



LINCOLN CHARTER TOWNSHIP

# 5-YEAR PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Five-Year Parks and Recreation Plan is to enable Lincoln Charter Township to improve the quality of life for its citizens. A Parks and Recreation Plan represents a foundation policy statement about what a community is, what its residents value, and what those residents hope the community will become in connection with parks and recreation facilities and services. As the community has grown over time, the Township has recognized the importance of proper recreation planning.

Lincoln Charter Township appreciates the significant contribution of recreation to the quality of life and the physical health of its citizens. This recognition has been manifested in this effort to update its Five Year Parks and Recreation Plan with the hopes of improving the existing parks, expanding public trails, and informing its residents of the recreational opportunities available. While the quality of life in the community is excellent, the Township government has chosen to take an active role in the delivery of recreation opportunities by completing this Plan.

Recreation planning is an exercise engaged by local and state governments and authorities to anticipate change, promote needed change, and 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 community. The parks and recreation plans of neighboring jurisdictions and Berrien County were consulted

in the preparation of this document to help coordinate recreation among the overall community.

This Five-Year Parks and Recreation Plan provides a policy and decision-making guide regarding future improvements within Lincoln Charter Township. Key planning issues are discussed, a clear set of goals and objectives are outlined, and specific implementation projects are identified. This Plan represents the culmination of several months of work by numerous residents and local officials. It reflects the community's deep concern for the natural beauty of its surroundings and a strong commitment to strengthening the quality of life within the Township. This document outlines the preferred future for parks and recreation and a comprehensive plan to realize it.

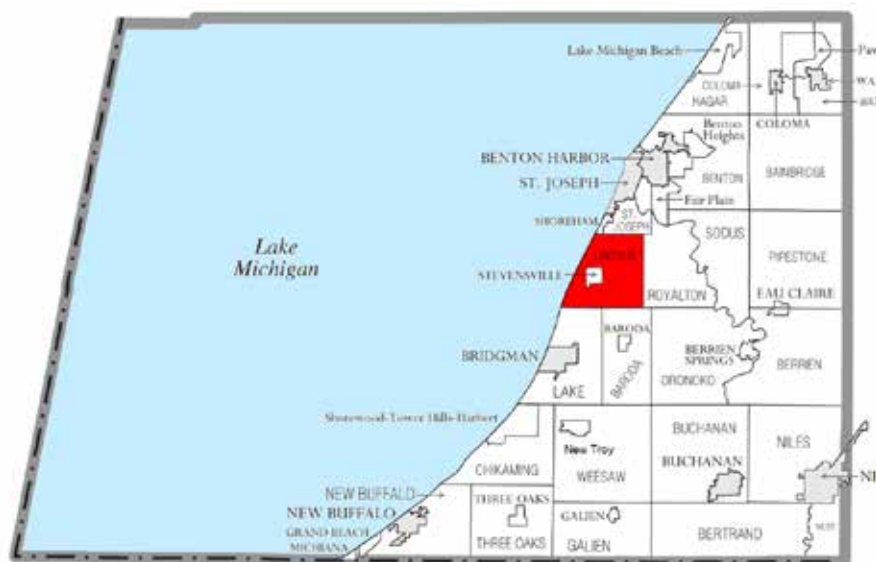
Lincoln Charter Township's Parks and Recreation Plan was last updated in 2011 and expired in December 2015. General recreation planning practice suggests, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) requires that Recreation Plans be updated every five years to keep them current. Following the DNR's guidelines establishes the Township's eligibility to apply for grant funds that would otherwise be unavailable. The former plan reflected many current conditions and trends, so the effort to update it in 2022-2023 enabled the community to focus on particular issues and challenges rather than restrict the effort to a more general overview.





## CHAPTER 2

## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION



## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Lincoln Charter Township is situated in the northwestern portion of Berrien County approximately 5 miles from the cities of St. Joseph and Benton Harbor. According to the United States Census Bureau, the Township has a total area of 18.2 square miles, of which, 17.9 square miles of it is land and 0.2 square miles (1.32%) is water.

Lincoln Charter Township adjoins Lake and Baroda Townships to the south, Roylton Township to the east, and St. Joseph Township to the north. The northern Township border at Maiden Lane Road is approximately 4 miles from the the City of St. Joseph's downtown area.

Interstate highway 94 passes through the western portion of Lincoln Charter Township, and Grand Mere State Park, located between the Village of Stevensville and Lake Michigan, is centered on the three Grand Mere Lakes and is home to sand dunes that range from 3,000 to 10,000 years old.

## GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES

Agriculture is the predominant land use in the eastern and southeastern portion of Lincoln Charter Township; residential or built-up land covers the central and northwestern portions; and the Grand Mere area is located in the southwestern portion of the Township. In addition to these prominent features, the Hickory Creek corridor generally bisects the Township into east and west halves. The valley along the creek is narrow with steep slopes in several locations. The soils associated with this area offer limited development potential but provide excellent opportunities for trails and recreation.

Other elements of Lincoln Charter Township's ecological system consist of a reasonably high water table in its eastern and southern portions and a large muck area south of the Grand Mere Lakes. Also lying between the Grand Mere Lakes and the Lake Michigan shore is a two-mile stretch of sand dunes comprising over 500 acres. This southern sandy shore is in marked contrast to the northern half of the shoreline, which is characterized by steep lake bluffs, which are threatened by erosion.

Like all of Michigan, the area was created by glacial activity, shaped by weather conditions and similar to the western portion of the State its climate is further modified by the Lake Michigan effect, which modifies extreme ranges in weather and

has created a rare biological environment containing numerous types of natural communities. Existing development in the area includes residential structures and a large State nature preserve. Historically, however, land uses in the Grand Mere area have included sand mining, commercial and industrial development, residences, and open space. At present, 1,184 acres are owned by the State of Michigan and managed by the Department of Natural Resources as a unique area that is proposed to remain as open space.

## SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

### Present Population

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Lincoln Charter Township has experienced steady population growth from 1990 to 2020. During this period, the Township's population grew from 13,604 in 1990 to 14,929 in 2020, an increase of 1,325 people (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Population Change 1990-2020**

|                        | 1990   | 2000   | 2010   | 2020   | % Change 1990-2020 |
|------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------------------|
| Lincoln Charter Twp    | 13,604 | 13,952 | 14,691 | 14,929 | 9.7%               |
| Baroda Twp             | 2,731  | 2,880  | 2,801  | 2,835  | 3.8%               |
| Lake Charter Twp       | 2,487  | 3,148  | 2,972  | 3,316  | 33.3%              |
| Royalton Twp           | 3,135  | 3,888  | 4,766  | 5,141  | 64%                |
| St. Joseph Charter Twp | 9,613  | 10,042 | 10,028 | 9,933  | 3.3%               |

In addition to the growth in Lincoln Charter Township, each of the surrounding townships experienced growth during this same period. However, with a population of nearly 15,000, Lincoln Charter Township represents the largest population by far. And while population growth rates are sometimes deceiving due to a smaller actual population, the growth experienced in Lincoln Charter Township and surrounding communities is a strong sign of local and regional community health.

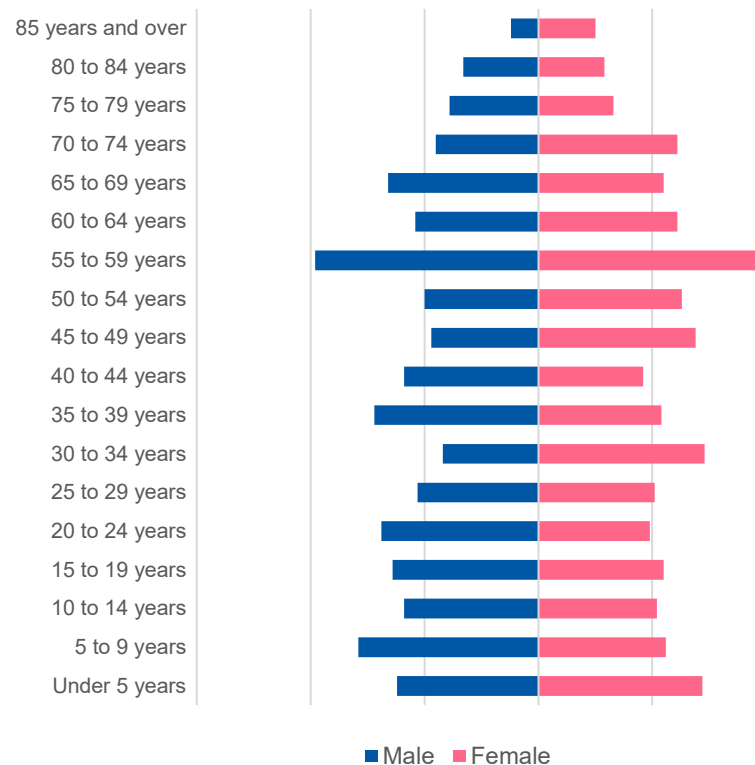
### Population Characteristics

Figure 1 is a population pyramid for Lincoln Charter Township based on age/sex data from the 2020 American Community Survey. Population pyramids are informative in that they show the proportion of males and females for each age group, and can also predict patterns and rates of growth in the future. For example, a population pyramid with a wide base and narrow peak indicates a high rate of growth as the younger residents outnumber the older residents, and it suggests that people are having children in greater numbers. In these cases, recreation planning should place more emphasis on facilities for children. Conversely, a population pyramid with a narrow base and a wide peak indicates a population likely to decline, as older residents who are nearing the end of their lives outnumber the young population, and in these cases, recreational facilities that are geared toward seniors should be emphasized.

