



Soccer Field at Rod Mills Memorial Park

Blackman Charter Township Park and Recreation Plan 2017-2021 edition



Mission

Provide more community-wide recreation opportunities for each and every resident.

Blackman Charter Township Park and Recreation Plan 2017-2021 edition

developed by
Blackman Charter Township
Park and Recreation Committee

with assistance from
Region 2 Planning Commission staff



Plan Approval and Adoption

Blackman Township Parks and Recreation Committee	TBD
Blackman Charter Township Board	TBD
Michigan Department of Natural Resources	TBD

*The 2017-2021 edition of the Blackman Charter Township
Parks and Recreation Plan will expire on December 31, 2021*

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Chapter 1
Community Description
Blackman Charter Township Parks & Recreation Plan



A priority of Blackman Charter Township is to develop a parks and recreation plan which responds to the recreational needs and desires of its residents. Given that charge, this plan provides a clear picture of the recreation opportunities available to residents regardless of who provides them. This review includes nontraditional opportunities such as shopping venues as well as traditional parks and recreation facilities.

A sincere effort was spent in developing this parks and recreation plan which represents the projected needs for recreation facilities and services in the 21st Century. For example, the presence of a potential trail corridor — and the public's support for a bike path — requires serious consideration regarding the construction of a new non-motorized trail. This document must be re-evaluated regularly and updated into new editions that meet the current needs of the community at least every five years.

Location

Blackman Charter Township is located in northern Jackson County, surrounding the northern third of the City of Jackson. The Township is also bordered by Rives Township to the north, Henrietta Township to the northeast, Leoni Township to the east and southeast, Summit Township to the south, Spring Arbor Township to the southwest, Sandstone Township to the west, and Tompkins Township to the northwest. A number of major roadways traverse the 31.8 square mile municipality: Interstate Highway 94 (I-94), United States Highway 127 (US-127), Michigan Highway 60 (M-60), Michigan Highway 50 (M-50), and Michigan Highway 106 (M-106) (see Map 1 - Location).

Jackson County is located in south-central Lower Michigan, close to the border with northwest Ohio and northeast Indiana. The Jackson Urbanized Area is located in the center of the County and covers the majority of Blackman Township. The junction of I-94 and US-127 is located along the Township's southern border with the City of Jackson, earning the Area the nickname of "Crossroads of Michigan." Those roads connect Jackson directly to Ann Arbor and Detroit to the east, Battle Creek and Kalamazoo to the west, and Lansing to the north.

A Brief Socioeconomic Summary

The demographic composition of the population of Blackman Township has an effect upon its recreational needs. Pertinent demographic components are listed below along with a brief paragraph describing the local situation. Each of the components is described in greater detail in Appendix A of this document.

- **Population History & Projections** — Blackman Township's population was comprised of 24,051 people in 2010 according to the US Census. The population of the Township grew in every decade between 1930 and 2010, with the largest increases occurring in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. It's projected the Township's population will only grow 1% by 2040, resulting in projected populations of 24,052 in 2015 and 24,210 in 2035. The American Community Survey estimates that the population was 24,024 for the 2010-2014 time period.

It should be pointed out that 26.4% of the population lived in group quarters (i.e., were institutionalized) in 2010, mostly in the various state prisons located in the Township. It is important to note that this factor reduces the population to be served and skews the demographic profile of the population living in the rest of Blackman Township.

- **Age & Gender** —The estimated median age of Blackman Township residents was 41.4 years for the 2010-2014 time period. People aged 45 to 54 years old comprised an estimated 18.1% of the population during the 2010-2014 time period. People aged 35 to 44 years old comprised an estimated 15.7% of the population. People aged 25 to 34 years old comprised an estimated 15.2% of the population. Males comprised an estimated 62.2% of the population for the 2010-2014 time period.
- **Race & Ethnicity** — African Americans comprised the largest minority group with an estimated 14.8% of the population for the 2010-2014 time period. Other minority groups comprised an estimated 5.6% of the total population, leaving it substantially white (79.6%). People of Hispanic origin were a small but important segment (3.6%) of the Township's population.
- **The Disabilities of Residents** — It is estimated that disabled individuals comprised 18.8% of Township residents during the 2010-2014 time period. An estimated 15.8% of residents 18-64 were disabled in some way and an estimated 8.0% had an ambulatory disability. An estimated 39.7% of residents at least 65 years old were disabled in some way and an estimated 28.9% had an ambulatory disability.
- **Households & Families** — Families comprised 57.3% of Blackman Township's estimated 8,011 households for the 2010-2014 time period, with an average size of 2.91 people. In comparison, the average size of a non-family household was only 2.21 people given that an estimated 37.9% of households consisted of a single person.
- **Household Income** — The estimated median family income for Blackman Township was \$52,244 for the 2010-2014 time period, substantially higher than the estimated \$23,678 reported for non-family households. The estimated median household income for all households was \$37,298. The estimated per capita income was \$18,230.

The Health of Jackson County Residents

Obesity describes ranges of weight that are above healthy guidelines given a certain height. Body Mass Index is used to calculate an individual's ratio of height to weight. Generally, a person with a Body Mass Index score of 25.0 or greater is considered obese.¹ In 2010,

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). Obesity and Overweight for Professionals: Adult: Defining – DNPAO - CDC. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/adult/defining.html>

31.1% of Michigan residents were considered obese (the tenth highest in the nation),² with 34% of adults in Jackson County reporting being obese.³ In 2016, 31% of Michigan residents and 33% of Jackson County residents were considered obese.⁴ According to a report published by Michigan State University's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research and Institute for Health Care Studies, being overweight or obese substantially increases the risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, lipid disorders, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory problems, psychological disorders, stress incontinence, and cancers of the endometrium, breast, prostate and colon.⁵ In 2008, the *Jackson Community Comprehensive Plan* showed that a poor diet and physical activity were second only to tobacco as the greatest cause for actual death in the United States in 1990 and 2000. Furthermore, a publication by the World Health Organization states that physical inactivity and a poor diet are large contributors to being overweight and obesity.⁶ According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 26% of Jackson County residents reported being physically inactive,⁷ placing it in the top 25 counties in Michigan for this measure. Physically inactive people comprised 21% of Jackson County residents in 2016.⁸ These statistics point to a need for more active recreational opportunities in all communities. Those opportunities may include providing more walkable neighborhoods as well as the provision of actual recreational opportunities such as athletic fields (e.g., soccer, baseball, etc.) and courts (e.g., basketball, tennis, etc.). Factors of particular relevance to community growth, development, and planning contributing to unhealthy weight according to the 2006 *Jackson Community Report Card* produced by the United Way of Jackson County include:

- “Inadequate community infrastructure limits the ability of people to be active. These include lack of accessible indoor and outdoor exercise facilities, neighborhood sidewalks, walking paths, and bicycle trails. Additionally, inclement weather, lack of adequate recreational opportunities, fear of unsafe neighborhoods, and unattractive/unpleasant local environments may prevent people from exercising.”
- “Programs and policies are necessary to promote smart community growth and the establishment of urban and rural environments supportive of physical activity. Active

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). Obesity and Overweight for Professionals: Data and Statistics — DNPAO - CDC. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>

³ County Health Rankings. (2014). Adult obesity in Michigan | County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. Retrieved from <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/michigan/2014/measure/factors/11/data>

⁴ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (2016). Retrieved from www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/michigan/2016/rankings/jackson/factors/3/snapshot

⁵ Kreulen, G. J. (2002). *Promoting healthy weight in Michigan through physical activity and nutrition (Informing the debate: health policy options for Michigan policymakers)*. East Lansing: Institute for Public Policy & Social Research and Institute for Health Care Studies at Michigan State University.

⁶ World Health Organization. (2009). Unhealthy Diets & Physical Inactivity. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/fact_sheet_diet_en.pdf

⁷ County Health Rankings. (2014). Physical inactivity in Michigan | County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. Retrieved from <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/michigan/2014/measure/factors/70/data>

⁸ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (2016). Retrieved from www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/michigan/2016/rankings/jackson/factors/3/snapshot

community environments provide access to safe favorable conditions for physical activity and promote the development of social support networks that encourage activity.”

The Michigan State University Report: *Promoting Healthy Weight in Michigan Through Physical Activity and Nutrition* (Kreulen, 2002), recommends cooperation among state and local units of government and residents in the promotion of active environments, including the following actions.

- “Develop walkable communities by widening and maintaining or building sidewalks, safe roadway crossings, and aesthetically pleasing areas.”
- “Encourage bicycling by developing, maintaining, and promoting the use of bike paths.”
- “Require [that] all urban planning and re-design incorporate the concepts of active community environments and thereby promote physical activity.”

Chapter 2
Administrative Structure
Blackman Charter Township Parks & Recreation Plan



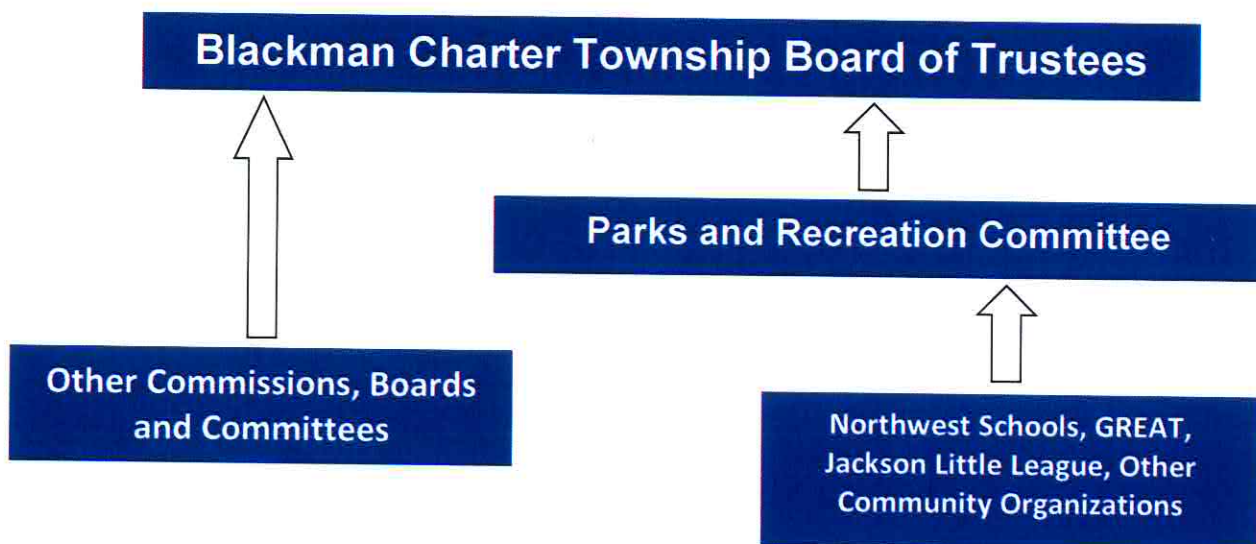
Authorization

The authority to provide public park systems and recreation programs is granted by the State of Michigan. Blackman Township's park is established under the authority of Public Act 156 of 1917, *Recreation and Playgrounds (MCL 125.51 et seq.)*. The act also allowed the creation of the Blackman Charter Township Parks and Recreation Committee.

Organizational Structure

Blackman Charter Township's Board of Trustees created the Parks and Recreation Committee and charged it to plan for and implement recreational services and facilities in the community (please see the organizational chart). The Committee assesses the needs and desires of the community (e.g., develops this document); makes appropriate budget requests to the Board, and seeks out grant opportunities on behalf of the Township.

Figure 2-1
Blackman Township Organizational Chart



Blackman Township does not maintain any parks and recreation staff. Mowing and other ongoing maintenance responsibilities are currently contracted out. The Parks and Recreation Committee undertake specific maintenance and improvement projects by coordinating with volunteers and partnering organizations. The cooperation of Township departments and other commissions, boards, and committees is also needed from time-to-time in order to administer projects and grants. In 2016, the Committee conscientiously pursued partnering with community organizations which supports the mission statement of increasing recreational opportunities for our residents. This has resulted in a working relationship with Jackson County Intermediate School District, the Northwest School District, the Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT), and the Community Little League.

Parks and Recreation Budgeting

The Township's park and recreation operating budget has varied over the past several years based upon the overall Township budget, resulting in spending varying from approximately \$4,000 in previous years to \$20,000 in 2016. There is no capital budget for the park system. It is important to note that the budget for parks and recreation fluctuates on an annual basis, based upon allocations from the Township Board and any grants and/or donations secured for a specific project.

Based upon survey responses showing exceptional support for park and recreational improvements, including support for a modest millage dedicated for parks & recreations, the Park & Recreation Committee has recommended to the Board to put a millage on the ballot in the spring of 2017 which will allow the Committee to move forward on goals identified in this plan.

Sources of Funding

The following funding sources are utilized by Blackman Township for parks and recreation purposes:

- general tax fund dollars;
- rental fees for pavilions and sporting equipment such as horseshoes and volleyball (i.e., volleyballs and net); and
- grants and donations awarded for specific projects.

General tax fund dollars were used by Blackman Township for the maintenance of its park, including the cost of producing this Plan. Some funding is generated by the rental of the picnic pavilions and sporting equipment at Rod Mills Memorial Park. The Township intends to have dedicated millage funds and utilize grant and other donations provided for specific projects.

Grants will be sought from various state, federal, and philanthropic sources for the development of a specific park facilities (e.g., bathrooms, sports fields, trails, playgrounds, picnic shelters) and to support development of recreational facilities in Blackman Township which are open to all residents such as river access for kayak and canoeing opportunities.

The objective for a millage proposal is designed to make funds available for the goals identified in this plan and for matching grant opportunities for large projects, without the impact from general fund budget variations.

Donations from the general public and various service organizations for a specific park, facility, or program are also accepted. A portion of the local match required of most grants may also come from the general fund or donations. Many grants for parks and recreational facilities are likely to come from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.¹

¹ This is a Federal program administered locally by the State of Michigan.

The Michigan Transportation Fund Act (Act 51) states that “a reasonable amount, but not less than 1% of” funds allocated to the state or a county, city, or village “shall be expended for construction or improvement of non-motorized transportation services and facilities.” That set-aside can be used to fund “an improvement in a road, street, or highway which facilitates non-motorized transportation or improvement of a sidewalk in a city or village, or any other appropriate measure.” The Michigan Department of Transportation and the Jackson County Road Commission receive funding through Act 51. Coordination with those entities could result in the expenditure of Act 51 funds on non-motorized projects proposed within this document.

Relationships with Other Recreation Providers

Blackman Charter Township is not the only supplier of parks and recreational opportunities to local residents.

Schools

Local school districts are significant suppliers of parks and recreational opportunities to their students and boosters as well as the general public. The Northwestern School District covers most of Blackman Township and its schools are located in the Township. However, Jackson Public Schools, East Jackson Community Schools, and the Western School District also serve some of the youth of the Township (see the School Districts map). The Jackson Intermediate School District also maintains facilities in Blackman Township.

In 2016, the Park & Recreation Committee has brought in Northwest Schools; and the Jackson County Intermediate Schools as members of the P & R Committee to better coordinate plans, goals, objectives and actions between the School and the Township.

Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT)

GREAT has property located in Blackman Township along the Grand River which provides an opportunity for the Township to partner in creating opportunities for our residents to enjoy recreational activities related to the river. GREAT was asked and is now participating with the Parks and Recreation Committee to identify areas where we can collaborate to make physical improvements and make available to the residents. Great has a Master plan of their own which aligns very well with the Township Park & Recreation Mission statement: ***Provide more community-wide recreation opportunities for each and every resident.***

Local, County, State Government and Private Providers

Some of the surrounding townships and the City of Jackson also maintain parks, trails, and recreation programs. The same is true for Jackson County. Blackman Township also is working with these local governments in planning for a countywide trail system as evidenced by the Jackson Trail Connector Feasibility Study, (Draft 10-13-16) under work and with participation by Blackman Charter Township Supervisor, Pete Jancek.

The State of Michigan provides a variety of recreational facilities in the form of state game, wildlife, and recreation areas; state historic parks; and state parks in the vicinity of Blackman Township. A variety of private entrepreneurs and quasi-public agencies also provide recreation facilities and programs in and around the Township.

Please refer to Chapter 3 for a more detailed description of recreation facilities in Blackman Charter Township.

Chapter 3
Recreation and Resource Inventories
Blackman Charter Township Parks & Recreation Plan



In order to plan for future parks and recreation facilities it is important to prepare a complete inventory of existing resources and facilities. The following inventory is comprised of all known parks and recreation facilities and programs available in Blackman Township, not just those owned and managed by the Township. The parks, facilities, and programs were identified through local knowledge and review of current and historic documents and maps.

Park Classifications and Standards

It is also important to be able classify parks and recreation facilities in order to identify the need for additional parkland and recreation facilities in Blackman Township. Park systems are comprised of several types of parks:¹

- **Mini-Parks** — Small parks (less than an acre) which address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.
- **Neighborhood Parks** — Informal active and/or passive recreation parks which serve as the focus of the neighborhood; *this park type also serves as a mini-park for the area immediately adjacent to the facility.*
- **Community Parks** — Parks which serve a broader focus than a neighborhood and may also preserve a unique landscape or open space; *this park type also serves as a neighborhood park for the area immediately adjacent to the facility.*
- **Regional Parks** — Parks which serve the entire county as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces; *this park type also serves as a community park for the area surrounding the facility.*
- **Connector Trails** — Linear parks which serve as non-motorized connectors among neighborhoods, business areas, parks, schools, and other destinations.

Parks and Recreation Facilities in Blackman Township

Parks and recreation facilities found in Blackman Township are provided by the Northwest School District and a variety of private and quasi-public entities as well as the Township.

