

CITY OF GRANT

Five Year Recreation Plan
2012-2017

Acknowledgements

The City of Grant Five Year Recreation Plan is a product of local community members. The individuals listed below contributed substantially by sharing their time, skills, knowledge, and thoughtful participation throughout the planning process. In addition, numerous residents offered comments and participated in public meetings and surveys. At its foundation, the City of Grant Recreation Plan emphasizes exercise and healthy lifestyles, the protection of natural resources, and the promotion of recreational opportunities within the City of Grant and Grant Area as a whole.

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INTRODUCTION

A community's recreational opportunities contribute immeasurably to the quality of life of its residents. These opportunities enhance the attractiveness of the community to existing and potential residents, businesses, investors, and visitors. The number, type, location, and quality of a community's recreational opportunities have a direct impact on the quality of life within the community.

In most communities, the provision of recreational opportunities is shared by the public sector (e.g., the local or state government), semi-public organizations (e.g., land trusts and school systems), and residents and other private individuals or institutions (e.g. community volunteers and area foundations). The City of Grant Five-Year Recreation Plan represents the entire community's desire to provide recreational opportunities in the area, while identifying, protecting, and enhancing those features of the natural environment that help define the character of our community and make the Grant Area a unique place to live, work, and visit. The purpose of the City of Grant Five-Year Recreation Plan is to set the priorities, define goals and objectives, align resources, and prepare a timeline for accomplishing this feat. The Plan will act as a road map for recreation-related decisions over the next five years (2012-2017).

The Plan incorporates City of Grant, Grant Public Schools, and general public efforts to examine the array of parks, playgrounds, fields, conservation areas, open space, and prominent physical features that compose Grant's recreational resources and distinguish its natural environment. This document sets forth the Community's official recreation goals and objectives along with an *Action Plan* for recreational facility maintenance and development over the next five years, while accounting for current *and* future recreation needs. The main focus of this Plan is directed upon recreational opportunities offered by the City of Grant, within the City Limits, but carefully considers the opportunities offered by the Grant Public Schools and the regional recreational opportunities offered by nearby communities.

MISSION STATEMENT

The City of Grant seeks to provide well-maintained and well-designed recreational facilities for the enjoyment of park users and the conservation of natural resources, while promoting fitness activities to the residents and visitors of Grant in conjunction with the efforts of surrounding municipalities and nearby public recreation providers.

BACKGROUND

This section offers a brief background of the local recreational opportunities offered by the City of Grant and other community organizations. Historically, Ashland and Grant Townships have not offered public recreational facilities to their respective residents. As rural townships they tend to rely heavily on other recreational providers for the provision of public recreational opportunities. The City of Grant is also a rural community that is constrained by inadequate funding, but because of a greater population density is called upon to provide a number of recreational opportunities for its residents that promote active and healthy living. Many of the township residents seek recreational facilities because surrounding townships do not have them. As a result the City of Grant, Grant Public Schools, and the other nearby Cities serve as recreational opportunities for township residents.

While much of this Plan will focus on facilities located in the City limits, it carefully takes into consideration the needs of the adjacent townships of Ashland and Grant.

Inventory of Current Recreation Opportunities:

Historically, the City of Grant has offered one major outdoor recreational opportunity to the community: Blanche Lake Park. Blanche Lake Park has been a popular host to a number of community activities and gatherings, including picnics, swimming, fishing, baseball games, and nature enjoyment since its dedication in 1911. From comments in the City's last parks and recreation plan, the City was successful in securing funding and implemented a new restroom facility and volleyball court at the park. Additionally, the City has operated and maintained the Grant Community Center as a gathering place for community members for more than 80 years. It was recently renovated in 2009/2010. The facility is used as a rentable hall for private events, fundraisers, and community meetings, but is also occasionally used for municipal meetings and public hearings, and serves as the centerpiece of Grant's annual Frontier Festival and Christmas Holiday event. The Center is available at a special discounted rate for City residents, and is also available for members of other communities. The Grant Park System added the Ryan Benson Skate Park in 2001 and reconstructed in 2009 completely out of steel to withstand its popular use and keep it as a community asset for the long term. The Skatepark demonstrates that the City strives to offer recreational opportunities that are in line with 21st Century recreation trends and also encourage our youth to participate in healthy recreational activities. The Water Tower Park was added the City park system in 2008. The City was able to receive grants and donations to relocate the old wooden water tower that is on the State of Michigan Historical Registry, renovate it and create a family friendly park setting for citizens to enjoy. Our recreational opportunities draw visitors from the city, adjoining townships, and beyond; the unique skate park especially attracts users from outside of the direct vicinity of Grant, and the Community Center provides public space for senior citizen activities, group counseling services, and other much-needed community events that service residents from the City of Grant and the adjoining municipalities.

The Grant Public Schools (student population: approximately 2,300: 2011 count) offer a number of additional recreational opportunities for community members, with playground

equipment available for students as well as the general public; an athletic center, sport fields, open fields, various sports courts, and other typical community recreational opportunities are also available to the public. The Grant Public Schools own, operate, and maintain their facilities separate from the City of Grant's facilities, but all outdoor facilities are available for the general public. The City of Grant encourages collaboration among local organizations to provide additional recreational opportunities to the community. As a model, the City of Grant *has* entered into recreational partnership opportunities with the Grant Public Schools that address community needs; the school system has operated and maintained tennis facilities on land at Blanche Lake Park that that the City has earmarked for their special need. The school system also constructed additional tennis facilities at the Park in 2006. The Grant Public Schools also sponsor Michigan History Day activities at Blanche Lake Park annually to celebrate our State's history, and routinely use the place for class trips related to recreation and the sciences.

Administrative Structure

Figure 1 represents the City of Grant's entire organizational structure. The City of Grant Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for providing maintenance for all City-operated facilities. Two full-time employees and two part-time employees dedicate a portion of their work hours to maintaining our recreation facilities. Additionally, community volunteers are organized in the spring to help get the facilities ready for the spring/summer recreation season, and the City regularly utilizes community service workers to assist in general cleaning and maintenance tasks while teaching community members a valuable lesson in hard-work and community involvement. City staff and volunteers prepare the facilities for the cold weather as fall and winter arrive.

