

ST. CLAIR COUNTY MASTER RECREATION PLAN 2022-2026



Adoption Date:
January 12, 2022 - St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission
January 20, 2022 - St. Clair County Board of Commissioners

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION & COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

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WADHAMS TO AVOCA TRAIL



ST. CLAIR COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION: MISSION

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) is dedicated to providing positive recreational opportunities for the citizens of St. Clair County and their guests.

The Commission will do so by:

- Preparing a Master Recreation Plan for St. Clair County;
- Advising the County Board of Commissioners on matters related to the implementation of the Master Recreation Plan;
- Working cooperatively with local, state, and national recreational providers; and
- Acquiring, maintaining, and operating quality parks, trails, and recreational facilities.

PARC PROFILE

- The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) was formed in 1994 as a department within St. Clair County government.
- PARC is not just about parks. PARC is involved with trails, greenways, blueways, and other recreational projects that serve all St. Clair County citizens.
- PARC properties and projects include Goodells County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park, Bridge to Bay Trail, Wadhams to Avoca Trail, Columbus County Park, Woodsong County Park, the Fort Gratiot Light Station, Blue Water River Walk County Park, the Marine City Dredge Cut Access, and the Blueways of St. Clair.
- PARC owns two accessible portable stages, called “Showmobiles,” along with two sets of portable bleachers. These are rented out at a reasonable price to organizations hosting musical, cultural, and community events.
- PARC is currently not involved with campgrounds, golf courses, marinas, boat launches, and other such activities that are adequately provided by the state, local units of government or by private citizens and businesses.

- PARC has ten members who represent all parts of St. Clair County, who possess a diverse skill set, and who serve on seven advisory committees: Acquisitions, Finance, Goodells County Park, Columbus County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park, Fort Gratiot Light Station, and Trails.
- PARC works closely with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners (BOC), the St. Clair County Administrator/Controller's Office, the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), the Road Commission, and the Drain Commissioner's Office.
- PARC enjoys a cooperative relationship with the St. Clair County Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA), Michigan State University Extension (MSUE), the St. Clair County 4-H Council and Fair Board, the Farm Museum, Propbusters remote control model airplane club, Earthkeepers, Can-Am BMX bicycle club, mountain biking and road biking organizations, hiking groups, and equestrians.
- PARC interacts with parks and recreation personnel, as well as elected officials, within local townships, cities, and villages.
- PARC interacts with parks and recreation advocates throughout Michigan, especially with officials in neighboring counties and Southeast Michigan.
- PARC activities are funded through a 0.4956 mil tax, which was approved by County voters in 1994 and renewed in 1999, 2004, 2010, and 2016. The margin of passage in 2004 was 68.5%. The margin of renewal in 2010 increased to 71%. In 2016, the renewal passed with nearly 70% approval
- PARC uses 75% of the millage funds for countywide projects. The other 25% is distributed to townships, cities, and villages. Local units of government must demonstrate "maintenance of effort" to assure the funds are used to expand recreation opportunities rather than supplant existing local funding.
- PARC obtains government and foundation grants and donations from businesses, groups, and individuals. PARC helps local units of government obtain grants for local parks and recreation projects.
- The preceding PARC Master Recreation Plan was effective from 2017 through 2021. This updated plan will be submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) in February 2022 to be eligible for continued grant funding.
- This updated Master Recreation Plan is consistent with the goals and objectives for recreation in the St. Clair County Master Plan, adopted by the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners on November 17, 2016.

PHILOSOPHY AND FORMAT

Philosophy

This Master Recreation Plan is an update of the 2017-2021 Master Recreation Plan for the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission.

This update incorporates the primary philosophies of the original 1997-2001 Master Recreation Plan:

- To offer workable solutions; and

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- To be objective, yet incorporate legitimate subjective views of local residents, County visitors, and appointed and elected government officials.

In addition to those basic philosophies, this Master Recreation Plan update strives to continue PARC’s long-standing tradition of innovation and originality when it comes to County parks and recreation.

Format

This 2022-2026 Master Recreation Plan update follows the format and content required by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans, IC 1924*, revised April 26, 2021. Sections for this Master Recreation Plan update are titled based on the required plan sections as detailed under “Preparing the Plan and Plan Content” in the MDNR Guidelines. The DNR requires all recreation plans to include the following sections:

- Community Description
- Administrative Structure
- Recreation Inventory
- Description of the Planning and Public Input Process
- Goals and Objectives
- Action Program

PARC has made every attempt possible to comply with the MDNR requirements. Moreover, PARC has included additional information beyond the MDNR requirements to better frame the recreational needs and opportunities of St. Clair County citizens.

JURISDICTION AND FOCUS AREA

This 2022-2026 St. Clair County Master Recreation Plan covers all parks and recreation facilities and programs owned and operated by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission, spanning all of St. Clair County and serving all St. Clair County residents. These facilities include:

- Goodells County Park
- Fort Gratiot County Park
- Fort Gratiot Light Station
- Columbus County Park
- Woodsong County Park
- Blue Water River Walk County Park
- North Channel County Park
- Wadhams to Avoca Trail
- Bridge to Bay Trail
- The Blueways of St. Clair (in conjunction with the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission)

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) has the responsibility to review and update the Master Recreation Plan every five years and to consider the conditions and trends affecting recreation. A wide variety of planning processes and techniques have been utilized in crafting the plan in years past; however, every update to the plan has been grounded in a desire to document current trends in St. Clair County, to meet the recreational demands and desires of St. Clair County residents, and to set a promising course for recreational opportunities for future generations. With each new rendition of the St. Clair County Master Recreation Plan comes an opportunity to proactively improve the quality of life for St. Clair County’s citizens.



The St. Clair County Master Recreation Plan is intended to have a lasting impact on the community. Relying on a strong foundation of data, research, and public input, it is reflective of a county with significant recreational assets and significant natural resources. While the plan identifies a number of goals and strategies meant to positively influence the overall quality of life in St. Clair County, it is built on a framework that focuses on action strategies that can actually be implemented. The vision, goals, and strategies identified in this plan will require cooperation and collaboration among community leaders and dedicated stakeholders in all sectors of the community.

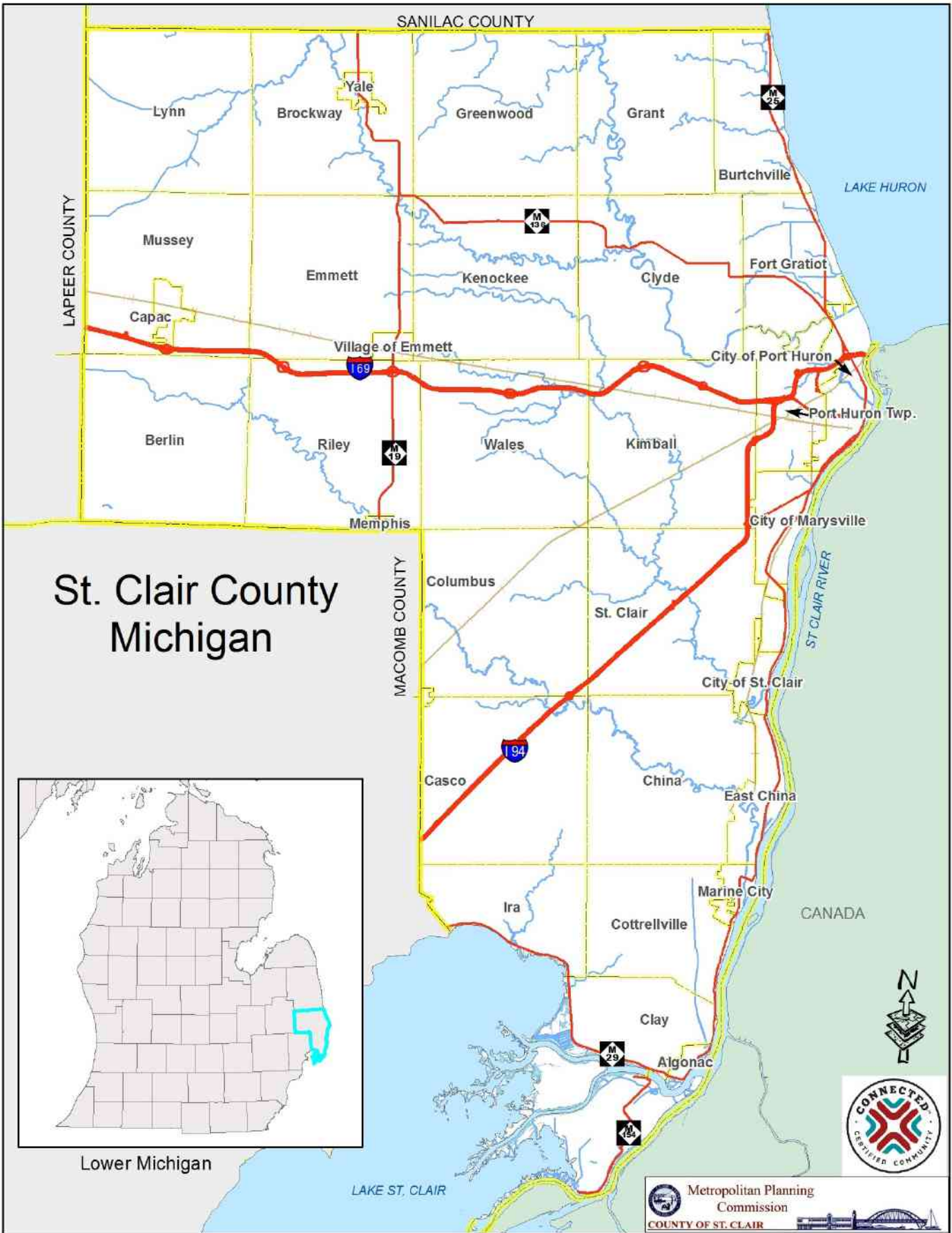
COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

ABOUT ST. CLAIR COUNTY

Located at the base of the thumb area of the lower peninsula of Michigan, St. Clair County is the easternmost of Michigan's 83 counties. It's known as the Blue Water Area because its eastern and southern boundaries are formed by the waters of Lake Huron, the St. Clair River, and Lake St. Clair. The St. Clair River forms a natural boundary separating Michigan from Ontario, Canada. The river flows south from Lake Huron with its mouth under the Blue Water Bridge. It continues south to the City of Algonac and the river's delta which enters Lake St. Clair. It is also one of the heaviest traveled rivers in the world and is part of the world's longest shipping canal, the 2,347 mile St. Lawrence Seaway.

Greatly influenced by Lake Huron, St. Clair County offers a temperate climate which has cold winters, hot summers, and moderate springs and falls. There are 140 miles of shoreline in the county. Within the county, there are a wide-range of land types and uses, from rural agriculture to urban development to expansive and beautiful coastline; there is even an international border. Wetlands are scattered throughout the county, covering approximately 62 square miles, or 8.6% of the county's land area, but are most prevalent along the eastern and southern coastlines and along inland rivers. Local governments are comprised of eight cities, including Port Huron which is the county seat, 23 townships and two villages: Capac and Emmett. Each municipality maintains its own master plan and zoning ordinance. The various jurisdictions within the county, along with many other organizations, have proven to be willing to cooperate with one another for the overall benefit of the region.

St. Clair County is a major international trade gateway between the United States and Canada for the movement of people and goods across the St. Clair River via the Blue Water Bridges and the international train tunnel. St. Clair County's stunning waterways as well as its diverse annual events makes it a tourist destination all year long. Residents and visitors alike, are attracted to its vast water resources, its scenic landscapes, beautifully maintained parks, miles of trails, neighborly communities, and its mix of traditional downtowns, and unique rural character.



St. Clair County Land Use 2020

Legend

- VACANT
- RECREATION / OPEN SPACE
- AGRICULTURAL / RURAL RES
- MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING
- MOBILE HOME
- SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING
- ATTACHED CONDO HOUSING
- OFFICE
- RETAIL
- MEDICAL
- PARKING
- MIXED USE
- GOLF COURSE
- CEMETERY
- HOSPITALITY
- INDUSTRIAL
- TCU
- INSTITUTIONAL
- EXTRACTIVE
- WATER

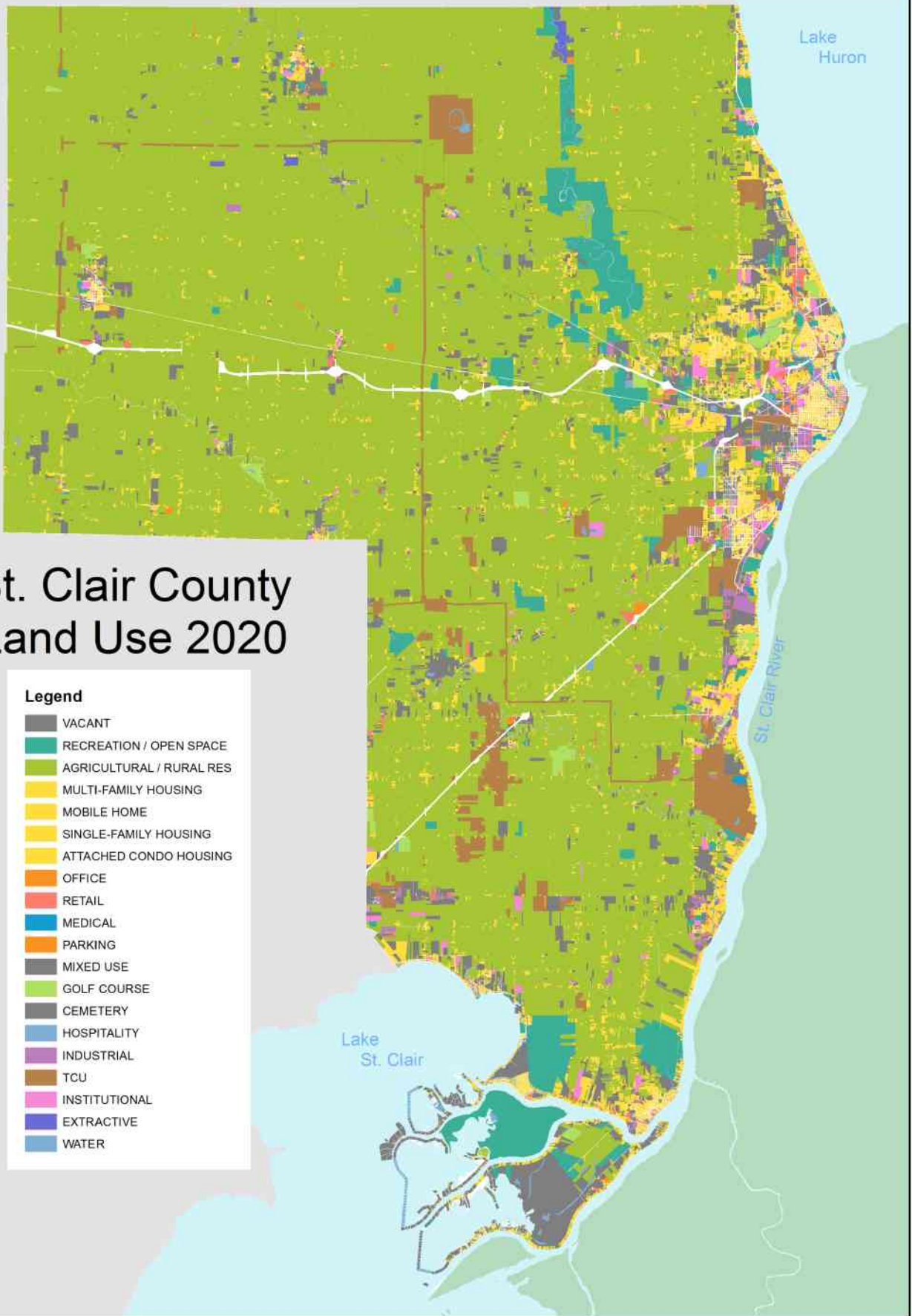


TABLE 1-1: ST. CLAIR COUNTY LAND USE, 2020

Land Use Category	Acres	Percentage
Agricultural/Rural Residential	347,411	76.08%
Attached Condo Housing	272	0.06%
Cemetery	447	0.10%
Extractive	594	0.13%
Golf Course	2,133	0.47%
Hospitality	586	0.13%
Industrial	2,880	0.63%
Institutional	3,017	0.66%
Medical	338	0.07%
Mixed Use	711	0.16%
Mobile Home	1,596	0.35%
Multiple-Family Housing	574	0.13%
Office	897	0.20%
Parking	110	0.02%
Recreation/Open Space	19,233	4.21%
Retail	2,112	0.46%
Single-Family Housing	26,504	5.80%
Transportation/Communications/Utilities	15,549	3.41%
Vacant	29,145	6.38%
Water	2,526	0.55%
Total Acres	456,635	-

Source: Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), 2021

The total area of the county is approximately 836.63 square miles, of which 724.37 square miles is land and 112.26 square miles is water. An agricultural/village pattern of land use exists in the western portion of the county, supporting a rural lifestyle that residents would like to preserve. The predominant land use is agricultural and rural residential, which covers 76% of the land area. This is followed by single-family residential land at 5%, then recreation and open space is the next largest use with 4.21%. This part of St. Clair County offers diversity, a change of view and a change of pace from populated commercial communities that have proliferated along the county's eastern and southern waterfront. See table 1-1.

More intense land uses such as commercial, industrial, institutional and transportation are primarily found in the Port Huron area and to a lesser extent in village areas and in small parcels on major corridors throughout the county.



St. Clair County has 34 units of government including St. Clair County government, 23 townships, eight cities, and two villages. In addition, the County has seven school districts within its borders. From a regional perspective, St. Clair County is the northernmost of seven counties in the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG). SEMCOG conducts planning studies and maintains a comprehensive database that offers detailed demographic information to its member communities. These materials have proven to be an authoritative source for statistical and population-related data that pertains to recreational activities in St. Clair County.

Additionally, St. Clair County is an active partner in the I-69 Thumb Region (Michigan Prosperity Region 6) along with Genesee, Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac, Shiawassee, and Tuscola counties.

TOPOGRAPHY

Topography refers to the elevations, relief features, or surface conditions of a geographic area. The understanding of topography is critical for a number of reasons. In terms of environmental quality, agriculture, and hydrology, understanding the topography of a region enables the understanding of watershed boundaries, drainage characteristics, water movement, and impacts on water quality.

The land surface of the county is a glacial landform, with characteristic slopes, substrata, soils, and drainage conditions, and as a result of these physical factors, certain vegetation evolved and now exist. According to the United States Geological Survey, St. Clair County is part of the landform called Washtenaw-Maumee Lake Plain. The county consists primarily of clay soils, along with several one to three mile wide end moraines that have been reshaped by water and runoff. Beach ridges and small sand dunes are common on the sand channels, which are visible from Fort Gratiot Township to St. Clair, running parallel to the shoreline.

Elevations throughout the county range from 580 feet to 800 feet above mean sea level. The highest points are in the glaciated area in the western part of the county, along the Black River in the northern part of the county, and along Lake Huron and the northern part of the St. Clair River. The lowest part of the county is in the south in an area known as St. Clair Flats, which is within the Lake St. Clair floodplain.

WATER RESOURCES

St. Clair County is blessed with water resources. The most noticeable of these are Lake Huron, the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair, all of which are part of the Great Lakes system. While there are no inland lakes of significant size, St. Clair County has a bounty of inland rivers. These include:

- 149 miles of primary rivers
- 810 miles of tributaries

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission recognizes the county’s abundance of inland rivers and streams as recreational opportunities for water trails on which canoeists and kayakers can paddle through miles

of riparian scenery and silence. In 2009, PARC partnered with the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission to develop *The Blueways of St. Clair*. See www.BluewaysofStClair.org for more information.

Lake Huron

Lake Huron is the largest neighboring watercourse. It creates a 12.5-mile shoreline boundary on the northeast corner of the county and is an integral recreational and economic factor. The cities of Detroit (60 miles south), Flint (75 miles west), and 90 other communities pump 400 million gallons of water per day from Lake Huron. Awareness of the quality of the water from Lake Huron and the Great Lakes has been a concern since the mid-1970s.

Lake St. Clair

Lake St. Clair borders 11.3 miles on the southern corner of St. Clair County and is a recreational haven for boaters, anglers, and sightseers. The largest fleet of pleasure boats on the Great Lakes is on Lake St. Clair, and about one-third of all the fish caught on the Great Lakes are caught there.

The largest remaining marshland in the Great Lakes Basin is located in Clay Township and Canada's Walpole Island near Lake St. Clair. Environmental concerns abound in this area and are evidenced by beach closings due to bacterial contamination, visible changes in the lake, and changes to lake plants and animal populations.

St. Clair River

The St. Clair River is 34.3 miles long and borders most of the east side of St. Clair County. The St. Clair River extends from Lake Huron in the north to Lake St. Clair at the south, where it has an average flow rate of 182,000 cubic feet per second. The City of Port Huron gets its water from the St. Clair River.

Except for a few drains that flow into Lake Huron or Lake St. Clair, the St. Clair River is the receptor of all drainage basins within St. Clair County and water level fluctuations of two to three feet are common. This fluctuation, along with rapid currents, causes tree mortality, shoreline erosion, and major alterations to the



PINE RIVER IN ST. CLAIR

composition and habitat of marshes and wet prairies. Six locations along the St. Clair River and one location along Lake Huron are monitored monthly to determine water level fluctuations. Water levels are usually lowest in February, then rise through July and decline through the rest of the year.

The St. Clair River's current and the frequent passage of large lake freighters provide for unique sightseeing and tourism opportunities. Shipping has brought infestations of non-indigenous aquatic species that are potentially detrimental to the environmental health of the river. The St. Clair River Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) is having noteworthy success in improving the quality of both water and habitat in and along the river.

Black River and Mill Creek

The Black River is the major tributary of the St. Clair River. It flows south from the Minden Bog in Sanilac County and through Port Huron. Along with its major tributary Mill Creek, the Black River drains almost all of the northern and western parts of St. Clair County.

The river's watershed (159,930 acres) is the largest in Southeast Michigan and is primarily a broad, flat plain bounded on three sides by hills ranging from 20 to 100 feet high. The Black River offers limited recreational use due to easily eroded clay soils. Traditionally, the river has afforded high-quality fishing, but fish populations have diminished and become almost nonexistent in recent decades.

Pine River

The Pine River is a tributary of the St. Clair River and is the largest watershed (126,110 acres) fully contained within St. Clair County. It flows through relatively flat land from the central part of the county and through the City of St. Clair.

Belle River

The Belle River is also a tributary of the St. Clair River. With its headwaters in Lapeer County, it begins in the west central part of St. Clair County, passes a short distance through a corner of Macomb County, then continues southeast through Marine City, draining 83,000 acres of relatively flat land.

Clinton River

In addition to these watercourses within St. Clair County, the North Branch of the Clinton River drains 8,600 acres in the southwest part of the county, even though the river does not physically flow through the county.

SHORELINE

St. Clair County has a total of 58 miles of shoreline along Lake Huron, the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair. Most of this shoreline either has been developed or is not suitable for development. Much of this shoreline, especially along the St. Clair River, has been stabilized with seawalls.

The undeveloped or recreational parts of the shoreline provide places for walking and/or fishing. Most walkways along the river are developed and stabilized.

The Lake Huron shoreline is 12.5 miles, just over a mile of which is accessible through state and municipal parks. The St. Clair River shoreline is 34.3 miles, most of which lacks natural beaches, but is good for scuba diving, boating, waterskiing, fishing, paddling and sailing. A significant amount of the shoreline has local parks and walkways for walking, rollerblading, and biking.

The 11.3 miles of Lake St. Clair shoreline is densely populated with residential development and limited public access beaches. However, more than 20 public boat ramps and marinas provide boaters with access to Lake St. Clair.

WETLANDS

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of time during the year, including during the growing season. Water saturation largely determines how the soil develops and the types of plant and animal communities living in and on the soil. Wetlands may support both aquatic and terrestrial species.

Wetlands are scattered throughout the county covering approximately 62 square miles, or 8.6% of the county's land area, but are most prevalent along the eastern and southern coastlines and along inland rivers. They are often covered with lowland-hardwoods, lowland-conifers, shrub or scrub growth, or aquatic beds. Wetlands are essential to St. Clair County communities as they help to maintain the delicate balance of the ecosystem. Wetlands serve as sponges, absorbing excess runoff during rain events. As the water infiltrates, it is cleansed using the natural filtration capability of the plants and soils. Wetlands also retain moisture for much of the growing season, endowing nearby plant communities with water and recharging underlying groundwater supplies.

