

# Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

Adopted March 8, 2011

2011-2015



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## Chapter One: Introduction

Parks and recreation services enhance a community's quality of life. Schools, private businesses, and County, State and regional parks all add to the parks and recreation choices available to residents. In order to maintain and improve the quality of life for its residents, the Township must take an active role in the delivery of recreation opportunities.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to guide decision makers with the future development and improvement of the Township's parks, recreation facilities, and programs. This 2010 update includes an evaluation of parks, facilities and programming to determine where improvements can be made, in accordance with the State of Michigan's five-year cycle for recreation planning, and where they should be made, as envisioned by the Township.

## Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

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The Plan is divided into separate sections that represent the planning process used in its development. In addition to this Introduction, the Plan contains:

- **Inventory.** Describes the specific parks, facilities and programs provided in and around the Township.
- **Planning and Administration.** Identifies the planning process, recreation budget and grant history, and the entities responsible for administration of the park and recreation programs and facilities.
- **Analysis.** Analyzes the programs and facility needs for Schoolcraft Township.
- **Action Program.** Identifies the Plan's goals, objectives, recommendations and a 5-year plan for investment.
- **Appendices.** Four appendices are included to supplement the Plan including:
  - A. **Community Description.** An overview of the Township's current and projected social, physical and economic characteristics.
  - B. **Public Involvement.** A summary of comments heard at the public meeting and documentation of the public meeting, review period, and public hearing.
  - C. **Funding Sources.** A summary of potential funding options to pursue implementation of the Action Program.
  - D. **Adoption and Transmittal Information.** Documentation of the Plan's adoption and submission to required agencies.

This document creates a solid foundation for future park and recreation improvements, investments, and policies that support a healthy, desirable quality of life for Schoolcraft Township residents.



## Chapter Two: Planning & Administration

### Administrative Structure

Parks in Schoolcraft Township are provided through general fund expenditures by the Township Board of Trustees. Management and operations of the parks is overseen by a Parks Committee, but the Township Board maintains fiscal oversight. The township maintains its parks, but does not maintain a separate parks department.

Schoolcraft Township cooperates with the Villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg on regional planning issues. The 2008 South County Growth Management and Inter-municipal Cooperation Agreement set the stage for additional cooperation, including recreation planning. Soon, Brady Township will join the inter-municipal agreement, which provides a wonderful opportunity to plan recreational facilities, such as trails that can and should cross jurisdictional boundaries. Discussion of regional trail concepts is included in *Chapter 5: Action Program*.

### Planning Process

The Township Board directed development of this Parks and Recreation Plan. The participatory process resulted in a Plan that reflects the needs and ideas of those who make use of the township's parks and recreation facilities. The planning process is discussed below.

#### **Task One      Community Description**

The process began with an update to the township's physical and social characteristics. These features include location, land use, natural features, and a description of the transportation network as well as population features including the age distribution, people with physical disabilities, employment and income.

#### **Task Two      Recreation Inventory**

The recreation inventory included site visits and written descriptions of recreation facilities in the township including public parks, schools, and private facilities. The information included acreage, barrier-free accessibility, types of equipment and other descriptions of the physical attributes. A list of other parks that are available to township residents through the villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg, cities of Kalamazoo and Portage, counties of Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Calhoun, the State of Michigan, and private businesses, is also included.

#### **Task Three     Public Participation**

A public open house was held to gain input from the general public. In addition, a public hearing was held by the Township Board before adoption. See *Appendix B: Public Involvement* for a summary of public comments received.

#### **Task Four      Analysis**

Based on the data collected from tasks 1 through 3, information was analyzed in accordance with national and state standards and guidelines, local needs, the experience of staff and consultants, the desires of the residents, and potential funding sources.

### **Task Five      Action Program**

Upon completion of the analysis, goals and objectives were determined to provide guidance for the development of the Action Program. This created the five-year plan and offers a checklist of what action is to be accomplished, when and where it will occur, who will accomplish it, how much it will cost, and potential funding sources.

### **Task Six      Plan Completion and Adoption**

Once consensus was reached amongst township officials, a public hearing was held to present the plan and to solicit public input prior to adoption. The Plan was available for public review for one month prior to adoption. Based on public comments, the Plan was revised and the document was endorsed by the Planning Commission and adopted by the Township Board. See *Appendix D: Adoption and Transmittal Information* for adoption documentation.

### **Budget and Funding**

The operating budget for the Parks and Recreation Department is annually adopted by the Township Board through the general fund for its fiscal year, which begins April 1 of each year. To-date, the majority of improvements in the township have been made as a result of private donations or expenditures from the township's general fund. Some of the leagues and organizations that use township facilities contribute to the cost of park improvements and maintenance, but the township does not charge for daily use of the park.

The following summarizes the Parks and Recreation expenditures for the past four years.

<b>2009/10</b>	=	\$36,300
<b>2008/09</b>	=	\$23,600
<b>2007/08</b>	=	\$28,500
<b>2006/07</b>	=	\$23,500
<b>2005/06</b>	=	\$8,200

### **Grant Inventory**

Schoolcraft Township received a Clean Michigan Initiative Grant in 2000 (Grant #CM99-149) to help develop Swan Park. The grant was originally

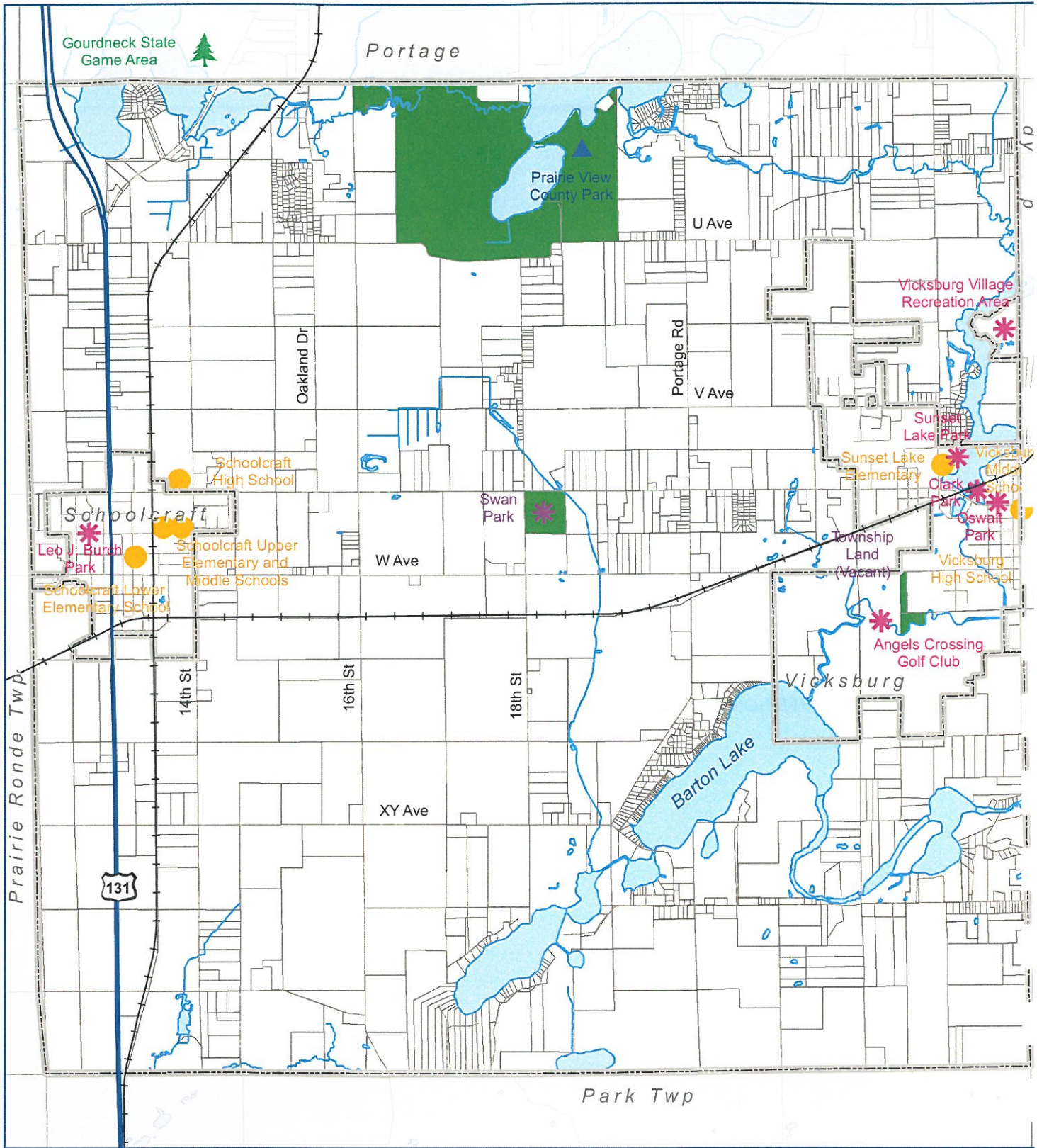


## **Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan**

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awarded in the amount of \$290,000, but actual costs approached \$500,000. The township has not received any Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grants in the past.







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Map One

# Public Parks

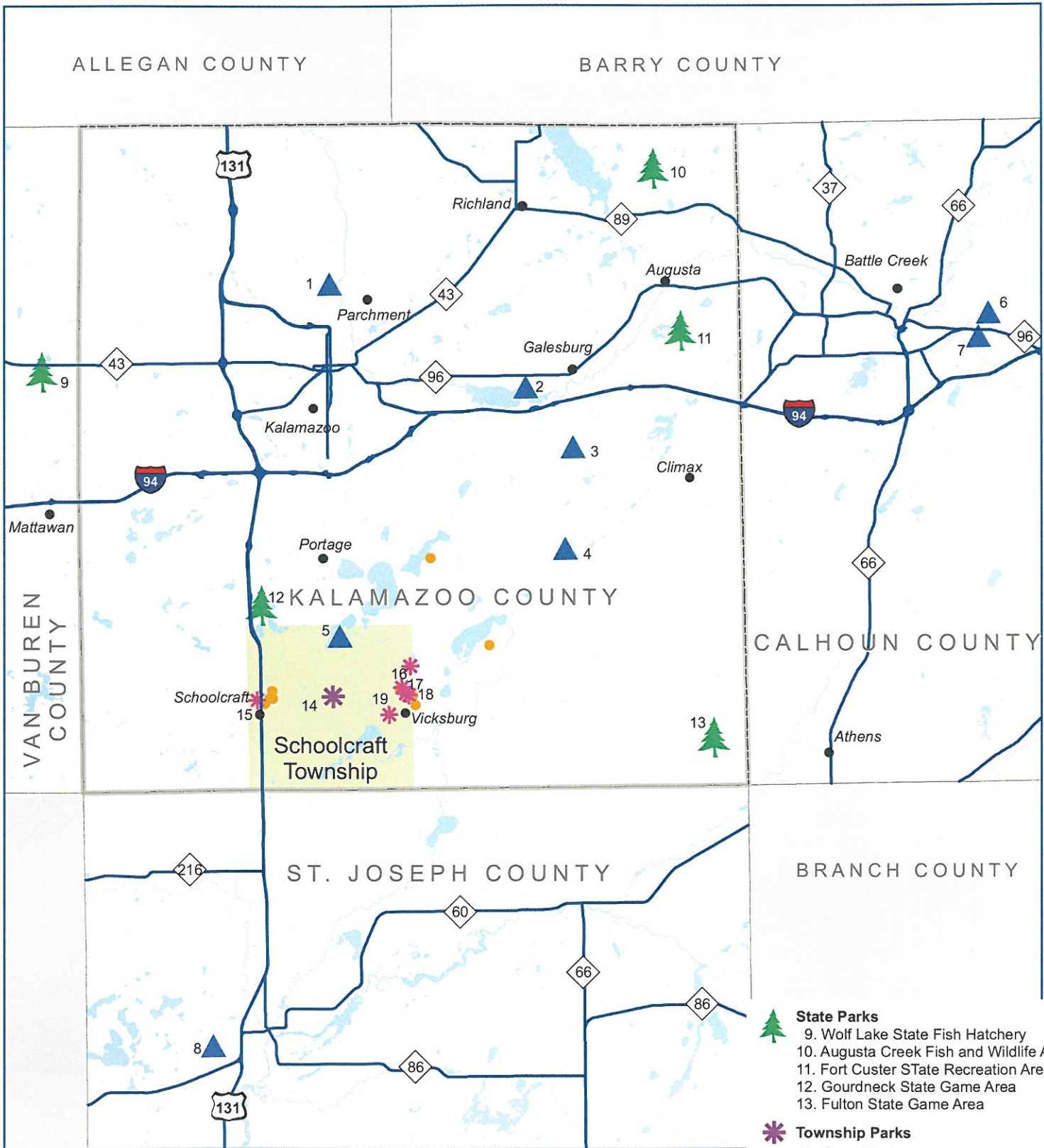
Schoolcraft Twp Parks and Rec Plan

-  State Park
-  County Park
-  Township Park
-  Village Park
-  Schools
-  Parks



Adopted March 2011  
Data Sources: MCGI,  
LSL Planning, Inc.





Map Two

# Regional Facilities

Schoolcraft Twp Parks and Rec Plan

### County Parks

- 1. Markin Glen County Park
- 2. River Oaks County Park
- 3. Cold Brook County Park
- 4. Scotts Mill County Park
- 5. Prairie View County Park
- 6. Kellogg Biological Preserve
- 7. Kimball Pines County Park
- 8. Meyer Broadway County Park

### State Parks

- 9. Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery
- 10. Augusta Creek Fish and Wildlife Area
- 11. Fort Custer State Recreation Area
- 12. Gourdneck State Game Area
- 13. Fulton State Game Area

### Township Parks

- 14. Swan Park

### Village Parks

- 15. Leo J Burch Park
- 16. Clark Park
- 17. Oswalt Park
- 18. Sunset Lake Beach
- 19. Angels Crossing Golf Club

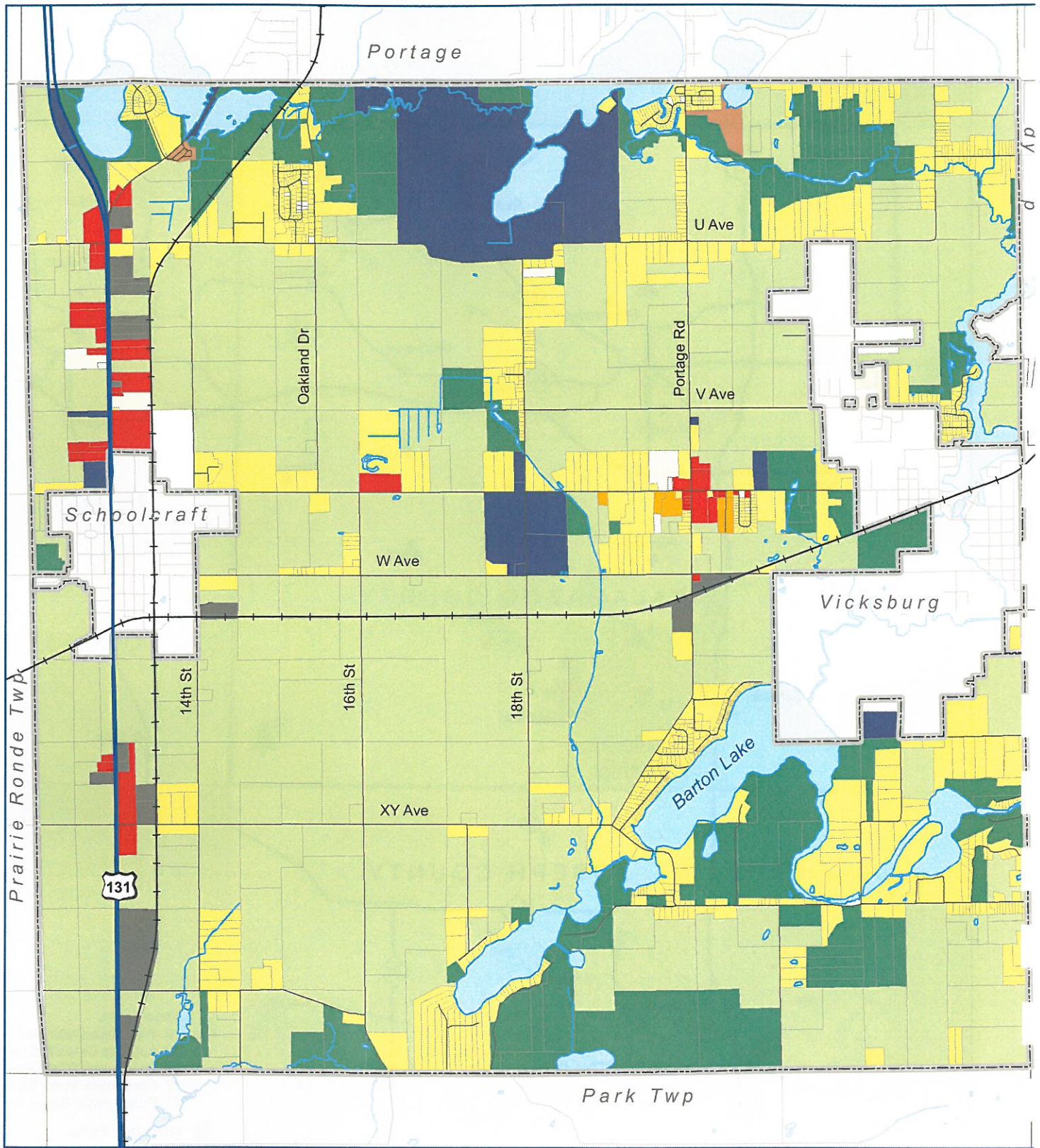
● Schools

Waterbodies



Adopted March 2011  
Data Sources: MCGI,  
LSL Planning, Inc.