Blackman Township Park

Blackman Township's park system is comprised of Rod Mills Memorial Park, a community park which encompasses approximately 91.5 acres (please see the following table and the map). Given the population of 17,711 people in Blackman Township in 2010-2014 time period — once the institutionalized population has been subtracted — the park, which serves as a community park, satisfies 51.7% of the acreage recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association.

¹ Springate, Lee, "Defining Parks and Park Systems," From Recreation to Re-creation: New Directions in Parks and Open Space System Planning, Megan Lewis, editor (PAS Report Number 551)

Table 3-1
Blackman Township Parks

Key	Name	Acres	Facilities	BFA
A	Rod Mills Memorial Park	91.5	Hiking trails, picnic pavilions; picnic tables and grills; baseball diamonds; soccer fields; a playground area; horseshoes, and volleyball (balls and nets available for a fee).	3

It is important that the township park be accessible to people with disabilities. After all, an estimated 10.2% of non-institutionalized township residents had ambulatory difficulties in the 2010-2014 time period. Accordingly, the park was rated according to its level of barrier free access.² The number listed under the BFA column in the above table equates to the barrier-free rating listed in the table below:

Table 3-2
Barrier-Free Access (BFA) Analysis

Key	Description
1 =	None of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
2 =	Some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
3 =	Most of the facilities/park area meet accessibility guidelines
4 =	The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
5 =	The entire park was developed/renovated using the principal of universal design

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has awarded no recreation grants to Blackman Township.³

Schools

Schools also provide a variety of recreational facilities. For example, elementary schools provide numerous playgrounds aimed at different age groups and sports fields. Middle and high schools provide football fields, ball diamonds and tennis courts. Elementary, middle, and high schools provide gymnasiums. Because of those facilities, schools generally function as community parks.

² The analysis of barrier free access was provided by the Blackman Township Parks and Recreation Committee, based upon its knowledge of the parks and understanding of barrier-free access. A professional analysis may produce different results.

³ The MDNR requires a declaration and/or listing of the recreation grants awarded to Blackman Township to be included in the recreation plan.

Table 3-3
Schools

Key	Name	District	Facilities
B	Northwest High*	Northwest School District	Gymnasiums, baseball/softball field, soccer field, football field, and track
C	R.W Kidder Middle**		
D	Northwest Early Elementary	Northwest School District	Gymnasiums, Playgrounds, baseball/softball fields, and soccer fields
E	Northwest Elementary		
F	Lyle Torrent Training Center	Intermediate School District	Playground and baseball field
G	da Vinci Primary School	da Vinci Institute	Playground
* The Northwest Alternative High School is located in the High School complex ** The former Flora List Elementary School, located to the north, still contains a playground			

The Northwest School District serves the majority of Blackman Township students and all of its schools are located within the municipality. Several other public school districts also serve students from Blackman Township. However, they maintain no facilities in the municipality.

The Lyle Torrent Training Center — a Jackson County Intermediate School District (JCISD) facility which serves students from across the county — is located within the Township. Other JCISD facilities are located outside of the surrounding area. Blackman Township is home to the da Vinci Institute's primary school (K-8). The da Vinci Institute— a public charter school operated by Central Michigan University — also maintains a secondary school (9-12) outside of the surrounding area.

Quasi-Public and Private Recreation Facilities

Finally, a number of quasi-public and private entities also maintain facilities in Blackman Township that have some recreational value. For example, the Jackson County Airport— Reynolds Field — provides a place for recreational flyers to land, maintain, and store their aircraft. The Jackson District Library (JDL) also provides access to books, films, and a variety of enrichment programs. The JDL's Meijer Branch is located in Blackman Township. The other branches are located throughout the county (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more detail on JDL facilities).

The main purpose of other facilities is strictly recreational. For example, the Township is home to the Richard F. Smith Post Foundation which maintains facilities for baseball and softball. Marino's Pizza also host soccer fields for local use. Finally, the ORS Fieldhouse and Total Performance Training Center provides basketball courts batting cages, leagues, group events, and athletic training.

Table 3-4
Other Recreation Facilities

Key	Name	Facilities
H	Richard F Smith Post Foundation	Baseball field
I	ORS Fieldhouse and Total Performance Training Center	Basketball courts, batting cages, leagues, group events, and athletic training
J	Marino's Pizza	Soccer fields

Parks and Recreation Facilities in the Surrounding Area

Parks and recreation facilities utilized by Blackman Township residents are also located in the surrounding area.

Other Municipal and County Parks

Some of the surrounding municipalities also provide parks to their residents (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more facilities).

- **City of Jackson** — the City maintains a total of 27 parks (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more detail).
- **Leoni Township** — Peter Alex Ball Park, Leoni Community Park, Bender Park, and a public boat launch
- **Rives Township** — Rives Township Park
- **Spring Arbor Township** — Fritz Gallagher Park and Harmony Park
- **Summit Township** — Probert Road Trail
- **Tompkins Township** — Tompkins Township Park
- **County of Jackson** — the County maintains a total of 16 parks (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more detail).

Other Public School Districts

The following school districts also maintain facilities within the surrounding area (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more school districts).

- **East Jackson Community Schools** — covers portions of Blackman, Leoni, Summit, and Waterloo Townships. The district maintains the following facilities:
 - Bertha Robinson Elem. School
 - Memorial Elementary School
 - East Jackson Middle School
 - East Jackson High School
- **Jackson Public Schools** — The district covers the City of Jackson and portions of Blackman, Liberty, Napoleon, and Summit Townships. Jackson Public Schools, which is part of the Jackson County Intermediate School District, maintains the following facilities:

- Bennett Elementary School
- Cascades Elementary School
- Dibble Elementary School
- Frost Elementary School
- Hunt Elementary School
- McCulloch Elementary School
- Northeast Elementary School
- Sharp Park Academy
- Amy Firth Middle School
- Middle School at Parkside
- Jackson High School
- T. A. Wilson Academy
- **Western School District** — covers the Village of Parma and portions of Blackman, Concord, Parma, Sandstone, and Spring Arbor Townships. The district maintains the following facilities:
 - Bean Elementary School
 - Parma Elementary School
 - Warner Elementary School
 - Western Middle School
 - Western High School
 - Western Options High School
 - Woodville Community Center

Local Colleges

There are several local colleges. Baker College's local campus is located in the Township, north of the Jackson County Airport. Jackson College's main campus is located in Summit Township and its W.J. Maher Campus is located in Blackman Township. Finally, Spring Arbor University's main campus is located in the unincorporated village of Spring Arbor.

Many colleges provide access to collegiate sports and athletic facilities. Township residents can also avail themselves of the other recreational facilities and programs hosted by those institutions. For example, The Potter Center (Jackson Community College) "is comprised of the most versatile and complete performing arts complex in the area."⁴ The Ganton Gallery (Spring Arbor University) "is one of the largest, single-room galleries in Michigan."⁵ The local Baker College campus does not contain significant recreation facilities that are open to the general public.

Regional Parks and Recreation Facilities

A variety of other public agencies and private entrepreneurs also provide recreational opportunities to city and county residents.

- **State Parks**

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), a significant provider of regional parks and recreation facilities, maintains the following park which extends into the surrounding area (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more state parks in Jackson County):

- **Meridian-Baseline State Park**, Henrietta and Rives Townships (not open to the general public).

⁴ <http://www.jccmi.edu/events/pottercenter/theatres.htm>

⁵ http://www.arbor.edu/edu_detail.aspx?id=37930

The following state game and recreation areas which extend into Jackson County are also provided by the DNR (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more state game and recreation areas in Jackson County):

- **Waterloo Recreation Area**, Grass Lake, Leoni, and Waterloo Townships. The Waterloo Recreation Area provides opportunities for cross-county skiing, snowmobiling, boating, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, swimming, horseback riding, picnicking, playing (i.e., playgrounds), and camping.

Finally, the DNR also maintains 5 boat launches in the surrounding municipalities (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more DNR boat launches in Jackson County).

- Center Lake and Gilletts Lake, Leoni Township
- Maple Grove Bridge (Grand River), Rives Township
- Tompkins Bridge (Grand River), Tompkins Township
- Trestle Bridge (Grand River), Tompkins Township

- **Jackson County Fairground**

The Jackson County Fair is held every August in the City of Jackson. However, it is important to note that the Fairground also hosts other special events throughout the year, including the annual ‘Nite Lights at the Fairgrounds.’

Private and Quasi-Public Parks and Recreation Facilities

A number of private and quasi-public institutions also provide recreation facilities.

- **Golf Courses**

In addition to the public courses associated with the Ella Sharp and Sparks Foundation (Cascades) County Parks, a variety of private courses are available to Blackman township residents. Many of those courses are open to the general public (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for a complete listing of golf courses in Jackson County).

- **Recreation and Sport Centers**

Airport Lanes (i.e., bowling) is located in Blackman Township. The YMCA of Jackson provides a variety of sports and recreational activities. Allskate Fun Center and Optimist Ice Arena are also located in the City of Jackson. Finally, Suburban Lanes (i.e. bowling) operates in the surrounding area.

- **Public and Private Facilities with Recreational Benefits**

Various other facilities in the surrounding area (provided publicly and privately) also have recreational benefits:

- **Cemeteries** — Cemeteries provide important green space. They can also be used as safe places to walk/exercise and contemplate nature (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for a listing of cemeteries in Jackson County).

- **Sidewalks** — Existing sidewalks are used for exercise as well as transportation and may even connect with non-motorized trails.
- **Shopping and Eating** — Many people enjoy shopping and going out to eat. Consequently, nearby local downtowns and other commercial districts provide recreation because of their restaurants and/or shops (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more on shopping and eating opportunities in Jackson County).

Recreation Events and Programs

Blackman Township does not maintain any recreation programming or provide any events. However, Jackson County and the City of Jackson do actively provide recreation programming and host events. It should also be pointed out that many of the recreation providers listed above also provide recreational programs. For example, the various bowling alleys also host bowling leagues.

Jackson County

The Sparks Foundation County (Cascades Falls) Park hosts a variety of events (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more detail). The Jackson County Parks Association also hosts a variety of work-bees and recreational events in the various parks.

City of Jackson

The City of Jackson provides a wide variety of recreation programming. Those programs are available to Township residents who also reside in the Jackson Public School District (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more detail on programs).

Resource Inventory

In addition to recreation facilities, Blackman Township is also home to a wide variety of natural resources.

Topography

Elevations of land in Blackman Township range from under 918 feet to over 1,017 feet above sea level. Land on either shore of the Grand River—as it flows northward to Lansing in the eastern half of the Township—has an elevation less than 918 feet. A few hilltops attain a height of more than 1,017 feet in the western half of Blackman Township.

Water Resources

The Upper Grand River Watershed covers all of Blackman Township and the surrounding area (see Map 4). The Grand River flows northward through the eastern half of the Township on its way to Lansing. The Portage River and a variety of county drains also flow through the Township. Unfortunately, Blackman Township is not blessed with the large lakes found further to the east in Jackson County. However, wetlands still exist.

Transportation

Jackson County and Blackman Township share a well-connected transportation system. Interstate 94 (I-94) traverses the Township from east-to-west and skirts the northern boundary of the City of Jackson. I-94 provides access to the major metropolitan areas of Chicago and Detroit. United States Highway 127 (US-127) runs through the center of the Township. It provides access to the Lansing area and other points north as well as Adrian and Toledo to the south. Several Michigan highways (i.e., M-50, M-60, and M-106) and a variety of county primary roads provide access to those major roadways. Portions of Blackman Township bordering the City are also served by a bus system.

Soils

The types of soils found in Jackson County are important to its development. For example, while agricultural land remains in Blackman Township, the proposed agricultural preservation area lays outside of the municipality to its west, north, and east (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more information on agricultural preservation areas). However, a possible network of greenways which “generally follows wetland areas, drainage ways, and forested lands” is located in Blackman Township (please see the *City of Jackson and Jackson County Recreation Plan* for more information on greenways).

Land Use

The ‘2025 Jackson County Land Use Plan’ map contained in the 2000-2025 edition of the *Jackson Community Comprehensive Plan* shows a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses within Blackman Township, extending along major thoroughfares.

Chapter 4
Descriptions of the Planning and Public Input Processes
Blackman Charter Township Parks & Recreation Plan



Description of the Planning Process

The development of this second generation edition of the Blackman Charter Township Parks and Recreation Plan (P & R Plan) included the following steps:

- Blackman Township Board recognized a need for new and additional membership on the Committee due to new Board members and the need for enhanced public involvement.
- The Parks and Recreation Committee reached out to the Spring Arbor University Business Department (Assistant Professor Alan Knight), Northwest (NW) Public Schools, the Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT) and the Jackson County Intermediate School District for input and ongoing participation in the development of park and recreation planning with the Township.
- The Parks and Recreation Committee conducted a community survey with the assistance of the NW Public Schools using Facebook, the Township web site, and direct surveys during Halloween activities at the Township's fire department.
- An inventory of parks and recreation information was done with input from Region 2 Planning Commission, NW Public Schools, and verification of the first generation Park Plan.
- The Mission Statement, and Goals, were agreed upon at the Park & Recreation Committee level and affirmed by the Township Board.
- Goals, Objectives and Actions were identified based upon the interests identified through the survey process and by first hand contact with park users, and with direct input from the Little League on the Park and Recreation Committee.
- The Park and Recreation Committee used the original Parks and Recreation Plan, and worked closely with Region 2 Planning Commission staff to update the 2016 Plan. Five students from Spring Arbor University were involved and provided input as part of a class project, coordinated with Assistant Professor Alan Knight from the Business School, a new experience for the process
- The 2016 Plan first draft was completed in December, 2016.
- The 2016 Plan was released for public comment January ??, 2017 through Jan ??, 2017.
- The Parks and Recreation committee held a public hearing on the Parks and Recreation Plan on February ??, 2017. The Committee subsequently approved the document and recommended it for adoption by the Township Board.
- The Township Board adopted the Parks and Recreation Plan on February 21, 2017 at a regularly scheduled Board meeting.

Description of the Public Input Process

Public input was gathered in variety of ways. The results of those methods enabled the Park and Recreation Committee to understand the community needs and suggest changes and other improvements.

Public Opinion Survey

The Park and Recreation Committee recognized a need to widen the focus beyond the Township owned Rod Mills Park to better assess and serve the wider interests of our residents. The survey was designed to collect information regarding satisfaction with current park facilities, to identify areas for improvement, and to determine the interest of expanding support to other areas of Blackman Township with options that Rod Mills Park cannot provide. In addition, it provided an opportunity to evaluate the willingness of residents to support a millage dedicated to recreation across the Township.

The survey was distributed at the counter and at the drive through window at the Township Office, at the Halloween event held at the Fire Station, on the Blackman Township website, and on the NW Public Schools Facebook page from mid-October through the end of November, 2016.

With a response of 239 surveys collected within that time period identified, it provided results that provided direction for improving the recreational facilities across Blackman Charter Township.

The complete survey and results are provided in Appendix B.

Table 4-1
Blackman Township Parks and Recreation Survey

<p>How often do you and your family visit the recreation facilities located within our township?</p> <p>Weekly—7.0% Monthly—10.2% 3-4 times a year —82.8%</p>	<p>How important to you feel the presence of recreational facilities is within the Blackman Township Community?</p> <p>Important— 83.7%</p>
<p>Please rate the condition of the equipment, grounds, courts, and diamonds.</p> <p>Great—6.8% Adequate—47.9% Needs Improvement—45.2%</p>	<p>In your opinion, what level of priority should the recreational facilities take in terms of tax dollars spent on these areas?</p> <p>High Level—63.1% Medium Level—29.2% Low Level—7.7%</p>
<p>Over the past decade, would you say the quality of the park facilities has increased, decreased, or remained constant.?</p> <p>Increased —15.8% Decreased —38.7% Remained Constant —45.5%</p>	<p>Should the Township work to connect with the Grand River Arts Walk and Lakeland Trails?</p> <p>These are outside of the park.</p> <p>Yes —85.4% No —14.6%</p>

Table 4-1 (continued)
Blackman Township Parks and Recreation Survey

<p>Are the township recreational facilities normally clean?</p> <p>Yes — 60.3% Marginal — 31.9% No — 7.8%</p>	<p>Should the Township look to create kayak/canoe access points to the Grand River?</p> <p>Yes — 87.9% No — 12.2%</p>
<p>Have you felt safe when at the park?</p> <p>Yes — 63.8% No — 28.2% No Response—8.1%</p>	<p>Please prioritize specific improvements you would like to have made to the park facilities.</p> <p>Better Restrooms — 81.6% Improved Visibility from the Road — 64.2% Improved Picnic Facilities—59.9% Additional Playground Options—59.0% Improved Trails—58.7% Improve Ball Fields—49.5%</p>
<p>What activities have you or your family participated in at Rod Mills Park?</p> <p>Walking—10.5% Pavilion—15.7% Playground—24.9% Baseball—26.6% Soccer—4.6% Picnic—17.7%</p>	<p>Would you support a millage of (.1) to support park improvements, trail improvements, in and outside of the Park, an access point to the Grand River for kayak & canoe, and other recreational improvements?</p> <p>Yes — 92.8% No — 7.2%</p>

Trails and Trail Planning and Programming

Trails and Trail Planning and Programming are shown in Appendix D, which the Township Supervisor and Park and Recreation Committee participate and support. Opportunities for water and non-motorized trails passing through Blackman create an opportunity for the Township to support and create trailhead locations with resources nearby.

Chapter 5
Mission, Goals & Objectives, and Action Program
Blackman Charter Township Parks & Recreation Plan



Mission

Provide more community-wide recreation opportunities for each and every resident.

