



Barry County Parks and Recreation Plan

2025-2029



Draft for review October 2024

**2025 BARRY COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION
MASTER PLAN 2025 – 2029**



**BARRY COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

David Jackson, Chair
David Hatfield, Vice-Chair
Marcia Bassett
Michael Callton
Bruce D. Campbell
Catherine Getty
Bob Teunessen
Jon Smelker



**BARRY COUNTY
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**

Daryl Cheeseman, Chair
Catherine Getty, Vice Chair
Doug Klein, Secretary
Elizabeth Hutton
Frank Fiala
Debbie Jensen
John LaForge
Nichole Lyke
Rick Moore
Sarah Nelson

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Hastings, MI 49058
(269) 945-3775
Barrycountyparks.org

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 2025 – 2029 Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission Plan was developed as a cooperative effort between the Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission and the citizens of Barry County and our many stakeholders.

2025 BARRY COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSIONERS

Daryl Cheeseman, Chair

Catherine Getty, Vice Chair

Doug Klein, Secretary

Elizabeth Hutton

Frank Fiala

Debbie Jensen

John LaForge

Nichole Lyke

Rick Moore

Sarah Nelson

BARRY COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION STAFF

Dan Patton

Ben Strimback

Shannon Pinkster

Jason Yonkers

Vicki MacKellar

Ron Welton

Claire Johnston

The Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission also acknowledges the work, guidance, and time the Parks Executive Committee members provided in developing the Barry County Parks Master Plan.

The Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission
County of Barry
Hastings, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION OF THE 2025 BARRY COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION FIVE YEAR PLAN
2025 – 2029.

At a meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission of the County of Barry, Barry County, Michigan, held at the Tyden Center Community Room, 121 South Church Street, Hastings, Michigan 49058 on November 21, 2024:

PRESENT: Members: Fiala, Getty, Jensen, Klein, Lyke, Moore

ABSENT: Members: Cheeseman, Hutton, LaForge, Nelson

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Klein and supported by Fiala:

WHEREAS, it is a primary function of the Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission to maintain a current plan for County park and recreation land, waters, and facilities; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has analyzed the cultural and physical resources of Barry County, including an inventory of existing recreation facilities; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has sought public input from a variety of channels in establishing goals and objectives which identified recreation improvement opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has transformed its goals into a logical plan of action for parks, recreation facility development, trails, and open space preservation in Barry County;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Parks and Recreation Commission adopts the 2025 – 2029 Barry County Parks & Recreation Five Year Plan and forward the plan to the Barry County Board of Commissioners.

YEAS: Members: Fiala, Getty, Jensen, Klein, Lyke, Moore

NAYS: Members: None

ABSTAIN: Members: None

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.


Catherine Getty, Vice-Chair



Resolution

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE 2025-2029 BARRY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION FIVE YEAR MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission has undertaken a planning process for developing a five year Parks and Recreation Plan which describes the physical features, existing recreation facilities and the desired actions to be taken to improve and maintain cultural and recreational facilities during the period between 2025 and 2029; and

WHEREAS, residents of Barry County were provided with a well-advertised opportunity during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the parks and recreation plan; and

WHEREAS, the public was given a well-advertised opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the final draft plan for a period of one month; and

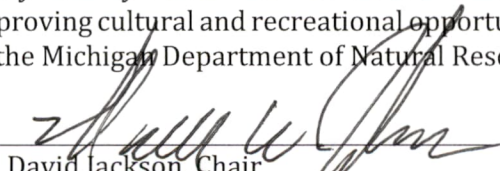
WHEREAS, Barry County has developed the plan for the benefit of the entire community and to adopt the plan as a document to assist in meeting the recreation needs of the community; and

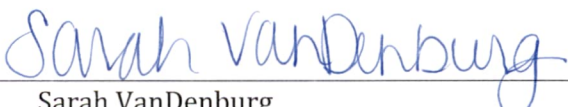
WHEREAS, at a meeting held on November 21, 2024, the Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission voted to adopt said 2025 Barry County Parks & Recreation Master Plan and recommend adoption by the County Board of Commissioners; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on December 17, 2024, within the Commissioners Chambers to provide an opportunity for all residents to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the 2025 Barry County Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing the Barry County Board of Commissioners voted to adopt said 2025 Barry County Parks & Recreation Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Barry County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the 2025 Barry County Parks and Recreation Master Plan as a reference document for future decision-making for improving cultural and recreational opportunities for the residents of the County, and that the plan be transmitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.


David Jackson, Chair
Barry County Board of Commissioners


Sarah VanDenburg
Barry County Clerk

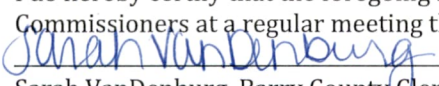
The foregoing resolution was offered by Getty, supported by Smelker, with the vote being as follows:

YEAS: Jackson, Hatfield, Bassett, Callton, Campbell, Getty, Smelker, and Teunessen

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None ABSTAIN: None

I do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by the Barry County Commissioners at a regular meeting thereof held on the 14th day of January 2025.


Sarah VanDenburg, Barry County Clerk

Adopted 1/14/2025



Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission

Commission
Members

January 27, 2025

Daryl
Cheeseman
Chair

Catherine Getty
Vice Chair

Doug Klein
Secretary

Elizabeth Hutton

Frank Fiala

Debbie Jensen

John LaForge

Nichole Lyke

Rick Moore

Sarah Nelson

Parks Director
Dan Patton

Mr. Jeff Keesler, Planning Director/Zoning Administrator
Barry County Planning and Zoning
220 W. State St.
Hastings, MI 49058

Dear Mr. Keesler:

With this communication, please find for your records and use an electronic copy of the adopted Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission Five-Year Parks Master Plan 2025 – 2029.

The 2025 Barry County Parks Master Plan was approved for adoption by the Barry County Board of Commissioners at their meeting held on January 14, 2025.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me directly via telephone at (269) 945-3775 or email at dpatton@barrycounty.org at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,
Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission

Dan Patton
Parks Director

Enclosure



Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission

Commission
Members

January 27, 2025

Daryl
Cheeseman
Chair

Catherine Getty
Vice Chair

Doug Klein
Secretary

Mr. Lee Adams, Director
Southcentral Michigan Planning Council
300 South Westnedge Ave.
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Dear Mr. Adams:

With this communication, please find for your records and use an electronic copy of the adopted Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission Five-Year Master Plan 2025 – 2029.

The 2025 Barry County Parks Master Plan was approved for adoption by the Barry County Board of Commissioners at their meeting held on January 14, 2025.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me directly via telephone at (269) 945-3775 or email at dpatton@barrycounty.org at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,
Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission

Dan Patton
Parks Director

Enclosure



SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

ABSTRACT

This plan has been developed both to reflect the needs and goals of the community and to meet the Michigan Department of Natural Resources requirements for qualifying for Federal and State funding assistance.

Parks, recreation, and open space are important elements of Barry County and reflect positively on residents' quality of life and visitors' experiences. In recent years, a more holistic approach to recreational planning has been encouraged, stretching beyond the boundaries of traditional parks to include birdwatching trails, linear trails, greenways, and other publicly and privately owned lands. In addition to the human benefits of recreation and open space, there are important environmental benefits such as water resource protection, reduced vehicular traffic, and plant and wildlife protection.

Plan Purpose

This 2025 Barry County Parks and Recreation Plan is a guide for the future development of recreation opportunities for the residents and visitors of the county. The plan addresses current recreation issues and identifies the future needs of the community and the means for meeting those needs over the upcoming five-year period. It addresses both short and long-range goals and objectives and identifies an action program by which these goals and objectives can be accomplished. In addition, the plan serves as an educational tool to acquaint local officials and residents with the need for a sound and balanced recreation program.

This plan has been developed to reflect the needs and goals of the community and to meet the Michigan Department of Natural Resources requirements for qualifying for Federal and State funding assistance. These funds are available for land acquisition, facility development, and improvements to new and existing parklands.

Plan Scope

The scope of this plan includes proposals for the management and improvement of the county's existing sites, as well as proposals to increase the facilities available. Although the plan concentrates on county-owned land, consideration is also given to facilities owned and operated by other municipalities and private entities within the county. In terms of time, the Action Program section of this document covers development over the next five years. However, the Goals and Objectives developed to guide recreation planning may continue to be relevant for many more years to come.

Plan Summary

Barry County currently owns and manages four recreational facilities: Historic Charlton Park Village, Museum & Recreation Area, McKeown Bridge Park, Bailey Nature Preserve, and the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail. This plan identifies proposed improvements to all of these assets. Other items considered in the plan include planning for greenways and connectivity across the county.



SECTION 2

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

ABSTRACT

Barry County's primary land uses are agriculture/rural residential and recreation. One of Barry County Master Plan's primary objectives is to preserve the county's natural and recreational amenities. These features make Barry County a desirable place to live.

Community Description

Barry County is situated in the southwestern lower peninsula of Michigan in the center of the triangle with metropolitan areas of Grand Rapids, Lansing, and Kalamazoo/Battle Creek at its points. Numerous inland lakes, rivers, and rolling terrain mixed with upland forests characterize the county. Barry County continues to experience increasing growth pressures, and the effects of growth and development are impacting the natural features and local quality of life.



The Barry County Parks and Recreation Plan will address needs for the 16 townships, four villages and one city within the county, covering 576 square miles:

Assyria Township	Maple Grove Township
Baltimore Township	Village of Middleville
Barry Township	Village of Nashville
Carlton Township	Orangeville Township
Castleton Township	Prairieville Township
Village of Freeport	Rutland Charter Township
Johnstown Township	Thornapple Township
City of Hastings	Village of Woodland
Hastings Charter Township	Woodland Township
Hope Township	Yankee Springs Township
Irving Township	

The City of Hastings is the only city in the county and is the most urbanized area. The villages of Freeport, Middleville, Nashville, and Woodland are in the northern half of the county. The county also features many unincorporated communities, including Cloverdale, Delton, and Dowling.

The county is home to Yankee Springs State Recreation Area and the Middleville and Barry State Game areas. Together, these areas provide over 26,500 acres of land for recreation and wildlife, located in Hope, Irving, Orangeville, Rutland Charter, Thornapple, and Yankee Springs townships.

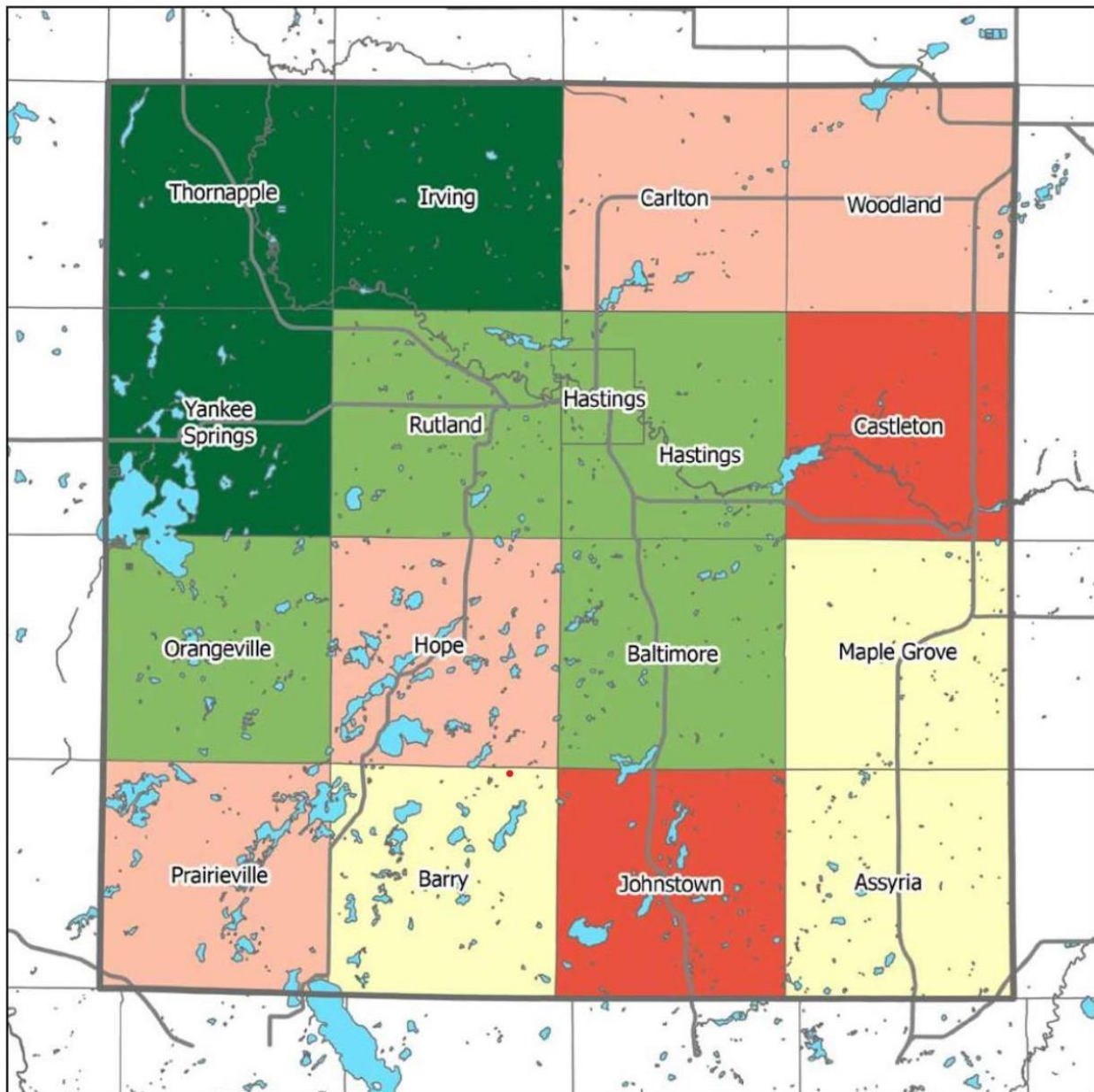
Population

The study of population growth trends and changing indicators, such as age, education, income and employment, is important in developing an understanding of the county's recreational needs. The 2020 U.S. Census indicates a population in Barry County of 62,423 and estimates a population of 63,554 as of July 1, 2022; an overall growth of 5.5%.

The following table illustrates the rate of population growth across Barry County. This is useful in attempting to forecast the likely areas of future growth. The townships that experienced the highest rates of growth between 2010 and 2020 were Irving, Thornapple and Yankee Springs townships; all located in the northwest portion of the county.

Table 2.1 Barry County Population Growth, 2010-2020 (Source, U.S. Census Bureau)

Municipality	2010 Population	2020 Population	Percent Change (2010-2020)
Assyria Township	1,986	1,992	0.3%
Baltimore Township	1,861	1,947	4.4%
Barry Township	3,378	3,417	1.1%
Carlton Township	2,391	2,368	-1.0%
Castleton Township	3,471	3,329	-4.1%
City of Hastings	7,350	7,514	2.2%
Hastings Charter Township	2,948	3,013	2.2%
Hope Township	3,239	3,154	-2.6%
Irving Township	3,250	3,734	14.9%
Johnstown Township	3,008	2,841	-5.6%
Maple Grove Township	2,668	2,676	0.3%
Orangeville Township	3,311	3,398	2.6%
Prairieville Township	3,404	3,334	-2.1%
Rutland Charter Township	3,987	4,136	3.7%
Thornapple Township	7,884	9,331	18.4%
Woodland Township	2,047	1,994	-2.6%
Yankee Springs Township	4,065	5,322	31.0%



Population Growth, 2010-2020

Barry County, Michigan

LEGEND

- +10 % Population Growth ↑
- 2 to 10% Population Growth ↑
- 0 to 2% Population Growth ↑
- 0 to - 4% Population Decline ↓
- 4% Population Decline ↓

February 1, 2022



0 2 4 6
MILES

Data Source: Michigan Geographic Data Library 2022.
United States Census Bureau 2022. McKenna 2022.



MCKENNA

Figure 2.1 Barry County Population Growth, 2010-2020 (Source Barry County 2040 Master Plan)

With 62,428 people in 2020, and 108 people per square mile, Barry County was the 33rd most populated county in the state of Michigan out of 83 counties. In 2022, the median household income of Barry County residents was \$75,182, with 8.5% of Barry County residents living in poverty. This shows a slightly more affluent community than the state overall, which has a reported median household income of \$68,505 and 13.4% of persons living in poverty.

In 2020 the median age of Barry County residents was 42.4 years, slightly older than the state median age of 40.3. The county, like the state, is growing older, with 20% of Barry County residents aged 65 or older according to the 2020 census, up from 12.5% in 2010. About 54% of the population falls in the 20 to 59 years age group, showing a need for family-orientated recreational facilities. School age children aged 5 to 18 make up approximately 21% of the population of Barry County. This number is unchanged since the 2010 census.

In terms of ethnicity, Barry County is very homogeneously a Caucasian community (95.8%). The provision of recreational opportunities needs to accommodate users with disabilities. The 2022 estimated population data for individuals in Barry County with disabilities under the age of 65 is 9.9%. Compared to the Michigan average of 10.1%

Climate

According to the Midwestern Regional Climate Center (MRCC), which averaged annual climatic conditions between 1981 and 2010, in January, temperatures in the county range from an average low of 15 degrees Fahrenheit to an average high of 30 degrees Fahrenheit. These temperatures, along with an average of 62.7 inches of snowfall annually, are conducive to many wintertime activities such as cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and ice fishing.

In July, the average low temperature of 58 degrees Fahrenheit and average high of 82 degrees Fahrenheit makes for a pleasant and comfortable environment for fishing, golfing, hiking and many other outdoor summer activities. The average annual rainfall for the county is 37.4 inches.

According to the 4th National Climate Assessment, climate change impacts for the Midwest region include increase in temperature, increase in frequency and intensity of heat waves, increase in frequency of intense precipitation, reduction in frost-free season and an increase to stressors to forest ecosystems, such as invasive species, insect pests and diseases and disturbance regimes. These changes will impact both the natural environment and recreation patterns.

Water Resources

One of the defining characteristics of the county are the abundance of water, farmland, and rolling terrain. Inland lakes, such as Gun Lake, Pine Lake, Upper and Lower Crooked Lake, Wall Lake, Long Lake, Cloverdale Lake, Wilkinson Lake, Algonquin Lake, and nearly 250 smaller lakes, are found in the western portion of the county, offering excellent recreational, residential, and wildlife opportunities. In the eastern portion of the county there are fewer and smaller lakes, which include Fine Lake, Thornapple Lake, Long Lake, Middle Lake, Leach Lake, and Jordan Lake.

Thornapple River

The Thornapple River is a predominant feature in Barry County. The riverfront offers excellent recreational opportunities for paddling and fishing, residential locations, and wildlife habitat. The Thornapple River originates in eastern Eaton County and meanders west into Barry County, entering the county in the Village of Nashville and flowing westward through Castleton and Hastings townships. Thornapple Lake, a natural lake formed from inlets that include the Thornapple River, Highbank Creek, and Mud Creek, is approximately 409 acres and reaches a depth of 30 feet. The Thornapple River continues westward into the City of Hastings, creating an attractive amenity through the urban area. The river then flows through Rutland Charter, Irving, and Thornapple townships and into the Village of Middleville.

Gun Lake

Gun Lake, one of the larger inland lakes in Michigan's Lower Peninsula, is located in Yankee Springs and Orangeville townships in Barry County, and in Wayland and Martin townships of Allegan County. The lake is 2,680 acres in size with approximately 17.8 miles of shoreline and an additional 1.4 miles of island shoreline.

The Gun River Watershed encompasses 30 square miles and is in the Kalamazoo River Basin, which drains into Lake Michigan. Eight lakes, including Payne, Long, Hall, and Fawn, drain into Gun Lake, and the outlet is the Gun River, which is a designated trout stream for most of its length.

Watersheds

The Grand River and Kalamazoo River watersheds are the two regional watersheds in Barry County. The Thornapple River Watershed, a sub-basin of the Grand, encompasses approximately 75% of Barry County.

The Thornapple River Watershed extends across portions of Eaton, Barry, Ionia, Kent counties, and a small portion of Allegan county. The watershed covers 876 square miles and includes 227 lakes and 741 total river miles. Land in 14 of the 16 townships in Barry County is part of the Thornapple River Watershed.

Some of the major tributaries of the Thornapple within Barry County are Cedar Creek, Butler Creek, Mud Creek, Fall Creek, Highbank Creek, Podunk Creek, Hill Creek, Bassett Creek, Duncan Lake Creek, Coldwater River, Little Thornapple River, Algonquin Lake outlet and Quaker Brook.

The Kalamazoo River watershed drains 2,020 square miles of land in Allegan, Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Calhoun, Barry, Eaton, Hillsdale, and Jackson counties. Two sub-watersheds of the Kalamazoo, the Gun River Watershed to the west, and the Battle Creek River Watershed to the south, cover approximately a quarter of the county, including most of Assyria, Barry, Orangeville and Prairieville Townships.

Wetlands

The wetlands in Barry County are dispersed and are primarily associated with low-lying areas and drainages. Wetlands play a critical role in regulating the movement of water within watersheds. Wetlands are characterized by water saturation in the root zone, or above the soil surface, for a certain amount of time during the year. The fluctuation of the water table above and below the soil surface is unique to each wetland type.

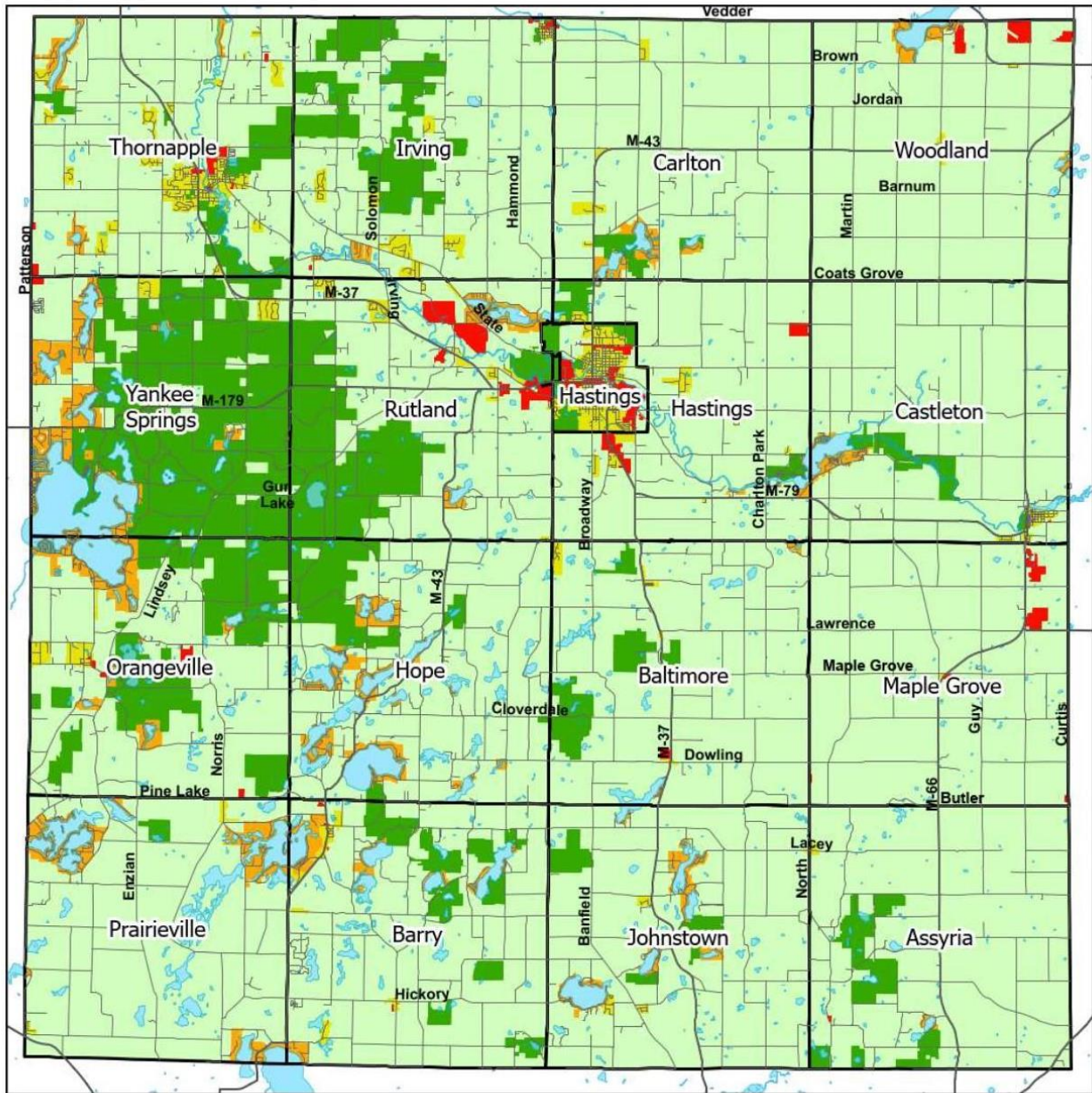
Wetlands store precipitation and surface water and then slowly release the water in associated water resources, ground water, and the atmosphere. They help maintain the level of the water table and may serve as filters for sediments and organic matter. They may also serve as a sink to catch water, or transform nutrients, organic compounds, metals and components of organic matter. Wetlands impact levels of nitrogen, phosphorus, carbon, sulfur, and various metals. Without them, water quality decreases, areas are prone to flash flooding, and habitat for specialized plants and animals is reduced.

Existing Land Use

Barry County's primary land uses are agriculture/rural residential and recreation. One of Barry County Master Plan's primary objectives is to preserve the county's natural and recreational amenities. These features make Barry County a desirable place to live, resulting in growth pressures for suburban residential development.



Meadow at Charlton Park in late summer



Existing Land Use

Barry County, Michigan

LEGEND

- Preserved Open Space / Natural Features
- Farmland / Rural Residential
- Lake Residential
- Urbanized Residential
- Commercial / Industrial
- Water Features

June 7, 2023



0 2 4 6
MILES

Data Source: Michigan Geographic Data Library, 2022.
Barry County GIS, 2022. McKenna, 2022.



MCKENNA

Figure 2.2 Barry County Existing Land Use (Source Barry County 2040 Master Plan)



SECTION 3

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

ABSTRACT

Volunteers are critical to our organization at every level. Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission benefitted from approximately 2,581 recorded hours of volunteer time in 2023

The parks and recreation of Barry County are under the guidance of a managing board known as the Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission (hereafter, BCPRC). The BCPRC was created by the Barry County Board of Commissioners in 1967. The creation of this commission was in response to public comment and was intended to serve the recreation needs of the County. The BCPRC has such powers and responsibilities as are expressly set forth by the legislature and those fairly implied.

The BCPRC is under the general control of the Barry County Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners may make rules and regulations for the commission, either at the request of the commission or at its discretion.

The powers and duties of the BCPRC are as specified in Public Act 261 of 1965.

The BCPRC Policy Statement and Goals were last updated as part of the 2019-2023 Barry County Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Its primary purpose is to expand on Public Act 261 of 1965 and interpret this act about the governance of all Barry County Parks. The primary policy is found within our Mission Statement: *Promote Barry County as a recreational and historical destination, by supporting and expanding recreational and educational opportunities, to enhance the quality of life for all.* With this statement in mind, our goals and objectives are given a sense of direction regarding park development, land acquisition, and the development of partnerships and relationships with other agencies and organizations.

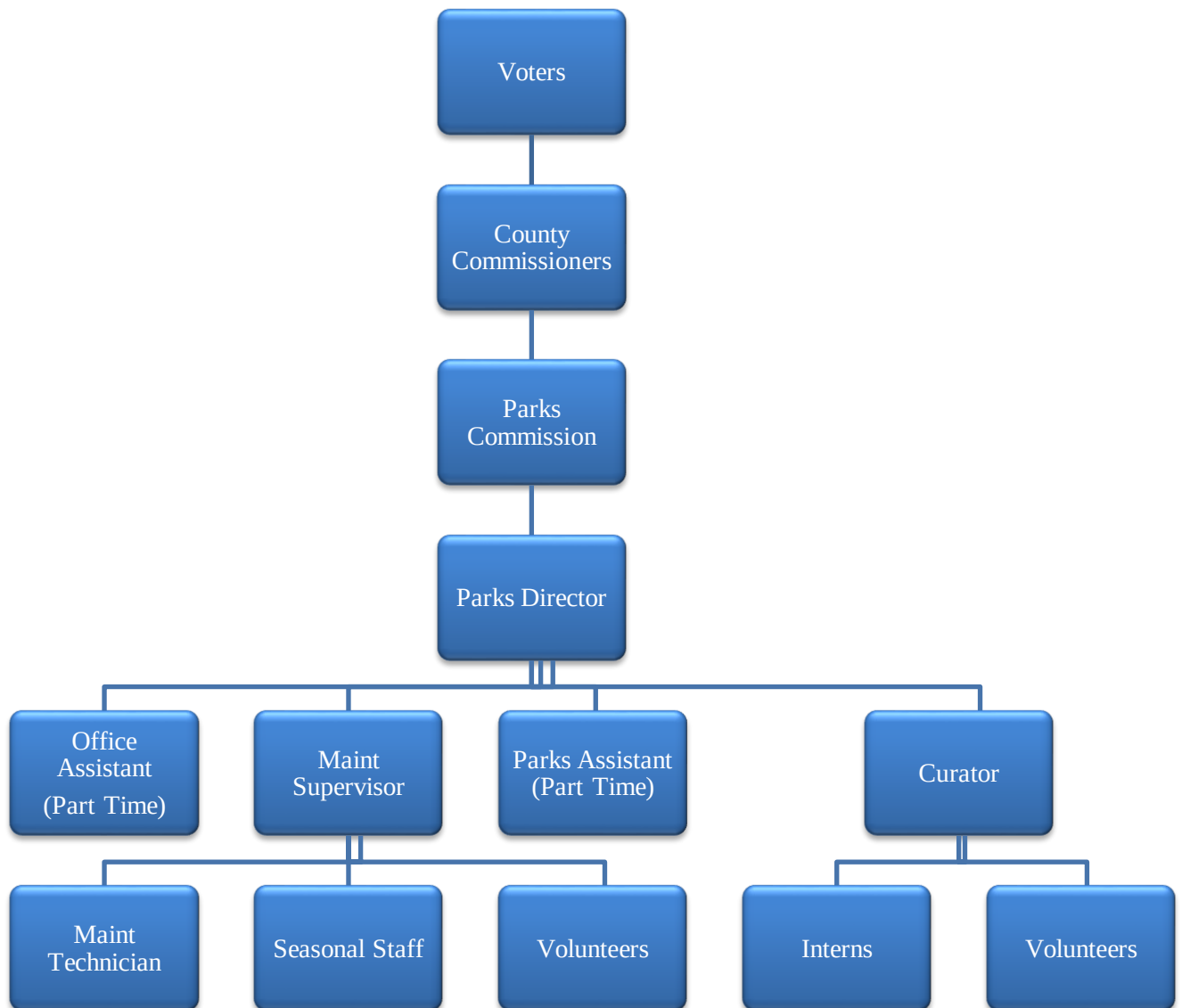
Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission

The BCPRC is designed to receive input from community members representing a wide variety of interests. The commission consists of ten (10) members each possessing voting privileges. There are four (4) citizens at large positions, one (1) representative from the Charlton Park Gas & Steam Club, one (1) representative from the Thornapple Trails Association, one (1) from the Barry County Drain Commissioner's office, one (1) from the Barry County Road Commission, one (1) from the Barry County Planning Commission, and one (1) Barry County Commissioner. Each term is three years with the sole exception of the County Commissioner representative who is appointed annually. The commission meets monthly with all meetings open to the public to receive input and answer questions regarding items related to county parks and outdoor recreation.

The BCPRC has custody, control, and management of Historic Charlton Park Village, Museum & Recreation Area, McKeown Bridge Park, Paul Henry Thornapple Trail, and Bailey Nature Preserve. Responsibilities include daily operations, long-range planning, approval of museum acquisitions, preparation of an annual budget, and approval of budget expenditures.

The BCPRC carries out its authority for operating parklands and facilities with the hiring of various staff and volunteers. Currently, the Commission has an Executive Director who is responsible for daily operations and works within an approved budget as adopted by the BCPRC. This individual is responsible for staffing and volunteers at all the park locations and reports to the BCPRC every month. The BCPRC can commit funds, apply for grants, and conduct business through the Executive Director. All final new land acquisitions require approval from the Barry County Board of Commissioners.

Organizational Chart



Annual Funding Sources and Expenses

The current operating budget for BCPRC is split between an operating millage, general fund dollars, and capital funding. The operating millage is specific to the maintenance and operations of Historic Charlton Park and was first approved in 1986. Most recently it was renewed in 2022 for 10 years at .25 mills. Other operational funds come from an appropriation each year from the Barry County General Fund and Barry County Capital Improvement Fund. Admission fees for special events, rental fees, donations, grants, and foundation funding, make up the other revenue streams for the BCPRC operating budget.

The 2024 BCPRC budget summary is outlined below:

Funding Source	Estimated Amount
Millage Fund Revenue	\$590,300
General Fund Revenue	\$130,909
Generated Revenue	\$104,700
Capital Funding	\$232,000
Other Funding	\$121,701
Total	\$1,179,610

Expenditure Source	Estimated Amount
Maintenance & Operation	\$927,610
Recreation & Educational Programming	\$20,000
Capital Improvement	\$232,000
Total	\$1,179,610

All revenue helps support the hiring of four (4) full-time staff members and approximately 17 part-time staff members throughout the year. The Directors' position is split between the Millage and General Fund revenue. The Millage covers all educational and recreational programming costs. Capital Improvement funds for equipment and other improvements come from a split between Millage funds and the General Fund and vary each year depending on replacement needs and improvement projects. The 2024 Capital budget included seal coating asphalt, building accessibility ramps, pouring concrete sidewalks, painting numerous buildings, and purchasing a new truck.

Volunteers and Organizations

Volunteers are critical to our organization at every level, starting with the volunteers who make up our Parks Commission. BCPRC benefitted from approximately 2,581 recorded hours of volunteer time in 2023 which supported educational programs, special events, historic collections, fund-raising activities, and general park maintenance activities. The estimated value of volunteer time for 2023 is \$55,130 (2,581 hrs. x \$21.36 per/hr.). Many hours are not tracked because individuals don't fill out time sheets or choose not to be recognized for their efforts.

Below is a listing of some of our supporting partnerships and what they provide:

Agency / Organization		
Charlton Park Gas & Steam Club	Volunteer Hours	Financial Support
Charlton Park Village Foundation	Volunteer Hours	Financial Support
Barry Community Foundation		Financial Support
Paul Henry Thornapple Trail Assoc.	Volunteer Hours	Financial Support
Barry County United Way	Volunteer Hours	
Barry Conservation District	Volunteer Hours	
Barry County Anglers Club	Volunteer Hours	
Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts	Volunteer Hours	
Michigan Longbow Association	Volunteer Hours	Financial Support
Numerous Business Partners	Volunteer Hours	Financial Support

Relationships

The development of partnerships with various agencies has been instrumental in furthering our mission across all sectors of our operation. We host approximately 5,000 school-age kids (2nd-5th grade) each year as part of programming. Additionally, we host approximately 30,000 people each year with special events focused on history, outdoor activities, and various programs. These programs are not possible without leveraging assistance and partnerships with outside agencies and community organizations. We work with multiple local school districts to host cross-country meets in the fall at one of our larger parks and yearly host the Barry County Outdoor Youth Day for anyone within the local school systems under the age of eighteen.

The most impactful relationship we have within Barry County is our "Mini-Grant" program. This program conducted by the BCPRC allocates \$15,000 each year toward the continued support of local parks and recreation activities for our local units of government through a granting program. In the last five years, the BCPRC has contributed \$75,000 toward improvements in four different Townships, three different Villages, and the City of Hastings.

This funding opportunity is grant-based and has assisted in improvements for ballfields, pickleball courts, playgrounds, walking trails, and water access. Each year this program is open for receiving a grant application from all Townships, Villages, Cities, and School Districts within Barry County.

Michigan DNR

Barry County Conservation District

Michigan Recreation & Park Association

National Recreation & Park Association

Michigan Museum Association

West Michigan Trail Association

National Park Service RTCA



Steeped in natural beauty and diverse recreation and education opportunities, Barry County parks are an invaluable community resource.

SECTION 4

RECREATION INVENTORY

This section of the plan provides a description of the existing parks and recreation facilities in Barry County. Analysis of the existing facilities, including strengths and weaknesses, helps to identify future needs as described in Section 5. The inventory was completed by park staff and park commissioners.

Park and Recreation Classification

Parks and recreation spaces are generally classified into the following categories:

- **Neighborhood Park:** the basic unit of the park system, typically serving a residential area and accessible by foot. A size of 5-10 acres is considered optimal for this type of park. The focus is on informal active and passive recreational activities, such as field games, court games, playground equipment, and picnicking. The county has no neighborhood parks, but surrounding communities fill that need.
- **Community Park:** serves a broader purpose than neighborhood parks and is typically 10-50 acres in size. The focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Charlton Park and McKeown Bridge Park are considered community parks and are supplemented by other larger parks in the cities of Hastings, Middleville, Nashville, and some of the surrounding townships.
- **Athletic Complex:** consolidates programmed athletic activities for youth or adults. Within Barry County, only the Crane Road complex in Middleville fits into this category, managed by Thornapple Area Parks and Recreation. Other sports facilities are scattered around municipal community parks and schools.
- **Linear Park:** includes transportation corridors and linear green space. The Thornapple Paul Henry Trail is the primary linear park within Barry County, providing non-motorized transportation and recreation along a former rail corridor.
- **Special Use Park:** covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities orientated towards single purpose uses, such as nature centers, historic sites, urban plazas or campgrounds. Within the county park system, Historic Charlton Park Village is considered a special use park.
- **School Park:** school sites that contain recreation facilities that may also be open to the public, such as playgrounds, playing fields, or sports facilities.
- **Natural Resource Park:** lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, landscapes, and open space. These sites may support recreational activities at a level that preserves the integrity of the natural resource. The location and size of these parks are largely governed by availability. The Bailey Nature Preserve is classified within this category.
- **Regional Parks:** large-scale regionally based parks and open spaces that often focus on natural resource preservation. Yankee Springs Recreation Area and the Barry State Game Area fulfill this need within Barry County.

Accessibility Assessment

An accessibility assessment was undertaken by park staff and park Commissioners for each of the county's parks using the ranking system recommended by the Michigan DNR. Improvements needed to bring the parks in line with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) are included in the five-year Action Program.

