

# Charter Township of Meridian Department of Parks and Recreation

*Creating Community through People, Parks, and Programs*



## 5-Year Parks & Recreation Master Plan 2017-2021



Adopted February 2017

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2017-2021

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**VISION STATEMENT**

**“Creating Community through People, Parks and Programs”**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

To enhance the quality of life for Township residents and visitors by providing diverse park facilities and recreation opportunities where participants are able to learn and play, create and imagine, and be safe and secure utilizing qualified, professional staff and volunteers emphasizing community interaction.

## Introduction

Our parks and recreation programs are perceived as an essential component of the community by meeting the needs of local residents and providing a major attraction for future township residents. It is intended that the Master Plan will fulfill the following goals:

1. Document broad-based public input regarding the current and future parks and recreation needs and priorities of Meridian Township residents.
2. Document the needs and desires of current Meridian Township.
3. Provide the Park Commission, department staff, and other community stakeholders with information to guide parks and recreation planning for the next five years and beyond.
4. Project the needs of current and future residents based upon demographic trends and public input.

This 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan describes the park and recreation opportunities in Meridian Township and establishes goals, objectives and an overall vision for our community’s parks and recreation future. It is intended to be a planning tool and guide for future decision making and application of resources.

The intent of this plan is to identify the current and future parks and recreation needs in order to continue providing programs and services to maintain and improve the quality of life in our community. This plan follows the guidelines and requirements established by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to provide eligibility for MDNR grant funding. The required plan content includes the following chapters:

- **Community Description.** This section includes the character and demographics of the population that is served by the park and recreation facilities and programs.
- **Administrative Structure.** This section outlines the township and parks and recreational organization structure, partnerships and volunteer efforts, and

relationships with the local school districts and other public agencies in regard to recreational, programming, and funding sources that are available for the parks and recreation department. Meridian Township is well organized, with a professional park staff that leverages available resources to maximize the recreation opportunities to its residents.

- **Recreation Inventory.** A thorough listing of park programs and facilities is included. Analysis of these facilities includes comparison to National Standards as well as how they meet local demands. An accessibility assessment helps identify opportunities to eliminate physical barriers to recreation. Funding sources for each park are included, as well as status of each grant funded park as part of the appendix. Land use and environmental features are identified that help shape opportunities and constraints for park development. The township has ample public landholdings, with only a percentage of developed parks supporting the demand for various activities. There are many recreation partners and volunteers that can and will continue to help support recreation to the community.
- **Planning Process.** The Parks and Recreation staff took the lead in directing the planning process and preparation of the master plan, with guidance from the elected Park Commission and other township staff members. ROWE Professional Services Company provided consulting services on areas of the plan that include public survey information and analysis from an objective third party perspective that helped direct the development of goals and objectives. The preparation of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan provided opportunities for citizens to play a key role in defining the future of parks and recreation in Meridian Township.
- **Goals and Objectives.** This section outlines the guidelines that shape the intent for future facility and program development within the community. They describe the character and vision that can be applied as opportunities are evaluated by the township regarding park and recreation improvements.
- **Action Plan.** The Action Program is the section of the plan that identifies how the township intends to meet, or work towards meeting goals and objectives over the next five years. Specific projects that were identified during the planning process are described and an explanation provided as to how they will meet the goals and objectives. The citizens of Meridian Township have continually demonstrated their support for the maintenance, stewardship and development of quality parks, natural areas, and recreation facilities. Past surveys revealed strong local support in favor of continued development and maintenance of the existing facilities.

#### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE THE 2011-2015 PLAN:**

The success of the 5 Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan is evident based on the following successes since the last plan written in 2011:

#### **A. TOWNSHIP MILLAGES & ORDINANCES**

*The public support for these recommendations and the importance of parks and*

recreation was substantiated by the successful passage of related ordinances and millages:

1. **New Park Millage** (.6667 mill passed in 2014 through 2025) provides funds for acquisition, maintenance, equipment and facility development.
2. **Previous Park Millage** (.317 mill renewed 1984-2016) provided funds for acquisition, maintenance, equipment and facility development.

## **B. GRANT AWARDS**

Seven different grants have been awarded to the township since 2011 for a total of \$ 1,012,582, including three recently awarded by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and Land and Water Conservation Fund.

1. North Meridian Road Park, Pavilion, \$50,000 MNRTF (2015)
2. Greenfields Outdoor Exercise Gym, Wonch Park, \$17, 682 (2016)
3. Consumers Energy, Right Tree Right Place Grant, Ferguson Park, \$1,000 (2016)
4. Capital Region Community Foundation, Volunteer Tool Shed Grant, \$6,500 (2016)
5. Central Park Regional Trail Connector & Fishing Platform, \$272,500 MNRTF (2016)
6. Central Park/Historical Village, bridge and restroom building, \$150,000 LWCF (2016)
7. Property acquisition, 80-acres, "Ponderosa", \$514,900, MNRTF (2016)

## **C. LAND PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLANS**

Management plans were developed for the land preserves within the township to prioritize available resources to maintain the health of these ecosystems.

## **D. STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Two full-time positions were added to the parks and recreation department in 2016:

- Stewardship Coordinator: This position was added in response to the department's growing commitment to facilities and natural areas management. The position is responsible for carrying out management plans for the natural areas. Activities involve invasive species management, recruiting and working with volunteers, and carrying out other duties set forth by the Park Commission and Land Preservation Advisory Board.
- Grounds Maintenance Employee: A full-time grounds maintenance employee was added in 2016, making a total of five full-time employees.
- Employees attend conferences and trainings annually to network and remain current on licenses and trends in their respective fields.

## **E. PARKS**

### **1. ORLANDO PARK**

- 2014 additional trees were planted in the park.
- 2016 a series of signs called a "Story Walk" were installed along the paved pathway. This project was fully funded by the Haslett Library. The book is

switched out each month. The signs invite the park visitor to participate in an activity, e.g. "Walk like a bear to the next page."

- 2016: New accessible play equipment was also added to the park. The new equipment is geared toward younger children and features a climbing slide structure that incorporates an artistic flower that spins and casts colorful shadows, swings, bongo drum toys, and a rocking piece for young children.

## **2. INDIAN HILLS PARK**

- 2015: The Indian Hills Neighborhood Association purchased a bench for the park.

## **3. FERGUSON PARK**

- 2013: Schoolchildren planted trees in the park through a Grand Learning Network grant.
- 2014: Numerous diseased and dead trees were removed from the park, due to the devastating infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer insect.
- 2016: School children planted 10 trees in the park with funding through the "Right Tree, Right Place" Consumer's Energy grant.
- 2016: The wooden park fencing along Okemos Road was replaced with black aluminum fencing.

## **4. HILLBROOK PARK**

- 2016: There were major updates and improvements made to the park, particularly the tennis courts and playground area. The tennis courts were completely renovated and redesigned to include: one tennis court, three pickleball courts, and one half-court basketball court. New vinyl-coated fencing, nets and posts were installed. The gates and paved access point to the courts were replaced for the purpose of improving accessibility. The existing playground equipment was removed and replaced with two structures: one for young children and one for older children. Swings and benches were also added to the playground area and an accessible picnic table was added to the paved picnic area.
- 2016: An Ingham County drain project was planned for the wooded portion of the park which called for the removal of numerous trees. As a result, the County provided 29 beautiful new replacement trees. Many were installed around the play area to provide shade.

## **5. TOWAR PARK**

- 2015: The baseball diamond was removed and replaced with an open grassy area that is utilized by open play space.

## **6. WONCH PARK**

- 2012: A number of dead or dying trees were removed from the park. This allowed more sun to enter the park and made it more inviting to visitors.

- 2012: A paved universally-accessible loop pathway (2,055 lf) was constructed through a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. The path meanders along the river at a very gentle slope. For the purpose of improved accessibility, a paved access path was also constructed to link the existing play structure with the new paved pathway.
- 2016: Major improvements included a new pavilion and paved access path and patio with ample room for maneuvering, new recycled picnic tables, a drinking fountain with a water-bottle filler, parking area renovation, and the installation of outdoor exercise equipment. The aged pavilion was demolished and replaced with a new pavilion that includes electricity, something that is highly desirable for pavilion rentals. Accessible picnic tables made of recycled material replaced the old, worn picnic tables. The drinking fountain/water-bottle-filler, is the first of its kind in our park system and features a fountain at an accessible level for wheelchair users.
- 2016: The township was awarded a grant from Greenfields Outdoor Fitness which allowed us to install accessible outdoor exercise equipment. The exercise equipment is permanently installed in pods that are located along the side of the paved pathway.
- 2016: The wood fencing along Okemos Road was removed and replaced with black aluminum fencing. A new bright green traffic bridge was also constructed along Okemos Road in 2016. This bridge includes a wide, paved pedestrian pathway and greatly improved non-motorized transportation access to the park.
- 2016: Community painted mural was installed on the East facing wall of the restroom building at the park's entrance.

## **7. NEWTON ROAD PARK**

- 2014: The athletic fields were developed using recommendations from MSU Turf Management experts, landscaping and a gravel parking area were installed.
- 2015: Park development included paving the 19-car parking lot, installing landscaping and a vinyl split-rail fence along Lake Lansing Road.
- 2016: A paved loop drop-off area was added to the parking area.

## **8. BRATTIN WOODS PARK**

- 2010: The loop trail was improved with gravel surfacing and the Okemos Kiwanis constructed benches that were placed along the path.
- 2010: Gravel was spread along the entire 0.5-acre path through the park.

## **9. CENTRAL PARK HISTORICAL VILLAGE**

- 2011: Meridian Township received a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant to construct an accessible fishing dock. This dock was constructed in the Historical Village section of Central Park. In addition to the fishing dock, an interpretive sign, bench, and accessible paved pathway were added to the dock area.

- 2011: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed a storage locker for fishing rods and tackle that are available free-of-charge to park visitors.
- 2013: An accessible game table and paved access pad were installed near the Farmers' Market pavilion, using funds from a grant from LINC (Liaison for Inter-Neighborhood Connectivity, a local group).
- 2015: The Claire Twohy gardens located near the pavilion were renovated to include butterfly-friendly plantings. An interpretive sign was installed near the gardens.
- Numerous shade trees have been added to Central Park in recent years, which is important in all of our parks due to the devastation of the Emerald Ash Borer infestation that began around 2006.
- 2015: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed benches along the fishing pond.
- 2016: A master plan was developed for all of Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park. The intent of the master plan is to develop improved non-motorized transportation connections; improved accessibility; and to develop a park identity for this busy and somewhat disconnected park area.

#### **10. HARTRICK PARK**

- 2011: Township enhanced the wetlands with native plantings.
- 2012: Eagle Scout candidates constructed a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile long gravel trail along the south edge of the park through the wooded area. An additional section of gravel was added by the township in to create a connection between the Okemos softball diamonds and Hartrick Park.
- 2013: Paving was added around the flagpole and bleachers to improve accessibility.
- 2015-2016: Certified monarch-waystation gardens were added to the park. The gardens were planted by schoolchildren.
- 2016: Covered dugouts were installed on the two ball diamonds.

#### **11. NANCY MOORE PARK**

- 2015: The pavilion was re-sided and a memorial garden was developed near the ball diamonds with an accessible path and bench. Other improvements included ball diamond safety fencing, new recycled and accessible picnic tables, paved pathway repairs, parking lot resurfacing, the installation of handmade benches by the Okemos Kiwanis, garden renovations, and the planting of eight trees from a Michigan State University Federal Credit Union "Go Green" grant program.
- 2016: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed our first Gaga ball pits.
- 2016: The sand volleyball courts were renovated with new Lake Michigan beach sand.

#### **12. NORTH MERIDIAN ROAD PARK**

- 2011: The heated restroom, a drinking fountain, and accessible paved pathways were constructed.
- 2015: Two sand volleyball courts were constructed.

- 2015: The Township received a Trust Fund grant to construct a universally accessible pavilion. This pavilion project is planned for 2017.

### **13. TOWNER ROAD PARK**

- 2007: Master planning for the park began and plans were finalized in 2016.
- 2015: The Township acquired a 1.58 parcel that adjoins the park on the north-west corner. The additional land is designed as active parkland. This addition resulted in a total park area of 23.58 acres.
- 2016: The 1.58 acre parcel of land originally had residential structures and they were demolished and the area was graded. The additional land will be utilized for park development.

### **14. HARRIS NATURE CENTER**

- 2012: The Nature Exploration Area is a place where people can intuitively interact with nature. This project was begun in 2012 with the creation of a climbable Turtle Sculpture. Additional features are the Log Jam for climbing and balance; the Sticks and Stones for building; the Spider Web for climbing and contemplation; the Michigan Fossil Dig for digging and imaginative play; 3 interpretive signs provide fossil education; overlook platform; the Gathering Circle includes a stage, bench seating and available electricity for organized programs or general public seating and play.
- 2014: Ingham County Road Department (ICRD) replaced the Van Atta Road bridge by the Nature Center entrance and Legg Park trail entrance. The bridge includes a pedestrian walkway on the west side. As part of their construction plan, the ICRD constructed a new fishing dock/platform on the bank of the Red Cedar River.
- 2015: Lansing Oar and Paddle Club (LOAPC) constructed a rustic canoe launch on the east side of Van Atta Road.

### **15. EASTGATE PARK**

- 2014: Numerous large trees were donated by a resident and were planted near the bicycle pump track and wooded edge of the park.
- 2014: Mountain bike enthusiasts added various stunts to the pump track.

### **16. LEGG PARK**

- 2013: Plans were developed to include additional recreational amenities including a dog park and habitat improvements in the southeastern portion of the park.
- 2015: The park entrance area was improved. A portion of the park entry drive was paved and a small five car parking area was developed. Numerous large trees were donated by a resident and were planted near the park entrance.

### **17. TED BLACK WOODS PARK**

- 2011 a small gravel parking area, fencing and gate were added at the Van Atta Road entrance to the park. An interpretive sign to recognize Dr. Ted

Black was installed near the trail head. Eagle Scout candidates have made numerous park improvements that include benches, a wetland overlook, and trail development and improvement.

- 2011: An Eagle Scout candidate made trail improvements to the park.
- 2012: An Eagle Scout candidate developed a gravel path and made four Aldo Leopold benches for the Van Atta Road entrance area.
- 2016: A wetland overlook was constructed by an Eagle Scout Candidate near the Van Atta Road entrance.

#### **18. MERIDIAN SENIOR CENTER**

- In 2011, the Meridian Senior Center left the umbrella of Okemos Community Education and was moved to the Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Department.
- In 2013, hours were increased to full-time for the Senior Center Coordinator and one additional part-time assistant was added.
- Also in 2013, seven additional handicap parking spaces were added near the entrance.
- Numerous interior improvements were made in 2014 including: upgraded lighting, new furniture, a new fireplace, paint and window treatments.
- Additional improvements were made 2016 including new flooring.

# I. Community Description

## A. Location Description and Population Information

The community of Meridian Township lies along the eastern border of East Lansing and the campus of Michigan State University and in close proximity to the Michigan State Capitol. Centrally located in the palm of Michigan's hand, Meridian Township has nestled within its borders two healthy and active communities; Haslett and Okemos. A smaller portion of the Township is comprised of East Lansing and Williamston mailing addresses.

Founded in the early 1800's along the Red Cedar River as a trading point, Meridian Township residents enjoy quiet, safe, and well maintained connected neighborhoods with outstanding schools, exceptional public safety, and plenty of parks, pathways, and recreational opportunities for visitors and families to enjoy. With natural beauty on roads, interurban pathways, and a vibrant business corridor, Meridian Township is a great atmosphere for families, seniors, and young professionals.

A destination for raising families since before the turn of the century, Meridian Township offers an array of quiet neighborhoods and an abundance of natural beauty with four seasons of outdoor activities.

With a park system that has 911.58 acres of park land in 29 parks and 798 acres of land preserves, Meridian Township welcomes visitors from surrounding areas to its parks and to the largest lake within 25 miles of the State Capital, Lake Lansing.

### Quick Facts

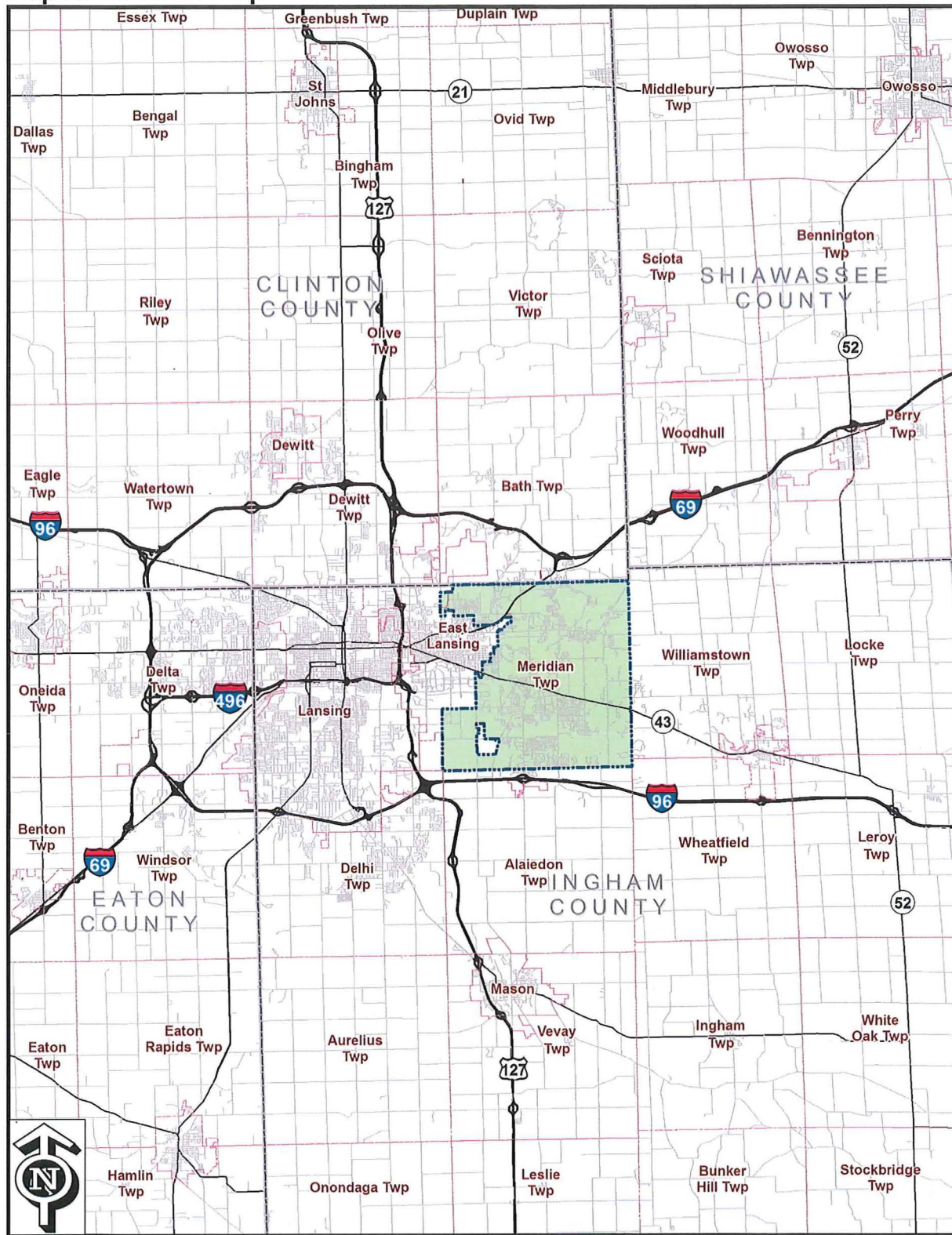
- Population: 41,139\*
- Square Miles: approximately 32
- Median Age: 38.1 years\*
- Households: 18,354\*
- College Graduates: 64.4%\*
- Median Household Income: \$65,143 \*
- Township Parks: 911.58 acres
- County Parks: 430+ acres
- Township Land Preserves: 798 acres

\*Data is from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates for the year 2015

Meridian Township is the local government unit that includes the unincorporated communities and census-designated places of Haslett and Okemos. The Township takes its name from the Michigan Meridian, the prime north-south survey line, which runs through the township. It is from this line that all townships were surveyed and measured.

Meridian Township originally encompassed 36 square miles with boundaries of Coleman Road on the north, Jolly Road on the south, College/Abbott Roads on the west and Meridian Road on the east. Over the years, due to annexations by East Lansing and a 425 agreement with the City of Lansing, the western boundary has changed and the Township now encompasses 31.7 square miles. Michigan State University borders the Township on the southwest side. Michigan's State Capital, Lansing, is located eight miles to the west of Meridian Township.

Map A: Location Map



**B. Meridian Township Residents**

Parks and natural areas have a fundamental impact on the character and quality of life in Meridian Township. Residents have long been concerned about maintaining the quality of their community, particularly the quality of residential life, the rich and diverse natural environment and the award winning schools and public services.

The Charter Township of Meridian takes great pride in being a community that provides a high quality of life for its residents, especially families. The diversity of values, experiences and socioeconomic status creates unique challenges for the Department of Parks and Recreation to provide leisure experiences that appeal to existing residents, while attracting new residents and businesses. The Parks and Recreation staff members are actively engaged in continuing their education and joining related professional associations to enhance their ability to meet these challenges. Staff members also contribute many hours of volunteering to community service organizations at the local and state levels.

Education is a priority to residents and overall Meridian Township is a highly educated community. 96.7% of the Township's adults (25 and over) have obtained four or more years of higher education. These high levels of educational attainment are highlighted in the types of occupations common of Meridian Township residents.

**C. Summary of The National Citizen Survey 2015**

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The NCS communities. The NCS captures residents' opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement). This report summarizes Meridian Township's performance in the eight facets of community livability with the "General" rating as a summary of results from the overarching questions not shown within any of the eight facets. The "Overall" represents the community pillar in its entirety (the eight facets and general).

In every pillar and within each facet, Meridian Township's ratings tended to be similar or higher when compared to other like communities across the nation.

**D. Township Millages & Ordinances**

The public support for these recommendations and the importance of parks

and recreation was substantiated by the successful passage of related ordinances and millages:

- ♦ **New Park Millage** (.6667 mill passed in 2014 through 2025) provides funds for acquisition, maintenance, equipment and facility development.
- ♦ **Previous Park Millage** (.317 mill renewed 1984-2016) provided funds for acquisition, maintenance, equipment and facility development.
- ♦ **Pedestrian/Bicycle Pathway Millage** (0.333 mills renewed in 2016 and continuing through 2028) maintain bicycle and pedestrian pathways.
- ♦ **Land Clearing Ordinance** (adopted in 2002) to prevent clear cutting of land prior to obtaining a permit from the Township.
- ♦ **Community Services Millage** 0.15 mil Community Services Millage (2012-2021,) provides funds for recreation, human services, and the Meridian Senior Center.
- ♦ **Land Preservation Millage** (.75 mills passed in 2000 until 2010, 0.33 passed in 2010 until 2020) provides funds to acquire and manage open-space for preservation and management.
- ♦ **Wetland Protection Ordinance** (originally adopted in 1991 and amended in 2001) provides regulations for preserving and protecting wetlands in joint jurisdiction over state regulated wetlands in Meridian Township.

## II. Administrative Structure

### A. Role of Township Board

The Meridian Township Board governs the Charter Township of Meridian. The Board is comprised of seven elected officials: Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer and four Trustees. The Board appoints a Township Manager to implement its policies based on the Policy Governance model. All Department Directors report directly to the Township Manager.

### B. Role of Park Commission

A five-member elected Park Commission, established under Michigan Compiled Law (MCL 41.426) is an elected policy-making board whose role is to oversee the park system. The Park Commission schedules 12 regular meetings and various special meetings as needed throughout the year. The Director of Parks and Recreation provides staff support to the elected Park Commission whose members prioritize park planning, design, acquisition and development. A member of the Park Commission also serves as a liaison to the Land Preservation Advisory Board.

### C. Role of the Land Preservation Advisory Board

The Land Preservation Advisory Board is an appointed body responsible for recommending land in the Township to obtain for the protection and preservation of open space and special natural features. The board also recommends the best management practices and oversees ecological restoration efforts in current land preserves.

The Land Preservation Program was accomplished through a .75 Land Preservation Millage that was established in 2000 to acquire, preserve, and protect natural areas throughout the township that have unique or special features. In 2010 the Land Preservation Millage was renewed at a reduced rate of .33 through 2020. As of December 2016, there are a total of 798 acres of the township's most beautiful, scenic and natural areas protected as 21 land preserves. The Parks and Land Management Coordinator and the Stewardship Coordinator serve as the staff persons to the Land Preservation Advisory Board by providing technical and clerical support to the advisory board, writing management plans for each of the preserves, helping to conduct neighborhood education meetings and coordinating volunteer activities for citizen stewards.

The Land Preservation Program is the first community-funded program of its kind in Michigan expressly for the acquisition and permanent preservation of open space and special natural features. It is also one of the few such programs in the United States and the only one in Michigan to use ecologically based screening criteria for natural area evaluation and acquisition. The lands and waters found within the land preserves provide

valuable habitat for native plants and animals, protect air and water quality, add aesthetic value and enhance public enjoyment of the outdoors. Although the preserves are not part of the park system, they complement our parks and add to the overall quality of life in Meridian Township. During 2006 the United States Environmental Protection Agency, studying similar type programs throughout the nation, ranked Meridian's as a "model program".