CLIMATE

The climate of St. Clair County is temperate with cold winters, hot summers, and moderate springs and falls.

- January average low temperature: 18 degrees Fahrenheit
- January average high temperature: 32 degrees Fahrenheit
- July average low temperature: 59 degrees Fahrenheit
- July average high temperature: 81 degrees Fahrenheit
- Average days below 0 degrees: 5
- Average days above 90 degrees: 6
- Annual Precipitation: 121.5 days
- Average annual rainfall: 34 inches
- Average annual snowfall: 35 inches
- Growing season: 170 days

Climate refers to the weather pattern that can be expected in a geographical region, based on the average weather for a month or season in previous years. Weather conditions affect the community's economic base. Variations in average conditions, especially during the summer months, can cause fluctuations in tourism and outdoor recreation activities, upon which the local economy is dependent. Prevailing winds determine lakeshore and sand dune erosion patterns, which impose limitations on development along the Lake Huron shore.

The Great Lakes are a major control factor on the climate for the Midwest; however, St. Clair County is generally affected less by climate because of its southeastern location in the state. The most obvious effect of the lakes on the county is the increased percentage of cloud cover in late fall and early winter, when prevailing westerly winds move cold air across the warmer lake water. In addition, the county's southeastern location within Michigan provides it with five to ten percent more sunshine than those counties at the same latitude on the western side of the state.

WILDLIFE

St. Clair County's wetlands, shoals, open waters, rural areas, woodlands and some urban land provide ecosystems that have appropriate soils and food to support a wide variety of plant and animal species. Certain animal species spark the interests of hunters, trappers, and people who enjoy viewing wildlife. Wildlife species in St. Clair County include whitetail deer, cottontail rabbit, fox squirrel, gray squirrel, raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote, beaver, muskrat, badger, opossum, pheasant, quail, ruffed grouse, crow, woodcock, wild turkey, ducks, geese, eagles, crows, swans, and others.

The Great Lakes Basin is also a major flyway for thousands of North American waterfowl and a breeding territory for several hundred species. For this reason, bird watching is a popular recreational activity in St. Clair County. The fact that many bird species are highly visible and easily documented within St. Clair County indicates the county is rich with wildlife habitat, not only for birds but for less noticeable vertebrate, invertebrate and micro-organic species. This is especially true in aquatic places, on publicly-owned land and along the edges of agricultural acreage.

Fishing

Lake Huron, the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair are the most popular fishing sites in St. Clair County. Here anglers catch brown trout, lake trout, steelhead, salmon, smelt, walleye, perch, bass, pike, muskellunge, carp, catfish, and panfish. The inland rivers have also been historically good fishing areas and continue to be a source of recreation for many anglers.



According to Friends of the St. Clair River, the Detroit River, Lake St. Clair, and the St. Clair River support the largest remaining population of free-ranging lake sturgeon. Of the many historically known spawning sites, only two are known to be active, and both are in the St. Clair River. The lake sturgeon is the largest fish and the only sturgeon found in the Great Lakes. Lake sturgeon are bottom feeders, eating a variety of small animals and fish. Geological records indicate that the lake sturgeon we see today are virtually unchanged from fossil lake sturgeon from over 100 million years ago.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Rare plant communities and many threatened or endangered animals can be found in wet, moderately wet, and dry sand prairies of St. Clair County. Originally, such land forms ranged extensively throughout the county but have been supplanted by commercial and residential development. Now, such plants and animals are found primarily on state-owned land.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

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PARC BACKGROUND

Most cities, villages, and townships in St. Clair County provide park areas and open spaces that are designed to meet their community's basic recreational needs. However, most communities would face considerable financial and personnel challenges if asked to satisfy recreational needs that require expansive and natural settings, special use facilities, or "resource-oriented" parks outside their corporate limits. As a result, such facilities are generally the responsibility of county and state government.

For this reason, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners (BOC) formed the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) in 1993 to serve as an advisory group for countywide recreation endeavors.

In 1994, the St. Clair County government took further steps to structure how it would deliver parks and recreation services when it converted PRAC from advisory status to commission status by creating the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC).

County government also secured voter support for a one-half (.5) mill property tax in 1994 and made a commitment to distribute 25% of the parks and recreation millage revenue to local units of government to help finance local recreation efforts.

In 1995, St. Clair County hired a full-time parks and recreation director.

In 1997, PARC developed an ambitious - yet realistic - Master Recreation Plan to provide park services to all county residents. The Master Recreation Plan has subsequently been reviewed and updated in 2002, 2007, 2012, and 2017.



MASTER RECREATION PLAN HISTORY

1997-2001 Master Recreation Plan

The St. Clair County 1997-2001 Master Recreation Plan identified essential issues, defined the County’s role in parks and recreation programs, and established PARC’s goals and objectives. It placed a primary emphasis on improving the year-round functionality of Goodells County Park, which, at that time, was the only public park property owned by St. Clair County. It gave secondary, yet significant, status to two County trail projects: the Bridge to Bay Trail and the Wadhams to Avoca Trail.

With a few minor exceptions, all of the 1997-2001 plan’s goals and objectives were met. PARC initiated projects beyond the specific details, yet well within the prescribed scope, of the Master Recreation Plan. PARC listened to citizen suggestions and communicated and cooperated with government agencies within St. Clair County and neighboring counties in order to accomplish its goals.

2002-2006 Master Recreation Plan

In 2002, PARC went to the public and asked for suggestions for parks and recreation activities and projects. Those comments, as well as recommendations by PARC members and other members of St. Clair County government, were the backbone of the plan update. The plan detailed PARC goals defined by six categories: Administrative, Financial, Goodells County Park, Bridge to Bay Trail, Wadhams to Avoca Trail, and Acquisitions.

2007-2011 Master Recreation Plan

The 2007-2011 Master Recreation Plan was considered a “light” update of the 2002-2006 Master Recreation Plan. In 2007, PARC facilitated a series of public input events to validate existing goals and objectives, as well as to develop goals for newly acquired properties that ultimately became Fort Gratiot County Park and Columbus County Park.

The 2007-2011 Master Recreation Plan had six categories of goals: Administration, Financial, Goodells County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park, Greenways and Trails, and Acquisitions. In general, the plan focused on

continuing the master development plans for Goodells County Park and Fort Gratiot County Park, and had an increased emphasis on the development of greenways and trails.

2012-2016 Master Recreation Plan

The 2012-2016 Master Recreation Plan included ten categories of goals: Administrative, General Facilities, Financial, Goodells County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park, Columbus County Park, Woodsong County Park, Fort Gratiot Light Station, Greenways and Blueways, and Acquisitions. The plan was focused on newly acquired park properties (Columbus, Woodsong, and the Fort Gratiot Light Station). It was also a plan developed with heavy public involvement, including a countywide survey managed by the St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA).

Priority capital improvement projects in the 2012-2016 Master Recreation Plan included the Blue Water River Walk land acquisition and trail development, the Light Station entrance and parking lot improvements, and the replacement of the Quonset Hut building at Goodells County Park.

2017-2021 Master Recreation Plan

The 2017-2021 Master Recreation Plan was a continuation of the previous plan, which focused on new recreation assets such as the Blue Water River Walk and Wetlands County Park, the beginnings of a collaborative approach to planning and implementing the regional trail network, and acquiring property along the North Channel of the St. Clair River for a new County park in the southern part of the county.



2022-2026 Master Recreation Plan

Now, as PARC enters the next five years of operation, it continues to work in concert with the St. Clair County Transportation Study (SCCOTS), St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), local government officials, and the general public to garner input and suggestions for PARC facilities and countywide trails and greenways to further define the county's role in parks and recreation programs. Public involvement for the development of this plan included a County leadership survey, an online countywide survey, and the use of social media. More information on the public planning process can be found in Chapter 4.

The 2022-2026 Master Recreation Plan includes goals for six strategic focal areas:

- Administration
- Finance
- Parkland
- Facilities and Infrastructure
- Greenways and Blueways
- Places and Spaces

For more information on these strategic focal areas and current PARC goals, see Chapter 5.

PARC FUNCTIONS

Throughout the years prior to the establishment of the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission, many local units of government allocated funding for parks and recreation facilities and programs. This was especially true of the cities and villages. A few townships gave parks and recreation a low or non-priority status.

Since the passage of the countywide millage to support parks and recreation functions, the County has returned 25% of the millage money to the local units of government to be used, at the discretion of local officials, for parks and recreation activities within their respective communities.

When communities receive these funds, they must show evidence of "maintenance of effort" to assure the funding is used to expand opportunities rather than supplant existing local funding. In many cases, the local units of government have utilized a portion of their local distribution as local match money to leverage grants from state and federal agencies or private philanthropic foundations.

While it is necessary to acknowledge the recreational endeavors of local units of government, the primary focus of this Master Recreation Plan document will be on countywide activities falling under the administration of the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission.

PARC RESPONSIBILITIES

The general purposes of the Parks and Recreation Commission are:

- To study and determine the extent of need for parks, preserves, parkways, recreation and other conservation facilities within the county.
- To develop cooperative planning efforts with the various cities, villages, townships and school districts concerned with parks, recreation and conservation services.
- To serve as an information center for local parks and recreation commissions.
- To prepare and recommend to the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners, the adoption of a comprehensive, coordinated countywide parks and recreation plan.

GODELLS COUNTY PARK



- To assure that acquisition and development consistently strive to include all citizens through attention to ADA guidelines.

The St. Clair County Board of Commissioners has charged the Parks and Recreation Commission with the responsibility for development and stewardship of recreational areas that serve a countywide population. PARC has chosen to place primary emphasis on spaces and facilities that, because of cost, location, or nature, are beyond those that can be reasonably provided by individual cities, township, and villages.

In that regard, PARC is responsible for:

- Identifying park, recreation, open space, and conservation needs in St. Clair County.
- Acquisition, development, operation, and stewardship of lands and facilities designated for parks and recreation uses by all county citizens or visitors.
- Developing cooperative planning efforts with, providing technical assistance to, and serving as an information center for 33 local units of government and St. Clair County government departments.

PARC currently is not involved with projects and activities that are already being adequately provided by local communities and private entities, such as golf courses, marinas, boat ramps, campgrounds, baseball and softball diamonds, soccer fields, and other traditional athletic facilities.

PARC financially supports endeavors that are designed to serve a countywide constituency, including out-of-county visitors and tourists.

PARC MEMBERS

PARC is a policy making body comprised of ten members. Four of the ten members are designated appointees, or their delegates, by statute. These are:

- Chairperson or member of the St. Clair County Road Commission;
- Chairperson or member of the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission;
- St. Clair County Drain Commissioner; and
- One County Commissioner appointed by the chairperson of the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners.

The six remaining members are citizens appointed by the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners. Four of these six citizens represent one or more of the County's seven County Commissioner districts and two serve "at-large."

The County Treasurer is the PARC treasurer and an ex-officio member.

PARC's citizen members reside and work in communities throughout St. Clair County, providing a broad representation of countywide issues and points of view. PARC encourages citizens representing diverse backgrounds and interests to participate on its advisory committees, attend and seek membership on the commission.

PARC COMMITTEES

PARC has seven standing committees:

- Acquisitions Advisory Committee
- Columbus County Park Advisory Committee
- Goodells County Park Advisory Committee
- Fort Gratiot County Park Advisory Committee
- Fort Gratiot Light Station Advisory Committee
- Trails Advisory Committee
- Finance Committee

These committees consist of members of the Parks and Recreation Commission as well as other citizens who are appointed at-large. Ad hoc committees are formed to fulfill certain short-term tasks, as necessary.

PARC DIRECTOR

St. Clair County has a parks and recreation director who advises the Parks and Recreation Commission and reports to the Board of Commissioners and the Administrator/Controller.

PARC Director Nancy Winzer was hired in April 2021, through a shared services agreement with the City of Port Huron. Ms. Winzer serves as the parks and recreation director for both entities, splitting her time evenly between St. Clair County and the City of Port Huron.

PARC PERSONNEL

On behalf of the Parks and Recreation Commission, St. Clair County currently employs:

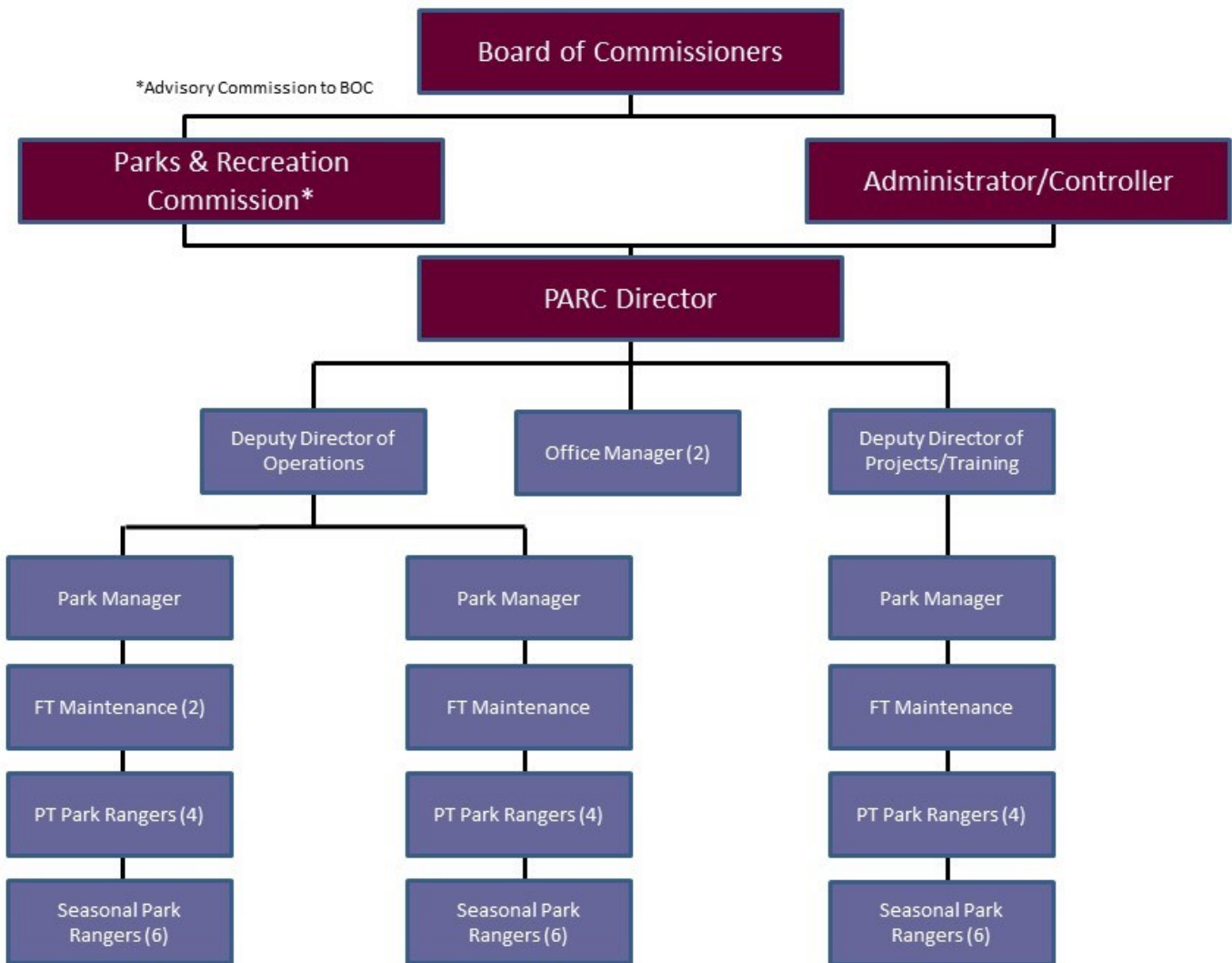
- One full-time director
- Two deputy directors
- Two full-time office managers
- Three full-time park managers
- Four full-time maintenance staff
- Twelve part-time park rangers
- Seasonal park rangers
- Volunteers

Goodells County Park is the maintenance hub of the St. Clair County park system, but maintenance facilities are also operated at Fort Gratiot County Park, Fort Gratiot Light Station, and Columbus County Park.

Volunteers

Volunteers assist PARC in non-skilled activities, such as trail clean-up campaigns and planting flower beds

FIGURE 2-1: PARC ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 2022



through its Adopt-A-Park program. PARC also has a successful Adopt-A-Trail program through which volunteers have invested numerous hours removing litter and lightweight debris from the Wadhams to Avoca Trail.

PARC MEETING SCHEDULE

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission meets on the second Wednesday of every month at public meetings in the St. Clair County Administration Building, 200 Grand River Ave, Port Huron.

The Finance Committee meets on a monthly basis. The rest of the committees (Acquisitions, Goodells County Park, Columbus County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park, Fort Gratiot Light Station, and Trails) all meet as needed.

PARC DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The Parks and Recreation Commission makes decisions regarding parks and recreational activities that affect all citizens of St. Clair County. PARC makes decisions according to bylaws that govern PARC's authority, geographic area, members, officers, duties and responsibilities, meetings, committees, and compensation.

According to their knowledge and expertise, the director, committees, and consultants present information on which decisions are based to the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners. PARC staffing decisions are governed by the personnel policies established by the BOC and purchases are governed by the BOC's purchasing policies.

PARC'S WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission enjoys a good working relationship with:

- The St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and other County government agencies, such as the Road Commission, the Drain Commissioner, and the Metropolitan Planning Commission.
- Officials in local units of government, particularly those in positions with local parks and recreation responsibilities.
- The St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA).
- Individuals and groups who engage in recreational activities.
- Officials from neighboring counties.
- State, regional and national agencies involved with parks and recreation activities.

Relationship with County Government

The PARC director and PARC members work closely with the County Administrator/Controller and report to the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners, who are responsible to the voters in St. Clair County. While PARC does not share employees with other County departments, the director and her staff do interact frequently with, obtain information from, and provide information to other pertinent agencies, especially the Administrator/Controller's office, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the Road Commission, the Drain Commissioner's Office, and the Buildings and Grounds department.

Relationship with Local Units of Government

PARC enjoys a good working relationship with officials from municipalities and townships throughout the county, each of which receives a share of the countywide parks and recreation millage money. Local officials are at liberty to use their share of the millage money in any way they deem necessary to serve the recreational needs of their local constituents. Local units of government must show, however, that the millage funds allocated to them are used to expand recreation opportunities rather than supplant existing local funding of recreational facilities and programs.

Relationship with the St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency

GOODELLS COUNTY PARK



PARC has a special relationship with the St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency that involves swapping in-kind services. PARC receives graphic arts and public opinion polling assistance from RESA's Communications and Marketing Department in exchange for providing maintenance staff and equipment to RESA's Pine River Nature Center, which is adjacent to Goodells County Park. PARC was one of several voices that encouraged RESA to acquire the property on which the nature center sits.

Relationship with Individuals and Groups

Several boards and organizations within St. Clair County also offer suggestions and advice to PARC even though they are not technically or formally affiliated with County government. These include the 4-H Council, the St. Clair County Agricultural Society, the Farm Museum Board, Probusters remote control model airplane club, Earthkeepers, Can-Am BMX, mountain biking and road biking organizations, hiking groups, and equestrian enthusiasts. Other partnerships include the Community Foundation of St. Clair County for the Blue Water River Walk and "Access to Recreation" programs and the Port Huron Museum for tours and programming at the Fort Gratiot Light Station.

Input and comment by these organizations through the committee structure and at PARC meetings indicates a strong cooperative effort among parks and recreation enthusiasts in the county. PARC works with local agencies and environmental groups in hosting the annual Earth Fair and with local community recreation departments to put together programs and activities.

Relationship with Federal, State, and Regional Agencies

The Parks and Recreation Commission has a good working relationship with federal, state, and regional agencies, including the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), and the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance (MTGA).

The Parks and Recreation Commission has received funds from the federal government through previous and current transportation bills, the Save Our Great Lakes program, and also the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) through the U.S. National Park Service.

PARC has received funds for County recreation projects from the State of Michigan through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) and the Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI). PARC has also received private funding from the St. Clair County Community Foundation, the Greenways Initiative, and the Access to Recreation grant program.

PARC has utilized grant money from these agencies for the purchase and development of the Wadhams to Avoca Trail, Fort Gratiot County Park, Columbus County Park, Woodsong County Park, and the new North Channel property in Clay Township. PARC has also helped local units of government obtain state and federal grant money to finance sections of the Bridge to Bay Trail, to acquire land for parks, and to secure additional waterfront property.

Relationship with Neighboring Counties

The Bridge to Bay Trail is a symbol of PARC's good working relationship with local units of government. Over one-half of the proposed 54-mile trail along the county's eastern and southern shores is now complete. When finished, it will extend from the county's northern border with Sanilac County to the southern border with Macomb County. It will also link with lateral spurs that reach inland, including the Wadhams to Avoca Trail, to better serve inland county residents.

PARC is actively partnering with the Regional Trails Governing Board and other community stakeholders to implement the St. Clair County Trails Plan and connect regional trails.

Relationship with Citizens

PARC receives many telephone calls from citizens asking questions about parks and recreation facilities, programs, and events. Some of these questions pertain to PARC endeavors, but many others relate to programs and facilities offered by townships, municipalities, private or non-profit organizations, including organizations outside St. Clair County.

PARC staff maintains a file of all activities and programs known to them and provides answers as completely as possible, based on this information. When appropriate, PARC staff directs the caller to a more appropriate information source.

PARC FUNDING SOURCES

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission receives money from:

- Countywide parks and recreation millage
- State and federal project grants
- Foundation grants
- Donations
- Fees and charges



Countywide Parks and Recreation Millage

In April 1994, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners authorized a parks and recreation millage issue to be placed on the countywide general election ballot the following August. Voters were asked to approve an increase in the limitation of the amount of property taxes that could be assessed each year by fifty cents per one thousand dollars (.5 mil) of the state equalized valuation.

The special levy was to be placed on all taxable property in St. Clair County for a period of five years, 1994 through 1998. The millage, if approved, would allow for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities in St. Clair County in accordance with the County's Master Recreation Plan.

St. Clair County voters approved the millage request by a 52% to 48% margin. The greatest approval margin occurred in those areas of the county where residents already had quality parks and recreation services.

In 1999, a millage renewal was placed on the ballot. The voter approval margin jumped to 63.5% countywide.

A six-year millage renewal was placed on the ballot again in 2004 and passed by a 68.5% to 31.5% margin. Millage renewals were approved by 71% of the voters in 2010 and again by nearly 70% of the voters in 2016.

From 1995 through 2021, the County has collected over \$68 million in parks and recreation millage revenue.

Millage Distribution

For Countywide Projects

PARC dedicates 75% of the millage revenues to parks and recreation facilities that serve a countywide audience. PARC projects are those that are best suited to a County government agency or open to all St. Clair County residents and visitors.

PARC does not participate in parks and recreation projects that do not serve a countywide audience or in facilities and endeavors that can be adequately provided by local units of government or private enterprises.

To Local Units of Government

PARC distributes 25% of the County parks and recreation millage revenues to local units of government to

enhance or expand local parks and recreation programs and facilities.

Since 1995, the amount of money distributed to local communities has totaled more than \$17 million. This distribution has had a positive impact on the delivery of local parks and recreation services in every community in St. Clair County.

Table 2-1 shows the amounts distributed to each unit of government from 1994 through 2016. The amount of local distribution is based on the number of residents living in each municipality or township, according to data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The per capita distribution in 2021 was \$4.87 per resident.

In order to receive these funds, communities must submit an annual report and show evidence of “maintenance of effort” to assure the funding is used to expand opportunities rather than to supplant existing local funding. In effect, local units of government must document that they have maintained their local financial support for parks and recreation services at a level equal to or greater than the amount they spent prior to the 1994 millage election.

Local Parks and Recreation Projects

Each local unit of government determines how its share of the County Parks and Recreation Millage funds is spent. Local projects have included:

- Developing local master recreation plans.
- Planning and engineering park improvements.
- Landscaping improvements.
- Purchase and installation of playground equipment.
- Constructing and improving athletic fields.
- Property purchases.
- Recreation programs and equipment.
- Trail development.

