

# PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN 2025 - 2029

Comstock Charter Township, Kalamazoo County, Michigan

DRAFT NOVEMBER 4, 2024

*Prepared by Comstock Charter Township, Kalamazoo County, Michigan with the assistance of*



**MCKENNA**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*The participation and cooperation of community leaders, residents, and members of civic organizations in the preparation of this 2025-2029 Parks and Recreation Master Plan are greatly appreciated; we thank everyone who participated in its development.*

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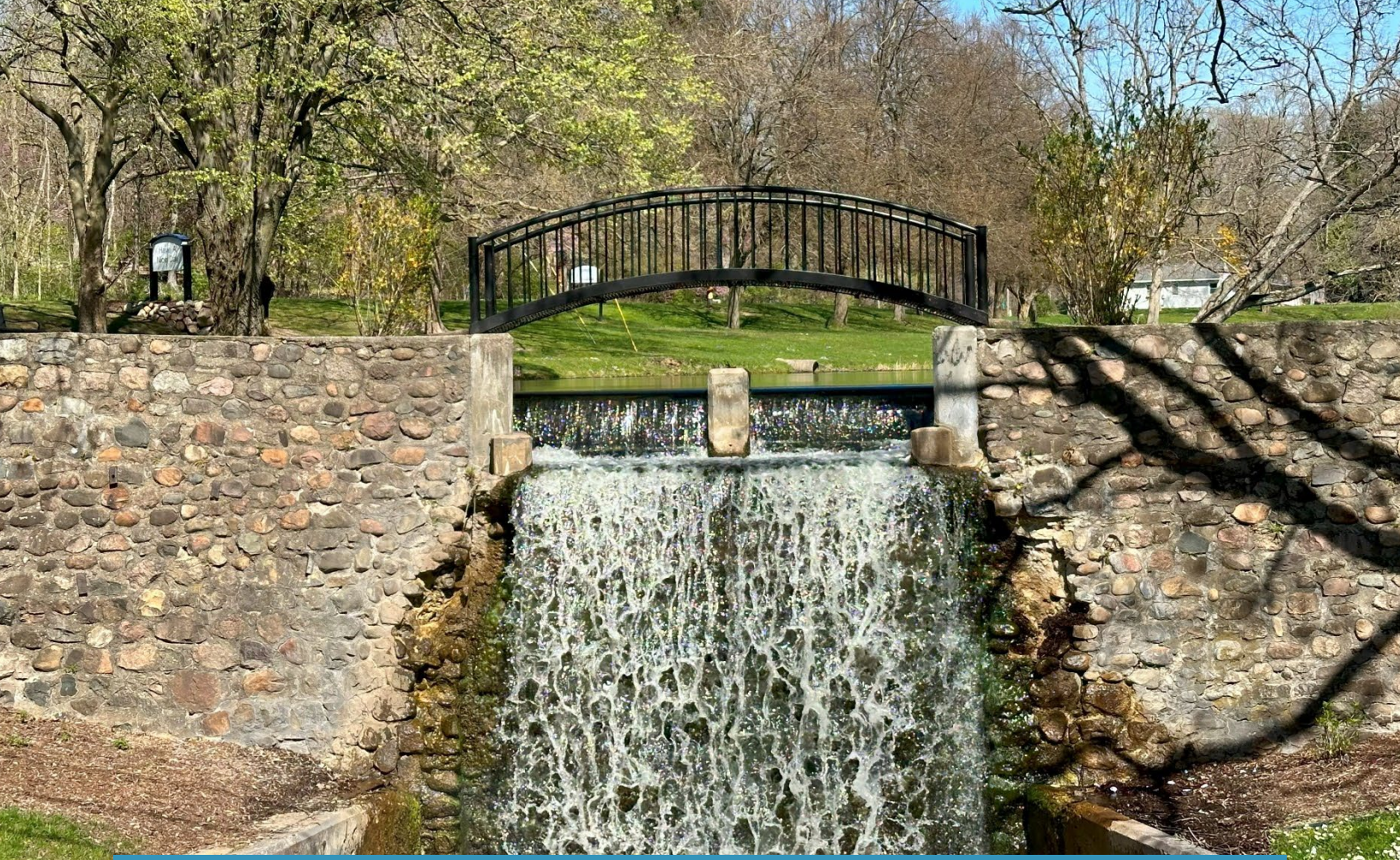
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## Chapter 1.

# INTRODUCTION

Comstock Charter Township coordinated an open, public planning process to create a comprehensive vision for Comstock Charter Township parks and recreation programs, satisfying the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) requirements for a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

A Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a roadmap for parks and recreation decisions (including facilities and programming) made over a five-year period, as well as a way to project future needs. The Plan includes all required elements of a Parks and Recreation Plan, and therefore qualifies Comstock Charter Township for funding through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The process taken to prepare the Plan gives the Township a better understanding of the needs and desires for parks, recreation facilities, and programming based on public engagement and industry trends going forward.

Comstock Charter Township's last Parks and Recreation plan covered the years 2020 through 2024. This plan update will build upon the existing mission statement: *The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission works on behalf of the citizens of Comstock Township to build a healthy community and a sustainable environment by promoting active lifestyles and strong individuals and families through parks, programs and partnerships.*

Parks and recreation are a critical component of a thriving community, and this Plan is an important document to help guide the Township in its pursuit of an enhanced quality of life, additional recreational opportunities, and inclusivity for the next five years and beyond.





## *Chapter 2.*

# COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Comprised of 35.3 square miles, Comstock Township is located in the northern quadrant of Kalamazoo County, Michigan, and is intersected by highways I-94 in the lower half, M-96 in the middle, and M-343 in the Township's northwest corner. Comstock is situated just east of the City of Kalamazoo, Michigan, and about 20 miles west of the City of Battle Creek, Michigan.

In the State of Michigan, there are two types of townships – general law and charter townships. Comstock Township is a charter township, meaning the Township has the authority to adopt its own charter, providing greater flexibility in governance and the ability to enact local ordinances. On the other hand, a general law Township operates under state laws and regulations with limited autonomy in decision-making. Townships are governed by a Township Board, which is comprised of elected officials.

The Township is composed of a large variety of uses, including single-family housing, industrial manufacturing, and large-lot agricultural production uses. There are a variety of lakes within the Township borders including Morrow Lake, Lyons Lake, Campbell Lake, among other smaller bodies of water. The Kalamazoo River runs through the middle of the Township, paralleling M-96.

Map 1: Regional Location

# DEMOGRAPHICS

The Comstock Charter Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan is updated and maintained to determine the needs and opportunities that exist within the community. Consideration is given to:

- Estimates of the number of likely users of recreational amenities;
- Projections of what type of programs users will enthusiastically participate in; and
- The facilities that are necessary to further the community’s parks and recreation-related goals and objectives.

By understanding current conditions and past trends, the Township can appropriately anticipate and plan for the future needs of the community.

Data within this plan is sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2020 Decennial Census and 2022 American Community Survey, analyzed and synthesized by McKenna.

## POPULATION

Over the past decades, Comstock Charter Township has experienced a slight population increase (2.5%). For the most part, nearby communities have also seen slight increases. The largest increase in the past decade is claimed by Richland Township, which has experienced a 15% population growth. Some of the area municipalities have seen slight population decreases, including Charleston and Climax Townships, while Cooper Township has seen a significant population growth.

Table 1: Population

| Municipality               | 2010    | 2020    | % Change (2010-2020) |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|----------------------|
| Comstock Charter Township  | 14,854  | 15,231  | 2.5%                 |
| Kalamazoo County           | 250,331 | 261,670 | 4.5%                 |
| Neighboring Municipalities |         |         |                      |
| City of Kalamazoo          | 74,262  | 73,598  | -0.9%                |
| Charleston Township        | 1,975   | 1,904   | -3.5%                |
| Climax Township            | 2,463   | 2,364   | -4.0%                |
| Cooper Township            | 10,111  | 10,418  | 3.0%                 |
| Galesburg                  | 2,009   | 2,049   | 2.0%                 |
| Kalamazoo Charter Township | 21,918  | 22,777  | 4.0%                 |
| Pavilion Township          | 6,222   | 6,387   | 2.7%                 |
| Portage                    | 46,292  | 48,891  | 5.6%                 |
| Richland Township          | 7,580   | 8,693   | 14.7%                |
| Ross Township              | 4,664   | 4,851   | 4.0%                 |

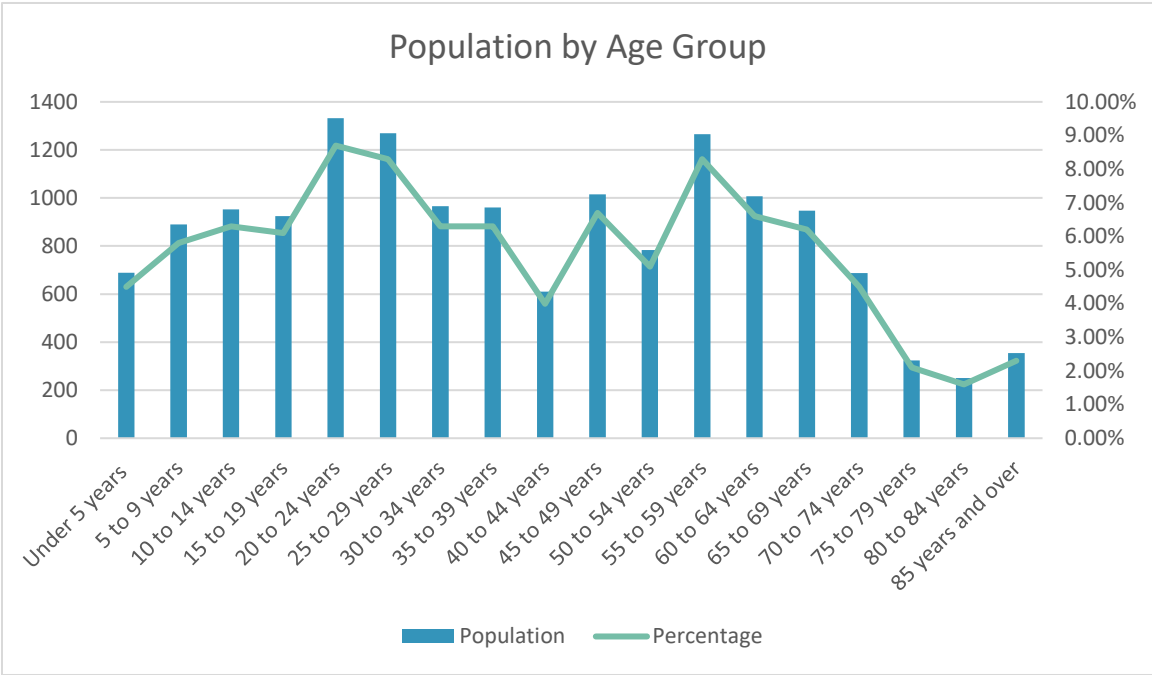
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P1 Redistricting Data 2010, 2020.

# AGE STRUCTURE

The age of a community’s population is extremely important when planning to improve parks and recreation facilities. Elderly residents may have different needs than childless adults, or families with children. Further, families with children also have different needs than one another, depending on the children's ages living in the home. For example, households with younger children will likely require parks with restrooms, play equipment, splash pads, and other similar amenities. Households with older children, such as high school and college age, may require parks with a more robust trail network, ball fields, and courts, or exercise stations.

The following figure separates the Comstock Township population by age group:

Figure 1: Population by Age Group, (ACS 2022)



Age structure (analyzing which proportions of a municipality’s population are in which stages of life) gives a nuanced view of the makeup of a community. To compare age structure, the percentage of the population in Comstock Charter Township is divided into the following age groupings.

| Age Structure  | Percentage of Population |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Under 5 years  | 4.5%                     |
| 5 to 9 years   | 5.8%                     |
| 10 to 14 years | 6.3%                     |
| 15 to 19 years | 6.1%                     |
| 20 to 24 years | 8.7%                     |
| 25 to 29 years | 8.3%                     |
| 30 to 34 years | 6.3%                     |
| 35 to 39 years | 6.3%                     |
| 40 to 44 years | 4.0%                     |
| 45 to 49 years | 6.7%                     |
| 50 to 54 years | 5.1%                     |



|                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| 55 to 59 years    | 8.3% |
| 60 to 64 years    | 6.6% |
| 65 to 69 years    | 6.2% |
| 70 to 74 years    | 4.5% |
| 75 to 79 years    | 2.1% |
| 80 to 84 years    | 1.6% |
| 85 years and over | 2.3% |

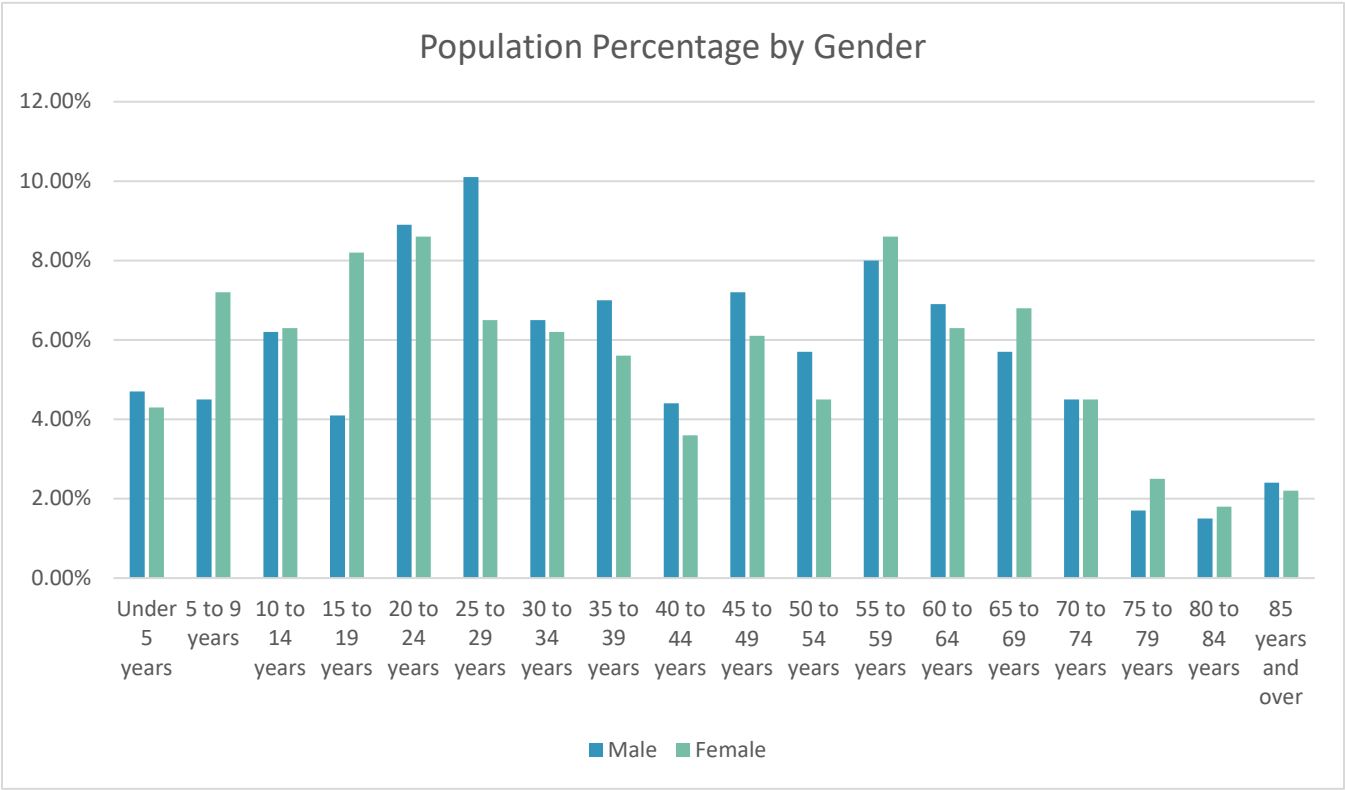
The median age of residents in Comstock Township is 37.9 years old. Comstock Charter Township is older than Kalamazoo County, which has a median age of 35.0 years old, and younger than the State of Michigan, which has a median age of 40.3 years old. As the census data above indicates, a large portion of the Township's population is within the family-forming age group.

Table 2 provides an overview of how Comstock Charter Township's population varies by age and gender. Figure 2 and accounts for the percentage of males in each age group with blue on the left and green on the right for females.

Table 2: Population by Age Group (ACS 2022)

| Age Group by Years | Total         | Male (#)     | Female (#)   | Male (%)    | Female (%)  |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Under 5 years      | 689           | 364          | 325          | 4.7%        | 4.3%        |
| 5 to 9 years       | 890           | 349          | 541          | 4.5%        | 7.2%        |
| 10 to 14 years     | 952           | 481          | 471          | 6.2%        | 6.3%        |
| 15 to 19 years     | 925           | 314          | 611          | 4.1%        | 8.2%        |
| 20 to 24 years     | 1,332         | 686          | 646          | 8.9%        | 8.7%        |
| 25 to 29 years     | 1,270         | 782          | 488          | 10.1%       | 6.5%        |
| 30 to 34 years     | 966           | 501          | 465          | 6.5%        | 6.2%        |
| 35 to 39 years     | 961           | 538          | 423          | 7.0%        | 5.6%        |
| 40 to 44 years     | 610           | 340          | 270          | 4.4%        | 3.6%        |
| 45 to 49 years     | 1,015         | 559          | 456          | 7.2%        | 6.1%        |
| 50 to 54 years     | 783           | 443          | 340          | 5.7%        | 4.5%        |
| 55 to 59 years     | 1,266         | 620          | 646          | 8.0%        | 8.6%        |
| 60 to 64 years     | 1,007         | 535          | 472          | 6.9%        | 6.3%        |
| 65 to 69 years     | 947           | 440          | 507          | 5.7%        | 6.8%        |
| 70 to 74 years     | 687           | 349          | 338          | 4.5%        | 4.5%        |
| 75 to 79 years     | 324           | 134          | 190          | 1.7%        | 2.6%        |
| 80 to 84 years     | 250           | 113          | 137          | 1.5%        | 1.8%        |
| 85 years and over  | 355           | 188          | 167          | 2.4%        | 2.2%        |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>15,229</b> | <b>7,736</b> | <b>7,493</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Figure 2: Population Percentage by Gender, (ACS 2022)



In recent years, changing trends in childcare show that grandparents (older adults) are taking a larger role in assisting with childcare needs for parents. As such, park facilities and playgrounds are more frequently utilized by those who may no longer be active in the workforce. For this reason, it is imperative that park design and amenities also accommodate this age group as well. These amenities can include more benches and seating areas, pavilions, walking paths, and other items.

