



*Parks and Recreation enhances community and quality of life through people, parks, and programs.  
Senior Center Network makes longer lives, better lives.*

**Meeting: Strategic Planning Committee of the Parks and Recreation Commission**

**Friday, August 23, 2019, 3:30 p.m.**

**Room 300, Third Floor, Governmental Center**

**400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, Michigan 49684**

**AGENDA**

**Committee Purpose:**

- Develop, present, and recommend annually or every two years a strategic plan with specific goals, strategies, and a schedule for the Commission and Department to follow to accomplish current and future park projects and Commission/Department objectives included in the five-year Parks and Recreation Plan.
- Research and recommend options to the Commission about how County Parks and Recreation can become financially more self-sustaining and less reliant on the County's General Fund.

**Members:** David Grams (Vice Chair), Rodetta Harrand, Steve Largent, Whitney Waara (Chair), Jalen Provo (Citizen Appointment)

**General Meeting Policies:** Please turn off all cell phones or switch them to silent mode. Any person may make a videotape, audiotape, or other recording of this meeting. Standing equipment, cords, or portable microphones must be located to not block audience's view. If you require auxiliary assistance, please call 231-922-4780 or TDD 231-922-4412.

**A. Call to Order**

**B. Pledge of Allegiance**

**C. Roll Call**

**D. First Public Comment**

Any person shall be permitted to address the Parks and Recreation Commission, which is required to be open to the public under the provision of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, as amended (MCLA 15.261, *et. seq.*). Public comment shall be carried out in accordance with the following Board Rules and Procedures:

1. Any person wishing to address the Commission shall state his or her name and address.
2. No person shall be allowed to speak more than once on the same matter, excluding Commissioners' questions. The Chairperson shall control the amount of time each person shall be allowed to speak, which shall not exceed three (3) minutes. The Chairperson may, at his or her discretion, extend the amount of time any person is allowed to speak.

**E. Approval of/Additions to Agenda**

**F. Parks and Recreation's Most Recent Strategic Plan (2016-2017) and Strategic Planning Report from December 17, 2018 Meeting of Parks and Recreation Commission and Business Development Team**  
(Director Will Provide Status Updates for Each Item; Review and Discuss)

**G. New and Incomplete Projects/Activities** (Group Projects and Identify Common Themes; Worksheet and List of All Parks Projects and Activities Provided at Meeting)

**H. Next Steps** (Prioritize Projects and Activities; Provide Direction to Staff)

**I. Brainstorming: Framework for New Parks Projects** (Chair)

**J. Next Meeting** (Discussion)

**K. Second Public Comment** (Please refer to Item D. on agenda for rules.)

**L. Notices and Commissioner Comments**

**M. Adjournment**



Strategic Planning Report from  
December 17, 2018 Joint Meeting of  
The Parks and Recreation Commission,  
and Its Business Development Team



B R i  
Beckett & Raeder  
*Landscape Architecture  
Planning, Engineering &  
Environmental Services*

# Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation and Senior Center Network

The Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation Commission and Its Business Development Team (BDT) held a special meeting on Monday, December 17, 2018, to engage in strategic planning discussions and activities as a foundation for a Strategic Plan attainable in 2019. Parks and Recreation-Senior Center Network has a current 5-year Parks and Recreation Plan filed with the State of Michigan, along with a strategic plan with numerous goals and action items. The Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan Ad Hoc Committee will use the results from the strategic planning meeting (in this report) to update the plan in early 2019. Prior to the special meeting, a survey was sent Commissioners and BDT members for input on their perception of priority goals and projects. Ten responses were received. Survey results were used to develop talking points and exercises for the special strategic planning meeting. Sixteen individuals attended, then divided into three separate groups.

A representative from Beckett & Raeder, Inc., a planning consultant, was there to facilitate the meeting. The facilitator had a series of questions, brainstorming activities, and open discussion items that were covered during the meeting. Each table went through the sequence of items to give their thoughts, ideas and input. Following each sequence, a representative from each group shared a short synopsis of what was discussed with the entire group.

One of the key outcomes from this meeting that was recognized was the importance of collaboration among the County and various civic groups, friends groups, and other municipalities. Although this acknowledgment of collaboration is obvious, there are a number of hurdles that come along with partnerships. Even though there may be certain obstacles, the meeting was successful in conveying creative and innovative concepts to achieve the priorities.



**Conclusion:** Parks and Recreation is an essential service for Grand Traverse County residents.

**Mission:** To enhance community and quality of life through people, parks and programs.



Identified values guided and influenced the vision:

- maintain safe and clean parks
- accessible for all
- preserve existing County parklands
- contribute to health and wellness



**Resulting Vision:** To develop and operate parks and offer recreational services to improve the quality of life for all who live in and visit the region.

