

# INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

## SECTION 1

# COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

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

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

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

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

Unlike many communities the size of Traverse City, the area is not lacking in cultural and educational activities. World famous artists perform throughout the year and outdoor summer concerts are a highlight at Interlochen National Music Camp and Arts Academy. The Traverse City Film Festival is gaining prominence and is becoming known internationally. In addition,

Northwestern Michigan College's Dennos Museum permanently houses an extensive collection of artwork and a children's discovery area, along with works by masters and regional artists. The school ship Inland Seas provides classes on West Grand Traverse Bay for school aged children.

Each year, many additional concerts, plays and special events such as art, antique, car and boat shows take place in the Traverse City area. Traverse City features the Traverse Symphony Orchestra, the Old Town Playhouse, the City's "Music In The Park" series and many other music and theater groups providing varied entertainment. Renovations have been completed to the historic "State Theatre" on Front St. allowing both a live theater and motion picture venue. The City Opera House has recently completed major restoration including a grand entrance in a former store front.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the City of Traverse City population estimate for 2009 was 14,172. This is down slightly from the 2000 census figure of 14,532 and the 1990 figure of 15,155. The surrounding townships however, continue to grow at a rapid rate. Grand Traverse County has grown from the 1970 population of 31,975 to the 2009 estimated, 86,333. The 1990 population was 64,273 and in 2000 it was 77,654. This figure indicates an over 25% increase during this 18 year period. The City of Traverse City has provided parks and recreation facilities that have been under increasing pressure from use by the growing area population along with the tourist influx, especially in the summer months.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

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

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

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

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

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

## **BOARDMAN RIVER SYSTEM**

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

# **TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS**

## **HIGHWAYS**

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

The heavy traffic along Traverse City's waterfront brings many people in close proximity to the City's fine recreation opportunities along the bay. With most parking located away from the bay, the roads bearing that heavy traffic also tend to create physical and physiological barriers to safely reaching recreation facilities and also create environmental concerns with storm water

runoff and pollutants. The City has attempted to reduce the barriers with a pedestrian tunnel under Grandview Parkway (US-31) at Cass Street, an underpass at the Murchie Bridge near Grandview and Front Street, an at grade crossing at Oak Street and signalized crossings of Grandview Parkway at Division, Union and Park Streets. The City continues to explore options for carrying pedestrian traffic safely across Grandview Parkway to bayside destinations including a pedestrian tunnel just West of Union Street in the "Warehouse District" and an at grade crossing at Elmwood Street. This was one of the most important goals set during the "Your Bay, Your Say" planning sessions that began in 2005.

## **LOCAL STREETS**

Most City parks are accessed via Traverse City's local streets. These streets are continuously targeted for improvements through the City's Public Improvements Program. The City has 27 miles of major streets and 49 miles of local streets as defined by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

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

## **PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE TRAVEL**

There are areas within the community that were designed years ago primarily for the automobile; where pedestrian travel has inadvertently been discouraged. In some areas, pedestrian and bicycle travel is challenging because streets were designed to move many vehicles as quickly as possible. The City is taking steps to correct these conditions by steadily enhancing the sidewalk network, adding trails and by marking bicycle lanes along many City streets. In 2009, the League of American Bicyclists designated Traverse City as a "Bicycle Friendly Community".

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

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

operations third and private motor vehicles last is typical when designing for active transportation – and recognized in the City's Master Plan.

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

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

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

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

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

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The Traverse City area, including Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, is served by the Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA). BATA provides scheduled routes with the Cherriot system; City Ride, County Ride and After Hours reservation ride service, school route service and Village Connector service to Northport, Empire and Fife Lake.

## **SECTION 2**

# **ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

## **PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

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

## **STAFF**

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

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

The City's Senior Citizen Center and Duncan L. Clinch Marina are under the direction of the Department of Public Services Director.

## **STAFFING LEVELS**

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

- Parks and Recreation Superintendent
- Marina Dockmaster / Hickory Hills Manager
- Parks and Recreation Supervisor



- City Forester
- Departmental Secretary (shared among several divisions)
- Cemetery Sexton
- Recreation Specialist
- Recreation Specialist / Grounds Maintenance Worker (one employee who performs 2/3 of their work as a Grounds Maintenance Worker and 1/3 as a Recreation Specialist at Hickory Hills ski area.
- An Office Clerk who works half time at the Department of Public Services and half time at the Oakwood Cemetery office.
- General Maintenance and Repair Specialist
- Six Grounds Maintenance Specialists
- Approximately fifty seasonal workers

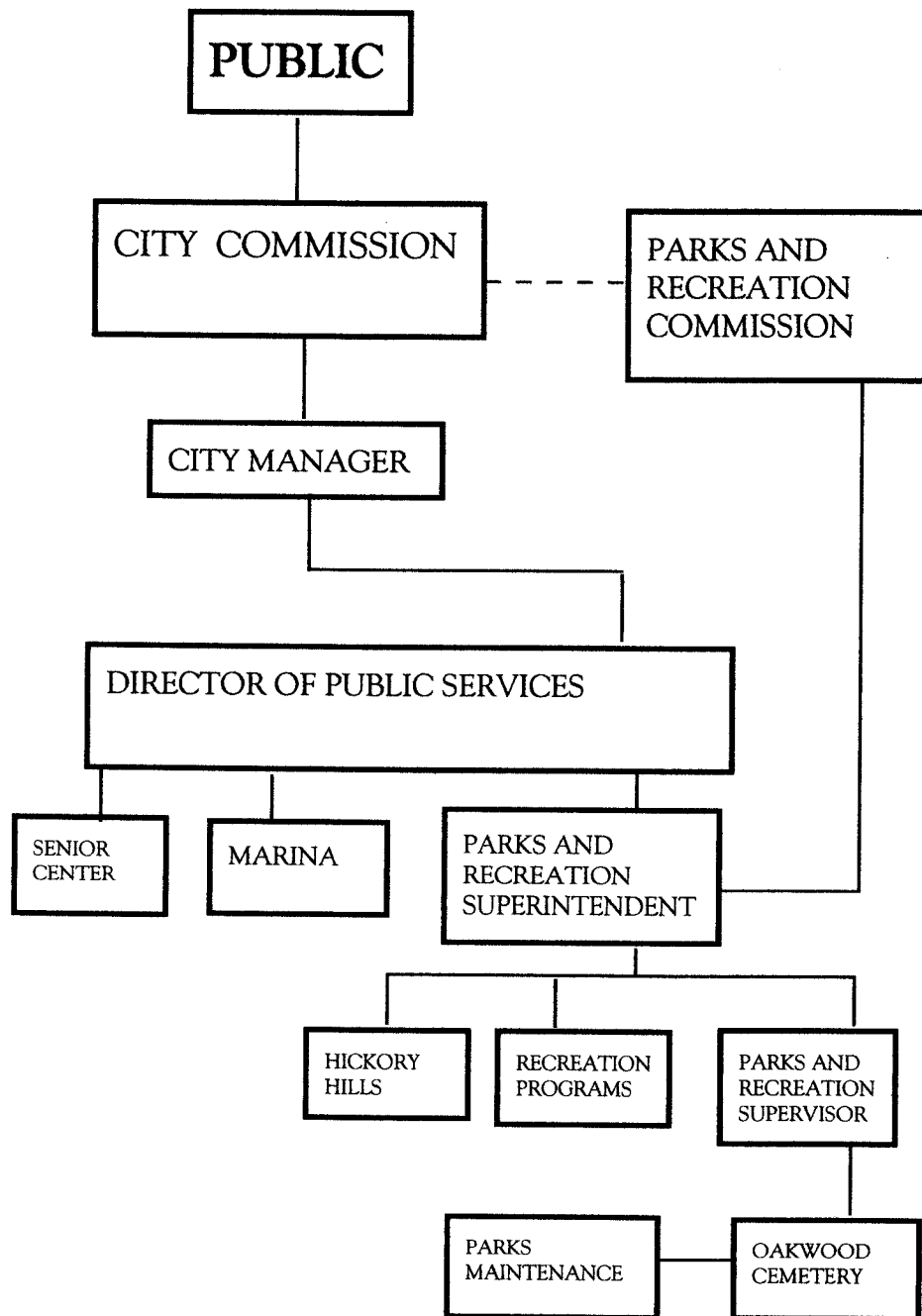
The Senior Citizen Center has one full-time Director and a full-time Program Director and over 100 volunteers. The operations of the History Center of Traverse City are run under a contractual agreement between the City of Traverse City and the History Center of Traverse City, Inc., which maintains the History Center of Traverse City which houses the collection of the Con Foster Museum. Volunteers and help from other institutions augment the staff positions listed above.

