

LOWELL CHARTER TOWNSHIP

2007 RECREATION PLAN



DECEMBER, 2007

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LOWELL CHARTER TOWNSHIP

Kent County, Michigan

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CHAPTER 1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AND PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

The Township has made significant improvements in the recreational facilities as a result of the previous recreation plan

Recreational facilities and amenities are important for a community to provide a high quality of life for its residents. This plan has been developed to determine if adequate facilities and activities exist in Lowell Charter Township, and to correct any shortcomings in an orderly manner, based on sound reasoning and planning.

Lowell Charter Township has made significant improvements in the recreational facilities offered within the community, as a result of the previous recreation plan developed in 2002. The primary focus of recreation in the Township is Grand River Riverfront Park. The 80-acre park along the Grand River has been a tremendous asset to the community and has numerous recreation activities available for Township residents. This Recreation Plan will aid the Township in identifying additional recreational development that should occur to meet existing and future demands of the residents of the Township.

This plan was developed with the benefit of a joint effort involving Lowell Charter Township, Vergennes Township, the City of Lowell and the Lowell Area Public Schools. The plan update was part of a joint effort undertaken by the three jurisdictions to consider recreation on a regional basis while simultaneously updating all three local recreation plans. As a result, each plan benefits from greater coordination than ever before and, through the use of the same consulting team completing each plan, the jurisdictions also achieve economies of scale in planning that would not otherwise be possible.

The joint effort to update all three plans also included an evaluation of the area's broader recreational needs. Thus, this plan and that of the other two jurisdictions include comparable facility inventories, more in keeping with the realities of how recreation facilities are used. In addition, the joint planning effort also included the development of an initial feasibility analysis pertaining to the potential use of an area of land that might be donated to the community for recreational purposes. That feasibility process included three important public input events:

- ◆ On October 25, 2007, more than seventy area residents attended a recreation visioning meeting at Lowell Charter Township Hall. The purpose was to evaluate existing recreation facilities and programming in a public discussion and to gain a better and broader understanding of the available resources, varying perspectives and possible approaches to maximize public and private resources to advance broad recreation goals.

- ◆ On November 2 and 3, the communities, working with their consulting team, sponsored a two-day Charrette design process to evaluate feasible alternative approaches to the potential land donation. The Charrette was attended by about _____ persons that provided input and guidance to the design of alternatives. It concluded with a public presentation of a range of alternatives which ultimately would be considered by a joint steering committee made up of representatives of all three jurisdictions, the school district, and the larger community.
- ◆ On _____, the final recommendations of the joint feasibility study were presented to the joint steering committee and _____.
- ◆ In addition to these broader community efforts, the work to update the Lowell Charter Township Recreation Plan concluded with a public hearing held before the Township Board.
- ◆ On _____, the final recommendations of the joint feasibility study were presented to the joint steering committee and _____.

In addition to these broader community efforts, the work to update the Lowell Charter Township Recreation Plan concluded with a public hearing held before the Township Board on _____. At that hearing, the Board gathered additional public comment on the plan and recreation needs and facilities.

While the action plan lays out a schedule for completing a variety of improvements, the schedule should remain flexible since funding opportunities may not match the identified schedule. The schedule attempts to evenly distribute the required improvements over the five year planning period, but the integrity of the plan will not be compromised if elements are moved to different time-frames.

Finally, this plan is intended to be frequently consulted. It will be in effect for five years through 2013. Under the Department of Natural Resources requirements, the plan will need to be updated at that time.

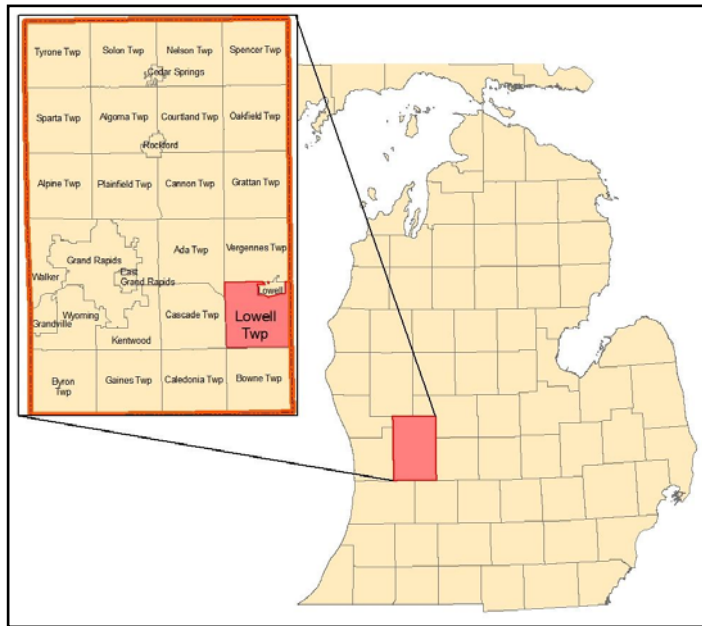
CHAPTER 2. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Introduction

The first step in planning for a community's recreational needs is a description of the area's physical and social features. The physical features do not change a great deal over the short term and include such natural features as soils, water features, topography, weather patterns, vegetation and wildlife. Physical features also include the built environment and include factors such as land use, transportation and historic sites.

Location

Lowell Township is located in the eastern portion of Kent County, and Kent County is located in the western portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. Lowell Township is 15 miles east of Grand Rapids, which is one of Michigan's major metropolitan areas. Other than Grand Rapids, the metropolitan area includes several communities: Kentwood, Wyoming and East Grand Rapids. Lowell Township is 50 miles southeast of Muskegon, 50 miles north of Kalamazoo, 50 miles west of Lansing, 140 miles west of Detroit, 190 miles northeast of Chicago, and 210 miles south of the Mackinac Bridge.



