

**TRAVERSE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION AND  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
JOINT STUDY SESSION**

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2015**

**6:30 P.M.**

**COMMISSION CHAMBERS  
Governmental Center, 2nd Floor  
400 Boardman Avenue  
Traverse City, Michigan 49684**

**Posted: 12/11/15**

**AGENDA**

The City of Traverse City does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission or access to or treatment or employment in, its programs or activities. Penny Hill, Assistant City Manager, 400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, Michigan 49684, 922-4440, T.D.D., 922-4766, has been designated to coordinate compliance with the non-discrimination requirements. If you are planning to attend and you have a disability requiring any special assistance at the meeting and/or if you have any concerns, please immediately notify the ADA Coordinator.

Planning Commission  
c/o Russell Soyring, Planning Director  
400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, MI 49684  
231-922-4778

- 1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**
- 2. ROLL CALL**
- 3. ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- 4. DRAFT PARKS AND RECREATION 5-YEAR PLAN (DISCUSSION)**
- 5. HICKORY HILLS MASTER PLAN (DISCUSSION)**
- 6. PUBLIC COMMENT**
- 7. ADJOURNMENT**

# INTRODUCTION

This Recreation Plan describes the parks system and recreation opportunities in the City of Traverse City and establishes goals, objectives and an overall vision for our community's parks and recreation future.

The City Parks and Recreation staff takes the lead in the direction of the planning process and the preparation of the City Recreation Plan with guidance from the City Parks and Recreation Commission and other City staff members.

This Parks and Recreation Plan is the result of a collaborative effort undertaken by the City of Traverse City's Parks and Recreation Commission and various City departments. The intent of this plan is to identify the current status of parks and recreation, the recreational needs of the community, and to develop priorities for Traverse City by evaluating the current available resources such as planning documents and public input.

The citizens of Traverse City have continually demonstrated their support for the maintenance and development of quality City parks and recreation facilities. Past surveys revealed strong local support in favor of continued development and maintenance of the existing facilities. Perceived as an essential component of the community, these facilities function both in meeting the needs of local residents and by providing a major attraction for tourism, which is Traverse City's most important industry.

For purposes of this plan, recreation can be defined as any activity that promotes the physical and/or mental well being of the person who is participating, and that provides relief from the routine and stress of everyday life. Recreational activities are often classified into two broad categories of "active" and "passive" involvement. Open space is defined simply as space that is not used for buildings or man-made structures. It can be air, land or water and is an area that is often used for recreational activities.

# SECTION 1

## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

This recreation plan has been developed for the City of Traverse City, located in Grand Traverse County 253 miles northwest of Detroit and 316 miles north of Chicago. The City's northern boundary is Lake Michigan's Grand Traverse Bay, a large bay divided by the Old Mission Peninsula. The southern tip of West Grand Traverse Bay is fully within the City of Traverse City. The western portion of the southern tip of East Grand Traverse Bay is also in the City limits. Situated in the Boardman River Valley, the City is surrounded by forested hills, cherry and apple orchards, vineyards, and numerous inland lakes along with a rapidly growing community that expands out into the surrounding townships. The area's beauty has historically attracted sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts from southern Michigan as well as throughout the U.S.A. Prior to developing a reputation as a recreation and tourist area, this part of the state, as well as all of northern Michigan, based its economy on lumbering and to a lesser extent, agriculture. In the 1850's, the City bustled with the activity of several sawmills and related industries along with a great number of diversified businesses of the era until the lumbering industry waned at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, several downtown buildings and businesses are reminders of that era dating back a century or more. Among them are the City-owned Opera House, the Hannah - Lay Building, and the old State Bank building (now Fifth-Third Bank). Both have maintained the 19<sup>th</sup> century flavor while adding modern conveniences of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Preservation of Traverse City's historic buildings and homes is important to residents. Within walking distance of downtown, one may tour the well maintained historic neighborhoods and view some of the finest "lumbering era" architecture in Michigan.

A number of major events are held in the area reflecting the region's tie to its natural resource and agriculture base. Some of the best known events are the National Cherry Festival, the Bayshore Marathon, "The Iceman Cometh" mountain bike race, the M-22 Challenge, and the North American Vasa Cross Country Ski Race. In addition, the area hosts a variety of sporting events including sail boat races, boat and car shows, golf championships, disc golf tournaments, skiing events, foot races, off road bicycle racing, and all variety of sports tournaments.

Unlike many communities the size of Traverse City, the area is not lacking in cultural and educational activities. World famous artists perform throughout the year and outdoor summer concerts are a highlight at the Interlochen National Music Camp and Arts Academy. The Traverse City Film Festival continues to gain in prominence and is becoming well known internationally. In addition, the Northwestern Michigan College Dennis Museum permanently houses an extensive collection of artwork and a children's discovery area, along with works by masters and regional artists. The school ship, Inland Seas, provides classes on West Grand Traverse Bay for school aged children.

Each year, many additional concerts, plays and special events such as art, antique, car and boat shows take place in the Traverse City area. Traverse City features the Traverse Symphony Orchestra, the Old Town Playhouse, and many other music and theater groups providing varied entertainment. The restored, historic State Theatre on Front St. and the Bijou By The Bay theater, housed in the former Con Foster Museum Building in the City's Clinch Park, allow for both live theater and motion picture venues. Both of these are operated by the Traverse City Film Festival organization. The City Opera House has undergone major restoration including a grand entrance in a former store front and new dressing room facilities are on the way.

The 2013 population estimate for Traverse City proper was 15,018. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the City of Traverse City population as of the 2010 census was 14,674. This was up slightly from the 2000 census figure of 14,532 and down from the 1990 figure of 15,155. The surrounding townships however, continue to grow at a rapid rate. Grand Traverse County has grown from the 1970 population of 31,975 to the 2014 estimate of 90,782. The 2010 census figure was 86,986, in 2000 it was 77,654 and the 1990 population was 64,273. This figure indicates an over 29% increase during this 24 year period. The City of Traverse City has provided parks and recreation facilities that have been under increasing pressure from use by the growing area population along with the tourist influx, especially in the summer months.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Enjoyment of recreation in the Traverse City area is due in large part to the abundance of natural and physical resources in the region. Certainly, this is true for boaters, swimmers, bikers, campers, bird-watchers, fishing enthusiasts, scuba divers, hikers, and both cross country and downhill skiers.

## **EAST AND WEST GRAND TRAVERSE BAYS (Lake Michigan)**

The bays are the most important natural resource. Its shoreline is an area of great concern, particularly in light of development pressures it is exposed to daily. While much of the bay shore is privately owned, the bay itself is a public resource. It is used for fishing, sailing, boating, swimming, wind-surfing, diving, and simply viewing from the shore. There is a desire to link all the City bay front parks together, featuring trails, walkways, etc. with interpretive educational centers as part of the trail. Several historical and watershed educational stations have been added in the past few years. There also is a push to enhance shore-based fishing, with an emphasis on more public fishing without need for a boat. One location in the planning stage is at the mouth of the Boardman River where it empties into West Grand Traverse Bay.

Management of the City's shorelines and riparian areas must include protection and enhancement of fish habitat to improve this fishery. Another aspect that needs improving along the shore line is the placement of storm water drains. There continues to be enormous thought going into planning for these positive steps to lessen impact on the bays. Stormwater treatment devices have been installed in four parks to help reduce the amount of pollutants and sediments reaching the Boardman River and the Bays. Removing or controlling several invasive species of plants and animals is also at the forefront of environmental efforts. The re-establishment of native vegetation in some disturbed habitat areas is the best defense against the growth of invasive plants.

About half of Traverse City's shoreline is sandy beach. Other parts of the shoreline have been altered with protective shoreline measures from rock revetments to broken concrete slabs to steel sheet pilings.

## **BOARDMAN RIVER SYSTEM**

The Boardman River passes through the City of Traverse City including Boardman Lake. This lake level is enhanced approximately nine feet by the Union Street Dam right in the center of the City. The lake and river both offer many recreational opportunities both land based and water based. With the bays so close at hand, Boardman Lake and River do not see the level of use that they would have if located in a community away from the Great Lakes. The potential is great for development of facilities that will enhance the uses of the Boardman River system as it passes through the City.

# TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

## HIGHWAYS

Traverse City is served by US-31, M-37, M-72 and M-22 allowing highway access to the community from any direction. US-131, a limited access highway from Grand Rapids, does not directly tie into Traverse City but comes within 39 miles of servicing the community. Located at the head of Grand Traverse Bay, several highways converge in the City. This phenomenon results in considerable traffic along the City's waterfront, especially during the peak travel months. An extension of Hammond Road, completed in 2010, connects with Keystone Road and has provided another alternative to going to the waterfront to get across Traverse City.

The heavy traffic along Traverse City's waterfront brings many people in close proximity to the City's fine recreation opportunities along the bay. With most parking located away from the bay, the roads bearing that heavy traffic also tend to create physical and physiological barriers to safely reaching recreation facilities and also create environmental concerns with storm water runoff and pollutants. The City has attempted to reduce the barriers with a pedestrian tunnel under Grandview Parkway (US-31, M-72, M-22) at Cass Street, an underpass at the Murchie Bridge near Grandview and Front Street, an at grade crossings at Oak Street and Elwood Avenue, and signalized crossings of Grandview Parkway at Division, Union and Park Streets. The City continues to explore options for carrying pedestrian traffic safely across Grandview Parkway to bayside destinations. This was one of the most important goals set during the "Your Bay, Your Say" planning sessions that began in 2005 and have begun implementation with the Clinch Park revitalization that was completed in 2013 and the Elmwood Avenue crossing in the fall of 2014.

## LOCAL STREETS

Most City parks are accessed via Traverse City's local streets. These streets are continuously targeted for improvements through the City's Public Improvements Program. The City has nearly 29 miles of major streets and 49 miles of local streets as defined by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Hickory Hills Ski Area and Brown Bridge Quiet Area lie outside the City limits and are accessed by County roads. The County road servicing Hickory Hills is maintained in the winter by the City.

## PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE TRAVEL

There are areas within the community that were designed years ago primarily for the automobile; where pedestrian travel has inadvertently been discouraged. In some areas, pedestrian and bicycle travel is challenging because streets were designed to move many vehicles as quickly as possible. The City is taking steps to correct these conditions by steadily enhancing the sidewalk network, adding trails and by marking

bicycle lanes along many City streets. In 2009, the League of American Bicyclists designated Traverse City as a “Bicycle Friendly Community”.

Cities and communities across the country are developing inclusive transportation solutions that encourage pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Although active transport planning is included in the *recreation plan inventory section*, it is not fully appreciated until an active transport planning process has been conducted. Active recreation and transportation master plans look at more than your everyday rail to trail conversions and non-motorized pathways; more importantly they begin to look at an entire transportation system. The transportation system will include pathways such as the TART and Leelanau Trails, but must also include a transportation system to get to and from such pathways, as well as developing and designing guidelines for the development of bike facilities including those within City parkland.

Developing an active recreation and transportation master plan involves several key steps including in-depth fieldwork. Key steps to a successful plan include evaluating surfaces and travel lane widths, how long it takes to cross the street, curb and gutter design, and vehicular turning radii and speeds. The sequence and approach to designing for active transport is also important; moreover, designing for pedestrians first, bicyclists second, transit riders and operations third, and private motor vehicles last is typical when designing for active -transportation – and recognized in the City’s Master Plan.

The City Plan (Master Plan) calls for community streets to be designed for a wide range of users, not just the motor vehicle driver. Roadway improvement designs must also consider the needs of the pedestrian and bicyclist, by incorporating sidewalks and bike lanes. Sidewalks need adequate separation from the roadway to provide comfort and clear demarcation between the road edge and the sidewalk. Driveways must be designed and limited in number so that they do not impair the safety of the pedestrian or bicyclist. Designs should also include consideration for mitigation of increased impervious surfaces or alternate surfaces.

To further encourage pedestrian and bicycle travel, a system of trails and connecting walks are being implemented to make these forms of travel through and around the community inviting. The eleven mile long TART trail is a paved urban transportation corridor that currently runs between Bunker Hill Road in Acme Township and Carter Road in Elmwood Township which is past the M22/M-72 intersection in Traverse City. The trail runs along Grand Traverse Bay, through downtown Traverse City neighborhoods and the Mitchell Creek watershed and is a favorite of families, visitors, bicyclists and in-line skaters.

The Leelanau Trail stretches over 15 miles through the last of the Leelanau County railway corridors. The Leelanau Trail connects Traverse City and Suttons Bay. The first 6 miles from Carter Road to Lakeview Road are paved, the middle 7 miles are an unpaved, hard-packed two-track and the final 2 miles to Suttons Bay are paved. These two trails have a distance of over 20 contiguous miles. Capital funds and grant monies have been used and more will be needed to construct additional new trails and to maintain existing trails and pathways.

The Boardman Lake Trail has moved well beyond the planning stages to have a completed Boardman Lake East Trail that connects Hull Park and the Traverse Area District Library at the north end and Medalie Park in Garfield Township at the south end in 2005. In 2009, the Boardman Lake North Trail was completed that connects the Old Town and other neighborhoods west of Boardman Lake with the East Trail and the library. This trail includes a major pedestrian bridge that crosses the Boardman River. In 2014 the first portion of the West Boardman Lake Trail was completed from 10th Street to 14th Street. Plans are underway to complete the trail around the entirety of Boardman Lake. The Boardman Lake Trail now connects to the TART Trail and eventually will connect to trails in the Boardman Valley and beyond.

The Vasa Trail pathway which is managed under agreement with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Grand Traverse County, and TART Trails, is located amid the pristine beauty of the Pere Marquette State Forest. The Vasa Pathway, utilized by cross country skiers, mountain bikers, walkers and naturalists, features a series of loops and trails that offer both challenging and easier routes for every level of user.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The Traverse City area, including Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, is served by the Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA). BATA provides scheduled routes with the City loops, various local area loops, Bike-n-Ride, Ski-n-Ride, and regional connections.

## **SECTION 2**

# **ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

## **PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

The Parks and Recreation Commission, formed in 1992, serves as an advisory body to the City Commission in Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery matters. Six of the seven commissioners are appointed by the City Commission and serve staggered terms of three years. The seventh member is the City Manager's representative. This body is an important liaison between the citizens of Traverse City and the City Commission, along with other groups and governmental units. The Commission was formed under the authority of Section 30 of the Charter of the City of Traverse City.

## **STAFF**

The Parks and Recreation staff directs the operation and maintenance of parks, cemetery, and special facilities and develops and organizes recreation programs. The Parks and Recreation Division is under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Superintendent who reports to the Director of Public Services who reports directly to the City Manager. The City Manager is responsible to the City Commission which consists of six citizens elected for staggered four year terms and an elected Mayor that serves a two year term. The Mayor and the City Commission are, in turn, ultimately responsible to the citizens which they serve. The Brown Bridge Advisory Group makes recommendations to the City Manager on issues related to the Brown Bridge Quiet Area.

Day to day purchasing decisions of an operational nature are made by the management level employees up to the normal City spending limit of \$2,000.00. The City Manager can authorize up to \$7,000.00 and the City Commission for amounts larger than \$7,000.00.

The Parks and Recreation Division is responsible for recreation programming and facilities, Hickory Hills Ski Area, Oakwood Cemetery, the urban forestry program, public park operations and maintenance, three outdoor ice skating rinks and snow removal from several City parking lots.

The Duncan L. Clinch Marina is under the direction of the Department of Public Services Director.

## **STAFFING LEVELS**

In the Parks and Recreation Division there are currently fifteen full-time employees including:

- Parks and Recreation Superintendent
- Marina Dockmaster / Hickory Hills Manager
- Parks and Recreation Supervisor
- Departmental Secretary (shared among several divisions)
- Cemetery Sexton
- Recreation Specialist
- Waterscape / Hickory Hills Recreation Specialist
- Recreation Specialist / Parks Maintenance Worker
- An Office Clerk who works part time at the Oakwood Cemetery office.
- General Maintenance and Repair Specialist
- Five Parks Maintenance Workers
- Approximately fifty seasonal workers

The Senior Citizen Center, now run by the Grand Traverse County Commission on Aging in an agreement with the City, has one full-time Director and a full-time Program

Coordinator and Outreach Coordinator and over 100 volunteers. Volunteers and help from other institutions augment the staff positions listed above.

Many other City divisions offer assistance to the Parks and Recreation Division, Marina, Oakwood Cemetery and Senior Center. These include the Streets, Water Treatment, and Sewer and Water Maintenance Divisions in the Department of Public Services. The Planning, Zoning and Engineering Departments lend assistance in the planning and designing of facilities, putting together grant proposals and long range planning.

## **PARKS OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE**

The Parks and Recreation Division is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and repair of the public park lands, fixtures, and buildings. In addition, the Parks and Recreation Division is responsible for the maintenance and operation of Oakwood Cemetery, garbage pick-up in both the downtown and Old Town areas, the urban forestry program which cares for over 9,000 street trees plus parks and cemetery trees, and planting and maintaining approximately 10,000 annual flowers each year. The Division also builds and maintains three outdoor ice skating rinks, operates Hickory Hills Ski area, plows some public parking lots, maintains and cleans the Union Street Dam and spillway of debris, plus other activities too numerous to mention.

