

Needs Assessment & Public Participation





PITTSFIELD TOWNSHIP PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

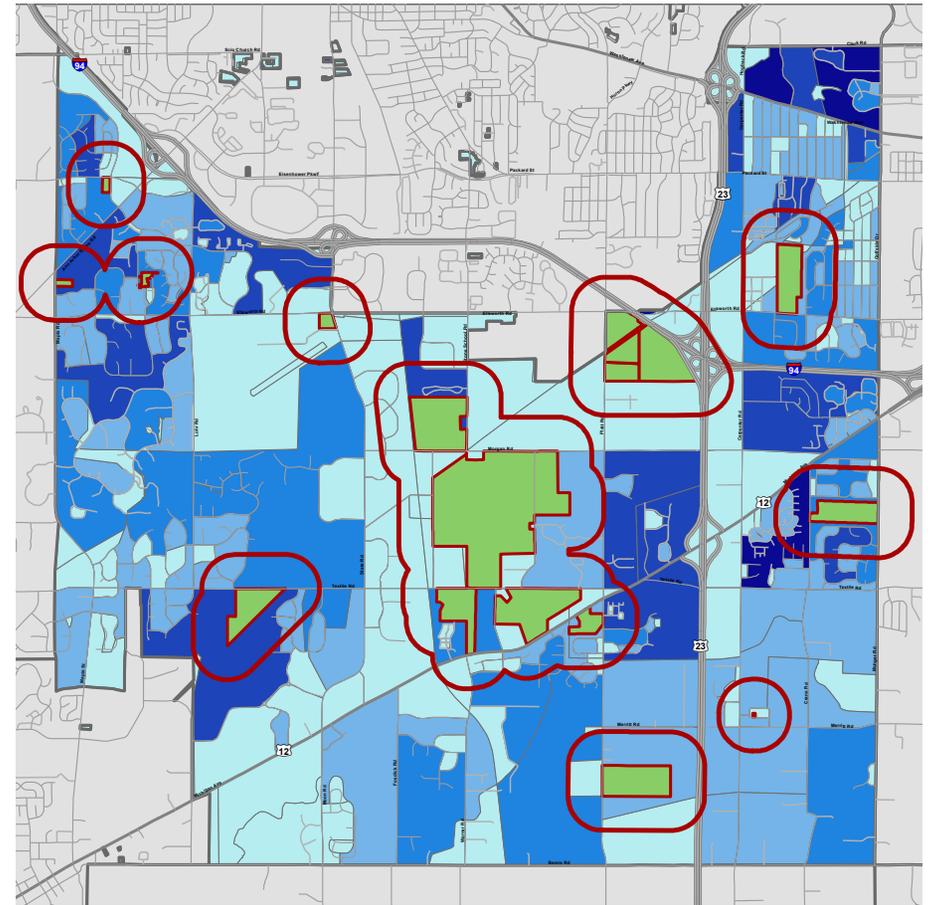
CONCURRENT AND PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

Beginning in 2009, Pittsfield Township began conducting a multitude of public input and engagement processes. As such, we have a strong understanding that our community demands environmental stewardship. This is evident not just through the 72% approval of the Park Millage renewal in March 2016, but also through consistent prioritization by township residents of green/park space maintenance and acquisition. As with other public input processes, the 2020 Vision planning process highlighted the fact that non-motorized and multimodal expansion is consistently prioritized at the top by survey respondents and the public forums, not just when discussing transportation and land use but also as part of the feedback for parks, recreation, art & culture, and even open space preservation! Clearly and without a doubt, if there is one issue that unites our community, it is expansion of non-motorized - sidewalks, bike lanes, greenways/pathways - amenities in our community. This concept extends into the prioritization of trails within the parks and transit services in northeast and northwest Pittsfield.

The 2020 Vision planning process, conducted October-December 2015, provided for robust public engagement and generated about 750 survey responses that are geographically representative and statistically significant.

