

Administrative Structure

Parks and recreation services in the Williamstown Township area are provided by the Township, the Red Cedar Recreation Association (RCRA), the City of Williamston, and the Williamston Community School District (see Figure 1). In essence, the Township, City and School District provide the facilities; the RCRA provides the recreation programs that make use of the various facilities.

Williamstown Township

Williamstown Township has a 7-member elected board, composed of the Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer, and four trustees. The Township Supervisor is the chief executive officer and is therefore responsible for parks and recreation administration. The Supervisor is assisted with these duties by appointed Township staff.

Both the Planning Commission and the Parks and Recreation Committee serve in an advisory capacity to the Supervisor and the Township Board. The Planning Commission oversees the Parks and Recreation master planning process and studies land acquisition needs. The Parks and Recreation Committee is comprised of five volunteers from the community (although there is no specified limit on the number who can join). The Parks and Recreation Committee's mission is focused on use and development of the Williamstown Township Community Park.

Maintenance of the Williamstown Township Community Park as well as the small park behind the Township Hall is handled by a combination of paid Township staff and volunteer labor.

As the Township's parks and recreation function expands, additional personnel or administrative changes may be necessary. An even stronger volunteer base must be developed to organize and run community events, plan for and oversee development of the parks, and protect the parks from vandalism.

Township Budget. The Township's general fund budget (2007-2008) provides for appropriations in the amount of \$787,812. The budget includes a category titled "Dept 751: Recreation." Within that category, line items include parklands (\$21,000), pool appropriation (\$10,000), and RCRA programs (\$8,000, based on reimbursement of \$10/participant), Historical Committee (\$19,000), Senior Citizen grant (\$7,000), and miscellaneous (\$2,500).

Williamston Community Schools

The Williamston Community School operates under the guidance of an elected school board. The top administrative official in the school district is the Superintendent. The Principals administer each of the schools in the district.

Between 1985 and 1995, the Community Education Director assisted in coordinating all recreation programs offered by the RCRA, as well as cultural and enrichment programs sponsored solely by the School District. In 1997, RCRA became a program of the School District with its own full-time director.

Today the RCRA is virtually autonomous, although it still has two representatives from the School District on its board of directors. The School District is for the most part out of the business of running recreation programs for the general public. The School District does offer community education classes, such as watercolors, total body fitness, drawing, kick boxing, babysitting basics, golf, and Spanish for elementary students. The School District operates the only indoor pool in the area.

Red Cedar Recreation Association

The RCRA was formed as a volunteer community recreation program about 30 years ago. The RCRA advisory board is representative of the area and is composed of at least one and no more than three representatives from each participating township (Williamstown, Locke, Leroy, Wheatfield, and Meridian), the City of Williamston, with 13 representatives total. The Township and other municipalities have input into the planning and management of the recreation program through their representation on the RCRA board.

The RCRA staff keeps all records, handles payments, organizes and distributes program publicity, schedules equipment and facilities, coordinates meetings and training sessions for coaches and officials, and mails minutes of the monthly recreation meetings to all Township boards, City Council members, the School District's Superintendent and physical education teachers, individual program directors and interested community members.

Programs offered by the RCRA include tackle and flag football, cheerleading, soccer, basketball, gymnastics, summer ball (baseball, softball, pegball), and wrestling.

