

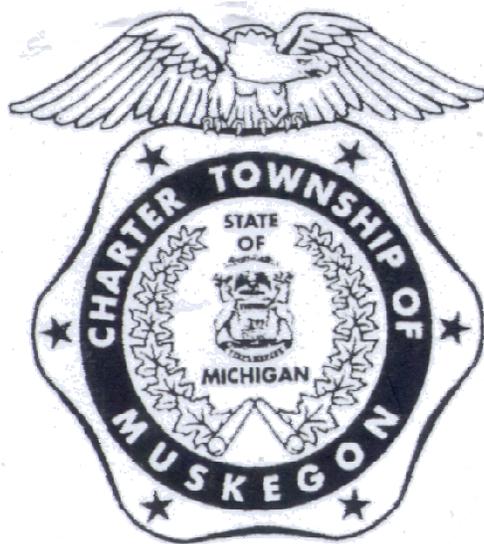
# Parks & Recreation Plan

## 2013 - 2018

for

*Muskegon Charter Township*

*A Community of Growth and Progress*



*OCTOBER 2013*

*Prepared by the*

Muskegon Charter Township Parks & Recreation Committee

# Muskegon Charter Township

1990 E. Apple Avenue  
Muskegon, MI 49442

## Township Board

Supervisor: David A. Kieft Jr.  
Clerk: Ann Oakes  
Treasurer: Jeffrey Wood  
Trustees: John Hughes  
Bill Ream  
Joe Kemp  
Jennifer Hernandez

## Planning Commission

Chairman: Richard Nolan  
Vice-Chair: Joseph Singerling  
Secretary: Sandra Frein  
Commissioners: Ron Hower  
Greg Bouwman  
James Borushko  
Township Board Representative: Jeffrey Wood

## Recreation Committee

Mary Payne
Stuart Peterson
Judy Clark-Ochs
Susie Hughes
Tony Patitucci
Bill Bowen (Softball World)
Jennifer Hernandez
Jerry Sanders (Staff)
Lorraine Grabinski (Staff)

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# **Community Description**

## **Introduction**

Muskegon Charter Township is influenced by the character and natural features that comprise the larger County land area around it. In order to provide a context for the physical characteristics of the Township, it is appropriate to look at the physical attributes of the surrounding county.

Muskegon County is located on the western side of the State along the shore of Lake Michigan and encompasses a land area of 504 square miles. In addition to its proximity to Lake Michigan, the County has an abundance of other water resources, which serve both industrial and recreational opportunities. Among these water bodies are the Muskegon River and the Muskegon Lake, which flow into Lake Michigan.

Muskegon Charter Township occupies 24.4 square miles of land approximately six miles east of the lakeshore, abutting the eastern boundary of the cities of Muskegon and North Muskegon. Approximately 25% of the Township's land area, located in the northern section, is within the Muskegon River watershed. Much of the land is marshland and within the Muskegon State Game Area. Very little development has occurred within this area due to the low, wet soils and frequent flooding.

## **Social Characteristics**

### **Population**

Understanding the population growth or decline trends in Muskegon Charter Township is an essential component in the creation of a Recreation Plan. Past trends, current assessments, and future predictions are all aspects that will create a vision for the basis of the type of development to best serve the population. Further, comparing Muskegon Charter Township to the neighboring townships will create a broader portrait of community needs.

The population of Muskegon County, according to the U.S. Census, changed less than one percent from 1970 through 1990. Between 1990 and 2000, it was estimated that the county population increased by 11,217 residents, or 7.1%, showing a much greater population increase than the previous two decades. The population from 2000 – 2010 increased by 1,988 or 1.15%. This shows a continual increase in population, but at a much lesser rate than the previous ten years.

<b>Figure 1.0 – 2000 - 2010 U.S. Census Population</b>				
	2000	2010	Population Change	
			Number	Percent
Muskegon County	170,200	172,188	1,988	1.15%
Blue Lake Twp	1,990	2,399	409	17.05%
Casnovia Twp	2,652	2,805	153	5.45%
Cedar Creek Twp	3,109	3,186	77	2.42%
Dalton Twp	8,047	9,300	1,253	13.47%
Egelston Twp	9,537	9,909	372	3.75%
Fruitland Twp	5,235	5,543	308	5.56%
Fruitport Charter Twp	12,533	13,598	1,065	7.83%
Holton Twp	2,532	2,515	17	0.68%
Laketon Twp	7,363	7,563	200	2.64%
Montague Twp	1,637	1,600	37	2.31%
Moorland Twp	1,616	1,575	73	4.63%
<b>Muskegon Twp</b>	<b>17,737</b>	<b>17,840</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>0.58%</b>
Ravenna Twp	2,856	2,905	49	1.69%
Sullivan Twp	2,477	2,441	36	1.47%
Whitehall Twp	1,648	1,739	91	5.23%
White River Twp	1,338	1,335	3	0.22%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Michigan Information Center/Michigan.gov/documents

<b>Figure 1.1 – Muskegon County U.S. Census 2010 Update</b>					
	Total Population	Median age	18 years and over	65 years and over	Average household size
Muskegon County	172,188	38.2	129,401	23,352	2.53
Blue Lake Twp	2,399	37.8	1,687	212	2.91
Casnovia Twp	2,805	35.5	1,986	279	2.94
Cedar Creek Twp	3,186	40.9	2,413	385	2.62
Dalton Twp	9,300	36.0	6,745	899	2.76
Egelston Twp	9,909	37.1	7,266	1,165	2.73
Fruitland Twp	5,543	44.0	4,255	774	2.64
Fruitport Charter Twp	13,598	40.8	10,237	1,852	2.65
Holton Twp	2,515	41.2	1,911	321	2.72
Laketon Twp	7,563	42.5	5,755	1,117	2.59
Montague Twp	1,600	43.1	1,226	247	2.59
Moorland Twp	1,575	39.6	1,190	185	2.59
<b>Muskegon Twp</b>	<b>17,840</b>	<b>37.2</b>	<b>13,147</b>	<b>2,535</b>	<b>2.58</b>
Ravenna Twp	2,905	36.6	2,084	371	2.78
Sullivan Twp	2,441	43.3	1,892	343	2.62
Whitehall Twp	1,739	43.6	1,339	247	2.53
White River Twp	1,335	48.5	1,051	281	2.53

As the largest and most urban Township in Muskegon County, the population growth of Muskegon Township greatly outpaced that of the County as a whole between the years 1980 to 1990. According

to US Census figures, the Township grew by a brisk 5.1 percent, while the County's growth was under 1 percent (.88%) during this ten year period. From 1990 to 2000 the increase was 15.9% while the County's growth was 7.1%. Based on the 2010 census, the Township's population currently stands at 17,840 which is an increase of 0.58% percent since 2000. This figure seems to show that the township residential growth may have reached its limit. Some of the smaller more urban townships have seen much greater increase in their populations in the last decade.

## Projections

Current population projections provided by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) indicate that the Township's population will grow to 18,048 by the year 2020; a modest 1.1 percent. For purposes of comparison, the County's overall population is expected to increase to 174,199 by 2020, also a 1.1 percent increase. The projected population increase for both the county and the township by 2040 is expected to increase by 3.5 percent. The planning goals of the township should be carefully reviewed due to the expected increases and actual population numbers in the future. The percentage increases projected in previous years were substantially higher than the actual 2010 population in both the county and the township.

	ACTUAL						PROJECTED					
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Muskegon County	157,426	157,589	158,983	170,200	176,102	172,188	173,191	174,199	175,214	176,234	177,260	178,292
Blue Lake Township	715	1,101	1,235	1,990	2,059	2,399	2,413	2,427	2,441	2,455	2,470	2,484
Casnovia Township	1,879	2,158	2,361	2,652	2,744	2,805	2,821	2,838	2,854	2,871	2,888	2,904
Cedar Creek Township	1,467	2,454	2,846	3,109	3,217	3,186	3,205	3,223	3,242	3,261	3,280	3,299
Dalton Township	5,361	5,897	6,276	8,047	8,326	9,300	9,354	9,409	9,463	9,519	9,574	9,630
Egelston Township	6,690	7,310	7,640	9,537	9,868	9,909	9,967	10,025	10,083	10,142	10,201	10,260
Fruitland Township	3,200	4,168	4,391	5,235	5,417	5,543	5,575	5,608	5,640	5,673	5,706	5,740
Fruitport Township	10,214	10,646	11,485	12,533	12,968	13,598	13,677	13,757	13,837	13,918	13,999	14,080
Holton Township	1,499	2,022	2,318	2,532	2,620	2,515	2,530	2,544	2,559	2,574	2,589	2,604
Laketon Township	5,440	6,327	6,538	7,363	7,618	7,563	7,607	7,651	7,696	7,741	7,786	7,831
Montague Township	1,147	1,359	1,429	1,637	1,694	1,600	1,609	1,619	1,628	1,638	1,647	1,657
Moorland Township	1,488	1,521	1,543	1,616	1,672	1,575	1,584	1,593	1,603	1,612	1,621	1,631
<b>Muskegon Township</b>	<b>13,754</b>	<b>14,557</b>	<b>15,302</b>	<b>17,737</b>	<b>18,352</b>	<b>17,840</b>	<b>17,944</b>	<b>18,048</b>	<b>18,153</b>	<b>18,259</b>	<b>18,366</b>	<b>18,472</b>
Ravenna Township	2,403	2,471	2,354	2,856	2,955	2,905	2,922	2,939	2,956	2,973	2,992	3,008
Sullivan Township	2,051	2,356	2,230	2,477	2,563	2,441	2,455	2,470	2,480	2,498	2,513	2,528
Whitehall Township	1,064	1,341	1,464	1,648	1,705	1,739	1,749	1,759	1,770	1,780	1,790	1,801
White River Township	1,016	1,215	1,250	1,338	1,384	1,335	1,343	1,351	1,358	1,366	1,374	1,382

Sources: Actual and Estimated Figures from the U.S. Bureau of the Census – Projected figures from WMSRDC

## Age Characteristics

Age distribution comparison over time may be used as a tool to measure the amount of change within a community. Further, an age breakdown can help determine the type of housing demands and recreational facilities that may be needed.

