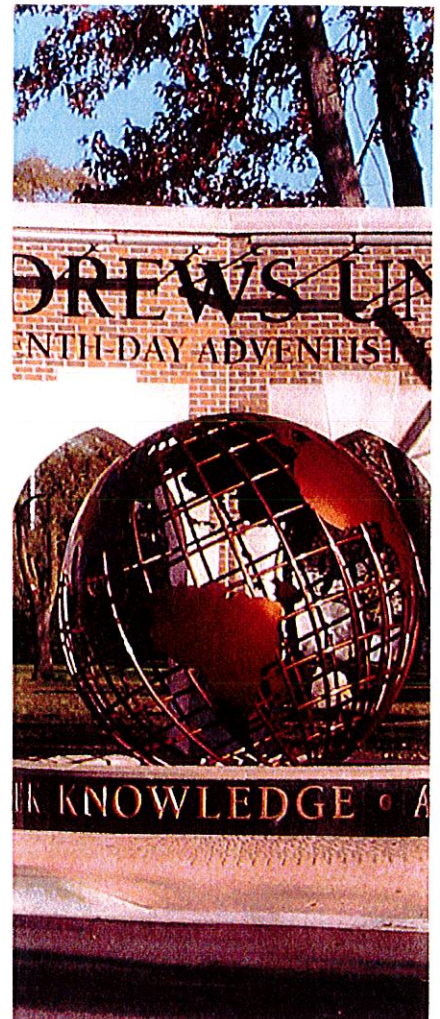




Oronoko Charter Township

2019-2023 Parks & Recreation Plan



Adopted [insert date]

williams&works

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The fundamental purpose of this Five-Year Recreation Plan is to enable Oronoko Charter Township to improve quality of life for its citizens. A Recreation Plan represents a policy statement about the future of recreation in the Township and provides a blueprint for making desired improvements over the next five years.

Oronoko Township recognizes the contribution of recreation to the quality of life and the physical health of its citizens and to the economic health of the region. This recognition has been manifested in this effort to develop a new Recreation Plan with the hopes of improving local recreation offerings, public trails, preservation of natural areas, and opening of government-owned lands to enhanced public recreation. While quality of life in the community is excellent, the Township government has chosen to take an active role in the delivery of recreation opportunities by completing this Five-Year Recreation Plan. The Oronoko Charter Township Planning Commission and Township Board are dedicated to improving recreational offerings in the Township.

Recreation planning is an exercise engaged by local and state governments and authorities to anticipate change, promote needed change, and to control or direct recreational development in such a way as to benefit the entire community. It has the aim of harmonizing the available recreational resources and activities with the environmental, aesthetic, and cultural requirements of the Township.

This Oronoko Charter Township Five-Year Recreation Plan provides a policy and decision making guide regarding future improvements. Key planning issues are examined, a clear set of goals and objectives are outlined, and specific implementation projects are identified. The plan establishes the vision for recreation in the Township and a realistic, workable plan to realize it.

The Township's Recreation Plan was last updated in 2013 and expired at the end of 2018. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requires that Recreation Plans be reviewed and updated every five years to keep them current. Following the DNR's guidelines establishes the Township's eligibility to apply for grant funds that would otherwise be unavailable. Thus, this plan is an investment in the community that will enable the Township to improve the quality of life for residents.



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Chapter 2. Community Description

Oronoko Charter Township is situated in the southwestern lower peninsula of Michigan in the center of Berrien County, just a few miles north of the State's border with Indiana. The Township has an area of slightly more than 33 square miles and is characterized by abundant agricultural land, wooded habitats, rivers and creeks mixed with new and old human development.

The Township is bounded by Royalton Township to the north, Buchanan Township to the south, Baroda Township to the west and by the Saint Joseph River and Lake Chapin to the east. The Township was organized on March 11, 1837 and became a charter township in 1988.

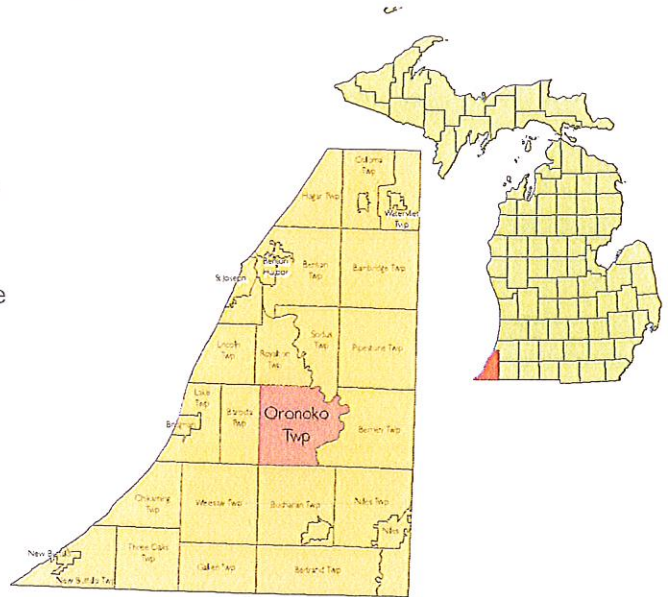
Lakes and Rivers

The most significant lake in the Township is Lake Chapin, which comprises a part of the Township's eastern border. Lake Chapin has an area of approximately 480 acres and is a popular destination for fishing and boating. Lake Chapin is a man-made reservoir, created with the construction of the Berrien Springs Dam in 1908.

The St. Joseph River is approximately 210 miles long and begins in Hillsdale County, dips southwest into northern Indiana before turning northwest and emptying into Lake Michigan between St. Joseph and Benton Harbor. The river provides residents with recreational opportunities such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking.

Selected Demographic Characteristics

Oronoko Township experienced relatively steady growth in the 1960s and 1970s, and that growth has plateaued and slowly declined in recent years. In 1980, the Township's population reached its highest at 10,761, compared with 9,843 in 2000 and 9,193 in 2010. Surrounding communities



Map 1. Location of Oronoko Charter Township



Lake Chapin provides an excellent recreational opportunity for Township residents



have experienced similar patterns of population change, with the exception of Royalton Township which has grown consistently over the past twenty years. The chart below illustrates population change in the Township and surrounding communities from 2000-2016.

Figure 2.1

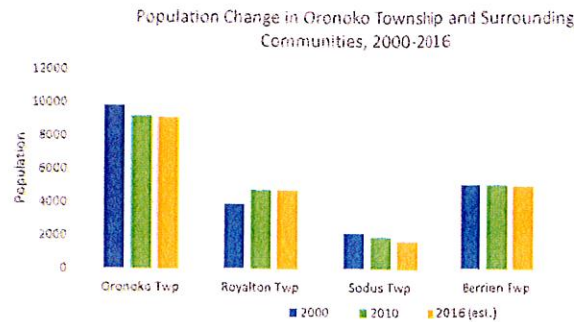


Figure 2.1 above illustrates population change in Oronoko Charter Township relative to the surrounding Townships. Those six communities had a combined population of 23,335 in 2016 (according to American Community Survey estimates), underscoring a need for parks and recreation facilities.