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

## **PARKS OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE**

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

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



Flow Chart does not reflect the entire City of Traverse City or entire Department of Public Services.

## RECREATION PROGRAMS

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

- 1) Women's Softball. There is one league in this program, a church slow pitch league.
- 2) Day Camp. Children 7-12 years of age may attend this summer program held at the Grand Traverse County Civic Center. The program emphasizes outdoor recreation, arts and crafts, nature education, and beach activities. The program is a cooperative effort between the City of Traverse City and Grand Traverse County. The City provides the registration, administration and staffing and the County makes the space available at a low rental rate and provides some logistical support. The ten week program has a maximum of 50 children per week and is full most weeks.
- 3) Volleyball Leagues. The City uses elementary school gyms for this program which currently features six men's, women's, and co-ed leagues that play from October through March.
- 4) Hershey Track and Field Meet. This meet is held in June for ages 9-14. Winners of the local meet advance to the state meet held in July.
- 5) The Traverse Area Community Sailing (T.A.C.S.) Program. This summer program gives children an opportunity to learn to sail and is located at the north end of Boardman Lake at Hull Park.
- 6) The Grand Traverse Area Ski Club. The GTSC offers children the opportunity to learn how to ski and snowboard in a non-competitive format and then become involved in the Club's ski racing program.
- 7) The Northern Michigan Disc Sports Organization. This group first approached the City with the offer to design and set up a 24 hole disc golf course at the City's Hickory Hills ski area in 1998. The course was completed in 1999. The NMDSO continues to be involved in the program with tournaments, weekly leagues and work bees to improve and maintain the course.
- 8) Music In the Park Series. The City holds free concerts during the summer at F & M and Hull Parks. The entertainment varies in talent from the Interlochen Music Academy to Jazz, Rock, Bluegrass and Country.
- 9) Badminton. An area resident organized and now coordinates this program with the City. This indoor, fall and winter program involves many age and ability levels.

## Recent Recreational Program Participation Levels

<u>Program</u>	<u>Total Number of Participants for Year</u>		
	<u>06-07</u>	<u>07-08</u>	<u>08-09</u>
Women's Softball	67	78	0
Day Camp for children	76	63	65
Downhill & XC skiing	13,132	14,562	11,550
Volleyball	645	630	600
Hershey Track and Field	23	39	29
Music In The Park	701	1,011	688
Badminton	N/A	293	280
<b>TOTAL ♦</b>	14,702	16,735	13,356

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

# PARK AND RECREATION FUNDING

## INTRODUCTION

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

## METHOD OF FINANCE

Parks and Recreation facilities and programs in the City of Traverse City are funded primarily by property tax revenues. During the fiscal year 2008-2009, approximately 88 % of the operating budget for Parks and Recreation (excluding marina) was generated from property taxes with the remainder from user fees.

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

intergovernmental cooperation, work release programs, park usage fees, gifts, and donations.

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

## **FUNDING LEVEL**

Parks and Recreation funding has been a substantial portion of the City of Traverse City budget. For fiscal year 2010/2011 the City has allocated \$1,702,240.00 for Parks and Recreation. Duncan L. Clinch Marina budget is listed as \$495,450.00. Of these expenditures, approximately \$695,900.00 are returned by revenue producing facilities or programs. Specifically, the marina is slated to generate \$507,000.00 for the 2010/2011 budget. All of the parks and recreational programs combined should produce approximately \$188,900.00 for the same period. The total operating budget allocated for Parks and Recreation constitutes 12.10 % of the City General Fund budget. In addition, the City Commission has approved the planned \$1,014,500.00 for Parks and Recreation related projects in the Six Year Public Improvement Plan but has committed no new funds to be spent in 2010-2011.

## **RECENT RECREATION RELATED ACTIVITIES BUDGETS**

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

<b>Division</b>	<b>2007-2008 (actual)</b>	<b>2008-2009 (actual)</b>	<b>2009-2010 (budgeted)</b>
Parks and Recreation	\$ 1,662,899.00	\$ 1,627,293.00	\$ 1,602,100.00
Marina	\$ 479,578.00	\$ 470,742.00	\$ 500,600.00
Senior Center	\$ 256,409.00	\$ 270,985.00	\$ 250,800.00
History Center	\$ 102,740.00	\$ 112,503.00	\$ 110,000.00

Oakwood Cemetery	\$ 332,589.00	\$ 319,671.00	\$ 390,200.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2,843,212.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,801,194.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,853,700.00</b>

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

It is anticipated the costs will continue to increase for the City of Traverse City to maintain the existing level of service for the Parks and Recreation programs. The City taxing rate presently stands at 11.8167 mills.

Other sources of revenues may need to be secured in the near future to support City Parks and Recreation programs. Perhaps in recognition of the regional nature of Traverse City recreation facilities, financial agreements with adjacent units of government can be reached. There has been some movement in that direction. Some adjacent townships provide financial assistance to the Traverse City Senior Center, recognizing that the City provides health, nutritional, and recreational services to seniors throughout the region.

## **PUBLIC AGENCY COORDINATION**

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

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

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

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

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

**The second proposal was** "The Open Space and Natural Area Millage Proposal". This proposal will allow the Recreational Authority of Traverse City and Garfield Township to maintain natural areas, wildlife habitat, public parks, and open space. The proposal would levy a property tax of up to 0.1 mills that would cost the owner of a home with a value of \$100,000.00, \$5.00 per year. State law would require an annual independent audit of the Recreational Authority.

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

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

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

## **OTHER COORDINATED VENTURES**

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

The Traverse City Senior Center, located on the west arm of Grand Traverse Bay, serves adults 50 years of age and older with a wide range of programs. Currently over 2,000 people enjoy

choosing among over 100 programs and activities such as; daily lunches, card games, computer lab with Internet access and classes, tap and line dancing classes, local and out-of-state trips, painting classes, ping pong and pool tables, tennis, pickleball, golf and shuffleboard leagues, wellness clinics for blood pressure, hearing, vision, reflexology and support groups. The Senior Center also serves as a meeting place for many senior related clubs and organizations. In 2009, over 32,000 visits were recorded at the Senior Center.

The Senior Center has been funded by the City of Traverse City and townships whose residents use the program. Currently those townships include Acme, East Bay, Elmwood, Garfield, Long Lake and Peninsula. Grants are also received from the Grand Traverse County Commission on Aging. Annual memberships were paid by those coming from non-participating townships at a rate of \$35.00 per year and \$15.00 from City residents and those from the participating townships. Donations from individuals and businesses, grants, memorial contributions and charges for services supplement the governmental funding.

In the November 2, 2010 election, Grand Traverse County voters approved a millage to change the funding model and operation methods for the Senior Center. Grand Traverse County has entered into an agreement with the City of Traverse City for the Grand Traverse County Commission on Aging to operate the Traverse City Senior Center along with satellite programs in several other areas to serve the entire County with more programs and with the expense of running the centers and programs spread to all County residents. As of the time of this writing, the plan is for membership fees for County residents to be eliminated. Many other details are being discussed, with an implementation date scheduled for July 1, 2011.