Map Three

# Existing Land Use

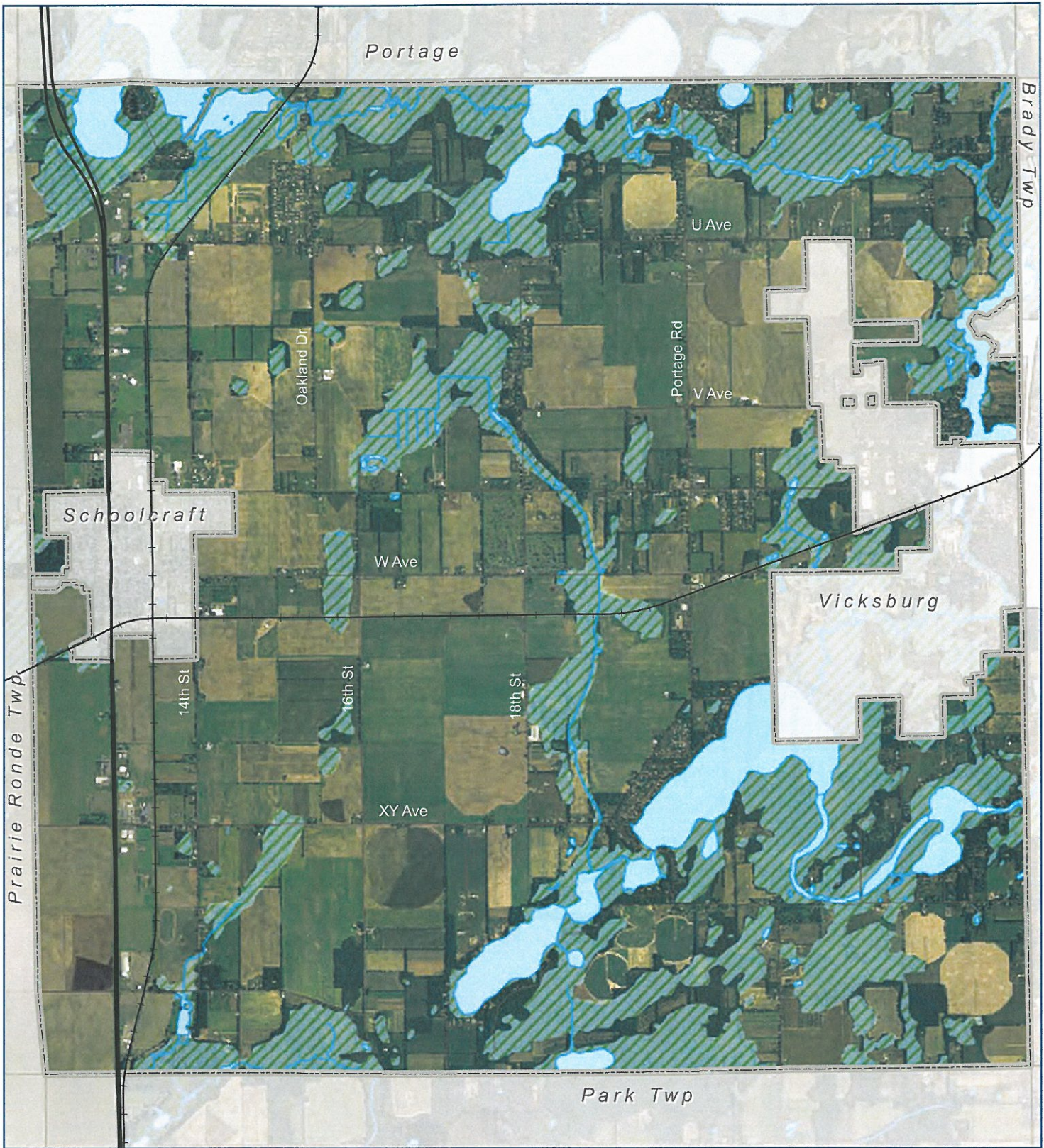
Schoolcraft Twp Parks and Rec Plan

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Single-Family Residential |  Public/Semi-Public |
|  Multi-Family Residential  |  Agriculture        |
|  Manufactured Home Park    |  Wooded             |
|  Commercial                |  Vacant             |
|  Industrial                |  |



Adopted March 2011  
 Data Sources: MCGI,  
 LSL Planning, Inc.







Map Four

# Natural Features

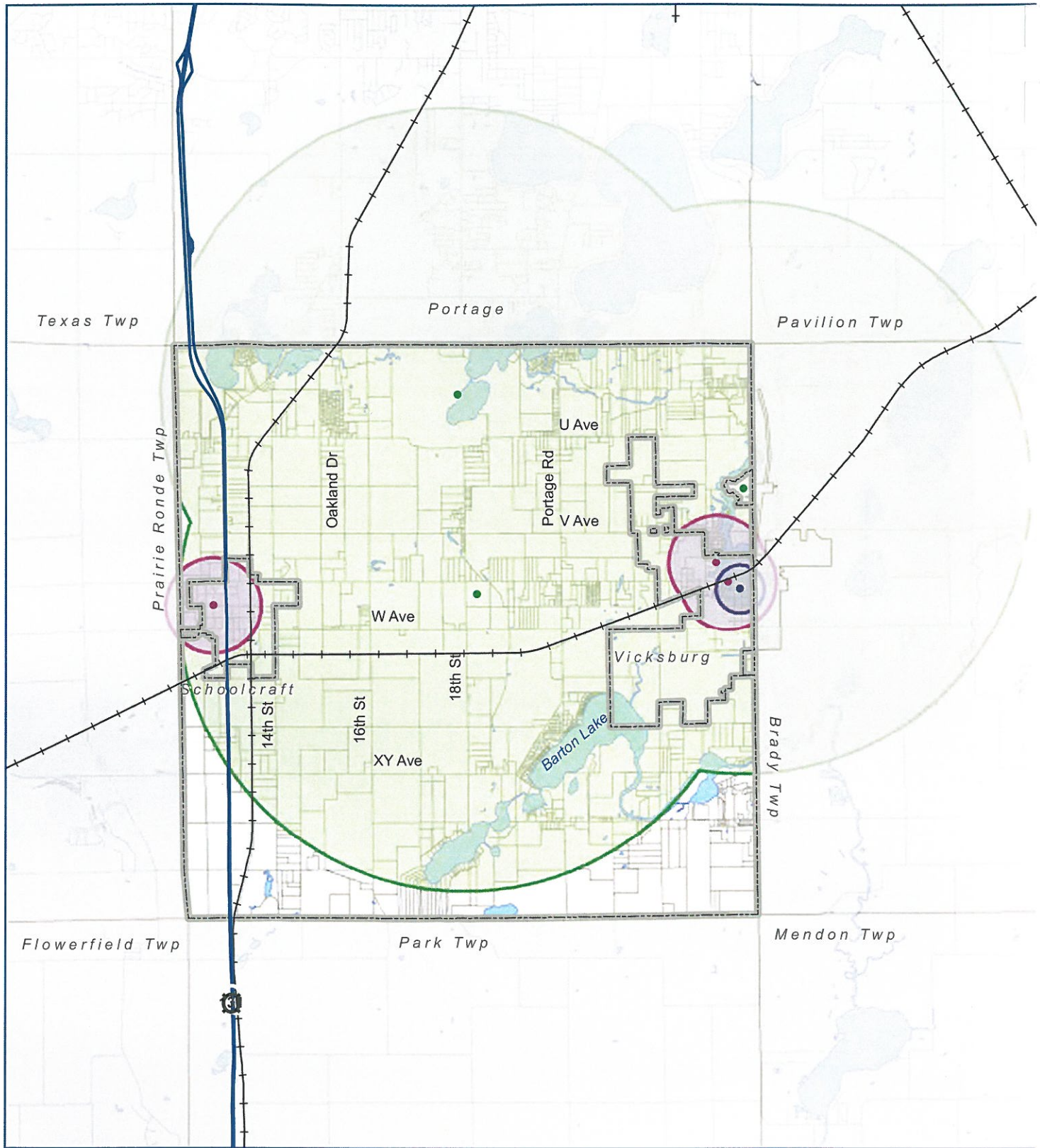
Schoolcraft Twp Parks and Rec Plan

-  Wetlands
-  Waterbodies



Adopted March 2011  
 Data Sources: MCGI,  
 LSL Planning, Inc.





Map Five

# Service Areas

Schoolcraft Twp Parks and Rec Plan

- Mini Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Mini Parks Service Area
- Neighborhood Parks Service Ar
- Community Parks Service Area

Adopted March 2011  
 Data Sources: MCGI,  
 LSL Planning, Inc.





## Chapter Three: Inventory

Developing a complete inventory of facilities, programs, and events is an essential component of a five year Parks and Recreation Plan, as it provides a base of information to use in developing the Action Program. Understanding what facilities, programs, and events are available to area residents will assist decision-making in the future.

*Map One: Public Parks* illustrates all parks located in Schoolcraft Township, including Village parks and schools. This inventory also includes other parks open to township residents that are provided by the cities of Kalamazoo and Portage, the State of Michigan, and the Counties of Kalamazoo, Calhoun, St. Joseph, Cass, Allegan and Van Buren.

### Inventory Process

The following inventory and subsequent analysis were developed using the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment's (MDNRE) and the National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) recommended park classifications and facility guidelines. These guidelines were developed in 1983 and are used to help identify needed recreational facilities in the



## Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

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community. While they help to give a baseline for measuring whether existing parks meet community needs, the township should balance these guidelines with other needs evident in the community. The inventory here was considered along with the community survey and public input gathered throughout development of the plan. These efforts are discussed further in *Appendix B: Public Involvement*.

### Park Classifications

Local parks generally fall into one of three categories based on size and function. The NRPA has established these generally recognized standards for classifying types of parkland which provide a means for determining the primary purpose or use of existing facilities within a community. Because of the unique nature of regional parks provided by the Separate discussion of regional parks is included later in this chapter,

**Figure 3-1**  
**Park Classifications**

Park Type	Description	Service Area	Setting	Typical Size
<b>Mini</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Small, specialized parks that serve the needs of residents in the surrounding neighborhood.</li> <li>▪ Provides daily places for those who cannot travel.</li> </ul>	¼ mile	Residential	2,500 s.f. to 1 acre
<b>Neighborhood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multi-purpose facilities that serve as a local recreational and social focus.</li> <li>▪ Provides both active and passive recreation.</li> </ul>	¼ to ½ mile	Away from main roads	5 to 10 acres
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meets larger, community-wide needs.</li> <li>▪ Preserves unique landscapes and open spaces.</li> </ul>	½ mile to 3 miles	Varies	30 to 50 acres
<b>School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilities located on public school property.</li> <li>▪ Generally used for school athletic programs but are also open to the public.</li> </ul>	Determined by school location and site size		
<b>Natural Resource Areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lands set aside for preservation due to significant natural resources, landscapes or aesthetics.</li> <li>▪ May be used for passive recreation.</li> </ul>	Determined by the resource, site location and size		
<b>Greenways</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Linear parks generally measured in feet/miles rather than acres.</li> <li>▪ Can link parks together to create a continuous park.</li> </ul>	Depends on available resources and location		

### Barrier Free Accessibility

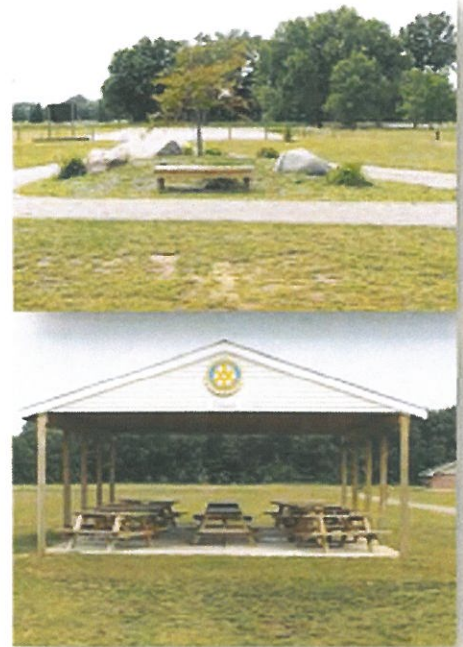
The passage of the American Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) required all areas of public service to have barrier-free accessibility, including parks and recreation facilities. An evaluation of Schoolcraft Township’s parks and facilities has been conducted as part of the inventory. In accordance with

the MDNRE standards, facilities were evaluated to determine if those with limited sight, hearing, mobility and comprehension can safely and independently access and use the park or facility. The following evaluation system was used to rank each park’s accessibility:

<b>Figure 3-2 Levels of Park Accessibility</b>	
<b>Level</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completely undeveloped and left in a natural state.</li> <li>▪ No paved surfaces.</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities.</li> <li>▪ Few paved areas.</li> <li>▪ Facilities such as play equipment or picnic areas are not easily accessible.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Somewhat accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities.</li> <li>▪ Either the parking or pathways are paved, but not both.</li> <li>▪ Many of the facilities such as play equipment or picnic areas are not easily accessible.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mostly accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities.</li> <li>▪ Most of the parking and pathways are paved.</li> <li>▪ Some of the facilities such as play equipment or picnic areas are accessible but may not be completely barrier-free.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completely accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities.</li> <li>▪ Parking areas and pathways are paved.</li> <li>▪ Most of the facilities such as play equipment or picnic areas are easily accessible.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completely accessible and designed using the principles of universal design.</li> <li>▪ Enables all environments to be usable by everyone, regardless of age, ability, or situation.</li> </ul>

### Schoolcraft Township Parks

Schoolcraft Township maintains one primary recreation area located adjacent to the township hall. Swan Park is classified as a Community Park because of its size, location and service area. This 40-acre park contains 4 little league baseball fields and 3 soccer fields, which were completed in 2002 using a Clean Michigan Initiative Grant. The ball fields are open to the public, but are used primarily by the Schoolcraft Little League. Other amenities include a playground, picnic shelter with tables, drinking fountain, paved parking and restrooms. Future improvements are planned that will further increase use of Swan Park. These include paved parking, a new storage building, 3 additional softball fields, a new t-ball field, possible band shell, expanded restroom/concessions as well as new basketball, beach volleyball and tennis courts. When complete, this multi-use park will provide many of the amenities needed to properly serve the community.