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## POPULATION BY RACE

The Township is primarily (81%) composed of a white/Caucasian population. It is important to note the proportion of white and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander residents has decreased over the last decade. Other races have increased in proportion, which have added to the Township experiencing a slight diversification of its population.

Table 3: Population by Race

| Race                                       | 2010          | %     | 2020          | %     | % Change (2010-2020) |
|--|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------------|
| <b>Total Population</b>                    | <b>14,854</b> |       | <b>15,231</b> |       | <b>2.5%</b>          |
| White/Caucasian                            | 13,080        | 88.1% | 12,334        | 81.0% | -5.7%                |
| Black/African American                     | 830           | 5.6%  | 1,026         | 6.7%  | 23.6%                |
| American Indian and Alaska Native          | 71            | 0.5%  | 77            | 0.5%  | 8.5%                 |
| Asian                                      | 276           | 1.9%  | 330           | 2.2%  | 19.6%                |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander | 13            | 0.1%  | 4             | >0.1% | -69.2%               |
| Some Other Race                            | 151           | 1.0%  | 232           | 1.5%  | 53.6%                |
| Two or more races                          | 433           | 2.9%  | 1,228         | 8.1%  | 1.8%                 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, P1 Redistricting Data 2010, 2020.

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## INCOME

Household income data can have important planning implications. Current income levels suggest that Comstock's residents are middle class, meaning residents are likely to use a mix of public and private recreational facilities. Table 4 illustrates the median household income trend since 2010.

Table 4: Median Household Income

| Year | Median Household Income |
|------|-------------------------|
| 2010 | \$51,301                |
| 2020 | \$61,525                |
| 2022 | \$74,451                |

Source: US Census Bureau, 2010, 2020, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, \* Inflation-adjusted Dollars.

In 2022, the median household income for Comstock Charter Township was \$74,451, above Kalamazoo County's median income of \$69,584. The median income for the State of Michigan was \$66,986 in 2022.

According to the 2022 American Community Survey, an estimated 5.8% of the Township's population lives below poverty level. It is estimated that the unemployment rate is approximately 3.1%, below Kalamazoo County's average of 4.3% and Michigan's average of 3.7%.

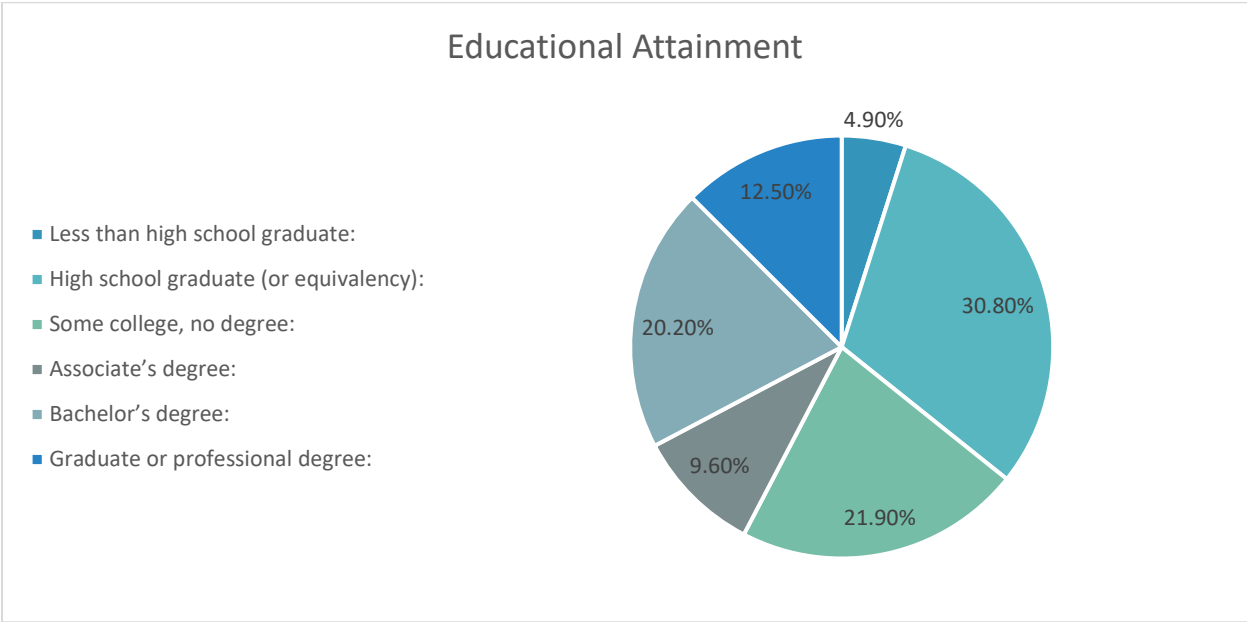


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## EDUCATION

Understanding the educational profile of a community can help decision-makers tailor programs, amenities, and outreach strategies to meet the diverse needs and interests of residents. By considering the educational dimension, parks and recreational facilities can be designed, promoted, and managed to cater to different preferences, foster engagement, and promote lifelong learning.

For Comstock Charter Township’s population that is 25 years old and older, educational attainment is broken down into the following:



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## HOUSING & HOUSEHOLDS

The composition of housing occupants within a community can provide additional information about the community’s profile. Understanding owner-occupied units versus renter-occupied units can help determine the needs of a community, as the needs of renters versus homeowners often differ. Examples of differences between the two include socioeconomic status, age & generational makeup, lifestyle, and tenure.

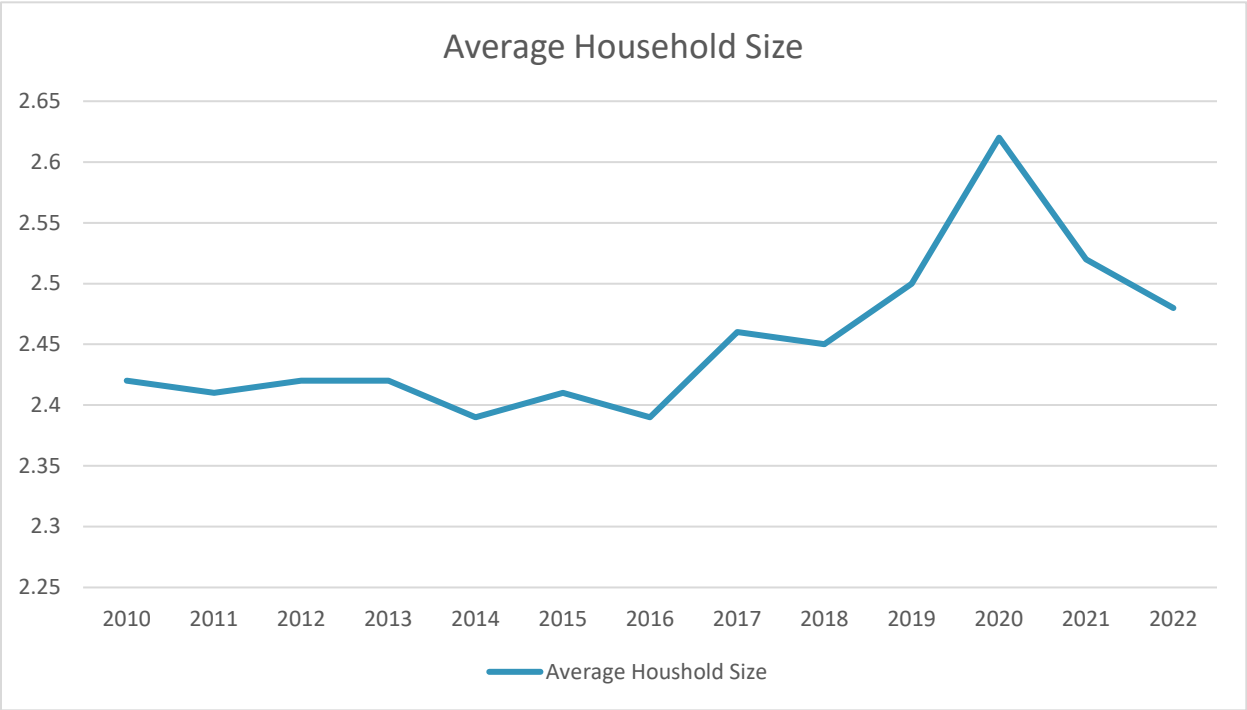
Of the 6,818 built homes in Comstock Charter Township, 94.8% (6,462 dwelling units) are occupied. Of the occupied houses, 69.9% (4,518 units) are owner-occupied, and about 30.1% (1,944 units) are renter-occupied. Since 2010, vacant homes have decreased from 574 to 356. The 356 existing, vacant housing structures have the potential to accommodate an influx of potential residents and increase the population to exceed current population levels.

Average household size is another indicator of community composition. Larger average household sizes generally mean more children and fewer single-parent families. Nationally, household sizes have been shrinking as young single adults wait longer to get married and life expectancy increases for the senior population.

According to the 2022 American Community Survey Estimates, the average household size in Comstock Charter Township was approximately 2.48 people. This statistic, in conjunction with additional household data, signifies that the average home is a married couple household and/or a household with individuals 65 years and over.

Household size in Comstock Charter Township, from 2010 to 2017, maintained a relatively stable household size. However, from 2017 up until 2020, household size rapidly increased. From 2020 onwards, the average household size has started to decrease. These trends are visualized below in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Household Size (ACS 2022)



Most households are classified as single families, 49.8% of which are occupied by married couples. The majority of households within the Township are detached, single-family homes at 72.4% of occupied housing stock. Further, there are also a number of apartment buildings with 10 or more units at 13.5% of occupied housing. Supplementary housing types between these two extremes are necessary to supplement the market and further support current and future residents.

Table 5: Housing by Family Type and Unit Type

|                                  | Total Occupied Households | Household Composition |                             |                               |                      |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
|                                  |                           | Married Couple Family | Male Householder, No Spouse | Female Householder, No Spouse | Non-family household |
| Housing by Family Type (#)       | 6,132                     | 3,052                 | 295                         | 413                           | 2,372                |
| Housing by Family Type (%)       | —                         | 49.8%                 | 4.8%                        | 6.7%                          | 38.7%*               |
| Housing by Units/Housing Type:   |                           |                       |                             |                               |                      |
| 1-unit structures                | 73.8%                     | 90.3%                 | 85.4%                       | 61.3%                         | 53.4%                |
| 2-or-more-unit structures        | 25.0%                     | 8.6%                  | 12.9%                       | 31.2%                         | 46.6%                |
| Mobile homes and all other types | 1.1%                      | 1.1%                  | 1.7%                        | 7.5%                          | 0.0%                 |

*\*Of the non-family households, 72% are people living alone. Of the people living alone, 26.2% are people over the age of 65 years old.  
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2022.*

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## DISABILITY

While it is encouraged that all park and play equipment in the Township is compliant with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), the type of disability and number of residents impacted by disabilities will influence the design and accommodations within the Township's Parks and Recreation Master Plan and future improvements to Township facilities. The 2022 American Community Survey reports that approximately 14.1% of residents in Comstock Township have a disability of some kind.

Of the total residents in the Township:

- 3.5% have hearing difficulty;
- 1.9% have vision difficulty;
- 7.6% have cognitive difficulty;
- 5.8% have ambulatory difficulty;
- 3.5% have self-care difficulty;
- And 8.4% have independent living difficulty.

Planning for parks and recreation could result in positive health outcomes for a population that already experiences difficulties on a day-to-day basis. Accommodations could include ramps or pavement improvements in order to ease accessibility concerns for those who suffer from ambulatory difficulties and installing audible and visually assisted crosswalks can assist those who may be visually or hearing impaired.



The ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), signed into law in 2010, detail enforceable standards for physical accessibility. However, these standards do not include elements designed for children with Down syndrome, sensory disorders, and visual and hearing impairments. New attention has been focused on inclusive playgrounds and universal design that can serve a diverse population, including children with physical, cognitive, emotional and sensory disabilities.

The following elements are considered essential activities for inclusive play:

- Sensory play
- Music
- Swinging
- Spinning
- Sliding
- Socialization/imaginative
- Safety, comfort and access

*Sources: United States Access Board, Landscape Structures; InclusivePlaygrounds.org*



# PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

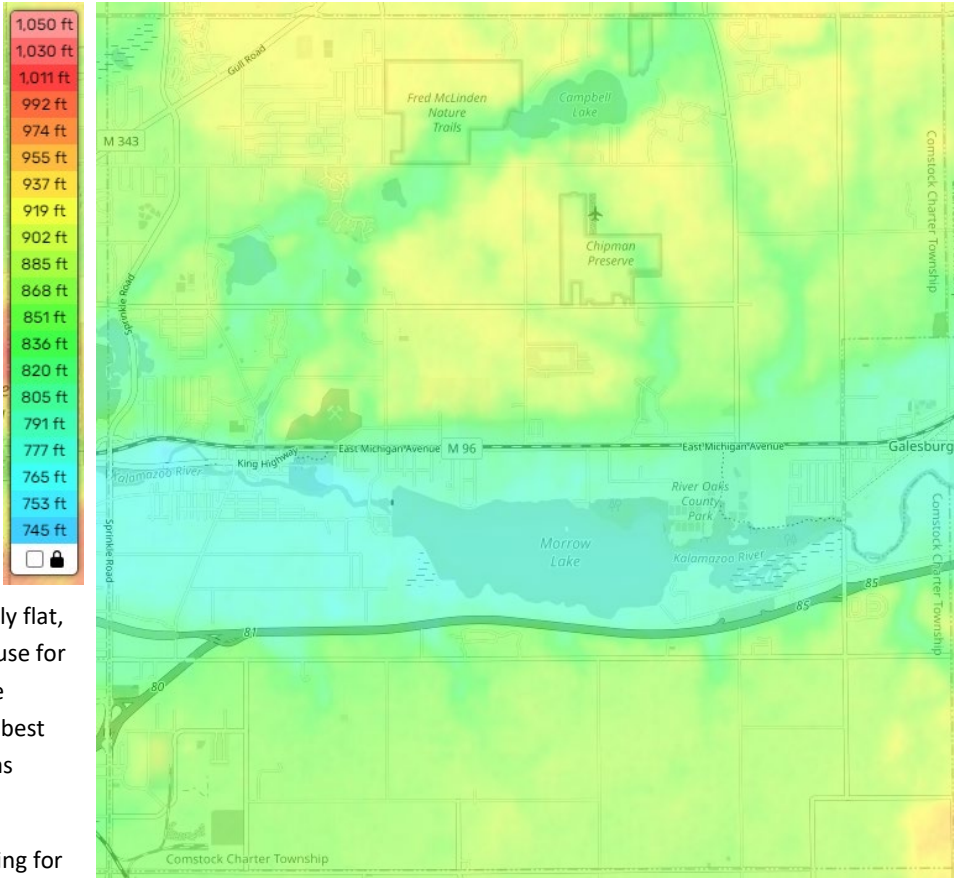
## TOPOGRAPHY

In comparison to its neighbors, Comstock has a relatively low elevation that ranges between 919 ft and 765 ft. The lowest elevations can be found along the Kalamazoo River and Morrow Lake, which serve as collection points for stormwater.

Some of the other lowest points in Comstock are along the community's smaller lakes.

Understanding the local topography can aid in park planning in terms of amenities offered. For example, a trail system may be appropriate for areas that are relatively flat, in order to offer the widest potential use for patrons. Alternatively, areas that have higher topographical changes may be best suited for wintertime activities, such as downhill skiing.

Topographic review also aids in planning for stormwater management and potential adverse impacts the natural features may impose on park and amenity expansion. For example, designing a park that is in a low-lying area that is prone to stormwater collection may not be advantageous. Further, creating sports fields, with hard top ground coverings for activities such as basketball, tennis, pickleball, etc., requires relatively level ground.



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## WATER ELEMENTS / FISH AND WILDLIFE

Of the 35.3 square miles that make up Comstock Charter Township, approximately 1.9 miles (5.49%) of it is composed of water. The water bodies that make up the Township include Campbell Lake, Lyons Lake, Morrow Lake, Schoonover Lake, and a variety of small unnamed lakes. The Kalamazoo River stretches across the middle of the Township and opens up to Morrow Lake, eventually tapering off back into the Kalamazoo River. Creeks and drains that are within the Township include Blakesee Plat Drain, Campbell Creek, Comstock Creek, Comstock Road Drain, Cramer Drain, Davis & Gilber Drain, East Branch Cramer Drain, Gilbert Drain, Lyons Lake Drain, Pease Drain, Town Line Drain, and the Wait & Van Buren Drain.