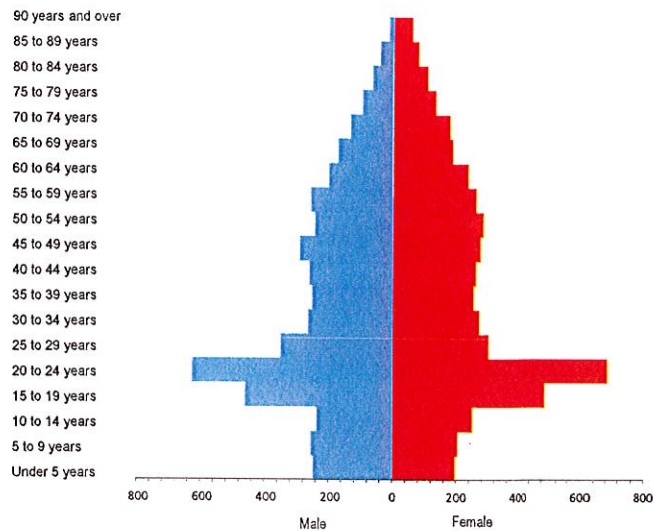
Age

A key indicator in recreation planning involves examining the age distribution of a community over time. This assists in determining the type of recreational facilities that may be needed. For example, if a large portion of the population were younger, the Township may benefit from additional park and playground facilities. However, if a significant amount of the population is at or nearing retirement age, then a different set of recreational needs would be apparent.

Oronoko Township, like most communities in southwest Michigan, has seen the median age increase over the last ten years as the “baby boom” generation reaches retirement age. However, the presence of Andrews University results in a large number of college-aged (20-30 year-olds) students living in the Township. While many will not become permanent residents of the Township, their recreation needs should be considered as well. The population pyramid in Figure 2.2 illustrates the age breakdown in Oronoko Charter Township, based on the 2010 Census.



Figure 2.2

Population Pyramid for Oronoko Charter Township
(2010)

Planning Implications

1. Oronoko Charter Township has experienced very little population change over the last twenty years, and the general trend has been a slight decrease in population. However, the Township must continue to provide quality recreation facilities for its residents.
2. Analysis of age distribution for Township residents reveals a likely demand for facilities appealing to young adults; although the accounting for Andrews University students skews age distribution figures, as noted above. Outside of students, the Township contains a remarkably even distribution of residents across all age ranges from under 5 to 65 years.
3. The abundance of water and other natural resources should be considered in any effort to plan for future recreation facilities. These invaluable amenities are likely conduits to augment quality of life in Oronoko Township by offering opportunities for trails, nature interpretation, fishing, and active recreation.
4. Agricultural tourism plays an integral role in the economy of many Berrien County communities. U-picks, wine-tasting rooms and vineyards attract tourists and residents alike throughout the year and these farms act as quasi-recreational facilities at times and augment the recreational opportunities found in the Township.



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Chapter 3. Description of Planning & Public Input Process

The Planning Process

The process to update this plan utilized a systems approach to planning. It involved three inter-related phases:

- Phase One: Understanding Current Challenges
- Phase Two: Defining a Preferred Future
- Phase Three: From Planning to Action

Phase 1 – Understanding Existing Conditions

During the first phase of the planning process, background data was gathered and updated to inform and support the Recreation Plan. The purpose of this effort was to develop an impression of the current state of the Township and a greater understanding of the recreational needs of the community. The information gathered during this phase, presented in Chapter 2, serves as a technical resource for the Planning Commission and the public and provides part of the foundation for identifying priorities to meet the recreation needs of residents.

Phase 2 – Outlining a Preferred Future

The objective of the second phase was to establish a policy basis for the Township's recreational goals. To do so, it was important to gather the opinions of community residents and determine the direction they were looking for the future of parks and recreation in their community. The effort to update this 2019-2024 plan employed an online survey, a public comment review period, and a public hearing.

The survey was conducted using the online tool SurveyMonkey. The survey asked a variety of questions related to parks and recreation facilities programming in the community. Input received from the survey were the basis of the goal statements, which form the foundation of the Plan. Each goal is supported by several more specific objectives that are intended as steps needed to accomplish the goal. Goals and objectives are presented in Chapter 6. Additionally, the public input received also helped to inform the process of prioritizing items identified in the Action Strategies.



Phase 3 – From Planning to Action

The final phase of the planning process involved the development of specific implementation strategies to carry out the Plan. These are included in Chapter 7. At the conclusion of the third phase, the Plan was promulgated for public review and comment, and a public hearing was held.

Soliciting Public Input

Township staff was very active in informing residents and entities interested in recreation on the effort to update the Plan. Survey respondents were notified of the availability of the survey via a newspaper notice, Facebook posts, and an email notification from the school district.

Once the draft Recreation Plan was complete, citizens were provided with a ____-day period to review and comment on the Plan. The Plan was published and placed at the Oronoko Township Hall for this purpose. The Plan was also published at the Berrien Springs Community Library. Contact information was provided.

To notify the public that the draft Plan had been completed, a notice was published in the Berrien Springs Journal Era on _____ describing the purpose of the review period.

Finally, the Township published a notice for public hearing in accordance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act in advance of the public hearing held by the Township Board on _____.

Community Survey

In November 2018, Oronoko Township issued an online survey for the purpose of gathering public opinions regarding parks and recreation facilities and services in support of its efforts to update the 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The survey resulted in quantifiable data from Township residents to help set policy relative to parks and recreation planning over the next five or more years. Further, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Recreation Plan guidelines require one method of public input aside from a public hearing held at the end of the process. The conclusions reached from the survey are presented below, and a complete analysis and report of the survey is presented in Appendix 1.

- Oronoko Charter Township appears to serve a community with many young families, as the majority of respondents were between 35 and 44 years old and had children less than 18 years of age. The respondents also indicated that the most under-served user groups were adults 35 to 64 years and young adults 19 to 34 years. Therefore, the respondents appear to represent a middle-aged user group especially interested in recreational opportunities.



