



Looking downstream from the gazebo in Riverside Park (Courtesy Evan Sweet)



CITY OF YPSILANTI  
PARKS AND RECREATION  
MASTER PLAN  
2020-2025



# Acknowledgements

## **PLAN ADOPTION**

The City of Ypsilanti Parks and Recreation Master Plan was adopted on 18 February 2020 by Resolution No. 2020-045 of the City Council of the City of Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, Michigan.

The plan was approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources on XXXX.

## **CITY COUNCIL**

Beth Bashert, Mayor  
Lois Richardson, Mayor Pro-Tem  
Nicole Brown  
Anthony Morgan  
Annie Somerville  
Jennifer Symanns  
Steve Wilcoxon

## **PLAN PREPARATION**

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The plan was prepared by the City of Ypsilanti Recreation Commission with support from the Department of Public Services and Planning and Development Department.

## **PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**

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Evan Sweet, Chair	Kurt Kohlmann
Cathy Thoburn, Secretary	Amanda Marshall
Julia Collins	Ashanti Harris
Ben Connor-Barrie	Dillon Navarre

## **STAFF**

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Bonnie Wessler, Project Manager	Andy Aamodt, City Planner
Ron Akers, Director, Public Services	Christopher Jacobs, Community Development Manager
Chris Simmons, Public Services	

## **PARK ADOPTERS & VOLUNTEERS**

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A special thank you to the City's devoted volunteers and neighborhood associations who have provided countless hours of effort to improve Ypsilanti's parks system.



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## Executive Summary

The City aims to provide a high quality parks system and ample recreational opportunities, but is restricted by a lack of resources and capacity. This plan therefore envisions that the City will play a custodial and facilitating role, focusing limited resources on oversight and maintenance of the parkland and facilities, yet poised to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. A key strategy to reach that goal is to develop and foster partnerships with potential partners, from regional entities to Ypsilanti's many talented residents and committed businesses. As implementation of projects will rely on the involvement of these partners and volunteers, the prioritization of projects presented in this plan is a guide, recognizing that opportunity will dictate which projects come to fruition.

This plan addresses the parkland and recreation facilities controlled by the City of Ypsilanti. Together, physical facilities and programming comprise Ypsilanti's recreation system. The system relies upon the participation of and cooperation with a variety of local and regional entities, ranging from local volunteers, volunteer groups, and nonprofits, to neighboring municipalities, universities, and school districts. Some of these partners coordinate formally with the City on recreation provision, while others are historically partners in fact, without active coordination or formal long-term agreements. Considering Ypsilanti's comparatively small physical area, limited fiscal capacity, and close geographic integration with surrounding communities, nurturing and developing working relationships with all of the area's recreation partners is an important part of the City's recreation system.

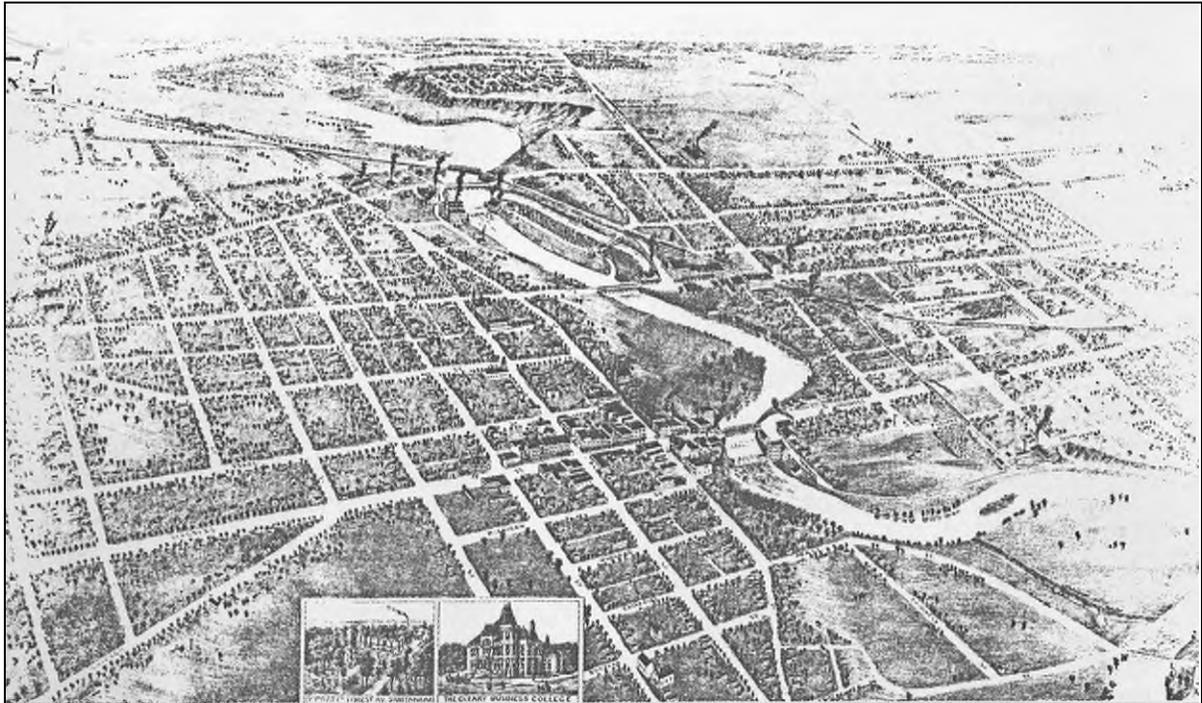
The Parks and Recreation Commission can take the lead in pursuing many of the objectives laid out in this plan. As many of the projects involve prioritization of limited maintenance dollars, involvement of volunteers, or raising funds to pay for needed capital improvements, and active, involved Parks and Recreation Commission could devote time to these projects. The City Council makes final decisions on budget and legislation, but the Parks and Recreation Commission may choose to make recommendations to them for budget priorities, policies, and legislation.



# Chapter 1: Community Description

This plan addresses the parkland and recreation facilities controlled by the City of Ypsilanti. It focuses primarily on physical facilities; programming is offered by partners and volunteer organizations. Together, physical facilities and programming comprise Ypsilanti's recreation system. The system relies upon the participation of and cooperation with a variety of local and regional entities, ranging from local volunteer groups to neighboring municipalities, universities, and school districts. Some of these partners coordinate formally with the City on recreation provision, while others are historically partners in fact, without active coordination or formal long-term agreements. Considering Ypsilanti's comparatively small physical area, limited fiscal capacity, and close geographic integration with surrounding communities, nurturing and developing working relationships with all of the area's recreation partners is an important part of the City's recreation system.

## HISTORY



The Ypsilanti area was settled in 1823, developing around the intersection between the Great Sauk Trail, now Michigan Avenue, and the Huron River. Ypsilanti is the second village to be incorporated in Michigan, in 1832, and later incorporated as a city in 1858. Like many older cities founded on rivers, Ypsilanti used the Huron River for both power and commerce, fostering a thriving community.



**Figure 1.1: 1913 Olmsted Brothers Huron River Improvement Draft Plan**

Ypsilanti’s history of supporting outdoor recreation stretches nearly as far back as its founding. Ypsilanti established its first public park in the 1890s, and then formed a Parks and Recreation Commission shortly thereafter in the early 1900s. In 1905, the city employed the renowned Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm to form a master plan for the Huron River corridor. In the General City Plan of 1913, also written by the Olmsted Brothers, the city was advised to acquire land along the riverfront to “preserve for posterity natural features of great beauty, such as the steep wooded hillsides and gorges that make the charm of the valley...” At the time, the City began acquiring riverfront land for public use, starting in the 1920s with what is now Riverside Park. Later acquisitions along the river include Waterworks Park, formerly called Tourist Park; Frog Island Park, the former Ypsilanti High School athletic fields; and Peninsular Park, where the Peninsular Paper Company once operated their mill. The City recently developed River’s Edge Park, a linear park and trail linking Riverside to Grove Road along the banks of the Huron, completing a key segment of the Border to Border Trail, a project led by the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission to link the communities of Washtenaw County along the Huron. Although the precise details of the Olmsted plan may never be developed, the City has been faithful to the plan’s larger goals of creating a river-linked parks system for the City’s residents and visitors to enjoy.

Due in large part to Ypsilanti’s history, it is also a relatively compact and walkable community with a substantial sidewalk network that places many residents within an easy walk of City parks. The majority of Ypsilanti’s housing stock is within a quarter-mile of a park. The City’s age and context in a fairly urbanized region also means that its boundaries are fixed, and little undeveloped land is available for additional parks, therefore any new recreational amenities will likely involve refinements or minor expansions of existing resources.

## **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

### **NATURAL FEATURES**

Although Ypsilanti is urbanized, natural features play an important role in the lives of its residents and visitors, in parks and recreation planning, and in land use planning. These include its climate, flora and fauna; the general topography of the city; and its water resources.

## Climate

Southeast Michigan's climate includes both hot, humid summers and frigid winters, and includes a full range of precipitation. This provides many opportunities for different means of recreation throughout the four seasons, ranging from canoeing, fishing, swimming, and outdoor fairs and festivals in the summer, to snowshoeing, sledding, cross-country skiing, and indoor recreational activities in the winter.

## Wildlife

Although the City is urbanized, it provides valuable year-round and migratory habitat for many species. Its diverse urban tree canopy and the Huron River provide habitat for birds, small mammals, insects, and many aquatic species. Although there is little year-round habitat for deer, they are often seen in the north of the City and near Ford Lake in late winter and early spring, as forage becomes scarce elsewhere. Hunting is not permitted in City parks or on City-owned property; however, fishing is both permitted and popular. Fish species found in the Huron include bluegill, sunfish, black crappie, smallmouth bass, bullhead, white perch, yellow perch, carp, white sucker, hog sucker, and the occasional channel catfish.

## Woodlands

Due to its developed state, the City of Ypsilanti has few areas of natural woodlands, most on private property not open to the public. However, extensive woodlands and publicly-accessible natural areas can be found in the surrounding area. A number of regional bodies, such as Washtenaw County, the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, and the Legacy Land Conservancy are working to preserve these assets, some of which are open to the public.

The City does have a significant urban forest of street and park trees. In 2011, the City used a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant to develop the eight-year Urban Forestry Management Plan<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, due to funding issues and other unforeseen problems, the replanting called for in the plan was unable to be executed. In 2019, the City lost its Arbor Day Tree City USA designation, and is working to earn it back.

## Topography

The majority of the City of Ypsilanti is a gently rolling landscape, with slopes rarely exceeding 6 percent. However, areas adjacent to the Huron River or its floodplain frequently reach slopes upwards of 12 percent. This is moderately steep, yet will support most types of development. Slopes greater than twenty percent are considered steep, and are susceptible to erosion and gully formation. Per 2009 LiDAR data, areas in Parkridge Park, Riverside Park, Frog Island Park, and Peninsular Park have steep slopes, generally at their perimeters.



## Soils

Most of the soils present in the City of Ypsilanti are of the St. Clair Series. This series consists primarily of well- to moderately well-drained soils formed in clayey textured glacial till. A great deal of the soil east of the Huron River, as well as areas in the northwest portion of the City, is of the Boyer Series—well-drained, nearly level soils formed in loamy and sandy deposits underlain by gravelly, coarse sand. Other soils include the Sloan Series, primarily along the

<sup>1</sup> The Urban Forestry Plan is available on the City website at [cityofypsilanti.com/trees](http://cityofypsilanti.com/trees).

Huron River; the Blount Series, found in small deposits along the city's northern boundaries; the Morley Series, in the southwest portion of the City; and areas of fill. Notably, Peninsular Park and portions of the Water Street redevelopment area are largely on fill soils, requiring investigation before construction of recreation facilities. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources currently owns mineral rights in an area of the City bounded by Marion, Ecorse, and Towner on the east.

### **Water Resources (see map 1.1)**

#### **The Huron River**

Ypsilanti's most prominent natural feature is the Huron River. An upstream portion of the Huron River is the only state-designated Natural River in southeast Michigan, and the river as a whole is one of only two federally-designated Water Trails in Michigan. It provides water for approximately 150,000 people, and supports one of Michigan's finest smallmouth bass fisheries. The main stem of the river originates at Big Lake and the Huron Swamp in Springfield Township, Oakland County, meanders through Ingham, Jackson, Livingston, Monroe, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties for approximately 136 miles, then joins Lake Erie.<sup>2</sup> The Huron River Watershed Council has created a Huron River Watershed Management Plan, recently updated in late 2011; an update of the lower middle Huron River Watershed Management Plan is planned for the near future.



Looking downstream from the gazebo in Riverside Park (Courtesy Evan Sweet)

Within Ypsilanti, the river flows from the Peninsular impoundment to Eastern Michigan University, Depot Town, the Water Street redevelopment area, and downtown before flowing into Ford Lake. Several parks lie along the river: upstream, Peninsular Park provides a secluded, natural setting in which to picnic, fish, or set off in a canoe. In the heart of Ypsilanti, Frog Island and Riverside Parks provide venues for entertainment, sports, and festivals. South of Riverside Park, River's Edge Linear Park and Trail follows the river from Michigan Avenue to Grove Road. The Huron curls around the ballfield and disc golf course of Waterworks Park before flowing through a channelized stretch adjacent to the former Ford plant and under I-94, finally entering the dam-controlled Ford Lake at Ypsilanti's southern boundary.

There is one dam within the City, at Peninsular Park, constructed in 1920 to power the former Peninsular Paper Company, but decommissioned by the time of the City's acquisition in 1984. There is a canoe/kayak portage around the dam; novices may need assistance at this point. This portage may be particularly difficult to paddlers of all skill levels during times of particularly high or low water levels. The City is actively working with the Huron River

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<sup>2</sup> Huron River Watershed Council, "Watershed Management Plan for the Huron River in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Metropolitan Area (Middle Huron)," Oct 2011.

Watershed Council (HRWC) to remove this dam, and jointly performed a removal feasibility study in 2018 with Princeton Hydro. The removal will not only eliminate a difficult portage and the ongoing need to maintain this aged dam, but also improve habitat for several native species.

The Huron River Watershed Council has partnered with the City to maintain the Huron River Watershed. The Huron River Watershed Council has also developed a Middle Huron River Watershed Management Plan (2011), approved by the Department of Environmental Quality. This plan contains detailed technical and narrative information about the River, its watershed, and its impoundments, and outlines management goals. The Middle Huron Watershed Management Plan is a valuable resource, and has helped guide many of the recommendations found in this plan.

The City has taken steps to protect the watershed. In 2011, the City, DDA, and volunteers worked to upgrade stormwater handling in the Depot Town area, installing three rain gardens alongside Cross Street and adjacent to the Freighthouse. In 2009, the City passed an ordinance limiting the use of phosphorus-containing fertilizers to minimize nonpoint source nutrient loading of both the Huron and Ford Lake. In 2017, the City received an EGLE Stormwater, Assent Management, and Wastewater grant to inventory the City's stormwater infrastructure; that inventory is currently underway.

### **Ford Lake**

Only a small portion of Ford Lake is within the City of Ypsilanti bounds, but as the Huron River flows through it, is affected by City of Ypsilanti development patterns. In 1996, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) listed the Middle Huron Watershed, consisting of the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti metropolitan area, as significantly contributing phosphorus to Ford Lake. MDEQ then placed the lake on the State's 303(d) list of impaired waters, meaning that the water quality is poor enough to warrant establishing a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for certain pollutants. In the case of Ford Lake, the pollutant in question is phosphorus, which comes from both point and non-point sources within the watershed. Since that time, both Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti have passed fertilizer ordinances to help reduce nonpoint pollution sources.

### **Other Waterways**

Two minor waterways run through the City: Paint Creek, in the south-west, and Owen Drain in the north-east.

*Paint Creek*, part of the Stony Creek Watershed,<sup>3</sup> collects water from South Hewitt south of Cross/Packard. It is an enclosed drain from Hewitt to Michigan Avenue, and unenclosed from Michigan Avenue to the City boundary at I-94. Paint Creek is a state-designated coldwater trout stream.<sup>4</sup> Recreation Park is located on the border of this watershed depending on the maps used.<sup>5</sup>

*Owen Drain* is an enclosed drain that is part of the Huron River Watershed. Its headwaters are in the College Heights neighborhood, around Candy Cane Park; and in the Normal Park neighborhood, along Owendale Street north of South Congress Street.<sup>6</sup> A relief drain flows

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<sup>3</sup> Stony Creek Watershed Management Plan (2005): [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/deg/ess-nps-wmp-stony-creek\\_208933\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/deg/ess-nps-wmp-stony-creek_208933_7.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Coldwater Trout Streams (2010): [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/FO-210-07\\_182400\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/FO-210-07_182400_7.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Stony Creek Watershed: [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2014-170\\_454563\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2014-170_454563_7.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Washtenaw County Drain Map, Ypsilanti Township (2017): <https://www.washtenaw.org/DocumentCenter/View/148/Ypsilanti-Township-Drain-Map-PDF>

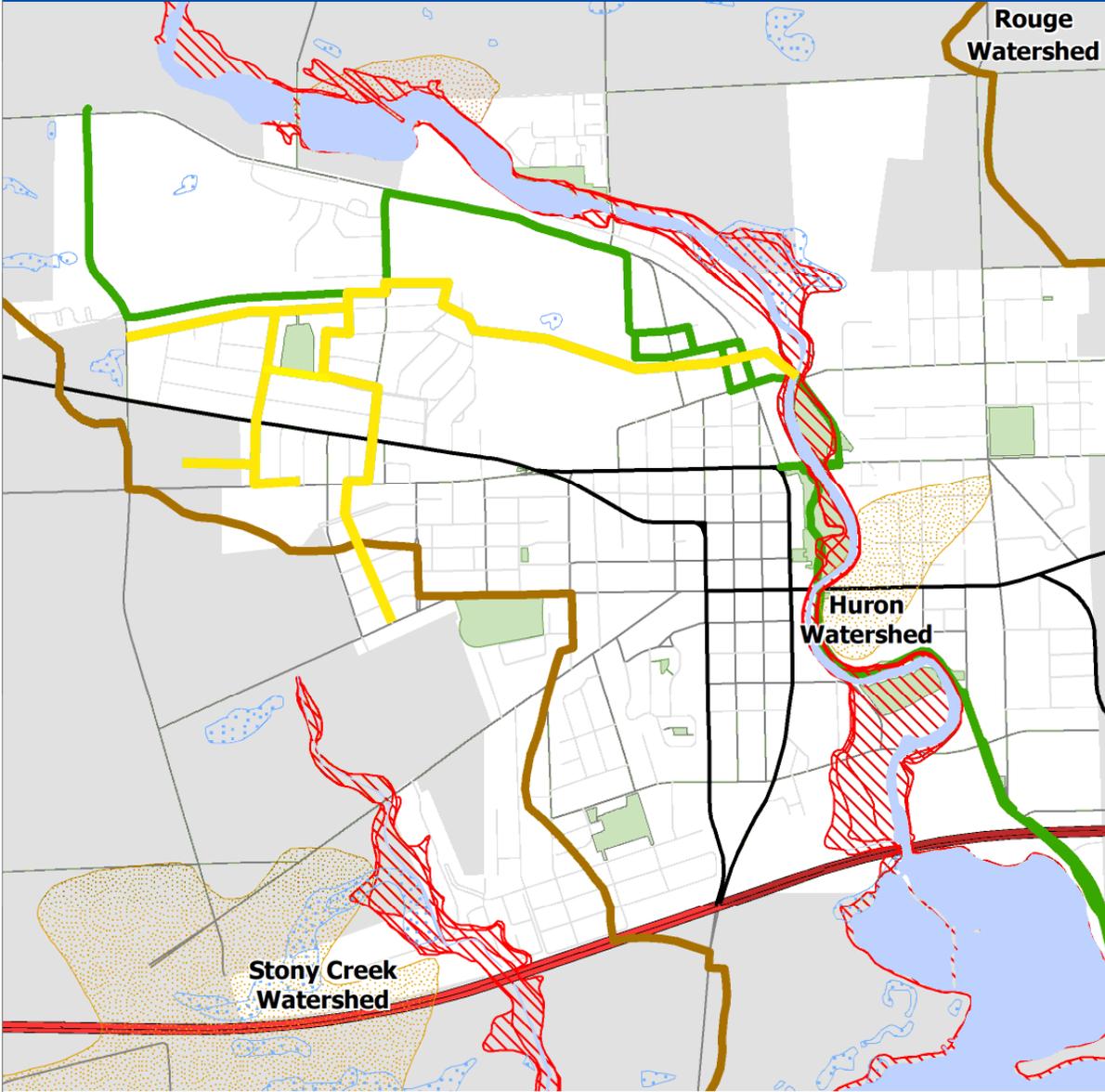
north along Cornell into the Huron River. The main branch of the Owen Drain travels eastward through EMU campus and empties into the Huron River just north of Forest Street. Candy Cane Park and portions of the Border-to-Border Trail are within this drainshed.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Huron River – Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Watershed: [http://www.michigan.gov/deg/0,1607,7-135-3313\\_3682\\_3714\\_31581-127715--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/deg/0,1607,7-135-3313_3682_3714_31581-127715--,00.html)

# Water Resources

map 1.1



Watersheds	Floodway	Owen Drain (approx)
Wetlands	Groundwater Recharge	0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles
Rivers	Border to Border Trail	
Lakes	Parks	Prepared for the City of Ypsilanti 2020-2025 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Data from Washtenaw County and City of Ypsilanti



## **Wetlands**

By definition, wetland areas hold water at least part of the time, have hydrolic soils, and sustain vegetative species partial to this type of environment. These regions are primarily associated with Paint Creek in the South Mansfield Avenue area of the City, and west of the Highland Cemetery along the Huron River basin. Both areas are heavily wooded.

## **Groundwater Recharge Areas**

Groundwater recharge areas permit water to move into an aquifer. There are two significant examples of this land type in Ypsilanti: the larger one occurs east of the Huron River around the intersection of River Street and Michigan Avenue; the other is in the southern portion of the West Commerce Park area, and spreads into Ypsilanti Township. Groundwater is not a source of Ypsilanti's water, aside from a small and decreasing number of personal wells, but proper treatment of this resource is important both as a matter of long-range stewardship and for the interconnectedness of groundwater resources with surface water, such as the Huron River. Soil contamination, management of road runoff, use of fertilizer and pesticides, and soil erosion can all affect groundwater quality.

## **Floodplains and Floodways**

Due to the presence of both the Huron River and Paint Creek, there are several areas that are part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood hazard areas, both floodways and floodplains. Floodways are shown in Map 1.1, Water Resources, and defined as an area which must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than a designated height. Development is regulated to ensure that there are no increases in upstream flood elevations.<sup>8</sup> The entirety of Frog Island Park, approximately half of the City-owned property on Railroad Street, significant portions of Riverside Park, and the entirety of Waterworks Park and the adjacent mulch yard are within the regulatory floodway or floodplain.<sup>9</sup> Development in floodplains carries less restriction than in floodways. These FEMA maps have not been updated since the early 1970s; since that time, the alignment of Spring/Factory Street has significantly changed. FEMA floodway and floodplain maps should be updated after any change to the Peninsular Dam or within the next ten years, whichever comes first.

## **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

### **Existing Land Use**

The City hosts a wide array of land uses. The core of the city is typical of older communities, with a fine-grained mixture of uses around the commercial districts of downtown, Depot Town, and the West Cross/Eastern Michigan campus area, in addition to industrial uses along the rail corridor and the Huron River. Much of the area of these central business districts and neighborhoods make up the Ypsilanti Historic District, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is one of the largest local districts in Michigan, encompassing more than 300 acres and more than 800 properties.

Further from this core are more contemporary land uses: uniform neighborhoods of single-family use; commercial bands along major road corridors, major apartment complexes, and an

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<sup>8</sup> FEMA. (2013, August 16). *Floodway*. Retrieved from <http://www.fema.gov/floodplain-management/floodway>

<sup>9</sup> FEMA Flood Map Service Center: <https://msc.fema.gov/portal/home>

industrial park. This pattern of land use is fairly stable, as changes of the established use typically occur only on a parcel-to-parcel basis over time. The Water Street Redevelopment Area, adjacent to Depot Town and Downtown, represents the largest potential change. Currently more than 35 acres of vacant space bordered by the River's Edge Park & Trail, the 2013 Master Plan, as well as previous visioning, calls for it to be largely commercial along Michigan Avenue with dense housing to the south, following traditional development patterns.

## **Transportation**

The City of Ypsilanti benefits from a location convenient to both a major north/south highway (US-23) and a major east/west expressway (I-94), providing residents with easy access to amenities around the region and carrying visitors to Ypsilanti and Eastern Michigan University. Washtenaw Avenue (Business Route US-23 and M-17) and Michigan Avenue (Business Route US-12) also run east and west through the heart of downtown. The traditional, highly-connected grid pattern generally followed by Ypsilanti's streets lends itself to easy navigability by users of both motorized and non-motorized forms of travel, despite having been split into one-way pairs in the historic core. Portions of the trunklines present significant challenges to non-motorized users, due to high volumes of fast-moving traffic, sidewalk gaps, lack of signed &/or signalized crossings, and lack of bike lanes. The City adopted the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan in 2010 and passed a Complete Streets ordinance in 2011 to help improve nonmotorized transportation for both utility and recreation.

Transit also plays a major role in transportation throughout the City. The Ride, the area public bus transit service, provides transit and paratransit service both to and from Ann Arbor and within the City of Ypsilanti itself. Four routes connect the cities, all terminating at the Ypsilanti Transit Center at Pearl and Adams downtown. The buses run seven days a week, with limited service on Sundays and no overnight service. Six local routes serve Ypsilanti on a more limited schedule, and the A-Ride, a call-ahead program that offers door-to-door service, serves Ypsilanti residents with disabilities. Many routes serve the City's recreation facilities and parks; information about specific routes and their relationship to the parks can be found in the park inventories.

The City is also pursuing rail options, both intercity and commuter. The City has recently applied for federal grants to construct an Amtrak stop in Depot Town, with a hoped-for construction date in 2022. In addition, the City is part of the southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority, which is working to develop a coordinated regional transit system that may include commuter rail, bus rapid transit, or coordinated express bus service. These systems could allow for greater regional attendance of Ypsilanti's events and parks systems; conversely, these regional systems allow Ypsilanti's residents easier access to regional resources.

## **SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS**

After a decline from its peak in the 1970s, Ypsilanti's total population is expected to remain constant at around 20,000 residents in coming years, including resident EMU students. As a dense, well-established urban area with a stable population, the City does not need to plan for new parkland to serve future population, but demographic characteristics help identify neighborhood needs and focus limited resources. Several of these factors are identified below, including overall population distribution, age, income level, and disability status.

### **Population Size**

The City of Ypsilanti's population has fluctuated over the years, from a high near 30,000 in the 1970 Census to 19,435 in the 2010 Census. Current Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) projections indicate that the overall size of the population will grow slightly to around 25,000 by 2045.<sup>10</sup>

Eastern Michigan University has a significant influence upon City demographics and recreation. EMU population remained fairly stable around 19,000 students from 1970 to 1980, and has increased to about 23,000 students today. Per a 2008 EMU report<sup>11</sup>, less than 15 percent of students reside near the campus, with up to 35% residing within six miles in 2013. This number has likely continued to fall due to the increasing popularity of online classes. Events and amenities draw some of these students, and as well as visitors and guests, into the parks system.

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<sup>10</sup> Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. (2019 December 23). *Community Profile – Ypsilanti*. Retrieved from <https://semcog.org/community-profiles/communities/4130>.

<sup>11</sup> Eastern Michigan University. (2020 January 02). *Systems appraisal feedback report: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs*. Retrieved from <https://www.emich.edu/assessment/pdf/CAT3.pdf>

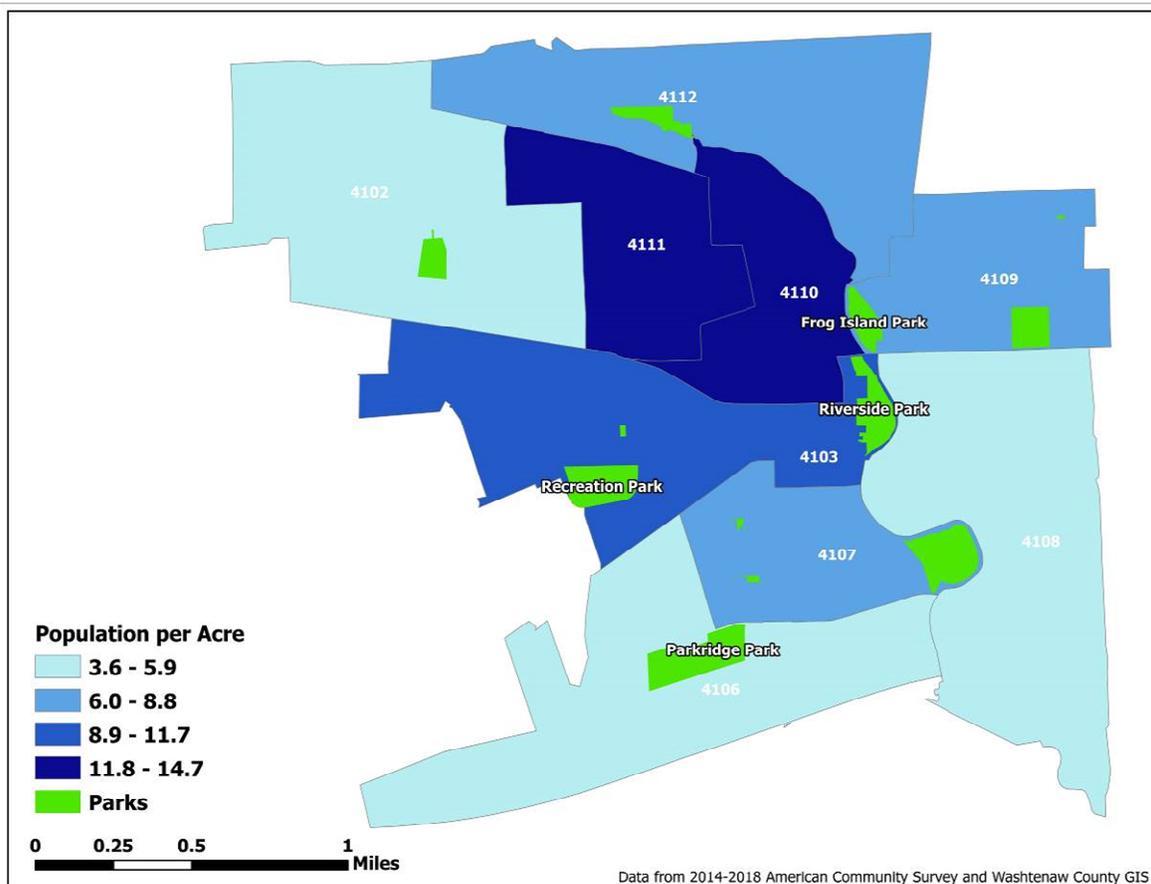


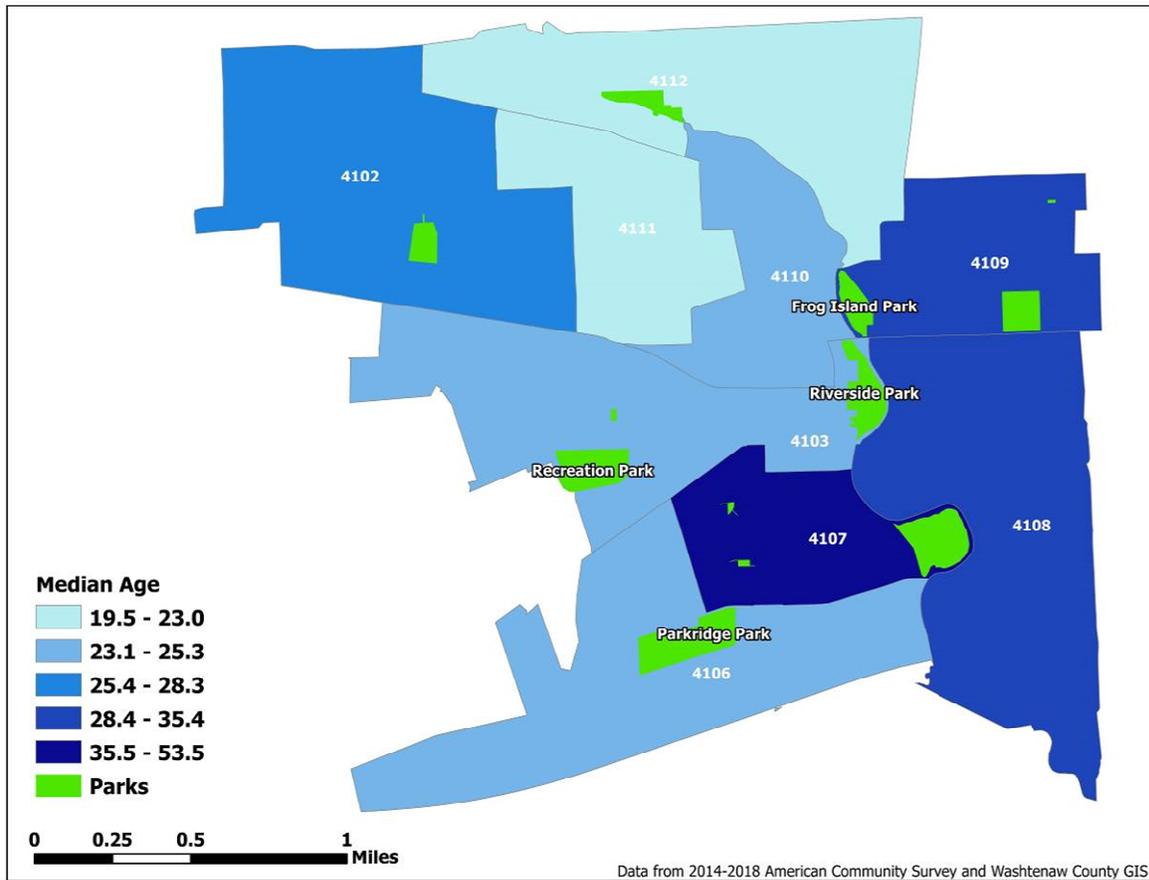
Figure 1.2: Residents per Acre by Census Tract

### Density

Knowing the density of population near parks can help predict usage volume. If more people live near a park, we should see increased usage of that park, provided people know that the park exists, can access it, and it has safe facilities that interest them.