Map 1. Location of Lowell Charter Township

Map 1 shows the location of Lowell Township in relation to Kent County and Michigan as a whole.

Climate

Climate has a significant influence on the type of development that occurs in the area as well as the types of recreational opportunities that can, or should, occur. Since Michigan experiences all four seasons it is essential that the climate is factored into the decision-making process.

Table 1 identifies many of the temperature and precipitation traits in the area. The table shows that January and February are generally the coldest months of the year and that July is generally the warmest. February usually has the least precipitation (1.42 inches) and September generally has the most (4.24 inches). Snow tends to fall during six months of the year, with January generally receiving the most snowfall. (20.5 inches). The prevailing wind is from the west.

Table 1. Temperature and Precipitation

	Temperature (degrees Fahrenheit)			Precipitation	
	Average Daily Maximum	Average Daily Minimum	Average Daily	Average	Average Snowfall
January	29	14.7	21.8	1.83	20.5
February	31.6	15.8	23.7	1.42	12
March	42.8	25.4	31.4	2.63	10.1
April	56.56	35.4	46	3.37	3.2
May	69.3	45.6	57.5	3.13	0
June	78.7	55.3	67	3.68	0
July	82.8	60.4	71.6	3.19	0
August	80.5	58.4	69.5	3.57	0
September	72	49.9	61	4.24	0
October	59.8	39.1	49.5	2.81	0.7
November	45.8	30.2	38	3.32	7.5
December	33.5	20.7	27.1	2.85	18.1
Year	56.9	37.6	36	36.04	72.1

Topography

The terrain in Lowell Charter Township can be described as gently rolling with most of the steep slopes occurring in the northern two-thirds of the Township. Elevations range from 630 to 890 feet above mean sea level. The highest land is found in the southwest corner of the Township, and the low-lying areas are primarily located along the Grand River and Pratt Lake. Slopes frequently exceed five percent, and slopes of 10 percent or more are not uncommon. These areas may be appropriate for sledding hills, trails and skiing areas. The only part of the Township that is relatively flat is the floodplain of the Grand River south of M-21 and the agricultural areas in the southern third of the Township.

Water Resources

The scenic Grand River is one of the predominate natural features that traverses through the northern half of the Township between M-21 and Grand River Drive. Grand River Riverfront Park is located on the south side of the Grand River. In recent years, Kent County has built a bicycle path by widening the shoulder of the southern side of Grand River Drive.

As the north side of the river is used for commercial and residential purposes, more land to the south may become available for recreational

purposes. Additionally, areas within the 100-year floodplain boundary on the north and south sides of the Grand River are often utilized for recreational purposes, and Lowell Township should continue to look for opportunities to utilize the river to for recreation.

There are three named lakes in the Township totaling approximately 220 acres. The largest lake, Pratt Lake, has an area of approximately 180 acres and is located directly north of 1-96 and provides public access for

boating and fishing. The remaining two lakes are located in the southwestern portion of the Township. McEwen Lake is approximately 25 acres in area and also provides public access. Morse Lake is approximately 12 acres in size and does not provide public access.



The Grand River runs east-to-west through the Township, and provides recreational opportunities for residents

Soils

The northern half of the Township is characterized by well-drained sandy and loamy soils. These well-drained sandy soils would be well suited for active recreational uses, such as ballparks and tennis courts. The northern two-thirds of the Township are also provided with amenities, such as topography and vegetation, that makes this area attractive for residential

development and recreational activities.

The area along the Grand River has poorly- drained mucks and loamy soils. This area would be best suited for passive recreational uses, such as trails and nature areas. Pratt Lake is surrounded by several acres of wetland, which should be preserved to protect its natural beauty. The south edge of the lake has had little disturbance and contains a rich diversity of plant species.

The soils in the southern half of the Township are composed of well-drained to poorly-drained loamy soils conducive to agricultural use.

Forested areas may be on excellent location for various passive recreation areas, such as trails, nature areas and picnic areas

Existing Land Use

Map 2 identifies current land use patterns in the Township. The overall character of the Township is rural and agricultural. Active cropland is especially dominant in the southern third of the Township. Forested areas are predominant in the middle of the Township south of the Grand River. Forested areas may be on excellent location for various passive recreation areas, such as trails, nature areas and picnic areas.

While scattered residential uses can be found throughout the Township, especially in the wooded areas south of the Grand River, the majority of residential development and other non-farm activities occurring in any significant pattern are found north of the Grand River and west of the City of Lowell. This area contains the 300-unit Eastgate Subdivision, the 285-unit Key Heights Mobile Home Park, the Whispering Hills development that will contain approximately 185 homes when completed and several other residential developments near M-21. These developments contain a number of families with school-age children. The Fountain View Nursing Home is also located in this area, and contains approximately 45 units. There is a smaller concentration of homes in the southern portion of the Township adjacent to the Village of Alto in Bowne Township. Concentrated residential areas would be the most appropriate location for smaller neighborhood parks. Community parks should be located with easy access and within two miles of concentrated residential areas.



Agriculture still plays an important role in Lowell Township

There is a growing commercial development in the Township at this time. The majority of commercial establishments are located west of Lowell along M-21.

Residential Density

The greatest concentration of homes is in the northern third of the Township, north of the Grand River and west of the City of Lowell. The overall residential density in this area is approximately one unit per two acres, with pockets reaching densities as high as three to four units per acre in residential neighborhoods such as the Eastgate development, Whispering Hills and the Key Heights Mobile Home Park. The middle third of the Township south of the Grand River contains a lower-density residential use, with approximately one unit for each 10 acres. Significant single-family development is located along Grand River Drive and Alden Nash Avenue. The southern third of the Township has a very low density of use. This area is predominately agricultural and contains approximately one unit for each 40 acres.

In general, active recreational activities should be located in close proximity to the population it serves. Based on this analysis, active recreation should be located in the northern portion adjacent to the highest density residential areas.