**Figure 1.3 – 2010 Age Characteristics**

	Under 5 yrs	5-9 yrs	10-14 yrs	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs	25-34 yrs	35-44 yrs	45-54 yrs	55-59 yrs	60-64 yrs	65-74 yrs	75-84 yrs	85 yrs and over	Median Age
Muskegon County	11,315	11,689	11,940	12,747	10,658	21,286	21,429	26,092	12,047	6,633	12,247	7,788	3,317	38.2
Blue Lake Township	149	207	216	192	103	250	352	380	175	163	152	49	11	37.8
Casnovia Township	195	233	231	228	151	344	394	429	185	136	183	78	18	35.5
Cedar Creek Township	198	209	211	232	191	336	394	563	261	206	252	114	19	40.9
Dalton Township	670	722	685	687	444	1308	1226	1489	664	506	584	247	68	36.0
Egelston Township	659	727	776	769	569	1225	1292	1480	681	566	714	355	96	37.1
Fruitland Township	270	339	416	424	259	488	649	977	515	432	489	82	67	44.0
Fruitport Township	772	916	994	1028	663	1458	1752	2334	1031	798	1055	592	205	40.8
Holton Township	149	146	185	210	159	248	301	442	197	157	196	97	28	41.2
Laketon Township	362	499	564	589	339	730	945	1300	629	489	609	393	115	42.5
Montague Township	82	114	97	125	87	156	180	270	118	124	145	80	22	43.1
Moorland Township	101	110	98	119	89	177	224	287	115	70	108	57	20	39.6
<b>Muskegon Township</b>	<b>1304</b>	<b>1284</b>	<b>1273</b>	<b>1331</b>	<b>1099</b>	<b>2180</b>	<b>2150</b>	<b>1608</b>	<b>1139</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>1271</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>37.2</b>
Ravenna Township	192	264	241	190	154	344	396	449	182	122	176	149	46	36.6
Sullivan Township	110	154	190	155	121	242	313	463	199	151	213	107	23	43.3
Whitehall Township	98	82	112	151	77	173	215	284	148	152	163	64	20	43.6
White River Township	59	83	87	76	43	97	163	194	131	121	164	89	28	48.5

SOURCE: 2010 U.S. Bureau of the Census.

The prime wage earning and child rearing age is 25 to 54. This age group is therefore important because it represents a majority of the population (33% in 2010) in Muskegon Township and represents a population that will require more commercial services, housing stock, recreational facilities, and services for children

## Income

1999 estimates indicate that average household income in Muskegon Township grew by a robust 46.8 percent between 1990 (\$28,202) and 1999 (\$41,403). This increase exceeded the national average of 46.1 percent, and serves as confirmation that the prolonged economic expansion of the 1990's made its impact felt in the Muskegon area despite the severe economic decline experienced throughout the region during the 1970's and 1980's.

The median household income in Muskegon Township in 2000 was \$38,634, while the median household income in Muskegon County was \$38,008 and \$44,667 for the State of Michigan (2000 U.S. Census). This comparison reveals that Muskegon Township has a slightly higher median household income than Muskegon County and lower than the State median. Further, Muskegon Township was lower in ranking in relation to the rest of the other townships and cities in Muskegon County for median household income in 2000 (median household incomes ranged from for a high of \$55,063 in North Muskegon to a low of \$21,778 in Muskegon Heights - U.S. census).

<b>Figure 1.4 – 2000 Income Statistics</b>		
	<b>PER CAPITA INCOME</b>	<b>MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>
Muskegon County	\$17,967	\$38,008
Blue Lake Township	\$18,866	\$50,000
Casnovia Township	\$16,880	\$41,711
Cedar Creek Township	\$16,775	\$36,179
Dalton Township	\$18,036	\$47,127
Egelston Township	\$16,489	\$37,557
Fruitland Township	\$23,216	\$53,977
Fruitport Township	\$20,582	\$49,065
Holton Township	\$16,210	\$37,813
Laketon Township	\$21,411	\$50,913
Montague City	\$21,238	\$40,677
Montague Township	\$17,695	\$41,534
Moorland Township	\$16,347	\$40,669
Muskegon City	\$14,283	\$27,929
<b>Muskegon Township</b>	<b>\$16,623</b>	<b>\$38,634</b>
Muskegon Heights City	\$12,456	\$21,778
North Muskegon City	\$27,140	\$55,063
Norton Shores City	\$22,713	\$45,457
Ravenna Township	\$18,440	\$44,315
Roosevelt Park City	\$19,825	\$37,035
Sullivan Township	\$19,360	\$51,394
Whitehall City	\$18,544	\$37,641
Whitehall Township	\$21,989	\$50,375
White River Township	\$21,797	\$48,077
Casnovia Village	\$18,962	\$47,188
Fruitport Village	\$22,364	\$48,125
Lakewood Club Village	\$13,451	\$40,313
Ravenna Village	\$19,197	\$47,167
SOURCE: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census		

## **Educational Attainment**

A comparison of Muskegon Township with Muskegon County and the State of Michigan education attainment levels is shown below. Muskegon Township ranks higher than both Muskegon County and the State of Michigan in percent of population with a high school diploma, although Muskegon Township had less college graduates than both the State and County. Typically, a community with a high percentage of college graduates indicates an environment with better paying jobs. A factor which potentially contributes to the relatively high level of educational attainment within the community is the presence of nearby institutions such as Baker College and Muskegon Community College. As a public institution dedicated to vocational and university preparatory programs, the latter frequently offers evening programs catering to the job training needs of local employers.

**Figure 1.5 - Education Attainment 2000**

	Less Than 9th Grade	9th - 12th Grade	High School Diploma	Some College	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
<b>Muskegon County</b>	5193	13210	38552	27349	9297	10215	4875
Blue Lake Township	42	119	434	315	157	121	62
Casnovia Township	93	205	720	332	103	129	39
Cedar Creek Township	33	176	905	524	196	78	14
Dalton Township	192	523	1827	1526	454	361	129
Egelston Township	320	905	2531	1453	354	301	83
Fruitland Township	72	239	1039	906	317	593	240
Fruitport Township	244	880	2670	2328	752	850	378
Holton Township	98	299	645	370	140	60	36
Laketon Township	55	279	1463	1403	607	651	422
Montague City	45	130	559	405	142	184	103
Montague Township	22	133	365	289	115	117	42
Moorland Township	82	136	410	240	72	47	8
Muskegon City	1826	3780	9308	6244	1756	1515	675
<b>Muskegon Township</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>1344</b>	<b>4322</b>	<b>2832</b>	<b>908</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>321</b>
Muskegon Hts City	608	1540	2484	1442	345	230	70
North Muskegon City	83	125	611	611	388	524	493
Norton Shores City	479	1397	4634	3664	1543	2486	1224
Ravenna Township	61	189	770	365	149	149	67
Roosevelt Park City	62	270	824	664	249	520	200
Sullivan Township	58	216	641	457	167	103	34
Whitehall City	54	207	708	465	167	196	81
Whitehall Township	33	59	361	308	108	143	64
White River Township	23	59	291	206	108	156	90
*Casnovia Village	13	36	80	38	17	14	1
*Fruitport Village	23	50	289	219	86	93	48
*Lakewood Club Village	19	101	229	146	34	8	4
*Ravenna Village	12	64	339	170	68	91	33
*Village Population Included in Township Figures							
SOURCE: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census							

## Households

A further reflection of the Township's overall population growth, is the increase in the number of existing households within the community. Muskegon Township is estimated to have experienced an increase of 630 households; or 11.5 percent between 1990 (5,467) and 1999 (6,097). This compares to an 11.7 percent increase for Egelston Township, 5.2 percent for the City of Ferrysburg, and a dramatic 48 percent for Moorland Township. The steeper rise in the number of households in relation to overall population growth, is a pattern consistent with national trends which have seen a general reduction in household size as a function of increased rates of divorce, postponement of marriage, and the rise in the number of single-parent households.

Average household size for Muskegon Township is estimated to be 2.65 persons; down slightly from 2.7 in 1990. Recent projections estimate that the total number of households within the Township will increase to 6,277 (3%) by 2004, and 15.5% by 2010. Based on 1999 estimates, 60 percent of Township residents are married.

Census figures for 1990 place the percentage of owner-occupied dwellings in Muskegon Township at 80.7 percent. This compares to 86.65 percent for Egelston Township, 87.7 percent for Moorland Township and 78.9 percent for the City of Ferrysburg. Using these same communities for purposes of comparison, Muskegon Township's 1990 median value of \$42,700 ranks ahead of Egelston Township at \$38,800, Moorland Township at \$40,600, and the City of Muskegon at \$32,400, but is well below the City of Ferrysburg at \$82,000, the County median at \$46,300 and State median of \$60,600.

Of the Township's 5,648 total housing units, just under 97 percent (96.8%) were occupied in 1999. Of the remaining 180 vacant units, 10 percent (18) were for rent and 30 percent (54) were for sale as of 1999. In terms of housing type, 77 percent are single-family detached dwellings, while 11 percent consist of mobile homes. The remaining 12 percent consist of a combination of attached single-family homes, duplexes and multi-unit apartments.

In terms of tenure of occupancy, 14 percent of Township households reported having lived in their current residence for one year or less in 1990. A full 27 percent reported having moved into their current residence within 2-5 years, 13 percent within 6-10 years, 19 percent within 11 -20 years and 12 percent within 21-30 years, Only 14 percent of Township residents reported having lived in their current residence for over 30 years in 1990. These figures demonstrate that the Township is a fairly stable community; a characteristic typical of communities with high rates of owner-occupancy (80%).

### **Physically Challenged**

The disability status of a population may be especially significant when considering recreational needs for a community. These individuals may have difficulty participating in recreational programs, utilizing facilities or even getting to designated public areas. Understanding the disability status of Muskegon County's population may assist decision-makers in determining adequate programs and appropriate locations for recreational activities.

<b>Figure 1.6 – Persons with Disabilities - Muskegon Township</b>	
<b>Population 5 –20 years</b>	4,470
With a disability	475
<b>Population 21-64 years</b>	9,417
With a disability	2,115
<b>Population 65 &amp; older</b>	2,157
With a disability	943
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>17,737</b>
With a disability	<b>3,533 (19.9%)</b>
SOURCE: 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census	

With the passage of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), all areas of public service and accommodation became subject to barrier-free requirements, including parks and recreation facilities and programs.

### **Race & Ethnic Groups**

The racial characteristics of Muskegon Townships' population are shown below. The Township contains a relatively homogenous population with 91.4 % being white. The next largest category is 4.6% of the Township's population in the Black or African American category.