RESIDENTS & VOTERS

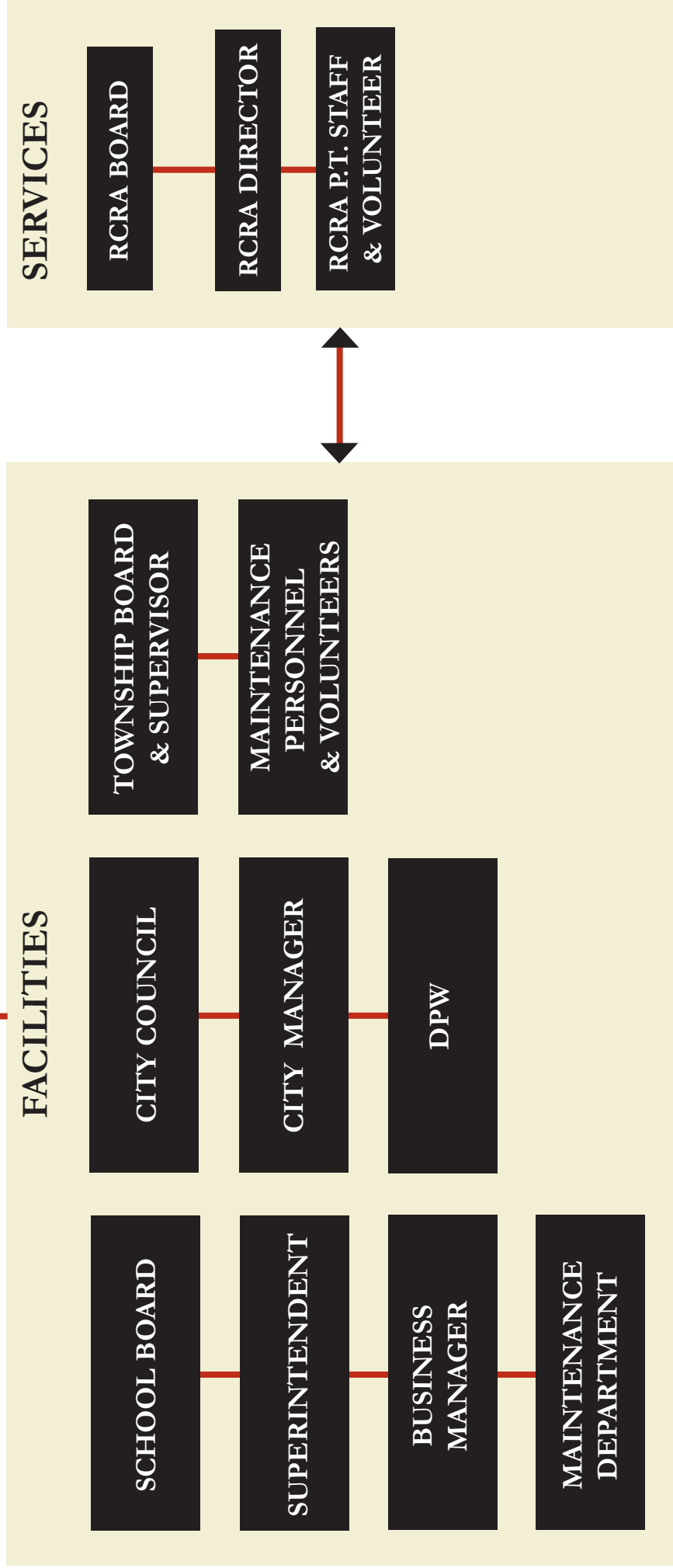


FIGURE 1
ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Inventory of Recreation Resources

Overview

For this inventory to be meaningful, it is necessary to consider resources not only in the Township but also in the City of Williamston, because Township and City residents make use of each others' recreation facilities on a regular basis. A regional perspective provides the best understanding of recreation resource needs. Information used in this inventory was collected from previous parks and recreation plans for the Township and the City of Williamston, a visual inventory of existing facilities in the Township and the City, aerial photography review, Internet research, and direct conversations with representatives from the Township, City, school district, and the Red Cedar Recreation Association (RCRA).

The following inventory reveals that the Williamston/Williamstown Township area is lacking comprehensive, well-developed, well-maintained park facilities. In particular, there seems to be a need for more land for field sports. As the Williamstown Township Community Park develops, it could satisfy some of these needs.

Residents of the Township have access to two Township-owned parks, in addition to Williamston city parks and recreation facilities. In partnership with RCRA, the Williamston Community School District organizes community recreation programs, including organized classes, sports leagues, and camps, which are offered to residents of the school district. Many facilities are jointly maintained by the school district and the City of Williamston.

A detailed description of parks and recreation facilities in the Williamstown Township area is provided on the following pages. See Maps 3 and 4 for the locations of nearby facilities.

Williamstown Township Resources

The Township owns two recreation facilities: the Williamstown Township Community Park on Grand River Avenue and the Township Hall site at Germany and Zimmer Roads. A state-owned roadside park is located on Grand River Avenue at Meridian Road.

Williamstown Township Community Park. The Township owns 130 acres of partially developed land on Grand River Avenue along the Red Cedar River. Available facilities include natural areas with trails, two soccer fields, a baseball field with dugouts, a sledding hill, a small storage building, and portable restrooms.

Facilities Summary: Ballfield, two soccer fields, nature trails, sledding hill, portable restrooms.

Township Hall Site. The Township Hall is available to residents for recreational use and for meetings of community clubs and organizations. The 10-acre site includes a ball field with backstop, picnic pavilion, and soccer field; portable restrooms are provided during the summer months. The fields suffer from poor drainage during heavy rains, and there is little landscaping on the site. Very little space remains on the site for future development; if the Township wishes to expand this facility into a full-service community park, it will be necessary to acquire additional land.

Facilities Summary: Ballfield, soccer field, picnic pavilion, portable restrooms.

Roadside Park. A Michigan Department of Transportation roadside park is located on the north side of Grand River Avenue at its intersection with Meridian Road. Located on the banks of the Red Cedar River, the 1.8 acre park provides picnic tables, outdoor grills, an historical marker, seasonal restroom facilities, and canoe launch accessibility. The proximity of the park to the Red Cedar River results in severe flooding during heavy rains.

Facilities Summary: Picnic/grill area, restrooms, river access.

School District Recreation Resources

The Williamston Community School District operates two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school, all of which are located within the City of Williamston. Although these school sites are designed to primarily meet the needs of the students, the schools also provide recreational opportunities normally found in neighborhood parks. The schools also have indoor recreational facilities, such as gymnasiums, which are available for public use on a restricted basis.