Planning and Zoning

The zoning pattern for the Township is similar to the existing land use pattern. The general character of the Township is primarily residential and wooded with several pockets of agriculture, mostly in the southern third of the Township. Residential districts run along Grand River Drive and both sides of the Grand River in the northern portion of the Township and immediately north of the Village of Alto in the southern portion of the Township. A small commercial district is located along M-21 west of the City of Lowell.

The Master Plan, adopted in 1995, is being updated in 2008. A Master Plan is intended to guide future land use decisions. It supports the existing land use and zoning pattern of the Township. High-density residential development is encouraged north of M-21 and west of the City of Lowell adjacent to the existing subdivision and mobile home park. Low-density residential is intended in the northern and middle portions of the Township. Continued agricultural use is intended in the southern portions of the Township where agricultural production is best located.

Vegetation

Surface vegetation consists of large stands of predominately birch, maple, pine and aspen forests. Where residential development has occurred, every effort has been extended to maintain as much of the natural vegetation as possible. Often, along low-lying areas one can spot

stag horn sumac, witch hazel, and other closely related species of brush, which contribute to the pristine environment of the Township.



Grand River park includes a stream that empties into the Grand River

Drainage

While Lowell Township is located within the Grand River watershed, surface waters within the Township flows into several sub-watersheds. The northern two-thirds drains into the Grand River. The topography of this area is generally quite steep and runoff water is quickly carried away by small streams and valleys into the river. Also, because of the soil types experienced in this area, the water that is not carried away quickly dissipates.

The southern one-third of the Township drains into the Coldwater River, the Thornapple River, the Pratt Lake Creek and Bear Creek. Here topography is relatively flat. Runoff water is not carried away very quickly, but is held into the ground causing portions of this area to be wet during certain periods of the year. The 100-year floodplain boundary runs north and south of the Grand River and into the City of

Lowell along the Flat River. According to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), development within the 100-year floodplain must meet a number of regulations in addition to the zoning requirements of the district it is located in.

Historic Sites

Lowell Charter Township has one site listed on Michigan's Register of Historic Places. La Framboise Trading Post, on M-21, was placed on the register in 1956. A marker identifies the location and historic significance of the site. There are 86 sites in Kent County listed on either the State's Register of Historic Places, the National Register of Historic Places, or both. In Kent County there are 75 sites listed on the State Register, 27 listed on the National Register and 16 listed on both registers.

Environmental Issues

Within the Township there is one known area of environmental concern. This site identified as hazardous waste is located west of the City of Lowell on M-21.

Transportation Network

I-96, a major thoroughfare in lower Michigan, extends from Muskegon on the west to Detroit on the east and runs through the southern half of Lowell Township. In an average 24-hour period in 2004, 40,569 vehicles used I-96 near the interchange with M-50 in Lowell Township. M-50 passes through Lowell Township in a north/south direction. During an average 24-hour period in 2000, 9,509 vehicles utilized M-50 in Lowell Township. M-21 crosses through the northern portion of Lowell Township, and in 2001 traffic counts indicate that 15,838 vehicles utilized this road just west of the City of Lowell.

Population Trends

Recreational facilities need to grow as the population increases in a community. Often just maintaining the existing facilities is not enough for ensuring that residents have adequate recreational opportunities. Table 2 illustrates that between 1970 and 2000 the population of Lowell Township increased from 2,160 to 4,774, which is an increase of 121.0 percent. During the same period the City of Lowell's population increased from 3,068 to 3,983 (a 29.8% increase) and Kent County's population increased from 411,044 to 500,631 (a 21.8% increase).

Table 2. Population Trends

	1970	1980	1990	% change 1970-1990	2000	2006 (est)	estimated % change, 1990-2006	estimated % change, 1970-2006
Lowell Charter Township	2,160	3,972	4,774	121.0%	5,219	6,733	41.0%	211.7%
City of Lowell	3,068	3,707	3,983	29.8%	4,013	4,141	4.0%	35.0%
Kent County	411,044	444,506	500,631	21.8%	574,335	599,524	19.8%	45.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

While the population in Lowell Township increased by 211.7 percent since 1970, the population increase has not occurred at a steady rate. Between 1970 and 1980 the Township's population increased by 83.9 percent, while the population in the City of Lowell increased by 20.8 percent and the population in Kent County increased by 8.1 percent. Between 1980 and 1990 the population in Lowell Township increased by 20.2 percent to 4,774 residents, the population in the City of Lowell increased by 7.4 percent to 3,983 residents, and the population in the County increased by 12.6 percent. Between 1990 and 2000, while the population increased, the rate at which the increase occurred was much slower. During this time Lowell Township increased 9.3 percent, the City increased 0.7 percent, and Kent County increased by 14.7 percent. 2006 figures from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that the rate of growth is has increased. According to 2006 estimates, the population of Lowell Township has increased by 29% to 6,733, the population in the City of Lowell has increased by 3% to 4,141, and the population of the County has increased by 4% to 599,524.

Population Projections

Projections are important for a community to plan for its future recreation needs. While this recreation plan is fairly short-term (5 years), the community must also look beyond the five-year period, since it often takes a considerable amount of time to meet future recreation demands. Table 3 identifies population projections through the year 2020. The projection predicting the strongest growth for Lowell Township has the population increasing to 6,330 by 2012. As Lowell Township's population increases, the need for recreation facilities will increase as well.

Table 3. Population Projections						
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Alternative A	2,160	3,972	4,774	5,219	6,680	7,341
Alternative B	2,160	3,972	4,774	5,219	6,229	7,239
Alternative C	2,160	3,972	4,774	5,219	6,455	7,290

Alternative A assumes the Township will continue to constitute 0.91% of the County's population¹

Alternative B assumes a yearly average growth of 101 persons per year based upon the growth rates of the Township from 1970-2000

Alternative C is an average of alternatives A and B

Based on the current rate of growth, the Township's population will have grown to 10,261 by 2020

While both methods of predicting the population indicate that the Township will continue to experience relatively robust growth, the estimated population in Lowell Township in 2006 was 6,733, exceeding both projections through the end of 2010. Using these figures and assuming an arithmetic rate of growth that adds 252 residents to the Township per year, the population by 2010 will be 7,741, and in 2020 the Township will have grown to 10,261.