During the National Cherry Festival in July, the Parks and Recreation and Streets Divisions spend considerable time setting up and taking down fencing and cleaning up during and after many events.

## **RECREATION PROGRAMS**

Traverse City prides itself on a well maintained and diversified parks system. Using these areas, along with school and county facilities, the Parks and Recreation Division has developed a variety of programs for youth and adults. The City recreation programs are coordinated with other area agencies so as not to compete or conflict with their activities and programs. The programs run throughout the year and are available to residents and non-residents alike. Below is a summary of offerings available through the City to residents in the area.

- 1) Day Camp. Children 7-12 years of age may attend this summer program held at the Grand Traverse County Civic Center. The program emphasizes outdoor recreation, arts and crafts, nature education, and beach activities. The program is a cooperative effort between the City of Traverse City and Grand Traverse County. The City provides the registration, administration and staffing and the County makes the space available at a low rental rate and provides some logistical support. The ten week program has a maximum of 50 children per week and is full many weeks.
- 2) Adult Volleyball Leagues. The City uses Traverse City Area Public Schools elementary school gyms for this program which currently features women's, and co-ed leagues that play from October through March.

Several other recreation programs are held on City property and operated by local non-profit organizations. The main programs are:

- 1) The Traverse Area Community Sailing (T.A.C.S.) Program. This summer program gives children an opportunity to learn to sail and is located at the north end of Boardman Lake at Hull Park. Donations to the group funded the construction of docks and a large boat storage building.
- 2) The Grand Traverse Area Ski Club. The GTSC offers children the opportunity to learn how to ski and snowboard in a non-competitive format at the City's Hickory Hills Ski Area and then they can become involved in the Club's ski racing program. The Club has also been active in raising money for capital improvement projects and equipment for Hickory Hills
- 3) The Northern Michigan Disc Sports Organization. This group first approached the City with the offer to design and set up a 24 hole disc golf course at the City's Hickory Hills Recreation Area in 1998. The course was completed in 1999 and has had subsequent improvements with the assistance of local community foundation grants. The NMDSO continues to be involved in the program with tournaments, weekly leagues and work bees to improve and maintain the course.
- 4) Traverse Area Community Rowing, is a new group that in 2016 will begin offering regular instructional programs in various types of rowing shells and opportunities for those that already have the skills to use the group's boats to row on Boardman Lake.

## Recent Recreational Program Participation Levels

<u>Program</u>	<u>Total Number of Participants for Year</u>			
	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2013-14</u>	<u>2014-15</u>
Day Camp for children	94	79	89	71
Downhill & XC skiing	11,737	13,186	13,996	12,056
Adult Volleyball	314	153	169	172
<b>TOTAL ❖</b>	12,145	13,418	14,254	12,299

❖ These figures do not include participants in the TACS Sailing Program, or any participants in the disc golf course located at Hickory Hills. The figures for day camp are based on the total number of different children enrolled and not the total number of camper days.

# **PARK AND RECREATION FUNDING**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Historically, the City of Traverse City has led the area in providing quality recreation. The community investment not only has improved the quality of life for the residents of the County, it has also helped to generate a strong tourist industry for the City. A past survey conducted by Traverse City Tourism indicated motel guests participated heavily in recreation when visiting the area. For example, 78% "relaxed on the beach" while staying in the area and 84% rated their recreational activity experience as "great." Maintaining a high quality park system is seen, from an economic perspective, as an important element to be considered during the budget process. Finding a balance between resident and tourist, however, requires sensitivity since interests between the groups may be divergent.

## **METHOD OF FINANCE**

Parks and Recreation facilities and programs in the City of Traverse City are funded primarily by property tax revenues. During the fiscal year 2013-2014, approximately 89 % of the operating budget for Parks and Recreation (excluding marina) was generated from property taxes with the remainder from user fees.

Parks and Recreation financial resources from the City are dependent upon fluctuations in the municipal budget. However, other forms of revenue options are available to the City to ensure financial stability of a viable Parks and Recreation Program. Alternative sources used or proposed are: permits, metered parking, concession sales, adopt-a-park programs, user fees, intergovernmental cooperation, work release programs, park usage fees, gifts, and donations.

Major capital improvement projects for Parks and Recreation, including property acquisition and development projects, are funded by the Capital Improvement Budget. The decisions to fund larger projects or to accept grants for those projects lies with the City Commission. A number of capital improvements have been funded in part by organizations or grant programs such as: Coastal Management Program, Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Recreation Bond Fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Oleson Foundation, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation Trails, Inc. (TART), Rotary Charities, Grand Traverse Whitetails, Ruffed Grouse Society, Ducks Unlimited, Grand Traverse Ski Club, Friendly Garden Club, Cherryland Garden Club, and the Kiwanis Club. These programs have provided not only matching funds but incentives to improve the City's recreational assets.

## FUNDING LEVEL

Parks and Recreation funding has been a substantial portion of the City of Traverse City budget. For fiscal year 2014/2015 the City has allocated \$1,912,100.00 for Parks and Recreation. The Duncan L. Clinch Marina budget is listed as \$582,600.00. Of these expenditures, approximately \$724,500.00 are returned by revenue producing facilities or programs. Specifically, the marina is slated to generate \$520,000.00 for the 2014/2015 budget. All of the parks and recreational programs combined will produce approximately \$204,500.00 for the same period. The total operating budget allocated for Parks and Recreation constitutes just over 14.85 % of the City General Fund budget.

## RECENT RECREATION RELATED ACTIVITIES BUDGETS

The following divisions and activities all are related to recreation pursuits. Some are passive activities and others are active. The Cemetery provides a more contemplative form of recreation with walking and historic observation. The other three take on a more active role in the provision of recreation.

<b>Division</b>	<b>2012-2013 (actual)</b>	<b>2013-2014 (actual)</b>	<b>2014-2015 (budgeted)</b>
Parks and Recreation	\$ 1,562,011.00	\$ 1,704,842.00	\$ 1,912,100.00
Marina	\$ 624,417.00	\$ 485,877.00	\$ 582,600.00
Senior Center	\$ 117,923.00	\$ 120,890.00	\$ 124,400.00
Oakwood Cemetery	\$ 286,715.00	\$ 323,831.00	\$ 347,200.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2,591,066.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,635,440.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,966,300.00</b>

Compared to the surrounding townships and Grand Traverse County, the City allocates a much greater amount of funds for parks and recreation. In a Grand Traverse County Area Parks and Recreation Analysis done in August of 2010 by R. Clark and Associates of Traverse City, research indicated that townships adjacent to the City spend anywhere from \$4.23 per capita for East Bay Township to \$21.68 for Garfield Township. Grand Traverse County spends \$15.11 per capita. In contrast, the City of Traverse City spends \$111.39 per capita which is more than the County and four adjacent townships spend combined. There have been improvements for many of the area governments in budgeting for parks and recreation, especially in Garfield Township. The discrepancy in spending patterns may be partially tied to the reality that the City's budget includes staff and equipment for forestry maintenance along with Parks and Recreation maintenance and programs which may fall under the general public works departments or road commissions of some of those jurisdictions.

It is anticipated the costs will continue to increase for the City of Traverse City to maintain the existing level of service for the Parks and Recreation programs. The City taxing rate presently stands at 11.1167 mills.

Other sources of revenues may need to be secured in the near future to support City Parks and Recreation programs. Perhaps in recognition of the regional nature of Traverse City recreation facilities, financial agreements with adjacent units of government can be reached. There has been some movement in that direction

## **PUBLIC AGENCY COORDINATION**

### **CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY / CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY**

Recently, the City and Garfield Township combined to create a Recreational Authority for the initial purpose of purchasing and preserving some land that was on the Real Estate market. In the November 2004 General Election, two ballot proposals from the Recreational Authority passed.

**The first proposal was** “The Open Space and Natural Area Preservation Bond Proposal”. This proposal will allow the Recreational Authority of Traverse City and Garfield Township to purchase and improve land to preserve open space and scenic views of the Bay and protect wildlife habitat and natural areas. Properties to be purchased include the West Bay Waterfront property (formerly the Smith Barney building), the Barns at the Grand Traverse Commons, and the property next to Hickory Hills. State law requires an annual independent audit of the Recreational Authority.

“Shall the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority formed by the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield borrow the sum of not to exceed Six Million Six Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$6,650,000.00) and issue its general obligation, unlimited tax bonds for all or portion of that amount, payable in not to exceed twenty years from the date of issuance, for the purpose of open space and scenic view preservation and wildlife habitat and natural areas protection by purchasing and improving land for public parks, including West Bay Waterfront property, the Barns at the Commons, and the property next to Hickory Hills?”

The millage levied in 2004 was 0.27 mills (\$0.27 per \$1,000.00 of taxable value) and the estimated simple average annual millage rate required to retire the bonds is 0.27 mills (\$0.27 per \$1,000.00 of taxable value). This is expected to result in an increase of \$13.50 in the tax levied on property valued at \$100,000 for a period of 20 years.

**The second proposal was** “The Open Space and Natural Area Millage Proposal”. This proposal will allow the Recreational Authority of Traverse City and Garfield Township to maintain natural areas, wildlife habitat, public parks, and open space. The

proposal would levy a property tax of up to 0.1 mills that would cost the owner of a home with a value of \$100,000.00, \$5.00 per year. State law would require an annual independent audit of the Recreational Authority.

“Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed on taxable property in the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority, be increased by up to 0.1 mill (\$0.10 per \$1,000.00 of taxable value) for a period of twenty (20) years, as a new millage for the purpose of protecting natural areas, wildlife habitat, and open space by acquiring, maintaining and improving public parks?”

Both proposals were only effective because they both passed. If one passed but not the second, the purchases could not have been accomplished.

*The 0.1 mill general fund operational money raised \$151,696.00 in the 2008-2009 fiscal year and the bond fund raised \$408,488.00.*

## **OTHER COORDINATED VENTURES**

To make efficient use of limited fiscal resources and maximize usage of existing recreation facilities, the City coordinates a number of activities with the public schools and Grand Traverse County. For instance, the winter volleyball leagues are conducted within school gyms. Two outdoor City skating rinks are on school property, and one on City park land. Several school athletic programs use City parks for practice locations. Our summer Day Camp is located at the Grand Traverse County Civic Center.

The Traverse City Senior Center, located on the west arm of Grand Traverse Bay, serves adults 50 years of age and older with a wide range of programs. Currently over 2,000 people enjoy choosing among over 100 programs and activities such as; daily lunches, card games, computer lab with Internet access and classes, tap and line dancing classes, local and out-of-state trips, painting classes, ping pong and pool tables, tennis, pickleball, golf and shuffleboard leagues, wellness clinics for blood pressure, hearing, vision, reflexology and support groups. The Senior Center also serves as a meeting place for many senior related clubs and organizations. *In 2009, over 32,000 visits were recorded at the Senior Center.*

In the November 2, 2010 election, Grand Traverse County voters approved a millage to change the funding model and operation methods for the Senior Center. Grand Traverse County entered into an agreement with the City of Traverse City that took effect July 1, 2011 for the Grand Traverse County Commission on Aging to operate the Traverse City Senior Center along with satellite programs in several other smaller towns, to serve the entire County with more programs and with the expense of running the centers and programs spread to all County residents. Membership fees for County residents age 60 and over have been eliminated. County residents between ages 50

and 60 pay \$10.00 per year. Residents in Elmwood Township in Leelanau County, (a participating funder) pay \$20.00 each. Other non-county residents pay \$50.00 per year.

*The Senior Center is currently in the planning stages of a capital campaign to build a new Senior Center on the current site in Traverse City. The 2000 U.S. Census data shows us that the local population is aging at a rate higher than the national average. This equates to an increasing demand for services from those 50 and older. Membership to the Senior Center averages about 50 new members a month. The 50-year old building is literally bursting at the seams. There are structural and utility concerns that must be addressed. The building is not adequate to serve the existing programs, not to mention the expected increased use. Either major renovations or new construction is a must if the program is to continue. The Senior Center Advisory Board and City Commission have supported the concept of reconstruction. A volunteer committee has been meeting since 2001 to formulate a plan and seek funding. Traverse City has been and continues to be a retirement haven for the aging baby boomers of America. A new Senior Center is in great demand. A committee, The Friends of the Senior Center, has been formed to initiate a capital campaign to raise funds for a new building. This committee has secured grant funds to complete a "Community Wide Assessment" and is now working on a feasibility study with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation with a grant received from Rotary Charities.*

## **SECTION 3**

# **RECREATION INVENTORY**

## **REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

Probably the greatest attraction of the Traverse City area is its abundance of recreational opportunities in a varied, interesting landscape. Within a one-half hour driving distance from the City are a National Lakeshore, three State parks, two regional ski resorts (Holiday Hills and Hickory Hills), a large expanse of State forest lands, a State game area, many public swimming areas, inland lakes, biking trails, and within 1 to 1 ½ hours you have seven major ski resorts (Crystal Mountain, Nub's Nob, Shanty Creek, Boyne Mountain, and Boyne Highlands, The Homestead and Caberfae Peaks). In addition, numerous historic sites, as well as the beauty of the peninsulas, bays, and various orchards and vineyards, attract people from all over the State of Michigan and the country to the Traverse City region. These areas provide an unlimited array of

recreational opportunities to the residents of Traverse City as well as to the outside visitor. The map identifies the locations of many recreational opportunities in the region.

## **FEDERAL AND STATE FACILITIES**

Although available, many State and Federal recreational areas are not geared toward serving a day-use population. Day-use can occur, but the primary focus of these parks is more passive long-term recreation. For example, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, after many years of development, is a major recreation area. The Dunes once serviced a localized population but they now attract a wider range and larger number of outside visitors because they are now better publicized and better known. Day-use of the area by local residents of Traverse City is possible since it is located relatively close to the community; however, repeated day-use is deterred because of higher day use costs and the likely competition for facilities by outside visitors.

## **COUNTY AND TOWNSHIP FACILITIES**

The facilities on the County and township levels serve both day-use and overnight users. It has been pointed out that the Sand Lakes Quiet Area, among others, and the open space area surrounding the City provide many opportunities for day-use activities. The recreational focus of some of the County-wide facilities is more toward longer term recreation. As to the nature of the long-term facilities, camping opportunities are available along the Boardman River and are concentrated in the State forests, the two State parks and Whitewater Township Park. Two major trails pass through the County along the Boardman River. The Cross State Riding and Hiking Trail is a developed trail that runs throughout the northern part of Lower Peninsula. Unfortunately, in Grand Traverse County it does not connect with any major recreational area or site. A trail for snowmobiling has been developed and runs parallel to the riding and hiking trail. During the summer months it unofficially doubles as a motorcycle/ATV trail. Public access to many nearby lakes and streams is available, ranging from those for non-motorized craft to power boat launching. In the City, the only public park on the Bay that can handle the larger motorized boats is a two lane launch site at the Clinch Park Marina. Small to medium sized motorized boats can be launched at the river launch site near the Boardman River mouth. East Bay Park has a small ramp that can be used by small boats in time of higher water levels such as are occurring now. During low water levels it is usable only for watercraft that can be carried in. Other sites exist around the Bay as shown on the County- wide recreation facilities map. Official public fishing sites are available throughout the County, but more areas are needed to meet the growing demands of this recreational pursuit. Picnic sites exist throughout the County; however, many of these sites often tend to be little more than roadside rest areas with a scenic focus. These sites are somewhat buffered from traffic and are geared toward day-use. The County itself owns nine recreational facilities with special restricted uses and are described below.

Power Island (formerly named Marion Island) - This 202 acre wooded island has hiking trails, picnic grounds, and a small four site primitive campground on the attached 2 acre

Bassett Island. The islands are in the West Arm of Grand Traverse Bay and are accessible only by boat.

Twin Lakes Park - This facility is located on a 175 acre parcel of land bordering North Twin Lake. It has Gilbert Lodge which is a dining and meeting facility for up to 200 people, and a large dormitory building that can sleep up to 142 people. Hiking trails run throughout the property and a beach is located on the lake. The facility can be rented out by various organizations or groups for meetings, retreats, weddings, etc. for a day or up to a week.

The Grand Traverse Nature Reserve - The Natural Education Reserve was set aside as a “natural environmental classroom for area youth” and is comprised of 505 acres. The property, which includes over seven miles of improved trails, runs along the Boardman River south of Boardman Lake and is used by naturalists, students, hikers, fishermen, and canoeists. The Boardman River Nature Center that opened in August of 2008 on the Reserve, is operated by the Grand Traverse Conservation District.

Civic Center - The Civic Center is located within the confines of Traverse City and is situated on 45 acres of land. The facility has an indoor ice skating rink, indoor swimming pool, skate park, several softball/baseball fields, a paved one mile walking/biking trail, basketball courts, and a picnic shelter that is available for reservation.

Medalie Park – a 15 acre park at the south end of Boardman Lake that has picnic facilities including a picnic shelter with restrooms, paved hiking/biking trail, a canoe launch and fishing platforms. The East Boardman Lake Trail connects Medalie Park to the City’s Hull Park at the north end of the lake.

Beitner Park - This 5 acre park is a canoe/kayak launch site on the Boardman River just south of the Nature Reserve.