#### **D. Role of Parks and Recreation Department**

The Meridian Township Department of Parks and Recreation was established in 1999, and consists of 15 full-time positions: a Director, Administrative Assistant, two Parks and Recreation Specialist, Senior Parks and Land Management Coordinator, two Senior Park Naturalists, Stewardship Coordinator, Senior Center Coordinator, Facilities Superintendent, and five (5) Utility Workers. In addition, there is a part-time Farmers' Market Manager, Senior Center assistant as well as numerous seasonal recreation, environmental, maintenance and park ranger staff. These positions all play an integral role in providing professional, broad-base programs and services to Meridian Township residents. (See Figure 1)

The Department of Parks and Recreation staff work to continually increase their ability to serve Meridian Township residents by participating in professional organizations, certification training and education opportunities.

The Department of Parks and Recreation administers the following activities:

- ♦ Coordinates acquisition, development and park renovation activities.
- ♦ Provides year-around maintenance to Meridian Township's 911.58 acres of parks and open space (29 parks and natural areas), 77 miles of bicycle/pedestrian pathway, two cemeteries, and 200 acres of township grounds and plazas. Also provides sports field preparation and special event set-up/take down activities.
- ♦ Implements policies of the Park Commission.
- ♦ Obtains grants to leverage local millage funds.
- ♦ Manages the Land Preservation Program by providing staffing to the land Preservation Advisory Board, coordinating acquisition, stewardship and management of Meridian Township's 798-acres of land preserves.
- ♦ Develops, promotes and delivers community-wide recreation programs to encourage use of park facilities and amenities.
- ♦ Operation of the Harris Nature Center, Meridian Senior Center, Snell-Towar Recreation Center, Farmers' Market
- ♦ Manages the operations of Riverside and Glendale Cemeteries.
- ♦ Organizes and implements community festivals and special events such as the Meridian Fireworks Celebration, Chinese New Year, Meridian Arts and Crafts Marketplace, Meridian Heritage Festival, Celebrate Meridian, Halloween Adventures, Family Winter Sports Weekends, and Free Fishing Weekend with DNR.

- ♦ Serves as the Township's liaison to Friends of Historic Meridian, Meridian Garden Club, Haslett Beautification Association, and Harris Nature Center Foundation.
- ♦ Assists and coordinates programming with other recreation providers, schools, non-profit and private organizations.
- ♦ Provides recreation sports programming for the City of Williamston via contract since 2010.
- ♦ Plans and implements a deer management program which strives to reduce the over-population of deer in the township by placing archery hunters in numerous parks and land preserves (the program began in 2011) and typically runs from October-December during the regular bow season.
- ♦ Oversees the planning and maintenance of the Township's Pedestrian-Bicycle Pathway system in the partnership with the engineering department.

#### **E. Parks and Recreation Administration and Staff**

The Director of Parks and Recreation for the Charter Township of Meridian reports directly to the Meridian Township Manager and is responsible for managing all full-time and part-time Parks and Recreation staff members. The Parks and Recreation Department staff serves as the Township liaison to the Park Commission, Land Preservation Advisory Board, Friends of Historic Meridian, Meridian Senior Center, and various community organizations.

##### **1. LuAnn Maisner, CPRP, Director of Parks and Recreation**

The Director of Parks and Recreation is responsible for managing and leading all aspects of the Department.

##### **Professional Credentials**

- Bachelor's degree - Parks and Recreation Administration
- Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP) - National Recreation and Park Association
- Former Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI)
- National Recreation and Park Association - Member
- Michigan Recreation and Park Association - Member
- Regional Parks and Recreation Directors Committee
- MParks Foundation Board - Member
- Southern Michigan Recreation and Park Association-Past President

##### **2. Kit Rich, Senior Park Naturalist/Harris Nature Center Coordinator:**

The Senior Park Naturalist/Harris Nature Center Coordinator is responsible for coordinating nature related programs and events held at the Harris Nature Center and throughout the park system, coordinating stewardship activities and natural area management. This position oversees various part-time staff and volunteers.

**Professional Credentials**

- Bachelor's degree - Interpretive Work
- Bachelor's degree - Agricultural Education
- National Association for Interpretation - member
- Association of Nature Centers Administrators - member

**3. Kati Adams, Senior Park Naturalist**

The Senior Park Naturalist is responsible for conducting programs, events and animal care at the Harris Nature Center and other park facilities throughout the park system. The Senior Park Naturalist coordinates mapping, signage, and maintenance of trails throughout the park system.

**Professional Credentials**

- Bachelor's degree - Outdoor Recreation
- Master's degree - Parks and Recreation Administration
- Interpretive Guide Certification
- Archery Instructor Level II Certification
- National Association for Interpretation - member
- International Wildlife Rehabilitation Association - member
- Michigan Wildlife Rehabilitation Association - member

**4, 5. Mike Devlin and Darcie Weigand, Parks and Recreation Specialist**

The responsibilities of the Parks and Recreation Specialist positions includes organizing of youth and adult recreation and sports programs, special events, promoting youth development opportunities, encouraging community interaction, and effectively recruiting and managing volunteers.

**Mike Devlin, Professional Credentials**

- Bachelor's degree - Community Development
- National Recreation and Park Association - member
- Michigan Recreation and Park Association - member
- Programmers Committee - MI Recreation and Park Association
- Southern MI Recreation and Park Association - Past President

- 2009 Recreation Leadership Award - MI Recreation & Park Association

#### **Darcie Weigand, Professional Credentials**

- Bachelor's degree – Recreation & Leisure Studies
- National Park Association - Member
- Michigan Recreation and Park Association – Member
- Southern Michigan Recreation and Park Association - Member
- Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP) – National Recreation and Park Association

#### **6. Jane Greenway, LLA, Senior Parks and Land Management Coordinator**

The Senior Parks and Land Management Coordinator performs planning and research related to park development, park land use plans, trail and open space projects, land preserves, wildlife corridors and management, and grant writing. This position also serves as staff in the implementation of policies, goals, and programs of the Park Commission and Land Preservation Advisory Board.

##### **Professional Credentials**

- Bachelor's Degree - Landscape Architecture
- Licensed Landscape Architect - State of Michigan
- Former Adjunct Faculty - Landscape Architecture Department, Lansing Community College
- American Society of Landscape Architecture - member
- Michigan Society of Landscape Architecture - member
- Mid-Michigan Stewardship Initiative – member

#### **7. Kelsey Dillon, Park Naturalist/Stewardship Coordinator**

The Stewardship Coordinator is responsible for initiating and managing ecological restoration activities in natural areas, recruiting volunteers and contractors to perform this work and educating the public on why improving ecosystem health is important. The Stewardship Coordinator attends meetings of the Land Preservation Advisory Board to report management activities in all land preserves. This position also provides stewardship in the parks and provides support to the Park Commission.

##### **Professional Credentials**

- Bachelor's Degree – Molecular Biology with High Honors Distinction in Ecological Research

- Graduate of School for Field Studies, Tanzania – Wildlife Management and Ecology
- Commercial Pesticide Applicator License Category 6 – State of Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Chainsaw Safety Certification - current
- Mid-Michigan Stewardship Initiative - member

**8. Dennis Antone, Parks and Grounds Maintenance and Cemeteries**

The Facility Superintendent coordinates the maintenance of parks, grounds, and building activities and fleet operations. He also directs the operations of two Township cemeteries (Glendale Cemetery and Riverside Cemetery) including sales, interments, record keeping and maintenance. There are five full-time utility workers in the Parks and Grounds Maintenance Division. Summer operations are enhanced with assistance from six seasonal workers.

**Professional Credentials**

- Associate's in Science - Business Management
- Former Certified Playground Safety Inspector
- Michigan Recreation and Park Association- member
- Park Resources Committee, past president
- American Public Works Association - member
- Michigan Association of Physical Plant Administrators – member
- International Code Council- member
- Michigan class A&B UST System Operator
- Graduate of Michigan Public Services Institute

**9-12. Utility Workers**

Responsibilities of the Parks and Grounds Maintenance staff include:

Year-round maintenance and repair of 911.58 acres of park facilities; year-round maintenance of 80 miles of pathways (trim, mow, snow removal); year-round maintenance of 798 acres of land preserves; and recreation program support including field preparation, set-up and take-down of numerous recreation programs and special events throughout the year.

**13. Robin Faust, Administrative Assistant II**

The Administrative Assistant is responsible for program registration, contract program management, social media/public relations, customer relations and clerical support for the entire department. Other Township duties include providing support services for the coordination of the Meridian Arts and Crafts Marketplace, creates

packets and records minutes for Park Commission and Land Preservation Advisory Boards.

**Professional Credentials**

- Associate's degree - Business Administration
- Certified Professional Secretary
- International Association of Administrative Professionals - member

**14. Christine Miller, Farmers' Market Manager**

The Farmers' Market Manager is responsible for recruitment of vendors, daily on-site management, and advertising/promotion for the 28-week Farmers' Market season (May-October). An indoor winter market at the Meridian Mall on the first and third Saturday of each month from December through April. This is a year-round part-time position.

**Professional Credentials**

- Bachelor's degree - Animal Science with a specialization in food processing.
- Teaching certificate - Elementary education with minors in math and science.
- Michigan Farmers Market Association – Member & President
- Foodspeak (MI Good Food Charter) - Member
- 4-H – Leader and Superintendent
- Market Manager Certification - Michigan Farmers' Market Association

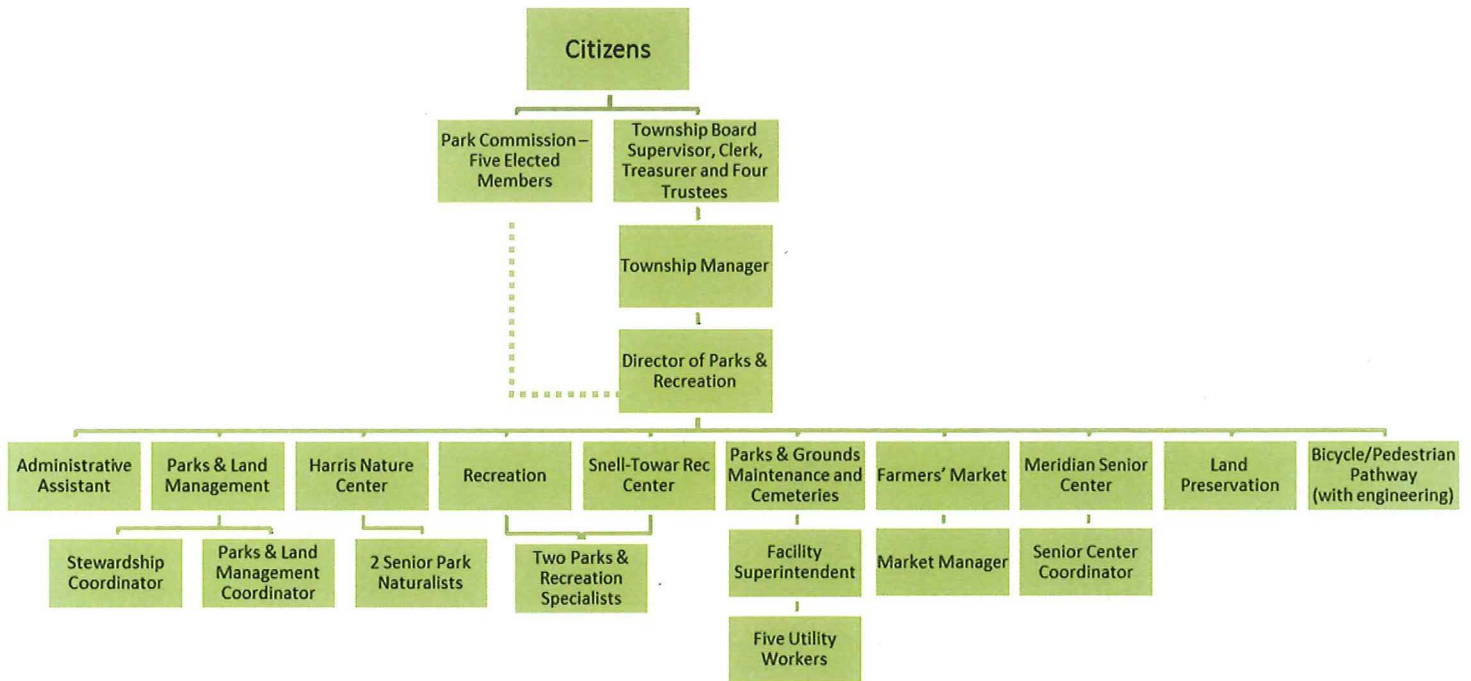
**15. Cherie Wisdom – Senior Center Coordinator**

The Meridian Senior Center is located inside Chippewa Middle School and is operated in partnership with Okemos Public Schools.

**Professional Credentials**

- Associate's degree – General Studies with a focus in Aging studies, Alzheimer's, and Dementia.
- Member of the Michigan Association of Senior Centers
- Legislative Chair for the National Council on Aging
- Member of the American Society on Aging

F. Administrative Structure Organizational Chart – Figure 1



## **G. Funding Sources and Budget**

The residents of Meridian Township place a high value on quality of life in their community. This has been demonstrated through the passage and numerous renewals of millages that support parks, recreation, senior services, land preservation, HNC operations and bicycle/pedestrian pathways.

The Park Millage (2/3 mill passed in 2014 through 2025), provides funds for acquisition, maintenance, equipment and facility development.

More detailed budget descriptions are located in the appendices, as well as the 2017-2021 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Township's DNR (Department of Natural Resources) grant history document. Since 1972, Meridian Township has received 27 grants totaling \$2,482,616.

Recreation is supported in part by a 10-year, 0.10 mill Community Services Millage that passed in 2002 for Recreation, Senior Programs and Human Services. The millage was renewed in 2012 through 2021 at the increased rate of 0.15 mill. Other sources of funding include general fund, grants and user fees.

- Figure 2 -  
**Budget Information**

10/24/2016

### Park Millage

#### Revenue:

	<u>2015 (Actual)</u>	<u>2016 (Budgeted)</u>	<u>2017 (Budgeted)</u>
Park Millage	\$1,580,086	\$1,627,884	\$1,700,350
Harris Nature Center Revenue	\$45,765	\$37,432	\$40,000
Grant Revenue	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$50,000
Pavilion Rentals	\$ 7,674	\$ 6,065	\$ 5,000
<b>Total Park Millage Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,633,525</b>	<b>\$1,671,381</b>	<b>\$1,795,350</b>

#### Expenses:

Administration & Operation	\$136,559	\$167,882	\$169,655
Parks Maintenance	\$201,356	\$242,982	\$249,495
Harris Nature Center	\$191,829	\$192,942	\$192,520
Park Development/Acquisition	<u>\$307,809</u>	<u>\$400,000</u>	<u>\$2,200,000</u>
<b>Total Park Millage Expense</b>	<b>\$837,553</b>	<b>\$1,003,806</b>	<b>\$2,811,670</b>

### General Fund

#### Revenue:

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Recreation Millage	\$55,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Recreation Program Revenue	\$249,886	\$241,070	\$241,070
General Fund	\$515,638	\$591,589	\$690,263
Cemetery	<u>\$25,150</u>	<u>\$17,000</u>	<u>\$20,000</u>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$845,674</b>	<b>\$909,659</b>	<b>\$1,011,333</b>

#### Expenses:

Parks & Recreation Administration	\$135,188	\$164,411	\$122,375
Grounds Maintenance	\$181,234	\$201,369	\$234,837
Cemetery Maintenance	\$43,607	\$47,933	\$109,811
Park Maintenance	\$174,924	\$199,972	\$240,400
Recreation Expense	\$301,367	\$295,974	\$303,910
Park Development	<u>\$ 9,354</u>	<u>\$ 0</u>	<u>\$ 0</u>
<b>Total General Fund Expenses</b>	<b>\$845,674</b>	<b>\$909,659</b>	<b>\$1,011,333</b>

## Senior Center Millage

### Revenue:

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Senior Center Millage	\$130,125	\$134,944	\$138,700

### Expenses:

Administration	\$88,897	\$100,050	\$159,100
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## Land Preservation Millage

### Revenue:

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
Land Preservation Millage	\$527,168	\$540,840	\$544,930
Land Preservation Reserve	<u>\$48,550</u>	<u>\$25,000</u>	<u>\$25,000</u>
<b>Total Park Millage Revenue</b>	<b>\$575,718</b>	<b>\$565,840</b>	<b>\$569,930</b>

### Expenses:

Administration & Operation	\$48,549	\$178,661	\$203,905
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Note: Figures shown in 2015 are actual; 2016 and 2017 are budgeted)

## H. Role of Volunteers

Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Department, the Park Commission, and the Land Preserve Advisory Board have made a priority of engaging residents in volunteer projects and programs. Meridian Township engages volunteers in a number of ways including youth sports coaching, organized volunteer days throughout the parks and land preserves (ex. Love-A-Park-Day), stewardship mornings at the Harris Nature Center, classroom projects for local schools and various other events throughout the year.

Volunteers play an integral role in providing quality parks, land preserves and recreation services. Whether it is coaching a youth sports team or removing invasive species from a land preserve, volunteers who donate their time and skills are essential to the success of Meridian Township. Local school classes, scout groups, church communities, clubs and individuals who volunteered in 2015 were valued at over \$730,000 in the services they provided; but one cannot put a dollar amount on the pride and feeling of accomplishment in their community that these volunteers take away.

**VOLUNTEER HOURS PER YEAR**

**2014**

Parks	346 volunteers	9,548 hrs
Recreation	412 volunteers	18,426 hrs
Harris Nature Center	307 volunteers	5,042 hrs
Friends of Historic Meridian	47 volunteers	912 hrs
Land Preservation	202 volunteers	499 hrs
Meridian Senior Center	40 volunteers	2,324 hrs

The dollar value to the Department totaled \$701,069.

(Source: Dollar value of volunteer work [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org) )

**2015**

Parks	937 volunteers	7,145 hrs
Recreation	432 volunteers	19,347 hrs
Harris Nature Center	227 volunteers	1,362 hrs
Friends of Historic Meridian	68 volunteers	1,792hrs
Land Preservation	211 volunteers	524 hrs
Meridian Senior Center	31 volunteers	1,538 hrs

The dollar value to the Department totaled \$731,504.

(Source: Dollar value of volunteer work [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org) )

**2016**

	<b><u>VOLUNTEERS</u></b>	<b><u>HOURS</u></b>
Parks/Land Preserves	453	5,413
Recreation	432	19,347
Harris Nature Center	198	1,225
Meridian Historical Village	68	1,792
Meridian Senior Center	31	1,323
Deer Management Program	73	3,000
<b>2016 TOTALS</b>	<b>1255</b>	<b>32,100</b>

The dollar value to the Department totaled \$756,276

(Source: Dollar value of volunteer work [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org) \$23.56/hr)

Each year, the Park Commission hosts its annual “Friend of the Parks” volunteer recognition ceremony. This is a special occasion where each person who volunteers is given special recognition for their efforts. The event is recorded and played on the Meridian Township cable access channel HOM-TV channel 21 and/or video streamed on the township website. The Harris Nature Center also hosts a special volunteer barbeque each summer to recognize their volunteers. A tree is planted to recognize volunteers each

year. A plaque is installed with a QR code that identifies each volunteer and their contributions each year.

The Parks and Recreation Department is assisted by various volunteer committees:

**1. Universal Access Advisory Board**

One of the goals of the Park Commission is to improve the accessibility of parks and trails and to promote park use by the disabled and elderly population. This goal led to the creation of a Universal Access Advisory Board. The first meeting was held in 2008 to review proposed site plans for development of Orlando Park. The group has met on several other occasions since to discuss and recommend improvements to other park facilities that would attract additional visitors with disabilities. This group has provided valuable input on numerous major park development projects. Future desires expressed by the Universal Access Advisory Board include: a braille trail with interpretive signs in braille; a station near a bench for park visitors to plug in and listen to audio books trail; smooth and easy access to park elements; information in the parks brochure about suitable parks for persons with disabilities; and accessible restrooms.

**2. Harris Nature Center Foundation Board**

The Harris Nature Center Foundation (HNCF) was created in 2008 to support activities and improvements to the Harris Nature Center that are beyond the regular operations supported by the Park Millage. The HNCF has its 501©3 designation and can acknowledge donations for tax purposes. Through grants, fund raising events, donations, and in-kind services, the HNCF has raised money for the ongoing School Bus Scholarship Program, building the river overlook and the creation of the Nature Exploration Area. The Harris Nature Center Foundation Board strives to successfully act on industry trends to bring children into nature through immersion activities and natural play opportunities.

**3. Friends of Historic Meridian**

The Meridian Historical Village is located in picturesque Central Park in Okemos, Michigan, and contains historic buildings relocated from other locations and carefully restored to their original 19th century style. The Village is operated by the Friends of Historic Meridian, a non-profit organization formed in 1974 to create and sustain an active appreciation of local history. The Friends of Historic Meridian preserve and maintain the historic buildings, sponsor community events in the Village, and hold free public lectures. The Village hosts almost 2500 schoolchildren annually on weekdays during the school year. The busiest months are between September-November and March - June. [www.meridianhistoricalvillage.org](http://www.meridianhistoricalvillage.org).

**4. Nokomis Learning Center Board**

The Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center is dedicated to the preservation of the history, Arts, and culture of the Anishinaabe people - the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi nations. The Center fulfills this mission through programs, exhibitions and special events. A volunteer board leads the activities and operations. To learn more about the Nokomis Center, visit [www.nokomis.org](http://www.nokomis.org).

**5. Meridian Garden Club**

The Meridian Garden Club, a 501(c)(3), began in 1970 and has approximately 100 members. The Club is responsible for planting and maintaining numerous gardens near the administration building and in Central Park. In addition, they hold educational sessions about gardening and a plant sale to provide funds for their gardens.

Highlights of recent years:

- 2008: The Club designed a Blue Star Memorial garden that is located near the Town Hall.
- 2013: The Club collaborated with the Township to install irrigation in all of the gardens that are maintained near the Town Hall, Historical Village, and the Claire Twohy Garden near the Farmers' Market pavilion.
- 2015 the Club developed the Claire Twohy butterfly garden near the pavilion in Central Park. The Twohy Garden received was First Place for Civic Achievement at both the State and National levels.
- Future Plans: The Club's next large endeavor is the Plant it Pink garden in the Historical Village. This garden will provide a quiet area in memory of those who have experienced breast cancer. It will include a bench, beautiful pink shrubbery and donor bricks.

**6. Haslett Beautification Association**

In 2005, residents gathered and formed the Haslett Beautification Association (HBA). The group spearheaded a non-profit organization that collects donations for the purpose of creating public gardens along the commercial areas of Haslett, Lake Lansing, and Marsh Roads. The mission of HBA is to improve the aesthetic appearance of downtown Haslett and encourage businesses to invest in the downtown. HBA has a strong history of fundraising and creating public improvements in downtown Haslett, which benefit businesses, residents, and visitors.

**I. Relationships with School Districts, Other Public Agencies and Private Organizations**

The Township has continued to foster strong partnerships with the Haslett and Okemos School Districts and Libraries, Boy and Girl scouts, civic

organizations, businesses, the GRAND Learning Network and Lansing Oar and Paddle Club. Other partnerships have been formed with recreation groups including: Haslett Youth Recreation Association, Haslett Baseball Club, Okemos Baseball Club, Okemos and Haslett Soccer Clubs, neighborhood associations and civic groups. Meridian Township also administers youth recreation sports programs for Williamston School District students through a contract with the City of Williamston since 2010.

The Meridian Senior Center is located inside Chippewa Middle School with dual funding by Okemos Public Schools and the 2012 Community Service Millage. Okemos Community Schools provides the facility and utilities and the Millage pays for salaries and improvements to the facility. The Meridian Senior Center Staff are supervised by the director of Parks and Recreation.

**J. Role of the Environmental Commission**

The Meridian Township Environmental Commission was established by the Township Board in 1995. Among its duties, the Commission provides comments on wetland use permits, educates the public through its Green Themes Speaker Series and publications, and since 1997, implements an annual Environmental Stewardship Award program to recognize local residents, businesses, and organizations.

**K. Other Environmental Planning Organizations**

Meridian Township staff members regularly attend and support other organizations such as the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, Friends of Meridian Pathways, Friends of the Red Cedar River, Friends of The Wetlands, the Mid-Michigan Stewardship Network, the Mid-Michigan Stewardship Initiative, Grand Learning Network and the Ingham County Trail Planning Group.

