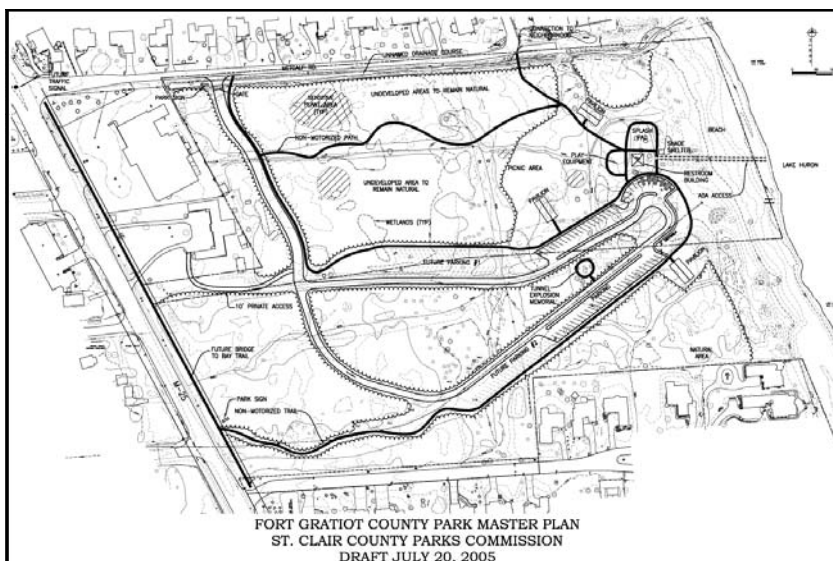


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5. GOALS & OBJECTIVES AND ACTION PROGRAM

THE TEXT IN THIS SECTION IS THE HEART OF THE MASTER RECREATION PLAN FOR ST. CLAIR COUNTY. IT INCLUDES:

- **THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEARS 2007 THROUGH 2011**
- **PRIORITY STATEMENTS REGARDING THOSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**
- **CAPITAL PROJECTS**



THE BENEFIT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

St. Clair County is a vibrant, growing community with a great citizenry and a high quality of life. This is an exciting time for the county, and parks and recreation should be an integral part of the county's image, character, and quality of life. Specifically, strong parks and recreation programs have the ability to:

- **Provide social benefits** by connecting people with neighbors of other ages, incomes, backgrounds, and abilities. Parks and recreation build community pride and spirit.
- **Provide economic benefits** by improving the quality of life in the community and helping to attract businesses and residents to the county. Top-rate parks and recreation facilities are a competitive advantage for St. Clair County in economic development.
- **Provide benefits to the environment** by connecting people with and educating them about nature. In addition, greenways can provide alternative transportation opportunities. Parks and open space are essential weapons in the county's arsenal against sprawl and environmental degradation.
- **Provide benefits to individuals** by promoting physical fitness and self-improvement. Opportunities for exercise and being outdoors result in greater physical fitness, emotional well-being, and connectivity to nature.

EMERGING ISSUES

Over the next five, ten, and even twenty years, there are some emerging issues unfolding in St. Clair County that will have numerous implications for recreation planning, including:

An Aging Population

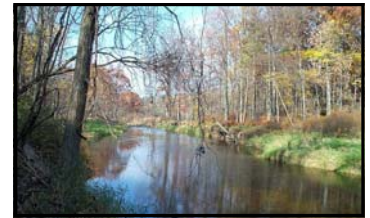
The first issue is that the county will continue to be the home for an ever-increasing aging population. The median age of county residents is 36.4 years and more than half are at least 35 years old. See Figure 5-1 on the following page.

