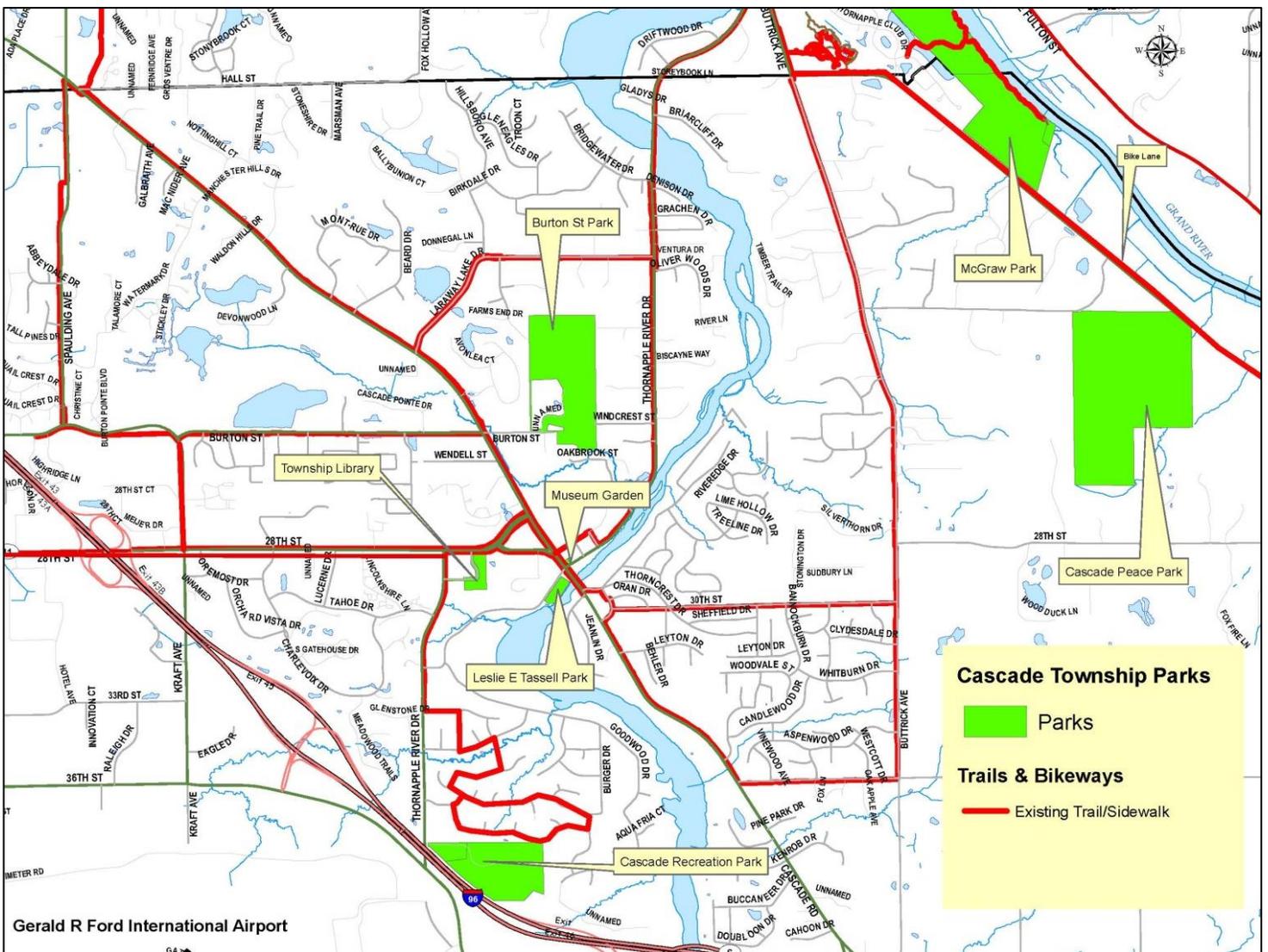


# Cascade Township

## Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan

2014- 2019





*Leslie E. Tassell Park*  
Thornapple River Drive



*Museum Garden Park*  
Cascade Road

**CASCADE CHARTER TOWNSHIP  
RECREATION PLAN  
2014-2019**

**Park Committee**

Rob Beahan, Supervisor  
Ron Goodyke  
Sara Homeyer  
Dawn McDonald  
Alan Rowland

**Township Board**

Ron Goodyke, Clerk  
Ken Peirce, Treasurer  
Jack Lewis, Trustee  
Jim Koessel, Trustee  
Tom McDonald, Trustee  
Fred Goldberg, Trustee

**With Assistance from:**

Steve Peterson, Planning Director  
Sandra Korhorn, Assistant to the Manager  
Ben Swayze, Township Manager

Cascade Charter Township  
2865 Thornhills Ave SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
Phone: 616.949.1500  
Fax: 616.949.3918

# CASCADE CHARTER TOWNSHIP PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

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# INTRODUCTION

## *Necessity of Plan*

Cascade Township is one of the fastest growing communities associated with the Grand Rapids metropolitan area and, consequently, the Township is experiencing significant changes over a short period of time. Therefore, it is important to initiate this planning process so that Cascade Township can be assured of a responsive and timely recreational program to satisfy existing and future community recreation needs. This plan outlines the vision for recreation in the Township and a realistic, workable plan to realize it.

The Cascade Township Recreation Plan is an important step towards a more comprehensive policy for future park and recreational development and improvement. The plan provides a specific framework for utilizing the Township's resources for recreational purposes in order to effectively meet identified needs. A Recreation Plan represents a policy statement about the future of recreation in the Township and provides a blueprint for making desired improvements over the next five years.

Cascade Township recognizes the contribution of recreation to the quality of life and the physical health of its citizens and to the economic health of the region. This recognition has been manifested in this effort to develop a new Recreation Plan with the hopes of improving local recreation offerings, public trails, preservation of natural areas and opening of government-owned lands to enhanced public recreation. While quality of life in the community is excellent, the Township has chosen to take an active role in the delivery of recreation opportunities by completing this Five-Year Recreation Plan. The Cascade Charter Township Planning Commission and Township Board are dedicated to improving recreational offerings in the Township.

Recreation planning is an exercise engaged by local and state governments and authorities to anticipate change, promote needed change, and to control or direct recreational development in such a way as to benefit the entire community. It has the aim of harmonizing the available recreational resources and activities with the environmental, aesthetic, and cultural requirements of the Township.

This plan is now the sixth recreation plan prepared for Cascade Charter Township. The last plan was adopted in 2008 and was predated by plans in 2002, 1995, 1988 and 1974. This new plan assesses the expanding need for facilities in the Township and identifies projects to meet the demands of future residents. As a result, this plan will provide a more comprehensive strategy for meeting those community recreation needs and eliminating any identified deficiencies.

The planning process undertaken for this plan analyzes the economic characteristics of Cascade Township, its relevant development patterns, the physical and natural attributes of the Township, accessibility of facilities and resident opinions related to recreation. In 2013, the Park Committee undertook a Township wide survey to gather input on park related issues. Further, the Township hosted a community open house and visioning workshop to solicit ideas and gather feedback on specific ideas related to development of existing Township parks. Another element of this process is an assessment of the Township's local and area wide recreational resources. This includes an inventory of public and

Recreation planning is an exercise engaged by local and state governments and authorities to anticipate change, promote needed change, and to control or direct recreational development in such a way as to benefit the entire community.



This plan is an investment in the community that will enable the Township to improve the quality of life for residents.

private recreational facilities and programs. A comparison of these local recreational resources with commonly accepted community standards had been made. The strengths and deficiencies within the existing resources were identified. From these evaluations, overall recreation goals and objectives for the Township are established.

The Cascade Township Recreation Plan concludes with a strategy and action program that suggests the direction and the activities that can be adopted for future recreational development. This action program establishes program priorities, identifies financial

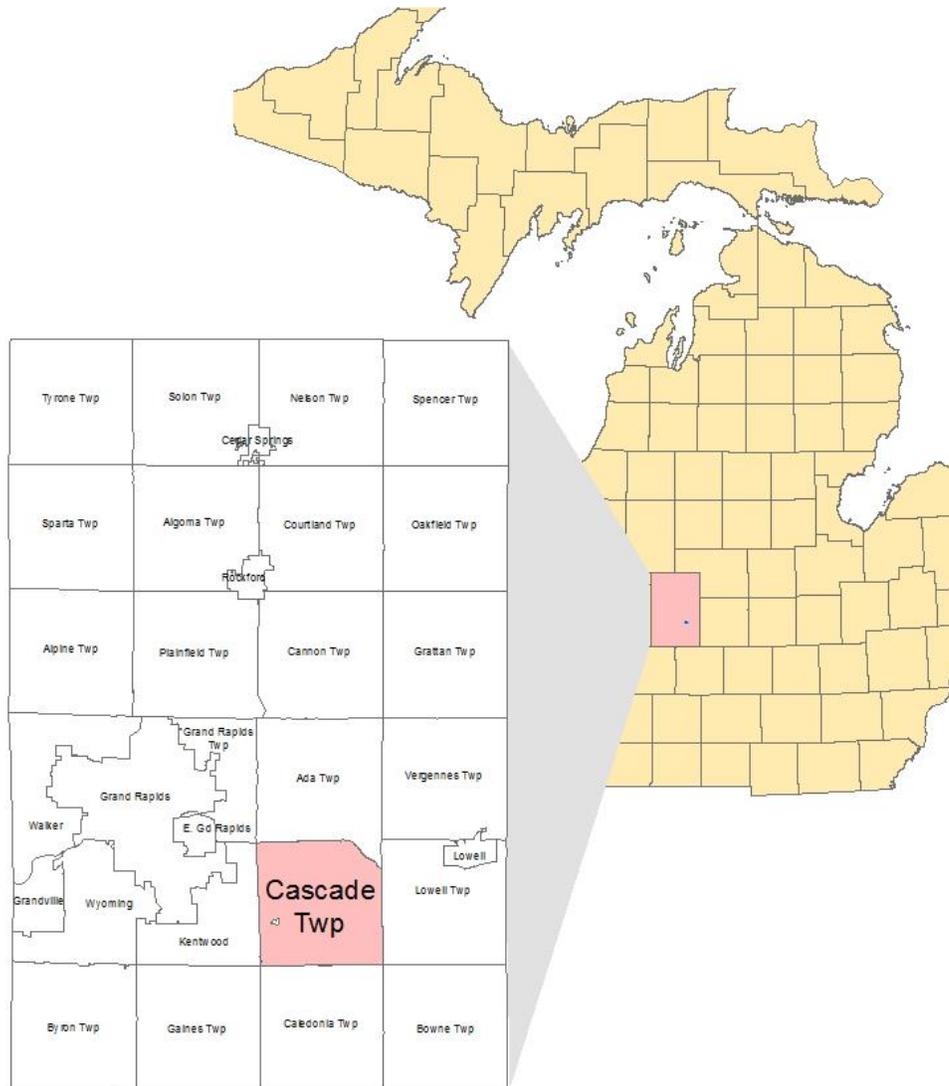
requirements and discusses the general administration of the overall program. This plan has been prepared to identify and propose a strategy for eliminating those deficiencies in the Township's recreation facilities and provides strategies that can be accomplished within a five-year time frame. The plan has also been prepared to satisfy recreation planning requirements established under certain state and Federal grant programs. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requires that Recreation Plans be reviewed and updated every five years to keep them current. Thus, this plan is an investment in the community that will enable the Township to improve the quality of life for residents. Additionally, this document will provide recreational information and direction for other public agencies and the private sector, all of which will affect recreational activities and opportunities within Cascade Township.

The Cascade Township Parks Committee prepared this plan. Technical assistance was provided by the Cascade Township Planning Department and planning consultants from Williams & Works, Inc.

## SECTION 1 - COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

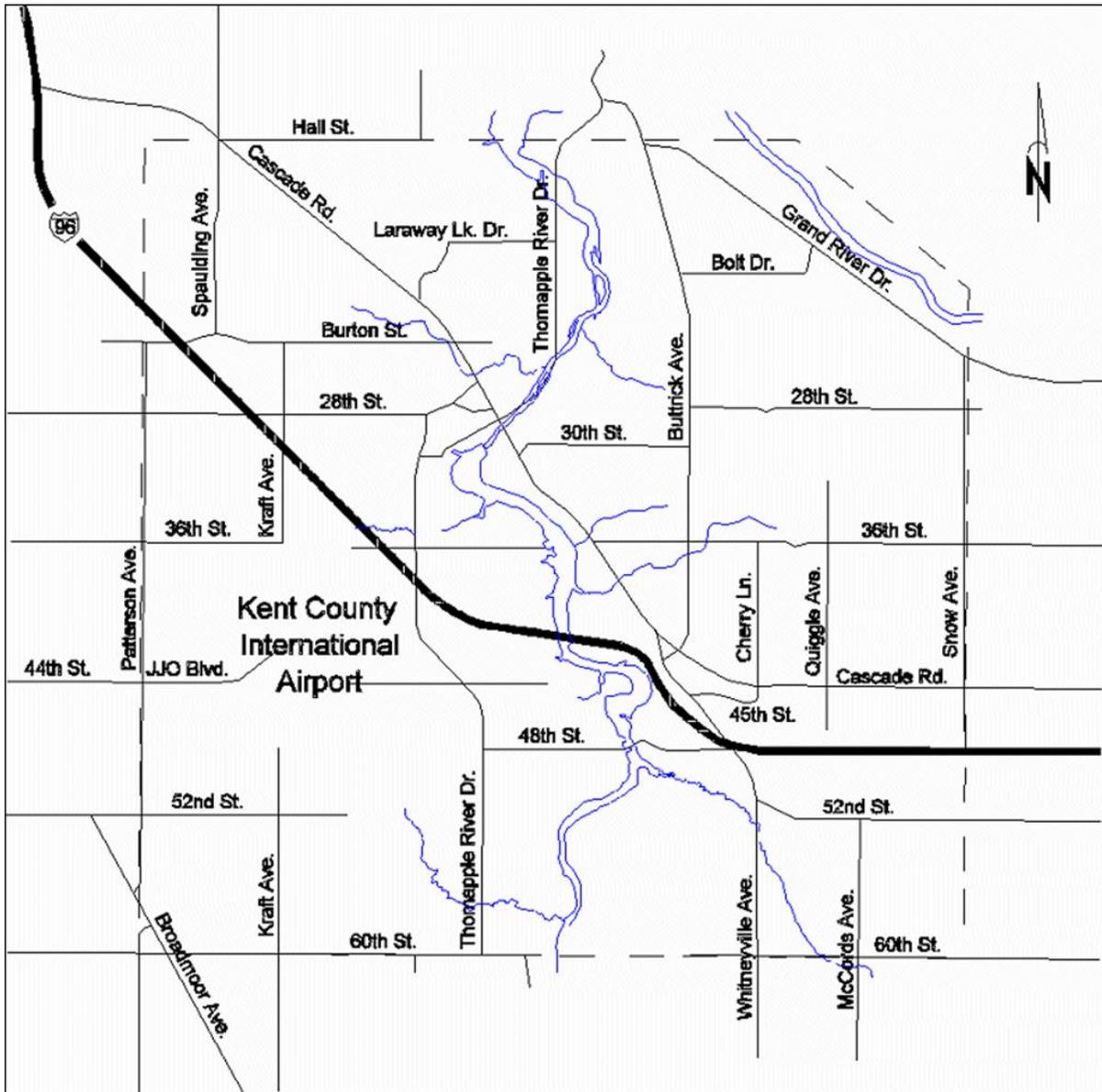
Cascade Township is located in the southeastern section of Kent County (see **Map 1**). The Townships of Ada, Lowell and Caledonia border Cascade Township on the north, east and south while the City of Kentwood forms a western border with the Township.