School-related recreational facilities are not perfect substitutes for well-designed public parks. School sites do not provide the full range of facilities normally found in parks, such as picnic pavilions and nature trails, and the design and maintenance standards for schools are generally not adequate for the recreation needs of the public at-large. An inventory and assessment of the primary recreational functions of the school facilities near the Township follows.

Williamston Elementary Schools. Two school buildings, one for students in grades K-2 and the other for grades 3-5, are located on a 12.3 acre site on the east side of the City, north of the Red Cedar River. The elementary schools are adjacent to the City's Memorial Park, which is in disrepair (see below). Ten acres of open land east of the schools contain softball diamonds and soccer fields.

Facilities Summary: Two indoor gymnasiums, outdoor basketball court, play area, two softball diamonds, and two soccer fields.

Williamston Middle School. The Williamston Middle School is located on a 17.5-acre site on Vanneter Road in the northeast corner of the City. The middle school recreation facilities are largely shared with the adjacent high school and together serve as a community-wide athletic facility. The softball field is used for RCRA-sponsored programs and the basketball

courts are used for pick-up games by residents. Little room is left on the site for new development, although existing fields may be shifted to create space for new fields.

Facilities Summary: Indoor gymnasium, practice field with soccer goals, two horseshoe pits, softball diamond, soccer field, two basketball courts (in parking lot), portable bleachers.

Williamston High School. The Williamston High School is located just north of the Middle School, on a 35-acre site at the southeast corner of Vanneter and Mitchell Roads. Some facilities are shared with the Middle School, including a wooded area between the two schools. The Williamston Community Pool (indoor) is located at the High School and offers programs for community residents. Outdoor facilities at the High School include tennis courts, a baseball diamond, and two soccer fields.

Facilities Summary: Indoor gymnasium, indoor pool, performing arts center, weight training room, nature trail, wetlands teaching station, eight tennis courts, two soccer fields, one baseball diamond, one practice field.

City of Williamston Recreation Facilities

McCormick Park. This attractive, 12.9-acre community park is located in the heart of Downtown Williamston, along the south bank of the Red Cedar River. The park is relatively flat with scattered mature trees and is used primarily as a picnic area and playground. There is one softball field, multiple smaller sports courts (e.g., horseshoes, shuffleboard, croquet), picnic pavilions, public restrooms, and a network of walking paths. The park plays host to holiday festivals and community special events, including a weekly Farmer's Market during the summer. Facilities in the park are in need of maintenance, and most of the trees were devastated by a tornado in October 2007. The City is currently updating the master plan for McCormick Park to adjust for the loss of trees. A small island in the Red Cedar River just to the west of the park is also under consideration for a new management plan.

Memorial Park. Located south of the Williamston elementary schools, this 13-acre park is primarily open ground along the north bank of the Red Cedar River. An abandoned outdoor pool, run-down tennis courts, baseball/softball field, and a small play area are the only improvements at the park.

Deer Creek Park. This largely undeveloped park is on Mechanic Street, just north of the football stadium on the west side of Downtown Williamston. The rear of the park contains wooded wetlands along Deer Creek, while the front of the park consists mainly of an unlined parking lot. A large open area is used for sledding in the winter and soccer in the warmer months. This park is the location of the City's annual Jubilee festival.

West Park. Although this park is signed as a City park, its location along the north side of the CSX railroad and behind a row of businesses on Grand River Avenue contributes to its lack of identity and relative obscurity. The park is undeveloped open space and serves as wetland and wildlife habitat. Public access is currently only available through a 12-foot wide easement connecting to Grand River Avenue on the west side of the City.

Williamston Area Community Center. The Community Center, formerly a middle school,

has been renovated to accommodate a variety of recreational and community education programs. The Community Center is located on a six-acre site on School Street in the south-central part of the City and currently houses the Senior Center and the Williamston Community Library. Meeting rooms and classrooms are also available in the Community Center. An adjacent neighborhood park provides playground equipment, picnic facilities, and basketball courts. To the west, a lighted stadium provides space for Williamston High School home football games and track and field events.

Pocket parks also exist in scattered locations in the City, including the City Hall site on East Grand River Avenue, a short riverfront boardwalk on the west side of Putnam Street, and an undeveloped piece of property owned by the Downtown Development Authority along the Red Cedar River at the west end of the downtown area.

Recreation Facilities in Nearby Communities

Other public recreation sites are located near Williamstown Township in neighboring townships and villages. These sites are summarized below:

Meridian Township Parks. The most complete range of parks and recreation facilities in the immediate area is located directly west of Williamstown Township in the Charter Township of Meridian. The parks system comprises approximately 20 properties, including riverfront and lakefront parks, nature centers and wildlife areas, neighborhood playgrounds and picnic areas, and undeveloped open space. Meridian Township's flagship recreation facility is Central Park, a 234-acre community park located north of Meridian Mall. Central Park provides diverse recreational opportunities including a farmer's market, fishing ponds, soccer fields, two baseball diamonds, volleyball courts, an historical village, nature trails, and picnic pavilions.