Strategic priorities are based on actions necessary to move closer to the community vision. Priorities must be tailored to the capabilities and capacity of the County's resources. Priorities should be broken down each year to pinpoint certain projects that can be attained in a realistic manner. Focus areas can help with the daunting task of prioritizing numerous goals and projects.

The team discussed a variety of goals, objectives, and action items from the 5-year Parks and Recreation plan and the existing strategic plan. As a result, six focus areas escalated to the top, as shown below.



**Mission:** Making longer lives, better lives.

**Purpose:** To meet the social, recreational, and educational needs of members, in an environment that is fun, safe, inclusive, and courteous for all.



## Senior Center

The need for a new Senior Center was rated as the highest priority among the group. This significant venture would be the first project on the list for 2019. Providing older adults with a place to gather and socialize is an important part of the quality of life. There are several fundraising opportunities associated with building a new facility. Naming rights for all aspects of a new building, including rooms and features that will be designed, could be one opportunity. A new building would be an opportunity for multi-use facilities which, turn, could generate more revenue to offset maintenance and operational expenses.



## Marketing and Branding

There is a definite need for a consistent marketing campaign for the County park system. Branding creates a defined identity for the public. Creating a unique style that would identify each park would make it easier for park users to know which facilities the County owns and operates. A new marketing venture would be a great way to start telling the story of the Grand Traverse Parks and Recreation's properties, and the Senior Center Network. Educating the public about what you have to offer and about the benefits of the park amenities is a vital part of management and operations. Showing how tax dollars are hard at work creates trust and loyalty.



