

GOALS OBJECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

The following goals and objectives were developed as a result of several factors that included not only a public workshop, but also Township Staff, Parks and Recreation Committee Member involvement and expertise lent by the recreation planning consultant.

Data and public input collected from past community brainstorming include the following documents, reports and plans.

- *Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan*
- *Recreation Survey, 2009*
- *Forest and Wildlife Management Plan, 2008*

The synthesis of pertinent excerpts from these documents provided the basis for development of the goals and objectives below.

DECISION MAKING & FORMULATION OF GOALS

As with many communities in Northern Michigan, Rapid River Township is relatively small in size, according to the US Census (2000) just over 1000 people are living in the Township. The small population size and low population density reinforces even more the need to develop recreation facilities that will operate as community and social hubs for the Township.

The Township's decision to move forward with investing in parks and recreation begins not only with the endless social benefits, but also the need to encourage active lifestyles, provide recreation opportunity for individual growth and progressive skill development for children and a number of economic benefits. Economic benefits vary from the attraction of tourists, increased property values and attracting young professionals back to the Township after college.

Prior to the development of this plan the Township has already moved forward with developing the Community Park – site clearing of existing plantation pine to provide additional open space and the erection of a playground structure have been completed. The decision to move swiftly with recreation improvements rests with the overwhelming young and middle aged population in the Township; according to the US Census (2000) close to 70% of the total population is under the age of 44 and the median age is a startling 35 years old. Close to half of this age cohort is under the age of 18.

After reviewing the census and holding a public workshop the Township has determined that a recreation-based development focus should be put on increasing facilities that are geared towards younger adults, teens and the family-age cohort. As the planning consultant and Parks and Recreation Committee formulated the goals an emphasis was put on provided facilities and design program elements geared towards teens – providing them places to socialize and recreate outside of the home. An emphasis was also placed on

developing facilities that were family friendly and provide a diverse range of recreation opportunities at one site – mixed-use facilities that have flexible and programmable spaces to accommodate a range of user based needs.

ENCOURAGING ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

As the population grows and changes demographically, recreational needs change as well. It is important to monitor the changes so that recreational facilities are developed for the current and projected populations. Currently, a vast majority of recreational facilities in Michigan and the United States fall short in connecting with the population. Facilities are either under-managed, outdated or in most cases do not provide for the recreational needs indicated by the cross-section of the demographic population.

According to a 2001 study by the American Planning Association, 70% of adults in the United States do not achieve the recommended amount of activity each week. This statistic may be related to the lack of connectivity between the general population and recreational facilities available. The U.S. Surgeon General recommends a minimum of 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity at least five days per week.

Approximately 64% of Americans are overweight; and one in three is obese. More than a third (36%) of young people in grades 9-12 do not participate in vigorous recreational activities three or more days a week, and one fourth (25%) of those aged 6-17 are already overweight. ***Although these statistics do not specifically represent Rapid River Township, they do show how critical it is to provide recreation opportunities for all age groups and to encourage active lifestyles.***

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Two types of goals emerged as a result of the recreation planning – the first type having more general objectives that holistically bring together the recreation facilities and programs in the Township including operation and maintenance, recreation programming and trail planning and the second type having specific objectives directed at detailed improvements to existing facilities (e.g. Croy Lake Park and Community Park). The more general goals were found to be important to the Township because they provided added “vision” to the planning process, supported the idea of Integrated Community Planning and seemed to overlay the more specific goals that outlined “brick and mortar” type projects.

GOAL #1: RAPID RIVER COMMUNITY PARK DEVELOPMENT

The Community Park is located at the Township Hall on Phelps Road. The desire exists to create a principle community space for the Township – a space that would provide for social gatherings and provide public space for active recreation.

Develop a park space that provides mixed-use recreational opportunities and amenities at the Rapid River Community Park.