We have made sustainability a central unit of analysis in updating the Parks & Recreation narrative along with our goals and objectives such that our future vision is defined within a sustainable framework. This document seeks to further the sustainability vision by: (a) expanding amenities and accessibility to park spaces, especially in deficient areas such as the northwest and northeast; (b) expanding green and preserved spaces, including providing for small, organic farming.

The Township Master Plan seeks to further the sustainability vision by: (a) implementing traffic congestion solutions that promote multi-modality and reduction in emissions; (b) expanding non-motorized amenities. Even though the two documents promote sustainability within their specific contexts, each is intrinsically linked together because of the inter-linkages between land use planning and green/park spaces. In fact, even when asked about how they would like to enhance the mixed-used destinations in the Township, 58% of survey respondents chose the need to add green/park space within these areas, especially in the northwest along Ann-Arbor Saline/Oak Valley Roads.



Park Proximity

Data Sources: State of Michigan Geographic Data Library, Pittsfield Township

Legend

 1/4 Mile Buffer

Population

 0 - 45 People

 46 - 137 People

 138 - 301 People

 302 - 644 People

 645 - 1881 People

0 0.5 1 Miles



DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

Due to our usage of citizen surveys and detailed recreation inventories, our approach parallels the “Systems Approach to Planning” defined in 1995 by the National Recreation and Park Association’s “Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenways Guidelines” by James D. Mertes and James R. Hall.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

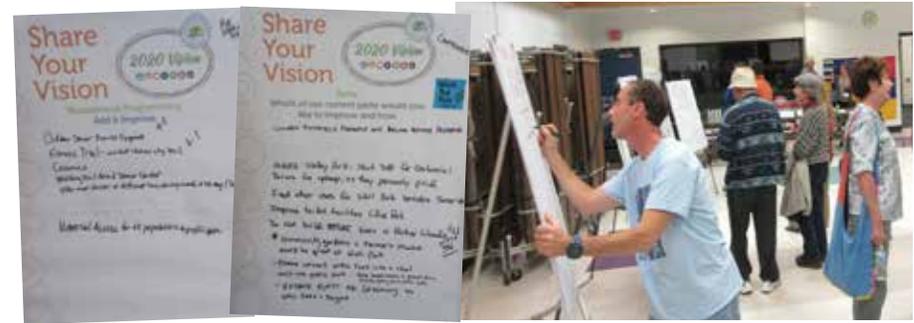
Multiple methods were used to incorporate public input early in the 2020 Vision planning process. Citizen input is not only an essential pillar of the planning process, but it’s also required by the MDNR Guidelines. Multiple forms of solicitation allowed the planning team to pull information from a variety of groups, citizens, and stakeholders, paying close attention to citizens that live and work in close proximity to future projects or current park & recreation assets, as well as any underrepresented populations that may have specific park & recreation needs.

Public input must be solicited by at least two means in the park & recreation planning process, but Pittsfield Township went above and beyond the minimum requirement. The planning process for the Township included several methods of public engagement: multiple park design workshops that engaged the public regarding three parks (Wall, Township, Montibeller) for which specific site plans were developed; a hybrid stakeholder engagement workshop that was open to the public; four public forums; an online community survey to solicit specific information and data, also as a part of the Master Planning process and survey; and park inventories which were conducted in a public manner, allowing residents to attend and discuss usability, park features, concerns, and public recommendations.



Specifically, on October 1, 2015, Pittsfield Township hosted a Kick-Off event for the 2020 Vision planning process which included a presentation on existing resources and amenities with the aim of obtaining feedback from attendees, which included regional stakeholders, on future priorities and needs.

The Kick-Off event was followed by four public forums hosted at different locations throughout the Township to facilitate attendance by Township residents from each geographic area of our community. Each of the public forums was well attended and the Township obtained feedback through questions posed during the presentations and comments noted on flip charts after the presentation.