The ranking system used is as follows:

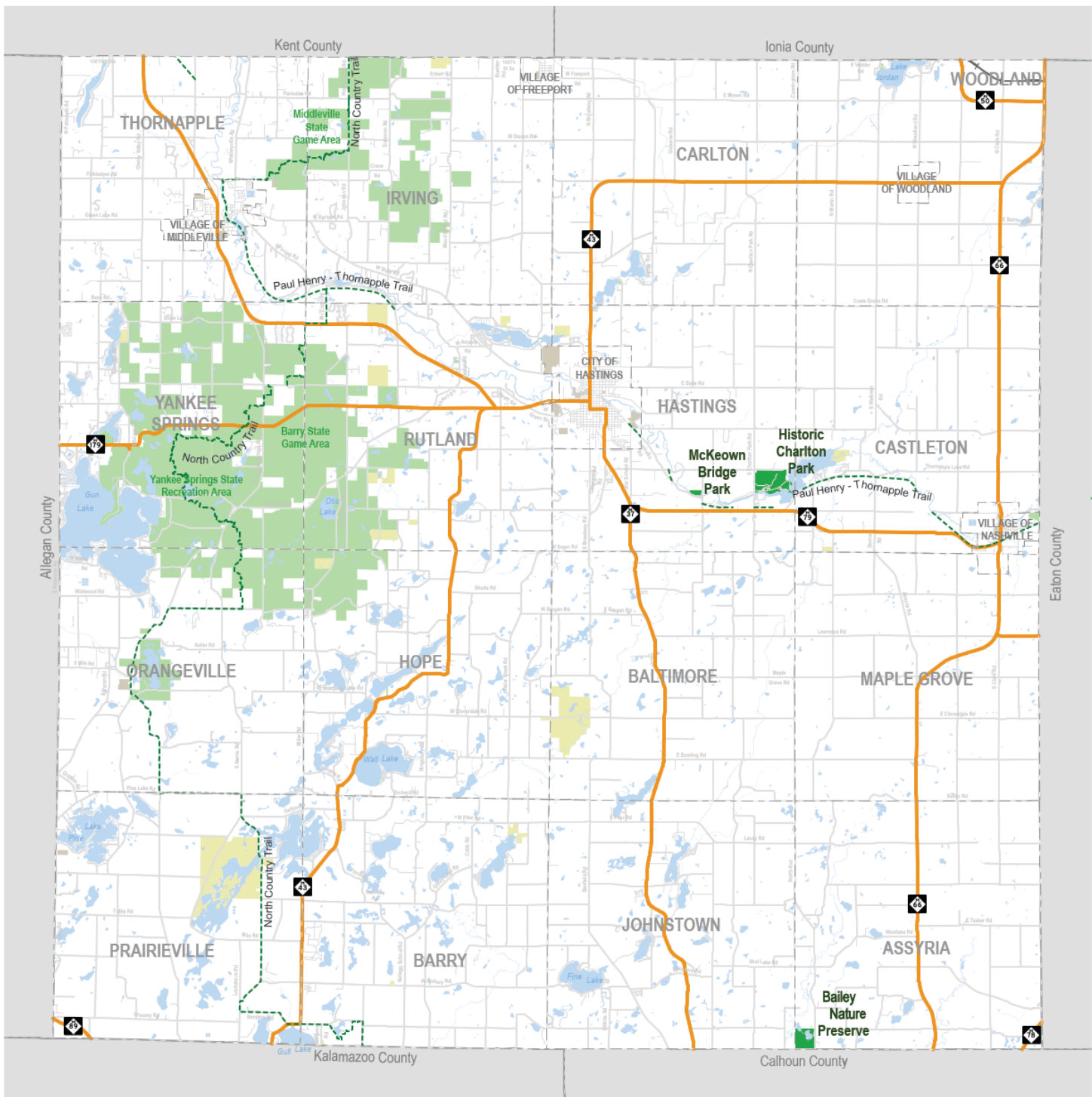
- 1 = none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 2 = some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 3 = most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 4 = the entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5 = the entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design



New sidewalk provides improved access to the Sixberry House in Historic Charlton Park Village

Barry County Park and Recreation Facilities

The following includes a map of the county's recreation facilities and a description of each property owned and managed by Barry County Parks, including the acreage, primary purpose and service area of the facility, recreation amenities and accessibility assessment.



- County Parks
- State & Federal Lands
- Local Parks
- Other Conserved Lands
- Linear Trails



BARRY COUNTY PUBLIC LANDS & RECREATIONAL FACILITIES MAP

Historic Charlton Park

Location: 2545 S. Charlton Park Rd., between the communities of Hastings and Nashville.

Size: 322 acres

Purpose and Service Area: The purpose of the park is two-fold: the historic village and museum provides a unique educational resource on rural life in Barry County in the late 1800s to early 1900s, while the recreation area provides a range of land- and water-based recreation opportunities. Historic Charlton Park was established in 1936 by Irving Delos Charlton, who donated the property to Barry County. In addition to the museum, historic buildings and collections, a primary asset is approximately 1.5 miles of frontage on Thornapple Lake. The park attracts visitors from across the county and beyond, enhanced by education programming for school groups and a variety of annual events.



Anglers fishing off the shores of the park on Thornapple Lake



Facilities: The historic village consists of 25 historic residences, businesses and community buildings moved from throughout Barry County. The museum is the only building in the village that was built on site by Irving Charlton. The buildings are open for tours and events and showcase period artifacts. The park also features an exhibition barn for larger equipment, a sawmill and a barn used by the Gas and Steam Club. The site of an 1849 mission, known as Indian Landing, is adjacent to the village. The recreation area was developed primarily between 1961 and 1991. It features a boat launch on Thornapple Lake, large pavilion, beach area with restrooms, several smaller shelters, two playgrounds, picnic facilities and a natural surfaced trail system.

Accessibility Rating: 2. The county has focused on accessibility improvements at this park over the past five years, including access to some of the historic buildings, new ADA vault toilet at the boat launch and new accessible playgrounds. However, continued improvements are needed as outlined below:

- Paved barrier-free parking spaces and accessible routes to all elements within the park
- Accessible walkway to new playgrounds
- Addition of accessible picnic tables and grills throughout the recreation area
- Improved access to waterfront for fishing, paddling and viewing
- Access improvements to and between historic buildings, as practical while maintaining historic integrity. Alternative access may also be considered such as videos or live cameras
- Barrier-free restroom improvements in historic village

Condition: The facilities in this park are older, and although still functional, significant investment is needed to bring facilities in line with modern expectations and to maximize use of the water frontage. The county has developed a master plan for this property to outline needs and priorities (see section 5)



New accessible ramp to the barber's shop



An accessible vault toilet at the boat launch



CHARLTON PARK - EXISTING CONDITIONS



McKeown Bridge Park

Location: Located off McKeown Road, southeast of Hastings, adjacent to the Barry County-owned Thornapple Manor medical care facility and County Emergency Management Services.

Size: 23 acres

Purpose and Service Area: The primary purpose of McKeown Bridge Park is to preserve the historic bridge and provide access to the Thornapple River, while protecting the river corridor. This park also provides an important recreation space for Thornapple Manor residents and their visitors. McKeown Bridge Park is accessed primarily by motor vehicle but is easily accessed from Thornapple Manor by foot and is also close to the route of the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail, which when complete, will provide non-motorized access from Nashville to the east and Hastings to the west. The park is also an important rest stop for paddlers on the Thornapple River.



A Thornapple Manor resident enjoys the bridge with family

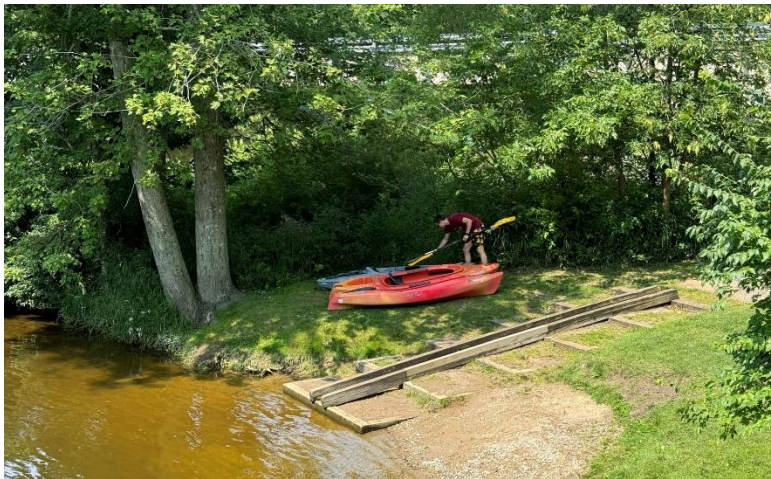
The historic bridge is listed on the State of Michigan Historical Registry of historic places in Michigan. This particular bridge was constructed in 1903 and stands as the last remaining steel Pratt through truss bridge in Barry County. When the bridge was originally constructed it cost \$2,090 dollars.

Facilities: This Park underwent significant improvements completed in 2010 with assistance from a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. Facilities include an historic bridge over the Thornapple River, shade shelter, canoe/kayak launch, two accessible fishing decks, riverside boardwalk, trails, vault toilet, parking, and picnic facilities.

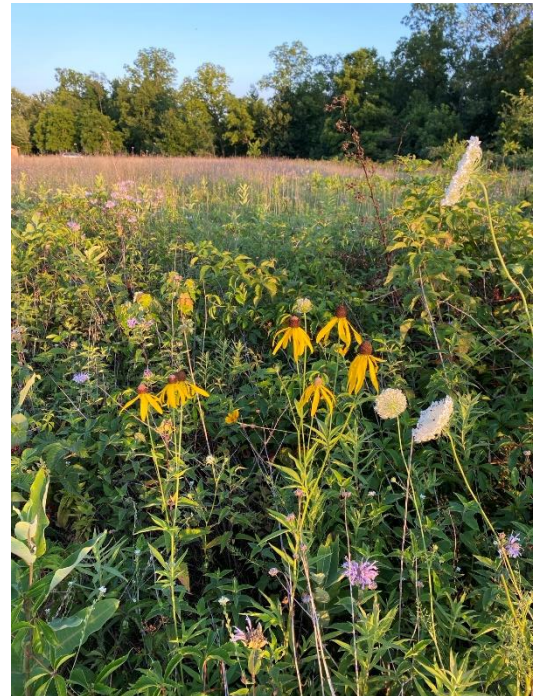
Accessibility Rating: 3. Improvements needed to meet ADA include:

- Restripe barrier-free parking on the south side of the river
- Improve trail surfacing on the north side of the river

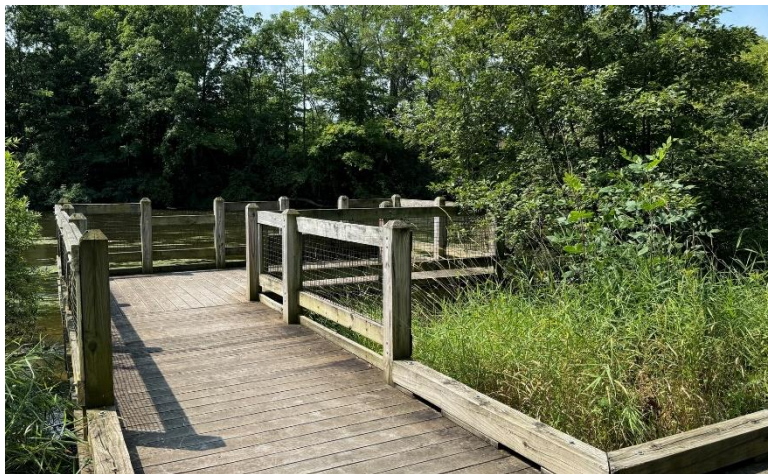
Condition: The facilities in this park are newer and generally in good condition. Trail maintenance and natural resource management are two areas of suggested improvement, as well as expanding the opportunities available in line with the site master plan.



A visitor preparing to launch kayaks



Wildflower meadow along the trails



One of two accessible fishing/overlook decks



Trails

Park Boundary

McKEOWN BRIDGE PARK - EXISTING CONDITIONS



Bailey Nature Preserve

Location: Located in the southeast of the county in Assyria Township. 5175 E. Baseline, Bellevue, MI 49021

Size: 160 acres

Purpose and Service Area: Formerly known as Metcalf Lake Natural Area and Park, this property was donated by David and Eleanor Bailey for preservation and quiet recreation and has deed restrictions on its use. The purpose of Bailey Nature Preserve is to protect the natural resources, including woodland, wetlands and 30-acre Metcalf Lake, while providing access to passive recreation opportunities. This preserve will serve residents of southern Barry County, as well as the Battle Creek area in neighboring Calhoun County.

Facilities: This preserve was recently acquired by the county, having previously been in the ownership of the City of Battle Creek. There are currently no developed facilities, although informal access allows for limited parking, hiking on user-created trails and lake access.

Accessibility Rating: 1. There are currently no developed facilities in this preserve. A Master Plan for the property has been developed that will guide development, including barrier free access. Priorities include:

- Barrier-free parking
- Accessible trail loop
- Accessible park overlook
- Accessible picnic tables
- Accessible restroom facilities

Condition: There are currently no developed facilities in the preserve. The county has developed a Master Plan for this property to outline needs and priorities (see section 5)



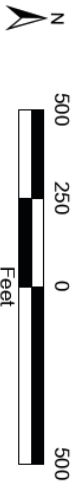
Woodland hike at Bailey Nature Preserve



Aerial view of Metcalf Lake



BAILEY NATURE PRESERVE - EXISTING CONDITIONS



Paul Henry Thornapple Trail

Location: Intermittent ownership from Kent County line to Eaton County line.

Size: 8.26 miles

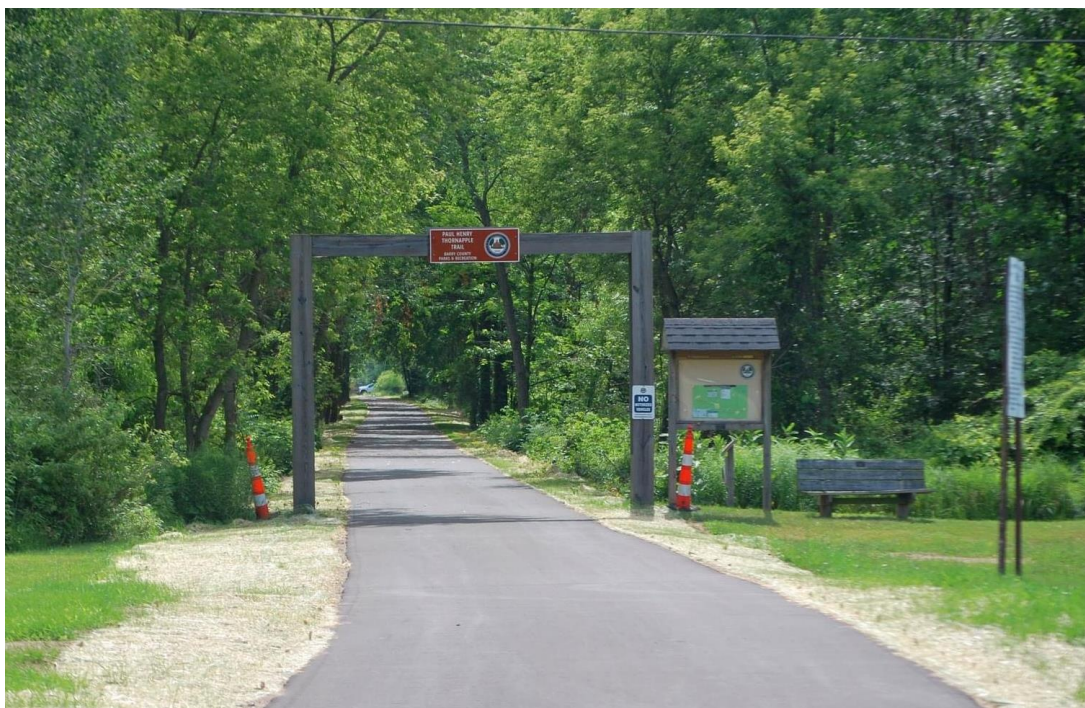
Purpose and Service Area: The Paul Henry Thornapple Trail follows the former Michigan Central Railroad through Barry County. The county-owned portions are interspersed by sections owned by the Village of Middleville, Thornapple Township, the City of Hastings and private property. The goal is to provide a continuous non-motorized transportation and recreation corridor through the county, continuing into Kent County to the north and Eaton County to the east.

Facilities: 1.5 miles of the trail in Barry County ownership is paved. An additional 0.5 miles has an improved crushed aggregate surface. The remainder of the trail in Barry County ownership is grass/gravel.

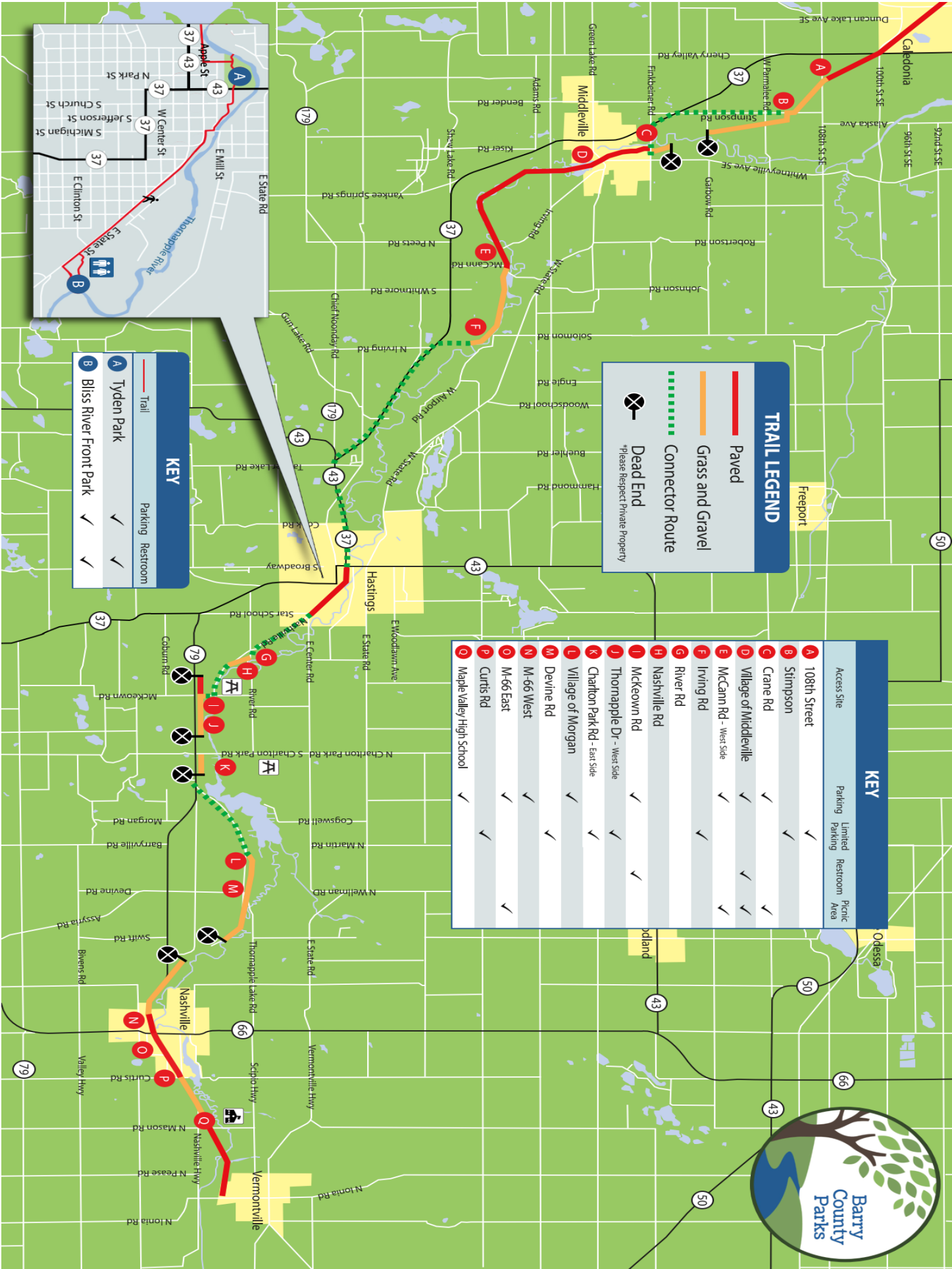
Accessibility Rating: Varies from 1 to 4. Portions of the trail in Nashville and adjacent to the Thornapple Manor care facility were paved or hard surfaced in 2024. Other portions currently do not meet ADA guidelines. Priorities include:

- Continuing hard surface throughout the length of the trail
- Providing accessible amenities along the trail
- Accessible trailheads/ parking areas in targeted locations

Condition: The condition of the trail varies from undeveloped to newly surfaced.



Newly paved section of Paul Henry Thornapple Trail in the Village of Nashville



TRAIL LEGEND

- Paved
- Grass and Gravel
- - - Connector Route
- X Dead End
*Please Respect Private Property

KEY

	Trail	Parking	Restroom
● A	Tyden Park	✓	✓
● B	Bliss River Front Park	✓	✓

KEY			
Access Site	Parking	Limited Parking	Restroom Area
● A 108th Street	✓		
● B Stimpson		✓	
● C Crane Rd		✓	
● D Village of Middleville		✓	✓
● E McCann Rd - West Side		✓	✓
● F Irving Rd		✓	
● G River Rd			
● H Nashville Rd			
● I McKeown Rd		✓	
● J Thornapple Dr - West Side		✓	
● K Charlton Park Rd - East Side		✓	
● L Village of Morgan			✓
● M Devine Rd			✓
● N M-66 West		✓	
● O M-66 East		✓	
● P Curtis Rd			✓
● Q Maple Valley High School		✓	

DNR Recreation Grant Inventory

In 2010, Barry County received a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for the development of McKeown Park Bridge. Improvements included a new park entrance and parking area, vault toilet building, canoe launch, shade shelter, barrier-free fishing decks, boardwalks, trails, and site amenities. The facilities are well used and maintained in good condition.

Barry County has been fortunate to receive four grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for development at Charlton Park Recreation Area. These grants were received in 1969, 1973, 1977 and 1991 and helped with the development of most of the park's facilities, including gravel access drive and parking areas, boat launch, pavilion, swimming beach, restrooms, picnic facilities and playground equipment, and additional property for inclusion in the total park acreage. The facilities have been well used and are generally in good condition given their age. Some accessibility improvements are needed to bring the facilities in line with current ADA guidelines.

Other Recreation Facilities

State Facilities

Yankee Springs Recreation Area, a 5,200-acre property located on the central western edge of Barry County, and the adjacent 17,000-acre Barry State Game Area provide diverse recreation opportunities. Campgrounds on Gun Lake and Deep Lake provide 320 modern and 100 rustic sites. Gun Lake, Deep Lake and seven other lakes within these state holdings provide ample fishing, boating, and water sports opportunities. Miles of trails, including a portion of the North Country National Scenic Trail, are available for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding. There is also an equestrian camp with 17 rustic sites. Additional accommodation is provided by cabins at the historic Long Lake and Chief Noonday Outdoor centers. Both the state game area and most of the recreation area are open for hunting in accordance with state regulations.

Barry County Shooting Range within the state game area opened in November 2023. The facility is open mid-April through mid-December and offers target shooting for handguns and rifles and sporting clay shooting.

The Middleville State Game Area, located in the county's north-west quadrant, provides an additional 4,500 acres available for hunting and wildlife viewing.

The Michigan DNR provides several boating access sites throughout the county including on the southeast of Thornapple Lake off Thornapple Lake Road and on the Thornapple River off Airport Road.

Linear Trails

In addition to the trail system in Yankee Springs Recreation Area, the county features two long distance non-motorized trails.

- The North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT) stretches 4,500 miles from North Dakota to the New York/Vermont border. The NCT enters Barry County north of Irving, travels south using portions of the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail, then traverses through Yankee Springs Recreation Area and Barry State Game Area. Once south of the recreation area, it becomes mostly a road walk from Keller Road, through Prairieville, over to the Kellogg Biological Station. The trail is maintained by the Chief Noonday Chapter of the North Country Trail Association.
- The Paul Henry Thornapple Trail follows the Thornapple River from 44th Street and Kalamazoo Avenue in Grand Rapids to Middleville, Hastings, Nashville, and Vermontville with large gaps to be acquired for a total of approximately 43 miles. Within Barry County, the Village of Middleville has 5.1 miles of paved trail.

Thornapple Birding Trail

The Thornapple Birding Trail encourages visitors to enjoy the many forest pathways, lakes and fields Barry County has to offer. The birding trail lists sites that offer safe, easy to access birding locations in high quality habitat and peaceful settings. With over 22,000 acres of state land, many parks and over 250 lakes, Barry County hosts a variety of bird-filled habitats.



Birders gather on a rural road



Thornapple Birding Trail sign at Otis Lake

Municipal Parks and Recreation

The City of Hastings provides two community parks, Tyden Park and Fish Hatchery Park. Tyden Park, an 11-acre park near the city center, provides fishing and canoe access on the Thornapple River, a paved loop trail with river overlooks, picnic shelters, play equipment, a soccer field, basketball courts, tennis courts and a sand volleyball court. A pedestrian bridge leads across the river to the Tyden Natural Area, which features additional riverside trails. Fish Hatchery Park provides picnic shelters, play equipment, a lighted ball diamond, basketball court, soccer field, two tennis courts, fishing ponds and horseshoe pits on a 40-acre site.

The city also features three less developed parks/open spaces. Hammond Hills Park is the city's largest recreation site covering 76 acres in the northwest corner of the city. The park features a popular disk golf course, hiking and mountain bike trails and views over Carter Lake. Sweezy's Pond is a 20-acre natural area in the southwest corner of the city featuring winding rustic footpaths and hiking trails through the hills, woods and wetlands surrounding the pond that gives the park its name. Bliss Riverfront Park is located in the southeast of the city and provides 35 acres of land alongside the Thornapple River for passive recreation. Facilities include a canoe/kayak launch, trails and boardwalks along the river, and a picnic shelter. This site serves as a trailhead for the Hastings Riverwalk, a 1.6-mile paved trail running along the river corridor and former railroad bed to Tyden Park.

In the City of Hastings there are also three neighborhood parks, First Ward Park, Second Ward Park and Bob King Park, providing playground equipment, picnic facilities, tennis and basketball courts, a ball field and a skate park. A splash pad and stage provide entertainment in the city's downtown.

The Village of Middleville offers eight recreational sites. Lions Spring Park is the village's largest facility, comprising about 24 acres of land and offering a baseball/softball diamond, disc golf course, picnic shelter, play equipment, and natural area. Crane Road Ball Fields provides three ball fields for recreational programming. Calvin Hill Park is a traditional neighborhood park with a basketball court, playground equipment and skate park, while Sesquicentennial Park offers picnic facilities beside the Thornapple River. The village also supports a canoe portage on the river and the Paul Henry Thornapple Trailhead and Park. The newest park is Wildwood Trails Park which is a 20-acre park with 1.45 miles of rustic walking trails and a recently added mountain bike trail.

The Village of Nashville and Prairieville Township also support multiple neighborhood and community parks. Orangeville, Yankee Springs, Hope, Barry and Johnstown townships and the villages of Woodland and Freeport each have one neighborhood park.

School Facilities

Barry County includes school facilities from multiple school districts, including Hastings, Thornapple Kellogg, Delton Kellogg, Lakewood and Maple Valley, as well as several private schools. While recreational facilities at school sites are primarily intended for school use, some facilities may be used by the public at specified times. Some outdoor facilities are left open for public use after school and team practice hours, while others must have uses scheduled through the district office.

- *Community Education & Recreation Center, Hastings.*
Located on the Hastings High School Campus, this facility includes a pool with scheduled lap and open swim times Monday through Saturday, and a gym and cardio exercise room with morning, evening and weekend hours.

Quasi-Public Recreation Facilities

Barry County has a range of quasi-public recreation facilities owned by non-profit or non-government entities. The primary facilities are listed below.

- *Barry Expo Center:* owned and operated by the Barry County Agricultural Society, this complex provides facilities and an exhibition hall for the annual county fair and a variety of shows and events throughout the year.
- *YMCA of Barry County and Camp Algonquin, 2055 Iroquois Trail, Hastings.* Set on 35 acres on Algonquin Lake, the YMCA facilities provide a location for summer camps and a rental facility for community use.
- *YMCA Camp Manitou-lin, Barlow Lake, Middleville.* Serving the Grand Rapids area, 155-acre Camp Manitou-lin features fishing and water sports areas, fitness, hiking and nature study trails, volleyball, baseball, basketball and playground facilities, tennis courts and a high ropes course.
- *Battle Creek Outdoor Education Center, 10160 S. M-37 Hwy. Delton.* This 176-acre facility owned by the Battle Creek Public Schools provides school camp opportunities on Clear Lake.
- *Circle Pines Center, Mullen Road, Delton.* Circle Pines Center is a member-owned and run non-profit cooperative organization featuring a children's summer camp and year-round retreat and conference center with programs for families, children and adults. The co-op owns 294 acres of land with frontage on Stewart Lake.
- *Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, 701 W. Cloverdale Rd., Hastings.* Pierce Cedar Creek Institute is a nature center, environmental education center and biological field station located on 850 acres with almost ten miles of hiking trails. The visitor's center is open to the public during the week and includes an auditorium and dining facilities available for rental and events.
- *W. K. Kellogg Biological Station, 3700 E. Gull Lake Drive, Hickory Corners.* The 4000-acre Lux Arbor facility, which extends into Kalamazoo County, includes Kellogg Farm, Kellogg Bird Sanctuary and the KBS Academic and Research Facilities. The full-service conference center offers lodging, meeting rooms and meals. The farm and bird sanctuary are open for self-guided and public tours year-round.
- *Gun Lake Tract, Marsh Road, Orangeville Township.* This 360-acre conservation area is owned and managed by the Ruffed Grouse Society. The Gun Lake Tract is open for hiking, bird watching and wildlife viewing. Hunting rights belong to the Ruffed Grouse

Society. The property features many managed natural communities, including upland and lowland woodlands, a peat bog, emergent wetlands and grasslands.

- *Michigan Audubon Otis Sanctuary.* This 120-acre wildlife sanctuary borders Glass Creek and has a canoe access, a cabin available for rental to members and hiking trails.
- *Michigan Audubon Warner Sanctuary.* This heavily wooded, 100-acre wildlife sanctuary hosts one of Barry County's last remaining stands of old growth forest.
- *Maher Sanctuary.* Owned by Grand Rapids Audubon, Inc., this 76.8-acre sanctuary is located at the southwest corner of 108th St. SE and Wood School Road. It has a mix of habitats, including frontage on Crane Creek. It has a parking area and hiking trail.
- *Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy Carter Lake Preserve.* This 80-acre preserve has a hiking trail.
- *Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy Bauer Natural Area.* A modest, 20-acre preserve that borders Highbank Creek. It has a hiking trail and is heavily wooded.

Private Facilities

Barry County features a range of private recreation facilities, including museums, campgrounds, golf courses, canoe liveries, health clubs, a riding stables, farms and orchards. The primary museums in the county are listed below:

- *Gilmore Classic Car Club Museum, 6865 Hickory Road, Delton.* This 80+ acre site houses one of the 10 best large classic car collections on display in America. In addition, the CCC hosts a variety of themed auto shows on the premises.
- *Bernard Historical Museum, 7135 Delton Rd., Delton.* This museum complex includes an 1873 schoolhouse, a 1900's country store, a blacksmith shop and over 25,000 artifacts.
- *Historic Bowens Mills, 55 Briggs Rd., Middleville.* Privately owned and operated, this 19-acre historical park features an 1864 water powered grist and cider mill. Other historical attractions on site are a plank house, Victorian house, a post and beam barn, covered bridge, and water wheel, and other historic buildings. Special events are hosted at the park throughout the year.



SECTION 5

PLANNING PROCESS

ABSTRACT

One of Barry County's strengths is its green corridors, including the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail and the Thornapple River which stretch across the county. It is the county's vision to connect green spaces and corridors, not only for recreational purposes but also for non-motorized transportation.

The BCPRC used a variety of methods to determine the primary needs for county parks and recreation. These methods included comparison to park metric standards, analysis of the Recreation Inventory, direct input from staff and park commissioners, and comments received through the public input process. By combining these methods an accurate assessment of recreational needs and deficiencies can be made.

Park Metrics

Most of the recreational facilities in Barry County are held by the state, other municipalities, school districts, or non-profit entities. Barry County owns just four properties; Charlton Park, McKeown Bridge Park, Bailey Nature Preserve, and sections of the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail. The total acreage of Barry County parks is just 483 acres over the three park properties (excluding the linear trail), which equates to one park per 15,607 residents served and 7.8 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. This is far below the national average reported by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) of one park for every 2,386 residents, with 10.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. While this deficit is offset somewhat by parkland managed by others, there is still a lack of well-developed community park facilities within Barry County. This also demonstrates the continued need to support other agencies through the county's mini-grant program.

Barry County's population, like the state, is growing older, with 20% of Barry County residents aged 65 or older according to the 2020 census, up from 12.5% in 2010. However, the communities growing the fastest feature younger average ages, indicating a higher number of children. It is therefore important to provide family-orientated recreation facilities, as well as those easily accessible by older adults.

Barry County acts as a "bedroom community" for Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, and Lansing, with nearly 75% of workers commuting outside of the county. This indicates that Barry County is an attractive place to live for those working elsewhere. The lack of a four-year degree-granting university in the county means there is an out flux of high school graduates for work and education outside the county. A strong parks and recreation system is one way of attracting people to move back and encouraging new residents.

The county is also way behind the national average in terms of full-time employees dedicated to parks and recreation, with less than one employee per 10,000 residents compared to the average of 8.9. This reflects the low operation expenditures, which equates to under \$20 per capita, compared to the national average of \$99.47.

Geographic Distribution

The public input survey completed as part of this planning process indicated a preference for close to home facilities. Two out of the three county parks are located in the northeast quadrant of the county, with none in the northwest, which is the most populated area and is expected to receive the most growth. However, a well-developed park system in the Village of Middleville,

Yankee Springs Township Park and state land help to fulfill the needs. The recent acquisition of the Bailey Nature Preserve fills an important gap in the southeast area of the county. Developing this preserve for public use will be a high priority over the next five years. As the county continues to grow, it will be increasingly important to protect open space from development to meet future needs.

Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires any new builds to fully integrate accessible design so those with disabilities can use recreational facilities. Barry County's primary recreation facility, Charlton Park, was primarily developed in the 1970s and 80s, before ADA went into effect. While many improvements are needed, as identified in the Recreation Inventory, accessibility modifications have been integrated when opportunities arise. Recent improvements have also been made to sections of the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail with hard surfacing in the Village of Nashville and the vicinity of Thornapple Manor, but other sections are not considered accessible. Bailey Nature Preserve is currently largely undeveloped. The county will work towards not only meeting ADA requirements at all facilities in the near future but striving to provide universal accessibility wherever possible.

Needs Assessment

Each of Barry County's existing park facilities was assessed and the needs and deficiencies identified are described below.

Charlton Park Historic Village and Museum

Historic Charlton Park was founded to serve as a reminder to present and future generations of what life was like in rural Michigan in the late 1800s. Since its meager beginnings in 1936, the Park has slowly developed into a major education and recreation area in southwest Michigan. In the last five years, improvements have included sidewalk and ramp construction to improve accessibility to key buildings, as well as continued building upkeep. The county has also tackled several unexpected infrastructure failures, illustrating the need to be more proactive in identifying and addressing needed updates.

The needs of Historic Charlton Park Village and Museum are three-fold:

- infrastructure improvements and additions to meet needs
- maintenance and upkeep of the existing buildings
- improvements in the upkeep and display of the collections.

Infra-structure improvements are needed to make the facility more enjoyable by visitors and accessible to persons with disabilities. This includes improving access to the historic buildings and museum while retaining the historic integrity, which will require some innovative approaches. Improving the stone restrooms and providing a welcome center for educational programming were identified as the highest priorities in the public input

survey. A need has also been identified for exterior lighting to facilitate evening events.

Capital improvements are required to provide expanded space for collections storage and to stabilize and conserve existing collections.

Charlton Park Recreation Area

The current facilities in Charlton Park Recreation Area were developed primarily between 1969 and 1991 with the assistance of funding from the Michigan DNR. These facilities have been well maintained but are now showing signs of their age.

In the last five years, improvements have included two new play structures, an accessible vault toilet at the boat launch and updates to the trail system and signage. Continued accessibility improvements are needed in the recreation area, primarily for lake, building access and connecting walkways between facilities. The Parks and Recreation Commission has recently completed a Master Plan for the property which will guide all future improvements (see section 8) Top priorities identified in the public input survey included new trail connections and beach improvements. Charlton Park features one of only three designated swimming beaches in the county, the others all being in the west of the county. The upkeep and maintenance of this facility is therefore important. Although water quality issues that impact beach use are largely outside of the county's control, demonstrating ecologically sensitive shoreline solutions will provide both ecological and education benefits.

The protection and enhancement of Charlton Parks' natural resources, which include the Thornapple River and lake, mature broadleaf woodlands, meadows and wetlands, is also important to ensure wildlife habitat is maintained for the enjoyment of future generations.

McKeown Bridge Park

McKeown Bridge is an important historical site listed on the State Register of Historic Places. The parkland surrounding the bridge underwent significant improvements in 2010 with assistance from a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. Facilities include a shade shelter, canoe launch, two accessible fishing decks, riverside boardwalk, trails, vault toilet, parking, and picnic facilities. This park serves as an important recreation resource for the adjacent Thornapple Manor facility as well as a popular location for river access. With this park ranked the lowest in terms of satisfaction for those completing the public input survey, continued improvements are important.

Bailey Nature Preserve

Bailey Nature Preserve (formerly known as Metcalf Lake County Park and Preserve) is the newest addition to Barry County Parks, acquired from the City of Battle Creek with assistance from the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy in 2024. This preserve fills an important gap in park and recreation space in the southeast corner of the county. However,

the preserve is currently undeveloped and needs significant investment to realize its potential. Hiking trails, boardwalks, bathrooms, habitat improvements and lake visual and physical access ranked the highest in terms of needs requested by the public.

Trails

One of Barry County's strengths is its green corridors, including the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail and the Thornapple River which stretch across the northern area of the county. It is the county's vision to connect green spaces and corridors, not only for recreational purposes but also for non-motorized transportation, thereby reducing emissions and contributing to a cleaner environment. The trail continues into neighboring Kent and Eaton counties, expanding the potential for such use. With assistance from funding from the American Rescue Plan Act, the county has recently provided over one mile of hard surfaced trail in the Village of Nashville and adjacent to the county's Thornapple Manor care facility. This corridor also provides important habitat and connections for wildlife.



The Thornapple River is another major asset to the county, flowing 88 miles from its headwaters in Eaton County to the Grand River in Kent County. Some portions of the river are heavily used for recreation, including paddling, tubing and fishing, however, other stretches remain largely inaccessible. A program that the Barry County Park and Recreation Commission would like to encourage is the development of a River Heritage Trail to promote the river as a recreation destination and preserve the green space and water quality. This will only be achievable through partnerships with other entities and/or volunteers. A similar program is in place on the Kalamazoo and St. Joseph rivers.

The Thornapple Birding Trail was implemented within the last five years, highlighting the many areas of the county considered to be birding hotspots. The trail will continue to be evaluated over the next five years to continue to enhance learning, enjoyment and closeness to nature.



SECTION 6

PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Barry County Parks and Recreation Plan is to guide the future of recreation for the benefit of all residents and visitors. As such, it is important to solicit and analyze the opinions of those that use the county parks facilities.

The purpose of this Barry County Parks and Recreation Plan is to guide the future of recreation for the benefit of all residents and visitors. As such, it is important to solicit and analyze the opinions of those who use the county parks facilities. The following is a description of the primary input methods used to help inform and shape this plan.

Online Public Input Survey

Early in the planning process, the Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission solicited public input to help inform the parks and recreation plan via an online public survey. The survey was available for 5 weeks from June 3 to July 7, 2024, and advertised via email lists, the county website, social media, and the local press. A total of 183 responses were received. Respondents answered questions on their recreation preferences, their level of satisfaction with current county recreation facilities, and feelings regarding improvements being considered. Finally, the survey collected demographic information to provide background information to inform the plan. A summary of the results of the online public input survey is provided in the appendices of this plan.

30-Day Public Review Period

Once the plan was drafted, the public was provided with an opportunity to review and provide comments on the draft plan. The 30-day comment period began on October 16 and was advertised via public notice in the local press, email notifications, and via social media. The plan was available for review and comment both online and at the park offices.

A public input meeting was held on October 16, 2024, at Barry County Central Dispatch Center 2600 Nashville Rd., Hastings, Michigan 49058, to present the draft plan and solicit questions and comments. There were six members of the public present to hear the presentation of the draft plan. The only comment was "it seemed like it was well thought out and a great deal of work had gone into completing it". No other comments were given. No oral or written comments were received during the 30-day review period.

Public Hearing and Resolution of Adoption

Following the public review period described above, revisions to the draft plan were made as appropriate. There were no revisions done or required. The final draft was then presented to the Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission at an open public meeting on Thursday, November 21, 2024, for adoption and recommendation to the BOC.

A formal public hearing was held on December 17, 2024, by County Commissioners for consideration to adopt by the COW Committee on January 7, 2025. Recommended by the COW for adoption to the BOC at their January 14, 2025 meeting. A copy of the Public Notice, Resolution adopting the plan and the minutes of the meeting are included.