**L. Communications**

The Department of Parks and Recreation utilizes the following methods to inform the public of programs, services and facilities:

- **Family Fun Guide** – The Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Family Fun Guide is published annually and mailed to 22,000 households, businesses and PO Boxes in Meridian Township, serves as the primary information source for programs, special events, facilities, and general Township news. The Guide is also available at the Township Hall, Meridian Service Center, Okemos, Haslett, East Lansing and Lansing Libraries, Harris Nature Center and online.
- **Email** – The Department utilizes email as a communication and promotional tool to program participants. Email, social media, Township website and ActiveNet have taken the place of flyers to elementary

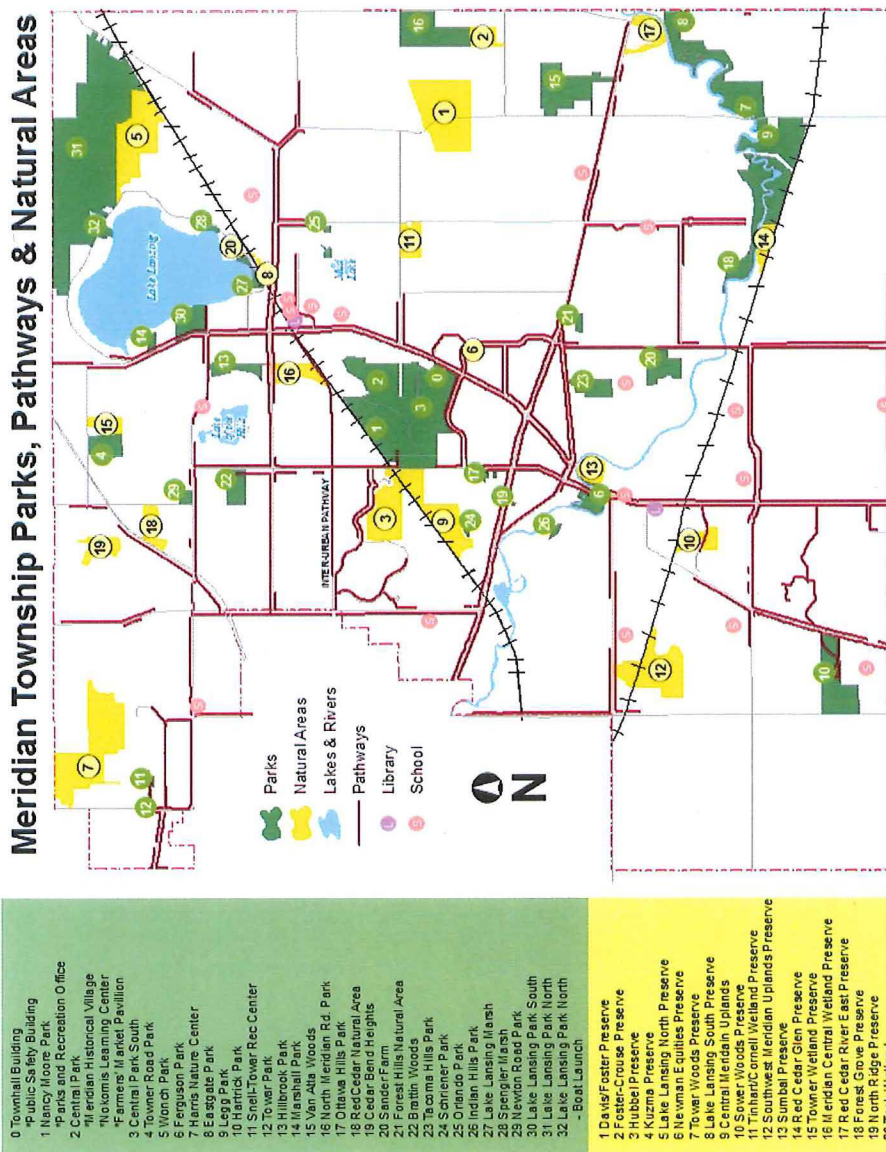
schools (which were once the most effective promotional method). Flyers to schools are still utilized, but on a very limited basis.

- **ActiveNet** – ActiveNet is the online registration program the Department utilizes that also provides credit card registration. This program provides direct marketing opportunities via broadcast email through the system of current and former program participants.
- **HOM-TV 21 (Haslett, Okemos, Meridian TV)** - Meridian Township has its own cable access channel together with programming staff who produce promotional shows and program coverage.
- **Social Media – (Facebook/Twitter/etc.)** - Meridian Township website has improved greatly over the last five years since Department staff has obtained the ability to update and download information. This has lead to more effective reporting and promotion of programs and activities. The Department also participates on Facebook and Twitter which has assisted in reaching the younger population.
- **Press Releases** – Press releases about parks and recreation programs are published on a regular basis to all local media outlets including the Lansing State Journal, Towne Courier, State News, local radio and TV stations.
- **Radio and TV Interviews** – Parks and Recreation staff are regularly interviewed regarding current programs and activities on local TV and radio stations.
- **Word-of-Mouth** – The Department relies on recommendations from current and former participants and its local partners to build interest and awareness of parks and recreation programs.

### III. Parks and Recreation Inventory & Evaluation

The Township’s park, recreation, and open space inventory includes Township-owned parks, natural areas, and recreational facilities. In addition to Township-owned parks, Meridian Township residents have access to Township land preserves that are supported by the land preservation program, Haslett and Okemos School property, and Ingham County Parks. Non-Township owned park and recreational resources accessible to the community are important to understanding the extent of park and recreational opportunities for township residents; therefore, they are listed as separate inventories within this plan.

Map 1: Meridian Township Parks, Pathways & Natural Areas Plan



## A. Community-Owned Parks, Natural Areas and Facilities

### Mini Parks

(4 parks totaling 5.63 acres)

1. **Cedar Bend Heights Park** **0.33 Acres**  
2280 Kenmore Drive, Okemos

#### **Park Description:**

- Amenities: This park includes a play structure, sidewalks, picnic table, park sign, landscaping, split-rail fence, grill and benches.

#### **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 2002: The Meridian Township Park Commission purchased this parcel in in response to neighborhood support.
- 2004: The park was developed utilizing Park Millage funds and money raised by residents who sold fence pickets.
- 2012: Additional landscaping was added to the park.

#### **Future Park Development Plans:**

- There are no future development plans aside from maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

2. **Ottawa Hills Park** **3 Acres**  
4980 Hillcrest Avenue, Okemos

#### **Park Description:**

- This park includes playground equipment geared toward young children, a sidewalk, picnic area, playground equipment and half-court basketball court.

#### **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1984-1986: Ottawa Hills Park has two non-contiguous parcels: one was donated in 1984 by Wayne Clinton and is located on Okemos Road. This parcel serves as a preserved natural wetland. The other parcel (which is the main section of the park) was purchased in 1986 from Marion Jergo for \$5,600 and is located on Hillcrest Avenue.
- 1998: Playground equipment and a basketball court were installed.
- 2001: Swings were added in to the park.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- There are no future development plans aside from maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**3. Schriener Park 1 Acre**  
5039 Algonquin Way, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- This park has open green space area is maintained for neighborhood use. There are no additional park amenities.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- Schreiner Park was acquired through a donation from Ernst and Elfrieda Schreiner in 1980.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- There are no future development plans for this park.

**4. Orlando Park 1.3 Acres**  
1275 Orlando Drive, Haslett

**Park Description:**

- The park has two non-contiguous parcels; an open greenspace which was developed as an active park and a heavily wooded outlot, located down the street from the main park and referred to as Orlando Park Outlot "B".
- This accessible park includes a gazebo, a play structure geared toward older children, a play structure geared toward younger children with a slide, swings, and a rocking/spring toy.
- The park features a paved loop walking path with "Story Walk" signs along the paved path guiding park users to participate in storybook related activities, bicycle rack, grill, game table, benches, and gardens.
- The butterfly gardens are certified as Monarch Waystations by the University of Kansas's Monarch Butterfly Program. Local school children and organizations assist with garden maintenance throughout the year.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1955: The land for Orlando Park came under Township ownership in 1955 when it was acquired for Public Works wells and a water tower, which were removed in 1966.
- 1980: The open grassy area in the park was utilized as a seasonal ice skating rink.

- 2008: The open parcel was developed as a neighborhood park and the play equipment, gazebo, pathway, bicycle rack, game table, benches, and gardens were installed.
- 2014 additional trees were planted in the park.
- 2016 a series of signs called a “Story Walk” were installed along the paved pathway. This project was fully funded by the Haslett Library. The book is switched out each month. The signs invite the park visitor to participate in an activity, e.g. “Walk like a bear to the next page.”
- 2016: New accessible play equipment was also added to the park. The new equipment is geared toward younger children and features a climbing slide structure that incorporates an artistic flower that spins and casts colorful shadows, swings, bongo drum toys, and a rocking piece for young children.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- There are no future development plans aside from maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**Neighborhood Parks**

**(10 parks totaling 100.1 acres)**

**1. Indian Hills Park**

**3 Acres**

4730 Tacoma Drive, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Indian Hills Park is an open grassy area that lies within the Indian Hills neighborhood. It is entirely open space with benches and trees.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1929: Indian Hills Park was platted as a public park for neighborhood residents.
- 2015: The Indian Hills Neighborhood Association purchased a bench for the park.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- There are no future development plans aside from maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**2. Ferguson Park/Sumbal Natural Area 5.7 Acres**

4540 Okemos Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Ferguson Park is a well-visited park located on the Red Cedar River near downtown Okemos. The park features play equipment, benches with river views, picnic tables, canoe launch, an accessible restroom, paved pathways, and parking.
- This park is also used on an annual basis by local schoolchildren as a release site for the "School Salmon in the Classroom" science project. It is also utilized by Mid-MEAC (Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council).

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1971: The original four acres were acquired through a donation from the Ingham County Road Commission.
- 1999: An additional 1.7 acres were donated to the park by adjacent property owners Ghulam and Sufia Sumbal.
- 2001: The park was renovated with grant assistance from the Clean Michigan Initiative Recreation Bond Program. Improvements included upgrading the accessibility of the canoe launch, restrooms, picnic area and playground improvements, and stream bank stabilization activities.
- 2004: Meridian Township Land Preservation Millage Funds acquired 25 acres adjacent to Ferguson Park along the Red Cedar River from Ghulam and Sufia Sumbal that provides a beautiful wooded property along the river with additional walking trail opportunities.
- 2013: Schoolchildren planted trees in the park through a Grand Learning Network grant.
- 2014: Numerous diseased and dead trees were removed from the park, due to the devastating infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer insect.
- 2016: School children planted 10 trees in the park with funding through the "Right Tree, Right Place" Consumer's Energy grant.
- 2016: The wooden park fencing along Okemos Road was replaced with black aluminum fencing.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future development plans include: improving the canoe/kayak launch, updating the restroom, landscape maintenance, and the replacement of park benches, signs and picnic tables.
- Additional improvements may include any necessary maintenance or replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**3. Hillbrook Park**  
1747 Lake Lansing Road, Haslett

**16.4 Acres**

**Park Description:**

- Hillbrook Park is located west of the corner of Lake Lansing Road and Marsh Road in Haslett. This accessible park features play equipment, a large open grassy area, a small pond/wetland, picnic area, tennis/pickleball courts, a half-court basketball court, natural wooded trails, a ball diamond with bleachers, drinking fountain, parking area, and landscaping.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1957: The park began as a 5.7-acre donation in 1957 by the Couchois-Miller families, developers of the Hillbrook Subdivision.
- 1974: Additional acreage of natural area was purchased extending from Lake Lansing Road to Haslett Road. This linear area includes natural trails, picnic area, and a second paved parking area.
- 1972 : With assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, recreation facilities were installed.
- 1986: With assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, recreation facilities were installed.
- 2016: There were major updates and improvements made to the park, particularly the tennis courts and playground area. The tennis courts were completely renovated and redesigned to include: one tennis court, three pickleball courts, and one half-court basketball court. New vinyl-coated fencing, nets and posts were installed. The gates and paved access point to the courts were replaced for the purpose of improving accessibility. The existing playground equipment was removed and replaced with two structures: one for young children and one for older children. Swings and benches were also added to the playground area and an accessible picnic table was added to the paved picnic area.
- 2016: An Ingham County drain project was planned for the wooded portion of the park which called for the removal of some of the trees. As a result, the County provided 29 beautiful new replacement trees. Many were installed around the play area to provide shade.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future development plans include: the creation of a rain garden, the addition of nature based interpretive signage, stewardship of the natural wooded area, tennis court features such as benches and a kiosk, and new ball diamond fencing.
- Additional future plans may include maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**4. Marshall Park** **5 Acres**  
6105 Marsh Road, Haslett

**Park Description:**

- Marshall Park features play equipment, swings, a basketball court, parking, paved pathways, and a picnic area.
- The park received its name in honor of the Marshall Brothers, the first settlers of Meridian Township in 1836.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1974: Marshall Park was purchased in 1974 for \$11,505 with funding support from a Department of Natural Resources Recreation Bond grant.
- 1975: Amenities were added to the park through the Department of Natural Resources Recreation Bond grant. Amenities included a basketball court, picnic area, parking lot, landscaping, backstop and drinking fountain.
- 1996: Playground equipment was added with money collected by Haslett Middle School students.
- 2004: Swings were added along with a pedestrian pathway that runs through the park connecting Marsh Road and Bliss Street.
- 2006: The outdated backstop was removed to create a grassy open play field.
- 2009: A demonstration area was added in the southeast corner of the park to filter storm water, in cooperation with the Lake Lansing Homeowners Association and the Meridian Township Engineering Department.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future development plans include: the renovation of the basketball court, the addition of landscaping, replacing the play structure, improving the parking area, and the replacement of benches and signage.
- Additional future plans may include maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**5. Towar Park** **4 Acres**  
6160 Towar Avenue, East Lansing

**Park Description:**

- Towar Park is located in the East Lansing School District area and serves residents in the northwest portion of the Township. This park is also the home of Snell-Towar Recreation Center, which provides year-around programming for youth, seniors and

teens. This is Meridian Township's only community recreation center.

- This linear park runs East-West from the Edgewood Village Apartment complex to Rutherford Street (a total of 3 blocks).
- Park amenities include sidewalks, a full-court basketball court, playground equipment, youth ball field, picnic areas, a recreation center, skateboard equipment, rain gardens, and paved parking.

**Park History and Development:**

- 1969: The four-acre park is acquired by the Township through the donation or purchase of 13 city lots.
- 1980: The park was developed to include sidewalks, a full-court basketball court, playground equipment, youth ball field, picnic areas, a recreation center, skateboard equipment and paved parking.
- 2008: The Ingham County Drain Commissioner's office constructed rain gardens throughout the neighborhood as an ecological way to address storm water runoff issues in the Towar Gardens neighborhood. As part of the project, rain gardens featuring beautiful flowers were created in the park.
- 2015: The baseball diamond was removed and replaced with an open grassy area that is utilized by the summer recreation program as open play space.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Additional future plans may include maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**6. Wonch Park**

**15 Acres**

4555 Okemos Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Wonch Park is located in a bend along the Red Cedar River on the west side of Okemos Road.
- This fully accessible park features an accessible pavilion, drinking fountain, paved loop pathway, playground equipment, swings, restroom, picnic areas, outdoor exercise equipment, benches, and a paved parking lot.
- Park visitors enjoy fishing in the "beach" area along the river and also use Wonch Park as an informal canoe/kayak launch..

**Park History and Development:**

- 1969: Wonch Park was purchased from Theodore Wonch for \$40,660 through the Township's General Fund.

- 1975: The Haslett Okemos Rotary constructed a pavilion in the park. Included was playground equipment, swings, a restroom, picnic areas, and paved parking lot.
- 2001: The restrooms were renovated to meet accessibility requirements.
- 2008: Master plans were developed to renovate Wonch Park. Future plans included a loop pathway, improved river access and viewing areas, a new pavilion, expanded parking, and an outdoor plaza area.
- 2012: A fair number of dead or dying trees were removed from the park. This allowed more sun to enter the park and made it seem more inviting to visitors.
- 2012: A paved universally-accessible loop pathway (2,055 lf) was constructed through a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. The path meanders along the river at a very gentle slope. For the purpose of improved accessibility, a paved access path was also constructed to link the existing play structure with the new paved pathway.
- 2016: Major improvements included a new pavilion and paved access path and patio with ample room for maneuvering, new recycled picnic tables, a drinking fountain with a water-bottle filler, parking area renovation, and the installation of outdoor exercise equipment. The aged pavilion was demolished and replaced with a new pavilion that includes electricity, something that is highly desirable for pavilion rentals. Accessible picnic tables made of recycled material replaced the old, worn picnic tables. The drinking fountain/water-bottle-filler, is the first of its kind in our park system and features a fountain at an accessible level for wheelchair users.
- 2016: The township was awarded a grant from Greenfields Outdoor Fitness which allowed us to install accessible outdoor exercise equipment. The exercise equipment is permanently installed in pods that are located along the side of the paved pathway.
- 2016: The wood fencing along Okemos Road was removed and replaced with black aluminum fencing. A new bright green traffic bridge was also constructed along Okemos Road in 2016. This bridge includes a wide, paved pedestrian pathway and greatly improved non-motorized transportation access to the park.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future development plans include: the development of a kayak/canoe launch, eventually replacing the play structure, and the development of riverside viewing areas and platforms.
- Additional future plans may include maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived

their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

**7. Newton Road Park** **5 Acres**  
Newton Road, East Lansing

**Park Description:**

- Newton Road Park is an open area that was developed for the purpose of providing much-needed athletic fields. The park has a small parking lot (19 cars) and a drop-off area. The fields are intended to be utilized as practice fields.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1992: The property was purchased by Meridian Township in 1992 for \$48,500 for the development of a fire station.
- 2009: The Park Commission received the parcel as a donation by the Township for the development of a neighborhood park. A park master plan was developed to include over three-acres of athletic fields, a split-rail fence with wildflower plantings, a paved walking path, driveway and 19-car parking lot, and a small play structure.
- 2010: The site was graded, seeded, and eight trees were planted.
- 2014: The athletic fields were developed using recommendations from MSU Turf Management experts, landscaping and a gravel parking area were installed.
- 2015: Park development included paving the 19-car parking lot, installing landscaping and a vinyl split-rail fence along Lake Lansing Road.
- 2016: A paved loop drop-off area was added to the parking area.

**Current Park Use:**

- This large, open field is utilized as a practice field for lacrosse.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- The development of a paved, loop walking path around the perimeter of the park.
- The installation of a play structure (utilizing donations from adjoining neighborhood).
- Planting wildflower or ornamental grasses planted along the split-rail fence on Lake Lansing Road.

**8. Brattin Woods** **20 Acres**  
5851 Okemos Road, Haslett

**Park Description:**

- Brattin Woods is a beautiful hardwood forest with an open-water wetland. Amenities include a gravel loop path, wetland overlook deck, and a paved parking area.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1986: Brattin Woods was purchased from Margaret Brattin, the Estate of John Brattin. The property was acquired utilizing \$100,000 from the Park Millage Fund.
- 1997: A 0.5-mile nature trail loop trail was constructed by an Eagle Scout candidate.
- 2005: Jeff Wells donated a 0.33-acre area to host a small parking area. The paved parking area was constructed for nine cars.
- 2009: An Eagle Scout candidate added a beautiful pond overlook deck.
- 2010: The loop trail was improved with gravel surfacing and the Okemos Kiwanis constructed benches that were placed along the path.
- 2010: Volunteers spread gravel along the entire 0.5-acre path through the park.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future development plans include the development of a trail head sign and bench/resting area along with an interpretive sign that describes the history of the property.
- Additional future plans may include maintenance of the parking area, trail, wetland overlook, benches, and any other improvements to improve accessibility.

**9. Forest Hills Natural Area**

**4.0 Acres**

4625 Northview Drive, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Forest Hills Natural Area is a wooded area that adjoins the Forest Hills subdivision. Its trails serve as off-road routes for many of the neighborhood children traveling to and from school or nearby stores. It is used extensively by the neighborhood for dog walking and nature observation.
- Each year the Forest Hills Neighborhood Association conducts a volunteer clean-up effort.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1987: Forest Hills Natural Area was acquired from the Goff family.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Additional future plans may include maintenance of the existing trails, and the possible construction of a split-rail fence along the property lines.

**10. Tacoma Hills Park** **22 Acres**  
1815 Hamilton Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- This property borders Hamilton Road on the north and the former Edgewood Elementary School on the south. It is primarily utilized by adjacent property owners for walking. Its primary feature is an open, successional field that has a loop trail, nearly a mile in length.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1988: The land was donated to Meridian Township by the Ingham County Drain Commission as part of the Spross Drain Improvement Project.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Additional future plans may include vegetation management, maintenance of the existing trails, and the possible construction of boardwalks along the wet portions of the trail.

**Community Parks** **(8 parks totaling 665.30 acres)**

**1. Central Park** **187.8 Acres**  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos  
(187.8 acres includes park areas, historical village, Nokomis Learning Center, Town Hall, Public Safety and Farmers' Market).

**Overall Park Description:**

- Central Park is a diverse area offering many recreational, cultural, and nature appreciation opportunities.

**Municipal Complex:** The Municipal Complex is in the southeast quarter of Central Park. This area contains the Township Municipal buildings (including the Township offices, Public Safety Building, entrance drives and parking lots), Farmers' Market pavilion, soccer fields, Historical Village, Nokomis Learning Center and a pond. This section of the park also includes restrooms, interpretive facilities, sidewalks, a pavilion, picnic areas, natural trails, historic structures, playground and paved parking.

**Historical Village:** The Historical Village includes seven buildings. (See more on building details under Park Facilities).

- The pond in the Historical Village is regularly stocked with fish which creates successful fishing opportunities for many first-timers. This dock is regularly used by school groups as part of field trips.
- 2013: An accessible game table and paved access pad were installed near the Farmers' Market pavilion, using funds from a grant from LINC (Liaison for Inter-Neighborhood Connectivity, a local group).
- 2015: The Claire Twohy gardens located near the pavilion were renovated to include butterfly-friendly plantings. An interpretive sign was installed near the gardens.
- Numerous shade trees have been added to Central Park in recent years, which is important in all of our parks due to the devastation of the Emerald Ash Borer infestation that began around 2006.
- 2016: A master plan was developed for all of Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park. The intent of the master plan is to develop improved non-motorized transportation connections; improved accessibility; and to develop a park identity for this busy and somewhat disconnected park area.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1966: The first parcel of land was purchased from Maynard and Doris Unruh for \$47,306.
- 1978: The Farmers' Market Pavilion was constructed in 1978 with federal grants and Township General Fund dollars to provide a shelter for the Meridian Farmers' Market. The pavilion includes restrooms, electricity and drinking fountains.
- 1986: 74 acres of Central Park were generously donated by George and Louis Eyde.
- 2005: 8.8 acres were partially donated by the Ledebuhr family and purchased for \$212,500 with Park Millage funds.
- 2011: Meridian Township received a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant to construct an accessible fishing dock. This dock was constructed in the Historical Village section of Central Park. In addition to the fishing dock, an interpretive sign, bench, and accessible paved pathway were added to the dock area.
- 2011: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed a storage locker for fishing rods and tackle that are available free-of-charge to park visitors.
- 2015: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed benches along the fishing pond.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- In 2016 a master plan was developed for all of Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park.
- Future plans call for primary non-motorized transportation corridors in the form of “promenades” that will be comprised of wide paved pathways and boardwalks; a covered basketball pavilion; art walk; pond enhancements; fishing dock at Central Park South; expanded parking; a doggy playground; and landscaping.
- Additional future plans may include vegetation management, maintenance of the existing trails, and the possible construction of boardwalks along the wet portions of the trail.

**2. Central Park South 15 Acres**  
 1990 Central Park Drive, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- The 15-acre Central Park South property provides an access point to over three miles of nature trails in Central Park and also provides shoreline fishing opportunities. This park also includes a picnic area and paved parking.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1984: Acquired in 1984 for \$125,250
- 1998, an asphalt pathway and bridge were constructed across the Mud Lake Drain to connect Central Park South to Gaylord C. Smith Court and Nancy Moore Park.
- 2004: A paved pathway was constructed from Central Park South north to Nemoke Trail, providing non-motorized connections from the Haslett area to the Meridian Mall.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Additional future plans may include vegetation management, maintenance of the existing trails, a boardwalk/paved path on the east side of the pond with a shaded fishing platform, and parking.
- In 2016 a master plan was developed for all of Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park. The master plan outlines the future plans for the “Ledebuhr” parcel, which adjoins Central Park South to the east. The plans for this property include a covered sports pavilion, parking, an outdoor amphitheater, and an art walk.

**3. Hartrick Park 60 Acres**  
 3685 Hulett Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Hartrick Park is located in the southwest quadrant of the Township, just north of Okemos High School. This park includes

restrooms, sidewalks, pavilion, flagpole, playground equipment, grills, gravel trail, paved trail, wetland overlook platform, wetland pond, picnic areas, two baseball/softball fields, two youth soccer fields, paved and gravel overflow parking.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1988: Meridian Township purchased 30 acres of land for \$330,000
- 1989: An additional 30-acres was donated by the James and Tass Hartrick family in 1989.
- 2003-2004: Hartrick Park was developed with \$488,125 of grant assistance from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund in.
- 2011: Township enhanced the wetlands with native plantings.
- 2012: Eagle Scout candidates constructed a ½ mile long gravel trail along the south edge of the park through the wooded area. An additional section of gravel was added by the township in to create a connection between the Okemos softball diamonds and Hartrick Park.
- 2013: Paving was added around the flagpole and bleachers to improve accessibility.
- 2015-2016: Certified monarch-waystation gardens were added to the park. The gardens were planted by schoolchildren.
- 2016: Covered dugouts were installed on the two ball diamonds.

**4. Nancy Moore Park 40 Acres**  
1960 Gaylord C. Smith Court, East Lansing

**Park Description:**

- This park was the township's first athletic complex and includes restrooms, paved and natural trails, picnic pavilion, restrooms, two baseball/softball fields, two soccer fields, two sand volleyball courts, a full-court basketball court, grills, playground equipment and a parking lot.
- Nancy Moore Park is located adjacent to the Meridian Township Service Center in which the Department of Parks and Recreation is housed.
- Many of the trees in the park were provided through the Township's Adopt-A-Tree program, and two gardens have been installed in memoriam.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1989: Nancy Moore Park was acquired from Doug Federau for \$156,000 and was developed into the Township's first athletic complex.
- 1990-1992: Park development was financed through the MDNR Quality of Life Recreation Bond Program.
- 1992-1995: Development of the athletic complex.