Many communities have used their local shares of the County Parks and Recreation Millage for the required local match for state and federal grants. This money has been used for development of parks, facilities, and trails.

TABLE 2-1: MILLAGE DISTRIBUTION 1995-2021	
Community	Amount
Cities and Villages	
Algonac	\$468,760.73
Capac	\$190,734.18
Emmett	\$28,448.42
Marine City	\$476,806.55
Marysville	\$1,022,762.93
Memphis	\$37,421.57
Port Huron	\$3,380,734.41
Richmond	\$133.35
St. Clair	\$591,843.26
Yale	\$213,670.23
Townships	
Berlin	\$328,271.73
Brockway	\$202,483.88
Burtchville	\$416,694.70
Casco	\$474,392.05
China	\$352,261.44
Clay	\$996,107.07
Clyde	\$559,601.08
Columbus	\$422,685.57
Cottrellville	\$385,815.41
East China	\$386,257.67
Emmett	\$232,190.08
Fort Gratiot	\$1,124,833.57
Grant	\$178,941.41
Greenwood	\$147,297.15
Ira	\$638,015.22
Kenockee	\$249,653.99
Kimball	\$926,065.35
Lynn	\$124,381.68
Mussey	\$216,738.64
Port Huron	\$989,711.16
Riley	\$321,374.85
St. Clair	\$667,896.51
Wales	\$306,816.28
Grand Total	\$17,059.802.12

Source: St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission, 2021

TABLE 2-2: ST. CLAIR COUNTY, MNRTF GRANT HISTORY

PROJECT	YEAR	GRANT AMOUNT	PROJECT TYPE	PUBLIC ACT
Wadhams to Avoca Rail Trail	1996	\$161,000	Acquisition	PA 480 of 1996
CN Rail Yard Acquisition	1998	\$962,000	Acquisition	PA 538 of 1998
Lake Huron Shoreline Acquisition	2004	\$2,312,500	Acquisition	PA 309 of 2004
Belle River Property Acquisition	2007	\$1,408,000	Acquisition	PA 59 of 2007
Camp Woodsong Simple Fee Acquisition	2008	\$291,800	Acquisition	PA278 of 2008
Blue Water River Walk Expansion	2012	\$150,000	Acquisition	PA 283 of 2012
North Channel Waterfront Acquisition	2014	\$296,000	Acquisition	PA 114 of 2014
Blue Water River Walk Park Development	2018	\$300,000	Development	PA 165 of 2018
North Channel Shoreline Acquisition	2021	\$1,425,300	Acquisition	PA 9 of 2021

Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, MNRTF Appropriation History, 2021

State and Federal Grants

PARC has been awarded over \$6 million in grants from state and federal agencies since 1994. PARC continues to seek grant opportunities from all agencies and sources that provide funding compatible with the County’s parks and recreation endeavors.

Other Grants

Since 2002, PARC has received grants from:

- The Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan – Greenways Initiative
- The Community Foundation of St. Clair County
- The Wadhams Council of Commerce
- Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light Station
- National Park Service (SAT)
- Michigan Department of Transportation

The Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan – Greenways Initiative has provided PARC with multiple grants since 2002. In 2002, it provided a \$56,250 grant to purchase right-of-way for the Wadhams to Avoca Trail extension. In 2005, it put forth \$30,000 to conduct a Wadhams to Avoca Trail – Bridge to Bay Trail connection study. In 2006, the Greenways Initiative provided PARC with \$10,000 to host a series of trails and greenways visioning workshops, which were also used to garner stakeholder input for the development of the Master Recreation Plan update.

In 2007, the Community Foundation of St. Clair County granted \$20,000 to PARC to acquire a second portable stage. Back in 1997, the Charles and Margaret Anderson Fund, acting through the Community Foundation of St. Clair County, donated a portable stage, known as the “Showmobile.” While PARC no longer owns the original Showmobile, it acquired another Showmobile in 2009. Organizations throughout the County use the Showmobiles for their intended purpose of musical and cultural events. The Community Foundation also granted PARC \$5,000 for improvements to the BMX track at Goodells County Park.

Donations

Businesses, organizations, families, and individuals have donated memorial trees and benches for Goodells County Park.

The 4-H Fair Board, St. Clair County Agricultural Society and the Bereaved Parents of the Blue Water Area have sponsored an adopt-a-brick program with proceeds to be used for additional Goodells County Park improvements.

Organizations, families, and individuals have donated their time and labor to maintain sections of the Wadhams to Avoca Trail or to maintain flower beds at numerous County parks.

PARC has received donations of five buildings for the Historic Village at Goodells Park including the Lynn Township Schoolhouse, the CC Peck Bank Building, the Murphy/Ryan Farmhouse, the Mudge Log Cabin and the Columbus Bible Church. All five buildings have been fully restored.

PARC continues to look for other historic buildings, especially those that are endangered by changing land use patterns.

Fees and Charges

PARC annually adopts a graduated fee schedule for use of the County's Showmobiles, portable bleachers, PARC facilities and grounds by groups, businesses, and organizations.

Under the graduated fee schedule:

- Private groups, non-residents, and businesses pay the highest fees
- Nonprofit organizations pay lesser fees
- Reservation fees guarantee exclusive use of the designated facilities for the group's event.

There is no charge for use of the Bridge to Bay Trail or the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Outdoor areas of Goodells County Park are also available for citizen use anytime at no cost. Likewise, certain outdoor park structures, such as the picnic pavilions, are available for individual use on a first-come basis, free of charge, when not reserved in advance by others.

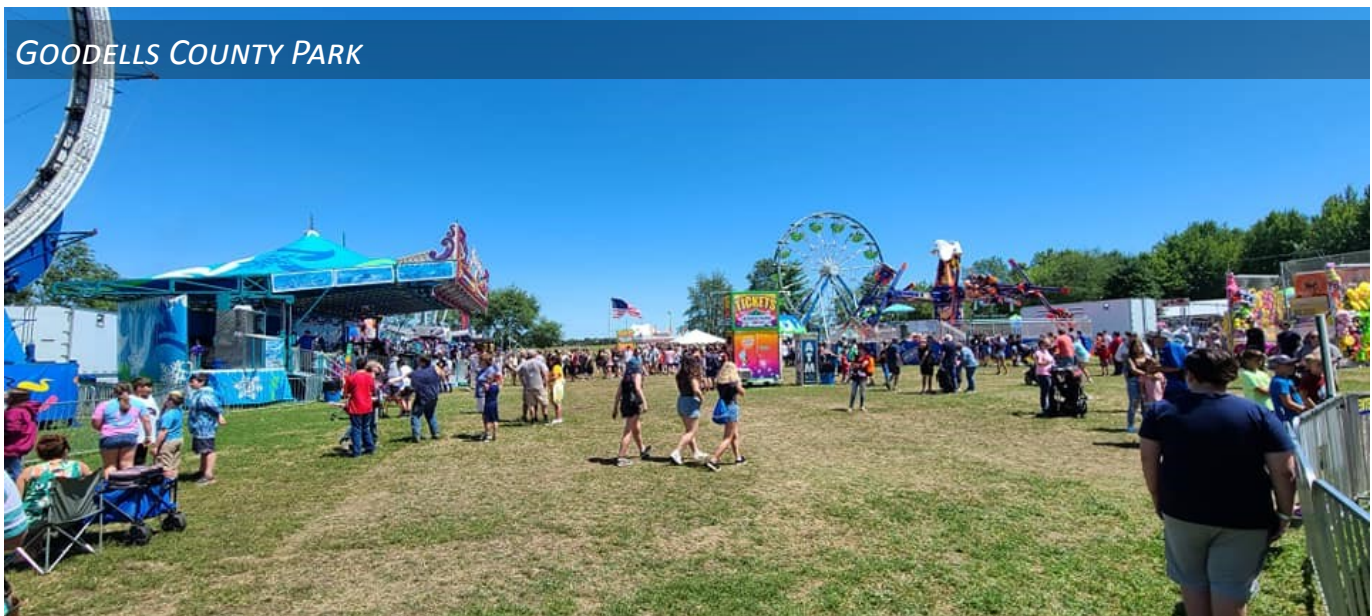


TABLE 2-3: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION BUDGET HISTORY

Category	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Revenues					
Millage	\$2,796,797	\$2,868,607	\$2,975,270	\$3,063,100	\$3,124,000
Grants – Government & Private	\$151,275	\$54,781	\$404,436	\$25,700	\$1,431,300
Fees & Charges	\$110,489	\$112,431	\$145,473	\$76,400	\$76,400
Interest/Rent Income	\$7,883	\$9,945	\$25,202	\$12,200	\$10,500
Other Income	\$36,043	\$35,775	\$9,910	\$65,200	\$11,000
Total Revenues	\$3,102,487	\$3,081,539	\$3,560,291	\$3,242,600	\$4,653,200
Expenditures					
Wages & Fringes	\$1,113,347	\$1,092,824	\$1,102,356	\$1,277,300	\$1,346,200
Operations & Maintenance	\$485,392	\$487,627	\$529,821	\$419,650	\$517,400
Special Grants to Locals	\$5,000	-	\$56,030	\$20,000	\$50,000
Local Millage Distributions	\$697,616	\$716,055	\$739,101	\$765,000	\$781,000
Capital Outlays	\$949,979	\$340,173	\$847,471	\$830,050	\$2,560,000
Cost Allocation	\$191,621	\$259,244	\$244,303	\$197,800	\$200,000
Total Expenditures	\$3,442,954	\$2,895,923	\$3,519,082	\$3,509,800	\$5,454,600
Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$340,467)	\$185,616	\$41,208	(\$267,200)	(\$801,400)

PARC BUDGETS

Budget History

From 2017 to 2021, millage revenue was relatively stable, with slight increases occurring each year during that period. Grant revenue during that same period fluctuated based on the availability of funding and the number of grant-eligible projects being undertaken. In 2018 and 2020, the County received fewer grant dollars compared to 2017, 2019, and 2021. See Table 2-3.

Responsible financial planning by PARC will ensure that the favorable relationship between revenues and costs is maximized.

Budget Projections

PARC financial projections for the next five years reflect yearly increases in both revenues and expenditures. See Table 2-4.

TABLE 2-4: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION BUDGET PROJECTION

Category	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Revenues					
Millage	\$3,186,480	\$3,250,210	\$3,315,214	\$3,381,518	\$3,449,148
Grants – Government & Private	\$1,459,926	\$1,489,125	\$1,518,907	\$1,549,285	\$1,580,271
Fees & Charges	\$77,928	\$79,487	\$81,076	\$82,698	\$84,352
Interest/Rent Income	\$10,710	\$10,924	\$11,143	\$11,366	\$11,593
Other Income	\$11,220	\$11,444	\$11,673	\$11,907	\$12,145
Total Revenues	\$4,746,264	\$4,841,189	\$4,938,013	\$5,036,773	\$5,137,509
Expenditures					
Wages & Fringes	\$1,373,124	\$1,400,586	\$1,428,598	\$1,457,170	\$1,486,314
Operations & Maintenance	\$527,748	\$538,303	\$549,069	\$560,050	\$571,251
Special Grants to Locals	\$51,000	\$52,020	\$53,060	\$54,122	\$55,204
Local Millage Distributions	\$796,620	\$812,552	\$828,803	\$845,380	\$862,287
Capital Outlays	\$2,611,200	\$2,663,424	\$2,716,692	\$2,771,026	\$2,826,447
Cost Allocation	\$204,000	\$208,080	\$212,242	\$216,486	\$220,816
Total Expenditures	\$5,563,692	\$5,674,966	\$5,788,465	\$5,904,234	\$6,022,319
Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$817,428)	(\$833,777)	(\$850,452)	(\$867,461)	(\$884,810)

With the economy growing and real estate prices continuing to go up, millage revenue is projected to grow and fees and charges are expected to slightly increase over the next five years as new recreation facilities are reserved and fees are adjusted to cover costs. Interest income will continue to be minimal due to historically low interest rates and lower fund balances.

Expenditures are expected to rise slowly over the next five years. Wages are expected to slightly increase over the next several years and fringe benefits costs have stabilized in recent years. Operations and maintenance costs are expected to rise slightly as new facilities have come on line over the past five years. Rising utility expenses could be offset by aggressive energy conservation and efficiency programs.

The net result of more conservative budgeting will be the reduction in the number of capital projects that can be pursued each year. Capital projects for trails, land acquisitions and the restoration of the Fort Gratiot Light Station will be dependent on public and private grants and donations.

The County parks and recreation millage revenue is projected to increase each year from 2022 to 2026, reaching \$3.45 million in 2026. For total revenues, it is projected there will be a \$484,309 increase over the next five years. Millage distributions to local units of government will continue to be 25% of the PARC millage funds collected each year. As the population grows, more millage funds will be collected and distributed.

PARC's ability to do additional park and trail improvements will be dependent on public and private grants, as well as donations. Potential grants are available from agencies such as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program, the Coastal Management Program funded through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

RECREATION INVENTORY

3



ST. CLAIR COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION PROPERTY

OVERVIEW

St. Clair County currently owns nine properties devoted to parks and recreation activities that total 1,060.5 acres. These are:

- Goodells County Park 405 acres
- Columbus County Park 411 acres
- Fort Gratiot County Park 30 acres
- Woodsong County Park 33 acres
- Fort Gratiot Light Station 5 acres
- Blue Water River Walk County Park 6.5 acres
- North Channel County Park 10 acres
- Marine City Dredge Cut Access 34 acres
- Wadhams to Avoca Trail 160 acres (12 miles long)

For the purposes of comparing the County’s Parks and Recreation property inventory with the recommended standards, it is also valuable to mention the St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency’s 111-acre Pine River Nature Center, which is adjacent to Goodells County Park. By adding that acreage to the parks and trails inventory above, PARC property totals 1,171.5 acres.

GOODELLS COUNTY PARK

On January 1, 1996, the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners gave the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission responsibility for maintenance, development, and operation of the County-owned Goodells County Park. At that time, the property was commonly known as “the poor farm” or “the fairgrounds” because of its previous uses as a residence for indigent senior citizens, as well as the ongoing site of the 4-H County Fair.

Facilities at the park include the Visitors Center, two playgrounds, river and fishing access, a seasonal ice skating rink, trails, four picnic shelters, a community center, historic buildings, a BMX track, a radio-controlled model airplane airfield and truck track, a butterfly garden, five special events buildings, the “Splashpad,” equestrian facilities, and areas for outdoor events.

The "Splashpad" has 11 spray features that include two water cannons, five dumping buckets, ground geysers, and a rainbow water tunnel. The “Splashpad” is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. from Memorial Day to





Labor Day and admission is free. In February 2006, the County received a Facility Design Award from the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) for the Goodells County Park Splashpad. This award recognized the Splashpad as the first water play facility in the state that uses and recycles water that is supplied by a well rather than a municipal water system.

The Historic Village at Goodells County Park contains the Lynn Township Schoolhouse (1885), and the C.C Peck and Company bank (1908). Visitors will also see the Columbus Bible Church (1860), the Murphy/Ryan farmhouse (1872) and the Mudge Log Cabin (1863). The latest addition to the Historic Village is the Columbus Bible Church. The Church was moved to the park and restored, complete with its twelve-foot tall windows and spectacular bell tower.

Goodells County Park is not just facilities and infrastructure. It is also a place where the community meets for many annual events, such as the St. Clair County 4-H Fair, dog shows, auctions, sewing bees, the Blue Water Humane Society Vaccination Clinic, regional cross country meets, Can-Am BMX bike racing, the Earth Fair, and Earthkeepers. The facilities are used throughout the year by dozens of organizations and families alike. On any given day at the park, one may see a wedding, family reunion, birthday party or day camp. The St. Clair County Farm Museum stores and demonstrates antique farm equipment at the park. The property is an essential part of the history and the future of St. Clair County.

COLUMBUS COUNTY PARK

Through five separate transactions, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) owns 411 acres of property in Columbus Township. PARC used a \$65,800 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) grant in 2016, to secure the final 26 acres. In 2007, PARC used a \$1.4 million MNRTF grant to secure 291 acres for the park. Phase 1 construction at Columbus County Park was completed in early 2010.

Facilities at the park include mountain biking trails, walking trails, horse trails, fishing access, and permit-only hunting. The Belle River runs through the park, totaling 1.6 miles of frontage. A historic gambrel roof barn is located at Columbus County Park near Bauman Road and is used for maintenance and storage. The barn was restored by Columbus Township. In the winter, visitors can enjoy winter sports such as sledding and cross country skiing. In September 2021, the Will Bendik Memorial Disc Golf Course opened at the park.

Construction of an energy efficient park Lodge with modern restroom facilities, a picnic pavilion, offices and storage rooms was completed in 2012. The Lodge uses geothermal technology for heating and cooling as a result of funding from the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant (EECBG) program.

Activities at the park include picnics, weddings, educational programs, and meetings.

FORT GRATIOT COUNTY PARK

Fort Gratiot County Park is located in the northeast part of St. Clair County, just off M-25 on Metcalf Road. This 30-acre park offers breathtaking views of Lake Huron and 852 feet of shoreline and beach. It also includes picnic areas, restrooms, a children’s playground, and paved walking trails.

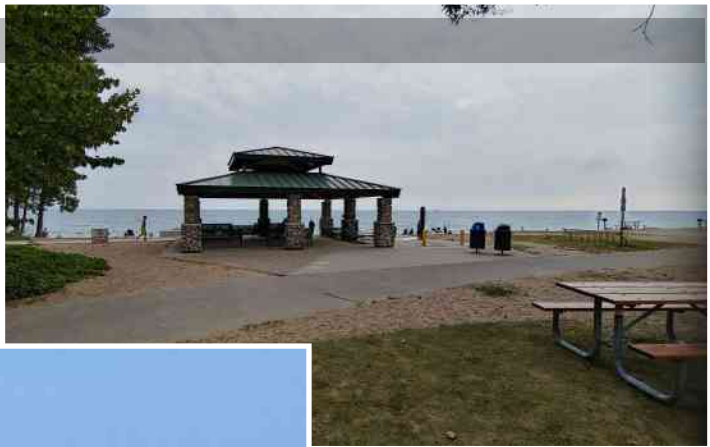
In Fall 2005, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission purchased 16 acres of property from Citizens First Bank for \$3.1 million using a \$2.2 million grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, administered by the Department of Natural Resources. PARC also purchased a beach easement from an adjacent property owner to move forward with the development of Fort Gratiot County Park.

PARC formally approved an updated Fort Gratiot County Park Master Plan that incorporated the use of the adjacent 14 acres leased from the Great Lakes Water Authority.

Phase 1 of the park’s development began in 2006 and included the installation of water and sewer lines, underground electrical lines, roads, paved trails, and parking areas.

Fort Gratiot County Park is also home to the 1971 Tunnel Explosion Memorial which commemorates the construction accident that took the lives of 22 men working on the water intake tunnel located beneath the park. The 1971 Water Tunnel Explosion committee raised funds for the memorial which was erected in 2007. The Michigan Historic Commission dedicated a State Historical Marker at the site to mark the 40th anniversary of the tragedy.

Other improvements at the park include ADA-accessible restrooms and a playscape in 2007, as well as an overflow parking area in 2008. In early 2009, two picnic pavilions were completed and additional sections of boardwalk were installed on the beach. An information kiosk was built, as well as a vending machine shelter and a beach gateway pavilion. All park improvements and equipment were funded by the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage.





WOODSONG COUNTY PARK

WOODSONG COUNTY PARK

In 2008, St. Clair County purchased the 33-acre Camp Woodsong site from the Michigan Waterways Council of the Girl Scouts of America. The property is located off of Abbottsford Road, at the east end of Rynn Road, in Clyde Township.

St. Clair County purchased the property for \$400,000 using a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. Under the grant, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund reimbursed St. Clair County for 64% of the purchase price and eligible costs. St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage funds were used to fund the balance of the purchase costs.

Woodsong is a passive park with rustic trails that traverse along scenic, steep slopes that travel down to 2,800 ft of Black River shoreline. The park is the ideal place to nature watch. The rustic trails follow the natural terrain. Additionally, The Clinton River Area Mountain Bike Association (CRAMBA) continues to rapidly develop mountain bike trails at Woodsong County Park. These trails are a combination of two track and single track that follow the steep ridges next to the Black River. At present, about three miles of designated mountain bike trails are completed, with a goal of completing an additional mile when fully built out.

In 2017 a canoe and kayak launch was added, using a \$50,000 grant from EGLE. While the launch itself is fully accessible, it is important to note that steep trail leading from the parking lot to the launch is not ADA accessible. Future plans include trail improvements to make the trail easier to use.

Woodsong County Park provides opportunities for nature study, hiking, biking, and water activities, such as canoeing, kayaking, and fishing on the Black River.

FORT GRATIOT LIGHT STATION

The Fort Gratiot Light Station is the oldest lighthouse in Michigan. As the shipping needs on the Great Lakes increased in the 1820's, so did the need for a navigational aid at the mouth of the St. Clair River. In August of 1825, the first lighthouse in Michigan was built at Port Huron. The original tower was located near the base of the present day second span of the Blue Water Bridge. It was 32 feet high above ground level, 18 feet in diameter at the base, and tapered to nine feet across at the top. The original tower did not last long, as poor construction and September storms would lead to its demise when it crumbled in November of 1828.

In the 1850's, the Lighthouse Board began a series of reforms that would affect the Fort Gratiot Light Station. The first such change was the addition of a Fresnel lens. From the 1860's to the 1930's, the property expanded with the addition of the Keeper's Duplex (1874), the Fog Signal Building (1900), the Single Keeper's Dwelling (1932), the Coast Guard Station (1932) and the Equipment Building (1938).

When most of the Great Lakes lights were automated in the 1930's, the need for light keepers faded into the sunset. The Coast Guard maintained the Fort Gratiot Light Station from the 1930's until they moved next door into the new station that was built in 2004.

The property was officially transferred to St. Clair County in 2010. Restoration of the lighthouse was completed in 2013, and other property repairs and additions have been made using Michigan Coastal Management Program grant funding. The restoration of the tower was made possible by the "Save America's Treasures" grant program and a match from the City of Port Huron. The tower reopened for tours in the summer of 2012. The Port Huron Museum serves as a partner in leading tours of the site, programming, and private reservations. Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light Station raises funds for building restoration projects and provides volunteers.

NORTH CHANNEL COUNTY PARK

In December 2020, St. Clair County was awarded funding from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for an acquisition grant to purchase four parcels of land on the North Channel of the St. Clair River in Clay Township. The





NORTH CHANNEL WATERFRONT ACQUISITION
 PRELIMINARY CONCEPT PLAN
 COUNTY OF ST. CLAIR
 2431 PT. TREMBLE
 CLAY TOWNSHIP



PMB
 PM Blough, Inc

four parcels, totaling approximately 10 acres, are located between the Algonac Harbour Club and the MDNR Boat Launch on M-29. The \$1,425,300 grant is being matched with \$500,800 from the County Parks and Recreation Millage. The project was a partnership with Six Rivers Land Conservancy, Clay Township and the City of Algonac. The new County Park will be developed in phases and will include a swimming beach, a kayak launch, shoreline fishing, walking trails, pavilions, a children’s playground and a paved parking lot. It will also be one of the designated locations along the new St. Clair-Macomb Birding Trail, created in 2021. PARC will begin developing the property in early 2022. Public input sessions will be held to allow residents to provide feedback on park amenities and design. See the site rendering for the new park on Page 39.

PINE RIVER NATURE CENTER

The St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency’s Pine River Nature Center is an educational facility whose mission is to promote the awareness, understanding and stewardship of the Blue Water Area's natural and cultural heritage. The center provides programs for local schools to enhance their science and mathematics curricula with outdoor-based field studies correlated with the Michigan Curriculum Framework and offers outdoor recreation and environmental education opportunities for area residents.

The Pine River Nature Center opened to the public in the May of 2003. The Nature Center sits on 111 acres of property, with over 4,800 feet of the Pine River meandering through it. Since opening, over 21,900 students from around St. Clair County have visited the center for programs. Activities and events at the center include the following:








- Opportunities to hike over two miles of trails (open daily from dawn to dark).
- Browse the indoor displays and live animals.
- Read about nature or do research in the library.
- Attend public programs, including star gazing parties and nature walks.
- Volunteer to help with special events and school programs.
- Adopt-a-Trail.
- Visit the universally-accessible (ADA) tree house.



