

DRAFT SEPTEMBER 2016



WOLCOTT MILL MASTER PLAN

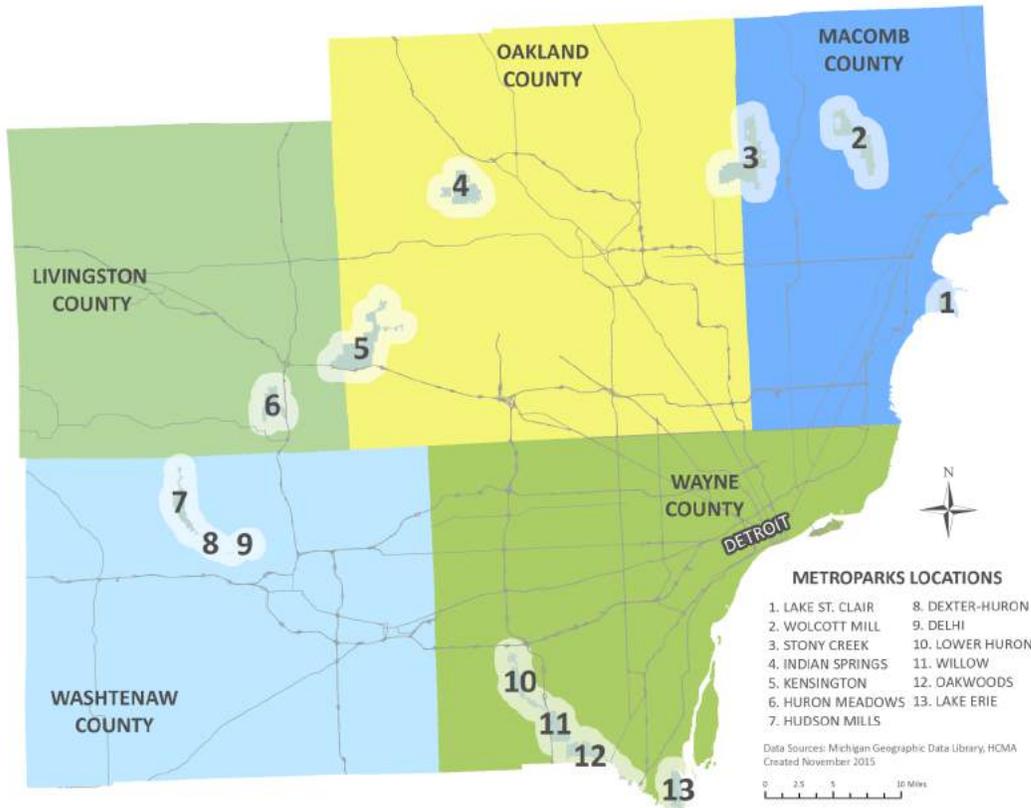


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INTRODUCTION

About the Metroparks

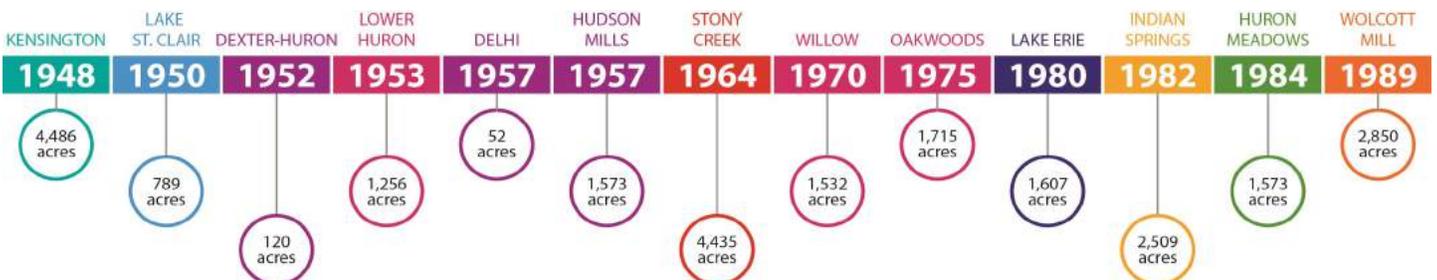


The Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority was sanctioned by the Michigan State Legislature in Act No. 147 of the Public Acts of 1939. Named after the two longest rivers within its boundaries, the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority is a regional park agency consisting of 13 Metroparks encompassing approximately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



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.

