



2027-2031 **PARKS & RECREATION**

Master Plan

SUBMITTED TO:
City of Oak Park
City Council
2027-2031

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**OAK PARK
RECREATION**

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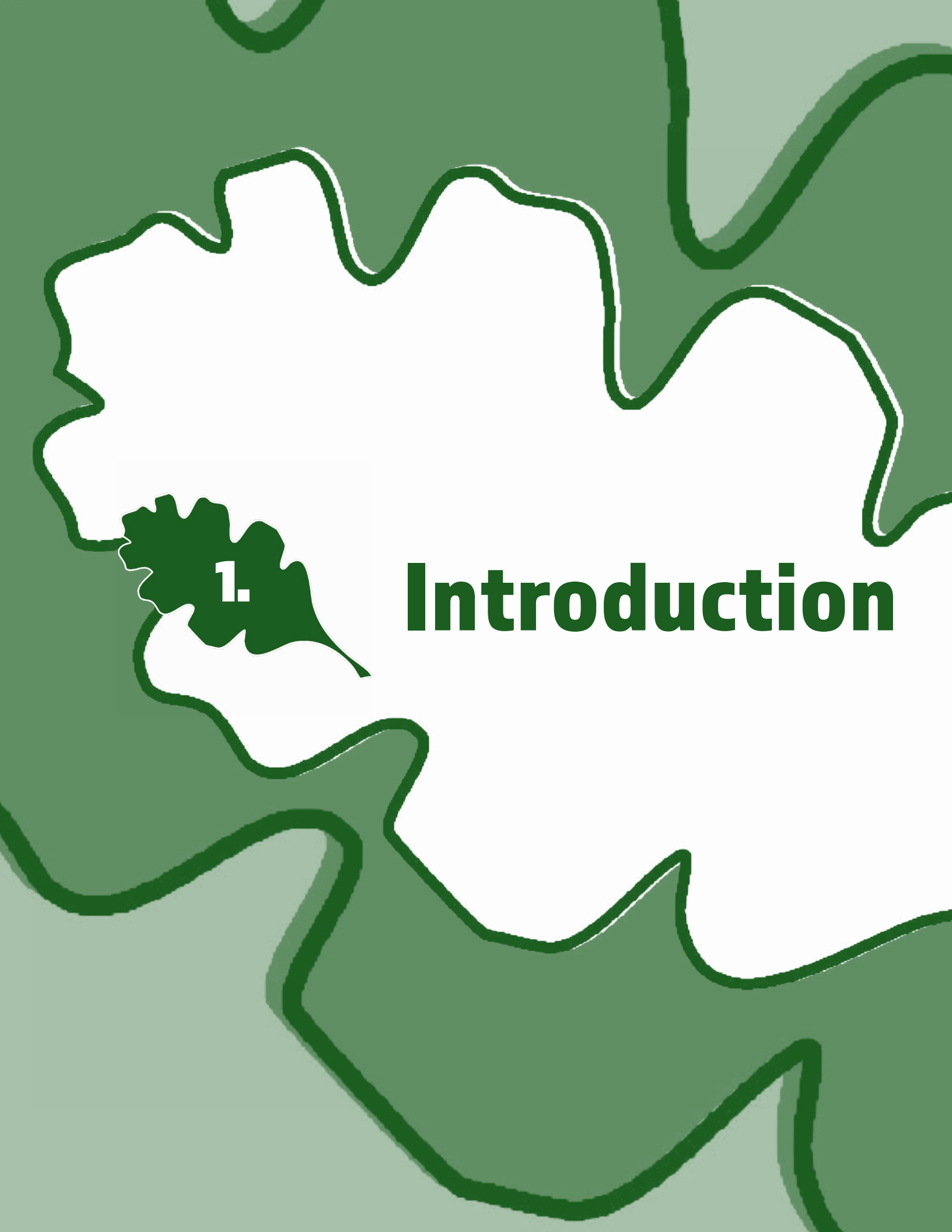
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1.

Introduction

Introduction

The City of Oak Park has been comprehensively planning for its parks for twenty years. This 2026-2030 update will serve as a guide in decision-making and aid in the targeting of available grant funding to continue the growth and improvement of the City's parks and recreation offerings.

The plan includes an update of the City's social and demographic characteristics as well as an updated inventory and review of all of the existing facilities and programs available in the City. The inventory includes City, school, county, regional, state, and private facilities.

In addition to identifying priorities in park and recreation amenities and offerings, an important goal of the plan is to establish a basis for funding the various improvement projects and programming. The City has used a variety of funding sources including general fund revenues, and grants from State and Federal agencies. It is intended that additional funding be obtained from all available sources.

Implications

The recreational implications of Oak Park's characteristics include:

- Good highway connections nearby facilitate development of recreational attractions that can be used to boost tourism in the community.
- The population makeup is such that there is a need for both active and passive recreation opportunities to satisfy the demands of all age segments. Demographic age groups should be tracked regularly to evolve and adapt the plan to meet community needs.
- The disability makeup of Oak Park suggests that accommodations to parks and recreation facilities and services should be provided.
- Income trends indicate the need for public facilities rather than private clubs. Updated playscapes and recreation opportunities will be well-received by this population and support community health and wellbeing.
- Natural features that preclude or limit development can be used for nature trails.

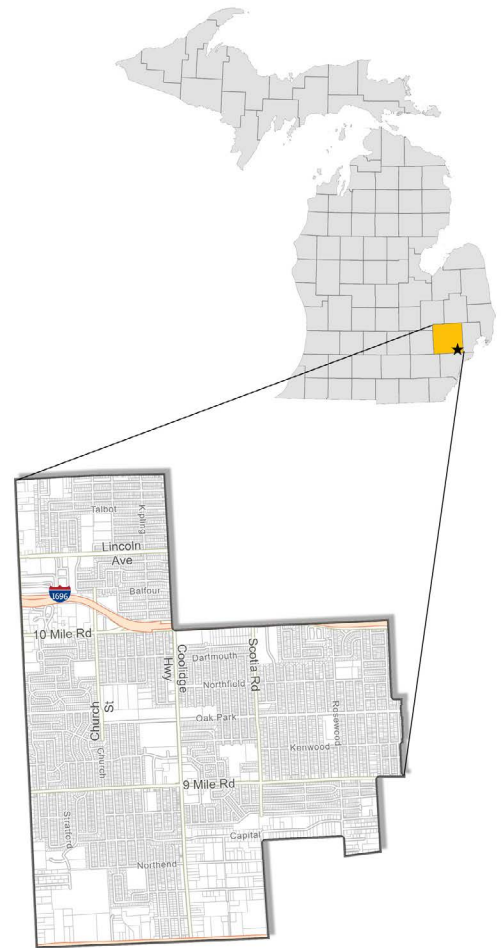


Community Profile

Location

The City of Oak Park is located in the southeastern corner of Oakland County primarily nestled between 8 Mile Road to the south and I-696 to the north with some parts of the City going north all the way to 11 Mile Road. Oak Park is bordered by the City of Detroit to the south along 8 Mile Road and is considered an inner ring suburb of the greater Detroit metropolitan area. It is also bordered by other suburban communities including Ferndale to the east, Southfield to the west, and Huntington Woods and Berkley to the north.

Oak Park is part of the greater Detroit metropolitan area and borders the City of Detroit along 8 Mile Road. The City's proximity to major transportation corridors, including the I-696 freeway, provides residents with convenient access to employment and recreation opportunities throughout Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne counties. This regional connectivity enhances mobility for the local workforce and positions Oak Park as an accessible and centrally located community within Southeast Michigan.

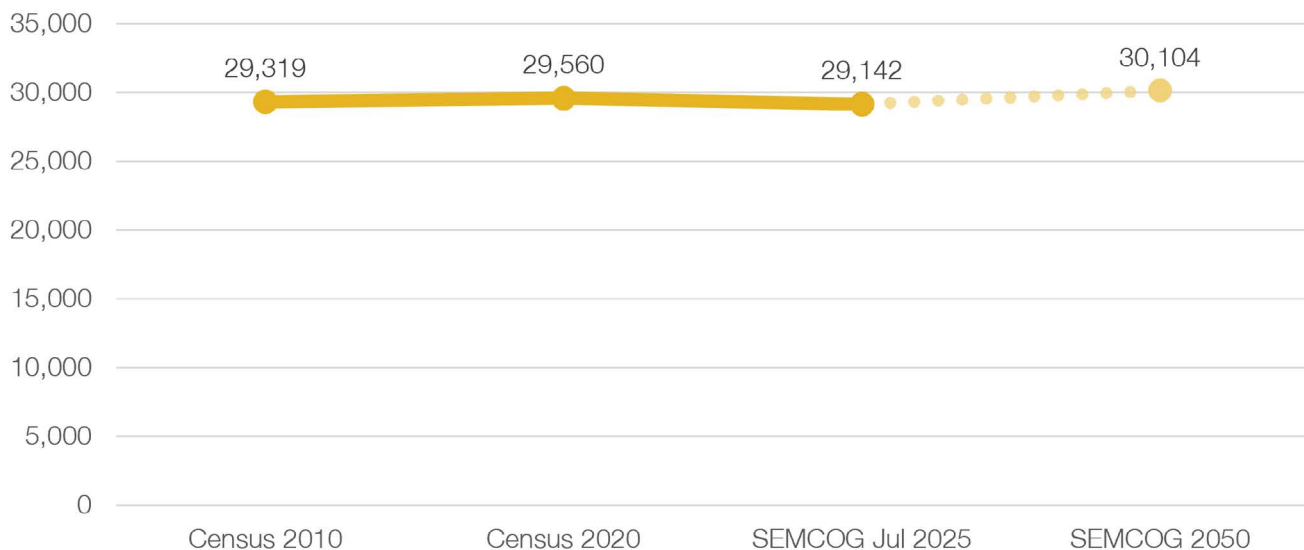


Demographic Characteristics

Population

The population of Oak Park peaked in 2000 at 32,379 (U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census) and has waned slightly over the last two decades. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) uses U.S. Census Bureau data and other factors to make projections on population through the year 2050. SEMCOG's 2050 Regional Development Forecast predicts the region growing at a mild pace and regaining the population lost since the 2000 Decennial Census.

Figure 1. Population Forecast



Age

The median age of Oak Park is 37.9 years and is younger than Oakland County and the State of Michigan overall. The median age has become slightly younger over the last decade and when looking at Census data trends from 2010 to 2023, it is apparent that there has been an influx of people aged 25-34. While the median age is younger overall however, there has also been a sharp increase in people aged 65-74. This suggests that there may be growing demand for Oak Park as a place to settle for older adults in their retirement years.

Figure 2. Population by Age, 2010-2023

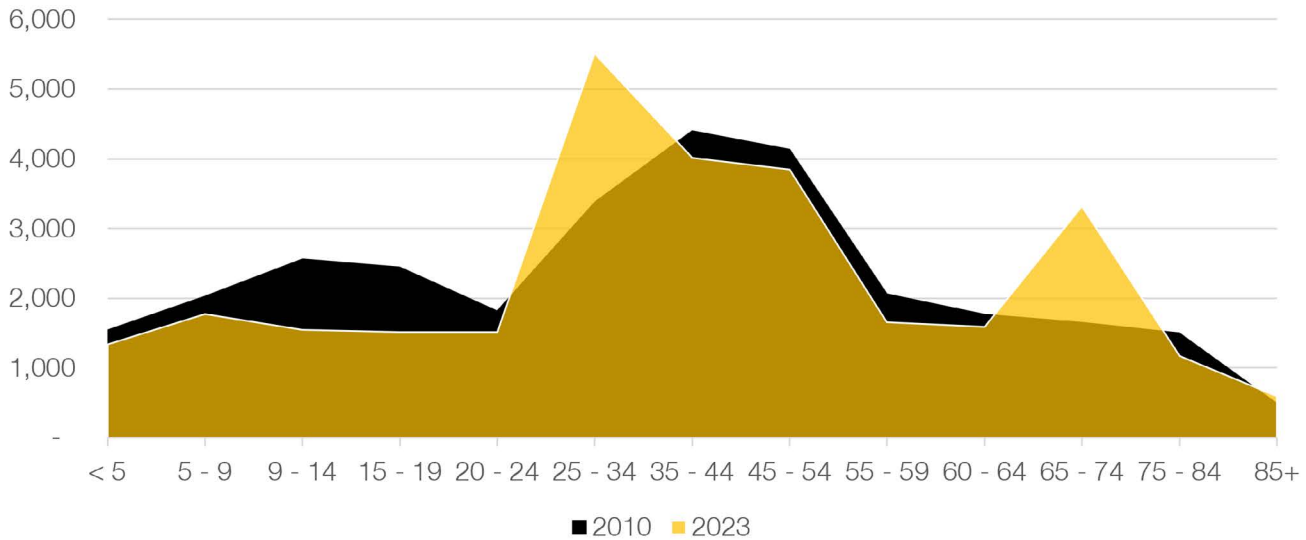
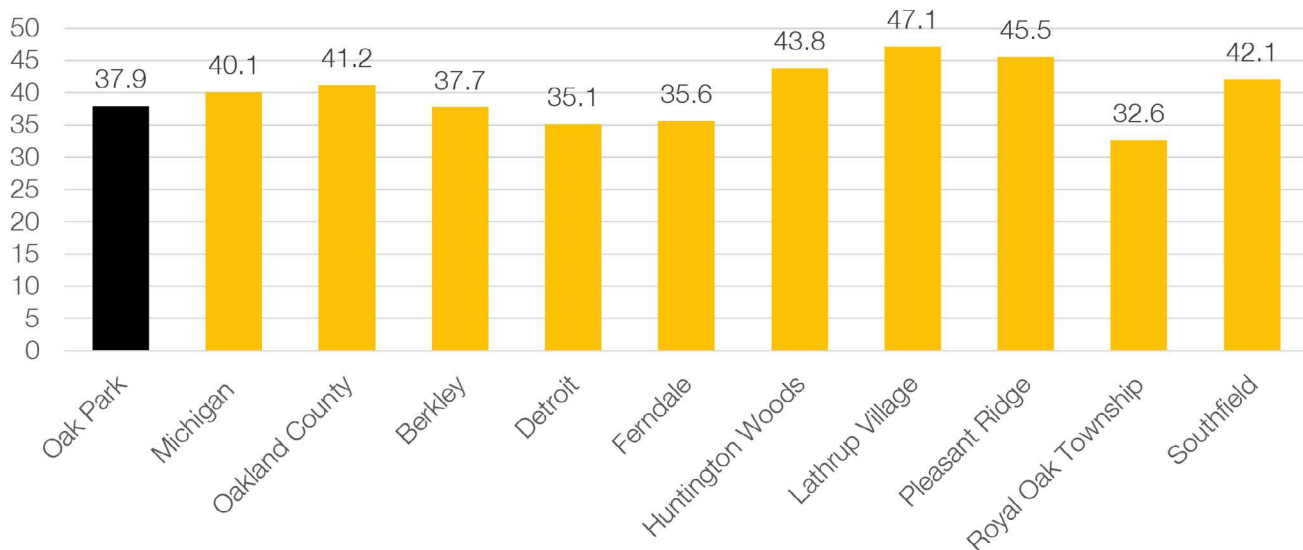


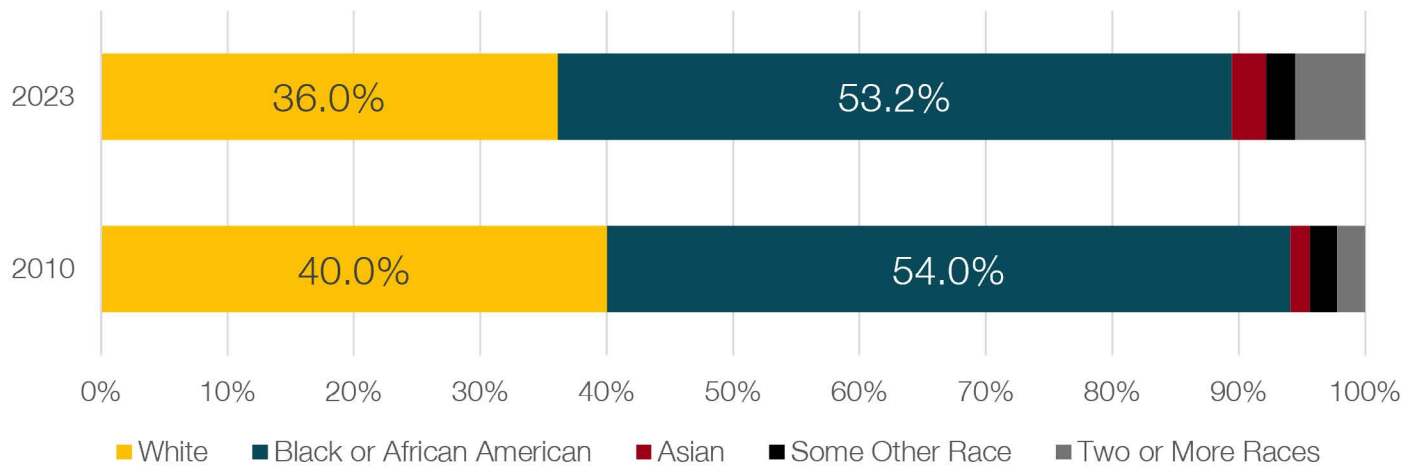
Figure 3. Median Age Comparison



Race

Oakland County is the sixth most diverse county in the entire state with a diversity index rating of 49.6%. The racial makeup of Oak Park has remained relatively the same since 2010 with a slight increase in racial diversity. This is part of a larger trend in the nation, state, and in Oakland County overall (2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File; 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the U.S.: 2010 Census and 2020 Census).

Figure 4. Population Racial Composition, 2010-2023



Walking path through Oak Park Woods at Shepherd Park.

Disability

In all parks and recreation planning, accommodations for persons with disabilities are considered to ensure access to all future facilities. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that in 2024, 13.8% of Oak Park’s residents had a disability of some sort, with the most impacted population being the 65 and older subgroup. [Table 1](#) below shows the most prevalent disabilities by type within this age group and the under 18 age group, with ambulatory, cognitive, and independent living difficulties being the most prevalent.

Ambulatory disabilities include serious difficulties walking or ascending/descending stairs, issues that limit physical activity and lead to poorer health. Cognitive disabilities are those involving limitations in mental functioning and skills such as communicating, self-care, and socialization. Disabilities associated with independent living extend beyond the ability to live alone and/or become employed to include difficulty with independent travel (e.g. using public transportation systems), managing a personal budget, dealing with insensitive and discriminatory behavior by peers, problem solving, adjusting to change, using community services, making complex decisions, and/or pursuing complex activities.

Considering these difficulties in planning for parks and recreation activities could result in positive health outcomes for a population that already experiences great difficulty on a day-to-day basis. Accommodations could include upgrades to park equipment and furnishings, installation of ramps or pavement improvements in order to ease accessibility for those who live with ambulatory difficulties, and installation of audible crosswalk signals.

Table 1. Resident Population with a Disability, 2024

Disability Type	Under 18	Ages 65+	Total (all ages)
Hearing	25 (0.4%)	418 (8.2%)	879 (3%)
Vision	15 (0.3%)	360 (7%)	740 (2.5%)
Cognitive	209 (5.1%)	334 (6.5%)	1,551 (5.6%)
Ambulatory	0 (0%)	1,348 (26.4%)	2,328 (8.4%)
Self-Care	0 (0%)	567 (11.1%)	1,051 (3.8%)
Independent Living	-	923 (18.1%)	1,717 (7.3%)
Total	249 (6%)	1,736 (72.6%)	4,045 (13.8%)
*Number is lower than the sum of the preceding rows, because there is overlap among categories			

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2024



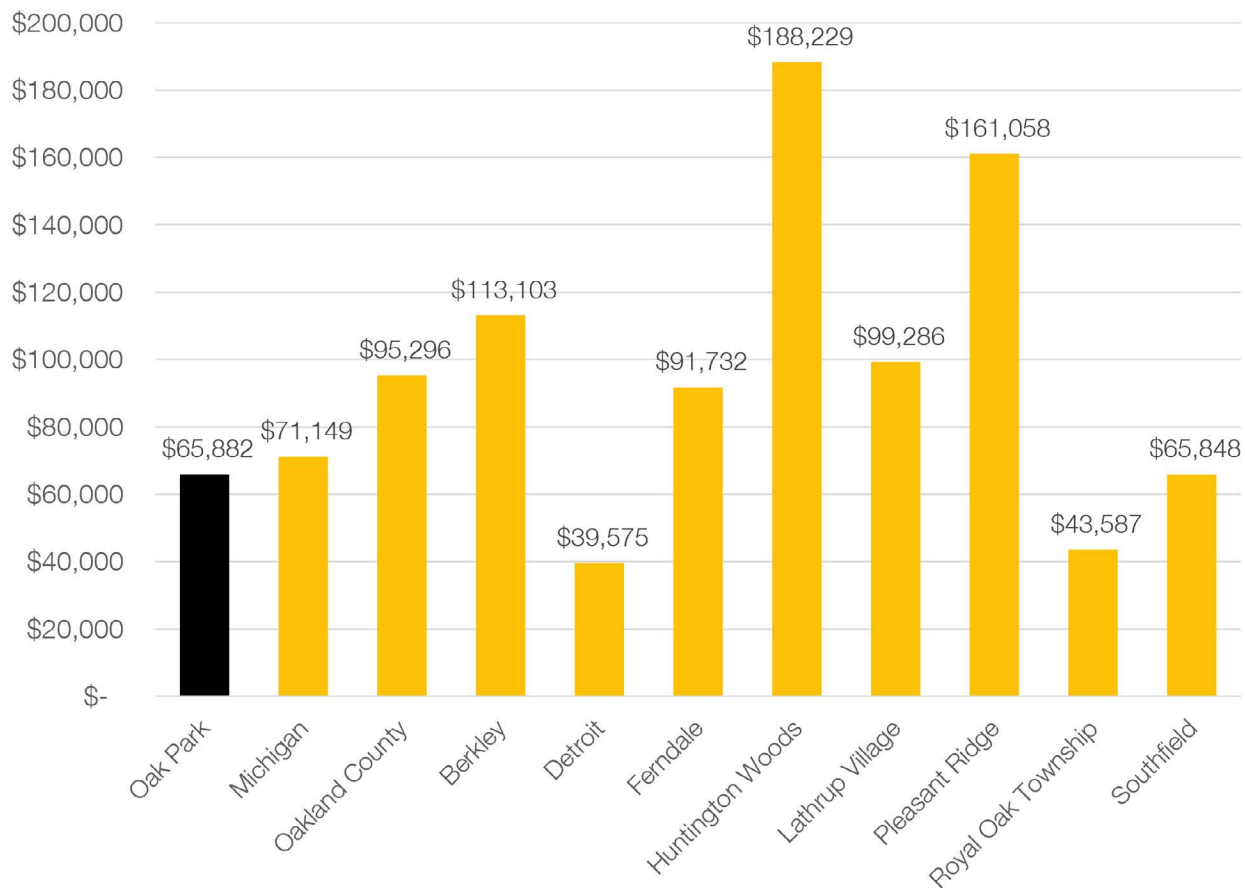
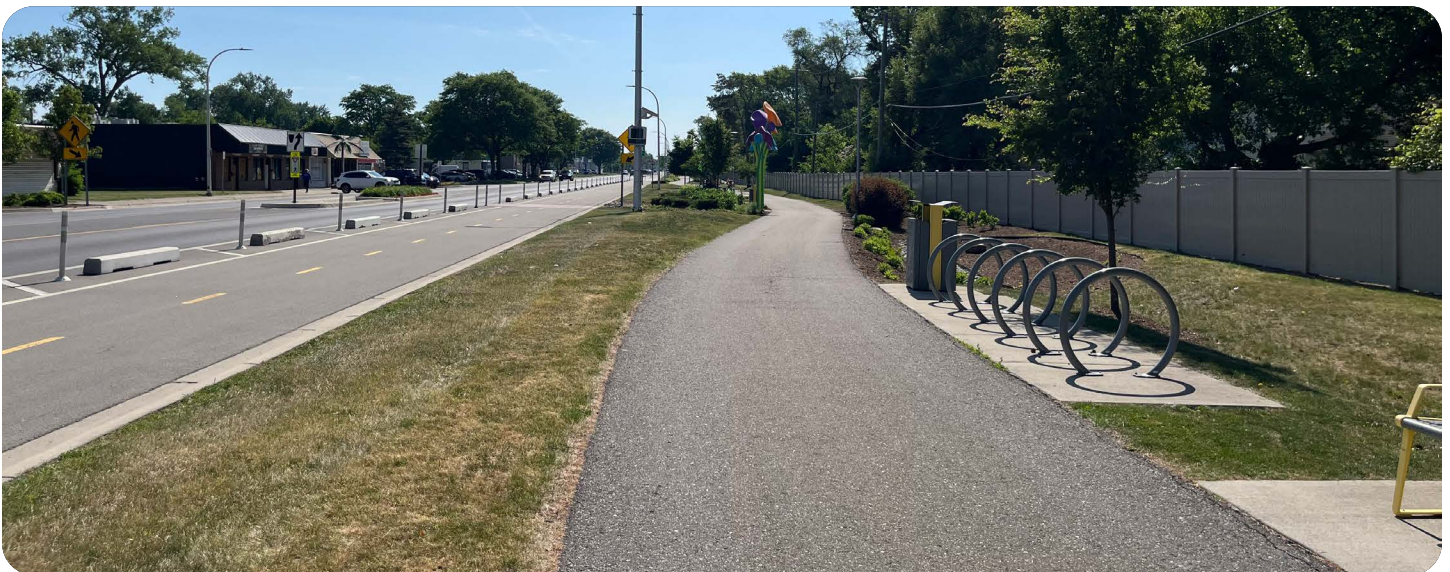
Sign language and braille educational signs at Key Park’s playground.