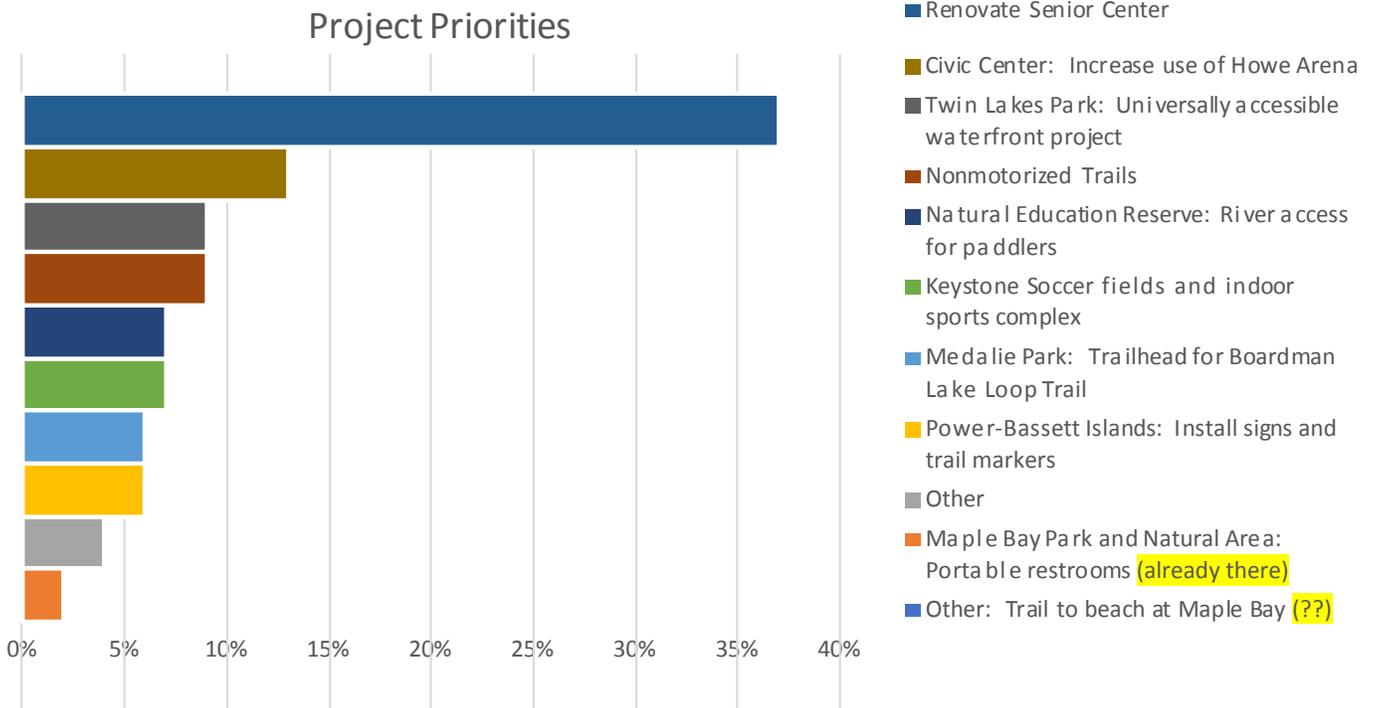
# Maintenance

Developing a maintenance fund is extremely important for Parks and Recreation. Steps have already been taken to implement this goal. The vision is to create a viable maintenance plan to work towards a preventative maintenance schedule and funding. A preventative maintenance schedule would help replace a reactive approach with a proactive approach. Budgeting for big-ticket items would be scheduled ahead of time, instead of bringing a surprise with a hefty expense at once. Engaging community groups could also help alleviate some of the general, everyday maintenance such as trash pick-up. Often, civic groups are looking for community service projects to which they can donate time, perfect opportunities to create partnerships and collaborations to maintain County Parks.



# Project Priorities

Participants established project priorities through a money allocation activity. Each person was given \$100 to assign among projects they deemed most deserving of funding. The following graph illustrates the results. The Senior Center project rose to the top with 37% of the funds collected.



## *Financial Sustainability*

A large portion of the meeting was spent on a brainstorming session about financial sustainability, resulting in a number of ideas and formulas. The vision is to operate a sustainable Parks and Recreation Department (Senior Center Network currently is separately funded through a millage), while using General Fund dollars for capital improvements and maintenance costs. A “work-smarter-not-harder” approach was a recurring theme. Collaborations and sharing of resources were discussed, and the multitude of benefits that go along with them.

Parks and recreational opportunities are what matter to people; a strong, dedicated department offering quality parks and programs is desirable to individuals, families, and visitors. A resilient park system will appeal to potential new residents and, therefore, create a good tax base for increased revenues. A notable park system also draws new businesses, thereby having a positive economic impact on the community.

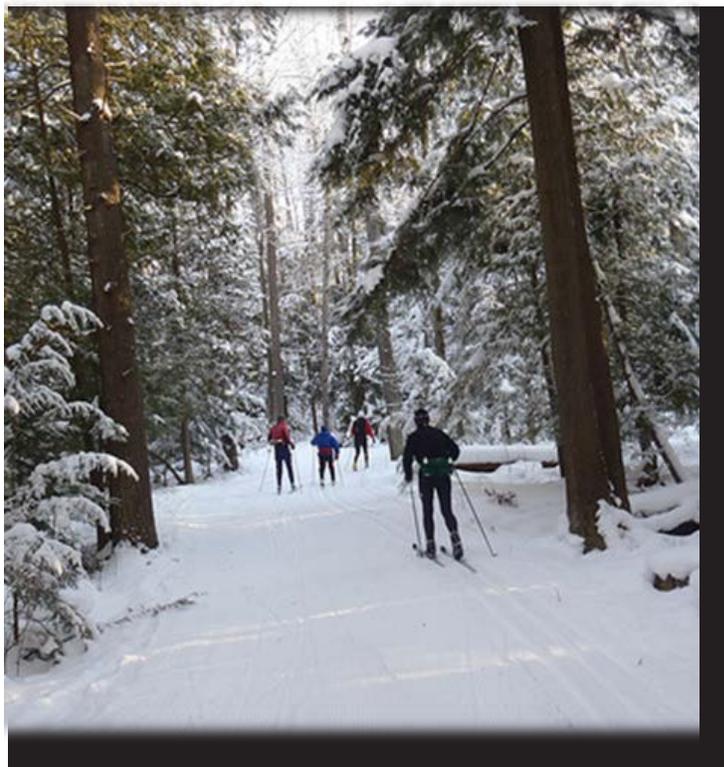
## *Collaboration*

The idea of Partnerships and Collaboration was deliberated throughout the entire process, resulting in a list of a variety of potential public and private partners. Partnerships are so important in the operations of any parks and recreation department/organization. One obstacle discussed is inefficient staffing levels. Creating partnerships with public and private groups can build a loyal list of volunteers. Volunteers are an integral part of parks and recreation operations, and a cost-saving measure.

Another important factor is collaborating with the surrounding municipalities to delineate and eliminate duplication of services. Sharing resources with other entities with a common vision shows the public good stewardship of their tax dollars.

## Health and Wellness

The Parks and Recreation Commission and BDT are dedicated to providing parks and recreation services that promote health and wellness. The Parks and Recreation Commission and BDT are enthusiastic about implementing the goal to improve regional health. This can be accomplished by providing safe, clean parks and by offering health-related recreational services. Water safety and education is extremely important in an area where the lakes and rivers cover a large portion of the landscape. The group also mentioned the importance of increasing services for the aging population. Potential collaborations to achieve these goals include regional healthcare providers, insurance companies, the County's Health Department, and fitness related groups.