- Children and entire families were found to be the most active users of parks and recreation. A review of the weighted averages related to frequency of visitation indicated that the most popular park was Wolf's Prairie Park, followed by Robert G. Feather Park and Warren Dunes State Park. Robert G. Feather Park is the only park located within the Township. Therefore, residents are required to travel outside the Township for most of their recreation. This indicates a need for more local recreational opportunities.
- Several respondents (16.3%) did not use parks and recreational facilities because they did not know where parks were located or what was available. The majority had never heard of Jasper Dairy Road Park or Boyle Lake State Wildlife Area, and several (8.7%) did not know about the new community park that will undergo construction in the spring 2019. Marketing parks and recreation opportunities may help residents understand nearby options for recreation.
- There is a strong indication that trails are desired as a recreational opportunity. The majority of respondents (68.75%) indicated that non-motorized trails and pathways would be the most necessary park type if new parks were established and showed high interest in adding hiking trails to existing or future parks. Extending the Michigan-Indiana Trail from Niles would fill this identified need. When asked if they would support the Michigan-Indiana trail, the overwhelming majority (90.8%) indicated support for the trail and 69.7% indicated that they were "very likely" or "likely" to use the trail. Because the Michigan-Indiana trail would be a paved rail trail, it would provide multi-use recreational opportunities, such as walking a pet or biking. Many respondents commented on the desire for trails to allow bikes and pets, so this trail would not only increase connectivity in the Township, but also appeal to a wide variety of users.
- The community appears to be generally satisfied with GBSRD programs. All of the programs offered by GBSRD appear to be important, with softball and baseball being the programs of greatest importance. Therefore, the presence of softball and baseball fields would likely serve the greatest number of residents in the community.
- Outdoor water recreation facilities, hiking trails, and a fenced dog park were the top-rated amenities, facilities, or services to add to existing or future parks. With the Township border along Lake Chapin and the St. Joseph River, recreational opportunities that incorporate these features would be of primary importance. The location of Wolf's Prairie park along Lake Chapin is a likely factor contributing to its high visitation rate. Also, many respondents indicated the desire for pet-friendly recreational opportunities in the comments. Locations for residents to take their pets would likely have a high visitation rate.



- The greatest identified benefit of the new community park was that it would increase recreation options. The theme throughout respondent answers was that there were not enough options. Middle-aged to younger families are looking for recreation options. This user group often requires a variety of options to accommodate activities for young kids while keeping the interest of mobile adults. Additionally, the park is expected to increase the community's image and sense of place. This indicates a desire to have community spaces that are unique and identifiable within the Township, along with an area that could be used as a gathering space.

Public Review of Draft Plan and Adoption Process

A draft Recreation Plan was reviewed by to the Township Board on December 17, 2018.

Once the draft plan was prepared, it was published for public scrutiny for a period of __ days, as described on page 12. Contact information was provided to enable the public to contact Township officials. In addition, at the conclusion of the plan development process, a public hearing was held by the Township Board on _____; and during this meeting the Township Board approved a Resolution which officially adopted the plan. Appendix 5 includes the minutes of the adoption meeting.



Chapter 4. Recreation Inventory

The Planning Process

This chapter provides an inventory of recreational facilities in the community. The inventory and analysis of facilities was conducted by the Township's planning consultant with the intent of developing a comprehensive perspective. The following elements were sources of information or considerations during the development of Chapter 4:

- The professional expertise and informed opinions of Township officials, Planning Commissioners and interested citizens who participated in public input exercises associated with this Plan.
- National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standards.
- The distinctive social and natural character of Oronoko Township.
- Trends in funding and plans for new facilities.
- Availability and proximity of regional or nearby facilities.

The NRPA has established generally recognized standards for classifying types of parkland based on size and function. These designations have been adopted by the DNR; and provide one method of defining the purpose and use of facilities. Public facilities in Oronoko Township are classified using this system below. Facilities are shown in a regional context on Map 2.

Accessibility

Federal and State laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of physical ability in connection with recreational facilities owned by the Township. Developed park facilities must comply with barrier-free design standards. Parks in and around the Township, including Robert G Feather Park, have been critiqued to understand the need for improvements relating to barrier-free accessibility. In addition, as park development is considered in the future, barrier-free accessibility is a significant priority item to help ensure that recreation can be enjoyed by all residents and visitors of Oronoko Township.

The community is devoted to this effort.

Following is a summary of an adapted scoring system generally in accordance with DNR standards:

- Level 1. None of the facilities in the park meet accessibility guidelines. Little pavement is provided and access routes to the facilities are not easily accessible.



- Level 2. Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines, but many of the facilities or the access routes to them are not easily accessible.
- Level 3. Most of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines. Parking areas and walkways are paved; and while most facilities are generally accessible, some barriers may exist for certain people because of age, ability or situation.
- Level 4. All of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines. The park is accessible and the routes to facilities within the park are accessible, but some play or other equipment may not be designed for everyone.
- Level 5. Universal design guidelines were used to design the entire park.

Township Facilities Available to the Public

Robert G. Feather Park

Robert G. Feather Park is located adjacent to the Township Hall and contains one baseball field, playground equipment, picnic facilities and two pavilions: one enclosed pavilion with restroom facilities and one open pavilion. The enclosed pavilion can be reserved by Township residents with payment of a deposit. This park is owned and operated by Oronoko Charter Township.

Accessibility Assessment Level: 3. The access drive to the park is unpaved, but users can park in the Township Hall parking lot, which is hard-surfaced. Additionally, there is a paved path that connects the parking lot to the enclosed pavilion. However, but some playground equipment is likely not intended for everyone's use and paved linkages are not provided to all of the park's amenities.

In 1976, the Township was awarded a grant from the LWCF for the development of one acre of land and a shelter at the property where the Township Hall and Robert G. Feather Park is located on Snow Road (grant #26-00838). While the park has been developed further since 1976 to provide additional amenities, the site and shelter remain in good condition as of this writing. The shelter is used primarily in the summer months for picnics and similar activities.

In 2017, the Township received a grant from the Michigan DNR Trust Fund for 278,100. This grant was awarded for the development of a multi-phase park adjacent to Feather Park that includes the addition of two football/soccer fields, concession and restroom building, parking lot, regional trailhead, accessible pathways, and a section of regional trail.



Regional or Nearby Facilities

Wolf's Prairie Park (Berrien Springs)

Located along the western shore of Lake Chapin in the southern portion of Berrien Springs, Wolf's Prairie Park is a 17-acre neighborhood park. It contains open spaces, a playground, a shelter and is owned and operated by the Village of Berrien Springs.

Accessibility Assessment Level: 3. The access drive and parking lot are paved, and a paved path connects the parking lot to the pavilion. However, paved linkages are not provided to all of the park's amenities.

Shamrock Park Campground (Berrien Springs)

Located along the east bank of the St. Joseph River in Berrien Springs, Shamrock Park Campground is owned and operated by the Village of Berrien Springs. It is a year-round camping and fishing park complete with modern restrooms and showers, DNR built boat ramp, fish cleaning station, and sanitary dump station. Both the restrooms and the fish cleaning station are heated in the winter. The campground has a total of 113 sites. The park also contains three cabins that can each sleep a maximum of four people.

Accessibility Assessment Level: 4 The access drive and parking lot are paved, and most amenities are accessible. However, paved linkages are not provided to all of the park's amenities.

Love Creek Nature Center and County Park (Berrien Township)

Located on 150 acres in Berrien Township just outside Berrien Springs, Love Creek County Park contains trails for hiking and cross country skiing, an interpretive center and areas for bicycling. Activities are available year-round, and the County's naturalist service is also based at this park.