Near Riverside and Frog Island, there is a dense residential area concentrated in the neighborhoods between downtown and the EMU campus area. The neighborhood has smaller lots and large houses divided into multiple apartments, as well as small purpose-built multifamily structures. Near Peninsular, the neighborhood to the north of the EMU campus has several large apartment complexes, and just to the south on campus, there are traditional dormitories. Near Parkridge, in the southwest portion of the city, the neighborhoods feature dense single family homes, with several larger housing complexes consisting largely of duplexes and townhomes.

The remainder of the City’s residential areas are predominantly single-family housing on lots of less than a quarter of an acre. Population density per Census tract, using 2014-2018 ACS data, is shown in Figure 1.2. Note, however, that tracts 4102, 4106, 4108, and 4112 skew low due to the presence of EMU’s athletic campus (4102); the industrial park, the former Ford plant, and Ford Lake (4106); the Water Street Redevelopment Area (4108); Highland Cemetery and undeveloped land (4112), respectively.



**Figure 1.3: Median Age of Residents by Census Tract**

### Age

Age can also help guide decisions regarding parks. If an area has a high proportion of children, it is likely to need playground equipment; if elderly, then accessible facilities and opportunities for low-impact exercise. Children and older residents are traditionally considered important in recreation planning, as these residents typically have more time in which to use recreation facilities, are more limited in their mobility, and have a higher sensitivity for accessible facilities. To safely access recreation facilities, these populations require few or no obstacles to a path of travel, such as steps, irregularities in a path, or even long distances between resting places.

Census tracts 4107 and 4108 contain housing developments specifically for senior citizens, including two smaller Ypsilanti Housing Commission properties that are predominantly communities of seniors. The City as a whole, however, skews noticeably young due to the presence of EMU and young families.

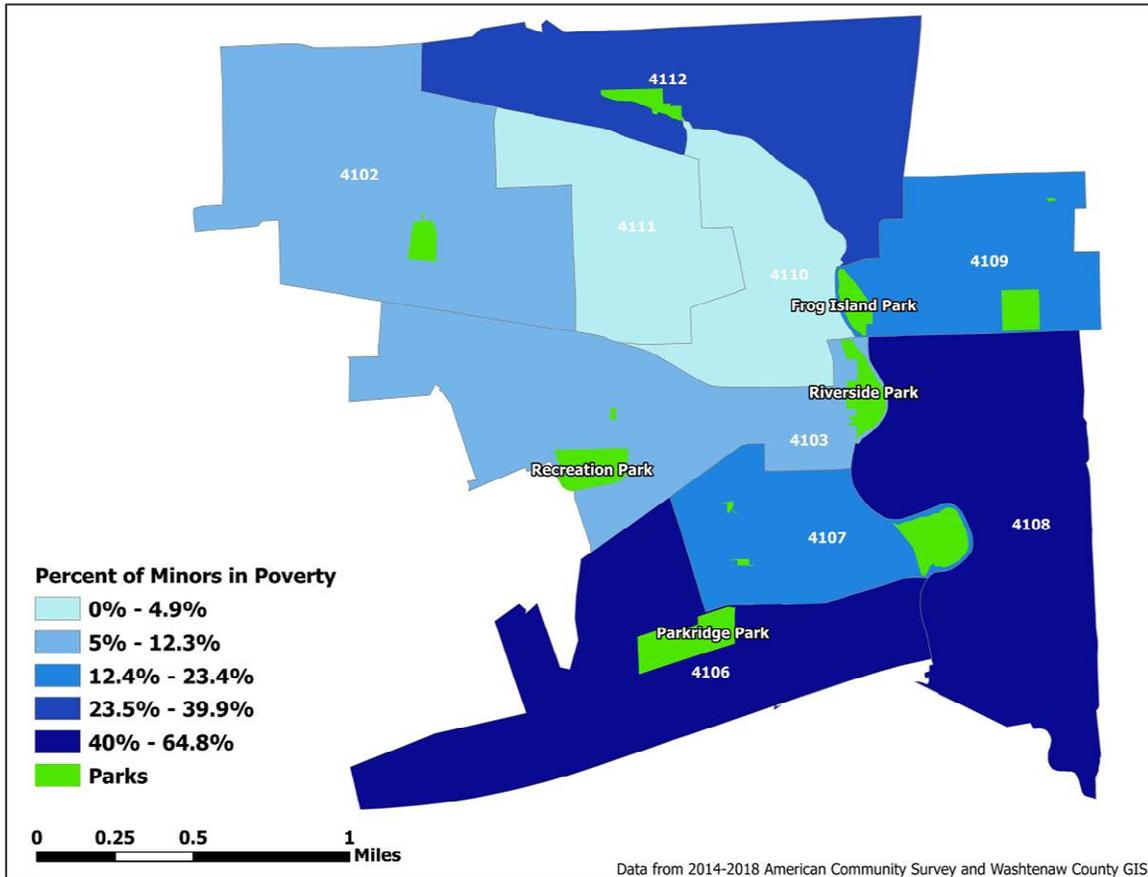


Figure 1.4: Percentage of Minors in Poverty per Census Tract

### Income and Poverty

Household income and poverty levels are also useful predictors of park usage. In areas with lower incomes and high poverty, we can expect to see increased levels of local resident usage, as other recreation opportunities may be too expensive. These data also help determine if charging for City parks access or programming would pose equity issues.

Household budgets for recreation in Ypsilanti are small, with many survey respondents listing a monthly expenditure of nothing for recreation. Ensuring that access to parks and greenspace is preserved for these users is a continuing priority. The areas around Parkridge Park, Waterworks Park, Frog Island & Riverside, and Peninsular Park have the highest percentages of minors in poverty, the lowest per capita incomes, and the highest percentages of persons in poverty, particularly 4106. Per HUD CDBG/HOME/ADDI funding guidelines, the majority of the City is considered low to moderate income.

The City of Ypsilanti has a lower median income and higher level of poverty than many communities in the area. Per the most recent (2014-2018) American Community Survey (ACS) statistics, the City had a median household income of \$36,982, 67% of the State-wide median of \$54,938, and 53% of the County-wide median of \$69,434.12. On a per capita basis, the City again

<sup>12</sup> United States Census Bureau. U.S. Department of Commerce, United States Census Bureau. (2020). State and county QuickFacts: Ypsilanti (city), Michigan. Retrieved from website: <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/MI,US/PST045219>

ranks the lowest at \$24,562, the County much higher at \$39,486, and the State per capita income between the two at \$30,336.

Approximately 32.2% of the residents of Ypsilanti were in poverty compared to the statewide 15%, per the ACS, and 37.3% of the residents under 18 years old were in poverty, significantly higher than Michigan as a whole at 20.8%. Geographically within Ypsilanti, Census tracts 4106 and 4108, in the southeast and south area of the City, contain the highest rates of minors in poverty, at 64.8% and 52.3% respectively (Figure 1.4). Overall, 54.4% of all residents of Census tract 4106 are in poverty, and 61.6% of all residents of Census tract 4111 are in poverty (Figure 1.5). Parkridge Park, classified as a community park, is the only park within tract 4106. Persons over 65 in Ypsilanti are also more likely to be in poverty compared to state levels, at 10.4% versus 8.3%.

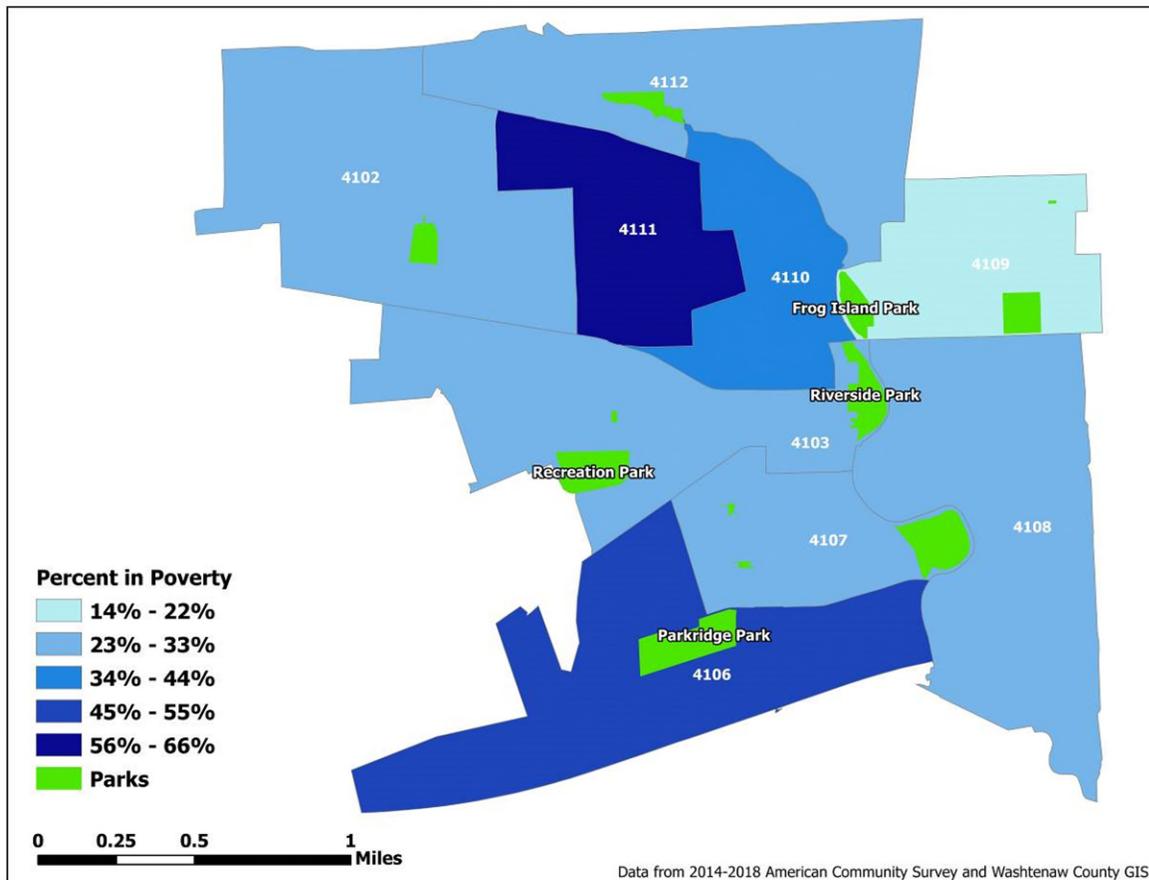
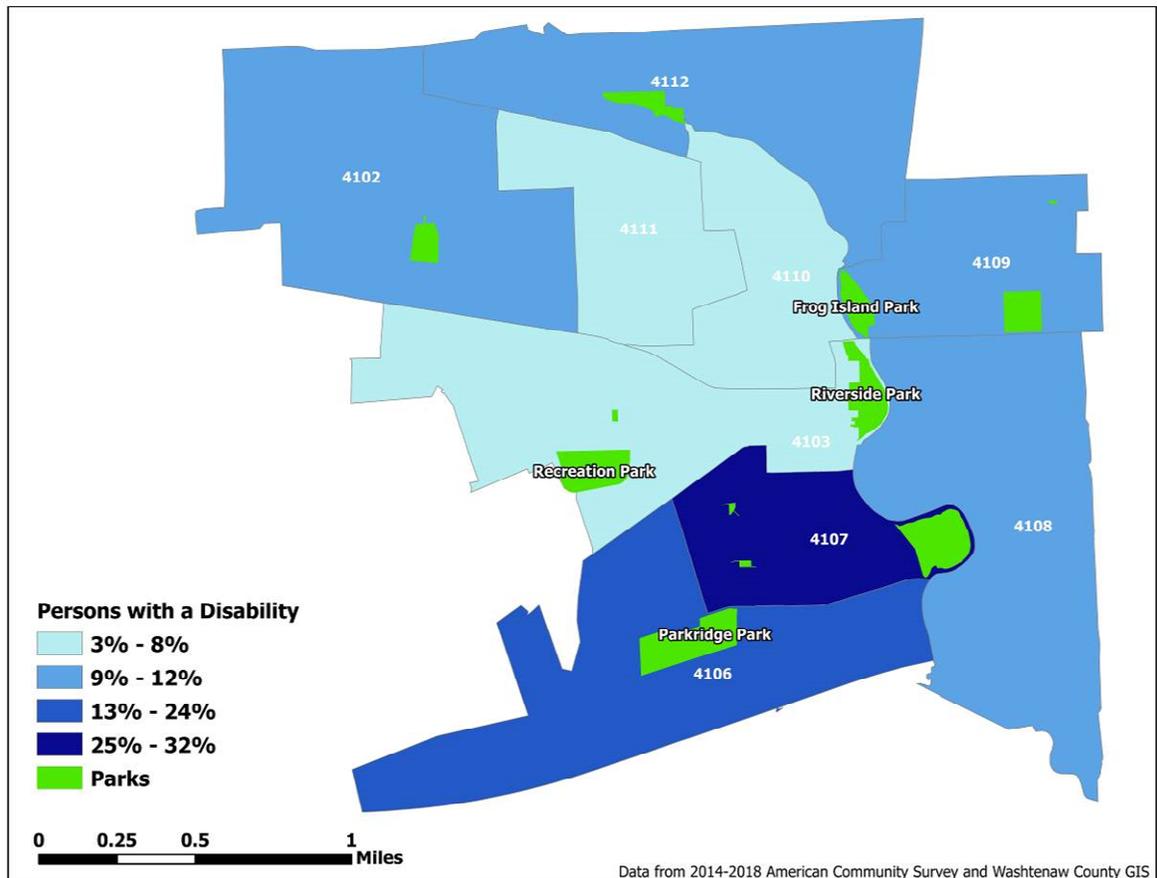


Figure 1.5: Percentage of Residents in Poverty by Census Tract



**Figure 1.6: Percentage of Persons with a Disability by Census Tract**

### Persons with Disabilities

Accessibility is important in park design and redesign. By ensuring parks are accessible, cities can ensure that all residents and visitors have the opportunity to enjoy the parks. People with accessibility needs include people with disabilities, but also includes people who use the park with small children, such as families or daycares, and friends and family of people with accessibility needs. Inaccessible facilities restrict access to the parks to a much smaller segment of the population than just those who are able-bodied.

Persons with disabilities comprise a significant portion of Ypsilanti’s population. According to the 2000 Census, nearly 32% of Ypsilanti’s residents had some disability. Disability was no longer enumerated in the 2010 Census. According to the 2018 5-year ACS, 8.9% of Ypsilanti’s residents had some disability. This compares to 14.3% of state residents, and 9.1% of county residents. Notably, 20.1% of all residents of Census tract 4107 have ambulatory difficulty. Figure 1.6 shows the distribution of persons with a disability throughout the City as of the 2018 ACS.

The American Community Survey is generally less accurate than the Census due to their use of sampling. In Figure 1.7, below, are the statistics used in the preceding as well as their margins of error.

TRACT	Percent below poverty level		Percent below poverty under 18		Percent with a disability		Median Household Income		Per Capita Income (Mean Income)		Ambulatory Difficulty		Independent Living Difficulty	
		MOE		MOE		MOE		MOE		MOE		MOE		MOE
<b>State</b>	15	0.10	20.8	0.30	14.3		54938	166	30336	121	7.8		6.6	
<b>County</b>	14.2	0.60	12.2	1.40	9.1		69434	1194	39486	566	4.6		3.9	
<b>4102</b>	27.5	7.70	11.4	12.10	9.7		50545	14988	36664	8110	2.4		3.9	
<b>4103</b>	25.2	7.80	5.3	8.10	7.1		44122	5555	29916	4418	2.9		2.6	
<b>4106</b>	54.4	8.20	64.8	12.40	13.5		21769	5743	12026	3320	7.6		7.5	
<b>4107</b>	28.2	8.00	15.9	26.90	26.5		20492	5740	23979	4635	20.1		15.4	
<b>4108</b>	31.4	8.80	52.3	20.60	11.3		33839	6072	21582	3106	7.5		6.4	
<b>4109</b>	14.2	11.50	16.4	21.50	9.8		67656	6580	29308	4469	3.4		2.2	
<b>4110</b>	35.5	6.00	0	17.40	5.5		31492	3368	21107	2971	3		0.8	
<b>(EMU)</b>														
<b>4111</b>	61.6	17.20	0	78.00	3.4		12361	5585	22879	2068	1.3		2	
<b>4112</b>	32.5	5.60	35.1	15.70	9.1		34487	4536	17402	1968	3.4		1	
<b>City</b>	32.2	2.60	37.3	6.40	8.9		36982	2631	24562	1457	4.4		3.6	

Figure 1.7: ACS 2014-2018 data with margins of error, where known

# Chapter 2: Administrative Structure

## **MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

The City of Ypsilanti employs a council-manager form of government that combines the political leadership of elected officials with the non-political management of an appointed local government manager. The Ypsilanti City Council is comprised of a Mayor, elected by voters in the City at-large, and six Council Members, two elected from each of the City's three voting wards. The Mayor nominates individuals to the City's boards and commissions, and the Council appoints members from those nominations. The City Council has policy-setting, budgeting, programming, operation, and capital improvements power; the Parks and Recreation Commission makes recommendations to City Council on these topics. The City Manager oversees City staff to execute Council's direction.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) members are appointed by the City Council to ensure recreational programs and opportunities are afforded all citizens by seeking sustainable partnerships and encouraging volunteerism. This Commission was established in 2003, after having been an advisory committee to the Recreation Department since 1990. In 2007, the Recreation Commission was expanded from a six-member body to between nine and eleven members, up to three of whom may be youth members. City Council changed the Recreation Commission's name from "Recreation Commission" effective early 2014 to "Parks and Recreation Commission" to more accurately reflect the scope of the Commission's work. The PRC meets monthly to advise City Council and to work with community partners; it has no budgeting, programming, operating, or capital improvements powers. City Council may choose to delegate a portion or all of these powers to the PRC under PA 156 of 1917 and per the City Charter.

## **STAFF**

Many departments share responsibility for parks and recreation. The Department of Public Services oversees the physical facilities, including maintenance and capital improvements, as well as day-to-day relationships with park users, residents, and volunteers. The Police Department coordinates events and facility rentals, and the City's Community & Economic Development Department coordinates grant applications and long-range planning. The Public Services and Community & Economic Development departments coordinate work on specific parks and recreation-related projects, such as grant applications and management, coordination with volunteer groups, and administrative oversight. See Figure 2.1 for details. At the recent annual goal-setting session of Council, several Councilmembers brought up the idea of re-instating the parks and recreation department. That conversation has not yet progressed beyond the theoretical, but may be a discussion that progresses in the coming years.

Non-profit and volunteer organizations help to fund operations, capital improvements, and staff at the Parkridge Community Center, Senior Center, Freighthouse, and Rutherford Municipal Pool.

## **VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

The City has several long-term relationships with committed recreation partners. Several facilities, such as the Senior Center, Rutherford Pool, Parkridge Community Center, and the

Freighthouse have programming and operations managed by volunteer groups, nonprofits, or other agencies; those relationships are expounded upon below, and Memoranda of Understanding or lease agreements are included in Appendix H. The Washtenaw County Convention and Visitors Bureau partners to attract and promote events that have a regional draw, such as the Michigan Brewer's Guild Summer Beer Festival and the Color Run, as part of their mission. The Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce sponsors an annual spring community-wide cleanup event that includes cleanup and minor maintenance of City parks. The YMCA runs summer camps annually in Parkridge Park. The Ypsilanti Little League has hosted youth baseball leagues in our parks since 1953, and does a significant amount of work to maintain the fields they use, primarily in Candy Cane Park and Recreation Park. A wide array of groups sponsor and organize the annual parades and other celebrations. Individual volunteers also play an integral role in the operation and maintenance of the parks system.

The City has explored other arrangements in the past, such as a contract with the Depot Town Community Development Corporation to manage and improve Frog Island and Riverside parks, or a proposed partnership with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation and the YMCA to build and operate an indoor recreation facility. Although these arrangements never fulfilled their full potential or never came to fruition, the City recognizes the value and passion for recreation that both individual and organizational partners can bring to the parks system.

## **FREIGHTHOUSE**

The Friends of the Freighthouse, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit, currently operates under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City to operate the Freighthouse; they currently oversee its use as an event venue. The agreement concludes in October 2020.

## **PARKRIDGE COMMUNITY CENTER**

The City of Ypsilanti has an operating agreement with Washtenaw Community College to provide programming at Parkridge Community Center. The Parkridge Advisory Board, a group of concerned local citizens, continues to provide outreach support and advise the City on long-term goals for the facility. This agreement expires in June 2020.

## **RUTHERFORD MUNICIPAL POOL**

The Rutherford Pool had to close its doors in late 2011 to rebuild the pool, but the 501(c)(3) Friends of the Rutherford Pool and the City secured grant monies, donations, and loans and reopened in May 2014. However, the bath-house was not able to be included in those renovations; the pool closed at the end of the season in 2019 and the bathhouse is currently undergoing extensive renovations with grant aid from the LWCF. An MOU was enacted in 2012 and expires in 2022.

## **SENIOR CENTER**

The Friends of the Senior Center, a volunteer organization that has recently attained 510(c)3 status, oversees the daily operations of the Senior Center. It also conducts fundraising, plans capital improvements, and seeks out programming partners. An MOU has yet to be completed.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS AND PARK RESERVATIONS**

Currently, City special events and park/facility reservations for those facilities not mentioned above are coordinated by staff in the Ypsilanti Police Department (YPD). This work includes taking registrations for events, reserving space, and working with the YPD, Ypsilanti Fire Department, and Department of Public Services to ensure safety and staffing at events.

Special event administration has been in flux prior to 2012, but has stabilized and improved with its transfer to the Police Department. Prior to 2005, the City's Recreation Department oversaw special events. From 2005 to 2010, the Ypsilanti Jaycees worked to coordinate events, with the Depot Town Community Development Corporation briefly taking over the reservations for Frog Island and Riverside parks in 2008 and 2009. From 2010 to mid-2012, a part-time City employee, overseen by the Assistant City Manager, administered special events. This shifting distribution of responsibility proved challenging for event organizers on both sides of the table. The settling of responsibility upon the YPD in mid-2012 has proven to be a significant improvement, and provides an opportunity to improve the process further.



Fall River Day 2019 in Riverside Park (Courtesy Evan Sweet)

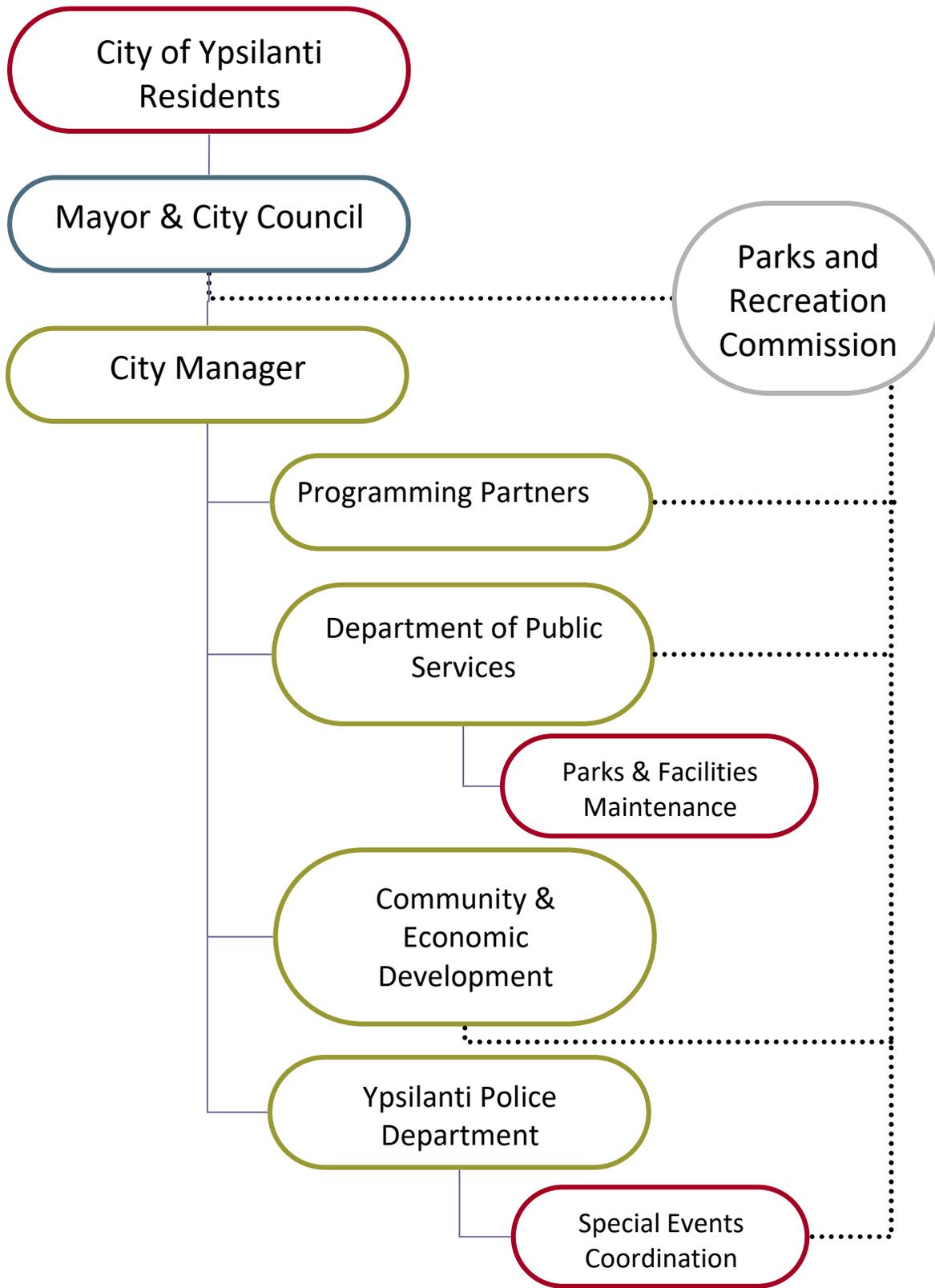


Figure 2.1: Administrative Structure

## BUDGET AND FUNDING

	FY 2010-2011 <sup>1</sup>	FY 2011-2012 <sup>2</sup>	FY 2012-2013 <sup>3</sup>	FY 2013-2014 <sup>4</sup>	FY 2014-2015 <sup>5</sup>	FY 2015-2016 <sup>6</sup>	FY 2016-2017 <sup>7</sup>	FY 2017-2018 <sup>8</sup>	FY 2018-2019 <sup>8</sup>	FY 2019-2020 <sup>8</sup>
<b>Maintenance Revenue (101-4-7170)</b>	\$9,000	\$0	\$10,466	\$9,000	\$17,750	\$5,250	\$23,995	\$18,091	\$168,602	\$9,250
<b>Maintenance Expenditure (101-7-7170)</b>	\$134,439	\$137,065	\$147,118	\$115,010	\$128,039	\$218,806	\$249,322	\$245,063	\$394,052	\$234,500
<b>Special Events Revenue (101-4-4420)</b>	\$28,145	\$22,294	\$28,773	\$41,605	\$32,649	\$29,637	\$31,886	\$29,562	\$30,750	\$30,750
<b>Special Events Expenditure (101-7-4420)</b>	\$46,414	\$40,681	\$6,634	\$50,971	\$41,721	\$37,642	\$43,537	\$38,715	\$41,541	\$41,748
	(1) Using actual 2010/2011 revenues/expenditures as reported in the Amended FY11/12 and Approved FY12/13 & FY13/14 budget, <a href="https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/252">https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/252</a> (2) Using actual 2011/2012 revenues/expenditures as reported in the Amended FY12/13 & FY13/14 budget, <a href="https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/253">https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/253</a> (3) Using actual 2012/2013 revenues/expenditures as reported in the Amended FY13/14 and Adopted FY14/15 & FY15/16 budget: <a href="https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/254">https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/254</a> (4) Using actual 2013/2014 revenues/expenditures as reported in the Amended FY14/15 and Adopted FY15/16 budget: <a href="https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/255">https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/255</a> (5) Using actual 2014/2015 revenues/expenditures as reported in the Amended FY15/16 and Adopted FY16/17 and FY17/18 budget: <a href="https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/404">https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/404</a> (6) Using actual 2015/2016 revenues/expenditures as reported in the Amended FY17/18 budget: <a href="https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/490">https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/490</a> (7) Using actual 2016/2017 revenues/expenditures as reported in the Amended FY17/18 budget: <a href="https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/603">https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/603</a> (8) Using actual 2017/2018 revenues/expenditures, and amended 18/19 and adopted 19/20 as reported in the Amended FY18/19 & 19/20 budget: <a href="https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/603">https://cityofypsilanti.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/603</a>									

Figure 2.2: Budget

The Department of Public Services 2019-2020 budget shows expenses that significantly outstrip revenue for both Maintenance and Special Events. Maintenance Revenue includes some revenue for minor capital expenditures, such as CDBG funds for play equipment replacement, that falls below the capital expenditure threshold. The 18/19 Maintenance Expenditure budget of \$394,052 reflects an additional \$125,000 that was allocated from a portion of refund to the City’s General Fund from a County-wide Public Safety and Mental Health Millage. An additional \$125,000 is budgeted in 19/20, but not guaranteed in 20/21 and beyond. The 2003 Parks & Recreation Master Plan was the last plan completed while the City had a Recreation Department and provided some programming; the total for Maintenance and Recreation Administration listed for FY03/04 was \$740,109; maintenance alone was \$222,778.