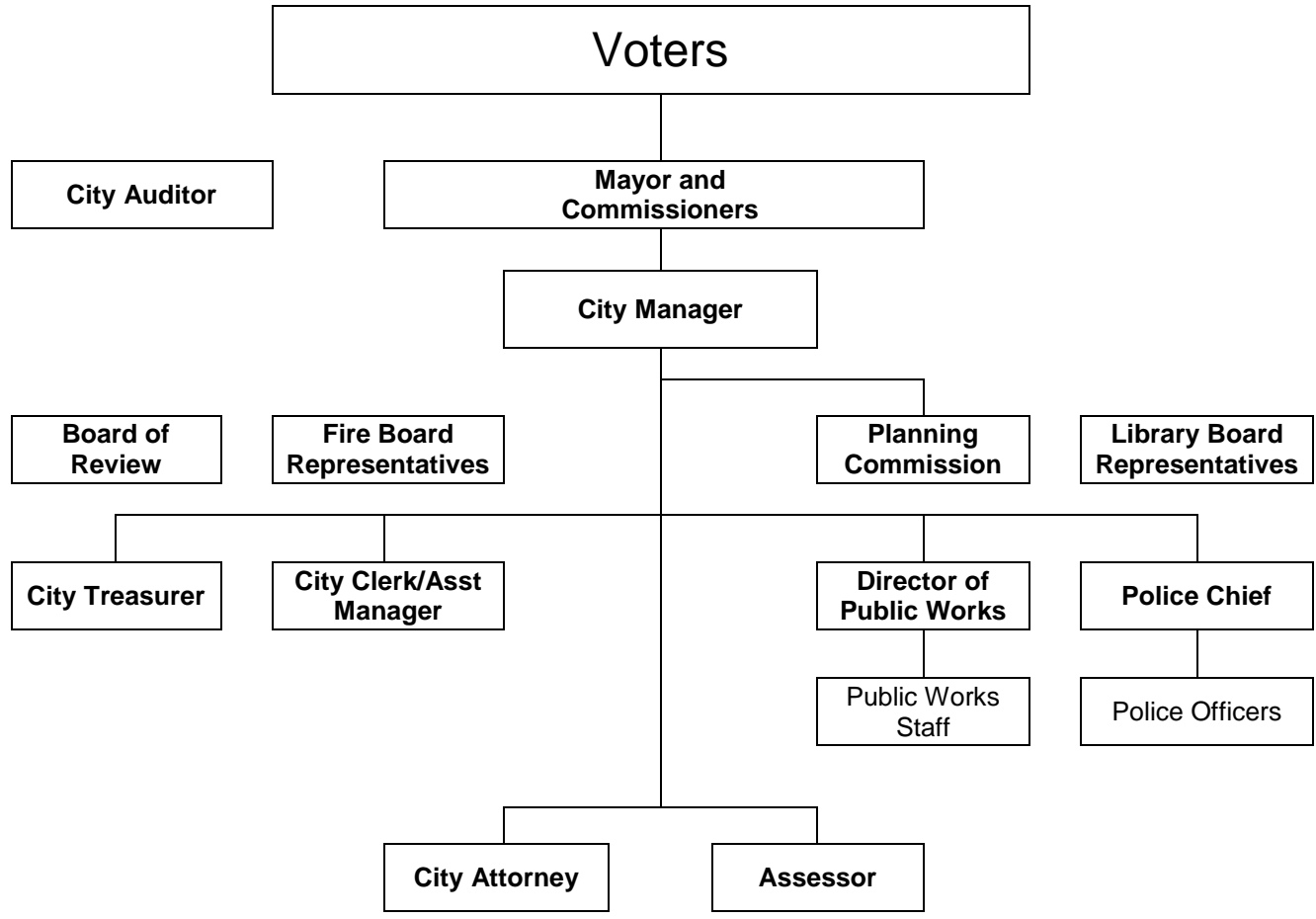
The City of Grant currently does not have a commission solely dedicated to parks and recreation planning and decision-making. Instead, the Grant City Commission is responsible for allocating funding for specific activities and maintenance, the Grant Planning Commission oversees planning and zoning efforts associated with the recreation system, and the City Manager is the administrative arm of the recreation system. These three bodies work to ensure recreational opportunities offered by the City are maximized as per the goals and objectives outlined in the current Plan. The City's DPW Supervisor is the direct supervisor of the City's recreational opportunities, and is responsible to directing the maintenance efforts of DPW workers.

In recent fiscal years, the City has allocated funds almost solely for general maintenance activities within the recreation system. Due to budget constraints, the City typically requires long-term planning and budgeting, and outside funding to undertake major enhancement activities. This plan will guide planning and budgeting efforts to help maximize the City's investments. Fiscal Year 11-12 includes City funds dedicated to general maintenance and capital outlay totaling ~\$7,000. This amount represents close to 1.8% of the City's General Fund budget for the fiscal year. The City General Fund Budget has suffered years of State revenue Sharing cuts along with property tax loss due to the housing sector crisis of 2008. These funding issues have meant that the City has had to be aggressive with outside grants to continue to invest as cuts to the General Fund have had to be made to secure the financial integrity of the City. The city expects positive growth in Michigan's economy in the next five

years and we are cautiously optimistic that more funds will be allocated to City parks operations and capital projects. The City further intends to work directly with private foundations, our neighboring townships, Newaygo County Parks and Recreation Department, the Grant School District, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and other public institutions to raise funds to meet the regional recreation enhancements addressed in this plan.

Figure 1: City of Grant Organizational Structure

City of Grant Organizational Plan

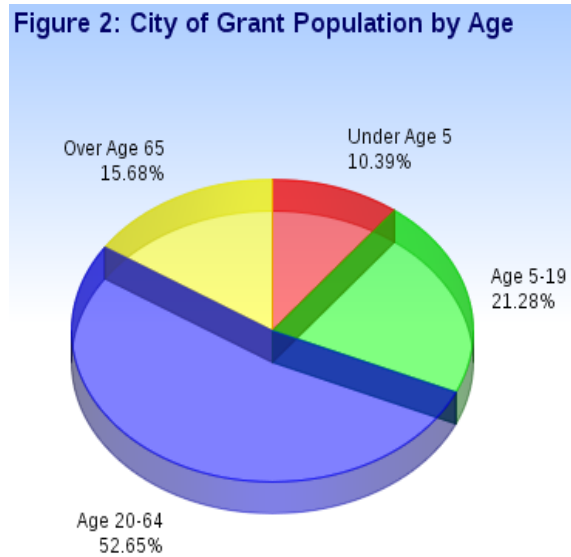


Chief Administrative Officer:	City Manager
Other Administrative Officers:	City Clerk/Asst Manager City Treasurer Police Chief Director of Public Works
Mayor:	Terry Fett
Commissioners:	Harold Portell Matt Bouwkamp Julie Hallman Anne Pickard Kevin Smith Cheryl Weeks

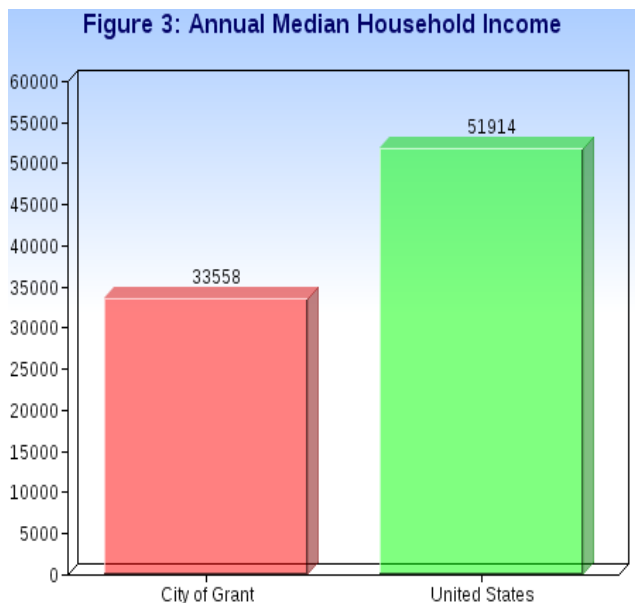
Community Demographics:

All demographic information contained within this plan was supplied by the U.S. Census Bureau, via Census 2010 data.