The Township, in partnership with Beckett&Raeder (BRI), hosted a public input session, park inventory, and two design workshops from October through December. Additionally, a community survey was implemented that garnered a 5.5% response rate, which is both geographically and demographically statistically significant. Public input from each of these has been incorporated in outlining the goals and objectives for this document. Soliciting public input in the multiple ways described allowed the planning team to capture responses from a variety of demographics and groups. The park design workshops, which focused on Wall Park, Montibeller Park, and Township Park, provided a specific avenue for those who lived in close proximity to these three parks to provide insight, suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding the future development or improvements to these spaces. The stakeholder engagement workshop allowed an opportunity for those members of the community with great interest or concerns to express their opinions while engaging the public or Township representatives. The online community survey provided a means for those who are typically unable to attend Township and workshop meetings the convenience of a readily-available mechanism for contributing their thoughts. Inviting the public to the park inventories provided specific means for user groups and nearby residents to contribute their local expertise on existing conditions and issues.

SURVEY

As part of the 2020 Vision planning process, the Township administered a community survey. Eight of the questions addressed respondent demographics; 14 questions on the survey were directly related to park and recreation planning; and the remaining 11 questions addressed broader master planning topics.

With 767 responses representing the approximately 13,776 households in the Township, the response rate of 5.5% was very good. Geographically and demographically, responses to the survey aligned reasonably well with the population distribution.

Since the survey was voluntary and respondents were self-selected randomly, the demographic questions allow an opportunity to compare the respondents' characteristics with those of the Township as a whole. This reveals that survey respondents are generally older, whiter, and wealthier than the overall composition of Township residents. In particular, several segments of the population had less than 1% representation among survey respondents, including persons younger than 25, black and Hispanic residents, and households earning less than \$25,000 per year. The greatest mismatch between survey respondents and Township residents is in income: approximately half of the households in the Township (47.3%) earn less than \$60,000 per year, but this group made up only 11% of survey respondents.

A firm majority of community survey respondents (55%) strongly agreed with the statement "Recreational programs and park amenities/facilities are important to our community and worthy of taxpayer support," and more than 96% indicated at least moderate agreement. The same impressive percentage of agreement was reported with the statement, "I feel safe when visiting Township parks," and it is hard to see how the two would not be related. Respondents agreed by a slimmer but still quite substantial margin (80%) with the statement, "The Township should invest in additional parks and recreation facilities." Though the smallest percentage of respondents agreed with the statement "I can walk / bike to Township parks," that percentage still constituted a majority (63%). For 12% of respondents, access to parks and recreation was one of the top three reasons they live in the Township (ranked 8th of 16), and over a quarter (27%; 7th of 11) cited "parks and recreation options" as one of the three most positive aspects of doing so.



Survey: Where should new parks go?

Data Sources: State of Michigan Geographic Data Library, Pittsfield Township, Washtenaw County GIS

Legend

- Pittsfield Township
- Township Parks
- Major Road
- Minor Road
- Lakes
- Rivers