Jasper Dairy Road Park (Royalton Township)

Owned and operated by the DNR, Jasper Dairy Road Park is located about two miles north of Oronoko Township. It is primarily used as public access to the St. Joseph River. The site contains a hard-surfaced boat launch and restrooms, as well as fishing pier. It also provides 42 parking spaces.

Boyle Lake State Wildlife Area (Buchanan/Weesaw Township)

Boyle Lake State Wildlife Area is located between Buchanan and Weesaw Townships just a couple miles south and west of Oronoko Township. It has an area of about 388 acres and has been dedicated to wildlife preservation and conservation by the DNR.



Warren Dunes State Park (Lake Township)

Containing about three miles of Lake Michigan Shoreline and nearly 2,000 acres, Warren Dunes State Park is a large and very popular regional park that draws visitors from throughout the region. It is located in Lake Township about seven miles west of Oronoko Township. The park allows hiking on several miles of trails, swimming, cross-country skiing, hunting and camping. It also contains a concession area, picnic areas, playgrounds and many other amenities.

Grand Mere State Park (Lincoln/Lake Township)

Located in Lincoln and Lake Townships about eight miles west of Oronoko Township, Grand Mere State Park is owned and operated by the DNR and is about 1,000 acres in area. It is located along the shoreline of Lake Michigan and allows hiking, swimming, cross-country skiing, hunting and many other activities. It also contains a boat launch, picnic areas and picnic shelter.

Public Facilities Analysis

Table 4.1 contains a summary of one method of analyzing deficiencies in parkland, based on the facilities currently provided in the Township. The figures presented in Table 4.1 are based on NRPA standards and the Township's 2010 population of 9,193 people.

Table 4.1 Public Facilities Acreage Analysis

Park Type	Recommended (acres per 1,000 residents)	Recommended Acres for Oronoko Township	Acres provided	Deficiency (-) / surplus (+)
Mini Park	0.375	3.5	0	-3.5
Community Park	6.5	61	about 9	-52
Regional Park	7.5	70	0	-70
Linear Park	1 per region		0	-1 linear park
Natural Resource Area	variable	variable	0	N/A
Special Use	variable	variable	0	N/A

Amenities

Table 4.2 depicts Township deficiencies in specific elements commonly found in parkland, based on NRPA standards. Based on those standards, the Township is deficient in the following facilities: tennis courts, playgrounds, baseball/softball areas, basketball courts, and volleyball areas.

The NRPA suggests a certain number of facilities per every few thousand people. For this analysis, thresholds of up to 10,000 people are used, although if the population increases over the years the figures in this table will need to be adjusted to reflect the increased population. Moreover, the Village of Berrien Springs is the center of the community; and Township residents frequent Village parks.



While the Township is deficient of several particular facilities on paper, accounting for parks in the Village, as well as facilities owned by the Berrien Springs School District that are available for public use via the Greater Berrien Springs Recreation Department (GBSRD) could eliminate deficiencies in some areas. Additionally, the table below includes the facilities (noted as “pending”) that will be constructed in the near future that will be funded by a MDNR Trust Fund Grant that was awarded to the Township in 2017.

Table 4.2 Public Facilities Acreage Analysis

Amenities	NRPA Standard	Recommended	Township Facilities	School/Village/ University facilities?	Deficiency (-) / Surplus (+)
Trails	1/region	1	1 (pending)	Yes	0
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	0	0	Yes	-
Running Track	1/20,000	0	0	Yes	-
Tennis	1/2,000	5	0	Yes	-5
Playground	1/3,000	4	1	Yes	-3
Baseball/Softball	1/5,000	2	1	Yes	-1
Basketball	1/5,000	2	0	Yes	-2
Volleyball	1/5,000	2	0	Yes	-2
Soccer	1/10,000	1	2 (pending)	Yes	+2
Football	1/20,000	0	2 (pending)	Yes	+2

Andrews University

As shown in Table 4.2, Andrews University contains many recreation facilities that are available at times for public use. These facilities include hiking trails, tennis courts, a swimming pool, and others. However, these facilities should not be considered a substitution for truly public recreation facilities, rather a supplement to public facilities that the university provides in the interest of being a valued member and supporter of the community. When considering new recreation opportunities or facilities, the presence of similar facilities at Andrews University should not preclude or discourage the Township from developing them.

Service Area

In addition to considering the acreage and amenities of park areas, it is also important to review park distribution throughout the Township. It is helpful to closely review where residents live, with the goal being to locate important park facilities within proximity to a concentration of rooftops; and to plan new facilities near areas under-served with easy access to parkland.



The NRPA promulgates “service area” standards for different types of park facilities, as follows:

- Mini Parks, 0.25 miles or less
- Neighborhood Parks, 0.25-0.5 miles
- Community Parks, 1.0 to 2.0 miles
- Regional Parks, approximately 30 minutes of drive time

Although service area standards may imply that only people residing within a certain distance of a park will be sufficiently and conveniently served, public parks are intended for use by all community residents and are open to the public.