The following Goals were based in part on the 2012 Parks and Recreation Plan, the survey conducted in the fall of 2016, with 239 responses, and community and county demographics supplied by the Region 2 Planning Commission.

The means to these goals and robust recreational facilities hinges in part on a funding source that is more significant than what Blackman Charter Township has been able to provide over the past several years. This plan recognizes this need, and is supported by the survey conducted. A key action item for all of the goals identified is the passing of a millage, which received overwhelming support of 92 percent on the survey.

Goal A:

Create a more walkable and bike friendly community.

Responses to the survey show a very strong support for non-motorized trails being available in Blackman with an 85% yes when asked about working to connect with trails, which will be outside of Rod Mills Park. The Committee supports these efforts with plans to create a trail head within Blackman, and eventual connection to the schools on Lansing Avenue.

Objective 1:

Connect the Grand River Arts Walk with the Lakeland Trails Extension, and establishing a trail head in Blackman for convenience of residents.

Action Program:

- a. Work with the following organizations in trail planning activities through the Township: State of Michigan, County of Jackson, Northwest Schools, and Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).
- b. Identify possible funding sources including budgeting support and grant applications leading to trail / trail head construction.

Objective 2:

Develop wider roads for bike path implementations on the shoulders.

Action Program:

Work with MDOT and the Jackson County Department of Transportation (JCDOT) on long term road and bridge planning to assure maximum efficiency during construction / reconstruction in Blackman and the surrounding community.

Objective 3:

Expand community sidewalks system for bikes, strollers, skating, or wheelchair.

Action Program:

- a. Identify usage patterns in the township for determining needs. Identify crossing points for improvements in safe crossings.
- b. Work with JCDOT and MDOT to document needs and identify funding sources.

Goal B:

Develop recreational activities related to the Grand River for Blackman Township Residents.

The survey results show overwhelming support for developing Grand River access with 88% responding yes when asked "Should the Township look to create kayak/canoe access points to the Grand River. The Township is blessed with the presence of the Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT) having property on the river in Blackman. They have built a structure to support these activities in the Township. GREAT has developed a Master Plan aimed to improve the river and facilities and to promote public use and enjoyment of this asset. The Park & Recreation Committee recognizes the synergy by working together and now has a member from GREAT participating on the Committee.

Objective:

Work with GREAT (Grand River Environmental Action Team) to develop river access improvements.

Action Program:

- a. Add GREAT members to the Park and Recreation Committee to ensure the overlapping interests of GREAT and the Parks and Recreation Plan are identified and met. *In place.*

- b. Work with GREAT to determine what and how to improve river access. Understand the GREAT Master Plan.
- c. Combine resources to acquire financing and assist in completing tasks identified which are open to all Blackman residents, and meets the Mission Statement.

Goal C:

Create a more handicap accessible, handicap friendly community.

Objective:

Improve Barrier-Free Access (BFA) meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), reaching for Universal Access where feasible.

The estimated population in Blackman Township with an ambulatory disability numbers 1,809 people (10%) with 52% of these being in the 65 years and over category. With the importance of recreational facilities in Blackman rated at 84%, the Committee is committed to inclusion of our disabled population, and for improvements to current recreational opportunities.

Action Program:

- a. Seek expertise (Jackson County Intermediate School District (JCISD) and others) to assess current compliance on equipment and facilities and develop plans for improvements to move towards universal access where possible.
- b. Ensure facilities added and maintained at Rod Mills park meets the ADA, and work to reach Universal Access where feasible financially.
- c. Participate in the planning of recreational facilities in the Township to promote ADA compliance.
- d. Partner with JCISD young adult training program with ongoing learning experiences that add value to the Township, Rod Mills Park, and the students.

Goal D:

Enhance the Rod Mills Park Experience.

Sixty-five percent of survey responders have used the park, and 83% of those who use the park use it 3-4 times per year with activities fairly well distributed between baseball and playgrounds, followed by picnic, pavilions, and walking. Specific improvements favored in the survey are better restrooms at 82% being the highest ranking. Improved

visibility from the road, improved picnic facilities, additional playground options, and improved trails all hover near 60 percent.

Open ended comments on the park identified safety related items 4 times with 36 % of survey respondents rating safety as marginal or worse. The Committee rated this a high concern. When combined with Township inspection, results showing problem activities that have occurred, improving safety becomes a key objective for Rod Mills Park.

Objective 1:

Safety, a basic need.

The Park and Recreation Committee believes a safe park is key to increasing park usage and is committed to making improvements that directly and indirectly improve safety.

Action Program:

- a. Implement a safety audit program and reporting system for timely corrections.
- b. Clear park brush well back from roads and parking to enhance vision for park users by teaming with volunteers and Jackson County Intermediate School District (JCISD) students to clear and maintain brush.
- c. Increase parking area, and provide a center rail in the parking area for more orderly parking and reduction of vehicle racing mischief.
- d. Add / improve lighting for the park for expanded evening hours.
- e. Fix park entrance apron, expanding width for better access, reducing the sensation of potentially being trapped, and install cameras.
- f. Improve dust control on the park drive throughout the summer.

Objective 2:

Pavilion and Picnic improvements.

Fifty-nine percent of survey respondents identified a desire for improved picnic facilities. When combined with the Committee's own observations of grills and pavilions, and a survey response of 39% indicating a decline in facilities, the Committee identified the following actions.

Action Program:

- a. Upgrade grills in the park.
- b. Review and upgrade picnic tables ensuring ADA access in all pavilions.

- c. Improve walkways leading to pavilions to meet ADA requirements.

Objective 3:

Improve Sports fields

An improved ball field received a 50% response and when combined with activities usage of 27% by the residents becomes a high priority item for improvement. The Little League, participating on the Park and Recreation Committee will provide “customer input” for several improvements. Soccer is underutilized partly due to field conditions and is in need of upgrades. With the growing popularity of soccer, this is an opportunity to grow park usage.

Action Program:

- a. Improve / maintain ball diamond fields for grass control and general infield improvements using input from the Little League Organization, and coordination with Jackson County Intermediate School District (JCISD) young adult classes.
- b. Maintain / improve fencing around the ball fields, and creating “dugout like experiences for players, improving coaching control and spectator interference.
- c. Improve access to the back ball fields.
- d. Alter the soccer field to provide for rain runoff, and improve goals. Work to coordinate resources with the Northwest Schools educational program on heavy equipment.

Objective 4:

Increase Park usage and other recreational opportunities in Blackman.

The survey revealed 22% of residents did not know the Township had a park. Eighty-four percent feel it is important to have recreational facilities within Blackman Township. When asked of the priority level for tax dollars being spent on recreational activities, 63% said high, with an additional 29% indicating medium.

Action Program:

- a. Determine public interests through survey and public meetings, ***ongoing***
- b. Provide information on the park and recreation options to residents. ***Underway with newsletters included with tax bills and February tax notices.*** Publicize on the web site.
- c. Use part time help (volunteer and paid) to organize activities in the park.

- d. Develop bathroom upgrades over the next three years, seeking grant funds to defray costs.

Goal E:

Assure ongoing funding for parks and recreation in Blackman Charter Township.

Objective:

Ensure the Parks and Recreation Committee becomes a team effort with stakeholders in the community participating in Blackman Charter Township.

The survey responses are overwhelmingly in favor of working to connect with the trails being developed passing through the county (85%), with working towards kayak/canoe access points for the Grand River (88%) and in support of a .1 millage coming in at 92%. The Committee heard this message and has sought out more input from community members and organizations to identify and complete work needed to make these things happen. In addition, restroom facilities were identified as a major target for improvement on the survey.

Action Program:

- a. Expand the Parks Committee to include community representatives from Northwest Schools, the Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT), Little League, and the Jackson County Intermediate School District (JCISD) - ***successfully done in the fall of 2016.***
- b. Increase volunteer activities for maintenance and improvements, ***ongoing***, including non-profits and coordination with our partner organizations on identified projects.

Identify work plans and share among the Little League, JCISD, and Township to accomplish tasks.
- c. Upgrade the restroom facilities, long term supported by grant and park funding.
- d. Pursue a millage in 2017 to support park and recreation facility improvements across Blackman Charter Township.
- e. Make grant applications a part of the Park and Recreation Committee's standard operating procedure going forward.

Appendix A
Demographics
Blackman Charter Township Parks & Recreation Plan



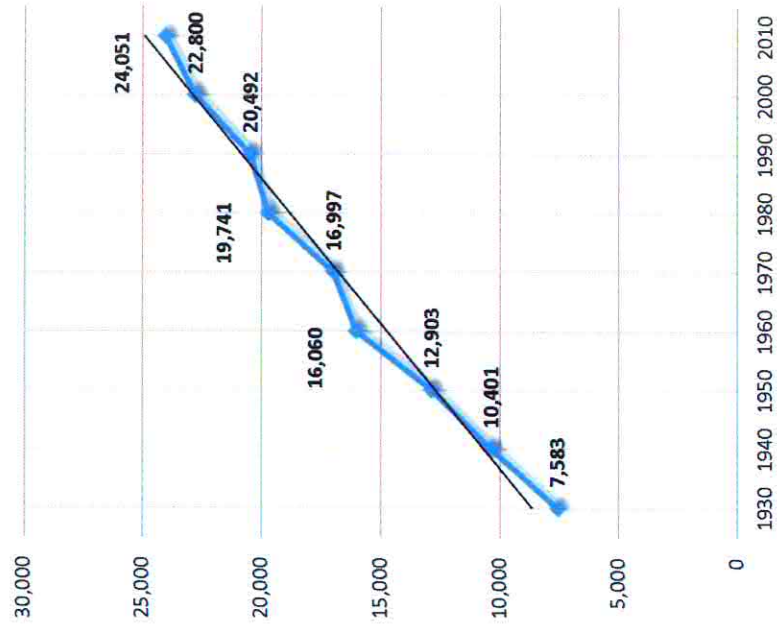
Demographic Composition & Recreation

The demographic composition of Township residents has an effect upon their recreational needs. For example:

- **Population History & Projections** — establish the need for general recreational facilities (standards for which are based upon the size of the population)
- **The Age & Gender of the Population** — further refine the need for general recreational facilities balanced among various age groups and gender interests
- **Household & Family Composition** — further refine the need for general recreational facilities balanced between family-oriented and individual activities
- **Racial & Ethnic Composition** — further refine the need for general recreational facilities balanced among the various interests of racial and ethnic groups
- **The Disabilities of Residents** — establish the need for special recreation facilities and disability accommodations to general recreation facilities
- **Income** — helps to illustrate the need for publicly-funded recreational facilities

Population History

- The Township was home to 24,051 people in 2010, according to the U.S. Census
- The adjacent figure shows that the population:
 - Increased 37.2% between 1930 and 1940
 - Increased 24.1% between 1940 and 1950
 - Increased 24.5% between 1950 and 1960
 - Increased 5.8% between 1960 and 1970
 - Increased 16.1% between 1970 and 1980
 - Increased 3.8% between 1980 and 1990
 - Increased 11.3% between 1990 and 2000
 - Increased 5.5% between 2000 and 2010

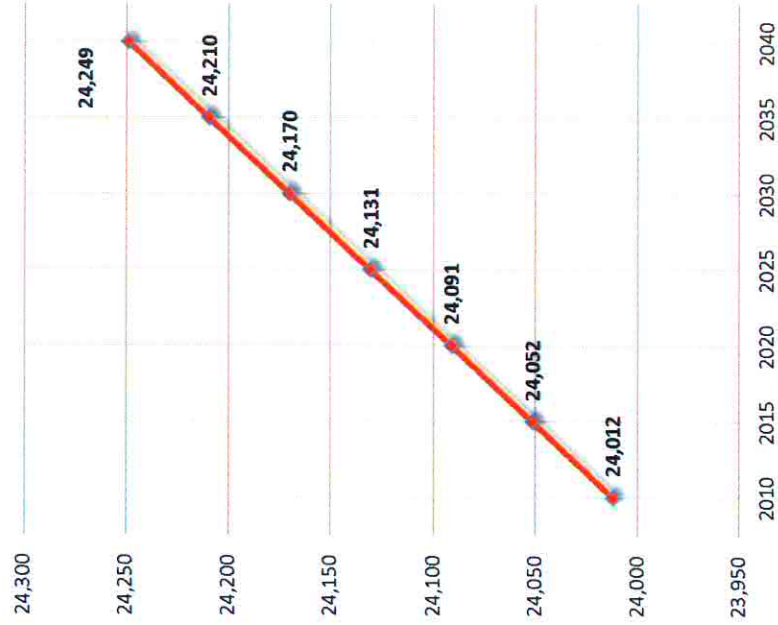


Population Projections

- The population projections utilized in this plan were developed for the Jackson Area Comprehensive Transportation Study (JACTS)
 - The 2040 projections are grounded on historic census trends and Regional Economic Models Inc. (REMII) forecasts
 - REMI data is based upon Cohort Survival methodology and local factors and input
 - The projections are then “straight-lined” in 5-year increments between 2010 and 2040
- Utilizing that information, it is reasonable to expect that:
 - The population will increase 1.0% by 2040
 - The 2015 population for the Township is projected to be 24,052 residents

The American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that the population was 24,024 people between 2010 and 2014

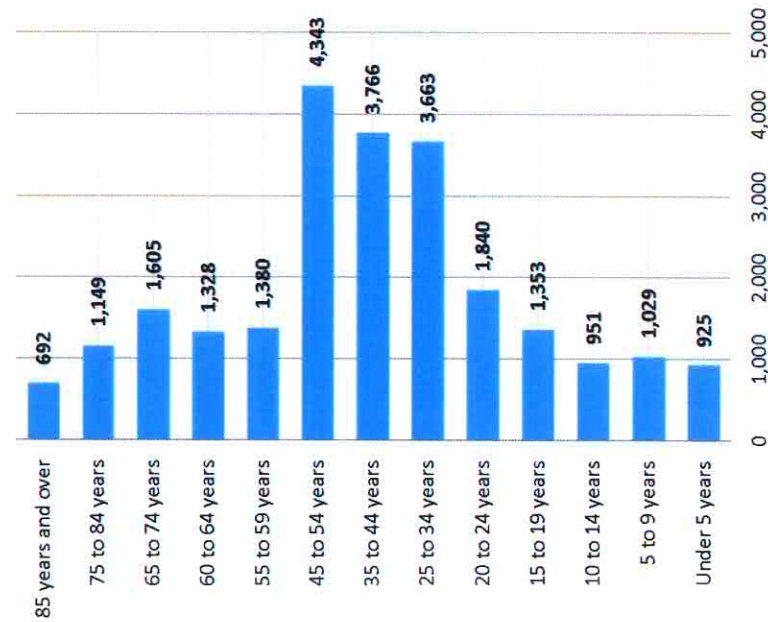
 - The 2035 population is projected to be 24,210



American Community Survey (ACS)

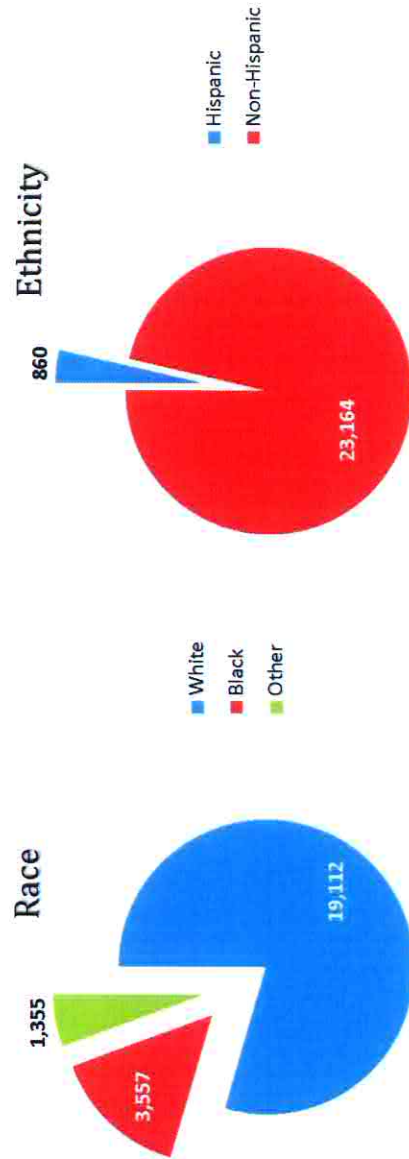
- The use of estimates provided by the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) provides more up-to-date demographics than the decennial census
- Reporting jurisdictions the size of Blackman Township are provided five-year average estimates on a regular basis
- The reporting period available and utilized for this plan is 2010-2014
- The ACS states that "median income divides the income distribution into two equal groups, one having incomes above the median, and [the] other having incomes below the median"
- The ACS states that "mean household income is obtained by dividing total household income by the total number of households"
- The ACS states that per capita income is the average "obtained by dividing aggregate income by [the] total population of an area"

Age & Gender: 2010-2014



- The estimated median age of Blackman Township residents was 41.4 years
- The adjacent figure illustrates Blackman Township's age cohorts:
 - 2.9% — 85 years and over
 - 4.8% — 75 to 84 years
 - 6.7% — 65 to 74 years
 - 5.5% — 60 to 64 years
 - 5.7% — 55 to 59 years
 - 18.1% — 45 to 54 years
 - 15.7% — 35 to 44 years
 - 15.2% — 25 to 34 years
 - 7.7% — 20 to 24 years
 - 5.6% — 15 to 19 years
 - 4.0% — 10 to 14 years
 - 4.3% — 5 to 9 years
 - 3.9% — Under 5 years
- Finally, it is estimated that males comprised 62.2% of the Township's population