In Lincoln Charter Township, the population pyramid is relatively even among all age groups from 0-70 years. For recreation planning purposes, this indicates a need for the Township to provide facilities for people of all ages, as there is not likely to be a significant demand for one particular age range over another.



### Lincoln Charter Township Population Pyramid, 2020



### Population Projections

The projection of the population for a community over an extended period is subject to many variables, such as national population trends, migration, as well as the national and regional economy. One significant factor affecting local population growth or decline is the availability of employment within a reasonable commuting distance.

In September 2019, the State of Michigan released population projections by County through 2045. For Berrien County, the 2045 population estimate is 157,470, which is an increase of approximately 3,000 residents countywide based on its 2020 population of 154,316. While this method assumes that Lincoln Charter Township's rate of growth will mirror the County, this projection coupled with historical patterns of growth suggests that the Township will continue to grow at a slow, yet relatively steady rate over the next 20-25 years.

Notably, the demand for recreational facilities is likely to remain high in the summer months given the seasonal influx of tourists and the increased capacity to accommodate them relative to short-term rentals. Combined, Lincoln Charter Township is likely to experience an increased demand for recreation facilities.

### Disability Status

In planning for improvements to park facilities, it is important to contemplate the needs of those with disabilities. The 2016-2020 American Community Survey reports that 10.7% of Berrien County residents under the age of 65 have a disability. Lincoln Charter Township has continually worked to make its park facilities accessible to all, and these efforts will continue for the foreseeable future.



# CHAPTER 3

## ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

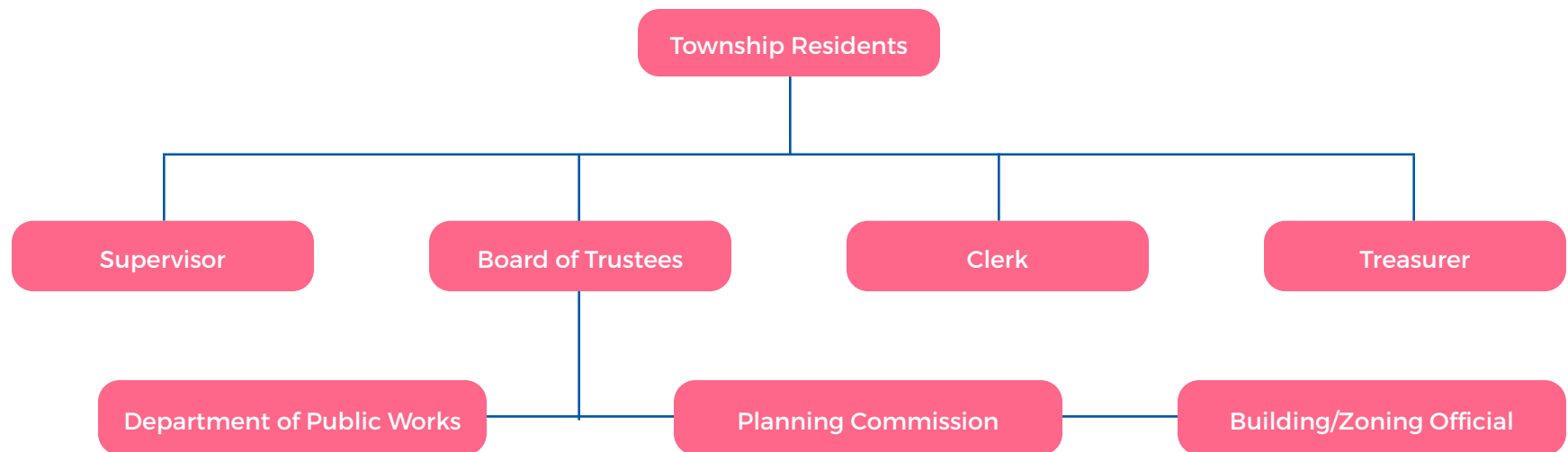
# ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

This Chapter of the Parks and Recreation Plan will discuss the administration, programming, and funding for parks & recreation facilities in Lincoln Charter Township.

## ADMINISTRATION

The Lincoln Charter Township Board of Trustees functions as the main governing body representing citizen interests for Township parks and recreation facilities. Currently the Township Treasurer and one of the Township Board members serve as the unofficial liaisons to the Township Board for all parks and recreation matters.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHART





## PROGRAMMING

Lincoln Charter Township does not provide recreational programming for its parks and recreation facilities. However, several independent entities provide social, youth-oriented, or competitive activities seasonally in the Township. Many of these organizations are private groups requiring fee payment to participate. While these entities are somewhat regional and may also schedule competitions or games elsewhere, they frequently utilize the Township's facilities.

These entities include:

- Southwest Michigan Rec (SWM Rec)
- Fresh Coast Lacrosse (LAX)
- Lakeshore Youth Baseball and Softball Association (LYBSA)
- Lakeshore Rocket Football (LRF)
- Lakeshore Public Schools
- Southwest Michigan Soccer Club
- Berrien Area Hockey Association

## MAINTENANCE

Maintenance for all of Lincoln Charter Township's parks is provided by the Township Department of Public Works staff and by volunteers representing the various independent entities utilizing many of the facilities. In particular, the Youth Baseball and Soccer groups spend a lot of time and private money on the maintenance and upkeep of those facilities at the Township's Lakeshore Youth Baseball & Softball Park and Youth Soccer Complex on Cleveland Avenue.

## CURRENT BUDGET AND FUNDING

Parks and recreation activities within Lincoln Charter Township are funded with general fund dollars; there are no separate millages. Additional sources of income come from various park usage fees and facility rental fees associated with the Lakeshore Youth Baseball & Softball Park. The Township collected \$4,000 from LYBSA, \$10,000 from SWM Rec, \$3,000 from LRF, and \$9,000 from LAX in usage fees in 2022.

The Lincoln Charter Township Board oversees budgeting and allocates the appropriate funding amount based on projected needs. In the 2022/2023 fiscal budget, a total of \$396,260 was budgeted for administration, general care, and maintenance, and \$282,500 was budgeted for capital expenditures. There is currently no debt incurred for parks and recreation facilities in the Township.

Additionally, parks across Lincoln Charter Township have benefitted from cash donations and many hours of volunteer labor from youth sports programs, and support of special projects from community groups such as Lakeshore Rotary, the Lions Club, Lakeshore Youth Baseball and Softball, SWM Rec, and Lakeshore Rocket Football.

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# CHAPTER 4

## RECREATION INVENTORY





## RECREATION INVENTORY

This chapter provides an inventory of recreational facilities in and surrounding the community.

### LINCOLN CHARTER TOWNSHIP PARK SYSTEM

Lincoln Charter Township has eleven areas designated as parks within the Township. There is also a 12th park in the Village of Stevensville, which is located within the Township's boundaries. A map showing the general location of the Township park areas is provided on the following page. A summary of each park area follows.

### Glenlord Beach Park

Glenlord Beach Park is a two-acre park located in the northwest region of Lincoln Charter Township on Lake Michigan. It is located at the western terminus of Glenlord Road. This land has been a park for many generations and a portion of the park was once known as Ball Park. The park is a large piece of a tall bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. The park has a port-a-jon, picnic tables, and a large parking lot. The park provides a scenic view of the lake although no beach access is allowed due to the steep slopes.

In 2018, a stone revetment was placed at the base of the slope to assist in protecting the bluff against erosion. A new concrete overlook area was installed in 2019 and improvements were made to the parking lot. In 2020, work was done to restore eroded areas adjacent to the overlook and to further protect the slope.