The City of Grant is an incorporated municipality with a population of 894 people up from 881 from the 2000 Census. The 2010 Census reveals that 53.8% of Grant's population is Female. In the 2000 Census 53.7% of the population was male. This illustrates a demographic shift between males and females who reside in the City. The median age of a Grant Resident is 31.9 years old. Currently, 31.67% of the City's population is under age 19, up from 30% from the 2000 Census; with approximately 10.4% being under age five, which is up from the 2000 census which was 5%. 52.65% of the City's population falls between 20 and 64 years of age and 15.68% over 65. This information is illustrated in Figure 2.



The median annual household income in Grant is \$33,558 compared to \$30,972.00 in 2000, and the per capita annual income of Grant Residents is \$17,802 compared to \$15,308.00 in 2000. The United States as a whole has a median annual household income of \$51,914 and a per capita annual income of \$27,334. This information is illustrated in Figure 3.



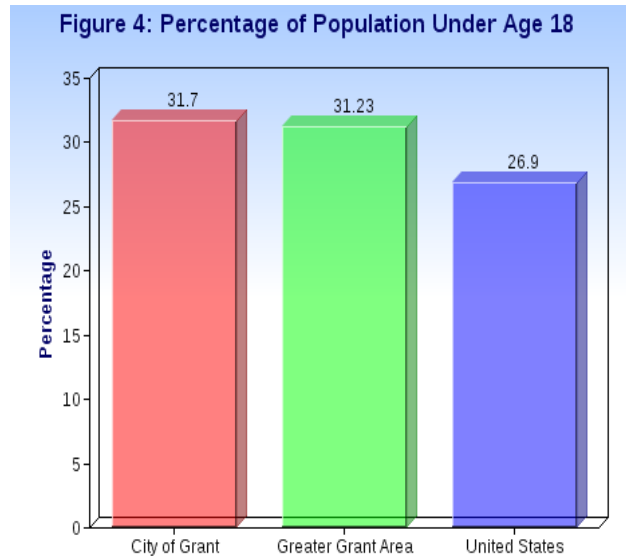
28.2% (11.2% in 2000) of the City of Grant's residents live below the national poverty level, while 13.8% (9.2% in 2000) of U.S. residents live below this level nation-wide.

The average Grant family consists of 3.06 people (3.22 in 2000). This is slightly smaller than the national average which is 3.14. This demographic information indicates that a typical family in Grant is slightly smaller than the average American family, and lives on an income that is approximately \$18,000 less per year. Certainly, this makes it difficult for elected officials to expect our residents to be the main funding source for

recreation enhancements, as their *limited* tax dollars must be dedicated to general city operating expenses first.

The Greater Grant Area, which includes the City of Grant and all of Ashland and Grant Townships, has a population of 8,998 (7,769 in 2000). The median age for residents of this area is 34.8. 31.2% of the population is under 18, and 8.3% is under age five. These numbers are very important to local recreation planning efforts, because according to Census 2010 data, only 26.9% and 6.5% of the nation's population are under 18 and 5 years of age, respectively. This data indicates that the Grant Area has a concentration of youths at a rate that is higher than the national average (see Figure 4). The City of Grant's recreational opportunities are available for the entire public to utilize, and users across the Greater Grant Area enjoy the facilities on a regular basis.

Grant has recently experienced a period of small population growth (1.5% growth since 2000 compared to the declining state of Michigan decline of -0.6% from 2000 to 2010). Grant's overall size has a direct effect on the amount and quality of services that can be offered to residents at an affordable price, as the limited tax base and limited state revenue-sharing greatly restrict the funds available to expend on certain services. Additionally, demographic characteristics, such as Grant's above-average concentration of youths and the population's below-average median household income significantly impact the services offered to the community.



Also included in Figure 4 is population information for the entire Grant Area. It is clear that the Grant Area has a great concentration of youths under the age of 18 to whom services must be provided to help promote healthy, active lifestyles. The City of Grant must be efficient and effective with the investments made in local recreation opportunities to maintain a recreation system that fits the needs of our youthful, growing community and does not create unrealistic tax burdens for our property owners to absorb. Ultimately, as this document will resonate, the City's recreation planning must concentrate on addressing the current and future needs of our growing population by managing our limited resources and utilizing State and Federal recreational funding opportunities, private foundation funding, collaboration with neighboring municipalities, and our local school district, and a very efficient public and volunteer workforce to offer adequate, first-class recreation opportunities to the community.

INVENTORY OF RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES:

A Recreation Map indicating the location of each of the City of Grant's recreation opportunities is included in Appendix D.

Blanche Lake Park

Classification: Community Park

Size: Approximately 13 Acres, Blanche Lake 44 Acres

Service Area: City and Surrounding Townships

Most of the Facility/Park Areas Meet Accessibility Guidelines



Blanche Lake Park has historically been the City of Grant's most frequented recreational opportunity. The park consists of approximately 13 acres of green space, athletic fields, playground equipment, tennis facilities (operated by the Grant Public Schools), walking/nature trails, and picnic areas. Additionally, 1200 feet of Blanche Lake frontage exist within the park; one boat launch and one fishing dock are present to access the 44 acre lake. Blanche Lake Park provides the only public access to the mostly undeveloped lake.

Blanche Lake Park was deeded to the City of Grant by Chester and Katherine Love in 1911, with the stipulation that the land be used as a public park under the control of the City. The Park has since been a cornerstone of the City. However, because of increasingly tightened financial constraints faced by the City of Grant throughout the past decades, investment and development within Blanche Lake Park has been greatly difficult. Since the previous parks and recreation plan update the City has been able to secure several grants, as well as some general fund appropriations to replace the old dock, new paved boat launch, new restroom facility, new volleyball area (Chamber of Commerce collaborative project), and invasive weed treatment of the Lake. A commitment to invest in Blanche Lake Park is a vital

component of the City of Grant's effort to offer the recreational opportunities expected by our community members and visitors to our great City, and therefore is a cornerstone of this Recreation Plan. The following section of this Recreation Plan outlines the City of Grant's goals for Blanche Lake Park over the next five years.

Anticipated Recreation Needs within Blanche Lake Park:

Address Environmental Concerns with Blanch Lake: Blanche Lake is the keystone of the Park. The City has utilized the City's Endowment Fund, through the Fremont Area Community Foundation to make some treatments. The City will continue to utilize this fund and general fund appropriations to address invasive aquatic plants that are damaging to recreation and the natural lake environment.

Walking/Hiking Trails: Currently, Blanch Lake Park contains a hiking and fitness trail that follows a path along the lakefront and through the wooded portions of the park property. This trail is maintained by the City of Grant's Department of Public Works and volunteers on community volunteer clean up days/events. The City plans on continuing maintenance and possible addition to the trail.

Play Equipment: Blanche Lake Park's currently consists of one playground swing set. The Grant Public Schools offer conventional play areas for youths; these facilities are in good condition, and accessible to the entire community. The City of Grant is not interested in reproducing these efforts in our small community, but is interested in installing unique playground opportunities at the park to provide recreation space when the weather is not conducive to aquatic recreation.