Race & Ethnicity: 2010-2014



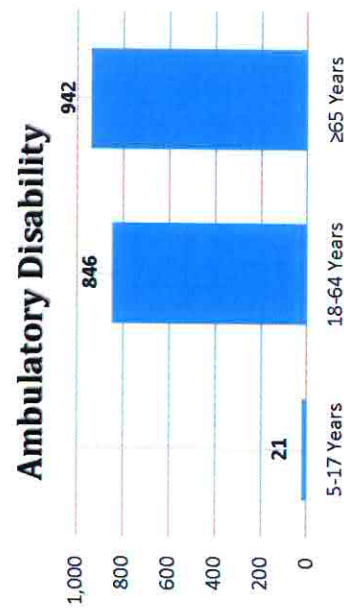
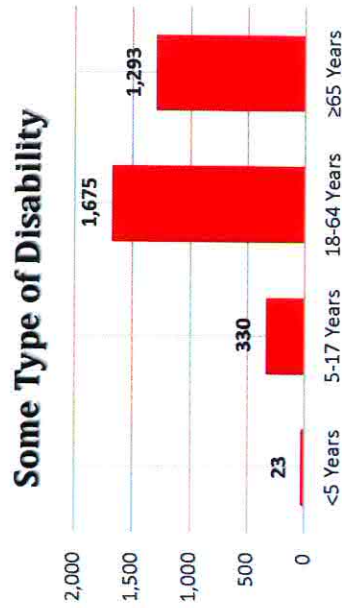
The population of Blackman Township is fairly homogenous, but is home to significant numbers of racial and ethnic minorities

- An estimated 79.6% of the Township's population was white, 14.8% was Black, and 5.6% were members of some other race
- An estimated 3.6% of the Township's residents considered themselves Hispanic

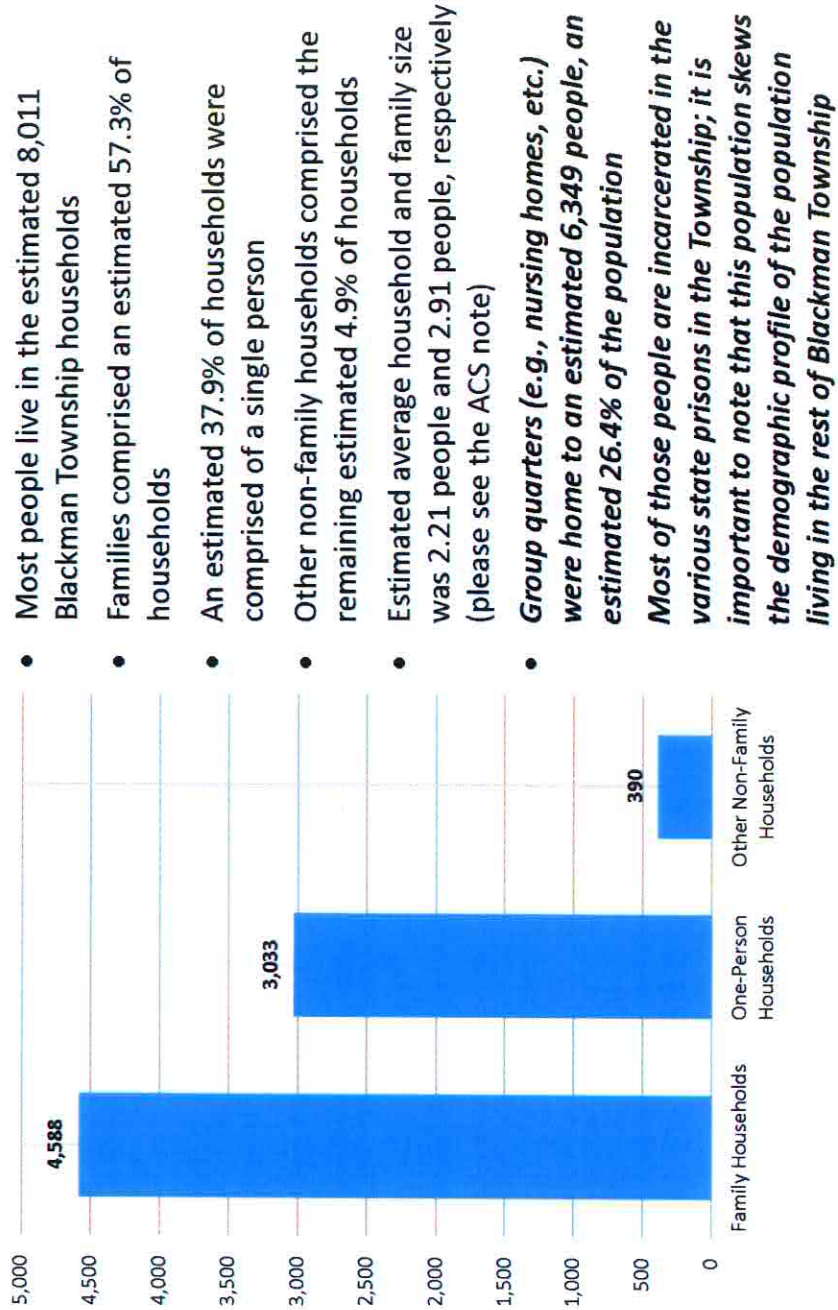
Disabilities: 2010-2014

Disabled residents are a significant component of Blackman Township's population

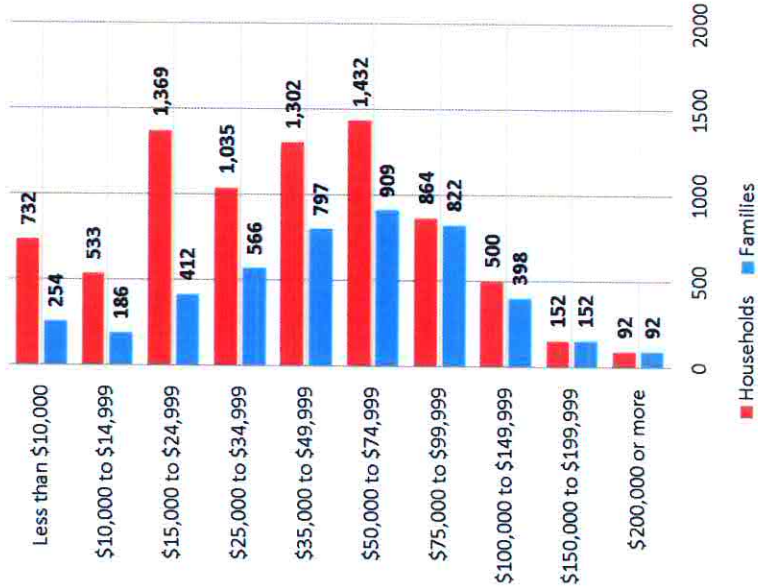
- An estimated 18.8% of Township residents were disabled
- <5 years
 - An estimated 2.5% were disabled
- 5-17 years
 - An estimated 11.2% were disabled
 - An estimated 0.7% had an ambulatory disability
- 18-64 years
 - An estimated 15.8% were disabled
 - An estimated 8.0% had an ambulatory disability
- ≥65 years
 - An estimated 39.7% were disabled
 - An estimated 28.9% had an ambulatory disability



Households & Families: 2010-2014



Household Income: 2010-2014



- Estimated median and mean household income, respectively:
 - Median — \$37,298 (please see the ACS note)
 - Mean — \$49,663
- Estimated median and mean family income:
 - Median — \$52,244 (please see the ACS note)
 - Mean — \$63,399
- Estimated per capita income:
 - Township — \$18,230 (please see the ACS note)
- Estimated median and mean non-family income:
 - Median — \$23,678 (please see the ACS note)
 - Mean — \$29,409

Appendix B
Park and Recreation Survey Results
Blackman Charter Township Parks & Recreation Plan



November 1, 2016

BLACKMAN TOWNSHIP PARK & RECREATION SURVEY

Blackman Township is in the process of updating its Park & Recreation plan and would like input from the public to help determine priorities for the future.

On behalf of the Township Board and Parks Committee, **THANK YOU**

PLEASE CIRCLE AND COMMENT WHERE APPROPRIATE.

1. Do you know the Township has a park (Rod Mills)with playground areas, ball fields, soccer fields, horse shoe pits and trails? Yes No
2. Have you or your family visited Rod Mills Park? No. Yes If yes how often?
Per Week 1.....2.....3.....4+ **or Month** 1.....2.....3.....4+ **or Year** 1.....2.....3.....4+
3. Please rate the condition of the equipment, grounds, courts, and diamonds.
Great Adequate Needs improvement.
5. Over the past decade, would you say the quality of the park facilities has increased, decreased, or remained constant?
Increased Decreased Remained Constant Don't know
6. Do you utilize Park facilities for individualized use such as exercise or for family activities?
Primarily individualized Activities Primarily family activities
A mixture of both I do not use the Park
7. Have you ever held a family or business event at Rod Mills Park? Yes NO
IF YES, What was the event?

8. If you have used the park, did you find it normally clean?
Yes Marginal No
9. Have you felt safe when at the park?
Yes Marginal No If no, why not?
10. What activities have you or your family participated in at Rod Mills Park? Please check.
Walking _____ Other: Please elaborate
Pavilion _____
Playground _____
Baseball _____
Soccer _____
Picnic _____
11. Would you hold a family or business event at a Blackman Township recreational facility? Yes
No Please explain why not.

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November 1, 2016

BLACKMAN TOWNSHIP PARK & RECREATION SURVEY

12. How important do you feel the presence of recreational facilities is within the Blackman Township Community?

Little to no importance 1 2 3 4 5 High Level of importance.

13. In your opinion, what level of priority should the recreational facilities take in terms of tax dollars spent on these areas?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

14. Please prioritize specific improvements you would like to have made to the Park facilities.

Better restrooms Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

Improve ball fields Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

Improved trails Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

Improved visibility from the road. Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

Improved picnic facilities Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

Additional playground options Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

Other? Please comment

15. Should the Township work to connect with the Grand River Arts Walk and the Lakeland Trails?

These are outside of the Park. Yes No

If Yes, What priority should this have?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 High

16. Should the Township look to create kayak / canoe access points to the Grand River?

Yes No If Yes, what priority should this have?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 High

Would you support a millage of .1 to support Park improvements, trail improvements in and outside of the park, an access point to Grand River for kayak & canoe or other recreational improvements? The Cost to a homeowner who's house has a taxable value of 50,000 (100,000 sale value) would be five dollars. (\$5.00).

Yes No

This would raise approximately \$52,000 per year for the Township to support Park & Rec maintenance and improvements and could **only** be used for Parks & Rec.

Please share other comments to assist the Township in meeting the needs of the Community by phone, 788-4345, by e mail, Ppreston@blackmantwp.com or a note on this questionnaire sent to the office at 1990 W. Parnall Rd., Jackson, MI 49201

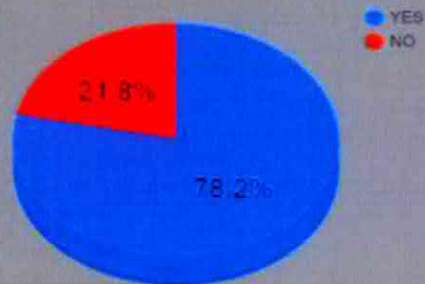
THANK YOU.

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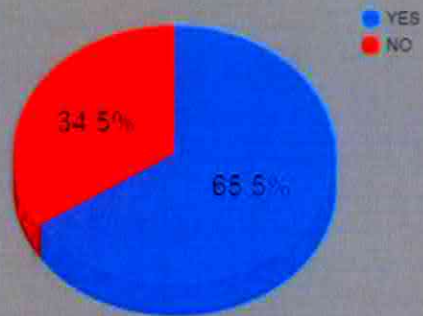
BLACKMAN TOWNSHIP PARK AND RECREATION SURVEY TABULATION RESULTS

November 30, 2016

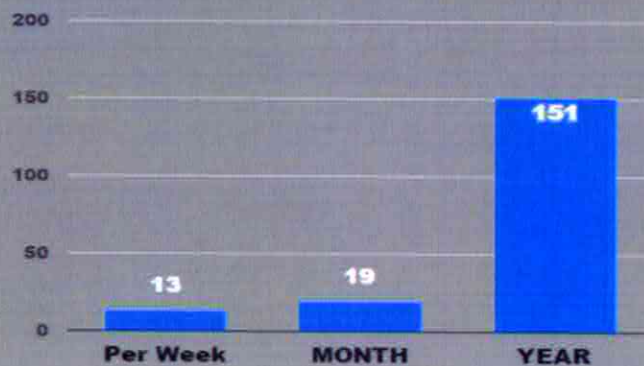
1. DO YOU KNOW THE TOWNSHIP HAS A PARK (ROD MILLS)WITH PLAYGROUND AREAS, BALL FIELDS, SOCCER FIELDS, HORSESHOE PITS AND TRAILS?



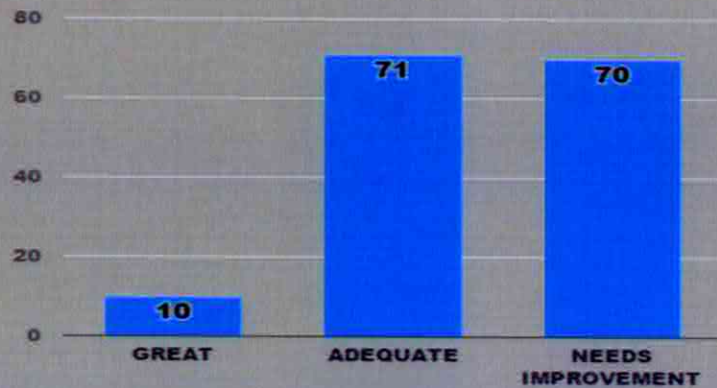
2. HAVE YOU OR YOUR FAMILY VISITED ROD MILLS PARK?



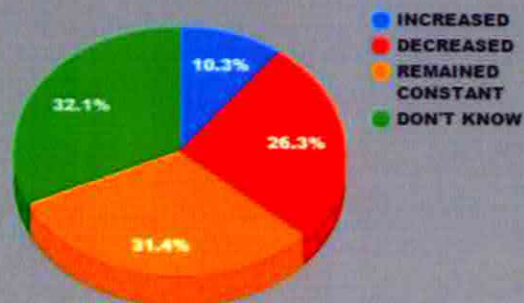
2A .HOW OFTEN TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY VISITED ROD MILLS PARK? (total number)



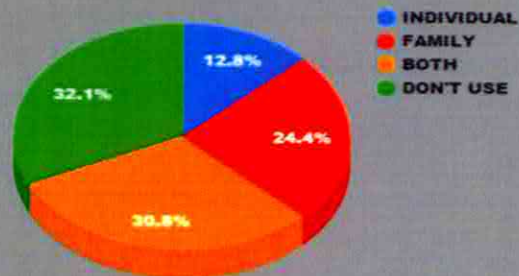
3. PLEASE RATE THE CONDITION OF THE EQUIPMENT, GROUNDS, COURTS, AND DIAMONDS. (total number)



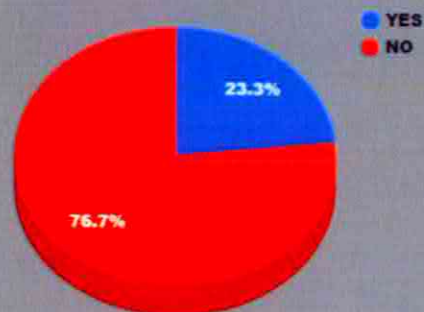
5. OVER THE PAST DECADE, WOULD YOU SAY THE QUALITY OF THE PARK FACILITIES HAS INCREASED, DECREASED, OR REMAINED CONSTANT?

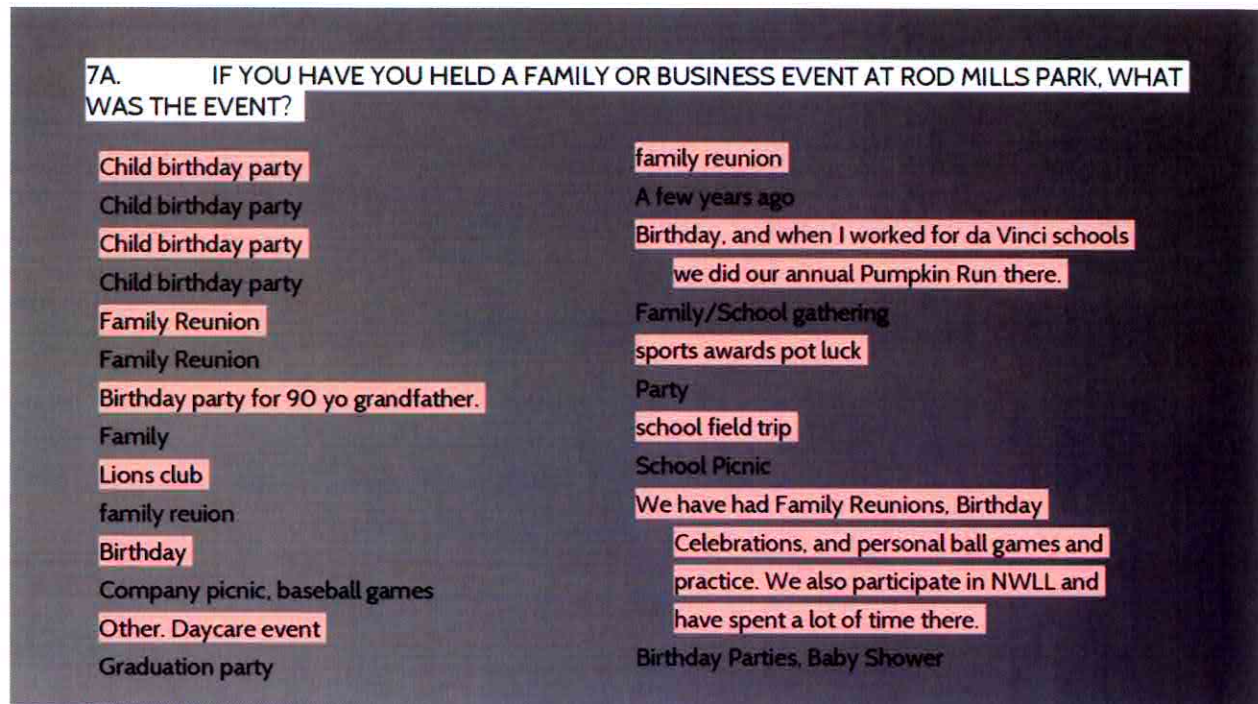


6. DO YOU UTILIZE PARK FACILITIES FOR INDIVIDUALIZED USE SUCH AS EXERCISE OR FOR FAMILY ACTIVITIES?

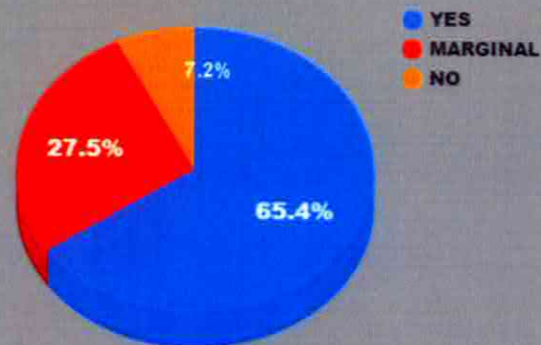


7. HAVE YOU EVER HELD A FAMILY OR BUSINESS EVENT AT ROD MILLS PARK?





9. HAVE YOU FELT SAFE WHEN AT THE PARK?



IF YOU HAVE NOT FELT SAFE IN THE PARK, WHY NOT?