**Swan Park**  
Photos from [schoolcrafttownship.org](http://schoolcrafttownship.org)

## Village Parks

Other park facilities located in the Villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg are available for use by township residents. They are relevant to list here, even if they fall outside of the township’s jurisdiction, because they augment the resources made available by the township. These parks include:

### Schoolcraft Village Parks



Leo J. Burch Park

- **Leo J. Burch Park.** This neighborhood park is approximately one acre in size. It is located on W. Clay Street in the heart of the neighborhood just west of downtown. Amenities include a gazebo, picnic tables and grills, and most recently, new playground equipment. Several tennis courts are also located here, but are planned to be removed due to their poor condition.
- **Historical Underground Railroad House and Museum.** The local Historical Society maintains the museum, which features the history of the Underground Railroad. Guided tours are available of a local house involved with the movement. This facility is not included in the parks inventory because it does not provide recreational opportunities, but it is still significant enough to discuss here.



Oswalt Park  
Photo from vicksburgmi.org

### Vicksburg Village Parks

- **Oswalt Park.** This small open space located in downtown Vicksburg contains gardens and winding paths, and is used as a picnic and gathering spot.
- **Clark Park.** Located just west of downtown Vicksburg, Clark Park contains a gazing pond, boardwalk and waterfalls. The park includes a play park built in 2004, and a small sledding hill. Clark Park is a local destination for festivals and outdoor gatherings.



Sunset Beach and Park  
Photo from vicksburgmi.org

- **Sunset Beach and Park.** Along the west shore of Sunset Lake is the beach and park. The beach provides a boat launch, swim area and picnic shelter, equipped with grills and tables. A boardwalk can be used for fishing or walking. On the northeast shore is a scenic walking trail through the woods that is accessible from the Village Recreation Area.
- **Village Recreation Area.** Approximately 88 acres of land at Sprinkle Road and TU Avenue was purchased with the Rail Trail. The land, which

## Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

adjoins Sunset Lake, contains nature trails, a scenic overlook and parking and restroom facilities.

- **Angels Crossing Golf Club.** This public access course located on East “W” Avenue abuts Portage Creek and the wetlands of Barton Lake. It provides 18 holes of golf on over 700 acres, and has been named to the top 10 public access golf courses in the state of Michigan and one of the top 100 residential golf courses in the country. In 2006, Golf Digest magazine named it one of the top “Best New Affordable Public-Access Courses in the U.S.”

### Inventory Summary Table

The table below summarizes the inventory of public-owned parks located within the township boundaries. These parks, as well as the County Parks discussed below, will be input into the analysis in Chapter Four to assess whether there are adequate amounts of parkland available to area residents. The table below shows the type of park, number of acres and facilities provided at each park, along with a barrier-free assessment of all parks located in the township boundary, which includes the 5 parks located in the two incorporated villages, and Prairie View Park located along the townships northern boundary.

<b>Table 3-3</b>											
<b>Parks and Facilities Inventory</b>											
<b>Park</b>	<b>Park Type <sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Barrier Free Rank <sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Baseball &amp; Softball Fields</b>	<b>Soccer Fields</b>	<b>Tennis Courts</b>	<b>Walking Trails</b>	<b>Play-ground</b>	<b>Rest-rooms</b>	<b>Picnic Shelters</b>	<b>Golf Course Holes</b>
<b>Schoolcraft Township Parks:</b>											
Swan Park	C	40	2	4	3			1	1	1	
<b>Village of Schoolcraft Parks:</b>											
Leo J. Burch Park	N	3	-			3		1		1	
<b>Village of Vicksburg Parks:</b>											
Oswalt Park	M	1	-				x	1		1	
Sunset Beach and Park	N	5	-				x				
Clark Park	N	10	-					1		1	
Village Recreation Area	C	88	-				x		x	1	
Angels Crossing G.C.	C	700	-								18
<b>Kalamazoo County Parks:</b>											
Prairie View Park	C	208	-	2	1		x	6	6	7	
<sup>1</sup> Park Types are Coded as follows: M = mini; N = neighborhood; C = community; R = regional <sup>2</sup> Barrier Free Ranking was only done for Township owned parks.											

### County Park Facilities

Regional parks offer unique natural features that are particularly suited for outdoor recreation, such as viewing and studying nature, wildlife habitats, fishing, boating, hiking, and trail use. Some include active play areas, and while these parks are not used for formal programming by Schoolcraft Township residents, they provide opportunities for relaxed family activities. Regional Parks are depicted on *Map Two: Regional Parks*.

#### Prairie View County Park (Kalamazoo County)



Prairie View County Park  
Photo from facebook.com

There are several recreational opportunities located in relatively close proximity to Schoolcraft Township, but only one, Prairie View County Park, is located within the township boundary. Prairie View Park is located on East “U” Avenue, about a mile and a half north of Swan Park. It contains 208 acres of land and generally offers passive recreation opportunities. The wooded nature of the park, with access to Hogsett Lake, provides a serene environment. Visitors can enjoy swimming, boating, fishing, hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing, but most enjoy the quiet picnic settings. Most recently, a dog park has been added

#### Other County Park Facilities

County facilities located within approximately 30 miles of the township are considered to serve Schoolcraft residents. The following table lists the County parks, along with the amenities offered at each:

**Table 3-4**  
**County Parks and Facilities Inventory**

Park	Acres	Facilities						Amenities				
		Baseball/ Softball Fields	Soccer Fields	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts	Walking Trail (# of miles)	Disc Golf (# of holes)	Playground	Parking	Restrooms	Picnic Shelters	Open space/ Natural Areas
<b>Kalamazoo County Parks:</b>												
Prairie View County Park	208	2	1		6	2.5		6	x	6	7	x
Cold Brook County Park	276				2	2.5		4	x	4	3	
Markin Glen County Park	160	2		4	3	1	24	3	x	3	6	
Kellogg/ Ott Biological Preserve	300					x						x
River Oaks County Park	330	6	22		2	6.5		2	x	3	4	
Scotts Mill County Park	110				1	1		1	x		1	

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## Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

Table 3-4, Continued County Parks and Facilities Inventory												
Park	Acres	Facilities						Amenities				
		Baseball/ Softball Fields	Soccer Fields	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts	Walking Trail (# of miles)	Disc Golf (# of holes)	Playground	Parking	Restrooms	Picnic Shelters	Open space/ Natural Areas
<b>Calhoun County Parks:</b>												
Meyer Broadway County Park	149				1	0.5	18	1		1	1	x
Kimball Pines County Park	100					1	18	1			1	
<b>St. Joseph County Parks:</b>												
Meyer Broadway Park	149				1	.5	18	1	x	x	x	x
Rawson's King Mill Park	4									x	1	
Palmer Lake Beach	497									1	1	
Nottawa Park	12	1			1					1	1	
<b>Cass County Parks:</b>												
Dr. T.K. Lawless Park	820	2	1		1	1	x	1	x	x	2	X
Fred Russ Forest Park	580					4		1		x	3	
<b>Allegan County Parks:</b>												
Littlejohn Lake County Park	113	2			1			1		2	1	x
<b>Van Buren County Parks:</b>												
Van Buren County Fairgrounds	80											
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,888</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20+</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>21+</b>	<b>32+</b>	<b>x</b>

### School Park Facilities

The children in Schoolcraft Township attend school in one of two districts, the Schoolcraft Community School District and the Vicksburg Community School District. Both districts maintain larger school complexes which house the middle and high schools, with smaller elementary school sites scattered throughout the community.

Because they are not owned by the township, and are subject to close at the discretion of the respective school boards, school facilities are not officially counted toward the inventory. However, school open space, gymnasiums, meeting rooms, athletic fields, and playgrounds all contribute to the larger recreation system, and do warrant some discussion. Local schools are listed below, and locations shown on *Map One: Public Parks*.

## Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

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### Vicksburg Community Schools

The Vicksburg Schools contain various facilities, as described below:



Ball Fields at Sunset Lake Elementary  
Aerial photograph from google.com

- **Vicksburg High School and Middle School.** Vicksburg’s High School campus is located at the northeast corner of E. Highway and S. Richardson Roads and includes the Middle school. This campus is the athletic center of the district, containing a stadium for track events and varsity football and soccer games, track and field facilities, a baseball and softball field (each with separate practice field), one soccer field with practice field, and 12 tennis courts.
- **Indian Lake Elementary.** Located on S. 30th Street, just north of East U Avenue is the Indian Lake Elementary School. Facilities here include an extensive playground structure and a paved area that accommodates both basketball and four-square.
- **Sunset Lake Elementary.** Sunset Lake Elementary, located on N. Boulevard Street, also maintains playgrounds and paved court areas, as well as seven well maintained play fields (see inset, left).
- **Tobey Elementary.** Tobey is the only of Vicksburg’s schools that is not located in the Village of Vicksburg. Because of its location near Portage, Tobey Elementary is not considered to serve Schoolcraft Township residents’ recreational needs.

### Schoolcraft Community Schools

All of the Schoolcraft Community Schools are located near the intersection of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and E. Lyons Street. E. Lyons Street separates the High School from the elementary/middle school campus.

- **High School.** Located on the north side of Lyon Street, the Schoolcraft High School contains limited athletic fields, but could have room for expansion. Facilities here include 2 baseball/softball fields, 8 tennis courts and one multi-purpose field. It also contains the Ken Krum Center, a multi-purpose facility that is used for both athletic and social events.

- **Early and Upper Elementary, and Middle School.** This campus includes a ¼ mile track, 3 baseball/softball fields, and one football field.

### Other Public Parks

#### City of Portage Parks

Portage is located immediately north of Schoolcraft Township, and many of the local parks are used by township residents as well. The larger parks provided by the City of Portage are summarized below:

- **Bicentennial Park.** Bicentennial Park is a "linear" park and features over 8 miles of biking/hiking/cross-country skiing trail along Portage Creek. The Parkway runs from an entrance off Kilgore Road at the north end, to the Celery Flats Interpretive Center at the south end.
- **Celery Flats Historical Area.** This park celebrates the area's history in celery, with an Interpretive Center, and historical park that features the 1846 Stuart Manor house, an 1856 schoolhouse and the 1931 grain elevator, the oldest remaining commercial building in Portage.
- **West Lake Nature Preserve.** This preserve along West Lake contains 2 miles of hiking trails through the nature area.
- **Bishop's Bog.** This nature preserve contains the unique "relict" bog, which harbors numerous rare plants. A "floating" dock trail offers visitors the opportunity to view nature without disturbing it.
- **Schrier Park.** Schrier Park, a wooded park with hiking trails, is the location for the city's annual Apple Festival and Haunted Forest.
- **Ramona Park.** This beach park is located on Long Lake, and features a fishing pier, large play structure, beach house, volleyball courts, picnic shelters, several soccer fields, softball facilities, and tennis and basketball courts.
- **Lakeview Park.** This park is located along the shore of Austin Lake offers two fishing piers, playground equipment, a ballfield and courts for volleyball, tennis, and basketball.
- **Central Park.** Central Park is the location of summer evening concerts at the Overlander Bandshell.



**Celery Flats Historical Area**  
Photo from portagemi.gov



## Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

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**South Westnedge Park**  
Photo from portagemi.gov

- **South Westnedge Park.** This athletic park provides facilities for over 200 city softball teams in the city's many leagues. The park includes 6 softball fields, a 10,000 square foot skate park, in-line hockey rink, soccer practice field, restroom building and parking.

### City of Kalamazoo Parks

Located 10 to 15 miles north of the township is the City of Kalamazoo, which provides an array of natural areas, sports fields and parks that are enjoyed by the entire region. The city is a hub of social, cultural and recreational activity for the County and region. The following parks are located in the city:

- **Blanche Hull Nature Preserve.** This park is mainly mature deciduous woodland with large wooded areas and unimproved trails. The park features a parking area, paved trail into the park and large open grass area.
- **Mayors' Riverfront Park.** This park is home to the city's parks department offices, but also contains a soccer/football and baseball stadium, picnic pavilion, grills, basketball court, play structure, canoe launch and paved trail along the Kalamazoo River.
- **Milham Park.** Adjacent to Milham Park Golf Course, this is the city's largest park. It offers paved drives and walkways throughout, four play areas and a ball field. Passive uses include picnicking and watching wildlife. There are two picnic shelters, numerous picnic tables and grills, accessible restrooms and drinking fountain.
- **Upjohn Park.** Upjohn Park, located on the banks of Axtell Creek southeast of Downtown Kalamazoo, was recently redeveloped to include a Boundless® playground, skate park, basketball court, tennis court, ball field, soccer/rugby field, picnic shelter, walking path and KIK pool.
- **VerSluis/Dickinson.** This sports complex features fifteen ball fields with paved parking, modern restrooms, picnic areas and a small playground.



**Milham Park**  
Photo from Kalamazoo Parks and Recreation Plan: 2009

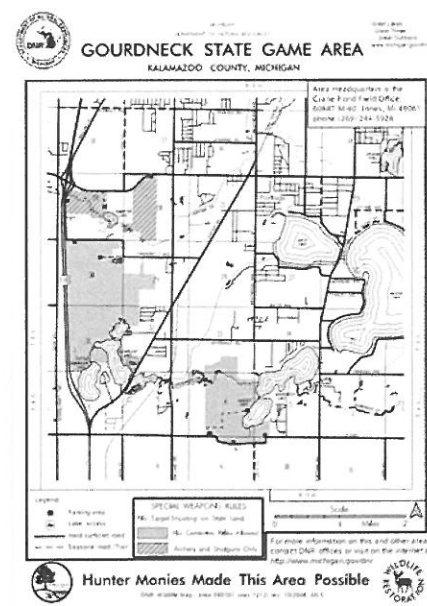
### Michigan State Parks

There are a number of Michigan State Parks that provide recreational opportunities to residents of the township and the region. These state facilities provide a variety of activities including camping, picnicking,

## Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

swimming, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

- **Gourdneck State Game Area.** This game area, located on the north side of Mud and Sugarloaf Lakes, is partially located in the northwest corner of Schoolcraft Township. It is known for its deer, beaver, duck, grouse and rabbit hunting opportunities.
- **Fulton State Game Area.** Located in nearby Fulton, this state game area provides hunting of deer and rabbit.
- **Augusta Creek Fish and Wildlife Area.** This fish and wildlife area is located in southeast Allegan County.
- **Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery.** Near Mattawan, in the eastern portion of Van Buren County, is where this hatchery is located. It produces more fish than any of the state's other six hatcheries.
- **Fort Custer State Recreation Area.** This 222 acre recreation area, located in Augusta, offers an array of recreation opportunities, from swimming, biking, hunting, picnicking, and snowmobiling.