- 2004: The parking lot was paved and has space for 164 cars.
- 2005: A paved trail was added that connects to Nemoke Trail in Haslett along an existing utility easement.
- 2009: Two horseshoe pits were added to the park.
- 2015: The pavilion was re-sided and a memorial garden was developed near the ball diamonds with an accessible path and bench. Other improvements included ball diamond safety fencing, new recycled and accessible picnic tables, paved pathway repairs, parking lot resurfacing, the installation of handmaid benches by the Okemos Kiwanis, garden renovations, and the planting of eight trees from a Michigan State University Federal Credit Union "Go Green" grant program.
- 2016: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed our first Gaga ball pits.
- 2016, the sand volleyball courts were renovated with new Lake Michigan beach sand.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Additional future plans may include new play equipment, new pavilion, shaded picnic pods, vegetation management, pathways around the parking area and maintenance of the existing trails.
- In 2016 a master plan was developed for all of Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park. Future plans for Nancy Moore include expanded parking and re-designing the circulation patterns of the parking between Nancy Moore Park and the Service Center.

**5. North Meridian Road Park** **60 Acres**  
5191 N. Meridian Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- North Meridian Road Park was purchased to provide recreational opportunities for residents in the eastern portion of the Township. The park has 40.6 acres of upland and 19.4 acres of wetland.
- Park amenities include athletic fields, a large sledding hill, nature trails and boardwalks, paved parking lot, year-round restroom, and a drinking fountain.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1991: North Meridian Road Park was purchased from Judy Linn for \$165,000.
- 1998: A sledding hill was created.
- 2002: Play equipment and a paved parking lot were added.

- 2010: The Township received a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant for development of a year-around universally-accessible restroom facility and accessible walkways.
- 2011: The heated restroom, a drinking fountain, and accessible paved pathways were constructed.
- 2015: Two sand volleyball courts were constructed.
- 2015: The Township received a Trust Fund grant to construct a universally accessible pavilion. This pavilion project is planned for 2017.

**6. Towner Road Park** **23.58 acres**  
2055 Towner Road, Haslett

**Park Description:**

- Towner Road Park was formally a commercial driving range and the land was acquired for the purpose of future development into a sports/multi-use park for residents in the northern portion of our community.
- The park is currently undeveloped but is being utilized for youth tackle football practices and lacrosse practices on small areas of flat land.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 2007: The Township acquires 22 acres of land from Ron Applegate for \$432,255 on a land contract.
- 2010: The Township demolished the golf driving range building.
- 2015: The Township acquired a 1.58 parcel that adjoins the park on the north-west corner. The additional land is designed as active parkland. This addition resulted in a total park area of 23.58 acres.
- 2016: The 1.58 acre parcel of land originally had residential structures and they were demolished and the area was graded. The additional land will be utilized for park development.
- 2007: Master planning for the park began and plans were finalized in 2016.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Construction of the park is planned to be completed in 2017. The site plan includes two ball diamonds, athletic fields, restroom building, paved pathways and boardwalks, landscaping, parking and utilities.

**7. Meridian Riverfront Park** **204.0 Acres**

**Park Description:**

- The Meridian Riverfront Park consists of three parks totaling 204 acres. They include Harris Nature Center, Eastgate Park and Legg Park.

**(a) Harris Nature Center**

**48 Acres**

3998 Van Atta Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- The Harris Nature Center is located along the Red Cedar River in a beautiful wooded area interspersed with meadows and a white spruce woodlot. The Nature Center building offers environmental activities and outdoor recreational opportunities focusing on protecting, promoting and interpreting the Red Cedar River. Within the park are a Nature Building and the Nature Exploration Area, both of which encourage visitors to engage with nature through cognitive experiences and physical interactions.
- The Nature Center building is in a 60-year old house that was renovated in 1997 into a public nature center that offers interpretive exhibits, live animal displays, nature murals by local artists, resource library, screened patio, and environmental programs for schools and the general public.
- The area outside the Nature Building is enhanced by native plant landscaping, a picnic area, river overlook deck, live Red-tail Hawk exhibit, interpretive signage, small pond, fire pit with amphitheater seating, canoe launch, fishing dock, storage barn, 20 paved parking spaces and overflow parking on grass.
- Within the park natural area there is a 1/2 mile paved loop trail and numerous natural trail paths with small interpretive signs installed in the 1990's. Benches are available along the trails and short boardwalks span chronically wet sections of the paths. With the help of volunteers, Wood Duck nest boxes are maintained within the wetlands and Bluebird nest boxes are located within meadow habitat. Trails are multi-use for walking, running, bicycling, skiing and snowshoeing.
- The Nature Exploration Area is a place where people can intuitively interact with nature. This project was begun in 2012 with the creation of a climbable Turtle Sculpture. Additional features are the Log Jam for climbing and balance; the Sticks and Stones for building; the Spider Web for climbing and contemplation; the Michigan Fossil Dig for digging and imaginative play; 3 interpretive signs provide fossil education; the Gathering Circle includes a stage, bench seating and available electricity for organized programs or general public seating and play.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1986: Harris Nature Center's property was purchased with Land and Water Conservation funds from Paul and Vila Allen for \$240,000.
- 1996: The Nature Center was created from a 45-year old house.
- 1997: The parking lot and nature trails were developed. Nature Center opened on July 22, 1997.
- 2014: Ingham County Road Department (ICRD) replaced the Van Atta Road bridge by the Nature Center entrance and Legg Park trail entrance. The bridge includes a pedestrian walkway on the west side. As part of their construction plan, the ICRD constructed a new fishing dock/platform on the bank of the Red Cedar River.
- 2015: Lansing Oar and Paddle Club (LOAPC) constructed a rustic canoe launch on the east side of Van Atta Road.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future park development plans include: enhancement of the nature exploration area, the addition of a pavilion, outdoor restrooms with drinking fountain, trail and boardwalk improvements, new expanded interpretive signage along trails, and canoe dock enhancements and signage related to the future Red Cedar Water Trail.

**(b) Eastgate Park**

**53 Acres**

4203 S. Meridian Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Eastgate Park is located on the far eastern edge of the township and has frontage on the Red Cedar River. It has a large, open grassy area, pavilion, paved pathway, gravel parking, and a bicycle pump track.
- A trail-head sign and trail markers direct visitors along the 1.4-mile natural river trail.
- Blue bird houses are located near the pavilion and are regularly maintained. This park includes sidewalks, natural trails, picnic pavilion with grill, open grassy area and accessible parking.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1986: Eastgate Park was purchased in with the assistance of a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant.
- 2002: A paved walkway was added from the parking lot to the pavilion.
- 2009: Residents who are also members of the Michigan Mountain Bike Association constructed a bicycle pump track in the eastern portion of the park.

- 2014: Numerous large trees were donated by a resident and were planted near the bicycle pump track and wooded edge of the park.
- 2014: Mountain bike enthusiasts added various stunts to the pump track.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future plans could include paving the parking area, trail and pathway maintenance, and maintenance of the bicycle pump track.

**(c) Legg Park**

**103.0 Acres**

3891 Van Atta Road, Okemos

**Park Description:**

- Legg Park is located on the west side of Van Atta Road following almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile along the south bank of the Red Cedar River. It is partly wooded and partly open and features wetlands, Sloan Creek, natural walking trails, gravel entry drive, gravel parking on the west side of the park, and a small paved parking area near the entrance on the east side of the park.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1980: A portion of this park was developed with a gravel entry drive, pavilion, parking lot and natural trails with grant assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- 2013: Plans were developed to include additional recreational amenities including a dog park and habitat improvements in the southeastern portion of the park.
- 2015: The park entrance area was improved. The park entry drive was paved and a small five car parking area was developed. Numerous large trees were donated by a resident and were planted near the park entrance.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1979: 70-acres were acquired from Louis and Joan Legg (55-acres donated and 15-acres purchased).
- 1994: An additional 31.7 acres were purchased from the Legg Family for \$96,000 for the purpose of developing future athletic fields. This area is commonly referred to as Legg Park South.
- 1994: Dr. Mason and Christine Cobb donated 1.58 acres near adjacent to the existing river trail system.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future park development plans may include: the development of a dog park, pavilion replacement, outdoor restrooms, trail and boardwalk improvements, and improved access.

**8. Ted Black Woods 74.92 Acres**

540 Grand River Avenue, Okemos  
(formerly known as Van Atta Woods Park)

**Park Description:**

- This park contains beautiful hardwoods and assorted wildflower species. It has been allowed to progress naturally with minimal improvements from the Township. There are two access points to the park with small parking lots: one on Van Atta Road (gravel) and Grand River Avenue (paved). There are 1.2 miles of nature trails.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1973: The central 68-acres of Van Atta Woods were acquired in for \$95,000 from Andrew and Kathryn Pavlik.
- 1989: An adjacent parcel on Grand River Avenue was purchased from James and Shirley Harding for \$130,000 with Park Millage funds to improve public access and paved parking area for park visitors.
- 2004: Two interpretive signs were added to the trails and were funded by a U.S. Forest Service grant.
- 2009: An additional .92 acres were added as a donation/purchase from the family of former Park Commissioner, Environmental Commissioner, Township Board Trustee, famed bird expert, Ted Black. The 0.92-acre parcel is located on the northwest corner of the park and will serve as an additional entrance to access the trail system. As part of the donation agreement and as an opportunity to honor Ted Black for his many years of service to the Meridian Township community, the entire Van Atta Woods Park was renamed "Ted Black Woods Park".
- 2010: Brian Van Order, owner of Michigan Demolition and Excavation, donated demolition of the house structure and restoration services on the site. Joe Pennoni, owner of Rapid Tree Removal Service, removed numerous dead, diseased, stressed and hazardous trees on the site and in the wooded area of the park.
- 2011 a small gravel parking area, fencing and gate were added at the Van Atta Road entrance to the park. An interpretive sign to recognize Dr. Ted Black was installed near the trail head. Eagle Scout candidates have made numerous park improvements that include benches, a wetland overlook, and trail development and improvement.
- 2011: An Eagle Scout candidate made trail improvements to the park.

- 2012: An Eagle Scout candidate developed a gravel path and made four Aldo Leopold benches for the Van Atta Road entrance area.
- 2016: A wetland overlook was constructed by an Eagle Scout Candidate near the Van Atta Road entrance.

**Future Park Development Plans:**

- Future park development plans may include: an outdoor pavilion and gathering spot, native bird-friendly plantings, bird viewing opportunities, pathway enhancement, sign enhancement, and invasive species management.

**Natural Areas**

**(4 parks totaling 139.3 Acres)**

- 1. Lake Lansing Marsh** **46 Acres**  
1430 Lake Drive, Haslett

Lake Lansing Marsh is located on the south end of Lake Lansing and is the primary fish breeding spot on the lake. It was donated to the Charter Township of Meridian by Donald and Marylan Bensen in 1962.

- 2. Spengler’s Marsh** **3.3 Acres**  
5929 Lake Drive, Haslett

This area is located on the southeast shore of Lake Lansing. The property was donated by Patricia Cleland and Barry Spengler in 1994 and is located on the southeast shore of Lake Lansing.

**Future Development Plans:**

- Future development plans could include a boardwalk and nature viewing overlook.

- 3. Red Cedar Natural Area** **56 Acres**  
1455 Oscoda Road, Okemos

The Red Cedar Natural Area is an area that is mostly wooded floodplain located on the north side of the Red Cedar River. The natural area also runs contiguous to the Shoals Subdivision. It is an important area for wildlife. Informal road-side parking is available, along Oscoda Drive, near the park sign.

**History of Park Acquisition and Development:**

- 1996: The property was deeded to Meridian Township by the Eyde Company.

- 2001: An Eagle Scout developed a figure-eight nature trail that lies in the flood plain of the park on the north bank of the Red Cedar River.

**4. Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area                      34 Acres**  
4344 Dobie Road, Okemos

Meridian Township currently holds a renewable 10-year (2015-2025) lease on the Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area property which is also protected under an open space easement. The Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area is bordered on the south by Dobie Road Reserve property owned by Michigan State University. Under the lease agreement, the current owner, Dr. Maureen Sander, has granted residents of Meridian Township permission to use the property for walking, picnicking, skiing or other passive outdoor recreation activities. A natural trail system meanders through the park and is the home to many bluebird boxes.

### **Regional Parks**

Meridian Township does not own or operate any regional parks within its boundaries. It is worth noting that Ingham County Parks owns and manages two regional parks in our community, Lake Lansing North and South Parks.

### **Meridian Township Facilities**

**1. Meridian Historical Village**  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos

The Historical Village, located in Central Park, is a collection of 19th century buildings moved from other locations and one modern reproduction of an Okemos church. The Village is maintained by the Friends of Historic Meridian, a nonprofit volunteer organization, focused on preservation of history and historic structures of Meridian Township. The Village has open hours for walk-through visits, presentations and special activities, and can be reserved by school groups for tours. Flowers, herbs, and vegetable gardens are planted in the Historical Village and maintained by Village volunteers and the Meridian Garden Club. A majority of the facilities, sidewalks, and parking are accessible to persons with disabilities.

The first building moved to the Village was the Grettenberger Farmhouse in January, 1974. This restored structure represents a

typical Michigan farmhouse of the period of 1860-1880. The Proctor Tollgate House followed in June, 1974, and contains an interpretive exhibit on early transportation focusing on the necessity, development, and impact of plank roads. The one-room frame Randall School House was moved to the Village in 1987 followed by the brick General Store building in 1988. The Unruh Barn was added in 1991 and serves as the site for old-time chores. The Barnes House Inn and Tavern was moved to the Village in 1997 and houses interpretive displays and meeting space. A single-story office wing was added to the Barnes House in 2016. The Perkins-Copland Log Cabin was added to the Village in 2006

The most recent addition to the village is the chapel, constructed in 2009. This chapel is the first “new construction” in the Village. All of the other structures have been moved from other locations throughout the township. The chapel was built as a reconstruction of a 19<sup>th</sup> century church which stood on a hill in Okemos for nearly 100 years. It lies nestled among seven lovingly restored buildings from the 1800s. The non-denominational Chapel is available for weddings and small gatherings on a rental basis. Sidewalks, gazebo, paved parking and a pond also add to the charm of the area.

A fishing dock, interpretive sign, benches, and a paved pathway were added to the Historical Village section of Central Park in 2011 with funding assistance from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

## **2. Snell-Towar Recreation Center**

6160 Towar Avenue, East Lansing

The Snell-Towar Recreation Center was constructed in 1972 with funds from the Township General Fund and a Federal Community Development Block Grant. Operating, staffing and upkeep continue to be funded by the Township General Fund. Staffing is provided by a full-time coordinator who is responsible for providing youth development opportunities and senior activities for residents of the Towar Community. The Center has 14 parking spaces (13 non-handicap, one handicap). Snell-Towar Recreation Center is located in the middle of Towar Park. Future renovations are planned to improve the functionality of this facility and increase its accessibility to individuals with a disability.

## **3. Farmers’ Market**

5151 Marsh Road, Okemos

The Farmers’ Market operates in the Central Park pavilion at the Meridian Municipal Complex from May-October on Wednesdays and

Saturdays with vendors selling a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and home-made products. The Market, which opened in 1978, has shown continued growth and popularity. The number of vendors is limited by the size of the facility. Expansion or relocation of the market is currently being studied. Beginning in December of 2010, the Farmers' Market was open on the second Saturday of each month, throughout the winter, inside the Meridian Mall. The Market is open on Saturdays, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. from May-October and on Wednesdays from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. from July through October. There are on average 35-45 vendors each market day which fill the pavilion and sidewalk leading to the Historical Village. The Market is operating at full capacity with limited options for growth at its current site. The Market is open 43-46 days each season. It originated in 1974 and is managed by a part-time market manager with assistance from a four-member elected advisory committee made up of farm market participants. The Market is also open the day before Thanksgiving from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and this special event has grown to include 19 vendors. In 2010, a "winter market" was developed at the Meridian Mall and was open for four Saturdays in the months of December and January. Almost 30 vendors participated in this very successful indoor marketplace.

#### **4. Harris Nature Center**

3998 Van Atta Road, Okemos

Harris Nature Center's property was purchased with Land and Water Conservation funds in 1986 from Paul and Vila Allen for \$240,000. The Center is housed in a 45-year old house that was converted in 1997 into a public nature center that offers environmental activities and outdoor recreation opportunities focusing on protecting, promoting and interpreting the Red Cedar River. The Center is staffed by two full-time Naturalists and a variety of part-time staff and volunteers. The Nature Center contains rotating displays that focus on the Red Cedar River and seasonal changes in nature. A Preuss Living River exhibit features a realistic mural, waterfall and live turtles. Programs offered include Chipmunk Storytime for preschoolers, My Cub and I for toddlers, nature day camps for all ages, scout badge programs, guided day and night walks, birthday parties, school programs and a variety of general public programs throughout the year.

The Harris Nature Center Foundation (HNCF) was created in 2008 to support activities and improvements to the Center. The HNCF has its 501(c)3 designation and can acknowledge donations for tax purposes. The HNCF is currently fundraising for the construction of a river overlook platform/outdoor classroom. In 2010, three local businesses donated their services for tree trimming and removal, and installation of 800 square feet of sidewalk leading to the future

overlook. Construction of the overlook is scheduled for 2011. Other improvements to enhance and educate visitors are being planned as well.

**5. Nokomis Native American Cultural Center**  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos

In 1987, the Meridian Township Board applied and received a \$100,000 grant from the Michigan Equity Program to build the Nokomis Learning Center, a Native American cultural center. The funding provided a building housing a display/demonstration room, exhibit/meeting room, kitchenette, office, restrooms, and lobby entrance. The funding sources are tours, programs, gift shop sales, donations, memberships and competitive grants. By agreement, the Township owns the land and the building, but the Nokomis Learning Center Board operates as a non-profit out of the building.

**6. Meridian Senior Center**  
400 N Okemos Road, Okemos

The Meridian Township senior citizens have been a focus of the Okemos Community Education department since 1970, providing activities such as luncheons, travel opportunities, recreation leagues and numerous special events. In 1990-1991 due to an increasing senior center population in the community, the Senior Center was also seeing steady growth with many requests coming in for additional space and programming. Motivated by this growth, Okemos Public Schools included plans for providing a larger space for the Senior Center in their 1991 bond issue.

Following the successful passage of the bond, a citizen's advisory committee was formed to assist in the development of the new center. In January 1995 a survey a survey was prepared and distributed to approximately 4,000 Meridian Township senior citizens. Over 500 supportive responses were received. The Meridian Senior Center was officially opened on September 17, 1995.

On November 5, 2002 the proposed Millage for Senior Citizen, Recreation and Human Service Programs was passed for .1 mills. In 2011, the Meridian Senior Center left the umbrella of Okemos Community Education and moved to Meridian Township Parks and Recreation. On August 7, 2012 a proposed millage renewal with an increase of an additional .05 mills specifically designated for the Senior Center passed.

## B. Description of Meridian Township Recreation Programs

Recreation in our community has created many opportunities to develop partnerships with local businesses, service organizations, neighboring communities and schools, as well as engage numerous residents in volunteer service or as program participants. Our youth and adult recreation programs, outreach volunteer programs and special events have increased use of our 911.58-acre park system. Meridian Township offers a wide range of programs and events to meet the year-round and seasonal needs of all segments of the population from youths to seniors.

Some youth programs are offered free of charge with grant assistance in order to reach a broader segment of the community. Youth recreational programs focus on positive youth development, including opportunities for adopting healthy, active lifestyles. Recreation services are provided by numerous clubs, leagues, citizen groups, and the Community Education Departments of Haslett and Okemos. Both Community Education Departments offer contract recreation classes, youth sports, senior activities and child care programs for their school districts.

In 2010, Meridian Township also began to provide recreational programming services for its neighbors to the east, to the City of Williamston.

The Meridian Township Parks and Recreation's "Family Fun Guide" provides a detailed listing of all events and programs offered by the Township. This Guide is distributed by mail annually and is available on the Meridian Township website ([www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us)). The department also promotes its activities through a variety of media outlets including Facebook, Twitter, press releases, and through email to former and current participants. On-line registration was added in 2007. The list below is a sample of the hundreds of programs offered (or supported) throughout the year by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

### **Youth Sports & Leisure**

*Sporties for Shorties  
Soccer, Flag Football  
Lacrosse, Basketball  
Totally Teen Trips*

*Nature Summer Camps  
Summer Playground Program  
Baseball, Softball  
Environmental Education*

### **Adult Recreation & Leisure**

*Photography Class  
Sand Volleyball, Golf  
Walking Programs*

*Nature Education  
Stewardship  
Softball, Kickball*

### **Family Recreation & Leisure**

Halloween Adventures  
Sledding  
Cross-Country Skiing  
Heritage Festival  
Celebrate Meridian  
Chinese New Year

Love A Park  
Christmas in the Village  
Arts & Crafts Marketplace  
Meridian Farmers' Market  
Polar Bear 5-K Race/Walk

## **Harris Nature Center Programs**

### **Youth Nature Programs**

School programs to enhance curriculum  
Nature Connection Summer Day Camp  
My Cub & I: Nature for Toddlers  
Timber Tots: Nature for Young Preschoolers  
Preschool Science Exploration  
Chipmunk Story Time  
Scout Badge Workshops  
Birthday Parties with multiple themes available

### **Family Nature Programs**

Winter Wonderland  
Halloween Adventures  
Live Animal Programs  
Family Specials: hands-on nature  
Themed Guided Walks  
Seasonal Campfire Programs

### **Adult Enrichment**

Native Plants Day  
Photography Classes  
Bird Watching Walks  
Wildflower Walks  
Guide Park Walks  
Skiing and Snowshoeing  
Stewardship Mornings  
Volunteer opportunities

## **C. Description of Other Public Recreation Sites**

### **1. Public School Space and Facilities**

Meridian Township residents have a variety of open space and facilities owned by local school districts. The schools and the township cooperate in programming and facility usage. Several schools provide restrooms that are accessible to the public from the outside during night and weekend events.

- Figure 3 -

**Public School Open Space in Meridian Township**

	Acreage
<b>Haslett Public Schools</b>	<b>97.0</b>
Haslett Middle School	20.0
Haslett High School	47.0
Murphy Elementary	10.0
Vera Ralya Elementary	10.0
Wilkshire Early Childhood Center	10.0
<b>East Lansing Public Schools</b>	<b>43.0</b>
Donley Elementary	19.0
Vacant parcel	24.0
<b>Okemos Public Schools</b>	<b>400.3</b>
Bennett Woods Elementary	45.0
Central Elementary	28.0
Chippewa Middle School	78.0
Cornell Elementary	10.0
Edgewood Elementary	12.0
Hiawatha Elementary	19.3
Kinawa Middle School	72.0
Okemos High School	96.0
Powell Road Property	20.0
Wardcliff Elementary	20.0
<b>Total Public School Property</b>	<b>540.3</b>

**Haslett Public School Sites**

Haslett School District has six parcels of land that contain three elementary schools, a middle school, a high school, administrative buildings, open space and natural areas. A brief description of each of the Haslett Public School sites follows.

**Haslett Middle School**

20 Acres

1535 Franklin Street

2 *Gymnasiums*

*Varsity Softball Field*  
*2 Outdoor Basketball Courts*

**Haslett High School**

47 Acres

5450 Marsh Road

2 *Gymnasiums*  
*Indoor Community Pool*  
*6 Tennis Courts*  
*Lighted Football Field*  
*Track*

*Multi-Use Room*  
*Youth Baseball Field*  
*Varsity Soccer Field*  
*Trails*  
*Lacrosse/Football Field*  
*Varsity Baseball Field*

**Haslett Community Education**

1590 Franklin Street

The Haslett Community Education building and the Haslett Community Library share the building.

*Gymnasium (half-court basketball) used for activities other than basketball*

**Murphy Elementary School**

10 Acres

1875 Lake Lansing Road

*Gymnasium*  
*Playground Equipment*

*Outdoor Basketball Court*  
*Outdoor Open Play Field*

**Vera Ralya Elementary School**

10 Acres

5645 School Street

*Gymnasium*  
*Playground Equipment*

*Outdoor Basketball Courts*  
*Youth Baseball Field*  
*Soccer Field*

**Wilkshire Early Childhood Center**

10 Acres

5750 Academic Way

*Playground Equipment*  
*No gymnasium*

*Soccer Fields/Open Space on an adjacent leased property*

**Okemos Public School Sites**

Okemos Public School District has ten parcels of land, nine of which are currently developed. They are as follows:

**Bennett Woods Elementary**  
2650 Bennett Road

45 Acres

*Gymnasium*  
*Outdoor Basketball Courts*

*Playground Equipment*  
*Softball/Baseball Field*  
*2 Soccer Fields*

**Central Elementary School**  
4406 N. Okemos Road

28 Acres

*Gymnasium*  
*Outdoor Basketball Court*

*Playground Equipment*  
*2 Soccer Fields*

**Chippewa Middle School**  
*(Also location of Meridian Senior Center)*  
4000 N. Okemos Road

78 Acres

*2 Gymnasiums*  
*4 practice football/lacrosse*  
*fields*  
*9 Tennis Courts*  
*Football Field*

*9 Softball/ Baseball Fields*  
*5 Soccer Fields*  
*Track*  
*Weight room*

**Cornell Elementary School**  
4371 Cornell Road

10 Acres

*Gymnasium*  
*Two outdoor Basketball*  
*Courts*  
*Small pavilion*

*Playground Equipment*  
*Paved loop trail*  
*2 Soccer Fields*  
*Small Nature Area*

**Edgewood Elementary School**  
*(Closed in 2003-now open for Okemos Community Education offices and child care)*  
1826 Osage Drive

12 Acres

*Gymnasium*  
*Outdoor Basketball Courts*  
*Small Pavilion*  
*Small Sledding Hill*

*Playground Equipment*  
*3 Soccer Fields*  
*Hiking Trails*

**Hiawatha Elementary School**  
1900 Jolly Road

19 Acres

*Gymnasium*  
*Outdoor Basketball Courts*  
*Playground Equipment*

*2 Soccer Fields*  
*Small Sledding Hill*

**Kinawa Middle School**  
1900 Kinawa Drive

72 Acres

*Gymnasium*  
*Indoor Pool*  
*3 Tennis Courts*  
*3 Softball Fields*  
*3 Soccer Fields*

*Pond and Stream*  
*Playground Equipment*  
*Cross-Country Trail*  
*Weight Room*

**Okemos High School**  
2800 Jolly Road

96 Acres

*2 Gymnasiums*  
*Indoor Pool*  
*12 Tennis Courts*  
*2 Practice Sport Fields*  
*Indoor Track*  
*Lighted Football Field*

*Track*  
*3 Softball/Baseball Field*  
*Wetland*  
*Nature Trail*  
*Wrestling Room*

**Wardcliff Elementary School**  
This school closed in 2009.  
5150 Wardcliff Drive

20 Acres

*Outdoor Basketball Courts*  
*Playground Equipment*

*3 Soccer Fields*

**East Lansing Public School Site**

East Lansing Public School District has one elementary school in Meridian Township.