The Senior Center is currently in the planning stages of a capital campaign to build a new Senior Center on the current site in Traverse City. The 2000 U.S. Census data shows us that the local population is aging at a rate higher than the national average. This equates to an increasing demand for services from those 50 and older. Membership to the Senior Center averages about 50 new members a month. The 45-year old building is literally bursting at the seams. There are structural and utility concerns that must be addressed. The building is not adequate to serve the existing programs, not to mention the expected increased use. Either major renovations or new construction is a must if the program is to continue. The Senior Center Advisory Board and City Commission have supported the concept of reconstruction. A volunteer committee has been meeting since 2001 to formulate a plan and seek funding. Traverse City has been and continues to be a retirement haven for the aging baby boomers of America. A new Senior Center is in great demand. A committee, The Friends of the Senior Center, has been formed to initiate a capital campaign to raise funds for a new building. This committee has secured grant funds to complete a "Community Wide Assessment" and is now working on a feasibility study with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation with a grant received from Rotary Charities.



## **SECTION 3**

# **RECREATION INVENTORY**

### **REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

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

### **FEDERAL AND STATE FACILITIES**

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

### **COUNTY AND TOWNSHIP FACILITIES**

The facilities on the County and township levels serve both day-use and overnight users. It has been pointed out that the Sand Lakes Quiet Area, among others, and the open space area

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

Power Island (formerly named Marion Island) - This 202 acre wooded island has hiking trails, picnic grounds, and a small five site campground on the attached 2 acre Bassett Island. The islands are in the West Arm of Grand Traverse Bay and are accessible only by boat.

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

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

Civic Center - The Civic Center is located within the confines of Traverse City and is situated on 45 acres of land. The facility has an indoor ice skating rink, indoor swimming pool, skate park, soccer/football field, several softball/baseball fields, a paved one mile walking/biking trail,

basketball courts, and an extensive children's play structure called "Kid's Kove". This facility is very popular among area residents and tourists.

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

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

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

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

Maple Bay Park – A recently acquired 388 acre farm on East Grand Traverse Bay is in the planning and early development stages.

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

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

## **CITY FACILITIES**

At the present time, Traverse City owns 33 parks and recreational properties, ranging from a small downtown parcel to the larger Hickory Hills Ski Area, the Grand Traverse Commons and the Brown Bridge Quiet Area. The City enjoys a broad range of recreational opportunities. Much of the park land is heavily concentrated along the Boardman River and along the shoreline of the West Grand Traverse Bay. The City park locations are shown on the accompanying map. In total, over 1,600 City-owned acres are currently dedicated to recreational pursuits including Hickory Hills Ski Area and Grand Traverse Commons that are each approximately 125 acres and

Brown Bridge Quiet Area, located 10 miles southeast of the City, has nearly two square miles (1,310 acres) of natural area along the Boardman River and Brown Bridge pond. City parks are listed beginning on the next page.

## **CULTURAL FACILITIES**

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

The Old Town Playhouse Civic Players entertain tourists and residents throughout the year. The local State Theatre has been renovated and is open again showing movies and holding other community events. In and around the community are numerous art galleries exhibiting every medium of art. In addition, there is the City Opera House, History Center of Traverse City, Northwestern Michigan College Dennis Museum, Lars Hockstad and Milliken Auditoriums for concerts, the Arts Council, WIPR, WIAA Public Radio, WNMC Public Radio, the local public access channel, Maritime Heritage Alliance and numerous art fairs.

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

## **OTHER FACILITIES**

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

# CITY PARK INVENTORY

## **American Legion Park - .47 acres**

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



## **Arbutus Park - .13 acres**

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

## **Ashton Park – 4.70 acres**

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

## **Boon Street Park - .34 acres**

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

### **Brown Bridge Quiet Area – 1,310 acres**

A regional parcel that is park-like and offers hiking trails, including some accessible trails, a fishing platform and water access on Brown Bridge Pond and a vault-type toilet. This rustic area is popular with nature enthusiasts. It appears likely that the dam will be removed during the period of this five year Recreation Plan. Recreation opportunities, land and water features, maintenance practices and capital expenditure requirements will be changing as a result. Some of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

### **Bryant Park – 3.32 acres**

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



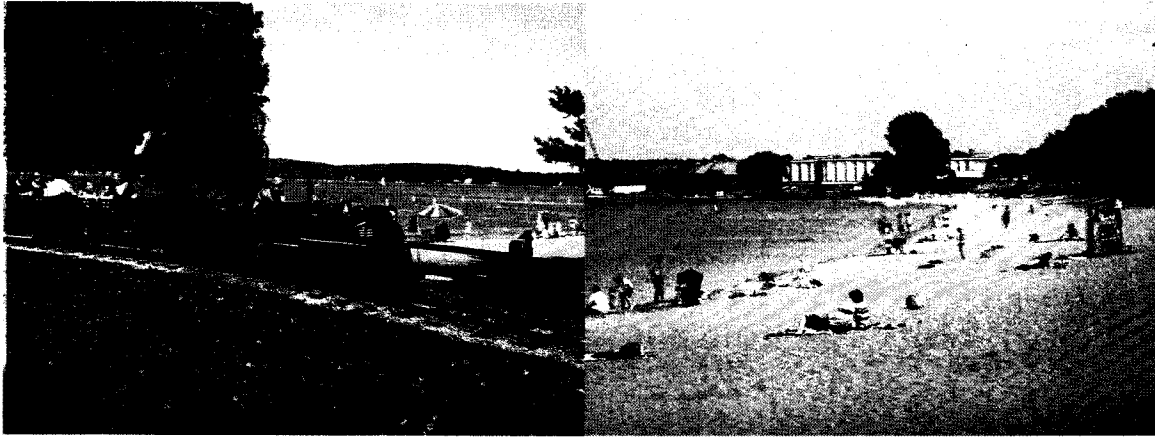
### **Clancy Park – 3.0 acres**

This larger neighborhood park features a large open grass field area for informal sports and games along with some wooded areas. The service area is the large Orchard Heights neighborhood. Facilities include a Jack and Jill play structure, slide, swing set, merry-go-round, climber and quarter court basketball. None of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

### **Clinch Park – 6.72 acres**

Clinch Park features the longest, wide beach in Traverse City and a portion is the former home of the Clinch Park Zoo that showcased Michigan wildlife for 50 years. The Spirit of Traverse City, is a ¼ scale steam locomotive that pulls passengers around the former zoo property and through a picnic area near the beach. Other facilities include the restroom and food concession building and the Con Foster Building that was formerly used to house the local history museum. The museum collection has moved to a location in the old library building on Sixth St., now called the History Center of Traverse City. The Traverse Area Recreational Trail runs through the park

and the old zoo site is currently used for group events and family picnics. The Duncan L. Clinch Marina is adjacent to the park and features a boat launch and boat slips. Most of the facilities in the park meet accessibility guidelines.



#### **Darrow Park – 1.11 acres**

Darrow Park has the size and appearance of a neighborhood park but with its location across from West Grand Traverse Bay, gets a lot of summer use from tourists and non-residents. The play structure and swing set were installed in 1999. There are nine recycled benches and a spring rocking toy in the playground donated in memory of local residents. Almost all features of this park meet accessibility guidelines.



#### **East Bay Park – 3.23 acres**

East Bay Park is a community park used by many people in the City and surrounding area along with tourists. The park has bathroom facilities, a play structure and swing set constructed in 1996, a small boat launch and swimming beach on East Grand Traverse Bay. Most of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.



### **F and M Park – 3.5 acres**

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



### **Fulton Park – 9.19 acres**

This natural area park features a four tenths of a mile self-guided nature trail. The trail was constructed using engineered wood fiber for use by wheelchairs. There is access to the trail from a small parking lot and from the Traverse Area Recreational Trail (TART). Most of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.