The City does not fund recreation programming. Programming is provided through the efforts of nonprofits, educational institutions, volunteers, or other partners, often coordinated by staff or the PRC. Capital improvements and significant repair or maintenance work are undertaken as specific funding, such as grants, can be obtained for them.

### CURRENT FUNDING SOURCES

The primary source of funding for parks and recreation maintenance is the City’s general fund. As the City of Ypsilanti’s budget has tightened over the past decades, general fund expenditures on recreation improvements, operations, and maintenance have been significantly reduced; programming has been eliminated. While alternative funding has been found for some improvements, via grants and partnerships, none of these are dedicated, consistent, or guaranteed funding sources.

## **General Fund**

The General Fund supports parks maintenance, which includes mowing the grass, collecting trash, repairing benches, and removing broken items such as benches beyond repair, playground equipment, and fallen trees or limbs. It does not support capital improvements, renovations, or replacements for broken park items. Such activities are usually funded by one-time grants or private fundraising. In 18/19 and 19/20, the City allocated \$125,000 per year from a refund of a County-wide millage to address deferred maintenance issues. Although this is an eight-year millage, this is not a guaranteed funding stream for the parks.

## **User Fees**

Some recreational activities lend themselves well to support through user fees, such as regular programming, facility use, and special events. The City does not provide recreation programming, and its facilities, such as the Rutherford Pool and Parkridge Community Center, are managed by partners. However, the City does have a Special Events program through which people can reserve the parks, pavilions, fields, and courts for everything from small family reunions to large, regional, multi-day festivals. The fees for park reservations vary depending upon the scale of the event and additional services requested or required. There are currently no rate reductions available for this program, however, celebrants of golden wedding anniversaries or 90<sup>th</sup> or more birthdays are eligible for a fee waiver if those individuals have been residents of the city for at least ten years (§78-121).

## **Private Donations and Grants**

Businesses, corporations, private clubs, community organizations, and individuals have contributed to parks, recreation, and other improvement programs. A number of projects, ranging from the annual spring community clean-up day to the River's Edge Trail construction, have been funded in whole or in part by donations or grants made either directly to the City or to its volunteer organizations. The Friends groups attached to various facilities often are supported in this way, and a number of one-time projects and capital improvements have been completed through grant funding.

## **State and Federal Grants and Funding Sources**

The City has been awarded several grants administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources over the years. The City has been the recipient of Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grants, Land & Water Conservation Fund grants, Recreation Bond Fund grants, and an Iron Belle Trail Mini-grant. The City has also received grant funds administered by the State Historic Preservation Office for projects such as the Riverside Arts Center renovation and the Freighthouse renovation.

In the past five years, Ypsilanti has used Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for replacement play equipment in its tot lots as well as extensive sidewalk ramp updates. Other federal funding sources have been used for recreation and natural areas purposes, such as Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Great Lakes Restoration Initiatives (GLRI) funds for bicycle lane installation and reforestation initiatives, respectively.

## **DNR Recreation Grant Inventory**

Ypsilanti has received several DNR recreation grants for park development, listed in Figure 2.3, below. These grants come from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (26), Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (TF), and the 1988 Recreation Bond Fund (BF). Site inspection reports for each grant-assisted area can be found in Appendix A.

**Figure 2.3: Past grants received from the State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources**

Grant	Park Name	Type	Status	Amount	Scope
26-01802 2018	Rutherford Pool Bathhouse Renovation	Development	In Progress	\$300,000	Renovate bathhouse.
TF12-120 2012	River's Edge Linear Park and Trail	Development	Closed	\$300,000	Construct trail, river overlook, fishing pier.
TF11-120 2011	Ypsilanti Heritage Bridge	Development	Closed	\$289,400	Build a bridge across the Huron River to connect the Water Street Redevelopment Area to Riverside Park.
TF11-083 2011	Rutherford Pool Renovation	Development	Closed, 2014	\$300,000	Demolish and rebuild pool and deck of the Rutherford Pool.
TF05-054 2005	Riverside Park Capital Improvement Program	Development	Closed, 2011	\$80,300	Lighting and electrical Gazebo construction Landscaping
BF93-352 1993	Prospect Park Improvement	Development	Closed, 1999	\$250,000	Play structures / equipment Court renovations Luna Lake renovations Softball field renovations Parking lot improvements Park structure renovation Landscape / earthwork General construction
26-01542 1993	Rutherford Municipal Pool	Development	Closed, 1999	\$159,850	Pool repairs Site upgrades Facilities building repairs
BF91-383 1991	Parkridge Park Renovation	Development	Closed, 1999	\$279,000	Ballfield, path, flag pole, play equipment, tennis & basketball courts, lighting.
26-01393 1985	Peninsular Park	Acquisition / Development	Closed, 1992	\$100,000	Shelter construction Parking lot construction Septic system Lighting
26-01269 1983	Frog Island Park Development	Development	Closed, 1990	\$68,901	Lighting Amphitheater construction Bike/walk path Tridge
26-01243 1981	Riverside Park Phases I & II	Development	Closed, 1985	\$98,250	Utility relocation Walking path Dock Landscaping
26-01060 Y2 1978	Parkridge Park	Development	Closed	\$28,000	Softball fields, landscaping, picnic area, tot lot.
26-00393 1972	Ypsilanti Swimming Pool	Development	Closed, 1977	\$150,000	Construct outdoor pool & bathhouse



# Chapter 3: Parks and Recreation Facilities

The City’s park, recreation, and open space inventory includes City-owned parks and recreational facilities. In addition to City-owned parks and open space, Ypsilanti residents have access to parks and facilities owned by the Ypsilanti Community Schools, Eastern Michigan University, neighboring townships, and Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation. Some of these facilities are located within the City’s boundaries; others are located throughout Washtenaw County. Non-City-owned park and recreational resources accessible to the greater Ypsilanti community are important to understanding the extent of park and recreational opportunities for residents; therefore, they are listed as separate inventories within this chapter.

## CITY PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The City of Ypsilanti owns or controls 95 acres of parkland in 15 parks and four facilities, for a total of about 4.75 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. When including Eastern Michigan University’s open space, that number jumps to almost 20 acres per 1,000 residents. The National Park and Recreation Association standard for park acreage is approximately 10 acres per 1,000 people; by way of local comparison, Ann Arbor has approximately 18 acres of City parkland for 1,000 people. Map 3.1 shows the City’s parks and recreation facilities. Figure 3.1 identifies an inventory of recreation facilities and amenities currently available at those locations. Map 3.2 identifies the parks “coverage,” those portions of the City that are within one-eighth, one-fourth, and one-half of a mile of a park. This can help determine which neighborhoods have the best access to parks; where accessibility, walkability, and bikability could be improved; and, when read in concert with Census data, help determine where new facilities could be placed.

Although national standards can be helpful in developing new parks and facilities, Ypsilanti is largely built-out, so community interests and needs will take a higher priority than national standards, and extensive parkland acquisition is unlikely. This inventory, however, can be helpful in understanding what is currently available within the community.

Park classifications as used in this plan are as follows: **Community**, where the draw for these parks or facilities regularly includes visitors from throughout the whole City as well as from outside it; **Neighborhood**, where the draw is primarily from surrounding neighborhoods within an approximate one-mile radius; **mini-parks or tot lots**, which draw primarily from areas within walking distance; and **connectors/trails**.

A thorough Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance assessment of the City’s park system was conducted in 2002, and can be found in the 2003, 2008, and 2014 Parks & Recreation Master Plans’ appendices. The grading scale for accessibility used in this document draws from that inventory and updates it based on projects that have occurred since. Any future capital improvement planning or projects must address accessibility issues.

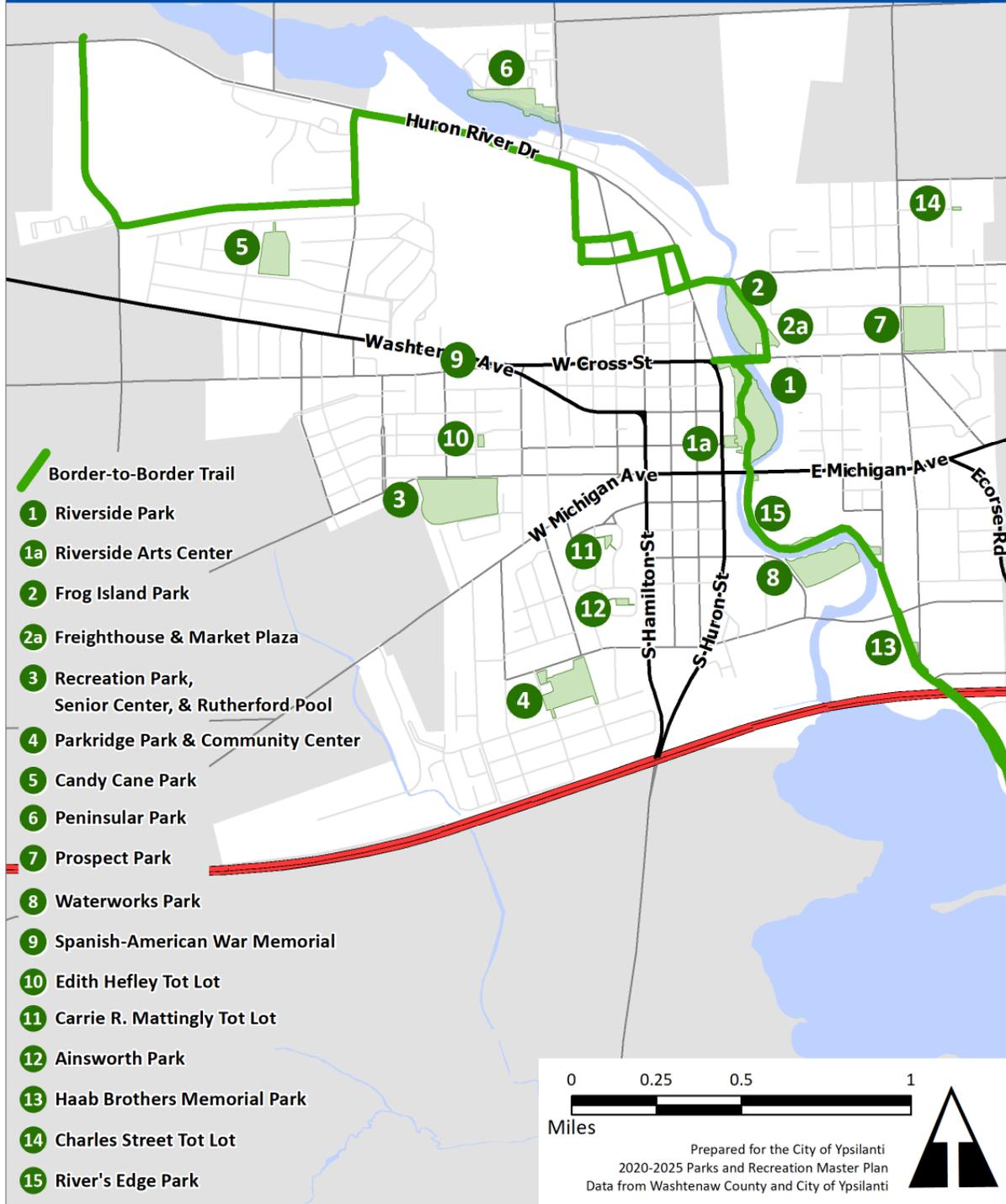
This inventory was constructed using past plans, as well as site visits conducted throughout 2018, 2019, and 2020 by both Parks & Recreation Commissioners and staff.

### **ADA Accessibility Scale**

- 1 - None of the site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.
- 2 - Some of the site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.
- 3 - Most of the site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.
- 4 - The entire facility/park meets 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.
- 5 - The entire facility/park meets the principles of universal design.

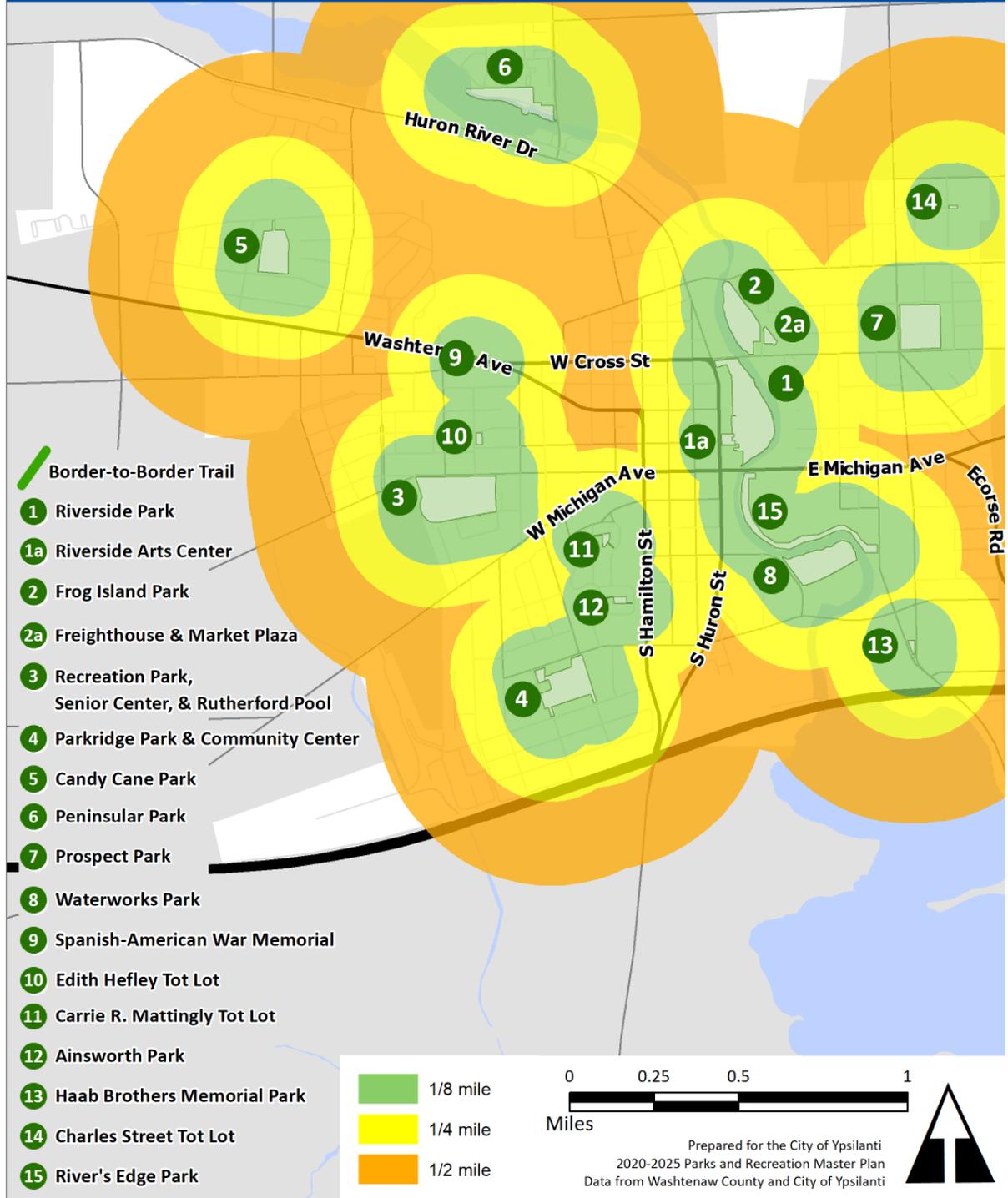
# City Parks and Recreation Facilities

map 3.1



# Distance From Parks

map 3.2



## **COMMUNITY PARKS AND FACILITIES**

Ypsilanti has four parks and five facilities classified as community-wide assets, hosting events and facilities that draw their audience from the entire city and surrounding area. These parks generally offer active and passive recreation activities and are large relative to other Ypsilanti parks. Car and bike parking is available on-site, but access can be from a variety of modes. They contain larger-scale or unique amenities such as fields for soccer, football, or baseball; tracks or trails; a swimming pool; or community gathering and event spaces. Community parks also contain the everyday amenities found in smaller parks, such as play and picnic areas, and can see regular daily use by the immediate neighborhood; several have river access. Within Ypsilanti, Riverside Park, Frog Island Park, and Recreation Park have the strongest community-wide draw. Several facilities also draw on the entire community for their audiences, including the Senior Center, Rutherford Pool, Parkridge Community Center, Freighthouse, and Market Plaza. Parkridge Park and Recreation Park, although smaller, are in this category due to their unique assets.



Winter in Riverside Park (Courtesy Ypsilanti DDA | Leisa Thompson)

## 1 Riverside Park

Riverside Park has a long history in Ypsilanti. The parcels that make up the park were acquired by the City from the early 1900s to the 1990s, as a result of recommendations from the Olmsted Brothers landscape design firm, who also wrote the first development plan for the park. It was originally known as Quirk Park, after the original owners, or colloquially as “the river flats,” but today is simply Riverside. It currently serves as a nonmotorized transportation link locally between downtown and Depot Town, and regionally as part of the Border to Border & Iron Belle trail network. It also serves as outdoor recreation space for adjacent neighborhoods and is the City’s primary outdoor event and gathering space, and the gazebo and dock by the river are together a popular site for weddings. The Liz Dahl MacGregor Playground, completed in 2018 with grant aid from Washtenaw County, is the first accessible playground in the City and has been extremely popular with residents and visitors alike. The Ypsilanti Heritage Bridge, constructed in 2015 with grant aid from the Michigan DNR, is not only the only accessible pedestrian entrance into the park, but also has become an iconic and photogenic part of

### ***Riverside Park At A Glance***

- 17 acres
- Known for the Huron River, paved paths, events space, the Tridge, and the Heritage Bridge
- Accessibility ranking: 2
- Owned and operated by the City
- Adjacent to Huron River, downtown, Depot Town, and US-12
- Part of Border-to-Border Trail, which is part of the Iron Belle Trail
- Prioritized projects include stormwater control, accessibility upgrades, and completion of deferred maintenance projects.

Ypsilanti's downtown. The park hosts major annual regional events, such as the Brewer's Guild of Michigan Summer Beer Festival; car and motorcycle shows such as the Orphan Car Show; and kicks off run/walk events, such as the Color Run.

As a result of the 2008 - 2010 partnership with the Depot Town CDC, Frog Island Park and Riverside Park have had extensive charette-driven development plans created. The recommendations for Riverside Park aim to enhance its role both as a recreation resource for residents and as a versatile setting for community events. Appendix B contains further detail on each of these items, as well as the full conceptual site plans. With the construction of the accessible Liz Dahl MacGregor Playground in late 2018 and the Ypsilanti Heritage Bridge in 2015 changing the landscape of the park, this development plan remains a vision and inspiration.



In 2009, work was completed on Natural Resources Trust Fund grant-funded improvements to the park, including lighting and electrical systems upgrades and construction of a gazebo on the existing dock, which itself had been constructed as part of a 1981 DNR Land & Water Conservation Fund grant (LWCF). In 2015, a pedestrian bridge connection from the

south side of Riverside Park across the river to the north side of Michigan Ave was constructed, courtesy of a 2011 Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant, with match generously provided by the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission. This enables pedestrians to cross from Riverside Park, across Michigan Ave via a HAWK crossing, and onwards to the River's Edge Linear Park and Trail. This is the only entrance that is ADA-accessible without a motor vehicle, and also increases the park's visibility from US-12. This bridge complements the pedestrian bridge known as the Tridge on the north side of the park, linking it to Frog Island. Also in 2015, the HRWC placed a rock vane in the river adjacent to the dock, as part of a larger project that also included felling and anchoring trees at the riverbank to improve fish habitat. In December 2018, the Liz Dahl MacGregor Playground was completed, following three years of fundraising effort by a dedicated group of residents, including Liz Dahl MacGregor, who passed away suddenly in June 2018. This is the City's only accessible playground, and hopefully the first of several.

During this plan's public engagement, people remarked that they particularly enjoyed Riverside's connection to the river, its peacefulness, and the trees, as well as the sledding in winter. Many also remarked that the park needed better stormwater control and bank

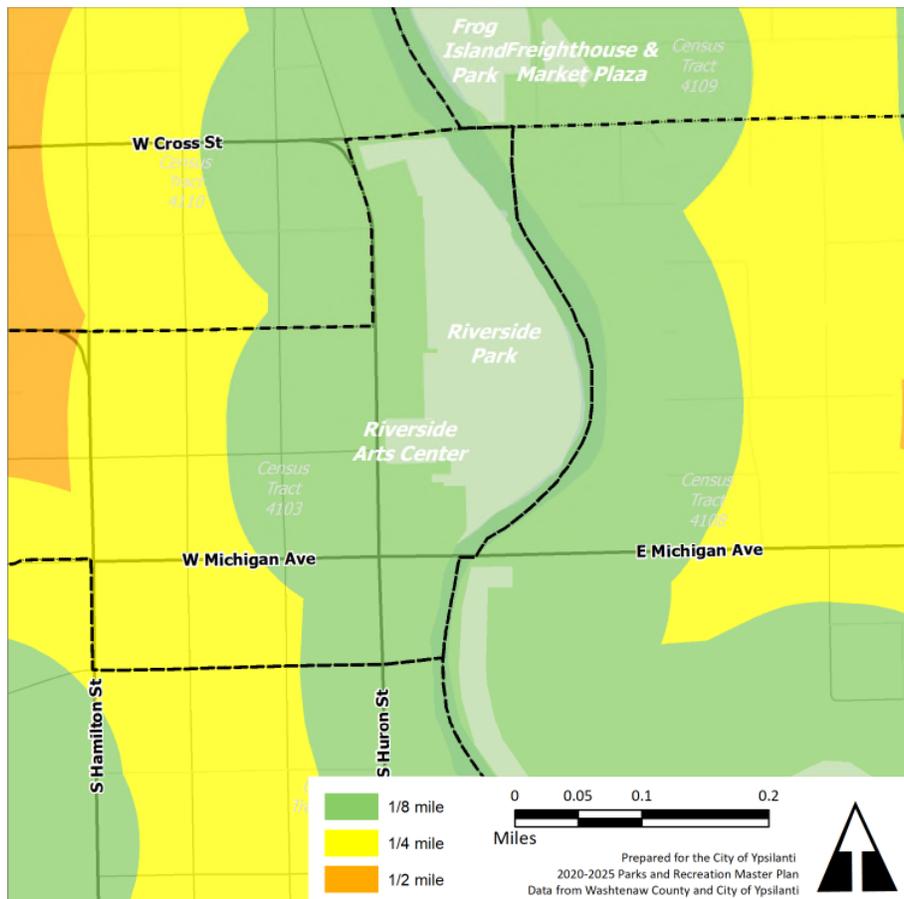




stabilization, trail repair, restrooms, and maintenance, including dog waste bag stations, as well as additional seating. In particular need of maintenance and consideration were the steps to the Riverside Arts Center (RAC), which were seen as unsafe due to their seclusion, lack of lighting, and lack of visibility from the RAC at the top. There was also concern expressed regarding the age of the trees, and a desire to plant more.

Riverside Park is within Census Tract 4103, adjacent to tracts 4110 and 4108, and is within 1/8 mile of Census Tracts 4109 and 4107. 4110 and 4103 in particular have a high population

density, due in part to their proximity to EMU, downtown, and a dense existing housing stock. The median age in 4110 & 4103 is less than 25 years; but 4107, 4108, and 4109 have a higher median age with 4107 the eldest. Between 40 and 65% of the minors in 4108 live in poverty, and between 12 and 23% of the minors in 4107 & 4109 live in poverty. Overall poverty levels in tracts 4103, 4107, and 4108 are between 23-33%. In tract 4103 & 4110 fewer than 8% of residents have a disability; east of the park, between 9-12% of the population has a disability. Availability, affordability, and accessibility should be prioritized concerns here for long-term improvements.



## Priority Projects

- Install signage at Riverside Arts Center entrance to the park, and work with the DDA and RAC to redesign the plaza to improve visibility.
- Provide barrier-free access at north and west entrances.
- Link pavilion and gazebo to trails.
- Provide additional barrier-free spaces in parking areas.
- Address ongoing stormwater issues.
- When reconstructing trails, bring to current barrier-free standards.
- Investigate slope stabilization plantings to prevent riverbank and hillside erosion.
- Plant new trees to keep up with the attrition of older trees.
- Install small signs or notices advertising the reservation system at reservable areas, such as the gazebo and pavilion.
- Provide lighting under pavilion and gazebo.
- Provide accessible public drinking fountain.
- Provide accessible public toileting facilities.
- Provide additional seating opportunities.



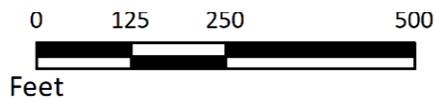
Riverside Park flooding, view from the south-west, January 12, 2020 (Courtesy Madeleine Baier)

# Riverside Park

map 3.3



- Path/Sidewalk
- Future Path
- Park
- Easement
- \* Entrance
- P Parking
- Structure



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Data from Washtenaw County and City of Ypsilanti



## **1a** Riverside Arts Center

The Riverside Arts Center (RAC) is owned by the Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority (YDDA) and operated by the Riverside Arts Center nonprofit under a lease that concludes in March 2021. The YDDA purchased and renovated this former Masonic Temple in the early 1990s, with grant aid from a number of organizations including the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, to provide not only a local public art facility, but also a west link into Riverside Park. The RAC is connected to the park via a landscaped plaza and terraced stairway, providing access from North Huron Street. The Riverside Arts Center is a 501(c)(3) group that operates the center, providing exhibit, studio, and reception space for artists and art cultural organizations. The City neither owns nor controls this facility, but it is an important part of the cultural and recreational landscape of the City.



## 2 Frog Island Park

Frog Island is another park with extensive history located along the Huron River, and envisioned by the Olmsted Brothers in 1905 as a public greenspace. Originally a true island, bordered on the east by a millrace and used by a neighboring mill for storage, it was acquired and used by the Ypsilanti High School from 1933 to 1975 as their sports field, having tennis courts, a football field, and a track. The City acquired it in 1975, and with assistance from a DNR LWCF grant in 1983, built the amphitheater, pathway, and the three-terminus bridge known as the Tridge. The millrace was culverted and the channel filled with concrete debris sometime before 1980. In 2007, a neighborhood group established the Frog Island Community Garden at the north end of the park.

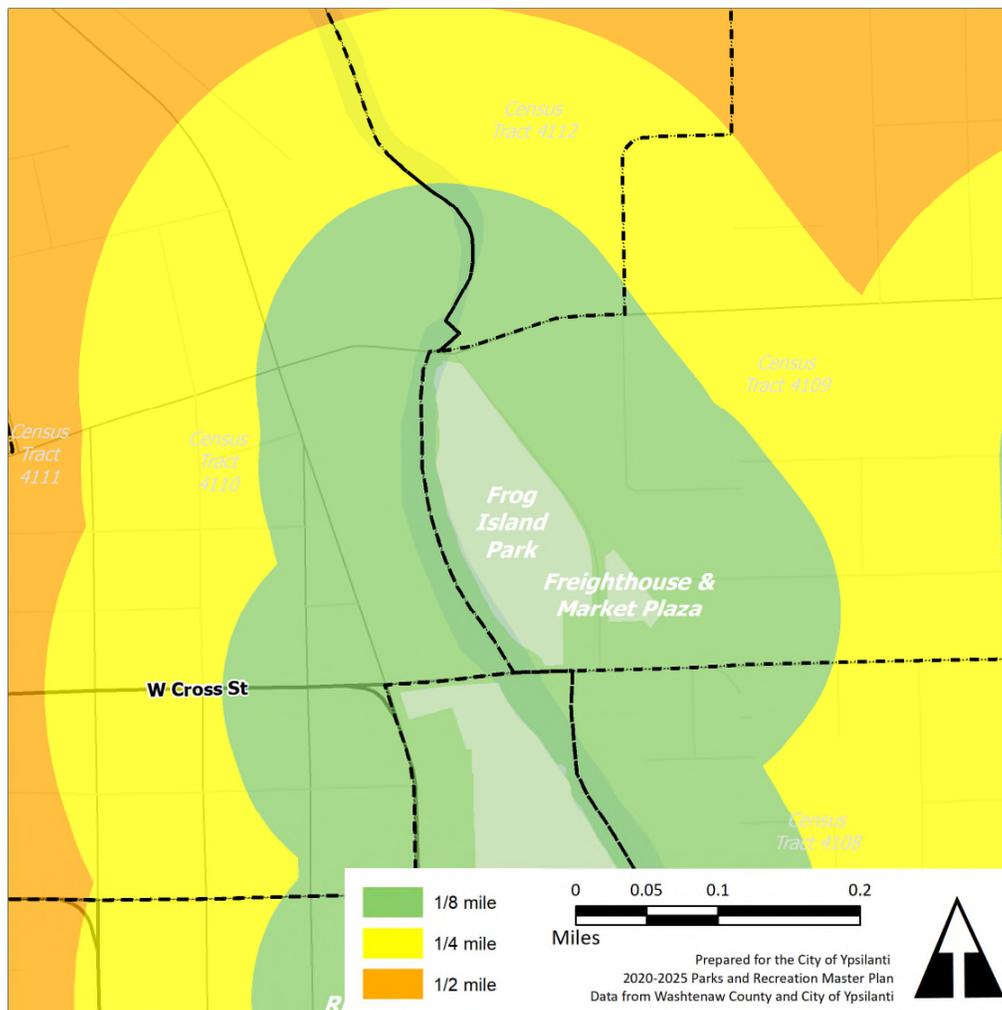
Frog Island hosts more sports uses than Riverside, in addition to serving as an overflow area for events occurring in Riverside. At the north end of the park is a set of steps and unpaved path leading down to the Huron River and a canoe/kayak takeout adopted by the Huron River Watershed Council, as well as the aforementioned community garden. The soccer field and running track in the center of the park are well-used, with organized groups or pick-up games on most days with good weather. The running track in particular is unique to the area due to its “cinder” surfacing and true quarter-mile length. The amphitheater at the southern end of the park is underutilized despite having electrical power available by reservation, but has the potential to host events. A paved path runs the length of the park along the berm that separates the park from the Huron; this path and the berm are scheduled to be reconstructed, and lighting installed, in early 2020 with assistance from the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation

### ***Frog Island At A Glance***

- 5 acres
- Known for its sports field and track, the Tridge, canoe/kayak launch, community garden and amphitheater
- Accessibility ranking: 2
- Owned and operated by the City
- Adjacent to Huron River and Depot Town; shares parking with Freighthouse and Market Plaza
- Part of Border-to-Border Trail
- Prioritized projects include stormwater control, accessibility and entryway improvements, and trail reconstruction.