Age Distribution

The age distribution of a community can influence the recreational needs of the community's residents. This is especially true if the area's age or sex distribution is unusual or differs a great deal from the average.

Figure 1 shows the age distribution of Lowell Township, the City of Lowell, Kent County and Michigan in 2000. The Township's median age of 35.4 is higher than the City of Lowell (34 years) and the County (32.5 years) as a whole, but is very similar to the State's median age of 35.5 years. The Township has a lower percentage of preschool age children and higher proportion of school-age children 5-19 than any of the comparison areas while having a lower proportion of college-age residents. Residents in the 25-49 age group comprise a larger percentage of the population in both the Township and the City. Residents over the age of 65 make up a much smaller percentage of the total population than any of the comparison areas.

This suggests that the bulk of the Township's recreational needs currently exist with families with school-age children.

¹ Grand Valley State University, Seidman School of Business. *Demographic Profile for Grand Rapids and Lakeshore Areas*. 2006

Racial Distribution

The racial distribution in Lowell Township differs a great deal from the State and Kent County but is similar to the City of Lowell. In 2000, 96.7 percent of the Township's population was white, 0.8% was African-American, 0.4 percent was American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut, 0.5 percent was Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1.6 percent was in the "other" category. In Michigan 80.2 percent of the population was white; 14.2 percent was black; 0.6 percent was American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut; 1.8 percent was Asian or Pacific Islander and 3.3 percent was "other."

Physical Disabilities

Table 4 shows that there are approximately 261 people between the ages of 16 and 64 that had mobility or self-care limitation in Lowell Township as of 2000. Further, approximately 38.5% of the population over the age of 65 reported a mobility or self-care disability in the 2000 Census. By way of comparison, 21,216 persons in Kent County (38% of the population) reported a mobility or self-care limitation in 2000. While this indicates that the Township does not have large physically disabled population, the number and proportion of disabled persons may grow as the "baby boom" generation gets older.

Table 4. Persons with Disabilities in Lowell Township

Age	Number of persons with a disability	Percent of age segment
5 to 15 years	716	7.40%
16 to 64 years	261	11.50%
65 years and over	170	38.50%

Socio-Economic Levels

Income levels in Lowell Township are higher than those in the comparison areas. According to the 2000 census, the median household income in Lowell Township was \$58,639, compared with the City of Lowell's median income of \$42,346; the County's median household income of \$45,980 and Michigan's household income of \$44,667.

The 2000 census indicates that 2.1 percent of the Lowell Township population is below the poverty level – a lower percentage than any of the comparison areas. While these trends may not have a direct impact on recreation needs, it may be important to consider when considering future recreation improvements in the Township.

CHAPTER 3. RECREATION INVENTORY

Introduction

In order to determine if an area's recreation facilities are adequate, it is necessary to inventory the facilities. Once the facilities have been inventoried standards can be used to determine if the population is being properly served - and determine if improvements should be made.



Grand River Riverfront Park offers visitors numerous recreational facilities

Lowell Township Facilities

Lowell Township has one developed recreation area designed to serve the Township's residents. The acquisition and development of Grand River Riverfront Park is a direct result of the understanding that recreation areas are important to enhancing the overall "quality of life" within the community. The 80-acre parcel adjacent to the Grand River was purchased in 1997 and the development of phase one began in 1998.

The park is handicapped accessible and offers the following facilities:

- ◆ 207 parking spaces
- ◆ 4 restrooms
- ◆ 1 playground
- ◆ 1 play area
- ◆ 1 unlighted baseball field
- ◆ 1 unlighted softball field
- ◆ 6 unlighted soccer fields
- ◆ 1 Lacrosse field
- ◆ Hiking trails
- ◆ Paved walkways
- ◆ 4 benches
- ◆ Natural areas
- ◆ Frontage along the Grand River
- ◆ 2 Canoe/kayak launch (non-motorized)
- ◆ Concession area
- ◆ Fishing area/dock
- ◆ Picnic areas
- ◆ Wetland education area
- ◆ 2 Pavilions
- ◆ Gazebo
- ◆ Storage building

The following inventory is an update from the previous Parks and Recreation Plan for the Township. Additionally, sections of the County's inventory are included to give a better understanding of facilities in the area. Also, State parks within 50 miles of the area are described in the inventory.

AREA RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

**Grand River
Riverfront Park is
the only park
located within the
Township**

Neighborhood Parks

In addition to the Grand River Riverfront Park, there are other public and private recreation areas available to residents living in Lowell Township. However, the Grand River Riverfront Park is the only park located within the Township. The Key Heights Mobile Home Park does, however, offer two play areas, three basketball courts, picnic tables and a swimming pool to the residents and guests of the mobile home park.

CITY OF LOWELL

The City of Lowell has five existing neighborhood parks, an amphitheater and two other properties that have not yet undergone recreational development. Considering a one-half mile service radius for convenient pedestrian travel to neighborhood parks, Creekside and Recreation Parks serve a portion of Lowell Township. This area is limited to the southern portion of the City, near the Grand and Flat Rivers. The City of Lowell's park facilities include:

Creekside Park - 15.0 Acres

Facilities – Soccer, softball and baseball fields, picnic shelter, concession building, paved pedestrian paths, restrooms, beach volleyball court, playground and a paved parking lot.

Richards Park - 1.6 Acres

Facilities – Playground, benches, ice-skating rink and paved pedestrian paths.