### **Grand Traverse Commons – 129.80 acres**

The Grand Traverse Commons is a community park. A portion of the former Traverse City State Hospital has become dedicated City park land with two trails that were used by patients at the hospital. These were called the Women's Walk and the Men's Walk and have kept the same names. Work by Eagle Scout projects and Camp Pugsley work crews have rejuvenated the trails. The local Veteran's Coalition have relocated the War Memorials that were located at Veteran's Park to a site on the Commons' Parkland. A significant portion of this property is dedicated wetlands and nature study is a major activity at this park. Only the sidewalks passing along Eleventh Street and Division Street along the park meet accessibility guidelines.

### **Hannah Park – 2.29 acres**

Hannah Park features a large change in elevation from its southern border along Sixth Street downhill to the Boardman River. A walking path runs through the upper portion of the park linking Sixth Street to Wadsworth Street. The park hosts many weddings and "Shakespeare in the Park" along with fishing on the platforms constructed in 2007. Only the sidewalks passing along Sixth Street and Union Street meet accessibility guidelines.



### **Hickory Hills – 122.5 acres**

Hickory Hills is a multi-season recreation provider and regional park. In the summer, a 24 hole disc golf course constructed by the Northern Michigan Disc Sports Organization with donations from local foundations and labor from the club members, receives heavy use. The cross country ski trails attract many hikers during eight months of the year. In the winter, Hickory is transformed into a downhill and cross country ski area featuring eight downhill runs with five rope tows. One of the slopes also has terrain park features added when snow conditions allow. Approximately five kilometers of cross country and snowshoe trails are available, along with a lodge with a warming fireplace, restrooms and a snack bar. Lighting is present for seven of the downhill runs and one cross country trail. Some of the features meet accessibility guidelines.



### **Highland Park – 1.35 acres**

Highland Park is a neighborhood park that is primarily an open field for informal play and sports. There is a slide available and there is pedestrian access from three easements provided when the neighborhood was created.

### **Hull Park – 6.4 acres**

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

from the Kellogg Foundation grant program. Almost all features of this park meet accessibility guidelines.

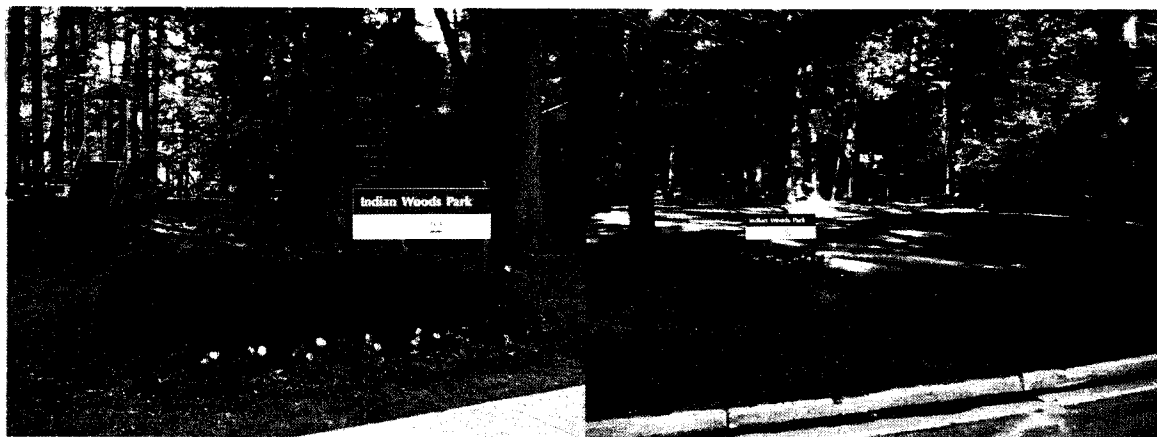


#### **Huron Hills Park – 1.71 acres**

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

#### **Indian Woods Park - .62 acres**

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



#### **Lay Park - .79 acres**

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

### **Meijer's Silverbrook Acres – 58.89 acres**

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

### **Mini-Park - .30 acres**

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

### **Open Space Park – 7.19 acres**

This is a park that fulfills both the community and regional labels depending on the time of year. Several major and minor festivals held on this space draw crowds from all over the region. The Cherry Festival and Film Festival draw people from all over the United States, along with several other countries. The park features a promenade along the West Grand Traverse Bay which doubles as the TART trail. There are few other amenities, as this area is kept as the name implies, open space. Most of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.



### **Park A – 1.2 acres**

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

**Park C - .10 acres**

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

**Senior Center Park – 3.7 acres**

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

**J. Smith Walkway - .06 acres**

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

**Sunset Park – 2.22 acres**

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

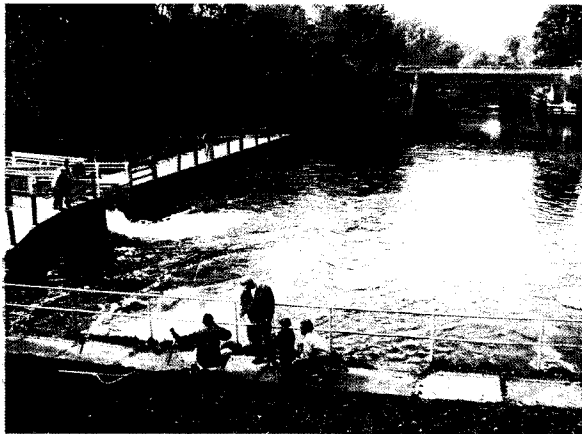


**Triangle Park (unofficial name) - .14 acres**

This small neighborhood park borders the TART trail and has a bench and peace pole donated by the local Rotary Club. Some of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

**Union Street Dam Park - .93 acres**

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



**Veteran's Memorial Park - 2.24 acres**

This community park offers four lighted tennis courts, a restroom building, a small swing set and slide. Until this late summer, the park was home to a grouping of memorials commemorating the death of Veterans from conflicts dating from the Civil War to present day. These memorials have been relocated in the new Veteran's Memorial on City Parkland at the Grand Traverse Commons. Most of the park features meet accessibility guidelines.

### **Volleyball Court Area – 2.79 acres**

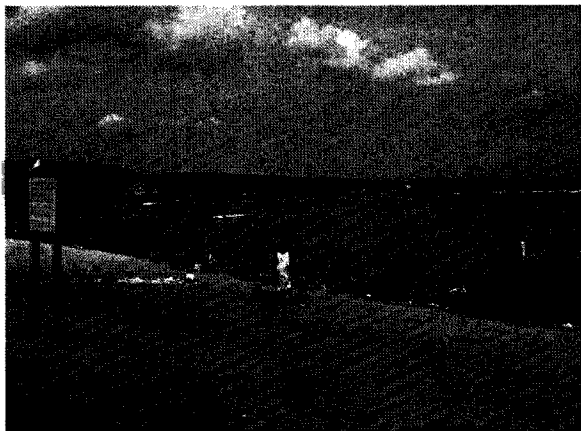
The community park includes two parcels separated by a parcel owned by the City of Traverse City – Garfield Township Recreational Authority. The eastern parcel has a parking lot and access to the beach on West Grand Traverse Bay. The western parcel has six sand volleyball courts and a nice beach area.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

### **Wellington Street Plaza - .07 acres**

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

### **West End Beach – 4.06 acres**

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



# ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

The City of Traverse City is moving forward in providing facilities that are barrier-free to better serve all segments of the population. As an example, the Streets Division has installed ramps at all intersection throughout the City. Four new playgrounds have been installed in the past fourteen years that meet current accessibility guidelines. As old picnic tables need replacing, they are replaced with tables designed for accessibility. Changes have been made to parking lots and other changes are in the works for public fishing along the Boardman River and an accessible path to Grand Traverse Bay. Restrooms have been retro-fitted with new faucets, grab bars, etc. to bring them up to current standards.