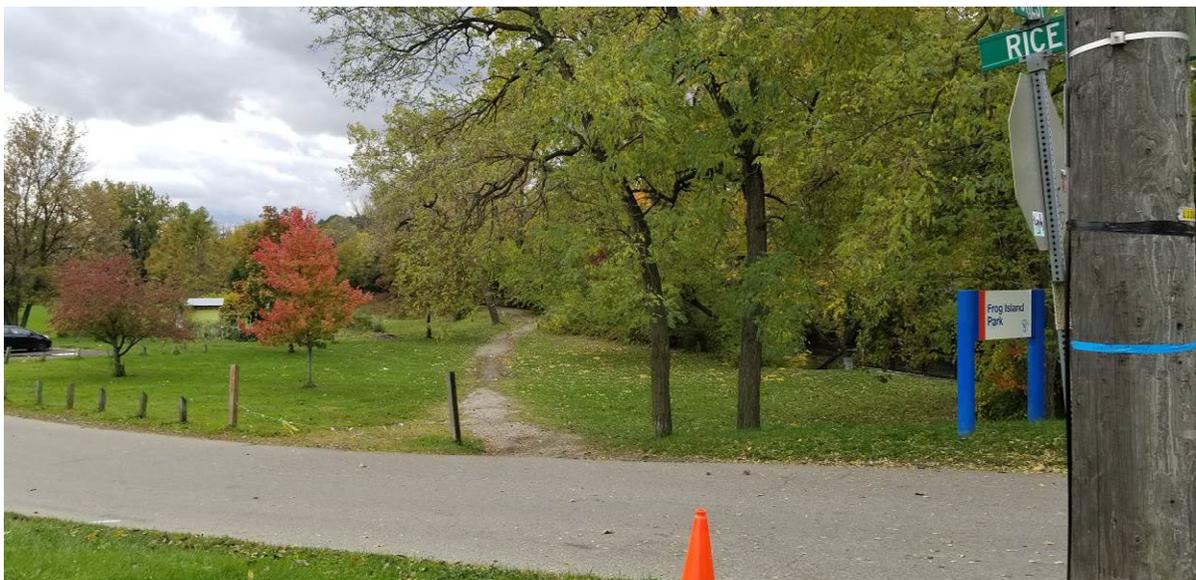
Commission. As part of this project, a trailhead and accessible connection to Forest will be constructed at the north end of the park. At the far south end of the park, Frog Island is connected to Riverside via the Tridge, and to Depot Town through both a paved path leading to a parking area and a small concrete bridge, originally constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The Recycling Center, located near the east entrance of the park, presented a grant conversion issue and was demolished in 2018.

Demographics in the neighborhoods surrounding Frog Island are substantially similar to those surrounding Riverside. Frog Island is slightly further away from Census Tract 4107, however, and closer to Census Tract 4112. Tract 4112 has a relatively high population density, a low median age, high poverty levels both overall and for minors, and a disability rate of 23-33%.



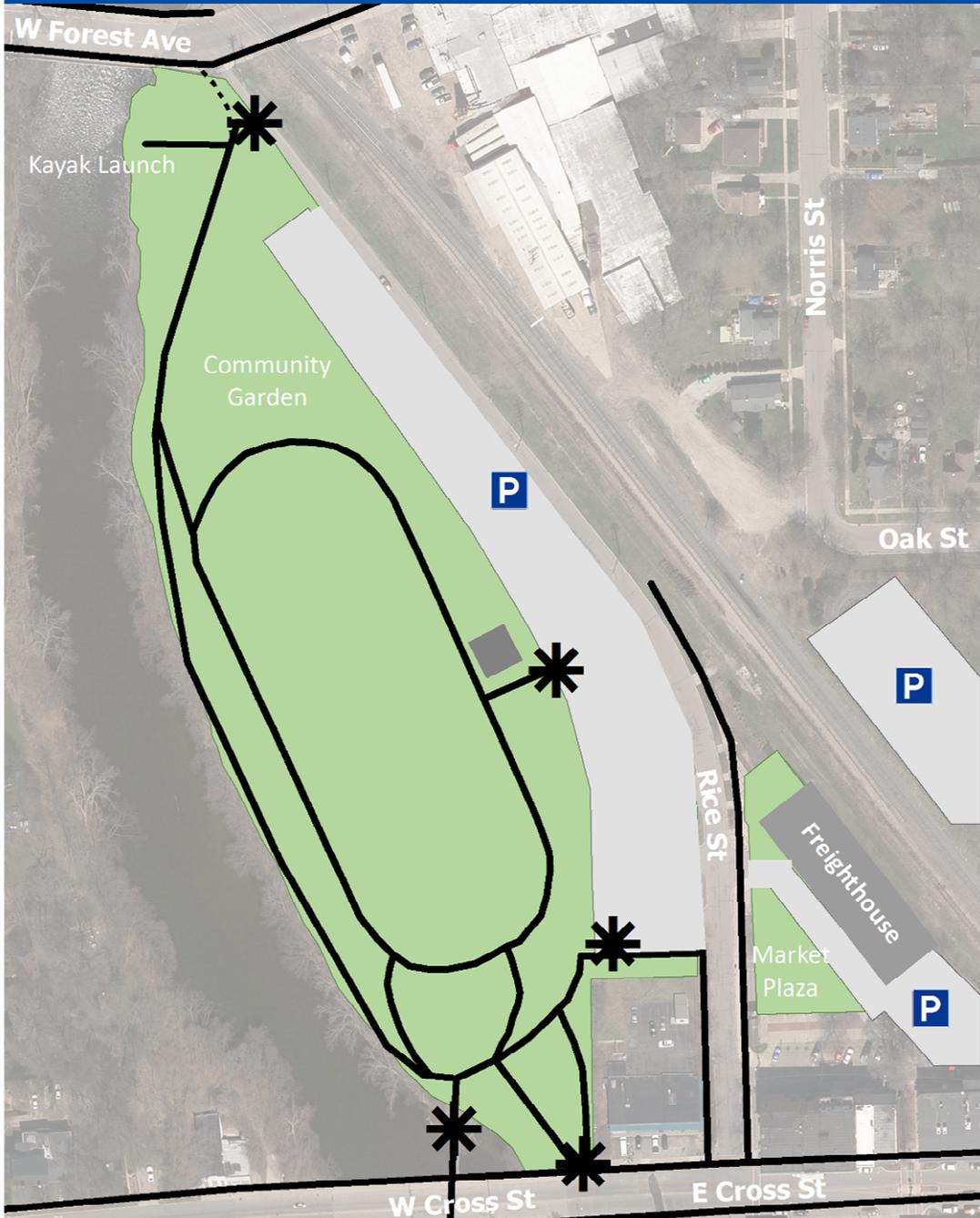
### Priority projects:

- Provide signage at center parking lot entrance.
- When reconstructing the parking area, consider a pedestrian pathway along the east side of the park or parking area for neighborhood connectivity. Construct pedestrian crossing from Frog Island parking to Freighthouse at Market Street.
- Provide barrier-free access at north, east (center) and south entrances.
- Install small signs or notices advertising the reservation system at reservable areas, such as Market Plaza and the amphitheater.
- Work with Friends groups, volunteers, and regular event-holders to help ensure the ongoing maintenance of facilities such as the Freighthouse and community garden areas.
- Address ongoing stormwater issues.
- Provide lighting at entrances and along paths.
- Resurface cinder walking/running track.
- Create standards for amplified sound to ensure compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.
- Pursue slope stabilization plantings to prevent erosion of riverbank.



# Frog Island Park

map 3.4



- Path/Sidewalk
- Future Path
- Park
- Easement
- Entrance
- Parking
- Structure

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## 2a Freighthouse and Market Plaza

The Michigan Central Railroad (MCR) came to Ypsilanti in 1838, spurring the area economy. The Freighthouse, built in 1878, increased the freight-handling capacity of the MCR's Ypsilanti station. The City acquired the building in 1979 and opened it as a community center and farmers' market the following year. Due to deferred maintenance, however, it was closed in 2004. The nonprofit Friends of the Ypsilanti Freighthouse (FOYF) worked diligently with the City since its closure to raise funds to restore and re-open it; the Freighthouse was once more open to the public in mid-2017. The City's current MOU with the FOYF expires in October of 2020.

The Market Plaza, a paved open space owned and operated by the City, lies between the Freighthouse and the southern parking area for Frog Island Park; it is used for the seasonal outdoor Depot Town Farmers' Market and other civic events. The Plaza contains a decorative caboose, owned by the Depot Town Association.



### 3 Recreation Park

Recreation Park, known as the Ypsilanti Fairgrounds until approximately 1905 and used by the Normal College (now Eastern Michigan University) in the early 1900s as their track & field facility, today serves a wide array of recreational purposes. Recreation Park houses play equipment, two ballfields, an unimproved walking path, the outdoor Rutherford Pool, a basketball court, a picnic pavilion, the Senior Center, and a community garden. Located next to the former Chappelle Elementary School, it also adjoins a school playground.

Recreation Park's mix of facilities and activities is popular throughout the community and for a broad range of ages. The Senior Center attracts users from both the City and the neighboring townships, and the Rutherford Pool has an even wider service area, being one of the few public swimming pools on the east side of Washtenaw County. The two ballfields are heavily used in the spring and early summer by participants in the Ypsilanti American Little League, which serves western Ypsilanti and eastern Ann Arbor, including parts of Ypsilanti and Pittsfield Townships. The park is surrounded by residential neighborhoods with many children, and is within walking distance of daycares, Washtenaw International High School & Middle Academy, Estabrook Elementary School, and Ypsilanti High School. The current tenants of the

#### ***Recreation Park At A Glance***

- 17.3 acres
- Known for Rutherford Pool and the Senior Center, as well as its ballfields
- Accessibility ranking: 2
- Owned and operated by the City; Rutherford Pool and Senior Center operated by Friends groups
- Within walking distance of downtown, located within a residential neighborhood
- Prioritized projects include accessibility and entryway improvements as well as completion of deferred maintenance projects.

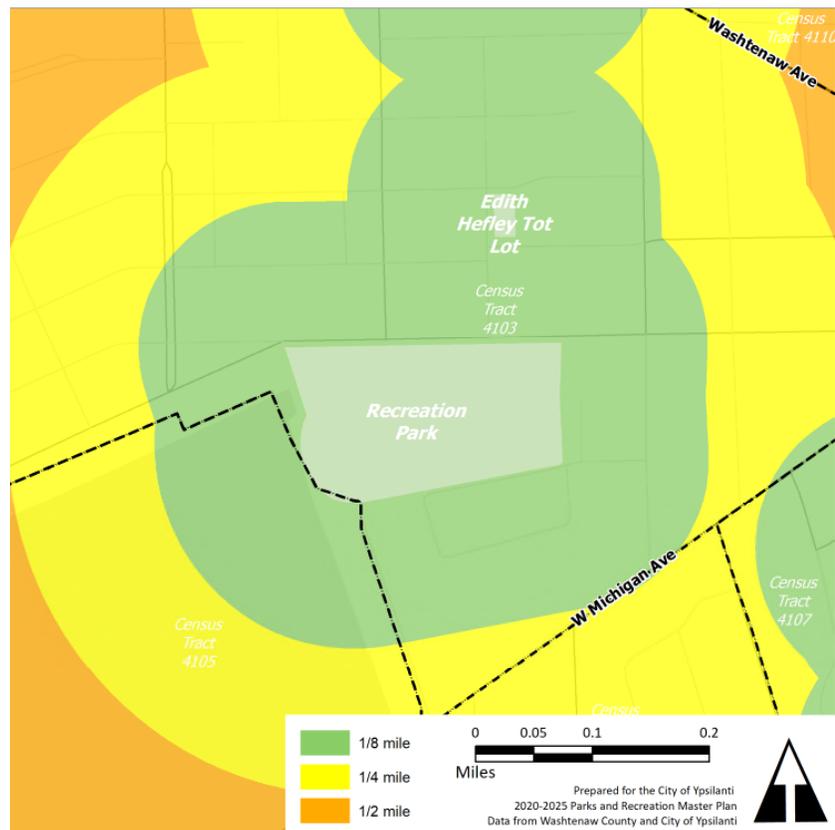
Chappelle school building consist of several daycare and nonprofit facilities; they do not currently use the park in their programming.

Due to Recreation Park's broad appeal, stakeholders have suggested that it be prioritized for accessibility updates, including a paved trail, and further expressed a desire to pursue intergenerational play opportunities. Stormwater control, dog waste, and tree succession issues were also brought up frequently in both surveys and during visioning sessions. The Little League has expressed interest in pursuing further playing field improvements, including reconfiguring and adding a field.

Recreation Park is located within Census Tract 4103, and is quite close to Census Tracts 4110 and 4106 within the City, and 4105 within Ypsilanti Township. Tract 4103 has a relatively high population density, a median age in the low twenties, and low disability rates. The tract has a relatively high percentage of minors in poverty (12-23%) and overall residents in poverty (23-33%). Tracts to the south, 4107 and 4106, have significantly higher rates of poverty and disability.

#### Priority Projects:

- Provide barrier-free walking path surfacing and improve connections to sidewalks.
- Improve barrier-free parking spaces near facilities, such as playgrounds, Senior Center, and the Rutherford Pool.
- Upgrade play area and surfacing to barrier-free standards at the end of the current play equipment's lifecycle.
- Provide lighting under pavilions, at entrances, and along paths.
- Resurface basketball courts; evaluate possibility of installing tennis courts.
- Work to improve stormwater drainage, particularly in the open fields to the south of the Rutherford Pool and baseball fields.
- Add picnic benches and dog waste stations.
- Pursue opportunities for intergenerational play.
- Work with the Little League to continue to provide opportunities for youth baseball, including but not limited to maintaining and improving the ballfields.
- Work with the Senior Center to continue to provide programming and support for area seniors.



## **Rutherford Municipal Pool**

The Rutherford Municipal Pool was built in 1972 with a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant. The bathhouse underwent minor renovations in 1993 with the aid of another Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant, and the pool itself was reconstructed in 2013 thanks to a 2011 Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant and significant fundraising done by the Friends of the Rutherford Pool (FORP), reopening in May 2014. The bathhouse, however, was still in need of significant repair; the City and the FORP have been awarded an additional LWCF grant for its reconstruction, which began at the close of the 2019 season. It is anticipated to re-open in 2020. FORP will continue to provide for utilities, maintenance, staffing, and other costs through pool fees and additional fundraising, under the terms of the 2012 MOU.

The pool has hosted open swimming, lap swimming, swim lessons, CPR and lifeguard training, water aerobics, water polo, and could be rented for activities ranging from birthday parties to fundraisers. Upon reopening, it shall resume these offerings. A fee is charged for admission; discounted rates are available for season passes, punch cards, and for those who meet income guidelines, as well as a limited number of full scholarships. The accessibility rating for the pool is significantly higher than that of the park as a whole; the current renovations have been planned with Universal Design standards in mind.

## **Senior Center**

Originally built as a Girl Scout house, the Senior Center has been an integral part of the City for many years. It was expanded from its original footprint approximately 50 years ago, at the time it became the Senior Center. Run by the City for many years until the dissolution of the City's recreation department, the volunteer-led Friends of the Senior Center formed in 2003 to operate the Center. They provide for operating costs through fundraising, and help to oversee staffing, allowing the Center to be open daily for fitness activities, crafts, cooking classes, meals, and social events. The Senior Center also provides hot lunches to area senior citizens through Washtenaw County's Department of Human Services. A fee is charged for admission to some events and for rental of the facility. The Center hosts meetings and events for various neighborhood and community groups. As the area population ages, the Senior Center is working to expand its offerings, and has expressed interest in renovations or additions to the facility. The Friends recently incorporated as a 501(c)3.

# Recreation Park

map 3.5



- Path/Sidewalk
- Unpaved Path
- Park
- Easement
- Entrance
- Parking
- Structure



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#### 4 Parkridge Park

Adjacent to over 300 units of affordable housing controlled by the Ypsilanti Housing Commission, the pre-school to first grade Perry Early Learning Center, the Parkridge Community Center, and near the intersection of Huron Street and I-94 (and planned bike lanes and nonmotorized crossing), this park has a wide potential user base. It contains basketball and tennis courts, a softball field, jogging and walking track, playground equipment, an educational garden, and a picnic pavilion.

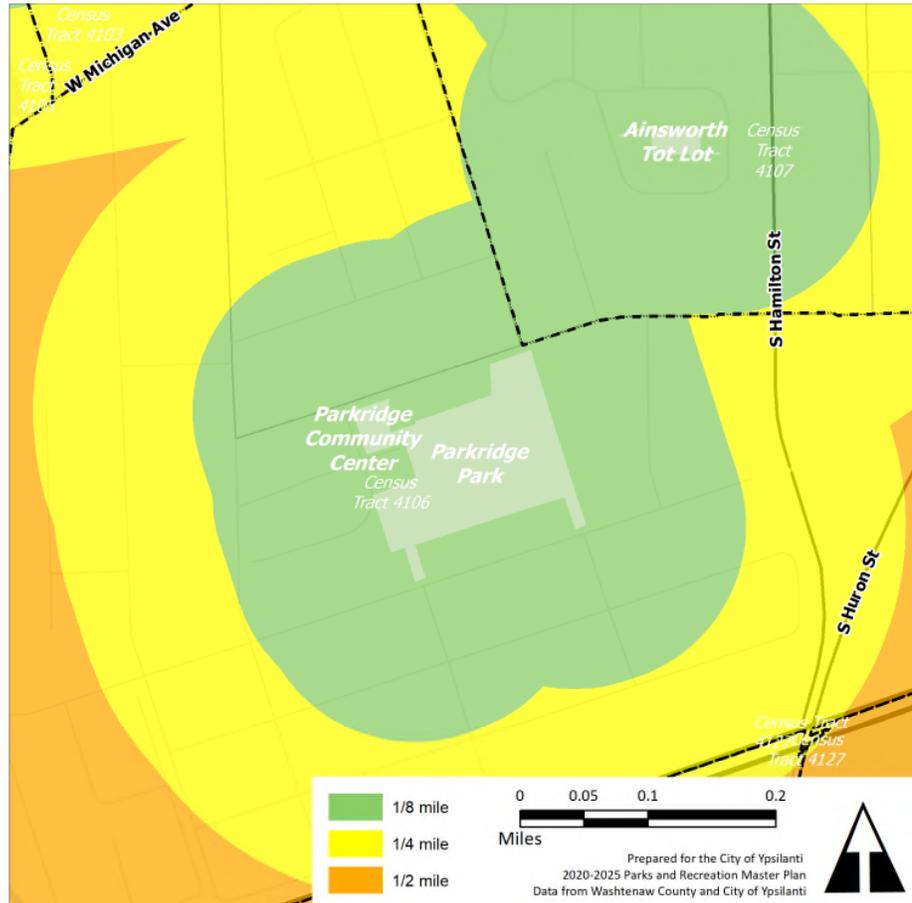
Perry ELC borders the park directly to the east, and some facilities- such as parking, a small “tot lot” playground, community garden, and paths, are freely accessible to the public and appear part of the park, but were installed by YCS, who currently maintains those grounds. West of there- with the easternmost north-south pathway being the approximate boundary line- ownership is clearly the City’s. On paper, however, records are less clear, and put the boundary further west. The City and YCS are currently working together to ensure boundaries and responsibilities are clear going forward.

Although relatively few survey respondents identified Parkridge as their primary park, this is likely a product of low response rates from that neighborhood rather than a lack of use. The area immediately around Parkridge ranks highly in demographic demand factors, including total number of residents, concentration of children, seniors, children in poverty, households without access to a car, and residents with disabilities; limited access to other parks is also a concern.

##### ***Parkridge Park At A Glance***

- 11.7 acres
- Known for Parkridge Community Center, playground area, basketball courts, and picnic pavilion.
- Accessibility ranking: 2
- Owned by the City and Ypsilanti Community Schools; YCS portions leased to and operated by the City; Parkridge Community Center is owned by the City and operated by Washtenaw County Community College with advising from the Parkridge Advisory Board.
- Less than a mile walk to downtown, located within a residential neighborhood, near I-94 access
- Prioritized projects include accessibility and entryway improvements as well as completion of deferred maintenance projects.

During site visits, we found significantly more use of Parkridge than other parks; there were consistently other users in the park no matter the time of day or day of week. This heavy use, demographic indicators, and location demonstrate that maintenance of Parkridge's existing facilities should be a high priority for the City, and that development of any new facilities or significant changes to existing facilities should be done with public input. Emblematic of this need for public input is the disused sand volleyball court, which was installed with grant aid.



Aware of the need for public input, the City has been working with Washtenaw County Office of Community & Economic Development to identify community priorities for expenditure of CDBG program income in the neighborhood surrounding Parkridge. Community conversations regarding the project have concluded, and plans to replace the current small and inaccessible play equipment with a more expansive accessible play equipment set are underway.

### Priority Projects:

- Update the Hawkins/Monroe Street entrance to include a barrier-free entrance and signage; consider paving the parking area.
- Link picnic pavilion to trails.
- When reconstructing trails, bring to current barrier-free standards.
- Upgrade playground, access, and surfacing to barrier-free standards.
- Provide lighting under pavilions.
- Install additional picnic tables &/or benches and shade trees near the play area in southwest area of the park.
- Ensure play area includes play equipment suitable for children of all ages.
- Remove disused sand volleyball court.
- Provide needed repairs to the basketball and tennis courts, as well as the pavilion and other equipment as needed.

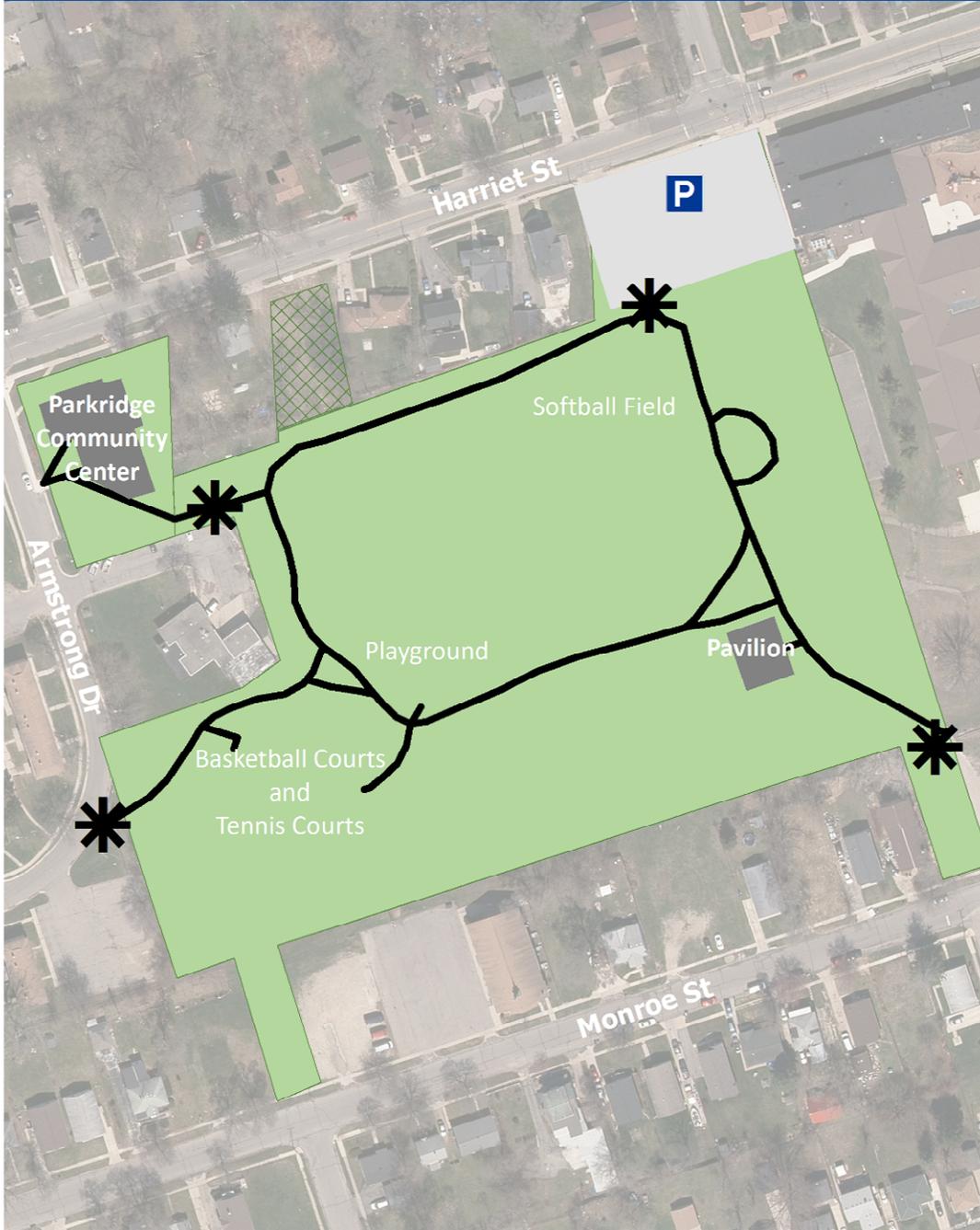
- Work with the Parkridge Community Center and WCC to ensure the park and the community center continue to complement each other and meet the needs of the community.

### **Parkridge Community Center**

Built in 1943 and expanded in 1981, the Parkridge Community Center offers recreational and educational programs, with a focus on after-school and summer activities and education. Washtenaw Community College (WCC) provides day-to-day administration of Parkridge. A broad variety of community organizations such as the YMCA help WCC to provide programming at Parkridge. Volunteers work to help raise funds, secure teachers, and propose programming. Programming is diverse, serving a wide array of interests, including health and fitness classes, cooking courses, job and literacy training, senior citizen activities, youth camps, social and neighborhood events, and even sewing and cooking classes. Programming at the Parkridge Community Center, especially summer youth programming, often incorporates play in the park. It has served as major institution for the City's predominantly African-American south side for almost seventy years, and the partnership with Washtenaw Community College's helps to expand the Center's reach and impact. A vacant lot at 761 Harriet Street was donated to the City in 2014, to aid in the eventual, as yet unplanned, expansion of the Parkridge Community Center. Programming at the building is currently limited due to the facilities; a renovation of the kitchen is planned for the near future, and the community is exploring options for expansion.

# Parkridge Park

map 3.6



- Path/Sidewalk
- Unpaved Path
- Park
- Easement
- Entrance
- Parking
- Structure



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## NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

In addition to these city-wide parks, Ypsilanti has a number of parks that are smaller in scale. Typically, the most frequent users come from the adjoining residential neighborhoods, distances of a quarter- to a half-mile, although unique or very popular features within these parks may attract users from the City as a whole.



### 5 Candy Cane Park

Candy Cane Park, acquired at the initial plat of the land and originally called College Heights Park, is 6.7 acres in size and is used primarily for active recreation. The Ypsilanti American Little League maintains the scoreboard and ballfield, and the neighborhood is active in parks maintenance projects. There is a small picnic pavilion on the site, which groups can reserve for events. The Border-to-Border Trail passes within 50 yards of the northern entrance, but the park itself is relatively secluded and known primarily to nearby residents or those seeking it out for Little League or for its play equipment. There are no paved pathways within the park, rendering it largely inaccessible, in part due to the grade difference between the north and south ends.

#### *Candy Cane*

- 6.7 acres
- Accessibility ranking: 1
- Prioritized projects include sidewalk construction and accessibility improvements.

Little League games have been held at Candy Cane in spring and early summer for over seventy years, and was the setting for a historic struggle for gender equity in sports. In 1973, Ypsilanti resident Carolyn King tried out for a place on the Ypsilanti Orioles, having been granted special permission by the league president, as girls were not allowed to try out or play. She outperformed many boys, and was placed on the roster. When Little League International officials learned that King had been placed on the team, they threatened to revoke YALL's charter unless she was removed. Begrudgingly, YALL removed Carolyn; however, Ypsilanti City Council responded by saying that if King was not allowed to play, YALL was not permitted to use City fields. YALL relented, and King played in May of 1973. Little League International officials then revoked the YALL charter, and the City joined a suit with King against Little League International alleging discrimination. Although Little League International won the suit,

they dropped the prohibition on girls beginning with the 1975 season. A documentary about this event was released in 2011 called *The Girl in Centerfield*.

The demographic analysis showed low residential density in the immediate neighborhood around Candy Cane Park, a median age in the late twenties, and relatively low levels of poverty and disability. A large proportion of survey respondents identified it as their primary park, but a similarly large proportion of survey respondents were residents of the adjacent neighborhood.

#### **Priority Projects:**

- Provide barrier-free access and trails at south and north entrances, linking the playground area, ballfield, tennis courts, and pavilion.
- Provide parking areas with barrier-free spaces or eliminate small paved areas and sign on-street barrier-free spaces.
- Upgrade play area and surfacing to barrier-free standards; provide barrier-free access.
- Replace play equipment.
- Provide lighting under pavilions, at entrances, and along paths; these lights can be motion-sensitive, photocell, on a timer, or a combination.
- Work with the Ypsilanti Historical Society and/or other resources to provide interpretive signage at Candy Cane regarding Carolyn King and the YALL.
- Work with the Little League to continue to provide opportunities for youth baseball and field improvements.





## 6 Peninsular Park

Peninsular Park, acquired in 1986 from the Peninsular Paper Company, is a 7 acre wooded area on the shore of the Huron River, anchoring the northern end of the riverfront park system. This park is largely undeveloped, having a fishing pier, canoe dock and picnic pavilion. It is relatively secluded, being separated from most of Ypsilanti by the river, railroad tracks, and major roadways; and from nearby multifamily residential developments by significant grade changes.

Peninsular Park serves a wide array of regional users due to its location on the river and scenic overlooks. The decommissioned dam requires that canoe and kayakers portage around it, using a floating dock on the upstream side of the dam and a concrete dock on the downstream side. The concrete dock also serves as a popular fishing pier, although lately fishing has been diminished due to concerns surrounding PFAS.