St. Clair County Parks & Recreation

Legend

Facility

-  Trail Head
-  park
-  Greenways
-  Interstate
-  Local Highways and Ramps
-  CSS Minor Civil Division
-  Major Watercourses



TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

Greenways are corridors of land recognized for their ability to connect people and places together. According to the EPA, greenways promote outdoor recreation, catalyze economic development, increase adjacent property values, celebrate historical and cultural assets, promote conservation and environmental education and improve quality of life.

Greenways have multiple purposes, but from a recreation perspective they have two major functions:

1. To link and facilitate hiking and biking access between residential areas and parks.
2. To provide opportunities for the linear forms of outdoor recreation (i.e. hiking, jogging, bicycling, equestrian riding, and walking) in which many St. Clair County residents engage today. These recreation activities require the development of trails along the greenways.

There are two primary trail systems within St. Clair County: the Wadhams to Avoca Trail and the Bridge to Bay Trail.

Wadhams to Avoca Trail

In 1999, PARC purchased the surface rights to 9.82 miles (100 acres) of right-of-way from CSX Railroad and began developing it as the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. In 2001 and 2004, PARC purchased two additional properties totaling 17.65 acres adjacent to the trail north of Imlay City Road for a trailhead and parking. In 2003, PARC purchased the surface rights to an additional two and a half miles of CSX Railroad right-of-way totaling 17.66 acres from Wadhams Road to Griswold Road. The trail is over 12.4 miles long and contains 160 acres.

To date, the 640-foot Mill Creek Trestle has been decked and railed for pedestrians and bike riders. Three acres of land southeast of the Trestle was purchased to create a horse crossing at Mill Creek.

At the south end of the trail in Kimball Township, over five miles of trail have been paved starting at McLain Road running southeast to Griswold Road. The paved section of the trail passes through a developing residential area and is heavily used by residents.



Bridge to Bay Trail



The Bridge to Bay Trail is a diverse trail system of boardwalks, riverwalks, rail trails and bike paths that extends along 50 miles of shoreline across St. Clair County, Michigan. Experience picturesque views, charming towns, parks and beaches, freighter watching and the blue waters of Lake Huron, the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair.

Learn More at www.bridgetobaytrail.org

Legend



Amenities



Amenities subject to seasonal availability and to change.



Michigan's Thumb Coast



BRIDGE TO BAY TRAIL



In a joint effort with the St. Clair County Road Commission, a hybrid pedestrian signal was installed in 2010 where the trail crosses Wadhams Road. It was the first time this type of signal has been used for a trail crossing in Michigan. The signal prompts flashing lights to stop traffic when a pedestrian wishes to cross the road.

Designated parking areas are located at the Wadhams Road, Imlay City Road, Lapeer Road and Avoca Road trailheads. The non-motorized trail is open to walkers, bicyclists and equestrians.

It is a priority of PARC and its community partners to extend the Wadhams to Avoca Trail to the City of Yale, as well as exploring opportunities to extend the trail beyond St. Clair County into Sanilac County.

Bridge to Bay Trail

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) is working in conjunction with 13 local units of government, Friends of the St. Clair River, the Metropolitan Planning Commission and the St. Clair County Community Foundation to develop a 54-mile paved trail from Lakeport State Park to New Baltimore. A regional trails governing board helps to plan and promote the trail, while each local unit of government is responsible for constructing their section of the trail. Even though PARC plays an instrumental coordinating role in the development of the Bridge to Bay Trail, the property that makes up that trail is owned by various municipalities and townships. Most trail construction projects are funded by grants. PARC usually helps to fund the local match required for trail construction grants.

The Bridge to Bay Trail extends from St. Clair County's northern border, under the Blue Water Bridges; through Port Huron, Marysville, St. Clair, Marine City, and Algonac; and past state and municipal parks, museums, gazebos, and lighthouses. Sometimes the trail is within reach of the water's edge and sometimes a few miles inland. It connects communities together for walkers, joggers, strollers, and bicyclists of all ages. The trail varies from a ten-foot wide separated paved pathway in the right of way along a road, or a five-foot wide dedicated bike lane.



BRIDGE TO BAY TRAIL IN PORT HURON

Community partners have a primary goal of connecting the Bridge to Bay Trail to the Wadhams to Avoca Trail within St. Clair County, the Macomb Orchard Trail in Richmond (Macomb County), and the St. Clair Parkway Trail in Lambton, Ontario, Canada via ferry. As of 2021, roughly 26 miles of the 54-mile Bridge to Bay Trail is complete.

Funding for the Bridge to Bay Trail comes from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage, local government funds, and state and federal grants, and philanthropic grants. Grant money for the trail has been provided by the United States government through federal transportation grants, and by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF).

Blue Water River Walk and Blue Water River Walk County Park

Blue Water River Walk County Park is a former railroad switch yard that has been partially restored to a coastal wetland. The wetlands feature three ponds, marshland and native plants. The habitat is home to amphibians, such as frogs and toads, and is a popular nesting and feeding spot for migratory birds. A boardwalk allows park visitors to get close to the wetland habitat without disturbing the natural features and interpretive signs help explain how the wetlands work. Just north of the wetlands is a picnic pavilion, a shade trellis, walkways, landscaping, an artificial lawn activity area, picnic tables, grills and benches. Future developments will include a children's playground, restrooms and a second pavilion.

Traveling through the park is the Blue Water River Walk. The River Walk is a paved pathway that begins at Desmond Landing to the north and travels southwest to 10th Street. The Blue Water River Walk is part of the Bridge to Bay Trail System. The Blue Water River Walk is owned by the Community Foundation of St. Clair County. St. Clair County Parks leases and maintains the grounds.

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission purchased 4.85 acres of land using two MNRTF grants and received a \$1,039,500 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to develop a 2.75-acre wetland on the very southern end of the river walk.

The Great Lake-to-Lake Trail, Route #1

The Great Lake-to-Lake Trails Route #1 is a 275-mile shared use trail across Michigan's southern Lower Peninsula that links Lakes Michigan and Huron while featuring pastoral farms and woodlots mingled with small towns and major cities. The linear destination trail connects visitors to nature while fostering healthy, sustainable and prosperous communities from South Haven to Port Huron. Route #1 is one of five Great Lake-to-Lake Trails that the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance (MTGA) intends to develop.

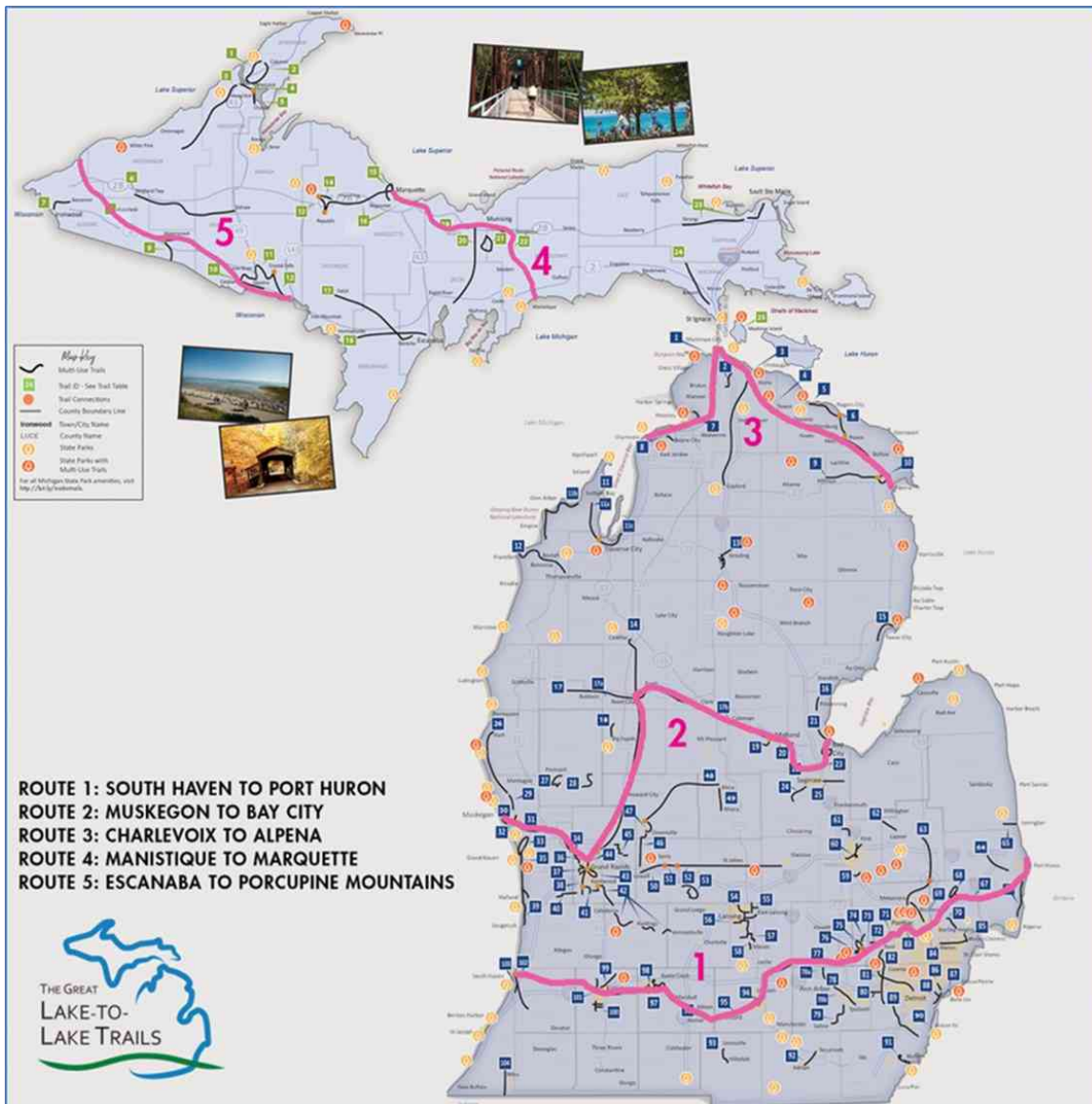
The Great Lake-to-Lake Trail offers Michigan's trail users a unique opportunity to experience quiet rural pathways and urban excursions as it winds its way across the southern lower portion of Michigan from shore to shore. The MTGA began the Great Lake-to-Lake Trails Project in 2009 with a grant from the Kresge Foundation to accelerate the development of cross-state trails while enhancing tourism and economic development opportunities.

Great Lakes Way

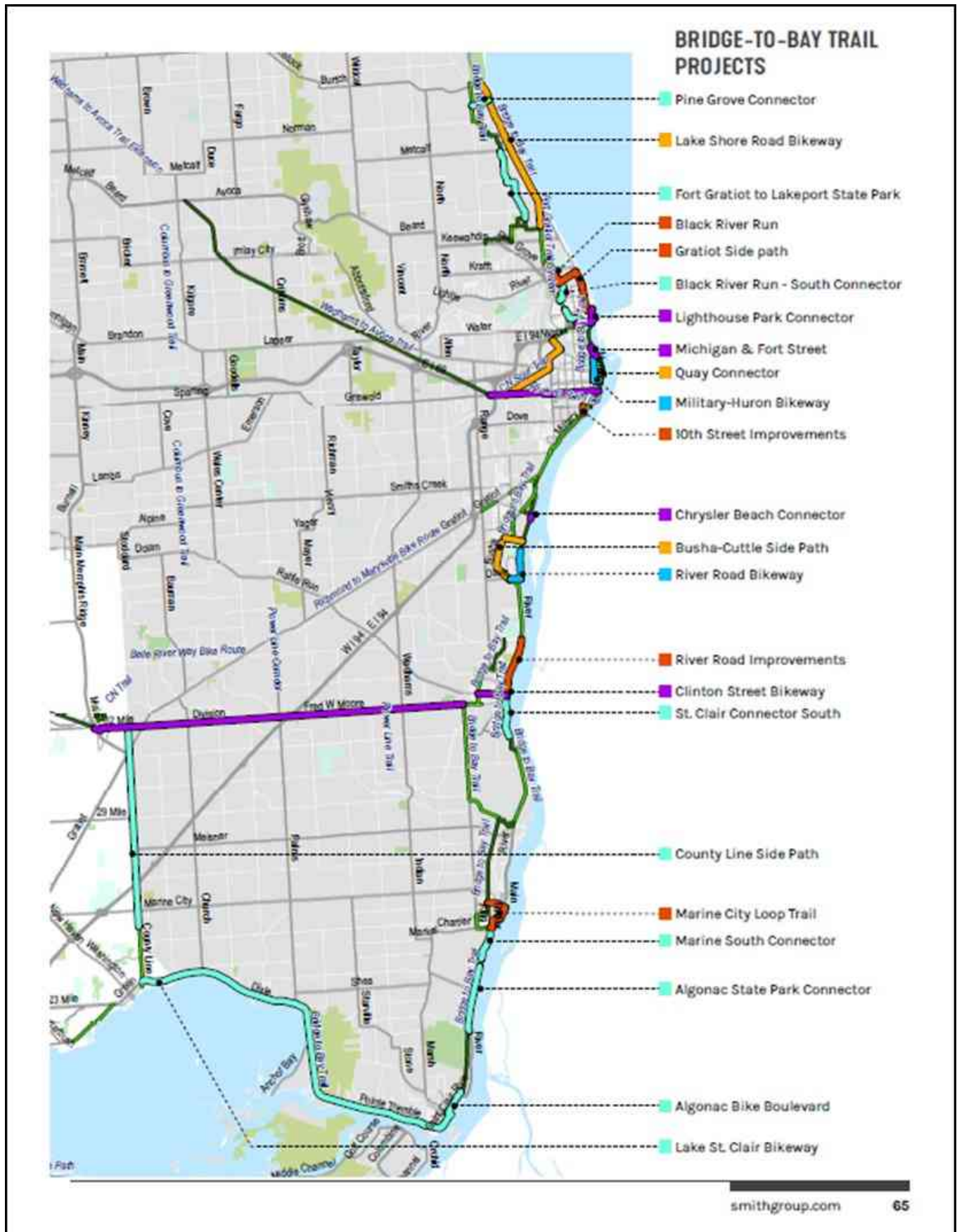
The purpose of the Great Lakes Way is to build upon the groundwork laid by so many others to strengthen and define the greenways and blueways of the Huron-Erie corridor and ensure that people of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities and interests feel welcomed and share in its benefits. The Great Lakes Way is a regional trail that builds upon existing assets and mapping and ensuring broad equity.

Creation of the Great Lakes Way brings together the collective assets of Monroe, Wayne, Macomb, and St. Clair counties. By designating these greenways and blueways as the Great Lakes Way, the region can focus on the important linkages still to be developed, while delivering a clear brand and message that will be recognizable to its residents. The goal is to link residents and visitors to the impressive collective of natural, educational, and

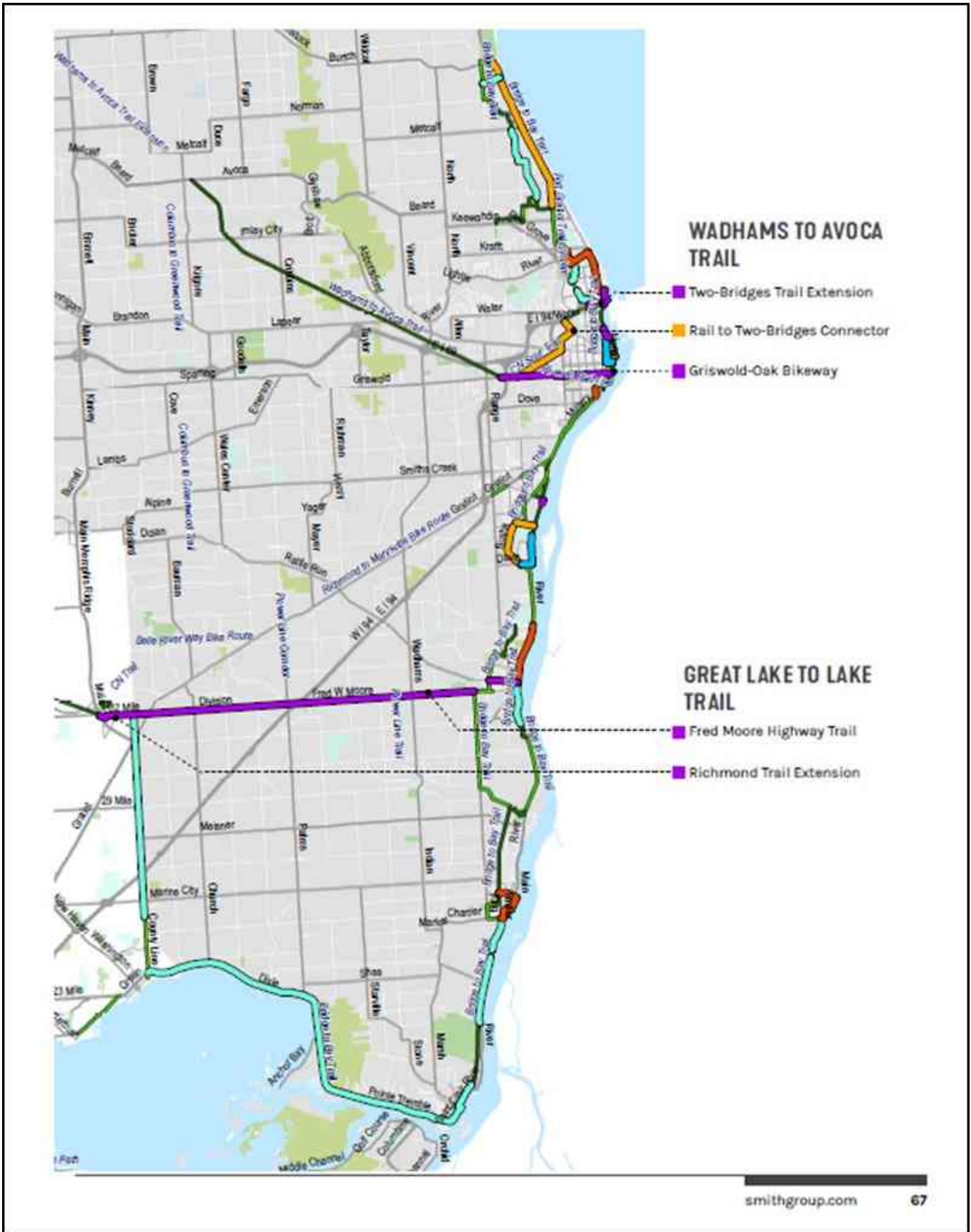
The Great Lake-to-Lake Trail, Route #1



St. Clair County Trails Plan - Bridge to Bay Trail



St. Clair County Trails Plan - Wadhams to Avoca Trail



recreational assets throughout the region. More information about the Great Lakes Way can be found online at <https://cfsem.org/initiative/greatlakesway/>.

ST. CLAIR COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

In 2019, St. Clair County, in conjunction with the St. Clair County Community Foundation, Friends of the St. Clair River, and local community partners updated the countywide trails plan to assess the overall county and its major destinations, inventory the existing trail systems, and understand community desires. These activities supported the adoption of an implementation-focused plan that clearly identifies opportunities, needs, and priorities for future trail and bikeway projects.

Ultimately, the planning process was a chance to step back and take stock of current facilities and position county government, local municipal partners, and other agencies to pursue and implement the next wave of trail projects across St. Clair County. A major goal of the plan is to connect community assets, downtowns, and recreation facilities.

The Parks and Recreation Commission supports the goals, priorities, and implementation strategies of the St. Clair County Trails Plan and incorporates those goals and priorities into this plan by reference.

THE BLUEWAYS OF ST. CLAIR

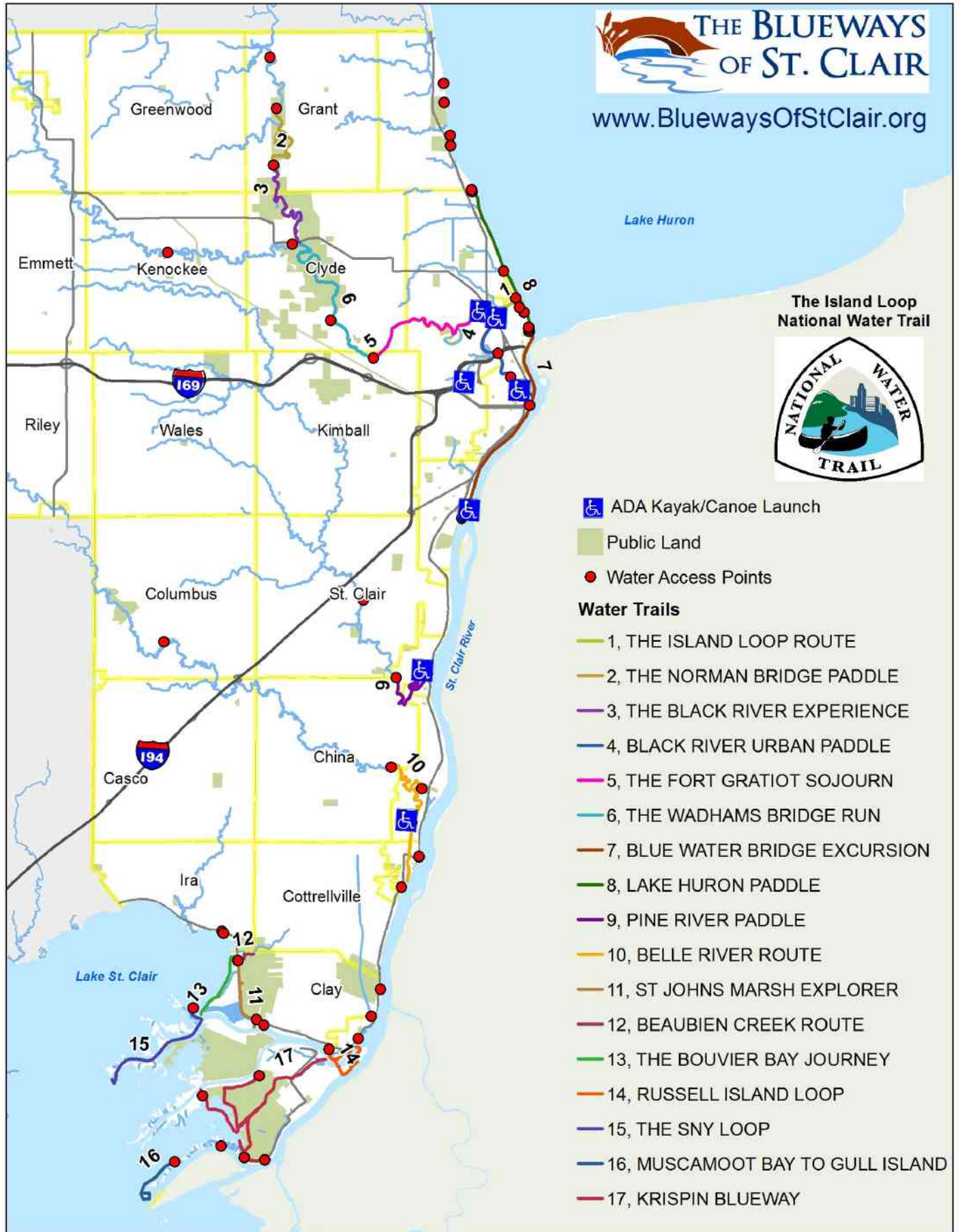
One of the goals included in the 2007-2011 Master Recreation Plan was to explore developing a system of water trails in St. Clair County. The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission, in partnership with PARC, applied for and was granted a Michigan Coastal Management Grant to create The Blueways of St. Clair water trail system for St. Clair County.