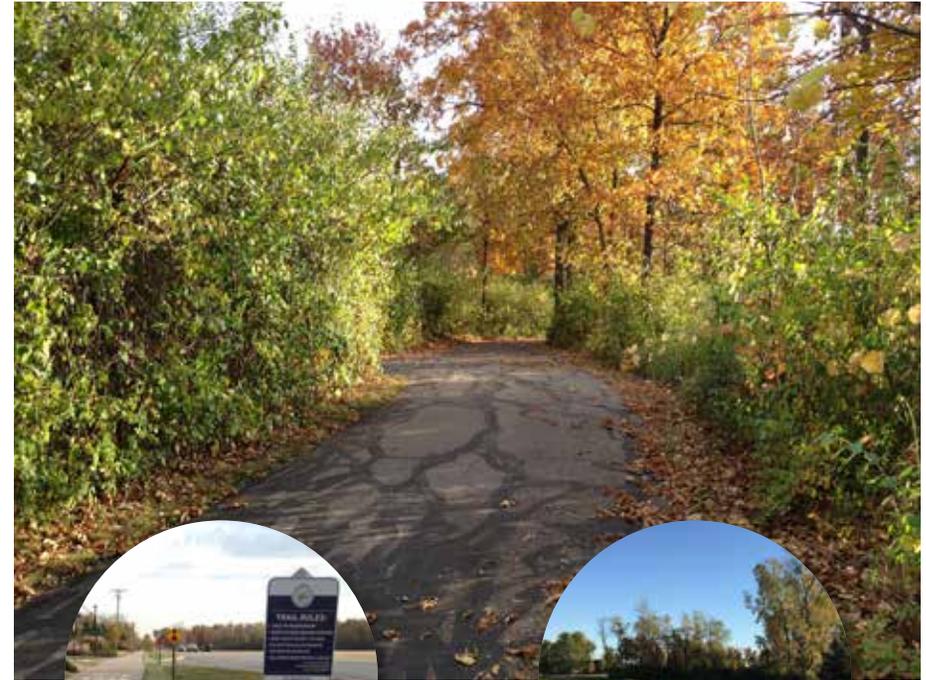
Respondents were asked, "In your opinion, if the Township were to purchase new parks and green space for preservation, which section of the Township should it be in?"

Number of Responses

- 0 - 10
- 11 - 20
- 21 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 40 +

To inform funding prioritization decisions, respondents were asked to split \$100 among nine overall master planning projects and services, including two which were related to parks and recreation, and another \$100 among projects and services specifically related to recreation. In the overall budget, park items received almost \$40¹, with the majority (\$25.20) going to acquisition of new parks and open space while the rest (\$14) went to development of existing park space. In particular, survey respondents identified park acquisition in the northwest part of Pittsfield Township as a major priority, as demonstrated in the survey map on page 41.

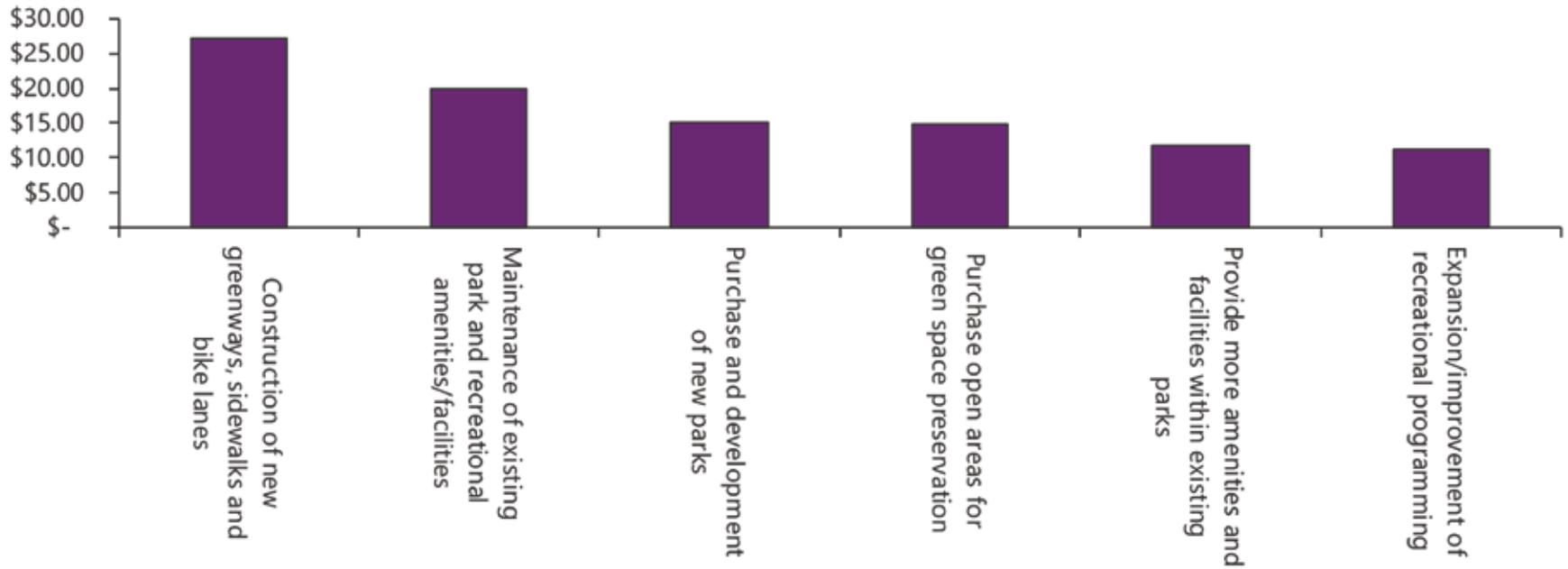
Improvements to existing roads to provide for pathways and sidewalks were another big ticket item at \$17.21, second only to road maintenance. With \$100 to spend on parks, respondents were willing to spend the most (\$27) on nonmotorized improvement construction, such as greenways, sidewalks, and bike lanes, and on maintenance of existing assets (\$20). They were a bit more likely to support purchase of new land (\$15 for new parks and \$15 for open space) than more amenities and facilities (\$12) or programming (\$11). Improvements to existing roads to provide for pathways and sidewalks were another big ticket item at \$17.21, second only to road maintenance. With \$100 to spend on parks, respondents were willing to spend the most (\$27) on nonmotorized improvement construction, such as greenways, sidewalks, and bike lanes, and on maintenance of existing assets (\$20). They were a bit more likely to support purchase of new land (\$15 for new parks and \$15 for open space) than more amenities and facilities (\$12) or programming (\$11).