Economics

Income

The median household income in Oak Park is \$65,882. This is lower than the state of Michigan and Oakland County overall. The median income also falls generally lower than the other inner ring suburbs of Detroit, indicating comparatively limited purchasing power and constrained financial stability within the community.

Figure 5. Median Household Income Area Comparison



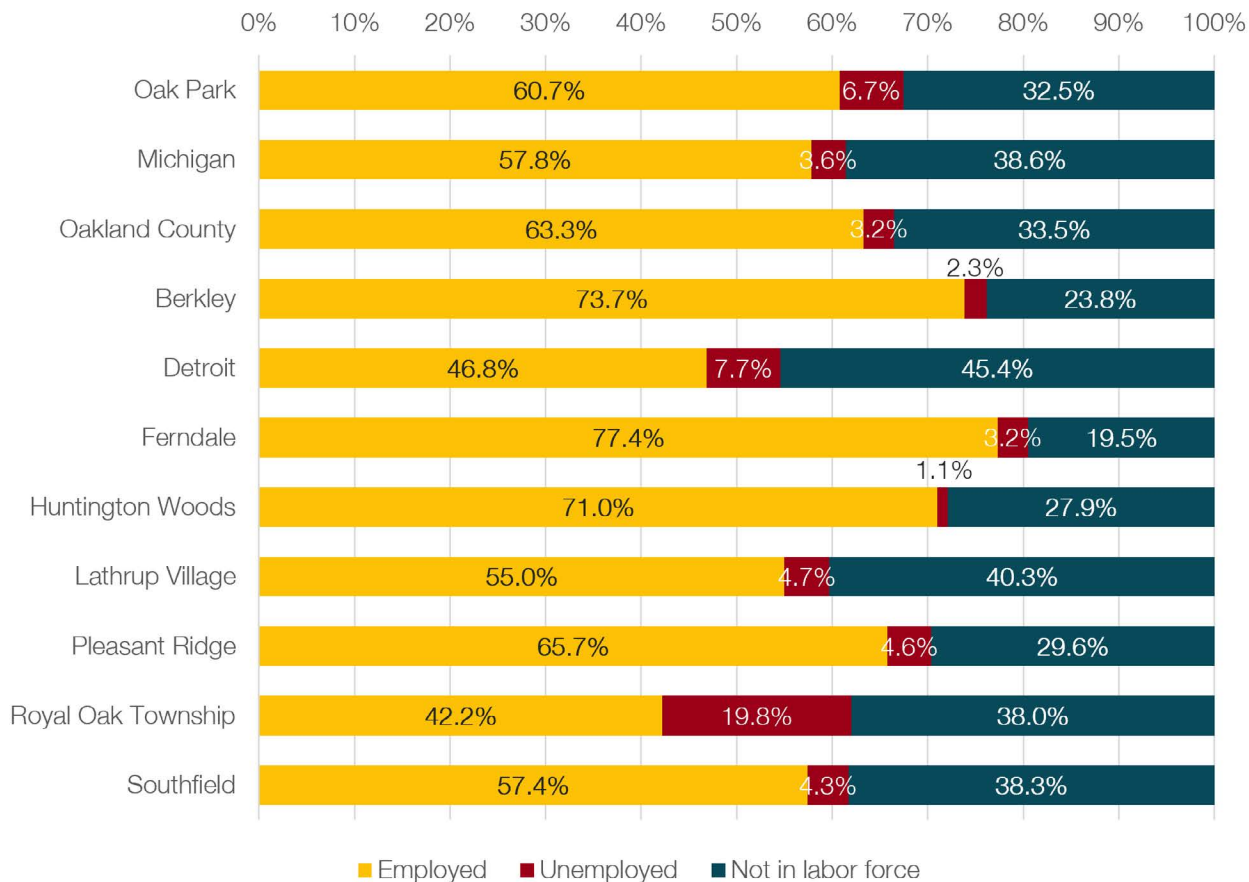
Walking paths and bike lane along 9 Mile Road.

Employment

Oak Park's unemployment rate of 6.7% is notably higher than both the State of Michigan (3.6%) and Oakland County (3.2%). While the Oak Park performs better than the City of Detroit, it has a higher instance of unemployment compared to other suburbs. This disparity may signal potential structural challenges in the local labor market, including skills mismatches, barriers to workforce participation such as a lack of transportation or childcare, or limited access to quality employment opportunities.

Oak Park's employment occupation profile reflects a workforce that is largely concentrated in management, business, science, and arts occupations (48.9%). While this share is lower than several nearby communities such as Huntington Woods and Pleasant Ridge, it exceeds the City of Detroit and is higher than the statewide average. The City also maintains a balanced distribution across service (12.8%) and sales and office occupations (20.7%), suggesting a diversified employment base. At the same time, 13.5% of residents work in production, transportation, and material moving occupations which is higher than many neighboring suburbs and highlights the continued importance of skilled trades and logistics-related employment among residents. Overall, Oak Park's occupational mix reflects a workforce diversity that ensures the City's economy flexibility and resilience within the broader regional economy.

Figure 6. Employment Status



Housing

Housing values have steadily increased since 2010, increasing from \$195,540 to \$213,300 in 2024 (once adjusted for inflation). During that same time, total housing units have slightly decreased from 13,272 to 13,091, with the renter population steadily increasing and the owner population steadily decreasing.

While the housing stock describes the physical supply of housing units, household characteristics help illustrate how residents are using that housing. It helps communities evaluate whether their existing housing supply aligns with the needs of current and future residents. There are an estimated 12,452 total households in Oak Park (note that households are different from housing units). Since 2010, the average household size in the City has shrunk by about 8.6% which follows a larger trend in the state and nation overall. While household sizes have declined over time due to demographic shifts, the size of new single-family homes has increased steadily for decades from a median size of 1,445 square feet in 1974 until it peaked in 2014 at 2,400 square feet. Over the last decade, however, the median size of new homes has begun to moderate with a particularly sharp decline since the COVID-19 pandemic, likely in response to rising construction costs and the push for more affordable housing. Despite household sizes shrinking since 2014, the overall trend of larger homes has been reflective of the modern demand for dedicated spaces such as home offices, exercise rooms, guest space, and flexible multipurpose rooms.

Smaller households make up a majority of households in the City, with 37.9% of residents living alone and another 39% consisting of households without children. Notably, older adults living alone account for 12.6% of all households, emphasizing the need for low-maintenance and accessible housing options that support aging in place.

Land Use & Zoning

Residential uses are the dominant land use in Oak Park, with single-family neighborhoods occupying a majority of the City. Multifamily housing, including apartments and condominiums, is concentrated along the major corridors of 9 Mile Road, Greenfield Road, and Coolidge Highway. Commercial uses are primarily located along 8 Mile Road, 9 Mile Road, Greenfield Road, and Coolidge Highway, providing a mix of retail, office, and service businesses. Industrial uses are generally limited to the City's southern edge near the Detroit border. Parks, schools, municipal facilities, and religious institutions are distributed throughout the community (See [Map 1](#) for the Oak Park Zoning Map). The City continues to support redevelopment and reinvestment along its commercial corridors while protecting the character of established residential neighborhoods.

Transportation

Oak Park is well connected to the regional transportation network. Interstate 696 borders the City to the north, with Interstate 75 and M-10 (Lodge Freeway) providing convenient regional access. Major arterial roads include 8 Mile Road, 9 Mile Road, Greenfield Road, and Coolidge Highway. Public transit is provided by SMART bus service, and Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport is located approximately 25 miles southwest of the City.



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2.

Administrative Structure

Administrative Structure

Roles of Commission(s) or Advisory Board(s)

The Parks and Recreation Commission was established on June 19, 2017, as a combination of the previously existing Independence Day Commission and the Recreation Advisory Board. The Commission advises the Oak Park Recreation Department, develops strategies to connect with community stakeholders, encourages citizen participation, and supports the values of sustainability, equity, engagement, and sound economics in providing quality, safe recreation programs and facilities for the City of Oak Park. The Commission also assists with planning, promoting, executing, and evaluating public recreation, parks, programs, and other department special events.

Department, Authority, and Organizational Chart

The City of Oak Park oversees its parks and recreation system through the collaborative efforts of City administration, the City Council, and other applicable boards and commissions. Park improvements and recreation initiatives may be funded through the City's annual budget process, capital improvement planning, grants, and other available funding sources. Smaller maintenance and enhancement projects can often be addressed through departmental operating budgets, while larger capital improvements typically require City Council approval and may involve additional planning, public input, and external funding opportunities. This collaborative approach helps ensure that parks and recreation investments align with community priorities and the City's long-term vision.



Shaded walking trail and recreation area at Oak Park Woods.



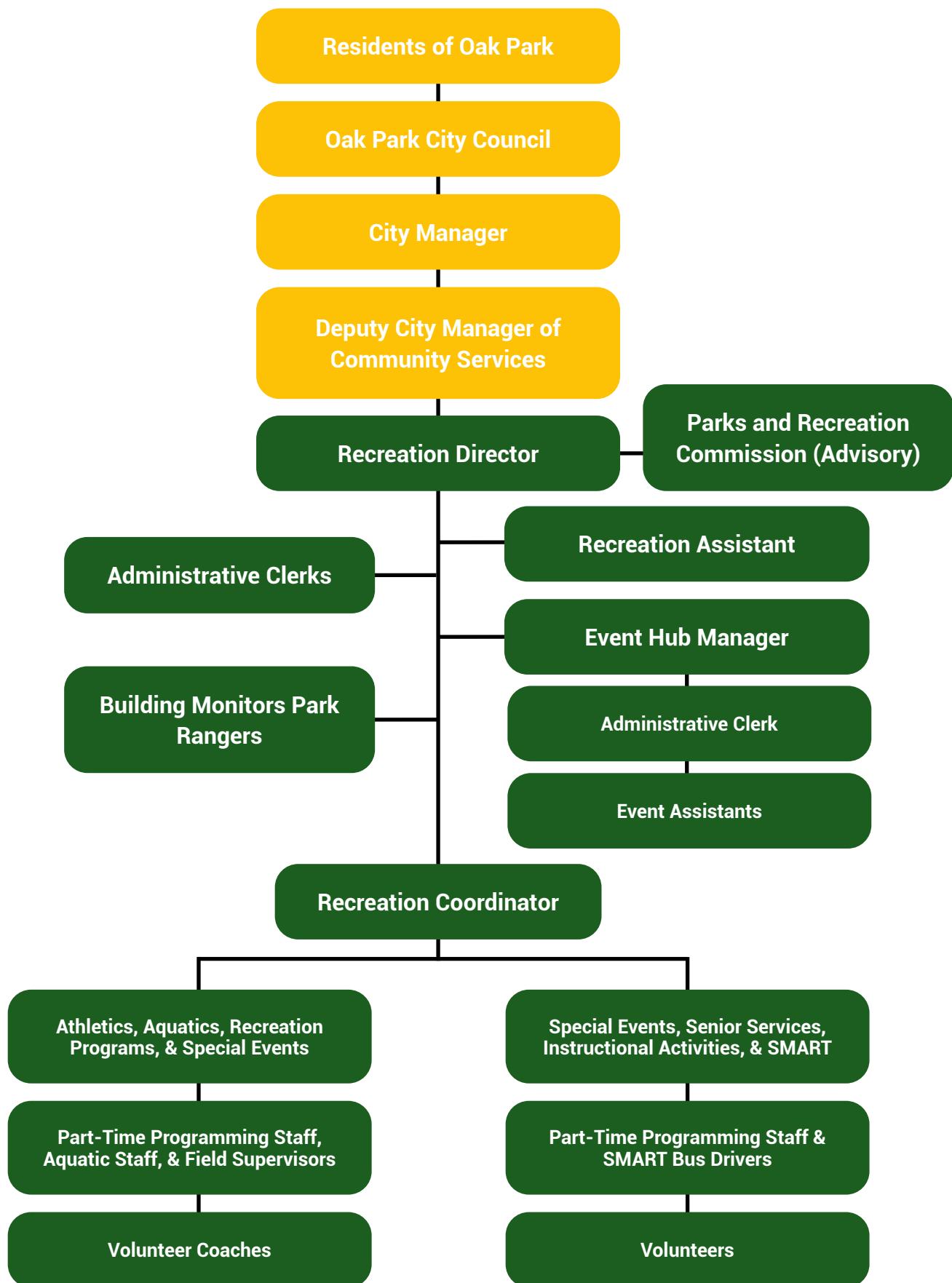
Public art sculpture along the Nine Mile Linear Park.

Recreation Millage

During the November 2023 election, more than 57% of voters were in support of growing Oak Park's parks and recreation opportunities. The City is now authorized to levy 2.4033 mills for a period of 20 years, from 2024 to 2043. Revenues from this millage will be available only for the purpose of funding capital improvements for facilities, parks, amenities, and general operating costs for the Department of Recreation. The first project that utilized this millage was for the City's Event Hub. This facility is open year-round, includes a banquet room and a 1,500 square foot commercial kitchen, and has plans to house a summertime Farmer's Market. More information on the Event Hub can be found on [page 23](#).



Figure 7. Parks and Recreation Administrative Structure Chart



Annual and Projected Budgets

Found in [Table 2](#) below, is the current-year and projected annual budgets for parks operation and maintenance, recreation programming, and capital improvements. More information about the City's capital improvement projects can be found on [page 84](#).

Table 2. Budgets for Operations, Maintenance, Capital Improvements, & Programming, 2026-2031

	2026 Requested	2027 Projected	2028 Projected	2029 Projected	2030 Projected	2031 Projected
CIP	\$18,155,000	\$18,820,000	\$500,000	\$1,400,000	\$6,300,000	\$525,000
Parks Operation and Maintenance	\$649,870	\$696,614	\$1,766,010	-	-	-
Recreation Programming	\$664,274	\$705,347	\$726,027	-	-	-

Current and Potential Funding Sources

The Parks and Forestry division of the City's DPW is in charge of the control and regulation of trees, including planting, development, maintenance, management and operation of parks, boulevards, and municipal parking lots. Expenditures by the DPW are paid from six funds: General; Major Streets; Local Streets; Solid Waste; Water & Sewer; and Motor Pool. The Department of Recreation is responsible for community programming in City recreation areas and facilities. A new fund has been created due to the passage of a new dedicated recreation millage which will allow for greater opportunities for the department. There are several existing or potential funding sources available for park and recreation facility improvements and are included in the following:

- **General Fund.** The general fund is the basic operating fund of the City and the traditional source of operating funds for parks and recreation. General Fund revenues are derived from property taxes, state-shared revenues, federal grants, license and permit fees, charges for services, interest on investments, and court fines or forfeitures. Any recreation program user fees are usually channeled through the General Fund.
- **Millage.** Voters passed a dedicated recreation millage during the November 2023 election which is used by the City to fund capital improvements for facilities, parks, amenities, and general operating costs for the Department of Recreation, and paying any other associated costs associated with or related to such programs. A property tax millage can be used to finance specific parks and recreation projects or for the operation of recreation facilities. The dedicated millage has gained favor in many communities because the voters are increasingly wary of approving millage increases for non-specified purposes. Approval by voters is required before a millage can be assessed. Any millage is subject to a periodic renewal by a vote of the people.
- **Parks and Recreation Improvement Capital Project Fund.** This fund was created in FY 2021-22 to make improvements to the City's parks and recreation programs, activities and various facilities. Grant funding will provide a portion of this fund's revenue. Various upgrades include facilities updates, program enhancements and purchases of new equipment. Funding will be from Grants and contributions from the General Fund.
- **Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Fund.** Quality of life initiatives, such as those represented by parks; open space, and trails projects, are an important component of the Capital Improvement Program. The City of Oak Park Department of Recreation offers ball fields, picnic grounds, and playgrounds. Funding for parks, open space, and cultural events is primarily from the Recreation dedicated millage that was established for maintaining parks and recreation purposes.
- **Oak Park Corridor Improvement Authority (OPCIA).** The OPCIA Budget can support parks, recreation, and public space improvements within the OPCIA boundary. The OPCIA works with the City to promote economic development, strengthen the tax base, and maintain the unique character of Oak Park. Funded primarily through tax increment financing (TIF), the OPCIA has invested in improvements such as updated streetscapes, wayfinding and gateway signage, landscaping, and other amenities that enhance vitality and benefit residents, businesses, and visitors.

- **User Fees.** Fees can be charged by the City to the users of specific recreation facilities or for enrollment in recreation programming. User fees can provide a substantial amount of support for certain parks and recreation facilities. Other communities in the region have established user fees for certain facilities.
- **Bond Programs.** Several bond programs can be used for parks and recreation facilities:
 - **General Obligations Bonds.** General Obligations Bonds are issued for specific community projects and may not be used for other purposes. These bonds are usually paid off with property tax revenues.
 - **Revenue Bonds.** Revenue Bonds are issued for construction of public projects that generate revenues. The bonds are then retired using income generated by the project.
- **Foundations.** The Friends of Parks & Recreation was established as a supporting organization in 2026 and in the future is expected to be an additional source of program and project funding. A foundation is a special non-profit organization that is established as a mechanism through which land, cash, and securities can be donated for the benefit of parks and recreation services.
- **Create a Regional Recreational Authority.** The City could explore partnerships with neighboring communities through collaborative planning efforts to expand opportunities and establish a broader, more sustainable funding base. Developing a regional recreation partnership or authority could improve access to facilities and programs, increase operational efficiencies, and strengthen the ability to pursue grant funding and shared investments that benefit residents across the region.
- **State-Level Grants.** The State of Michigan has several departments that offer grants for various programming and assets. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is a prime source of parks and recreation grant funding.
- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).** Revenues obtained through the federal CDBG program can be used for a variety of projects, including development of recreation facilities.
- **Donations.** Businesses, corporations, private clubs, and community organizations will often contribute to recreation and other improvement programs to benefit the communities in which they are located. Private sector contributions may be in the form of monetary contributions, the donation of the land, providing volunteers, or the contribution of equipment and facilities.



Art installations along Nine Mile Road.

Role of Volunteers and Organizations

The Recreation Department recognizes the important role that volunteers and community partnerships play in enhancing recreational opportunities and community life. The Department will continue to cultivate volunteer involvement while exploring partnerships with local organizations to support events, programs, and community improvement efforts.

Establishing a more formal volunteer program will help create a reliable network of residents willing to contribute their time and talents, fostering community stewardship, civic involvement, and a stronger sense of connection among residents.

Relationships with School Districts and Other Public Agencies

The City of Oak Park recognizes that strong partnerships are essential to providing high-quality parks, recreation, and community services. The Recreation Department has developed collaborative relationships with local school districts, neighboring communities, community and faith-based organizations, businesses, county and state agencies, and other partners to enhance recreational opportunities, expand programming, maximize public resources, and support community events.

Schools

Three primary school districts serve Oak Park residents, including Oak Park, Berkley, and Ferndale Public Schools. Through ongoing collaboration, the City and school districts work together to encourage the shared use of recreational facilities, athletic fields, and other community assets while expanding opportunities for students, families, and residents.

Neighboring Communities

Oak Park maintains cooperative relationships with neighboring municipalities to enhance recreation services and improve efficiency through shared resources. One example is the partnership between Oak Park, Ferndale, Pleasant Ridge, and Hazel Park to provide a combined youth sports league, which helps increase participation opportunities and strengthen regional recreation offerings. The City also collaborates with these communities, and more, on recreation programming, special events, and other initiatives that benefit residents throughout the region.

Community Organizations and Businesses

Community organizations, local businesses, volunteers, and emerging community groups play an important role in supporting parks, recreation programs, special events, and other quality-of-life initiatives. The City will continue to explore opportunities to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new relationships that enhance recreation services and community engagement.



Two teams from the Oak Park adult kickball league.

Oakland County Parks and Oakland County

Oak Park works closely with Oakland County to coordinate recreation, mobility, infrastructure, and community development initiatives. These partnerships help the City pursue grant funding opportunities, participate in countywide programs and events, and advance projects that improve recreational amenities and connections throughout the community.

Michigan Recreation and Park Association (mParks) and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

The City values its relationships with professional and state-level organizations that provide technical assistance, training, networking opportunities, and grant resources. Working with organizations such as mParks and MDNR helps Oak Park remain informed of best practices while supporting the continued development and improvement of its parks and recreation system.



3.

Parks and Recreation Inventory

Parks & Recreation Inventory

Oak Park residents have access to a wide range of recreation opportunities offered by several organizations throughout the region. Recreation providers include the City of Oak Park and nearby communities, the State of Michigan, Oakland County, and various private businesses and community organizations.

State Parks and Recreation Facilities

Eighteen (18) state parks and recreation areas are located in the seven-county Southeast Michigan region, with several within an hour drive from Oak Park. Common recreation opportunities available at these sites include hiking, swimming, fishing, boating, picnicking, camping, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling, among others.

Although no Michigan State Parks or Recreation Areas are located within the City of Oak Park, residents have convenient access to several state-managed recreation destinations within a 30- to 45-minute drive that offer the same recreation opportunities as the nearby state parks.

Nearby state recreation facilities include:

Belle Isle Park

14 miles from Oak Park

Dodge #4 State Park

17 miles from Oak Park

Maybury State Park

22 miles away

Bald Mountain Recreation Area

25 miles away



Biker at Dodge #4 State Park.

Sources: © 2019 Michigan Sky Media, Credit: Tyler Leipprandt and Michigan Sky Media, Creator: Tyler Leipprandt

Regional Facilities

Oak Park residents also benefit from access to several regional parks and recreation destinations throughout Southeast Michigan. The Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority (HCMA) operates 13 Metroparks that provide extensive recreational amenities, including hiking and biking trails, beaches, boating, fishing, golf courses, nature centers, picnic facilities, playgrounds, and winter recreation opportunities. The Metroparks closest to Oak Park include Kensington Metropark, Stony Creek Metropark, and Lake St. Clair Metropark, all located within approximately 30 miles of the City. See [Map 2](#) for a map of the regional park facilities surrounding Oak Park.

County Facilities

Oak Park is located within Oakland County and benefits from the extensive Oakland County Parks system. Several county-owned recreation facilities are located within a short drive of the City, including Catalpa Oaks County Park, Red Oaks County Park, Red Oaks Nature Center, Red Oaks Waterpark, and the Royal Oak Golf Center. These facilities provide residents with opportunities for picnicking, walking, nature interpretation, golf, aquatic recreation, athletic activities, and environmental education. Additionally, Oak Park residents have convenient access to regional recreation facilities in neighboring Wayne County, including Rouge Park, Palmer Park, and the Detroit Riverwalk, further expanding recreational opportunities throughout the area.



Kayakers at Kensington Metropark.



Baseball diamond at Key Park that is shared with nearby schools.

School Facilities

Oak Park is served by three public school districts: Oak Park Schools, Berkley School District, and Ferndale Public Schools, which combine for 11 public school campuses total. School campuses throughout the City provide important recreational resources for residents, including playgrounds, athletic fields, baseball and softball diamonds, soccer fields, football fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, tracks, gymnasiums, and open green space. These facilities support school athletics, physical education, and community recreation activities.

Several school facilities are available for community use through agreements with the respective school districts or by permit when not in use for school activities. Continued coordination between the City of Oak Park and the local school districts helps maximize recreational opportunities for residents and supports efficient use of public recreational facilities.

Oak Park is also located near several institutions of higher education that provide educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities, including Lawrence Technological University in Southfield, Oakland Community College - Royal Oak Campus, Wayne State University in Detroit, and Oakland University in Rochester Hills.

Regional Planning Efforts

The City of Oak Park participates in regional planning efforts with Oakland County, neighboring municipalities, SEMCOG, local school districts, and other public and nonprofit partners. These partnerships support coordination of recreation services, trail connectivity, grant opportunities, and collaborative approaches to improving parks and recreational amenities throughout the region.