Objectives:

- a. *Utilize the newly created Site Master Plan to seek out funding, build public support and political will.*
- b. *Consider grant alternatives: Rotary; AYSO*
- c. *Conduct an architectural evaluation of the Township Hall that considers improving its relationship with the proposed park and accessibility.*
- d. *Conduct a tree evaluation to evaluate remaining jack pine plantation planting and determine extent of removal.*
- e. *Consider short-term improvement projects:*
 - *Irrigation and turf grass improvements*
 - *Tree management, Landscape restoration*
 - *Playground accessibility improvements*
 - *Improve barrier-free accessibility and amenities - consider universal design principles*
- f. *Consider feasibility of utilizing Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) & Green Building Standards on all site and building solutions where possible.*
- g. *Provide better athletic facilities at the site for local use (e.g. Little League Baseball, soccer)*

GOAL #2: CROY LAKE PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Croy Lake Park is located on the eastern edge of the Township in Section 24. The Park is 80 acres in size and provides a diverse range of woodland, meadow and aquatic habitat. A spring-fed creek flows into the Lake from the adjacent Rainbow Lake and offers many opportunities to observe nature.

Develop Croy Lake Park into a “natural” recreation area that provides natural resource based recreational opportunities.

Objectives:

- a. *Develop a site master plan for the park site that can be used as a tool for securing funding, making policy decisions and strategy for implementation and cost estimates.*
- b. *Consider the following design program when developing a site master plan:*
 - *Develop a multi-seasonal network of trails that provide varying degrees of access for different user groups (e.g. hiking, disc golf, running, biking, cross-country skiing)*
 - *Construct access bridge over the existing creek*
 - *Consider a disc golf course that includes t-boxes, signage, baskets and other golf accessories.*
 - *Provide barrier-free fishing opportunities on Croy Lake by developing a permanent boardwalk or dock system*
 - *Consider constructing a boardwalk section parallel to Priest Road to cross the creek.*
 - *Incorporate signage and wayfinding (see goal #3)*
 - *Incorporate landscaping and irrigation where applicable*
 - *Utilize the Forest and Wildlife Management Plan, 2008 to move forward with forest and wildlife management – consider forestry management, demonstrations/interpretation, champion tree planting, event days such as “logging with horses”*
 - *Obtain plan approval from the MDNR Forest Management Division for proposed improvements to the Park.*
 - *Develop a picnic area – consider the feasibility and need of constructing a pavilion or shelters*
 - *Develop a kids play area that fits with the character of the property*
- c. *Consider low-impact development standards when designing parking and other non-permeable surfaces to reduce stormwater discharge along the creek and Croy Lake.*
- d. *Consider use of portable toilets (seasonal) until demand increases or monies become available to construct a permanent structure (vault or plumbed toilets to be determined during site master planning).*
- e. *Consider short-term improvement projects:*
 - *Develop improved parking area to provide access to site*
 - *Mark layout of future trails and provide map near parking/arrival area for users*
 - *Create safe and accessible trail access from the parking to the creek and Croy Lake edge.*
- f. *Consider land acquisition (See Goal #7)*

GOAL #3: SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

As the Township moves forward with developing its first recreation facilities and looks to increase a recreation presence in Kalkaska County, signage and wayfinding will be an important aspect of this growth. Quality, tasteful and a well thought out array of signs will increase the sense of ownership, increase name recognition and increase park usage.

Develop consistent wayfinding signage system to improve overall identity and name recognition of the Township Parks as well as improve access and increased use of the parks.

Objectives:

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

GOAL #4: MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

Currently, the Township does not have any non-motorized trails or trail systems planned. Township residents have expressed much interest in improving aspects of multi-modal transportation and recreation to improve the overall recreational experience in the Township.

Develop a multi-modal transportation plan that would support future trails, pathways and transportation improvements in and around the community and increase and encourage more trail use.

