

# Premier Agency Member Spotlight: Pittsfield Township Parks & Recreation

Since 2009, Pittsfield Township has conducted a multitude of public forums, surveys, and design workshops. Each of these processes has consistently yielded the message that parks, recreation and green space preservation are a top priority for Pittsfield Township's residents. That is the reason the 10 year Park millage was overwhelmingly approved in March 2016 by the community of 34,663, located just south of Ann Arbor. This is the second 10-year extension of the millage, first established in 1996.

As part of the prioritization of parks, Pittsfield Township residents identify the need for 10' pathways (greenways), sidewalk and bike lanes as very important to them. As such, since 2009, Pittsfield has installed seven (7) miles of greenways, a seamless network of sidewalk connectivity on the northeast and northwest part of Pittsfield along with bike lanes and a number of pedestrian crossings. These non-motorized amenities were installed by leveraging \$5 million in county, state and federal grants.

Consequently, Pittsfield Township now boasts a growing network of 17 parks, covering 1,046 acres and 23 miles of trails, including seven miles of paved greenways (non-motorized, multi-modal trails).

"Non-motorized access to our park, green and recreational spaces has been a top priority for us and we are committed to building on not just multimodal accessibility but expanding our park and green spaces in order to provide for a better quality of life for our community," notes Mandy Grewal, Supervisor. To that end, Grewal anticipates taking an agreement to the Board of Trustees later this month, that will finalize purchase of the first park in the densely population northwest part of Pittsfield.

Mark Gasche, Director of Parks & Recreation at Pittsfield further notes that "The Board of Trustees just approved grant applications for a new two-mile extension of the Platt Road Greenway, which will link to Wall Park, south of Michigan Avenue." It is a goal of the township to make multiple connections to Washtenaw County's Border-to-Border (B2B) Trail. Eventually this trail will tie into the 2,000-mile Iron Belle Trail, which traverses the state with both a hiking route and a biking route from Belle Isle (in Detroit) to Ironwood (in the western U.P.).

Parks and trails only tell a part of the story in this very connected Township. Four different school districts fall within Township borders, and facilities, programs and events draw users with diverse recreational interests from all over central Washtenaw County.

Within the park system, the Township's baseball fields, 11 soccer fields, and Community Center engage all ages. Young kids can play T-ball and Pee Wee soccer or try the newer Tiny Tikes Tennis and Squirt Sports, an introduction to a variety of different sports.

"Our goal is not competition, but for kids to play for the fun of it," Gasche explains. "It's about introducing them to different activities and not just sports; developing social skills; to just have fun and enriching experiences."

For older kids, the Department provides a progression of recreational opportunities, including a popular spring soccer program that attracts participants even outside the township. The Department also rents fields to groups for soccer, softball, baseball, Ultimate Frisbee, lacrosse, rugby, and cricket.

One important mainstay of Pittsfield Township Parks & Recreation is the Summer Day Camp, which has been in existence for more than 30 years and which provides fun and education for about 60 children a week. There's no shortage of variety for Summer Camp participants, with a summer full of activities and specialty programs in creative writing, art, and sports. Summer Camp participants also have the chance to experience farm life and feed animals at the local Roots and Shoots Farm Camp.

Kids aren't the only ones having fun in Pittsfield Township, though. The Community Center's Senior Program boasts 800 members and a full slate of activities to keep members young at heart. Members enjoy fun-filled Department trips, publishing stories through a creative writers' groups (three books of short stories so far!), jamming with fellow "Uksters" on their ukuleles, getting creative in the "Anyone Can Paint" class, and participating in any one of 30 groups that meet regularly at the Center.

Pittsfield Township's Senior Program is especially known for its travel opportunities; seniors take about 70 trips per year to explore the state, the nation and even other countries! This year's offerings include a fall color tour on a train trip in Canada and the Niagara Falls Festival of Lights in December.

The Pittsfield Township Parks & Recreation Department also relies on Pittsfield Seniors Inc., along with other partner groups like Ann Arbor Jaycees, to put on special events throughout the year. Washtenaw Community College provides instructors for senior exercise classes, Ann Arbor Public Schools provides space for after-school programs, and the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission's Recreation Center is used for swimming and adult fitness classes.

"Volunteers and partners are really essential," Gasche says. "They help make many of our events and programs possible."

Thanks to these partners, Pittsfield Township is truly a mecca for family activities. Residents and visitors can purchase locally-grown food and artisan goods at the Farmer's Market, reel in a big one in the Fishing Derby, or take a hayride through a 570-acre natural area park, to name just a few fun activities.

These offerings are also made possible due to the tremendous support from Grewal, the Board of Trustees, and the dedicated members of the Park Commission, combined with an excellent staff team. "The entire team makes good on the Pittsfield Township promise to provide the "Gold Standard in Customer Service," beams Gasche.

On and off the greenways and trails, Pittsfield Township families truly have great options to play thanks to their commitment to a robust Parks and Recreation Department. Because of that, Pittsfield Township invites the entire community to come out and play!



Article written by mParks –  
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