An empty powerhouse remains on the site, a legacy of the Peninsular Paper Company, connected to a deteriorated dam, built in 1920 to power the Peninsular Paper mill across the river. The 2,500 square foot Powerhouse and the sign atop it together are a historic landmark, reflecting Ypsilanti's industrial past, although not officially designated or protected as such. Although the mill site across the river was demolished and redeveloped in the early 2000s as student housing, the dam and Powerhouse remain. The dam is considered a high-hazard dam by the State, and the City is legally obligated to make repairs or to remove it. A feasibility study was completed in 2018 by Princeton Hydro with support from the Huron River Watershed Council. This feasibility study is contained in Appendix I. In May 2019 City Council resolved to

### *Peninsular Park*

- 7 acres
- Accessibility ranking: 1
- Prioritized projects include accessibility improvements and completion of deferred maintenance projects, particularly at the kayak/canoe portage.

remove the dam, and to pursue grants to do so; efforts to that end are currently underway. Restoration of the exposed impoundment area will be part of any dam removal project.

Demographic analysis shows a very high potential user base in the immediate area surrounding Peninsular Park. The neighborhood is dominated by large apartment complexes, many of which were built in the 1970s to accommodate EMU students during Ypsilanti's population peak. This is reflected in the area's high overall population density; there are also a high number of children, households in poverty, and households without access to an automobile – all factors that indicate demand for accessible and affordable neighborhood park space.

**Priority Projects:**

- Consider reorienting the LeForge Street signage to be legible to vehicular traffic.
- Provide barrier-free access from LeForge as well as at canoe/kayak portage.
- When constructing or reconstructing trails, bring to current barrier-free standards.
- Link pavilion to trails.
- Improve parking area; provide barrier-free spaces.
- Provide lighting under pavilions, at entrances, and along paths; these lights can be motion-sensitive, photocell, on a timer, or a combination.
- Create a barrier-free walking path along the Huron River.
- Work with local stakeholders such as volunteer groups to install functional plantings, such as butterfly/pollinator gardens and raingardens or slope-stabilizing plantings, as well as interpretive and educational signage.
- Continue to work with MDEQ and the HRWC to remove the dam and plan restoration of the exposed impoundment area. Consider Powerhouse preservation as part of dam removal, if feasible.
- Improve fencing around the Powerhouse to prevent additional vandalism.
- Consider installation of play equipment.



## 7 Prospect Park

Prospect Park is the City's oldest park. Originally a privately-owned graveyard, it was acquired by the Park Improvement Society in 1892, a women's charity organization. Over the next two years, they moved the graves to Highland Cemetery, performed significant work, including installation of Luna Lake, fed by the City water system, and deeded it to the City in 1894. A historic cannon, a former coast defense gun from Fort McClery in Kittery, Maine, was placed on the west side of the park in 1902 and remains there to this day as a memorial to the mayor who placed it there, Oliver E. Thompson.

### *Prospect Park*

- 10 acres
- Accessibility ranking: 3
- Prioritized projects include accessibility improvements and completion of deferred maintenance projects.

Today, this 10-acre expanse is a popular destination for neighborhood residents. Within this park are a skate park, two picnic shelters, basketball courts, the Luna Lake native plant garden installed and cared for by the neighborhood associations, a baseball diamond, and a play area shared with the neighboring Ypsilanti International Elementary School (PK-5).

### **Priority Projects**

- Install signage at the Prospect/Cross corner as well as the Oak/Prospect corner, consistent with signage at other locations, to distinguish this location as a public park.
- Install secondary park identification signage at the parking lot on the southeast corner of the park, near the parking lot.
- Provide barrier-free access from entrances to south pavilion.
- Improve parking area at south-east corner; provide barrier-free spaces.
- Work with YCS to upgrade the play area and its surfacing to barrier-free standards, and to maintain, replace, and upgrade play equipment as needed.
- Provide lighting under pavilions, at entrances, and along paths; these lights can be motion-sensitive, photocell, on a timer, or a combination.
- Work with the skate park volunteer group on maintenance and improvement projects.
- Repair the existing basketball courts.
- Install sidewalk along the Oak Street frontage.
- Continue to work with YCS to ensure that the park can meet student needs as well as community needs.



## 8 Waterworks Park

Waterworks is located on the Huron River at the southern end of the river’s course through the City. It is secluded, separated from the nearest major thoroughfare, Factory Street, by the compost/mulch yard for the City where once a water treatment plant operated. Sidewalk connectivity in the immediate area is poor, due to a history of industrial use to the east and south, steep slopes to the west, and the Huron River to the north. The park is linked to River’s Edge Trail by an existing steel truss pedestrian bridge. The park has a disused baseball field, a picnic shelter and a disc golf course built in 2007 by volunteers. This course draws players from around the Ann Arbor and eastern Washtenaw County area.

### **Waterworks Park**

- 9.3 acres
- Accessibility ranking: 1
- Prioritized projects include accessibility improvements and completion of deferred maintenance projects.

Several groups have expressed interest in constructing a dog park in Ypsilanti. Currently it appears that Waterworks may be an ideal location, due to its relative isolation and a relatively large, vacant, grassy space. Should a dog park be developed, careful attention must be paid to preserving existing uses; the disc golf course is unique in Ypsilanti’s parks, as is the existing forested area. This and any other proposals for future uses must also consider that this park is entirely within the floodway of the Huron River.

### **Priority Projects:**

- Construct sidewalk along Catherine Street frontage; continue to Factory Street.
- Improve parking area; provide barrier-free spaces.
- Continue to work with the Ann Arbor Area Disc Induced Sports Club (A3 Disc) and other stakeholders to restore and maintain the disc golf course.
- Work with area stakeholders and potential partners to explore the need for, design of, and potential fundraising mechanisms for a dog park.
- Remove disused ball diamond.

## MINI-PARKS

In Ypsilanti, mini-parks and tot lots are small parks, generally less than an acre. Mini-parks may be simply greenspace or single-feature; others, called tot lots, have playgrounds meant to serve young children in the population within an eighth to a quarter mile.

**9 The Spanish-American War Memorial**, known as “The Hiker,” stands on a 0.3 acre parcel at the intersection of Cross and Washtenaw. It was gifted in 1940 by veterans of the Spanish-American War to memorialize its veterans. One such veteran, Walter Pierce, was a member of Ypsilanti’s first police force. The plaque describing the memorial is worn, and the bronze statue itself is falling victim to corrosion brought about by outdoor pollution. There is minimal signage, but sidewalks are present on both sides; it has an accessibility ranking of 3.



**10 Edith Hefley Tot Lot**, a 0.4-acre parcel on Elm Street, is heavily used by neighbors. It has play equipment, including a swing set and a slide, as well as a Peace Pole. The play equipment was replaced in 2017. Sidewalks are present on the three street sides of the parcel, and signage exists on the north-west corner. There are no paths internal to the park. It has an accessibility ranking of 1.

**11 Carrie R. Mattingly Tot Lot** is a 0.4-acre play area in the center of a residential block in the Ainsworth Street neighborhood. Its play equipment was replaced in 2017. There is almost no visibility or access from the street. There are two access points; one has been encroached upon by a driveway and garage; the other is poorly maintained and overgrown. Maintenance equipment can only access the park via the entrance encroached upon by the driveway, due to guy wire placement at the west entrance. Signage is minimal; it has an accessibility ranking of 1.

**12 Ainsworth Park** is a 0.55-acre center-block parcel similar in layout to and one block south of Carrie R. Mattingly. There are two access points, but neither is signed; there is nothing to indicate from the street that there is a park nearby. This park appears to generally be used by adjacent homeowners as an extension of lawn or garden space. This park should be assessed whether it can continue to or begin to serve a recreation need in the neighborhood. There is no play equipment or other park amenities. It has an accessibility ranking of 1.

**13 Haab Brothers Memorial Park** is a 0.3 acre triangular parcel at the intersection of Grove and Prospect. Previously a gas station, the site was deeded to the City in 1996, with the condition that it be used as a public green space or city park, named in memory of the Haab Brothers, Otto and Oscar. There are no sidewalks on either side of this park, nor is there signage in place or a place to park a vehicle or a bicycle. It has an accessibility ranking of 1. Priority projects include sidewalks and signage.

**14 Charles Street Tot Lot**, a 0.16-acre parcel to the east of the intersection of Charles and Thomas streets, was deeded to the City in 1979. It has a prominent sign, is connected to the

street network via a sidewalk, and has play equipment that was mostly replaced in 2017. Some equipment, such as the rockers and climbing letters, should be removed due to the lack of fall surfacing and other updated safety standards. It has an accessibility ranking of 1.

## **TRAILS, BIKEWAYS, AND LINEAR PARKS**

Ypsilanti's parks are generally well-connected to both their surrounding neighborhoods and each other.

Overall, the city is very walkable and bikeable, due in part to its age, the long-term efforts to create a river-connected park system, and partnerships with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation and neighboring jurisdictions to create the County-wide Border-to-Border (B2B) Trail. The City has adopted a non-motorized transportation plan



and a Complete Streets ordinance, reflected in its relatively complete sidewalk network, several shared-use paths both in the parks and as part of the Border-to-Border Trail, an ever-expanding network of on-road bicycle lanes, and permanent bicycle repair stations at convenient locations, such as at the bus station and along the B2B.

### **15 River's Edge Linear Park and Trail**

River's Edge Linear Park and Trail, opened in 2018 with grant aid from the DNR's NRTF and several other partners. It connects on the north to Riverside Park via a HAWK crossing of Michigan Avenue, and to the south it connects to Grove Road. This shared-use path also connects to Waterworks Park via a pedestrian bridge at about its midpoint. There are two accessible fishing piers along its length, as well as a small plaza with a bench at the Waterworks bridge. This trail was created to move several miles of Border-to-Border Trail from a mixed bike-lane and sidewalk experience to a shorter, more scenic shared-use path.

#### **Border-to-Border Trail**

The B2B Trail runs through the City from the north-west to the south-east. In the north-west and through EMU, it's predominantly an off-road asphalt shared use path. As it leaves EMU campus, near the intersection of Huron River Drive and LeForge, it becomes reliant upon the sidewalk and bicycle lane network. Work was recently completed on the River's Edge Park, which connects Riverside to Frog Island following the Huron River; this took over a mile of mixed sidewalk and on-street Border to Border Trail to a shorter and more scenic shared-use path. The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission's planned work to reconstruct the Frog Island trail and to construct a shared-use path along Grove Road will be a further significant improvement to the experience of trail users. As the B2B exits the City to the south, it connects to a shared-use path south of I-94 alongside Ford Lake. This is a priority project for the region.

#### **Bike Lanes**

Ypsilanti is working to expand its options for safe and accessible nonmotorized transportation. Accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians – as well as all legal road users – are considered during the design phase of any road reconstruction project, per the requirements of the City's

Complete Streets ordinance. The City currently has more than 4 miles of on-street bike lanes and expects to add more as road reconstruction and reconfiguration projects occur. Most significantly, the City is working with partners to complete a non-motorized crossing of I-94 at Huron Street. As I-94 follows the boundary between the City of Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Charter Township, it poses a significant barrier for those who need or want to reach recreational or other resources on one side of the freeway, but live on the other. This crossing would connect to planned bike lanes on the north along Huron and Hamilton that connect directly to Riverside Park and the Border to Border Trail and enable easy connections to Parkridge Park and Eastern Michigan University. To the south, this crossing would directly connect to North Bay Park, which spans Ford Lake to connect to the south end of the Border to Border Trail, and Eagle Crest golf course; it would also connect to a planned route along Huron River Drive that would connect to Ford Heritage Park. This is a priority project for the region.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

Ypsilanti embraces its history. There are many privately-erected historic markers throughout the community, from State Historic Preservation Office “green plaques” to markers placed by the Ypsilanti Historical Society (YHS) dating specific buildings. The YHS has an inventory of many of these markers, current through 2012, available on their website.<sup>13</sup>



Since that time, the City has supported or installed several additional historic markers, including Ypsilanti Black Heritage Project signage erected in 2019, which celebrates Ypsilanti’s strong Black history.

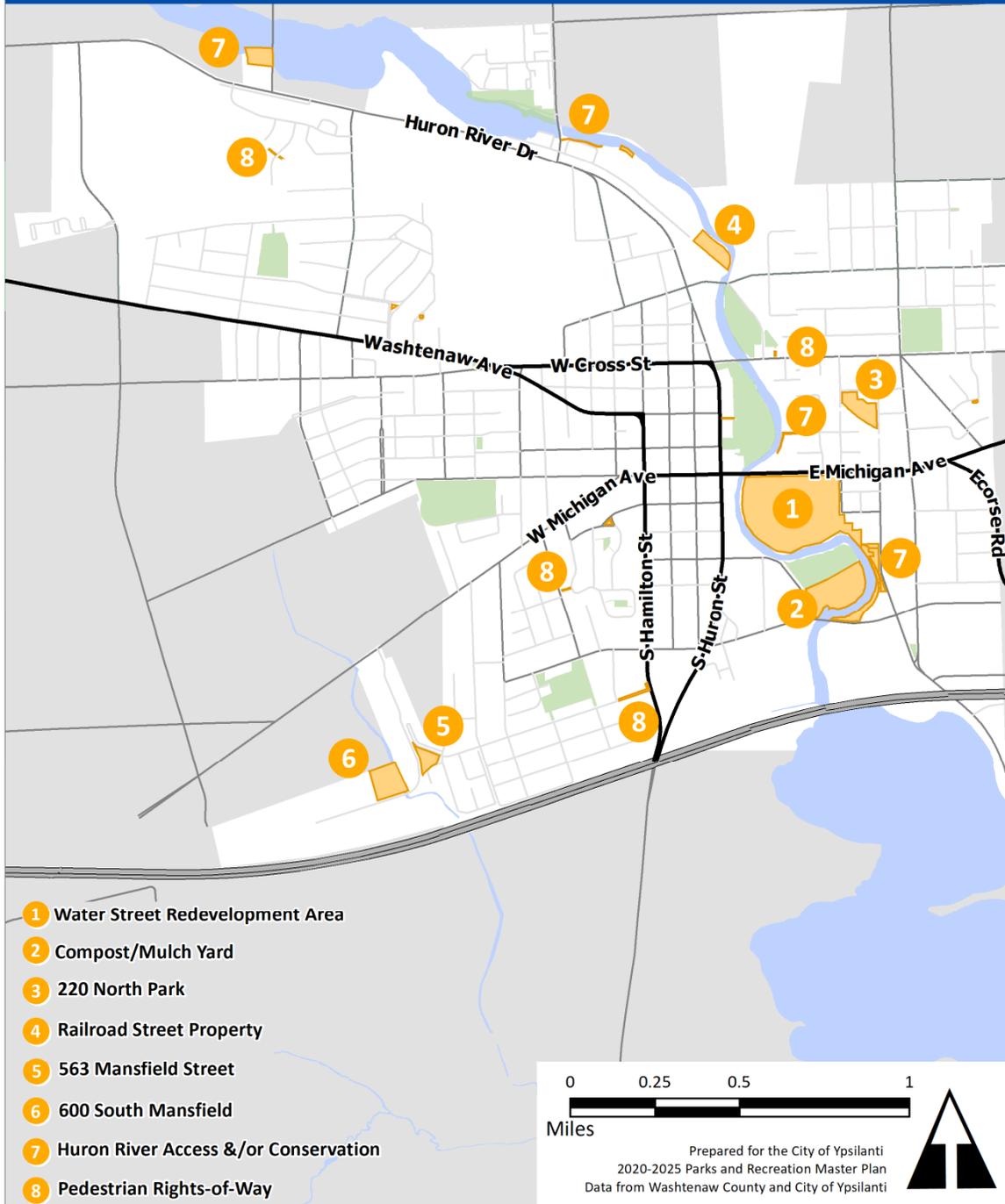
## SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events are held throughout the year, both in the City parks and recreation facilities and elsewhere. Riverside and Frog Island Parks host large events, such as the Ypsilanti Heritage Fest, ElvisFest, Michigan Brewer’s Guild Summer Festival, car and motorcycle shows, music performances, and fun runs. Partners such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, and the Ypsilanti American Little League hold regular reoccurring events for youth, such as summer camps and baseball series, in Candy Cane, Parkridge, Prospect, and Recreation Parks, amongst others. Two farmers’ markets currently operate; one in the City’s Market Plaza, and the other on the downtown Ferris Street.

<sup>13</sup> Ypsilanti Historical Society. (2020 February 5). *Historical Markers & Statues - Ypsilanti, Michigan*. Retrieved from <http://ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org/markers/tableofcontents.html>

# City-Owned Related Lands

map 3.7



## CITY-OWNED RELATED LANDS

A few publicly-owned properties around Ypsilanti serve recreational functions, have served recreational functions in the past, or have significant natural features, but are not currently considered parkland. These properties are noted for completeness; some have potential for formal inclusion in the parks system in the future. Locations are noted in Map 3.7.

### 1 Water Street Redevelopment Area

The City's Water Street Redevelopment Area, along the Huron River consists of more than 36 acres and includes nearly a half mile of frontage on the Huron River, now the River's Edge Trail, and 1,500 feet of frontage on Michigan Avenue. The site, with the exception of the trail, is planned to be redeveloped.

### 2 Compost/Mulch Yard

The City runs its minor composting, woodchipping, and mulching operations from the southern half of the parcel that contains Waterworks Park. The space the compost yard occupies was formerly occupied by a water treatment plant. This area would be a natural expansion of Waterworks Park and expand parkland frontage along the river. However, the City would have to relocate the facility or make other arrangements for composting, chipping, and mulching.

### 3 220 North Park

The 4.3-acre vacant site at 220 N. Park Street once hosted the area Boys and Girls Club, now defunct, which provided recreational programming for area youth. The building was demolished in 2016. It is planned for sale for private redevelopment.

### 4 Railroad Street Property

This 2.5-acre, heavily forested property was acquired by the City of Ypsilanti Economic Development Corporation in 1994 from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, who at the time handled tax-foreclosed land. Two key deed restrictions were included in the sale: that the property must be put to a public purpose, which includes economic development, and that "the people of the State of Michigan (have) the rights of ingress or egress over and across" it. This land has been referenced as a "future park" in parks plans since 1991, but has not been developed. It is listed as a "protected land" per provisions laid out by the City Charter; an explanation of protected lands is contained in Appendix C.

### 5 563 Mansfield Street

The City of Ypsilanti Economic Development Corporation, a subsidiary of the City of Ypsilanti, owns a 1.8-acre parcel at 563 South Mansfield Street. This parcel is wooded, undeveloped, and near Paint Creek, Arbor Manor, and Forrest Knoll. It is currently zoned Production, Manufacturing, and Distribution, located at the south-east of the Mansfield Industrial Park adjacent to both industrial and multifamily uses, and currently walled off from Mansfield, but accessible from Mansfield, Manor, and Monroe Streets. Currently, the adjacent 80-unit Arbor Manor provides a small park for the use of its residents, and the adjacent 231-unit Forrest Knoll provides ample open space but few recreation opportunities. Both are within a half-mile of Parkridge Park.

### 6 600 Mansfield Street

The West Commerce Park Owners Association, a second-tier subsidiary of the City of Ypsilanti, owns a 5-acre parcel on the north side of Mansfield between 580 and 612 Mansfield. The Upper

Paint Creek runs through the east side of this parcel, and the remainder consists of undeveloped, vegetated space, with minimal development potential. It is currently zoned Production, Manufacturing, and Distribution, located in the middle of the Mansfield Industrial Park, adjacent to industrial uses, and accessible from Mansfield Street. Consider partnering with WCPRC or a nonprofit, such as a land conservancy, to preserve this area as a public natural area, as it could help to protect the limited undeveloped natural resources within the City as well as the Stony Creek watershed.

## **7 Huron River Access and Conservation Easements**

A long-standing goal of both the City's recreation master plans and overall master plans has been to preserve and protect the beauty of the Huron River and to provide access when possible. In recent years, the City has assembled various access and conservation easements, in addition to the parks, to this purpose. In the north end of the City, the City worked with two separate property owners to secure access easements along the Huron. Further south, at the intersection of Forest Street and the Huron River, the City owns a conservation easement on the high banks opposite Frog Island. Across the river from Riverside Park, the City has reserved an easement to provide access and conservation along the west bank from the vacated North Street to approximately 300 feet south. The City is currently working with other property owners along the Huron River to ensure that it is protected and accessible.

The City itself owns a fee-simple parcel along the Huron River at Grove Road. The Grove Road property includes a former railbed along the Huron River, which will be preserved for future public use.

## **8 Pedestrian Rights-of-Way**

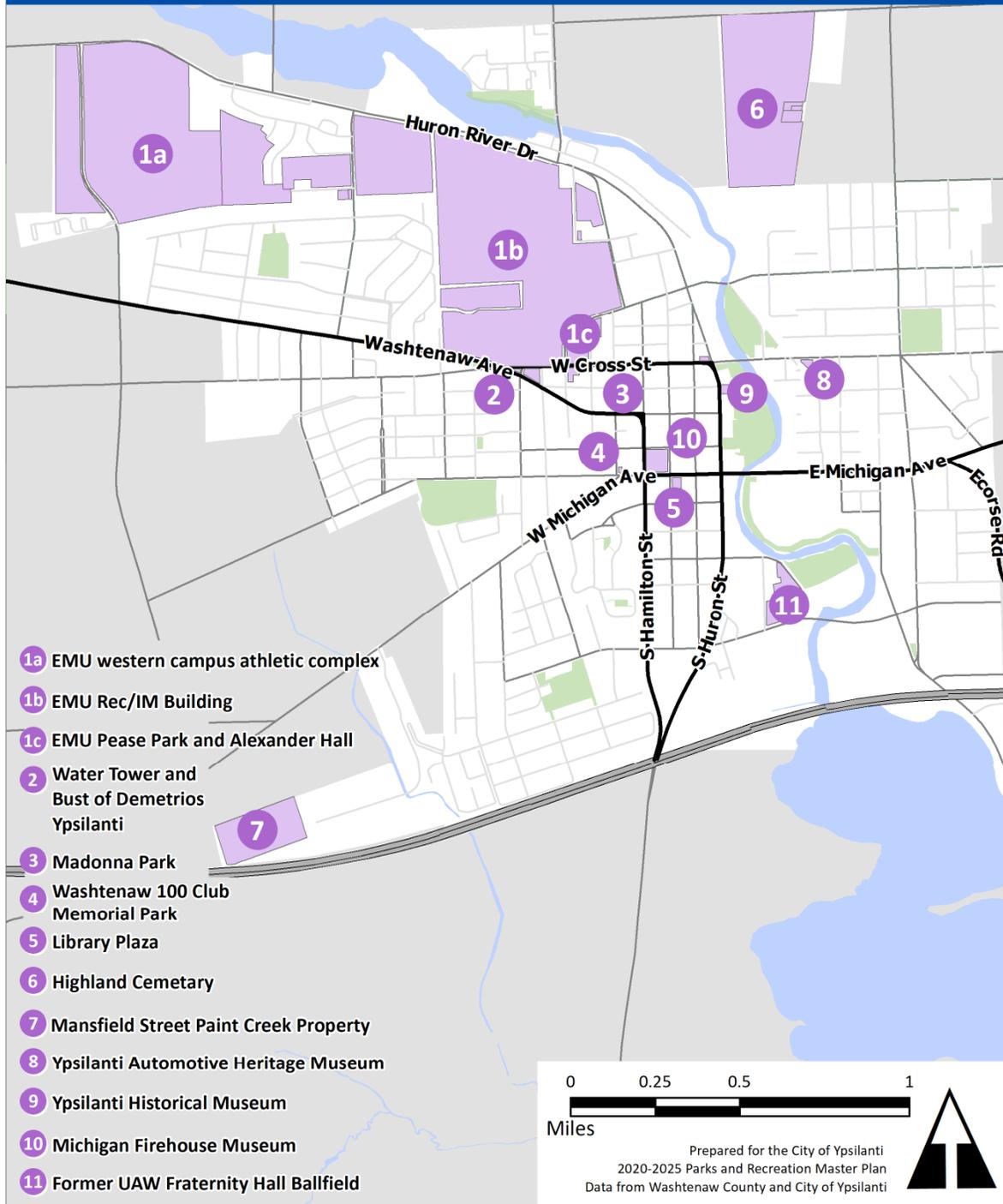
The City owns parcels, easements, and rights-of-way throughout the City that are unconnected to the Huron River. These were often granted to the City to ensure pedestrian connectivity was maintained, despite a lack of street network connectivity. Some of these serve or could serve a valuable purpose and should be maintained; others, such as those in the Gerganoff subdivision, should be re-evaluated and likely vacated.

### **Traffic Islands and Medians *(not mapped)***

There are many traffic islands and medians within the City of Ypsilanti. As these are often part of the transportation right-of-way, they will likely remain in public ownership for the long term. Some are small, grassy spaces; others are extensively landscaped with mature trees. Still others serve as mini-parks for the adjacent neighbors. These are important pieces of the City's open space and transportation networks.

# Related Lands Under Other Ownership

map 3.8



## RELATED LANDS UNDER OTHER OWNERSHIP

Eastern Michigan University, other public institutions, and private organizations own and control several properties in the City that are popular landmarks, open space, or recreation areas. As the City has no control over these spaces or plans to acquire them, they are described for completeness' sake. The locations of these resources are shown in Map 3.8.

### 1 Eastern Michigan University

Eastern Michigan University (EMU) owns more than 395 acres within the City. Significant portions of that land, such as the **western campus athletic complex**, are set aside for recreation. The west campus facilities include a football stadium and track; an indoor football training facility; no less than six full-size baseball diamonds; an indoor basketball facility and convocation center, a disc golf course, and a fitness circuit adjacent to the B2B Trail; On central campus there is the **Rec/IM building**, an indoor gym and recreation facility that includes an indoor track, an indoor pool, and racquetball; two outdoor basketball courts; a sand volleyball court; and University Park. Off West Cross at College Place is **Pease Park**, a passive outdoor park that contains a tribute to the first responders at 9/11, and **Alexander Hall**, a music performance venue. EMU's campus also contains many miles of walking and jogging paths, including almost 2 miles of the B2B Trail. Several of their facilities are available for rent, such as the outdoor University Park adjacent to the Student Center, and the Rec/IM offers for sale annual memberships to community members. For all facilities, University-scheduled events and classes take precedence over community use.

### 2 Water Tower and Bust of Demetrios Ypsilanti

This Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority-owned 0.13-acre area at the intersection of Cross, Summit, and Washtenaw hosts two of the most memorable landmarks in Ypsilanti: the historic water tower and a bust of the City's namesake, Demetrios Ypsilanti. The tower was constructed in 1890, and a state historic marker on its south side describes its history. The bust, to the west of the tower, commemorates both the naming of the City and Demetrios Ypsilanti's role in the Greek War of Independence (1821-1832). The grounds are open to the public.



### 3 Madonna Park

Madonna Park is a 0.14-acre park at the south-west corner of Hamilton and West Cross. Owned and maintained by the Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church across the street, the park prominently features a statue of the Madonna and provides a place of peaceful contemplation. It is open to the public.

### 4 Washtenaw 100 Club Memorial Park

This 4,500 square foot garden and memorial wall at the north-east corner of Michigan, Ballard, and Congress was developed in 2005 to memorialize police officers and firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty. It provides a place of contemplation and hosts memorial services. It is open to the public.

## **5 Library Plaza**

Adjacent to and owned by the downtown branch of the Ypsilanti Public Library, this 4,000 square foot plaza contains benches and tables, a fountain, and a space for a children's story hour. In addition, it features a life-size bronze statue of Harriet Tubman, memorializing Ypsilanti's role in the Underground Railroad, and a historical marker commemorating Elijah McCoy, a local man whose lubrication inventions kept the trains running and were the origin of the phrase "the real McCoy." The Plaza is open to the public, but library-scheduled events take precedence over community use.

## **6 Highland Cemetery**

Highland Cemetery is a garden-style cemetery, designed by Colonel James Lewis Glen in the 1860s. It is well-landscaped with an array of native species, well-maintained, and as one of the highest points in the City, overlooks the Huron River and the city. As a peaceful low-traffic area, it attracts runners, bicyclists, and others in search of contemplative space. The Starkweather Chapel, a centerpiece of the cemetery, was constructed in 1888 and is currently undergoing extensive restoration. The Cemetery was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 2019; that nomination is pending. It is open to the public seven days a week, from 8 am to dusk, and does not charge an admission fee.

## **7 Mansfield Street Paint Creek Property**

The Ypsilanti Free Methodist Church owns a 20-acre parcel located at the southern terminus of Mansfield Street. This property is largely wooded wetlands, rendering the site difficult to develop. The City may consider working with the property owner and WCPRC to preserve this relatively undisturbed natural area in the long term. It is not open to the public; it is zoned Production, Manufacturing, and Distribution.

## **8 Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum**

The Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum, located at the south-east corner of East Cross and River tells the story of the birth of the auto industry in Michigan, with an Ypsilanti focus. It also includes Miller Motors, a fully preserved pre-war automobile dealership, which still sells and assists with the service of vintage Hudson Motors vehicles. The museum preserves and exhibits a rotating inventory of classic vehicles, and helps organize automobile-related events such as the Orphan Car show in Riverside Park and the weekly Cruise Night in Depot Town. It is open to the public seven days a week and charges an admission fee.

## **9 Ypsilanti Historical Museum**

The Ypsilanti Historical Museum, located at 220 North Huron Street, is dedicated to local history. The Museum presents a snapshot of daily life in the 1860s, and the Fletcher-White Archives contain an extensive collection of atlases, newspapers, government documents, and other ephemera. The museum is operated by the all-volunteer Ypsilanti Historical Society, and is open to the public.

## **10 Michigan Firehouse Museum and Education Center**

The 26,000 square foot Michigan Firehouse Museum and Education Center is located at the north-west corner of Cross and Huron and incorporates the City's original 1898 firehouse. The museum's mission is to enhance the appreciation of firefighting history through engaging and informative exhibits, as well as teaching and promoting fire safety and prevention. It is open to the public.

## **11 Former United Auto Workers Baseball Field**

This property was owned by the United Auto Workers (UAW) and operated as outdoor recreation space in conjunction with the neighboring UAW hall when the

Ford/Visteon/Automated Components Holdings (ACH) factory was in operation. The former UAW hall is now a church, and the ballfield is currently owned by Angstrom Holdings, also the owner of the former factory. It is not now nor is it anticipated to be open to the public. It is included in this plan for reference only; due to its location and due to mistaken online mapping services, it is often mistaken for Waterworks Park or even the long-defunct Gilbert Park.

## **REGIONAL RECREATION RESOURCES**

In addition to the City's parks and facilities, a number of regional recreational opportunities maintained by Washtenaw County, the Huron-Clinton Metroparks Authority, the State of Michigan, or area colleges and universities are available to Ypsilanti residents.

### **YPSILANTI COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

The Ypsilanti and Willow Run School Districts combined in 2013 and are now known as Ypsilanti Community Schools. Their properties provide more than 100 additional acres of public grounds, all within a five-minute drive of the City. The outdoor play areas and facilities, such as tracks, ballfields, and tennis courts, are available for public use when school is not in session and when no other official school event, such as a practice or game, is scheduled.

### **BORDER TO BORDER (B2B) TRAIL**

Within Washtenaw County, the WCPARC and the Washtenaw County Greenways Advisory Committee (GAC) have been trailblazers working to create the Border to Border Trail, a regional trail that runs along the Huron River through Washtenaw County and connects to the statewide Iron Belle Trail. Although gaps remain, the trail is largely complete and progress is being made to bridge the remaining gaps and improve the overall trail experience. Area trails that connect to the B2B offer access to significant area recreational resources, such as the Matthaei Botanical Gardens. A map of the B2B Trail is provided in Appendix D.

