

DRAFT November 2016



LOWER HURON MASTER PLAN

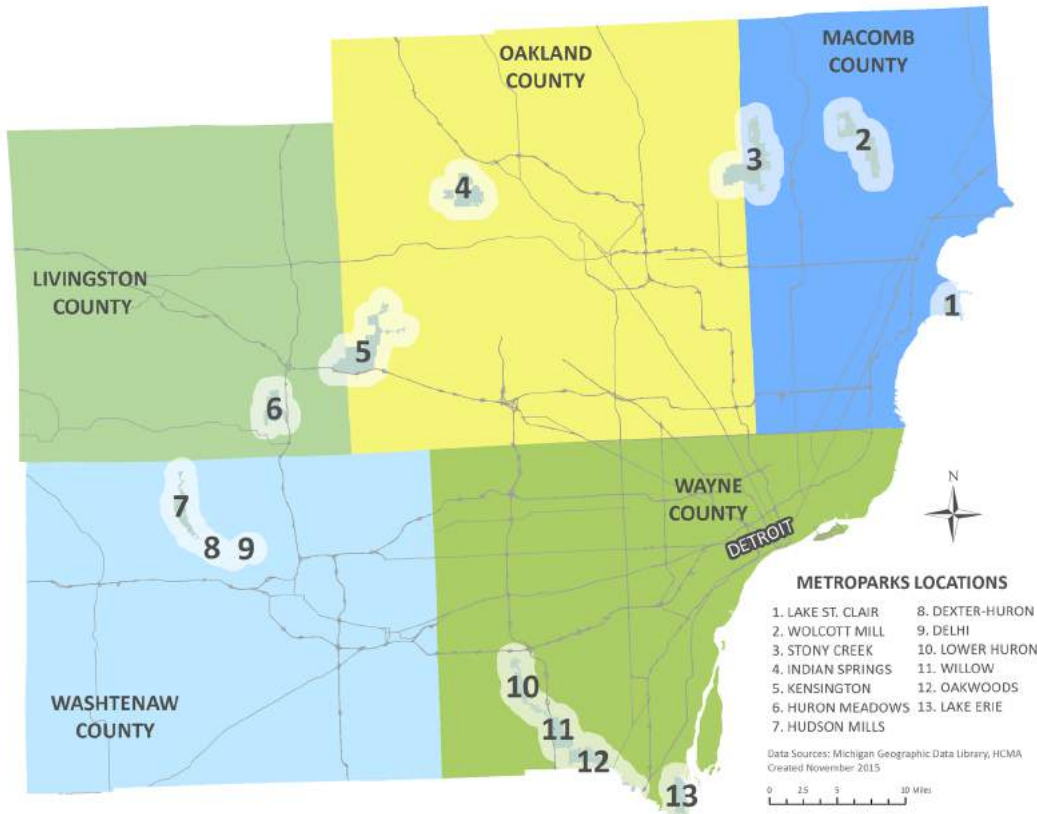


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INTRODUCTION

About the Metroparks

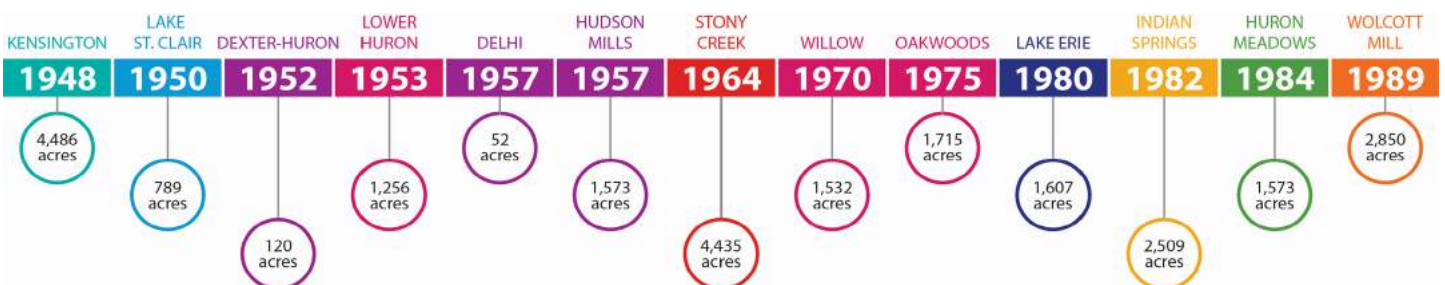


The Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority was sanctioned by the Michigan State Legislature in Act No. 147 of the Public Acts of 1939. Named after the two longest rivers within its boundaries, the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority is a regional park agency consisting of 13 Metroparks encompassing approximately 25,000 acres of land within a five county area in southeast Michigan.

Much credit can be given to Henry S. Curtis and Harlow O. Whittemore for making the Metroparks a reality. The 1937 vision for a park system proposed a series of parks connected by a long parkway extending from Lake St. Clair along the Clinton and Huron rivers to Lake Erie below the mouth of the Detroit River.

Funding of the parks began in 1942 with a property tax levy, limited to one-quarter of one mill. The rate today has been adjusted to .2146 mills.

PARK DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE



Introduction

Administration & Operations

Board of Commissioners

A seven-member Board of Commissioners governs the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority. The Board of Commissioners meets the second Thursday of each month, where they make policy decisions for the Authority, including approving expenditures, acquiring land, planning of new parks and facilities, approving fees and charges, awarding contracts through competitive bidding, and other matters necessary to provide regional recreation. The Board appoints staff officers for the Metroparks.

Two commissioners, appointed by the Governor of Michigan for a term of four years, serve as representatives at large. Five commissioners, one each to represent the counties of Wayne, Macomb, Oakland, Livingston and Washtenaw, are appointed for a term of six years by the board of commissioners of the above-named counties.

Director is the Chief Executive Officer of the Metroparks, provides leadership and executive oversight of all administrative and operational activities.

Administrative Departments provide administrative support to operations, and guide the organization towards its mission.

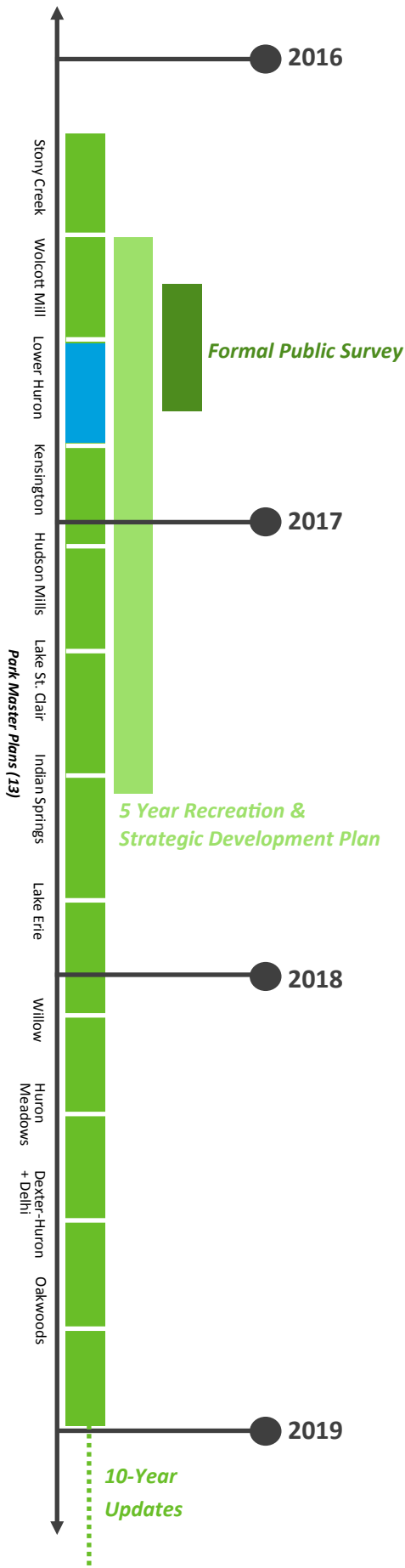
Operational Departments facilitate the day-to-day operations of the parks, making sure patrons have enjoyable and educational visits. They include Maintenance and Interpretive Services.

Metroparks Police ensure that everyone can enjoy the parks in a safe and secure environment.



Introduction

Planning Process

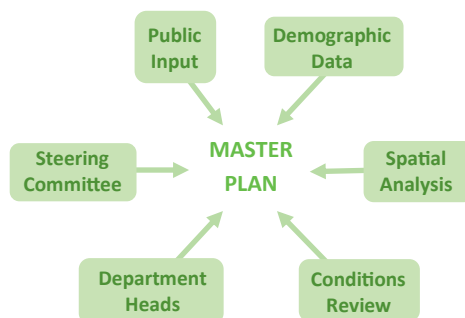


Several factors contribute to the recommendations that will be proposed for Lower Huron in the master plan. One of the most important is the public input collected through meetings, questionnaires, and online comments. This reveals the public's hopes and expectations for the park and significantly influences plan recommendations. A master plan steering committee was formed to include park employees with exceptional knowledge of Lower Huron and surrounding community, who along with the experienced Metroparks department heads provide their professional opinions.

The Metroparks Planning Department has scheduled an aggressive timeline for completing all 13 park master plans in three years. Each park will be given a planning window of six months, with overlap between parks. The order of the parks in the planning process was determined by staff based on current and planned park projects, planning need, geography, and park popularity.

The Planning Department collects demographic and spatial data to inform master plan recommendations. Demographic data looks at the density, age, language, mobility, and other factors of the regional population. Spatial data, usually analyzed through Geographic Information Systems software, looks at the physical location of the parks in relation to other recreation opportunities, transportation facilities, population centers, important natural resources, and more. Finally, the Planning Department conducts a review of park conditions to identify areas needing improvement and areas experiencing success.

The master plans are intended to be living documents, modified as needed to reflect changing conditions in the parks. However, they focus on park developments over the following ten years, and will be updated every decade through a formal planning process similar to the current one.



The Steering Committee for the Lower Huron Master Plan met on 6/22/16

LOWER HURON TODAY

Character

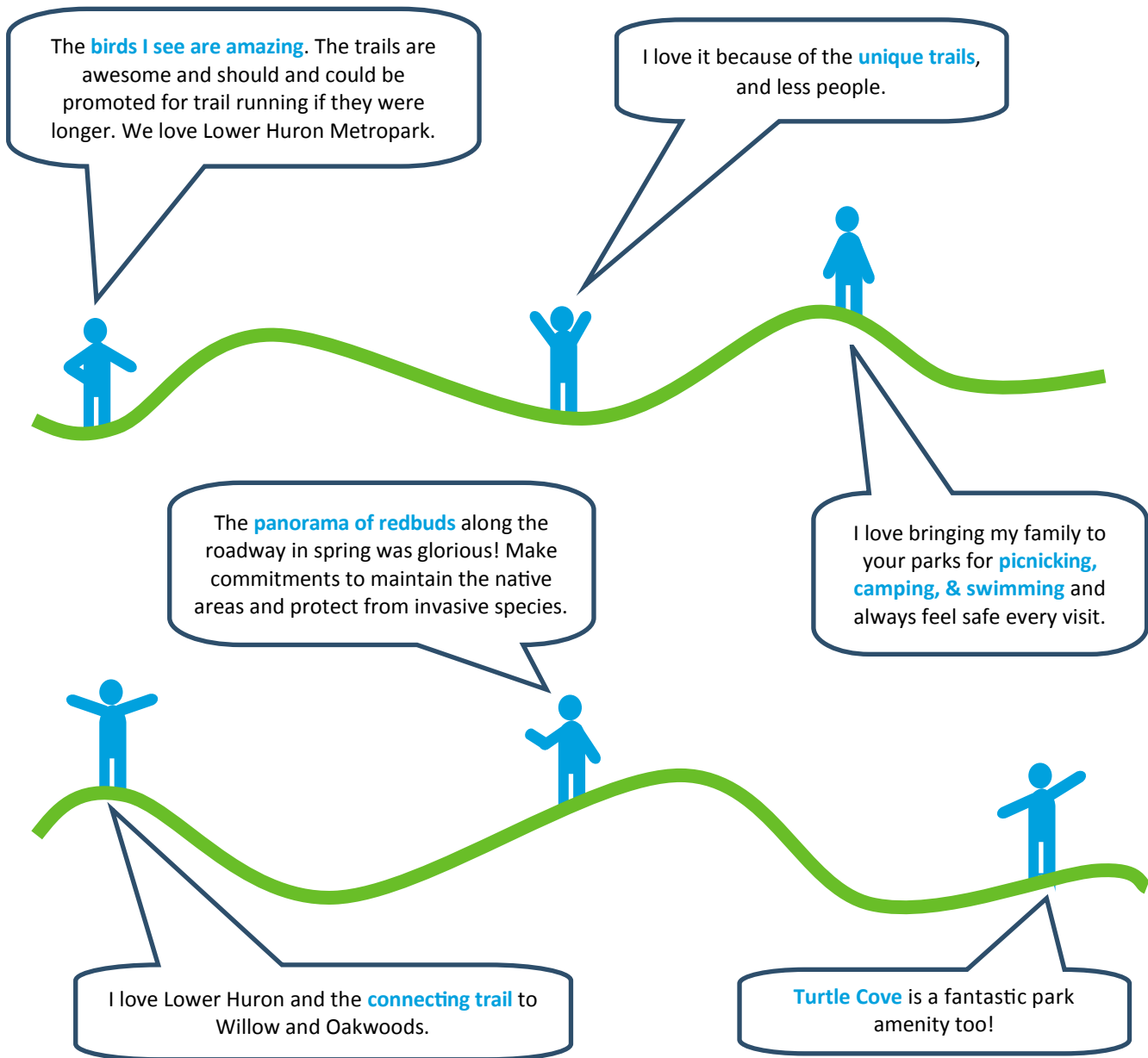
The following responses to our survey questions highlight the many facets of Lower Huron that form a unique experience. It is seen as a relaxing escape for viewing and strolling through nature, as well as active recreation and family activities.