Research began in 2009 to find all the public access points along waterways in the county. Next, public input was gathered for popular paddling routes and put-ins. An interactive website was built up with paddling routes,





www.BluewaysOfStClair.org



The Island Loop National Water Trail



ADA Kayak/Canoe Launch

Public Land

Water Access Points

Water Trails

- 1, THE ISLAND LOOP ROUTE
- 2, THE NORMAN BRIDGE PADDLE
- 3, THE BLACK RIVER EXPERIENCE
- 4, BLACK RIVER URBAN PADDLE
- 5, THE FORT GRATIOT SOJOURN
- 6, THE WADHAMS BRIDGE RUN
- 7, BLUE WATER BRIDGE EXCURSION
- 8, LAKE HURON PADDLE
- 9, PINE RIVER PADDLE
- 10, BELLE RIVER ROUTE
- 11, ST JOHNS MARSH EXPLORER
- 12, BEAUBIEN CREEK ROUTE
- 13, THE BOUVIER BAY JOURNEY
- 14, RUSSELL ISLAND LOOP
- 15, THE SNY LOOP
- 16, MUSCAMOOT BAY TO GULL ISLAND
- 17, KRISPIN BLUEWAY

St. Clair County Public Water Access (mainland only)

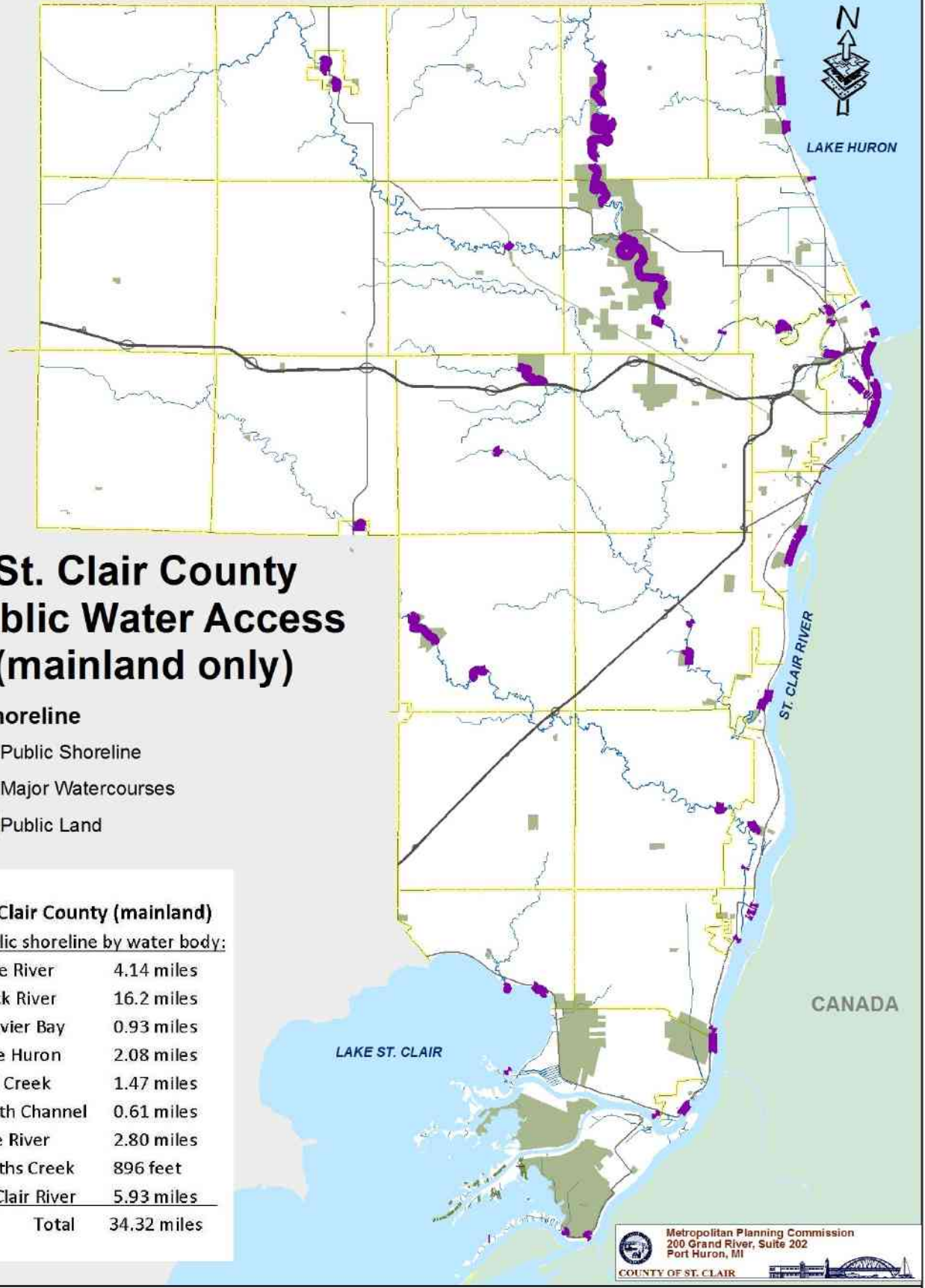
Shoreline

-  Public Shoreline
-  Major Watercourses
-  Public Land

St. Clair County (mainland)

Public shoreline by water body:

Belle River	4.14 miles
Black River	16.2 miles
Bouvier Bay	0.93 miles
Lake Huron	2.08 miles
Mill Creek	1.47 miles
North Channel	0.61 miles
Pine River	2.80 miles
Smiths Creek	896 feet
St. Clair River	5.93 miles
Total	34.32 miles



access pictures, information on restaurants, motels, museums and other points of interest. The website provides information on the major rivers in the County, including the Black River, Belle River, Pine River, Lake Huron, St. Clair River, and the St. Clair River delta, which is the largest freshwater delta in North America.

The Blueways website lists 17 different paddling routes, totaling 151 miles, in nine unique bodies of water and lots of valuable information related to paddling and shoreline recreation. Check out St. Clair County's Blueways website at www.BluewaysOfStClair.org.

Island Loop National Water Trail

The 10.2-mile Island Loop National Water Trail was the first national water trail to be designated in Michigan and the 14th in the United States. The trail makes a loop from the Black River, to the Black River Canal, to Lake Huron, into the St. Clair River and back to the Black River. It also passes the oldest lighthouse in Michigan, the Thomas Edison Museum, the Huron Lightship Museum, and the Acheson Maritime Center. It also navigates between the United States and Canada for 2.5 miles and meanders through Fort Gratiot Township, Port Huron Township, and the City of Port Huron.

RECREATION STANDARDS

Two recreation standards are applicable to parks and recreation facilities within St. Clair County:

1. Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, developed by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), which relate to park acreage requirements.
2. Michigan Recreation Opportunity Standards, developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, which relate to a variety of park facilities and features as well as acreage requirements.

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Standards

National Recreation and Park Association's Open Space Guidelines and Standards, known as the NRPA Standards, are used by many state, regional, and county parks and recreation agencies throughout the United States to aid in the development of master recreation plans.

The sections of the NRPA Standards that are relevant to properly assessing the amount of parks and recreation acreage and facilities in St. Clair County are:

- Mini-Parks, Neighborhood Parks, and Community Parks
- Regional Park
- Regional Park Reserves

All three of these types of parks and recreation facilities can be found within St. Clair County, and all are included in the recreation inventory on the previous pages and defined in the following text.

Mini, Neighborhood, and Community Parks

Mini, neighborhood, and community parks are small parks, designed to satisfy the recreational needs of a local community within a service radius of up to two miles.

These parks are under the ownership of, and considered the responsibility of, local units of government. While these properties are listed in the recreation inventory matrix on pages 53-61 and a share of the County's Parks and Recreation Millage is distributed to the local units of government, plans for mini, neighborhood, and community parks lie outside the realm of this countywide Master Recreation Plan.

Regional Parks

Regional parks are culturally significant, ecologically significant and/or large parks (over 200 acres) that typically

result from the need to protect a cultural, natural, or historical resource of regional significance, or to provide a new regional attraction. They are designed to serve several communities within a service radius of up to one hour's driving time. Regional parks within St. Clair County are the primary subject of this Master Recreation Plan.

Regional Park Reserves

Regional park reserves are parks of 1,000 acres or more, designed to serve several communities within a service radius of up to one hour's driving time.

All regional park reserves in St. Clair County are Michigan State Parks and Michigan State Game Areas. These are the responsibility of, and managed by, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Parks and Recreation Division and Wildlife Division.

Though many St. Clair County residents use these state-owned facilities, the one-hour service radius of these properties also serve residents in all or part of Macomb, Oakland, Wayne, Lapeer, Genesee, Sanilac, Tuscola, and Huron counties as well as international visitors from Canada.

The Michigan State Parks within St. Clair County attract campers, bird watchers, boaters, and anglers. The vast majority of State Game Area property in the county is dedicated for wild game management and hunting purposes.

Since these regional park reserves are state-owned property and are the responsibility of state government, plans for how these properties are used and managed are not included in this Master Recreation Plan.

St. Clair County's Regional Parks

The purpose of the "Regional Park" category in the NRPA Standards is to help identify whether a certain geographic area or unit of government – in this case, St. Clair County – possesses sufficient park acreage to satisfy the recreational needs of its citizens. Both the 405-acre Goodells County Park and the 411-acre Columbus County Park specifically fit the NRPA standard for a regional park.



Due to its adjacent location to Goodells County Park, the County Parks and Recreation Commission has also listed RESA’s 111-acre Pine River Nature Center as part of the County’s required total parks and recreation acreage.

Fort Gratiot County Park (30 acres), Woodsong County Park (33 acres), and the Wetlands County Park (five acres) are considered regional parks due to their significant frontage along important bodies of water. Woodsong’s location along 2,800 feet of Black River shoreline and the existence of threatened flora are two factors that make it very valuable. The shores of Lake Huron and the State Historical site at Fort Gratiot County Park classify it as a Regional Park. Wetlands County Park provides access to the St. Clair River.

Finally, the park at Fort Gratiot Light Station (five acres) is a regional park due to its historic significance in the Great Lakes system.

The Wadhams to Avoca Trail is technically classified as a linear park. However, since the County Parks and Recreation Commission has acquired trailhead property and intends to acquire more land for that purpose, the total trail acreage (currently 160 acres) is included within the county’s regional parks inventory.

The total acreage for these properties currently stands at 1,171.5 acres.

The acreage devoted to the Bridge to Bay Trail is not included because that land is owned by the various local units of government through which the trail passes.

Park Acres Needed

The recognized NRPA Standard for Regional Parks is at least five to ten acres for every 1,000 persons in the service area. Based on St. Clair County’s current and projected population, Table 3-1 shows how much additional park acreage the County should acquire to meet current and future standards. It is the policy of the Parks and Recreation Commission to meet the higher acreage standard - ten acres of regional park space per 1,000 people.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Standards

In addition to the NRPA Standards, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has identified 30 Michigan Recreation Opportunity Standards.

TABLE 3-1: ST. CLAIR COUNTY, REGIONAL PARK NEEDS - ACREAGE		
REGIONAL PARK NEEDS: CURRENT POPULATION (BASED ON 2020 CENSUS) - 160,383		
5 acres per 1,000 people	Current Acreage	Acres Needed
802	1,171.5	+369.5 over
10 acres per 1,000 people	Current Acreage	Acres Needed
1,604	1,171.5	-432.5 deficit
REGIONAL PARK NEEDS: PROJECTED POPULATION (2040 SEMCOG FORECAST) - 166,922		
5 acres per 1,000 people	Current Acreage	Acres Needed
835	1,171.5	+336 over
10 acres per 1,000 people	Current Acreage	Acres Needed
1,669	1,171.5	-497.5 deficit

Like the NRPA Standards, these MDNR standards identify acres required for parks and recreation purposes. They also identify the number of units, such as boat launch sites or feet of fishing access, needed to serve the population within a defined area.

The MDNR Standards also recognize that no one agency, such as a county parks and recreation commission or department, is responsible for meeting all of the recreational standards in a given region. Therefore, the MDNR suggests that facilities managed by state and county governments, as well as those owned and managed by cities, townships, and villages, be included in a comprehensive inventory and be measured against the numerical standard.

Of the 30 standards identified by the NRPA and MDNR, 16 are considered to be “resource-based” facilities as opposed to “activity-based” facilities. Resource-based facilities are more likely to be used by all citizens throughout a county or region. Swimming beaches and nature trails are examples of resource-based facilities. Tennis courts and ball diamonds are examples of activity-based facilities; these are more likely to be used by residents within a community, neighborhood, or locale.

Subjective Interpretation of Standards

Recreation standards are often used to test the validity of information gained from surveys and through direct citizen input. Therefore, planners in Michigan have historically used numerical standards as a means of determining the number of park acres and/or facilities needed to serve a given population. These standards were originally expressed only in terms of open space, but later were expanded to include a list of basic park amenities.

The strength of the standards approach to planning has been that these formulas are officially accepted by most state and federal plan review agencies.

However, even though recreation planning standards are generally constructive, they must also be used intelligently in concert with other information because they tend to either understate or overstate actual citizen needs due to regional interests, demographics, citizen mobility, unique natural areas, and the impact of tourism. Recognizing the value of public opinion, standards, and intelligent analysis, the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission has relied on both quantitative data as well as public comments, citizen surveys, input from numerous government officials and on subjective and objective interpretation of all data sources.

This balance of subjective and objective interpretation is the basis for all St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission decisions and actions.

BARRIER-FREE ENDEAVORS/ACCESSIBILITY

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that over 53 million Americans – one out of every five adults – are disabled. While these numbers are broad estimates, it is clear that the number of people nationwide who have disabilities is large and is growing significantly as the American population continues to age. The incidence of disability rises sharply as individuals reach their sixth and seventh decade of life. In St. Clair County, 12.6% of the total population (US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019) under age 65 has a disability.

PARC is dedicated to providing positive recreational opportunities for all citizens. With that dedication comes recognition of the importance of providing for the special needs of disabled members of the community.

To that end, PARC has removed barriers from existing facilities.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), PARC is working to ensure that all future



parks and recreation projects adhere to specifications for access, inclusion, emotional well-being, and physical fitness that provide increased independence and improved quality of life for disabled individuals.

Each PARC facility was compared to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design and given a ranking from 1-5, where:

- 1 = none of the site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- 2 = some site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- 3 = most site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- 4 = all site elements meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, and
- 5 = the facility meets the Principals of Universal Design

Goodells County Park | Accessibility Ranking: 4

Access issues have been addressed for each activity area. Both the Community Center and the Visitor’s Center have paved sidewalks and pathways for easy entrance and egress as well as convenient parking areas with a more-than-adequate number of handicapped-accessible parking spaces. These buildings also have electrically-operated handicapped-accessible doors, proper signage for direction and location, and completely accessible bathroom and shower facilities.

Paved pathways connect these buildings to other park areas, including the children’s playground, the historic village, exhibit barns, Farm Museum, and picnic pavilions. PARC has also provided handicapped and wheelchair access to the Special Events Arena. All historic buildings are barrier free with earth ramps to create "at-grade" entrances.

There are paved handicapped parking spaces in the north gravel parking lot, as well as the east gravel lot. The Splashpad is also barrier-free, so that all residents and visitors can enjoy it during the summertime. Additionally, the main play structures at Goodells County Park are handicapped-accessible.

Columbus County Park | Accessibility Ranking: 3

Currently, there are handicapped-accessible parking spaces. The park Lodge includes an ADA-accessible family restroom and an elevator shaft, in the event that the basement will include a public use in the future. The park also features playground with a fully handicapped-accessible play structure.

Fort Gratiot County Park | Accessibility Ranking: 4

Accessible parking has been addressed by dedicating handicapped parking spaces by the beach area and near both pavilions. The main picnic shelter is equipped with an ADA-accessible family restroom. Clear signage has been put in place to assist with wayfinding.

A boardwalk leading to the beach provides access to the water. A transfer bench is located near the water's edge, and a beach wheelchair is available for use for free. PARC's accessible beach wheelchair is equipped with large, wide wheels which can roll across the sand without sinking.

Woodsong County Park | Accessibility Ranking: 2

At this time, there is a temporary parking lot providing access to the park. The park currently is a passive park with rustic trails and mountain bike trails. In 2017, an ADA-accessible canoe and kayak launch was installed at Woodsong, though the steep trail leading from the parking lot to the launch is not ADA-accessible.

North Channel County Park | Accessibility Ranking: 1

This park is currently undeveloped. Plans for North Channel County Park include an ADA-accessible canoe and kayak launch, an ADA-accessible boardwalk, and ADA-accessible paths throughout the park. Additional amenities will include accessible parking and restroom facilities. See the design plan on Page 39.

Fort Gratiot Light Station | Accessibility Ranking: 4

The Fort Gratiot Light Station includes handicapped parking spaces. PARC also used Michigan Coastal Management Grant funds in 2012 to build interpretive signage and accessible walkways near the Light Station. Barrier-free restrooms have been constructed in the Fog Signal building and the equipment building.

Trails | Accessibility Ranking: 3

Barrier-free access is an important component of the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission trails projects as well.

For both the Bridge to Bay Trail and the Wadhams to Avoca Trail, PARC has specified and is working toward:

- Adequate accessible parking spots and restrooms at trailheads.
- Adequate, legible signage for ease of understanding by people with visual or cognitive impairments .
- Proper substrate and finished trail surface for ease of wheelchair and ambulatory mobility.

Currently, there are handicapped parking spaces at every trailhead parking lot along the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Accessible vault toilets are located at the Avoca, Imlay City and Lapeer Road trailheads.

Trails are built to the dimensions specified by the Americans with Disabilities Act to allow trail access for wheelchairs, while preventing passage by motorized vehicles. All bollards at road crossings are placed according to the standard.

People with disabilities encountering barriers to their enjoyment of any St. Clair County park are encouraged to contact PARC regarding the issue and are invited to make suggestions to reduce or eliminate the barrier.

PARKS AND RECREATION PROPERTY HELD BY MUNICIPALITIES, TOWNSHIPS, STATE AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

OVERVIEW

The matrix that appears on the following pages show an inventory of municipal and township recreational facilities within St. Clair County. The Metropolitan Planning Commission conducted this inventory to determine the number of parks and recreation facilities and their acreage and features. The inventory was developed through the examination of community recreation plans and through discussion with local government officials.

MPC staff examined information about playgrounds, ball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts, outdoor and indoor swimming pools, access to ponds, rivers and lakes, marinas, boat ramps, fishing access (other than by boat), ice skating, camping, trails, golf courses, picnic shelters or pavilions, community centers, hunting access, and any other special facilities.

In addition to these items, several communities indicated the existence and availability of tennis courts, volleyball courts, boardwalks, park benches, viewing vistas, landscaped areas, concession stands, track and football fields, indoor tracks, golf ranges, and golf domes. Some facilities are lighted for use at night.

The inventory also shows that several communities own vacant park land that is planned for recreational development at some point in the future. Some of this vacant land is wetland and is, therefore, not intended for development of any kind.

School facilities are not included even though all or most of those have playgrounds that are open to the public.

City of Algonac		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Smith Field	2.0	Skate Park
Riverfront Park	5.0	River access, boat launch, fishing access, picnic areas, restrooms, freighter watching, gazebo rental, life jacket loaner station, blooming gardens
Water Tower Park	1.0	Playground
Scout & Columbia St. Park	0.25	Playground
Lions Field	10.0	Playground, soccer fields, basketball/volleyball courts, swimming pool, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, community center, restrooms
Village of Capac		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Capac Lions Park	6.0	Playground, ballfields, picnic areas, restrooms
Marine City		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Marine City Beach	1.20	Bathing beach, river access, playground, fishing access, restrooms, pavilion, freighter watching
Broadway Park	0.75	River access, fishing access, battleship gun deck display, freighter watching
Lighthouse Park	1.0	Volleyball courts, river access, fishing access, Peche Island Lighthouse, freighter watching
Civic Women's Club River Park	0.5	River access, fishing access, picnic area, freighter watching
Drake Memorial Park	0.75	River access, fishing access, freighter watching
Nautical Mile Park	1.2	River access, fishing access, picnic areas, freighter watching
Tot Lot	0.5	Playground
King Road Park	14.0	Playground, ballfields, picnic areas, restrooms, basketball/volleyball courts, ice skating, sledding hill, drinking fountain
Ward Cottrell Park	5.5	Ballfields, tennis courts, playground, running track
St. Clair Park	0.5	River access, fishing access, freighter watching
Water Works Park	1.63	Playground, river access, fishing access, picnic areas freighter watching
Village of Emmett		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Emmett Village Park	10	
City of Marysville		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Marysville City Park	58	Playgrounds, soccer fields, basketball courts, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, restrooms, amphitheater, picnic shelters, ballfields, sledding hill, freighter watching
Marysville Boardwalk	1.4	River access, boat ramp, bathing beach, fishing access, trail, freighter watching

City of Marysville (continued)

Park	Acres	Amenities
Morton Park	10	Playground, soccer field, ice skating, inline skating, picnic table/areas, restrooms, picnic shelters, skate park, parking area, trails/walking track
Mermaid Park	0.7	River access, fishing access, freighter watching
4th Street Park	35	Trails
Chrysler Beach	2	Playground, bathing beach, river access, fish cleaning station, concessions, restrooms, charging stations, fishing pier, gazebo, trail, picnic areas, ADA accessible, boat launch, kayak launch
Ravenswood Road Park	39	Ice skating, trails
Washington Road Park	5.4	Native trees
Huron Road Park	1.4	Ice skating
New Hampshire/6th Street Park	1	Ice skating
Delaware Road Park	0.3	Ice skating
Connecticut Road Park	0.3	Ice skating
Municipal Golf Course	152.7	Golf course, restrooms, freighter watching

City of Memphis

Park	Acres	Amenities
Musial Road Park	5	Playground, river access, fishing access, trails, picnic area, water fountain

City of St. Clair

Park	Acres	Amenities
Greig Park	36.5	Imagination Station (play Structure), sand volleyball, Roller Hockey Rink, Basketball Courts, Picnic Shelter, Pathways, Nature Interpretive Trail, Modular Skate Bike Park, BMX Pump Track, Portable Restroom, Artwork
Klecha Park	4.9	3 Ball Fields, Playground, Restrooms, Picnic Pavilion, Paved Pathway
Palmer/Oakland Access	0.1	St. Clair River Access, Park Bench, Freight Watching
Palmer Park	5.9	World's Longest Freshwater Boardwalk, Paved Pathway, Art Sculptures, Seating Area, Freight Watching, Downtown Access
Patrick Sinclair Park	0.6	River access, fishing access, marina
Harbor Walk	0.52	River access, fishing access, boardwalk, boat slips, freighter watching
Diamond Pointe Park	0.7	Landscaped Area, Art Sculpture
Community Center		
Outdoor Community Pool	0.7	Outdoor pool
Legacy Park	52	9 Ball Fields, 4 Picnic Shelters, Concession/Fieldhouse, Permanent Restrooms, Pine River Access, 26 Acres Undeveloped
Pine River Access	1.2	Undeveloped, Pine River Access
Pine Shores Golf Course	51	Nine Hole Golf Course, Clubhouse Facility

City of St. Clair (continued)		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Rotary Centennial Park	0.3	Boardwalk, Boat Mooring on Pine River, Pine River Access, Picnic Tables & Grills, ADA - Accessible Fishing Pier, Art
St. Clair Harbor	6.2	120 Boat Slips, Boat Launcher, ADA Accessible Canoe/Kayak Launch, Canoe/Kayak Rentals, Camping, Fish Cleaning Station, Restrooms, Picnic Shelter, Water, Electric, Pumpout Station
City of Port Huron		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Lakeside Park	17.7	Courtesy Toy Box, Beach Volleyball Court, Handicapped Accessible Swing, Bathrooms
Lighthouse Park	7.9	Parking Lots, Bath House, Seawall Fence, Jetties, Hot Coal Bins
Blue Water Bridge Park	3.7	River access, fishing access, trails, freighter watching
Thomas Edison Park	9	River access, fishing access, trail, freighter watching
Pine Grove Park	13.7	Playground, ballfields, river access, fishing access, trails, picnic areas, restrooms, concessions, pavilion, freighter
Lincoln Avenue Turnout	0.5	River access, fishing access, freighter watching
Kiefer Park	0.9	St. Clair River Habitat Restoration Display, Bridge to Bay Trail Sign and Pathway Electrical Box, Wooden Benches with
Kind Park		Surrounding Fence, Baby Swings, Lighted Areas, Fire Hydrant
Municipal Office Grounds	1.8	River access, fishing access, trail, freighter watching
Wastewater Treatment Plant	1.1	River access, fishing access, trail, freighter watching
Lincoln Park Turnout	0.6	River access, fishing access, trail, freighter watching
Fort Street Dock	0.8	River access, marina, fishing access, trail, restrooms
Quay Street Dock	1	River access, marina, fishing access, restrooms, ADA accessible kayak launch
Southside Dock & Park	1.25	River access, fishing access
River Street Dock	9.1	River access, marina, fishing access, restrooms
12th Street Dock	1.8	River access, boat ramps, fishing access, restrooms
Riverside Boat Ramp	5.7	River access, boat ramps, fishing access, restrooms
Sanborn Park	41.7	Playground, ballfield, basketball court, swimming pool, trails, tennis courts, restrooms
International Flag Plaza		Parking Lots, Memorialized Bricks, Memorial Benches, Propeller Display, Blue Water Maiden, 43rd Parallel Exhibit
Palmer Park	7.8	Playground, ice skating, trails, community center, sledding, restrooms
Gratiot Park	1.8	Basketball Court, Lighted Areas, Baby Swings, Bus Stop Shelter
Mansfield Park	0.8	Playground