**Map 1 - Location Map**



Interstate 96, connecting Muskegon, Grand Rapids, Lansing and Detroit bisects Cascade Township in a northwest by southeast direction. M-11 terminates at I-96 within the Township. M-11, also known as 28th Street, is a major east-west route for the Grand Rapids metropolitan area and has also become a major focus of commercial development along much of its length. M-6 also runs through Cascade connecting I-96 with M-37 in the southwest part of the Township. Other important primary roads that are part of the Township’s transportation network include Cascade Road, Patterson Avenue and Thornapple River Drive (see **Map 2**).

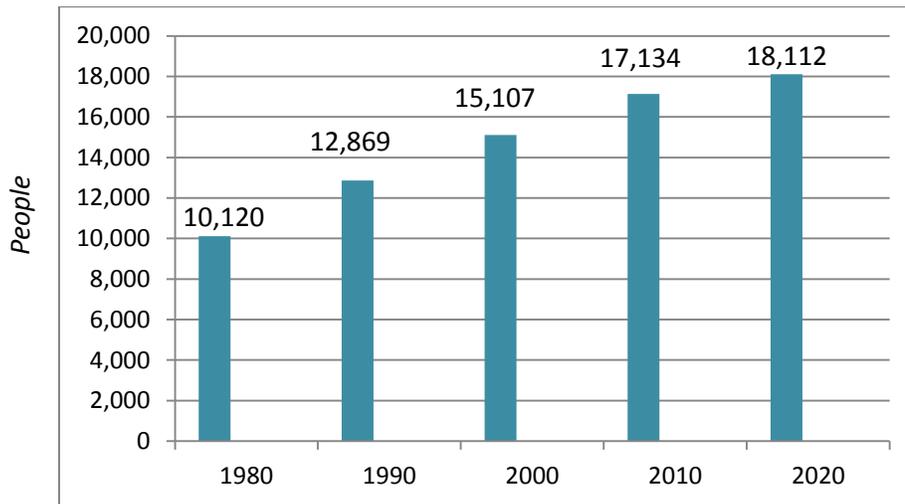
Map 2 - Township Primary Street Map



**Population**

Cascade Township has continued its steady growth throughout the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The 2010 census count indicated the population of Cascade Township as 17,134 (See **Figure 1**). Between 2000 and 2010, the Township’s population has increased 13 percent. The population projections from the 2009 Cascade Township Master Plan indicate a population of 18,112 in the year 2020; and 19,424 in the year 2030.

**Figure 1 - Population Change 1980- 2010**



Source: U.S. Census, 2010

Projected

**Age**

Comparing age groups and their representative proportions within a community’s population provide insight to the types of recreational activities that would most benefit the community. While there is little change between the age structure from 2000 to 2010, it is important to recognize that the two most prominent age groups in the Township are school aged children 5 to 19 (24.4% of total population) and career aged adults 45-64 (32.9%). **Figure 2** illustrates the age structure of the Township. These demographics require family centered recreational activities and park spaces that can be accessed by neighborhoods, trails and sidewalks, and feature a range of activity offerings and amenities. The median age has remained consistent between 2000 and 2010 at 41.1 years of age.

**Figure 2 - Population Age Structure 1990- 2000 and 2010**

Age Group (Years)	Age Group Classification	Percent of 1990 Population	Percent of 2000 Population
Under 5	Preschool	6%	6%
5 - 19	School age	24%	26%
20 - 34	College and Early Career	15%	10%
35 - 54	Career	36%	36%
55 - 64	Retirement	9%	12%
65 and over	Senior Citizen	9%	11%

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 and 2000

Age Group (Years)	Age Group Classification	Percent of 2010 Population
Under 5	Preschool	5.4%
5 to 19	School Aged	24.4%
20 to 34	College/Early Career	9.5%
35 to 44	Career/Young Family	13.2%
45 to 64	Career	32.9%
Over 64	Retirement	14.5%

Source: Community Research Institute

The percentages shown above portray a steady increase in retired and seniors 64 and older from 1990 to 2010. From this trend it is apparent that there is a growing demographic of older adults who may benefit from a renewed focus on developing passive recreation amenities throughout the Township. Although the development of recreational facilities must benefit the generalized population, there should also be a certain amount of focus on activities that benefit distinct populations. Good examples of passive activities may include hiking, walking trails, cross country skiing, nature viewing, biking, and picnic shelters. A key area of planning parks and recreational facilities for older adults is accessibility; ensuring that individuals in all stages of health can achieve their desired levels of recreation through barrier-free, safe, and well-designed amenities.

### ***Households***

Statistics from the 2010 U.S. Census have indicated that there are a total of 6,578 households in Cascade Township, for a housing density of 194.1. The average family household size is 2.8 persons, and the average family size is 3.16. The average family household size is slightly higher than State (2.5) averages; similarly, the average family size is slightly higher than the state of Michigan (3.05).

### ***Persons with Disabilities***

Residents with disabilities must be considered in the preparation of any recreational plan. The U.S. Census categorizes disability as an individual that has a long-lasting physical, mental or emotional condition. The condition can make it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, learning or remembering. The condition can also impede an individual's ability to go outside or participate in activities alone.

### ***Median Income***

The estimated 2012 median income per household in Cascade Township was \$87,856. Twenty-two percent of households average a yearly income between \$100,000 and \$150,000; and 20 percent of households average a yearly income between \$150,000 and \$200,000. This estimated median income is significantly higher than that of Grand Rapids (\$38,529), Kent County (\$47,943), and the Grand Rapids-Wyoming Metro Area (\$47,272).

### ***Education Level***

According to the latest Census data on education attainment in Cascade Township (from 2000) approximately 96% of the population over 25 years of age have the equivalent of a high school education, with 55% having a bachelor's degree or higher. In Kent County, roughly 28.3% of the population have the equivalent of a high school education with 25.9% reporting a bachelor's degree or higher. Thus, a much greater percentage of Township residents have graduated high school and have attained a bachelor's degree or higher than County residents.

## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The population characteristics for Cascade Township regarding income and education indicate a relatively affluent and educated population. A population such as Cascade Township, according to several studies, is more inclined to participate in a variety of leisure activities more frequently than most other population groups. Residents of Cascade Township may be more aware of the recreational activities and facilities available to them and residents may prefer diversity when recreating. Based on these studies, it can be assumed that there will be a demand for a variety of recreational activities and opportunities available for the residents.



1. Cascade Charter Township has experienced steady population growth over the last twenty years. This increase contributes to a need for long term planning of parks or recreational spaces.
2. Analysis of age distribution for Township residents reveals a likely demand for facilities appealing to school aged children and their families as well as an aging senior demographic that may wish to continue active lifestyles and take advantage of local recreational offerings.
3. While there is no current data on how many individuals within Cascade Township are living with disabilities, it is important to consider the benefits barrier-free and handicap accessible recreation facilities when planning future park spaces that are universally accessible and offer recreation opportunities for all individuals within the Township.

## SECTION 2 - ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

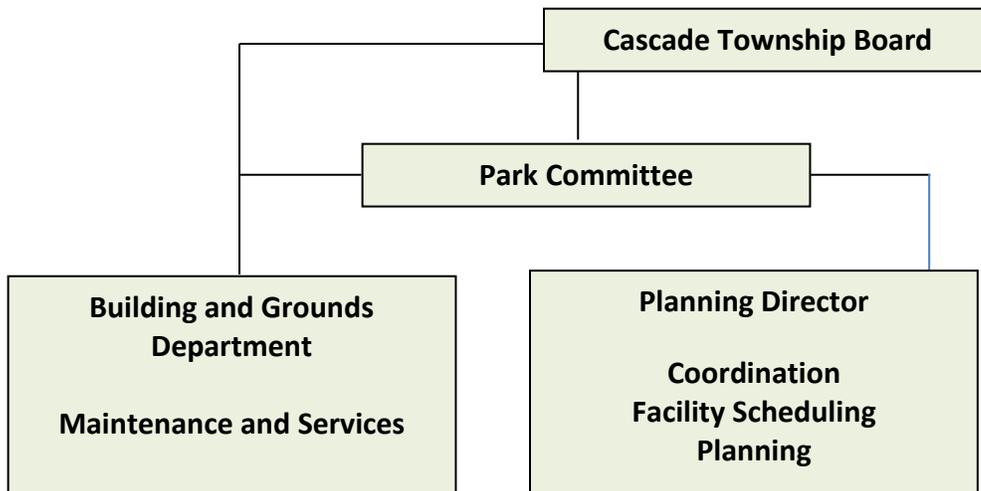
### *Governing Body*

The Cascade Charter Township Board of Trustees is the elected body that functions as the main governing body representing citizen interests. The Township Park Committee is appointed by the Township Board. The Park Committee concentrates on acquiring and managing land, overseeing maintenance of existing properties, and seeking ways to continue to provide outstanding recreational opportunities for residents of Cascade Township.

### *Parks and Recreation Programming*

The responsibility for planning, developing, programming, budgeting, operating and maintaining the Township's recreational facilities and programs belongs to the Park Committee that is appointed by the Township Board. Township employees and seasonal staff currently handle park maintenance with some of the mowing done by a lawn service. The Township does not offer any formal recreation programs but does cooperate in scheduling fields for organization use. Cascade Township families and youth benefit from area recreational offerings through regional school districts including Forest Hills Public Schools, Lowell Area Schools, and Caledonia Community Schools as well as programs offered through the Kent County Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, youth are provided the opportunity of organized sports through the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) Region 571 serving Ada and Cascade. An organizational chart graphically illustrating these responsibilities is contained in **Figure 3**.

**Figure 3 - Organizational Structure**



### *Current Budget and Funding*

Each year, the Township Board of Trustees sets the General Fund appropriation for the Parks Committees operating budget through a comprehensive budgeting process. The Township Board oversees budgeting and allocates the appropriate funding amount based on projected needs.

Funding for the parks in Cascade Township is appropriated from the Township’s general fund with the exception of the pathway millage and open space millage. The budget, expenditures and revenues for the Township’s recreational facilities for the past five (5) years are summarized in **Figure 4**. The Township’s 2013 budget for parks and recreation was \$94,800, most of which was allocated to operations and maintenance expenses.

The Township does receive payments for the reservation of park space for large groups at Cascade Township (Rec) Park; in 2013 these payments amounted to \$6,000.

**Figure 4 - Cascade Township Parks and Budget for 2008-2012**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Supplies and other expenses</b>	\$1,791	\$2,719	\$2,626	\$3,500	\$3,500
<b>Operations and Maintenance</b>	\$14,151	\$25,430	\$20,717	\$25,000	\$20,300
<b>Capital Expenses (a)</b>	\$5,780	-	\$36,370	\$41,000	\$15,000
<b>Capital Rec Budget (b)</b>	\$3,030	\$80,000	\$55,734	\$50,000	\$50,000
<b>Capital Rec Revenue (c)</b>	\$5,165	\$4,840	\$4,945	\$6,000	\$6,000
<b>Total</b>	\$29,917	\$112,989	\$120,392	\$125,500	\$94,800

*Source: Cascade Charter Township*

- (a) Some money is carried over from year to year for capital improvements that were planned but not done in the year budgeted.
- (b) Compensation for the work that is performed by the Buildings and Grounds Department on the Township Park’s from the Buildings and Grounds Budget.
- (c) Revenue received from renting the park to large groups.

## SECTION 3 - RESOURCE INVENTORY

### *Climate*

Cascade Township is under the climatic influence of Lake Michigan located about 35 miles to the west. As a result, the weather from season to season is generally modified by the tempering effect of the lake with prolonged periods of intense cold and heat significantly reduced. The growing season averages about 170 days between the months of April and October. July is the sunniest and warmest month, while January is the coldest month and December is the cloudiest. Half of the annual precipitation (over 36 inches per year) falls between the months of May and September. The snowfall season extends from November to March and averages about 86 inches annually.

### *Natural Resources*

In addition to its proximity to the enlarging Grand Rapids metropolitan area, the attractiveness of the Township's natural features has also been responsible for Cascade's increasing suburban development. The Township offers natural amenities that are conducive to both a new residential development and to a variety of recreational activities.

### *Water Resources*

The most dominant geographic feature in Cascade Township is the Thornapple River, which flows from the south and converges with the Grand River about a mile north of the Ada Township border. The Thornapple River divides the Township into east and west halves with several smaller streams and creeks merging with the river along its course. Two (2) hydroelectric dams along the river have created large impoundments that have expanded some of the recreational uses that can be made of the river.



There are several small lakes in the Township including Laraway Lake, Walden Lake, Wood Lake, and Quiggle Lake. Of these, Quiggle Lake is the largest with a surface area of about 22 acres. None of these lakes offer public access and most are fully developed with residential land uses and have limited recreational potential.

### *Topography*

The topographic features within the Township vary from steep slopes and hilly knobs associated with river drainage ways to nearly level glacial till plains along the Township's western sections. The effect of these variations in local topography is a diverse and interesting landscape that is suitable for a variety of recreational activities.

## ***Soils***

Soil resources within the Township are the result of complex natural events that have occurred in the past, such as continental glaciation, as well as natural processes that are occurring today. The consequences of these historical and current natural events and processes are a variety of soil types possessing varying suitability levels for recreational facilities. **See Map 3- Soils** in the **Appendix**.

In Cascade Township, the soils best suited for recreational facility development include: the Plainfield-Oshtemo-Spinks Association, Marlette-Perrinton-Metea Association and Marlette-Chelsea-Boyer Association. These associations are characterized by nearly level to very steep terrain, either wooded, pastured or cropped and with minimal limitations from flooding, wetness, slope or texture. The suitability of these soils for recreational development must be evaluated on a site-specific basis and include considerations of what type of recreational facility is being proposed as well as the expense that would have to be incurred if the site was modified, through design or engineering, to accommodate certain recreational activities.