**Donley Elementary**  
2961 E. Lake Lansing Road

19 Acres

*Gymnasium*  
*Outdoor Basketball Courts*  
*Playground Equipment*  
*Softball Field*  
*Soccer/Lacrosse Field*

### **Community Education Programs**

Meridian Township residents are also served with recreational and enrichment opportunities offered by Okemos and Haslett Community Education Departments. Meridian Township works in partnership with these organizations to provide programs and facilities with minimal duplication of services. Listed below are examples of programs offered through community education:

*Child Care Programs*  
*Arts and Crafts*  
*Cooking Programs*  
*Reading*  
*Sports Camps*

*Special Needs Day Camp*  
*Swimming*  
*Science & Math*  
*Adult Education*  
*Basketball/Volleyball*

## **2. Ingham County Parks and Facilities**

### **A. Lake Lansing County Parks North and South (2 parks totaling 563 Acres)**

Although Lake Lansing North and South are not Township parks, it is important to acknowledge them because they serve as **regional parks** and are located within the limits of Meridian Township. These parks, and the associated boat launch, are owned and operated by Ingham County Parks. Lake Lansing Park North is a 531 acre natural area park in Haslett. Access to the park is provided on the north side of Lake Drive. The park contains six miles of trails, two picnic shelters, a ski rental building, two public restroom buildings and picnic areas and softball diamond. A public boat launch is located on the north side of the lake on Lake Drive. A total of 120-acres were added to the Lake Lansing North Park in 2010 with assistance from the Meridian Township Land Preservation Program.

Lake Lansing Park South is a 30-acre County Park and contains the only public bathing beach in Meridian Township. It is located in Haslett on the northeast corner of Marsh and Lake Lansing Roads. In addition to the beach, this park contains a large community-built wooden play structure, community band shell, concession area, restrooms, picnic shelters, volleyball courts, paddle and row boat rentals, fishing dock and assorted play equipment and amenities.

### **B. Hawk Island Park (100 Acres)**

Hawk Island is a new county park in South Lansing on Cavanaugh Road, ¼ mile west of Aurelius, adjacent to and south of Lansing's Scott Woods Park. This 100-acre parcel which includes a 35-acre lake was purchased in January, 1994. Amenities include a beach, splash pad, bathhouse and concession building, restrooms, three

shelters, picnic areas, boat rental, playground, volleyball courts, paved trail around the lake, sledding hill and 17-acre dog park (owned by the City of Lansing and maintained by Ingham County Parks).

**C. Potter Park Zoo (102 acres)**

The Zoo, located in the city of Lansing, encompasses over 20 acres and features more than 500 individual animals representing approximately 160 different species. Through education, conservation, research and recreation, Potter Park Zoo provides a wonderfully wild experience for students and families. Potter Park Zoo will celebrate its 100th birthday in 2020. In 2006, a Potter Park Zoo Millage was passed, providing funding from Ingham County residents. In July 2007 the Zoo officially became an Ingham County managed facility. Although the ownership of the Zoo is in the city of Lansing, passage of a county-wide Zoo Millage put both the funding and management of the zoo to Ingham County Parks. The five-year, 0.41-mill levy (renewed in 2016 and ends in 2021) generates roughly \$2.8 million a year to support Potter Park and the 20-acre zoo that bears its name on South Pennsylvania Avenue in Lansing.

**D. Rose Lake Wildlife Research Area, State of Michigan (4,140 acres)**

Rose Lake Wildlife Research Area is located in Bath and Woodhull Townships with parking off of Bath, Clark, Peacock, Robson, State, Stoll and Upton Roads. The research area is operated by the MDNR and contains Rose Lake, Potter Lake and a portion of Mud Lake. Existing facilities provide opportunities to study wildlife habitats, and activities such as hunting, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and trails for hiking and mountain biking. Most of the facilities provide limited access. Parking and roadways are around the perimeter with facilities located in the middle.

**E. Michigan State University**

Meridian Township residents are able to take advantage of the many park and recreational facilities on the Michigan State University Campus in East Lansing. These facilities include: University Club, Munn Arena, Breslin Center, Museums, Children's Garden, Beal Gardens, Trails, Observatory, and the Wharton Performing Arts Center. These facilities provide residents with access to world-class cultural, sports, education and entertainment events and programs.

**F. City of East Lansing**

Meridian Township residents also utilize parks and recreation facilities owned and operated by the City of East Lansing. These facilities include: Hannah Community Center, East Lansing Soccer Complex,

Softball Complex, Patriarche Park Aquatics Center and adjacent 1.5-acre dog park.

## **D. Quasi-Public Sites**

Quasi-public sites in Meridian Township serve community members, but are not publicly owned. Most of these are churches, private schools, or public utilities. Most have limited open space for future development. Quasi-public sites provide a very important function to the community. These sites, when located in neighborhoods, can provide space for active or passive recreation. A few of the sites have sports fields that are used by a variety of sport leagues, including baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, and football. These open areas can also be utilized as connections to Township parks, helping to create greenways throughout the community.

A number of quasi-public sites have allowed limited, responsible use of their land. The Department of Parks and Recreation continues to work with these land owners to increase public access. Quasi-public sites can complement public lands within the community and "stretch" the availability of publicly owned facilities. Therefore, it is important for the Township to maintain an inventory of these sites, some of which may be available for purchase in the future.

### **Parkwood YMCA**

This facility is the local branch of the YMCA of Lansing. It is located on the north side of Haslett Road on 5 ½ acres of land, between Park Lake and Okemos Roads. YMCA program offerings include youth sports, progressive swim lessons, health and fitness classes and assorted youth and camp activities.

Facilities offered at the YMCA include a 25-yard heated indoor swimming pool, indoor track with fitness classes held on the infield, five multi-use sport courts (racquetball, basketball, etc.), gymnastics and kids gym area, cardio-fitness center, Nautilus and free weight room and locker rooms. In addition, an outdoor sports slab, sand volleyball court, athletic field and a playground are located on the grounds. The YMCA is a non-profit, membership organization, but all programs are open to the public.

### **Hope Soccer Complex**

The Kenneth A. Hope Soccer Complex is a 30 acre premier complex with six playing fields that opened in September of 2000. It has been designed and developed to meet the growing need for quality fields for the Greater Lansing area soccer and lacrosse enthusiasts and tournament players statewide. This complex is located on Aurelius Road in South Lansing and is now under a private contractor for operation and maintenance.

**Suburban Ice**

This is a full-service ice arena located on Hannah Boulevard adjacent to the Michigan Athletic Club. It opened in 1999 and contains two ice rinks, locker rooms, private party space, skate rental area, arcade and snack bar. Program offerings include public skating, hockey programs, instructional programs, and freestyle and dance programs. This is the only ice facility in Meridian Township.

**Fitness Clubs**

*Michigan Athletic Club*  
*Go Workout*  
*Anytime Fitness*  
*Fitness Together*

*Court One East Athletic*  
*State of Fitness*  
*Snap Fitness*  
*Curves*

**Cultural Arts**

*Wharton Center for Performing Arts*  
*Starlight Dinner Theater*  
*Rahula Performing Arts Center*

*Williamston Theater*  
*Lansing Civic Players*  
*Happendance*

**Golf Courses**

*Meridian Sun (18)*  
*Lake O' the Hills (9)*  
*College Fields (18)*  
*Indian Hills (9)*

**E. Description of Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory**

The parks inventory was created using the established standards classification system developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) for municipal parks. The NRPA standards are best used as guidelines and not as absolute targets because each community has its own unique blend of social and economic characteristics that define them.

These classifications, however, are not always clear cut, and overlap in several instances. Several mini parks, for example, also serve as neighborhood parks for the residents who live in close proximity. The classifications are meant as a guide for staff and the public to understand the breadth and scope of the park system.

Description of the classification system:

1. **Mini Park** - Used to define limited, isolated or unique recreational needs. Typical park size is up to one acre. A mini park serves a ¼ mile distance in a residential setting. NRPA standard acreage for mini-parks is 0.25 to 0.50 – acre per 1,000/population.
2. **Neighborhood Park** - Designed to provide leisure and recreation opportunities for a neighborhood and may include features such as play structures, multi-use courts, family picnic areas, and open-space areas. NRPA standards range from one acre to 24 acres. A Neighborhood Park serves a population within one square mile of residential development. The NRPA standard acreage for a neighborhood park is one to 20 acres per 1,000/population.
3. **Community Park** - Serves a broader purpose than a neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. A community park may offer such features as lighted athletic fields, large and small group picnic areas, aquatic facilities, restrooms and parking. Park size is 25 to 60 acres and is intended to service a population within a one- or two-mile radius of the park. The NRPA standard acreage for a community park is five to eight acres per 1,000/population.
4. **Regional Park** - Designed to provide centralized recreational opportunities for a major portion of the governmental entity. A regional park is developed as a large complex with a variety of amenities capable of accommodating large groups. Features of a regional park may include theme recreation areas and/or large open areas intended for active sport use. Regional parks offer restroom facilities and parking. Park size is 70+ acres. The NRPA standard acreage for a regional park is five to 10 acres per 1,000/population.

## F. Overall Summary of Recreation Open Space in Meridian Township Relative to NRPA Standards

The Charter Township of Meridian currently has a total of 911.58 acres of park land to meet the recreational demands of residents. Although 911.58 acres exceeds the overall National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) recommended Open Space Standards (8 to 10 acres/1,000 population), a closer look reveals that 82% of the township park land is wooded, wetland, or floodplain, therefore unavailable as “active” open space for park development. In fact, there are only 166.25 acres of “active” park areas. Therefore, there may be a need to acquire additional parkland for active use. These “active” areas are defined as upland areas that are

developed for parking, athletic fields, ball diamonds, paths, play areas, paths, picnic areas and open mowed areas, etc.

An evaluation based solely on comparison of existing acreage to a set of standards does not provide a complete picture of parks and recreation needs in Meridian Township. The following considerations are also pertinent when planning for future park development:

- The standards outlined by NRPA are general guidelines that may need to be modified based on the needs of existing and future residents as identified in comprehensive planning process with public input. For example, the standards do not take into consideration our aging population, which may or may not take advantage of competitive forms of recreation or conversely, the large number of families with young children which create a higher demand for sports fields than reflected in the NRPA standard.
- The acquisition of land for parks should be based on strategic planning based on the needs of residents, geographic deficiencies and population trends. For example, smaller parks should be located in close proximity to each neighborhood.
- The evaluation of mini-parks does not account for subdivision commons areas, outlots, and other private play areas for children throughout the Township. Many apartments and condominium developments also have playgrounds which are non-accessible and poorly constructed with limited facilities. These outlots and mini-parks are not listed because an accurate inventory does not exist. The Township encourages private development of mini-parks rather than expending public funds to acquire and develop them.
- The evaluation of natural areas does not account for the large amount of acreage that is retained in its natural state in existing community and large urban parks including wetland preservation. For example, Central Park alone has over 150 acres of natural area that is not accessible to the majority of park users. As a result, the amount of acreage available for active recreation use by Meridian Township residents is far less than the overall acreage suggests.

## **G. Evaluation of Existing Park Acreage**

Meridian Township has a variety of open space needs. Open space is integral to maintaining the high-quality environment that residents currently enjoy, and is vital for attracting residential and commercial uses. This section evaluates current open space needs in relation to current and anticipated

future needs based upon national open space standards and demographic projections.

This plan recognizes that township-owned parks are not the only opportunities for outdoor recreation. The Department of Parks and Recreation has developed strong relationships with schools and quasi-public organizations to increase the amount of open space that is available to meet the recreational needs of Meridian Township residents. As a result, residents have access to an additional 540.3 acres of open space that are located at schools. The recreation needs for some residents in the Meridian Township area are provided through quasi-public and school-owned recreation facilities, ranging from county parks to performance theaters. In addition, many Township residents take advantage of recreation opportunities at regional facilities outside the Township's corporate boundary. Private open space should be considered a valuable supplement to public open space, but not a substitute, because of its restricted usage.

The evaluation of park acreage is based on existing inventory of parks, NRPA standards, and population trends. As noted above, Meridian Township has an existing inventory of 911.58 acres of parks and natural areas. Currently, NRPA does not provide standards for natural areas.

**Figure 4**

**NRPA STANDARDS FOR PARKLAND**

<b>NRPA Park Type</b>	<b>Acres/1000 Population</b>	<b>Minimum Size</b>	<b>Service Area Radius</b>
Mini-Park	0.25 - 0.50	1 acre or less	< .25 mile/5 minute walk
Neighborhood Park	1 - 20	1 - 24 acres	1 mile/12 minute walk
Community Park	5 - 8	25 - 60 acres	1-2 miles/5 minute drive
Regional Park	8 - 10	70+ acres	30 miles/1 hour drive

**Figure 5**

**MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP QUANTITIES OF PARKLAND**

<b>NRPA Park Type</b>	<b>Acres/1000 Population (40,635)</b>	<b>Existing Area</b>	<b>Surplus or Deficiency</b>
Mini-Park	10 - 20.3	5.63 acres	- 4.37 / -14.67
Neighborhood Park	40.62 - 812.5	100.1 acres	+ 59.48 / - 712.4 acres
Community Park	203.13 - 325	665.30 acres	+ 462.17 / + 340.3
Regional Park	325- 406	0 acres	- 325 / -406
Natural Areas	n/a	139.3 ac. (parks) & 798 ac (land pres)	--

**NOTE:**

40,635 is the population per the 2014 community survey 5 year population estimate

**Figure 6  
Park Areas Mowed, Existing and Future Development Areas**

	<b>Park Name</b>	<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>Acres Mowed</b>	<b>Acres Developed (parking, athletic field or ball diamond, pavilion, paths, play structure, open mowed areas)</b>	<b>Acres of Natural Areas (Wooded, Wetland, or Open Un-mowed Areas)</b>	<b>Acres of Open, Upland Area Available for Future Development</b>
1	Nancy Moore Park	40	20.5	30	10	2.5
2	Central Park (N & S)	203	31	38	165	4.4
3	Towner Road Park	23.58	12.5	14.35	7.65	14
4	Wonch Park	15	8.25	9.75	5.25	0
5	Ferguson Park	5.7	3.3	3.7	2	0
6	Harris Nature Center	48	2.7	4.7	43.3	0
7	Eastgate Park	53	7.6	8.85	44.15	6.35
8	Legg Park	103	7.5	9.5	93.5	21.25
9	Hartrick Park	61	14.6	12	49	6
10	Towar Park	4	2.5	4	0	2.5
11	Hillbrook Park	16	4.5	5.3	10.7	0.5
12	Marshall Park	5	4	4.75	0.25	2
13	Ted Black Woods	75	0.02	0.5	74.5	0
14	North Meridian Road Park	60	10	10	50	4.5
15	Ottawa Hills Park	3	1	0.25	2.75	0
16	Red Cedar Natural Area	56	0.6	0.6	55.4	0
17	Cedar Bend Heights Park	0.3	0.25	0.3	0	0
18	Sander Farm Natural Area	34	0	0	34	0
19	Forest Hills Natural Area	4	0	0.2	3.8	0
20	Brattin Woods	20	0.25	0.75	19.25	0
21	Tacoma Hills Natural Area	22	0.75	0.75	21.25	0
22	Schriener Park	1	0.6	0.6	0.4	0
23	Orlando Park	1.3	0.9	0.9	0.4	0.15
24	Indian Hills Park	3	3	3	0	3
25	Lake Lansing Marsh	46	0	0	46	0
26	Spengler Marsh	3.3	0	0	3.3	0
27	Newton Road Park	5	3.5	3.5	1.5	0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>911.58</b>	<b>139.8</b>	<b>166.25</b>	<b>743.40</b>	<b>67.15</b>

## H. Accessibility Assessment

According to the 2011-2015 American Community Survey, in 2015 8.9% of Meridian Township residents were disabled. The sixty-five and older age group had the highest proportion of individuals who were disabled (63.6%). Full data can be seen in Appendix F.

The accessibility of each park was evaluated using the MDNR ADA Rating Scale (1 through 5). Figure 7 provides a general rating of each park according to the MDNR criteria. Efforts are constantly made toward improving accessibility in the parks, but we recognize that more work is necessary. Many of the proposed park improvements outlined in our Capital Improvement Plan include upgrades to the park system related to enhanced accessibility. The Meridian Universal Access Advisory Board, formed in 2007, provides comments on existing and future park plans in an effort to improve the accessibility of the parks.

### **The features assessed when rating the accessibility of a park include:**

- An assessment of the ease of getting to the park
- Parking
- General travel around the park
- The existing facilities (including restrooms and other support facilities)
- Any recreation programming within the park.

### **MDNR ADA Rating Scale (1 through 5):**

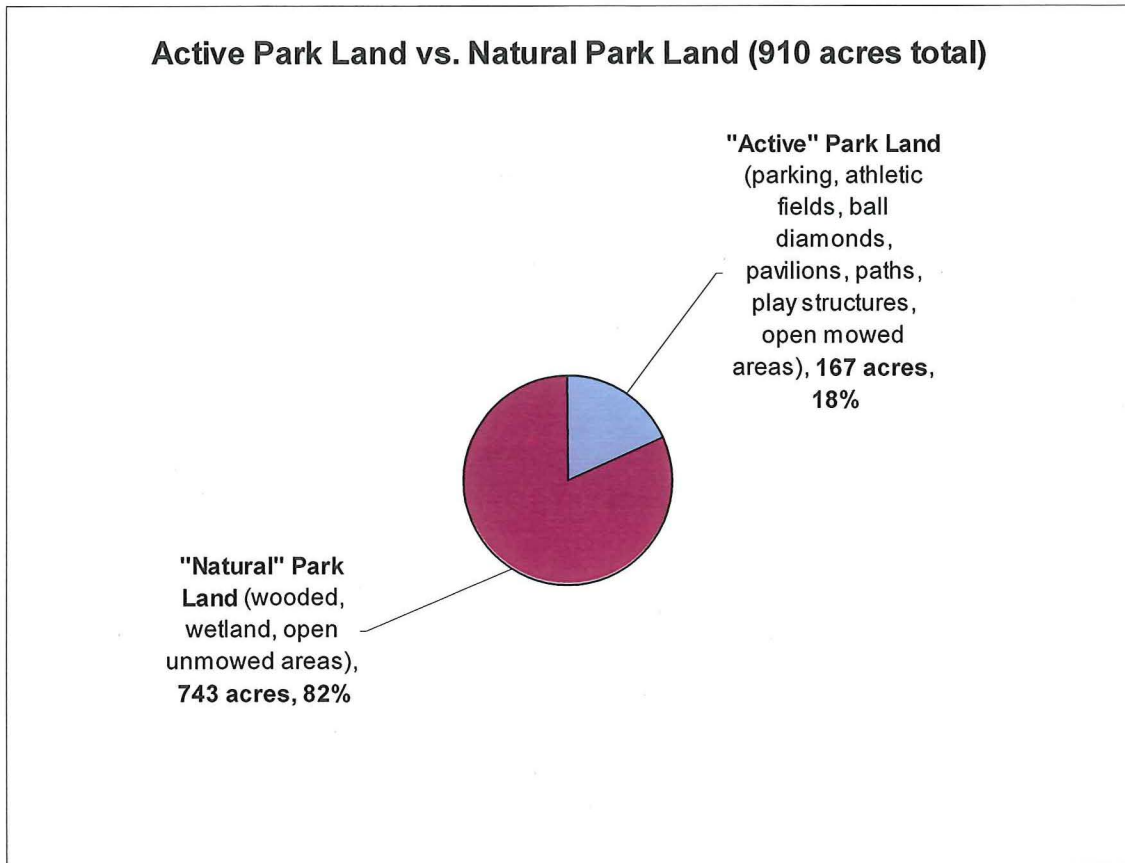
- 1) None of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 2) Some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 3) Most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 4) The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5) The entire park was developed/renovated using the principles of universal design.

# I. Inventory of all Community Owned Parks and Recreation Facilities

- Figure 7 -

Meridian Township Parks & Recreation Facilities		Acres	MDNR ADA Rating	Basketball Court	Softball/Baseball Fields	Lake, Pond, River or	Fishing Access	Canoe Launch	Picnic Area & Grills	Play Equipment	Restrooms	Building or Pavilion	Soccer Fields	Tennis Court	Trail	Sand Volleyball Court	Open Area	Steeding Hill
Nancy Moore Park	1960 Gaylord C. Smith Ct, Okemos	40	3	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Parks & Recreation Office	2100 Gaylord C. Smith Ct., Okemos																	
Central Park	5151 Marsh Rd, Okemos	187.8	3			P	x			x	x	x	x		x			
Townhall Bldg/Public Safety Bldg	5151 Marsh Rd, Okemos		4									Bldgs						
Meridian Historical Village	5151 Marsh Rd, Okemos		3									Bldgs						
Nokomis Learning Center	5151 Marsh Rd, Okemos		3									Bldg						
Farmers' Market Pavilion	5151 Marsh Rd, Okemos		4								x	x						
Central Park South	1990 Central Park Dr, Okemos	15	3			P	x		x						x			
Towner Road Park	2055 Towner Road, Haslett	22	1														x	
Wonch Park	4555 Okemos Rd, Okemos	15	3			R			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Ferguson Park/Sumbal Nat'l Area	4540 Okemos Rd, Okemos	5.7	2			R	x	x	x	x	x				x			
Harris Nature Center	3998 Van Atta Road, Okemos	48.44	4			R			x			Bldg			x		x	
Eastgate Park	4203 S. Meridian Rd, Okemos	53.05	3			R			x			x			x		x	
Legg Park	3891 Van Atta Road, Okemos	103	3			R			x			x			x		x	
Hartrick Park	3685 Hulett Road, Okemos	60.7	2		x	P			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Snell-Towar Recreation Center	6146 Porter Ave, East Lansing		3									Bldg						
Towar Park	6166 Pollard Avenue, East Lansing	4	2	x	x				x	x			x				x	
Hillbrook Park	1747 Lake Lansing Rd, Haslett	16.4	3	x	x	D			x	x				x	x			
Marshall Park	6105 Marsh Road, Haslett	5	4	x	x				x	x								
Van Atta Woods	540 Grand River, Okemos	74	2												x		x	
North Meridian Road Park	5191 N. Meridian Rd, Okemos	60	3						x	x			x		x			x
Ottawa Hills Park	4980 Hillcrest Ave, Okemos	3	2	x		D			x	x	x				x			
Red Cedar Natural Area	1455 Oscoda Road, Okemos	56	1			R									x		x	
Cedar Bend Hghts Nghborhd Prk	2280 Kenmore Dr, Okemos	0.33	4						x	x								x
Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area	4344 Dobie Road, Okemos	34	1			D									x		x	
Forest Hills Natural Area	4625 Northview Drive, Okemos	4	1												x		x	
Brattin Woods	5851 Okemos Road, Haslett	20	2												x		x	
Tacoma Hills Park	1815 Hamilton Road, Okemos	22	1												x		x	
Schriener Park	5039 Algonquin Way, Okemos	1	1														x	
Orlando Park	1275 Orlando Dr, Haslett	1.3	4														x	
Indian Hills Park	4730 Nakoma Dr, Okemos	3	1														x	
Lake Lansing Marsh	1430 Lake Drive, Haslett	46	1			L											x	
Spengler Marsh	5929 Lake Drive, Haslett	3.3	1			L											x	
Newton Road Park	Newton Road, East Lansing	5	2														x	
MDNR ADA Rating Scale 1-5																		
1: None of the facilities or park areas meet accessibility guidelines																		
2: Some of the facilities or park areas meet accessibility guidelines																		
3: Most of the facilities or park areas meet accessibility guidelines																		
4: The entire park meets accessibility guidelines																		
5: The entire park was developed/renovated using the principles of universal design																		

- Figure 8 -



## J. Evaluation of Existing Sports Facilities

An inventory of sports teams and fields was conducted in order to assess the need for sports facilities in Meridian Township. Overall, the results indicate that Meridian Township is deficient in soccer/football/lacrosse fields, baseball/softball/t-ball fields and indoor gym space. (See Table 9). Public input participants and staff emphasized that new fields need to be developed to meet game and tournament needs. Also, many of the existing facilities are in desperate need of renovation. It should also be noted that the deficiency could be far greater if Meridian Township did not have access to school facilities.