Recreation Programming

The City of Oak Park Recreation Department provides a variety of recreational programs and activities for residents of all ages. Programming is designed to promote health, wellness, community engagement, and lifelong recreation. Offerings include youth programs, fitness and wellness classes, sports activities, arts and cultural programs, senior activities, community events, and seasonal programming.

Youth recreation opportunities include camps, sports programs, enrichment activities, and special events designed to encourage physical activity, creativity, and social interaction. Adult and senior programming includes fitness classes, social activities, educational opportunities, and recreational events that support active lifestyles and community connections.

In addition to City-sponsored programs, Oak Park residents have access to recreation opportunities provided by neighboring communities, Oakland County Parks, local nonprofit organizations, and private recreation providers throughout Southeast Michigan. Nearby communities including Berkley, Ferndale, Huntington Woods, Royal Oak, and Southfield offer additional classes, facilities, and special events that expand recreational options available to Oak Park residents.



Co-ed soccer game from the Quad-City Alliance Soccer League.

City Facilities

The City of Oak Park owns and maintains a variety of parks, playgrounds, athletic facilities, and recreational spaces that provide opportunities for active and passive recreation. Detailed descriptions of the City's parks are provided in the following section. See [Map 3](#) for a map of the recreation amenities within City boundaries. There are three main parks and recreation facilities within the City:

Event Hub

The City welcomed its new Event Hub in June 2026, located between City Hall and the library. The facility features a four-season Farmers Market and event space, an outdoor amphitheater, a Memorial Garden, a 1,500-square-foot commercial kitchen, and open gathering areas for community use. Since its grand opening, the Event Hub has already hosted numerous events, quickly becoming a vibrant destination for residents and visitors alike. The space is available to residents, community groups, and City staff for meetings and special events, while local businesses can rent the commercial kitchen to support their operations.

Community Center

The current community center within Oak Park is located next to City Hall and shares a building with the Parks and Recreation Department. It hosts a variety of programs for people of all ages, from seniors to youths. Including activities such as dance, archery, yoga, strength training, pilates, and tai chi.

New Community Center

A new community center is proposed to be built behind the library where the ice arena was located. The new center will include a year-round aquatic center with a pool, enclosed indoor/outdoor waterslide, zero-depth kids play area, lap lanes, cardio areas, gymnasium, pickleball courts, flexible programmable spaces, and other amenities. To build this center, the City borrowed a \$44 million bond.

Methods

To conduct the parks and recreation inventory update, Giffels Webster, a team of planning consultants, and City staff collaborated to address changes from the 2019 plan. The previous plan was used as a foundation to build from. Through comments from staff, an open house and a survey to collect feedback from residents, and on-site visits to the parks, the parks and recreation inventory was updated to address any changes.



Inside of the new Event Hub.

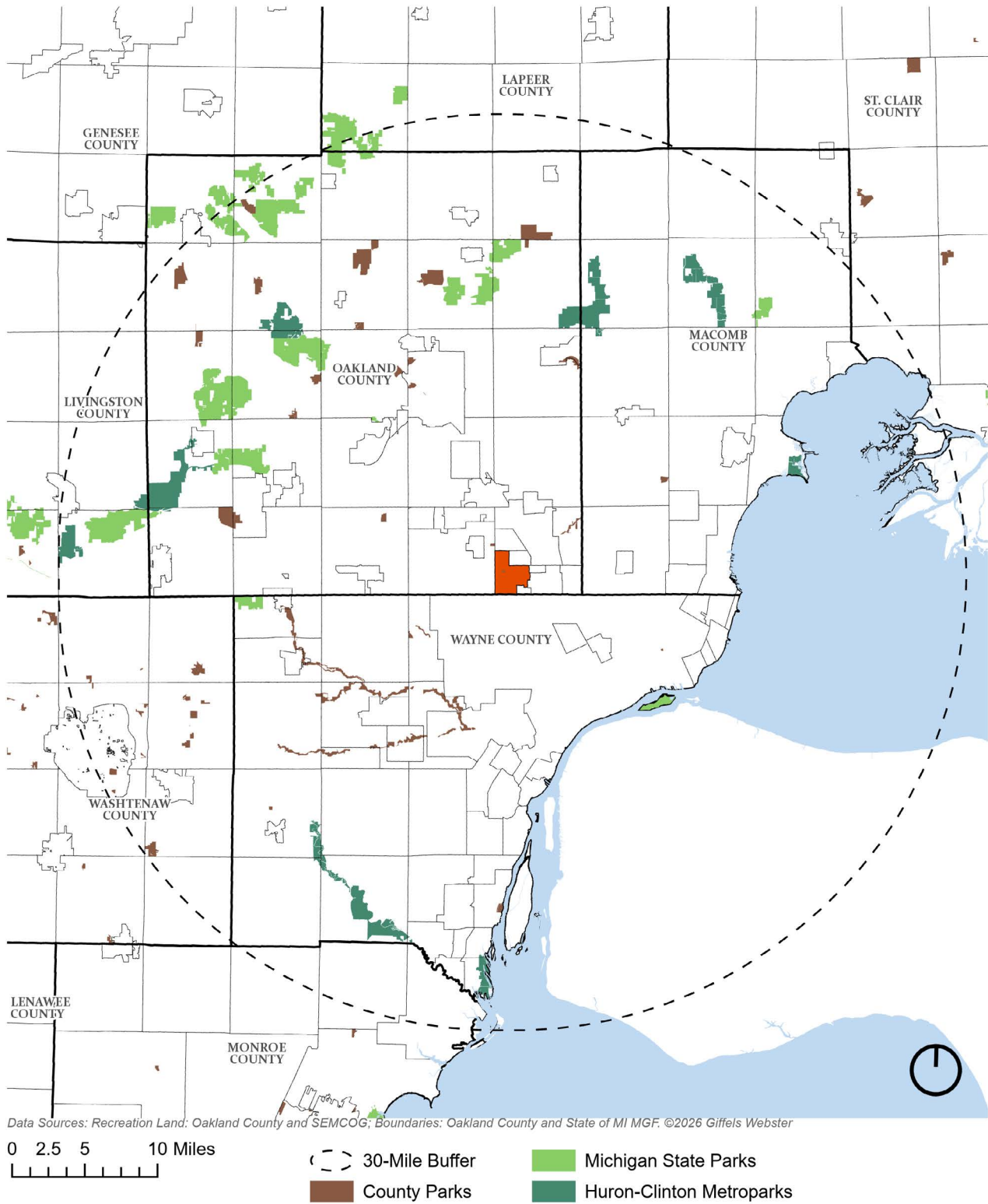


The City of Oak Park's Recreation office and Community Center.



Rendering of the new Community Center.

Map 2. Regional Park Facilities





Best Park

Best Park (3.7 acres)

Best Park is located behind John F. Kennedy Elementary School between Colgate and Yale Street. Field space is shared with the neighboring Ferndale school, with desire to establish an agreement to add a paved walking pathway around the park to improve accessibility and connectivity.

Amenities

- Two swing sets
- Tee ball field
- Benches
- Picnic tables
- Grills
- Dog waste station

School Facilities

- Two swing sets
- Large play structure

CIP Future Construction

- Walking trail
- Pavilion
- Play area





Charlotte M. Rothstein Park

**UNDER
CONSTRUCTION**

Charlotte M. Rothstein Park (7.2 acres)

Located behind the Alfred Taubman Jewish Community Campus, Charlotte M. Rothstein Park exists upon a green overpass that caps Interstate 696, connecting residents across the highway to community resources. While some improvements have been made at the time of this plan being written, construction has not yet been completed and fully open to the public. Charlotte M. Rothstein Park is expected to be complete by late 2026.

Amenities (anticipated)

Expected to be completed late summer/early fall of 2027

- Play structure
- Vita course
- Lighted paved path
- Seating
- Outdoor fitness equipment
- Bike repair stand



David H. Shepherd Park

David H. Shepherd Park (39.8 acres)	Amenities
<p>Located off Oak Park Blvd behind the civic complex, David H. Shepherd park is the largest park in the City. Formerly 56.8 acres, the park is now 39.8 acres as 17 acres have been utilized for Oak Park Woods. David H. Shepherd Park features several recreational amenities, including indoor and outdoor sports facilities, play structures, and a walking path.</p> <p>Improvements and construction to Oak Park Woods are separate from David H. Shepherd Park amenities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grills with tables • Three pavilions • Wooden train and truck • Two play structures • Swing set • Three play tunnels • Four play tires • Two basketball courts • Two lighted baseball courts with scoreboards • Nature path • Walking trail • Hill with sledding • Indoor restrooms <p>CIP Phase 2 of Construction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi use courts • Bench shade structures



Dewey Park

Dewey Park (6.7 acres)

Located off 21600 Stratford, near the end of the residential roadway. The park is situated on the south side of Oak Park Academy, providing an accessible recreational space for nearby residents, students, and community members.

Amenities

- Benches
- Grills
- Picnic tables

CIP Future Construction

- Walking trail
- Multipurpose courts
- Pavilion
- Exercise stations





Harding Tot Lot

Harding Tot Lot (less than one acre)	Amenities
Located at the northern end of Harding Street, Harding Tot Lot sits just north of Talbot Road at the street’s dead end, providing a local recreation opportunity for nearby residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two play structures• Benches• Swing set



Key Park

Key Park (6.1 acres)

Located off Scotia Street across from Francis Scott Key Elementary School, Key Park provides a neighborhood recreational space that serves the surrounding community.

Amenities

- Baseball field with bleachers
- Accessible play structure with swing set
- Benches
- Dog waste station

School Facilities

- Two soccer goals

Future CIP Construction

- Walking trail
- Multipurpose courts
- Playground





Lessenger Park / Oak Park & Bark

Lessenger Park / Oak Park & Bark (7.3 acres)	Amenities
<p>Located to the east of Lessenger Early Childhood Center, Lessenger Park provides recreation opportunities for local residents and students.</p> <p>To the west of the childhood center, Oak Park & Bark is a membership-only park that is divided into three sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1.3 acres for large dogs over 25 pounds• 0.18 acres for small dogs under 25 pounds• 0.16 acres for dogs with special needs <p>The annual registration fee is \$40 for residents and \$65 for non-residents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play structure• Walking path• Drinking water for dogs and humans• Paw wash station• Dog waste station• Entry gate controlled by keyless electronic system



Nine Mile Connector Park

Nine Mile Connector Park (less than one acre)

Located on Troy Street off of Scotia Road, Nine Mile Connector Park provides direct access to 9 Mile Road and the 9 Mile Linear Park, and includes several recreational features for people of all abilities.

Amenities

- Small zip line
- Sensory panels
- Accessible spinning and bouncing features
- Benches
- Accessible picnic tables



Nine Mile Linear Park

Nine Mile Linear Park

Nine Mile Linear park, spanning from Scotia Road to Rosewood Street along 9 Mile, features a walking path lined with several art installations, recreational activities for people of all ages, and seating areas. There is also a designated bike lane spanning from the trailhead at Eastwood Street to Pinecrest Drive in Ferndale.

These amenities welcome and encourage pedestrians to travel by bike or by foot along the 9 Mile corridor to patronize local businesses.

Amenities

- Ninja warrior course
- Sensory panels
- Benches
- Picnic tables
- Swings
- Art installations



Oak Park Woods at Shepherd Park

Oak Park Woods at Shepherd Park (17 acres)

Formerly a part of Shepherd Park, Oak Park Woods completed construction in the summer of 2026. The priorities of this park aim to preserve nature, create walking paths, maintain a clean and safe park with working amenities, and create spaces where everyone is welcome to gather, relax, and play. Investments for this park totals \$3.25 million.

Amenities

- Play structure
- Picnic areas
- Play fields
- Pavilions and shelters
- Boardwalk and nature trails
- Plazas and gathering areas
- Indoor bathrooms



 Seneca Pocket Park

Seneca Pocket Park (less than one acre)

Located on Seneca Street and 9 Mile, Seneca Pocket Park provides residents direct access to 9 Mile Road across from the 9 Mile Linear Park, and includes a large climbing structure for children to play on.

Amenities

- Large climbing structure
- Benches



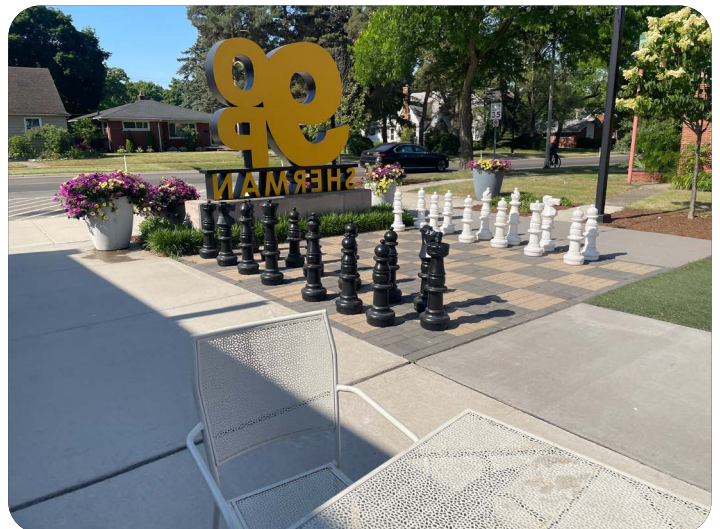
Sherman Pocket Park

Sherman Pocket Park (less than one acre)

Located on Sherman Street and 9 Mile, Sherman Pocket Park provides residents direct access to 9 Mile Road across from the 9 Mile Linear Park, and includes leisurely amenities for pedestrians to utilize.

Amenities

- Cornhole boards
- Oversized chess
- Benches





Tyler Park

UNDER
CONSTRUCTION

Tyler Park (3.7 acres)	Amenities (anticipated)
Tyler Park is under construction at the time of this plan being written, with completion expected in late 2026 or early 2027. Located at 14000 Oak Park Boulevard, the construction is a \$3.4 million joint project between the Berkley School District and the City of Oak Park.	<p>Expected to be completed late spring 2027</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swing set• Baseball field• Two soccer goals• Hill for sledding• Indoor bathrooms• Walking track <p>School Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Softball complex• Bathrooms <p>CIP Phase Two Construction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large playground• Pavilion



Photo of Tyler Park that were taken before the start of the 2026 construction project.

Victoria Park

**UNDER
CONSTRUCTION**

Victoria Park (8.5 acres)

Located on Church Street between 10 Mile and Balfour, Victoria Park exists on a green overpass over Interstate-696. Similarly to Rothstein Park, which is located nearby, this park connects residents across the highway to community resources. At the time of this plan being written, construction is still underway, and is expected to be complete by late 2026.

Amenities (anticipated)

Expected to be completed late summer/early fall of 2027

- Two swing sets
- Tee ball field
- Bleachers
- Basketball court
- Two tennis courts
- Three pavilions
- Bathroom
- Six shade structures
- Restored playground
- Prairie garden

School Facilities

- Two swing sets
- Large play structure



Photos of Victoria Park that were taken before the start of the 2026 construction project.

Source: The Oakland Press

Accessibility Assessment

Background

A critical component in planning for recreation facilities is providing barrier-free access to accommodate the needs of visitors with physical and/or mental disabilities. Barrier-free access includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that adequate barrier-free parking spaces, sidewalks, trails, picnic tables, and playground equipment are provided for renovated or new recreational facilities. The U.S. Access Board is designated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as the agency responsible for developing minimum accessibility guidelines to ensure that new construction and alteration of facilities covered by ADA are accessible and usable by people with disabilities.

Assessment Methods

Standards from The Accessibility Checklist, a guidebook founded upon the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS), the codes and standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design were used to verify barrier-free compliance.

The MDNR Guidelines require that a barrier-free ranking be given to each facility for assessing its accessibility for people with disabilities. The assessment considers the accessibility of both the facilities themselves as well as the access routes to them. The following system, provided by the MDNR Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks and Recreation Plans (11/10/2011), was used to assess each park:

Rating Score 1: None of the facilities / park areas meet accessibility guidelines.

Rating Score 2: Some of the facilities / park areas meet accessibility guidelines.

Rating Score 3: Most of the facilities / park areas meet accessibility guidelines.

Rating Score 4: The entire park meets accessibility guidelines.

Rating Score 5: The entire park was developed / renovated using the principals of universal design.



Wheelchair accessible park table.

Source: Park N Pool



Fully ADA accessible playground.

Source: Humboldt County, CA

Summary of Accessibility Assessment

Provided below are the accessibility rankings of all the parks in Oak Park that are not currently under construction at the time of writing this plan. For more information, see [Table 3](#) for the full accessibility assessment.

Best Park

Overall rating: 1

Nine Mile Connector Park

Overall rating: 4

David H. Shepherd Park

Overall rating: 4

Nine Mile Linear Park

Overall rating: 4

Dewey Park

Overall rating: 1

Oak Park Woods at Shepherd Park

Overall rating: 5

Harding Tot Lot

Overall rating: 1

Seneca Pocket Park

Overall rating: 4

Key Park

Overall rating: 3

Sherman Pocket Park

Overall rating: 4

Lessenger Park / Oak Park & Bark

Overall rating: 2

Improvements to Target

In Oak Park, there are general improvements that could be made to each park that would make them more accessible:

- Develop paved or stabilized pathways to all amenities within the parks; make all paths of sufficient width for two people to walk side-by-side or pass
- When making playground improvements, provide ramps and transfers, and use “poured-in-place” or rubber tiles under equipment, rather than loose fill material such as wood chips; as playground equipment requires replacement, provide ramps and transfers to all play components

Table 3. Accessibility Assessment

	Best Park	David H. Shepherd Park	Dewey Park	Harding Tot Lot	Key Park	Lessenger Park / Oak Park & Bark	Nine Mile Connector Park	Nine Mile Linear Park	Oak Park Woods at Shepherd Park	Seneca Pocket Park	Sherman Pocket Park
Arrival and Site Entry											
Accessible route from parking/drop-off/public sidewalk to the park entrance	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Accessible passenger drop-off area, if one exists	Y	Y	Y	N/A	Y	Y	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	Y
Entrance gates/openings are easy to operate and wide enough for wheelchair users and other mobility devices	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wayfinding and Signage											
Accessible signage identifying key amenities (restrooms, play areas, trails, picnic shelters, parking)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N/A	N/A
Directional signage along routes	N/A	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N/A	N/A
High-contrast, easy-to-read lettering	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tactile/Braile signage where appropriate	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Maps or orientation boards at an accessible height	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Parking											
Accessible parking spaces are provided and marked with International Symbol of Accessibility	N	Y	N	N/A	Y	Y	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A
Accessible parking is as near to the park entrance as possible	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A
Play Areas											
There is an accessible route (60 inches wide) to the entrance of the play area with a slope no steeper than 1:16	Y	N/A	N/A	N	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
For playground equipment, at least one turning space is provided on the same level as play components	N	N/A	N/A	N	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A
Play area surface is firm and stable (mulch/woodchips, sand and gravel are not accessible surfaces)	N	N/A	N/A	N	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A
Ground-level and elevated play components provide variety	N	N/A	N/A	N	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y	N	N/A
Transfer systems/platforms are provided where required	N	N/A	N/A	N	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A

	Best Park	David H. Shepherd Park	Dewey Park	Harding Tot Lot	Key Park	Lessenger Park / Oak Park & Bark	Nine Mile Connector Park	Nine Mile Linear Park	Oak Park Woods at Shepherd Park	Seneca Pocket Park	Sherman Pocket Park
Accessible route connects to required play components	N	N/A	N/A	N	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A
Inclusive play opportunities for children with different sensory, cognitive, and physical disabilities	N	N/A	N/A	N	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y	N	N/A
Shaded seating nearby for caregivers	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Where multiple swings in a swing bay are provided, one swing is located on an accessible route	N	N/A	N	N	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
For sport courts, at least one accessible route connects both sides of the court	N/A	Y	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Park Amenities											
Drinking fountain spout outlets are a maximum of 36 inches above the finish floor or ground	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A
Safety is promoted by good street lighting	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ramps are non-slip	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A
Benches are provided along routes/trails	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	N	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	N/A	N/A
Some benches include backs and armrests	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Accessible companion seating is available	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
Seating areas are connected by an accessible route	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Viewing areas or overlooks include wheelchair-accessible spaces	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Public restroom, if provided, includes at least one fully accessible stall	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A
Public restroom, if provided, is available via an accessible route	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A
Routes, Trails, and Sidewalks											
Cross slope is manageable	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Route surface is stable, firm, and slip-resistant throughout	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
No abrupt level changes	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Running slope of accessible routes is within acceptable limits	Y	Y	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

	Best Park	David H. Shepherd Park	Dewey Park	Harding Tot Lot	Key Park	Lessenger Park / Oak Park & Bark	Nine Mile Connector Park	Nine Mile Linear Park	Oak Park Woods at Shepherd Park	Seneca Pocket Park	Sherman Pocket Park
There is a path of travel that does not require the use of stairs	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bike paths are separate from pedestrian walkways	N/A	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N	N/A	N/A
Sidewalks are free of obstruction, wide enough for wheelchairs, solid (not made of dirt), and have curb cuts	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Handrails are provided on both sides of a ramp	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Accessible routes connect all park amenities and coincide with general circulation paths	N/A	Y	N/A	N	Y	N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Safety and Maintenance											
Emergency access/egress routes are accessible	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Call boxes or emergency phones (if present) are accessible	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lighting is adequate along accessible routes, not just streets	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Potential hazards are marked clearly	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Routes, parking areas, and equipment is maintained	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Overall Park Ranking:	1	4	1	1	3	2	4	4	5	4	4
Rank System Rank 1 = No facilities meet guidelines Rank 2 = Some facilities meet guidelines Rank 3 = Most facilities meet guidelines Rank 4 = All facilities meet guidelines Rank 5 = Entire park is universally accessible											

Grant Assisted Facilities

Previous MDNR Grants

The City of Oak Park Parks and Recreation Departments have received nine Michigan Department of Natural Resources grants for development projects since 1972. [Table 4](#) describes these projects below.

Table 4. Previous MDNR Grants

Grant Number	Application Year	Project Description	Grant Amount	Current Use/Condition
26-00296	1972	Shepherd Park: Combination restroom/shelter building	\$18,300.00	Shelter in fair condition, some lights were replaced in 2017. The sliding gate/bathrooms/and kitchen are all in fair condition but could use improvements. This shelter has a high volume of usage continually throughout the summer.
26-00612	1975	Best Park: Lighted magic square, and LWCF sign	\$20,569.52	Magic square has been removed.
26-00613	1975	Tyler Park: Develop two lighted tennis courts, and LWCF sign	\$21,011.37	No longer have tennis courts at Tyler Park, two baseball fields and a soccer field.
26-00614	1975	Shepherd Park: Develop lighting at five existing tennis courts, and LWCF sign	\$11,085.80	Tennis courts in poor condition but lighting system still works adequately.
26-00866	1977	Shepherd Park: Develop less than one acre for one basketball court, and LWCF sign	\$2,820.00	Outdoor basketball courts have been moved. We have 5 total hoops, two-full court and one half-court section.
BF89-283	1989	Shepherd Park Infrastructure: Replace ballfield lights at Merton Colburn Field, replace fencing at Merton Colburn and CP#2 ballfield, replace handicapped accessible asphalt path through nature area	\$81,300.00	Asphalt is in fair condition. Fencing has some issues with it becoming raised up and rusting. Lighting structures are in good shape and used on a regular basis, some individual lights were replaced in 2017.
CM00-156	2000	Pool Renovation: Renovate the City's outdoor 50-meter pool and diving tank	\$495,000.00	Pool is no longer in use.
26-01685	2008	Key Park Play Equipment: Development of play equipment at Key Park	\$50,000.00	Fair amount of usage, and the equipment is in fair condition. However there is some graffiti and it needs some general upkeep and maintenance.
26-01844	2020	Connector Park: development of Oak Park Connector Park	\$100,000.00	The park has been completed and is in use.

Other Funding Sources and Grants

Beyond MDNR funding, the City of Oak Park received grants and funding from various sources to further support the maintenance and development of their parks. These different sources are listed in [Table 5](#).

Table 5. Other Funding Sources and Grants

Grant Source	Application Year	Project Description	Grant Amount	Current Use/ Condition
Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Fund	2019	9 Mile Seneca Pocket Park: Fund the DNA climbing structure	\$50,000	Condition: excellent
KABOOM! Play Everywhere Grant	2019	9 Mile Seneca Pocket Park: Fund the DNA climbing structure	\$65,000	Condition: excellent
Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Fund	2021	9 Mile Linear Park: Fund the various recreation amenities throughout the park	\$45,000	Condition: excellent
Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Fund	2021	Mobile Recreation Program: Fund equipment and program supplies	\$20,000	Program was soft launched summer of 2022
PatroniCity Crowdfunding Campaign (in partnership with MEDC)	2021	9 Mile Linear Park: Fund amenities and public art	\$100,000	Condition: excellent
Funding Source	Year	Project	Amount	Current Use/ Condition
Oakland County Parks	2026	Oak Park Woods	\$6,200,000	Condition: excellent



A photo of Oak Park's public library.