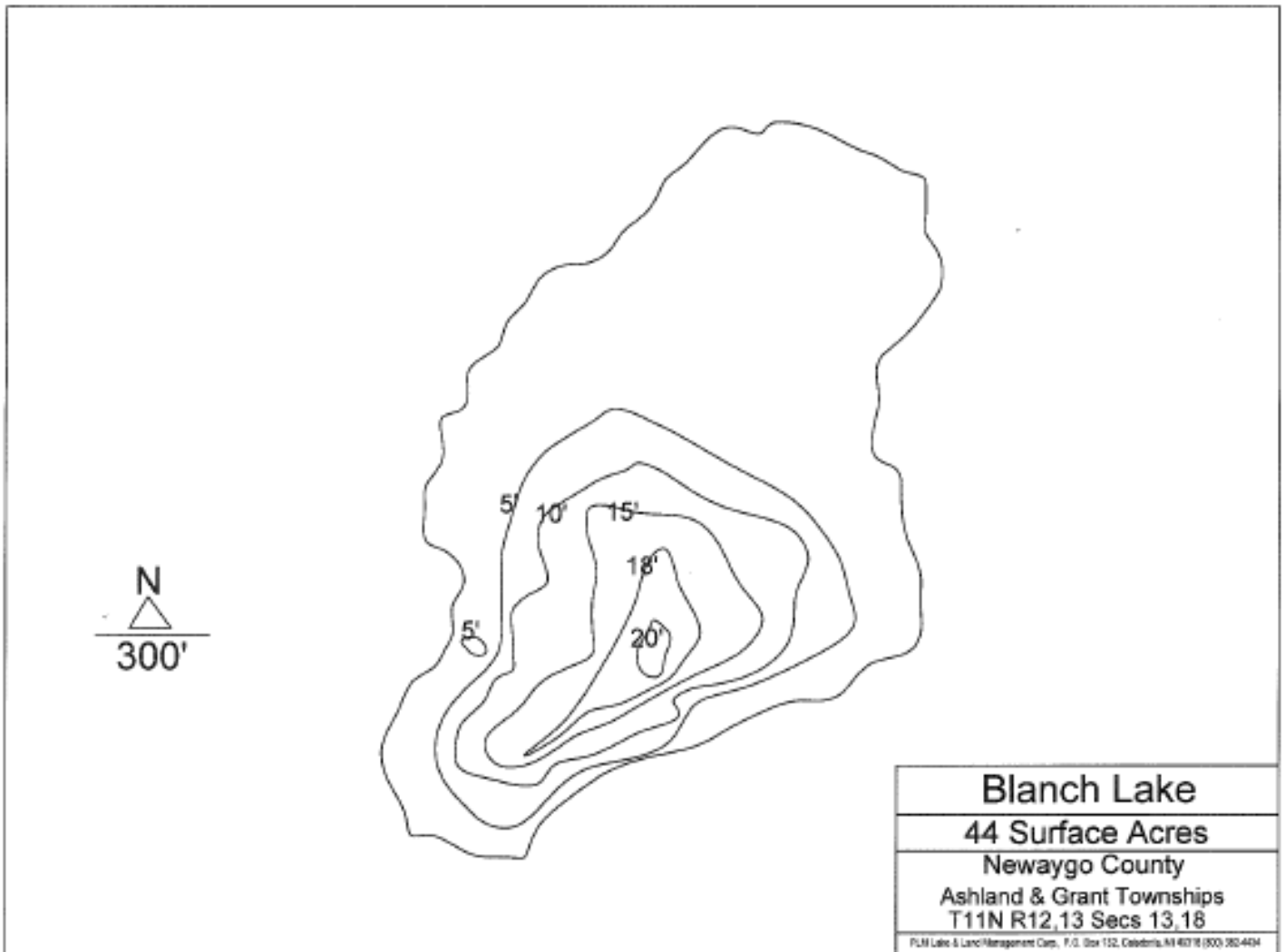
Picnic Areas: The current picnic areas include one pavilion and a number of stationary picnic tables and charcoal grills. These areas have been repainted and repaired since the previous parks and recreation plan but will need continued maintenance. The City of Grant is interested in adding an additional pavilion, addressing maintenance concerns with the existing pavilion, and adding a number of handicapped-accessible picnic tables to allow for expected increased use that will follow the anticipated park updates.

Baseball/Softball Field: The baseball field that currently exists at Blanche Lake Park is used on a limited basis because the Grant Public Schools have newer, more adequate facilities for area youth to enjoy; other fields also exist in Newaygo and White Cloud. Additionally, the current ball field requires attention to the play surfaces before it can be regularly used. The City of Grant would like to update the current baseball field. The field must be re-graded to offer safe environment for users, and updates to the electrical, lighting, seating, and dugouts must be made to allow for spectators to view ball games and other entertainment venues. The City will explore more appropriate recreational opportunities that may be more-needed at Blanche Lake Park. Some activities that have been suggested to date are an entertainment/amphitheater venue, play equipment, and natural areas.

General Security: The City of Grant currently operates a part-time police department that provides approximately 60-70 hours of patrol coverage each week. Accordingly, it is difficult to rely solely upon the Grant Police Department to provide needed security and surveillance of Blanche Lake, or the other recreational opportunities in Grant, to completely

thwart all acts of vandalism to park facilities and general illegal activity within the park(s). The City of Grant installed a security camera at the Ryan Benson Memorial Skatepark as was identified from the previous parks and recreation plan and this has aided as a deterrent to crime and violence as complaints regarding the park have declined. The City is intends on making Blanche Lake Park the next facility to place a security camera during the duration of this plan. The City of Grant started a “Neighborhood Watch” program in 2011 to assist general security and information sharing within the community. It is important to tap into the community’s volunteer population to provide community watch-type services within our parks on key nights each week to assist the police efforts in keeping our parks safe and free from vandalism.

Public Restrooms: The City of Grant was successful in adding a permanent, vandal proof, and all concrete restroom facility since the previous plan. The City will continue cleaning and maintenance to make sure this facility is available to the public.



Ryan Benson Skate Park

Classification: Special Use Facility

Size: Approximately .25 Acres

Service Area: Entire County

Most of the Facility/Park Areas Meet Accessibility Guidelines



Skate Park Rebuild 2008-2009



Former wood skate park

The Ryan Benson Skate Park was completed in 2002 through a joint effort by the City of Grant, the Fremont Area Community Foundation, and a number of community members and rebuilt entirely from steel in 2008-2009. The Park was dedicated in memory of Ryan Benson, a local youth interested in skating activities. This park offers an exceedingly popular recreational opportunity for area youths; extreme in-line skating, skateboarding, and biking. Skate Parks are very unique in our area, as population levels and budget constraints make it difficult to offer these types of specialize recreation opportunities; the City of Grant recognizes the need for recreation opportunities that appeal to our young community members. The Ryan Benson Skate Park is a poster for community pride and cooperation, as it represents a collaborative commitment from the entire Grant community to provide recreation opportunities in Newaygo County that are in line with 21st Century recreation trends.