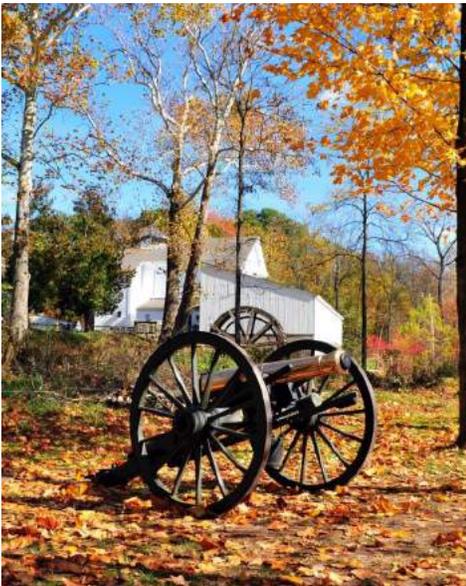
Two commissioners, appointed by the Governor of Michigan for a term of four years, serve as representatives at large. Five commissioners, one each to represent the counties of Wayne, Macomb, Oakland, Livingston and Washtenaw, are appointed for a term of six years by the board of commissioners of the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

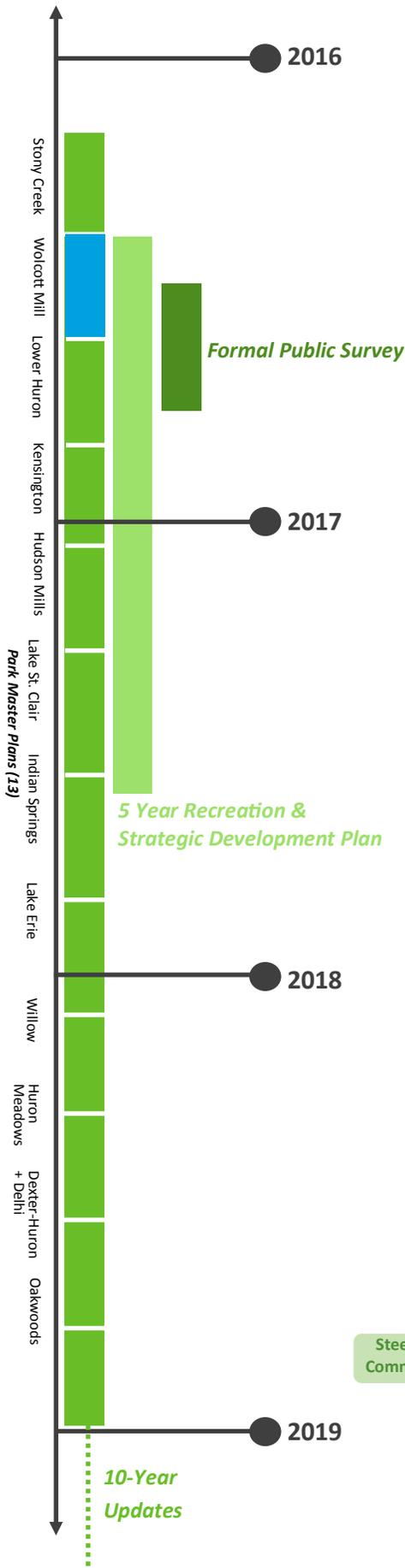
Operational Departments facilitate the day-to-day operations of the parks, making sure patrons have enjoyable and educational visits. They include Maintenance and Interpretive Services.