- Figure 9 -

2016 Meridian Township Sport Facility Inventory and Assessment

	Participation				Existing Inventory			Deficiency/ Surplus (2016)
	Haslett Players	Okemos Players	Meridian Players	Total Players	Haslett	Okemos	Meridian	
Soccer	397	820	0	1217				173 Teams
Football	105	100	267	472	6	16	7	Deficient (-3)
Lacrosse	<u>140</u>	<u>250</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>390</u>				Field
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>1017</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>2079</b>				
Baseball	189	278	0	467				160 Teams
Softball	90		660	750				Deficient (-5)
T-Ball	81	206	0	287	4	9	5	Fields
Kickball	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>420</u>	<u>420</u>				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>1080</b>	<b>1,924</b>				
Basketball	583	636		1219				153 Teams
Volleyball	<u>100</u>	<u>58</u>		<u>158</u>	6	8	0	Deficient (-8)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>694</b>		<b>1377</b>				Indoor Courts
Sand								36 Teams
Volleyball	0	0	216	216	0	6	6	Existing Facilities are sufficient

## K. Status Report for all Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities

This section describes each park that was partially or completely acquired and/or developed with DNR recreation grant funds. These funds include the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, and the Clean Michigan Initiative Recreation Bond Fund.

Application Year	Project Number	Project Title and Scope	Current Condition
1972	26-00335	Hillbrook Park Acquire 11.2 acres, develop 6 acres to include picnic area, tot lot, multi-purpose court, 2 sets of horseshoe pits, fencing, parking, landscaping, backstop and signs	Unchanged, except horseshoe pits were never constructed
1975	26-00562	Towar Gardens Acquire 0.63 acres of land to be used for public outdoor recreation	Land is being used as intended, for outdoor recreation
1976	26-00750	Marshall Neighborhood Park Basketball court, playground equipment, landscaping, picnic equipment, softball backstop, LWCF sign, tennis court, 2 shuffleboard courts	Softball backstop removed (obsolete), tennis courts and shuffleboard courts were removed due to soil heaving damage, area is being used as open recreation area.
1978	26-01060 R	Central Park Park shelter, woodchip trail, landscaping and site improvements, LWCF sign	Land is being used as intended by grant, for outdoor recreation
1978	26-01060 S	Marshall Park Marshall Neighborhood Park Parking lot, bollards, landscaping and site improvements, LWCF sign	Land is being used as intended by grant
1978	26-01060 T	Towar Recreation Area Acquisition of 0.66 acres of land	Land is being used for recreation, as intended
1980	26-01101	Legg Park	Land is utilized for

		Development of entry drive and parking lot, pavilion, trails and picnic area.	outdoor recreation.
1982	TF628	Riverfront Rec. Area Acquisition of a 50 acre tract with 4,560 of frontage along the Red Cedar River	Land is being used for hiking trails and nature observation
1985	TF1078	Red Cedar Riverfront Park Acquisition of 60.5 acres	Land is being used for hiking trails and nature observation
1985	26-01413	Central Park Phase II Site development including landscaping, play equipment, athletic equipment, picnic equipment, signs, trails	Land is being used as intended by grant, for outdoor recreation
1986	26-01426	Meridian Riverfront Park Gravel access road and parking, backstop and player benches, landscaping, park entrance sign, trail signage, LWCF sign	All scope items are in tact, with the exception of the player benches,(obsolete)
1987	TF87-212	Central Park North Acquisition of 40.3 acres	Land is being used for active recreation
1989	BF89-437	Central Park North (Nancy Moore Park) Development of a recreation complex to include ball diamonds, soccer fields, basketball and volleyball court, picnic facilities with playground, nature trails, parking area as part of a total 240 acre Central Park Master Plan	Land is being used as intended as stated in grant
1991	BF91-315	Central Park North-Phase I (Nancy Moore Park) Develop, restroom, and a passive trail system through the wetlands to the existing park trails	Park is being utilized as intended by grant.
1994	TF94-194	Harris Nature Center-Phase II Upgrade entry drive, develop accessible trail including rest stops, scenic overlook, and interpretive signage	All scope items in the grant were constructed and are being used as intended by grant
1999	CM99-173	Ferguson Park Renovation Repair bank erosion, restore canoe launch, renovate restrooms	All scope items in the grant were constructed and are

		and paths to provide accessibility, resurface parking lot and replace play equipment and surface material	being used as intended by grant
2001	TF01-024	Hartrick Park Development Development of nature trails, paved pathways, barrier free boardwalk, wildlife lookout, multipurpose ball fields, pavilion/restroom facility, entry drive and parking areas to provide active and passive recreation opportunities	All scope items in the grant were constructed and are being used as intended by grant
2009	TF09-068	Central Park Fishing Dock	All scope items in the grant were constructed and are being used as intended by grant
2009	26-01698	North Meridian Road Park, development of an accessible restroom, sidewalks, utilities, landscaping	All scope items in the grant were constructed and are being used as intended
2009	2009 TF12-024	Wonch Park Pathway Development – Development of a universally accessible 2055 lf paved pathway	All scope items in the grant were constructed and are being used as intended
2015	TF15-0070	North Meridian Road Park Accessible Pavilion – Development of an accessible pavilion	The project is in progress and the grant is still open.

**L. Red Cedar Water Trail Information**

In 2014, Meridian Township Parks and Recreation developed a water trail map to help to begin the establishment of a designated water trail along the Red Cedar River. A water trail (or blue trail) is a waterway adopted by a local community that is dedicated to improving family-friendly recreation opportunities such as fishing, boating, wildlife watching, and education about conserving land and water resources. Just as hiking trails are designed to help people explore the land, water trails help people discover rivers.

The Red Cedar River is a tremendous resource for outdoor enthusiasts throughout Mid-Michigan. Our water trail map provides information for paddlers to experience 23 miles of the Red Cedar River and maps the

area from Williamston to the Grand River confluence at River Street Park / Sweeney's Landing in Lansing. The map highlights the locations of launches, portage areas, and local amenities such as restrooms and picnic areas along the route.

Although the Red Cedar River is in close proximity to numerous Meridian Township residents, many don't realize the central role that the river plays in enhancing our community. A healthy river provides clean drinking water, thriving fish and wildlife habitat, natural protection from flooding, and abundant recreational opportunities.

Our parks and recreation community survey revealed that residents are very interested in recreational paddling, fishing, and river access areas and the water trail plan helps provide guidance for the development of additional river access improvements and other amenities along the Red Cedar River.

The water trail map provides information for paddlers to experience 23 miles of the Red Cedar River, highlighting the stretch from Williamston to the Grand River confluence in Lansing. Highlights include the locations of launches, portage areas, and local amenities such as restrooms and picnic areas along the route. Many residents are already enjoying the recently completed canoe launch on the east side of Van Atta Road near the Harris Nature Center. The structure is regularly utilized for fishing, launching kayaks and canoes, and as an outdoor classroom area for Harris Nature Center day campers who are learning about the outdoors. Future park plans include features such as additional launches, pavilions, signs, and rest rooms within our parks along the river. Many park visitors enjoy the Red Cedar for its fishing and paddling opportunities. In fall the river offers spectacular foliage viewing opportunities.

See Appendix B.III

## **M. Ingham County Trail Information**

In November 2014, Ingham County voters approved a 0.5 mill tax millage to support the development of a countywide regional trails and parks system through 2020. The overall goal of the Ingham County Regional Trails and Parks Millage Fund is to create and maintain a sustainable countywide system of recreation trails and adjacent parks within Ingham County.

Funds must be matched by the local community with their own funds, or in-kind services, or funds obtained from other sources, i.e., state, federal or other allocations. Eligible projects must fit the following categories: New Construction; Repair, Rehabilitation, or Long-Term Maintenance; and Special Project(s), (including blueways).

Meridian Township submitted two grants for trail projects in 2016 and is currently waiting on approval. Utilizing grants and awards from the Ingham County Parks and Trails Millage assists Meridian Township in extending its local funds to accomplish additional projects and maintenance needs.

See Appendix A

## **N. Deer Management Program Information**

In an effort to reduce the over-population of deer within the Township, a managed harvest is conducted yearly in select Township properties during the regular archery season.

The program began in 2011 in response to numerous complaints of deer over-population that have resulted in an increase of damage to landscaping, an increase in reports of vehicle/deer accidents, concern for public health and a disruption to the ecological balance of natural areas. In response, Meridian Township developed a Deer Management Plan that outlines measures for a highly managed program to harvest white-tailed deer in numerous Township and County-owned properties. All parks and land preserves remain open to the public during this time.

The managed harvest is not open to the general public. Only approved, qualified, competent and experienced hunters will be allowed to access Township property for the managed harvest. Township staff works closely with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to do what we feel is best to help reduce the population of deer. The program places hunters in all Township-owned properties that are practical and safe for bow hunting. Although this project is aimed at deer reduction, it is also offers an excellent opportunity for outdoor recreation.

See Appendix B.III

## **IV. Resource Inventory**

### **A. Existing Land Use Description**

Based on information from the 2016 Meridian Township Master Plan, Meridian Township covers approximately 20,000 acres, nearly 32 square miles. Land use in Meridian Township has reached new levels of developed land as a result of residential and commercial growth over the past decade. Over 85% of the Township has been developed or improved. With Township preservation efforts, infill development is a viable option to pursue in the future. Single-Family Residential development utilizes the most land, at 35.8%, followed by Recreation and Open Space, with 22.8% and Institutional (government, education complexes), at 14.9%. Other prominent developed uses include Road and Railroad Right-of-Ways and Multi-Family Residential. Only 11% of the 2,281 acres of potentially developable land is used for agriculture; the remaining area is left natural or unimproved.

Since 2002, the Township has used nearly 39% of its total developable land. Institutional land uses have grown the most significantly, but Multi-Family Residential land uses have increased in scope in the last 13 years. A land use category that was not present in 2002 and now covers 95 acres in the Township is mixed use. Mixed use, while still a low percentage of the total land use coverage, has likely emerged due to efforts from the Township to encourage creatively combining compatible land uses, such as Smart Growth principles that influence the Township's Master Plan and implementation mechanisms like the Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District.

Meridian Township currently owns and maintains 911.58 acres of parks and natural areas. There are an additional 971.3 acres of quasi-public open space in Meridian Township that is utilized by residents for recreational use (School sites: 540 acres; and Ingham County parks: 431 acres). The Meridian Township Land Use Map (Appendix A) illustrates the current land use in Meridian Township. The Township has also acquired 798-acres of land through the Land Preservation Millage program. These lands are reserved for preservation purposes.

### **B. Environmental Features**

**1. Geology**

The underlying geology of Meridian Township and the surrounding area was formed by the glacial advances and recessions that covered much of Michigan. Two primary geological formations underlie the Meridian Township area. The first 100 feet below the surface consists of glacial till or deposits that were laid down and contoured by glacial activity. This layer has created landforms specific to glacial terrain including eskers, moraines, kames, drumlins, and kettles. Below this layer of till is several hundred feet of sedimentary rock that was formed out of the deposits from the lakes that covered Michigan during the Paleozoic Era.

**2. Topography**

The glacial action that deposited till over the base sedimentary rock also created the surface topography of Meridian Township. The terrain in Meridian Township ranges from level to gently rolling. The highest points in Meridian Township are found in Sections, 34 and 35, just north of Jolly Road near the Southeast corner of the Township. The elevations at these points are approximately 925 feet above sea level. From these two points, the ground slopes down rapidly to the west and north. The lowest natural point in Meridian Township is located in Section 17, at the Red Cedar River, and is 845 feet above sea level. The flood plains of the Red Cedar River, Herron Creek, Mud Lake Drain and Pine Lake Drain are generally the lowest areas in Meridian Township.

**3. Hydrology**

The 1976 Meridian Township Floodplain Study identified the Red Cedar River and its tributaries as areas of primary concern with respect to flooding in Meridian Township. This study indicated that development along the Red Cedar River is primarily residential in the Okemos-East Lansing area and primarily undeveloped or agricultural to the east of Okemos. The other residential development within the floodplain is along Pine Lake outlet, north of Haslett Road. Local ordinance regulates future floodplain usage and limits it to residential and recreational purposes. Floodplain areas vary in width from a narrow, winding strip, 100 feet wide, to a large plateau, 2,500 feet in width. Meridian Township is comprised of approximately 620 acres or 3.1 percent of lakes, rivers and large drains.

In 1991, the wetlands in Meridian Township were inventoried and mapped by J. & L. Consulting Services (See Appendix A). This inventory was based on the definition of a wetland as stated in the Administrative Rules of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, June 22, 1988, and in the Goemaere-Anderson Wetland Protection Act 203 of 1979. The WPA 203 regulates wetlands over 5

acres in size. The Meridian Township Wetland Ordinance was adopted in 1992 to regulate wetlands that are between 1/4 of an acre and 5 acres in size.

The 2000 Land Use survey calculated that the Township is comprised of approximately three percent of open water. This includes Lake Lansing, the Red Cedar River and Mud Lake. Lake Lansing is approximately 450 acres and its watershed area is approximately 2,500 acres (extending into Clinton County). The Red Cedar River flows Westerly through Meridian Township for an approximate distance of nine miles. It has total fall of 14.9 feet and is fed by four main tributaries. The ten-acre Mud Lake and its tributaries drain the northern two-thirds of Meridian Township into the Red Cedar River. Herron Creek, Smith Drain and Sloan Creek drain the southern third of the Township. In addition, there are a number of other natural and man-made ponds which are scattered throughout Meridian Township.

#### 4. Soils

Most of the soils in Meridian Township were formed by glacial deposits and vary greatly throughout the area. These soil types have limitations and uses associated with its particular characteristics. The factors that determine whether a soil is suitable for recreational use are permeability and fertility, level of flooding and wetness, and stability. The soils can be characterized into the following five types:

- a. Urban Land-Marlette-Capac (UMC) Association - urban land and nearly level to hilly, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy soils. Stability for recreational use: Poor
- b. Marlette-Capac-Owosso (MCO) Association - nearly level to rolling, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy soils. Stability for recreational use: Fair
- c. Houghton-Palms-Edwards (HPE) Association - nearly level, very poorly drained muck soils. Stability for recreational use: Poor
- d. Oshtemo-Houghton-Riddles (OHR) Association - nearly level to hilly, well drained very poorly drained, sandy, loamy, and muck soils. Stability for recreational use: Fair to Favorable
- e. Marlett-Oshtemo-Capac (MOC) Association - nearly level to steep, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy and sandy soils. Stability for recreational use: Fair to Favorable

Glacial soil deposits throughout Meridian Township include recessional moraines, eskers, pitted outwash plains, lacustrine plains, and old glacial drainage ways. These glacial soils are highly variable and range from well-drained sandy loams and clay loams to pockets of poorly drained soil. (See Appendix A).

#### 5. **Climate**

Meridian Township lies within the Central Plains climate region. The Great Lakes winds have a moderating influence over the climate within this region. The mean annual temperature of the area is 47.6 F, the average annual snowfall is 45.8 inches and the mean annual rainfall is 30.66 inches. Sixty-one percent (61.0%) of the total area rainfall occurs from May through October. Meridian Township is located in the Lansing metropolitan area which is impacted by lake effect from the Great Lakes.

#### 6. **Vegetation**

Meridian Township has a diversity of vegetative communities and species. Most of the Township contains areas of woodlots, fields, and wetlands near residential areas, office and commercial parks, and agricultural fields. Due to the mix of land uses and plant communities, the majority of the vegetation in the Township is considered edge or transitional from one community to another. Typically, these areas include a mix of plant species from both communities, and diversity in these edges can be very high.

These areas, along with parcels still in private ownership, provide homes for a great variety of plants and wild animals, which are integral parts of a healthy environment and which add significantly to the quality of life for Township residents.

Meridian Township was once part of a large hardwood forest that covered most of Michigan. Now, only dispersed woodlots remain. Most of the larger remaining mature woodlands are concentrated along the Red Cedar River, major drains, and lowlands of Meridian. A variety of trees are found in these woodlots. For example, 'mixed mesophytic' hardwood stands (e.g. beech-maple) are present in moist upland areas while oaks and hickories are dominant on drier sites. Species such as red and silver maple, ashes, cottonwood, sycamore, box elder, swamp white oak and black willow are found in bottomland forest and on flood plains. This natural combination of wetlands and drains precludes extensive uses of these areas and acts to preserve the remaining wooded acres.

State-listed threatened plants including beak grass (*Diarrhenia americana*), water-horehound (*Lycopus virginicus*) and ginseng

(*Panax quinquefolia*). Several species of sedge (*Carex* spp.) are known to occur in the Township.

Many of the most unique and valuable open spaces and natural areas have received protection as Township or County parks. There are still a number of areas in private ownership that represent significant ecological and economic resources to residents and businesses. The Township has been proactive in the identification and acquisition of the most important and sensitive habitats.

## 7. **Wildlife**

Meridian Township residents recognize wildlife as an integral and valuable part of the landscape and the experience of Township life. There is a diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats in Meridian Township, and an abundance of wildlife species that have adapted to human presence. Although much of the Township is developed, there remains a significant amount of high-quality riparian, wetland, and upland habitat that supports populations of native species of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Many of these are known as “backyard” or “edge” species, including: mammals (e.g., White-tailed Deer, Red Fox, Fox Squirrel, Woodchuck, Raccoon, and Opossum); birds (e.g., Cooper’s Hawk, American Goldfinch, Downey Woodpecker, and Northern Cardinal), reptiles (e.g., Garter Snake, Milk Snake, Map Turtle and Painted Turtle) and amphibians (e.g., Spring Peeper, Wood Frog and Blue-spotted Salamander). Approximately 28 native species of amphibians and reptiles, 93 native bird species and 27 species of mammals have been observed in the Township.

The Davis Foster Land Preserve has confirmed (Capital Area Audubon Society) breeding pairs of the state-endangered Henslow’s Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*). These grassland nesting birds live and reproduce in the restored native grassland on the property from April-October. The threatened Long-eared Owl (*Asiootus*) and Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) formerly nested in the greater Lansing area. Potential breeding habitat still exists for these species in Meridian Township, though recent breeding has not been confirmed. The Blanding’s Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) and Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene Carolina*) are presently breeding in the Township. They are listed by the state as “Special Concern” species. Several unlisted amphibian species thought by biologists to be declining in parts of Michigan also breed in the Township, including the Western Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*) and the Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*). A number of avian species also fall within this category.

The Meridian Township Land Preservation program is currently acquiring and managing properties to maintain the environmental and natural characteristics of the land and to support wildlife habitat in the community. Wildlife habitat is one of the scoring criteria for acquiring new land preserves and management activities focus on improving ecosystem health to support native wildlife. The Davis Foster restored grassland being home to the Henslow's Sparrow is a great example of the success of the program.

#### **8. Potential Conservation Areas Assessment**

Meridian Township was actively involved in the recent Potential Conservation Areas Assessment that was developed by Tri-County Regional Planning. This report identifies and ranks Potential Conservation Areas (PCA's) remaining in Eaton, Ingham, and Clinton Counties. Potential Conservation Areas are defined as places on the landscape dominated by native vegetation that have various levels of potential for harboring high quality natural areas and unique natural features. In addition, these areas may provide critical ecological services such as maintaining water quality and quantity, soil development and stabilization, pollination of cropland, wildlife travel corridors, stopover sites for migratory birds, sources of genetic diversity, and floodwater retention. ("Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties... Potential Conservation Areas", John Paskus, Senior Conservation Scientist, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, 2008). (See Appendix A)

#### **9. Greenspace Plan**

The private consulting firm, Greenway Collaborative, Inc., prepared The Meridian Township Greenspace Plan in May 2004. The plan grew out of Township residents' wishes to protect the area's natural resources while accommodating new development. There is a desire that growth come not at the expense of water quality, natural systems, and wildlife, rather, that new development be used as a tool to permanently protect key natural and cultural resources and enhance the Township's sense of place.

The plan outlines ways in which growth and development in the Township can continue to occur while simultaneously protecting the natural systems and community character of the Township. The Greenspace Plan is multi-faceted, reflecting the input of the citizens of Meridian Township. It is structured to preserve and enhance the community character by establishing a green space system that incorporates:

- Wildlife corridors that link existing natural preserves
- Scenic roadways that preserve views of natural areas

- Key waterways, adjacent wetlands and upland buffers
- Walking and biking routes that link parks, schools and other community resources
- Agricultural lands

According to the Greenspace Plan, green-spaces and pathways must remain interconnected in order to be functional to both people and wildlife. This plan identifies key areas in Meridian Township to preserve and to maintain the health of the entire system. The vision of the plan is to “provide a network of green spaces and non-motorized linkages that will protect and connect valued natural and cultural resources, provide linkages to adjacent communities, and improve the quality of life for Township residents.” The entire Greenspace plan can be viewed on the township website at [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us). (See Appendix A)

## C. Demographic Information

Source: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau Survey

### 1. Population and Household Size

The 2010 population of Meridian Township was 39,688. The Township population is increasing with a recent 2015 estimate putting the population at 41,139.

The following household breakdown is from the 2010 Census Survey data (Appendix F).

<b>Total households</b>	<b>17,377</b>
Average household size	2.26
Average family size	2.92
<b>Family households</b>	<b>9,970</b>
Non-Family households	7,407
Householder living alone	5,495

### 2. Age and Gender Demographics

The following age and gender breakdown is from the 2010 Census Survey data (Appendix F).

There are a total of 18,878 males and 20,810 females residing in Meridian Township (Total – 39,688).

- Ages under 5 = 1,835
- Ages 5 - 19 = 7,300

-----23%	▪ Ages 20 - 34 = 9,442
-----49%	▪ Ages 35 - 54 = 10,010
-----28%	▪ Ages 55 - 64 = 5,840
	▪ Ages 65 - 74 = 2,703
	▪ Ages 75+ = 2,558

The Township's population is aging as the "baby boom" generation moves through middle age. This is reflected in the increase in the Township's median age during the past four decades: 1980 (28.1 years), 1990 (32.3 years), 2000 (35.4 years) and in 2010 (38.7 years). Currently the median age is 38.2; 27% of residents are over the age of 55. 49% of adults are between the ages of 20-54 and 24% of our population consists of youths ages 19 and under.

AGE & GENDER	Population (%)
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>39,688</b>
Male – Total	18,878 (47.6%)
Males - Under 19 Years	4,621
Male – 65 years and over	2,218
Female - Total	20,810 (52.4%)
Females - Under 19 Years	4,514
Female – 65 years and over	3,043

**3. Race**

The following race breakdown is from the 2010 Census Survey data (Appendix F).

<b>Race</b>	
White	31,749 (80.0%)
African-American	1,926 (4.9%)
American Indian	145 (0.4%)
Asian	4,333 (10.9%)
Pacific Islander	7 (0.0%)
Other Race	407 (1.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,688</b>

**4. Education**

The following data is from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates (Appendix F).

There are 6,136 children enrolled in school from pre- school through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and 5,936 enrolled in college or graduate school. 96.7% of residents, older than 25, have a high school diploma or equivalent. 64.4% have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

**5. Income**

The following data is from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates (Appendix F).

The majority of Meridian Township residents enjoy a relatively high standard of living. The median household income is \$65,143 (up from \$55,203 on 2000) which is higher than the national average of \$53,889. However, there are 12.2% of families who are living below the poverty level.

**6. Persons with Disabilities Census Data**

The following data is from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates (Appendix F).

The survey estimates that in 2015 8.9% of Meridian Township residents were disabled. The sixty-five and older age group had the highest proportion of individuals who were disabled (63.6%).

(Detailed census information may be found in Appendix F.)

## **V. Description of the Planning Process**

### **A. Planning Area Description**

The 2017-2021 Parks and Recreation Master Plan focuses on the recreational needs and natural resource conservation opportunities within Meridian Township as a sole entity. There are many examples of our Parks and Recreation Department sharing resources with surrounding communities and participating in regional planning efforts, but the primary focus of this document is Meridian Township.

### **B. Description of the Potential Grant Applicant**

Meridian Charter Township is a local unit of government that is seeking grant eligibility. Three grant programs administered by Grants Management, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and the Passport Grant Program all require communities to prepare five-year community recreation and natural resource conservation plans (community plans) as part of the eligibility requirements for those programs.

### **C. Members of the Steering Committee**

The 2017-2021 Parks and Recreation Master Plan was written by staff of the Parks and Recreation Department. ROWE Professional Services Company, Inc. conducted the public survey, public input meetings, and assisted the Township with developing goals for the plan. Input was solicited from the Park Commission, elected and appointed officials, general public, local schools, and other township staff.