VASA Pathway Trailhead - A 40 acre parcel located at the beginning of 34 kilometers of non-motorized trails, which features parking, restrooms and a warming hut.

Keystone Recreational Complex - In a cooperative venture with Traverse Bay Area Youth Soccer (TBAYS), 16 soccer fields have been developed just south of Traverse City on 40 acres of the 77 acre parcel.

Maple Bay Park – A recently acquired 450 acre farm on East Grand Traverse Bay is in the early development stages including parking and a two mile trail. The Grand

Traverse Regional Land Conservancy helps with some programming and stewardship at the park.

Many of the townships in the area have their own park facilities for the enjoyment of their residents and guests. Some of the most active townships are Acme, Blair, East Bay, Garfield, Green Lake, Long Lake and Whitewater Township in Grand Traverse County and Elmwood Township in Leelanau County.

Taking into consideration the amount of recreational opportunities available throughout the region and the County, the average Traverse City resident is fortunate to have a number of facilities available that address a wide variety of recreational activities.

## **CITY FACILITIES**

At the present time, Traverse City owns 34 parks and recreational properties, ranging from a small downtown parcel to the larger Hickory Hills Ski Area, the Grand Traverse Commons and the Brown Bridge Quiet Area. The City enjoys a broad range of recreational opportunities. Much of the park land is heavily concentrated along the Boardman River and along the shoreline of the West Grand Traverse Bay. The City park locations are shown on the accompanying map. In total, over 1,600 City-owned acres are currently dedicated to recreational pursuits including Hickory Hills Ski Area and Grand Traverse Commons that are each approximately 125 acres and Brown Bridge Quiet Area, located 10 miles southeast of the City, has nearly two square miles (1,310 acres) of natural area along the Boardman River. City parks are listed beginning on the next page.

## **CULTURAL FACILITIES**

Typically, cultural amenities are tied to the more heavily populated metropolitan regions of the state, leaving the rural northern areas of Michigan largely void of such opportunities. Traverse City, however, is atypical of most communities of its size and is blessed with a wealth of cultural developments complementing the natural beauty of the area. World famous artists perform throughout the year and outdoor concerts are a highlight at Interlochen Center For The Arts. The Traverse Symphony Orchestra holds both summer and winter concerts and season tickets are in high demand.

The Old Town Playhouse Civic Players entertain tourists and residents throughout the year. The local State Theatre has been renovated by the Traverse City Film Festival non-profit organization and is open again showing movies and holding other community events. In a cooperative agreement with the City of Traverse City, the Con Foster

building that used to house the Con Foster Museum Collection in Clinch Park, is now home to the “Bijou By The Bay” movie theatre that is also operated by the Traverse City Film Festival. In and around the community are numerous art galleries exhibiting every medium of art. In addition, there is the City Opera House, Crooked Tree Arts Center of Traverse City, Northwestern Michigan College Dennis Museum, Lars Hockstad and Milliken Auditoriums for concerts, WIPR, WIAA, and WNMC Public Radio, the local public access channel, Maritime Heritage Alliance and numerous art fairs.

Although cultural events may not be seen as recreational to some, it is clear the citizens of Traverse City view these amenities as important in contributing to their quality of life. Residents ranked "live entertainment" as the third most popular recreational activity in a past survey. The downtown even holds special “Friday Night Live” events in August which brings hundreds of people into the downtown area.

## **OTHER FACILITIES**

Many other properties used for recreational purposes are located in the City limits and surrounding areas. School facilities provide playgrounds, sports fields and indoor facilities used by the community. Seven public, three parochial, and two charter school sites are located in the City Limits plus Northwestern Michigan College. One of the six public elementary schools has been closed to their former use to cut costs to the school district but the ground are still available for recreational use. The Traverse City Country Club offers a nice green space along the southern boundary of the City.

## **CITY PARK INVENTORY**

### **American Legion Park - .47 acres – Washington Street at Cass Street**

This small neighborhood park has frontage on the Boardman River and serves those entering or leaving downtown as a place to stop and rest. There is a memorial to area Veterans and park benches. Only the sidewalk passing adjacent to the park meets accessibility guidelines.



**Arbutus Park - .13 acres – At the east end of Arbutus Court at Boon Street**

A small, neighborhood park with quarter court basketball court, a donated child's recycled plastic picnic table and a park bench. Used primarily by those living close by, for a place to relax or to shoot a few free throws. Only the sidewalk passing adjacent to the park meets accessibility guidelines.

**Ashton Park – 4.70 acres - Between Wayne and Hill Streets at Madison Street**

A neighborhood park adjacent to Willow Hill Elementary School that features an old growth forest of beech, hemlock and maple trees. This park is used as a shortcut route to school and as a nature study area by the neighborhood and school. There is a short self-guided nature trail located in the wooded area. Along the east side of the park near Wayne Street, there is a small, older Jack and Jill play structure and a climber. Only the sidewalks passing adjacent to both sides of the park meet accessibility guidelines.

**Boon Street Park - .34 acres – On Boon Street, west of Rose Street**

This neighborhood park services a several block area along the south central boundary of the City. Amenities include: half court basketball court, slide, swing set and climber. None of the park areas meet accessibility guidelines.

**Brown Bridge Quiet Area – 1,310 acres – South-east of the City off Garfield Road**

A regional parcel that is park-like and offers hiking trails, including some accessible trails, water access on the Boardman River and a vault-type toilet. This rustic area is popular with nature enthusiasts. The dam that formed Brown Bridge Pond was removed in 2013 and the river channel re-established and the lake bottom planted with native species for restoration. Recreation opportunities, land and water features, maintenance practices and capital expenditure requirements changed as a result. Some of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

### **Bryant Park – 3.32 acres – Peninsula Drive at North Garfield Avenue**

A community park that serves residents, non-residents and tourists alike. Bryant is located at the south-east corner of West Grand Traverse Bay and has a great swimming beach, boat-themed play structure constructed in 2002, swing set, picnic grills, park benches and a restroom building. Most of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.



### **Clancy Park – 3.0 acres – Sheridan Road at West Orchard Drive**

This larger neighborhood park features a large open grass field area for informal sports and games along with some wooded areas. The service area is the large Orchard Heights neighborhood. Facilities include a Jack and Jill play structure, slide, swing set, merry-go-round, climber and quarter court basketball. Currently, none of the park features meet accessibility guidelines however a project now being considered for grant funding would include walkways, benches, a small picnic shelter and new play equipment.

### **Clinch Park – 6.72 acres – Grandview Parkway at Cass Street**

Clinch Park features the longest, wide beach in Traverse City and a portion is the former home of the Clinch Park Zoo that showcased Michigan wildlife for 50 years. The Spirit of Traverse City, a ¼ scale steam locomotive that pulled passengers around the former zoo property and through a picnic area near the beach closed in 2012. New construction in 2012 – 2013 funded in part by a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant replaced the old restroom and food concession building. The project also included a new waterscape spray park and small playground, improved beach access and new walkways. The Con Foster Building that formerly housed the local history museum is now the “Bijou By The Bay” movie theater operated by the local non-profit Traverse City Film Festival. The Traverse Area Recreational Trail runs through the park. The Duncan L. Clinch Marina is adjacent to the park and features a boat launch and boat slips. Almost of the facilities in the park meet accessibility guidelines.



### **Darrow Park – 1.11 acres – Bay Street at Monroe Street**

Darrow Park has the size and appearance of a neighborhood park but with its location across from West Grand Traverse Bay, gets a lot of summer use from tourists and non-residents. The park features a play structure and swing set. There are ten plastic recycled benches in the park and a spring rocking toy in the playground donated in memory of local residents. Most of the features of this park meet accessibility guidelines.



### **East Bay Park – 3.23 acres – East Bay Boulevard at East Front Street**

East Bay Park is a community park used by many people in the City and surrounding area along with tourists. The park has bathroom facilities, a play structure and swing set, a small boat launch and a swimming beach on East Grand Traverse Bay. Most of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.



**F and M Park – 3.5 acres – Surrounded by State, Hope, and Washington Streets and Railroad Avenue**

F & M Park, so named due to the Florida and Michigan fruit packing company that used to be on the site, is a great neighborhood park that often takes on the role of a community park. During the National Cherry Festival, large numbers of people attend Cherry Kid's events held at F & M. Many school groups from the region stop at the park for end of year parties and as a stop on field trips. Amenities include a gazebo constructed in 2003, a train-themed play structure installed in 2009, slide and merry-go-round. An ice skating rink has been installed here since 2006. Most features of this park meet accessibility guidelines.



**Fulton Park – 9.19 acres – Carter Road off of M-22**

This natural area park features a four tenths of a mile self-guided nature trail. There is access to the trail from a small parking lot and from the Traverse Area Recreational Trail (TART). The parking area meets accessibility guidelines.



**Grand Traverse Commons – 129.80 acres - Centers around Division and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets**

The Grand Traverse Commons is a community park. A portion of the former Traverse City State Hospital has become dedicated City park land with two trails that were used by patients at the hospital. These were called the Women’s Walk and the Men’s Walk and have kept the same names. Work by Eagle Scout projects and Camp Pugsley work crews rejuvenated the trails in the 1990s. A significant portion of this entire property is dedicated wetlands and nature study is a major activity at this park. The local Veteran’s Coalition has relocated the War Memorials that were previously located at the former Veteran’s Park to a site on the Commons’ Parkland near the corner of 11<sup>th</sup> Street and Elmwood Avenue. Walkways, a picnic shelter, and benches have been added to this area. The sidewalks passing along Eleventh Street and Division Street along the park and the Veteran’s Memorial area meet accessibility guidelines.

**Hannah Park – 2.29 acres – Sixth Street at Union Street**

Hannah Park features a large change in elevation from its southern border along Sixth Street downhill to the Boardman River. A walking path runs through the upper portion of the park linking Sixth Street to Wadsworth Street. The park hosts many weddings and “Shakespeare in the Park” along with fishing on the platforms constructed in 2007. The sidewalks passing along Sixth Street and Union Street meet accessibility guidelines as does the new Perry Hannah statue plaza (2015) at the intersection corner of the two streets.



**Hickory Hills – 122.5 acres – At the west end of Randolph Street, 1 ¾ miles west of Division Street**

Hickory Hills is a multi-season recreation provider and regional park. In the summer, a 24 hole disc golf course constructed by the Northern Michigan Disc Sports Organization with donations from local foundations and labor from the club members, receives heavy use. The cross country ski trails attract many hikers during eight months of the year. In the winter, Hickory is transformed into a downhill and cross country ski area featuring eight downhill runs with five rope tows. One of the slopes also has terrain park features added when snow conditions allow. Approximately three kilometers of cross country and snowshoe trails are available, along with a lodge with a warming fireplace, restrooms and a snack bar. Lighting is present for seven of the downhill runs and one cross country trail. Some of the features meet accessibility guidelines. A recently completed master plan and an active advisory group are currently raising funds to make many improvements to Hickory Hills. These include a new lodge, more downhill terrains, more features that can be used during the other three seasons such as a ropes course, climbing wall, and trails for hiking and biking.



### **Highland Park – 1.35 acres - Between Highland Park Drive and Bloomfield Road**

Highland Park is a neighborhood park that is primarily an open field for informal play and sports. There is a slide available and there is pedestrian access from three easements provided when the neighborhood was created. None of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

### **Hull Park – 6.4 acres – Hannah Avenue west of Woodmere Avenue**

Hull Park was transformed in 1999 by a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant, from a road through a field with a boat launch on Boardman Lake to a very attractive community park with a multi-use building with restrooms and a picnic/meeting area. Other facilities include a small wooden gazebo overlooking the lake, four sitting platforms, boardwalks and docks with fishing opportunities and an improved boat launch. In 2009, the Traverse Area Community Sailing (TACS) group donated the materials and construction costs for a large boathouse to store their sailing fleet for summer classes taught to area young people and some adult classes. TACS has a long term management agreement for the boathouse and they also use the multi-use recreation building for teaching the sailing lessons. TACS has recently installed an accessible lift to get people into boats on the lake. Some money for the boat lift and related projects was from the Kellogg Foundation grant program. A new non-profit called Traverse Area Community Rowing plans on starting a community rowing program in 2016. Almost all features of this park meet accessibility guidelines.



### **Huron Hills Park – 1.71 acres – Between Kewaunee and East Timberlane Drives just west of Birchwood Avenue**

This is a small neighborhood park with no amenities except for a small open field and a small hill that is sometimes used as a sledding hill. None of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

**Indian Woods Park - .62 acres – Between Indian Woods Drive and Huron Street, just south of East Front Street**

This two-tiered neighborhood park has frontage on two streets and offers a Jack and Jill play structure, swing set, merry-go-round, climber and benches. None of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.



**Lay Park - .79 acres – Union Street near 6<sup>th</sup> Street**

This downtown neighborhood park offers a shaded sitting area and park benches. Only the sidewalk passing along Union Street along the park meets accessibility guidelines.

**Meijer’s Silverbrook Acres – 58.89 acres – Division Street at West Silver Lake Road**

This undeveloped parcel along US-31/M-37, is a natural area with Kid’s Creek running through the length of the property. This property is deed-restricted for use as a nature study area and only viewing platforms or boardwalks for that purpose, could be constructed. None of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

**Mini-Park - .30 acres – East Front Street at Grandview Parkway**

This small neighborhood-sized park straddles the Grandview Parkway, with a walkway along the Boardman River offering fishing opportunities. This path also serves as the TART trail as it passes under the Murchie (US 31/M37, Grandview Parkway) Bridge. The park also features the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial and a State Historic Marker. Most of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

**Open Space Park – 7.19 acres – Grandview Parkway at Marina Drive**

This is a park that fulfills both the community and regional labels depending on the time of year. Several major and minor festivals held on this space draw crowds from all over

the region. The Cherry Festival and Film Festival draw people from all over the United States, along with several other countries. The park features a promenade along the West Grand Traverse Bay which doubles as the TART trail. There are few other amenities, as this area is kept as the name implies, open space. Most of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.



#### **Park A – 1.2 acres – Between Arrowhead Drive and East Timberlane Drive**

This neighborhood park is a wooded parcel that is surrounded by homes in one of the newer developments on the east side of the City. It is strictly a natural area used by park neighbors. None of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

#### **Park C - .10 acres – Birchwood Avenue at Kewaunee Drive**

This small neighborhood park offers access to East Grand Traverse Bay down a set of steps that were constructed in 2006 by a Camp Pugsley work crew. A bench is also provided along the steps. None of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

#### **Senior Center Park – 3.7 acres – East Front Street at Barlow Street**

The Senior Center Park houses the Senior Center building that serves the entire Grand Traverse area community with programs for mature adults age 50 and over. The park, that fronts on West Grand Traverse Bay, offers tennis courts that are also marked for pickleball, shuffleboard courts, and picnic facilities. A swimming beach and public bathrooms are also available. Most of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

#### **Slabtown Corner (formerly Veteran’s Memorial Park) - 2.24 acres – Division Street between Bay and Cypress Streets**

This community park offers four lighted tennis courts, a restroom building, a small swing set and slide. The park is also home to Wags West, the first off-leash Dog Park in the City. Until 2010, the park was home to a grouping of memorials commemorating the ultimate sacrifice of Veterans from conflicts dating from the Civil War to present day.

These memorials have been relocated to the new Veteran's Memorial on City Parkland at the Grand Traverse Commons. Most of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

**J. Smith Walkway - .06 acres – 100 Block of East Front Street between Union and Cass Streets**

This tiny downtown pocket park offers an attractive path from Front Street to a pedestrian bridge across the Boardman River to the Farmer's Market area. The park features benches, tables, wall seating and a fountain. All of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.



**Sunset Park – 2.22 acres – East Front Street at Hope Street**

Sunset Park is a small community park that has a beach on West Grand Traverse Bay. A swing set and merry-go-round are also found at the park. Only the sidewalk passing along Front Street along the park meets accessibility guidelines.



**Triangle Park (the name is in the process to be renamed Jupiter Gardens) - .14 acres – Boyd Avenue at Rose Street**

This small neighborhood park borders the TART trail and has a bench and peace pole donated by the local Rotary Club. The trail meets accessibility guidelines. The planet Jupiter model is depicted on a pole mounted adjacent to the park as part of the scaled solar system installed along the TART trail from Hull Park to a point about 5 miles east.

### **Union Street Dam Park - .93 acres – Union Street at 6<sup>th</sup> Street**

Union Street Dam offers fishing opportunities for trout, salmon and other species along the toe of the dam or on the fishing deck along the river. There is also a fish-ladder for passage of (primarily) steelhead trout to reach upstream spawning grounds. Some of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.



### **Volleyball Court Area – 2.79 acres – Grandview Parkway east of Oak Street**

The community park includes two parcels separated by a parcel owned by the City of Traverse City – Garfield Township Recreational Authority. The eastern parcel has a parking lot and access to the beach on West Grand Traverse Bay. The western parcel has six sand volleyball courts. The TART trail also passes along the southern boundary of this park. Some of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

### **Wellington Street Plaza - .07 acres – East Front Street at Wellington Street**

Wellington Street Plaza is a small downtown pocket park nestled between two businesses. It offers Boardman River fishing, some seating areas and a place to tie up a boat for short-term day use access to downtown. It connects to the Mini Park and TART trail. Some of the park features meet accessibility guidelines when entered through the Mini Park.