SECTION 7

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

ABSTRACT

The mission of the Barry County Parks and recreation Commission is to provide and support recreational opportunities that enhance the quality of life for ALL residents.

The Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission has developed the following goals and objectives to guide the management and development of recreation opportunities in the county. The goals are long-range in nature and intended to be broad in scope and flexible enough to accommodate future change. The objectives are short-range in nature and intended to direct specific development decisions to be made in the next five years. Goals and objectives are meant to guide the intent of the actions to be taken but accommodate a degree of flexibility to reflect changing attitudes and opportunities and to ensure the county is responsive to its citizens.

Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission Mission Statement:

Promote Barry County as a recreational and historical destination, by supporting and expanding recreation and educational opportunities, to enhance the quality of life for all.

Goal 1

Develop and maintain a Recreation Plan to ensure that funds are spent efficiently, short-term and long-term goals are met, and to ensure eligibility for State and Federal grant programs.

Objective:

1. Evaluate progress against the plan annually to ensure the plan is utilized and progress is made.

Goal 2

Provide a geographically balanced and diverse system of park and recreation facilities in coordination with local municipalities, recreation authorities, and schools to meet current and future needs.

Objectives:

1. Target areas that are deficient in recreation opportunities or are experiencing population growth for land acquisition or development.
2. Provide financial and technical assistance to other recreation providers in the county to develop and maintain public recreation facilities.
3. Monitor recreation trends and facilitate opportunities to respond to emerging and unique needs.
4. Develop and encourage unique recreational experiences to attract visitors/tourists to Barry County.

Goal 3

Continue to maintain and enhance existing park and recreation facilities to provide high-quality recreational and aesthetic experiences at all county parks and facilities.

Objectives:

1. Make park improvements in line with master plans developed with public input for each property.
2. Develop standards of operation for high-quality maintenance and operation of recreational areas and open space lands.

3. Provide recreation opportunities that are accessible to all individuals regardless of ability, ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
4. Encourage and facilitate partnerships and volunteer efforts to assist with maintenance at county-owned park and recreation facilities.

GOAL 4

Preserve and manage buildings, structures, artifacts, and collections that demonstrate early rural Michigan life and cultural history.

Objectives:

1. Protect and maintain the integrity of Historic Charlton Park Village and Museum and provide improved interpretation for education and understanding.
2. Protect and maintain the historic McKeown Bridge and provide improved interpretation describing its historical significance.
3. Identify objects and artifacts within collections not yet inventoried and seek to ensure proper historical data regarding collections artifacts.
4. Provide a high level of stewardship for the collections utilizing the Museum Assessment Program and best management practices.
5. Develop a collections plan to guide future acquisitions.
6. Develop and implement a plan to address storage needs for collections.

GOAL 5

Acquire, protect, and preserve land and facilities of natural significance and promote understanding of the rich natural resources of Barry County and Michigan.

Objectives:

1. Protect and enhance riverfront, lakeshore, and wetland properties to protect water quality and provide educational opportunities.
2. Demonstrate best management techniques in all park development, management, and improvement to set an example for county residents.
3. Implement habitat improvements and provide interpretation to promote enjoyment and provide education.
4. Update Thornapple Birding Trail to new properties as appropriate to highlight the many birding opportunities available throughout the area.

GOAL 6

Promote and develop linear parks and trails to provide safe and enjoyable recreational experiences and non-motorized transportation, linking residential areas, business districts, and parks.

Objectives:

1. Support the goals and objectives of the Barry County Trails Master Plan to advance the collective vision for a county-wide and regional non-motorized trail system.

2. Work in collaboration with others to ensure the continuity and connectivity of the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail across the county.
3. Actively pursue acquisitions of land or permanent easements for linear parks and trails as they become available.
4. Implement improvements to the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail in county ownership including accessible surfacing, amenities, and trailheads.

GOAL 7

Expand the availability of public waterfront access and fishing/boating opportunities on lakes and rivers within the county.

Objectives:

1. Continue to improve access to the Thornapple River, Thornapple Lake, and Metcalf Lake on county-owned properties for boating, shore fishing, and other recreation opportunities.
2. Look for opportunities to expand waterfront property under Barry County ownership or control.
3. In collaboration with partners, work to provide a navigable passage along the Thornapple River through the county and provide facilities in targeted locations for the development of a water trail (i.e. launch ramps, rest areas, bathrooms, etc.)

GOAL 8

Provide accurate and easily attainable information to the public to promote the county parks and recreation opportunities

Objectives:

1. Promote programs, events, and facilities through advertising and public relations campaigns.
2. Enhance the county website to fully inform residents and visitors of the recreation opportunities in the county.
3. Implement a branding guide for consistent signage and publications for county park facilities.

GOAL 9

Provide and continue developing educational programming, events, and facilities that promote and enhance appreciation for history, natural resources, and family entertainment.

Objectives:

1. Provide educational programming that promotes an understanding of our rural history from the late 1800's and early 1900's.
2. Provide educational programming that focuses on natural resources and understanding our outdoor environment.
3. Provide educational programming, events, and facilities for people of all ages and abilities.

4. Host events that provide family entertainment, are educational, and/or heighten an appreciation for the natural environment and cultural history.

GOAL 10

Grow and sustain a financial standing for short- and long-term operational needs, maintenance, development, and growth.

Objectives:

1. Develop and nurture partnerships and volunteers that help realize identified goals, needs, and objectives.
2. Strengthen funding for parks and recreation through the continuation of a dedicated millage, user fees, grant opportunities, sponsorships, and donations.



Volunteers help construct accessibility improvements with funding assistance from an AARP grant.



The Action Program and Capital Improvement Schedule of the Barry County Park and Recreation Plan states the proposed course of development or improvement that will be taken over the next five years.

SECTION 8

ACTION PROGRAM

Action Program

The Action Program and Capital Improvement Schedule of the Barry County Park and Recreation Plan states the proposed course of development or improvement that will be taken over the next five years. The Goals and Objectives, from the previous section, serve as guidelines for the development of the Action Program. The Capital Improvement Schedule that follows will focus on the needs identified in the Action Program and will project potential expenditures for the five-year action period on a year-by-year basis. The five-year period will begin in 2025 and extend through 2029. This period will not be sufficient to accomplish all of the goals and objectives but begins to prioritize those projects that may be achievable within the initial five years.

The Action Program focuses on the reduction of deficiencies and expansion and improvements of facilities in a manner that not only meets current needs but also diversifies the type and quality of recreational opportunities within the county. The Parks and Recreation Plan identifies these needs in general terms in the Planning Process section; the Action Plan describes specific actions to be taken to address these needs. The following actions are comprehensive and may require more than five years to complete. The plan may not identify every potential new opportunity and the Parks Commission can be flexible to adjust priorities as necessary for any new or emerging prospect but it is the frame work for future action.

Paul Henry Thornapple Trail

Completion of the Paul Henry Trail through Barry County is a high priority for county residents. The county will continue to work towards gaining a contiguous trail route by working with partners to gain easements across private property, property acquisition, or by studying alternative routes. Included are implementation plans for comprehensive trail signage, trail surfacing from High Bank Creek to Morgan Road, trail surfacing from Fuller Street in Nashville to Greggs Crossing, and trailhead parking at 108th Street.

McKeown Bridge Park

McKeown Bridge Park was ranked the lowest of the county's properties in terms of satisfaction in the online survey conducted as part of this planning process. Actions proposed over the 5-year planning process include repainting the historic bridge, extending the nature trails, and continuing habitat improvements. If funding allows, the county will also look to improve the popular canoe/kayak access and partner with others to improve facilities for paddlers along the Thornapple River through the county.

Charlton Park Recreation Area

A master plan to guide the development of Charlton Park Recreation Area was completed in 2024. This includes improvements to existing facilities focusing on accessibility, lake access, and sustainability. Projects proposed for the upcoming 5-year planning period include boat launch parking and accessibility improvements, a barrier-free kayak launch, beach area improvements, including parking reconfiguration, new concrete walks, accessible picnic tables and grills and native shoreline plantings, and construction of a

new trail through the recreation area. Long-term plans also include the development of a modern campground, although this will require a considerable investment in both funding and staffing.

Charlton Park Historic Village

Improvements at Charlton Park Historic Village will focus on two primary areas: collections storage and accessibility. Specific actions include completing a feasibility study for collections storage and implementing the recommendations, rehabilitating the stone restrooms, accessible walkways linking the museum's upper and lower levels, and site lighting. A master plan completed in 2024 also identified needed improvements to the parking and circulation, including the addition of a welcome center to accommodate school groups. Although not included in the capital improvement schedule for the upcoming 5-year planning period, this is still a priority should funding allow.

Bailey Nature Preserve

Bailey Nature Preserve is Barry County's newest park. It is currently undeveloped but fills an important geographic gap in facilities. A master plan was developed for the property in 2023. Initial improvements will focus on providing vehicular access and parking, hiking trails, overlooks, benches, vault toilets, information kiosks, and wayfinding signage. A second phase of development will focus on continued trail development with overlooks and pavilion, access and parking off North Avenue, and a dock and carry-down launch on Metcalf Lake.

Park Land Acquisition

Barry County Parks will work toward acquiring additional parkland as it becomes available targeting areas that are deficient in recreation facilities, property adjacent to existing parks, waterfront, and lands that protect natural and cultural resources.

Capital Improvement Schedule

The following schedule is a breakdown of anticipated projects and projected funding sources for the next five years. Changes in the program may occur depending on funding opportunities, but it is anticipated that the changes would be in timing rather than the specific projects. Costs are based on 2024 prices and have been determined either through master planning or estimated based on the best available knowledge. Assistance will be solicited from all available sources and will include both physical and financial support. The county will also seek funding assistance from all available sources such as trusts, charitable foundations, and available federal and state funding programs.

Capital Improvement Schedule

Year	Project	County	Other Funds*	Total Cost
2025	Bailey Nature Preserve Phase 1 Grant Application Submit MNRTF grant application for improvements to include hiking trails, overlooks, benches, vault toilet, information kiosk and wayfinding signage	\$5,000		\$5,000
2025	Charlton Park Recreation Area Lake Access Grant Application Submit Recreation Passport grant application for boat launch parking improvements, barrier-free kayak launch and accessibility improvements	\$5,000		\$5,000
2025	Charlton Park Historic Village Accessibility Phase 1 accessibility improvements – connect lower-level museum to upper level	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$25,000
2025	Charlton Park Historic Village Collections Complete feasibility study for collections storage		\$25,000	\$25,000
2025	Paul Henry Thornapple Trail Signage Implement comprehensive trail-wide wayfinding and information signage	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000
2026	Bailey Nature Preserve Phase 1 Design and construct improvements, to include accessible walkways, hiking trails, overlooks, benches, vault toilet, information kiosk and wayfinding signage	\$50,000	\$200,000	\$250,000
2026	Charlton Park Recreation Area Lake Access Design and construct boat launch parking improvements, barrier-free kayak launch and accessibility improvements	\$50,000	\$150,000	\$200,000
2026	Charlton Park Historic Village Restrooms Rehabilitate stone restrooms	\$100,000		\$100,000

Year	Project	County	Other Funds*	Total Cost
2027	McKeown Bridge Park Repaint historic bridge	\$100,000		\$100,000
2027	Paul Henry Thornapple Trail Parking Construct parking area at 108 th Street	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$75,000
2027	Charlton Park Recreation Area Accessibility Improvements Make accessibility improvements to existing facilities	\$10,000		\$10,000
2027	Charlton Park Historic Village Site lighting Install village site lighting	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$25,000
2028	Charlton Park Recreation Area Beach Design and construct beach area improvements, including parking reconfiguration, new concrete walks, accessible picnic tables and grills and native shoreline plantings	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$150,000
2028	McKeown Bridge Park Parking Reconfigure parking to accommodate trailers	\$20,000		\$20,000
2029	Charlton Park Recreation Area Trail Design and construct new accessible trail	\$45,000		\$45,000
2029	McKeown Bridge Park Trails Extend nature trails and implement habitat improvements	\$20,000	\$5,000	\$25,000
2029	Paul Henry Thornapple Trail Complete clearing & surfacing trail High Bank Creek to Morgan Road	\$25,000	\$5,000	\$30,000

Other Priority Projects to be implemented as funding allows

Project	Total Cost
Paul Henry Thornapple Trail Complete hard surfaced trail from Fuller Street to Gregs Crossing	\$384,000
Bailey Nature Preserve Phase 2 Design and construct improvements, to include, parking, accessible trail loop, accessible overlook with pavilion, North Avenue access improvements and parking, dock and carry-down launch,	\$200,000

Other funds include:

- Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF) – minimum/maximum grant amount: \$15,000 to \$400,000 for development. Minimum match 25%
- Michigan Recreation Passport Grant – minimum/maximum grant amount is \$7,500 to \$150,000. Minimum match 25%
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) – minimum/maximum grant amount is \$30,000 to \$500,000 for development. Minimum match 50%
- MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program – minimum construction grant amount \$200,000. Minimum match 40%
- Other state and federal funding sources
- Foundation grants, private funding, etc.



Commissioners and park staff stand by the new park sign

BLANK FOR APPENDICES

HISTORIC CHARLTON PARK MASTER PLAN

06/24/2024



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PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Dan Patton -

Director of Parks and Recreation

Daryl Cheeseman - Citizen-at-Large

Frank Fiala -

Barry County Road Commission

Catherine Getty -

Barry County Commissioner

Elizabeth Hutton -

Barry County Deputy Drain Commission

Debbie Jensen - Citizen-at-Large

Doug Klein - Citizen-at-Large

John LaForge -

Barry County Planning Commission

Nichole Lyke - Citizen-at-Large

Rick Moore - Citizen-at-Large

Sarah Nelson - Citizen-at-Large

***Master Plan Steering Committee in bold**

MASTER PLAN PROCESS

The Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission developed this master plan in conjunction with a consultant team and supported by community input.

PROJECT GOALS

The goal of the planning process is to develop a successful, innovative, and sustainable Site Master Plan for Historic Charlton Park to direct future operational and facility improvements.

Maximize potential of property assets

Meet the cultural, historical, and recreational needs of Barry county users

Welcome people of all abilities, ages, and background

Primary focus: long-term stability, management, and programming of existing assets and facilities

Secondary focus: development of new assets and facilities

PROJECT SCHEDULE

FALL 2023

Project awarded

NOVEMBER 2, 2023

Master planning team kicks off the project with the Barry County Parks Commission and completes an initial site visit at Charlton Park.

DECEMBER 9-10, 2023

Public Input Session #1

OPEN DECEMBER 9-22

Public Input Survey

WINTER 2024

The planning team develops a draft master plan, working closely with the parks commission and park staff, and meeting monthly to discuss design approaches, revisions, and solutions.

MAY 2024

Public Input Session #2

MAY 2024

The planning team refines the master plan and prepares cost opinions and supporting graphics.

JUNE 2024

The Historic Charlton Park Site Master Plan is delivered to Barry County for implementation.

HISTORIC CHARLTON PARK

Historic Charlton Park is a 310 acre property bounded by the Thornapple River to the south and Thornapple Lake to the east. Irving Delos Charlton donated the property to Barry County in 1936, and the Barry County Museum was built from 1944-1950, now known as the Irving D. Charlton Memorial Museum.

This Site Master Plan addresses the entire property, with the following exclusions:

- Prioritizing historic building maintenance, repairs, and new acquisitions.
- Estimating costs for interior renovations including restroom improvements, though these areas of need were identified and noted in the plan.
- Acquiring permits for identified work in the wetlands and floodplains.

The Park's unique identity falls in a few areas:

- An extensive collection of antique items, including machinery that is regularly used for grounds maintenance.
- Multiple ecosystems including riparian habitat, wetlands, uplands, historical farmland, and meadows. These offer diverse bird and wildlife habitat and a prime recreational opportunity.
- Visitor categories include recreational users, education-focused school groups, and large-scale public events. Balancing these three user types and prioritizing investment across the site were significant challenges in the design process. The Steering Committee established the highest priority to be based on the greatest number of days of use. This would specifically address the experience of school groups and recreation area visitors, with consideration of large events secondary.

RECREATIONAL USE

The Recreational Area includes the trail system north of the entrance road and all areas east of the gate, encompassing the boat launch, all pavilions, and the beach area. The most frequent visitors use the site for walking, boating, and fishing, including ice-fishing. This plan includes improvements to high-use amenities along the waterfront, parking areas, and barrier-free access, while also considering the greatest value of investment.

VILLAGE USE

The Historic Village contains 25 historic residences, businesses, and community building that were moved from various locations in the County to depict a village of the early 1900's. The village is the heart of many special and private events such as weddings. School groups are frequent visitors in the spring and fall, but are currently functioning with inadequate facilities. This plan addresses these needs by improving accessibility and creating an entry sequence to transport children back a century.

EVENT USE

Events throughout the year, primarily in the summer, bring thousands of visitors into the park in high concentrations, requiring flexibility for site amenities, parking areas, and traffic patterns. This plan considers the major events as a secondary use following regular use.

GENERAL INFORMATION

VISITOR ACCESS

- Visitors access the park primarily by car, but also by mountain bike, road bike, and walking. Motorized vehicles are not permitted off road.
- Regular visitors often park and walk the trails and roads. Some roads are wide enough to allow vehicles and pedestrian safely simultaneously, but there is opportunity to separate pedestrians and vehicles for an improved and more natural walking experience.
- There is limited barrier-free access due to road and trail surfaces, minimal barrier-free parking, and boardwalks.
- Occasional issue with vandalism; the Steering Committee indicated no interest in fencing the property.
- School groups are transported by school bus and chaperon vehicles.

HISTORIC VILLAGE

- The Historic Village attracts families, individuals, and school groups; demonstrators and educators include both paid part-time staff and volunteers.
- Historic Village includes the County Parks Office at the Upjohn House (3 full-time staff, several part-time and seasonal staff).

EVENTS AND COLLECTIONS

- Charlton Park holds 10-12 events per year, each attracting up to 6,000 visitors at each. Events include Of Christmas Past, the Great Lakes Longbow Invitational, Gas & Steam Club Events, Civil War reenactments, and Antique Car Shows. Weekend events utilize the park's DNR Group Camping Permit. These events dramatically increase visitor attendance but also tax the existing infrastructure and pose parking and traffic flow challenges.
- There are ten (10) campsites with electrical hookups on the Big Green that are reserved for those requiring medical equipment. Other campers sprawl on the Big Green and surrounding areas, often mixing modern vehicles with antiques. The majority of campers use RVs, trailer campers, and vans.
- Parking for events is provided in lawn areas; staff and volunteers set up a rope system to establish parking aisles. The car show, the largest event, directs parking to the high meadows off of River Road where a shuttle service delivers visitors to the Village.
- Antique tractors have steel wheels which can not drive on asphalt.
- The County possesses a train and some track; there is potential for a loop track but significant infrastructure and permitting would be required.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Boardwalks may be feasible for wetland trails if not cost-prohibitive.
- There are several soil types on site, often with cobblestones, making agriculture difficult.
- Forest species include beech, maple, walnut, and oak.
- A large portion of the site is wetlands and/or floodplain which poses construction and permitting challenges.
- There is an opportunity to investigate and efficiently manage regular high water levels.

TRAILS

- Some trails are newly constructed with new trail maps and signage. Most trails are heavily used by regular park visitors.
- Trails are typically lawn, leaf litter, and packed soil. There are no paved, accessible trails or boardwalk beyond the Historic Village. Specific areas may require enhancements to provide a more stable, dry surface.
- Trails are multi-use. Primary users are walkers, but may include horse trail riders and bikers.
- The Parks Director indicated an ongoing discussion with Southwest Michigan Mountain Biking Association (SWMMBA) for a fat tire bike track.

WIDE SHARED ROAD TO RECREATION AREA



VAULT TOILET AT BOAT LAUNCH



BEACH PARKING



TRAIL SIGNAGE AND MAPS



VIEW TO THE RIVER BY THE VILLAGE



SHELTERS AT BEACH AREA



PRIMARY ENTRY INTO THE VILLAGE



UNDEFINED BUS PARKING AT THE VILLAGE



CONCRETE CURBING AT BEACH SAND AREA



WETLANDS



PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- Construction in wetland poses requires extensive reviews and permitting with Michigan's EGLE Department and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).
- Improvements should not negatively impact large portions of wetlands and/or water frontage.
- Hydric soils may not be stable within wetlands, making some types of construction difficult.

FRESHWATER EMERGENT WETLAND



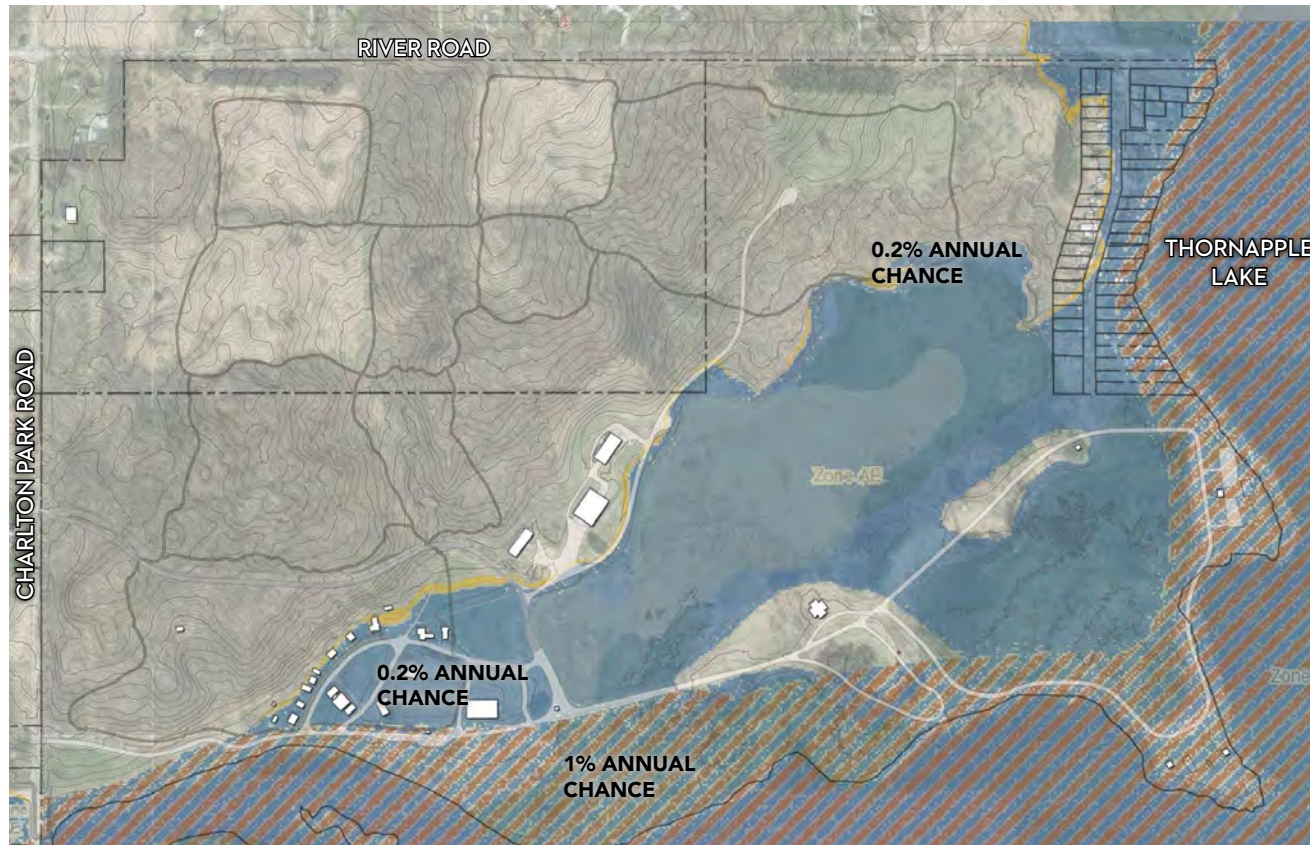
FRESHWATER FORESTED/SHRUB WETLAND



WATER BODY



FLOODPLAIN



PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- Construction in the floodway requires extensive reviews and permitting.
- Improvements within the floodway are at risk of flooding and must be constructed to withstand water flow.
- Soils within the floodplain may not support some types of improvements.

NATIVE AND INVASIVE SPECIES

Charlton Park is a stop along the Birding Trail and offers multiple habitat types including forested wetlands, upland fields and forests, and water's edge, resulting in diverse birding opportunity. Visitors may spot an endangered cerulean warbler, among many other native bird species. Invasive species are a threat to Charlton Park's habitats, and include gypsy moths, purple loosestrife, zebra mussels, and phragmites.

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- Removal of invasive species and protection or enhancement of native species should be a priority.
- Provide educational resources and viewing areas for birding.
- Implement the master plan respecting habitat and minimizing impact on healthy habitat.
- Provide tools and education for reducing waterway contamination, including transporting and disposing of bait, and washing and draining watercraft.

VEGETATION



A large portion of the site is designated wetland, while the remainder is an upland forest, field, or maintained lawn area.

WETLANDS

- The site contains both freshwater emergent wetland and freshwater forested/shrub wetland.

UPLAND FOREST

- Wooded areas include walnut, beech, maple, and oak. A small Scotch pine plantation exists in the property center.

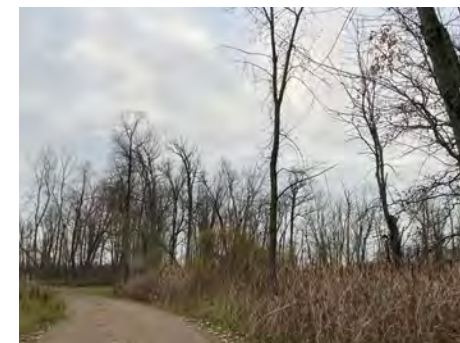
FIELDS

- Fields in the north were historically corn and grain, but are now either maintained lawn or native plantings.
- The northwestern field was planted by the CRP with the intention of regular controlled burned; maintenance staff brush-hogs it every 1-2 years.
- The north central field was used for demonstrative agriculture but has been fallow since the mid 2000s.
- The northeastern fields are maintained lawn and used for events and parking.

HIGH MEADOWS



BEECH-MAPLE FOREST

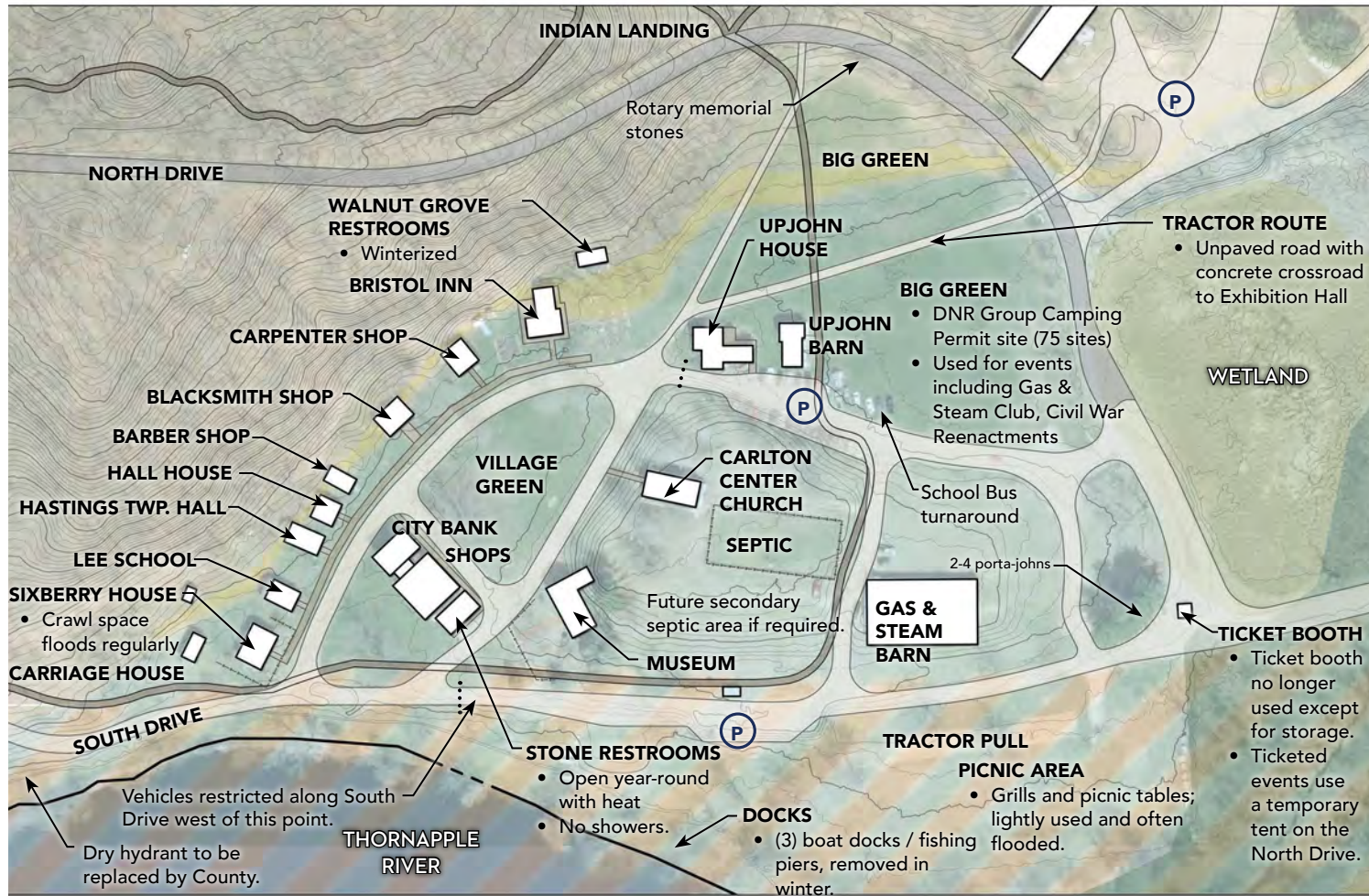


PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Historic vegetation should be maintained where feasible to strengthen the historic character of the property. Wetlands must be protected, all improvements must comply with EGLE's requirements. Multiple landscape types are optimal for interesting trails; the existing trail system includes routes through fields, forest, and edging wetlands.



HISTORIC VILLAGE



VILLAGE OPPORTUNITIES

- Improvements to accessibility.
- Entry sequence for all vehicles
- Defined parking area with minimal paved area
- Reduction of pedestrian-vehicular conflicts
- School bus parking, unloading, and loading area.
- Restroom improvements

VILLAGE CHALLENGES

- Poor drainage in the Big Green during wet events
- Maintaining the historical character while improving access and amenities.
- Balancing event volume with everyday use.
- Available land limited by adjacent wooded slopes, floodplain, and wetland.

BIG GREEN



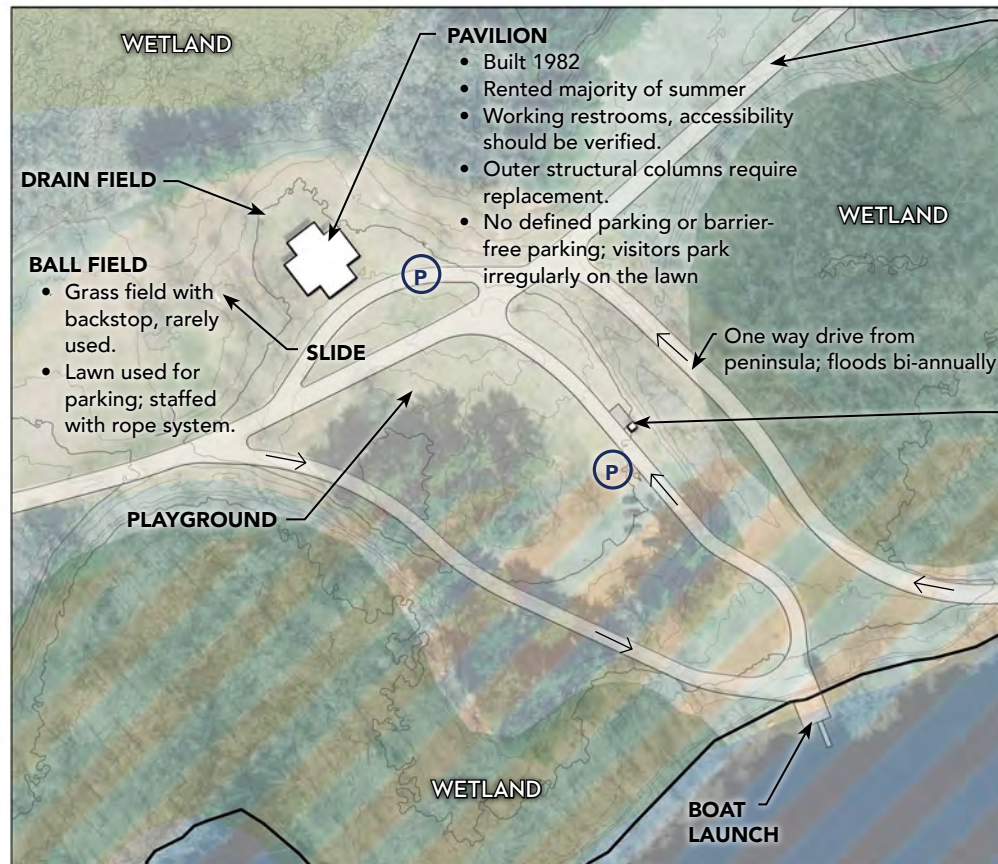
PARKING NEAR TRACTOR PULL



MAIN STREET + STONE RESTROOMS



BOAT LAUNCH AND PAVILION



DRIVE

- Lawn adjacent to drive is above the floodplain and wetland, but little to no wooded areas provide dry ground.

BOAT LAUNCH BF PARKING

- (2) barrier-free parking spaces for standard vehicles, and vault toilet installed in 2023.

BOAT LAUNCH

- Heavily used.
- Originally designed for up to (4) boats; now serves up to (2) boats due to equipment size increases.
- Kayak launch may conflict with boat launch activity.

BOAT LAUNCH OPPORTUNITIES

- Improvements to accessibility.
- Entry and maneuvering sequence for long trailers.
- Define parking for higher capacity and to improve safety.
- Addition of accessible route to the boat launch and a new kayak/canoe launch.
- Improve awareness of invasive species management.

BOAT LAUNCH CHALLENGES

- Surrounding floodplain and wetlands.
- Existing vegetation and slopes limit reconfiguration options.

PAVILION



BOAT LAUNCH



BEACH AREA AND PENINSULA

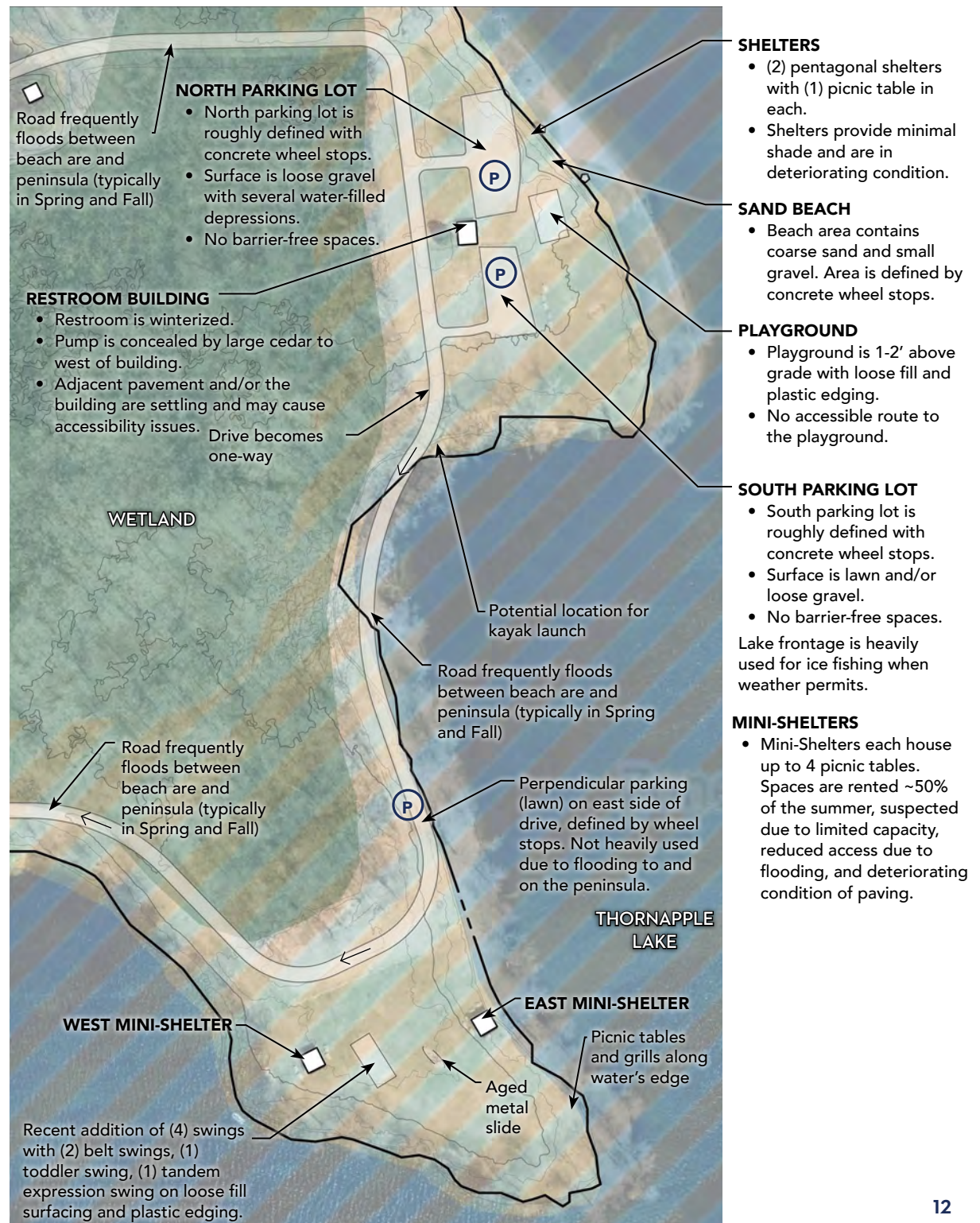
NORTH PARKING LOT AT BEACH AREA



MINI-SHELTER ON PENINSULA



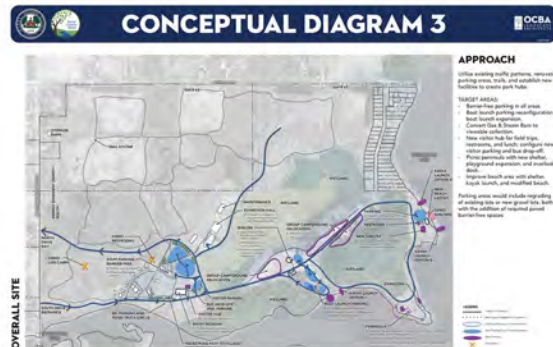
BEACH AREA SHELTER + PLAYGROUND



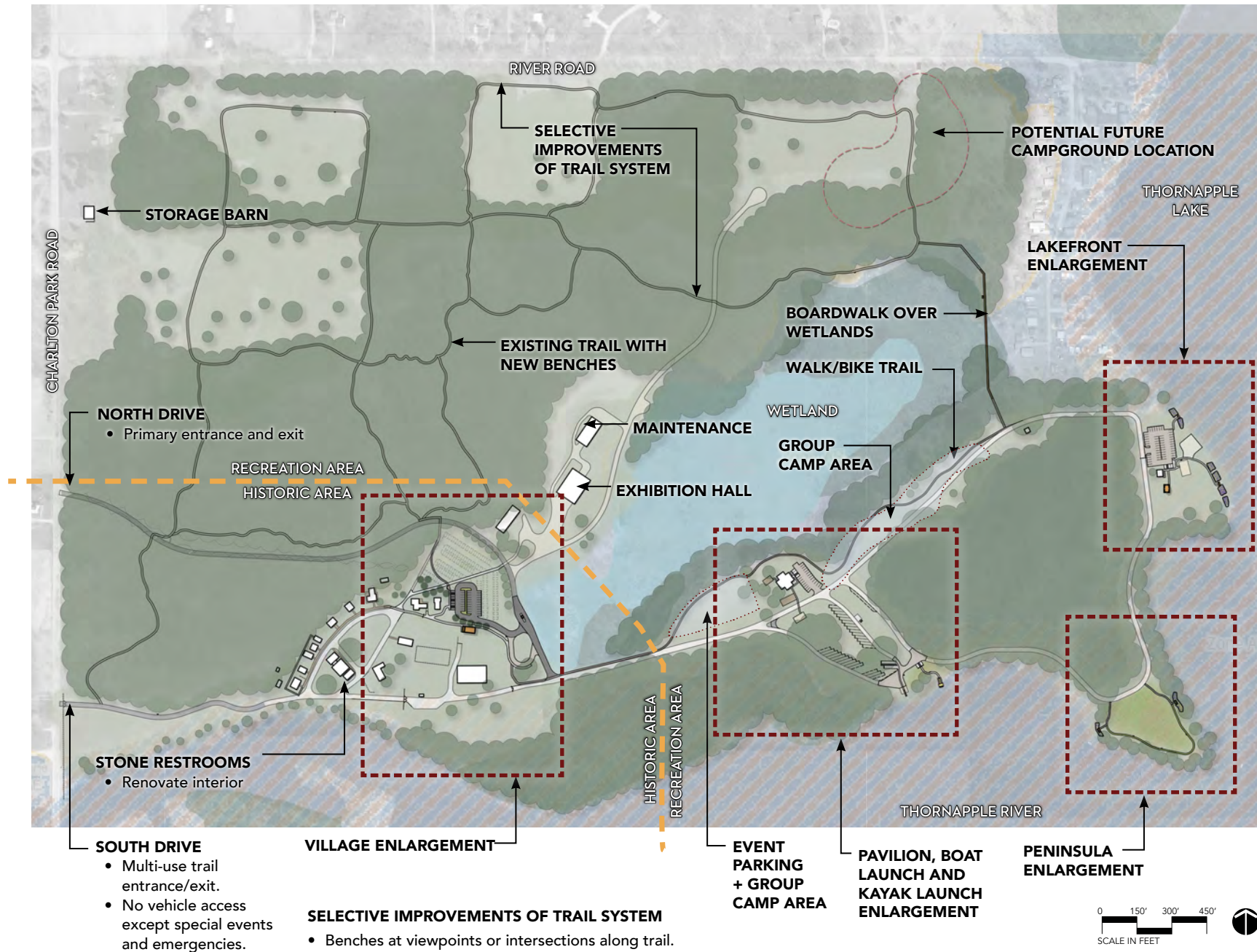
DESIGN ITERATIONS

Initial concept diagrams proposed three different approaches from least to most change and were discussed with the Steering Committee.

