

Status update on Kalamazoo Township's Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan

April 10, 2017 (5-15-18 update)



Background

The Township Board of Trustees adopted the current Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan: 2015-2019 in January 2015, which contains an extensive list and description of park facilities for residents to enjoy, including:

- a variety of park and recreation options within the township, including:
 - Grand Prairie Golf Course
 - Kalamazoo Township-owned mini-parks
 - Academy & Grand Park
 - Jenks & Grand Pre
 - Lakewood Park
 - Rynbrandt Park
 - Scheid Park
 - Stroud Family Playground
 - Wilson Recreation Area
- several public school playgrounds, the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail, the Bow in the Clouds preserve, and other facilities, and
- regional parks, such as nearby Markin Glen County Park, Fray's Park, Oshtemo Township Park, Kindelberger Park, and others.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources encourages this regional perspective to maximize opportunities by complimenting resources.

The Plan also lists the following, publically vetted objectives to support parks and recreation services during the 2015-2019 time period. Now, at this mid-point of the Plan, is an appropriate time to review the objectives.

Goal 1: Non-motorized Connectivity – Improve non-motorized connectivity in the Township including both sidewalks and bikeways

Kalamazoo Township's approximately 63 miles of sidewalks and other non-motorized features can be viewed as linear, recreational features, which facilitate rich connections between homes, conventional parks within and on the peripheral of the township, and other destinations.

Status of objectives:

In 2016, the following measures were completed:

- The township connected the Westwood neighborhood to Western Michigan University by constructing a critical segment of sidewalk between Sabin Street and M-43/W. Main.

- Bicycle boulevard routes were signed in the Eastwood and Westwood neighborhoods to guide casual bicyclists on relatively quiet, 25 mph routes that connect the neighborhoods to near-downtown Kalamazoo; the routes were designed in cooperation with the City of Kalamazoo, who is working to complete its segment.
- The township constructed or repaired sidewalks on both sides of Grand Prairie Avenue, connecting residents to two public schools, Stroud Family Park, Westwood Little League, and improved access to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trailway.
- The Road Commission of Kalamazoo County implemented East Main Street’s Road Diet, which supported multiple transportation options by converting 4 traffic lanes into two traffic lanes, a center-turn lane, a set of signed bicycle lanes, and ADA-compliant sidewalk connections to roadways.
- Kalamazoo Probation Enhancement Program volunteers revitalized a section of sidewalk at Olmstead Road and enhanced community spirits in the Lakewood neighborhood.



Anticipated measures:

- Proposed work for 2017 includes installing critical sidewalks along particularly busy roads (Nazareth Road, Olmstead Road, and Sunnyside Drive), correcting many orphaned sidewalks (sidewalks which end in lawn before reaching a roadway), and installing sidewalk ramps where existing curb and gutter pose a physical barrier. (3-15-18 update: most sites were completed in 2017; 2018 is slated to address ~100 more sidewalk repairs, complete the northern end of Nazareth’s sidewalk, and complete an engineered study of the west side of Nichols Road – between Grand Prairie and Ravine – to connect to better Westwood to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail.)



- Discussions will continue to explore the potential for a pathway located on the edge of the Grand Prairie Golf Course to more safely connect Westwood neighborhood households to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trailway and to promote public awareness and use of the golf course.

Goal 2: Utilize parks and recreation as a means to improve quality of life in Township neighborhoods

Status of objectives:

- The Township has received positive feedback from residents concerning recent improvements and aims to continue to enhance infrastructure and public awareness as guided by the plan to promote use of recreational opportunities.

Goal 3: Existing Facilities Maintenance and Improvement – Continue to maintain and improve existing parks and recreation facilities

Status of objectives:

- Lakewood Park & Stroud Family Park: Removed obstructing vegetation in 2015 & 2016 (see Goal 6).
- Stroud Family Park: Repainted sign and purchased new playground equipment in preparation for a 2017 installation (including edging and wood chips).
- Many residents are enthusiastically volunteering as “Friends of the Park” to support the parks’ infrastructure by maintaining plantings, picking up trash, and reporting findings and feedback to the Parks & Recreation Commissioner. (Also see Goal #5).
- The Township Maintenance staff has a management plan for mowing lawns and for weekly trash collection from the parks’ waste containers.
- Restroom services will continue to be available at Stroud Family Park and Wilson Recreational Area.
- The playground equipment in Lakewood Park and Wilson Recreation Area received a fresh installation of engineered wood chips to enhance safety (also see Goal #6).



Lakewood Park – older mulch



Lakewood Park with new mulch in 2017

Anticipated measures:

- Stroud Family Park: an additional playground area will be installed in 2017. (3-15-18 update: complete)
- Lakewood Park and Wilson Recreation Area: Broken picnic tables will be repaired. And, the Township is currently in discussions with Kalamazoo Public Schools concerning the repair of broken sections of the white vinyl fence. (3-15-18 update: complete)