Other Meridian Township parks within two miles of Williamstown Township include:

- Meridian Riverfront Park. This park, located along the southern bank of the Red Cedar River, is composed of three units: Legg Park, the Harris Nature Center, and Eastgate Park. Available activities and facilities include picnicking, hiking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, boating, a covered pavilion, and a nature center.
- North Meridian Road Park. Amenities include soccer fields, hiking and cross-country skiing trails, playgrounds, a sledding hill, and a wildlife habitat preserve.
- Van Atta Woods. This less-developed park protects a valuable wildlife area and provides hiking and cross-country skiing trails.

Perry Township, Perry, and Morrice. Located 3-4 miles northeast of Williamstown Township, Perry Township, the City of Perry, and the Village of Morrice provide a variety of parks and recreation facilities, including three public parks and five school sites. Jubilee Park, an 8.5-acre neighborhood park, contains picnic facilities, ball fields, playground equipment, an ice-skating rink, horseshoe pits, and shuffleboard courts. Hickory Lake Camping and Recreation Area is a 147-acre facility providing picnic areas, campgrounds, hiking, fishing and boating, and a playground. Lions Club Park offers picnic and playground

facilities on three acres in the Village of Morrice.

Woodhull Township. Located about two miles north of Williamstown Township, the 17-acre Woodhull Township Park contains picnic facilities, two ball diamonds, playground equipment, and a five-acre woodlot. A ten-acre private park in the Melrose subdivision offers campsites, boat rentals, fishing, swimming, picnic areas, a playground, and indoor game room. Shaftsbury School (in the Perry School District) is located on a half-acre site two-and-a-half miles north of Williamstown Township and provides two basketball courts and playground equipment.

Leroy Township and Webberville. The Leroy Township Hall is located in the Village of Webberville and is used by residents for meetings and recreational programs. A portion of the YMCA Camp Pa-Wa-Pi is located in Leroy Township along Grand River Avenue; this summer camp sponsors various recreational programs, including an environmental education camp program. Webberville school facilities include three baseball fields and a football field at Webberville High School and a baseball field at the elementary school.

Locke Township. The Locke Township Hall, located on Sherwood Road about 2.5 miles east of Williamstown Township, serves as a meeting and recreation space for community groups. The YMCA Camp Pa-Wa-Pi is located east of the City of Williamston and is largely within Locke Township. There are no other public recreation facilities in Locke Township.

Wheatfield Township. The Wheatfield Township Hall, located three miles south of Williamstown Township at the corner of Zimmer and Holt Roads, is used as a meeting space for community groups. An open area adjacent to the Township Hall is used by nearby residents as a sports field.

Ingham County Parks

The Ingham County parks system includes five parks and three water access sites. The parks provide year-round recreational opportunities including picnicking, hiking, skiing, boating, and sports fields. Two county parks – Lake Lansing Park North and Lake Lansing Park South – are located in Meridian Township, about two miles west of Williamstown Township.

Lake Lansing Park – North. This park contains 410 acres of open space, woods, and trails. Facilities and activities at the park include a softball diamond, boat launch, hiking trails, horseshoe pits, nature study area, picnic grounds, playgrounds, volleyball courts, a basketball court, and cross-country skiing.

Lake Lansing Park – South. Formerly an amusement park, this park occupies 30 acres on the western shore of Lake Lansing, the largest body of water within 30 miles of Lansing. The park has a sandy beach with paddleboat rentals, as well as picnic facilities, playgrounds, horseshoe pits, shuffleboard courts, volleyball courts, a tricycle track, and an historic carousel building.

State of Michigan Facilities

Rose Lake Wildlife Research Area. The nearest recreation-related facility operated by the

State of Michigan is the Rose Lake WRA, located about two miles northwest of Williamstown Township. The 873-acre site straddles the Woodhull-Bath Township border and offers picnicking, hiking, fishing, nature study, and hunting.

Sleepy Hollow State Park. This 2,678-acre state-owned park is located about 12 miles northwest of Williamstown Township and contains camping and picnicking facilities, playgrounds, a beach house and boat launch, swimming, fishing, snowmobiling, hiking, and cross-country skiing.

Other state recreation facilities within 30 miles of Williamstown Township include:

