



RECATHORITY

TRAVERSE CITY / GARFIELD TOWNSHIP

2026 5-Year Recreation Plan



RECAUTHORITY
TRAVERSE CITY / GARFIELD TOWNSHIP

**The City of Traverse City &
Charter Township of Garfield
Recreational Authority
2026 5-Year Recreation Plan**

January 2026 - December 2030



acknowledgments

This 5-year planning effort was sponsored by The City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority and administered by the Rec Authority Board of Directors.

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January 7, 2026



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executive summary

Renowned for its scenic views of Lake Michigan, pristine forests and rolling hills, the Grand Traverse region has built a strong sense of place around nature and recreation. In doing so, the area has drawn consistent four-season tourism, creating a vibrant downtown at the center of myriad opportunities for outdoor exploration.

In recent years, more people have chosen the area as their permanent residence. This has driven demand for development as housing, commercial buildings and additional infrastructure are needed to service a growing population. Though this development is ultimately necessary for a region experiencing growth, it also raises the importance of maintaining many of the natural and historic amenities that created the community's draw in the first place.

This 5-year Plan serves four key purposes. First, in order to apply for

funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), a recreation entity must have an approved 5-year plan on file with the State. Second, the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority* manages recreational properties that greatly contribute to the area's culture of outdoor recreation and intends to have future initiatives at these properties designed with public input included. Third, this Plan provides a framework to guide the Rec Authority's planning in conjunction with recreational planning in the City of Traverse City, Garfield Township and Grand Traverse County. Finally, the Rec Authority intends to use this Plan as a community-supported document to further promote the preservation of the cultural and natural assets that make the area a unique place where people want to live, work and play.

**Hereafter referred to as "the Rec Authority"*



introduction



The 2026 5-Year Parks and Recreation Plan serves as a guide and a decision-making document for future recreation facilities and programs. The Plan presents an inventory of existing facilities and programs managed by the Rec Authority and its community partners, as well as an evaluation of opportunities and needs. The Plan describes the existing properties managed by the joint authority, as well as the anticipated demand for additional or improved facilities and programs. The Plan also includes goals, objectives and a 5-Year Action Plan.

This 2026 5-Year Plan represents the second 5-year Parks and Recreation Plan completed by the Rec Authority. While the Rec Authority operates independently from the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield, this Plan was developed in consideration of the short- and long-term planning efforts of these two municipalities. The goals and action steps developed in this 5-year Plan are intended to complement the 5-year Parks and Recreation Plans and the Master Plans of both Traverse City and Garfield Township, while also considering the unique features of the properties managed by the Rec Authority. The Plan is also intended to enable the Rec Authority to apply for funding assistance from various agencies and to work toward implementing the documented recommendations. This Plan specifically provides for five years of grant eligibility with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR).



chapter 1.

community description

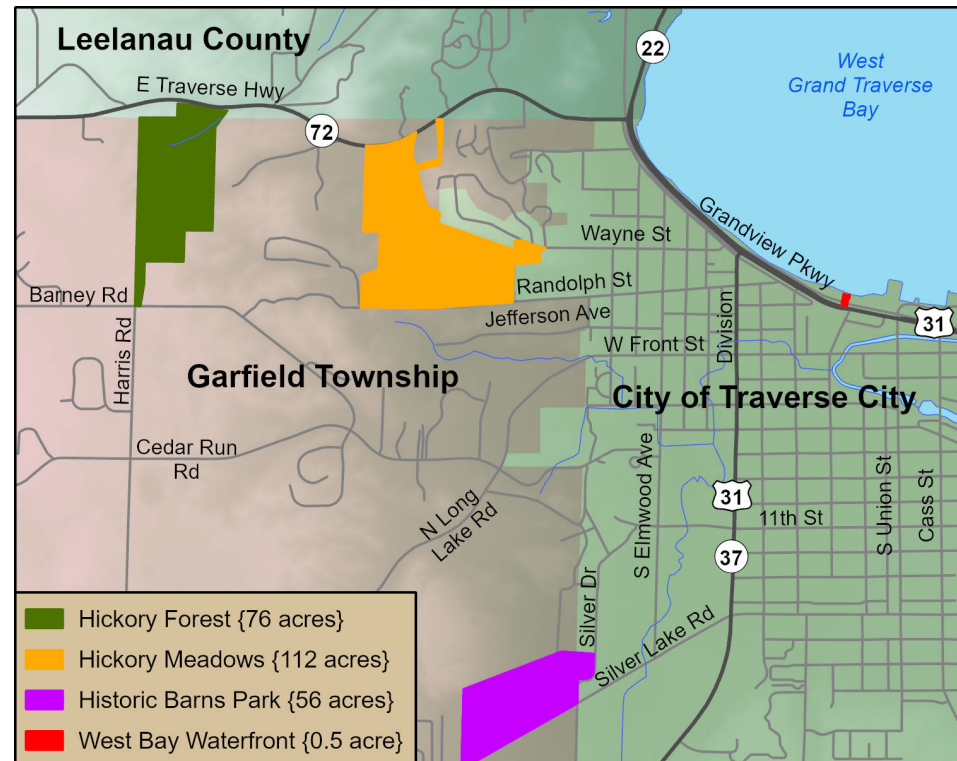
Traverse City and Garfield Township are contiguous municipalities in beautiful Grand Traverse County, located in Michigan's northwest Lower Peninsula. The community is set along the western arm of Lake Michigan's Grand Traverse Bay, making it a year-round destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

Traverse City and Garfield Township are bordered by Elmwood Township (Leelanau County) to the northwest; Long Lake Township and Green Lake Township to the west; Blair Township to the south; East Bay Township to the east; and Peninsula Township to the north.

The community is intersected by the US-31 highway system and is connected to the scenic M-22 state highway, which features picturesque views of Lake Michigan and connects to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

The greater community offers abundant programming and facilities for year-round outdoor recreation and opportunities to experience the local culture. Some of the best known events are the National Cherry Festival, the Bayshore Marathon, "The Iceman Cometh" mountain bike race, the M-22 Challenge, the North American Vasa Cross Country Ski Race and the Great Lakes Equestrian Festival. In addition, the area hosts various sporting events including sail boat races, boat and car shows, golf championships, disc golf tournaments, skiing events, running races and off-road bicycle events.

The four properties currently managed by the Rec Authority uniquely contribute to the area's outdoor recreation culture. This Plan details how these community assets can be preserved and improved in order to continue serving the area's residents as well as visitors.



Population

The Grande Traverse area has been growing in population steadily over the past 20 years. The City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield form the urban core of the Traverse City metropolitan area, with a total population in 2024 estimated at 156,634.

As more people choose the area as their permanent residence, the community has seen significant increases in median household income and median home value (see Table 2). The median age has remained relatively the same over the past 10 years. This consistency is likely a result of the age demographics the area has traditionally appealed to, a combination of lifelong residents, young professionals and retired workers.

While Traverse City has a relatively dense urban center, many of the nearby townships experiencing significant growth will see their built environment change and adapt to social, economic and environmental needs. As a growing population creates increased demand for recreational assets, the community will need to respond by planning for and maintaining recreational amenities.

Table 1.

	Grand Traverse County	City of Traverse City	Garfield Charter Township
2000 Total Population	77,654	14,760	13,840
2010 Total Population	86,986	14,705	16,256
2020 Total Population	95,238	15,678	19,499
2024 Population (Est.)	96,625	15,782	20,542

Table 2.

	Grand Traverse County	City of Traverse City	Garfield Charter Township
Median Household Income			
2020	\$61,467	\$61,056	\$47,053
2024	\$82,468	\$66,439	\$52,938
Median Home Value			
2020	\$197,981	\$224,676	\$180,795
2024	\$220,570	\$241,374	\$194,821
Median Age			
2010	41.3	40.9	42.9
2020	43.5	44.2	43.5
2024	43.8	44.9	43.8

Local Spending on Recreation

Tables 3 and 4 provide a snapshot of the extent to which area residents spend resources on recreational activities and goods. Table 3 shows how much area residents spend on recreation equipment using the Spending Potential Index (SPI). The SPI is household-based, and represents the amount spent for a product or service relative to a national average of 100. Based on this information, one can see that local spending on recreation equipment is close to national averages for nearly every category. In addition, Grand Traverse residents spend more on hunting and fishing equipment, while Traverse City residents spend more on bicycles.

Table 4 also uses the SPI. However, it additionally notes the total average spent per household on activities outside of the household. Grand Traverse residents spend about the same as national averages on entertainment, recreation and food away from home. A community that emphasizes strong connections between neighborhoods, parks, trails and the downtown places itself in a better position to leverage the economic benefits that come from a well-designed built environment.

Grand Traverse County households spend on average \$3,194.67 on entertainment/recreation and \$3,528.77 on food away from home. These averages are similar to national averages, which is impressive considering the largely rural character of Grand Traverse County.

The findings from Tables 3 and 4 are important for two main reasons. First, they demonstrate that the community is highly active in recreational activities based on household spending. Second, they highlight the importance of the Rec Authority's commitment to providing quality recreation opportunities. This commitment supports the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the community.

Table 3.

Spending Potential Index	Grand Traverse County	City of Traverse City	Garfield Charter Township
Exercise Equipment and Gear, Game Tables	99	96	80
Bicycles	96	102	79
Camping Equipment	68	98	79
Hunting and Fishing Equipment	101	96	77
Winter Sports Equipment	98	93	74
Water Sports Equipment	100	94	76

Table 4.

Consumer Spending, Average Spent	Grand Traverse County	City of Traverse City	Garfield Charter Township
Entertainment/Recreation	\$3,194.67 (98)	\$3,206.95 (98)	\$2,587.70 (79)
Food Away from Home	\$3,528.77 (96)	\$3,631.97(99)	\$2,927.84 (80)

Recreation Assets

Table 5 lists parks managed by the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield, respectively. This list does not include the many parks and recreation areas in the region that are operated at the federal, state or county level, nor those managed by other entities such as land conservancies and non-profits. The nearly 50 parks in Traverse City and Garfield Township serve a wide variety of interests and geographic areas. Grand Traverse County features parklands that range from major tourism destinations to small neighborhood parks. One goal for the Rec Authority is to help facilitate safe non-motorized connections between these local amenities and the properties the Recreation Authority manages.

Table 5.

	Parks	Acres	Primary Service Area
Traverse City Parks	American Legion Park	0.47	Downtown employees and residents
	Arbutus Court Park	0.13	Traverse Heights neighborhood
	Ashton Park	4.7	Slabtown neighborhood and Willow Hill School
	Boon Street Park	0.34	Traverse Heights neighborhood
	Brown Bridge Quiet Area	1,310	Entire region and tourists
	Bryant Park	3.32	Entire City, community and tourists
	Clancy Park	3	Orchard Heights neighborhood
	Clinch Park	6.72	Entire City, community and tourists
	Darrow Park	1.11	Slabtown neighborhood and tourists
	Dutmers Natural Area	1.61	Neighborhood
	East Bay Park	3.23	Entire City, community and tourists
	F & M Park	3.5	Boardman and Oak Park neighborhoods and community
	Fulton Park	9.19	Entire community and TART trail users
	Grand Traverse Commons	129.8	Entire region and tourists
	Hannah Park	2.29	Central neighborhood and community
	Hickory Hills	122.5	Entire region and tourists
	Highland Park	1.35	Local neighborhood
	Hull Park	6.4	Entire community
	Huron Hills Park	1.71	Local neighborhood

	Parks	Acres	Primary Service Area
Traverse City Parks	Indian Woods Park	0.62	Indian Woods neighborhood
	J. Smith Walkway	0.1	Downtown employees, shoppers and tourists
	Kayak Launch	0.7	Boardman Lake access
	Lay Park	0.79	Downtown employees, residents and tourists
	Meijer's Silverbrook Acres	58.89	Entire community
	Mini Park	0.3	Downtown and Boardman neighborhoods and tourists
	Oakwood Cemetery	65	Local neighborhood and community
	Open Space	7.19	Entire region and tourists
	Senior Center Beach	3.9	Entire community and tourists
	Slabtown Corner	2.24	Entire community and tourists
	Sunrise Peace Park	0.1	Local neighborhood
	Sunset Park	2.24	Entire community and tourists
	Triangle Park (Jupiter Gardens)	0.14	North Traverse Heights neighborhood and TART trail
	Union Street Dam Park	0.93	Entire community
	Veterans Memorial Park	1.01	Entire community
	Volleyball Courts (West End)	2.79	Entire region and tourists
	Wellington Street Plaza	0.07	Downtown employees, shoppers and tourists
	West End Beach	4.06	Entire region and tourists
Garfield Charter Township Parks	Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area	185	Entire region and tourists
	Boardman Valley Nature Preserve	125	Entire township and surrounding areas
	Silver Lake Recreation Area	85	Less than 3 miles
	Miller Creek Nature Reserve	94	Less than 3 miles
	Kids Creek Park	21	Less than 3 miles
	Hughes Drive Natural Area	9	Less than 1/2 mile
	River East Recreation Area	71	Entire township and surrounding areas



chapter 2.

administrative structure



The Rec Authority was formed in 2003 as a partnership between the citizens of Traverse City and Garfield Township "for the purpose of the acquisition, construction, operation, maintenance or improvement of public recreation centers, public parks, and public conference centers as may be acquired by the Authority or as may be transferred to it by a participating municipality." (Articles of Incorporation, adopted June 30, 2003).

In 2004, voters in both jurisdictions approved ballot measures for the Rec Authority to purchase and operate three properties as public parks, known today as Historic Barns Park, Hickory Meadows, and part of the Open Space on West Grand Traverse Bay. On November 3, 2020, voters approved a new 20-year operating millage for the Authority.

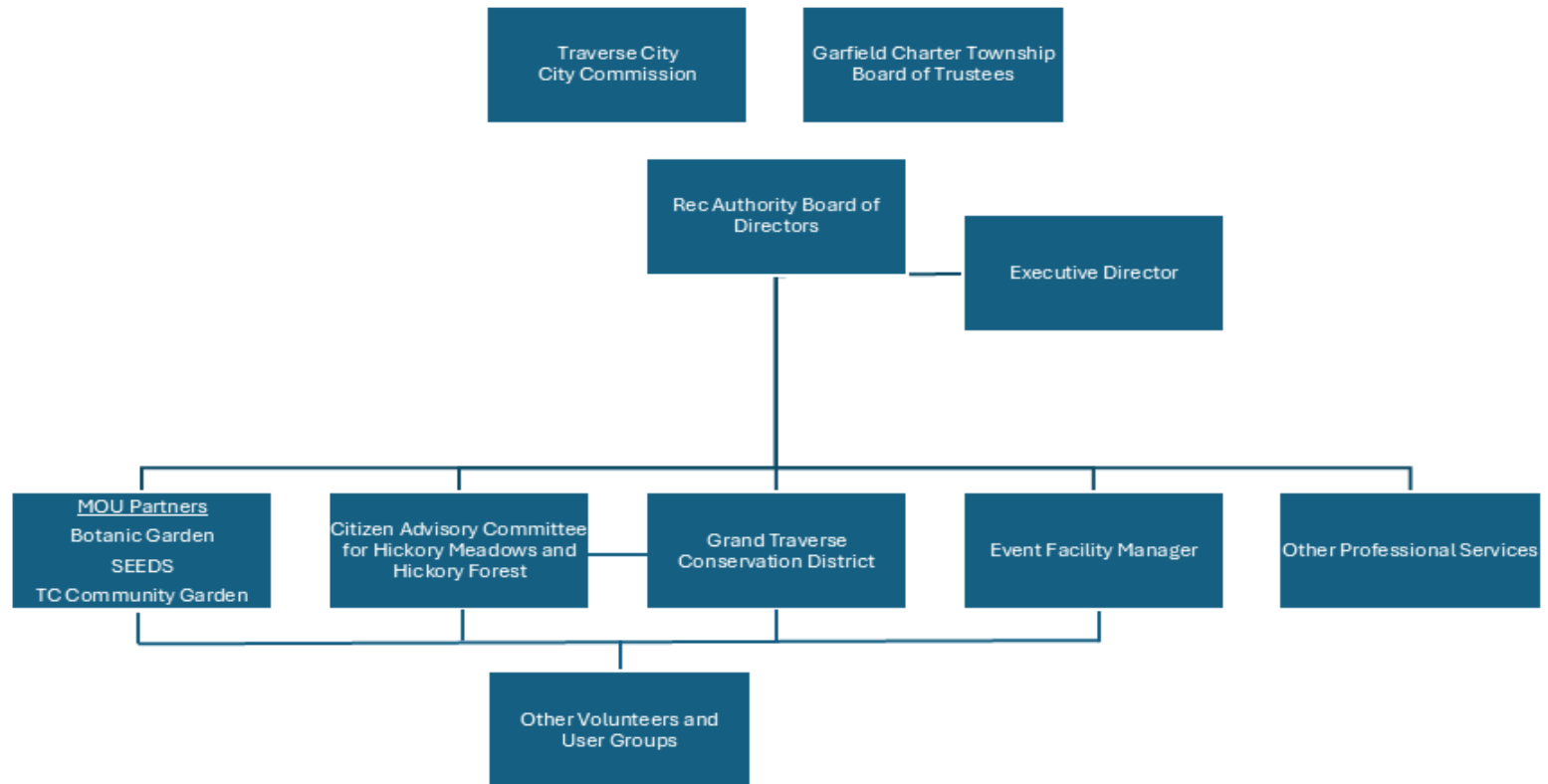
Creation of the Authority was provided for under the provisions of Michigan's Recreational Authorities Act (Public Act No. 321 of 2000). The Rec Authority is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors consisting of seven members; those members are appointed as follows:

- Three are appointed by the City Commission, with at least one of those three being an elected City Commissioner.
- Three are appointed by the Garfield Township Board of Trustees, with at least one of those three being an elected Garfield Township Trustee.
- One is appointed by the Board of Directors of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy.
- All board appointments are for three years, and expire 6/30.

Regular board meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. and alternate between the Garfield Township Hall (3848 Veterans Drive), the Governmental Center (400 Boardman Avenue), and Historic Barns Park (1500 Red Drive). Study sessions and special meetings are held as needed.

The seven-person board has the authority to commit funds for parks and recreation, accept grants, and purchase land on behalf of the multi-jurisdictional authority. The Rec Authority's organizational chart can be seen on the next page, along with descriptions of the community entities that the Authority has formed relationships with.

Recreational Authority Organizational Chart



Note: The City and Township appoint board members but do not provide direct oversight of the Rec Authority Board, except in special circumstances provided for in the Authority's Articles of Incorporation.



Partnering Organizations

The success of the Rec Authority could not have been possible without significant financial and energy investments from a variety of community partners, including non-profit management groups, the Grand Traverse Conservation District, and the Citizen Advisory Committee among many others. The following summarizes a few of the numerous initiatives undertaken by these partners:

The Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park

The non-profit Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park opened this public garden in 2014 and has generated considerable success, including restoration of an 1885 granary and an 1899 dairy barn as spaces for a visitor center, classrooms and events. Multiple impressive accessible gardens, with an emphasis on native plants and the roles of plants and gardens in health, are available for the public to enjoy at no charge, and additional gardens are under development. Since 2015, the Botanic Garden has averaged 30,000 visitors a year from all over the world.

The Botanic Garden has cultivated a mighty force of 300 volunteers who maintain the grounds, provide free daily tours from April through October, operate the Visitor Center and gift shop and, most importantly, offer dozens of classes and workshops for children and adults at little or no cost. The Garden's board of directors has raised over \$8 million in grants and donations which have been invested in capital improvements for The Garden and Historic Barns Park and, in turn, in the economic development of the region.

Citizen Advisory Committee & Grand Traverse Conservation District (GTCD)

Starting in 2006, these partners helped the Rec Authority develop a mission statement, goals, and management plans to guide long-term management of Hickory Meadows and Hickory Forest. These plans are based on public input as well as Floristic and Natural Features Inventories. Trail development and maintenance have been major areas of focus, including installation of an ADA crushed gravel pathway from the Randolph Street Trailhead to the Wayne Street Trailhead through grants from Grainger and the Traverse City Track Club Endowment. With leadership from the GTCD, Invasive Species Management Plans have also been developed. GTCD actively manages invasive species and fosters native trees, plants, and grasses. The GTCD and volunteers have also made improvements to a pond area, including installation of steps and benches.

TC Community Garden

TC Community Garden provides space at Historic Barns Park for over 250 members to grow produce and flowers for personal consumption. Its volunteers have led hundreds of hours of educational classes on sustainable gardening practices; donated more than 10,000 pounds of organic produce; invested nearly \$128,000 in infrastructure improvements to approximately 1.6 acres of management area including fencing, irrigation, hose hangers, and a green-roof shed; and invested immeasurable hours of sweat equity in daily maintenance and minor improvements.



SEEDS Ecology & Education Centers

SEEDS has hosted a Farmer Residency program at Historic Barns Park since 2010, providing encouragement and exposure to organic farming for the next generation.

SEEDS Energy & Environment staff authored the white paper, Historic Barns Park Conceptual Design for Energy Action Planning. This report offers a quantified road map of the top 10 Clean Energy strategies for the entire campus, including energy efficiency standards, renewable generation goals, and carbon sequestration technologies that would position the Park as a premier showcase of smart energy and carbon management technologies. SEEDS EcoCorps helped to install the Park's first solar array, a 2.5 kW system used to power irrigation pumps for the SEEDS Farm and TC Community Garden, and has now added a rooftop solar array.

Over the years, SEEDS staff and volunteers have introduced the Park to thousands of individuals. Focusing especially on learners age 6-26, SEEDS has offered regional community members well over 15,000 hours of on-the-job training, field trips, and events focused on ecological literacy, organic farming, green building, and clean energy.





Budget and Funding Mechanisms

Current Finances

No fees are charged to enter any of the parks; they are free and open to all visitors. The 2004 millage to purchase Historic Barns Park and two other properties was dedicated almost wholly to the costs associated with the property purchases themselves. Beyond funding the initial Barns stabilization project in 2005, the millage only provided the Recreational Authority with a very modest operating levy of 0.1 mill to be spread across all the Rec Authority properties. It has always been the intent that the Rec Authority would have to seek additional sources of funding to improve and maintain the three parks.

A facilities rental enterprise focused on the restored barns at Historic Barns Park has been developed as a source of self-generated funding, wherein fees are charged for special events, classes, etc.

A new operating millage 0.3 mill approved by voters in November of 2020 stabilized the Authority's operations through 2039. Beyond operations, revenues from the new millage were used to leverage grants to purchase an additional 76 acres of parkland, now known as Hickory Forest.

Table 6. Rec Authority Budget

	FY 21/22 actual	FY 22/23 actual	FY 23/24 actual	FY 24/25 budget	FY 24/25 projected	FY 25/26 budget
REVENUES						
property taxes	\$307,775	\$332,866	\$358,465	\$758,000	\$758,800	\$805,000
PPT reimbursement	9,673	9,985	24,028	-	10,751	-
interest income	212	3,093	10,549	15,000	8,800	8,000
grants and contributions	36,039	46,760	15,000	75,000	20,000	40,000
Barns Park rental revenues	158,616	127,865	77,165	80,000	40,000	60,000
other income	3,015	27,747	20,220	-	-	-
total revenues	515,330	548,316	505,427	928,000	838,351	913,000

	FY 21/22 actual	FY 22/23 actual	FY 23/24 actual	FY 24/25 budget	FY 24/25 projected	FY 25/26 budget
EXPENDITURES						
office expenses	1,124	1,097	660	2,000	1,400	2,000
professional services	181,571	203,653	208,672	251,200	200,000	252,600
insurance & bonds	3,487	4,103	4,933	6,000	5,974	8,000
facility/property expenses	68,207	64,184	68,953	145,100	74,000	148,600
transportation	123	-	2	500	-	500
capital outlay	61,229	279,403	146,310	875,000	179,100	595,900
debt service (bonds)	-	-	-	120,000	118,744	207,600
total expenditures	315,741	552,440	429,530	1,279,800	579,218	1,215,200

excess of revenues over/ (under) expenditures	199,589	(4,124)	75,897	(351,800)	259,133	(302,200)
beginning fund balance	350,142	549,731	545,607	621,505	621,505	880,638
ending fund balance	\$549,731	\$545,607	\$621,504	\$269,705	\$880,638	\$578,438
2025/26 millage rate	0.2883					



chapter 3.

history of the recreational authority

Two Decades of Service

The Rec Authority has enjoyed considerable success since its inception. Listed below is a summary of some of the key accomplishments by the Authority and its partners to date:

The Early Years: Setting the Stage (2003-2007)

2003: The City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority is officially incorporated in July. It is formed through joint action by the City and Township governments to investigate potential parkland preservation efforts in the two jurisdictions.

2004: After more than a year of research, public input, and grassroots campaigning, the Rec Authority completes a successful millage and capital bond campaign in November, supported by voters in both Traverse City and Garfield Township by a 3-to-1 margin. The campaign secures minimum funding for acquisition and permanent preservation of three properties: the former Smith-Barney property on West Grand Traverse Bay; the former Oleson farm, now Hickory Meadows; and the barns and surrounding property at the south end of the former State Psychiatric Hospital, now known as Historic Barns Park.

2005: Shortly after acquiring the West Bay Waterfront property, the Authority demolishes the Smith-Barney Building and completes environmental cleanup on the parcel. The parcel is the last link in what is now over one mile of contiguous public open space along beautiful West Bay in downtown Traverse City.

2005: An urgent stabilization project is undertaken at Historic Barns Park to preserve and protect the two largest buildings on the site, the majestic dairy barns known as the Cathedral Barn (c. 1934) and the Historic Barn (c. 1900). The project includes new roofing for both barns to stop leaks, ceiling insulation for the Cathedral Barn, the installation of a French drain to protect both foundations, and the installation of secure window coverings.

2005: Environmental work also begins at Historic Barns Park, with extensive testing of soils and buildings to determine any cleanup needs from the past farming operations of the State Hospital.

2005: A management plan is created for Hickory Meadows in cooperation with the Grand Traverse Conservation District (GTCD) and the Hickory Meadows Advisory Committee (HMAC), a volunteer citizen committee. Accomplishments in the early years include the addition of bridges, benches, trailheads, and informational kiosks to the property; the removal of trash and barbed wire; and efforts to control and remove invasive species.

2007: The Authority leads a comprehensive public input process titled “Brainstorming the Barns” to create a community vision for the Barns and surrounding property.

Bringing Back the Barns (2008-2013)

2008: Modern sewer and water infrastructure is brought to Historic Barns Park to ready the buildings for redevelopment.

2008: The Rec Authority solicits proposals from community organizations to help execute the public's vision at Historic Barns Park, leading to today's on-site partnerships with The Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park, SEEDS, and TC Community Garden.



2009: Modern electric and natural gas service is brought to Historic Barns Park to ready the buildings for redevelopment.

2009: A Master Site Plan is developed and adopted for Historic Barns Park that includes land allocations and guiding principles for the site based on the public vision. The new partners in the park enter into a formal Management Agreement with the Rec Authority.

2010: In line with the public vision for the site, a Business Plan is developed for Historic Barns Park centered on a facility rental enterprise based in the Cathedral Barn. The Business Plan also introduces the “Energy Farm” concept to the site, in which the Authority and its partners on the site will pursue energy efficiency and renewable energy demonstrations on the site.

2010: After years of planning, the Rec Authority launches a three-year capital fundraising campaign in cooperation with The Botanic Garden and the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation. The campaign sets a target of \$1.5 million for the initial phase of capital improvements at Historic Barns Park, with major goals of opening the Cathedral Barn to event use and the launch of the Botanic Garden Visitor Center in the old farm granary building.

2011: Through considerable public input and a contribution of \$130,000 from the Authority, the South Campus Entrance to the old State Hospital grounds is constructed and opened. The new roadway connects Franke Road to Silver Drive near the entrance of Historic Barns Park, improving public access to the park and immediately boosting use of the site.

2012: The first Energy Farm project, a geothermal heating and cooling field, is installed at Historic Barns Park. The project is largely funded by contributions from three utility providers, including Consumers Energy, Cherryland Electric Cooperative, and Traverse City Light and Power.

2012: In cooperation with the Grand Traverse County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, the Minervini Group (developers of the Village at Grand Traverse Commons) and several other stakeholders, the Authority secures \$200,000 in brownfield cleanup funds from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. The funding is used to begin the removal of lead paint and asbestos from buildings at Historic Barns Park, to demolish two obsolete structures, and to prepare the Pavilion and the Walled Garden structures for public use.

2013: In partnership with Garfield Township, a \$300,000 grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund helps to build a commuter trail across Historic Barns Park, filling a critical gap in pedestrian infrastructure and connecting Garfield Township's most populous neighborhoods with downtown Traverse City.

2013: On its second try, the Authority secures a \$200,000 Brownfield Cleanup Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to continue brownfield cleanup work at Historic Barns Park. This funding will pave the way for public reuse of the remaining buildings on the site.

2013: The Phase I Capital Campaign exceeds its goal and raises \$1.6 million for improvements at Historic Barns Park.



From Aspirations to Operations (2014-2020)

2014: These years kick off with a flurry of construction at Historic Barns Park, preparing the Cathedral Barn and the Botanic Garden Visitor Center for public use.