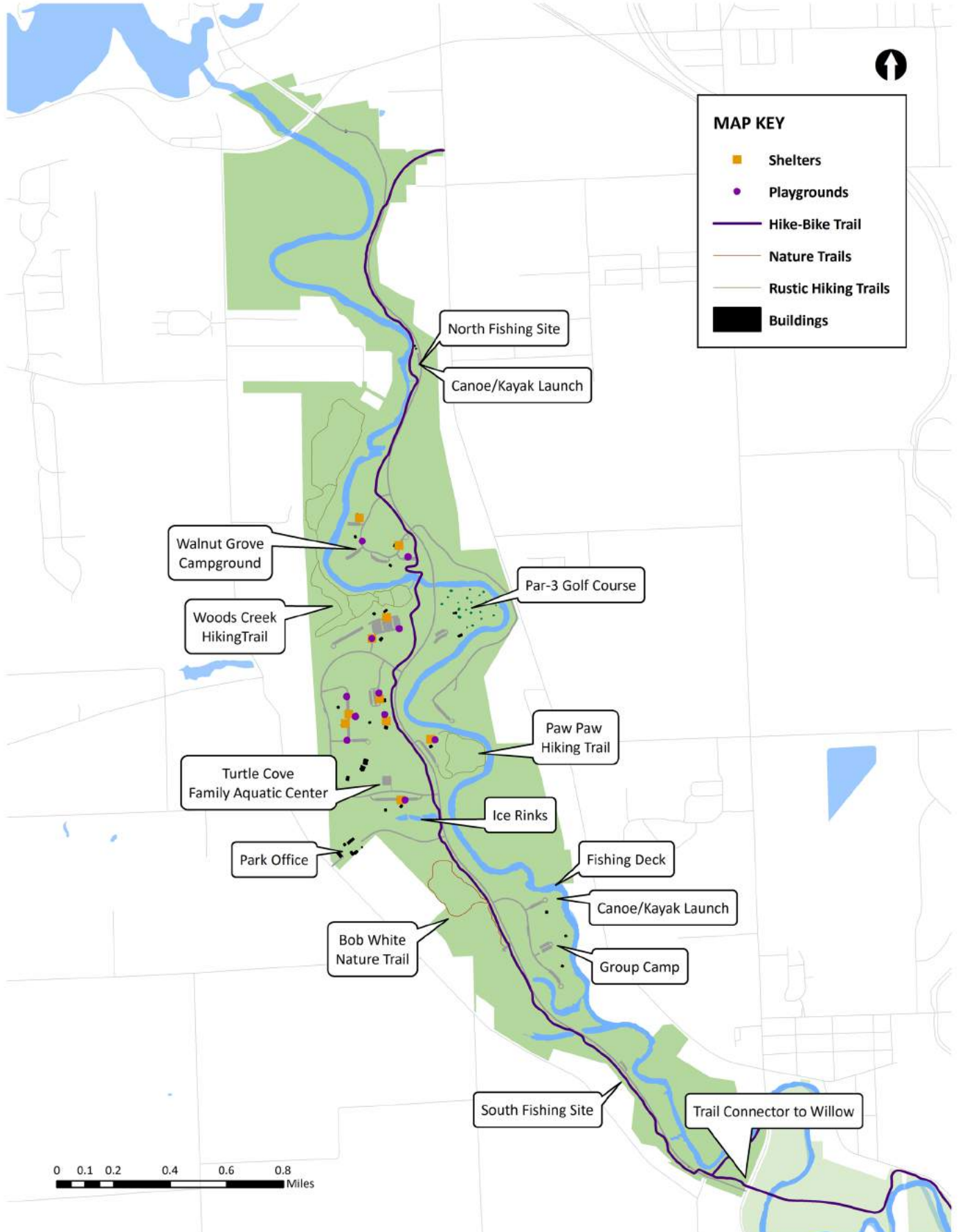
NEEDS

Better highlight and advertise special character of park

Build a strong identity and user base

OPPORTUNITIES

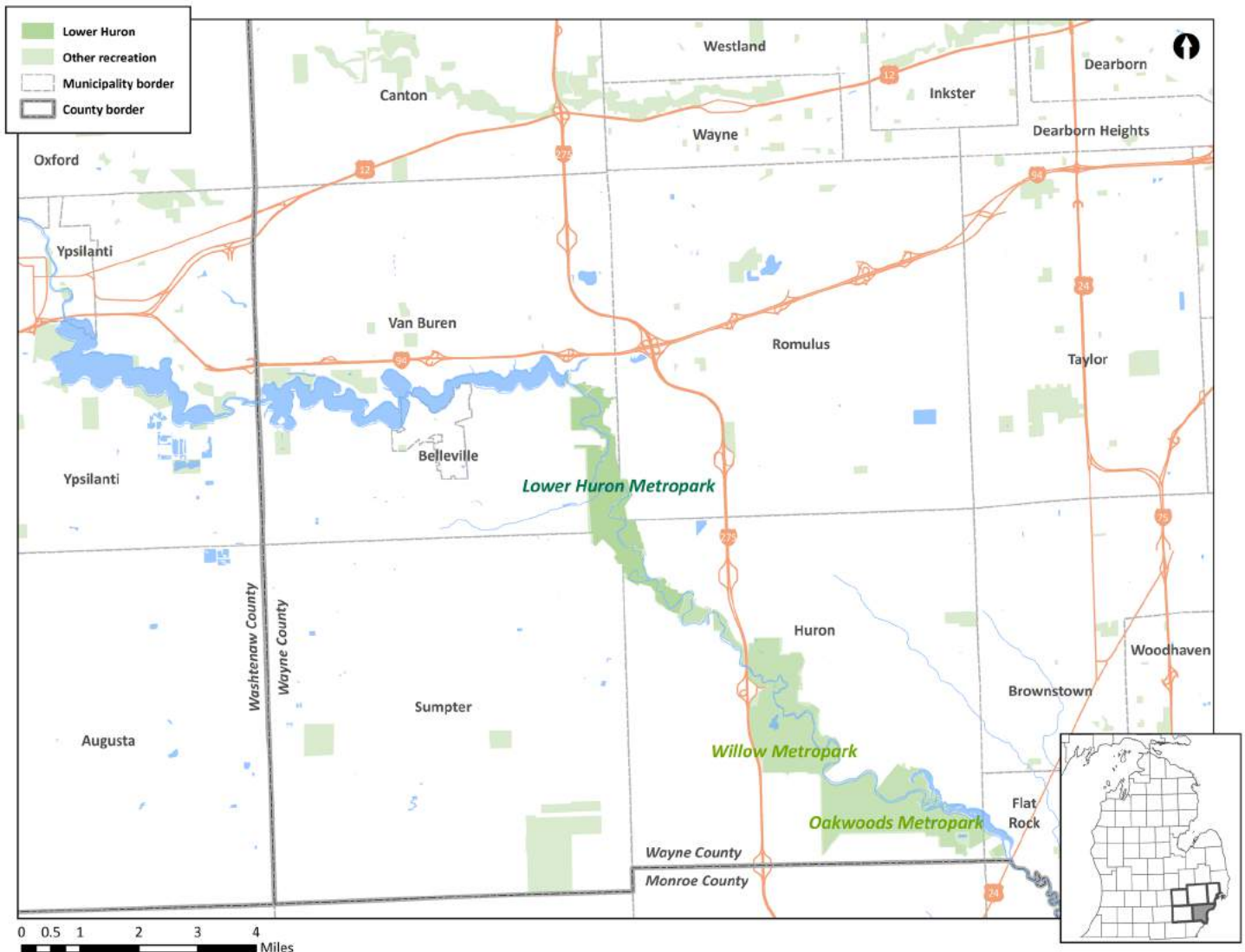




Location

Lower Huron Metropark is located in the southwest section of Wayne County in southeast Michigan. Four municipalities include portions of Lower Huron within their borders: Van Buren Township, Sumpter Township, the City of Romulus, and Huron Township.

At its northernmost extent, Lower Huron reaches I-94. Its eastern boundary is Waltz Road/Huron River Drive, to the west it reaches Haggerty Road, and to the south it extends to Savage Road. The park is situated on the Lower Huron River.



Lower Huron Today

NEEDS

Define and protect areas with important biodiversity features

Create a resilient network of biodiverse areas in the park

OPPORTUNITIES

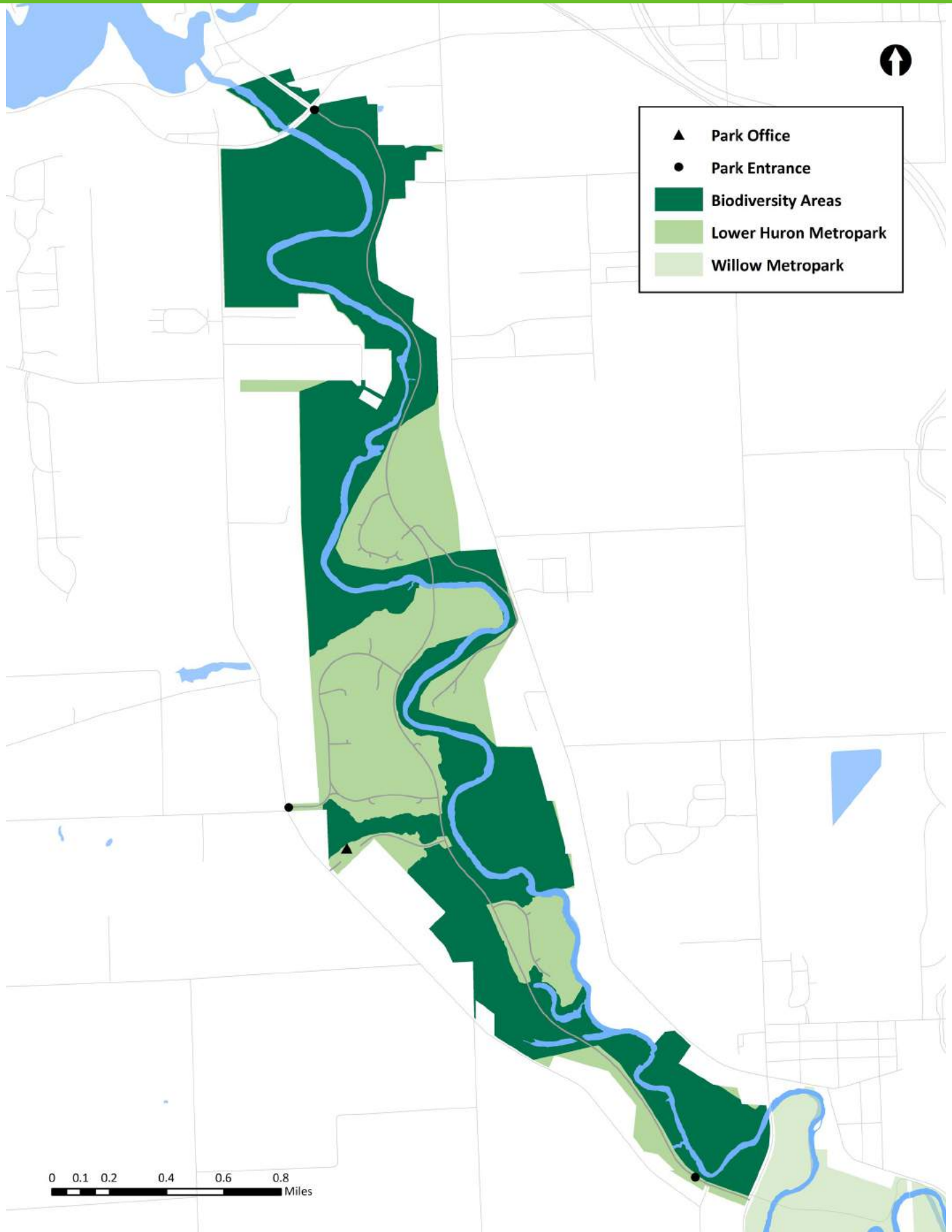
Biodiversity refers to the variety of life present in a given area, often measured by number and distribution of species. It is important to preserve because it provides humans with ecological services such as clean water and oxygen, leads to greater resistance and resilience during natural and human-caused disturbances, and reduces the risk of disease.

Biodiversity Areas

Identifying biodiversity areas can help inform the development of current and future park amenities, allowing the Metroparks to fulfill its mandate and mission statement of protecting the natural resources of the communities it serves. Development within biodiversity areas is carefully reviewed to minimize unnecessary disruption.

The following criteria for determining biodiversity areas were adapted from a matrix that the Natural Resources Department uses to determine work priorities throughout the park system. The following page shows a map of proposed biodiversity areas in Lower Huron.