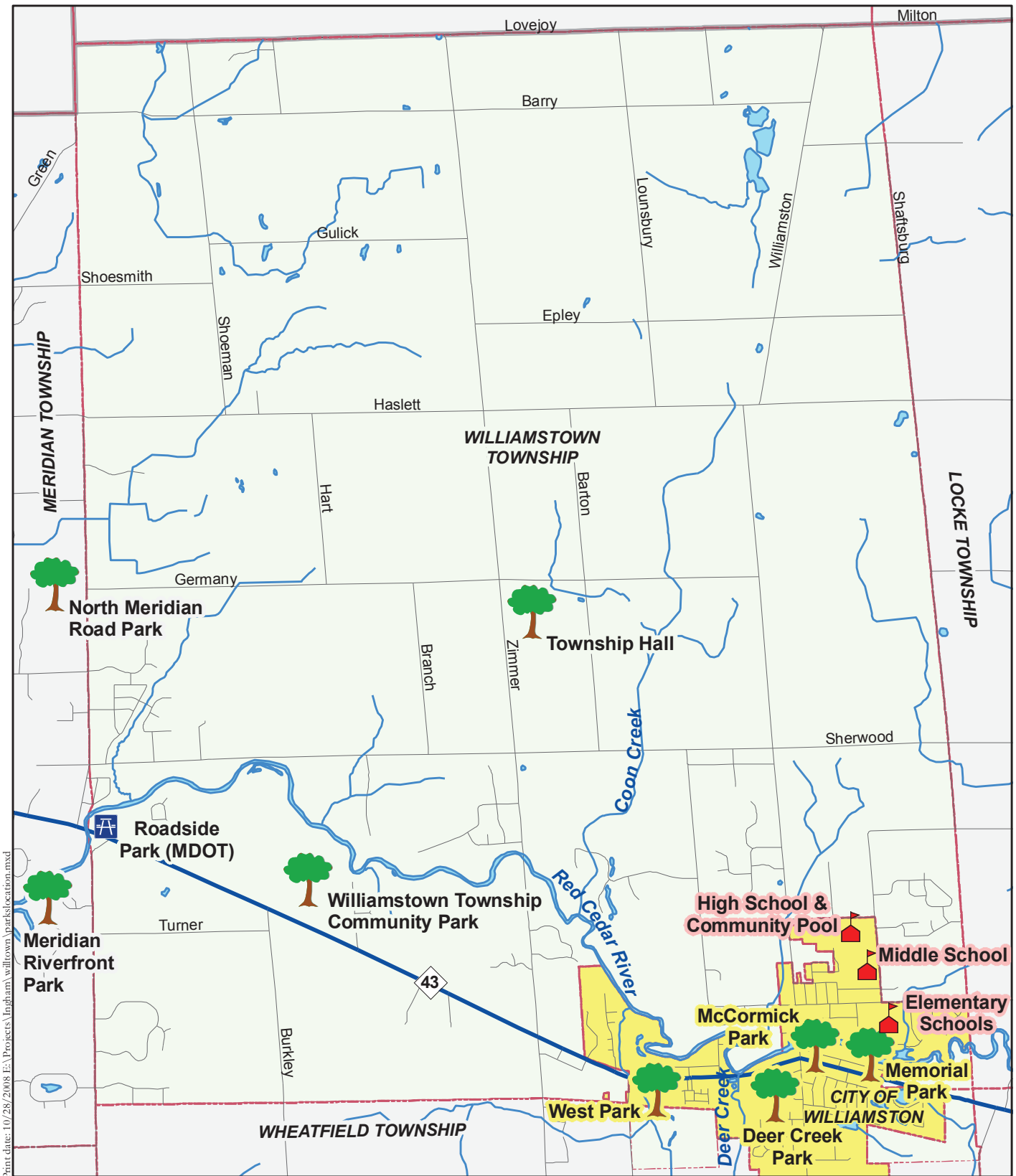
- Muskrat Lake State Game Area. 200 acres, north of DeWitt. Boat launch, hunting, and fishing.
- Dansville State Game Area. 5,000 acres, south of Dansville. Hiking, hunting, and fishing.
- Pinckney State Recreation Area. 10,000 acres in southern Livingston County. Camping, hunting, fishing, picnicking, swimming beach, boat launch, hiking, snowmobiling, mountain and trail biking, and cross-country skiing.
- Brighton State Recreation Area. 5,000 acres, southwest of Brighton. Camping, hunting, fishing, picnicking, swimming beach, boat launch, hiking, snowmobiling, mountain and trail biking, and cross-country skiing.

Commercial Recreation Facilities

Private, for-profit recreation facilities help to address the recreation needs of the Williamstown Township area. These facilities are not accessible to all residents because they charge fees for membership and/or use of the facility. In contrast to municipal or school facilities, commercial recreation resources are designed to serve a much larger population than the residents of a single township or city. Commercial recreation facilities near Williamstown Township include:

Golf Courses

- Brookshire Inn and Golf Course – 18 holes, in Williamston
- Meridian Sun Golf Course – 18 holes, 2 miles west of Williamstown Township
- Indian Hills Golf Course – 9 holes, 4 miles west of Williamstown Township
- College Fields Golf Course – 18 holes, 4 miles west of Williamstown Township
- Lake-o'-Hills – 9 holes, 4 miles west of Williamstown Township
- Walnut Hills Country Club – 18 holes, 5 miles west of Williamstown Township
- Oak Lane Golf Course – 18 holes, in Webberville
- Glenbrier Golf Course – 18 holes, 1 mile north of Williamstown Township



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Map 3 Williamstown Township Area Parks

Data Source: Mich Center for Geog Info, 2007



Williamstown Township, Ingham County, Michigan

McKenna ASSOCIATES INCORPORATED

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Map 4: Regional Parks and Recreation Facilities

Williamstown Township, Ingham County, Michigan

Data Source: Mich Center for Geog Info, 2007



- Public Park / Recreation Facility
- Golf Course / Country Club
- School / Township Hall

- Wheatfield Valley Golf Course – 18 holes, 1 mile south of Williamstown Township

Sun Theater. The popular Sun Theater is located in downtown Williamston and shows first-run movies on its single screen.