**Figure 1.7 – Race & Ethnic Group**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Pacific Islander	Other Race	Multiracial	Hispanic
<b>Muskegon County</b>	137,679	24,882	1,407	941	28	2,362	4,889	8,261
Blue Lake Township	2,165	71	57	11	-	8	87	62
Casnovia Township	2,594	17	6	7	-	124	57	230
Cedar Creek Township	3,061	32	12	6	-	10	65	79
Dalton Township	8,754	169	84	20	1	69	203	314
Egelston Township	9,224	120	106	35	1	121	302	514
Fruitland Township	5,296	41	59	19	-	20	108	111
Fruitport Township	12,878	173	91	110	-	118	228	429
Holton Township	2,404	11	32	16	-	12	40	59
Laketon Township	7,154	145	38	47	-	18	161	192
Montague City	2,266	15	24	8	1	10	37	81
Montague Township	1,509	11	12	4	-	20	44	78
Moorland Township	1,520	4	6	3	-	30	12	74
Muskegon City	21,906	13,241	361	148	5	1,003	1,737	3,157
<b>Muskegon Township</b>	<b>15,675</b>	<b>1,086</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>903</b>
Muskegon Heights City	1,739	8,501	33	14	-	153	416	451
North Muskegon City	3,580	79	21	27	2	9	68	90
Norton Shores City	22,027	759	188	294	8	237	481	911
Ravenna Township	2,772	5	13	5	-	78	32	175
Roosevelt Park City	3,289	321	24	62	-	42	93	148
Sullivan Township	2,364	15	9	6	1	15	31	50
Whitehall City	2,570	37	15	14	3	14	53	74
Whitehall Township	1,657	17	11	6	-	7	41	42
White River Township	1,275	12	12	-	-	13	23	37

SOURCE: 2010 U.S. Bureau of the Census

**Gender Statistics**

**Figure 1.8 – Gender Statistics 2012 Census**

	MALE	FEMALE
Muskegon County	85,451	86,737
Blue Lake Township	1,223	1,176
Casnovia Township	1,438	1,367
Cedar Creek Township	1,601	1,585
Dalton Township	4,707	4,593
Egelston Township	4,853	5,056
Fruitland Township	2,830	2,713
Fruitport Township	6,734	6,864
Holton Township	1,310	1,205
Laketon Township	3,768	3,795
Montague Township	784	816
Moorland Township	832	743
Muskegon City	20,017	18,384
<b>Muskegon Township</b>	<b>8,603</b>	<b>9,237</b>
Muskegon Heights City	5,023	5,833
North Muskegon City	1,768	2,018
Norton Shores City	11,651	12,343
Ravenna Township	1,419	1,486
Sullivan Township	1,230	1,211
Whitehall City	1,240	1,466
Whitehall Township	861	878
White River Township	654	681

SOURCE: 2010 U.S. Bureau of the Census

## **Physical Characteristics**

### **Location & History**

Established in 1812, and chartered in 1987, Muskegon Township is situated in Muskegon County, east of the City of Muskegon and has the distinction of being the oldest Township in the State of Michigan. Encompassing some 23 square miles of the suburban periphery of the City of Muskegon, the Township originated as a sparsely settled farming community, comprising parts of Ottawa and Oceana Counties. Over the past 75 years, the Township has experienced successive waves of suburban growth beginning in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and reaching its apex in the post war period. The source of most of this growth was the expansion of the industrial economy of the City of Muskegon, who in spite of several annexations of Township property, could not fully envelop the eastward expansion of the growing metropolitan region.

The social and economic forces portending the rapid growth of the Township in the 1960's and 1970's followed a national trend which witnessed suburbanization as a response to extensive road building projects, as well as the middle classes' increased prosperity, and alienation from urban-industrial society.

By the mid 1970s, the rapid population growth which characterized the 1950s and 1960s, had begun to subside in the wake of a series of prolonged economic recessions which hit the industrial states of the Midwest, including Michigan, particularly hard. By the time the economic malaise dampened the pace of population growth and development in the 1970s, a more urban pattern and intensity of land use in the Township had been well established.

Muskegon Township consists of primarily two school districts; the ReethsPuffer School District which encompasses the north side of the community, and the Orchard View School District which straddles the Township's eastern border with the City of Muskegon. These two districts are especially important because of they offer and coordinate recreational programs with the Township. A third school district, the Muskegon Public Schools, serves a very small section of the Township but does not offer a high level of programs for the Township residents. The newly constructed Reeths-Puffer High School offers a high-tech educational center along with a 3000 seat gymnasium and 1000 seat auditorium. Orchard View School District encompasses some 12 square miles and has an enrollment of approximately 2,650 students. The District includes a early childhood center, three elementary schools, a middle school, a high school, an adult education program, and four child care centers. The Township also contains a charter school, the Timberland Academy.

Though technically not in the Township, post secondary education in the area is offered through Muskegon Community College (MCC) and the newly relocated Baker College. With its 111 acre campus and 300,000 square feet of classrooms, MCC is the largest higher education Institution in the metropolitan Muskegon area. The enrollment of MCC is approximately 4,500 students with a median age of 27 years, and an estimated part time enrollment of 75%. In addition to having on-site conference, and job training facilities, the adjacent Muskegon Center for Higher Education serves as an extension facility for Ferris State, Grand Valley and Western Michigan Universities.

The adjacent Baker College campus is approximately 40 acres in size, with 300,000 square feet of classroom and office space. The college which moved to its present location in 1997, offers both Bachelors and Masters degree programs. Both colleges together comprise over 150 acres land within a distinctively suburban academic setting.

It is important to begin an assessment of the community with a description of its natural attributes. This chapter presents a description of the topography, soils, water resources and woodlands that provide the physical basis of the community and the utility systems that protect and utilize its groundwater.

## **Land Forms & Soils**

The natural landscape of Muskegon Township is best described as fiat, with few major land-forms or natural features to give it topographical relief. The Muskegon River forms a land depression that gives the area some degree of height variation; however, the large wood-stands which once covered the area have been largely removed in the wake of urbanization.

Soil classifications in Muskegon Township are fairly homogeneous and are best known for their sandy composition and variable drainage. Specific soil types however vary by location (southside or northside) and their proximity to the Muskegon River watershed. The most common soil classification is the *Rubicon* -Croswell-Deer Park association, which makes up most of the Township's interior lands. These soils are generally described as sandy, level and well drained.

The southeastern portion of the Township contains a sizeable area of *Rubicon-Au-Gres-Granby* type soils, which are similar to the Rubicon series in composition, but have more topographical definition. Along the Township's northwestern edge exist soils of the Montcalm-Nester series, which are also gently sloping but are less well drained. Finally, the Muskegon River watershed is composed of Carlisle-Tawas series soils, which are level, depressional, poorly drained and consists mostly of peat and mucks.

*As the Muskegon Township Slope Map (Map 1.) illustrates, approximately 90% of Muskegon Township experiences slopes from 0 to 6 percent, the few steep slopes of the Township are located mainly around the Muskegon State Game Area. These, areas have the potential of being wind blown and eroded or eroded by excessive use due to the sensitive nature of steeper gradients. Special consideration needs to be given when developing recreational uses in these areas with steeper slopes.*

## **Climate**

Prolonged periods of extreme hot or cold are seldom experienced in West Michigan. Summers are dominated by moderately warm temperatures with July the warmest month, averaging a daily maximum of 83.9°F and a daily minimum of 58.1°F. Winters are moderately cold, with average daily maximum and minimum temperatures of 30.9°F and 15.1°F in January, the coldest month. Between November and March, 85% of the minimum daily temperatures are 32°F or below. The frost-free period or growing season, averages 135 days per year.

Approximately 55 inches of snow fall each year between the months of November and April. January is the snowiest month, with an average of 11 inches. An average of 71 days per season will have on inch or more of snow on the ground. Rainfall accounts for an average of over 30 inches annually. June is usually the wettest month, and February the driest. Between the months of May and October, the crop season, 59% of annual rainfall occurs.

## **Water Resources**

The hydrology of Muskegon Township, as in all locales, is a function of the dominant soils types, local water bodies, flood-plains, and the amount of impervious (i.e. paved) surfaces in the community. Of course drainage is also affected by a community's elevation and the existence of major infrastructure such as storm sewers.

The Township's most significant natural and hydrological feature is the Muskegon State Game Area, which comprises the Muskegon River watershed and its many tributaries. The river figures predominantly in the social and economic history of the region and assisted the extensive lumbering activity, which fueled the metropolitan growth of the area in the mid to late 1800s. This is due to the river's role as the primary conduit for the transportation of logs from up river mills to the mouth of the river at Muskegon Lake where they were sorted and loaded onto barges and transported to various Great Lakes ports.

The extensive use of the river for this purpose resulted in the construction of various impounds and dams especially in down-river locations. The river was also dredged and straightened at several locations to facilitate the transportation function. The extensive alterations of its banks, combined with extensive deforestation during the lumbering era, had serious environmental impacts on the river, which were further exacerbated during the region's latter industrialization.

According to the 1997; *Muskegon River Watershed Assessment* study by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the River's most pressing environmental issues surround river-bank erosion and associated sedimentation caused by deforestation and loss of riparian vegetation. Other problems include surface water contamination associated with pesticides and chemical runoff.

In spite of these problems, the water quality along most segments of the river is generally characterized as "good". Nevertheless standing public health advisories exist on the eating significant quantities of fish caught in the river. These advisories stem from the various chemical contaminants including: PCBs, chlordane, PAHs, DDT, DDE and dioxins which are found in various concentrations in the river-shed, Mercury, which is also found in the water-shed, is largely attributed to atmospheric emissions, primarily from automobiles.

According to the report, fishing conditions in the lower part of the river-shed, including Muskegon Township, are described as "good to excellent". Walleye, Small-Mouth Bass, Northern Pike as well as Steelhead and Chinook salmon are the most common game fish found in this stretch of river. At the other end of the spectrum, the river contains five fish species that are listed as threatened in Michigan. These include: Sauger, Lake Herring, Lake Sturgeon and Mooneye.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) regulates wetlands that are five acres or larger or if located within five hundred feet of surface water (lake or stream). If any wetland meets these criteria and is going to be modified, filled, or drained, a permit must first be obtained from the MDEQ. Wetlands may also be regulated by a local community ordinance.

## **Woodlands**

Most of the land was, at one time, forested. However, over the years the forests have been removed by a combination of lumbering, farming, and development.

## **Utilities**

Due to the physical limitations of the Muskegon River, the Township's utility service has been divided into north and south zones. The south zone consists of water and sanitary services that were built from 1956 to 2010. The southern water system consists of the same, but much of the sewer system is considerably older than the northside. All sewer flow goes to the County's Wastewater Treatment Facility located in Egelston Township.

The water system in Muskegon Township became part of the Muskegon County Water Policy System, which was formed in 2005 and consists of Muskegon Charter Township, Laketon Township, Dalton Township and Fruitland Township.

## **Land Use**

A section-by-section land use survey of Muskegon Township was completed in March of 2000. The findings of the survey are summarized in the following table and are depicted graphically in the Existing Land Use Map. The survey revealed the following highlights:

- Muskegon Township has developed more than 200 acres of land for single family residences over the past 22 years.
- Muskegon Township has more than tripled its land area devoted to multiple family dwellings and more than doubled its land area devoted to manufactured home parks and industry since 1978. Commercial development and land area devoted to public/quasi public uses (including schools, churches, parks, etc.) has increased by 40%.