# Lincoln Charter Township

## Recreation Facilities

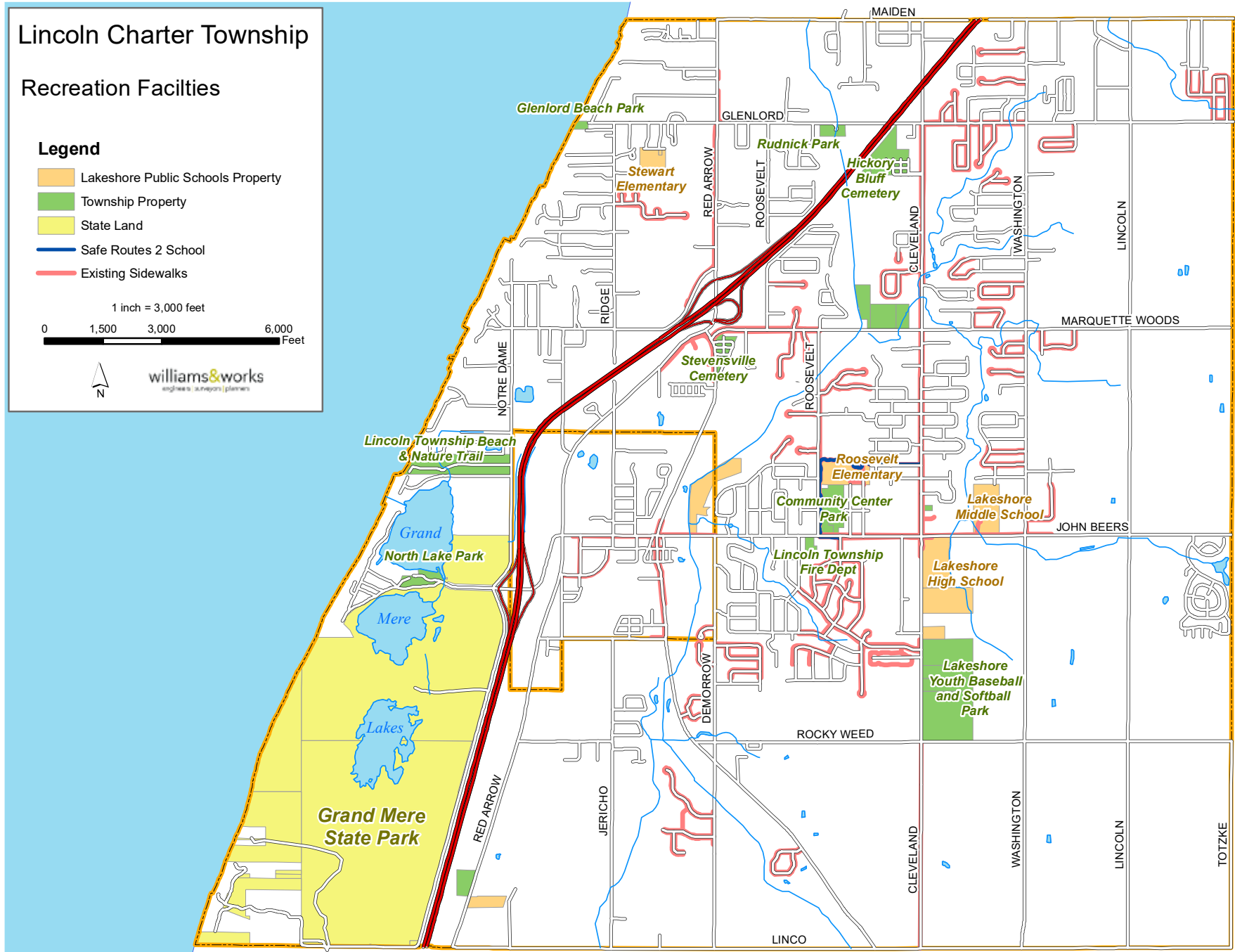
### Legend

- Lakeshore Public Schools Property
- Township Property
- State Land
- Safe Routes 2 School
- Existing Sidewalks

1 inch = 3,000 feet  
 0 1,500 3,000 6,000 Feet



**williams&works**  
 engineers, architects, planners



### Rudnick Park

Rudnick Park is a five-acre park located in the central northern region of Lincoln Charter Township. The park is located on both sides of Hickory Creek with access off Glenlord Road. The park is primarily a natural area along the creek. There is a small gravel parking area with a rustic trail to the creek side. The west side of the creek is mowed, providing access to the creek for wildlife viewing, walking, and fishing. The park area on the east side of Hickory Creek is undeveloped.

### Lincoln Township Beach & Nature Trail

This park provides the primary public beach access within Lincoln Charter Township. The park is 34.4 acres in area with direct frontage on Lake Michigan. The park is long and linear, with an entrance drive off Notre Dame Avenue. The majority of the park has natural vegetation with sand dunes along Lake Michigan. Amenities include nature trails and a picnic shelter near the entrance, an unpaved parking area, and vault-style bathroom near the beach.

The high water levels of Lake Michigan experienced in 2017 – 2020 damaged an existing boardwalk, picnic area, and gravel parking lot, resulting in the need to close the beach to all but walk-in use. Lincoln Charter Township desires to restore access to the beach, though firm plans are not yet in place. There is no water or sewer to the site.



### Community Center Park

Center Park is located in the central region of Lincoln Charter Township, adjacent to the Township Hall on Roosevelt Road. The park is nearly fifteen acres in size and provides active recreational facilities for residents. Facilities within the park include a spray park, a playground, picnic shelter with restrooms, two pickleball courts, two tennis courts, a beach volleyball court, a basketball court, a baseball diamond, a 0.3 mile walking path, and paved parking. Adjacent to the park is a 10-foot wide non-motorized trail that runs along South Roosevelt Road and connects to the Township Library and John Beers Road.

Plans are currently being developed to install additional parking for this popular park.



## North Lake Park

North Lake Park is located within the Grand Mere area and near the Pine Street, Lake Street, and Pier Street Beaches. It is immediately adjacent to Grand Mere State Park and located on North Lake, which discharges into Lake Michigan. The park is a little over six acres in size and provides access to a variety of natural resources. It is used by hunters for parking, picnickers, fishermen, and boaters. The park has an informal gravel parking lot, a picnic pavilion, a restroom facility, play equipment, and a boat launch. It is a popular lunchtime spot for a quiet picnic, and lake and nature viewing.

The Lakeshore Rotary has adopted this park and performs a variety of maintenance tasks and improvements.

## Lakeshore Youth Baseball & Softball Park, Lakeshore Rocket Football Park, and the Lakeshore Youth Soccer Complex

This park is located in the southeast region of Lincoln Charter Township at the corner of Cleveland Avenue and Rockey Weed Road. A total of 80 acres has been developed into this multi-sports facility.

The north end of the park is dedicated to baseball and softball facilities. This area contains 10 fields of various sizes from tee-ball to high school baseball and is home to the Lakeshore Youth Baseball and Softball Association (LYBSA). The LYBSA hosts 6 tournaments a year, bringing approximately 80-95 teams per tournament. They contribute approximately \$30,000-40,000

a year to the improvement of the facilities and are the primary financial provider for capital improvement. They also contribute hundreds of volunteer hours. The baseball/softball area includes restrooms, a concession area, a small playground area, and an indoor batting/practice facility. Additional ADA bathrooms were added in 2022.

South of the baseball/softball facilities is the youth football field operated by the Lakeshore Rocket Football Association. Completed in 2017, it includes an artificial turf game field with lighting and seating for 400 as well as natural turf practice fields.

The south end of the park is also known as the Lakeshore Youth Soccer Complex and is home to the Southwest Michigan Soccer (SWM Rec). The complex includes fields of various sizes, a restroom/concession stand, a small playground, and 600 feet of non-motorized trail. The SWM assists in the maintenance of the facility and provides volunteer assistance and donations for capital improvements. Parking to the soccer area is accessed via Rockey Weed Road and Cleveland Avenue. The fields are also used to host 3 LAX tournaments a year, bringing in approximately 60-70 teams per tournament. The Township plans to add two additional lacrosse fields in the coming years.

## Open Space Park

Located along Interstate 94 is a 5½ acre triangular-shaped piece of land remaining from the construction of the highway. While the park serves as an open green space, there are no developments or facilities located in the space.

### Chicago Street Beach

The Chicago Street Beach is located in the street right-of-way at the western terminus of Chicago Street. The park provides public beach access to Lake Michigan. There is informal parking and a footpath over the dune to the beach. The total area of the park is approximately one-half acre.