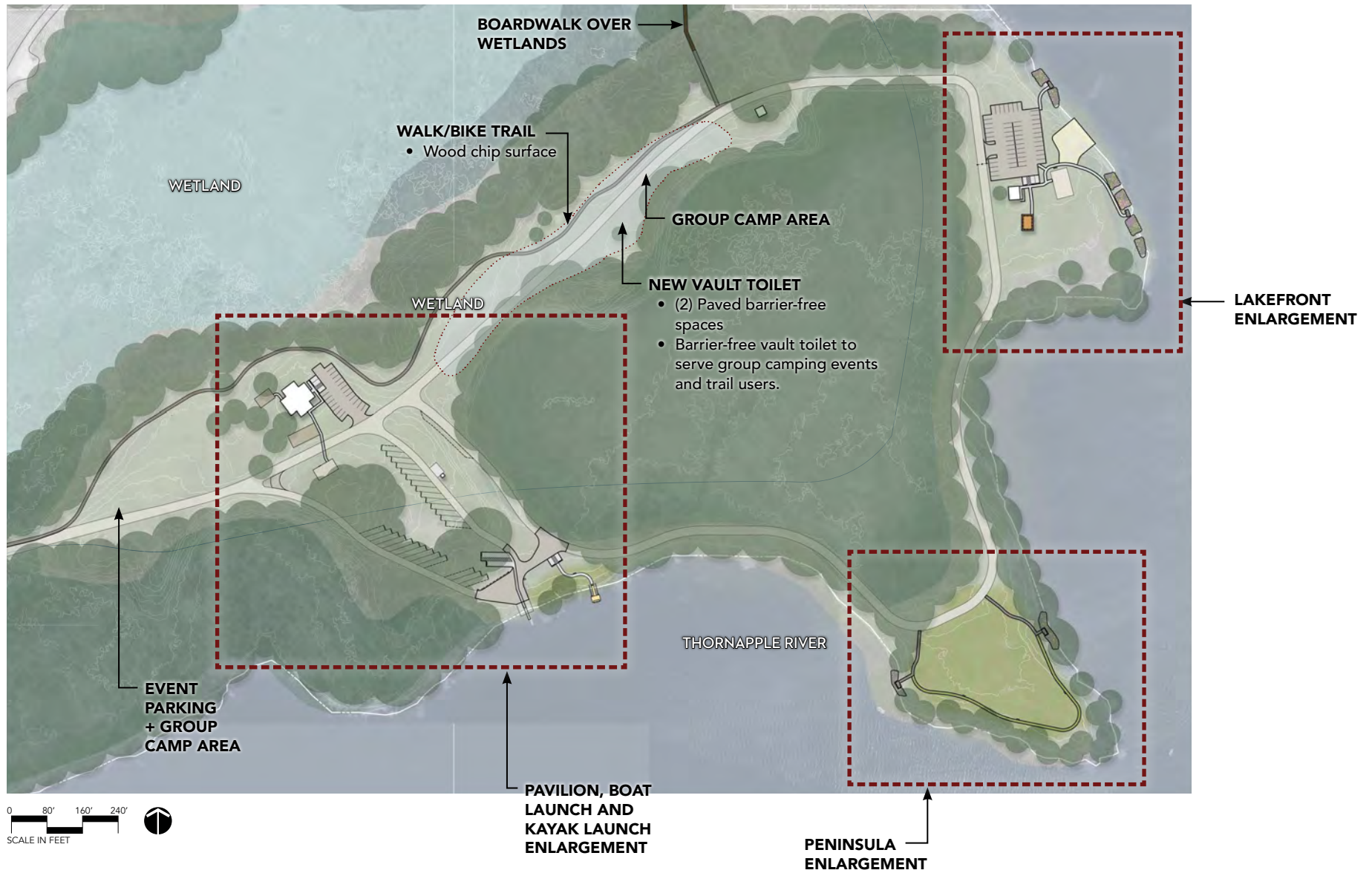
Revised conceptual diagrams refined the circulation patterns and amenities and presented three alternative options addressing the entry sequence and parking at the village.



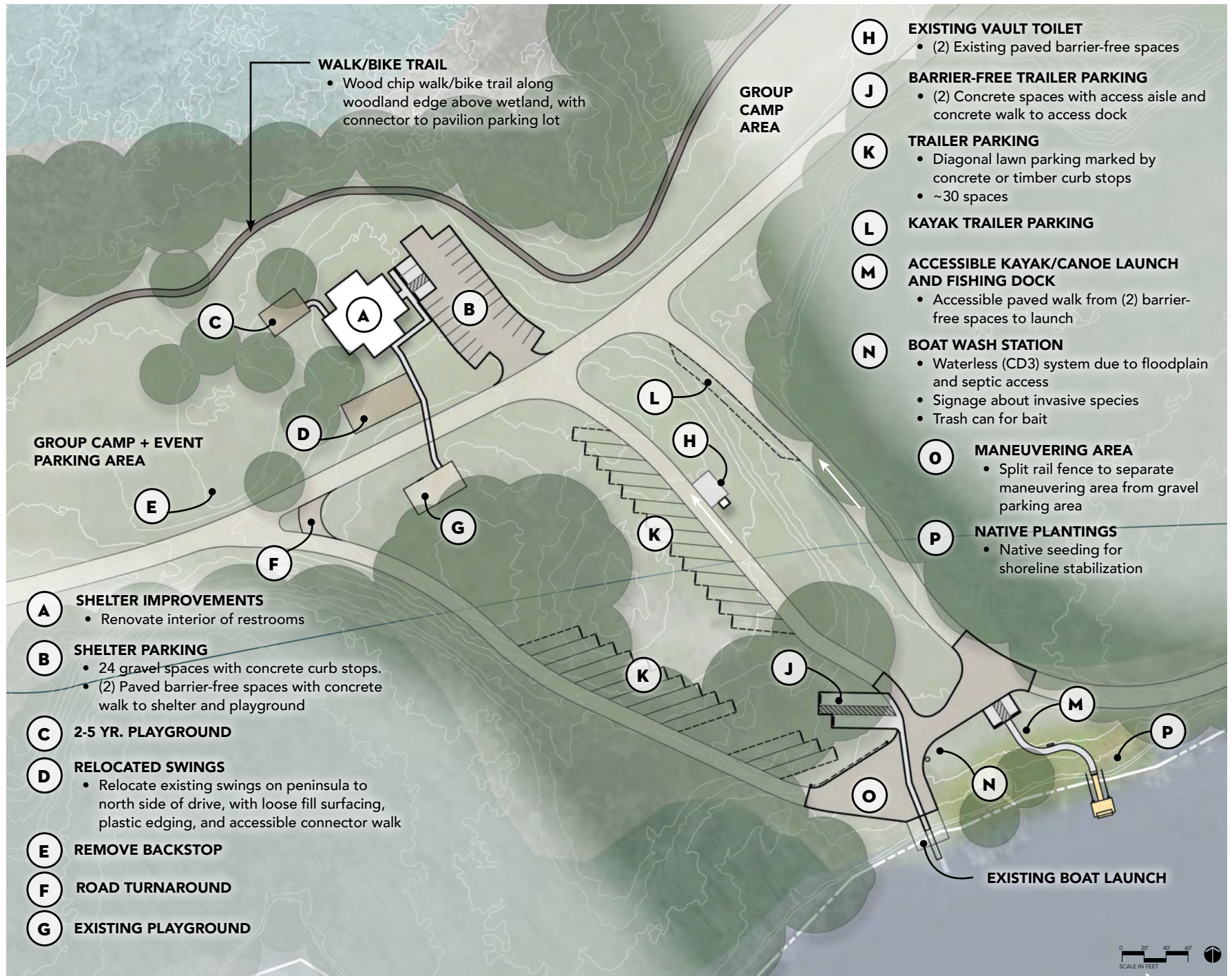
OVERALL MASTER PLAN



RECREATION AREA



PLAN: PAVILION, BOAT LAUNCH, AND KAYAK LAUNCH





WATERFRONT APPROACH

Charlton Park's beach area offers a free swimming area that is not available elsewhere nearby. The waterfront is also heavily used for fishing, picnicking, and as a boating location. The proposed parking reconfiguration utilizes the gravel area more efficiently while opening land to the south of the restroom building.

Increasing accessibility is a priority; concrete barrier-free spaces and a concrete walk that connects the parking, restroom, shelter, playground, and the southern overlook deck provide an accessible route to each amenity.

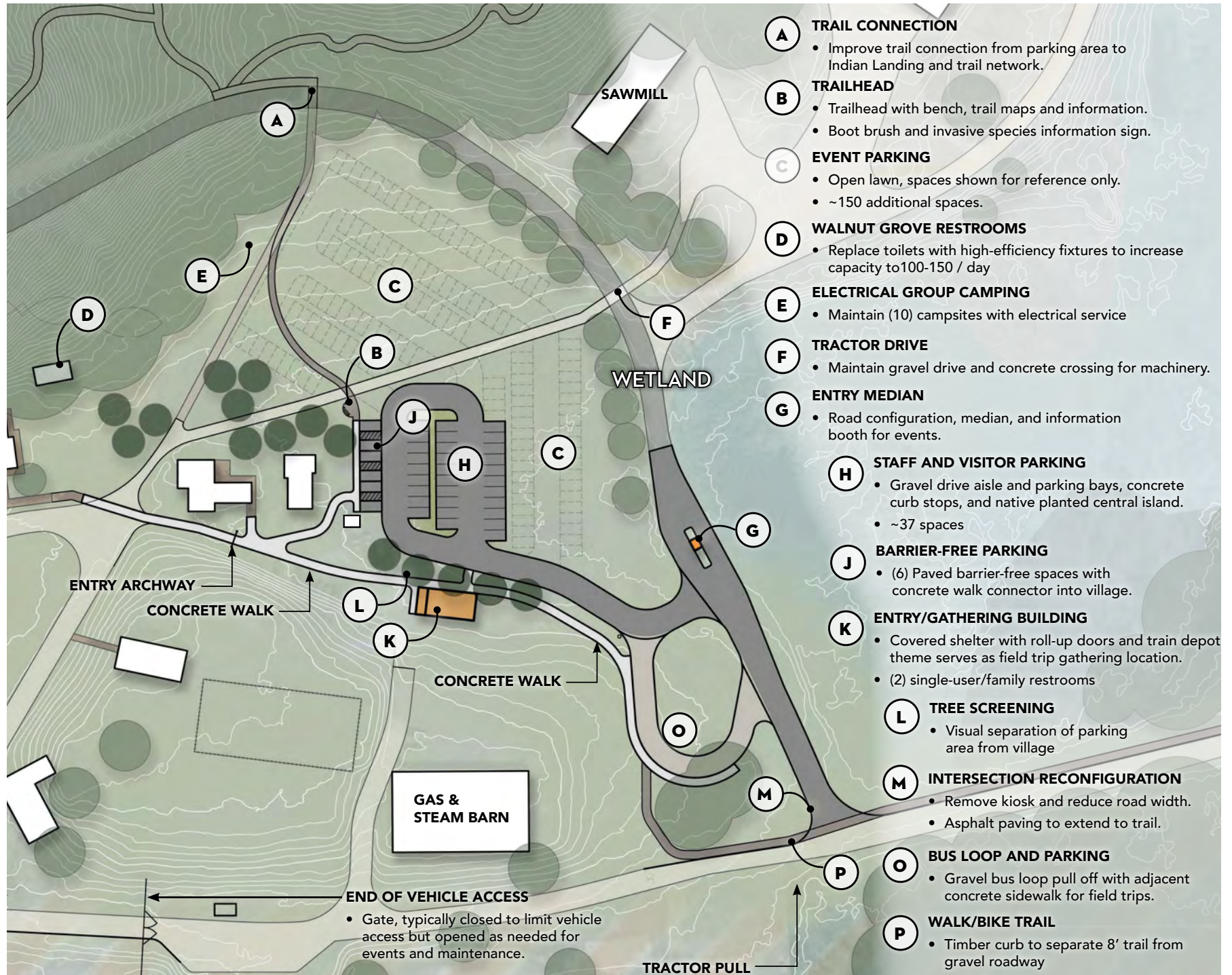
The narrow beach provides more sand area while reducing the waterfrontage, encourage families and children to play with the sand but reducing the amount of debris and erosion.



PENINSULA APPROACH

Due to continued erosion along Thornapple Lake and regular flooding, maintaining a drivable road through the wetlands is high investment and high maintenance. This plan recommends no significant erosion-reducing measures such as sea walls and heavy rip rap. Instead, as the road edge erodes, the County may allow the road to narrow and eventually convert to a multi-use trail with no vehicular access.

This approach allows the peninsula to become a passive recreation area to showcase the natural beauty of the waterfront.



20 May 2024 Historic Charlton Park Barry County Parks									
Draft Prioritization Plan									
Description	Priority (review required by Board)	Anticipated Cost	Goal reached through project						
			Utilize and enhance existing facilities and assets	Increase waterfront access	Accessibility	Address environmental considerations	Enhance recreation user experience	Enhance event user experience	Enhance educational user experience
Historic Village Projects									
Walnut Grove Restroom Improvements	HIGH	\$	x				x	x	x
Stone Restroom Improvements	HIGH	\$	x				x	x	x
Paving and Parking Reconfiguration	MEDIUM	\$ 301,000.00			x		x	x	x
Bus Loop	LOW	\$ 87,500.00			x			x	x
Train Depot Building	LOW	\$ 699,600.00			x				x
Pavilion and Boat Launch Projects									
Kayak Launch and Barrier Free Access	HIGH	\$ 149,900.00		x	x		x		
Boat Launch Parking Improvements	MEDIUM	\$ 98,500.00		x	x		x		
Shelter Restroom Improvements	MEDIUM	\$ -	x		x		x	x	
Shelter Parking Reconfiguration	LOW	\$ 80,500.00			x		x	x	
2-5 Year Old Playground	LOW	\$ 79,300.00					x		
Swing Relocation	LOW	\$ 51,700.00	x				x		
Lakefront Area									
Beach Improvements and Parking Reconfig.	HIGH	\$ 169,600.00	x	x		x	x		
Restroom Improvements	MEDIUM	\$ -	x						
Shoreline Plantings	MEDIUM	\$ 9,800.00		x		x	x		
Shelter	MEDIUM	\$ 230,300.00		x	x		x	x	
Overlook Walk and Decks	LOW	\$ 27,200.00		x	x		x		
Meadow Peninsula									
Meadow Planting and Shoreline Stabilization	MEDIUM	\$ 102,800.00				x	x		
Removal of Existing Shelters and Play Equip.	LOW	By Owner				x			
Overlook Decks	LOW	\$ 31,700.00		x		x	x		
Trails									
New Rec Area Trail	MEDIUM	\$ 48,500.00					x		
Wetland Boardwalk	LOW	\$ 331,700.00		x			x		
Existing Improvements to the Existing Trail	LOW	\$ 31,800.00	x		x		x		
Campground									
Public Campground (non-event)	LOW	\$ -					x		

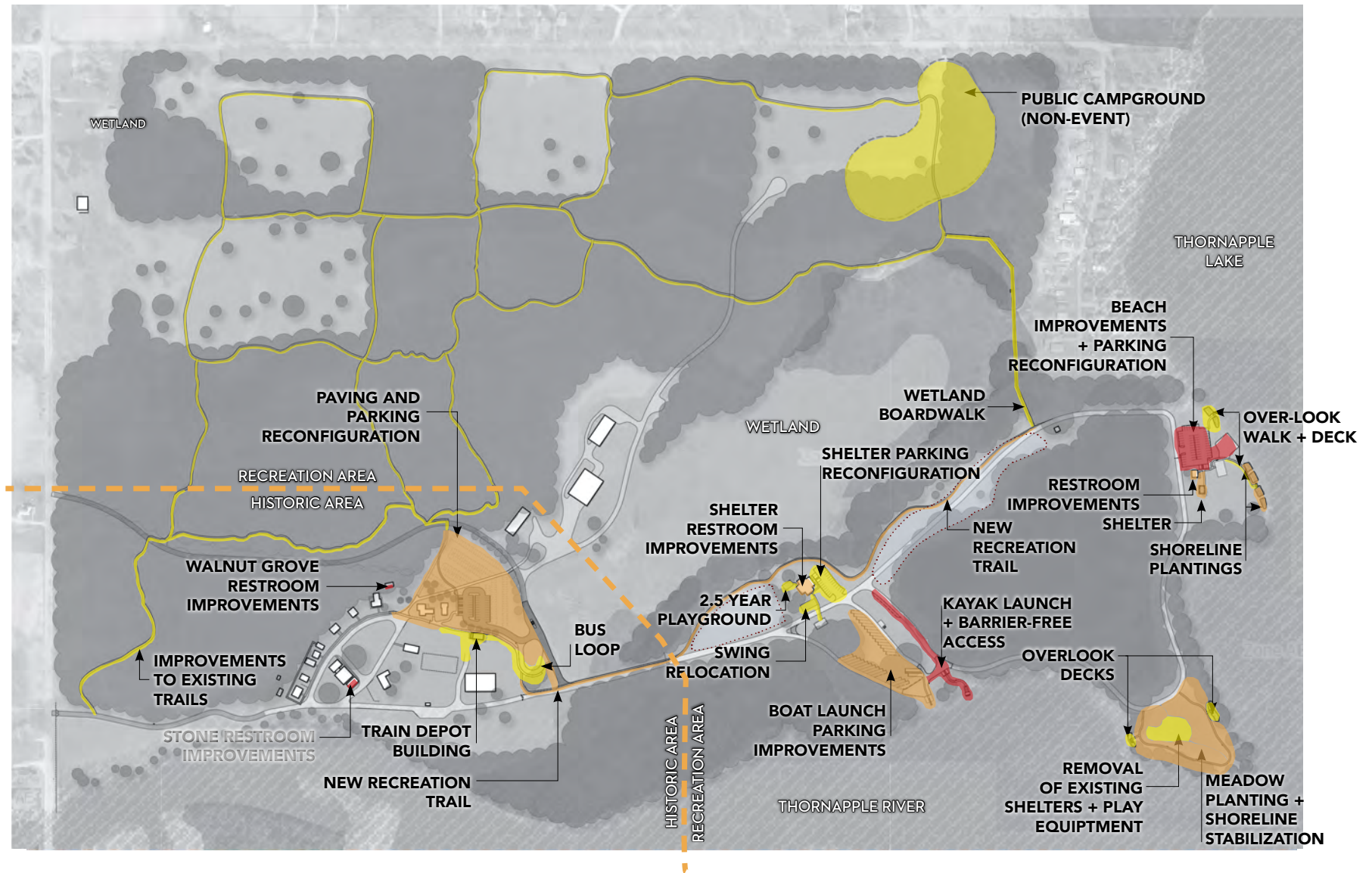
PRIORITIZATION APPROACH

The master plan was broken down into several projects in each area. The goals identified align with the original Request for Proposals (RFP) language for the vision of the park, as well as goals discussed with the steering committee throughout the process, such as improving accessibility. Generally, projects achieving more goals were ranked as higher priority due to providing more value to the park.

COST INFORMATION

The costs provided are based on 2024 construction prices and include a 28% increase for design, contingency, and escalation. In providing these opinions of probable cost, it is understood that the Consultants (OCBA) have no control over market conditions and these opinions of probable cost are made on the basis of the Consultant's professional judgement and experience at a master plan level. The Consultants make no warranty that the cost of work will not vary from this opinion of probable cost.

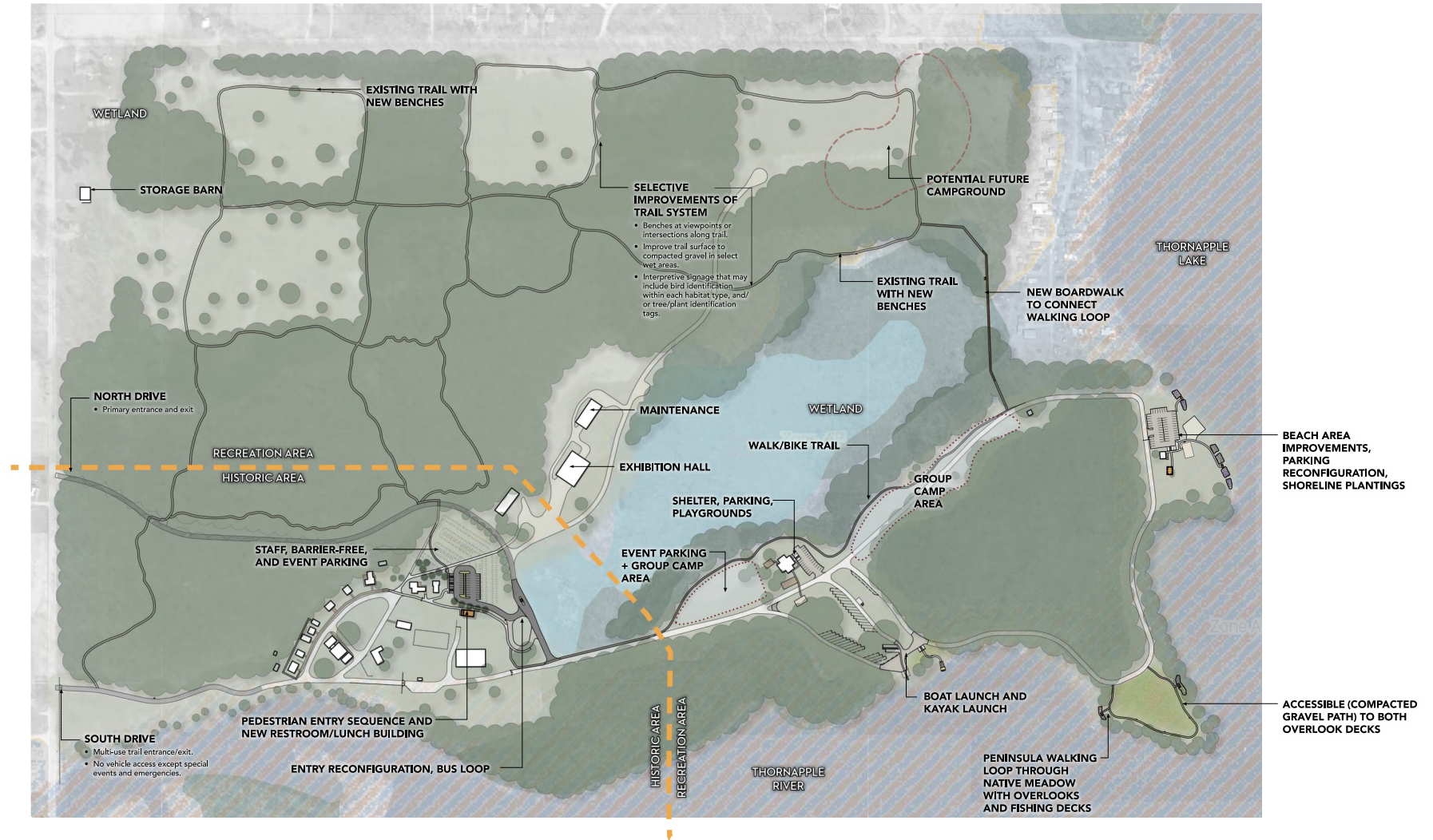
PRIORITIZATION PLAN



- HIGH PRIORITY** ■
- MEDIUM PRIORITY** ■
- LOW PRIORITY** ■

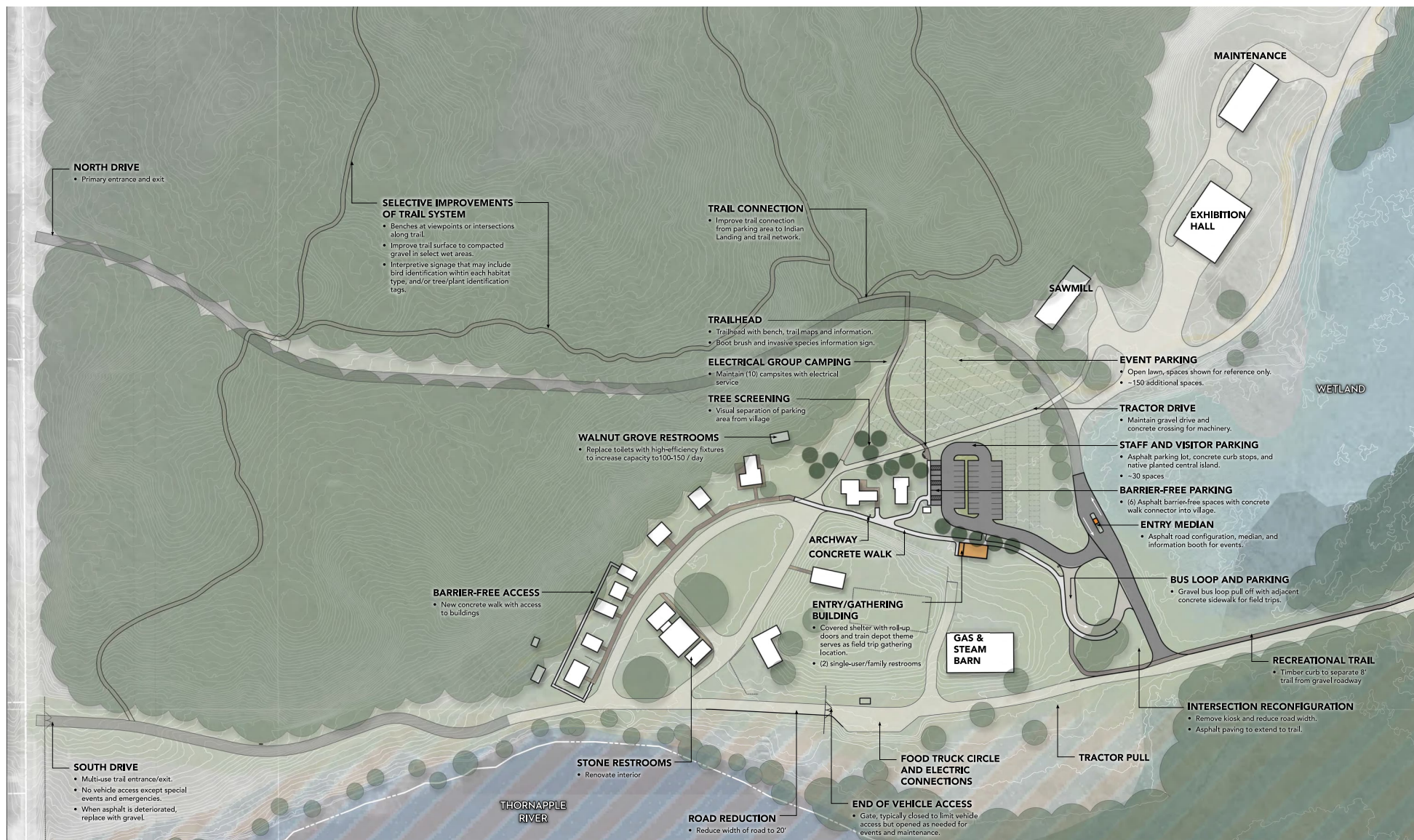


OVERALL PLAN





HISTORIC AREA

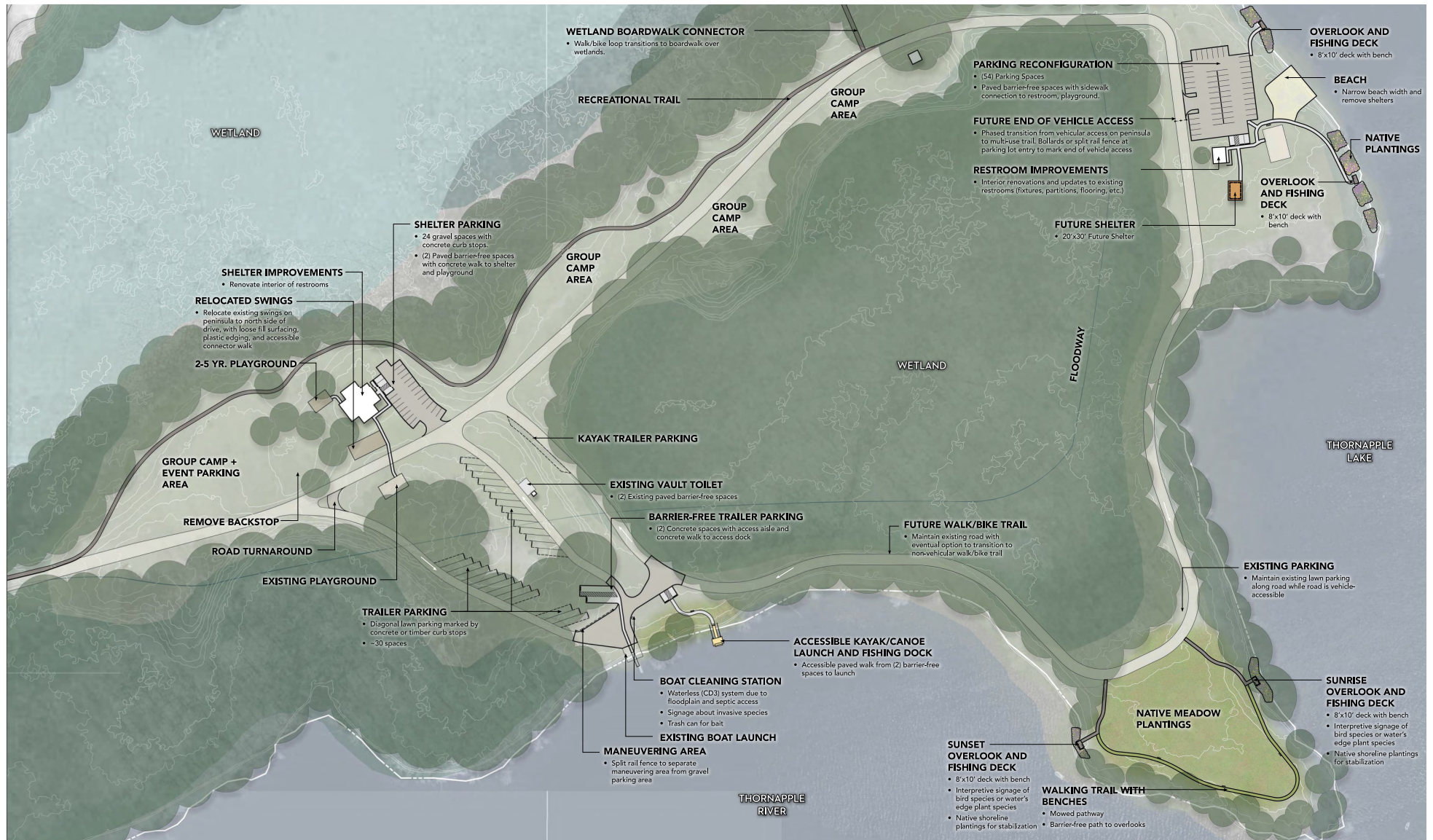




RECREATION AREA



REVISED 06/24/24



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Bailey Nature Preserve



Design Plan

Prepared By:
Williams & Works
March 2023



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was initiated by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy with participation from the Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission. Public engagement, planning, and design services were provided by Williams & Works.

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of the Bailey family.

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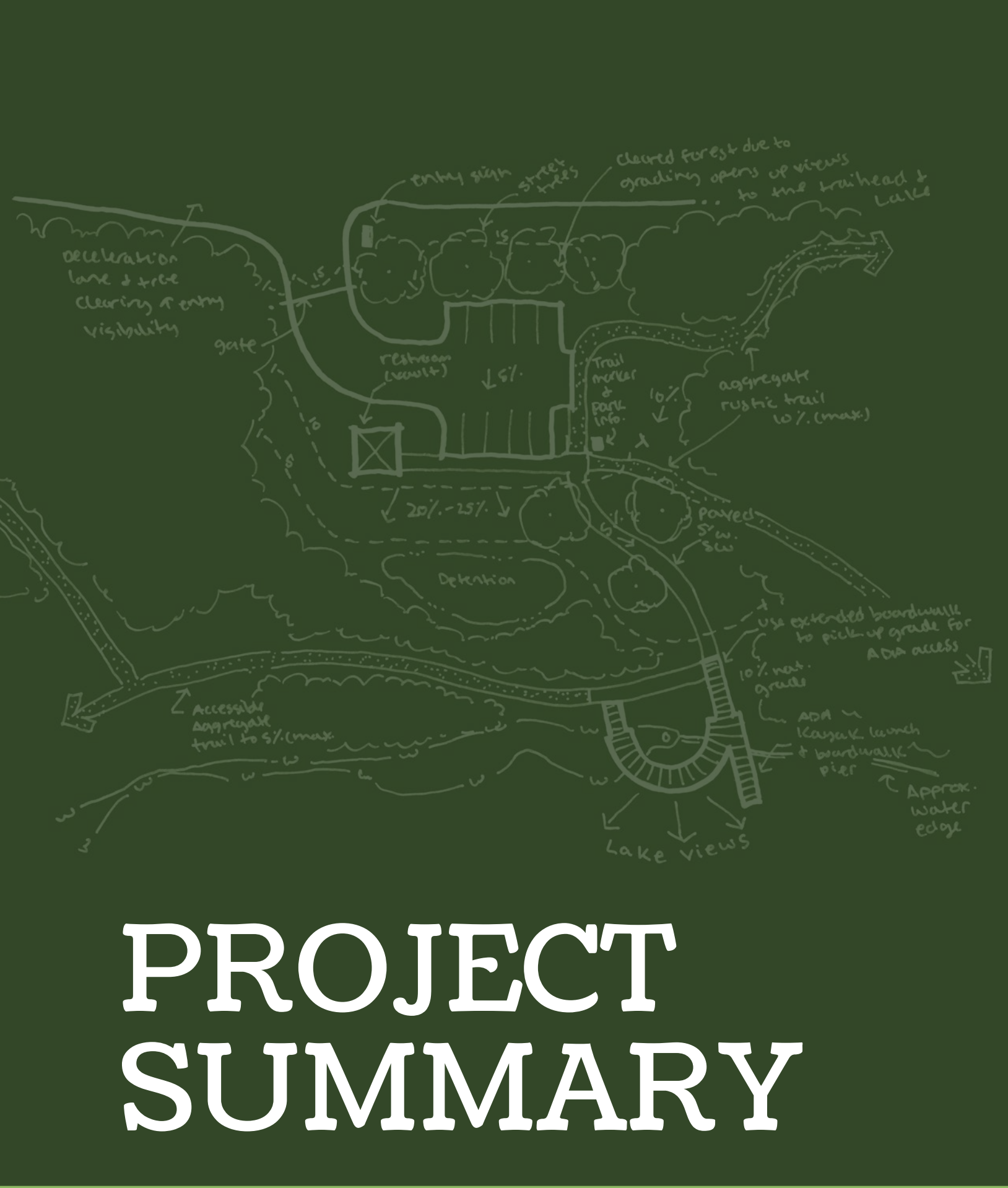
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DESIGN PLAN

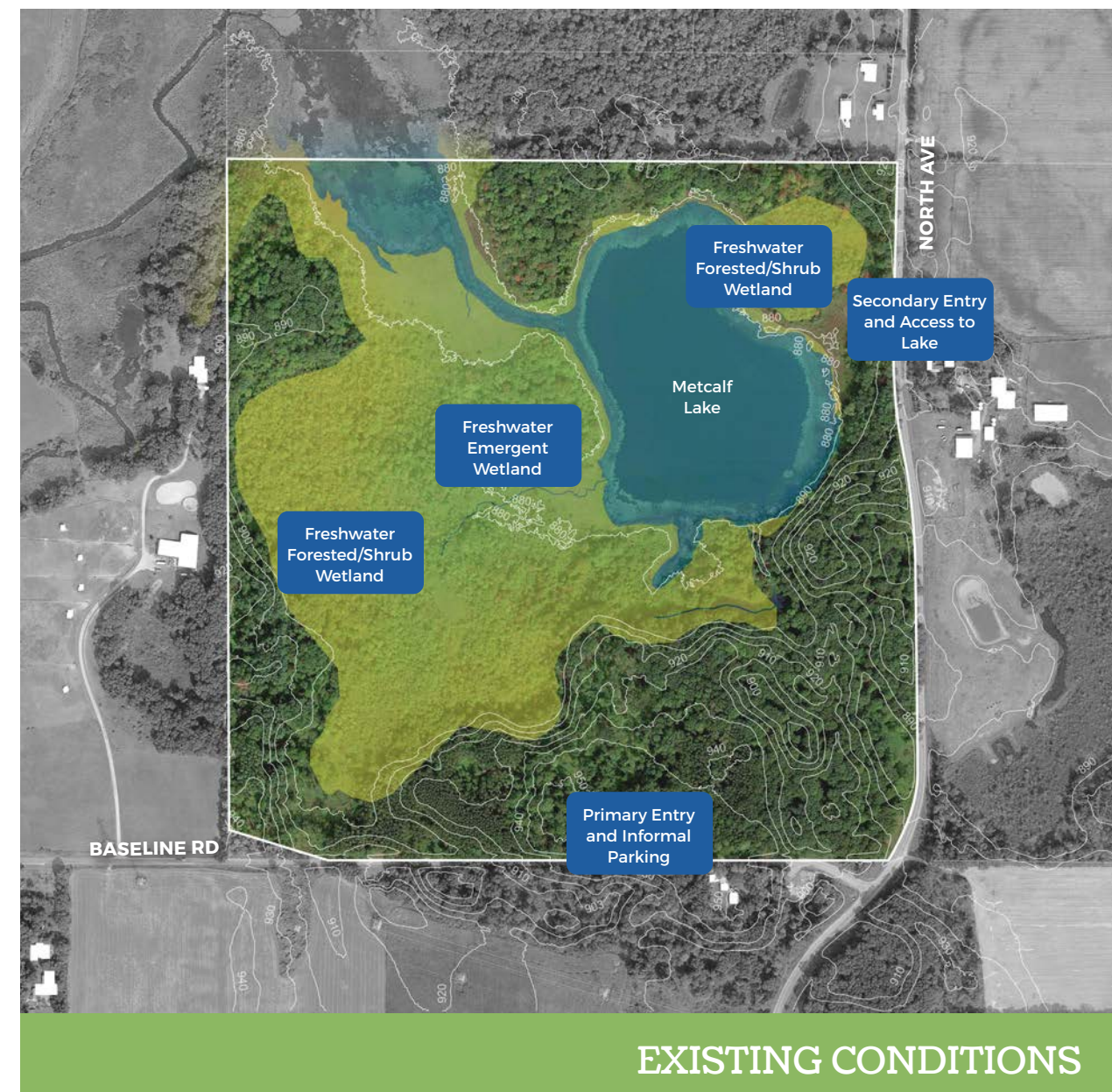
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APPENDICES

Appendix A Warranty Deed & Conditions
Appendix B Property Analysis Presentation
Appendix C Engagement Report
Appendix D Probable Costs & Prioritization



PROJECT SUMMARY



EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

David and Eleanor Bailey envisioned a beautiful natural space for the public to enjoy when they donated their land for the Bailey Nature Preserve over 20 years ago. With the support of the Bailey's children, Barry County Parks & Recreation Commission and Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy have partnered to create a design plan for this property that will enhance the natural area while providing safe public access.