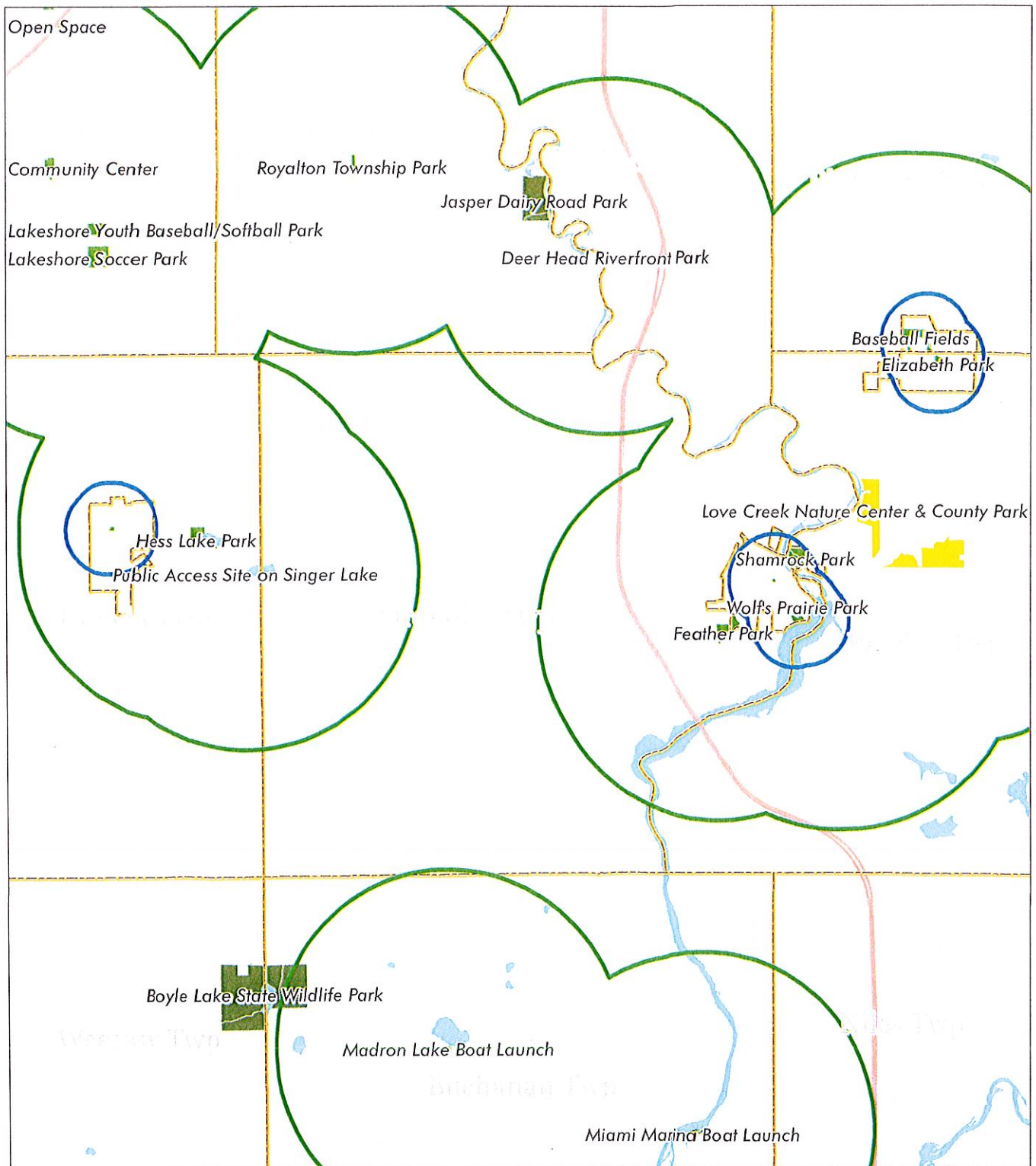
Nevertheless, it may be ideal to consider areas outside of an existing service area radius for additional park land acquisition to help ensure Township residents are adequately served with parks geographically distributed throughout the community.

Map 2 applies these service area radii to parks within and surrounding Oronoko Township to assist in evaluating where, if any, new parks might be located in the Township to disperse amenities and serve the entire community. However, it should be noted that these service radii do not factor in the facilities available at school facilities and Andrews University.

Planning Implications

Map 2 illustrates that the most populated areas of the Township (generally east of US-31) are adequately served by community parks, and numerous regional parks throughout Berrien County (such as Grand Mere and Warren Dunes State Parks) serve all Township residents as well. However, there may be additional opportunities for smaller neighborhood-scale parks in the residential areas of the Township, particularly where residential development exists or is planned, such as the neighborhoods located north of the Village, areas along or near the M-139 corridor, or in the central portion of the Township near the Country Acres or Hildebrand Hills developments.





Oronoko Charter Township

Berrien County, Michigan

Map 2.

Recreation Inventory

Legend

- County Park
- Local Municipal Park
- State Park
- Community Park Radius (2 Miles)
- Neighborhood Park Radius (1/2 mile)

1 inch = 8,000 feet

0 4,000 8,000 16,000 Feet

williams & works
engineers surveyors planners



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Chapter 5. Administrative Structure

The Oronoko Charter Township Board of Trustees is the elected body that functions as the main governing body representing citizen interests. Much of the Township remains a rural community, and public service needs with regard to recreation have been relatively consistent. Thus, multiple governmental agencies and administrative divisions within the Township's governance structure are probably not needed at this time. As such, the Township is deficient of an organized parks department and staff dedicated solely to recreational services. This Chapter of the Recreation Plan will describe how park and recreation functions are administered.

Organization and Roles

Planning Commission. Historically, the Planning Commission has taken on the role of recreation planning, while the Township Board has made decisions regarding budgeting, land acquisition, facilities, and program development. The Planning Commission is governed by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended. The Township's small staff, including elected Board members, coordinates administration, maintenance, and operations.

As an instrumentality of the Township, the Planning Commission generally cannot spend funds or request bonds for the acquisition of land or construction of facilities; but serves in an advisory capacity to the Township Board. While the Planning Commission did not have an active role in the development of the 2019 Plan, both the Planning Commission and Township Board are dedicated to promoting the Township's continuing interest in the community's recreational and cultural resources.

Public Properties Committee. The Oronoko Charter Township Public Properties Committee is an informal advisory committee consisting of three members that are appointed by the Township Board. This committee has oversight of the properties that are owned by Oronoko Charter Township including parks, cemeteries, and all buildings.

Parks and Recreation Programming

The Township Board also appoints members to the Greater Berrien Springs Recreation Department (GBSRD), which serves the Berrien Springs community. The GBSRD "offers a variety of athletic activities for the youth of Oronoko Township, Berrien Township, and the Village of Berrien Springs. Our programs



are also available to those from other communities for those wishing to join the fun that the Greater Berrien Springs Recreation Department has to offer.”

The GBSRD is run jointly with the Village, Berrien Township, Oronoko Township, and the Berrien Springs Public Schools. Oronoko and Berrien Township, as well as the Village, jointly fund the GBSRD using a formula to calculate the annual amount for each municipality based on population base and participation in the program. The school contributes to the program “in-kind” via the use of their buildings and facilities.

Volunteers

The Greater Berrien Springs Recreation Department depends heavily on volunteers for the provision of quality recreation and programming opportunities in the community. Administratively, the GBSRD employs a director and one part-time office assistant. The GBSRD also employs seasonal part-time workers to assist in the maintenance of facilities throughout the community and to officiate athletic events. Outside of these few employees, the GBSRD is organized and run by numerous volunteers from throughout the Berrien Springs community. Oronoko Charter Township recognizes the work and commitments these volunteers put into the community and is very grateful for their efforts.