## ***Vegetation***

Cascade Township is fortunate to have many areas covered with various woods. Many of the scattered wood lots represent those areas in the Township that have slopes that are too steep or soils that are too wet or dry for farming and were consequently spared for development. In addition, several areas that were previously cultivated and have since been abandoned for continued farming are now returning to a woodland habitat. The types of woodlands found in the Township are dependent on the soils present and other local conditions. Mixed hardwoods, composed of red and white oak, shagbark hickory, sugar maple, beech, black cherry and white ash can be found on some of the Township's upland areas. Other upland areas may contain white pine, basswood and aspen as predominant woodland species.

In low lying areas and bottom lands associated with drainage ways, representative woodland species include: red and silver maple, cottonwood, sycamore, ironwood, black ash and willow. Other plant communities characteristically found in the Township include meadowlands, marshes, swamps and other open undisturbed areas containing a variety of native herbaceous plants.

Cascade Township is also the home of three (3) rare plant species listed under the Michigan Endangered Species Act. The three (3) plant species known to occur are: Virginia snakeroot (*Aristolochia serpentaria*), kitten-tails (*Besseyia bullii*) and prairie buttercup (*Ranunculus rhomboideus*). All three (3) species are classified as "threatened" under the Michigan Endangered Species Act.

## ***Wetlands***

The term "wetland" includes marshes, swamps, bogs and similar areas that are often found between open water and upland land. Many, but not all of these areas, are subject to State regulation under the Goemaere-Anderson Wetland Protection Act of 1979.

The inventories represent existing information that suggests the probability that a wetland may or may not exist in a given area. Areas shown as wetlands, wetland soils or open water on the map are potential wetlands and deserve further site investigation to verify if wetlands are actually present. The map may not identify all potential wetlands in the Township. It may show wetlands that are not actually present and it may not show wetlands which are actually present.

In the past, wetlands were often regarded as wastelands – sources of mosquitoes, flies and unpleasant odors. Most people felt that they were places to be avoided, or better yet, eliminated.

This negative view, combined with the demand for more developable land, has resulted in the destruction of some of the township's poorly drained lands. These areas have been drained and converted to farmland, industrial use or filled for housing development. Of the estimated 11 million acres of wetlands that stood in Michigan 150 years ago, 3 million acres remain. Since there is little historical data on wetland identification, it is not possible to estimate the total loss of wetlands within Cascade Township.

Pockets of wetlands are found throughout the Township, with significant areas associated with the Plaster Creek drainage area in Sections 7 and 18. In addition, significant perched and low-lying wetlands are found along the southern reaches of the Township along the Thornapple River. **Map 4 - Wetlands Inventory** in the **Appendix** illustrates the location of wetlands, water features and topography in the Township.

Because they occur where the dry land meets the water, wetlands play a critical role in the management of the Township's water-based resources. Acre for acre, wetlands produce more wildlife and plants than any other Michigan habitat type. Michigan boasts about 2,300 native plant species; fifty percent of these are wetland species and over twenty-five percent of the wetland species are threatened or endangered.

Other benefits of wetlands include the following:

- They help reduce the extent of flooding by absorbing runoff from rain and melting snow and slowly releasing excess water into rivers and lakes. (A one-acre swamp, when flooded to a depth of one foot, contains 325,851 gallons of water.)
- They filter pollutants from surface runoff, trapping fertilizers, pesticides, sediment and other potential contaminants and help to break them down into less harmful substances.
- They contribute to recharge groundwater supplies when connected to underground aquifers.
- They form part of the natural nutrient and water cycles and produce vital atmospheric gases, including oxygen.
- They provide commercial and recreational value to the economy, by producing plants, game birds and fur-bearing mammals. Survival of many varieties of fish is directly connected to wetlands, as they require shallow water areas for breeding, feeding and escape from predators.

Wetlands also contribute to the open, natural character of the Township, by providing natural areas of open space interspersed with developed land. Wetland areas can provide a valuable site design element in residential development, providing separation between neighboring properties and attractive natural areas which serve as a property value-enhancing amenity.

In Michigan, the Goemaere-Anderson Wetland Protection Act (Act 203 of the Public Acts of 1979) provides for the statewide preservation, management, protection and use of wetland areas. Wetlands having an area of at least five (5) acres in size, or those that are contiguous with a lake or stream, are subject to State regulation. The Act requires a permit from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for activities such as filling, dredging, and draining.

### ***Existing Land Development Patterns***

Cascade Township's land development patterns are very characteristic of a formerly rural community undergoing relatively rapid suburbanization. The attractiveness of the Township's landscape as well as its proximity to a thriving urban area has contributed to these major changes in land use patterns. Much of this new development is occurring in the central and northern sections of the Township while the southern and eastern sections continue to contain low-density rural developments. Residential development in the Township represents the most significant land use change with single-family developments and some

multiple-family developments constituting much of this change (see **Map 5 - Future Land Use** in the **Appendix**).

Commercial development has principally taken place along the 28th Street corridor. The commercial development and redevelopment along this major east-west thoroughfare is likely to continue as existing vacant land is converted to commercial use. Office park development is also associated with this commercial development, but located at sites off of the main thoroughfare. In 1995, Cascade Township established a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) for 28th Street. This DDA now covers all of 28th Street in Cascade and a portion of Centennial Park. This DDA district also includes the village area of the Township.

Industrial development is also expanding within the Township, along the western sections of the Township and north and south of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport from Starr Street to 60th Street. The location of this major regional airport, as well as the I-96 and M-11 (28th Street) interchange, has also played a major role in attracting growth and development within the Township. Additional development is also expected now that the South Beltline (M-6) is constructed along with the new 36th Street interchange (see **Figure 1**).

### ***Future Land Use***

Cascade Township has experienced significant growth pressure over the last two (2) decades emanating from the 28th Street corridor, the airport area and quality residential areas. This growth pressure is not anticipated to subside in the coming years given the overall health of the local economy and regional improvements. The highest density of development has occurred with the utility service area boundary. However, as larger parcels are increasingly developed inside and outside the service area, opportunities to preserve quality open space and sensitive environmental areas need to be evaluated on a proactive, project by project basis. **Map 5** in the **Appendix** illustrates the future land use.

As projects of all types come forward, the applicant and Township will work cooperatively to retain open areas and preserve natural features to the maximum extent possible. Recreation facilities, either large or small, enhance the character of a community. Development of these facilities need to be a continuing process either formally or as part of proposed projects.

### ***Historic and Cultural Resources***

Historical sites in the Township that are State listed include the original Cascade Christian Church Chapel and the Township museum building. The Township museum building, which was designated as a historical site in 1998, was the original structure for the Cascade Township Hall. The Cascade Dam, and a few buildings in the "village" area, is also eligible for consideration as historic sites.

A significant archaeological find has also been located in Cascade Township. Fluted arrowhead points, of the Clovis style that were

Opportunities to preserve quality open space and sensitive environmental areas need to be evaluated on a proactive, project by project basis.



used by paleo-Indians of 10,000 years ago, were found in the vicinity of 28th Street and Thornhills Drive. Indian artifacts as well as burial mounds have been found in the Township.

A variety of area-wide cultural opportunities are available within the Grand Rapids metropolitan area and include the 133-acre Howard Christensen Nature Center, 144-acre Blandford Nature Center and Farm, Grand Rapids Public Museum, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids John Ball Park Zoo and Fredrick Meijer Gardens. Several city parks are also available within this area including Ada Park, Leonard Field, and Grand Rapids Township Park.

## **ANALYSIS OF RESOURCE INVENTORY AND PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

- The presence of the Thornapple and Grand River play an integral role in the communities of Eaton County, Barry County, and Kent County. The potential for expanded recreational uses, river related tourism activities, and collaborative conservation efforts is significant and will be important when considering the future of land use planning in Cascade Township.
- The abundance of water and other natural resources should be considered in any effort to plan for future recreation facilities. These invaluable amenities are likely conduits to augment quality of life in Cascade Township by offering opportunities for trails, nature interpretation, fishing, and active recreation.
- Industrial, commercial, and residential development is expanding in the Township and significant growth pressure is not anticipated to subside given the health of the local economy. Therefore, opportunities to preserve quality open space and sensitive environmental areas need to be evaluated on a proactive, project by project basis and considered as a top priority for future land use development.

## Section 4- Recreation Facilities Inventory

### EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES

A recreation inventory describes all parks and recreation facilities a community owns or operates. For clarification, the facilities of all types that are located within Cascade Township are listed and described first, followed by other public and private recreation facilities available regionally. Describing the community and its characteristics establishes the special qualities that will help in determining the possible type, quantity and location of recreation in the Township. It is similarly important to establish the types, quantities and locations of existing recreational facilities already available in the Township. Between what already is available and what is needed for recreation in the Township comes the identification of recreational deficiencies that must eventually be accompanied by a strategy for alleviating these identified deficiencies.

#### *Accessibility Assessment*

Also included at each facility is an assessment of the accessibility of each park to people with disabilities. This assessment must consider the accessibility of both the facilities themselves (as appropriate), as well as the access routes to them. At a minimum, the following ranking system will be used for each park:

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

#### *Grant History*

For each park that was partially or completely acquired and/or developed with recreation grant funds, the information below must be reported. These funds include the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (formerly known as the Michigan Land Trust Fund), the Clean Michigan Initiative Recreation Bond Fund, and the 1988 Recreation Bond Fund.

Cascade Township has received recreation grants from the State of Michigan for several projects. They are as follows:

#### TOWNSHIP PARKS AND OPEN SPACE GRANT HISTORY

<b>Program</b>	<b>Grant Number</b>	<b>Project/Location</b>
Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund And the Nature Conservancy, 2008	TF08-149 \$1.2 million	Cascade Natural Area, 197 acres 8900 Grand River Ave.
Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) 1992	26-01517 \$20,327	Township Park Shelter 3810 Thornapple River Drive SE.
<b>Program</b> Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) 1978	<b>Grant Number</b> 26-01060x1 \$40,289	<b>Project/Location</b> Cascade Recreation Area 3810 Thornapple River Drive SE.
Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) 1975	26-00649 \$35,916	Cascade Recreation Area 3810 Thornapple River Drive SE.

## COMMUNITY PARKS

### *Cascade Park*

The Township of Cascade owns and operates a 55-acre park located on Thornapple River Drive north of the I-96 overpass. The park was acquired in 1973. Improvements include two (2) fenced softball fields and a third unfenced ball field that also serves as a multi-purpose football and soccer field; four (4) tennis courts; plumbed restrooms; a sheltered picnic pavilion; a paved one-mile walking/jogging trail; a gazebo structure; an 18-hole Frisbee golf course; a volleyball court; and a playground and small picnic shelter. The playground includes a play system that is accessible to the physically impaired, slides, sandbox, hanging bars, climbing bars and other miscellaneous play equipment; and a maintenance barn. Park development has been phased since 1973 with the restrooms and walking/jogging trail completed in 1985.



Cascade Park serves as the hub of recreational activity during the summer. It is the home of many leagues for softball, baseball, soccer, football and lacrosse. Some of the organized leagues assist in improving the fields. The park is used nearly to capacity during these league sports and the picnic pavilion is rented out nearly every weekend. The playground is also extensively used. These conditions indicate that the demand for these facilities has not been adequately met in the Township.

Several improvements to the park have occurred since the 2000 recreation plan was completed. Most of these improvements were maintaining what was already at the park or replacing it with new. The items include new roofing and façade for the pavilion, new, slightly relocated, bathroom building, newly resurfaced walking trail and new picnic tables. An expansion of the frisbee golf course was done in 2006 from nine (9) to 18 holes. Other improvements included paving the parking lots and irrigating the baseball and soccer fields. Many of these improvements were done to assist in handicapped accessibility as well.

### **Accessibility Assessment- Cascade Township (Rec) Park**

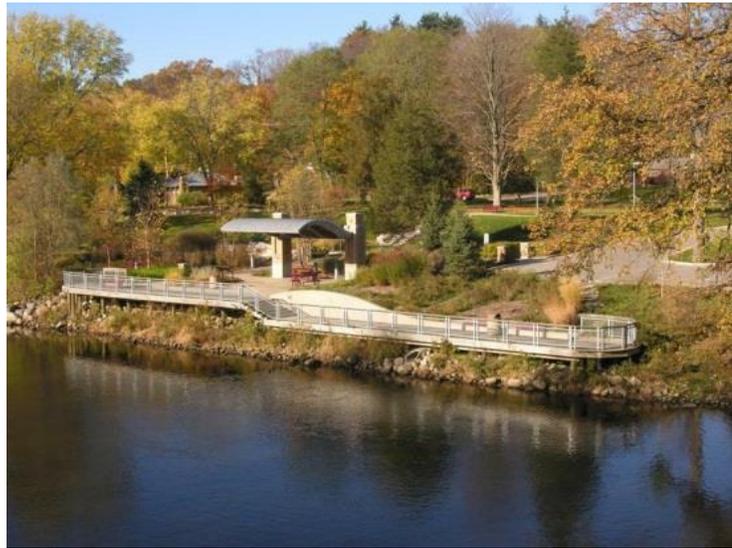
**Rating: 2**

Facility	Accessibility	Slope	Surface
Baseball/Softball Diamonds	Y	L	D
Multipurpose Athletic Field	Y	L	G
Sand Volleyball Court	N	L	D
Tennis Courts	Y	L	O
18 Hole Disc Golf Course	N	M	G
Horseshoe Pits	N	S	D
Children's Playground (Ages 5-12)	N	L	O
Picnic Shelters	Y	L	P
Restrooms	Y	L	P
Parking	Y	L	P

KEY: Y=accessible feature; N= not accessible; L=level Slope, S=slight slope; M=Moderate slope; P=Paved; D=dirt, gravel, sand; W=wood/boardwalk; G=grass/turf, O=other

***Leslie E. Tassell Park***

In 1993, the Township began purchasing residential properties downstream of the Cascade Dam. In 2000, the Township began the development of a small park along the west bank of the Thornapple River, near the village downtown area. It was thought that this proposed park would serve as a passive focal point for the village area. The park now serves Cascade as a community-gathering place along the Thornapple River immediately below the Cascade Dam. It is an intensely developed public space with picnic shelter, boardwalks, canoe/kayak/fishing access, public sculpture display and support facilities on a three (3) acre parcel.