Gourdneck State Game Area  
Map from michigan.gov

### Quasi-Public Facilities

Sometimes, other facilities are available for public use but are not owned by the public. Others are owned through private-public partnerships or non-profit groups. Most of the quasi-public facilities in Schoolcraft Township's service area consist of natural areas for passive enjoyment or educational enrichment and are run with assistance from Michigan State University Extension offices and other non-profit societies. These include the following:

- Kalamazoo Nature Center (Kalamazoo)
- Kellogg Forest (Battle Creek)
- Leila Arboretum (Battle Creek)
- Binder Park Zoo (Battle Creek)
- Kellogg Bird Sanctuary (Augusta)

### Private Recreation Facilities

Several privately-owned recreation facilities located in the area complement the public parks discussed above. Although these facilities are privately operated and often charge a user fee or require membership, they are considered because they do meet specific recreation needs. One golf course, States Golf Course, is located in the township, adjacent to Swan Park. A list of other local private facilities is provided below:

#### Golf

- Battle Creek Country Club (Battle Creek)
- Cedar Creek Golf Club (Battle Creek)
- Cheshire Hills Golf Course (Allegan)
- Freedom Hill Golf Course (Sturgis)
- Indian Run Golf Course (Scotts)
- Lake Doster Golf Club (Plainwell)
- Maple Hills Golf Course (Augusta)
- Marywood Golf Course (Battle Creek)
- Olde Mill Golf Course (Schoolcraft)
- Pine View Golf Course (Three Rivers)
- Sauganash Country Club (Three Rivers)
- Shamrock Hills Golf Course (Gobles)
- States Golf Course (Schoolcraft Township)
- Wilderness Hills Golf Course (Plainwell)
- Yarrow Woods Golf Center (Augusta)



Photo from michigangolf.com

#### Skiing

- Bittersweet Ski Resort (Otsego)
- Timber Ridge Ski Area (Gobles)

#### Sports Stadiums and Arenas

- Echo Valley Winter Fun Park (Kalamazoo)
- Galesburg Speedway (Galesburg)
- Kalamazoo Speedway (Kalamazoo)
- Kellogg Arena (Battle Creek)
- Twinstar Ice Arena (Kalamazoo)
- Wings Stadium (Kalamazoo)

#### Others

- Peterson & Sons Winery (Kalamazoo)
- Klines Resort Campground (Three Rivers)
- Gilmore Car Museum (Hickory Corners)



Timber Ridge Ski Area

Photo from onthesnow.com

### Recreation Programs

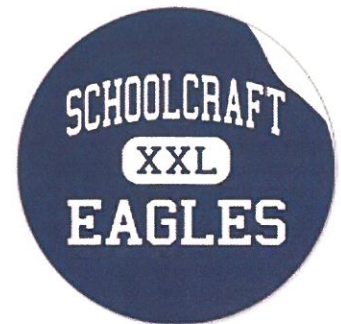
Recreation programming is provided through local schools and other athletic leagues.

**Athletic Leagues.** Several organized leagues operate within the area, many of whom contribute funds for necessary park improvements or maintenance. One consideration when developing this plan were the needs of these leagues, and how best to accommodate all sports. The Schoolcraft Little League plays at Swan Park, and has priority use of the fields there. A new Lacrosse league has formed and will use Swan Park as well. Leagues that operate in the area include:

- Vicksburg Travel Lacrosse
- Schoolcraft Little League
- Vicksburg Little League
- Mattawan Little League
- Three Rivers Little League
- Constantine Little League
- Centreville Little League

**Schoolcraft Community Schools.** Athletic programs offered through the Schoolcraft Community Schools include varsity and junior varsity programs. Additional information can be found on the school's website: [www.schoolcraftschools.org](http://www.schoolcraftschools.org)

**Vicksburg Community Schools.** The Vicksburg Community School's Community Education Office offers recreation programming and rentals of school facilities. More information on school programs and their varsity and junior varsity sports can be found on the school district's website: [www.vicksburgcommunityschools.org](http://www.vicksburgcommunityschools.org)



### Pathways and Trails

Pathways in the area provide excellent recreational opportunities, and can also act as secondary transportation routes, often connecting key parks with other destinations or places. One trail system is located within the township boundaries, but is owned by the Village of Vicksburg, as described below:

- **Vicksburg Rail Trail.** In 1986 Vicksburg acquired a 1.8 mile stretch of the abandoned Railway that ran from the Vicksburg Train Depot north to Kalamazoo. The old railroad rock was removed and asphalt put down



Vicksburg Rail Trail  
Photo from vicksburgmi.org

## Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

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**Battle Creek Linear Park**  
Photo from bcparcs.org

to create a non-motorized trail for residents and visitors to jog, bike, rollerblade or just casually walk among nature.

- **Battle Creek Linear Park.** This trail offers over 17 miles of paved pathways that are marked to measure your distance and identify historical and cultural points of interest.
- **Kal-Haven Trail.** Converted from an old railroad, the 33.5 mile Kal-Haven Trail connects Kalamazoo to South Haven. The trail starts in South Haven on North Bailey Avenue and ends in Kalamazoo on 10th Street. The trail is used year-round and it maintained by Van Buren County.
- **Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KRV).** This trail is still in development, but when complete the KRV will offer 35 miles of trails connecting Kalamazoo, Portage and Battle Creek to Lake Michigan and, eventually, Lake Michigan to Lake Huron. The trail is needed to complete a 140 mile chain of trails that will link the Battle Creek Linear Park, Kal-Haven Trail, and Portage Creek Bicentennial Park Trail.
- **Portage Creek Bicentennial Park Trail and Bikeway.** Bicentennial Park features a 3.5 mile biking, hiking and cross-country trail along Portage Creek. Acting as both park and natural area preserve, this linear park also features the Milham Avenue activity area, the Celery Flats Interpretive Center, and Historical Area. The Portage Bikeway System stems from Bicentennial Park, but connects to most other parks in the city. The bikeway was first implemented in 1989 and has grown to a 50-plus mile long system of trails that mostly parallel local roads.



**Portage Bikeway System**



## Chapter Four: Analysis

An essential task in the recreation planning process is to determine the needs of the community. The needs serve as a basis for the development of the Action Program. This task is accomplished using a compilation of several methods, including comparing the Township to established national recreation standards and input received from the public, Township staff, community leaders and local officials.

Schoolcraft Township includes two incorporated Villages, the Villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg. Technically, the following analysis evaluates the need for parks and facilities for Township residents only, which would exclude residents in the Villages. However, realistically speaking, residents living in all three communities share the collective resources, and so this analysis also speaks to the greater provision and need for recreation that is shared by all.

### Method of Analysis

Area	Population
Township With Villages	7,260
Village of Schoolcraft	1,587
Village of Vicksburg	1,638
Township Without Villages	4,035

As suggested by the MDNRE, Schoolcraft Township’s parkland and recreation inventory was compared to the minimum guidelines set by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA, 1983). Although the NRPA's guidelines were set over twenty-five years ago, the MDNRE still recommends their use as standards to establish minimum community needs in terms of land area and number of facilities. The NRPA guidelines are based on the population of the study area. In 2000, the U.S. Census reported the total population within the township to be 7,260 residents. If residents of the Village of Schoolcraft (1,587) and Vicksburg (1,638) are subtracted, the township population is 4,035 residents.

Caution must be taken when interpreting recommendations based on these guidelines because they may not represent current popular activities and trends. Area-to-population ratios tend to oversimplify the purpose of recreation planning, which is to address the specific needs of the community, based on its own particular resources and resident preferences/demands so that the plan best suits the community’s desires for recreation.

### Parkland Analysis

#### Amount of Parkland



Signage at Swan Park

*Table 4-1: Public Parkland Acreage Analysis* shows the results of the parkland analysis for the township. They reveal that, while there is a need for additional Mini and Neighborhood parks to serve township residents, the amount of Community and Regional parks is sufficient. Furthermore, when combined with the facilities provided in the Villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg, adequate amounts of parkland are available. However, what is not shown is the need for more park distribution throughout the community. The parks located in the villages are, of course, located in concentrated areas within the township, and with only one central park provided by the township, residents not living near either village or Swan Park are without local facilities. The township should consider ways to augment the community recreation already provided, with smaller parks that can serve residents’ daily needs.

Although the purpose of the parkland analysis is to determine if township parks are adequate to serve local residents, some of the parks in the table below include parks land owned by nearby villages, cities, counties and the State of Michigan. The parks listed in the table were determined to be those that serve the residents of Schoolcraft Township. The factors used in deciding which parks to include in the analysis were the proximity of the park to Schoolcraft Township (within 30 miles), the intended service area of each park, and likeliness of use by township residents. Therefore, mini, neighborhood and community parks that may be within 30 miles of the township, but whose service area does not extend into the township, were not included in the analysis, but larger parks that are intended to draw regional residents, were included.

More specifically, *Table 4-1* analyzes recreation needs considering only township-owned parks (on the left) and needs considering all publicly owned parks (on the right). Public parks include those provided in both Villages, as well as the Prairie View Park, which was considered a Community Park rather than a Regional Park because of its partial location in the township.

<b>Table 4-1</b>						
<b>Public Parkland Acreage Analysis</b>						
<b>Park Classifications</b>	<b>Township Parks Only</b>			<b>Total Public Parks in Township Boundary</b>		
	<b>NRPA Guideline</b>	<b>Provided</b>	<b>Analysis</b>	<b>NRPA Guideline</b>	<b>Provided</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
<b>Mini Parks</b>	1.51	0	-1.51	2.72	1	-1.72
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>	7.06	0	-7.06	12.71	18	+5.29
<b>Community Parks</b>	26.23	40	+13.77	47.19	336	+288.81
<b>Regional Parks<sup>1</sup></b>	30.26	3,888	+3857.74	54.45	3,680	+3,625.55
<b>Total</b>	<b>65.06</b>	<b>3,928</b>	<b>+3,862.94</b>	<b>117.07</b>	<b>4,035</b>	<b>+3,917.93</b>

<sup>1</sup> Regional Parks include all County Parks shown in Table 3-3, County Parks and Facilities Inventory, except for Prairie View County Park, which acts more as a Community Park due to its proximity and partial location within the township.

**Service Area**

Although the overall amount of parkland in Schoolcraft Township is sufficient by national guidelines, it is important to consider the type of parks, their location, and their disbursement throughout the township. When evaluating parks and recreation service areas, it is important to specifically consider where the residents of the community live. The NRPA establishes a recommended service area for each park classification to determine which areas in Schoolcraft Township are lacking easy access to parkland. By mapping these service areas, the township can see what areas are underserved.



Regional parks are not included in this analysis because of their large (30 mile) service area. Service areas for the other park types are as follows:

- Mini Parks                                ¼ miles or less
- Neighborhood Parks                ¼ to ½ miles
- Community Parks                    ½ to 3 miles

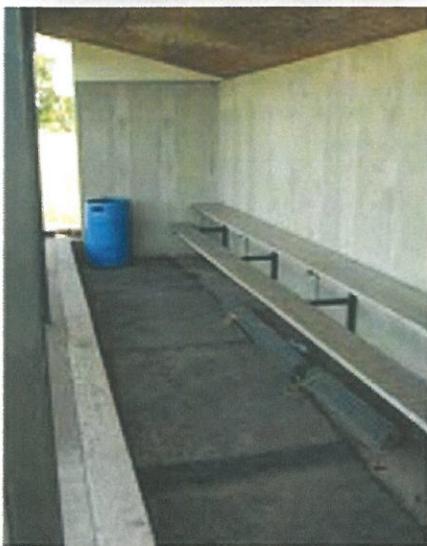
*Map Five: Service Areas*, shows the service areas of publicly-owned mini-, neighborhood- and community parks in the vicinity. It shows that the parks provided by Schoolcraft Township, the Villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg, and Kalamazoo County provide valuable parkland to most residents within the township's boundary, but pockets of underserved areas are found in the extreme southern and northwestern portions. After review, the township feels this distribution may be appropriate because of the greater concentration of residents in the northern portion of the township.

### Facilities Analysis

In addition to parkland, facilities were analyzed to determine if the current facilities are adequate to meet the needs of residents. This analysis includes facility recommendations based on national averages, but also considers the public input provided during this process, as well as recent trends in recreation that could not be anticipated when the national standards were developed in the 1980's.

### National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Standards

As noted in this Plan, the NRPA standards are commonly used to evaluate the adequacy of parkland and facilities when compared to local populations. They were developed a number of years ago, and so they do not consider modern desires like dog parks, skate parks, splash parks or large recreational complexes that have become more common in recent years. The number of athletic fields in the township reflects an adequate amount of fields when compared to the NRPA standards. Potential facility surpluses and deficiencies are shown below, in *Table 4-2: Recreation Facility Analysis*. *Table 4-2* analyzes the same parks as those in *Table 4-1*, above, and neither include school parks in the analysis.



LaPorte Field Facilities at Swan Park

Table 4-2 Recreation Facility Analysis						
Park Facility	Township Parks Only			Total Public Parks in Township Boundary		
	Guideline	Provided	Analysis	Guideline	Provided	Analysis
Tennis	2	-	-2	4	-	-4
Playground	1	1	-	2	10	+8
Baseball/ Softball	1	4	+3	1	6	+5
Basketball	1	-	-1	1	-	-1
Volleyball	1	-	-1	1	6	+5
Soccer	0	3	+3	0	4	+4
Football	0	-	0	0	-	0
Running Track	0	-	0	0	-	0
Swimming Pool	0	-	0	0	-	0
Golf Course (18 hole)	0	-	0	0	1	+1

In general, the number of fields and athletic facilities provided at Swan Park serve the community well. But, being the township's sole park, it is difficult to provide the breadth of facilities needed for any community. The analysis indicates that additional tennis and basketball courts are needed to serve residents. Some of these needs may be met through school facilities.

### Other Considerations

#### Public Meetings

The township solicited public input in a myriad of ways, the primary means being through public meetings. A public forum was held on June 7, 2010 before the Township Board, Planning Commission and Swan Park Committee. A public hearing was held on January 11, 2011 to solicit additional comments.

#### Local Knowledge

The township also drew upon knowledge of local programs, facilities, and presence of organized leagues. It was discovered that the Schoolcraft Little League, who used to play at school facilities in the Village of Schoolcraft, will no longer use these facilities as of 2011. They have approached the township in hopes they will resume play at Swan Park. The Vicksburg travel lacrosse team is also interested in using Swan Park for their organized play. Most of these leagues pay a user fee, and contribute funds when needed to maintain fields and facilities there. They have encouraged the township to

expand the existing restroom facilities to include additional storage and concessions areas that will help them recoup some of their operating costs, thus allowing more funds to be re-circulated into the park. Officials also commented that there is a demand for additional playgrounds and seating areas for parents. Observations indicate that parents and children use the Swan Park playground almost as soon as the snow melts, and current play structures are not large enough to accommodate the high number of users.

### Swan Park Survey

Recreation needs were also determined through a survey conducted by the Swan Park Committee, which was sent to every taxpayer in the township, including those in both villages. The results revealed additional facilities that are desired by local residents. The top ten items are listed below:

1. Covered Picnic Pavilion
2. Basketball Hoops
3. Additional Picnic Area
4. Ice Skating Rink
5. Horseshoe Pits
6. Soccer Fields
7. Dog Walk Area
8. Butterfly Garden
9. Water Play Fountain
10. Expand Current Playground

### Pathways Analysis



Portage Bikeway System

A pathway system adds to the overall quality of life for residents by providing access to various community facilities and parks, by offering a source of recreation for residents that bike, jog, and walk, and by offering other opportunities for recreation and exercise.

While several regional pathways and non-motorized trails are available for use by township residents, few trailhead or access points are within walking or biking distance to township residents. Schoolcraft Township is working with others in south Kalamazoo County toward a comprehensive pathways system that will define a continuous pathway system connecting some of these regional systems to local parks. In addition to pathways along major roads, opportunities to develop off-road paths along natural features corridors, drainage easements, railroad corridors, transmission lines, etc. should also

be actively pursued. The plan should provide direction on the location, types, design details, estimated costs and necessary land acquisition that would be required to implement a comprehensive pathway system. In order to efficiently accomplish this objective, priorities must be established.