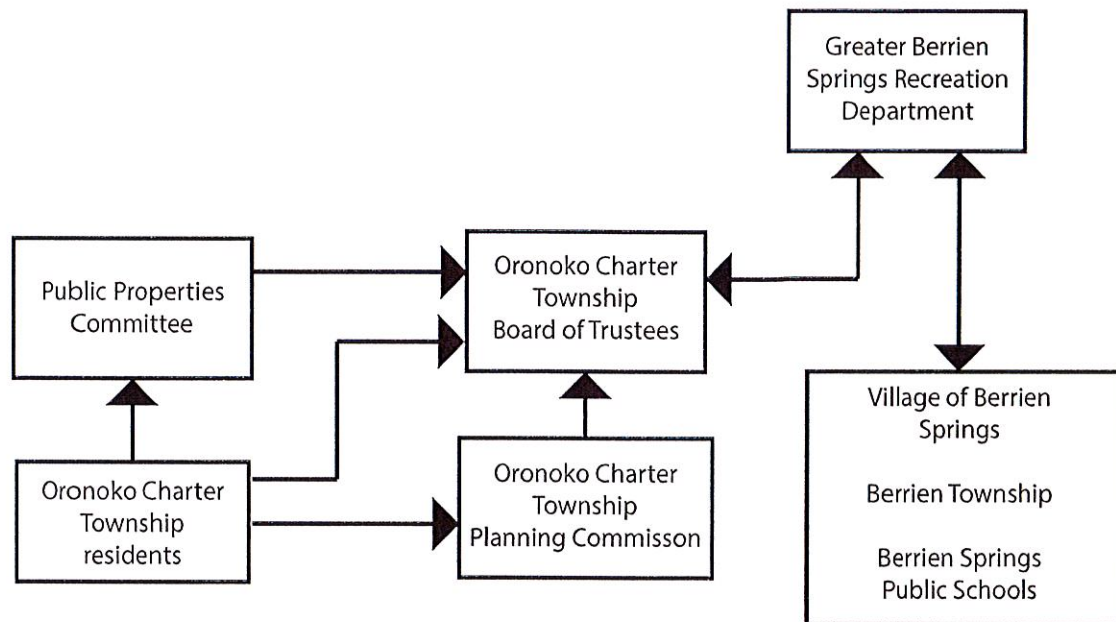
Current Budget and Funding

Oronoko Charter Township parks and recreation activities are funded with general fund dollars; there are no separate millages. The Township’s 2018 budget for parks and recreation was \$_____, most of which was allocated to the GBSRD. However, the Township does receive payments for the reservation of the enclosed shelter located at Feather Park; in 2018 these payments amounted to \$_____. The Township Board oversees budgeting and allocates the appropriate funding amount based on projected needs.

Land acquisition and other development-related expenses are likely to be budgeted for in the future to assist the community in implementing this Plan.



Organizational Chart



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Chapter 6. Goals & Objectives

Introduction

Input from the community survey, Planning Commissioners and other Township officials, and an analysis of existing facilities is blended together to formulate a collection of broad goal statements. Each goal state is supported by more specific objectives. The goals are intended to describe the state of parks and recreation within the Township within the next five years or more. They are intentionally general, but are thought to be attainable through concerted effort and cooperation by a multitude of entities. The objectives are more detailed and may be thought of as milestones in the journey to achieving the goal.

Township Parkland

Goal 1. The citizens of Oronoko Charter Township will be served with accessible and well-maintained Township parks designed for a variety of recreational activities to accommodate people of all ages with particular emphasis on the Township's many young families.

Objectives:

1. Develop Township-owned properties along Snow Road to connect the Feather Park to Public Safety Building property.
2. Develop parkland for residents in the "1st/2nd/3rd" St neighborhoods, or in the residential neighborhoods north of the Village limits (see Map 3)
3. Develop additional active recreation facilities, including soccer or football fields, baseball and softball fields, disc golf courses, or others, in appropriate locations.
4. As opportunities present themselves, acquire, plan, develop and maintain additional land and facilities for passive and active recreation; primarily locating new facilities in areas under-served with parkland, near population concentrations, and/or near M-139 and US-31.
5. Explore funding opportunities for land acquisition and park development, including the MDNR Trust Fund, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and Passport Grants Program.
6. Design new facilities in compliance with ADA requirements; and strive to achieve universal design.



7. Increase visibility and public awareness of Township-owned and regional parks and recreation facilities to Township residents through marketing and promotion efforts.
8. Explore the development of pet-friendly amenities at existing Township park facilities such as a fenced-in dog park or hiking trails.

Water Resources

Goal 2. The surface waters of Oronoko Charter Township, particularly Lake Chapin, will be popular destinations for low-impact recreational activities.

Objectives:

1. Explore mechanisms to expand safe public access to Lake Chapin and the St. Joseph River, where feasible and reasonable.
2. Seek MDNR funding to acquire property on Lake Chapin for recreational use. A new facility could include decking, a scenic overlook, fishing, interpretive signage, picnic areas, etc.
3. Work with the State, County, Southwest Michigan Regional Planning Commission, and other interested agencies in development of water trails in the St. Joseph River and Lake Chapin.
4. Explore the possibility of a boardwalk/linear park along the St. Joseph River, working with the Village, MDNR and other appropriate agencies.

Park Programming

Goal 3. The residents of Oronoko Charter Township will continue to be served by organized and effective recreation programming through the Greater Berrien Springs Recreation Department.

Objectives:

1. Continue to assist with funding of the GBSRD.
2. Explore and establish additional programs in conjunction with the GBSRD, as feasible. Examples include adult basketball, volleyball, lacrosse, fitness classes, yoga, etc.
3. Work with the GBSRD to develop a marketing campaign to actively promote facilities and programs to residents and others.
4. Work with the GBSRD to determine future needs for ball fields and other facility needs, particularly softball and baseball fields.



Local Cooperation

Goal 4. Oronoko Charter Township will continue to support and cooperate with adjacent units of government and other agencies in meeting the recreational needs to residents throughout the region.

Objectives:

1. Work with Andrews University and the Village of Berrien Springs in the development of a non-motorized trail that connects Township and Village residents as well as students to public recreation facilities.
2. Work with the County, Southwest Michigan Regional Planning Commission, and other interested agencies in development of water trails in the St. Joseph River and Lake Chapin.
3. Continue to support and work with the GBSRD to provide recreation opportunities for residents throughout the region.
4. Assist with the development of a skateboard park in the community.

Trails

Goal 5. The residents and visitors of Oronoko Charter Township will enjoy a network of trails that connect to local and regional natural areas and recreational facilities.

Objectives:

1. Identify desired trail routes, taking into account likely emerging growth areas, existing regional trails, natural feature destinations, regional parks, public and quasi-public uses and cultural venues. Coordinate trail planning with adjoining communities, property owners and Andrews University.
2. Explore the possibility of including conditioning stations along future non-motorized trails in the Township.
3. Actively support and encourage the potential extension of the Michigan-Indiana River Valley Trail through Oronoko Township from the City of Niles and work with applicable local and regional agencies.
4. Coordinate with the Berrien Springs Community Schools to develop additional Safe Routes to School initiatives to connect neighborhoods to the school campus in the Village.
5. Explore funding opportunities or general resource partners, including the MDNR, the Southwest Michigan Regional Planning Commission, the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, and others.



6. Improve existing roads so that they can be used as proper bike lanes, in conjunction with the Berrien County Road [Department](#) and MDOT. Also explore the development of sidewalks or walking paths along M-139, Kephart Lane, Timberland Drive, and Main Street.
7. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to encourage or require the inclusion of pathways and sidewalks in new development to promote pedestrian connections between neighborhoods and developments.