¹ Methodology note: Because average totals for each item did not add up to \$100, the items were recalculated proportionately to total \$100 for clarity.



You have \$100 to split between the following categories. Please indicate how you would divide these funds:



DESIGN WORKSHOPS

In the final community engagement event, residents, regional stakeholders, administrative and elected officials were asked to actively participate in the design of the three parks. Three workshops—one per park—were held on December 5, 2015 at the Pittsfield Township Administration Building. Attendees heard a short presentation about the project before dividing into groups of 3-5 participants, each seated at a table with the results of the previous exercises and a large-format blank aerial image of the park. Participants first reviewed the information already compiled and offered feedback on the official inventory. Next, they held a discussion facilitated by BRI representatives to develop the desired program of activities to take place in the park. Once the list was complete, each group used markers and tracing paper to site the activities in the park, paying particular attention to access and to relationships among the activities.

After the groups completed their team exercises, the audience gathered around each table in turn to hear a summary of the discussion and view the results generated by each team. In all sessions, commonalities across the groups were noted. The final activity was a prioritization exercise designed to establish preferences among all of the workshop suggestions. Rotating through the tables, members of each group were asked to use post-it notes to identify the three elements they liked best about each plan and then to use a star sticker to identify the single most important item. These results have been compiled and are presented along with a tally of existing conditions. A brief summary of the most consensus findings from each park are presented below.





Montibeller Park

Trails and a building were the hottest topics at Montibeller. "Improve trails" received the highest number of votes overall, and other trail-related topics included improving trail signage, adding biking trails, connecting the tennis courts and the baseball diamonds to the parking lot with paths, improving access to the park from the subdivisions along the eastern edge of the park, and creating and/or designating an official cut-through to Meijer. A new community facilities building was closely followed by an improved pavilion; these two items combined received 70% of the "single most important element" votes. Restrooms, shade trees, and picnic tables near but not under the pavilion were also requested. Lighting represented the only safety concern mentioned, with requests for better lighting both at the ballfields and on the paths. One interesting request called for a "bookmobile" type of setup at the new community building that would rent sports equipment or games to residents.