Muskegon Township is a largely urbanized community with limited amounts of undeveloped land for industrial expansion. Recent economic development efforts within the community include the development of the Weirengo Industrial Park which was rapidly filled. As such, future economic development activities in the community are perhaps best concentrated in the areas of land assembly and redevelopment.

Assisting such efforts is new legislation in the State of Michigan which has improved the legal and financial environment for "brownfield" redevelopment by limiting the legal liability for non-culpable investors, and providing local units of government with a funding mechanism for the rehabilitation of contaminated lands.

## **Housing**

The study of a community's housing stock provides a high level of insight into a community's collective investment in itself. Variables such as: value, tenure and the level of owner-occupation provide an indication of the relative stability and economic health of a community, and can form the basis for recommendations concerning the type and intensity of future land use. Statistics such as housing age can reveal major periods of community growth and development, and are useful in providing both historical perspective and guidance in the development of housing policy.

Housing in the Township consists of a wide variety of dwelling types and densities. Despite increases in the numbers of manufactured, and multi-family housing units over the years, the dominant housing type remains firmly, the detached single-family home. This type of housing comes in a variety of forms ranging from pre-World War II rural cottages, to the rising number of larger, upscale homes of recent construction. In between these two very

different housing types are the large number of single-story, circa 1950-60's, ranch houses which aptly reflect the community's major period of development.

The community's urban makeup is reflected in its significant number of multi-unit apartment communities. These range from high-density, highrise apartment buildings, to attached townhouses and low-rise suburban apartment complexes. The community also contains a number of duplex and mobile home communities.

### **Transportation Network**

U.S. 31 passes through the western portion of the Township, providing access to all major cities in Michigan and northwestern Lower Peninsula communities. Two state roads also serve the township, M-46 and M-120. The Muskegon County Road Commission will construct a new lane on Sheridan on either side of Apple, to handle anticipated traffic increase. Finally, the Township's 2000 Paving Projects includes six residential streets for which local residents have approved special assessments.

As always, it is important that these and all other infrastructure improvements be coordinated so as to avoid redundant and wasteful public expenditures.

The Township also has a well-established network of all season roads maintained by the Muskegon County Road Commission and Muskegon Township.

### **Michigan Townships**

Recreation planning is a method for anticipating and arranging recreational improvements so that they may be implemented on a reasonable schedule and without an adverse effect on a community's administrative and financial structure. An effective recreation plan will recognize the practical relationship between a community's administrative structure and its ability to follow through on a recommended recreational improvement program.

Townships are a product of Michigan's early history, and Michigan is one of 20 states that currently have some form of township government. Township government powers in Michigan have grown to the point that it is difficult to discern the differences between townships, cities and villages.

There are two types of townships in Michigan—general law and charter townships. Charter township status is a special township classification created by the Michigan Legislature in 1947 to provide additional powers and streamlined administration for governing a growing community. Muskegon currently operates as a charter township.

A township board consisting of seven members—a clerk, supervisor, treasurer, and four trustees, serves as the Muskegon Township elected government. The township board is responsible for hiring of an assessor, police and fire chief, superintendent and other necessary personnel to properly and efficiently operate the township.

Townships serve other governmental units by providing tax collection services. To avoid imposing an unnecessary burden on citizens to pay separate property taxes to the township, schools, special assessment districts and the county, Michigan townships provide uniform assessment of property values and collect all property taxes on behalf of the other units of government. Only a very small portion of the taxes collected is retained by the township for its own operating purposes. The Michigan Constitution and state statutes also limit the amount of property tax millage that townships can levy for general township operations.

## **Staffing**

The Township Supervisor acts as the board chairman as well as overseeing the day-to-day operations of all the Township departments and preparing the annual fiscal budget.

The Clerk, popularly elected, is responsible for overseeing the disbursement of funds for these purposes. Funding for parks and recreation comes from the Township's general fund. The annual operation and maintenance funds listed above funds were used for such as grounds upkeep, and repairs to as picnic tables, fencing, play equipment, underground utilities, and electrical systems.

Personnel for the parks program come from several sources. The Township's Department of Public Works is responsible for maintenance and improvements within the parks. The staff of the DPW is assisted throughout the summer by part-time labor. The two school districts provide staff resources through their Community Education Departments for indoor and outdoor programming throughout the year and also provide for supervisory staff at various parks during the summer months.

Muskegon Charter Township, Reeths-Puffer Schools, and Orchard View Schools share responsibility for the Township's parks and recreation program. The Township owns most of the parks and is responsible for maintenance and capital improvements. The school districts are responsible for programs, staffing, and providing some facilities.

## **Budget**

Funding for parks and recreation comes from the Township's general fund and the school districts' operating budgets. Since 1992, the budget has increased 83% from \$74,939 to the 1997 budget of \$137,500. Approximately 80% of this budget comes from the Township and the remainder from Orchard View Schools and from Reeths-Puffer Schools.

The following sums represent the general funds budgeted for park operation and maintenance for the referenced years. These funds include expenses incurred as a result of existing park maintenance and include materials, utility costs, some capital improvements such as irrigation systems and labor:

*COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES*  
**FOR MUSKEGON CHARTER TOWNSHIP PARKS DEPARTMENT**

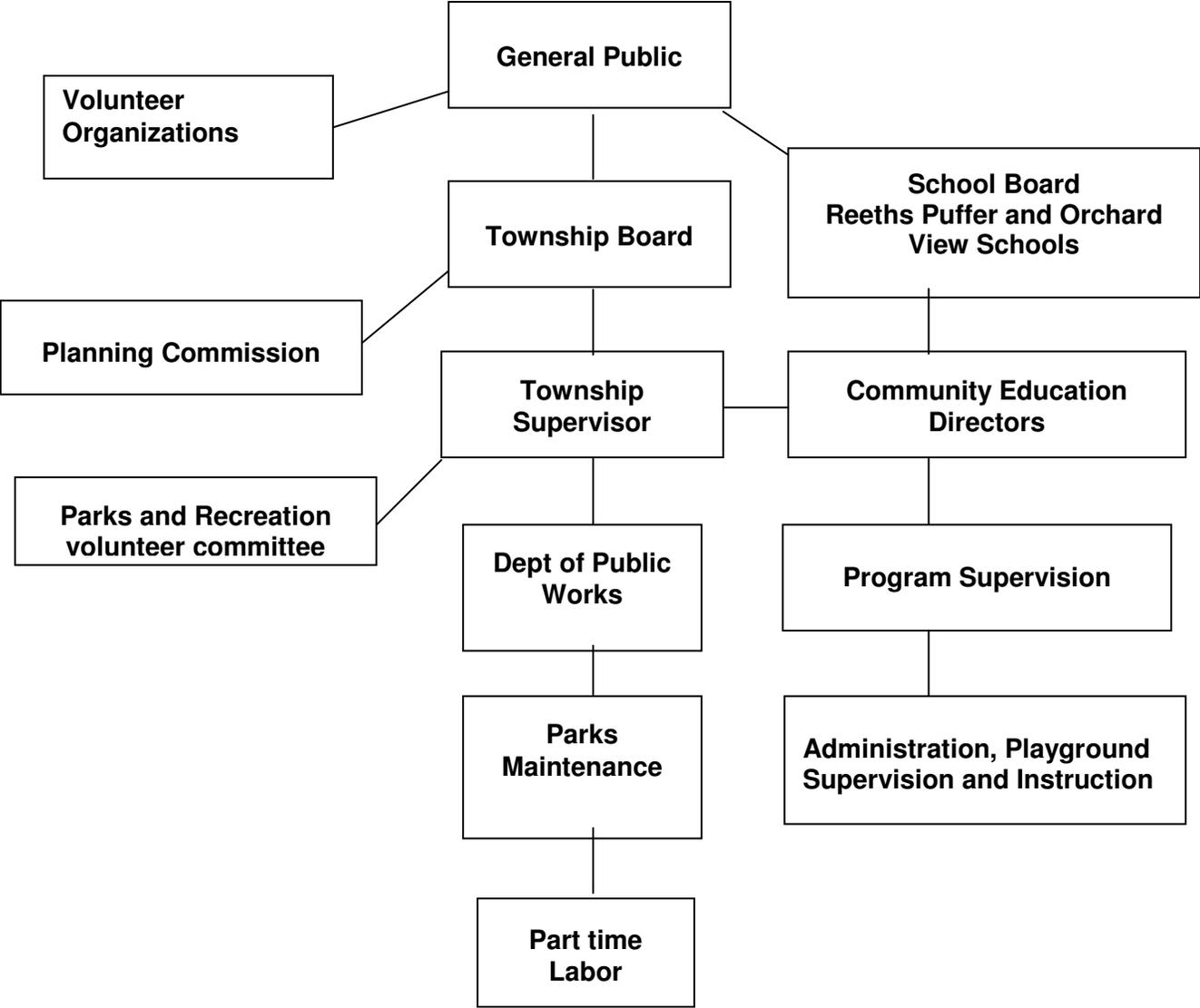
<b>DEPARTMENT 707</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
WAGES - FULL TIME	41,940.08	49,549.9 3	40,565.76	61,133.81
WAGES - OVERTIME/COMP	23,983.40	120.79	103.27	1,285.11
WAGES - PART TIME/SEASONAL	8,440.50	0.00	0.00	493.50
EMPLOYERS SOCIAL SECURITY	5,611.85	3,729.46	3,043.41	4,645.54
RETIREMENT FUND CONTRIBUTIONS	4,139.80	3,695.58	2,823.12	8,785.81
INSURANCE	1,212.21	886.17	664.98	1,085.88
OPERATING SUPPLIES	5,701.81	848.90	2,008.83	8,774.69
REPAIR & MAINTENANCE	2,646.51	2,888.62	4,569.40	4,721.36
SMALL EQUIPMENT REPAIR	2,401.69	3,453.38	1,842.03	2,695.83
SCHOOL RECREATION PROGRAM	26,118.73	0.00	0.00	14,529.78
UTILITIES	13,867.34	13,765.2 5	13,013.23	11,962.42
PROPERTY TAXES - FIRE DIST S/A	279.26	275.93	0.00	0.00
PARK IMPROVEMENTS	4,800.00	0.00	17,788.00	14,345.15
EASTSIDE EXTRAVAGANZA CAPITAL	828.00	3,301.50	614.09	34,047.14
EQUIPMENT	8,469.23	0.00	0.00	0.00
	150,440.4 1	82,515.5 1	87,036.12	168,506.02

**Budget Analysis**

The Parks and Recreation budget has decreased over the past several years. In 2002, \$202,400 was budgeted, not including full time employees, for Parks and Recreation, or over \$54,000 more than in 2004. Muskegon Charter Township's budget moved full time employees into the Parks & Recreation Budget, beginning in 2006. These wages, along with insurance, retirement fund contributions, and social security, account for a significant portion of the 2005 and 2006 Parks & Recreation Budget. In 2006, these additions to the budget added up to \$68,622.70, or a net of \$9,614.59 less than what was spent the prior year. In 2007, the same full-time wage expenses were \$75,837.08, or a net of \$7,751.70 less than 2005. Note that in 2005, over \$22,000 had already been reduced from the 2004 parks improvements, with over \$5,000 overall reduction from 2004 to 2005. No funds were budgeted for parks and recreation equipment in 2005 or 2006.