The Kalamazoo River and Morrow Lake are classified as “warm transitional”, meaning they experience temperatures which are relatively warmer compared to cool streams or rivers, especially during the summer months when temperatures are higher. For aquatic ecosystems, the temperature of rivers and streams plays a crucial role in supporting various species and their habitats and can have implications for aquatic life, such as influencing the distribution and behavior of fish species and affecting the overall ecosystem dynamics.

Due to their temperatures, warm transitional lakes and streams provide the opportunity for a variety of recreational opportunities such as swimming, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and nature observation. In addition to these listed bodies, there are wetlands surrounding the lakes and creeks in Comstock Charter Township. Of these wetlands, there are two primary types: freshwater emergent wetlands, characterized by the presence of rooted aquatic vegetation that extends above the water surface, and freshwater forested or shrubbed wetlands. Both types of wetlands play a crucial role in flood protection and water improvement, serving as natural filtering systems due to the rooted vegetation's capacity to trap sediments and pollutants. Furthermore, these wetlands provide essential habitats for a diverse array of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Much like warm transitional rivers and streams, these wetlands offer valuable opportunities for education and observation of ecosystems in their natural state.



Map 2: Natural Features



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## SOILS

Soil characteristics have an important influence on the ability of land to support various types of equipment, drainage, and park target locations. Four specific soil characteristics influence their ability to be used for various purposes. These include the following:

- Bearing capacity: the ability to support the weight of trails, buildings, and vehicles;
- Erodibility/stability: the susceptibility to withstand erosion hazards;
- Drainage: the ability for soils to retain, drain, and receive water;
- Resource value: the economic worth.

Kalamazoo County hosts a few soil associations: loamy soils underlain by sand and gravel, loamy soils, sandy soils, and wet sandy/loamy soils underlain by sand and gravel. Comstock Charter Township is primarily dominated by the Kalamazoo-Oshtemo and the Schoolcraft-Kalamazoo-Elston associations. Each of these associations is characterized by loamy soils underlain by sand and gravel.

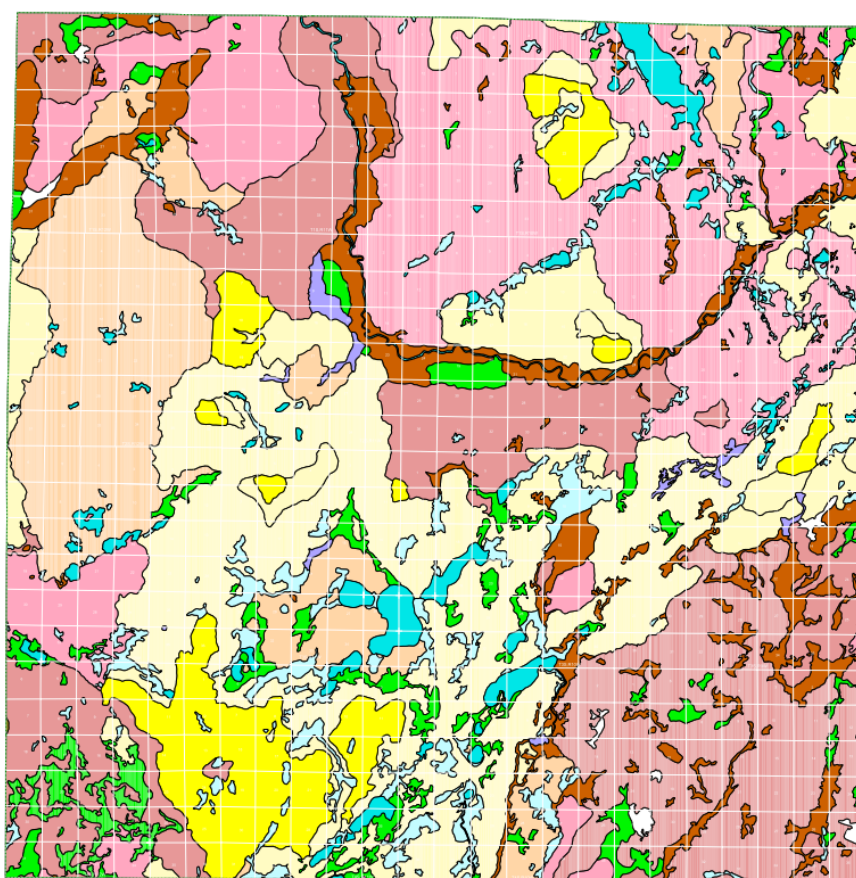
These loamy soil types are good for agriculture and gardening. They offer good drainage, moisture retention, and fertility, making them suitable for a variety of crops including fruits, vegetables, and grains. Loamy soils are generally considered to be suitable for building because they offer good stability and can provide adequate support for structures. However, this can vary on a site-to-site basis.

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## VEGETATION

Comstock Charter Township is largely rural and suburban. As such, the Township's vegetation can be classified as wooded or agricultural. According to Michigan State University Extension, land cover historically looked like dense forests, swampland, and grasslands. Examples of vegetation found in the area include:

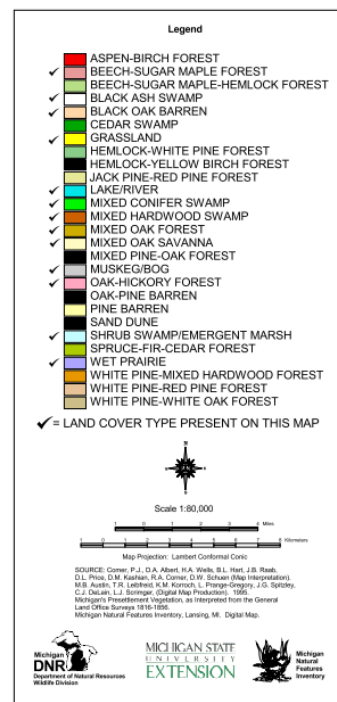
- Beech and Sugar Maple forests
- Black Ash swamps
- Black Oak barrens
- Mixed Hardwood swamps
- Mixed Conifer swamps
- Mixed Oak forests/savannas
- Shrub swamps/ emergent marshes
- Wet prairies
- Mixed Oak savannas
- Oak and Hickory forests



## Vegetation circa 1800 of Kalamazoo County, Michigan

An Interpretation of the General Land Office Surveys

By P. J. Corner and D. A. Albert  
Michigan Natural Features Inventory  
1997



Source: Michigan State University Extension, 1997

## CLIMATE

The general Kalamazoo area, which includes Comstock Charter Township, experiences a humid continental climate. This means there are four distinct seasons with warm to hot summers and cold winters. Average summer temperatures range from 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit (21-30 degrees Celsius), while winter temperatures regularly drop below freezing, with average highs ranging between 30- and 40 degrees Fahrenheit (-1 to 7 degrees Celsius). Precipitation is evenly distributed throughout the year, with snowfall common in the winter months.

On average, the area experiences approximately 42.2 inches of rainfall per year, more than the Michigan average of 32.79 inches per year. Alternatively, the Township experiences an average of 75.6 inches of snowfall per year, which is more than the Michigan average of 60.7 inches per year. On average, there are 139 days per year with a measurable amount of precipitation. However, there are 159 sunny days per year in Comstock.

These statistics are anticipated to change due to global climate change. Temperatures and precipitation amounts may vary widely. This amount of unpredictability should be considered, especially when looking at development that is existing or proposed near bodies of water.

## TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

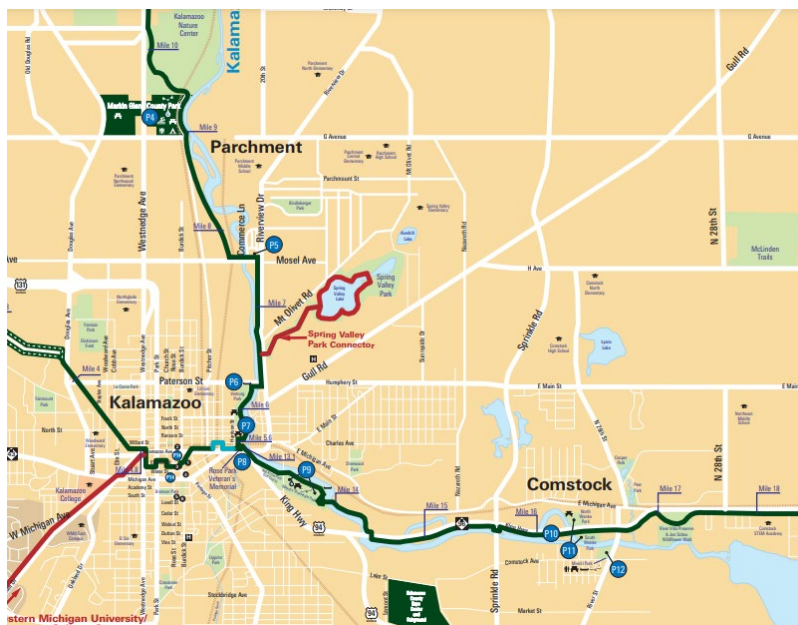
Comstock Township's circulation system is typical of Michigan townships, where the circulation system is characterized by straight roads, dirt or paved, which are designed to move vehicles efficiently. The Township also has winding and irregular roads, especially in the western portion. This is likely due to the proximity to the City of Kalamazoo. Except for these irregularities, Comstock has a fairly grid-like system, with Gull Road and King Highway/East Michigan Avenue being some of the Township's largest roads.

Gull Road is situated in the Northwestern quadrant of the Township and runs from Northeast to Southwest. It serves as a link between the City of Kalamazoo to the west and Richland Township in the north. Alternatively, King Highway/East Michigan Avenue runs from east to west, right through the center of the Township. It connects the Comstock Charter Township to Kalamazoo City and Kalamazoo Township to the west and the City of Galesburg and Charleston Township to the east.

The main mode of transportation within the Township is the personal automobile. Even within central Comstock, which has a higher density, sidewalks either are uncommon or do not exist. Because some of the main shopping and employment centers are the City of Kalamazoo and the City of Battle Creek to the west and east respectively, residents predominately rely on automobiles as the main mode of transportation.

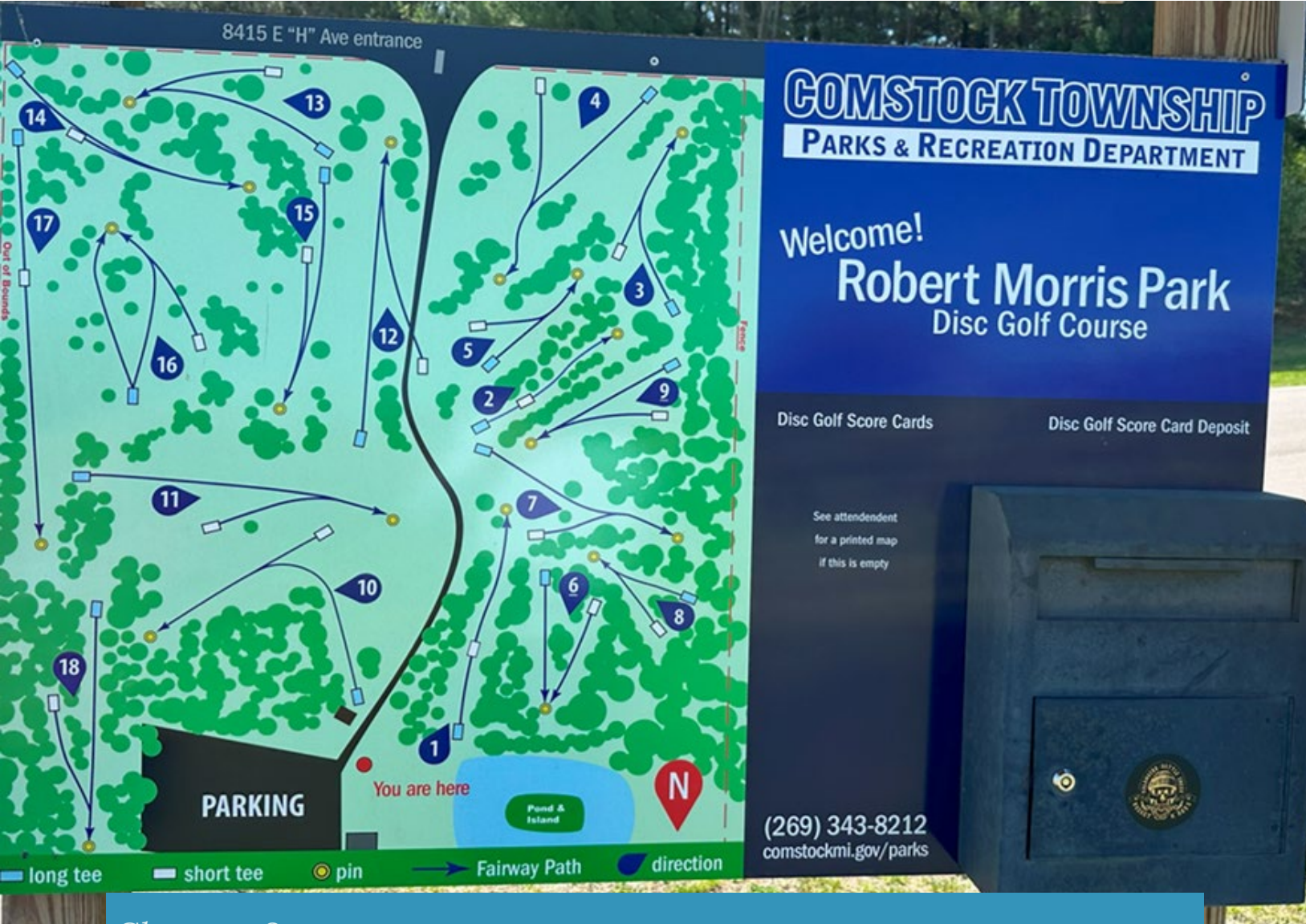
The City of Kalamazoo provides public transit services to the greater Kalamazoo area via the Kalamazoo Metro. A Metro bus route runs from Lake Street to 26th Avenue and connects back to Gull Road. Additionally, Metro provides two rideshare options that service Comstock Charter Township: Metro Share and Metro Link. Metro Share is a free dial-a-ride service that serves seniors and individuals with disabilities. Metro Link serves as another rideshare service that covers most of the Township, at a fee of \$1.50 per trip. Metro Link prides itself on providing the comfort of a taxi with the price of a bus ride.

Comstock Center, located in the region of Kings Highway and M-96, which run east-west, and River Street (north-south), has access to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail. The Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KRVt) is a non-motorized pathway that connects multiple municipalities in Kalamazoo County. A map excerpt, provided by Kalamazoo County Parks, is provided below, which shows the KRVt connection in Comstock.



### Map 3: Transportation System





### Chapter 3.

## INVENTORY OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

The physical inventory of local facilities consisted of in-person and virtual site inspections of all Township parks and recreation sites. A Township inventory of playground equipment and park facilities was recorded and reviewed concerning location, acreage, quantity, quality, accessibility, and condition.

|  |        |                      | Organized Sports |            |                  |           | Play Area     |                      | Passive Activities |                    |                 |          |           |         |               |       | Amenities |            |                   |           |
|--|--------|----------------------|------------------|------------|------------------|-----------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|-------|-----------|------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Public Parks:                                    | Acres  | Accessibility Rating | Basketball       | Ballfields | Beach Volleyball | Disc Golf | Swings (Sets) | Playground / Tot Lot | River/Lake Access  | Natural Area/Field | Trail/ Sidewalk | Pavilion | Bleachers | Benches | Picnic Tables | Grill | Restrooms | Trash Bins | Doggy Bag Station | Bike Rack |
| Celery Street Park                               | 1.35   | 2                    | 1                |            |                  |           | 2             | 1                    |                    | 1                  |                 |          |           | 2       | 1             |       |           | 1          |                   |           |
| Cooper Park                                      | 2.25   | 2                    |                  |            |                  |           |               |                      |                    | 1                  | 1               |          |           | 3       | 3             |       |           | 2          |                   |           |
| DNR Site   | 0.74   | 2                    |                  |            |                  |           |               |                      | 1                  |                    |                 |          |           |         |               |       |           |            |                   |           |
| Fleetwood Park                                   | 2.29   | 3                    |                  |            |                  |           | 4             | 2                    |                    | 1                  | 1               | 1        |           | 5       | 2             |       |           | 2          | 1                 | 1         |
| Green Meadow Park                                | 16.27  | 2                    |                  | 1          |                  |           |               |                      |                    | 1                  | 1               |          | 2         |         | 1             |       |           | 1          |                   |           |
| McLinden Nature Trails                           | 382.21 | 2                    |                  |            |                  |           |               |                      | 1                  |                    | 1               |          |           |         |               |       |           | 1          | 1                 |           |
| Merrill Park                                     | 5.67   | 3                    | 2                |            |                  |           | 2             | 2                    | 1                  | 1                  | 1               | 2        |           | 7       | 18            | 2     | 1         | 6          | 2                 | 2         |
| North Wenke Park                                 | 21.61  | 2                    |                  |            |                  |           |               |                      | 1                  | 1                  |                 |          |           | 1       | 1             | 1     |           | 1          |                   |           |
| South Wenke Park                                 | 23.07  | 3                    |                  |            |                  |           |               |                      | 1                  |                    | 1               |          |           |         | 1             |       |           | 1          |                   |           |
| Peer Park  | 0.98   | 2                    |                  |            |                  |           |               |                      | 1                  | 1                  |                 |          |           | 1       |               |       |           |            |                   |           |
| River Villa Preserve & Jan Schau Wildflower Walk | 74.93  | 2                    |                  | 1          |                  |           |               |                      | 1                  | 1                  | 1               |          |           |         |               |       |           |            |                   |           |
| Robert Morris Park                               | 34.13  | 3                    |                  |            | 1                | 1         | 6             | 2                    | 1                  | 1                  | 1               | 2        |           | 4       | 41            | 5     | 1         | 4          |                   |           |
| Wenke Softball Complex                           | 40.00  | 3                    |                  | 4          |                  |           |               | 1                    |                    |                    |                 | 1        | 4         |         | 12            |       | 1         | 10         |                   |           |
| Totals:  | 605.5  | -                    | 3                | 6          | 1                | 1         | 14            | 9                    | 8                  | 9                  | 8               | 6        | 6         | 23      | 80            | 8     | 3         | 29         | 4                 | 3         |

**Accessibility Guidelines**

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

## MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

At the time of this plan, the Township owns and operates the following parks and facilities, which consists of over 600 acres of Township parkland. For a more detailed inventory of Township parks and facilities, please refer to the parks inventory previously listed.