Key elements to consider during the design of any pathway system are discussed below, but for the sake of producing a meaningful system in the long-term, some compromises are required in the short-term. Because local path systems are relatively new, they are likely to consist of on-street bike lanes and use of county road shoulders. Because most roads fall within the County's jurisdiction, Schoolcraft Township should build relationships with the Kalamazoo County Road Commission to ensure that road-side paths are properly maintained and safe. Ideally, such as with the Portage Bikeway System, separate paths are provided to protect non-motorized users. Therefore, the long-term plan for pathways in Schoolcraft Township should include acquisition of off-street land or easements where the trails can meander away from vehicle traffic to create a more peaceful experience.



Walking Trail at Swan Park

### **Continuity**

Maintaining an interconnected system of pathways enhances the pedestrian environment. The township should pursue filling in gaps in the system that act as barriers. While township funds may be used for this purpose, the community in general should also share in this commitment. Options to accomplish this include requiring the installation of pathways along major roads and throughout the interior of new development projects or for residential lots that have not maintained or installed their sidewalks, requiring an escrow or performance guarantee when transfer of property ownership occurs.

### **Convenience**

While people will walk farther distances for exercise and recreation purposes, studies show that the average pedestrian will not walk more than 15 minutes or a quarter mile to reach their destination. Therefore, convenient routes must be offered to encourage more pedestrian activity as an alternative to driving. This includes considerations for road crossings, conflicts with multiple users, continuity of the pathway and directness of the route. Inconvenient systems can encourage unsafe activity or use of non-designated sidewalks or crossings. Where the township wishes to

increase pedestrian activity, it should ensure that continuous pathways are provided that offer safe crossings that bring the pedestrian to the forefront of consideration, rather than making the automobile the priority.

### Safety

Without a safe pedestrian environment, pathways will not be used to their maximum. Elements such as lighting, proper maintenance and proper crossing enhancements will bring comfort to users. Where high pedestrian activity exists or is encouraged, the township should work toward reducing the posted speed limits for motorists. Statistics show that 85% of vehicle-to-pedestrian crashes will result in death to the pedestrian if a vehicle is traveling at 40 mph, versus only a 15% rate if a vehicle is traveling at 20 mph.



Entrance to Swan Park

### Accessibility

Disabled residents often rely heavily on public transit as their primary means of travel and pathways to access transit. However, their unique needs are often overlooked when designing pathways. When considering improvements to these systems, the following considerations should be included:

- Maintain a consistent intersection design, so disabled users can easily anticipate where a bench, pedestrian crossing button or shelter is located.
- Install textured materials, such as brick or stamped concrete, at the edges of sidewalks to indicate where the walk ends and the motorized travel lanes of the road begin.
- Install pedestrian signals that produce an audible sound to indicate signal changes at critical intersections.
- Include medians in the design or redesign of intersections, especially where a high volume of pedestrian activity is expected. Medians provide safer crosswalk options for all residents.

### Summary of Analysis

The purpose of the above analysis is to reveal where new parks or park improvements are needed. After reviewing the parks and recreation available in the township, the following key needs surfaced:

1. Continued development of Swan Park is needed to meet the growing

demand for playgrounds and softball, lacrosse and soccer fields. Additional development of hard-court facilities for tennis, basketball and volleyball are also needed in this location to meet NRPA guidelines.

2. Additional mini and neighborhood parks should be contemplated for all areas in the township. Swan Park provides valuable resources to those living in the central portion of the township, so priority should be given to parks in the northwest corner of the township, where new development is anticipated, and in the southeast corner, where little park facilities are provided to serve residents.
3. Continued development of non-motorized trails and pathways are needed to address growing trends toward more active and healthy lifestyles. The NRPA guidelines were developed several years ago, and do not represent these local emerging needs. Cooperation with neighboring communities and regional park agencies is needed to expand existing systems.
4. The Community Description (see Appendix A) indicates that 16% of township residents (which includes the two villages) have some sort of disability, half of whom have a physical disability. Serving these residents is a key concern, and the township has contemplated adding “challenger” fields to Swan Park that could be used for both t-ball and disabled ball leagues. Additionally, pathway connections to the restrooms and accessible viewing areas are needed.

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## Chapter Five: Action Program

The Action Program is the culmination of a comprehensive effort that began with a parks inventory and the analysis of existing community conditions and attitudes. It begins by briefly discussing key goals and objectives, which evoke the spirit of this effort, but which are common to most communities. These overall goals are then translated into township-specific tasks, organized into useful lists and expressed in a 5-year Action Program that itemizes targeted actions that should be accomplished each year. The goals stated here were developed in consideration of the previous Recreation Plan (adopted in 1994), the Swan Park Survey, the analysis in this plan, local and regional demographics, and the public input gathered throughout the process.

While this Action Program is intentionally aggressive to encourage more progress, the speed at which the tasks are completed will depend on local resources, funding, and regional cooperation.



## Overall Goals

Generally speaking, the objective of parks and recreation planning is to improve the overall quality of life for area residents by providing the physical facilities and organized recreation programming needed to maintain healthier lifestyles and social interaction. Successful implementation requires action, not generalized goal statements that provide sentiment but not direction. Therefore, the three primary goals of this plan are discussed in general, followed by more specific objective statements.

**Quality.** *Schoolcraft Township will offer high quality, well-maintained park facilities and recreation programs that create a pleasant experience for all users.* The parks inventory indicates that there is enough parkland for area residents, but some additional facilities may be needed. While the amount of parkland is adequate, certain structures, fields and facilities are needed to meet the national guidelines.

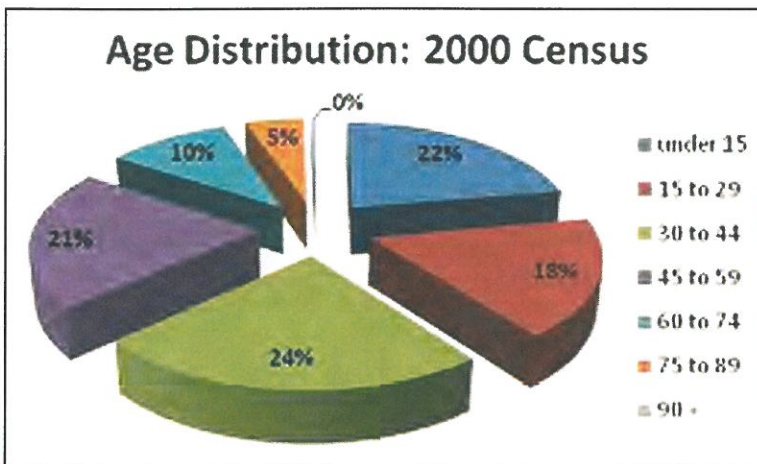
**Accessibility.** *Parks and recreation facilities will meet the diverse needs and interests of the community.* Census data shows that a large percentage of

residents in Schoolcraft are in the “family formation” stages of life. The 2000 Census was the most recent data available, so those shown in the age distribution chart (see insert left) as within the “15 to 29” age bracket are now in a “25 to 39” age bracket. The largest age group (24%) is now between the ages of 40 and 54. Less than 16% of residents are now over the age of 70.

In 2000, the largest segment of the population was age 30 to 44, but there is a relatively consistent distribution of residents between the ages of 15 and 75, which means that recreation should not be

focused toward any one particular sector; rather, recreation facilities and programs should focus on addressing the needs of all ages. The small percentage of senior citizens suggests, however, that some preference could be given to providing youth and young adult recreation opportunities.

In all over 16 percent of area residents have some sort of disability, and almost half of those residents have either a physical or employment handicap. This coupled with the fact that none of the public parks inventoried are fully accessible, suggests that a large segment of the population is underserved.



The Township has taken care to consider accessibility of its parks. While recent improvements have not been fully accessible, Township officials are dedicated to providing accessible connections between parking areas and parkland; offering accessible seating and events viewing areas; providing access to restrooms; and even installation of a “challenger” ball field. The Township should incorporate “universal design” into future park improvement projects. Universal design seeks to improve the function of products and buildings so they can be used by everyone, not just the elderly or disabled. Take for example the design of curb ramps, which originally responded to the needs of those wheelchair-bound, but which now benefit those on bicycles, pushing strollers, and the visually impaired. The idea behind universal design is to continually evaluate and improve facilities to improve the experience of all users rather than adhere to a prescribed set of guidelines.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) established guidelines to provide barrier-free accessibility at public facilities. As parks and facilities are improved or developed, a high priority must be placed on upgrades that improve barrier-free accessibility with improvements to proper surfaces for wheelchairs, accessible picnic tables, and play equipment that provides universal access. Outside consultants may be valuable in assessing barriers.

**Variety.** *A variety of recreation programs and events will be offered to encourage social interaction and a high quality of life for all area residents.* The current variety of parks in Schoolcraft Township is appropriate, meaning there does not seem to be a great deficiency; however, there is a need for more neighborhood and mini-parks throughout the study area. The variety desired will serve residents in all areas, but also those with differing needs. Currently, Village parks provide a reasonable mix of the typical facilities desired: athletic fields, play areas, walking paths, and pavilions; but are lacking those features more recently in demand, such as skateboard parks, lacrosse fields and splash parks. These sorts of facilities were considered in addition to those discussed in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ Suggested Facility Development Standards.

### Examples of Universal Design:

- Installing electrical outlets within reach of everyone
- Larger restrooms for handicap accessibility or family use
- Signage that clearly communicates rules and hazards
- Use of symbols rather than words on signs

### Specific Goals and Objectives

#### **Improve existing park facilities before devoting resources to new construction.**

- Work with the Schoolcraft and Vicksburg School Districts to identify needs not met by existing school facilities.
- Improve accessibility at Swan Park, especially to the restrooms and ball fields.
- Utilize the vacant 10-acre parcel adjacent to Vicksburg Cemetery for park use before purchasing additional land new park development.
- Develop a program of consistent signage, lighting, benches, and waste receptacles at all parks that promote the Schoolcraft Township image.

#### **Implement the recommendations of this plan as cost-effectively and as efficiently as possible.**

- Coordinate the Action Program with the Township's capital improvement program.
- Educate the Planning Commission about ways that parks and recreation can be considered during the development review process.
- Review the Parks and Recreation Master Plan annually to establish yearly priorities and responsibilities.
- Explore grant opportunities and alternative funding opportunities for improvement projects.
- Involve local residents, service groups and volunteer organizations in fundraising efforts to demonstrate strong community support and grass-roots efforts.
- Coordinate with other recreation providers to prevent duplication of services and avoid unnecessary competition.
- Evaluate the option of charging programming fees that balance operation costs with affordability.

#### **Improve access to existing recreational facilities.**

- Work to improve the conceptual pathway system so residents can have non-motorized access to parks.
- Incorporate universal design into all park improvement projects.
- Improve barrier-free accessibility by installing hard-surfaced pathways, wider gates and fence openings, and upgrading equipment to meet accessibility standards.

### **Provide recreation opportunities for residents of all areas of the Township.**

- Consider population densities when identifying new park locations. While the service area map may show underserved areas, some are very rural and may not demand significant parks.
- Encourage new residential projects to include parkland and/or open spaces to serve future residents.
- Continue to monitor resident desires, local trends and preferences in recreation. Follow-up surveys and comment boxes could be used to solicit continued input.
- Host community-wide events that bring together residents from different neighborhoods, generations and backgrounds.

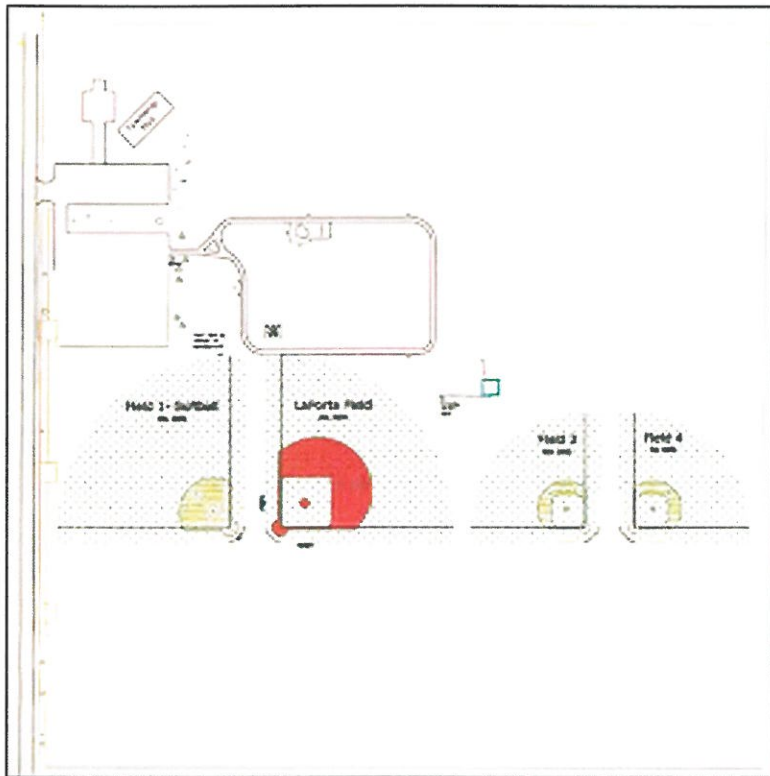
### **Develop a comprehensive pathway system that provides non-motorized access to key local and regional destinations.**

- Coordinate with surrounding communities to link pathways and develop a regional system.
- Develop wider, multi-use pathways that accommodate walkers, joggers, runners, rollerbladers and bicyclists.
- Coordinate with local schools toward development of Safe Routes to School programs that compliment Township efforts.
- Utilize off-road, utility and railroad corridors where possible to provide off-road pathways, and continually upgrade existing sidewalks that provide connectivity.
- Work with the Kalamazoo County Road Commission to use and/or improve road shoulders where off-road facilities are not feasible, or where they may be needed to provide temporary connections.

### **Support the acquisition and development of land that respects natural resources and compliments conservation efforts.**

- While hard-surface pathways are important, trails through natural areas should be carefully designed to use natural materials.
- Avoid the need to cut mature or large stands of trees, or at a minimum, maintain existing root systems along shorelines and riverbanks.
- Where funds allow, purchase sensitive lands that are susceptible to development and would otherwise be developed if not protected.
- Work with local land conservancies to acquire sensitive land for protection.
- Encourage walking and bicycling as alternative transportation options to help reduce emissions and improve the environment.

### Specific Recommendations



#### Swan Park Existing Conditions

Existing improvements at Swan Park, as shown above, include four ball fields, restrooms, playground, covered pavilion and paved walking path.