### Pine Street Beach, Lake Street Beach, and Pier Street Beach

These small public beaches are located near each other in the Grand Mere neighborhood that was, for many generations, comprised largely of small family cottages. The beaches are located at platted street ends that end at Lake Michigan. These parks offer informal street parking and sand pathways to the beach. They are popular and are used all year long for public access to Lake Michigan.

### TRAILS AND PATHWAYS

Over the last 15-20 years, Lincoln Charter Township has made a concerted effort to build out its network of sidewalk and nonmotorized trails. Currently, there are sidewalks on several main roads throughout the Township, including portions of Red Arrow Highway (from I-94 to Glenload), Cleveland Avenue, (from Lakeshore High School to Glenlord Road), and various sections of Roosevelt, Marquette Woods, Glenlord, and John Beers Roads. Additionally, several residential developments contain sidewalks, and the Township has worked to connect its nonmotorized network to schools, parks, and similar places of interest.

Lincoln Charter Township continues to plan new sidewalks throughout the Township and extensions of its non-motorized path network. As new developments occur, private developers are required to consider sidewalks and pathways in the planning process. Map 1 shows the locations of sidewalks and trails in the Township.

### OTHER FACILITIES AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC

#### Lakeshore Public Schools

**Stewart Elementary** - Stewart Elementary has a large outdoor playground area with two basketball courts, play equipment with two structures, fourteen swings and two tire swings, two informal soccer fields, and a 6' wide walking track. Interior facilities include an elementary-sized gym.

**Roosevelt Elementary** - Roosevelt Elementary has a large outdoor playground area with two basketball courts, play equipment with two structures, fourteen swings and two tire swings, three informal soccer fields, and one softball diamond. The school also hosts a Safety Town; a network of paved miniature streets, signs, signals, and intersections for children to learn about traffic safety. Interior facilities include an elementary-sized gym.

**Hollywood Elementary** - Hollywood Elementary has a large outdoor playground area with two basketball courts, and play equipment with two structures, fourteen swings, and two tire swings. Interior facilities include an elementary-sized gym.

**Lakeshore Middle School** - Lakeshore Middle School has a large outdoor multi-purpose athletic field, two portable basketball courts, and four tennis courts. Interior facilities include a gym.

**Lakeshore High School** - Lakeshore High School has an outdoor football stadium with a track, one baseball diamond, one softball diamond, and eight tennis courts. Interior facilities include two gymnasiums, an auditorium, a new fieldhouse, and meeting and conference rooms available for public meetings.

### St. Joseph Public Schools

**Upton Middle School** - Located in the northeast corner of Lincoln Charter Township, facilities include a track and football field, three soccer fields, two ball diamonds, four tennis courts, an indoor gymnasium, and a planetarium.

### Berrien County Parks

Lincoln Charter Township is located in Berrien County whose park system is under the direction of the Berrien County Parks, and Recreation Commission. None of the parks owned and operated by the County are located within the Township, but are regionally available for use by Township residents. An inventory of the County Parks is given below:

**Galien River County Park Preserve** - The Preserve is located in New Buffalo Township along the Galien River and includes a mix of upland and wetland habitats. The wetland is part of the New Buffalo Marsh, a Great Lakes marsh that formed along the Galien River upriver from Lake Michigan.

**Love Creek County Park** - Love Creek is located outside of the Village of Berrien Springs and has 150 acres of natural vegetation. The park has six miles of hiking trails and a staffed interpretive center that includes parking and restrooms. Cross-country skiing is offered in the winter with groomed and lighted trails.

**Madeline Bertrand County Park** - Madeline Bertrand County Park is located south of the City of Niles along the St. Joseph River. The park offers trails for hiking, bicycling, and winter cross-country skiing, an 18-hole disc golf course, picnic shelters, an indoor lodge, restrooms, informal picnicking, play equipment, and parking.

**Rocky Gap County Park** - Located in Benton Township, Rocky Gap County Park overlooks Lake Michigan from a bluff. The park includes 1,100 feet of Lake Michigan beach frontage with a swimming beach and picnic facilities.

**Silver Beach County Park** - Silver Beach County Park is located at the mouth of the St. Joseph River on Lake Michigan in the City of St. Joseph. Recreational opportunities include a Lake Michigan beach, beach volleyball, play equipment, a picnic pavilion, restrooms, and parking.

**Sarret Nature Center** - Sarrett Nature Center is a nonprofit organization. This unique nature center located in Berrien County, has five miles of trails meandering through its 800 acres. Its trail system includes boardwalks, observation platforms, and an easily accessible barrier-free walkway. Trails running along the Paw Paw River bluffs provide great views of the river valley below. Boardwalks and observation platforms in the floodplain give an up-close look at wetland wildlife and habitats.

## State of Michigan Parks

The State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources owns and operates two state parks that directly benefit Lincoln Charter Township. Grand Mere State Park is located in the western region of the Township, and Warren Dunes is located just south of the Township.

**Grand Mere State Park** - Grand Mere State Park is located within Lincoln Charter Township, along Lake Michigan. The park encompasses 1,184 acres of land and has 5,000 lineal feet of Lake Michigan shoreline. The park has been designated a National Natural Landmark by the United States Government in 1968. The park does not have any developed facilities and is located adjacent to North Lake Park.

**Warren Dunes State Park** - Warren Dunes is located south of Lincoln Charter Township near the City of Bridgman. It is 1,600 acres in size and is located on Lake Michigan. Public facilities include camping, hiking, picnicking, and swimming.

## Village of Stevensville Parks

Lions Park is located within the Village of Stevensville, which is surrounded by Lincoln Charter Township. It contains a dog park as well as a playground.

## City of St. Joseph Parks

The City of St. Joseph, just north of Lincoln Charter Township, contains several public recreational areas. Following is a summary of the more prominent facilities.

**Tiscornia Park** - This 16-acre park with beachfront on Lake Michigan and access to the north pier and lighthouse has a designated swimming area, a pavilion overlooking the St. Joseph River, and a restroom facility.

**Margret B. Upton Arboretum** - The arboretum is a 2.3-acre linear park located along the south shoreline of the St. Joseph River. Recently a new concrete boardwalk and safety railing was built along the western portion of the site. The park contains numerous sculptures that are periodically replaced with new pieces by the Krasl Art Museum. The park also contains a walking trail, drinking fountain, ornamental lighting, benches, swings, and botanically identified trees.

**Whirlpool Field/Vine Street** - Whirlpool Field was recently developed with an interactive fountain centered within the park. Along with the fountain, there is a small pump house and concrete boardwalk with bench seating that bisects the park. The park has become a very popular location during the summer. A parking lot to the south has recently been changed to a pay-to-park lot to provide access and parking for the park.

**Lions Park Beach** - This 17.22-acre park is located along the shoreline of Lake Michigan. Parking is currently free and the two existing park pavilions are always reserved during the summer months. The park also has a restroom facility and playground area with picnic tables and grills.



**John & Dede Howard Family Recreation Trail** - This multi-use path is located along approximately 5 acres of city-owned land and provides accessible linkage for area residents above the 60-foot tall bluff and the beachfront via a wooden bridge and accessible switchback ramp system. The path continues to the north through a wooded area to the west of the railroad tracks and then connects to Silver Beach, Whirlpool Park, and the Upton Arboretum. New improvements include lighting and benches.

**Lake Bluff Park** - This linear park of over 7 acres in size is located along the west side of Lake Boulevard at the top of the approximately 60-foot bluff that runs from Park Street north. The park has numerous memorials and provides outstanding views of Lake Michigan, the lighthouse, and the newly developed Whirlpool Fountain. The mature trees and passive seating areas adjacent to the walk add shade and gathering areas. Throughout the summer months, the park is used for farmer's markets, craft shows, festivals, and many other events. The Howard band shell at the northern end of the park holds concerts and has been the location for many weddings. The park also has a newly renovated restroom facility that is accessible via a ramp.

**Lookout Park** - Lookout Park is located at the south end of the St. Joseph city limits along a scenic overlook over Lake Michigan. The park is over 14.5 acres in size and runs for over one-half mile in length along the west side of Lakeshore Drive. The park is strictly passive with a parking lot and observation platform.

**Whittlesey Park** - This 2.64-acre park is the location of the John and Dede Howard Ice Arena with an NHL size refrigerated open-air rink under a roof. The building has a warming hut, locker

rooms, concession, and restroom facilities. The arena is used for open recreational skating as well as by area hockey leagues. The park also contains a large parking lot with lighting. To the north of the ice arena is an open lawn area that is utilized as an informal dog run area and for open sports and rec program activities.

**Kiwanis Park** - This park has the largest acreage (19.2) within the city limits. This park has a lighted ball field used by area leagues, a park shelter, restrooms, a dog park and playground equipment, and a large parking lot. The park is also the location of the John and Dede Howard Skate Park. This facility contains above-ground ramps, grind rails, and other similar facilities.