### **HURON RIVER WATER TRAIL**

The Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC) has spearheaded efforts to develop and promote tourism along the Huron River, in addition to their commitment to river stewardship and public education. These efforts have led to the creation of the Huron River Water Trail (HRWT), a 104-mile inland paddling trail connecting people to the river's natural environment, its history, and the communities it touches in Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

Development of this water trail helps to improve recreational access to the river, and includes projects such as adding interpretive, way-finding, and historical signage; creating linkages between the City, its attractions, and other municipalities and tourist attractions along the river; and creating economic development opportunities related to river tourism. The trail helps to reconnect communities in Oakland, Livingston, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties to the Huron River and its recreational, economic, historic, and cultural values, as well as each other. A map of the trail is in Appendix D.

### **YPSILANTI TOWNSHIP PARKS**

The Charter Township of Ypsilanti, which surrounds the City on three sides, maintains 30 parks totaling over 900 acres. As in the City, parks along the Huron River and Ford Lake make up the core of the Township's park system, including North Bay, Ford Lake, Loonfeather Point, North and South Hydro, and Lakeside Parks; portions of North Bay Park and Ford Lake are within the City boundaries. Several additional Township parks are located in the northern, more heavily populated portion of the Township, including the Community Center at 2025 E. Clark Road and the planned skatepark. The Township's Recreation Department offers activities for children, adults, and seniors, including sports, fitness classes, and educational and social activities. Township parks and programs are open to City residents, though some parks require vehicle entry fees, and programming also typically requires registration fees. Notably, entry fees for

City of Ypsilanti residents are the same as those for Ypsilanti Township residents at certain parks surrounding Ford Lake, including North Bay, Loonfeather, and North Hydro. Maps of the Ypsilanti Township park system are included in Appendix D.

### **SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN LAND CONSERVANCY**

The Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy protects more than 3,400 acres in southeast Michigan. A significant concentration of these lands is in Superior Township, just to the north of Ypsilanti, as part of their Superior Greenway efforts. These lands include the Conservancy Farm, a 99 acre historic farmstead, much of which is still being farmed; the Smiley Nature Preserve, a 100-acre nature preserve and farm; LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve, 325 acres of farmland and nature area, including woodlands, wetlands, and meadows; and Springhill Nature Preserve, 30 acres that contain cattail and buttonbrush swamp. The Superior Greenway project is a collaborative effort to protect high-quality natural areas and farmland in the area between Ann Arbor and Detroit. A brochure and map describing the Superior Greenway project is in Appendix D.

### **WASHTENAW COUNTY PARKS, FACILITIES, AND NATURAL AREAS**

The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission (WCPRC) and Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP) maintain many recreational amenities that are accessible to Ypsilanti residents. Some of these facilities require annual or daily entry fees. WCPRC and NAPP facilities within one mile of Ypsilanti include the Rolling Hills County Park, which contains both nature trails and a recently improved and extensively renovated water park; Parker Mill County Park, which includes nature trails and seasonal tours of a functioning grist mill. Also easily accessible from Ypsilanti are County Farm Park, containing many nature trails, and the Meri Lou Murray Recreation Center, which provides fitness equipment and classes, both off of Washtenaw Ave and a major bus route. WCPRC recently acquired a large nature preserve just north of the City's Highland Cemetery that is planned to be incorporated into the Superior Greenway; the City, Highland Cemetery, and Washtenaw County Road Commission may wish to work together to provide a link from the Greenway to the Border to Border Trail through the City. A map of these facilities is included in Appendix D.

### **HURON-CLINTON METROPARKS**

The Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority is a regional special parks district that maintains 13 parks around the Detroit region. The Metroparks system includes 24,000 acres of parkland, funded by a regional millage, annual and daily vehicle entry fees, and user fees for some facilities. These parks supplement local parks by offering a diverse range of activities that most local governments cannot provide, though are typically smaller and less wilderness-oriented than the DNR's recreation areas. Within a half-hour drive from the City of Ypsilanti, this system includes the Delhi, Dexter-Huron, Hudson Mills, and Lower Huron Metroparks; notably, the Lower Huron Metropark offers camping. Washtenaw County's Border to Border Trail and a trail along the Huron in Wayne County provide hiking and biking connections from Ypsilanti to these Metroparks; the Huron River Water Trail runs through these parks as well.

### **STATE RECREATION AREAS**

Within and near Washtenaw County the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides large natural areas for activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, and camping—activities that cannot be accommodated well in an urban setting such as Ypsilanti.

These DNR facilities typically require entrance fees, which are available daily or annually, and fees for some amenities, such as camping.

The Waterloo Recreation Area, about a half-hour drive away, near Chelsea on the western side of Washtenaw County, is the largest park in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The park's 20,000 acres include campgrounds, rustic cabins, and group use camping; picnic areas and playgrounds; multiple lakes for swimming, fishing, and boating; and more than 40 miles of interpretive nature, equestrian, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and general hiking trails. Waterloo also includes the Gerald E. Eddy Discovery Center, a year-round facility offering geology and natural history exhibits, as well as educational programming by the Waterloo Natural History Association.

The Pinckney Recreation Area spans 11,000 acres north of Chelsea in western Washtenaw and Livingston Counties, also about a half-hour drive away. Like Waterloo, Pinckney includes numerous lakes, campgrounds, and trails to accommodate a variety of users. The Pinckney and Waterloo Recreation Areas are connected via the 35-mile-long Waterloo-Pinckney Trail.

A number of smaller DNR parks are located north of Ypsilanti: the Brighton and Island Lake Recreation Areas, in Livingston County near Brighton, and Maybury State Park, near Northville in Wayne County. These state facilities also offer a range of activities, from swimming and fishing to hiking and picnic areas. Maybury, as a smaller, more "suburban" recreation area, does not provide space for hunting or camping.

## Chapter 4: Planning and Public Input Process

The Parks & Recreation Master Plan was developed from March 2012 to December 2013 by the Recreation Commission and aided by Planning & Development staff and the Public Service Department.

### **INITIAL ANALYSIS**

The Recreation Commission and staff began with a review of the City's 2014 Parks & Recreation Master Plan, and with a summer/fall 2019 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 *Watershed Management Plan for the Huron River in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Metropolitan Area (Middle Huron)*, recreation plans of neighboring jurisdictions, past City recreation plans, the City's *Non-Motorized Transportation Plan (2010)* and the *2013 Shape Ypsilanti Master Plan*. In light of the budgetary constraints facing the City, the planning process focused heavily on existing facilities and amenities, current relationships with volunteer organizations, and on maintaining and improving both in the future.

### **PUBLIC SURVEY**

Over the course of June, July, and August of 2019, the Commission and staff surveyed Ypsilanti residents and other users of the recreation system. The survey was designed gain insight into public perception and use of City parks, as well as to collect resident feedback on the Adopt-a-Park program, alternative funding models, and other ideas for future recreation provision.

The survey was available to participants online, and in paper format upon request. The survey was distributed through City Hall and on the City's website, the Senior Center, via e-mail to families of Ypsilanti Community Schools attendees, via the City's general announcement e-mail, through Facebook, and via NextDoor.

### **SURVEY REPRESENTATION**

In total, over 500 quarter-sheets with online survey information were distributed, via placement in City Hall at the Clerk's window (the general customer service point of entry) and at various City events and meetings throughout the summer and fall; online, with heavy promotion by City Councilmembers; via the Mayor's popular email newsletter; via paper copies at the Senior Center; and via a Ypsilanti Community Schools email blast to YCS families. 347 people completed the survey. The majority of respondents noted that they received the survey via Facebook; following distantly was the YCS email. Responses, however, predominantly seemed to be from neighborhood associations which have strong presences on Facebook or e-mail, suggesting a survey bias to households which not only have internet access, but those who choose to engage in their neighborhood association online. This survey's distribution methods relied heavily upon residents being engaged to some degree in the community at large, either through their neighborhood or local institutions, rather than simply being parks users. As many who use the parks may not otherwise be engaged with the community, or not engaged through the institutions used, perhaps other survey distribution and/or publicization methods should be explored, such as survey-takers positioned in the parks themselves or going door-to-door, or an expanded partnership with YCS, and other community facilities. Demographic information was not collected by the survey, as many residents have expressed discomfort with and reluctance to complete a survey that requests it.

## **RESULTS**

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 E.

## **PUBLIC MEETING**

A public meeting was held on Wednesday, January 8<sup>th</sup> 2020. It was publicized via the City's email general announcement list, Facebook, and NextDoor. Attendance was objectively low, but high compared to the previous plan's turnout. Eleven people attended, as well as two Councilmembers. Staff gave a brief overview of the current plan process, then solicited feedback on existing goals and parks and how they might be improved. Participants expressed interest in recent talks regarding re-establishment of the Recreation Department; maintaining and improving relationships with volunteer organizations, particularly those who manage City facilities; improving walkability and connectivity to and through the parks; improving safety, cleanliness, and accessibility; improving provision of toileting facilities; and establishing a talk park. They all reaffirmed the overall goals from the 2014 plan as well as its objectives, and were proud of the work that had been accomplished since that time, with significant pride in the Rutherford Pool, River's Edge Trail, and Liz Dahl MacGregor Playground.

## **PLAN CREATION**

This plan was largely based upon the 2014 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, drawing also information from other local and regional plans and public input as described above. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis and inspections of the parks were also performed on countless occasions, both with staff and with commissioners, in part due to the capital allocation for FY 2018/19 and 19/20. Visioning sessions were held with the Parks and Recreation Commissioners during the September and October meetings to determine the vision and overarching goals of the 2020 plan; the vision, goals, and objectives were reaffirmed with slight changes to the language to be more inclusive.

## **REVIEW AND ADOPTION**

The draft plan was released for comment on January 10, 2020. An electronic copy was posted on the City website, and electronic copies of the draft were provided to members of the Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission, and City Council. Notice of the plan's availability for public comment and review was sent to those signed up on the City listserv and via Facebook and NextDoor. The plan was also sent to regional entities for review, including Washtenaw County, Ypsilanti Community Schools, Eastern Michigan University, and the Planning Departments of Ypsilanti and Superior Charter Townships.

The Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the draft, held a public hearing, and made a recommendation to City Council to approve it at its February 11, 2020 meeting. At this meeting, comments were heard from community members, and a summary of written comments received would have been read to the Commission and the five community members in attendance, had any been received. As a result of comments received on the draft plan, the Commission recommended including more information about the Frog Island Track and slope stabilization. The Commission recommended adoption of the plan to City Council.

On February 18, 2020, the final draft of the plan was presented to the City Council along with the Parks and Recreation Commission's recommendation of adoption. No additional comments

had been received from the public, and no members of the public spoke at the public hearing. The Council adopted the plan with Resolution Number 2020-045.

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



## Chapter 5: Vision, Goals, and Objectives

The City aims to provide a high quality parks system and recreational opportunities, but is restricted by its current lack of resources and capacity. The plan therefore envisions that the City will play a custodial and facilitating role, focusing limited resources on oversight and maintenance of the underlying parkland, yet poised to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

A keystone strategy of this plan is to develop and foster shared interests with regional partners and the energy and talents of Ypsilanti residents. As implementation of projects from the Action Plan will rely on the involvement of these partners and volunteers, the prioritization of projects presented in this plan is only a rough guide, recognizing that opportunity will dictate which projects come to fruition.

### **VISION**

Residents and visitors to the City can enjoy the plentiful recreation opportunities the City and its partners provide, regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, or abilities.

### **MISSION**

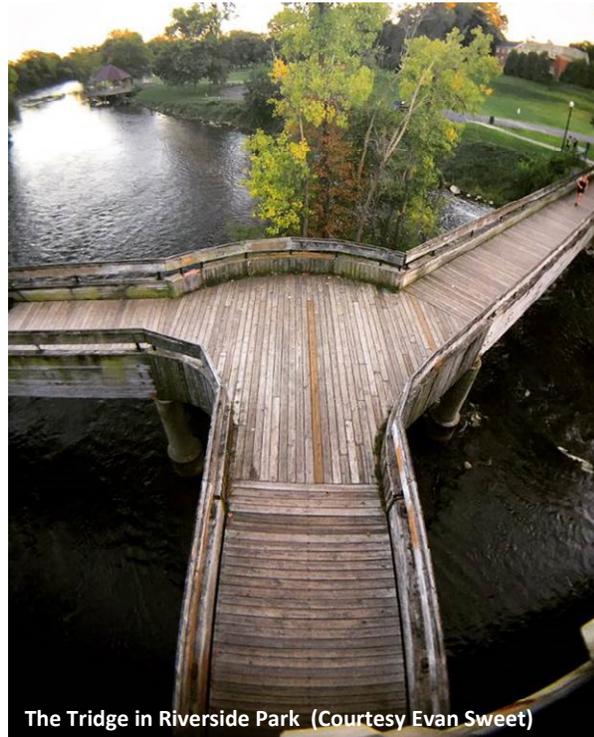
The City of Ypsilanti is committed to preserve, maintain, and enhance the existing parks, while pursuing partnerships to provide necessary capital improvements and recreation programming. The City ensures that recreation opportunities will be provided to residents and visitors, and offered to all regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, or abilities. This is achieved through cooperative efforts between the City and Ypsilanti Community Schools, Eastern Michigan University, other governments and community institutions, volunteers, the private sector, and the general public.

### **GOAL 1: ENSURE PARKS ARE ATTRACTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE**

**Objective 1: Ensure safe routes to parks and recreation facilities from neighborhoods, schools, and business districts, for people of all ability levels.** The City's road network can be considered complete with the likely exception of the Water Street Redevelopment Area; however, gaps exist in the sidewalk network, often at park frontages. These gaps can discourage potential park users from using these parks entirely, or may encourage nearby residents to only access them via motor vehicle. Even access via motor vehicle or bicycle can be challenging at several parks, due to lack of facilities, poor condition of pavement, lack of signage, or a combination of those factors.

- *Frog Island, Freighthouse & Market Plaza:* Frog Island's large parking lot is bordered to the east by Rice Street, which is currently part of the Border to Border Trail, anticipated to be shifted to Frog Island in 2020. On the opposite side of Rice Street are the railway, Market Plaza, and the Freighthouse. There are no sidewalks connecting Frog Island's main entrance on Rice Street north to Forest Street, anticipated to be remedied with 2020's planned work. The only crossing to Market Plaza and the Freighthouse is at the park's south end. This should be addressed with the reconstruction of the parking area, not yet programmed.
- *Riverside Park:* There are several access points to this park that serve a variety of modes. To the south, access is via metal steps west of the Michigan Avenue Bridge (able-bodied pedestrians), via a small alleyway meant for motor vehicle traffic (able-bodied pedestrians,

bicyclists, or motorists), or via the newly constructed and accessible Ypsilanti Heritage Bridge (pedestrians of all abilities and bicyclists). From the west, access is only available via steps at the Riverside Arts Center or an unmarked entrance's grassy slope behind a private parking lot; neither entrance is accessible or signed. From the north, pedestrians can access the park via the Tridge, from a set of steps on the west end of the Cross Street bridge, or from a steep trail just west of those steps. Vehicle access from the north is via a drive at the west end of the Cross Street bridge, west of both the trail and the steps. This gate is closed during winter, as the driveway isn't plowed or salted. Accessibility improvements at the north end of the park could be paired with the upcoming Cross Street Bridge replacement, likely taking place after 2023.



- *Recreation Park:* The southern boundary of the park, parallel to Woods Road and perpendicular to Warner Street, does not have a traditional sidewalk. Part of the unpaved walking path runs for much of this length, along top of a berm. Paving this path, or a parallel path, and connecting it to the existing sidewalk to the east of the park on Woods Road and paving a small connector path to Warner Street would provide a significant increase in accessibility from the south side, as well as an increase in visibility.
- *Parkridge Park and Parkridge Community Center:* Currently, there is no accessible sidewalk connection between New Parkridge Homes and the Parkridge Community Center at Hilyard Robinson Way; residents currently have to travel up to the Harriet intersection to cross. One is scheduled to be designed and installed in FY20/21. There are no accessible entrances from the south end of the park.
- *Prospect Park:* The sidewalk along the north side of the park, along Oak Street, is complete from Prospect halfway to Vought Street. There is no sidewalk along the south side of Oak, the north side of Prospect Park, from this point to Charles. This creates a barrier to access from the neighborhood, and also can make travel to/from Ypsilanti International Elementary School challenging.
- *Waterworks:* Although Waterworks is connected to River's Edge Park, part of the Border to Border Trail, via the bridge over the Huron River, it is inaccessible to pedestrians from the south and west. It lacks sidewalks along its Catherine Street frontage, as does the compost yard to the south, thus blocking access from Factory/Spring Street. There are also significant gaps in the sidewalk westward along Catherine linking the park to Huron Street.
- *Haab Brothers Memorial Park:* Situated at the "Y" intersection of Grove and Prospect Streets and adjacent to the Border to Border Trail, access to this park is challenging at best. For those approaching the park by motor vehicle from Prospect Street, there is a place to pull off and park for a single compact car. There is no other public parking available

nearby, nor access from South Grove. Furthermore, there are no sidewalks along either side of the park north almost to Factory Street.

- *North Bay Park:* Although North Bay Park is owned and operated by Ypsilanti Township, west portions lie within the City boundaries. Furthermore, it is an important connection to the Border to Border Trail along South Grove. However, access to this park by City residents is limited by a gap in the sidewalk along the west side of South Grove Road, just north of the I-94 bridge; City residents are also unable to access it from the west off Huron Street due to the lack of a crossing of I-94 for pedestrians. These gaps also restrict access to the City by Township residents.

**Objective 2: Ensure each park has a visible presence, entrance, and sign on adjacent rights-of-way.** Many parks have understated entrance points or lack signage. All parks should have consistent, well-maintained identifying signage at each entrance. Each entrance should also be signed with standardized information about the parks, including hours of operation, rules, and contact information; parks that have specific rentable spaces should be signed to promote those programs as well.

- *Community Parks:* Updated signage for Riverside, Frog Island, Parkridge, and Recreation parks, as well as many smaller parks, was provided in 2019. However, many parks still lack important information about hours of operation, rules, and other important information.
  - *Riverside Park:* Riverside Park has many public access points: Cross Street on both sides of the bridge near the river, an access easement at 130 N Huron St, the Riverside Arts Center stairway, Michigan Avenue on the west side of the river, and via the Ypsilanti Heritage Bridge. There is no signage on Huron Street nor east of the Cross Street Bridge. Although the 120 N Huron entrance could remain understated, the Riverside Arts Center entrance should be signed and redesigned to help improve the connectivity to the park from the RAC, and improve use and safety of the entrance steps.
  - *Frog Island:* Although many visitors to Depot Town are familiar with the Frog Island parking lot, far fewer are familiar with Frog Island Park. Frog Island is most visible from the intersection of Rice Street and Forest, but signage at this entrance is minimal and obscured. The center and south entrances are less visible due to trees; only one is signed. Signing all three entrances off Rice Street to an equal level will help improve the park's visibility. These signs should be updated as part of parking lot updates or the north entrance updates.
  - *Parkridge:* Visitors to Parkridge Park from outside the neighborhood have access to two parking lots at the park's perimeter: to the south of Perry Early Learning Center on Perry Street; and off Harriet, west of Perry Early Learning Center. Neighborhood residents and visitors can also access the park from off Armstrong Drive in the New Parkridge Homes, and from the point at the intersection of Hawkins and Monroe. There is no signage at the Hawkins entrance, and only a dirt lot in which to park. The Hawkins/Monroe entrance should be signed and made accessible, and accessible parking provided.
- *Prospect:* Prospect has only one identifying sign: a historic plaque at the Cross, Prospect, and Miles intersection. Signage in a similar style to that at other parks, such as Riverside, should be installed at this intersection as well as at the Prospect & Oak intersection. As it is used by the nearby Ypsilanti International Elementary School as a playground, and its

picnic area is adjacent to a church, some form of signage indicating that it is a public City park is strongly recommended.

- *The Spanish-American War Memorial, Ainsworth Park, Carrie R Mattingly Tot Lot, and Haab Brothers Memorial Park:* All of these parks lack adequate signage; some have no signage at all. These parks should be signed.
- *Pavilions, gazebos, and other park facilities available for rent:* Currently, the City does not publicize facility rental information anywhere but the website, although it is a long-standing program. Facility and park rental information is spread through either the Convention & Visitors Bureau for large events, or via word-of-mouth for smaller or private events. By placing signs with rental and reservation information in relevant locations, the City can raise awareness of this service.
- *Nonmotorized connections.* In several subdivisions within the City, such as Gerganoff and Ainsworth, the original developer deeded small lots to the City for use as nonmotorized connections to other neighborhoods. Some of these small lots have been neglected by the City and encroached upon by neighbors, others have simply been forgotten, still others are used for their original purpose. None are signed. Each should be evaluated to see if it still can provide a valuable connection; if not, disposition or vacation options should be explored.

**Objective 3: Ensure that each park presents a well-maintained and clean image.** Each park should have adequate waste collection facilities and pickup, and all facilities should be kept free of graffiti, well-maintained, and in good operating condition. Research has shown that well-maintained parks and open spaces have a net positive impact upon neighboring properties. Generally speaking, large natural areas have the greatest net positive impact, and smaller playgrounds have the smallest impact. In all cases, poorly maintained parks had a negative impact on property values. Beautifying the parks, then, has a net positive impact upon property values, as well as contributing to overall quality of life.

- *Improve maintenance, either through engaging additional volunteers, adding staff time, or a combination of both.* The majority of the City's parks contain picnic pavilions, playgrounds, or other structures, as well as some landscaping or plantings. Many of the structures are in need of repair or replacement, which will be addressed elsewhere. Engaging volunteers for beautification projects, such as those below, could help both maintain the facilities and increase the sense of community ownership around these facilities.
  - Peeling/rusting paint on signage and structures is addressed in annual maintenance schedules, but is often de-prioritized as other projects take precedence. Regular scraping and repainting of structures and facilities, perhaps as part of annual cleanup events, should be encouraged.
  - Landscaping maintenance, including weeding, planting, and invasive species removal, are also regular maintenance tasks that are often de-prioritized for other concerns. These are often part of annual spring cleanup events, but often entirely volunteer-initiated and guided, with little or no oversight or direction from the City, or follow-up engagement to ensure the landscaping's success. Working to integrate these volunteer efforts into longer-term or broader landscaping plans should help to alleviate potential conflicts and improve the overall appearance of the parks.
  - Regular annual or seasonal inspections should be performed with an eye for these and other issues that can be addressed by volunteers. The results of these inspections

should guide both volunteer and staff workplans and budgets for the year, and include the beautification issues described above.

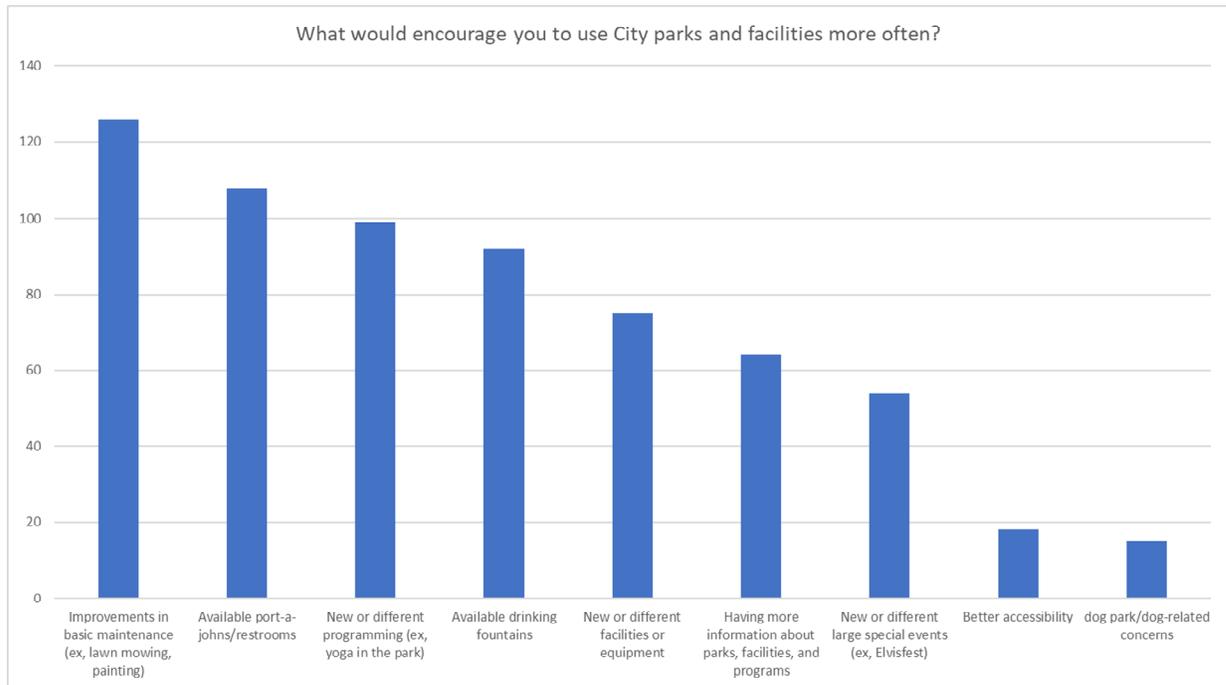
- *Improve waste collection in all parks.* Community Parks, such as Riverside, could benefit from additional, strategically placed waste cans. Recycling options could also be explored in these parks. Neighborhood Parks, such as Prospect, could benefit from optimizing trashcan placement, adding waste cans, and possibly adding recycling options. Placement of waste cans in mini-parks should be evaluated on a case-by case basis. Placement of waste cans in all parks should be evaluated on two major criteria: where waste is generated (picnic areas, parking areas, entrances/exits, trail midpoints), and where those waste cans will be accessible to staff for removal. Inaccessible waste cans will have a tendency to overfill or be vandalized; waste cans not located near waste generation areas will be underutilized. Waste generation areas without adequate waste cans will contribute to litter issues.
  - Volunteers could be engaged for periodic litter cleanup days. However, if litter cleanup days need to be scheduled more frequently than every month, this could be taken as an indicator that there could be more waste cans or that the existing waste cans are placed suboptimally.
  - Special events could be encouraged to make use of outside organizations in clean-up efforts as well. Various service organizations and/or non-profits will often be willing to field volunteers in exchange for a donation; this amount may reduce the monetary cost of cleanup to the special event and the time cost of cleanup to the City. Alternately, events could coordinate with ZeroWaste Washtenaw to reduce overall waste generation and to compost or recycle what waste is generated, a project of the Washtenaw County Solid Waste Division.

**Objective 4: Ensure all parks, park shelters, trails, and other facilities are physically accessible to people of all ages and ability levels.** As more people are able to use the parks, more people will use the parks. Each park in Ypsilanti needs at least some level of accessibility upgrades. The City could focus on improving one park at a time, thus ensuring, for instance, that an accessible play structure is not obstructed by a lack of an accessible trail, sidewalk, or ramp. Alternately, many parks could be significantly improved by relatively small updates, such as adding or repairing a short length of asphalt trail, and it may be worthwhile to batch these smaller jobs into one contract/project.

The City has recently begun providing port-a-potties in many of its parks, and these port-a-potties are generally themselves ADA-compliant. However, not all of them have been located such that there is an accessible path to the port-a-potties. In all cases, care should be taken to place the port-a-potties such that they are accessible, potentially creating a long-term accessible space for each.

Accessibility Improvements Needed, by Park.					
Park Name	Entrance	Pavilion	Parking lot	Trails	Play Areas
Riverside	north and west accessibility improvements required	link pavilion and gazebo to trails	Add to existing barrier-free spaces	Need to be reconstructed	Currently accessible
Frog Island	north, east, and south, + sidewalk along Rice	n/a	Parking lot needs reconstructed; barrier free spaces at both north and south entrances	ensure even surface and slopes within acceptable ADA limits	n/a
Recreation	south	Accessible from trail	ensure barrier-free spaces are maintained	Need paved/resurfaced	upgrade to accessible play equipment and surfacing
Parkridge	southern entrance (Hawkins)	link to trails	provide accessible parking at all entrances that are adjacent to parking	ensure even surface and slopes within acceptable ADA limits	upgrade to accessible play equipment and surfacing
Candy Cane	Construct accessible entrances/trails	link to trails	No parking lot; sign barrier-free space at each entrance	create a trail system, link to north entrance and create entrances at south-east and south-west	upgrade to accessible play equipment and surfacing
Peninsular	Pave trail from LeForge  Remove portage; install accessible dock for kayaks/canoes upon dam removal	link to trail	ensure barrier-free spaces marked, surface barrier-free	install trails, link to waterfront + water trail.	n/a
Prospect	Provide access from south/parking lot entrance; provide sidewalk along full north frontage to Charles	link to trails and parking area	link to trails/sidewalk; repave and ensure accessible/barrier-free	Continue maintenance with cracksealing and patch repairs as needed	Upgrade to accessible play equipment and surfacing
Waterworks	create sidewalk along Catherine	Connected to internal trail, no upgrades necessary	Repave and ensure barrier-free spaces and even surface provided	Connect trail (west of parking area) to any resources added (ex, dog park)	n/a

## GOAL 2: PROVIDE PARKS THAT MEET YPSILANTI'S RECREATION NEEDS.



Source: 2019 Survey

### Objective 1: Ensure existing facilities can continue to meet the needs of park users.

- Continue to perform regular, scheduled safety inspections of playground and sports equipment, repairing, removing, or replacing equipment as necessary and as resources permit.* Playgrounds are heavily used, and are evaluated annually by staff to ensure that they are safe to use. However, several playground facilities are more than 10 years old, are inaccessible to children and caregivers with mobility disabilities, may be limited to children of certain age groups, or no longer have available replacement parts. An inventory of these deficient facilities will help to inform the Capital Improvements plan, as well as annual budgets and workplans. Play facilities in Parkridge, Candy Cane, Prospect Park, and Recreation should be updated in the next 5-10 years, in approximately that order due to level of use, wear, and availability of parts.
- Perform annual safety inspections of pavilions and other structures.* All of the picnic pavilions are more than 20 years old. Several pavilions have closed-off restrooms, roofs and support structures that have been recently repaired, or portions that still require significant repair. The cost to renovate or remove and replace these facilities – or simply remove – should be considered as a capital cost that will be incurred within the next five to ten years.
- Perform annual or seasonal inspections of electrical systems used in festivals and events.* Festivals in Riverside Park use power hookups that can be damaged during storm and flooding events, as well as during regular use. Costs for this maintenance should be included in the fees charged to the events that use the electrical system.
- Institute a “move in and move out” checklist for large events, such as Class III and IV events.* This will help to ensure that developing maintenance concerns can be addressed promptly.