**Accessibility Assessment- Leslie E. Tassell Park**  
**Rating: 3**

Facility	Accessibility	Slope	Surface
Pedestrian Pathway	Y	L	P
Riverside Boardwalk	Y	L	W
Picnic Shelters	Y	L	P
Community Fire Pit	Y	L	P
Fishing Pier	Y	L	P
Restrooms	Y	L	P
Parking	Y	L	P

KEY: Y=accessible feature; N= not accessible; L=level Slope, S=slight slope; M=Moderate slope; P=Paved; D=dirt, gravel, sand; W=wood/boardwalk; G=grass/turf, O=other

***Cascade Dam***

The Township owns the Cascade Dam along the Thornapple River adjacent to the south end of Tassel Park and has leased it to STS which operates it for hydroelectric power, which is sold to Consumers Energy Company. At this time, access to the river can be made from both sides of the dam. The upstream east bank off of Thorncrest Street is most accessible for boating and canoeing. The west bank, both up and downstream, are used primarily for fishing and also has a canoe portage. There are other areas along the river that have also



been used for access to the river. Some of the access has been through public property and some of it has been through trespassing on private property. None of this access has been recognized as official and recommended because of the trespassing issue and the damage that has occurred in many instances.



### ***Cascade Museum Garden***

A small perennial garden (0.4 acres) with walks and benches has been developed adjacent to the Township Museum building. It is located at a strategic intersection in the village and is adjacent to several small local shops and boutiques. The site is easily accessed by sidewalks and is enjoyed by residents as a reflection of the areas local historic and cultural heritage.

### **Accessibility Assessment- Museum Garden Park**

**Rating: 4**

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>Slope</b>	<b>Surface</b>
Pedestrian Pathway	Y	L	P
Park Benches	Y	L	P

*KEY: Y=accessible feature; N= not accessible; L=level Slope, S=slight slope; M=Moderate slope; P=Paved; D=dirt, gravel, sand; W=wood/boardwalk; G=grass/turf, O=other*

### ***McGraw Park***

In 2002, Mick McGraw donated 68.8 acres of Grand River frontage for use as a new park. It is contiguous to a similar parcel donated to Ada Township to the northwest. It is primarily floodplain with extensive wooded lowlands along the River. The only development of the park has been some trails. Also adjacent to the park is a small two (2) acre parcel owned by Forest Hills Public Schools that serves as their access to the Grand River for their crew teams.

### **Accessibility Assessment- McGraw Park**

**Rating: 2**

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>Slope</b>	<b>Surface</b>
Pedestrian Pathway	N	L	D
Boat Launch (Forest Hills Public Schools)	N	M	D
Parking	Y	L	P

*KEY: Y=accessible feature; N= not accessible; L=level Slope, S=slight slope; M=Moderate slope; P=Paved; D=dirt, gravel, sand; W=wood/boardwalk; G=grass/turf, O=other*

### ***Cascade Peace Park***

Cascade Peace Park is approximately 198 acres in size. This property consists of floodplain and meadow areas with extensive old growth forest. No improvements are on the property and it is intended that any changes to the property will only allow for passive recreational uses.

This property was identified originally by the Cascade Township open space study as having desirable features for preservation. In order to acquire the property the Township worked with the assistance of the open space committee, The Land Conservancy of West Michigan, The Nature Conservancy, The Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Disability advocates of West Michigan as well as local landscapers. The property was acquired with assistance by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund and The Nature Conservancy. Both of these organizations provided assistance in purchasing the property.



Cascade Peace Park is located at 8900 Grand River Ave. and can be accessed from two locations. The access off from Bolt Drive is located at the west end of Bolt Drive on an unpaved section of road. This access point has a small parking area and is better suited for handicapped access. The Grand River Drive access is at the far NE corner of the property. Grand River Drive provides better access for those on bikes since it is located along a dedicated bike lane on the park side of the Grand River Drive. This location also provides an opportunity to provide public parking.

**Accessibility Assessment- Cascade Peace Park**  
**Rating: 2**

Facility	Accessibility	Slope	Surface
Trails	N	L/S/M	D
Parking	Y	L	P
Port-A-John Facilities	N	L	P

KEY: Y=accessible feature; N= not accessible; L=level Slope, S=slight slope; M=Moderate slope; P=Paved; D=dirt, gravel, sand; W=wood/boardwalk; G=grass/turf, O=other

**Cascade Burton Park**

Burton Park is approximately 80 acres and is located at 6805 Burton Street. The property is wooded with considerable topography as well as meadow areas. It is intended that any changes to the property will only allow for passive recreational uses.

The Township purchased the 80 acre parcel of land through the Cascade Township Open Space Fund, which was established in 2009 as a result of a successful millage election (.23 mills) in late 2008. The Township Board adopted a Master Plan for the park in November 2009 and then started



the process to develop and open the park. Access to the property is from both Burton Street and Windcrest Street. There are paved parking lots at both entrances, and each lot includes handicap parking spaces.

There is one bathroom located on the north end of the large metal storage building. According to the adopted millage for Burton Park, the park is to remain a minimally improved site that encourages uses that are low-impact and environmentally sensitive.

**Accessibility Assessment- Cascade Burton Park**  
**Rating: 3**

Facility	Accessibility	Slope	Surface
Trails	N	L/S/M	D
Non-Motorized Pathway	Y	L	P
Restrooms	Y	L	P
Parking	Y	L	P

*KEY: Y=accessible feature; N= not accessible; L=level Slope, S=slight slope; M=Moderate slope; P=Paved; D=dirt, gravel, sand; W=wood/boardwalk; G=grass/turf, O=other*

***Township Pedestrian pathways***

The Township has made substantial strides in providing pedestrian pathways (separate, 10' wide) throughout the northwest and central portions of the Township – essentially in the more intensively developed residential parts of the Township and along major thoroughfares. Approximately 17 miles have been constructed. These pedestrian pathways are one of the most popular recreational resources in the Township. The funding for this project was done with a dedicated millage which will expire in 2016. The current fund does not have any excess money to build/maintain any new paths. The paths have been designed to provide a looped, interconnected system that many residents enjoy. The paths are also linked to the sidewalk system on 28th Street. **See Non-Motorized Trails System Map in the Appendix.**



**NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS**

Two (2) elementary schools and the school district administrative offices also offer some recreational opportunities to Cascade Township residents. Pine Ridge Elementary School, located off of Redford and Leyton Drive, offers 10 acres of open land plus a playground, a ball field, a multi-purpose field and a gymnasium. Thornapple Elementary School, located off of Middlebrook and Bridgewater, has approximately five (5) acres devoted to a playground, softball fields, a multi-purpose play field and a gymnasium. The Forest Hills School District Administrative Offices, a former school located at Cascade Road and Burton Street, contains five (5) acres with a ball field and a gymnasium. All of these facilities are available for public use even though there are no formal arrangements between the school district and the Township. The school district also sponsors community recreation programs, such as basketball, volleyball and other indoor recreational activities. Additionally, the school district offers services to the

Forest Hills Senior Citizens Organization by providing them an activity center at the Forest Hills Aquatic Center, located in Grand Rapids Township.

## **REGIONAL PARKS (Within 10 miles)**

### ***Grand River Public Access Sites***

There are two public access boat launch sites on the Grand River, under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Waterways Division. The Knapp St. Bridge Public Access Site is located south of the Knapp Street Bridge on the east side of the river. The site contains 14 parking spaces. The Ada Grand River Public Access Site (47 parking spaces) is located just north of Fulton Street (M-21), on the river's west bank. Each site contains a boat launch ramp and pit-type restrooms.

### ***MDOT Roadside Rest Area Park***

This MDOT roadside rest area is on a three-acre site along M-21 in Ada Township near the extreme southeast corner of the Township. Picnic tables, grills and restroom facilities are available at the park.

### ***Ada Township Park***

The most utilized of the Township-owned parks, Ada Township Park is a 57-acre site located on the southern border of Ada Township, southeast of the Village, at Buttrick Avenue and Grand River Drive. This park has become popular with persons and groups from throughout the Grand Rapids metro area, not only for its many recreational opportunities but for its barrier-free design and complete access.

Existing facilities at the park include:

- 1 Park office building, containing Park Director's office, with adjacent classroom/meeting room with natural history displays, and a barrier-free, unisex restroom.
- Storage and maintenance building,
- 1 half-court basketball court
- 6 tennis courts
- 2 softball diamonds with bleachers
- Large open field area used by AYSO soccer organization for practice and games, with two fields for ages 7-14 and two fields for kindergarten-age players.
- 7 picnic areas, each with a grill and picnic tables (18 tables total)
- 1 shelter with grill, electric service, water, 12 picnic tables and barrier-free restrooms
- 3 connected gazebos, near ponds, with grill, electric service and 6 picnic tables
- 1 stand alone gazebo in arboretum, with grill and 2 picnic tables
- Paved paths and nature trail (barrier free)
- Fishing ponds with barrier free fishing deck
- 1 children's' playground with barrier-free play structures
- Arboretum
- 2 paved parking lots; 1 gravel parking lot
- Wildflower prairie

### ***Grand River Nature Trail and Preserve***

The largely wooded land totaling 120 acres is located in the Grand River floodplain between the Ada Moorings development and the river. It extends east to the boundary with Cascade Township, where an

adjacent 70 acres (Michael McGraw Park) was donated by Eastbrook Homes to Cascade Township, as well as a 4-acre parcel donated to Forest Hills Public Schools, for development of a crew boat launch and boat storage facility, with sufficient parking for holding of crew meets. The total 194 acres donated for public use includes over 1 mile of river frontage.

This preserve will remain in a largely natural condition, with facility improvements limited to non-motorized trails to facilitate public access to and enjoyment of this natural site. Trails in the natural area are to be limited to a mowed grass surface. Directional signs to get visitors from the parking area to the trail head have been installed. Interpretive signs that will educate the public on habitats, cultural history and the flora and fauna of the preserve will be installed along the paved trail.

### ***Leonard Park***

This park is a two-acre site adjacent to the Thornapple River just east of Ada's village business district. The Township's only lighted softball diamond is located here. When winter temperatures permit, the ball diamond is flooded for use as an ice skating rink. The park's unique asset is a replica of a historic covered bridge which spans the Thornapple River and links the park with the village business district. This bridge is a focal point for the entire community. The park has a paved parking area, ball field bleachers, period lighting and a barrier-free river overlook. A drinking fountain was relocated to make it barrier-free in 2006. Plans are currently underway to construct a barrier-free restroom facility here in the spring of 2007, to replace the portable toilets that have been in use.

### ***Roselle Park***

Ada Township's parklands more than doubled in size in 2002 with the purchase of the former Ada Beef property located on Grand River Drive NE. in Ada Township. In 2006, an additional 17-acres along the Grand River and adjacent to Roselle Park were purchased from neighboring property owners with funds from the dedicated millage for parks and open space. With the purchase of this additional floodplain property, Roselle Park now totals 247-acres with 1.75 miles of frontage on the Grand River.

### ***Grand Rapids Charter Township Park***

Recreation activities are available at the Township Hall Complex on the East Beltline that comprises 58 acres with three ball fields, soccer field, sand volley ball, three tennis courts, basketball hoops, handicap accessible playground and nature trails that can be used for cross country skiing in the winter.

### ***Crahen Valley (Doezema) Township Park***

Crahen Valley Park is located on Leonard Street in Grand Rapids Charter Township and offers over 200 acres of rolling parkland with rolling hills, a steep ravine, and natural wetland.

## **REGIONAL COUNTY PARKS (Within 10 miles)**

### ***Seidman Park***

Seidman Park is located in Ada Township at 8155 Conservation Road. The park is owned and operated by the Kent County Road and Park Commission. With 530 acres, Seidman Park is one of the largest parks in the Kent County system. The heavily wooded site contains a trail network used for hiking and cross-country skiing. There are several interpretive display boards along the trail network. Restroom facilities

are located at both the northern and southern ends of the park. The trail network includes a boardwalk extending through one of several wetlands which occur within the park.

### ***Chief Hazy Cloud Park***

Chief Hazy Cloud Park is a 22-acre facility on the north bank of the Grand River near the center of Ada Township. The park contains picnic tables and grills, play equipment and restrooms. Fishing is a popular activity at this park. Negotiations are underway between the Kent County Road and Park Commission and the neighboring landowner to purchase the 97-acre parcel to the north of this riverfront park for park expansion and land preservation.

### ***Knapp Valley Forest Preserve***

This 104 acre park, located in Grand Rapids Charter Township is undeveloped but the scenic woods host several walking trails.

### ***Gerald R. Ford International Airport Viewing Area***

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport maintains a viewing field on their premises that is accessed off of Kraft Avenue north of 52<sup>nd</sup> Street. The viewing area features ample parking, picnic tables, and elevated views of the airport and surrounding landscapes.

## **INVENTORY OF TOWNSHIP AMENITIES**

- **Cascade Township Park (55 acres)**
  - Playground (large)
  - Tennis (4 new)
  - Softball (2, irrigated)
  - Volleyball (1)
  - Horseshoes (4)
  - Soccer (1 full size, 1 practice)
  - Restroom
  - Picnic Shelter (150-200 people)
  - Picnic Shelter (24 people, playground)
  - Picnic Gazebo (30 people)
  - Walking Trail (2 mile)
  - Frisbee Golf (18 hole)
  - Natural Area
  
- **Leslie E. Tassell Park (3 acres)**
  - Restroom
  - Picnic Shelter (30-45 people)
  - Picnic Gazebo (10-12 people)
  - Riverfront Fishing
  - Canoe/Kayak Access
  
- **Cascade Museum Garden (.4 acres)**
  - Garden Setting
  
- **McGraw Park (68.8 acres)**

- River frontage
- Walking trails
- **Cascade Burton Park (80 acres)**
  - Nature Trails (2.5 miles)
  - Bathrooms
  - Handicap accessible parking
- **Cascade Peace Park (198 acres)**
  - Nature Trails (4 miles)
  - Port-A-John facility
- **Township Pedestrian pathways**
  - 17 Miles Constructed

### ***Township Schools***

- **Pine Ridge Elementary School (10 acres)**
  - Playground
  - Paved Court with hoops
  - Pickup ball field
  - Soccer (2, small, practice)
- **Thornapple Elementary School (5 acres)**
  - Pickup ball field
  - Playground

### ***Private and Commercial Recreational Facilities***

A variety of private and commercial recreational facilities have located in Cascade Township (see **Map 6** in the **Appendix**), these include:

- Charlevoix Club. A private health club.
- Crowne Plaza Resort. A registered resort open to the patrons of Radisson Plaza.
- Watermark Golf Club. A private 18-hole golf course on 89 acres.
- The Golfclub at Thornapple Pointe. An 18-hole public golf course on 229 acres.
- Quail Ridge Golf Club. An 18-hole golf course on 279 acres.
- MVP. A private sports training facility three (3) full size soccer fields and one small field.
- Patterson Ice Center. A public ice arena with two (2) sheets of ice for all forms of ice skating competition and recreation.
- Shaggy Pines. 20 acre private dog park.