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

- American Legion Park - No facilities except for sidewalks on two sides of park, a Veteran's monument and a drinking fountain that is barrier-free.
- Arbutus Court - Accessible from neighborhood sidewalk. Plans are for a small accessible play structure for ages 6 and under and a connection to the 1/4 court basketball area.
- Ashton - Wooded lot featuring old growth beech and hemlock trees. Small playground and trails not accessible.
- Boon Street Park - Small neighborhood park with 3 pieces of playground equipment and 1/2 court basketball. Currently has grass with no hard surface path to any of these items.
- Brown Bridge Quiet Area - Wild and scenic area with some barrier free nature trails along with a fishing platform and MDNRE-type primitive toilet.
- Bryant Park - Has barrier free flush toilet facility, designated parking and a new playground meeting ADA standards. A hard surface path connects parking to the play structure along with a picnic table and barbeque grill pad. A portable ADA path to beach is planned.
- Clancy Park - Old playground, 1/4 court basketball and large grass area. No hard surface paths to either. Will replace playground in approximately 2012.
- Clinch Marina - New construction of entire marina completed in 2004 allows access to all parts of the marina by all.
- Clinch Park - Has barrier-free restrooms and paths that reach most sections of the park. A beach access route and a small boat/kayak accessible launch are planned for 2011-2012, thanks to a Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant that was awarded in December 2010.



- Darrow Park - New playground installed in 2000 is per ADA accessibility guidelines. Sidewalks surround park and lead to playground.
- East Bay Park - New playground installed in 1996 is per ADA accessibility guidelines. New parking lot also installed with designated parking and sidewalks to restroom, playground and toward the beach. When water levels increase, will need path to water.
- F & M Park - A new play structure was constructed in late fall of 2009 per ADA accessibility guidelines. A gazebo constructed in 2003, has a sidewalk that connects the gazebo to the sidewalk system surrounding the park. The sidewalk was added in 2005.
- Fulton Park - Natural area that had new parking lot and trail installed in 2004. ADA accessible parking is present and ADA accessible wood fiber was added to the self-guided nature trail in 2005.
- Grand Traverse Commons - Sidewalks exist on the edges of portions of the property. Current trails are not ADA accessible.
- Hannah Park - No facilities at this time except for two sets of steps leading to the lower level near the Boardman River and three fishing platforms overhanging the river.
- Hickory Hills Ski Area - Needs new lodge and parking arrangements to become barrier-free. It is in the long-range plan to make major changes.
- Highland Park - No development to this small neighborhood park. Only a slide is currently present. Only access is across grassy areas.
- Hull Park - Major renovations completed in 2002 allow access to boardwalk, boat launch facilities, restrooms and amphitheater. An accessible boathouse used for sailing classes was completed in 2009. The East and North Boardman Lake Trails connect at Hull Park and are accessible.
- Huron Hills Park - Small grassy neighborhood park, no facilities, no access.
- Indian Woods Park - Four pieces of play equipment accessible only by grass lawn areas.
- Lay Park - No development to this downtown park except for sidewalks on two sides.
- Meijer's Silverbrook Acres - No development, no access at this natural area park.
- Mini Park (Wequetong Point) Park- Walkways to river are accessible for fishing and sight-seeing.
- Open Space Park - Has accessible walkways to observe West Bay. Improvements could be made to the interior of the park with walkways and picnic facilities.

- Park A - No development, no access. Small wooded parcel.
- Park C - Small set of steps leading to East Bay frontage. Not currently accessible.
- Senior Center Park - Shuffleboard Courts and Tennis Courts are accessible along with the main part of the building. The restrooms that are reached from the exterior of the building need some renovation. The entire building will be replaced as soon as fund-raising is complete. 2013-14 is target year.
- J Smith Walkway - Small park with accessible walkway to downtown. Upgrades were completed in 2006 to make it more attractive and useable.
- Sunset Park - Only facilities are swings and a merry-go-round. They are not reachable by hard surface paths, nor is beach.
- Triangle Park (unofficial name) - Newly designated park that has the TART trail passing adjacent. Has no facilities except for a bench and peace pole donated by Rotary but does have the TART trail access.
- Union Street Dam Park - Long sloping ramp to fishing dock is present. There are plans to install better access to two additional fishing areas below the dam within the next few years.
- Veteran's Memorial Park - Sidewalks from accessible parking to restroom building and tennis courts is complete. Improvements to restroom accessibility were completed in 2005.
- Volleyball Court Area - The TART trail passes along the edge of this property and a parking lot with designated spaces is a short distance from the courts.
- Wellington Street Plaza - River access for fishing is accessible from the South Mini-Park.
- West End Beach - Plans have been prepared for a new restroom structure and ramped path to beach. Waiting for funding to become available. TART trail runs the length of this park area.

# GRANT INVENTORY

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

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

Tennis courts have been removed and replaced with new courts. Benches were deteriorating and were replaced, some of landscaping has died or become unsightly and was replaced. Some fencing is in need of replacement before long.

## ***Grant Number – 2610247 Land and Water Conservation Fund Boardman River Access – 1981***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

***Grant Number TF02-104 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund  
Boardman Lake Trail - East***

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

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

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

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

## **SECTION 4**

# **PLANNING PROCESS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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

## **LAND USE**

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

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

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

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

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

Perhaps the most noted portion of the plan concerns the "Bayfront Plan", a generalized name given to the property lying between Senior Citizen Park and the northwest City limits. The "Bayfront Plan" area is intended to be a balanced active and passive facility designed to serve

residents and tourists alike. The overall park is really a succession of specialized small parks interconnected by green space linkages. In 2004, the City of Traverse City - Garfield Township Recreational Authority was established with the intentions of acquiring and developing additional land for the area's future. Bond and millage issues passed that allowed another parcel on West Grand Traverse Bay to become public recreational land.

## **ZONING**

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

## **OVERVIEW**

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

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

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

## **STAFF INPUT**

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

## **SECTION 5**

# **PUBLIC INPUT**

## **SURVEYS**

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

## **PUBLIC MEETINGS**

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

## **"YOUR BAY - YOUR SAY" PUBLIC PLANNING PROCESS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In January of 2010, a Request for Proposals was prepared to take the information gathered during the above steps and develop it further to the preliminary engineering level. Proposals were received on February 8 from twelve firms with four firms being interviewed on February 18. URS Corporation was selected and began their duties in March. The final product was presented to the City Commission on July 19 which was followed by approvals of various boards and commissions before the City Commission formally adopted the plan on September 7, 2010.

The public was highly involved with this process including a three day charrette where a great number of civic, business, educational and other groups were present to listen to a short presentation and then to provide input from their group's point of view. There were also sessions for the general public to observe and give input during the planning and design days.

Representatives from URS gave summary presentations to local neighborhood groups, boards and commissions and civic organizations, then answered questions and received feedback.



## **“PUBLIC WORKSHOP FOR PARKS”**

On September 23, 2010, the Parks and Recreation Commission hosted the “Public Workshop for Parks” to gather insight from the community on needs and desires for parks, recreation facilities and recreation programs. An informational briefing was followed by small group prioritization of the draft goals and objectives. The last project of the evening was for the small groups to take a park map and analyze it, then make design and operational suggestions for future consideration. At this meeting a short, informal survey was passed out and returned by those in attendance. (Other means of accessing this survey was also publicized in several ways highlighted earlier.)

The workshop was publicized in the local Record-Eagle newspaper, on the City’s website, posters placed around town and at other City meetings. In addition, the neighborhood groups were contacted and encouraged to pass along the information at their local meetings or through e-mail or newsletter channels. Although the workshop was lightly attended, there was a good cross-section of the community represented. Participants from many parts of town were present along with several age groups.

