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## Executive Summary

The City of Ypsilanti, Michigan, has a variety of public parks and facilities throughout the city, which have historically provided residents with recreational opportunities ranging from sports, playgrounds, and festivals to fishing, gardening, and fitness classes. Since the adoption of the City's previous Parks & Recreation Master Plan in 2003, however, the City's fiscal situation has forced the elimination of the Recreation Department, and precluded the implementation of many of the recommendations in that plan.

The City has been able to achieve a few significant components of the 2003 plan with the aid of property owners and regional partners. For example,

- Ypsilanti worked with Washtenaw County and Eastern Michigan University to complete portions of the Border to Border Trail, providing bicycle and pedestrian connections to adjacent communities.
- The City used brownfield redevelopment tax incentives to aid in the redevelopment of the old paper mill adjacent to Peninsular Park.
- The Senior Center and Parkridge Community Center saw notable renovations, using CDBG funds allocated by the Washtenaw Urban County partnership.

In general, however, Ypsilanti's recreation system has come to be more dependent on volunteer and community groups, and most of the significant improvements made in the parks and recreation system over the past five years have been the result of these efforts. A brief sample of these includes:

- The Friends of the Senior Center, Friends of the Rutherford Pool, and Friends of Parkridge Community Center have performed fundraising to maintain public enjoyment of those facilities, as well as managing day-to-day operations.
- The Friends of the Ypsilanti Freighthouse have raised a significant amount of money towards necessary repairs to that structure, though more remains to be done before it can be returned to use.
- A number of community organizations, including Messiah Temple and the Ypsilanti Housing Commission, have raised funds for physical repairs and have implemented programming in Parkridge Park.
- Growing Hope, an Ypsilanti-based non-profit, has aided neighborhood and school groups in caring for portions of Frog Island Park, Recreation Park, and Parkridge Park as community gardens.
- The Ann Arbor Area Disc Indueced Sports Club (A3Disc) donated materials and labor to create a disc golf course in Waterworks Park.

This plan is intended to build on those successes, with a focus on working collaboratively with partners such as EMU and Washtenaw County on additional projects, and on supporting projects driven by neighborhood volunteers. Whereas previous plans have been very capital-intensive, this plan is created with the understanding that the City is not expected to have the

fiscal capacity for such projects in the five year period covered. The process of finding and working with partners is a necessary first step for most of the recommendations in this plan.

## **PLAN COMPONENTS**

With the expiration of Ypsilanti's *2003-2007 Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, the Recreation Commission and City staff undertook the planning process in order to comply with recreation planning guidelines from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The plan includes the following components:

- Description of the planning process, including the public input process
- Community description, including geographic and demographic characteristics relevant to demand for recreation facilities
- Recreation inventory, describing current conditions in the City's parks and recreation facilities, as well as other recreation opportunities near Ypsilanti
- Administrative structure, identifying City entities involved in recreation provision
- Action program, including goals and objectives for the plan, and recommendations for reaching these goals

Appropriately for the collaboration-based focus of the plan, the portion of this plan concerning Riverside and Frog Island Parks was prepared in coordination with the Depot Town Community Development Corporation (DTCDC). As the DTCDC is hoping to make significant capital improvements to these parks over the next few years, their public input and conceptual design process was incorporated into this plan. Since the DTCDC will be the group making the improvements at these parks, the plans are at a significantly higher level of detail than the recommendations for the other parks, which will evolve and grow as interested members of the community get involved in the implementation of this plan.

Within the plan, a number of recommendations are presented for each park and facility, as well as some general, system-wide recommendations. Some of the recommendations that have been identified as priorities include,

- Clarifying, formalizing, and streamlining the City's relationship with the various volunteer groups providing recreation programming, and easing the creation of new groups.
- Completing the Border to Border Trail within the City.
- Turning over responsibility for the tot lots to neighborhood associations or adjacent property owners.
- Working with the Friends of the Rutherford Pool and other area organizations to find funding for needed repairs to the pool.
- Pursuing a private partner to rehabilitate the historic Peninsular Park powerhouse for some use that complements the park.
- Implementing basic lighting, signage, and maintenance improvements throughout the system.

Because the character of this plan's recommendations are generally a *process* for approaching projects, rather than specific, discrete projects, the timing and financing of implementation will depend on when project partners can be found, and what the interaction with those partners results in.