- *Work with Friends groups, Adopters, and regular event-holders to help ensure the ongoing maintenance of facilities such as the Freighthouse, the Rutherford Pool, Parkridge Community Center, ballfields, and community garden areas.* This may take the form of an annual meeting with these partners to develop a workplan, or periodic check-ins before and after major events to address maintenance issues as they arise. The Parks and Recreation Commission, City staff, and partners should reference MOUs, Adopt-A-Park agreements, Special Events agreements, or other similar documents to ensure that expectations on both sides are clear and well understood.
- *Address ongoing stormwater issues in Riverside, Frog Island, and Recreation Parks.* Both Riverside and Frog Island parks are adjacent to the Huron River and only slightly above its banks. Both have issues with flooding in low-lying areas, but the issue is more pronounced in Riverside Park. Flooding in Riverside at its worst can strand fish in the parks, but even during the most mild storm event, drainage issues including sheet flow over paths or standing, stagnant water present themselves. In Frog Island Park, flooding is usually limited to the track, which is the lowest point in the park. The flooding can complicate both everyday use of the parks and scheduled events, and presents significant maintenance challenges – use of the parks during or after a storm event can result in damage to the turf, trees, and trails. Stormwater controls could be placed in these parks directly, but depending on the type of control used, could be located upstream, perhaps in the Railroad Street property. Diverting stormwater from the storm drain system and into retention, detention, or infiltration systems throughout the City would also benefit water levels in the parks. Flooding in Recreation Park is likely related to soil compaction and grading issues, and primarily in the south and south-east portions of the park.
- *Confirm boundaries of Parkridge Park with regards to the Ypsilanti Community School District.* In the past, due to challenges with recordkeeping, the City has leased Parkridge Park from YCS and Ypsilanti Housing Commission to ensure continuing service and accountability. A title search &/or further research should be done to confirm ownership, and if necessary, ownership transferred to appropriate responsible agencies.
- *Consider installing an intergenerational play space in Recreation Park.*
- *Consider installing a dog park in Waterworks Park.*
- *Work with the Ypsi-Arbor Little League to develop plans for continuing future use of the park, including scoreboards installation or maintenance, ballfield improvements, and lighting improvements.*
- *Continue to work with the adjoining public schools to ensure that children have safe, accessible, and appropriately challenging places to play during the school year.*
- *Continue to expand the network of shared use paths and connectors.*

**Objective 2: Ensure that parks are safe and appear to be safe.**

- *Lighting should be consistently provided in parks.* This should be done in such a way as to improve safety- both from crime and from other hazards- without impacting light levels in surrounding neighborhoods. Lighting should be energy-efficient, cost-effective, and context-sensitive; solar lighting should be considered for long-term sustainability.
  - *Community Parks:* Lighting under pavilions, at entrances, and along paths.
  - *Neighborhood Parks:* Lighting under pavilions and at entrances.

- *Mini-parks*: The need for lighting should be assessed on a per-park basis for these smaller parks.
- *Improve sightlines*. The lack of a clear field of vision around areas such as pavilions, parking areas, or even bends in trails can lead to people feeling unsafe.
  - Brush and overgrown landscaping affects sightlines in several parks, especially at park borders and entrances. Regular clearing of this brush will not only improve sightlines but also reduce litter accumulation by these overgrown areas, helping to present a well-maintained image for the park. Areas that need clearing can be identified during annual inspections and recommended as projects for volunteers; borders with rights-of-way or parking areas should be prioritized over those with private property, unless an alternate screening method is provided. In some areas, these overgrown areas could be replaced with tended gardens, but volunteer stewards should be secured for gardened areas.
  - Most of the picnic pavilions in the City are open on at least three sides. When renovating or replacing these facilities, maintain that open character.
  - At the top of the Riverside Arts Center/Riverside Park stairs, there is a raised central garden feature that obscures the views of the steps from the Riverside Arts Center, which leads to people feeling unsafe on the steps and, occasionally, illicit behavior on the steps. This could be remedied by redesigning the central landscape feature.
- *Address vandalism issues promptly and thoroughly*. The Department of Public Services currently responds to issues of vandalism as staffing permits. This effort should continue, and could be expanded as part of volunteer beautification efforts. Efforts to reduce vandalism, such as using easy-to-repair surfaces when renovating or reconstructing equipment and facilities, or increasing patrols, should also be continued as the budget permits.
- *Create standards for amplified sound in Frog Island and other parks to ensure compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods*. Ypsilanti's parks host events that engage residents and the region. However, these events have the potential to be a nuisance to neighbors, particularly where amplified music is featured. Creating and enforcing clear standards for sound levels during events can help prevent nuisances. Consider securing design services for this project, with an emphasis on ensuring the standards are easy to understand and follow as well as being effective, and scalable for large and small events alike.

**Objective 3: Provide upgrades to the parks that increase their long-term durability and reduce operation costs.**

- *When renovating pavilions or other structures in the parks, consider long-term maintenance and operating costs*. An initial investment in better-quality or different materials may be able to present significant savings in the long-term. These can be included in the Capital Improvements Plan, referenced in Objective 1. Some examples include:
  - metal roofs, which may require less ongoing maintenance than do shingle roofs;
  - solar power, which can offset the cost of lighting and seasonal electric uses;
  - careful attention to structure placement and landscaping to reduce the need for powered lighting;

- use of weathering steel for structural supports to minimize the need for rust-removal and painting, balanced against the likelihood of graffiti, as graffiti is difficult to remove from weathering steel.
- *Consider replacing decommissioned restrooms with accessible portable toilets, and in the long run durable facilities in select location.* The restrooms as they currently exist-contained as part of the picnic pavilions – has proven not to be a sustainable solution in Ypsilanti, and most were decommissioned by the late 1990s. These restrooms had high maintenance costs and were frequently targets of vandalism, from graffiti to destruction of fixtures. As accessible restrooms are in high demand in public spaces, any renovation of these spaces should consider reinstatement of restrooms in high-traffic locations or permanent accessible portajohns in lower-traffic or higher-vandalism locations. A potential model for a low-maintenance, durable restrooms is the Portland Loo<sup>14</sup>.
- *Use landscaping to beautify the parks, help to provide shade, improve the ecology of the City, and offset stormwater impacts.* In recent years, the City has been unable to provide landscaping services beyond simple mowing and tree/branch removal. Volunteers provide some landscaping, often via one-time spring plantings that are later not maintained. This service is valuable, but could be expanded. Volunteers could be incorporated in all phases of a given project, or only during certain phases, depending on the project. Some examples include:
  - Invasive species removal, such as garlic mustard and buckthorn, and seed or plant in their stead native plants. Note that woody invasive species may require herbicide treatment by a licensed professional in conjunction with mechanical removal, such as cut stump treatment.
  - Streambank restoration efforts, including plantings, in Peninsular, Frog Island, Riverside, River’s Edge, and Waterworks parks.
  - Slope stabilization plantings in Frog Island, Riverside, Peninsular, and Parkridge Parks.
  - Installation and maintenance of attractive perennial beds throughout the parks. These plantings could be purely aesthetic or serve other purposes, such as pollinator gardens, shade tree groves, or rain gardens.
  - Lawn in little-used parts of the parks could be converted to low-maintenance prairie, reducing the amount of mowing needed; however, this should be balanced against the need for open space and visibility. These could be maintained using controlled burns; maintenance should be a primary concern with any planning.
  - Raingardens could be designed, constructed, and maintained by volunteers, perhaps in partnership with the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner’s Master Rain Gardener program. Such gardens should be designed to be low-maintenance.

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<sup>14</sup> City of Portland Environmental Services. (2012). *The Portland Loo*. Retrieved from <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/59293>

#### **Objective 4: Provide upgrades to the parks that increase recreation opportunities.**

- *Ensure each park has sufficient benches, picnic tables, waste cans, barrier-free parking, and bike parking.* Many parks, but not all, already have these features. Parks that already have these amenities may not have enough, or enough in good repair. Parks without these features may be underutilized due to the lack. Ensuring that each park has enough of these amenities, as well as other park-specific amenities, can help to ensure that the parks remain useful in the years to come. As more park features are replaced with accessible features, such as playgrounds and trails, additional barrier-free or handicap placard parking should be available at each location.
- *Ensure each park has sufficient trees.* In many City parks, trees have not been planted in many years due to budget concerns. As a result, the parks have many mature trees, but fewer younger trees, leading to concerns about succession.
- *Ensure each park's attractions are accessible.* In most parks, picnic pavilions are not connected to the trails, sometimes only separated by a few feet of grass. These small- yet significant-barriers to access can be remedied relatively cheaply and easily.

#### **Riverside**

- *Pursue an update of the site plan proposed in the 2008 Parks & Recreation Master Plan, included in Appendix B.* This plan included a proposal for construction of a new pavilion and removal of the existing pavilion; extensive shoreline improvements, including river overlooks and streambank stabilization projects; integration of the parcel at the intersection of Huron and Cross; extensive stormwater controls; trail improvements, including improvements for events service; and an accessible children's play area. In particular, residents and visitors have expressed the most interest in stormwater improvements and a new children's play area. Of necessity, stormwater control should be pursued before any additional projects or long-term impervious surfaces are added, but planned with these future projects in mind, as was presented in the 2008 plan. The plan should be updated to reflect the changed bridge location and the Liz Dahl MacGregor Playground. In the meantime, this plan can be used as a source of ideas and inspiration, rather than a blueprint.

#### **Frog Island**

- *Pursue implementation of the ideas contained in the site plan proposed in the 2008 Parks & Recreation Master plan, included in Appendix B.* This plan includes improvements to spectator seating at the soccer/football field, streambank and stormwater improvements, entrance improvements at the north, east, and south entrances, path improvements, a fishing pier, and improvements to the existing amphitheater. As the community has changed somewhat in the past ten years, as have recreation trends, these 2008 site plans are better viewed as inspirational than as blueprints, but remain consistent with the overall goals and values of the community.

### **Recreation Park**

- *Pave walking path around park; ensure that the path width is a consistent ten feet wide and that the grade meets accessibility standards.*
- *Pursue opportunities to foster accessible intergenerational play, including accessible intergenerational play equipment.*
- *Resurface former tennis courts- currently basketball courts.*
- *Work to improve stormwater drainage in the open playing fields to the south of the Rutherford Pool and baseball fields. Currently, this portion of the park does not drain well, leading to issues with standing water. There are storm drains located within Recreation Park; portions of the park could be regarded to drain to these areas, perhaps in conjunction with raingardens or vegetated drainage swales.*
- *Remove or repair nonfunctional lighting poles. Work with the Little League to explore funding options.*
- *Repair or replace outfield fencing; work with Little League to ensure infield fencing is adequate.*
- *Stripe additional barrier-free spaces in both parking lots.*
- *Add picnic benches and dog waste stations.*

### **Parkridge Park**

- *Update the play area; expand the playground facilities and ensure they are accessible and appeal to a broad range of ages and abilities.*
- *Install picnic tables &/or benches and shade trees near the play area in southwest area of the park. Providing areas for guardians, family, and friends to sit and observe children at play helps to foster a safe environment.*
- *Finish and landscape the parking area off of Monroe Street at Hawkins, or close curb cuts and use as pedestrian entrances. Consider using a permeable system such as GrassPave for any areas to be used as parking. Coordinate this effort with the churches along this street. Another entrance off Monroe at Brooks is very steep, the City could explore abandonment of that access.*
- *Create ADA-accessible connections to Monroe Street via paved pathways. By improving the pedestrian connections with the neighborhood to the south, a wider array of people will be able to use the park.*
- *Provide needed repairs to ballfield, basketball courts, tennis courts, and pavilion; remove disused sand volleyball court.*

### **Candy Cane**

- *Install an accessible pathway through Candy Cane, linking the pavilion, the existing sidewalk to the north, the playground, and the sidewalk to the south.*
- *Replace play equipment and fall surfacing; upgrade to improve accessibility.*
- *Work with the Little League to provide needed updates to the ballfield.*
- *Work with partners to mark historic Little League/Carolyn King events.*

### ***Peninsular Park***

- *Remove the dam and restore the resulting exposed shoreline.*
- *Create a barrier-free walking path along the Huron River and around the park. Consider using GrassPave, GravelPave, or another stable, ADA-accessible permeable substance to do so, and ensuring that the pathway is clearly marked.*
- *Create barrier-free access to canoe/kayak launch and fishing areas. This can and should be completed after the dam removal, as the best location for such a launch may change.*
- *Work with local stakeholders such as volunteer groups to install functional plantings, such as butterfly/pollinator gardens and raingardens, as well as interpretive and educational signage. Volunteer groups should be able to commit to maintaining the plantings and signage for a minimum of five years; plantings can take three to five years to become fully established, and this time frame enables the group to establish and communicate a clear maintenance schedule for future volunteers or staff.*
- *Seek a private partner for re-use of the historic Powerhouse. As the Powerhouse is linked to the dam and is in deteriorated condition, it may not withstand dam removal. If it does survive, an RFP could be issued for private development, with the stipulation that it be for a recreation, education, or otherwise public use, including concessionaires. Many options exist for the powerhouse: ideas for re-use mentioned in public meetings for the Parks & Recreation Master Plan and the Master Plan included a river-oriented café, restaurant, or brewpub that also served as a concessionaire; a canoe/kayak livery; an industrial museum; or an environmental education center.*
- *Repair the access to the concrete dock downstream of the dam, and add an accessible path to the dock. Currently, there is a timber stairway on the upstream side of the dock and a concrete stairway on the downstream side; they both lead up to the parking area and road, respectively. The timber stairway is very deteriorated; although it is the more popular access, in the interests of safety it might be best to remove it until such time as it can be replaced with an accessible path to the dock.*

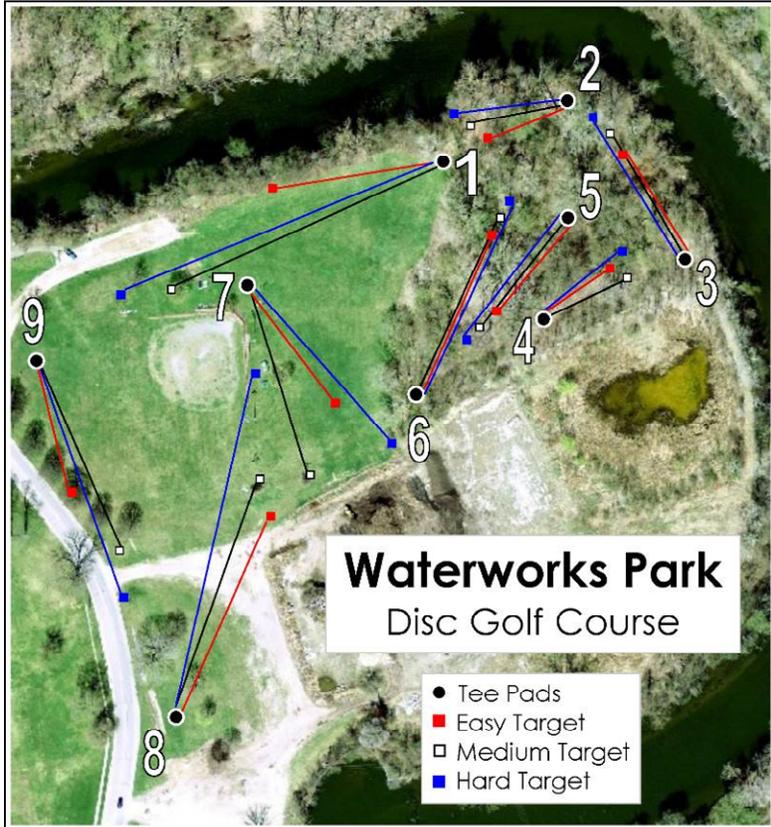
### ***Prospect Park***

- *Work with the skate park volunteer group on maintenance, improvement, and expansion projects.*
- *Repair the existing basketball courts.*
- *Work with YCS to ensure the play equipment is maintained and replaced as needed; continue to work with YCS on other projects to improve its functionality as a school playground and maintain its functionality as a community playground.*
- *Repair the pathways and ensure they are linked throughout the park. Currently, the picnic pavilion at the south end of the park is not linked to a paved pathway and removed from it by about twenty feet of lawn; the pavilion on the north end is likewise separated from the paved pathway, however, this distance is only about two feet. Linking at least one of these amenities to a paved pathway should be a relatively high-impact, low-cost improvement.*

### ***Waterworks Park***

- *Remove the existing ball diamond. The existing ball diamond is extensively overgrown, and there has been no interest from local partners in its restoration.*

- Continue to work with the Ann Arbor Area Disc Induced Sports Club (A3 Disc) and/or other volunteers to ensure the disc golf course is maintained. Portions of the disc golf course are in disrepair, with several tees being very overgrown. The City could work with A3 Disc and other local disc golf stakeholders to hold clean-up days.
- Work with area stakeholders and potential partners such as Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation, dog-sitting or boarding services, and interested individuals to explore the need for, design of, and potential fundraising mechanisms for a dog park.



In recent years, the City has seen several groups come forward to explore the possibility of locating a dog park or off-leash run within the City, as the nearest runs are located 5-8 miles away in nearby Ann Arbor. Waterworks Park seems a natural fit, as it has a half-acre of unused open space that would be relatively easy to fence off. Other parks have been considered and rejected due to their lack of available parking, space, or neighborhood support. Although half an acre is well below the American Kennel Club recommended minimum size of one acre<sup>15</sup>, the dog park will likely draw mainly local users, due in part to its relatively secluded location and limited parking facilities. Preliminary research indicates that a clear parking area, a minimum 8' tall chain link fence with at least one airlock-style entrance/exit, a covered trash container, and clearly posted rules may well be the only physical components needed for a dog park. However, programmatic elements such as insurance, funding, fees, rule development, rule enforcement, and maintenance need to be worked out before construction.

<sup>15</sup> American Kennel Club. Government Relations Department, (2008). *Establishing a dog park in your community* (GLEG01). Retrieved from website: <http://classic.akc.org/pdfs/GLEG01.pdf>

### **Tot Lots and Mini-Parks**

- *Maintain and replace play equipment as needed.*

### **Border-to-Border Trail**

- *Ensure that the portions of the Border to Border trail that run through Frog Island and Riverside Parks are in good repair.* The Frog Island trails are to be reconstructed in 2020 with aid from Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission. Trails in Riverside Park also require reconstruction, but stormwater issues should be addressed prior to repaving.
- *Shift portions of the Border to Border trail that are split between bike lanes and sidewalks to shared-use paths wherever possible.* These splits are brief in some places – such as along Cornell Street – and much longer in others – such as along Lowell and Forest. Alternatives should be explored wherever possible; where alternatives do not exist, maintenance of both bike lanes and sidewalks should be a priority.
  - *Cornell:* In the long term, it may be advantageous to create a shared-use path along the south side of Huron River Drive from Westview to Cornell, making the existing rail-trail corridor a scenic loop, and taking the section of Cornell that is shared sidewalk and bike lane off the main path. In the short and medium term, however, work to ensure that the existing sidewalks and bike lanes are kept in good condition, and plan to complete the sidewalk gaps along Cornell south of Mayhew, connecting the neighborhood to the B2B trail.
  - *Huron River Drive, LeForge to Forest Street:* On Huron River Drive at LeForge, the shared-use path becomes a sidewalk. There is no bike lane at this location, although one does begin about 725 feet to the east, where eastbound Huron River Drive becomes a one-way pair comprised of Lowell St (south/eastbound) and Huron Street (north/westbound). The bike lane continues on Lowell, south/eastbound only, and ends about 100 feet short of the intersection. Forest connects this portion of the trail to the north end of Frog Island Park/Rice Street; it has bike lanes both ways. The space with neither on-street bike lanes or wide sidewalks and the intersection of Forest/Lowell are challenging for bicyclists to navigate safely at peak hour due to high volumes of fast-moving traffic; many bicyclists opt to cut through EMU instead and avoid this section entirely. A shared-use path should replace the sidewalk wherever feasible in this area, and could be paired with either future development or roadworks.
  - *Grove Road:* This section begins where the River’s Edge Trail intersects Grove, and continues south into Ypsilanti Township. Currently, it consists of a sidewalk and a bike lane; although Grove is a two-way road it only has a southbound bike lane. The City is working with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation to replace the sidewalk with shared-use path from the River’s Edge Trail south to just before the road bridge over I-94 in 2020, and working with WCPRC and MDOT on a separate project to connect this shared-use path with a safe pedestrian and bike crossing of I-94 at Grove, likely before 2022. Although the bike lane is continuous across the bridge, and there is sidewalk on part of the bridge structure, there is no connector between the bridge sidewalk and the sidewalk to the north, forcing pedestrians into the bike lane.
- *Link the Border-to-Border Trail with the parks and to the nonmotorized transportation system.* Robust connections between the parks, Ypsilanti’s nonmotorized transportation network, and the Border to Border Trail would provide for easy access to and through the

City and its parks by both visitors and residents. By connecting the Border to Border Trail with the parks not directly in its path, such as Parkridge, Recreation, and Candy Cane, via well-maintained sidewalks and bike lanes, we increase the accessibility of these parks. This is also a goal of the *Nonmotorized Transportation Plan (2010)*.

- *Continue to expand the City's bike lane and trail system, linking parks and the Border to Border Trail to the City's commercial and cultural centers, as well as to regional resources.*

### ***Huron River Shoreline***

- *Continue assembling access and/or conservation easements on private shoreline. This process relies on donations of easements by property owners. Crucial easements can be obtained on a project-by-project basis as funding allows. Easements for access should be particularly sought-after along the river where it would be advantageous for shared-use path construction, such as along the west shoreline of the Huron River south of Factory Street; conservation easements should be sought in other cases, such as across the river from Frog Island, Riverside, and River's Edge.*
- *Pursue opportunities to construct a riverfront trail system as they arise. The completion of a riverfront path between LeForge Road and Forest Avenue continues to be a long-term recreation goal that is not likely to be achieved in the near term, as does one linking River's Edge and Waterworks to Ford Lake. However, the incremental assembly of riverbank access and construction of trails will need to continue to enable completion. As access easements along the riverfront are obtained, work to integrate them with the nonmotorized system, constructing trails as possible.*
- *Consider development of certain City-owned properties along the Huron River, while preserving recreational access. The City and its assigns, such as the Ypsilanti Economic Development Corporation (YEDC), currently owns a vacant parcel at the end of Railroad Street, was acquired in 1994 from the MDNR by the YEDC. This parcel – or rather, portions of it – have recreation value due to its location along the Huron River and potential future use as a linkage between the Huron River shoreline trail and the Border to Border Trail in Frog Island. If and when this site is redeveloped, ensure that both the shoreline and the potential railway assets are protected and developed.*

## **GOAL 3: WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES TO CITY RESIDENTS**

One of the many strengths of Ypsilanti is its volunteers. Many individual volunteers, volunteer groups, nonprofits, and other organizations have come forth in the wake of ongoing budget cuts to help provide recreation programming, capital improvements funding, and maintenance in the City's parks. These efforts are greatly appreciated and widely admired in the community, but both these volunteers and the City have expressed a need for better coordination of activities and communication. 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, reduce duplication of effort, clarify responsibility for costs and maintenance, provide liability coverage, and ensure effective communication.

### **Objective 1: Improve relationships with entities that provide recreation opportunities within the City.**

- *Continue to formalize relationships wherein another entity is operating a city-owned facility. Currently, the Rutherford Pool, the Freighthouse, and the Parkridge Community Center are*

being operated by other entities under Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) for public uses. Such agreements set expectations for both parties and help to ensure continuity of services to the public. Maintain and pursue MOUs with partners as opportunities arise, including Ypsilanti Community Schools and the Ypsilanti Little League.

- *Continue to help provide resources to established partners, such as expertise, historical information, and joint purchasing where feasible.* Although this plan document contains information about the individual parks and the parks system as a whole, space and time limitations prevent us from going in to the detail that organizations may need. By being poised to help provide information to partners, the City can help partners be successful, but can only do so within the constraints of available staffing and other resources.
- *Work with adjacent schools, daycare centers, and other institutions in parks improvements and maintenance.* Parkridge, Prospect, and Recreation Parks are all immediately adjacent to Ypsilanti Community Schools buildings. Others, such as Riverside, Waterworks, and Frog Island, are adjacent to churches, senior housing, and businesses. Still others may provide valuable outdoor space to daycare centers or other community institutions. As primary users of the parks, the school district, parent groups, and student groups, and other neighbors should be involved in the future of those parks. These stakeholders may provide insight into how to implement various recommendations from this plan, and may also be partners in programming and maintenance.
- *Coordinate with neighboring communities and the County to implement regional planning goals.* This plan identifies a number of regional plans relevant to the provision of recreation to Ypsilanti residents and visitors. These plans address regional needs and approaches to open space, non-motorized transportation, and mass transit. The City's limited resources may in some cases be most effectively used to cooperatively work towards these region-wide goals.

## **Objective 2: Encourage volunteerism.**

- *Strengthen relationships with current volunteers and volunteer groups, and work to encourage new individual and group volunteers.* Currently, park adopters, neighborhood groups, and other volunteers receive sporadic feedback on project ideas and work, and are seldom recognized for their efforts. The PRC can work with staff to improve feedback and play a leadership role in working to strengthen the recruitment and recognition process.
- *Strengthen and streamline the Adopt-A-Park program.* The PRC launched the current Adopt-A-Park program in 2009. This has served the City well for organized groups who wish to perform recurring work in the parks, such as neighborhood associations, but is less suited to groups who wish to perform a single project or for individual one-time volunteers. Furthermore, the applications have no concrete standards for approval or denial: approval is at the discretion of the PRC and the Department of Public Services, who themselves often must defer to the local union due to lack of clarity in the current contract regarding volunteer activities in the parks. This system creates uncertainty in those who may be otherwise eager to volunteer, and delays in the approval process, limiting the number of willing volunteers. Work to create a standard list of projects that individual volunteers or small groups can undertake, create and share standards for successful applications, and work to streamline the application process for smaller projects, with union input and engagement throughout the process to ensure the process is clear and predictable for all stakeholders. Keeping track of past projects and noting where they have succeeded or failed can help both to inform this process and future projects.

- *Create a volunteer manager position, or merge volunteer management responsibilities with a new position that will also coordinate Special Events.* One of the key components of many of this plan’s objectives is a reliance on volunteer support and support from outside organizations. Currently, responsibility for working with volunteers is distributed: individual volunteers and smaller groups may coordinate directly with the Department of Public Services, or sometimes with DPS through the PRC via Adopt-A-Park. Events are coordinated through the Special Events Coordinator, but several recurring events, such as YALL, may also work directly with DPS. Other ongoing commitments are led by various other departments, such as YMCA’s use of the parks for day camps or the DTDCDC’s past efforts, coordinated through City Council and the City Manager’s Office. Prioritization of work is entirely based upon the volunteer group’s interest and ability; there is currently no concerted effort to recruit or direct volunteers to prioritized projects. This lack not only fails to further City goals, it can also lead volunteers to feel devalued and disengaged from the “big picture.”

Having one point of contact to help gather and disseminate information about City resources, volunteer opportunities, media and publicity information; to integrate volunteer work with larger, long-term goals; to coordinate the efforts of disparate groups operating in overlapping spheres; and to provide recognition and feedback to both volunteers and staff could help the system reach its full potential. A volunteer manager could also coordinate volunteering by those uninterested in the perceived long-term commitment of the Adopt-A-Park program. Furthermore, concentrating this work in one position- rather than spreading it amongst departments – reduces the risk of miscommunication or duplication of effort, as well as reduces staff opportunity costs. A skilled volunteer manager would be able to maximize the potential of existing volunteers, both individual and organizational, retain existing volunteers, and encourage new volunteers.

**Objective 3: Continue to improve the Special Events and park reservations program.**

- *Increase the visibility of and publicize the Special Events program.* By ensuring that policies and standards for organizational use of parks, such as day camps or other special events, from family reunions to the Michigan Brewer’s Fest, are public, clear, and consistent, the City has increased compliance with its standards and reduced confusion and misunderstandings. Although many of those who serve as liaisons for potential organizers, such as the Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, have been excellent partners in guiding events to the City’s events coordinator, there remains a knowledge gap with the general public. A press release, plus a Frequently Asked Questions page on the website regarding park reservations, special events, and recurring events, as well as signage in reservable spaces such as pavilions, ballfields, and the gazebo, may serve to increase use of this service,.
- *Ensure that the City website can be a resource to those seeking to volunteer, to reserve a park, or simply to find a park or an event.* The events and activities that take place in Ypsilanti’s parks and recreation facilities are numerous, organized by many groups, and diverse. Many survey respondents stated that they did not know about the parks in the system or the amenities available at them, with many stating that they felt more information would encourage them to use the parks and programs more. Making this and other information easy to find, in a centralized location, is important for success. The PRC can, alone or with community partners, inventory recreational programs; publicize opportunities to reserve parks or facilities for private events; network with and coordinate various efforts within the city; and otherwise assume a facilitating role.

- *Continue to work with well-established partners to support and promote recreation in the City.* Partnerships with entities such as EMU, WCC, Ypsilanti Community Schools, Ypsilanti Township, Washtenaw County, the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce, the Convention and Visitor's Bureau, the YMCA, and countless others have helped to ensure that there are recreation opportunities in Ypsilanti. The Convention and Visitors Bureau in particular is instrumental in attracting and retaining many of the city's most popular events, such as the Michigan Brewer's Guild Summer Beer Festival and the Color Run.
- *Consider making the Special Events Coordinator a full-time temporary/seasonal position, or possibly combining the duties of this position with that of a Volunteer Manager.* Due to the complexities of the events and the demands of coordinating many disparate stakeholders and City departments, Special Events require a significant amount of dedicated time and attention. As the duties of special events coordination have been assumed by the Police Administrative Services Manager, the process has improved significantly, but places a significant time demand on that position, and may not be sustainable in the long-term.

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**Figure 6.1: PRIORITIZATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

Criteria	Points Awarded
Is this project legally required?	20
Does this project align with or fulfill one of the stated goals of this plan?	10
Is the project a repair of an existing facility?	10
Is the project located in an area with an above-Ypsilanti-average concentration of...	
those living below the poverty level	5
the elderly	5
disabled persons	5
households with children	5
Is the project in an area not currently served by a similar park or facility? (choose only one)	
More than 1 mile away	5
More than ¾ mile away	4
More than ½ mile away	3
More than ¼ mile away	2
More than 1/8 mile away	1
Is the park or facility adjacent to a school or another public recreation facility?	5
Does the project remedy an issue that presents a significant barrier to <i>access</i> to the facility? (ex, curb cuts, paths, sidewalks)	5
Does the project remedy an issue that presents a significant barrier to <i>use</i> of the facility? (ex, bike parking, lighting, restrooms)	4
Does the project remedy a potential safety issue?	10
Has there been an incident(s) resulting in injury or property damage resulting from a deficiency in this project site, and would this project remedy that deficiency?	15
Is there outside (grant, partnership, etc) funding for the <i>total cost</i> of the project?	
The funding will pay for 100% of the project	5
The funding will pay for 75-100% of the project	4
The funding will pay for 50-75% of the project	3
The funding will pay for 25-50% of the project	2
The funding will pay for less than 25% of the project	1
Will this project have an impact upon the annual maintenance cost of the park or facility?	
Yes, the project will save more than 25% of the current annual maintenance budget for this park or facility	10
Yes, the project will save less than 25% of the current annual maintenance budget for this park or facility	5
This project will have little or no impact upon the current annual maintenance budget for this park or facility	0
This project will increase the cost of annual maintenance by less than 25% for this park or facility	-5
This project will increase the cost of annual maintenance by more than 25% for this park or facility	-10

# Chapter 6: Action Plan

## **PRIORITIZATION**

As Ypsilanti prepares to undertake the projects identified by this plan, it will need to prioritize. The questionnaire in Figure 6.1 may be useful in determining where to begin work, or how to evaluate projects as opportunities arise or budgets are decided. Projects which garner more points with “yes” answers are likely to have a more significant positive impact than those projects which garner fewer points with “no” answers. This questionnaire may also be useful when revisiting and revising this plan at the proscribed five-year intervals. The language in this questionnaire is designed to address not only financial ability or pressing facility repairs, but also to address issues of socioeconomic disparity, as provision of recreation infrastructure, or lack thereof, can often affect those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged to a much greater degree than those who are not, because their recreation choices may be far more constrained. However, this questionnaire should not be relied wholly upon to determine whether a project is worth pursuing.