Too secluded, with no fence the woods are creepy

finding knives on the ground and just the people who go there make me feel uncomfortable

Not very crowded. The park is hidden back in the woods.

I feel it is very isolated.

Overgrown brush to secluded

Too secluded and questionable people

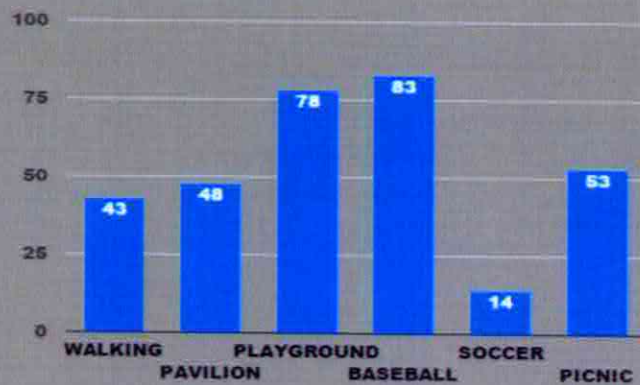
Entrance is obscured. Not visible from road.

Lots of stray cars, and people wondering around. Since it is so far back in the woods, I did not feel that if I called for help, someone could hear me, so I never went to that park when my kids were little except for little league games.

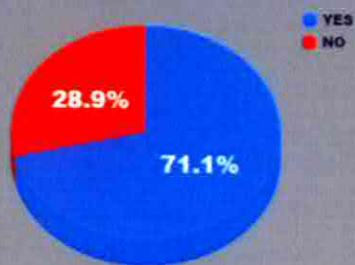
too secluded

The park is very secluded with no security. I would love to go walk or run there but as a female I feel it is not very safe. There also always seems to be people loitering in vehicles there.

10. WHAT ACTIVITIES HAVE YOU OR YOUR FAMILY PARTICIPATED IN AT ROD MILLS PARK?



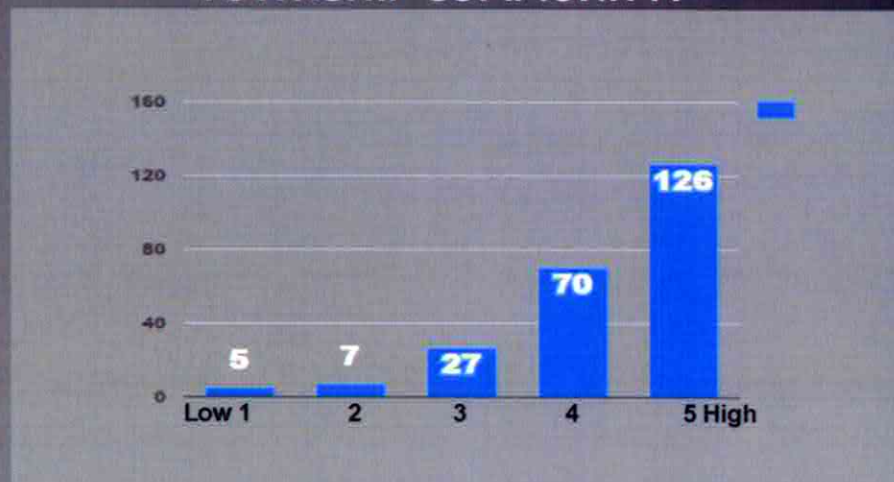
11. WOULD YOU HOLD A FAMILY OR BUSINESS EVENT AT A BLACKMAN TOWNSHIP RECREATIONAL FACILITY?



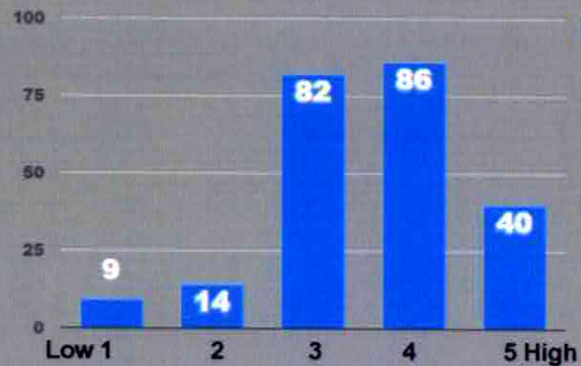
IF YOU WOULD NOT HOLD A FAMILY OR BUSINESS EVENT AT A BLACKMAN TOWNSHIP RECREATIONAL FACILITY? PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY NOT.

- ▶ I am not from the area, I work here only.
- ▶ There is a place closer to our home.
- ▶ I would hold my events at my home as I am able to entertain a large number of people
- ▶ Not sure I would feel safe if I wasn't there with all the other baseball families.
- ▶ I don't have a lot of family in the immediate area so family functions are usually held in our hometown.
- ▶ too far off the road
- ▶ I do not like how it is behind the woods. It makes it feel unsafe
- ▶ would be more inclined to go to other Jackson area parks with walking path and ice cream shop
- ▶ I feel that there are higher quality parks to have events at. There seems to be minimal things to do there that meet the needs of my family. We only go when they play baseball there. I feel that only one field has the quality as others in the area.
- ▶ I have other places to do that which are more convenient.
- ▶ I do not normally plan events.
- ▶ Lack of restroom facilities with running water.
- ▶ Weather
- ▶ always trash on the ground and broken and dirty tables
- ▶ No need
- ▶ No need
- ▶ The bathrooms (port-a-johns) are not adequate. They are often very dirty (soiled), and unkept.
- ▶ It's not clean and the tables are old and splintered
- ▶ Run down with poor facilities
- ▶ No clean bathroom, sketchy neighborhood kids hanging around, unpaved entrance or parking lot and it is way too hidden and hard to find behind all of the dead trees out front. Just doesn't feel very nice.
- ▶ Not a facility I would want to use for those events
- ▶ Only one place
- ▶ Need modern bathrooms
- ▶ There's homeless people that stay there. People sit in the parking lot and do drugs.
- ▶ Don't know much about the options.
- ▶ Family events are held at home.
- ▶ The atmosphere and facilities need major improvements.
- ▶ Would use a space closer to my home.
- ▶ I don't host business events and family would come to my house for events

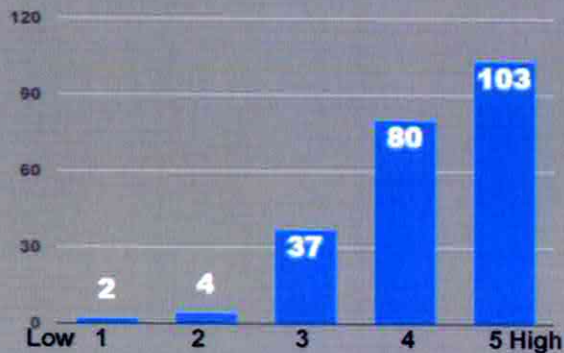
12. HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU FEEL THE PRESENCE OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IS WITHIN THE BLACKMAN TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY?



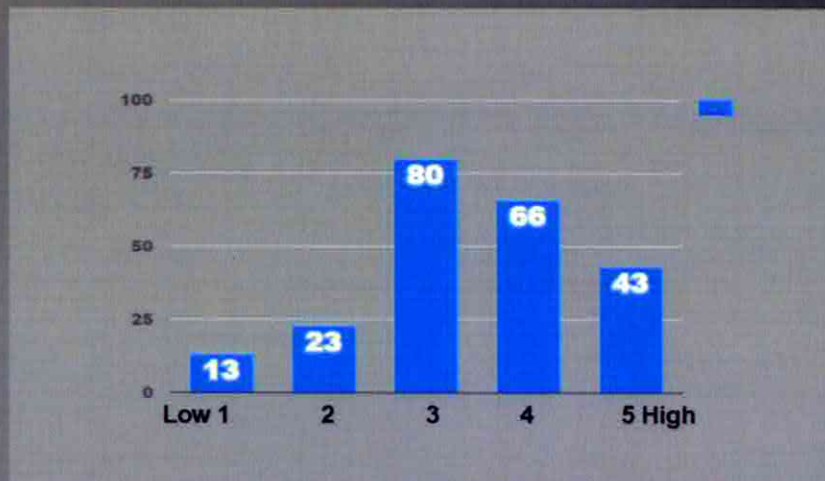
13. IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT LEVEL OF PRIORITY SHOULD THE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES TAKE IN TERMS OF TAX DOLLARS SPENT ON THESE AREAS?



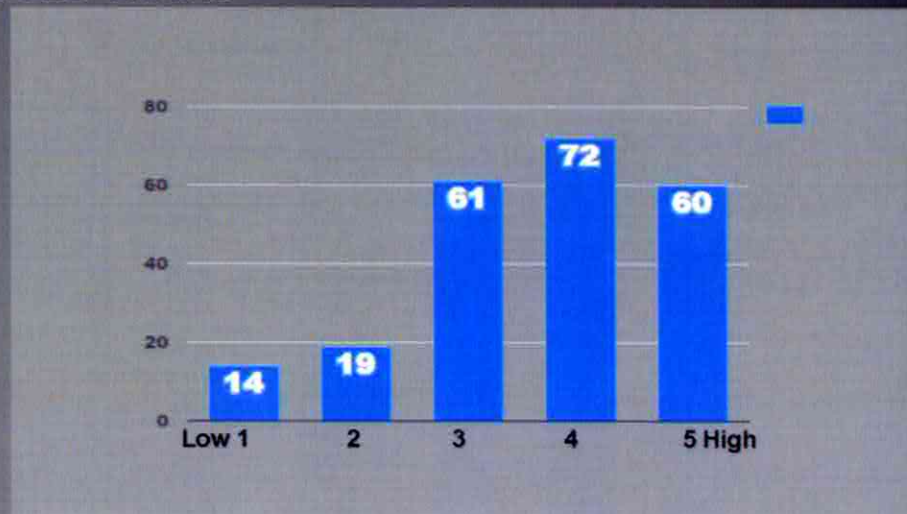
14. PLEASE PRIORITIZE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MADE TO THE PARK FACILITIES: BETTER RESTROOMS



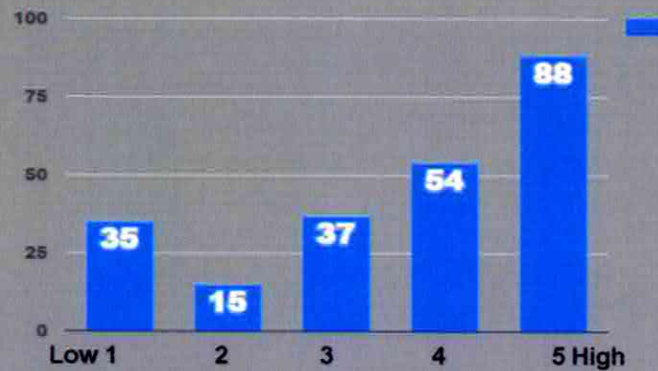
14. PLEASE PRIORITIZE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MADE TO THE PARK FACILITIES: IMPROVE BALL FIELDS



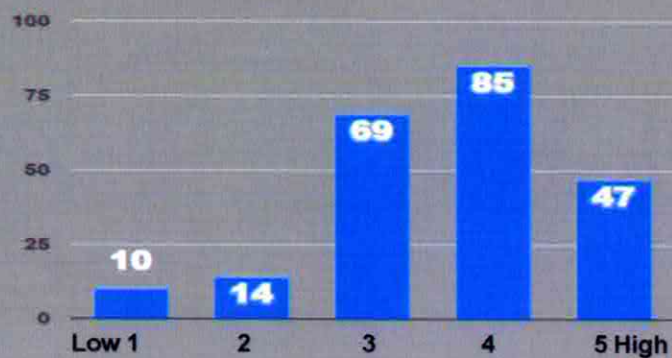
14. PLEASE PRIORITIZE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MADE TO THE PARK FACILITIES: IMPROVED TRAILS



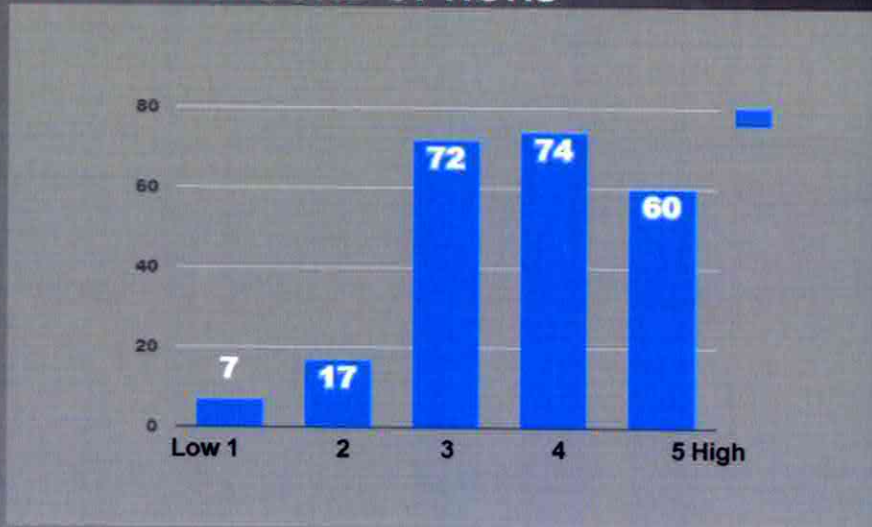
**14. PLEASE PRIORITIZE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MADE TO THE PARK FACILITIES:
IMPROVED VISIBILITY FROM THE ROAD**



**14. PLEASE PRIORITIZE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MADE TO THE PARK FACILITIES:
IMPROVED PICNIC FACILITIES**



14. PLEASE PRIORITIZE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MADE TO THE PARK FACILITIES: ADDITIONAL PLAYGROUND OPTIONS



14. ARE THERE OTHER SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MADE TO THE PARK FACILITIES, PLEASE COMMENT:

Safety -Mentioned 4 times

Better/more seating for baseball diamonds

no

Soccer field

Drive and parking lot. Dusty and bumpy

Playground equipment for handicapped kids

Paved roads

more tables for get togethers

more cops on grounds during the summer time

A good, safe soccer field

Additional Soccer Fields

Paved road/ parking lot at Rod Mills

Walking and bike trails

More available activities. Draw in the community.

Better basketball courts

The park need to be updated. Bathrooms and better visibility from Parnall would be great

Parking

Safety at Rod Mills park...more police drive throughs to check on the facility...it is not visible from the road and the trails are not clearly marked

neader to the road, and better road to the park.

More monitoring/patrolling, there have been some sketchy characters known to associate in and around the outskirts of the park.

parking/driveway improvements

Mountain bike trails would be spectacular (if possible).

Hiking trails/bike trails would be awesome

biking/walking paths

A climbing area,Jungle Gym

Security

Trash, including dumpster service and clean up

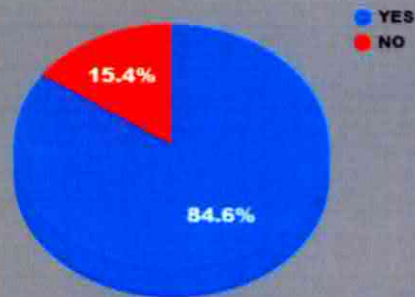
Dog run area

actual bathrooms more police or safety officer presence to deter illegal activities at the park

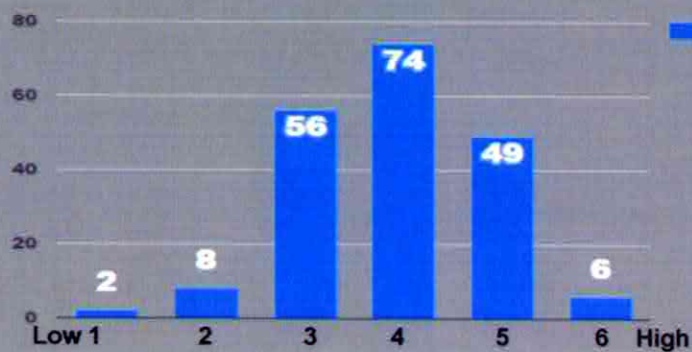
Would love to see the landscaping more disability friendly... potentially access to the older child playground equipment area? Some flowering bushes etc would be nice.

