

Chapter 1: Planning and Public Input Process

The Parks & Recreation Master Plan was developed over the period from April 2007 to January 2008 by the City of Ypsilanti Recreation Commission, aided by staff from the Planning & Development and Public Works Departments. During this period, the Commission typically met twice monthly, holding a working session devoted to some aspect of the Master Plan in addition to the broader monthly meeting.

INITIAL ANALYSIS

The Commission began with a review of the City's 2003-2007 Parks & Recreation Master Plan, and with a tour of the City's existing parkland and recreation facilities. The Commission and staff also reviewed other related City and regional plans, such as the City's *1998 Huron River Corridor Master Plan*, the Washtenaw Metro Alliance's *2007 Plan for Coordinated Parkland and Open Space*, and the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study's *2006 Non-Motorized Transportation Plan*.

Additionally, the Commission was asked to consider the budgetary constraints facing the City; the planning process focused heavily on the recreation programming currently provided by volunteer organizations, and on strengthening and enhancing those volunteer efforts in the future.

Based on these considerations, the Commission adopted the Goals and Objectives for the Plan, which are presented in Chapter 5. Recognizing the importance of maintaining and building upon the efforts of other entities, those goals place the City's role in the recreation system as providing a safe and welcoming collection of parks and facilities, and on engagement with volunteers, non-profits, neighboring communities, and regional efforts to provide programming.

PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY

Over the course of September and October, the Commission and staff surveyed Ypsilanti residents and other users of the recreation system. The survey was designed to evaluate use patterns of various parks, as well as to collect resident feedback on the potential for Adopt-a-Park programs, alternative funding models, and other ideas for future recreation provision.

The survey was available to participants both online and in paper format. The survey was distributed initially through CoPAC, the coalition of neighborhood associations within the City, at City Hall and on the City's website, and at the downtown public library and on the library's public computer terminals. Partway through the survey collection process, several additional distribution points were added in an attempt to increase participation in under-represented portions of the City, as determined by responses to the question "Where do you live?" Surveys were provided to the Ozone House youth drop-in center and to Hope Clinic; an Ypsilanti High

School (YHS) teacher distributed the survey to several classes; and staff contacted neighborhood associations that had few responses, including distributing the survey in person at one association's meeting. The Housing Office at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) and the Ypsilanti Housing Commission were contacted to participate in the survey process, but were not able to respond in time for this survey.

In total, approximately 250 residents completed the online survey, and an additional 200 completed paper surveys. The various distribution methods had different levels of success:

- The neighborhood associations yielded 33% of the total responses, almost all from the CoPAC e-mail list. These were fairly heavily concentrated in a few neighborhoods, however.
- Distribution of 200 paper surveys at Ypsilanti High School produced 137 responses, or 30% of the total responses. While many of these surveys were not completely filled out, or had fairly cursory answers, they are a useful complement to the CoPAC distribution, both in age and where respondents live.
- A notice on the City's website yielded 30 responses, while 15 respondents noted that they found out about the survey at City Hall (6 of those respondents filled out the survey online).
- A drop box at the downtown Ypsilanti District Library produced 23 responses. While the survey was also publicized on the library's webpage and MySpace pages, and loaded onto public terminals in the library, only 3 online responses noted the library as their source.
- Around a dozen respondents indicated various local blogs as their pointer to the survey; 15 cited the Ann Arbor News.

Survey Representation

Around 300 respondents answered each of the demographic questions included at the end of the survey. Within this section, percentages are of only those respondents who answered the demographic questions.

Most respondents (75.7%) identified themselves as City of Ypsilanti residents, with 15.7% identifying themselves as living in Ypsilanti or Superior Townships.

Approximately one third of respondents had an Ypsilanti Public School District student in their household, though only 15 of these were respondents who did not receive the survey through Ypsilanti High School.

Fifty-five respondents, 18.7%, reported having an EMU student, faculty member, or staff member in their household. Of these, 76.4% stated they were residents of the City of Ypsilanti, and 12.7% residents of Ypsilanti or Superior Townships, similar to the residency of all respondents. EMU affiliated respondents, like all survey respondents, primarily received the survey through their neighborhood associations (41.8%), or through YHS (16.3%). Even within this group, however, few appeared to be students—of 143 residents in these household, only 18 (12.3%) were between the ages of 18 and 24. In fact, on average, EMU affiliated respondents have lived in Ypsilanti slightly longer than the average of all survey respondents—

14.4 years, compared to 13.0 years for all respondents. In terms of park usage and priorities, EMU households did not notably differ from all households.

More than half of respondents (171, or 56.3%) reported household members under the age of 18; these households reported a total of 324 children, or 1.89 children per household. In general, households with children were very well-represented in the survey, compared to the 2000 Census figures showing only 21.7% of Ypsilanti households having children under 18. This is largely because of the number of surveys returned from YHS—excluding those surveys, a total of 73 surveys, or 24.0%, noted having household members under the age of 18.

Table 1-1: Household types reported on survey

Household type	Number	% of Total	Ypsilanti population
Single Person	49	16.1%	40.4%
Two adults, no children	64	21.2%	-
More than two adults	40	13.2%	-
Households with children	171	56.3%	21.7%
One adult with children	36	11.8%	9.9%
All residents aged 18-24	3	1.0%	-
Households with residents aged 65+	19	6.3%	12.6%

Ypsilanti population data from 2000 Census. Comparison Census data is not readily available for all household types.

Households without minor children were under-represented; in particular, only 16.1% of respondents were from single-person households, while 40.4% of the City's households had only a single occupant in 2000. Households with residents aged 65 or older were also underrepresented, with only 6.3% of households reporting these residents, compared to 12.6% of households reported by the 2000 Census. Table 1-1 includes these and other figures on the types of households that took the survey.

Table 1-2: Ages of household members reported

Age of household member	Number	% of total	Ypsilanti population
Younger than 5	59	6.5%	5.0%
5-12	103	11.4%	-
13-17	162	17.9%	-
<i>5-17 (total)</i>	<i>265</i>	<i>29.3%</i>	<i>10.9%</i>
18-24	74	8.2%	38.3%
25-44	294	32.5%	26.4%
45-65	191	21.1%	12.5%
Over 65	23	2.5%	7.1%

Ypsilanti population data from 2000 Census. Note that Census data is not readily available for the age divisions used in the survey, so city-wide percentages for 5-12 and 13-17 year old age groups are combined.

When considering the household data in terms of the number of individuals of various ages, rather than households of various types, similar patterns are found: children and people aged 25 or older are very well represented, but people aged 18-24 and 65 or older are underrepresented relative to the population of the community as a whole. Future outreach efforts should include attempts to contact residents and staff at dormitories, assisted living facilities, and age-specific housing complexes serving these age groups, in order to better evaluate their needs. In particular, the 18-24 year age group, which makes up nearly 40% of the city's population, is important to consider.

For some of the demographic groups and neighborhoods not reached by this survey, future outreach efforts could include door-to-door surveys, or better coordination with organizations that work with the underrepresented residents. During implementation of any plan elements,

but particularly those affecting parks that received little attention in the survey, additional work should be performed to identify and engage stakeholders. This may involve working with EMU or the schools to engage their students and staff, local churches and other neighborhood institutions, or door-to-door engagement. The neighborhoods around Peninsular and Parkridge Parks were underrepresented in the survey, and should therefore be a priority in future efforts.

A discussion of the survey results as they apply to park usage and priorities is provided in Chapter 5, under the discussion of individual parks; the complete survey form is provided in Appendix A.

RIVERSIDE AND FROG ISLAND CHARRETTE

In parallel with the preparation of this plan, the Depot Town Community Development Corporation (DTCDC) was working with the City of Ypsilanti on an agreement that would allow the DTCDC to perform certain capital improvements and maintenance operations in Riverside and Frog Island Parks, as well as to streamline special event management and coordinate additional special events. The DTCDC worked closely with City staff during this process, as well as consulting with the Recreation Commission on needs and expectations for these parks, with the goal of producing detailed action plans for these parks that would be incorporated into this master plan.

On November 8, 2007, the DTCDC and City held two community design charrettes for the parks at the Ypsilanti Senior Center. Invitations were sent to a broad group of stakeholders, including neighborhood associations, business groups, past special events organizers, and Washtenaw County and Eastern Michigan University officials. One session was held in late afternoon and one in the evening, to accommodate stakeholder schedules. Approximately 50 community members participated in the design sessions, discussing potential capital improvements and programming ideas in small groups. Public input from the charrette was used along with feedback from the Recreation Commission, master plan surveys, and the DTCDC's expected fiscal capacity to generate the action plan for those parks included in this plan.

GENERATION OF ACTION PLAN

From the assessment of current conditions, Goals & Objectives, public input process, and community physical and demographic factors, the Commission and Staff generated recommendations for the City's recreation system, and prioritized those recommendations into the action plan presented in Chapter 5.

PUBLIC REVIEW AND ADOPTION

The draft plan was made available for public comment on January 4, 2008. Within the city, copies of the draft were placed at City Hall, at the Ypsilanti Senior Center and at Parkridge

Community Center, and were provided to the downtown branch of the Ypsilanti Public Library and to Eastern Michigan University's Halle Library. The plan was available for download from the City's website, and a notice of the downloadable copy sent to a number of community websites. Copies of the plan were also provided to City Council members and to the Planning Commission. The concept plans for Riverside and Frog Island Parks, which are within the Ypsilanti Historic District, were presented to the Historic District Commission.

The plan was also sent to a number of regional entities for review, including the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, Public Health Department, and Planning and Environment Department; the Ypsilanti Public School District; Eastern Michigan University; and the Planning Departments of Ypsilanti and Superior Charter Townships. Finally, a notice was placed in the Ypsilanti Community News on Sunday, December 30, 2007, including locations where the draft plan was available and information on the public hearing.

On February 6, 2008, the Recreation Commission held a public hearing on the draft plan. Notice of the hearing was published in the Ypsilanti Community News on Sunday, January 27, 2008. At this meeting, comments were heard from community members, and a summary of written comments received was read to the Commission and the community members in attendance. As a result of comments received on the draft plan, the Commission added recommendations to the plan to consider sound level standards for events occurring in parks and to more proactively engage the public schools in parks programming and maintenance, and revised some other recommendations. The implementation priorities at the end of Chapter Five of the plan were also guided in part by the public comment process. The Commission recommended adoption of the plan to City Council.

On February 19, 2008, the final draft of the plan was presented to the City Council along with the Recreation Commission's recommendation of adoption. The Council adopted the plan unanimously with Resolution No. 2008-029.

The notices, resolutions, and minutes for the meetings mentioned above are included in Appendix G for reference.