City of Port Huron (continued)		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Mansfield Park	0.8	Playground
Optimist Park	3.2	Playground, ballfields, basketball court, ice skating, picnic areas
White Park	3.4	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, ice skating
20th & Court Street Park	2.5	Swimming pool, restrooms
11th & Division Tot Park	1	Lighted Areas, Baby Swings, Baby Slide
19th & Division Tot Park	0.5	Baby Swings, Tot Lot
Knox Field	6.5	Parking Lots, Basketball Court, Track, 2 Baseball fields with Bleachers and Dugouts, Splash Pad, Pavilion, Baby Swing
Lincoln Park	9.8	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, ice skating, picnic areas, freighter watching
16th & Dove Park	14.5	Parking Lots, Tennis Court, 2 Baseball Fields with Bleachers and Dugouts, Pickleball Court, Handicap Accessible Swing, Basketball Court
Haynes Park	1.17	Basketball Court - 1 hoop, 4 Hoop Basketball Pole, Surrounding Fence
12th & Jenks Tot Park	0.44	Playground
Heritage Park on the Quay	0.21	Information Board, Memorial Plaques, Dog and Boy Reading Bench, Water Front, Cement Steps - Art
Flag Plaza Park	1.2	River access, fishing access, freighter watching
McMorran Place		Special events, performances, concessions, restrooms
Renaissance Tot Park	0.47	Playground
City of Yale		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Yale City Park	16	Playground, ballfields, river access, fishing access, picnic areas, special facilities, restrooms
Berlin Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Berlin Township Memorial Park	11	Playground, soccer fields, basketball courts, ice skating, trails, picnic areas, community center, special facilities
Brockway Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Brockway Township Park	38	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, lake access, bathing beach, fishing access, skate park, restrooms
Burtchville Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Burtchville Township Park	18	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, lake access, bathing beach, fishing access, skate park, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, restrooms, freighter watching
Casco Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Belle River Park	20	undeveloped
Casco Township Park	97	undeveloped

Clay Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Pearl Beach Pier	0.5	River access, fishing access, fishing pier
Clay Township Hall Park	6.6	Playground, basketball courts, ice skating/inline skating, trails, picnic areas, volleyball court, splash pad, pavilion, concessions, horse shoe pits, "little libraries," restrooms
China Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Indian Trial Road Site	62	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, restrooms
Neiman Park	3.5	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, picnic areas, community center, horseshoe pits, restrooms
King Road/Belle River Site	14	Playground, river access, fishing access, trails, picnic areas, fire pit, restrooms
Recor Road Site	5.3	Undeveloped
Clyde Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Bills Bearss Park	20	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, tennis courts, picnic areas, pavilion, basketball court, concessions, restrooms
Firefighters Park	1	Playground, Ball diamond, basketball court, picnic facilities, ice skating
Clyde Township Hall Park	1	Playground, tennis courts, picnic areas, pavilion, restrooms
Jake Simpson Wilderness Park	17	Basketball courts, inline skating, playground, pickleball court
Riverfront Park	1.8	undeveloped
Columbus Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Belle River Roadside Park	23	River access, fishing access, picnic areas
Cottrellville Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Cottrellville Township Park	17	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball/volleyball courts, picnic areas, restrooms, freighter watching
Riverside Park	2.8	River access, fishing access
East China Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
East China Park	81	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, river access, fishing access, ice skating/inline skating, trails, tennis courts, pickleball, picnic areas, dog park, restrooms, pavilions, freighter watching
River Park	0.2	Playground, river access, fishing access, picnic areas

East China Township (continued)		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Manor Park	1.6	Playground
Springborn Park	0.2	River access, fishing access, picnic tables, ADA-Accessible Kayak launch
Township Hall Site	13	
Emmett Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Emmett Township Park	3	Playground, basketball courts
Fort Gratiot Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
North River Road Park	7	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, river access, fishing access, tennis courts, picnic areas, ADA-accessible kayak launch, restrooms
Robert E. Crawford Ball Fields	18	Playground, ballfields, restrooms
McIntyre Park, Fort Gratiot Canine Commons	9	River Access, fishing access, trails, dog park
Keewahdin Road Beach	0.25	Lake access, fishing access, freighter watching
Fort Gratiot Pond	40	Playground, pond access, fishing access, trails, picnic areas, covered fishing dock
Kettlewell Pond		Pond access, fishing access, paved trails, large observation dock
Grant Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Park	10	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, shuffleboard court, pavilion, restrooms
Greenwood Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Greenwood Township Park	24.8	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, special facilities, restrooms
Ira Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Ira Township Municipal Park	33	Playground, basketball courts, lake access, fishing access, ice skating/inline skating, trails, picnic areas, disc golf, gaga ball pits, restrooms
Water Works Park	25	Lake access, fishing access, trails
Kenockee Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Hall Park	16.4	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, trails, picnic areas, sledding hill

Kimball Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Park #1 - Sutherland	46	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, pond access, fishing access, bathing beach, trails, tennis courts, picnic areas, restrooms
Township Park #2 - Smiths Creek Park	3	Playground, basketball courts, ice skating, trails, picnic areas
Lynn Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Ohmer Township Park	4	Playground, picnic shelter area
Mussey Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Capac Schools Property	12	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, trails, pavilion restrooms
Port Huron Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Park #1 - Lions Club	10	Playground, river access, boat ramps, fishing access, picnic areas, sledding hill, restrooms
Township Park #2 - Port Huron Township RV Campground	18.4	Playground, basketball courts, river access, fishing access, ice skating/inline skating, camping, picnic areas, restrooms
Township Park #3 - Memorial Park	58	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, river access, fishing access, camping, picnic areas, restrooms
Township Park #4 - 40th Street Pond	65	Playground, pond access, ADA - accessible fishing piers, trails, picnic areas, restrooms, ADA - accessible kayak launch, boat launch
Township Park #5	56	undeveloped
Township Park #6 - Hoover School	1.5	Playground, basketball courts, picnic areas, restrooms
Baker's Field Park	61.5	River access, boat ramps, fishing pier access, trails, pavilion, restrooms, ADA - accessible kayak launch, tennis courts, pickleball court
Michigan Road Little League Park	10.6	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, river access, restrooms, concessions
Water Street Property	32.6	undeveloped
Riley Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Riley Township Park	19	Playground, ballfields, soccer fields, basketball courts, trails, picnic areas
Egling Road Pond	20	Pond access, fishing access, trails

St. Clair Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Fred Meiselbach Township Park	5	Playground, ballfields, basketball courts, river access, fishing access, picnic areas, pavilion, restrooms
Wales Township		
Park	Acres	Amenities
Township Park	26.7	Playground, picnic shelter area, restrooms, water pump



PUBLIC INPUT & PLANNING PROCESS

4



THE PLANNING PROCESS

The success of any planning process is reliant upon stakeholder involvement. St. Clair County has committed itself to pursue a proactive public outreach effort throughout the development of this plan. Efforts focused on soliciting community involvement to maximize awareness of the recreation planning process.

2022-2026 Master Recreation Plan Development

The process that led to the development of this 2022-2026 Master Recreation Plan included:

- A decision by the Parks and Recreation Commission to update the Master Recreation Plan in accordance with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources guidelines.
- Contracting the services of the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission to manage the project and complete the update.
- A review of the existing Master Recreation Plan by the St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission.
- A leadership survey distributed to members of the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners, Parks and Recreation Commission, PARC Committees, and the Metropolitan Planning Commission.
- An online, countywide survey, allowing residents to provide input from May through July in 2021. The survey was completed by 306 respondents.
- Drafting of the Master Recreation Plan document.
- Discussion among all PARC committees regarding 2022-2026 goals and objectives.
- Review of the Master Recreation Plan document by the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Metropolitan Planning Commission and the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners.
- A 30-day public review and comment period that began on December 5, 2021 and ended on January 5, 2022.
- A public hearing held on January 12, 2022 to receive additional citizen comments.
- A presentation of the Master Recreation Plan to all members of PARC, as well as the Metropolitan Planning Commission.
- Adoption of the Master Recreation Plan by PARC on January 12, 2022.
- An update on the Master Recreation Plan to the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners, Environment and Public Works Committee on January 6, 2022.
- Adoption of the Master Recreation Plan by the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners at its January 20, 2022 meeting.
- Transmission of the Master Recreation Plan to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).
- Transmission of the Master Recreation Plan to SEMCOG and the Metropolitan Planning Commission.

OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC INPUT

LOCAL LEADERS SURVEY

At the start of this planning process, members of the Board of Commissioners, Parks and Recreation Commission, Metropolitan Planning Commission, and PARC committees were given a survey to establish a framework on key planning issues related to parks and recreation in St. Clair County. There were 15 responses to the Local Leaders Survey. A summary of the leadership survey input can be found on the next page.

COUNTYWIDE PUBLIC SURVEY

From May through July 2021, an online survey was available to residents to provide input on parks and recreation in St. Clair County and the update of the Master Recreation Plan. Respondents were presented with

LOCAL LEADERS SURVEY SUMMARY

- **86%** feel we need more bicycle infrastructure in our communities.
- **93%** feel it is important for local communities to install bike lanes on local roads to provide a safe transportation alternative and create connections to the larger regional trail network.
- **100%** of the respondents indicated they would like to see the regional trail network expand to the western part of St. Clair County.
- **80%** think there are adequate resources available to senior citizens in St. Clair County.
- **53%** do not feel there is a lot to do for young people within the County.
- **64%** feel that the County should develop additional parks or add to existing parks.
- **73%** are willing to fund new park facilities or park improvements. **26%** are not.
- **23%** feel that PARC should assist local communities in developing additional dog parks, while **47%** are unsure.

What do you like about St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Facilities?

- Access to water for all residents.
- Biking and walking trails.
- Diversity and variety of parks with unique features.
- The countywide millage funding mechanism.
- Diverse locations throughout the county.
- Play areas for children.
- Well maintained structures and facilities.
- Quality of design and maintenance.

Improvements I would like to see in St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Facilities:

- Continue biking and walking trails to western part of county.
- Extend Wadhams to Avoca Trail to Yale.
- More trails/Connect bike trails to each other and to city centers.
- Continued maintenance of facilities.
- Trail improvement, more for handicapped people.
- Increased use by county residents.
- Continue to develop existing parks.
- More downriver.
- Restroom facilities at all locations.
- Increased funding to keep up with maintenance.
- More marketing toward tourism.
- Sites that can include winter and indoor activities.
- Development/maintenance of parks in southern end of the county.
- More trails for riding horses at Columbus and Goodells County Parks.
- Ropes course/Challenge course.
- Updated facilities in a timely fashion.

23 questions on the survey, covering such topics as park visitation habits, preferred method of receiving information, recreation preferences, and open ended questions that allowed for written answers and open idea submittals. In total, there were 306 respondents to the online survey. The online survey was an optimal solution for gathering public input during the COVID-19 pandemic that began in March 2020. In-person events were not able to be held during the planning process.

While the responses came from all parts of the county, the largest percentage (62%) of respondents lived in Port Huron and its surrounding communities - Port Huron Township, Fort Gratiot Township, Kimball Township and the City of Marysville. Approximately 42% of respondents were between the ages of 30 and 49. Another 34% were between ages 50 and 65. Roughly 8.25% of respondents were age 29 or younger.

About half of the respondents said they visited St. Clair County parks more than ten times in the past year. 22% visited one or more of the County parks between three and six times over the past year. 58% of respondents are satisfied with the overall amount of park land in St. Clair County and 85% would like the County to develop additional parks or add to existing parks.

Highlights from the countywide survey are shown on the following pages.

The screenshot shows the Facebook page for the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission. The page header includes the profile picture and name. A navigation menu on the left lists options like Home, About, Photos, Reviews, Videos, Events, Posts, Services, Groups, and Community. The main content area features a post from May 7 with the text: "We Need Your Help! The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission is updating its five-year recreation master plan. The purpose of this survey is to get input and ideas on countywide parks and recreation from St. Clair County residents. You may not have a deep familiarity with some of the topics or locations. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. It is fine to leave no response or skip a question if you do not feel you can provide an adequate answer... See more". Below the post is a survey link from SURVEYMONKEY.COM. The post has 13 likes, 2 comments, and 19 shares. A comment from Doug Borgman is visible. The right sidebar shows a star rating of 5 stars, 3,201 likes, and 45 visits. Related pages listed include Shellinz Salon & Spa, Fort Gratiot Little League, Thumb Area Transit, Deckerville Eagles Basketball, and Durand Railroaders Boys Basketball.

COUNTYWIDE ONLINE SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Trail-Related Survey Input:

- 28% did not use the Bridge to Bay Trail or Wadhams to Avoca Trail in the past year.
- 26% used one or both of the trails in the past year.
- 18% used one or both of the trails between 3-6 times in the past year.
- 85% would like to see the Wadhams to Avoca Trail extended to the City of Yale.

Summary of things people like best about St. Clair County Parks:

- Biking/Walking Trails
- The number and variety of parks
- Good locations/accessibility
- Waterfront areas/Access to water
- Playgrounds are new and well-maintained
- Parks are well-maintained and clean
- Well run and adequately funded
- Natural areas/habitats
- Not over-programmed
- Splash pads

Summary of General Improvements People would like to see:

- More beaches
- More biking/hiking trails; Extension of trails (both WTA & Bridge to Bay)
- More mountain bike trails
- Make it possible to walk/bike from one park to another
- Available parks in NW part of county
- Classes and workshops
- More/better signage
- More restroom facilities/Year-round restroom facilities
- Linking existing Township trails
- More kayak launches
- More equestrian trails
- Western area park
- Pave Wadhams to Avoca all the way
- More access to lakes and rivers
- Improved parking for trails
- More kids activities
- More promotion/advertising of parks to attract visitors
- More disc golf courses
- More improvements for runners

What Improvements would you like to see at Goodells County Park?

- Disc golf course
- More bike trails
- Equestrian trails
- Develop ponds for fishing for kids and families
- More restrooms and year-round restrooms
- More pavilions by the playground/splash pad area
- Better connection to the Pine River Nature Center
- More/better playground equipment
- Paved trails throughout the property
- Mountain bike trails
- Nothing...it is good as is

What Improvements would you like to see at Columbus County Park?

- More of a barrier between the playground and parking lot for safety
- Expand equestrian trails
- Better signage
- Signage about activities for all seasons
- More trails (paved and unpaved)
- Cross country trails
- Kayak launch area
- Cross country ski rental
- Give equestrians the trails back
- More/better mountain biking trails
- Enlarge the sledding area
- Better handicapped-accessible facilities

What Improvements would you like to see at Woodson County Park?

- Better parking, but not bigger
- More trails/extend the trails/more off-pavement trails
- Riverfront trail going north into the DNR woodlands
- Add a fishing dock
- Fishing or access points on water
- Existing structures need work to promote usage. Looks deserted
- Signage for the trails
- Continue mountain bike trails/More mountain bike trails
- Camping
- Kayaking opportunities
- Better upkeep of facilities
- Restrooms

What Improvements would you like to see at Fort Gratiot County Park?

- More picnic tables or benches
- More parking
- More pavilions
- Create a kayak launch
- Signage identifying native plants in the park
- More play equipment/larger playground area
- Improve the beach
- Connection to Bridge to Bay Trail
- Keep things as is

What Improvements would you like to see at the Blue Water River Walk?

- Signage identifying flowers
- Safety features/more security
- More local artists' work
- Better trash removal/more trash cans
- Better cleanup of goose droppings
- More discrete signage about how the trail can connect to other routes
- More trees and green areas
- Restrooms
- More benches/sitting areas
- Paved parking/parking lot is awful

What Improvements would you like to see along the Wadhams to Avoca Trail?

- Extend in both directions
- Connect to the Bridge to Bay Trail
- Fully paved trail
- Trash cans throughout the trail
- Increased safety measures/It doesn't appear safe
- Safety lights/call boxes
- Better trail markers and maps
- Bike repair/tire filling stations/water bottle fill stations
- Some entry points need better parking
- Trim back the brush...too overgrown
- More parking at entry points
- More spots to stop and take a break – more benches
- Interpretive signage along the trail

What Improvements would you like to see at the Fort Gratiot Light Station?

- Benches in sand area so people can sit and watch their children
- Upkeep to the lighthouse itself
- Better beach access
- Shade trees and picnic tables
- Add more kids activities like what is hosted by museum

What amenities would you like to see at the new County Park in Clay Township?

- Beach
- Nature trails
- Connect park to Bridge to Bay Trail
- Kayak launch
- Restrooms
- Fishing pier/separated fishing access
- Concession stand
- Picnic pavilions/shelters near the channel and shade trees
- Bike repair stations
- Accessible pathways/accessible amenities
- Never heard of it...needs marketing

What improvements would you like to see with hiking/biking trails in St. Clair County?

- More trails and connect existing trails to one another
- Connected, linked trails
- Safety measures
- Cleaner/more trail restrooms
- More mountain bike trails
- Better signage/mile markers
- The more, the merrier
- More awareness of available trails
- More trails on side roads/off main roads
- Bike lanes for transportation
- More improvements for runners
- Trails to connect to existing trails
- Connect to Macomb County biking trails

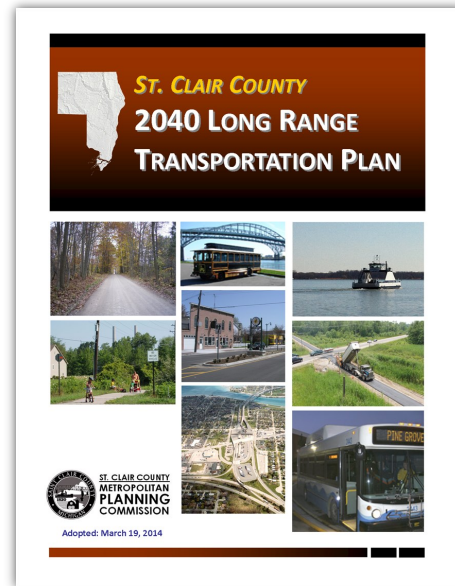
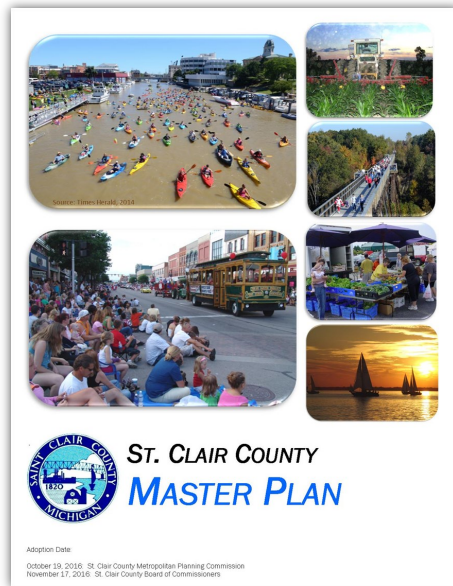


RELATION TO THE ST. CLAIR COUNTY MASTER PLAN

The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) and the Board of Commissioners adopted the St. Clair County Master Plan in November 2016.

The MPC identified numerous goals of the County Master Plan that are directly related to the County's recreational needs, including:

- **Recreation Opportunities:** Continue development of high quality parks and recreation facilities, community facilities, and public infrastructure.
- **Walkable Communities:** Promote greater access to complete, walkable neighborhoods. Connect people to healthy food, parks, shops, transportation options and other core services.
- **Focused Placemaking:** Make great places in our local communities by capitalizing on unique assets. Ensure that residents and visitors have multiple options for housing, transportation, recreation, and entertainment.
- **Healthy People and Places:** Create a healthy environment for people, decrease chronic and acute diseases, and promote access to fresh, healthy food in all St. Clair County communities.
- **Resource Protection:** Create a cleaner and greener built and natural environment - more trees, better air and water quality, and lower carbon emissions.
- **Efficient Public Services:** Reinvent and continually improve how effective and efficient public services are delivered to the public. Seek innovative ways to improve the quality and depth of public services.



Specific planning objectives and strategic actions related to parks and recreation in the St. Clair County Master Plan include:

- Work with community partners and stakeholders to develop and implement a Blueways of St. Clair Strategic Master Plan.
- Promote the special features within the county including forests, parks, trails, lakes, rivers, and other physical amenities.
- Link new and existing recreation facilities with non-motorized trails.
- Link new and existing trails and greenways with new and existing trails and greenways in neighboring counties.
- Promote county attractions in order to stimulate awareness that St. Clair County is a great place to live, work, and play, and enhance business attraction efforts.
- Create a prioritized list of areas underserved by parks and recreation spaces and develop a schedule for addressing each one.
- Help create a private operation/association to plan, promote, and support both Blueways and greenways, coordinating with business and government efforts.
- Continue to build upon the momentum of the Blue Water Trail Towns program and the Blueways of St. Clair to maximize economic development opportunities along trails and waterways.
- Work with partners to develop a bike share program in downtown Port Huron, integrating assets such as the Bridge to Bay Trail and the Blue Water River Walk.
- Participate in local, regional, and statewide initiatives to connect hike-bike trails and water trails.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission is currently updating the St. Clair County Master Plan, which is expected to be completed and adopted in 2022.

RELATION TO THE 2040 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)

The St. Clair County 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan includes a Non-motorized Plan Elements section that highlights potential non-motorized improvements and trail expansion. Since the adoption of the 2040 LRTP, St. Clair County has taken a proactive approach in planning and constructing non-motorized facilities throughout the county.

The following summarizes non-motorized-related recommendations in the 2040 LRTP:

- Promote alternative transportation options for area residents and employees that are reliable and accessible to all users.
- Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian facilities within major new residential and commercial developments.
- Encourage “Complete Streets” in planning and constructing major transportation improvements.
- Place a high priority on serving the needs of transportation disadvantaged including the elderly, persons with disabilities, and low income residents.
- Maximize bicycle and pedestrian access to roadways and transit facilities.
- Encourage transportation choices that benefit the environment including transit, carpooling, bike and pedestrian movement.
- Support alternative transportation modes to improve air quality.

RELATION TO THE 2019 ST. CLAIR COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

St. Clair County, along with the Community Foundation of St. Clair County and numerous local and regional partners, developed an updated countywide Trails Plan in 2019 that identifies existing gaps in countywide non-motorized trail networks, identifies preferred alternatives to eliminate those gaps, and prioritizes the timing and sequencing for completing needed connections. The overarching goal is to complete the Bridge to Bay Trail and Wadhams to Avoca trail networks, which includes connecting to the Macomb Orchard Trail and the Great Lake-to-Lake Trail Route #1, which runs from South Haven in the western part of the state to Port Huron in the eastern part of the state. More information about the St. Clair County Trails Plan can be found in Chapter 4.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION (PARC) WEBSITE

Once the draft Master Recreation Plan update was complete, each chapter was placed at PARC’s website, www.stclaircounty.org/Offices/parks/, allowing residents and other visitors to the website to access the Plan and thoroughly read through its content. The draft Plan was accessible on the website beginning on November 24, 2021, in advance of the January 12, 2022 public hearing.

PARC SOCIAL MEDIA

In the past few years, PARC has increasingly leveraged social media to expand its reach and keep the public informed. The prolific utilization of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter by the general public make it a communication medium that cannot be ignored.

PARC has developed and maintains a Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/St-Clair-County-Parks-and-Recreation-Commission/114026198441>) where people with Facebook accounts can go and “Like” the page in order to receive updates and announcements from PARC in their Facebook newsfeeds. It has proven to be an effective way to spread the word about the great projects and activities in which PARC is involved. PARC also has an Instagram page (@stclaircountyparks.mi).