**Riverview Park** - This 107-acre park is owned by the City of St. Joseph and located within St. Joseph Charter Township adjacent to the St. Joseph River. The park is more natural in appearance and character and contains a lodge and two shelters. The park also has many picnic tables and grills scattered throughout. There are two ball fields. The lighted baseball field has a concession stand, bleacher seating with an accessible ramp system, a drinking fountain, and landscaping. There is also a boat launch with parking for boat trailers.

**West Basin Marina** - This City-owned marina is located at 273 Marina Drive and has 94 total slips, 74 seasonal and 20 transient, ranging from 30 to 50 feet in length. West Basin Marina has a convenient location just inside the pierheads (no bridges), one block from the public beach at Tiscornia Park and next to the St. Joseph River Yacht Club.

## PRIVATE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Lincoln Charter Township, the City of St. Joseph, and the surrounding areas provide numerous private opportunities for recreational pursuits and activities. A listing of these service providers can be found by contacting St. Joseph Today and/or the Southwestern Michigan Tourist Council.

## RECREATION PROGRAMS

### Lakeshore Youth Baseball & Softball Association

The Lakeshore Youth Baseball & Softball Association is a non-profit volunteer-based association that provides baseball and softball leagues for area youth from tee-ball up through recreational teenage leagues.

### Southwest Michigan Rec (SWM Rec)

SWM Rec is a non-profit soccer association that provides youth soccer programs for both boys and girls of all ages.

### Lakeshore Rocket Football Association

The Lakeshore Rocket Football Association provides youth football and cheerleading programs for youth ages eight to twelve years of age. The Association is a non-profit association.

### Southwest Michigan Select Soccer Program

The Southwest Michigan Select Soccer Program is a competitive soccer program offered for both male and female youth.

## ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

Federal and State laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of physical ability in connection with recreational facilities owned by governmental units. Developed park facilities must comply with barrier-free design standards. Public facilities in Lincoln Charter Township have been critiqued to understand the need for improvements relating to barrier-free accessibility. The ranking system suggested by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Guidelines (2021) was used to evaluate the parks. The ranking system ranges from 1 to 5 and is described as follows:

1. None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
2. Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
3. Most of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
4. The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
5. The entire park was developed/renovated using the principles of universal design

Each of the parks was evaluated using the ranking system. The specific elements considered include parking, paths to travel from parking to activity areas, activity areas, support facilities such as restrooms and surfacing.

In addition, as park development is considered in the future, barrier-free accessibility will remain a significant priority item to help ensure that recreation can be enjoyed by all residents and visitors of Lincoln Charter Township. The community is devoted to this effort.

## LINCOLN CHARTER TOWNSHIP ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

| Park   | Assessment | Summary   |
|--|------------|---|
| Glenlord Beach Park  | 3          | The parking lot, restrooms, and overlooks are accessible.   |
| Rudnick Park   | 1          | Use is primarily hiking and nature viewing with rustic, improved facilities   |
| Lincoln Township Beach and Nature Trail  | 1          | Access, parking areas, and beach are unpaved.   |
| Community Center Park  | 3          | Most amenities are accessible   |
| North Lake Park  | 2          | Use is primarily hiking and nature viewing. Bathrooms have been improved and cement paths have been added for handicap accessibility. |
| Lakeshore Youth Baseball & Softball, Rocket Football, and the Lakeshore Youth Soccer Complex | 3          | Most amenities are accessible   |
| Open Space Park  | n/a        | Undeveloped land  |
| Chicago Street Beech   | n/a        | Used for informal access to Lake Michigan; there are no designated parking areas or other amenities.                                  |
| Pine/Lake/Pier Street Beaches  | n/a        | Used for informal access to Lake Michigan; there are no designated parking areas or other amenities.                                  |



## GRANT-ASSISTED PROJECTS

Lincoln Charter Township has received four grants from the DNR, which are described below:

1. In 1990, the Township received an \$81,000 trust fund development grant for work at the Lincoln Township Beach (Project 90-129). The project consisted of the construction of removable beach stairs, boardwalks, picnic areas, landscaping, three gazebos, and a restroom building with a pump out. The park and improvements remain open to the public but the beach is closed to all but walk-in use. Lincoln Charter Township desires to restore access to the beach, though firm plans are not yet in place.
2. In 1991 the Township received a recreation bond fund grant for \$72,000 for the development of four ballfields, expanded parking, the installation of fencing, and dugouts at the Lakeshore Youth Ball Park. These improvements remain in place and the park remains open to the public.
3. The Lakeshore Youth Soccer Park received a recreation bond fund grant in 1995 for \$151,200 for the construction of six soccer fields, drainage and irrigation systems, a pavilion, a parking lot, and play areas. These improvements remain in place and the park remains open to the public.
4. Most recently, in 2011 the Township received a grant for work at North Lake Park. This included a six-foot-wide wetland boardwalk and viewing deck, signs, a handicapped drive and parking area, a barrier-free fishing platform/path, upgraded restrooms, a boat ramp, site amenities, utility lines, and six-foot-wide accessible paths. This park remains open to the public.





# CHAPTER 5

PLANNING & PUBLIC  
INPUT PROCESS

# PLANNING & PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

## PLANNING METHODS

Lincoln Charter Township utilized a systems approach to planning. This approach identifies local issues, priorities, and levels of service that can be determined via a community survey to inform the planning process.

## COMMUNITY OPINION SURVEY

The Lincoln Charter Township Parks and Recreation Plan was initiated to provide direction for future Township Park projects, administration, ongoing operation, and maintenance. The timetable for review and approval began in October 2022 and ended with adoption of the plan in early 2023. Community input was gathered through the issuance of an online community survey to the public. The survey was publicized through the Township’s website, social media accounts, and other means. A total of 443 people completed the survey by its deadline of November 25, 2022. The results of the survey, along with local input, aided the Township in developing the Goals and Objectives (Chapter 6) and the Action Plan (Chapter 7) of this Plan.

## SURVEY RESULTS

Selected results are provided in the following pages and the complete results are provided in Appendix \_\_\_\_.

Figure 2. Who in your household is the most active user of parks?

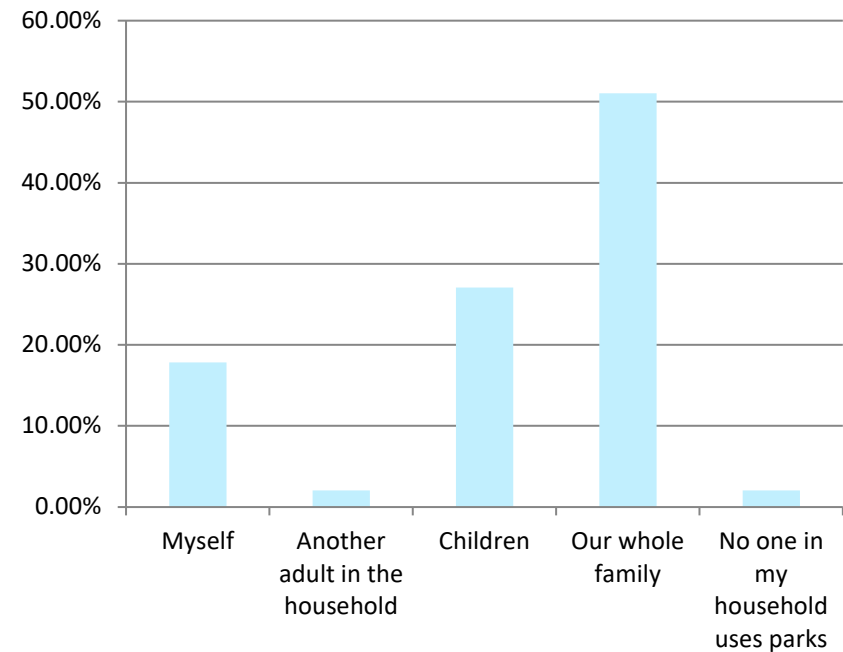


Figure 3. How important are the following in improving the park and recreation facilities in Lincoln Charter Township?