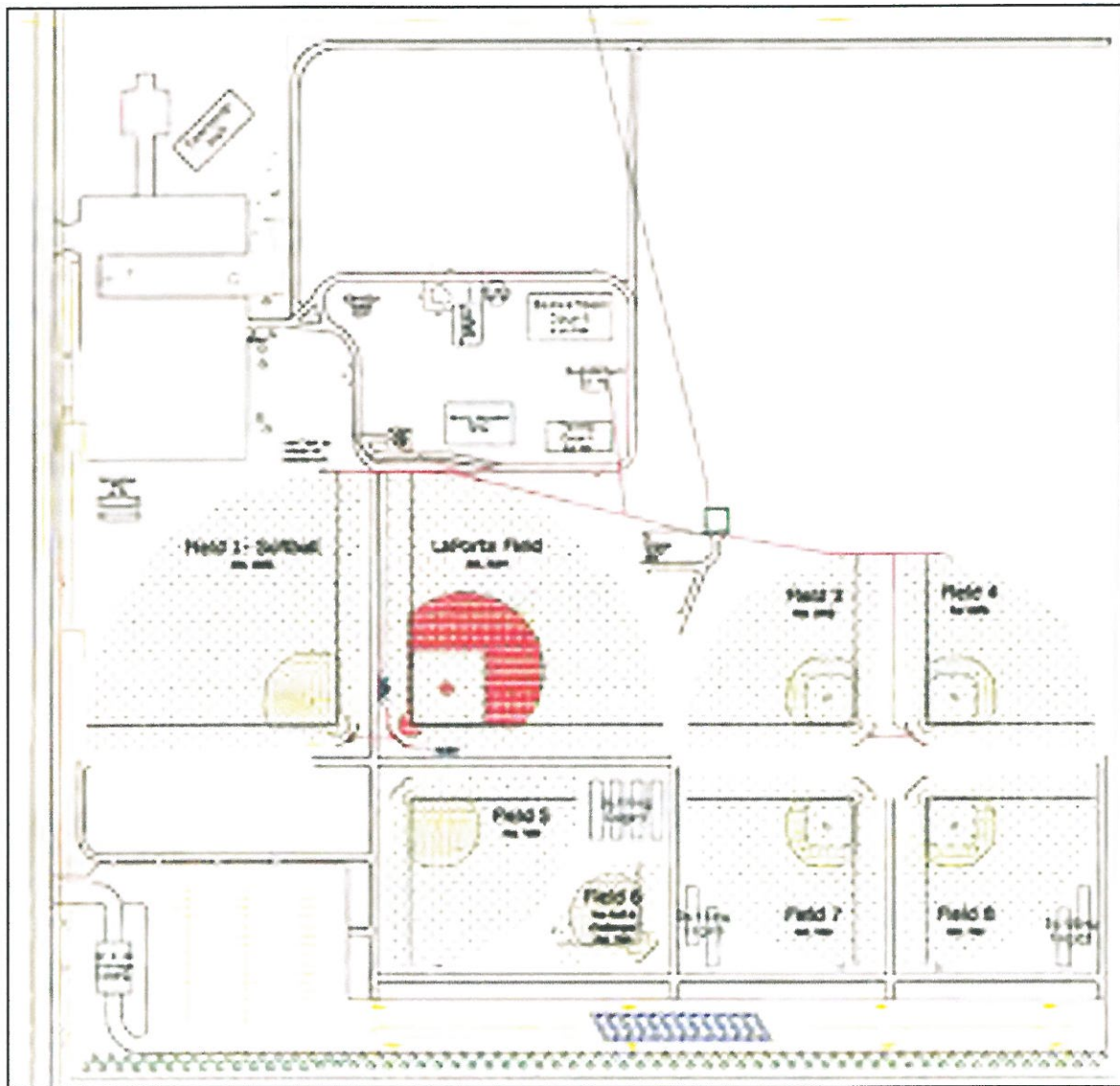
#### Swan Park

Swan Park is an excellent local resource, especially given its central location in the Township. A conceptual plan for Swan Park was developed by the Swan Park Committee that illustrates the long-term vision (see next page), which includes the following goals:

- **Storage and Concessions.** The existing park is highly used, but lacks storage for the leagues that rent the fields. Booster clubs also desire to sell concessions to offset their costs. They presently use a temporary trailer for this purpose, but need a more permanent and secure location. A 42' x 60' storage building was recently constructed (in 2010), and the existing restroom building was designed to be expanded to accommodate concessions.
- **Additional Fields.** The Schoolcraft Little League recently began using Swan Park, so additional fields are needed to accommodate them. Four additional fields are planned, which may include a challenger field for use by disabled citizens. Installation of irrigation systems are also part of this phase of park improvements.
- **Walking Trails.** To maximize use of the park, a perimeter walking path is planned that will meander through all of the fields, providing barrier-free access to most of the park, and connecting elements like the parking areas, restrooms, concessions and play areas.
- **Playground Improvements.** Many who use the current playground have requested expanded play areas, additional facilities, and wish for more seating and gathering areas for parents.
- **Additional Field Improvements.** Development of the actual fields is an earlier task, and some improvements have been completed, but the township plans to equip each field with dugouts, scoreboards and irrigation systems.
- **Paving Improvements.** To serve the above, additional parking will be needed. A 230-space parking lot is planned along the south property

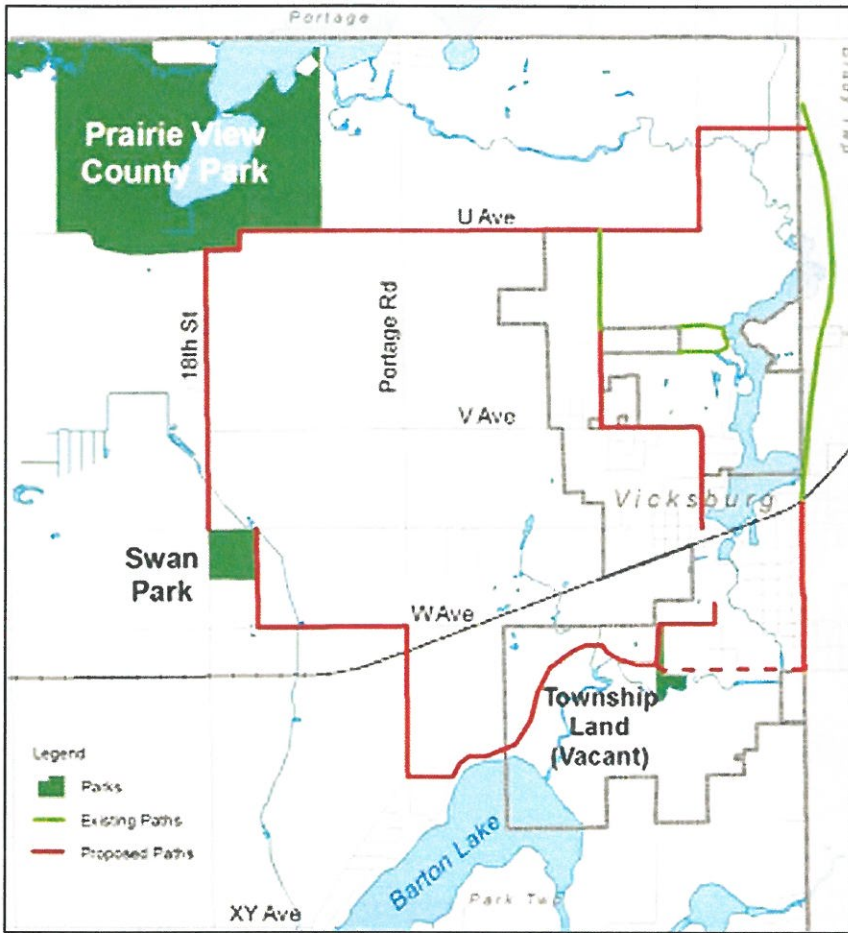
line, which contains ample handicap parking. This phase of development may be increased in priority if demand suggests it is needed sooner.

- **Additional Amenities.** This phase of park development involves additional amenities requested throughout the township's park planning process. The Park Committee distributed surveys, which helped identify a "wish list" of items that they would like to accommodate if resources allow. These include basketball courts, tennis courts, horseshoe pits, tetherball courts, and band shell.



**Swan Park Long Term Vision:** The above plan was developed to maximize use of Swan Park. Future planned improvements include additional ball fields, extended paths, new parking and landscaping, expanded playgrounds, new court amenities (tennis, basketball, tetherball), additional storage and concessions, and various other amenities.

Regional Trail System



Regional Trail Vision

The above map shows existing paths and parks, and the proposed pathway system intended to connect them

Trails are becoming more popular as citizens seek more active travel and recreation opportunities.

The township cooperates with the Village of Vicksburg through the “South County Growth Management and Inter-municipal Cooperation Agreement.” The purpose of the agreement is to coordinate planning and municipal decisions in the southern end of Kalamazoo County. Brady Township is expected to join this agreement, which will allow for excellent cross-connections to the regional trail system that is currently being developed.

Due to various constraints, this project will likely proceed first where land, access easements and financial resources are available and will be completed in stages as additional resources are attained.

Five Year Action Program

The Action Program for Schoolcraft Township provides a five-year implementation checklist for use by those involved in park and recreation planning.

The tables on the following pages list recommendations to help the Township track projects and identify funding priorities. Tasks should be reviewed on an annual basis and priorities adjusted to respond to updated findings and identification of funding opportunities. The costs proposed in this plan are estimates based on the Swan Park Committee’s general

assumptions of construction costs. While the tables list items that should be completed in a specific order, the reality of implementation is that projects will be completed as time and funding resources permit. This requires some flexibility when implementing the Action Program, as time-sensitive opportunities may demand that certain projects rise to the top of the priority list.

Actual costs for each project will be more specifically determined as site surveys, programming elements and engineering plans are developed. If funding levels are lower than required to implement the Plan based on the schedule provided, some projects may extend beyond the 5 year scope of this Plan, or be broken into sub-projects to be completed incrementally over time.

Year	Project	Estimated Cost
2011	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Construct Concession Stand addition to existing restrooms.</li> <li>2. Install electrical to power new storage building.</li> </ol>	\$100,450
2012	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Install irrigation systems on existing fields.</li> <li>2. Construct additional fields (a mix of baseball, softball, tee ball and challenger fields).</li> <li>3. Construct paved walking trail.</li> </ol>	\$145,000
2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop playground and sandbox additions.</li> <li>2. Install dugouts at all fields.</li> <li>3. Install scoreboards at all fields.</li> <li>4. Install irrigation systems on all remaining fields.</li> </ol>	\$215,000
2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Install irrigation system around remaining park areas.</li> <li>2. Pave southern parking lot (230 spaces).</li> </ol>	\$300,000
2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Install additional amenities (basketball, tennis, horseshoe pits, tetherball, band shell).</li> <li>2. Continued park maintenance.</li> </ol>	\$122,500

The township already receives financial assistance from the larger groups that frequently use the park. However, other, less direct improvements may require additional funding to achieve. The above tasks may be funded through a variety of sources (see inset, right), which are discussed in greater detail in Appendix C, Funding Sources.

**FUNDING SOURCES**

**Federal Programs:**

- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grants
- Save America's Treasures
- EPA's Clean Water Fund/Wetland Program Development Grants

**State Programs:**

- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) Grants
- Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI) Grants
- Michigan Natural Resources Tree Planting Grants

**Private:**

- Arbor Day Foundation
- Bikes Belong Coalition
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation
- Michigan Recreation and Park Association Foundation
- Baseball Tomorrow

**Local Fundraising:**

- User Fees
- Private Donations
- Public Partnerships
- Recreation Bond or Millage
- Conservation Easements



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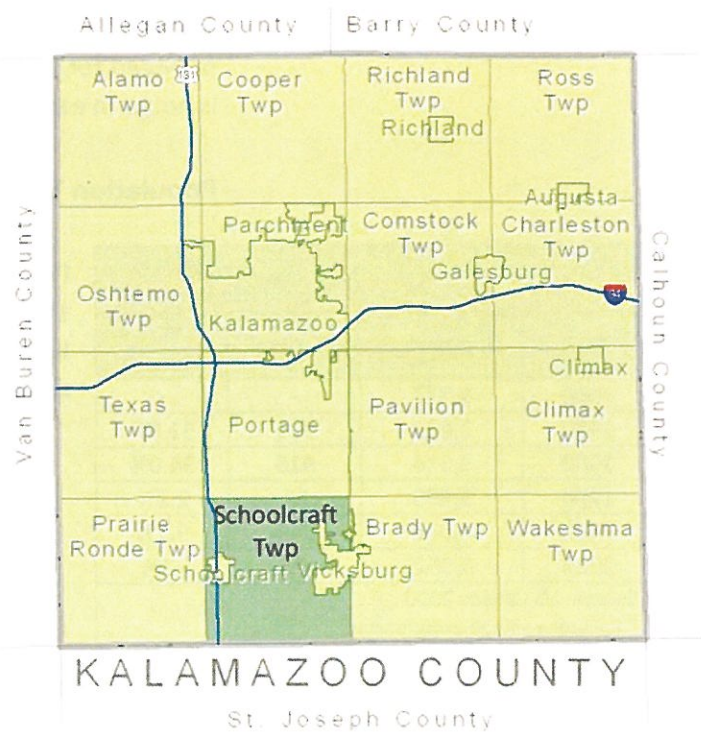


## Appendix A: Community Description

This Appendix is a snapshot of Schoolcraft Township today. It serves as a starting point for understanding the township and is valuable when determining goals and recommendations. Included are key findings of the township’s various socioeconomic characteristics, as well as an overview of the community’s location, land use, natural features, and transportation system. It is important to understand the township’s existing conditions to establish realistic park and recreation goals and objectives.

### Regional Setting

Located in southern Kalamazoo County, Schoolcraft Township is influenced by growth surrounding the cities of Kalamazoo and Portage, and to a lesser extent, Battle Creek. The US-131 freeway runs north-south through the Township and provides access to I-94, an east-west interstate to the north. This arrangement of



## Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

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infrastructure and development creates a unique pattern of growth that has both rural and urban elements. The City of Kalamazoo is a regional draw, providing an increasingly attractive urban center that includes influential educational, cultural and health facilities, while the Villages of Schoolcraft and Vicksburg, among others in the region, have evolved into quaint, rural residential communities.

Natural resources have played a key role in the industrial and residential development within the township. The presence of prime agricultural soils and a plentiful groundwater aquifer have contributed to a large agricultural land base for seed corn production. The chain of lakes in the southern portion of the township (Barton and Howard are the two largest) has attracted residential development. Many township residents feel that these unique natural features, the scenes of active agricultural production and the presence of water and wetlands are integral elements of the community's character.

### Socioeconomic Characteristics

The following is a demographic profile of Schoolcraft Township, which depicts the various characteristics of the community to gain a better understanding of its unique qualities. Most of the information uses 2000 U.S. Census data, which provides some data for the entire Township, including both of the villages located within; however, some other data was provided for just the Township's jurisdiction. The scope of the information is noted in each table.

#### Population Trends

Figure A-1 Population Trends*			
Year	Population	Change	Percent Change
1960	1,777	-	-
1970	2,698	921	51.8%
1980	3,614	916	34.0%
1990	3,695	81	2.2%
2000	4,035	340	9.1%
2005	3,952	-83	-2%

Source: US Census 2000  
\* Excludes village populations.

Population in the Township has been relatively steady since 1990, with the greatest period of population growth occurring between 1960 and 1980. The 2005 US Census estimates indicate a slight population loss.

**Age**

An understanding of the age distribution is essential in planning for future park and recreation needs. As people pass through the various stages of life, their recreational requirements change, resulting in different facility and programming requirements. Figure A-2 shows the age distribution of Township residents in 2000. Ages are expressed in fifteen year increments, which helps to show where the largest needs are today. It can be logically concluded that, if populations remain steady as projected, residents in each bracket will graduate to the next within the coming fifteen years. In 2000, the largest segment of the population was age 30 to 44, but there is a relatively consistent distribution of residents between the ages of 15 and 75, which means that recreation should not be focused toward any one particular sector; rather, recreation facilities and programs should focus on addressing the needs of all ages.

Figure A-2 Age Distribution*		
Age Sector	Population	Percent
under 15	1,597	22.0%
15 to 29	1,279	17.6%
30 to 44	1,720	23.7%
45 to 59	1,530	21.1%
60 to 74	749	10.3%
75 to 89	357	4.9%
90 and over	28	0.4%

Source: US Census 2000  
\* Includes village populations.

**Persons with Disabilities**

The proportion of the population with some type of disability should be considered when planning parks and recreational facilities and programs. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 mandates that all public services, including park facilities, be barrier-free. As the population ages, the proportion with one or more disabilities generally increases, and this trend is consistent for Schoolcraft Township. Disabilities include sensory, physical, mental, self-care, go-outside-home, and employment disabilities. Figure A-3 shows the number of residents with a disability, including a partial breakdown by type. In all over 16 percent of area residents have some sort of disability, and almost half of those residents have either a physical or employment handicap. These figures indicate that, while the township population is modest, there still exists an important contingent of residents who rely on more accessible places to recreate.