Muskegon Charter Township contributes approximately \$40,000 total to Orchard View and Reeths Puffer Schools to run community recreation programs to benefit township citizens. Orchard View Community Education receives over 68% of the contribution, as it historically has served two-thirds of Muskegon Township citizens through its recreation programs. Reeths-Puffer partnered with White Lake Community Education in 2005, so Muskegon Township contributions for citizens in the northern section of the township are served through that program. Please note, from page 26 of this report, the significant decline in participation when local supervision of the community education program changed in Reeths-Puffer.

The administrative structure is as follows:



## **Planning Process**

Thorough planning and community input is essential to determining the recreational needs of Muskegon Charter Township. This can help to determine the type, quantity, location, need and priority for recreational planning. These include observing the use levels for existing facilities, comparison of recreational facilities in neighboring communities, unique opportunities for certain types of facilities, guidelines or standards based on quantity per population, and projected population growth, to identify a few.

Comparison of existing recreation opportunities to recreation standards can be used to determine deficiencies. However, great care must be taken to apply common sense and knowledge of the community. These standards must be used only in conjunction with other methods to determine recreational deficiencies and priorities.

Citizen opinion on recreation priorities is a key consideration in plan development. It is important to involve the public early in the process through public meetings, surveys, and other means. Early citizen involvement not only helps in defining needs and priorities, it also keeps the public informed about what is going on. This in turn helps to build support and to avoid unnecessary controversy.

For this Parks and Recreation Plan, workshops were facilitated by township staff, members of the Planning Commission, and a township resident. Six meetings were held in 2007 to gather information and decide upon means to solicit public input. A survey was inserted into the September 2007 Township Newsletter, with 44 being returned (See Appendix 1 - Survey Summary). The results of this survey was published and emailed to the respondents who requested the information, and was presented at the January 14th, 2008 Muskegon Charter Township Planning Commission Meeting. Public comment was also solicited at that meeting. Parks and Recreations Committee is the tool used to communicate with the community

The purpose of the strategic planning process was to receive direct input from key individuals within the community relative to the identification and ranking of the community's current recreational needs. The issues and needs were identified and are incorporated into this document.

## **EXISTING RECREATIONAL INVENTORY**

Muskegon Township provides a variety of recreation opportunities distributed throughout the community. In total, about 161 acres are devoted to outdoor recreation. Parks range from traditional neighborhood facilities to a large, one township-owned but leased for private operation complex of softball diamonds. In addition, there are several indoor facilities devoted to senior citizen activities and to community education / recreation. Extensive programming in the form of adult education, leisure classes, and organized sports programs is offered for the residents by the school districts in cooperation with the Township.

### **Facilities**

An essential element of a recreation plan is the inventory of local and regional, public and private recreation facilities that are available to a community's resident. Such an inventory provides a basis from which a comparison can be made of existing recreation opportunities with the community's identified recreation needs. This inventory process also identifies barrier-free facilities. This will ensure that citizens with disabilities will fully enjoy these facilities. Involving advocate organizations and utilizing the knowledge of the Township staff will help facilitate this element of the inventory process. Further, this facility inventory establishes the foundation from which a recreational improvement program can be developed and implemented. The included map also shows the location of local recreational facilities. One of the unique characteristics of the Township's parks and recreation offerings to the community is the highly cooperative arrangement it enjoys with both the Reeths-Puffer and Orchard View School Districts. Each of the districts makes its facilities (outdoor play areas, athletic

fields, gymnasiums, classrooms, and meeting rooms) available for community recreation. This relationship has existed for many years. The school districts also staff and administer many of the programs in cooperation with the Township.

The following are parks and recreation areas within the Township and the facilities available at each location. Of the locations listed, eight are Township parks; ten are schools; three are community buildings; and two are privately-owned locations utilized by the public for river access. A brief description of these facilities is as follows:

**A. Public Facilities — School owned**

1. **Orchard View Workforce Development & Training Center** (formerly Jolman School) — Playground equipment has been removed. Baseball field still exists.
2. **Seventh Day Adventist School** - A small playground is located here. Although this is a private school, there is evidence that the facilities are used by children from the surrounding area.
3. **Orchard View Early Elementary - Gustafson Campus** - The play area at this school contains a variety of new playground equipment and facilities for public use, including picnic tables. Play fields are available for softball and soccer. Basketball courts are also located here. A well-equipped fenced area is also found at this school.
4. **Orchard View Middle School** - Soccer and softball fields are located here along with basketball courts. The school gymnasium is available for public use.
5. **Orchard View High School** — New in 2007, facilities include: two basketball courts; new soccer arena, baseball and football fields; and a track. The school also contains an indoor gymnasium.
6. **Orchard View Cardinal Elementary** — Facilities include a large gym; community weight room; state-of-the-art playground; two basketball courts; four tennis courts; and a baseball field.
7. **Orchard View Community Education Center** - Recreation facilities include: a gymnasium, a large open play field, a hard-surface play area, and a playground containing a variety of equipment. The area is well-maintained and equipment is in good condition. This facility houses Orchard View Community Education.
8. **Reeths-Puffer High School** - The facilities are mainly athletic fields and gymnasiums associated with the high school sports program, but are available for public use. These include a baseball field, 8 tennis courts, a grassy play field, a new football / track/ soccer complex and a lighted band practice field.
9. **Reeths-Puffer Middle School** - This school is located just west of the Township boundary in Laketon Township. It contains a gymnasium plus a variety of athletic fields for softball, football, and soccer.
10. **Reeths-Puffer Elementary** - A children's play area is located adjacent to the school. It contains a variety of play equipment that is in very good condition, outdoor basketball courts, as well a multi-purpose room.
11. **Reeths Puffer Community Center** - This center is located on property owned by the Township. The center houses the Reeths-Puffer Head Start Program.

**B. Public Facilities- Township owned**

1. **Softball World** — This serves as a regional facility and consists of four lighted softball fields along with a small children's play area. This facility is heavily used by city and other municipalities for recreation.
2. **Quarter Oak Park** - This Park contains a ball field, picnic areas and playground. Generally, the park is in good condition, but could use some repairs and upkeep such as fencing and seeding. New play structures were added in 2012.
3. **Parslow Park** - This is one of the Townships more heavily used parks. Facilities available at this park include: restrooms, skate-park, ball fields, basketball courts, a playground, parking, and picnic areas. New structures were added in 2012.
4. **Buel Avenue Park** - Among the facilities located at this park are: four basketball courts, a playground, a restroom building, two ball fields, and picnic areas with benches and grills. Vandalism continues to be a problem.
5. **Riverside Park** - this park is located on-Cedar Creek, a large tributary to the Muskegon River, and includes 38 acres. Facilities include a playground, open playfield, and basketball courts, ball diamonds, horseshoe pits, nature trail, and picnic areas.
6. **Evanston Gardens Park** - A variety of activities are accommodated in this park, including: ball diamonds, basketball, tennis, shuffleboard and picnic areas. The park also contains a playground and restrooms.
7. **Wesley Park** - This Park contains restrooms, 1 tennis court, 1 pickle ball court, 3 ball fields, basketball courts, shuffleboard courts, a picnic shelter, horseshoe pits, a playground and a soccer field. Signs of vandalism are evident in several areas of the park. New structure in 2012.
8. **Muskegon Township Hall** - The township hall contains a multi-purpose room available to any non-profit community group. Regularly schedule meetings are held here by groups.

### **C. County or Other Governmental Public Facilities**

1. **Blue Lake Park** - This Park contains about 25 acres of land and 600 feet of lake access. It contains a lodge, picnic areas, playground, beach, and swimming area.
2. **Deremo Park** - With approximately 10 acres of land and 650 feet of Lake Frontage, this park is primarily used as a small boat launch site.
3. **Duck Lake State Park** - Located on the north shore of Duck Lake near Lake Michigan, this state facility contains about 600 acres of land, with picnic pavilion, beach, and well-groomed trails.
4. **County Fairgrounds** - This facility contains 160 acres and is located in the south central portion of the County.
5. **Meinert Park** - Picnic areas, playground equipment, a concession stand, and beach with swimming area are found on this 29-acre Lake Michigan Park.
6. **Moore Park** - About 36 acres of land are encompassed by this park, which contains picnic areas, playground equipment, concession stand, beach, and a swimming area.
7. **Patterson Park** - Picnicing and playgrounds are the principle activities at this 28- acre park. It

is sited in a lovely natural area and offers ideal conditions for relaxing family outings.

8. **Twin Lake Park** - This is a ten-acre park with approximately 800 feet of Lake Frontage. The facilities here include a lodge building, concession stand, picnic areas, playground equipment, tennis and basketball courts, and beach with a swimming area.
9. **Pioneer Park** - Located on Lake Michigan, this popular park contains 146 acres and over 2000 feet of Lake Frontage. A variety of active and passive recreational facilities include picnic areas, playgrounds, ball diamonds, tennis courts, basketball courts, concession stand, campgrounds and a lodge.
10. **Veterans Memorial Park** - Located on Muskegon Lake near the mouths of the Muskegon River and Cedar Creek, this 19-acre linear park contains picnic areas, lake access, and a memorial trail.
11. **Wolf Lake Park** - Picnic areas, ball diamond, playground, beach and swimming area are available at this six-acre park in Egelston Township.
12. **Pere Marquette Park** - This Park is located between Lake Michigan and southern Muskegon Lake, It provides swimming, a beach, playgrounds, open play areas, concession stand and picnic areas.
13. **Muskegon State Game Area** - Muskegon Charter Township contains an area of over 3,000 acres devoted to the Muskegon State Game Area which provides vast hunting and fishing opportunities. This property, owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, is undeveloped and occupies the lowlands and marshes along the Muskegon River.
14. **Hoffmaster State Park** - Encompassing over 1000 acres, this park contains extensive natural features such as woods and sand dunes. A nature interpretive center is located along with a system of trails. Camping, swimming, picnicking, and play areas are also accommodated.
15. **Muskegon State Park** - Located along the channel on Lake Michigan and Muskegon Lake, this park contains 1125 acres. Facilities include beach, swimming area, picnic areas, concession stand and campsites.
16. **Heritage Landing Park** - This Park, located on Muskegon Lake, provides a large play area, community stage and a fishing pier.
17. **Mill Iron Boat Launch** - This site is not a designated launch area, but a convenient location where the street dead-ends at the Muskegon River. Many area residents launch small boats at this location. The adjacent property owner has allowed this practice to continue.
18. **Creston Boat Launch** - Like the Mill Iron site, this is another location where the street ends at the Muskegon River, affording boaters a place to launch their boats. This site also abuts private property, the owner of which has allowed the practice to continue.
19. **Sheridan Drive Boat Launch** - DNR owned and controlled access point to Muskegon River at end of Sheridan Drive. Property is currently undeveloped and the Township would encourage the State of Michigan to pursue development of a improved boat launch facility as funds become available.

