



The City of Traverse City

## Communication to the City Commission

FOR THE CITY COMMISSION MEETING OF DECEMBER 6, 2010

DATE: DECEMBER 2, 2010

FROM: R. BEN BIFOSS, CITY MANAGER

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RBB', is written over the name 'R. BEN BIFOSS'.

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

Attached is a memo from Robert Cole, Public Services Director, submitting the proposed five-year Parks and Recreation Plan.

As indicated, the Parks and Recreation Commission will consider the proposed Plan at its Thursday evening meeting, December 2, after the City Commission packet has already been distributed. Therefore, we will present the Parks and Recreation Commission's recommendation to you on Monday evening.

If the Parks and Recreation Commission adopts the proposed Plan, the following motion is appropriate for the City Commission to adopt the Plan:

**That the Resolution Adopting the City of Traverse City Parks and Recreation Plan be adopted.**

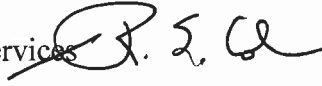
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Memorandum

TO: R. Ben Bifoss, City Manager

FROM: Bob Cole, Director of Public Services



SUBJECT: Parks and Recreation Plan

DATE: November 30, 2010

Parks and Recreation Superintendent Lauren Vaughn and the Parks and Recreation Division have been working for several months on the Five-Year Parks and Recreation Plan. It is essential that this plan be on file with the DNRE in order for the City to qualify for certain State and Federal grants. The plan and a resolution adopting the plan are attached.

We are asking that the City Commission consider adopting the plan at their December 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. We think this is important because we want to ensure that the plan is delivered to the DNRE by the end of December, which is the due date. The Parks and Recreation Commission will make a recommendation regarding the plan at their December 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, so I cannot yet tell you as of this date that they recommend adoption. I will however update you as soon as they take action Thursday evening.

Please request that the City Commission approve a resolution adopting the Parks and Recreation Plan.

To: R Ben Bifoss, City Manager  
From: Lauren Vaughn, Superintendent Parks and Recreation  
*L. Vaughn*  
Subject: **RESOLUTIONS FOR PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN**  
Date: November 29, 2010

**MEMORANDUM**  
City of Traverse City



Attached is the 2010 Resolution for the City's Parks and Recreation Plan from the Parks and Recreation Commission, the proposed Resolution for the City Commission, and the proposed Parks and Recreation Plan. Every five years the City revises its Parks and Recreation Plan which is required for the City to be eligible to apply for certain grants that would request Federal and/or State funds for parks and recreation improvements.

The Parks and Recreation Commission will be considering their resolution at the December 2, 2010 meeting and I will report the results of this meeting on Friday, December 3.

Please submit the attached City Commission Resolution for approval at the December 6, 2010 City Commission meeting. We then must submit the approved Plan to the Grants Management Division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE), prior to December 31, 2010.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

pc: Robert E. Cole

Attachments - 2010 Parks and Recreation Plan Resolution from the Parks and Recreation Commission  
Proposed Resolution for the City Commission

**RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING  
THE  
PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, The City of Traverse City has undertaken a Five Year Parks and Recreation Plan which describes the physical features, existing recreation facilities and the desired actions to be taken to improve and maintain recreation facilities during the period between 2011 and 2015, and

**WHEREAS**, a public comment session was held on Thursday, September 29, 2010 at the Parks and Recreation Commission's "Public Workshop for Parks", in the Governmental Center Cafeteria, 400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, Michigan 49684, to provide an opportunity for citizens to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the Parks and Recreation Division and the Parks and Recreation Plan, and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Traverse City has developed the plan for the benefit of the entire community and to adopt the plan as a document to assist in meeting the recreation needs of the community, and

**WHEREAS**, an opportunity for public comment was also held on Thursday, November 11, 2010 and on Thursday, December 2, 2010 at the Parks and Recreation Commission meetings in the City Commission Chambers, 400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, Michigan 49684, to provide an opportunity for citizens to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the Parks and Recreation Plan, and

**WHEREAS**, after the opportunity for public input, the City of Traverse City Parks and Recreation Commission voted to adopt said Parks and Recreation Plan on December 2, 2010..

**NOW THEREFORE**, be it resolved that the City of Traverse City Parks and Recreation Commission hereby adopts the City of Traverse City Parks and Recreation Plan as a guideline for improving parks and recreation for the residents of the City of Traverse City.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a copy of the Parks and Recreation Plan for the City of Traverse City be officially submitted to the City Commission for formal adoption on December 6, 2010.

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Nathan Elkins, Chairperson  
Traverse City Parks and Recreation Commission

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Gary Howe, Vice-Chairperson  
Traverse City Parks and Recreation Commission

(Yeas:                      Nays:                      Absent:                      )



**Resolution Adopting the  
City of Traverse City  
Parks and Recreation Plan**

**BECAUSE,** The City of Traverse City has undertaken a Five Year Parks and Recreation Plan which describes the physical features, recreation facilities and the desired actions to be taken to improve and maintain recreation facilities during the period between 2011 and 2015;

**BECAUSE,** An opportunity for public comment was held on Thursday, September 29, 2010, at the Parks and Recreation Commission’s “Public Workshop for Parks” in the Governmental Center Cafeteria , 400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, Michigan 49684, to provide an opportunity for citizens to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the Parks and Recreation Division and the Parks and Recreation Plan;

**BECAUSE,** The City of Traverse City has developed the plan for the benefit of the entire community and to adopt the plan as a document to assist in meeting the recreation needs of the community;

**BECAUSE,** An opportunity for public comment was also held on Thursday, December 2, 2010, at the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting in the City Commission Chambers, 400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, Michigan 49684, to provide an opportunity for citizens to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the Parks and Recreation Plan; and

**BECAUSE,** After the opportunity for public input, the City of Traverse City Parks and Recreation Commission voted to adopt said Parks and Recreation Plan; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED** That the City of Traverse City City Commission hereby adopts the City of Traverse City Parks and Recreation Plan as a guideline for improving recreation for the residents of the City of Traverse City.

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_  
No: \_\_\_\_\_  
Absent: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Traverse City City Commission at its regular meeting of December 6, 2010, held in the Commission Chambers, Governmental Center, 400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, Michigan.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Debra A. Curtiss, MMC, City Clerk

# INTRODUCTION

This Recreation Plan describes the parks system and recreation opportunities in the City of Traverse City and to establish goals, objectives and an overall vision for our community's parks and recreation future.

The City Parks and Recreation staff takes the lead in the direction of the planning process and the preparation of the City Recreation Plan with guidance from the City Parks and Recreation Commission and other City staff members.

This Parks and Recreation Plan is the result of a collaborative effort undertaken by the City of Traverse City's Parks and Recreation Commission and various City departments. The intent of this plan is to identify the current status of parks and recreation, the recreational needs of the community, and to develop priorities for Traverse City by evaluating the current available resources such as planning documents and public input.

The citizens of Traverse City have continually demonstrated their support for the maintenance and development of quality City parks and recreation facilities. Past surveys revealed strong local support in favor of continued development and maintenance of the existing facilities. Perceived as an essential component of the community, these facilities function both in meeting the needs of local residents and by providing a major attraction for tourism, which is Traverse City's most important industry.

For purposes of this plan, recreation can be defined as any activity that promotes the physical and/or mental well being of the person who is participating, and that provides relief from the routine and stress of every day life. Recreational activities are often classified into two broad categories of "active" and "passive" involvement. Open space is defined simply as space that is not used for buildings or man-made structures. It can be air, land or water and is an area that is often used for recreational activities.

# SECTION 1

## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

This recreation plan has been developed for the City of Traverse City, located in Grand Traverse County 253 miles northwest of Detroit and 316 miles north of Chicago. The City's northern boundary is Lake Michigan's Grand Traverse Bay, a large bay divided by the Old Mission Peninsula. The southern tip of West Grand Traverse Bay is fully within the City of Traverse City. The western portion of the southern tip of East Grand Traverse Bay is also in the City limits. Situated in the Boardman River Valley, the City is surrounded by forested hills, cherry and apple orchards, vineyards, and numerous inland lakes along with a rapidly growing community that expands out into the surrounding townships. The area's beauty has historically attracted sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts from southern Michigan as well as throughout the U.S.A. Prior to developing a reputation as a recreation and tourist area, this part of the state, as well as all of northern Michigan, based its economy on lumbering and to a lesser extent, agriculture. In the 1850's the City bustled with the activity of several sawmills and related industries along with a great number of diversified businesses of the era until the lumbering industry waned at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, several downtown buildings and businesses are a reminder of that era dating back a century or more. Among them are the City-owned Opera House and the Hannah - Lay Building. Both have maintained the 19<sup>th</sup> century flavor while adding modern conveniences of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Preservation of Traverse City's historic buildings and homes is important to residents. Within walking distance of downtown, one may tour the well maintained historic neighborhoods and view some of the finest "lumbering era" architecture in Michigan.

A number of major events are held in the area reflecting the region's tie to its natural resource and agriculture base. Some of the best known events are the National Cherry Festival, the Bayshore Marathon, "The Iceman Cometh" mountain bike race, "Horseshows By the Bay" equestrian festivals and the North American Vasa Cross Country Ski Race. In addition, the area hosts a variety of sporting events including sail boat races, boat and car shows, golf championships, disc golf tournaments, skiing events, foot races, off road bicycle racing, and all variety of sports tournaments.

Unlike many communities the size of Traverse City, the area is not lacking in cultural and educational activities. World famous artists perform throughout the year and outdoor summer concerts are a highlight at Interlochen National Music Camp and Arts Academy. The Traverse City Film Festival is gaining prominence and is becoming known internationally. In addition,

Northwestern Michigan College's Dennon Museum permanently houses an extensive collection of artwork and a children's discovery area, along with works by masters and regional artists. The school ship Inland Seas provides classes on West Grand Traverse Bay for school aged children.

Each year, many additional concerts, plays and special events such as art, antique, car and boat shows take place in the Traverse City area. Traverse City features the Traverse Symphony Orchestra, the Old Towne Playhouse, The City's "Music In The Park" series and many other music and theater groups providing varied entertainment. Renovations have been completed to the historic "State Theater" on Front St. allowing both a live theater and motion picture venue. The City Opera House has recently completed major restoration including a grand entrance in a former store front.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the City of Traverse City population estimate for 2009 was 14,172. This is down slightly from the 2000 census figure of 14,532 and the 1990 figure of 15,155. The surrounding townships however, continue to grow at a rapid rate. Grand Traverse County has grown from the 1970 population of 31,975 to the 2009 estimated, 86,333. The 1990 population was 64,273 and in 2000 it was 77,654. This figure indicates an over 25% increase during this 18 year period. The City of Traverse City has provided parks and recreation facilities that have been under increasing pressure from use by the growing area population along with the tourist influx, especially in the summer months.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Enjoyment of recreation in the Traverse City area is due in large part to the abundance of natural physical resources in the region. Certainly, this is true for boaters, swimmers, bikers, campers, bird-watchers, fishing enthusiasts, scuba divers, hikers, and both cross country and downhill skiers.

### **EAST AND WEST GRAND TRAVERSE BAYS (Lake Michigan)**

The bays are the most important natural resource. Its shoreline is an area of great concern, particularly in light of development pressures it is exposed to daily. While much of the bay shore is privately owned, the bay itself is a public resource. It is used for fishing, sailing, boating, swimming, wind-surfing, diving, and simply viewing from the shore. There is a desire to link all the City bay front parks together, featuring trails, walkways, etc. with interpretive educational centers as part of the trail. Several historical and watershed educational stations have been added in the past few years. There also is a push to enhance "shore-based" fishing, with an emphasis on more public fishing without need for a boat. One location in the planning stage is at the mouth of the Boardman River where it empties into West Grand Traverse Bay.

Management of the City's shorelines and riparian areas must include protection and enhancement of fish habitat to improve this fishery. Another aspect that needs improving along the shore line is the placement of storm water drains. There continues to be enormous thought going into planning for these positive steps to lessen impact on the bays. Removing or controlling several invasive species of plants and animals is also at the forefront of environmental efforts. The re-establishment of native vegetation in some disturbed habitat areas is the best defense against the growth of invasive plants.

About half of Traverse City's shoreline is sandy beach. Other parts of the shoreline have been altered with protective shoreline measures from rock revetments to broken concrete slabs to steel sheet pilings.

## **BOARDMAN RIVER SYSTEM**

The Boardman River passes through the City of Traverse City including Boardman Lake. This lake level is enhanced approximately nine feet by the Union Street Dam right in the center of the City. The lake and river both offer many recreational opportunities both land based and water based. With the bays so close at hand, Boardman Lake and River do not see the level of use that they would have if located in a community away from the Great Lakes. The potential is great for development of facilities that will enhance the uses of the Boardman River system as it passes through the City.

# **TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS**

## **HIGHWAYS**

Traverse City is served by US-31, M-37, M-72 and M-22 allowing highway access to the community from any direction. US-131, a limited access highway from Grand Rapids does not directly tie into Traverse City but comes within 39 miles of servicing the community. Located at the head of Grand Traverse Bay, several highways converge in the city. This phenomenon results in considerable traffic along the City's waterfront, especially during the peak travel months. Although an urban "by-pass" has been discussed by the State to relieve some of the cross-town congestion, such a major project is only at the planning stage. Grand Traverse County has incorporated an urban bypass in the adopted Grand Traverse County Road Network Plan but local resistance and funding have hampered efforts. An extension of Hammond Road, that was completed in 2010, connects with Keystone Road has provided another alternative to going to the waterfront to get across Traverse City.

The heavy traffic along Traverse City's waterfront brings many people in close proximity to the City's fine recreation opportunities along the bay. With most parking located away from the bay, the roads bearing that heavy traffic also tend to create physical and physiological barriers to safely reaching recreation facilities and also creates environmental concerns with storm water

runoff and pollutants. The City has attempted to reduce the barriers with a pedestrian tunnel under Grandview Parkway (US-31) at Cass Street; an underpass at the Murchie Bridge near Grandview and Front Street; an at grade crossing at Oak Street; signal crossings of Grandview Parkway at Division, Union and Park Streets. The City continues to explore options for carrying pedestrian traffic safely across Grandview Parkway to bayside destinations including a pedestrian tunnel just West of Union Street in the “Warehouse District” and an at grade crossing at Elmwood Street. This was one of the most important goals set during the “Your Bay, Your Say” planning sessions that began in 2005.

## **LOCAL ROADS**

Most City parks are accessed via Traverse City's local streets. These streets are continuously targeted for improvements through the City's Public Improvements Program. The city has 27 miles of major streets and 49 miles of local streets as defined by the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Hickory Hills Ski Area and Brown Bridge Pond Quiet Area lie outside the City limits and are accessed by county roads. The county road servicing Hickory Hills is maintained in the winter by the City.

## **PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE TRAVEL**

There are areas within the community that were designed years ago primarily for the automobile; where pedestrian travel has inadvertently been discouraged. In some areas, pedestrian and bicycle travel is challenging because streets were designed to move many vehicles as quickly as possible. The City is taking steps to correct these conditions by steadily enhancing the sidewalk network, adding trails and by marking bicycle lanes along many City streets. In 2009, the League of American Bicyclists designated Traverse City as a “Bicycle Friendly Community”.

Cities and communities across the country are developing inclusive transportation solutions that encourage pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Although active transport planning is included in the *recreation plan inventory section*, it is not fully appreciated until an active transport planning process has been conducted. Active recreation and transportation master plans look at more than your everyday rail to trail conversions and non-motorized pathways, more importantly they begin to look at an entire transportation system. The transportation system will include pathways such as the TART and Leelanau Trails, but also include a transportation system to get to and from such pathways, as well as developing and designing guidelines for the development of bike facilities including within City parkland.

Developing an active recreation and transportation master plan involves several key steps including in-depth fieldwork. Key steps to a successful plan include evaluating surfaces and travel lane widths, how long it takes to cross the street, curb and gutter design, and vehicular turning radii and speeds. The sequence and approach to designing for active transport is also important; moreover, designing for pedestrians first, bicyclists second, transit riders and

operations third, and private motor vehicles last is typical when designing for active transportation – and recognized in the City’s Master Plan.

The City Plan (Master Plan) calls for community streets to be designed for a wide range of users, not just the motor vehicle driver. Roadway improvement designs must also consider the needs of the pedestrian and bicyclist by incorporating sidewalks and bike lanes. Sidewalks need adequate separation from the roadway to provide comfort and clear demarcation between the road edge and the sidewalk. Driveways must be designed and limited in number so that they do not impair the safety of the pedestrian or bicyclist. Designs should also include consideration for mitigation of increased impervious surfaces or alternate surfaces.

To further encourage pedestrian and bicycle travel, a system of trails and connecting walks are being implemented to make these forms of travel through and around the community inviting. The eleven mile long TART trail is a paved urban transportation corridor that currently runs between Bunker Hill Road in Acme Township and Carter Road (Elmwood Township) which is past the M22/M-72 intersection in Traverse City. The trail runs along Grand Traverse Bay, through downtown Traverse City neighborhoods and the Mitchell Creek watershed and is a favorite of families, visitors, bicyclists and in-line skaters.

The Leelanau Trail stretches over 15 miles through the last of the Leelanau County railway corridors. The Leelanau Trail connects Traverse City and Suttons Bay. The first 6 miles from Carter Road to Lakeview Road are paved, the middle 7 miles are an unpaved, hard-packed two-track and the final 2 miles to Suttons Bay are paved. These two trails have a distance of over 20 contiguous miles. Capital funds and grant monies have been used and more will be needed to construct additional new trail and to maintain existing trails and pathways.

The Boardman Lake Trail has moved well beyond the planning stages to have a completed Boardman Lake East Trail that connected Hull Park and the Traverse Area District Library at the north end and Medalie Park in Garfield Township at the south end in 2005. In 2009, the Boardman Lake North Trail was completed that connects the Old Town and other neighborhoods west of Boardman Lake with the East Trail and the library. This trail includes a major pedestrian bridge that crosses the Boardman River. Plans for the West Boardman Lake Trail are underway

to complete the trail around the entire Boardman Lake. The Boardman Lake Trail now connects to the TART Trail and eventually will connect to trails in the Boardman Valley and beyond.

The Vasa Trail pathway which is managed under agreement with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Grand Traverse County, and TART Trails, is located amid the pristine beauty of the Pere Marquette State Forest. The Vasa Pathway, utilized by cross country skiers, mountain bikers, walkers and naturalists, features a series of loops and trails that offer both challenging and easier routes for every level of user.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The Traverse City area, including Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, is served by the Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA). BATA provides scheduled routes with the Cherriot system; City Ride, County Ride and After Hours reservation ride service; school route service and Village Connector service to Northport, Empire and Fife Lake.

## **SECTION 2**

# **ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

## **PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

The Parks and Recreation Commission, formed in 1992, serves as an advisory body to the City Commission in Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery matters. Six of the seven commissioners are appointed by the City Commission and serve staggered terms of three years. The seventh member is the City Manager's representative. This body is an important liaison between the citizens of Traverse City and the City Commission, along with other groups and governmental units. The Commission was formed under the authority of Section 30 of the Charter of the City of Traverse City.

## **STAFF**

The Parks and Recreation staff develops and organizes recreation programs and directs the operation and maintenance of parks, cemetery, and special facilities. The Parks and Recreation Division is under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Superintendent who reports to the Director of Public Services who reports directly to the City Manager. The City Manager is responsible to the City Commission which consists of six citizens elected for staggered four year terms and an elected Mayor that serves a two year term. The Mayor and the City Commission are, in turn, ultimately responsible to the citizens which they serve. The Brown Bridge Advisory Group makes recommendations to the City Manager on issues related to the Brown Bridge Quiet Area.

The Parks and Recreation Division is responsible for recreation programming and facilities, Hickory Hills Ski Area, Oakwood Cemetery, the urban forestry program, public park operations and maintenance, the steam train at the Clinch Park and marina area, three outdoor ice skating rinks and snow removal from several City parking lots.

The City's Senior Citizen Center and Duncan L. Clinch Marina are under the direction of the Department of Public Services Director.

## **STAFFING LEVELS**

In the Parks and Recreation Division there are currently sixteen full time employees including:

- Parks and Recreation Superintendent
- Marina Dockmaster / Hickory Hills Manager
- Parks and Recreation Supervisor

- City Forester
- Departmental Secretary (shared among several divisions)
- Cemetery Sexton
- Recreation Specialist
- Recreation Specialist / Grounds Maintenance Worker (one employee who performs 2/3 of their work as a Grounds Maintenance Worker and 1/3 as a Recreation Specialist at Hickory Hills ski area.
- An Office Clerk that works half time at the Department of Public Services and half time at the Oakwood Cemetery office.
- General Maintenance and Repair Specialist
- Six Grounds Maintenance Specialists
- Approximately fifty seasonal workers

The Senior Citizen Center has one full-time Director and a full-time Program Director and over 100 volunteers. The operations of the Grand Traverse Heritage Center museum are run under a contractual agreement between the City of Traverse City and the Friends of the Con Foster Museum, Inc., which maintains the Grand Traverse Heritage Center which houses the collection of the Con Foster Museum. Volunteers and help from other institutions augment the staff positions listed above.

Many other City divisions offer assistance to the Parks and Recreation Division, Marina, Grand Traverse Heritage Center, Oakwood Cemetery and Senior Center. This includes the Streets, Water Treatment and Sewer and Water Maintenance Divisions in the Department of Public Services. The Planning, Zoning and Engineering Departments lend assistance in the planning and designing of facilities, putting together grant proposals and long range planning.

## **PARKS OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE**

The Parks and Recreation Division is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and repair of the public park lands, fixtures, and buildings. In addition, the Parks and Recreation Division is responsible for the maintenance and operation of Oakwood Cemetery, garbage pick-up in both the downtown and Old Towne areas, the urban forestry program and planting and maintaining approximately 10,000 annual flowers each year. The department also builds and maintains three outdoor ice skating rinks, operates Hickory Hills Ski area, plows some public parking lots, maintains and cleans the Union Street Dam and spillway of debris, plus other activities too numerous to mention.

During the National Cherry Festival in July, the Parks and Recreation and Streets Divisions spend considerable time setting up and taking down fencing and cleaning up during and after many events.

## RECREATION PROGRAMS

Traverse City prides itself on a well maintained and diversified parks system. Using these areas, along with school and county facilities, the Parks and Recreation Division has developed a variety of programs for youth and adults. The City recreation programs are coordinated with other area agencies so as not to compete or conflict with their activities and programs. The programs run throughout the year and are available to residents and non-residents alike. Below is a summary of offerings available through the City to residents in the area.

- 1) Women's Softball. There is one league in this program, a church slow pitch league.
- 2) Day Camp. Children 7-12 years of age may attend this summer program held at the Grand Traverse County Civic Center. The program emphasizes outdoor recreation, arts and crafts, nature education, and beach activities. The program is a cooperative effort between the City of Traverse City and Grand Traverse County. The City provides the registration, administration and staffing and the County makes the space available at a low rental rate and provides some logistical support. The ten week program has a maximum of 50 children per week and is full most weeks.
- 3) Volleyball Leagues. The City uses elementary school gyms for this program which currently features six men's, women's, and co-ed leagues that play from October through March.
- 4) Hershey Track and Field Meet. This meet is held in June for ages 9-14. Winners of the local meet advance to the state meet held in July.
- 5) The Traverse Area Community Sailing (T.A.C.S.) Program. This summer program gives children an opportunity to learn to sail and is located at the north end of Boardman Lake at Hull Park.
- 6) The Grand Traverse Area Ski Club. The GTSC Offers children the opportunity to learn how to ski and snow board in a non-competitive format and then become involved in the Club's ski racing program.
- 7) The Northern Michigan Disc Sports Organization. This group first approached the City with the offer to design and set up a 24 hole disc golf course at the City's Hickory Hills ski area in 1998. The course was completed in 1999. The NMDSO continues to be involved in the program with tournaments, weekly leagues and work bees to improve and maintain the course.
- 8) Music In the Park Series. The City holds free concerts during the summer at F & M and Hull Parks.. The entertainment varies in talent from the Interlochen Music Academy to Jazz, Rock, Bluegrass and Country.
- 9) Badminton. An area resident organized and now coordinates this program with the City. This indoor, fall and winter program involves many age and ability levels.

## Recent Recreational Program Participation Levels

<u>Program</u>	<u>Total Number of Participants for Year</u>		
	<u>06-07</u>	<u>07-08</u>	<u>08-09</u>
Women's Softball	67	78	0
Day Camp for children	76	63	65
Downhill & XC skiing	13,132	14,562	11,550
Volleyball	645	630	600
Hershey Track and Field	23	39	29
Music In The Park	701	1,011	688
Badminton	N/A	293	280
<b>TOTAL ❖</b>	14,702	16,735	13,356

❖ These figures do not include participants in the TACS Sailing Program, or any participants in the Disc Golf course located at Hickory Hills. The figures for day camp are based on the total number of different children enrolled and not the total number of camper days.

# PARK AND RECREATION FUNDING

## INTRODUCTION

Historically, the City of Traverse City has led the area in providing quality recreation. The community investment not only has improved the quality of life for the residents of the county, it has also helped to generate a strong tourist industry for the city. A past survey conducted by Grand Traverse Convention and Visitors Bureau indicated motel guests participated heavily in recreation when visiting the area. For example, 78% "relaxed on the beach" while staying in the area and 84% rated their recreational activity experience as "great." Maintaining a high quality park system is seen, from an economic perspective, as an important element to be considered during the budget process. Finding a balance between resident and tourist, however, requires sensitivity since interests between the groups may be divergent.

## METHOD OF FINANCE

Parks and Recreation facilities and programs in the City of Traverse City are funded primarily by property tax revenues. During the fiscal year 2008-2009, approximately 88 % of the operating budget for Parks and Recreation (excluding marina) was generated from property taxes with the remainder from user fees.

Parks and Recreation financial resources from the City are dependent upon fluctuations in the municipal budget. However, other forms of revenue options are available to the City to ensure financial stability of a viable Parks and Recreation Program. Alternative sources used or proposed are: permits, metered parking, concession sales, adopt-a-park programs, user fees,

intergovernmental cooperation, work release programs, park usage fees, gifts, and donations.

Major capital improvement projects for Parks and Recreation, including property acquisition and development projects, are funded by the Capital Improvement Budget. A number of capital improvements have been funded in part by organizations or grant programs such as; Coastal Management Program, Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Recreation Bond Fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Oleson Foundation, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation Trails, Inc. (TART), Rotary Club, the Grand Traverse Zoological Society, Grand Traverse Whitetails, Ruffed Grouse Society, Ducks Unlimited, Grand Traverse Ski Club, The Friendly Garden Club, The Cherryland Garden Club, and the Kiwanis Club. These programs have provided not only matching funds but incentives to improve the City's recreational assets.

## **FUNDING LEVEL**

Parks and Recreation funding has been a substantial portion of the City of Traverse City budget. For fiscal year 2010/2011 the City has allocated \$ 1,702,240.00 for Parks and Recreation. Duncan L. Clinch Marina budget is listed as \$ 495,450.00. Of these expenditures, approximately \$ 695,900.00 are returned by revenue producing facilities or programs. Specifically, the marina is slated to generate \$ 507,000.00 for the 2010/2011 budget. All of the parks and recreational programs combined should produce approximately \$188,900.00 for the same period. The total operating budget allocated for Parks and Recreation constitutes 12.10 % of the City General Fund budget. In addition, the City Commission has approved the planned \$1,014,500.00 for Parks and Recreation related projects in the Six Year Public Improvement Plan but has committed no new funds to be spent in 2010-2011 .

## **RECENT RECREATION RELATED ACTIVITIES BUDGETS**

The following divisions and activities all are related to recreation pursuits. Some are passive activities and others are active. The Heritage Center and Cemetery provide a more contemplative form of recreation with walking and historic observation. The other three take on a more active role in the provision of recreation.

<b>Division</b>	<b>2007-2008 (actual)</b>	<b>2008-2009 (actual)</b>	<b>2009-2010 (budgeted)</b>
Parks and Recreation	\$ 1,662,899.00	\$ 1,627,293.00	\$ 1,602,100.00
Marina	\$ 479,578.00	\$ 470,742.00	\$ 500,600.00
Senior Center	\$ 256,409.00	\$ 270,985.00	\$ 250,800.00
Heritage Center	\$ 102,740.00	\$ 112,503.00	\$ 110,000.00

Oakwood Cemetery	\$ 332,589.00	\$ 319,671.00	\$ 390,200.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2,843,212.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,801,194.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,853,700.00</b>

Compared to the surrounding townships and Grand Traverse County, the City allocates a much greater amount of funds for parks and recreation. In a recent Grand Traverse County Area Parks and Recreation Analysis done in August of 2010 by R. Clark and Associates of Traverse City, research indicates townships adjacent to the City spend anywhere from East Bay at \$ 4.23 per capita to \$21.68 for Garfield Township. Grand Traverse County spends \$15.11 per capita. In contrast, the City of Traverse City spends \$111.39 per capita which is more than the county and four adjacent townships spend combined. The discrepancy in spending patterns may be partially tied to the reality that the City's budget includes staff and equipment for forestry maintenance along with Parks and Recreation maintenance and programs which may fall under the general public works departments or road commissions of some of those jurisdictions.

It is anticipated the costs will continue to increase for the City of Traverse City to maintain the existing level of service for the Parks and Recreation programs, The city taxing rate presently stands at 11.8167 mills.

Other sources of revenues may need to be secured in the near future to support City Parks and Recreation programs. Perhaps in recognition of the regional nature of Traverse City recreation facilities, financial agreements with adjacent units of government can be reached. There has been some movement in that direction. Some adjacent townships provide financial assistance to the Traverse City Senior Center, recognizing that the City provides health, nutritional, and recreational services to seniors throughout the region.

## **PUBLIC AGENCY COORDINATION**

### **CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY / CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY**

Recently, the City and Garfield Township combined to create a Recreation Authority for the initial purpose of purchasing and preserving some land that was on the Real Estate market. In the November 2004 General Election, two ballot proposals from the Recreation Authority passed.

*The first proposal was* 'The Open Space and Natural Area Preservation Bond Proposal'. This proposal will allow the Recreation Authority of Traverse City and Garfield Township to purchase and improve land to preserve open space and scenic views of the Bay and protect wildlife habitat and natural areas. Properties to be purchased include the West Bay Waterfront property (formerly the Smith Barney building), the Barns at the Grand Traverse Commons, and the property next to Hickory Hills. State law requires an annual independent audit of the Recreational Authority.

“Shall the City of Traverse City and Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority formed by the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield borrow the sum of not to exceed Six Million Six Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$6,650.00) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds for all or portion of that amount, payable in not to exceed twenty years from the date of issuance, for the purpose of open space and scenic view preservation and wildlife habitat and natural areas protection by purchasing and improving land for public parks, including West Bay Waterfront property, the Barns at the Commons, and the property next to Hickory Hills?”

The millage levied in 2004 was 0.27 mill (\$0.27 per \$1,000.00 of taxable value) and the estimated simple average annual millage rate required to retire the bonds is 0.27 mill (\$0.27 per \$1,000.00 of taxable value). This is expected to result in an increase of \$13.50 in the tax levied on property valued at \$100,000 for a period of 20 years.

***The second proposal was*** “The Open Space and Natural Area Millage Proposal”. This proposal will allow the Recreational Authority of Traverse City and Garfield Township to maintain natural areas, wildlife habitat, public parks, and open space. The proposal would levy a property tax of up to 0.1 mill that would cost the owner of a home with a value of \$100,000.00, \$5.00 per year. State law would require an annual independent audit of the Recreation Authority.

“Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed on taxable property in the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority, be increased by up to 0.1 mill (\$0.10 per \$1,000.00 of taxable value) for a period of twenty (20) years, as a new millage for the purpose of protecting natural areas, wildlife habitat, and open space by acquiring, maintaining and improving public parks?”

Both proposals were only effective because they both passed. If one passed but not the second, the purchases could not have been accomplished.

The 0.1 mill general fund operational money raised \$151,696.00 in the 2008-2009 fiscal year and the bond fund raised \$408,488.00.

## **OTHER COORDINATED VENTURES**

To make efficient use of limited fiscal resources and maximize usage of existing recreation facilities, the City coordinates a number of activities with the public schools and Grand Traverse County. For instance, the winter volleyball leagues are conducted within school gyms. Two outdoor city skating rinks are on school property, and one on City park land. Several school athletic programs use City parks for practice locations. Our summer Day Camp is located at the Grand Traverse County Civic Center.

The Traverse City Senior Center, located on the west arm of Grand Traverse Bay, serves adults 50 years of age and older with a wide range of programs. Currently over 2,000 people enjoy choosing among over 100 programs and activities such as; daily lunches, card games, computer lab with Internet access and classes; tap and line dancing classes, local and out-of-state trips,

painting classes, ping pong and pool tables, tennis, pickleball, golf and shuffleboard leagues, wellness clinics for blood pressure, hearing, vision, reflexology and support groups. The Senior Center also serves as a meeting place for many senior related clubs and organizations. In 2009 over 32,000 visits were recorded at the Senior Center.

The Senior Center has been funded by the City of Traverse City and townships whose residents use the program. Currently those townships include Acme, East Bay, Elmwood, Garfield, Long Lake and Peninsula. Grants are also received from the Grand Traverse County Commission on Aging. Annual membership were paid by those coming from non-participating townships at a rate of \$35.00 per year and \$15.00 from City residents and those from the participating townships. Donations from individuals and business, grants, memorial contributions and charges for services supplement the governmental funding.

In the November 2, 2010 election, Grand Traverse County voters approved a millage to change the funding model and operation methods for the Senior Center. Grand Traverse County has entered into an agreement with the City of Traverse City for the Grand Traverse County Commission on Aging to operate the Traverse City Senior Center along with satellite programs in several other areas to serve the entire county with more programs and with the expense of running the centers and programs spread to all county residents. As of the time of this writing, the plan is for membership fees for County residents to be eliminated. Many other details are being discussed, with an implementation date scheduled for July 1, 2011.

The Senior Center is currently in the planning stages of a capital campaign to build a new Senior Center on the current site in Traverse City. The census 2000 data shows us that the local population is aging at a rate higher than the national average. This equates to an increasing demand for services from those 50 and older. Membership to the Senior Center averages about 50 new members a month. The 45-year old building is literally bursting at the seams. There are structural and utility concerns that must be addressed. The building is not adequate to serve the existing programs, not to mention the expected increased use. Either major renovations or new construction is a must if the program is to continue. The Senior Center Advisory Board and City Commission have supported the concept of reconstruction. A volunteer committee has been meeting since 2001 to formulate a plan and seek funding. Traverse City has been and continues to be a retirement haven for the aging baby boomers of America. A new Senior Center is in great demand. A committee, The Friends of the Senior Center has formed to initiate a capital campaign to raise funds for a new building. This committee has secured grant funds to complete a "Community Wide Assessment" and is now working on a feasibility study with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation with a grant received from Rotary Charities.

## **SECTION 3**

# **RECREATION INVENTORY**

### **REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

Probably the greatest attraction of the Traverse City area is its abundance of recreational opportunities in a varied, interesting landscape. Within a one-half hour driving distance from the City are a preserved National Lake Shore, three state parks, two smaller ski resorts (Holiday Hills and Hickory Hills), a large expanse of state forest lands, a state game area, many public swimming areas, inland lakes, biking trails, and within 1 to 1 ½ hours you have seven major ski resorts (Crystal Mountain, Nub's Nob, Shanty Creek, Boyne Mountain, and Boyne Highlands, The Homestead and Caberfe). In addition, numerous historic sites, as well as the beauty of the peninsulas, bays, and various orchards and vineyards, attract people from all over the State of Michigan and the country to the Traverse City region. These areas provide an unlimited array of recreational opportunities to the residents of Traverse City as well as to the outside visitor. The map identifies the locations of many recreational opportunities in the region.

### **FEDERAL AND STATE FACILITIES**

Although available, many State and Federal recreational areas are not geared toward serving a day-use population. Day-use can occur, but the primary focus of these parks is more passive long-term recreation. For example, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, after many years of development, is taking shape as a major recreation area. The Dunes once serviced a localized population, they now attract a wider range and larger number of outside visitors because they are now better publicized and better known. Day-use of the area by local residents of Traverse City is possible since it is located relatively close to the community, however, repeated day-use is deterred because of costs and the likely competition for facilities by outside visitors.

### **COUNTY AND TOWNSHIP FACILITIES**

The facilities on the county and township levels serve both day-use and overnight users. It has been pointed out that the Sand Lakes quiet area, among others, and the open space area