Better basket ball court

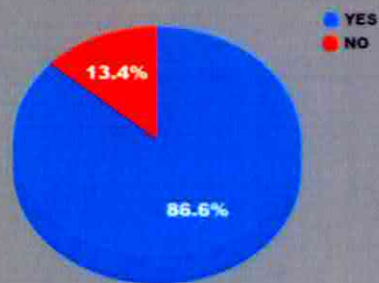
15. SHOULD THE TOWNSHIP WORK TO CONNECT WITH THE GRAND RIVER ARTS WALK AND THE LAKELAND TRAILS? THESE ARE OUTSIDE OF THE PARK.



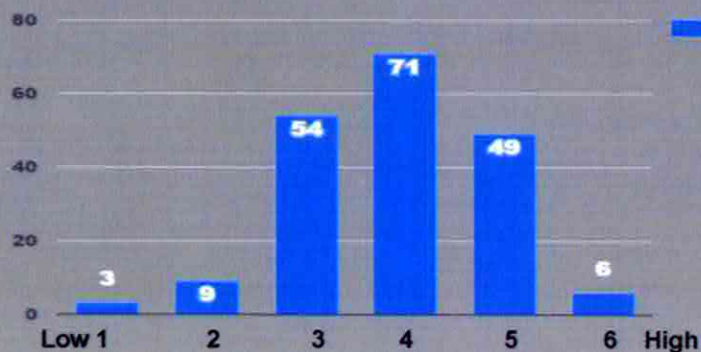
15 A. IF YOU FEEL THE TOWNSHIP SHOULD WORK TO CONNECT WITH THE GRAND RIVER ARTS WALK AND THE LAKELAND TRAILS? WHAT PRIORITY SHOULD THIS HAVE?



16. SHOULD THE TOWNSHIP LOOK TO CREATE KAYAK / CANOE ACCESS POINTS TO THE GRAND RIVER?

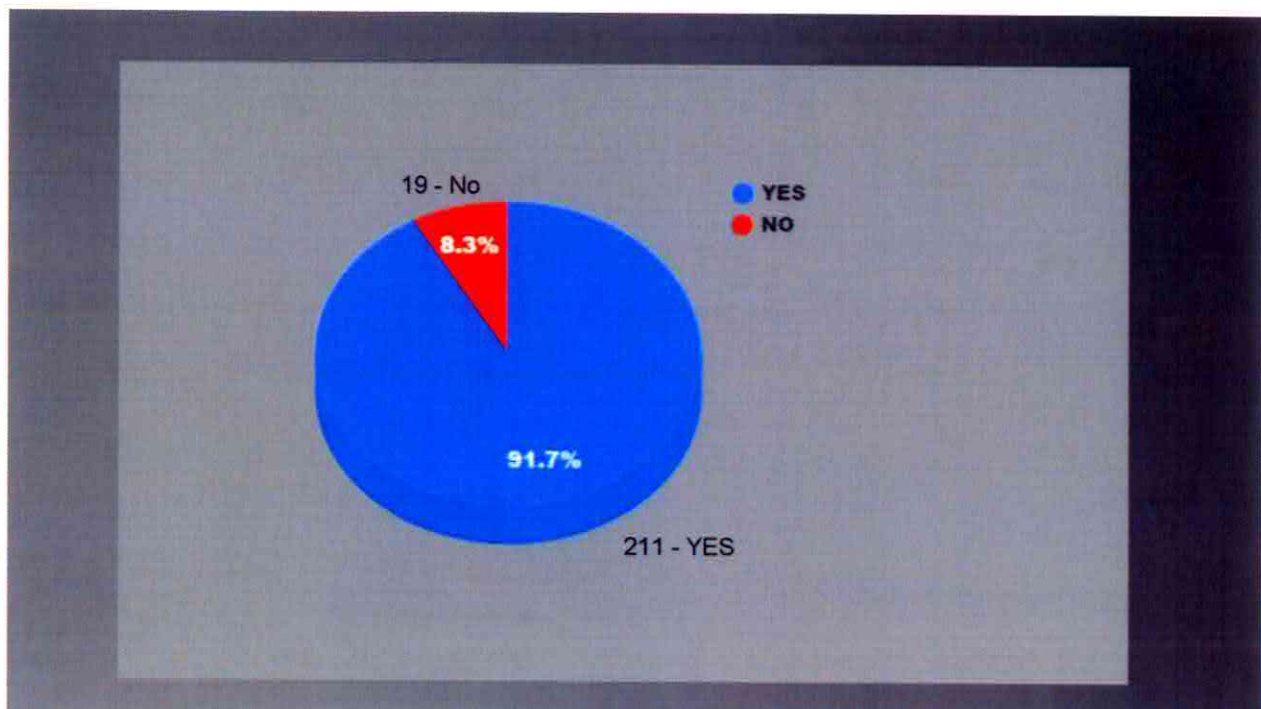


16.A. IF THE TOWNSHIP SHOULD LOOK TO CREATE KAYAK / CANOE ACCESS POINTS TO THE GRAND RIVER, WHAT PRIORITY SHOULD THIS HAVE?



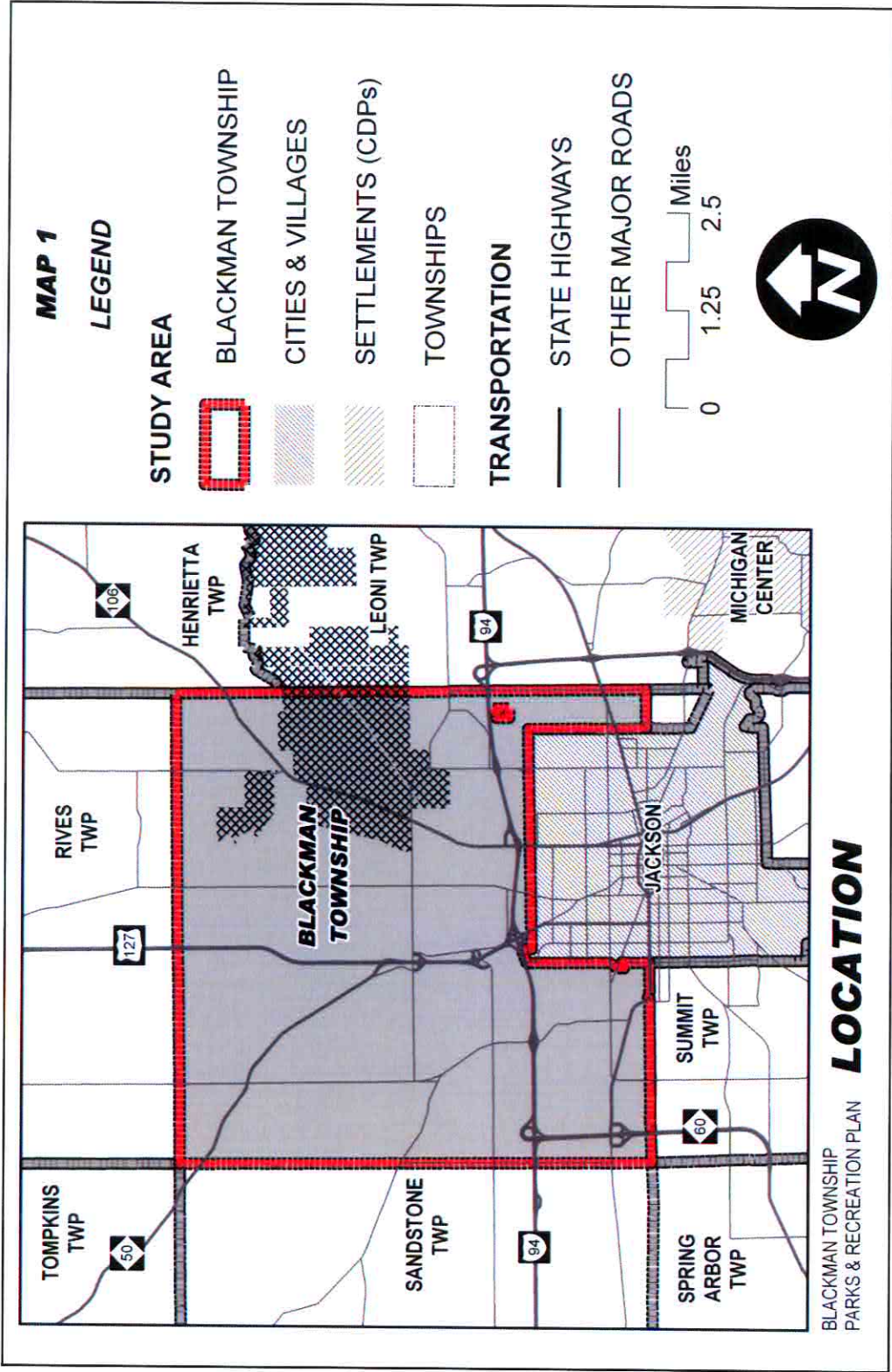
WOULD YOU SUPPORT A MILLAGE OF .1 TO SUPPORT PARK IMPROVEMENTS, TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS IN AND OUTSIDE OF THE PARK, AN ACCESS POINT TO GRAND RIVER FOR KAYAK & CANOE OR OTHER RECREATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS?

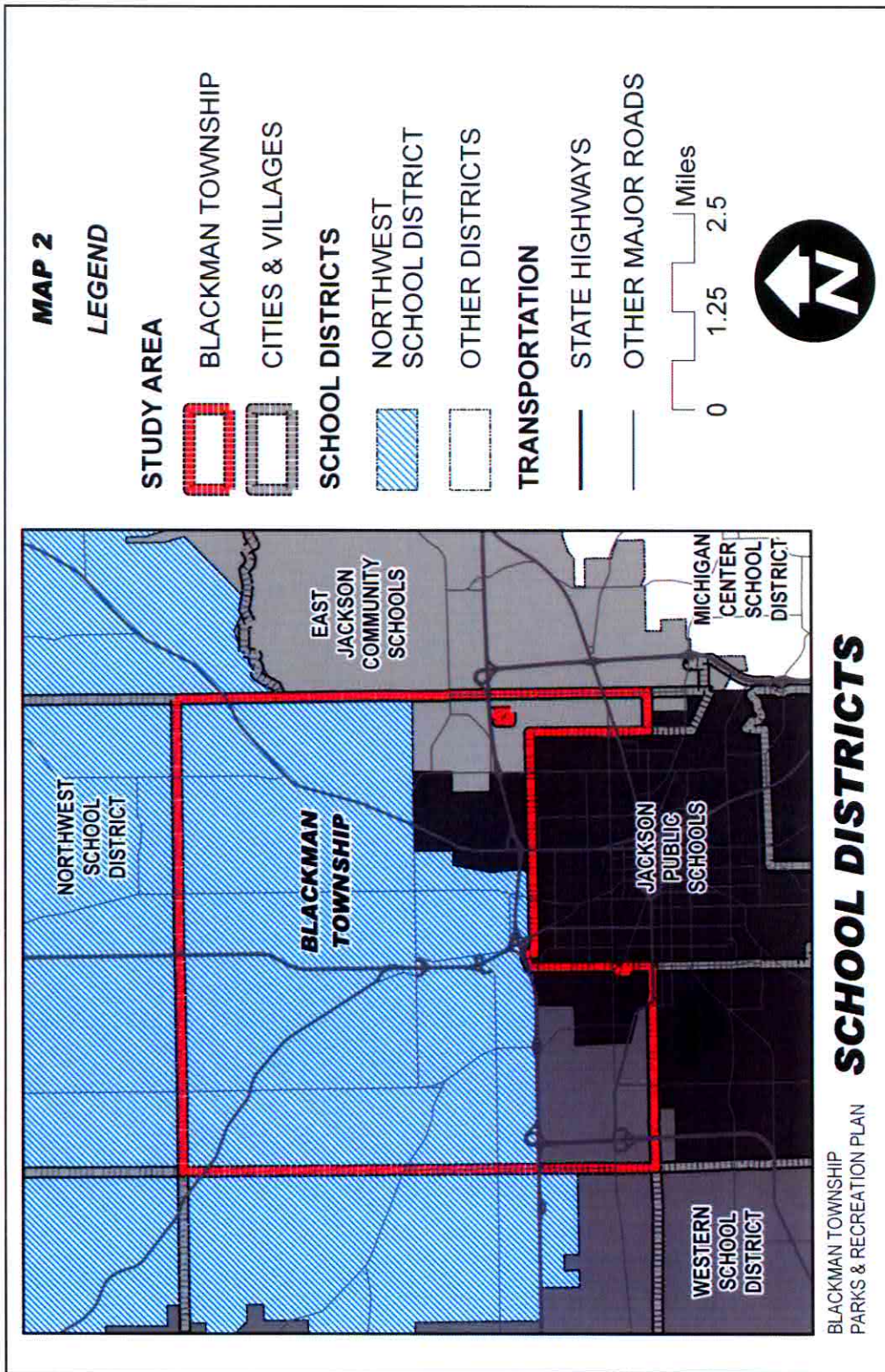
THE COST TO A HOMEOWNER WHO'S HOUSE HAS A TAXABLE VALUE OF 50,000 (100,000 SALE VALUE) WOULD BE FIVE DOLLARS. (\$5.00).THIS WOULD RAISE APPROXIMATELY \$52,000 PER YEAR FOR THE TOWNSHIP TO SUPPORT PARK & REC MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS AND COULD ONLY BE USED FOR PARKS & REC.