Williamston Theatre. Downtown Williamston is also home to a regional, live-performance theater, which plays host to 4-5 productions each year.

Municipal Recreation and Leisure Programs

Williamstown Township sponsors recreation activities by contributing a per-participant fee for resident participation in Red Cedar Recreation Association (RCRA) activities. Township residents can participate in recreational programs offered by the Williamston School District and RCRA. All school district and RCRA programs are offered on a self-supporting basis. The Township also provides an annual contribution to the Williamston School District to defray the operating expenses of the Williamston Community Pool; access to the pool is thereby granted to Township residents.

The school district's Community Education office and RCRA provide a wide range of recreation opportunities for all area residents. The school's direct programs include men's basketball, weight training, fitness and aerobics, kickboxing, a walking club, middle school golf, watercolor painting, drawing classes, foreign language instruction, babysitting, and dog obedience training. RCRA's programs include softball, baseball, T-ball, cheerleading, soccer, football, and basketball. Adult activities offered by RCRA include volleyball and softball. Program formats include classes, leagues, camps, and open community use of school facilities.

These programs, the majority of which require registration and activity fees, are available to all area residents. The school district conducts its programs at the elementary schools, middle school, high school, and community center. The school district also maintains a variety of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, available to all area residents at little or no cost, although school athletic teams and regularly scheduled programs take priority in scheduling.

Evaluation of Recreation Resources and Determination of Need

Parks are commonly classified in terms of size and intensity of use, as described below using terminology from the National Recreation and Park Association:

- **Mini-parks** are small, specialized parks that serve the needs of residents within ¼ mile. Mini-parks are usually less than an acre in size and can serve as children’s playgrounds, sitting areas for senior citizens, or simply undeveloped buffers between land uses. Many newer residential subdivisions provide areas that function as mini-parks, but these are generally limited to residents of a particular development.
- **Neighborhood parks** are typically multi-purpose facilities that serve as the focus of recreation activity for an entire neighborhood (up to ½ mile distance). These parks are often 5 to 10 acres in size and contain areas for active recreation, including sports fields and courts, and passive recreation, such as picnicking or walking. The recreation facilities at the Williamstown Township Hall are of the type usually provided by a neighborhood park.
- **Community parks** usually provide a wide variety of active and passive recreation facilities to meet the diverse needs of residents from several neighborhoods within a three-mile radius. Community parks are typically 25 or more acres in size and, in addition to the facilities found in a neighborhood park, provide more specialized facilities including nature areas, extensive trail systems, and lighted sports fields. The Township’s Community Park on Grand River Avenue is an example of this type of park.
- **Regional parks** are generally focused around unique natural features (e.g., lakes) which are particularly suitable for outdoor recreational use. Regional parks usually comprise over 100 acres of land and water, with opportunities ranging from hiking and camping to swimming and fishing. Such parks typically serve many communities, with most users living within an hour’s drive of the park. Regional parks may also include specialized recreation facilities, such as a sports complex or water park. Regional parks in the Williamstown Township area include Lake Lansing Park (North) and Sleepy Hollow State Park.

Distinctive recreation facilities – such as special use parks, golf courses, linear parks and trails, and open space conservation areas – are also important components of a community’s parks and recreation resources but may be more difficult to classify in terms of service area. These types of facilities may be provided by a public agency or private concern based on perceived need rather than established population guidelines; depending on the character of the community, there may be many or none such facilities in an area.

Especially in the Williamston area, school facilities can function as neighborhood, community, or special use parks. With the close relationship between the school district, the City of Williamston, and Williamstown Township, the various ball fields, tennis and basketball courts, play structures, swimming pool, stadium, and other school facilities contribute to the overall supply of recreation facilities in the area.

**Table 1
TOWNSHIP, CITY, AND SCHOOL RECREATION FACILITIES**

	Park Type	Baseball Diamonds	Softball Diamonds	Soccer Fields	Practice Fields	Basketball Courts	Tennis Courts	Indoor Pool	Sledding Hill	Playground	Trails/ Paths	Nature Area	Picnicking
Williamstown Twp Community Park	C		2	2					1		Y	Y	
Williamstown Twp Hall	N		1	1									Y
MDOT Roadside Park	M												Y
TOWNSHIP TOTAL		--	3	3	--	--	--	--	1	--	Y	Y	Y
McCormick Park	N		1							2			Y
Memorial Park	N	1					4			1			
Deer Creek Park	M			1					1			Y	
West Park	M											Y	
Community Center	N					2				1			Y
CITY TOTAL		1	1	1	--	2	4	--	1	4	Y	Y	Y
Elementary Schools	N		4	2		1				1			
Middle School	N		1	2	1	2						Y	
Williamston High School	C	1		2	1		8	1			Y		
SCHOOLS TOTAL		1	5	6	2	3	8	1	--	1	Y	Y	--
AREA-WIDE TOTAL		2	9	10	2	5	12	1	2	5	Y	Y	Y