Metric	What	Why	Metric	What	Why
Elemental Occurrence	the presence of a species under legal protection, or of a complete system recognized as in condition similar to pre-settlement	statutory, occurrences protected by law from intentional take	Percent Invasive Species Cover	percentage of total acreage with invasive plant coverage	areas with few invasive species require less work, have greater return on investment
FQA (Floristic Quality Assessment)	presence of plant species likely to occur in conditions similar to pre-settlement	determines the ecological value of a system based on its floral assemblage	Community Ranking	rank assigned by the state due to natural community rarity or rate of decline	assesses the vulnerability of each natural community within the state
FQI Connectivity	the presence of a quality habitat (greater than 35 FQI) within 100 feet of another	connected habitats provide diverse resources and facilitate migration, increase species fitness	Wetlands	the presence of wetlands	wetlands tend to have greatest diversity, and are also critical to promote healthy water resources
Size	acreage of the habitat in question	large habitats provide more diverse resources and facilitate migration, increase species fitness, resilience	Habitat Connectivity	the presence of a complementary habitat within 100 feet of another	connected wetlands promote genetic diversity conservation and water quality



Lower Huron Today

NEEDS

Better educate about and preserve important cultural features

Draw new visitors with programming/education based on history of park

OPPORTUNITIES

Archaeological Findings

Several archaeological studies have been conducted at Lower Huron in the past decades, resulting in the discovery of artifacts from both Native American and European settlements. Sites identified include burial grounds, campsites, dwellings, kilns, commercial structures, tool manufacture areas, and farmsteads.

Schulz Mill and Dam

The dam is no longer standing, but the pilings can be seen within the park. The mill is still in operation just outside the park and sells feed and other grain products. Other mills that once stood on current park property but no longer exist include Johnson Mill and Otis/Stewart Mill.

Mt. Pleasant Village

Founded during the first half of the 1800s, the village no longer existed by the time of the Civil War. It can still be seen on historical maps, marked at the edge of current Lower Huron boundaries.

Robbe Farm

The Franklin L. Robbe farm consisted of a beautiful late-nineteenth century farmhouse and associated outbuildings. Robbe was involved in Van Buren Township politics in the 1880s, holding several elected positions including township supervisor. The farm and the buildings were donated to the Metroparks in the late 1960s, and the Metroparks began restoration of the property in the early 1970s.

Work stopped due to a reallocation of resources, and the farmhouse and two acres were donated to Van Buren Township after the community expressed an interest in restoring the building. Funding for the restoration was not secured and after several years of Township ownership the farmhouse and property reverted back to Metropark ownership. The Robbe farmhouse was demolished in December, 2003, but the Robbe Farm is included on the list of Michigan State Historic Sites.

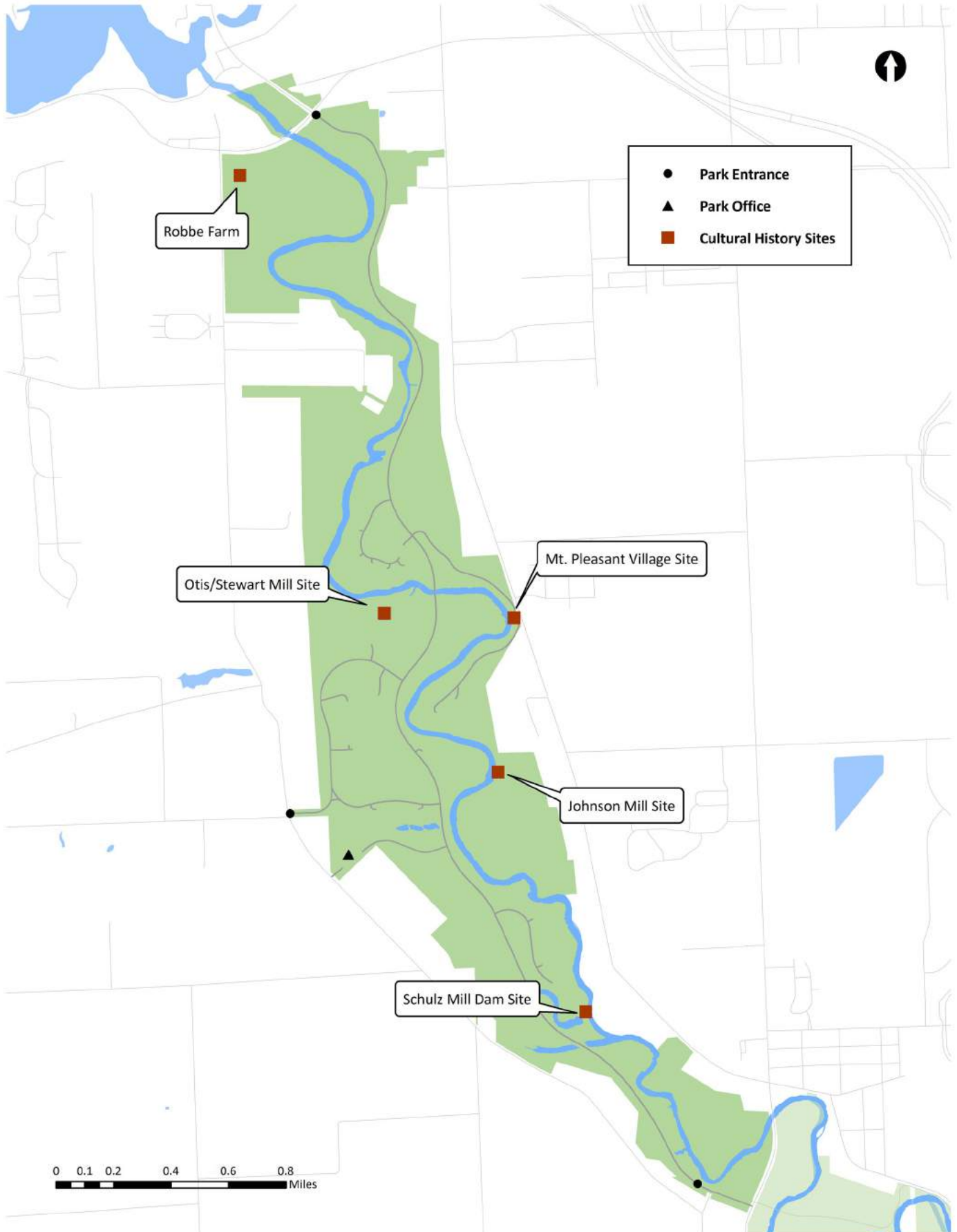
Cultural History



Schulz Mill in 1913



Remains of Schulz Mill Dam pilings



Infrastructure

In order to serve the varied needs of park visitors, Lower Huron contains a number of buildings, surfaces, facilities, and activity areas. Many of these were constructed years or decades ago, meaning that they may need to be repaired or replaced in the near future.

Lower Huron is popular for picnicking and fishing, requiring shelters and piers to be maintained. Along with launches for paddlers on the Huron River Water Trail, a National Park Service-designated National Water Trail, these elements make up the primary recreational infrastructure of the park.

Due to their proximity, Lower Huron and the other Metroparks in Wayne County work together to provide high quality recreation to visitors. A goal in the planning process is to ensure that the facilities and infrastructure in these parks complement and do not duplicate each other.



NEEDS

Address aging and overbuilt infrastructure

Redevelop park areas to better serve visitors and environment

OPPORTUNITIES

Lower Huron Infrastructure	
Public bldgs / avg age	3 / 25
Service bldgs / avg age	3 / 20
Comfort stations / avg age	9 / 30
Paths & trail miles	9.14
Road miles	8.66
Playgrounds	7
Percent of park mowed	22.6
Rental shelters	9
Sand volleyball courts	3
Baseball fields	2
Fishing platforms	3
Parking lot acreage	20.09
Tennis courts	1
Ice skating areas	1
Basketball courts	2
Canoe/kayak launches	2



Lower Huron Today



Facilities & Centers

Lower Huron features a number of facilities that define its character and enhance the recreational experience of visitors. Some of these require an admission fee, are available for rentals, or sell concessions, supplementing park revenue. As with all park infrastructure, it is a priority to keep the facilities well-maintained and replace them when no longer functional.

Walnut Grove Campground

Lower Huron is one of two Metroparks with a public campground. Nestled within a bend of the Huron River and among the scenic Woods Creek trails, it provides easy access to picnicking and fishing.

Ice Rinks

The Metroparks are open and provide exceptional recreation all four seasons of the year. On cold winter days, the two ice rinks host hockey matches and figure skating.

Group Camp

On the banks of the river, the Group Camp site allows scouting troops, youth groups, and other youth organizations to enjoy a night at the park while learning about nature and rustic living.

Turtle Cove Family Aquatic Center

One of the defining facilities of Lower Huron is the Turtle Cove Family Aquatic Center, constructed in 2007. It has become a popular destination for summer adventures in Wayne County. The center includes a lazy river, two waterslides, a zero-depth entry pool, and a play structure with a 300-gallon dumping bucket. Concessions are available at Turtle Cove.

Par-3 Golf Course

This course has been utilized by beginner golfers and families, and includes both traditional and foot golf. It includes shorter holes than regulation golf.



Lower Huron Today

The Metroparks are moving towards a more data-driven approach to developing facilities. In order to best serve the residents of southeast Michigan and use resources wisely, the Planning Department has identified the location of similar facilities and programs. The goal for future development is to avoid duplication and instead offer unique facilities that fill recreation voids in the geographic area where the park is located.

The map below shows the location of aquatic facilities, golf and disc golf, neighborhood sports facilities, and interpretive programs that compete with those offered at Lower Huron. The park is surrounded by relatively few other facilities, not including other Metroparks. Even court and field games are not well-represented except to the southeast near Willow. This may suggest that Lower Huron and the other Southern District parks play an important role in the recreation offered to residents of the area, acting as more of a local resource than other Metroparks.

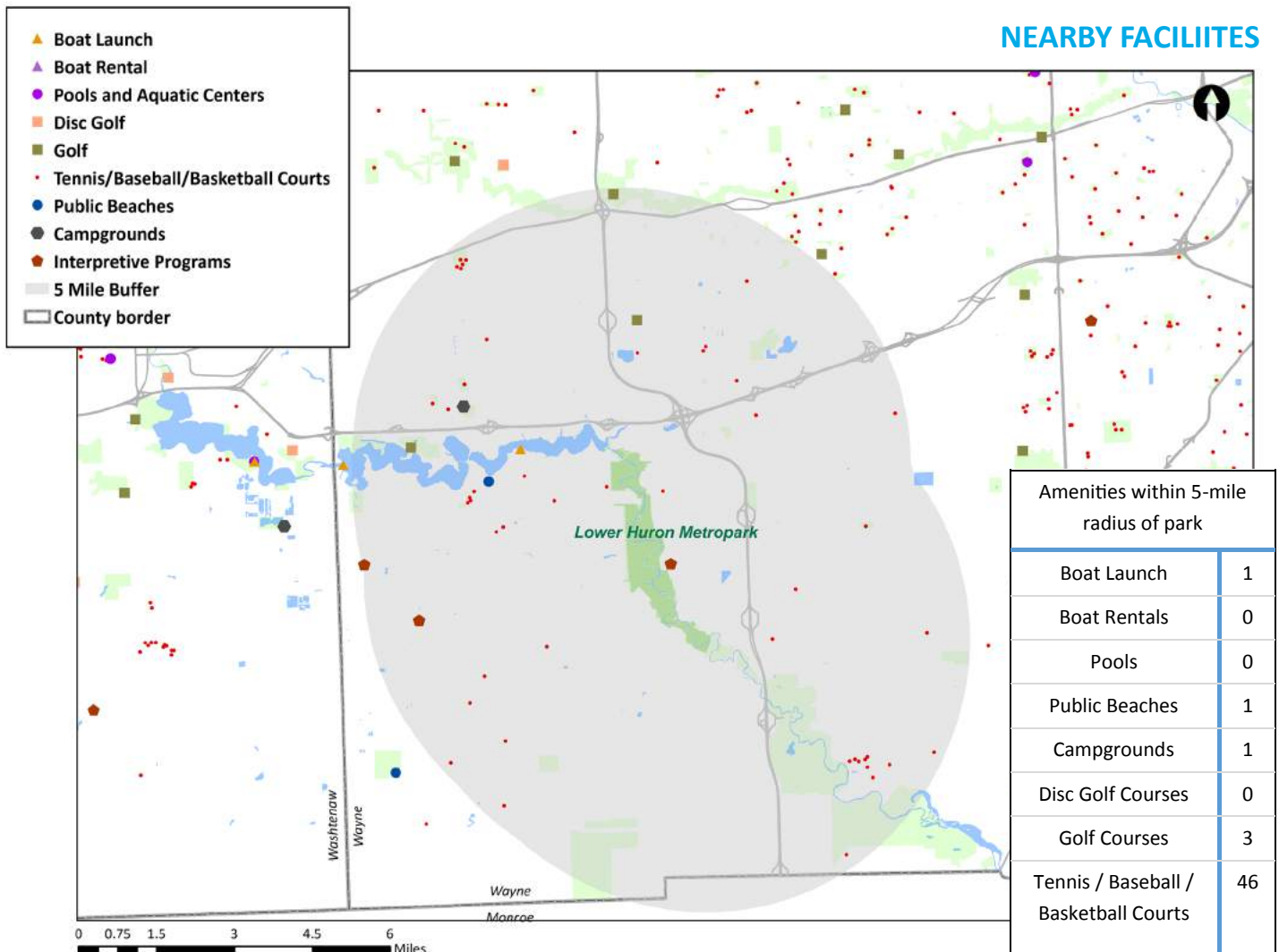
NEEDS

Identify areas of facility duplication

Provide unique recreational facilities to draw visitors from across the region

OPPORTUNITIES

NEARBY FACILITIES



NEEDS

Work with county to address park boundary issues

Create good working relationship with neighbors and partner organizations

OPPORTUNITIES

Grants

Over its history, Lower Huron has received several grants from the DNR for land acquisition, trail development, and more. The land specified as the project area of those grants was encumbered in perpetuity—meaning it may never be converted into a private or non-recreational use. All of Lower Huron is encumbered, as shown on the following page.