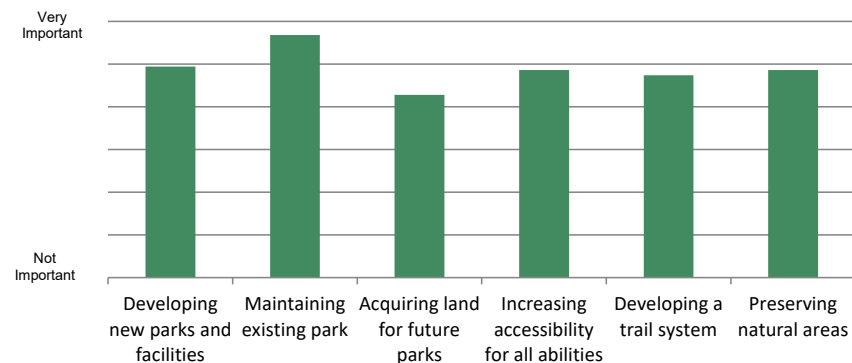


Figure 4. Which of the following benefits of parks and recreation are most important to you? (Please select your TOP THREE)

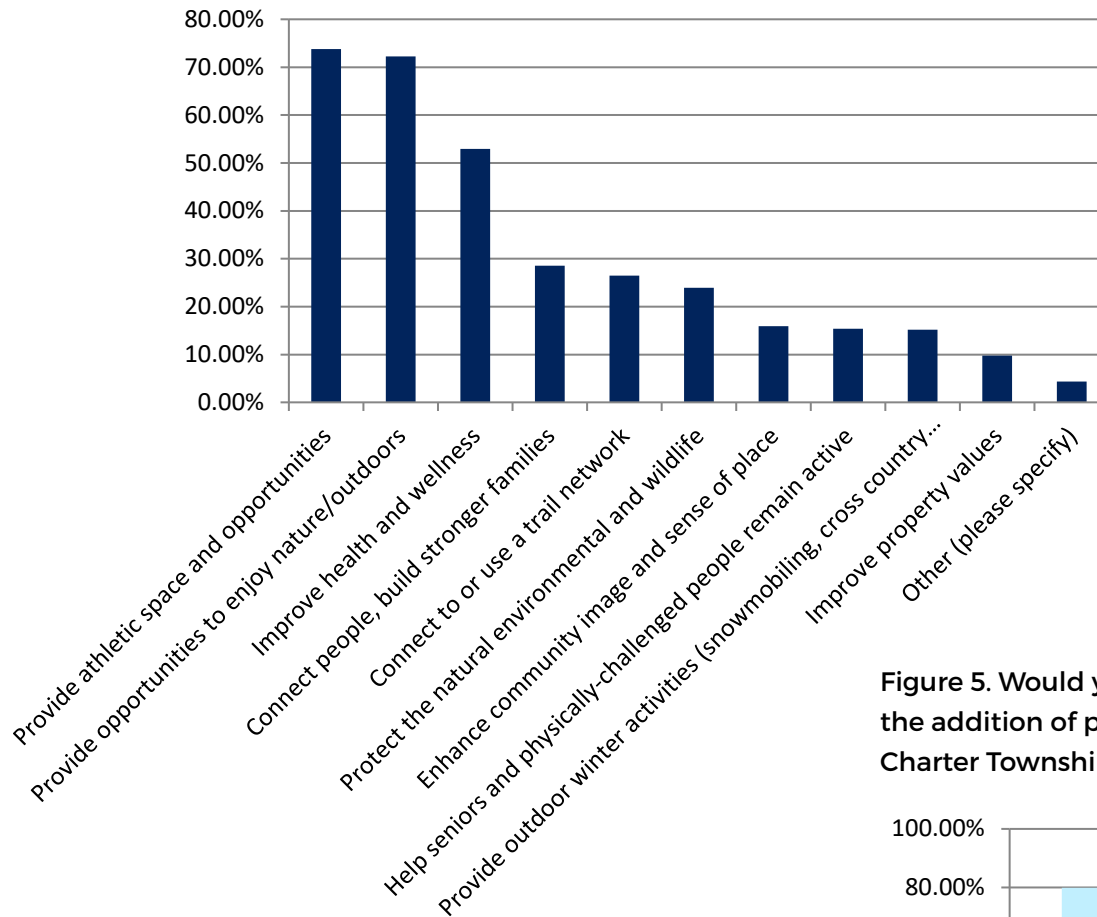


Figure 5. Would you or anyone in your household benefit from the addition of parks, trails, and/or recreation facilities in Lincoln Charter Township?

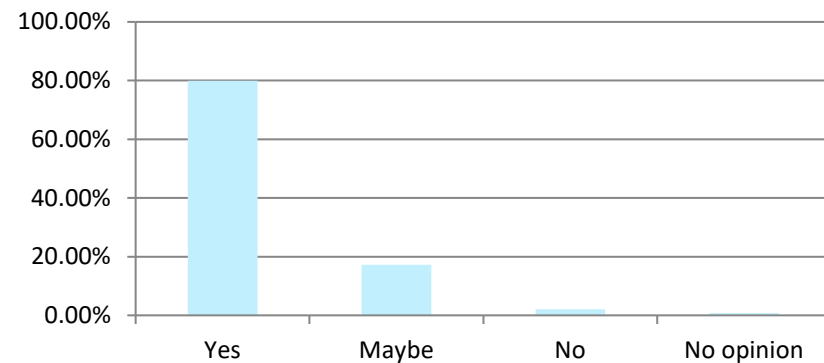


Figure 6. How often do you use the following Lincoln Charter Township Parks?

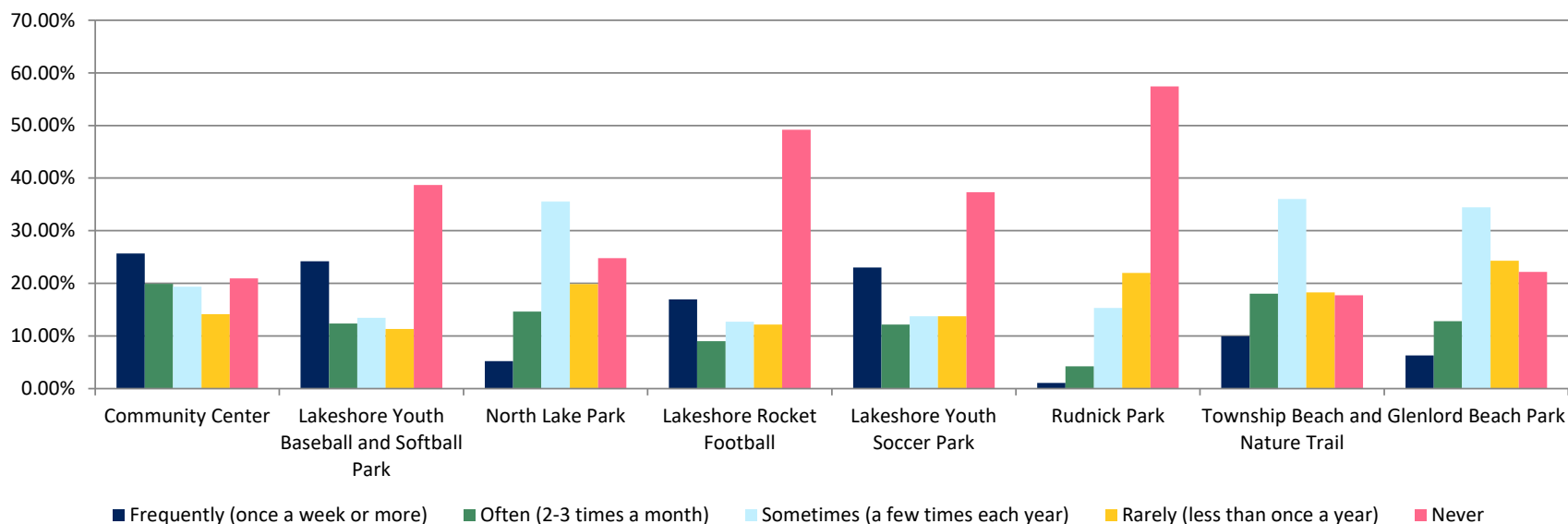


Figure 6. Which groups do you feel are under-served by current recreation services and amenities? Please check all that apply.