D. **Other**

1. Eagle Island – This site includes a golf course and driving range. BARRIER-FREE
2. Johnson Hall - This facility is a community center/ multi-purpose building used extensively by the Northside Seniors for meetings, -Bingo, and activities.

**EVALUATION**

The goal is to provide recreation opportunities that include everyone. With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), all areas of public service and accommodation are subject to barrier-free requirements, including parks and recreation facilities and programs. This planning process should include methods to ensure that the Muskegon Township park and recreation system is accessible to persons with disabilities.

The Township has completed an evaluation of existing facilities and programs to determine if they are barrier-free. When looking at areas and programs to determine their accessibility to all people, we started by asking these simple questions:

Can a person who has a sight or hearing disability, uses a wheelchair, using a walking aid, such as, crutches or braces, has a mental disability that affects learning and understanding, safely and independently:

- *Get from the arrival place to the activity area?*
- *Move around the area?*
- *Do what others do in the area?*
- *If not, what is getting in the way?*
- *How can this barrier be removed?*

Common components that need to be looked at to answer these basic questions include: parking, paths of travel from parking, street or sidewalk to activity areas, the activity areas themselves, signage, support facilities such as restrooms, surfacing, and communications required for recreation programs and general use of a facility or area.

The Township has scheduled in each phase I of any new development, as outlined in the capital improvement schedule, that ADA accessibility concerns will be addressed as a first priority. Furthermore, the goal of full accessibility is stated as a primary goal in the action plan outlined by the Township. A transition plan for Township owned facilities is as follows:

**Barrier-Free Evaluation of Recreation Facilities in Muskegon Charter Township**

<b><u>Facility</u></b>	<b>Current Condition/ Recommended Action</b>
------------------------	--

**Buel Avenue Park-Public Property**

- a. No barrier-free spaces delineated or signed. **Parking area should have the required barrier-free spaces delineated and signed.**
- b. No accessible routes exist to connect surrounding residential neighborhood to park, i.e. no pedestrian/sidewalk circulation. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- c. No hard surface accessible pathways exist to inter-connect park facilities and parking. Accessibility should accommodate a mixed-ability of groups, such as able-bodied child and a parent with a disability. Long grass is difficult to wheel or walk through. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- d. Transfer point on play structure with manufactured resilient surfaces should be connected to accessible route. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**

- e. For each transfer point, 30"x48" wheelchair parking spaces should be provided adjacent to an accessible route and out of the equipment's required fall zone. (Play equipment should be accessible, but must be designed for children, not wheelchairs.) **Relocate equipment to allow for transfer points (5'X5' clear, level area) should be provided to allow a child to transfer between a wheelchair and the play structure.**
- f. Restroom Building & Toilet Facilities-confirm if ADA accessible.
- g. Ex. sidewalk to restroom building & entrances is less than 5' width required. Grills should be located on an accessible surface and located on an accessible walk or path. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**

**Facility      Current Condition/ Recommended Action**

**Evanston Gardens Park-Public Property**

- a. Restroom Building & Toilet Facilities- **Modify interior furnishing as required to comply with ADA Standards.**
- b. Ex. sidewalk to restroom is adequate.
- c. Ex. sidewalk to restroom building & entrances is less than 5' width required. **Widen paved walks where appropriate.**
- d. Barriers free parking not adjacent to ramp. **Relocate designated barrier-free parking closer to park entrance & sidewalk ramp.**
- e. Transfer point on play structure with manufactured resilient surfaces should be connected to accessible route. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- f. For each transfer point, 30"x48" wheelchair parking spaces should be provided adjacent to an accessible route and out of the equipment's required fall zone. (Play equipment should be accessible, but must be designed for children, not wheelchairs.) **Relocate equipment to allow for transfer points (5'.X5' clear, level area) should be provided to allow a child to transfer between a wheelchair and the play structure.**
- g. No accessible routes exist to connect surrounding residential neighborhood to park, i.e. no pedestrian/sidewalk circulation. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- h. No hard surface accessible pathways exist to inter-connect park facilities and parking. Accessibility should accommodate a mixed-ability of groups, such as able-bodied child and a parent with a disability. Long grass is difficult to wheel or walk through. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- i. Grills should be located on an accessible surface and located on an accessible walk or path. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**

**Facility      Current Condition/ Recommended Action**

**Parslow Park-Public Property**

- a. No hard surface accessible pathways exist to inter-connect park facilities and parking. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- b. Accessibility should accommodate a mixed-ability of groups, such as able-bodied child and a parent with a disability. Long grass is difficult to wheel or walk through. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- c. No accessible routes exist to connect surrounding residential neighborhood to all sides of the park. Existing narrow sidewalk only along Shonot St. & part of Francis Ave. **Widen walk were appropriate.**
- d. Transfer point on play structure with manufactured resilient surfaces should be connected to accessible route. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- e. For each transfer point, 30"x48" wheelchair parking spaces should be provided adjacent to an accessible route and out of the equipment's required fall zone. (Play equipment should be accessible, but must be designed for children, not wheelchairs.) **Relocate equipment to allow for**

**transfer points (5'X5' clear, level area) should be provided to allow a child to transfer between a wheelchair and the play structure.**

- f. *Restroom Building & Toilet Facilities*-**Modify interior furnishing as required to comply with ADA Standards.**
- g. Ex. sidewalk to restroom building & entrances is less than 5' width required. **Widen walk were appropriate.**
- h. Existing picnic furniture not ADA compliant. **Add barrier-free compliant picnic table(s).**
- i. Grills should be located on an accessible surface and located on an accessible walk or path. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**

**Facility Current Condition/ Recommended Action**  
**Quarter Oak Park-Public Property**

- a. No barrier-free spaces delineated or signed. **Parking area should be paved and have the required barrier-free spaces delineated and signed. An accessible route must be provided to the park's facilities.**
- b. No accessible routes exist to connect surrounding residential neighborhood to park, i.e. no pedestrian/sidewalk circulation. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- c. Transfer point on play structure with manufactured resilient surfaces should be connected to accessible path or walk. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- d. For each transfer point, 30"x48" wheelchair parking spaces should be provided adjacent to an accessible route and out of the equipment's required fall zone. (Play equipment should be accessible, but must be designed for children, not wheelchairs.) **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- e. Drinking fountain is not designed and located so it is usable by a person in a wheelchair. Drinking fountain should be located on an accessible walk or path. **Replace fountain with ADA accessible model and add paved walks as needed.**
- f. Grills should be located on an accessible surface and located on an accessible walk or path. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**

**Facility Current Condition/Recommended Action**  
**Riverside Park-Public Property**

- a. Nature Trail is not barrier-free accessible. May be cost prohibitive to develop an accessible route down wooded ridge to Cedar Creek. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- b. Transfer point on play structure with manufactured resilient surfaces should be connected to accessible route. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- c. For each transfer point, 30"x48" wheelchair parking spaces should be provided adjacent to an accessible route and out of the equipment's required fall zone. (Play equipment should be accessible, but must be designed for children, not wheelchairs.) **Relocate equipment to allow for transfer points (5'X5' clear, level area) should be provided to allow a child to transfer between a wheelchair and the play structure.**
- d. No accessible routes exist to connect surrounding residential neighborhood and Reeths-Puffer Schools to park, i.e. no pedestrian/sidewalk circulation. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- e. Grills should be located on an accessible surface and located on an accessible walk or path. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**

**Facility Current Condition/ Recommended Action**  
**Softball World-Public Property leased**

- a. Barrier-free spaces are delineated & signed.
- b. Concession/Restroom Building & Toilet Facilities. **Modify interior furnishing as required to comply with ADA Standards.**
- c. Ex. sidewalk to restroom is adequate.
- d. No hard surface accessible pathways exist to connect parking lot to park facilities. Stone dust surfacing connects parking lot to ball fields. Only sidewalk found around the concession/restroom building. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- e. No accessible routes exist to connect surrounding residential neighborhood to park, i.e. no pedestrian/sidewalk circulation. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- f. Existing picnic furniture not ADA compliant. **Add barrier-free compliant picnic table(s).**
- g. **Convert a field to fast pitch softball and little league baseball.**

**Facility Current Condition/ Recommended Action**  
**Wesley Park-Public Property**

- a. Total number of parking spaces provided should be reviewed to assure that the proper number of barrier-free spaces are delineated and signed. Barrier-free spaces should be spread proportionately between the three parking lots. An accessible route must be provided to the park's facilities from all parking lots. **Parking area should be paved and have the required barrier-free spaces delineated and signed. Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- b. *Restroom Building & Toilet Facilities.* **Modify interior furnishing as required complying with ADA Standards.**
- c. Ex. sidewalk to restroom building & entrances is less than 5 widths required. **Widen paved walks where appropriate.**
- d. No accessible routes exist to connect surrounding residential neighborhood to park, i.e. no pedestrian/sidewalk circulation. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- e. More hard surface accessible pathways should be constructed to inter-connect park facilities and parking. Accessibility should accommodate a mixed-ability of groups, such as able-bodied child and a parent with a disability. Long grass is difficult to wheel or walk through. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- f. Transfer point on play structure with manufactured resilient surfaces should be connected to accessible route. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**
- g. For each transfer point, 30"x48" wheelchair parking spaces should be provided adjacent to an accessible route and out of the equipment's required fall zone. (Play equipment should be accessible, but must be designed for children, not wheelchairs.)
- h. Some barrier-free compliant picnic tables are recommended. **Relocate equipment to allow for transfer points (5'X5' clear, level area) should be provided to allow a child to transfer between a wheelchair and the play structure.**
- i. Grills should be located on an accessible surface and located on an accessible walk or path. **Add paved walks where appropriate.**

**Facility Current Condition/ Recommended Action**  
**Mill Iron Boat Launch-Public Property/Right-of-Way**

- a. No formal parking or any provisions for disabled persons. **ADA requirements should be incorporated into any future site improvements.**

**Facility Current Condition/ Recommended Action**  
**Creston Boat Launch -Public Property/ Right-of-Way**

- a. No formal parking or any provisions for disabled persons. **ADA requirements**

should be incorporated into any future site improvements.