Expected Amenities

The City is planning for many new amenities to be introduced to its parks system and proposed community center. Some of these amenities include:

Best Park

- Walking trail
- Pavilion
- Play area

Charlotte M. Rothstein Park

- Play structure
- Vita course
- Lighted paved path
- Seating
- Outdoor fitness equipment

David H. Shepherd Park

- Multi use courts
- Bench shade structures

Dewey Park

- Walking trail
- Multipurpose courts
- Pavilion
- Exercise stations

Key Park

- Walking trail
- Multipurpose courts
- Playground

Tyler Park

- Large playground
- Pavilion

Victoria Park

- Two swing sets
- Tee ball field
- Bleachers
- Basketball court
- Two tennis courts
- Three pavilions
- Bathroom

Community Center

- Year-round aquatic center with a pool
- Lazy river
- Lap lanes
- Enclosed indoor/outdoor waterslide
- Zero-depth kids play area
- Cardio areas
- Multi-court gymnasium
- Pickleball courts
- Flexible programmable spaces
- Locker rooms and changing rooms
- Walking track
- Fitness-equipment areas

General Cost Estimates



Rubber play surface

~\$18 per SF



Decomposed granite

~\$9 per SF



Concrete, 6 ft

~\$6 per SF



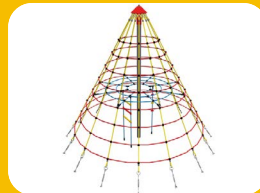
Shade sail

3 Point Sail Shade Structure
Company: Willy Goat
~\$16,000 EA



Bench

Arcata Bench
Company: Landscape Forms
~\$2,500 EA



Play structure

The Great Pyramid
Company: Willy Goat
~\$7,000 EA



Play structure

Pebble Path Pods Playground
Section, 12 Pods
Company: Willy Goat
~\$1,400 EA



Play structure

Connect Four Board
Company: Picnic Furniture
~\$5,700 EA



4.

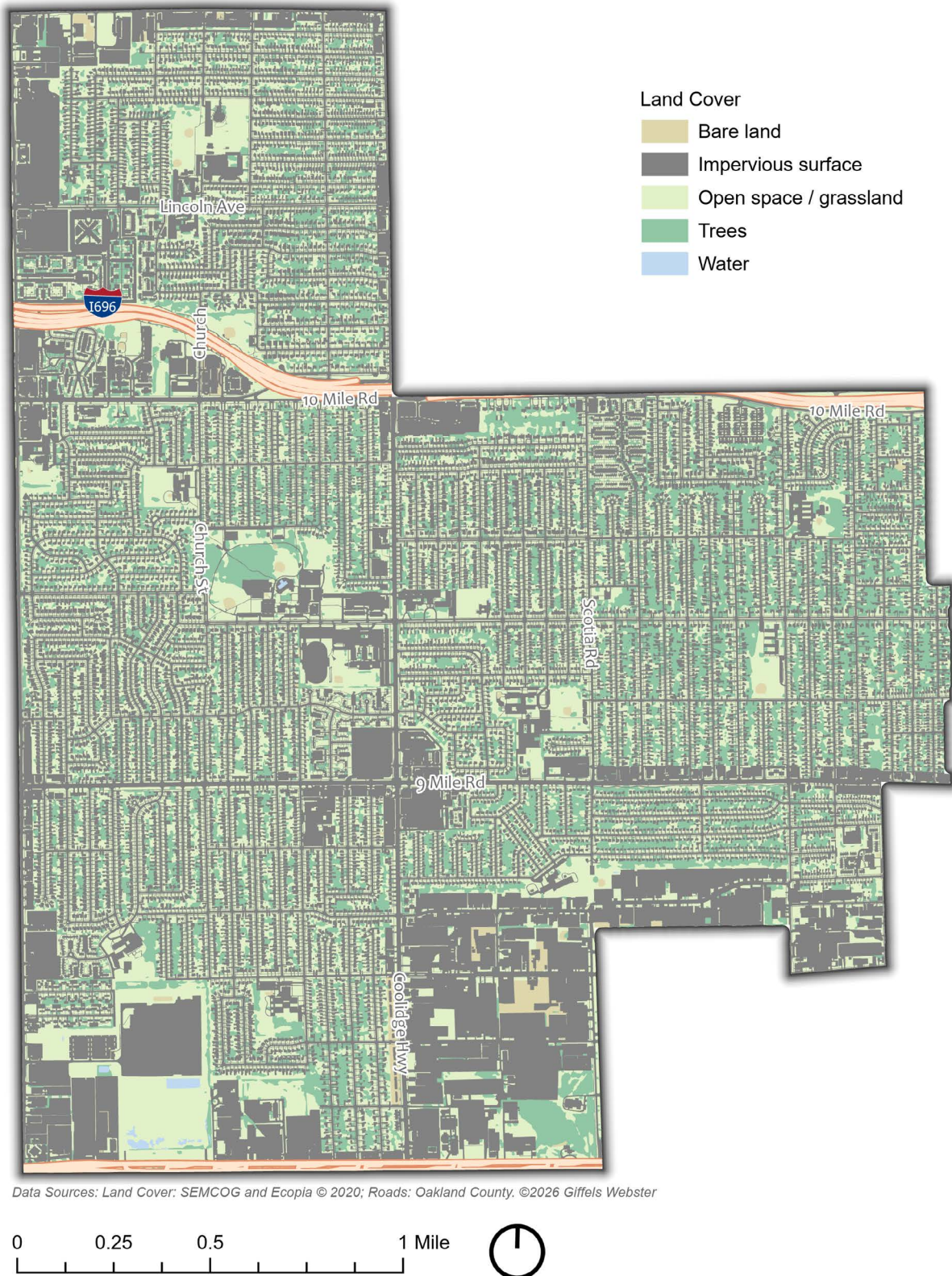
Natural Features Inventory

Natural Features Inventory

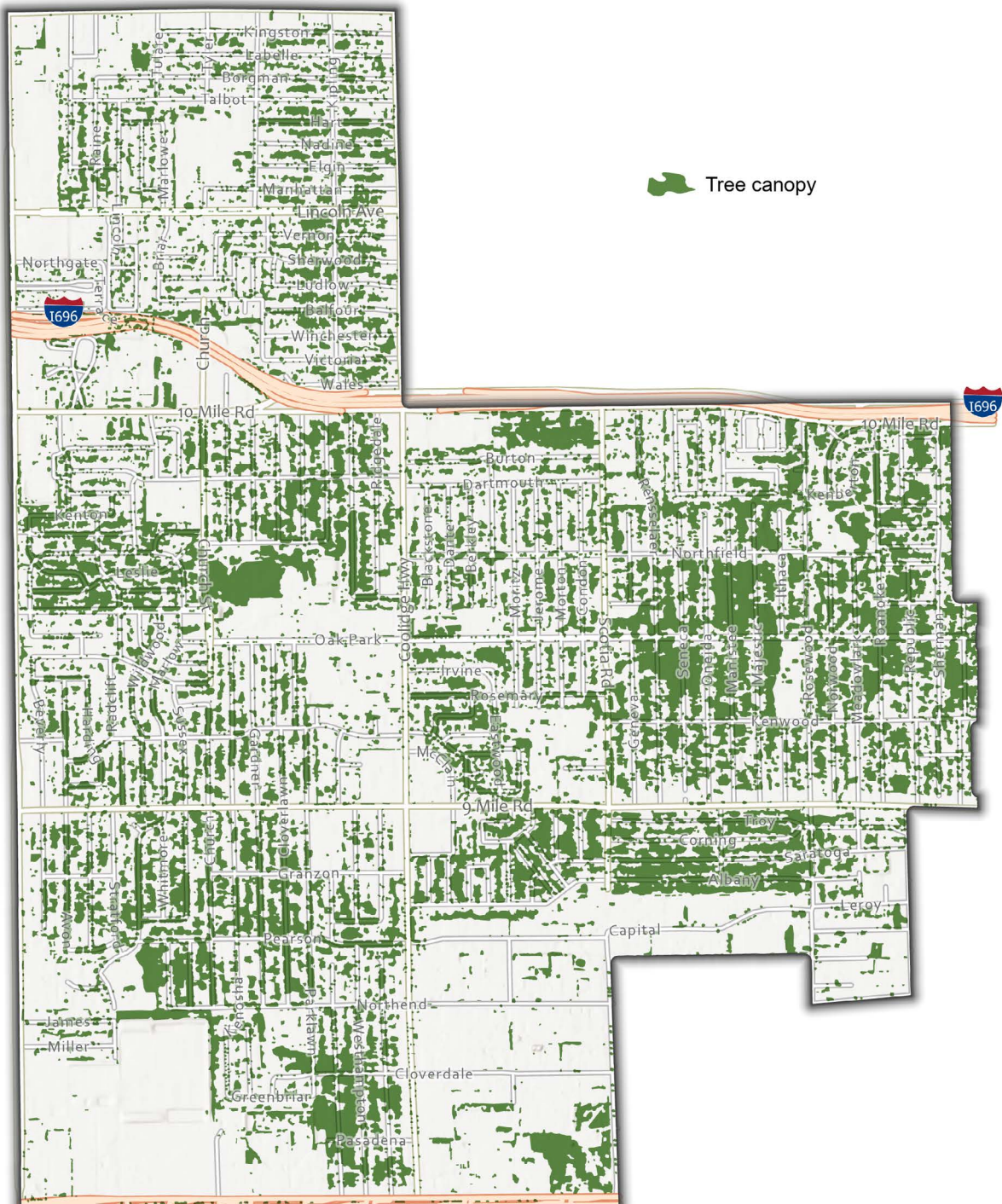
In a community such as Oak Park, Michigan, where recreation and daily life are closely connected to the surrounding natural landscape, maintaining an inventory of natural resources is an important tool for identifying potential opportunities for conservation and recreation. These maps can also guide planning efforts for open space preservation beyond recreational uses. The following pages illustrate watersheds and waterways, wetlands, and woodlands within the Oak Park area as well as the impervious surfaces and tree canopy.



Map 4. Land Cover and Impervious Surfaces



Map 5. Tree canopy



Data Sources: Tree Canopy: SEMCOG and Ecopia © 2020; Roads: Oakland County. ©2026 Giffels Webster



5.

Recreation Needs Analysis

Recreation Needs Analysis

To analyze the recreational needs of Oak Park residents and determine deficiencies within recreation programs, it is helpful to consider standards for recreation service areas, land needs based on future population, and the ultimate size and extent of recreation facilities and their location.

These recreation planning standards are a useful tool in assessing future recreation needs. Standards may be used effectively only as a means for comparing present conditions to what is thought to be suitable or desirable, and as a general guide toward estimating future needs and demands.

The following organizations have developed guidelines for recreation that could be used as benchmarks for understanding Oak Park's recreation facilities and needs:

- **Heritage Conservation & Recreation Service (HCRS).** The HCRS recommends standards based on compiled data on standards used or recommended by various City, county, metropolitan, state, and federal park and recreation agencies.
- **Urban Land Institute (ULI).** The ULI, a private research organization concerned with planning and development of land, recommends standards for recreation areas for community and neighborhood development.
- **National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).** The NRPA developed recommended standards and guidelines for recreation, parks and open space.

Recommended Community Recreation Facilities

The major types of community recreation facilities recommended by the above organizations include:

- **Playgrounds/Mini-Parks.** Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population, or specific groups such as small children or senior citizens. For example, suggested recreational amenities for an individual mini-park include a tot lot, two picnic tables and open space.
- **Playfield or Athletic Fields/Neighborhood Park.** Neighborhood parks should offer a variety of activities to accommodate a range of ages, physical abilities, and recreational interests. Therefore, it is recommended that neighborhood parks should be comprised of approximately 50% active uses (fields, courts, playgrounds, skating, etc.) and 50% passive uses (trails, picnic areas, etc.). In an urbanized community such as Oak Park, parking occurs on the street.
- **Community Parks.** Community-wide parks include larger parks with diverse environmental quality. A variety of passive and active uses are provided, including athletic fields, sledding hills, trails, picnic areas, and playgrounds. Typically, uses are separated by activity and age group to limit potential conflicts between different types of users. Other potential facilities include lighted spectator-type athletic fields and off-street parking.
- **Connector Trails.** Connector trails would include a multi-use trail to give non-motorized access to parks and other uses throughout the City, and would also provide connections to regional bike lanes. Modes of travel include walking, biking, and in-line skating. These trails would by necessity be located within the road rights-of-way. There are no current standards for trails within/around a community.

NRPA Annual Agency Review

Each year, the NRPA surveys parks and recreation agencies across the US and shares this data to help communities benchmark their programs and facilities against similar-sized peers. The NRPA recognizes that applying standards and guidelines often prove challenging due to the variety of populations served and funding sources available. This could also be a useful resource for the City in determining what, if any, additional recreation facilities or amenities are needed.

Oak Park's 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan conducted the Needs Assessment based on NRPA standards. However, to more closely align with State of Michigan guidance, the Needs Assessment in this 2026 update is based on guidelines provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). More information on these guidelines are provided on the next page.

State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

The DNR includes a Recommended Classification System for Local and Regional recreation Open Space and Trails (see [Table 6](#)) for the development of recreation plans. On the pages that follow, these standards outline recommendations for developed recreation acreage and for the various types of recreation activities; however, it should be noted that these standards are guidelines and the City should consider other recreation opportunities within the area as well as the ability to maintain community facilities. These standards are compared with the recreation opportunities provided by the City in the table on the following pages.

Table 6. MDNR Recommended Classification System for Local and Regional Recreation Open Space and Trails

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria	Size Criteria	Acre / 1,000 Population (Min)	Acre / 1,000 Population (Max)
Mini-Park	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs.	Less than ¼ mile distance in residential setting.	Between 2500 sq. ft. and one acre in size.	0.25	0.5
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal active and passive recreation.	¼- to ½-mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers.	5 acres is considered minimum size. 5 to 10 acres is optimal.	1	2
School-Park	Depending on circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, sports complex and special use.	Determined by location of school district property.	Variable-depends on function.		Variable
Community Park	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site Usually serves two or more neighborhoods and ½ to 3-mile distance.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually between 30 and 50 acres.	5	8
Large Urban Park	Large urban parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves the entire community.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 50 acres, with 75 or more acres being optimal.		Variable
Natural Resource Areas	Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.		Variable
Regional Metropolitan Park	Land set aside for preservation of natural beauty or environmental significance, recreation use or historic or cultural interest use.	Located to serve several communities within 1 hour driving time.	Optimal size is 200+ acres, but size varies based on accommodating the desired uses.	5	10
Greenways	Effectively tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.		Variable
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community.	Strategically located community-wide facilities.	Determined by projected demand. Usually a minimum of 25 acres, with 40 to 80 acres being optimal.		Variable

Table 7. Existing Oak Park Recreation Amenities Compared to MDNR Recommended Classification System

Classification	Oak Park 2020 Population		Oak Park 2050 Projected Population		Existing (acres)	Existing Parks	Recommendations
	29,560		30,104				
	Min (acres)	Max (acres)	Min (acres)	Max (acres)			
Mini Park	7	8	15	15	0.76	9 Mile Connector Park Harding Tot Lot Seneca Pocket Park Sherman Pocket Park	Explore opportunities to acquire new developments to incorporate recreational open space into neighborhood plans
Neighborhood Park	29	59	30	60	43.2	Best Park Dewey Park Key Park Lessenger Park Oak Park & Bark Rothstein Park Tyler Park Victoria Park	Explore opportunities to acquire new developments to incorporate recreational open space into neighborhood plans
School Park		Variable		Variable			The City currently utilizes several school facilities to meet the recreation needs of the residents; additional opportunities should be explored
Community Park	148	237	151	241	68.2	9 Mile Linear Park Oak Park Woods Shepherd Park	Explore opportunities to develop City-owned land as development increases
Large Urban Park		Variable		Variable			Not needed
Natural Resource Areas		Variable		Variable			Opportunities to add natural resource areas could be explored
Regional Metropolitan Park	148	296	150	301			Kensington, Stony Creek, and Lake St. Clair Metroparks nearby offer some recreation amenities within close proximity to City residents
Greenways		Variable		Variable			Add trails/shared paths
Sports Complex		Variable		Variable			Explore partnerships with nearby communities, school districts, and organizations to provide indoor sports opportunities

Parks for an Aging Population

In Oak Park, the community has a unique opportunity to enhance its parks and recreation facilities to better serve the aging population. While there are no universal standards for parks designed specifically for older adults, many communities nationwide are recognizing the benefits of keeping seniors physically active and socially engaged. For Oak Park, this could mean incorporating age-friendly design elements such as accessible walking paths, benches with proper support, low-impact exercise equipment, and shaded gathering areas into existing parks like Shepherd Park.



Example of adult playground equipment that provides an opportunity for both physical activity and social interactions.

Replacement Guidance for Park Amenities

Begin by assessing the condition of surfaces, playgrounds, site amenities, and other park features with the assistance of a professional Landscape Architect. A qualitative site assessment can identify assets that should be retained, repaired, or replaced, with findings documented in a condition assessment report.

For assets requiring attention, many surfaces can be resurfaced, repaired, recoated, or otherwise restored, depending on the extent of deterioration. In many cases, the existing aggregate subbase can remain in place and be reused, reducing replacement costs and material waste.

Playground equipment should be evaluated based on its age, condition, and compliance with current safety and accessibility standards. If equipment remains in good condition and meets applicable standards, certain components may be donated or relocated for continued use. Equipment that cannot be reused may be recycled where feasible.

Site furnishings such as benches, bike racks, and similar amenities can often be repaired and retained. When replacement is necessary, these items may also be suitable for donation, salvage, or recycling.

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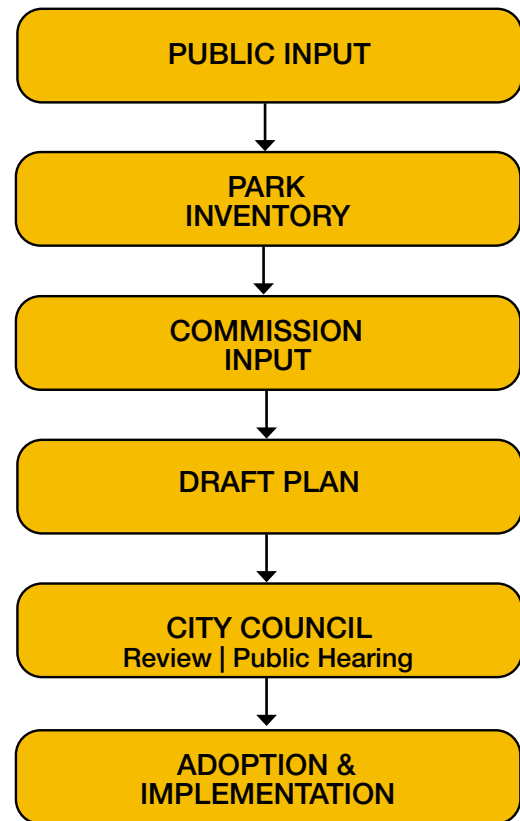
6.

The Planning Process

Planning Process

The recreation planning process in Oak Park included many opportunities for input from the public as well as Parks and Recreation commissioners and City staff. This outreach is intended to represent a wide variety of stakeholders within the City. The process began with a community open house that included an online element for those who could not attend. Between both forms of public outreach, an inventory of all Oak Park's parks facilities was conducted and meetings with the Parks and Recreation Commission and City staff were held.

Using the inventory and findings from public engagement, this Recreation Plan identifies strengths and opportunities of the current parks' facilities, along with goals for the future. Two additional surveys were publicized at the end of this process to receive additional feedback, one for residents and one for students. The draft plan was reviewed by City Council, and was available for public review and comment for at least 30 days prior to formal adoption by City Council, with notice of the public review period provided in the local newspaper. This plan was presented at a public hearing held by City Council. Copies of the notices announcing the review period and public hearing are included in the [Appendix](#).



Residents at the Community Open House kick-off for the Parks and Recreation Plan and Master Plan.

Public Input – Open House

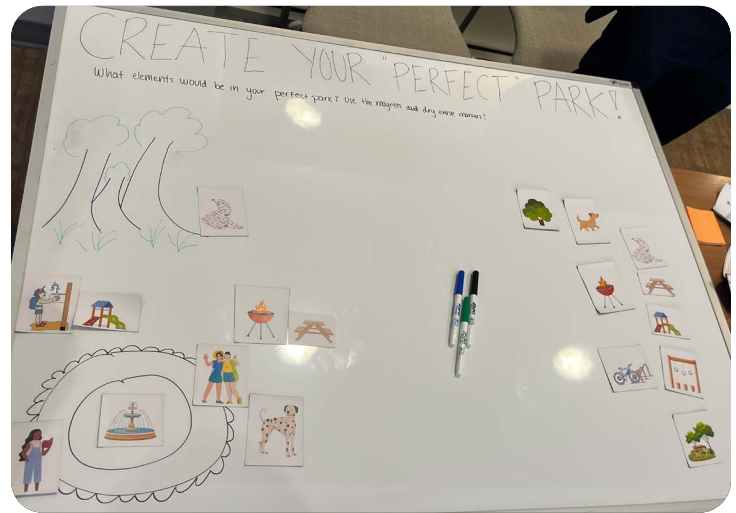
The Oak Park Parks & Recreation Open House on May 23, 2026 offered residents a chance to share their thoughts on the City's parks and recreational opportunities. The event was attended by approximately 30 residents, primarily adults between the ages of 35 and 64 years old.

Perfect Park Visioning

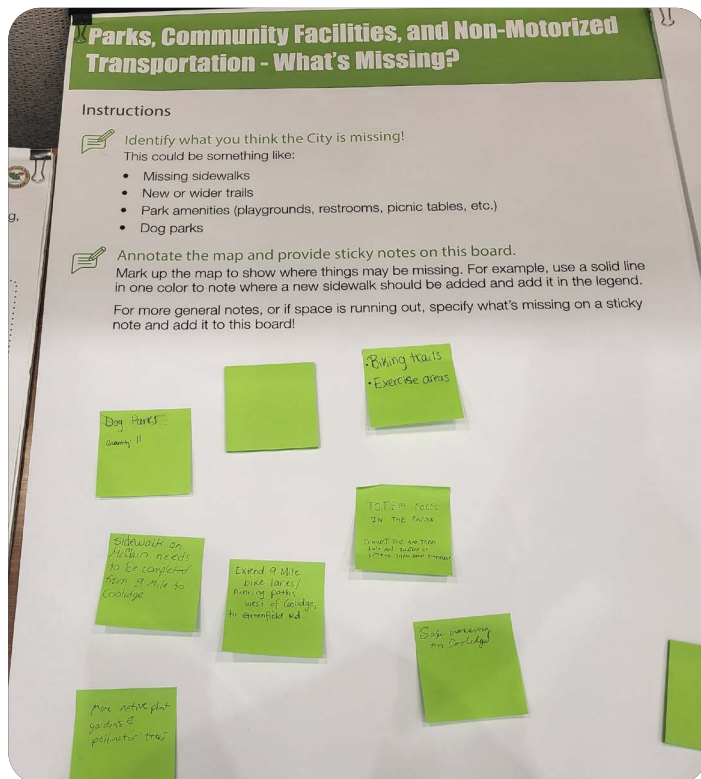
The open house kicked off with a visioning activity where residents built their “perfect park”. The main features residents had in their dream parks were nature-related, which included landscaping, flowers, and trees. Benches and picnic tables were the second-most popular with water features falling in third consisting of fountains, splash pads, and ponds. The other popular choices were trails, grills, and dog-friendly parks.

What's Missing?

When residents were asked to identify what they think the City is missing, a common theme of non-motorized transportation emerged. The extension of sidewalks from 9 Mile Road to Coolidge on McClain Drive and the extension of bike lanes and running paths west of Coolidge to Greenfield Road were specific mentions of the need for a continuation of non-motorized transportation. Additionally, residents noted that biking trails and safe crossings across Coolidge were missing. Beyond non-motorized transportation, residents identified other elements they felt were missing in Oak Park. Two residents suggested adding dog parks, while others recommended native plant gardens, pollinator-friendly trees, and outdoor exercise areas. One idea was to repurpose diseased or dying trees into carved totem poles rather than removing them entirely. Residents were then able to mark up a map of Oak Park and further identify where anything was missing. Only bike lanes were identified as missing on this map and are noted with red marker.



An example of two different residents' “perfect parks.”