The aging of the "baby boom" generation is changing the age structure of communities across the state of Michigan. Those born during the baby boom of 1946 to 1964 created a bulge of persons in their forties and fifties. In the 2000 Census, the largest age group was persons aged 35 to 44. As the largest age cohort moves into their forties to sixties in the next decade and their fifties to seventies in the following decade, there will be a significant increase in the already expanding elderly population.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, approximately 1 in 7 Americans were 65 or older in 2000, and this ratio is projected to increase to



Both kids and adults having fun at Goodells County Park



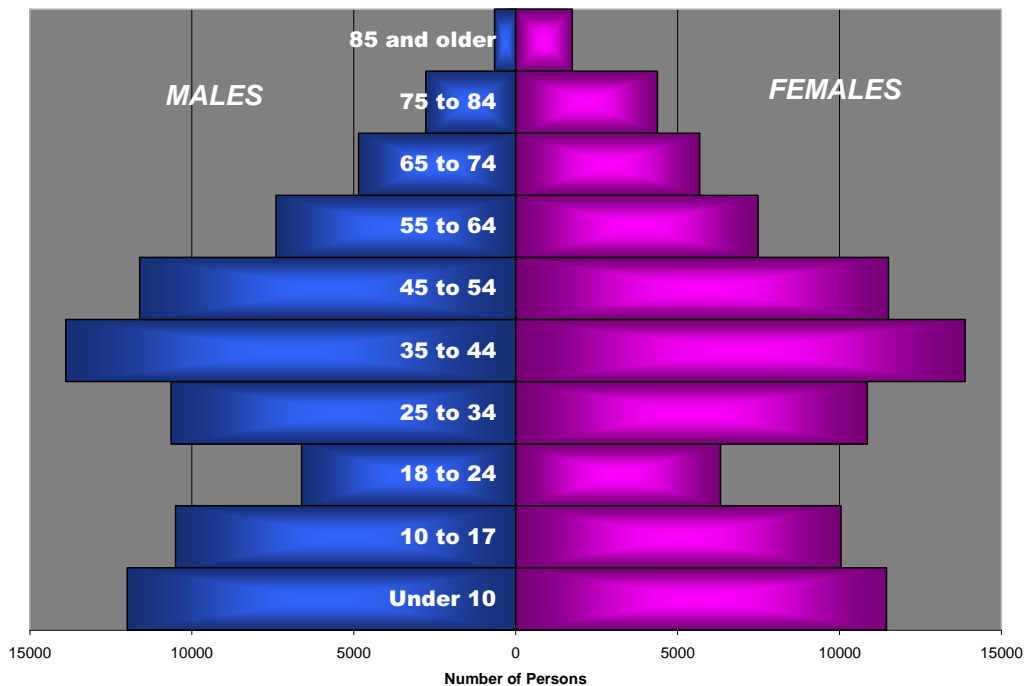
The Belle River runs through Columbus County Park. Rivers provide recreational opportunities such as fishing, canoeing, and kayaking and connect people with the natural environment

The United States Census Bureau projects that by the year 2050, 1 in 4 Americans will be age 65 or older.

1 in 4 by the year 2050. In terms of per-capita disposable income, the 55-to-59, 60-to-64, and 65-to-69 age groups are wealthier than any other 5-year age-range groups.

PARC should be cognizant that as more and more county residents retire, there will be an increased number of older residents with the time and income to spend on leisure. This is true for a number of reasons. More people are living longer, more people are retiring earlier, and retirees are more active in lifestyle than ever before.

Figure 5-1. St. Clair County Age-Sex Pyramid, 2000



“Brain Drain”

There are very few 18-24 year olds in the county. This information suggests that few persons this age stay after high school graduation. That means few young workers, college students, young singles or young married couples live in the county. The loss of young adults in the state of Michigan has been well-documented in recent years. In 1990, St. Clair County had 14,090 persons between the ages of 18 and 24. During the next decade, that number decreased by 8% to 12,932. The exodus of young adults is continuing in the present decade. This loss of college-aged young adults and college graduates has been nicknamed the “brain drain.”