Chapter 7. Action Strategies

The Oronoko Charter Township Planning Commission has prepared the following Action Program, based on a “comparison to standards” facility analysis, expertise of residents and area leaders, and the goals and objectives listed in Chapter 6. The Action Program details what Oronoko Township plans to achieve within the next five years or more.

The Action Program does not supplant the goals and objectives, but should be used in conjunction with them. Many of the goals and objectives presented may be long-term in nature, and in many instances, entities in addition to Oronoko Township will need to cooperate in order to fully implement them. The Action Program recognizes this and proposes a reasonable timeframe based on public priorities. Additionally, potential funding sources are included.

However, recreation planning should be viewed as flexible; and the timing of new projects may, in part, be influenced by the availability of land; funding resources; and cooperation of private property owners. Moreover, public opinions and ideas may change or be refined over time; and this plan may be amended from time to time to reflect shifts in perception and needs. Priorities should be reviewed annually and adjusted as necessary.

Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of physical ability in connection with Township recreational facilities. Developed park facilities must comply with barrier-free design standards. As recreational facility development or improvement is considered in the future, barrier-free accessibility is a significant priority item to help ensure that recreation can be enjoyed by all residents and visitors of Oronoko Township. Improvements can include proper hard surfaces for wheelchairs, accessible picnic tables and restrooms, resting benches frequently placed along a walking route, and play equipment that is easy to get to and use. The principles of universal design are supported by this Recreation Plan.

Staffing

While the Township’s recreation needs are not large enough to warrant a large recreation staff, limited part-time staff could be helpful in overseeing daily efforts and coordinating activities, policies, and suggestions. The Township will annually monitor staffing needs and will continue to seek partners in the process to implement this plan.



New Parks & Facilities / Continually Improved Facilities

The recreation planning process revealed a need for additional or improved facilities to expand the opportunities offered to residents and visitors. The Township views land acquisition as an ongoing, long-term process. Additionally, improving existing facilities is also a priority. Desired items that will be explored, at a minimum, include the following (See Map 3):

- A local non-motorized trail connecting users to Village, the St. Joseph River, Andrews University trails, Feather Park, and other local destinations
- Development of parkland located between the Township Hall and the Public Safety Building
- Acquisition of new land for parks in the "1st/2nd/3rd St" neighborhoods and neighborhoods north of the Village limits.
- Assistance in the development of water trails
- Soccer fields, football fields, baseball fields, softball fields, concession facilities and storage areas, a disc golf course, and restrooms at appropriate locations to serve Township residents and participants on the GBSRD.

Park Maintenance and Stewardship

It is critical that new parks and/or future facilities receive proper care. Continued coordination with outside agencies and organizations such as Berrien Springs Public Schools, Andrews University, the GBSRD any local or regional athletic organizations and neighborhood associations will be beneficial in accomplishing this objective. In the future, when new facilities are introduced, the Township must consider strategies for maintenance. A possible solution may include involvement from volunteer entities that use the facilities via an organized stewardship program (e.g. Friends of Oronoko Township Parks).

Potential Funding Sources / Resource Concepts

A variety of resource partners and potential funding sources may exist to assist in implementing the strategic implementation summary provided on the following pages. A non-exhaustive summary of these resources is as follows:

- **Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.** The MRTF can provide assistance for the Township's outdoor recreation projects, including land acquisition and physical development of park facilities. This assistance is intended to bolster existing facilities, protect critical natural resources and establish new parkland. Development project grants may range between \$15,000 and \$500,000; there is no limit to acquisition requests. The minimum required local match is 25%. This opportunity should particularly be contemplated for future acquisition and development activities.



- **Land and Water Conservation Fund.** The LWCF is similar to the Trust Fund grant described above, in that it is meant to help fund land acquisition and park development. The minimum grant request amount is \$30,000 and the maximum grant request amount is \$100,000. The required local match is exactly 50%; meaning that total project costs range from \$60,000 to \$200,000. Natural feature preservation has historically been the primary award criteria; and as such, this opportunity should especially be taken into account when planning for new passive recreation facilities. In addition, the LWCF now places emphasis on trails, “green” technology in outdoor recreation, universal design and coordination among recreation providers.
- **Passport Grant Fund.** The Passport Grant is the third type of grant available to local units through the DNR. The grant program may only be used for local development projects. The program is focused on renovating and improving existing parks, but the development of new parks is eligible. The minimum request for a passport grant is \$7,500 and the maximum request amount is \$45,000. The minimum required local match is 25%. Passport grant requests are often appropriate in urban areas where there are fewer opportunities for natural feature preservation and more active recreation facilities are needed.
- **Non-Motorized Entities.** Trails encourage health and wellness, enhance quality of life, and promote sense of community. Trails also can improve non-motorized system safety. Aside from the programs described above, several other entities can provide assistance with trail funding, planning, information or construction. These include the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, the Safe Routes to School Program, and the Bikes Belong Coalition. In addition, the Michigan Department of Transportation may provide funding for numerous types of projects that encourage safe, accessible and efficient forms of multi-modal transport, including non-motorized facilities and other improvements related to transportation.

Additionally, the Recreation Improvement Fund Grant and Recreation Trails Program Grant may help to fund projects that connect facilities on MDNR-owned property. A MDNR division or bureau is always the applicant, but a local government partnership may be considered if the project contributes to MDNR goals and is located on, or linked to, MDNR land.

- **Leveraging Resources.** Most recreation grants will stipulate a minimum required local match. It is possible to be awarded grant dollars from multiple funding sources, and use the monies leveraged from one source as the match for another. An example might be a local trail project, where the community uses MDOT funds as the match for an MDNR grant. This can



help save local government resources, is usually permitted by most grant programs, and is encouraged.

- **Regional Parks and Recreation Planning.** Grant application guidelines often include a provision for regional coordination and cooperation, and recreation grants are no exception. The Township will generally receive more “points” for a grant application if it can demonstrate that the proposed project is the result of collaboration with an adjacent community, regional entity or multiple units of government. The Township should therefore keep this concept in mind, especially when planning for future trail connections that may traverse more than one community.
- **Donations & Foundations.** Residents, property owners, businesses, and organizations will frequently contribute to causes that improve local quality of life. While these contributions are often pecuniary, they may also include land donations, volunteer services, or the gift of equipment or other facilities. For example, forming an entity such as “Friends of the Berrien Springs Area Trail” is likely to garner regional support and should therefore be explored. Other foundation-type entities may also be explored, as foundations are non-profit organizations that are expressly established to receive donations and use them in accordance with a plan. While endowments should not be relied on in totality, they can contribute significantly to recreational offerings in Oronoko Township.
- **Township Funds.** The general fund, a special millage, the parks budget, and bonds are possibilities to help fund new and improved facilities in the Township. The parks budget has been successful in contributing to programming with the GBSRD and will continue to be critical to recreation services in the community. Additionally, a special millage can help the Township to provide matching funds for grant applications. However, a parks millage is not proposed; and is merely discussed here as an option. Bonds are another possibility, but these are not as flexible and usually require the constructed public project to generate revenues.