## SECTION 6

# COMMUNITY GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Recreation surveys, citizen comments, and the recreation facility planning process provide a wide variety of ideas and priorities to guide staff and City efforts. The goals stated below provide a basis in the development of the objectives. The objectives in turn provide guidance in the development of an action plan to improve recreation for the citizens of Traverse City while at the same time enhancing the City's image as a vacationland. Understanding that values and priorities are ever changing in the community, this set of goals will be continually refined and expanded to reflect new attitudes and ideas.

### GOAL 1: TRAVERSE CITY BAYFRONT REVITALIZATION

Design and implement our Bayfront Revitalization Plans 2010 as means to care for our public waterfront primarily as an urban recreational resource for use by all, with care and attention given for preserving and enhancing the natural and environmental qualities.

#### Objectives:

- a. Apply and prioritize the elements of the Traverse City Bayfront 2010, beginning implementation projects in 2011.
- b. Continue to leverage local dollars and apply for local, state and federal grants on a regular basis.
- c. Utilize the Traverse City Bayfront 2010 Plan, preliminary engineering, cost projections and recommendations as a guide to move forward with implementation.
- d. Consider short-term improvements that could be implemented sooner that would have a positive effect on the future revitalization efforts. Improvements shall include:
  - Develop safe at-grade pedestrian crossings to the bay with high visibility crosswalks on Grandview Parkway (US—31).
  - Support the financing and construction of bathrooms in phase one.
- e. Utilize Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) & Green Building Standards on all site and building solutions where possible.

### GOAL 2: MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE EXISTING PARKS

Strengthen communications and relationships with neighborhood associations and other community groups and individuals, to develop new parks, recreational amenities and park enhancements.

Objectives for all parks:

- a. Advocate for a recreational millage or use of Brown Bridge Trust Fund interest to develop a capital improvement fund to support neighborhood park improvements.
- b. Work together with neighborhood associations and community groups to facilitate discussion and planning for park improvements.
- c. Work together with foundations and organizations for building or replacing aging playground structures.

Objectives for certain parks with preliminary planning in process:

- a. Clancy Park
  - 1. Develop cost projections and phasing, funding and implementation plan for Clancy Park based on Clancy Park Site Master Plan 2010.
  - 2. Work together with the Orchard Heights Neighborhood group to continue to develop strategies for implementation, funding opportunities and design.
- b. Hannah Park
  - 1. Work with the Central Neighborhood group to consider developing Hannah Park as possible site for an "Art Park" or outdoor sculpture park. Work with local artists, non-profits and community organizations to develop a Hannah Park Site Master Plan.
- c. Triangle Park (Rose and Boyd Streets)
  - 1. Work with neighborhood group to develop a Site Master Plan.
- d. Lay Park
  - 1. Develop a revised site plan that supports recreational / pedestrian opportunity in Old Town.
- e. Identify City parkland that could be used as a dog park.

### **GOAL 3: DEVELOP MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR GRAND TRAVERSE COMMONS AND MEIJER'S SILVERBROOK ACRES PARK**

Develop management plans for the Grand Traverse Commons and Meijer's Silverbrook Acres Parks to outline a systematic approach to improving the landscaping and usability of the two parks.

Objectives:

- a. Consider removing invasive vegetation.
- b. Develop trail systems to showcase the scenic and unique areas of the parks.
- c. Develop appropriate use areas for low impact recreation opportunities.
- d. Maintain the unique character of habitat types in certain designated areas.

## GOAL 4: PERFORMANCE LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

Develop a set of Performance Landscape Guidelines (PLG) that will encourage a more sustainable approach to designing and managing City parks.

### Objectives:

- a. The following criteria should be considered:
  - Soils, ecology and existing wildlife habitat.
  - Storm water management.
  - Selection of vegetation.
  - Air quality and the capture of carbon emissions.
  - Design, social space and park visitor amenities.
  - Operation and maintenance including the mowing and the development of no-mow areas in existing parks – (possibly convert some existing lawn areas to native meadows to increase species diversity in our parks and provide wildlife habitat).
  - LEED and other National and State accredited design standards including LID and Green Infrastructure.
- b. Utilize existing model guidelines including “High Performance Landscape Guidelines: 21st Century Parks for NYC, January 2011”.

## GOAL 5: ACTIVE MULTIMODAL RECREATION & TRANSPORTATION

Develop an active transportation plan that would support future trails, pathways and transportation improvements in and around the community to increase and encourage more recreational opportunities.

### Objectives:

- a. Advocate for implementation of a complete streets ordinance.
- b. Develop a comprehensive multimodal transportation plan for the City working with appropriate City staff, local agencies and the Planning Commission.
- c. Consider developing standards and locations for the development of bicycle facilities and pedestrian walkways.
- d. Evaluate existing and future transportation corridors in the City for improved multimodal options in conjunction with ongoing trail and streetscape planning efforts.
- e. Build sidewalks adjacent to and where appropriate within all of our parks located within a neighborhood setting.
- f. Improve overall transportation choices that would also improve recreational opportunities by connecting recreational facilities together.
- g. Utilize existing and past trail planning efforts that have been completed by TART Trails, City Planning and neighboring townships.

- h. Work with local non-governmental organizations (NGO's) such as the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and trail advocacy groups including the NW Michigan Council of Governments and the Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation Trails (TART).
- i. Implement universal accessibility design principles as a design standard for all new facilities.
- j. Support Safe Routes to Schools Program
- k. Utilize Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) & Green Building Standards on all site and building solutions.
- l. Work together with the Downtown Development Authority to increase active transportation in the DDA District.

## **GOAL 6: SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING**

*Develop consistent wayfinding signage system to improve overall identity and name recognition of the City parks as well as improve access and increase use of the parks.*

As the City moves forward with developing its park facilities, signage and wayfinding will be an important aspect of this growth. Quality, universally understood and a well thought out array of signs will increase the sense of ownership, increase name recognition and increase park usage.

### **Objectives:**

- a. Develop wayfinding analysis and recommendations including sign concepts and sign array for park entrance signs, internal circulation and directional signs, interpretive signs that include educational and historical components, administrative and policy signs and wayfinding signs.
- b. Review City ordinance for signage requirements and restrictions.
- c. Consider permit requirements for sign construction and placement within the MDOT and Grand Traverse County Road Commission right-of-way.
- d. Consider funding and phasing plan for implementation of signs.
- e. Develop signage program and design intent drawings (construction details and specifications) for bidding.

## **GOAL 7: BOARDMAN LAKE & RIVER**

*Develop Boardman Lake and River as a natural resource promoting active, passive and water related recreational opportunities.*

### **Objectives:**

- a. Continue to provide a mixed-use recreation environment that promotes active and passive activities.
- b. Work with the appropriate agencies and local non-profits (TART) to complete the third and final phase (west side) of non-motorized trail around Boardman Lake by 2013.

- c. Develop activities that connect downtown to the south end of Boardman Lake and future non-motorized access to the south of S. Airport Road.
- d. Continue to support Traverse Area Community Sailing (TACS), TC Whitewater and other non-profit organizations that encourage water-related recreational use of Boardman Lake and River.
- e. Design a riverwalk that will provide connection from downtown to Boardman Lake and pursue recreation development along this corridor.
- f. Encourage enterprises such as snack shops, kayak and canoe rental and associated businesses.

## **GOAL 8: OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

*Develop an operation and maintenance (O&M) manual that can be used to streamline efficiency.*

Realizing that parks and recreation facilities and programs are local assets generating tourism revenue into the community parks and recreation needs to meet the following objectives.

Objectives:

- a. Conduct annual efficiency review of programs and facilities for review by Parks and Recreation Commission.
- b. Develop City/Township and City/County financial agreements concerning use and development of parkland.
- d. Utilize Performance Landscape Guidelines (Goal 3) as a tool to evaluate existing operation and maintenance standards.
- e. Adjust user fees for programs and entrance fees (including Hickory Hills) on an as needed basis.
- f. Implement a recycling program in the parks.