PROPERTY OVERVIEW

Bailey Nature Preserve is a quiet space that’s home to Assyria Township’s third largest water body. In 1999, the 160-acre parcel was donated to the City of Battle Creek with deed restrictions (Appendix A) specifying its use as a natural area open to the public. Bailey Nature Preserve is located in Assyria Township in Barry County, just 7 miles north of downtown Battle Creek.

In addition to the 30-acre lake, the site is heavily wooded and contains forested freshwater and emergent wetlands. The property is picturesque. Its wooded ridges and wide ravines lend themselves well to potential future trails systems. Groves of white cedar, eastern hemlock, and tamarack edge Metcalf Lake, giving parts of the property an “Up North” feel. The property is also a vital headwater source for Waubasca Creek and a whole chain of downstream lakes that includes Waubasca and Foster Lakes, all the way down to the Kalamazoo River.

The property is zoned as Conservation Reserve with adjacent zoning districts of Rural Residential. North Avenue borders the site to the east and Baseline Road to the south. No non-motorized trails or sidewalks exist along these roadways, so the most common mode of transportation to access the site is by car.

Observations made throughout this planning process for strategies of environmental stewardship specific to Metcalf Lake include the following:

- Invasive species removal, specifically targeting Celastrus orbiculatus, Vinca minor, and Phragmites australis;
- Invasive species management and education through signage, boot brush stations, etc;
- Replacement of non-native species with native vegetation to enhance existing habitat;
- Removal of dead/damaged trees (non-native primarily) that inhibit the viability of selective habitats and pose a hazard to areas of human traffic (trails, trailhead, overlooks, etc.);
- Conversely, maintaining existing deadwood and snags as necessary elements of the existing habitat;
- Preservation of sensitive ecosystems (waterbodies, fens, shrub wetlands), natural topography (ridge and hilltops, steep slopes, wide ravines and saddles), and undisturbed areas of the property; and
- Educational elements and programs should be a part of the park, such as engagement of school groups and providing spaces for people to learn, including interpretive signage along trails, and highlighting demonstration areas.



METCALF LAKE

Metcalf Lake is a picturesque natural water body that connects north to Waubasca Creek. The east side of the Lake can be accessed by an unimproved entry drive off of North Avenue, while steep terrain and rolling forests border it to the south. A large wetland exists adjacent to the lake and encompasses most of its western shores. Deed restrictions on the property prohibit use of the lake without personal flotation devices.

NORTH AVENUE ENTRY

The existing North Ave entry has low visibility from the road and has a gated entry. It provides the only vehicular access to Metcalf Lake with a steep, narrow dirt road. The former dock has since been removed.



BASELINE ROAD ENTRY

The existing, gated entry off Baseline Road has better sight lines and larger, more disturbed landscapes than the North Avenue entry. Woodchips were placed to create a temporary parking area in 2022.



WETLANDS

Freshwater Emergent and Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetlands are present. Wetlands encompass approximately 60 acres of the property, making navigating to the western and northern portions of the site challenging.



CABIN SITE & ROLLING FORESTS

The former cabin has since been removed but the location of this demolished structure offers exceptional views over the entire lake. Rolling topography through dense woodlands adds to the site’s beauty.



PLANNING PROCESS

Steering Committee

The process for this Design Plan was guided by a steering committee that includes members of the Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission, Barry County staff, and the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. Using feedback from the community engagement process, their institutional knowledge and understanding of the property and surrounding area were used to help craft the conceptual designs.

Purpose

A design plan for Bailey Nature Preserve will serve a variety of purposes. It will help guide local decision-making regarding:

- Long-term property investments;
- Improved public facilities;
- Habitat restoration and protection;
- Trail expansions; and
- Recreation improvements

Inventory

A site inventory was conducted first by gathering publicly available data, including data gathered from Barry County GIS on topography, parcels, streets, and rights-of-way, information downloaded from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory, and aerial imagery downloaded from ArcGIS Pro and Google Earth. No boundary or topographic surveys, or wetland delineations were completed as part of this conceptual design plan. A meander transect sampling was conducted in December of 2020 (Appendix B) and was used as a reference for inventory throughout this process. Supplemental information was gathered through site visits.

Feb, 2022	1	Site Visit #1 & Kick-Off Meeting
Mar, 2022	2	Site Visit #2
Mar-May, 2022	3	Online Community Survey
May, 2022	4	Public Day at Metcalf Lake
June, 2022	5	Focus Groups
Sept, 2022	6	Steering Committee Workshop
Oct, 2022	7	Design Plan Creation
Jan, 2023	8	Steering Committee Review
Feb, 2023	9	Draft Design Plan

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Community feedback was important to this planning process. The public engagement for the Bailey Nature Preserve encompassed a variety of outreach techniques and methods to solicit community feedback from numerous sources. A hybrid of virtual and in-person events were conducted to accomplish this purpose. A detailed analysis of these events and activities can be found in Appendix C.

Online Community Survey

March-May, 2022

An online survey was designed for members of the community to provide detailed feedback regarding the Bailey Nature Preserve.

Public Day

March-May, 2022

The public day was held at the Metcalf Lake property by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. Participants toured the property and discussed areas of interest and concern.

Focus Groups

March-May, 2022

Two focus group sessions were held with local governmental and organizational leaders and leaders from the recreation and science community to discuss opportunities, threats, and priorities for the Bailey Nature Preserve.

Online Community Survey

- A total of 458 responses were completed from the launch of the survey on March 28, 2022, through the close of the survey on May 9, 2022.
- A majority of the participants reported never visiting the Bailey Nature Preserve and had never heard of the recreational facility before. The majority of participants are park users and reside in Barry County, so it can be assumed that they have an understanding of the natural amenities and recreation needs of their community.
- Protecting the natural environment, open space, water quality, and wildlife were listed as the most important benefit of the natural areas and parks. The least important benefit was reported to be improved property value.
- Walking/hiking trails had the highest response followed by high-quality woods and wildlife observation in response to the question asking what would attract the respondent or the members of their household to visit Bailey. Restroom facilities were frequently requested as an “other” item, in addition to accessibility and quiet spaces.

Online Community Survey Continued

When asked what uses felt inappropriate at Bailey Nature Preserve, survey responses largely fell into the following major categories:

- Motorized boats and off-road vehicles
- Hunting
- Paved walkways
- Camping
- Playgrounds
- Mountain biking
- Dog walking
- Large structures or buildings

Many participants understood the need for paved areas (parking, accessible walkways) and small-scale structures (restrooms, shelters) but indicated that these should be kept to a minimum or concentrated in small development areas.



Public Day

Bailey Nature Preserve Public Day was held on Sunday, May 1, 2022 by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. A total of approximately 50 people attended the event which included passersby, neighbors, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy members, and participants from Calhoun and Barry Counties.

The attendees were asked to report their areas of interest and areas of concern regarding the use of the park and natural areas.

Areas of Interest

Create greater access to the Lake (paddling, fishing)

Provide more park amenities (benches, bathroom facilities)

Areas of Concern

Invasive species (several overwhelming parts of the property)

Habitat (Concern over powerboats on the Lake)

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted. The first group included governmental and organizational leaders, and the second group included nature, recreation, and science leaders. A total of 20 people attended the focus group events.

The governmental and organizational leaders focused on broader topics, such as building upon the existing character of the site, opportunities for regional draws to the property, and partnerships.

Nature, recreation, and science leaders zoomed-in to more detailed discussions, talking about connections, learning, and education, invasive species clean-up, trail accessibility, boardwalks to the wetlands, canoe and kayak links, and the desired rustic nature of any recreational build-out to occur.

Steering Committee Workshop

A review meeting was held with the steering committee to discuss the results of the community engagement campaign. A design workshop session was held with the steering committee to begin taking the feedback gathered from the public and sketching ideas out onto paper. Two stations were provided during the workshop, one that focused on trails and the other on site amenities.

Pictures of the activities were taken to document this feedback and influenced the subsequent conceptual designs.



Bailey Nature Preserve is a 160-acre forested parcel that features rolling hills and a sizable lake. The illustrated concept focuses on connecting people to nature at Bailey Nature Preserve. Preservation of the environment is key to this design. Areas of disturbance, such as the existing park entrances and former cabin site, are reimagined as trailheads that support school trips, gathering spaces with exceptional views to the lake, and an accessible location for non-motorized water connection and wildlife observation.

Three design concepts have been provided for Bailey Nature Preserve. These concepts are defined based on anticipated level of investment, offering a menu designed approach with multiple options for greater successes. The low level of investment illustrates the simplest design with rustic amenities while the high level of investment shows a more developed layout. Each level of investment builds upon the last, so it is envisioned that the low level can provide basic services to make the property safe, open, and more accessible, while the medium and high investment levels show a vision for expanding upon those services to provide further accessibility and opportunities for learning and engagement with nature.

Bailey Nature Preserve

Concept
1 | 3

PPN 01-031-020-00 | Investment Level 1
Assyria Township, MI | 03/28/23

LOW INVESTMENT LEVEL

Focus on safe access and parking.

- Baseline Road parking area - gravel parking lot
- Entrance sign on Baseline Road
- Gravel area at overlook with benches
- Portable restroom (Porta-John)
- Kiosk (Eagle Scouts)
- Trail signage (wayfinding)
- Clearing vegetation around North Avenue drive entrance
- Little to no other improvements at lake access
- Gates at North Avenue and Baseline Road entrances
- Trail benches

~ Hiking Trails (0-10%)

With support from the Bailey family.



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Bailey Nature Preserve

Concept
2 | 3

PPN 01-031-020-00
Assyria Township, MI

Investment Level 2
03/28/23

MEDIUM INVESTMENT LEVEL

Focus on safe access and parking, overlooks, accessible elements.

- Entrance sign on Baseline Road
- Portable restroom (Porta-John)
- Kiosk (Eagle Scouts)
- Basic improvements to drive and parking at Baseline Road and North Avenue entrances (gravel)
- Gates at Baseline Road and North Avenue entrances
- Clearing vegetation around North Avenue drive entrance
- Small dock at lake
- Small sign at North Avenue entrance
- Accessible trail from Baseline Road parking lot to pavilion/overlook area
- Pavilion at the overlook
- Gravel walking area at overlook with benches
- Trail signage (wayfinding)
- Trail benches (increased number from Low Investment Level)

Accessible Pathways*

Accessible Trails (0-5%)

Hiking Trails (0-10%)

*In this plan, accessible pathways are considered aggregate walking surfaces that connect elements within a developed space, and are not necessarily part of a designated trail.

With support from the Bailey family.



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Bailey Nature Preserve

Concept
3 | 3

PPN 01-031-020-00 | Investment Level 3
Assyria Township, MI | 03/28/23

HIGH INVESTMENT LEVEL

- Primary trailhead:
 - Enhanced entry drive, vehicular drop-off, parking, restroom, small picnic and seating area, park information kiosk, trail access
- Metcalf Lake access:
 - Enhanced entry drive, parking, restroom, park information kiosk, trail access
- Park overlook and wetland access:
 - Pavilion, picnic and seating area, viewing areas
- Wetland boardwalk
- Hiking trails
- Lake overlook (photo spot) & nature observation blind
- Kayak launch and lake overlook
- Footbridges, as needed

Accessible Pathways* Accessible Trails Hiking Trails Wetland Boardwalk

*In this plan, accessible pathways are considered aggregate walking surfaces that connect elements within a developed space, and are not necessarily part of a designated trail.

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Bailey Nature Preserve

TRAIL DESIGNATIONS

Reflective of the High Investment Level concept

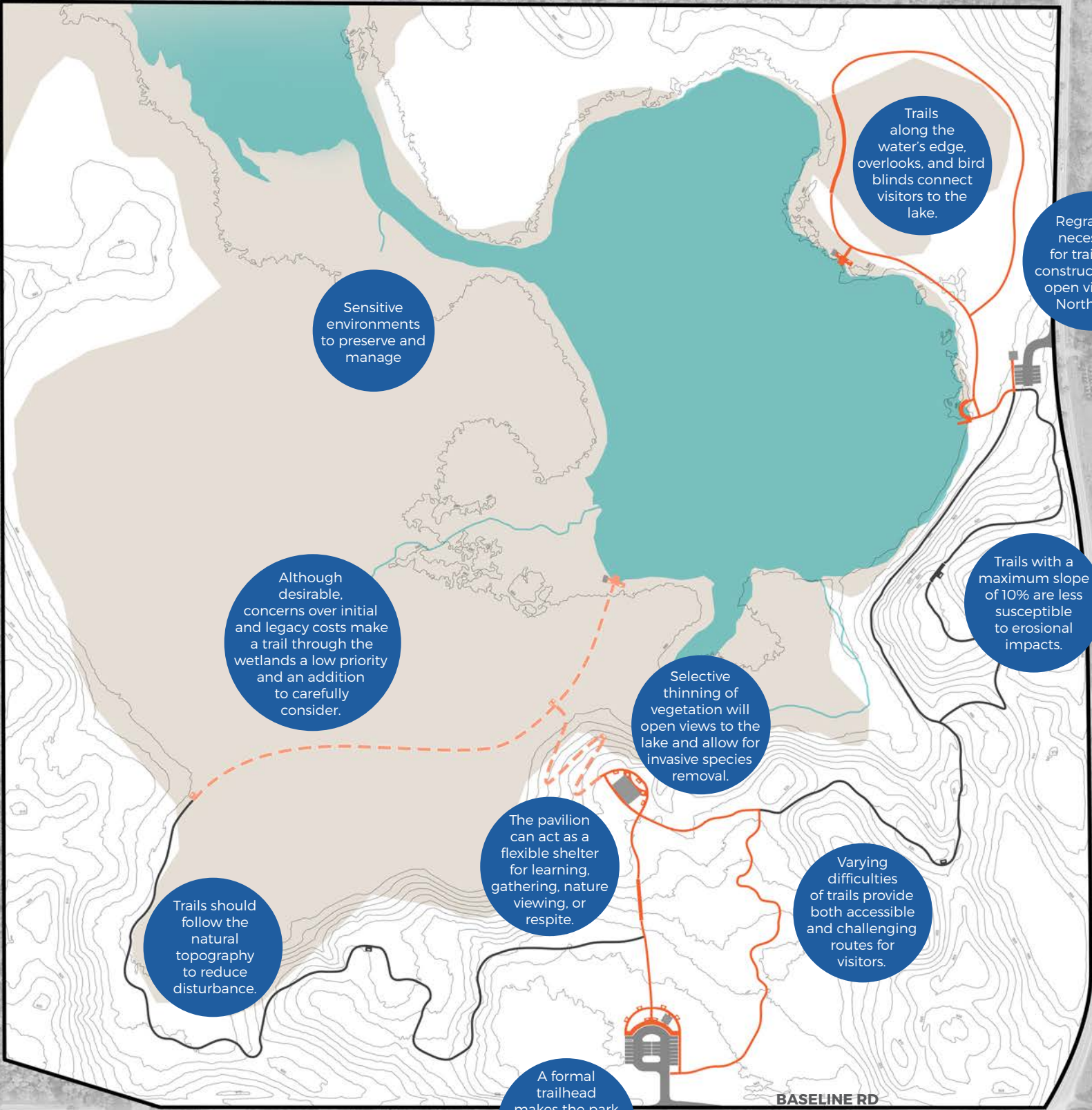
LEGEND

- Approximate Site Area = ±160 acres
- Approximate Wetland Area = ±60 acres
- Approximate Water Body Area = ±25 acres
- Approximate Trail Length = ±2 miles (excluding future trail & boardwalk)
-  Aggregate Trails & Pathways 0-5% (accessible) = 0.9 mile
-  Compacted Earth Trails 0-10% = 1.1 miles
-  Wetland Boardwalk (accessible) = 245 feet
-  Potential Future Trail & Boardwalk (accessible) = 0.4 mile
-  Approximate Wetlands (National Wetlands Inventory)

With support from the Bailey family.



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GENERALIZED COSTS

The immediate goal of this design plan is to make Bailey Nature Preserve safe, open, and accessible. Elements of the concept would likely be built over a period of many years. Priorities include providing basic services for visitors, including parking, places for waste, and rustic trails. Potential phases of build-out and their associated costs for the High Investment Level concept are provided in Appendix D. Potential unit costs for key elements of the conceptual design are illustrated below. They do not include costs for contingencies, mobilization, clearing, earthwork, or engineering. These costs are generalizations informed by research, comparative projects, and past experience, and will vary based on market influences, site conditions, future design of specific features, and final engineered plans.



Trails

The three levels of investment for Metcalf Lake propose differing trail surfaces and build-out depending on trail use and available funding. Ideally, paved trails would be used in high activity areas like around parking areas and at the overlook, compacted aggregate for accessible trails, and compacted earth for rustic hiking trails.

Approximate Cost: \$63 per linear foot of paved trail (8’ wide), \$52 per linear foot of aggregate trail with geogrid support (8’ wide), and \$14 per linear foot of compacted earth trail (5’ wide)

Benches

Rest areas are shown throughout the designs and include benches located along the trails and at key points, like trail heads and overlooks.

Approximate Cost: \$1,000 per bench

Pavilion

The pavilion is shown centrally in the park, overlooking Metcalf Lake. The cost of this structure can vary greatly depending on size, architectural elements, and desired utilities (electricity, water, etc.).

Approximate Cost Range: \$50,000 to \$250,000

Restroom Building

In the long-term, a restroom at each trailhead is desired. Portable restrooms (Porta John) would likely be utilized in the early phases with the long-term goal of a permanent rustic restroom building. Water and sewer do not exist nearby, so this facility will likely need to include a well and septic or operate as a vault toilet that will need to be regularly emptied.

Approximate Cost: \$150,000 per restroom building, \$18,000 per septic system



Kayak Launch

Enhancing access to Metcalf Lake is a priority of this plan. Improvements to the existing drive off of North Avenue and a kayak launch will greatly increase the ability to use Metcalf Lake for water recreation.

Approximate Cost: \$55,000 per launch, \$9 per square foot of aggregate drive/parking lot



Signage

Increasing visibility to the park will inform the community that Metcalf Lake is open to the public. Entry signage at the trailheads and internal trail signage in the form of simple posts will be important as the park is built-out.

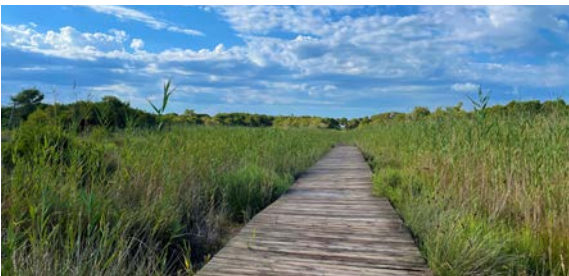
Approximate Cost: \$10,000 per entry sign, \$5,000 per kiosk, \$200 per post trail sign



Boardwalk

The High Investment Level includes boardwalks that cross/provide access to wetlands. These systems vary in cost depending on sub-surface conditions and type of boardwalk needed.

Approximate Cost: \$550 per linear foot





Barry County Trails Master Plan

Completed in partnership with



BLUE ZONES®
ACTIVATE
BARRY COUNTY



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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

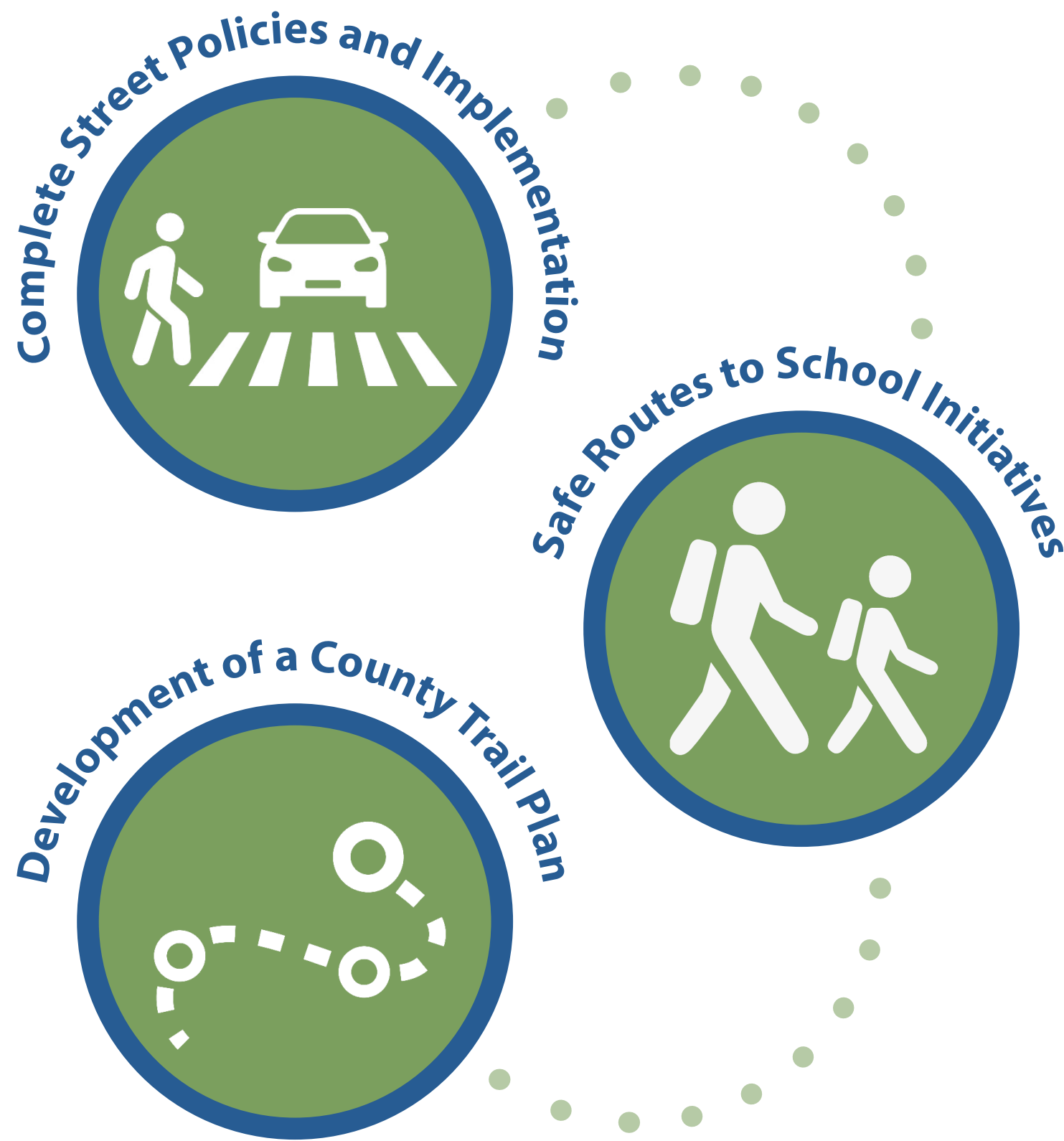
In September of 2019, Barry County launched the initiative Activate Barry County along with Blue Zones to create a healthier environment so that all residents of Barry County experience greater well-being, and live healthier, better, longer lives. A central tenet of that work is to create settings where people are likely to get physical activity as a part of their daily lives.

One of the simplest ways to do that is through walking or biking - collectively termed "active transportation" - for routine tasks and travel, as well as recreation and leisure.

The development of the Barry County Trail Plan is the result of the substantial community and expert engagement, which stemmed from the Activate Barry County Blue Zones initiative. Representatives of the Blue Zones National Built Environment team visited Barry County in the fall of 2019, touring key sites throughout the county and engaging a wide range of stakeholders for insights on what would help increase routine physical activity and active transportation for county residents. As part of this work, a virtual planning summit was convened in summer of 2020 in which community partners explored approaches to advance health through the built environment.



Three priorities identified through this summit process were:



PURPOSE

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

A master plan is a long-term, dynamic planning document that takes existing data & conditions as well as community input to support decision making for future development. It gives communities a reference point when making decisions on their built-environment. This county-wide non-motorized trail plan will complement

municipal trail planning throughout the County, including the Barry County Parks and Recreation Plan and Barry County Master Plan. The Barry County Trail Plan will effectively serve as a foundation for a collective vision, future investments, and funding opportunities for a county-wide and regional non-motorized trail system.



Barry County has the good fortune to have preserved its historic rural and agricultural character. The County's vision of vibrant city, town, and village centers surrounded by protected open space, forests, wetlands, and working farmlands was often described by participants throughout this planning process. A robust, diverse, and connected network of trails has been consistently identified as a critical element in allowing residents to enjoy the many benefits of these settings while helping to preserve the county's character and protect even the most sensitive environments.

This plan identifies a series of specific recommendations for action that will continue to advance this vision. The County Trail Plan will be incorporated into Barry County's comprehensive master planning process that is scheduled for completion in late 2022.

From the onset of the Activate Barry County initiative, residents made clear that a diverse network of trails throughout the county is critical to maintaining the desired character of the county and quality of life for residents. This is true for both urban and developed areas as well as open space and natural areas. A theme throughout this planning process was that the very best trail system is comprised of a range of trail types spread throughout the county to accommodate users from across the broad spectrum of age, income, interests, and abilities.

An ideal system would accommodate everyone from serious cyclists to mountain bikers to long-distance hikers. There would also be areas for cross country skiers to birders to fishermen to fitness walkers as well as recreating families and active commuters. Ideally there will be a network of trails allowing residents to bike to work, walk to school, or to shop. Several broad benefits of a diverse and connected network of trails were identified during the planning process.



BACKGROUND + NEED

RECREATION & LEISURE

Many residents indicated they feel one of the very best ways to enjoy the beauty of Barry County is along its trails. Trails allow residents to amble along remote sections of the Thornapple River, hike to improbable glacial erratics on the North Country Trail, or bike to a favorite fishing spot, whether out in the country or near the downtowns of Middleville, Hastings, or Nashville.



These findings are consistent with research from the National Recreation and Parks Association and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancyⁱⁱ which identify trails as a highly valued asset by residents in, and visitors to, trail communities. It is important to recognize that the more diverse a trail network, the greater the variety of residents who can enjoy utilizing the trails.

The variety of trails identified and recommended for further development in this plan is important to assure that residents of all ages, abilities, and incomes can enjoy the recreational and health benefits of the trails. Paved sections of trail near population centers (and that meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) design standards) are particularly important to assure that older adults and those with mobility limitations can explore the trails. For example, sections of the Thornapple Trail linking Middleville, Hastings, Nashville, and Delton are particularly important in providing this access.

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

The US National Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that all American Adults participate in a minimum of 150 minutes/week of moderate physical activity for health benefits.ⁱⁱⁱ Averaging just 30-minutes of walking five days a week will not only reduce risk for a host of chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, Type II diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis, and a growing list of cancers, but it will also reduce stress, improve mental health, and reduce risk for dementia in old age. Although far too few Americans meet those guidelines (certainly less than half, and perhaps as few as 20% of adults)^{iv}, walking is one of Americans' favorite ways of getting physical activity. This aligns with findings of the Activate Barry County Blue Zones initiative, through which many

stakeholders indicate an interest in walking for health on trails in the county. Therefore, walking on trails presents an exceptionally appealing opportunity for increasing population physical activity and public health.^v It requires no formal training or participation structure, little if any specialized equipment, no cost to the individual if trails are public assets, and a varied experience that allows people to calibrate their effort to their own fitness level and desires; one can saunter for 30-minutes on an in-town section of paved trail, or hike all day along a footpath of the North Country Trail. This is borne out by numerous studies indicating that the presence of trails is well correlated with increased physical activity among park visitors.^{vi, viii}



Trails can provide an essential and uniquely equitable component of Barry County's active transportation system. The Rails-to-Trails conservancy, in a report that makes the case for increased public investment in walking and bicycling connectivity, states the following:

“Active transportation networks provide more people—such as children, seniors, those with disabilities and those without economic means—with inclusivity and connection to not only destinations and opportunities, but their communities and society at large.”^{viii}

For example, if significant numbers of students walked and biked on an improved connection from the Thornapple Trail to Fuller Elementary school in Nashville, it could help alleviate traffic congestion that, at school dismissal, will often back traffic out to Casgrove Road and M-66. Similarly, employers such as Bradford White (located along the trail) might encourage employees to consider active commuting, providing improved employee health, reduced demand for on-site employee parking, and less traffic congestion at shift changes. Improved trail access can also ease parking demand in community centers; for example, if more people walk and bike to events in Tyden Park or Thornapple Plaza in Hastings there is less competition for area parking.

The Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail spine route through the county, as well as connecting spurs and links recommended in this plan, will provide significant opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle access to community centers, major employers, schools, and parks.

BENEFITS OF TRAILS

ECONOMY

Outdoor recreation now outpaces the oil and gas industry in economic impact. The outdoor recreation industry is built on trails, making trails an important economic driver.



EMPLOYMENT

Trails create jobs. Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects create 8–12 jobs per \$1 million of spending. Road infrastructure projects create 7 jobs per \$1 million of expenditures.



HEALTH

Trails boost physical activity, creating measurable and substantial savings in healthcare costs.



RESIDENTIAL

Trails both drive tourism, and make communities a more desirable place to live, which in turn increases nearby property values.



<https://www.americantrails.org/economic-benefits>

A growing body of research has identified trails as beneficial to local and regional economies.^{ix} Many assume that this benefit is restricted to the commercial activity that accompanies travel and tourism associated with visitors who come to Barry County to walk, ride, or otherwise enjoy the trails. And this benefit will be increasingly realized as networks are completed, connected, and marked and identified for users.

Many additional economic benefits will be associated with a comprehensive trail system in the county. Home values tend to be higher proximate to trails, and homes near trails tend to sell more quickly. This price premium yields higher property tax revenues for communities with trails.



The public health benefits of a more physically active population, as well as environmental health benefits of cleaner air and water can, over time, help reduce collective health care costs in the region.



Trails can also benefit local businesses by facilitating greater access for a wider array of patrons and employees, who are able to walk and bike to their destinations. An example would be the increased access provided by the trail to Middleville's downtown district, farmers market, and other activities at the pavilion. This impact can be even greater if there are on-street pedestrian and bicycle facilities connecting to trails, by providing an even more comprehensive active transportation network. Studies have shown increases in retail activity and employment on more Complete Streets that accommodate all travel modes.

A growing body of evidence suggests that the quality-of-life benefits of trails create communities with better employee recruitment and retention, which therefore creates greater desirability for businesses hoping to hire and retain those employees.^{xi}

ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY

A robust network of trail corridors provides an array of benefits for Barry County's environmental health. Trails can provide crucial green/wildlife corridors with many benefits to their surrounding areas. This is particularly important as communities work to improve their resilience to climate change. Obvious benefits include the reduction in harmful emissions through the expansion of non-motorized transportation alternatives as well as the carbon capture and cooling benefits associated with greater foliage and tree canopy. Well planned trail networks will promote the use of non-polluting transportation options such as bicycles, scooters, and walking.



Environmental Benefits of Trails

Expanding non-polluting transportation options

Providing wildlife habitat corridors for natural wildlife movement

Natural & cultural history preservation & interpretation opportunities, which can help with community education around critical environmental issues

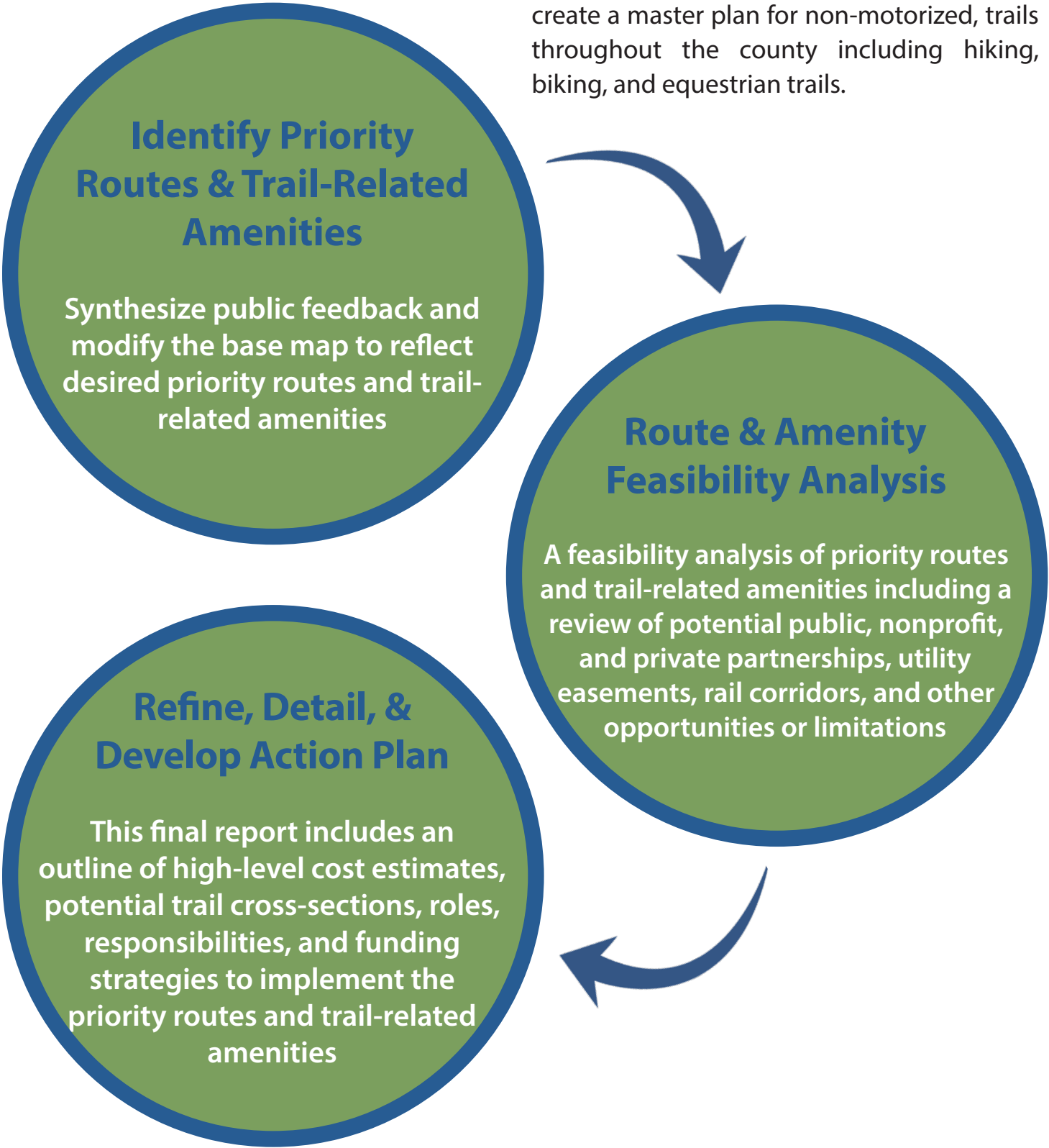
Air quality and heat reduction benefits of enhanced green corridors

Often provides a natural buffer to development or watercourses.



PLANNING PROCESS

Goals of the Planning Study:



After reviewing the initial feedback regarding the importance of trails to the health and vitality of Barry County, the Built Environment Committee prioritized developing a comprehensive, county-wide trail plan. In 2021, the Committee hired a consultant to create a master plan for non-motorized, trails throughout the county including hiking, biking, and equestrian trails.

Barry County, with the assistance of Blue Zones Activate, West Michigan Trails, The Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail Association, and Wightman & Associates, conducted focused public outreach to engage Barry County residents on their opinions and ideas regarding the trail systems.

A stakeholder advisory group was formed to help guide this process. The committee also sought input through an interactive website.

The online feedback resources included a public survey comprised of selection, rating, and short answer questions; a trail point map to help indicate specific areas of opportunity or concern; and a proposed trail map that allowed respondents to draw a trail segment or link they would like to see implemented. These online tools were available from November 3rd through the end of 2021 and were utilized by nearly 260 respondents.

Input was also collected at a booth at the County Fair where information was gathered from residents on current trail uses, needs, and desired connections. This in-person outreach was conducted at a pop-up booth at the County Fair from July 19 through July 24, 2021 by the Blue Zones, Barry County Parks Board, and Wightman teams. The booth provided educational materials regarding Activate Barry County Blue Zones and the trail master plan. A mapping activity was provided that encouraged residents to place pushpins along areas of the trail they use and write sticky notes for further feedback and ideas.

The community feedback provided insight as to how people use the trail system, where they are using it most often, and the areas in which they would like to see further development.



Participants in the June 2021 Blue Zones “marquee” summit

STAKEHOLDERS

The project team consisting of representatives from Barry County, West Michigan Trails, Wightman, and Activate Barry County met monthly throughout the planning process. Throughout these activities stakeholder advisory meetings were held to present new information, assess feedback that was being collected, and to plan next steps. Stakeholders range from residents and trail enthusiasts to Michigan Department of Transportation and National Parks Service officials. The multi-disciplinary nature of the stakeholder group allowed for understanding and context, innovative ideas, and critical conversations that helped continuously move the trails plan forward.

Meeting	Location	Date
1	Marquee Meeting	June 2020
2	Stakeholder Meeting	July 14, 2021
3	Barry County Fair	July 19 - 24, 2021
4	Stakeholder Meeting	January 26, 2022



January 26, 2022 Stakeholder Meeting

Stakeholder	Affiliation/Organization
Catherine Getty	Trail Plan Co-Champion, Barry County Commissioner, County Parks and Recreation, Thornapple Area Parks & Recreation Commission
Jennifer Antel	Trail Plan Co-Champion, West Michigan Trails
Mark Fenton	Blue Zones Built Environment Expert
Dan Patton	Barry County Parks and Recreation
Patrick Lydon	National Park Service: Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program
Jon Sporer	Barry County YMCA
Dan King	City of Hastings
Rick Moore	Barry County Parks and Recreation Board, PHTT association
Chelsey Foster	Trail enthusiast
Jane Norton	North Country Trail, Chief Noonday Chapter
Joseph Jandernoa	Michigan DNR, Yankee Springs Recreation Area
Lucas Galiviz	Michigan DNR, Yankee Springs Recreation Area
Ron Welton	Staff, Barry County Parks & Recreation
Brian Green	Nashville area resident
Tom Devries	Village of Middleville
Jennifer Heinzman	Barry County Chamber and Economic Development Alliance
Frank Fiala	Barry County Road Commissioner / Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission
Bobbie Taffee	Trail enthusiast
Staff	City of Hastings Department of Public Works
Tyler Kent	MDOT, Transportation Planner
Cynthia Krupp	MDOT, Transportation Planner
Josh DeBruyn	MDOT, Pedestrian and Bicycle Coordinator/Specialist
Dave Bee	West Michigan Regional Planning Commission
Jill Sell	Michigan DNR, Southwest Michigan Trail Specialist
Debbie Jensen	Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission, Trails Committee
Chuck and Mary Schira	Yankee Springs residents - M179 trail planning
Mickey Bittner	Wightman Consultant - County Wide Trail Plan
Ben Baker	Wightman Consultant - County Wide Trail Plan
Sarah Nelson	Barry Conservation District, Barry County Parks & Recreation
Allison Troyer Wiswell	Activate Barry County Blue Zones, Director

TAKEAWAYS AND THEMES

Some of the repeated ideas and needs that were understood from the public and stakeholder feedback included completing The Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail spine across the county, increasing trail connections to community destinations (schools, parks, business districts, neighborhoods, etc.), furthering development of a bicycle pedestrian trail along M-179 in Yankee Springs, and increasing safety measures and infrastructure for pedestrian and bicyclist routes and connections on or near roads.