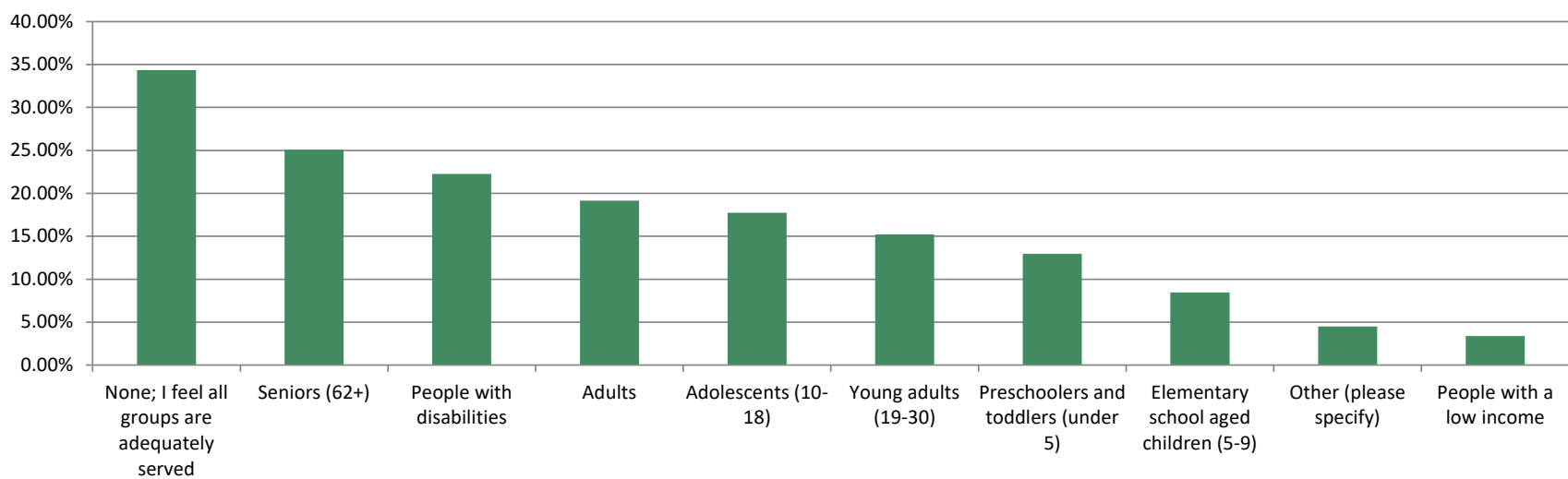




Figure 8. If the Township were to build additional trails, how should the different types be prioritized?

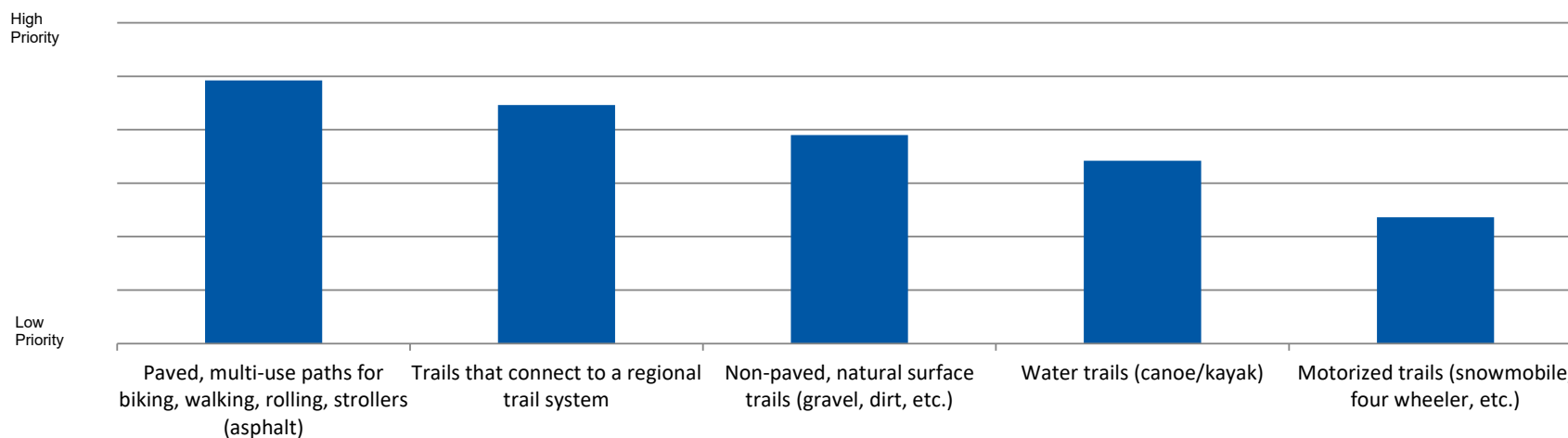
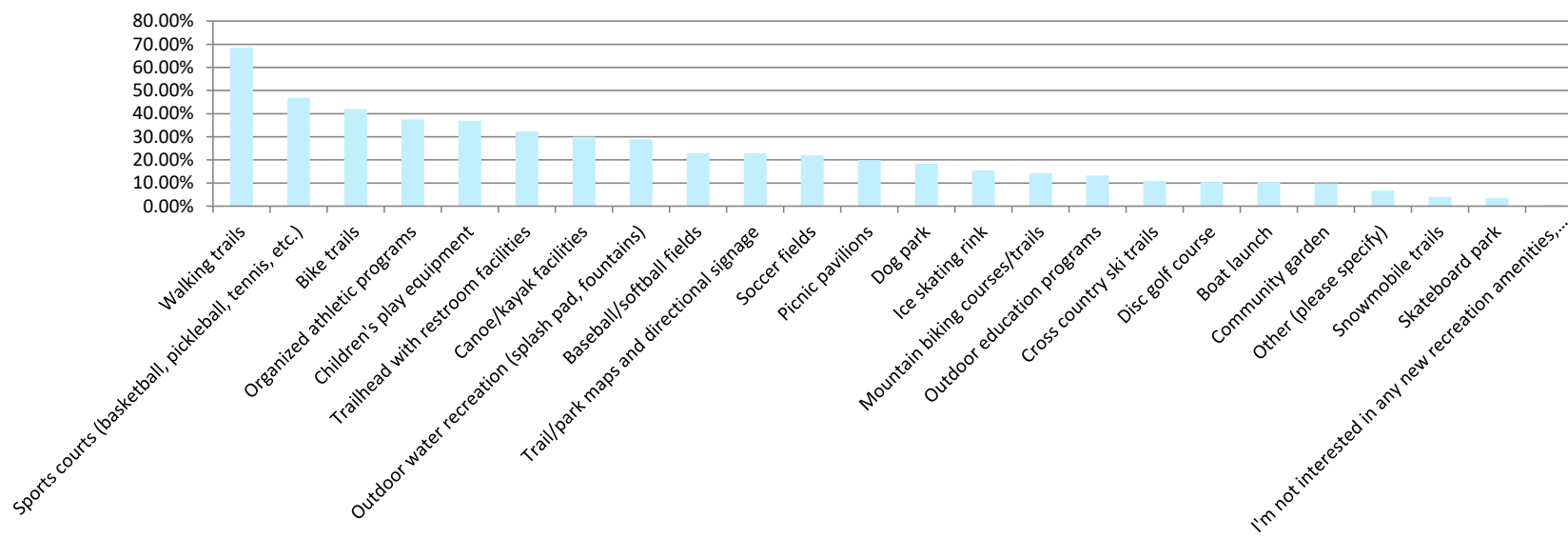


Figure 9. What parks and recreation amenities, facilities, and services are most important to your household? (select TOP FIVE)



## PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- Most survey respondents indicated that “our whole family” uses parks, which suggests a high level of park participation among all age ranges (see Fig 2). This also is reflected by the idea that most respondents indicated that they felt the entire community is adequately served by parks and recreation facilities (see Fig 7).
- The popularity of athletic facilities in the Township is reflected by question 5, in which more than 70% of respondents indicated that the provision of athletic space and opportunities was the most important benefit of parks and recreation. In addition, opportunities to enjoy nature and improving health and wellness were seen as top benefits by most respondents (see Fig 4).
- Figures 8 and 9 illustrate continued support for the Township’s efforts to build non-motorized transportation facilities.



# CHAPTER 6

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The result of the public input survey, specific park Master Planning efforts, the analysis of public facilities, and the application of local knowledge is a collection of broad goal statements, each supported by more specific objectives. This 5-Year Parks and Recreation Plan is founded on the policies outlined in these statements. The goals are intended to describe the state of the Township within the next five years or more. They are intentionally general but are thought to be attainable through concerted effort and cooperation by a multitude of entities. The objectives are more detailed and may be thought of as milestones in the journey to achieving the goal.

**GOAL 1. Lincoln Charter Township will provide a formal structure for parks & recreation planning, operation/maintenance, and capital improvements.**

Objectives:

1. Develop a clear chain of command for organizing park planning, maintenance, and capital improvements. Delegate responsibility to staff as necessary. Establish regular planning/review meetings. Obtain approval from Township Board.
2. Re-confirm roles for Parks Advisory Committee and establish regular meeting dates.
3. Provide monthly reporting to Township Board on park activities.
4. Maintain active inventory of park facilities and operation/maintenance needs.
5. Develop a plan for pursuing short and long-term facility capital improvements.



