

CHAPTER 1

Executive Summary

Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to the *Five-Year Park and Recreation Master Plan 2013-2017*. The *Recreation Plan* is designed to guide the staff and decision makers of the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission (OCPRC) over the next five years as they provide park and recreation services to the residents of Oakland County and strive to improve the social, environmental and fiscal sustainability of the parks system. This commitment to excellence is captured in the mission of the organization:

“The Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission is dedicated to providing quality recreation experiences that encourage healthy lifestyles, support economic prosperity, and promote the protection of natural resources.”

A fundamental goal of the Parks Commission is to increase public participation in Oakland County Parks and Recreation while increasing cost recovery organization-wide.

Recreation Plan Process

Completion of the *Recreation Plan* is an important milestone in OCPRC’s effort to develop an integrated in-house planning process. Within this process, the responsibility for the overall planning process and major products is held by OCPRC staff, with assistance from consultants for specific planning efforts. Over the next five years, this will result in a “Planning Portfolio” that integrates planning at all levels (park system, park, facility, and project) and incorporates system-wide plans for technology and other support services.

The planning process for this Recreation Plan was facilitated by the six-member Master Planning Team and guided by input from the public, Parks Commission and staff (50 staff members from all units of OCPRC directly participated in the planning process). Plan development was guided by the *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans* provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). (See Chapter 7: Planning Process).

Advances in the Last Five Years

Adoption of this *Recreation Plan* by the Parks Commission marks the midpoint in OCPRC’s progress in implementing the *2008 Strategic Plan*. The comprehensive strategic planning process that occurred 2006-08 culminated in major advances for OCPRC. Here are a few examples:

- The effectiveness of the departments that support the delivery of park and recreation services is enhanced by a reorganized staff structure (*Ch. 3, pp. 3-5*), new asset management and point-of-sale tracking mechanisms (*Ch. 4, pp. 14*), and new investment in technology (*Ch. 8, pp.30*).
- By designing the delivery of recreational programs and services around core program areas, such as volunteer services, nature education and adaptive recreation, OCPRC is now able to provide services where they are most needed, such as within urbanized areas, and not only within the boundaries of Oakland County Parks (*Ch. 5, pp. 14-16*).

- Prioritized 15-year forecasts for infrastructure improvements are helping ensure that Oakland County Parks will continue to provide residents with safe, up-to-date, and accessible recreational facilities (*App. A, pp. 131-150*).
- And OCPRC's commitment to science-based natural resources management in Oakland County Parks and participation in regional stewardship initiatives is its promise to future generations that the woodlands, wetlands and grasslands that are Oakland County's natural heritage are here to stay (*Ch. 7, pp. 45-51*).

This *Recreation Plan*, with its strategic action plan (*Ch. 9, pp. 9-44*), effectively updates the goals and strategies of the *2008 Strategic Plan*; continued implementation of the *2008 Strategic Plan* will be accomplished through implementation of this *Recreation Plan*.

Relevance to State and Federal Programs and Initiatives

Acquisition of land and development of recreational facilities over the 46-year history of the Oakland County Parks system has been greatly assisted by funding from the State of Michigan through its grant programs, including the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) (*See Appendix C: Grant Inventory*). Adoption of this *Recreation Plan* is a requirement for eligibility to submit grant applications to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) grant programs.

Two major planning documents from the State of Michigan were released in 2012. The Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel released its recommendations on Michigan's system of parks and recreational facilities; and MDNR released the *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2013-2018* (SCORP). The SCORP is a five-year strategic plan designed to help shape investment by the state and local communities in recreation and a tool that guides Michigan's participation with federal initiatives, such as President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative. Reference to Michigan's major planning documents will be invaluable as OCPRC implements this *Recreation Plan* and will help ensure that OCPRC's actions work hand-in-hand with the state and federal initiatives that promote health and wellness, economic prosperity, and a strengthened regional identity.

Looking Forward

Land and Natural Resource Management

Land acquisition strategies that focus on opportunities to protect and restore natural areas, protect water quality, and increase or establish trail and green infrastructure continue to be a priority. Urbanized areas of Oakland County, however, have limited potential for this traditional acquisition focus and OCPRC is expanding its acquisition vision to include exploring opportunities for redevelopment and adaptive re-use of sites where development or other disturbances have already occurred. Effective natural resource management of Oakland County Parks is a key element of implementing the Green Infrastructure Vision of Oakland County and, OCPRC, through its Natural Resource Management program, will continue to increase the proportion of the natural areas within its parks that are being actively managed for the purpose of increasing biological diversity, protecting water resources, and controlling invasive species. (*See Chapter 9: Strategic Action Plan, pp. 9-11 for the Land and Natural Resource Management action program; See Chapter 5: Recreational Resources and Chapter 6: Land Acquisition and Management for information supporting the action program*).

Recreation Facilities

Recent advances in OCPRC's planning process will continue over the next five years with all parks undergoing the park master planning process and new implementation and business planning processes that acknowledge the uniqueness of various facility types. Accessibility of all aspects of the parks system will be enhanced by the

development and implementation of an Accessibility Transition Plan that considers facility, programming, information and other aspects of accessibility. Trail development will be assisted by the development of trail standards and their application to all trail projects.