The Skate Park is in very good condition. Our local skateboarders, in-line skaters, and bikers recognize the importance of maintaining this facility, and seem to take great care in refraining from destructive activities at the park. The City of Grant has installed a surveillance cameras and appropriate lighting on the site to help protect this investment and promote the safety of the park's users since the previous plan. City staff and citizens can access this camera remotely to watch activities in the park. Since the camera was installed complaints at the park have virtually come to a halt.

Additionally, a number of residents have expressed an interest in a similar type of recreational opportunity on the Skate Park's grounds – a skating rink. The City is interested in exploring this need over the next five years, and setting up a tentative date to install this activity should it be determined that this is an appropriate investment into our recreation system.

Anticipated Recreation Needs within the Ryan Benson Skate Park:

Skating Rink: Local residents have expressed interests in a skating rink to be used for roller/in-line skating in the warm seasons, and as an ice skating ring in the winter. This facility could also be used for recreational hockey and other skating sports.

Grant Community Center

Classification: Special Use Facility

Size: Approximately 4,000 Square Feet

Service Area: City and Surrounding Townships

Some of the Facility/Park Areas Meet Accessibility Guidelines



2007-2008 Community Center

2009-2010 Community Center after renovation

Veteran Memorial

The Grant Community Center is a vital component of the City's Recreation Plan. The historical Community Center is one of Grant's greatest and most recognizable pieces of Architecture. Completed in 1921, the Community Center has long been a popular gathering place for community members. Senior lunches and gatherings, roller skating, indoor gym sports, fine arts activities, and other functions have been held at the Community Center throughout its lifetime. Previously, the Community Center housed the Grant Police Department and the City's administrative offices. It is now available for rent to the public for private gatherings, fund raising events, and other miscellaneous events. The City currently leases out space within the facility to the District 10 Health Department-WIC program to better serve citizens in southern Newaygo County. Other groups that utilize the facility for free or low cost rent/donations are Grant AA, Cub/Boy Scouts, and other nonprofit organizations that provide a public benefit to the community. Major renovations in 2009-2010 added insulation, new windows, new HVAC, new roof, ADA compliance, new kitchen appliances, new restrooms, and electrical upgrade.

Handicap Accessibility: The building was constructed prior to the Americans with Disabilities Act, and thus was not in compliance with the Act. The Community Center was renovated in 2009-2010 and this was one of the items addressed from needs highlighted in the previous parks and recreation plan. The City now has a handicap accessible ramp and barrier free access to the building.

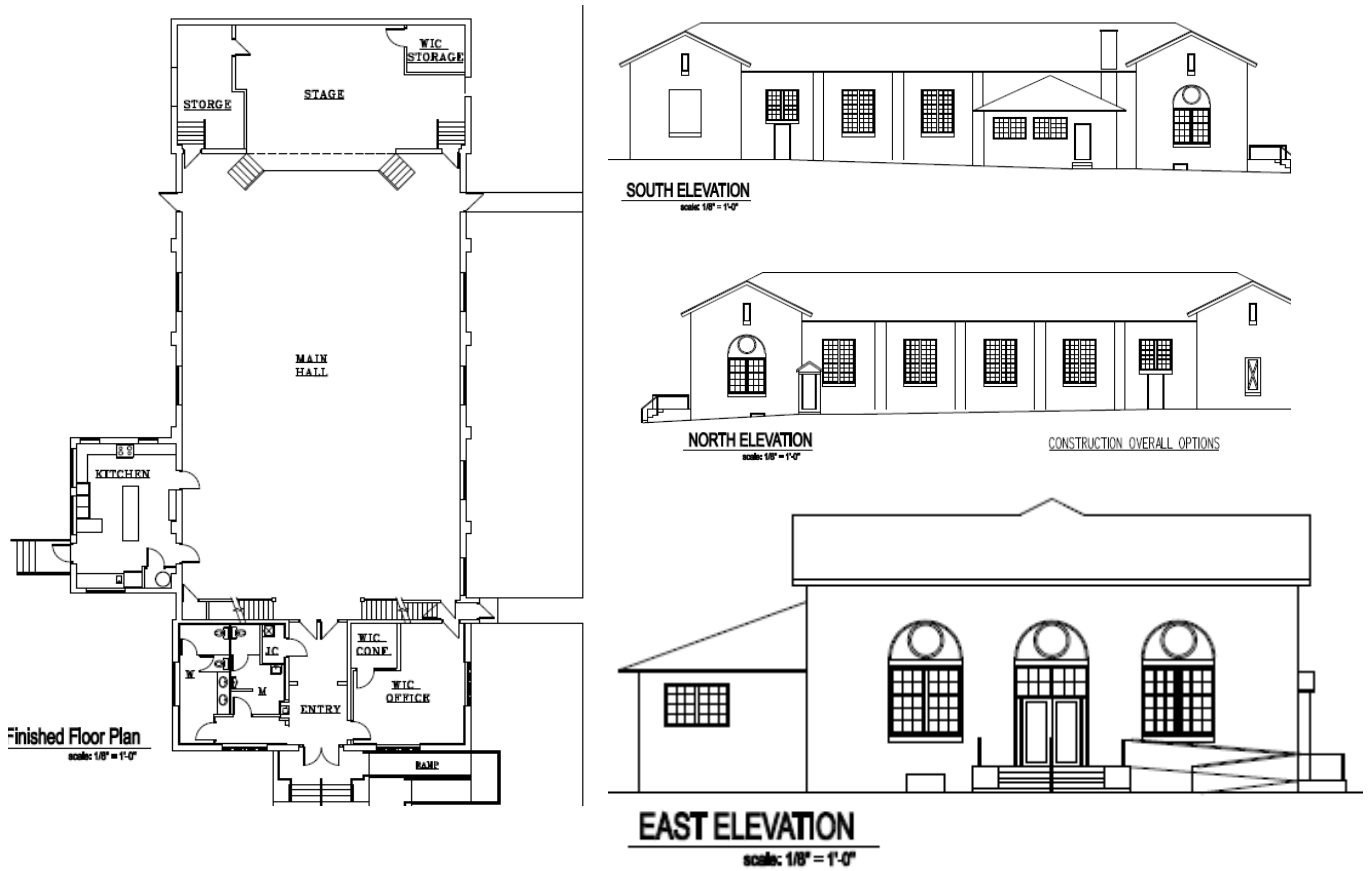
Restrooms:

The Community Center restrooms were also renovated in the 2009-2010 project. The City was able to increase restroom space by utilizing excess space from the old police department office and combining it with the existing restroom space. The restroom facilities are now ADA compliant and incorporated inside the building instead of the only previous access point of entry which was outside the building.

Anticipated Recreation Needs within the Community Center:

Interior Maintenance:

With all the upgrades needed that were addressed from focus on the previous parks and recreation plan, the City still will seek improvements to the interior of the building, specifically with the stage area heating/cooling HVAC system in the main hall.



Renovated Floor Plan/Renderings 2009-2010

Historic Water Tower Park

Classification: State Historic Site-Community Park

Size: Approximately .11 Acres

Service Area: City/Statewide

The Facility/Park Areas Meet Accessibility Guidelines



The Grant Water Tower was built in 1891 by the Grand Rapids, Newaygo and Lakeshore Railroad for \$1,910 (before Grant was incorporated in 1893). After train services ceased in 1966, the railroad had deeded the Water Tower over to the Village/City of Grant and it was used up into the 1980's as a water reserve for the fire department. In 2008, the City was successful in raising donations from many citizens and partners to move and restore the Water Tower and Caboose to their original state. The Water Tower Park is located on the Westside of M-37 in the City.