McMahon Park - 5.0 Acres

Facilities – Two benches and a picnic table

Stoney Lakeside Park - 30 Acres

Facilities – 27 acre pond that affords opportunities for swimming, fishing, and boating, a beach, restrooms, playground, picnic shelter, parking lot, and picnic tables and a dog-walking park.

Recreation Park - 30 Acres

Facilities – Softball field, football stadium, 4-H fair facilities, travel-trailer camping (no defined camp sites), track, Grand River boat launch, and storage area for Lowell Crew team.

Upper Bridge Park

Facilities – None at this writing

Moose and Rogers Properties

Facilities – None at this writing

VILLAGE OF ALTO

The Village of Alto, located in Bowne Township, immediately south of Lowell Township, has a small neighborhood park. It is approximately one-half acre in size and contains a play area, a basketball court and a picnic area. Its service area extends one-half mile into Lowell Township and includes approximately 25 residential homes in the Township adjacent to 60th Street.

Facilities - Picnicking, a play area, a basketball court and a picnic area.

PRIVATE RECREATION FACILITIES

The Township contains very limited private recreational facilities within its borders. It contains one golf course, the Deer Run Golf Course located immediately north of Pratt Lake on Cascade Road. Deer Run is an 18-hole, 7,151 yard golf course and is open to the public. The 52-acre Northeastern Sportsman's Club is located south of the Grand River along Grand River Drive near the Township's western border.

The Township is also home to the Bradford Dickinson White Nature Preserve, which is maintained by the Land Conservancy of West Michigan. This preserve contains a trailhead and parking area located along 36th Street, about ½ mile from Alden Nash.

The Township also contains two lakes with public fishing access areas and boat launches, located on Pratt Lake and McEwen Lake.

The City of Lowell contains some limited commercial recreation facilities, such as two bowling alleys and a roller rink. The YMCA is currently located within the City, and contains a fitness center, weight room, teen center and rock climbing wall.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

The Lowell School District is the primary school district serving the Township. While there are no school park facilities located in the Township, several schools serving the Lowell Township residents are located in the City of Lowell to the north and the Village of Alto to the south.

Wittenbach/Wege Agri-science and Environmental Center. Located on Alden Nash Road across from Lowell High school in Vergennes

Township, this facility is used by the science and social studies curriculums for field trips, and provides students with hands-on experience programs.

Lowell High School. Recreation facilities at the high school include: 8 outdoor tennis courts, one baseball diamond, one softball diamond, one soccer field and one practice soccer field, a football stadium, three practice football fields and two indoor gymnasiums.

Lowell Middle School, located on 80 acres on Foreman Street, contains six outdoor tennis courts, one baseball diamond, a practice football/baseball/soccer field and an indoor gymnasium including five basketball courts and seating for approximately 1,200.

Cherry Creek Elementary School, located on eight acres on Foreman Street, includes a playground, two outdoor basketball courts, one softball diamond, one baseball diamond, an open play area, a fitness course and a nature area. The school has four indoor basketball courts and seating for 600.

The Village of Alto also contains an elementary school in the Lowell School District system. Alto Area Elementary School provides playground equipment, a gymnasium, two softball fields, one outdoor basketball court, and one soccer field.

Murray Lake Elementary School, located in Vergennes Township, contains a playground and an open play field

INVENTORY OF KENT COUNTY FACILITIES

Kent County has 37 parks encompassing over 4,500 acres of land. The County does not currently have any park facilities in the Township, although a large park is currently being planned near Cascade and Alden Nash Roads. It is anticipated that when completed, this new County park will encompass approximately 700 acres.

The following is a brief description of the facilities at existing County parks:

John Ball Park & Zoo, 100 Acres - Playgrounds, picnic areas, open shelter, restrooms and zoo.

Bettes Memorial Park, 1 Acre - Undeveloped.

Brewer Park, 95 Acres - Ball diamonds, soccer fields, playgrounds, Frisbee, golf course, picnic areas and vault toilets.

Caledonia Lakeside Park, 58 Acres - Fishing, ball diamonds, picnic areas, playgrounds, shelter house and restrooms.

Chief Hazy Cloud Park, 22.5 Acres - Fishing, playgrounds, picnic areas and restrooms.

Coldwater River Park, 6 Acres - Fishing, picnic areas and vault toilets.

Cooper Creek, 60 Acres - Fishing, natural trails, vault toilets.

Creekside Park, 32 Acres - Walking/biking, fitness trail, playgrounds, soccer, ball diamonds, picnic areas, open shelter and restrooms.

DuHon Shadyside Park, 14 Acres - Playgrounds, tennis courts, ball diamonds, picnic area with shelter and restrooms.

Fallasburg Park, 458 Acres - Fishing, playgrounds, ball diamonds, picnic areas, shelter house, nature trails and restrooms.

Fisk Knob, 4 Acres - Picnic areas.

Gordon Park, 35 Acres - Playgrounds, ball diamonds, picnic areas, hiking/walking and restrooms.

Johnson Park, 245 Acres - Fishing, winter sports, playgrounds, ball diamonds, bike trails, fitness trails, Frisbee, golf course, hiking/walking trails, picnic areas, shelter house, soccer, and restrooms.

Kent Trails, 15 Miles - Nature Trails, cross-country skiing, walking/biking and fishing.

Knapp Valley Forest Park, 80 Acres - Undeveloped.

Lamoreaux Park, 249 Acres - Ball diamond, campground, cross-country skiing, walking/hiking trails, nature trails, fishing, picnicking and vault toilets.

Lamoreaux Memorial Park, 1 Acre - Picnic area.

Long Lake Park, 232 Acres - Ball diamonds, fishing, swimming, playgrounds, picnic area, open shelter, shelter house and restrooms.

Luton Park, 267 Acres - Undeveloped.

Dwight Lydell Park, 35 Acres - Walking/biking/hiking, fishing, winter sports playgrounds, ball diamonds, picnic area, open shelter and restrooms.