## **GOAL 9: RECREATION PROGRAMS**

*Develop strong and dynamic recreation programming affording a variety of recreational activities and experiences for a wide range of users.*

Objectives:

- a. Conduct annual analysis and efficiency review of programs.
- b. Partner with local non-profits, schools and community organizations that are providing recreation programs.
- c. Consider s recreation millage that would provide funding to support more advanced programs.
- d. Survey program participants to ascertain their opinion on ways to continually improve the recreation programs.

- e. Recreation programs need to be affordable and fulfill a community value.

## **GOAL 10: HICKORY HILLS**

*Build a stronger recreation facility at Hickory Hills that provides year round recreation opportunities.*

### **Objectives:**

- a. Collaborate with stakeholder groups that may be interested in programming activities or maintaining facilities.
- b. Develop a Site Master Plan as a guide for future planning.
- c. Work together with the Grand Traverse Ski Club to make improvements to snow-making equipment, rope tows (e.g. replace with updated style tows) and other facility operation related to winter sports.
- d. Consider short term improvements that could be implemented soon that would have a positive effect on the future revitalization efforts. Improvements could include:
  - 1. Build a new pole barn that will provide additional storage space for groomer and snowmaking equipment. (Design and plans completed in 2009 – location of facility to be reviewed and recommended by Parks and Recreation Commission.)
  - 2. Develop a tubing run.
  - 3. Improvements to or replacement of the lodge.
  - 4. Enhanced snack bar.
- e. Install a donation tube at the disc golf course along with a new sign and map to help fund improvements to the course. Work together with the Northern Michigan Disc Sports Organization to develop a prioritized set of improvement projects.
- f. Develop a single track and/or technical mountain bike course.

## **GOAL 11: BROWN BRIDGE QUIET AREA**

*Continue to maintain the Brown Bridge Quiet Area as a passive recreational resource for the residents of Traverse City and surrounding region.*

### **Objectives:**

- a. Work with the Grand Traverse County Road Commission and TART to develop a bike route from Traverse City to the Brown Bridge Quiet Area.
- b. If the proposed dam removal takes place, make the necessary changes in facilities and programs to embrace the changes as opportunities to further new educational and recreational opportunities.

## **GOAL 12: SENIOR CITIZEN CENTER**

Continue to support the Commission on Aging to provide recreation programs, education and assistance for mature adults, age 60 and over.

### **Objectives:**

- a. Investigate new sources of funding in cooperation with Senior Center staff and the "Friends of the Senior Center" for construction of a new community facility on the current site.
- b. Help to increase membership.
- c. Continue to support development of innovative programming.
- d. Continue to enhance the working relationship with the Senior Center.

## **GOAL 13: PARKS AND RECREATION AWARENESS**

Develop a marketing plan that focuses on increasing awareness of City parks and recreation programs.

### **Objectives:**

- a. Implement an effective, relevant and user friendly web / online presence by the end of 2011.
- b. Utilize existing promotional material and continue to develop more.
- c. Utilize pop-up tent at local community events and "Music In The Park" to pass out promotional material including Park Guide and Map and recreational program information.
- d. Recognize July as National Park and Recreation Month and celebrate by holding special events in the month of July.
- e. Promote awareness of health, education, social, and environmental benefits of recreation.
- f. Encourage family participation programs.
- g. Designate a liaison from the Parks and Recreation Commission to provide monthly updates to the City Commission.

## **GOAL 14: SCHOOLS**

Work with schools to make recreation facilities and programs part of the education system.

### **Objectives:**

- a. Develop educational programs for recreational skills and environmental understanding.
- b. Investigate summer neighborhood programs using school playgrounds and gyms.
- c. Develop programs with area schools to promote the utilization of Hickory Hills.



## **GOAL 15: LAND ACQUISITION**

Purchase additional property on an as-needed basis that will help grow and diversify the City's recreational facilities.

### **Objectives:**

- a. Consider feasibility of acquiring property near parks to provide future land for expansion of recreational activities.
- b. Consider feasibility of acquiring easements or full purchase of property with Boardman River Property Owners for the future extension of a riverwalk.
- c. Investigate with Traverse City Area Public Schools, the possibility of developing a City park on a lease or use agreement, in the wooded area adjacent to Traverse Heights Elementary School.

## **GOAL 16: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND**

Develop a capital improvement fund for improvements to City parkland.

### **Objectives:**

- a. Survey the community to gauge interest and support for funding parks and recreational programming.
- b. Consider use of Brown Bridge Trust Fund Interest.
- c. Consider a recreational millage.
- d. Seek to direct revenue from park usage fees, donations and fundraisers to a dedicated capital improvement fund.
- e. Earmark specified donations and apply them to capital improvements for the specific park facility.

## **GOAL 17: PARK USAGE POLICY**

Revise and update the existing Park Usage Policy.

### **Objectives:**

- a. Consider application fees and staff time to prepare, process and provide assistance to events held on City parkland.
- b. Consider park usage fees for events held on City parkland.
- c. Consider number of events, location and duration.

# PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS PLAN SUMMARY

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>	<u>EST. PROJECT COST</u>
<b>2010/11</b>		
Hickory Hills Snow Guns Purchase		40,000.00
<b>2011/12</b>		
Hickory Hills Pole Barn		80,000.00
Senior Center Park Irrigation		15,000.00
Hannah Park Improvements		50,000.00
Paving of Gravel Senior Center Parking Lot		15,000.00
Bayfront Implementation Phase 1		1,042,800.00
Boardman Lake Trail (West)		235,000.00
<b>2012/13</b>		
Bayfront Implementation Phase 2		1,500,000.00
Hickory Hills Tubing Park and Snow Making Expansion		200,000.00
Beach Retaining Wall at Bryant Park		90,000.00
Union Street Dam Fishing Access Improvements		65,000.00
Park Sign Replacement		20,000.00
Ashton Park Playground		15,000.00
Foot Bridge Over Lower River Section – Brown Bridge		50,000.00
Clancy Park Improvements		50,000.00
<b>2013/14</b>		
Lay Park Improvements		130,000.00
Bayfront Implementation Phase 3		3,000,000.00
Hickory Hills Lodge Replacement		1,000,000.00
Foot Bridge Over Upper River Section – Brown Bridge		50,000.00
<b>2014/15</b>		
Senior Center Building Replacement		4,500,000.00
Indian Woods Playground		20,000.00
Boardman Lake Park Purchase (West)		300,000.00
Bayfront Implementation Phase 4		2,000,000.00
Hannah Park Boardwalk		200,000.00
Brown Bridge Property Acquisition		100,000.00
Develop Bottomlands Trail - Brown Bridge		50,000.00

# CAPITAL PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

FISCAL YEAR	PROJECT NAME	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	COST ESTIMATE	POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES
2010 - 2011				
1	Hickory Hills Snow Gun Purchase	With the addition last year of booster pump, 3 additional snow guns can increase production with less hours worked.	\$40,000.00	City Funds
2011 - 2012				
1	Bayfront Implementation Phase 1	This phase of development would include at Clinch Park an accessible splash pad, natural playground, small boat and kayak launch, beach access ramps and walks, picnic areas and also improvements to bank and beach stabilization and adding new retaining walls.	\$1,042,800.00	MNRTF TIF Funds City Funds Foundations Private Sources
2	Hickory Hills Pole Barn	Pole barn is needed for storage of snow groomer, snow guns and other ski area equipment.	\$80,000.00	City Funds
3	Senior Center Park Irrigation	This park has need for irrigation to improve turf conditions and appeal of facility.	\$15,000.00	City Funds Donations
4	Hannah Park Improvements	Convert dirt trail through park to hard surface, add grass pavers to service drive and improve lighting.	\$50,000.00	TIF Funds City Funds
5	Paving of Gravel Senior Center Parking Lot	Improve safety, aesthetics and eliminate dusty conditions.	\$15,000.00	City Funds Donations
6	Boardman Lake Trail (West)	This would complete the trail around the entire Boardman Lake for community enjoyment.	\$235,000.00	MNRTF MDOT Grants Other Jurisdictions
2012 - 2013				
1	Bayfront Implementation Phase 2	Continue Bayfront Revitalization of the Clinch Park / Open Space area including restrooms, concession facilities and plaza.	\$1,500,000.00	Donations City Funds Grants Foundations
2	Hickory Hills Tubing Park with Snow Making Expansion	Add revenue producing facility to enhance opportunities and reduce City subsidy.	\$200,000.00	City Funds GT Ski Club Bond or Loan
3	Beach Retaining Wall at Bryant Park	The wall and landscaping will help reduce beach drift inland and improve turf area.	\$90,000.00	City Funds
4	Union Street Dam Fishing Access Improvements	Portions of the dam are accessible and this project would open up additional fishing opportunities for all.	\$65,000.00	City Funds TIF Funds GL Fisheries Trust