### **West End Beach – 4.06 acres – Grandview Parkway from Oak Street to Division Street**

This long narrow community park stretches along the Grandview Parkway (US 31/M-37/M-72) and is fronted on West Grand Traverse Bay. A marked swimming area is present at the west end of the volleyball courts and the TART trail follows the entire park to the second marked beach at the intersection of Division Street. There is a bathroom facility at this second beach location. Some of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.



## **ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT**

The City of Traverse City is moving forward in providing facilities that are barrier-free to better serve all segments of the population. As an example, the Streets Division has installed ramps at all intersections throughout the City. Four playgrounds have been installed in the past nineteen years that meet current accessibility guidelines. As old picnic tables need replacing, they are replaced with tables designed for accessibility. Changes have been made to parking lots and other changes are in the works for a possible public fishing pier at the mouth of the Boardman River. Accessible walkways on the beach are now available at Bryant, Clinch and East Bay parks. Older restrooms have been retro-fitted with new faucets, grab bars, etc. to bring them up to current standards and the new restrooms have been built at Clinch Park.

The following list indicates for each park what the current barrier-free status is, and current plans for improvements.

- American Legion Park - No facilities except for sidewalks on two sides of park, a Veteran's monument and a drinking fountain that is barrier-free.
- Arbutus Court - Accessible from neighborhood sidewalk.
- Ashton - Wooded lot featuring old growth beech and hemlock trees. Small playground and trails not accessible.
- Boon Street Park - Small neighborhood park with 3 pieces of playground equipment and ½ court basketball. Currently has grass with no hard surface path to any of these items.
- Brown Bridge Quiet Area - Wild and scenic area with some barrier free nature trails and MDNR-type primitive toilet.
- Bryant Park - Has barrier free flush toilet facility, designated parking and a playground meeting ADA standards. A hard surface path connects parking to the play structure along with a picnic table and barbeque grill pad. A portable ADA path to beach was installed in 2014.
- Clancy Park - Old playground, 1/4 court basketball and large grass area. No hard surface paths to either. Waiting for results of grant application to add walkways, playground pieces and small picnic shelter that will be accessible.
- Clinch Marina - New construction of entire marina completed in 2004 allows access to all parts of the marina by all.
- Clinch Park – New barrier-free restrooms and paths were opened in 2013 thanks to donations and a MNRTF grant. A beach access walk was added in 2012 and upgraded in 2014.
- Darrow Park - New playground installed in 2000 is per ADA accessibility guidelines. Sidewalks surround park and lead to playground.
- East Bay Park - New playground installed in 1996 is per ADA accessibility guidelines. New parking lot also installed with designated parking and sidewalks to restroom, playground and toward the beach. An accessible walkway on the beach was relocated from Clinch Park in 2015.
- F & M Park - A new play structure was constructed in late fall of 2009 per ADA accessibility guidelines. A gazebo constructed in 2003, has a sidewalk added in 2005 that connects the gazebo to the sidewalk system surrounding the park.

- Fulton Park - Natural area that had new parking lot installed in 2004 that is ADA accessible.
- Grand Traverse Commons - Sidewalks exist on the edges of portions of the property. Current nature trails are not ADA accessible.
- Hannah Park - No facilities at this time except for two sets of steps leading to the lower level near the Boardman River and three fishing platforms overhanging the river and sidewalks on two sides of the park.
- Hickory Hills Ski Area - Needs new lodge and parking arrangements to become barrier-free. A master plan has been done and fund raising has begun.
- Highland Park - No development to this small neighborhood park. Only a slide is currently present. Only access is across grassy areas.
- Hull Park - Major renovations completed in 2002 allow access to boardwalk, boat launch facilities, restrooms and amphitheater. An accessible boathouse used for sailing classes was completed in 2009. The East, North, and first leg of the West Boardman Lake Trails connect at Hull Park and are accessible.
- Huron Hills Park - Small grassy neighborhood park, no facilities, no access.
- Indian Woods Park - Four pieces of play equipment accessible only by grass lawn areas.
- Lay Park - No development to this downtown park except for sidewalks on two sides.
- Meijer's Silverbrook Acres – No development, no access at this natural area park.
- Mini Park (Wequetong Point) Park- Walkways to river are accessible for fishing and sight-seeing.
- Open Space Park - Has accessible walkways to observe West Bay. Improvements could be made to the interior of the park with walkways and picnic facilities.
- Park A - No development, no access. Small wooded parcel.
- Park C - Small set of steps leading to East Bay frontage. Not currently accessible.
- Senior Center Park - Shuffleboard Courts and Tennis Courts are accessible along with the main part of the building. The restrooms that are reached from the

exterior of the building need some renovation. The building will be updated as soon as fund- raising is complete. 2016-17 is target year.

- J Smith Walkway - Small park with accessible walkway to downtown. Upgrades were completed in 2006 to make it more attractive and useable.
- Sunset Park - Only facilities are swings and a merry-go-round. They are not reachable by hard surface paths, nor is beach.
- Triangle Park (soon to be Jupiter Gardens) - Park that has the TART trail passing adjacent to it. Has no facilities except for a bench and peace pole donated by the Rotary Club but does have the TART trail access.
- Union Street Dam Park - Long sloping ramp to fishing dock is present.
- Slabtown Corner (formerly Veteran's Memorial Park) - Sidewalks from accessible parking to restroom building and tennis courts is complete. Improvements to restroom accessibility were completed in 2005. Wags West off-leash dog park was opened in 2013. Sidewalks lead to the gate of the dog area.
- Volleyball Court Area – The TART trail passes along the edge of this property and a parking lot with designated spaces is a short distance from the courts.
- Wellington Street Plaza - River access for fishing is accessible from the South Mini-Park.
- West End Beach – Draft plans have been prepared for a new restroom structure and ramped path to beach. Waiting for funding to become available. TART trail runs the length of this park area.

## GRANT INVENTORY

### ***Grant Number – 26-00333 Land and Water Conservation Fund Veteran's Memorial Park Development - 1972***

Scope items: Two lighted tennis courts, shelter and restroom building, tot lot play equipment, fencing, walks, benches, parking, landscaping and utilities.

Tennis courts have been removed and replaced with new courts. Benches were deteriorating and were replaced, some of landscaping has died or become unsightly

and was replaced. The original fencing along Division Street has been replaced as part of the Wags West dog park project. This park was renamed Slabtown Corner in 2014.

***Grant Number – 26-10247 Land and Water Conservation Fund  
Boardman River Access – 1981***

*(Cass St. at the river, east side – Called the Chamber of Commerce River Plaza for identification reference.)*

Scope Items: Boat landing, retaining wall planter, steps and barrier free ramp, boardwalk, lighting and landscaping.

Some decking has been replaced on boardwalk, steps and ramp. Some of the retaining wall was redone with construction of the new Chamber of Commerce Building. Landscaping has been updated in many locations.

***Grant Number – TF704 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund  
West Grand Traverse Bay Acquisition – 1983***

This 3.83 acre parcel is along West Grand Traverse Bay from the area that is now the volleyball courts to near West End Beach. This area is used as a beach, volleyball courts, general park green space / sitting area along the Grandview Parkway (U.S. 31/M – 37/M – 72).

***Grant Number TF88-184 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund  
West Bay Beach – 1988 (Called West End Beach)***

Scope Items: Create beach, topsoil and seed, irrigation, landscaping, plaza with sidewalks, parking lot, lighting, bike trail, wooden steps and decking.

All items in good shape, some aging to wooden deck and steps. The bike trail has been resurfaced.

***Grant Number TF92-199 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund  
Riverfront Acquisition - 1992***

This project added 70 acres to the Brown Bridge Quiet Area with 2,500 feet of Boardman River frontage protecting it from further development and adding to the natural area.

***Grant Number TF99-160 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund  
Hull Park Waterfront- 1999***

Scope Items: Multiuse recreation pavilion, boardwalks and accessible docks, parking for boat trailers, bituminous pathway, shade pavilion / overlook, move access road, landscaping and irrigation.

All development items are in good condition and used heavily. Has turned field and small dock into a vibrant community park.

***Grant Number TF02-151 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund  
Boardman Lake Trail - East***

Trail is in good shape with the exception of some root damage to bituminous surface in a few locations. Trail is well used and a great community asset.

***Grant Number TF05-104 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund  
Boardman Lake Trail – West (North)***

Trail is in good shape with the exception of some root damage to bituminous surface in a few locations. Trail is well used and a great community asset.

This trail connects the East Boardman Lake Trail through Hull Park, across the Boardman River to the north end of the west side of the lake. All items are almost new and doing very well.

***Grant Number TF??-??? (need number and details) Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund  
Boardman Lake Trail – West , first portion***

Trail, picnic shelter and fishing dock / kayak launch were constructed in 2014 with dedication in 2015. The trail and other amenities is in new condition. Trail is great addition to the local trail system and is this first part of the west trail that will eventually connect the East and North trails to surround Boardman Lake.

## **SECTION 4**

# **PLANNING METHODS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Park and Recreation planning for the City of Traverse City is a participatory process involving the public, City Staff, the Planning Commission, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the City Commission. Principal City staff involved in the process is the Parks and Recreation administration and office team.

## **LAND USE**

The City's Master Plan (2009) incorporates a "Natural Resources Element" and a "Parks and Recreation Element" both of which have provided a basis for this plan. The "Natural Resources Element" deals specifically with environmentally sensitive lands such as steep slopes, wetlands, shoreline zones, and wildlife habitat. Management guidelines are provided to minimize negative impacts when developing in or near these sensitive areas. Generally, the guidelines limit or discourage development in the environmentally sensitive areas.

The "Parks and Recreation Element" provides policies and guidelines for developing and regulating the use of the municipal park system, and its facilities. The plan discusses the various types of parks the City has and guidelines for their development.

Generally, the plan indicates the areas within the City that should be committed to permanent open space usage. A sizable percentage is proposed to be preserved as open space providing protection for flood plain, stream basin, shoreline, steep slope, and wetland areas.

## **PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE PLAN**

Another element of the City Plan (Master Plan) is the provision of "linkages" that tie groups of parks along the bay and Boardman River together. These linkages strengthen the relationship between recreational areas and enhance usability.

Perhaps the most noted portion of the plan concerns the "Bayfront Plan", a generalized name given to the property lying between Senior Citizen Park on the east and the intersection of M-72 and Grandview Parkway on the west. The "Bayfront Plan" area is intended to be a balanced active and passive facility designed to serve residents and tourists alike. The overall park is really a succession of specialized small parks interconnected by green space linkages. In 2004, the City of Traverse City - Garfield Township Recreational Authority was established with the intentions of acquiring and developing additional land for the area's future. Bond and millage issues passed that allowed another parcel on West Grand Traverse Bay to become public recreational land.

## **ZONING**

The City Zoning Ordinance allows for the development of parks, playgrounds, and community recreational buildings owned or operated by the City, and country clubs or golf courses (public or private), in most zoning districts.

## **OVERVIEW**

The Traverse City Parks and Recreation Plan was prepared by staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission for review by the public and City Planning Commission. After advertised public meetings, the City Commission adopts this document by formal resolution as the Traverse City Parks and Recreation Plan and authorizes submission to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment for approval.

In addition, the Traverse City Planning Commission must prepare a Public Improvements Plan annually for submittal to the City Commission. The plan describes all major proposed physical improvements and equipment purchases for the next six years, including improvements for City Parks and Recreation facilities. The plan complements the Traverse City Parks and Recreation Plan's Public Improvement Schedule and is prepared annually rather than once every five years, as is the case with the Recreation Plan.

The Public Improvements Plan and subsequent reviews are held at public meetings both at the Planning Commission and City Commission levels. Finally, the plans are carried into action via the Traverse City Annual Budget as prepared by staff for City Commission implementation.

## **STAFF INPUT**

The principal City staff involved in the process is the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Public Services Clerical Support Staff, with input from the Senior Center Director, Brown Bridge Quiet Area Project Coordinator, Director of Public Services, City Planning Director, Planning and Zoning Administrator, and the City Manager.

## **SECTION 5**

# **PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS**

## **SURVEYS**

A non-scientific opinion survey was also distributed in various media forms in the fall of 2010. The survey was made available at the “Public Workshop for Parks” held on September 23, 2010, a link to the survey was placed on the City’s website, the neighborhood groups were informed of the survey availability and the Downtown Development Authority publicized the survey. More information will be noted later in the document.

## **PUBLIC MEETINGS**

The Parks and Recreation Plan and the Capital Improvement schedule (CIS) were a collaborative effort of the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, Director of Public Services, Planning and Zoning Administrator, Planning Director and the City Manager. The CIS is reviewed and amended by the City Parks and Recreation Commission at public meetings and forwarded to the Planning Commission and then to the City Commission for their action.

## **“YOUR BAY - YOUR SAY” PUBLIC PLANNING PROCESS HISTORY**

Beginning in February 2004, a committee was formed to begin looking at what to do with the space that would become park land when the Bayfront Power Plant was removed. About a year later, the scope of the committee was expanded to include a roughly two mile stretch of waterfront from Senior Center Park on the east side, to the intersection of M-72 and the Grandview Parkway on the west side.

The Small Town Design Initiative program from Michigan State University and the Master’s Level program in Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning from the University of Michigan were both contracted to assist in planning the Bayfront area. The MSU group was concerned mainly with the Bayfront and Boardman River area and the U of M group was charged with strengthening the connections between the downtown area and the Bayfront.

On June 23, 2005, the first public meeting was held with about 150 people in attendance. At this meeting, people were asked to list what they were proud of, sorry about, and what they would like to see from a hot air balloon if they flew over Traverse City in 5 to 10 years.

The next series of meetings was held on September 15 - 17, 2005. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, a visual preference survey was held on design styles. September 16<sup>th</sup> was a walking tour with Dan Burden from "Walkable Communities". A public design process was held on September 17<sup>th</sup>. After these meetings, the MSU students divided into teams and prepared design proposals that were presented in an interactive telecast from MSU to Traverse City on November 10, 2005.

After opportunities for the public to view the design boards at various locations around Traverse City, a meeting was held on January 19, 2006 where people were able to rate their favorite parts of all designs. Those comments were then taken back to MSU where a final design was produced and presented at a public meeting on June 8, 2006.

The University of Michigan Downtown Character Study was presented at a public meeting on May 11, 2006 after a series of public sessions to prepare the study.

At the conclusion of the MSU and U of M processes, a Request for Proposals was issued for a private consulting firm to take the results of the two college groups along with additional public input and work them further into a conceptual master plan for the entire Bayfront. The RFP deadline was in late July of 2006 and interviews of the top three firms were held on September 14, 2006. After the contract was awarded to JJR/Wade Trim, work began on the master plan.

During this phase of the planning for the Bayfront, public meetings were held on January 25 and April 24, 2007 to gather public input on proposed designs. The presentation of the results of the design process, "Key Recommendations - Traverse City's Waterfront Plan", was held in a public meeting on June 21, 2007. The plan, with some slight modifications, was accepted and adopted in September of 2007 by the City of Traverse City.

## **FURTHER PLANNING STEPS FOR THE BAYFRONT PLAN**

In February 2010, proposals were received to take the Master Plan to the preliminary engineering level. URS Corporation was selected and began their duties in March. The public was highly involved with this process including a three day charrette where a great number of civic, business, educational and other groups were present to listen to a short presentation and then to provide input. There were also sessions for the general public to observe and give input during the planning and design days. Representatives from URS gave summary presentations to local neighborhood groups, boards and commissions and civic organizations, then answered questions and received feedback.

Their final product was presented to the City Commission on July 19 which was followed by approvals of various boards and commissions before the City Commission formally adopted the plan on September 7, 2010.

In 2011, proposals were received for the Clinch Park – Phase One Final Design and Construction Documents. The contract was awarded to Hamilton – Anderson. After

these documents were completed, proposals were received in 2012 from construction contractors with the contract awarded to Hallmark Construction of Traverse City. Construction began in early September of 2012 and the park was reopened to the public in late June of 2013.

## **“PUBLIC WORKSHOP FOR THE FUTURE OF PARKS AND RECREATION”**

On November 12, 2015, the Parks and Recreation Commission hosted the “Public Workshop for the Future of Parks and Recreation” to gather insight from the community on needs and desires for parks, recreation facilities, and recreation programs. An informational briefing was followed by small group input on goals and objectives from the 2011-2016 plan. The last project of the evening was for those in attendance to look at park maps and then make design and operational suggestions for future consideration

The workshop was publicized in the local Record-Eagle newspaper, on the City’s website, The Ticker a local daily electronic news and events emailing, and other media outlets including WTCM Radio. Although the workshop was lightly attended, there was a good cross-section of the community represented. Participants from many parts of town were present along with a varied age range.



# HICKORY HILLS



## MULTI-SEASON RECREATION MASTER PLAN

JUNE 2, 2014

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hickory Hills Multi-Season Recreation Master Plan has been a collaboration of

- The City of Traverse City,
- Garfield Township,
- The Grand Traverse Ski Club, and
- Preserve Hickory.