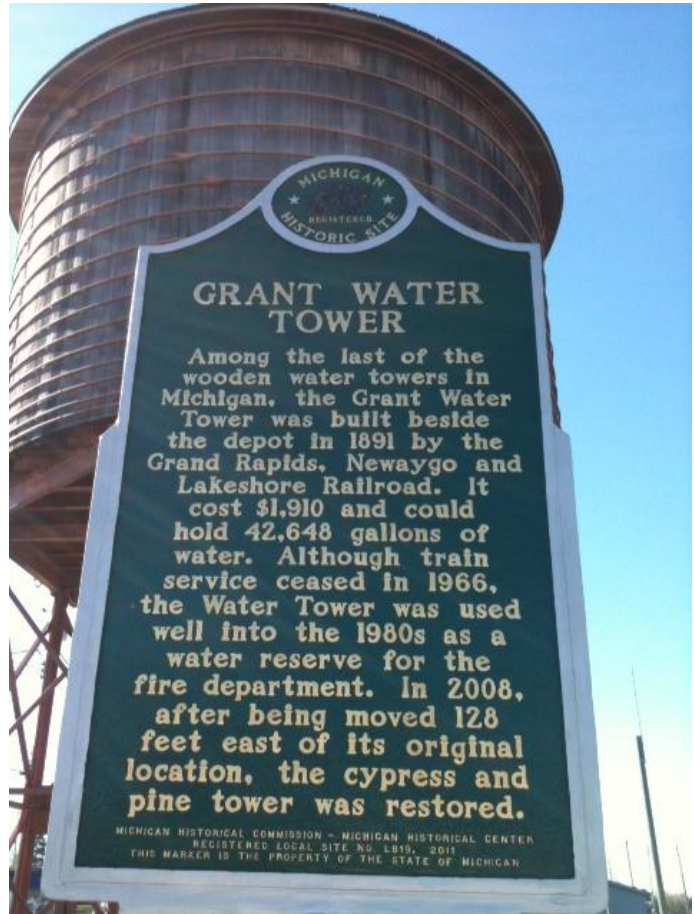
Anticipated Recreation Needs for Water Tower Park:

Parking:

Securing additional parking and increasing more green space.



Water Tower Relocation 2008



Historical Marker

Other Facilities

The Grant Public Schools (www.grantps.net) operate a number of sports courts and athletic and open space fields within the City. Additionally, playground facilities are located at the Primary and Elementary Schools.

Facilities Matrix

The following *Facilities Matrix* (see Table 1) is designed as a quick reference to the availability and quality of the recreational opportunities available within the City of Grant. Facility quality is graded on the following scale:

- Good: Equipment is completely functional and not in apparent need of repair.
- Fair: Equipment is functional, but showing some wear. Equipment is not in need of any major repairs or refurbishing.
- Poor: Equipment is not functional, and in need of repair or replacement.
- Planned: The City of Grant has plans to include this facility or equipment in the future; financial constraints permitting.

Table 1

Recreational Facilities Matrix

Recreational Opportunity	Blanche Lake Park		Community Building		Skate Park		Water Tower Park		Other Facilities	
	Yes/No	Condition	Yes/No	Condition	Yes/No	Condition	Yes/No	Condition	Yes/No	Remarks
Open Play Field	Yes	Fair	No	-	Yes	Good	Yes	Good	Yes	Grant Area Schools Owned/Operated (various locations)
Natural Area	Yes	Good	No	-	Yes	Good	Yes	Good	No	
Scenic Walkway	Yes	Fair	No	-	No	-	Yes	Good	No	
Hiking Trails	Yes	Fair	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	
Cross Country Ski Trails	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	
Camping	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	
Lake Frontage	Yes	Fair	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	
Fishing Piers	Yes	Good	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	
Swimming Beach	No	Planned	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	
Boat Launch	Yes	Good	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	
Basketball	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	-	Yes	Grant Area Schools Owned/Operated (various locations)
Softball/Baseball	Yes	Fair	No	-	No	-	No	-	Yes	Grant Area Schools Owned/Operated (various locations)
Tennis	Yes	Good	No	-	No	-	No	-	Yes	Grant Area Schools Owned/Operated (various locations)
Sand Volleyball	Yes	Good-	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	
Horseshoes	No	-	Yes	Good	No	-	No	-	No	
Playground Equipment	Yes	Poor	No	-	No	-	No	-	Yes	Grant Public Schools
Parking	Yes	Fair	Yes	Good	Yes	Good	Planned	Fair	Yes	Parking is readily available throughout the City of Grant
Picnic Tables	Yes	Fair	No	-	No	-	Yes	Good	Yes	Grant Area Schools Owned/Operated (various locations)
Benches	Planned	-	Yes	Good	No	-	Yes	Good	Yes	Grant Area Schools Owned/Operated (various locations)

Grills	Yes	Fair	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	
Signage	Yes	Fair	Yes	Good	Yes	Good	Yes	Good	Yes	Recreational signage is posted throughout the City of Grant
Refuse Areas	Yes	Good	Yes	Good	Yes	Good	Yes	Good	No	
Community Center	No	-	Yes	Good	No	-	No	-	No	
Public Restrooms	Yes	Good	Yes	Good	No	-	No	-	No	
Picnic Shelter/Pavilion	Yes	Poor	No	-	No	-	No	-	No	
Kitchen Facilities	No	-	Yes	Good	No	-	No	-	No	
Stage/Performance Area	Planned	-	Yes	Fair	No	-	No	-	Yes	Grant Area Schools Owned/Operated
Table 1 Continued										

RESOURCE INVENTORY

This Resource Inventory is in place to identify open-space areas in the City of Grant that could be available for development into needed recreation facilities. This section will outline currently undeveloped areas in the City that should be earmarked for open space, protection, or public park development.

Lincoln Street Property

The City of Grant owns approximately ½ an acre of undeveloped land on the City's Westside. The parcel is located between Lincoln and State Streets, and is currently only used for public parking during special events. The land is completely undeveloped, and is currently earmarked for possible recreation opportunities should the City of Grant determine that it is appropriate to locate a park facility on this site.



The City of Grant is only 1 square mile in area. Accordingly, open space is a valuable community for the community, and the City of Grant intends to make provisions to ensure that certain existing green space areas are earmarked from future development to ensure adequate amounts of recreation space for the members of the community.



This plot of land represents the City of Grant's efforts to make provisions for future recreation opportunities should it be determined that a park facility is needed and desired.

Sycamore Road Property

The City of Grant currently owns approximately 60 acres of undeveloped land outside the City limits in Grant Township. This land could be utilized in some capacity for recreation fields like soccer and football if funding sources are identified. A portion of the property must remain undeveloped to protect the City's water system plant and wells.