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 Wolcott Mill inside 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 Wolcott Mill and the 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 four 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, race, income, language, and other factors of the regional population. Spatial data, usually analyzed through Geographic Information System 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 Wolcott Mill Master Plan met on 7/11/16

WOLCOTT MILL TODAY

Character



The following responses to our survey questions highlight the many facets of Wolcott Mill that form a unique experience. The park offers a rural, rustic feel that visitors value, as well as fun activities for children and adults.

NEEDS

Better highlight and advertise special character of park

Expansion of available events and activities at park

OPPORTUNITIES

Thank you for maintaining the Historic Center/ Mill. For many people like myself, **visiting historic sites** is an important part of my recreational activities.

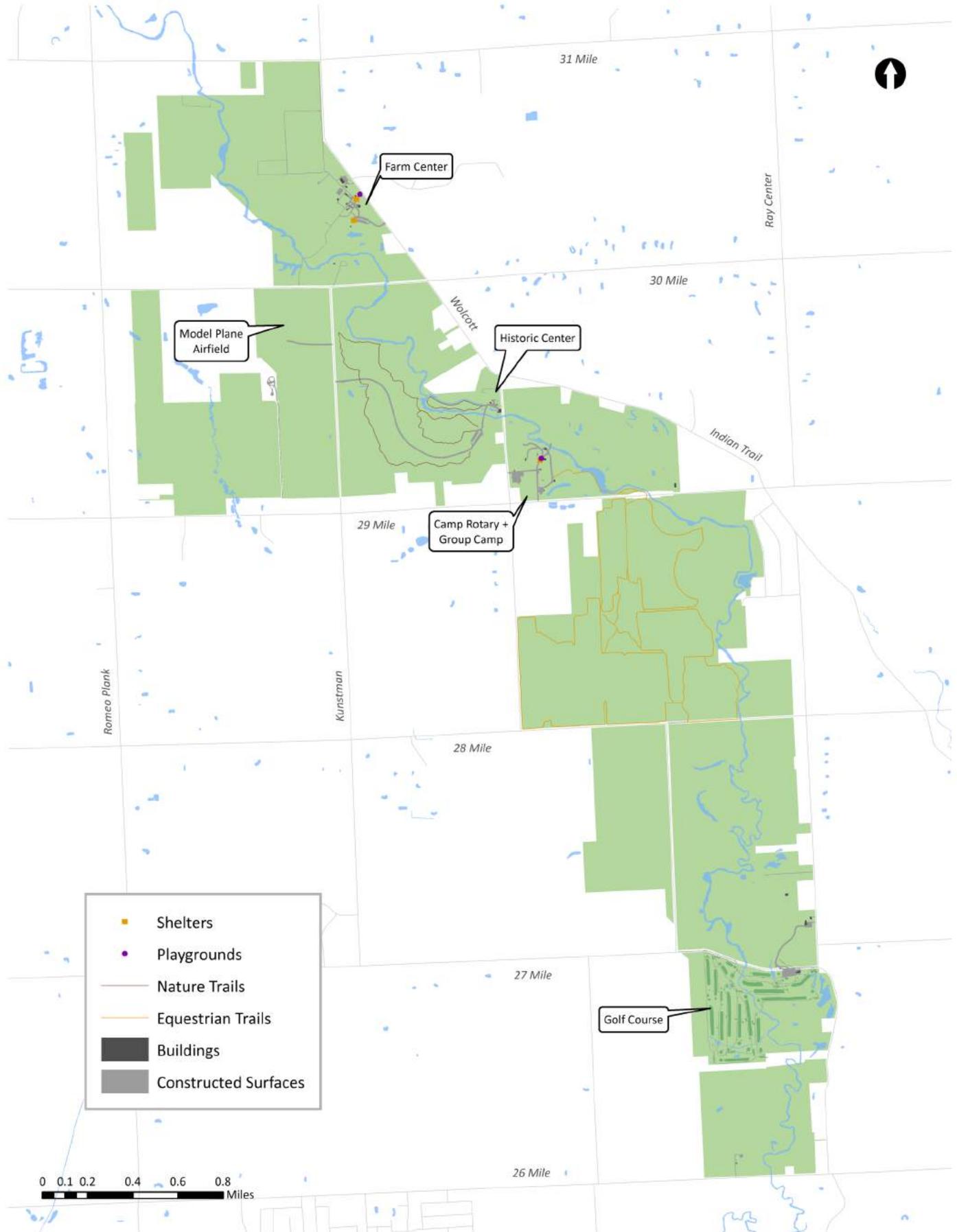
Wolcott area off Kunstman is a real gem for the **nature lover, hiker, wildlife enthusiast**.

The farm center is a **hidden treasure** in Macomb County.

I take my wife to Wolcott now and we really enjoy the scenic beauty and it's **quiet, peaceful**. It's a nice change of pace from Stony Creek.

I've **brought my children** here over the years and now grandchildren. I love this park!

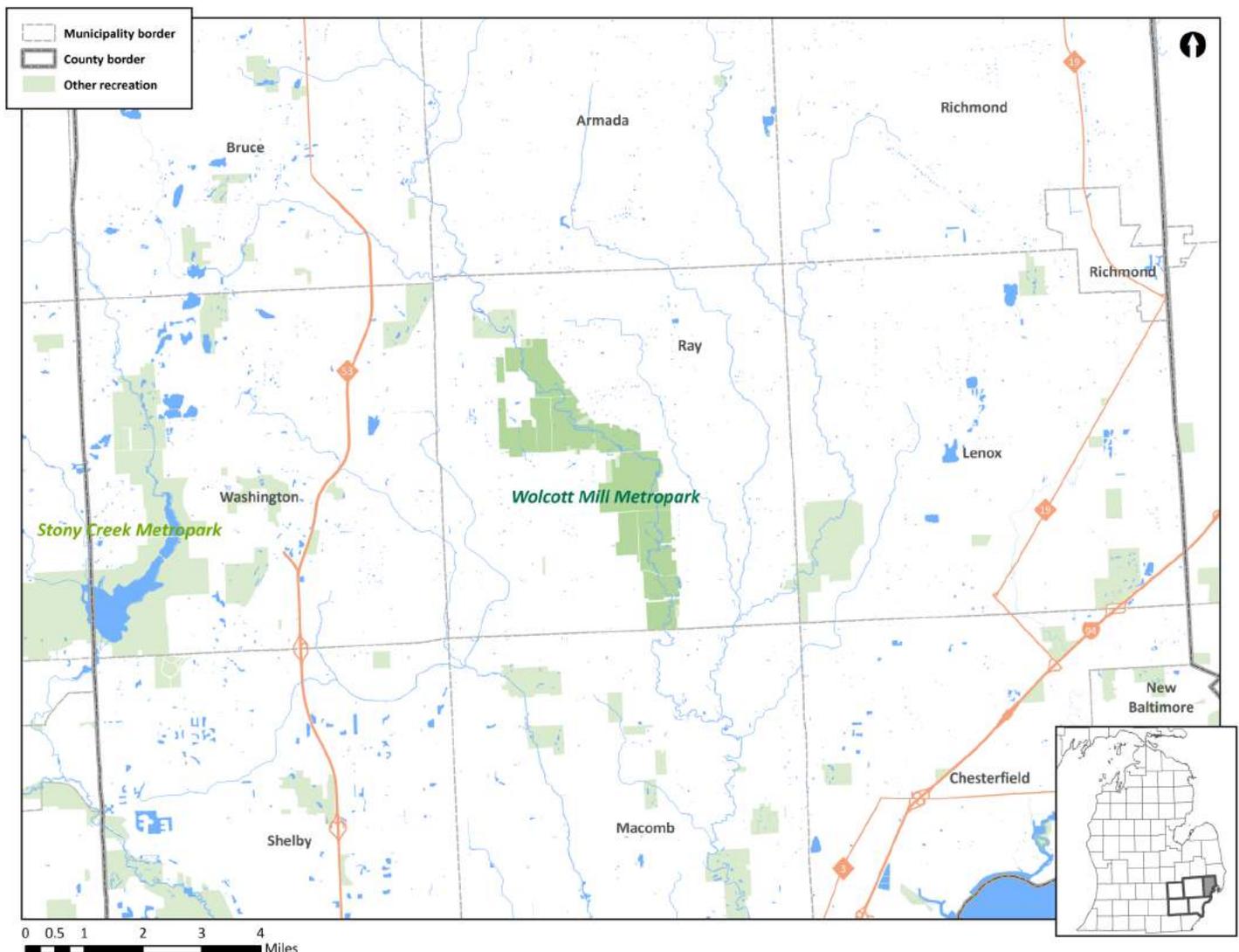
I love Wolcott Mill Metropark, especially the farm! This is one of the **best farm settings** in all of SE Michigan