Planning for specific park improvements is an important function of the Recreation Plan and is based on existing capital improvement and major maintenance plans and facility concept documents. All projects proposed in the Recreation Plan will undergo detailed facility planning and are subject to the review and approval by the Parks Commission before implementation. Here are some highlights of proposed park improvements over the next five years:

- Addison Oaks – boathouse replacement, new picnic pavilions, installation of yurts, and establishment of trail connectivity with the Polly Ann Trail; potential dog park development; park master planning process is scheduled for 2013
- Catalpa Oaks – completion of playing fields and parking lots that complement the newly-constructed accessible concession, restrooms and play areas
- Glen Oaks – installation of a new putting green; improvements to infrastructure, including construction of a new bridge of the Pebble Creek Drain; park master planning process is scheduled for 2015
- Groveland Oaks – replacement of play structure and concession; installation of yurts; potential dog park development; restroom and shower renovations, construction of fishing docks; new campground and day use restrooms; park master planning process is scheduled for 2013
- Highland Oaks – design and construction of parking lot; trail development; dock construction; park master planning process is scheduled for 2014
- Independence Oaks – boat house and launch construction; boardwalk and trail construction; estate house remodel; picnic shelter; fishing dock replacement; park master planning process is scheduled for 2014
- Lyon Oaks – new contact station; cricket field and dog park lighting; small dog park pavilion; park master planning process is scheduled for 2015
- Orion Oaks – dog park pavilion; pole barn construction; park master planning process is scheduled for 2016
- Red Oaks – dog park and golf course stormwater reclamation; dog park shade structures; walking/biking trails; waterpark security system and shade structures; facility planning process is scheduled for 2013
- Rose Oaks – trail development; park master planning process is scheduled for 2016
- Springfield Oaks – bleacher replacement; potential dog park development; restroom/shower replacement; fishing pond/storm water system renovation; Davisburg Dam improvements; park master planning process is scheduled for 2013
- Waterford Oaks – dog park development; picnic pavilions; toboggan run repairs; new waterpark feature (to be determined), pavilion, and bathhouse improvements; county market improvements; irrigation improvements; and storm water management improvements; facility planning process is scheduled for 2013
- White Lake Oaks – first tee renovation; addition of maintenance and storage buildings; park master planning process is scheduled for 2015

(See Chapter 9: Strategic Action Plan, pp. 12-25 for the Recreation Facilities action program; See Chapter 5: Recreational Resources and Chapter 7: Planning Process for information supporting the action program)

Recreation Programs and Services

Planning for recreation programs and services includes park programs that are facilitated by operations staff, such as campground, greenhouse/horticulture, county market, golf, and dog park programs. Staff of the Recreation Programs and Services unit of OCPRC supports these programs as well as facilitating programs and events in the parks and out in the community. The overall planning focus is on targeted geographic distribution of services and the delivery of services to all age groups. The concept of core service areas will continue to apply specialized skills and equipment to the delivery of programs and events to the residents of Oakland County. Proposed advances in core service areas include:

- Adaptive Recreation Programs – expanded collaboration with accessibility partners; development of a Adaptive Recreation Resource Guide; new programs for autism, developmental disabilities, and disabled veterans
- Volunteer Services – updates to Volunteer Manual; creation of Volunteer Management Manual with staff guidelines for effective volunteer management
- Nature Education and Interpretation – creation of Nature Education Programs and Services Plan; renovation of exhibit collections; development of new partnerships
- Special Events – development of “Signature Events” and increased partnership planning and tracking of the outreach impacts of all special events
- Mobile Recreation and Outreach – planning focus on the geographic distribution of mobile recreation services, evaluation of mobile recreation inventory; and review of standards for safety and compliance

(See Chapter 9: Strategic Action Plan, pp. 13-34 for the Recreation Programs and Services action program; See Chapter 5: Recreational Resources and Chapter 7: Planning Process for information supporting the action program)

Organizational Sustainability

Organizational sustainability is moved forward first and foremost by continued actions to develop an effective organizational structure and support staff with training and career development, clear performance and customer service standards, and effective management. Advances in technology will continue, including expanded use of asset management and point-of-sale tracking tools and the availability of technology that improves and enhances the park experience, such as wireless networks, online reservation systems, and multi-media tours.

Knowledge by the public of OCPRC’s recreational resources and opportunities will be enhanced by a new branding strategy, followed by updated signs for wayfinding and interpretation that will put a fresh face on OCPRC’s parks and facilities. Effective collection of public input paired with a thoughtful response to that input is the desired outcome of a comprehensive public engagement strategy, which will integrate the county-wide needs assessment with the surveys, focus groups, partner interviews and other tools that are used to inform and guide park, facility and program plans.

In addition to continued increases in the management of natural resources, OCPRC will reduce the environmental impact of Oakland County Parks through a series of actions that reduce energy usage, promote recycling, utilize environmentally-friendly materials, and prevent pollution.

Fiscal sustainability actions are important to OCPRC’s stewardship of public funds. It will be improved through the development of a service portfolio that establishes cost recovery targets for all park and recreation services and management guidelines to assist staff in achieving desired outcomes. An integrated contributions program will support all areas of the organization as they work to increase cost-effectiveness by identifying alternate funding sources, such as grants, donations, and sponsorships.

(See Chapter 9: Strategic Action Plan, pp. 35-44 for the Organizational Sustainability action program; See Chapter 3: Organizational Structure, Chapter 4: Budget and Finance and Chapter 7: Planning Process for information supporting the action program)

Evaluation of Outcomes

The design of the *Recreation Plan* is focused on planning for specific outcomes that are measurable and linked with timelines. OCPRC will measure progress on achieving specific outcomes at two levels (*See Chapter 9: Strategic Action Plan*). The Tracking Metrics provided in the action matrices will be used internally to assist staff in tracking progress at completing specific deliverables. The Performance Metrics will measure the impact of OCPRC actions on larger organizational outcomes and set targets for changes in those outcomes. Examples include participation, cost recovery, area of land under active management, and geographic distribution of services. The Performance Metrics are currently under development, as well as a Dashboard reporting mechanism that will be used to report to the Parks Commission and the public on a quarterly and annual basis.

This page left intentionally blank