PLANNING PROCESS

The process followed in preparing the 2012-2017 Recreation Plan was set by the Grant Planning Commission at the March 2012 Regular Meeting to follow the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans*. The process began with a thorough review and examination of the City's 2007-2012 Recreation Plan by City staff; concentrating on previous recreation goals and the success of the plan in reaching its objectives. A community-wide survey of the current recreation opportunities in Grant was completed, area demographic information was collected, and the expected recreation needs over the next five years were explored. City Staff met with planning officials to examine the current facilities and their relationship to the expectations and standards set by our community members. A public comment period was opened from April 23, 2012 and June 1, 2012 and a public review session was held on June 7, 2012 at which time, public comments and Planning Commission input were recorded and the Action Program was adopted. The Recreation Plan was adopted by the Grant City Commission on June 18, 2012.

This Plan takes into account demographic changes, as reflected in 2010 Census information, since the last plan was drafted. The previous Plan's goals and objectives were reviewed, and recommendations were made to update them to better-reflect current facility conditions and the City's economic state (see Appendix C). Efforts were made to make broad-reaching goals and more specific objectives for each goal to better focus the City's future recreation priorities.

PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

A community-wide recreation survey was distributed to each residence and business in the City of Grant. Approximately 320 surveys were distributed, with 29 being returned; a return rate of 9%. The survey (see Appendix A) was used to collect data on park usage, frequency, reasoning for visiting/not visiting local parks, needed facilities, and overall satisfaction with the current facilities. Surveys were delivered to segments of our population that were believed to be normal users of our recreation opportunities, but may not be as likely to participate in typical public input sessions. The survey also allowed for additional comments (see Appendix B). **A 30-day public comment period was held between April 23, 2012 and June 1, 2012; advertised in the Fremont Times Indicator, and a public hearing was held in on June 7, 2012 to collect comments on the final draft of the Plan (see Appendix E).**

RECREATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Guiding Issues

The planning process explored a number of issues regarding current and future recreation opportunities and undertakings. The following issues were explored via a community survey, discussions with community members, review of local demographic information, and a thorough examination of current facilities. The efforts yielded the goals and objectives that act as a foundation for this plan.

1. What types of recreational opportunities does the City of Grant offer, and what is the condition of the facilities related to those opportunities?
2. Do our residents utilize the current facilities?
3. What type of facilities/activities could be implemented to increase usage of the current parks and promote exercise and physical activities?
4. Are there additional (new) facilities that would better-fit our City's demographics? How can these facilities be incorporated into the current recreation system?
 - a. What facilities could be implemented to cater to our senior citizen population?
 - b. Are members of the Grant community interested in developing recreational opportunities on the west side of the City (West of M-37) other than the Water Tower Park that was added?
 - c. Are there additional unique recreational opportunities - similar to the Ryan Benson Skate Park - that the City should offer to provide special activities to the area youth?
5. Are the members of the Grant community and surrounding area interested in investment/development at Blanche Lake Park?
 - a. Will investments/development attract new/more users to the Park to substantiate any investment?
 - b. Can the Park attract visitors from outside of the Grant area?
 - c. What types of investments are favored?
 - i. Blanche Lake environmental preservation
 - ii. Public swimming opportunities
 - iii. Public fishing opportunities
 - iv. Nature trails or hiking trails
 - v. Added natural space-land acquisition- "Blanche Lake Nature Preserve"
 - vi. Picnic facilities
 - vii. Ballpark investment
 - viii. Amphitheater
 - ix. Play equipment-maintenance

6. How can local funds be allocated to meet the recreational goals of the community?
7. How can local resources be used to leverage funding from private and public institutions to meet the recreational goals of the community?
8. Are current maintenance schedules adequate to meet current facility maintenance needs and provide a safe and enjoyable environment for users?
9. What further resources will be needed to address facility maintenance if additions to the recreation system require additional maintenance and upkeep?
10. What investment is needed to preserve the Community Center building and increase the availability of the facility to residents?
 - a. General preservation maintenance
 - b. Upgrades to heating/cooling-Main Hall
 - c. Security-surveillance equipment
11. How can the City partner with other local institutions (i.e. the school district, Newaygo County, and the neighboring townships) to pool resources and provide greater recreation opportunities while limiting repetition in the resources offered?

Adopted Goals and Objectives

The City of Grant has adopted a number of goals to direct recreation development over the next five years. The goals were developed with consideration of community input, and are reflective of a number of community characteristics, including population, economic information, and personal demographic information. The City administered a recreation survey and compiled the data to be used as a mechanism for guiding planning and goal development for this Plan. The following broad-based goals and corresponding objectives are echoed throughout this plan:

Goal: *Promote active lifestyles through recreational opportunities that encourage children and adults to stay active.*

Objectives:

- Provide public opportunities for swimming and water recreation at Blanche Lake
- Provide adequate trails/paths for hiking and biking
- Provide adequate picnicking areas at Blanche Lake Park
- Provide facilities that promote fall/winter recreation
 - Ice Skating/Hockey-Blanche Lake
 - Sledding

Goal: *Increase visual appeal of current facilities to promote existing recreation opportunities as attractive, safe, and regularly enjoyed by the public.*

Objectives:

- Increase maintenance schedules for existing park facilities
- Invest in improved landscaping for existing park facilities
- Increase police patrol of existing park facilities and create volunteer to organize volunteers to participate to patrol efforts
- Add security cameras to City Parks
- Add lighting throughout all park facilities
- Invest in facilities and recreation equipment that are resistant to graffiti, damage, and other acts of vandalism.

Goal: *Provide valued recreational opportunities that do not require user or service fees from residents for participation.*

Many of the local residents live at or below the poverty line. Additionally, the overall average household income and per capita income for local residents are well below the State and National averages. The City is interested in offering recreational activities that are free or with a minimal cost to users, as most users will likely be unable to fully enjoy the facilities if user fees or service fees are required. Additionally, the City should strive to make certain that the recreational opportunities are of the highest possible quality to ensure continued safe use.

Objectives:

- Focus investment efforts on upgrading public facilities that historically do not require user fees.
- Invest in Community Center activities that can be funded by outside sources, but still be opened to the public at minimal or no cost.

Goal: *Protect and promote our City's water resources*

The recreation survey yielded a number of responses that indicate public interest in restoring and preserving Blanche Lake as part of this Plan. Specific comments included, "swimming beach," "clean up Blanche Lake-It's nasty!," and "open up Blanche Lake-put in nice park there" The abundance of comments received can be viewed in Appendix B of this Plan. Additional public input not included in Appendix B include comments made by area residents to City officials that show a desire to add more docks, continue to improve water quality, eliminate invasive weeds/cattails and add more natural nature preserve land to Blanche Lake Park to add natural nature trails.

Objectives

- Address environmental concerns at Blanche Lake
 - Continue program of water quality treatments of Blanche Lake-Invasive plant species
- Provide appropriate avenues for visitors to enjoy Blanche Lake
 - Continue to add on the success of the boat launch and dock
 - Provide inviting access for swimming at Blanche Lake-sandy shore area
 - Acquisition of undeveloped land for nature preserve and natural trails at Blanche Lake Park to protect the water resource and park area from development

Goal: *Provide unique recreational opportunities to keep our youth interested in recreation activities and attract facility users from outside of the Grant area.*

The City of Grant currently offers the Ryan Benson Skate Park to visitors that are interested in skateboarding, and biking. This park is attractive for many of our area youths; it also regularly attracts users from the rest of Newaygo County. Other unique opportunities that recreation survey respondents indicated would be beneficial to the area include swimming opportunities, in-line/ice skating facilities, park upgrades and maintenance, improving the ball field at Blanche Lake Park along with addition of an amphitheatre.