Comparison with Accepted Standards

While evaluating a community's recreational needs based on national "per 1,000 population" standards is not the preferred method of parks planning today, using these comparisons confirms some of the perceived needs stated through the public input process. Using a projected 2025 population of 9,065 persons in the Township and City and the list of facilities from the previous

Township Parks and Recreation Plan, the area is deficient in volleyball courts (-1.8), golf driving range (-0.2), outdoor ice rink (-0.5), handball courts (-0.5), and field hockey fields (-0.5). With the exception of handball, all of these activities were mentioned in either the survey or the focus group as being needed in the Township.

The national standards do not always accurately reflect local needs, however. According to the standards, there is a surplus of softball fields in the Township and City (9 fields for a projected need of just 1.8), while information gathered from the focus group indicates that there is significant unmet demand for such facilities. The Township, in conjunction with the City and the school district, cannot satisfy itself with meeting the national standards if local demand shows different needs.

An inherent flaw in this standards-based analysis is that City or school recreation facilities may not be sufficient to satisfy the needs of Township residents. The limited geographic accessibility of City and school parks (in the far southeast corner of the Township), poor maintenance conditions, and/or perceived or real limitations to free access all conspire to minimize the value of these facilities for meeting the recreation demands of Williamstown Township.

Public Input

In the past, parks and recreation plans have relied on nationally-established standards for park acreage per population to determine the recommended supply of recreation facilities. Today, however, recreation planners rely more on the perceived desires of the individual community as expressed through public involvement programs and demonstrated need.

For this plan, the Township held a focus group of area parks and recreation officials and conducted a survey of Township residents regarding the need for additional recreation facilities. The results of the 1997 Township Park Questionnaire also provide valuable insight into the desires of community residents.

Focus Group. Invitations to participate in a focus group on recreation issues in Williamstown Township were sent to area parks and recreation providers, including surrounding jurisdictions, as well as residents who had returned surveys and provided their names and addresses. Two focus groups were planned, although only one was held due to lack of attendance. The six participants included a representative from the Red Cedar Recreation Association (RCRA), the superintendent of the Williamston Community School District, the director of parks and recreation for Meridian Township, a representative from Leroy Township, and two City of Williamston officials, one of which serves on the City Parks and Recreation Commission. A series of questions were prepared in advance to guide the discussion, but conversation was permitted to continue and change as the meeting progressed.

A general lack of non-motorized (pedestrian, bicycle, etc.) paths throughout the Township and City was agreed to by all as a significant recreation issue. The participants agreed that Williamstown Township and surrounding area is a very recreation-oriented community, with a higher demand per capita than other areas of the same size. The RCRA representative confirmed this observation with a statement that the Association often has trouble finding

adequate field space for its 40-plus sports teams. She also stated that increasing interest in lacrosse and indoor basketball is revealing a net deficit in facilities that are able to accommodate these types of activities.

The school superintendent noted that the school district owns a 150-acre tract of land in the eastern part of the Township; the land had been planned for a new football stadium, but that stadium was built in the City of Williamston. Currently, the land is vacant and with no plans to build for the next 30 years, the school district is looking for some way to make use of the property. The focus group participants suggested a variety of uses for the land, including a dog park, picnic areas, community gardens, and an off-road cross-country course for the school teams. The biggest obstacle to developing this resource is a dedicated source of recreation funding.

One solution that was advanced at the focus group is to establish a regional parks authority as a joint venture of the Township, the City, and the school district. This entity would serve as a single point of contact and decision-making for the acquisition, maintenance, development, and promotion of parks and recreation resources in the Williamston area. RCRA would continue as a programming organization, but infrastructure and administrative responsibilities would be granted to the new joint parks entity. Again, funding is a critical element of this solution; discussion was favorably received regarding a potential millage dedicated to parks and recreation. As noted below, a majority of the Township residents who returned the 2008 parks survey also indicated a favorable reception to a dedicated recreation millage.

1997 Questionnaire. The 1997 Williamstown Township Park Questionnaire was distributed to Township residents with the objective of assessing recreation needs at the Township's Community Park, which was at that time a recently purchased but as-yet undeveloped tract of land along Grand River Avenue. One hundred questionnaires were returned.

In response to a question on intended uses of the park, Township residents put primary emphasis on passive recreation opportunities, including hiking trails, picnicking/pavilion, and wildlife observation. Athletic facilities, bicycle trails, cross-country skiing, canoeing, and ice skating were also indicated in respectively decreasing order of preference. Residents stated that they would use the park an average of 21 times per year, or almost twice a month.

