



RICHLAND TOWNSHIP

5-Year Parks & Recreation Plan 2022-2026

ADOPTED BY RESOLUTION OF THE RICHLAND TOWNSHIP BOARD ON JANUARY 18, 2022



RICHLAND TOWNSHIP

5-Year Recreation Plan 2022-2026

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A decorative background featuring a stylized plant with several leaves. The leaves are outlined in a dark teal color and are scattered across a solid light green background. Some leaves are fully visible, while others are partially cut off by the edges of the frame.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION



PURPOSE AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

This recreation plan aims to provide a framework for developing and maintaining parks and recreation facilities in Richland Township that are supported by the community. This plan includes an inventory of recreation facility conditions, accessibility assessments, and identifying goals and objectives for future improvements. It also provides an action plan to implement the goals and objectives recommended by this plan and pursue the Township's vision for recreation.

This plan will guide local officials when making parks and recreation decisions and for the local community engaged in recreation efforts. It also incorporates the requirements set forth by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to develop park and recreation plans. To be eligible for any state recreation grants, the MDNR requires that an up-to-date recreation plan be submitted.

This plan is founded on community input from residents, local officials, and Township staff. The strategies presented in the previous recreation plan were identified for 2017-2021; this update will build upon the previous plan to further support recreation efforts for 2022-2026. However, this plan should be considered a working document and may require appropriate adjustments as conditions change and funding opportunities arise.



Chapter 2

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

THE EXTENT OF PLAN FOCUS

This Recreation Plan has been developed to address parks and recreation facilities in Richland Township for the five years from 2022 through 2026. This plan generally includes the jurisdiction associated with the Township boundaries and the incorporated Village of Richland. Residents of the Village are considered residents of the Township and were included in the Community Survey and public meeting attendance. The U.S. Census also consists of the Village in all Township data reports.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The U.S. Census Bureau incorporates all Village data within Township data reports. Therefore, for purposes of this plan and similar reference purposes, the demographic characteristics analyzed in this chapter contain both the Richland Township and Village of Richland values unless otherwise specified.

Richland Township has experienced a steady rate of growth over the last thirty-year period. Since 2000, the Township's population has grown by approximately 27 percent, and the Village has increased by about 30 percent (Table 2.1). This rate of growth was more significant than all surrounding townships. For example, more urban townships to the south (Comstock Charter) and west (Cooper Charter) grew roughly 24 percent and 12 percent, respectively, over the same period. The more rural townships to the north (Prairieville in Barry County) and east (Ross) have less influence on population growth, although they share a standard connection through the frontage onto Gull Lake.

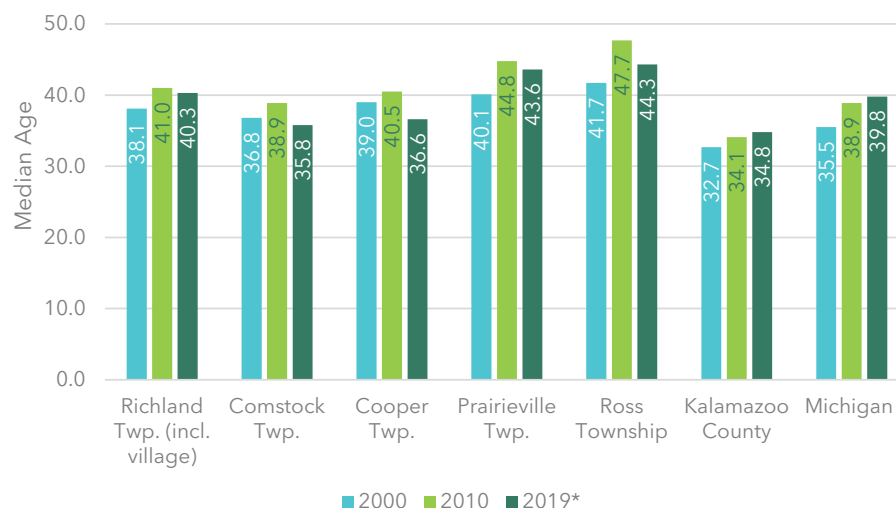
Table 2.1 - Population

| Community | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Richland Twp. | 4,634 | 5,896 | 6,829 | 8,693 |
| Richland Village | 465 | 593 | 751 | 946 |
| Comstock Twp. | 11,834 | 13,851 | 14,854 | 15,231 |
| Cooper Twp. | 8,442 | 8,754 | 10,111 | 10,418 |
| Prairieville Twp. | 3,409 | 3,222 | 3,404 | 3,334 |
| Ross Township | 4,730 | 5,047 | 4,664 | 4,851 |

Source: US Census Bureau

All communities experienced an increased median age between 2000 and 2010. In 2019, this trend of increasing age was estimated to continue in the County and state (Fig. 2.1). However, Richland Township, the Village, and surrounding townships were estimated to decrease in median age between 2010 and 2019, somewhat reversing this trend. Yet, the Township remains comparable to the state median age overall and more significant than Kalamazoo County.

Figure 2.1 - Median Age Comparison



Source: Census 2000, 2010

*Estimate from the 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



With national trends supporting an overall aging population, there is a need for housing and recreation options to allow for more “aging in place.” Yet, the Village retains a relatively young population. Together, the Township and Village support a range of ages that may require active and passive recreation options. In addition, the Township, the Village, Gull Lake Community Schools, and Kalamazoo County Parks and Recreation are collaborating on improvements to existing community and regional facilities and seeking to expand non-motorized connections within and to regional facilities in surrounding communities. Toward this end, the Richland Township Planning Commission and Richland Township Board of Trustees have adopted the Richland Township 2035 Master Plan, which includes a non-motorized plan (within the Transportation element).

Following are other population and housing trends in Richland Township that may influence the recreational needs and desires of the community.

- **EDUCATION.** In 2019, the percentage of Richland residents with a high school education or higher (95.9%) was higher than Kalamazoo County (93.6%) and Michigan (90.8%). Similarly, the Township had a

much higher percentage of residents with at least a bachelor’s degree (50.4%) compared to the County (38.8%) and Michigan (29.1%). These trends indicate that Township residents are highly educated. In addition, higher education often corresponds to positive physical activity and involvement in extra-curricular activities.

- **INCOME.** The median household income of Richland Township residents (\$79,611) was considerably higher than Kalamazoo County (\$54,431) and Michigan (\$54,938). This may support specialized types of recreation such as clubs or associations for those with higher incomes. Conversely, recreational opportunities for more modest gains may seek through affordable activities such as biking and hiking.
- **HOUSEHOLD SIZE.** Richland Township had a greater average household size (2.59 people) than Kalamazoo County (2.46) and Michigan (2.47) in 2019. This suggests larger families in the Township, which may impact the community’s types of recreation options, such as more family-friendly activities.
- **HOME VALUE.** In 2019, Richland Township contained a higher median home value (\$207,000) than Kalamazoo County (\$153,800) and Michigan (\$169,600). This aligns with a higher median household income in the Township and may support various every day and specialized recreational activities that appeal to different income levels.
- **COMMUTING.** Most residents worked outside Richland Township (88%), with an average commute time of 22.6 minutes in 2019. This was higher than Kalamazoo County (20.4 min.) but lower than Michigan (24.5 min.). This time suggests that most residents travel to larger urban centers for employment, such as Kalamazoo or Battle Creek. In addition, recreational activities may capitalize on the more rural setting and water features in Richland Township.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Richland Township is located along the northern tier of Townships in Kalamazoo County. It has a unique mixture of urban (Village), suburban (access to Kalamazoo and Battle Creek employment markets), and rural characteristics. The Village of Richland is entirely contained within the Township. Together, they form a typical township square that encompasses 36 square miles.

TRANSPORTATION

The natural pattern of growth has been along the M-43 and M-89 corridors and around Gull Lake. M-43, M-89, and M-343 serve as major transportation corridors and offer access to Kalamazoo and Battle Creek as large urban centers. These cities provide employment, shopping, and services a reasonable distance from Richland Township residents. In addition, M-43 connects to US-131 to the northwest, a central north-south transportation corridor linking Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids.

NATURAL FEATURE PRESERVATION

Considering the proximity of major road corridors near-critical natural features, the Township has incorporated elements of historic preservation and protection of natural resources in planning, considering the impacts of each on future development. The Township's 2035 Master Plan utilized recent map updates to the flood hazard and wetland areas and the City of Kalamazoo's wellhead protection area in defining "open space" preservation areas (Map 1). These areas are then combined with public and private recreation and open space areas to form the "Recreation/Open Space" designation on the Future Land Use Map.

NATURAL LANDSCAPE

Richland Township's landscape was primarily influenced by glacial activity, leaving many "kettle" lakes, outwash sand, and gravel as the ice melted, and glaciers retreated. As a result, wetlands typically surround the lakes and rivers, especially prominent around Three Lakes and Spring Book. In addition, wetlands typically surround smaller lakes such as Little Long Lake, Miller Lake, and Grassy Lake. Still, they are scarcer directly adjacent to Gull Lake due to the lakeside residential development (Map 2).

Richland Township's terrain is relatively level or gently sloping overall. Areas of steeper terrain are generally located along with water features, with the greatest slopes (>15 degrees) occurring near Spring Brook and Three Lakes.

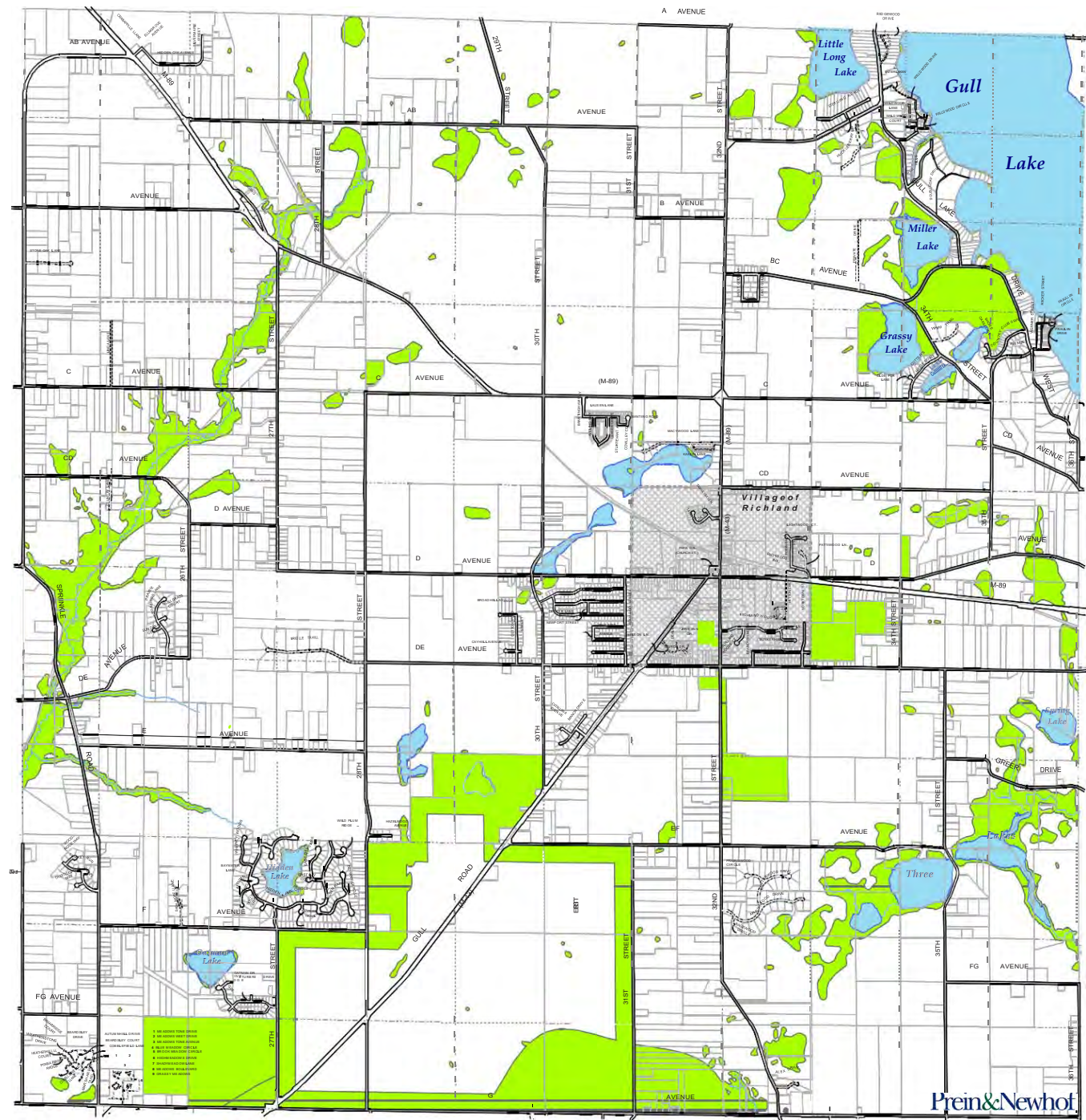
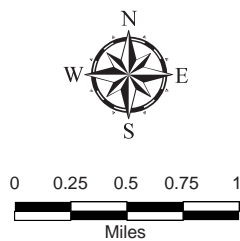