## Prioritized Goals and Projects

The groups participated in a second money allocation activity that involved prioritizing goals featured in the 5-year Parks and Recreation Plan and in the current Strategic Plan. Everyone was given \$100 to allocate toward goals they considered most important. The graph shown below depicts collective results. The Senior Center Network received the most funding at 21%, followed closely by establishing a Maintenance Fund, which is 16%.



All participants carefully reviewed the list of goals and projects from the existing 5-year Parks and Recreation Plan and the current Strategic Plan. Each group was asked to select and prioritize its top goals (action items) and projects. Each group worked together to create its own list of highest priorities for both goals and projects. The table shown below summarizes their work.

Goal Action Items	Steps	Priority
Build Financial Sustainability	Establish alternate revenue streams. Implement new funding initiatives. Write grants. Host an exclusive annual fundraising event.	High
Build a New Senior Center Building	Create a capital campaign to fund a new Senior Center. A creative functional building design can help move fundraising efforts in a positive direction.	High
New Marketing and Branding	Create a consistent brand for all parks and programs. Develop new signage with a consistent look and color. Develop marketing strategies incorporating same consistent branding look and feel.	High
Build a Maintenance Fund	Set aside funds each fiscal year for Parks' maintenance. Establish partnerships with volunteer groups to help with maintenance projects. Establish a preventative maintenance plan for entire park system. Perform a detailed Capital Needs Assessment to plan ahead for each budget cycle.	High
Expand Partnerships	Collaborate with surrounding municipalities to reduce duplicate services. Build friends' groups. Nurture existing relationships and create new partners surrounding specific topics and interests.	Moderate
Improve Regional Health and Wellness	Implement health and wellness initiatives in new programming ventures. Develop strategies that appeal to living healthfully through parks and recreation. Establish health and wellness partners throughout the County.	Moderate

Project Action Items	Steps	Priority
New Senior Center	Collaborate with the City of Traverse City to build new Senior Center. Immediately install fundraising initiatives to create awareness of this important project.	High
Marketing and Promotions	Develop new branding and marketing efforts. Tell the story Parks and Recreation-Senior Center Network through creative and consistent communications. Instill health and wellness through promotion of Parks and Recreation Department and the Senior Center Network. Educate public about all County has to offer.	High
Power Island	Implement Power Island Business Plan projects.	High
Civic Center	Implement Civic Center Business Plan projects. Design and develop a dog park; expand Marker Tree placemaking project; expand community playground and make fully accessible; refurbish amphitheater; landscape northwest quadrant.	Moderate
Safety and Accessibility	Implement safety and accessibility standards with all new projects and initiatives. Promote water safety and education programs.	Moderate
Medalie Park	Develop as trailhead as part of Boardman Lake Loop project.	Moderate

## Conclusion

The strategic planning session conveyed numerous creative ideas. It brought forth a list of priorities and projects that the Parks and Recreation Department can focus on in 2019. Fiscal sustainability will be a main focus area for years to come. Developing a marketing and branding strategy can help educate the public about the parks and programs that are offered by the County. Grand Traverse County is a place of destination. A prestigious park system draws people to a place where they want to live and work. Establishing a consistent brand and public awareness of the many beautiful County parks and recreational opportunities, identifying duplication of services and resources throughout the region, and collaborating and forming strategic partnerships to share those resources is essential to the future of County Parks. Such actions can lead to the development of a plan for the future of Parks and Recreation and its sustainability. Financial stability means that County parks can improve the quality of life and impact collective health and wellness throughout the County for generations to come.

References/Models: Exemplary park systems in Michigan with precise branding formulas are in Washtenaw and Oakland Counties, both with easily recognizable logos and promotions. Both have consistent signage making it clear their parks are County parks. Both have dedicated millages to help fund their departments.

The future of Parks and Recreation-Senior Center Network has tremendous potential, especially with its many accomplishments of recent years. Continuing to use the 5-year plan and the strategic planning tools presented in this report will keep momentum moving toward future successes with providing services, programs, park enhancements, and places and green spaces to live and be well.



## **2016-2017 Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan**

(Approved by Motion of the Parks and Recreation Commission June 16, 2016)

### **Grand Traverse County Strategy #7**

*To advance the health and quality of life of the region.*

### **Parks and Recreation Mission Statement**

*To enhance community and quality of life through people, parks, and programs.*

### **Introduction**

The Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan will be developed for each year on an annual basis by the Parks and Recreation Commission during a special planning session, the time and date to be determined by the Commission.