Increased trail connections and access to services such as restrooms and drinking water were the most requested specific improvements for trails. Updated connections and maintenance, particularly at The Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail (Middleville and Hastings) and Yankee Springs, were noted as the most needed trail improvements from the public input. Connectivity, wayfinding, and trail safety were consistently addressed as needs and opportunities throughout the public and stakeholder engagement process.

CONNECTIVITY



SAFETY



WAYFINDING



Walkability Audit led by Blue Zones Expert, Mark Fenton.

TRAIL TYPES + AMENITIES

TRAIL CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE

Trails are constructed in a variety of ways, whether these are typical sidewalks or larger regional trails. The most cost-effective way to add a non-motorized facility within a road right-of-way is in conjunction with the adjacent roadway being constructed or maintained. If a roadway is being reconstructed, it's much more efficient to widen the shoulders, add bike lanes, or side paths to add additional non-motorized facilities than it is to construct those features as a separate project.

Many communities require new developments or businesses to include sidewalks as they are built and trails can also be a part of the construction requirements, depending on the situation.



Trails outside of road rights-of-way can be constructed in various ways, but typically aren't part of a road project. These projects take years of planning and often use existing corridors such as utility corridors, abandoned rail corridors or other rights-of-way. These are often spearheaded by municipalities, park departments, and trail organizations.

Like all infrastructure, trails have a lifespan and need to be maintained. This can vary from adding additional aggregate and regrading unpaved trails, sealing, or repaving asphalt trails, or replacing concrete. It is important to understand the maintenance requirements for trails and have maintenance and repair as part of the budget by the trail's owner.



Consideration for ongoing maintenance and operations cost will be taken into account for trails support and funding. See the following table for estimates on maintenance requirements and frequencies.

Maintenance Task	Frequency
Trash Collection	Weekly
Pruning	1 time / year
Crack Sealing	1 time / year
Tree Root Cutting	As Needed
Aggregate Grading	1 time / year
Mowing	3-4 times / year
HMA Seal Coat	1 time / 3-5 years
HMA Mill & Resurface	1 time/ 30 years

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The main trails through the county are The Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail, which runs from the northwest to the east through the northern half of the county, and the North Country hiking trail, which runs north and south through the western third of the county. In addition to these longer trail corridors, there are self-contained trails at Yankee Springs Recreation Area, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, and City of Hasting Hammond Hill Park. There is also a small spur of the Jordan Lake Trail in the Northeast portion of the county. See the existing trail map on page 32/33 to provide context.

The Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail is approximately 50% complete through the County, with the largest gaps immediately east and west of Hastings and another gap north of Middleville. The survey and feedback listed completing this trail through the county as the highest priority. In addition, spurs connecting the main trail to parks and facilities along the trail, such as Historic Charlton Park and Hammond Hill were highly desired.

Connecting Yankee Springs to Gun Lake and communities to the west, as well as The Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail, were also highly requested. In addition, a trail from Hastings running southwest



TRAIL TYPES

There are a variety of different trails types to choose from when planning trails. The selection of which trail type to use is critical to the operation of the trail, as well as the roadway that it might be along.

Two critical ideas to keep in mind when planning a trail for bicyclists, according to the American Association of State Highway

and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), is continuity and consistency for all users. It is important that the proposed trail will not encourage or require bicyclists or motorists to operate in a manner that is inconsistent with the rules of the road. Considering the needs of both the motorists and the bicyclists are equally as important and should be carefully evaluated.



Shared Use Path/Trails

Separated Trail, with Dirt/Gravel Shoulders

A separated trail, also known as a shared use path/trail, allows users to be physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space (dirt or gravel shoulders) or barrier, either within the road right-of-way or within an independent trail right-of-way.

Separated shared use paths/trails may be used by bikers, pedestrians, skaters, wheelchair users, runners, and other non-motorized users depending on the surface type. In some cases, this trail type couple be separate and at a slightly different elevation than the roadway, providing a sufficient space between the road travel way and the trail travel way.

According to American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), shared use paths can provide a recreational opportunity or, in some instances, can serve as direct commute routes if flow between motor vehicles and pedestrians is minimized.

Shared use paths and trails can be paved (asphalt/cement) or unpaved (crushed limestone/aggregate/asphalt, etc.). Trail surfacing decisions should be well researched to consider the likely users of the trail, construction costs, long term maintenance plans, grading needs, etc. ADA compliance will also be important when considering surface material. Unpaved shared use paths/trails can be a lower cost, natural alternative to paved trails especially for long sections outside village or city limits.



TRAIL TYPES

Roadside Trail, Shoulder, or Sidepaths

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Grand Region Non-motorized Trail Plan describes sidepaths as a specific type of shared use path that runs adjacent to a roadway. They are setback from the edge of roadway or have a physical barrier between the path and roadway. MDOT cautions that sidepaths may not be safe for bikers depending on the frequency of curb cuts due to intersection conflicts.



On-Road Links

On-road links are typically used in urban areas where there are higher levels of bicycle traffic. There are a variety of different types of on-road links related to bicycle lanes. In general, a bicycle lane is a marked space along a length of roadway designated for use for bicyclists.

According to AASHTO, bike lanes are intended to delineate the right of way assigned to bicyclists and motorists, and to provide for more predictable movements by each.

A buffered bicycle lane is a bike lane with additional buffer space between the bike lane and the auto lane or parked cars used on high-volume or high-speed roads or roadways with high parking turnover. A contra flow bicycle lane is a bicycle lane separated by a yellow centerline marking on a street with one-way motor vehicle traffic, to allow contra-flow bicycle traffic. Utilizing bike lanes on a roadway creates a safe and comfortable area within the road right-of-way for bicyclists to exist and travel within. Another aspect of on-road links are bike boulevards.



A bike boulevard incorporates several design elements to accommodate bicyclists. These may include, but are not limited to: stop signs on side streets to allow free flow of bicyclists, traffic circles to slow motor vehicles, wayfinding signs for bicyclists, shared lane markings where appropriate, crossing improvements at major streets, and traffic diverts for motor vehicles. Every street is different, so the type of on-road link needs to be evaluated to best fit each scenario.

Specialty Trails (Horse, Mountain Bike, Foot Paths, etc.)

There are a variety of specialty trails, which include but aren't limited to equestrian trails, mountain biking trails, and foot paths. It is typical that specialty trails are unpaved and separate from roadways. Specialty trails should be carefully designed and maintained to plan for surface drainage and minimize erosion.



Image Source: www.secondwavemedia.com/concentrate/features/mountainbiking05262021.aspx



Image Source: www.fs.usda.gov/activity/dbnf/recreation/horseriding-camping

TRAIL TYPES

PAVED COUNTY ROAD SHOULDER ACCESS TO TRAILS

A repeated theme throughout the community feedback process for this plan was the need to provide safe access to trails, particularly for those who cannot or choose not to drive, but who would like to walk or bicycle to a nearby shared use path/trail. In more developed areas, infrastructure such as sidewalks and on-street bicycle lanes may provide safe trail connections for many possible users. But in more rural areas, the roads are the only available routes to a shared use path/trail.

There are numerous locations where county roads could provide access to trails for nearby residents, but only if users feel comfortable enough walking or biking along those roadways. One approach is to provide a paved and marked 4- to 5-foot wide shoulder along county roads in areas that provide access points to trails.

- The initial recommended goal is to target roads within one mile of shared use path/trail crossings. This is roughly a 15- to 20-minute walk, or 5- to 10-minute bike ride
- Eventually the goal is to expand to areas within three miles of shared use path/trail crossings (a 12- to 20-minute bike ride)

Although there is a cost to include additional finished surface on county roadways, there are numerous safety, performance, and maintenance benefits recognized by roadway management agencies across the country which is creating a movement toward more routinely paving shoulders even in rural areas.

The Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks guide of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA-HEP-17-024, 2016; www.ruraldesignguide.com) identifies the following specific benefits associated with paved shoulders for bicycle and pedestrian use:

- Improves bicyclist experiences on roadways with higher speeds or traffic volumes
- Provides a stable surface off the roadway for pedestrians and bicyclists to use when sidewalks are not provided
- Reduces pedestrian “walking along roadway” crashes
- Can reduce “bicyclist struck from behind” crashes, which represent a significant portion of rural road crashes
- Provides advantages for all roadway users, by providing space for bicyclists, pedestrians, and motor vehicles



Benefits to Adding Shoulders to County Roads

Based on guidance from the American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials (AASHTO), standard width paved shoulders provide benefits in three important areas: safety, capacity, and maintenance. Priority should be given to seek and allocate funding to make Barry County’s roads safer, more efficient, and less costly to maintain by routinely paving more shoulders.

1. Safety

Highways with paved shoulders have reduced accident rates, as paved shoulders:

- Provide space to make evasive maneuvers;
- Accommodate driver error;
- Add a recovery area to regain control of a vehicle;
- Provide space for disabled vehicles;
- Provide increased sight distance for through vehicles and for vehicles entering the roadway (such as in cut sections or brushy areas in rural areas);
- Provide lateral clearance to roadside objects such as guardrail, signs, and poles;
- Contribute to driving ease and reduced driver strain;
- Reduce passing conflicts between motor vehicles and bicyclists and pedestrians;
- Make the crossing pedestrian more visible to motorists;
- Provide for storm water discharge farther from the travel lanes, reducing hydroplaning. This also reduces splash and spray to following vehicles and nearby pedestrians and bicyclists

2. Capacity

Roadways with paved shoulders can carry more mixed or multiple use traffic, as paved shoulders:

- Provide more intersection and safe stopping sight distance;
- Allow for easier exiting from travel lanes to side streets and roads (also a safety benefit);
- Provide greater effective turning radius for trucks;
- Provide space for off-tracking of truck’s rear wheels in curved sections;
- Provide space for disabled vehicles, mail delivery, and bus stops;
- Provide space for bicyclists to ride at their own pace and not delay vehicles;
- Provide space between motor vehicles and pedestrians, increasing drivers’ and pedestrians’ level of comfort

3. Maintenance

Highways with paved shoulders are easier to maintain, as paved shoulders:

- Provide structural support to the pavement;
- Discharge water further from the travel lanes, reducing the undermining of the base and subgrade;
- Provide space for maintenance operations and snow storage;
- Help to direct run-off away from streams/rivers, and towards storm drains
- Provide space for portable maintenance signs;
- Facilitate painting of fog lines

AMENITIES

(Trailheads, restrooms, drinking water, signage, etc.)

Highly visible and friendly trailheads and trail access points are necessary to ensure trails are inviting and accessible to residents and visitors alike. Trailheads help orient users to the local area and can be designed to fit with the natural and cultural surroundings. There are many opportunities for safe, clear trail access points along Barry County Trails that will help connect residents and visitors alike to the trail.

The following are recommendations to consider as trail project move into the design phase. The opportunities listed are recommendations and not be misconstrued as final decisions. Each of the following categories will need further consideration during the design and engineering phases. Communities should consider the feasibility of the potential trailhead facilities and trailhead locations as well signage design, location, and quantity when considering trail improvements.

Trail support facilities include trailheads, directional, regulatory and interpretive signage, and other trail amenities (e.g. site furnishings, trash cans, lighting). Trail support facilities should allow for safe, easy access to the trails while also helping to connect trail users to other attractions in the area.



Trailheads

Trailheads should be provided at locations that give the greatest range of users access to the trail network. Particularly important locations are in or near population centers (cities, towns, and villages), and at or near major roadway crossings. It may be better for trailhead facilities, such as a parking area and information kiosks, to be located on a secondary road near to a major crossing rather than on a high traffic roadway, simply for ease and safety of access.

Specific candidate locations for trailheads along the Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail within Barry County include a location in the northwest end of Hastings (Rutland Township property, Walmart, Aldi's Grocery), and within the Village of Nashville.

Wayfinding Signage

Community wayfinding guide signs are part of a coordinated and continuous system of signs that direct tourists and other road users to key civic, cultural, visitor, and recreational attractions

and other destinations within a city or a local urbanized or downtown area. In 2022 & 2023 West Michigan Trails is developing a unified signage system guide for all West Michigan non-motorized, multi-use trails. Although this guide will be for the entire West Michigan region, each community will have an opportunity to brand their signs to fit their community. This guide will be incorporated into the Barry County Trail Plan when completed.

Volunteer Efforts

Friends & other Grassroot groups play a key role in trail support. A "Friends of" group is a group of people who have an interest in trails in Barry County and volunteer their time, services, and support to enhance the trail corridor. These groups often attend to low-skill maintenance tasks, community outreach and coordination of volunteer efforts. Current Groups include The Thornapple Trail Association, Friends of the Barry County Parks and Trails, and the Chief Noonday Chapter of the North Country Trail Association.

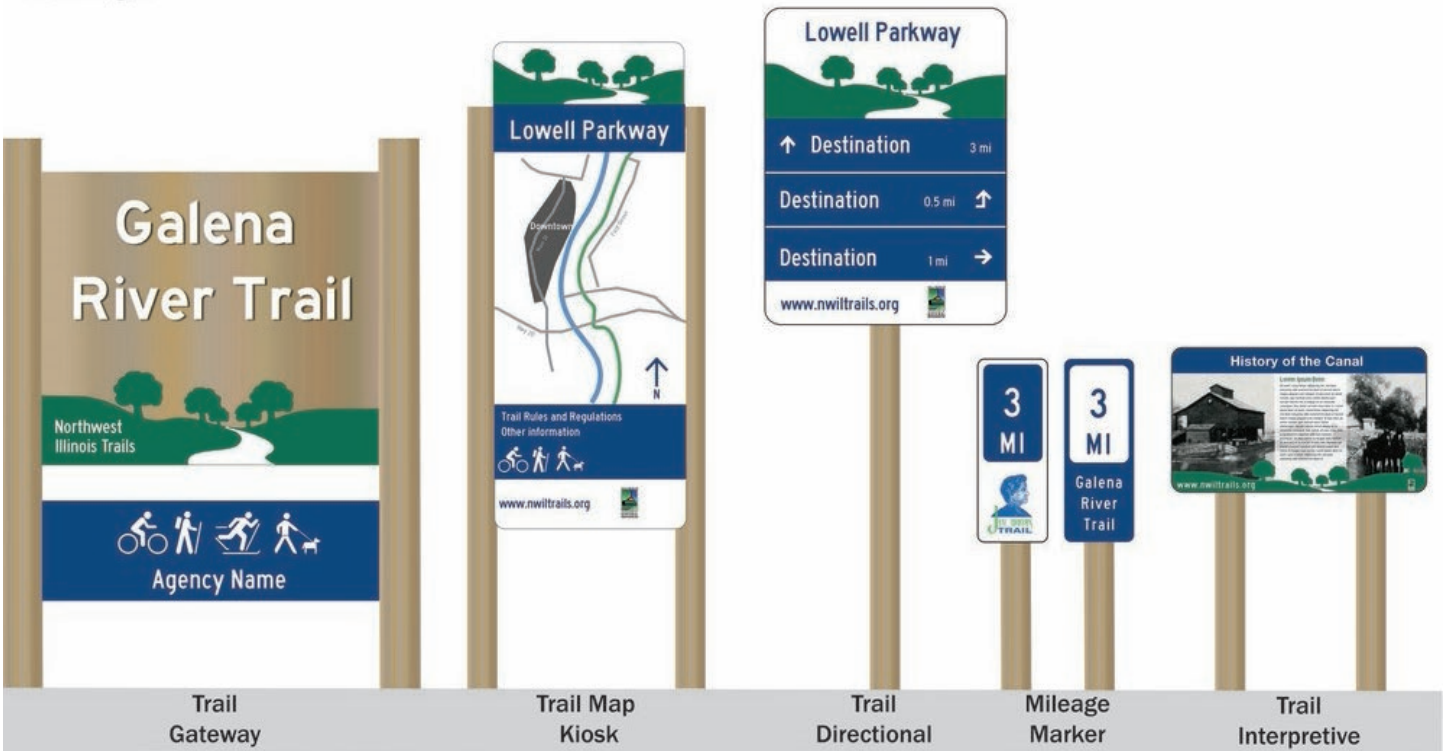


Image Source: wmitrails.org

RECOMMENDATIONS + IMPLEMENTATION

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives were identified through community and stakeholder input.

1

Complete the Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail main spine across the County. Priority segments of this corridor include the following:

- 1.1 A connection from the paved section of the trail extending southeast from Caledonia to the trail in Middleville
- 1.2 The incomplete sections of trail from Middleville to Hastings
- 1.3 The incomplete sections of the trail from Hastings to Nashville
- 1.4 A portion of trail from Nashville toward the Maple Valley Schools complex

2

Make more trail connections to local destinations. There are numerous opportunities for short links to connect the Paul Henry-Thornapple trail spine to community destinations such as schools, parks and green spaces, retail and business districts, and residential areas. Examples of these links include:

- 2.1 Links and wayfinding from the Hastings Riverwalk to the Hammond Hill open space and trail system
- 2.2 A connection to the Fuller Elementary School in Nashville, including an improved high visibility crossing of Fuller Road (M-66)
- 2.3 Links to trailheads for the North Country Trail

3

Develop and implement standard wayfinding and signage to guide residents and visitors safely and efficiently to and from trails county-wide. Trail utilization throughout the county will improve with better promotion and clearer direction to access points.

- 3.1 Collaborate with West Michigan Trails and other regional trail organizations on consistent signage throughout Barry County
- 3.2 Develop local wayfinding signage to promote local amenities near trail routes (restaurants, ice cream, public restrooms, drinking water, etc.)
- 3.3 Develop standardized trail map displays along the Paul-Henry Thornapple Trail spinal route ("you are here")

4

Create safer on-road and near-road facilities to get people to and from the trails, especially for cyclists. (See FHWA Small Town Rural Design Guide for shoulder recommendations). Improvements to on-road alternatives are needed where off-road sections of trail are planned but not yet complete. Examples include:

- 4.1 A high-quality on-road route from Middleville to the Caledonia section of trail, likely utilizing Crane Road, M-37, Garbow Road, and Stimpson Road
- 4.2 A trail parallel to M-179 in Yankee Springs, for pedestrian and bicycle access to local businesses, Yankee Springs State Park, Yankee Springs Township Park, and potentially as part of a trail loop around Gun Lake
- 4.3 A safe crossing for the Hastings Riverwalk (Thornapple corridor) across Broadway Ave. (M-43) at Tyden Park in Hastings

5

Advance the trail system as a destination and economic asset by developing regional connections. Specific long-term connection opportunities include:

- 5.1 Linking south to Kalamazoo
- 5.2 Linking north from the Nashville area to Odessa and the Jordan Lake Trails
- 5.3 Linking west from Yankee Springs to Allegan County Trails

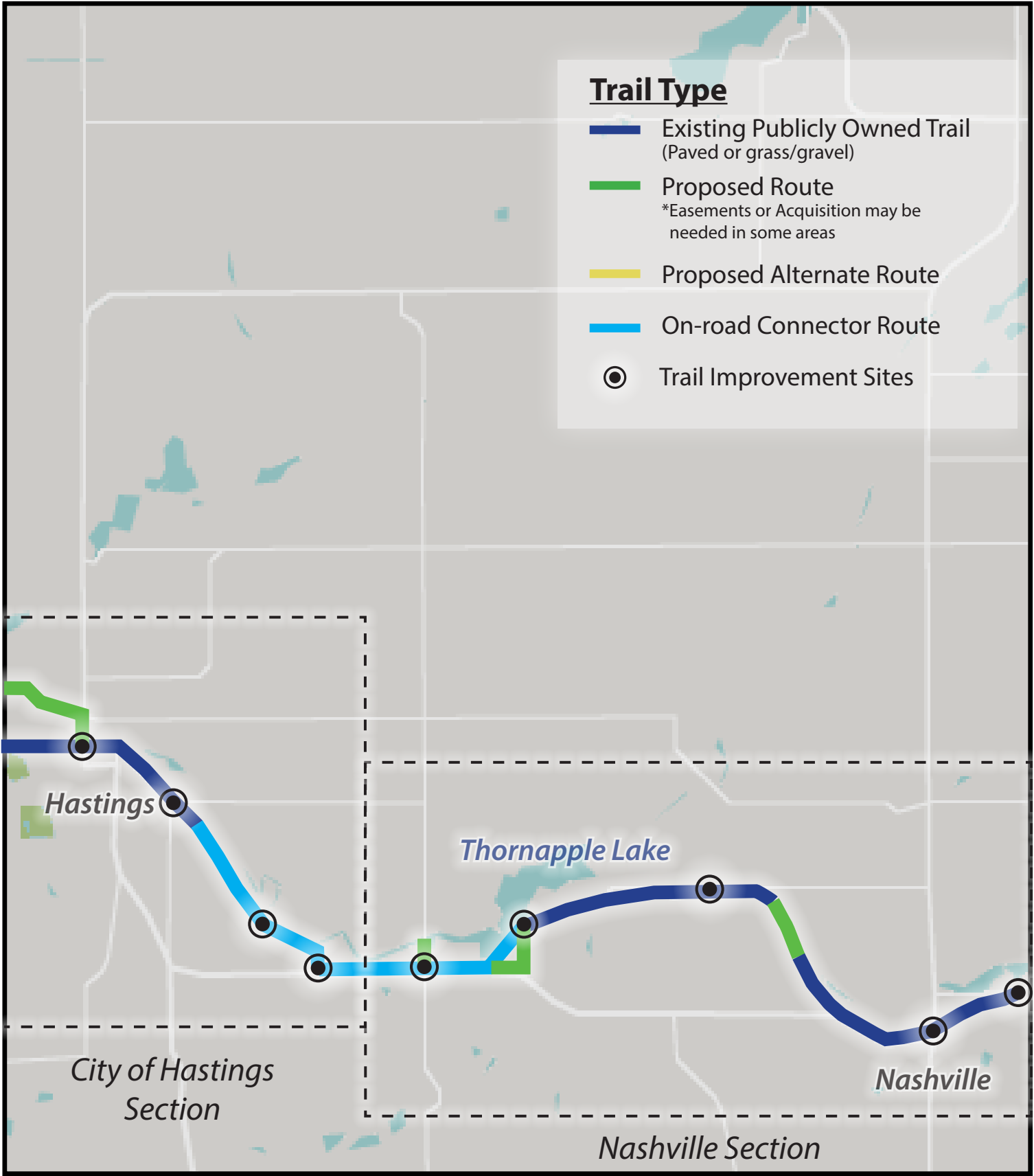
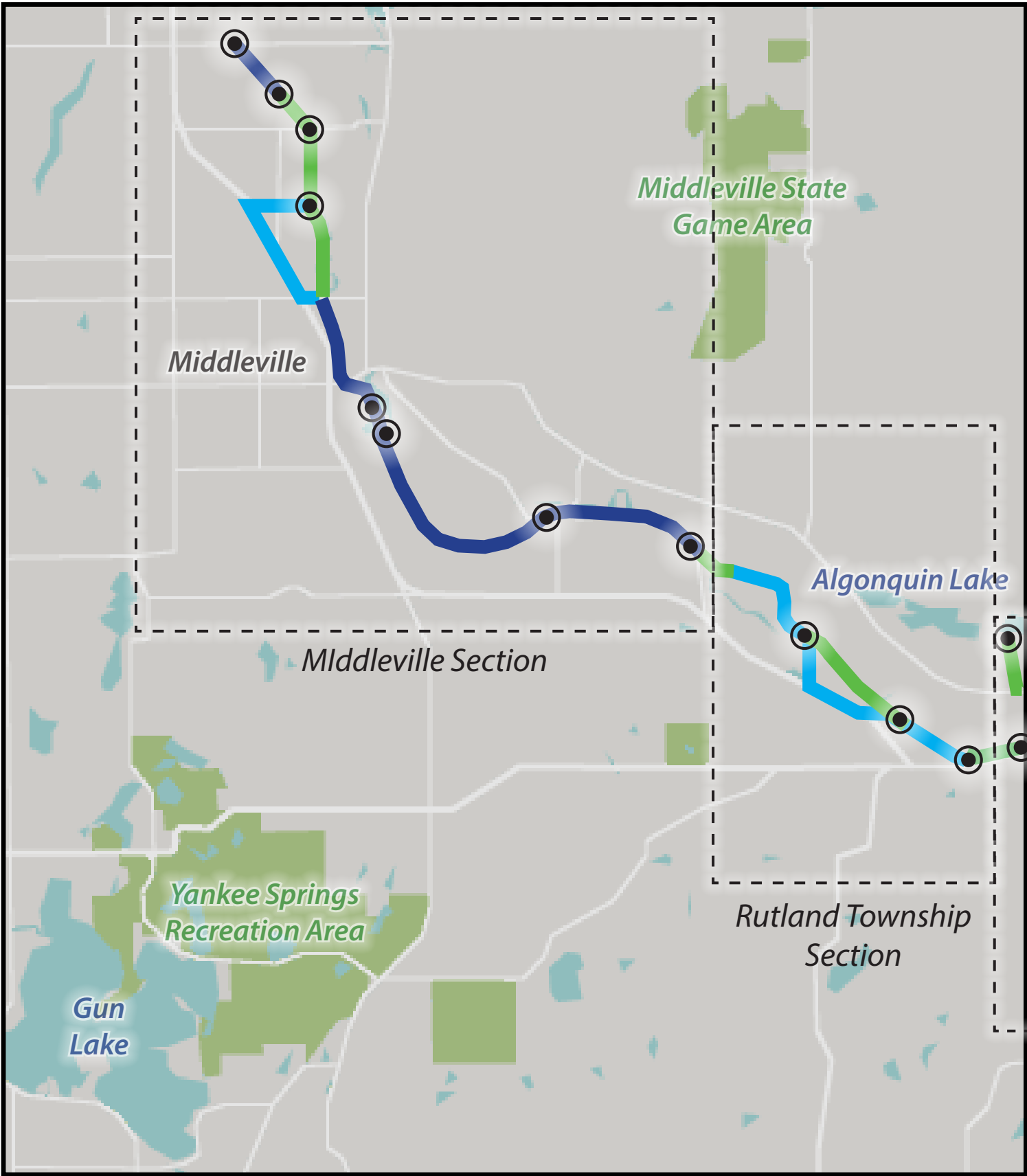
6

Provide enhanced trail amenities:

- 6.1 Identify key locations on the spine of the Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail for additional restrooms, drinking water, and parking areas.
- 6.2 Identify high profile trailhead locations for more developed user amenities (pavilions etc.)

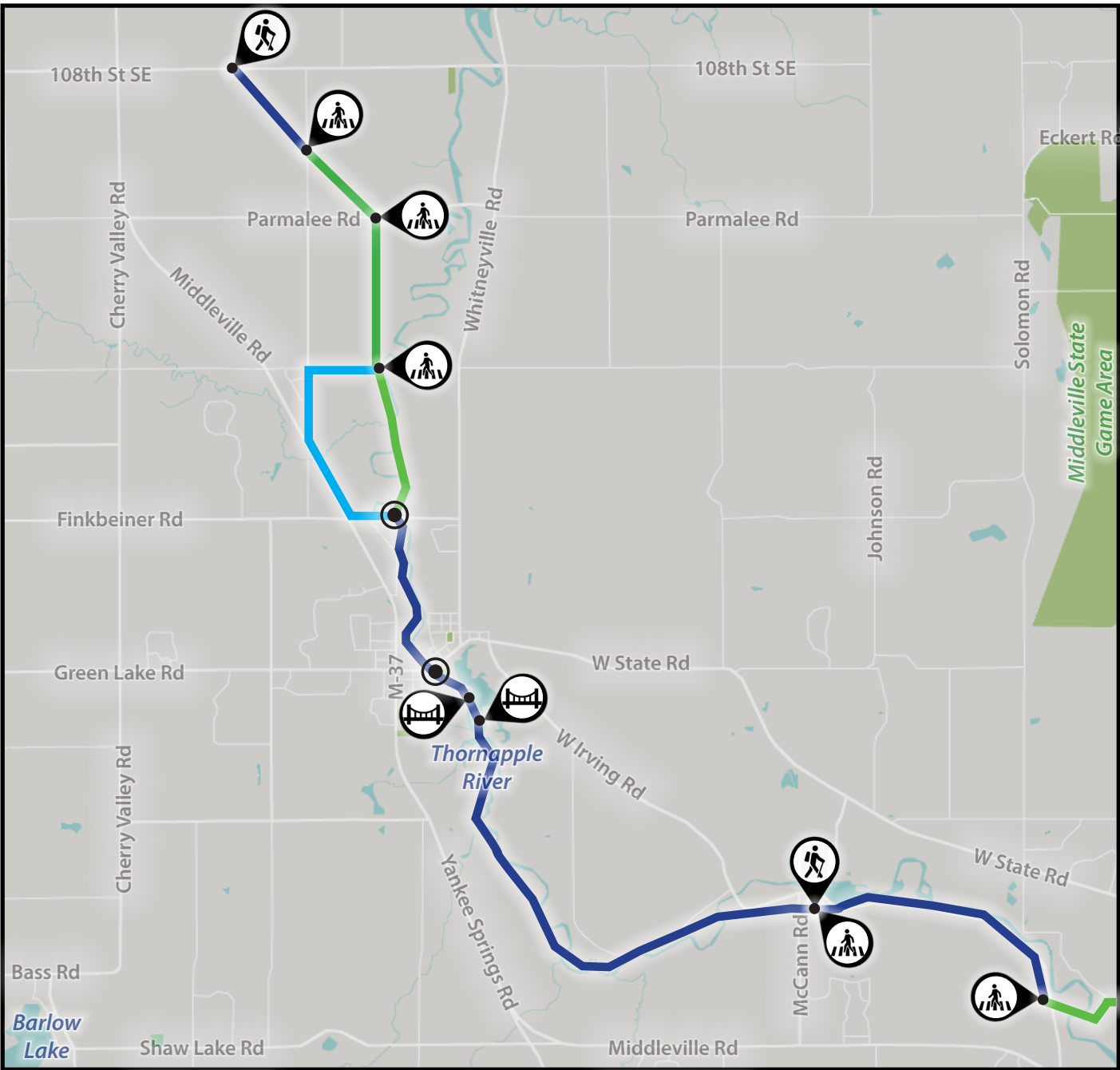
TRAIL SEGMENTS

PAUL HENRY-THORNAPPLE TRAIL From Kent County To Eaton County



TRAIL SEGMENTS

MIDDLEVILLE SECTION 108th Street to Irving Road



Trail Type

- Existing Publicly Owned Trail (Paved or grass/gravel)
- Proposed Route
*Easements or Acquisition may be needed in some areas
- Proposed Alternate Route
- On-road Connector Route

Trail Improvement Sites

- Existing Major Trail Point
- Trail Improvement Opportunity
- Trail Crossing
- Bridge Evaluation/Improvement

DESCRIPTION:

This section of trail runs from the Kent/Barry County Line south through the paved trail section in Middleville to Irving Road. There is an existing paved trail heading north from 108th Street that will eventually connect this section of the trail north into Caledonia Township and regional trail networks. Barry County owns approximately 4,000 feet from 108th Street to Stimson Road that was recently graded and is well traveled.

The trail section from West Crane Road to Irving Road is approximately 4.5 miles and is owned by the Village of Middleville. This section is almost entirely located on the old RR ROW. The Village of Middleville has developed trailhead parking, restrooms, potable water, and bike repair stations at Crane Road and Main Street crossings. There is a picnic pavilion, amphitheater, several restaurants, and shopping available in the area. The publicly owned and developed trail in this section is a 10' asphalt paved path from Crane Road to McCann Road and grass and gravel from McCann Road to Irving Road.

STATUS:

Thornapple Township was awarded a MIDNR Land Acquisition grant to acquire the RR ROW from Stimson Road to Crane Road. At the time this report was published (December 2022), of the 3 miles needed to complete the trail from 108th Street to Irving Road, property owners have agreed to sell or give trail easements to approximately two miles.

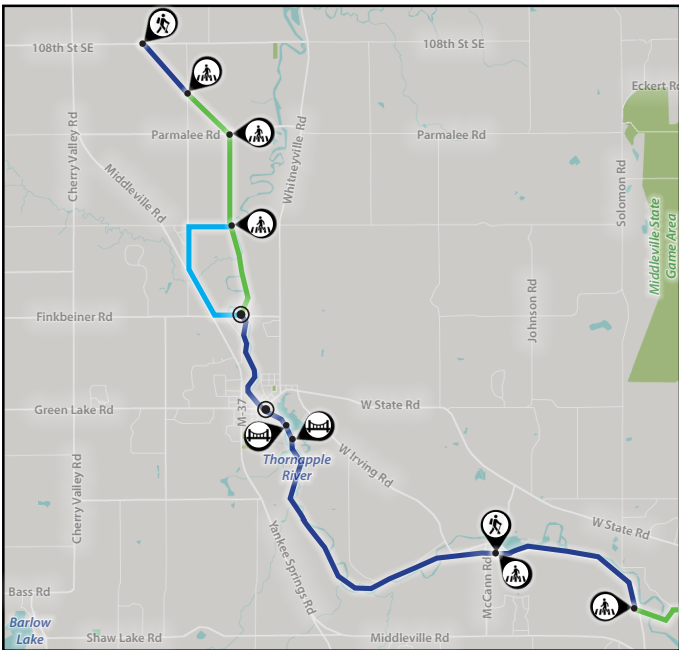
The paved section from Main Street to McCann Road was first installed in the 1990's and will need maintenance or repaving in the near future. The short railroad bridges closest to the Village have been identified as needing to be repaired or replaced. The Village of Middleville considers the repair or replacement of the bridges to be a critical need.



TRAIL SEGMENTS

MIDDLEVILLE SECTION (Continued)

108th Street to Irving Road



PREFERRED ROUTE:

- Along the existing RR ROW from Stimson Road to Crane Road
- Utilize existing cement tunnel under Crane Road designed to serve the trail when the bridge was constructed

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE(S):

- A connector route along Garbow Road east to M37, south to Crane Road and east to Village trailhead on Crane Road
- Acquisition of private property adjacent to RR ROW or public roads to establish off road trail route

PREFERRED TRAIL TYPE/SURFACES:

- 10-foot-wide unpaved (crushed limestone/aggregate) surface with shoulders outside of Village limits
- 10-foot-wide paved surface with shoulders within the Village limits
- Consider converting paved sections outside Village limits to a 10-foot-wide unpaved trail (limestone/aggregate) surface with shoulders when trail reconstruction is needed
- Alternate surface - 10-foot-wide asphalt surface for entire section

CHALLENGES:

- Connector routes on Garbow, M37, and Crane have safety concerns due to heavy traffic and narrow shoulders
- Acquisition of adjacent private property not within RR ROW would involve river crossings of the Thornapple River and potentially the construction of boardwalk through wetlands to connect with existing sections of trail
- Two bridges need to be repaired or replaced
- Repaving older paved sections south of Main Street
- The trail section from McCann to Irving is not developed. The Village of Middleville owns this 1.5+ mile section but has not allocated resources to make improvements. It is several miles outside its municipal boundaries and improvements are not likely going to be funded solely by the Village of Middleville

OPPORTUNITIES:

- The entrance to the trail off 108th Street is an opportunity for a “Welcome to Barry County Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail” arch to match Eaton County line entrance
- Trailhead parking at 108th Street
- Consider transfer of the McCann to Irving Road section to Barry County or Irving Township to promote the development and maintenance of this section of the PHTT



KEY DESTINATIONS FROM THIS SEGMENT:

- Connects the Village of Middleville to the Village of Caledonia and to the broader west Michigan trail network

- Connects Barry County to Kent County
- Village of Middleville downtown district (restaurants, farmer’s market, live music)
- Barry County Expo and Fairgrounds
- Whispering Waters Campground
- Thornapple River boating access sites (Village of Middleville, DNR boat launch at Irving Road, and Whispering Waters Campground)

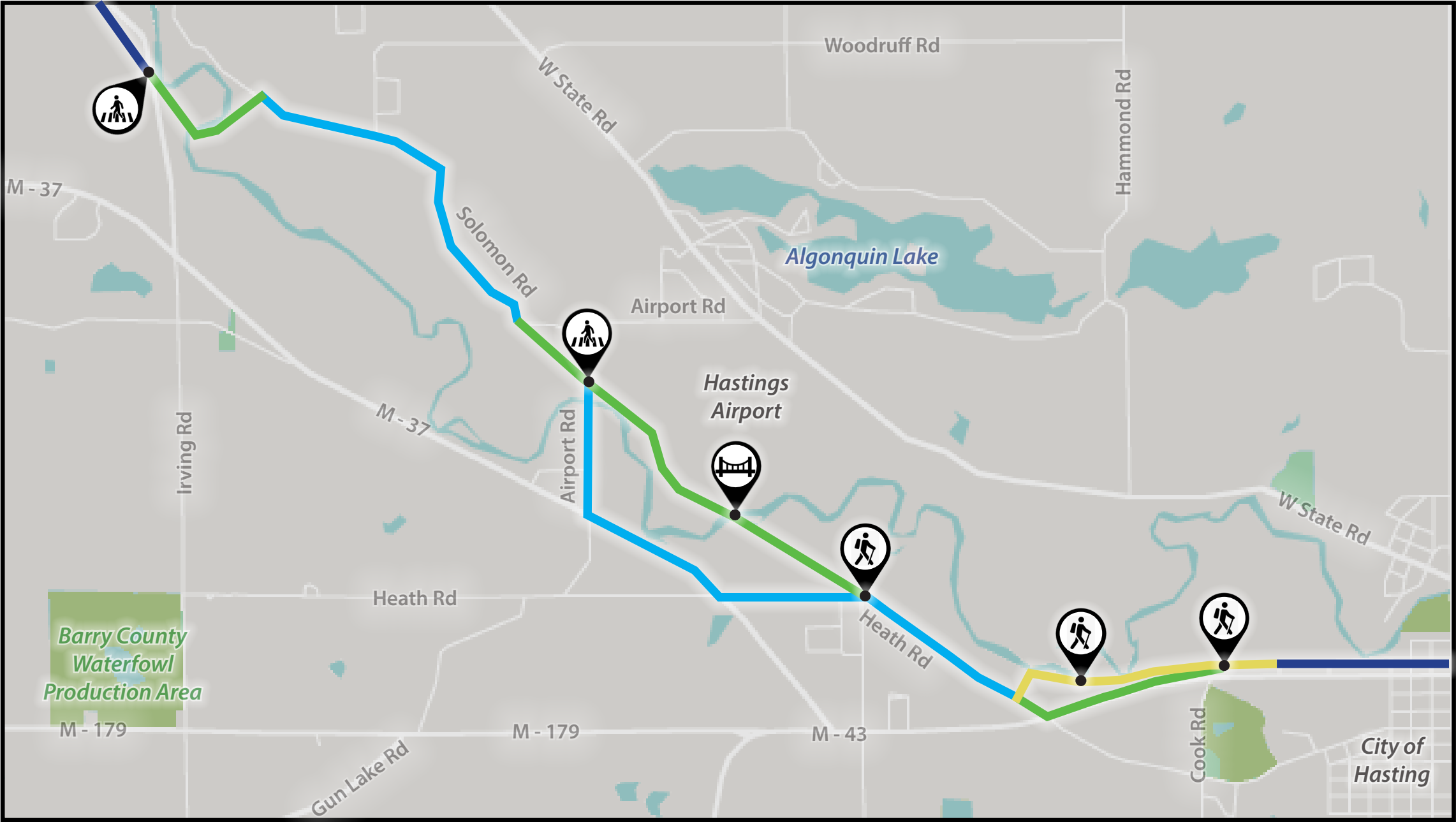
AMENITIES NEEDED: (road crossing, enhanced crosswalks, water, bathrooms, trailhead parking, bike rack, benches, bridge work, signage, etc.):

- Trailhead with “Welcome Arch” at 108th
- Benches/Picnic area at 108th
- Benches at Thornapple River overlook at ½ mile north of Crane Road
- Trail crossing signage/stripping at Stimson Road, and Parmalee Road
- Wayfinding signage of connector route along Garbow Road, M37, and Crane
- Enhanced wayfinding signage within the Village
- Enhanced connections from the PHTT to neighborhoods, schools, and shopping districts
- McCann Road Trailhead improvements (parking, cross walk, drinking water, bathrooms)
- Irving Road Trailhead parking area and safe road crossing

TRAIL SEGMENTS

RUTLAND TOWNSHIP SECTION

Irving Road to City of Hastings

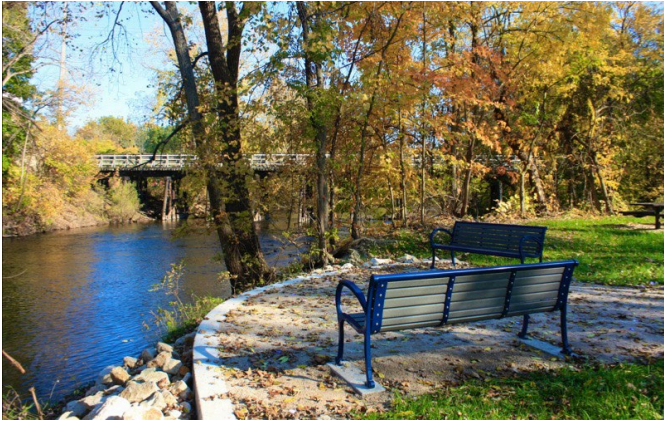


Trail Type

- Existing Publicly Owned Trail (Paved or grass/gravel)
- Proposed Route
*Easements or Acquisition may be needed in some areas
- Proposed Alternate Route
- On-road Connector Route

Trail Improvement Sites

- Existing Major Trail Point
- Trail Improvement Opportunity
- Trail Crossing
- Bridge Evaluation/Improvement



DESCRIPTION:

Irving Road to Airport Road

This section of the trail will require easements and/or purchases to construct a 10' wide trail along the old RR ROW through private property to allow access over the existing trestle bridge and north to Solomon Road. An on-road trail connector route is anticipated along Solomon Road adjacent to an active agricultural/ dairy farm operation to connect trail users to the county-owned property on the corner of Solomon and Airport Roads.