The generous grants from the DNR and other sources have allowed the Metroparks to develop Lower Huron into the center of high-quality recreation that it is today.



Encroachments

The Planning Department has worked with Lower Huron park staff to identify external encroachments on park boundaries. These include private development on park property, dumping waste, and breaking through fence lines. Together with a new combined map of county parcels in relation to historic HCMA-created parcels, this will help staff resolve existing property issues.

Since Lower Huron abuts numerous residential backyards, it is important to work with neighbors to discourage informal paths into the park and identify areas where a formal pedestrian entry point may be necessary to serve a neighborhood.

Informal Access Points

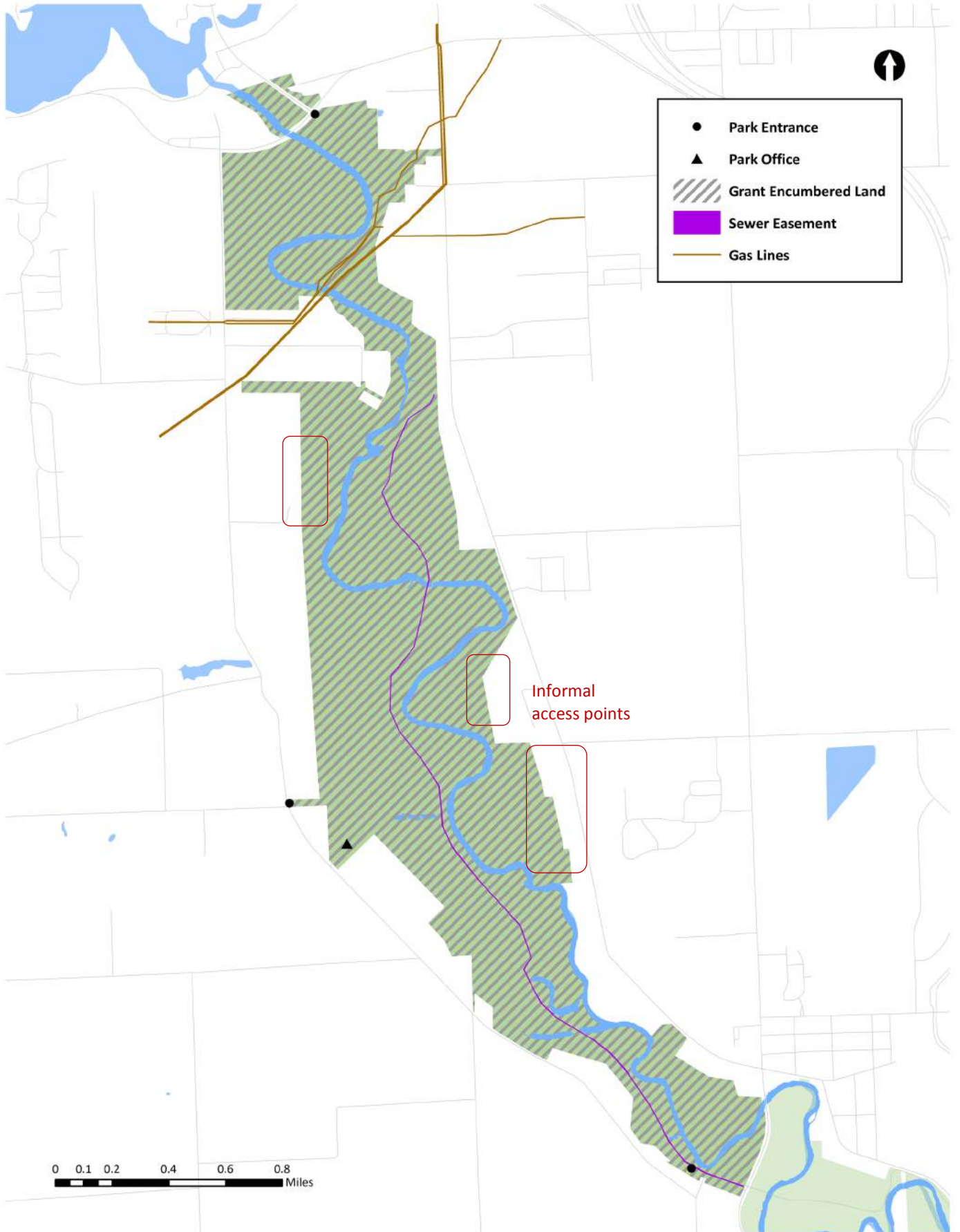
Certain spots on the park border are open to pedestrian access but not formally designated as an entrance. These must be monitored and considered in the planning process. Individuals may park on adjacent streets and enter the park on foot, affecting the tolling revenue of the park and potentially causing negative traffic impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

Easements

Lower Huron contains various utility easements. These allow providers to use certain sections of land to run power lines or other equipment, in order to provide service to the surrounding area. In the future, the Metroparks will collaborate with surrounding municipalities and agencies to link into existing utilities rather than building park-specific utilities—thus furthering the vision of a lean, efficient park system.

Adjacent Property Uses

Most of the property adjacent to the park is single-family residential, along with a small amount of industrial and commercial uses.



Wayfinding

Vehicular Wayfinding

Standardization

Currently Metroparks include signage installed at various times with various standards and designs. This does not reinforce the parks working together as a system and can be confusing for visitors. As older signs reach the end of their lives, they will be replaced with new, standardized signs.

Simplicity

In many parks, including Lower Huron, an abundance of signage is not necessarily useful for directing visitors. Minimizing duplication of signs and expressing sign information simply will make navigation easier for users of the park.

Symbols

Symbols are useful for expressing information in a small amount of space, and also make park facilities more accessible for visitors who have trouble reading or speaking English. A standard set of symbols has been developed to be used in wayfinding signage.

Trail Wayfinding

Standardization

Trail types present in the Metroparks include shared use, mountain bike, ski, nature and rustic, and equestrian. Despite their different functions, these trails together create a complete recreation system, so signage will be based on a uniform template.

Flexibility

In order to serve the differing needs of users on these various trail types, the signage template will allow for removable panels and be customized to fit the needs of that user group.

Legibility

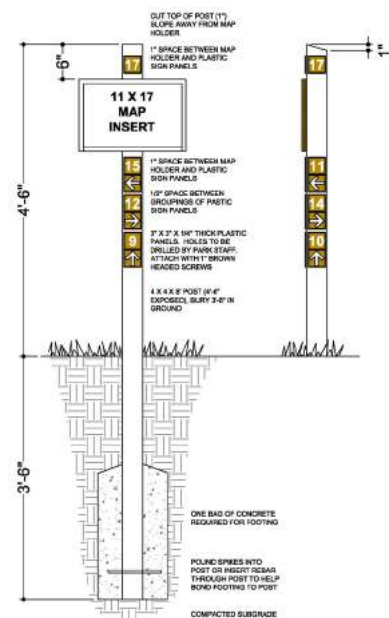
For many people, the easiest way to orient oneself in a new environment is through use of a map. For greater ease of use, all new trail wayfinding signs will include a map marked with a "you are here" symbols and the location of important park features and amenities.

NEEDS

Replace outdated, confusing, inconsistent signs

Create consistent, convenient wayfinding system to give visitors confidence

OPPORTUNITIES

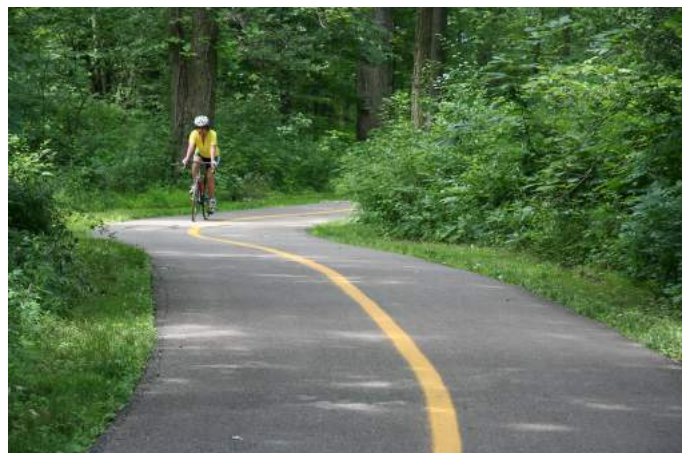


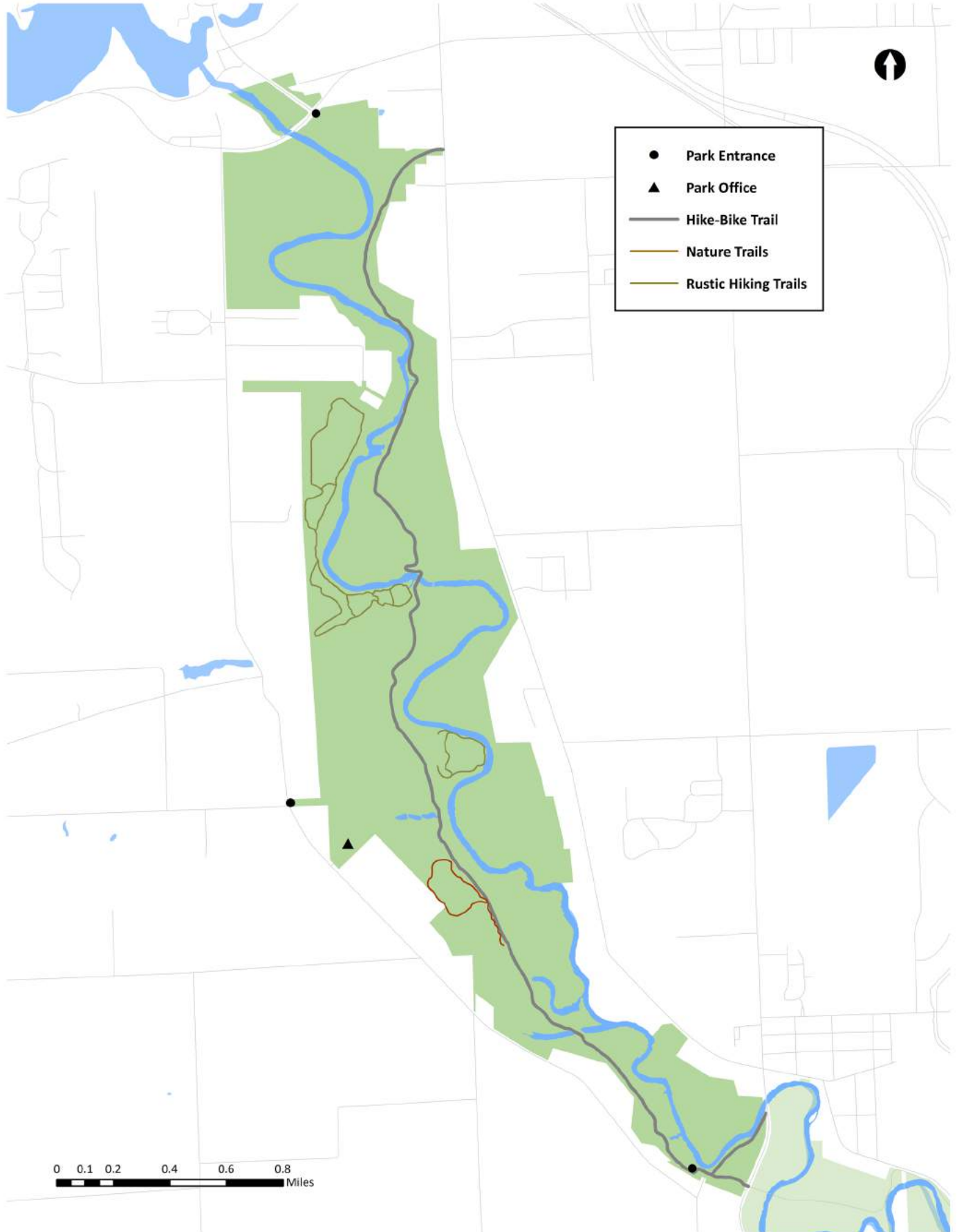
Lower Huron Today

Trails

As part of the master planning process, staff have categorized and defined the various types of trails in the park, inventoried the miles, and specified the uses and design of each. This formal listing allows for assessment of trail availability in comparison to user group demand. It will also lead to more standardized maintenance and rule enforcement processes.

Trail Type	Miles in park	Allowed Uses	Prohibited Uses	Surface
Shared-Use Trail (Hike-Bike Trail)	4.94	Non-motorized traffic and pets.	Horses and motorized vehicles such as golf carts, scooters and hover-boards.	10' wide, typically asphalt, some small sections may be concrete or boardwalk.
Nature Trail	0.82	Pedestrian use only; hiking and walking. Snowshoeing is permitted on all Nature Trails except those designated for cross-country skiing. Cross-country skiing is permitted on designated trails only.	Motorized vehicles, running, jogging, pets, bikes and horses.	Trail surfaces vary and include asphalt, aggregate, mulch and compacted earth. Portions of these trails are accessible, but most are not ADA-compliant.
Rustic Hiking Trail	3.38	Pedestrian use only; running, jogging and pets. Snowshoes and cross-country skiing are permitted on designated trails only.	Motorized vehicles, bikes and horses.	Width and material vary, often dirt trails.





Accessibility

To remain compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Metroparks are responsible for ensuring that park space is accessible to all members of the public. In the development of this master plan, planning staff has taken an active role in locating the less accessible park amenities, so that all guest can enjoy the park. A survey of several areas has resulted in a list of accessibility issues present at Lower Huron Metropark These areas are highlighted below and shown on the map on the following page.

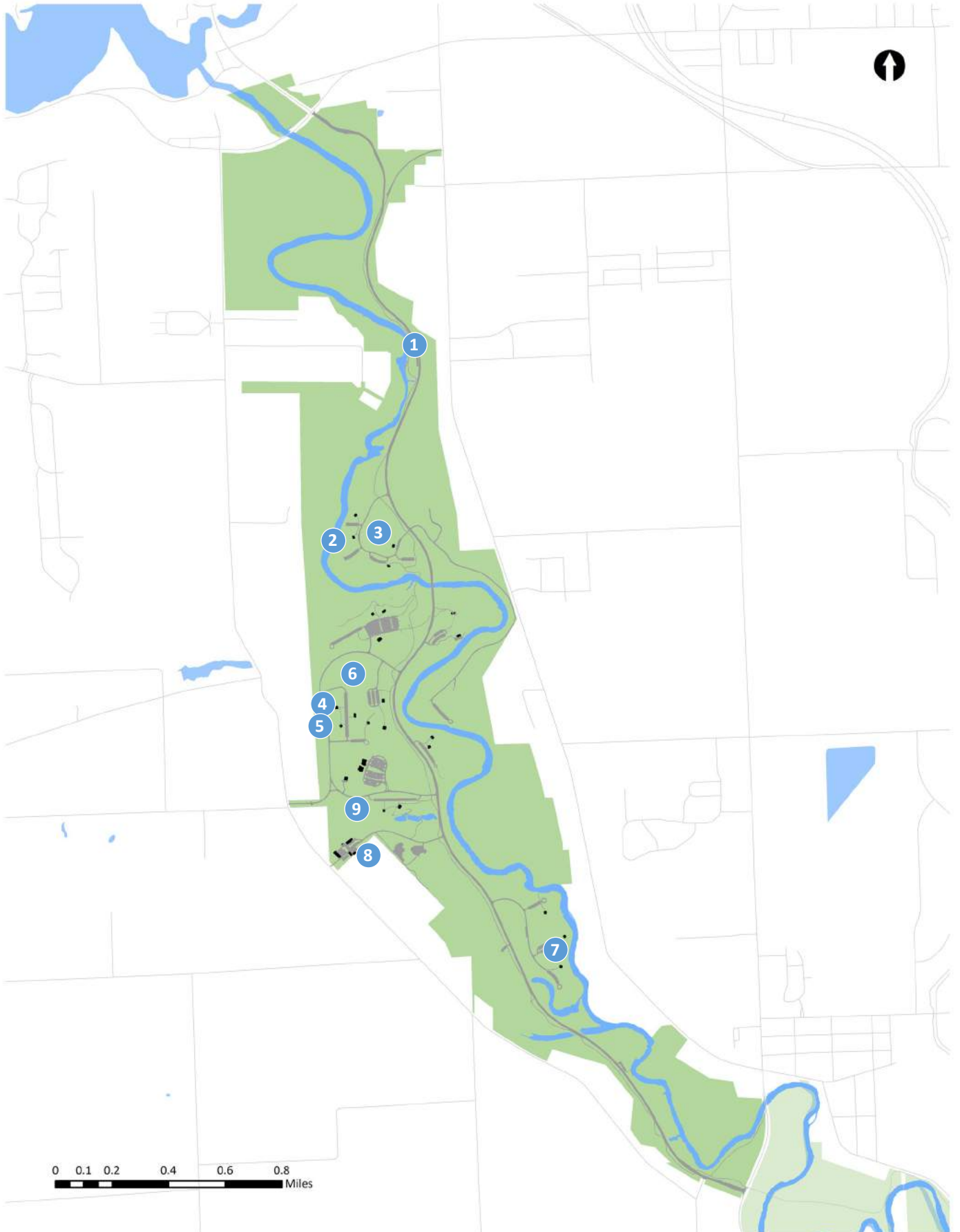
NEEDS

Pursue improvements to park accessibility

Ensure that users of all abilities feel empowered to take full advantage of the park

OPPORTUNITIES

Area	ID #	Description
North Fishing Site	1	Recommendation of North Launch site as accessible fishing site.
Walnut Grove	2	The playground is designed for accessibility but there is no access walkway to the structure.
Tulip Tree	3	An accessible walk is needed between the picnic shelter and restrooms. Currently connection requires travel via car or roadways.
Ellwoods East Playground	4	The playground is designed for accessibility but there is no access walk to the structure .
Ellwoods Restroom Building	5	Accessible walks are needed to the restroom building. There are no paved walks to the building at this time.
Hawthorn Glade South Shelter	6	An accessible walk is needed to the shelter. Recommendation is to move the shelter to a better spot that can be more easily connected with current accessible walks.
Group Camp Picnic Shelter	7	An accessible walk is needed to the picnic shelter. Recommendation is to move the shelter to a better spot that can be more easily connected with current accessible walks.
Park Office	8	Requires ADA assessment to ensure all features meet requirements.
Fox Woods	9	An access walk to the shelter, restrooms and lower skating ponds is provided. Current entrance gates to parking lot interfere with accessible routes, do not offer consistent access walkways. The parks should consider modifying so access is provided all the time.
Parking lots	-	Need additional striping, spaces and signage to make them compliant.
Picnic shelters	-	ADA picnic tables and grills needed at shelters.



REVENUE

Revenue Sources



2015 Operations Revenue

Revenue Source	2015 Total	% of Revenue
Turtle Cove	918,560	58.48
Tolling	549,115	34.96
Shelter Reservations	42,375	2.70
Par-3/Footgolf	33,739	2.15
Camping	19,016	1.21
Special events (approx.)	6,000	0.38
Miscellaneous (approx.)	2,000	0.13
	1,570,805	100.00

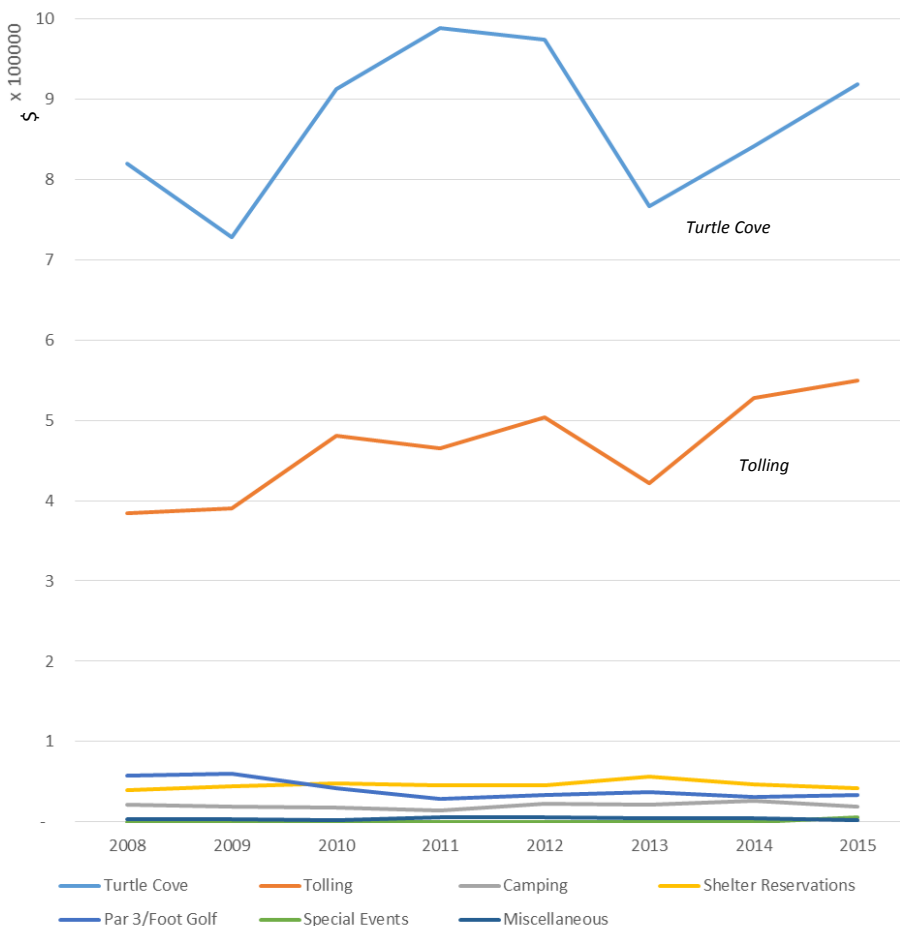
NEEDS

Build up other sources of revenue

Offer new and exciting activities/ programs to visitors of the park to both boost tolling and gather user fees

OPPORTUNITIES

REVENUE TRENDS—2008-2015



The Metroparks 2015 General Fund revenue equaled \$48,477,108. Lower Huron’s 2015 operations revenue was approximately \$1,570,805, comprising 3.2% of all Metroparks revenue.

The budgeted 2016 operations revenues for Lower Huron, Willow, and Oakwoods is \$2,884,254, while estimated 2016 operations expenses are \$6,202,473. These parks are combined in the budgeting process since they are administered together. Property tax and other revenue will subsidize 53.5% (\$3,318,219) of the three parks’ operating budget.

As the chart illustrates, nearly all of Lower Huron’s operations revenue comes from the Turtle Cove Family Aquatic Center and from park entrance tolling.

Revenue

 **Visitors**

Lower Huron Metropark is a regional park and can draw from the 3,484,040 people that live within a 30 mile radius (approximately a 45-minute drive) of the park. Certain events and activities may draw visitors from greater distances.

Vehicle entries to Lower Huron Metropark have averaged around 300,000 since 2008. Record entries of over 400,000 were recorded in 2010. Weather often plays a role in attendance to the park; activity areas greatly affected by weather are the trails, fishing piers, Turtle Cove, and the golf course. Entries have dropped since 2010 but in the last couple years have shown signs of improvement.

Consolidation of statistical information is needed to better assess vehicle entries, park users, event attendance, event participants and activity participation within the park. This information will help with marketing of events, activities and future analysis of the park.

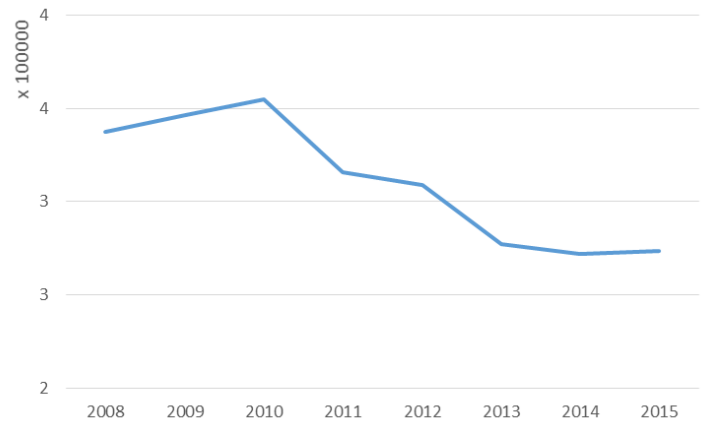
NEEDS

Increase vehicle entry numbers

Draw visitors to the park with additional marketing and attractions

OPPORTUNITIES

VEHICLE ENTRIES 2008-2015



Popular Turtle Cove and Hike-Bike path

Lower Huron Metropark 30-Mile radius



Revenue

Programs & Events



NEEDS

Increase revenue and visitation

Take advantage of captive audiences, actively take part in programming activities and events

OPPORTUNITIES



Volunteer work day



Cruizin' the Park



Radio Disney D-Tour

Lower Huron is primarily used for picnicking, family outings, and water recreation, and does not hold many programmed events throughout the year. Interpretive programs generally take place in nearby Oakwoods, where an interpretive center is located. Volunteer workdays do occur when special natural resources projects are needed, such as the boardwalk on the Woods Creek trail. Turtle Cove occasionally sees special events, and a number of external groups use park facilities to host gatherings such as 5k runs.

Due to its size and layout, nearby Willow Metropark has traditionally hosted more events. However, public input gathered for the master plan has revealed an interest in more programmed activities at Lower Huron, especially for children.



COMMUNITY INFLUENCES

Population

The population of the communities surrounding Lower Huron is aging rapidly and changing in mobility. The percentage of households without access to an automobile is rising throughout the region, and although the absolute numbers are still low, this trend is especially stark in the communities around Lower Huron. The Metroparks were created at the time of the auto boom, when it was assumed that every family would have a car to take out to the countryside on the weekends. Since habits and lifestyles are changing, the Metroparks must look into innovative ways to provide access to the parks for all.

Although the municipalities immediately surrounding Lower Huron have a lower percentage of individuals over 65 years than the county and the region, that percentage is rising steeply. It seems possible that in the future these communities will overtake Wayne County in percentage of older adults.

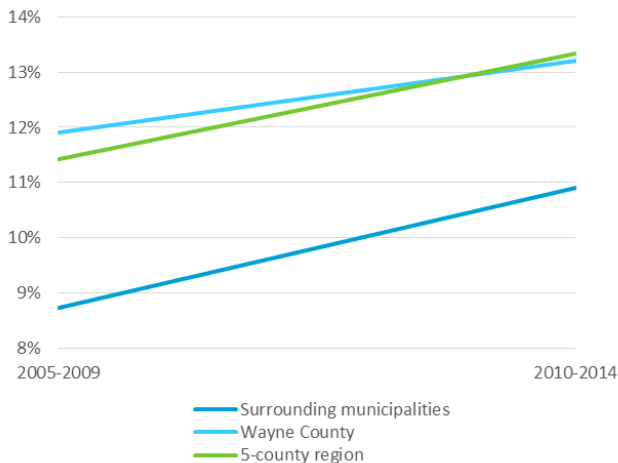
Older adults have distinct needs, often requiring accommodations for mobility and accessibility of park features such as trails and buildings. This is important to keep in mind when planning the future of a park serving an older population.

NEEDS

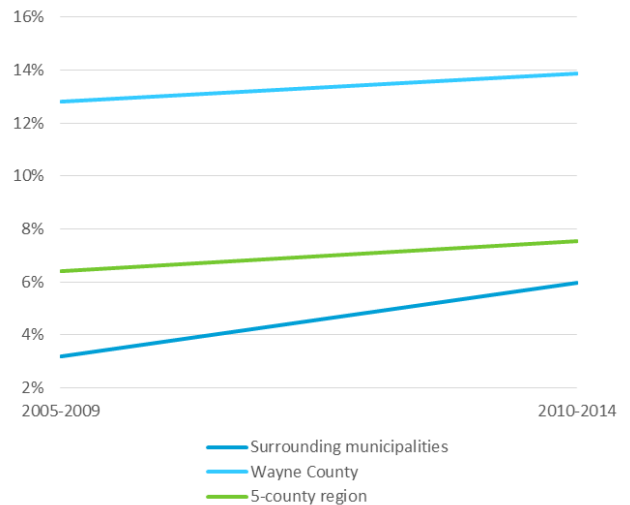
Address changing needs of new population demographics

Draw new users with an accessible, welcoming park environment

OPPORTUNITIES



CHANGE IN PERCENT OF POPULATION OVER 65 YEARS, FROM 2005-09 through 2010-14 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)



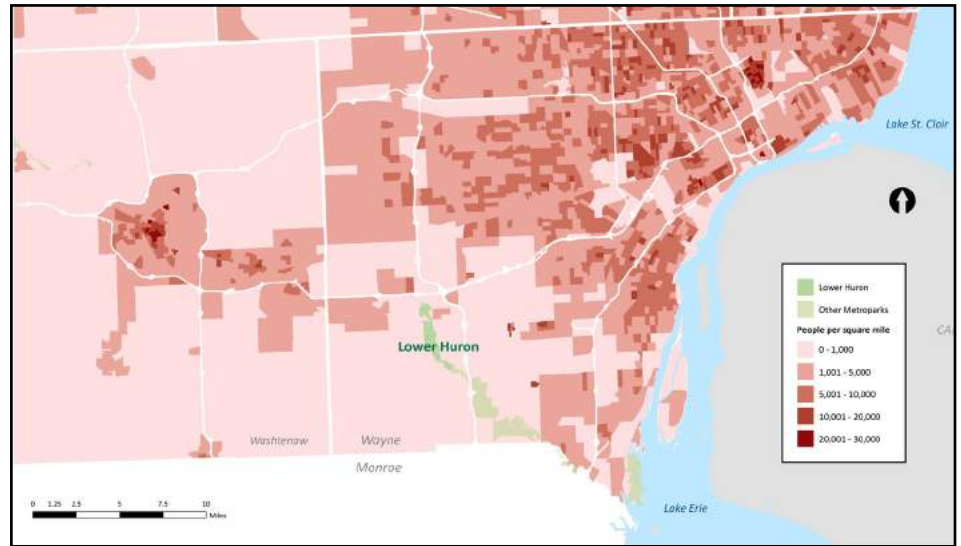
CHANGE IN PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO CARS AVAILABLE, 2005-09 through 2010-14 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)

Community Influences

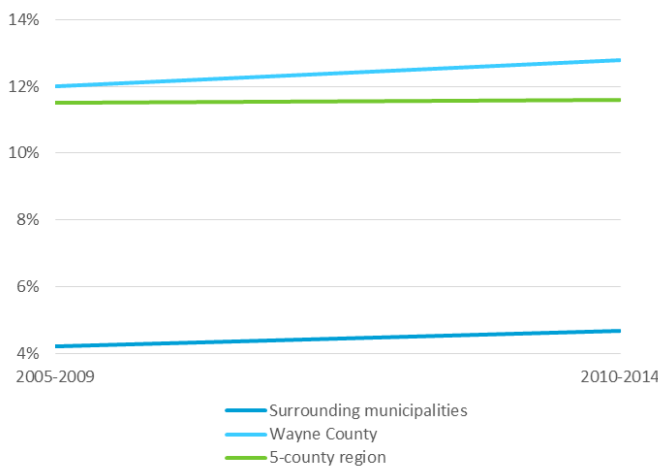
As shown below, Lower Huron is located at the southern edge of the suburban ring around Detroit, largely in the midst of rural low-density areas with less than one thousand residents per square mile. It is also connected to the string of urbanization extending to Ann Arbor. These factors create unique land use and park access challenges.

While Wayne County is falling in population density, the population in the municipalities surrounding Lower Huron has stayed remarkably constant over the past ten years. Remaining aware of development changes in the area will be important to gauge recreation needs.

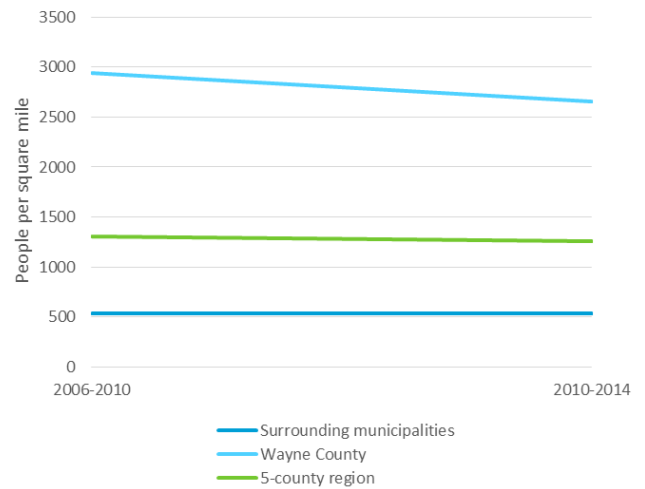
Although most households in the area still speak English as their first language, in both the surrounding communities and Wayne County a growing number of households speak a language other than English at home. Because of this growing linguistic diversity, the Metroparks are working towards more universal signage design, with a focus on easily understandable symbols.



POPULATION DENSITY BY CENSUS TRACT, 2010-14



CHANGE IN PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS SPEAKING LANGUAGE BESIDES ENGLISH AT HOME, 2005-09 through 2010-14 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)



CHANGE IN AVERAGE POPULATION DENSITY, 2006-10 through 2010-14 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)

Community Influences

NEEDS

Improve park connectivity with community

Create good working relationship with surrounding municipalities

OPPORTUNITIES

Van Buren Township

- City of Belleville serves function of “downtown” for southern Van Buren
- Preserve open space and rural feel
- Development of greenway and trails plan

Sumpter Township

- Preserve open and agricultural lands
- Protection of natural resources such as Lakeplain Prairie
- Woodland and Open Space ordinances, use of cluster developments
- Interest in development of greenway system

City of Romulus

- Connectivity and traffic flow challenges due to Detroit Metropolitan Airport
- Streetscape and non-motorized connection improvement
- Interest in acquiring public land

Huron Township

- Metroparks as major attraction to township
- Preserve open space and farmland
- Planned denser development in the villages
- More bicycle and pedestrian connections

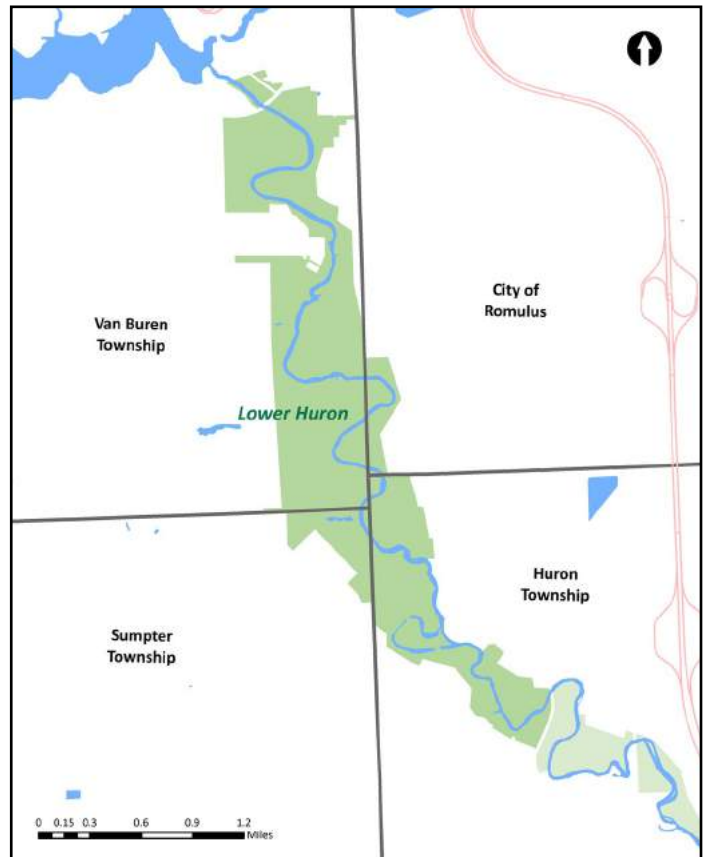
Huron River Watershed Council

- Improve climate resiliency of communities on the watershed
- Green infrastructure for local governments program
- Collaboration in stormwater management efforts
- RiverUp! program supporting placemaking in river towns

Projects/Initiatives

Understanding the goals and plans of municipalities bordering and/or containing Lower Huron is essential for a collaborative, comprehensive planning process. Planning staff researched the published master plans and recreation plans of each municipality: Van Buren Township, Sumpter Township, Huron Township, and the City of Romulus. These provided a basic idea of the planned direction of each community, especially regarding land use, development, and recreation.

MUNICIPALITY MAP



Community Influences

Relevant Planning Documents

Huron Charter Twp Master Plan, 2004

“Huron Township is blessed with the presence of the Huron River and the Metroparks. The natural features associated with the Huron River are a critical part of the Township’s ecosystem, natural heritage, and quality of life.” pg. 17

Sumpter Twp Master Land Use Plan, 2005

“Woodlands, particularly along unpaved and/or narrow rural roads are an important feature because they contribute to the Township’s rural character and help to convey a ‘country’ atmosphere.” pg. 67

Lower Huron River Watershed Management Plan, 2005

“If current development practices are employed to accommodate the projected increase in population and associated infrastructure, then SEMCOG estimates 40% of the remaining open spaces will be developed within the watershed by 2020. Much of this projected conversion of undeveloped land will occur in the lower Huron River Watershed” pg. 23

Van Buren Twp South Side Master Plan, 2007

“As the South Side continues to grow and development pressures increase, a re-evaluation of land use and development planning and policies is warranted. A combination of open space preservation, zoning changes and innovative land development will likely become more important.” pg. 3.7

City of Romulus Master Plan, 2009

“A multi-modal pathway has been installed along the I-275 that must be maintained in order to protect Romulus’s access to the regional pathway system. In addition, there is a planned regional greenway system that should be considered in non-motorized transportation planning.” pg. 4-7

SEMCOG Green Infrastructure Vision for SE Michigan, 2014

“Public accessibility to the green infrastructure network is paramount, including access to parks, trails, water, and ensuring public spaces are designed for all residents.” pg. 1

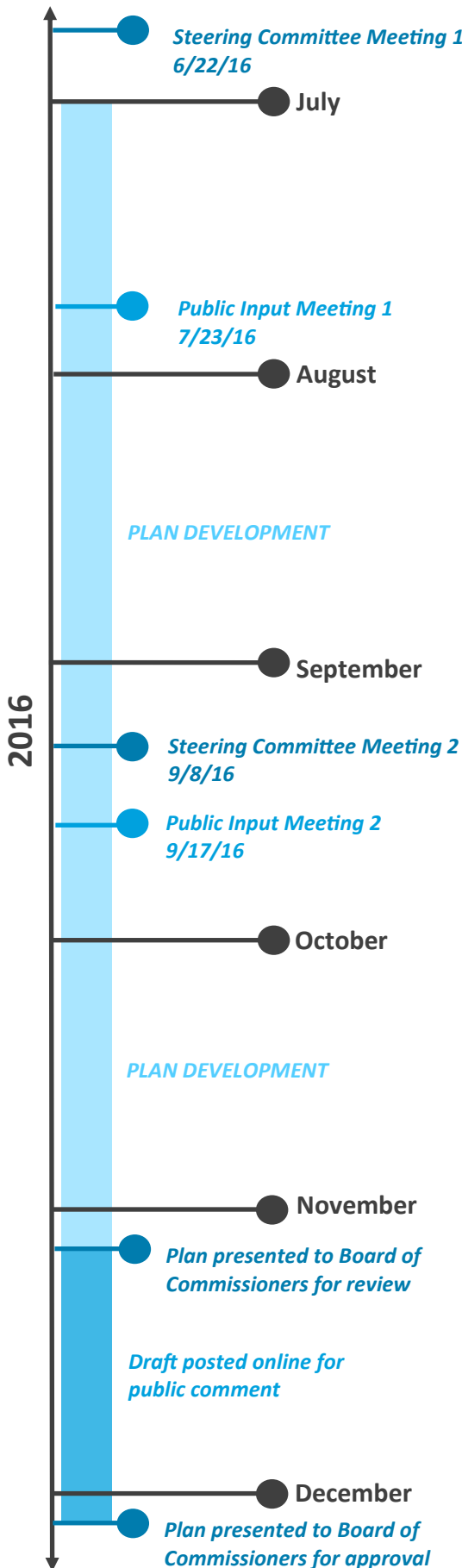
Since the development and land use decisions of bordering communities and other governmental agencies directly impact the park, these neighbor master plans were reviewed and taken into account when creating this document. The opinions and ideas expressed by residents and leaders in these municipalities give Lower Huron a wider context and in many cases underscore the importance of the park’s resources to citizens.

The southern portion of Wayne County contains few other large parks beyond the four Metroparks. Therefore, Lower Huron, Willow, and Oakwoods may provide a disproportionate amount of local recreation opportunities.

Lower Huron is part of a broader system of recreation and green space that includes other Metroparks as well as local, county, and state parks and greenways. Due to this, recreation and green infrastructure plans were also considered in creating the Lower Huron Master Plan. Many communities are currently advancing their non-motorized networks, seeking grant funding to create greenways and paths, and cooperating to provide linked green and recreation spaces to their constituents. The Iron Belle Trail is a state-designated trail with both a hiking and a biking arm reaching from Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood at the very western edge of the Upper Peninsula. The hike-bike trail from Lake Erie to Lower Huron Metropark is part of the 791-mile bicycle route, with is 64% complete according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. This kind of multi-jurisdictional partnership enhances the recreational resources of all participants.

PUBLIC INPUT

← Outreach Process



Since this park belongs to the people of southeast Michigan, the Planning Department aimed to include the public in multiple stages of the planning process.

The planning process began with a meeting of the steering committee, which identified organizations and individuals with significant investment in the park for targeted invitations to the public meeting. A strategy for soliciting general participation in the public meeting was also discussed.

The next step was a public meeting with community members to gather initial ideas about the direction of the park. A general park feedback survey was posted online and advertised both by Metroparks social media and by staff distribution of flyers to libraries and community centers in the surrounding areas.

Submitted ideas were taken into account, along with staff feedback and other data, in developing initial recommendations. These were then presented to the public at a second meeting, and feedback was collected, analyzed, and incorporated into a draft Master Plan document.

This document was posted online in November for final public comment, which influenced the final Master Plan sent to the Board of Commissioners for approval in December.

Public Meeting 1 - 7/23/16

- Explanation of and timeline for the planning process
- General park information and map
- Regional map on which participants placed stars to indicate their place of residence in relation to the park
- Exercise in which participants placed pom-poms representing resources in jars representing activities, expressing their opinion on where investments should be made
- Opportunity to fill out survey in person

Public Meeting 2 - 9/17/16

- Short presentation on survey results, community influences, and intended projects
- Opportunity for participants to write down feedback on intended projects

Public Input

Results 

At the first public meeting, the pom-pom activity showed that trails are a top priority for Lower Huron visitors, with Canoeing/Kayaking and Camping also being highly valued. Golf and Winter Activities came in next, then Picnicking and Turtle Cove, then Fishing, and finally Court Games.

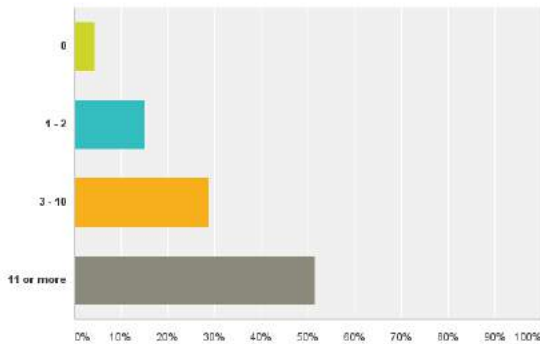
The survey responses, both written and submitted online, offered more insight into the needs of park patrons. A common theme running through the suggestions was the desire for more amenities and activities at the park. A number of respondents proposed canoe/kayak rental, more play areas and activities for children, and trail-related programming. Several comments were made about trails, including need for better maintenance, better signage, and expansion. Individuals also mentioned general park concerns about cost, access, natural resource preservation, and advertisement.

At the second public meeting, participants expressed strong support for improvements at the North Fishing Site, especially regarding kayak access. They also approved of enhancement of the campground, favored a relocation of the park office to the Haggerty Road entrance, and supported closure of the Par-3 course.

This input helped form the project list in the following section of the plan. More analysis of public feedback results can be found on the next page.

Q3 Approximately how many times do you visit Lower HuronMetropark in a year?

Answered: 180 Skipped: 1



Q7 What can be done to improve your favorite area or facilities for your favorite activity?

Answered: 71 Skipped: 118



Q8 What would make your visit to Lower HuronMetropark more enjoyable overall?

Answered: 61 Skipped: 128



Public Input

Survey Response Topics

User Experience

- Trees and natural landscapes
- Disability/senior access
- Transportation to park
- Annual pass entrance lane
- Restroom quality/quantity
- Frequency of park patrol
- Road repair and user conflict
- Scenic overlooks

Events/Activities

- Advertisement of activities
- Band selection
- Horse and buggy rides
- Increased activity programming
- Choice of caterer

General

- Entrance fee
- Extend hours
- Website improvement
- Land acquisition

Trails

- Increased trail programming
- Better trail maintenance
- Addition of walking trails
- Addition of biking trails
- Winter trail plowing
- Addition of mountain bike trails
- Improved trail signage
- Improved dog signage
- Potable water access
- Increased shade and amenities
- Improved nature trails
- Bike rental
- Segways on trails

Golf/Sports

- Advertisement of golf course
- Addition of sports courts
- Closure of golf course
- Improved ice rink
- Disc golf course
- Rental fishing poles

Children

- Addition of new kinds of play areas
- Increased children's activities
- More shade in play area
- Safety and security for children
- Addition of bounce house

Camp/Picnic

- Improved campground
- East Bend as picnicking
- Reopened group camp
- Vehicle access to picnic shelters
- Barbecue pits

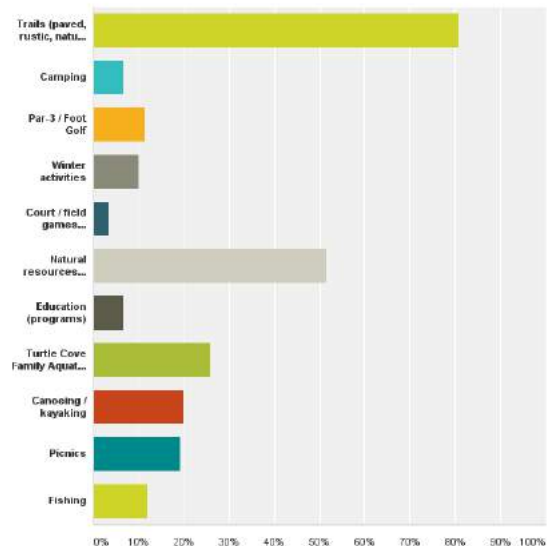
Water

- Canoe/kayak rental
- Addition of Turtle Cove features
- Vehicle paths to launches
- Addition of kayak launches
- Improved launch signage
- Picnic tables near water
- River clean up



Q6 What is your favorite part of the park or activity within Lower HuronMetropark? Examples are given for each category. (Choose up to 3.)

Answered: 151 Skipped: 38



Public Input

Participation

The Lower Huron Master Plan online and hard copy questionnaire received 181 responses, and a dozen individuals attended the two public meetings. As shown in the map below, responses came in primarily from the area directly surrounding Lower Huron in southwest Wayne County. Zip codes in Washtenaw and Monroe counties also yielded several responses, along with a few in Livingston, Oakland, and Macomb counties. One or two responses came from Kalamazoo County in southwest Michigan and Chippewa County in the Upper Peninsula.

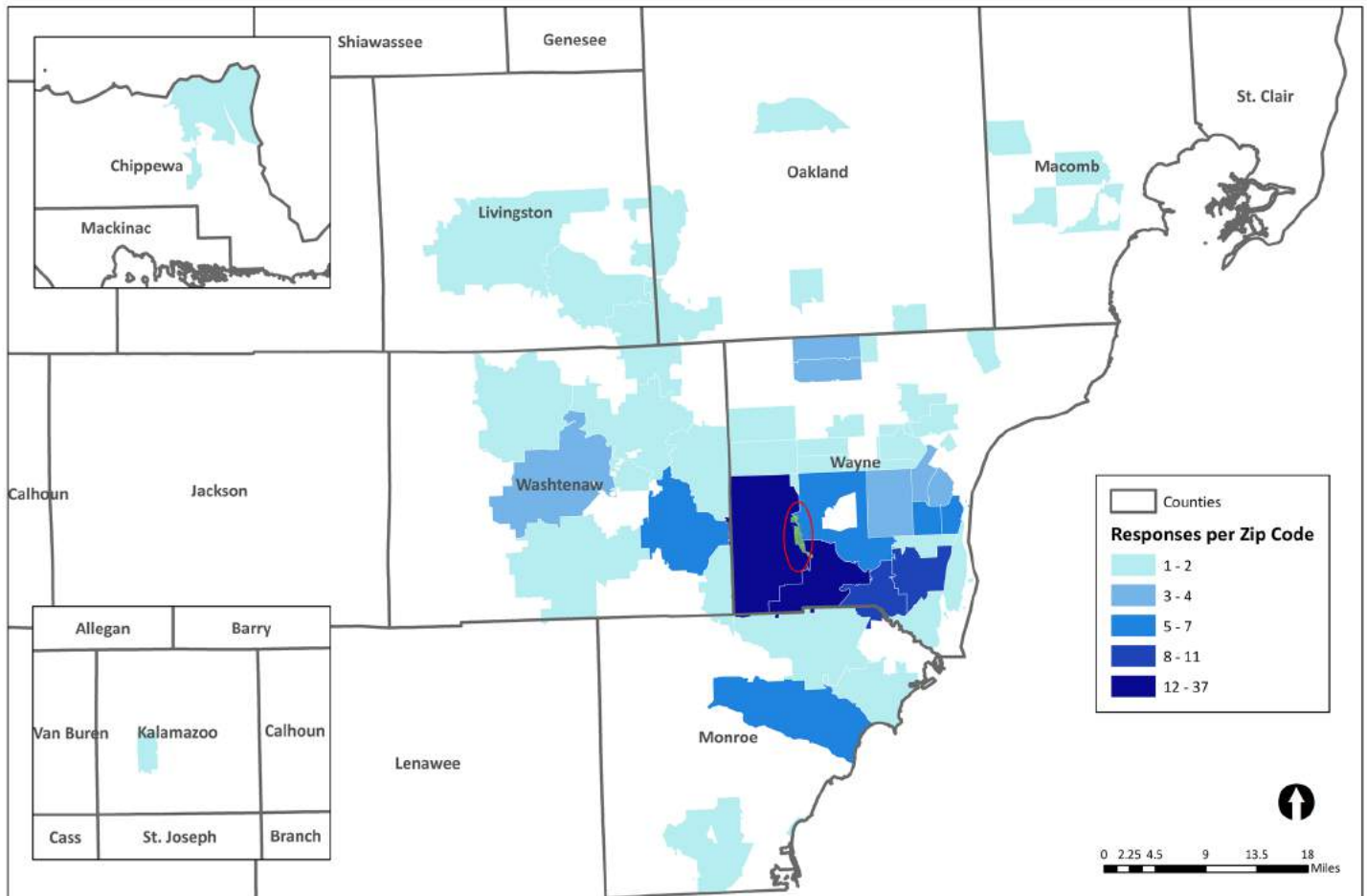
NEEDS

Incorporate variety of opinions and user groups into master plan

Create vibrant park through robust, transparent public outreach

OPPORTUNITIES

Survey Response Zip Code Map



Action Plan

Needs & Opportunities

Based on the assessment of park conditions, demographic research and spatial analysis, public input, and staff input, the needs and opportunities listed throughout this document were developed.