Map 1

OPEN SPACE

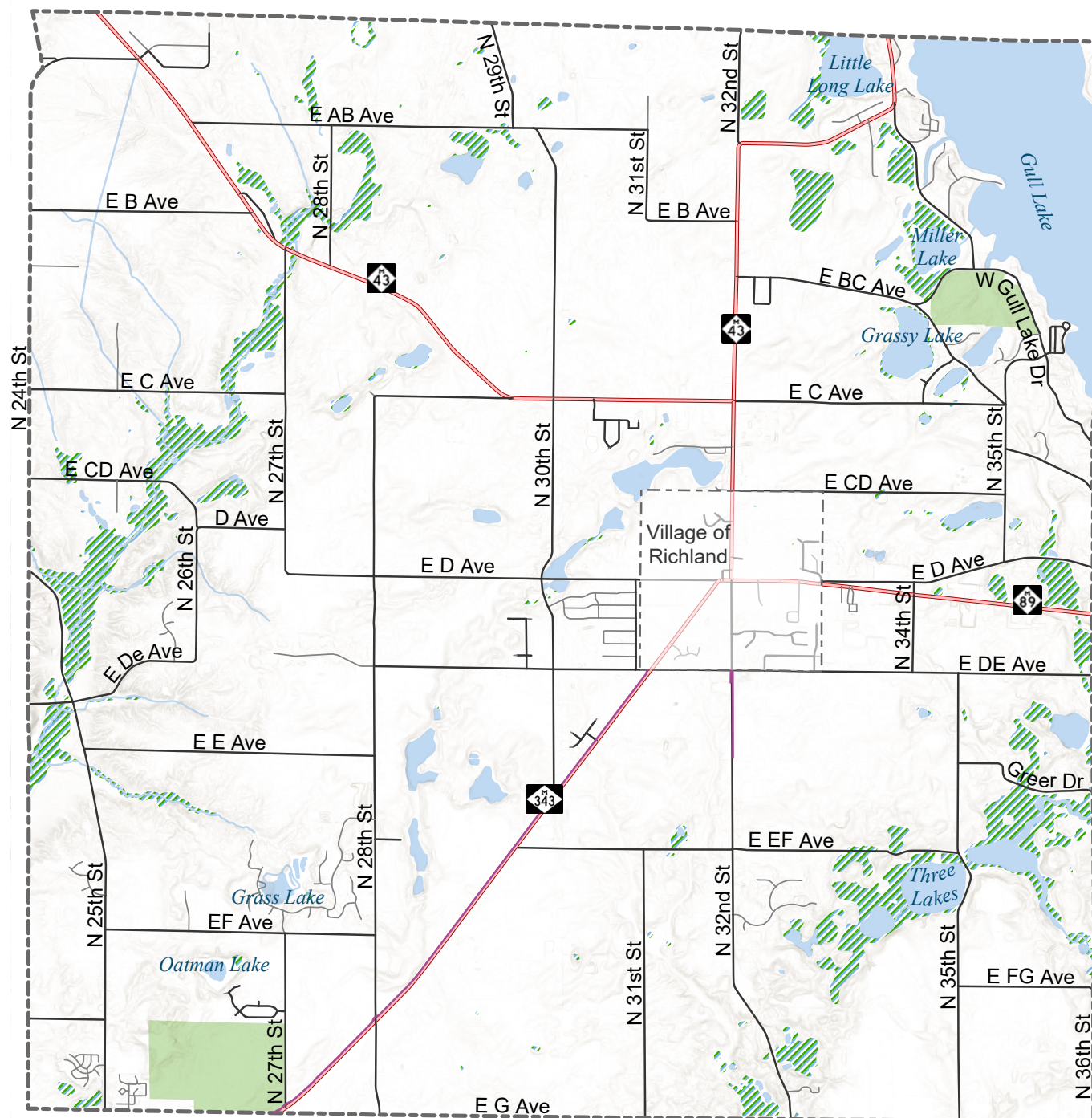
Recreation Areas per
2035 Land Use Plan

 Open Space

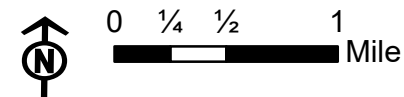


Map 2

NATURAL FEATURES



- Rivers
- Lakes
- ▨ Wetlands
- State Highway
- Arterial Roads
- Local Roads



Data Sources: ESRI Living Atlas; Michigan Open Data Portal; Michigan DNR; EGLE

WATER FEATURES

Gull Lake is a significant water feature in Richland Township, providing valuable scenery, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat. Like other lakes in the area, Gull Lake was formed by glacial activity that once covered Michigan. However, it is much larger than many in the region at almost four miles long and nearly a mile wide for most of its length. Several deep depressions exist in the lake, with the deepest being approximately 110 feet in the middle of the lake. The Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program classified Gull Lake as oligotrophic in 2019, indicating it is generally deep and clear, with little aquatic or plant growth. Oligotrophic lakes often maintain oxygen to support cold-water fish in deeper waters. These conditions are often the idea for recreational activities such as swimming, boating, and fishing.

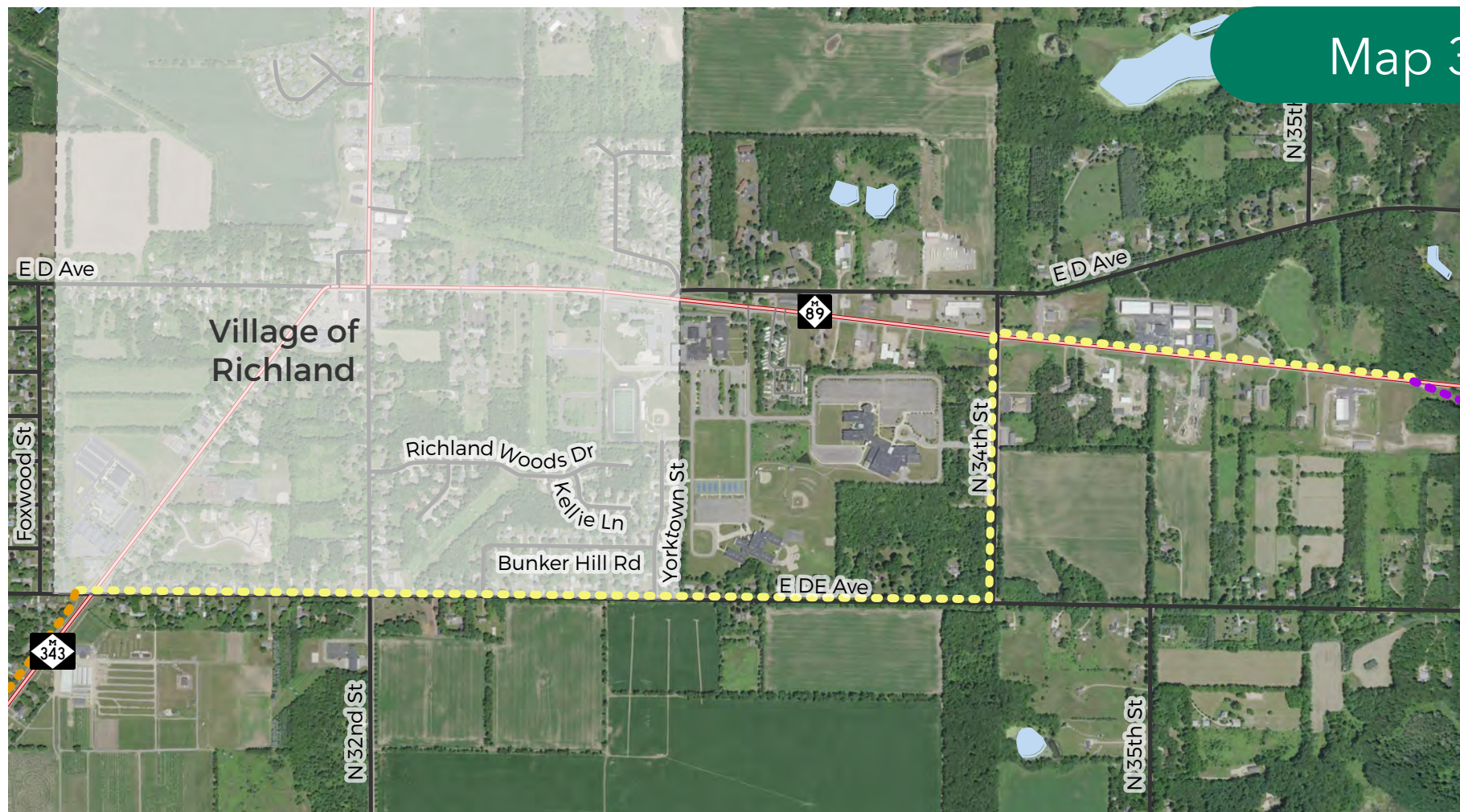
The Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program also evaluated the human impact on the Gull Lake shoreline in 2019, indicating it is below average compared to other lakes in the program. The weakest point noted by the assessment was its riparian zone, and improving this zone was pointed out as the best way to improve the lake's overall health, such as through reduced mowing and increased natural vegetation.

Other smaller lakes in Richland Township include Little Long Lake, Miller Lake, Grassy Lake, Three Lakes, Grass Lake, and Oatman Lake. These smaller lakes provide opportunities for fishing, kayaking, and hiking.

REGIONAL / STATEWIDE CONNECTION

While Richland Township and Richland Village have created their sense of community, efforts to connect historical and natural resources around Gull Lake have created a regional link between communities in Kalamazoo County. The efforts made to construct the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KRVt), with its statewide focus and connection to the KalHaven Trail, provide a unique opportunity to now bring the amenities of Richland and Gull Lake into this trail system. A segment of this system (termed Phase III of the KRVt) is now proposed from the Village of Augusta extending north through Ross Township to Gull Lake (Map 3). At Gull Lake, this trailway would then extend west (along M-89) to Richland Township and connect to Gull Lake Community Schools and their recreational facilities.

Segments within the Township are now being evaluated to connect to the existing Gull Road Path along M-343. This trail, constructed by MDOT, connects the Village of Richland, down Gull Road (M-343) to Comstock Township. It is anticipated that this would become part of the River Valley Trailway (KRVt system) once these connections through Richland Township can be completed. Further collaboration between the County, Comstock, Richland, and Cooper Townships could link with G Avenue extending west to Parchment. This G Avenue corridor can link several large apartment complexes with commercial development areas and further recreation options (Eastern Hills Golf Course). A final connection would be made in Cooper Township, where the trail follows the Kalamazoo River through the Nature Center preserve to a trailhead at the D Avenue bridge.



KALAMAZOO RIVER VALLEY FUTURE TRAIL EXTENSION



- Future Augusta to Gull Lake Trail
- Future Kalamazoo River Valley Trail
- Gull Lake Pathway

Data Sources: ESRI Living Atlas; Michigan Open Data Portal; Michigan DNR; EGLE

A stylized graphic of a plant with several leaves, rendered in a dark purple outline against a solid magenta background. The plant starts from the bottom left and branches upwards and to the right, with leaves of varying sizes and orientations.

Chapter 3

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

TOWNSHIP BOARD AND PARKS COMMITTEE

A board of elected officials governs Richland Township. The Richland Township Board of Trustees comprises seven members consisting of a supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and four trustees. In addition, they have established a Recreation Advisory Committee according to Act 157 of 1905 ("Township Parks and Places of Recreation") made up of five members, three of whom are members of the Township Board (*). It should also be noted one member is also the Board representative on the Planning Commission to coordinate those activities better. The Township Board and Parks Committee are served by a Parks Director who oversees the Township Park system.

A list of the current elected officials and key personnel is as follows:

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Lysanne Harma, Supervisor*

Bear Priest, Clerk

Marsha Drouin, Treasurer

Dave Wendzel, Trustee*

Bill Peter, Trustee

Trey Eldridge, Trustee

Paul Foust, Trustee*

PARKS COMMITTEE

Rob LaDuke

Dave Wendzel*

Lysanne Harma*

Paul Foust*

(One Position currently unfilled)

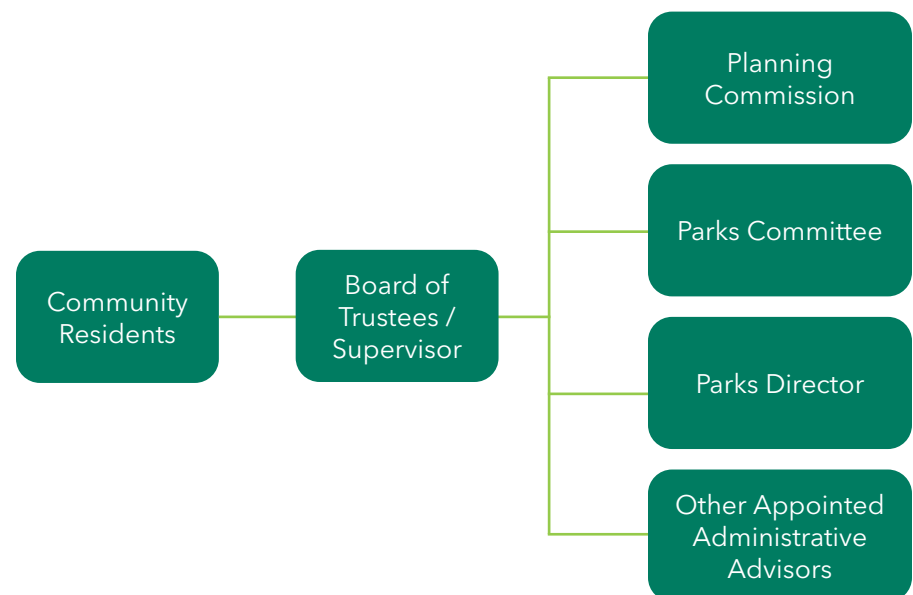
PARKS STAFF

Dave Jones, Parks Director

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE STAFF

The Parks Director oversees the operation and maintenance of the Township Parks system, recreational events and activity scheduling associated with them, marketing and promotion, and identifying and implementing new funding sources/programs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



PROGRAMMING/BUDGETING/ FUNDING SOURCES

Programs, budgeting, and funding are based upon facility utilization for public and private activities. The most significant revenue-producing activity is park rental fees, with these established by the Township Board. In addition, the Township Board establishes an annual budget for the Parks System. This budget is directed at recreation planning, programs, or facility improvements.

Most programs and utilization of the facilities are not revenue-producing but provide facilities for all residents to undertake passive and active recreational pursuits. Greater exposure of the facilities through the improvements and expansion to the trail system is expected to increase such facilities' desirability for future events.

BUDGET, 2021/2022

| GL NUMBER | DESCRIPTION | APPROVED BUDGET |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 101 - GENERAL FUND | | |
| 101-722-702.00 | PARKS SALARIES | 32,216 |
| 101-722-702.22 | WAGES FOR RICHLAND SQUARE GROUNDS | 1,000 |
| 101-722-702.35 | ADDITIONAL DUTIES - HAZARD PAY | |
| 101-722-702.50 | CONCESSION WAGES | 7,000 |
| 101-722-702.70 | GROUNDS MAINT WAGES | 6,000 |
| 101-722-702.80 | FIELD PREP WAGES - REIMBURSE | |

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------|
| 101-722-710.00 | TECHNOLOGY STIPEND | 1,800 |
| 101-722-717.00 | FICA | 3,700 |
| 101-722-751.00 | GAS & OIL | 500 |
| 101-722-775.00 | PARK FIXTURES & SUPPLIES | 7,500 |
| 101-722-775.20 | RICHLAND SQ SUPPLIES | 350 |
| 101-722-775.50 | CONCESSION SUPPLIES | 10,000 |
| 101-722-800.00 | ENGINEERING | 500 |
| 101-722-826.00 | LEGAL FEES | 500 |
| 101-722-830.00 | PARK ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS | 500 |
| 101-722-881.00 | PROMOTIONS | 500 |
| 101-722-911.00 | INSURANCE | 5,200 |
| 101-722-911.20 | RICHLAND SQUARE INSURANCE | 130 |
| 101-722-917.00 | WORKMAN'S COMP INSURANCE | 2,000 |
| 101-722-920.00 | UTILITIES | 8,000 |
| 101-722-920.10 | PARK PORTA POTTY EXPENSE | 1,200 |
| 101-722-920.20 | UTILITIES - RICH SQ. | 1,500 |
| 101-722-927.00 | CAPTIAL EXPENDITURES - 32ND ST | 4,000 |
| 101-722-927.20 | CAPITAL EXP RICHLAND SQ. | 6,700 |
| 101-722-927.30 | CAPTIAL EXPENDITURES - TABLES | |
| 101-722-930.00 | BUILDING MAINTENANCE | 5,000 |
| 101-722-931.00 | GROUNDS MAINTENANCE | 47,500 |
| 101-722-931.10 | GULL ROAD PATH MAINTENANCE | 3,600 |
| 101-722-931.20 | GROUNDS MAINT - RICH SQ | 7,000 |
| 101-722-931.30 | TWP COURTS | |
| 101-722-933.00 | EQUIP. REPAIR | 2,000 |
| 101-722-958.00 | MEMBERSHIPS & DUES | 800 |
| 101-722-960.00 | EDUCATION & TRAINING | 1,500 |
| 101-722-971.00 | CAPITAL IMPROV PARK GRANT | |
| 101-722-974.00 | LAND IMPROVEMENTS | 1,000 |
| 101-722-974.10 | MEMORIAL TREES | |
| 101-722-999.00 | TRANSFER OUT | |
| 101-751-960.00 | EDUCATION & TRAINING | 1,500 |
| NET OF REVENUES/APPROPRIATIONS - 722 - PARKS & RECREATION | | (169,196) |



ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS/ RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Community volunteers are essential to Richland Township's parks and recreation efforts. Dedicated individuals and organizations assist with community projects, donating time, money, and resources for improvement and maintenance projects. There has been a continuous growth of volunteers and organizations helping with maintenance and using the park facilities for their activities. A partial list is as follows:

1. Rotary of Gull Lake
2. Richland Area Fire Fighters Association
3. Lions Club of Richland
4. Boy Scout Troop 294
5. Gull Lake High School Football Team
6. Gull Lake High School Baseball Team
7. Gull Lake High School Softball Team
8. Gull Lake High School Volleyball Team
9. Gull Lake High School Cross Country
10. Soccer Shots Youth Training
11. Gull Lake Youth Football
12. KAR- Kalamazoo Area Runners Club
13. Gull Lake National Honor Society
14. Gull Lake Middle School Volunteers
15. Kalamazoo LaCrosse BJ Sports Camps
16. Kalamazoo Home School Group 1589
17. BPA Travel Baseball of Michigan

A stylized graphic of a plant with a central stem and several large, elongated leaves, rendered in a light green color against a dark green background. The leaves are arranged in a way that suggests growth and movement.

Chapter 4

RECREATION INVENTORY



This inventory of recreational facilities begins with a review of those facilities directly owned, operated, and maintained by the Township, followed by other public or private facilities within the jurisdiction of the Township and Village. Other County facilities and nearby facilities of a regional/statewide nature are also addressed. This inventory is helpful in better defining the needs of the Township's growing population to improve upon current recreation facilities through collaboration with others and connectivity between places.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Michigan DNR requires that every park owned or operated by the Township include an accessibility assessment. This assessment was not included in the 2017 Master Plan, so parks were re-evaluated for this plan. Each Township-operated facility is assigned a score from 1-5 based on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (Table 4-1). A description of compliance with ADA accessibility is included in the goals and action plan.

Table 4.1 - MDNR Grading System for Accessibility

| Accessibility Grade | Definition |
|---------------------|--|
| 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 |

METHODS

The methods used to determine site inventory and accessibility were based on a compilation of information from the previous recreation plan, a review of aerial imagery, site visits, and information provided by Township officials and other local entities. The planning consultant, Richland Township Parks Director, Parks Committee, Planning Commission, and Township staff contributed to the inventory and ADA assessments.

TOWNSHIP OWNED AND OPERATED FACILITIES

Following are descriptions of the park and open space areas within Richland Township, along with a description of improvements, activities that occur at each place, and an accessibility evaluation.

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP PARK

This 48-acre site, located at 6996 N. 32nd Street (Map 3), is an active recreational facility, with five (5) baseball fields and two (2) softball fields, including dugouts, scoreboards, and bleachers. In addition, it has one (1) soccer field with nets, one (1) football field with a scoreboard, two (2) volleyball courts, and one (1) batting cage. These fields host youth baseball, football, and soccer leagues and their associated summer camps for boys and girls. They also host Little League tournaments and travel sites for baseball and softball. In addition, the Township facilities are often used to assist Gull Lake Community Schools with sports fields for school site over flow and cross-country venue. The Gull Lake Community Schools often use the Township facilities and have a strong relationship with the Parks & Recreation Department. Other programs and activities include volleyball leagues, rugby, frisbee, lacrosse, model airplane flying, and kite flying.

There are also more passive recreational facilities and support buildings, including walking paths, a pavilion, a gazebo, an outdoor grill, restrooms, concession facilities, benches, and picnic tables. In addition, there is a playground structure for children with other stand-alone improvements, such as swing sets, sandboxes, and climbing walls and rocks—these support community activities and private rentals for parties, picnics, and reunions.

The community has actively supported these activities through donations and volunteer efforts, such as the tree-planting program, Relay for Life

events, and cleanup activities. In addition, it is a recreational resource known throughout the area, with easy access and sufficient parking. Therefore, this facility would be considered in the “community park” category based upon the size, although facility upgrades and utilization have characteristics of a “sports complex” and “large urban park.”

Accessibility Score: 2



RICHLAND TOWNSHIP HALL

This property is approximately 6.4 acres located at 7401 N. 32nd Street and includes the governmental offices, fire station, and a community meeting room. In addition, a basketball court, which can also be converted into two pickle-ball courts is accessible from the large, lighted parking lot. The court has also been used as an ice rink in the winter; this would generally be considered the “mini- park” category.

Accessibility Score: 2

32ND STREET SIDEWALK

In collaboration with Richland Village, the Township has extended the sidewalk from De Avenue south to the Township Hall property (on the west side of 32nd Street) and constructed a new sidewalk from De Avenue south to the Township Park (on the east side of 32nd Street). The extension from De Avenue to the Township Park is approximately 2,500 linear feet. This sidewalk extension creates “greenway” connectivity between the Village Green Park in the center of the Village (corner of M-89 and M-43) to the Township Hall and Township Park. This approximately one-mile distance allows community residents to access the Township Park and its internal pathway system and recreation facilities.

Accessibility Score: 2

VILLAGE GREEN

This passive 1-acre park is the central square within the Village, yet owned by the Township. The amenities surrounding the square include the library and community building. Improvements include picnic tables, park benches, lighting, a drinking fountain, community activities sign, and mature trees. This would generally be considered in the “mini-park” category.

Accessibility Score: 2

D AVENUE “PASSIVE” PARK

This 7.8-acre site is devoted to passive walking trails and is often used by dog-walkers. It also supports geocaching activity. This natural area is located just north of the termination of 34th Street at D Avenue.

TOWNSHIP/VILLAGE - OTHER FACILITIES (PUBLIC/PRIVATE)

The following facilities are either owned by the Village of Richland or are private facilities in the Township or Village. Pathways between these facilities would enhance connectivity between destinations. These facilities include the Gull Lake Community Schools campus, two golf courses (Gull Lake Country Club, a private facility in the northeastern portion of the Township and Eastern Hills, a public facility in the southwestern part of the Township), and several community organization buildings (Community Hall and the Richland Area Community Center). In addition, the Gull Prairie Preserve is a 160-acre recreational preserve with walking paths that contain prairie and woodland restoration areas, which are readily available by Township and other area residents.

KALAMAZOO COUNTY PARKS SYSTEM

Kalamazoo County operates an extensive county park system comprised of active and passive recreational facilities. These include River Oaks Park (Comstock Township), Markin Glen Park (Cooper Township), Prairie View Park (Schoolcraft Township), Scotts Mill Park (Pavilion Township), and Cold Brook Park (Climax Township). River Oaks and Markin Glen parks are essential to Richland Township, as they would be destination parks as part of the linear connection to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail.

OTHER COUNTY FACILITIES

There are many other facilities in the County, including those operated by other cities, villages, and townships. Following is a description of parks in adjacent Townships:

ROSS TOWNSHIP (EAST)

A range of public and non-profit facilities exist in Ross Township. The Township operates Ross Township Park on Gull Lake, used for picnics and access by swimmers and divers. The YMCA operates a facility on Sherman Lake that area residents well utilize for swimming, camping, and related activities.

Through donations by the Kellogg Foundation, Michigan State University also operates a number of facilities in the area, including the W.K Kellogg Biological Station, the Bird Sanctuary, and the Experimental Forest. The State of Michigan also has the Fort Custer Recreation Area to the east between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. Private facilities include many golf courses and areas that support summer tourism.

COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP (SOUTH)

In addition to the county facilities along the Kalamazoo River, Comstock Township has an active parks system that includes Robert Morris Park and several smaller mini-parks. In addition, there is a fee-based winter park (Echo Valley) that abuts Robert Morris Park on Campbell Lake. These facilities are just south of the Richland Township boundary and accessible off or within proximity of 32nd Street.

COOPER TOWNSHIP (WEST)

In addition to the county facilities along the Kalamazoo River (as it branches northward), there is a large natural area operated as the Nature Center and Delano Farms, accessed on the west side of the river along Westnedge Avenue. There are also park facilities within the City of

Parchment and in Kalamazoo Township. Crossings of the river are limited, with Mosel to the south and D Avenue to the north allowing for westerly crossing points.

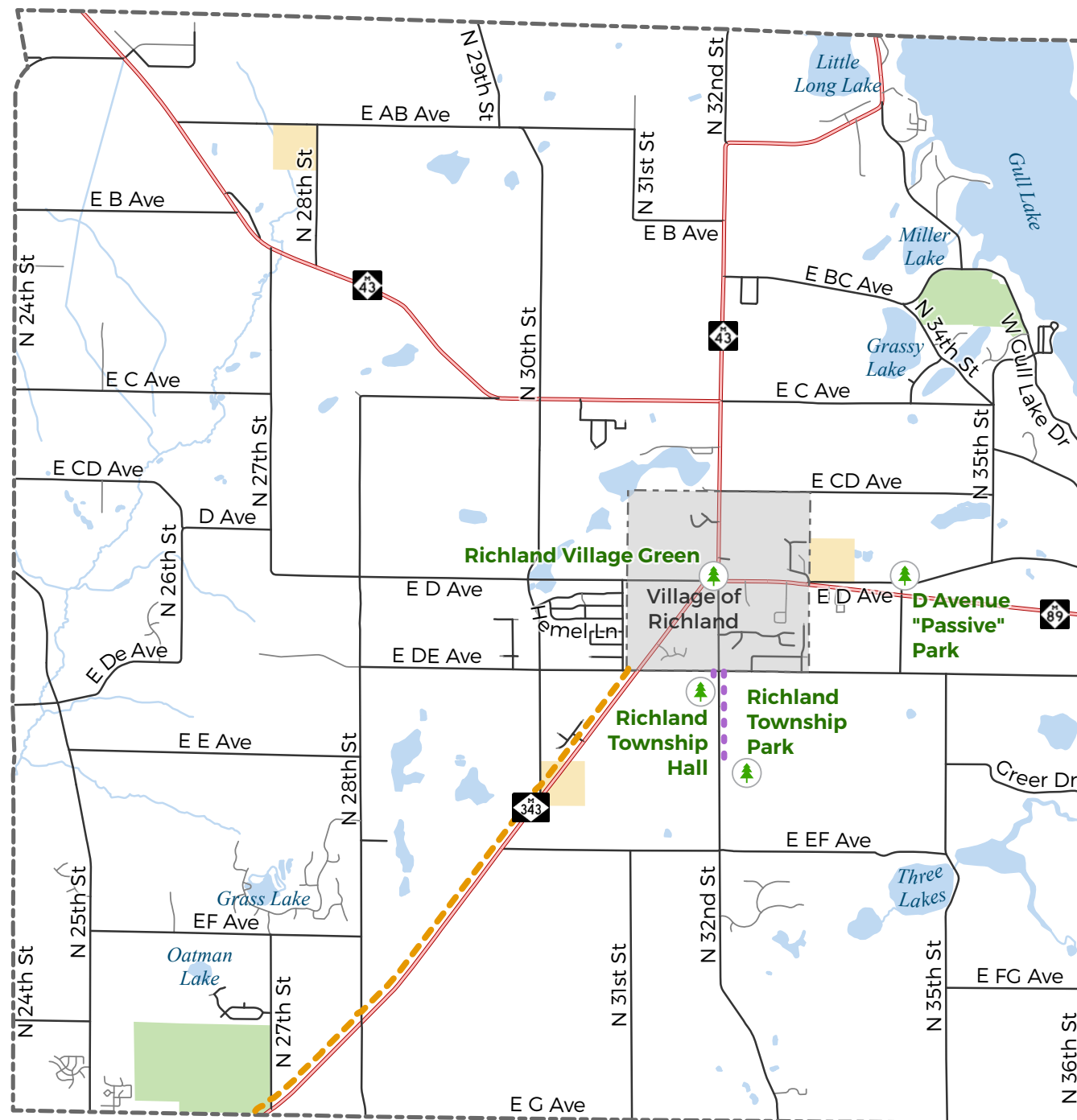
REGIONAL/STATEWIDE FACILITIES

Existing linear trail connections that are part of the statewide trail system are critically important to this plan. For example, connection to the south and west allows Township access to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail, which connects to the KalHaven Trail. This state pathway links Kalamazoo to the lakeshore at South Haven. The River Valley Trail also runs to the east, with plans on connecting to the Battle Creek Linear Park System, which then connects back to the Kalamazoo River through Trailway efforts in Calhoun County.

The North Country Scenic Trail provides a statewide and national connection, utilizing local and state linkages to connect trails from New York State to North Dakota. In addition, there is a segment that connects the Yankee Springs State Recreation Area in Barry County to the Battle Creek Linear Park System, with an area defined as running through Ross Township in the northeast corner of Kalamazoo County.

Map 4

PARKS, TRAILS, & OPEN SPACE



Data Sources: ESRI Living Atlas; Michigan Open Data Portal; Michigan DNR; EGLE

A decorative background featuring a dark purple field with a pattern of stylized, light pink leaves and stems. The leaves are elongated and pointed, arranged in a branching, organic fashion.

Chapter 5

PLANNING PROCESS & PUBLIC INPUT



PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This new 5-Year Recreation Plan was initiated in 2021 to coordinate the various recreational facilities better and provide direction for future park expansion, administration, and ongoing operation and maintenance. The timetable for review and approval begins with a kickoff meeting at the Township with a Parks Committee Meeting and leads to local support of the plan in early 2022. This would correspond to the successful completion of work outlined within the initial 5-Year plan (2017 - 2021).

PRIOR RECREATION PLANS/ PROJECTS

As part of the 2002-2006 Plan's "Basis for Action Program," the Township's priority was creating and expanding the first Township Park. As a result, the Richland Township Park was established through land acquisition within Section 26, less than .5 miles from the Township Hall. An MDNR trust fund grant was awarded to begin the improvements, including baseball diamonds, restrooms, a playground, and supporting open space. Since then, several other improvements have taken place, including a concrete sidewalk connecting the park with the Township Hall property.

The Action Program within the Plan began the vision for a very active park resource enjoyed by the community and several organizations that have established the location as the base for their recreation programs. (See Appendix for listing.) In addition, population growth and demand for these facilities have prompted the further expansion, including practice soccer fields and general utilization by residents and non-residents.

As part of the 2013-2017 Plan, the Township continued to improve the Township Park, receiving a Passport Grant for upgrades to the internal trail system and playground equipment. It also began coordinating an overall regional trail connection to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail. In addition, the Township assumed full responsibility for the maintenance of the Village Green.



2022 PLAN (PRE-PLANNING AND PUBLIC INPUT)

Public demand for additional facility improvements prompted the Township to undertake a new Recreation Planning process in 2021. This was coordinated with the Township review of their 2035 Master Plan in July - September of 2021 and a follow-up survey of residents in August - September of 2021. The community survey was created with an online survey format with which both Township and Village residents were encouraged to respond. Other copies of this online survey were available in print format at the Township Hall and downloaded on the Township's website. There were approximately 118 surveys returned, all very successful in terms of percentage and validation as quality public input.



2022-2026 (DRAFT PLAN REVIEW/ LOCAL ADOPTION AND SUBMISSION TO STATE)

The Parks Committee held meetings in the summer and fall (minutes included) to kick off the new 5-year Recreation Plan process and begin more detailed discussions regarding the potential for land acquisition abutting the Township Park and expanding a trail network throughout the Township. The public review of the 2017-2021 Draft Plan began at the November Township Board meeting. The Parks Committee met on November 11, 2021, to gauge initial comment approximately six weeks before the public hearing.

Following this initial Draft Plan presentation, the Township accepted written comment, via email or regular mail, for the next 45-60 days. In addition, notice public input meeting, this in the form of a public hearing on January 18, 2022, at the Township Hall, included any proposed changes to the draft made by the Parks Committee based upon this input.

The Parks Committee and staff then presented this draft plan to the Township Board at their January 18, 2022 meeting, followed by discussion and local adoption by the Township Board. Upon local adoption, this will then be transmitted to the State (MDNR) before the February 2022 deadline.

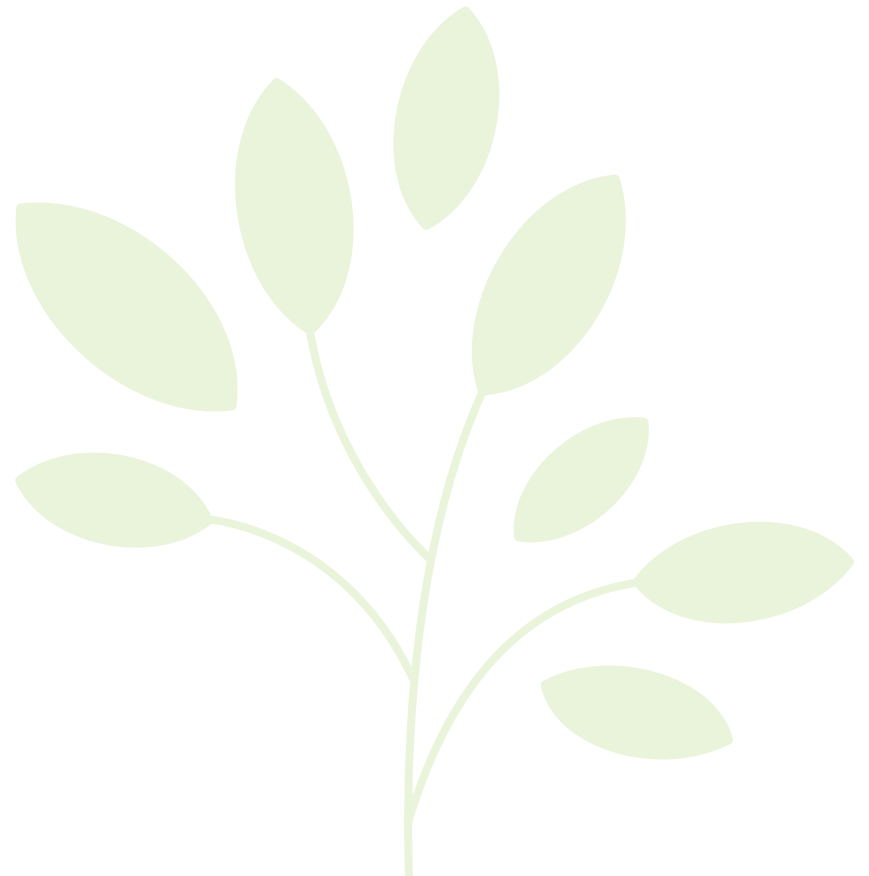
The background is a solid green color. Overlaid on this are several stylized leaves and stems in a teal color. The leaves are simple outlines, some pointing upwards and others downwards, creating a sense of growth. A white rounded rectangle is positioned on the left side, containing the chapter title.

Chapter 6

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



The overriding goal of this plan is to continue to expand on both the active and passive recreational amenities within the Township and create connectivity to other facilities and amenities in the adjoining communities. These goals and objectives were based on feedback from the community survey and public meetings.





GOAL 1: To acquire additional land and continue the improvement program at the Richland Township Park.

OBJECTIVES

- Seek out park expansions allowing for additional access.
- Expand walking trails within and outside the park boundaries.
- Expand volunteer and private donation opportunities.
- Develop an overall concept plan for both active and passive use.

GOAL 2: To enhance collaboration and connectivity with the Village of Richland and Gull Lake Community Schools.

OBJECTIVES

- Increase the connectivity of sidewalks, bike paths, and bike lanes serving the Village and the Township residents.
- Locate facilities and improve areas with the most outstanding visibility for residents to generate more interest and use.
- Enhance recreational facilities to current ADA and universal design standards.



GOAL 3: To connect existing facilities with new linear connections to Township boundaries and collaborate with adjoining communities to connect County and regional facilities.

OBJECTIVES

- Work with Comstock Charter Township and Cooper Charter Township to make connections to the south (32nd Street) and the west (along G Avenue) to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail and related county parks
- Work with Ross Township and Prairieville Township to consider linear connections to the east and the north in support of Gull Lake residents and coordinate with the Kalamazoo Valley River Trail (KVRT) concept and the Water Quality Organization.

GOAL 4: Create more indoor and outdoor recreation facilities with the available land at the Richland Township Park, Township Hall, and Village Green Park.

OBJECTIVES

- Plan and install an outdoor basketball court facility that is designed specifically for this use, as well as more pickleball courts.
- Develop more multi-purpose programs that will be available for residents to encourage outdoor exploration and activity.
- Develop a community bandshell or pavilion to provide recreational space for outdoor community activities and functions.
- Construct more park maintenance and support facilities to provide park staff with better access to maintenance equipment for routine upkeep.
- Construct more bathrooms to serve the community better.



Chapter 7

ACTION PROGRAM

ACTION PROGRAM

This plan has been based on a building-block approach, utilizing past projects, successful improvements, and community support to establish a Parks Program in Richland Township. The intent and direction of this new 5-year plan are threefold: (1) To acquire additional property to expand the Richland Township “community park”; (2) To continue to build a linear park system within the Township with connections to the local school system (Safe Routes) and adjoining communities; and (3) To support the expansion of the regional and statewide trail system through connection to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail and KalHaven Trail to Lake Michigan.

The following action program is devoted to all three directions, with elements of each spread over the five years. Specific actions are more apparent within the first year when a possible grant application will be submitted. In contrast, future years may be more flexible in terms of priorities within the plan.

2022

Begin collaboration with the surrounding communities and other local organizations and institutions to support the continued growth and development of a Township-wide trail system.

2023

Coordinate the internal linear park connection with Gull Lake Schools through their Safe Routes to Schools program application. Build upon this connection to Phase III of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail.

Plan for the addition of maintenance buildings to provide more room to keep equipment and routine care materials strategically around Township parks and in locations of future expansion.

2024

Continue to work on further Trailway expansion with identification of connection points at Township boundaries. In addition, participate with adjoining Townships on a coordinated plan of their non-motorized projects with priority given to linear connections to county parks (River Oaks and Markin Glen) linked to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail.

Begin planning and development of additional active recreational facilities such as pickleball courts and basketball courts.

2025

The Township will continue planning and the installation of park maintenance facilities and public bathrooms at the Township parks. Expand the paving of the walking trail the encircles Richland Township Park. Explore the expansion of the dog park.

2026

Support the regional expansion of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail through a direct connection to Richland Township at Ross Township boundary along M-89 and Cooper and Comstock Township boundaries along G Avenue.

Initiate a new 5-year Recreation Plan. Continue the process of an improvement program for the expanded park facility.

FUNDING

This Action Program anticipates that funding for such capital Improvements will require support from the Township’s general fund, state grant funding, possible support from local foundations or other private entities, including donations and volunteer support from residents.

A decorative background featuring a stylized plant with a central stem and several large, elongated, pointed leaves. The leaves are outlined in a dark purple color against a solid magenta background. The pattern is asymmetrical, with leaves extending from the left and bottom towards the right.

Appendix A.

SURVEY ANALYSIS

PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY - RICHLAND TOWNSHIP PARKS & RECREATION PLAN

Richland Township
Planning Commission
September 27, 2021

INTRODUCTION

During August and September of 2021, the Richland Township Planning Commission issued opinion surveys to gather public input on recreation and land use planning in the Township. This survey resulted in 118 responses, which provide a large amount of quantifiable data to help set policy related to growth, development, and recreation in the Recreation Plan. Following are the results of this survey, along with a summary of trends and planning implications.

RESULTS

1. Do you live in Richland Township?

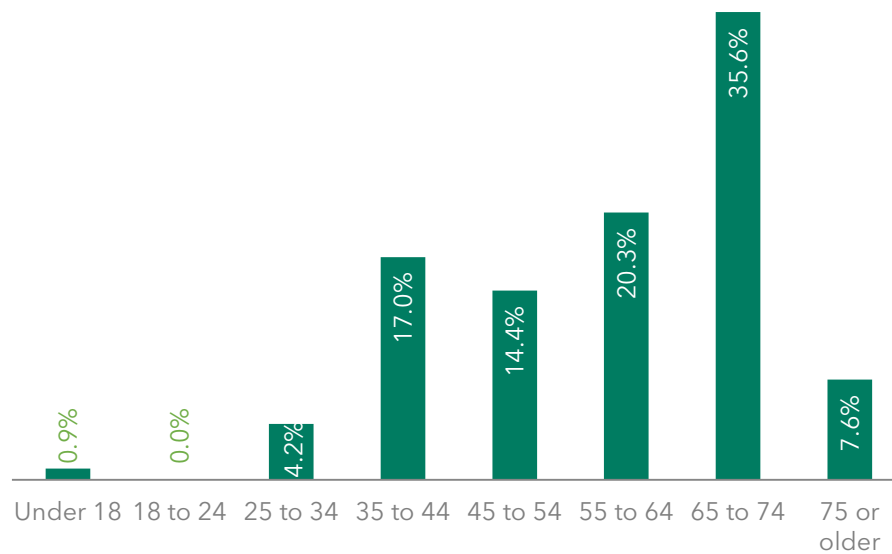
| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|--|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 92.4% | 109 |
| No | 6.8% | 8 |
| Not sure | 0.9% | 1 |
| If you do not live in Richland Township, please indicate where you live. | | 7 |
| Answered | 118 | |
| Skipped | 0 | |

Other responses:

- Battle creek
- Augusta
- Ross Township but am on the GLYFB Board so we utilize the park
- Prairieville Township
- 6882 north 32nd st
- Village of Richland
- We live in Ross Township but have a business in Richland Township.

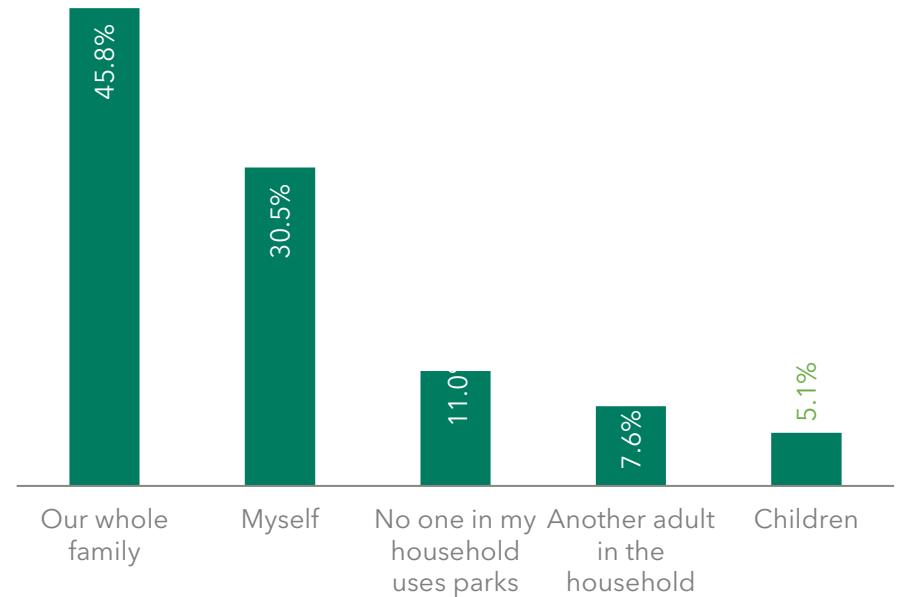
2. What is your age?

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|----------------|-----------|----|
| Under 18 | 0.9% | 1 |
| 18 to 24 | 0.0% | 0 |
| 25 to 34 | 4.2% | 5 |
| 35 to 44 | 17.0% | 20 |
| 45 to 54 | 14.4% | 17 |
| 55 to 64 | 20.3% | 24 |
| 65 to 74 | 35.6% | 42 |
| 75 or older | 7.6% | 9 |
| Answered | 118 | |
| Skipped | 0 | |



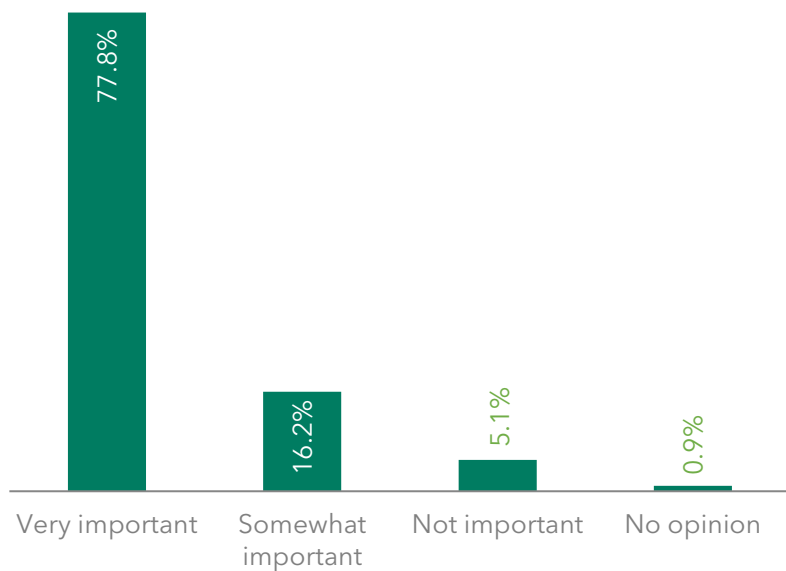
3. Who is in your household is the most active user of parks?

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|----|
| Our whole family | 45.8% | 54 |
| Myself | 30.5% | 36 |
| No one in my household uses parks | 11.0% | 13 |
| Another adult in the household | 7.6% | 9 |
| Children | 5.1% | 6 |
| Answered | 118 | |
| Skipped | 0 | |



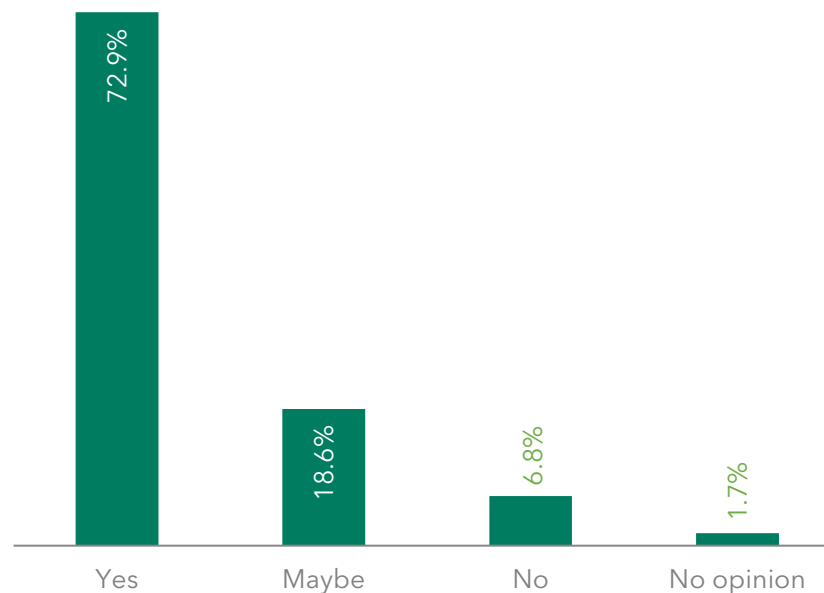
4. How important are parks, trails, and open space to you and/or your household's quality of life?

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|--------------------|-----------|----|
| Very important | 77.8% | 91 |
| Somewhat important | 16.2% | 19 |
| Not important | 5.13% | 6 |
| No opinion | 0.9% | 1 |
| Weighted Average | 2.71 | |
| Answered | 117 | |
| Skipped | 1 | |



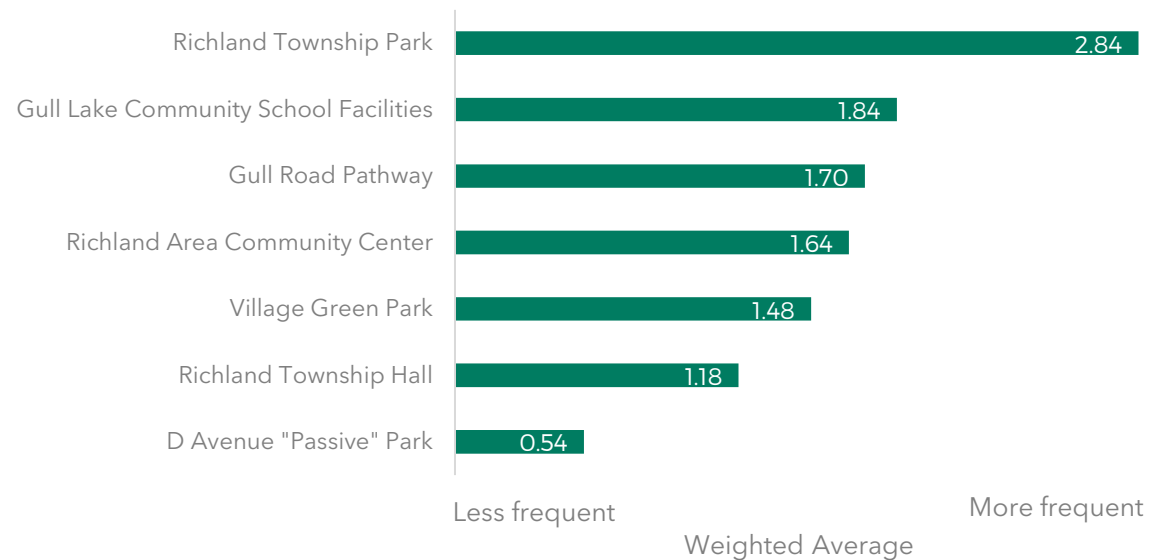
5. Would you or anyone in your household benefit from the addition of parks, trails, or recreation facilities in Richland Township?

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|----------------|-----------|----|
| Yes | 72.9% | 86 |
| Maybe | 18.6% | 22 |
| No | 6.8% | 8 |
| No opinion | 1.7% | 2 |
| Answered | 118 | |
| Skipped | 0 | |

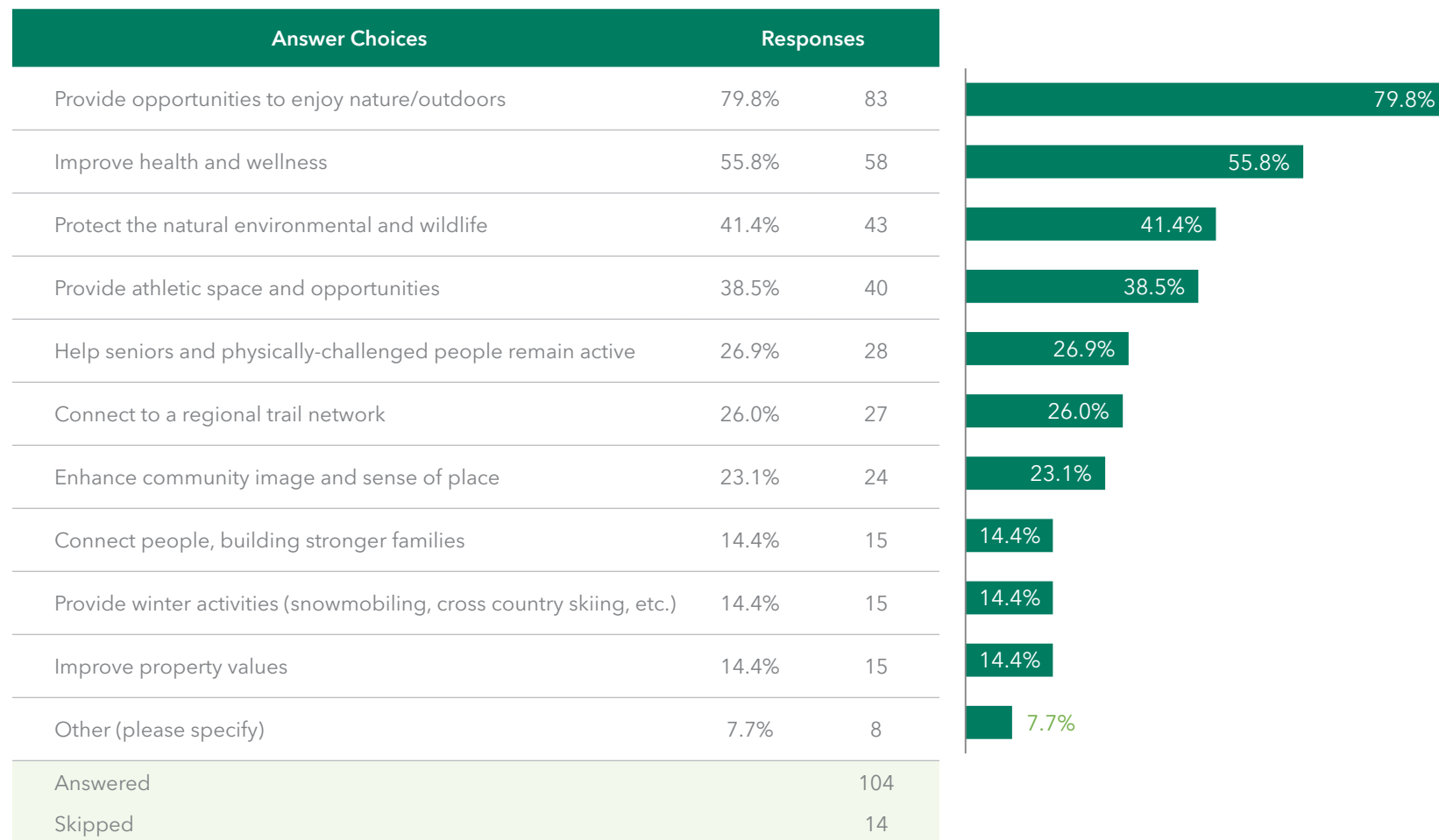


6. How often do you use the following parks and recreation facilities?

| Answer Choices | Responses | | | | | | Total | Weighted Average |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--|-------|------------------|
| | Frequently (once/week or more) | Often (2-3 times/ month) | Sometimes (few times/ year) | Rarely (less than once/ year) | Never | | | |
| Richland Township Park | 37.0% (40) | 31.5% (34) | 16.7% (18) | 8.3% (9) | 6.5% (7) | | 108 | 2.84 |
| Gull Lake Community School Facilities | 27.6% (29) | 9.5% (10) | 14.3% (15) | 16.2% (17) | 32.4% (34) | | 105 | 1.84 |
| Gull Road Pathway | 13.3% (14) | 17.1% (18) | 23.8% (25) | 18.1% (19) | 27.6% (29) | | 105 | 1.70 |
| Richland Area Community Center | 7.4% (8) | 13.0% (14) | 37.0% (40) | 21.3% (23) | 21.3% (23) | | 108 | 1.64 |
| Richland Township Hall | 5.7% (6) | 6.6% (7) | 20.8% (22) | 34.0% (36) | 33.0% (35) | | 106 | 1.18 |
| Village Green Park | 2.8% (3) | 16.0% (17) | 34.0% (36) | 20.8% (22) | 26.4% (28) | | 106 | 1.48 |
| D Avenue "Passive" Park | 2.1% (2) | 2.1% (2) | 9.3% (9) | 20.6% (20) | 66.0% (64) | | 97 | 0.54 |
| Answered | 109 | | | | | | | |
| Skipped | 9 | | | | | | | |



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

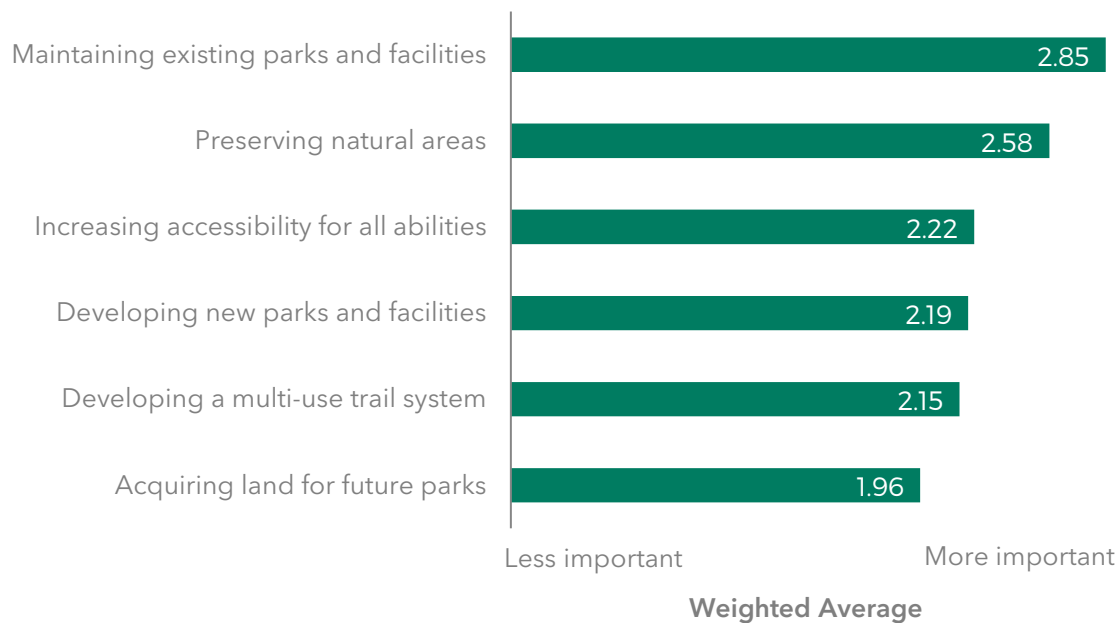


Other responses:

- teach about the environment and how we must protect it
- All of the above!
- People & pet (dog) exercise
- A place to walk with my dog.
- use for group gathering
- Why is the gull road bike path crumbling? It has become dangerous.
- need an off-leash dog park. I drive to Galesburg a few times a week. need to plow snow on gull road path.
- Community events

8. How important are the following in improving parks and recreation in Richland Township?

| Answer Choices | Responses | | | | | Weighted Average |
|--|----------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------|-------|------------------|
| | Very important | Somewhat important | Not important | No opinion | Total | |
| Maintaining existing parks and facilities | 89.9% (96) | 7.4% (8) | 3.7% (4) | 0.0% (0) | 108 | 2.85 |
| Preserving natural areas | 66.7% (70) | 26.7% (28) | 4.8% (5) | 1.9% (2) | 105 | 2.58 |
| Increasing accessibility for all abilities | 46.7% (50) | 35.5% (38) | 11.2% (12) | 6.5% (7) | 107 | 2.22 |
| Developing a multi-use trail system | 43.0% (46) | 37.4% (40) | 11.2% (12) | 8.4% (9) | 107 | 2.15 |
| Developing new parks and facilities | 35.9% (38) | 50.0% (53) | 11.3% (12) | 2.8% (3) | 106 | 2.19 |
| Acquiring land for future parks | 26.4% (28) | 50.0% (53) | 17.0% (18) | 6.6% (7) | 106 | 1.96 |
| Answered | 106 | | | | | |
| Skipped | 14 | | | | | |



9. If you do not currently use parks in Richland Township, what is the reason? (Please select all that apply)

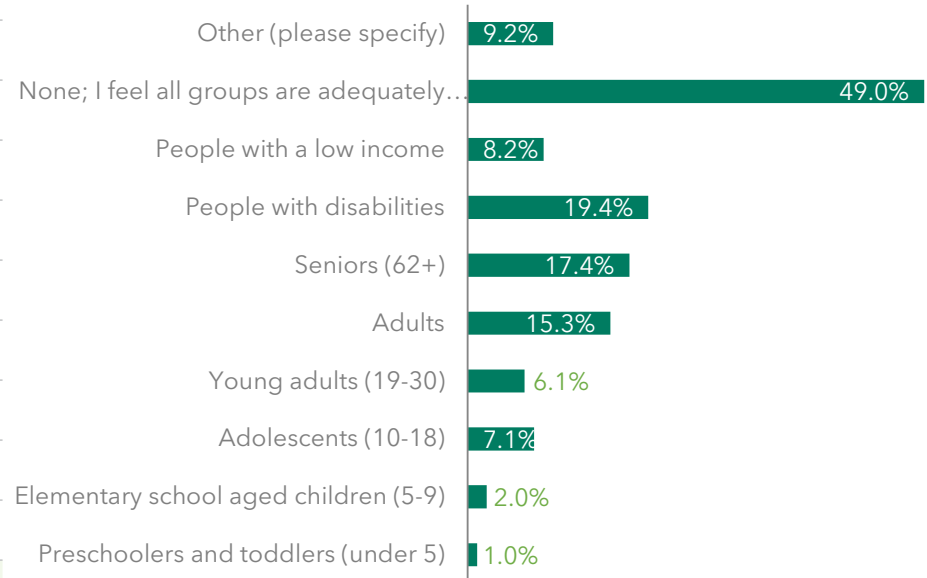
| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|--|-----------|----|
| Other | 43.3% | 13 |
| Not interested / no time | 23.3% | 7 |
| I use parks in other townships/cities | 16.7% | 5 |
| I don't know what's available | 10.0% | 3 |
| Too far away, not conveniently located | 6.7% | 2 |
| I don't know where they are | 6.7% | 2 |
| Lack of facilities | 3.3% | 1 |
| Poorly maintained | 3.3% | 1 |
| I don't have transportation | 3.3% | 1 |
| Answered | 30 | |
| Skipped | 88 | |

Other Responses:

- COVID-19
- Wish the ball fields were accessible to all and not just leagues
- caring for a disabled person
- Use the park down the street from township hall and fire dept. Nice park and well kept up
- Time :)
- Our own property is quite park-like.
- Would love a place to play tennis/bball or have a larger trail.
- I hike with people outside Richland now, but want to improve our hiking options.
- Not interesting
- need of leash dog park, need to plow snow on gull road path.
- Gull road paved path had too much traffic just a few feet away.

10. Which groups do you feel are under-served by current recreation services and amenities? (Please select all that apply)

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|---|-----------|----|
| Preschoolers and toddlers (under 5) | 1.02% | 1 |
| Elementary school aged children (5-9) | 2.04% | 2 |
| Adolescents (10-18) | 7.14% | 7 |
| Young adults (19-30) | 6.12% | 6 |
| Adults | 15.31% | 15 |
| Seniors (62+) | 17.35% | 17 |
| People with disabilities | 19.39% | 19 |
| People with a low income | 8.16% | 8 |
| None; I feel all groups are adequately served | 48.98% | 48 |
| Other (please specify) | 9.18% | 9 |
| Answered | 98 | |
| Skipped | 20 | |



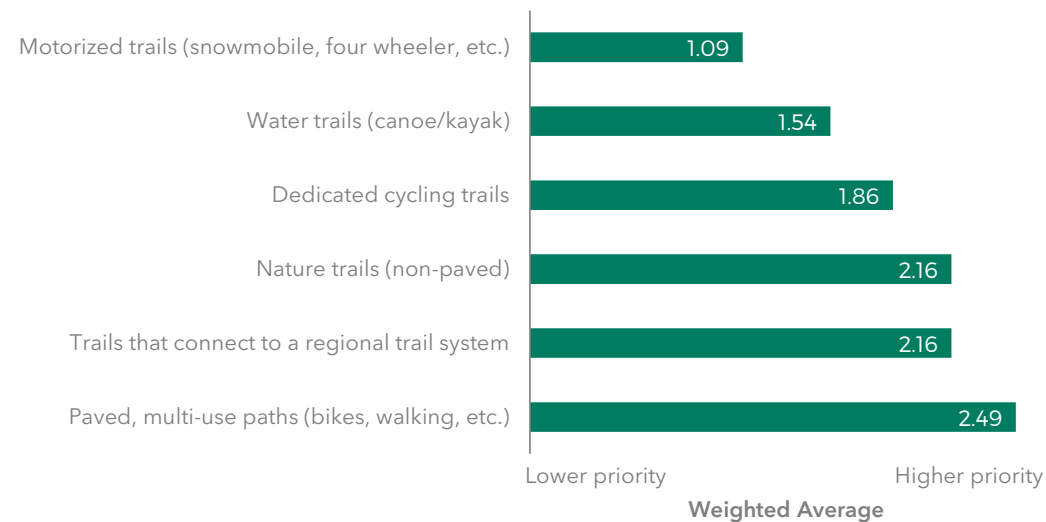
Other Responses:

- Have no idea
- People with dogs - we need a dog park
- people that need a smooth surface to walk on. The mile trail at Richland Township Park would be much better if paved. Mosquito spraying would be appreciated too.
- Not sure

- I rarely see people with disabilities at current facilities but I'm not sure that these locations aren't accessible.
- as a retired senior, I like the Richland options. I don't know what other people need or want.
- I don't know how adequate they are for each group.
- bicyclists
- What & where is the D Avenue "Passive" Park

11. How should different types of trails or pathways be prioritized in Richland Township?

| Answer Choices | Responses | | | | | |
|---|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-------|------------------|
| | High Priority | Medium Priority | Low Priority | I don't know | Total | Weighted Average |
| Paved, multi-use paths (bikes, walking, etc.) | 61.4% (62) | 28.7% (29) | 6.9% (7) | 3.0% (3) | 101 | 2.49 |
| Trails that connect to a regional trail system | 39.6% (40) | 40.6% (41) | 15.8% (16) | 4.0% (4) | 101 | 2.16 |
| Nature trails (non-paved) | 36.6% (37) | 47.5% (48) | 10.9% (11) | 5.0% (5) | 101 | 2.16 |
| Dedicated cycling trails | 30.7% (31) | 33.7% (34) | 26.7% (27) | 8.9% (9) | 101 | 1.86 |
| Water trails (canoe/kayak) | 14.9% (15) | 38.6% (39) | 32.7% (33) | 13.9% (14) | 101 | 1.54 |
| Motorized trails (snowmobile, four-wheeler, etc.) | 4.0% (4) | 12.0% (12) | 73.0% (73) | 11.0% (11) | 100 | 1.09 |
| Other (please specify) | - | - | - | - | 3 | - |
| Answered | 101 | | | | | |
| Skipped | 17 | | | | | |



Other Responses:

- Mountain bike trails
- Dog Park
- need off lead dog park like Galesburg, need to plow snow on gull rod trail.

12. How important is pedestrian connectivity (sidewalks, trails, pathways, crossings, etc.) to you and/or your household?

