

Chapter 4: Administrative Structure

Since the creation of the 2003 City of Ypsilanti Parks and Recreation Master Plan, budget constraints have resulted in the elimination of the City's Recreation Department. At present, staff from multiple departments work with the Recreation Commission and with numerous volunteer groups to provide park maintenance and programming.

COMMISSION

The Recreation Commission is appointed by the City Council to “ensure recreational programs and opportunities are afforded all citizens,” by seeking sustainable partnerships and encouraging volunteerism. In 2007, the Recreation Commission was expanded from a 6-member body to have between 9 and 11 members, up to 3 of whom may be youth members under the age of 18.

STAFF

The primary staff involvement with the parks and recreation system is maintenance through the Public Works Department, including mowing, trash collection, and facility repairs. The Assistant City Manager coordinates special event staffing, including additional Police Department and Public Works staffing. The Planning & Development Department assists the Commission with long-range planning. The Public Works and Planning and Development Departments are also involved in specific parks and recreation-related projects, such as applying for grants or coordinating with volunteer groups.

Private fundraising by volunteer organizations provides for part-time city employees at the Parkridge Community Center, Senior Center, and Rutherford Municipal Pool.

BUDGET

The Public Works Department has a Parks Maintenance budget totaling \$204,056 in fiscal year 2007-2008. This budget has been reduced in recent years, as shown in Table 4-1, at right. The City does not have recreation programming or capital improvements budgets; programming is provided through dedicated fundraising by volunteer organizations or other partners, and capital improvements made as specific funding can be identified for them.

Fiscal Year	Maintenance Budget
2005 – 2006	\$277,034
2006 – 2007	\$231,602
2007 – 2008	\$204,056
<i>2008 – 2009 (projected)</i>	<i>\$91,056</i>

Capital improvements are typically funded by partnerships or grants; in 2007, for example, the City partnered with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Department to leverage about

\$100,000 in CMAQ funding for the construction of bike lanes on a segment of the Border to Border Trail, and the Washtenaw Urban County assisted the City in securing about \$300,000 in CDBG funding for capital improvements to the Senior Center, Parkridge Community Center, and Rutherford Municipal Pool.

VOLUNTEERS AND OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

Volunteers play a critical role in the City of Ypsilanti's parks and recreation system, particularly in the area of recreation programming.

The City has an agreement with the Ypsilanti JayCees to administer special events registrations for the parks. A JayCees volunteer handles the paperwork for events and works with the Assistant City Manager and Police and Public Works departments to ensure proper staffing at events.

Each of the four major recreational facilities has an associated volunteer "Friends" group: the Friends of the Ypsilanti Freighthouse, the Friends of the Rutherford Pool, the Friends of the Senior Center, and the Friends of the Parkridge Community Center.

The Friends of the Freighthouse, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit, has raised money through grants and private donations to perform some of the repairs needed at the Freighthouse. The other Friends groups manage the daily operations of the respective recreation facilities, including fundraising to pay facility staff.

Several of the parks have had volunteer improvements made, as well as volunteer-run recreation programs. For example, neighborhood and school groups maintain community gardens in Parkridge, Recreation, and Frog Island parks, and at Estabrook Elementary and West Middle Schools, with the assistance of local non-profit Growing Hope. In summer of 2007, the Ypsilanti Disc Golf Club provided the equipment and assisted with the installation of the disc golf course in Waterworks Park. Sports groups such as Little League or soccer teams use the sports fields at various parks. The Ypsilanti Health Coalition, a group coordinated by the Washtenaw County Public Health Department, has been active in a number of efforts to promote physical activity; in 2007, the YHC and various community partners were successful in applying for grant money from the Ann Arbor Community Foundation to make capital



Figure 4-1: The Perry Learning Garden, constructed between Perry Child Development Center and Parkridge Park in 2002, is one of several gardens maintained by volunteers on school, park, or private property. The gardens turn underused space into community-organized and supervised space for education, socializing, and food production.

improvements to the basketball courts and other facilities in Parkridge Park, as well as coordinating a Health Festival to promote use of the park.

In 2007, the newly formed Depot Town Community Development Corporation proposed to undertake capital improvements, additional programming, and general maintenance in Riverside and Frog Island Parks. At present, this is the only formal agreement that the City has with another organization to provide maintenance or programming in the parks and recreation facilities.

FUTURE STEPS

The current provision of recreation programming in the city has grown organically out of perceived need by a wide variety of volunteer groups, non-profits, and other organizations, particularly in the wake of budget cuts by the City. While these efforts are widely appreciated and admired in the community, both the Commission and members of these organizations have stated a desire for better coordination of activities. The Commission wishes to pursue formalization of relationships between the City and the various entities working in the City parks and recreation facilities, in order to provide a clear channel for authorizing groups to undertake activities; clarify responsibility for costs and maintenance; provide coverage of liability; and ensure effective communication.

While the "Friends" model has been effective in providing for day-to-day management of the City's recreation facilities, the partnership with the DT CDC shows promise for larger-scale capital improvements. Each of these types of relationship may be built upon or expanded to other parks in the future. As the number and extent of community and volunteer partnerships grows, the City will need to consider how best to coordinate with these efforts – keeping track of formal responsibilities and communicating needs between dozens of partners has the potential to consume significant staff resources.

Table 4-2: Recreation administrative structure