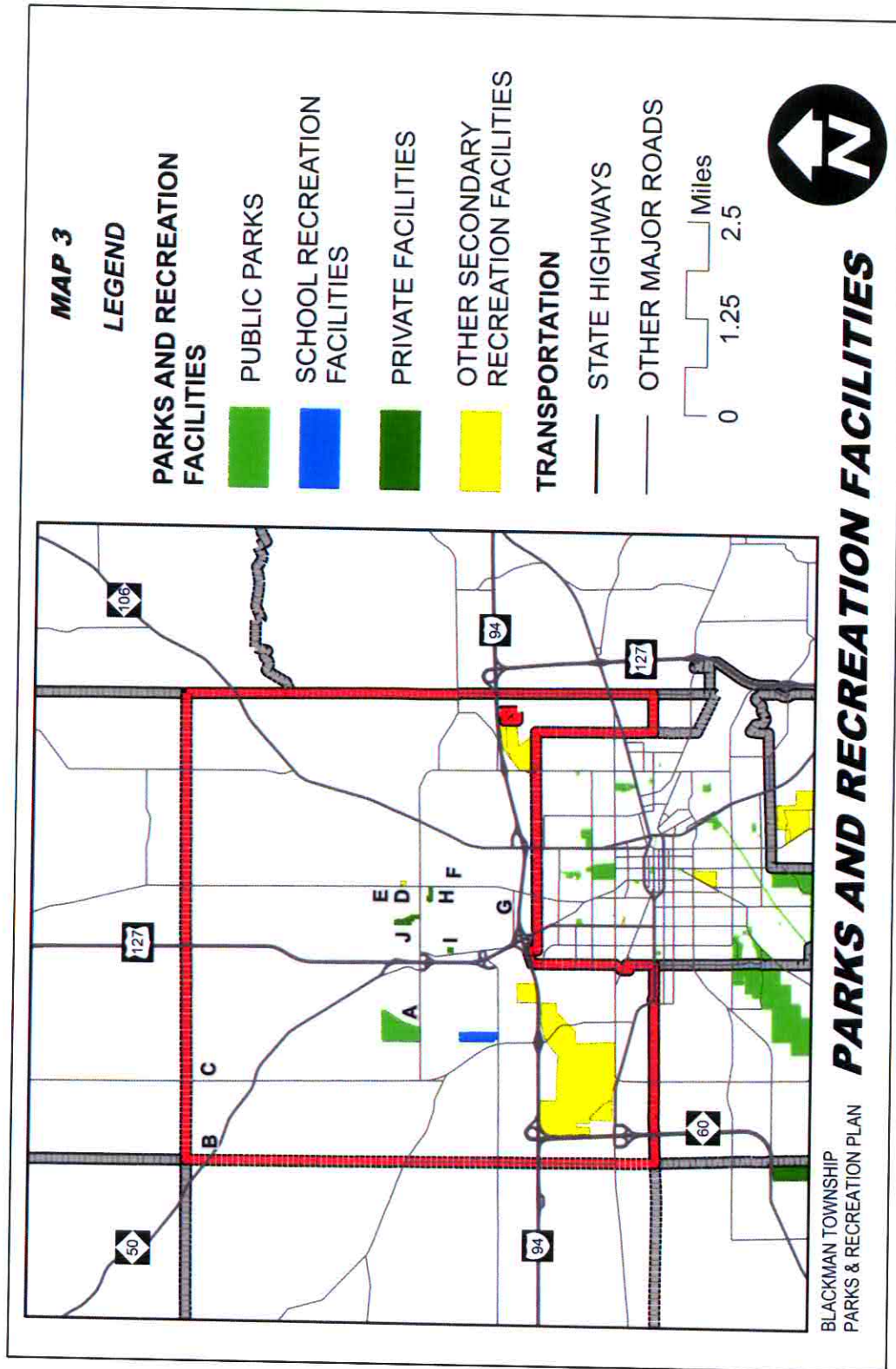


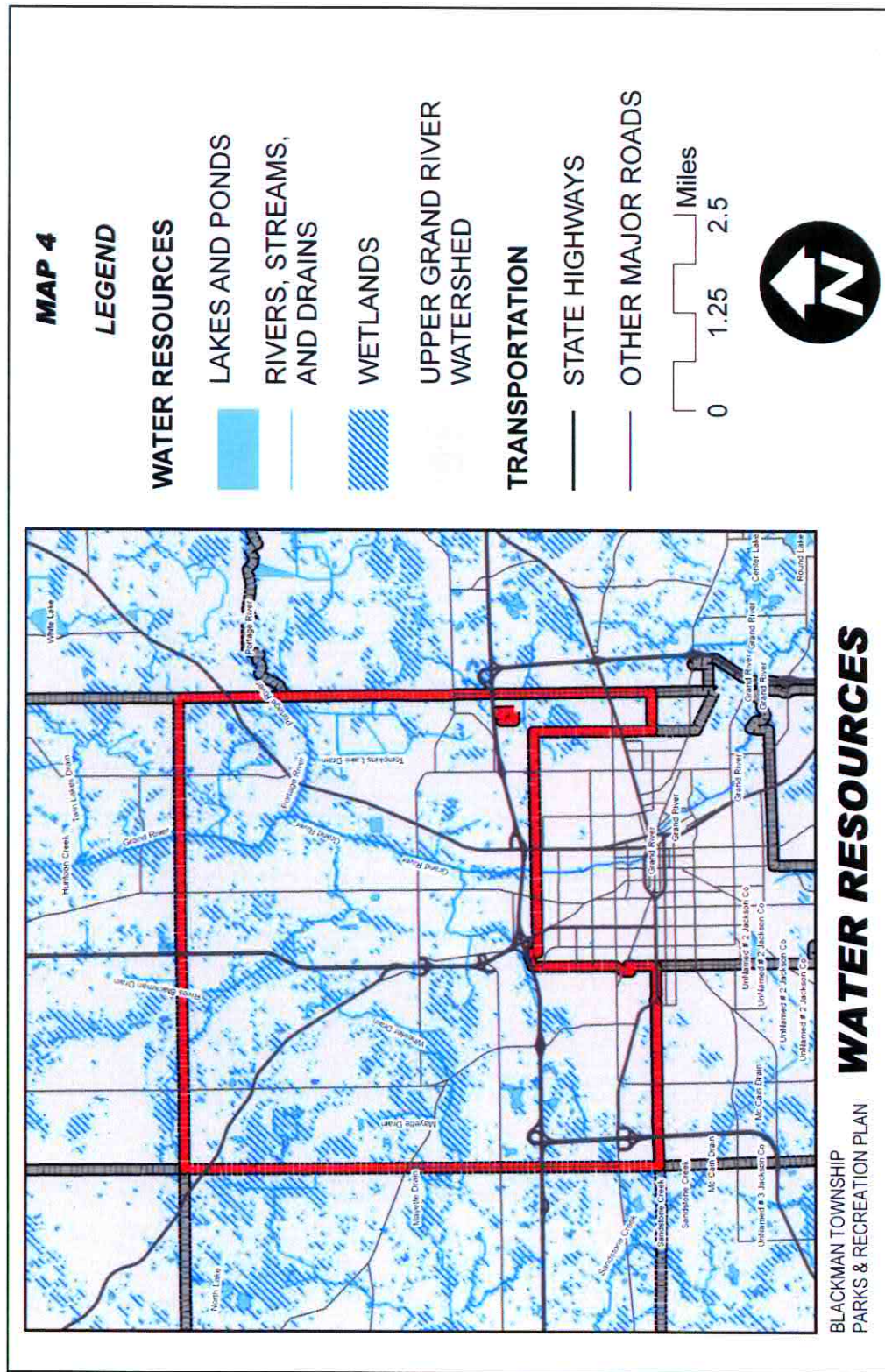
Appendix C
Maps
Blackman Charter Township Parks & Recreation Plan