Additionally, the Metropolitan Planning Commission administers a Facebook page for The Blueways of St. Clair project, aimed at keeping citizens and visitors up-to-date on Blueways-related events, paddling information, and other news related to St. Clair County waterways. That page can be accessed at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Blueways-of-St-Clair/111881135522468?v=wall>. The Blueways of St. Clair is also on Twitter (@BluewaysStClair) and Instagram.

Beginning in May 2021, PARC utilized its social media pages to send out links to the online public survey, as well as follow up reminders for people to complete the survey.

St. Clair County Parks & Recreation Commission

[Review the 2017-2021 St. Clair County Master Recreation Plan](#)

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission is funded by a special 0.49 mill property tax for the purpose of improving parks and recreation services in St. Clair County.

The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission currently operates the 365-acre Goodells County Park, 411-acre Columbus County Park, 30-acre Fort Gratiot County Park, 45-acre Woodsong County Park, 5-acre Fort Gratiot Light Station, 4-acre Wetland County Park, the Marine City Dredge Cut and the 12-mile long Wadhams to Avoca Trail. The Commission also assists local units of government with the development and promotion of the Bridge to Bay Trail.

The Parks and Recreation Commission also provides specialized mobile recreation units for use at community events including two portable stages, two portable bleacher units, and crowd control barriers.

St. Clair County Parks offers a wide range of recreational opportunities including, but not limited to:

- biking
- rollerblading/inline skating

PARC'S MARKETING AND OUTREACH MATERIALS

PARC hired a full-time Special Events/Marketing/Volunteer Coordinator in 2004, which was a goal of the 2002-2006 Master Recreation Plan.

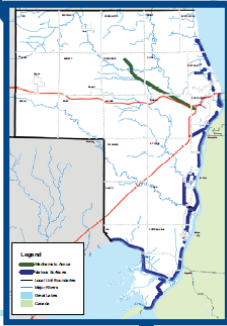
PARC employs a variety of marketing efforts, with each park and trail in the park system having its own dedicated website and brochure. Attractive brochures are distributed to every chamber of commerce in St. Clair County, to several Michigan welcome centers, Main Street Port Huron, and to various tourism boards. They are also distributed to all 32 municipalities in the county.

The PARC newsletter goes out to 65,724 households in St. Clair County, tri-annually in the spring, summer and fall. It is also distributed in the same manner as the brochures, as described above.

PUBLIC HEARING

In accordance with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources guidelines, PARC finished drafting the Master Recreation Plan prior to the public hearing and notified the public by means of a news release and social media, that the draft copy was available for public review for at least 30 days. The draft document was available to be read at the PARC office, as well as on the PARC website. The public hearing was held during a regular PARC meeting on January 12, 2022.

St. Clair County Trail System



Trail System Information

St. Clair County Parks and Recreation also operates 11 miles of trails in the Avoca Trail system. For more information, call 810/989-6960 or visit www.stclaircountyparks.org.

St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission

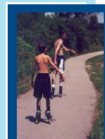
200 Grand River Avenue, Suite 205
Port Huron, MI 48060-810/989-6960
www.stclaircountyparks.org
www.bridge-to-bay-trail.org



Funding for the construction of Bridge to Bay Trail sections comes from the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage, local government funds and grants. Grant funds for the trail have been provided by the United States Government through the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-first Century (TEA-21) program administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT); the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR); and the GreenWays Initiative program administered by the Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan.

Bridge to Bay Trail

St. Clair County, Michigan



St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission



200 Grand River Avenue, Suite 107
Port Huron, MI 48060-810/989-6960
www.stclaircountyparks.org
www.woodsongcountypark.org



Woodsong County Park is located at 1400 Rynn Road, Clyde, MI 48049. For a large print brochure, call 810/989-6960.

8/20/10-10/40 Printed 2012

Woodsong County Park

St. Clair County, Michigan



Discover Woodsong County Park!
www.woodsongcountypark.org

About Columbus County Park...

Columbus County Park is a 300-acre park that offers beautiful views of the Belle River and provides fishing, hunting, hiking, climbing, kayaking, biking and equestrian opportunities. Reservations are required for exclusive use of any park facility. For reservation information call 810/989-6960.



Funding

Funding to purchase Columbus County Park was made possible with a \$2.27 million grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation millage provided funding for the grant. Local match and ongoing development of the park.



Park Rules

- Columbus County Park is open from 8 am - 9 pm, Memorial Day through Labor Day (9 pm during the rest of the year)
- Trails in the park are for non-motorized use only.
- The lighted climbing hill is open daily from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm weather permitting.
- Pets must be kept on a leash. Owners must clean up after their pets.
- Hunting is allowed by permit only.
- Admission is free.

County Parks Information

St. Clair County is home to five county parks: Columbus County Park, Fort Gratiot County Park, Fort Gratiot Light station, Cassville County Park and Woodsong County Park. St. Clair County also operates the Woodhams to Avoca Trail and works with local units of government to develop the Bridge to Bay Trail.

St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission



200 Grand River Avenue, Suite 107
Port Huron, MI 48060-810/989-6960
www.stclaircountyparks.org
www.columbuscountypark.org



Columbus County Park is located in the southwest part of St. Clair County, just minutes north of Gratiot Road. The park is located at 3670 Beaumont Road, Columbus, MI 48001. For a large print brochure call 810/989-6960.

8/20/10-10/40 Printed 2012

Columbus County Park

St. Clair County, Michigan



Discover Columbus County Park!
www.columbuscountypark.org

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PLANNING GOALS AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

5



FORT GRATIOT COUNTY PARK



INTRODUCTION

BENEFITS OF PARKS AND RECREATION

St. Clair County is a vibrant, beautiful community with a great citizenry and a high quality of life. This is an exciting time for the county, and parks and recreation should be an integral part of the county's image, character, and quality of life. Specifically, strong parks and recreation programs have the ability to:

- **Provide social benefits** by connecting people with neighbors of other ages, incomes, backgrounds, and abilities. Parks and recreation build community pride and spirit.
- **Provide economic benefits** by improving the quality of life in the community and helping to attract businesses and residents to the county. Top-rate parks and recreation facilities are a competitive advantage for St. Clair County in economic development.
- **Provide benefits to the environment** by connecting people with and educating them about nature. In addition, greenways can provide alternative transportation opportunities. Parks and open space are essential weapons in the county's arsenal against sprawl and environmental degradation.
- **Provide benefits to individuals** by promoting physical fitness and self-improvement. Opportunities for exercise and being outdoors result in greater physical fitness, emotional well-being, and connectivity to nature.

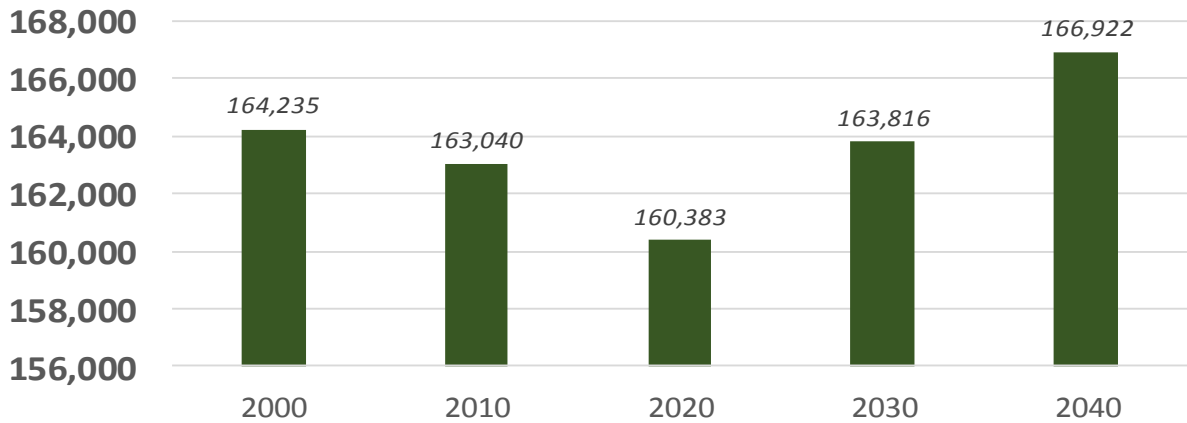
EMERGING ISSUES

Over the next five, ten, and even 20 years, there are some emerging issues unfolding in St. Clair County that will have numerous implications for recreation planning, including:

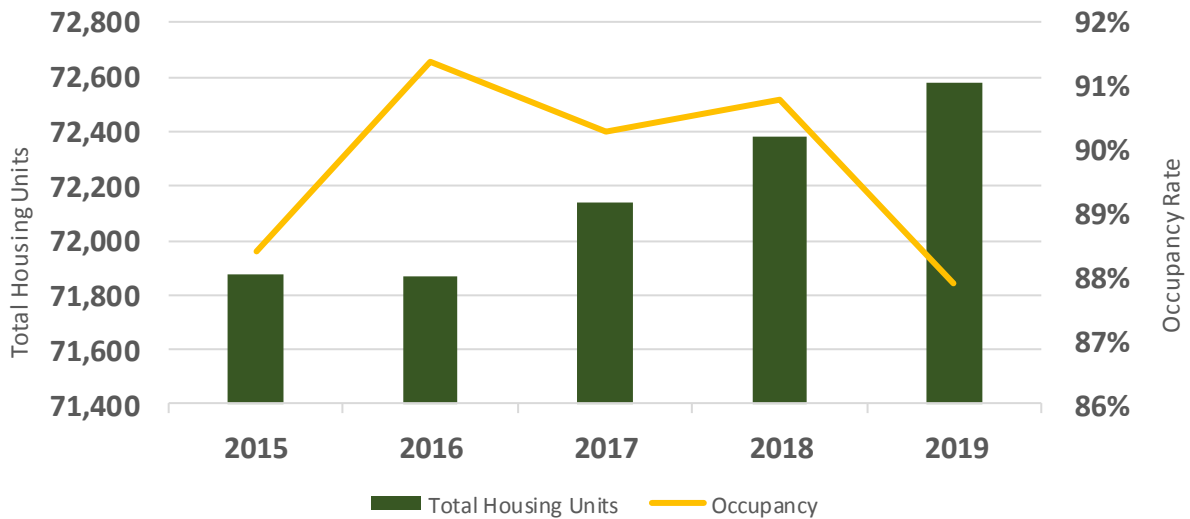
An Aging Population

The first issue is that the county will continue to be the home for an ever-increasing aging population. The median age of county residents is 43.8 years and more than half (54.2%) of the county's population is at least 40

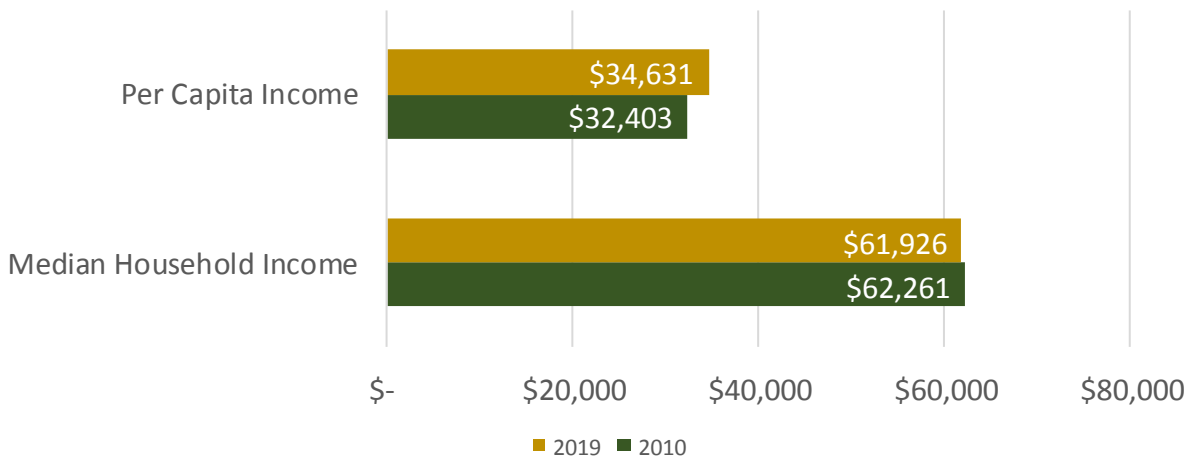
Population in St. Clair County 2000-2040



Total Housing Units and Occupancy Rate

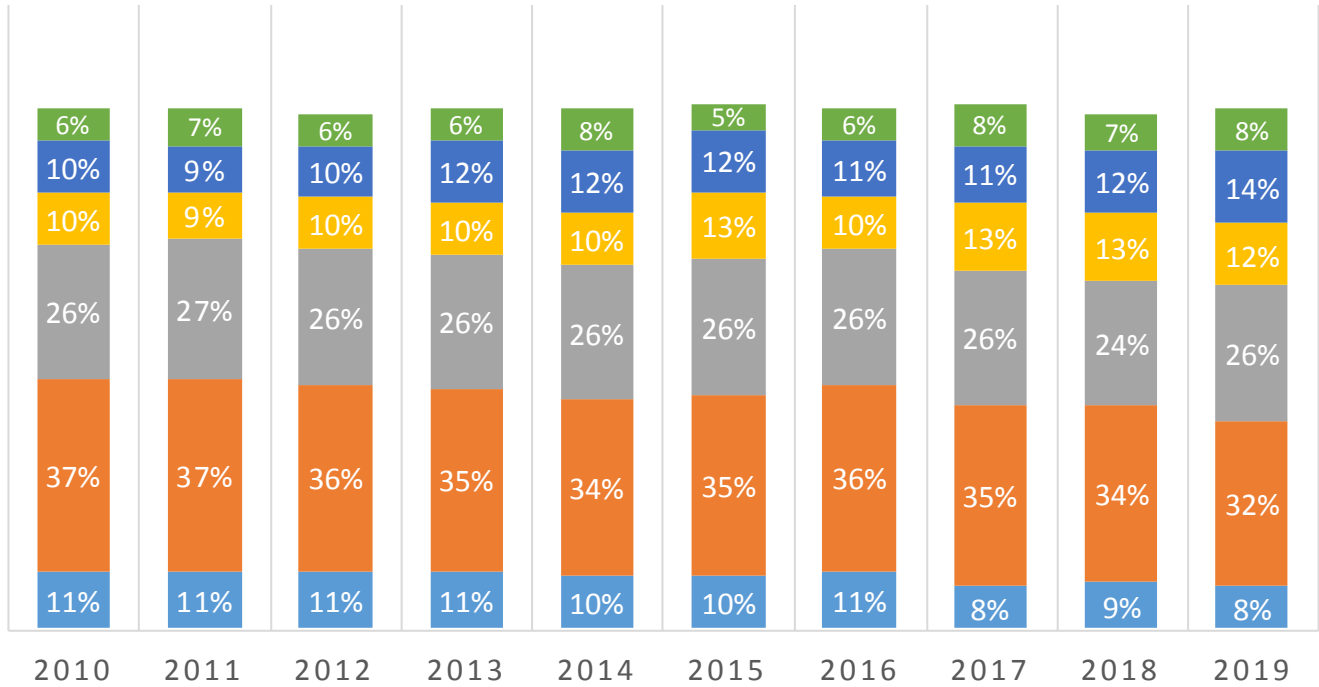


Income 2010-2019



ST. CLAIR COUNTY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2019

■ Less than high school graduate ■ High school graduate ■ Some college No Degree
■ Associate's Degree ■ Bachelor's degree ■ Graduate Degree Or More



Labor Force and Unemployment Rate



years old. SEMCOG projects that by 2045, a quarter of the County's population will be 65 years of age or older. The Parks and Recreation Commission needs to keep this in mind as it plans out new park amenities and trails. Additionally, the Commission should strategically partner with other organizations to enhance older residents' access to parks and recreation facilities to continue living active, healthy lives.

PARC should be cognizant that as more and more county residents retire, there will be an increased number of older residents with the time and income to spend on leisure. This is true for a number of reasons. More people are living longer, more people are retiring earlier, and retirees are more active in lifestyle than ever before.

“Brain Drain”

There are very few 20 to 24 year olds in the county. This information suggests that few persons this age stay after high school graduation. That means few young workers, college students, young singles or young married couples live in the county. The loss of young adults in the State of Michigan has been well-documented in recent years. According to the 2019 American Community Survey, there were 9,399 residents (6%) between the ages of 20 to 24 and only 18,278 residents in their twenties altogether. The exodus of young adults is continuing in the present decade. This loss of college-aged young adults and college graduates has been nicknamed the “brain drain.”

It is well documented that young professionals and families are seeking out a high quality of life when deciding where to live. They want good schools, access to a wide variety of recreational opportunities, and options for entertainment. Parks and trails have a big impact on quality of life and influencing decisions on where to live.

Recreational Opportunities for Youth

The greatest percentage of the county's population, 30%, is between the ages of 50 and 69. The next largest percentage of the population, 29.2%, is under 24 years of age and 10.3% are under 10 years old, which suggests that, in addition to providing more services for the elderly within the community, the County and its communities may also need to target more recreational opportunities toward young children and teenagers.

Economic Development and Placemaking

Quality of life can be defined in many ways; however, most definitions are likely to include parks and recreation opportunities as a major component. On a global scale, there are no great communities that do not have great parks and recreation amenities. In today's world, economic development efforts start with being able to market a



GREAT LAKE-TO-LAKE TRAIL, ROUTE #1 INAUGURAL RIDE, SEPTEMBER 2019

high quality of life. Companies now look beyond simple infrastructure concerns when deciding where to locate. They look for areas that offer recreational, cultural, and entertainment amenities – all things that factor into a high quality of life. Companies go where talented individuals are located. Talented individuals choose where they live based on quality of life issues.

The term “placemaking” can mean many different things. When it comes to community planning, it often means simply creating better community spaces in our cities, villages, and townships. St. Clair County and its local units must work to create places that will draw people in – places that make residents and visitors alike feel as though that particular town is the place to be. By creating more functional, interesting places, shops and businesses in our downtown areas can thrive, jobs can be created and sustained, and the already high quality of life in the county will increase. Recreation plays a huge role in effective placemaking, because people want to live in places that have options for recreation, options for entertainment, and other options for how they spend their time.

The Tourism Industry in St. Clair County

Most of St. Clair County’s tourist attractions are along the eastern and southern coastline in the form of beaches, parks, and marinas. There are few recreational areas inland. Local communities offer special events, such as parades and annual or semi-annual festivals.

St. Clair County is in a prime position to attract even greater amounts of tourism dollars thanks to the park and trail facilities, historical features, beaches, agri-tourism, cruise ship tourism, and a trend for families and aging citizens to take vacations closer to home. In recent years, there has been a significant boon in the number of new restaurants, boutique hotels, theaters, shopping, and entertainment options in downtowns up and down the shoreline, including Port Huron, St. Clair, Marine City, and Algonac.

The Blueways of St. Clair features 17 paddling routes along St. Clair County waterways, which serve as a tourist attraction for water enthusiasts from throughout Southeast Michigan. Kayaking and canoeing are continuing to grow in popularity and PARC expects increased use of the county’s paddling routes.

In addition, there is an ongoing collaborative effort to connect St. Clair County’s trail network with the larger regional system, including connections to the Macomb Orchard Trail, the Great Lake-to-Lake Trail, and the Great Lakes Way.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Green infrastructure is our system of natural resources that provide the critical ecological services necessary to maintain a healthy environment for humans and wildlife. Parks and open space are important components of green infrastructure. This includes local, state, and federal parks, land conservancy properties, and other natural areas. Open space that extends across community boundaries provides opportunities for parks and recreational use. It can also conserve natural features such as habitat for plants and animals.

Land that has major development constraints can be targeted as future protected open space or parks. Areas with steep slopes, poorly draining and unstable soils, and poor access should be identified to help plan future land acquisition priorities. A community’s open space and greenway network should connect to the network of neighboring communities to create a connected regional network. This will help ensure ecological health as well as expand recreational opportunities for all residents.

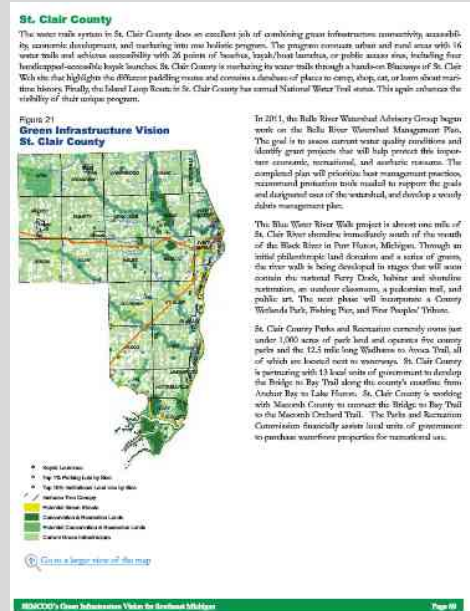
SEMCOG GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE VISION FOR SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN: HIGHLIGHTS

In May 2014, SEMCOG completed the “Green Infrastructure Vision for Southeast Michigan.” Among other things, the Green Infrastructure Vision examined green infrastructure’s impact on the economy, tourism, transportation, infrastructure, water quality, air quality, vacant land, and health. It also zoomed in on each of the seven counties in Southeast Michigan, including St. Clair County, and identified existing green infrastructure assets, connections, and goals.

Among the highlighted green infrastructure assets in St. Clair County, the document focuses on the Blueways of St. Clair, the Belle River Watershed Plan (and other watershed planning efforts), the Blue Water River Walk, and the numerous assets of the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC).

Regional policy areas identified in the Vision include:

- Increasing tree canopy in Southeast Michigan;
- Protecting existing high quality wetlands through land use regulation;
- Using green infrastructure to manage storm water runoff;
- Increasing public green infrastructure in local and regional parks;
- Encouraging preservation of high-valued agricultural lands and development of community gardens to provide a quality local food network and continue the economic vitality of the agricultural industry;
- Increasing green infrastructure along riparian corridors and connecting these corridors to parks and other natural areas;
- Seeking opportunities to construct green infrastructure in priority areas such as roadways, institutional properties, parking lots, riparian corridors, and downtown areas;
- Ensuring natural areas have maintenance plans to maintain quality;
- Increasing public access to public parks in small towns within rural areas;
- Using access to green infrastructure as a means to attract young professionals;
- Increasing public access along the Great Lakes and connecting channels, including the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair;
- Prioritizing funding for trail improvements to fill gaps within the Southeast Michigan trail network;
- Integrating water trails with public green infrastructure along riparian corridors to the extent possible, including canoe/kayak launch areas;
- Coordinating non-motorized trail planning with green infrastructure planning to assist in meeting the needs of a green infrastructure network that uses trails as a linkage;
- Incorporating green infrastructure elements into publicly-funded projects;
- Promoting the use of complete and green streets as appropriate in transportation improvements; and
- Using vacant land to increase protected green infrastructure around existing parks and natural areas.



SEMCOG PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN FOR SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN: HIGHLIGHTS

In 2019, SEMCOG completed the “Parks and Recreation Plan for Southeast Michigan.” This plan was developed to ensure that the region’s recreation system meets the quality of life, health, and accessibility needs of its residents and visitors, as well as local and regional economic development and environmental priorities.

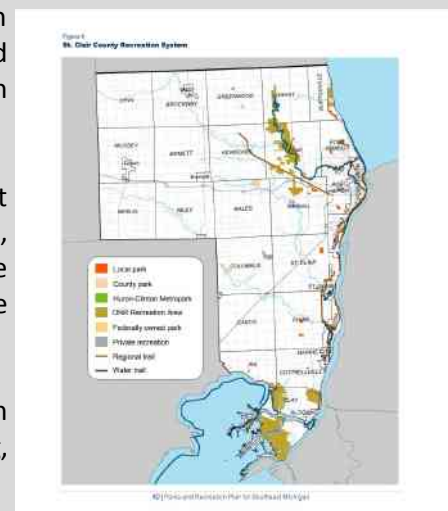
SEMCOG established a Parks and Recreation Task Force, comprised of 65 representatives from local governments, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, land conservancies, trail councils, health care providers, and other organizations to provide input and guide development of the plan. The task force met five times over the course of a year-long planning process. Members identified common challenges and priorities to establish the framework for this plan, and deliberated on the regional policies and actions. The St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission and the Metropolitan Planning Commission both had representatives on the task force.