### **Celery Street Park**

1.35 ACRES



Celery Street Park is located between Celery Street to the south and Wright Street to the north. Nestled among a neighborhood, the park features a play structure, swing set, and basketball court, alongside a vast amount of open space. Celery Street Park is considered a pocket park due to its size (less than two acres) and proximity to residential dwellings.



## Cooper Park

2.25 ACRES



Cooper Park, sandwiched between N 26th Street and Oran Ave, is well known for its prominent water features such as the Comstock Waterfall and Comstock Creek. Cooper Park was officially named after the famous author, James Fenimore Cooper. The park features a gazebo, picnic tables and a small pedestrian bridge overlooking the Comstock Creek waterfall. Further, the park features native plantings and wildlife habitats. While not adjacent to a high density of residential dwellings, Cooper Park resembles a pocket park, due to its size of approximately 2.25 acres, as compared to a neighborhood park, which typically has between one to fifteen (1-15) acres.

## Comstock Township DNR Site

(State Owned)

0.74 ACRES



Comstock Township DNR Site is located off King Highway. This area allows access to the Kalamazoo River as well as the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail.



## Fleetwood Park

2.29 ACRES



Fleetwood Park is located just south of Shadowlane Avenue to the west of the River Manor Apartments. The park consists of a ADA-accessible paved walking loop, two play structures, and four sets of swings. Fleetwood Park could be classified as a neighborhood park, due to its size and location to the Shadowlane Avenue and Blake Boulevard neighborhood, which consists of over 260 individual (single) family dwelling units.

## **Green Meadow Park**

16.27 ACRES



Green Meadow Park is located just south of East Cork Street and east of the Kalamazoo Water Tower. The park features a rentable ball field. Green Meadow Park could be classified as a community park, due to the size and service it provides to residents and patrons within the Township. The park also features open green space and a naturalized trailway through wooded portions of the site.

## **McLinden Nature Trails**

382.21 ACRES



The McLinden Nature Trails was named after lifelong resident, park board commissioner, and dedicated citizen, Fred McLinden, in 1984. The facility is operated as a joint effort between Comstock Charter Township and the City of Kalamazoo and features over two miles of trails, with portions of the trail system (those areas marked) being maintained solely by the Parks & Recreation Department. It is located just North of E H Avenue to the east of Comstock Creek.



## Merrill Park

5.67 ACRES



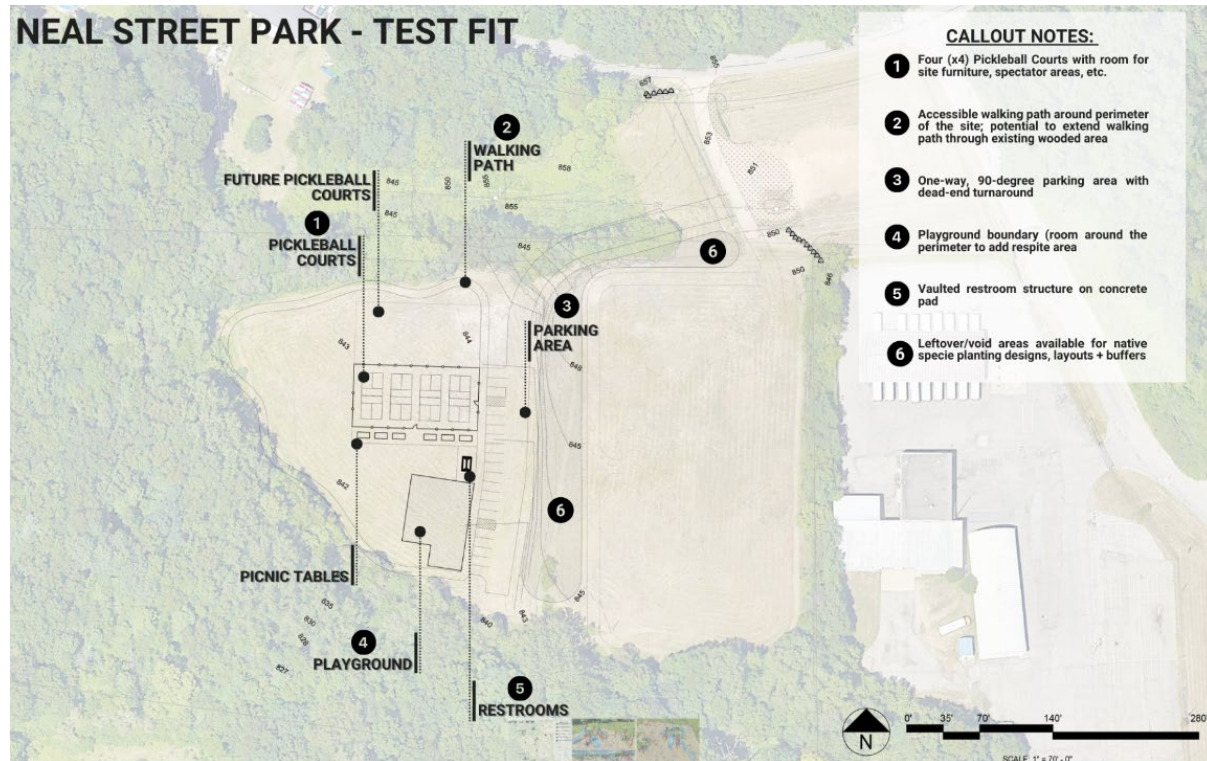
Merrill Park, located on River Street and Comstock Avenue, was the first official park recognized by Comstock Township. It offers excellent fishing spots on the Kalamazoo River and has a playground, picnic shelters, a boat launch, public restrooms (opened seasonally), basketball courts, and open space which can be enjoyed via a ADA-accessible paved walkway. The park was renovated in 2019 with funds from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant. Merrill Park is frequently used for special events and recreational programs. Given the recreational opportunities at Merrill Park, the classification of a community park for this property is appropriate. Merrill Park offers recreational activities to the Township and surrounding communities.

Additionally, Merrill Park was visited by former President of the United States, William (Bill) Jefferson Clinton, on August 28, 1996. The marker reads: *The Forty-Second President of the United States gave a speech on protecting America's environment on this site in Merrill Park. Comstock Township was one of four stops the President made in Michigan while on a whistle-stop campaign tour that culminated at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.*



## Neal Street Park

~6 acres



Neal Street Park – not yet constructed – will feature four (4) pickleball courts, walking pathway, playground equipment, restroom facilities and a paved parking lot. Neal Street Park will be located between Shields Street to the west and North 26<sup>th</sup> Street to the east.



## North Wenke / South Wenke Parks

21.61 ACRES / 23.07 ACRES



The North and South Wenke Parks are situated on the northern and southern sides of King Highway. The parks feature various fishing areas, a miniature lighthouse, a gazebo, and plenty of open space.

## Peer Park

0.98 ACRES



Just north of E Michigan Avenue and east of N 26th Street, Peer Park offers a variety of green spaces, benches, and a historic memorial. Each year, the park serves as the venue for Comstock's annual Memorial Day celebration. Parking is available along the street adjacent to the park.

## River Villa Preserve & Jan Schau Wildflower Walk

74.93 ACRES



River Villa Preserve is located east of the Jan Schau Wildflower Walk. Parking is available at the Comstock Community Center located west of the Wildflower Walk. The park has natural surface trails and offers public access to the Kalamazoo River. The Kalamazoo River Valley Trail runs through this park. Comstock's Community Garden, which features 12 plots, is also located within the preserve.



## Robert Morris Park

34.13 ACRES



Robert Morris Park, located between Campbell Lake to the north and E H Avenue to the south, was initially opened in 1968 at Campbell Lake Park and was renamed in 1975. The park has playgrounds, swing sets, a disc golf course, paved walkway, fishing opportunities, and a public beach. The park also offers pavilions and non-propane grills throughout the park. Restrooms are offered seasonally, along with concessions. Admission fees are charged all year with annual permits available. Robert Morris Park is classified as a community park due to its size and regional draw for recreational amenities.

## Wenke Softball Complex

40 ACRES



The Wenke Softball Complex is located on East Michigan Avenue. It features softball and baseball fields used for tournaments, leagues and practices, a playset, and seating areas composed of bleachers and picnic tables. Wenke Softball Complex is classified as a community park due to its size and recreational influence to the Township. The complex is owned by Kalamazoo County Parks & Recreation, with field space leased to Comstock Charter Township. Restrooms and concessions are available during sponsored events.



## SCHOOL FACILITIES

Schools offer a variety of recreational opportunities for students and, less frequently, the public due to the increasing safety concerns that schools across the country have faced. Comstock is served by three school districts: Comstock Public Schools (west half of the Township), Galesburg-Augusta Community Schools (east side of the Township), and Gull Lake Community Schools (northern portion of the Township).

The following schools are located within Township boundaries, with all four being a part of the Comstock Public School District:

1. Comstock Elementary School
2. Comstock Middle School
3. Comstock High School
4. STEM Academy

It should be noted that school facilities outside of the Township's borders still serve the parks and recreational needs of the Township and is largely dependent on which school a student attends. Many school facilities are publicly available or easily accessible for students and families who are a part of the school district(s). However, school districts have been increasing safety measures, which limit access to certain facilities.



## OTHER RECREATION FACILITIES

Oftentimes, a population will meet their recreational needs with public and private recreation facilities. Private recreation facilities can include camps, sports arenas, golf courses, gyms, clubs, and more. The Township has a variety of private recreation opportunity, including:

- » Private gyms and fitness classes
- » Golf courses (Eastern Hills Golf Course and Hickory Ridge Golf Course)
- » Private clubs and leagues (baseball, golf, etc.)
- » Water recreation

Kalamazoo County Park, River Oaks is located within the Township. According to Kalamazoo County, River Oaks features the following amenities to patrons:

- » 15 soccer fields
- » Boat ramp
- » Splash pad
- » Group picnic areas
- » Picnic shelters
- » Playgrounds
- » Fishing access
- » Dog parks
- » Hiking trails
- » Volleyball courts
- » Cross-country skiing
- » Wenke Softball Complex

## REGIONAL RECREATION RESOURCES

Regional recreation areas are large facilities serving people within a broad geographic area. The region has been defined as the area within roughly a one-half to one-hour driving radius of Comstock Township. Table 5 summarizes regional facilities located within 30 miles distance from Comstock Township Hall. The size and type of facilities vary.

Table 3: Regional Facilities Near Comstock Township

| Regional Facility                 | Distance from Comstock Township* (miles) | Description  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Kalamazoo County, MI</b>       |  |  |
| Portage Creek Bicentennial Park   | 13.1                                     | The park is a 200-acre linear park offering trails, picnic areas, playgrounds, fishing areas, and benches.   |
| Lakeview Park                     | 13.3                                     | Lakeview Park is 26 acres in size offering amenities like ballfields, basketball courts, fishing docks, picnic areas, pickleball and tennis courts, volleyball courts, and many walking trails |
| Kalamazoo Nature Center           | 11.6                                     | Open year-round, the Kalamazoo Nature Center features 15 miles of trails, camp programs, event rentals, and special events.  |
| Kellogg Forest                    | 9.8                                      | The 716-acre forest is known for its diverse plant species. It includes various trails for walking and hiking.   |
| Fort Custer State Recreation Area | 8.2                                      | This 3,033-acre recreation area features lakes, the Kalamazoo River, and over 25 miles of multi-use trails.  |
| Cold Brook County Park            | 8.6                                      | This park is 276 acres, featuring picnic areas, playgrounds, 43 campsites, a swimming beach, fishing, ballfields, volleyball, disc golf, and hiking trails.                                    |
| Chipman Land Preserve             | 0.2                                      | A 228.8 acre preserve with five (5) miles of mowed trails.   |
| <b>Allegan County, MI</b>         |  |  |
| West Side Park                    | 58.1                                     | West Side Park overlooks Lake Michigan with plenty of picnic areas, pavilions, restrooms, a playground, and an open field area.  |
| Silver Creek Park and Campground  | 49.9                                     | This park is 320 acres in size and features 75 campsites, 30 miles of horseback riding trails, and access to Silver Creek.   |
| Gun Lake Park                     | 27.0                                     | The park is 4 acres featuring a beach, playground, basketball court, picnic areas, restrooms, and a boat launch. Most of the amenities are ADA accessible.                                     |
| <b>Barry County, MI</b>           |  |  |
| Bailey Nature Preserve            | 19.6                                     | This park is 160 acres in size. It contains a lake for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking as well as trails along the lake and Wabascon Creek.  |
| Paul Henry Thornapple Trail       | 32.5                                     | This trail, when completed, will be 42 miles of multi-use trails running from Grand Rapids to Vermontville, Michigan.  |
| <b>Branch County, MI</b>          |  |  |
| Quincy-Marble Lake Park           | 53.3                                     | This park is located on Firs Lake and features a boat launch, 129 campsites, a swimming beach, picnic areas, a ballfield, and playground.  |
| Memorial Park                     | 45.4                                     | Memorial Park is 30-acres in size offering a swimming beach, 52 campsites, restrooms, a boat launch, picnic areas, and a playground.   |
| <b>Calhoun County, MI</b>         |  |  |
| Calhoun County Trail              | 23.7                                     | This trail is 5.3 miles long beginning at Battle Creek Linear Path and ending at Historic Bridge Park. It is accessible for pedestrians, wheelchairs, and bicycles.                            |
| Ott Biological Preserve           | 22.2                                     | Ott Biological Preserve is 298 acres in size including trails through beautiful forests for hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing.  |

| Regional Facility              | Distance from Comstock Township* (miles) | Description   |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Kimball Pines Park             | 22.0                                     | This 117-acre park offers hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing trails, picnic areas, and disc golf.   |
| <b>Cass County, MI</b>         |  |   |
| Arthur Dodd Memorial Park      | 20.5                                     | Open year-round from sunrise to sunset with limited parking and no entrance fee. The park is 51 acres and offers opportunities for fishing, canoeing, hiking, volleyball, horseshoeing, and picnicking.   |
| Dr. T.K. Lawless Park          | 7.7                                      | The park features 820 acres and a variety of recreational opportunities such as disc golf, soccer, volleyball, inner-tube sledding, biking, picnicking, cross-country skiing, ball fields, and play equipment. A nominal admission fee is required. |
| Fred Russ Forest Park          | 14.6                                     | The park features 580 acres of research forest and offers canoeing, children's play equipment, cross-country skiing, equestrian trails fishing, hiking, horseshoeing, and picnicking.   |
| Harmon Park                    | 5.1                                      | Harmon Park offers a swimming area and picnicking areas.  |
| Stevens Lakeside Memorial Park | 12.2                                     | Stevens Lakeside Memorial Park features a two-acre swimming area with limited parking in addition to a picnic area.   |
| <b>Eaton County, MI</b>        |  |   |
| Fitzgerald Park                | 61.9                                     | Fitzgerald Park is known for its "Big Rocks" and ledges. It features nature trails, playgrounds, picnic areas, playgrounds, basketball  |
| Keehne Environmental Area      | 29.1                                     | This 30-acre park contains two ponds, several nature trails, fishing piers, and an extensive boardwalk system. This park offers fishing, picnicking, aquatic habitat exploration, and hiking and cross-country ski trails.                          |
| Crandell Park                  | 47.3                                     | Crandell Park is 432 acres in size, located around Eaton County's Largest Lake. The park features a trail with various paths and pavilions.   |
| <b>St. Joseph County, MI</b>   |  |   |
| Hoshel Canoe Park              | 25.7                                     | Hoshel Canoe Park provides a non-motorized boat launch on the Prairie River and has picnic tables, a fire pit, and fishing areas.   |
| Meyer Broadway County Park     | 20.0                                     | Meyer Broadway features 160 acres that have multi-use trails, grills, picnic tables, a pavilion, playground, dog park, fire pits, snow tubing hills, a volleyball court, disc golf, and grills.   |
| Timm Preserve                  | 25.6                                     | Timm Preserve is made up of 95 acres with 3 miles of hiking trails that feature a boardwalk and bridge.   |
| <b>Van Buren County, MI</b>    |  |   |
| Van Buren State Park           | 44.9                                     | This park is 400 acres including a beach area, playground, picnic areas, campgrounds, and access to the Van Buren Trail.  |
| North Beach                    | 46.4                                     | This beach is ADA accessible and includes a concession stand, picnic area, playset, restrooms, and volleyball courts.   |
| Kal Haven Trail                | 32.2                                     | Kal Haven Trail runs 34 miles from South haven to Kalamazoo and is optimal for running, walking, and biking.  |

\*Distance measured from Comstock Township Hall

## RECREATIONAL PARK NAMING

Comstock Township's parks date back to 1936 when 62 freeholders requested that the Township Board appoint a Parks Commission. Many of the Township's parks have a historic significance.