Together, the municipal entities, non profit organizations, and the greater community have contribute their time, resources, and insight to the project.

A special thank you to the Advisory Team members for the time, energy, and thoughtfulness towards the Hickory Hills Multi-Season Recreation Master Plan. The following persons should be acknowledged for their efforts:

David Green	Laura Ness
Mac McClelland	Lauren Vaughn
Brian Hass	Maureen Madion
Brian VanDenBrand	Michael Estes
Chuck Korn	Mike Groleau
Denise Schmuckal	Roberto Larrea
Don Stellan	Tim Werner
Jered Ottenwess	Valarie Handy
Larry Lacrosse	Barry Smith

## CONSULTANT TEAM

- **SE Group** has over 55 years of experience working with ski areas and mountain resorts. SE Group brings broad experience in helping ski areas realize opportunities for sustainable multi-season operations, while maintaining the qualities and character of the area that are important to the community.
- **RRC Associates** is a multi-disciplinary consulting firm providing market research, strategic analysis, and community/land planning services. Principal areas of focus by RRC include the ski and snowboard industry in particular, and the travel, tourism, and recreation industries generally.

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## APPENDICES

*(bound as separate document)*

- A. Community Survey #1
- B. Existing Ski Area Specifications
- C. Youth/Teen Focus Group Comments
- D. Market Assessment
- E. SWOT Analysis
- F. Community Survey #2
- G. Summer Activity Information

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# Introduction

## BACKGROUND

Hickory Hills Recreation/Ski Area has been owned and operated as a ski area and municipal park by the City of Traverse City since 1952 and has a long established legacy within the Traverse City micropolitan area. The park is widely used by the greater community—offering active and passive recreational activities through all four seasons. Hickory Hills is an important community asset that provides affordable recreation opportunities for area youth and residents alike.

## WHY A MASTER PLAN

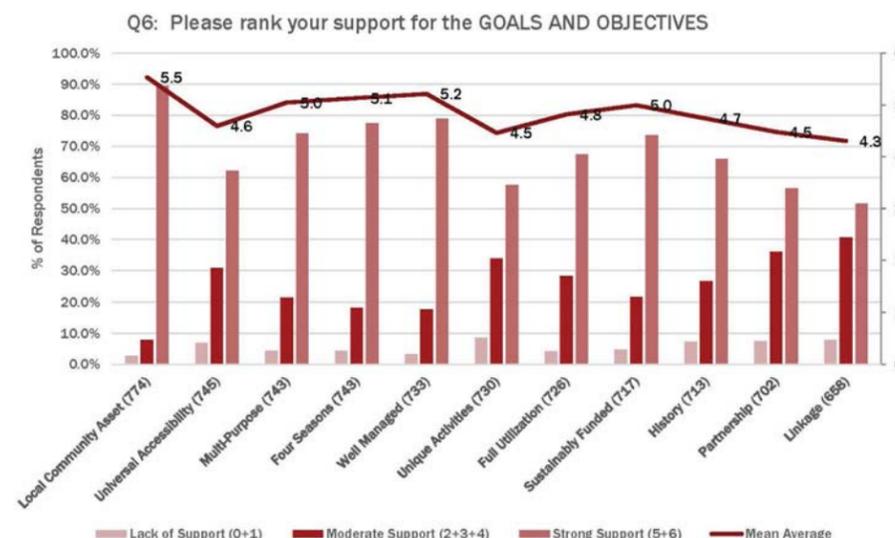
The purpose of the Master Plan is to:

- Assess the ski area operations and recommend capital and operational improvements for the long-term sustainability of the ski area.
- Assess the potential for introducing new summer activities, programs, and/or events that will contribute to the greater recreational community.
- Develop a plan based on community, site, operations, fiscal, and market intelligence.
- Provide direction for considerations of new partnerships for funding, operations, enhanced programming, and capital improvements.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives were developed by the Advisory Team to help guide the Master Plan development.

- **Local Community Asset:** Hickory will remain a public asset for which the regional community will have a sense of ownership and engagement.
- **Universal Accessibility:** Hickory Hills will be open to all people of any age, ability, and interest.
- **Full Utilization:** The full Hickory property should be utilized for recreational activities.
- **Multi-Purpose:** There are numerous active and passive, all-season recreational activities that would be ideal for Hickory, in addition to the current predominant winter uses of downhill skiing, snowboarding and cross country skiing.
- **Four Seasons:** Hickory will be a year-round recreational facility.
- **Unique Activities:** Hickory will provide unique recreational opportunities that may not be otherwise readily available in the area.
- **Linkage:** To optimize connectivity and create a true regional asset, Hickory Hills will be linked physically to and effectively managed in conjunction with current and potential future adjacent recreational property, facilities, and trails.
- **Well Managed:** Hickory will be well managed utilizing best practices.
- **Sustainably Funded:** A long-term, sustainable funding mechanism will be in place to ensure continued operation of Hickory.
- **Partnership:** Community members and governmental entities will bring unique assets, experiences and capabilities to a partnership for the long-term stability and sustainability of Hickory.
- **History:** The history of Hickory Hills will be recognized and valued, and play an important role in determining the future development and activities, including the continuation of downhill skiing and snowboarding.



OVERALL, THE COMMUNITY STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IDENTIFIED BY THE ADVISORY TEAM.

## CONTEXT

Hickory Hills is located in the northwest corner of Garfield Township but is owned by the City of Traverse City. The park is located approximately 2 miles west of downtown Traverse City and is accessed via Randolph Street.

- Hickory Hills is 1 of 33 parks and recreational properties managed by the City of Traverse City, Parks and Recreation Department.
- Hickory Hills primarily serves residents from the City, Garfield Township, and Grand Traverse County.
- Hickory Meadows, a 110-acre conserved parcel owned by the Joint Recreation Authority, lies east and adjacent to Hickory Hills.
- The parcel falls within the A1 (Agricultural) Zone of the Garfield Township regulations. As the Township considers zoning adjustments, the municipalities should work together to ensure uses and definitions afford opportunities within the community fabric.
- There is one access point into the park from Randolph Street where residents can also access Hickory Meadows.



Local Park Map. Prepared by Garfield Township Planning Dept. Jan 2012.

## THE PARK

The existing ski area and park evolved based on property acquisition by the City over a period of 25 years (from 1951–1975). The park is approximately 123 acres and offers a large natural/open space for community use.

- Site topography offers many “rooms” and differing experiences throughout the park. The topography offers development challenges due to the varied terrain and steep slopes.
- The top of Swede trail offers great views of Grand Traverse Bay and downtown Traverse City (refer to Image A).
- The existing parking area and drop off create challenges to both winter and summer users. In winter, the dead end drop off creates circulation challenges for parents and visitors alike. In summer, the closed gate limits access resulting in on street parking along Randolph Street.
- Existing walk/hike/bike trail network offers summer and winter time recreational opportunities but could be improved, expanded, and connected to the larger regional network.
- The award-winning disc golf course enjoys a strong following for three seasons (spring, summer, and fall) and is a primary park use during the non-winter months.



A. Views from Top of Swede towards downtown Traverse City



B. Park entrance and gate location



C. Disc Golf Course sign



## THE LEGACY

The legacy and history of Hickory Hills is well documented in “Light The Night, A History of Hickory Hills” by Molly Tompkins and Ryan Ness. The publication outlines the evolution of the ski area and qualities that have led to its strong community support.

- **How did Hickory Hills start?** The concept was inspired by Howelsen Hill in Steamboat, Colorado which has operated since 1915. The City of Traverse City opened Ci-Bo Hill, representing a partnership between the City and Board of Education. Ci-Bo was the first ski area in Michigan to offer night skiing. Hickory Hills opened in 1952, replacing Ci-Bo after running for two successful seasons.
- **Ski Schools and Racing.** Starting the first year, (1950), *The Record Eagle* sponsored a ski school program to teach kids how to ski. The legacy of affordable skiing for youth continued for over six decades through the support of many community organizations including: *The Record Eagle*, the Kiwanis club, the Milliken Department Store, and the Grand Traverse Ski Club. Notable ski instructor and racer, Stein Eriksen (from Boyne Mountain) helped form the racing legacy and ski school development.
- **A Community Asset.** Hickory Hills quickly grew into a community ski hill and park. It is seen as small, safe, accessible (proximity to city), and affordable.
- **Partnerships and Volunteers.** A history of partnerships, community resources, and endless volunteers started Hickory Hills and have helped keep it running ever since.

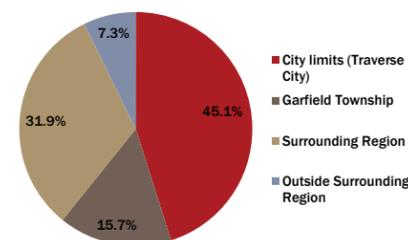


## COMMUNITY SUPPORT – THE RESULTS OF SURVEY #1

The community was polled early in the process of the Master Plan to understand users of the park, general support for Hickory Hills, and ideas for improvements (*complete survey results can be found in Appendix A*). The 1,023 responses highlighted that members of the community:

- Are interested in both active and passive recreation-based activities at Hickory Hills;
- Have a strong connection to the legacy of Hickory Hills as a community asset;
- Recognize the natural setting/beauty of Hickory Hills and support enhancement of the facility and recreation offerings;
- Feel very strongly that Hickory Hills maintain its natural character and not become a high-energy, amusement-oriented destination;
- Strongly support continued municipal funding for the park to keep the facility affordable for public use;
- Believe additional funding sources should be pursued to support park operations; and
- Would like a broader diversity in winter and summer offerings (facilities, programs, and events).

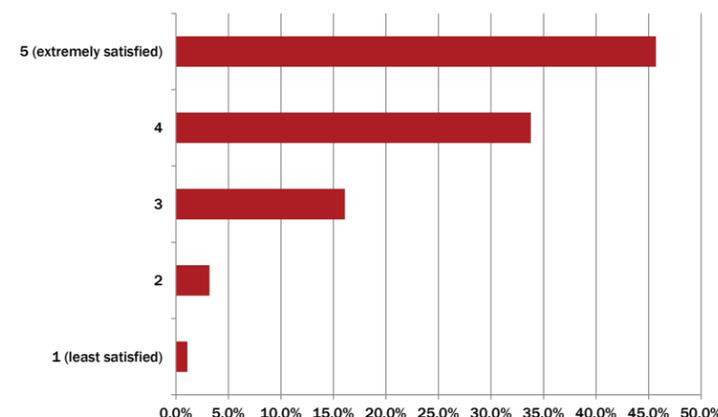
7. Place of residence:



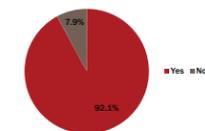
8. What activities do you participate in?



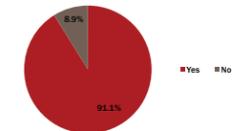
12. Generally, how well is Hickory Hills serving the Greater Traverse City community? (scale of 1 to 5, with 5 representing extremely satisfied)



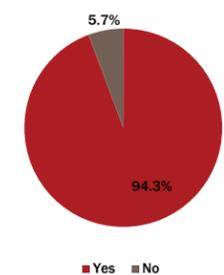
15. Do you support the concept of enhanced winter recreation activities, events, and/or programs being operated at Hickory Hills?



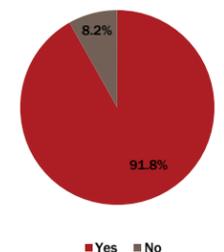
16. Do you support the concept of enhanced summer recreation activities, events, and/or programs being operated at Hickory Hills?



20. There exists a current gap in funding for the cost of winter recreation at Hickory Hills--historically it has been funded by the City of Traverse City as a park operation. Do you agree with the continuation of the City's financial support of Hickory Hills?



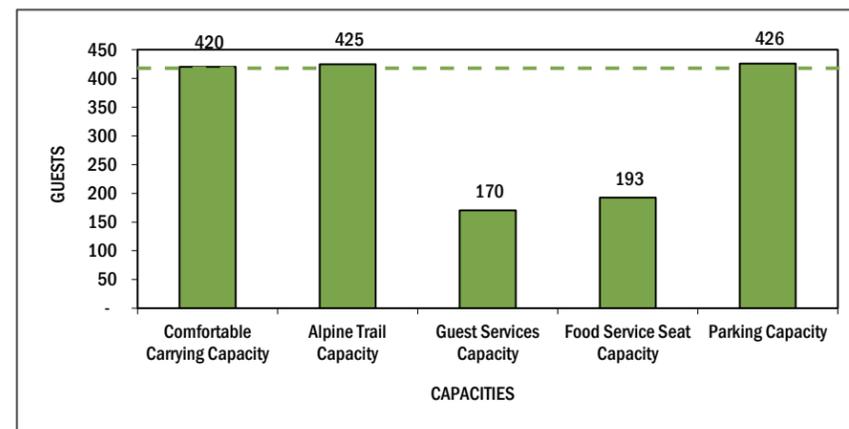
21. Do you believe additional funding sources should be pursued to support park operations? If so, please provide your suggestions.



## COMFORTABLE CARRYING CAPACITY

Comfortable Carrying Capacity (CCC) is a planning tool used to determine the optimum level of daily utilization for a ski area—one that facilitates a pleasant recreational experience. This is a planning figure only and does not represent a regulatory cap on visitation. CCC is used to ensure that capacities are balanced across facilities, and are sufficient to meet anticipated demand. CCC is based on a comparison of uphill vertical lift supply to downhill vertical skiing demand.

The CCC for Hickory Hills is calculated at 420 skiers/riders. Based on the related facility capacities, there is a strong imbalance related to Guest Services and Food Service. Parking is adequate given the percentage of drop off occurrences and comments from management. *Refer to Appendix B for Existing Ski Area Specifications.*



Hickory Hills CCC; Source: SE Group

## LIFTS

Hickory Hills currently operates five rope tows and would be best served by remaining with the operation of surface lifts only (tows, platters, conveyors, etc). While the idea of an aerial lift may be appealing, the operational and maintenance complexities and costs far outweigh the benefit. As an example, aerial lifts require significant increases in equipment, personnel, and training to address evacuations in the event of a lift failure. Surface lifts are far easier and less expensive to operate.

## GUEST SERVICES AND SEATING

The existing lodge offers 2,310 square feet of guest service space. Even without providing rentals, ski school, retail, and employee space, **the amount of existing guest service space is low by ski industry standards.** Recommended guest service space ranges from 5,700 to 7,190 square feet. *Refer to Appendix B for space use recommendations.*

- The existing lodge is a cherished building by the community and has served Hickory well over the years. The building is in need of code upgrades and repairs which would likely result in a significant renovation project. A building assessment would be valuable for the community to evaluate the best approach for upgrades and/or renovation.
- There is a shortage of seating at Hickory Hills. The existing lodge offers 55 seats. Even if one assumes a fairly high turnover of 3.5 turns, that will only provide 193 people a place to eat lunch. The amount of seating also limits summer time use and opportunities for rental of the building for events.
- The food service is operated by a third party concession. Past agreements limit intelligence on success and revenue. Community comments and input from the Advisory Team suggest improvements to the food service offerings are needed (kids order pizzas and have them delivered from a local shop). Food Service is a great opportunity to capture additional winter revenue and four season use.
- The ski area does not offer rentals. This is a limitation in attracting new/beginner skiers and/or working with school districts to offer lesson programs to youth.
- An improved retail counter adjacent to the ticket desk to sell and support Hickory Hills logo wear is a missed opportunity. Brand and identity are essential to Hickory's future (see comments on ski area operations).



## SKI & RIDE TERRAIN

Although the amount of terrain is balanced within the CCC metric, it is obvious from community comments and dialogue with the Advisory Team that there is a need for more terrain and most importantly, terrain variety. A factor that contributes to this need is current use by the racing programs, both high school and the ski club.

A YOUTH/TEEN FOCUS GROUP WAS HELD TO GATHER ADDITIONAL INPUT. SEE THE RESULTS IN APPENDIX C.

- Opening more terrain would provide for greater recreational ski use and offerings. Terrain variety could attract a wider demographic (both youth and young adult) and increase utilization at Hickory Hills. Terrain variety includes recreational terrain, glades, moguls, terrain parks, and terrain features.
- An improved and expanded terrain park is needed. This could provide opportunity for more interest in the area from the youth demographic and increase utilization of the ski area.
- The learning terrain is relatively far from the lodge and access to the existing beginner area requires walking through skiers coming off Buck and Birch trail. The learning terrain offers a rope tow, which is a challenging lift for first-timers. These factors limit the ability to attract and serve the first-time visitor.
- Improved progression of terrain would help with teaching. The Bunny slope is good for first-timers—good grades, width, and length. The next step up from Bunny is Jack's trail (off Birch). At 14% average grade, that is a good next step. However, the run is too narrow and has uneven grade. Improvements to Jack's trail (widening and regrading) would help to provide the next step of progression. From there, the next step is Swede, which works well with a 21% average grade.

## NORDIC

Hickory Hills offers nordic skiing on approximately 0.75 km of groomed and lighted trails. The trail loop is located in the open meadow west of the lodge. Other nordic trails exist but are not currently maintained or lighted and would require improvement to meet acceptable standards for recreational/race use.