Millennium Park, 1,500 Acres - Lake, beach, bath house, concession stand, boardwalks, playgrounds, volleyball courts, picnic area and shelters, grilling sites, paved trails for walking/biking./hiking, fishing.

Myers Lake Park, 6 Acres - Fishing, swimming, playgrounds, picnic area, open shelter and restrooms/bath house.

Palmer Park, 340 Acres - Nature trails, hiking/walking/ biking, cross-country skiing, fishing, playgrounds, 18-hole golf course, ball diamonds, picnic areas, playground and restroom.

Paris Park, 60 Acres - Hiking and nature trails.

Pickerel Lake, 304 Acres - Nature trails, hiking trails, fishing and cross-country skiing.

Provin Trail Park, 45 Acres - Nature trails, cross-country skiing and vault toilets.

Rogue River Park, 100 Acres - Fishing, playgrounds, tennis courts, picnic area, hiking/walking trails, cross-country skiing and ball diamonds.

Ruehs Park, 5 Acres - Fishing, playgrounds, picnic area and vault toilets.

Seidman Park, 422 Acres - Nature trails, hiking/walking trails, cross-country skiing, fishing and vault toilets.

Spencer Forest, 550 Acres - Undeveloped.

Thornapple Riverbend, 209 Acres - Undeveloped.

Townsend Park, 157 Acres - Nature trails, hiking/walking trails, cross-country skiing, fishing, playgrounds, ball diamonds, picnic areas, picnic shelter, shelter house, restrooms and vault toilets.

Wabasis Lake Park, 102 Acres - Campgrounds, hiking/walking trails, nature trails, fishing, swimming, playgrounds, ball diamonds, picnic areas, open shelter, restrooms/bath house and vault toilets. The Campground offers 45 electric sites, two of which are handicapped accessible, 15 have full hookup sites. There are also 16 primitive sites and 15 walk-in primitive sites and one cottage.

Wahlfield Park, 46 Acres - Trails, cross-country skiing and vault toilets.

Douglas Walker Park, 62 Acres - Playgrounds, bike trails, hiking/walking trails, ball diamonds, soccer, picnic area and shelter house.

White Pine Park, 80 Acres - Vault toilets, undeveloped.

Kent County Program Inventory

The Kent County Parks Department provides many recreational programs to County residents. Fishing contests for the youth in the County are held four times each summer at Dwight Lydell Park. Groups use the parks for big band concerts and music festivals such as the Reggae Festival at Fallasburg Park. Unique programs such as the annual dog sled race, dog frisbee catching contest, cross country ski race and the Walk Michigan Program are also sponsored by the Parks Department.

STATE PARKS

Ionia Recreation Area - This 4,500 acre facility east of Lowell Township has 100 campsites and offers a variety of recreational opportunities including picnic facilities, playground equipment, swimming, boating, a beach house, a boat launch, hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and horseback riding.

Sleepy Hollow State Park - This 2,678 acre park near Lansing has 181 campsites and offers a variety of recreational opportunities including picnic facilities, playground equipment, swimming, boating, a beach, a boat launch, hunting, fishing, hiking and cross-country skiing.

Yankee Springs Recreation Area - This 5,017 acre facility south of Lowell Township has 325 campsites and offers a variety of recreation opportunities including picnic facilities, playground equipment, swimming, boating, a beach house, a boat launch, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and horseback riding.

Fort Custer Recreation Area - This 2,962 acre recreation area has 112 campsites and offers a variety of recreational opportunities including picnic facilities, playground equipment, mountain biking, swimming, boating, a beach house, a boat launch, hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and horseback riding.

Kal-Haven Trail - This 34 mile trail extends from Kalamazoo to South Haven. The trail is covered with crushed stone and offers recreation opportunities for walkers, runners, cyclists, cross-country skiing, horseback riding and snowmobiling.

Saugatuck State Park - This 889 acre park on the sandy shores of Lake Michigan offers swimming, hiking, cross-country skiing and picnicking. **Holland State Park** - This 142 acre park on Lake Michigan has 308 campsites. The park offers picnic facilities, swimming, a beach house, a boat launch and fishing.

Grand Haven State Park - This 48 acre park on Lake Michigan has 174 campsites and offers picnic facilities, swimming, a beach house, pier fishing and a boat launch.

P. J. Hoffmaster State Park - This 1,043 acre park is located on the shores of Lake Michigan and has 293 campsites. The park has picnic facilities, swimming, a beach house, boat launch, fishing, an interpretive center, hiking, cross-country skiing and horseback riding.

Newaygo State Park - This 257 acre park north of Lowell Township has 99 campsites, a boat launch, fishing and hiking.

TRAILS

North Country Trail. The North Country Trail is part of a larger trail network which when fully completed will stretch nearly 4,600 miles from Vermont to North Dakota; 1,600 miles are already complete. The North Country Trail enters into Lowell Township in the southeast corner, and follows several County roads along with an abandoned railroad right-of-way north through the Township to the City of Lowell. From the City of Lowell the Trail extends north through the Lowell State Game Area.

Lowell Area Recreation Authority. In 2004, Lowell Township, the City of Lowell and Vergennes Township formed the Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA) for the purpose of working toward developing, acquiring, constructing, operating and maintaining a trail

system for residents of the Townships and the City. The LARA board consists of officials from each of the three municipalities, and has developed a Trailway Master Plan for the Lowell Area. Lowell Township's continued involvement in LARA will be an important part of improving recreational opportunities for residents.

CHAPTER 4. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

A series of eight goal statements has been developed to form the foundation of this Recreation Plan. The goals are intended to describe a desirable end state or the condition of recreation in Lowell Charter Township over the life of this plan, but some goals will remain relevant beyond this timeframe. The goal statements are intentionally general but are felt to be attainable through concerted effort. The objective statements tend to be more specific and may be regarded as milestones in the journey to achieve the larger goal.