2015: The Rec Authority contracts with an event facility manager and the Cathedral Barn opens for events in February of 2015. Thanks to many donors and countless volunteer hours, the Barn has been transformed into a fiscally self-sufficient venue, which was a goal of the public vision for the building established in 2007. The Cathedral Barn has now hosted hundreds of events including weddings, fundraisers, festivals, proms, corporate retreats, corporate dinners, barn dances, concerts, annual meetings, event showcases, birthday celebrations, high school sports banquets, school band concerts and yoga classes. The venue has earned numerous awards, including 2016 Best New Wedding Venue from Michigan Meetings + Events Magazine and several Red Hot Best Wedding/Event Venue awards from MyNorth Magazine.

2016: Remaining environmental cleanup on all of the buildings is completed at Historic Barns Park.

2017: The Recreational Authority begins to look to its future, with its initial operating millage and bond debt both set to retire in 2024. In addition to strategic planning and branding efforts, user surveys and trail counters are instituted at Hickory Meadows. The Authority engages both the City and Township in contingency planning for the three parklands.

2018: The Authority works with the City on collaborative stormwater and wastewater plans for the redevelopment of the City-owned Hickory Hills Ski Area next to Hickory Meadows. Collaboration extends to winter grooming of multi-use trails at the Meadows.

2019: The Rec Authority completes a succession plan and long-term

agreements for continued recreational use of Rec Authority properties in the event that the Rec Authority were ever to cease operations (current operational millage expires in 2039). The City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield approved both the succession plan and long-term management agreements in May 2019.

2019: The Authority conducts its first major public visioning effort since 2007, seeking citizen input on the preferred future for the Rec Authority, its parklands and its projects, and the potential for a millage renewal.

2019: Spurred on by input from the public visioning process and in joint meetings with the City Commission and Township Board, the Authority was encouraged to do a better job of “telling its story” and existing in the public mind. As a first step, the Authority completed a brand identity to add to signage, publications, meeting materials, etc.

2020: The Rec Authority works with private landowners and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy to investigate ways to preserve an additional 76 acres of pristine forest next to Hickory Hills for public recreational use.

2020: After a decade of fundraising, planning and engineering, modern road and stormwater infrastructure is built at Historic Barns Park, dramatically improving universal access to the park and protections for the historic buildings from storm damage and recurring flooding.

2020: The Rec Authority places a new operating millage request on the ballot for the November 3, 2020 general election. The millage is intended to provide for 20 more years of Rec Authority operations and to provide matching dollars for the purchase and preservation of the new recreational property, tentatively dubbed Hickory Forest. Voters in both jurisdictions overwhelmingly approve the millage request, with 72 percent voting in favor.

Embarking on the Next 20 Years (2021-Present)

2021: Expanded winter trail grooming at Hickory Meadows dramatically expands four-season use of the parkland, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The snow-grooming effort is in partnership with the city-owned Hickory Hills Ski Area.

2021: Planning begins to work with the Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park on fundraising to redevelop part of a second large dairy barn, Barn 206, as an education center for the Garden.

2021: The Rec Authority submits its first 5-Year Recreation Plan to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

2021: The Rec Authority submits an acquisition grant application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to pursue the public purchase of the Hickory Forest property. The \$467,600 request is approved by the Trust Fund Board in December.

2022: To improve site safety and access, outdoor solar street lighting is installed throughout Historic Barns Park. The lighting is dark-sky compliant and represents another significant Energy Farm demonstration project at the park.

2022: Planning continues for the new Hickory Forest property. The acquisition grant is formally approved by the Michigan legislature in July.

2022: Capital planning begins to expand a universally accessible non-motorized pathway system throughout Historic Barns Park.

2022: The Rec Authority Board of Directors establishes the Ross Biederman Volunteer Service Award to recognize exemplary volunteer involvement with the Authority’s parklands on an annual basis. Biederman served as the board’s chair from 2003-2021 and is the award’s



first recipient.

2023: Capital planning continues, with an emphasis on an \$800,000 commitment in matching funds to support the Botanic Garden's fundraising effort to renovate the vacant Barn 206 at Historic Barns Park.

2023: Acquisition processes for Hickory Forest are completed in June, and a new public trail system is installed on the site that fall that is protective of the site's unique flora and topography. The trail system is designed by the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and built by a SEEDS EcoCorps crew.

2024: A paved, universally accessible trailhead and parking area is installed for Hickory Forest, and the park holds an official ribbon cutting in June.

2024: The Rec Authority issues bonds to partially fund the second major round of building renovations at Historic Barns Park, including work on the dairy barn and the installation of an elevator "silo" to serve both levels of both barns. Along with the Botanic Garden's fundraising, the total project investment is over \$5 million.

2025: Construction projects continue throughout the calendar year, including SEEDS's renovation of Building 223 at Historic Barns Park.

2025: The Authority works with the Botanic Garden and the Grand Traverse Conservation District to protect and restore the bluff at the West Bay Waterfront property with new plantings and the installation of a stone staircase for dramatically improved public access to the beach.

2025: The Rec Authority works throughout the year to update its 2021 Rec Plan, with a new plan to be submitted to the DNR no later than February 1, 2026.



chapter 4.

recreation assets inventory

Hickory Meadows

Hickory Meadows is a 112-acre parcel on the east side of the city-owned Hickory Hills ski area. Purchase of this property protected it from private development and preserved it as a popular destination for hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, bird watching and other passive recreational pursuits. A citizen volunteer Advisory Committee provides recommendations to the Rec Authority regarding the park's management.

The Hickory Meadows property originally contained upland forest and wooded swamp wetlands before European settlement. The vegetation was unspoiled until the mid-1800s when settlers began clearing the land. This clearing consisted of logging, burning of slash, and stump removal. Logging occurred in all areas of the property with any tree species of several inches in diameter or larger being harvested. This harvest included the removal of all trees in areas with level topography (in preparation

of agriculture) and most trees on sloped grades. Following this period of logging, the nonsloping areas were extensively used for traditional agriculture, which included grazing, crop cultivation, and orchard establishment. This led to, along with the removal of forest cover, an erosion and depletion of topsoil that in many areas can still be seen to this day. In addition, limited logging of some secondary-growth forest trees has occurred, most notably in the mesic hardwood forest areas.

Interpretation of aerial photographs and Plat maps show farmstead homes present as early as 1905. Historical records for Grand Traverse County shows the land, which includes the present-day Hickory Meadows property, was owned by several individuals. Plat maps from 1905 show that a T. A. Hitchcock owned a large parcel that included the lower half of the Hickory Meadows property (though only that portion which is found in present-day Garfield Township). The northern half of the Hickory Meadows property was contained in a parcel owned by the



Cherry Valley Fruit farm (Charles Manville, owner). The portion of the present-day property located within the current Traverse City city limits was owned (in 1905), separately, by G. W. McWethey, G. Pubus, and Anna Koenig. Aerial photograph interpretation reveals that the property was used for agriculture up until its purchase by the Rec Authority. Aerial photos from 1938, 1952, and 1971 all show the presence of orchards in various and changing locations within the presently defined field areas. In addition, stream channelization appears in photos from 1971 and an artificially constructed cattail marsh area appears in the 1952 and subsequent photos. Finally, vegetative cover has returned to many areas since the 1980s (LaCross, 2006).

Property Acquisition

In February of 2004, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy acquired an option from G.D.O. Investments for the Hickory Meadows property. As part of the option, G.D.O. Investments reserved a 25-year right to grow and harvest hay on the property in locations historically used for this purpose. However, the agricultural use is subordinate to public recreation.

In November of 2004 an Open Space and Natural Area Preservation Bond Proposal was passed by voters in Traverse City. This allowed the Recreational Authority to execute the option and acquire Hickory Meadows for public recreation.



Rules at Hickory Meadows

1. Camping and fires are prohibited at Hickory Meadows.
2. All trail users must stay on designated improved trails, and must respect any special access restrictions.
3. Off-road or other motorized vehicles shall be prohibited in Hickory Meadows except for directly authorized management purposes.
4. Dogs are permitted within Hickory Meadows, but must be kept on leash in accordance with local and state laws. Pet owners are required to clean up after their pets.
5. Hunting and trapping is not allowed on the property. Fishing is allowed in accordance with the laws of the State and the rules of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
6. No plants or other specimens are to be removed from Hickory Meadows unless authorized by management.
7. Littering is strictly forbidden. This includes dumping of yard waste and household trash.
8. No person shall damage, deface, or destroy any public owned property within Hickory Meadows.
9. Glass containers and alcoholic beverages are prohibited at Hickory Meadows.



Recreation Management at Hickory Meadows

User Groups

The grounds and trails of Hickory Meadows are intended to provide for those activities that are considered as “passive recreation.” Passive recreation, in this case, is defined as non-consumptive of the resource and non-organized. The opposite of passive is active recreation, which includes improvements such as soccer and baseball fields. Because Hickory Hills, adjacent to Hickory Meadows, offers a more active recreation experience, the Authority has historically sought to maintain the Hickory Meadows as a place of passive recreation. Typical users include:

- Hikers
- Nature Enthusiasts
- Trail Runners
- Dog Owners
- Mountain Bikers
- Cross Country Skiers

No fees will be assessed to individual users of Hickory Meadows. Fees may be charged for commercial or organized group use of the property. Motorized bike, ORV, and horse traffic is not allowed within Hickory Meadows unless required for management/maintenance activities. Paintball is also prohibited at Hickory Meadows.

In order to ensure that user needs are being met, it is important that the managers of Hickory Meadows stay abreast of the numbers and types of users on the property. The most recent survey of users was completed during the development of this Plan. This data should be periodically updated.

Current Trails

The current trail system is well established and winds through most of the cover types present on the property. There are three primary trails currently used at Hickory Meadows. The first runs from east to west across the large meadow, roughly paralleling Randolph Street at the southern end of the property. The second trail runs along the north edge of the pine plantation, then turns north and leads to the barn on M-72. There is also a loop trail that runs around the perimeter of the large meadow at the west end of the property.

Future Trail Construction

Future trail construction should be done in manner that minimizes environmental impact and disruption to user activities. If new trails become established by frequent visitor use, these new trails should either be blocked or properly marked and maintained to prevent erosion and provide a safe user experience.

Trail Surfaces

Trail surfaces at Hickory Meadows are designed first and foremost to limit erosion. Secondly, they are intended to be easily maintained and provide an enjoyable experience for all user groups. Woodchips are an easily renewable and inexpensive way to surface trails. Woodchips should be used where necessary to prevent erosion, and trail surfaces should be left “natural” when practical. However, when practical, ADA-compliant trails with improved surfaces should be constructed in order to make the property more accessible to those with limited mobility.

Adjacent Lands and Trail Considerations

Trail connections between Hickory Meadows, Hickory Hills and the new Hickory Forest Natural Area are desired by the public and will



need to be coordinated between the Authority, the City and the public. Continued collaboration with Traverse City Parks and Recreation will help ensure that recreational opportunities and management efficiencies are maximized.

It is possible that in the future the Hickory complex could be connected to other trail systems. These connections should be encouraged, as they will add valuable recreation opportunities for users. Partnerships with other organizations such as Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation (TART) Trails may help to support such efforts.

Trailheads and Parking

Parking areas and corresponding trailheads have been established at the following locations in Hickory Meadows.

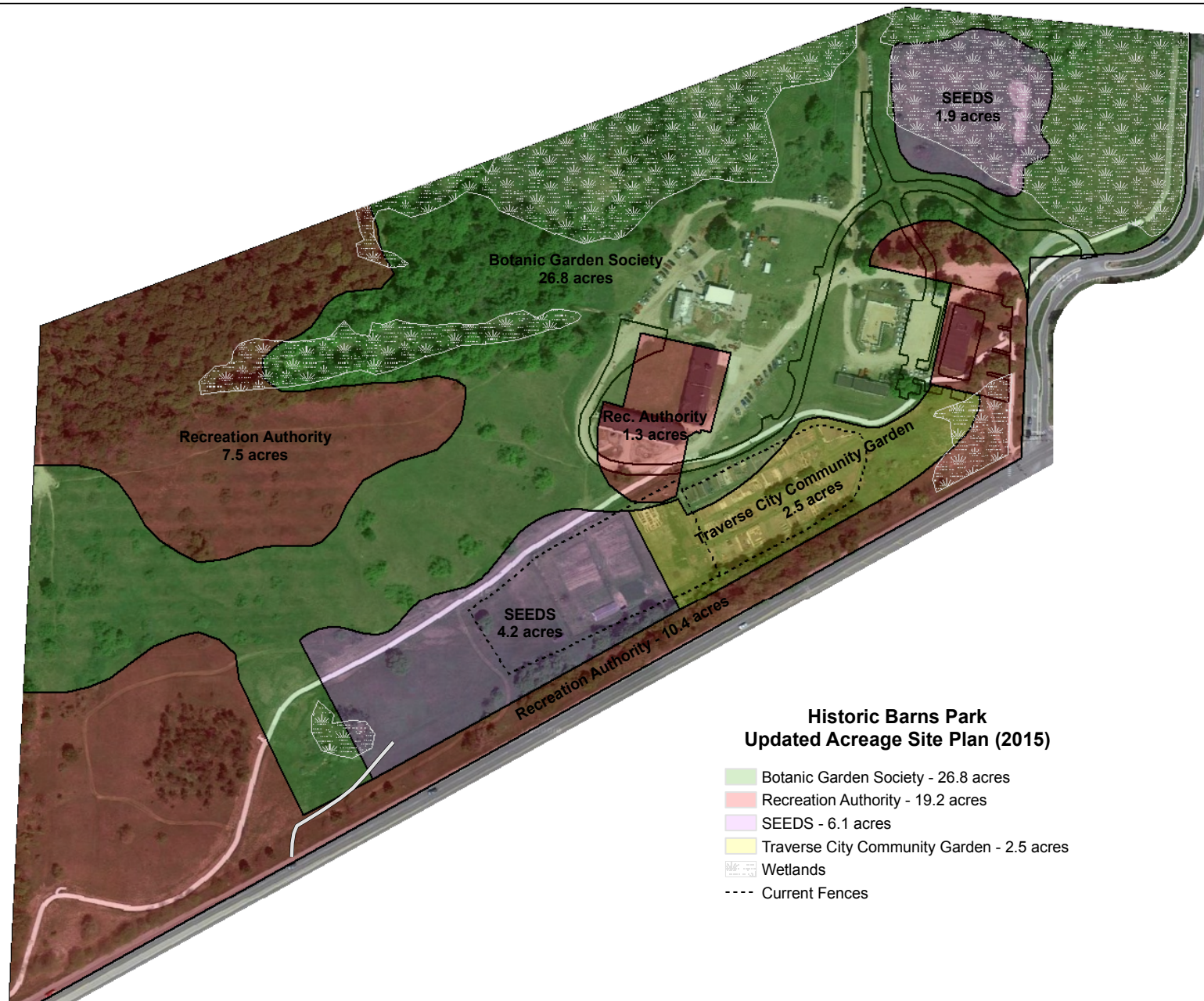
1. Randolph Street at the southwest corner of the property.
2. Wayne Street along the east side of the property (on-street parking only)
3. At the barn on M-72 on the north end of the property.

Each trailhead/parking area has a garbage bin, as well as an information station/kiosk. The parking areas are bordered by fencing or large rocks to clearly delineate their bounds and prevent vehicles from entering the Meadows.

Restrooms and Other Facilities

Restrooms installed by the City as part of the redevelopment of Hickory Hills are also available to users of Hickory Meadows. Portable facilities are maintained by the Rec Authority at the Randolph Street trailhead.





Historic Barns Park

Historic Barns Park is a 56-acre parcel at the southern end of the Grand Traverse Commons, once the heart of an extensive agricultural production area for the former Traverse City State Hospital. Guided by extensive public input, the park is being redeveloped as a public space to promote agriculture, arts, community events, recreation, and environmental sustainability with onsite partners including the Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park, TC Community Garden, and SEEDS. The majestic Cathedral Barn offers an event space for weddings and other public events, and the soon-renovated Historic Barn will become the Debra J. Edson Family Education Center for Botanic Garden use and programming.

Site History

In 2004, with the assistance of the Friends for Recreational Lands, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, the Traverse City Convention and Visitor's Bureau, Rotary Charities of Traverse City, the National Cherry Festival, the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce and the Biederman Foundation, voters in Traverse City and Garfield Charter Township overwhelmingly approved a millage request (by a 3 to 1 margin) to acquire three properties, including the 56 acres that now are known as Historic Barns Park.

The property had long been known as “the Barns” because of two large and beautiful structures — the Cathedral Barn and the Historic Barn — that form the centerpiece for rolling meadows, woodlots, wetlands, trails, and a cluster of other historic outbuildings. Located in the heart of northern Michigan's most heavily populated area, this urban park is only blocks away from downtown Traverse City. An island of green, Historic Barns Park is becoming the region's “Central Park” and a community touchstone for residents and visitors alike. The park adjoins the region's largest employer, Munson Medical Center, and is

nestled in one of the nation's largest historical redevelopment projects, the Grand Traverse Commons.

The Grand Traverse Commons is the site of the former Traverse City State Psychiatric Hospital, owned and operated by the State of Michigan to treat individuals with mental illness. Originally opened in 1885, the State Hospital housed 50,000 patients, hired 20,000 employees, and accepted 250,000 visitors before its closure in 1988. The Barns property was the agricultural production area for the State Hospital. Largely a self-sufficient community, almost 84,000 pounds of food and almost 103,000 pounds of milk were produced annually at its peak to feed 3,500 patients and staff.

The legacy of the old State Hospital and the agricultural heritage of the Barns area were driving factors behind the popularity of the 2004 millage. As part of the purchase, the Rec Authority promised to stabilize the Cathedral and Historic Barns, which had been falling into disrepair for years. The Barns stabilization was undertaken in August 2005 and included reroofing of both barns, repair and painting of masonry and woodwork, installation of a French drain to protect the foundations from water damage, and securing doors and windows against unauthorized entry. Vandalism was reduced with the improvements to the buildings and deterioration of the buildings was halted. The stabilization also included the installation of insulation on the roof of the Cathedral Barn, the largest of the two main structures. The insulation was added to the exterior of the roof under the shingles to preserve the beauty of the interior beams. Other early property improvements included the installation of electrical service (underground to preserve the natural character of the property), a sewer and water extension, and a gas line.

In 2007, several community meetings were held to gather public input on a vision for the Barns property. These sessions, called “Brainstorming the Barns,” provided the Rec Authority with four consistent themes for use of the property: Agriculture/Horticulture, Arts, Community



(community event centers, small festivals), and Recreation.

Based on the public vision articulated in the “Brainstorming the Barns” process, the Rec Authority developed a Master Site Plan for Historic Barns Park in 2008 and 2009. The Master Site Plan is used to guide principles, collaboration and the creation of a public park with activities on the property that encourage agriculture, art, community and recreation. These themes have become the guiding vision for the property, including the participation of community nonprofit organizations to aid in providing these experiences. Examples of current nonprofit partners are as follows:

The Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park (BGHBP), a nonprofit organization that has been working to create a regional botanic garden in northwest Michigan since 2000. Their goal is to build and maintain a public botanic garden that will enhance Historic Barns Park, creating a garden that is beautiful, accessible, sustainable and enjoyable. BGHBP voluntarily maintains many of the public grounds on the site and is working to raise funds for further development.

SEEDS Ecology & Education Centers, a nonprofit research, design and educational institution whose mission is to seek the development of socially and ecologically sustainable environments. SEEDS conducts agricultural projects, youth workforce training, and renewable energy projects at the park.

TC Community Garden is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide a place for members of the community to gather and share a common interest in organic gardening in an urban setting, provide educational opportunities to the community that foster an appreciation for sustainable growing practices, and grow fresh produce for charitable purposes. The Community Garden has more than 80 plots available for use at the park.

The Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, which served as fiduciary for a three-year, \$1.5 million joint capital fundraising campaign between the Recreational Authority and BGHBP. Completed in 2013, this campaign funded Phase I improvements to the Cathedral Barn and Botanic Garden. The Cathedral Barn received fire suppression,



restrooms, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, making it available for year-round public use. Completion of the first phase of the Botanic Garden provided the park with a visitors' center and classroom, a walled wildflower garden, and two display gardens.

These and other organizations are cooperating with the Rec Authority and with each other to improve the buildings and grounds of the park and provide educational and recreational opportunities to the community. These unique partnerships of public and non-profit institutions continue to reflect the broad community support for Historic Barns Park.

On the heels of the Master Site Plan and the formation of the capital campaign, the Rec Authority completed a four-year Business Plan. The plan guided the development of a facilities rental enterprise based around the Cathedral Barn and an adjoining outdoor amphitheater, as well as a unique "Energy Farm" component of innovative energy generation and conservation demonstrations on the site. The goal is to make the ongoing use and preservation of the Cathedral Barn financially self-sustaining. Uses include public events, concerts and other performances,

conferences, weddings and classes. The new Education Center in Barn 206 will add to the available indoor venues at the site.

Recreational uses of the park include hiking, biking, running, bird watching, skiing and snowshoeing.

Health Benefits

Historic Barns Park is a popular destination for recreational activities, especially as a hub for a network of recreational trails that traverse over 200 acres of adjacent natural lands. Garfield Township secured a 2011 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant to fill a prominent gap in our regional trail network with a commuter trail section through the park. The Master Site Plan places an emphasis on non-motorized access to the park, encouraging visitors to "get out of their cars" to enjoy the park. It is hoped that this "active" access model will promote healthful exercise in the park and help to preserve its rural nature in the midst of its urban setting.

An equally healthful emphasis has been placed on the programming

activities at the park. Sustainable use of our land, water, and energy resources is one of the prime challenges of the 21st century, one that is directly related to human health, welfare, and social equity. The Rec Authority requires that environmentally sustainable strategies be used in all activities on the site. Farming and gardening practices are based on organic methods and integrated pest management (IPM) strategies. Native trees, shrubs and perennials are being restored throughout the site for the support of indigenous insect and bird populations, as well as for the preservation and reintroduction of these species. Sustainable strategies are also being implemented for water and soil conservation on the site. As part of the Business Plan, an Energy Farm is slated for the site, both to help power the park with renewable/alternative energy and to serve as a public model to demonstrate these techniques and other energy-saving technologies. Prominent Energy Farm projects to date include a closed-loop geothermal system that heats and cools the Cathedral Barn and the Education Center, a solar array that powers the irrigation pump for the agricultural and community garden areas of the park, outdoor solar street-lighting fixtures, and a new rooftop solar array on Building 223.

Public Engagement

The Rec Authority has a long and consistent history of extensive public participation and engagement, beginning with its founding millage campaign in 2004. With the assistance of the Friends for Recreational Lands, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, the Traverse City Convention and Visitor's Bureau, Rotary Charities of Traverse City, the National Cherry Festival, the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce and the Biederman Foundation, voters in Traverse City and Garfield Charter Township overwhelmingly approved the Recreational Authority millage request by a 3 to 1 margin.

In 2007, the Recreational Authority held an intensive public engagement process to gather public input on the vision for the Barns property. This series of public meetings, called "Brainstorming the Barns," articulated





the public vision for the park and led to the development of a citizen-driven Master Site Plan for the Historic Barns Park. The Master Site Plan is a guide for carrying out the public's vision, including agriculture, art, community and recreational activities.

Progress and results of all Rec Authority projects are reported at monthly public meetings of the Rec Authority Board of Directors. Special meetings are also held as necessary. Meeting agendas, informational packets and approved minutes are posted on the Rec Authority website at www.recauthority.org. Press releases and paid advertising are used to publicize special events or processes.

Economic Benefits

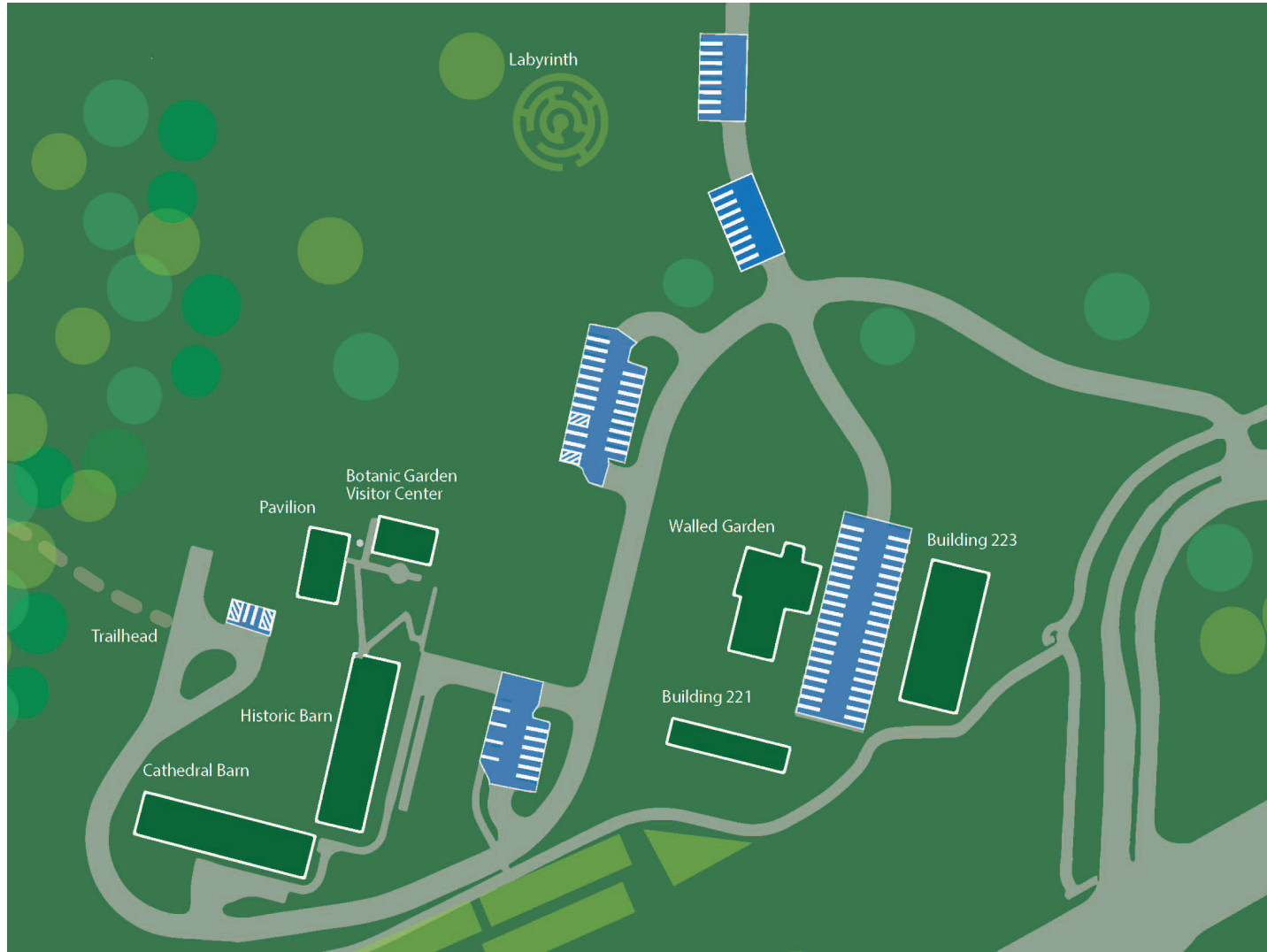
The goal of managing a facilities rental enterprise as an economic engine for the park is twofold. First, it helps to make the park itself more of a self-sufficient entity. It also serves as an economic engine for the region, drawing countless visitors from within and outside the area to enjoy the park's unique amenities and events.

Related benefits include all the advantages of having a world-class historic, recreational and educational retreat within walking distance of an urban center. From schools to senior centers, nearby users are able to attend a concert, stroll the gardens, and learn about the latest advances in energy and agriculture only minutes from their homes and offices. Visitors to the region get to experience something distinctly and uniquely of this place, and local businesses benefit from this increased activity.

Environmental Benefits

Historic Barns Park is adjacent to over 282 acres of protected parkland that straddles the municipal boundary of Traverse City and Garfield Charter Township. Historic Barns Park serves as a wildlife corridor between these parklands, home for deer, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and over 114 species of birds. The park provides ample opportunities for wildlife viewing and habitat protection in an otherwise urban setting.







Inventory of Buildings at Historic Barns Park

The defining centerpieces and namesakes of Historic Barns Park are two large old barns that were once part of the farming operations of the former Traverse City State Hospital (1885-1988). These and five other buildings remain on the site and are in various states of adaptive public reuse. Ownership is retained by the Rec Authority, though various structures have been placed under the management auspices of the nonprofit partners at the park as a way to share resources and expenses, as the renovation and upkeep of the buildings is the dominant expense on any of the Rec Authority properties. The vast majority of renovation work on the buildings to date has been accomplished through grants and fundraising by the Rec Authority and the partners. A building inventory follows.

Building 204, The Cathedral Barn – Constructed circa 1932, this is a massive two-story, wood-framed barn with brick walls and a stone and block foundation, approximately 5,750 square feet per floor. During its farming days, the upper level was used for hay storage and the lower level was used for young cattle stock, calving and milking. The open, soaring upper level is now used as an event space, the revenues from which support the operation and upkeep of the building itself. Utility services include electricity, water and sewer, and a closed-loop geothermal heating and cooling system. The building is currently undergoing partial renovation of its lower level, with the addition of a storage area. It is also being connected to a new elevator tower to provide universal access to both levels. This barn is under the direct management auspices of the Rec Authority.