Recreational Opportunities for Youth

As shown in Figure 5-1, the greatest percentage of the current population, 40%, is within the 35 to 64 age group. The next largest percentage of the

population, 27%, is under 18 years of age, which suggests that, in addition to providing more services for the elderly within the community, the county and its communities may also need to target more recreational opportunities toward young children and teenagers.

Parks and Recreation will be Critical to Economic Development

Quality of life can be defined in many ways; however, most definitions are likely to include park and recreational opportunities as a major component. On a global scale, there are no great communities that do not have great park and recreation amenities. In today’s world, economic development efforts start with being able to market a high quality of life. Companies now look beyond simple infrastructure concerns when deciding where to locate. They look for areas that offer recreational, cultural, and entertainment amenities – all things that factor into a high quality of life. Companies go where talented individuals are located. Talented individuals choose where they live based on quality of life issues.



The Bridge to Bay Trail adds to the high quality of life in St. Clair County

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals for the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission are defined by six categories:

- Administrative
- General Facility
- Financial
- Goodells County Park
- Fort Gratiot County Park
- Greenways and Trails
- Acquisitions

ADMINISTRATIVE GOALS

PARC’s administrative goal is to continue and expand upon a solid administrative foundation.

To accomplish its administrative goal, PARC will pursue the following objectives:

- Network with Federal, state, county, local, and non-profit recreation providers.
- Market and promote county parks and recreation amenities through commercial media, printed materials, the county website, and through a promotional video.
- Work to enhance the volunteer program to benefit all PARC facilities, including cleanups and invasive species control.
- Continue to work with the St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) on the continued development and



The Pine River Nature Center is owned by RESA



Goodells County Park is the County's largest regional park

operation of the Pine River Nature Center.

- Take advantage of opportunities to use recreational/ open space as catalyst to economic and residential redevelopment.
- Encourage and promote participation and support from the community, non profit conservation organizations, local businesses, and citizens.
- Establish a mechanism to monitor or tally facility usage.
- Work with all law enforcement agencies to provide security for all County owned Parks and Recreation facilities, grounds and trails.
- Consider contracting with the Sheriff's Department to provide specialized patrol of County owned Parks and Recreation facilities, grounds and trails.

GENERAL FACILITY GOALS

PARC's general facility goals are intended to ensure quality, safe, and functional amenities at each of its facilities and along its non-motorized trail network.

To accomplish its general facilities goal, PARC will pursue the following objectives:

- Pursue the year-round usage of PARC facilities and trails.
- Update park facilities and equipment to maximize energy efficiency.
- Enhance informational and directional signage at all park and trail facilities.
- Advocate and facilitate barrier-free access to all PARC facilities, trails and greenways.

FINANCIAL GOALS

PARC's financial goal is to maintain solid financing strategies to address the need for park acquisition, development, maintenance and stewardship.

To accomplish its financial goal, PARC will pursue the following objectives:

- Continue to distribute 25 percent of the annual millage revenues to local units of government – based on the 2000 U.S. Census figures (until the 2010 U.S. Census figures are available) – for planning, maintenance, and development of parks and recreation facilities and programs.
- Work with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners to seek renewal of the County Parks and Recreation millage in 2010.
- Research and recommend, as appropriate, potential income generating mechanisms to support County parks.
- Continue to aggressively pursue public and private grants and donations.

- Develop a grant program for local units to assist in the acquisition of small parcels for habitat or cultural preservation.

GOODELLS COUNTY PARK GOALS

PARC's goal for Goodells County Park is to continue its development as a multi-purpose facility for all county citizens and their guests.