**Thomas Merrill Park** - Initially acquired in 1939, Merrill Park is the oldest recreational area in continuous use in Comstock Township. When it was first established, the park was used as a pasture and baseball field, which created its colloquial name "Baseball Park". Many local merchants sponsored baseball teams, including Bell's Greenhouses, Jones' Pure Oil Station, Portenga & Slager Lumber Company, Reed's Grocery, and Whitney's Barber Shop. Oftentimes, these merchants would offer free movies for parkgoers. In 1958, the park was officially renamed Thomas Merrill Park, named after the reverend of the Township's first church.

**Robert Morris Park** - Dedicated in 1968 as Campbell Lake Park, Robert Morris Park is the newest and largest of all Township parks. The park initially had a bathhouse, beach, and picnic structure. In 1974, the beloved Township Supervisor Robert Morris passed away, prompting the park's final name change as a lasting memorial. At the dedication ceremony, a new flag was raised by the Honor Guard from the Comstock VFW Post. A bronze plaque was mounted at the base of the pole in Robert Morris' honor.

**Peer Park** - The land for Peer Park was obtained in 1939 and named after Perry Peer, one of the former owners of the land and the Peer Foundry Company. Previously, there was significant industrial activity where this park now lay. From 1880 to the 1920s, a large factory was in this spot and it operated by water from the pond. In the early 1930s, the factory was a Tool and Die shop. The park was previously known as the "lower" or "first pond" and was a beloved ice-skating spot and playground.

**North/South Wenke Parks** - Before the King Highway's construction in 1937, this piece of land on the Kalamazoo River was known as "the Island" or "Scout Island" and was a spot for Boy Scouts' summer outings in the 1920s. After the highway's construction was complete, the Park Commission took responsibility for this land. The parks were improved with picnic tables and grills and were opened to the public. These parks were named after long term resident and park board commissioner, Chris Wenke.

**Local History Room** - The Local History Room is located at the library and includes a collection of books, pamphlets, maps, obituaries, clippings, and brochures of the township.

## RECREATION PROGRAMS / EVENTS

The Township's recreation programming began with baseball but has now evolved into a variety of sports and programs. Comstock Township currently offers the following recreation programs / activities:

- » **Archery Clinic.** Archery clinics are offered throughout the year, with multiple rounds of sessions occurring. Sessions consist of a weekly class for six weeks and include learning skills and archery games. Attendees are instructed by a Certified USA Archery Level 2 Coach.
- » **Adult Softball.** Adult softball leagues operate from April to October each calendar year. Games take place at the Wenke Softball Complex inside River Oaks County Park.
- » **Community Garden.** Comstock Township offers 4 ft x 12 ft raised beds. Each plot is \$10 to cover water costs. Some vegetable and herb plants are donated by local greenhouses, but plot renters are encouraged to plant any produce plants they like. Participants are limited to one plot at the beginning of the season, with more plots potentially available further along in the season. A pre-gardening season meeting is held at the garden to inform plot owners of garden operations.
- » **Dino Dig.** The Dino Dig includes digging through sand to find dinosaur bones, a snack, craft making, and story time. The Dino Dig is free to participate, however, registration is required in order to participate.



- » **Farmers Market.** The Farmers Market is held at Merrill Park on Mondays, from June to September. This market has a variety of vendors, food trucks, and activities each week.
- » **Fall Fest.** This event takes place on the 3rd Saturday in September at Merrill Park. The festival includes market vendors, greenhouses, food trucks, live music, kids' activities and more. Partnership with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) helps support this event.
- » **Boo Bash.** This event takes place the weekend before Halloween at Merrill Park. Boo Bash is a game trail around the Merrill Park path system, which allows attendees the opportunity to win candy and other prizes.
- » **Haunt your House for Halloween.** Residents can decorate their house for Halloween and enter in the contest to win a gift card and season pass to Robert Morris Park.
- » **VFW Memorial Day Parade.** This event takes place on Memorial Day each year to honor our veterans who served in our community. The Parks & Recreation Department partners with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) organization for this event.
- » **VFW Easter Egg Hunt.** This event takes place the Saturday before Easter and is held at Merrill Park. The Parks & Recreation Department partners with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) organization for this event.
- » **Letters to Santa.** Santas mailbox has two locations: Comstock Township Library and the Comstock Township Hall and is available the first Monday of November through the middle of December. Participants are encouraged to leave their letter in the mailbox with a return address to receive a personal response.
- » **Free Park Day.** Every summer on Juneteenth Robert Morris Park is FREE for everyone!
- » **Holiday Lights Festival.** The Parks & Recreation Department brings the festival spirit by lighting up the park with holiday decorations. This event will happen mid- December each year.
- » **National Night Out.** A collaboration with the Kalamazoo County Sheriffs Office held at Merrill Park the first Tuesday in August. The event showcases the different departments and areas of public safety including the fire department and EMS. The event offers free food and other giveaways.
- » **Paddle & Pour.** This end of summer event is a downtown River Fest with live music, food trucks, and entertainment. Partnership with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA).



## Chapter 4.

# ADMINISTRATION

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission is a five-member elected body long established under Michigan Enabling Legislation Act 1905 PA 157. According to the 2000 edition of the book, *Authorities & Responsibilities of Michigan Township Officials, Boards and Commissions* authored by John H. Bauckham, this commission has authority to acquire, improve, maintain, manage and control Township parks and places of recreation, establish fees, and adopt rules and regulations (MCL 41.426(a-f)). This commission also has authority to operate a system of public recreation and playgrounds (MCLs 123.51- 123.54).

The sitting Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission members were elected to a four-year term in November 2020 and began their tenure with the next month's meeting. The commission meets once monthly with the ability to call special meetings as necessary. Its officers are elected at each December meeting for the following year.

The commission employs a full-time Parks and Recreation Director to administer the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Department. The Parks Director reports directly to the board and works closely with the board chair. The Parks and Recreation Director is responsible for all operations, overseeing two full-time staff members and seasonal employees, and works with the Commission to prepare and manage the yearly budget. The Parks Director oversees a full-time Program Coordinator, and a full-time Parks Maintenance Leader. These positions report directly to the Parks Director but are under the Parks Board of Commissioners oversight as well.

The Parks and Recreation budget approvals and personnel policy/records administration are conducted by the Township Board of Trustees.

## PARKS AND RECREATION FUNDING

The primary funding for Parks and Recreation is provided by the Township General Fund. The Park Commission creates the budget for parks and recreation and makes a recommendation to the Township Board for approval. The Township Board reviews the request and appropriates funds for parks and recreation. The Township does not have a separate park millage.

General fund revenues are derived from property taxes, state-shared revenues, license and permit fees, charges for services, interest on investments, and court fines or forfeitures. The Parks & Recreation Department also collects some revenue from park permits, concession sales, and fees.

### REVENUES

| Source                          | 2024 Approved Budget | 2024 Amended Budget | 2025 Projected Budget |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Baseball / Softball Fees        | \$27,000             | \$27,000            | \$20,000              |
| Sales                           | \$17,000             | \$17,000            | \$17,000              |
| Park Permit Fees                | \$30,000             | \$30,000            | \$25,000              |
| Pavilion Rental Fees            | \$5,000              | \$5,000             | \$3,500               |
| Field Rental Fees               | \$15,000             | \$15,000            | \$5,000               |
| Contributions and Donations     | \$200                | \$200               | \$200                 |
| <b>Total Estimated Revenues</b> | <b>\$94,200</b>      | <b>\$94,200</b>     | <b>\$70,700</b>       |

### EXPENDITURES

| Expense                              | 2024 Approved Budget | 2024 Amended Budget | 2025 Projected Budget |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Salaries and Wages                   | \$252,000            | \$252,000           | \$275,000             |
| Payroll Taxes                        | \$16,500             | \$16,500            | \$18,000              |
| Pension                              | \$18,500             | \$18,500            | \$22,000              |
| Fringe Benefits Parks and Recreation | \$40,000             | \$40,000            | \$60,000              |
| Office Supplies / Equipment          | \$250                | \$250               | \$250                 |
| Supplies / Equipment - Operations    | \$25,000             | \$25,000            | \$20,000              |
| Supplies / Equipment - Facilities    | \$12,000             | \$12,000            | \$15,000              |
| Supplies / Equipment - Vehicles      | \$3,000              | \$3,000             | \$2,500               |
| Program Supplies / Equipment         | \$10,000             | \$10,000            | \$10,000              |
| Contracted Services                  | \$156,000            | \$156,000           | \$120,000             |
| Legal Services                       | \$500                | \$500               | \$500                 |
| Insurance                            | \$22,000             | \$22,000            | \$25,000              |
| Communications                       | \$1,500              | \$1,500             | \$1,500               |
| Mileage Reimbursement                | \$1,000              | \$1,000             | \$750                 |
| Marketing and Advertising            | \$5,000              | \$5,000             | \$5,000               |
| Printing and Publishing              | \$500                | \$500               | \$1,000               |



|   |                    |                    |           |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Utilities                               | \$9,000            | \$9,000            | \$12,000  |
| Land / Building Repairs and Maintenance | \$15,000           | \$15,000           | \$15,000  |
| Miscellaneous                           | \$200              | \$200              | \$7,600*  |
| Postage / Shipping                      | \$500              | \$500              | \$150     |
| Education and Training                  | \$3,000            | \$3,000            | \$5,000   |
| Memberships                             | \$500              | \$500              | \$750     |
| Capital Outlay                          | \$445,000          | \$445,000          | \$375,000 |
| <b>Total Appropriations</b>             | <b>\$1,040,450</b> | <b>\$1,040,450</b> |           |

\* Engineering services & equipment/vehicle repairs included in this line item.

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## MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES GRANTS

The following is a summary of the three most well-known recreation grant programs now available through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) for communities that have an up-to-date recreation plan:

**Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF):** Eligible projects include acquisition of land or rights in land for recreational uses or for protection of the land because of its environmental importance or scenic beauty, including additions to existing parks, forest lands or wildlife areas. Development of public outdoor-recreation facilities is eligible (such as picnic areas, beaches, boating access, fishing and hunting facilities, winter sports areas, playgrounds, ballfields, tennis courts, and trails). Funds are provided through the sale of oil and mineral leases on State land. Local contributions equal to at least 25 percent of the project cost are required. There is no minimum or maximum amount for acquisition projects. The minimum allowable grant for development is \$15,000 and the maximum is \$300,000.

There are three special initiatives approved by the Trust Fund Board of Trustees. Proposals will receive special attention if they:

- Are located within U.S. Census Bureau Metropolitan Statistical Areas;
- Increase environmental education facilities statewide; but particularly in urban areas; and
- Acquire land or develop trail ways that contribute to the development of a statewide trail network.

**Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF):** Administered eligible projects include community recreation and trailway improvements. These are grants of \$30,000 to \$500,000 to local units of government for development of facilities such as ballfields, tennis courts, playgrounds, trails and picnic areas; and including support facilities; renovation of existing facilities and retrofitting of existing facilities to make them accessible to persons with disabilities. Funds are provided through federal appropriations. The grant match basis is 50 percent MDNR/50 percent local.

**Recreation Passport Grant:** The Recreation Passport program is funded through proceeds of park passes purchased for admission to State Parks in Michigan. Grants of between \$7,500 and \$45,000 are available to communities mainly for the improvement of existing parks, though new park development is technically eligible.

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## OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG):** Revenues obtained through the Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program can be used for a variety of community improvement projects, including development of recreation facilities or land acquisition for new parks or athletic fields in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods that qualify under the program.

**Donations:** Businesses, corporations, private clubs, and community organizations will often contribute to recreation and other improvement programs to benefit the communities in which they are located. Private sector contributions may be in the form of monetary contributions, the donation of land, the provision of volunteer services, or the contribution of equipment or facilities.

**Foundations:** A foundation is a special non-profit legal entity that is established as a mechanism through which land, cash, and securities can be donated for the benefit of parks and recreation services. The assets are disbursed by the foundation board of directors according to a predetermined plan. Funding for recreation facilities through foundations is very limited.

**Lease or Contractual Agreements:** The Parks & Recreation Department may increase the availability of recreation facilities to its residents by leasing sites and facilities from other recreation providers. For example, the Township could agree to help maintain school recreation facilities in exchange for guaranteed availability of the facility to the public. The Township could also contract with private entrepreneurs to provide services at Township -owned Park facilities, such as recreation programming, food service, or facility maintenance. Privatization of services can increase recreation opportunities available to residents, while minimizing Township costs.

**Public Use Conveyances:** Administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, this program provides state lands acquired through delinquent taxes for local government units for public use. Acceptable uses of land acquired under this program include development of local parks.

## GRANT HISTORY

Though Comstock Township does not regularly receive grant funding for maintenance or improvements to its parks, it has been a recipient of grant funds for specific capital projects in the past. Table 5 provides a description of the projects for which the Township received grant funding.

Table 4: Comstock Charter Township Grant History

| Project Year / Project Number | Project Title                    | Grant Amount | Project Description   |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|---|
| 1980 / 26-01104 D2            | Merrill Park                     | \$8,101.21   | Picnic shelter, LWCF sign   |
| 1992 / TF92-129               | River Villa Preserve             | \$82,500.00  | Acquisition of 37.2 acres of land with 1,270 feet frontage along the Kalamazoo River for nature area.   |
| 1999 / CM99-162               | Fleetwood Park Development       | \$28,932.00  | Develop a community park by adding park benches, walkway, swing set, gazebo, horseshoe pits, and a toddler play structure.  |
| 2011 / TF11-003               | Robert Morris Park Development   | \$300,000.00 | Development to include multi-use building, pavement/concrete removal, sidewalk, topsoil/seed/mulch and storage building demolition.   |
| 2016 / TF16-0184              | Merrill Park Improvement Project | \$300,000.00 | Development to improve amenities at Merrill Park. Improvements include relocating the playground, multi-use pavilion, and basketball courts away from the water's edge; and create a multi-purpose recreational space for individuals of all ages and abilities to play, exercise, relax and participate in community-based programs. The 5.55-acre park is located on the central green space along the Kalamazoo River within the downtown area of Comstock Township. |
| TOTAL FUNDING                 | -                                | \$719,533.21 | -   |



## Chapter 5.

# BASIS FOR ACTION PLAN

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has adopted a set of standards, based upon those developed by the National Parks and Recreation Association (NPRA), to determine the need for recreation facilities in each community. These standards establish 1) the specific recreation facilities such as tennis courts or soccer fields, which should be available based upon the population of the community; and 2) the “service areas,” or the number and type of parks that should be available to residents within a certain distance of their homes. Each of these standards will be applied to the existing inventory of Comstock Township-owned and operated facilities to determine if deficiencies are present.

MDNR standards are evaluated alongside public input, which was garnered with a public survey. MDNR standards are not meant to be set-in-stone necessities of the Township and should instead be considered as recommendations, with equal priority being placed upon public opinion. The results of this analysis will be incorporated, in part, into the Action Plan that follows.



## SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

Public input is extremely important to Comstock Charter Township, as residents, business owners, and community stakeholders are the experts of the community. The opinions gathered during the public engagement process were paired with the expertise of Comstock Charter Township's staff and consultants to inform the goals and objectives in this plan. To gather a sufficient amount of public opinion, the Township had multiple methods of collecting public comment including a survey, the public comment period, and public hearing.

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### PARKS AND RECREATION SURVEY

The public survey was launched on July 2, 2024, and concluded on August 28, 2024. The survey had 14 questions and covered various topics related to Comstock's parks and recreation facilities.

A Quick Response “QR” code was distributed to the residents alongside property owners’ summer tax bills, which resulted in **291 responses**, or about **1.9%** of Comstock Charter Township's population. People interested in filling out a physical survey could receive a copy at Township Hall. Eight (8) of the total responses were from physical surveys.

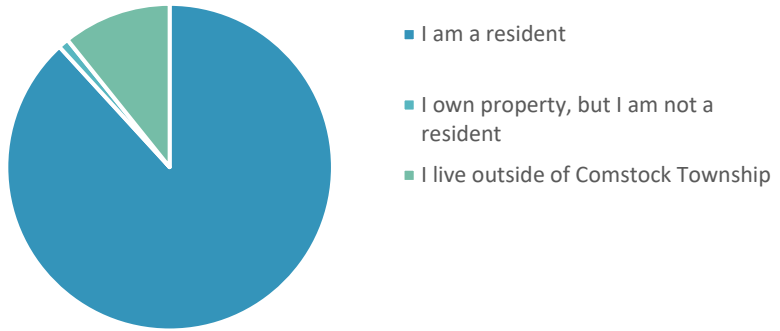
### SUMMARY of KEY POINTS

1. **Safety** - Many respondents indicated a perceived lack of safety and security in public parks. As one of the Parks & Recreation Department's top priorities, it should consider how to increase feelings of overall safety. This could look like increased police presence, emergency call boxes, and surveillance.
2. **Desire** - Overall, there is a desire for more amenities in the Township. Specifically, restrooms, hiking and walking trails, canoe and kayak launches, special events and festivals, adult fitness and wellness, and pickleball.
3. **Variety** - Analysis of survey data indicates the need for more variety in amenity types so people of all ages and abilities can participate in recreational programming and activities. Variety may also look like the incorporation of fall and winter activities to promote all-season recreation.
4. **Connectivity** - Some respondents expressed disuse of recreational opportunities due to the lack of access and connectivity. Many survey respondents noted the desire for additional walking paths and trails. This concern is further analyzed later in this chapter.
5. **Programming** - Many respondents indicated a desire for programming, noting their availability is largely on weekends (Saturday and Sunday).