Building 206, The Historic Barn – Constructed circa 1900. It is also a two-story, wood-framed building with brick walls and a stone and block foundation, approximately 5,700 square feet per floor. Like the Cathedral Barn, the upper level was used for hay storage and the lower level was used for cattle, calving and milking. Unlike the Cathedral Barn, a fire wall bisects the northern and southern halves of the building, which were built a few years apart. The building is currently being renovated for modern reuse and is also being connected to the same new elevator tower that will service the Cathedral Barn. The Botanic Garden will use the renovated space as the Debra J. Edson Family Education Center, complete with a demonstration kitchen, an event space, classrooms and offices.

Building 211, Botanic Garden Visitor Center – A former root cellar and granary that has been adapted for reuse as a Visitor Center by the Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park. The building consists of two levels, approximately 1,380 square feet per floor. The block walls and concrete floors date to 1951, though a stone foundation is much older. Utilities include electricity, water and sewer, HVAC, and phone/internet. The lower level now houses a gift shop and information center; the upper level is used as meeting and event space. The lower level is connected to the lower level of the Pavilion via an original tunnel built by the State Hospital.

Building 221, Wagon House – A one-story concrete block structure with a concrete floor and a small attic space, approximately 2,020 square feet in total. The 10 stalls in the building were used by the State Hospital as



storage for wagons and sleighs, originally built circa 1915. The building is under the management auspices of the Botanic Garden and is currently used as storage. The roof has been replaced with accommodations for a green roof and solar panels in the future. The building does not yet have utility services.

Building 222, Walled Garden – The 6,000 square-foot stone foundation of a former horse barn (constructed circa 1900) has been adapted by the Botanic Garden as a unique open-air walled garden feature.

Building 223, Blacksmith Shop – A one-story main floor (approximately 5,760 square feet) with a partial basement (approximately 1,440 square feet) constructed of block walls, a reinforced concrete frame, concrete floors and wood-framed roof. It was built circa 1920 to house the State Hospital's blacksmith shop. The building is subdivided under

the management auspices of SEEDS, TC Community Garden and the Botanic Garden and has primarily been used as storage. Recent improvements spearheaded by SEEDS include a new roof with a rooftop solar array, water and sewer service, and a new floor.

Building 226, The Pavilion – Another former crop storage building for the State Hospital consisting of a main floor and a cellar, approximately 2,000 square feet per floor. Constructed circa 1930, with block walls, concrete floors and a concrete roof slab, though the stone foundation is older than that. Now under the management auspices of the Botanic Garden, the above-ground main floor of the building has been adapted into an open-air pavilion, and the lower cellar level has yet to be renovated. The lower level is connected to the lower level of the Visitor Center via an original tunnel built by the State Hospital. Both levels are served by electricity.



West Bay Waterfront Property

This small parcel had outsized importance for the community and the evolution of the Traverse City waterfront. The City and a wide variety of partners (including the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, the Les and Anne Biederman Foundation, the National Cherry Festival, Rotary Charities of Traverse City, the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Traverse City Convention and Visitors Bureau, among others) had worked for years to reclaim the historically industrialized Lake Michigan waterfront for public recreational purposes. This 0.5-acre parcel was the last privately-held property in what had become a long stretch of otherwise public parkland.

The Rec Authority's voter-approved millage in 2004 and the Rec Authority's subsequent purchase of the site completed today's contiguous public open space along West Grand Traverse Bay in downtown Traverse City. The Rec Authority performed brownfield cleanup activities on the site in 2005, including the demolition of an office building and parking lot. Other than some vegetation plantings and the recent installation of a stone staircase for formal beach access, the site has remained largely in the same state since then, an open, grassy spot set against the beautiful bay.

Based on feedback from the 2019 Public Visioning process, people are generally satisfied with the West Bay Waterfront property as is. Some believe it should be given to the City, which provides basic maintenance (e.g., mowing) on the area; some think not. Many feel that the Authority continues to have a role and responsibility to ensure this property is maintained in its natural state.



Hickory Forest Natural Area

Hickory Forest is a 76-acre parcel on the west side of the city-owned Hickory Hills ski area. Purchased with generous technical assistance from the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC), a voter-approved millage (2020), and a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (2022), this is the fourth and newest public property owned and managed by the Rec Authority. Combined with the adjoining Hickory Hills and Hickory Meadows parklands, residents and visitors now enjoy more than 330 acres of contiguous parkland on the edge of northern Michigan's most populous urban center.

One of the largest remaining intact wooded parcels in the immediate vicinity of Traverse City, Hickory Forest Natural Area is located within Garfield Township. The Natural Area includes frontage on M-72 to the north with a narrow access on Barney Road to the south. The Barney Road access serves as the main trailhead for the site and includes a paved parking area.

The property is mostly comprised of mesic northern forest, which is listed as vulnerable habitat in the State of Michigan and harbors exceptional floristic quality with habitat for many faunal species that rely upon this forest type. The site's Floristic Quality Index (FQI) is 43.9, which is well above the state average and signifying it is a rare and extremely significant property in the State of Michigan.

Like the Rec Authority's other parklands, Hickory Forest has its own Management Plan complete with a natural features inventory. Given its ecological significance, the park is managed to protect the unique and diverse natural features of the property balanced with providing passive outdoor recreational amenities.

For over 50 years, this beloved forest was owned and stewarded by Clarence and Esther Kroupa and their family. The property has steep, rolling topography compelling for public recreation and resource preservation.

Immediately following the public acquisition of the property, a sustainable trail design was implemented in November of 2023, offering a quality trail experience on unpaved paths that are protective of ecologically-fragile areas.

Administration

Hickory Forest is governed by the Recreational Authority Board of Directors. The Recreational Authority retains control of all management and budgeting decisions for Hickory Forest.

The Recreational Authority Board authorized the creation of a seven-member citizen advisory committee in 2005 for Hickory Meadows. In 2023, the Board revised the scope of the Hickory Meadows Advisory Committee to include Hickory Forest and renamed the committee as the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). The committee provides advice and makes management recommendations to the Recreational Authority Board for final approval. The Recreational Authority Board appoints members of the CAC for staggered two-year terms, and reviews new appointments on an annual basis. The Executive Director of the Recreational Authority and a representative of the Grand Traverse Conservation District support the work of the CAC.

Property Management

A property manager appointed by the Recreational Authority performs and oversees all maintenance required at Hickory Forest. The Grand Traverse Conservation District (GTCD) has been contracted to serve as the property manager for Hickory Meadows since 2006, and the contract



was extended in 2023 to include Hickory Forest. GTCD provides professional and technical services to implement an annual work plan for the management of Hickory Forest (and Hickory Meadows). GTCD attends every regular meeting of the Rec Authority Board of Directors and convenes monthly meetings of the Citizen Advisory Committee. GTCD also prepares quarterly maintenance reports for submission to the advisory committee and the Recreational Authority Board.

Property Use

GTRLC designed and oversaw implementation of a sustainable hiking trail system balancing trail-related activities, preservation of ecologically-sensitive areas, and the unique feel of the site. It has quickly become popular for hikers, runners and naturalists. Bow hunting for deer is allowed in the fall by permit during the state season.

The trail system is designed to maximize environmental sustainability through:

- grades that do not exceed the maximum sustainable grade of the local sandy soils;
- incorporation of numerous reversals in the trail grade to control water flow across the trails, and;
- the minimization of sharp turns which can degrade quickly over time.

The trail system is also designed to provide maximum social sustainability of trails through:

- numerous options for users, ranging from a half-hour stroll to an hours-long tour of the entire property and adjacent Hickory Hills and Hickory Meadows;

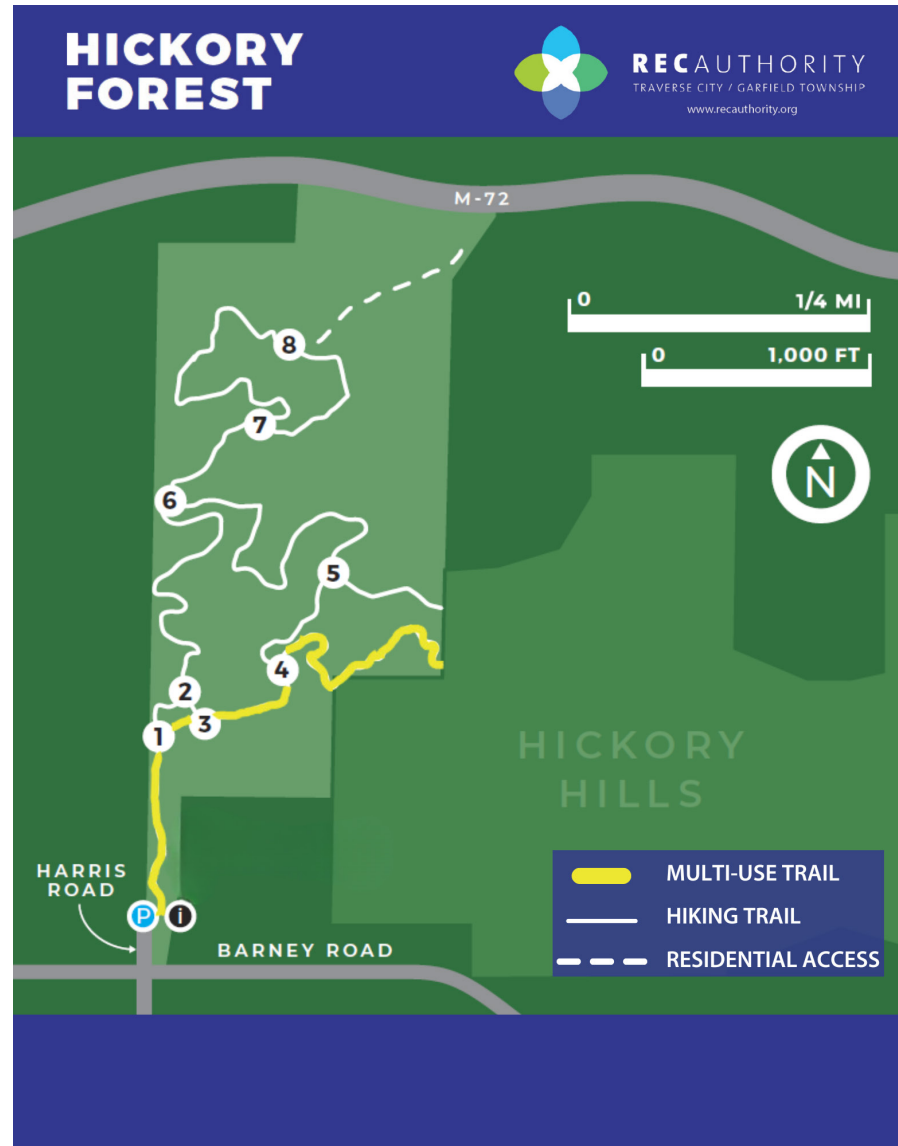
- development of hiking-only trails that minimize impact on the steep slopes throughout the property;
- minimizing speed differential between pedestrian users and mountain bikers by prohibiting biking on the hiking trails and constructing a designated multi-use trail connecting to planned dedicated mountain biking trails in Hickory Hills; and
- providing adequate line of sight on the designated, hiking/biking multi-use trail.

Given the steep terrain and limited flat areas, groomed ski trails are offered at Hickory Meadows instead, though snowshoers and Nordic skiers do access the ungroomed trails in the winter.

Park Rules

1. Permitted uses include hiking, running, snowshoeing, classic skiing (non-groomed), low-impact mountain biking (on designated multi-use trail), nature study, photography, and guided hikes.
2. Open from dawn to dusk unless for guided night hikes or other special events.
3. Camping and fires are prohibited at Hickory Forest.
4. Stay on designated improved trails and respect any special access restrictions.
5. Off-road or other motorized vehicles are prohibited in Hickory Forest except for directly authorized management purposes.
6. Dogs are permitted within Hickory Forest but must be kept on a leash in accordance with State and local laws. Pet owners are required to clean up after their pets.

7. Firearm hunting and trapping are not allowed on the property. Bow hunting is allowed by permit.
8. No plants or other specimens are to be removed from Hickory Forest unless authorized by management.
9. Littering is strictly forbidden. This includes dumping of yard waste, household trash and abandoning animal waste bags along trails.
10. No person shall damage, deface, or destroy any property or features within Hickory Forest.
11. Glass containers and alcoholic beverages are prohibited at Hickory Forest.
12. Fireworks, horse-riding and paintball are prohibited at Hickory Forest.
13. Drone use must be approved in writing by the Recreational Authority.



Accessibility Assessment

The accessibility evaluations for the Rec Authority's properties have been conducted by the Rec Authority's Executive Director as part of the recreation planning process.

The evaluations were based loosely on the United States Access Board's Section 15 – Recreation Facilities, the Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities, Americans with Disabilities Act, and used the ranking criteria suggested by MDNR's Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans (2016). These criteria are based on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

The criteria are as follows: ADA Ranking System Rank Interpretation

1. None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.
2. Some of the facilities/parks meet accessibility guidelines.
3. Most of the facilities/parks meet accessibility guidelines.
4. All the facilities/park meets accessibility guidelines.
5. The entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design.

Table 7. ADA Assessment

Public Facility	Asset Type	Rating
Historic Barns Park	Park	3
Hickory Meadows	Park	2
Hickory Forest	Park	2
West Bay Waterfront	Conservation	1





chapter 5. planning for the future

Engaging the Community

In 2018 and 2019, 700 people made their voices heard through a five-month inclusive public visioning effort. The purpose of the visioning effort was to help the Rec Authority chart a path forward to ensure continued success for years to come. Based on public input, the vision for the Authority is to serve as a regional entity that facilitates collaboration among stakeholders, local governments, and non-profits; serves as a convener for fundraising and project implementation; and pursues projects that foster connectivity and protect natural and cultural assets for generations to come.

In 2020, the Rec Authority worked with the public and key stakeholder groups in the Grand Traverse area to review the public input findings from 2019 to identify additional goals and objectives for its first 5-Year Recreation Plan. Now, in 2025, this new plan reflects on past accomplishments, takes the current pulse of parkland users, and orients the Authority on goals and objectives for the next five years to come.

Consideration of this Plan was an agenda item for Rec Authority Board monthly public meetings from March 2025 through January 2026, with a public hearing and final adoption of the Plan conducted at the Board's public meeting in January of 2026.



Community Survey

This section summarizes community input on park usage, preferences, and improvement needs to support the Recreation Plan for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority. The survey gathered insights from residents, visitors, and key stakeholders to ensure the Authority's Recreation Plan reflects current trends and community priorities. The survey builds on previous questionnaires to capture evolving expectations for the Recreational Authority and its parks and trails.

Authority staff and Gaining Ground, LLC (the Survey Team), administered the survey online through SurveyMonkey and promoted the survey through press releases, email outreach and signage in the parks. The survey remained open from early September through mid-November 2025. In total, 175 people responded.

Among the 175 survey respondents, nearly half (45%) live in the City of Traverse City, while 29% reside in Garfield Township and 26% live elsewhere. The age distribution is weighted toward older adults, with the largest groups being ages 61–70 (26%) and 51–60 (23%), though younger adults ages 31–40 also represent a significant share (21%). In terms of gender identity, respondents are primarily female (53%) or male (45%), with about 1% preferring not to answer and fewer than 1% identifying as nonbinary.

Additionally, the Survey Team created separate online surveys for each park, made accessible through QR codes posted at each park. The results of these surveys are not included in the main text of this report but are included in the appendix. The Survey Team found that the results of these supplemental surveys are consistent with the main survey.

SURVEY TIMELINE



Key Findings

Respondents mostly enjoy Recreational Authority parks for walking, dog walking, and cross-country skiing. Awareness levels of park ownership and leash rules are generally high, and respondents consistently highlight the need for improved trail maintenance, enhanced connectivity, and clearer signage across the system.

The feedback also reveals several recurring themes, including interest in year-round trail upgrades, increased accessibility, conservation of natural features, and better management of user behavior to improve safety. Findings specific to each park include the following:

Hickory Meadows

- 82% have visited; most visit less than once a month.
- Most popular activities: walking (89%), cross-country skiing (50%), walking dogs (46%).
- Most used in fall, summer, and spring.
- Feedback themes: trail maintenance, signage, accessibility, and environmental conservation.

Hickory Forest

- 58% have visited; most visit less than once a month.
- Most popular activities: walking (93%), walking dogs (48%), wildflower viewing (43%).
- Most used in summer, spring, and fall.

- Feedback themes: trail maintenance, signage, and natural environment conservation.

Historic Barns Park

- 92% have visited; most visit less than once a month.
- Most popular activities: hiking (81%), Botanic Garden events (74%), Cathedral Barn events (43%).
- Most used in summer, spring, and fall.
- Feedback themes: park upkeep, garden care, historic building preservation.

Overall Impressions

Survey results are generally positive and demonstrate a strong interest in the quality and future of the Recreational Authority and its parks. Respondents value the natural character of park properties and rely on them for diverse outdoor activities, yet they also identify important opportunities to enhance access, maintenance, and visitor experience.

Respondents have a clear desire for better-connected trails, continued conservation efforts, and targeted upgrades that support both everyday use and special events. This feedback is important to consider as the Recreational Authority updates the Recreation Plan and works to ensure that the Plan aligns community wants and needs, protects natural resources, and strengthens the Authority's recreational assets.

Purpose of Survey

The purpose of this survey was to gather input from residents, visitors, and other stakeholders to ensure the Recreation Plan reflects current community needs, priorities, and recreation trends. Survey results help identify which parks, facilities, and programs are most valued, what improvements or new amenities are desired, and any barriers that limit participation. Input from this survey helps the Recreational Authority Board and staff make data-driven decisions, allocate resources effectively, and strengthen grant applications.

Background

This survey was adapted and refined from surveys used in previous planning cycles to ensure consistency while capturing new priorities and emerging community needs. The Survey Team made the updated survey available online using SurveyMonkey. To encourage broad participation, Authority staff announced the survey through press releases, the Authority's email listservs, and partner distribution lists.

Questions

This survey collected demographic information, usage patterns, awareness of park management, desired improvements, and attitudes toward future goals and priorities for the Recreational Authority.

This survey contains a variety of question styles to gather both quantitative and qualitative feedback. Question styles include single-choice, multiple-selection, open-ended questions, and scaled questions.

The mix of question types allows the survey to capture both structured data and open-ended feedback for deeper insights. A copy of the survey is included in the appendix.

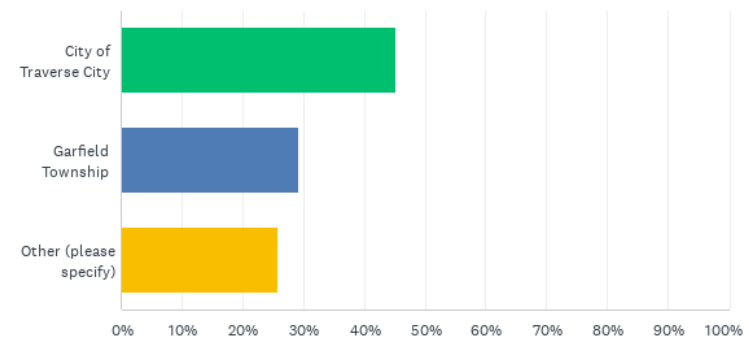
Respondent Profile

Residence: The largest group of respondents reside in the City of Traverse City (45.1%), followed by Garfield Township (29.1%), and 25.7% selected "Other."

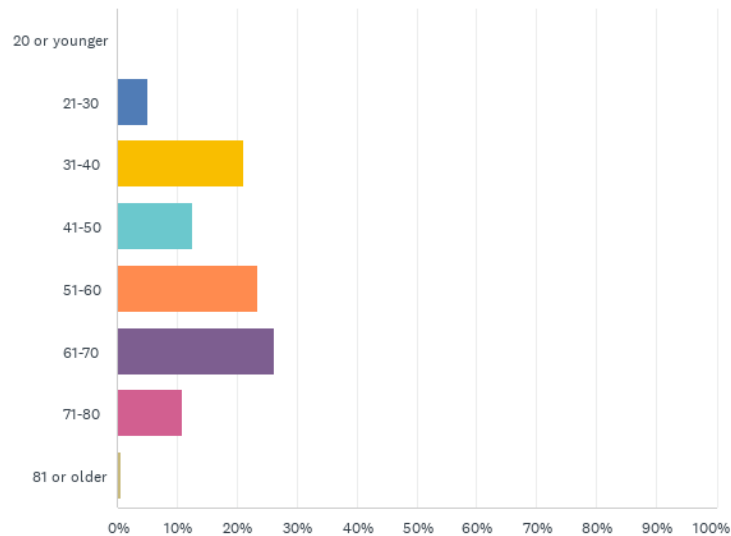
Age: The most common age group is 61-70 (26.3%), followed by 51-60 (23.4%) and 31-40 (21.1%). Smaller proportions are in the 41-50 (12.6%), 71-80 (10.9%), 21-30 (5.1%), and 81 or older (0.6%) categories. No respondents are 20 or younger.

Gender: The majority of respondents identified as Female (53.1%), with Males making up 45.1%. A small number preferred not to answer (1.1%) or identified as Nonbinary (0.6%).

Q1 Where do you reside?



Q2 What is your age?



Survey Results

Visitation patterns indicate broad use of the park system: 92% have visited Historic Barns Park, 82% have been to Hickory Meadows, and 58% have visited Hickory Forest. Most households have one or two park users, and visits typically occur less than once a month, with summer and fall being the most popular seasons.

Walking is the most common activity across all parks, followed by dog walking, cross-country skiing, and bird watching.

In terms of park knowledge, 65% of respondents are aware that the parks are owned by the Recreational Authority, and 89% understand dog leash requirements.

When suggesting improvements, respondents most often emphasize continued trail maintenance, better connectivity, clearer signage, and enhanced amenities, while also stressing the importance of preserving the parks' natural landscapes and existing features.

Overall, participants rate land preservation, capital improvements, connectivity, and sustainability as very or extremely important priorities for the Authority.

General Themes

TRAIL MAINTENANCE & UPGRADES: Many comments focus on the need for improved trail maintenance, grooming, erosion control, and upgrades for both summer and winter use.

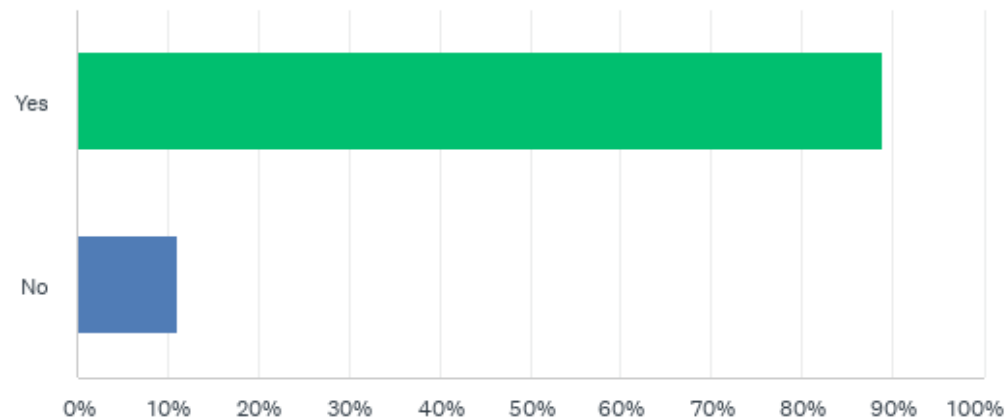
ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY: Respondents mention the importance of trail accessibility, signage, and connecting trails and parks for easier access.

CONSERVATION: Themes include preserving natural features, landscape quality, and balancing recreation with conservation efforts.

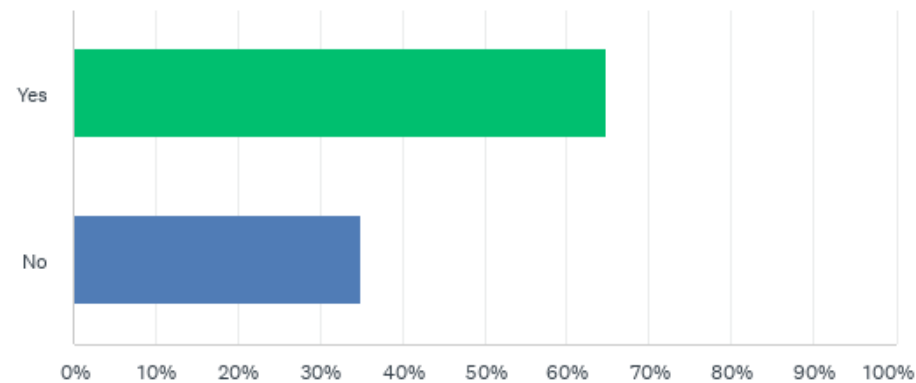
DOG MANAGEMENT: Issues such as off-leash dogs, pet waste management, and dog park amenities are frequently mentioned.

SAFETY & USER BEHAVIOR: Comments highlight safety perceptions, incident reports, and managing interactions between different trail users (e.g., cyclists, walkers, dog owners).

Q57 Are you aware that state and local laws require dogs to be leashed at all times in Recreational Authority parks?



Q56 Before this survey, were you aware that Hickory Meadows, Hickory Forest, and Historic Barns Park were owned by the Recreational Authority?



PARK AMENITIES: Suggestions include adding or improving parking, restrooms, water supply, and community event spaces.

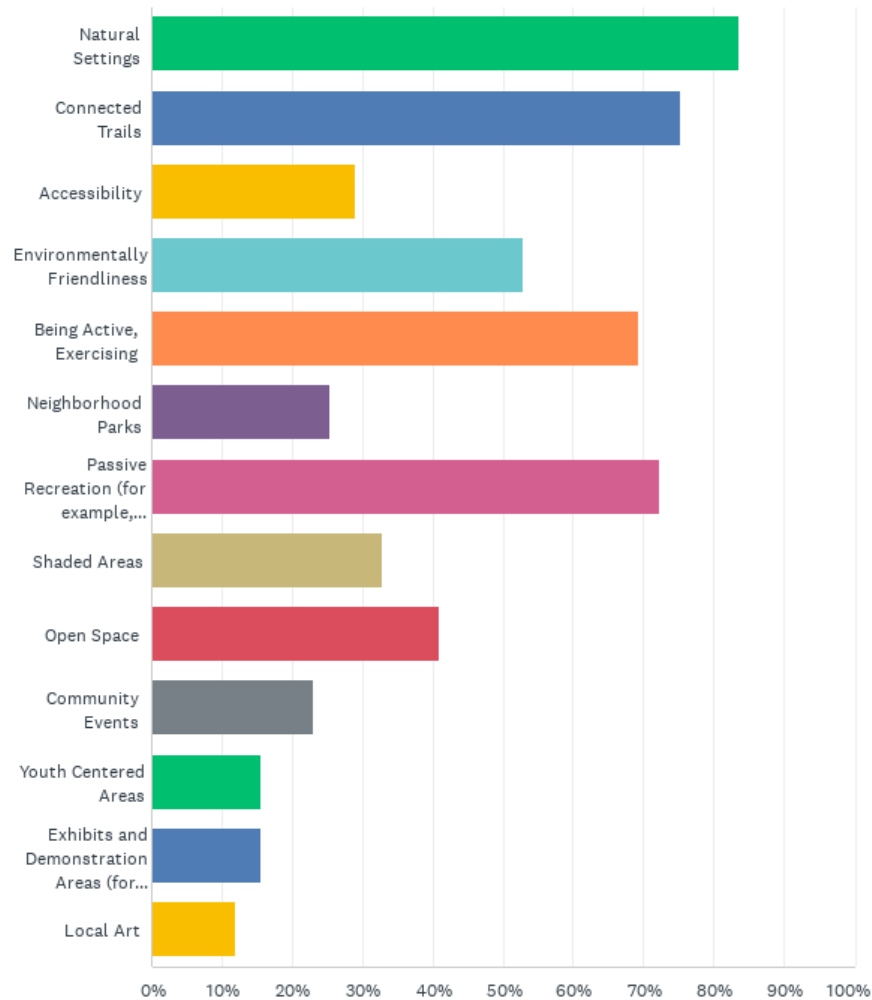
COMMUNITY VALUE & ENGAGEMENT: Respondents value the parks for their tranquil atmosphere, community events, and opportunities for engagement.

HISTORIC & NATURAL PRESERVATION: There is a strong desire to maintain historic buildings, garden features, and the natural landscape.