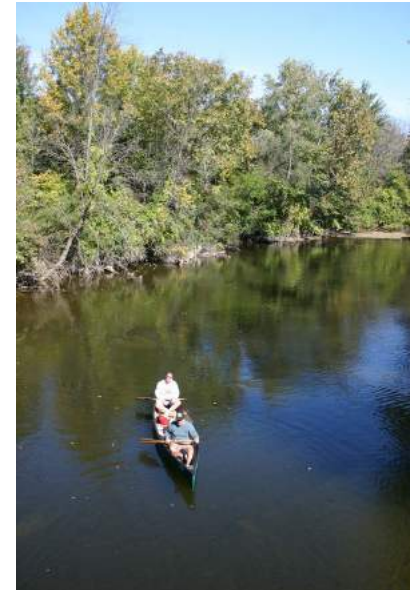
Needs

- Better highlight and advertise special character of park
- Define and protect areas with important biodiversity features
- Better educate about and preserve important cultural features
- Address aging and overbuilt infrastructure
- Identify areas of facility duplication
- Work with county to address park boundary issues
- Replace outdated, confusing, inconsistent signs
- Build up other sources of revenue
- Increase vehicle entry numbers
- Increase revenue and visitation
- Address changing needs of new population demographics
- Improve park connectivity with community
- Incorporate variety of opinions and user groups into master plan



Opportunities

- Build a strong identity and user base
- Create a resilient network of biodiverse areas in the park
- Draw new visitors with programming/education based on history of park
- Redevelop park areas to better serve visitors and environment
- Provide unique recreational facilities to draw visitors from across the region
- Create good working relationship with neighbors and partner organizations
- Create consistent, convenient wayfinding system to give visitors confidence
- Offer new and exciting activities/programs to visitors of the park to both boost tolling and gather user fees
- Draw visitors to the park with additional marketing and attractions
- Take advantage of captive audiences, actively take part in programming activities and events
- Draw new users with an accessible, welcoming park environment
- Create good working relationship with surrounding municipalities
- Create vibrant park through robust, transparent public outreach



With these in mind, the following list of projects, plans, and studies was developed. Major and minor projects have been identified as priorities and assigned a timeline, and the accompanying studies have been listed. These pages should serve as a blueprint for the future of the park over the next ten years.

Action Plan

Large Facilities

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2017-2021)	Mid-Term (2022-2026)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Turtle Cove renovations: new aquatic feature, new rental shelters, reinforced turf in overflow parking, increase food service kitchen capacity, new shade structure(s) for extended queuing line	Engineering	Planning, Operations	Contractor	\$1,000,000	x		
North fishing site improvements: increase parking capacity, replace/relocate pit toilets, improve canoe/kayak launch	Engineering	Planning, Operations	Contractor	TBD		x	
Replace Bemis Road tollbooth	Engineering	Planning, Operations	Contractor	\$120,000	x		
Replace and relocate Park Office	Engineering	Planning, Operations	Contractor	\$2,000,000	x		
Walnut Grove campground improvements: provide electricity to selected camp sites, add shower facilities, enhance landscape (more trees, seed former ball fields)	Engineering	Planning, Operations, Maintenance	Contractor	TBD		x	
Close Par 3 Golf Course	Operations	Maintenance, Planning, Engineering		n/a	x		



Action Plan

Infrastructure / Small Facilities

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2017-2021)	Mid-Term (2022-2026)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Pavement projects (list developed annually, as needed)	Engineering	Planning, Operations	Contractors	various	x	x	x
Accessibility improvements, including interiors and walkways - parkwide	Engineering	Planning, Operations	Contractors	various	x	x	
Install above-ground fuel storage at Service Yard	Engineering	Maintenance	Contractor	\$170,000	x		

Signage

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2017-2021)	Mid-Term (2022-2026)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Roadside wayfinding/directional signage updates - parkwide	Planning	Maintenance, Operations		\$15,000	x		
Trail wayfinding and interpretive signage improvements - Woods Creek, Paw Paw, Bob White	Planning	Maintenance, Operations		\$10,000	x		



Natural Resources

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2017-2021)	Mid-Term (2022-2026)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Vegetation management (annual)	NR	Planning, Operations		\$30,000	x	x	x
Landscape tree diversity plantings (annual)	NR	Planning, Operations		\$3,500	x	x	x
Energy conservation initiatives	NR	Planning, Engineering, Interpretive		\$9,000	x		
Hazardous waste removal (annual)	NR			\$1,000	x	x	x
Early detection, rapid response. Invasive species surveys and control in high quality natural areas (annual)	NR	Interpretive	NGOs	\$10,000	x	x	x
Conduct prescribed fire in adapted native communities (Bobwhite wetland, Fox Woods ravine, etc.)	NR			\$15,000	x	x	x
Oak wilt monitoring and prevention (annual)	NR	Operations	MDNR	staff time	x	x	x
Deer cull to maintain deer at roughly 15/square mile.	NR	Police		staff time	x	x	x

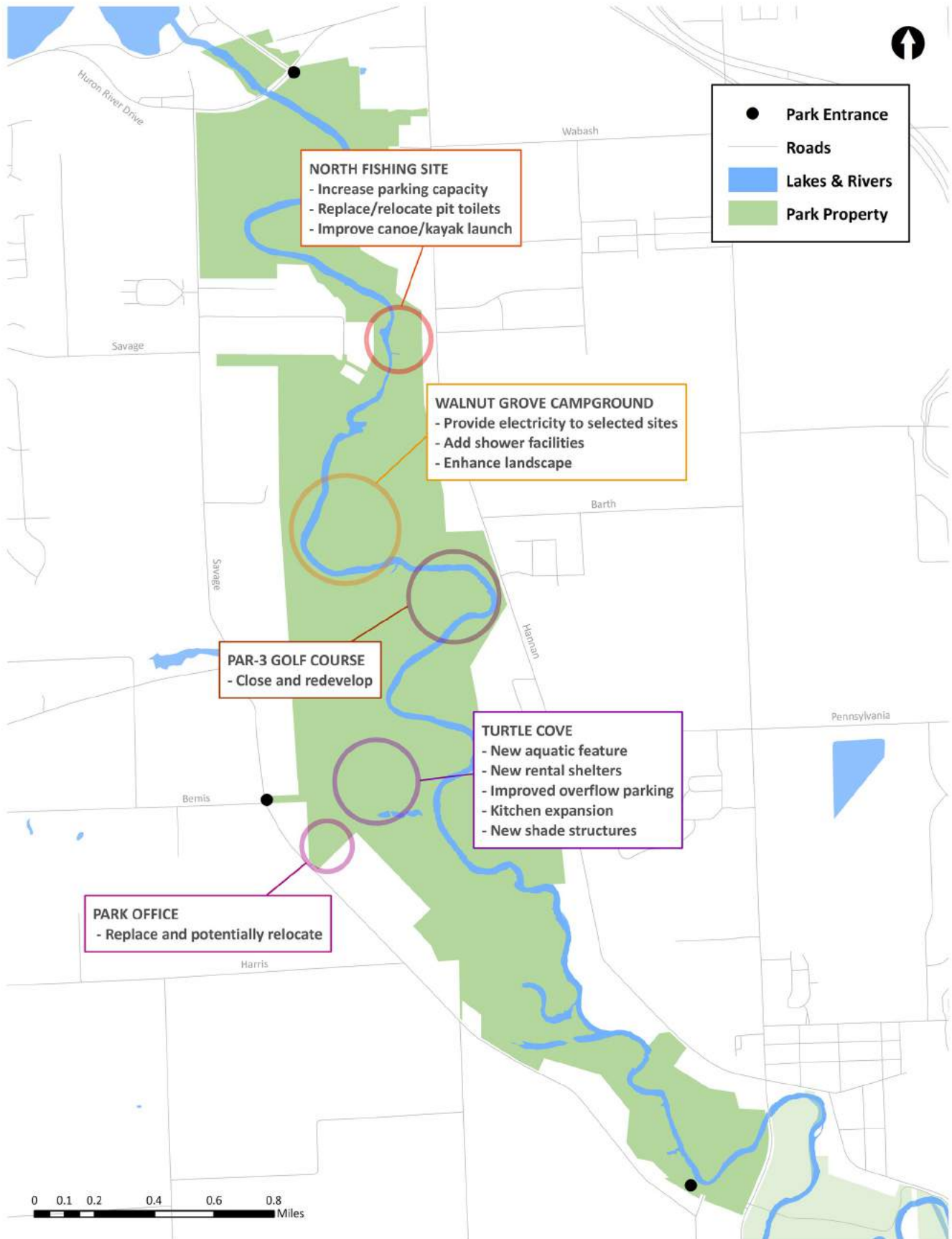


Action Plan

Area Plans/Studies/Initiatives

After identifying the need for changes or improvements based on user feedback and staff research, in-depth evaluation and planning must be carried out to gain a detailed understanding of problems and opportunities and determine the best strategies based on existing conditions and resources. Sometimes a process to formally monitor facility usage and gauge popularity is necessary. These studies often result in a scope of work, a work plan, and in some cases a site plan that give staff a roadmap for planned changes. Recommended studies are listed below:

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2017-2021)	Mid-Term (2022-2026)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Update trail maps to show opportunities for walking/hiking/trail running	Graphics	Planning		staff time	x		
Turtle Cove renovation site plan	Planning	Engineering, Operations		staff time	x		
Park Office redevelopment and relocation plan	Planning	Engineering, Operations	Consultant	\$80,000	x		
North fishing site improvements plan	Planning	Engineering, Operations		staff time	x		
Walnut Grove campground monitoring and site improvements plan	Planning	Engineering, Operations		staff time	x		
Future plan for Par 3 Golf Course	Planning	Engineering, Operations		staff time	x		
Investigate partnership with Rolling Hills waterpark for overflow days	Planning			staff time	x		
Fisheries assessment and creel survey	NR		MDNR	\$25,000	X		
Herpetological assessment of the park	NR			\$9,000	X		X
Shoreline erosion survey	NR			\$10,000	X		
Establish invasive species control tracking website	NR	IT	MNFI, MISIN	\$15,000	X		
Comprehensive wildlife surveys and mapping (Birds, insects, freshwater mussels)	NR	Interpretive	MNFI, Consultant	\$35,000	X		X



Action Plan

Key Projects

Turtle Cove

2017-2021

Built in 2007, Turtle Cove Family Aquatic Center is a popular destination for family outings in Wayne County. Since then, changes have been proposed to make the user experience more enjoyable and comfortable for all. These investments into the facility will ensure that Turtle Cove can continue providing high quality recreational experiences for years to come.

Needs:

- More varied play experience
- Amenities on high-volume days
- More picnicking opportunities

Solutions:

- Add new water element to the facility
- Expand kitchen and add shade structures
- Add picnic shelters nearby



North Fishing Site

2022-2026

Built in 2001, the North Fishing Site draws many anglers, paddlers, and other nature lovers due to its beautiful and convenient location near the north park entrance. This popularity means that the facility needs upgrading to accommodate larger volumes and more intensive recreational use.

Needs:

- More user amenities
- Improved paddling facilities and access to the river

Solutions:

- Expand parking area
- Add restrooms
- Enhance canoe/kayak launch



Action Plan

Park Office

2017-2021

Built in 1958, this park office has seen decades of park operations at Lower Huron, and staff are in need of a more modern facility to keep the park running smoothly. Since the office serves a fundamental role in providing information and assistance to visitors to Lower Huron, Willow, and Oakwoods, the new building will likely be constructed in a more prominent and accessible location.

Needs:

- Structural improvements
- More central location

Solution:

- Build new park office in new location



Walnut Grove Campground

2022-2026

Built in 2012 at the Tulip Tree picnic area, this is one of only two public campgrounds in both Wayne County and the Metroparks system. After several seasons of families and individuals taking advantage of this site for outdoor adventure, a few amenities have been identified as important to drawing campers in the future.

Needs:

- Improved campsite amenities
- Improved aesthetics

Solutions:

- Addition of showers
- Addition of electricity to select sites
- New landscaping features



Action Plan

Par-3 Golf Course

2017-2021

Opened in 1961, the Par-3 golf course allows players to take on shorter holes and has often been used by beginners and younger golfers. It has consistently generated more expenses than revenue, however, and upcoming infrastructure costs make it no longer financially viable. The course will be closed and a site plan will be created to repurpose the land for other recreational activity.

Needs:

- Less maintenance-intensive land use
- No further investment in course

Solutions:

- Close golf course
- Create site plan for alternate recreational use



Other Projects

- **Walkway and interior accessibility improvements**

Due to growing awareness that park facilities do not meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, increasing accessibility will be an ongoing focus. Structures will be built and retrofitted to improve ease of access, and paved paths will be constructed to better connect parking with recreational activities.

- **Above-ground fuel storage**

All parks are transitioning to above-ground fuel tanks, which are less costly and easier to install, maintain, and monitor.

- **Wayfinding/interpretive signage**

Current wayfinding can be inconsistent and confusing. New signs will provide succinct information at important decision points and provide more concise, engaging interpretation of the natural world. Symbols will also be incorporated into the design to promote universal comprehension.

- **Update of trail maps**

Current maps do not accurately reflect trail availability within the park. Trails will be properly classified and mapped in conjunction with the signage updates.

- **Annual projects: paving, vegetation management**

Both natural resources and built infrastructure are regularly maintained by staff. Invasive species are consistently removed and treated, and when cracks and other wear appear on paved trails they are patched or repaved.



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