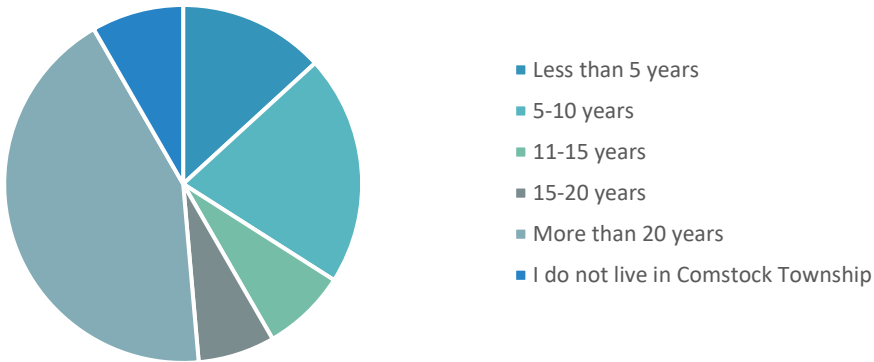
### QUESTION 1 - WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RESIDENTIAL STATUS

Of the respondents that reside out of Comstock Township, the following municipalities were the most commonly listed:

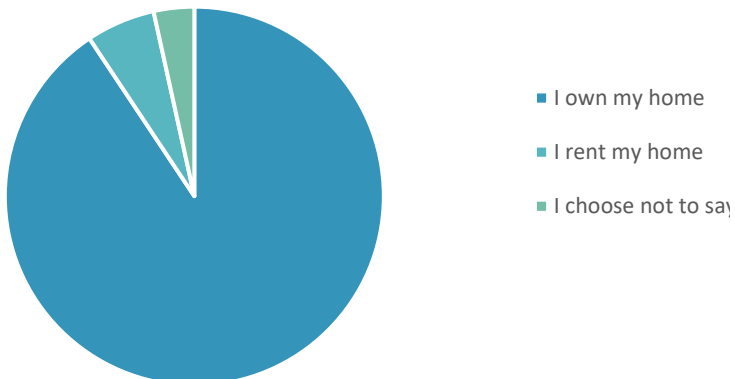
- Cooper Township
- Texas Township
- Kalamazoo Township
- City of Kalamazoo
- Galesburg



### QUESTION 2 - HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP?

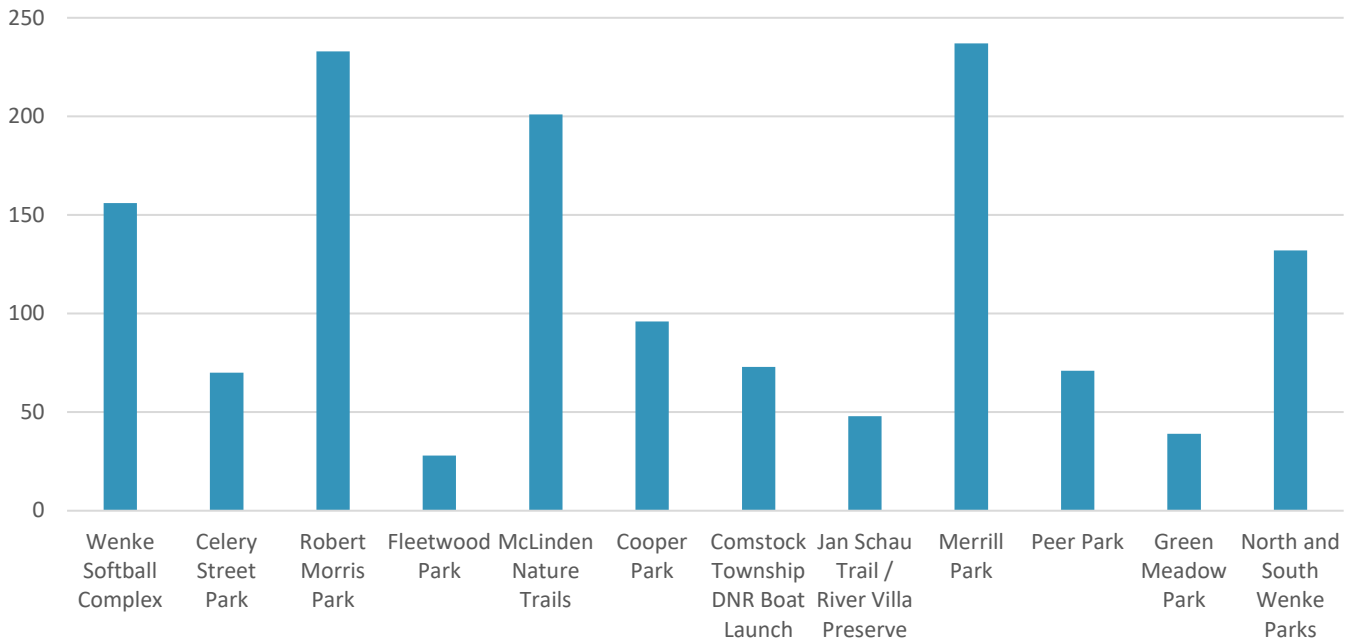


### QUESTION 3 - PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR HOME OWNERSHIP STATUS.



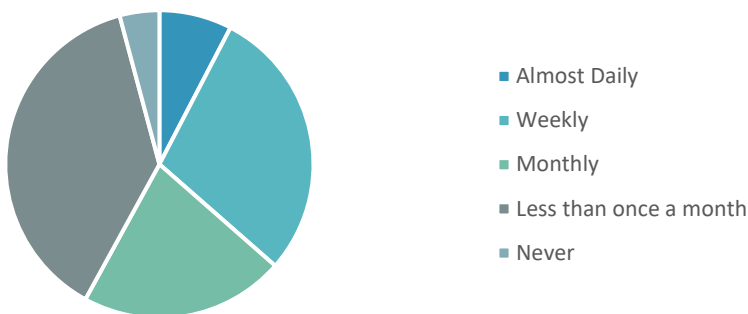
A high home ownership status demonstrates a long-term commitment to Comstock parks and recreation programming. Home ownership status is important to consider when deciding what types of amenities a community will provide.

**QUESTION 4 - WHICH COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH OR HAVE VISITED IN THE PAST?**



Survey respondents were mostly familiar with Merrill Park, Robert Morris Park, McLinden Nature Trails, and the Wenke Softball Complex. While this may be because they intend to serve on a Township scale rather than on a neighborhood scale, it is important to understand alternative reasons for why other parks in the Township have not been as frequently utilized. Lack of amenities, safety issues, lack of signage, and other conflicts could prevent community members from using these spaces.

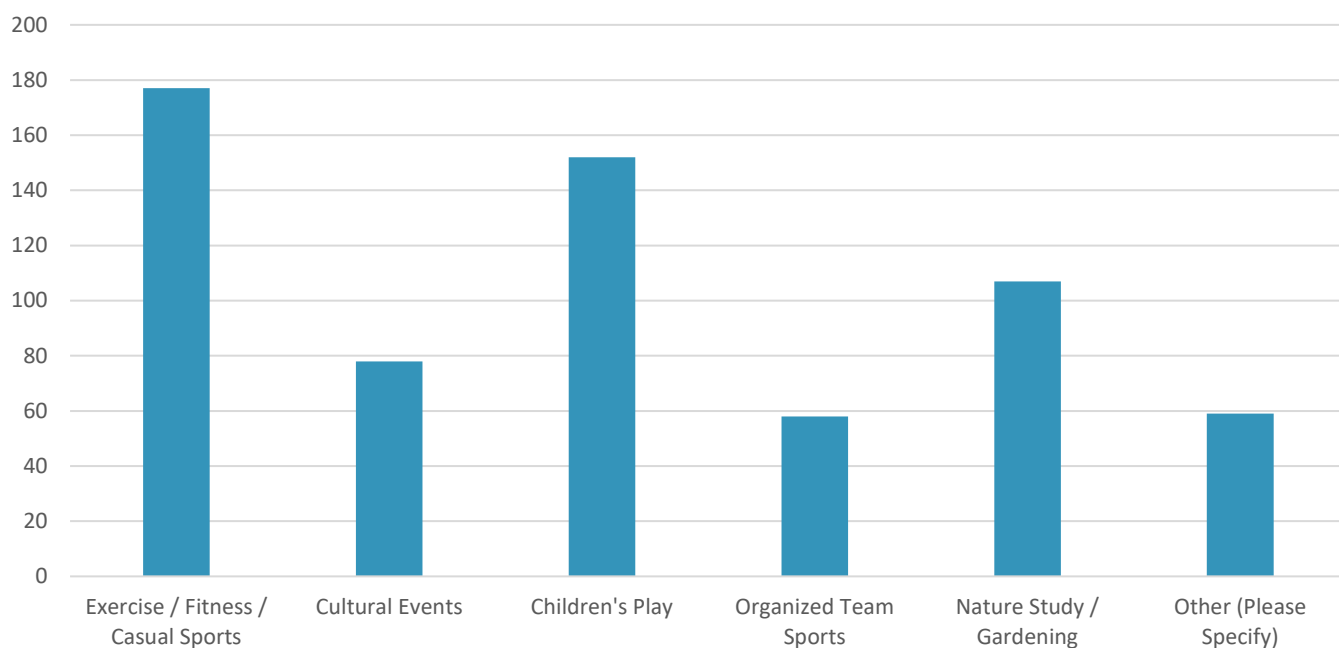
**QUESTION 5 - HOW OFTEN DO YOU OR MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD VISIT A COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP PARK OR RECREATIONAL FACILITY**



Almost half of respondents indicated that they visit Comstock Township Parks either never or less than once a month. To resolve this, Comstock Township parks should incorporate a larger variety of amenities for all ages. In addition, the Township should look into potential amenities for the fall and winter months.

**QUESTION 6 - IN GENERAL, WHAT KINDS OF RECREATION / LEISURE ACTIVITIES DO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN (PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)?**

The most popular types of recreation voted for are exercise and fitness. As such, the Parks & Recreation Department should look into how exercise and fitness are incorporated into its parks and facilities. The same is true for Children's play. Ensuring residents have access to their most desired and utilized amenities is essential.

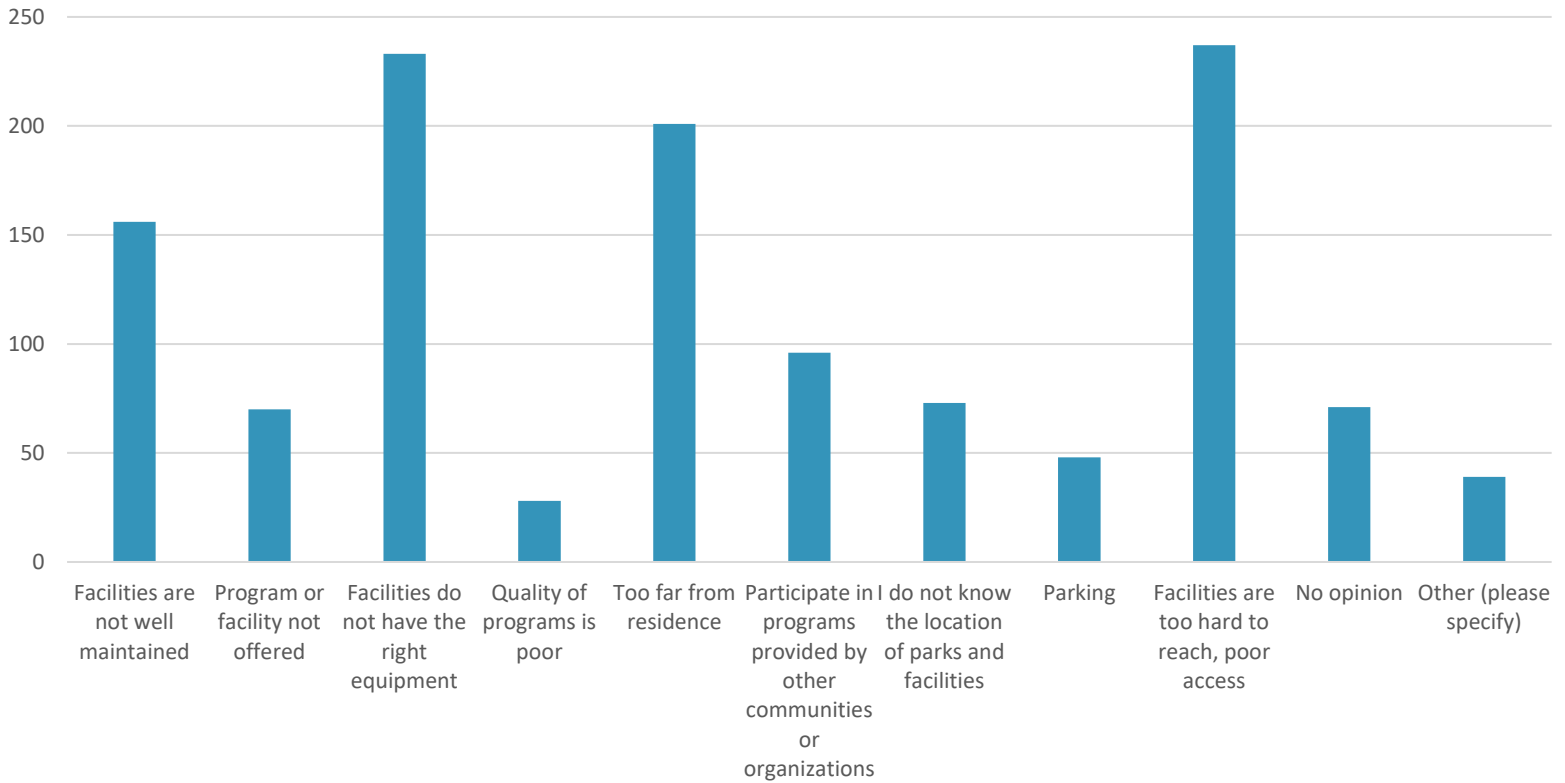


The word cloud below summarizes responses under "other"





**QUESTION 7 - IF YOU DO NOT VISIT TOWNSHIP PARKS, RECREATION FACILITIES, AND/OR PROGRAMS, WHY NOT? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)**



Other responses are summarized in the word cloud below.



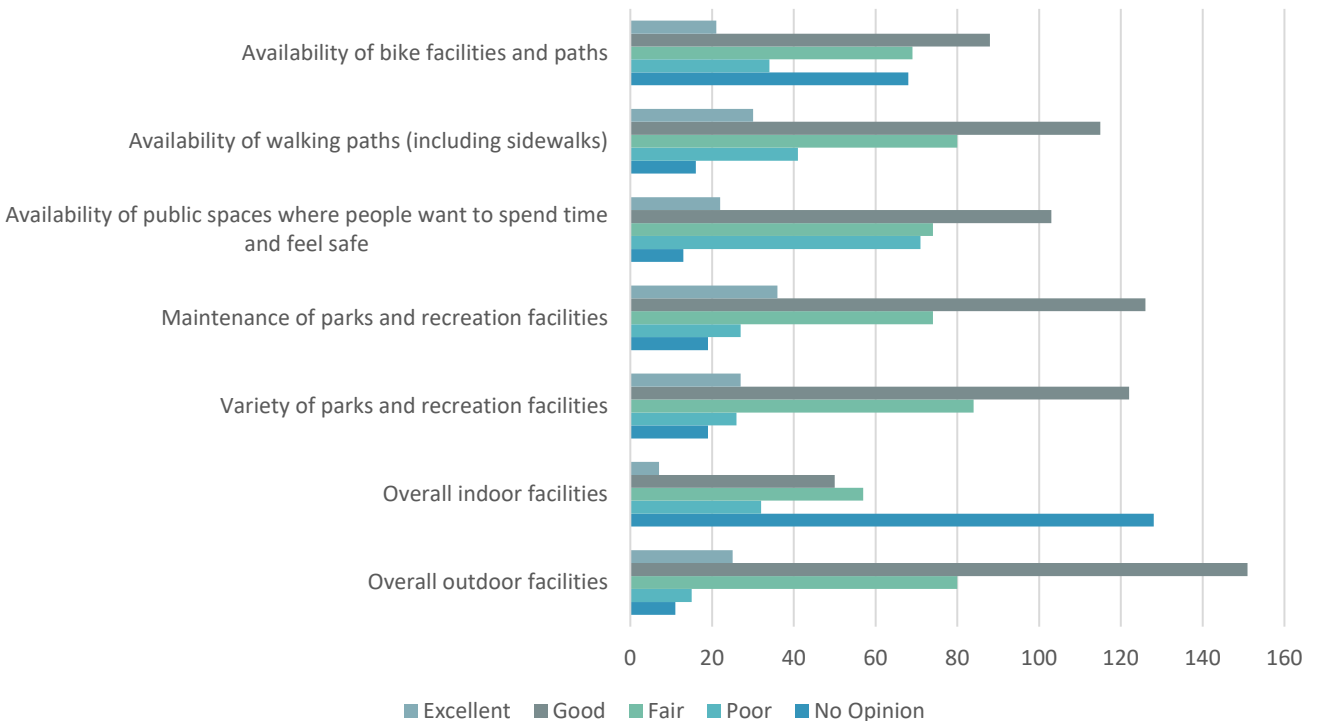
## QUESTION 8 - I BELIEVE PARKS, TRAILS, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS ARE VITAL IN OUR COMMUNITY.