- The ski area does not offer nordic ski rentals. Having an adequate supply would afford interested residents to try the sport and/or allow for programs.
- There is opportunity to expand the nordic trail network on Hickory Hills property and potential to link into Hickory Meadow. Together, these properties afford an excellent nordic venue.
- Currently, nordic use provides minimal revenue to the operations. However, with trail improvements and available rentals, there is opportunity to increase revenue from season/trail passes, food and beverage sales at the Lodge, and Nordic race events.



A. Looking towards Pete and Buck trails



B. Terrain Park on Swede



C. Nordic Field



## MARKETING + BRAND

Marketing and Brand is an important aspect to any successful business and/or operation. You have to understand your market and get the word out! Make the messaging clear and communicate what Hickory Hills is and what services are offered.

There is much room for improvement with respect to the Hickory Hills marketing and brand.

- While Hickory Hills has strong brand recognition amongst loyal followers, there is NO public brand identity. There is a need for a logo and a tag line.
- Communicate a shared VISION amongst the partners (City of Traverse City, Grand Traverse Ski Club, Preserve Hickory). Define what Hickory is and what services are offered. Send a consistent message.
- Develop a UNIFIED media presence (print, web, social media, tv, and radio). Understand who the target audience is and focus efforts towards them.
- Develop one web site that communicates all information. Inconsistent information about Hickory can currently be found on four different websites. Get on the map with Ski Michigan
- Make messaging fun and attractive to the target audience. For example, the GTSC uses the term “clinics” for Learn to Ski programs. This sounds like a medical term and is not attractive to parents or kids.



## SKI AREA BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

A Ski Area Benchmark Analysis was performed evaluating Hickory against the smallest ski areas in the Midwest region. Hickory Hills is smaller than those operations and should not be expected to perform similarly to other Midwest resorts. Nonetheless, the benchmark analysis does provides a financial performance “report card” and insight towards additional revenue opportunities.

Indicator/Metric	2012-2013 Season		
	Hickory Hills Mountain 2012/13	NSAA Economic Analysis 12/13 Data (Mid-West 0 to 3.0m VTF/H)	Comparison
<b>Number of Areas in Category</b>	1	8	
<b>Ski Area Characteristics</b>			
Season Length (days)	73	85	86%
Skiable Terrain (acres)	12	135	9%
Annual Skier Visits	13,186	67,898	19%
VTF/Hr (000)	900	2,310	39%
<b>Ski Area Economic Characteristics</b>			
Adult Weekend Ticket Price	\$19.00	\$42.00	45%
Adult Season Pass Price	\$170.00	\$301	56%
Child Season Pass Price	\$150.00	\$252	60%
<b>Summary Financial Data</b>			
Profit (Loss) Before Tax	(\$78,816)	\$598,000	-13%
Operating Profit Margin	-80%	27.0%	
Profit (Loss) / Skier Visit	(\$5.98)	\$19.78	-30%
<b>Revenue Sources &amp; Analysis</b>			
Ticket Sales (including Season Passes)	\$90,764	\$1,628,000	6%
Lessons	\$2,876	\$137,000	2%
Food & Beverage	\$1,144	\$522,000	0%
Rentals	\$0	\$558,000	0%
Retail	\$3,195	\$88,000	4%
Tubing/Snowplay	\$0	\$305,000	0%
Misc. Operating Rev	\$0	\$38,000	0%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$97,979</b>	<b>\$3,276,000</b>	<b>3%</b>
Total Rev / Skier Visit	\$7.43	\$49.49	15%
Ticket Rev / Skier Visit	\$6.88	\$23.97	29%
Ticket Yield	36.2%	57.1%	63%
Lesson Rev / Skier Visit	\$0.22	\$2.02	11%
Food & Beverage / Skier Visit	\$0.09	\$7.68	1%
Rentals / Skier Visit	\$0.00	\$8.22	0%
Retail / Skier Visit	\$0.24	\$1.29	19%
Tubing/Snowplay/Skier Visit	\$0.00	\$4.49	0%
Misc. Operating Rev/Skier Visit	\$0.00	\$0.69	0%
Ticket Rev / Total Rev	92.6%	49.7%	
Lesson Rev / Total Rev	2.9%	4.2%	
Food & Beverage Rev / Total Rev	1.2%	15.9%	
Rental Rev / Total Rev	0.0%	17.0%	
Retail Rev / Total Rev	3.3%	2.7%	
Tubing Rev / Total Rev	0.0%	9.3%	
Misc. Operating Rev / Total Rev	0.0%	1.2%	
<b>Expenses &amp; Analysis</b>			
Cost of Goods Sold	\$1,315	\$231,000	1%
Direct labor	\$63,158	\$796,000	8%
Other Operating Expenses	\$112,322	\$990,000	11%
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$176,795</b>	<b>\$2,017,000</b>	<b>9%</b>
Total Expenses / Skier Visit	\$13.41	\$29.71	45%
Cost of Goods Sold / Skier Visit	\$0.10	\$3.40	3%
Other Op Expenses / Skier Visit	\$8.52	\$16.78	51%
Direct labor / Skier Visit	\$4.79	\$11.73	41%
Cost of Goods Sold / Total Expenses	0.7%	11.5%	
Direct labor / Total Expenses	35.7%	39.5%	

Source: Hickory Hills Management, NSAA

## SNOWMAKING AND GROOMING

Current snowmaking and grooming operations are lean and mean, yet offer an acceptable guest experience. However, expanded snowmaking capabilities would allow the ski area to open faster (and perhaps earlier), cover terrain expansions, and develop more terrain park features/areas.

The existing groomer has reached its life expectancy and will need to be replaced in the near future. A new groomer should offer terrain feature building capabilities.



Total revenue per skier visit is \$7.43 which represents 15% of the comps.

Food/Beverage, Lessons, Lockers, and Rentals are typically a significant revenue source for most ski area facilities. There are opportunities to capture this revenue.

Retail is not generally as lucrative as the sources above, but can provide a notable amount of revenue and often provides a higher level of convenience to the guest.

With an average season length of just 78 days, the obvious opportunity to significantly improve financial performance is to utilize the facility during the summer and, if possible, shoulder seasons.

Operating expenses are well managed at 9 to 12% of the comps. Direct labor is well managed at 8% of the comps.

## OBSERVATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A market assessment was undertaken to define local and regional market demographic profiles and visitation patterns, and to identify the existing amenities and attractions in the area. This information reveals a number of observations related to the potential opportunities for additional recreation at Hickory Hills. *The full Market Assessment report can be found in Appendix D.*



A SWOT ANALYSIS (STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS) CAN BE FOUND IN APPENDIX E.

## Population and Demographics

- Residents of Grand Traverse County represent the primary market for users of Hickory Hills. Projections indicate that the population of Grand Traverse County is anticipated to grow to 99,600 by the year 2020; a 14% increase from 2010-2012 population numbers. Residents of Grand Traverse County have a median household income of \$50,629.

*This suggests availability of time for leisure and recreation, as well as the means for local households to afford participation in some level of leisure and recreational activities.*

## Potential to Capture Visitors

- Summer in Northwest Michigan sees a significant influx of visitors from other parts of the state, as well as from out of state. In 2012, 3.3 million visitor trips were made to Traverse City; 1.3 million visitor parties came to Traverse City area specifically.

*Hickory Hills has the opportunity to capture some of these visitors from outside the region.*

## Visitor Activities and Reasons for Visit

- Top visitor activities in the Traverse City area are shopping, entertainment, dining, and sightseeing—suggesting a leisure-based visitor. Additionally, the primary reasons for visiting the Traverse City area were wineries, Sleeping Bear Dunes, visiting friends and relatives, outdoor recreation and sports, beach activities, and festivals and events.
- The Traverse City region has numerous scenic drives throughout the area, including wine tours, fall color driving tours, and motorcycle tours.

*While Hickory Hills has the opportunity to capture some of these visitors from outside the region, Hickory Hills is not currently part of the primary draw or primary set of activities for visitors.*

## The Competitive Marketplace

- Significant competition exists for Hickory Hills, both in the winter (nearby Mt. Holiday and Timberlee Hills, as well as Crystal Mountain and Boyne Mountain) and the summer (Sleeping Bear Dunes, water-based activities, the downtown waterfront, and a new zip line at Mt. Holiday).

*Future activities and programming at Hickory Hills must consider the competitive landscape, and complement rather than compete with other venues.*

## Complementary Parks and Recreation Use

- Grand Traverse County, Garfield Township, and the City of Traverse City offer a wide range of recreational activities and parkland types. However, it is apparent that current efforts to survey and better understand the needs and wants of the regional community are a critical next step to understand facilities, activities, programs, and events that serve the greater community.
- The City and Township have traditionally provided facilities, but not programming, for recreation. Whether or not this continues to be the case at Hickory Hills, the planning group needs to consider the types of programming that would be the best fit at the park.

*Opportunities might be available for Hickory Hills to fill a niche for summer activities and programming that is not currently being filled by other Parks and Recreation facilities.*

*The GT Regional Parks and Recreation Network suggested a regional solution to Hickory Hills as part of the GT County Recreation Master Plan*

## IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES

A master list of opportunities was developed from Community Survey #1 comments and the analysis of the site, ski area, and market.

The opportunities offer suggestions for site and facility improvements, activities, programs, and events for both winter and summer (summer includes spring, summer, and fall) at Hickory Hills.

An important part of the master plan process was consultation with all of Hickory Hills partner groups and the community regarding the long-term recreation and infrastructure plans. The master list of opportunities was presented to the community at a Public Open House and used as the framework for Community Survey #2.

## PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

A Public Open House was held on February 20, 2013 at the Government Center in Traverse City. There were over 125 attendees. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Present initial findings of the site analysis, ski area facilities and operations review, and market research
- Provide examples of possible multi-season uses and activities for public consideration
- Invite people to comment on their vision and ideas for future uses and activities at Hickory Hills

Presentation boards were arranged around the room for an Open House format. A presentation was then given summarizing the process, purpose, and suggested opportunities. This was followed by a community discussion about Hickory Hills. Participants were invited to complete the online survey and rank their support for the various improvements, activities, programs, and events.

### NOTES FROM HICKORY HILLS MASTER PLAN PUBLIC INPUT SESSION

- Remember the place is for the kids
- Enjoy, respect and preserve the historical feeling
- Improve the lifts, including poma lifts
- Expand cross country skiing
- Discussion about additional access; however the cul de sac gives a safe feeling
- Keep affordable
- Create a tubing and/or sledding hill
- Disk golf lanes have created good wide cross country ski trails; need more wide XC trails.
- Look at Hickory in the context of other parks; some proposed facilities may be more appropriate at other locations.
- Don't make decisions that are driven by money.
- Concern about over development
- Need traffic calming measures on Randolph
- Alternative access points to property.
- New lodge – look to community business donations of materials and labor.
- How do we pay for the improvements and operations?
- How do we not screw it up?
- Increase promotion for winter recreation, alpine skiing.
- Improve hiking and snowshoeing experience
- Develop glade skiing
- Linkage with TCAPS for after school programs and physical education
- Lack of rental skis is a problem
- Preserve natural features
- Ask the kids
- Change the age cohort stratification for the survey
- Create mountain bike trails and linkages with nearby recreation properties
- No parks break even or even generate revenue – why does Hickory have to?
- Don't wreck it.
- Expansion needs to meet objectives
- Economic impact study
- Expand terrain park features
- Dedicated person to market Hickory and provide leadership.



## WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY THINK?

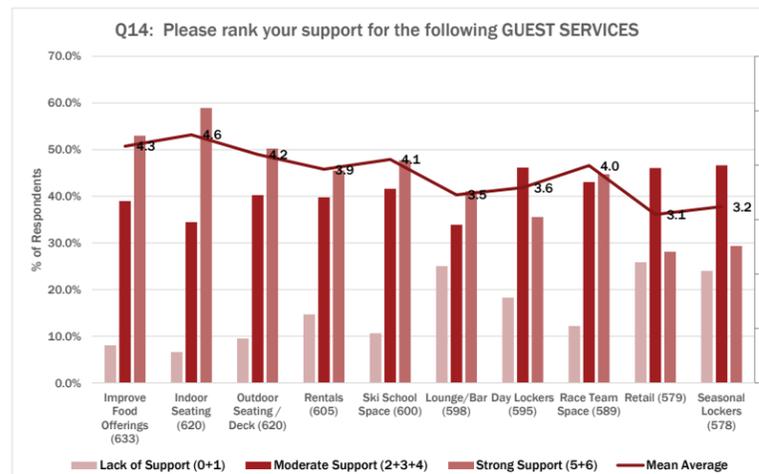
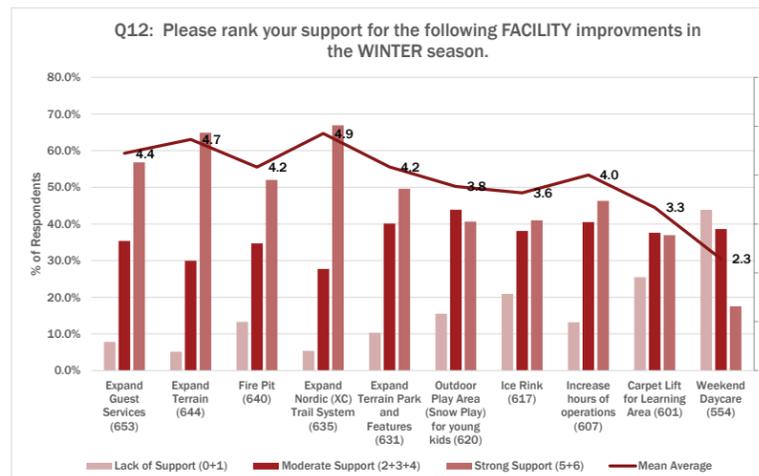
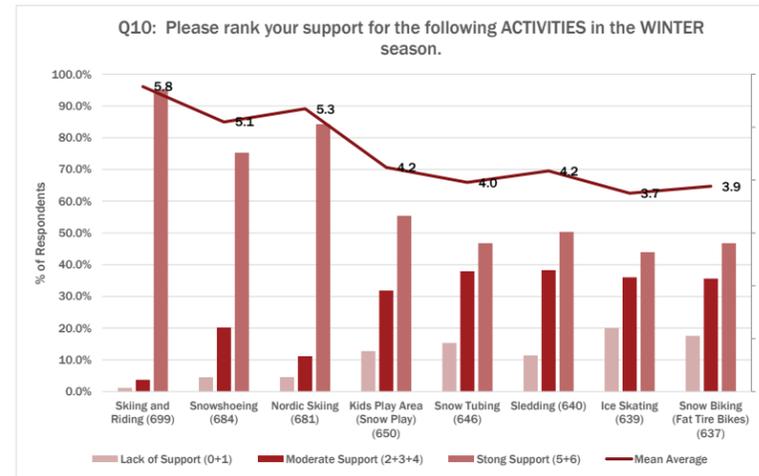
The Master Plan survey included questions related to both the improvement of the winter operation and the potential for adding summer activities. Participants were asked to rank their support for both winter and summer improvements, activities, programs and events that fit with their vision for the future of Hickory Hills. Write-in comments were also encouraged.

The survey provided a vehicle for capturing input from all community members, not just those who were able to attend the open house. Available on several websites, the survey was also advertised in the local paper, radio, and through flyers distributed by the Grand Traverse Ski Club.