## **POTENTIAL FUNDING APPROACHES**

General fund expenditures on recreation improvements and operations have been reduced from their peak of decades ago, with the minimum funding levels in recent years barely funding basic mowing, trash removal, and emergency maintenance of the parks. Sustainable financing for our parks and recreation system outside of the general fund should be pursued. Although many of these mechanisms below have been used by the City at some point in the past, some would require action by voters, in cooperation with another agency, or by a higher level of government.

The City’s parks budget, wholly funded from the general fund, currently supports a minimal level of maintenance, including grass cutting and trash removal. If play equipment or other amenities become unsafe or are too damaged to use, the budget can support emergency removal, but neither repair nor replacement. The vast majority of capital projects in the parks are funded through grants, donations, volunteer effort, one-time allocations, or a combination. No money is currently budgeted for recreation programming, or specifically towards accessibility improvements. It should be considered that accessibility improvements are currently only a requirement with new or changed facilities, generally; however, in the future they may be required even for older facilities constructed prior to the adoption of the ADA.

## **ONGOING FUNDING**

### **General Fund**

Currently, all park and recreation activities that are funded by the City are done so through the General Fund. The amount budgeted has stabilized over the past years, but if no other funding sources have been identified to address deferred maintenance needs, this amount can be expected to increase to address significant maintenance issues.

### **Dedicated Property Millage**

A property tax millage can be used to finance either specific park and recreation projects, such as parkland enhancements or the ongoing operation of recreation facilities. This option is available to local governments, counties, and regional authorities. The City of Ypsilanti does not currently levy a parks and recreation millage. At the current time, it appears that the current

parks maintenance budget is roughly equivalent to the amount generated by 0.5 mills. The City, however, is capped at the amount that it can levy for operations at this time; it may only pursue a levy to pay debt already accrued. By comparison, many neighboring communities do have a millage dedicated to parks and/or recreation.

### **Joint Recreational Authority**

As Ypsilanti residents use parks and recreation resources outside the community, and visitors from nearby communities use Ypsilanti's, regional cooperation could be explored. Chief among regional cooperation and funding models is a regional recreation authority, which could be formed with neighboring communities under Public Act 321 of 2000. This authority would have the ability to seek a regional millage, much as the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority has done, and would have the power to acquire, maintain, operate, and improve parks. As the authority's funding stream would be drawing funds from the same source as before- Ypsilanti's tax base, either via a general fund allocation from the City budget or via a direct millage- the primary benefit to this approach would be the regional coordination of resources and a more predictable revenue stream.

In the 1970s and '80s, The City participated in a joint recreation authority with Ypsilanti Township, called JYRO, limited to specific properties surrounding Ford Lake. Although the City and the Township could choose to participate together in another joint recreation authority, partners are not limited to those that share a geographic boundary, per the state act.

### **User Fees**

Some recreational activities lend themselves to support through user fees, and user fees are common for recreation facilities and programming locally, regionally, and even at state parks. User fees are fees that are charged to offset the cost of providing a space, service, or programming. Many survey respondents indicated that user fees could be a source of revenue for the parks.

The City and its partners do charge some user fees. Special events charges are user fees; as prior to claiming exclusive use of a park, pavilion, gazebo, or similar facility for any length of time, users must pay a fee. If additional services are required, such as police, fire, or waste removal, those too must be paid for. For certain classes of event that attract large numbers of people, or that serve alcohol, additional fees may be imposed to offset the additional wear and tear on the parks. Fees for such activities are set by the City Council annually.

As the capital improvement plan is updated, the fee schedule for special events should also be reviewed and updated to account for those costs. As bearing the entirety of capital improvements through user fees may result in prohibitively high fees, we recommend that the PRC determine a target percentage of capital improvement costs to fund via user fees when recommending special events and parks reservation fees to City Council.

Many of the City's facility-operating Friends groups charge user fees as well. The Friends of the Rutherford Pool charges fees for admissions, programs, and facility rental; the Friends of the Senior Center charges for programming and facility rental; and the Friends of the Ypsilanti Freighthouse charge a facility rental fee. The City does not have direct control over these fees, but could influence them, should it choose to alter terms of the memoranda of agreement under which such entities operate. These methods could include levying a fee on these entities to support capital improvement of the grounds, parking areas, or utilities, potentially causing user fees to be increased; requirements to establish a sliding fee scale for residents who cannot afford the full fee; or to establish a scholarship fund to ensure that residents who cannot afford fees at all can still participate.

Charging user fees is generally a fairly intuitive process and common experience, and was the second most popular potential revenue source discussed by survey respondents. Many 2014 respondents specifically mentioned adding fees that the City does not currently charge, including an annual pass or admission fee, similar to the Township and the State. Although this premise does have merit on its face, it is not a good fit for the City. The City prioritizes providing access to its parks for all residents, and a fee has the potential to exclude many. Furthermore, such a fee would likely bring in very little revenue: the City's parks are generally accessible by walking, biking, or taking the bus, and often have many entry points or permeable boundaries. However, user fees should be borne in mind, should the City expand its scope of services or park holdings.

### **Lease Arrangements and Concessions**

Some communities successfully lease parkland or particular operations to private companies. These leases can take a variety of forms, ranging from leasing a small corner of a park to site a cell tower, to paying for the right to run a commercial canoe livery from a public park, operate a concessionaire, or other similar uses. Since Ypsilanti's current parkland is limited, leasing portions of parkland to private concerns should be carefully considered to ensure that it does not impede the park's ability to serve the community, in addition to providing a service in high demand that the City cannot otherwise offer.

A clear and public process to evaluate any proposal to operate a private business on publicly-owned land should be followed. A three-step approach could be used to evaluate these proposals. First, the business interested in locating in a park should come before the PRC. The PRC can evaluate the proposal in the context of the Recreation Plan, current and past grant obligations, and other current projects, then make a recommendation to City Council as regards the proposal. City Council may then hear the proposal and decide whether to enter into an agreement with the business. Any agreement made between the business and the City should be made contingent upon the project receiving approval in the third, administrative step of the process; construction of new facilities or establishment of a new use, for instance, could require a Capital Improvements or site plan review by Planning Commission; building plan review, or even Michigan Department of Environmental Quality wetlands permit review. This or a similar process will help to ensure that opportunity for public involvement and scrutiny exists.

## **PROJECT-BASED**

### **Federal Funding Programs**

A number of federal programs provide money that may be used for recreation-related projects. For example, Ypsilanti has used **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** funds for facility repair and capital improvements; and **Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)** funds for the urban forestry initiative, including tree canopy inventory and tree nursery. Each of these funds is limited in the types of projects that it can be used for, and may place long-term obligations upon the projects funded.

### **State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grants**

The **Natural Resources Trust Fund (NRTF)** utilizes royalties from oil, gas, and other mineral developments on state-owned lands to help finance the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation facilities. Matching local funds are required in the amount of at least 25% of the total project cost. Two types of projects are supported by this grant: acquisition of land for outdoor recreation, and development of land for outdoor recreation. Both types of projects proposed under this program should be directed towards helping meet statewide goals, including natural

resource protection, water access, urban recreation, economic development, trails, and community recreation. A state-approved recreation plan is a prerequisite for applying for this grant.

The **Land and Water Conservation Fund** (LWCF) is funded at the federal level by receipts from offshore oil and natural gas. Grants are then made to states, which then may make grants to subordinate, units of government. In Michigan, the granting body is the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. This program provides funds on a 50/50 reimbursable matching basis for the development of outdoor recreation facilities. Funds are awarded once per year. The local share of a project can be cash, approved donations of service and material, credit for locally assumed costs, and/or donations after project approval. The minimum grant amount is \$15,000 and the maximum grant amount is \$500,000. A state-approved recreation plan is a prerequisite for applying for this grant.

The **Recreation Passport** grant program may only be used for local development projects. The program is focused on renovating and improving existing parks, but development of new parks is eligible. The grant amount changes from year to year depending upon the amount of revenue generated from sales of the Recreation Passport, which replaced the Motor Vehicle Permit for state park entrance in 2010. Matching funds are required in the amount of at least 25% of the total project cost. A state-approved recreation plan or current five-year capital improvements plan is a prerequisite for applying for this grant.

All of the above grants require that previously received Department of Natural Resources grants be in good standing. This means that all previously-funded improvements, be they trails or tennis courts, be in useful physical condition and in the form originally approved by the granting body. Should such a facility be closed, removed, or significantly altered, referred to as a “conversion” by the DNR, the City is obligated to restore it or replace it. Thus, DNR grants should not be sought to fund improvements that are not intended to be permanent. Furthermore, selling parkland that has been improved by a DNR grant is prohibited; and changing the use of any part of a DNR-funded park from outdoor or indoor recreation to another use is also prohibited. There are methods to remedy or address these issues, but such situations should be avoided.

### **Special Assessment Districts**

Although the majority of Ypsilanti’s budget is drawn from property taxes, the amount of tax-exempt land has a significant impact upon the City’s finances. As many tax-exempt properties benefit either directly or indirectly from the parks system, capturing monies to support access and improvements to these assets could offset free rider costs. One such tool to do so would be a special assessment district. A potential use for special assessments could be for improvements at the neighborhood tot lots, such as Edith Hefley, Charles Street, or Carrie Mattingly, where the benefits of improvements would overwhelmingly accrue to residents of the immediate neighborhoods. As the City has applied special assessment districts only sparingly in the past, and many of these parks may be relatively unknown, extensive neighborhood outreach would need to take place, and public support for the project and its scope would need to be garnered prior to any action.

### **Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority**

Two of the City’s Community Parks, Frog Island and Riverside, are wholly or partially within Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Tax Increment Finance (TIF) districts. Due to legislative restrictions, DDAs may only spend money within their boundaries, and only on projects described in their TIF plans, created when those TIFs were enacted. As such, the

potential the YDDA has to be involved in the parks system as a whole is constrained, but support can be sought for certain projects in Frog Island, the Freighthouse and Market Plaza, Riverside Arts Center, River's Edge, and portions of Riverside as they arise, provided they conform to goals set forth in the TIF plans. These TIF plans are available on the YDDA's website. As TIF plans are revised and renewed opportunities should be sought to integrate parks and recreation goals into the plan that support or complement DDA goals.

### **Leverage Private Development**

Private development can also help to satisfy the demand for a complete recreation system. As development occurs near desired amenities, such as planned right-of-ways for the Border-to-Border Trail or water resources such as the Huron River, the City can work with the developer to obtain access or conservation easements. Furthermore, if new multifamily residential development occurs, the City can work with the developer to ensure that adequate open space is provided and encourage the provision of outdoor play areas for children. As these arrangements tend to benefit the City, its inhabitants, and the developer, private developers are often willing to help provide these public goods.

### **Private Partnerships and Grants**

Businesses, corporations, private clubs, community organizations and individuals may contribute to recreation and other improvement programs to benefit their communities. Private sector contributions may be in the form of financial contributions; the donation of land, equipment, or facilities; or the provision of volunteer services.

A number of recent projects in Ypsilanti have been funded by donations or foundation grants made either to the City or private groups. The Friends groups attached to various facilities are almost entirely funded in this way, and a number of one-time projects are completed through grant funding.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

This section summarizes the overall system recommendations as well as specific improvements to specific parks, grouped by objective. Parks-specific improvements grouped by parks are listed with the parks in Chapter 3. Some are multi-year efforts that will involve time and coordination, while others are improvements that require largely monetary investment. Priorities should be reviewed annually by the Recreation Commission, and recommendations made by them to City Council. These priorities and recommendations should take into account updated findings and conditions, available funding sources, and volunteer or partner availability, interest, and involvement. Costs should be closely monitored, as the proposed plan estimates are simply that- rough estimates of price ranges. No quotes or bids have been solicited for any of these projects at this time. Actual costs for each project will be more specifically determined as site surveys and engineering or construction plans are develop, as applicable, as well as further analysis of the proposed improvement. If funding levels are lower than required to implement the Plan based on the schedule provided, the implementation could be stretched over additional years.

<b>PROJECT</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT</b>	<b>TIME TO COMPLETE</b>
<b>GOAL 1: ENSURE PARKS ARE ATTRACTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE</b>			
<b>Objective 1: Ensure safe routes to parks and recreation facilities from neighborhoods, schools, and business districts, for people of all ability levels.</b>			
Frog Island, Freighthouse & Market Plaza			
Construct pedestrian crossing from Frog Island parking to Freighthouse at Market Street.	\$	★	✓
Riverside Park			
Install bollards along drive (both sides) to prevent unauthorized access.	\$	★	✓
Construct ADA-compliant barrier-free access from street sidewalk at north and south ends of park.	\$	★	✓

**Cost:** \$ = <\$50,000; \$\$ = \$50-150,000; \$\$\$ = >\$150,000 | **Volunteer Involvement:** ★ = minimal, <25%; ★★ = moderate: 25-75%; ★★★ = high, >75%  
**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓✓ = 3-5 years; ✓✓✓ = >5 years; (∞) = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
<b>Recreation Park</b>			
Connect walking track to sidewalk along Woods Road at both east and west ends.	\$	★	✓
<b>Waterworks</b>			
Construct sidewalk along Catherine Street frontage; continue to Factory Street.	\$	★	✓
<b>Haab Brothers Memorial Park</b>			
Construct sidewalk on both sides, to Factory Street.	\$	★	✓ ✓
<b>North Bay Park</b>			
Construct accessible crossing of driveway north of bridge over I-94, and sidewalk from driveway to bridge.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓ ✓
<b>Objective 2: Ensure each park has a visible presence, entrance, and sign on adjacent rights-of-way.</b>			
<b>All Parks</b>			
Design and place consistent signage about rules, hours, and other information for each park.	\$	★	✓
<b>Riverside Park</b>			
Install signage at Riverside Arts Center entrance; improve visibility.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓
<b>Frog Island</b>			
Place signage at center parking lot entrance.	\$	★	✓

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓✓ = 3-5 years; ✓✓✓ = >5 years; (∞) = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Relocate north entrance signage as part of 2020 project.	\$	★	✓
<b>Parkridge</b>			
Landscape and improve access at south Hawkins entrance.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓
<b>Peninsular</b>			
Repair and consider reorienting the LeForge Street signage to be legible to vehicular traffic.	\$	★	✓
<b>Prospect</b>			
Install signage at the Prospect/Cross corner as well as the Oak/Prospect corner, consistent with signage at other locations, to distinguish this location as a public park.	\$	★	✓
Install secondary park identification signage at the parking lot on the southeast corner of the park, near the parking lot.	\$	★	✓
<b>The Spanish-American War Memorial, Edith Hefley Tot Lot, Ainsworth Park, Carrie R Mattingly Tot Lot, and the Haab Brothers Memorial Park</b>			
Install signage indicating that these are public parks, consistent with signage at other locations.	\$\$	★	✓
<b>Pavilions, gazebos, and other rentable or reservable facilities.</b>			

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓✓ = 3-5 years; ✓✓✓ = >5 years; (∞) = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Install small signs or notices advertising the reservation system.	\$	★★	✓
<b>Nonmotorized connections</b>			
Evaluate City-owned parcels for their ability to serve as nonmotorized connections between neighborhoods.	\$	★★	✓ ✓
Provide signage for those parcels determined to be needful to serve a nonmotorized transportation purpose.	\$	★	✓
<b>Objective 3: Ensure that each park presents a well-maintained and clean image.</b>			
Improve maintenance, either through engaging additional volunteers, adding staff time, or a combination of both.			
Regular annual or seasonal inspections should be performed with an eye for cosmetic and other issues that can be addressed by volunteers.	\$	★★★	()
Regular scraping and repainting of structures and facilities, either by volunteers or as part of an annual cleanup event, should be encouraged.	\$	★★★	()
Integrate volunteer efforts into long-term landscaping plans.	\$	★★★	()

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓ ✓ = 3-5 years; ✓ ✓ ✓ = >5 years; () = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Improve waste collection in all parks.			
Regularly evaluate location and number of trash receptacles; eliminate those in low-volume or inaccessible areas and add more where need seems to be greater.	\$	★	()
Engage volunteers or service groups for periodic litter cleanup days.	\$	★★★	()
Encourage special events to make use of non-profit or service organizations in post-event clean-up efforts.	\$	★★★	()
Encourage special events to coordinate with ZeroWaste efforts.	\$	★★★	()

**Objective 4: Ensure all parks, park shelters, trails, and other facilities are physically accessible to people of all ages and ability levels.**

Riverside Park

Provide barrier-free access at north and west entrances.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓ ✓
Link pavilion to trails.	\$	★	✓
Mark additional barrier-free spaces in parking areas.	\$	★	✓
When reconstructing trails, bring to current barrier-free standards.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓ ✓

**Cost:** \$ = <\$50,000; \$\$ = \$50-150,000; \$\$\$ = >\$150,000 | **Volunteer Involvement:** ★ = minimal, <25%; ★★ = moderate: 25-75%; ★★★ = high, >75%  
**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓ ✓ = 3-5 years; ✓ ✓ ✓ = >5 years; () = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Frog Island Park			
Provide barrier-free access at north, east (center) and south entrances.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓ ✓
Improve parking area; provide additional barrier-free spaces.	\$\$\$	★	✓ ✓
When reconstructing trails, bring to current barrier-free standards.	\$\$\$	★	✓
Recreation Park			
Provide additional barrier-free spaces near facilities, such as playgrounds, Senior Center, and the Rutherford Pool.	\$	★	✓
When reconstructing trails, bring to current barrier-free standards.	\$\$	★	✓
Upgrade play area and surfacing to barrier-free standards.	\$\$	★★	✓
Pave walking path and connect to sidewalk system to the south	\$\$	★	✓ ✓
Parkridge Park			
Provide barrier-free access at south Hawkins entrance.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓ ✓
Link pavilion to trails.	\$\$	★	✓
When reconstructing trails, bring to current barrier-free standards.	\$\$\$	★	✓
Upgrade play area and surfacing to barrier-free standards.	\$\$\$	★★	✓

**Cost:** \$ = <\$50,000; \$\$ = \$50-150,000; \$\$\$ = >\$150,000 | **Volunteer Involvement:** ★ = minimal, <25%; ★★ = moderate: 25-75%; ★★★ = high, >75%  
**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓✓ = 3-5 years; ✓✓✓ = >5 years; (∞) = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Candy Cane Park			
Provide barrier-free access at south and north entrances.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓
Provide handicap placard parking.	\$\$	★	✓
Create a paved path linking north & south ends of park, pavilion, and play area.	\$\$	★	✓
Upgrade play area and surfacing to barrier-free standards; provide barrier-free access.	\$\$\$	★★	✓
Peninsular Park			
Provide barrier-free access from LeForge.	\$\$\$	★★	✓ ✓ ✓
When constructing or reconstructing trails, bring to current barrier-free standards.	\$	★	✓
Link pavilion to trails.	\$	★	✓
Improve parking area; provide barrier-free spaces.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓
Provide barrier-free access to dock	\$\$\$	★	✓ ✓ ✓
Prospect Park			
Provide barrier-free access from entrances to south pavilion and link to trail.	\$\$	★	✓
Improve parking area at south-east corner; provide barrier-free spaces.	\$\$\$	★	✓ ✓
Work with YCS to upgrade the play area and its surfacing to barrier-free standards.	\$\$	★★	✓

**Cost:** \$ = <\$50,000; \$\$ = \$50-150,000; \$\$\$ = >\$150,000 | **Volunteer Involvement:** ★ = minimal, <25%; ★★ = moderate: 25-75%; ★★★ = high, >75%  
**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓ ✓ = 3-5 years; ✓ ✓ ✓ = >5 years; (∞) = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Pave sidewalk along south side of Oak, Vought to Charles	\$\$	★	✓
Waterworks Park			
Provide sidewalk along east side of Catherine.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓
Improve parking area; provide barrier-free spaces.	\$\$\$	★	✓ ✓

## GOAL 2: PROVIDE PARKS THAT MEET YPSILANTI'S RECREATION NEEDS

### Objective 1: Ensure existing facilities can continue to meet the needs of park users.

Develop a parks-specific maintenance and capital improvement plan, to be integrated with the larger City-wide Capital Improvements Plan.	\$\$	★	✓
Continue to perform regular, scheduled safety inspections of playground and sports equipment, repairing, removing, or replacing equipment as necessary and as resources permit.	\$	★	()
Perform annual safety inspections of picnic pavilions.	\$	★	()
Perform annual or seasonal inspections of electrical systems used in festivals and events.	\$	★	()
Institute a “move in and move out” checklist for large events, such as Class III and IV events.	\$	★	✓

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓ ✓ = 3-5 years; ✓ ✓ ✓ = >5 years; () = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Work with Friends groups, Adopters, and regular event-holders to help ensure the ongoing maintenance of facilities.	\$	★★★	()
Address ongoing stormwater issues in Riverside, Frog Island, and Recreation Parks.	\$\$\$	★★	✓ ✓ ✓
Clarify boundary between Parkridge Park and Perry School.	\$	★	✓ ✓ ✓
Consider installing an intergenerational playground in Recreation Park, adjacent to and with the aid of the Senior Center.	\$\$	★★	✓ ✓
Consider installing a dog park in Waterworks Park.	\$\$	★★	✓ ✓
Work with the Ypsi-Arbor Little League to develop plans for continuing use of Recreation Park and Candy Cane Park, including scoreboard installation or replacement, fencing improvements, lighting improvements, and ballfield improvements.	\$\$	★★	✓ ✓
Continue to work with the adjoining public schools to ensure that children have safe, accessible, and appropriately challenging places to play during the school year and year round.	\$\$	★★	()
Continue to expand the network of shared use paths and connectors.	\$\$	★	()

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓ ✓ = 3-5 years; ✓ ✓ ✓ = >5 years; () = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
<b>Objective 2: Ensure that parks are safe and appear to be safe.</b>			
Lighting should be consistently provided in parks.			
Community Parks			
Provide lighting under pavilions, at entrances, and along paths at Riverside, Frog Island, Recreation, and Parkridge Parks.	\$\$\$	★★	✓ ✓ ✓
Neighborhood Parks			
Provide lighting under pavilions, at entrances, and along paths; these lights can be motion-sensitive, photocell, on a timer, or a combination.	\$\$\$	★★	✓ ✓ ✓
Mini-parks			
Evaluate the need for lighting on a per-park basis.	\$\$	★★	✓ ✓ ✓
Improve sightlines			
Clear brush at entrances, bends in trails, and at park borders.	\$\$	★★★	()
When renovating or replacing pavilions, maintain at least three open sides.	\$\$\$	★	()
Redesign area at top of Riverside Arts Center/Riverside Park stairway to improve visibility and feelings of safety.	\$\$\$	★	✓ ✓

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓ ✓ = 3-5 years; ✓ ✓ ✓ = >5 years; () = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Address vandalism issues promptly and thoroughly.	\$	★★	()
Create standards for amplified sound in Frog Island and other parks to ensure compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.	\$	★★	✓
<b>Objective 3: Provide upgrades to the parks that increase their long-term durability and reduce operation costs.</b>			
When renovating pavilions or other structures in the parks, consider long-term maintenance and operating costs as well as the initial cost.	\$	★	()
Consider replacing decommissioned restrooms with accessible and durable facilities, either permanent or seasonal.	\$\$\$	★★	✓ ✓ ✓
Use landscaping to beautify the parks, help to provide shade, improve the ecology of the parks, and offset stormwater impacts.			
Remove invasive species, and replace with gardened spaces.	\$	★★★	✓ ✓
Pursue streambank restoration.	\$\$	★★	✓ ✓
Investigate slope stabilization plantings for Frog Island, Riverside, Peninsular, and Parkridge Parks.	\$\$	★★	✓ ✓
Work to install shade tree plantings adjacent to play and picnic areas.	\$\$	★★★	✓
Use raingardens to control stormwater and drainage issues; work with skilled volunteers to install and maintain.	\$\$	★★	✓ ✓

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓ ✓ = 3-5 years; ✓ ✓ ✓ = >5 years; () = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Plant trees to replace those lost in the past decade.	\$\$	★★	()
<b>Objective 4: Provide upgrades to the parks that increase recreation opportunities.</b>			
Ensure each park has sufficient benches, picnic tables, waste cans, dog waste stations, lighting, barrier-free parking, and bike parking.	\$\$	★★★	()
Ensure each park has sufficient trees.	\$\$	★★	()
Ensure each park's attractions are accessible.	\$\$	★	()
Riverside			
Pursue implementation of the vision proposed in the 2008 Parks & Recreation Master Plan, particularly stormwater improvements and trail repair, and consider updating the site plan.	\$\$\$	★★	()
Frog Island			
Pursue implementation of the vision proposed in the 2008 Parks & Recreation Master Plan, and consider updating the site plan.	\$\$\$	★★	()
Recreation Park			
Pave walking path around park; ensure that the path width is a consistent ten feet wide and that the grade meets accessibility standards.	\$\$\$	★	✓✓

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓✓ = 3-5 years; ✓✓✓ = >5 years; () = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Resurface former tennis courts- currently basketball courts.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓
Work to improve stormwater drainage in the open playing fields to the south of the Rutherford Pool and baseball fields.	\$\$\$	★	✓ ✓
Repair or remove nonfunctional lighting poles.	\$	★	✓
Repair or replace outfield fencing, work with Little League to ensure adequate fencing is provided.	\$	★★★	✓
Stripe additional barrier-free spaces in both parking lots.	\$	★	✓
<b>Parkridge Park</b>			
Install picnic tables &/or benches and shade trees near the play area in southwest area of the park.	\$\$	★★★	✓
Update the play area; expand the playground facilities and ensure they are accessible and appeal to a broad range of ages and abilities.	\$\$	★★★	✓ ✓
Finish and landscape the parking area off of Monroe Street, or close curb cut and use as pedestrian entrances.	\$\$\$	★★	✓ ✓ ✓
Create ADA-accessible connections to Monroe Street via paved pathways.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓ ✓ = 3-5 years; ✓ ✓ ✓ = >5 years; (∞) = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Provide needed repairs to ballfield, basketball courts, tennis courts, and pavilion; remove disused sand volleyball court.	\$	★	✓ ✓
Candy Cane			
Install an accessible pathway through Candy Cane, linking the pavilion, the existing sidewalk to the north, the playground, and the sidewalk to the south.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓
Replace play equipment.	\$\$	★★★	✓
Work with Little League to provide needed updates to the ballfield.	\$	★★★	✓ ✓
Work with partners to mark historic Little League/Carolyn King events.	\$	★★★	✓
Peninsular Park			
Remove the dam.	\$\$\$	★★	✓ ✓ ✓
Create a barrier-free walking path along the Huron River.	\$\$	★	✓ ✓ ✓
Install an accessible canoe/kayak launch.	\$\$\$	★★	✓ ✓ ✓

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓ ✓ = 3-5 years; ✓ ✓ ✓ = >5 years; (∞) = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Work with local stakeholders such as volunteer groups to install functional plantings, such as butterfly/pollinator gardens and raingardens, as well as interpretive and educational signage.	\$	★★★	✓✓
Following dam removal, work to restore the newly exposed impoundment area.	\$\$	★★★	✓✓
Seek a private partner for re-use of the historic Powerhouse.	\$	★	( )
Repair the access to the concrete dock downstream of the dam, and add an accessible path to the dock.	\$\$\$	★	✓✓
Prospect Park			
Work with YCS to ensure the play equipment is maintained and replaced as needed.	\$	★	✓
Continue to work with YCS on other projects to improve the park's functionality as both a school playground and a community playground.	\$\$	★★★	( )
Work with the skate park volunteer group on maintenance, improvement, and expansion projects.	\$	★★★	( )
Repair the existing basketball courts.	\$	★	✓
Repair the pathways and ensure they are linked throughout the park.	\$	★	✓

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓✓ = 3-5 years; ✓✓✓ = >5 years; ( ) = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
<b>Waterworks Park</b>			
Continue to work with the Ypsilanti American Little League and private partners to renovate the existing ball diamond.	\$	★★★	()
Continue to work with the Ann Arbor Area Disc Induced Sports Club (A3 Disc) to ensure the disc golf course is maintained.	\$	★★★	()
Work with area stakeholders and potential partners to explore the need for, design of, and potential fundraising mechanisms for a dog park.	\$\$	★★★	✓ ✓ ✓
<b>Tot Lots and Mini-Parks</b>			
Maintain and replace play equipment as needed.	\$\$	★★★	()
<b>Border-to-Border Trail</b>			
Repair and maintain the portions of the Border to Border trail that run through Frog Island and Riverside Parks.	\$\$\$	★	✓ ✓
Shift portions of the Border to Border trail that are split between bike lanes and sidewalks to shared-use paths wherever possible.	\$\$\$	★	✓ ✓ ✓
Link the Border-to-Border Trail with the parks and to the nonmotorized transportation system.	\$\$\$	★	()

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓ ✓ = 3-5 years; ✓ ✓ ✓ = >5 years; () = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Continue to expand the City's bike lane and trail system, linking parks and the B2B Trail to the City's commercial and cultural centers, as well as to regional resources.	\$\$\$	★★	()
Huron River Shoreline			
Continue assembling access and/or conservation easements on private shoreline.	\$	★★★	()
Pursue opportunities to construct a riverfront trail system as they arise.	\$\$	★★★	()
<b>GOAL 3: WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES TO CITY RESIDENTS</b>			
<b>Objective 1: Improve relationships with entities that provide recreation opportunities within the City.</b>			
Continue to formalize relationships wherein another entity is operating a city-owned facility.	\$	★★★	()
Continue to help provide resources to established partners, such as expertise, historical information, and joint purchasing where feasible.	\$\$	★★★	()
Work with adjacent schools, daycare centers, and other institutions in parks improvements and maintenance.	\$	★★★	()

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**Time to Complete:** ✓ = 1-3 years; ✓✓ = 3-5 years; ✓✓✓ = >5 years; () = ongoing

PROJECT	COST	VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT	TIME TO COMPLETE
Coordinate with neighboring communities and the County to implement regional planning goals.	\$	★★★	()
<b>Objective 2: Encourage volunteerism.</b>			
Strengthen and streamline the Adopt-A-Park program.	\$	★★★	()
Create a volunteer manager position, or merge volunteer management responsibilities with a new position that will also coordinate Special Events.	\$	★★	✓✓
<b>Objective 3: Continue to improve the Special Events and park reservations program.</b>			
Increase the visibility of and publicize the Special Events program.	\$	★★	✓
Ensure that the City website can be a resource to those seeking to volunteer, to reserve a park, or simply to find a park or an event.	\$	★★	()
Continue to work with well-established partners to support and promote recreation in the City.	\$	★★★	()

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