**A number of special recreational programs and events take place each year in the Township, these include:**

- Fourth of July Festival. Sponsored by the Township.
- Thornapple Valley Baseball Little League. Baseball in the Township park. (Spring)
- AYSO. Soccer league in the Township Park. (Spring and Fall)
- Baseball and Softball Tournaments. Sponsored by a variety of organizations and held in the Township Park.

- Forest Hills Youth Football. Conducted in the Township park. (Fall)
- Cascade Library (part of the Kent County Library system). Offers a variety of activities and programs throughout the year.
- Clubs and organizations. Several groups meet regularly in the Township, using Township facilities for their meetings. These groups include a garden club, hockey club, horse club, basket guild, library support club and neighborhood associations which will sponsor a variety of recreational activities.

### ***River Access***

The Township encompasses a number of natural features that make it an attractive place to live. The most obvious features are the Grand River and the Thornapple River. The Grand River forms the northeast border, roughly two (2) miles in length. The Thornapple River bisects the Township north to south. Until very recently, the Township residents had no opportunity for access to either of these rivers within the Township, with the exception of a public access site for canoe/kayak access at the Cascade Dam on the Thornapple River in the Village of Cascade.

With the addition of Leslie E. Tassell Park on the Thornapple River and McGraw Park on the Grand River, river access opportunities for Township residents have improved although still limited. Immediately to the north of the Township, within ½ mile are other access points:

- On the Thornapple River, at the Ada Dam (primarily foot traffic for fishing).
- On the Grand River, at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Public Access Site (boat launch ramp, restrooms, parking).

## **TOWNSHIP RECREATION PROGRAMS**

While there are currently no recreation programs organized by the Township, residents benefit from close partnerships with regional recreational offerings, local school districts, and additional recreational programming through community programs.

### ***American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO)***

When the Ada-Cascade area AYSO program was established, all games were played at Ada Township Park. Since then, the dramatic growth of the league has outgrown the capacity of the available space at the park. The AYSO league now schedules games at several locations in Ada and Cascade Townships.

### ***Community Education***

The Forest Hills School District offers a variety of community education programs, a number of which are recreation or fitness oriented. These programs are generally conducted at school sites.

### ***YMCA***

The Southeast Metropolitan YMCA uses school facilities for some of its recreation programs, in addition to its own facilities in Grand Rapids Township. Its youth recreation programs include hosting a competitive swim team, swimming lessons for all ages, fitness and wellness classes and programs, and youth sports programs in floor hockey, soccer, t-ball, baseball, flag football, basketball, tennis, soccer and gymnastics.

## ANALYSIS OF FACILITY NEEDS

Determining what recreational facilities should be provided to Township residents in the future to most effectively satisfy their needs is a critical and difficult element of a recreation plan. No community can casually fund recreation projects without being assured that these facilities would be used. Funds for recreation are difficult to obtain when other community needs must also be addressed. Consequently, it is important to accurately predict and prioritize what recreational facilities will be popular now and in the future.

It is important to accurately predict and prioritize what recreational facilities will be popular now and in the future.

Making these predictions about recreation needs and priorities has not been an exact science. Therefore, a variety of methods have been utilized to determine what residents will want for improving recreational opportunities in a community.

Varied methods were used to identify the Township's recreation needs and develop a planned program of recreation facility improvements for the future. These included: consideration of the growth and demographic trends discussed in the previous section; review of resident participation data in area recreation programs; review of the results of a community survey conducted in 2013; review of past Recreation Plans; review of Recreation Plans of adjacent communities and on-site inspection of existing recreation facilities. State and Federal recreation facility guidelines were also considered.

### *Recreation Facility Standards*

No standards exist to determine how much open space a community needs, although community desire can certainly be assessed. Rather, information is available on how to determine the conservation value of different areas. The justifications for preserving biodiversity and natural areas in which high levels of biodiversity occur include benefits to humans. These benefits include the increased quality of life many people feel living near natural environments, the recreational and economic value of trails and wildlife viewing in natural areas, and the health benefits from increased access to open land and

Most people are aware of the attributes of a site that make it seem worthy of protection. These attributes may include, among others, the naturalness or relative absence of human alteration; the presence of rare plant and animal species; the presence of rare or rapidly disappearing plant communities; and the occurrence of attractive landforms (i.e., valley, waterfalls or other physical features of the site). A site may also be considered for conservation over another because of its proximity to a city or its easy access. Some landscape-level factors that should be considered, in addition to current and future use of the surrounding land, include the size of the area to be protected, the connection of the area to other natural areas by means of corridors, the role the area will play in protecting the water quality of the larger region and the ability to maintain or mimic natural disturbances such as fires or floods.

Another planning tool used to assess recreation needs is a suggested community standard for recreational facility development. Standards can be a useful guide in determining what recreational opportunities may be absent or inadequate within a community. These standards are often based on averages per population as estimated from and compared with various communities from across the country.

Standards for recreational facilities are useful but they possess significant limitations, especially when the standard is not supported by other criteria for assessing a community's recreation needs, such as a community survey or local input. Standards often lack an appreciation for the differences that exist between different communities. For example, standards will suggest that a community of a certain size

should have so many tennis courts or playgrounds. However, perhaps in a certain community, their existing tennis courts are unused and the community is characterized by a high percentage of individuals of retirement age that would not require the devotion of so many acres for playgrounds.

Although standards for recreational development are not absolutes, and this should be recognized whenever they are used, these standards do offer some guidance on what may be an appropriate number or size for a certain recreational facility. For Cascade Township, the use of facility standards in combination with the results of the community survey and open house input can suggest how the community compares with other communities and whether there might be a greater or lesser demand for certain facilities than the standards indicate.

**Figure 5** compares suggested community standards for those recreational facilities that were identified on the survey with the Township’s existing facilities and nearby facilities. The result of this comparison shows that volleyball, shuffleboard, picnic shelter, play equipment, basketball courts, and neighborhood parks are deficient given the current and projected population. **Figure 5** is on the following page.

**Figure 5. Recreational Standards  
Cascade Township Facilities**

Type of Facility	Standard	Number Existing	Year 2010 Population (17,134)		Year 2020 Population (22,060)	
			Number Needed	Surplus or Deficiency	Number Needed	Surplus or Deficiency
Hard-Surfaced Play Areas	1 per 10,000	1	1	0	2	-1
Outdoor Basketball	1 per 5,000	0	3	-3	4	-4
Outdoor Tennis Courts	1 per 4,000	4	4	0	5	-1
Volleyball	1 per 5,000	1	3	-2	4	-3
Badminton	1 per 5,000	0	3	-3	4	-4
Racquetball	1 per 10,000	0	1	-1	2	-2
Baseball	1 per 5,000	2	3	-1	4	-2
Softball	1 per 5,000	2	3	-1	4	-2
Football	1 per 20,000	0	0	0	1	-1
Soccer	1 per 10,000	2	1	+1	2	0
Grills	1 per 500	-	34	-	44	-
Shelters	1 per 2,000	-	8	-	11	-
Tables	1 per 200	-	85	-	110	-
Outdoor Pool	1 per 20,000	0	0	0	1	-1
Indoor Ice Rink	1 per 50,000	0	0	0	0	0
Outdoor Ice Rink	1 per 20,000	0	0	0	1	-1
Community Center	1 per 25,000	0	0	0	0	0
Gymnasium	1 per 10,000	2	1	+1	2	0
Playgrounds	1 per 3,000	3	5	-2	7	-4
Outdoor Track	1 per 20,000	0	0	0	1	-1
Neighborhood Parks (Ac.)	2 acres per 1,000	34*	14	-10	44	-30
Community Parks (Ac.)	5 acres per 1,000	405*	85	+320	110	+295
Regional Parks (Ac.)	10 acres per 1,000	1,515*	170	+1,345	220	1,295

Source: Michigan DNR, Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans, Appendix E. Suggested Facility Development Standards. Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, National Recreation and Park Association, 1996

\*Neighborhood Parks: Thornapple Elementary School and Pine Crest Elementary School

\*Community Parks: Cascade Township (Rec) Park, Cascade Burton Park, Cascade Peace Park, Michael McGraw Park, Leslie E. Tassell Park

\*Regional Parks: Ada Township Park, Grand River Nature Trail and Preserve, Leonard Park, Roselle Park, Grand Rapids Charter Township Park, Crahen Valley Township Park, Seidman Park, Chief Hazy Cloud Park, Knapp Valley Forest Preserve

## ANALYSIS OF EXISTING FACILITIES AND PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- Cascade Township is well positioned to serve diverse recreational needs and interests and therefore, planning efforts should strive to establish the Township as a year-round, four-season active community that utilizes its existing trails, parks, and natural areas while identifying new opportunities for the development of small neighborhood parks and recreation areas serving diverse sports interests.
- The Township has an abundance of facilities at a regional scale and benefits from recreational opportunities within the Township as well as through adjacent park and recreation facilities, county held properties and facilities, and private recreation offerings. The analysis indicates that the need for community and regional parks is satisfied for both current and future populations.
- The analysis shows a deficiency in the acreage of neighborhood parks. The Township has long realized that there is a need for conveniently-located playground facilities among the many neighborhoods in the central, north, and east sectors of the community. In addition, although blessed with an abundance of natural areas, the Township is lacking in playground facilities and will need to begin establishing future plans for development to meet projected 2020 recreation needs.
- The population-based standards indicate a deficiency in active recreation facilities including court sports such as outdoor basketball, volleyball, badminton, and racquetball as well as field sports including baseball and softball. School aged children between ages 5-18 represent 24% of the population, and participation in regional athletic activities is strong. Therefore it will be an important priority for the Township to explore ways to increase athletic facilities in the next 5-10 years.
- Cascade Township (Rec) Park is a key element in the Township park system and provides a wide variety of facilities for both active and passive recreation, serving the entire Township population, yet is somewhat isolated from the community due to its position on a busy road on a steep slope and lack of non-motorized trail access. Improving and expanding the amenities at Cascade Township (Rec) Park while increasing neighborhood accessibility will benefit the entire Township.
- The analysis indicated that the Township population is not large enough to support several major types of facilities such as an outdoor swimming pool and ice-rink. However, these facilities should be available within a reasonably convenient distance. Many recreation deficiencies that show up in the table are actually provided within a reasonable distance by other public agencies, private non-profit organizations, or the private sector. For example, Patterson Ice Arena is an indoor facility located about 2.5 miles southwest of Cascade Township. In addition, several community members live within walkable distances to Ada Township recreation facilities.
- The Township is currently well served by recreational amenities; however, in order to provide quality recreational opportunities for a growing population, parks improvements need to address the amenity deficiencies within the Township on a short and mid- term basis over the next 5-7 years.

## SECTION 5 - PLANNING PROCESS

This Community Recreation Plan has been prepared with the oversight and direction of the Park & Recreation Committee, which consists of four (4) citizen members appointed by the Township Board. The Committee met on several occasions during the preparation of this plan and was responsible for the following planning activities:

1. Review of inventory of park/recreation programs and facilities.
2. Review of citizen survey results concerning satisfaction with park and recreation facilities and programs.
3. Review and refinement of planning goals and objectives.
4. Development and refinement of proposed Action Plan.
5. Review and approval of the draft Recreation Plan.

The planning process involved three inter-related phases:

- Phase One: Understanding Existing Conditions
- Phase Two: Defining a Preferred Future through Public Input
- Phase Three: From Planning to Action

### ***Phase 1 – Understanding Existing Conditions***

During the first phase of the planning process, background data was gathered to inform and support the Recreation Plan. The purpose of this effort was to develop an impression of the current state of the Township and a greater understanding of the recreational needs of the community. The information gathered during this phase, presented in Chapter 2, serves as a technical resource for the Planning Commission and the public and provides part of the foundation for identifying priorities to meet the recreation needs of residents.

### ***Phase 2 – Outlining a Preferred Future through Public Input***

The objective of the second phase was to establish a policy basis for the Township’s recreational goals. To do so, it was important to gather the opinions of community residents and determine the direction they were looking for the future of parks and recreation in their community. The Recreation Plan process employed several methods of acquiring community input including a community opinion survey, a community open house, a thirty (30) public comment review period, and a public hearing held on Wednesday, March 12<sup>th</sup> 2014 at the Cascade Township Public Library.

The community open house took place after the existing conditions research and before the preparation of the Goals & Objectives and Action Strategies. Comments gathered from this input opportunity were the basis of the goal statements, which form the foundation of the Plan. Each goal is supported by several more specific objectives that are intended as steps needed to accomplish the goal.

Part of the planning process to determine which types of facilities the Township may be missing utilized a “comparison to standards” process. Additionally, the public input received also helped to inform the policy-development process.

### ***Phase 3 – From Planning to Action***

The final phase of the planning process involved the development of specific implementation strategies to carry out the Plan. These are included in Chapter 7. At the conclusion of the third phase, the Plan was promulgated for public review and comment; and a public hearing was held.

#### **PUBLIC INPUT**

The Parks Committee and Township staff were very active in informing residents and entities interested in recreation on the effort to update the Plan. A flyer was prepared advertising the link for the community opinion survey and community open house and was distributed to families with children at Forest Hills Public Schools as well as throughout the community. In addition, notices were posted on the Township website advertising the survey link and the open house event. Parks Committee members also reached out to area stakeholders via word of mouth. In addition, a local media newsletter ran an article about the community open house

**The Parks Committee and Township staff were very active in informing residents and entities interested in recreation on the effort to update the Plan.**

It is believed that the general views of the community are well represented in this plan. Furthermore, the Parks Committee considers public input as an open, ongoing process and will continue to maintain an open dialogue with the Township residents.

In addition, once the draft Recreation Plan was complete, citizens were provided with a 30 day period to review and comment on the Plan. The Plan was published and placed at the Cascade Township Hall for this purpose. The Plan was also published at the Cascade Township Public Library. The plan was also distributed to the three local public schools districts in Cascade Township to disseminate to their constituents. Contact information was provided.

To notify the public that the draft Plan had been completed, a notice was published Jan 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

Finally, the Township published a notice for public hearing in advance of the public hearing held by the Planning Commission on Wednesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

#### ***2013 Community Opinion Survey***

The 2013 community input survey was an integral part of the community input process. The survey was created using the webhosting site surveymonkey.com. The survey had nineteen (19) questions for residents to respond to, as well as a comment section. The response was broken down by location of the residents into six (6) different quadrants of the Township. 169 responses were gathered. Residents were asked what improvement they would like to see at the existing parks, which park they use, if they would like to see additional pathways and whether or not they would support a new millage for parks or pathways. The survey link was publicized on fliers and distributed to several hundred families within the Forest Hills Public School District, distributed throughout the community, and on the Township website. In addition, paper copies were available to all residents at the Township Hall.