The vast majority of respondents indicated that they agree parks and recreation are vital to the community, indicating support for more parks and recreation amenities, updates, and maintenance.



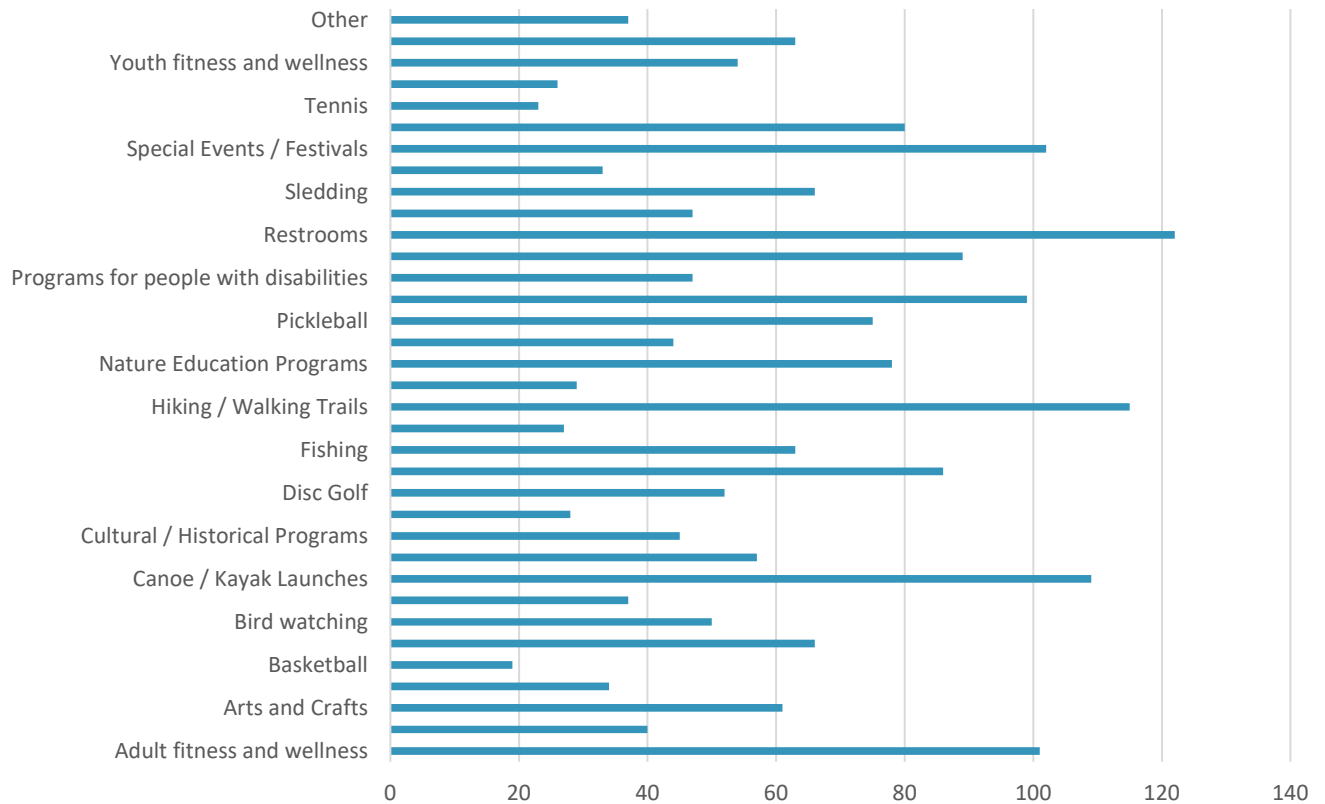
## QUESTION 9 - PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF PUBLIC PARKS, RECREATION FACILITIES, AND SPACES IN COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP

The most poorly rated category is the feeling of safety in public parks, while the most highly rated category are the Township's overall outdoor facilities.



**QUESTION 10 - WHAT NEW OR ENHANCED FEATURES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)?**

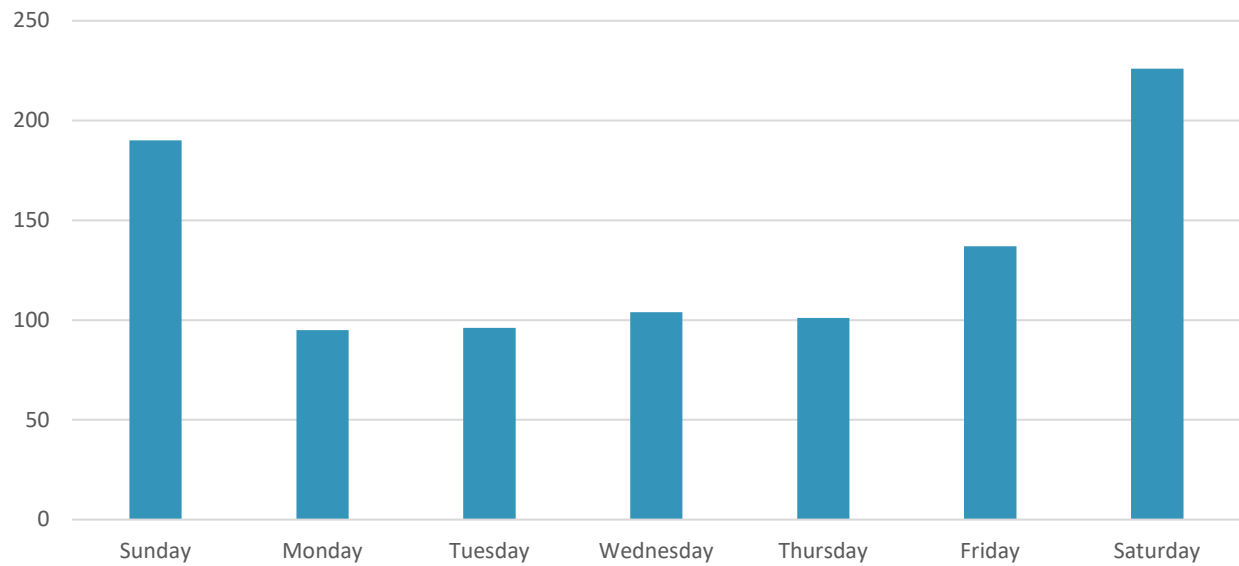
Respondents expressed desire for a large variety of amenities. The following are the top-voted amenities: restrooms, hiking and walking trails, canoe and kayak launches, special events and festivals, adult fitness and wellness, and pickleball. The Township should make an effort to provide the greatest extent of parks possible.



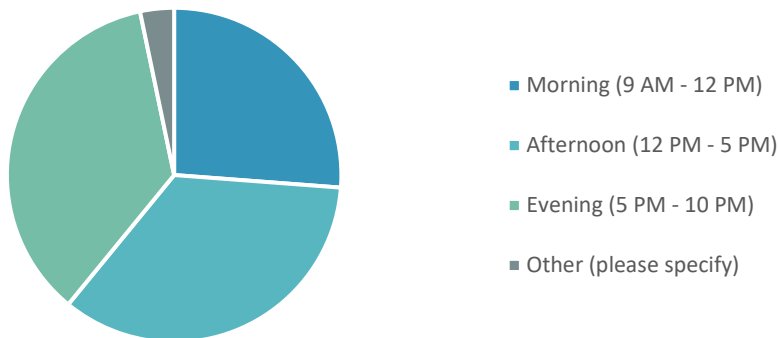
**Other responses include:**

activities walking park  
playgrounds Safety youth  
options trails Splash pad  
festivals

**QUESTION 11 - FOR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES, WHICH DAY(S) WORK BEST FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?**



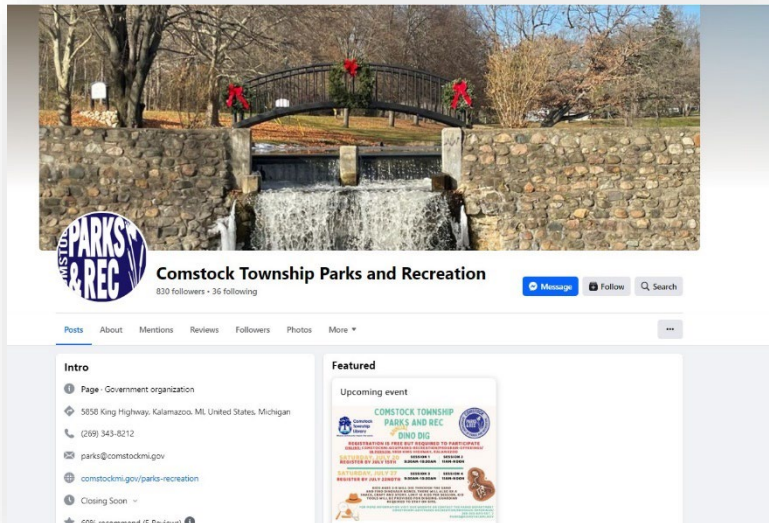
**QUESTION 12 - WHICH TIME(S) WOULD WORK BEST ON THOSE DAYS?**



In general, questions 11 and 12 indicate a general availability on Saturday and Sunday, with mixed availability throughout the day. Availability is more limited on weekdays, suggesting most programming should be held on weekends.



### QUESTION 13 - WHAT IS THE BEST WAY THAT COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP CAN GET INFORMATION OUT TO RESIDENTS?



The top-voted (41.84%) method of communication was Facebook or other social media such as Twitter (X) and Instagram.

To meet the needs of residents and visitors, Comstock Township Parks and Recreation should try to both regularly market parks and programming on its social media accounts and at its parks. While the Township is largely active on Facebook, it should attempt to capture younger audience members on Instagram and Twitter (X).

It's also important to have a diverse method of communication. The other top-voted methods are the Comstock Communicator and email.

### QUESTION 14 - PLEASE SHARE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

The word cloud below summarizes the additional comments provided by respondents. Many comments addressed the following points:

1. Concerns for safety, calling for more police presence.
2. The desire for pickleball courts, more boat launches, trails and walking paths, and a dog park.
3. The desire for more accessible park amenities for those with disabilities.



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## PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Residents and stakeholders of Comstock Charter Township had the chance to provide feedback on the plan within the 30-day public comment period, commencing on x, 2024, and concluding on x, 2024. Notification about the public comment duration was posted online and at Township Hall. The plan was accessible both online and in-person at Township Hall for examination. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED.

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## PUBLIC HEARING

Prior to adoption, the Township Board held a public hearing on x, 2024. Notice for the public hearing was posted on x 2024, on the Township website and at Township Hall. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED.

## PARKS INVENTORY RESULTS

A parks inventory, detailed on in this report, was conducted through field visits, previous documentation, aerial images, Geographic Information System (GIS), and photograph analysis. The inventory process encompasses an analysis of facility and infrastructure conditions, availability, accessibility, and safety.

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### SERVICE AREAS

**Map 4** illustrates the typical 1-mile service area for Comstock Township’s parks and facilities. This one-mile radius encompasses those who would either walk or ride their bike to the park. For reference, it takes approximately 15-20 minutes for someone to walk 1 mile and approximately 5 minutes for someone to bike 1 mile. These estimates may change depending on weather and geographic conditions.

The map indicates that portions of the Township, primarily in the south and southeastern region (S. 28th Street east towards the municipal boundary; E. ML Avenue south towards N Avenue) are not within a one-mile radius of a park facility. This region of the Township is predominately composed of large-lot, residential dwellings and active agricultural production. Given that this region of the Township is not as densely populated as others, careful consideration should be given to ascertain the viability of future park locations in this region.

**Map 4: Park Radius Map**

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## PEDESTRIAN LINKAGES

For the most part, some of the stronger pedestrian linkages in the Township are those in the western quarter of the Township, closest to Kalamazoo. Despite this, the Township does not have strong pedestrian linkages surrounding its parks. When improving parks, the Township must consider strengthening linkages to residential areas through pathways, sidewalks, and pedestrian crossings.

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## ACCESSIBILITY & ADA COMPLIANCE

An accessibility assessment was conducted by the Township's Planning Consultant, McKenna, and Comstock Township. Each facility was compared to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design and ranked from 1-5, based on how accessible each facility is, with 5 being the most accessible. Results for the Accessibility Assessment are shown on the parks inventory matrix.

| DNR Accessibility Grading System for Parks and Recreation Facilities |  |
|--|--|
| Accessibility Grade  | Definition   |
| 1  | None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines                   |
| 2  | Some facilities meet accessibility guidelines                          |
| 3  | Most facilities meet accessibility guidelines                          |
| 4  | The entire park meets accessibility guidelines                         |
| 5  | The entire park was developed using the principles of universal design |

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all citizens have access to all facilities provided by the Township regardless of ability. The Township's parks and amenities should be updated, where appropriate, to ensure ADA accessibility and compliance in terms of:

- Pathway and sidewalk resurfacing
- Universally accessible play structure equipment
- Shaded resting areas
- Accessible bathrooms and drinking fountains

Comstock Township is committed to ensuring that all parks and municipal buildings are safe, accessible, and welcoming to all visitors and citizens.



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## SAFETY

One of the primary takeaways from the community survey is that park visitors commonly feel unsafe within Township parks. Many respondents expressed their safety concerns stem from loitering and substance abuse in Township parks. It is understood that people currently facing homelessness also seek refuge in Township parks. With this in mind, Comstock Township wishes to address the safety concerns of park visitors while also being mindful of the larger systemic issues at hand. While this plan attempts to bring temporary solutions for park safety, this issue must be further addressed through policy and study. This effort should also involve surrounding municipalities, the region, and the state.

Safety and the perception of safety are important to increasing the use of existing parks. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a concept of design that increases the perception of safety for a typical user and the perception of risk for a would-be offender. CPTED “is [the] proper design and effective use of the built environment which can lead to a reduction in the incidence and fear of crime and an improvement in the quality of life” (National Crime Prevention Institute, 1986). Four principles are utilized:

1. The placement of physical features, activities, and people in such a way as to maximize visibility (natural surveillance);
2. The physical guidance of people coming and going from a space by the judicious placement of entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping, and lighting (natural access control);
3. The use of physical attributes that express ownership, such as fences, pavement treatments, art, signage, and landscaping (territorial reinforcement); and
4. Maintenance of existing amenities and facilities to prevent any equipment or park amenities from being in a state of disrepair, which discourages its use.

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## EXISTING FACILITIES

The following table outlines recreation standards recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). These standards recommend minimum numbers for different recreation facilities based on existing and projected populations. These numbers are not intended to be prescriptive but instead are one piece of the analysis. It should also be noted that the raw numbers do not address the quality of existing parks and recreation facilities.

According to this analysis, Comstock Township generally does not meet the NRPA standard for the minimum number of facilities. It should be noted that these deficiencies are often met by other governmental agencies (surrounding municipalities and the county) or by private entities. The tables displayed do not account for other agencies, just those provided by the Township.



Table 5: Outdoor Recreation Facilities Evaluation, Comstock Township

| Facility                          | Recommended Standard <sup>1</sup> | Percent of Agencies | Suggested Amount <sup>3</sup> Based on Population 15,231 <sup>2</sup> | Total Existing in Comstock | Surplus (+) / Deficiency (-) |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Playgrounds                       | 1 / 2,014                         | 95                  | 8   | 7                          | -1                           |
| Basketball Courts                 | 1 / 3,729                         | 86                  | 4   | 3                          | -1                           |
| Baseball Diamonds (Youth / Adult) | 1 / 3,114<br>1 / 7,627            | 79 / 55             | 5 / 2   | 1 / 0                      | -4 / -2                      |
| Tennis Courts                     | 1 / 2,805                         | 76                  | 5   | 0                          | -5                           |
| Multi-Purpose Fields              | 1 / 3,859                         | 69                  | 4   | 0                          | -4                           |
| Dog Parks                         | 1 / 11,100                        | 68                  | 1   | 0                          | -1                           |
| Softball Fields (Youth / Adult)   | 1 / 5,079<br>1 / 5,800            | 62 / 63             | 3 / 3   | 4 / 4                      | +1 / +1                      |
| Community Gardens                 | 1 / 8,178                         | 52                  | 2   | 1                          | -1                           |
| Swimming Pools                    | 1 / 9,745                         | 51                  | 2   | 1 <sup>4</sup>             | -1                           |
| Soccer Fields (Youth / Adult)     | 1 / 3,600<br>1 / 6,955            | 50 / 42             | 4 / 2   | 0                          | -4 / -2                      |
| Tot lots                          | 1 / 5,816                         | 48                  | 3   | 2                          | -1                           |
| Skate Parks                       | 1 / 10,726                        | 41                  | 1   | 0                          | -1                           |
| Football Fields                   | 1 / 8,637                         | 35                  | 2   | 0                          | -2                           |
| Pickleball Courts                 | 1 / 3,252                         | 31                  | 5   | 0                          | -5                           |
| Regulation 18-hole Courses        | 1 / 9,587                         | 29                  | 2   | 0                          | -2                           |
| Multipurpose Synthetic Fields     | 1 / 9,518                         | 25                  | 2   | 0                          | -2                           |
| Ice Rinks                         | 1 / 8,045                         | 18                  | 2   | 0                          | -2                           |
| Lacrosse Fields                   | 1 / 9,786                         | 11                  | 2   | 0                          | -2                           |
| Overlay Fields                    | 1 / 8,707                         | 9                   | 2   | 0                          | -2                           |
| Field Hockey Fields               | 1 / 18,000                        | 4                   | 1   | 0                          | -1                           |

#### Footnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> Recommended number of each facility per unit of population (National Recreation and Park Association/Michigan Recreation Opportunity Standards).
- <sup>2</sup> Based on U.S. Census 2020 population count of 15,231.
- <sup>3</sup> Rounded to the nearest whole number
- <sup>4</sup> The Township does not have any outdoor swimming pools, but it does have a public beach on Campbell Lake.