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|--------------------|-----------|----|
| Very important | 61.6% | 61 |
| Somewhat important | 30.3% | 30 |
| Not important | 7.1% | 7 |
| No opinion | 1.0% | 1 |
| Weighted Average | 2.53 | |
| Answered | 99 | |
| Skipped | 19 | |

13. How important is public lake access to you and/or your household?

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|--------------------|-----------|----|
| Very important | 24.8% | 25 |
| Somewhat important | 25.7% | 26 |
| Not important | 45.5% | 46 |
| No opinion | 4.0% | 4 |
| Weighted Average | 1.71 | |
| Answered | 101 | |
| Skipped | 17 | |

14. If new parks were to be established in Richland Township, what types are most needed? (Check all that apply)

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|---|-----------|----|
| Parks with bike trails | 42.6% | 43 |
| Non-motorized trails and pathways | 40.6% | 41 |
| Natural preservation areas | 37.6% | 38 |
| Large multi-use parks that serve the whole Township | 31.7% | 32 |
| Small neighborhood parks | 30.7% | 31 |
| Parks with lake or river frontage | 30.7% | 31 |
| Other (please specify) | 9.9% | 10 |
| No additional parks or natural areas are needed | 6.9% | 7 |
| Answered | 101 | |
| Skipped | 17 | |

Other Responses:

- Allow ebikes
- Dog Park
- Paved, well maintained trails so people can walk without twisting an ankle on gravel.
- Establish a dedicated pickleball area
- safe play areas for children, & exercise stations for adults.
- A park in or near Eastern Heights

15. How adequately do you feel that the community is served by area programming (camps, sports leagues, outdoor education)?

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|---------------------|-----------|----|
| Very adequately | 13.0% | 12 |
| Adequately | 45.7% | 42 |
| Somewhat adequately | 29.3% | 27 |
| Inadequately | 8.7% | 8 |
| Very inadequately | 3.3% | 3 |
| Weighted average | 3.57 | |
| Answered | 92 | |
| Skipped | 26 | |

16. What parks and recreation amenities, facilities, and services are you most interested in? (Please select your TOP FIVE)

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|--|-----------|----|
| Walking trails | 82.0% | 82 |
| Bike trails | 45.0% | 45 |
| Dog Park | 33.0% | 33 |
| Trailhead with restroom facilities | 33.0% | 33 |
| Outdoor water recreation (splash pad, fountains) | 26.0% | 26 |
| Canoe/kayak facilities | 24.0% | 24 |
| Picnic pavilions | 22.0% | 22 |

| | | |
|---|-------|----|
| Trail/park maps and directional signage | 22.0% | 22 |
| Children's play equipment | 19.0% | 19 |
| Cross country ski trails | 18.0% | 18 |
| Disc golf course | 17.0% | 17 |
| Ice skating rink | 17.0% | 17 |
| Sports courts (basketball, pickleball, tennis, etc.) | 16.0% | 16 |
| Community garden | 16.0% | 16 |
| Mountain biking courses/trails | 14.0% | 14 |
| Outdoor education programs | 14.0% | 14 |
| Organized athletic programs | 12.0% | 12 |
| Baseball/softball fields | 8.0% | 8 |
| Boat launch | 6.0% | 6 |
| Soccer fields | 5.0% | 5 |
| Other (please specify) | 5.0% | 5 |
| Snowmobile trails | 3.0% | 3 |
| Skateboard Park | 2.0% | 2 |
| I'm not interested in any new recreation amenities, facilities, or services | 2.0% | 2 |
| Answered | 101 | |
| Skipped | 17 | |

Other Responses:

- Duck pond for Elders/ Grandchild
- pickleball courts
- More paved trails for walking, mobility scooters, strollers, wheelchairs.
- Movie night under the stars, outdoor music night, etc.

17. Please use the space below to provide additional comments regarding parks and recreation in Richland Township.

- I don't see any questions regarding how well the current park is being maintained. Before we look at increasing our footprint or investing in other sites, it might be nice to take care of what we already have. The fields at the Township Park look nice but the walking paths and landscaping are not maintained at all. When was the last time that township officials walked the paths? There have been overgrown weeds the entire year. When was the last time that we had new wood chips in the play areas? Why aren't we trimming the branches that overhand the path that hit your head as you walk by?

The worst area is on the South side of the walking path as you exit the pine tree area. When you take the corner as you exit the woods, I'm guessing that you've lost at least 2' of the paved paths with the overgrowth that hasn't been addressed. We focus so much on the ball fields that it appears that we don't have enough staff to take care of making the rest of the park look good. Just my opinion but I would really like you all to walk the path once before the end of the year.

- The current Richland Parks director is doing a great job of keeping the Township Park in beautiful condition.
- The Gull Road pathway needs shade trees. I would walk and bike there if there was shade.
- They are improving and need more. Connecting the old rail grades would be a major achievement that could create a loop trip.
- The Park system is fine just as-is! No need to spend more money for additions!!! The Bike Trail already has been a major expense and waste of resources - honestly, how many people have YOU ever seen biking from Richland to Walmart? There's plenty of sidewalks already and adding more will just ruin the residential property values of the

homes in which another Trail is added. Just maintain the park as-is! It's great and well used already.

- I think it would be a huge win if the Richland area had a rec/fun league for high school aged children that loved to play sports but maybe aren't one of the few that make the high school teams. Many rec leagues in the Kalamazoo area are a very far drive from our area and make it more difficult to participate especially with working parents. I think it's a great way to keep kids busy with positive activities as well. An adult rec league would be fun as well and create a closer community.
- More Trees for Shade on the hiking trails and resting benches.
- I like the Richland Park I just wish it was closer to where I live.
- It would be nice to improve Pickleball courts.
- Township should coordinate the development and maintenance of the new Gull Lake Prairie Preserve.
- The Gull Lake bike path is a mess. #1 priority is to get it paved with a lane divider and shrubs and trees overhanging path removed.
- This community is a very "dog friendly" area, and could really use a first-class dog park. This is an essentially low-cost area to install and maintain versus athletic, playground, water park, etc. Most urban communities do have their own dog parks - and these can be made secure for community members only.
- Thank You all for the beautiful job at Richland Township that you all have done on your parks! They are wonderful!
- Other communities in the area have constructed and developed pickleball courts and our residents are traveling to those communities. The temporary courts behind the township hall are substandard in comparison to other communities. I believe there is

additional space behind the township hall for new construction of at least four courts.

- I feel that the Township needs to address pedestrian and bike safety on all roads. The absence of shoulders on most Township roads is dangerous and allows access to outdoor recreation only if you can drive there.
- I feel that people who choose to own dogs or snowmobiles or other mechanical toys should bear at least some of the cost for the parks that only they derive benefit from.
- I think a common place for kids to gather to play b-ball or tennis at Richland Park can allow for healthy connection habits for teens and adults. Although there are school tennis courts, they are often filled due to the school seasons.
- Definitely want more trails and natural areas. Like more historic tie-ins.
- You are doing well already, but there is always room for improvement. Richland TWP does better than Gun Plain TWP.
- plow snow on gull road path.
- I think you should target young families with outdoor activities for all ranges including: movie night under the stars, music night, community garden, etc.
- Township Park on 32nd street is the best; I use the walking/jogging path several times a week (except when 90 degrees out)

Would be nice to have detailed info about the park/trail on D Ave on the township web site. I've seen small parking area there kitty-corner to Kitchen House, but have no info on what that park is like.

Would love to see expansion of 32nd street park and its walking trail. The mowed trail added in the last year or so was a great idea.

Another nature-oriented walking/jogging path in the Township would be great for variety. And/or expansion of 32nd St park. If the path could be wide enough, allowing part of the trail to incorporate bicycles would be good, too.

I do not have a need for athletic fields, but I like how well used the 32nd street park fields are and all appears well maintained and organized. Thank you!!

- Township needs a dog park. With walking unpaved trails.
- The Richland township park is a great space in our community. However, we feel that the focus is mostly on the baseball fields and the look/maintenance of them instead of the other areas. The wood chips in the playground areas used to be refreshed every year and I don't think I've seen a new layer in the past two years. The grounds on the trails seriously lack any sort of upkeep. The trees are overgrown on most parts of the path, the walkway that goes by the sprinkler and up towards the football field is very overgrown and hard for kids riding bikes to stay clear of others walking. It would be great if the entire path was paved for walkers and bike riders to enjoy which then in the winter could be snow blown for walkers and/or cross country skiers. We would like to see the football fields maintained better as it's mostly overgrown and rarely used. At one point there were college teams that would play and practice out there. It would be great to see some soccer fields added for all the ayso teams that practice at the park. A splash pad in the figure would be a wonderful addition.
- Bike and walking-jogging path down 27th to gull road path to richland

- Having a nicely maintained trail/path so you wouldn't need to use the road way for safety should be a top priority to connect all areas of Richland township. If you look at other townships, the nice walking, running, and biking trails off to the side of the road but still accessible to all of the areas are great. If I want to walk my dogs and kids to a park from my home there is no way other than a busy road to achieve it.

We use the Richland township park nearly daily, all seasons. In the winter there are so many people that would walk the entire loop if it were groomed or even had a snowblower taken around the entire path. It's a beautiful long path with some paved and some gravel but need to be maintained all season.

PLANNING IMPLICATIONS AND TRENDS

- The large majority of respondents live in Richland Township and their responses are generally reflective of an older demographic. About 64% of responses were from those over the age of 55, which is older than the Township's median age of 40.3 years in 2019. Therefore, the responses may provide insight into the types of facilities and services desired by residents above the median age. Yet, the Planning Commission should be aware that the results may not fully reflect the desires of the younger demographic, especially those under the age of 35 years.
- Over three-quarters of respondents indicated that parks, trails, and open spaces are "very important." A relatively similar percentage thought these would be beneficial to add in the Township. Yet, about 90% indicated that maintaining existing parks and facilities was "very important" while acquiring land for future parks was much less important. Comments supported the need to maintain existing parks before considering any acquisitions. Therefore, the Planning Commission may consider maintenance at existing facilities and explore opportunities to continue enhancing trails and facilities in these parks.
- The most popular park was clearly Richland Township Park, followed by Gull Lake Community School Facilities. Few respondents visited the Village Green Park or D Avenue "Passive" Park.
- The ability to enjoy nature/outdoors was identified as the top benefit of parks and recreation by almost 80% of respondents. Over half also believed they were important to improving health and wellness, which aligns with the strong desire for walking and biking trails. While most respondents use of Township parks, was the most common reason people did not use a park was a lack of interest or time.
- Paved, multi-use paths were the most desired type of trail in the Township, with 61% indicating these pathways as a "high priority" in Q11. This aligns with the importance of pedestrian connectivity, which was identified as "very important" by 62% of respondents in Q12. This is also supported by the desire for parks with bike trails, as well as non-motorized trails and pathways in Q14. Lastly, there was an overwhelming desire for walking trails (82%) and bike trails (45%) in Q16 that further suggest the importance of non-motorized pathways. Overall, there is a strong desire for connectivity and trails that accommodate various types of users. The Planning Commissions may consider how these pathways can continue to support pedestrian connectivity in the Township.
- The desire for a dog park or a place to walk dogs were mentioned several times throughout the survey. 33% of respondents chose a dog park as a top facility they would enjoy.
- The Gull Lake pathway was the most common facility noted as needing improvement in comments. Paving and snow plowing were desired, as well as shade and maintenance of landscaping/trees.

- The ball fields at Richland Park were noted as being very well maintained, but additional maintenance is desired in other areas of the park. Overgrown pathways and wood chips in the playground areas were both noted as needing improvement by respondents.
- In general, respondents are happy with parks in the Township. About half felt that all groups were served by recreation services and amenities. Several comments indicated satisfaction with parks and recreation development.

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP

5-Year Recreation Plan 2022-2026