Goal 1. Recreational opportunities at Grand River Riverfront Park will be increased and improved through the work of Lowell Charter Township.

Objective A: Expand on educational opportunities at Grand River Park

Objective B: Expand the range of activities and facilities offered for use at Grand River Park.

Objective C: Add a boat launch for small watercraft at Grand River Riverfront Park

Goal 2. Lowell Charter Township will actively cooperate and participate in the development of non-motorized trail networks in the Township.

Objective A: Participate in discussions with the North Country Trail regarding the potential use of an abandoned railroad right-of-way in the eastern portion of the Township.

Objective B: Provide continued support to the Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA) in developing trails and connections in the greater Lowell region.

Objective C: Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions in the development of a rail-trail between Lowell, Greenville and Ionia.

Goal 3. Residents of the Township will be provided with a variety of recreational facilities and activities.

Objectives A: Encourage developers to create pocket parks or natural areas in future residential developments in higher density areas of the Township.

Objective B: Explore the potential recreational uses for the Township-owned property in the Eastgate neighborhood.

Objective C: Develop feasible approaches to meet a growing demand for equestrian-related recreational opportunities in the Township.

Objective D: Explore the potential of the Township Hall property for recreational use.

Goal 4. The Township will ensure that recreational facilities are available to all residents and visitors.

Objective A: Add an ADA-accessible fishing pier or other ADA-accessible facilities to Grand River Park.

Objective B: Pursue senior activities and exercise opportunities at Grand River Riverfront Park.

Goal 5. The Township will actively work to increase the number of visitors to Grand River Riverfront Park.

Objective A: Construct basketball and/or tennis courts in Grand River Park.

Objective B: Construct or acquire an historic bridge for relocation to Grand River Park to access the island in the Grand River and the north bank.

Objective C: Develop the barked trail around the perimeter of Grand River Riverfront park for cross-country skiing.

Goal 6. Lowell Charter Township will facilitate in the development of additional recreational properties within the Township.

Objective A: Explore feasibility of purchasing additional acreage at Grand River Park.

Objective B: Explore feasible methods, such as trails and bridges, to connect the various recreational facilities the Township and surrounding communities.

Goal 7. Lowell Charter Township will begin to acquire properties within the 100-year floodplain along the Grand River for recreational use.

Objective A: Acquire property along the north side of the Grand River across from the western portion of Grand River Riverfront Park

Objective B: Acquire property along the south side of the Grand River for recreational uses

Goal 8. Lowell Charter Township will continue and expand cooperative efforts with neighboring communities to improve and expand recreational opportunities for residents of the larger Lowell community.

Objective A: Explore feasible approaches to developing and maintaining a competition swimming pool.

Objective B: Explore joint approaches to meet recreational needs of the area's aging population.

CHAPTER 5. ACTION PLAN

This section of the Recreation Plan details what the community plans to accomplish over the next five years. The Action Program is based on other elements of the Plan - primarily the Basis for Action Section, which identifies why each of the actions is being recommended. The Action Program is broken down by year and includes the action to be taken, a cost estimate and the potential funding sources for each action.

Year	Action	Cost estimate	Potential Funding Source
2008	1. Update and improve trail signage at Grand River Park	1. \$1,000 - \$2,000	MDNR Grants, Township general fund, private contributions /donations, fund-raisers and foundations
	2. Create and install navigational maps for Grand River Park	2. \$1,000 - \$2,000	
	3. Consider expansion of the playground area at Grand River Park	3. minimal expenses	
	4. Participate in exploration North Country Trail expansion on railroad right-of-way in eastern portion of Township	4. \$30,000	
	5. Explore feasibility of creating a pocket park on Township-owned property in Eastgate neighborhood	5. \$5,000 - \$10,000	
	6. Explore inter-jurisdictional approaches to expanding recreational facilities and services	6. minimal expenses	
	7. Purchase additional property to expand Grand River Riverfront Park	7. \$15,000	

<p>2009</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Install irrigation systems at Grand River Park 2. Add boat launch for small watercrafts at Grand River Park 3. Add a handicapped-accessible fishing pier at Grand River Park 4. Clear underbrush in specific wooded areas between soccer fields and river and maintain it. 5. Analyze trail networks in surrounding communities to look for potential connection points. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$60,000 - \$80,000 2. \$20,000 - \$30,000 3. \$10,000 - \$20,000 4. \$2,000 - \$3,000 5. minimal expenses 	<p>MDNR Grants, Township general fund, private contributions /donations, fund-raisers and foundations</p>
<p>2010</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore the possibility of creating nature trails on the Township Hall property 2. Construct bird houses or other wildlife habitat in Grand River Park. 3. Study and evaluate park usage 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$1,000 - \$2,000 2. minimal expenses 3. 3,000 - 5,000 	<p>MDNR Grants, Township general fund, private contributions /donations, fund-raisers and foundations</p>
<p>2011</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construct life trail stations along trails in Grand River Park 2. Construct informal basketball courts in Grand River Park. 3. Work to expand winter use of the park, such as creating ice-skating rinks or cross-country ski trails 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$50,000 - \$60,000 2. \$1,000 - \$1,500 3. \$5,000 - \$7,000 	<p>MDNR Grants, Township general fund, private contributions /donations, fund-raisers and foundations</p>
<p>2012</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construct a bridge or acquire an old/historic bridge for relocation to Grand River Park to access the island within the Grand River 3. Examine potential for connecting Township's greenspace 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$500,000 - \$1,000,000 3. minimal expenses 	<p>MDNR Grants, Township general fund, private contributions /donations, fund-raisers and foundations</p>
<p>2013</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update Recreation Plan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$2,000 	<p>Township General fund</p>

CHAPTER 6. BASIS FOR ACTION PLAN

Prior to the development of the 1996 Recreation Plan, Lowell Township did not own or maintain any recreational facilities. As a result of the Plan and the progressive efforts of the Township, the 80-acre Grand River Riverfront Park is available to the community. While the Township has made substantial improvements in the recreational facilities in the community, it is recognized that the community still has many needs.