Table 6: Indoor Recreation Facilities Evaluation, Comstock Township

| Facility                            | Recommended Standard <sup>1</sup> | Percent of Agencies | Suggested Amount <sup>3</sup> Based on Population 15,231 <sup>2</sup> | Total Existing in Comstock | Surplus (+) / Deficiency (-) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Recreation centers (including gyms) | 1 / 9,745                         | 63                  | 2   | 0                          | -2                           |
| Community centers                   | 1 / 8,829                         | 59                  | 2   | 0                          | -2                           |
| Senior centers                      | 1 / 14,000                        | 41                  | 1   | 0                          | -1                           |
| Performance amphitheaters           | 1 / 11,100                        | 37                  | 1   | 0                          | -1                           |
| Nature centers                      | 1 / 10,633                        | 33                  | 1   | 0                          | -1                           |
| Aquatic centers                     | 1 / 11,650                        | 28                  | 1   | 0                          | -1                           |
| Stadiums                            | 1 / 9,250                         | 20                  | 2   | 0                          | -2                           |
| Teen centers                        | 1 / 14,593                        | 13                  | 1   | 0                          | -1                           |
| Indoor ice rinks                    | 1 / 8,000                         | 12                  | 2   | 0                          | -2                           |
| Arenas                              | 1 / 5,531                         | 8                   | 3   | 0                          | -3                           |

**Footnotes:**

- <sup>1</sup> Recommended number of each facility per unit of population (National Recreation and Park Association/Michigan Recreation Opportunity Standards).  
<sup>2</sup> Based on U.S. Census 2020 population count of 15,231  
<sup>3</sup> Rounded up to the nearest whole number

Table 7: Analysis of Existing Facilities, Comstock Township

| Type of Facility          | Recreation Standards <sup>1</sup>  | Comstock Community Facilities        |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Mini-Parks</b>         | Mini-Parks are small, specialized parks, usually less than an acre in size, that serve the needs of residents in the surrounding neighborhood. A mini park may serve a limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens.   | Cooper Park<br>Peer Park             |
| <b>Neighborhood Parks</b> | Neighborhood parks are typically multi-purpose facilities that provide areas for intensive recreation activities, such as field games, court games, crafts, playgrounds, skating, picnicking, etc. Neighborhood parks are generally 15 acres or more in size and serve a population of up to 5,000 residents located within ¼ to ½ mile radius from the neighborhood they serve. | Celery Street Park<br>Fleetwood Park |
| <b>Community Parks</b>    | Community Parks typically contain a wide variety of recreation facilities to meet the diverse needs of residents from several neighborhoods. Community parks may include areas for intense recreation facilities, such as athletic complexes and swimming pools. These parks usually contain other facilities not commonly found in neighborhood parks such                      | Robert Morris Park<br>Merrill Park   |



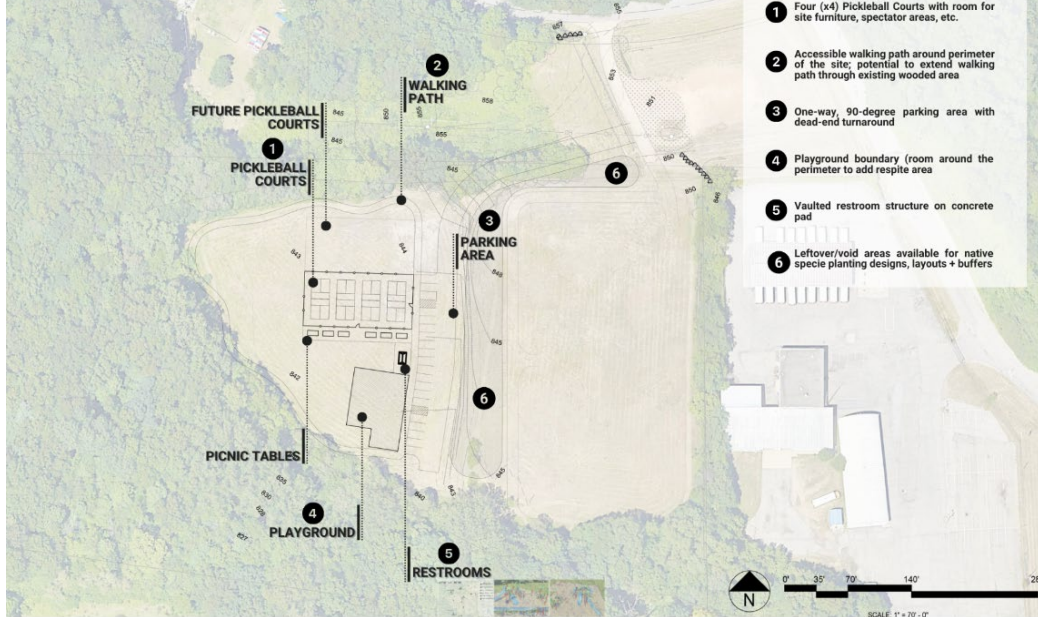
| Type of Facility                              | Recreation Standards <sup>1</sup>  | Comstock Community Facilities   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Regional/<br/>Metropolitan<br/>Parks</b>   | as nature areas, picnic pavilions, lighted ball fields, and concession facilities.   |   |
|   | Regional parks are typically located on sites with unique natural features that are particularly suited for outdoor recreation, such as viewing and studying nature, wildlife habitats, conservation, swimming, picnicking, hiking, fishing, boating, camping and trail use. Many also include active play areas.  | N/A   |
| <b>Special Use/<br/>Conservancy<br/>Parks</b> | Special use recreation facilities are typically single-purpose recreation facilities, such as golf courses, nature centers, outdoor theaters, interpretative centers, or facilities for the preservation or maintenance of the natural or cultural environment. Protection and management of the natural/cultural environment may be the primary focus with recreation use as a secondary objective. | Wenke Softball Complex<br>McLinden Nature Trails<br>Jan Schau Trail / River Villa Preserve<br>Green Meadow Park |
| <b>Passive Parks</b>                          | The primary purpose of passive areas is to provide relief from highly developed residential and commercial neighborhoods. Facilities may include sitting areas and other pedestrian amenities, landscaping, monuments and fountains, and historical features.  | North / South Wenke Parks   |
| <b>Linear Parks</b>                           | A linear park is an area developed for one or more modes of recreation travel, such as hiking, bicycling, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, canoeing, horseback riding, and pleasure driving.  | N/A   |

Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources: Recreation Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, 1983, Lancaster, National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

## POTENTIAL PARKLAND

Currently, a piece of property owned by the Township is in the process of being developed. The *Neal Street Park* is in conceptual design phasing. Neal Street Park is located west of Shields Street, and east of North 26th Street. The proposed park is anticipated to have approximately 6 acres of improved recreational amenities, which would include: four (4) pickleball courts; walking pathways; playground equipment; restroom facilities and an improved parking area for patrons. The following graphics have been provided by the Township for conceptual purposes only. Further site layout and offered amenities are subject to funding availability and future design considerations.

## NEAL STREET PARK - TEST FIT



GameTime  
www.gametime.com

Comstock Township  
Neal Street Park - Option Two

SINCLAIR  
RECREATION, LLC  
www.sinclairrecreation.com

## Chapter 6.

# ACTION PLAN

This Chapter of the Plan is the culmination of a comprehensive planning effort that began with a thorough analysis of the physical and demographic attributes of the community, followed by public engagement, and park inventory. Existing parks and recreation facilities and programs were inventoried and evaluated. An assessment of need was then developed that considered both accepted recreation standards and the specialized needs of persons with disabilities. This information was all considered when forming the resulting Action Plan, which will guide the Township's decisions for parks and recreation for the next five years.

## MISSION STATEMENT

***The Comstock Township Park and Recreation Commission works on behalf of the citizens of Comstock Township to build a healthy community and a sustainable environment by promoting active lifestyles and strong individuals and families through parks, programs, and partnerships.***

## VISION STATEMENT

***Comstock Township Parks and Recreation strives to cultivate vibrant and inclusive parks, recreation, and programming that enhance community well-being, promote active lifestyles, provide educational opportunities, and preserve the Township's natural beauty.***

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals should be broad and address general needs and establish the basis for setting specific programmed objectives. Objectives are measurable results that the community works toward accomplishing. The following goals and objectives resulted from demographic data, MDNR recommendations, previous Township goals, the conducted needs assessment, best practices and public input.

The following table identifies goals and objectives, while placing a priority ranking of Low (L), Medium (M) or High (H) based on the desired need. Further, the table identifies the timeline, on a year one to year five scale, of when the objective is anticipated to be reached. Lastly, the table identifies the objective/project Lead in terms of organization that will be the primary party responsible for executing the objectives.

| Goal 1: Ensure and maintain safe recreation opportunities and facilities.   |          |                  |                     |
|---|----------|------------------|---------------------|
| Objective   | Priority | Timeline (Years) | Lead                |
| <b>1.a</b> Improve park lighting to increase visibility.  | M        | 1                | Director            |
| <b>1.b</b> New parks and park renovations should incorporate clear sightlines and limited secluded areas.                           | M        | 1                | Director            |
| <b>1.c</b> Host regular park events and activities to foster a sense of ownership and vigilance.                                    | H        | 1                | Director/Programmer |
| <b>1.d</b> Increase the presence of local law enforcement or add a new position in the Parks & Recreation Department of Park Ranger | H        | 1                | Director            |
| <b>1.e</b> Place functioning surveillance cameras in strategic locations to monitor activity.                                       | H        | 1                | Director            |
| <b>1.f</b> Regularly maintain parks facilities to create an inviting and physically safe environment                                | H        | 1                | All                 |
| <b>1.g</b> Promptly address vandalism and graffiti  | M        | All              | All                 |
| <b>1.h</b> Seek community input in planning, designing, and implementing park and programming opportunities.                        | M        | All              | Director            |

| Goal 2: Provide inclusive, accessible, and a variety of recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities.  |          |                  |                     |
|---|----------|------------------|---------------------|
| Objective   | Priority | Timeline (Years) | Lead                |
| <b>2.a</b> Annually assess user fees and make changes as necessary based on area comparisons and current and/or economic conditions.                    | H        | All              | Director            |
| <b>2.b</b> Update existing and create new parks and facilities which meet or exceed the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).                           | H        | All              | Director            |
| <b>2.c</b> Provide recreational programming that is considerate of all age groups, backgrounds, and interests via internal programming or partnerships. | H        | All              | Director/Programmer |
| <b>2.d</b> Update parks signage with easy-to-read fonts, colors, braille or universal icons.  | H        | 2                | Director            |
| <b>2.e</b> Provide communication tools with information related to all parks and recreation offerings and facilities.                                   | H        | All              | Director/Programmer |

| Goal 3: Sustainability, Resiliency & Natural Features Preservation   |          |                  |                             |
|--|----------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Objective  | Priority | Timeline (Years) | Lead                        |
| <b>3.a</b> Develop and install informational materials about flowers, native plantings, birds, wildlife, etc. at certain park locations  | M        | 1                | Director/ Programmer        |
| <b>3.b</b> Develop and install informational materials providing directions and distances for the trails at Jan Schau Wildlife Walks, River Villa Preserve and Green Meadow.   | M        | 1                | Director/ Programmer        |
| <b>3.c</b> Develop educational programs and signage to inform visitors about the environment, sustainability, and stewardship.   | M        | 3                | Director                    |
| <b>3.d</b> Encourage alternative methods of accessing parks and recreation facilities including bicycling and public transportation.   | M        | 2                | Director                    |
| <b>3.e</b> Establish pollinator gardens and habitats to support bees, butterflies, and other pollinating insects as well as native plantings.  | L        | 3                | Director                    |
| <b>3.f.</b> Encourage the shift from high energy use appliances and lighting to more environmentally friendly, such as LED lighting, smart thermostats, increased insulation for better heat retention, throughout the parks facilities. | L        | 3                | Director/Facilities Manager |

| Goal 4: Financial Resources and Investments   |          |                  |                      |
|---|----------|------------------|----------------------|
| Objective   | Priority | Timeline (Years) | Lead                 |
| <b>4.a</b> Seek additional funding opportunities through grant assistance and Capital Improvement Fundings  | M        | All              | Director/ Programmer |
| <b>4.b</b> Seek cooperative funding and community volunteer resources for programs and services with existing agencies, programs and organizations. | M        | All              | Director/ Programmer |

## PARK-SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS

The following table is a summary of actions that the Township and its partners should undertake during the planning period, and beyond; these activities are discrete and consistent with the Goals and Objectives, public input received, and the analysis of the Township's parks and recreation needs. The activities are less defined than those found in Table 9, which is a Capital Improvement Program Summary with specific capital improvements, their estimated costs, and the year(s) that the actions are proposed to be undertaken.



Table 8: Summary of Action Items, Comstock Township

| Park               | Finding/Observation   | Priority | Timeline (Years) | Comments |
|--------------------|---|----------|------------------|----------|
| All Parks          | <b>Need Identified:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase ADA Accessibility;</li> <li>2. Update park signs to promote unified look and message display;</li> <li>3. Acquire new land for future expansion and development of recreational facilities;</li> <li>4. Increase safety and security;</li> <li>5. Create community events and programs;</li> <li>6. Add additional recreational features;</li> </ol> | M        | 2 - 4            |          |
| Celery Street Park | <b>Needs Identified:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Add new recreational feature to green space</li> </ol>   | L        | 3 - 5            |          |
| Cooper Park        | <b>Needs Identified:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Address pond depth, native plants and wildlife</li> <li>2. Pave parking area</li> <li>3. Renovate infrastructure of waterfall</li> </ol>   | M        | 2 - 4            |          |
| Fleetwood Park     | <b>Needs Identified:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Update playground equipment</li> <li>2. Add ADA parking space(s)</li> </ol>  | H        | 1 - 2            |          |
| Green Meadow Park  | <b>Needs Identified:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Redefine and label trail systems</li> <li>2. Develop additional programming opportunities using existing green space</li> <li>3. Add restroom facilities</li> </ol>  | M        | 2 - 3            |          |
| Merrill Park       | <b>Needs Identified:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct Phase 2 of the Waters Edge Improvement Plan</li> <li>2. Construct a kayak launch</li> </ol>  | H        | 1 - 2            |          |
| Neal Street Park   | <b>Needs Identified:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete development of the vacant parcel into a parks facility</li> <li>2. Develop programming to support pickleball courts</li> </ol>  | H        | 1 - 3            |          |
| South Wenke Park   | <b>Needs Identified:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discontinue the use of the existing access point for vehicular traffic and construct new primary access from Township Hall</li> </ol>  | L        | 3 - 5            |          |

| Park  | Finding/Observation   | Priority | Timeline (Years) | Comments |
|---|---|----------|------------------|----------|
| <b>River Villa Preserve &amp; Jan Schau Wildflower Walk</b> | <b>Needs Identified:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Install new benches for leisure rest</li> <li>2. Expand existing signage to offer educational components and instructional material</li> <li>3. Install trail and distance delineation markers</li> <li>4. Install plants for pollinators</li> </ol>                         | <b>M</b> | 3 - 5            |          |
| <b>Robert Morris Park</b>                                   | <b>Needs Identified:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expand disc golf course and provide for increased maintenance</li> <li>2. Enhance pathway connections to interlink pavilions, swings, playground equipment and volleyball court</li> </ol>   | <b>H</b> | 1 - 2            |          |
| <b>Wenke Softball Complex</b>                               | <b>Needs Identified:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop additional ball fields</li> <li>2. Enhance and modernize field illumination fixtures</li> <li>3. Enhance parking lot facilities</li> <li>4. Increase capacity of concessions by undergoing modernization and layout changes to the existing service area.</li> </ol> | <b>H</b> | 2 - 3            |          |

Table 9: Capital Improvement Program

| Facility/Program                                   | Year(s)    | Proposed Improvements   | Estimated Costs | Potential Funding Sources  |
|--|------------|---|-----------------|--|
| Neal Street Park Development                       | 2025       | Add four (4) pickleball courts, paved walking path, accessible playground, paved parking, restroom facilities   | \$450,000       | CIP Funds<br>ARPA Funds  |
| Jan Schau Wildflower Walk trail signage & upgrades | 2025, 2026 | Signage along trailways, add wildflowers/native plantings   | \$50,000        | CIP Funds<br>DNR Grants  |
| South Wenke Park                                   | 2026, 2027 | Connect park to Comstock Charter Township Hall, development of a boardwalk and remove existing vehicular access | \$300,000       | CIP Funds  |
| Merrill Park                                       | 2026, 2027 | Creation of kayak launch, rivers edge enhancements  | \$200,000       | CIP Funds<br>Michigan Grants<br>Partnership with Comstock Downtown Development Authority (DDA) |

# APPENDICES

## **APPENDIX A: NOTICE OF 30-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

## **APPENDIX B: PUBLICATION OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR PLAN ADOPTION**



**APPENDIX C:  
RESOLUTION OF PLAN ADOPTION BY TOWNSHIP BOARD ON  
XXXX, 202X**

## **APPENDIX D: PUBLIC HEARING AND ADOPTION MINUTES**

## APPENDIX E: POST-CERTIFICATION

See documents below.

## APPENDIX F: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

See results below.



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