Implementation Summary

This section of Chapter 7 will provide a listing of recommendations. Some are ongoing efforts that will involve time, commitment, planning and coordination; while others are physical improvements that will require investment. Map 3 illustrates many of the concepts. This summary of implementation includes the term in which each project is expected to be undertaken. Short-term projects are intended to be addressed in 1-2 years, while medium-term projects are intended to be addressed in 3-5 years, and long-term projects are expected to be addressed in 5 or more years. However, this Plan recognizes that opportunities may arise outside of the anticipated time frame and that such projects may be undertaken outside of their intended term.

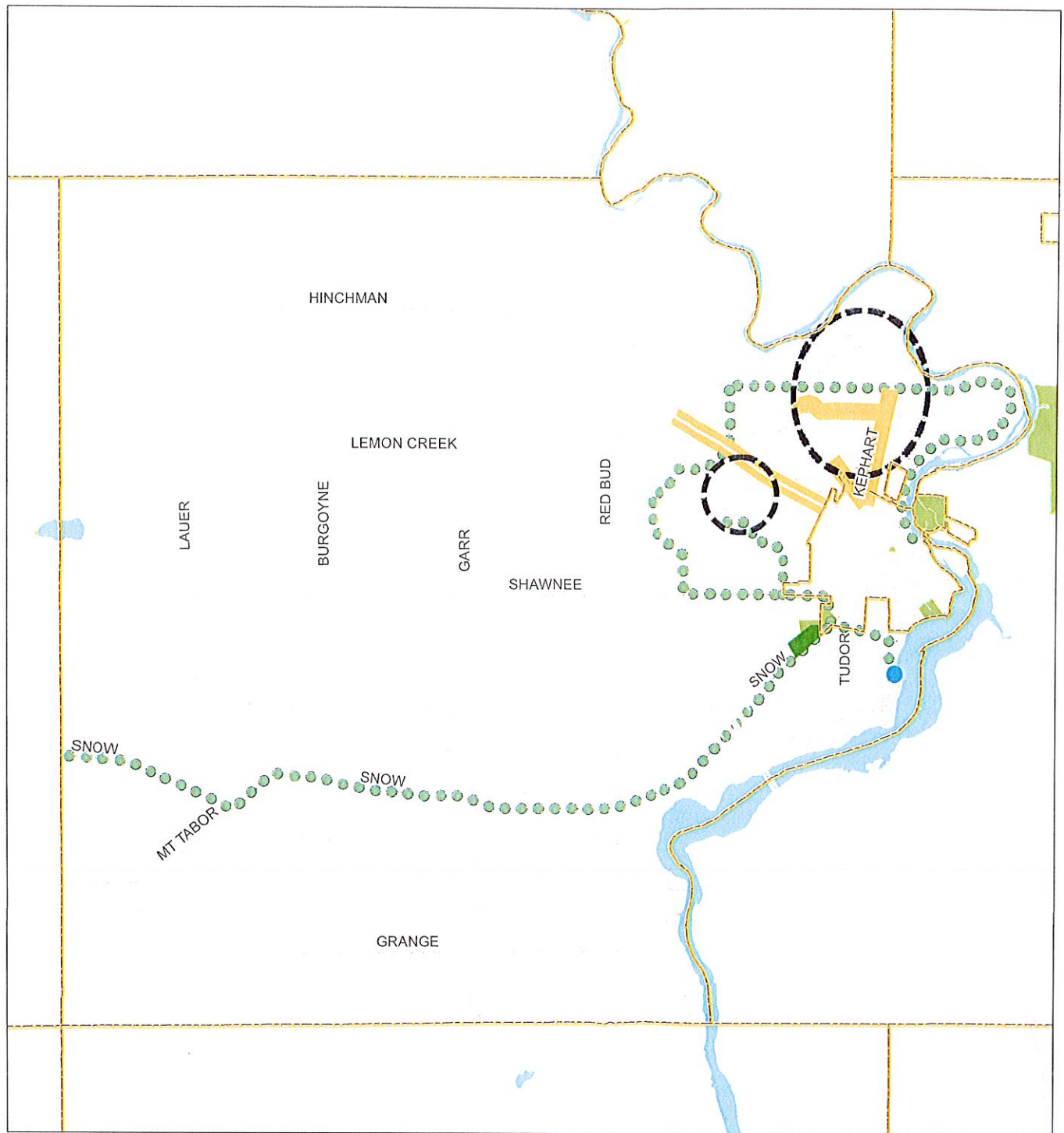
Further, it is recommended that the plan be reviewed annually; and as part of that review potential costs should be estimated and timeframes should be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Term	Project	Potential Funding Sources
Short	Improvements to or new pedestrian/bicyclist safety paths along M-139, Kephart Lane, Timberland Drive and Main Street.	Local funds, MNRTF, MDOT, or others.
Short	Development of facilities on Township property between Feather Park and the Public Safety Building	Local funds, MNRTF, LWCF, or others.
Medium	Develop non-motorized trail connecting Feather Park, Andrews University, St. Joseph River and other destinations	Local funds, MNRTF, LWCF, MDOT, Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance, or others.
Medium	Research and evaluate potential locations for the acquisition of land in the "1st/2nd/3rd St" neighborhoods for a future park	Local funds
Medium	Coordinate outdoor water recreation facilities improvements in a joint effort with the Village at Wolf's Prairie Park	Local funds, MNRTF, LWCF, or others
Medium	Develop scenic overlook near Township cemetery located along Rose Hill Road	Local funds, MNRTF, LWCF, or others.
Long	Coordinate future road improvements in the Township with the Berrien County Road Department to include paved shoulders, bike lanes, and other on-street non-motorized transportation facilities placing particular emphasis in areas near parks, schools, and other major destinations	Local funds, BCRD, or others
Long	Develop indoor multi-purpose recreation facility	Local funds, MNRTF, or others.



Ongoing	Develop and provide support (where necessary and feasible) for additional non-motorized trails	Local funds, MNRTF, LWCF, MDOT, or others.
Ongoing	Develop additional Safe Routes to School connections	Local funds, Safe Routes to Schools
Ongoing	Make improvements to meet ADA standards	Local funds, MNRTF, LWCF
Ongoing	Market and promote parks and recreation facilities and programs available to the public through a variety of methods including community events, social media, flyers, postcards, additional information on the Township's website, and other means	Local funds
Ongoing	Provide financial and marketing support for GBSRD programs	Local funds





Oronoko Charter Township

Berrien County, Michigan

Map 3. Proposed Recreation Improvements

Legend

- Lake Chapin Scenic Overlook
- New Park Service Area
- New MNRTF-funded Park
- Proposed Non-motorized Trail
- Proposed Pedestrian or Bicycle Improvements
- Existing Recreation Facilities

1 inch = 5,000 feet
0 2,500 5,000 10,000 Feet

williams&works
engineers surveyors planners

