

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Park Planning Process

The purpose of the park planning process is to ensure that operational and facility improvements are designed to meet the recreational needs of Oakland County residents and are welcoming to people of all abilities, ages, and cultures. The primary focus is on the long-term stability, management, and programming of existing assets and facilities, with a secondary focus on development of new assets and facilities.

Foundation for Park Plans

Extensive background documentation and research is conducted on each park, which is summarized in the *Baseline Park Analysis* document. The development of recommendations for operational and facility improvements are supported are built upon the following foundation:

- ✓ The policies, goals and objectives of the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission
- ✓ Current conditions of the park and its assets and facilities
- ✓ Accessibility assessments and ADA transition plans
- ✓ Public engagement and recreational trends
- ✓ Evaluation of performance metrics

Planning Cycle – 10-year plans, 5-year updates, annual review

The park planning process is designed to be responsive to organizational priorities and fiscal considerations and is closely tied to the budget approval cycle for operations, capital improvements, and maintenance programs. The park plans provide context and structure for development of individual projects and budgets. Park Commission approval for projects and other actions is obtained through the approval of operational budgets, capital projects and maintenance programs.

Park plans will be incorporated into the *Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2018-2022*. Adoption by the Parks Commission and Oakland County Board of Commissioners is scheduled for November 2017 and submission for approval to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) will occur by February 2018. Having a current *Recreation Plan* on file with the MDNR is an eligibility requirement to be able to apply for state and some federal grants for acquisition and development.

Annual review will occur within the 5-year *Recreation Plan* cycle and is the responsibility of the Planning and Resource Development staff. The annual review process will commence in January and February of each year by meeting with park staff to update information about the current conditions in each park; reviewing data and evaluating the results of the previous year's implementation; and revising recommendations as needed based on evaluation results. Forecasts will be reviewed and revised based on current budget conditions. Updates and revisions will be reviewed by the Administrative Management Team (AMT) before presenting an update to the Parks Commission. Annual updates of park plans and forecasts will provide support for the budget process. Filing of an official amendment with MDNR will be necessary only if new recommendations affect current or proposed grant-funded projects.

Forecasting Implementation Costs

The budget allocation in FY2016 was \$1.5 million for capital improvement projects. If we assumed that this funding level would be consistent over the 10-year planning period – we would expect a total capital improvement budget of \$15,000,000 over that period. Since the focus of the capital improvement program is reinvestment in existing assets – this would represent an annual reinvestment rate of approximately 1.4% (park assets were valued at \$107,346,628 in 2015). If new assets are planned, a decision must be made to identify additional funding resources or divert funding from reinvestment in existing assets or a combination of both.

The actual allocation of funding on an annual basis will be decided through the annual budget process and it is expected that annual budgeted amounts will fluctuate based on need, available funding, and other priorities set by the Parks Commission. With limited funding, dollars will be directed to where the greatest organizational need is, largely based on health and safety and the need to maintain existing assets.

Components of the Plan

Park Vision

The Park Vision looks forward 10 years and describes the future role of the park in the community and value to Oakland County residents. It forecasts increases in revenue, creation of operational efficiencies, and adjustments to operations, services offered, and fees based on demand and recreational needs.

Park Planning Units

Through the planning process, we identify distinct Park Planning Units within the park where similar park and recreation services are delivered. Planning Units may be considered dispersed throughout the park (**Park-Wide Planning Units**), located in a specific geographic area in the park (**Location-Specific Planning Units**), or considered operational (**Park Operation Units**). In some cases, new facilities or services are proposed (**Proposed Service Units**) – these areas may or may not have a geographic location identified.

Facility Concepts

Facility Concepts are recommendations for facility and operational improvements and are organized by Planning Area. Support for the concepts is provided by summaries of recreational trends, public engagement, and accessibility assessments. Annual review of the concepts is important, as changing conditions and identification of new funding sources may cause a realignment of priorities. Three types of recommended concepts are proposed:

- **10-Year Planning Concepts:** The 10-Year Planning Concepts incorporate operational, programming, maintenance and/or capital improvement recommendations. They may also identify the need for additional planning. These recommendations are considered a higher priority based on current conditions and recreational needs and are forecast to be implemented within the next 10 years. Actions identified in the ADA Transition Plan to remove barriers and increase recreational access to the park in order to meet federal accessibility guidelines are incorporated.
- **Concepts for Future Consideration:** These recommendations are considered either a lower priority, less urgent, or dependent on implementation of the 10-Year Concepts. They may also exceed the current budgetary guidelines.