Objectives:

- a. *Develop a comprehensive multimodal transportation plan for the Township.*
- b. *Consider developing standards and locations for the development of bicycle facilities and pedestrian walkways.*
- c. *Evaluate existing and future transportation corridors in the Township and County for improved multimodal options in conjunction with ongoing trail and streetscape planning efforts.*
- d. *Improve overall transportation choices that would also improve recreational opportunities by connecting recreational facilities together.*
- e. *Consider working together with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE) to develop trails on State land along the Rapid River or other lands that would provide connections between recreation facilities.*
- f. *Utilize existing and past trail planning efforts that have been completed by Kalkaska County and neighboring townships.*
- g. *Work with local non-governmental organizations (NGO's) such as the Grand Traverse Land Conservancy and trail advocacy groups including the NW Michigan Council of Governments and the Kalkaska Area Recreation and Transportation Trails (KART).*
- h. *Implement universal accessibility design principals as a design standard for all new facilities.*
- i. *Integrate a "Complete Streets" design policy in future streetscape planning and park projects.*
- j. *Consider Safe Routes to School Program*
- k. *Utilize Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) & Green Building Standards on all site and building solutions.*

GOAL #5: MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

Currently, the Township is organizing a maintenance program as the Community Park is being developed – the program to include landscape maintenance, building and picnic structure repairs, restroom maintenance, mowing and fertilizing and trash removal. As the Township continues to develop its recreation facilities it will proactively seek to strengthen the maintenance program for all the facilities as a high priority.

Expand, develop, and sustain a parks and recreation maintenance program to ensure long term quality recreational opportunities at Township facilities.

Objectives:

- a. *Develop an operations and maintenance program with Township Board and the Parks and Recreation Committee to adequately address immediate and long-term equipment, budgetary, and personnel needs for the existing and proposed facilities.*
- b. *Consider pros and cons of outsourcing maintenance versus hiring part-time / full-time staff member to carry-out operations and maintenance.*
- c. *Provide oversight by the Parks and Recreation Committee to assist staff with management of an operations and maintenance program and to make recommendations to the Township Board for improvements.*
- d. *Seek out additional volunteer, in-kind, or sub-contractual services where and when needed to supplement a maintenance program and staff.*
- e. *Develop a “Spring and Fall Work Days” volunteer program*
- f. *Provide adequate facilities, equipment and storage to support operations and maintenance.*
- g. *Consider developing a Park Usage Policy that could include rental and/or deposit fees for group facility use.*

GOAL #6: RECREATION PROGRAMS

The Township currently does not offer recreational programming; however, there is interest in supporting user-defined programming needs for all ages by increasing the level of awareness of facilities, user-groups and resources available.

Inform, Educate, and Encourage. Inform Township residents of ongoing recreation projects and programs, educate them of all the recreational benefits and encourage broader input from residents and seasonal visitors to Rapid River Township.

Objectives:

- a. *Research and consider alternative advertising schemes to promote more public involvement.*
- b. *Encourage the Parks and Recreation Committee to work with the Township Board and residents to identify and fulfill user-based programming initiatives.*
- c. *Work with the nearby Townships, Villages, nearby school districts, and Kalkaska and Antrim Counties to consider recreational programming needs.*
- d. *Provide support for a wide range of user groups. Work with non-profits, active sports organizations and other recreation-based groups to promote and encourage their activities wherever possible in order to broaden programming availability and diversity in the Township.*
- e. *Develop an annual activity schedule in conjunction with local businesses. A non-profit organization could coordinate activities provided during peak seasonal periods.*
- f. *Consider interns to support program development and operations.*

GOAL #7: LAND ACQUISITIONS

Acquiring property for recreation is difficult and timing is critical. At this time, the Township is interested in properties that either have some type of connection to existing recreational facilities owned and maintained by the Township; properties that would help diversify the Township's recreational facilities, or properties that would provide access to the Rapid River.

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

Objectives:

- a. *Consider feasibility of acquiring property near parks to provide future land for expansion of recreational activities.*
- b. *Consider feasibility of acquiring other State and private lands consistent with the Rapid River Township Parks and Recreation Plan.*
- c. *Consider feasibility of acquiring other State and private lands along the Rapid River to provide access.*
- d. *Consider feasibility of acquiring the following properties:*
 - i. *(80 acre) parcel (owned by Kalkaska County) in the Northwest corner of the Township.*
 - ii. *Private property easements, easements in existing utility easements and easements through State Lands that would allow a non-motorized trail to be constructed from Croy Lake Park to the Community Park at the Township Hall.*
 - iii. *State Land where existing sledding hill is – this property could also provide access to the Rapid River.*
 - iv. *Expand Township Hall and Community Park Property to the east – this property could be used for a new fire hall.*