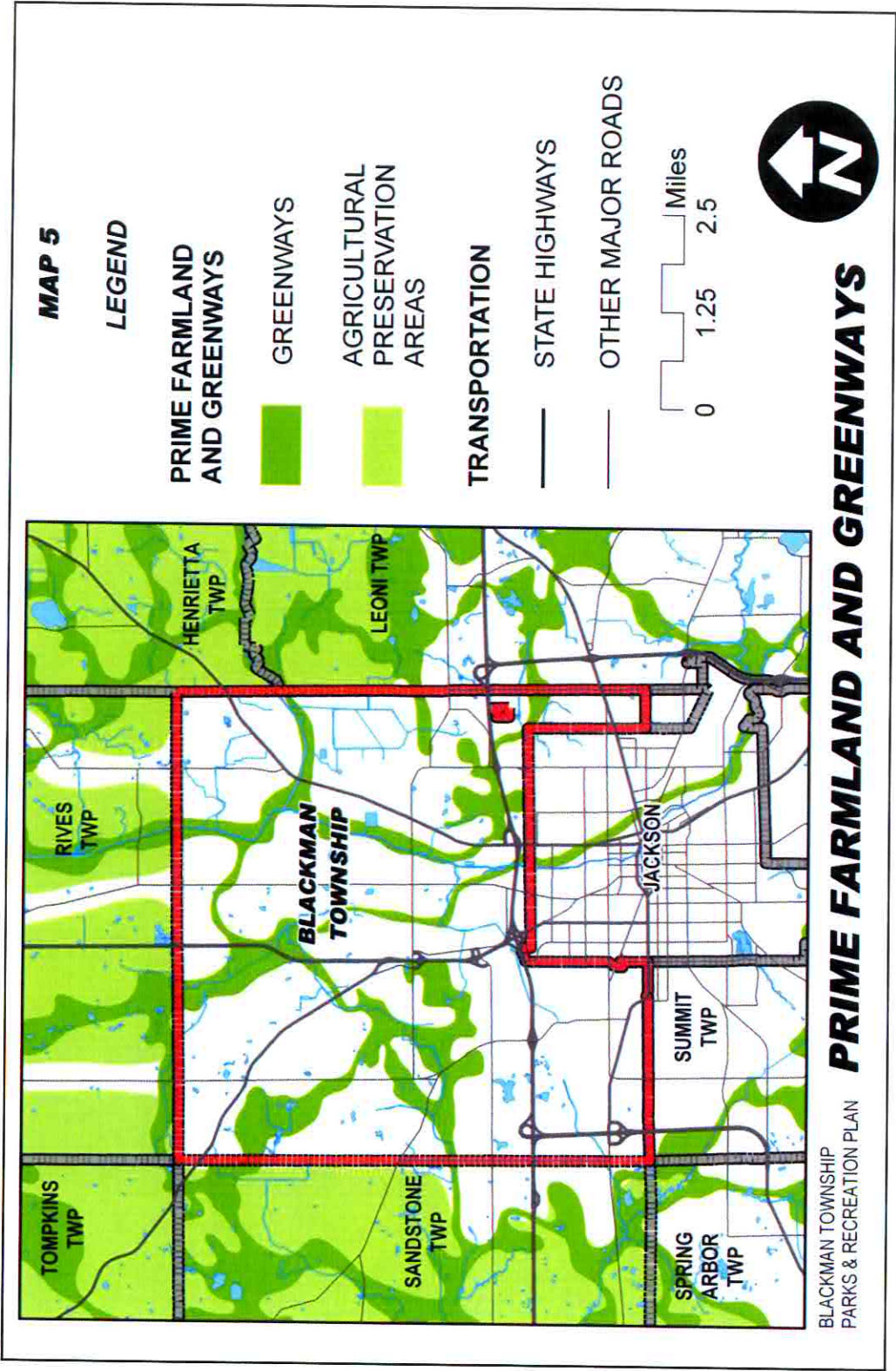


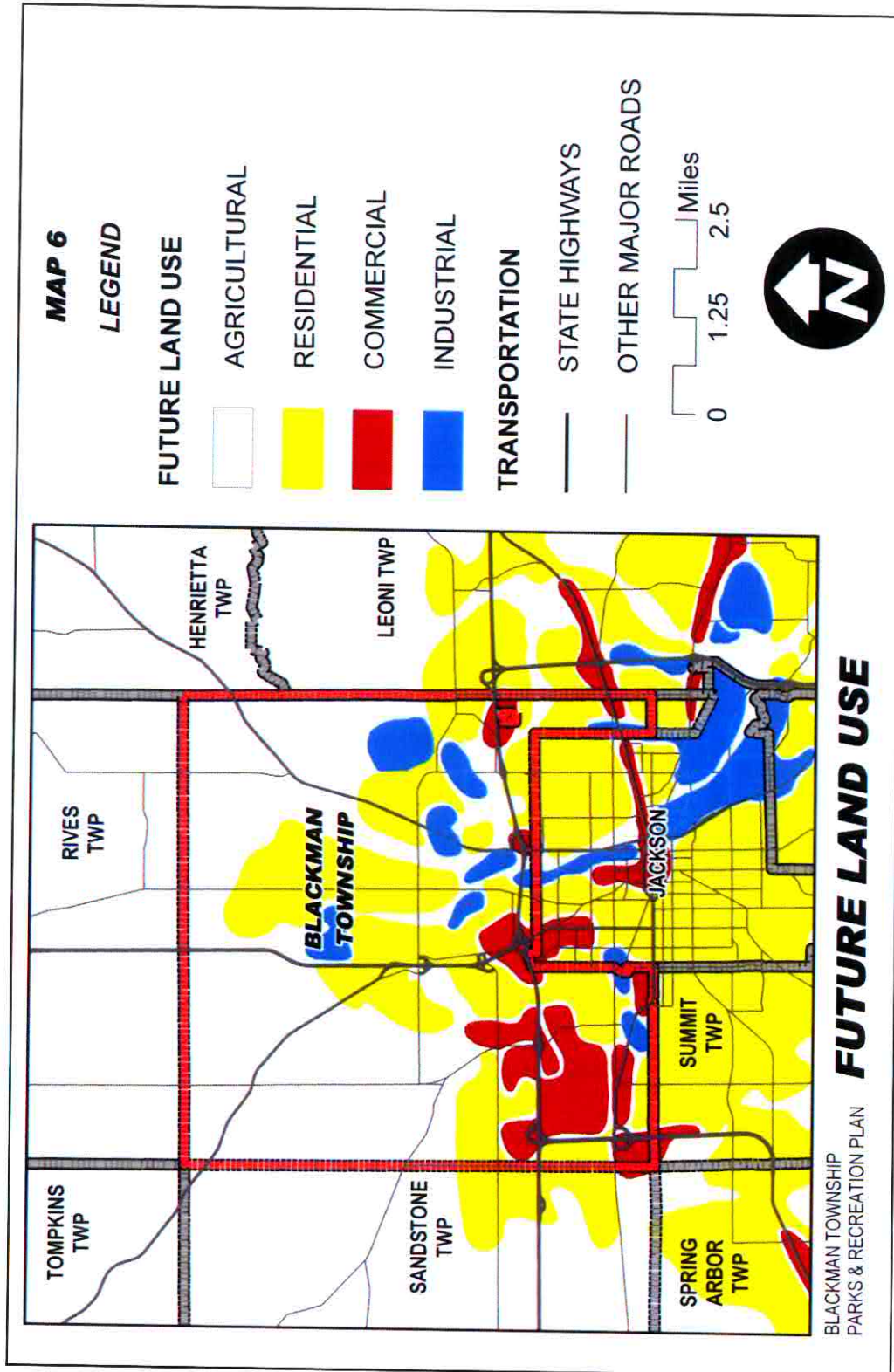


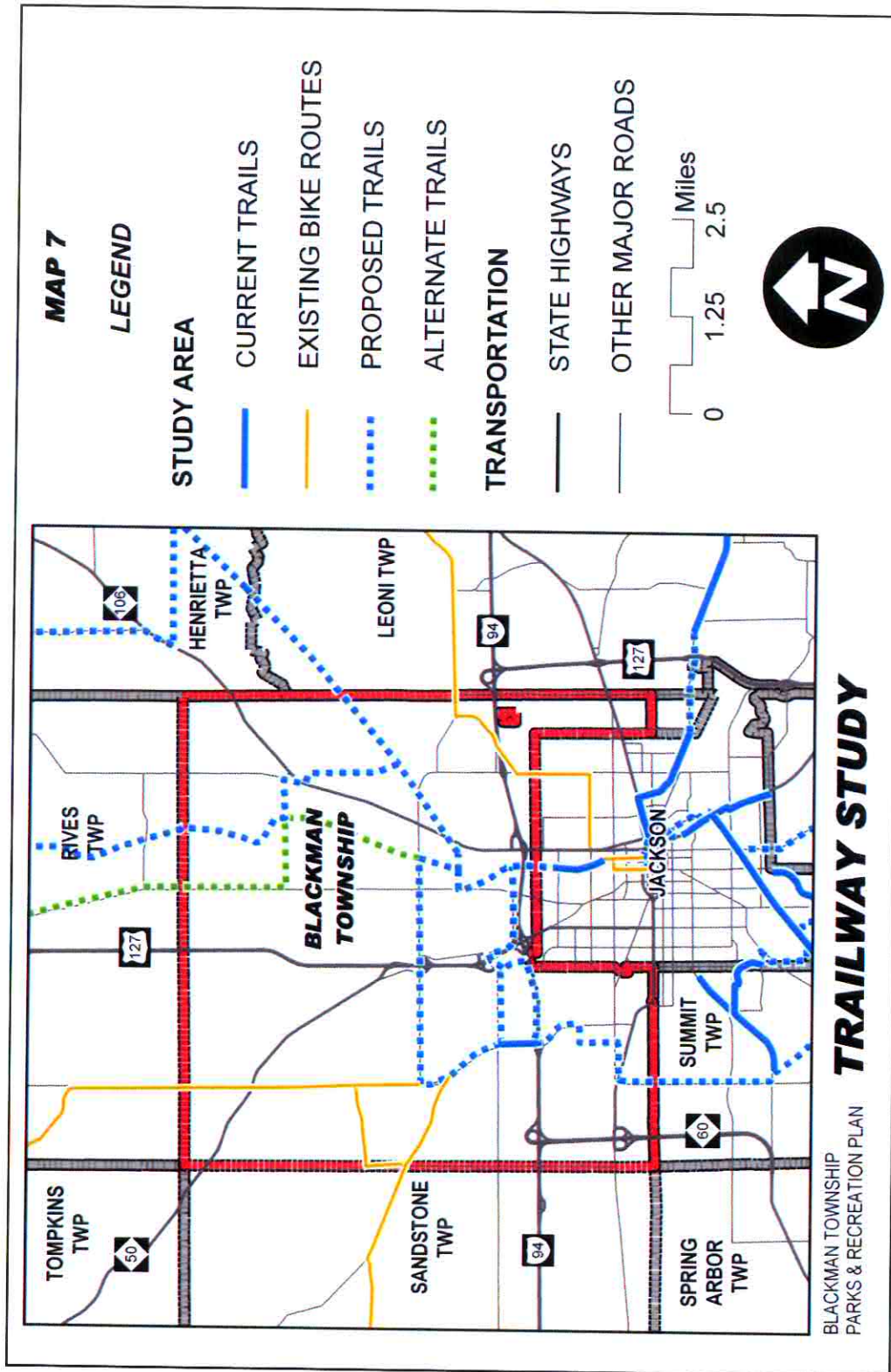


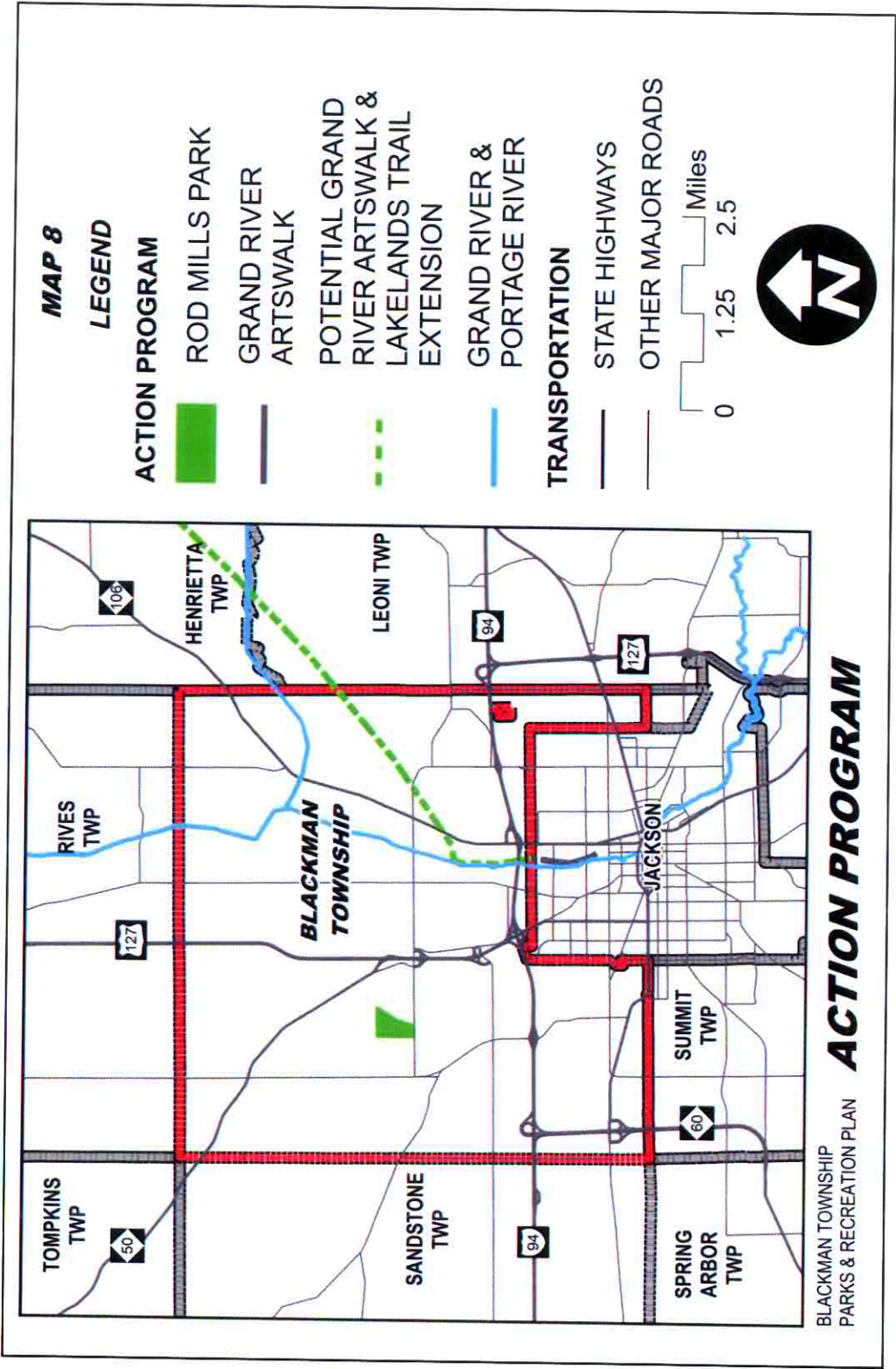




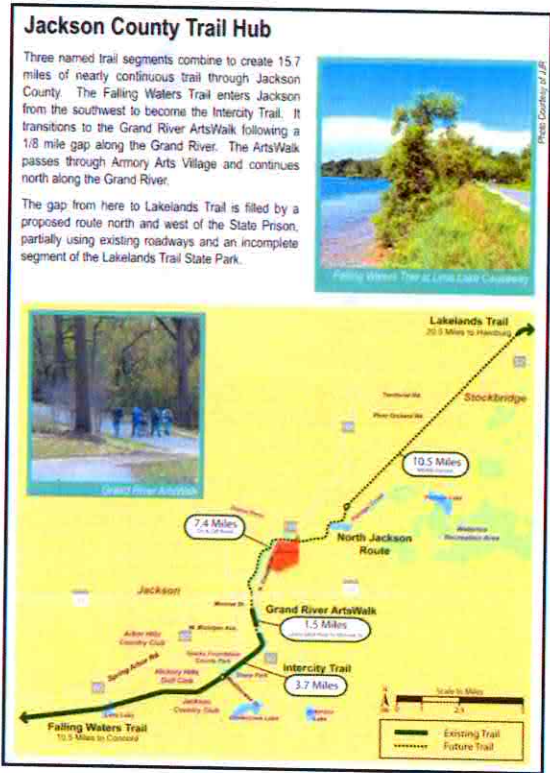
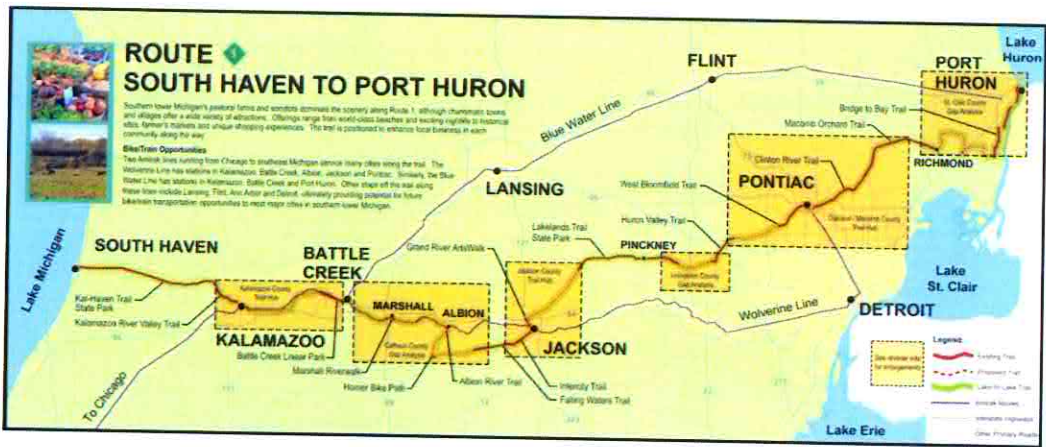






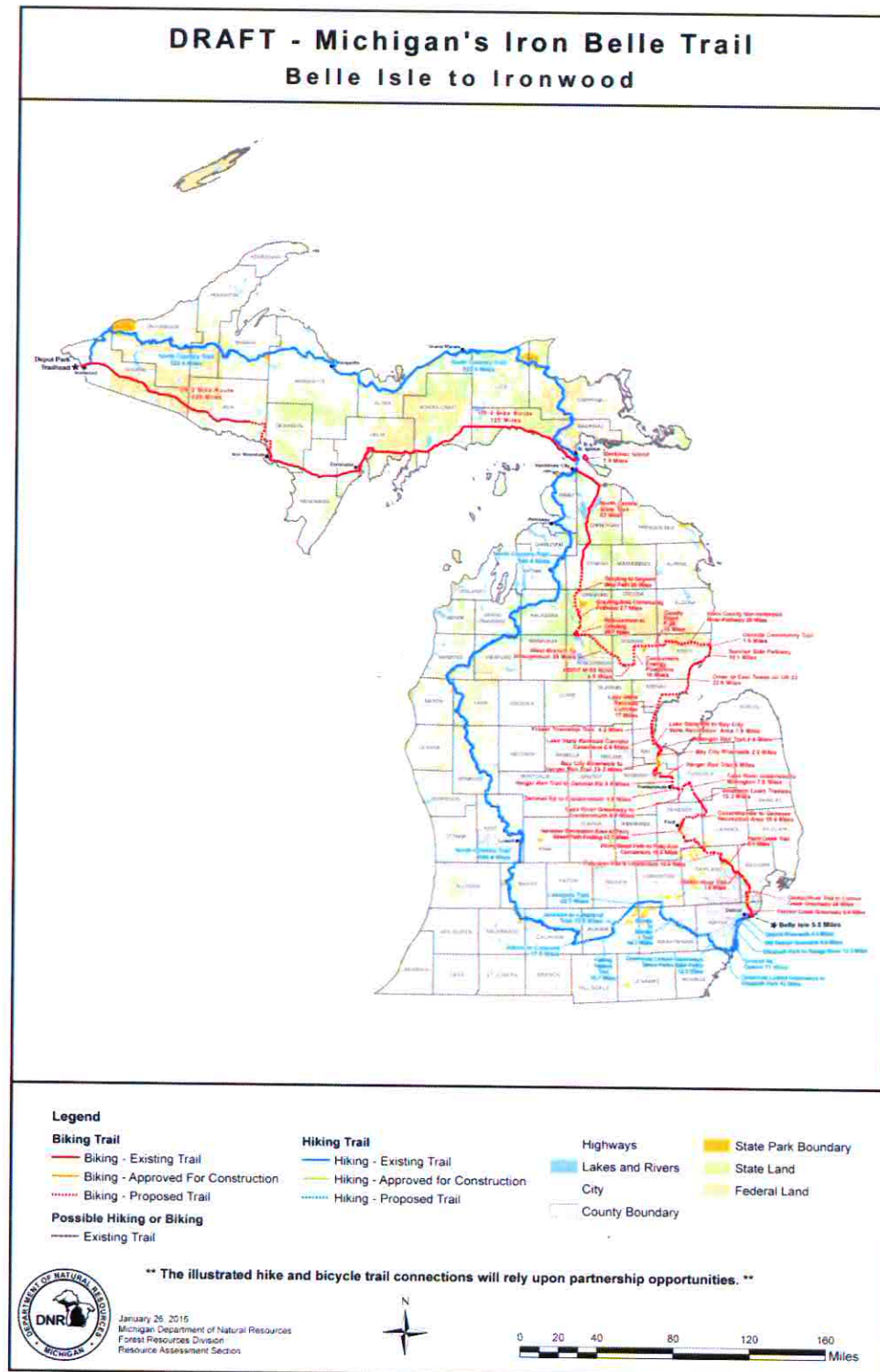


Great Lake-to-Lake (GLTL) Trails



The Great Lake-to-Lake Trails concept and the above graphics are the creation of the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance.

Iron Belle Trail



Appendix D
Trails & Trail Planning & Programming
Blackman Charter Township Parks & Recreation Plan



Blackman Township is partnering with other municipalities and governmental agencies as well as non-profit advocacy groups on the developing network of trails throughout Jackson County and beyond. This appendix provides a countywide context of current trail planning efforts.

Water Trails (“Blueways”)

Various blueways exist (in some fashion) along waterways in Jackson County. Water trails are maintained along the Grand River as it traverses Jackson County. Smaller blueways are also located along portions of the River Raisin and the Kalamazoo River.

Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT)

The Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT) currently maintains various routes (i.e., trips) along the Grand River as it flows through Jackson County. GREAT also sponsors canoe and kayak “paddles” each year which utilize those and other routes. Visit www.great-mi.org to learn more about future “paddles” and other GREAT events.

GREAT also owns land in the Birdland Subdivision off of Lansing Avenue on the Grand River. The following is a short master plan for that property:

Objectives:

To improve the environmental health of the river; to create public paddle boat access; to build equipment storage; and to provide educational opportunities for the public to learn about the river’s historical modifications and present natural environment.

Projects:

1. River Re-channelization:

- a. Ultimately, GREAT plans to restore some of the present river (officially named the “Grand River Drain”) flow into an old oxbow, which was the original path of the river prior to the straightening of the river bed in 1920. This would create an island, breaking-up much of the unnatural flow of the present river and improving its environmental health.
- b. GREAT will seek a grant to develop an engineering proposal which meets all regulatory requirements. The plan must be approved by the MDEQ and U. S. Army Corp of Engineers. MDEQ grant funding is dependent upon demonstration of one or more expected improvements: habitat, water quality, sediment reduction, flood control, and recreation. If approval is obtained, then additional public and/or private grants will be sought to implement the plan.

2. River Access:

- a. As there are no nearby locations for public river access, the public would greatly benefit from boat access through GREAT’s land. To avoid tree removal, a power line clearing offers a likely path for an access road from Canary Lane to the Grand River. However, there are two obstacles that must be overcome: 1) the old oxbow which is present most of the length of the land, is often wet muck

preventing passage; 2) a very steep high dike created by the debris removed during channelizing and straightening of the Grand River exists at the river's edge. Environmental regulations make it difficult and expensive to modify the bed of the old oxbow and remove any part of the dike to provide suitable access for GREAT's activities. These obstacles could be avoided if a substantial river bed can be recreated in the old oxbow channel. This would provide shorter access to the river with a road developed on the power line path from Canary Lane, without crossing the wet land of the old oxbow and surmounting the high dike at the river's edge.

- b. A possible temporary solution for river access would be to seek regulatory permission and grant money to excavate the old oxbow a short distance from its southern end to the power line. This would provide direct access to the river while grants are sought and work is in progress to re-channel the complete old oxbow.
3. Trails for Public Use of the Property:
- a. A system of public trails looping the ten acres will be developed for environmental learning. Interpretive signage will add to the educational value of these trails. Boardwalks and bridges (over the old oxbow or the new river bed after excavation) will be constructed as needed. Signage will include the history of the river at this location (original flow, when and how it was straightened, and how and why it was restored). Descriptions of river corridor habitats, the local flora and fauna, and the history and goals of GREAT will be added.
 - b. Invasive plant species have been identified and a plan will be developed for their removal and monitoring. A committee will be created to recruit volunteers and oversee removal tasks, which is expected to take years or continue indefinitely. Partnerships will be established to help with this task (e.g. The Grand Raisin Cluster of the Stewardship Network, and The Dahlem Conservancy).
4. Storage Building:
- a. GREAT will construct a pole barn with a concrete floor, an exterior apron, a service door, and three double bay doors, to store our boats and boat trailers. There will be adequate space to store and maintain GREAT's equipment, including floor space to dry PFDs.
 - b. The building will include a small enclosed room for people to change out of wet clothing. The room will be plumbed for water and sewage should it be decided to in the future to add bathroom facilities. This room will have doors for inside and outside access.
 - c. The building's design will incorporate natural lighting as much as possible. Plans are in place to investigate the cost effectiveness of installing solar lights both inside and outside the building.

Timetable:

1. Removed rubbish (completed May 2014)
2. Identify and prepare report of the property's flora and fauna (completed June 2014)
3. Apply for zoning variance to construct a building and public use of property (granted March 2015)
4. Begin invasive species removal (November 2015)
5. Grade and fill area for driveway, parking area, and building foundation (completed August 2015)
6. Begin member solicitation campaign and foundation requests to complete the building (November 2015)
7. Construct building (summer of 2016)
8. Apply for grants to create river access (2016)
9. Apply for grants to re-channel the river (August 1, 2016)
10. Develop trails and signage (2017)

Jackson to Grand Haven

An August 21, 2015, Mlive post announced a Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) initiative to facilitate a “locally-led, bottom-up” effort to create a 252-mile Grand River blueway from Jackson County through Ottawa County at Grand Haven.¹ In response to this challenge, the Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance and other community leaders spearheaded the creation of the *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan*. The goal of the plan—which will be released in early 2017—“is to outline the activities, process and framework to establish a water trail along the Upper Grand River.”

Non-motorized Trails

Jackson County partnered with other municipalities in 2002 to develop the *Jackson County Regional Trailway Study*. That document has been used as a guide ever since and various municipalities have expanded upon the basic “stick” network as part of their recreation planning efforts. The Falling Waters/Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Equity Trail Corridor also serves as the backbone for a developing statewide trail as it traverses Jackson County.

Regional Trailway Study

The parks departments of Jackson County and the City of Jackson; the townships of Blackman, Spring Arbor, and Summit; the Falling Waters Trail Committee; and the Lakelands Trail effort joined together to develop the *Jackson County Regional Trailway Study* which was

¹ 250-mile Grand River water trail across Michigan under development, Garret Ellison, 8/21/15 edition of *The Grand Rapids Press* via Mlive (http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2015/08/grand_river_water_trail.html)

completed in 2002. The Study is comprised of the following “stick” network of trails throughout the County (please see Non-Motorized Trail Network map):²

- Lakelands Trail – 15.4 miles
- Henrietta Loop – 19.9 miles
- Portage Lake Trail – 6.5 miles
- North Trail – 7.6 miles
- Blackman Township Loop – 8.0 miles
- Inter-City Trail – 7.5 miles
- Airport Trail – 5.5 miles
- Falling Waters Trail – 11.5 miles
- Hanover Trail – 8.9 miles
- Summit Township Loop – 7.2 miles
- Ella Sharp Park Trail and Cascades Park – 4.4 miles
- South Trail – 19.5 miles
- Connection to Existing Trail on Page Avenue – 0.3 miles

Statewide Trail Planning Efforts

There are two statewide trail planning efforts which impact Jackson County and its developing network of non-motorized trails:

- **Route #1 of the Great Lake-to-Lake (GLTL) Trails.** The Michigan Greenways Alliance proposes the development of a series of trails which provide five non-motorized connections among the Great Lakes once they are developed. Route #1 will eventually connect Port Huron (Lake Huron) and South Haven (Lake Michigan), traversing Jackson County along the way. This opportunity increases the significance of the emerging trail network within Jackson County to statewide significance (please see the Route #1 of the Great Lake-to-Lake (GLTL) Trails map).
- **Iron Belle Trail.** Governor Snyder unveiled the routes of his showcase trail, which links Belle Isle Park in the City of Detroit with Depot Park in Ironwood (located along the Wisconsin border in the western Upper Peninsula) in early 2015. The hiking portion of the Iron Belle Trail will follow the current route of the North County Scenic Trail, traversing Jackson County along the way. This opportunity increases the significance of the emerging trail network within Jackson County to national significance (please see the Iron Belle Trail map).³

These trails utilize the primary non-motorized corridor planned for Jackson County. For example, the existing Falling Waters/ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Equity Trail Corridor will be utilized by the Iron Belle Trail and Route #1 of the Great Lake-to-Lake Trails as they traverse Jackson County. The planned extension of the Lakelands Trail Corridor into Jackson County will also serve as part of that backbone.

² Please refer the attached map as well as the full study for greater detail.

³ The North County Scenic Trail stretches from eastern New York to central North Dakota.

Other Local Trail Planning Efforts

Municipalities within Jackson County have also engaged in non-motorized trail planning with the aim of supplementing the network defined in the *Jackson County Regional Trailway Study*.

Local Recreation Plans. Various municipalities have also proposed local expansions of the “stick” network proposed in the Trailway Study. The City of Jackson has also continued to refine the non-motorized pathways proposed within its boundaries.

Intergovernmental Cooperation. The municipal plans mentioned above illustrates that the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation that created the original Trailway Study is still active in trail planning for Jackson County. For example, the *Heart of the Lakes Area Recreation Plan* covers the Village of Brooklyn and the Townships of Columbia, and Norvell. The *Grass Lake Area Recreation Plan* covers the Village of Grass Lake and Grass Lake Charter Township.

Jackson County Strategic Plan. One of the strategies contained in the ‘Arts, Recreational, and Cultural Opportunities’ component of the *Jackson County Strategic Plan* is to “continue to improve the non-motorized system in the Jackson Community.” Current activities listed under this strategy include:

- Help facilitate the update of the *Jackson County Non-Motorized Transportation Plan*
- Develop the Sparks Park/Inter-City Trail Connector
- Develop more statewide connection trails (Lakelands Trail to Stockbridge)