Pittsfield Township Park

The parking lot at Pittsfield Township Park received the most attention, with just under half of all participants voting its expansion and improvement as the item of top concern, and two people citing it as the lone safety hazard of the park. Specific suggestions included reconfiguring the parking lot to accommodate AAATA access, adding lighting, and creating a new parking point from Airport Drive. Two more ballfields (for a total of 3), a Zen garden, and a walking trail around the perimeter of the park were the most popular desired elements in the park. The Senior Center building was singled out as an asset, and requests were made for its expansion and for better maintenance. The most unique request was for a playground designed specifically for senior citizens.



Township Park
Pittsfield Township, Michigan
Draft Concept Plan
December 2016

Beckett & Paeder



Wall Park

Here again, trails and a building were the dominant topics. Lack of sidewalks on Platt Road, south of Michigan Avenue, was a major, repeatedly-cited concern, and the most frequent “must have” request was to extend the Platt Road Greenway further south to connect into the park. A pedestrian crossing at Platt Place North was also requested. A trail system for hiking was suggested, including a boardwalk and overlooks into the wetlands. A hot issue for this park is its adjacency with a residential development to the north. Neighbors experiencing traffic and noise from the soccer fields preferred to limit that use; a representative from the soccer organization who was in attendance noted that the ability to play many games simultaneously is essential to the organization’s success. The votes showed that participants overall were in favor of keeping all of the soccer fields; support was also shown for implementing a vegetative buffer between the park and the residences.



Wall Park
Pittsfield Township, Michigan
Draft Concept Plan

December 2016

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Beckett&Raeder





TRENDS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Trends

Below are some of the trends gleaned from the public engagement results:

- Survey respondents prioritized investments in pedestrian and biking trails along with non-motorized connectivity at the top. This extends to prioritizing trails as the most valued amenity at the parks and the need for a linear, inter-connected park network.
- Open space and preservation of green spaces also ranks at the top for Pittsfield Township residents. After trails, nature/wildlife viewing ranked second as the most enjoyed park feature. Further, when asked to prioritize spending \$100, survey respondents ranked "Purchase of open areas for green space preservation" as third following construction of non-motorized amenities (first) and maintenance of existing park and recreational amenities/facilities (second).
- When asked about park and recreation programming, respondents recorded a desire for more adult programming such as fitness programs, drop-in art activities, and beginner-level sports leagues. Lower on the list of priorities, ADA accessible play structures and tennis / pickleball courts were more important to parks respondents than to open space respondents.
- Some of the wealthiest and poorest residents have the least access to parks on the northwest and northeast side respectively. They also had the highest rate of participation in the various public engagement forums since they represent the greatest residential densities in Pittsfield Township.

Issues

- Although the residents are generally happy with improvements in nonmotorized connections to recreational space, lack of this type of infrastructure remains a grievance. Over 1,000 households in Pittsfield Township, most of whom are renters, do not have access to a vehicle. ACS 2014 5-year estimates shows that renters are more than twice as likely to have a housing cost-burden, and therefore less income to spend on recreational activities. Improving nonmotorized paths will allow lower-income resident better access to more recreational opportunities. Most Township parks are located in the less populated areas.
- Lack of park spaces in the denser residential areas of the Township, particularly northeast and northwest, has been identified as a definite need. While the northeast has at least one park (Montibeller), the northwest area of Pittsfield has no developed public park.
- Programming recreational facilities should include activities that are open to disabled residents. In addition to access to public structures, programming is a vital service for residents of all abilities.

Opportunities

Acquisition of open space and natural areas as appropriate protect biodiversity and the recreational/economic value of natural spaces is considered an ongoing opportunity. Criteria for stewardship of the land could be developed for the conservation/preservation areas of the Township. Attributes to emphasize include naturalness/lack of human alteration, presence of plant and animal life or rare species, occurrence of attractive landforms, and wetlands.