The needs of the Township (based on an estimated 2006 population of 6,733) can be determined by reviewing the standards published in the Michigan DNR’s *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans*, as well as through the day-to-day input by residents and users of the park. A summary of the DNR’s guidelines are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Suggested Facility Development Standards

Activity/Facility	Number of Units per Population	Number of Units required per 2006 Township population estimate (6,733)	Number Currently existing in Township
Badminton	1 per 5,000 people	1 - 2	0
Basketball	1 per 5,000 people	1 - 2	1
Handball	1 per 20,000 people	Less than 1	0
Ice Hockey	depends on climate	n/a	0
Tennis	1 court per 2,000 people	3 - 4	0
Volleyball	1 court per 5,000 people	1 - 2	0
Baseball	1 per 5,000 people	1 - 2	1
Field Hockey	1 per 20,000 people	Less than 1	0
Football	1 per 20,000 people	Less than 1	0
Soccer	1 per 10,000 people	Less than 1	8
Golf - driving range	1 per 50,000 people	Less than 1	1
1/4 mile running track	1 per 20,000 people	Less than 1	0
Softball	1 per 5,000 people	1 - 2	1
Multiple recreation court	1 per 10,000 people	Less than 1	0
Trails	1 system per region	1	1 (under development)
Archery range	1 per 50,000 people	Less than 1	0

Combination skeet/trap field	1 per 50,000 people	Less than 1	0
Golf course (18 hole standard)	1 per 50,000 people	Less than 1	1
Swimming Pools	1 per 20,000 people	Less than 1	0

While Table 6 indicates that Lowell Township is lacking many recreational facilities, the above table is not intended to be taken as a complete diagnosis of the Township’s recreational needs.

More important Table 7 is a matrix of all the existing recreational facilities in the Lowell region, which consists of Lowell Township, the City of Lowell and Vergennes Township together with facilities offered by Lowell Area Public Schools. While many of these facilities are not located within the Township’s boundaries or owned by the Township, they serve the recreational needs of many Lowell Township residents.

This Plan proposes to acquire additional land, make various improvements to Grand River Riverfront Park, and cooperate with other recreational programming occurring in the Lowell region. In addition to helping meet the DNR standards, the continued development of Grand River Riverfront Park and other recreational facilities within the Township will benefit much of surrounding area, which has a need for additional facilities.

The primary action the Township wishes to undertake during the five-year planning period involves making improvements to Grand River Riverfront Park and purchasing land and/or arranging easement agreements for the development of a linear trail network. To ensure the successful development of the trail network the Township will prioritize trail development into three phases. Once developed, the trails will connect to the North Country Trail, the Grand River Riverfront Park, the City of Lowell and other regional trails existing or in development.

A continued effort to enhance the Grand River Riverfront Park through the addition of various amenities is the primary goal. While these improvements to the Grand River Riverfront Park were identified in the previous Recreation Plan, not all of the goals were accomplished and therefore are included in this Recreation Plan. To ensure the need for additional park amenities in the Riverfront Park the Township will evaluate the parks usage. After the evaluation the Township will begin the development of those amenities needed the most.

While much of the Township's attention will be focused on Grand River Riverfront Park, the Township also wishes to successfully develop a linear trail network in cooperation with LARA. The Township will pursue grants and property donations thus reducing the overall cost of the development. Additionally, cooperation with the North Country Trail will also allow the Township to expand the variety of recreation facilities in the area for both handicapped and non-handicapped individuals, encourage exercise and a healthy lifestyle, and meet the future needs of the area's growing population with minimal direct expenses.

Furthermore, during the five-year planning period the Township will pursue the acquisition of additional land for neighborhood parks in residential areas as well as throughout the Township to preserve open space and increase the availability of parks. While the Grand River Riverfront Park meets many of the overall Township's needs, residents still need small neighborhood parks. Such parks should be installed in new developments, at the developers expense, and will help Lowell Township meet its recreational needs and will make it easier for the Township to grow and meet future residents' recreational requirements.

Towards the end of the planning period the Township will review its successes in meeting goals of the Plan and determine the Township's future recreation needs. A survey of residents or a public meeting can be used to determine how resident feel about the progress made within the Township park system. This information will be used to determine what should be done in the next five-year period and the Township's Recreation Plan will be updated in the year 2013.

CHAPTER 7. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

In order for Lowell Township to have a parks and recreation program that operates smoothly, a chain of command needs to exist. The residents elect a Township Board, which provides the direction the Township will take and represents the Township's residents. Lowell Township's day-to-day operations are performed by a clerk, supervisor, treasurer and a staff of 23 Township employees - six full-time and 17 part-time (including Boards). Police services are provided through the Kent County Sheriff's Department and fire services are contracted through the City of Lowell and Bowne Township.

When the recreation needs of the community are involved, the Township Board listens to a variety of sources. In addition to listening to the residents of the Township, the Board also depends on information provided by the Recreation Planning Committee and the Township Planning Commission.

The organization chart (Figure 2) graphically represents the relationship between the various groups involved in recreation. Ultimately, the residents are responsible for electing the Township Board, which is the decision-making body of the Township. The Board works with a variety of groups to provide recreation resources to the area's resident including Kent County and the Lowell School District.

The Township Board receives recommendations from the Recreation Committee. This Committee works with the Township Planning Commission to ensure that the goals of both groups are related and to determine where recreation activities should occur. The Committee also works with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to help create meaningful plans and to fund improvements. The Recreation Committee works closely with Township staff and a recreation planning consultant.

The Township's recreation budget usually contains approximately \$25,000 - \$30,000. This fund is used for maintenance of Grand River Riverfront Park and incidental expenses.

Figure 2. Organization Chart