- Stroud Family Park: Options are being considered to restore the approximately 16 year-old tennis courts by filling gaps (5-15-18 update: Board approved repairs anticipated for 2018).
- Lakewood Park: Maintenance staff will evaluate the 3 cooking grills. (3-15-18 update: complete)
- Rynbrandt Park and Academy and Grand Park: Install welcome and rule signs. (3-15-18 update: complete)
- Develop an environmentally-sensitive management plan for Academy & Grand Park.
- Lakewood Park: Explore fencing alternatives to the aging, metal fences located on the park's north and east (3-15-18 update: complete) sides.
- Wilson Recreation Area: Seal the asphalt pathway to protect this investment.
- Scheid Park: Continue to implement the park's management plans, including the installation of a Leopold bench.
- Rynbrandt Park: Consider options to site a bench and other enhancements. (5-15-18 update: concrete pad is poured to receive 6'-wide, recycled plastic bench)
- Re-paint existing signs at Wilson Recreation Area and Lakewood Park, as well as Lakewood's pavilion posts and the fire truck play equipment. (3-15-18 update: complete)



Goal 4: Establish passive recreation facilities at existing underdeveloped/underutilized sites

Status of objectives:

- The Township has begun to gather resident's input.

Anticipated measures:

- In 2017, the Parks and Recreation Commissioner aims to gather neighbors' input and participation to enhance the use and awareness of Rynbrandt Park (5-15-18)



update: partly completed), Academy & Grand Park, and Jenks & Grand Pre Park (also see Goal #5)

Goal 5: Marketing and Publicity – Ensure community is aware of the park facilities

Status of objectives:

- The former Recreation Commissioner Mark Miller individually highlighted a park during Board of Trustees meetings.
- The township newsletter has included some promotion.
- The sign for Stroud Family Park was repainted to enhance public awareness.

Anticipated measures:

- Touch up the signs for Lakewood Park and Wilson Recreation Park to enhance public awareness and neighborhood pride. (3-15-18 update: complete)
- Enhance parks and recreation information on the township's website (continuously updated).
- Feature the township's parks on Public Media Network's "Kalamazoo Township Roundtable" program.
- A postcard mailed to township residents could promote the township website in general (the prime message) as well as highlight parks and recreation opportunities.
- Solicit more "Friends of the Parks" volunteers to help with specific needs (e.g., Master Gardeners and others to help maintain plantings, a resident acting as a "Parks Champion" to weekly visit a park to pick up trash and report new findings to the Parks & Recreation Commissioner (also see Goal #3) (continuously updated).
- * Identify community events, such as a "Celebrate Wilson Recreation Area (or "Jenks & Grand Pre Park Day") with interactive activities.

Goal 6: Safety & Security – Ensure the Township park properties have the highest degree of safety and security for residents and users

Status of objectives:

- Obstructing vegetation was removed from Lakewood Park, which makes the park more visible and safe feeling. Likewise, vegetation was cleared or thinned in much of Shied Park as part of plant restoration project, which also increased openness and a sense of safety.
- The playground equipment in Lakewood Park and Wilson Recreation Area received a fresh installation of engineered wood chips to enhance safety

Anticipated measures:

- Lakewood Park: evaluate restoraton of the east (3-15-18 update: complete) and south fence.
- All parks: In Spring 2017, the Parks and Recreation Commissioner and others can solicit neighbors who may be interested in becoming a "Friend of the Park" by regularly picking up trash or tending vegetative plantings to promote a sense of active, community involvement and caring, which can deters uncivil behaviors (continuously updated).

Goal 7: Serve All Populations with Parks and Recreation – Provide a range of parks and recreation facilities to meet the leisure needs of all segments of the population.

Status of objectives:

- As part of the its commitment to Complete Streets, the Township continues to enhance the availability and quality of sidewalks as linear parks for the recreation and transportation needs of all residents.

Anticipated measures:

- Continue to encourage input from citizens, the Planning Commission, and staff.

Goal 8: Funding – Develop stable sources of funding and practice sound fiscal management of the parks and recreation system.

Status of objectives:

- A grant proposal was discussed with a local foundation.

Anticipated measures:

- Identify and promote a process for accepting donations and memorials of funds or materials (plantings, bench, etc.).
- Identify potential grant opportunities.

Goal 9: Planning – Maintain an on-going parks and recreation planning process

Status of objectives:

Anticipated measures:

- Create a Parks Citizen Committee: Potentially enlist “Friends of the Park”, Maintenance staff, the Township Manager, a member of the Planning Commission, and the Parks & Recreation Commissioner to identify and discuss needs and plans. Share the committee’s findings with the Planning Commission and the Township Board of Trustees in order to promote communications, ideas, and useful dialog.

Update: 2018 goals (3-15-18 draft)

1. As part of Goal 3
 - a. Develop a management plan for Academy Park, which involves purposely naturalizing the eastern end and replacing aged locust trees with new tree plantings (such as burr oak).
 - b. Seal asphalt pathway in Wilson Recreational Area
 - c. Acquire (via purchase or grant) more engineered wood chips for playground areas
 - d. Consider options for installing a bench in Rynbrandt Park
2. As part of Goal 5:
 - a. Improve web info
 - b. Partner with PMN to produce a program highlighting the parks and sidewalks (and other non-motorized transportation facilities) as linear parks that help residents support their health, environment, and community/placemaking goals.
 - c. Highlight parks in a township newsletter, as part of a larger promotion of the township’s web offerings
 - d. Solicit Master Gardeners to expand the number of Friends of the Parks
 - e. Discuss an event (such as a 0.21K walk ?) in Wilson Recreation Area with Eastwood Neighborhood Association, Police, and Fire Departments