## Results

The majority of survey respondents (35%) were aged 45-54, followed by persons in the 35-44 age range (27%), and those aged 54 or older. There were no survey respondents under age 18, and therefore the Parks Committee identified that a separate outreach effort would need to be initiated to solicit input from a younger demographic through focus group discussions or an open house held at the high school. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents were homeowners in Cascade Township, and 9 percent were residents of adjacent Ada Township. Most residents (71%) who gave input feel parks, trails, and open space are very important to maintain a good quality of life, and survey results indicate that family members as a whole are active users of parks. Of the many benefits of parks and recreation, the community responses indicate that the providing opportunities to enjoy nature and the outdoors is the greatest benefit, along with improving health and wellness and protecting the natural environment and wildlife.

Of the six Township parks, Cascade Township (Rec) Park is the most frequently visited and is the community's most developed park providing the greatest range of amenities and accessibility. Thirty-five percent of respondents however have never visited Burton Park or Cascade Peace Park, and sixty percent have never visited Michael McGraw Park. These parks are more recently established and also are less developed, with primarily natural areas and low impact hiking trails. In addition, sixty percent of respondents have never visited the Museum Garden Park, which is centrally located and features gardens and park benches.

Overall, respondents from the community report being somewhat satisfied (38%) with current parks and recreational offerings in the Township, while 35 percent of respondents feel adequately served, and 11 percent feel highly satisfied. Residents also feel adequately served by area programming (camps, sports leagues, outdoor education), but note that adolescents aged 10-18 are perhaps the least served by current recreation offerings.

Community values shifted from previous years on the importance of acquiring land for developing new recreational opportunities to focusing on maintaining existing parks and facilities. According to the survey poll, types of parks residents believe are most needed in Cascade Township are natural areas. Other high priority parks include those with water frontage, and small neighborhood parks. As for trail development, the community favors the trails with links to an overall regional trail system, particularly with connections to Caledonia and Lowell. Two-third of respondents are willing to financially support a dedicated park millage, as well as the renewal of a pathways expansion millage, which is set to expire in 2016. A complete survey tabulation is included in the **Appendix**.

## Community Open House

As part of the planning process to develop an updated parks and recreation plan for Cascade Township, township staff and the Parks Committee, along with planning consultation held a community open house

Community values shifted from previous years on the importance of acquiring land for developing new recreational opportunities to focusing on maintaining the Township's existing parks and facilities.



and visioning workshop in December 2013. Several stakeholders were contacted by word of mouth, and the full list can be viewed in the Appendix.

The Community Open House was a general open house format. The planning team presented multiple topics to generate discussion and gain input into public perspectives. The following activities were designed to engage participants:

**Penny Jars:** Participants “invested” 10 pennies into jars labeled with possible parks and recreation projects.

**Tag It:** A board with various pictures of parks and recreation projects was featured, and participants had the opportunity tag the photos with sticky notes describing their opinions of possible projects.

**Parks to Parks:** A chart of all community parks was shown, and participants weighed in on their usership of area amenities.

**Map It:** A map of Cascade Township was available for participants to draw in features of parks and recreation that they believe would be appropriate additions to the overall area.

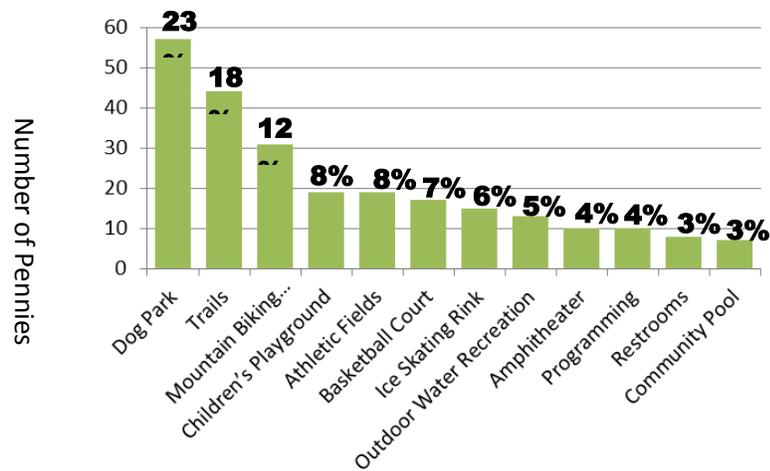
**Recreation Routes:** Participants responded by placing pins where they live and where they recreate, and had the opportunity to map their preferred recreation routes, which offer them recreational opportunities (biking, jogging, dog walking) or connect them to parks.

**Comment Cards:** Cards were available for participants to write in additional thoughts, suggestions, or considerations.

## KEY INPUT FROM COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

### *Penny Jars*

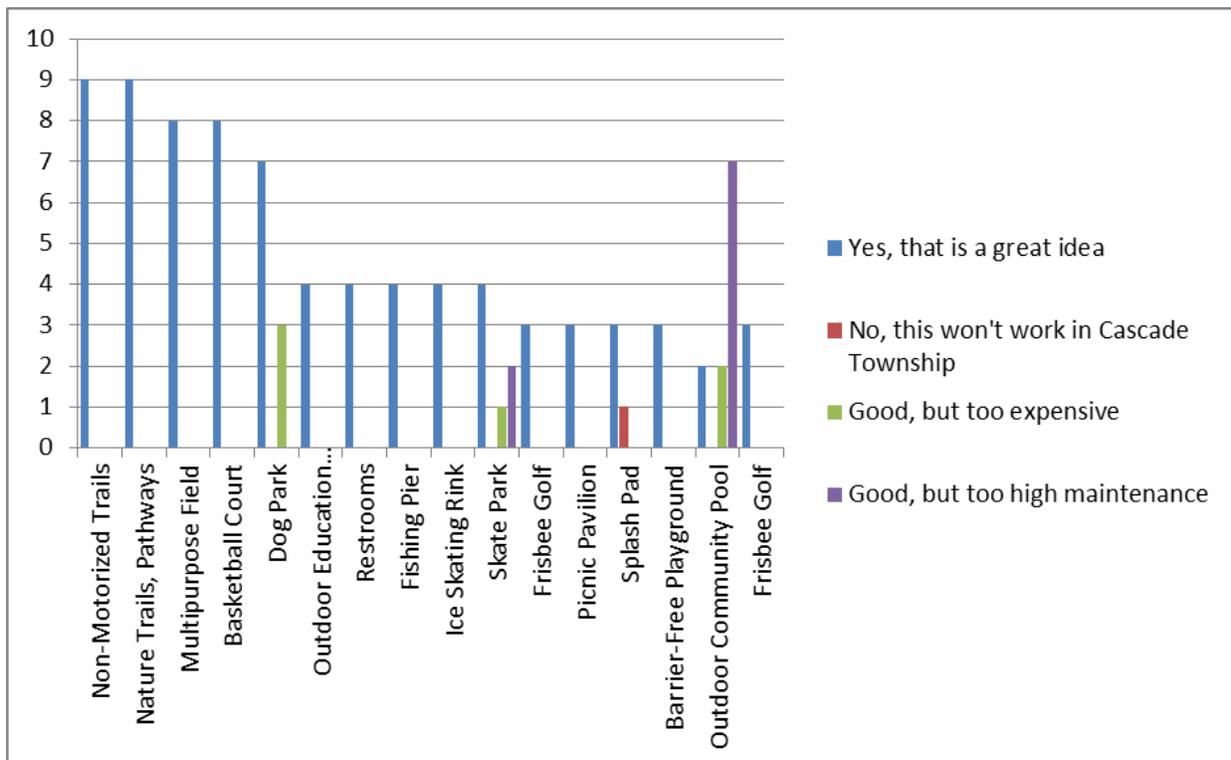
The top investments were in a dog park, trails, and mountain biking infrastructure. These top three choices captured 53% of total investment. Support for features including children’s play equipment, athletic fields, a basketball court, outdoor water recreation (splash pad), and an ice skating rink all received roughly the same amount of investment, comprising thirty-three percent of the total. An amphitheater, community programming, an outdoor pool, and public restrooms all received the least amount of investment, with a combined total of 14% of total penny investment.



In addition, comment cards were placed next to each jar for participants to give greater detail about where they would like to see featured amenities. Overall, the addition of a dog park is strongly supported at Burton Park, with off-leash access. Mountain biking infrastructure, which captured 12% of total investment, was strongly linked to Burton Park as well, according to participant comments. Participants shared several suggestions for locations of new trails. In addition, participants showed support and agreed upon the suggestion of developing an ice-skating rink at Tassell Park, and the addition of basketball courts at Cascade Township Park. A chart displaying the results is shown in the Appendix.

**Tag It**

There were a total of 91 responses from participants for this activity. Participants were asked to place tabs on pictures of parks amenities that indicated: Yes, that is a great idea; No, this will not work in Cascade Township; Good, but too expensive; or Good, but too high maintenance. In general, most of the responses to possible parks and recreation projects were favorable (Yes, that is a great idea). Non-motorized trails and nature pathways had the most favorable tabs, at 9 each. Multipurpose fields and a basketball court also ranked high, at 8 each. The third highest favorable response was for a dog park, with 7 tabs. The dog park however, also received 3 tabs marking it as Good, but too expensive. Other divisive park features were the skate park, which received 4 favorable tabs, 1 tab for being Good, but too expensive, and 2 tabs for being Good, but too high maintenance. An outdoor community pool received the least favorable response, with 7 tabs marking it good, but too high maintenance, and 2 marking it good, but too expensive. The outdoor community pool received 2 favorable tabs.



### ***Parks to Parks***

The majority of respondents spend their time at Cascade Township Park, located in the mid to southwest section of the Township off of Thornapple River Drive SE, and participants are most likely to walk or ride their bike to Tassell Park, centrally located in the Township off of Thornapple River Drive SE. Respondents feel that Cascade Township Park has the best amenities for their families. Cascade Township Park, while not the largest park in the Township at 55 acres, contains the most recreational amenities, including athletic fields and courts, a non-motorized pathway, pavilions, children's play equipment, a disc-golf course, and restrooms. The majority of respondents live in the quadrant 2 area, which is defined as being bound by Hall Street to the north, Buttrick Avenue to the east, 36<sup>th</sup> Street to the south, and roughly Thornapple River Drive/ Burton Park to the West.

Based on participant responses from the community open house, families in Cascade Township are most interested in their community parks which offer the following:

- Accommodate activities for varying age groups and interests, and ability levels.
- Are four season places with activity space for all seasons.
- Include a unique regional feature (such as the Cascade Township Disc Golf Course).
- Are located near a water source which either allows for passive uses, such as trails and observation areas, or active uses such as fishing and boating.
- Include some sort of trail, either unpaved nature trails or paved multi-use trails.
- Are able to accommodate large gatherings of people in covered shelters and provide restroom and drinking fountain accommodations.
- Are dog friendly.
- Contain a mix of active use amenities and passive use amenities.

### ***Recreation Routes***

Participants shared the location of places they like to recreate, and drew in their preferred recreation routes for walking, jogging, biking, dog walking, etc. Routes drawn in are marked in a blue dashed line and the size of the light blue circles indicates how many respondents marked that particular park with a pin. Of the 19 pins indicating where participants households were located, most indicated close proximity to the downtown area of Cascade Drive/Thornapple River Dr./28<sup>th</sup> Street and were in close proximity to Leslie E. Tassell Park. Participants drew in preferred recreation routes that included Ada Drive SE, Buttrick Avenue SE, 36<sup>th</sup> Street, 30<sup>th</sup> Street, Thornapple River Drive, Cascade Road SE, Cascade Springs Drive SE, and Burton Street.

### ***Map It- Individual Park Comments***

Individuals had the opportunity to comment on specific improvements they would like to see at each Township park. In general, participants were in favor of adding community gathering spaces at Leslie E. Tassell Park that would complement the already inclusive and diverse park features. The public envisions Burton Park as a neighborhood amenity, with improved accessibility via pathways and trails from surrounding neighborhoods. Michael McGraw Park and Cascade Peace Park were favorable locations for natural areas left largely undeveloped that have the opportunity for expanded low impact passive recreation activities and improvements in signage and trails markers. Participants noted that added recreation amenities and facilities would be desirable at the already family-oriented Cascade Township (Rec) Park.

## Map It – Individual Park Comments

<b>Leslie E. Tassell Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add a splash pad</li> <li>• Downtown Christmas Festival here</li> <li>• Light whole park during the holidays</li> <li>• This location is great for an amphitheater with bands playing in the summer</li> <li>• Add park signs and naming</li> <li>• Add parking spaces</li> <li>• Create a portage south of the dam</li> <li>• Create a park, or rest area off of Thorncrest, or better maintain the picnic table and bench</li> </ul>
<b>Burton Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect to Ada Park by Trail or Pathway</li> <li>• It is difficult to know where the park is because of a lack of signage</li> <li>• Add signage</li> <li>• It is connected on all sides by neighborhoods</li> <li>• Add fenced in dog park</li> <li>• Partner with family and friends or Cascade Animal Hospital</li> <li>• Have a key card for dog park users</li> <li>• Off leash dog park</li> <li>• Add disc golf, wooded park</li> <li>• Burton trail signage</li> <li>• Great location for basketball courts because it is surrounded by neighborhoods</li> <li>• Mountain bike trails- easy/moderate, built and maintained by the West Michigan Mountain Biking Association</li> </ul>
<b>Michael McGraw Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add mowed trail</li> <li>• Seasonal, closed November to April</li> <li>• Leave untouched</li> </ul>
<b>Museum Garden Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add rotating art sculpture</li> </ul>
<b>Cascade Peace Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish Friends of Cascade Peace Park to manage invasive plants, perform trail maintenance, or host Adopt-A-Trail programs</li> <li>• Keep dogs on a leash to protect habitats of box turtles and nesting birds</li> <li>• More clear signage</li> <li>• No development allowed in this park, because of a promise to the taxpayers, keep it a nature park</li> <li>• Need trail markers</li> </ul>
<b>Cascade Township Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add fenced dog park and trees</li> <li>• Add basketball courts</li> <li>• Add dog park</li> </ul>

A full summary of the input derived from these input activities is included in the Appendix. The input received from the Open House, along with the survey responses, was used to help inform the Parks Committee in developing the goals and objectives, and subsequent action plan.

### ***Draft Review and Public Hearing***

A draft Recreation Plan was presented to the Planning Commission on Friday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Once the draft plan was prepared, it was published for public review for a period of 30 days. Comment cards were provided to enable the public to contact Township officials.

Lastly, the Township Board held a public hearing on the proposed plan on Wednesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014. A copy of the hearing notice is contained in the Appendix of this document. The plan was reviewed and proposed park improvements summarized, followed by public comment. Following the public hearing, the Township Board adopted the plan. Documentation of the plan approval is contained in the Appendix.

## SECTION 6 – GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The establishment of community goals and objectives for providing recreational opportunities create a framework from which decisions can be made on a daily basis. Goals represent a long-term ideal to be aimed for by the community in providing recreational opportunities. For Cascade Township, the following goals and objectives have been formulated to establish an ideal for community recreation and to identify what steps can be taken to reach that ideal.