Budgeting Activity

During the budgeting activity, residents received \$100 to allocate between different parks and recreation improvements, with the option to choose “other”. Priorities centered on park maintenance, youth and teen programs, park improvements, and investments in trails and non-motorized pathways. See [Table 8](#) for the full list of improvements and the money allocated for each. The “other” option notably included \$130 of funding for public education that included out-of-school time programs and literacy programming. Additionally some funding was provided for more landscaping, racquetball courts, and mini-golf. Overall, the feedback underscored a vision of a well-maintained and quality parks and recreation system.

Table 8. Budgeting Activity Results

Improvements	Money Allocated
Maintenance of Facilities	\$435
Youth and Teen Programs	\$385
Park Improvements (Drinking fountains, restrooms, benches, pavilions, etc.)	\$365
Trails and Non-Motorized Connections	\$310
Indoor Recreation Facility	\$260
Adult and Senior Programs	\$215
Sports Courts	\$185
Play Structures	\$170
Wayfinding & Interpretive Signage	\$85
Other	\$160



Parks and Recreation Goals

Setting goals and further breaking them down into milestones (objectives) is a key component of any plan. Below are the goals that have been established by the City of Oak Park's 2023 Parks and Recreation Plan. The goals that are adopted will guide improvements and additions to parks, recreation, and programming in Oak Park for the next five years.

Place a dot in the box that represents the priority in which you believe each goal should be met.

GOAL 1 Continue to cultivate effective outreach and dialogue with community members of all ages and abilities.

GOAL 2 Expand parks and recreation resources through partnerships that provide benefits to the community and align with Oak Park's overall vision and values.

GOAL 3 Address the need for facilities to better relate to the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse community, and secure assets for the future.

Tell Us More!

Use the sticky notes below to provide additional comments.

What other goals should we have that are missing?

What changes should be made to the proposed goals?

Other comments?

Parks and Recreation Goals

Setting goals and further breaking them down into milestones (objectives) is a key component of any plan. Below are the goals that have been established by the City of Oak Park's 2023 Parks and Recreation Plan. The goals that are adopted will guide improvements and additions to parks, recreation, and programming in Oak Park for the next five years.

Place a dot in the box that represents the priority in which you believe each goal should be met.

GOAL 4 Improve operational efficiencies and enhance the long-term viability of parks through innovative and sustainable practices.

GOAL 5 Continue to evaluate the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse population, ensuring programs are accessible and of interest to people of all ages and abilities.

GOAL 6 Explore a variety of funding mechanisms to ensure the ongoing provision of recreation programs and quality of open spaces.

Tell Us More!

Use the sticky notes below to provide additional comments.

What other goals should we have that are missing?

What changes should be made to the proposed goals?

Other comments?

Goals from 2019 Plan

When presented with the goals from Oak Park's 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, residents overwhelmingly indicated that the existing goals should remain a high priority. Community members provided input through an interactive goals board at the Community Open House, with additional opportunities to participate through a goals display available at the Community Center for several weeks following the event. Results from both engagement efforts were consistent, demonstrating broad support for all existing goals. Only two goals received a notable number of “medium priority” responses: Goal 2, which focuses on leveraging partnerships to expand parks and recreation resources, and Goal 3, which addresses the need for facilities and services that better reflect the needs of Oak Park's diverse community. In addition to prioritizing existing goals, residents identified several ideas for future consideration. Suggestions included offering financial literacy classes, expanding access to sports courts such as tennis and pickleball courts, and ensuring the new community center includes dedicated spaces for specific activities to reduce the need for room reconfiguration and associated labor costs.

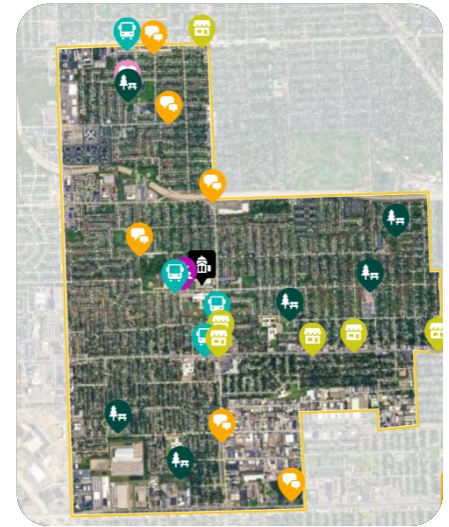
Online Public Input - Open House

To accommodate residents who could not attend the Community Open House, some of the boards and activities were converted into a digital survey. The online survey reached 25 additional residents and the full results can be found in the [Appendix](#).

Participation Map

Through an online map where residents could make comments at specific points accross the City, residents expressed interest in enhancing parks, recreation, connectivity, and community engagement. Key themes included:

- **Bicycle Connectivity:** Strong support was expressed for expanding and connecting the bike lane network from East Nine Mile to areas west of Coolidge. This was the most supported suggestion, receiving 5 upvotes.
- **Farmers Market Accessibility:** Residents suggested extending market hours or moving the market to a weekend day to better accommodate working individuals. This idea received 2 upvotes.
- **Park Improvements:** Requests for more tree planting in the updated Tyler Park and the addition of pickleball courts.
- **Community Building:** Interest in hosting more community events to help residents connect with one another.
- **Pedestrian Infrastructure:** A request was made for a sidewalk along the outskirts of the park near OPW at Shepherd Park.



Budgeting Activity

Also provided in the survey was the budgeting activity. See [Table 9](#) below for the full list of money allocated in the survey online, in person at the open house, and the combined total across both. The combined total across both the in-person open house and the online portion shows that residents prioritize trails and non-motorized connections, the maintenance and upkeep of facilities, and additions to parks to improve them and make them more comfortable for residents to use.

Table 9. Online Budgeting Activity Results

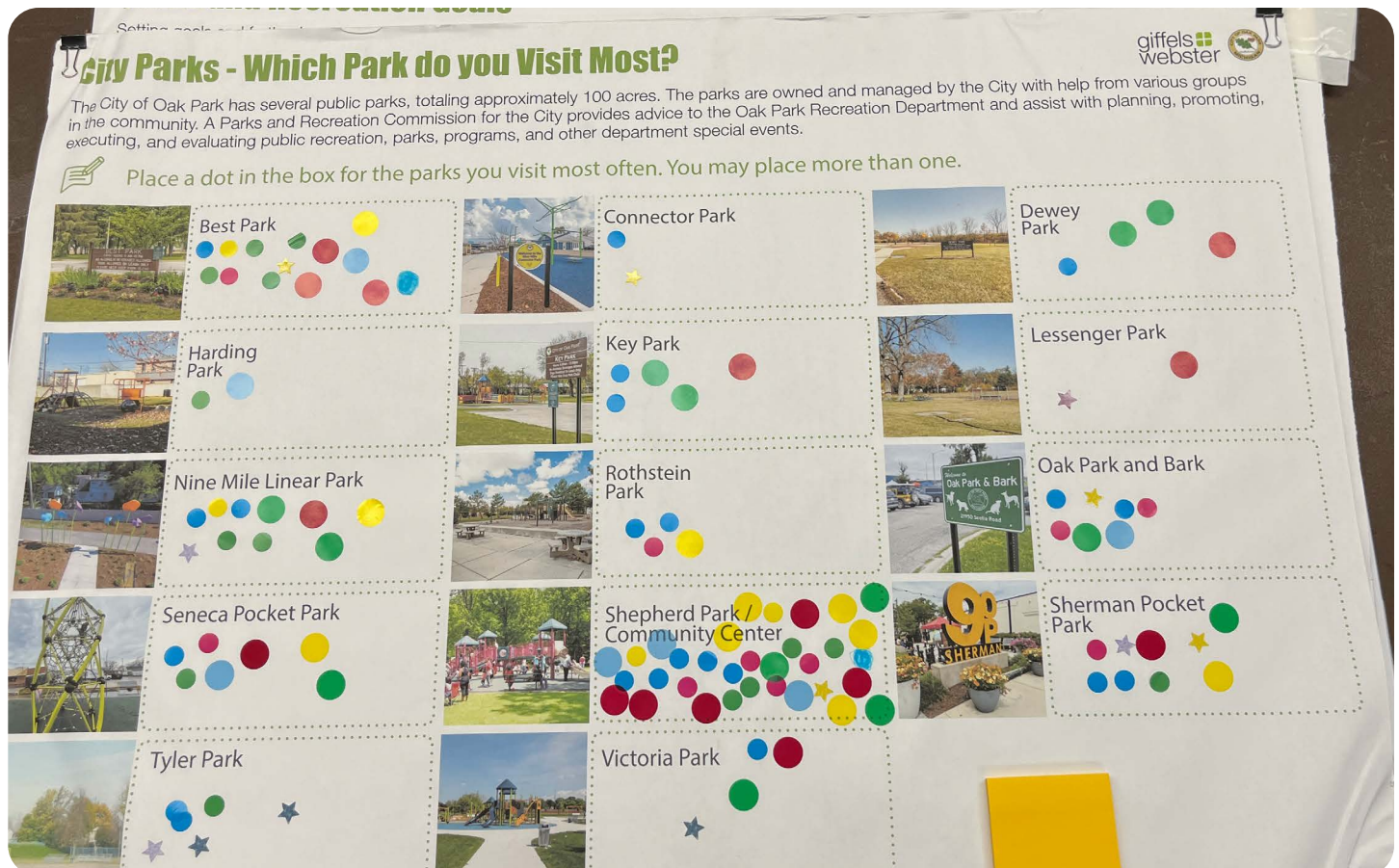
Improvements	Money Allocated Online	Money Allocated In Person	Combined Money Allocated
Trails and Non-Motorized Connections	\$300	\$310	\$610
Maintenance of Facilities	\$110	\$435	\$545
Park Improvements (Drinking fountains, restrooms, benches, pavilions, etc.)	\$150	\$365	\$515
Youth and Teen Programs	\$50	\$385	\$435
Indoor Recreation Facility	\$100	\$260	\$360
Adult and Senior Programs	\$120	\$215	\$335
Sports Courts	\$120	\$185	\$305
Play Structures	\$30	\$170	\$200
Wayfinding & Interpretive Signage	\$10	\$85	\$95

Goals from 2019 Plan

Lastly, the priority ranking of the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan's goals was available and were not considered as high of a priority compared to the open house results, but were still considered a priority.

Table 10. Online Budgeting Activity Results

2019 Goals	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Goal 1: Continue to cultivate effective outreach and dialog with community members of all ages and abilities.	0	2	1
Goal 2: Expand parks and recreation resources through partnerships that provide benefits to the community and align with Oak Park's overall vision and values.	3	2	0
Goal 3: Address the need for facilities to better relate to the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse community, and secure assets for the future.	0	2	1
Goal 4: Improve operational efficiencies and enhance the long-term viability of parks through innovative and sustainable practices.	3	2	0
Goal 5: Continue to evaluate the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse population, ensuring programs are accessible and of interest to people of all ages and abilities.	0	2	1
Goal 6: Explore a variety of funding mechanisms to ensure the ongoing provision of recreation programs and quality of open spaces.	3	2	0



Poster from the Community Open House showing the parks where residents visit the most. Attendees highlighted Shepherd Park, Best Park, and the Nine Mile Linear Park as their most-visited locations.

Resident and Student Surveys

Near the end of the planning process, two short surveys were distributed to gather additional community feedback. One survey was targeted to students, while the other was open to all residents. Both surveys remained open for one month and received a combined total of 94 responses. Complete survey results are provided in the [Appendix](#).

Resident Survey

A total of 52 residents responded to the survey. Respondents represented a range of age groups, with the largest share between 36 and 55 years old (20 respondents), followed by 19 to 35 years old (16 respondents). Thirteen respondents were 65 years of age or older, while three respondents were between 55 and 64 years old. This distribution indicates that feedback was received from residents at various stages of life, with particularly strong participation from working-age adults.

Household sizes varied among respondents. The most common household size was two people (20 respondents). Eleven respondents each reported living in a one-person and four-person household, while six respondents reported a household size of three people. An additional four respondents indicated their household included more than four people.

When asked whether they felt informed about the City's recreational programming and park system, most respondents indicated they had at least some awareness. Nearly 62% (32 respondents) reported feeling somewhat informed, while approximately 33% (17 respondents) felt well informed. Only 5.8% (3 respondents) reported feeling not at all informed, suggesting that while awareness is generally positive, there may still be opportunities to improve communication and outreach efforts.

Residents also expressed strong support for enhanced navigation and information throughout the community. Approximately 74% of respondents indicated that Oak Park would benefit from additional wayfinding and informational signage, while 26% did not feel additional signage was necessary.

When asked what they would most like to see added to City parks, respondents highlighted a variety of improvements. The most frequently requested amenity was walking trails (7 responses), including both natural and paved trail options. Sports courts (6 responses), such as tennis, pickleball, and handball courts, were the second most common request, followed by a community pool (5 responses). Other desired additions included shaded seating, bicycle infrastructure, and exercise equipment (3 responses each), as well as additional trash receptacles and enhanced landscaping with trees and flowers (2 responses each). These responses suggest a strong interest in facilities that support active recreation, connectivity, comfort, and the natural environment.

Student Survey

A total of 42 students participated in the student-specific survey. The majority of respondents were 6th through 8th grade students, accounting for 38 responses (90.5%), while 4 students (9.5%) were in 11th and 12th grades. The results therefore primarily reflect the perspectives and experiences of middle school-aged students.

Students were also asked whether they lived in Oak Park. Approximately 60% of respondents (25 students) indicated that they were Oak Park residents, while 40% (17 students) lived in neighboring communities. Among those living outside Oak Park, respondents identified communities including Detroit (6 students), Southfield (4 students), Redford, Rosedale Park, Harper Woods, Berkley, and Highland Park. This mix of residents and non-residents provides insight from both local youth and students who regularly visit Oak Park for school and activities.

When asked whether they felt they had places to go and things to do in Oak Park, responses were mixed. Seven students specifically stated that they did not feel they had sufficient places to go or activities available to them. Among students who identified existing destinations and activities, the most common responses included attending sporting events or participating on school teams (7 responses) and visiting local parks (6 responses). Other destinations mentioned included stores and restaurants (4 responses), such as local retail and dining establishments, as well as the library (1 response) and the zoo (1 response). These responses suggest that recreation and organized sports currently play a significant role in youth activities within the community.

Students were also asked what they wished they could easily do after school that is not currently available. The most common response was a desire for a dedicated youth hangout space (5 responses), including suggestions for places with games, snacks, and safe, supervised gathering areas. Other frequently identified needs included access to additional businesses and destinations (3 responses), such as a mall, Dairy Queen, or Smoothie King, as well as opportunities to play basketball (3 responses). Students also expressed interest in swimming facilities (2 responses), part-time employment opportunities (2 responses), and amusement-oriented venues (2 responses) such as arcades and trampoline parks.

Overall, the survey results indicate that while many students make use of existing parks, sports programs, and community destinations, there is a strong interest in additional social, recreational, and entertainment opportunities geared specifically toward youth. The desire for safe gathering spaces, expanded recreation options, and more destinations to visit after school emerged as key themes throughout the responses.



7.

Goals and Objectives

Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives formulated by the City of Oak Park are the basis of the recreation planning process. They form the framework for public and private decision-making regarding recreational facilities and programs in the City. This Recreation Plan seeks to pursue long-range recreational goals and objectives through specific short-range actions on the part of the City, county, and state as well as private entities.

Establishing Goals and Objectives

City staff and the Planning Commission originally formulated Oak Park's parks and recreation goals for their previous 2019 Elevate Oak Park plan, as informed by residents and stakeholders.

After reviewing the status and progress made by the previous goals, the City decided to ultimately renew the goals for their updated plan, while adding and adjusting a number of objectives and action items to be more applicable to current conditions and visioning.

Goals of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The overall goals of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan are as follows:

- [Goal 1: Communication & Awareness](#). Continue to cultivate effective outreach and dialogue with community members of all ages and abilities.
- [Goal 2: Partnerships](#). Expand parks and recreation resources through partnerships that provide benefits to the community and align with Oak Park's overall vision and values.
- [Goal 3: Public Spaces & Facilities](#). Address the need for facilities to better relate to the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse community, and secure assets for the future.
- [Goal 4: Maintenance & Operations](#). Improve operational efficiencies and enhance the long-term viability of parks through innovative and sustainable practices.
- [Goal 5: Programming](#). Continue to evaluate the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse population, ensuring programs are accessible and of interest to people of all ages and abilities.
- [Goal 6: Funding](#). Explore a variety of funding mechanisms to ensure the ongoing provision of recreation programs and quality open spaces.

What are Goals, Objectives, and Action Items?

- **Goals** are general guidelines that explain what the community wants to achieve. Goals are usually long-term and represent global visions such as "protect the City's natural resources." Goals define the "what" but not the "how."
- **Objectives** identify the milestones that mark progress in achieving goals – more of the "how." For example, the goal of "protect the City's natural resources" could be measured in terms of "Maintain the City's tree cover." Objectives are plan-specific and are included here.
- **Action items** are more specific and define the steps to accomplish objectives and attain the identified goals – these could be considered the "who" and "when." The most effective action strategies will include who will tackle that task and when it should be accomplished.

The action items for the goals of this Parks and Recreation Plan can be found in the [Action Program](#) chapter.

Goal 1: Communication & Awareness

Continue to cultivate effective outreach and dialogue with community members of all ages and abilities.

Objectives

1. Elevate awareness of parks, facilities and programs through communication and engagement.
2. Develop a uniform and appealing system of park wayfinding and informational signs.
3. Enhance stewardship of parks and public spaces.

Action Strategies

The corresponding action strategies for this goal are contained in the [Action Program](#) section.

Overview

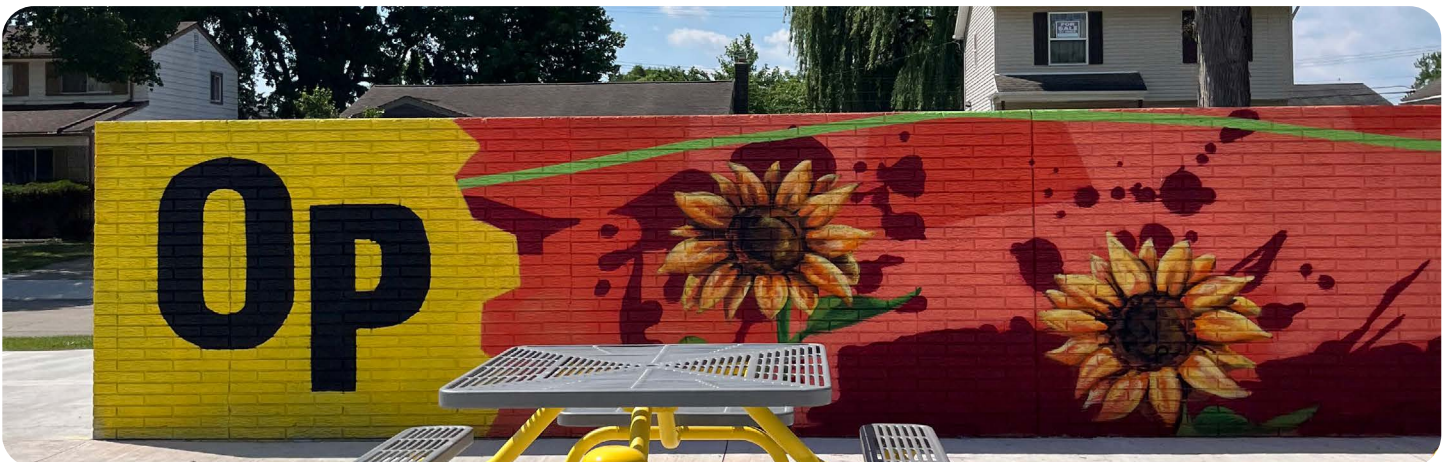
As Oak Park continues to invest in its parks and recreation system, effective communication is essential to ensuring that all residents are aware of and able to access available facilities, programs, events, and services. Clear, timely, and accessible information, combined with a consistent system of park wayfinding and informational signage, helps residents navigate parks and amenities, connect with recreation opportunities, and fully benefit from the City's offerings. These efforts support equitable access while creating a more welcoming and user-friendly parks system.

Oak Park's population is diverse in age, income, cultural background, and mobility needs. Youth, families, seniors, residents with disabilities, and households with varying transportation options may access information differently and face unique barriers to participation. See the [Community Profile](#) for data on the City's age and disability populations.

To create an inclusive recreation system, the City may utilize a variety of communication channels, formats, and outreach methods to ensure information reaches all segments of the population. Particular attention should be given to residents who may rely on traditional communication methods, require accessible formats, or have limited resources to access recreation opportunities. By strengthening communication, improving wayfinding and informational signage, and encouraging community stewardship of parks and public spaces, Oak Park can foster a greater sense of connection, pride, and shared responsibility for the parks and recreation system.

Key Populations

- Youth and teens
- Families with children
- Older adults
- Residents with disabilities
- Lower-income households
- Residents with limited transportation access



Goal 2: Partnerships

Expand parks and recreation resources through partnerships that provide benefits to the community and align with Oak Park's overall vision and values

Objectives

1. Continue to foster engagement and relationships with local and regional partners, identifying opportunities for shared resources.

Action Strategies

The corresponding action strategies for this goal are contained in the [Action Program](#) section.

Overview

Partnerships play an important role in strengthening Oak Park's parks and recreation system and expanding the resources available to the community. Building strong relationships with organizations that share Oak Park's commitment to enhancing quality of life can create opportunities to leverage resources, expertise, and community connections beyond what the City can provide independently. Effective partnerships can also strengthen coordination, encourage innovation, and broaden the reach and impact of parks and recreation services.

The City's parks and recreation system is strengthened through relationships with neighboring communities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and other community-based organizations. These connections create opportunities for collaboration and can help the City expand its capacity to serve residents while supporting shared community priorities.

A strategic approach to partnerships should focus on shared values, mutual benefit, and meaningful outcomes for Oak Park residents. By cultivating relationships that complement the City's vision and priorities, Oak Park can strengthen its parks and recreation system and create additional opportunities for community benefit.

Key Partnerships

- Oak Park Schools
- Oakland County Parks and Recreation
- Huron-Clinton Metroparks
- Berkeley / Ferndale / Hazel Park schools and facilities
- Business owners



Goal 3: Public Spaces & Facilities

Address the need for facilities to better relate to the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse community, and secure assets for the future.

Objectives

1. Develop new City facilities as needed, utilizing natural and sustainable design elements.
2. Improve equitable access to parks and amenities to encourage participation and active lifestyles for all age groups and abilities.
3. Expand and enhance the City's park system to improve connectivity, accessibility, and community character.

Action Strategies

The corresponding action strategies for this goal are contained in the [Action Program](#) section.

Overview

Oak Park's facilities are important community assets that contribute to quality of life, health, connection, and a strong sense of place. As the community continues to evolve, public spaces should reflect the needs, interests, and experiences of the people who use them while remaining adaptable to changing needs over time. Thoughtful investment in parks, facilities, and public spaces can help ensure that these assets remain welcoming, functional, and valuable to the community for generations to come.

Oak Park's public spaces should support a diverse range of ages, abilities, interests, and ways of participating in community life. The City's approach to public spaces and facilities should consider both current community needs and long-term stewardship, balancing functionality and accessibility with environmental sustainability, connectivity, and opportunities for community gathering and activity.



Goal 4: Maintenance & Operations

Improve operational efficiencies and enhance the long-term viability of parks through innovative and sustainable practices.

Objectives

1. Ensure the long-term maintenance and provision of facilities and programs through the strategic planning and management of human resources and funding.
2. Enhance the long-term viability of park features.

Action Strategies

The corresponding action strategies for this goal are contained in the [Action Program](#) section.

Overview

Effective maintenance and operations are essential to protecting Oak Park's investment in its parks and recreation system and ensuring that these spaces remain safe, welcoming, functional, and available to the community. As the City's parks and facilities continue to evolve, thoughtful management of resources, infrastructure, and daily operations will be necessary to maintain their quality while responding to changing community needs and available resources.

Long-term stewardship requires balancing current operational demands with the future needs of Oak Park's parks and recreation system. The City's approach to maintenance and operations should emphasize efficiency, sustainability, preventative care, and responsible resource management.

Maintenance as a Priority

The maintenance of park facilities emerged as one of residents' highest priorities, receiving the second greatest total allocation of funds through the budgeting activity.



Goal 5: Programming

Continue to evaluate the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse population, ensuring programs are accessible and of interest to people of all ages and abilities.

Objectives

1. Provide a diversity of programs that are safe, welcoming, affordable, accessible, and of interest to Oak Park's diverse population.
2. Establish unique places through non-traditional and specialty parks and programming.

Action Strategies

The corresponding action strategies for this goal are contained in the [Action Program](#) section.