**RECREATION PROGRAMS**

Both Muskegon Orchard View and Reeths-Puffer school districts and community sports organizations offer a variety of indoor and outdoor programs which utilize the park and the school facilities. Organized activities at the parks include:

• Senior citizen center activities	• Summer Olympics
• Saturday recreation	• Summer day camps
• Playground picnics	• Arts and crafts
• Baseball & softball leagues	• Youth soccer leagues
• Youth football leagues	• Basketball dribbling contests
• Bike races	• Car washes
• Home run derby	• Tennis instruction
• Litter pick-up contest	• Uno tournament
• Pet shows	• Watermelon party
• Scavenger hunt	• Basketball camp

In addition, many leisure and enrichment programs are offered at the schools. Examples of these include:

- |                 |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| • Gymnastics    | • Arts and crafts        |
| • Volleyball    | • Blood pressure testing |
| • Basketball    | • B i n g o              |
| • Aerobics      | • C o o k i n g          |
| • Dog obedience |                          |

As noted previously, senior citizen programs are very popular in the Township. Programs are offered at several school locations and at township apartment complexes in the evening.

Reeths-Puffer Area Youth Baseball/Softball League administers summer youth baseball programs at both Beegle Field and Duff Field. Volunteers run the programs. Summer programs are held for ages 7-16 and had 400+ participants in 2002.

Reeths-Puffer Community Education, through White Lake Community Education, serves as a key coordinator of some of the recreational programs for Muskegon Township. Programs offered include youth/adult golf, tennis, basketball, and football. Reeths-Puffer provided a list of area park usage for their Sports & Shorts programs for 2003-2007 and these are listed below. There have been on average a total of about 500 persons in different recreation programs each year.

Registered Attendance in Sports & Shorts at Area Parks through White Lake (Reeths-Puffer) Community Ed.

Park	Township	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Riverside	Muskegon	60	75	No data	34	34
Buel	Muskegon	108	115	No data	41	35
Twin Lake	Dalton	24	25	No data	39	35
Mullally	Laketon	40	33	No data	38	55
Lakewood	Dalton	No data	No data	No data	No data	18

There is also other program offered by White Lake (Reeths-Puffer) Community Education such as Gymnast-A-Dance program, fitness programs and painting which averages 125 to 150 persons a year. In addition,

Community Education also sponsors the following:

- Four swim programs that are held at the YMCA = average 140 persons each session; total about 660 persons per year.
- Yearly there is the "Dinner with Santa Claus" at the High School = 500 persons

Attendance and participation records are unavailable for all facilities. The attendance figures involve programs conducted by the source organizations and are firm. Since attendance by neighborhood residents and groups that visit the parks are not verifiable, actual attendance and park use is higher. Summer programming, coordinated with the two area school districts have leveled off, after a 88% increase from 1986-1991. An over all increase during this time period depicts growth and increased park usage by youth baseball, soccer, and football programs.

## **ACTION PROGRAM, DESIRED PARKS IMPROVEMENTS, AND RATIONALE**

In defining the action program, the formulation of community goals and objectives for the provision of recreation is a vital component. The goals and objectives represent the purposes for a community's role in providing recreation to its residents as well as outlining the direction that the community's effort should take in the long term. Goals are the general targets for which a community aims for while objectives are the specific steps that can be taken towards that goal. A recreation plan identifies those actions that can be undertaken to implement the objectives and fulfill the community's goals.

The goals and objectives for Muskegon Township in meeting the recreation needs of residents are outlined below.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Goal 1**

**To acquire, develop, maintain and preserve sufficient open space and to develop recreational facilities to serve the needs of the Township's present and anticipated population.**

### Objectives

- A. Acquire property adjacent to existing park properties whenever possible to allow for the greatest flexibility and offer economy of sharing infrastructure when expanding or adding recreation activities to existing dedicated parklands.
- B. Acquire additional park property as opportunities present themselves in high growth areas of the Township, which may be distant from existing park facilities. This is especially true in the northern part of the Township and may be accomplished with cooperation of Reeths-Puffer Schools and the State of Michigan.
- C. Develop a public boat launch facility along the Muskegon River. Improve access and use for all residents to the Township's water resources.
- D. Encourage, support and develop a linear trail system to connect various park facilities with particular emphasis on old railroad corridors.

### **Goal 2**

**To promote the enhancement of the quality of life in the Township by providing multi-generational, fully accessible and safe recreational facilities that is responsive to the needs of all residents with high quality recreational facilities that efficiently utilize available resources.**

Objectives

- A. Develop a variety of recreational facilities that reflect the changing and diverse needs of the Township residents.
- B. Promote the acquisition and improvement of boating access to the Muskegon River.
- C. Develop a non-motorized path system, in cooperation with the Muskegon County Road Commission, to connect the various recreational and school facilities to one another and provide residents easier access to the Berry Junction Trail, Musketawa Trail, and the Muskegon State Game Area.
- D. Improve existing recreational facilities to more effectively fulfill the needs of Township residents and to encourage regular use of these facilities.
- E. Develop certain recreational facilities as identified by the survey and needs assessment and establish priorities for their development.
- F. Whenever feasible, take advantage of other resources for the development and maintenance of recreational facilities, such as non-local funding sources or the inclusion of concessions.
- G. Utilize design, construction, and maintenance practices that maximize the benefits provided for the resources expended.
- H. Plan improvements that offer both active and passive recreation opportunities.
- I. Develop unique recreational opportunities for elderly and physically challenged citizens. Every recreational opportunity should be fully accessible to all individuals whenever possible.
- J. Provide play areas that are in conformance with the "Playground Equipment Safety Act".

**Goal 3**

**To promote the coordination, cooperation and expansion of recreational programs with other public agencies, private enterprise, citizen groups, and other interested organizations with the common goal of improvement of recreational opportunities for Township residents.**

Objectives

- A. Encourage the participation of volunteers in the development of recreational facilities.
- B. Utilize public and private sector cooperation in the promotion of recreation and the improvement of recreational opportunities.
- C. Coordinate existing recreational projects with the school systems, community education and volunteer groups and look for ways to expand recreational programs as new facilities are developed.
- D. Encourage the cooperation and participation of adjacent townships such as Laketon, Dalton and Egelston Townships' in the formation of a regional recreational advisory board in an effort to combine resources and avoid duplication of facilities and services.

**Goal 4**

**To continually improve the quality of and the opportunities for recreation in the Township by reassessing community recreation needs, trends, and characteristics.**

Objectives

- A. Periodically update this Recreation Plan.
- B. Provide opportunities for the involvement of Township residents in the identification, selection, and development of recreational facilities through public meetings of the Parks & Recreation Committee.
- C. Monitor the effectiveness of the Township's efforts in fulfilling identified goals and objectives by providing opportunities for Township residents to evaluate the progress of recreational development.
- D. Monitor the effectiveness of the Township's efforts in providing fully accessible opportunities for Township residents.

**Goal 5**

**Improve the quality of the township parks through a program of regular on-going maintenance throughout the system.**

Objectives

- A. Reduce vandalism in all parks with increased supervision with leadership of community groups.
- B. Improve the existing facilities which may include repair and replacement of play equipment, repairing damage caused by vandalism, repair and replace park - identification signs, resurface play courts and parking areas as well as general landscaping improvements.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

These recommended actions represent the substance and purpose of a recreation plan - the development of a strategy for effectively closing the gap between existing recreation opportunities and recreation needs. A general statement can be made that all of the properties currently operated as park facilities in Muskegon Township lack basic facilities such as paved parking areas, paved walks and restroom facilities. This lack of walks and parking is also a concern regarding ADA accessibility. The planning standards are as follows.

**PLANNING STANDARDS**

Opportunity	Standard	Need	Avail.	Difference
Local Park Land System (acres)	10/1000	174	111(a)	-63 (a)
Ball Fields	1/3000	5	12 (b)	+7 (b)
Basketball (outdoor)	1/5000	3	8 (c)	+5 (c)
Picnic Tables	1/200	88	90	+2
Playgrounds	1/3000	5	7 ( d )	+ 2 ( d )
Soccer Fields	1/10,000	2 (h)	4	+2(h)
Tennis Courts. (Outdoor)	1/2000	9	10 (e) \	+1 (e)
Boat Launch (parking)	1/400	40	(f)	(f)
Campgrounds (Sites)	1/150	102	(9)	(9)
X-Country Trails	1/10,000	1.5	(92)	(9)
Hiking Trails	1/5000	3	(9)	(9)
Nature Areas	1/50,000		1 (9)	(9)
ORV Areas (acres)	1/7500	2	(9)	(9)

Sources: 1VIDNR and Muskegon Charter Township

- Additional 63.6 acres of school park land available, resulting in surplus of 0.5 acres
- 9 additional ball fields on school property, surplus of 16
- 9 additional basketball courts on school grounds, surplus of 14
- 5 additional playgrounds at schools, surplus of 7
- 12 additional tennis courts on school property, surplus of 13
- Boat launches have been allowed by private property owners. Parking is on road,
- Provided by Muskegon County and / or State of Michigan
- Number depends on programs and need

The existence of appropriate recreation standards and criteria can enable a community to create a program for acquisition and development that will keep pace with the community's growth. However, a single set of standards cannot identify and serve

Muskegon Township's needs fully. The criteria and standards must be flexible and extensive. One must look at the needs created by recreational programs than serve a larger population area than just Muskegon Township. The changing population must be taken into account. As we tend to live longer statistically and as the birth rate decline, so too must the emphasis shift on recreational facilities and those they shall serve. These classification systems are intended to serve as a guide to planning, not as an absolute blueprint.

In terms of the availability of land and facilities in relation to accepted standards, the Township is satisfactorily accommodating the needs in most areas. While limited recreation facilities do currently exist north of the river, an opportunity for development of school land on Singerling Playfield may be accomplished with school, township, county, and state cooperation. When combined with the facilities of Reeths-Puffer and Orchard View Schools, most park recreation needs appear met. The Parks and Recreation Committee, provides a conduit of communication to address the needs of the residents. Muskegon Township should explore the cooperation and participation of adjacent townships such as Laketon, Dalton and Egelston Townships' in the formation of a regional recreational advisory board in an effort to combine resources and avoid duplication of facilities and services.