Objectives and Performance Indicators

Implementation of Facility Concepts is expected to have an effect on the recreational experience at the park and on a variety of park statistics. Six measurable objectives have been selected for all parks. Each objective is measurable in terms of performance indicators and provides a timetable for evaluation throughout the 10-year period. The performance indicators for an individual park are integral to the performance indicators of the overall organization.

Objective 1: Park User Satisfaction

Increase customer satisfaction with the amenities and services

Recommended park improvements may be targeted at the areas where customer satisfaction is lower. Implementation of improvements is intended to increase customer satisfaction and should be reflected in public engagement and customer service ratings. *Performance Indicator: Park user surveys and comment cards – Report annually*

Objective 2: Park Visits

Increase annual number of visits to facilities in the park

Improvements in existing recreational opportunities and creation of new ones are intended to draw new and repeat visitors to the park. *Performance Indicators: Park visit statistics – Report monthly and annually*

Objective 3: Fiscal Trends

Increase park annual net revenue as appropriate to the park's categories of service

Appropriate revenue goals are related to the services provided at the park. Highly subsidized services, such as general park use and trail usage, are not expected to produce significant revenue. Other services, such as concession sales and boat rentals, are expected to show increases in revenue associated with increases in park visits. The Parks Commission has indicated an intention to balance OCPRC's overall annual operating budget. Success in increasing net revenue at individual facilities will contribute to a positive fiscal trend by the entire organization. *Performance Indicator: Park fiscal trends – Report monthly and annually*

Objective 4: Cost Recovery

Meet cost recovery targets as established by the Parks Commission

Many park improvements are intended to have a positive effect on cost recovery by increasing participation in existing revenue generating opportunities (such as rental of campsites, boats and bikes), by creating new opportunities to generate revenue (such as concessions and merchandise sales), and by creating operational efficiencies. Cost recovery is also affected by the number of park visits, which reflects the number of individuals and families who engage in activities that generate revenue for the park. *Performance Indicator: Cost recovery calculation for services delivered – Report annually*

Objective 5: Nature Resource Quality

Preserve existing high quality ecosystems and improve ecological communities that are fragmented or degraded

Natural resource management includes the preservation of intact natural communities, ecosystem restoration and invasive species management, environmentally sustainable practices, and, potentially, land acquisition to increase the amount of protected natural area. *Performance Indicator – Geographic measurement of managed areas – Report annually*

Objective 6: Accessibility of Facilities

Implement Accessibility Transition Plan

Resolution of the accessibility issues identified in the ADA Transition Plan will help to increase the value of a park to residents. This can be expected to increase the number of park visits and therefore the cost recovery for the park. Sufficient public engagement will be needed as accessibility issues are resolved and barriers are removed to make sure the public is aware and takes advantage of increases in accessibility. *Performance Indicator – Documentation of Transition Plan implementation – Report annually*

Park Planning Products – Complete Portfolio

The park planning process is an iterative process resulting in a set of planning documents that become more comprehensive as they are updated annually to incorporate the evaluation of outcomes, continuing public engagement, and adjustments to organizational priorities and funding levels.

In addition to the *Park Vision and Facility Concepts* document that is incorporated into the *Recreation Plan*, there are documents that provide a greater depth of detail and should be consulted when planning individual projects. The complete dossier of park-specific planning resources includes the following and all are available to the Parks Commission and the public upon request:

- *Baseline Park Analysis*
- *ADA Transition Plan*
- *Annual Project Meeting Minutes*
- *Public Engagement Reports*
- *Service Portfolio and Cost Recovery Trends*
- *Fiscal Trends*
- *Park Visit Trends and Methods*
- *Asset Inventory*
- *Annual Dashboard and Data Book*
 - *Annual Park Visit Trends*
 - *Park Profile*
 - *Land Acquisition History*
 - *Property Restrictions*
 - *Natural Resource Management Annual Update*
 - *Facility Inventory*
 - *Drive-Time Service Area*
 - *Facility Season Length and Weather Trends*