5	Park Sign Replacement	Current park signs are becoming unsightly. New sign array will improve overall aesthetics and usability of parks.	\$20,000.00	City Funds TIF Funds
6	Ashton Park Playground	Replacement of old play equipment with younger children's play structure	\$15,000.00	City Funds Donations
7	Foot Bridge Over Lower River Section – Brown Bridge	Passage from one side of the river to the other will increase recreation access and opportunities.	\$50,000.00	City Funds
8	Clancy Park Improvements	Project will include replacing play structure and developing walking trail around park.	\$50,000.00	City Funds Donations Foundations
2013 - 2014				
1	Lay Park Improvements	Will give this Old Town park a more formal look and improve usability.	\$130,000.00	Donations TIF Funds City Funds
2	Bayfront Implementation Phase 3	Will add accessible fishing location and public space for enjoying West Bay and Boardman River mouth.	\$3,000,000.00	GL Fisheries Trust MNRTF Donations City Funds
3	Hickory Hills Lodge Replacement	Will replace aging lodge with facility with improved accessibility and functionality.	\$1,000,000.00	Donations GT Ski Club Grants
4	Foot Bridge Over Upper River Section – Brown Bridge	Passage from one side of the river to the other will increase recreation access and opportunities.	\$50,000.00	City Funds
2014- 2015				
1	Senior Center Building Replacement	Current facility is not adequate in size for needed programs and has constant maintenance issues.	\$4,500,000.00	Donations Other Jurisdictions Foundations
2	Indian Woods Playground	Old play equipment needs to be replaced to meet current standards.	\$20,000.00	Donations City Funds
3	Boardman Lake Park Purchase (West)	This part of town is lacking in parks and recreation opportunities.	\$300,000.00	MNRTF Foundations
4	Bayfront Implementation Phase 4	Continue Bayfront Revitalization including restroom construction.	\$2,000,000.00	City Funds Grants Foundations
5	Hannah Park Boardwalk	Boardwalk to connect to Union Street Dam Park area. Will increase fishing opportunities for all.	\$200,000.00	TIF Funds GL Fisheries Trust City Funds
6	Property Acquisition Brown Bridge	Purchase adjacent properties as available to enhance Brown Bridge.	\$100,000.00	MNRTF City Funds
7	Bottomlands Trail – Brown Bridge	After dam is removed and the bottomlands evolve, a new trail will be developed near the river for access and appreciation of this feature.	\$50,000.00	City Funds

## SECTION 7

# ACTION PROGRAM

The City of Traverse City is actively striving to continue making improvements to our Parks and Recreation facilities and programs, even in these tough economic times. The citizens of this great City have spoken repeatedly about the importance they place in Parks and Recreation. This was never evidenced more than in the various steps that have taken place toward the revitalization of the West Grand Traverse Bay shoreline parks from the Senior Center on the east to M-72 on the west. The City is looking at creative ways to fund these needed changes over the next several years. First step meetings have already taken place with potential funders, to stimulate their interest in the various projects that will be taking place. Grants, trusts, foundations, community organizations, private citizens and businesses are just some of the avenues the City intends to follow to make the projects listed in the public improvement plan a reality. Bonds and millages are also being investigated as strong possibilities for funding projects for both the Bayfront parks and other City parks as well.

Another area of great discussion currently in Traverse City, is making parks and other features in the City easier to reach by non-motorized means. This includes constructing new trails or re-marking and designating portions of streets for bicycle traffic. Developing the plan to follow will take a good deal of study and thought, to provide a system that works for all modes of transportation. Most of this will be out of the jurisdiction of Parks and Recreation, but when possible, it will be embraced in new construction and in updating of existing facilities. A project with an extremely strong community desire to be completed, is the West Boardman Lake Trail which will complete a recreational trail around the entire lake. This trail will connect to the TART network that will travel east and west from the north end of the trail at Hull Park and to the south with other planned trails through the Boardman Valley. Eventually it may provide a connection to the Brown Bridge Quiet Area.

One of the most important tasks for the Parks and Recreation Commission and staff is to let people know about what we have to offer them. Some of the traditional methods including newspaper features and advertising, brochures and word of mouth are not reaching the masses. A more active, diverse website is being developed now which will reach many new people and social media is just beginning to be investigated and utilized by the City. Even though literature has been available for years, many people who live here, some as long as their entire lives, are not familiar with some of our parks and programs. Utilizing these other avenues will make the information available in various ways that will hopefully reach the vast majority of the community.

While looking to the Bayfront for exciting changes for the whole community and its guests, the neighborhoods must also be an important portion of the parks and recreation package that must not be neglected, to enable Traverse City to be a complete community. Smaller neighborhood parks like Clancy, Ashton, Indian Woods, Hannah, Lay and others, provide exciting opportunities for neighborhood involvement in development plans for these parks. Working

with these groups, the Parks and Recreation Commission and staff can create vibrant hubs for these mini-communities where neighbors can meet, interact and strengthen friendships and cooperation.

Some of the larger community and regional parks such as Hickory Hills, the Senior Center and the Grand Traverse Commons, create new challenges of providing varied types of recreational opportunities while not being too much of a cash drain on the City. Finding ways to fund these special places, other than the General Fund, will need to be further explored and utilized for these facilities to remain viable. These funds could come in several ways including user fees, millages, foundations and donations from several sources along with receiving funding from other jurisdictions whose citizens utilize these parks.

At Hickory Hills, adding a tubing run to enhance revenue and to diversify winter recreation is being investigated for possible installation in the near future. A master plan to look at the short and long term future of this wonderful resource has to be developed so proper design, phasing and fund procurement can be pursued. The location for a new lodge needs to be identified so other infrastructure can be properly located and other new facilities can be constructed to complement the new facility.

Partnerships and collaboration with other recreation and education providers will be essential going forward into the future. All of these entities are enduring the same cash challenges, and working together to share facilities, staff and ideas, can work to benefit all of these pieces of the community. Recreation programming will continually need to be reviewed to make sure that it is serving a need for an evolving community and to investigate new programs as trends change. Local jurisdictions and organizations that provide recreation need not compete with each other by duplicating programs that do not have the participation numbers to warrant multiple entities offering the same programs.

Some parts of the City are farther than desired, by recreation standards and from the voices of the citizens, from a park. Traverse City must continue to look at property as it becomes available and seek funding so that when such a piece in a park-deficient neighborhood becomes available, it can be purchased. A fund that can be dedicated for this purpose would be a great start along with identifying a source of income for the fund. This could be from a special millage, a user fee that is earmarked, or some other forced savings account for land acquisition. One example is the West Boardman Lake Park concept that would benefit the Old Town neighborhood directly, along with all those that use the complete Boardman Lake Trail system.

We are excited about the possibilities the next five years and beyond offers Traverse City. There are a great number of challenges, but also a large number of opportunities that should be embraced, to make Traverse City truly a model for other communities to emulate as they provide programs and facilities for their citizens.