The task force’s overarching goal for the region was to ensure that Southeast Michigan’s recreation system meets the quality of life, health, and accessibility needs of its residents and visitors, as well as the economic development and environmental priorities and goals of the region and local communities.

The plan contains the following six regional policies to address common challenges and supports a systems approach to park planning, development, maintenance, and programming:

- **Integrate community health** and wellness initiatives with outdoor recreation opportunities;
- **Ensure equitable access** to recreation opportunities for people of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities in Southeast Michigan;
- **Promote the economic value** of parks and recreation in Southeast Michigan;
- **Support conservation and stewardship** of natural and cultural resources, in balance with outdoor recreation opportunities;
- **Raise awareness** among Southeast Michigan residents and visitors about outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities in the region; and
- **Foster collaboration** among outdoor recreation stakeholders.

SEMCOG’S VISION IS FOR ALL PEOPLE IN SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN TO BENEFIT FROM A CONNECTED, THRIVING REGION OF SMALL TOWNS, DYNAMIC URBAN CENTERS, ACTIVE WATERFRONTS, DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOODS, PREMIER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AND ABUNDANT AGRICULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND NATURAL AREAS.



PLANNING GOALS AND STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

TABLE 5-1: 6 STRATEGIC FOCAL AREAS

1	<p>ADMINISTRATION</p> <p>The Parks and Recreation Commission aims to continue its history of providing quality recreational experiences through effective management, innovative service delivery, and collaboration with community stakeholders.</p>
2	<p>FINANCE</p> <p>PARC's long-term financial directive is to maintain strong financing strategies to address the need for park acquisition, park development, facilities and infrastructure maintenance, and environmental stewardship.</p>
3	<p>PARKLAND</p> <p>In terms of property acquisition and maintenance, PARC's focus is to rectify current acreage deficiencies by acquiring lands and facilities that are viable parks and recreation opportunities for both present and future citizens.</p>
4	<p>FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>PARC's overarching facilities and infrastructure goal is to ensure quality, safe, and functional amenities at each of its facilities and along the countywide non-motorized trail network.</p>
5	<p>GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS</p> <p>PARC's primary greenways and blueways focus is to provide for a multi-use regional trail and blueways system that connects community assets and links to other county and municipal parks and community trail systems.</p>
6	<p>PLACES AND SPACES</p> <p>A community's sense of place is tied to its well-being and prosperity. PARC strives to work with community stakeholders to bolster placemaking efforts that highlight the waterfront, cultural and historical resources, and the natural environment.</p>



ADMINISTRATION

One of PARC's primary focal points is to continue to expand and build upon a solid administrative foundation that has allowed the organization to effectively and efficiently carry out its mission of providing recreational opportunities to St. Clair County residents. Over the years, PARC has demonstrated a high degree of organizational effectiveness - the ability of an organization to utilize its knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively fulfill its mission. The Parks and Recreation Commission, in conjunction with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners and PARC administration, have a proven track record of delivering innovative parks and recreation services through strong management, broad-based collaboration, and providing leadership in parks and recreation.

ADMINISTRATION GOAL 1: STRONG COLLABORATION

The importance of strong organizational collaboration to the success and well-being of a community cannot be overstated. Working with other stakeholders and organizations with common goals is strategically advantageous and, in current times, it is essential for securing funding, building capacity, and carrying out projects. Collaborating with community partners allows for resource sharing, community awareness, economies of scale, innovative problem solving, and access to funding.

Strategic Actions:

- Network with federal, state, county, local and nonprofit recreation providers.
- Encourage and promote use and support from the community, nonprofit conservation organizations, local businesses, and citizens. Continually work to expand PARC's volunteer network.
- Communicate and meet regularly with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners to ensure ample time for project planning, gathering information, and project review.
- Work with all law enforcement agencies to provide security for all county-owned parks and recreation facilities, grounds and trails.
- Continue working with the Sheriff's Department to provide cost-effective patrol of county-owned parks and recreation facilities, grounds and trails.
- Actively collaborate with SEMCOG, the Community Foundation, Friends of the St. Clair River, the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, Michigan Trails Southeast on matters pertaining to recreation, trails, and tourism.
- Collaborate with government, businesses, economic development organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other entities to support parks, trails, and other environmental stewardship efforts.

ADMINISTRATION GOAL 2: EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Work to continually innovate and deliver a high quality recreational experience for St. Clair County citizens and visitors. Above all else, all PARC commissioners and employees share the primary job of ensuring citizens' (aka 'customers') recreational needs are met. To ensure PARC is managed well, PARC officials must understand customer needs, communicate effectively, and be aware of PARC's vision and mission at all times.

Strategic Actions:

- Attend parks and recreation conferences, workshops, training programs, and other educational classes to expand PARC's knowledge base.
- Regularly engage the public to find out what citizens need/want in terms of parks and recreational opportunities.

- Ensure that all staff members are aware of PARC’s vision and mission. Provide staff with the necessary training and resources to do their jobs well.
- Promote sustainability and efficiency practices at PARC facilities to the extent that it is feasible, cost-effective, and practical.
- Provide outstanding customer service in all aspects of PARC’s service delivery.
- Provide adequate funding for operational needs and adequate staffing for PARC facilities.

ADMINISTRATION GOAL 3: LEADERSHIP IN RECREATION

Staying abreast of the latest trends and best practices in parks and recreation, trail planning, and public service delivery is imperative for PARC going forward. PARC strives to be a model county park system within the state of Michigan.

Strategic Actions:

- Ensure that PARC commissioners, managers, and staff stay abreast of the latest trends and best practices in parks and recreation.
- Advocate for parks and recreation through participation in local, regional, state, and national recreation organizations and committees.
- Ensure St. Clair County Parks and Recreation is considered a model when it comes to the delivery of parks and recreation services to residents.
- Provide project planning support and assistance to local units of government to ensure they have the



FINANCE

PARC's financial focus is to maintain solid financing strategies to address the need for park acquisition, development, maintenance and stewardship. Funding is a critical component for communities trying to develop or improve parks. Additionally, creative funding strategies are necessary to effectively maintain existing trails and to plan, design, and build new trails. PARC is fortunate to be funded by a special 0.5 mill property tax for the purpose of improving parks and recreation services in St. Clair County and must continually demonstrate effective stewardship of those millage funds. In order to do this effectively, PARC must pursue specific financial goals that will continue to provide value and quality services to citizens and local units of government.

FINANCE GOAL 1: EFFICIENT FUNDING MECHANISMS

Ensuring that PARC has adequate financial resources for park and trail acquisition, development, and maintenance now and into the future. Moreover, working with the Board of Commissioners and County administration to develop functional and accurate budgets and forecasts.

Strategic Actions:

- Continue to distribute 25% of the annual millage revenues to local units of government - based on the latest U.S. Census figures - for planning, maintenance, and development of parks and recreation facilities and programs.
- Work with the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners to seek renewal of the countywide Parks and Recreation millage in 2022.
- Research and recommend, as appropriate, potential income-generating mechanisms to support county parks.
- Continue to aggressively pursue public and private grants and donations.
- Work with the Community Foundation to maintain and expand agency funds for county parks and trails.
- Maintain grant programs for local units of government to assist in the acquisition of small parcels for waterfront preservation, skate parks, dog parks, trails, and canoe/kayak launches.
- Continue to assist local units of government in accessing grant opportunities for parks and trails.

FINANCE GOAL 2: COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL PLANNING

Create short-term and long-term business and operations plans for each PARC facility in order to understand financial opportunities and liabilities and to enhance park usage tracking and metrics. Begin multi-year planning for maintenance, development, acquisition, and capital improvements.

Strategic Actions:

- Maintain updated business plans for each county park as necessary.
- Continually utilize the Long Term Maintenance Table to identify and manage major investments, assist with planning decisions, and prioritize capital improvements.
- Regularly evaluate PARC's fee structures and establish an acceptable level of cost recovery through user fees.
- Use data and metrics from PARC counters and other tracking mechanisms in order to inform future decision-making.
- Track the income and expenses of each site and program.

FINANCE GOAL 3: STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT

Continue to identify and evaluate long-term capital maintenance needs for PARC assets and incorporate those needs into the County’s Capital Improvement Program. Business and operations plans for each park will identify recurring renovation needs, projected lifecycles for infrastructure and equipment replacement, immediate project needs, and projected costs for capital assets.

Strategic Actions:

- Continue to identify and annually plan for capital improvements for all PARC facilities. Maintain an accurate inventory of major park assets and improvements (amenities and features valued at greater than \$5,000 and having an ordinary useful life of ten years or more) maintained by PARC.
- Regularly assess the current condition of park assets, identify benchmarks for industry accepted cyclical maintenance standards, and provide criteria to prioritize needs for renovation or replacement of assets.
- Use the County’s Capital Improvement Program to guide PARC’s annual budgeting and capital maintenance project submittals.
- Plan and schedule capital projects to coincide with the availability of funds to finance needed improvements.
- In order to preserve county assets, maintenance and repair projects should be a higher priority than the construction of new facilities.



PARKLAND

PARC's focus for existing parks is to continue development activities that allow for Goodells, Columbus, Fort Gratiot, and the Blue Water River Walk County Parks to be used as multi-purpose facilities that can be used year-round. PARC's focus for Woodsong County Park is to continue its development as a natural area for all county citizens and their guests. Acquiring land for parks and recreation use in order to rectify acreage deficiencies is a high priority for the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission. It is also a priority that cannot be assigned a specific schedule because, by their nature, land acquisitions are hard to predict. PARC must be flexible enough to aggressively pursue appropriate land acquisitions whenever they become available. Land acquisitions are usually "one-shot" opportunities that, if missed, are unlikely to ever come around for a second chance.

PARKLAND GOAL 1: STRATEGIC PROPERTY ACQUISITION

Acquire lands and facilities that are viable parks and recreation opportunities for both present and future county citizens. Property acquisitions should be targeted in underserved areas and in locations that will allow PARC to rectify acreage deficiencies based on per capita standards.

Strategic Actions:

- Explore the acquisition of a culturally or naturally significant property or properties in the western part of St. Clair County for the eventual development of county park facilities.
- Identify appropriate waterfront properties that could be acquired and developed and integrated into St. Clair County's existing green infrastructure network.
- Explore other potential locations for acquisition of significant property or properties, such as:
 - ◆ Significant properties in conjunction with the regional trail plans and the Michigan Natural Features Inventory.
 - ◆ Properties up and down stream from Columbus County Park, particularly riverfront properties.
 - ◆ Properties adjacent to existing PARC facilities.
 - ◆ Opportunities for extending the Wadhams to Avoca Trail from Avoca to Yale to the county line.
- To the greatest extent possible, property acquisition and park development projects should reflect the master plans of the local municipality, the county, the state and adjoining regions.
- Understand the financial implications of acquisition through the use of financial analysis tools. Build potential acquisitions into the individual business plans developed for each facility.

PARKLAND GOAL 2: PARKS FOR ALL PEOPLE

Understand the changing demographics in St. Clair County and the Southeast Michigan region. Our population is aging and parks and recreation amenities and programs will need to adjust to population shifts. Additionally, recreation opportunities that appeal to young professionals, families, and children must also be provided to attract new residents and maintain St. Clair County's high quality of life.

Strategic Actions:

- Anticipate the needs of the changing community and structure PARC facilities accordingly.
- Bring children and families into St. Clair County Parks and provide them with reasons to become lifetime patrons.
- Explore the potential for adding amenities that promote physical activity for senior citizens and other features that appeal to an aging population.

GOODELLS COUNTY PARK



- Examine potential opportunities to develop indoor recreation amenities that will promote year-round facility usage, especially during colder winter months.
- Regularly engage stakeholders of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds and ask for their input on future parks and recreation amenities and future planning activities.
- Serve an aging population with social, recreational, active and healthy opportunities.
- Ensure that all PARC playgrounds are regularly inspected and safe.
- Develop North Channel County Park according to park master plans and community input.

PARKLAND GOAL 3: PRESERVATION OF RESOURCES

According to the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), the mission of public parks and recreation at all levels should support the conservation and stewardship of land, water, and natural resources. Parks serve an essential role in preserving natural resources and wildlife habitat, protecting clean water and clean air, and providing open space for current and future generations. The quality of life for every person in St. Clair County is improved by clean, accessible parks, trails, and open space.

Strategic Actions:

- Control and/or mitigate the impacts of invasive species on the biodiversity of plants and animals. Plant additional plant species as needed.
- Develop and implement a plan to manage large woody debris in rivers flowing through PARC properties and stabilize the shoreline to reduce soil erosion and improve fish habitat.
- Encourage the propagation of species of plants and animals that are native and indigenous to St. Clair County.
- Protect and maintain the quality of water resources both on and near PARC facilities.
- Develop programs to interpret the natural, cultural and physical resources and educate the public of their importance.
- Maintain and grow the partnership with Friends of the St. Clair River and other environmental groups in support of their stewardship of our region's natural resources.

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

When it comes to PARC's general facilities and infrastructure, the focus is to ensure quality, safe, and functional amenities at every county park and along its non-motorized trail network. Paramount in this focus is ensuring that all county residents and their guests have a great experience using St. Clair County parks. Great experiences come from having access to nature, being active outdoors, making memories with loved ones, and learning new things about the community or environment. This focal area goes hand-in-hand with the identification of long-term capital maintenance needs and ongoing business planning for individual facilities. Each PARC property is unique and provides a different user experience for residents and visitors.

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL 1: WELL-MAINTAINED INFRASTRUCTURE

Provide a continued high level of service to residents and visitors in a safe, clean manner that protects the natural, cultural and recreational resources of the county. Ensure that PARC infrastructure functions properly and contributes to a patron's overall enjoyment of a facility.

Strategic Actions:

- Replace high maintenance items with more sustainable, low maintenance items.
- Maintain existing and explore new partnerships for maintenance and operation of PARC facilities.
- Provide and maintain appropriate public access to areas designated for public use.
- Explore opportunities to utilize green infrastructure over older, traditional infrastructure when possible. Look for ways to implement recommendations in SEMCOG's *Green Infrastructure Vision for Southeast Michigan*.
- Incorporate rain gardens, bioswales, porous pavement, and other techniques used to manage storm water runoff when improving PARC facilities. Explore other low-impact development (LID) tools that can be implemented in PARC facilities.
- Address recurring maintenance needs based on the priorities identified in individual park business plans and the Long Term Maintenance Table.

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL 2: MODERN FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Maintain and update existing parks and facilities before constructing new facilities. Ensure that PARC officials have a strong understanding of the current and coming trends in parks and recreation and build modernization activities into capital improvement projects and individual park business plans.

Strategic Actions:

- Work to develop each park following the goals and objectives of each individual park master plan and business plan.
- Develop parking lots and restroom facilities in appropriate manners based on location and need.
- Develop ADA-accessible walkways and trails to enhance connectivity in PARC facilities.
- Install ADA-accessible canoe/kayak launches in appropriate locations at PARC-owned facilities.
- Continue working with mountain biking advocacy groups to develop additional mountain bike trails at appropriate locations at Columbus and Woodsong County Parks.

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL 3: QUALITY USER EXPERIENCE

Develop and maintain recreational facilities that draw people in to experience nature, experience their communities, and to be active outdoors. Ensure that all PARC facilities are well-designed and well-maintained.

Make sure equipment and infrastructure is safe and functional. Create experiences that make people want to keep coming back to the parks.

Strategic Actions:

- Work with the Regional Trails Governing Board and other regional and community partners to implement the St. Clair County Trails Plan and the signage and wayfinding plan for the Bridge to Bay Trail.
- Pursue the year-round usage of PARC facilities and trails.
- Enhance informational and directional signage to all park and trail facilities as needed. Improve entrance and events signage on main roads.
- Advocate and facilitate barrier-free access to all PARC facilities, trails, and greenways whenever feasible.
- Work to make programs, features, and special exhibits more accessible to the general public.
- Work with regulatory agencies to maintain and protect swimming beaches at PARC facilities.
- Establish a signature event for each PARC facility as a gateway to additional programming and seek partners to eventually run those events.
- Provide for overflow parking where needed at PARC facilities.
- Construct additional picnic facilities as needed.



GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS

PARC's overarching focus for greenways and blueways is to provide for a multi-use, regional trails and blueways system that connects community assets and links to other county and municipal parks and community trail systems. Greenways and blueways provide our residents with an abundance of benefits, including personal health, transportation options, economic prosperity, increased property values, environmental health, and community connectivity.

GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS GOAL 1: CONNECTED GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS

Connect land and water trails within the county to downtowns, natural areas, recreation areas, riparian corridors, community centers, and other trail systems within the region. Connectivity enhances the quality of life in St. Clair County while at the same time reducing habitat fragmentation and encouraging additional recreation opportunities. Connecting the network of greenways and blueways will require a coordinated effort of local, regional, state, and federal stakeholders, as well as private landowners.

Strategic Actions:

- Work with partners to implement the St. Clair County Trails Plan. Assist local communities in filling identified gaps in the Bridge to Bay Trail.
- Connect the Bridge to Bay Trail to the Macomb Orchard Trail along Fred Moore Highway as part of the statewide Great Lake to Lake Trail.
- Connect the Bridge to Bay Trail to the Wadhams to Avoca Trail in Port Huron and Port Huron Township.
- Extend the Wadhams to Avoca Trail to Yale.
- Connect to other land and water trails owned or operated by neighboring counties.
- Work with transportation agencies to provide non-motorized access to trail, parks, and greenways consistent with local, county, and regional non-motorized plans.
- Consider acquiring abandoned railroad rights-of-way for future trails.
- Research and pursue grant opportunities from a variety of public and private sources.
- Continue to develop and promote the Blueways of St. Clair and partner with local units of government to provide additional canoe and kayak launches along the Blueways.
- Ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) along all trail routes.
- Develop rustic walking/hiking trails throughout PARC facilities.
- Work with equestrian stakeholders to develop equestrian trails in appropriate locations. Provide adequate parking and river crossings for equestrian activity at PARC facilities.

GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS GOAL 2: MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION

Now, more than ever, multimodal solutions are critical in addressing the long-term mobility needs of St. Clair County residents and businesses. Our residents are getting older and our communities are working to attract new residents who desire a variety of mobility options. Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. Parks and trails play an important role in the provision of multimodal transportation options.

Strategic Actions:

- Work with local communities to encourage their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right-of-way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation.

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- Collaborate with local partners to secure “Safe Routes to School” funding for implementation of trail extensions in appropriate areas.
 - Work with local units of government and law enforcement on educating people on bicycle and pedestrian safety.
 - Actively participate in non-motorized planning and implementation activities with groups such as the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), Michigan Trails Southeast, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and other agencies.
 - Assist local communities, county departments, and other community organizations in developing strong grant applications seeking funding for multimodal projects that will benefit St. Clair County.
 - Encourage cost-effective trail patrols throughout the county.
 - Explore opportunities to integrate non-motorized transportation infrastructure within existing transit routes.
 - Work with and support local adoption of Complete Streets policies and bicycle and/or pedestrian mobility plans.

GREENWAYS AND BLUEWAYS GOAL 3: HEALTHY, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

St. Clair County ranks 52nd out of 83 Michigan counties in terms of overall health according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. 19% of our population is in fair or poor health and 34% of St. Clair County adults are obese. 27% of St. Clair County residents who are age 20 or older report they have no leisure-time physical activity. About 23% of St. Clair County adults smoke and another 21% have indicated they participate in binge or heavy drinking. County and local parks are in a prime position to afford residents with an accessible and inexpensive means for changing their lifestyle behaviors. A healthy population enhances the overall quality of life and economic prosperity of a community.

Strategic Actions:

- Increase marketing of parks and trails to raise awareness and increase utilization.
- Work with community partners to develop plans and guidelines that offer incentives to create walkable and bikeable communities and increase the demand and awareness for physical activity.
- Work with local road agencies to develop Complete Streets policies that can be integrated in to local master plans.
- Work with the St. Clair County Health Department and other partners on initiatives to combat alarming county health trends and build upon positive momentum.
- Include articles and information on health and fitness in the PARC Newsletter that is distributed to all residents.
- Promote active living and healthy initiatives in PARC marketing materials.
- Explore amenities and/or programming that could be implemented in PARC facilities to promote healthy lifestyles and physical fitness.
- Promote walking as a means of transportation and highlight alternatives to vehicle transportation.
- Increase public awareness about where people can walk, bike, or paddle.

Great Lake to Lake Trail, Route 1 Inaugural Ride, September 23, 2019



PLACES AND SPACES

A community's sense of place is tied to its well-being and prosperity. PARC strives to work with community stakeholders to bolster placemaking efforts that highlight the waterfront, cultural and historical resources, and the natural environment. Bringing people and place together, parks and trails play a key role in creating desirable spaces and contribute to St. Clair County's overall quality of life. Parks bring vitality to communities and enrich the lives of residents.

PLACES AND SPACES GOAL 1: INCREASED MARKETING AND TOURISM

Position PARC facilities as a key economic engine that provides unique destinations and attracts visitors to experience St. Clair County. Partner with tourism organizations in the region to cross-promote PARC assets and other tourist draws in St. Clair County.

Strategic Actions:

- Actively participate in the *Blue Meets Green* economic development group that works to bolster people, places, and prosperity in St. Clair County.
- Work with the Blue Water Area Convention and Visitors Bureau on marketing and promotion of the county and ensure that PARC facilities are highlighted and promoted in countywide and regional marketing materials.
- Through the development of facility-specific business plans, track usage and activity to more strategically market and promote PARC facilities to certain user groups.
- Partner with other tourism-related businesses and organizations to cross-promote and pool resources.
- Work with the Economic Development Alliance (EDA) of St. Clair County and other stakeholders to enhance PARC's impact on business attraction and retention. Capitalize on parks and recreation being an economic engine for St. Clair County.
- Increase marketing and promotion of PARC facilities and countywide trails. Ensure that County Parks, the Bridge to Bay Trail, and the Wadhams to Avoca Trail have widespread name recognition.

PLACES AND SPACES GOAL 2: LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Highlight the impact of parks and recreation on creating highly desirable communities that provide residents with a high quality of life and economic prosperity. According to the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University, America's local and regional public park agencies generated nearly \$140 billion in economic activity and supported almost one million jobs from their operations and capital spending alone in 2013. Truly livable communities have a sense of place. Parks and trails provide green space and open space that contributes to the community's identity.

Strategic Actions:

- Participate in local and regional placemaking initiatives aimed at revitalizing downtowns and creating vibrant community spaces. Understand the important role parks and recreation can play in placemaking.
- Incorporate arts and cultural activities into recreation planning.
- Work with local units of government and other partners to implement the recommendations of the *Blue Water Trail Towns Master Plan*.
- Continue to seek opportunities for local organizations to host community events within PARC facilities.
- Consider how trail extension projects can help to connect neighborhoods and provide residents with additional access to services.



PLACES AND SPACES GOAL 3: CULTURAL AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

PARC's focus on cultural and historic preservation is centered on the full restoration of the Fort Gratiot Light Station buildings in accordance with the deed requirements put forward by the federal government and to increase access to this historical treasure. Additionally, Goodells County Park is home to a Historic Village that highlights St. Clair County's past.

Strategic Actions:

- Work with local tourism and marketing partners to promote the Light Station as a destination and to increase public access to and awareness of the facility.
- Construct amenities at the Light Station in accordance with the HSR, site plan, and Long Term Maintenance Table.
- Reconstruct the 1913 gate at the end of Garfield Street.
- Protect the Light Station buildings from weather damage through appropriate improvements and repairs in accordance with the deed.
- Work with the Port Huron Museum to facilitate programming at the Fort Gratiot Light Station site, including.
- Collaborate with the Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light Station to benefit the restoration of the Light Station buildings and grounds, and site interpretation.
 - ◆ Solicit donations and raise funds to financially support restorations.
 - ◆ Maintain an Agency Directed Fund with the St. Clair County Community Foundation.
 - ◆ Assist with grant writing and historical research.
 - ◆ Provide competent volunteers to aid with restoration projects.
 - ◆ Recruit volunteers to assist with the maintenance of flower beds and grounds.
 - ◆ Promote the Light Station through social media.
- Preserve and expand the Historic Village at Goodells County Park.
- Seek outside funding assistance to construct an arena building near the exhibit barns at Goodells County Park and a third pavilion at Fort Gratiot County Park.
- Seek outside funding assistance for a historic farm equipment display/demonstration facility for the machines that are already owned by the Farm Museum.