Figure A-3 Non-Institutionalized Persons 5 years and Older with a Disability					
Age Sector	Residents with Disability <sup>1</sup>				Percent of Total
	Physical <sup>2</sup>	Mental	Employment	Total	
5 to 15	16	83	0	113	1.7%
16 to 20	0	7	22	43	0.6%
21 to 54	164	24	203	671	9.9%
65+	139	12	0	306	4.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>1133</b>	<b>16.7%</b>

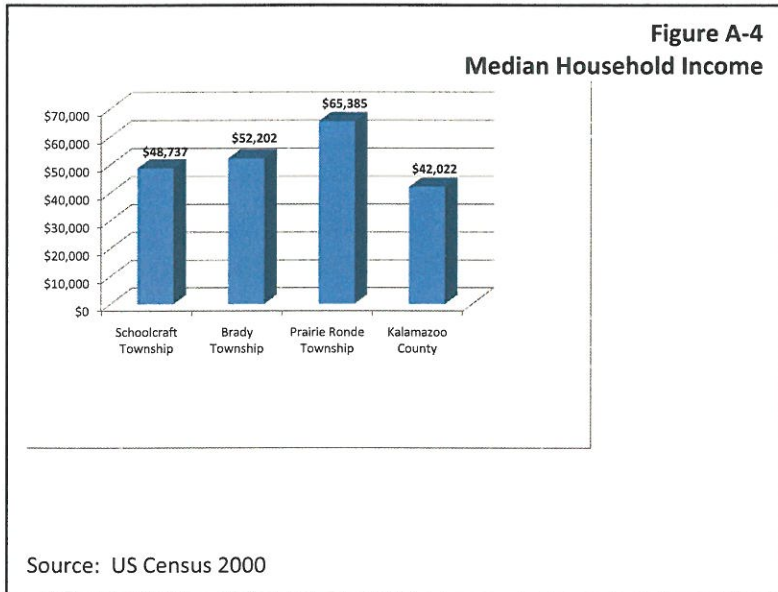
Source: US Census 2000  
<sup>1</sup> Includes village populations.  
<sup>2</sup> Includes sensory, self-care and go-outside-home disabilities.

# Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

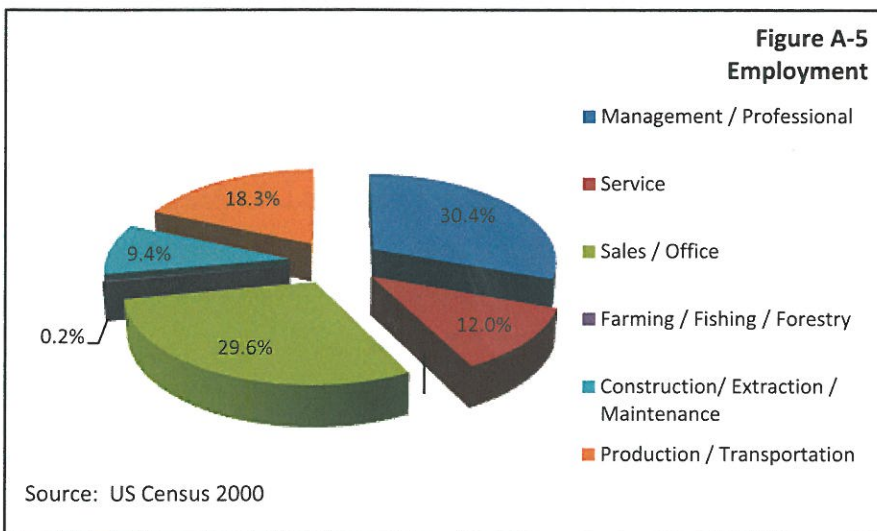
## Income

A successful parks and recreation program requires providing affordable recreational opportunities to the community. As incomes vary within a community and a region, so too does the notion of affordability and

availability of disposable income for recreation. Figure A-4 illustrates the median household income of the township, compared to other similar communities. The table reveals that, while township residents earn more than the county overall, it still lags behind nearby townships like Brady and Prairie Ronde, and that incomes in the community may not facilitate wide use of fee-based, private recreation. Further, what is not reflected in this chart is the declining economy and associated lower income levels experienced since the 2000 Census. The township should consider these as the best-case scenario until more updated figures are available.



## Employment



Residents of Schoolcraft Township are employed in a range of employment categories. As shown in Figure A-5, there is a good distribution of residents in the management or professional, sales or office, and production or transportation occupations. The relative strength of the employment picture in Schoolcraft Township suggests that the local economy is stable and that residents should be able to continue to fund the parks and recreation budget.

## Physical Characteristics

The following is a description of the physical characteristics of the township, including land use, natural features, and the transportation network. This information is useful when locating future residential growth areas, and subsequently the extent of needed future park and recreation improvements.

**Land Use**

The land use distribution and development pattern of a community is important when considering the geographic distribution of parks and recreational facilities because they should be placed where there are concentrations of residents and the related places of public gathering. Map Four indicates the location, and Figure A-6 shows the acreage of key land uses in the township.

Agricultural production, including pasture, field crops and livestock, is the dominant land use within the township. The largest number of farms enrolled in the PA 116 farmland preservation program is found in the western portion of the township, but due to the location of the US-131 freeway, this area is beginning to transition from active farming to other uses. The eastern portion of the township is actively farmed, but has seen additional residential development as well. Residential development in the township consists of farmsteads and large-lot residential estates to subdivisions, a manufactured housing community and two village centers. Single-family homes on large lots can be found on every major roadway throughout the township, but recent trends have focused this kind of development near the eastern township boundary and around the lakefronts. Commercial development is primarily concentrated along the northern stretch of US-131 and along VW Avenue and Portage Road. The largest area of industry in the township is located along US-131, with some small industrial centers existing along the CN Railroad.

<b>Figure A-6</b>		
<b>Land Use Distribution</b>		
<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Agricultural	12,541	52.6%
Single-Family Residential	3,252	13.6%
Multiple-Family	32	0.1%
Manufactured Home Park	38	0.2%
Commercial	336	1.4%
Industrial	240	1.0%
Public	1,490	6.2%
Forest	2,488	10.4%
Open Water	950	4.0%
Vacant/Transitional	77	0.3%
Villages	2,398	10.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,842</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Source: LSL Planning, 2006		

**Natural Features**

Schoolcraft Township is blessed with abundant natural features, as shown on Map Three. Preservation of natural features is a major priority for the community as they both enhance and protect the quality of life. These

## Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

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features help to clean groundwater supplies, provide wildlife habitats, accommodate stormwater surges and manage floodwaters and, where in public ownership, protect environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, steep slopes, and woodlots. These natural features, especially the inland lakes, also attract development as residents seek out the serenity and beauty they offer.

### Transportation

While residents are attracted to the township's rural character and natural beauty, what brings them are the regional transportation routes. The transportation system that serves Schoolcraft Township makes it easily accessible and has attracted commuters working in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. US Highway 131 travels from north to south through the western quarter of the township. All public roads are paved and are under the jurisdiction of the Kalamazoo County Road Commission.

The township is bisected by two significant rail lines. The Norfolk Southern line runs parallel and about ¼ mile east of US-131 through the Village of Schoolcraft. The Canadian National Line traverses through the center of the township, from Schoolcraft Village through Vicksburg. The nearest commercial airport is located six miles to the north, in Kalamazoo.

## Appendix B: Public Involvement and Adoption

Schoolcraft Township developed this plan with input from the public. Some input was obtained through meetings held during this planning process, and through surveys conducted previously. Summarized below are the various ways the Township solicited input.

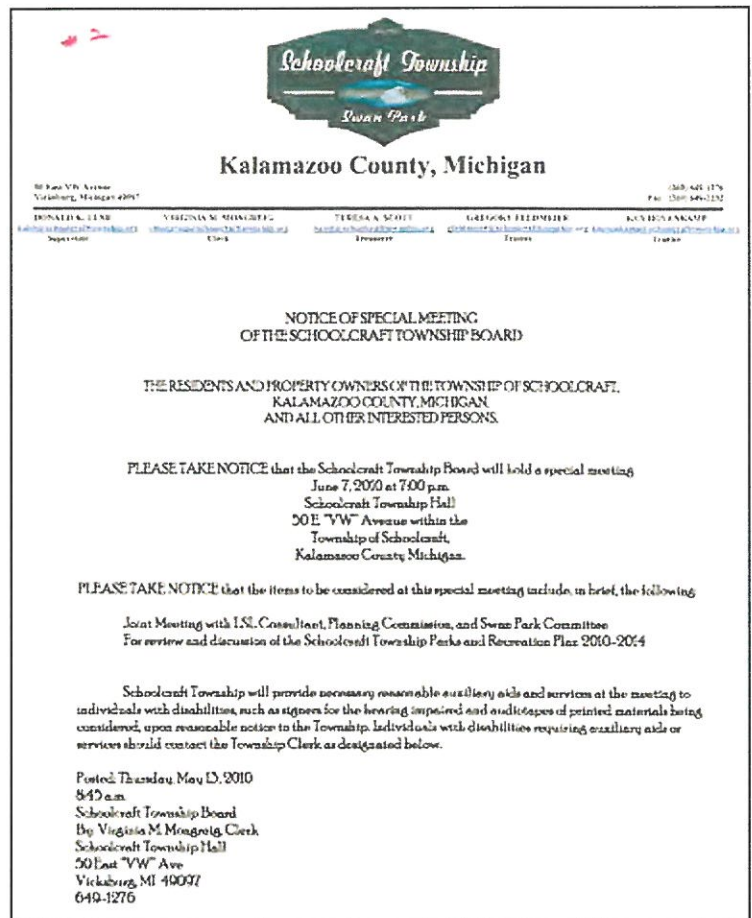
### Public Meetings

The Township Board met early in the process with the Planning Commission and Swan Park Committee to discuss goals for recreation. This visioning session was held on June 7, 2010 and was open to the public. A notice (see right) was posted to announce the meeting.

The following four key issues were discussed:

1. Swan Park Goals:

- Schoolcraft Little league now uses Swan Park – needed storage (being provided) and concessions
- Add/expand pathway for accessibility considerations and to connect to restrooms and seating areas
- Seating/Viewing areas – bleachers may be provided by Little League, but we may need accessible seating areas
- Comments on site plan: move horseshoes closer to action; picnic closer to play area
- Add to Swan Park playground – it is highly used
- Potential “challenger” field for handicap play, and/or for youth t-ball
- Traffic on VW Avenue is a concern – especially for children who could wander close to the road
- Vicksburg travel Lacrosse team has contributed money for improvements to fields they use





## Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

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2. Consider costs for operation and maintenance:
  - User fees are charged for leagues that use the park, but otherwise the park is open to the public
  - Consider how we will pay for operation and maintenance – suggestions in the plan
  
3. Trails:
  - South county plans a trail to connect Vicksburg to Prairie View to Swan Park
  - Land acquisition needed for trail – could follow railroads, water courses
  - Work with the county to improve shoulders where needed to make connections
  
4. 10-acre Township-owned site (next to cemetery on W Ave):
  - Originally planned for cemetery expansion that may not be needed now...
  - Could be a trailhead and/or neighborhood park
  - Fronts on Portage creek

### Survey

A survey was conducted in 2004 by the Swan Park Committee, which garnered 256 responses. The survey measured public opinion regarding the facilities at Swan Park and desired improvements. In general, residents are aware of the location and facilities available at Swan Park, but were somewhat neutral regarding their satisfaction with them. Many agreed that additional recreation is needed at the Park, and the top ten specific items residents stated they would use most were:

- |                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ▪ Covered picnic pavilion (124) | ▪ Dog walk area (41)             |
| ▪ Basketball hoops (64)         | ▪ Butterfly garden (35)          |
| ▪ Additional picnic areas (57)  | ▪ Water play fountain (34)       |
| ▪ Ice skating rink (56)         | ▪ Expand current playground (32) |
| ▪ Horseshoe pits (49)           |                                  |
| ▪ Soccer fields (47)            |                                  |

## Public Review Period and Public Hearing Notice

The draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan was available for public review at the Schoolcraft Township Hall during normal business hours, on November 10, 2010. The Notice of Public Review and Public Hearing is included to the right.

The Township Board held a public hearing on January 11, 2011 and published a notice to announce the meeting. The Township Board approved the Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan at this meeting, but because the meeting was not published 30 days prior to the hearing, the Township held a second public hearing on March 8, 2011.

An excerpt of the minutes containing the public hearing discussion, a copy of the signed resolution of adoption, and transmittal letters to the County/Regional Planning Commission and State Department of Natural Resources and Environment are found on the following pages.

**SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

The Schoolcraft Township Board will hold a public hearing on the

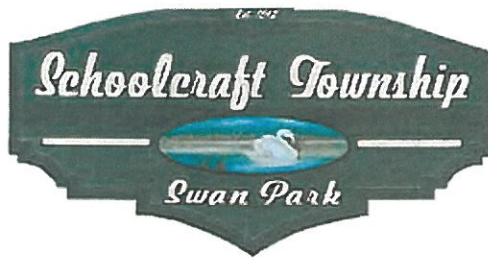
**Draft Recreation Plan**  
Township Hall on January 11, 2011  
at 6:00 a.m.

A copy of the Draft Recreation Plan is available for public inspection at the Schoolcraft Township Hall, 50 East VW Avenue, Vicksburg, Michigan, 49067.

Schoolcraft Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services of the hearing to individuals with disabilities, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audiotapes of printed materials being considered, upon reasonable notice to the Township. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Township Clerk as designated below.

Virginia M. Manareis, Clerk  
Township of Schoolcraft  
50 East VW Avenue  
Vicksburg, MI 49067  
Phone: (269) 649-1276

RECEIVED  
JAN - 5 2011



## Kalamazoo County, Michigan

50 East VW Avenue  
Vicksburg, Michigan 49097

(269) 649-1276  
Fax (269) 649-2232

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<a href="mailto:dulsh@schoolcrafttownship.org">DONALD K. ULSH</a> Supervisor	<a href="mailto:vmongreig@schoolcrafttownship.org">VIRGINIA M. MONGREIG</a> Clerk	<a href="mailto:tscott@schoolcrafttownship.org">TERESA A. SCOTT</a> Treasurer	<a href="mailto:gfeldmeier@schoolcrafttownship.org">GREGORY FELDMEIER</a> Trustee	<a href="mailto:khovenkamp@schoolcrafttownship.org">KEN HOVENKAMP</a> Trustee
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March 8, 2011 Schoolcraft Township Board Meeting

10.) **New Business**

a.) Public Hearing of Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan

Motion by Scott with support by Mongreig to open the public hearing.

**Motion Carried 5-0**


Supervisor Ulsh opened the meeting for discussion. No public comment.

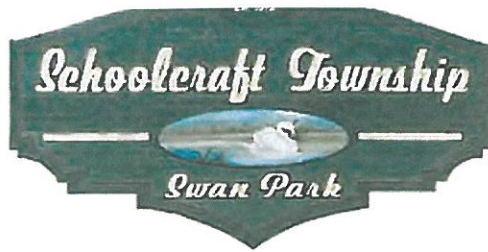
Motion by Scott with support by Mongreig to close the public hearing.