Objectives

- Provide Swimming access at Blanche Lake
- Continue maintenance of Ryan Benson Skatepark
- Improve water access and quality along with park amenities and ball field at Blanche Lake Park
- Addition of amphitheatre and programming

Goal: *Ensure that the City of Grant's funding levels dedicated to its Parks and Recreation opportunities are adequate to accomplish the goals outlined in this Plan.*

It is important that the City of Grant has funding mechanisms in place to fund the maintenance of its current facilities, any upgrades that are undertaken, and the future maintenance of any investments made in the City's Parks and Recreation opportunities.

Objectives

- Dedicate general fund dollars to invest maintenance of parks
- Dedicate staff time to the research of appropriate funding opportunities related to Parks and Recreations investments; including the Fremont Area Community Foundation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Transportation, and other funding outside sources.
- Coordinate recreation development efforts with the Grant Public Schools to ensure minimal duplication of services while still ensuring the provision of recreational opportunities that are needed and desired in the community.

These goals and objectives are imbedded throughout this Plan. They are applied broadly to the entire Plan, and also narrowly into each of the City's individual recreational facilities. Goals and objects that are specific to individual recreational facilities are included in the inventory of recreational opportunities in the following section.

ACTION PLAN

Basis for the Action Program

The Action Plan was designed to align the Goals and Objectives of this Plan into an adequate system of ranking and ordering our community's needs to assign a time line for development efforts to follow. The purpose of the Action Program is to guide investments over the next five years to ensure that the goals outlined in this Plan can be realized by the end of the five-year planning period. The Action Program includes specific steps to be taken over the next five years toward achieving the Plan goals.

Organization of Volunteer Program

July 2012-June 2017: Work with community leaders and other residents to organize an always growing and changing database of volunteers to provide neighborhood watch activities at local parks, participate in volunteer cleanup efforts, and help maintain the current park facilities and future investments as great facilities for the community to enjoy

Spring 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017: Organize volunteer group to assist the recreation staff in preparing park facilities for warm weather months and greater usage through the City's continued spring clean up.

Fall 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016: Organize volunteer group to assist the recreation staff in preparing park facilities for winter months.

Blanche Lake Park Improvements

2012/2013:

- *Replace ball field benches
- *Continue to contract with MDEQ approved vendor for invasive weed species treatments at Blanche Lake.
- *Work to add shoreline sandy beaches-coordinate with MDEQ if required
- *Add security cameras to the park
- *Add lighting to the park
- *Paint picnic tables-and grills
- *Apply for grant funds from the FAF for public amphitheatre
- *Increase park awareness marketing

2013/2014:

- *Implement construction of public amphitheatre
- *Add set of bleachers for spectators on hill
- *Continue to contract with MDEQ approved vendor for invasive weed species treatments at Blanche Lake
- *Apply for grant funding from the FAF to hire consultant for land acquisition of nature preserve land to connect to Blanche Lake Park as part of initial step in DNR-Trust fund grant

- *Apply for DNR-Trust funds for acquisition of public preservation land
- *Continue shoreline restoration to increase public usage and enjoyment of Blanche Lake.

2014/2015:

- *Public preservation land acquisition-DNR-Trust fund grant
- *Addition of natural trails connecting to existing trails
- *Addition to Blanche Lake dock system
- *Continue to contract with MDEQ approved vendor for invasive weed species treatments at Blanche Lake

2015/2016:

- *Continue to contract with MDEQ approved vendor for invasive weed species treatments at Blanche Lake.
- *Apply to the MDEQ for sandy swim beach area within water per shoreline restoration

2016/2017:

- *Review park maintenance program and make adjustments, start planning process for next parks and recreation plan

Review

Blanche Lake Park offers the perfect setting for family and other group outings. With wooded acreage completely surrounding the park, and beautiful Blanche Lake, it is certainly an oasis within the City. With the proposed upgrades, and an increased maintenance efforts and overall investment by the City of Grant, this park will quickly become the cornerstone of the area's recreation system.

Grant Community Center

2012/2013:

- *Apply for HVAC funds and solicit donations to address HVAC upgrade needed in the Community Center main hall
- *Add security camera system

2013/2014:

- *Apply for grant from FAFD for stage and backstage curtains/backdrop-and implement

2014/2015:

- *Main hall floor work-overhaul

2015/2016:

*Paint kitchen/upgrade kitchen lighting

Review

The Grant Community Center is a community landmark. The building is in excellent shape since the last parks and recreation plan due to the nearly \$200,000 in grant funds that were invested into the facility. The building is frequently used by residents and local organizations for private gatherings, fundraisers, auctions, community holiday events, community festival events and by the District 10 Health Department for their WIC program and flu shot clinics.

Historic Water Tower Park

2012-2017:

*Attempt to secure additional parking from the railroad

*The City secured grant funds and donations to cover the cost of land acquisition, and historical restoration (approved by the Michigan Historical Commission) as was part of the goals and objectives of the previous parks and recreation plan. For the next five years the City will continue maintenance of the park.

Review

The Grant Water Tower was built in 1891 by the Grand Rapids, Newaygo and Lakeshore Railroad for \$1,910 (before Grant was incorporated in 1893). After train services ceased in 1966, the railroad had deeded the Water Tower over to the Village/City of Grant and it was used up into the 1980's as a water reserve for the fire department. In 2008, the City was successful in raising donations from many citizens and partners to move and restore the Water Tower and Caboose to their original state. The Water Tower Park is located on the Westside of M-37 in the City.

Ryan Benson Skate Park

2012-2017:

*the City secured grant funds and donated labor/craftsmanship from a local businessman to rebuild the Ryan Benson Memorial Skatepark as was set forth in the previous park and recreation plan. Furthermore, the City installed a security camera to aid in eliminating

misbehavior and vandalism in the park. Through the next parks and recreation plan this park will need continued maintenance like painting, etc...

2012-2017:

*The City will seek out any ways to add ice skating options

Review

The Ryan Benson Skate Park was completed in 2002 through a joint effort by the City of Grant, the Fremont Area Community Foundation, and a number of community members and rebuilt entirely from steel in 2008-2009. The Park was dedicated in memory of Ryan Benson, a local youth interested in skating activities. This park offers an exceedingly popular recreational opportunity for area youths; extreme in-line skating, skateboarding, and biking.

CONCLUSION

This Plan sets forth a very progressive and optimistic pathway to provide some of the greatest recreational opportunities in rural West-Michigan to the Grant Area's residents and visitors. This Plan will require dedicated staff members, coordination and collaboration between neighboring municipalities, private and public financial contributions, and high levels of community involvement. It will take dedication and commitment of citizens and community leaders to work together to implement this plan.

For questions or comments regarding this Plan, please contact the Grant City Manager:

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