During each year, the Commission will review and revise the plan, as it deems necessary.

The plan will be comprised of a list of short-term and long-term goals (two years or less), each with assigned measurement or measurements to gauge progress, success, and completion of each goal.

Each goal will be assigned a timeline, an estimated cost (when applicable), and estimated revenue (when applicable).

The Parks and Recreation Director will report the progress of applicable goals during each of the Parks and Recreation Commission's regular meetings. A record of accomplishments will be included in the Minutes of each regular Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting and in the Strategic Plan document (a living document to be updated as goals are revised or met).

## Goals

### 1. Civic Center Master Plan

- Establish a timeline for completing the goals in the existing Civic Center Business Plan, and implement elements of the plan, funds-permitting.

Measurements: Business Development Team delivers a business plan to the Parks and Recreation Commission for approval. Approved plan is presented to the County Board of Commissioners by December 31, 2016. Thereafter, using the Civic Center Business Plan as a guide, Business Development Team monitors progress and follows through, bringing decisions to the Parks and Recreation Commission, as necessary.

- Continue to monitor and resolve safety issues.

Measurement: Technological improvements (such as additional cameras) are made based on research of potential upgrades. A collaboration among Parks and Recreation staff, police, and park users is formally established and promoted.

### 2. Power Island

- Implement elements of Power Island Business Plan, funds-permitting.

Measurement: Using the Power Island Business Plan as a guide, Business Development Team monitors progress and follows through, bringing decisions to the Parks and Recreation Commission, as necessary.

### 3. Keystone Soccer Complex

- Solidify or expand nonprofit partnerships to expand soccer fields.

Measurement: Partner with TBAYS and develop plan to add soccer fields and potential structure.

### 4. Twin Lakes Park

- Implement elements of Twin Lakes Park Business Plan, funds-permitting.

Measurement: Using the Twin Lakes Park Business Plan as a guide, Business Development Team monitors progress and follows through, bringing decisions to the Parks and Recreation Commission, as necessary.

- Continue to address and resolve the park's swimming and security issues.

Measurement: Make a plan to relocate beach for consideration by Commission.

**5. Maple Bay Park and Natural Area**

- Review Maple Bay Park and Natural Area Master Plan and identify projects and improvements.

Measurement: Commission identifies any necessary and affordable projects or improvements to enhance Maple Bay Park and Natural Area, and works with staff on a plan for implementation.

- Continue to work with the Grand Traverse Land Conservancy for the care and maintenance of Maple Bay Park and Natural Area.

Measurement: Goals and projects identified in Memo of Understanding with the Grand Traverse Land Conservancy are completed.

- Explore revenue-producing opportunities at Maple Bay Park and Natural Area.

Measurement: Commission identifies revenue-producing opportunities, and works with staff on a plan for implementation.

**6. Keystone-Birmley Property**

- Explore potential for developing and/or leasing property.

Measurement: Plan for developing and/or leasing property is developed, approved by Commission, and implemented by staff.

**7. Trails**

- Continue to partner with TART Trails, Grand Traverse Conservation District, and other entities to provide further countywide connectivity through non-motorized and multi-modal trails.

Measurement: Ongoing written and verbal reports from TART Trails and department Director to Commission; opportunities are identified, presented, and considered by Commission.

**8. Grants**

- Continue exploring opportunities for grants to fund park projects.

Measurement: Identify parks and projects; make application.

**9. Medalie Roadside Park**

- Develop a Business Plan for Medalie Roadside Park in 2017.

In 2016, Business Development Team develops and delivers a business plan to the Parks and Recreation Commission for approval. Approved plan is presented to the County Board of Commissioners by December 31, 2017. Thereafter, using the Medalie Roadside Park Business Plan as a guide, Business Development Team monitors progress and follows through, bringing decisions to the Parks and Recreation Commission, as necessary.

## **10. Cultural Affairs**

- Explore opportunities for bringing cultural events to County parks.

Measurements: Working with the Senior Center Network and community, the scope of Parks and Recreation expands to include cultural events and education at its parks.

## **11. Senior Center Network**

- Engage in capital campaign with City of Traverse City to renovate Senior Center.

Measurement: \$1.2 million in funds raised, design finalized, and date identified for project to begin.

- Increase recreational opportunities at all five locations, and in County Parks.

Measurement: Additional recreational programming, based on membership survey, is offered at all locations and at County Parks.

## **12. General**

- Establish measurable goals for tracking park use.

Measurement: Goals, tools, and technology (such as trail counters) are in place to track park use.