Overview

Recreation programming is a central component of the City's parks and recreation system, providing opportunities for residents to connect, stay active, learn, socialize, and participate in community life. A strong programming system should reflect the interests and needs of the community while creating opportunities for people of different ages and backgrounds to participate. Accessible programming can help strengthen community connections and contribute to the overall quality of life in Oak Park.

Understanding how residents engage with recreation can help the City make informed decisions about where to invest its resources and how to create a balanced mix of programs and experiences. Oak Park should continue to view programming as an opportunity to activate its parks and facilities, respond to community interests, and create distinctive experiences that encourage participation and engagement throughout the year.

Desire for Programming

During the budgeting activity from the open house and online survey, residents allocated significant funds for youth and teen programs, as well as adult and senior programs.



Goal 6: Funding

Explore a variety of funding mechanisms to ensure the ongoing provision of recreation programs and quality open spaces.

Objectives

1. Identify financial resources to fund improvements to public space and recreation facilities.
2. Ensure that the funding available in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is spent efficiently based on community need.

Action Strategies

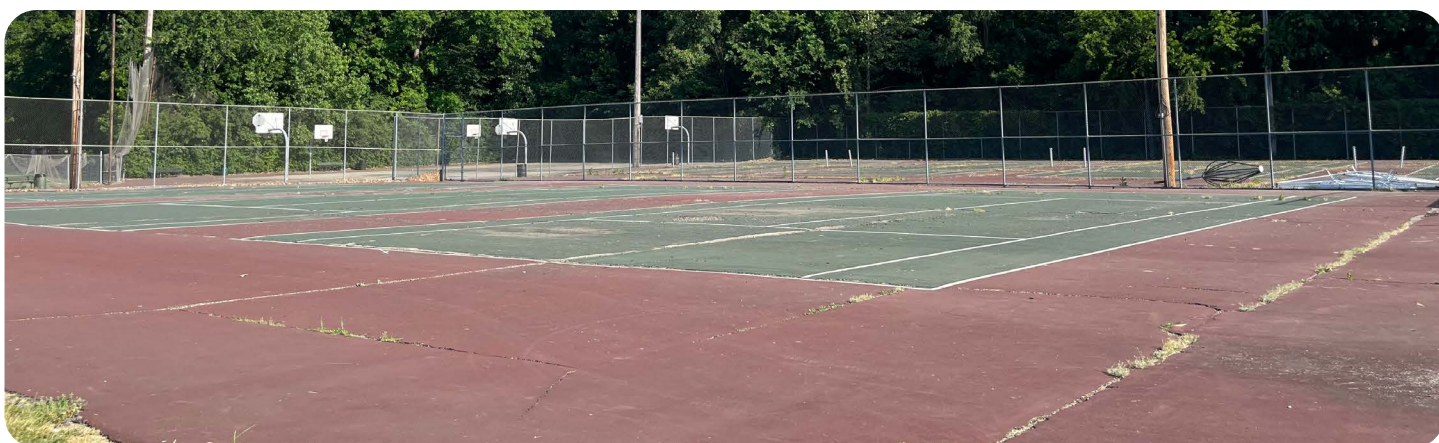
The corresponding action strategies for this goal are contained in the [Action Program](#) section.

Overview

Sustainable and diversified funding is essential to maintaining Oak Park's facilities and supporting continued investment in public spaces, facilities, and programs. A strong financial foundation allows the City to respond to community needs, maintain existing assets, and pursue improvements that enhance the quality and availability of recreation opportunities. Taking a long-term approach to funding can also help the City navigate changing costs, available resources, and community priorities.

Oak Park's approach to funding should balance responsible stewardship of public resources with opportunities to expand the financial capacity of the parks and recreation system.

Pursuing a range of funding sources can provide greater flexibility and resilience while reducing reliance on any single source of revenue. Funding decisions should be guided by community needs, City priorities, long-term sustainability, and the value and impact of proposed investments.





8.

Action Program

Introduction

Bringing the vision of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to fruition requires consistent, incremental, and strategic action. The action program that follows serves as a roadmap for implementation, illustrating how the Plan's goals and objectives identified in Section 7 [Goals and Objectives](#) can be achieved through specific strategies and projects.

Implementation of the Plan is a shared responsibility of the City Council, Parks and Recreation Commission, and City staff. These groups should regularly review the action program, evaluate priorities, and develop annual work plans that advance the Plan's vision. As community conditions evolve, including economic trends, development patterns, demographic changes, and available resources, implementation priorities may also shift. Accordingly, the action program should be viewed as a flexible tool that can be adapted to changing circumstances while maintaining progress toward the community's long-term goals.

The action program outlines the City's approach to achieving the goals and objectives identified in this Plan. Intended to guide planning, budgeting, and decision-making over the next five years, the recommended strategies establish general priorities while allowing flexibility for new opportunities, partnerships, and innovative approaches that may emerge over time. Each action has an allocated time frame and identifies the primary party responsible for accomplishing the action strategy.

Action Program Categories	
Program Categories	Definitions
Action	The actions necessary to carry out goals and objectives.
Time Frame	Identifies when each action is aimed to start. Time Frame Legend: Ongoing - Action requires continuous monitoring or effort. Short-Term - Action will begin work within 1-2 years. Long-Term - Action will begin work within 3-5 years.
Responsibility	Identifies the primary party responsible for accomplishing the action strategy. Responsibility Legend: CMO - City Manager's Office IT - Information Tech Comms - Communications MS - Municipal Services DPW - Department of Public Works MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation EDP - Economic Development & Planning PRC - Parks and Recreation Commission RD - Recreation Department

Implementation Considerations

Generally, parks and recreation action strategies should consider the following when outlining a strategy to implement goals and objectives:

- Are there immediate health, environmental, and safety concerns that need to be addressed?
- What are opportunities that exist to partner with other groups towards a common goal?
- Is there a person or group who can champion specific goals/objectives?
- Are there multiple goals that can be achieved by implementing a project?
- What projects affect the greatest number of people in the community and/or address the greatest need?
- How can projects be broken down into phases for a multi-year approach?
- What funding opportunities exist for implementation of certain goals?

Action Program

Communication & Awareness

Goal 1: Continue to cultivate effective outreach and dialogue with community members of all ages and abilities.

Table 11. Action Program, 2027-2031

Objective 1: Elevate awareness of parks, facilities and programs through communication and engagement.			
#	Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
1	Continue to use design standards (logo, layout, content) consistently across all communication materials, including print and web-based media and products.	Ongoing	Comms, RD, IT
2	Continue to utilize the City's website, email, and social media for real-time communication and up-to-date information.	Ongoing/ Short-Term	Comms
3	Utilize traditional media channels (direct mail, flyers, newsletters) to reach a broad target audience.	Ongoing/ Short-Term	Comms
4	Identify methods to make recreation registration more convenient and accessible to all segments of the population.	Short-Term	Comms, RD
5	Establish priority segments to target in terms of new program/service development and communication tactics (e.g., Teens, Seniors, etc.).	Short-Term	Comms, RD
6	Explore additional marketing mediums to maximize exposure to identified target markets.	Ongoing	Comms, RD
7	Establish and review regularly performance measures for marketing; performance measures can be tracked through customer surveys as well as some web-based metrics.	Ongoing	Comms, RD
8	As services grow, consider implementing additional public input methods such as pre-program surveys, regular/recurring user surveys, lost customer/user surveys and non-customer/non-user surveys.	Short-Term	Comms, RD
9	Leverage relationships with partners to enhance marketing efforts through cross-promotion that include defined measurable outcomes.	Short-Term	Comms, RD
Objective 2: Develop a uniform and appealing system of park wayfinding and informational signs.			
1	Determine a preliminary budget for a wayfinding plan and issue an RFP for qualified vendors.	Short-Term	Comms, RD, EDP
2	Develop a preliminary budget for signage implementation.	Short-Term	RD, EDP, CMO
3	Seek funding sources to support implementation of wayfinding system.	Short-Term	RD, EDP, CMO
Responsibility Legend: CMO - City Manager's Office EDP - Economic Development & Planning MS - Municipal Services Comms - Communications IT - Information Tech PRC - Parks & Recreation Commission DPW - Department of Public Works MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation RD - Recreation Department			

Objective 3: Enhance stewardship of parks and public spaces			
#	Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
1	Communicate with user groups through word of mouth, surveys, community meetings, open houses and focus groups to ensure expectations are met in terms of facility and programming accessibility and function.	Short-Term	RD
2	Create a system to collect resident's general park improvement requests that can be utilized during the decision making process of improving and upgrading parks.	Ongoing	Comms, RD
3	Continue to coordinate stewardship and volunteerism within the Recreation Department's services to improve and maintain parks, assist with programming and special events, and build community.	Ongoing/ Short-Term	RD, DPW
4	Continue to engage neighbors adjacent to parks where changes are being discussed.	Ongoing/ Short-Term	Comms, DPW
5	Evaluate the need to expand office hours to better serve our residents.	Short-Term	Comms, RD
6	Invite community members to propose locations for bicycle racks, corrals, and other storage to spark interest in non-motorized culture.	Short-Term	RD, Comms
Responsibility Legend: <div> <div>CMO - City Manager's Office</div> <div>Comms - Communications</div> <div>DPW - Department of Public Works</div> </div> <div> <div>EDP - Economic Development & Planning</div> <div>IT - Information Tech</div> <div>MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation</div> </div> <div> <div>MS - Municipal Services</div> <div>PRC - Parks & Recreation Commission</div> <div>RD - Recreation Department</div> </div>			

Partnerships

Goal 2: Expand parks and recreation resources through partnerships that provide benefits to the community and align with Oak Park's overall vision and values.

Objective 1: Continue to foster engagement and relationships with local and regional partners, identifying opportunities for shared resources

#	Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
1	Continuously evaluate the Quad City network budget, agreements, and personnel time to ensure equal resource allocations. The Quad City network includes Hazel park, Pleasant Ridge, Oak Park, and Ferndale.	Ongoing	RD
2	Continue to examine agreements and policies with public schools to maximize the benefit while minimizing the cost to both entities, including the use of facilities as well as cooperative program offerings.	Ongoing/ Short-Term	RD
3	Maintain and continue to pursue private partnerships with organizations that have compatible values and goals and which result in mutual benefits.	Ongoing	RD
4	Track the full costs associated with each partnership, for each party.	Short-Term	RD
5	Identify measurable outcomes for partnerships, and to the extent possible, memorialize them in written agreements.	Short-Term	RD
6	Require annual reports of partners, if feasible.	Ongoing	RD

Responsibility Legend:

CMO - City Manager's Office	EDP - Economic Development & Planning	MS - Municipal Services
Comms - Communications	IT - Information Tech	PRC - Parks & Recreation Commission
DPW - Department of Public Works	MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation	RD - Recreation Department

Public Spaces & Facilities

Goal 3: Address the need for facilities to better relate to the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse community, and secure assets for the future.

Objective 1: Develop new City facilities as needed, utilizing natural and sustainable design elements.

#	Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
1	Uphold baseline standards for all new facilities, including compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood, connectivity, safety, ADA accessibility, and environmental sustainability.	Ongoing	DPW, EDP, MS
2	Explore the feasibility and identify opportunities to add cold-month seasonal park features to extend the use of parks throughout the year.	Short-Term	RD, DPW
3	Continue to seek opportunities to incorporate reforestation and native naturalized landscape projects, accompanied by green stormwater infrastructure and interpretive signage.	Ongoing	DPW, MS
4	Continue to increase environmentally sustainable practices in all City buildings and properties.	Ongoing	CMO, DPW, EDP
5	Explore opportunities to add public art in parks and community centers.	Short-Term	RD, EDP
6	Consider supplying bathrooms, water fountains, trash bins, wayfinding signage, places to sit and shade structures at every park.	Ongoing	RD, DPW
7	Plant additional trees of compatible varieties in Oak Park parks per state standards and the recommendations of staff arborists or relevant consultants.	Ongoing	DPW
8	Explore opportunities to establish community garden plots for residents. Consider possible use of the Albany Greenbelt between Scotia and Rosewood or other underutilized spaces.	Short-term	RD

Objective 2: Improve equitable access to parks and amenities to encourage participation and active lifestyles for all age groups and abilities.

1	Develop ADA baseline recommendations for park improvements, ensuring each park has a network of accessible paved pathways.	Short-Term	RD, DPW, MS
2	Provide communication, scheduling, and permitting resources to ensure facilities are available to everyone for personal, family, and community events through rentals and low/no-cost programming.	Ongoing	RD
3	Conduct parking studies as necessary to understand unmet demand, and areas of excess supply, specifically for parks like Rothstein.	Short-Term	RD, DPW
4	Consider ways to integrate teen-focused amenities into recreational facilities such as gaming rooms, homework spaces, etc.	Short-Term	RD
5	Upgrade or replace park amenities to meet evolving resident needs.	Ongoing	RD, DPW
6	Improve underutilized parks through targeted amenity enhancements informed by public input.	Ongoing	RD, Comms, DPW
7	Identify opportunities to enhance recreational programs, City-run events, and senior-focused activities.	Ongoing	RD, Comms, CMO
8	Expand recreation opportunities into public spaces through pop-up programming and community-based activities.	Ongoing	RD, Comms

Responsibility Legend:

CMO - City Manager's Office	EDP - Economic Development & Planning	MS - Municipal Services
Comms - Communications	IT - Information Tech	PRC - Parks & Recreation Commission
DPW - Department of Public Works	MDOT - Michigan Department of Transportation	RD - Recreation Department

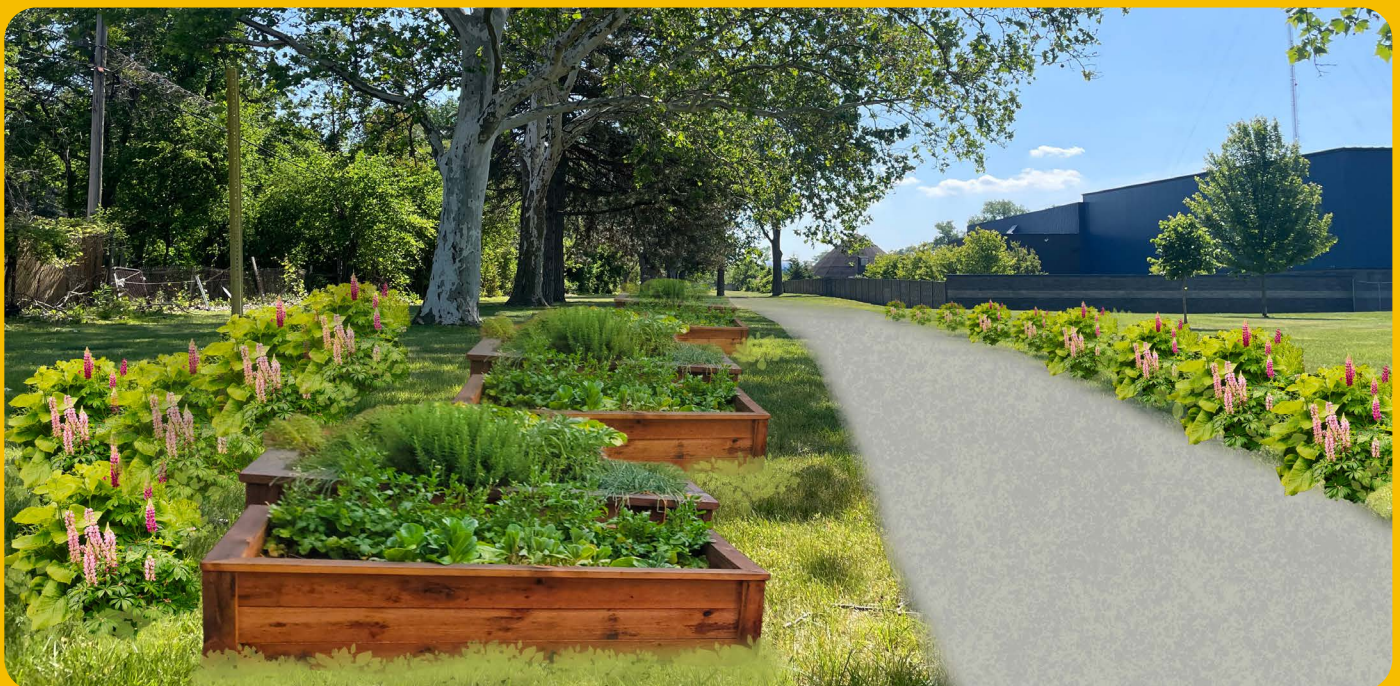
Objective 3: Expand and enhance the City's park system to improve connectivity, accessibility, and community character.

#	Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
1	Ensure trail system includes consistent and informative wayfinding signage.	Ongoing	DPW
2	Participate in City-wide streetscape design projects to ensure pedestrian facilities, open spaces, connections to nearby parks, signage, and historical interpretation are included where feasible.	Ongoing	EDP, DPW, RD, MS
3	Follow MDOT roadway maintenance project schedules and strategically coordinate on-street non-motorized route design based on this plan's recommended trail framework.	Ongoing	DPW, MDOT, RD, EDP, MS
4	Develop and expand the non-motorized trail system to underserved portions of the community.	Ongoing	DPW, MDOT, RD
5	Explore opportunities to create new pocket parks and other destination amenities that serve a variety of resident interests.	Ongoing	RD

Connectivity and Community Garden Concept

In support of Goal 3, Public Spaces and Facilities, particularly Objective 1.8 and other objectives focused on improving community connectivity, the Albany Greenbelt between Scotia and Rosewood was identified as a unique opportunity to advance multiple community goals. While this idea remains conceptual and would require further evaluation, the wide corridor is free of utility constraints and appears to offer sufficient space to accommodate a shared-use path. Such a facility could create a desirable non-motorized connection within Oak Park, improving access between neighborhoods, parks, schools, and other community destinations.

Beyond its transportation benefits, the corridor has the potential to become an active public space that fosters social interaction and strengthens neighborhood connections. Incorporating community garden plots alongside the pathway could provide residents with opportunities for recreation, gardening, education, and stewardship. Community gardens were identified as a desired amenity during the planning process and could serve residents of all ages, including students who could utilize the space for educational programming and hands-on learning experiences. This concept could transform an underutilized parcel into a linear community asset that strengthens non-motorized connectivity, expands access to local food-growing opportunities, and creates a welcoming space for residents to build community.



Maintenance & Operations

Goal 4: Improve operational efficiencies and enhance the long-term viability of parks through innovative and sustainable practices.

Objective 1: Ensure the long-term maintenance and provision of facilities and programs through the strategic planning and management of human resources and funding.

#	Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
1	Evaluate and adjust staffing needs to ensure the efficient administration of programs, facility use and future recreation trends.	Ongoing	PR, Comms, EDP, DPW, CMO
2	Ensure the importance and role of the Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) is recognized throughout the City (both internally and externally), and continue to create sub-committees to address specific issues and initiatives as needed such as the park stewardship sub-committee.	Ongoing	RD, CMO
3	Ensure PARC is a diverse cross-section of Oak Park's population, representing different household types, interests, and abilities.	Ongoing	RD, CMO
4	Perform an annual asset inventory for all parks including but not limited to age of facility, facility condition, and needed improvements to meet code requirements.	Ongoing	RD, DPW
5	Continue to utilize community groups, private partners, and volunteers to assist in maintenance and beautification projects.	Ongoing	RD, DPW
6	Incorporate the National Recreation and Park Association's Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) Standards into agency practices, to be updated on an annual basis.	Short-term	RD
7	Upgrade or replace park amenities to meet evolving resident needs.	Ongoing	RD, DPW

Objective 2: Enhance the long-term viability of park features

1	Continue utilizing the year round beautification/landscaping-schedule.	Ongoing	DPW, PR
2	Develop a maintenance plan, incorporating certified professionals, which check the equipment, playscapes and facilities on a scheduled basis.	Short-term	DPW, PR
3	Conduct an annual inventory of park amenities and review of Elevate Oak Park to continue the planning process and make updates as needed.	Ongoing	DPW, RD
4	Create a cohesive family of general park elements (signage, seating, light fixtures, etc.) to streamline maintenance processes.	Ongoing/ Short-Term	DPW, RD, EDP
5	In selecting park elements, consider materials that maximize long-term sustainability, minimize maintenance and management, and deter vandalism.	Ongoing	DPW, RD
6	Engage local conservancy and land trust organizations in helping to fund capital costs associated with landscape restoration.	Ongoing	DPW, RD
7	Explore innovative ways to approach maintenance to maximize environmental sustainability and reduce utility consumption, such as proactive and preventative maintenance.	Short-Term	DPW
8	Develop guidelines for low maintenance landscaping and landscaping that serves a stormwater management function.	Short-Term	EDP, RD, DPW

Programming

Goal 5: Continue to evaluate the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse population, ensuring programs are accessible and of interest to people of all ages and abilities.

Objective 1: Provide a diversity of programs that are safe, welcoming, affordable, accessible, and of interest to Oak Park's diverse population.

#	Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
1	Based upon the observations of the Program Assessment as well as demographic and recreation trends information, Recreation Department staff should evaluate Core Program Areas and individual programs, ideally on an annual basis, to ensure offerings are relevant to evolving demographics and trends in the local community.	Short-term	RD, Comms
2	Continue to expand and enhance the mobile recreation program.	Ongoing	RD
3	The Recreation Department should consider the extent of program offerings for adult fitness and wellness given the significantly high Priority Investment Ranking (PIR) identified in the Program Assessment.	Ongoing/ Short-Term	RD
4	Offer a range of recreation programs (athletic, educational, and social) for people with different abilities to ensure all community members have welcoming and accessible recreation and enrichment opportunities.	Ongoing/ Short-Term	RD
5	Consider updating Mini Business Plans for each Core Program Area on a yearly basis to aid in program evaluation.	Ongoing	RD
6	Establish and track Lifecycle, Age Segment, Classification, and Cost Recovery Goals to utilize alongside demographic trends and community input during program evaluation.	Short-Term	RD
7	Utilize the Age Segment and Lifecycle Analysis when evaluating programs and determining program mix.	Ongoing	RD
8	Continue to monitor demographic shifts and program offerings to ensure that the needs of each age group are being met, particularly programs for young children.	Ongoing	RD
9	Recreation Department staff should be trained on the process of conducting a Cost-of Service Analysis and the process should be undertaken on a regular basis.	Short-Term	RD
10	Set cost recovery goals at the start of each year in order to benchmark against the Recreation Department's goals annually.	Ongoing	RD
11	Consider ways to broaden opportunities for teenage residents to access social and recreational activities.	Ongoing	RD
12	Reach out to potential partners for programs that would appeal to teenagers.	Short-Term	RD, Comms

Objective 2: Establish unique places through non-traditional and specialty parks and programming

1	Promote total wellness and healthy living lifestyle opportunities through special events, programs and facilities.	Ongoing	RD, Comms
2	Create activities that capitalize on the uniqueness, amenities and character of specific parks.	Short-term	RD, Comms
3	Continue to explore opportunities to regularly use parks in non-traditional ways to engage residents and maximize facilities (such as outdoor yoga, special neighborhood events).	Ongoing	RD

Funding

Goal 6: Explore a variety of funding mechanisms to ensure the ongoing provision of recreation programs and quality open spaces.

Objective 1: Identify financial resources to fund improvements to public space and recreation facilities

#	Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
1	Develop plans and a means of generating and increasing revenues through federal, state and private grants, sponsorships and partnerships for upgrading and expanding recreational facilities. Grant sources to consider include the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, the recent SPARK grant program (funded through ARPA), MEDC Public Spaces/Community Places, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.	Short-Term	RD, CMO
2	Continue to consider programs and facilities that have revenue-generating potential.	Ongoing	RD
3	Keep apprised of current state and federal recreation guidelines and standards in order to position Oak Park for funding streams.	Ongoing	RD
4	Research local and federal transportation grants like TAP and RAISE that would support the implementation of the non-motorized loop trail system.	Short-Term	RD, EDP, CMO
5	Establish a business development plan to support the parks direction and other staff in securing grant funding, growing partnerships and sponsorships, developing park and program business plans, and supporting overall revenue generation efforts.	Short-Term	RD
6	Investigate and pursue opportunities to install electric charging stations so that revenues can be invested directly in tree reforestation and habitat creation projects within the Oak Park Recreation System.	Long-Term	EDP, CMO
7	Continue to actively seek and encourage private-public partnerships to enable and enhance programs and facilities through donation, adoption, and sponsorship opportunities of physical park elements, recreation programs, and team and event sponsorships.	Ongoing	RD, CMO
8	Seek funding through private foundations such as the Kresge Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott and Ruth Mott Foundations and the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundations.	Ongoing	RD, CMO
9	Engage the community in a public education and information campaign that assesses the potential support for a recreation millage that would help provide matching funds for grant pursuits, capital improvements, maintenance upgrades, and operating expenses.	Ongoing	RD, CMO

Objective 2: Ensure that the funding available in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is spent efficiently based on community need

#	Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
1	Follow purchasing guidelines and utilize competitive bidding to obtain the lowest price on all projects.	Ongoing	EDP, DPW, RD
2	Review and adjust the CIP every budget year to ensure it's alignment with priorities of the City and needs of the community.	Ongoing	EDP, DPW, RD, CMO
3	Continue to explore opportunities to regularly use parks in non-traditional ways to engage residents and maximize facilities (such as outdoor yoga, special neighborhood events).	Ongoing	RD

Capital Improvement Program

The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) identifies the larger park, recreation, and trail projects that the City intends to pursue over the next five years. These projects represent investments in the community's parks and recreation system and are intended to help achieve the vision, goals, and recommendations outlined in this Master Plan.