### *Maintenance*

#### **GOAL 1:**

**All Township owned property and parks will be consistently and continuously maintained to insure enjoyable user experiences for all, with improvements and updates being regularly assessed.**

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Complete an Asset Management Plan addressing maintenance issues citizens are most concerned with.
- B. Perform necessary improvements to enhance universal access that provide equal levels of experiences for all age groups and abilities and their specific recreational needs.
- C. Complete an assessment of all trails and pathways, and sidewalks near recreational areas to determine if these surfaces need improvement.
- D. Develop a comprehensive parks publicity and awareness plan which will include updating park and trail maps, posting maintenance update notices in the Township newsletter, installing new trail signage throughout Township parks, and potentially developing digital apps with park location information.
- E. Organize Friends of Cascade Parks group to establish a volunteer network to collectively monitor and care for park facilities and to provide routine, simple maintenance. This can be a non-profit organization enabling them to accept tax-deductible donations.

### *Natural Areas*

#### **GOAL 2:**

**The Township will continue to provide spaces for residents to enjoy the natural environment through the provision of open and easily accessed areas.**

- A. Continue to promote low impact uses and passive recreational activities at Michael McGraw Park, Burton Park, and Cascade Peace Park in order to preserve the natural qualities and wildlife habitats at each.
- B. Develop improved signage and wayfinding at Michael McGraw Park, Burton Park, and Cascade Peace Park to clearly mark trailheads, trails and paths, park entrances, and sensitive wildlife areas.
- C. Create educational signage to foster conservation and wildlife awareness and preservation.
- D. Along with Forest Hills Public Schools, Lowell Public Schools, Caledonia Community Schools, the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, and other organizations, develop youth environmental and naturalist programming focusing on the natural landscapes of Cascade Peace Park, Burton Park, and Michael McGraw Park.

## *Pathways*

### **GOAL 3:**

**Continue to develop a system of non-motorized paths which will connect the Township's residential neighborhoods with schools, parks, commercial centers and destination points and which will link the township to adjacent communities.**

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Integrate existing pedestrian path segments within the village business district, business corridors, parks, destinations and adjacent community pedestrian pathways.
  - Grand River Avenue
  - 28<sup>th</sup> Street from Buttrick to Snow
  - Cascade Road from 36<sup>th</sup> Street to Whitneyville
  - Cascade Road to Tassell Park
  - Burton Road to Patterson Avenue
  - Thornapple River Drive to Cascade Township Park and south to Caledonia
  - Thornapple River Drive from Cascade Road to Thornhills
  - Kraft Avenue
  - Cascade Park to Ada Park
- B. Continue to provide a separate, Class I, looped/connected pedestrian pathway system.
- C. Determine a location for a greenbelt corridor and develop a non-vehicular trail along the south side of the Grand River from Ada Township's proposed trail to the east edge of Cascade Township.
- D. Encourage and coordinate future pedestrian pathway expansions to tie into future residential and recreational lands to the east.

## *Land Acquisition*

### **GOAL 4:**

**Assure that adequate land is available for the appropriate use and improvement of park and recreation facilities in the Township.**

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Work with groups such as the State of Michigan, the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, Kent County Parks, Cascade Community Foundation, and Township residents to evaluate potential acquisition of property to provide recreational opportunities as well as protect natural land features and open space. The Township has identified a parcel of land on Cascade Road, east of Quiggle Avenue for potential recreation facility development.
- B. Priority areas for land acquisition should be those identified in the Natural Features Inventory Report.
- C. In order to expand neighborhood park acreage, future subdivision and site condo developments will be encouraged and incentivized to include open areas, park space, or recreational facilities and amenities into their development plans.
- D. Explore other land acquisition in the residential portions of the Township.

- E. Acquire available land adjacent to existing parks for improved access, parking and expansion of green space and enhanced use areas and facilities.
- F. Acquire land or negotiate joint ventures with other governmental and non-governmental entities to provide for and assure access to nearby open space, water frontage or access points, parks and trail systems that provide expanded leisure time opportunities for members of the community.
- G. Continue to re-evaluate available lands in the Township for possible acquisition or development as future recreation land through systematic approach by utilizing data under resource inventory.
- H. Encourage and coordinate easement or ownership for non-motorized pedestrian pathway trail extensions as result of private developments.
- I. Explore acquisition of land for development of Community Center in the Village area, connected to other public leisure and cultural opportunities.

### ***Universal Design***

#### **GOAL 5:**

**Continue the improvements and development of universal design concepts at all the Township park locations.**

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Annually assess each park and recreation facility’s accessibility opportunities and challenges and work towards individual action steps for maintenance and design improvements.
- B. Provide for paved parking areas and trails to provide barrier-free access to all areas.
- C. Update the playground and parking areas at Cascade Township Park to meet current ADA guidelines and requirements.
- D. Explore options for an all-access, inclusive playground.

### ***Water Resources***

#### **GOAL 6:**

**Explore future opportunities for waterfront access and utilization in the Township.**

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Explore options for recreational facilities (bathrooms, paved parking, pathways, observation decks, etc.) at McGraw Park that would improve resident’s access to the waterfront along the Grand River.
- B. Explore options for public recreational amenities including a boat launch, picnic tables, and parking off of Thorncrest Drive along the Thornapple River.
- C. Explore options for future non-motorized trails along the Thornapple River.
- D. Improve visibility of the riverfront throughout the Township where possible to retain the waterfront’s presence and influence in the community.

### ***Collaborative Efforts***

#### **GOAL 7:**

**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 and avoiding duplication of facilities and services.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Coordinate and regularly communicate with the Kent County Parks Department, Ada Township Parks and Recreation Department, City of Lowell Parks, Recreation & Culture Department, and Caledonia Township. Routinely determine regional recreation needs and develop coordinated plans for the preservation and conservation of natural areas, water resources, and open spaces.
- B. Encourage the participation of volunteers in the development of recreational facilities.
- C. Assure communication to encourage public awareness and involvement in the recreation process and recreation resources. Develop a community database for email “blasts” or a mobile app that lets the community know about events at parks, organized activities, and facility updates.
- D. Utilize public and private sector cooperation in the promotion of recreation and the improvement of recreational opportunities.
- E. Cooperate with the school district, YMCA, AYSO, GRASA, and other providers of soccer programs in the development of an area-wide soccer facility.
- F. 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.
- G. Encourage the cooperation and participation of Ada, Lowell and Caledonia Townships as well as the City of Kentwood in the formation of a regional recreational advisory board in an effort to combine resources and avoid duplication of facilities and services.
- H. Align goals with Cascade Community Foundation to assure community needs and values are jointly assessed and community supported funding is strategically aligned with the Township and Foundation’s short and long term goals.
- I. Coordinate with the Downtown Development Authority in the revitalization of the Township Village development area and the Museum Garden Park Gateway Concept plan.
- J. Communicate with regional trails organizations including West Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, West Michigan Mountain Biking Alliance, and West Michigan Water Trails to encourage development and linkages into Cascade Township.

***Future Needs***

**GOAL 8:**

**Develop mechanisms to meet future recreational needs in the Township.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Pursue a dedicated Township millage levy for park, recreation, and open space facilities and acquisition.
- B. Annually review the Township’s park rules and policy and routinely seek public input and feedback on ways to revise or improve them.
- C. Review and analyze the Township’s off-leash dog policy and seek further input from the community on interests related to dog
- D. Pursue a renewed pathways millage in anticipation of the existing millage expiring in 2016.
- E. Budget for implementation funds for a recreational capital improvement program each year.
- F. Pursue a variety of possible funding sources, including State and Federal grant programs.

- G. Explore mechanisms for evaluating and accepting private donations of land, time and monies through a Friends of Cascade Parks & Trails organizational framework.

**GOAL 9:**

**Encourage preservation and integration of township natural resources.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Pursue the acquisition of land or development rights to land by the Township, County, State or private land trust.
- B. Set aside undeveloped properties for future recreational needs.
- C. Work with the Downtown Development Authority to identify potential sites and properties for future recreational development.

**Goal 10:**

**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. Develop an expanded survey to ensure public needs and desires in areas of parks and recreation.
- C. Provide opportunities for the involvement of Township residents in the identification, selection and development of recreational facilities.
- D. Monitor the effectiveness of the Township's efforts in fulfilling identified goals and objectives by
- E. providing opportunities for Township residents to evaluate the progress of recreational development.
- F. Monitor the effectiveness of the Township's efforts in providing fully accessible opportunities for Township residents.
- G. Cooperate with intergovernmental efforts to establish a regional greenway and trail system along the Grand River from Lowell to Grand Rapids.

## Section 7. Action Plan

The Cascade Charter Township Parks Committee has prepared the following Action Program, based on a “comparison to standards” facility analysis, expertise of residents and area leaders, and the goals and objectives listed in Section 6. The Action Program details what Cascade Charter Township plans to achieve within the next five years or more.

The Action Program does not supplant the goals and objectives, but should be used in conjunction with them. Many of the goals and objectives presented may be long-term in nature, and in many instances, entities in addition to Cascade Township will need to cooperate in order to fully implement them. The Action Program recognizes this and proposes a reasonable timeframe based on public priorities. Additionally, potential funding sources are included.

However, recreation planning should be viewed as flexible; and the timing of new projects may, in part, be influenced by the availability of land; funding resources; and cooperation of private property owners. Moreover, public opinions and ideas may change or be refined over time; and this plan may be amended from time to time to reflect shifts in perception and needs. Priorities should be reviewed annually and adjusted as necessary.

*Below are the vision statements that were identified throughout the planning process that have informed the action plan. They address key themes that the community envisioned for each park, as well as overall goals for Cascade Township parks and recreational amenities.*

### **The Township will achieve Barrier-Free compliance for all Cascade Township Parks.**

The Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of physical ability in connection with Township recreational facilities. Developed park facilities must comply with barrier-free design standards. As recreational facility development or improvement is considered in the future, barrier-free accessibility is a significant priority item to help ensure that recreation can be enjoyed by all residents and visitors of Cascade Township. Improvements can include proper hard surfaces for wheelchairs, accessible picnic tables and restrooms, resting benches frequently placed along a walking route, and play equipment that is easy to get to and use. The principles of universal design are supported by this Recreation Plan.

In most communities many parks, playgrounds and public spaces that have been recently built or that are underway are missing a crucial element of fostering a unique and joyful play experience. Many of these are long-standing layouts and designs utilizing standard methods with paved hard surface pathways and ramps that allow for full accessibility. But in a larger sense, they miss the mark by not appealing to the senses of sight, sound, taste and touch. A goal would be to facilitate imaginative, interactive dramatic social play. By understanding the diverse needs of children with different kinds of abilities and disabilities, it is possible to create an extraordinary environment where children (and adults too) of all abilities can interact together. The challenge is how to create, in an affordable manner, areas and elements that sparks the imagination of the user and appeals to all the senses.

As recreational facility development or improvement is considered in the future, barrier-free accessibility is a significant priority item to help ensure that recreation can be enjoyed by all residents and visitors of Cascade Township.

All improvements should strive for universal access. The intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was to give all Americans equal opportunities to participate in public activities, but often the rule falls short of this goal. One must recognize that a project must involve more than providing simple access as a minimum standard. Design principles focusing on universal access that provide equal levels of experiences for all age groups and abilities while delivering on the ADA's promise of equal accessibility opportunities is a prime consideration.

Many of the park facilities not in compliance with current accessibility standards can be brought into compliance as part of a maintenance program. Others will require a major expenditure of effort to change and should be part of any capital improvements planned for that particular facility. Areas for improvement generally include paved parking areas, improved barrier-free parking, paved trails to improve access, updating play areas, restroom building and improved overlooks/viewing platforms. Ongoing review by the Parks Committee on improving opportunities for universal access will continue in the future with the involvement of local individuals and/or advocacy groups representing handicap residents and all residents to insure that park development elements are designed and built in the fullest and best accord in the principles of Universal Access. A complete list of necessary improvements for each facility can be found in the Appendix.

**The Township will explore options for adding dedicated parks staff members as needed.**

While the Township's recreation needs are not large enough to warrant a large recreation staff, limited part-time staff could be helpful in overseeing daily efforts and coordinating activities, policies, and suggestions. The Township will annually monitor staffing needs and will continue to seek partners in the process to implement this plan.

**The Township will continually improve existing facilities and continue to seek new opportunities for parks and recreational development.**

The recreation planning process revealed a need for improved and expanded facilities to increase the opportunities offered to residents and visitors. While land acquisition was not a top priority for Township residents based upon the planning process, the Township views land acquisition as an ongoing, long-term process.

**Burton Park will be re-oriented to become an active and regularly used neighborhood park.**

Burton Park is well positioned to serve as a highly accessible neighborhood park. Residents envision a park they can access via improved trails and pathways from the surrounding neighborhoods. In order to give Burton Park more of a presence in the community and to increase public usership, residents envision a recreation destination that includes expanded amenities that serve a broad range of age groups and are easily accessed. While it is the desire of the community for Burton Park to remain as natural as possible, the Township can explore ways to add low-impact, passive use recreation activities and improved way-finding signage to enhance the visibility and user experience of the park. Several members of the community would also like the Township to consider the existing off-leash dog policy and would like to explore the opportunity to include an off-leash dog area at Burton Park.

Reorient Burton Park as an accessible neighborhood park that is a destination for those within and outside the community.

**The Thornapple River will be a prominent feature of the community with public access and recreational opportunities.**

Community members feel that the Thornapple River is one of the greatest recreational and natural resources in the Township, and would like to see it better activated for public use. There was support for the addition of boating launches/portages south of the dam at Leslie E. Tassell Park. Respondents would also like to see greater fishing opportunities along the river with the inclusion of other fishing docks and boardwalks. Participants at the open house discussed the possibility of creating a water trails map for residents, and the development of water trail markers along the Thornapple River.

Leslie E. Tassell Park will serve as a central community gathering space that features ample recreational access to the Thornapple River.

**Leslie E. Tassell Park will serve as a central community gathering space and a place for civic activity and events.**

Respondents feel that Leslie E. Tassell is the most centrally located park that has the potential to offer space for large community events, and become an active “Town Centre”. The Cascade Community Foundation has a strong interest in beautify the park through a rotating public art exhibit and a mural to be created on the bridge at Tassell Park. Several voiced the opinion that they would like to see the inclusion of an amphitheater in the current park space, as well as the continuation of concerts in the park. Activating the riverfront for greater recreational opportunities is a desire of the community, and can be achieved through a long-term goal of expanding waterfront public parklands in Cascade Township.