Residents expressed the desire in 1997 to maximize the use of limited resources by concentrating a variety of recreation opportunities within each future Township park. Residents did not perceive a need for mini-parks because most residents have large building lots that provide ample space for play equipment and individual recreation facilities.

Public meetings held throughout the 1990s revealed that Township residents at that time believed acquisition of additional parkland was an urgent necessity due to the rapid pace of development and the loss of larger tracts of land. While new development has slowed in the past few years, the 2008 survey (see below) still suggests that Township residents are in favor of acquiring additional parkland.

2008 Parks Survey. As of February 5, 2008, a total of 46 responses to the 2008 Parks and Recreation Survey were received by the Township. The survey was conducted online and paper copies of the survey were made available at the Township Hall. A selected group of residents also received a paper copy of the survey in their winter tax bills. Nine of the 46 responses were received through the Internet.

Residents were asked what types of facilities should be developed in the Township, whether in the Township Community Park or elsewhere. Over half of the respondents indicated that hiking and cross-country ski trails, nature trails, and bicycle paths are the primary recreation facilities that are needed in the Township. Other facilities receiving more than 25% support from the respondents include an outdoor ice skating rink, jogging and exercise trails, community gardens, a nature center, and picnic shelters. Residents could also write in another type of facility not listed; responses included canoe launches, golf driving ranges, a skateboard park, and trailer camping area.

The survey also asked residents for the most important summer and winter recreation activities in their household. The most popular activities were generally passive recreation activities and points toward a need for a well-developed system of trails and paths. Providing community gardening spaces and an ice skating rink would also serve to meet an apparent need in the Township.

Table 2
TOP FIVE RECREATION ACTIVITIES BY SEASON

<i>Summer</i>	<i>Winter</i>
1. Hiking/Walking	1. Skiing/Cross-Country Skiing
2. Bicycling	2. Hiking/Walking
3. Swimming	3. Sledding
4. Jogging/Running	4. Ice Skating
5. Gardening	5. Jogging/Running

Two additional questions were presented regarding the acquisition of additional parks and recreation facilities. 76% of respondents stated that the Township should acquire additional land for future park development and/or open space preservation. 63% of respondents indicated that they would be in favor of a parks and recreation millage for acquisition and development of park facilities. These results are consistent with previous questionnaires and meetings which revealed that Township residents are concerned about the potential loss of open space and parkland and are generally in favor of the Township purchasing and developing additional recreation facilities.

Geographic Distribution of Parks

In a community that is 29 square miles in area, the geographic distribution of parks is an important consideration. The normal service area for a neighborhood park (e.g., Township Hall, all City parks) is approximately 1/2 mile in radius, while a community park (e.g., Williamstown Township

Community Park, Williamston High School, North Meridian Road Park) can serve an area up to 2-3 miles in radius. In a rural area, the service area may extend farther, provided that there are no significant physical barriers. In Williamstown Township, heavily traveled roads such as Grand River Avenue, Haslett Road and Zimmer Road are barriers that limit parks access for children, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

An examination of the geographic distribution of recreation facilities reveals that the northeast corner of the Township – north of Haslett Road and east of Zimmer Road – is significantly underserved by park resources. The Township Community Park and all City and school recreation facilities are located in the southern third of the Township, but this is also where most of the Township population resides. Meridian Township parks can meet some of the recreation needs for residents west of Zimmer Road, but there is a clear need for additional Township parkland in the central and northeast portions of Williamstown Township. Also critical to park accessibility is the development of a trails and pathways network throughout the Township, linking residential areas to parks, schools, and other frequent destinations.

The Township has adopted a goal of maximizing the use of parks and recreation facilities based on a shared-use/multiple-use concept, whereby a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities are provided in each park and the lines between mini-park, neighborhood park, and community park are blurred. Beyond traditional recreation objectives, the Township also seeks to include natural resource protection (including water recharge area protection) as an important parkland acquisition objective. Implementation of this multiple-use concept suggests that the Township should invest its resources in a few larger parks rather than thinly spreading recreation resources across multiple sites. In light of this philosophy, new Township parks should be at least 40 to 50 acres in size so as to satisfy a broad list of objectives.

Summary

- Recreation facilities in adjacent jurisdictions (the City of Williamston and Meridian Township) currently address the needs of residents in the southeast and northwest corners of Williamstown Township. The Williamstown Township Community Park provides recreation opportunities for the southern and central portions of the Township, but accessibility remains a significant issue. New parkland is needed in the northeast section of the Township.
- The recreation interests of Township residents are not adequately satisfied by existing park resources. The development of hiking, biking, and cross-country ski trails represents a primary need, while the provision of an ice rink and community gardening areas are important secondary considerations.
- Area recreation providers noted the need for additional active recreation facilities and sports fields (especially softball/baseball diamonds), although these activities were not highly-ranked on the 2008 resident survey. It would be prudent for the Township to plan for active recreation facilities where feasible.