To accomplish its goal for Goodells County Park, PARC will pursue the following objectives, according to the Goodells County Park Master Plan:

- Improve park directional and informational signage.
- Work to make the Farm Museum collections more accessible to the general public.
- Pursue construction of new amenities or improvements to existing amenities in appropriate locations including, but not limited to:
 - ⇒ Permanent improvements to the Outdoor Special Events Arena.
 - ⇒ A potential entrance and events sign off of Lapeer Road.
 - ⇒ Acoustical repairs and sun shades in the Visitors Center lobby.
 - ⇒ A potential universal access trail and supplemental nature trails throughout the nature area.
 - ⇒ A potential trail link to the Pine River Nature Center.
 - ⇒ An arena building near the exhibit barns with substantial outside funding assistance.
 - ⇒ Preservation, renovation, and expansion of the Historic Village.
 - ⇒ A historic farm equipment display/demonstration facility for the Port Huron Manufacturing Company machines that are already owned by the Farm Museum with substantial outside funding assistance.



Visitors will find breathtaking views of Lake Huron at Fort Gratiot County Park



Workers install sidewalks during the construction of Fort Gratiot Park in Summer 2006

FORT GRATIOT COUNTY PARK GOALS

PARC's goal for Fort Gratiot County Park is to continue its development as a year around facility for all County residents and their guests.

To accomplish its goal for Fort Gratiot County Park, PARC will pursue the following objectives, according to the Fort Gratiot County Park Master Plan:

- Complete Phase 1 construction begun in 2006.
- Develop maintenance and operations procedures for the park and beach.
- Assist Fort Gratiot Township in connecting the Bridge to Bay Trail system to the park including a safe M-25 pedestrian crossing at Metcalf Road.
- Consider and/or pursue construction of new amenities or improvements to existing amenities in appropriate locations including, but not limited to:
 - ⇒ Additional parking areas for peak summer usage.
 - ⇒ A potential splashpad.



A DNR Plaque at Fort Gratiot Park denotes that the park was funded using a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund



The Bridge to Bay Trail runs along the County's eastern shoreline through multiple communities



One of PARC's goals for Trails & Greenways is to extend the Wadhams to Avoca Trail north-west to Yale

- ⇒ Picnic pavilions as needed.
- ⇒ Concrete walkways and ADA access mats to the beach.
- ⇒ A children's playground.
- ⇒ A modern building with restrooms, a maintenance, area, and shaded seating areas.
- ⇒ A park entrance sign.
- ⇒ Plant additional native plant species as needed.

GREENWAYS AND TRAILS GOALS

Greenways have multiple purposes, but from a recreation perspective they have two major functions:

1. To link and facilitate hike and bike access between residential areas and parks.
2. To provide opportunities for the linear forms of outdoor recreation (i.e. hiking, jogging, bicycling, equestrian riding, and walking) in which many St. Clair County residents engage today. These recreation roles require the development of trails along the greenways.

PARC's greenways and trails goal is to provide a multi-use regional trail system, which connects to other county and municipal parks and community trail systems.

To accomplish its greenways and trails goal, PARC will pursue the following objectives:

- Research opportunities and pursue grant funding to expand and connect existing non-motorized trail segments including:
 - ⇒ Extending the Wadhams to Avoca Trail to Yale.
 - ⇒ Connecting the Bridge to Bay Trail to the Wadhams to Avoca Trail.
 - ⇒ Connecting the Bridge to Bay Trail to the Macomb Orchard Trail.
 - ⇒ Connecting to other trails owned by neighboring counties.
 - ⇒ Consider acquiring abandoned railroad rights-of-way for future trails.
- Continue to assist local units of government in building sections of the Bridge to Bay Trail by providing technical assistance and financial support for the required local matching funds for acquisition and development grants.
- Work with transportation agencies to provide non-motorized access to trail, parks and greenways consistent with the St. Clair County NonMotorized Guidelines
- Work with appropriate agencies and stakeholders to implement the Regional Trails and Greenways Vision for St. Clair County and the Southeast Michigan Greenways Plan.
- Work with state and Federal transportation agencies to develop non-motorized facilities at the I-94/Black River crossing.
- Continue to make improvements to the Wadhams to Avoca Trail

including, but not limited to:

- ⇒ Parking lots and trailheads as needed.
- ⇒ Parallel bridle trails where feasible.
- ⇒ Interpretive and information panels/kiosks.
- ⇒ Surfacing improvements as needed.
- ⇒ Exploring potential connection to Goodells County Park.



