

What am I hearing about a possible partnership?

Bloomfield Hills Schools (BHS) and Oakland County Parks (OCP) have been exploring an intergovernmental partnership to support and strengthen Bowers School Farm and the Johnson Nature Center.

The result from those conversations is two 30-year operating agreements, one for Bowers School Farm and one for Johnson Nature Center. Under terms of the agreement:

- Ownership remains with Bloomfield Hills Schools.
- Operations transfer to Oakland County Parks, including staffing authority and day-to-day management responsibility.
- Bloomfield Hills Schools will provide \$1.5 million toward stabilization of existing conditions at Bowers School Farm prior to OCP assuming operations.
- Oakland County Parks is committed to not less than \$1.5 million toward public access and recreation improvements across both sites, to be expended within two years of full transition.
- Bloomfield Hills Schools will continue to have priority access for educational programming while broader community use will be expanded.
- Bloomfield Hills Schools will retain access to Bowers School Farm where educational pathway programming for students will continue to grow.

What is the status of the conversation?

The Bloomfield Hills Board of Education unanimously approved a resolution on March 23 to enter into the two separate interlocal agreements with the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners approved each agreement on April 8.

What are the benefits of this partnership?

This partnership will:

- Ensure long-term sustainability and environmental stewardship of both properties.
- Bring in new facility and infrastructure investments and improvements.
- Offer more programs and activities for families.
- Preserve educational access for Bloomfield Hills students while expanding broader community use.
- Combine BHS's commitment to education and community with Oakland County Park's recreation expertise.
- Help win state and federal grants that require joint ownership.

Will this increase my taxes?

No. The agreements will not raise taxes.

How long will the partnership last?

The partnership agreements are for 30 years. Long-term agreements allow BHS and OCP to jointly apply for state and federal grants, bringing additional resources to enhance and sustain the Farm and Nature Center.

Why does this make sense for Oakland County Parks?

Oakland County Parks is committed to delivering increased value to residents by expanding access to recreation, education, and nature. Partnering with BHS on Bowers School Farm and Johnson Nature Center will:

- Strengthen OCP's mission to connect people with outdoor learning and recreation.
- Extend services into an area of the county that currently has limited OCP presence.
- Leverage county resources to invest in and sustain two well-loved community destinations.
- Ensure that more families and students benefit from high-quality programs and facilities.
- Expand offerings as both sites contain the core components of successful park destinations: a nature center, a working educational farm, event programming and year-round attractions such as Winter Park.
- Reinforce educational and park missions with assets built by the school district that align naturally with park system operations.
- Provide complementary use of environmental education, agricultural learning, outdoor recreation and stewardship. A student visiting on a field trip and a family visiting on a weekend are seeking many of the same experiences.

Why does this make sense for BHS?

This partnership will bring important resources to preserve and enhance these treasured spaces, while expanding recreational opportunities and addressing long-term facility needs.

Will current programs change?

This intergovernmental partnership is designed to strengthen long-term sustainability and expand offerings. It will help fund new programming, improve accessibility and provide essential operational investments and maintenance.

Will the Farm and Nature Center be shared more widely with the public?

These spaces already serve the broader community through school field trips, camps and public events. The partnership may maintain or expand these already established experiences.

Where do things stand now?

Bloomfield Hills Schools and Oakland County Parks are in a transition period that will end on June 30, 2026, but if both parties are agreeable, it can be extended to Sept. 30, 2026.

During this transition period, both organizations will work to facilitate the transfer of park planning, management, maintenance and operations to Oakland County Parks. A park action plan, capital improvement plan and operations and management plan will be developed.

No capital improvement projects will be started during this time of transition as either party can terminate the agreement, without liability, prior to the end of the transition period.