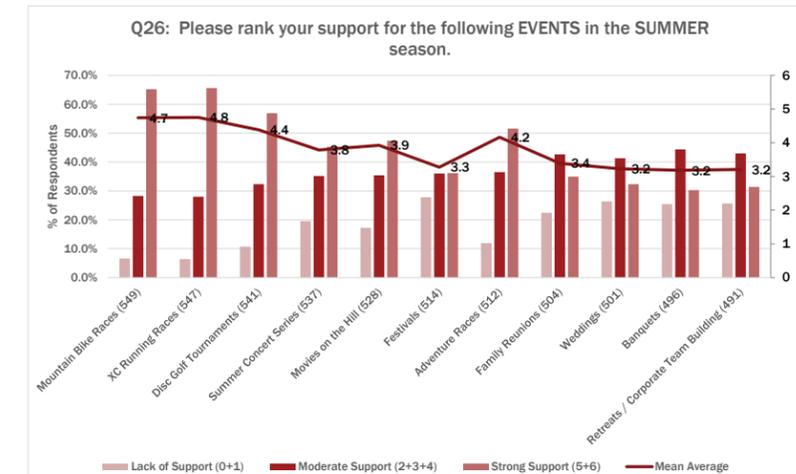
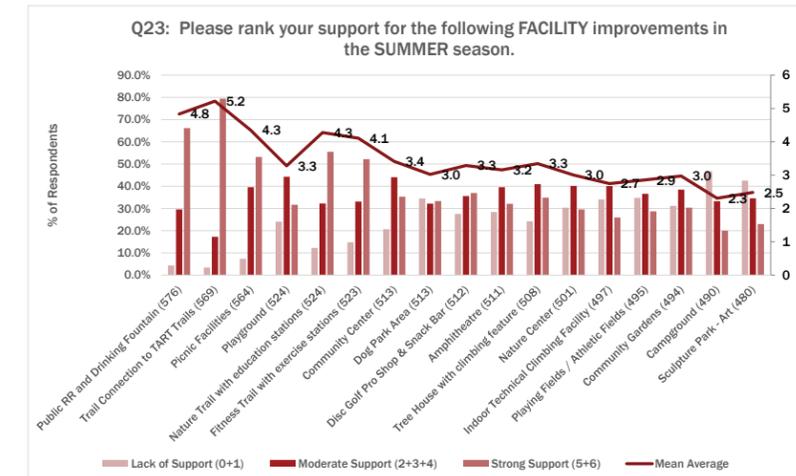
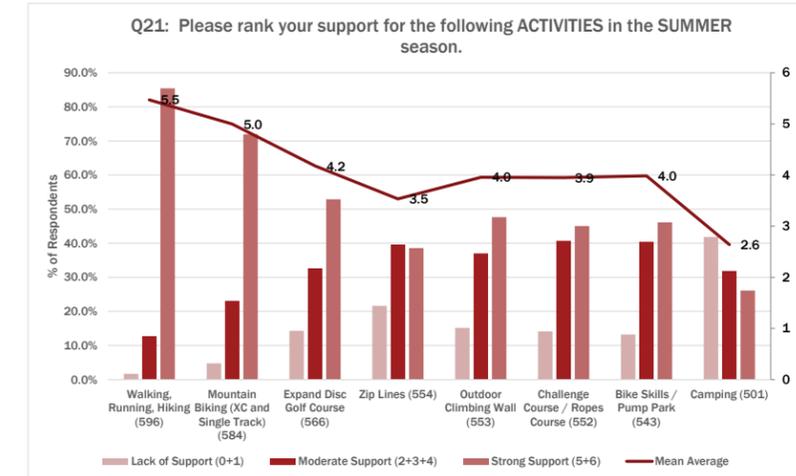
Over 900 individuals took part in all or a portion of the survey, with over 600 completing it in its entirety. Respondents included a mix of community residents: Traverse City (47%), Garfield Township (15.2%), Grand Traverse County (25.5%), and outside the surrounding region (12.3%).

The survey results have been utilized to gauge the level of community support for the proposed components of the master plan. The adjacent charts highlight some of the findings. A complete summary of the survey results may be found in Appendix F.

## WINTER RESULTS



## SUMMER RESULTS



## INTRODUCTION

The Master Plan concepts are derived from an in-depth understanding of the site conditions and facilities, operations (including financials), market conditions, and community input. Combined, this research and analysis has identified what is possible in the future, what the community supports, and what would work harmoniously with one another to stabilize Hickory Hill's longevity and financial landscape. Key points below summarize the findings:

- Ski area operations are efficient but limit opportunities for growth and revenue.
- Existing summer recreation focuses on walking, hiking, and disc golf. Parking along Randolph Street is a problem.
- Local and regional market demographic profiles and visitation patterns suggest Hickory Hills is not part of the primary draw or primary set of activities for visitors.
- Community interest and support exist for a broader diversity of recreational activities and programming that is not currently being filled by other Parks and Recreation facilities such as adventure and skill based activities and education and camp programs.

## HICKORY HILLS IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A COMMUNITY RESOURCE.

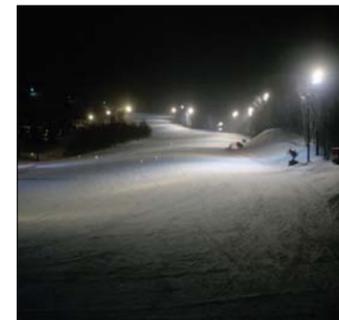
As a community resource, the Hickory Hills Master Plan must be focused on community interests.

### Members of the community:

- Are interested in both active and passive recreation-based activities at Hickory Hills, particularly winter recreation (skiing, riding, and walking trails), disc golf, and trail-based recreation (walking, hiking);
- Have a strong connection to the legacy of Hickory Hills as a community asset;
- Recognize the natural setting/beauty of Hickory Hills and support enhancement of the facility and recreation offerings;
- Feel very strongly that Hickory Hills maintain its natural beauty and not become a high-energy, amusement-oriented destination;
- Strongly support continued municipal funding for the park to keep the facility affordable for public use;
- Believe additional funding sources should be pursued to support park operations; and
- Would like a broader diversity in winter and summer offerings (facilities, programs, and events).

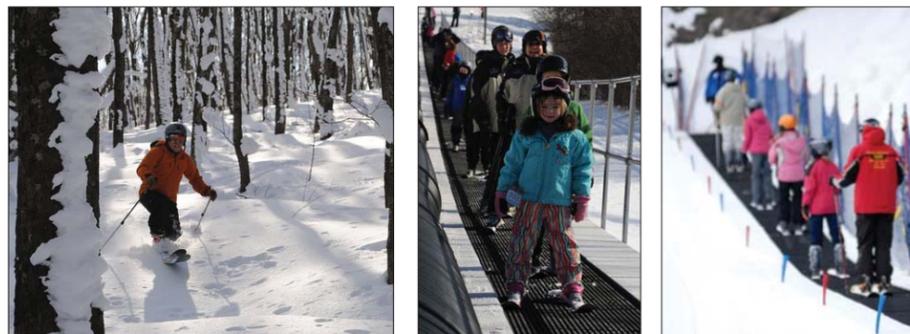
### As such, winter and summer operations will seek to:

- Preserve the natural character of Hickory Hills;
- Maintain and enhance the year-round community use of the facility and recreational offerings;
- Balance any potential tourism use with community vision and the need to provide additional revenue for continued financial viability of the operation; and
- Fit within the larger framework of community recreation facilities, providing unique programs and activities for area residents.





Terrain Park Features



Glade Skiing

Learning Carpets



Nordic Skiing



Snowplay Area



Fat Bike Festivals



Sledding & Tubing



The recommended opportunities for winter respond to the existing operational needs and opportunities. These opportunities include a number of improvements, activities, programs, and events at Hickory Hills. The components build upon the existing facilities, capture the interest and support of the community, and provide opportunity for increased utilization and revenue.

## SITE AND FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

- Improve Drop Off and Parking Area
  - » Drop Off Area (circulation and lighting)
  - » Improve Accessibility
  - » Entry at Randolph Street
  - » Gate Location
- Lodge and Guest Services
  - » Seating (indoor and outdoor with fire pit)
  - » Food/Beverage
  - » Rentals (skis, boards, Nordic, snowshoe, snowbikes)
  - » Ski School
  - » Lockers
  - » Retail
- Terrain Expansion
  - » Accessible Learning Terrain
  - » Terrain Parks/Freestyle
  - » Ski and Ride Terrain (Recreational)
  - » Glades
- New Lift
  - » Learning Carpet
- Nordic Terrain
  - » Expand Trail System
  - » Link to Hickory Meadows
  - » Groom for skate skiing
- Kids Play Space
- Improve Wayfinding
  - » Facility Signage
  - » Trail Signage for snowshoe and Nordic

## ACTIVITIES

- Skiing and Riding
- Nordic Skiing
- Sledding or Snow Tubing
- Snow Biking (Fat Tire Bikes)
- Snowshoeing

## PROGRAMS

- Learn to Ski/Ride Programs for all age groups
- Explore potential for programs that emphasize learning and development vs. competition
- Expand partnerships with School Districts and Youth Programs

## EVENTS

- Alpine Racing
- Winter Rail / Terrain Competition
- Nordic Races
- Snow Biking
- Après ski entertainment

## WINTER CONCEPT A

Concept A builds upon the existing ski area facilities and offers expansion opportunities that could be implemented in incremental steps. The facility improvements and recreational activities harness opportunities to attract residents and visitors and respond to the desires of the community. The end result would allow Hickory Hills to gradually work towards financial stability by improving the guest experience and increasing the per-ticket yield. Key elements include:

A. The Drop Off provides a turn-around with parallel parking for 12 to 15 cars and ADA parking. Walkways, seating, lighting, and landscaping improve the existing drop off area. This improvement would require significant site work and would not change the challenge of driving through the parking area to drop off.

B. The Lodge and Guest Services build upon the existing facilities and offer improvements to sequence, space needs, and functionality. The new facilities are modest in size (marking the low end of the space use requirements) and offer the ability for incremental improvements.

Although Concept A proposes to reuse the existing lodge location, it is assumed the existing building would be completely reconstructed as two-story lodge - with the intent to salvage some of the architectural elements, such as the fire place.

C. Terrain Expansion for skiers/riders including terrain park and features, learning terrain, recreational terrain, and glades. The terrain expansion is modest and allows for phased implementation.

D. New surface lifts are required to access the additional terrain. A carpet is recommended for the new learning area and a rope tow for the expanded terrain southwest of Buck. Additional personnel to operate the new lifts would be required, although discussion is ongoing as to techniques for dual monitoring of rope tows via video.

With the modest expansion of surface lifts and trails, the

overall capacity of the ski area would modestly increase allowing for potential visitation increase.

E. Snow Tubing with Warming Hut (seating, small food service, and restrooms). As an alternative to snow tubing, a small community sledding hill is located near the park entry. This area would have a pavilion area and be great for families who want to enjoy Hickory but do not ski/ride.

A sledding hill may be an activity to implement prior to snow tubing to better measure the communities interest in coming to hickory for a winter activity other than skiing/riding without expending the capital necessary for snow tubing.

F. The Nordic Trail network includes approximately 3.4 km of new trails for a total trail network length of 4.0 km. Integrating nordic trails with existing ski terrain during race events would comfortably accommodate a 5 km course.

G. Snowshoe trails could be expanded beyond the existing trail network today offering the entire Hickory Hills property for exploration.

At this point, the trail layout for Snowshoe and Nordic is conceptual. As design refinement continues, trail layouts should consider other networks/uses (walk, run, bike, disc golf) to avoid user conflicts.

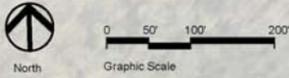
H. The park entry presents new signage and a modest parking area for visitors not interested in downhill skiing/riding.

I. The existing parking area remains in its general location with minor improvements including a few island dividers, signage, and designating a clear pedestrian route to the drop off.

*Note:* Locations and alignments of activities shown on the plan are conceptual with the goal of providing feasibility and establishing parameters for pricing. Further design refinement/development will be required for each individual improvement.

HICKORY HILLS SKI PARK  
& RECREATION AREA

CONCEPT A - WINTER PLAN



## WINTER CONCEPT B

Concept B takes a fresh look at the park and establishes a new center or “heart” for Hickory Hills. While utilizing the existing facilities, Concept B expands terrain, improves circulation, finds efficiency in the operations, and establishes an improved guest experience. Concept B also has the potential to build a stronger connection with Hickory Meadow due to the location of the facilities.

The facility improvements and recreational offerings take advantage of the site’s unique terrain, harness opportunities to attract residents and visitors, and respond to the desires of the community. The end result would allow Hickory Hills to gradually work towards financial stability by improving the guest experience and increasing the per-ticket yield. Key elements include:

- A. The Drop Off and Parking provide an intuitive arrival for the visitor. An entry road leads to a drop off and offers parking at a convenience. Walkways, seating, lighting, and landscaping present an arrival that allows families to find one another and new guests to feel welcome and comfortable.
- B. The New Lodge would house all guest services in one building including additional seating for tubing guests. The Lodge would be two-story and have views up the valley towards the learning terrain, terrain parks, and race terrain. The new lodge provides adequate space for all guests (marking the high end of the space use requirements) and includes a large outdoor deck to enjoy the afternoon sun.  
  
A benefit of Concept B is the existing lodge can remain in place; providing historical architectural nostalgia and serve as storage and/or warming hut.
- C. Terrain Expansion and Circulation for skiers/riders including terrain park and features, learning terrain, recreational terrain, and glades. Concept B offers the best of Hickory’s terrain and captures the circular circulation that will make Hickory feel big.

D. New surface lifts provide improved circulation and offer a new lift option—a platter tow. The platter tow takes guests out of the base area, offers new round trip ski/ride opportunities, and meets the requests of the community. A handle tow is recommended for the new learning area. No additional personnel are needed as the lift operations remain constant (no net increase in surface lifts).

With the surface lifts and terrain expansion, the overall capacity of the ski area would modestly increase allowing for potential visitation increase.

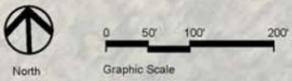
- E. Snow Tubing (warming hut would be shared use with the new lodge, increasing food and beverage sales). As an alternative to snow tubing, a small community sledding hill is located near the park entry. This area would have a pavilion area and be great for families who want to enjoy Hickory but do not ski/ride. A sledding hill may be an activity to implement prior to snow tubing to better measure the communities interest in coming to hickory for a winter activity other than skiing/riding without expending the capital necessary for snow tubing.
- F. The Nordic Trail network includes approximately 3.4 km of new trails for a total trail network length of 4.0 km. Integrating nordic trails with existing ski terrain during race events would comfortably accommodate a 5 km course.
- G. Snowshoe trails could be expanded beyond the existing trail network today.

At this point, the trail layout for Snowshoe and Nordic is conceptual. As design refinement continues, trail layouts should consider other networks/uses (walk, run, bike, disc golf) to avoid user conflicts.

*Note:* Locations and alignments of activities shown on the plan are conceptual with the goal of providing feasibility and establishing parameters for pricing. Further design refinement/development will be required for each individual improvement.

HICKORY HILLS SKI PARK & RECREATION AREA

CONCEPT B - WINTER PLAN



- MAINTENANCE 3200 SF
- NEW LODGE, 7,190 SF (2 STORY) ALL GUEST SERVICES
- NEW DROP OFF (15) CARS AND BUS
- NEW PARKING AREA (155) SPACES
- HICKORY MEADOW
- PAVILION
- RELOCATED GATE
- NEW PARKING AREA, (40) SPACES
- RANDOLPH ST
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE



Outdoor Pavilion



Fitness Trail



Nature Trail with educational information



Aerial Challenge Course



Climbing Wall



Biking: Singletrack + XC Trails, Skills Parks, Pump Tracks

The recommended opportunities for Summer include a number of improvements, activities, programs, and events at Hickory Hills. The components build upon the existing facilities, capture the support of the community, and provide opportunity for increased utilization and revenue. Concept A and B - Summer Plan are included to correspond to the respective Winter Plan.

## SITE AND FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

The proposed site and facility improvements compliment the winter improvements and build upon the existing natural area character of Hickory Hills.

- Picnic Facilities (Pavilion, Tables, BBQ)
- Restrooms + Drinking Fountain
- Fitness or Exercise Trail with stations
- Nature Trail with educational information
- Trail Connections to TART & other local trails
- Wayfinding/Trail Signage

## ACTIVITIES

The proposed activities builds upon what exists at Hickory today and responds to the interests of the community. These activities will increase the utilization of Hickory Hills during the summer months, by both community members and visitors to the area.

- 27 Hole Disc Golf Course (expanding upon the award winning disc golf course; course adjustments necessary to accommodate trails and shared use of the park)
- Aerial Challenge Course (*important to serve all ability levels and have an area specific to youth. Refer to Appendix G for detailed description.*)
- Climbing Wall (*refer to Appendix G for detailed description*)
- Mountain Biking (*important to serve all ability levels*)
  - » XC and Singletrack Trails
  - » Pump Track and Skills Park (*refer to Appendix G for detailed description*)
- Walking, Hiking, and Trail Running

## PROGRAMS

Programming will increase the utilization of the activities and facilities at Hickory Hills, as well as provide an additional revenue stream for the operation. These programs may be utilized by members of the community and visitors to the area.

- Trail Running Series
- Scavenger Hunts/Orienteering for Kids
- Summer Camps for Kids & Outdoor Education Programs

## EVENTS

Hickory Hills has the ability to host group events and gatherings that would benefit from the unique activities and opportunities available at the park. Small race events could take advantage of the upgraded and expanded trails system. School field trips, family reunions, weddings, and other group events could take place in the lodge or out on the property. Other local youth groups could be targets for summer group activities that aren't available or less accessible elsewhere. It is important that any event at Hickory respect the neighborhood context and be responsive to concerns related to noise and traffic.

- XC Running Races
- Adventure Races
- Movies on the Hill
- Family Reunions
- Disc Golf Tournaments
- Summer Concert Series
- Weddings
- Banquets

*Note:* Locations and alignments of activities shown on the plan are conceptual with the goal of providing feasibility and establishing parameters for capital expenditures. Further design refinement/development will be required for each individual improvement.

HICKORY HILLS SKI PARK & RECREATION AREA

CONCEPT A - SUMMER PLAN

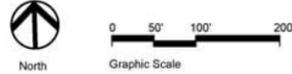


- LEGEND
- EXISTING DISC GOLF
  - PROPOSED/RELOCATED DISC GOLF
  - PRIMARY TRAIL (FITNESS, XC MTN BIKE, RUNNING)
  - SECONDARY TRAIL (SINGLE TRACK, HIKING)



HICKORY HILLS SKI PARK & RECREATION AREA

CONCEPT B - SUMMER PLAN



- LEGEND**
- EXISTING DISC GOLF
  - PROPOSED/RELOCATED DISC GOLF
  - PRIMARY TRAIL (FITNESS, XC MTN BIKE, RUNNING)
  - SECONDARY TRAIL (SINGLE TRACK, HIKING)



## OVERVIEW

The financial analysis was used throughout the duration of the planning process to gauge various opportunities and provide important financial input to the planning evaluation. Upon completion of the planning process, the financial model was further refined to begin assessing the overall potential performance of the planned projects.