**GOAL 2.** The citizens of Lincoln Charter Township will be regularly informed about the Township's recreational facilities and programs to encourage their use and input.

**Objectives:**

1. Frequently update and enhance the Township's website and social media accounts to keep citizens up to date on park and recreation matters.
2. Develop park facility summary newsletter.
3. Place signs at each park with a map that shows master-planned activities and provides contact information for input.
4. Schedule periodic park open house days to encourage education and participation.

**GOAL 3.** Lincoln Charter Township will optimize existing park facilities, maintaining and improving as necessary to meet the needs of Township residents.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Develop an ongoing planning process with a built-in procedure for receiving public input and evaluation of recreation opportunities.
2. Regularly inspect and repair park amenities to ensure that existing park facilities are preserved and well-maintained through adequate and appropriate maintenance, and remain suitable for future improvements and expansion, where feasible.

**GOAL 4.** Lincoln Charter Township will continue to pursue a network of sidewalks and non-motorized trails to provide safe, inviting, and non-intrusive connections to recreational facilities, commercial districts, and school areas.

**Objectives:**

1. Develop cost estimates and pursue interests for sidewalks along Washington Ave. from Marquette Woods to John Beers Road.
2. Complete masterplan for extension of non-motorized trail on Roosevelt & Marquette Woods Road.
3. Identify potential projects for MNRTF and/or MDOT TAP grant funding.
4. Explore opportunities to complete gaps in the Township's non-motorized trail network and connect to existing or planned regional non-motorized trail systems, where feasible, including those within the Hickory Creek Corridor.

**GOAL 5. Lincoln Charter Township residents will be served with accessible and plentiful parkland that offers a variety of recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities.**

**Objectives:**

1. Retain, and where appropriate acquire, land and facilities for a variety of passive and active recreation uses that accommodate different age groups, primarily locating new facilities in areas lacking parkland and near population concentrations.
2. Encourage or require developers to create pocket parks or natural areas in future residential developments in higher-density areas of the Township.
3. At a minimum, design park and recreation facilities in compliance with ADA requirements and strive to achieve universal design.
4. Ensure that existing park facilities are preserved and well-maintained through adequate and appropriate maintenance, and remain suitable for future improvements.
5. Install wayfinding signage in Township parks and along trails to inform, orient, and provide a sense of place for those visiting parks and recreation areas.

**GOAL 6. Lincoln Charter Township will continue collaboration with neighboring communities and the school district and be a leader in improving and expanding recreational opportunities for residents of the Township and region.**

1. Explore joint approaches to meet the recreational needs of the Township's population.
2. Coordinate parks and recreation planning efforts between the Township, Village of Stevensville, local schools, and residents to ensure all entities play an inclusive role in the parks and recreation planning and prioritization process.



# CHAPTER 7

## ACTION PROGRAM

## ACTION PROGRAM

Lincoln Charter Township has prepared the following Action Program, based on a review of the existing facilities and input from user groups to address the goals and objectives developed in this planning process.

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

However, recreation planning should be viewed as flexible; and the timing of new projects will, in part, be influenced by available funding resources, permitting requirements, and cooperation of private organizations and residents. 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.

### ACCESSIBILITY

The Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of physical ability in connection with publicly-owned recreational facilities. Developed park facilities must comply with barrier-free design standards. This document provides a general assessment of accessibility for

public facilities. As park development 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 Lincoln Charter Township. Improvements can include proper surfaces for wheelchairs, accessible picnic tables and restrooms, and play equipment that is easy to access and use. The principles of universal design are supported by this Parks and Recreation Plan.

### STAFFING

While a full-time staff dedicated to parks and recreation was not identified as a high priority at this time, the desire to continually organize the planning, development, and operation efforts was clearly stated. To that end, a Township Parks Advisory Committee could be created to play an important role in the implementation of the various Action Program items. In addition, Lincoln Charter Township will continue to foster productive relationships with volunteer groups and recreation entities to ensure that parks are well-used and maintained for all residents.

### NEW VS. EXISTING PARKS & FACILITIES

The recreation planning process did not reveal a need for additional parkland, but focused on expanding the opportunities offered to residents through existing or additional amenities. The Action Program developed identifies several planning and capital improvement projects to meet the stated goals and objectives.



## PARK MAINTENANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

A Parks Advisory Committee would continue to improve park stewardship and help assure that existing and future facilities receive proper care. Coordination with outside agencies and organizations such as athletic organizations and neighborhood associations will be beneficial in accomplishing this objective. In the future, when new facilities are introduced, such a Committee must consider strategies for maintenance. Possible solutions may include involvement from volunteer entities that use the facilities via an organized stewardship program.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES / RESOURCE PARTNERS

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 provided below.

- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) - The MNRTF can provide assistance for 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 \$300,000; there is no limit to acquisition requests. The minimum required local match is 25%.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) - The LWCF is similar to the MNRTF 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 \$75,000. The minimum required local match is 50%. 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 places emphasis on trails, “green” technology in outdoor recreation, universal design, and coordination among recreation providers.

- Passport Grant – The objective of the Recreation Passport Grant program is to provide funding to local units for the development of public recreation facilities. This includes the development of new facilities and the renovation of old facilities. Criteria emphasize renovations to existing facilities that have outlived their useful life expectancy. Major scoring criteria include the need for the project, site quality, quality of overall park design, and applicant history. The development project minimum/maximum grant amount is \$7,500 to \$150,000. At least 25% of the cost of the project is required as a local match from applicants.
- Spark Grants – Spark Grants are administered by the DNR and are intended to help local communities that want to create, renovate or redevelop public opportunities for residents and visitors – especially those whose economic opportunities and health were hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Individual grant amounts range from a minimum of \$100,000 to a maximum of \$1 million, and will be distributed in three rounds in January, spring 2023, and summer 2023.

- **Non-Motorized Entities** – Trails and walkways encourage health and wellness, enhance quality of life, and promote a sense of community. Trails also can improve non-motorized system safety. Aside from the programs described above, several other entities can assist 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.
- **Tree Planting and Maintenance** – A variety of entities can assist with tree planting and maintenance. Trees provide many aesthetic, economic, and environmental benefits to society; and should be planted within parks wherever possible for landscape enhancement. Programs or entities to consider for assistance include the Community Forestry Grant and the Arbor Day Foundation Mini-Grant.
- **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. 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 the Township.

- **Township Funds** – The general fund, a special millage, the parks budget, bonds, and the parks capital improvement account are possibilities to help fund new and improved facilities in Lincoln Charter Township. The parks budget and the parks capital improvement account have been successful in renovating and improving facilities and will continue to be critical to recreation services in the community. Additionally, a special millage could help the Township to provide matching funds for grant applications. However, a park 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

The Action Plan is provided on the following page. It is created to identify specific improvements and programs that will be required to advance the goals and objectives of this Parks and Recreation Plan. Some are ongoing efforts that will involve time, commitment, planning, and coordination; while many physical improvements that will require investment. Lincoln Charter Township intends to review the Action Plan annually; and as part of that review, estimated costs be evaluated and updated as necessary. Notably, the Action Plan provided herein is intended to be flexible, as priorities and projects will likely shift due to economic conditions, changing circumstances, available financial resources, environmental challenges, and other factors. In addition, there may be projects that the Township undertakes that are not listed below, and this Action Plan should not be construed as excluding any project not specifically listed. Instead, projects that fulfill the Goals and Objectives of this overall Parks and Recreation Plan will be considered and acted upon when they are in the best interest of the Township and its citizens.

## ACTION PLAN

| Park                             | Action  | Potential Timeframe |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Community Center Park            | Construct additional parking  | 2023                |
|                                  | Construct 2-6 additional pickleball courts  | 2023                |
|                                  | Construct toddler park  | 2024                |
|                                  | Add a second basketball court   | 2025                |
|                                  | Construct volleyball court  | 2023                |
| Lakeshore Youth Soccer Complex   | Add two more lacrosse fields  | 2023                |
| Chicago St. Beach                | Improve parking lot   | 2024                |
| Lincoln Twp Beach                | Upgrade bathrooms   | 2025                |
|                                  | Upgrade boardwalk   | 2025                |
|                                  | Install new playset   | 2026                |
|                                  | Upgrade access / parking  | 2025                |
| Open Space Park and Rudnick Park | Improve access (parking, lighting, signage, etc)                                  | Ongoing             |
| All Parks                        | Continue to build out trail and sidewalk network and connect parks to one another | Ongoing             |
|                                  | Unified wayfinding signage for all LCT park facilities                            | 2026                |



# APPENDIX

## COMPLETE COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS





## 5-YEAR PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN