

# Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2022-2026

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A PRIME COMMUNITY

January 25, 2022 - ADOPTED

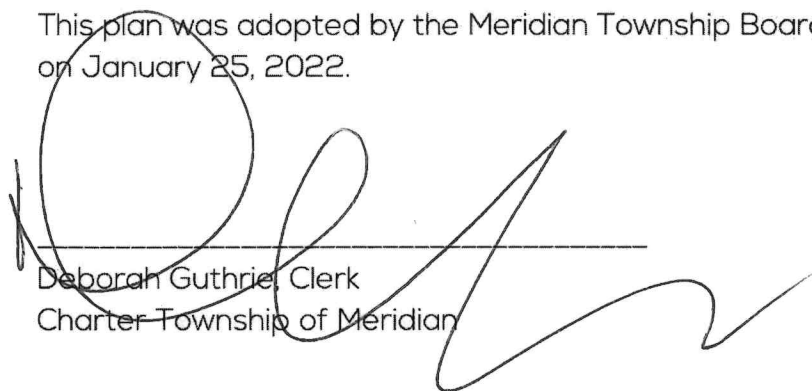
This plan was adopted by the Meridian Township Park Commission  
on January 11, 2022.



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Mary Nardo-Farris, Park Commission Chair  
Charter Township of Meridian

This plan was adopted by the Meridian Township Board  
on January 25, 2022.



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Deborah Guthrie, Clerk  
Charter Township of Meridian

# Acknowledgments

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## VISION STATEMENT

"Creating Community through People,  
Parks and Programs"

## MISSION STATEMENT

To enhance the quality of life for Township residents and visitors by providing diverse park facilities and recreation opportunities where participants are able to learn and play, create and imagine, and be safe and secure utilizing qualified, professional staff and volunteers emphasizing community interaction.

## **Introduction to Master Plan**

Meridian Township's parks, open space, pathways and recreation programs are essential components of the community's culture. Parks and programs meet the needs of local residents and serve as a major attraction for businesses and township residents.

### **2020 was a year of renewed appreciation of our parks and open spaces**

Although we have always appreciated our green spaces and programs, the COVID-19 pandemic made us realize how essential they are to our well-being. The pandemic brought us stay-at-home orders and social distancing. Simple things like a walk in the park proved to be more important than ever. Many of our residents gained a renewed appreciation and recognition of parks as critical suburban infrastructure. Parks and recreation staff saw record numbers of park visitors and volunteers. Staff swiftly adapted and mobilized to keep our green spaces open to safely support physical, emotional, and mental health. As a group, we strived to cultivate a sense of place, meaning, and ownership for Meridian Township residents. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored what we have known for years... that parks and recreation are essential to mental and physical health.

It is intended that the Master Plan will fulfill the following goals:

1. Document broad-based public input regarding current and future parks and recreation needs and priorities of Meridian Township residents.
2. Document the needs and desires of current Meridian Township.
3. Provide the Park Commission, department staff, and other community stakeholders with information to guide parks and recreation planning for the next five years and beyond.
4. Project the needs of current and future residents based upon demographic trends and public input.

This 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan describes the park and recreation opportunities in Meridian Township and establishes goals, objectives and an overall vision for our community's parks and recreation future. It is intended to be a planning tool and guide for future decision-making and application of resources. This plan follows the guidelines and requirements established by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to provide eligibility for MDNR grant funding. The required plan content includes the following chapters:

- I. Community Description.** This section includes the character and demographics of the population that is served by the park and recreation facilities and programs.

- II. Administrative Structure.** This section outlines the township and parks and recreational organization structure, partnerships and volunteer efforts, and relationships with the local school districts and other public agencies in regard to recreational, programming, and funding sources that are available for the parks and recreation department. Meridian Township is well organized, with a professional park staff that leverages available resources to maximize the recreation opportunities to its residents.
- III. Recreation Inventory.** A thorough listing of park programs and facilities is included. Analysis of these facilities includes comparison to National Standards as well as how they meet local demands. An accessibility assessment helps identify opportunities to eliminate physical barriers to recreation. Funding sources for each park are included, as well as status of each grant funded park as part of the appendix. Land use and environmental features are identified that help shape opportunities and constraints for park development. The township has ample public landholdings, with only a percentage of developed parks supporting the demand for various activities. There are many recreation partners and volunteers that can and will continue to help support recreation to the community.
- IV. Planning Process.** The Parks and Recreation staff prepared the master plan, with guidance from the elected Park Commission and other township staff members. The preparation of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan provided opportunities for citizens to play a key role in defining the future of parks and recreation in Meridian Township.
- V. Goals and Objectives.** This section outlines the guidelines that shape the intent for future facility and program development within the community. They describe the character and vision that can be applied as opportunities are evaluated by the township regarding park and recreation improvements.
- VI. Action Plan.** The Action Program is the section of the plan that identifies how the township intends to meet, or work towards meeting goals and objectives over the next five years. Specific projects that were identified during the planning process are described and an explanation provided as to how they will meet the goals and objectives. The citizens of Meridian Township have continually demonstrated their support for the maintenance, stewardship and development of quality parks, natural areas, and recreation facilities. Past surveys revealed strong local support in favor of continued development and maintenance of the existing facilities.

A large group of people, mostly women, are running a race on a paved road. They are wearing various athletic gear like tank tops and leggings in colors like pink, blue, and black. In the foreground, a man in a red shirt is riding a bicycle. To the left, there are several green banners with the word 'Orto' and some text. The background shows a line of trees under a clear sky.

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## Community Description



# Community Description

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Location Description and Population Information

Map A: Location Map

Meridian Township Residents

Township Millages and Ordinances

Environmental Features

# 1. Community Description

## A. Location Description and Population Information

The community of Meridian Township lies along the eastern border of East Lansing and the campus of Michigan State University and in close proximity to the Michigan State Capitol. Centrally located in the palm of Michigan's hand, Meridian Township has nestled within its borders two healthy and active communities; Haslett and Okemos. A smaller portion of the Township is comprised of East Lansing and Williamston mailing addresses.

Founded in the early 1800's along the Red Cedar River as a trading point, Meridian Township residents enjoy quiet, safe, and well-maintained connected neighborhoods with outstanding schools, exceptional public safety, and plenty of parks, pathways, and recreational opportunities for visitors and families to enjoy. With natural beauty on roads, interurban pathways, and a vibrant business corridor, Meridian Township is a great atmosphere for families, seniors, and young professionals.

A destination for raising families since before the turn of the century, Meridian Township offers an array of quiet neighborhoods and an abundance of natural beauty with four seasons of outdoor activities.

With a park system that has 933 acres of parkland in 30 parks and 968 acres of land preserves, Meridian Township welcomes visitors from surrounding areas to its parks and to the largest lake within 25 miles of the State Capital, Lake Lansing.

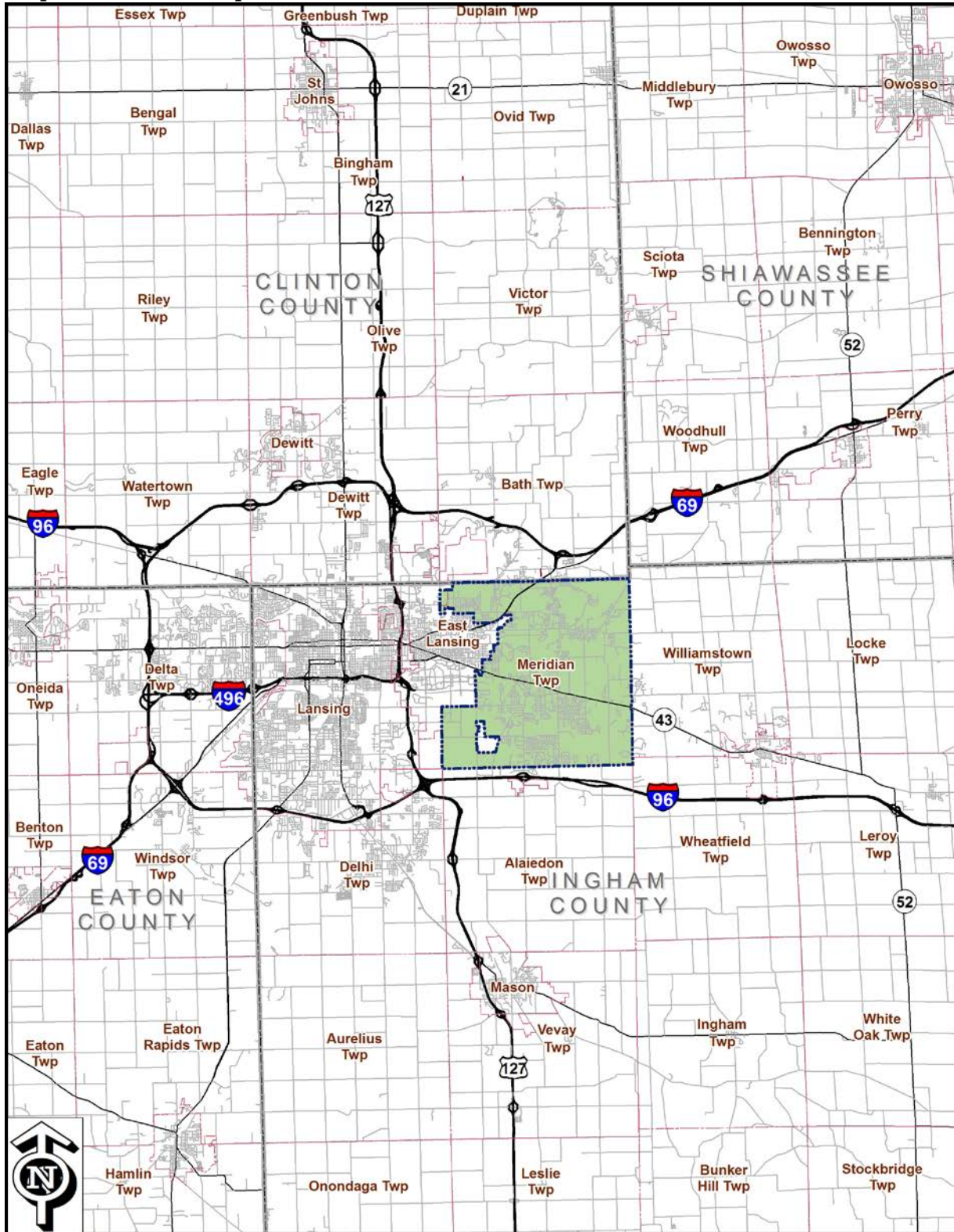
### Quick Facts - 2020 Census Data

- Population: 43,916\*
- Okemos - 25,121
- Haslett - 19,670
- Square Miles: approximately 32
- Households: 18,210
- College Graduates: 67.1%
- Median Household Income: \$72,463 \*
- Township Parks: 933 acres
- County Parks: 430+ acres
- Township Land Preserves: 968 acres

Meridian Township is the local government unit that includes the unincorporated communities, school districts, and census-designated places of Haslett and Okemos. The Township takes its name from the Michigan Meridian, the prime north-south survey line, which runs through the township. It is from this line that all townships were surveyed and measured.

Meridian Township originally encompassed 36 square miles with boundaries of Coleman Road on the north, Jolly Road on the south, College/Abbott Roads on the west and Meridian Road on the east. Over the years, due to annexations by East Lansing and a 425 agreement with the City of Lansing, the western boundary has changed and the Township now encompasses 31.7 square miles. Michigan State University borders the Township on the southwest side. Michigan's State Capital, Lansing, is located eight miles to the west of Meridian Township.

Map A: Location Map





**B. Meridian Township Residents**

Parks and natural areas have a fundamental impact on the character and quality of life in Meridian Township. Residents have long been concerned about maintaining the quality of their community, particularly the quality of residential life, the rich and diverse natural environment and the award winning schools and public services.

The Charter Township of Meridian takes great pride in being a community that provides a high quality of life for its residents, especially families. The diversity of values, experiences and socioeconomic status creates unique challenges for the Department of Parks and Recreation to provide leisure experiences that appeal to existing residents, while attracting new residents and businesses. The Parks and Recreation staff members are actively engaged in continuing their education and joining related professional associations to enhance their ability to meet these challenges. Staff members also contribute many hours of volunteering to community service organizations at the local and state levels.

Education is a priority to residents and overall Meridian Township is a highly educated community. 96.7% of the Township's adults (25 and over) have obtained four or more years of higher education. These high levels of educational attainment are highlighted in the types of occupations common of Meridian Township residents.

**C. Township Millages & Ordinances**

The public support for these recommendations and the importance of parks and recreation were substantiated by successful passage of related ordinances and Millages:

**Millage Information**

- ♦ **Park Millage** (.6667 mill passed in 2014 through 2025) provides funds for acquisition, maintenance, equipment and facility development.
- ♦ **Previous Park Millage** (.317 mill renewed 1984-2016) provided funds for acquisition, maintenance, equipment and facility development.
- ♦ **Pedestrian/Bicycle Pathway Millage** (0.333 mills renewed in 2016 and continuing through 2028) maintain bicycle and pedestrian pathways.
- ♦ **Community Services Millage** 0.15 mil Community Services Millage (2012-2021), provides funds for recreation, human services, and the Meridian Senior Center.
- ♦ **Land Preservation Millage** (.75 mills passed in 2000 until 2010; 0.33 passed in 2010 until 2020; .01 in 2020 to 2030) provides funds to acquire and manage open-space for preservation and management.

### Ordinance Information

- **Park Ordinance** – [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us). Charter Township of Meridian / Code of Ordinances. Chapter 54. Parks and Recreation; Cross references: Outdoor assemblies, § 38-186 et seq.; streets, sidewalks and other public places, ch. 58; vegetation, ch. 82. State law reference: Township parks, MCL 42.1, 41.421 et seq.
- **Wetland Protection Ordinance** (originally adopted in 1991 and amended in 2001) provides regulations for preserving and protecting wetlands in joint jurisdiction over state regulated wetlands in Meridian Township. [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us), chapter 22.
- **Land Preservation Ordinance** – [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us), chapter 22. Provides regulations for preserving and protecting land. Charter Township of Meridian / Code of Ordinances / Environment
- **Land Clearing Ordinance** (adopted in 2002) to prevent clear cutting of land prior to obtaining a permit from the Township. [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us), chapter 22.

### D. Environmental Features

#### 1. Geology

The underlying geology of Meridian Township and the surrounding area was formed by the glacial advances and recessions that covered much of Michigan. Two primary geological formations underlie the Meridian Township area. The first 100 feet below the surface consists of glacial till or deposits that were laid down and contoured by glacial activity. This layer has created landforms specific to glacial terrain including eskers, moraines, kames, drumlins, and kettles. Below this layer of till is several hundred feet of sedimentary rock that was formed out of the deposits from the lakes that covered Michigan during the Paleozoic Era.

#### 2. Topography

The glacial action that deposited till over the base sedimentary rock also created the surface topography of Meridian Township. The terrain in Meridian Township ranges from level to gently rolling. The highest points in Meridian Township are found in Sections, 34 and 35, just north of Jolly Road near the Southeast corner of the Township. The elevations at these points are approximately 925 feet above sea level. From these two points, the ground slopes down rapidly to the west and north. The lowest natural point in Meridian Township is located in Section 17, at the Red Cedar River, and is 845 feet above sea level. The flood plains of the Red Cedar River, Herron Creek, Mud Lake Drain and Pine Lake Drain are generally the lowest areas in Meridian Township.

**3. Hydrology**

The 1976 Meridian Township Floodplain Study identified the Red Cedar River and its tributaries as areas of primary concern with respect to flooding in Meridian Township. This study indicated that development along the Red Cedar River is primarily residential in the Okemos-East Lansing area and primarily undeveloped or agricultural to the east of Okemos. The other residential development within the floodplain is along Pine Lake outlet, north of Haslett Road. Local ordinance regulates future floodplain usage and limits it to residential and recreational purposes. Floodplain areas vary in width from a narrow, winding strip, 100 feet wide, to a large plateau, 2,500 feet in width. Meridian Township is comprised of approximately 620 acres or 3.1 percent of lakes, rivers and large drains.

In 1991, the wetlands in Meridian Township were inventoried and mapped by J. & L. Consulting Services (See Appendix A). This inventory was based on the definition of a wetland as stated in the Administrative Rules of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, June 22, 1988, and in the Goemaere-Anderson Wetland Protection Act 203 of 1979. The WPA 203 regulates wetlands over 5 acres in size. The Meridian Township Wetland Ordinance was adopted in 1992 to regulate wetlands that are between 1/4 of an acre and 5 acres in size.

The 2000 Land Use survey calculated that the Township is comprised of approximately three percent of open water. This includes Lake Lansing, the Red Cedar River and Mud Lake. Lake Lansing is approximately 450 acres and its watershed area is approximately 2,500 acres (extending into Clinton County). The Red Cedar River flows Westerly through Meridian Township for an approximate distance of nine miles. It has total fall of 14.9 feet and is fed by four main tributaries. The ten-acre Mud Lake and its tributaries drain the northern two-thirds of Meridian Township into the Red Cedar River. Herron Creek, Smith Drain and Sloan Creek drain the southern third of the Township. In addition, there are a number of other natural and man-made ponds which are scattered throughout Meridian Township.

**4. Soils**

Most of the soils in Meridian Township were formed by glacial deposits and vary greatly throughout the area. These soil types have limitations and uses associated with its particular characteristics. The factors that determine whether a soil is suitable for recreational use are permeability and fertility, level of flooding and wetness, and stability. The soils can be characterized into the following five types:

- a. Urban Land-Marlette-Capac (UMC) Association - urban land and nearly level to hilly, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy soils. Stability for recreational use: Poor
- b. Marlette-Capac-Owosso (MCO) Association - nearly level to rolling, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy soils. Stability for recreational use: Fair
- c. Houghton-Palms-Edwards (HPE) Association - nearly level, very poorly drained muck soils. Stability for recreational use: Poor
- d. Oshtemo-Houghton-Riddles (OHR) Association - nearly level to hilly, well drained very poorly drained, sandy, loamy, and muck soils. Stability for recreational use: Fair to Favorable
- e. Marlett-Oshtemo-Capac (MOC) Association - nearly level to steep, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy and sandy soils. Stability for recreational use: Fair to Favorable

Glacial soil deposits throughout Meridian Township include recessional moraines, eskers, pitted outwash plains, lacustrine plains, and old glacial drainage ways. These glacial soils are highly variable and range from well-drained sandy loams and clay loams to pockets of poorly drained soil. (See Appendix A).

## 5. **Climate**

Meridian Township lies within the Central Plains climate region. The Great Lakes winds have a moderating influence over the climate within this region. The mean annual temperature of the area is 47.6 F, the average annual snowfall is 45.8 inches and the mean annual rainfall is 30.66 inches. Sixty-one percent (61.0%) of the total area rainfall occurs from May through October. Meridian Township is located in the Lansing metropolitan area which is impacted by lake effect from the Great Lakes.

## 6. **Vegetation**

Meridian Township has a diversity of vegetative communities and species. Most of the Township contains areas of woodlots, fields, and wetlands near residential areas, office and commercial parks, and agricultural fields. Due to the mix of land uses and plant communities, the majority of the vegetation in the Township is considered edge or transitional from one community to another. Typically, these areas include a mix of plant species from both communities, and diversity in these edges can be very high.

These areas, along with parcels still in private ownership, provide homes for a great variety of plants and wild animals, which are integral parts of a healthy environment and which add significantly to the quality of life for Township residents.

Meridian Township was once part of a large hardwood forest that covered most of Michigan. Now, only dispersed woodlots remain. Most of the larger remaining mature woodlands are concentrated along the Red Cedar River, major drains, and lowlands of Meridian. A variety of trees are found in these woodlots. For example, 'mixed mesophytic' hardwood stands (e.g. beech-maple) are present in moist upland areas while oaks and hickories are dominant on drier sites. Species such as red and silver maple, ashes, cottonwood, sycamore, box elder, swamp white oak and black willow are found in bottomland forest and on flood plains. This natural combination of wetlands and drains precludes extensive uses of these areas and acts to preserve the remaining wooded acres.

State-listed threatened plants including beak grass (*Diarrhenia americana*), water-horehound (*Lycopus virginicus*) and ginseng (*Panax quinquefolia*). Several species of sedge (*Carex* spp.) are known to occur in the Township.

Many of the most unique and valuable open spaces and natural areas have received protection as Township or County parks. There are still a number of areas in private ownership that represent significant ecological and economic resources to residents and businesses. The Township has been proactive in the identification and acquisition of the most important and sensitive habitats.

## 7. **Wildlife**

Meridian Township residents recognize wildlife as an integral and valuable part of the landscape and the experience of Township life. There is a diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats in Meridian Township, and an abundance of wildlife species that have adapted to human presence. Although much of the Township is developed, there remains a significant amount of high-quality riparian, wetland, and upland habitat that supports populations of native species of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Many of these are known as "backyard" or "edge" species, including: mammals (e.g., White-tailed Deer, Red Fox, Fox Squirrel, Woodchuck, Raccoon, and Opossum); birds (e.g., Cooper's Hawk, American Goldfinch, Downey Woodpecker, and Northern Cardinal), reptiles (e.g., Garter Snake, Milk Snake, Map Turtle and Painted Turtle) and amphibians (e.g., Spring Peeper, Wood Frog and Blue-spotted Salamander). Approximately 28 native species of amphibians and

reptiles, 93 native bird species and 27 species of mammals have been observed in the Township.

The Davis Foster Land Preserve has confirmed (Capital Area Audubon Society) breeding pairs of the state-endangered Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*). These grassland nesting birds live and reproduce in the restored native grassland on the property from April-October. The threatened Long-eared Owl (*Asiootus*) and Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) formerly nested in the greater Lansing area. Potential breeding habitat still exists for these species in Meridian Township, though recent breeding has not been confirmed. The Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) and Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene Carolina*) are presently breeding in the Township. They are listed by the state as "Special Concern" species. Several unlisted amphibian species thought by biologists to be declining in parts of Michigan also breed in the Township, including the Western Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*) and the Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*). A number of avian species also fall within this category.

The Meridian Township Land Preservation program is currently acquiring and managing properties to maintain the environmental and natural characteristics of the land and to support wildlife habitat in the community. Wildlife habitat is one of the scoring criteria for acquiring new land preserves and management activities focus on improving ecosystem health to support native wildlife. The Davis Foster restored grassland being home to the Henslow's Sparrow is a great example of the success of the program.

# 2

## Administrative Structure





# Administrative Structure

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Role of Township Board

Role of Park Commission

Role of the Land Preservation Advisory Board

Role of Environmental Commission

Role of Parks and Recreation Department

Parks and Recreation Administration and Staff

Role of Volunteers

Relationships with School Districts, Other Public Agencies and Private Organizations

Communications

Funding Sources and Budget Information



## 2. Administrative Structure

### A. Role of Township Board

The Meridian Township Board governs the Charter Township of Meridian. The Board is comprised of seven elected officials: Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer and four Trustees. The Board appoints a Township Manager to implement its policies. All Department Directors report directly to the Township Manager.

### B. Role of Park Commission

A five-member elected Park Commission, established under Michigan Compiled Law (MCL 41.426) is an elected policy-making board whose role is to oversee the park system. The Park Commission schedules 12 regular meetings and various special meetings as needed throughout the year. The Director of Parks and Recreation provides staff support to the elected Park Commission whose members prioritize park planning, design, acquisition and development. A member of the Park Commission also serves as a liaison to the Land Preservation Advisory Board.

### C. Role of the Land Preservation Advisory Board

The Land Preservation Advisory Board is an appointed body responsible for recommending land in the Township to obtain for the protection and preservation of open space and special natural features. The board also recommends the best management practices and oversees ecological restoration efforts in current land preserves.

### D. Role of the Environmental Commission

The Environmental Commission advises the Township Board, officials, and staff on matters pertaining to environmental protection, management of natural resources, water conservation and preservation of open space. The commission is also responsible for the duties of the wetland board; thus it serves in an advisory role in setting policy guidelines on wetland issues, reviews wetland use permits, and develops and promotes wetland education and stewardship.

### E. Other Environmental Planning Organizations

Meridian Township staff members regularly attend and support other organizations such as the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, Friends of Meridian Pathways, Friends of the Red Cedar River, Friends of The Wetlands, the Mid-Michigan Stewardship Network, the Mid-Michigan Stewardship Initiative, Grand Learning Network, Michigan Mountain Biking Association and the Ingham County Trail Planning Group.

## **F. Role of Parks and Recreation Department**

The Meridian Township Department of Parks and Recreation was established in 1999, and consists of 13 full-time positions (down from 15 in 2016): a Director, Administrative Assistant, one Parks and Recreation Specialist, Senior Parks and Land Management Coordinator, one Park Naturalist, one Stewardship Coordinator, one Senior Center Coordinator, Parks and one Land Management Superintendent, and five (5) Utility Workers. In addition, there is a part-time Farmers' Market Manager, Senior Center assistant as well as numerous seasonal recreation, environmental, maintenance and park ranger staff. These positions all play an integral role in providing professional, broad-base programs and services to Meridian Township residents. (See Figure 1)

## **G. Parks and Recreation Administration and Staff**

The Director of Parks and Recreation for the Charter Township of Meridian reports directly to the Meridian Township Manager and is responsible for managing all full-time and part-time Parks and Recreation staff members. The Parks and Recreation Department staff serves as the Township liaison to the Park Commission, Land Preservation Advisory Board, Friends of Historic Meridian, Meridian Senior Center Advisory Board, Nokomis Cultural Heritage Center, Harris Nature Center Foundation Board, and various community organizations.

## **H. Role of Volunteers**

Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Department, the Park Commission, and the Land Preserve Advisory Board have made a priority of engaging residents in volunteer projects and programs. Meridian Township engages volunteers in a number of ways including youth sports coaching, organized volunteer days throughout the parks and land preserves (ex. Love-A-Park-Day), stewardship mornings at the Harris Nature Center, Meridian Conservation Corp, classroom projects for local schools and various other events throughout the year.

The Parks and Recreation Department is assisted by various volunteer committees:

### **1. Universal Access Advisory Board**

One of the goals of the Park Commission is to improve the accessibility of parks and trails and to promote park use by the disabled and elderly population. This goal led to the creation of a Universal Access Advisory Board. The first meeting was held in 2008 to review proposed site plans for development of Orlando Park. The group has met on several other occasions since to discuss and recommend improvements to

other park facilities that would attract additional visitors with disabilities. This group most recently met in September, 2021 and provided valuable input on numerous major park development projects. Future desires expressed:

Quiet/sensory space

Mid-Michigan Autism Association – body of water can be very dangerous

Fire station – loud, also hard for autism/epilepsy

Enough handicapped spots

Shaded, scared of bugs

Dementia/alzheimers/quiet space

Shade – physical sun exposure to medicine makes them susceptible

Signs in parks with some “Learn how to sign” communication provokers

Nearby accessible bathroom

Smells, noises, lights

Sensory seeking and sensory avoidance

Tactile things to touch

Seeking sensory input

Things in braille

Family bathrooms

Unisex bathrooms

Allows for longer excursions

Allows people go to the park

More hooks

Vertical bars rather than horizontal

Button for handicap door, mechanical door handle

Sharps container for medical waste containers

Bigger waste cans

Staff training, standards for pull weight of door

Trash can placement

Larger trash cans

Bags to contain incontinence

Non-slip floor surfaces

Loud hand dryer

Signs along the way to describe nature

Sign language – how to “play” “friends”

Loves HNC paved path – need more

Look around at a wheelchair level

Visual barrier-free fencing

Central Park South – need a barrier between water

Battle Creek – “friendship” park has an adult changing station

“Falconers” group at Potter’s Park

Handicap accessible porta-a-jon

Towner Road Park

Adult swing

Regular swing next to it

Put wheelchair on it

How far do I have to walk and where is the bathroom?  
“Social story” – where everything is, where is most crowded  
Michigan Alliance for cultural accessibility  
How crowded a place is  
Icon – where your headphones  
Potter Park Zoo  
Ramp – secure wheelchair – like going down a slide, feel independent and free  
Rope pull – pull yourself up – ropes course for wheelchairs

MSU Engineering Department  
Pathway (MSU to Lake Lansing Pathways): What can we do to make it more pleasant and nicer for users of all abilities?  
Bathrooms  
Rumble strips on the side of the sidewalk to alert the blind  
Feel tactilely where the bumps are (rumble strip), like a roadway  
How far off is the next bathroom  
Sign for “stop and learn” to encourage breaks  
Reflective paint  
Benches  
Low level lights  
Not strobe or bright lights  
Universal changing station for adults  
Ask before we build!  
Shelters over handicapped spots  
Group programming – “wheelz”  
  
“Michigan cares for tourism” – Insta site

## **2. Meridian Conservation Corps**

The Meridian Conservation Corps is a program devoted to increasing community involvement in our parks and preserves. It is a vehicle to grow awareness of volunteer opportunities involving the care and conservation of Meridian Township’s local green spaces. These places will grow on their own, but in order to thrive, we need to take care of each aspect of their health. Natural areas are important for the physical and mental well-being of human life. We need nature and nature needs us. This program aims to utilize the community’s knowledge and passion and gather it into one concentrated place: the conservation corps!

## **3. Harris Nature Center Foundation Board**

The Harris Nature Center Foundation (HNCF) was created in 2008 to support activities and improvements to the Harris Nature Center that

are beyond the regular operations supported by the Park Millage. The HNCF has its 501©3 designation and can acknowledge donations for tax purposes. Through grants, fund raising events, donations, and in-kind services, the HNCF has raised money for the ongoing School Bus Scholarship Program, building the river overlook and the creation of the Nature Exploration Area. The Harris Nature Center Foundation Board strives to successfully act on industry trends to bring children into nature through immersion activities and natural play opportunities.

**4. Friends of Historic Meridian**

The Meridian Historical Village is located in picturesque Central Park in Okemos, Michigan, and contains historic buildings relocated from other locations and carefully restored to their original 19th century style. The Village is operated by the Friends of Historic Meridian, a non-profit organization formed in 1974 to create and sustain an active appreciation of local history. The Friends of Historic Meridian preserve and maintain the historic buildings, sponsor community events in the Village, and hold free public lectures. The Village hosts almost 2,500 schoolchildren annually on weekdays during the school year. The busiest months are between September-November and March - June. [www.meridianhistoricalvillage.org](http://www.meridianhistoricalvillage.org).

**5. Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center Board**

The Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center is dedicated to the preservation of the history, Arts, and culture of the Anishinaabe people - the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi nations. The Center fulfills this mission through programs, exhibitions and special events. A volunteer board leads the activities and operations. To learn more about the Nokomis Center, visit [www.nokomis.org](http://www.nokomis.org).

**6. Meridian Garden Club**

The Meridian Garden Club, a 501(c)(3), began in 1970 and has approximately 100 members. The Club is responsible for planting and maintaining numerous gardens near the administration building and in Central Park. In addition, they hold educational sessions about gardening and a plant sale to provide funds for their gardens.

Highlights of recent years:

- 2008: The Club designed a Blue Star Memorial garden that is located near the Town Hall.
- 2013: The Club collaborated with the Township to install irrigation in all of the gardens that are maintained near the Town Hall, Historical Village, and the Claire Twohy Garden near the Farmers' Market pavilion.

- 2015: the Club developed the Claire Twohy butterfly garden near the pavilion in Central Park. The Twohy Garden received was First Place for Civic Achievement at both the State and National levels.
- 2016: The Plant It Pink Garden received national recognition by the National Garden Club for Civic Achievement.
- 2018: the garden club planted the gardens at the Safety Building and the main fire station. Both gardens were planted with the help of local youth. They received the First Place award from Michigan Nursery Association for Community Gardens. The Garden at the Okemos Post Office received the same award this spring.

## 7. **Haslett Beautification Association**

In 2005, residents gathered and formed the Haslett Beautification Association (HBA). The group spearheaded a non-profit organization that collects donations for the purpose of creating public gardens along the commercial areas of Haslett, Lake Lansing, and Marsh Roads. The mission of HBA is to improve the aesthetic appearance of downtown Haslett and encourage businesses to invest in the downtown. HBA has a strong history of fundraising and creating public improvements in downtown Haslett, which benefit businesses, residents, and visitors.

### I. **Relationships with School Districts, Other Public Agencies and Private Organizations**

The Township has continued to foster strong partnerships with the Haslett and Okemos School Districts and Libraries, Boy and Girl scouts, civic organizations such as the Haslett-Okemos Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs, businesses, the GRAND Learning Network and Lansing Oar and Paddle Club. Other partnerships have been formed with recreation groups including: Haslett Youth Recreation Association, Haslett Baseball Club, Okemos Baseball Club, Okemos and Haslett Soccer Clubs, neighborhood associations and civic groups.

The Meridian Senior Center is located inside Chippewa Middle School with dual funding by Okemos Public Schools and the 2012 Community Service Millage. Okemos Community Schools provides the facility and utilities and the Millage pays for salaries and improvements to the facility. The Meridian Senior Center Staff are supervised by the director of Parks and Recreation.

### J. **Communications**

The Department of Parks and Recreation utilizes the following methods to inform the public of programs, services and facilities:

- **Prime Meridian Magazine** – This magazine promotes recreation programs, events and activities, as well as other township news and mailed

annually to 22,000 households, businesses and PO Boxes in Meridian Township. The Guide is also available at the Township Hall, Meridian Service Center, Okemos and Haslett Libraries, Harris Nature Center and online.

- ***Meridian Township Website*** – The Meridian Township website is managed by the Communications Department, and in 2021, the website completed a major overhaul thus providing more efficient navigation organization.
- ***Email*** – The Department utilizes email as a communication and promotional tool to program participants. Email, social media, Township website and ActiveNet have taken the place of flyers to elementary schools (which were once the most effective promotional method). Flyers to schools are still utilized, but on a very limited basis.
- ***Weekly Electronic Township Newsletter*** (Meridian Happenings) – This newsletter has a distribution of 10,500 subscribers.
- ***ActiveNet*** – ActiveNet is the online registration program the Department utilizes that also provides credit card registration. This program provides direct marketing opportunities via broadcast email through the system of current and former program participants.
- ***HOM-TV 21*** (*Haslett, Okemos, Meridian TV*) - Meridian Township has its own cable access channel together with programming staff who produce promotional shows and program coverage.
- ***Social Media – (Facebook/Twitter/etc.)*** - Meridian Township website has improved greatly over the last five years since Department staff has obtained the ability to update and download information. This has led to more effective reporting and promotion of programs and activities. The Department also participates on Facebook and Twitter which has assisted in reaching the younger population.
- ***Press Releases*** – Press releases about parks and recreation programs are published on a regular basis to all local media outlets including the Lansing State Journal, Towne Courier, State News, local radio and TV stations.
- ***Radio and TV Interviews*** – Parks and Recreation staff are regularly interviewed regarding current programs and activities on local TV and radio stations.
- ***Word-of-Mouth*** – The Department relies on recommendations from current and former participants and its local partners to build interest and awareness of parks and recreation programs.

## **Funding Sources and Budget Information**

Parks, recreation, and land preserves are funded and maintained primarily through the Park Millage and the General Fund. Meridian Township has millages that support parks, pathways, seniors, land preservation, and recreation. In order to leverage our local funds for community improvements, the Township places a high priority on obtaining grant funding, engaging volunteer support and working cooperatively with neighboring communities to expand funding and services.

The Township heavily relies on State and Federal grants for park acquisition and development. Since 1972, Meridian Township has received 31 grants totaling \$3,918,991.34

More detailed budget descriptions are located in the appendices, as well as the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Township's DNR (Department of Natural Resources) grant history document.



- Figure 2 -

## Budget Information

10/15/2021

### Park Millage

#### Revenue:

	<u>2020 (Actual)</u>	<u>2021 (Budgeted)</u>	<u>2022 (Budgeted)</u>
Park Millage	\$1,200,133	\$1,228,250	\$1,229,900
Harris Nature Center Revenue	\$ 5,122	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000
Pavilion Rentals	\$ 4,620	\$ 19,500	\$ 20,000
Total Park Millage Revenue	\$1,209,875	\$1,277,750	\$1,279,900

#### Expenses:

Administration & Operation	\$157,830	\$180,960	\$192,255
Parks Maintenance	\$316,941	\$414,400	\$465,725
Harris Nature Center	\$133,965	\$168,955	\$179,784
Park Development/Acquisition	<u>\$2,481,172</u>	<u>\$401,250</u>	<u>\$638,000</u>
Total Park Millage Expense	\$4,363,808	\$1,165,565	\$1,475,764

### General Fund

#### Revenue:

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Recreation Millage	\$61,000	\$61,000	\$62,000
Recreation Program Revenue	\$35,118	\$147,598	\$150,000
General Fund	<u>\$461,695</u>	<u>\$575,149</u>	<u>\$616,899</u>
Total Revenue	\$557,813	\$783,747	\$828,899

#### Expenses:

Parks & Recreation Administration	\$121,323	\$225,120	\$211,376
Park Maintenance	\$304,958	\$351,947	\$397,368
Recreation Expense	<u>\$151,532</u>	<u>\$206,680</u>	<u>\$220,155</u>
Total General Fund Expenses	\$577,813	\$783,747	\$828,899

### Senior Center Millage

#### Revenue:

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Senior Center Millage	\$152,806	\$156,550	\$158,550

**Expenses:**

Administration	\$96,874	\$155,000	\$118,000
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**Land Preservation Millage**

**Revenue:**

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Land Preservation Millage	\$621,129	\$206,100	\$198,400
Land Preservation Reserve	\$217,345	\$49,030	\$40,000
Total Park Millage Revenue	\$838,474	\$255,130	\$238,400

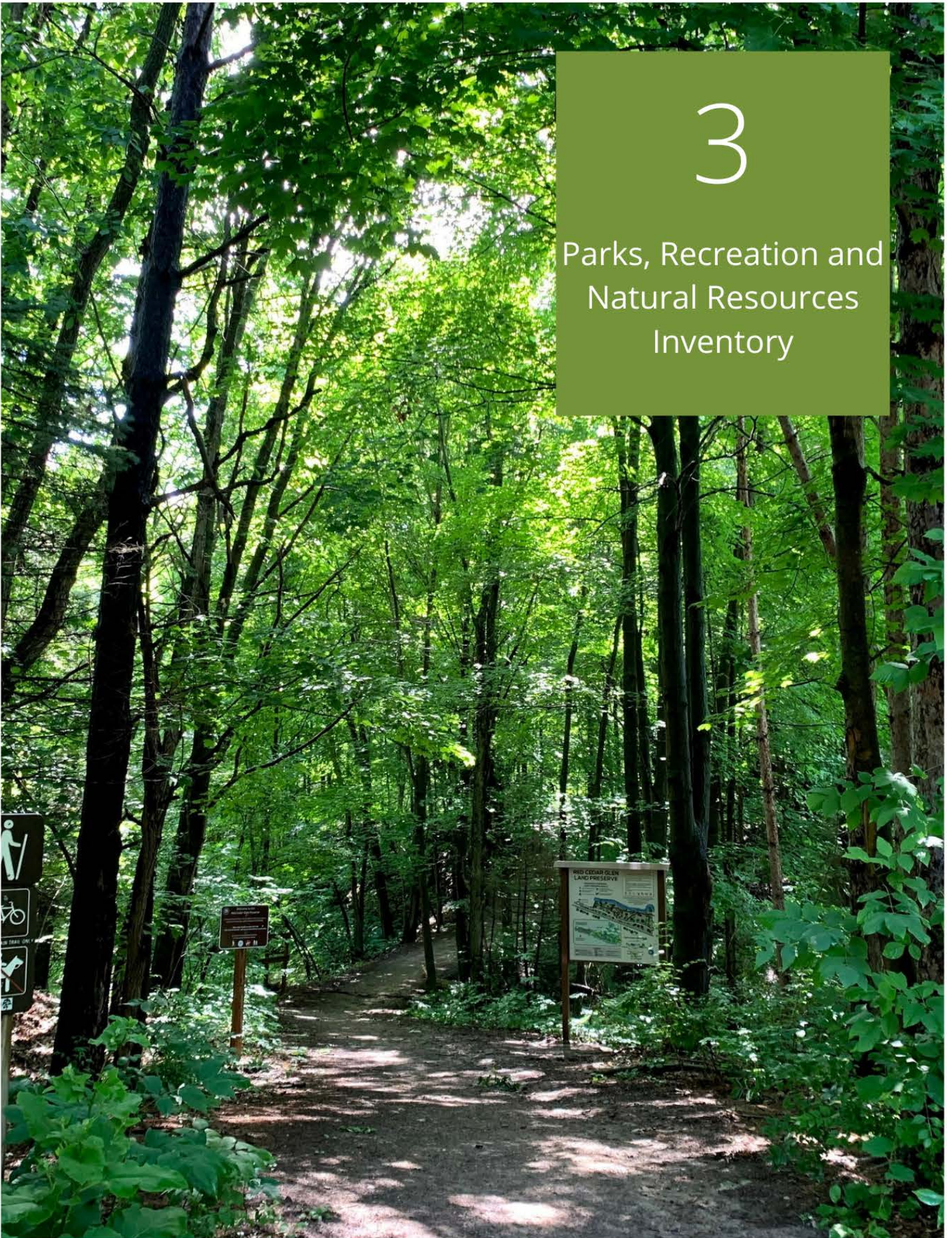
**Expenses:**

Administration & Operation	\$101,667	\$201,595	\$171,375
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Note: Figures shown in 2020 are actual; 2021 and 2022 are budgeted)

# 3

## Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Inventory







## Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Inventory

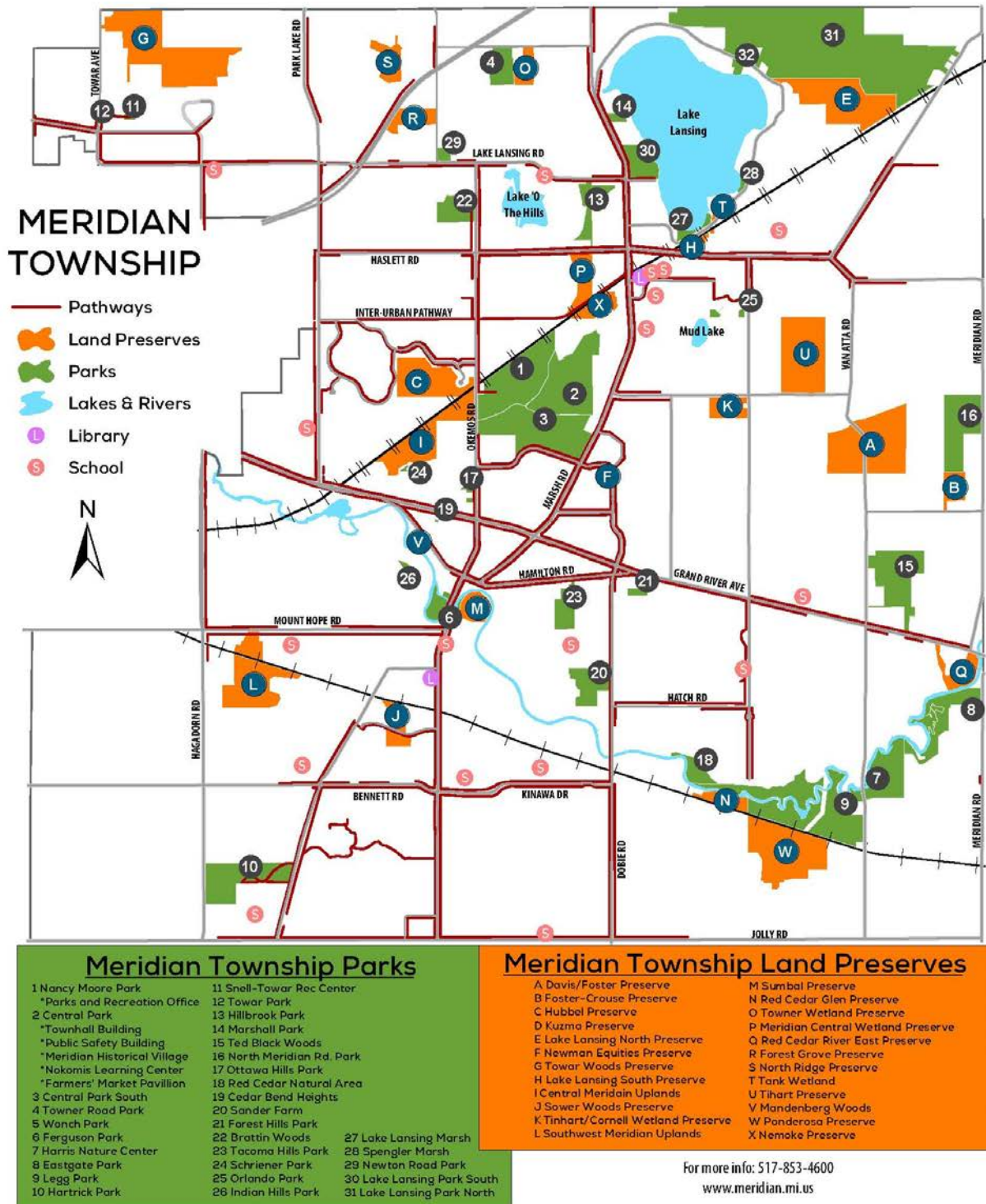
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- Community-Owned Parks, Natural Areas and Facilities
  - Park Accomplishments from 2016-2021
  - Recreation Programs & Events
  - Description of Other Public Recreation Sites
  - Description of Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory
  - Overall Summary of Recreation Space in Meridian Township
    - Evaluation of Existing Park Acreage
    - Accessibility Assessment
- Inventory of all Community Owned Parks and Recreation Facilities
  - Evaluation of Existing Sports Facilities
- Status Report for all Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities
  - Trails and Pathways Inventory
  - Land Preservation Program
  - Natural Resources Inventory

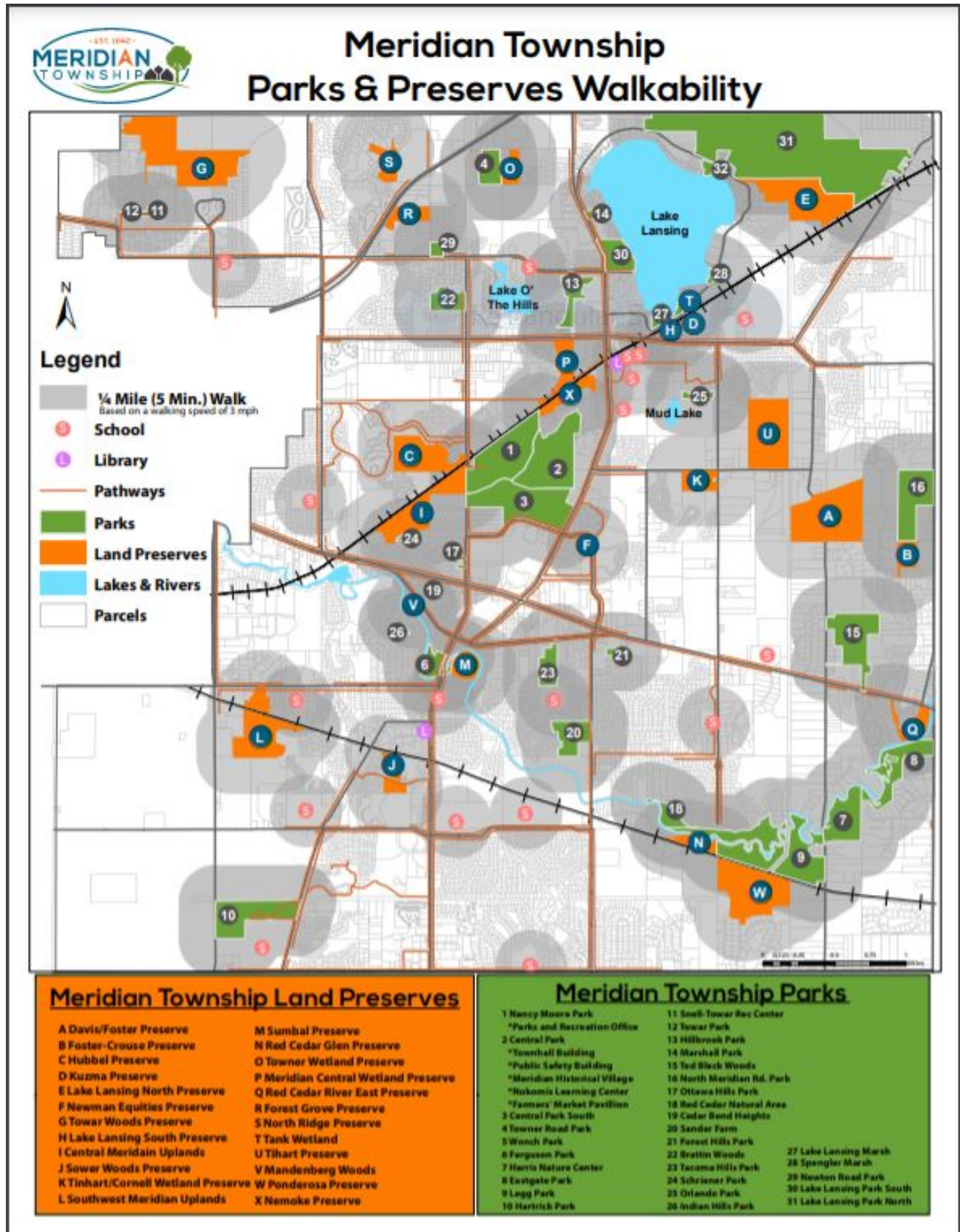
### **3. Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Inventory**

The Township's park, recreation, and open space inventory includes Township-owned parks, natural areas, land preserves, pathways and recreational facilities. In addition to Township-owned parks, Meridian Township residents have access to recreation spaces provided by Haslett and Okemos Schools and Ingham County Parks. Non-Township owned park and recreational resources are included to fully understand the extent of park and recreational opportunities for township residents; therefore, they are listed as separate inventories within this plan. This inventory was conducted in-house by Township staff from the Parks and Recreation Department, Engineering Department, the Department of Neighborhood and Economic Development and the Department of Community Planning and Development.

## Parks, Pathways & Natural Areas



Map 1: Meridian Township Parks, Pathways & Natural Areas Plan



Map 2: Meridian Township Parks & Preserves Walkability



## A. Community-Owned Parks, Natural Areas and Facilities

### Mini Parks

(4 parks totaling 5.63 acres)

#### 1. Cedar Bend Heights Park 0.33 Acres

2280 Kenmore Drive, Okemos

##### **Park Description:**

- Amenities: Play structure, sidewalks, picnic table, park sign, landscaping, split-rail fence, grill and benches.

##### **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 2002: The Meridian Township Park Commission purchased this parcel in response to neighborhood support.
- 2004: The park was developed utilizing Park Millage funds and money raised by residents who sold fence pickets.
- 2012: Additional landscaping was added to the park.

##### **Future Park Development Plans:**

- There are no future development plans aside from maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

#### 2. Ottawa Hills Park 3 Acres

4980 Hillcrest Avenue, Okemos

##### **Park Description:**

- This park includes playground equipment geared toward young children, a sidewalk, picnic area, playground equipment and half-court basketball court.

##### **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1984-1986: Ottawa Hills Park has two non-contiguous parcels: one was donated in 1984 by Wayne Clinton and is located on Okemos Road. This parcel serves as a preserved natural wetland. The other parcel (which is the main section of the park) was purchased in 1986 from Marion Jergo for \$5,600 and is located on Hillcrest Avenue.
- 1998: Playground equipment and a basketball court were installed.
- 2001: Swings were added in to the park.
- 2018: Tetherball was added to the park; basketball court surface was improved; an Eagle Scout built a "ball" bin; and a Lending Library was added.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future development plans include new and updated play equipment, a pathway connection to Okemos Road, and any other necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**3. Schriener Park** **1 Acre**  
5039 Algonquin Way, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- This park has open green space area is maintained for neighborhood use. There are no additional park amenities.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- Schreiner Park was acquired through a donation from Ernst and Elfrieda Schreiner in 1980.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- There are no future development plans for this park.

**4. Orlando Park** **1.3 Acres**  
1275 Orlando Drive, Haslett

**Park Description:**

- The park has two non-contiguous parcels; an open greenspace which was developed as an active park and a heavily wooded outlot, located down the street from the main park and referred to as Orlando Park Outlot “B”.
- This accessible park includes a gazebo, a play structure geared toward older children, a play structure geared toward younger children with a slide, swings, and a rocking/spring toy.
- The park features a paved loop walking path with “Story Walk” signs along the paved path guiding park users to participate in storybook related activities, bicycle rack, grill, game table, benches, and gardens.
- The butterfly gardens are certified as Monarch Waystations by the University of Kansas’s Monarch Butterfly Program. Local school children and organizations assist with garden maintenance throughout the year.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1955: The land for Orlando Park came under Township ownership in 1955 when it was acquired for Public Works wells and a water tower, which were removed in 1966.

- 1980: The open grassy area in the park was utilized as a seasonal ice skating rink.
- 2008: The open parcel was developed as a neighborhood park and the play equipment, gazebo, pathway, bicycle rack, game table, benches, and gardens were installed.
- 2014 additional trees were planted in the park.
- 2016 a series of signs called a “Story Walk” were installed along the paved pathway. This project was fully funded by the Haslett Library. The book is switched out each month. The signs invite the park visitor to participate in an activity, e.g. “Walk like a bear to the next page.”
- 2016: New accessible play equipment was also added to the park. The new equipment is geared toward younger children and features a climbing slide structure that incorporates an artistic flower that spins and casts colorful shadows, swings, bongo drum toys, and a rocking piece for young children.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- There are no future development plans aside from maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**Neighborhood Parks**

**(10 parks totaling 100.1 acres)**

**1. Indian Hills Park**

**3 Acres**

4730 Tacoma Drive, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Indian Hills Park is an open grassy area that lies within the Indian Hills neighborhood. It is entirely open space with benches and trees.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1929: Indian Hills Park was platted as a public park for neighborhood residents.
- 2015: The Indian Hills Neighborhood Association purchased a bench for the park.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- There are no future development plans aside from maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**2. Ferguson Park/Sumbal Natural Area 5.7 Acres**  
4540 Okemos Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Ferguson Park is a well-visited park located on the Red Cedar River near downtown Okemos. The park features play equipment, benches with river views, picnic tables, canoe launch, an accessible restroom, paved pathways, and parking.
- This park is also used on an annual basis by local schoolchildren as a release site for the “School Salmon in the Classroom” science project. It is also utilized by Mid-MEAC (Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council).

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1971: The original four acres were acquired through a donation from the Ingham County Road Commission.
- 1999: An additional 1.7 acres were donated to the park by adjacent property owners Ghulam and Sufia Sumbal.
- 2001: The park was renovated with grant assistance from the Clean Michigan Initiative Recreation Bond Program. Improvements included upgrading the accessibility of the canoe launch, restrooms, picnic area and playground improvements, and stream bank stabilization activities.
- 2004: Meridian Township Land Preservation Millage Funds acquired 25 acres adjacent to Ferguson Park along the Red Cedar River from Ghulam and Sufia Sumbal that provides a beautiful wooded property along the river with additional walking trail opportunities.
- 2013: Schoolchildren planted trees in the park through a Grand Learning Network grant.
- 2014: Numerous diseased and dead trees were removed from the park, due to the devastating infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer insect.
- 2016: School children planted 10 trees in the park with funding through the “Right Tree, Right Place” Consumer’s Energy grant.
- 2016: The wooden park fencing along Okemos Road was replaced with black aluminum fencing.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future development plans include: improving the canoe/kayak launch, updating the restroom, landscape maintenance, accessibility improvements, streambank stabilization, and site furnishing replacement.

**3. Hillbrook Park 25.4 Acres**  
1747 Lake Lansing Road, Haslett

**Park Description:**

- Hillbrook Park is located west of the corner of Lake Lansing Road and Marsh Road in Haslett. This accessible park features play equipment, a large open grassy area, a small pond/wetland, picnic area, tennis/pickleball courts, a half-court basketball court, natural wooded trails, a ball diamond with bleachers, drinking fountain, parking area, and landscaping.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1957: The park began as a 5.7-acre donation in 1957 by the Couchois-Miller families, developers of the Hillbrook Subdivision.
- 1974: Additional acreage of natural area was purchased extending from Lake Lansing Road to Haslett Road. This linear area includes natural trails, picnic area, and a second paved parking area.
- 1972: With assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, recreation facilities were installed.
- 1986: With assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, recreation facilities were installed.
- 2016: There were major updates and improvements made to the park, particularly the tennis courts and playground area. The tennis courts were completely renovated and redesigned to include: one tennis court, three pickleball courts, and one half-court basketball court. New vinyl-coated fencing, nets and posts were installed. The gates and paved access point to the courts were replaced for the purpose of improving accessibility. The existing playground equipment was removed and replaced with two structures: one for young children and one for older children. Swings and benches were also added to the playground area and an accessible picnic table was added to the paved picnic area.
- 2016: An Ingham County drain project was planned for the wooded portion of the park which called for the removal of some of the trees. As a result, the County provided 29 beautiful new replacement trees. Many were installed around the play area to provide shade.
- 2019: A 9-acre adjacent property was added to the overall park acreage as a donation from.
- 2019: The Ingham Co. Drain Office made improvements to the drain that runs through the park and replaced a bridge. Drain work continued into 2021.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future development plans include: the creation of a rain garden, the addition of nature based interpretive signage, stewardship of the natural wooded area, tennis court features such as benches and a kiosk, new ball diamond, fencing and trail improvements.

**4. Marshall Park** **5 Acres**  
6105 Marsh Road, Haslett

**Park Description:**

- Marshall Park features play equipment, swings, a basketball court, parking, paved pathways, and a picnic area.
- The park received its name in honor of the Marshall Brothers, the first settlers of Meridian Township in 1836.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1974: Marshall Park was purchased in 1974 for \$11,505 with funding support from a Department of Natural Resources Recreation Bond grant.
- 1975: Amenities were added to the park through the Department of Natural Resources Recreation Bond grant. Amenities included a basketball court, picnic area, parking lot, landscaping, backstop and drinking fountain.
- 1996: Playground equipment was added with money collected by Haslett Middle School students.
- 2004: Swings were added along with a pedestrian pathway that runs through the park connecting Marsh Road and Bliss Street.
- 2006: The outdated backstop was removed to create a grassy open play field.
- 2009: A demonstration area was added in the southeast corner of the park to filter storm water, in cooperation with the Lake Lansing Homeowners Association and the Meridian Township Engineering Department.
- 2021: Three memorial benches and landscaping were added to the park.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future development plans include: the renovation of the basketball court, the addition of landscaping and a large native no-mow zone, replacing the play structure, improving the parking area, and the replacement of benches and signage.
- Additional future plans may include maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**5. Towar Park** **4 Acres**  
6160 Towar Avenue, East Lansing

**Park Description:**

- Towar Park is located in the East Lansing School District area and serves residents in the northwest portion of the Township. This park is also the home of Snell-Towar Recreation Center, which

provides year-around programming for youth, seniors and teens. This is Meridian Township's only community recreation center.

- This linear park runs East-West from the Edgewood Village Apartment complex to Rutherford Street (a total of 3 blocks).
- Park amenities include sidewalks, a full-court basketball court, playground equipment, youth ball field, picnic areas, a recreation center, skateboard equipment, rain gardens, and paved parking.

**Park History and Development:**

- 1969: The four-acre park is acquired by the Township through the donation or purchase of 13 city lots.
- 1980: The park was developed to include sidewalks, a full-court basketball court, playground equipment, youth ball field, picnic areas, a recreation center, skateboard equipment and paved parking.
- 2008: The Ingham County Drain Commissioner's office constructed rain gardens throughout the neighborhood as an ecological way to address storm water runoff issues in the Towar Gardens neighborhood. As part of the project, rain gardens featuring beautiful flowers were created in the park.
- 2015: The baseball diamond was removed and replaced with an open grassy area that is utilized by the summer recreation program as open play space.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Additional future plans may include maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**6. Wonch Park 15 Acres**  
4555 Okemos Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Wonch Park is located in a bend along the Red Cedar River on the west side of Okemos Road.
- This fully accessible park features an accessible pavilion, drinking fountain, paved loop pathway, playground equipment, swings, restroom, picnic areas, outdoor exercise equipment, benches, and a paved parking lot.
- Park visitors enjoy fishing in the "beach" area along the river and also use Wonch Park as an informal canoe/kayak launch.

**Park History and Development:**

- 1969: Wonch Park was purchased from Theodore Wonch for \$40,660 through the Township's General Fund.

- 1975: The Haslett Okemos Rotary constructed a pavilion in the park. Included was playground equipment, swings, a restroom, picnic areas, and paved parking lot.
- 2001: The restrooms were renovated to meet accessibility requirements.
- 2008: Master plans were developed to renovate Wonch Park. Future plans included a loop pathway, improved river access and viewing areas, a new pavilion, expanded parking, and an outdoor plaza area.
- 2012: A fair number of dead or dying trees were removed from the park. This allowed more sun to enter the park and made it seem more inviting to visitors.
- 2012: A paved universally-accessible loop pathway (2,055 lf) was constructed through a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. The path meanders along the river at a very gentle slope. For the purpose of improved accessibility, a paved access path was also constructed to link the existing play structure with the new paved pathway.
- 2016: Major improvements included a new pavilion and paved access path and patio with ample room for maneuvering, new recycled picnic tables, a drinking fountain with a water-bottle filler, parking area renovation, and the installation of outdoor exercise equipment. The aged pavilion was demolished and replaced with a new pavilion that includes electricity, something that is highly desirable for pavilion rentals. Accessible picnic tables made of recycled material replaced the old, worn picnic tables. The drinking fountain/water-bottle-filler, is the first of its kind in our park system and features a fountain at an accessible level for wheelchair users.
- 2016: The Township was awarded a grant from Greenfields Outdoor Fitness which allowed us to install accessible outdoor exercise equipment. The exercise equipment is permanently installed in pods that are located along the side of the paved pathway.
- 2016: The wood fencing along Okemos Road was removed and replaced with black aluminum fencing. A new bright green traffic bridge was also constructed along Okemos Road in 2016. This bridge includes a wide, paved pedestrian pathway and greatly improved non-motorized transportation access to the park. The parking lot was also resurfaced and striped.
- 2016: A community mural was painted by over 200 visitors to the 2016 Celebrate Meridian Festival. The mural's artist is resident, Kelly Boyle.
- 2018: Three "Disco Fish" sculptures were donated by the Meridian Township DDA and installed.



**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future development plans include: the development of a kayak/canoe launch, eventually replacing the play structure, and the development of riverside viewing areas and platforms.
- Additional future plans may include maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**7. Newton Road Park** **5 Acres**  
Newton Road, East Lansing

**Park Description:**

- Newton Road Park is an open area that was developed for the purpose of providing much-needed athletic fields. The park has a small parking lot (19 cars) and a drop-off area. The fields are intended to be utilized as practice fields.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1992: The property was purchased by Meridian Township in 1992 for \$48,500 for the development of a fire station.
- 2009: The Park Commission received the parcel as a donation by the Township for the development of a neighborhood park. A park master plan was developed to include over three-acres of athletic fields, a split-rail fence with wildflower plantings, a paved walking path, driveway and 19-car parking lot, and a small play structure.
- 2010: The site was graded, seeded, and eight trees were planted.
- 2014: The athletic fields were developed using recommendations from MSU Turf Management experts, landscaping and a gravel parking area were installed.
- 2015: Park development included paving the 19-car parking lot, installing landscaping and a vinyl split-rail fence along Lake Lansing Road.
- 2016: A paved loop drop-off area was added to the parking area.

**Current Park Use:**

- This large, open field is utilized as a practice field for lacrosse, flag football and youth soccer.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- The development of a paved, loop walking path around the perimeter of the park.
- The installation of a play structure (utilizing donations from adjoining neighborhood).
- Planting wildflower or ornamental grasses planted along the split-rail fence on Lake Lansing Road.

**8. Brattin Woods** **22.2 Acres**  
5851 Okemos Road, Haslett

**Park Description:**

- Brattin Woods is a beautiful hardwood forest with an open-water wetland. Amenities include a gravel loop path, wetland overlook deck, and a paved parking area.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1986: Brattin Woods was purchased from Margaret Brattin, the Estate of John Brattin. The property was acquired utilizing \$100,000 from the Park Millage Fund.
- 1997: A 0.5-mile nature trail loop trail was constructed by an Eagle Scout candidate.
- 2005: Jeff Wells donated a 0.33-acre area to host a small parking area. The paved parking area was constructed for nine cars.
- 2009: An Eagle Scout candidate added a beautiful pond overlook deck.
- 2010: The loop trail was improved with gravel surfacing and the Okemos Kiwanis constructed benches that were placed along the path.
- 2010: Volunteers spread gravel along the entire 0.5-acre path through the park.
- An adjacent 2.2 acre parcel was donated in 2019 and was added to the overall acreage.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future development plans include the development of a trail head sign and bench/resting area along with an interpretive sign that describes the history of the property.
- Additional future plans may include maintenance of the parking area, trail, wetland overlook, benches, and any other improvements to improve accessibility.

**9. Forest Hills Natural Area** **4.0 Acres**  
4625 Northview Drive, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Forest Hills Natural Area is a wooded area that adjoins the Forest Hills subdivision. Its trails serve as off-road routes for many of the neighborhood children traveling to and from school or nearby stores. It is used extensively by the neighborhood for dog walking and nature observation.
- Each year the Forest Hills Neighborhood Association conducts a volunteer clean-up effort.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1987: Forest Hills Natural Area was acquired from the Goff family.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Additional future plans may include maintenance of the existing trails, and the possible construction of a split-rail fence along the property lines.

**10. Tacoma Hills Park** **22 Acres**  
1815 Hamilton Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- This property borders Hamilton Road on the north and the former Edgewood Elementary School on the south. It is primarily utilized by adjacent property owners for walking. Its primary feature is an open, successional field that has a loop trail, nearly a mile in length.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1988: The land was donated to Meridian Township by the Ingham County Drain Commission as part of the Spross Drain Improvement Project.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Additional future plans may include vegetation management, maintenance of the existing trails, and the possible construction of boardwalks along the wet portions of the trail.

**Community Parks** **(8 parks totaling 665.30 acres)**

**1. Central Park** **187.8 Acres**  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos  
(187.8 acres includes park areas, historical village, Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center, Town Hall, Public Safety and Farmers' Market).

**Overall Park Description:**

- Central Park is a diverse area offering many recreational, cultural, and nature appreciation opportunities.

**Municipal Complex:** The Municipal Complex is in the southeast quarter of Central Park. This area contains the Township Municipal buildings (including the Township offices, Public Safety Building, entrance drives and parking lots), Farmers' Market pavilion, soccer fields, Historical Village, Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center, and a pond. This section of the park also includes restrooms, interpretive facilities, sidewalks, a pavilion,

picnic areas, natural trails, historic structures, playground and paved parking.

**Historical Village:** The Historical Village includes seven buildings. (See more on building details under Park Facilities).

- The pond in the Historical Village is regularly stocked with fish which creates successful fishing opportunities for many first-timers. This dock is regularly used by school groups as part of field trips.
- 2013: An accessible game table and paved access pad were installed near the Farmers' Market pavilion, using funds from a grant from LINC (Liaison for Inter-Neighborhood Connectivity, a local group).
- 2015: The Claire Twohy gardens located near the pavilion were renovated to include butterfly-friendly plantings. An interpretive sign was installed near the gardens.
- Numerous shade trees have been added to Central Park in recent years, which is important in all of our parks due to the devastation of the Emerald Ash Borer infestation that began around 2006.
- 2016: A master plan was developed for all of Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park. The intent of the master plan is to develop improved non-motorized transportation connections; improved accessibility; and to develop a park identity for this busy and somewhat disconnected park area.
- 2016: Addition to the Barnes House to serve as office space for Friends of Historic Meridian staff; landscape enhancements to the flower garden areas. The ground was broken for the Garden Club's "Plant It Pink" Garden.
- 2018: Interpretive Signage in the Historical Village: We installed and held a ribbon cutting for interpretive signs in the Meridian Historical Village. Haslett Okemos Rotary Club funded six new interpretive signs that artistically describe life in the late 1800's and the history of the structures located in the Village.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1966: The first parcel of land was purchased from Maynard and Doris Unruh for \$47,306.
- 1978: The Farmers' Market Pavilion was constructed in 1978 with federal grants and Township General Fund dollars to provide a shelter for the Meridian Farmers' Market. The pavilion includes restrooms, electricity and drinking fountains.
- 1986: 74 acres of Central Park were generously donated by George and Louis Eyde.
- 2005: 8.8 acres were partially donated by the Ledebuhr family and purchased for \$212,500 with Park Millage funds.

- 2011: Meridian Township received a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant to construct an accessible fishing dock. This dock was constructed in the Historical Village section of Central Park. In addition to the fishing dock, an interpretive sign, bench, and accessible paved pathway were added to the dock area.
- 2011: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed a storage locker for fishing rods and tackle that are available free-of-charge to park visitors.
- 2015: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed benches along the fishing pond.
- 2020: A 1/3 mile paved pathway/boardwalk; fishing dock; and trailhead was added to the park. It runs east and west between the Town Hall area and Central Park South.
- 2020: A restroom was added to the Historical Village along with an improved pathway that improves the connection between the area around the Central Park Pavilion and the Historical Village.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- In 2016 a master plan was developed for all of Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park.
- Future plans call for primary non-motorized transportation corridors in the form of “promenades” that will be comprised of wide paved pathways and boardwalks; a covered basketball pavilion; art walk; pond enhancements; fishing dock at Central Park South; expanded parking; a doggy playground; and landscaping.
- Additional future plans may include vegetation management, maintenance of the existing trails, and the possible construction of boardwalks along the wet portions of the trail.

**2. Central Park South 15 Acres**  
1990 Central Park Drive, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- The 15-acre Central Park South property provides an access point to over three miles of nature trails in Central Park and also provides shoreline fishing opportunities. This park also includes a picnic area and paved parking.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1984: Acquired in 1984 for \$125,250
- 1998, an asphalt pathway and bridge were constructed across the Mud Lake Drain to connect Central Park South to Gaylord C. Smith Court and Nancy Moore Park.

- 2004: A paved pathway was constructed from Central Park South north to Nemoke Trail, providing non-motorized connections from the Haslett area to the Meridian Mall.
- 2019: Construction of the 3-acre Large Dog Park. This space is fenced and has a electronic access system. The park includes a natural pathway that meanders through the woods, an open grassy area for play, and a doggy drinking fountain.
- 2020: Fishing dock was installed at Central Park South and is connected by the Central Meridian Regional Pathway, which runs east-west for 1/3 of a mile from the pond to the Town Hall parking lot. An extension of the paved pathway was constructed along the east side of Central Park South.
- 2021: An Eagle Scout constructed outdoor dog agility equipment in the park.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Additional future plans may include vegetation management, maintenance of the existing trails, a boardwalk/paved path on the east side of the pond with a shaded fishing platform, and parking.
- In 2016 a master plan was developed for all of Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park. The Parks Department has been making progress with the plan and in 2021, two major developments were constructed: the Central Park Regional Pathway and the Gateway Path and Restroom in the Historical Village.
- Future plans include an art walk within the woods along the east side of the Central Park South Pond.
- Future ponds include efforts for improved water quality through the use of bio-islands.

**3. Hartrick Park**

**60 Acres**

3685 Hulett Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Hartrick Park is located in the southwest quadrant of the Township, just north of Okemos High School. This park includes restrooms, sidewalks, pavilion, flagpole, playground equipment, grills, gravel trail, paved trail, wetland overlook platform, wetland pond, picnic areas, two baseball/softball fields, two youth soccer fields, paved and gravel overflow parking.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1988: Meridian Township purchased 30 acres of land for \$330,000
- 1989: An additional 30-acres was donated by the James and Tass Hartrick family in 1989.

- 2003-2004: Hartrick Park was developed with \$488,125 of grant assistance from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund in.
- 2011: Township enhanced the wetlands with native plantings.
- 2012: Eagle Scout candidates constructed a ½ mile long gravel trail along the south edge of the park through the wooded area. An additional section of gravel was added by the township in to create a connection between the Okemos softball diamonds and Hartrick Park.
- 2013: Paving was added around the flagpole and bleachers to improve accessibility.
- 2015-2016: Certified monarch-waystation gardens were added to the park. The gardens were planted by schoolchildren.
- 2016: Covered dugouts were installed on the two ball diamonds.
- 2017: Michigan Audubon Society installed chimney swift box with the assistance of the Okemos High School Earth Club

**4. Nancy Moore Park** **40 Acres**  
1960 Gaylord C. Smith Court, East Lansing

**Park Description:**

- This park was the township's first athletic complex and includes restrooms, paved and natural trails, picnic pavilion, restrooms, two baseball/softball fields, two soccer fields, two sand volleyball courts, a full-court basketball court, grills, playground equipment and a parking lot.
- Nancy Moore Park is located adjacent to the Meridian Township Service Center in which the Department of Parks and Recreation is housed.
- Many of the trees in the park were provided through the Township's Adopt-A-Tree program, and two gardens have been installed in memoriam.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1989: Nancy Moore Park was acquired from Doug Federau for \$156,000 and was developed into the Township's first athletic complex.
- 1990-1992: Park development was financed through the MDNR Quality of Life Recreation Bond Program.
- 1992-1995: Development of the athletic complex.
- 2004: The parking lot was paved and has space for 164 cars.
- 2005: A paved trail was added that connects to Nemoke Trail in Haslett along an existing utility easement.
- 2009: Two horseshoe pits were added to the park.
- 2015: The pavilion was re-sided and a memorial garden was developed near the ball diamonds with an accessible path and bench. Other improvements included ball diamond safety

fencing, new recycled and accessible picnic tables, paved pathway repairs, parking lot resurfacing, the installation of handmaid benches by the Okemos Kiwanis, garden renovations, and the planting of eight trees from a Michigan State University Federal Credit Union “Go Green” grant program.

- 2016: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed our first Gaga ball pits.
- 2016, the sand volleyball courts were renovated with new Lake Michigan beach sand.
- 2019: Construction of the 2-acre Small Dog Park. This space is fenced and has a electronic access system. The park includes an open grassy area for play, fencing, and a doggy drinking fountain.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Additional future plans may include new play equipment, new pavilion, shaded picnic pods, vegetation management, pathways around the parking area and maintenance of the existing trails.
- In 2016 a master plan was developed for all of Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park. Future plans for Nancy Moore include expanded parking and re-designing the circulation patterns of the parking between Nancy Moore Park and the Service Center.

**5. North Meridian Road Park 60 Acres**  
5191 N. Meridian Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- North Meridian Road Park was purchased to provide recreational opportunities for residents in the eastern portion of the Township. The park has 40.6 acres of upland and 19.4 acres of wetland.
- Park amenities include athletic fields, a large sledding hill, nature trails and boardwalks, paved parking lot, year-round restroom, and a drinking fountain.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1991: North Meridian Road Park was purchased from Judy Linn for \$165,000.
- 1998: A sledding hill was created.
- 2002: Play equipment and a paved parking lot were added.
- 2010: The Township received a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant for development of a year-around universally-accessible restroom facility and accessible walkways.
- 2011: The heated restroom, a drinking fountain, and accessible paved pathways were constructed.
- 2015: Two sand volleyball courts were constructed.
- 2017: The Township constructed a pavilion.



**6. Towner Road Park** **23.58 acres**  
2055 Towner Road, Haslett

**Park Description:**

Towner Road Park is a large community park located in the northern portion of the Township. It features ball diamonds, athletic fields, a paved walking path, parking, a pavilion, restroom, and pickleball courts.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 2007: The Township acquires 22 acres of land from Ron Applegate for \$432,255 on a land contract.
- 2010: The Township demolished the golf driving range building.
- 2015: The Township acquired a 1.58 parcel that adjoins the park on the north-west corner. The additional land is designed as active parkland. This addition resulted in a total park area of 23.58 acres.
- 2016: The 1.58 acre parcel of land originally had residential structures and they were demolished and the area was graded. The additional land will be utilized for park development.
- 2007: Master planning for the park began and plans were finalized in 2016.
- 2017: Construction of the park was completed in 2017. The park includes two ball diamonds, athletic fields, restroom building, paved pathways and boardwalks, landscaping, pickleball, parking and utilities.

**7. Meridian Riverfront Park** **204.0 Acres**

**Park Description:**

- The Meridian Riverfront Park consists of three parks totaling 204 acres. They include Harris Nature Center, Eastgate Park and Legg Park.

**(a) Harris Nature Center** **48 Acres**  
3998 Van Atta Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- The Harris Nature Center is located along the Red Cedar River in a beautiful wooded area interspersed with meadows and a white spruce woodlot. The Nature Center building offers environmental activities and outdoor recreational opportunities focusing on protecting, promoting and interpreting the Red Cedar River. Within the park are a Nature Building and the Nature Exploration

Area, both of which encourage visitors to engage with nature through cognitive experiences and physical interactions.

- The Nature Center building is in a 60-year old house that was renovated in 1997 into a public nature center that offers interpretive exhibits, live animal displays, nature murals by local artists, resource library, screened patio, and environmental programs for schools and the general public.
- The area outside the Nature Building is enhanced by native plant landscaping, a picnic area, river overlook deck, live Red-tail Hawk exhibit, interpretive signage, small pond, fire pit with amphitheater seating, canoe launch, fishing dock, storage barn, 20 paved parking spaces and overflow parking on grass.
- Within the park natural area there is a 1/2 mile paved loop trail and numerous natural trail paths with small interpretive signs installed in the 1990's. Benches are available along the trails and short boardwalks span chronically wet sections of the paths. With the help of volunteers, Wood Duck nest boxes are maintained within the wetlands and Bluebird nest boxes are located within meadow habitat. Trails are multi-use for walking, running, bicycling, skiing and snowshoeing.
- The Nature Exploration Area is a place where people can intuitively interact with nature. This project was begun in 2012 with the creation of a climbable Turtle Sculpture. Additional features are the Log Jam for climbing and balance; the Sticks and Stones for building; the Spider Web for climbing and contemplation; the Michigan Fossil Dig for digging and imaginative play; 3 interpretive signs provide fossil education; the Gathering Circle includes a stage, bench seating and available electricity for organized programs or general public seating and play.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1986: Harris Nature Center's property was purchased with Land and Water Conservation funds from Paul and Vila Allen for \$240,000.
- 1996: The Nature Center was created from a 45-year old house.
- 1997: The parking lot and nature trails were developed. Nature Center opened on July 22, 1997.
- 2014: Ingham County Road Department (ICRD) replaced the Van Atta Road bridge by the Nature Center entrance and Legg Park trail entrance. The bridge includes a pedestrian walkway on the west side. As part of their construction plan, the ICRD constructed a new fishing dock/platform on the bank of the Red Cedar River.
- 2015: Lansing Oar and Paddle Club (LOAPC) constructed a rustic canoe launch on the east side of Van Atta Road.
- 2019: Natural Exploration Area is constructed and includes a log jam, mole hole, fossil dig area, and improved fire pit.

- 2020: An accessible bird observation/overlook with viewing scopes was added.
- 2021: A waterless restroom and accessible pavilion were constructed. Pavement, electricity, and a water bottle filling station were also added to the park area around the Nature Center building.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future park development plans include: enhancement of the nature exploration area, new expanded interpretive signage along trails, and canoe dock enhancements, repairs to existing pathways and trails, and signage related to the future Red Cedar Water Trail.

**(b) Eastgate Park**

**53 Acres**

4203 S. Meridian Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Eastgate Park is located on the far eastern edge of the township and has frontage on the Red Cedar River. It has a large, open grassy area, pavilion, paved pathway, gravel parking, and a bicycle pump track.
- A trail-head sign and trail markers direct visitors along the 1.4-mile natural river trail.
- Blue bird houses are located near the pavilion and are regularly maintained. This park includes sidewalks, natural trails, picnic pavilion with grill, open grassy area and accessible parking.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1986: Eastgate Park was purchased in with the assistance of a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant.
- 2002: A paved walkway was added from the parking lot to the pavilion.
- 2009: Residents who are also members of the Michigan Mountain Bike Association constructed a bicycle pump track in the eastern portion of the park.
- 2014: Numerous large trees were donated by a resident and were planted near the bicycle pump track and wooded edge of the park.
- 2014: Mountain bike enthusiasts added various stunts to the pump track.
- 2019: The Outdoor Adventure Club continues to maintain and add various stunts to the pump track.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future plans could include paving the parking area, trail and pathway maintenance, and maintenance of the bicycle pump track.

**(c) Legg Park**

**103.0 Acres**

3891 Van Atta Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Legg Park is located on the west side of Van Atta Road following almost ¾ mile along the south bank of the Red Cedar River. It is partly wooded and partly open and features wetlands, Sloan Creek, natural walking trails, gravel entry drive, gravel parking on the west side of the park, and a small paved parking area near the entrance on the east side of the park.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1980: A portion of this park was developed with a gravel entry drive, pavilion, parking lot and natural trails with grant assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- 2013: Plans were developed to include additional recreational amenities including a dog park and habitat improvements in the southeastern portion of the park.
- 2015: The park entrance area was improved. The park entry drive was paved and a small five car parking area was developed. Numerous large trees were donated by a resident and were planted near the park entrance.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1979: 70-acres were acquired from Louis and Joan Legg (55-acres donated and 15-acres purchased).
- 1994: An additional 31.7 acres were purchased from the Legg Family for \$96,000 for the purpose of developing future athletic fields. This area is commonly referred to as Legg Park South.
- 1994: Dr. Mason and Christine Cobb donated 1.58 acres near adjacent to the existing river trail system.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future park development plans may include: the development of a dog park, pavilion replacement, outdoor restrooms, trail and boardwalk improvements, and improved access.

**8. Ted Black Woods**

**74.92 Acres**

540 Grand River Avenue, Okemos  
(formerly known as Van Atta Woods Park)

**Park Description:**

- This park contains beautiful hardwoods and assorted wildflower species. It has been allowed to progress naturally with minimal improvements from the Township. There are two access points to the park with small parking lots: one on Van Atta Road (gravel) and Grand River Avenue (paved). There are 1.2 miles of nature trails.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1973: The central 68-acres of Van Atta Woods were acquired in for \$95,000 from Andrew and Kathryn Pavlik.
- 1989: An adjacent parcel on Grand River Avenue was purchased from James and Shirley Harding for \$130,000 with Park Millage funds to improve public access and paved parking area for park visitors.
- 2004: Two interpretive signs were added to the trails and were funded by a U.S. Forest Service grant.
- 2009: An additional .92 acres were added as a donation/purchase from the family of former Park Commissioner, Environmental Commissioner, Township Board Trustee, famed bird expert, Ted Black. The 0.92-acre parcel is located on the northwest corner of the park and will serve as an additional entrance to access the trail system. As part of the donation agreement and as an opportunity to honor Ted Black for his many years of service to the Meridian Township community, the entire Van Atta Woods Park was renamed “Ted Black Woods Park”.
- 2010: Brian Van Order, owner of Michigan Demolition and Excavation, donated demolition of the house structure and restoration services on the site. Joe Pennoni, owner of Rapid Tree Removal Service, removed numerous dead, diseased, stressed and hazardous trees on the site and in the wooded area of the park.
- 2011 a small gravel parking area, fencing and gate were added at the Van Atta Road entrance to the park. An interpretive sign to recognize Dr. Ted Black was installed near the trail head. Eagle Scout candidates have made numerous park improvements that include benches, a wetland overlook, and trail development and improvement.
- 2011: An Eagle Scout candidate made trail improvements to the park.
- 2012: An Eagle Scout candidate developed a gravel path and made four Aldo Leopold benches for the Van Atta Road entrance area.
- 2016: A wetland overlook was constructed by an Eagle Scout Candidate near the Van Atta Road entrance.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future park development plans may include: an outdoor pavilion and gathering spot, native bird-friendly plantings, bird viewing

opportunities, pathway enhancement, sign enhancement, and invasive species management.

**Natural Areas**

**(4 parks totaling 139.3 Acres)**

- 1. Lake Lansing Marsh** **46 Acres**  
1430 Lake Drive, Haslett

Lake Lansing Marsh is located on the south end of Lake Lansing and is the primary fish breeding spot on the lake. It was donated to the Charter Township of Meridian by Donald and Marylan Bensen in 1962.

- 2. Spengler's Marsh** **3.3 Acres**  
5929 Lake Drive, Haslett

This area is located on the southeast shore of Lake Lansing. The property was donated by Patricia Cleland and Barry Spengler in 1994 and is located on the southeast shore of Lake Lansing.

**Future Development Plans:**

- Future development plans could include a boardwalk and nature viewing overlook.

- 3. Red Cedar Natural Area** **56 Acres**  
1455 Oscoda Road, Okemos

The Red Cedar Natural Area is an area that is mostly wooded floodplain located on the north side of the Red Cedar River. The natural area also runs contiguous to the Shoals Subdivision. It is an important area for wildlife. Informal road-side parking is available, along Oscoda Drive, near the park sign.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1996: The property was deeded to Meridian Township by the Eyde Company.
- 2001: An Eagle Scout developed a figure-eight nature trail that lies in the flood plain of the park on the north bank of the Red Cedar River.

**4. Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area 34 Acres**  
4344 Dobie Road, Okemos

2021: Meridian Township was given ownership of the Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area property, which had been protected under an open space easement agreement with the Township for over 30 years. The former owner, Dr. Maureen Sander, granted residents of Meridian Township permission to use the property for walking, picnicking, skiing or other passive outdoor recreation activities for many years until her passing in 2020 leaving the land to the Township. A natural trail system meanders through the park and is the home to many bluebird boxes.

### **Regional Parks**

Meridian Township does not own or operate any regional parks within its boundaries. It is worth noting that Ingham County Parks owns and manages two regional parks in our community, Lake Lansing North and South Parks.

### **Meridian Township Facilities**

**1. Meridian Historical Village**  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos

The Historical Village, located in Central Park, is a collection of 19th century buildings moved from other locations and one modern reproduction of an Okemos church. The Village is maintained by the Friends of Historic Meridian, a nonprofit volunteer organization, focused on preservation of history and historic structures of Meridian Township. The Village has open hours for walk-through visits, presentations and special activities, and can be reserved by school groups for tours. Flowers, herbs, and vegetable gardens are planted in the Historical Village and maintained by Village volunteers and the Meridian Garden Club. A majority of the facilities, sidewalks, and parking are accessible to persons with disabilities.

The first building moved to the Village was the Grettenberger Farmhouse in January, 1974. This restored structure represents a typical Michigan farmhouse of the period of 1860-1880. The Proctor Tollgate House followed in June, 1974, and contains an interpretive exhibit on early transportation focusing on the necessity, development, and impact of plank roads. The one-room frame Randall School House was moved to the Village in 1987 followed by the brick General Store building in 1988. The Unruh Barn was added in 1991 and serves as the site for old-time chores. The Barnes House Inn and Tavern was moved

to the Village in 1997 and houses interpretive displays and meeting space. A single-story office wing was added to the Barnes House in 2016. The Perkins-Copland Log Cabin was added to the Village in 2006

The most recent addition to the village is the chapel, constructed in 2009. This chapel is the first “new construction” in the Village. All of the other structures have been moved from other locations throughout the township. The chapel was built as a reconstruction of a 19<sup>th</sup> century church which stood on a hill in Okemos for nearly 100 years. It lies nestled among seven lovingly restored buildings from the 1800s. The non-denominational Chapel is available for weddings and small gatherings on a rental basis. Sidewalks, gazebo, paved parking and a pond also add to the charm of the area.

A fishing dock, interpretive sign, benches, and a paved pathway were added to the Historical Village section of Central Park in 2011 with funding assistance from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

## **2. Snell-Towar Recreation Center**

6160 Towar Avenue, East Lansing

The Snell-Towar Recreation Center was constructed in 1972 with funds from the Township General Fund and a Federal Community Development Block Grant. Operating, staffing and upkeep continue to be funded by the Township General Fund. Staffing is provided by a full-time coordinator who is responsible for providing youth development opportunities and senior activities for residents of the Towar Community. The Center has 14 parking spaces (13 non-handicap, one handicap). Snell-Towar Recreation Center is located in the middle of Towar Park. Future renovations are planned to improve the functionality of this facility and increase its accessibility to individuals with a disability.

## **3. Marketplace on the Green**

1995 Central Park Drive

The Farmers’ Market found a new home in 2020 within Marketplace on the Green. This area is located between Central Park South and the Meridian Mall and features a 15,000 sf pavilion, restrooms/office, stage, parking, bike parking, electricity, play equipment, and site furnishings. The market operates from May-October on Wednesdays and Saturdays with vendors selling a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and home-made products. The Market, which opened in 1978, has shown continued growth and popularity and in 2020 it was officially moved to Marketplace on the Green. The market is managed by a part-time market manager



with assistance from a four-member elected advisory committee made up of farm market vendors.

**4. Harris Nature Center**

3998 Van Atta Road, Okemos

Harris Nature Center's property was purchased with Land and Water Conservation funds in 1986 from Paul and Vila Allen for \$240,000. The Center is housed in a 45-year old house that was converted in 1997 into a public nature center that offers environmental activities and outdoor recreation opportunities focusing on protecting, promoting and interpreting the Red Cedar River. The Center is staffed by two full-time Naturalists and a variety of part-time staff and volunteers. The Nature Center contains rotating displays that focus on the Red Cedar River and seasonal changes in nature. A Preuss Living River exhibit features a realistic mural, waterfall and live turtles. Programs offered include Chipmunk Storytime for preschoolers, My Cub and I for toddlers, nature day camps for all ages, scout badge programs, guided day and night walks, birthday parties, school programs and a variety of general public programs throughout the year.

The Harris Nature Center Foundation (HNCF) was created in 2008 to support activities and improvements to the Center. The HNCF has its 501(c)3 designation and can acknowledge donations for tax purposes.

**5. Nokomis Native American Cultural Center**

5151 Marsh Road, Okemos

In 1987, the Meridian Township Board applied and received a \$100,000 grant from the Michigan Equity Program to build the Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center, a Native American cultural center. The funding provided a building housing a display/demonstration room, exhibit/meeting room, kitchenette, office, restrooms, and lobby entrance. The funding sources are tours, programs, gift shop sales, donations, memberships and competitive grants. By agreement, the Township owns the land and the building, but the Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center Board operates as a non-profit out of the building.

**6. Meridian Senior Center**

400 N Okemos Road, Okemos

The Meridian Township senior citizens have been a focus of the Okemos Community Education department since 1970, providing activities such as luncheons, travel opportunities, recreation leagues and numerous special events. In 1990-1991 due to an increasing senior center

population in the community, the Senior Center was also seeing steady growth with many requests coming in for additional space and programming. Motivated by this growth, Okemos Public Schools included plans for providing a larger space for the Senior Center in their 1991 bond issue.

Following the successful passage of the bond, a citizen's advisory committee was formed to assist in the development of the new center. In January 1995 a survey a survey was prepared and distributed to approximately 4,000 Meridian Township senior citizens. Over 500 supportive responses were received. The Meridian Senior Center was officially opened on September 17, 1995.

On November 5, 2002 the proposed Millage for Senior Citizen, Recreation and Human Service Programs was passed for .1 mills. In 2011, the Meridian Senior Center left the umbrella of Okemos Community Education and moved to Meridian Township Parks and Recreation. On August 7, 2012 a proposed millage renewal with an increase of an additional .05 mills specifically designated for the Senior Center passed.



The success of the 5 Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan is evident based on the following successes since the last plan written in 2016...

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE THE 2016-2021 MASTER PLAN

## B. Park Accomplishments from 2016-2021

Parks and Recreation Master Plans and Capital Improvement Plans are important as they provide a basis for implementation. Accomplishments that were completed during the 2016-2012 Master Plan are as follows:

### 2016

1. **Wonch Park:** New pavilion with electricity and tables made from recycled materials; drinking fountain with water bottle filler; community mural; 12 pieces of universally accessible fitness equipment, and resurfacing/stripping the parking lot.
2. **Hillbrook Park:** Tennis Court renovation including creation of one tennis court, three pickleball courts, and half-court basketball court; new fencing; new play equipment, 30 new trees, and repaving the internal walkways.
3. **Orlando Park:** New playground; and new storybook walking trail (in partnership with CADL and the Haslett Library).
4. **Hartrick Park:** Four new dugouts; a pollinator garden for monarch butterflies; Garlic Mustard Free eradicated
5. **Harris Nature Center:** The Nature Exploration Area added a Fossil Dig area funded and designed by the Harris Nature Center Foundation Board members. Other improvements included basement waterproofing, painting and new storage racks.
6. **Central Park Historical Village:** Addition to the Barnes House to serve as office space for Friends of Historic Meridian staff; landscape enhancements to the flower garden areas. The ground was broken for the Garden Club's "Plant It Pink" Garden.
7. **Nancy Moore Park:** New Lake Michigan beach sand was delivered for the sand volleyball courts; Eagle Scout constructed and installed a Gaga Ball court.
8. **Ferguson Park:** Planted 10 trees with grant assistance from Consumers Energy and volunteer support from Chippewa School students.
9. **Legg Park:** 80 students from Ralya Elementary and Haslett Middle School released salmon into the Sloan Creek and fished the Historical Village Pond.
10. **Ferguson Park:** the following students released salmon into the Red Cedar River as part of a "Salmon in the Classroom" lesson.
  - 100 – 5<sup>th</sup> grade school children from Murphy Elementary
    - 140 – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from Highlander Way Middle School (Howell)
    - 34 - 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students from Laingsburg Elementary and 19 High School
    - 58 - 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students from Gier Park Elementary
    - 25 - 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from Hiawatha Elementary

## 2017

1. **Towner Road Park:** Development of this 26-acre park began in 2017 and contains two baseball/softball fields, two soccer/lacrosse fields, accessible perimeter walking path, picnic pavilion, restrooms, six-pickleball courts, and parking lot.
2. **Harris Nature Center:**
  - a. **Boulder Garden** containing indigenous rocks of Michigan with informational signage
  - b. **Building Generator installed**
  - c. **Drilled new well -**
  - d. **Replaced parking lot lights with LED lighting.**
  - e. **Installed new split-rail fence (Eagle Scout project) at Nature Exploration Area**
3. **Interpretive Signage in the Historical Village:** The Haslett Okemos Rotary Club is funding six new interpretive signs for the Historical Village that artistically describe life in the late 1800's and the history of the structures located in the Village. They will be installed in the spring of 2018.
4. **Mobile Tool Shed:** Funded by the Capital Community Foundation through a \$6,500 grant, this trailer is used to support various park and land preserve volunteer projects.
5. **ART!**
  - a. **Three "Disco Fish" sculptures** were donated by the Meridian Township DDA and installed in Wonch Park.
  - b. **Community Mural** painted during the 2017 "Celebrate Meridian" event was installed in Hillbrook Park in the fall. This makes the second mural installation in our parks. A new mural is scheduled for creation during this years' Celebrate Festival.
6. **Farmers' Market Relocation Project:** Progress has been made with creating a public - private partnership with CBL Properties for moving forward with "Marketplace on the Green" pavilion and amenities. CBL is in the process of developing the land lease and staff has been working to obtain funding for the project from multiple sources. The proposed location is located along the greenspace near Studio C on Central Park Drive.



## **2018**

7. **Towner Road Park:** located in Haslett, this park was officially opened in fall of 2018 with a ribbon-cutting and kickball tournament that honored the Will Goodall Fund. The park contains athletic fields, walking paths, pavilion, restrooms, pickleball courts, and parking.
8. **Harris Nature Center:**
  - f. **Beaver Lodge:** Local architect David VanderKlok, Studio Intrigue, has designed and built a new amenity for the Nature Exploration Area, a Beaver Lodge replica. He has donated his time, skills and money to design and construct an oversized beaver lodge structure comprised of all natural materials.
  - g. **Patio:** replaced ceiling tile with a vinyl tile
  - h. **Fire Circle:** replaced and rebuilt the amphitheater bench seating
9. **Interpretive Signage in the Historical Village:** We installed and held a ribbon cutting for interpretive signs in the Meridian Historical Village. Haslett Okemos Rotary Club funded six new interpretive signs that artistically describe life in the late 1800's and the history of the structures located in the Village.
10. **Mobile Tool Shed:** Funded by the Capital Community Foundation through a \$6,500 grant that was received in 2017, this trailer is being used regularly to support various park and land preserve volunteer projects.
11. **ART!**
  - c. **Community Mural** painted during the 2018 "Celebrate Meridian" event, features dogs and will be installed on the fencing at the new dog park in Central Park.

**Farmers' Market Relocation Project:** Progress has been made with creating a public – private partnership with CBL Properties for moving forward with "Marketplace on the Green" pavilion and amenities. CBL is in the process of developing the land lease and staff has been working to obtain funding for the project from multiple sources. The proposed location is located along the greenspace near Studio C on Central Park Drive. We are currently working with an engineer on the site plan development. A crowd funding campaign was held in December 2018/January 2019 through the Michigan Economic Development Council(MEDC) The fundraising campaign raised \$67,000 and we will receive a match of \$50,000 from the MEDC.

12. **Gateway Footbridge and Restroom Building in Historical Village:** Project is currently being engineered and is anticipated to be complete in early summer 2019.
13. **Central Meridian Regional Trail Connector Project:** Project is currently being engineered and is anticipated to be complete in early summer 2019.
14. **North Meridian Road Park:** Installed a new pavilion, accessible grill, accessible picnic tables at park (funded by Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant). Grant amount was \$50,000 and local match was \$50,000. An Eagle scout installed gaga ball pit at park in summer 2018.
15. **Small Dog Park:** Fencing and signage was installed in December, 2018.
16. **Indian Hills Park:** Planted one tree at park
17. **Ottawa Hills Park:** Planted six evergreen trees at park
18. **Nancy Moore Park:** Planted four deciduous trees
19. **The following two grant applications were submitted earlier this year to the DNR for park projects:**
  - Towner Road Play Space and Wetland Restoration/Nature Observation Area to Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

- Ottawa Hills Park Play Space and Fitness Zone to Michigan Recreation Passport Fund
- We received notification in December, 2018 that we did not receive the grant funding.

## 20. Outreach to MSU

- Worked with MSU landscape architecture classes to critique their designs and to talk about working in government

## **MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP PARK TRAILS**

### **1. Completed new trailhead signs for the following parks:**

- Ted Black Woods
- North Meridian Road Park
- Tacoma Hills Park
- Hartrick Park
- Brattin Woods
- Forest Hills Park
- Meridian Riverfront Park (Eastgate, Harris & Legg)



### **2. Installed new signs and trail markers in Ted Black Woods**

### **3. Completed new print maps for Ted Black Woods**

### **4. Began working with GIS on interactive map of township parks for the website**

### **5. Uploaded the following trail systems to the AllTrails app:**

- Ted Black Woods
- North Meridian Road Park
- Brattin Woods
- Hillbrook Park
- Harris Nature Center
- Eastgate Park
- Hartrick Park

### **6. 2018 Projection:**

- Install the remaining signs that are completed along with trail markers and print maps
- Complete Central Park (includes Nancy Moore & Central Park South), Towner Road Park, Wonch Park, Sander Farm and Hillbrook Park signs, trail markers, installation and print maps
- Begin trail updates and upgrades in all parks where needed
- Finish loading remaining parks onto the AllTrails app.

## **2019**

### **Marketplace on the Green**

This year the project was awarded to Gordon Construction Services for the site work and restroom/office facility. The pavilion portion was awarded to Mid-States Recreation/Coverworx. This facility, when completed will contain a large pavilion, music stage, playground, patio area, rain gardens, and open green space and will become our premier community event location as well as the new home for the Meridian Township Farmers Market. Construction will began in January 2020 and was completed in October, 2020.

### **Harris Nature Center Pavilion and Restroom Project**

The Harris Nature Center has proven to be a popular destination in our community for environmental education and accessible walks in the woods. Thanks to state and federal grants, a new waterless restroom building and picnic pavilion will enhance the usage of this township gem. The contract for construction was awarded in December 2019 with construction in spring of 2020.

### **Central Park Grant Projects: Central Meridian Regional Trail Connector and Gateway Walkway and Restroom in Historical Village**

This is another example of leveraging local Park Millage funds as grants were received from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust fund and the Land and Water Conservation Fund for these two projects. Bids for construction were received and rejected in 2019 due to higher-than- anticipated costs. Time was spent reviewing and reworking the plans and was re-bid in late December. Proposals are due in at the end of January 2020. Construction will begin in the spring of 2020.

### **DOGS –DOGS-DOGS!**

**Small dogs** in our community are very “yappy” (happy) with the new Small Dog Park that opened in 2019 in Nancy Moore Park. This fenced facility contains a welcoming area with a drinking fountain for pets and owners, dog washing station and benches. The control gate regulates use on a registration basis. Inside the fenced area is green grass, trees and fun agility equipment. Much of the installation work was done in-house by the Parks Maintenance staff. A total of 172 dogs are registered to utilize the park. Two special events took place there this year including a Howl-o ween Costume Party and a Holiday Hounds party that included pictures with Santa!

**Large Dogs** have been patiently waiting for their new park. Their site in Central Park South was cleared of dead trees, graded and seeded in preparation for completion in the spring of 2020. This project will be completed in concert with the Central Meridian Regional Trail Connector Project.

### **Senior Center Outdoor Improvements Senior Center Outdoor Improvements**

Operation of the Meridian Senior Center is a joint collaboration between the Okemos School District and Meridian Township. With a current membership of 510, the Senior Center is an important facility for enrichment, socialization and fitness for our older adults. New to the Center, this year was the development of an outdoor courtyard space including a paved loop trail. The new courtyard contains multiple pieces of outdoor furniture, landscaping and raised plant beds. A ribbon-cutting event was held with school and township officials present in October.

### **New Fence at Riverside Cemetery**

The fencing in Riverside Cemetery had deteriorated to the point that repair was no longer an option. Therefore, new black aluminum fencing was installed this summer that closely replicates the wrought iron that existed there previously. Some portions of the old fence were saved for a future amenity in the Historical Village.



### **Parkland Additions**

Nearly 45-acres of parkland were added to the park system in 2019. A big THANK YOU to the following donors:

- T.J Acquisitions, LLC donated 9-acres adjacent to Hillbrook Park in Haslett.
- Marilyn Pinnavaia Trust donated a 2-acre parcel adjacent to Brattin Woods Park in the Sleepy Hollow neighborhood.
- Dr. Maureen Sander donated a 31-9 acre parcel on Dobie Road named the Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area.
- In preparation for development of Marketplace on the Green, Meridian Township acquired 2.5 acres of green space on Central Park Drive as part of a land transfer agreement with CBL Properties/Meridian Mall.

### **New Trailhead and Directional Signage in Parks**

This project began in 2018 and continued throughout 2019 of adding new trailhead and directional signage in multiple parks with the goal of making our parks more welcoming, informative and easier to navigate. All 20 miles of park trails were GPS marked and uploaded to a Google-based smartphone app called "All Trails". The remaining 15 parks will receive new signs in 2021.

## **RECREATION PROGRAMS**

### **Recreation Programs for Youth, Adults, and Seniors**

Providing recreation services to our residents creates a positive connection with government, other participants, as well as to our community. Programs were offered for persons of all ages and abilities including exercise



2021 Fitness Over 50 Exercise Group



## 2020

### **Marketplace on the Green**

The ribbon was officially cut for this facility in October consisting of a large pavilion; restroom; office space; music stage; playground; outdoor musical instruments; patio area with seating; rain gardens; and open green space. The market also features electricity for each vendor and an area with a bike fix-it station, memorial plaque, and seating that was funded by donations received in memory of former Trustee John Veenstra. **Marketplace on the Green received an MParks Design Award** that will be awarded virtually in February, 2021.

### **Central Park Grant Projects: Central Meridian Regional Trail Connector and Gateway Walkway and Restroom in Historical Village**

This is an example of leveraging local Park Millage funds as grants were received from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust fund and the Land and Water Conservation Fund for these two projects. Construction began on both projects during the spring of 2020. The Gateway Walkway and Restroom in the Historical Village was completed in the fall of 2020 and the Central Meridian Regional Trail is expected to be completed in spring 2021. Some highlights

of these projects include a fishing dock, boardwalk, interpretive signage, a bike fix it station, and electricity for motorized wheelchairs.

### **DOGS HAVING A DOG-GONE GOOD TIME**

**Large Dogs** finally got their very own dog park in 2020. A total of 375 dogs are currently registered to utilize the large dog park. The park is located in Central Park South, directly across from the Marketplace on the Green. It features a natural walking path, control gate, dog fountain, open grassy area, and shaded areas with lots of opportunities for good sniffs! The entryway has a beautiful dog mural that was painted during Celebrate Meridian in 2018. The Park Maintenance staff installed a majority of the items for this project. A HOWL-O-WEEN party was held in October and fun was had by all 30 dogs who attended.

**Small dogs** in our community continue to be very happy with the new Small Dog Park that opened in 2019 in Nancy Moore Park. This fenced facility contains a welcoming area with a drinking fountain for pets and owners, dog washing station and benches. The control gate regulates use on a registration basis. Inside the fenced area is green grass, trees and fun agility equipment. A total of 330 dogs are registered to utilize the small dog park. Our office received many compliments on both of the dog parks and there are regular groups of people and dogs who meet their on a daily basis. Visitors have reported to staff how valuable the space is and that it was their only opportunity for socialization during the pandemic. If you are ever feeling down, just go and sit outside the small dog park around 4 p.m. and your frown will immediately turn upside down!

### **Harris Nature Center Pavilion and Restroom Project**

The Harris Nature Center has always been a popular destination in our community for environmental education and accessible walks in the woods. Thanks to state and federal grants, a new waterless restroom building and picnic pavilion will enhance the usage of this township gem. The construction began in spring of 2020 and is complete with the exception of landscaping that will be done in the spring. A special feature of the pavilion is the adjacent patio that features engraved donor pavers (still available!) and a grill. This pavilion is a much-needed amenity as our pavilion rentals throughout the park system are very popular.

### **Harris Nature Center Bird Overlook**

The Harris Nature Center has been able to complete many projects due to the support from the Harris Nature Center Foundation Board. The Board's funding, along with a grant from the Capitol Region Community Foundation allowed for the construction of a 20' x 20' accessible bird overlook at the Center. All-weather binoculars and a Michigan Birds interpretive signage serves to enhance the experience.

### **MSU to Lake Lansing Trail Hub Acquisition Grant**

Meridian Township received notification in December of its successful grant proposal from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for acquisition of a parcel to enhance the entrance to Nancy Moore Park and also to create a hub for the upcoming MSU to Lake Lansing Trail. This property will provide a vital link and opportunity to build a rest stop for

trail enthusiasts and community members to explore and utilize the regional trail system. Funds for this acquisition won't be released until mid-2021.

### **Pickleball Courts**

The pickleball courts at Hillbrook and Towner Road Parks were more popular than ever in 2020. The courts were full on a daily basis with an enthusiastic group of seniors who have continued to play outdoors through December!

### **New Trailhead and Directional Signage in Parks**

This wayfinding project, which began in 2018, added new trailhead and directional signage in multiple parks. The goal is to make the parks more welcoming, informative and easier to navigate. An additional 15 parks received new signs in 2020 and we have three more to go in 2021. All 20 miles of park trails were GPS marked and uploaded to a Google-based smartphone app called "All Trails". In addition, Ingham County funded and installed numerous trail signs throughout the Township in locations along the cross-country trail and various parks including Hartrick Park, Central Park, and Nancy Moore Park. The signs were installed by our Parks Maintenance staff.

### **Parking Lot Improvements**

Our Parks Maintenance department installed an **overflow parking lot in Towner Road Park** utilizing asphalt millings from the current road projects in the Township. This area was on the original development plan but was put on hold because of costs. In addition, we also **paved the entry drive to Legg Park** with recycled asphalt millings as well. This work will allow the park to remain open all year as former muddy conditions would force temporary park closures throughout the year. This type of application creates a firm, stable and pervious surface.

### **Pathway Maintenance**

In 2020, the Parks Department made a very strong effort in trimming and mowing the Pedestrian/Bicycle Pathways. Staff trimmed and mowed 80 miles of pedestrian/bicycle pathways (prior to 2020, this work was contracted out). We received numerous phone calls during 2020 from residents telling us "The pathways and park trails have NEVER looked this good!"

### **Harris Nature Center Facility/Programming Report**

The Harris Nature Center building received a beautiful facelift in 2020. Improvements included: a renovated new classroom space with ten bench risers (funded by the HNC Foundation); new paint throughout the entire interior of the building, a refurbished archway with lights at the entrance, and a new split-rail fence around the frog pond all completed by our Park Maintenance staff. Despite the pandemic, HNC staff made great efforts to offer programs to engage the public with the natural world while still keeping people safe. Quick Facts: ● Hosted two weeks of Annie's Big Nature Lesson with 100 students participating in a weeklong outdoor classroom ● Hosted 1,979 drop-in visitors ● Hosted 1,467 program participants (both in person and virtual) ● Implemented new virtual programming for

schools, senior centers, and families • Created and offered Private Guided programs (these were extremely popular).

## **B. GRANTS AWARDED SINCE THE 2016 MASTER PLAN**

Seeking grant and community donations has always been a priority for the Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Department. The various Millages Meridian Township residents support for quality of life issues offers provides instrumental funds for local grant matches. It is also important that our residents to see responsible uses and leveraging of their tax dollars for the community good.

The following grants have been secured for recreation projects since 2016:

1. North Meridian Road Park, Pavilion, \$50,000 MNRTF (2015)
2. Greenfields Outdoor Exercise Gym Grant, Wonch Park, \$17, 682 (2016)
3. Consumers Energy, Right Tree Right Place Grant, Ferguson Park, \$1,000 (2016)
4. Capital Region Community Foundation, Volunteer Tool Shed Grant, \$6,500 (2016)
5. Central Park Regional Trail Connector & Fishing Platform, \$272,500 MNRTF (2016)
6. Central Park/Historical Village, bridge and restroom building, \$150,000 LWCF (2016)
7. Property acquisition, 80-acres, "Ponderosa", \$514,900, MNRTF (2016)
8. Meridian Riverfront Park Accessible Riverside Pavilion, \$50,000 LWCF
9. Meridian Riverfront Park Accessible Waterless Restroom, \$50,000 LWCF
10. Trail and Pathway Map- Ingham County Parks and Trails Millage, \$6,000
11. Trail, Pathway, Bridge Renovation Project – Ingham County Parks and Trails Millage, \$5,619,000
12. Park Directional and Wayfinding Signage – Ingham County Parks and Trails Millage, \$10,000
13. Community Art Sculpture - Lansing Economic Area Partnership Grant (LEAP), \$10,000 (2021)

## **C. Recreation Programs and Events**

Recreation in our community has created many opportunities to develop partnerships with local businesses, service organizations, neighboring communities and schools, as well as engage numerous residents in volunteer service or as program participants. Our youth and adult recreation programs, outreach volunteer programs and special events have increased use of our 933-acre park system. Meridian Township offers a wide range of programs and events to meet the year-round and seasonal needs of all segments of the population from youths to seniors.

Some youth programs are offered free of charge with grant assistance in order to reach a broader segment of the community. Youth recreational programs focus on positive youth development, including opportunities for adopting healthy, active lifestyles.

The Meridian Township's Prime Meridian Magazine provides a detailed listing of all events and programs offered by the Township. This Guide is distributed by mail and on-line annually and is also available on the Meridian Township website ([www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us)). The department also promotes its activities through a variety of media outlets including Facebook, Twitter, press releases, website, and through email to former and current participants. On-line registration was added in 2007. The list below is a sample of the many programs offered (or supported) throughout the year by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

## **1. Recreation Programs, Events, Enrichment, Volunteer Events**

### **Youth Sports & Leisure**

*Sporties for Shorties  
Soccer, Flag Football  
Basketball, Teeball*

*Nature Summer Camps  
Baseball, Softball  
Environmental Education*

### **Adult Recreation & Leisure**

*Photography Class  
Sand Volleyball, Golf  
Walking  
50+ Fitness Workout*

*Nature Education  
Stewardship  
Softball, Kickball*

### **Family Recreation & Leisure**

*Halloween Adventures  
Sledding  
Snow Shoeing  
Blue & Gray Civil War  
Reenactment  
Celebrate Meridian  
Summer Concerts at  
Marketplace*

*Ice Skating  
Love A Park Day  
Christmas in the Village  
Arts & Crafts Marketplace  
Meridian Farmers' Market  
Dog Park Parties  
5-K Races*

## **Harris Nature Center Programs**

### **Youth Nature Programs**

*School programs to enhance curriculum  
Summer Day Camp  
Nature Tots  
Chipmunk Story Time  
Scout Badge Workshops*

**Family Nature Programs**

*Halloween Adventures*  
*Live Animal Programs*  
*Fireside Chats*  
*Trail Talks*  
*Music in Nature*  
*Howl at the Moon guided night walks*

**Adult Enrichment**

*Gardening with Native Plants Class*  
*Native Plant Sale*  
*Edible and Toxic Plant educational walks*  
*Photography Classes*  
*Wildflower Walks*  
*Snowshoeing*  
*Volunteer opportunities*

**2. Deer Management Program Information**

In an effort to reduce the over-population of deer within the Township, a managed harvest is conducted yearly in select Township properties during the regular archery season.

The program began in 2011 in response to numerous complaints of deer over-population that have resulted in an increase of damage to landscaping, an increase in reports of vehicle/deer accidents, concern for public health and a disruption to the ecological balance of natural areas. In response, Meridian Township developed a Deer Management Plan that outlines measures for a highly managed program to harvest white-tailed deer in numerous Township and County-owned properties. All parks and land preserves remain open to the public during this time.

The managed harvest is not open to the general public. Only approved, qualified, competent and experienced hunters will be allowed to access Township property for the managed harvest. Township staff works closely with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to do what we feel is best to help reduce the population of deer. The program places hunters in all Township-owned properties that are practical and safe for bow hunting. Although this project is aimed at deer reduction, it is also offers an excellent opportunity for outdoor recreation.



## D. Description of Other Public Recreation Sites

### 1. Public School Facilities

Meridian Township residents have a variety of open space and facilities owned by local school districts. The schools and the township cooperate in programming and facility usage. Several schools provide restrooms that are accessible to the public from the outside during night and weekend events.

**- Figure 3 -  
Public School Open Space in Meridian Township**

	Acreage
<b>Haslett Public Schools</b>	<b>97.0</b>
Haslett Middle School	20.0
Haslett High School	47.0
Murphy Elementary	10.0
Vera Ralya Elementary	10.0
Wilkshire Early Childhood Center	10.0
<b>East Lansing Public Schools</b>	<b>43.0</b>
Donley Elementary	19.0
Vacant parcel	24.0
<b>Okemos Public Schools</b>	<b>400.3</b>
Bennett Woods Elementary	45.0
Central Elementary	28.0
Chippewa Middle School	78.0
Cornell Elementary	10.0
Edgewood Elementary	12.0
Hiawatha Elementary	19.3
Kinawa Middle School	72.0
Okemos High School	96.0
Powell Road Property	20.0
Wardcliff Elementary	20.0
<b>Total Public School Property</b>	<b>540.3</b>

**Haslett Public School Sites**

Haslett School District has six parcels of land that contain three elementary schools, a middle school, a high school, administrative buildings, open space and natural areas. A brief description of each of the Haslett Public School sites follows.

**Haslett Middle School**

20 Acres

1535 Franklin Street

*2 Gymnasiums*

*Varsity Softball Field*

*2 Outdoor Basketball Courts*

**Haslett High School**

47 Acres

5450 Marsh Road

*2 Gymnasiums*

*Indoor Community Pool*

*6 Tennis Courts*

*Lighted Football Field*

*Track*

*Multi-Use Room*

*Youth Baseball Field*

*Varsity Soccer Field*

*Trails*

*Lacrosse/Football Field*

*Varsity Baseball Field*

**Haslett Community Education**

1590 Franklin Street

The Haslett Community Education building and the Haslett Community Library share the building.

*Gymnasium (half-court basketball) used for activities other than basketball*

**Murphy Elementary School**

10 Acres

1875 Lake Lansing Road

*Gymnasium*

*Playground Equipment*

*Outdoor Basketball Court*

*Outdoor Open Play Field*

**Vera Ralya Elementary School**

10 Acres

5645 School Street

*Gymnasium*

*Playground Equipment*

*Outdoor Basketball Courts*

*Youth Baseball Field*

*Soccer Field*

**Wilkshire Early Childhood Center**

10 Acres

5750 Academic Way

*Playground Equipment*

*No gymnasium*

*Soccer Fields/Open Space on an adjacent leased property*

**Okemos Public School Sites**

Okemos Public School District has ten parcels of land, nine of which are currently developed. They are as follows:

**Bennett Woods Elementary**  
2650 Bennett Road

45 Acres

*Gymnasium*  
*Outdoor Basketball Courts*

**Central Elementary School**  
4406 N. Okemos Road

28 Acres

*Gymnasium*  
*Outdoor Basketball Court*

*Playground Equipment*  
*2 Soccer Fields*

**Chippewa Middle School**  
*(Also location of Meridian Senior Center)*  
4000 N. Okemos Road

78 Acres

*2 Gymnasiums*  
*4 practice football/lacrosse*  
*fields*  
*9 Tennis Courts*  
*Football Field*

*9 Softball/ Baseball Fields*  
*5 Soccer Fields*  
*Track*  
*Weight room*

**Cornell Elementary School**  
4371 Cornell Road

10 Acres

*Gymnasium*  
*Two outdoor Basketball*  
*Courts*  
*Small pavilion*

*Playground Equipment*  
*Paved loop trail*  
*2 Soccer Fields*  
*Small Nature Area*

**Edgewood Elementary School**  
*(Closed in 2003-now open for Okemos Community Education offices and child care)*  
1826 Osage Drive

12 Acres

*Gymnasium  
Outdoor Basketball Courts  
Small Pavilion  
Small Sledding Hill  
Hiking Trails*

*Playground Equipment  
3 Soccer Fields*

**Hiawatha Elementary School**  
1900 Jolly Road

19 Acres

*Gymnasium  
Outdoor Basketball Courts  
Playground Equipment*

*2 Soccer Fields  
Small Sledding Hill*

**Kinawa Middle School**  
1900 Kinawa Drive

72 Acres

*Gymnasium  
Indoor Pool  
3 Tennis Courts  
3 Softball Fields  
3 Soccer Fields*

*Pond and Stream  
Playground Equipment  
Cross-Country Trail  
Weight Room*

**Okemos High School**  
2800 Jolly Road

96 Acres

*2 Gymnasiums  
Indoor Pool  
12 Tennis Courts  
2 Practice Sport Fields  
Indoor Track  
Lighted Football Field  
Track  
3 Softball/Baseball Field  
Wetland  
Nature Trail  
Wrestling Room*

*Outdoor Basketball Courts  
Playground Equipment  
3 Soccer Fields*



## YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL AND SOCCER



**Wardcliff Elementary School**

20 Acres

5150 Wardcliff Drive

\*This school closed in 2009. The athletic fields are used by Okemos Soccer Club.

**East Lansing Public School Site**

East Lansing Public School District has one elementary school in Meridian Township.

**Donley Elementary**

19 Acres

2961 E. Lake Lansing Road

*Gymnasium*

*Outdoor Basketball Courts*

*Playground Equipment*

*Softball Field*

*Soccer/Lacrosse Field*

**Community Education Programs**

Meridian Township residents are also served with recreational and enrichment opportunities offered by Okemos and Haslett Community Education Departments. Meridian Township works in partnership with these organizations to provide programs and facilities with minimal duplication of services. Listed below are examples of programs offered through community education:

*Child Care Programs*

*Arts and Crafts*

*Cooking Programs*

*Reading*

*Sports Camps*

*Special Needs Day Camp*

*Swimming*

*Science & Math*

*Adult Education*

*Basketball/Volleyball*

**2. Regional Parks and Facilities**

**A. Lake Lansing County Parks North and South  
(2 parks totaling 563 Acres)**

Although Lake Lansing North and South are not Township parks, it is important to acknowledge them because they serve as **regional parks** and are located within the limits of Meridian Township. These parks, and the associated boat launch, are owned and operated by Ingham County Parks. Lake Lansing Park North is a 531 acre natural area park in Haslett. Access to the park is provided on the north side of Lake Drive. The park contains six miles of trails, two picnic shelters, a ski rental building, two public restroom buildings and picnic areas and softball diamond. A public boat launch is located on the north side of the lake on Lake Drive. A total of 120-acres were added to the Lake Lansing North Park in 2010 with assistance from the Meridian Township Land Preservation Program.

Lake Lansing Park South is a 30-acre County Park and contains the only public bathing beach in Meridian Township. It is located in Haslett on the northeast corner of Marsh and Lake Lansing Roads. In addition to the beach, this park contains a large community-built wooden play structure, community band shell, concession area, restrooms, picnic shelters, volleyball courts, paddle and row boat rentals, fishing dock and assorted play equipment and amenities.

**B. Hawk Island Park (100 Acres)**

Hawk Island is a new county park in South Lansing on Cavanaugh Road, ¼ mile west of Aurelius, adjacent to and south of Lansing's Scott Woods Park. This 100-acre parcel which includes a 35-acre lake was purchased in January, 1994. Amenities include a beach, splash pad, bathhouse and concession building, restrooms, three shelters, picnic areas, boat rental, playground, volleyball courts, paved trail around the lake, sledding hill and 17-acre dog park (owned by the City of Lansing and maintained by Ingham County Parks).

**C. Potter Park Zoo (102 acres)**

The Zoo, located in the city of Lansing, encompasses over 20 acres and features more than 500 individual animals representing approximately 160 different species. Through education, conservation, research and recreation, Potter Park Zoo provides a wonderfully wild experience for students and families. Potter Park Zoo will celebrate its 100th birthday in 2020. In 2006, a Potter Park Zoo Millage was passed, providing funding from Ingham County residents. In July 2007 the Zoo officially became an Ingham County managed facility. Although the ownership of the Zoo is in the city of Lansing, passage of a county-wide Zoo Millage put both the funding and management of the zoo to Ingham County Parks. The five-year, 0.41-mill levy (renewed in 2016 and ends in 2021) generates roughly \$2.8 million a year to support Potter Park and the 20-acre zoo that bears its name on South Pennsylvania Avenue in Lansing.

**D. Rose Lake State Wildlife Area, State of Michigan (4,140 acres)**

Rose Lake State Wildlife Area is located in Bath and Woodhull Townships. The research area is operated by MDNR and contains Rose Lake, Potter Lake and a portion of Mud Lake. Existing facilities provide activities such as hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, bird watching and nature observation. Most of the facilities provide limited access. Parking and roadways are around the perimeter with facilities located in the middle.

**E. Michigan State University**

Meridian Township residents are able to take advantage of the many park and recreational facilities on the Michigan State University Campus in East Lansing. These facilities include: University Club, Munn Arena, Breslin Center, Museums, Children's Garden, Beal Gardens, Trails, Observatory, and the Wharton Performing Arts Center. These facilities provide residents with access to world-class cultural, sports, education and entertainment events and programs.

**F. City of East Lansing**

Meridian Township residents also utilize parks and recreation facilities owned and operated by the City of East Lansing. These facilities include: Hannah Community Center, East Lansing Soccer Complex, Softball Complex, Patriarche Park Aquatics Center and adjacent 1.5-acre dog park.

### **3. Quasi-Public Sites**

Quasi-public sites in Meridian Township serve community members, but are not publicly owned. Most of these are churches, private schools, or public utilities. Most have limited open space for future development. Quasi-public sites provide a very important function to the community. These sites, when located in neighborhoods, can provide space for active or passive recreation. A few of the sites have sports fields that are used by a variety of sport leagues, including baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, and football. These open areas can also be utilized as connections to Township parks, helping to create greenways throughout the community.

A number of quasi-public sites have allowed limited, responsible use of their land. The Department of Parks and Recreation continues to work with these land owners to increase public access. Quasi-public sites can complement public lands within the community and "stretch" the availability of publicly owned facilities. Therefore, it is important for the Township to maintain an inventory of these sites, some of which may be available for purchase in the future.

#### **Parkwood YMCA**

This facility is the local branch of the YMCA of Lansing. It is located on the north side of Haslett Road on 5 ½ acres of land, between Park Lake and Okemos Roads. YMCA program offerings include youth sports, progressive swim lessons, health and fitness classes and assorted youth and camp activities.

Facilities offered at the YMCA include a 25-yard heated indoor swimming pool, indoor track with fitness classes held on the infield, five multi-use sport courts



(racquetball, basketball, etc.), gymnastics and kids gym area, cardio-fitness center, Nautilus and free weight room and locker rooms. In addition, an outdoor sports slab, sand volleyball court, athletic field and a playground are located on the grounds. The YMCA is a non-profit, membership organization, but all programs are open to the public.

### **Hope Soccer Complex**

The Kenneth A. Hope Soccer Complex is a 30 acre premier complex with six playing fields that opened in September of 2000. It has been designed and developed to meet the growing need for quality fields for the Greater Lansing area soccer and lacrosse enthusiasts and tournament players statewide. This complex is located on Aurelius Road in South Lansing and is now under a private contractor for operation and maintenance.

### **Suburban Ice**

This is a full-service ice arena located on Hannah Boulevard adjacent to the Michigan Athletic Club. It opened in 1999 and contains two ice rinks, locker rooms, private party space, skate rental area, arcade and snack bar. Program offerings include public skating, hockey programs, instructional programs, and freestyle and dance programs. This is the only ice facility in Meridian Township.

### **Fitness Clubs**

*Michigan Athletic Club*  
*Go Workout*  
*Anytime Fitness*  
*Fitness Together*

*Court One East Athletic*  
*State of Fitness*  
*Snap Fitness*

### **Cultural Arts**

*Wharton Center for Performing Arts*  
*Starlight Dinner Theater*  
*Rahula Performing Arts Center*  
*School of Rock*

*Williamston Theater*  
*Lansing Civic Players*  
*Happendance*

### **Golf Courses**

*Meridian Sun (18)*  
*Lake O' the Hills (9)*  
*College Fields (18)*  
*Indian Hills (9)*

## E. Description of Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory

The parks inventory was created using the established standards classification system developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) for municipal parks. The NRPA standards are best used as guidelines and not as absolute targets because each community has its own unique blend of social and economic characteristics that define them.

These classifications, however, are not always clear-cut, and overlap in several instances. Several mini parks, for example, also serve as neighborhood parks for the residents who live in close proximity. The classifications are meant as a guide for staff and the public to understand the breadth and scope of the park system.

Description of the classification system:

- 1. Mini Park** - Used to define limited, isolated or unique recreational needs. Typical park size is up to one acre. A mini park serves a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile distance in a residential setting. NRPA standard acreage for mini-parks is 0.25 to 0.50 – acre per 1,000/population.
- 2. Neighborhood Park** - Designed to provide leisure and recreation opportunities for a neighborhood and may include features such as play structures, multi-use courts, family picnic areas, and open-space areas. NRPA standards range from one acre to 24 acres. A Neighborhood Park serves a population within one square mile of residential development. The NRPA standard acreage for a neighborhood park is one to 20 acres per 1,000/population.
- 3. Community Park** - Serves a broader purpose than a neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. A community park may offer such features as lighted athletic fields, large and small group picnic areas, aquatic facilities, restrooms and parking. Park size is 25 to 60 acres and is intended to service a population within a one- or two-mile radius of the park. The NRPA standard acreage for a community park is five to eight acres per 1,000/population.
- 4. Regional Park** - Designed to provide centralized recreational opportunities for a major portion of the governmental entity. A regional park is developed as a large complex with a variety of amenities capable of accommodating large groups. Features of a regional park may include theme recreation areas and/or large open areas intended for active sport use. Regional parks offer restroom facilities and parking. Park size is 70+

acres. The NRPA standard acreage for a regional park is five to 10 acres per 1,000/population.

## **F. Overall Summary of Recreation Open Space in Meridian Township Relative to NRPA Standards**

The Charter Township of Meridian currently has a total of 933 acres of park land to meet the recreational demands of residents. Although 933 acres exceeds the overall National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) recommended Open Space Standards (8 to 10 acres/1,000 population), a closer look reveals that 82% of the township park land is wooded, wetland, or floodplain, therefore unavailable as “active” open space for park development. In fact, there are only 190 acres of “active” park areas. Therefore, there may be a need to acquire additional parkland for active use. These “active” areas are defined as upland areas that are developed for parking, athletic fields, ball diamonds, paths, play areas, paths, picnic areas and open mowed areas, etc.

An evaluation based solely on comparison of existing acreage to a set of standards does not provide a complete picture of parks and recreation needs in Meridian Township. The following considerations are also pertinent when planning for future park development:

- The standards outlined by NRPA are general guidelines that may need to be modified based on the needs of existing and future residents as identified in comprehensive planning process with public input. For example, the standards do not take into consideration our aging population, which may or may not take advantage of competitive forms of recreation or conversely, the large number of families with young children which create a higher demand for sports fields than reflected in the NRPA standard.
- The acquisition of land for parks should be based on strategic planning based on the needs of residents, geographic deficiencies and population trends. For example, smaller parks should be located in close proximity to each neighborhood.
- The evaluation of mini-parks does not account for subdivision commons areas, outlots, and other private play areas for children throughout the Township. Many apartments and condominium developments also have playgrounds which are non-accessible and poorly constructed with limited facilities. These outlots and mini-parks are not listed because an accurate inventory does not exist. The Township encourages private development of mini-parks rather than expending public funds to acquire and develop them.

- The evaluation of natural areas does not account for the large amount of acreage that is retained in its natural state in existing community and large urban parks including wetland preservation. For example, Central Park alone has over 150 acres of natural area that is not accessible to the majority of park users. As a result, the amount of acreage available for active recreation use by Meridian Township residents is far less than the overall acreage suggests.

## **G. Evaluation of Existing Park Acreage**

Meridian Township has a variety of open space needs. Open space is integral to maintaining the high-quality environment that residents currently enjoy, and is vital for attracting residential and commercial uses. This section evaluates current open space needs in relation to current and anticipated future needs based upon national open space standards and demographic projections.

This plan recognizes that township-owned parks are not the only opportunities for outdoor recreation. In addition to 933 acres of parks, residents have access to 968 acres of land preserves. Respite from the busy world is within a short walking distance from every resident in Meridian Township.

The Department of Parks and Recreation has developed strong relationships with schools and quasi-public organizations to increase the amount of open space that is available to meet the recreational needs of Meridian Township residents. As a result, residents have access to an additional 540.3 acres of open space that are located at schools. The recreation needs for some residents in the Meridian Township area are provided through quasi-public and school-owned recreation facilities, ranging from county parks to performance theaters. In addition, many Township residents take advantage of recreation opportunities at regional facilities outside the Township's corporate boundary. Private open space should be considered a valuable supplement to public open space, but not a substitute, because of its restricted usage.

The evaluation of park acreage is based on existing inventory of parks, NRPA standards, and population trends. As noted above, Meridian Township has an existing inventory of 933 acres of parks and natural areas. Currently, NRPA does not provide standards for natural areas.

**Figure 1**

<b><u>NRPA STANDARDS FOR PARKLAND</u></b>			
<b>NRPA Park Type</b>	<b>Acres/1000 Population</b>	<b>Minimum Size</b>	<b>Service Area Radius</b>
Mini-Park	0.25 - 0.50	1 acre or less	< .25 mile/5 minute walk
Neighborhood Park	1 - 20	1 - 24 acres	1 mile/12 minute walk
Community Park	5 - 8	25 - 60 acres	1-2 miles/5 minute drive
Regional Park	8 - 10	70+ acres	30 miles/1 hour drive

**Figure 2**

<b><u>MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP QUANTITIES OF PARKLAND</u></b>			
<b>NRPA Park Type</b>	<b>Acres/1000 Population (43,916)</b>	<b>Existing Area</b>	<b>Surplus or Deficiency</b>
Mini-Park	10 - 20.3	5.63 acres	- 4.37 / -14.67
Neighborhood Park	40.62 - 812.5	100.1 acres	+ 59.48 / - 712.4 acres
Community Park	203.13 - 325	665.30 acres	+ 462.17 / + 340.3
Regional Park	325- 406	0 acres	- 325 / -406
Natural Areas	n/a	139.3 ac. (parks) & 968 (land pres)	--

**NOTE:**

43,916 is the population per the 2020 census.

## H. Accessibility Assessment

The accessibility of each park was evaluated using the MDNR ADA Rating Scale (1 through 5). Figure 7 provides a general rating of each park according to the MDNR criteria. Efforts are constantly made toward improving accessibility in the parks, but we recognize that more work is necessary. Many of the proposed park improvements outlined in our Capital Improvement Plan include upgrades to the park system related to enhanced accessibility. The Meridian Universal Access Advisory Board, formed in 2007, provides comments on existing and future park plans in an effort to improve the accessibility of the parks.

**The features assessed when rating the accessibility of a park include:**

- An assessment of the ease of getting to the park
- Parking
- General travel around the park
- The existing facilities (including restrooms and other support facilities)
- Any recreation programming within the park.

**MDNR ADA Rating Scale (1 through 5):**

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

# I. Inventory of all Community Owned Parks and Recreation Facilities

- Figure 1 -



Township Parks		Area	Parking	Trail (In season / Paved)	Natural Area with No Amenities	Lake / Pond / River / Stream / Wetland	Restrooms / Portable Toilets	Playground (Building(s) with soft surf)	Swimming / Tennis	Electricity	WiFi	Picnic Area(s)	Hiking Access	Fishing Dock	Canoe / Kayak Launch	Boat Launch	River / Pond / Wetland / Overlook Dock	Play Equipment	Native Interpretation Area	Story Book Trail	Secure / Fenced / Lacrosse Fields	Baseball / Softball Diamonds	Baseball Court	Tennis Court	Soft Volleyball Court	Strolling Hill / Pump Track	Recreation Pits / Gaga Ball	Fitness Equipment / Jump Park	Open Space for Activities				
1	Nancy Moore Park 1960 Gaylord C. Smith Court	40	x	N/P		D	R	B																									
2	Central Park 5151 Marsh Rd	197	x	N		P	R	P	x	x		x	x	x			x	x			x								HP	x			
3	Central Park South 1990 Central Park Dr	15	x	N/P		P						x	x	x																			
4	Towner Road Park 2055 Towner Rd	23.6	x	P		W	R	P	x	x		x	x								x	x		x						x			
5	Wonch Park 4555 Okemos Rd	15	x	P		R	R	P	x	x		x	x					x										x	HP	FE	x		
6	Ferguson Park 4540 Okemos Rd	5.7	x			R	R		x			x	x		x																x		
7	Harris Nature Center 3996 Van Atta Rd	48	x	N/P		R	R/P	B	x			x	x	x			x		x												x		
8	Eastgate Park 4203 S. Meridian Rd	53	x	N		R	P					x	x	x														PT			x		
9	Legg Park 3891 Van Atta Rd	103	x	N		R	P					x	x																		x		
10	Hartick Park 3685 Hulett Rd	60.7	x	N/P		P	R	P	x	x		x	x				x	x			x	x									x		
11	Snell-Towar Recreation Center 6146 Porter St		x				R	B	x																								
12	Towar Park 6146 Porter St	4	x									x	x					x													x		
13	Hillbrook Park 1747 Lake Lansing Rd	25.4	x	N		D			x			x	x								x	x	x								x		
14	Marshall Park 6105 Marsh Rd	5	x									x	x																			x	
15	Ted Black Woods 540 Grand River Ave   4714 Van Atta Rd	74	x	N		W							x				x															x	
16	North Meridian Road Park 5191 N. Meridian Rd	60	x	N			R	P	x	x		x	x					x			x						x	SH	GB		x		
17	Ottawa Hills Park 4980 Hillcrest Ave	3				D						x									x											x	
18	Red Cedar Natural Area 1455 Oscoda Rd	56					x	R																									
19	Cedar Bend Heights Neighborhood Park 2280 Kenmore Dr	0.33										x																				x	
20	Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area 4344 Dobie Rd	34		N		D																											
21	Forest Hills Park 4625 Northview Dr	4		N																													
22	Brattin Woods 5851 Okemos Rd	22.2	x	N		W																											
23	Tacoma Hills Park 1815 Hamilton Rd	22		N																													
24	Schriener Park 5039 Algonquin Way	1				x																											
25	Orlando Park 1275 Orlando Dr	1.3		P					x			x						x		x												x	
26	Indian Hills Park 4730 Nokoma Dr	3																															x
27	Lake Lansing Marsh 1430 Lake Dr	46				x	W/L																										
28	Spengler Marsh 5929 Lake Dr	3.3				x	W/L																										
29	Newton Road Park 6025 Newton Rd	5	x																														x
30	Lake Lansing Park South (Ingham County Park)	30	x				L	x	x			x	x	x				x										x				HP	x
31	Lake Lansing Park North (Ingham County Park)	530	x	N			L	x	x			x	x					x															x
32	Lake Lansing Park Boat Launch (Ingham County)						L	x				x	x																				

## Share the Trails

Everyone enjoys the parks in their own way. Here are things you can do while in the parks to be respectful for the next visitor. Footprints and paw prints ruin established ski tracks. Please do your part to preserve these ski trails. Remember that muddy trails are for foot traffic only, so please refrain from riding bikes and horses on the trails at these times. Bring your pets along for your walks but keep them on a leash and clean up after them (these are both code violations). **#scoopthepoop**



## J. Evaluation of Existing Sports Facilities

An inventory of sports teams and fields was conducted in order to assess the need for sports facilities in Meridian Township. Overall, the results indicate that Meridian Township is deficient in soccer/football/lacrosse fields, baseball/softball/t-ball fields and indoor gym space. (See Table 9). Public input participants and staff emphasized that new fields need to be developed to meet game and tournament needs. Also, many of the existing facilities are in desperate need of renovation. It should also be noted that the deficiency could be far greater if Meridian Township did not have access to school facilities.

### Meridian Township Sport Facility Inventory and Assessment

<u>Participation</u>				<u>Turf Fields Inventory</u>			Deficiency/Surplus
	Haslett	Okemos	Meridian	Haslett	Okemos	Meridian	
Soccer	165	282	862	6	16	10	-2
Football	60	100	241				
Lacrosse	160	250	0				
<b>Total each community</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>1103</b>				
<b>Total players</b>			<b>2120</b>				

<u>Participation</u>				<u>Ball Diamonds</u>			Deficiency/Surplus
	Haslett	Okemos	Meridian	Haslett	Okemos	Meridian	
Baseball	108	110	207	4	9	7	-2
Youth Softball	45	0	149				
T-ball	0	234	42				
Kickball	0	0	154				
Adult Softball	0	0	252				
<b>Total each community</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>804</b>				
<b>Total players</b>			<b>895</b>				

<u>Participation</u>				<u>Indoor Courts</u>			Deficiency/Surplus
	Haslett	Okemos	Meridian	Haslett	Okemos	Meridian	
Basketball	140	626	285	6	8	0	-7
Volleyball	100	44	0				
<b>Total each community</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>285</b>				
<b>Total players</b>			<b>1195</b>				



<u>Participation</u>		<u>Outdoor Courts</u>			Deficiency/Surplus
		Haslett	Okemos	Meridian	
Sand Volleyball	22 teams	110 players		4	-0-

## K. Status Report for all Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities

See Appendix for Post Completion Reports

## L. Trails and Pathways Inventory

Description of Trails in Meridian Township

Meridian Township provides a park approximately 2,000 steps (on your pedometer) closer to a healthier lifestyle. With 933 acres of parkland, with 20 miles of natural park trails, and 76 miles of paved pedestrian/bicycle pathways, we have numerous opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy getting to their destination of choice along the Trails of Meridian. Trails and Pathways are funded through the Park Millage and Pedestrian/Bicycle Pathway millage. The pathway system is maintained by the Township’s Parks and Grounds Maintenance Staff.

### Ingham County Trail Information

In November 2014, Ingham County voters approved a 0.5 mill tax millage to support the development of a countywide regional trails and parks system through 2020 and then renewed through 2025. The overall goal of the Ingham County Regional Trails and Parks Millage Fund is to create and maintain a sustainable countywide system of recreation trails and adjacent parks within Ingham County.

Funds must be matched by the local community with their own funds, or in-kind services, or funds obtained from other sources, i.e., state, federal or other allocations. Eligible projects must fit the following categories: New Construction; Repair, Rehabilitation, or Long-Term Maintenance; and Special Project(s), (including blueways).

In conjunction with our partners at the Ingham County Parks Department, utilizing the Ingham County Trails and Parks Millage and the Meridian Township Pathway Millage, a total of 12 separate trail and pathway projects have been completed throughout Meridian

Township. These include rehabilitation of four separate boardwalk structures (approximately 225 feet in total), replacing one ageing pedestrian bridge, replacing three drain crossing structures, installing a new boardwalk (over 1,000 feet long), resurfacing existing trails, and installing new and widening existing pathways.

In total approximately 800 feet of existing asphalt trail has been replaced as well as resurfacing of 11,300 feet (2.1 miles) of existing asphalt trails. These include parts of the off-road trail network within Meridian as well as trails through several Township Parks. Further, two gaps in the Township system have been closed with approximately 2,100 feet of new concrete pathway. Lastly, over 3,000 feet of existing concrete pathways have been widened in order to form part of the county-wide off-road trail network.



**MSU to Lake Lansing Trail Connector Plan – made possible through Ingham County grant and Meridian Township Pathway Millage**

**Red Cedar Water Trail Information**

In 2014, Meridian Township Parks and Recreation developed a water trail map to help to begin the establishment of a designated water trail along the Red Cedar River. A water trail (or blue trail) is a waterway adopted by a local community that is dedicated to improving family-friendly recreation opportunities such as fishing, boating, wildlife watching, and education about conserving land and water resources. Just as hiking trails are designed to help people explore the land, water trails help people discover rivers.

The Red Cedar River is a tremendous resource for outdoor enthusiasts throughout Mid-Michigan. Our water trail map provides information for paddlers to experience 23 miles of the Red Cedar River and maps the area from Williamston to the Grand River confluence at River Street Park / Sweeney's Landing in Lansing. The map highlights the locations of launches, portage areas, and local amenities such as restrooms and picnic areas along the route.

Although the Red Cedar River is in close proximity to numerous Meridian Township residents, many don't realize the central role that the river plays in enhancing our community. A healthy river provides clean drinking water, thriving fish and wildlife habitat, natural protection from flooding, and abundant recreational opportunities.

The Red Cedar River is a beautiful natural waterway. The biggest challenge for users and for maintenance is the large number of trees that fall into the river each year which makes it difficult to navigate and also to maintain.

Our parks and recreation community survey revealed that residents are very interested in recreational paddling, fishing, and river access areas and the water trail plan helps provide guidance for the development of additional river access improvements and other amenities along the Red Cedar River.

The water trail map provides information for paddlers to experience 23 miles of the Red Cedar River, highlighting the stretch from Williamston to the Grand River confluence in Lansing. Highlights include the locations of launches, portage areas, and local amenities such as restrooms and picnic areas along the route. Many residents are already enjoying the recently completed canoe launch on the east side of Van Atta Road near the Harris Nature Center. The structure is regularly utilized for fishing, launching kayaks and canoes, and as an outdoor classroom area for Harris Nature Center day campers who are learning about the outdoors. Future park plans include features such as additional launches, pavilions, signs, and rest rooms within our parks along the river. Many park visitors enjoy the Red Cedar for its fishing and paddling opportunities. In fall the river offers spectacular foliage viewing opportunities.



## **M. LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

Meridian Township's Land Preservation Program was established in 2000 to acquire, preserve, and protect natural areas throughout the Township that have unique or special natural features. Now the gift of permanence and the knowledge of those features will always be available for current and future generations to visit, appreciate, and enjoy.

The Land Preservation Program is supported by a township millage, passed by township residents in November, 2000. 956 acres of the township's most beautiful, scenic and natural lands have been acquired through twenty three (23) total properties comprised of forty three (43) acquisitions. The original goal of the program set in 2000 was to acquire 600 acres, or 10% of available land.

Stewardship and land management programs for each individual parcel are currently being developed. The management plans outline the stewardship activities necessary to protect or restore the site.

Properties come into the program through fee simple purchase, donation, or a combination of the two. The Land Preservation Advisory Board continues to seek ecologically valuable woodlands, wetlands, and other green and open spaces that will provide a lasting benefit to our community.

# Land Preserve Inventory

**Land Preserves: 24**

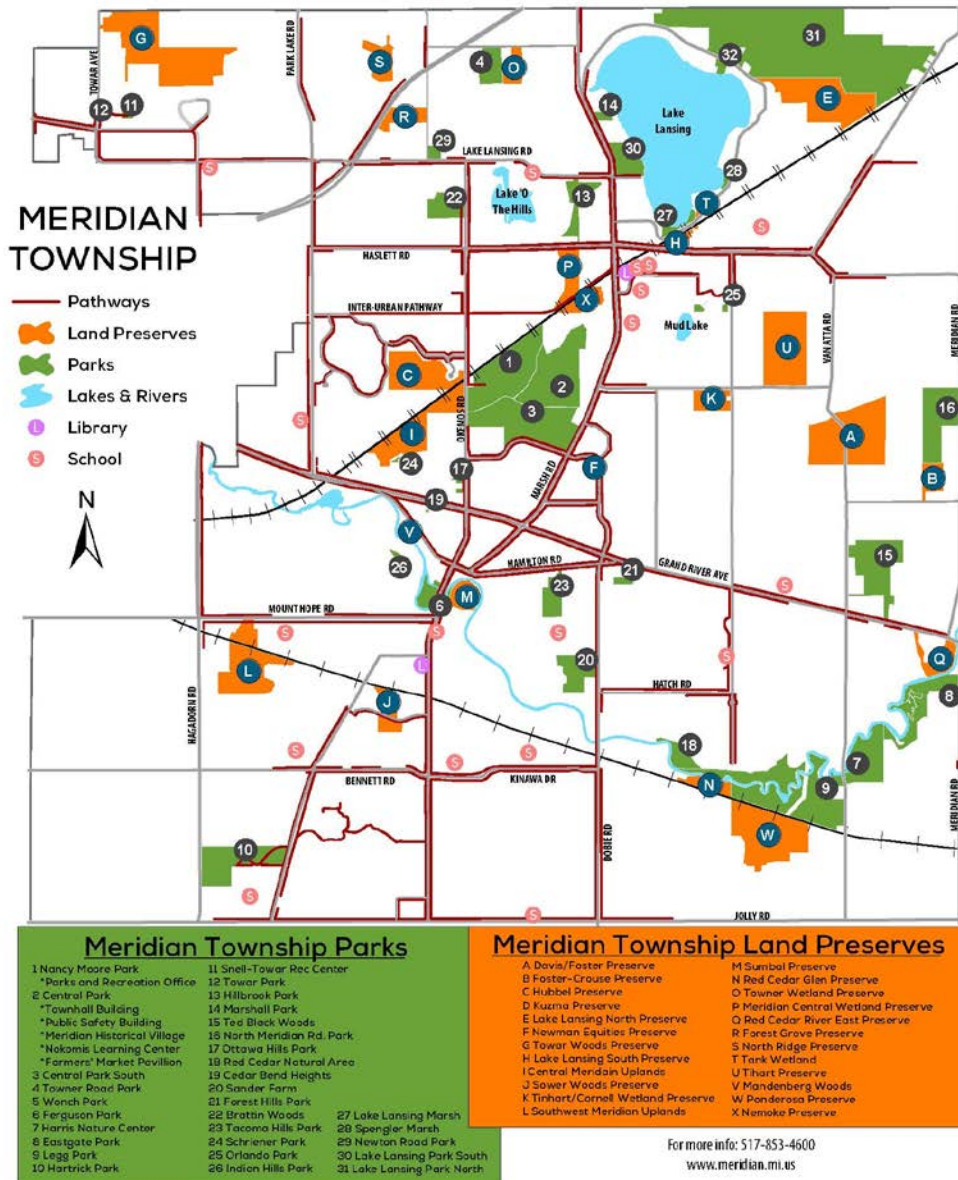
**Acquisitions: 44**

**Acres of Current Land Preserves: 956 acres**

The original goal of the program set in 2000 was to acquire 600 acres, or 10% of identified available land; the Land Preservation Program is currently at 16.13%

**Total acquisition costs = \$9,497,708**

## Parks, Pathways & Natural Areas



Map 1: Map of Community Owned Land Preserves

## Description of Land Preserves

### 1. Davis-Foster Preserve | 5120 Van Atta Road

- Area: 108.90 acres (2 parcels)
- Year Acquired: 2006
- Purchase Price: \$1,650,000
- Description: The Davis-Foster Preserve is a former farm; riparian and lowland hardwoods, shrub-scrub and emergent wetlands, and savannah grasslands and woodlands. The land has a historical barn that is over 100 years old still standing that was once part of the Davis family agricultural homestead. This preserve is good for birdwatching with reports of the rare Henslow's sparrow, Grasshopper sparrow, Woodcock, and several other species.

### 2. Foster-Crouse Preserve | 250 Newman Road

- Area: 18.08 acres
- Year Acquired: 2002
- Purchase Price: Donation
- Description: The Foster-Crouse Preserve is a mix of dry-mesic forest, wet meadow/emergent wetland, abandoned field, forested wetland, scrub-shrub wetland, and a disturbed second growth forest. The land was used historically for livestock grazing and logging. This preserve was the founding property for the Land Preservation Program and donated by 2 families: Richard and Gretchen Foster and Edward and Patricia Crouse in 2002.

### 3. Hubbel Preserve | 5921 Okemos Road

- Area: 57.66 acres
- Year Acquired: 2003
- Purchase Price: Donation
- Description: The Hubbel Preserve is just 50 acres of 9 different natural communities which include emergent marsh, second-growth upland forest, forested wetland, emergent wetland, mixed emergent and scrub-shrub wetland, wet meadow, and mature upland forest. The land was historically used for agricultural crops and pasture. This preserve provides habitat for many different types of amphibians, birds, and mammals. It runs alongside Central Meridian Uplands and is only separated by the railroad crossing on Okemos road.

### 4. Kuzma Preserve | 5770 Carlton Street

- Area: 0.32 acres
- Year Acquired: 2003
- Purchase Price: Donation
- Description: The Kuzma Preserve is 0.32 acres of disturbed uplands and emergent marsh. This land was historically donated to the Land Preservation Program by the Judy A. Kuzma Trust. Kuzma is one of the smallest preserves in the township but acts as an important buffer for storm runoff into the Lake Lansing watershed. This wetland has been used by Northern Pike for spawning as well as a resting spot for rare migratory waterfowl.

### 5. Lake Lansing North Preserve | 1000 Wild Ginger Trail

- Area: 120 acres (3 parcels)
- Year Acquired: 2010
-

- Purchase Price: \$675,000 (Township contribution toward DNRE Grant Purchase, approx. \$1.2 million)
- Description: The Lake Lansing North Preserve is 117 acres of mixed deciduous upland and lowland forest and forested wetlands that is a partnership between the Ingham County Parks and Meridian Township Land Preservation Program. The Township purchased the land as a Conservation Easement, and works closely with Ingham County to increase stewardship efforts such as invasive removal, and controlled burns to regenerate oaks and rare native woodland flowers. The land has a historical pine stand that was planted by the Citizen Conservation Corp which was an initiative started under Franklin D. Roosevelt. This preserve is one of the most biologically diverse natural areas in the Township.

#### **6. Newman Equities Preserve | 5025 Central Park Drive**

- Area: 13.41 acres
- Year Acquired: 2004
- Purchase Price: Donation
- Description: The Newman Equities Preserve is 13.41 acres comprised of two natural communities which include a mixed emergent scrub-shrub wetland, and an upland forest. The land was historically donated in order to preserve a natural area within a commercially heavy portion of the township. This preserve is in close proximity to several major roads making it easy to access nature in an urban setting. The trees along the roadway provide a serene break from the hustle and bustle of Central Park Drive.

#### **7. Towar Woods | 2948 Margate Lane**

- Area: 124.8 acres (10 parcels)
- Year Acquired: 2004 through 2008
- Purchase Price: TOTAL \$2,351,561:
  - Ranes 11.26 ac. \$300,000 (2006)
  - Ranes 15 ac. \$300,000 (2006)
  - Van Acker 9.2 ac. \$180,000 (2004)
  - Van Acker 9.42 ac. \$180,000 (2004)
  - DNR 3.16 ac. \$4,261 (2002)
  - Whitcomb 3.91 ac. \$19,000 (2008)
  - DNR 8.06 ac. \$300 (2004)
  - East Lansing Schools 24 ac. \$118,000 (2007)
  - Walnut Hills 14.72 ac. \$625,000 (2005)
  - Walnut Hills 25 ac. \$625,000 (2005)
  - Mitroka Addition 1 ac. Donation (2017)
- Description: The Towar Woods Preserve is almost 125 acres of seven natural communities which include upland fields/scrub, wetland forests, regrowth forests, mature upland forests, logged upland forests, wetland fields/scrub, and oak groves. The land has been historically logged in some areas, but mature upland forests remain intact, containing trees over 200 years old. This preserve has several areas with high floristic and wildlife quality, and is home to a native tree plantation. Native tree species have been planted and cared for by dedicated neighbors who are helping to create a diverse forest for future generations.

#### **8. Lake Lansing South (Potter) Preserve | 5763 Carlton Street**

- Area: 5.5 acres (2 parcels)
- Year Acquired: 2010

- Purchase Price: \$25,000 + \$2,507 (winter tax bill) = \$27,507
- Description: The Lake Lansing South Preserve 5.2 acres comprised of two natural communities of forest and wet meadow. This small tract of land acts as a valuable buffer for the Lake Lansing watershed and mitigates runoff in conjunction with the Kuzma Preserve and Spengler Marsh nearby. The land was historically an important holding site for agricultural products being loaded onto the nearby train for railroad transport. Northern Pike have been witnessed spawning at this preserve.

**9. Central Meridian Uplands Preserve | 5190 Okemos Road**

- Area: 60.22 acres (2 parcels)
- Year Acquired: 2005
- Purchase Price: Partial Donation, \$80,000
- Description: The Central Meridian Uplands Preserve is just over 60 acres of 5 different natural communities which include mature upland forest, regrowth upland forest, open grass fields, forested wetland, and open marsh wetlands. The land was historically an agricultural site with areas that had been cultivated and used as pasture. This preserve includes a unique glacial mound and foundation from an old barn.

**10. Sower Woods Preserve | 2351 Sower Boulevard**

- Area: 17.97 (5 parcels)
- Year Acquired: 2005 through 2008
- Purchase Price: TOTAL \$240,242: 5.43 ac. \$231,000 (2005)
  - 1.36 ac. \$4,261 (2002)
  - 5.166 ac. \$4,261 (2002)
  - 4.038 ac. \$720 (2008)
  - 1.77 ac. \$4,261 (2002)
- Description: The Sower Woods Preserve is nearly 18 acres of seven natural communities which include mature wetland forest, regrowth wetland forest, upland forest, emergent wetland, scrub-shrub wetland, open water, and meadow. The land was historically part of a 100-year old farm owned by Michigan State University Sociology Professor Dr. Christopher and his wife Virginia Judy Sower. It is home to one of the largest red oaks that dates back before the European settlers arrived. This preserve contains a diversity of native plants, many of which are planted and cared for by dedicated neighbors.

**11. Tihart-Cornell Wetland Preserve | 5227 Cornell Road**

- Area: 21.26 acres
- Year Acquired: 2006
- Purchase Price: \$206,000
- Description: The Tihart-Cornell Wetland Preserve is just over 22 acres of five natural communities which include emergent wetland, upland field and scrub, regrowth forest, forested wetland, and upland forest. The land was historically purchased as part of the Greenspace Plan as a Priority Conservation Corridor. This preserve has some native lowland hardwoods such as elm, ash, and cottonwood trees, some of which turn into snags and provide valuable food and habitat for woodpeckers and hawks. This valuable wetland provides the benefit of storing flood waters, decreasing flood damage and providing water during drought.

**12. Southwest Uplands & Serafine Preserve | 2760 Sophiea Parkway**

- Area: 91 acres (4 parcels)
- Year Acquired: 2010



- Purchase Price: TOTAL = \$1,460,000
  - A: \$157,161
  - B: \$216,369
  - C: \$733,058
  - D: \$193,412
  - 14 acre Serafine addition: \$160,000 (2017)
- Description: The Southwest Meridian Uplands Preserve is 91 acres of upland forest, emergent wetland, old field/scrub, and prairie grassland. The southwestern edge of the preserve is home to historic forest with large oak and maple trees and a pair of Barred Owls. Historically used for agriculture and mining of sand, a large portion of the preserve is disturbed with large, man-made hills. A Great Blue Heron rookery (nesting site) can be observed when looking at the wetland located to the NW.
- Description: The Serafine addition to Southwest Meridian Uplands Preserve is 13.5 acres of rolling hills that are primarily upland field/scrubs with young successional upland forest bordering the edges. The land was historically used as an agricultural field primarily for the production of hay. Many native plant species have been planted by dedicated neighbors, and can be viewed along Mt. Hope Road and the central portion of the preserve. Serafine connects to Southwest Meridian Uplands Preserve: both are home to Herron Creek.

### **13. Sumbal Preserve | 4538 Okemos Road**

- Area: 20.31 acres
- Year Acquired: 2004
- Purchase Price: Donation
- Description: The Sumbal Preserve is nearly 20 acres of two natural communities which include an upland forest and a forested wetland. The land has historic floodplain features including a “back swamp” and a “natural levee” which helps mitigate flooding from the Red Cedar River. This preserve is home to some rare and threatened species, such as the Green Dragon plant.

### **14. Red Cedar Glen (Sylvan Glen) Preserve | 1389 Sylvan Glen Drive**

- Area: 14.91 acres
- Year Acquired: 2006
- Purchase Price: \$425,000
- Description: The Red Cedar Glen Preserve is nearly 15 acres of six natural communities which include upland field/scrubs, floodplain forest, wetland forest/streams, regrowth forest, pine forest, and mature upland forest. Historically, small portions of the preserve were used for agriculture, but you can still find trees that date back to the 1800s. This preserve offers an opportunity for viewing diverse types of spring ephemerals, such as spring beauty and blood root. Rare bluestem goldenrod can be found growing here in the late summer and fall.

### **15. Towner Wetland (Applegate) Preserve | 1941 Towner Road**

- Area: 14.96 acres
- Year Acquired: 2006
- Purchase Price: \$207,645
- Description: The Towner Wetland Preserve is 15 acres of four natural communities which include upland field and shrub, scrub-shrub wetland, emergent wetland, and upland forest. The land has some portions that were historically deforested and used for agriculture and grazing but some of the original flora and fauna is still present. These areas are emergent wetland that is an authentic representation of the natural remnant habitat and is currently

undergoing an ecological inventory and a search for rare species. This preserve is located adjacent to Towner Road Park and brings a natural and peaceful element to the recreational activities.

**16. Meridian Central Wetland Preserve | 1727 Haslett Road**

- Area: 24.78 acres (2 parcels)
- Year Acquired: 2003-2004
- Purchase Price: TOTAL= \$93,000 [13.36 ac. (\$50,000); 11.38 ac. (\$43,000)]
- Description: The Meridian Central Wetland Preserve is just shy of 25 acres and is comprised of five natural communities: upland forest, forested wetland, scrub-shrub wetland, wet meadow, and open water wetland. The land was historically much drier but with urbanization water runoff has been directed to this area creating wetland communities. With close proximity to the Inter-Urban Pathway, this preserve makes it easy to access nature in an urban setting. Sandhill cranes, and red-tailed hawks are frequent visitors.

**17. Red Cedar River East Preserve | 101 Grand River Avenue**

- HOWE (original preserve area)
- Area: 9.14 acres (2 parcels)
- Year Acquired: 2010
- Purchase Price: \$92,000
- Description: Riparian hardwood forest

**Wangler addition**

- Area: 13.30 acres
- Year Acquired: 2011
- Purchase Price: \$13,106.89 (tax- reverted property from Ingham County Land Bank)
- Description: Adjacent to Red Cedar River, wooded, wetland, floodplains
- The Red Cedar River East Preserve is 25 acres of wooded floodplain forest and riparian wetlands that run along the Red Cedar River. Historically the land was not logged, leaving behind some trees 100+ years old. This preserve has over 16 different tree species including some of the largest oak trees in the county. Explore this preserve and see if you can find one of these giants.

**18. North Ridge (Whitehills) Preserve | 6260 Fenwick Court**

- Area: 25 acres
- Year Acquired: 2010
- Purchase Price: \$400,000
- Description: The North Ridge Preserve is 19.92 acres primarily comprised of upland forest with pockets of small wetlands interspersed. The upland portion of the land was historically formed by a lateral moraine, or what is also referred to as an esker. This preserve's ridge is one of the highest elevations in all of Ingham County.

**19. Forest Grove (White M-78) Preserve | 2245 Saginaw Highway**

- Area: 20.4 acres
- Year Acquired: 2011
- Purchase Price: \$425,000
- Description: The Forest Grove Preserve is just over 20 acres of forested wetland. The land was historically not logged, so many of the trees are over 100 years old. This preserve has a unique tulip poplar stand, which glows a golden yellow in the fall time. This preserve has a diverse wetland bordering Newman Road with species such as swamp rose, vervain, and common boneset.

## **20. Tank Wetland Preserve**

- Location: near Carlton and Lake Drive
- Area: 2.51 acres
- Year Acquired: 2016
- Purchase Price: Donation
- Description: The Tank Wetland Preserve is 2.25 acres comprised of two natural communities which include a scrub-shrub wetland and an emergent wetland. The land was historically donated to the Land Preservation Program by the Edward Felton Tank Revocable Trust. In conjunction with nearby preserves (Lake Lansing South & Kuzma), this preserve acts as a vital wetland buffer to Lake Lansing and is recognized in the National Wetland Inventory.

## **21. Tihart Preserve (Linn Family)**

- Location: Tihart Rd. between Cornell and Van Atta Road
- Area: 90 acres
- Year Acquired: 2018
- Purchase Price: \$600,000
- Description: The Tihart (Linn) Preserve is 133.5 acres of four natural communities which include rolling uplands, emergent wetlands, old growth woodlots, and abandoned farm fields. The land was historically a mint and soybean farm that was part of the Van Atta homestead. Donated in part by the Linn family, it is currently undergoing plans for a wetland restoration, along with the planting of diverse native species. It provides a valuable ecological corridor that nearly connects with nearby preserves, Davis-Foster and Tihart-Cornell Wetland. A pair of red-tailed hawks can be seen hunting the preserve, often perching on nearby power lines.

## **22. Mandenberg Woods | 2265 Hamilton Road**

- Area: 4 acres
- Year Acquired: 2018
- Purchase Price: \$63,000
- The Mandenberg Woods Preserve is just over 4 acres of primarily emergent wetland with pockets of forested wetland and upland forest. The land was historically purchased to provide a storm water buffer to the Red Cedar River that runs along the preserve's southwestern border. This preserve is near several residential areas so it provides an opportunity to engage with nature close to home.

## **23. Ponderosa | 3700 Ponderosa Drive**

- 92 acres
- Purchase Price: \$485,100 (because we received a \$514,900 MNRTF grant) – Total land value was 1.2 million
- Year Acquired: 2018
- Description: The Ponderosa Preserve is 97.2 acres of four natural communities which include wetland field/scrub, forested wetland, upland forest, and scrub-shrub uplands. The land was historically part of a significantly larger wetland but with recent developments the wetland areas became fragmented and only a few remain part of the 100 year floodplain. This preserve hosts frequent wildlife sightings, with a known pair of Barred Owls that often call along the Northern edge of the preserve. Visit these trails and listen for the owl's familiar, *Who-cooks-for-you?*

#### **24. Nemoke Preserve**

- 12 acres
- Year Acquired: 2018
- Purchase price: \$3,547
- Description: The Nemoke Preserve is 14 acres of mainly comprised of emergent wetland along with a small upland forest. The upland forest portion of this land was historically not logged so there are several large, mature oak trees. This preserve has some wonderful wetland plants such as plants such as sensitive fern, and vervain. Located nearby the Nemoke Apartments, they provide a natural scene for residents to take in.

## **Description of Stewardship and Management Plans**

### **Meridian Township Land Preservation Program: Master Stewardship Plan**

This plan is an outline of stewardship priorities and goals for Meridian Township's green space. Land management practices for each park and preserve will follow this outline as well as Meridian's Management Plan for Invasive Species. This Master Stewardship Plan will act as a guideline for the creation of individual management objectives at each park and preserve; objectives will differ depending on needs, location, and resources

### **Stewardship objectives for both parks and land preserves:**

- Implementing land management on an ecosystem level to address the overall environmental health of the Township.
- Management of priority areas will improve ecosystem health, community health (physical & mental), as well as environmental outreach and education.

### **Stewardship priorities that management goals will be based upon Invasive Species Management:**

Management will be applied according to the Invasive Species Adaptive Management Framework (fig. 1) following Integrative Pest Management (IPM) methods.

**Assess site priorities:** Priority management areas will have established native communities, increasing the likelihood that the area could be restored. Identify and map sites that have the potential to be more resilient once invasives are removed. Inventory both native and invasive species in each area to track success of management and ecosystem resilience

**Design management plan:** Species focus and management methods will be dependent on seasonal changes as well as existing site conditions which will be assessed first.  
Herbaceous invasive plant species:  
Season of management: spring through fall  
Management techniques: mechanical removal and chemical treatment (foliar application, stem injections)  
Chemical management will be used only in areas of dense invasive species, to reduce possible damage to non-target species woody invasive plant species.  
Season of management: Summer through winter

- Management techniques: mechanical removal and chemical treatment (cut-stump, basal, & foliar treatments).
- Contractual removal & management: Identify sites that would be a good candidate for contracted invasive removal and/or prescribed burns to control populations of large areas of invasive stands that have the potential to be restored, but require more equipment and resources.
- Public education & volunteer stewardship: invasive species outreach will give community members, and volunteers the tools they need to properly identify, remove, and/or monitor invasive species in their local natural areas
  - Educational materials
  - Training opportunities & workshops
  - Stewardship workdays

**Implement plan:** implement management plans in all priority areas first and broaden efforts to include all Township properties. Develop individual management plans for each area based on the natural communities present, funding, public interest, and ecosystem resilience.

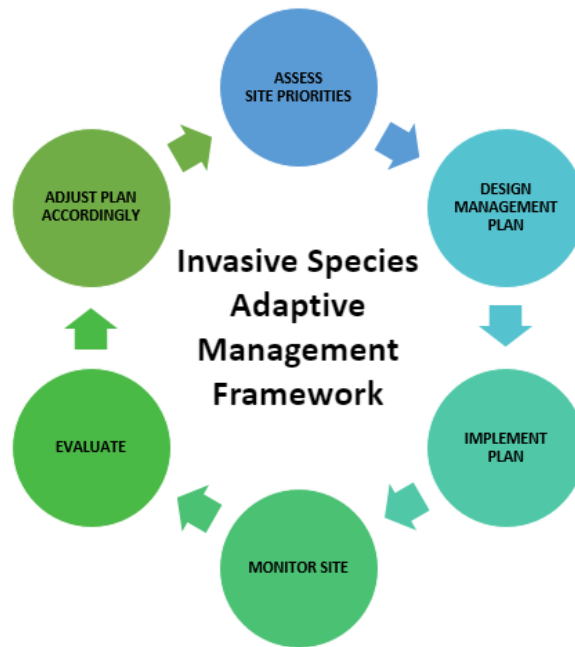
**Mapping & monitoring:**

- Invasive management areas will be mapped utilizing GPS/ArcGIS for record keeping, which will aid in efficient and sound management as part of IPM practices.
- Records of management techniques & chemical information will be kept alongside maps for future evaluation.
- Volunteers opportunities for species inventory at each site will aid in monitoring the success of management
- Chemical application rates, and type of chemical will be analyzed for success and adjusted on an annual basis

**Evaluation & adjustment of plans:** all management plans, & techniques will be evaluated on an annual basis to ensure best management practices are being implemented for each individual area. Changes will be made where necessary and may depend on numerous factors.

**Education & outreach:** Implement educational signage in parks & preserves, host community training workshops, & engage the community through volunteer stewardship.

Meridian Conservation Corps Invasive Species Strike Team will be a vehicle in growing community involvement, outreach, and educational efforts.



**Fig. 1: Model outlined in the Invasive Species Management Plan to guide efficient management of parks and preserves**

### **Establishing Native Communities**

- As invasive species are removed from targeted areas, it is important to monitor regrowth of native species and reseed areas that may need extra support
- Plant native seed bank gardens in designated parks and use the seed to replant areas within land preserves ( i.e. Davis-Foster Preserve, Tihart Preserve)
- Collect seeds annually from Township properties to enhance local genetic diversity
- Through the Meridian Conservation Corps', Planting A Native Meridian program, residents learn about native species identification, seed collection and preservation, establishing native species in parks/preserves, and growing native species in their own yards
- Expand educational signage about native species within parks and land preserves, and the ecosystem services they provide
- Continue to host educational workshops, trainings, workdays and presentations on the environmental benefits of planting native species

### **Water Quality Improvement**

- Invest time, resources, and educational efforts into wetlands, lakes, streams and rivers within the Township's Red Cedar watershed.
- Continue to expand current Wetland Education Campaign; a collaboration between Township departments as well as the Environmental Commission, Land Preservation Advisory Board, and Township Board
- Identify land use activities that are both adversely affecting and benefitting these areas (stormwater runoff, erosion, flooding, flood mitigation, wetland restoration)
- Mitigate adverse activities while enhancing watershed areas

- Coordinate water quality testing, macroinvertebrate sampling, river/wetland cleanups through the Meridian Conservation Corps
- Create community pledges focused on improving water quality as a home or business owner

I pledge to (examples):

- “Reduce nutrient pollution by choosing to not apply fertilizer to my lawn this year.”
- “Reduce runoff and sediment pollution by planting a rain garden in my yard.”
- Annual septic system inspection
- Use phosphate free soaps and detergents for car/clothes washing
- Buffer riparian areas by removing invasives, and supporting existing native communities through plantings.

## **2. Deer Management**

- Continue to support and grow the deer management program through annual assessment and evaluation of the program.
- Work with MSU and the DNR to survey the deer population to make better informed management decisions.
- Monitor areas for deer damage and target as priority areas
- Use for experimentation and monitoring for deer enclosures, caging of native plants, prescribed burns, and hunter pressure
- Continue to expand education & outreach for deer management in the Township
- Educational materials for deer resistant gardens
- Promote deer deterrents and educate on attractants for residents backyards

## **3. Community Involvement and Engagement**

- Devote resources to increase community involvement in order to grow awareness of volunteer opportunities involving the care and conservation of Meridian Township’s parks and land preserves
- Use the Meridian Conservation Corps (MCC) as a vehicle to gather citizen’s knowledge, skills and expertise in one place.
- See MCC program outline for details and volunteer opportunities
- Increase contact and outreach with local HOA’s and neighborhoods
- Involve board members (Park Commission and LPAB) and park staff in neighborhood picnics, and meetings
- Continue to aid in the expansion of the Green Neighborhood Network, a network which connects communities within the Township and identifies lead contacts for green news, MCC events, and local conservation efforts
- Develop signage and outreach to educate park/preserve users on various environmental topics:
  - Invasive species identification, removal and boot brushes
  - Benefits of native plant communities
  - Deer management
  - Importance of water quality and aquatic ecosystems
  - Yard waste dumping

## Description of Management Activities

### Invasive Species Removal and Monitoring

The invasive species management plan is outlined in this plan. Management activities include mechanical removal of herbaceous species throughout the spring, summer and fall. Chemical treatments are conducted throughout the summer and fall months by licensed staff and trained volunteers (this includes foliar, basal, and cut-stump treatment).

Priority species include: oriental bittersweet, common/glossy buckthorn, phragmites, Japanese knotweed, reed canary grass, Japanese hedge parsley, field thistle, spotted knapweed, autumn olive, and honeysuckle.

Properties currently undergoing active invasive species management include: Nancy Moore Park, Harris Nature Center, Eastgate Park, Legg Park, Hartrick Park, Hillbrook Park, Ted Black Woods, Brattin Woods Park, Lake Lansing North Preserve, Davis-Foster Preserve, Foster-Crouse Preserve, Towar Woods Preserve, Lake Lansing South Preserve, Central Meridian Uplands, Sower Woods Preserve, Tihart-Cornell Wetland Preserve, Southwest Meridian Uplands & Serafine Preserve, Red Cedar Glen Preserve, Forest Grove Preserve, North Ridge Preserve, Tihart Preserve, Ponderosa Preserve, & Mandenberg Woods Preserve.

### Establishment & Restoration of Native Plant Communities

As priority invasive species are removed, native plant communities will re-establish themselves naturally in areas where diversity and resilience is high. Township properties such as Red Cedar Glen Preserve, & Ted Black Woods Park have a historic seedbank that is extremely diverse. Areas like these will thrive with the removal of invasive species. Other areas such as Tihart Preserve have been farmed for many years, and need more intentional plantings of native seed and transplants. Intentional plantings are done using native stock from local nurseries (Wildtype, Designs By Nature), but the preferred method is collect seed from local natural areas to spread throughout the Township, which will enhance the local genetic diversity instead of diluting it further. These properties are mapped, inventoried and monitored to evaluate species success, planting techniques, soil quality, resilience, and long-term management.

Properties currently undergoing active establishment or restoration of native plant communities include: Nancy Moore Park, Sower Woods Preserve, Lake Lansing North Preserve, Davis-Foster Preserve, Red Cedar Glen Preserve, Serafine & Southwest Uplands Preserve, Legg Park, Lake Lansing South Preserve, Harris Nature Center, Hartrick Park, Towar Woods Preserve, Brattin Woods Park, Tihart Preserve, & Ponderosa Preserve

### Species Inventory

Species inventory is an important management tool to prioritize areas of high importance and ecological value that need management now. Inventories also guide management decisions, funding and resource allocation. Currently all properties are under inventory at different levels of detail. Inventory is taken during field visits (Land Stewardship



Coordinator, Stewardship Intern), during volunteer events, and through individual volunteers. Species lists are ever changing, as species are added, and include insects, fungi, plants, and wildlife.

### **Oak Management**

Due to the diverse array of organisms that oaks support, they have been identified as a priority species in the Township. Certain preserves and parks are being managed to support oaks species. Management activities include: prescribed fire, tree caging & monitoring, planting oak seeds and transplants, forest understory management to promote more sunlight. We have been working with the MSU Forestry Department and local ecologists to develop our plan for the restoration of oak systems.

Oak management is currently happening at the following Township properties: Davis-Foster Preserve, Red Cedar Glen Preserve, & Ponderosa Preserve

### **Prescribed Fire**

Prescribed fire is used for invasive species management, restoration of oak species and other fire dependent species, and nutrient cycling.

It is currently used at the following Township properties: Davis-Foster Preserve, & Lake Lansing North Preserve. Future properties for prescribed fire management: Tihart Preserve, Ted Black Woods, Legg Park, and Red Cedar Glen Preserve.



Davis-Foster Land Preserve prescribed burn



## **Deer Management**

The Meridian Township Deer Management Program is in its 11<sup>th</sup> year and is an integral part of conserving native communities in our natural areas, as well as keeping the local deer herd as healthy as possible. The program runs from October 1<sup>st</sup> to January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year and is archery hunting only. It is a community program made up of 70 resident volunteers. Management takes place at 42 properties.



## Description of Volunteer Activities

1. All volunteer activities since 2020 have been orchestrated through the Township’s program, the Meridian Conservation Corps (MCC). This organization has been formed around the idea that volunteer stewards will be the ones to turn the tide of conservation in the Township for future generations. With the volume of natural area and green space to enact stewardship upon, volunteers are essential to meeting the goals of the Master Stewardship Plan.
2. Various activities are planned and completed through the MCC, but community stewardship opportunities are also created through wants and needs of community members and local groups. The following occur on an annual, to monthly, to bi-weekly basis:
  - Invasive Species Strike Team: about 60% of the work completed through community stewardship is invasive species removal at priority sites throughout Township parks and preserves. The MCC’s, Invasive Species Strike Team, is a corps group of volunteers that have undergone training and hands on field identification and removal in order to create a larger network of invasive species management. New volunteers are continually recruited and trained in as interest arises.
  - Removal of invasive species happens all year long and is often an activity at the bi-weekly Stewardship Saturdays, which are every other Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
  - Cleanup Crew: litter and improper disposal of items in parks and preserves is a huge source of pollution in the Township. In an effort to focus on wetland education and stewardship, wetland cleanups at local preserves, have been a core element to this stewardship. Efforts are also based on focus of residential complaints received, often certain areas along major roadways in the Township.

- **Forest Watch:** this program offers a more passive form of volunteer stewardship aimed toward those community members who enjoy using the trails, and can log their daily observations to notify us of trail maintenance, local species inventory, as well as daily happenings at the parks and preserves. Volunteers can fill out a form for data collection through an application on their phone or computer.
- **Planting a Native Meridian:** this program focuses on the establishment of native plant populations throughout the Township. Volunteers are given the opportunity to learn about the benefits of native species and the effect that invasive species have on the sharp decline of these populations. In the spring seeds and transplants are intentionally planted at various parks and preserves. This process educates the community on native plant identification, as well as growing conditions and the restoration of historic ecosystems. In the late-summer/fall season gears are shifted toward seed collection, processing and dispersal. This is a wonderful opportunity for volunteers to understand the full extent of these natural processes. This program will continue to expand to include guides on planting native species in their backyard, as well as growing seed collected from the Township. The goal is to increase the square footage of native plants in the Township as well as the importance of these species and their recovery in our natural areas.
- **Vernal Pool Patrol:** Meridian Township is a proud partner of the Vernal Pool Project, a statewide program focused on the inventory and data collection of vernal pools throughout Michigan. This information is important in the future of vernal pool management as well as future protections afforded to these small wetlands. Participants go through rigorous training on how to identify, monitor, and care for vernal pools. Each volunteer can choose areas to monitor in the Township through the online mapping application. Once they have chosen their sites, they head out in the field three times a year to collect data and determine the health and status of the pool.

## **N. Natural Resource Inventory**

### **Existing Land Use Description**

Based on information from the 2016 Meridian Township Master Plan, Meridian Township covers approximately 20,000 acres, nearly 32 square miles. Land use in Meridian Township has reached new levels of developed land as a result of residential and commercial growth over the past decade. Over 85% of the Township has been developed or improved. With Township preservation efforts, infill development is a viable option to pursue in the future. Single-Family Residential development utilizes the most land, at 35.8%, followed by Recreation and Open Space, with 22.8% and Institutional (government, education complexes), at 14.9%. Other prominent developed uses include Road and Railroad Right-of-Ways and Multi-Family Residential. Only 11% of the 2,281 acres of potentially developable land is used for agriculture; the remaining area is left natural or unimproved.

Since 2002, the Township has used nearly 39% of its total developable land. Institutional land uses have grown the most significantly, but Multi-Family Residential land uses have increased in scope in the last 13 years. A land use category that was not present in 2002 and now covers 95 acres in the Township is mixed use. Mixed use, while still a low

percentage of the total land use coverage, has likely emerged due to efforts from the Township to encourage creatively combining compatible land uses, such as Smart Growth principles that influence the Township’s Master Plan and implementation mechanisms like the Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District.

Meridian Township currently owns and maintains 933 acres of parks and natural areas. There are an additional 971.3 acres of quasi-public open space in Meridian Township that is utilized by residents for recreational use (School sites: 540 acres; and Ingham County parks: 431 acres). The Meridian Township Land Use Map (Appendix A) illustrates the current land use in Meridian Township. The Township has also acquired 968-acres of land through the Land Preservation Millage program. These lands are reserved for preservation purposes.

## Demographic Information

Source: 2020 U.S. Census Bureau Survey

### Population and Household Size

The 2020 population of Meridian Township was 43,916. The Township population has seen an 11% growth in the last decade.

The following household breakdown is from the 2020 Census Survey data (Appendix F).

<b>Total households</b>	<b>18,210</b>
Persons per household	2.33

### Age and Gender Demographics

The following age and gender breakdown is from the 2020 Census Survey data (Appendix F).

- Ages under 5 = 5.5%
- Ages 5 - 19 = 21.3%
- Ages 65 years and over = 16.5%

## Race

The following race breakdown is from the 2020 Census Survey data (Appendix F).

Race	
White	(74.4%)
Black or African-American	(4.5%)
American Indian and Alaskan Native, alone	(0.4%)
Asian alone	(15.5%)
Two or More Races	(4.3%)
Hispanic or Latino	(4.3%)

## Education

High school graduate or higher, percentage of persons age 25 years+ = 96.6%  
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+ =67.1%

## Income

The majority of Meridian Township residents enjoy a relatively high standard of living. The median household income is \$72,463. However, there are 12.1% of families who are living below the poverty level.

## Persons with Disabilities Census Data

The survey estimates that in 2020, 6% of Meridian Township residents under the age of 65 years were disabled. The 2020 census does not have data for the sixty-five and older age group, but in 2010 the percentage of residents 65 and older who are disabled was 63.6%.

## Potential Conservation Areas Assessment

Meridian Township was actively involved in the recent Potential Conservation Areas Assessment that was developed by Tri-County Regional Planning. This report

identifies and ranks Potential Conservation Areas (PCA's) remaining in Eaton, Ingham, and Clinton Counties. Potential Conservation Areas are defined as places on the landscape dominated by native vegetation that have various levels of potential for harboring high quality natural areas and unique natural features. In addition, these areas may provide critical ecological services such as maintaining water quality and quantity, soil development and stabilization, pollination of cropland, wildlife travel corridors, stopover sites for migratory birds, sources of genetic diversity, and floodwater retention. ("Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties... Potential Conservation Areas", John Paskus, Senior Conservation Scientist, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, 2008). (See Appendix A)

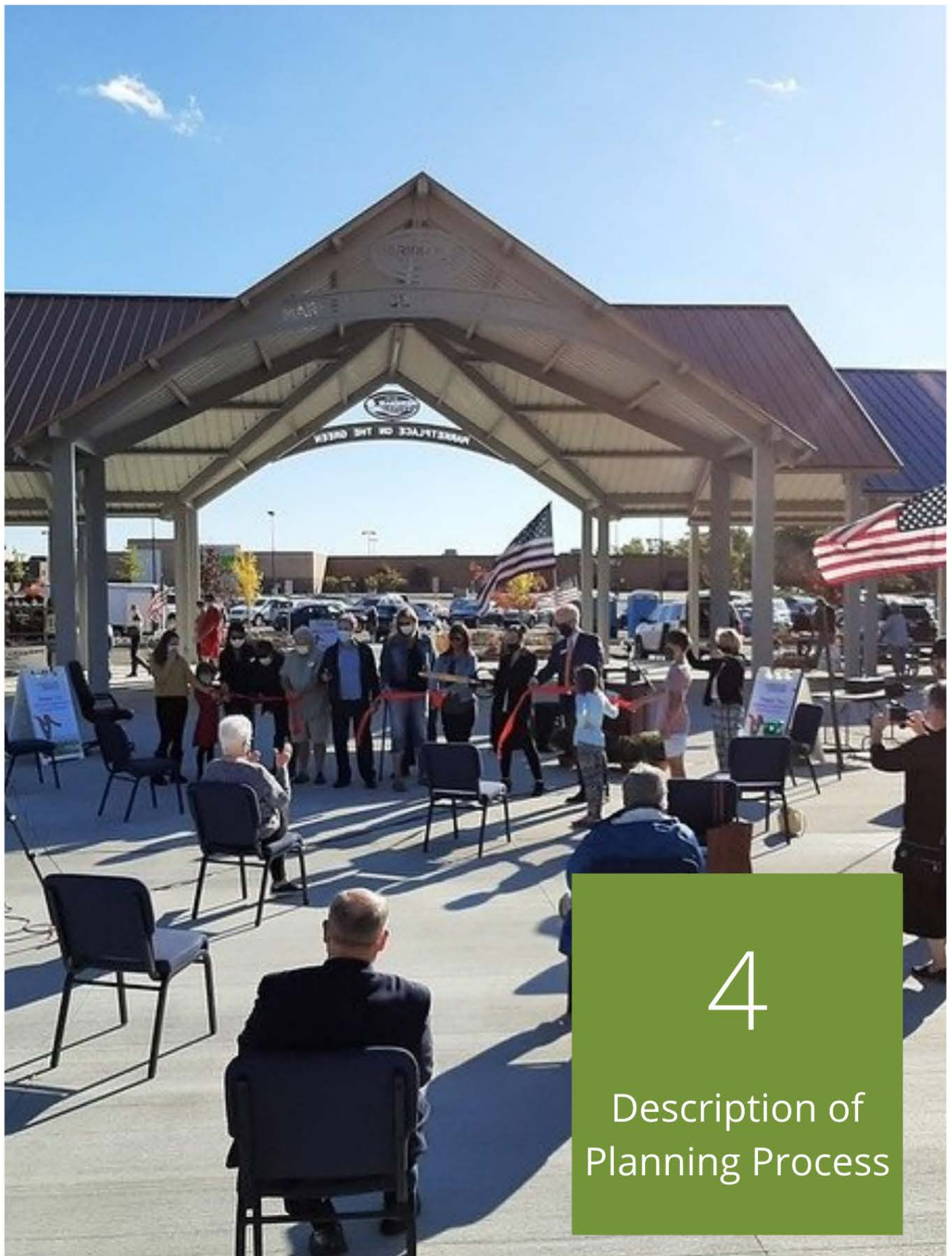
### **Greenspace Plan**

The private consulting firm, Greenway Collaborative, Inc., prepared The Meridian Township Greenspace Plan in May 2004. The plan grew out of Township residents' wishes to protect the area's natural resources while accommodating new development. There is a desire that growth come not at the expense of water quality, natural systems, and wildlife, rather, that new development be used as a tool to permanently protect key natural and cultural resources and enhance the Township's sense of place.

The plan outlines ways in which growth and development in the Township can continue to occur while simultaneously protecting the natural systems and community character of the Township. The Greenspace Plan is multi-faceted, reflecting the input of the citizens of Meridian Township. It is structured to preserve and enhance the community character by establishing a green space system that incorporates:

- Wildlife corridors that link existing natural preserves
- Scenic roadways that preserve views of natural areas
- Key waterways, adjacent wetlands and upland buffers
- Walking and biking routes that link parks, schools and other community resources
- Agricultural lands

According to the Greenspace Plan, green-spaces and pathways must remain interconnected in order to be functional to both people and wildlife. This plan identifies key areas in Meridian Township to preserve and to maintain the health of the entire system. The vision of the plan is to "provide a network of green spaces and non-motorized linkages that will protect and connect valued natural and cultural resources, provide linkages to adjacent communities, and improve the quality of life for Township residents." The entire Greenspace plan can be viewed on the township website at [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us). (See Appendix A)



4

Description of  
Planning Process





# Description of Planning Process

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Planning Area Description  
Description of the Potential Grant Applicant  
Members of the Steering Committee  
Plan Funding

## **4. Description of the Planning Process**

### **A. Planning Area Description**

The 2022-2026 Parks and Recreation Master Plan focuses on the recreational needs and natural resource conservation opportunities within Meridian Township as a sole entity. There are many examples of our Parks and Recreation Department sharing resources with surrounding communities and participating in regional planning efforts, but the primary focus of this document is Meridian Township.

### **B. Description of the Potential Grant Applicant**

Meridian Charter Township is a local unit of government serving 43,000 residents that places a priority on quality of life and environmental practices. Meridian Township is also a very “family friendly” community with high-quality school districts and recreation programming for persons of all ages and abilities. Special funding is available through millages that support parks, pathways, seniors, land preservation, and recreation. In order to leverage our local funds for community improvements, the Township places a high priority on obtaining grant funding, engaging volunteer support and working cooperatively with neighboring communities to expand funding and services.

Three grant programs administered by Grants Management, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and the Passport Grant Program all require communities to prepare five-year community recreation and natural resource conservation plans (community plans) as part of the eligibility requirements for those programs.

### **C. Members of the Steering Committee**

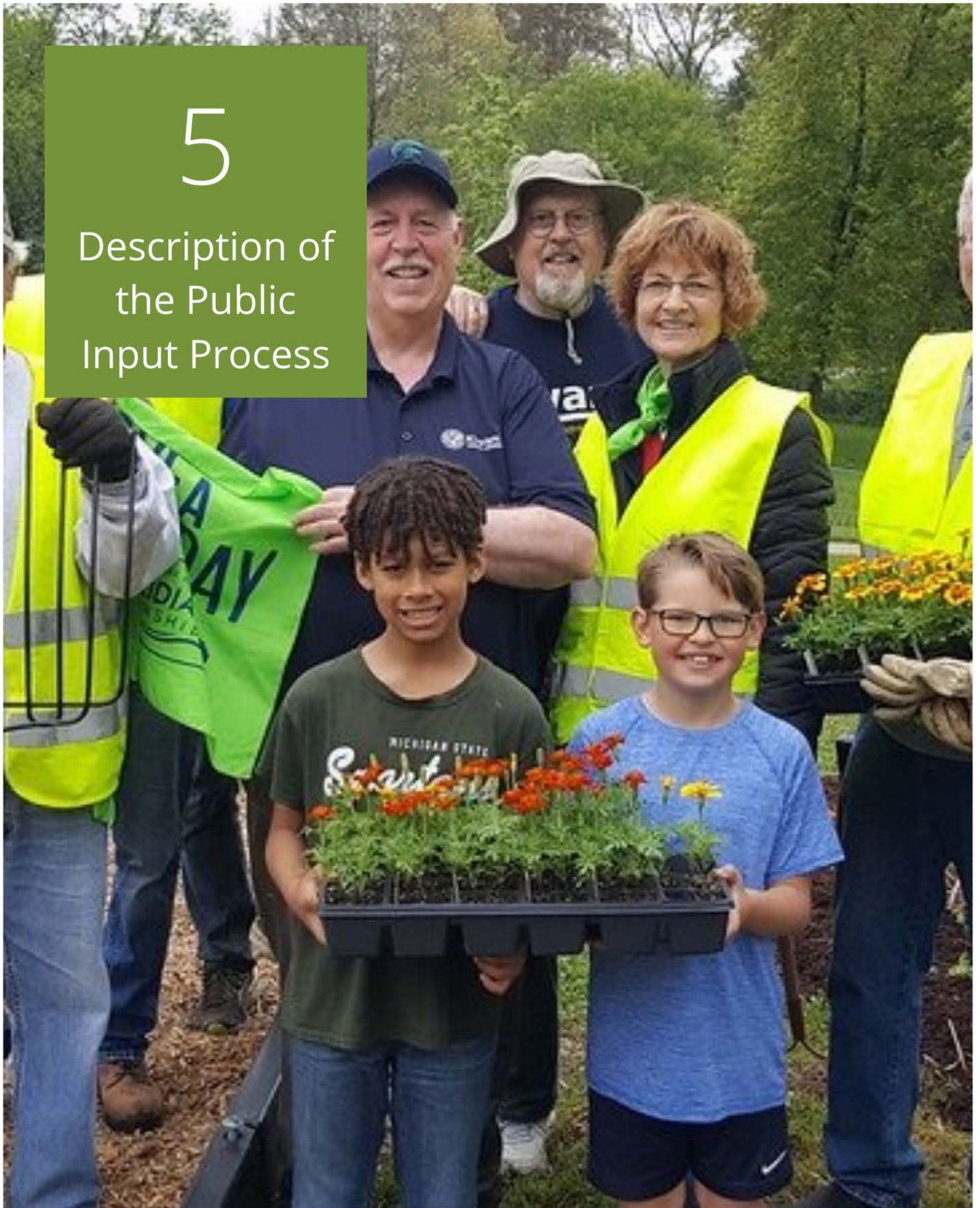
The 2022-2027 Parks and Recreation Master Plan was updated in-house by professional staff of the Parks and Recreation Department. Staff also conducted the public survey, public input meetings, and assisted the Township with developing goals for the plan. Input was solicited from the Park Commission, elected and appointed officials, general public, stakeholders/park users, local schools, and other township staff.

### **D. Plan Funding**

Meridian Charter Township did not receive any financial or technical assistance grants to prepare the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

# 5

## Description of the Public Input Process





## Description of the Public Input Process

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Methods Used to Solicit Public Input  
2021 Cobalt Resident Survey  
Parks and Recreation Master Plan Survey  
Meridian Township Master Plan - 2017  
Meridian Township Board Goals for 2022  
Meridian Township Bicycle/Pedestrian Pathway Master Plan  
Public Meeting Notices

# PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN SURVEY



Share your input to help shape the future of  
parks and recreation in your community!



Scan here to take  
the survey online!



Survey Deadline: November 16  
[meridian.mi.us](http://meridian.mi.us)  
[parks@meridian.mi.us](mailto:parks@meridian.mi.us)  
517.853.4600

## 5. Description of the Public Input Process

### A. Methods Used to Solicit Public Input

Creating a venue for dialogue and enlisting feedback from the public, community leaders and staff are the most valuable element of this planning process. The process not only allowed residents to voice their opinion, it also served as a promotional tool to remind others of the parks and recreation benefits and opportunities available in their community. Input into this plan was obtained through the following methods:

1. Citizen Survey (Cobalt Community Research) Township-wide Statistically valid Community Survey, August, 2021
2. Online Survey Monkey Parks and Recreation Survey, November 4-November 16, 2021
3. Universal Access Advisory Board Meeting, September, 2021
4. In-person Engagement at Farmers Market, October, 2021
5. Meeting with Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Commission and Staff, November, 2021
6. Public Hearing, December 14, 2021

### B. 2021 Cobalt Resident Survey

In 2021, Cobalt Community Research conducted a Resident Survey and Priority Assessment in Meridian Township. The Community Survey was developed by Cobalt to provide a statistically valid survey of resident opinions about community services provided by local government. The survey results are intended to be used by staff, elected officials and other stakeholders for community planning and resource allocation, program improvement and policy making.

The Community Survey focuses on a series of community characteristics and local government services, as well as issues of public trust. Resident behaviors related to civic engagement in the community also were measured in the survey.

- The Township outperforms the Cobalt benchmarks with an overall satisfaction score of 78
- Residents liked Township safety, parks, and public schools

- Would like more music, art, and food events
- Would like more bike friendly areas, biking trails, more green areas, pocket parks, and a community pool.

Recreational opportunities in Meridian Township were rated positively as were services related to parks and recreation. Township parks and recreation programs or classes were rated higher than the benchmark. Parks and recreation ratings have stayed constant over time. Resident use of Meridian Township parks and recreation facilities tells its own story about the attractiveness and accessibility of those services. Recreation program use in Meridian Township was higher than use in comparison jurisdictions. There were more than 100 jurisdictions included in the benchmark comparison. For additional information on the 2021 Citizen Survey, please refer to the township website [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us).

The assessment was mailed to a random sample of 1,500 registered voters in Meridian Township to participate in the survey via mail or online. Of the random sample, 386 (25%) residents completed the survey.

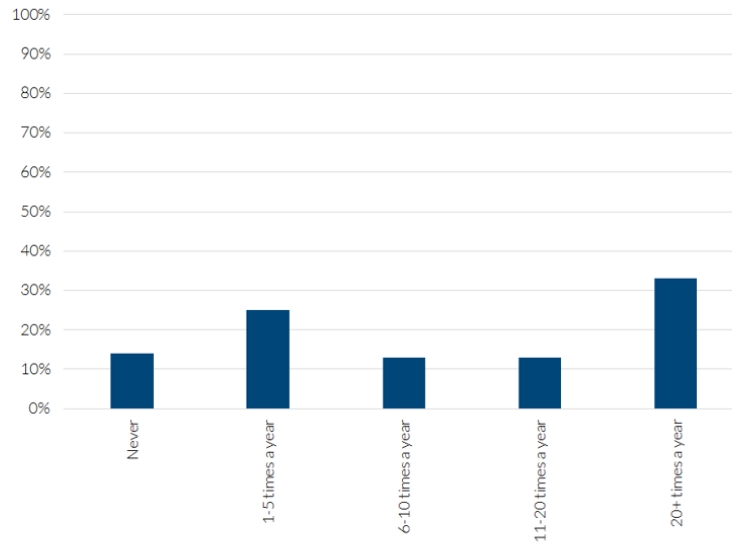
According to the 2021 Meridian Township Residential Engagement and Priority Assessment results, Meridian Township ranks 10 points above the national, state, and regional averages for community satisfaction.

The survey was issued to concentrate beyond indications of satisfaction and highlight specific areas of improvement for Township leadership to review and make plans to address in the future. Survey results show residents' opinions regarding Township services, community image, public works, police services, and transportation infrastructure.

The results report shows a need for "improved and expanded walking and cycling infrastructure", the desire for "more music, art and food events" and "more information on community events and Township projects."

Top themes of improvements residents' believe the Township should prioritize include diversity in downtown areas and entertainment options, improved road conditions with expanded bike lanes, as well as sidewalks on both sides of the street. When asked about the continuation of the Township's Deer Management Program, 80% of respondents supported it. Residents rank Meridian high as a safe place to bike and walk, an enjoyable place for children and overall community image.

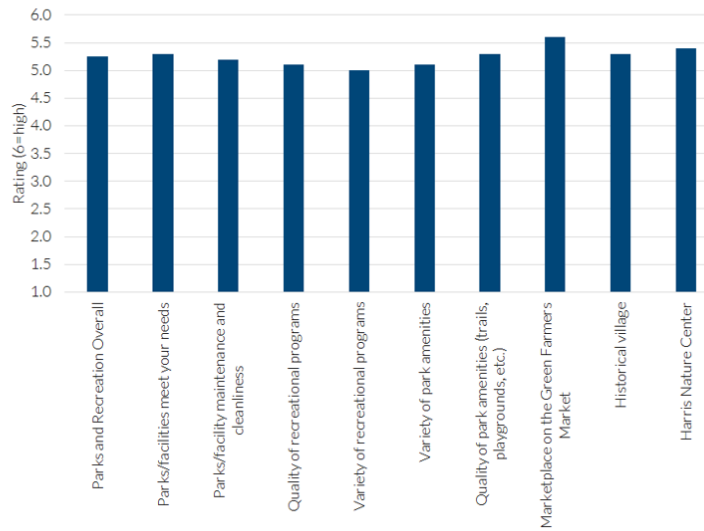
## How many times have you use the parks and pathways?



CobaltCommunityResearch.org

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## Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs



CobaltCommunityResearch.org

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## Word Cloud:

### What types of cultural events would you like to see in our community?

Top Themes:

1. **Music:** The community would like to see more music festivals. They would also like to see more diversity.
2. **Art:** People would like more art festivals and to see murals and sculptures added to the downtown area.
3. **Food:** People are looking for more dining options such food trucks.



Word Cloud:

What do you like most about living in Meridian Township?

Top Themes:

1. **Safe:** People feel the community is safe for everyone with low crime rates and an active police force.
2. **Parks:** The community is looking for safer walking paths and redevelopment of downtown areas to accommodate people with disabilities for better access to parks and green areas.
3. **School:** People enjoy living near Michigan State University, along with easy access to safe, affordable schools.



CobaltCommunityResearch.org

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*Note: See full list of comments for context*

## C. Parks and Recreation Master Plan Survey (Survey Monkey)

The online survey was promoted through a press release sent to the newspapers and through social media posts. The survey was also linked on the township website and notices were sent directly via email to more than 30,000 individual stakeholders.

**A summary of key findings is noted below:**

- ❖ The top parks, based on frequency of visits include: Marketplace on the Green (Farmers’ Market)

and Central Park were the most visited parks (including Nancy Moore Park, Meridian Historical Village and Farmers' Market). Harris Nature Center is second.

- ❖ 70-90% of respondents were satisfied with park maintenance, with the most needs identified for parking, restrooms, and trail signage; consistent with 2016 input.
- ❖ 80% of survey responses said their family had visited the Farmers' Market within the past year.
- ❖ Residents overwhelmingly enjoy walking and hiking (88%). Other top activities (more than 40%) include biking, use of playgrounds, nature observation, visiting the Farmers' Market and picnicking.
- ❖ Respondents used the website and Google as their primary source of information for events, programs, and activities.
- ❖ Most responses listed customer service as good or excellent.
- ❖ Top picks for potential park projects include paved pathways, restroom buildings, trail signage, pickleball courts, splashpad and a skatepark.

## **D. Meridian Township Master Plan - 2017**

The Charter Township of Meridian 2017 Master Plan represents the vision, values, goals, and objectives for the future of the Township. The Master Plan is for Meridian residents, future residents, neighboring communities, schools, and developers. This Plan will help guide policy-making decisions of elected officials and boards and commissions. The Master Plan is focused on preserving and enhancing the best characteristics of the Township while making the most of opportunities that come with new development. The Master Plan can be viewed by visiting [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us).

The Planning Commission established a detailed set of Goals, Objectives, and Strategies to guide the formulation of specific policy decisions. The Planning Commission presents the following set of specific goals that are derived from the statements of community values (no priority is implied): Goal 1: Preserve and strengthen residential neighborhoods. Goal 2: Preserve open space and natural areas. Goal 3: Enhance the viability of Township businesses. Goal 4: Maintain and expand a diverse park system. Goal 5: Maintain essential public services. Goal 6: Provide and support an efficient, safe, and environmentally sensitive multi-modal transportation network. Goal 7: Promote efficient and sustainable growth practices.

## **E. Meridian Township Board Goals for 2022**

Each year the Township Board reviews its goals and ends statements which provide guidance and direction to township operations, philosophy and budget. Many of the board's goals are related to parks, environment and recreation. Goals may be viewed by visiting [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us).

## **F. Meridian Township Bicycle/Pedestrian Pathway Master Plan**

The Bicycle/Pedestrian Pathway Master Plan was developed in 1974 in an effort to create non-motorized transportation links throughout the township. The plan indicates seven-foot wide paths and expanded shoulders on the roadway that serve as bicycle lanes. The pathways are supported by a millage that has been renewed several times since 1974 (0.3333 mills renewed in 2016 through 2028), and provides funds to develop and maintain pathways. Over 75 miles of paved pathway have been developed to date. The bicycle/pedestrian pathway master plan may be viewed at [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us).

## **G. Public Meeting Notices**

### **1. Community Survey & Notices for Public Input**

The Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Department published a press release to advertise options for public input for the Five-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2022-2026.

The Parks and Recreation Department accepted comments through December 30, 2021 on the draft plan.

Feedback submission options included:

- Saturday, October 23, 2021: Visit the Parks and Recreation table at Marketplace on the Green (1995 Central Park Drive, Okemos) from 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- Survey Monkey (link may be found on Meridian Township website under Parks and Recreation) Survey is open October 22, 2021 – November 16, 2021.
- Any and all comments may also be forwarded to LuAnn Maisner, Director of Parks and Recreation at [maisner@meridian.mi.us](mailto:maisner@meridian.mi.us) or (517) 853-4600 on or before January 20, 2022.

### **2. Notice of Availability of the Plan for Public Review**

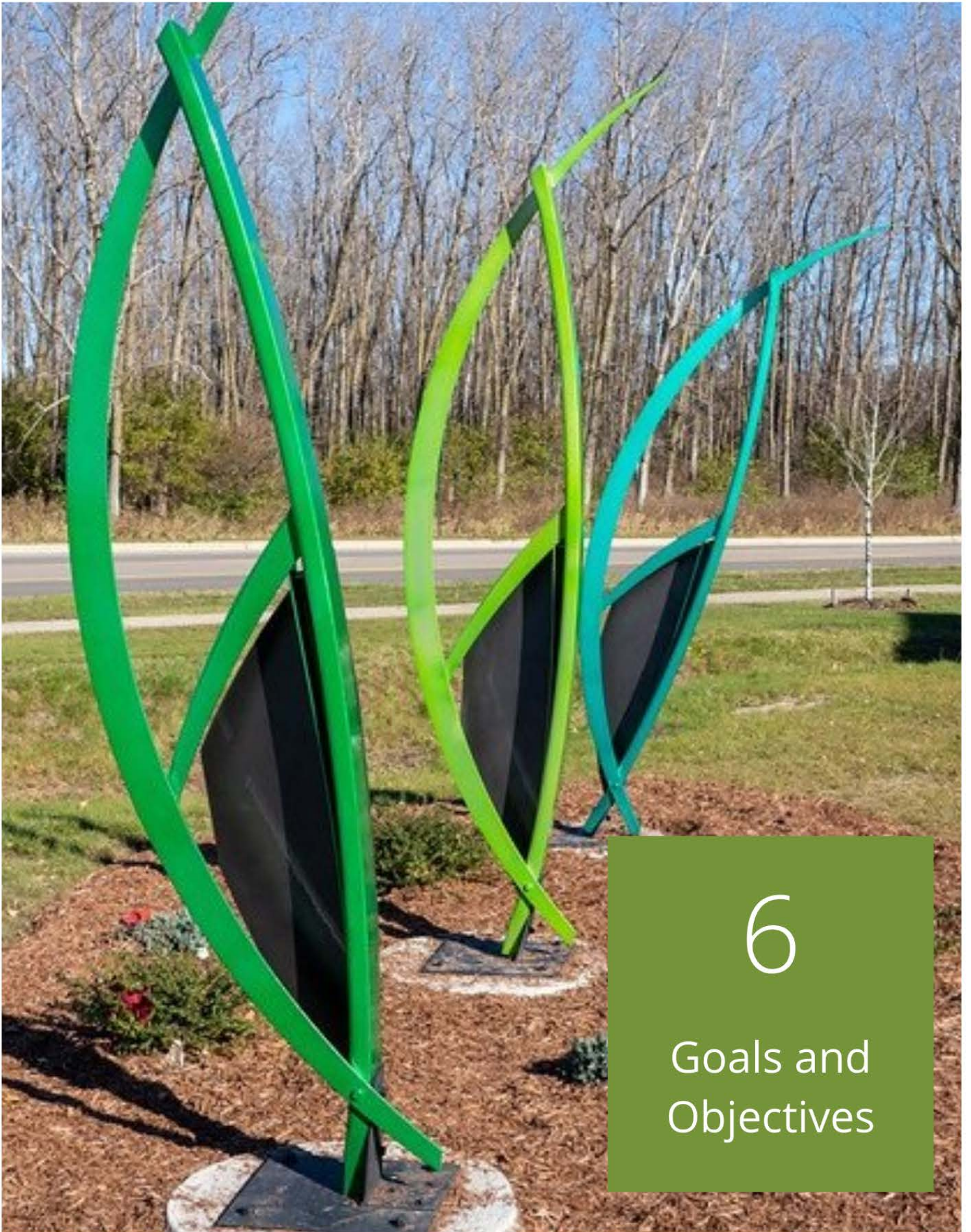
See Appendix

### **3. Notice for Public Hearing and Plan Adoption**

See Appendix K

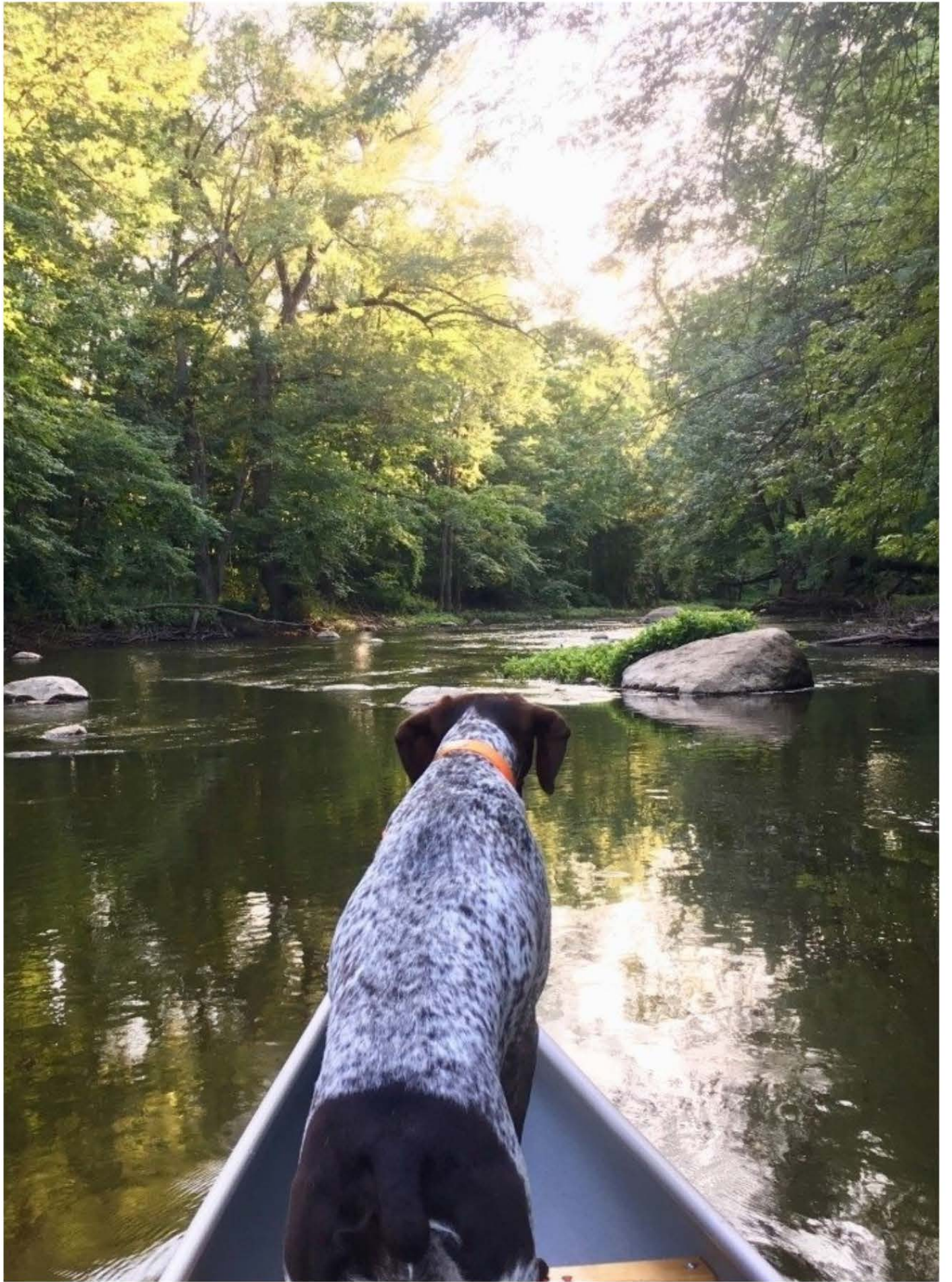
The Meridian Township parks, recreation and open space system exists to serve the needs and desires of the residents of the Township and the Meridian community by providing a full spectrum of recreational opportunities, while enhancing the visual quality of neighborhoods and the Township as a whole. Historically, Meridian Township's parks, recreation and open space system has been looked upon as one of the most important elements in the quality of life for Meridian Township residents.

The Park and Recreation system-wide goals have not changed that significantly from the previous plan. This is because after gathering the public input, staff recognized that even though some issues have changed, the overriding goals and objectives are still relevant and respond to the desires and concerns of residents today.



# 6

## Goals and Objectives



## 6. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### The Master Plan goals are:

**Provide safe, accessible facilities and leisure opportunities for all persons regardless of their physical and socio-economic characteristics. (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion)**

- a. Increase multi-use trails in parks and natural areas.
- b. Improve amenities for universal access in all park facilities including improved signage, more year-round restrooms, and benches along trails and pathways.
- c. Provide scholarship opportunities to help offset program registration costs when needed.
- d. Continue to make necessary program amendments to accommodate special need requirements for universal inclusion.
- e. Provide culturally diverse programs and events that celebrate the make-up of our community.
- f. Continue support of the Friends of Historic Meridian and Nokomis Cultural Heritage Center and their work to educate the community on cultural history and, language, and practices.
- f. Continue to provide regular and consistent facility maintenance to deter vandalism and keep park users safe.
- g. Provide regular programming or self-guided recreation opportunities to promote regular and consistent usage by the community.
- h. Continue partnership with Police Department to open and close each park daily providing an obvious presence.

**Continue to focus on Environmental Sustainability, Education and Land Stewardship.**

- a. Practice environmentally friendly maintenance practices in parks and land preserves.
- b. Utilize energy-saving opportunities for new construction and renovation projects.
- c. Promote recycling opportunities in park facilities.



- d. Improve and promote non-motorized transportation connections between parks and neighborhoods.
- e. Monitor and remove invasive species, encourage native plantings and educate the public about ecosystem health.
- f. Monitor and respond to early signs of erosion, disease, and facility deterioration.
- g. Support the continued popularity and growth of the Farmers Market.
- h. Support the continued success and environmental education opportunities provided by the Harris Nature Center operations.
- i. Support the Environmental Commission's "Protect Our Wetlands" initiative including "Build Back the Buffer," education, community outreach, marketing and restoration projects, in an effort to mitigate negative impacts of flooding.

**Plan for the continued availability of financial, physical and personnel resources to support the parks and recreation system.**

- a. Continue seeking partnerships and collaborative opportunities.
- b. Seek grants, sponsorships and donations to best leverage local tax funding.
- c. Based on increased park usage and the addition of new park facilities, evaluate the maintenance division's increased workload versus current staffing level to determine opportunities to employ new best practices and/or opportunities for increased staffing.
- d. Based on survey results requesting more events, arts and music programs, reinstate the Parks and Recreation Specialist position eliminated during the pandemic.
- e. Continue to encourage and utilize citizen volunteers.

**Utilize recreation programs and events as a vehicle to educate and instill positive personal attributes such as ethics, values, citizenship, sportsmanship and leadership.**

- a. Encourage and expand the use of parks for exercise and stress relief regimens for all ages and abilities.
- b. Expand and seek opportunities for collaborations, partnerships and shared services.

- c. Seek grants and sponsorships to support recreation services and events.
- d. Provide healthy outlets for teens and adolescents.
- e. Provide programs and services during a variety of days and times to reach the greatest number of participants.
- f. Provide activities that focus on health, wellness and physical fitness and positive youth development.
- g. Provide recreational activities and programs to meet the diverse needs of the community.
- h. Improve program registration software services, pavilion rental process, and dog park membership systems.

**Communication**

- a. Maintain production of the Prime Meridian Magazine as an effective communication tool.
- b. Develop a marketing plan to be more efficient and effective with various methods of communication.
- c. Utilize various methods of promotion and advertising to effectively reach the broadest segment of the community as possible.



7

Action  
Program



# Action Program

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2022-2027 Capital Improvement Program  
Programs and Services  
Communication  
Quality of Life Initiatives  
Acknowledgements and Final Comments

## 7. Action Program

This section highlights a series of recommended actions that resulted from the process of preparing this Master Plan. The recommended actions are intended to guide the Park Commission and staff when making decisions regarding the priorities for the park and recreation needs of Meridian Township residents, businesses, and visitors for the next five years and beyond.

The action program was developed based upon input gathered from the community survey, public input meetings, township-wide planning efforts, demographic data, land use trends and efforts of adjacent communities. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP), developed by the Park Commission and staff for future park projects, outlines future development projects and their associated costs (Appendix D). Many of the top park or facility additions identified through the process are in alignment with proposed park improvement projects in the CIP.

It is the responsibility of the Department of Parks and Recreation to provide services and programs that meet the needs of residents. The Department must be alert to the population and demographic trends in the Township and adjust accordingly. Meridian Township not only has to be aware of the aging population trend, the large population of college aged residents, but also the active children and families in the community.

### A. 2022-2027 Capital Improvement Program

To meet the recommendations and actions, the Park Commission and the Department of Parks and Recreation have identified a series of capital projects for the next six years. These projects will address the needs identified in this Master Plan. Additional public input is obtained prior to final planning of each project

<u>Year</u>	<u>Project Name</u>	<u>2022</u> <u>Cost</u>	<u>Funding Source</u>
2022	Towner Road Park Playground	\$400,000	MNRTF/Park Millage
2022	Parking Lot repaving/expansion (Central Park South, N. Meridian Rd Park HNC, Marshall)	\$200,000	Park Millage
2022	New Park Signs and site furnishings	\$50,000	Park Millage
2022	Shade Structure at Towner	\$20,000	Park Millage
2022	Floating Islands Purification System	\$18,000	Park Millage

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<b><u>2023</u></b>			
2023	Central Park Pavilion Renovation, Landscaping	\$150,000	Park Millage
2023	Marshall Park Playground Replacement	\$150,000	Park Millage, Grants
2023	Okemos Road Parcel Development	\$400,000	Park Millage, Pathway Millage, Grants
2023	New Park signs	\$20,000	

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<b><u>2024</u></b>			
2024	Ottawa Hills Playground Replacement	\$ 75,000	Park Millage, Grants
2024	New Park Signs	\$20,000	Park Millage
2024	Skate Park	\$500,000	Park Millage, Grants
2024	River Access Areas at Wonch & Ferguson Parks	\$650,000	Park Millage, Grants

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<b><u>2025</u></b>			
2025	Nancy Moore Park Playground	350,000	Park Millage/grant
2025	Nancy Moore Park Pavilion	\$300,000	Park Millage/grant
2025	Nancy Moore Park Loop Trail	<u>\$90,000</u>	Park Millage/grant

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<b><u>2026</u></b>			
2026	Hillbrook Park Restroom Building	\$250,000	Park Millage, Grants
2026	Wonch Park Improvements – Restroom, Streambank, launch, WiFi	\$500,000	Park Millage, Grants
2026	Snell-Towar Recreation Center Improvements	<u>\$185,000</u>	Park Millage, Grants

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<b><u>2027</u></b>			
2027	Central Park Improvements-Splashpad	\$500,000	Park Millage, Grants
2027	Meridian Riverfront Park Trail Improvements	\$1,000,000	Park Millage, Pathway Millage Federal/State Grants

**Additional Considerations**

**a. Trails/Pathways**

A popular item identified during the public input process was the continued development of multi-purpose trails or pathways in and through parks as well as pathways that link the parks together. This will provide non-motorized access to parks and recreation facilities to satisfy the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and joggers, and will facilitate universal access for both transportation and natural resources.

**b. Watertrail/River/Fishing Access:**

Residents identified the need for safe, clear river access for canoe and kayak navigation. The Watertrail in the Appendix plan identifies opportunities for access sites and signage that will provide a safe and enjoyable paddling experience. It is a challenge to maintain a navigable river due to the many trees along the edges. The log jams are informally maintained by river users but there is not a private canoe livery along the river, therefore, it isn't cleared on a regular basis.

**b. Sports Fields and Facilities:**

There is a need to upgrade some of the existing sports facilities to ensure the safety and enjoyment of participants and spectators. Facilities should be developed or upgraded to provide a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities.

**d. Land Acquisition and Easement Agreements:**

The long-term potential of the Red Cedar River corridor has yet to be realized. Future land acquisitions and easement agreements should be pursued with the goal of eventually providing a pedestrian/bicycle trail system that links the Harris Nature Center to the Bicycle/Pedestrian trail system in Meridian Township. It would also serve as a major attraction for new residents and tourists.

## **B. Programs and Services**

Based on the community survey, respondents were very satisfied with the programs and services being provided by the Department of Parks and Recreation. It is clear that residents value the potential benefits of leisure/free time activities, especially those related to wellness.

The results indicated that residents were appreciative of the Farmers' Market and the other special events/festivals offered by the Department. They also suggested that additional special events and festivals are needed that focus on local culture and history. Focus strategies for the next five years includes:

- Increase activities for families
- Increase in special events related to art, music, and food
- Increase activities for toddler and preschoolers during evening and weekends
- Additional programs that serve adolescents and teenagers
- Because older adults are working longer, offer opportunities for active recreation for them in the evenings and on weekends
- Foster greater cooperation and collaboration with schools, surrounding governmental units and business
- Provide additional special events, also events during the week at lunchtime
- Outdoor spaces for events were/are vital during the pandemic

## C. Communication

Effectively reaching our community and keeping them informed is a primary goal and need to be successful.

- Creatively promote all the parks in the park system.
- Meet with park neighbors to discuss stewardship and to identify future development opportunities.
- Continue to publish and distribute the “Prime Meridian Magazine” to all residents in the community annually.
- Continue to utilize the website, Facebook and Twitter to promote programs and activities.
- Continue to utilize HOM-TV to promote parks and recreation programs throughout the community.
- Continue to operate quality programs to take advantage of the least expensive form of promotion – word of mouth.

## Quality of Life Initiatives

Meridian Township is constantly promoting quality of life initiatives in the community. Some of these measures include:

- **“Complete Streets” Ordinance** - Meridian Township adopted in 2011.
- **“Potential Conservation Assessment”** project - Tri-County Regional Planning.
- **“Greening Mid-Michigan Plan”** - Participated in development with Tri-County Regional Planning in regional vision for green infrastructure.
- **“Meridian Township Greenspace Plan”** - adopted in 2004.
- **Meridian Township “Land Preservation Program”** - Millage to acquire and manage fragile lands in the community since 2000.
- **“Ingham County Trail Plan”**- Active participation with the Meridian Township portion in conjunction with Ingham County.
- **Meridian Township “Bicycle/Pedestrian Pathway Millage”** - Has developed almost eighty miles of pathway in the community.
- **“Promoting Active Communities” Award Program** - Sponsored by the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports (5-time award winner).
- **“Climate Sustainability Plan”** – Adopted by Meridian Township Board 10.24.2017  
<https://www.meridian.mi.us/home/showpublisheddocument?id=12317>
- **Protect Our Wetlands** – Environmental Commission initiative



## Acknowledgements and Final Comments

The public input for this Master Plan proved invaluable. The information from the input meetings and individual comments (i.e., email, phone, and in-person) were used by the Department of Parks and Recreation and Park Commission. The public input identified residents' strong desire for high quality parks and recreation and the connection to higher quality of life. It also validated the Township's, Department's, and the Park Commission's commitment to continuously improve parks and recreation in Meridian Township. It is also clear that these improvements have resulted in increased expectations for parks, facilities, and programs.

In addition to meeting the requirements for the MDNR, it is hoped that this Plan will result in additional public input to accomplish the recommendations and actions presented in this report. Over the next five years, it is hoped that this Plan will result in additional amenities in existing parks and expansion of existing programs to meet the needs of all Meridian Township residents. The Park Commission will continue to encourage and work cooperatively with developers to site neighborhood parks in their developments.

The Department's effort to increase collaboration has resulted in stronger relationships with many community-based organizations (e.g., neighborhood and sport), schools, businesses, neighboring communities, and non-profits. These efforts should continue in order to ensure that residents and visitors are aware of all of the recreation opportunities in the Township. This report will be shared with these groups to discuss strategies to increase overall recreation participation and enhance the many potential benefits.

In conclusion, this Plan represents the efforts and input of many individuals. It is hoped that it will result in more dialogue with residents and community leaders to assist Meridian Township Department of Parks and Recreation to meet its mission:

***To enhance the quality of life for Township residents and visitors by providing diverse park facilities and recreation opportunities where participants are able to learn and play; create and imagine, and be safe and secure utilizing qualified, professional staff and volunteers emphasizing community interaction.***



## Parks and Recreation

### Mission Statement

To enhance the quality of life for Township residents and visitors by providing diverse park facilities and recreation opportunities where participants are able to learn and play; create and imagine, and be safe and secure utilizing qualified, professional staff and volunteers emphasizing community interaction.