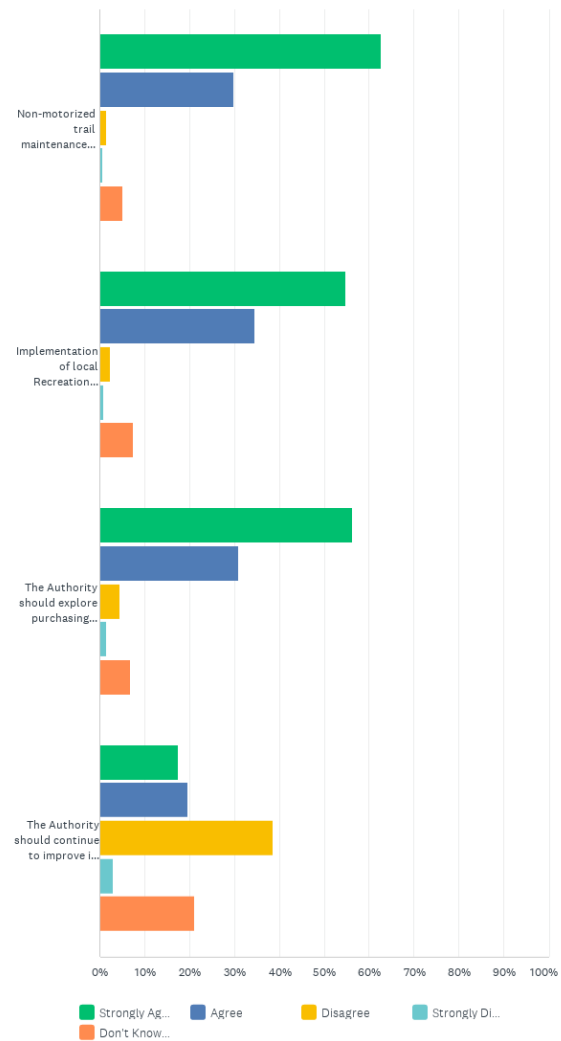
Overall, these themes reflect the community's priorities for well-maintained, accessible, and environmentally preserved parks, with attention to safety.



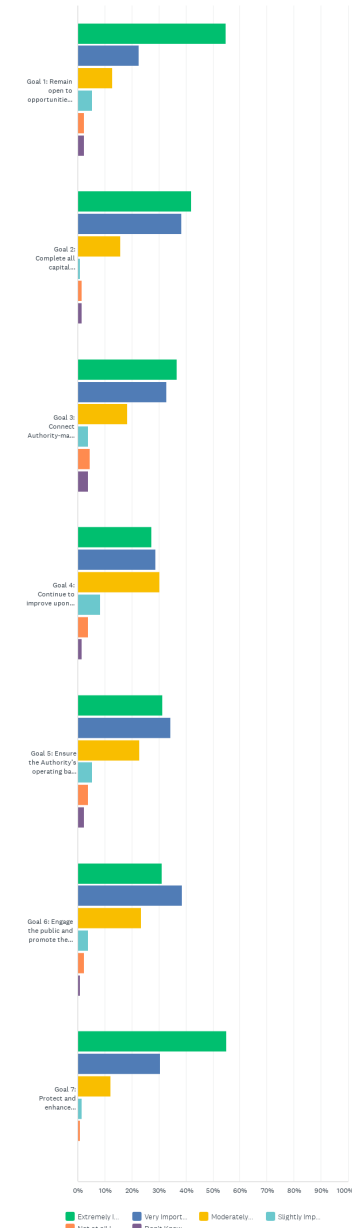
Q58 In your opinion, what are the most important attributes of parks and recreation amenities in Traverse City and Garfield Township? Please select 5.



Q59 The Recreational Authority is always open to the possibility of expanding its focus to other areas in Traverse City and/or Garfield Township. Thinking about existing recreational amenities and services in the city and township, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.



Q60 The following goal statements have been developed after reviewing the Recreational Authority's current tasks and priorities. Please rate the overall importance of the following.



Hickory Meadows

82% of respondents (142 out of 173) have visited Hickory Meadows.

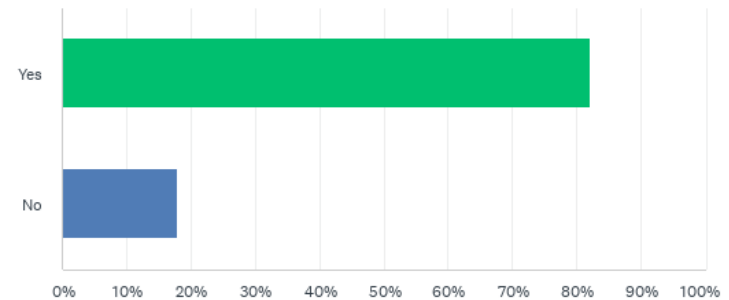
Before the survey, 71% (89 out of 125) were aware that Hickory Meadows is owned and operated by the Recreational Authority, while Hickory Hills is separately owned and operated by the City of Traverse City.

Most households using Hickory Meadows have two members in active use (46%), followed by one member (20%).

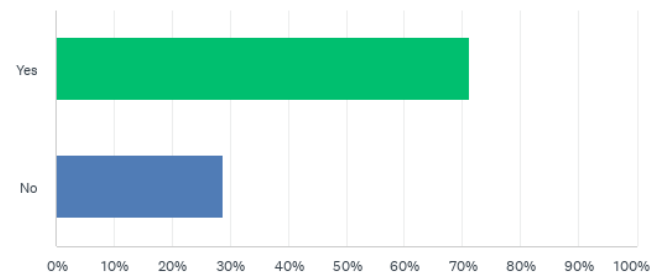
The most common visit frequency is less than once a month (43%), with 23% visiting 1-4 times a month.

The most popular seasons for using Hickory Meadows are Fall (89%), Summer (84%), Spring (75%), and Winter (72%).

Q4 Have you ever visited Hickory Meadows?

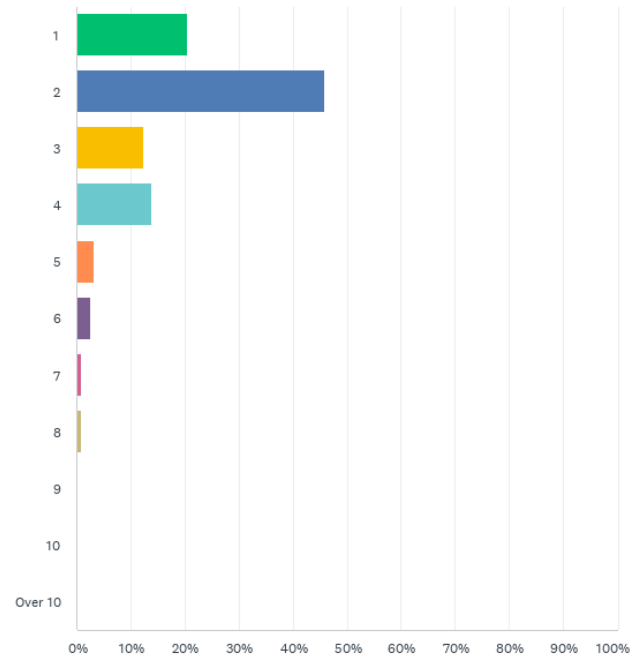


Q5 Before this survey, were you aware that Hickory Meadows is owned and operated by the Recreational Authority, while Hickory Hills is separately owned and operated by the City of Traverse City?

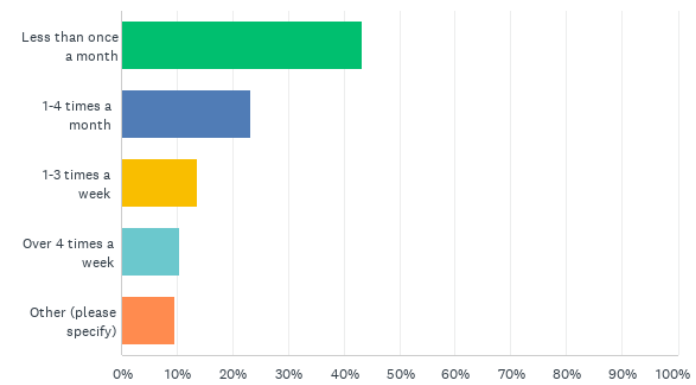




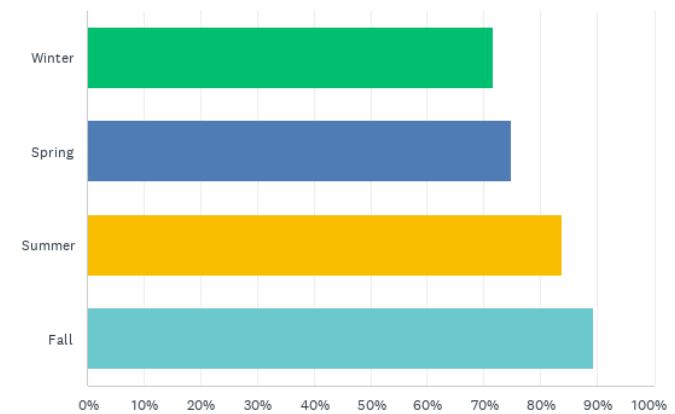
Q6 How many members of your household use Hickory Meadows?



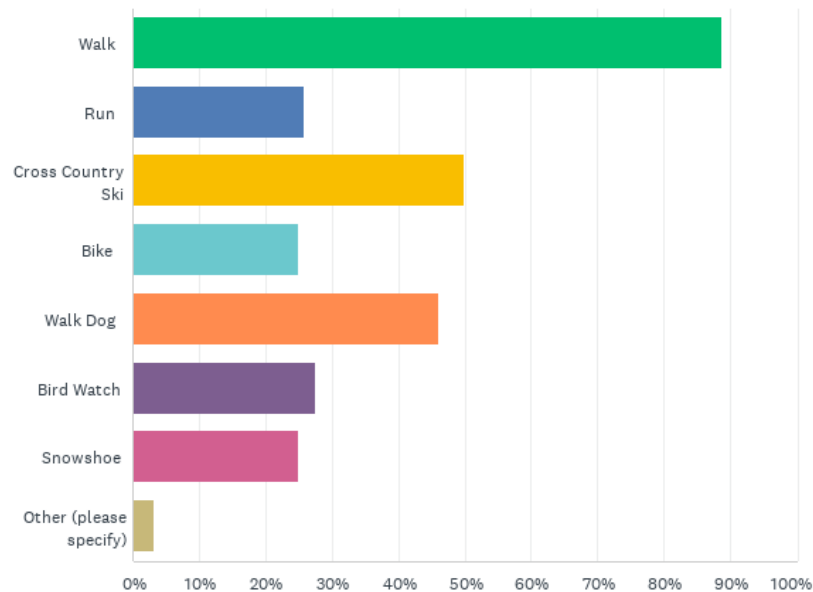
Q7 How often does your household visit Hickory Meadows?



Q8 Which seasons do you use Hickory Meadows (check all that apply)?



Q9 What activities do you enjoy at Hickory Meadows (check all that apply)?



Top activities enjoyed at Hickory Meadows include walking (89%), cross-country skiing (50%), walking dogs (46%), bird watching (27%), running (26%), biking (25%), and snowshoeing (25%).

For open-ended questions, respondents' explanations about trail maintenance, safety, and the balance between preservation and access are generally Positive or Neutral, with comments centered on maintenance needs, signage and facilities, accessibility and safety, environmental protection, trail design, recreational use, volunteer efforts, and responsible dog ownership.

When asked about desired improvements, people most frequently point to better connectivity, upgraded maintenance, clearer navigation aids, enhanced bicycle and natural area amenities, improved water and parking infrastructure, expanded dog-park features, and additional restrooms or rest areas.

In contrast, when discussing what should remain unchanged, respondents emphasize preserving the natural landscape, maintaining diverse trail attributes and design, continuing winter maintenance and strong property management, and protecting the area's tranquil atmosphere and varied ecosystems.



Hickory Forest

58% of respondents (87 out of 150) have visited Hickory Forest.

Before the survey, 84% (69 out of 82) were aware that Hickory Forest is owned and operated by the Recreational Authority, while Hickory Hills is separately owned and operated by the City of Traverse City.

Most households using Hickory Forest have two members in active use (48%), followed by one member (23%).

The most common visit frequency is less than once a month (41%), with 29% visiting 1-4 times a month.

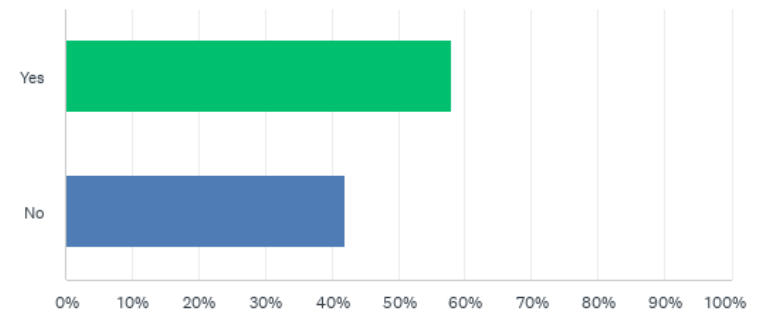
The most popular seasons for using Hickory Forest are Summer (88%), Spring (86%), and Fall (86%), with Winter usage at 50%.

Top activities enjoyed at Hickory Forest include walking (93%), walking dogs (48%), wildflower viewing (43%), running (34%), bird watching (26%), cross-country skiing (20%), and biking (19%).

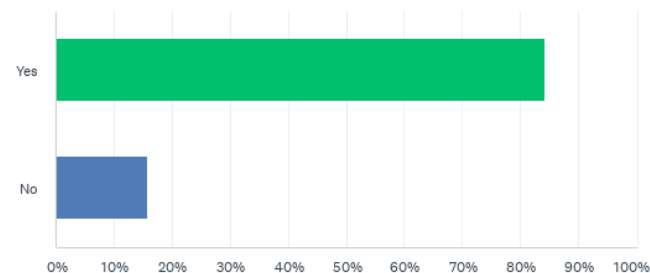
Respondents' open-ended feedback on Hickory Forest center on the quality, preservation, and usability of its trails, with most comments expressing positive or neutral sentiment.

Feedback underscores strong support for maintaining and improving the trail system while preserving the forest's ecological character and accommodating diverse forms of recreation.

Q21 Have you ever visited Hickory Forest?

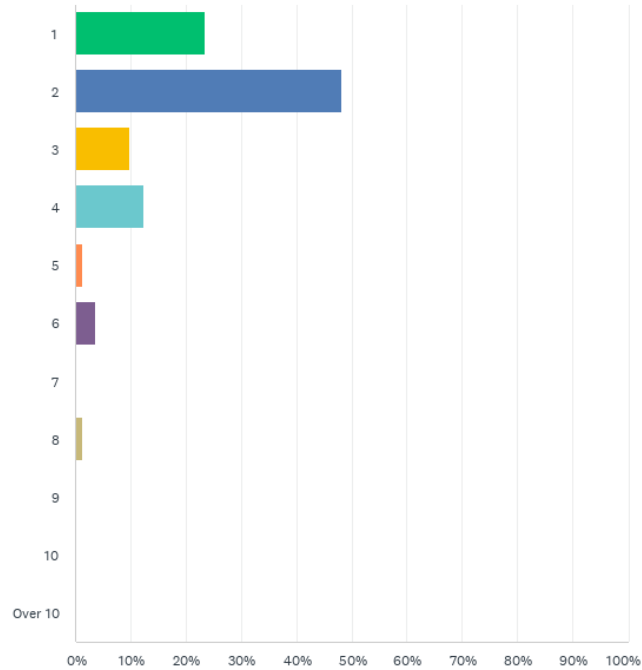


Q22 Before this survey, were you aware that Hickory Forest is owned and operated by the Recreational Authority, while Hickory Hills is separately owned and operated by the City of Traverse City?

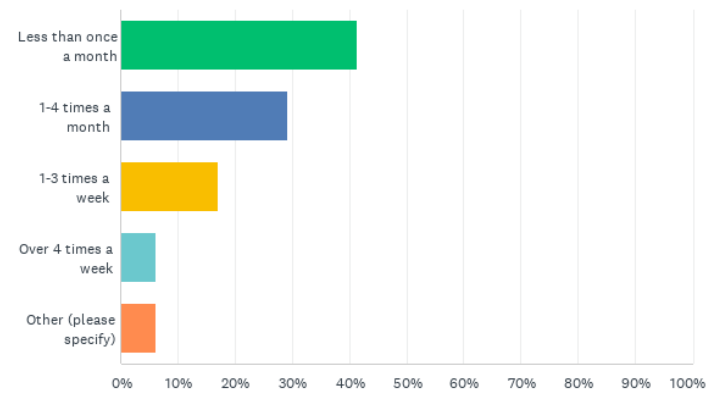




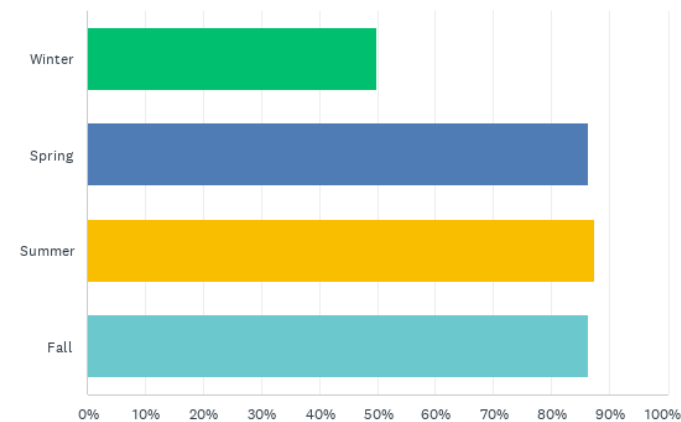
Q23 How many members of your household use Hickory Forest?



Q24 How often does your household visit Hickory Forest?

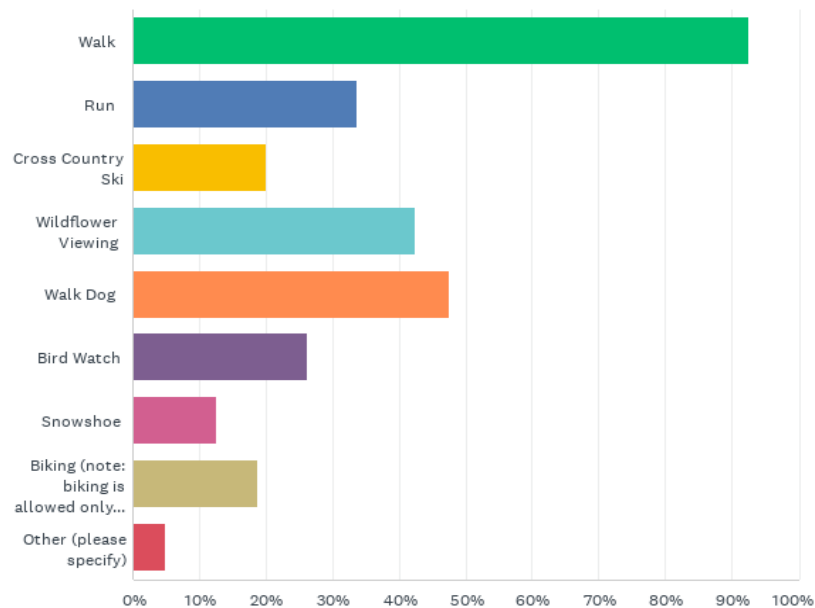


Q25 Which seasons do you use Hickory Forest (check all that apply)?





Q32 What activities do you enjoy at Hickory Forest (check all that apply)?



Suggestions for improvement most commonly focus on enhancing signage, expanding trail connectivity, investing in biking infrastructure, upgrading trailhead amenities, and strengthening maintenance and environmental management.

When describing what should remain unchanged, respondents emphasize keeping existing trail infrastructure planning, natural environment conservation, usage restrictions, native plant communities, and scenic views intact.



Historic Barns Park

92% of respondents (134 out of 146) have visited Historic Barns Park.

Most households using Historic Barns Park have two members in active use (51%), followed by one member (18%).

The most common visit frequency is less than once a month (47%), with 30% visiting 1-4 times a month.

The most popular seasons for using Historic Barns Park are Summer (96%), Spring (89%), and Fall (88%), with Winter usage at 49%.

Top activities enjoyed at Historic Barns Park include hiking (81%), attending Botanic Garden events/visits (74%), Cathedral Barn events (43%), biking (30%), and community gardening (23%).

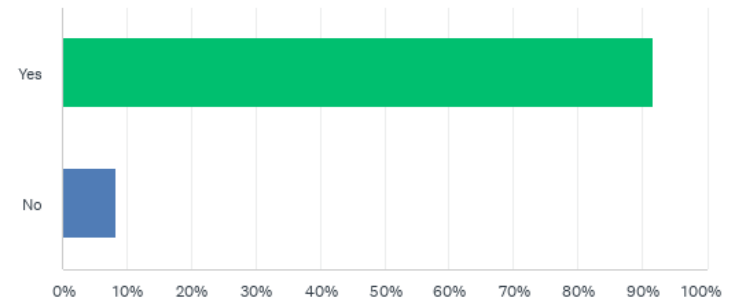
Open-ended feedback for Historic Barns Park emphasizes strong overall satisfaction with park maintenance, safety, and the balance between preservation and public access, with most comments expressing positive or neutral sentiment.

Respondents highlight the importance of well-maintained trails, gardens, and historic buildings, as well as continued community engagement and volunteer involvement.

When asked what should remain unchanged, participants point to the park's garden designs, natural areas, public art, accessibility, and historic character.

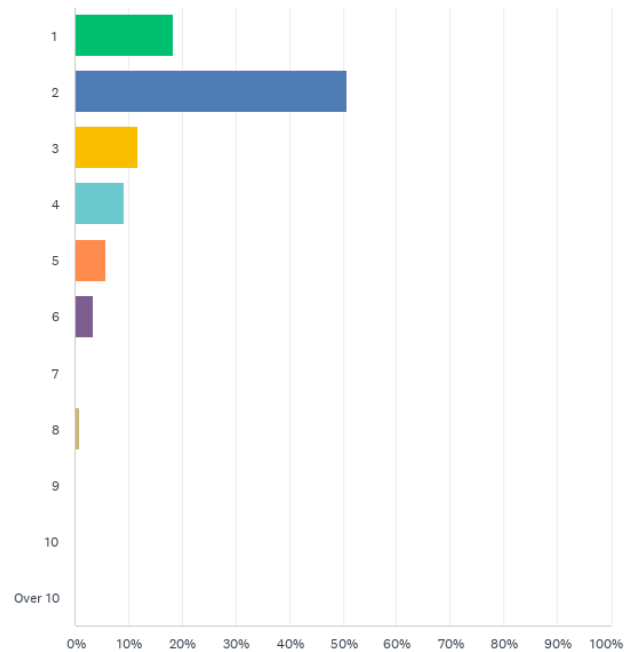
Respondent feedback reflects a desire to preserve the park's unique features while pursuing thoughtful enhancements to support visitor experience and community use. Suggestions for improvement commonly focus on enhancing the trail network, expanding amenities, improving

Q38 Have you ever visited Historic Barns Park?

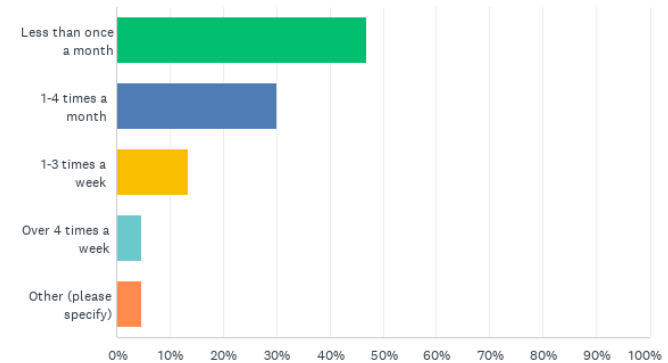




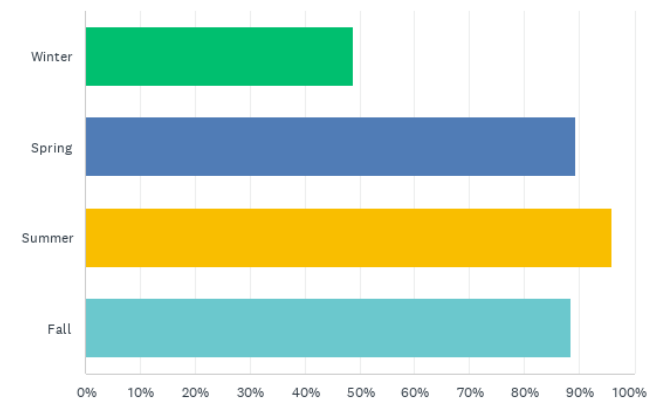
Q39 How many members of your household use Historic Barns Park?



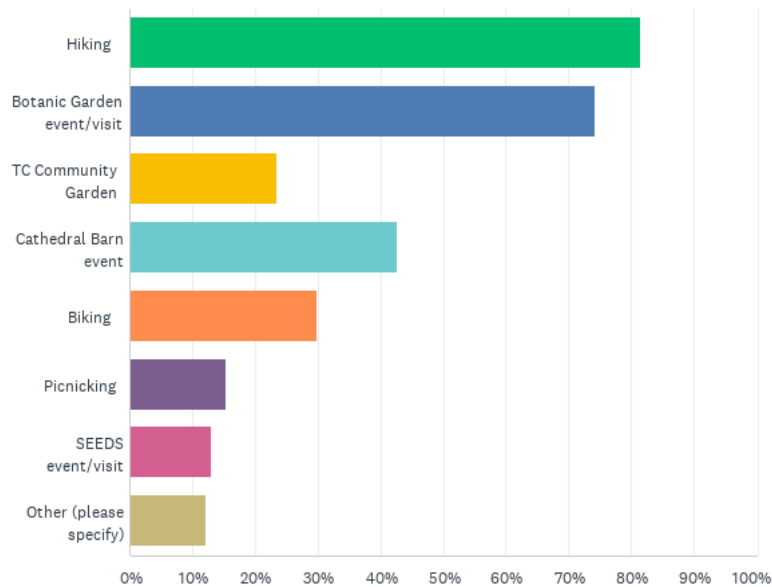
Q40 How often does your household visit Historic Barns Park?



Q41 Which seasons do you use Historic Barns Park (check all that apply)?



Q42 What activities do you enjoy at Historic Barns Park (check all that apply)?



parking and traffic flow, and further developing botanic garden features and event spaces.

Conclusion

In general, the community appreciates the existing recreational amenities and supports ongoing efforts to maintain, improve, and preserve these valuable public spaces for future generations. Across individual parks, feedback reflects similar priorities:

- At Hickory Meadows, visitors value walking, skiing, dog walking, and

biking, with comments focused on maintenance, safety, signage, accessibility, and preservation; desired improvements include better connectivity, clearer navigation, upgraded maintenance, and additional amenities.

- Hickory Forest users emphasize its trail quality and ecological character, supporting maintenance and conservation while seeking better signage, stronger connectivity, improved trailhead amenities, and biking-related upgrades.

- At Historic Barns Park, visitors appreciate well-maintained trails, gardens, historic buildings, and community events, expressing satisfaction with its balance of preservation and access. They wish to maintain its historic and natural character while improving trails, amenities, parking, and garden and event facilities.

Respondents also clearly prioritize goals related to land preservation, sustainability, and the balance between recreational use and conservation, while capital improvements and public engagement are also highly valued.

Most participants agree that the Authority should be willing to take on additional responsibilities, including non-motorized trail maintenance and implementing local Recreation Plans. While expansion is generally supported, opinions are more mixed when it comes to the approach of improving existing properties versus expanding services, with a significant portion of respondents expressing uncertainty.

The findings suggest that the community favors a proactive and

multifaceted role for the Authority, emphasizing both stewardship of natural resources and the development of accessible recreational opportunities. Respondents want well-maintained, accessible, safe, and environmentally preserved parks that continue to support both recreation and community engagement.



Public Open House

A public open house on the Authority's draft plan was held on Wednesday, December 17, 2025, in Garfield Township Hall. Twenty attendees provided feedback on poster boards covering all seven draft goals and related objectives, as well as all eight themes that emerged from responses to the public survey.

COMMENTS ON GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Attendees were broadly supportive of the proposed acquisition of the Wilson property adjacent to Hickory Meadows (Objective 1.1), but comments also emphasized that any new acquisitions should not undermine existing holdings and responsibilities (Objective 1.2).

Attendees were also broadly supportive of additional trail connections across the community, including finding a route or routes to safely connect the Grand Traverse Commons to the Hickory complex (Objective 3.2). Attendees also raised a need for a safe crossing of M-72 between the Hickory complex on the south side of the highway and rapidly expanding residential development on the north side of the highway (Objective 3.4). Comments suggested that a tunnel may be the safest alternative.

Comments also encouraged cooperation around invasive species control and management with adjacent public landowners, particularly with the City of Traverse City across the Hickory complex and the Charter Township of Garfield between Historic Barns Park and the adjacent Commons Natural Area (Objective 4.5).

COMMENTS ON THEMES FROM THE PUBLIC SURVEY

Regarding the theme of Trail Maintenance and Upgrades, commenters were pleased with the current state of maintenance and want to make sure that remains a priority. Regarding Accessibility and Connectivity, comments mirrored the trail-related feedback for the Goals and Objectives, repeating desires for a connection between the Commons



and the Hickories as well as a safe crossing of M-72.

Under the theme of Conservation, commenters felt the Authority and partners such as the Grand Traverse Conservation District are doing a good job of balancing recreation with conservation efforts.

Regarding the theme of Safety and User Behavior, several comments emphasized respect, kindness and courtesy as tones that should be set for park use. Dogs off leash were cited as an example of undesired behavior. Dog Management was also its own theme, with commenters expressing a mix of frustration and exasperation, uncertain of how to manage other people's behaviors with their pets.

Regarding desired Park Amenities, access to restrooms and drinking water were most commonly referenced. Regarding Community Value and Engagement, attendees noted that the parks are invaluable resources and are worthy of continued protection.



chapter 6.

goals & objectives



Continuing Toward Excellence

The recreational goals and objectives were developed through evaluation of current facilities and programs, community input, and planning initiatives noted in other documents developed by the Rec Authority. The goals and objectives therefore reflect the preferences of the Traverse City/Garfield community in addressing the management, programming and future initiatives for the properties managed by the

Authority. These goals are also intended to complement the recreational goals of both the neighboring jurisdictions and Grand Traverse County. While general strategies are provided below, specific action items and implementation steps for achieving these goals are detailed further in Chapter 7.

Goal 1: Remain open to opportunities to preserve land for recreational, educational and environmental preservation purposes.

Objective 1.1: Pursue the acquisition of the Wilson property, which consists of five acres and is landlocked between Hickory Hills and Hickory Meadows.

Objective 1.2: Remain open to opportunities to expand holdings and/or services as opportunities arise, in a manner that is not to the detriment of current Authority operations and responsibilities.

Goal 2: Complete all capital improvement projects outlined in the 2019 Public Visioning and the 2021 Recreation Plan.

- Objective 2.1:** Complete Phase II of the Cathedral Barn (complete the renovation of the lower level, install access to the mezzanine, and improve the amphitheater area).
- Objective 2.2:** Add clear and comprehensive signage at each of the parks that offer educational information (plant and wildlife, history), directions and mapping, safety warnings, and park rules and/or expectations.
- Objective 2.3:** Complete the universally accessible non-motorized pathway system at Historic Barns Park.
- Objective 2.4:** Consider the addition of a universally accessible trail loop and viewing platform at the southern entrance to Hickory Forest.
- Objective 2.5:** Remain open to other capital projects as parklands and user needs continue to evolve.

Goal 3: Connect Authority-managed properties with non-motorized routes to nearby parks and community amenities.

- Objective 3.1:** Continue to work with the City of Traverse City to coordinate, plan and facilitate trail connectivity between Hickory Meadows, Hickory Hills and Hickory Forest.
- Objective 3.2:** Collaborate with regional trail entities, the Charter Township of Garfield, the Grand Traverse County Road Commission, other units of government and residents to develop a trail connection between the Hickory complex and the Grand Traverse Commons.
- Objective 3.3:** Work with the Charter Township of Garfield and other appropriate entities to develop a road circulation plan for the Grand Traverse Commons to help move vehicular traffic on and off campus without relying on Historic Barns Park, and work to improve transit and multimodal transportation options.
- Objective 3.4:** Consistently collaborate with local, regional and state entities to identify opportunities for more connections between properties managed by the Authority and other natural areas, neighborhoods and schools, including a safe connection across or under M-72 to provide access to the Hickory complex from the north.



Goal 4: Continue to improve upon and expand outreach and partnerships.

Objective 4.1: Look for opportunities for the Authority to host more community events at Historic Barns Park, including but not limited to concerts, on-site education and festivals.

Objective 4.2: Continue to recruit and support public events and programming at Historic Barns Park hosted by outside organizations.

Objective 4.3: Collaborate with Garfield Township, the City of Traverse City, community organizations and the organizations currently operating at the parks to ensure that activities at the parks are consistent with local needs and opportunities.

Objective 4.4: Continue to foster a positive and collaborative relationship with the Botanic Garden, SEEDS and TC Community Garden on activities and programming at Historic Barns Park.

Objective 4.5: Work with the City of Traverse City, Garfield Township and other partners to increase collaboration on forest and ecosystem health, invasive species control and management, trail connectivity, wayfinding signage, ski grooming and parking.

Goal 5: Ensure the Authority's operating base as sustainable and diverse as possible.

Objective 5.1: Expand the rental operation at Historic Barns Park to promote more public and private events.

Objective 5.2: Apply for grants from foundations and state and federal agencies to support project development at the Authority's parks.

Objective 5.3: Foster public/private partnerships with local and regional businesses to support programming at the Authority's parks.



Goal 6: Engage the public and promote the properties as a community-oriented resource.

Objective 6.1: Continue to seek input from stakeholders that represent a diverse range of recreational and cultural interests.

Objective 6.2: Seek opportunities to use additional mediums for communication and informational transparency with the public.

Goal 7: Protect and enhance Authority-managed properties so that they are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

Objective 7.1: Balance the recreation needs of the public with the need to monitor, preserve, protect and restore natural features and animal habitats.

Objective 7.2: Continue to improve accessibility at each of the properties to promote use for all ages and abilities.

Objective 7.3: Seek opportunities to support activities at the parks during all four seasons.

Objective 7.4: Continue to educate the public on the unique cultural and natural features found at each site.



chapter 7.

action program



Steps Toward a Sustainable Future

The following Action Program describes how Rec Authority intends to meet, or advance toward meeting, the aforementioned goals and objectives over the course of the next five years.

Goal 1: Remain open to opportunities to preserve land for recreational, educational and environmental preservation purposes.

As mentioned previously in this plan, the Grand Traverse region has experienced a rise in population in recent decades. This trend has placed demand on new housing and commercial development in both Traverse City and Garfield Township. Going forward, the Rec Authority will play an important role in helping to preserve significant natural areas from development pressure by remaining open to land acquisition opportunities.

However, the Rec Authority will base its level of openness for a new acquisition on its capacity to effectively manage a new property. The most recent acquisition of Hickory Forest was only made possible by both a new voter-approved operating millage and a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. Public input for this plan has again made it clear that the Authority should remain open to additional preservation opportunities, but not to the detriment of existing parklands and services.

As of 2025, the Authority has identified one clear land acquisition target that would support the goals and objectives contained in this plan. The Wilson property totals five acres and is landlocked between

the Authority's Hickory Meadows property and the city-owned Hickory Hills ski area. While this opportunity has been explored in the past to no avail, the Rec Authority will continue to express its interest to the Wilson property owner, and will coordinate with the City of Traverse City as needed should any opportunity arise. Past valuations for the property have come in around \$100,000.

More generally, the Rec Authority will continue to coordinate with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC), the City and the Township to periodically assess other potential property acquisitions. A collaborative effort in this regard will be important to ensure that decisions complement the aspirational goals of other park entities in the community.

Goal 2: Complete all capital improvement projects outlined in the 2019 Public Visioning and the 2021 Recreation Plan.

Several projects noted in our 2021 plan have come to fruition. Notable progress at Historic Barns Park includes:

1. Construction of an entry vestibule for the Cathedral Barn, fully completed.
2. Construction of an elevator, stairs and renovated lobby to connect the two barns and make both levels of both barns universally accessible to the public, to be completed in early 2026.
3. Rehabilitating the upper floor of the Historic Barn 206 for modern reuse, consistent with the 2007 and 2019 Public Visioning and the master site plan, to be completed in early 2026.
4. Partial rehabilitation of the lower level of the Cathedral Barn for modern reuse, including preparation for modern utilities and a partial floor.
5. New roofs for both barns 204 and 206.

Historic Barns Park remains in need of renovations to serve the public most effectively. The Rec Authority has estimated a cost of \$1,150,000 for several major remaining capital improvement projects. These improvements include the following:

1. Complete the universally accessible non-motorized pathway system at Historic Barns Park to link all of the park's buildings and features, at a cost estimate of \$250,000.

2. Finish the lower level of the Cathedral Barn to host indoor activities, restrooms and a green room/bride's room, at an estimated remaining cost of \$600,000.

3. Install public access to the mezzanine level in the Cathedral Barn, at an estimated cost of \$200,000.

4. Improve the informal "amphitheater" area between barns 204 and 206 for public use, at an estimated cost of \$100,000.

A coordinated wayfinding signage project is already underway for Hickory Forest, Hickory Meadows, and Hickory Hills in partnership with the City of Traverse City, so that visitors can easily and efficiently navigate all three sites despite there being two different municipal owners. Remaining costs are estimated at \$60,000. As Historic Barns Park continues to develop, wayfinding within the park and throughout the greater Grand Traverse Commons campus as a whole has become more important. The Authority will work with its internal partners as well as its neighbors on the Commons to make improvements. Costs have not yet been determined, but the Rec Authority will support this action item through its operating funds and/or grant funding.

The general topography of Hickory Forest is very steep, but there are some flatter areas immediately adjacent to the Barney Road trailhead. The Authority will assess the feasibility of adding a universally accessible trail loop and viewing platform to this area of the park.



Goal 3: Connect Authority-managed properties with motorized and non-motorized routes to nearby parks and community amenities.

Trails are generally extremely popular recreational features in the Grand Traverse region, and trail use remains one of the most popular activities at the Authority's parks as reported by users.

At high priority, the Rec Authority will work to implement built features at Historic Barns Park that improve the site's accessibility. To accomplish this, the Rec Authority plans to coordinate with the Disability Network of Traverse City and other experts to identify barriers and opportunities for improved accessibility throughout Historic Barns Park. In addition, it will work with the partners at Historic Barns Park, as well as park users, to gather further input on built features that would supplement the pedestrian experience.

Another aspect of working towards Goal 3's objectives is to recognize the immense value of non-motorized trail connections. First, the Rec Authority will continue to work with City of Traverse City staff, the Hickory Hills Advisory Committee, the Citizen Advisory Committee and members of the public to create desirable and sustainable trail routes between Hickory Meadows, Hickory Hills and Hickory Forest. When planning these routes, collaborators should detail how conflicting recreation uses could be coordinated to ensure safe and efficient use within the parklands.

The Rec Authority is also interested in pursuing a trail connection between the Hickory complex and the Grand Traverse Commons. This action would support the tenets of a livable community by connecting natural and cultural sites with residences and local businesses. The Rec Authority will continue to work with TART Trails, the City of Traverse City, Garfield Charter Township, GTRLC, Munson Hospital, the

Minervini Group and other stakeholders to identify viable routes and to estimate construction, easement and maintenance costs.

Public input gathered for this plan recognized a recent explosion of residential development in areas directly across the M-72 highway from the Hickory complex. Safe crossings on or under M-72 to connect residents with these parklands are warranted and would also improve non-motorized connectivity for the greater regional trail system.

Another prevailing issue at Historic Barns Park and the Grand Traverse Commons concerns road management tasks. The Grand Traverse Commons Master Plan contains a circulation plan for the campus, but as the campus lacks a singular municipal authority over the road system, tasks such as road planning, construction and maintenance are left to an informal patchwork of public and private owners. The Rec Authority will continue to seek additional collaborative efforts with the City, the Township, the Minervini Group, and neighbors such as Greenspire School and Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District to identify optimum ways to move traffic on and off the southern end of the Commons campus. The group should also plan to assign maintenance responsibilities to roads on the campus so that this work is more formalized and planned for the long term.

Finally, the Rec Authority will remain open to opportunities for regional connectivity. Historic Barns Park already serves as a critical link in the community's extensive nonmotorized pathway system, and the Authority will stay open to ways it can help increase this connectivity. The Authority should maintain working relationships with organizations such as TART Trails and GTRLC to continually target opportunities for improved non-motorized travel.

Goal 4: Continue to improve upon and expand outreach and partnerships.

The Rec Authority launched the Cathedral Barn as an event rental space in 2015, realizing the public's vision to generate operating funds that would help the maintenance and upkeep of the building to be self-sustaining. Event rental revenues have also become an important source of the revenue mix for the nonprofit Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park, which has created a separate event rental enterprise that to now has been based largely around outdoor garden features.

The Botanic Garden's renovations to Barn 206 will dramatically increase the organizations ability to operate in all four seasons, but will also introduce a large indoor space to the event rental mix. To efficiently operate that new space in a manner that complements and coordinates with the Cathedral Barn, the Rec Authority and the Botanic Garden are working to combine rental management services under a single operator for the whole site. We believe this approach will best serve the entire park and increase opportunity to host more community events.

The remaining action items for Goal 4 are guided by the need to collaborate. The Rec Authority will continue to work with the City and Township to make sure experiences provided at the parks are coordinated and complementary of City and Township parklands to the extent possible. To accomplish this, the Rec Authority will annually review updates to City and Township municipal parks and recreation plans. The

Rec Authority should also periodically review organizational activities at municipal sites, quarterly reports and monthly board meeting agendas for the City and Township.

In addition, the Rec Authority will continue to foster a strong positive relationship with the Botanic Garden, SEEDS and the TC Community Garden at Historic Barns Park. The Rec Authority and the partnering entities will continue to abide by the management agreement, updated in 2019. The partnering organizations will regularly participate in meetings of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) committee and in monthly board meetings.

Because of their physical proximity and connectivity, Hickory Meadows, Hickory Hills and Hickory Forest require a coordinated management approach. The Rec Authority will continue to collaborate regularly with the City, the Hickory Hills Advisory Committee and the Citizen Advisory Committee for Hickory Meadows and Hickory Forest. Joint management planning should ensure that trail systems are convenient for users, easy to follow between the two sites, sustainable, and protective of natural features, flora and fauna.

Finally, the Rec Authority will continue to collaborate with the City of Traverse City on stormwater and wastewater management, cross-country ski grooming and parking management at Hickory Meadows, and on a bicycle connection between Hickory Forest and Hickory Hills.



Goal 5: Ensure the Authority's operating base is as sustainable and diverse as possible.

While the community approved a millage in 2020 that will maintain the Rec Authority's basic operations into 2040, there are still opportunities to expand and diversify funds. The Rec Authority will adhere to the action program described for Goal 4, namely to improve and coordinate event management at Historic Barns Park. Grants have been and will continue to be a critical piece of implementing nearly all of the projects described in this plan.

Event management at Historic Barns Park also provides a specific opportunity to explore more public/private partnerships with the business community. In addition to a singular event manager for the site, transportation management is a major consideration for that operation, as larger events require the rental of shuttle transportation. The Authority will continue to investigate partnerships and operational strategies to control costs and make transportation on and off the site as efficient as possible.

Goal 6: Engage the public and promote the properties as a community-oriented resource.

As an organization that provides for public recreation, the Rec Authority will continue to encourage members of the public to participate in decision-making processes. Currently, the Rec Authority communicates its news through press releases, paid advertising and on its web page. Those interested can also easily find meeting agendas and packets in advance of each monthly board meeting. These agendas, packets and minutes are also archived online for later review.

In addition to what it is already doing, the Rec Authority will also seek opportunities to engage non-traditional civic participants. This could take many forms as the Rec Authority adapts its outreach to satisfy community needs. Examples may include hosting meetings at different times to account for different work shifts, utilizing engagement techniques that consider disabilities, and using both mail and online communication.



Goal 7: Protect and enhance Authority-managed properties so that they are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

The Rec Authority will continue to work toward the triple-bottom line of sustainability. Part of a park's social sustainability is dependent on its ability to host users of all abilities. To assess and improve accessibility at each property, the Rec Authority will continue to collaborate with the Disability Network of Traverse City and other stakeholders. The Rec Authority will also coordinate with the partnering organizations at Historic Barns Park, the public and parks users to get input on desired park features.

Another important factor that guides the Rec Authority's decisions is the need to balance the public's recreation needs with environmental protections. To support this, the Rec Authority should provide additional signage that denotes the environmental significance of the plant and animal habitats found at each site. In addition, for every infrastructure project, the Rec Authority will strongly consider the project's impact on the site's natural features. The Rec Authority should continue to coordinate with the Grand Traverse Conservation District to manage invasive species at

Hickory Meadows and Hickory Forest and seek additional funding to support invasive species prevention and management. The Authority will also complete a joint Forest Health Plan with the City of Traverse City that covers all of Hickory Meadows, Hickory Forest and Hickory Hills.

At all of its parklands, the Rec Authority should ensure that environmental concerns play a role in determining what (if any) built environment features will be introduced. At all four sites, uses will be, to the extent possible, complementary to the natural features of the site.

The West Bay Waterfront site is intended to remain undeveloped for the foreseeable future. The Rec Authority will follow best shoreline management practices to protect water quality at the site.



appendix

2025 PUBLIC SURVEY OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

How well do you feel the Hickory Meadows trails are maintained for summer use?

There is always acceptable signage that is in good shape. Trails are very good for taking a stroll to unwind.

I didn't know how to answer, as I have only been there in the winter.

They looked great this summer when we MTB'd and hiked there

It seems clean and free of debris.

Trails are in good shape & well marked

Have had a good experience, overall. The casual (social) trails that intersect can be confusing. Wish for more signage at official trail junctures.

"Natural forest debris but clear enough to walk easily with a walking stick."

Trails are always in excellent shape in summer, fall, and spring.

Clean, easy to walk trails, and accessible parking year round. Love that there is a trash can to dispose of dog waste, so we don't have to carry it home with us.

It's been a while since I was there but I recall they were lightly maintained to keep native plants growing and prevent invasive species

Trails are marked and no major obstructions

The trails are very well maintained for hiking.

I'm able to run the trails with no trouble.

Never a problem

Natural is better

Never had an issue with the area

Wash out areas are cleaned up. Trails readily visible. Trails could use additional markings/maps.

It's easily accessible from multiple parts of town, has great parking, has connected bike trails, and it showcases what Michigan glades look like in the wild.

Easy to follow and they were clearly marked

I have only been there 3 times and it was wet and dark

Never had a problem on those trails in the years I've walked them

The trails are clearly marked and as easy or a bit of challenge if you want.

I barely use Meadows in the spring-summer-fall season

I haven't visited in awhile

Overall, I think the trails at Hickory Meadows are well maintained. I appreciate all the work it takes to keep them so.

Trails are in good condition, trailheads are neat and clean

Decent most of the time.

Trails are well defined, mowed well, easy to follow, and offer a vast array of options from ADA flat surface to bench-cut inclines.

The rocks placed for drainage on the 2 track off Randolph St are difficult to walk or ride bikes over.

actually it is overly maintained. mowing the trails is unwarranted and goes against what the meadows is supposed to be. It was voted in as a View shed in perpetuity not as a park. This goes especially in winter when it is overrun by cross country skiers which goes against why the voters voted to buy the land and what its charter is supposed to be. It has been turned into Hickory

Hills cross country park even though Hickory Hills has great trails problem is they charge. Using Hickory Meadows in this manner is bad for the flora and fauna of the Meadows. At dusk in the winter walkers could once in a while see a deer or two on the Inchochee trail end of the Meadows this hasn't happened since it got turned into a cross country ski area. "Some" cross country skiing would be fine. also people have been accosted by the skiers they think its all theirs.

Love the mowed trails while keeping meadows natural. One recommendation: please level out entrance meadows North trail for better walking w/ o the South gravel

Trails are clear of debris. Trees do not overhang

Typically, the trails seem rough and worn.

Haven't been there yet this year

I appreciate the mowed paths and the ease of walking

No problem with the trails

They are usually in good shape

No complaints

At least mowing happens. Some washouts are an issue

trails are clean, clear and easy to use

Gravel walkways are always maintained. Downed trees never present. Nice porta bathroom. Good stuff!

I don't go there in summer.

A little over-grown at times, but can move around just fine.

"We have lived here 13 years, the trails have only improved. The drainage has improved. No gullies. Mostly people respect the law though dog poop on the trail is still an issue"

Trails are beautiful

Every time I visit the property, the trails seem to be well taken care of and maintained. No issues to the work being performed.

Needs more parking maybe an area along Randolph Street. Not just the dirt pull off.

Mostly well maintained and groomed in the winter.

Easy to follow

Trails kept clear promptly. Invasive species kept under control

The trails are just right. Wooded trail might be nice if widened slightly so 2 people can walk abreast. Also have noted good erosion mitigation.

It's a low maintenance parkland so I am not displeased as the expectation is that the park is moderately maintained. The dog owners could do a better job for sure.

I think it is a wonderful place to visit and always well maintained.

Trails are mowed, and gravel has been used in seasonally wet places to reduce slip risk.

Great job by volunteers and County crews

The newer trails need to be better benched were this is a slope.

How well do you feel the Hickory Meadows trails are maintained/groomed for winter use?

We do not use hickory meadows in the winter.

They have been good when we have skied there.

Trails were good in winter

Unsure

nicely tracked for skiing - separate snowshoe trails would be nice

I enjoy the classic ski trails. Not too keen on the dog walkers, though.

No option

We love John. The fact that this is groomed at all is phenomenal. However, it's definitely a challenge to maintain a well groomed trail with the volume of walkers and dogs that use it.

See above re: parking lot. Trails are used and continue to be easy to hike or snowshoe on throughout the winter.

Unknown. I don't use trails in the winter

Groomed and clearly signed.

The trails always seem to be well groomed for x-country skiing and snowshoeing. I saw they were groomed for our brief snow this week. (11/9 to 11/11/25)

No complaints!

Groomers rock!!

same

Don't use in winter

Don't go in the winter

Would be nice to know the grooming schedule to plan outings.

The trails are perfect for winter sports and maintained enough and fast enough to be used every day. Could be more accessible or welcoming for fat tires.

Have not been there in the winter

I don't use in winter

There were not many tracks to see where the trails were

It would be nice if the Pisten Bully would groom more often when conditions allow. Maybe have a separate walker trail from the ski trail.

Don't really know, I don't use it in the winter

I don't mind having to trudge through the snow a bit.

It's northern Michigan, there isn't much we can do in the winter on trails except manage. Lots of ice however which makes me avoid.

"Know this by friends who use the trails in winter. We are snowbirds "

I enjoy the new groomed trails and layout

Very well.

Same as above.

I do not have experience using the trails in the winter time.

Fine for conditions at time of the year.

While I do not use the winter trails, they are always groomed well from the volunteers and kept open for all to use

Would like to see lighting added on Hickory meadows side. Trails are easier for beginners and they are unavailable most the time because limited amount of daylight in the winter.

The trails for skiing are wide and groomed well.

its overused its not supposed to be a cross country ski area. It is supposed to be a view shed. cross country skiers have accosted walkers becoming threatening and saying that it is for CC skiers not walkers and dog walkers, this has happened more than once

Love the post snow, daily grooming

Trails for cross country skiing are groomed every morning. Other trails ignored in terms of snow, which is fine for winter. Wouldn't expect otherwise. Do clear of issues on the other trails.

Love the ski trails!

Conflict with skiing

Same

Excellent grooming for XC skiing

Would love to see separate hiking and skiing trails in the winter. And more enforcement of leash laws picking up after dogs. The poop on the trail in the spring is awful.

The grooming is great. Some areas are unclear about locations for walkers vs. skiers. I still get confused about turns for doing the full loop (is it just me?)

It's marginal

Do not often use in winter to provide answer.

grooming for x-c skiing is excellent

Its just the nordic vs. hiker and dog thing. But it's shared, i get it.

As older folks, we like to ski at Hickory Meadows because there are routes with no downhill, easy to access from our home, and consistently groomed.

I think they're maintained well.

again the trails are great but too many people think their dogs can run loose and leave poop on the trails

As well as can be expected

The seasonal winter grooming volunteers are always able to make it out to groom the trails depending on the weather condition. Great work!

Pretty good most times

Very easy to follow; nicely groomed

N/A

I have walked up here before cross country skiers used this area. Without a better way to phrase this, they act like they kind of own the property in the winter. It should be emphasized that it is used for all.

Separate groomed from walking trails better

Please maintain a walking trail for non skiers.

Currently do not use in the winter

The winter time has a more intentional maintenance component.

great job by cross country ski groomers!

the trails are very well groomed for cross country skiing.

Excellent grooming and trail design. Very complementary to neighboring Hickory properties

When we have snow, the volunteer and City staff do an amazing job with the grooming for XC skiing.

Great job by Hickory groomers

The grooming by volunteers and city employees is awesome!

How safe do you feel when using the Hickory Meadows property?

There have always been other families/people xc-skiing.

I wouldn't go out alone

I feel safe if I'm with my husband or dog, but if I was by myself I would be more cautious

I have never felt unsafe.

Never encountered problems

I only use the trail in daylight when others are apt to be around, as I am usually alone.

Sometimes the frisbee trails and upper parking lot attracts some pretty heavy pot smoking. It's legal, I get it, but over the last couple years we notice more folks just sitting in their cars, smoking, and loitering. My husband prefers I not walk the upper wooded trails alone.

Um, I feel safe

"Never have a concern for safety and use the area from dawn to dusk."

I feel safe in the open areas. There are usually many people out there. In the wooded areas, as a woman, I try to remain situationally aware.

I'm not ever afraid to use the trail system.

A few unleashed dogs are a PIA

it is a safe environment

Never seen anything out of the ordinary

Never feel threatened and have cell phone signal throughout.

Umm....the only users are people walking the trails.

I wouldn't walk there alone- always with someone. I don't see any safety measures (signage for emergency calls etc)

I've never had problems. But I have seen posting of people complaining about an old man that lives near by harassing trail users

I walk with a partner and feel no issues

Never had any issues

It would be 5/5 if more people understood and respected the rules about dogs being on leash. We could go there more often if this was less of an issue.

Dogs off leash may be an issue but I haven't run into that personally.

I grew up in the area and know the property well, I also am usually in the company of 2 decent sized dogs and or a friend or too so I understand this answer could differ if I was a solo female walking the park unaccompanied.

People on bikes flying by without warning can really ruin an otherwise pleasant walk. I've nearly been run over several times at the Meadows and while hiking at Hickory Hills because riders don't announce themselves or give any notice when they're coming up behind you.

Safe from humans but always have an issue with unleashed dogs while I am there.

no reason to think Hickory Forest hunters won't migrate, or others will get the wrong idea.

Safe from personal attacks but please place signs for bikers coming from walker's back to ring bell so I can move leashed dog to my right side. Love the multi use

Feel safe other than worrying about the bikers using Hickory. I know other Slabtown residents who have stopped walking in there due to the cyclists. They take the trails as fast as they can, including around blind curves and very narrow trails.

Dangerous on some trails, such as higher wooded trail behind Wayne St homes (I.e. high, narrow trail behind large 2 story brick

and 2 story green home on Wayne), with big drop off on side. Lastly, cyclists feel they have right of way and hikers should move quickly out of their way. Always worrying they will appear.

Occasionally, bikers will zip around corners and have to skid to a stop to not hit me and my dog.

TC generally feels safe.

I'm usually with other people

Aside from sometimes rude (ish) mountain bikers, I find people to be friendly and nice to our dogs.

No problem

The only thing that makes me feel unsafe is dogs off leash.

I have heard the story about the shooting there and it makes me nervous when I'm with my dog here. Also, worried about hunters.

It's utopia out there

I am there often and have always felt very safe. I've never had any reason to feel unsafe.

Feels safe during day hours

"i guess i come from the time a guy shot a dog and that I have been jumped on by unleashed dogs. mostly ok but always have to be watchful"

Biggest problem is from people having their dogs off leash

No issues with people or animals when visiting the property. I notice dogs off leash, but people are quick to notice approaching public and leash up.

Dogs off leash and their owners need to clean up their waste.

Its safe other than off leash pets

All good

I have never had a problem

14 years without incident

All good!

"So many people walk their dogs off leash. We really need an area within Hickory Meadows, where it is considered OK to let your dogs roam off leash."

No safety concerns.

never had an incident

There are still a lot of folks who ignore the dogs on leash requirement.

No troubles in many years, and few signs of vagrancy

I have never felt unsafe when using the Hickory Meadows trails.

It's Traverse City. My only fear in local parkland is somebody's unleashed dog.

How well do you feel Hickory Meadows balances preservation of natural features with public access and usage?

It's hard to tell in the winter, but it appears well balanced.

Preserves sense of 'wilderness' while offering good trails in middle of populated & easy to reach area

The meadow loop provides for functional use (XC ski training). The alternate loop above the meadow is great for hiking and wild flower viewing.

Meadow has low coverage of native plants.

I think its done well

To perfectly preserve natural features, you wouldn't allow any of us on the property! I think a good job is done ensuring that the natural area is well maintained.

More work to add trails would be good.

No excessive maintenance, kept as natural as possible.

Trails are nicely maintained and marked. Great native tree/shrub planting

For the space it's good

Feel like it's a great balance right now. Could be better erosion control in some places.

I don't think many people know about hickory meadows and there is limited programs to entice people there. Doing a great job preserving but not getting people to use the park.

You need to plant more native trees and grasses.

Area seems cleaned up seasonally and promotes use.

I think there could be more done for re-forestation, native plant diversity and or invasive removal

Very well. However, some more intentional restoration planning of the fields using native plants for wildlife benefits (and aesthetics) would be beneficial, and deciding on where trees can regrow or not (allowing early successional habitat vs maintaining open meadows). Let me know if you'd like any more thoughts on this.

I think that the work done to maintain and expand the trails is thoughtful and achieves a balance of allowing users to experience nature while encouraging users to stay on groomed trails to keep erosion or social paths from causing damage to the park.

It's a beautiful piece of land and grateful to be able to access it.

Feels like an escape from the city, right in slabtown

cc skiing is way overdone and needs to be severely curtailed.

Having walked the fields 15 years, I appreciate the + changes of: improving & maintaining paths, naturalizing with native plants & trees, encouraging respect for all users w/ signage, benches & bird houses!

Felt a well balanced preservation, until again, cyclist usage was allowed. Fyi, they also attempt to make new cut thrus, other trails so that they can go faster on turns, curves, etc.

I appreciate the natural meadow with clear walking trails

A great location and well maintained

It's very sensitive and proper!

I helped the conservancy plan milkweed seedlings once, which I enjoyed and I feel is very important for the preservation of the natural features. And at the same time I appreciate that there are maintained trails for public use.

We use the open areas for skiing and hiking, and the woods for more natural hikes.

"there is a clear attempt to bring nature into reality, but still too many people do nThese are the problem people. its not the park but how to have people comply with the regulations"

Need to keep it natural and protect the landscape. But appreciate the porta potty

The maintenance of the trails is very enjoyable for walking. Having multiple "meadows" corridor areas presents a nice appeal for multiple natural features and wildlife that make it very enjoyable. Park entrances are very noticeable and easily accessible in all seasons.

Seems good, a variety of Trail users peacefully coexisting

I appreciate the reforestation

I don't feel like any public events should be held in the meadows. I don't think the area should be advertised in any way. Seems to get enough traffic right now.

Holding up well from current usage

It is not over developed. Let's keep it that way

I am very concerned about the expansion of mountain biking in Hickory Meadows because if the mountain bikers share the same trails as walker/runners that will put the walkers/runners in danger.

Great!

it is a perfectly balanced.

I appreciate that trails are occasionally re-routed to allow some overused areas to recover.

Responsible oversight by Rec Comm and Advisory Group

The addition of a porta potty and trash/recycling bins at the trailhead is a wonderful addition.

What improvements would you like to see at Hickory Meadows?

That first steep hill to get to the xc-ski trail. That's a tough hill for xc-skiers.

More mountain biking and Cross country skiing trails

Better trail signage

Groomed for mountain biking.

Added biking trails nice, pump would be fun

"1) snowshoe trails separated from skiing would be nice 2) turn off parking lot lights when ski center not in use to allow dark sky viewing (northern lights, meteor showers, etc) 3) provide parking at Wayne entrance"

Hickory Meadows is a simple, diverse area & doesn't need man-made improvements.

Trailheads - other than at hickory hills - have been difficult to find with limited parking. Dark-sky friendly lighting.

No improvements needed - keep it simple and as natural as possible.

More trails if they are compatible with sustaining an appropriate environment that's friendly to birds/wildlife.

Mountain bike trails

Additional lands purchased and attached to the property.

Unsure

None

Better trails. Cleaned up parking area. Maybe new/more trails

More maps along the way to directionality.

Separate bike trails would be a bonus but it's not a problem right now. Everyone is polite Better erosion control.

Traverse in general is lacking with public play structures for kids, but i am not sure if hickory meadows is the right spot for a public play place.

Better marked trails & trail signage

"Improved single track bike trails and better trail signage/maps. Groomed trails for winter bike riding and xc skiing"

Do some restoration on the old fields to add native grasses and forbs.

nothing, I would like it to stay the same, natural and free

None at this time

I think there could be more done for re-forestation, native plant diversity and or invasive removal.

More native plants in the meadow and more trees in smaller meadows (allow early succession to occur)

I appreciate the native plantings that are done, please continue as well as the maintenance/curbing of invasive species. I would love to see more opportunities for the community to volunteer for planting/trail maintenance/invasive species control meet ups.

more deliberate habitat creation

"Dedicated bike trails so hikers & dogs don't get run over by mountain bikes - I've had some close calls"

Connect to Hickory Hills trails without going through the parking lot or crossing roads. Better separation of walking and skiing trails. fire pit, warming hut

More options for passive recreation. (ie disc golf)

More emphasis and use of the little pond. A formalized trail going around it might be cool. Maybe more native plantings in the meadows as well. Perhaps a pollinator garden

Lighting for XC ski trails, more trails cut/groomed for beginners/intermediate skiers

"Improve the walkway where the large drainage rocks are. Clean up area by the stream where all the dead trees have fallen."

much fewer groomed cross country trails, some yes but now its ridiculous and is bad for animals trying to survive winter. Also no reason to mow the trails let people who want to use it, use it in a natural way bugs and all

refer to #15: also, a seasonal social meet up coffee @ lodge or part entry in addition to clean up park day?

A water bottle filler would be great!

None

Obviously I will state that bicycles not be allowed. Adding even more trees than the ones that have already been added by/along the parking lot for shade purposes in the summer.

more natural integration with hickory hills - e.g. extension of trails etc.

More benches / sitting areas.

Better connections to local trails

Biking trails

"Easy connection with Hickory Woods. Limited bicycles. Allow pond to fill"

Separation of trail uses between bike and hike in the summer and xc ski and hike in the winter.

Enclosed dog park added to a section of the park.

Improved signage for designating users groups and helping to navigate the loop. Better connections to the parking lot.

A connection across M-72 to Morgan Farms

More cycling trails

Possibly a water station for filling water bottles and/or for dogs/pets.

Honestly just some additional wooded trail that is bike friendly. Also maybe post some multi-use information so bikes on trails is not a surprise... unless bikes are not allowed in which case we should discuss that. Also please keep planting trees in the huge open fields.

Bathroom facilities

Better maps

More trails or more clear trails in wooded areas.

reminders people need to carry their dog crap bags out. Not just pick them up but actually put the bag into the bin. why can't people do that?

The trail by Randolph needs to be widened for 2 people to walk side by side .

Filling in the spots that get wet and muddy

"Everything is just great the way it is. No complaints. One day I would like to see the pond area revamped with better stairs for access and approach."

More parking!!!!!!

Bathroom access at trailheads

Better signage and connectivity to adjacent rec areas. Maybe some fat bike grooming

None

I would like to see mt. bike trails.

More woods trails

See above for wooded trail suggestion.

"Create a smaller dedicated area within Hickory Meadows, where it is permitted that dogs can be off leash. I would like to see separate designated trails designed for hikers and designed for bikers. "

Better parking - Hickory gets really full with alpine and CC skiing traffic - and the roadways and not ideal to park on. It would be great to add more parking areas to serve all users.

removal of more invasive species/planting of more natives

none

Extend winter grooming to the M72 trailhead, improve the trail in the utility corridor, add an additional connection to Hickory Hills North of the lodge that can be skied across without having to go through the parking lot.

Permanent signage. Safe connection across M-72 to Morgan Farms and ultimately to the Leelanau Trail.

can't think of any

Water bottle refill station and a bike repair station would be great.

Map signage

What would you like to see stay the same at Hickory Meadows?

Keep the ski trails.

I think its great cross country ski track is nice

everything else!

Natural

Public access to open space. In winter, lighting for night use.

Tree coverage: please do only absolutely necessary try cutting.

Keeping it basic, no need to make the area more complex or change it - it is great the way it currently is.

I really like that you are out grooming right after each snow, especially since the snow is so sporadic now with climate change.

Unsure

Natural landscaping. Doesn't feel overly manicured.

All of it. I'd have no problem if it stayed the same.

I like the walking trails keep those.

No paved trail system

Ski trails are well laid out.

Forest areas. No bike trails, they're detrimental to the forest floor.

Everything.

The nature of the area

NON-PAVED, natural surfaces!! I relish having the opportunity to seek out natural terrain and surfaces.

The low-impact use.

Annual work bees so the community can participate in actively supporting/improving the space.

groomed winter trails

Natural areas

Multiple users Bike Ski walk. Dogs must be on a leash

Not sure if mountain biking is allowed, but it shouldn't be.

The quiet nature and ease of access.

Continue with good grooming efforts on xc ski trails. Keep focus on natural and native species.

Most everything , so it can remain natural.

the pond and the benches,

continuing the atmosphere of multi usage while encouraging respect thru + signage

The prairie, great sidepaths, and the healthy tree diversity!

Walking trails

Enjoy the mixture of meadows and wooded trails.

Nordic trails

Small but nice paths

Ski trails

Trails

The open nature of the space

I like the signage and information that's available.

Multi-use.

Like it the way it is!

Quiet

Range of trail difficulty.

all of it . The trails, but not too many. open spans. Emphasis on non invasives

Most of it . It's a beautiful and natural jewel right in our town

I enjoy the way the Conservation District manages the property. I find no issues with anything on a daily basis and would like almost everything to stay the same.

ice rink

Paths through meadow and forest with good directional information. Multiple access points. Connectivity to Hickory Hills and Hickory Forest.

Yes

I don't think any events should be held in the meadows and I think it should be kept as separate as possible from Hickory Hills. It should just be used by walkers and cross country skiers.

Minimal bike traffic (and I'm a cyclist) trail conflict with walkers

The low-key atmosphere.

The landscape and rustic feel

The trail layouts are good. There's open/flat terrain, wooded/hilly terrain, and a great place to sit by the pond
everything

While continuing to plant trees, maintain some of the nice open sight lines throughout the property. Keep the site natural with minimal signage or other features.

The wooded areas and the viewsapes on the property.
maintenance

The winter grooming!

Mix of narrow and wide trails, more winter grooming trail/widen trail toward m72 barn

How well do you feel the Hickory Forest trails are maintained for summer use?

The trails looked great when we were mountain biking this summer and fall

Nicely designed for hilly area - fit lots of trail in small area

Easy walking trails, good signage, porta-john, and garbage available for dog waste.

Clearly signed and no major obstructions

I didn't realize the trails were maintained at all.

No complaints.

Lovely flow of trails

It's beautiful, although I do see some erosion on the slopes in the summer. Might make hiking a little treacherous.

Clear easy to use i like how they have a connection to the public roads

Best trails ever!

Need to connect the mountain bike trail to a system through Hickory Hills.

Very well.

Some washouts but overall good.

Where the meadows has plenty of accessible trails, the Forest offers more challenging terrain and other sights that are unique to the area. They don't need to be mowed or trimmed, it offers a more backcountry feel the way it is.

they are properly maintained not overly maintained

Haven't used during summer

Is some growth overhanging on trails

The new trails are really starting to break in and are beautiful.

The trails are unmarked and not adequately maintained.

"We love the narrow trails (my husband helped build them a couple years ago)"

Some obstacles

Kind of muddy in spots and eroded in others

Trails with signs were great.

new but are really easily walkable

They are beautiful and well designed

There are areas along #7 and #8 Where the vegetation encroaches over the paths. I am also concerned About erosion which I would guess is a result from the many bikers I confront who use paths that they are not supposed to use.

Every time I use the trail systems at Hickory Forest, they are well maintained and free and clear of downed trees. At times there are trees that fall, but the conservation district is quick to act.

Usually pretty dialed

Nice maps

The trail at Hickory Forest are very well maintain for hiking

Beautiful walking path

This is a newer space, trail is used less frequently by hikers.

It's intended to be natural and rustic - it's maintained just fine.

so far, so good

Some tread work required in spots on the walking trails, but otherwise upkeep is great. Trailhead parking lot is always well-maintained.

Need clearer signage that bicycles are NOT allowed on hiking trails. Do not need so many signs about picking leaks.

The trails look great! No trash, minimal blockages from trees/limbs, and over all just really top notch

How well do you feel the Hickory Forest trails are maintained for winter use?

Great for hiking

I don't use it in the winter but I have heard good things.

trails are on steep hill sides and trickier for winter use. Also harder to follow when snow covered. would like to snowshoe but concerned about following trail - blazes would help

Plowed parking!

Not used

I didn't realize the trails were maintained at all.

No complaints.

A little more challenging than meadows, but if prepared(spikes) it's a great trail

Might need more branch removal in the winter; many downed branches and this is a hazard for back country or Nordic skiers, especially.

I don't ski, but I haven't heard complaints.

Have not used them in the winter

No winter use

They are not maintained as far as I can tell. Some skiers and hikers venture through on their own. It would be nice to groom the mountain bike trail for biking and skiing.

Trees over trail appear to be removed promptly

Unsure. Haven't visited in the winter.

Can't speak on

Not aware of winter trails

Enjoyed last winter walks w/ dog early am on groomed trails before skiers.

Never tried winter

Unsure

Have not accessed in Winter

They become slippery and icy. Good for snow shoeing but not much else

I'm not sure. We tend to ski (x country) instead of walking in the winter

Have not used in winter

Hikers usage generally keeps the trail packed down

Not used in winter

I have limited winter exposure there

n/a-do not use trails in the winter

Parking entry is awesome, thanks! Just not sure trail wise what is happening in winter.

Haven't used in winter

i don't know in reality so i am a no comment person

Not really sure

Minimal maintenance requirement during the winter months of the property. Seems to be well maintained, can be difficult at times to know where the trail is after heavy snow accumulations.

Seems fine but is it maintained in the winter?

Not here in winter.

I think it's appropriately maintained as a low-traffic parkland.

I remember walking with care when it was snowy/icy, but I think that's okay for that type of trail. They do not need to be pristine. If there is too much ice or snow, I just won't walk on them then.

Trails can get slippery after melt-freeze events, but that is the nature of a hiking trail in a preserve. Perhaps some seasonal warning signs about narrow and potentially slippery trails at the entrance would help.

Needs little maintenance in winter

We haven't visited in the winter yet, but we will!

How safe do you feel when using the Hickory Forest property?

If I'm with my husband or dogs I feel safe. If by myself, I would use extra precautions, probably not go at night, etc.

Never had probs but would be happier if hunting weren't allowed

Never met an unfriendly person, and the trail gets a lot of use!

"Never had a concern or instance that questions my safety as a single female on the trails."

No complaints.

Cell phone signal throughout and with all the traffic you always feel like help or witnesses are close by

Limited use by people

I am usually accompanied by dogs and or a friend or two when walking these trails.

Same issue as Hickory Meadows and Hickory Hills with mountain bikers. Unfortunate that they need to ride in these areas when there are tons of other options in the area specifically for that type of use.

In a very safe area although the poor cell reception could be an issue in an emergency

Unleashed dogs are always a problem

allowing hunting endangers anyone who uses it except the hunters, this should never be used for hunting.

Nice, less busy than hickory meadows. Please note, cyclists do ride on these trails. Not nearly as many as Hickory Meadows though.

Yes

Great wildflowers, beautiful relief in the landscape

the location is very central to the city center. it offers a variety of trees and meadows. Its not over crowded,

The park offers and array of opportunities to enjoy. Some of the best spring ephemerals to see in the area. Unique bird species can be spotted here making it a very enjoyable bird watching location.

I really enjoy spring time at Hickory Forest with all the rare red trilliums in bloom, jack-in-the-pulpits and all the other flowers and trees. The woods are absolutely beautiful.

It would serve the users well to better define the boundary between the hickory forest and hickory hills area so users are crystal clear on any rules that change between properties. It's great to have the connectivity!! But sadly without a connective mindset between the two property owners on how to manage differing rules and passing from one property to the other, it lends itself to being a problem even if the user doesn't realize they have done anything wrong (or even moved onto a different property).

Ascending and descending gently from the forest floor to the ridge, but always immersed

How well do you feel Hickory Forest balances preservation of natural features with public access and usage?

Nicely designed for hilly area - fit lots of trail in small area

"The “newer” or more formal 'trails are appreciated - keep people on the trails and not making their own is appreciated."

Would appreciated more MTB trails as the terrain is well suited to it.

No complaints.

It doesn't need to be super built up. The trail access off Fouch is beautiful and accessible for those with physical limitations.

Only walking trails advisable

New trails take advantage of topography to be sustainable. The wildflowers are starting to recover after the disruption of trailbuilding.

Very thoughtful trail design and appreciate the delineation as a natural area with a lighter touch in such a special woods. Allowing connection to the more intensive recreational goals at Hickory Hills and Meadows seems to be working well.

Better signage/trail access between Hickory Meadows and Hickory Forest

Seems to be OK.

Absolutely phenomenal. The spring wildflowers are incredible, so the minimal approach to trails and infrastructure is appreciated.

except for the hunting which is dangerous for anyone walking through and especially their dogs. I can't go in there when hunters are there, if they miss the deer which is most of the time they could hit a person or dog, which would precipitate a huge lawsuit which would mean Hickory Forest would become private property not to mention the rest of the millions lost to the county

Please keep this at it's most beautiful, natural state

"Good trails, yet feel immersed in nature. BUT note - Bikers also ride here even though you state they are not allowed "

One of my favorite parts of the property is the high overlook spots with the flowers

Hickory forest needs more public access facilities.

"We love the maintained trails and the carefully preserved Woods"

Better trail maintenance

So underrated. Wonderful asset for this community. Such a great escape into nature.

It's a nice new facility

Lovely natural natural area

Great being so close to town.

"i like the tree planting, the invasive species removal, the well groomed trails. maybe a bit more on dogs poop pick up (more than leash issues) would be good. Poop in the middle of the trail summer fall or winter is a nuisance."

The trails are very well designed for the hilly terrain

With the minimal traffic and trail placement, I feel the accessibility with natural features blend well as the trail navigates the terrain of the park. This allows for both low and high scenic scenes.

I think it would be nice to have some of the old two tracks be hiking trails.

Amazing trail construction!

I am very concerned about the expansion of mountain biking in Hickory Forest because if the mountain bikers share the same trails as walker/runners that will put the walkers/runners in danger.

Great stuff! Keep it natural, yet usable!

I appreciate that the majority of the area with the sensitive plants and steep slopes which are susceptible to erosion are reserved for walking/hiking.

...Except for bicycles on the hiking trails

We love that, aside from the trail, there is very little intervention on this property. One bench is plenty, please don't clutter it up with more. We also appreciate the clear effort someone has made to prevent folks from creating new paths and to prevent folks from walking in areas prone to erosion.

What improvements would you like to see at Hickory Forest?

Would love to see more mountain biking trails on the west side of town where we live. It's a half hour drive to the Vasa or Palmer woods.

"1) blazes would help in following trail, especially in winter 2) more permanent trail marking & maps - current paper signs are good but fragile 3) signs should show relation to Hickory Hills trails"

"Nothing - keep it simple and the way it is."

Would appreciate more MTB trails as the terrain is well suited to it.

Purchase of the adjoining Kukla property for incorporation into the forest.

Unsure

More substantial maps in the future. More obvious connection with hickory hill at once you leave the forest, and you want to continue, it's not always obvious how to connect with trail system at Hickory Hill.

Maybe separate bike trails from hiking. Everyone is polite and I've had no issues but it would be nice to get some speed up without having to worry about hikers

Low impact activities may help make it more used. Disc golf course. Small play structure at park entrance, etc.

None!

Connect the mountain bike trails to a system through Hickory Hills.

Consider making some loops one way trails as they are so narrow it makes it difficult to let others pass without stepping off the path.

"Everything seems very well signed and maintained. Ongoing garlic mustard removal would be beneficial to the understory of the maple-beech forest there. I have heard the parking lot can get full on Barney road, likely most congested during peak spring wildflower season. Not sure what the solution is other than possibly a sign directing people to the other entrance (if one is not there already). However, the strenuous nature of the hike from Hickory Hills may not work for some visitors. "

more biking and groomed xc skiing

Love the wilderness feel - don't change a thing

Improved trails for skiing and biking. Trails connections to Hickory Hills and Hickory Meadows.

More passive recreation options (ie disc golf).

Nothing! Keep it the way it is. Permanent signage will be nice.

Better mapping of what's available for use.

NO HUNTING PERIOD!

I would celebrate some trail-side benches for vista-enjoying!

None

Signage (and other?) for no bikes

More dedicated mountain biking trails. Integration with (future) hickory hills trail network.

Expansion of the multi use trail

More biking infrastructure and better connections to local trails

More biking and ski trails

As above

Clear signage

Separation of trail uses between bike and hike in the summer.

More trails. Dedicated bike trails

More cycling trails with proper design for sustainable bike riding

The multi-use trail is great. But would love to see a bike loop in there. Even if it is small I know it would get used often. I dare say more than the hiking loop!

No bikes; my husband (89) can no longer hike as far as in the past too bad that you have to walk through all the pine plantation before you get to the natural part of the Forest. Small complaint about a lovely place!

Trail connections

sadly it all comes down to behavior, our society doesn't want any control, but encouraging people to think about others and having a wider cleaner place would be great.

The trails are narrow and a little scary among the ravines

Better signage to discourage bikers from using the hiking paths. Also better signage Regarding keeping dogs on a leash at all times.

I would like to see a Trailhead information station to give brief highlights of the park and some key features of the property.

A fully accessible trail.

Better access signage

See answer to 34.

Unsure. Not as familiar with this area.

"For the connector trail, If it is required to be a shared used trail, that allows bikes, Please improve site lines. I would like to see a connector Trail that is designated for bikes only. Remove the off camber and short, tight radius turns and replace with sweeping bermed turns. I would like to see a connector trail that allows bike access to 72 south of Zimmerman landscaping. "

I would like to see the original trails that were built by the Kroupas re-opened wherever possible.

Improve a plan on how to handle the boundary between Hickory Hills and the Hickory Forest so that the users do not have confusion and all are clear =)

Just keep on maintaining and keeping invasive plants at bay

Potentially a future bike route out to M72 if connectivity to Hickory Meadows parking lot (MDOT ROW) and across M72 to Morgan Farms and the Leelanau Trail can become a possibility.

Clear signage on bicycles - and you could include the Hickory Hills loop on the trail map, which makes it a 3-mile hike.

Better way finding and a sign on Barney indicating that there is a trailhead.

The bike signs need to be more clear. "Bikes Only" could mean no walkers. How about "Bike Route"

Map signage

What would you like to see stay the same at Hickory Forest?

Everything else

Keeping it simple - don't make it more complicated to just go explore the natural area.

Public access.

Rustic charm of narrower trails.

No lights. I love that it's left dark.

I'd be happy if it stayed the way it is.

The trails and trees.

Everything!

Separate hiking and biking trails.

The wildflowers!

We enjoy the spring ephemerals, large old-growth trees, wildflowers, and birdsong, especially in the spring and fall seasons. The natural features are amazing, efforts to preserve them as is with a light touch are appreciated. thank you!

habitat preservation

Wilderness

preservation

Restrictions to mountain bikers kept the same (needs better enforcement)

The current state of the trails and infrastructure is perfect for this property.

Everything except the hunting

see #34

I love the minimal trail signage and all of the sweet switchbacks.

Trail system

Surrounded only by nature and walkers

trail design and layout.

The hiking trails should stay designated for hiking and stay narrow and low impact

Small trails!

Trees

No more development

Hike only trails

Keep the trees!

I like the narrow trails, even for bike trails. Trails that blend in that allows nature to be preserved.

Natural aspect retained, keep paths to minimum

Most of it it's a gorgeous walk

I would like to see the bike traffic remain the same. I really enjoy being able to enjoy most of the property without having a bike flying by.

Limited bike usage on winding hilly trails. Only bike use on multi-use trail. Preservation of native plants.

I like the way it is. As much as I love mt. biking, I do not think trails should be made on this piece of property with all the beautiful wild flowers, etc.

I don't think any events should take place there and I don't think it should be advertised. It has enough traffic currently.

The tree canopy is awesome.

Views under the canopy of the rolling valleys are great.

Everything else!

Lookin' good

The forest with its amazing Spring ephemerals.

everything else

The beautiful tree canopy and spring ephemerals.

Almost everything!

How well do you feel Historic Barns Park is maintained for summer use?

Trails are good.

Botanic garden facilities are excellent. Trail signage should be improved. I walk through there from slabtown to Copper Ridge med facilities but it's not very clear how the trail works.

Above average for volunteers

I can walk the entire property (keeping to sidewalks or the one trail to Copper Ridge) and I never think that it looks poorly maintained.

I think the trails could be better marked.

No complaints.

It is

It's perfect

The fairy garden looks messy and i think it should be cleaned up. But my kids do like running around and looking at the items. Having an outdoor rotating art exhibit may be more interesting for the parents to bring kids back to more often.

Every time I have been there, it has been well maintained. I attribute that to the volume of people who use/visit the gardens and/or rent the facility.

Very well.

The gardens - botanic garden and community garden - are really beautiful! The SEEDS farm doesn't appear to be well maintained. Could it become more community garden plot space?

Usually in good condition

not over maintained or under maintained

I am amazed at some of the newer gardens I am seeing well along in the process of development. I have not seen any easy access to restrooms, however, and I do not stay for extended periods because of this.

A lot of trash

I love the maintained gardens and all the plant identification

Not able to comment

Trail access could be better.

Love the trails!

It's gorgeous

I honestly haven't noticed and active "maintenance" on the walking/hiking trails, but they are easily accessible and I enjoy them.

Too much money being spent on it.

Nice but still a work in progress

The grounds are mowed, but the area still looks shabby.

I bike past it nearly every day. I see people out there. Its great

While visiting the Barns property, I find it to be well maintained and cared for.

I thought there were going to be better maintained mt. bike trails made and improved at the Historic Barns Park.

It's on its way but not completed

Botanic Garden is amazing.

Overall it the park is well maintained, but I cringe when I enter the park and the drive is lined with invasive autumn olive

We love the various flowers, walkways, and the fairy walk. It always seems clean, well maintained, yet provides a habitat for pollinators.

It is a true gem and easily accessible to visitors from out of town.

I always find parking. The space is abundant with vegetation, and I particularly love the Botanic Gardens

...and getting better all the time

The Barns Park is one of the best maintained parks in the area. Gorgeous flower beds, well maintained grassy areas, and just overall clearly well loved by the volunteers

How well do you feel Historic Barns Park is maintained for winter use?

Unsure how to answer as we don't use it in the winter.

Garden facilities are good. Haven't used trails in winter

Don't know. Haven't been there in the winter

N/A

I haven't been to the trails in the winter, so I can't comment.

No complaints.

Don't use in winter

Don't know

No problems. Maybe same day snow removal on the paved trail going up to Copper Ridge.

Do not use it much in the winter. I wish there were more events in the big barns during winter. Like date nights or crafts and educational events hosted by seeds on the weekends.

I have not been in there during the winter so I cannot comment

I don't use this area as much in winter

I don't visit in the winter unfortunately.

More frequent snow plowing needed for road, parking

I don't go there much in the winter so can't answer this

Many trails and spots get very icy in the winter. I know some of that is out of the Rec Authority control, but it does deter us from visiting in the winter.

Don't visit much in the winter

see above

I usually do not think of going to the park in winter, as it seems to have less activities that are publicized during the winter months.

Not able to comment

Uncertain - have not been there in Winter

Doesn't feel as accessible in the winter.

Don't go there much in winter

Snow clearing on the hike and bike trail is good, but inconsistent when we receive frequent snowfall

do not often visit in the winter

It's winter - what can you do?

Again, I honestly haven't noticed any active "maintenance" on the trails in the winter other than trails packed down by other visitors.

Too much money is being spent on it.

Fear of falling

Even though I live here year round my family doesn't use the property in the winter.

I see it less in winter so cannot really comment

Beautiful all seasons of the year

I actually do not know, I'd assume since it is well taken care of in the summer that it is also in the winter months.

roads not always plowed leaving large chunks of frozen snow

Not here in winter so cannot answer 45

It's quiet in the winter.

I have never been there in the winter

I don't visit in the winter but with the barn improvements it will be more to do in the winter.

I actually to go there too much in the winter

Plowing seems to be good when I am there.

Doesn't need much except plowing

The paved multimodal trails that passed by and through the park are not always cleared

Even in winter the parking lot is cleared and trails are useable

How safe do you feel when using the Historic Barns Park property?

We've always felt safe there.

No problems

No homeless tents

Never had a concern

I have only used the Historic Barns Park in the daytime, but I have never felt unsafe there.

As a woman, I'm cautious on the trails.

No complaints.

Since the woods got cleaned up

Never had issues

I am scared to be in the fairy garden.

Sometimes unhoused folks are in the area or outlying grounds that I travel through to get there (via TART trail from Division).

The only concern I really have is an encounter with someone on drugs

I haven't experienced any issues there but if nefarious activity is present, motion sensor lights rather than lights that stay on all night, seem to be a good idea. Additionally, this would help decrease light pollution.

Most always there are people around. Could use more night lighting.

Seems fairly safe. Only had one issue in the last 15+ years (off leash dog)

Don't use this property much, other than to access the Commons Natural Area trails. Sometimes it feels a little crowded at HBP with all the different ventures going on.

Still have issue with homeless people once in a while and people that look like they are up to trouble.

never know who's gonna come creeping out (home less drugies

I have never had an issue, although there are sometimes few people around, so in the case of an emergency or other incident, I am not sure help would be available.

That's why we don't hike here - safety

Not able to comment

I feel relatively safe but be sure to stay aware of surroundings and those (people and/or animals) nearby.

Everyone is nice! There are occasional grouchy people but harmless

It's safe. Period.

I've encountered a few unhoused people over the years. One we suspected was dead, but we were able to rouse him and he declined assistance. I remember witnessing the aftermath of a forest fire probably 20 years ago - fire started by unhoused folks, unfortunately. I'm not sure if the "hippy tree" is part of this survey area, but I've had negative encounters with folks coming/going from that situation.

I have had no concerns with safety

with so many guns around how can anybody feel safe no matter where they are

There are always volunteers and staff working in the area of the Historic Barns property. Also, being more of an open area provides a safe feeling.

TCCG had some theft last year & again recently. We now sadly lock the gates

Currently it feels really safe, but some past issues with encampments in the natural area around the barns does lend itself to questioning being alone sometimes on property.

I would say 5, but as a community garden member it was disturbing to have the incidents of theft

I feel safer now that there is not a large homeless community nearby.

I have never had an issue, but have experienced theft and vandalism in the TC Community garden area.

There are often families and volunteers around.

I have never had an issue at HBP.

I'm a man

I have never had a single bad or questionable encounter there.

Mountain bikers need to pay more attention

How well do you feel the buildings are maintained?

I can only say from the outside, as I've never been inside.

.

Nice facilities

From the exterior, the buildings look well maintained.

The visitor center/gift shop and walled garden are beautifully maintained.

No complaints.

From what I see

They're beautiful

I wish that the barns were open to the public more.

So much work has gone into restoring and improving these buildings and grounds!

Very well.

Safe, appealing

Not entirely sure but they look ok.

no

Everything has appeared to me to be well-maintained.

Not able to comment

Looks great compared to what they did a few years back.

Some of the buildings (not the barns) need some upgrading.

Buildings are clean and maintained well, while still preserving the historic aspect.

They are gorgeous!

Totally beautiful! :)

From the outside they look good. I haven't been inside though

very good where I visit but I haven't seen everything

The expansion and preservations of the Barns and gardens are exceptional

Most of the buildings have been revamped or getting an upgrade which makes them look very well maintained.

Excited for new construction to be completed and opened.

the barns are very well maintained

Don't use it enough to know

Beautiful restoration of the buildings and land!!

I don't spend a lot of my time there indoors. It seems as though there is work being done to improve the buildings!

They are always making wonderful improvements and I think Matthew Ross is a great addition to the Botanic Garden which helps draw more people to visit the site.

It's hard to tell with all the construction now

I think the ongoing work at the Barns and at SEEDs workshop are evidence that the maintenance of the buildings is a priority.

They are well loved

So much great work is being done!

How well do you feel Historic Barns Park balances preservation of natural features with public access and usage?

It appears well balanced.

Keeps nice open space and garden operations

Average

More focused on public access and usage than other natural trails areas nearby but that is OK. See the barns as a popular tourist/out of town activity than say Hickory Forest or Hills.

Having half of the park be grassy fields along with being adjacent to forested trails helps provide a backdrop to showcase natural features well. Most of the outdoor areas are carefully maintained to keep plant life in sight and a major feature. The sidewalks and other paths help as well.

I don't have any concerns about land use.

No complaints.

I'm sure there are conflicts with parking. I typically ride my bike to events there b/c I know parking is a challenge

Good blend of land use

Feels half finished

Never seen too many events, has so much room that it's not an issue.

There is so much to be sad about when you see how over use and abuse of the natural features has diminished the conservation value of the property. I would love to see significant educational outreach, restoration activities, and rule enforcement at the property to bring the splendor/ natural beauty back to these trails.

Very well but the impacts to the woods seem rather intense for the fairy garden area (which my child loves!) and maybe a more suitable location could be found. If not, gentle educational messaging highlighting the value of downed woody debris for mesic northern forests might be a useful info sign to consider some day ~ but I understand the goals may be different than a natural area.

Outstanding -love how the botanic garden tells the history of the site

Good job!

A little overbuilt and less nature focused, but that isn't really the purpose of the property

no

Much attention is towards natural features, which is excellent, but readily accessible restrooms and drinking water would really improve the park for the public.

Not able to comment

From the outside [at least] the historic character is very visible. I have not been inside. The mixture of the old bldgs with community gardens and natural area is awesome.

It would be nice to have trailheads with better integration to the nearby hike and bike trails

Would like to see reasonable rental rates for meetings for non-profit groups. There is a lack of low and no cost venues in the area for groups to hold low impact (no food, no speakers) operation meetings.

It's a nice dance between history and meeting space. Love the acoustics!

Incredible efforts to be commended!

I think they are trying but they could incorporate more sustainable features. For example, plant clover in the grass instead of throwing grass seed down and getting weeds.

like above, I am not involved enough but feel it is going in a good direction

We are so lucky to have this beautiful and historic are preserved

I feel as if the public access. I think it does an okay overall of balancing the natural features with the goal of the park and its amenities.

Not sure

Don't use it enough to know

The Botanic Garden looks great

a LOT of pavement as of late - but I get it with erosion/potholes/perpetual maintenance of natural roads/parking.

It's weighted toward public access and usage, but that is appropriate for this space.

I wish there was a natural playground for my kids (both indoors and outdoors); like the Whiting Forest in Midland or the Meijer Garden's in Grand Rapids.

I do think there could be improvements to the entrance to make it safer to turn in to the park.

The hills and trails feel a bit wilder, while the rest of the park is groomed/designed for human use.

Botanic Gardens are so welcoming to the public, and they have so many events for people of all ages and backgrounds.

No problems yet

"I think there's too much development. Too many fences. Too many signs. Just too much stuff. It becomes a lot of visual clutter that separates us from the real beauty and historic use of that landscape. I think a perfect example is the A

creek that passes through the park at the northern border but there's also a fake creek. The real creek is not accessible but the simulated creek is centered as a feature adjacent to the Colantha statue. The simulated creek is also surrounded by a fence and multiple signs that caution park visitors not to climb on the rocks or drink the water. "

I love the native plants and the foraging garden is really cool. My one quibble is that there is WAY too much plastic and crap being allowed on the fairy trails. When they were all natural materials it was charming. It is becoming trashy.

What improvements would you like to see at Historic Barns Park?

No suggestions

Additional botanical works and sculpture

Trail signage should be improved. I walk through there from slabtown to Copper Ridge med facilities but it's not very clear how the trail works.

Public bathroom

Parking improvements

Nothing to share

Either slight improvements to the human kept areas (near the buildings) to either ensure keeping in touch with the plant history of the area or something else similar. Otherwise, I do not think the Historic Barns Park needs many improvements.

More signage and better marking on the trails.

Any additional lands available incorporated into the park.

?

None

Parking improvements

Clearer delineation between recreation and Botanic Gardens

Water bottle fill stations close to the trail would be nice.

Clean up fairy garden

Improve trail and markings/map. Other than that, I think that area should stay as it is to preserve the environment

Keep improving the buildings!

I'd love to see an alternate pedestrian access from the Kids creek wetland boardwalk towards the visitor center. I know the TART trail goes west but I want to go north sooner and get to the visitor center/ Commons Natural Area on a bike/pedestrian dedicated lane rather than the driveway

STOP WITH THE FAIRY HOUSES. There is so much garbage in the woods already, we don't need to encourage more. Our school cleans up that mess every year and every year I wish they would just stop and educate people why continuing with them is detrimental to the environment. Paint is plastic, glitter is plastic, fake foliage is plastic. There is so much beauty in nature already we don't need to invent silly reasons to go for a walk in the woods. (And the fairies probably hate the plastic garbage too.)

Removal of the plastic tree tubes--if you want ideas on other options, please let me know.

Public restrooms

yoga from YHE

anything to prevent more car traffic onsite and mitigate the traffic noise from silver lake rd

Improved Biking and skiing trails. Trail connections to Hickory Hills

Potential for more family friendly passive recreation (ie disc golf)

Maybe more connections to trails

Focus more on the botanic gardens and what they provide. Better trail mapping and trail signage of the area. Nicer and more available bathroom facilities

none

As mentioned above, restrooms and drinking water.

Better clarity on where we are allowed to explore and where is off-limits.

I love all that I'm seeing. Maintenance will be key.

Quit changing things!!! The more that is added, the more chance of things being ruined because too many people visit - leading to vandalism, etc.

Parking

Financially support Botanic Garden

Any improvement to the Botanic garden park or trail system behind the garden would be wonderful. The renovation of the historic barn with additional community/education space and restrooms (an improvement I know is already in the works but vital).

Better traffic flow

I personally really, really dislike the "fairy garden" concept. As far as I'm concerned it's just garbage in the forest and I truly wish it wasn't a thing.

IDK. I honestly don't even know what/why to do there. But it's beautiful when i ride through.

The wooded areas need established paths to protect landscape. Too bad this wasn't done when property was first opened to the public. GTRLC has shown the way in establishing paths immediately in newly acquired properties. This problem should receive focus and money to remediate. The area is too beautiful to be destroyed.

Increased use. It's a waste.

Better maintenance of the gardens. More flowers. A little more seating to enjoy the space. More shade trees.

as above, not involved enough to make a good opinion

Need public bathrooms and a walkway from the parking lot to the Visitors Center

Filling in areas that get wet and muddy on the trails

None.

permitted parking for TCCG & park volunteers

More parking continue development of Botanic Gardens

improved mt. bike trails

Better SIGNAGE everywhere: Entrance, trails, etc. Also your current signage is kind of negatively stated. Improved parking for larger events. Also could use a few strategic sidewalks. More gardens, better connectivity with the wooded area and trails.

I think it's great.

Looking forward to the completion of the barn. Getting the cause of intermittent water outages at the community garden fixed. (The water has always been quickly restored, but would be great to have the underlying issues solved.)

See answer above

More outdoor concerts and events for the community.

I think the entrance and signage could be better. The vegetation near the entrance sometimes makes it difficult to turn out of the park.

More public events in the Cathedral Barn.

Some improvements to the walkability between buildings/sites. Red Drive is a mess and needs to be improved or closed to vehicular traffic (gate).

Build out the basements of the barns

Better connectivity between parking and the trails.

Less stuff. No more plastic trash fairy garden. Managed waste receptacles so that people don't stuff their trash into park partners bins on trash pickup day. I wish there was less hardscaping and fewer fences.

Better control of fairy trail entries. A drinking fountain or water fill bottle station by the buildings would be cool.

What would you like to see stay the same at Historic Barns Park?

No suggestions.

The barns

Botanic garden facilities

The lighting and easy access.

Structures

Most of the features of Historic Barns Park should stay the same. It is great to have a well-maintained area of human creation, along with an area of little human maintenance with a great view.

The visitor center/gift shop, walled garden, and community garden are beautiful and well maintained.

Public access.

?

Would be happy with it staying the same. More water refills would be great.

The ruin barn with the garden inside it is my favorite spot at the park. Keep that the same.

It's so charming

I love the Botanic Garden grounds and look forward to seeing them maintained and expanded

The community vibe there is great~ the grounds are beautiful and appreciate the tribal gardens, native plants, and environmental education~ thanks for all you do!!

"Sidewalks!! Keep the hiking trails. Reduce speed of mountain bikers on trails"

welcoming to a broad spectrum of community members and visitors

I love the fairy houses, story walk and butterfly garden.

The trails!

Anything that botanic garden has in place is great, community garden is nice to walk through and look at as well.

everything except pull the concrete walk up replace with nice trail

I love taking my dog there and appreciate the doggie bags available at the beginning of the Fairy Trails.

The inviting atmosphere for all uses including those of us who respect the area while leash walking dog.

The great buildings and vegetation!

EVERYTHING that is there now.

Multi use and beautiful gardens

Access to all components

The Botanic Gardens. They are an incredible gift for our community, and I would love to see them continue to grow and offer the beauty they do.

The barns

I love the efforts to resurrect the historical plans/design of the area - especially bringing back native gardens and orchards. That's lovely.

A wonderful piece of land and beautiful gardens in the developed area. The new addition to the barns is architecturally perfect.

Botanic Garden, trails, natural areas, SEEDS

focus on environmental activities, environmental education, natural resources. the importance of preservation

The gardens are incredible and the barns improvements are amazing .

Everything is great and I would like to see everything stay or remain the same for the time being.

limited surface parking

I think it's great!

Great people "those volunteering and the public (dog-walkers, walkers, bikers, etc.) interacting mostly in a supportive, positive way.

The flowers, the labyrinth, the fairy trail. I really love everything about this park.

We love the gardens and the kids love visiting the fairy garden and the new additions.

I think it is very well maintained.

A growing & thriving Botanic Garden!

The look of the property.

Change is inevitable

The easy access on foot or bicycle.

The gardens are beautiful. There is some interesting public art. Activities and events are good. Building preservation is good.

Everything!

Is there anything else you would like to share with the Recreational Authority about its parks and goals?

Connect the high school parking area to the TART Trail and provide parking to encourage commuting to downtown

These are huge assets. Proximity to Hickory Meadow influenced our choice of house (Slabtown).

Love the botanic gardens. It is a very peaceful and beautiful place for my family to spend time.

All of the land asked in this survey should be held as parks and community areas. Please do not sell/rent the land for non-community or private use.

I very much enjoy these resources and am willing to pay for them.

Garfield Township has sprawled over the outskirts of Traverse City with negative impacts to surface water resources (eg. parking lot runoff) and wildlife habitat. It's always the right time to protect land for the citizenry for whom it's important to walk, run, and relax in nature as much as it is to get takeout or get a great deal on the junk we never tire of buying. The natural world deserves as much respect as that of the capitalist world, that's why we've either chosen to stay where we grew up or to have moved here.

Collaborate with the city itself to make sure ALL parks are well maintained. Very uneven maintenance of Parks, especially with regard to overgrowth and visibility

We have a wonderful thing going here. I think we need to continue our efforts to make the entities feel slightly more contiguous"-you can enter on 72 and wander through the meadows to hickory (city owned) and then to the forest and back again. I think currently, it feels a little disjointed. And directionality isn't always clear in the meadows, especially for skiers.

Make MTB trails official. Invite local trail builders to make trails of different ability ratings that are maintainable and that don't add to erosion.

Co-manage Hickory Hills so that ski grooming and biking/hiking trails are consistently maintained for both.

Thank you for all you do for Traverse City and the region! Living in Leelanau County, we greatly appreciate having a nature break when we come to the "big city" and it is so important for young people to connect to nature. thank you!

Just appreciation to all those involved in the management, maintenance and development of these properties. Thank you all!

Thank you!

Thank you for making these spaces available - we love them

Parks near towns priority should be to increase the numbers of people using and getting out and enjoying the outdoors versus preserving the land and not increasing access for user groups.

Thank you for all your work and dedication to our recreational spaces. The hiking spots and trails are one of the best things about this area!

Great job! Would love to see other forms of passive recreation explored in these parks.

The Rec Authority does a great job with the management and preservation of their properties, alongside the GT Conservation District for on-the-ground work. Keep it up!

Please do something with the rocky area on the walkway from Randolph st to make it safer. Thanks

don't over develop like at Hickory Meadows

I wonder about the Grand Traverse Mall and what is going to become of it since so many places have moved out, and I just wonder if the township and/or the county could become involved with transforming some of it (or the parking area) into a community natural area that would also benefit businesses.

Walking these wonderful trails w/ leashed dog for 15 years; continue to encourage the multi use with signage to ring a bell before coming up to walkers; separate/designate Bikers use areas w/ signage

Limit reckless trail bikers and e-bikers on walking trails.

I would like to see a coordinated plan for connected the two main access points in this part of town - hickory area, and the commons. The lack of fluidity when biking or running between the two hubs is appalling. The slow pace at which all government bodies seem to be moving forward on their strategic plans is annoying. I believe both GT commons and hickory have been in a planning phase for three years now with little to show share with the public on their progress. In my opinion, this work on properties so close should never have been started with out a clear strategy for interagency collaboration. If there is such collaboration happening, the development of the lands does not reflect that. There is a lot of promise and potential on this land, but it appears there is not much movement.

Keep up the great work, Rec Authority!

Mileage support for Botanic Garden

Dedicated, sustainable mountain bike trails please. We love to bike and hike but would like those user groups separated.

Create and advertise any potential volunteer opportunities for the community to help make these community spaces better.

The abandoned TCLP flash dump on Cedar Run is a natural extension of the open lands to be protected for our future. Please acquire and develop trails there ,

Well done! You guys really do awesome work. I like that you just build a trail and get it done without kicking the can down the road for years.

The parks are so important to us. We're so grateful for them.

The parks are #1 in our reason for loving this area. Keep up the splendid work. Keep buying land before it's all paved over! Thanks.

Too much money has been spent on all of this. Sad that it was approved for 20 years.

The Light and Power property on Cedar Run Road should be needed to the Authority. It should not be sold to housing developers.

The Authority is very well run and is critical to protect and expand our natural areas in TC

Signage improvements to encourage dogs on leash and picking up after your dog. Installation of more poop bags and trash cans for disposal at trailheads

Rec Aut is focusing too much on Barn Rental. Too many events including weddings / graduations / baby showers during the day takes away from the calm that gardens should bring to those walking around. Events need to be limited!

I think passive recreation is most important and don't think there that you should increase community events or advertise the areas unless its at the barns. Please keep Hickory Meadows and Forest as is!

Promote cycling, hiking, skiing, but with separate infrastructure so as to minimize conflict of use

As far as acquiring property, I think the RA should be ready to jump on opportunities that make sense (like adjacent lands). Is the RA responsible for the woods/hills behind the park?? It sure needs some help and I think the RA is the right entity for this. Perhaps Garfield Township would welcome your leadership. It feels unsafe, too many rogue trails, poor signage etc.

Thank you for all you have done to protect these beautiful areas within our community - they are accessible and appreciated by so many!

Keep up the good work. Thank you!

No

You are on the right track, including by seeking public input and updating long-range plans

All properties need better signage.

Consider the land itself as a partner with natural rights. Be less eager to use the land as a resource, even as a resource for a trail or a garden or a sign. Maybe just let some of it be.

These parks are TREASURES and our community is richer because we have them.

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
FOR
THE CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY AND CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD
RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY

These Articles of Incorporation are adopted, signed, and acknowledged by the incorporating units for the purpose of forming a recreational authority under the provisions of Act No. 321, Public Acts of 2000 (the "Recreational Authorities Act").

ARTICLE I

NAME

This authority shall be known as the CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY AND CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY, hereafter referred to as the Authority.

ARTICLE II

PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES

The participating municipalities are the City of Traverse City, a Michigan municipal corporation, and the Charter Township of Garfield, a Michigan municipal corporation. They are hereafter referred to as the participating municipalities.

ARTICLE III

PURPOSE

The Authority is incorporated for the purpose of the acquisition, construction, operation, maintenance, or improvement of public recreation centers, public parks, and public conference centers as may be acquired by the Authority or as may be transferred to it by a participating municipality. The Authority may donate, sell, lease or transfer any such facilities so acquired only

to a participating municipality. Other than as limited by these Articles, the Authority is incorporated for all purposes as stated in the Recreational Authorities Act, as limited by these Articles and any subsequent amendments.

ARTICLE IV

DURATION

The Authority shall be automatically dissolved within sixty (60) days from and after the election date if the electors of the Authority fail to approve a public recreation tax on all of the taxable property within the territory of the Authority by November, 2004. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if the participating municipalities, acting through their respective governing bodies within such sixty (60) day period, elect to extend its duration, then the Authority shall continue for so long as then specified by the participating municipalities. If the electors so approve such tax, the Authority's duration shall continue for so long as an approved millage remains in effect.

ARTICLE V

TERRITORY

The territory of the Authority shall be the corporate boundaries of the participating municipalities.

ARTICLE VI

POWERS AND DUTIES

Section 1 The Authority shall be an authority under Section 6 of Article IX of the State Constitution of 1963. It shall be a body corporate with power to sue and be sued in any court of the State of Michigan. It shall have the powers and duties as established by the Recreational Authorities Act and incidental thereto. MCL 123.1131.

Section 2 The Authority and the participating municipalities shall have the power to acquire and hold, by purchase, lease, option, grant, gift, devise, land contract, installment purchase contract, bequest, or other legal means, real and personal property inside or outside the territory of the Authority. The property may include franchises, easements, or rights of way on, under, or above any property. The Authority may pay for the property from, or pledge for the payment of the property, revenue of the Authority.

Section 3 The Authority shall have the power to donate, sell, lease or otherwise transfer its property or any part thereof or interest therein to one or both participating municipalities or to any other person or entity upon approval of the participating municipalities.

Section 4 The Authority shall have the power to apply for and accept grants and contributions from individuals, the federal government or any of its agencies, the State of Michigan, a municipality, or other public or private agencies to be used for any of the purposes of the Authority.

Section 5 Before adopting by resolution a proposal for a tax authorized by the Recreational Authority Act, the proposed resolution shall be submitted to the participating municipalities and not less than 45 days be allowed for their consideration and comment.

Section 6 The Authority shall operate on a July 1 – June 30 fiscal year and the annual operating

budgets shall be submitted to the participating municipalities for review and approval.

Section 7 The Authority shall have the power to hire full-time or part-time employees and retain professional services.

Section 8 The Authority shall have the power to provide for the maintenance of all of the real and personal property of the Authority.

Section 9 The Authority shall have the power to assess and collect fees for services provided by and expenses incurred by the Authority.

Section 10 The Authority shall have the power to receive revenue as appropriated by the legislature of the State of Michigan or a participating municipality.

Section 11 The Authority shall have the power to enter into contracts incidental to or necessary for the accomplishment of the purposes of the Authority.

Section 12 The Authority's operation of public facilities shall be limited to only those public facilities and lands that it has acquired or that have been transferred to the Authority by a participating municipality. Nothing in these Articles shall obligate a participating municipality to transfer any park, recreation center, or any land or interest therein to the Authority.

ARTICLE VII

GOVERNING BODY - OFFICERS

Section 1 The Authority shall be directed and governed by a board of directors of seven members known as the "Board", three members to be appointed by the City

Commission of Traverse City, three members to be appointed by the Garfield Township Board, and one member to be appointed by the Board of Directors of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy.

Section 2 Members of the legislative body of a participating municipality are eligible for membership or appointment to the Board. At least one (1) member of each participating municipality's legislative body shall be appointed to the Board. Each member of the Board shall be a resident of the participating municipality that appoints that member. The member appointed by the Grand Traverse Land Conservancy shall be a resident of either the City of Traverse City or Garfield Township.

Section 3 The terms of the directors shall be three years. The initial terms of the directors constituting the first Board shall be staggered as follows:

- a. For the three directors appointed by the City of Traverse City:
One director shall serve a one-year term.
One director shall serve a two-year term.
One director shall serve a three-year term.
- b. For the three directors appointed by the Township of Garfield:
One director shall serve a one-year term.
One director shall serve a two-year term.
One director shall serve a three-year term.
- c. The director appointed by the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy shall serve a three-year term.

Section 4 The Board shall designate one of the directors as Chairperson, another of the directors as Secretary, and another as Treasurer.

- Section 5 The Board shall adopt and amend by-laws including rules of procedure consistent with the provisions of the Recreational Authorities Act. The by-laws shall provide for regular meetings of the Board, not less frequent than quarterly. The by-laws and any amendment to them shall not be effective until approved by the Traverse City City Manager and the Garfield Township Supervisor.
- Section 6 The Chairperson shall preside at meetings of the Board and may sign and execute all Authority-authorized bonds, contracts, and other obligation in the name of the Authority. The Chairperson shall do and perform such other duties as may be fixed by the by-laws and from to time to time assigned by the Board.
- Section 7 The Secretary shall perform all the duties fixed by the by-laws. The Secretary shall preside at meetings of the Board in the absence of the Chairperson.
- Section 8 The Treasurer shall perform all duties fixed by the by-laws. The Treasurer shall be bonded for the faithful discharge of the duties as Treasurer, the bond to be of such character, form, and in such amount as the Board may require.
- Section 9 No member of the Board shall receive compensation for services as a member of the Board but is entitled to reimbursement for reasonable expenses, including expenses for travel authorized by the Board incurred in the discharge of the directors' duties.
- Section 10 Vacancies occurring in the office of director shall be filled by the participating municipality or other entity having appointed the vacated director position. Vacancies shall be filled within 30 days of the vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term.
- Section 11 A director may be removed from office as provided by and in accordance with the Recreational Authorities Act.

ARTICLE VIII

PUBLIC BODY

The Authority is a public body and shall comply with the requirements of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, Act 267 of the Public Acts of 1976, as amended, and the Freedom of Information Act, Act 442 of the Public Acts of 1976, as amended.

ARTICLE IX

PUBLICATION

A copy of these Articles of Incorporation shall be published once in the *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, being a newspaper circulated within the participating municipalities prior to adoption by the participating municipalities.

ARTICLE X

ADDITION OR WITHDRAWAL OF PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES

Section 1 A municipality may become a participating municipality in the Authority only upon an affirmative vote of the legislative bodies of the existing participating municipalities and the proposed participating municipality. If the Authority has been authorized to levy a tax, the addition of another participating municipality shall be contingent upon approval by the electors of the proposed municipality of a tax equivalent to that which the Authority has been authorized to levy.

Section 2 A participating municipality may withdraw from the Authority on an affirmative vote of the legislative body of each participating municipality. However, in no event shall a participating municipality withdraw from the Authority during the period for which the Authority has been authorized to levy a tax by the electors of the Authority.

ARTICLE XI

AMENDMENT

Amendments to these Articles of Incorporation shall be made only as authorized by the Recreational Authorities Act. Amendments shall be published in the *Traverse City Record-Eagle* before adoption.

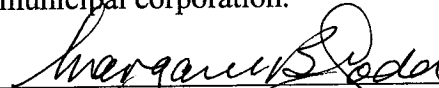
ARTICLE XII

EFFECTIVE DATE

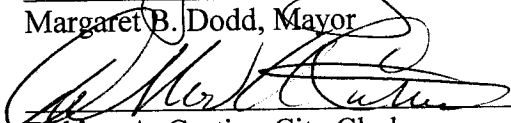
These Articles of Incorporation shall become effective and be in full force and effect upon filing with the Secretary of State.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the participating municipalities have adopted and authorized to be executed these Articles of Incorporation, in behalf of the City of Traverse City, by the Mayor and the City Clerk, and the Charter Township of Garfield, by the Supervisor and the Township Clerk.

CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY, a Michigan
municipal corporation.

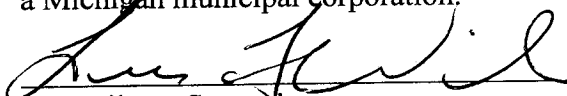


Margaret B. Dodd, Mayor

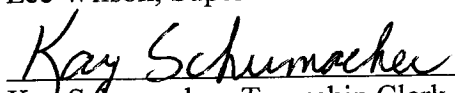


Debra A. Curtiss, City Clerk

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD,
a Michigan municipal corporation.



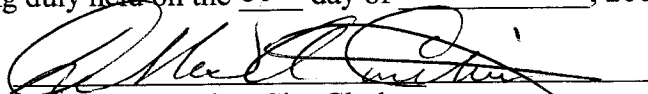
Lee Wilson, Supervisor



Kay Schumacher, Township Clerk

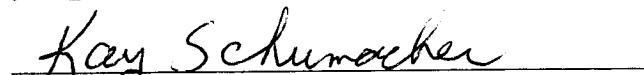
The foregoing Articles of Incorporation were adopted by the City Commission of the City of Traverse City, Michigan, at a special meeting duly held on the 30 day of June, 2003.

Dated: June 30, 2003


Debbra A. Curtiss, City Clerk

The foregoing Articles of Incorporation were adopted by the Charter Township of Garfield Board at a special meeting duly held on the 30 day of June, 2003.

Dated: July 8, 2003


Kay Schumacher, Township Clerk

Published in the *Record-Eagle* on May 18, 25 and June 29, 2003.

Filed with the Secretary of State on July 15, 2003.

9/19

**FIRST AMENDMENT TO
ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
FOR
THE CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY AND CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD
RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY**

This Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation is adopted, signed, and acknowledged by the participating municipalities for the purpose of amending Article III of the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority adopted by the City Commission of the City of Traverse City, Michigan, on June 30, 2003, and the Charter Township of Garfield Board on June 30, 2003.

Article III is hereby amended to provide in its entirety as follows:

ARTICLE III

PURPOSE

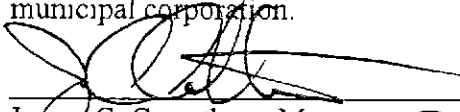
The Authority is incorporated for the purpose of the acquisition, construction, operation, maintenance, or improvement of public recreation centers, public parks, and public conference centers as may be acquired by the Authority or as may be transferred to it by a participating municipality. The Authority may donate, sell, lease or otherwise transfer facilities so acquired or any part thereof or interest therein to one or both participating municipalities or to any other person or entity upon approval of the participating municipalities. Other than as limited by these Articles, the Authority is incorporated for all purposes as stated in the Recreational Authorities Act, as limited by these Articles and any subsequent amendments.

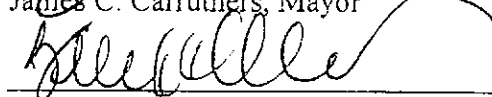
All other provisions of the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority shall be and remain the same.

This First Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority shall become effective and be in full force and effect upon filing with the Secretary of State.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the participating municipalities have adopted and authorized to be executed this First Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority, on behalf of the City of Traverse City, by the Mayor and City Clerk, and the Charter Township of Garfield, by the Supervisor and the Township Clerk.

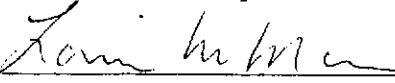
CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY, a Michigan
municipal corporation.


James C. Carruthers, Mayor


Benjamin C. Marentette, City Clerk

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD, a
Michigan municipal corporation.

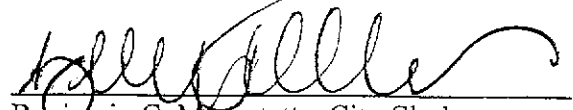

Chuck Korn, Supervisor


Lanie McManus, Township Clerk

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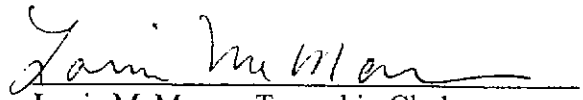
The foregoing First Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority was adopted by the City Commission of the City of Traverse City, Michigan at a regular meeting duly held on the 19th day of September 2016 at 7 pm.

Dated: 9/26/2016


Benjamin C. Marentette, City Clerk

The foregoing First Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority was adopted by the Charter Township of Garfield Board at a Regular meeting duly held on the 13th day of September, 2016 at 6:00 pm..