Subsequently, the model was used to evaluate two possible planning concepts. It was determined that both Concept A and Concept B should be taken through the evaluation and presented in the final analysis. A final iteration of the financial analysis was created for both concepts to determine the anticipated financial performance of the master plan and proposed projects.

## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

As with all financial analyses and modeling, key inputs to the evaluation are frequently, and necessarily, based upon informed assumptions and the establishment of key parameters. For the preparation of this analysis, SE Group utilized its proprietary industry database to determine each necessary input. Examples of this include: capital costing requirements for planned projects, anticipated operating expenses, evaluation of revenue potential, etc. In the interest of conservatism, all assumptions were carefully evaluated to ensure that the model produced was real, accurate and conservatively biased toward understating anticipated revenue and over estimating operations expenses where possible.

In conjunction with the planning of new infrastructure and amenities, a conceptual estimate of anticipated capital expenditures was prepared for both concepts. This evaluation was derived from well-established costing for recently constructed projects, as well as in conjunction with facility and amenity manufacturers to ensure accuracy. Care was taken to include all anticipated and associated costs such as parking area improvements, wayfinding, and rental equipment.

Hickory Hills Master Plan - Capital Expenditures	
Concept A	
<b>New Facilities &amp; Infrastructure</b>	
Category	Total Cost
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
Upgrade to Existing Lodge	\$1,485,600
Lodge Utilities	\$50,000
Parking Drop-Off Improvements	\$278,239
Maintenance/Storage Building	\$112,000
Snowmaking	\$289,000
Grooming	\$120,000
Ski Terrain Expansion	\$89,715
Ski Terrain Lighting	\$25,299
Lift Expansion	\$120,000
Play Space for Kids	\$7,000
Nordic Trails	\$64,500
Wayfinding	\$10,000
Picnic Area	\$49,610
MTB Trails	\$65,000
Fitness Stations	\$24,000
Nordic/Snowshoe Rentals	\$20,000
Alpine Rental Equipment	\$50,000
<b>Infrastructure Total</b>	<b>\$2,859,963</b>
<b>Activities</b>	
Tubing	\$983,000
Sledding	\$7,000
Climbing Wall	\$80,000
Challenge Course/Ropes Course	\$350,000
<b>Activities Total</b>	<b>\$1,420,000</b>
<b>Total Improvements</b>	<b>\$4,279,963</b>

Hickory Hills Master Plan - Capital Expenditures	
Concept B	
<b>New Facilities &amp; Infrastructure</b>	
Category	Total Cost
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
New Lodge	\$1,857,500
Parking Drop-Off Improvements	\$433,092
Lodge Utilities	\$145,000
Maintenance/Storage Building	\$208,000
Snowmaking	\$327,500
Grooming	\$120,000
Ski Terrain Expansion	\$111,607
Ski Terrain Lighting	\$43,034
Lift Expansion	\$320,000
Play Space for Kids	\$7,000
Nordic Trails	\$64,500
Wayfinding	\$10,000
Picnic Area	\$49,610
MTB Trails	\$65,000
Fitness Stations	\$24,000
Nordic/Snowshoe Rentals	\$20,000
Alpine Rental Equipment	\$50,000
<b>Infrastructure Total</b>	<b>\$3,855,843</b>
<b>Activities</b>	
Tubing/Sledding	\$977,500
Sledding	\$7,000
Climbing Wall	\$80,000
Challenge Course/Ropes Course	\$350,000
<b>Activities Total</b>	<b>\$1,414,500</b>
<b>Total Improvements</b>	<b>\$5,270,343</b>

As detailed in tables above, total anticipated capital expenditures for Concept A and Concept B are approximately \$4.3 million and \$5.3 million, respectively. The key difference between the capital programs is primarily attributable to the construction of a new lodge under Concept B, which includes 1,220 square feet more guest service space than Concept A. Additionally, Concept B provides enhanced skiing and terrain opportunities, which would improve the overall appeal and enjoyment of the facility but demand more capital. Development of the planned tubing facility is essentially the same under both concepts.

While the total anticipated capital expenditures for Concept A and Concept B are approximately \$4.3 million and \$5.3 million, respectively, it should be noted that smaller projects requiring less capital could be phased and implemented to work towards the goals of master plan. The nordic and mountain bike trail systems, general park improvements, snowmaking upgrades, and terrain park expansion are examples of these smaller projects.

## POTENTIAL VISITATION

Potential visitation for the Hickory Hills Master Plan is determined by reconciling the capacities of each proposed activities against the potential “pool” of visitors in the marketplace. Capacity of each activity is calculated by factoring the physical hourly capacities and hours of operation by an expected utilization rate, which adjusts the capacity to reflect the reality that the activities will not always be used at full capacity (except, possibly, during peak periods). As depicted in tables presented here, selected utilization rates were input very conservatively and range from only 10% to no more than 20%. Utilization rates and the physical capacity of the activity are disproportionate—with low utilization anticipated on high throughput activities, and vice versa.

The potential “pool” of visitors is determined by data gained through the market assessment, (refer to Appendix D), industry knowledge of similar municipal/non-profit ski areas, and existing skier visitation at Hickory Hills. The market assessment identified that over 3 million visitor trips were made to Traverse City in 2012. In conjunction, the population of the Traverse City Micropolitan area is approximately 143,000 and is expected to see continued growth. The annual skier visits to Hickory Hills is approximately 12,500 (or 8.7% of TC Micropolitan area). This combined volume is significant, and a small capture rate of less than 1% (i.e., less than 1% of the entire market will come to Hickory Hills once a winter/summer) will support the visitation projections utilized in the Master Plan.

As part of this portion of the analysis, Hickory Hills annual skier visitation was further evaluated. Presently averaging approximately 12,500 skier visits per year, utilization of the facility is approximately 40% of comfortable carrying capacity (hill capacity x operating days). For both concepts, it is assumed that modest improvements to winter skier visitation may be achieved in conjunction with the planned improvements. Concept A has been modeled at 45% or 15,120 visits while Concept B—with improved skiing terrain—has been depicted at 48% or roughly 16,128 visits. These projected utilizations are within ski industry performance standards.

Hickory Hills Master Plan - Potential Visitation

### Concept A

	Activity			Annual Skier Visits
	Challenge Course	Climbing Wall	Tubing	
Capacity at One Time	45	6	250	420
Ave Length of Visit (hours)	1.5	0.25	2	
Ave Hourly Visitation	30	24	125	
Hours of Operation	8	8	6	
Daily Visitation Potential	240	192	750	33,600
Daily Utilization (%)	10%	12%	20%	45%
Adjusted Daily Potential Utilization	24	23	150	
Planned Operating Days	100	100	80	80
Visitation Potential	2,400	2,304	12,000	15,120

Hickory Hills Master Plan - Potential Visitation

### Concept B

	Activity			Annual Skier Visits
	Challenge Course	Climbing Wall	Tubing	
Capacity at One Time	45	6	250	420
Ave Length of Visit (hours)	1.5	0.25	2	
Ave Hourly Visitation	30	24	125	
Hours of Operation	8	8	6	
Daily Visitation Potential	240	192	750	33,600
Daily Utilization (%)	10%	12%	20%	48%
Adjusted Daily Potential Utilization	24	23	150	
Planned Operating Days	100	100	80	80
Visitation Potential	2,400	2,304	12,000	16,128

## REVENUE POTENTIAL

Estimates of projected revenue are the product of anticipated visitation and the expected price of each activity. Amenity pricing was carefully developed accounting for local and regional pricing for similar opportunities as well as based on current pricing at ski areas nationwide. Revenue has been conservatively calculated by assuming activity price points on the low end of available data ranges. The revenue and expense tables presented here detail the anticipated pricing by amenity/activity, as well as the operations and maintenance expenses (detailed in the following section). The product of these inputs yields the expected revenue. Increased annual revenue from the planned activities and improvements would be approximately \$715,000 for Concept A and roughly \$821,500 for Concept B. The key difference in the revenue capabilities of the two concepts lies in Concept B's ability to provide a full food and beverage option to visitors to the tubing operation, while Concept A would have a warming facility with simple pre-packaged food items available.

## OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE EXPENSES

To fully assess the performance of the planned augmented operations, an estimate of associated operations and maintenance expenses was prepared. This portion of the analysis includes and accounts for all of the anticipated expenses associated with each of the individual planned activities/amenities. This portion of the analysis was achieved by using typical operations and maintenance expenses which SE Group has developed through the course of the evaluation of similar projects both regionally and nationally. Expenses were calculated and expressed as a percentage of revenue with a range from 20 to 60% depending upon the amenity/activity considered. As an example, food and beverage operations require high levels of labor, as well as include a cost of goods sold component; therefore having a relatively high operating expense (included here at 55 to 60% of revenue). Whereas the simplicity of an amenity such as the planned challenge course has a much lower cost of operation (roughly 20% of revenue). As depicted in the revenue and expense tables above, operations and maintenance expenses (which include labor) are anticipated to be approximately \$325,000 and \$380,000 for Concept A and Concept B, respectively.

Hickory Hills Master Plan - Revenue Potential							
Concept A							
Activity/Revenue Outlet	Annual Visits	Revenue Per Visit	Anticipated Revenue	Typical O&M Expenses % of Rev	Typical O&M Expenses	Anticipated Net Revenue	Net Revenue Margin
Tubing	12,000	\$18.00	\$216,000	45%	\$97,200	\$118,800	55%
Climbing Wall	2,304	\$12.00	\$27,648	45%	\$12,442	\$15,206	55%
Challenge Course/Ropes Course	2,400	\$45.00	\$108,000	20%	\$21,600	\$86,400	80%
Winter F&B - Skiers	15,120	\$4.00	\$60,480	55%	\$33,264	\$27,216	45%
Winter F&B - Tubing Guests	12,000	\$1.50	\$18,000	55%	\$9,900	\$8,100	45%
Winter Rental	15,120	\$3.50	\$52,920	45%	\$23,814	\$29,106	55%
Winter Retail	15,120	\$1.00	\$15,120	60%	\$9,072	\$6,048	40%
Summer F&B Opportunity	3,136	\$4.00	\$12,544	55%	\$6,899	\$5,645	45%
Summer Wedding Opportunity	1,400	\$120.00	\$168,000	60%	\$100,800	\$67,200	40%
Special Events F&B	1,575	\$12.00	\$18,900	55%	\$10,395	\$8,505	45%
Incremental Increase in Nordic Track Fees	30	\$8.00	\$240			\$240	
Incremental Increase in Winter Lift Revenue	2,520	\$6.88	\$17,338			\$17,338	
Subtotal					\$325,386	\$389,804	
Debt Service					\$284,859		
			\$715,190		610,245	\$104,945	
Current Winter Operations Annual Subsidy From CTC						\$100,000	
Net Change in Operating Income						\$4,945	

Hickory Hills Master Plan - Revenue Potential							
Concept B							
Activity/Revenue Outlet	Annual Visits	Revenue Per Visit	Anticipated Revenue	Typical O&M Expenses % of Rev	Typical O&M Expenses	Anticipated Net Revenue	Net Revenue Margin
Tubing	12,000	\$18.00	\$216,000	45%	\$97,200	\$118,800	55%
Climbing Wall	2,304	\$12.00	\$27,648	45%	\$12,442	\$15,206	55%
Challenge Course/Ropes Course	2,400	\$45.00	\$108,000	20%	\$21,600	\$86,400	80%
Winter F&B - Skiers	16,128	\$4.00	\$64,512	55%	\$35,482	\$29,030	45%
Winter F&B - Tubing Guests	12,000	\$4.00	\$48,000	55%	\$26,400	\$21,600	45%
Winter Rental	16,128	\$4.50	\$72,576	45%	\$32,659	\$39,917	55%
Winter Retail	16,128	\$1.00	\$16,128	60%	\$9,677	\$6,451	40%
Summer F&B Opportunity	3,136	\$4.00	\$12,544	55%	\$6,899	\$5,645	45%
Summer Wedding Opportunity	1,750	\$120.00	\$210,000	60%	\$126,000	\$84,000	40%
Special Events F&B	1,800	\$12.00	\$21,600	55%	\$11,880	\$9,720	45%
Incremental Increase in Nordic Track Fees	30	\$8.00	\$240			\$240	\$1
Incremental Increase in Winter Lift Revenue	3,528	\$6.88	\$24,273			\$24,273	
Subtotal					\$380,238	\$441,282	
Debt Service					\$312,853		
			\$821,521		693,092	\$128,429	
Current Winter Operations Annual Subsidy From CTC						\$100,000	
Net Change in Operating Income						\$28,429	

Note 1: The model does not provide for concessioning or the fees (ie: profit sharing) which would be associated with concessioned operations. It is assumed that the owner of the facility would operate the amenities.

Note 2: The Winter F&B revenue per visit does not include alcohol. Alcohol is included in all Summer F&B opportunities.

## NET REVENUE

As additionally depicted in the revenue and expense tables, total net revenue (before debt service) is projected to be approximately \$390,000 for Concept A and roughly \$441,000 for Concept B. These values represent a substantial improvement (and opportunity) in the performance of the facility as a whole. The improved operating income would allow for the service of the majority of the incurred debt, as well as the compensation of the average annual subsidy (+/- \$100,000) being provided to the operation each year by the City of Traverse City.

## SOURCE OF CAPITAL AND DEBT SERVICE

In exploring various origins for the capital necessary to fund the planned improvements, several options were evaluated. For an operating municipality, bonding is a logical opportunity. However, were the full capital requirement (\$4.3 to \$5.3 million) to be bonded, even at attractive terms, the debt service would outpace the improved net operating income. Based on the results of the initial pro forma (which, as described, is an approximation of the anticipated financial performance of the project), the planned improvements would provide a substantially improved net operating income in the future, understanding the initial capital investment must be accommodated to realize these results.

Through discussions with the Hickory Hills Advisory Team, the question was presented: “if not all of the obligation, then what level of debt could the improvements and associated operating income support (including the accommodation of the current annual \$100,000 subsidy from the city) and still provide a break-even for the overall operation moving forward”? By way of the financial model, this question was evaluated and tested.

- Concept A is capable of supporting approximately 74% of the necessary capital (\$3.1 million) while Concept B can support 66% of the capital requirement (\$3.4 million) while still providing an additional \$100,000 annually to cover the present subsidy by the City.
- The inverse of this analysis suggests that if the City and/or community, by various means, were to invest an initial \$1.1 million for Concept A, or \$1.8 million for Concept B, Hickory Hills as an overall enterprise could become self-sustaining and would further benefit from the planned improvements under the either of the concepts.

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary results of the financial analysis are captured in the preceding section and summarized here:

- *Taking the initial steps to improve and enhance the facility will result in both an enriched user experience and move the enterprise to a self-sustaining financial position.*
- *Both planning concepts have potential to provide substantially improved net operating income allowing the annual subsidy from the City to become unnecessary.*
- *The planned improvements and capital necessary to implement them cannot be fully supported from the operations—even if improved. Initial external capital will be required to initiate either of the programs. This external capital requirement is approximately 26% (\$1.1 million) for Concept A and 44% (\$1.8 million) for Concept B.*
- *During the period that the remaining capital would be served by bonding (assumed to be 15 years) the overall enterprise would operate at essentially a breakeven. Subsequent to the retirement of the bonded debt (year 16) the operation should become cash positive and provide the order of \$350,000 to \$400,000 in annual net operating income.*

## **The following recommendations build upon the process and the content of the Master Plan.**

### Get everyone on the same team

- Unify around a common vision and collaborate as partners towards the common goal.
- Forming a joint operating board between partners may offer opportunities for simple success.
- Harness community energy and volunteer efforts to move Hickory forward.

### Build momentum

- Before major capital is invested, the Hickory team should take some small steps and build momentum and measure results. These small steps include:
  - » Branding,
  - » Marketing/communication with the community,
  - » Fundraising, and
  - » Looking for additional partners.

### Continue Due Dilligence

- The Master Plan is complete but there is more due dilligence work to be done. Specific studies will help access future oportunties:
  - » Boundary Survey (particularly around the entry area)
  - » Building Assessment Report for Lodge (structural, infrastrucutre, and code)
  - » Environmental Resource documentations (wetlands, drainages)
- Continue to watch the regional market for summer activities and be in the mindset of compliment versus compete.

### Assess the Operations

- The City will need to decide if they want to operate Hickory Hills as a business or if they want to operate as a park.
- The operations can remain “affordable” to the public under a business model.

### Take Incremental Opportunities

- The Hickory Hills Master Plan provides an overall vision for the future of this important recreational area. Implementation of the Master Plan will be most effective if smaller projects requiring less capital are phased to work towards the overarching goal of master plan. The Nordic Skiing and Mountain Bike trail system, general park improvements, Snowmaking upgrades, and terrain park expansion are examples of these smaller projects.