Location

Wolcott Mill Metropark is located in Macomb County in southeast Michigan. It is approximately halfway between M-59 and the Lapeer County border. This is the largest Metropark in the system to be located solely within one municipality, in this case Ray Township.

At its northernmost extent Wolcott Mill reaches 31 Mile, its eastern boundary is Ray Center Road, to the west it nearly reaches Romeo Plank, and to the south it extends to 26 Mile. The park is situated on the North Branch of the Clinton River.



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.

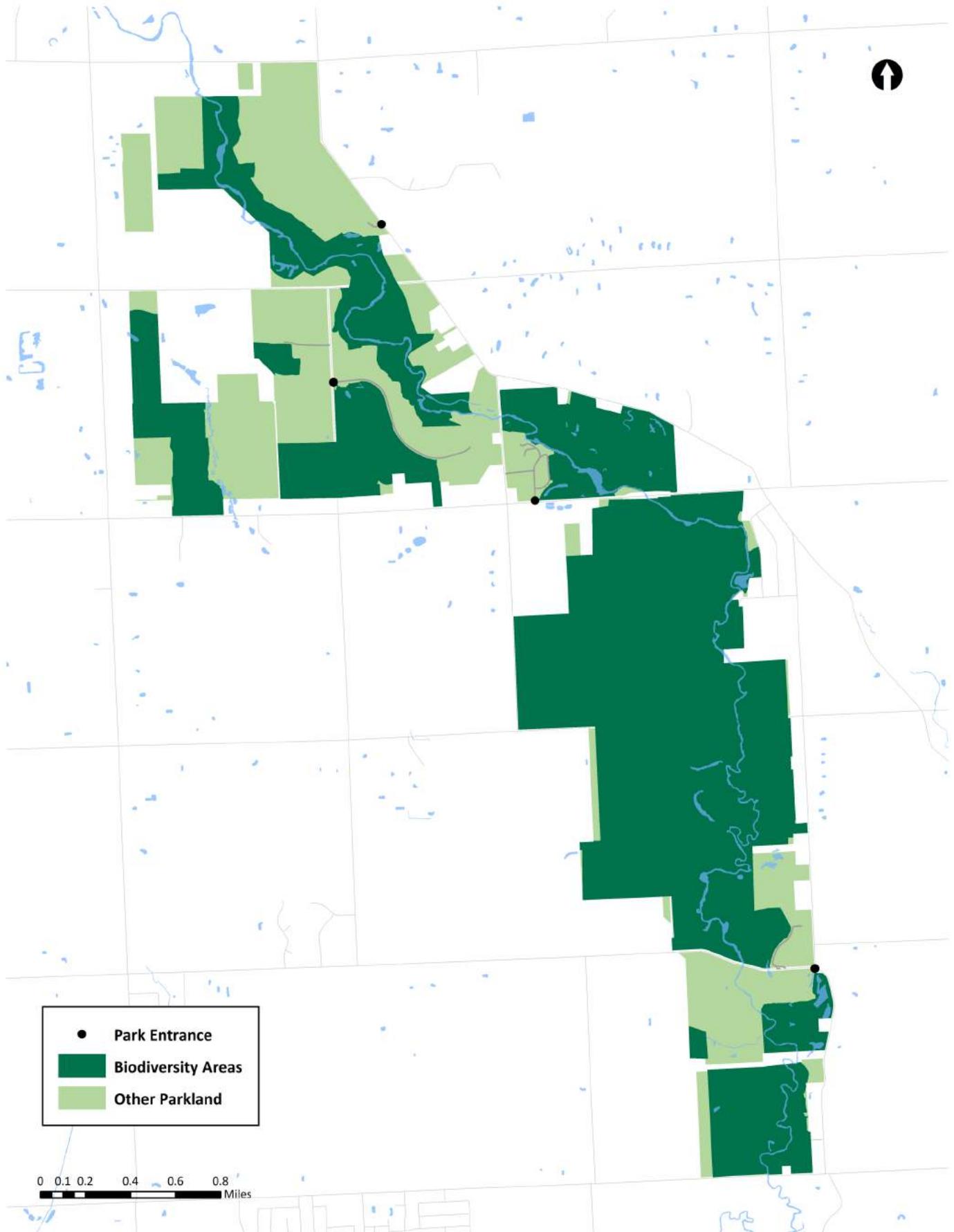


Biodiversity Areas

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 Wolcott Mill.

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



Cultural History

HISTORIC CENTER

The grist mill that gives this park its name dates back to the mid 1800s, when milling was an essential industry in Michigan and Macomb County. The mill was built in 1845 by one of the important early families in the county, the Freemans, and passed through several other