**Motion carried 5-0.**

Motion by Scott with support by Mongreig to approve The Resolution of Adoption for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

**Motion carried 5-0**

  
Virginia M. Mongreig, Clerk  
Schoolcraft Township



## Kalamazoo County, Michigan

50 East VW Avenue  
Vicksburg, Michigan 49097

(269) 649-1276  
Fax (269) 649-2232

<u>DONALD K. ULSH</u> dulsh@schoolcrafttownship.org Supervisor	<u>VIRGINIA M. MONGREIG</u> vmongreig@schoolcrafttownship.org Clerk	<u>TERESA A. SCOTT</u> tscott@schoolcrafttownship.org Treasurer	<u>GREGORY FELDMEIER</u> gfeldmeier@schoolcrafttownship.org Trustee	<u>KEN HOVENKAMP</u> khovenkamp@schoolcrafttownship.org Trustee
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### Schoolcraft Township Board Resolution of Adoption for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

March 8, 2011

**WHEREAS**, development of adequate parks and recreation facilities requires a pro-active plan based on a combination of community input, analysis of existing conditions, analysis of the basic needs for current and future residents, parks and recreation planning expertise, as well as prioritized improvements programs and potential funding opportunities; and

**WHEREAS**, the foundation of the plan is established with the Action Program consisting of overall goals and supporting objectives and specific Action Program for the next five years; and

**WHEREAS**, the plan provides recommendations for park and recreation facilities, and recreation programming with a prioritized list of capital improvements for the next five years; and

**WHEREAS**, Schoolcraft Township along with the assistance of LSL Planning, Inc. has prepared the Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan which includes all the above elements; and

**WHEREAS**, said plan is represented to meet the requirements of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, thereby making the Township eligible for State and Federal grants administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment; and

**WHEREAS**, Schoolcraft Township followed a planning process that contained public involvement, including a public meeting for the purpose of soliciting community input on said plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township Board endorsed the final draft of the Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan on November 9, 2010, giving the public more than 30 days to review and comment on the draft.

**WHEREAS**, a public hearing was held by the Township Board on March 8, 2011.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOVED** that the Schoolcraft Township Board of Trustees hereby adopts the Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan as a guideline for improving recreation for the residents of Schoolcraft Township.

Resolution declared adopted this 8th day of March, 2011.

Signed Donald K. Ulsch  
Donald K. Ulsch, Supervisor

Attested Virginia M. Mongreig  
Virginia M. Mongreig, Clerk



**LSL Planning, Inc.**

Community Planning Consultants

March 10, 2011

Ms. Lotta Jarnefelt  
Kalamazoo County Director of Planning & Community Development  
Kalamazoo Metropolitan County Planning Commission  
201 West Kalamazoo Avenue  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

**Subject: Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan**

Dear Ms. Jarnefelt,

On behalf of the Schoolcraft Township, we are pleased to submit for your records the locally adopted Parks and Recreation Plan. The plan was endorsed by the Township Board on March 8, 2011.

Should you have any questions or require additional assistance, please contact Don Ulsh, Township Supervisor at (269) 649-1276.

Sincerely,

**LSL PLANNING, INC.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherrin S. Hood".

Sherrin S. Hood, AICP  
Senior Planner

Enclosure

cc: Don Ulsh, Schoolcraft Township Supervisor



**LSL Planning, Inc.**

Community Planning Consultants

March 10, 2011

Grants Management

Attn: Jason Cherry

Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment

PO Box 30425

Lansing, MI 48909-7925

**Subject: Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan**

Dear Mr. Cherry,

On behalf of the Schoolcraft Township, we are pleased to submit for your records the locally adopted Parks and Recreation Plan. The plan was endorsed by the Township Board on March 8, 2011.

Should you have any questions or require additional assistance, please contact Don Ulsh, Township Supervisor at (269) 649-1276.

Sincerely,

**LSL PLANNING, INC.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherrin S. Hood".

Sherrin S. Hood, AICP

Senior Planner

Enclosure

cc: Don Ulsh, Schoolcraft Township Supervisor



**LSL Planning, Inc.**

Community Planning Consultants

March 10, 2011

South Central Michigan Planning Council  
Rand D. Bowman, Executive Director  
P.O. Box 2137  
Portage, MI 49081

**Subject: Schoolcraft Township Parks and Recreation Plan**

Dear Mr. Bowman,

On behalf of Schoolcraft Township, we are pleased to submit for your records the locally adopted Parks and Recreation Plan. The plan was adopted by the Township Board on March 8, 2011.

Should you have any questions or require additional assistance, please contact Don Ulsh, Township Supervisor at (269) 649-1276.

Sincerely,

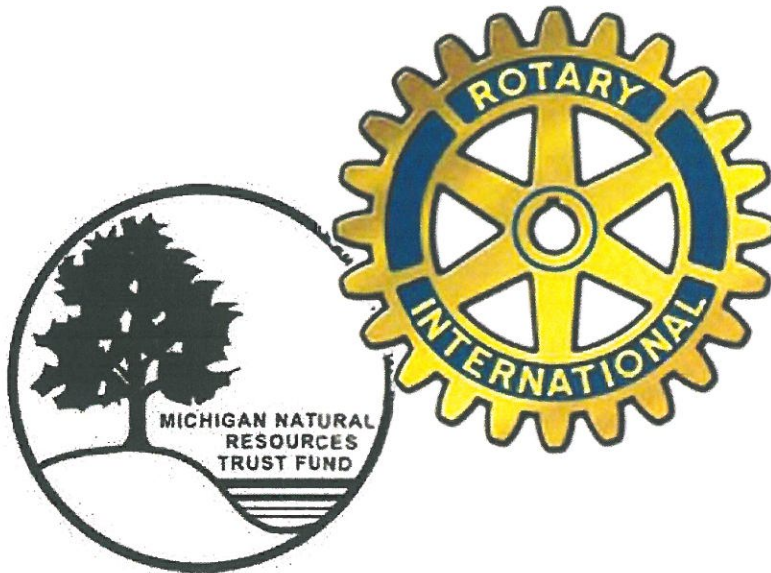
**LSL PLANNING, INC.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherrin S. Hood".

Sherrin S. Hood, AICP  
Senior Planner

Enclosure

cc: Don Ulsh, Schoolcraft Township Supervisor



## Appendix C: Funding Sources

The scope of recreation improvements proposed in the Action Program can be financed through a combination of resources. In addition to the general fund, potential funding sources are described below.

### Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund provides funding assistance for communities to acquire and develop land for outdoor recreation. The minimum award is \$15,000 and the maximum is \$500,000 with a required 50% local match. The eligibility criterion emphasizes preservation of natural resources such as waterways. Grant applications are due in April of each year. For more information, visit their website at: [www.nps.gov/lwcf](http://www.nps.gov/lwcf)



### Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources administers the MNRTF grant program. The MNRTF provides funding assistance for the purchase of land (or interests in land) for recreation or protection of land because of its environmental importance or scenic beauty, and the development of



recreation facilities. Funding assistance is directed at projects that protect natural resources or improve outdoor recreational opportunities, especially those promoting “universal design” and development of trails. Two types of grant applications are offered: improvement grants are offered between \$15,000 and \$500,000 with a required minimum local match of 25%, and acquisition grant amounts vary depending upon the value of property and local match amount – there is no maximum. MNRTF grants are ideal for acquisition of environmentally sensitive land and park development plans, but it is a highly sought source of funding and the application process can be quite competitive. Applications are due in April and September of each year for acquisition projects and April of each year for development projects. For more information, visit their website at:

[www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10366\\_37984\\_37985-124961--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10366_37984_37985-124961--,00.html)

### Clean Michigan Initiative’s Local Recreation Grants



In 1998, Michigan voters approved a bond initiative to fund improvements to State and local parks. The Local Recreation Grants Program provides funding for the development and renovation of indoor or outdoor public recreation facilities and infrastructure. The goal of the program is to enhance or develop recreational opportunities by improving or replacing an existing public facility, by meeting the recreational needs of the local residents, or by attracting tourists. Grants are awarded for non-acquisition projects in amounts between \$15,000 to \$750,000, based on the need for the project, capability of the local community to operate and maintain the improvement, and quality of the site and project design. Clean Michigan moneys were used to improve Swan Park. More information on these programs can be found on the state’s website at:

[http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-30301\\_31154\\_32314--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-30301_31154_32314--,00.html)

### Michigan Natural Resources Tree Planting Grants

Through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), there are two tree planting grant programs that will assist in funding park landscape enhancements and re-forestation projects. Applicants must provide at least 50% of the total project cost.

- **Arbor Day Mini-Grants.** This mini-grant program is designed to provide information and technical assistance to municipal governments and volunteer groups for urban and community forest activities related

to Arbor Day. Applications are due in July with maximum grant requests of \$20,000. For more information, visit their website at:

[www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10366\\_37984\\_38165-128813--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10366_37984_38165-128813--,00.html)

- **Urban Community Forestry Program.** This program provides the same services as above plus management plans, inventories and maintenance activities. These activities do not have to be related to Arbor Day. Applications are due in July with maximum grant requests of \$20,000. For more information, visit their website at:  
[www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10366\\_37984\\_38165-126153--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10366_37984_38165-126153--,00.html)

### U.S. Department of the Interior

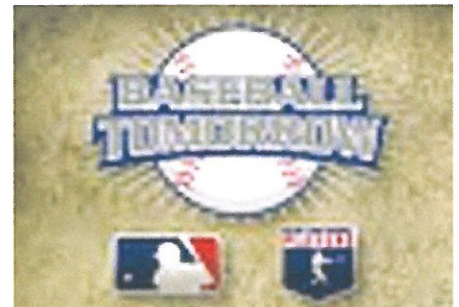
The Department of the Interior (DOI) is the nation's principal conservation agency. Its mission is to "protect and manage the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provide scientific and other information about those resources; and honor its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated Island Communities."

- **Non-competitive Grants.** Grants are offered through the Historic Preservation Fund to assist State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices in their efforts to protect and preserve their historic resources.
- **Save America's Treasures.** Funding to government agencies and nonprofit organizations is available for preservation and conservation work on nationally significant artifacts, collections, and historic properties.

### Baseball Tomorrow Fund

This fund, which is provided through a joint partnership between Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association, and awards annual grants to projects aimed at increasing the number of youth participating in and improving the quality of baseball and softball programs. The program is specifically aimed at children ages 10 to 16, and to those using innovative approaches or providing opportunities to minorities and women. Tax exempt and 501(c)3 organizations are eligible, and Baseball Tomorrow strongly encourages at least 50% matching funds.

[http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official\\_info/community/btf.jsp?content=grant\\_process](http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official_info/community/btf.jsp?content=grant_process)



### **Wetland Program Development**

The goals of the Environmental Protection Agency's wetland program and the Clean Water Action Plan are to increase the quantity and quality of wetlands in the U.S. by conserving and increasing wetland acreage, and improving wetland health. State, tribal, and local governmental agencies, interstate, intertribal, and local government associations are eligible to receive grant funds. Applications are due in the fall with a required 25% minimum local match. For more information, visit their website at: [www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/grantguidelines](http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/grantguidelines)

### **User Fees**

Schoolcraft Township charges reasonable fees to use Swan Park facilities and fields. The township works closely with local league organizations to fund maintenance and improvement costs associated with their use. No other fees are charged to use the park. The township should evaluate these fees annually to ensure they are providing the appropriate amount of funding to allow the programs to continue.

### **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**

TIF is authorized by the Downtown Development Authority Act and Local Development Finance Authority Act. When a TIF district is established, the stated equalized assessment value of all properties within the district is recorded. Every year thereafter, the property tax revenue generated by any increase in the total stated equalized value is "captured" by the responsible organization to finance improvements established in the overall development plan. The development plan is a required document illustrating all proposed improvements within the district. Often, revenue bonds are used to finance the improvements and the tax increment revenues are used to repay the bonds.

### **Conservation Easements**

A conservation easement is a method of preserving open space that is guaranteed through formal documentation. This technique can also be used to preserve open space if it is not feasible or practical for Brownstown to acquire the land. Rather than obtaining fee simple, or complete ownership, an organization or community can purchase or acquire by gift an 'easement' to the property.

### Public-Private or Public-Public Partnerships

The township currently participates in the South County planning group, which coordinates growth amongst the communities in southern Kalamazoo County. Such partnerships encourage more efficient use of local resources and funding, and in southern Kalamazoo County have equated to a regional growth strategy and coordinated pathway discussions. While this group is still in its early stages of operation, the township is fortunate enough to have a regional planning framework already in place. Future partnerships with local businesses, schools, service groups or entities like libraries or senior centers, can help further common interests at reduced costs. Should this group evolve into a more formal authority in the future, they would also be able to levy millages or sell bond for improvements, as described below.

### Recreation Bond

A number of bond programs can be used to finance construction of parks and recreation facilities. General Obligation Bonds are issued for specific community projects, such as park improvements and park land acquisition, and may not be used for other purposes. These bonds are usually paid for with property tax revenues. Revenue Bonds are issued for construction of public projects that generate revenues. The bonds are then retired using income generated by the project.

### Special Millage

A property tax millage can be used to finance specific park and recreation projects such as park development, pathway improvements and facility upgrades. A millage is an effective method to divide costs over time amongst all the taxpayers in the community to provide matching grant funds or finance projects out-right. A millage allows more flexibility in how the money is used than a bond.

### Local Fundraising

The Schoolcraft Township community is full of active, community-minded residents. Businesses, corporations, private clubs, community organizations, and individuals often contribute to recreation and other improvement programs to benefit the communities in which they are located. Private sector contributions may be in the form of monetary



Example of Donor Monument at skate park

contributions, the donation of land, the provision of volunteer services, or the contribution of equipment or facilities.

Soliciting funding and support from those who stand to benefit from parks and recreation improvements makes sense, but is also more likely to foster a sense of ownership of local resources.

### Foundations

A foundation is a special non-profit legal entity that is established as a mechanism through which land, cash, and securities can be donated for the benefit of parks and recreation services. The assets are disbursed by the foundation Board of Directors according to a predetermined plan. Two of the more prominent, Michigan-based foundations that fund recreation programs include:



- **Arbor Day Foundation.** Becoming a member of the Arbor Day Foundation could provide the township with additional resources for tree planting and maintenance. Schoolcraft Township may investigate becoming a designated Tree-City USA, which provides additional advantages towards park enhancement projects. To qualify, the township must meet the following four standards, established by The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Association of State Foresters. More information is available on their website: [www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org)
  1. A Tree Board or Department
  2. A Tree Care Ordinance
  3. A Community Forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita
  4. An Arbor Day observance and proclamation
  
- **Bikes Belong Coalition.** The Bikes Belong Grants Program strives to put more people on bicycles more often by funding projects that leverage federal funding and build momentum for bicycling. They seek to assist local organizations, agencies, and citizens in developing bicycle facilities projects. Bikes Belong Coalition accepts applications for grants quarterly for up to \$10,000 each, and will consider successor grants for continuing projects. For more information, visit their website at: [www.bikesbelong.org/grants](http://www.bikesbelong.org/grants)
  
- **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.** The Mott Foundation is a private, grantmaking organization based in Flint, Michigan with a vision, “of a world in which each of us is in partnership with the rest of the

human race-where each individual's quality of life is connected to the well-being of the community, both locally and globally.” Mott funds environmental, social and economic programs that further their vision. Funding through Mott should be limited to those items with strong community support, preferably those initiated through grass-roots efforts that cannot be funded through other public funding sources.  
[www.mott.org](http://www.mott.org)



- **W. K. Kellogg Foundation.** The Kellogg Foundation’s mission is aimed at “creating communities, systems, and nations in which all children have an equitable and promising future – one in which all children thrive.” As such, many of their grants fund school-related projects, and since recreation in Schoolcraft Township involves the school districts, this is a promising funding source for school-based applications. Kellogg grants are directed to child education and learning; food, health and well-being; and family economic security, and are best suited for Safe Routes to School projects that focus on improving safety and non-motorized access to local schools.  
[www.wkkf.org/default.aspx?LanguageID=0](http://www.wkkf.org/default.aspx?LanguageID=0)
- **Michigan Recreation and Park Association Foundation.** The MRPA is committed to enhancing quality of life experiences for all people by supporting community enrichment, research, advocacy, natural resources, and professional development of park and recreation professionals, students, and citizen advocates.  
[www.mrpafoundation.org](http://www.mrpafoundation.org)

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