Airport Road to Walmart

This sub-segment includes sections of the old RR ROW held in both public and private ownership. Title research and surveys are needed to determine locations of public and privately owned sections of the old RR ROW. Some residential structures have been constructed within or close to the old RR ROW. Careful determination on the best routes to establish a 10' wide trail is needed in this section.

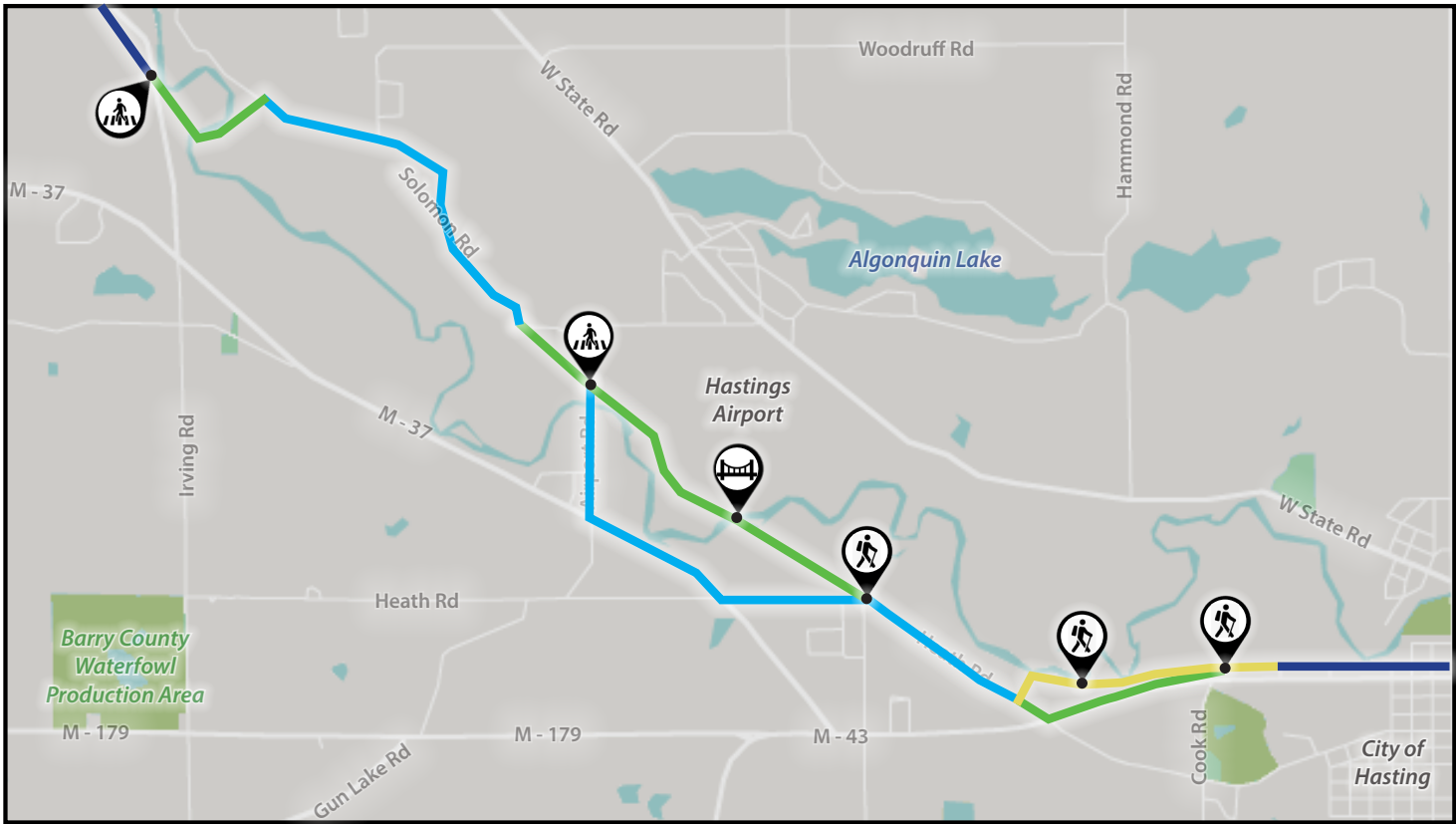
Walmart - Hastings Riverwalk/Industrial Drive

This missing one-mile trail connection could connect Walmart to the paved Hastings Riverwalk at Industrial Drive and through the City of Hastings to Bliss Park. Portions of the old RR ROW are still intact and in good condition in this subsection. However, several other short sections have been developed into commercial and office buildings. Property acquisitions and easements will be necessary to establish an off-road, separated trail in this subsection. The City of Hastings owns close to 20 acres behind Aldi's Market that could serve as a park destination along the trail and trailhead.

TRAIL SEGMENTS

RUTLAND TOWNSHIP SECTION

Irving Road to City of Hastings



PREFERRED ROUTE:

- Along or as close as possible to the existing RR ROW

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE(S):

- Land acquisitions or easements of property within or close to RR ROW property
- Property acquisition or easements along M43 for a separated 10-foot-wide trail with shoulders
- Connector route along Airport Road to M37 to Heath Road to Walmart

PREFERRED TRAIL TYPE/SURFACES:

- 10-foot-wide unpaved trail surface with shoulders outside of City limits
- Alternate surface: 10-foot-wide asphalt surface



CHALLENGES:

- Determine the best route from Irving Road to Solomon Road.
- Property acquisition and/or easements are necessary to connect this section.
- Establish safe connector route along Solomon Road to Barry County owned Airport Road property.
- Establish an approved trail route through Barry County Airport property.
- Determine RR ROW property ownership throughout this segment
- Trestle bridge structural evaluation is needed
- Establish safe connector route along Heath Road to Walmart.
- Several different property owners within this subsection would need to agree to sell or give easements for this section to be an off-road/separated trail.
- Acquisition of private property near the RR ROW contains wetlands and would likely involve the construction of boardwalk to connect to Industrial Drive.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Establish connector route to DNR Boat Launch site (River Trail connection)
- Rutland Township owns a parcel off Heath Road connecting to the old RR ROW. This could be an ideal trailhead park with parking, bathrooms, drinking water, etc.
- This is a key connection to the City of Hastings and shopping destinations
- This route has the potential to become a non-motorized commuting route

- between residential areas and employment centers in the City of Hastings and Rutland Township
- Significant economic impact of connecting non-motorized users with commercial districts along M43

KEY DESTINATIONS FROM THIS SEGMENT:

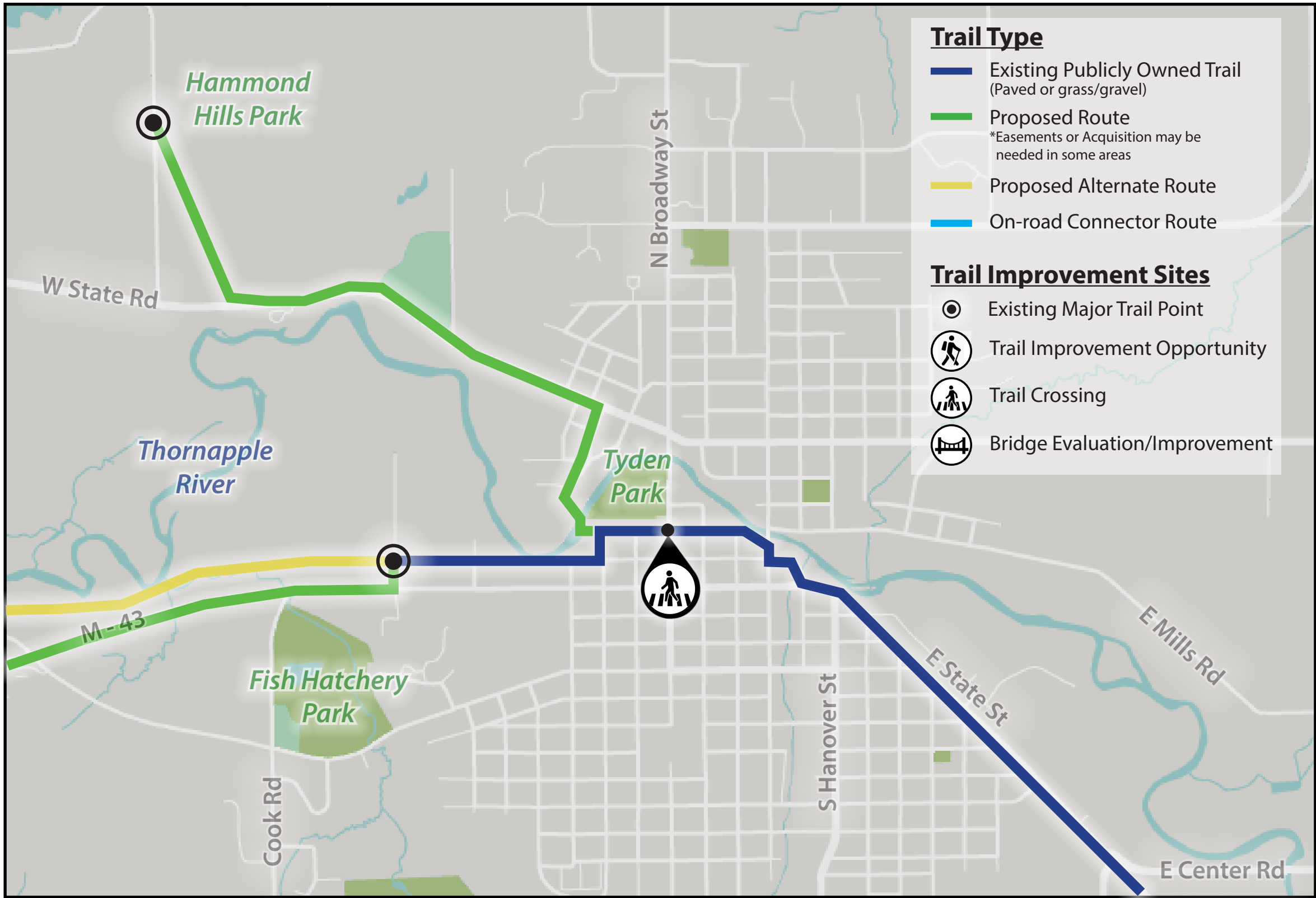
- Barry County Expo and Fairgrounds
- Whispering Waters Campground
- DNR Boat Launch at Airport Road (800 feet south of trail crossing on Airport Road)
- Village of Middleville
- Walmart/Business District
- DNR Boat Launch at Airport Road
- Connection to the City of Hastings (retail, grocery stores, restaurants, coffee houses, hotel, and employment centers)
- Scenic Thornapple River overlook sites

AMENITIES NEEDED:

- Improved parking at Airport Road trail access site
- Wayfinding signage (miles to Middleville, miles to Hastings, river access)
- Benches/Picnic area
- Trail crossing signage/stripping at all road crossings
- Connector route signage on Solomon
- Restrooms
- Drinking Water
- Bike Racks
- Possible development of City of Hastings parcel as trailhead and park area

TRAIL SEGMENTS

CITY OF HASTING SECTION Industrial Drive to Bliss Riverfront Park



DESCRIPTION:

The City of Hastings trail section is a fully constructed 10-foot-wide paved shared use path traveling along Apple Street through Tyden Park and along the Thornapple River east to Bliss Riverfront Park. This section includes several amenities including trail maps, benches, scenic overlooks, and trail parking.

PREFERRED ROUTE:

- No change in this route is anticipated

PREFERRED TRAIL TYPE SURFACES:

- 10-foot-wide asphalt surface

CHALLENGES:

- Crossing at M43/Tyden Park

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Develop a safe, non-motorized trail route connecting the City's Hammond Hill Disc Golf and Mountain Bike Park

KEY DESTINATIONS FROM THIS SEGMENT:

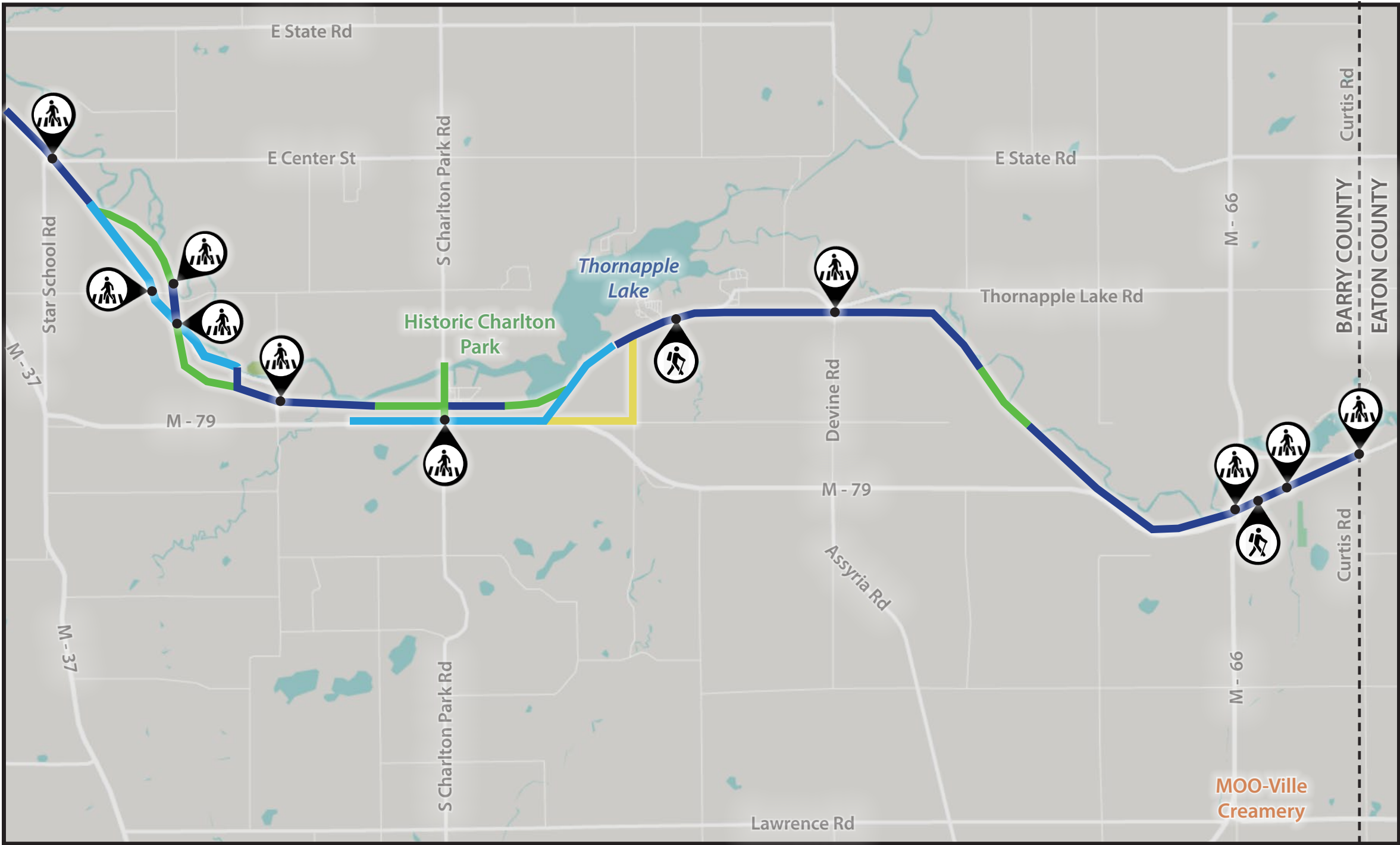
- City of Hastings commercial district
- Tyden Park
- Thornapple River
- Bliss Riverfront Park
- Kayak and tubing livery along Apple Street

AMENITIES NEEDED:

- Consistent wayfinding signage

TRAIL SEGMENTS

NASHVILLE SECTION City of Hastings to Nashville



DESCRIPTION:

This section of trail is the gateway from Eaton County into Barry County and has the potential to connect Nashville with Vermontville and the Eaton County trail system. The old RR ROW is publicly owned between Eaton County line and the Nashville Village limits to the west. Improvements to the trail surface as well as enhanced trail amenities (safe road crossings, lighting, trailhead parking, and restrooms) throughout the Nashville section will expand this section of the trail to be used as a non-motorized transportation route. Priority should be given to working cooperatively with Eaton County to coordinate trail construction to provide improved connections between Fuller Street Elementary and Maple Valley Jr/Sr. High Schools. Extending the Nashville trail section west approximately 12 miles to the City of Hastings will connect residents and visitors to Thornapple Lake, Charlton Park, McKeown Bridge Park, Barry County Christian School and Thornapple Manor.

STATUS:

As of 2022, Barry County is developing the publicly owned sections of the trail between Nashville and Hastings as part of funds allocated to the County from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The route from Nashville to Hastings will likely require the use of many trail types including shared use paths (paved and unpaved), roadside trails, and on-road links. Trail easements and purchases should be a priority to gain access to a separated shared use pathway in this corridor when available.

Trail Type

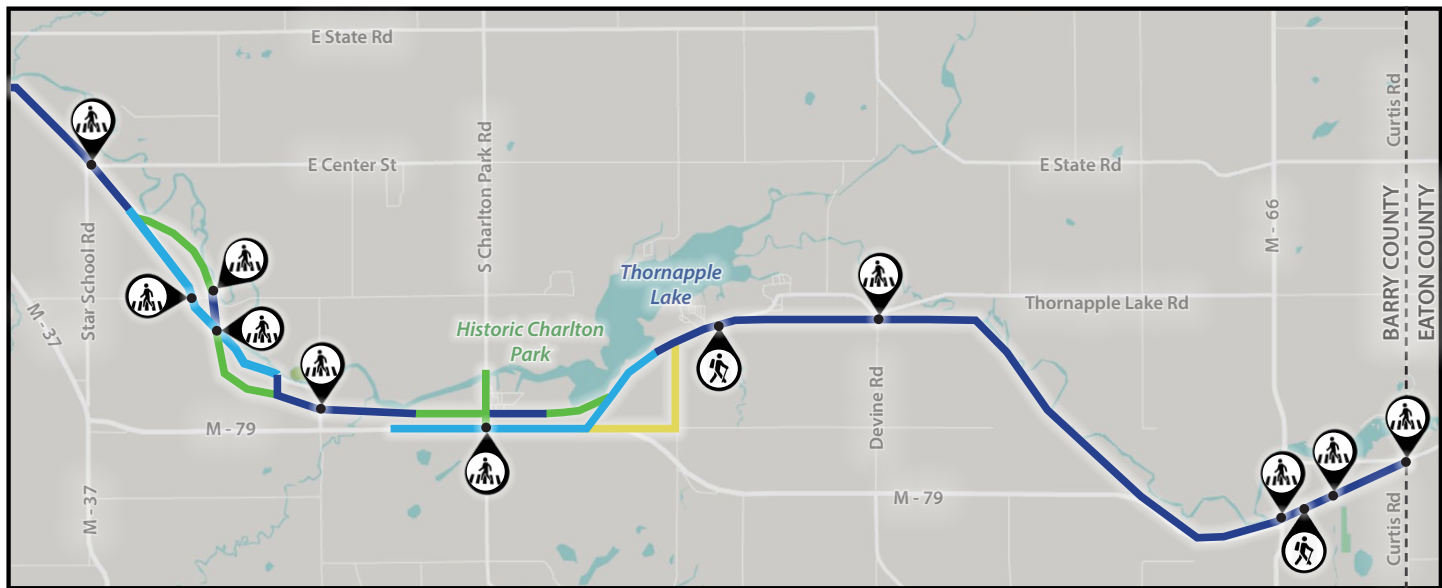
- Existing Publicly Owned Trail (Paved or grass/gravel)
- Proposed Route
*Easements or Acquisition may be needed in some areas
- Proposed Alternate Route
- On-road Connector Route

Trail Improvement Sites

- Trail Improvement Opportunity
- Trail Crossing
- Bridge Evaluation/Improvement

TRAIL SEGMENTS

NASHVILLE SECTION City of Hastings to Nashville



PREFERRED ROUTE:

- Along or as close as possible to the old RR ROW

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE(S):

- Property acquisition or easements along public roads for a separated 10-foot-wide trail with shoulders
- On-road connections with widened shoulders

PREFERRED TRAIL TYPE/ SURFACES:

- 10-foot-wide shared use path
- Paved surface trail within City and Village limits
- Unpaved surface trail outside of City and Village limits
- Consideration should be given to asphalt surfaces within the Thornapple Manor/Harvest Point senior living campus



CHALLENGES:

- Old RR ROW along Nashville Road south of Hastings Riverfront Park is in private ownership
- Several different property owners within this subsection would need to agree to sell or give easements for this section to be an off-road/separated trail
- Acquisition of private property near the RR ROW may contain regulated wetlands and would likely involve the construction of boardwalk

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Establishment of a safe on or near road connection from Riverfront Park to the County owned Thornapple Manor/911 Dispatch campus
- Establish a connector route to Charlton Park Historic Village and Recreation Area
- Connect City of Hastings with Thornapple Manor/Harvest Point Senior Living Campus
- Connect City of Hastings with Charlton Park Historic Village and Recreation Area
- Establish commuting route from City of Hastings to Thornapple Manor/Harvest Point Senior Living Campus, and Barry County Christian School
- This is a key connection between The Village of Nashville, Barry County parks, and the City of Hastings
- Significant economic impact of connecting non-motorized trail between the Village Nashville and the City of Hastings
- Establish a Connector Route from Nashville to MooVille Ice Cream

KEY DESTINATIONS FROM THIS SEGMENT:

- McKeown Bridge Park (picnic area, fishing, kayak launch, bathroom, walking trails)
- Charlton Park (Historic Village, lake access, hiking trails, picnicking, special events)
- Thornapple Lake
- Thornapple Manor/Harvest Point Senior Living Campus
- Barry County Christian School
- Village of Nashville
- Maple Valley Schools

AMENITIES NEEDED:

- Road crossings
- Benches/river overlooks
- Wayfinding signage/maps/distance indicators



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

IMPLEMENTATION

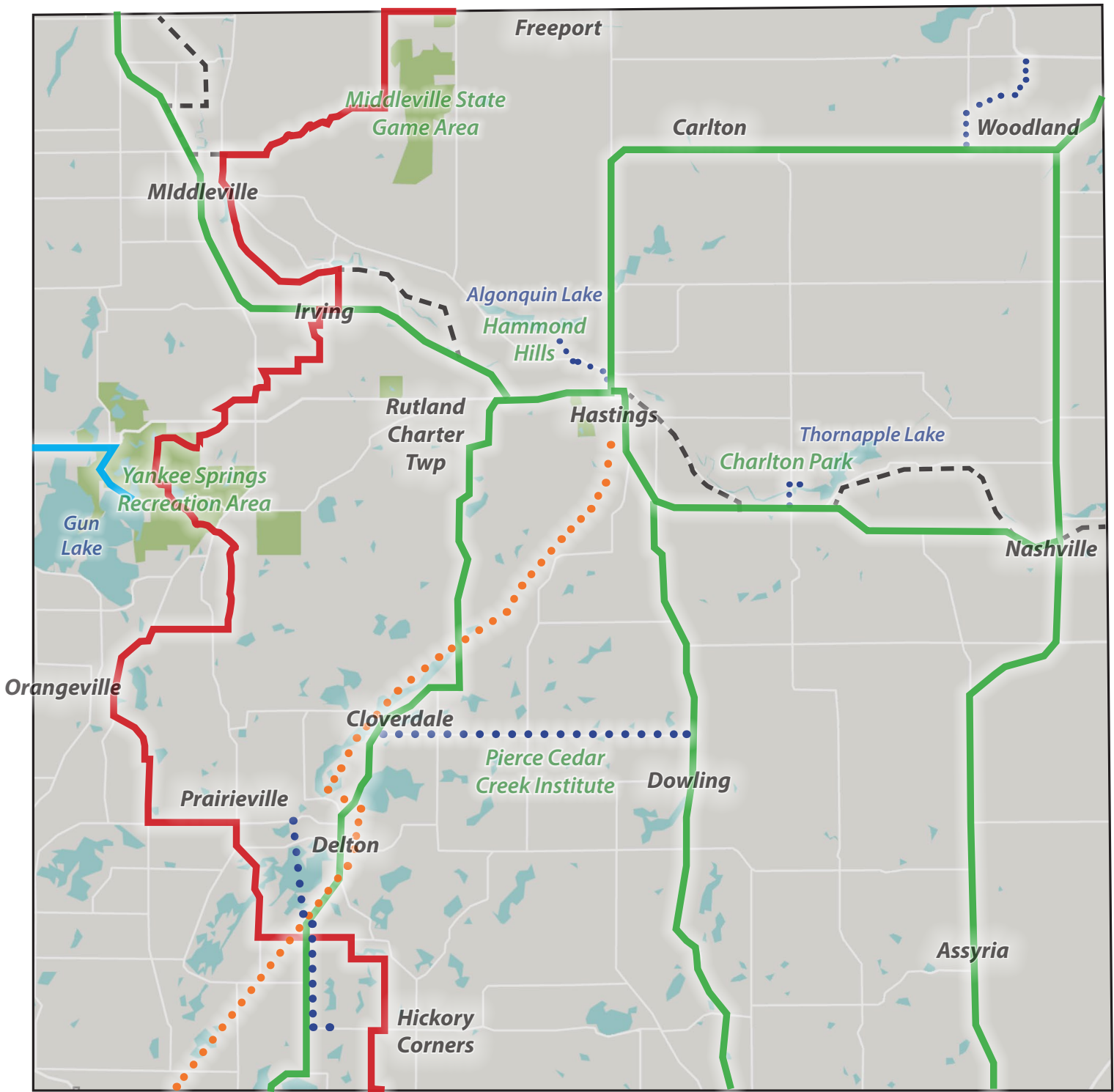
- 1 Municipalities within Barry County are encouraged to include this Countywide Trails Plan in their community master plan and parks and recreation plan. This will support communities when applying for grants to complete projects within their jurisdictional boundaries.
 - 2 Municipalities can use this plan to identify and pursue trail property acquisition/easements.
 - 3 Municipalities should develop detailed engineered designs, working towards 75% engineered designs for publicly owned segments. This phase should also identify the lead agency for trail implementation. Often these plans are required by funders before applications for grants can be submitted.
- There are several areas that will require further research during the trail design phase: Designs and specifications for trail amenities (e.g., benches, picnic areas, signage for Hwy 131, signage for trailheads and signage for overlooks)
 - Designs and layout of trailheads and of rest areas / overlooks
 - Locations and design needs for fill, design over wet areas, and installation of railings at higher trail elevations
 - SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) investigation as part of grant funding

OTHER RESOURCES (TRAIL PLANNING TOOL KIT)

- 1 Small Town and Rural Multi-Modal Networks, published by the Federal Highway Administration
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/small_towns/
- 2 American Trails Resource Library
<https://www.americantrails.org/resources/trail-planning-hub>
- 3 Rails to Trails Conservancy Resource Library
<https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/>
- 4 Trail Planning Workshop Toolkit by the National Parks Service
<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/upload/Trail-Planning-Workshop-Toolkit.pdf>

OTHER TRAIL SEGMENT FOCUS AREAS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION:

- "M" Roads – Routine improvements to "M" Roads should include 7-foot shoulders
- Prioritizes local area trail connections including Yankee Springs Recreation Area, the North Country Trail, and other nearby trail opportunities



Trail Map Key

- "M" Roads
- North Country Trail
- Yankee Springs - M179/State Park
- Paul Henry - Thornapple Trail
- ... Possible Future Utility Corridor
- ... Key Destination Connections Needed

FUNDING & GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

There are numerous funding sources that can be utilized for trail or pathway projects. One of the most comprehensive places to locate information on funding is the Michigan Trail and Greenways Alliance website www.michignatrails.org. Of the numerous funding sources available the most likely sources of funding for the identified projects are federal and state grant opportunities, trail sponsors and donations, foundations, and county/municipal funds.

Funding Sources

Federal & State Grants

Trail Sponsors & Donations

Foundations

County/Municipal Funds



FEDERAL GRANTS

There are several federal transportation funding sources that are dispersed by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). These sources would need to be allocated through either MDOT or the Barry County Road Commission (BRC). The sources most likely to be used for non-motorized facilities include:

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM (TAP):

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a competitive grant program that uses federal transportation funds designated by Congress for specific activities that enhance the intermodal transportation system and provide safe alternative transportation options. Facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists are eligible, including traffic calming and other safety improvements.; TAP funding requires matching funds of at least 20% of the eligible project cost.



SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL (SR2S):

Safe Routes to School is an international movement—and now a federal program—to make it safe, convenient, and fun for children, including those with disabilities, to bicycle and walk to school. When routes are safe, walking or biking to and from school is an easy way to get the regular physical activity children need for good health. Safe Routes to School initiatives also help ease traffic jams



Safe Routes to School



FUNDING & GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

STATE GRANTS

DNR NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND:

Can be used for land acquisition or project development. Minimum match requirement of 25%. No minimum or maximum grant request for Acquisition projects. \$15,000 minimum grant and \$300,000 maximum grant request for development projects.

DNR LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND:

This grant may be used for development projects only. Match requirement is 50%. \$30,000 minimum and \$500,000 maximum grant request.



DNR RECREATION PASSPORT:

This grant may be used for development projects only. Match requirement is 25% minimum. \$7,5000 minimum and \$150,000 maximum grant request.

CONGESTION MITIGATION AND AIR QUALITY (CMAQ):

The CMAQ program funds transportation projects or programs that will contribute to the attainment or maintenance of National Ambient Air Quality Standards. In the past, CMAQ funds have been used for trail and pathway programs that will reduce the number of trips by automobiles.



EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Bicycle Specific Infrastructure Information

Economic Benefits of Bicycling

<https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/travel/safety/road-users/bicycling/economic-benefits-of-bicycling>

Bicycle Lending Libraries

<https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/bike-libraries-are-increasing-access-to-bikes-across-america>

Michigan Bike Wave Lending Library

<https://lmb.org/initiatives/bike-wave/>

AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities

<https://store.transportation.org/>

MDOT Bicycling

<https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/Travel/safety/Road-Users/Bicycling>

FHWA Bikeway Selection Guide

https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/docs/fhwasa18077.pdf

FHWA Incorporating On-Road Bicycle Networks into Resurfacing Projects

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/resurfacing/

Traffic Control and Road Design Information

Criteria for Level of Traffic Stress (LTS):

<https://peterfurth.sites.northeastern.edu/2014/05/21/criteria-for-level-of-traffic-stress/>

Michigan Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

<https://mdotjboss.state.mi.us/TSSD>

NCHRP Guide for Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety at Alternative and Other Intersections and Interchanges

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/26072/guide-for-pedestrian-and-bicyclist-safety-at-alternative-and-other-intersections-and-interchanges>

FHWA Traffic Calming

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/speed-management/traffic-calming-eprimer>

FHWA Small Town and Rural Design Guide

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/small_towns/

FHWA Office of Safety – Proven Safety Countermeasures

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures>

FHWA Road Diet Informational Guide

https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/guidance/info_guide/

FHWA Guide for Improving Pedestrian Safety at Uncontrolled Locations

https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2022-07/STEP_Guide_for_Improving_Ped_Safety_at_Unsig_Loc_3-2018_07_17-508compliant.pdf

FHWA Interim Approvals

https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/res-interim_approvals.htm

Other State Level Plans and Guides

Michigan Mobility 2045: State Long-Range Transportation Plan and AT Plan

<http://www.michiganmobility.org/>

Regional Nonmotorized Investment Plans

<https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/travel/safety/road-users/bicycling>

MDOT Sidepath Intersection & Crossing Treatment Guide

<https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/MDOT/Travel/Safety/Road-User/Bicycling/Research/Sidepath-Intersection-Crossing-Treatment-Guide.pdf?rev=48b64203714a49efb24e512792e737ae>

Trail Towns Designation Program

<https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/dnr/Documents/PRD/Misc/PureMichiganTrailsHandbook20-21.pdf?rev=05491584bbb64ba2b77e8294bd14cd93>

Gateway Treatment

https://www.planningmi.org/assets/docs/gateway_treatment_research_presentation_2018_transportation_bonanza2.pdf

Winter Maintenance

<https://tooledesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Winter-Maintenance-Resource-Guide.pdf>

Online Tools for Municipalities

Street Mix: an online tool that allows you to edit street elements given a specific right-of-way width quickly. It is free and can be exported for use in reports and presentations

<https://streetmix.net>

My Maps: A Google application and tool that allows you to develop a network map and document issues and opportunities within your community

<https://mymaps.google.com>

Michigan Fitness Foundation Promoting Active Communities

<https://activecommunitytool.org/about.aspx>

NACTO Don't Give up at the Intersection

<https://nacto.org/publication/dont-give-up-at-the-intersection/>

REFERENCES

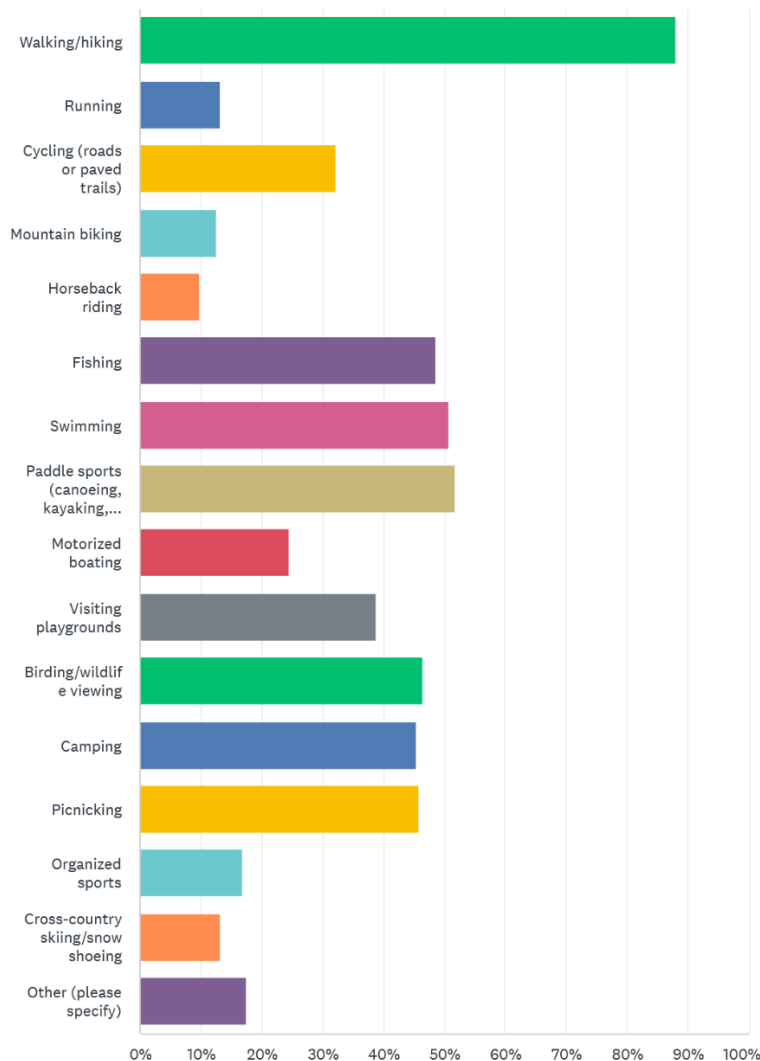
- ⁱ National Recreation and Parks Association, *Safe Routes to Parks: Improving Access to Parks through Walkability*; NRPA, Ashburn VA, 2015.
- ⁱⁱ Torsha Bhattacharya, Ph.D.; Kevin Mills, J.D.; and Tiffany Mulally, Ph.D., *Active Transportation Transforms America: The Case for Increased Public Investment in Walking and Biking Connectivity*; Washington, D.C.: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2019.
- ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, 2nd edition. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2018.
- ^{iv} Zenko Z., Willis E.A., and White D.A., (2019). Proportion of Adults Meeting the 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans According to Accelerometers. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 7:135.
- ^v Andrew T. Kaczynski, PhD, Luke R. Potwarka, MA, and Brian E. Saelens, PhD. *Association of Park Size, Distance, and Features With Physical Activity in Neighborhood Parks*; *American Journal of Public Health*; August 2008, Vol 98, No. 8
- ^{vi} Andrew T. Kaczynski and Karla A. Henderson, *Parks and Recreation Settings and Active Living: A Review of Associations With Physical Activity Function and Intensity*; *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 2008, 5, 619-632.
- ^{vii} Merriam, D.; Bality, A.; Stein, J.; Boehmer, T. 2017. *Improving Public Health through Public Parks and Trails: Eight Common Measures*. Summary report. US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and US Department of the Interior, National Park Service.
- ^{viii} Torsha Bhattacharya et. al., . . . 2019.
- ^{ix} *Measuring Trails Benefits Series: Overall Benefits*; <http://headwaterseconomics.org>; Spring 2016
- ^x Liu, Jenny H. and Shi, Wei. *Understanding Economic and Business Impacts of Street Improvements for Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility – A Multicity Multiapproach Exploration*. NITC-RR-1031/1161. Portland, OR: Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC), 2020.
- ^{xi} Andersen M. and Hall ML. *Protected Bike Lanes Mean Business: How 21st Century Transportation Network Help Urban Economies Boom*; *The Green Lane Project*, 2015.

Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission solicited public input to help inform the parks and recreation plan via an online public survey. The survey was available for 5 weeks from June 3 to July 7 and advertised via email lists, the county website, social media and in the local press. A total of 183 responses were received. Respondents answered questions on their recreation preferences, their level of satisfaction with current county recreation facilities and feelings regarding improvements being considered. Finally, the survey collected demographic information to provide background information to inform the plan.

The majority of respondents (47%) reside the northeast region of the county (Carlton, Woodland, Hastings, Castleton, Nashville), which is not surprising as this is the most populous area of the county. However, responses were received from throughout the county and beyond.

Please indicate which of the following recreation activities you or members of your household enjoy (select all that apply)

Answered: 183 Skipped: 0



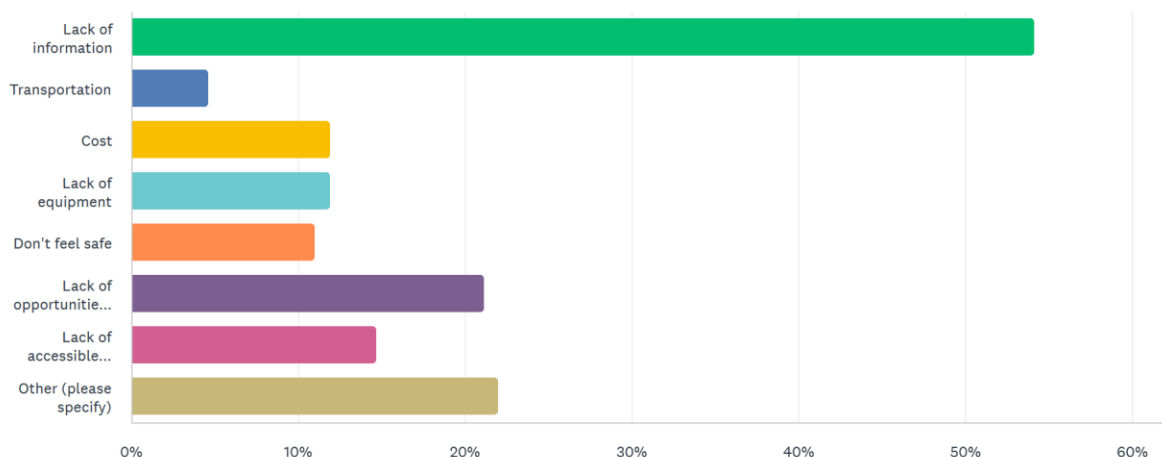
When asked to select all activities in which respondents participate, the top five, in order of frequency, were walking/hiking (88%), paddle sports (52%), swimming (51%), fishing (49%) and birding/wildlife viewing (46%). Overall, a wide-range of recreation interests were represented.

Asked to rank what facilities they use the most, state facilities (state park and state game areas) and Barry County facilities were the most popular, with school facilities used the least. These results varied somewhat depending on where people lived, with those in the southwest quadrant (Orangeville, Hope, Prairieville, Barry) more likely to use state facilities and nature preserves and less likely to use school facilities or linear trails. Those residing in the northwest quadrant (Thornapple, Middleville, Irving, Freeport, Yankee Springs, Rutland) used linear trails more than those in other areas of the county. Those in the northeast area frequented municipal parks more than others. This indicates a preference for close to home recreation facilities.

Of the 109 people that responded to the question “Are there any barriers that prevent you from participating in outdoor recreation”, over 50% selected a lack of information. Comments on this issue included a lack of time or perceived lack of safety or cleanliness or a lack of specific opportunities people were looking for.

Are there any barriers that prevent you from participating in outdoor recreation? (select all that apply)

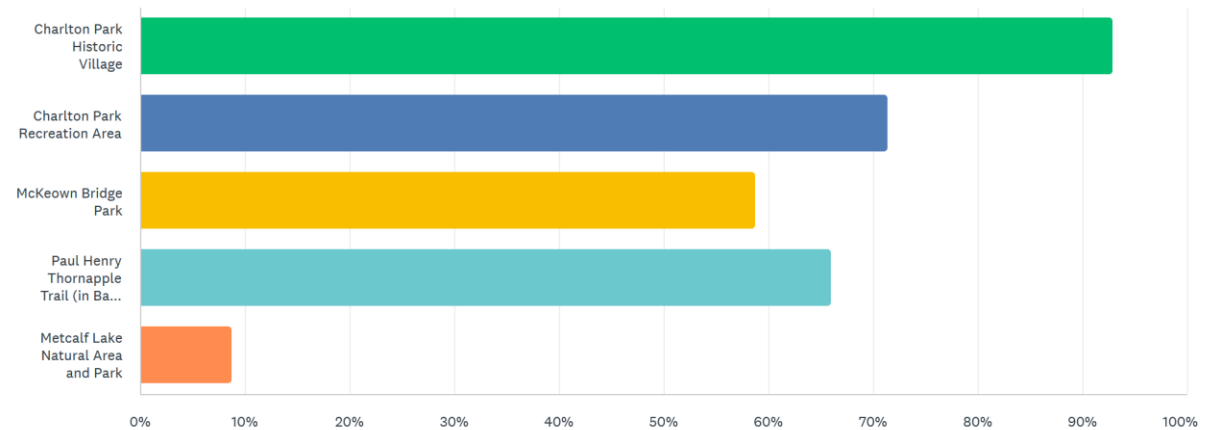
Answered: 109 Skipped: 74



Of the county owned parks, Charlton Park, the biggest and most developed of Barry County's parks, was the most visited. Within Charlton Park, more people had visited the historic village than the recreation area. Few have visited Metcalf Lake Natural Area and Park (now known as the Bailey Nature Preserve), which is not surprising since it is currently undeveloped and was only acquired by the county in.

Which of the following Barry County parks have you or members of your household visited? (select all that apply)

Answered: 182 Skipped: 1



When asked to rate the level of enjoyment for each park respondents have visited, Charlton Park Historic Village, Charlton Park Recreation Area, the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail and Metcalf Lake Natural Area and Preserve all ranked high (a weighted average of 2.49 or more out of 3). McKeown Bridge County Park ranked lower, with a weighted average score of 2.19. Suggestions given to enhance visitors' level of enjoyment were varied. For Charlton Park Village, more events, buildings open more often and different types of interpretation, such as audio tours, were amongst the suggestions. The most commonly cited improvements for Charlton Park Recreation Area were cleaner water and beach, more grills and picnic tables closer to the water and seasonal camping. For McKeown Bridge Park, better water access/canoe launch was the most requested improvement, along with activities for children. Connectivity, both along the trail and to neighboring trail systems, was the most common response, along with better maintenance and more restrooms. Only seven responses were received for Metcalf Lake, suggesting better access, trails and bathrooms.

People were then asked to select their level of support for various improvements being considered by the Parks Commission at each park, from no support (oppose) to high support. Tables with the results for each county park are shown below.

Please select your level of support for the following improvements at Charlton Park Village

	OPPOSE	LOW SUPPORT	MEDIUM SUPPORT	HIGH SUPPORT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
▼ Stone restroom improvements	3.90% 6	11.69% 18	42.21% 65	42.21% 65	154	3.23
▼ Welcome center shelter with restrooms	5.16% 8	13.55% 21	36.13% 56	45.16% 70	155	3.21
▼ Walnut Grove restroom improvements	4.76% 7	16.33% 24	47.62% 70	31.29% 46	147	3.05
▼ Paving and parking reconfiguration	9.33% 14	31.33% 47	37.33% 56	22.00% 33	150	2.72
▼ Bus loop and school group drop-off	12.50% 18	31.94% 46	33.33% 48	22.22% 32	144	2.65

Please select your level of support for the following improvements at Charlton Park Recreation Area

	OPPOSE	LOW SUPPORT	MEDIUM SUPPORT	HIGH SUPPORT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
▼ New wetland boardwalk	5.96% 9	11.26% 17	30.46% 46	52.32% 79	151	3.29
▼ Beach area improvements	3.29% 5	13.16% 20	35.53% 54	48.03% 73	152	3.28
▼ Lakeshore stabilization and native plantings	3.25% 5	13.64% 21	36.36% 56	46.75% 72	154	3.27
▼ New loop walking trail	5.23% 8	16.34% 25	26.80% 41	51.63% 79	153	3.25
▼ Pavillion restroom and parking improvements	4.00% 6	13.33% 20	40.67% 61	42.00% 63	150	3.21
▼ New overlook/ fishing decks	3.29% 5	18.42% 28	37.50% 57	40.79% 62	152	3.16
▼ Playground improvements	4.64% 7	22.52% 34	34.44% 52	38.41% 58	151	3.07
▼ New accessible kayak launch	7.28% 11	21.85% 33	34.44% 52	36.42% 55	151	3.00
▼ New picnic shelters	5.33% 8	21.33% 32	42.00% 63	31.33% 47	150	2.99
▼ New public campground	14.67% 22	22.00% 33	25.33% 38	38.00% 57	150	2.87
▼ Boat launch parking improvements	6.12% 9	34.01% 50	36.05% 53	23.81% 35	147	2.78

Please select your level of support for the following improvements at McKeown Bridge Park

	OPPOSE	LOW SUPPORT	MEDIUM SUPPORT	HIGH SUPPORT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
▼ Walking trail expansion	6.76% 10	12.16% 18	28.38% 42	52.70% 78	148	3.27
▼ Habitat improvements	6.29% 9	21.68% 31	28.67% 41	43.36% 62	143	3.09
▼ Fishing/ river overlook decks	6.12% 9	24.49% 36	33.33% 49	36.05% 53	147	2.99
▼ Boat launch improvements or relocation	8.90% 13	29.45% 43	34.93% 51	26.71% 39	146	2.79
▼ Parking area improvements	7.59% 11	35.17% 51	31.03% 45	26.21% 38	145	2.76

Please select your level of support for the following improvements at the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail

	OPPOSE	LOW SUPPORT	MEDIUM SUPPORT	HIGH SUPPORT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
▼ Property acquisition to complete the trail	5.33% 8	11.33% 17	23.33% 35	60.00% 90	150	3.38
▼ Parking areas/trailheads	4.03% 6	17.45% 26	38.93% 58	39.60% 59	149	3.14
▼ Improved trail surface (paved or gravel)	7.59% 11	16.55% 24	31.03% 45	44.83% 65	145	3.13
▼ Trail amenities (benches, signage etc.)	4.70% 7	24.16% 36	34.23% 51	36.91% 55	149	3.03

Please select your level of support for the following improvements at Metcalf Lake County Park and Preserve

	OPPOSE	LOW SUPPORT	MEDIUM SUPPORT	HIGH SUPPORT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
▼ Hiking trails	5.88% 7	18.49% 22	29.41% 35	46.22% 55	119	3.16
▼ Restrooms	7.63% 9	19.49% 23	30.51% 36	42.37% 50	118	3.08
▼ Wetland boardwalk	11.21% 13	17.24% 20	32.76% 38	38.79% 45	116	2.99
▼ Habitat improvements	7.69% 9	23.93% 28	29.91% 35	38.46% 45	117	2.99
▼ Lake overlook	8.62% 10	21.55% 25	36.21% 42	33.62% 39	116	2.95
▼ Parking area and access improvements	7.76% 9	26.72% 31	37.07% 43	28.45% 33	116	2.86
▼ Kayak launch	10.17% 12	23.73% 28	35.59% 42	30.51% 36	118	2.86
▼ Picnic area/pavilion	9.32% 11	24.58% 29	38.98% 46	27.12% 32	118	2.84
▼ Interpretive signage	8.55% 10	35.04% 41	35.90% 42	20.51% 24	117	2.68
▼ Observation blind	9.40% 11	33.33% 39	36.75% 43	20.51% 24	117	2.68

When asked what programs or events survey respondents had attended, a wide range of options were selected. The fathers' day car show, gas and steam engine show and of Christmas Past were the three most popular events.

When asked to submit comments on the events, many showed their appreciation. A selection of the comments received are shown below:

Love the special events surrounding holidays. Wonderful to open to the public and a great way to meet neighbors

The events are educational and a great family atmosphere

Always enjoy the history displayed. Excellent maintained & available

They are a great way to enjoy the outdoors with family. A lot of people are low income and cannot afford a vacation or going places and the parks help create that for families a place to enjoy the outdoors and family time. Thank you

Some suggestions for additional programming were also received, including guided hikes, bringing back the Pow Wow, an owl watch with a naturalist or hosting outdoor movies for families, storytelling, folk music, fiber festival, etc. more advance advertising was also suggested.

People generally agreed that parks and recreation have many benefits, such as physical health, mental health and overall quality of life.

The survey asked some demographic questions to get a better understanding of those completing the survey. The majority were female (64%) and over 45 years of age (74%), however, 44% reported having one or more child in their household, with more children under the age of 12.

Park visitors shared many memories of their time visiting Barry County parks, illustrating the importance of recreation opportunities in peoples' lives. A selection of the comments received follow:

I remember going to Indian powwows at Charlton Park with my grandpa and gas and steam shows when they would try to climb the hill and balance on the teeter totter.

Both of my boys learn to ride bikes on the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail. It was a really great resource for me in being able to give them a place they could ride and still be safe. Thank you.

My favorite field trip with my kids was always the trip to Charlton Park. I grew up on the east side of the state, so it was a mini-Greenfield Village, and I loved how it tied so much to the local community and taught me so much about where I was living.

One of my earliest memories is riding a bicycle down the Paul Henry Trail in Middleville with my grandparents, both of whom have now passed.

For generations our family has gathered at Charlton Park for family parties and events. I am in my 50s and I remember being there for field trips when I was in elementary school, we would press cider. We just hosted our son's graduation party at the pavilion. I remember being there with my Great Great Grandmother talking about history of the county. The park is living history.

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other comments about recreation in Barry County. The comments were wide-ranging, including a desire to keep things natural and to be fiscally responsible, more horse-friendly facilities, a desire for pickleball courts, a county campground, for Charlton Park Historic Village to stay true to Mr. Charlton's original intent and to connect the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail through the county..

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Hooded Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, American Redstart, Black-throated Green Warbler, Yellow-throated Vireo and Chestnut-sided Warbler. Veery, Scarlet Tanager, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Eastern Wood Pewee also nest in this area. The best time to visit Fire Tower Road is from late April to July. It should be avoided during deer hunting season.



13 SAGER TRAIL AT DAGGETT LAKE
McKibben Road 1 mile S. of Gun Lake Road

Another unimproved road that is best walked, take Sager Trail east from McKibben Road. Park in any convenient spot, but beware of loose sand. This road travels past Daggett Lake and can be hiked a mile or more through mature second growth mixed woodlands. This is a prime spot to search for Cerulean Warblers. Listen for their buzzy song from early May through June. The birds are best seen in early May before the leaves come out. Your hike will also bring you through a great area for Blue-headed, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, Blue-winged Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Pine Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Least Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, Ovenbird and Broad-winged Hawk. Avoid this road during hunting season.



14 BUTLER ROAD MARSHES
Butler Road west of Highway M-66

Located approximately six miles south of Nashville, this is an area of extensive wetlands and small lakes that is privately-owned. Thus, all birding should be done from the road. The land is far too wet for hiking. Park along this lightly-traveled road but do not pull off the road. The Butler Road marsh area features open shrub wetlands and cattail marsh and is an excellent place to find Sora and Virginia Rail. American Bittern has been heard here but is not found annually. Sandhill Cranes and Trumpeter Swans frequent the area, as do Swamp Sparrows



and Pileated Woodpeckers. Rusty Blackbirds are seen annually in migration. Common Yellowthroat and Yellow Warblers breed in the marshes. Tree and Barn swallows are usually found hawking for insects. Bald Eagles and Wilson's Snipe are often seen in spring. Mallard and Wood Duck are common local breeders.

15 IRVING POND
Irving Road at McCann Road

Half-way between Middleville and Hastings, Irving Pond is created by a dam on the Thornapple River at McCann Road. It backs up approximately 25 acres of shallow river channel and sand bars. Usually ice-free except in the coldest weather, it is a good place to check for ducks, geese, swans and gulls. Bald Eagles occasionally sit in a tree surveying the scene. It is also a good place to put in a kayak for a trip upriver. Best times to bird here are all year.



16 EDGER WATERFOWL PRODUCTION AREA
5000-5400 M-179 Highway (Chief Noonday Road)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages this property in association with the Michigan DNR Wildlife Division. This 160 acre property is open to the public daily from dawn to dusk. Edger is located approximately 4.5 miles west of Hastings on M-179. Since acquiring the property in 2007 to preserve wetlands and grasslands for waterfowl and other wildlife, USFWS and DNR have been working to restore the property's original prairie habitat through prescribed burns, invasive vegetation removal, and seeding the broad slopes with native grasses and flowers. Hayfields have been converted to native warm-season grasses and wild flowers. A small lake surrounded

by trees can be found near the center of the property. There is a mowed loop trail beginning from the parking lot, circling around the lake, and returning to the parking lot. Mallards and Wood Ducks are resident on the lake. Great Blue and Green herons and an occasional Great Egret frequent the lake. During spring and fall migration Ring-necked, Ruddy ducks and Bufflehead can be common. Summer resident birds include Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Willow Flycatcher, Warbling and Red-eyed vireos, Yellow and Blue-winged warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Great Crested Flycatcher, Sandhill Crane, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Field Sparrow, Eastern Bluebird, Baltimore Oriole, Indigo Bunting, and Eastern Towhee. Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Eastern Wood Pewee, and Wood Thrush can often be heard singing from the adjacent woodlands. The land is open to hunting, and care should be taken during hunting season. Further information can be obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office in East Lansing at 517-351-6236.



17 HIDDEN POND PRESERVE
4000-4288 Otis Lake Road

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy owns this 67 acre preserve which is open to the public daily. The parking lot is on Otis Lake Road ¼ mile south of Sager Road. Much of the property is surrounded by the Barry State Game area. Since acquiring the property in 2010, SWMLC has been working to restore the property's original prairie habitat through prescribed burns, invasive vegetation removal, and seeding with native grasses and



flowers. Visitors can access the preserve on a half-mile of moderate trails through grassland and forest edges, over a stream to a "hidden" hilltop pond, a seeming oasis of marsh plants, frogs, and ducks. Henslow's Sparrow, a species that is endangered in Michigan, has been seen and heard singing in the grassland. Other summer residents include Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Willow Flycatcher, Warbling and Red-eyed vireos, Yellow and Blue-winged warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Great Crested Flycatcher, Sandhill Crane, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, American Redstart, Eastern Bluebird, and Eastern Towhee. Red-shouldered Hawks can often be heard calling from the adjacent woodlands as well as Pileated Woodpeckers. Further information can be obtained on the website <http://www.conserveland@swmlc.org>



18 GOODWILL ROAD AT HUBBEL ROAD

Goodwill Road runs west off of Highway M-43 approximately four miles southwest of Hastings. The open grassland habitat at the corner of Goodwill and Hubbel roads is the place to go when searching for Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Willow Flycatcher, Sandhill Crane, Barn Swallow, and Savannah Sparrow. The best time to look for these grassland birds is May, June and July. A spotting scope is helpful at any season. Pull to the side of the road and be aware of traffic.



19 GULL LAKE
5469 M-43, Hickory Corners

Gull Lake is a large inland lake that just nudges into Barry County from the south. It hosts a wide variety of waterfowl, including loons, grebes, ducks, swans, geese, gulls and terns during the migration seasons. It is mostly surrounded by cottages and homes, but there are several places where the lake can be scanned for birds. One such place is the Gull Lake Boat Launch at the address given above. An entrance fee is charged at all seasons. Another overlook is along East Baseline Road, which is approximately 1.2 miles if you drive clockwise around the lake. W.K. Kellogg Biological Station at 3700 East Gull Lake Road offers another good vantage point. The best times to visit Gull Lake are in spring and fall and whenever the lake is ice-free in winter. Gull Lake has hosted Franklin's Gull, all three scoters, Red-throated Loon, and Barrow's Goldeneye.



20 NASHVILLE MILL POND
Thornapple River east of M-66

Following removal of a dam on the Thornapple River in Nashville in 2009, the area upstream of M-66 has reverted to a floodplain. There is some public land on the south bank of the river north of Reed Street, accessible from a dirt road 200 yards west of the intersection of Curtis Road, or the floodplain can be viewed from the north side of the river along Kellogg Street. Trumpeter Swans are often found here and Spotted Sandpipers in summer. When the river level is high in early spring, numerous duck and geese can be found. Rusty Blackbirds like the trees in March. Flooding conditions in April and May can make conditions right for migrating shorebirds. The river can also be kayaked, putting in at a small launch on Middle Street one block north of Reed Street.



21 DELTON KELLOGG HIGH SCHOOL
10425 Panther Pride Drive, Delton

From Delton Road enter the school campus next to the football field and drive south past the high school buildings to the parking lot near the baseball fields. From the fields you can look over Upper Crooked Lake and some cattail marshes adjacent to the school grounds. This area is great for ducks, swans and geese, coots, rails, cranes, Swamp Sparrows, and Marsh Wren. There is a short hiking trail along the shoreline north into a small woodlot. Please respect all school rules (such as no smoking) while you are on their property.

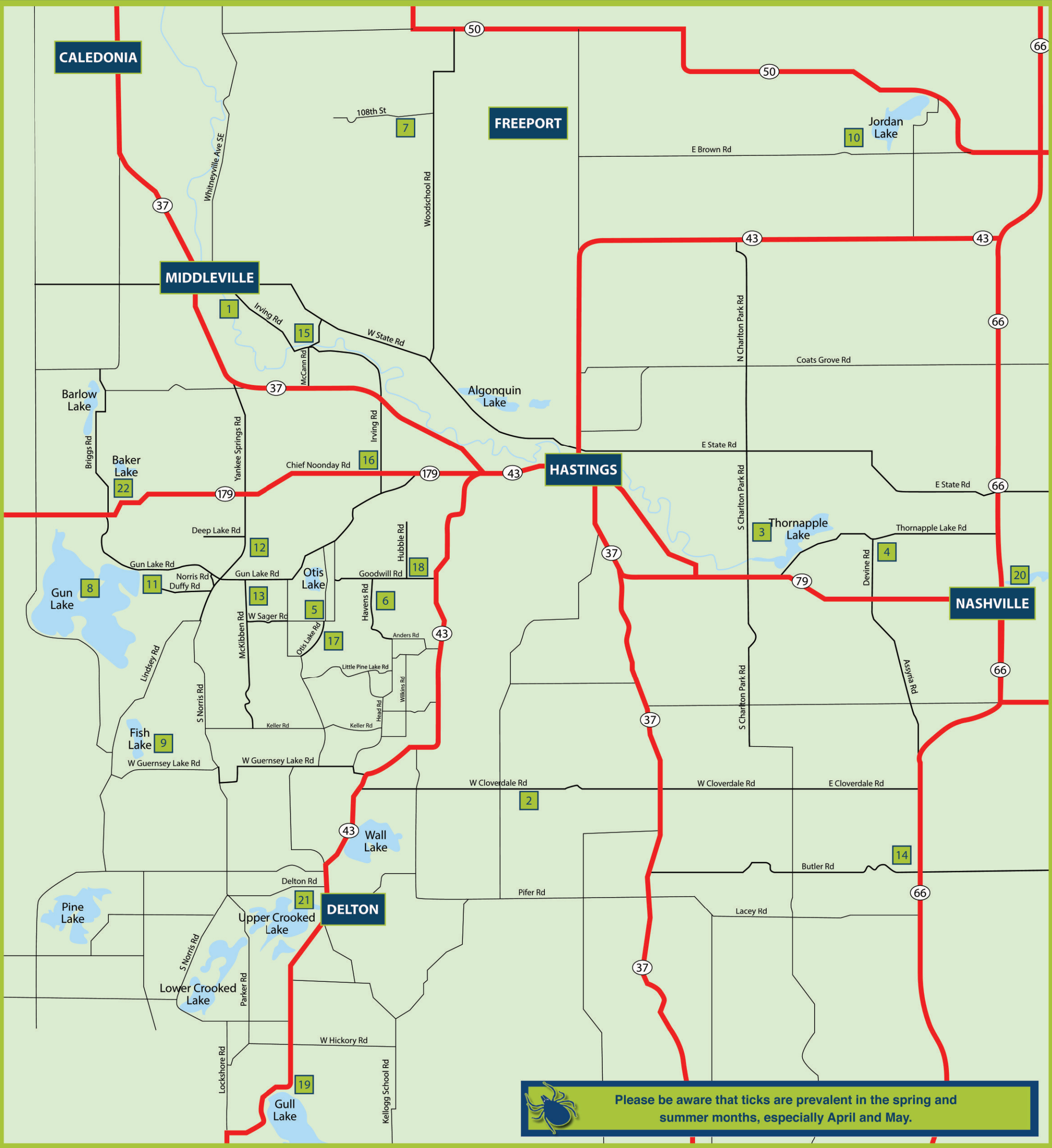


22 BAKER LAKE
Norris Road 2/3 mile N of M-179 Highway

This quiet lake is almost entirely within Yankee Springs Recreation Area and is a splendid place to kayak or hike. From the parking area off Norris Road there are trails extending clockwise and counter-clockwise around the lake, through a variety of woods both wet and dry. Both trails dead end, requiring a return hike back to your car. In spring and summer this can be a good area for Wild Turkey, Red-shouldered Hawk, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, flycatchers, warblers, woodpeckers, migrating ducks, and kinglets.



Bird images donated by Josh Haas www.hawksonthewing.com
With additional photography by...
Delmar Bachert, Marie Elzinga & Anne Klein



BIRDING SITE AMENITIES KEY:



**PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANT
POST-COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT**

*This information required under authority of Part 19, PA 451 of 1994, as amended;
the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 78 Stat. 897 (1964); and Part 715, of PA 451 of 1994, as amended.*

GRANT TYPE: ☐ MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND ☐ CLEAN MICHIGAN INITIATIVE
(Please select one) ☐ LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ☐ RECREATION PASSPORT ☒ BOND FUND

GRANTEE: Barry County

PROJECT NUMBER: BF 91-368

PROJECT TYPE: Development

PROJECT TITLE: Charlton Park

PROJECT SCOPE: Roadway, Restrooms, Swim Beach Parking, Picnic Equipment

TO BE COMPLETED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY (GRANTEE)

Name of Agency (Grantee)	Contact Person	Title
Historic Charlton Park - Barry County	Mr. Dan Patton	Park Director
Address	Telephone	
2545 S. Charlton Park Rd.	(269) 945-3775	
City, State, ZIP	Email	
Hastings, MI 49058	dpatton@barrycounty.org	

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Any change(s) in the facility type, site layout, or recreation activities provided?
If yes, please describe change(s).

☐ Yes ☒ No

Has any portion of the project site been converted to a use other than outdoor recreation? If yes, please
describe what portion and describe use. (This would include cell towers and any non-recreation buildings.) ☐ Yes ☒ No

Are any of the facilities obsolete? If yes, please explain.

☐ Yes ☒ No

SITE QUALITY

Is there a park entry sign which identifies the property or facility as a public recreation area?
If yes, please provide a photograph of the sign. If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Are the facilities and the site being properly maintained? If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Is vandalism a problem at this site? If yes, explain the measures being taken to prevent or minimize vandalism.

☐ Yes ☒ No

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

Is maintenance scheduled on a regular basis? If yes, give schedule. If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Staff work at the facility daily 8am until closing

GENERAL

Is a Program Recognition plaque permanently displayed at the site? If yes, please provide a photograph. (Not required for Bond Fund Grants)

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Is any segment of the general public restricted from using the site or facilities? (i.e. resident only, league only, boaters only, etc.) If yes, please explain.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Is a fee charged for use of the site or facilities? If yes, please provide fee structure.

☒ Yes ☐ No

The facility is free for 353 days of the year. We charge a per-person fee of \$7.00 or \$5.00 for certain special events that happen approximately 12 days per year.

What are the hours and seasons for availability of the site?

Park is open year-round. Hours are typically adjusted by season or 8am till dusk.

COMMENTS (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED)

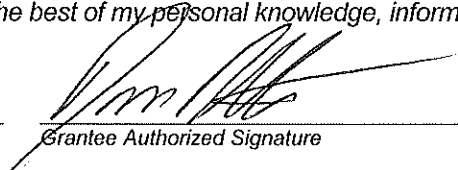
POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that I am duly elected, appointed and/or authorized by the Grantee named above and that the information and answers provided herein are true and accurate to the best of my personal knowledge, information and belief.

Dan Patton

Please print

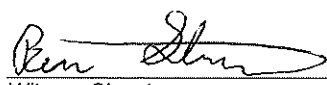

Grantee Authorized Signature

10/14/24

Date

Ben Strimback

Please print


Witness Signature

10/14/24

Date

Send completed report to:

POST COMPLETION GRANT INSPECTION REPORTS
GRANTS MANAGEMENT
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 30425
LANSING MI 48909-7925

**PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANT
POST-COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT**

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(Please select one) ☒ LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ☐ RECREATION PASSPORT ☐ BOND FUND

GRANTEE: Barry County

PROJECT NUMBER: 26-01023S2

PROJECT TYPE: Development

PROJECT TITLE: Charlton Park

PROJECT SCOPE: Shelter Construction, Picnic Equipment

TO BE COMPLETED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY (GRANTEE)

Name of Agency (Grantee)	Contact Person	Title
Historic Charlton Park - Barry County	Mr. Dan Patton	Park Director
Address	Telephone	
2545 S. Charlton Park Rd.	(269) 945-3775	
City, State, ZIP	Email	
Hastings, MI 49058	dpatton@barrycounty.org	

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Any change(s) in the facility type, site layout, or recreation activities provided?
If yes, please describe change(s).

☐ Yes ☒ No

Has any portion of the project site been converted to a use other than outdoor recreation? If yes, please describe what portion and describe use. (This would include cell towers and any non-recreation buildings.) ☐ Yes ☒ No

Are any of the facilities obsolete? If yes, please explain.

☐ Yes ☒ No

SITE QUALITY

Is there a park entry sign which identifies the property or facility as a public recreation area?
If yes, please provide a photograph of the sign. If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Are the facilities and the site being properly maintained? If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Is vandalism a problem at this site? If yes, explain the measures being taken to prevent or minimize vandalism.

☐ Yes ☒ No

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

Is maintenance scheduled on a regular basis? If yes, give schedule. If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Staff work at the facility daily 8am until closing

GENERAL

Is a Program Recognition plaque permanently displayed at the site? If yes, please provide a photograph. (Not required for Bond Fund Grants)

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Is any segment of the general public restricted from using the site or facilities? (i.e. resident only, league only, boaters only, etc.) If yes, please explain.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Is a fee charged for use of the site or facilities? If yes, please provide fee structure.

☒ Yes ☐ No

The facility is free 353 days of the year. We charge a per person fee of \$7.00 or \$5.00 for certain special events that happen approximately 12 days per year.

What are the hours and seasons for availability of the site?

Park is open year round. Hours are typically adjusted by season or 8am till dusk.

COMMENTS (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED)

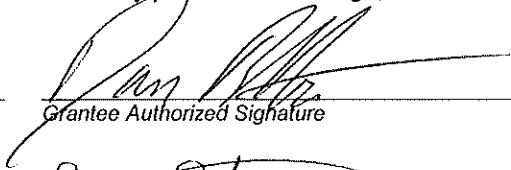
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Dan Patton

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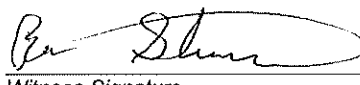

Grantee Authorized Signature

10/14/24

Date

Ben Strimback

Please print


Witness Signature

10/14/24

Date

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MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 30425
LANSING MI 48909-7925

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(Please select one) ☐ LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ☐ RECREATION PASSPORT ☐ BOND FUND

GRANTEE: Barry County

PROJECT NUMBER: TF08-107

PROJECT TYPE: Development

PROJECT TITLE: McKeown Bridge Park Development

PROJECT SCOPE: Barrier-free Fishing platform, Parking, Restroom, River Access

TO BE COMPLETED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY (GRANTEE)

Name of Agency (Grantee)	Contact Person	Title
Historic Charlton Park - Barry County	Mr. Dan Patton	Park Director
Address	Telephone	
2545 S. Charlton Park Rd.	(269) 945-3775	
City, State, ZIP	Email	
Hastings, MI 49058	dpatton@barrycounty.org	

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Any change(s) in the facility type, site layout, or recreation activities provided?
If yes, please describe change(s). ☐ Yes ☒ No

Has any portion of the project site been converted to a use other than outdoor recreation? If yes, please
describe what portion and describe use. (This would include cell towers and any non-recreation buildings.) ☐ Yes ☒ No

Are any of the facilities obsolete? If yes, please explain. ☐ Yes ☒ No

SITE QUALITY

Is there a park entry sign which identifies the property or facility as a public recreation area?
If yes, please provide a photograph of the sign. If no, please explain. ☒ Yes ☐ No

Are the facilities and the site being properly maintained? If no, please explain. ☒ Yes ☐ No

Is vandalism a problem at this site? If yes, explain the measures being taken to prevent or minimize vandalism. ☐ Yes ☒ No

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

Is maintenance scheduled on a regular basis? If yes, give schedule. If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Toilets & Trash maintained weekly

Weekly mowing summer time

GENERAL

Is a Program Recognition plaque permanently displayed at the site? If yes, please provide a photograph. (Not required for Bond Fund Grants)

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Is any segment of the general public restricted from using the site or facilities? (i.e. resident only, league only, boaters only, etc.) If yes, please explain.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Is a fee charged for use of the site or facilities? If yes, please provide fee structure.

☐ Yes ☒ No

The facility is free year round

What are the hours and seasons for availability of the site?

Park is open year round.

COMMENTS (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED)

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that I am duly elected, appointed and/or authorized by the Grantee named above and that the information and answers provided herein are true and accurate to the best of my personal knowledge, information and belief.

Dan Patton

Please print

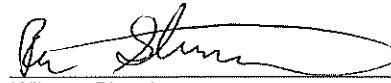

Grantee Authorized Signature

10/14/24

Date

Ben Strimback

Please print


Witness Signature

10/14/24

Date

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(Please select one) ☒ LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ☐ RECREATION PASSPORT ☐ BOND FUND

GRANTEE: Barry County

PROJECT NUMBER: 26-00175

PROJECT TYPE: Acquisition

PROJECT TITLE: Charlton Park

PROJECT SCOPE: Purchase 124 acres of land contiguous to Charlton Park

TO BE COMPLETED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY (GRANTEE)

Name of Agency (Grantee)	Contact Person	Title
Historic Charlton Park - Barry County	Mr. Dan Patton	Park Director
Address	Telephone	
2545 S. Charlton Park Rd.	(269) 945-3775	
City, State, ZIP	Email	
Hastings, MI 49058	dpatton@barrycounty.org	

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Any change(s) in the facility type, site layout, or recreation activities provided?
If yes, please describe change(s).

☐ Yes ☒ No

Has any portion of the project site been converted to a use other than outdoor recreation? If yes, please
describe what portion and describe use. (This would include cell towers and any non-recreation buildings.) ☐ Yes ☒ No

Are any of the facilities obsolete? If yes, please explain.

☐ Yes ☒ No

SITE QUALITY

Is there a park entry sign which identifies the property or facility as a public recreation area?
If yes, please provide a photograph of the sign. If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Are the facilities and the site being properly maintained? If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Is vandalism a problem at this site? If yes, explain the measures being taken to prevent or minimize vandalism.

☐ Yes ☒ No

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

Is maintenance scheduled on a regular basis? If yes, give schedule. If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Staff work at the facility daily

GENERAL

Is a Program Recognition plaque permanently displayed at the site? If yes, please provide a photograph. (Not required for Bond Fund Grants)

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Is any segment of the general public restricted from using the site or facilities? (i.e. resident only, league only, boaters only, etc.) If yes, please explain.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Is a fee charged for use of the site or facilities? If yes, please provide fee structure.

☒ Yes ☐ No

The facility is free about 350 days of the year. We charge a per person fee of \$7.00 or \$5.00 for certain special events that happen approximately 12 days per year.

What are the hours and seasons for availability of the site?

Park is open year round. Hours are typically adjusted by season or 8am till dusk.

COMMENTS (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED)

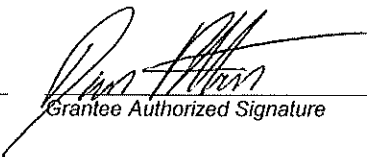
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CERTIFICATION

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Dan Patton

Please print


Grantee Authorized Signature

10/14/2024

Date

Ben Strimback

Please print


Witness Signature

10/14/2024

Date

Send completed report to:

POST COMPLETION GRANT INSPECTION REPORTS
GRANTS MANAGEMENT
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 30425
LANSING MI 48909-7925

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the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 78 Stat. 897 (1964); and Part 715, of PA 451 of 1994, as amended.*

GRANT TYPE: ☐ MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND ☐ CLEAN MICHIGAN INITIATIVE
(Please select one) ☒ LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ☐ RECREATION PASSPORT ☐ BOND FUND

GRANTEE: Barry CountyPROJECT NUMBER: 26-00416PROJECT TYPE: DevelopmentPROJECT TITLE: Charlton ParkPROJECT SCOPE: Boat Launch, Swim Beach, Ball Diamond, Parking, Water System**TO BE COMPLETED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY (GRANTEE)**

Name of Agency (Grantee)	Contact Person	Title
Historic Charlton Park - Barry County	Mr. Dan Patton	Park Director
Address	Telephone	
2545 S. Charlton Park Rd.	(269) 945-3775	
City, State, ZIP	Email	
Hastings, MI 49058	dpatton@barrycounty.org	

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Any change(s) in the facility type, site layout, or recreation activities provided?
If yes, please describe change(s). ☐ Yes ☒ No

Has any portion of the project site been converted to a use other than outdoor recreation? If yes, please
describe what portion and describe use. (This would include cell towers and any non-recreation buildings.) ☐ Yes ☒ No

Are any of the facilities obsolete? If yes, please explain. ☐ Yes ☒ No

SITE QUALITY

Is there a park entry sign which identifies the property or facility as a public recreation area?
If yes, please provide a photograph of the sign. If no, please explain. ☒ Yes ☐ No

Are the facilities and the site being properly maintained? If no, please explain. ☒ Yes ☐ No

Is vandalism a problem at this site? If yes, explain the measures being taken to prevent or minimize vandalism. ☐ Yes ☒ No

POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

Is maintenance scheduled on a regular basis? If yes, give schedule. If no, please explain.

☒ Yes ☐ No

Staff work at the facility daily 8am until closing

GENERAL

Is a Program Recognition plaque permanently displayed at the site? If yes, please provide a photograph. (Not required for Bond Fund Grants)

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Is any segment of the general public restricted from using the site or facilities? (i.e. resident only, league only, boaters only, etc.) If yes, please explain.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Is a fee charged for use of the site or facilities? If yes, please provide fee structure.

☒ Yes ☐ No

The facility is free approximately 350 days of the year. We charge a per person fee of \$7.00 or \$5.00 for certain special events that happen approximately 12 days per year.

What are the hours and seasons for availability of the site?

Park is open year round. Hours are typically adjusted by season or 8am till dusk.

COMMENTS (ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED)

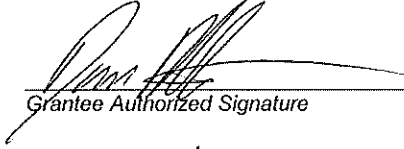
POST COMPLETION SELF-CERTIFICATION REPORT - CONT'D

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that I am duly elected, appointed and/or authorized by the Grantee named above and that the information and answers provided herein are true and accurate to the best of my personal knowledge, information and belief.

Dan Patton

Please print

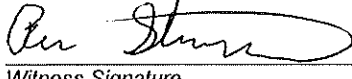

Grantee Authorized Signature

10/14/24

Date

Ben Strimback

Please print


Witness Signature

10/14/24

Date

Send completed report to:

POST COMPLETION GRANT INSPECTION REPORTS
GRANTS MANAGEMENT
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 30425
LANSING MI 48909-7925