Dated: 9/14/16


Lanie McManus, Township Clerk

Published in the *Record-Eagle* on September 13, 2016.

Filed with the Secretary of State on October 4, 2016.

**SECOND AMENDMENT TO
ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
FOR
THE CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY AND CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD
RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY**

This Second Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation is adopted, signed, and acknowledged by the participating municipalities for the purpose of amending Article VII, Section 2 of the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority adopted by the City Commission of the City of Traverse City, Michigan, on June 30, 2003, and the Charter Township of Garfield Board on June 30, 2003.

Article VII, Section 2 is hereby amended to provide in its entirety as follows:

**ARTICLE VII
GOVERNING BODY – OFFICERS**

Section 2

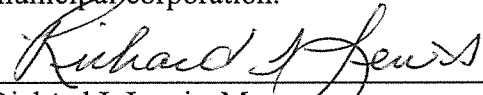
Members of the legislative body of a participating municipality are eligible for membership or appointment to the Board. At least one (1) member of each participating municipality's legislative body shall be appointed to the Board. Each member of the Board shall be a resident of the participating municipality that appoints that member. The member appointed by the Grand Traverse Land Conservancy shall have experience in operating, protecting or maintaining natural, scenic, park and farm lands for the public's use.

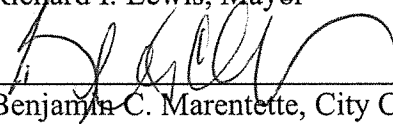
All other provisions of the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority and as amended by the First Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority shall be and remain the same.

This Second Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority shall become effective and be in full force and effect upon filing with the Secretary of State.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the participating municipalities have adopted and authorized to be executed this Second Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority, on behalf of the City of Traverse City, by the Mayor and City Clerk, and the Charter Township of Garfield, by the Supervisor and the Township Clerk.

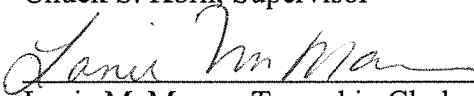
CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY, a Michigan
municipal corporation.


Richard I. Lewis, Mayor


Benjamin C. Marentette, City Clerk

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD, a
Michigan municipal corporation.

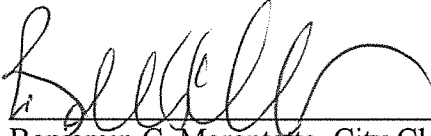

Chuck S. Korn, Supervisor


Lanie McManus, Township Clerk

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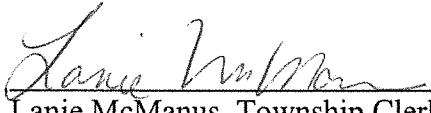
The foregoing Second Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority was adopted by the City Commission of the City of Traverse City, Michigan at a regular meeting duly held on the 6th day of December, 2021 at 7 p.m.

Dated: 12/17/21


Benjamin C. Marentette, City Clerk

The foregoing Second Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority was adopted by the Charter Township of Garfield Board at a regular meeting duly held on the 14th day of December, 2021 at 6 p.m.

Dated: 12/21/21


Lanie McManus, Township Clerk

Published in the *Record-Eagle* on November 18, 2021.

Filed with the Secretary of State on December 21, 2021.

RESOLUTION SUBMITTING
RECREATION MILLAGE PROPOSAL
AND BOND PROPOSAL

WHEREAS, the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority is a recreational authority organized under 2000 Public Act 321 and may place a proposal for an authority-wide millage for recreational purposes at a state-wide general election; and

WHEREAS, 2000 Public Act 321, §11 provides that a recreational authority may levy a tax on all taxable property within the limits of the authority for acquiring and maintaining parks, if approved by a vote of the people; and

WHEREAS, 2000 Public Act 321, §23 provides for an election on the issuance of general obligation bonds and a tax for the payment of such bonds.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that there be placed on the ballot for action by the voters in the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield at the general election to be held on November 2, 2004 a recreation bond proposal for the issuance of bonds in an amount not to exceed \$6,650,000 and an additional recreation millage proposal of up to 0.1 mill for a period of up to twenty (20) years levied on all taxable property within Traverse City and Garfield Township commencing as soon as possible;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Grand Traverse and Leelanau County Clerks, City Clerk and Township Clerk are authorized to take all appropriate actions in connection with placing this matter on the ballot;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each proposal shall be levied only if both proposals are approved by the voters; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the following ballot language is hereby approved:

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, the Barns at the Commons, and the property next to Hickory Hills. State law requires an annual independent audit of the Recreational Authority.

This proposal, if approved by the voters, will only be effective if both it and the Open Space and Natural Area Millage Proposal pass.

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) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds for all or a 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 estimated millage to be levied in 2004 is 0.27 mill (\$0.27 per \$1,000 of taxable value) and the estimated simple average annual millage rate required to retire the bonds is 0.27 mill (\$0.27 per \$1,000 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.

YES _____

NO _____

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 mill that would cost the owner of a home with a value of \$100,000 \$5.00 per year. State law requires an annual independent audit of the Recreational Authority.

This proposal, if approved by the voters, will only be effective if both it and the Open Space and Natural Area Preservation Bond Proposal pass.

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 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?

It is estimated that 0.1 mill will raise approximately \$125,000 when first levied in 2004.

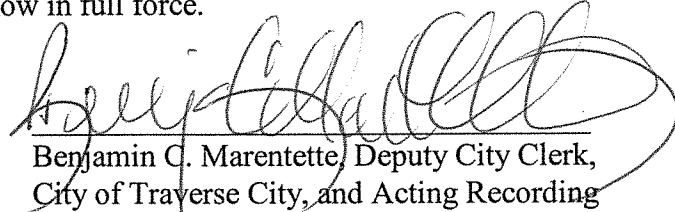
YES _____

NO _____

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager immediately file a copy of this Resolution with the Clerks of Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, the City of Traverse City, and the Charter Township of Garfield.

I CERTIFY THAT I am the Deputy City Clerk of Traverse City and the Acting Recording Secretary for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority and that the foregoing is a correct copy of the resolution passed as therein set forth on the 12th day of August, 2004 and that the same is now in full force.

Dated: August 12, 2004



Benjamin C. Marentette, Deputy City Clerk,
City of Traverse City, and Acting Recording
Secretary, City of Traverse City and Charter
Township of Garfield Recreational Authority

**RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE BALLOT LANGUAGE FOR A MILLAGE
PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE FUNDS FOR THE CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY AND
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY TO THE
ELECTORATE IN THE REGULAR ELECTION
ON NOVEMBER 3, 2020**

At a special meeting of the Board of the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority, held remotely in compliance with orders to suppress the spread of COVID-19 in Traverse City, Michigan on August 5, 2020.

Present: Ross Biederman, Chair; Michael Groleau, Secretary; Molly Agostinelli; Chris Sullivan; and Ashlea Walter.

Absent: Tim Hughes, Treasurer.

The following resolution was offered by Agostinelli and supported by Sullivan.

WHEREAS, the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority (the "Recreational Authority") has been established under the provisions of the Recreational Authorities Act, Act 321 of 2000 (the "Act"); and

WHEREAS, the Recreational Authority is authorized to levy a tax of not more than 1 mill for a period of not more than 20 years on all of the taxable property within the territory of the authority for the purposes of acquiring, constructing, operating, maintaining, and improving a public swimming pool, public recreation center, public auditorium or conference center, public historic farm, or public park, MCL 123.1141; and

WHEREAS, the funds for the Recreational Authority to construct, operate, maintain, acquire, and improve pursuant to the Act have been provided by a millage of 0.10 mills, which have been rolled back by the Headlee rollback to 0.0968, previously approved by the electors for the Charter Township of Garfield and City of Traverse City in 2004, which will expire following the December, 2023 levy (the "2004 Millage"); and

WHEREAS, the Recreational Authority wishes to levy a new additional millage up to 0.15 mills from 2020 through 2023 and levy a millage up to 0.30 mills from 2024 through 2039 for the purposes of continuing operations of the Recreational Authority, continued historic preservation of the Historic Barns, and acquiring property adjoining Hickory Hills, and all other purposes of the Recreational Authority (the "Millage Plan"); and

WHEREAS, the Recreational Authority desires to obtain voter approval for a new additional millage of up to 0.30 mills for a period of 20 years to implement and provide funds for the Millage Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Recreational Authority wishes to submit this millage proposal to the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield electors at the regular election to be held on November 3, 2020; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Article VI, Section 5 of the Recreational Authority's Articles of Incorporation, the Recreational Authority has submitted a proposed resolution for the tax proposal to the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield for their consideration and comment at least 45 days prior to the adoption of this Resolution;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. That the following proposals, the language of which is hereby approved by the Recreational Authority and certified to the Grand Traverse County and Leelanau County Clerks, respectively, shall be submitted to the electors of the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield for a vote at the November 3, 2020, election:

a. To be submitted to Grand Traverse County Clerk:

**CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY AND CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF
GARFIELD
RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY
MILLAGE PROPOSAL**

This proposal will allow a new millage for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority to protect the water quality of rivers, creeks, lakes, and bays, protect wildlife habitat, protect natural woodlands and forests, preserve environmentally sensitive lands, and provide opportunities for children and families to enjoy the outdoors by continuing its operations at the Historic Barns Park, Hickory Meadows, and the West Bay Waterfront along with continued historic preservation of the Historic Barns Park for the next 20 years as well as acquiring a new property adjoining Hickory Hills to expand the public park area near Hickory Meadows. State law requires an annual independent audit of the Recreational Authority.

For the purpose of providing funds for the continued acquisition, construction, operation, maintenance, and improvement of public parks by the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority (the "Authority") at an increased millage level, shall the tax limitation on general ad valorem taxes within the territory of the Authority that may be assessed in one (1) year upon all property within the Charter Township of Garfield and the City of Traverse City, Michigan, be increased and shall the Authority be authorized to levy, up to 0.30 mills (\$0.30 per \$1,000

of Taxable Value) as a new, additional millage for a period of 20 years, 2020 through 2039 inclusive?

If approved and levied in full, this millage will raise an estimated \$644,000 in the first calendar year of the levy based on taxable value.

As required by law, a small portion of this millage must be distributed to other governmental units within Grand Traverse County that are entitled to receive a portion of this millage, which are the City of Traverse City Downtown Development Authority, Grand Traverse County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, and Grand Traverse County Land Bank Authority.

Shall the proposal be adopted?

YES ☐

NO ☐

b. To be submitted to the Leelanau County Clerk:

**CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY AND CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF
GARFIELD
RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY
MILLAGE PROPOSAL**

This proposal will allow a new millage for the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority to protect the water quality of rivers, creeks, lakes, and bays, protect wildlife habitat, protect natural woodlands and forests, preserve environmentally sensitive lands, and provide opportunities for children and families to enjoy the outdoors by continuing its operations at the Historic Barns Park, Hickory Meadows, and the West Bay Waterfront along with continued historic preservation of the Historic Barns Park for the next 20 years as well as acquiring a new property adjoining Hickory Hills to expand the public park area near Hickory Meadows. State law requires an annual independent audit of the Recreational Authority.

For the purpose of providing funds for the continued acquisition, construction, operation, maintenance, and improvement of public parks by the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority (the "Authority") at an increased millage level, shall the tax limitation on general ad valorem taxes

within the territory of the Authority that may be assessed in one (1) year upon all property within the Charter Township of Garfield and the City of Traverse City, Michigan, be increased and shall the Authority be authorized to levy, up to 0.30 mills (\$0.30 per \$1,000 of Taxable Value) as a new, additional millage for a period of 20 years, 2020 through 2039 inclusive?

If approved and levied in full, this millage will raise an estimated \$644,000 in the first calendar year of the levy based on taxable value.

Shall the proposal be adopted?

YES ☐

NO ☐

2. If the propositions are approved, the Recreational Authority shall not levy the 2004 Millage beginning with the 2020 levy for the remainder of its term.

3. If the propositions are approved, the Recreational Authority shall levy only up to 0.15 mills of the new millage from 2020 through 2023.

4. All Public Officials of Grand Traverse County and Leelanau County, State of Michigan, and all Governmental units thereof, within such time as shall be required by law, are requested to perform all acts which shall be necessary to be performed in order to submit the above stated proposition to the duly qualified voters of the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield at the election to be held in within the territory of the Authority, the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield, on Tuesday, November 3, 2020.

5. A certified copy of these propositions will be filed with the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield Clerks.

6. It is further ordered that a certified copy of these propositions be filed with the County Clerks as required by law.

Upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

	Aye	Nay
Molly Agostinelli	<u>X</u>	_____
Ross Biederman	<u>X</u>	_____
Michael Groleau	<u>X</u>	_____
Chris Sullivan	<u>X</u>	_____
Ashlea Walter	<u>X</u>	_____

The Chair and Secretary thereupon declared this Resolution approved and adopted by the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority board this 5th day of August, 2020.



Ross Biederman, Chair



Michael Groleau, Secretary

I hereby certify that the foregoing constitutes a true and complete copy of a Resolution adopted by the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority, at a special meeting held on August 5, 2020.



Michael Groleau, Secretary



NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – PLEASE FORWARD

Subject: Rec Authority releases draft five-year recreation plan for public comment

Plan will set goals and objectives for the next five years of operations; open house set for December 17, followed by a public hearing on January 7.

Contact: Matt Cowall, Executive Director, 231-715-1380, mcowall@recauthority.org

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. – December 5, 2025 – The joint City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority has released a draft of its new five-year recreation plan for a 30-day public comment period.

The draft plan includes the results of a recent public survey, along with goals and objectives for the next five years of operations at Historic Barns Park, Hickory Meadows, Hickory Forest and a small part of the downtown waterfront on West Grand Traverse Bay.

The draft plan can be accessed online at www.recauthority.org or by contacting the Rec Authority at 231-715-1380 or mcowall@recauthority.org. Comments can be submitted via email or via U.S. mail to the Recreational Authority, 1500 Red Dr, Traverse City, MI 49684, with a 24/7 drop box also available at that address.

A public open house on the draft plan will be held on Wednesday, December 17, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. in Garfield Township Hall at 3848 Veterans Drive. Visitors can drop in at any time throughout the open house to review the components of the new plan, ask questions and provide input.

“The Rec Authority’s first five-year plan was completed in 2021, and it led to accomplishments like the public purchase of Hickory Forest and the second major round of building renovations at Historic Barns Park,” said Matt Cowall, executive director of the Rec Authority. “The new plan captures the public’s desires for the Authority for the next five years, and we encourage everyone to weigh in.”

The 30-day public comment period will culminate with a public hearing at the regular meeting of the Recreational Authority Board of Directors on January 7.

The new plan must be completed and submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) by February 1 in order for the Rec Authority to be an eligible applicant for various recreation grant programs administered by the DNR, such as the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.



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About the Rec Authority: Parks, People, Partners

The City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority (Rec Authority) was formed in 2003 as a partnership between the citizens of Traverse City and Garfield Township for the purposes of acquiring, constructing, operating, maintaining or improving public parks. In 2004, voters in both jurisdictions approved ballot measures for the Rec Authority to purchase and operate three properties as public parks, known today as Historic Barns Park, Hickory Meadows, and part of the waterfront on West Grand Traverse Bay. In 2020, voters approved a new 20-year operating millage for the Rec Authority to continue operations and pursue the public purchase and preservation of the Hickory Forest Natural Area, which became the newest Rec Authority parkland in 2023.

The Rec Authority is governed by a seven-member volunteer board of directors. Board meeting schedules, minutes and more information can be found online at www.recauthority.org or by contacting the office at 231-715-1380 or mcowall@recauthority.org.



Notice

Draft Five-Year Recreation Plan Released for Public Comment

December 5, 2025 – The City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority has released a draft of its new five-year recreation plan for a 30-day public comment period.

The draft plan includes the results of a recent public survey, along with goals and objectives for the next five years of operations at Historic Barns Park, Hickory Meadows, Hickory Forest and a small part of the downtown waterfront on West Grand Traverse Bay.

The draft plan can be accessed online at www.recauthority.org or by contacting the Rec Authority at 231-715-1380 or mcowall@recauthority.org.

Comments can be submitted via email, or via U.S. mail to the Recreational Authority, 1500 Red Dr, Traverse City, MI 49684, with a 24/7 drop box also available at that address.

A public open house on the draft plan will be held on Wednesday, December 17, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. in Garfield Township Hall at 3848 Veterans Drive. Visitors can drop in at any time throughout the open house to review the components of the new plan, ask questions and provide input.

The 30-day public comment period will culminate with a public hearing at the regular meeting of the Recreational Authority Board of Directors on January 7. Thank you for your interest and participation!

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

STATE OF MICHIGAN
County of Grand Traverse

PUBLIC NOTICE

**The City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield
Recreational Authority Board of Directors
Five-Year Recreation Plan
Notice of Public Hearing**

The Board of Directors for The City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority will hold a public hearing on its draft Five-Year Recreation Plan for 2026. The public hearing will be held on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, at 7 p.m. in the Commission Chambers on the second floor of the Governmental Center, 400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, MI 49684. During the meeting, a hearing will be granted to any person interested.

A copy of the draft plan is available for public review and comment online at www.recauthority.org or by contacting the Office of the Executive Director, 1500 Red Drive, Traverse City, MI 49684, (231) 715-1380, mcowall@recauthority.org.

IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO ATTEND THE PUBLIC HEARING AND HAVE A DISABILITY REQUIRING ANY SPECIAL ASSISTANCE AT THE MEETING, PLEASE NOTIFY THE CITY CLERK AT (231) 922-4480 AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. TDD# (231) 922-4412.

The Recreational Authority does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs or activities. The City Manager's Office, 400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, Michigan, 49684, (231) 922-4440, TDD/TTY 231-922-4412, VRS 231-421-7008, has been designated to coordinate compliance with the non-discrimination requirements contained in Section 35.107 of the Department of Justice regulations. Information concerning the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the rights provided thereunder, are available from the ADA Coordinator.

December 27, 2025 - 1T 633142

Paul Heidbreder being duly sworn deposes and says the annexed printed copy of notice was taken from the Traverse City RECORD EAGLE, a newspaper printed and circulated in said State and County, and that said notice was published in said newspaper on the following dates:

12/27/2025

that he or she is the agent of the printers of said newspaper, and knows well the facts stated herein



Subscribed and sworn to before
this 29th of December, 2025.



Dennis G. Thayer
Notary Public, State of MI
County of Grand Traverse
10/08/2028
Acting in County of Grand Traverse



January 6, 2026

The City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority
Matt Cowall, Executive Director
1500 Red Drive
Traverse City, MI 49684

RE: Draft 2026 Recreational Authority 5-Year Parks and Recreation Plan – Comments from
Garfield Township

Hello Matt,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft 2026 Recreational Authority 5-Year Parks and Recreation Plan during the public comment period. Staff attended the open house on Wednesday, December 17, 2025 at Garfield Township Hall to review the presentation on the draft Plan. The Garfield Township Parks and Recreation Commission also were provided an opportunity to review the draft Plan at their meeting on Monday, January 5, 2026. Garfield Township offers the following comments on the draft Plan:

- Page 73 – Objective 3.2 is to “Collaborate with regional trail entities, local units of government and residents to develop a trail connection between the Hickory complex and the Grand Traverse Commons”
 - The Hickory complex and Grand Traverse Commons would be connected through Garfield Township. Thus, the Township should be identified as the local unit of government for this objective.
 - In addition to trail entities helping to develop connections between these parks, Grand Traverse County Road Commission needs to be part of the collaboration to facilitate safe crossings of North Long Lake Road and Cedar Run Road.
- Page 73 – Objective 3.3 is to “Work with the appropriate entities to develop a road circulation plan for the Grand Traverse Commons to help move vehicular traffic on and off campus without relying on Historic Barns Park, and work to improve transit and multimodal transportation options.”
 - The Township would be a key stakeholder in any conversation on circulation in this area. Red Drive connects Historic Barns Park to the Red Drive trailhead area for Commons Natural Area. This road section faces engineering challenges with wetlands. Past ideas for circulation included a direct connection to Silver Drive (“Purple Drive”) from Red Drive near Greenspire. The Township is willing to be a participant and facilitate in any conversation to develop a solution to this issue which will mutually benefit all parties.

- In addition to road connectivity and circulation, non-motorized connectivity also needs to be considered in these conversations. For example, the “Purple Drive” corridor offers an opportunity to connect three area trails: the Commons Natural Area trails, Buffalo Ridge Trail, and Kids Creek Trail along the former railway into the Commons. The area just south of the former power has the potential to be a key regional trail hub.
- Page 73 – Objective 3.4 is to “Consistently collaborate with local and regional entities to identify opportunities for more connections between properties managed by the Authority and other natural areas, neighborhoods and schools.”
 - Garfield Township is willing to collaborate on potential future opportunities to connect natural areas and parks to other key destinations and amenities. This is consistent with the goals of the Township’s 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Township’s Strategic Plan.

We appreciate the great work of the Recreational Authority and thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Plan!

Sincerely,



Stephen Hannon, AICP
Deputy Planning Director



RECAUTHORITY
TRAVERSE CITY / GARFIELD TOWNSHIP

Minutes

The City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority Board of Directors

January 7, 2026

A regular meeting of the Recreational Authority Board of Directors was called to order in the Second Floor Commission Chambers, Governmental Center, 400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, Michigan, at 7:01 p.m.

The following Directors were present, constituting a quorum: Laura Ness, Chair; Michael Groleau, Secretary; Tim Hughes, Treasurer; Ken Funk; Steve Lagerquist (arrived 7:02 p.m.); and Laurie Lapp.

The following Directors were absent (excused): Chad Dutmers.

Chair Ness presided over the meeting.

1.

The first item being “Public Comment,” Chair Ness introduced this matter. The following individuals addressed the Board:

None.

2.

The next item being “Election of officers for 2026,” Chair Ness introduced this matter. The following individual addressed the Board:

Matt Cowall, Executive Director

Chair Ness opened the floor for nominations.



Hughes nominated Laura Ness as Chair, Michael Groleau as Secretary, and Chad Dutmers as Treasurer.

Moved by Hughes, seconded by Funk, that nominations be closed and a unanimous ballot be cast for Laura Ness as Chair, Michael Groleau as Secretary, and Chad Dutmers as Treasurer.

CARRIED.

3.

The next item being the “Consent Calendar,” Chair Ness introduced this matter. The following individual addressed the Board:

Matt Cowall, Executive Director

Moved by Funk, seconded by Lapp, that the Consent Calendar be approved as amended:

- a) That the minutes of the regular meeting of December 3, 2025, be approved.
- b) That the report regarding payment of expenditures be received and filed.

CARRIED.

4.

The next item being “Items removed from the Consent Calendar,” Chair Ness introduced this matter.

None.

5.

The next item being “Public hearing for the draft 5-year recreation plan,”



Chair Ness introduced this matter. The following individuals addressed the Board:

Matt Cowall, Executive Director, shared for the record written comments submitted by the Charter Township of Garfield.

Chair Ness opened the public hearing. The following individual addressed the Board:

Dan Tholen, Traverse City resident, who gave his congratulations on the plan and was encouraged by the evidence of cooperation in the plan. He asked that the word “abandonment” in reference to Historic Barns Park be removed from page 32 of the draft plan, noting that other community groups were working to care for the barns before they were purchased by the Authority.

There being no one else present desiring to speak, Chair Ness closed the public hearing.

No action was taken.

6.

The next item being “Consideration of a resolution adopting the 5-year recreation plan,” Chair Ness introduced this matter. The following individual addressed the Board:

Matt Cowall, Executive Director

Moved by Groleau, seconded by Hughes, that the 2026 Five-Year Recreation Plan as amended and the resolution adopting the plan be approved, and that the plan be submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

CARRIED.

7.

The next item being “Event facility management planning updates,” Chair Ness introduced this matter. The following individuals addressed the Board:



Matt Cowall, Executive Director
Jason Miles Lorimer

No action was taken.

8.

The next item being “Consideration of 2026 Annual Goals from the Management Entities at Historic Barns Park,” Chair Ness introduced this matter. The following individuals addressed the Board:

Matt Cowall, Executive Director
Matthew Ross, BGHBP
Patty Sharrow, TCCG
Sarna Salzman, SEEDS

Moved by Lapp, seconded by Hughes, to accept the 2026 annual goals and benchmarks for TC Community Garden, the Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park and SEEDS.

CARRIED.

9.

The next item being “Reports,” Chair Ness introduced this matter. The following individuals addressed the Board:

Matt Cowall, Executive Director
Cameron Evans, GTCD
Charlyn Niedzielski, Eventures Up North
Patty Sharrow, TCCG
Sarna Salzman, SEEDS
Matthew Ross, BGHBP

No action was taken.



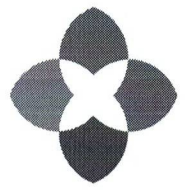
10.

The next item being “Public comment,” Chair Ness introduced this matter. The following individuals addressed the Board:

None.

There being no objection, Chair Ness declared the meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Matt Cowall, Executive Director



**RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2026 FIVE-YEAR RECREATION PLAN
for The City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield
Recreational Authority,
Grand Traverse County, Michigan**

WHEREAS, the joint City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority ("Recreational Authority") has undertaken a planning process to determine the recreation and natural resource conservation needs and desires of its residents during a five-year period covering the years 2026 through 2030, and

WHEREAS, the Recreational Authority began the process of developing a community recreation and natural resource conservation plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities, and

WHEREAS, residents of the Recreational Authority were provided with a well-advertised opportunity during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the recreation and natural resource conservation plan, and

WHEREAS, the public was given a well-advertised opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the final draft plan for a period of at least 30 days, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on January 7, 2026 at a regular meeting of the Recreational Authority Board of Directors to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the 2026 Five-Year Recreation Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Recreational Authority has developed the plan as a guideline for improving recreation and enhancing natural resource conservation for the Recreational Authority, and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing, the Recreational Authority Board of Directors voted to adopt said 2026 Five-Year Recreation Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Recreational Authority Board of Directors hereby adopts the 2026 Five-Year Recreation Plan.

I hereby certify that the foregoing constitutes a true and original copy of a Resolution adopted by the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority Board of Directors at a regular meeting held on the 7th day of January, 2026.



Michael Groleau, Secretary

**PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANT
POST-COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT**

*This information required under authority of Part 19, PA 451 of 1994, as amended;
the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 78 Stat. 897 (1964); and Part 715, of PA 451 of 1994, as amended.*

GRANT TYPE: (Please select one) ☒ Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund ☐ Clean Michigan Initiative
☐ Land and Water Conservation Fund ☐ Recreation Passport ☐ Bond Fund

GRANTEE:

City of Traverse City & Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority

PROJECT NUMBER:

TF21-0143

PROJECT TYPE:

Acquisition

PROJECT TITLE:

Hickory Forest Acquisition

PROJECT SCOPE:

Fee simple acquisition of 76 acres of land for habitat conservation and outdoor recreation.

TO BE COMPLETED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY (GRANTEE)

Name of Agency (Grantee)

City of Traverse City & Charter Township of Garfield Recreational A

Contact Person

Matt Cowall

Title

Executive Director

Address

1500 Red Dr

Telephone

231-715-1380

City, State, ZIP

Traverse City, MI 49684

Email

mcowall@recauthority.org

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Any change(s) in the facility type, site layout, or recreation activities provided?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe change(s).

Promptly following acquisition, we designed and installed a natural-surface public trail system throughout the site, along with a formal trailhead/parking area at Barney Road.

Has any portion of the project site been converted to a use other than outdoor recreation? If yes, please describe what portion and describe use. (This would include cell towers and any non-recreation buildings.)

☐ Yes ☒ No

Are any of the facilities obsolete? If yes, please explain.

☐ Yes ☒ No**SITE QUALITY**

Is there a park entry sign which identifies the property or facility as a public recreation area?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide a photograph of the sign. If no, please explain.

Are the facilities and the site being properly maintained? If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Is vandalism a problem at this site? If yes, explain the measures being taken to prevent or minimize vandalism.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Thankfully none so far.

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONTINUED

Is maintenance scheduled on a regular basis? If yes, give schedule. If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Visits multiple times each week year-round by contracted staff to maintain trailhead and trails.

GENERAL

Is a Program Recognition plaque permanently displayed at the site? If yes, please provide a photograph. (Not required for Bond Fund Grants)

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Is any segment of the general public restricted from using the site or facilities? (i.e. resident only, league only, boaters only, etc.) If yes, please explain.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Is a fee charged for use of the site or facilities? If yes, please provide fee structure.

☐ Yes ☒ No

What are the hours and seasons for availability of the site?

Dawn to dusk year-round.

COMMENTS (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED)

This immediately became a popular destination for a beautiful hike through a beautiful forest. Bow hunting for deer is available by permit during the state archery season.

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONTINUED**CERTIFICATION**

I do hereby certify that I am duly elected, appointed and/or authorized by the Grantee named above and that the information and answers provided herein are true and accurate to the best of my personal knowledge, information and belief.

Please print Matt Cowall	Grantee Authorized Signature 	Date 1/29/26
Please print MICHAEL CROLEAN	Witness Signature 	Date 1/29/2026

Send completed report to: **POST COMPLETION GRANT INSPECTION REPORTS
GRANTS MANAGEMENT
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 30425
LANSING MI 48909-7925**