### **D. Plan Funding**

Meridian Charter Township did not receive any financial or technical assistance grants to prepare the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

## VI. Description of the Public Input Process

### A. Description of the Methods Used to Solicit Public Input

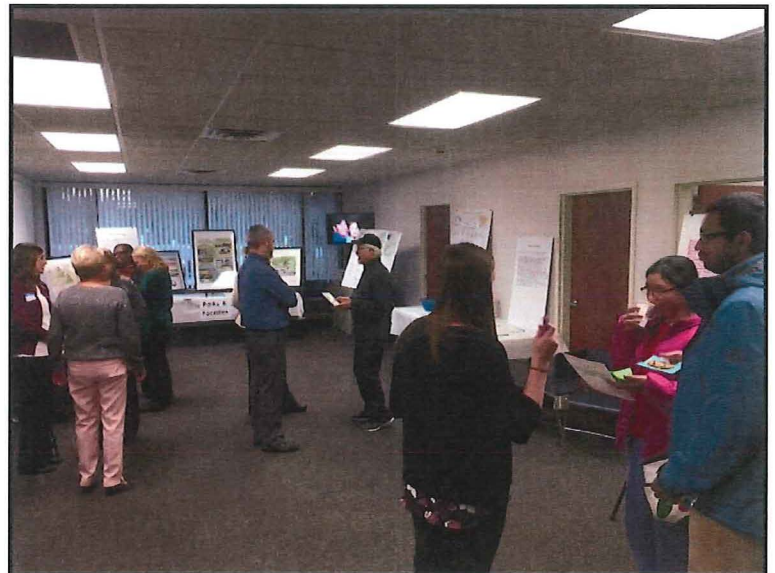
Creating a venue for dialogue and enlisting feedback from the public, community leaders and staff are the most valuable element of this planning process. The process not only allowed residents to voice their opinion, it also served as a promotional tool to remind others of the parks and recreation benefits and opportunities available in their community. Input into this plan was obtained through the following methods:

1. **Public Input Meetings**
2. **Online Community Survey**
3. **Online Farmers Market Survey**
4. **Meeting with Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Commission and Staff:**
5. **Public Hearing**

*An open house was held on November 21, 2016 providing an opportunity for in-depth discussions between residents and staff on various topics. A variety of suggestions were listed and provided to staff for further evaluation.*

### B. Overall Summary of Community Input

Rowe Professional Services was engaged in the plan update process to assist Meridian Township with community engagement/public input, goal and objective development and action plan recommendations. A postcard was mailed to 22,000 households inviting them to participate in an on-line survey and to also attend the Public Input Open House that was held on November 21, 2016 from 1pm-9pm. Over 16,000 emails were also sent to encourage public participation as well as postings on social media.



Comments were also received from a

third grade class at Bennett Woods Elementary School, vendors from the farmers' market, Parks and Recreation Department staff, and Park Commissioners.

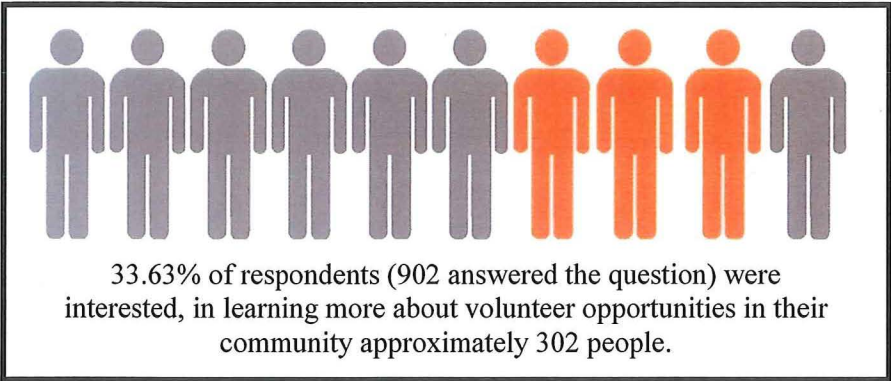
### **ON-LINE SURVEY**

The online survey was promoted through a post card sent to all township residents. The survey was also linked on the township website and notices were sent directly via email to more than 25,000 individual stakeholders. A separate survey was also sent to Farmers' Market vendors with a specific set of questions.

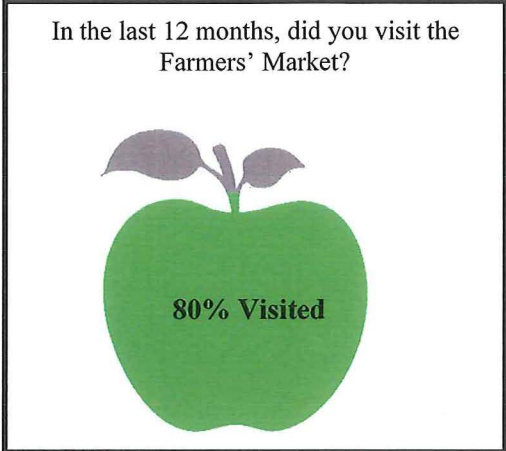
#### **A summary of key findings is noted below:**

- ❖ The top parks, based on frequency of visits, remained the same from 2010. Central Park is the #1 most visited park (including Nancy Moore Park, Meridian Historical Village and Farmers' Market). Harris Nature Center is #2.
- ❖ 70-90% of respondents were satisfied with park maintenance, with the most needs identified for parking, restrooms, and trail signage; consistent with 2010 input.
- ❖ 80% of survey responses said their family had visited the Farmers' Market within the past year.
- ❖ Residents overwhelmingly enjoy walking and hiking (88%). Other top activities (more than 40%) include biking, use of playgrounds, nature observation, visiting the Farmers' Market and picnicking.
- ❖ 75% of respondents used the Family Fun Guide and website as their source of information for events, programs, and activities; only 26% rely on social media.
- ❖ Most responses listed customer service as good or excellent.
- ❖ Top picks for potential park projects (above 30%) include a new Farmers' Market location, river access, restroom buildings, ice rink and trail signage
- ❖ 89% are proud of where they live
- ❖ 84% feel comfortable and accepted at programs and events
- ❖ 80% of non-white respondents indicated parks and programs adequately address the community's cultural diversity
- ❖ 45% of the responses were from the Okemos zip code, 29% were from Haslett.

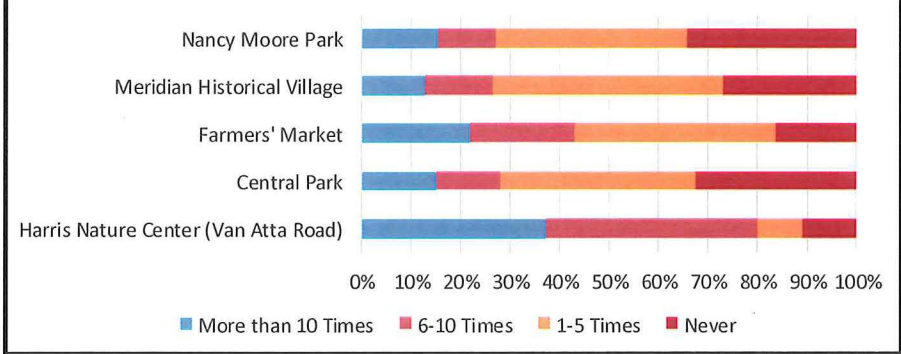
**Interested volunteer opportunities**



**Farmers' Market**



Top Park and Facility Usage



## Suggested Parks and Facilities Improvements

# Misc. Park Improvements

## Maintenance



*These are the different suggested improvements based on write-in comments grouped into categories. The larger the phrase the more people commented the same thing.*

Written comments shown above from question #16 addressed what suggestions people had to improve their experience when visiting parks and participating in programs. Seventeen percent of the responses were suggestions related to trails (more of them, better connections, etc.). The next category of comments was related to various park improvements, such as larger playgrounds, more benches, etc.

Comments regarding maintenance ranged from mosquito control to picking up branches along the trails. The need for additional parking, restrooms, facilities for off-leash dog walking and exercise as well as improving signage in parks and on trails. There was support for the Farmers' Market, and suggestions for programs each received some of the comments

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*A majority of write-in comments on the survey and Open House were positive in nature, providing specific suggestions for improvement. It demonstrates a 'solution-based' engagement from the community vs a list of complaints. There were various "I didn't know..." comments that could be addressed by additional communication and programming.*

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Various other comment themes were evident through other question fields such as:

- #1 Park Usage (not aware of park offerings, demonstrates a need to promote what the system has to offer)
- #2 Park Maintenance (many repeated comments represented in question 16)
- #3 & #4 Programs and Activities (support for Harris Nature Center, festival in Haslett, senior exercise, yoga, art, painting in the park, photography)
- #7 Potential Projects (as the need for soccer fields, water-fountain, meditation pond, 5k x-country course, volleyball, outdoor theater, sledding hill).
- #12 Cultural Diversity. Comments included the suggestion to showcase the connection to indigenous people.
- #14 Disability. Comments included suggestions such as electronic wheel chair charging stations, pathway paving and improvements, adding year-round restrooms and more benches along pathways).

## PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

An open house was conducted on November 21, 2016 for public input. A summary of the comments received is listed below.

### Recreation Programs and Events to be Added or Addressed

- Music program for youth
- Future planning for multi-purpose facility
- Utilize churches to get the word out
- Nature poetry with MSU haiku club
- Flash mob... various events
- Quidditch (Harry Potter)
- Nokomis 3 Sisters organic garden tour, expand on programming
- Inflatable activities at events (big water slides, etc.)
- Portable stage
- Pickleball league
- Fishing camps
- Bee keeping program
- Outdoor exercise / yoga
- Nancy Moore; more mosquito control
- Reduce rental rate / facilities for resident vs non-resident
- Policy to allow for financial hardship waivers for programs
- Support for deer management
- River camps like Ann Arbor
- Who is Chief Okemos? (history talk, interpretive signs)
- Educational programming with lake/ water monitoring
- Education work days

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*Suggestions for programs in general could be accommodated within existing park facilities without additional development. They tended to focus on education, passive uses with limited staff support.*

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### Stewardship and Volunteerism Suggestions

- Monitoring of land preserve trails, downed trees, limbs, etc.
- Drop off point for trash pickup for volunteers
- Police monitor inner parts of parks and preserves
- Invasive species shadow project in Ann Arbor
- Novel uses for invasive species (Garlic mustard paper, cook off)
- Eco-tourism within the township
- Work with Audubon to promote birdwatching / tourism, use of exiting web applications
- Drones, rocket control, novel uses?
- Better trail clearing before winter for cross country skiing, promote trail use for skiing
- Integrate on-line maps for land preserve trails (what is open seasonally)
- Less division between land preserves

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*Increasing efforts to accommodate more people in natural areas will create a greater awareness and appreciation of our existing resources and grow interest in stewardship initiatives and volunteerism.*

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and parks, differentiate between management plans is ok but public does not always know the difference

- Identify land preserve access points (onsite signs as well as maps)
- Tour of land preserves to educate, point out assets, build appreciation for value

- Emphasize connections to existing destinations
- Educate about stewardship plans and ecosystems (differences between each preserve, unique and special features)
- Work with schools for outdoor classrooms
- Newsletters about accomplishments
- Conservation and education programs about endangered species, utilize resources from MSU, etc.
- Make sure volunteer time is spent productively, must show results.
- Work with corporate sponsor days (a day 'on' vs a day off) use employees for a day or an event
- Call attention to special projects on website for volunteers
- Partner with groups with similar goals (Stewardship Network, Sierra Club, etc.)
- More invasive treatments in parks (Buckthorn in Central Park)

### **Parks and Facilities**

- Boardwalks through wet areas on park trail
- Paved trails in all parks for ADA, small loops, etc.,
- Pavilion at Harris Nature Center
- Tennis court backboard needed
- Half court tennis courts
- Two full tennis courts at Hillbrook
- Dog park at Legg Park
- Food truck at Farmers' Market
- Restrooms at all parks
- Accessible canoe launch
- Maintain Towar Rec area
- Love art in the park at Wonch Park
- Dog park
- Central Park paths, trails, signage and access (develops a town center)
- Kayak landing at Lake Catherine (Historic Village Pond)
- Lighted drop-in soccer field at Central Park with turf
- Walking bridge at Inner Urban into Nancy Moore

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*Although the Township has 1675 acres of dedicated greenspace (798 acres of land preserves and 911.58 acres of parkland). Only 200 acres (12%) are developed. Site qualities (wetlands, floodplains, etc.) limit ability to develop to meet community wants and needs.*

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### **Trail and Pathways**

- Check trails for downed trees, limbs
- Guided hikes for land preserves, get people familiar with natural trails
- Signage for lands preserve trails
- Add trails in Red Cedar and Sower Woods
- Interpretive signs
- Overall park map, hard to find on website
- Clear trails in fall for cross country skiing
- Trail signs at Ted Black Woods
- Roots in Ted Black make walking / skiing difficult
- ID what trails are good for what (running, walking, birding)
- Clear phragmites on Interurban, south side near Marsh Rd
- Mow 4' each side of path
- Prune edge of vegetation back more frequently
- Identify path linkages / destinations, use MUTCD signage
- Wheelchair charging stations
- More benches on trails
- Need signals at busy street crossings

- Central Park trails, needed along Mudd Lake Drain and over bridge
- Mile markers for 5K run (coordinate more run events to make people aware of trail routes)
- Develop Central Park sooner than later, it is close to more residents
- Trail along river Eastgate to Sylvan Glenn
- Deer management

### Miscellaneous Comment Sheets

- I like the beaver dam design
- Trail maintenance best ever
- Trail maintenance work smarter (lopper on mower to trim branches while mowing)
- New Farmers' Market, make at least one of the pavilions with walls and temporary heating for dances, music
- Bocce ball in small area
- Bathrooms in all parks
- Continue spring walks
- Continue deer management program
- Towner Road Park, too isolated, feeling of safety is important
- Hillbrook needs two tennis courts with a backboard (high school courts too busy)
- Lake Lansing trails not for beginners

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*Most comments focused on how to improve the current trail system to be more user friendly through signage, maintenance*

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- Maps need to be the same size to overlay
- Loss of parking at Van Atta Bridge for river users, can they be added
- Add river access points
- I like using park trails for bike riding
- Support deer management program
- Thank you for the Historic Village support
- Thank you for supporting the 50+ exercise program at Mall
- Consider priority needs in survey and put in CIP list

### Farmers' Market Vendor Survey Summary

Meridian Township is in discussions with the Meridian Mall to permanently move the Farmers' Market to the outdoor location it has occasionally occupied during the 2015 and 2016 market seasons. The plan includes providing electricity, water, restrooms, trees, and picnic area. Future amenities may include a performance stage and playground all in the grassy area on the north side of the parking lot. A shelter would be constructed over a portion of the paved area. Negotiations are currently underway. Relocating the Farmers' Market was adopted by the Park Commission in the Central Park Master Plan. Numerous market vendors have commented that sales were increased when vending from the mall parking lot vs their current market location. Two major factors were considered when undertaking this proposed move: lack of adequate parking; and lack of universal accessibility. A common sense approach was utilized in garnering a public/private partnership to best accommodate this beloved community activity. Vendors were asked their opinion of this plan.

### Survey Results

1. The majority of the Farmers' Market Vendors were in favor of relocating the market to the mall location. Of 44 respondents, only 8 desired to stay in the existing location.

2. In support of relocation, 20% would prefer the addition of a pavilion for Farmers' Market utilization.

## **STAFF INPUT SUMMARY**

Staff members conducted a round-table discussion to share their observations and provided their views on facilities and program opportunities as we look toward growth in the next five years and beyond:

### **Observations and Recommendations:**

1. Trail maintenance (trimming, pruning, etc.)
2. Additional maintenance staff (the crew we have are great but need more to accomplish demands)
3. Signage:
  - ✓ Identification, beautiful signs for all parks and preserves; pathways that are throughout the township (like East Lansing's wayfinding signs)
  - ✓ Interpretive signs or other info at all parks and preserves telling WHY the land is here, maybe a boundary map, what is interesting about the land
4. Need improved/professional maps and signage
5. Dog park(s): suggested locations include Central Park, Nancy Moore Park, Hartrick Park, Towner Road Park
6. Improved Farmers' Market Facility (better location with proper access and parking for both vendors and visitors; safer environment)
7. Promoting parks - requests for guided hikes and programs on nature and history
8. Trail maps and routes - suggestions on website for good hikes, best playgrounds for certain ages, best places for a picnic, maybe have a "best of" contest?
9. Need to diversify and increase marketing efforts; especially if people are asking for programs and activities we are already offering
10. Harris Nature Center: outdoor restroom and pavilion for program participants and casual park/trail users. It is needed not only when the Nature Center is closed, but when hosting school groups 50-75 kids at a time and during special events. A pavilion is also needed because the Center has outgrown its current space and since school come with bus loads, additional classroom/program space is needed – a pavilion would help with that greatly! The park is also becoming a destination location and could host picnics and family get-togethers.
11. Replace play equipment in parks like Ottawa Hills.
12. Focus on details at each park (little things like post covers, landscaping and flowers, painting, etc.,) will make huge difference.
13. Diversity and inclusion – in facilities, programs and events.
14. Thank residents for their input; add a thank you note in the Family Fun Guide, send newsletter addressing misconceptions raised in survey.
15. Communication important:
  - keep kiosks updated
  - create a newsletter
  - fun fact Fridays on Facebook

- virtual walks/tours through parks; can use temporary signage when highlighting a trail or pathway for a couple of weeks utilizing a go-pro video
  - list of 5 things to do in the Township for specific age groups such as parents with children ages 1-5; just for seniors; just for people with dogs
  - Mobile story walk like the one in Orlando Park
16. Create uniform wayfinding signage
  17. Focus on improving amenities and self-directed amenities to increase enjoyment of parks for casual users.
  18. Include amenities that will attract new users
  19. Totally agree that additional staff is needed for parks and grounds maintenance.
  20. Need to better clarify and communicate the number of parks in our system. Many of our 29 parks are marshes, wetlands, floodways and floodplains.
  21. Move to on-line pavilion rental system
  22. Address trash dumpster/can needs and emptying schedule.
  23. Need evening and weekend maintenance from Memorial Day to Labor Day?  
Use seasonal or part-time staff?
  24. Excited to move forward with implementing the Central Park Master Plan
  25. Need to assist the Friends of Historic Meridian in obtaining new members
  26. Include more artwork in the parks (murals, sculptures)
  27. Create a performing arts area for plays etc.
  28. Utilizing ActiveNet, create the ability to access all the activities in the Township on a specific day or week; Robin and Darcie will work on this project
  29. Farmers' Market needs to relocate to the Meridian Mall.
    - The current location does not have sufficient parking
    - Site drainage is not good
    - Sidewalk too narrow for pedestrians
    - Play structure blocked by vendors
    - Difficult for vendors because they cannot park near their booth
  30. Maintenance:
    - ✓ Too much for Maintenance staff to do
    - ✓ Asked to do too much too fast with not enough time
    - ✓ The crew takes pride in their jobs but need additional staff
    - ✓ New lawn mowers are needed; two old ones need to be replaced asap
    - ✓ Clear back intersections of trails for user safety and easier access by plows and mowing equipment
    - ✓ Maybe hire outside firm to clean restrooms and pick up trash, even on weekends; would free up a lot of staff time
    - ✓ Appreciate summer help but the system needs attention; would like another option other than using college-aged crew
  31. Land Preservation
    - ✓ People are interested in accessing, walking and biking the trails
    - ✓ Need signage; directional and interpretative signage
    - ✓ Need off road parking
  32. North Meridian Road park needs expanded parking – currently unsafe

33. Need to improve communication and programming to promote parks and amenities:
  - ✓ Publicity
  - ✓ Communication
  - ✓ Maps with where I am and what you can find
34. Residents want:
  - ✓ pavilions and restrooms (need both for Harris Nature Center and restroom for Hillbrook)
  - ✓ River access next to restrooms
  - ✓ More family-oriented programs; suggest re-working some of the current options and gear toward families
  - ✓ Passive recreation without committed times; maybe with media direction; able to access trail system on phones; self-directed opportunities
  - ✓ Offer on-line invasive species removal workshops
  - ✓ To feel safe in the parks
  - ✓ A dog park but staff questions the amount of maintenance
35. Offer Tools for teachers; expand what staff is currently doing and start charging; create shovel ready projects to offer teachers
36. Create a senior type playground; have installed fitness equipment in Wonch; what about swings that are easier to access especially for the physically challenged
37. Suggested developing volunteer groups to walk and trim up the trails once a month; create an adopt a trail video; could ask Martha Hentz to speak; she and her family love Hartrick Park
38. Need to improve marketing presence at the Town Hall; lost the indoor kiosk but need something there to promote programs and events
39. Recreation:
  - ✓ Install a cricket ball batting cage and a game field
  - ✓ According to numbers need additional lacrosse fields and softball fields (there may be enough once Towner Road is developed)
  - ✓ Would like to see an indoor basketball court
40. Suggest listing accomplishments at front of Master Plan along with future plans
41. Try to work with railroad to create a pedestrian crossing over the railroad tracks connecting in inner-urban pathway to the Nancy Moore park trail; there is a make-shift path already being used.

### **Trends:**

- People are interested in using parks and land preservation parcels but we need to improve:
  - ✓ Publicity
  - ✓ Signage (color coding)
  - ✓ Maps (web-based; where am I? What is here?)
  - ✓ trail system
- ✓ parking
- ✓ Connect with other locations
- Citizen science and volunteering
- River access with destination stops with restrooms
- Interpretative signs / use of native plants
- Passive recreation

- ✓ Include all natural areas of township
- ✓ Guided walks with professionals and with staff members
- ✓ Self-guided activities
- Show signs instructing park users on invasive removal in parks and preserves
  - ✓ Map invasives
  - ✓ Guided walks / workshops
  - ✓ "passive" volunteer removal
- Create more opportunities
  - ✓ Make information available for teachers on website
  - ✓ Different projects in different parks and preserves
- Promote volunteerism
  - ✓ Update wish list of projects
- Additional recreation facilities (cricket ball, gaga ball, disc golf, pickleball, etc.)
- Implement Placemaking strategies and principles when possible. Make areas interactive and fun!
- Add technology into Central Park and Wonch Park such as Wi-Fi, charging stations at picnic tables to host study groups, outdoor business meeting etc. This is a strong point of interest for millennials

### YOUTH INPUT

The following input was received from a class at Bennett Woods Elementary courtesy of Ms. Ivy Schmidt's third grade class, Okemos Schools.

Wishes -

- gaga pit
- basketball hoops
- more playground equipment
- dodgeball court (I reminded him that these are usually inside!)
- tetherball
- more trails
- small fountain (not a drinking fountain)
- zip line (!)
- parkour jumps/setup
- giant trampoline
- chess tables
- more bathrooms (they were saying they think they're so far away at Nancy Moore)
- more volleyball sites
- tornado (like the equipment at BW)
- climbing walls
- lights (holiday)
- pool
- merry go round

- oval track (or like the one at Lake Lansing for Big Wheels)

What they like -

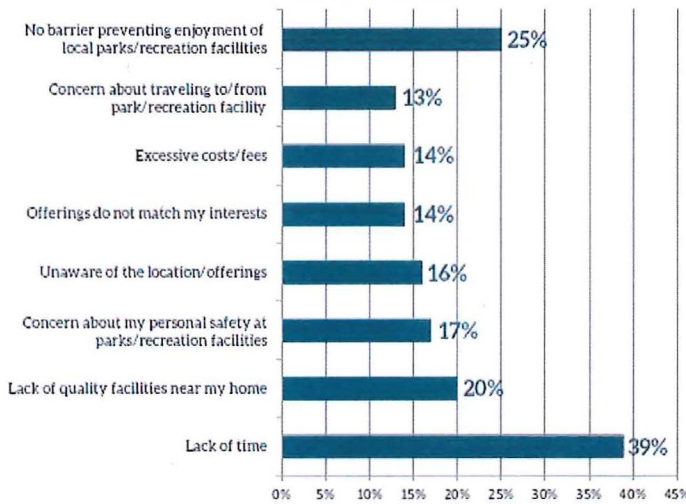
- the parks look good
- they're fun
- so many benches/tables
- fields
- they're safe
- entertainment
- swings
- many trees
- wildlife
- lots to do
- peaceful/quiet

**NATIONAL TRENDS**

The following information is provided from a 2016 survey conducted by the National Park and Recreation Association. It indicates national trends as a benchmark. Some interesting facts that correlate with public input from the township is the desire to be closer to nature and the social, health and wellness aspect of recreation which is present in the highly successful Farmers Market.

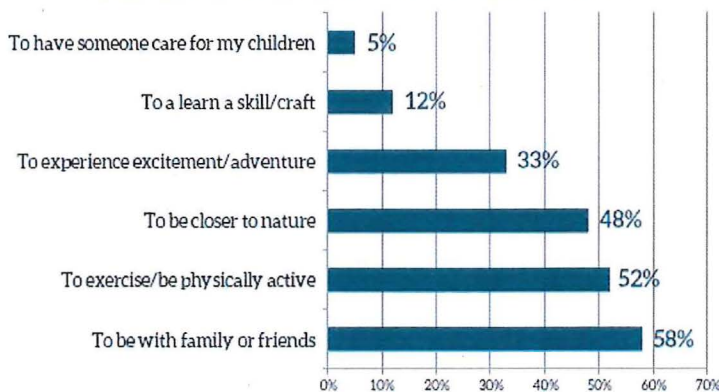
**Barriers Preventing Greater Enjoyment of Local Park and Recreation Facilities**

(Percent of Respondents)



**Key Reasons for Visiting Park and Recreation Facilities**

(Percent of Respondents Who Personally Have (or a Household Member Has) Visited Local Park/Recreation Facility in the Past Year)



**ANALYSIS AND KEY FINDINGS**

A staff meeting was held on November 29, 2016 to review comments received at the open house, as well as results from the online survey. Lists of trends, needs, strengths and opportunities were generated. Suggestions were made regarding revisions to current goal and objective statements proposed for the recreation plan. An additional meeting was held with ROWE on December 5, 2016 to review public input and identify how goal and objectives relate to the proposed action plan. Many comments could be applied directly into staff

Department of Parks and Recreation

**NRPA AMERICANS' ENGAGEMENT WITH PARKS SURVEY**

**29 times a year**  
 Number of times Americans visit their local park and recreation facilities on average

**90% of Americans agree**  
 that parks and recreation are important local government services (comparable to police/fire, schools, transportation)

**75% of Americans**  
 support increased local government spending for park and recreation agencies

**70% of Americans**  
 say they are more likely to vote for local politicians who make park and recreation funding a priority

**3 in 4 Americans agree**  
 that Conservation, Health and Wellness, and Social Equity represent what they see as the priorities for their local park and recreation agency

operations and planning. Based on the broad overview of public input, ROWE Professional Services offers the following observations and recommendations to be addressed in the Goals, Objectives and Action Plan:

1. The township's most popular parks have been consistent for the past 10 years (Central Park and Harris Nature Center). The proximity to parks and amenities in parks had a high approval rating. There was not a significant park project identified in question 7 of the survey that would require additional property other than gaining control for trail extensions. These indicators suggest there is **low priority for acquiring additional park property** at this time. Efforts should focus on **improving** existing facilities that handle the most use, such as **Central Park**.
2. Based on satisfaction levels in question 10 of the survey, **additional investigation** should be made as to what improvements can be made **regarding accessibility** in parks,
3. Other needs, identified in the written comments, included **additional parking, wayfinding signage and more and/or cleaner restrooms**.
4. 58% of survey respondents supported **moving the Farmers Market** from its current location. Only 65% say that current market meets their needs. In a survey sent to the Farmers' Market vendors, 82% of vendors support a move to the Meridian Mall.
5. Although park maintenance is rated well in the survey overall, the need for clean restrooms is listed repeatedly in comments and this area received the lowest satisfaction level in survey question 2. Other write-in comments listed the need for trail improvements and directional signage. Staff comments rate the need for additional staffing for maintenance as a priority. Additional facilities such as the Towner Park sports complex will **require additional maintenance and raise the need for additional staff support**. Future improvements should factor in associated maintenance needs.
6. One observation that was revealed was the popularity of park usage during lunchtime. This, coupled with the high ratings for the Farmers Market, would suggest that **additional investigations should explore how to maximize opportunities at other park locations for lunchtime users**. For example, are there additional improvements needed to support this use (more picnic tables), should programs be focused at this time of day, or is there partnering opportunities with local food vendors at local parks.
7. 88% of the respondents enjoy walking and hiking. Since the township is looking for ways to **engage volunteers, use of walking activities** along trails may provide an opportunity to target efforts in recruiting.
8. The **Family Fun Guide and website** are strong resources for communicating to Meridian Township residents and **should be maintained**. A **communication plan** that identifies how the township can utilize its existing database, email lists, frequency and other methods throughout the year may be useful in securing additional volunteerism.