The projects included in the CIP reflect current community needs and priorities; however, implementation will depend on available funding, staffing capacity, partnership opportunities, and changing community conditions. As a result, the CIP should be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure it remains responsive to emerging needs and opportunities.

Since the total cost of desired improvements often exceeds available funding, the City should continue to pursue grants, partnerships, donations, and other funding sources to maximize implementation opportunities and leverage local investments.



Table 12. Capital Improvement Program 2026-2032

Project	Fiscal Year	Amount
New Recreation Center	2026-27	\$17,000,000
	2027-28	\$17,320,000
Trail System - Dewey, Best, Key, and Rothstein Park	2026-27	\$900,000
Park Upgrades	2027-28	\$1,500,000
	2028-29	\$500,000
Best Park	2029-30	\$1,400,000
	2030-31	\$1,400,000
Rothstein Park	2030-31	\$2,600,000
Dewey Park	2030-31	\$2,300,000
Phase 2 Tyler Park	2031-32	\$400,000
Joe Forbes Field Enhancement (fence, dugout, storage, lights)	2031-32	\$125,000



Concept renderings of the future recreation center.

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A.

Appendix

Appendix

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Open

2023 Parks and Recreation Plan Goals
Oak Park Master Plan

6
Contributors

6
Contributions

Contribution Summary

1. Goal 1: Continue to cultivate effective outreach and dialogue with community members of all ages and abilities. Required

Slider | Skipped: 2 | Answered: 4 (66.7%)

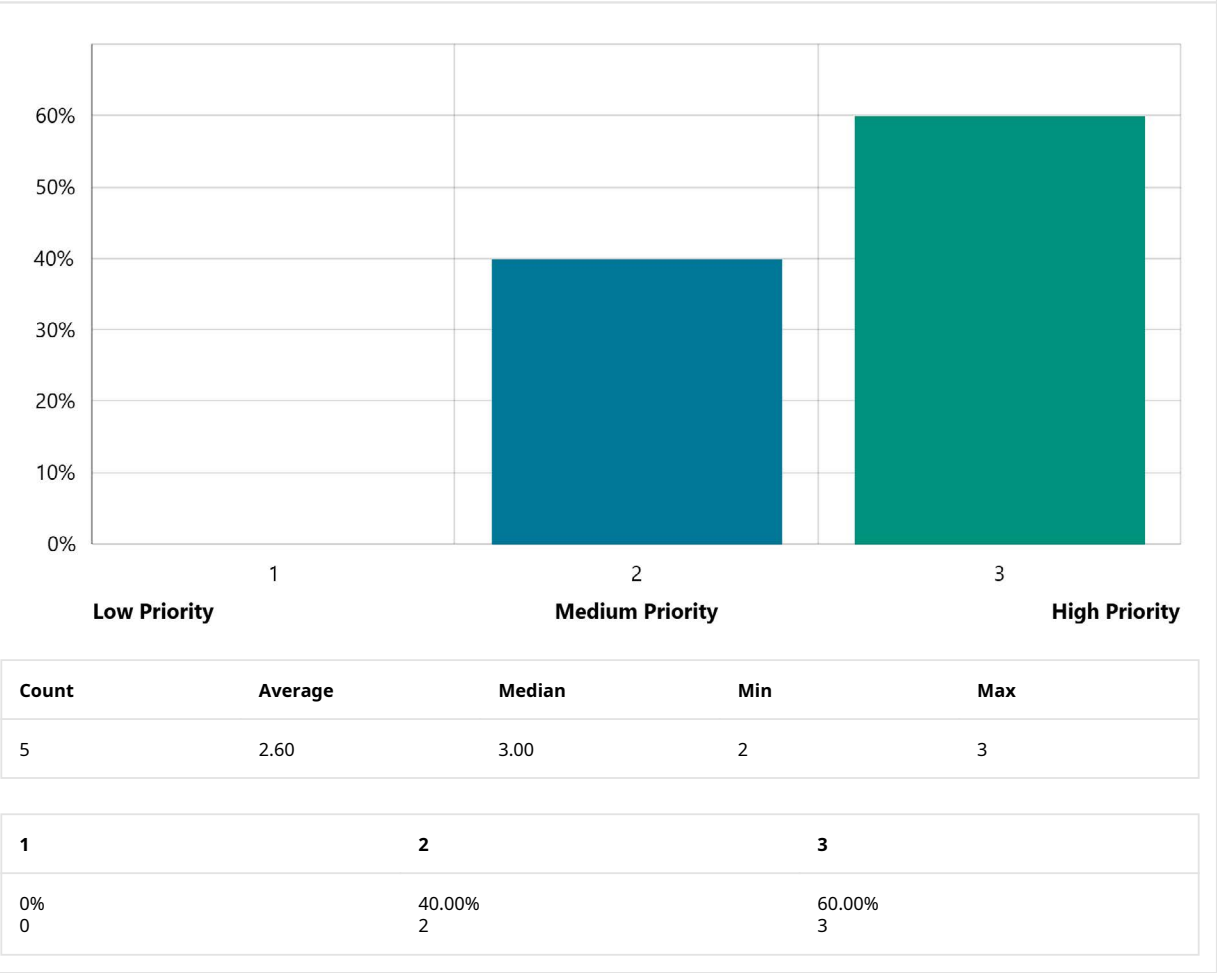
Priority	Count	Percentage
1 (Low Priority)	1	25.00%
2 (Medium Priority)	3	75.00%
3 (High Priority)	0	0%

Count	Average	Median	Min	Max
4	1.75	2.00	1	2

1	2	3
25.00%	75.00%	0%
1	3	0

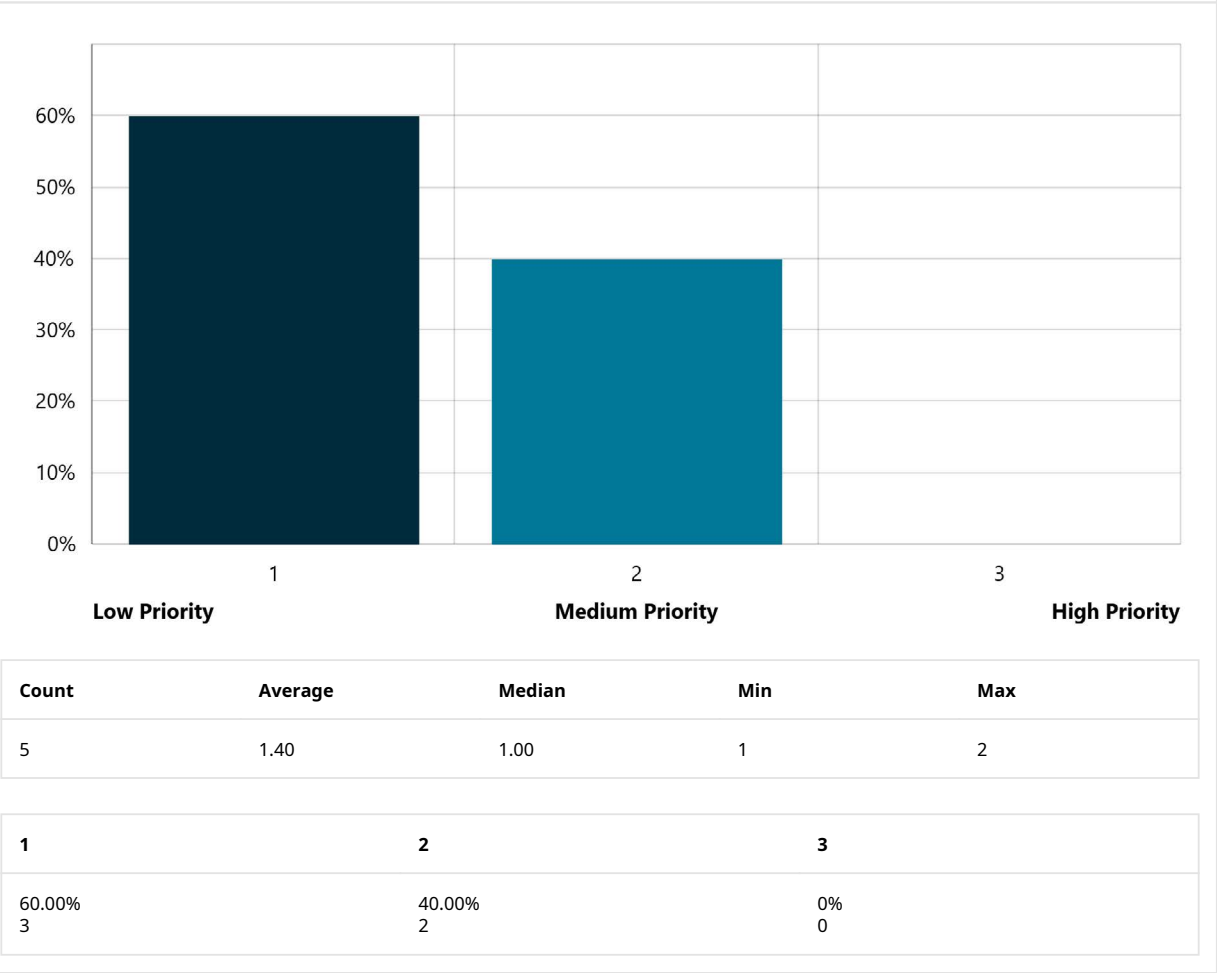
2. Goal 2: Expand parks and recreation resources through partnerships that provide benefits to the community and align with Oak Park's overall vision and values. Required

Slider | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 5 (83.3%)

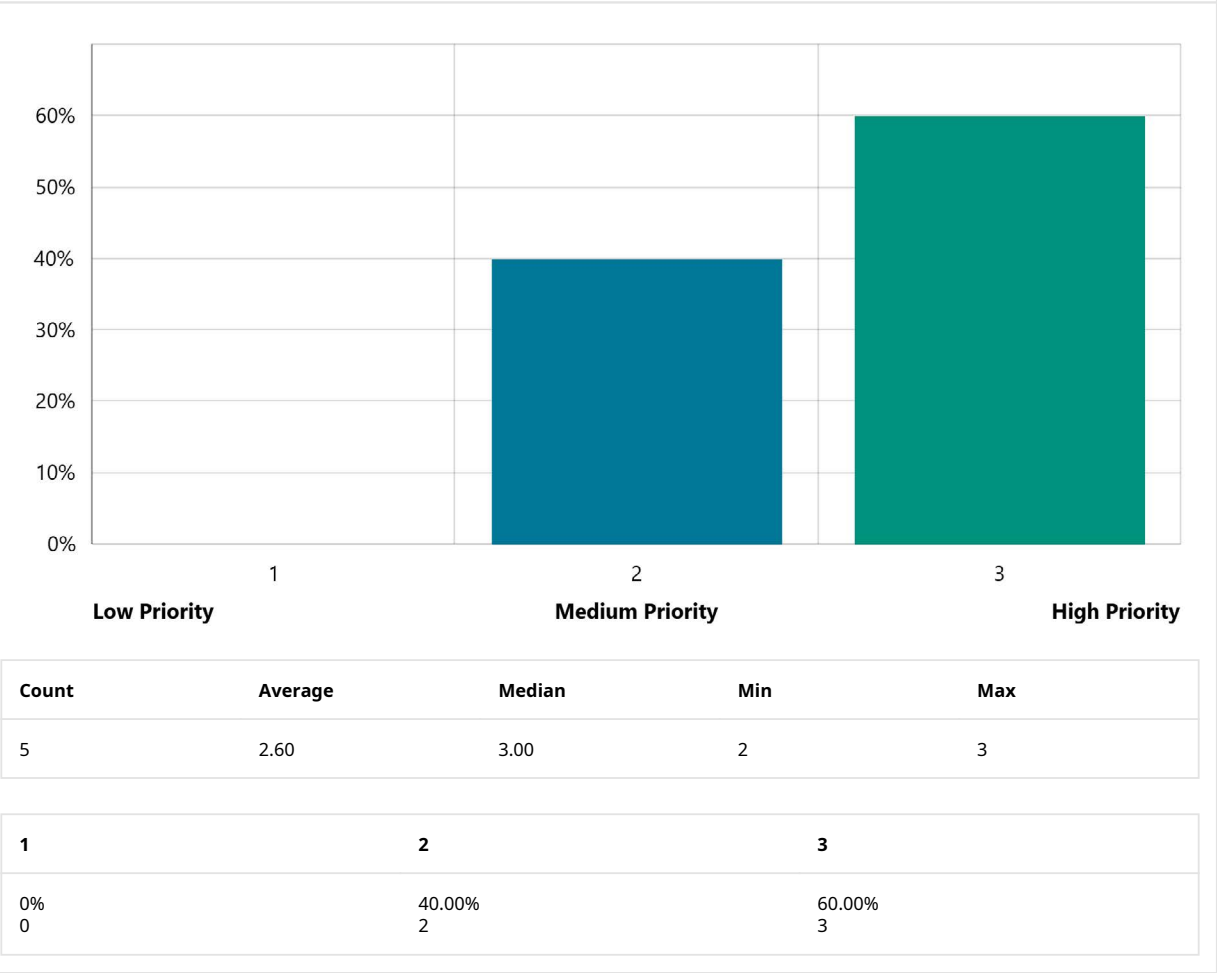


3. Goal 3: Address the need for facilities to better relate to the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse community, and secure assets for the future. Required

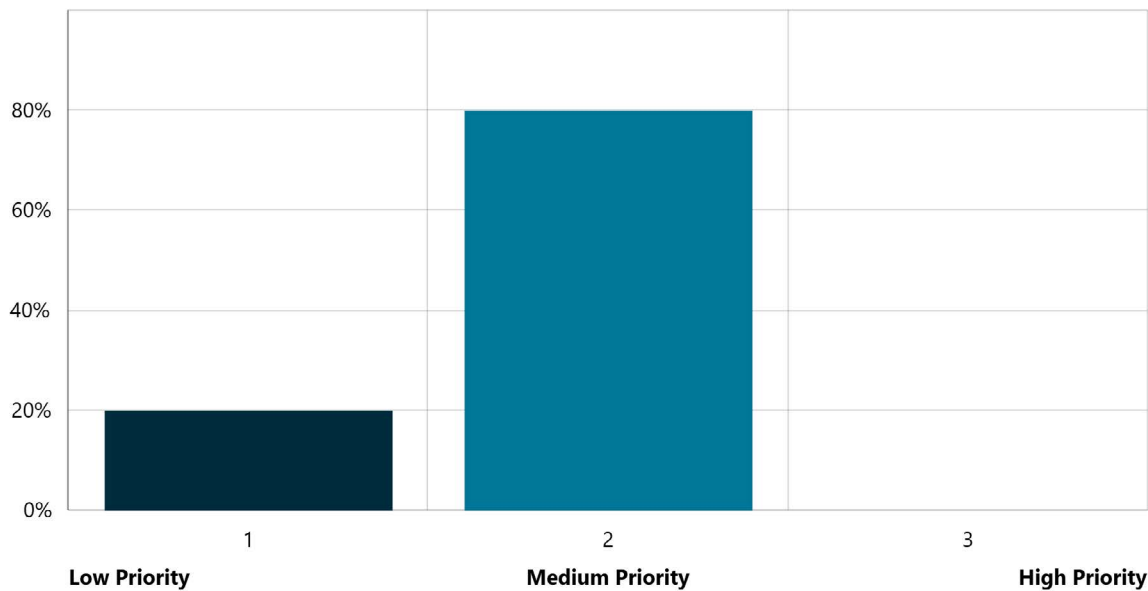
Slider | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 5 (83.3%)



4. Goal 4: Improve operational efficiencies and enhance long-term viability of parks through innovative and sustainable practices. Required
Slider | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 5 (83.3%)



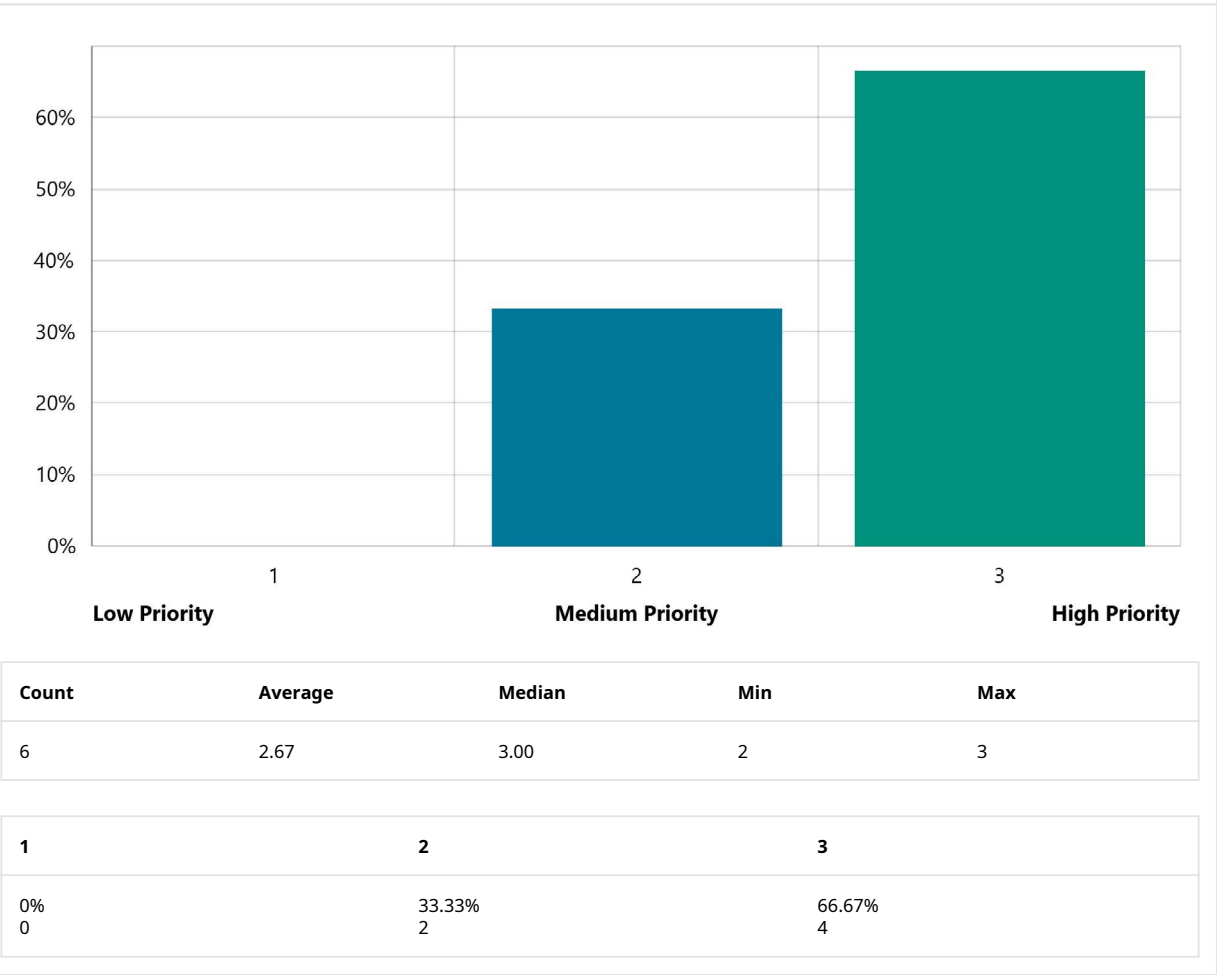
5. Goal 5: Continue to evaluate the needs and interests of Oak Park's diverse population, ensuring programs are accessible and of interest to people of all ages and abilities. Required
Slider | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 5 (83.3%)



Count	Average	Median	Min	Max
5	1.80	2.00	1	2

1	2	3
20.00% 1	80.00% 4	0% 0

6. Goal 6: Explore a variety of funding mechanisms to ensure the ongoing provision of recreation programs and quality open spaces. Required
Slider | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 6 (100%)



Open

What parks in the City do you visit?

[Oak Park Master Plan](#)

8Contributors

8Contributions

Contribution Summary

1. Best Park

Single Checkbox | Skipped: 7 | Answered: 1 (12.5%)

Yes

Skipped

Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	100.00%	1
Total	100.00%	1

2. Harding Park

Single Checkbox | Skipped: 8 | Answered: 0 (0%)



- Yes
- Skipped

Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	0%	0
Total	0%	0

3. Nine Mile Linear Park

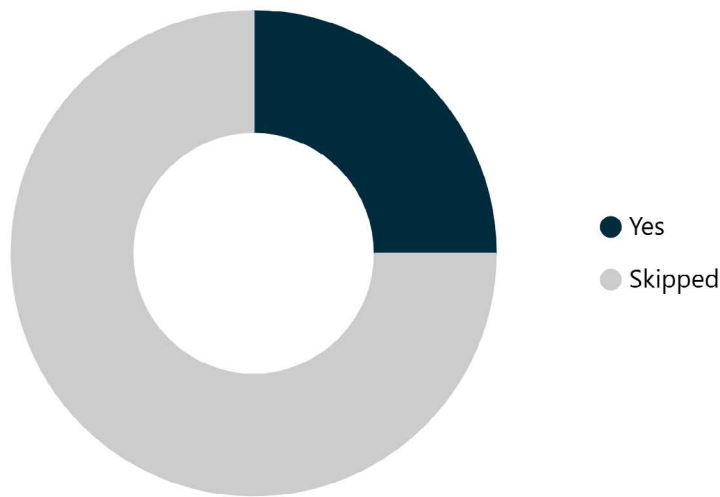
Single Checkbox | Skipped: 5 | Answered: 3 (37.5%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	100.00%	3
Total	100.00%	3

4. Seneca Pocket Park

Single Checkbox | Skipped: 6 | Answered: 2 (25%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	100.00%	2
Total	100.00%	2

5. Tyler Park

Single Checkbox | Skipped: 8 | Answered: 0 (0%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	0%	0
Total	0%	0

6. Connector Park

Single Checkbox | Skipped: 7 | Answered: 1 (12.5%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	100.00%	1
Total	100.00%	1

7. Key Park

Single Checkbox | Skipped: 7 | Answered: 1 (12.5%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	100.00%	1
Total	100.00%	1

8. Rothstein Park

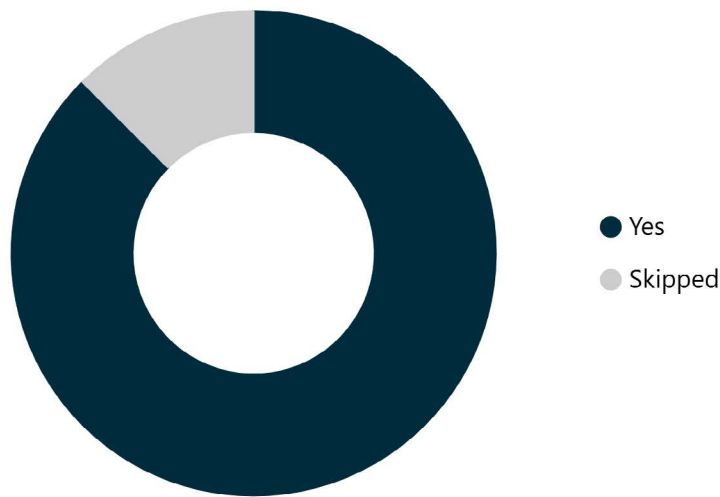
Single Checkbox | Skipped: 8 | Answered: 0 (0%)



- Yes
- Skipped

Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	0%	0
Total	0%	0

9. Shepard Park / Community Center
Single Checkbox | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 7 (87.5%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	100.00%	7
Total	100.00%	7

10. Victoria Park

Single Checkbox | Skipped: 6 | Answered: 2 (25%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	100.00%	2
Total	100.00%	2

11. Dewey Park

Single Checkbox | Skipped: 5 | Answered: 3 (37.5%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	100.00%	3
Total	100.00%	3