One emerging area of recreational need highlighted in the Vision 2020 Muskegon Township Master Plan prepared in 2001 was a need for the development of a non-motorized path system to connect the various recreational and school facilities to one another and provide residents easier access to the Musketawa Trail and the Muskegon State Game Area. To implement such a trail system, as outlined in Conceptual Sidewalk and Trail Network Plan found in appendix, the following are suggested measures:

1. Acquire abandoned railroad right-of-way along Evanston and Laketon Avenues to connect the Musketawa Trail to Consumer's energy utility corridor.
2. Obtain trail easement from Consumer's Energy along utility corridor to link the Musketawa Trail to the Muskegon State Game Area.
3. Incorporate 4 sidewalk construction schedules into the capital improvements program for the Township as a whole.

The Sheridan Boat Launch was improved by the State of Michigan in 2004. The site is publicly owned and maintained by the DNR. The road access and parking are substandard and erosion controls are needed.

Another area identified was the acquisition and improvement of boating access to the Muskegon River. Although un-improved, the public has utilized two sites found at the dead end of local street right-of-ways at the point where they intersect with the Muskegon River. The first, Mill Iron Boat Launch, is a designated launch area, and a convenient location where the street dead-ends at the Muskegon River. It has paved shoulder parking and improved drainage, as of 2007, through MCR and Muskegon Township cooperative efforts. Many area residents launch small boats at this location. The adjacent property owner has allowed this practice to continue. The second, Creston Boat Launch is another location where the street ends at Cedar Creek, affording boaters access to the water. This site also abuts private property, the owner of which has also allowed the practice to continue. The Creston site is unimproved and hazardous. There is a lack of parking. The ramp is steep and unimproved.

Each site serves as an informal launch facility and thus has an uncertain future that relies

on the goodwill of private landowners and outside of public control. Each site lacks adequate land for parking and facilities and should be prime targets for land acquisition of approximately one to two acres of adjacent private property prior to any improvement of facilities. Acquisition would also place the launches under public control and insure the use for generations to come.

The following park improvement table outlines and assigns relative priorities to activities and projects that can be implemented in both the short-term and long-range future to improve recreational opportunities in Muskegon Township. Those activities and projects that can be undertaken during the five-year planning period (2013 - 2018) have been summarized in the Desired Park Improvements Table on the following page. This table includes possible funding sources for each suggested project.

### Desired Park Improvement Projects

Project	Justification	Funding Source
Buel-Pavillion	Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups
Establish Disc Golf	Citizen comments	Private
Playground Equipment - various parks	Citizen comments	General Fund, Service Groups
Dog Park	Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups
Develop 2.2 miles of non-motorized trail along railroad corridor from Musketawa Trail to utility corridor	Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups
Softball World Improvements	Citizen comments	Private
Land acquisition for area adjacent to Mill Iron Boat Launch +- 2 acres	Basic lack of facilities, Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups
Softball World Improvements	Citizen comments	Private
ADA improvements to various park sites	Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups
Softball World Improvements	Citizen comments	Private
Improve boat launch facility at Mill Iron Site including new skid pier and plank ramp	Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups
Land acquisition for area adjacent to Creston Boat Launch 1-- 2 acres	Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups

Develop 4.5 miles of non-motorized trail along utility corridor from Musketawa Trail to OV High School to Muskegon State Game Area	Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups
Playground Equipment—various parks	Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups
ADA improvements to various park sites	Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups
Improve boat launch facility at Creston Site including new skid pier and plank ramp	Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups
Softball World Improvements	Citizen comments	Private
Playground Equipment—various parks	Citizen comments	Grants, General Fund, Service Groups

In addition to the above specific projects to be undertaken in the near term, the Township is committed to improving its general maintenance throughout the park system it has identified on-going actions to be taken to generally upgrade the recreation standards in the community and address the serious problem of vandalism. These include:

- Enlisting the aid of service clubs, church groups, youth clubs, scouts, and neighborhood associations to 'adopt' a park as a part of a community service project.
- Working closely with Community Education Directors at Reeths-Puffer Schools (White Lake Comm. Ed.) and Orchard View Public Schools to improve communication and the quality of recreation programming.

## **FINANCING MECHANISMS**

The following paragraphs briefly outline existing sources of funds for financing the future recreational improvements in the Muskegon Township.

### *1. General Funds*

The Township's general fund has been the primary source of funds for operating and maintaining its current facilities. Future site improvements, acquisition, and development will remain dependent on these tax-supported funds, as will the continued operation and maintenance of these facilities. Consequently, recreation planning has to be coordinated with the yearly budgeting process for the Township's general funds.

### *2. Donations and Gifts*

The availability of donated land, labor, equipment, and funds from individuals and organizations is an attractive and effective way to improve recreational opportunities in Muskegon. Over the past few years, several groups, most notably Eastside Extravaganza, and several individuals have contributed significantly. Such support should be encouraged to continue.

### *3. Millage*

In an effort to raise matching funds or fund projects with local money, many community leaders have placed ballot proposals before their residents for a dedicated increase in their existing levied property tax to fund park maintenance and repair including care for new parks and newly acquired parks, compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as safety and security improvements. Consideration for Park Improvement/Development, Maintenance and Repair Millage will assure that parks and facilities will be maintained at the level of quality expected by park users and that new parkland will have adequate amenities.

Redesignation of existing hydrant special assessment districts provide an opportunity for this consideration by the Muskegon Charter Township Board.

#### 4. *Non-local Financial Assistance*

Many communities seek outside sources of funds to supplement their local sources when providing recreational improvements. There are several programs administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) that can provide some financial assistance to local recreation projects. Funding amounts available to communities vary from year to year depending on Federal support and State legislative agendas.

The **Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund** (MNRTF) is administered by the MDNR. The MNRTF program utilized the royalties from oil, gas, and other mineral developments on state-owned lands to help finance the acquisition and the development of outdoor recreation facilities. The CMI program is the result of the passage of Proposal C of 1998.

Any unit of government, including school districts, may apply for grants to develop or acquire land(s) for public recreation or resource protection purposes. Application forms are available on February 1 of each year. The application deadlines are April 1 and September 1, of each year. The MDNR submits a list of recommended projects to the legislature the following January and funds are available after legislative appropriation, usually the following fall.

All local units of government must provide a local match of at least 25 percent of total project costs. For **MNRTF** development projects, the minimum funding request is \$15,000, and the maximum is \$500,000. Proposals must be for outdoor recreation or resource protection purposes. Outdoor recreation support buildings and other facilities are eligible for development funding, as is the renovation of existing recreation facilities.

All applicants must have a current DNR-approved community recreation plan, documenting the need for project proposal.

In addition, any private individual may nominate land for public acquisition under this program. All nominations are reviewed by the MDNR for possible acquisition and the landowner is not required to be the person nominating a parcel of land for public acquisition. Nomination forms are available at any time from the DNR Recreation Division, and may be submitted to the Department year round.

The Enhancement Program is located in MDOT's Office of Transportation Economic Development and Enhancement. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) established a fund for Transportation Enhancement Activities. **Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)** of 1998 continued this program through the year 2003. Ten percent of the Surface Transportation Fund is set aside for these activities. In TEA-21, the term transportation enhancement activities mean:

- Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles.
- Provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites.
- Scenic or historic highway programs (including the provision of tourist and welcome center facilities).
- Landscaping and other scenic beautification.
- Historic preservation.
- Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities (including historic

railroad facilities and canals).

- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use of it for pedestrian or bicycle trails).
- Control and removal of outdoor advertising.
- Archaeological planning and research.
- Environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff or reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity.
- Establishment of transportation museums.

The Enhancement Program represents an opportunity to improve Michigan's Intermodal transportation network and the quality of life in Michigan. Public response to the program has been overwhelming. MDOT will continue to ensure that these monies are fairly distributed geographically, jurisdictionally, and across the various program areas. We are striving to select only the best projects, which will provide the most positive impact upon our state's transportation system.

The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program makes money available to the States for land acquisition and development of outdoor recreation facilities. From 1965 to 1996, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) received over \$100 million in LWCF assistance for more than 1,500 projects, over 1,100 of which have been grants to local governments. From 1996 to 1999, Congress did not fund the "Stateside" portion of the LWCF. Stateside funding began again in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2000 with a \$1.1 million apportionment to Michigan. The annual apportionment has been increasing each year, and topped \$4 million in FFY 2002. The objective is to provide grants to local units of government and to the State to acquire and develop land for outdoor recreation.

Applications are evaluated on established criteria including project need, capability of applicant, and site and project quality. At least 50 percent match on either acquisition or development projects is required from local government applicants. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) makes recommendations to the National Park Service (NPS), which grants final approval. Criteria are spelled out in the "Recreation Grants Selection Process" booklet given to all applicants.

The ***Quality of Life Recreation Bond*** program was established through Public Act 329 of the Public Acts of 1988 as a result of passage of Proposal D in the November, 1988 elections. The objectives of this program are: community recreation, tourism development, waterfront recreation, outdoor education for intermediate school districts, and local infrastructure repair. **This program is currently not funded.**

The MDNR will consider a project application for funding if it meets all of the following conditions:

1. Local unit of government has on file with the department an approved community recreation plan. Department approved plans are valid through December 31 of the fifth full calendar year after adoption by the local unit's governing body.
2. Project for which funding assistance is sought is listed and justified in the local unit of government's recreation plan.

Organizations with an interest in developing fishing conditions in their areas may be able to get financial assistance from a program established through the ***State Game and Fish Protection Fund***.

This fishing development grant is offered through the MDNR and can be as much as \$200,000 annually, in cash or in-kind services. Projects eligible for funding include: culvert modifications for improved stream flow; livestock or sheet erosion control projects; the development of spawning riffles, fish cover structures, or spawning reefs; and the construction of fishing piers and rough fish barriers. The MDNR accepts grant proposals from organized fishing groups and local units of government. In all cases, projects are able to approach other sources such as the federal government for additional matching funds.

The ***Historic Preservation Grant Program*** is administered by the Department of State with funds made available through the National Park Service of the Department of Interior. The intent of the program is to conduct surveys of architectural, engineering, archaeological, and historic resources, to identify and nominate eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places, and to plan for the protection of those cultural/recreational resources.

The funds for this program are apportioned by the National Park Service directly to the State, which, in turn, allocates funds on a project-by-project basis to local governments, organization, and individuals.

In Michigan the Historic Preservation Grant program is administered by the Michigan Department of State. The amount of assistance is up to 50% of the project expenses. Grantees are reimbursed at the completion of the project for work done within the days of a contract between the Department of State and the grantee. EXPENSES INCURRED PRIOR TO THE EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT ARE NOT ALLOWABLE PROJECT COSTS AND WILL NOT BE REIMBURSED.

The ***Inland Fisheries Grant Program*** offers grants up to \$30,000 for projects that enhance the state's aquatic resources. This program may be applicable to the, scenic overlook fishing platforms and educational kiosks.

Muskegon Charter Township is committed to review all available funding sources and prepare the necessary plans, reports, cost estimates, and funding applications, to achieve the goals of this recreation plan.