9. The paddle sport (kayak, stand-up boards) industry is a growing national trend. Creating more river access areas is the most popular potential park project in survey question 7. The township should investigate **how to improve access and awareness of the Red Cedar Water Trail.**

The top ten potential park projects include:

- i. River access
  - ii. Restrooms
  - iii. New Farmers' Market
  - iv. Ice rink
  - v. Dog park
  - vi. Paved trails
  - vii. Splash pad
  - viii. Trail signage
  - ix. Neighborhood parks
  - x. Playgrounds
10. There was a specific intent to identify diversity needs within the community; at this point 80% of the non-white respondents indicated **parks and programs adequately address the community's cultural diversity.** There were no specific requests for additional facilities or programs to meet the needs of special populations. Engagement with diverse community members should continue to be a goal of future park department communication efforts.
  11. The community values the open space it has preserved. In the National Citizen Survey, 40% of the survey respondents rated this as essential. The quality of the natural environment was also rated high, above the national average.
  12. Adding more amenities for teenagers and young adults was a frequent theme in the survey comments. Increasing technology in the urban parks such as adding Wi-Fi and study tables with charging stations should address this need.

### **INPUT FROM PARK COMMISSION**

The Park Commission reviewed the public input summary in December, 2017 and provided additional comment and direction for the development of Goals, Objectives and Action Plan development.

## **C. Citizen Survey Report**

In 2015, The National Citizen Survey (NCS) and the National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) conducted a citizen survey in Meridian Township. The NCS was developed by

NRC to provide a statistically valid survey of resident opinions about community services provided by local government. The survey results are intended to be used by staff, elected officials and other stakeholders for community planning and resource allocation, program improvement and policy making.

The NCS focuses on a series of community characteristics and local government services, as well as issues of public trust. Resident behaviors related to civic engagement in the community also were measured in the survey.

Most residents experience a good quality of life in Meridian Township and believe the Township is a good place to live. The overall quality of life in Meridian Township was rated as “excellent” or “good” by 88% of respondents. A majority report they plan on staying in Meridian Township for the next five years.

Recreational opportunities in Meridian Township were rated somewhat positively as were services related to parks and recreation. Township parks and recreation programs or classes were rated higher than the benchmark. Parks and recreation ratings have stayed constant over time. Resident use of Meridian Township parks and recreation facilities tells its own story about the attractiveness and accessibility of those services. Recreation program use in Meridian Township was higher than use in comparison jurisdictions. There were more than 100 jurisdictions included in the benchmark comparison. For additional information on the 2015 Citizen Survey, please refer to the township website [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us). See Appendix G.

## **D. Meridian Township Master Plan**

Meridian Township planning staff is currently updating the information for the Planning Commission initiated Master Plan review. The Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan when completed will be adopted into the Township Master Plan. The Master Plan can be viewed by visiting [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us).

## **E. Meridian Township Board Goals and Ends Statements**

Each year the Township Board reviews its goals and ends statements which provide guidance and direction to township operations, philosophy and budget. Many of the board's goals are related to parks, environment and recreation. This document is provided in Appendix H, together with action staff is taking to meet the board's goals in 2017. The goals and end statements can be viewed by visiting [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us).

## **F. Meridian Township Bicycle/Pedestrian Pathway Master Plan**

The Bicycle/Pedestrian Pathway Master Plan was developed in 1974 in an effort to create non-motorized transportation links throughout the township. The plan indicates seven-foot wide paths and expanded shoulders on the roadway that serve as bicycle lanes. The pathways are supported by a millage that has been renewed several times since 1974 (0.3333 mills renewed in 2016 through 2028), and provides funds to develop and maintain pathways. Over 71-miles of paved pathway have been developed to date. The bicycle/pedestrian pathway master plan may be viewed at [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us).

See Appendix B.III

## **G. Public Meeting Notices**

### **1. Community Survey**

An on-line community survey was conducted from November 17, 2016 to December 5, 2016 to obtain information regarding the likes and recommendations for improving parks and recreation services and facilities in Meridian Township. Postcards were mailed to approximately 22,000 residences, post office boxes and businesses inviting total community participation. An email was sent to 16,000 contacts to encourage public participation as well as advertising through social media and press releases. People were given the option of completing the survey on-line or requesting a hardcopy in the mail. A total of 1,149 surveys were completed.

**2. Community Input Meeting**

A public input meeting / workshop / open house was conducted for residents to voice their opinions and recommendations with the Park Commission and staff. The meeting was held on November 21, 2016 with a total of 35 participants. The meeting was advertised with a postcard mailing and notices in the local East Lansing/Meridian Towne Courier newspaper.

**3. Notice of Availability of the Plan for Public Review**

(See Appendix J).

**4. Notice for Public Hearing and Plan Adoption**

To be completed. (See Appendix K).

The Meridian Township parks, recreation and open space system exists to serve the needs and desires of the residents of the Township and the Meridian community by providing a full spectrum of recreational opportunities, while enhancing the visual quality of neighborhoods and the Township as a whole. Historically, Meridian Township's parks, recreation and open space system has been looked upon as one of the most important elements in the quality of life for Meridian Township residents.

The Park and Recreation system-wide goals have not changed that significantly from the previous plan. This is because after gathering the public input, staff recognized that even though some issues have changed, the overriding goals and objectives are still relevant and respond to the desires and concerns of residents today.

## VII. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### A. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PHILOSOPHIES

1. Provide accessible facilities and leisure opportunities for all persons regardless of their physical and socio-economic characteristics.
2. Efficiently employ Township resources, in concert with other public, private and volunteer resources, to provide a wide range of recreation and leisure opportunities and avoid duplication of services where unnecessary.
3. Actively seek the most appropriate acquisition and uses of community open space and natural features to meet the community's needs for active, structured recreation, as well as passive enjoyment of the outdoors.
4. Plan for the continued availability of financial, physical and personnel resources to support the parks and recreation system.

### B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. **Accessibility**
  - a. Increased multi-use trails in parks and natural areas.
  - b. Improved trail maintenance and trail signage.
  - c. Improve amenities for universal access in all park facilities.
  - d. More year-round restrooms in parks.
  - e. More benches along trails and pathways.
  - f. Improve connectivity between parks.
2. **Safety**
  - a. Crime prevention through environmental design.
  - b. Safety through improved maintenance.
  - c. Safety through increased park usage.
3. **Environmental Sustainability**

- a. An emphasis on environmental sustainability (new buildings and renovations) – Energy saving opportunities.
- b. Improved non-motorized transportation connections between parks.

**4. Financial Stewardship**

- a. Increase partnerships and collaborative opportunities.
- b. Seek additional grant support.
- c. Seek additional seasonal staff for maintenance support.
- d. Seek sponsorships and donations.
- e. Continue to encourage and utilize volunteerism.

**5. Environmental Stewardship**

- a. Monitor and remove invasive species, encourage native plantings and educate the public about ecosystem health.
- b. Work cooperatively with the Land Preservation Advisory Board and Environmental Commission in stewardship planning and implementation.
- c. Monitor and respond to early signs of erosion, disease, and facility deterioration.
- d. Identify and protect rare and sensitive species in the parks where feasible.

**6. Education**

- a. Utilize recreation as a vehicle to educate and instill positive personal attributes such as ethics, values, citizenship, sportsmanship and leadership.
- b. Expand the educational outreach of the Harris Nature Center by adding interpretive signage at the entrance and along trails of our natural areas to facilitate self-directed and self-paced nature study.
- c. Expand and encourage additional educational outreach of the Meridian Historical Village and Nokomis Learning Center by adding educational/interpretive signage to the grounds surrounding the buildings to facilitate self-directed and self-paced cultural education.

- d. Improve awareness regarding the qualities, benefits and diversity of the park system.
- e. Expand Harris Nature Center environmental programs and outreach throughout the entire park system.

**7. Recreation and Events**

- a. Encourage and expand the use of parks for exercise and stress relief regimens for all ages and abilities.
- b. Expand and seek opportunities for collaborations, partnerships and shared services.
- c. Seek grants and sponsorships to support recreation services and events.
- d. Provide healthy outlets for teens and adolescents.
- e. Provide programs and services during a variety of days and times to reach the greatest number of participants.
- f. Provide activities that focus on health, wellness and physical fitness and positive youth development.
- g. Provide recreational activities and programs to meet the diverse needs of the community.

**8. Parks and Facilities**

- a. Support Farmers' Market, Snell Towar Recreation Center, and Harris Nature Center operations and facility improvements.
- b. Provide diverse amenities in the park system to accommodate citizens' interests and needs.
- c. Provide information and facilities that will encourage self-directed recreation.
- d. Focus capital investment on existing facility renovation and improvement.

**9. Volunteerism and Community Engagement**

- a. Identify volunteer commitment level (short term vs long term) and create projects to address these groups
- b. Communicate with various methods to maximize amount of volunteer engagement

- c. Encourage passive volunteer efforts by providing information on projects and empowering volunteer leaders (self-directed stewardship)

**10. Communication**

- a. Maintain production of Family Fun Guide as an effective communication tool.
- b. Develop a marketing plan to be more efficient and effective with various methods of communication.

## VIII. Action Program

This section highlights a series of recommended actions that resulted from the process of preparing this Master Plan. The recommended actions are intended to guide the Park Commission and staff when making decisions regarding the priorities for the park and recreation needs of Meridian Township residents, businesses, and visitors for the next five years and beyond.

The action program was developed based upon input gathered from the community survey, public input meetings, township-wide planning efforts, demographic data, land use trends and efforts of adjacent communities. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP), developed by the Park Commission and staff for future park projects, outlines future development projects and their associated costs (Appendix D). Many of the top park or facility additions identified through the process are in alignment with proposed park improvement projects in the CIP.

It is the responsibility of the Department of Parks and Recreation to provide services and programs that meet the needs of residents. The Department must be alert to the population and demographic trends in the Township and adjust accordingly. Meridian Township not only has to be aware of the aging population trend, the large population of college aged residents, but also the active children and families in the community.

It has been demonstrated that the provision of restrooms, multi-purpose trails, open space, greenways, improved Farmers' Market facility, indoor basketball facilities, and athletic fields are important to the residents. The Department must continue to set common goals and form partnerships with other departments and community organizations in order to enhance the quality of life of all residents, businesses, and visitors.

The recommendations and actions are summarized below:

### A. Capital Improvement Program

To meet the recommendations and actions, the Park Commission and the Department of Parks and Recreation have identified a series of capital projects for the next six years. These projects will address the needs identified in this Master Plan and are reviewed every year. Additional public input is obtained prior to final planning of each project. Appendix D summarizes the capital projects that are detailed in the 2017-2022 Meridian Township Six Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). To keep connected to the most recent CIP Plan, visit [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us).

### 3. Parks and Facilities Improvement and Maintenance

#### a. Central Park

The Farmers' Market is located in Central Park, which is also home to some of our most popular athletic fields, paved and unpaved trails, Nokomis Learning Center, and the Meridian Historical Village. Central Park has been called the "Heart of Meridian" and is well-loved and well-used by many residents. In order to continue to meet the recreational needs of the residents, a master plan will be developed to evaluate opportunities for:

- Universal accessibility
- Greater use of water features
- Multi-use trails
- Farmers' Market relocation
- Splash pad
- Restroom building
- Pavilion
- Bridge into Village
- Covered basketball, ice rink, and parking
- Sculpture garden
- Overlook shelter
- Playground
- Outdoor interpretation in the Historical Village and around Nokomis.
- Doggie Playground
- Other outdoor recreation facilities

#### b. Towner Road Park

A strong need for athletic fields in the northern portion of our community has been identified for a number of years in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and is supported by the large number of youth participating in sports programs. Plans include:

- Athletic fields for soccer, lacrosse, football, and baseball
- Pavilion and restroom
- Play equipment
- Accessible loop trail
- Interpretive signage
- Parking lot
- Pickleball

#### c. Legg Park

Plans are being created for the continued development of Meridian Riverfront Park, Legg entrance, 3891 Van Atta Road, Okemos, by designing and implementing a master plan for amenities including:

- Dog park
- Pavilion
- Driveway improvements
- Universally accessible trails

- Trail improvements
  - Habitat improvements
  - Footbridge replacement
- d. **Harris Nature Center**  
Enhance the Harris Nature Center by adding indoor and outdoor universally accessible activity space and amenities to meet growing demand, including:
- Pavilion
  - Outdoor restroom building
  - Natural playground
  - River access/launch
  - Outdoor interpretive signage and displays
- e. **North Meridian Road Park**  
Improvement plans include:
- Expanded parking
  - Trail improvements and signage
  - Shade structures
  - Landscaping
- f. **Wonch Park Improvements**  
Wonch Park is located on Okemos Road and the Red Cedar River within the Okemos DDA District. Implement the Master Plan which includes:
- Stream bank stabilization improvements
  - Fishing dock/canoe launch
  - New restroom facility
  - Landscaping
  - Connector trail to downtown Okemos
  - Wi-Fi connection
- h. **Hillbrook Park**  
Future plans include:
- Restroom building
  - Trail improvements and signage
- i. **Marshall Park**  
Plans include:
- Accessible loop trail
  - New Playground Equipment
  - Landscaping
- j. **Meridian Riverfront Park**  
Meridian Riverfront Park extends along the Red Cedar River for approximately 2.5 miles. Plans include:

- Universally accessible river trail including boardwalk and/or hard surfaces and bridges
- Trail and interpretive signage.

**k. Nancy Moore Park**

Future plans for Nancy Moore include:

- Addition of a second pavilion
- Accessible playground
- Paved loop trail
- Parking improvements

**l. Newton Road Park**

Future plans for Newton Road Park include:

- Playground
- Loop path around perimeter

**m. Ottawa Hills Park**

Future plans include:

- Playground
- Loop path around perimeter

**n. Eastgate Park**

Future plans for include:

- Pave parking lot

**o. Farmers Market Building Relocation**

Visiting the Farmers' Market is a very popular activity for residents. For the past forty-three years the market has been held at the pavilion in Central Park near the Town Hall. However, the successful market has outgrown the facility and should be relocated to an area that offers more parking and a larger pavilion for the vendors. Plans have been developed to relocate the Farmers' Market to the Meridian Mall, which lies just south of Central Park. This public/private partnership will utilize existing infrastructure as well as attract new visitors to the mall.

**4. Additional Considerations**

**a. Trails/Pathways**

A popular item identified during the public input process was the continued development of multi-purpose trails or pathways in existing parks and pathways that link the parks together. This will provide non-motorized access to parks and recreation facilities to satisfy the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and joggers, and to facilitate use of natural areas, including the Meridian Riverfront Park. Walking, hiking, and bicycling were identified as some of the most popular leisure activities in the community survey and during other public meetings. Enhancing the trails would also serve

persons with disabilities and bicycle commuters by providing much improved access through the parks. Also a priority is improved trail maintenance, better trail signage and more benches. The Township's non-motorized bicycle/pathway plan typically constructs paths alongside roadways, but there are many opportunities to extend these pathways into the park system to create a large network of trails.

**b. Watertrail/River/Fishing Access:**

Residents identified the need for safe, clear river access for canoe and kayak navigation. The Watertrail in the Appendix plan identifies opportunities for access sites and signage that will provide a safe and enjoyable paddling experience.

**b. Sports Fields and Facilities:**

There is a need to upgrade some of the existing sports facilities to ensure the safety and enjoyment of participants and spectators. Facilities should be developed or upgraded to provide a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities. It is also very important for the Parks and Recreation Department to recognize trends and to respond to our residents. Pickleball has recently become very popular and the plan is to develop four courts at Towner Road Park.

**d. Land Acquisition and Easement Agreements:**

The long-term potential of the Red Cedar River corridor has yet to be realized. Future land acquisitions and easement agreements should be pursued with the goal of eventually providing a pedestrian/bicycle trail system that links the Harris Nature Center to the Bicycle/Pedestrian trail system in Meridian Township. It would also serve as a major attraction for new residents and tourists.

In order to maximize the potential benefits of open space and natural areas, it is necessary that there is increased coordination of efforts between the Land Preservation Advisory Board and the Park Commission. It is important that new developments in Meridian Township also be encouraged to incorporate parks and recreation amenities that complement the efforts of the Department and Park Commission. The benefits of these collaborations will enhance the potential for recreation, conservation and stewardship.

## **B. Programs and Services**

Based on the community survey, respondents were very satisfied with the programs and services being provided by the Department of Parks and Recreation. It is clear that residents value the potential benefits of leisure/free time activities, especially those related to wellness.

The results indicated that residents were appreciative of the Farmers' Market and the other special events/festivals offered by the Department. They also suggested that additional special events and festivals are needed that focus on local culture and history. Focus strategies for the next five years includes:

- Increase activities for families
- Increase activities for toddler and preschoolers during evening and weekends
- Additional programs that serve adolescents and teenagers.
- Because older adults are working longer, offer opportunities for active recreation for them in the evenings and on weekends.
- Foster greater cooperation and collaboration with schools, surrounding governmental units and business.
- Provide additional special events, also events during the week at lunchtime

## C. Communication

Effectively reaching our community and keeping them informed is a primary goal and need to be successful.

- Creatively promote all the parks in the park system.
- Meet with park neighbors to discuss stewardship and to identify future development opportunities.
- Continue to publish and distribute the "Family Fun Guide" to all residents in the community annually.
- Continue to utilize the website, Facebook and Twitter to promote programs and activities.
- Continue to utilize HOM-TV to promote parks and recreation programs throughout the community.
- Continue to operate quality programs to take advantage of the least expensive form of promotion – word of mouth.

## D. Funding Sources

Various grant opportunities and programs exist that are useful in leveraging funding for projects and property acquisition. A summary of some of the common funding resources for recreation in the state of Michigan include:

- **Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF)** – Provides funding assistance for the purchase of land (or interest in land) for recreation or protection of land because of its environmental importance or scenic beauty, and the development of

recreation facilities. This assistance is directed at creating and improving outdoor recreational opportunities and providing protection to valuable natural resources. The improvement grants are between \$15,000 and \$300,000 with a required minimum local match of 25%. Acquisition grants vary depending upon the value of property and local match amount; therefore there is not a minimum or maximum amount. This grant is ideal for implementing community park plans and for land acquisition in the future. Applications are due in April and September of each year for acquisition projects and April of each year for development projects.

- **Michigan Recreation Passport** – Provides capital improvement plans and development projects in communities throughout Michigan. Projects must be in public recreation use for the life of the project rather than perpetuity. Indoor recreation facilities and existing park locations are eligible for the grant. The primary focus is on improving and renovating existing parks. The application deadline is April 1<sup>st</sup>, with a November grant award announcement. Duration of the grant usually run 3 years. Minimum grant request must be \$7,500 with a maximum request of \$75,000 starting in 2017; there is a 25% match by the local municipality or organization. The 25% match can either be cash/credit (for locally assumed costs including labor and equipment) donations of goods and services from non-government entities, cash donations from non-governmental entities or repurposed land.
- **Aquatic Habitat Grant Program** – The Aquatic Habitat Grant Program (AHCP) began in October 2013 and will operate each year that funding is available. A total of approximately \$1,250,000 will be available for the second round of 2014 grand funding from the Game and Fish Protection Fund. The AHCP's purpose is to improve fish and other aquatic organism's populations by protecting intact and rehabilitating degraded aquatic habitat. Grant applications are due in November with award information available in April.
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)** – LWCF provides funding assistance for communities to acquire and develop land for outdoor recreation. The minimum award is \$15,000 and the maximum of \$500,000 with a 50% local match. The eligibility criterion emphasizes preservation of natural resources such as waterways. This grant is ideal for implementing community park plans for land acquisition in the future.
- **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)** – TAP is a competitive grant program that funds projects such as non-motorized paths, streetscapes and historic preservation of transportation facilities that enhance Michigan's intermodal transportation system and provide safe alternative transportation options. These investments support place-based economic development by offering transportation choices, promoting walkability and improving the quality of life. The program uses federal transportation funds designed by Congress for these types of activities. TAP grant funding requires matching funds of at least 20 percent of the eligible project cost.

- **Public-Private or Public-Public Partnerships** – Reduced funding at the public and private sector has created a need for various partnerships between public and private entities as well as between two or more public entities, to accommodate specialized large-scale recreation demands.
- **Donations** – Businesses, corporations, private clubs, community organizations and individuals will often contribute to recreation and other improvement programs to benefits the communities in which they are located. Private sector contributions may be in the form of monetary contributions, the donation of land, the provision of volunteer services, or the contribution of equipment or facilities.
- **Private Foundations** - There are various foundations and grant sources with specific criteria. Many can be identified through community foundations and other listings.

### **Conclusion:**

Meridian Township has been successful using a blend of various funding sources to leverage available resources. Each future project should be evaluated against the scope of each project and the limitations and conditions that some grant sources attach.

## IX. Quality of Life Initiatives

Meridian Township is constantly promoting quality of life initiatives in the community. Some of these measures include:

- **“Complete Streets” Ordinance** - Meridian Township adopted in 2011.
- **“Potential Conservation Assessment”** project - Tri-County Regional Planning .
- **“Greening Mid-Michigan Plan”** - Participated in development with Tri-County Regional Planning in regional vision for green infrastructure.
- **“Meridian Township Greenspace Plan”** - adopted in 2004.
- **Meridian Township “Land Preservation Program”** - Millage to acquire and manage fragile lands in the community since 2000.
- **“Ingham County Trail Plan”**- Active participation with the Meridian Township portion in conjunction with Ingham County.
- **Meridian Township “Bicycle/Pedestrian Pathway Millage”** - Has developed almost eighty miles of pathway in the community.
- **“Promoting Active Communities” Award Program** - Sponsored by the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports (5-time award winner).

## X. Acknowledgements and Final Comments

The public input for this Master Plan proved invaluable. The information from the input meetings and individual comments (i.e., email, phone, and in-person) were used by the Department of Parks and Recreation and Park Commission. The public input identified residents' strong desire for high quality parks and recreation and the connection to higher quality of life. It also validated the Township's, Department's, and the Park Commission's commitment to continuously improve parks and recreation in Meridian Township. It is also clear that these improvements have resulted in increased expectations for parks, facilities, and programs.

In addition to meeting the requirements for the MDNR, it is hoped that this Plan will result in additional public input to accomplish the recommendations and actions presented in this report. Over the next five years, it is hoped that this Plan will result in additional amenities in existing parks and expansion of existing programs to meet the needs of all Meridian Township residents. The Park Commission will continue to encourage and work cooperatively with developers to site neighborhood parks in their developments.

The Department's effort to increase collaboration has resulted in stronger relationships with many community-based organizations (e.g., neighborhood and sport), schools, businesses, neighboring communities, and non-profits. These efforts should continue in order to ensure that residents and visitors are aware of all of the recreation opportunities in the Township. This report will be shared with these groups to discuss strategies to increase overall recreation participation and enhance the many potential benefits.

It also is important to mention former Park Commissioners Teri Banas, Melanie Jaramillo, Todd Wilson and Phil Deschaine, who have each made significant contributions toward the implementation of the Master Plan as well as former Township Board Trustee, Angie Wilson who assisted in the successful Park Millage Proposal in 2014.

In conclusion, this Plan represents the efforts and input of many individuals. It is hoped that it will result in more dialogue with residents and community leaders to assist Meridian Township Department of Parks and Recreation to meet its mission:

***To enhance the quality of life for Township residents and visitors by providing diverse park facilities and recreation opportunities where participants are able to learn and play; create and imagine, and be safe and secure utilizing qualified, professional staff and volunteers emphasizing community interaction.***