12. Lessenger Park

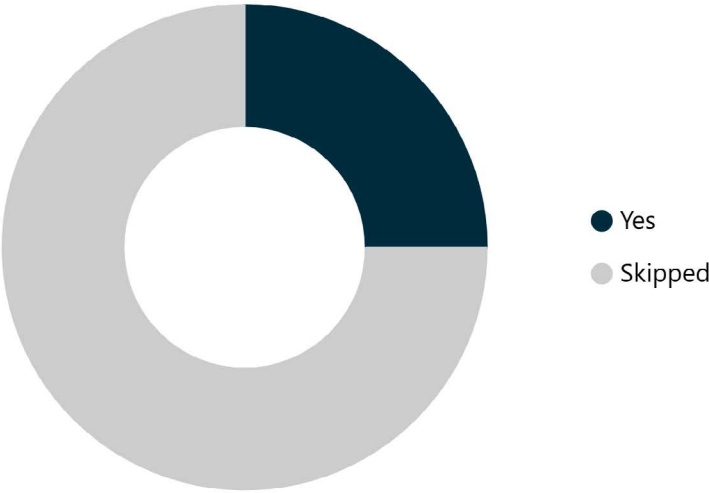
Single Checkbox | Skipped: 8 | Answered: 0 (0%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	0%	0
Total	0%	0

13. Oak Park and Bark

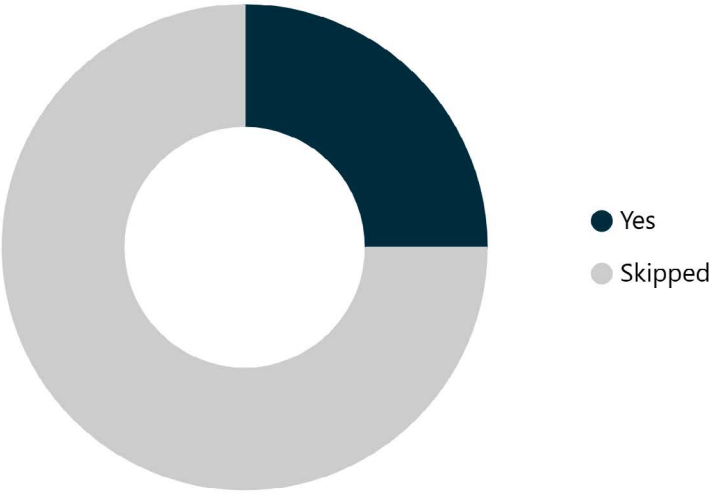
Single Checkbox | Skipped: 6 | Answered: 2 (25%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	100.00%	2
Total	100.00%	2

14. Sherman Pocket Park

Single Checkbox | Skipped: 6 | Answered: 2 (25%)



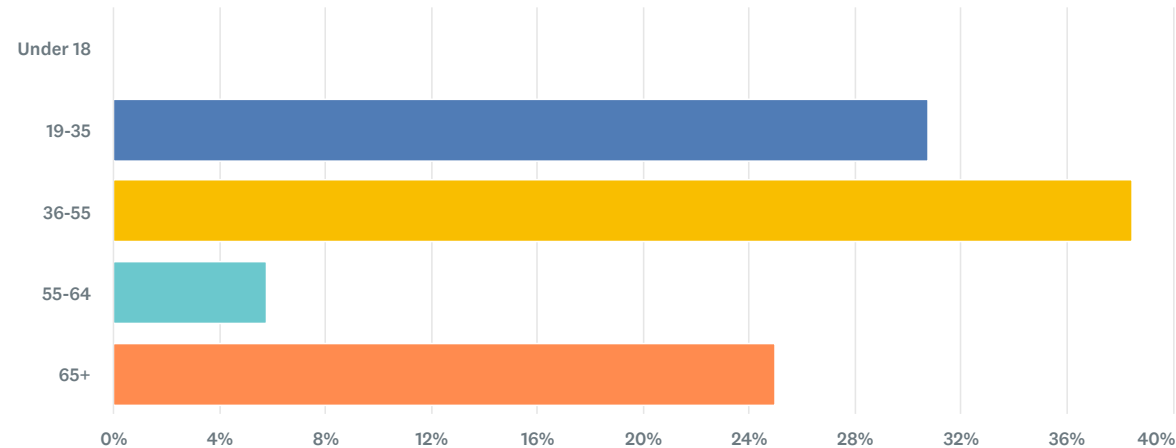
Answer choices	Percent	Count
Yes	100.00%	2
Total	100.00%	2

Resident Survey Results

Oak Park Resident Recreation Survey

Q1 52 responses

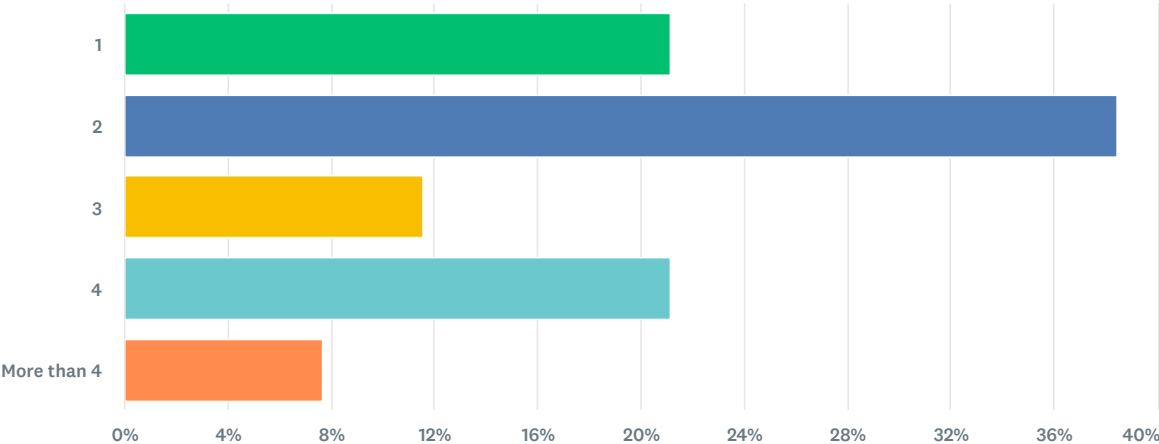
How old are you?



Oak Park Resident Recreation Survey

Q2 52 responses

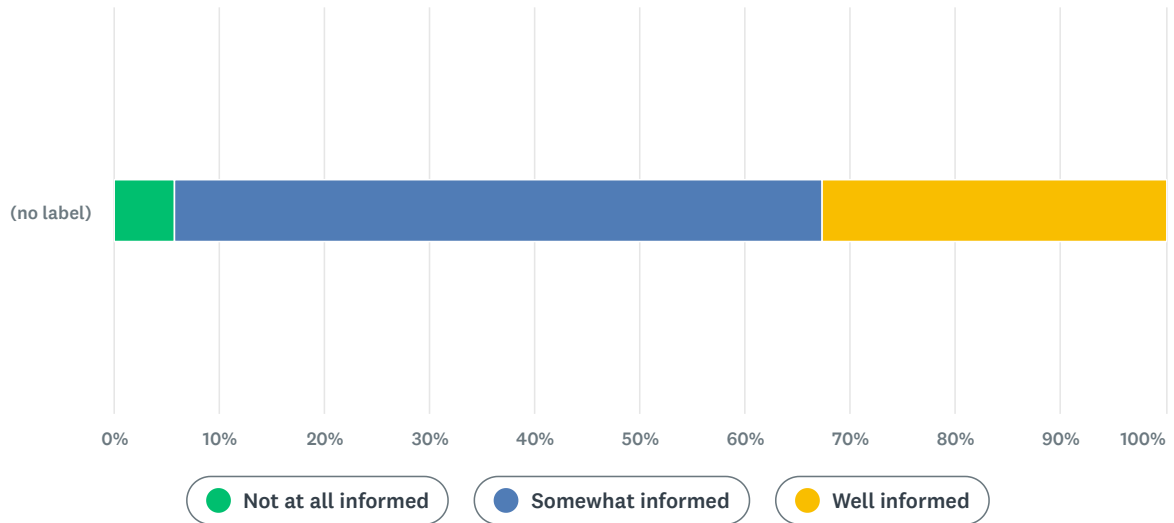
How many people are in your household?



Oak Park Resident Recreation Survey

Q3 52 responses

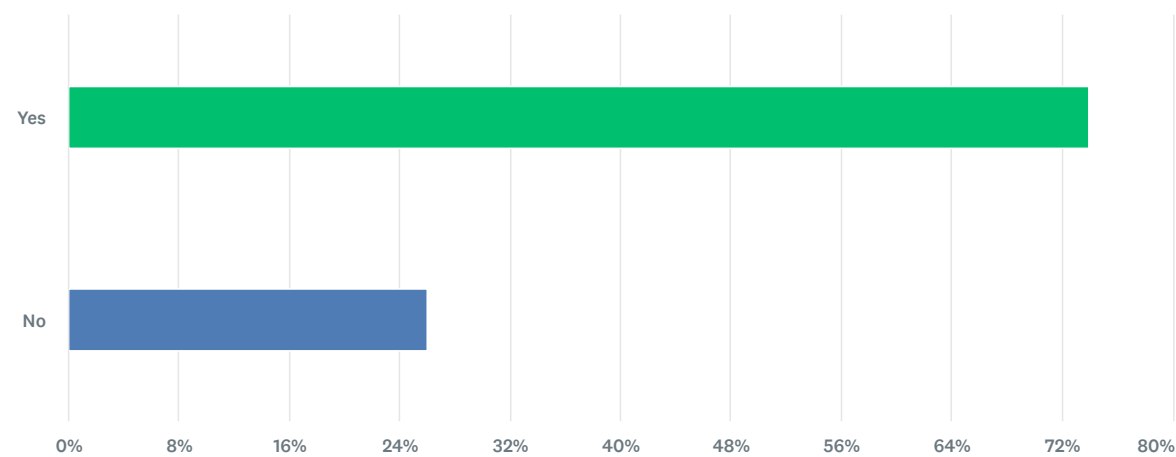
Do you feel well informed about Oak Park's recreational programming and parks?



Oak Park Resident Recreation Survey

Q4 50 responses

Do you think Oak Park would benefit from more wayfinding and informational signage?



Oak Park Resident Recreation Survey

Q5 What's one thing you would like to see added to the parks in Oak Park?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 7

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	more flowers attract humming birds and butterflies along walking paths through park	10/15/2026 2:45 PM
2	I think they're great! I love seeing existing trees taken care of and more trees planted always. I love the sustainable planting and natural stormwater infrastructure added.	10/15/2026 10:53 AM
3	A walk friendly walking lane through the park; a walking lane made out of the same material used on the track. Some seniors, including myself, have difficulty walking on the sidewalk on Oak Park blvd or through the neighborhoods. The high school track is an alternative, but it would be nice to walk through the park without having to walk on concrete or the worn out asphalt (?) in the park. JUST AN IDEA, YOU ASKED! 😊	10/2/2026 9:24 PM
4	Signs prohibiting motorized transportation such as scooters, e-bikes near playgrounds	10/2/2026 3:52 PM
5	Shaded seating in open areas	10/2/2026 3:26 PM
6	Lounge chairs with shade cover (two-seater) for times when you just want to sit and enjoy the atmosphere.	10/2/2026 1:39 PM
7	Tennis courts	10/1/2026 10:44 PM
8	Pickleball!	10/1/2026 9:55 PM
9	Walkable paths and trails	10/1/2026 9:55 PM
10	None	10/1/2026 6:00 PM
11	Pickleball courts	10/1/2026 4:31 PM
12	Outdoor handball courts. Either one-wall (almost no cost) or three-wall. Now you know who I am. haha.	10/1/2026 4:19 PM
13	PLEASE - PLEASE fumigate/spray ALL TREES in Shepard's Park Walkway from where the pool use to be --- all the way around to the street hill which leads up to the snow/sled hill. There have been endless flying bugs which swarm in the entire section. They've also existed within the trees by the curb down the side street between the same section. If you can't fumigate please trim back/trim off the low hanging branches on that same walking path. Note - this is not a bird concentration issue and this persistent bug issue is only in that area: Never the front side where the sunflowers, track, school, new outdoor place, prior grassy area nor parking lot where hockey building use to be nor the baseball diamond within the fencing. Whew - this constand bug situation creates a situation of attempting to walk the park as an exercise path or part of one's extended distance path after doing the track or if track is closed due to a game/practice totally unenjoyable. You just end up waving away bugs or skipping the section which is 1/2 the walk-around of the full distance you could create. Gesh	10/1/2026 2:13 PM
14	Where possible I'd like to see more nature trails. Expanding forested areas will take years to develop, but we have to start somewhere and should maintain the areas we do have. Planting native wildflower fields with trails can create natural experiences much faster and also provide a number of environmental benefits.	10/1/2026 1:54 PM
15	Outdoor exercise equipment	10/1/2026 1:43 PM
16	To have the pathways through the trees cleared and at least somewhat maintained so residents can enjoy walking through the trees instead of only being able to walk around them. Overall though - good work. Bought my first home here 3 years ago and I'm extremely pleased to see that my local government is an excellent steward of our tax money. Keep it up you guys are doing great !!!	10/1/2026 1:42 PM
17	Put-Put Golf Course	10/1/2026 1:41 PM

Oak Park Resident Recreation Survey

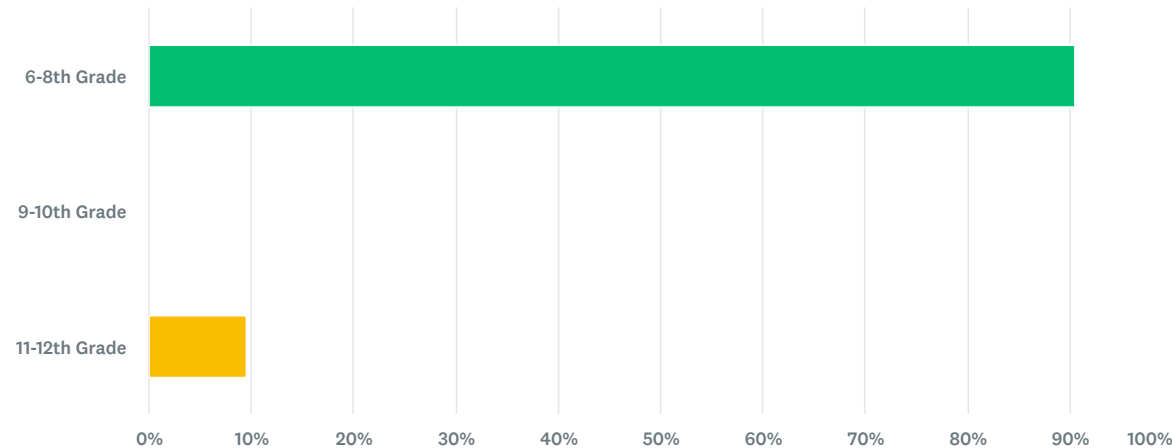
18	Seating areas and shade.	10/1/2026 1:02 PM
19	Safety and cleanliness	10/1/2026 1:00 PM
20	Trees	10/1/2026 12:54 PM
21	Walking Trails.	9/29/2026 9:29 AM
22	Coffee shop, sand box, swimming pool, rose garden, slide, swings, band stand, Japanese garden, climbing wall, bathrooms, monthly festivals, vending machines, rubberized running path, lake feature	9/28/2026 10:11 PM
23	Benchess	9/28/2026 10:06 PM
24	Signage	9/28/2026 9:07 PM
25	Tennis courts	9/28/2026 7:53 PM
26	Bike trails would be a nice addition	9/28/2026 7:30 PM
27	- Trees/equipment in dog park and expand. (eg. Lake Orion's Orion Oaks Dog Park) - More parks/trails in North Oak Park - Water bottle refill stations with dog drinking fountain - Dog waste stations	9/28/2026 5:54 PM
28	Exercise equipment	9/28/2026 2:55 PM
29	More trash cans	9/28/2026 12:48 PM
30	Exercise equipment	9/28/2026 12:11 PM
31	Box hockey - use the six sets that were built and donated by a resident, install them in parks, and paint with marine varnish to protect them from the weather.	9/28/2026 11:35 AM
32	Where is our pool? Also, I have no idea what you mean by wayfinding in question 4.	9/28/2026 10:25 AM
33	Swings for toddlers. More parks that are not associated with schools (open to the public during school hours)	9/28/2026 10:13 AM
34	More walking trails	9/28/2026 10:09 AM
35	Indoor pool	9/28/2026 9:46 AM
36	More programs for kids	9/28/2026 9:41 AM
37	Lights on the whole trail through Shepherd park	9/28/2026 9:40 AM
38	More trash bins. There is trash all over. Litter enforcement as well	9/28/2026 8:50 AM
39	More things to do with little kids (1-3) that don't only occur during the week during working hours. Working parents want activities to do with their littles after work or on the weekends	9/28/2026 8:49 AM
40	Walking trails 🐾	9/28/2026 8:17 AM
41	Swimming pool	9/28/2026 7:25 AM
42	Bike racks	9/28/2026 6:50 AM
43	Pool	9/28/2026 5:01 AM
44	I feel so much is being invested above 9 mile particularly 10-11 and east op. But south of 9, west of Coolidge is ignored.	9/28/2026 12:31 AM
45	Walking trail. Bike infrastructure. Pickleball courts	9/27/2026 11:30 PM

Student Survey Results

Oak Park Student Recreation Survey

Q1 42 responses

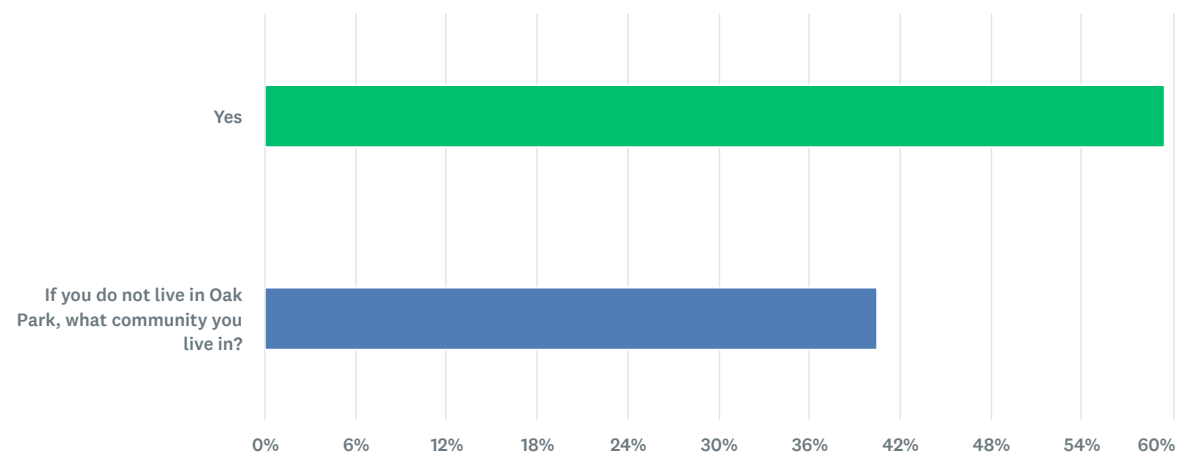
What is your current grade level in school?



Oak Park Student Recreation Survey

Q2 42 responses

Do you live in Oak Park?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
<div><div></div>Yes</div>	59.52%	25
<div><div></div>If you do not live in Oak Park, what community you live in?</div>	40.48%	17
Total		42

#	IF YOU DO NOT LIVE IN OAK PARK, WHAT COMMUNITY YOU LIVE IN?	DATE
1	Southfield	10/12/2026 7:03 PM
2	Redford	10/8/2026 11:16 AM
3	Rosedale park	10/8/2026 11:05 AM
4	Detroit	10/8/2026 10:53 AM
5	Harper Woods	10/1/2026 5:55 PM
6	big detroit	9/30/2026 1:59 PM
7	Southfield	9/30/2026 1:54 PM
8	Detroit	9/30/2026 1:53 PM
9	no i live in berkley community	9/30/2026 1:51 PM
10	Ferndale	9/30/2026 1:50 PM
11	I live in highland park	9/30/2026 1:28 PM
12	Detroit	9/30/2026 1:27 PM
13	Southfield	9/30/2026 1:25 PM
14	detroit	9/30/2026 1:25 PM

Oak Park Student Recreation Survey

15	detroit	9/30/2026 1:24 PM
16	southfield	9/30/2026 1:23 PM
17	yes	9/30/2026 1:21 PM

Oak Park Student Recreation Survey

Q3 Do you feel like you have places to go and things to do in Oak Park?
What are some of those things?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 1

[illegible]

Oak Park Student Recreation Survey

31	yes like going to some of the parks.	9/30/2026 1:24 PM
32	No I feel like it's nothing to do in oak park.	9/30/2026 1:24 PM
33	yes I do feel like I got places to go	9/30/2026 1:23 PM
34	sometimes I talk to my friends and play	9/30/2026 1:23 PM
35	yes, I got to volleyball practice or go outside to chill or go to the park	9/30/2026 1:23 PM
36	no i dont	9/30/2026 1:23 PM
37	umm I don't live in oak park I live in south field but oak park is a good city	9/30/2026 1:23 PM
38	Yeah but I would like stores closer to the house	9/30/2026 1:22 PM
39	I have to go to school	9/30/2026 1:21 PM
40	nope	9/30/2026 1:21 PM
41	gaming,taking care of my little sister	9/30/2026 1:20 PM

Oak Park Student Recreation Survey

Q4 What do you wish you could easily do after school that you don't feel is available now?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	I personally don't know	10/12/2026 7:03 PM
2	Go to the arcade	10/9/2026 9:15 PM
3	uhhh idk	10/8/2026 11:16 AM
4	Work a job	10/8/2026 11:05 AM
5	go somewhere safe and supervised with my friends after school	10/8/2026 10:55 AM
6	Just go swimming or have a place to go hangout in stuff	10/8/2026 10:53 AM
7	Like overnight field trips could be cool, or carnivals.	10/5/2026 8:47 AM
8	Just walk around the school, or go to the Gym.	10/1/2026 5:55 PM
9	Go to like a hang out spot with friends that's in the area with games and maybe snacks	10/1/2026 5:54 PM
10	I would like to do a extracurricular activity, but there's nothing that I'm gonna do or the ones I do want to do all the spots are full	10/1/2026 5:53 PM
11	Eat at a park	10/1/2026 5:53 PM
12	What do I wish is like a aaU team for basketball.	10/1/2026 11:21 AM
13	Say bye to all my teachers.	10/1/2026 11:11 AM
14	Have a place to go swimming	9/30/2026 2:26 PM
15	having to put our phones away from us and school isnt even safe to not have phones so thats not smart at all then yall got us putting our phones in locks thats very "intelligent" like thats pretty not so smart, then we gotta security guard following us into the bathroom which is very uncomfortable and weird and its also annoying how we try to talk normal to a security guard normal and we get attitude back (targeted) and yea yall gotta change that locking phone up rule just say put it up or take it.	9/30/2026 1:59 PM
16	short band practice	9/30/2026 1:55 PM
17	I don't know	9/30/2026 1:55 PM
18	Go out with my friends.	9/30/2026 1:54 PM
19	idkkkkkkk	9/30/2026 1:54 PM
20	go out somewhere	9/30/2026 1:53 PM
21	the pi equation its lowkey hard	9/30/2026 1:53 PM
22	nothing I have all the resources I need	9/30/2026 1:52 PM
23	I wish I can just go home after school and eat whatever I want and watch TV and lay down all day.	9/30/2026 1:51 PM
24	mall	9/30/2026 1:50 PM
25	get ice cream from dairy queen like I really want it and my order is cookies and cream with cheese cake bites so good	9/30/2026 1:33 PM
26	Nothing	9/30/2026 1:28 PM
27	workkkkkkkkkkkkkkk	9/30/2026 1:27 PM

Oak Park Student Recreation Survey

28	go to smoothie king.	9/30/2026 1:27 PM
29	Nothing	9/30/2026 1:25 PM
30	basketball	9/30/2026 1:25 PM
31	like a basketball	9/30/2026 1:25 PM
32	nothing	9/30/2026 1:24 PM
33	Nothing.	9/30/2026 1:24 PM
34	go to the park	9/30/2026 1:23 PM
35	play football	9/30/2026 1:23 PM
36	Nothing	9/30/2026 1:23 PM
37	go to the park	9/30/2026 1:23 PM
38	finish my homework	9/30/2026 1:23 PM
39	Nothing	9/30/2026 1:22 PM
40	walk to the store	9/30/2026 1:21 PM
41	I wish I can go to fun places like urban air	9/30/2026 1:21 PM
42	nothing	9/30/2026 1:20 PM



2027-2031

PARKS & RECREATION

Master Plan

SUBMITTED TO:

City of Oak Park
City Council
2027-2031

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**OAK PARK
RECREATION**