**The Township will continue to develop pathways within the community and will link up with regional pathway networks.**

The development of trails and pathways was the top priority for residents in Cascade Township. According to the community opinion survey, sixty-five percent of residents are willing to financially support a continued trails and pathways millage in some capacity. Residents would most like to see pedestrian pathways along all major roads in Cascade Township, and would like pathways that connect to adjacent communities including Grand Rapids Charter Township, Lowell, and Caledonia. Cascade Township, Ada Township, and Grand Rapids together boast over 50 miles of trails, however many parts of the trails are not connected . Cascade Community Foundation is offering seed money to each township which will be used to fuel fundraising efforts to build the final links between all of the trails. There is significant opportunity for the Cascade Township pathways and non-motorized trails systems to link up to the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail in Caledonia as well as the Fred Meijer M-6 Trail in Kentwood.

**The Cascade Public Library and its property will be considered and included in area-wide parks and recreation expansions.**

The community feels that Cascade Public Library is a natural space for expanding recreational opportunities, and feel that the inclusion of amenities geared towards older youth aged 10-18 would be most desirable, given that survey respondents felt that adolescents aged 10-18 were the most underserved by current recreational offerings in the Township. The library is centrally located and is within a short drive and walking distance of several community neighborhoods. Residents voiced the opinion that they would like to see the library take an active role in planning and organizing community events at the proposed park space. The Downtown Development Authority undertook an effort to express a vision for

added community gathering places at the Library in 2010. The **DDA Library Plan** can be viewed in the **Appendix**.

**The addition of recreation amenities at Cascade Township (Rec) Park will ensure that the park continues to offer accessible, diverse, and high-quality athletic amenities.**

Community members voiced their opinion that the already sports-oriented Cascade Township Park would provide an ideal place for the inclusion of several added amenities that would contribute to a highly utilized, four seasons recreational destination for the Township. The park already features several other athletic offerings and offers ample parking, field lighting, and bathrooms for park users. The Cascade Community Foundation will be adding the Township's first two public basketball courts to this park. Other possible additions include an ice skating rink and an off-leash dog park.

A conceptual park plan noting these improvements and additions at Cascade Township (Rec) Park is included in the **Appendix**. (See **Conceptual Park Plan**).

Cascade Public Library will be strategically utilized to give the community expanded recreational opportunities on-site.

**Cascade Township will become a destination for biking enthusiasts through the development of regionally linked bike trail system.**

As an extension of the existing trails and pathways infrastructure, biking enthusiasts envision Cascade Township as a key connection to regional biking facilities and trails in adjacent communities. Bikers envision diverse opportunities to recreate, and several voiced an interest in mountain biking. The sport has become widely popular regionally, and residents would like the Township to explore options to develop modest trails. Local bike shops and riding clubs, as well as the West Michigan Mountain Biking Association would be likely partners to help establish and maintain the trails.

Peace Park, Burton Park, McGraw Park are to remain natural areas that provide ample opportunity for low-impact passive recreation activities, nature programming, land conservation, and wildlife preservation.

**Youth and adults will have opportunities to engage in quality outdoor and nature programming at Peace Park and Burton Park.**

Cascade Peace Park and Burton Park are primarily undeveloped forestland and contain an abundance of wildlife and natural features. Residents would like to see these areas used for nature programming which would include tours, hikes, species identification, family outings, and possibly a nature center. As part of the wish to highlight the features of the park, residents voiced their desire for better signage and trail maintenance in these parks. The Cascade Community Foundation has expressed an interest in investing in way-finding signage at Peace and Burton Parks and plan identification signage at McGraw Park. It was suggested that community-wide events such as stargazing, invasive species management, and bird watching could occur at these parks.

**The Township will remain committed to its focus on maintaining natural areas.**

Community members remain deeply committed to preserving and protecting natural areas, and value the natural areas at Cascade Burton Park, Cascade Peace Park, and Michael McGraw Park, as well as open spaces throughout the Township. According to the survey, most

residents agree that natural areas are the most needed type of park in Cascade Township. This is important because eighty-eight percent of survey respondents believe that providing opportunities to enjoy nature and the outdoors is the most important benefit of parks and recreational areas. As Cascade Township develops its parks and recreation plan, it will be important to balance the desires for amenities with the community's commitment to ensuring that open space is preserved with low impact uses.

**Township parks and recreation planning will work strategically with the Cascade Downtown Development Authority to re-envision the Village development area off of Cascade Road and Old 28<sup>th</sup> Street.**

Several community members voiced the idea that they envision a revitalized Town Center with recreation amenities in the development area off of Cascade Road, Old 28th Street, and Thornapple River Drive. The community feels this underutilized commercial area can be refreshed as a recreational area due to its central location within the Township, proximity to the river, and availability of space. Respondents feel that the inclusion of recreation activities would be a viable use of the property and offer easily accessed amenities via non-motorized transportation.

The Downtown Development Authority has an interest in enhancing the Village to make it a destination in the Township, and making it pedestrian friendly. The DDA envisions a place that offers activities and events for people of all ages including children and seniors. The Village will benefit from improved traffic flow and traffic safety, thus allowing for large public gatherings. Specific projects the DDA has explored are the creation of a skate park, a kid's playground with rock climbing wall, small amphitheater, children's garden with water play activities, and improved aesthetic amenities including added lighting, parking, site furniture, landscaping, signage, and walking paths. In addition, it is a goal of the DDA to improve the Museum Garden Park through the creation of a Gateway Concept plan that will establish the corner of Cascade Road and Thornapple River Drive as a prominent avenue towards the Village center (**See Gateway Concept Plan** in the **Appendix**). The distinct plan calls for improved pedestrian access, a new public plaza seating area, and expanded gardens and landscaping. Together, the Village redevelopment and Gateway Concept plan will add a recreational presence to the Township's center of activity.

**The parks staff will remain committed to the improved maintenance of existing parks.**

Some residents voiced concern that current park maintenance can be improved, specifically at Cascade Township Park which includes several amenities, as well as the Museum Garden Park. Residents would like to see improved continuous and consistent care of the lawns and landscaping, and would like to see sidewalks kept well-maintained and kept clear of debris. Fifty-seven percent of respondents who took the opinion survey feel that maintaining and improving existing park facilities is the most important step in improving parks and recreational offerings in the Township. The Township will explore ways to assure that park maintenance as well as funding is adequate and sustainable.

**The Township will seek opportunities for the development of an athletic field complex offering multi-purpose recreational opportunities.**

Residents voiced the opinion that organized sports such as soccer, football, lacrosse, and field hockey are very popular with Cascade Township families, and they feel that a multi-purpose athletic field complex is

Over half of respondents who took the opinion survey feel that maintaining and improving existing park facilities is the most important step in improving parks and recreational offerings in the Township.

needed in the Township to support the growing number youth involved in sports. Representatives from the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) would like to partner with the Township to explore options for development. The Township has explored the option for development of a multi-purpose field on Cascade Road between Quiggle Avenue SE and Snow Avenue SE. (See **Conceptual Park Plan-Soccer Complex** in the **Appendix**).

**The Township will continually and conscientiously align parks and recreation planning goals with the Cascade Community Foundation.**

The Cascade Community Foundation, an organization dedicated to connecting funds with community development projects, is in the process of raising capital to support various recreational projects throughout the Township. Uniting and joining efforts will strengthen the ability of the Township and the Foundation to meet the needs of all residents in Cascade Township, and will ensure that there is continued support and capital for developing and maintaining parks and recreation amenities and infrastructure. Along with other improvements to parks mentioned, the Cascade Community Foundation has a strong interest in improving the Airport Viewing Area at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport by including a pavilion, seating, and adding a restroom. Together, the Township and the Foundation may continue to provide unique and enriching recreational opportunities for the greater Grand Rapids community.

**The Township will regularly assess existing and future stewardship and funding needs.**

It is critical that new parks and/or future facilities have long term maintenance and funding plans. Continued coordination with outside agencies and organizations such as Forest Hills Public Schools, Lowell Area Schools, Caledonia Community Schools, AYSO, Cascade Community Foundation, and any other regional athletic organizations and neighborhood associations will be beneficial in accomplishing this objective. In the future, when new facilities are introduced, the Township must consider strategies for maintenance. A possible solution may include involvement from volunteer entities that use the facilities via an organized stewardship program (e.g. Friends of Cascade Township Parks).

**POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES AND RESOURCE CONCEPTS**

A variety of resource partners and potential funding sources may exist to assist in implementing the strategic implementation summary provided on the following pages. A non-exhaustive summary of these resources is as follows:

***Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.*** The MNRTF can provide assistance for the Township’s outdoor recreation projects, including land acquisition and physical development of park facilities. This assistance is intended to bolster existing facilities, protect critical natural resources and establish new parkland. Development project grants may range between \$15,000 and \$500,000; there is no limit to acquisition requests. The minimum required local match is 25%. This opportunity should particularly be contemplated for future acquisition and development activities.

***Land and Water Conservation Fund.*** The LWCF is similar to the Trust Fund grant described above, in that it is meant to help fund land acquisition and park development. The minimum grant request amount is \$30,000 and the maximum grant request amount is \$100,000. The required local match is exactly 50%; meaning that total project costs range from \$60,000 to \$200,000. Natural feature preservation has historically been the primary award criteria; and as such, this opportunity should especially be taken into account when planning for new passive

recreation facilities. In addition, the LWCF now places emphasis on trails, “green” technology in outdoor recreation, universal design and coordination among recreation providers.

***Non-Motorized Entities.*** Trails encourage health and wellness, enhance quality of life, and promote sense of community. Trails also can improve non-motorized system safety. Aside from the programs described above, several other entities can provide assistance with trail funding, planning, information or construction. These include the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, the Safe Routes to School Program, and the Bikes Belong Coalition. In addition, the Michigan Department of Transportation may provide funding for numerous types of projects that encourage safe, accessible and efficient forms of multi-modal transport, including non-motorized facilities and other improvements related to transportation.

Additionally, the Recreation Improvement Fund Grant and Recreation Trails Program Grant may help to fund projects that connect facilities on MDNR-owned property. A MDNR division or bureau is always the applicant, but a local government partnership may be considered if the project contributes to MDNR goals and is located on, or linked to, MDNR land.

***Leveraging Resources.*** Most recreation grants will stipulate a minimum required local match. It is possible to be awarded grant dollars from multiple funding sources, and use the monies leveraged from one source as the match for another. An example might be a local trail project, where the community uses MDOT funds as the match for an MDNR grant. This can help save local government resources, is usually permitted by most grant programs, and is encouraged.

Regional Parks and Recreation Planning. Grant application guidelines often include a provision for regional coordination and cooperation, and recreation grants are no exception. The Township will generally receive more “points” for a grant application if it can demonstrate that the proposed project is the result of collaboration with an adjacent community, regional entity or multiple units of government. The Township should therefore keep this concept in mind, especially when planning for future trail connections that may traverse more than one community.

***Donations & Foundations.*** Residents, property owners, businesses, and organizations will frequently contribute to causes that improve local quality of life. While these contributions are often pecuniary, they may also include land donations, volunteer services, or the gift of equipment or other facilities. For example, forming an entity such as “Friends of Cascade Area Trails” is likely to garner regional support and should therefore be explored. The Cascade Community Foundation is a source of continued support, and the Thornapple River Watershed Council is an alliance in preserving and protecting the environmental and recreation qualities of the Thornapple River. Other foundation-type entities may also be explored, as foundations are non-profit organizations that are expressly established to receive donations and use them in accordance with a plan. While endowments should not be relied on in totality, they can contribute significantly to recreational offerings in Cascade Township.

***Township Funds.*** The general fund, a special millage, the parks budget, and bonds are possibilities to help fund new and improved facilities in the Township. The parks budget has been successful in contributing to land acquisition and maintenance and will continue to be critical to recreation services in the community. Additionally, a special millage can help the Township to provide matching funds for grant applications. However, a parks millage is not proposed; and is merely discussed here as an option. Bonds are another possibility, but these are not as flexible and usually require the constructed public project to generate revenues.

## **IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY**

This section provides a listing of recommendations. This summary of implementation includes the term in which each project is expected to be undertaken. Short-term projects are intended to be addressed in 1-2 years, while medium-term projects are intended to be addressed in 3-5 years, and long-term projects are expected to be addressed in 5 or more years. However, this Plan recognizes that opportunities may arise outside of the anticipated time frame and that such projects may be undertaken outside of their intended term.

Further, it is recommended that the plan be reviewed annually; and as part of that review potential costs should be estimated and timeframes should be reviewed and updated as necessary. A timeline of action steps can be viewed on the following page.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Term	No.	Project	Potential Funding Sources
SHORT	1	Increase park publicity and awareness for all parks. Tasks include quarterly parks updates in Township newsletter, updated parks maps, improved way-finding signage, and digital tool development for park location information	Township funds, MNRTF, LWCF, or others
	2	Host community focus group discussions to review the existing dog owner's policies and guidelines as they relate to individual parks	-
	3	Establish essential pilot programs for youth outdoor education, organized sports, volunteer events, and stewardship organizations	Township funds
	4	Complete short neighborhood pathway connections in critical areas (See Goal 3)	Township funds, MNRTF, LWCF, Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance
	5	Develop barrier-free, handicap accessible, and universally designed children's play area in existing Cascade Township (Rec) Park as well as new properties such as the Village center or Cascade Public Library	Township Funds, CCF
	6	Organize Friends of Cascade Parks and Trails	Township Funds
	7	Develop an off-leash dog park at Cascade Township (Rec) Park	Township funds, MNRTF, LWCF
MID	1	Develop basketball courts at Cascade Township (Rec) Park with transitional ice skating rink	CCF, Private donations
	2	Prepare preliminary engineering plans for a regional trail system that will connect Cascade Township recreation areas with adjacent communities including Lowell, Caledonia, and Grand Rapids.	Township funds, MNRTF, LWCF, Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance
	3	Construct all-inclusive, barrier-free playground	Township funds, MNRTF, LWCF
	4	Implement Gateway Concept Plan at Museum Garden Park	DDA, CCF
LONG	1	Long term maintenance plan for pathways and trails extension	Township funds, MNRTF, LWCF, Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance
	2	Compile database of properties on the Thornapple River and Grand River to explore options for land acquisition and expansion of waterfront public park space	Township funds, MNRTF, LWCF, Thornapple River Association, Cascade Community Foundation, Private Donors
	3	Regional trail network connections to adjacent communities including Paul Henry Thornapple Trail and Fred Meijer M-6 Trail	Township funds, MNRTF, LWCF
	4	Develop multi-use athletic field complex	Township funds, MNRTF, LWCF
	5	Redevelop Village area with focus on unique and diverse recreation amenities	DDA, CCF

*Potential Funding Sources Key:*

*MNRTF = Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund; LWCF = Land and Water Conservation Fund  
CCF= Cascade Community Foundation; DDA= Cascade Downtown Development Authority*