ACQUISITIONS GOALS

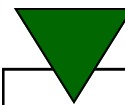
PARC's acquisition goal is to rectify current acreage deficiencies by acquiring lands and facilities that are viable parks and recreation opportunities for both present and future county citizens.

To accomplish its acquisition goal, PARC will pursue the following objectives:

- Continue to work in concert with Acheson Ventures to promote public access along the shoreline portion of its property in downtown Port Huron.
- Explore the acquisition of a culturally or naturally significant property or properties in appropriate locations of the county for the eventual development of park facilities. Potential locations include, but are not limited to:
 - ⇒ Significant properties in conjunction with the Southeast Michigan Greenways Plan.
 - ⇒ Properties up and down stream from Columbus County Park, particularly riverfront properties.
 - ⇒ Properties adjacent to existing PARC facilities.
 - ⇒ Opportunities for water access and a system of water trails.
 - ⇒ The northwestern part of the county.
- To the greatest extent possible, property acquisition and park development projects should reflect the master plans of the local municipality, the county, the state and adjoining regions.
- Research and support the development of local dog parks.



Aerial photos of the future Columbus County Park



Land Acquisitions are a high priority that cannot be assigned to a specific time schedule

PROJECT PLANNING AND PRIORITIES

Project goals for the Master Recreation Plan are viewed as three categories:

- Land Acquisitions
- Capital Projects
- Programs

Each category has its own characteristics that affect capital improvement planning. The Parks and Recreation Commission will make priority decisions based on the characteristics of projects within these categories.

LAND ACQUISITIONS

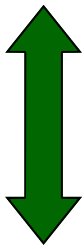
Acquiring land for parks and recreation use in order to rectify acreage

deficiencies is a high priority for the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission. It is also a priority that cannot be assigned to a specific time schedule because, by their nature, land acquisitions are hard to predict and plan for.

This is due to the fact that most landowners are not motivated to sell their property exclusively to the county and are not willing to wait indefinitely to sell their property at a time that is convenient to the county. Therefore, PARC must be flexible enough to aggressively pursue appropriate land acquisitions whenever they become available.

Capital Projects have ongoing priority and can be scheduled to coincide with availability of funds

Likewise, land acquisitions are usually “one shot” opportunities that, if missed, are unlikely to ever come around for a second chance. Therefore, PARC is prepared to allocate or reallocate funds for land acquisition projects as part of each year’s capital budget to ensure that decisions to acquire land can be made based on the merits of the acquisition, rather than the availability of funds.



Due to the high cost of land acquisitions, every effort will be made to obtain grant funds for property acquisition. Because of the lengthy acquisition time for grants – up to two years from the time of application to property closing – PARC might choose to exercise purchase options or enlist the aid of third-party nonprofit agencies that could act as interim property holders until PARC has secured the necessary funding for outright purchase.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Programs have ongoing priority and are a function of time management rather than funding designation

Capital projects have an ongoing priority. This category includes construction of new buildings and facilities, equipment purchases, and facility renovations. By their nature, capital projects can be planned and scheduled to coincide with the availability of funds to finance these improvements. Capital projects and purchases can be moved forward or backward to accommodate outside funding sources such as grants and donations. Conversely, capital projects can be delayed so that funds can be utilized to accommodate land acquisitions that are more time-sensitive.

PROGRAMS

Programs also have an ongoing priority because these include maintenance and operations initiatives, administrative initiatives, and policy initiatives. The pursuit of program goals is usually more of a function of time management rather than a designation of funding. With the exception of severe financial disruptions, program goals, once agreed upon, can be pursued as planned unless other program goals of higher priority are added.

Program initiatives that require the addition of full-time staff must be approved in advance by the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and, therefore, require advance planning.