hands before being sold to Frederick Beech Wolcott in 1878. Wolcott modernized the mill and created a successful business selling Old Times flour sacks. During his ownership, Wolcott restored the appearance of the mill, purchased a turbine wheel, and added an improved roller system in 1890.

The surrounding buildings were built in the following years, consisting of barns, storehouses, an equipment repair shop, a large structure that served as a waiting room, and a two story white frame family house, where the Wolcott family lived until 1969.

After his death in 1921, the Wolcott children continued operation of the mill, converting to electrical power and selling flour to bakeries in Detroit.

The mill closed in 1968, was briefly planned as an agricultural campus for Macomb Community College, suffered vandalism and the removal of the house structure, and was transferred to HCMA ownership in 1979.

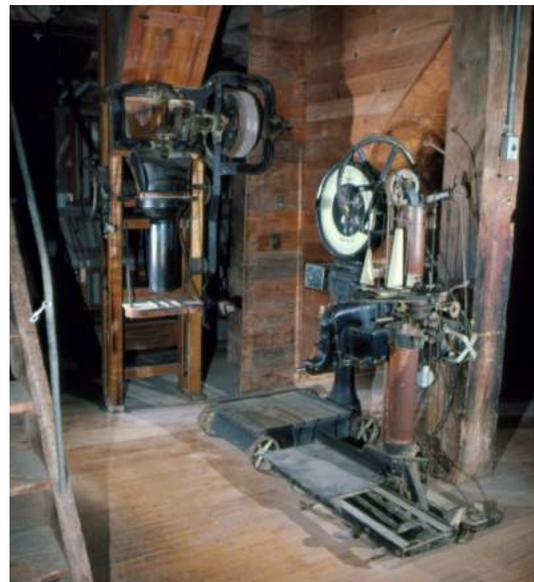


NEEDS

Preserve features of historic structures

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

OPPORTUNITIES

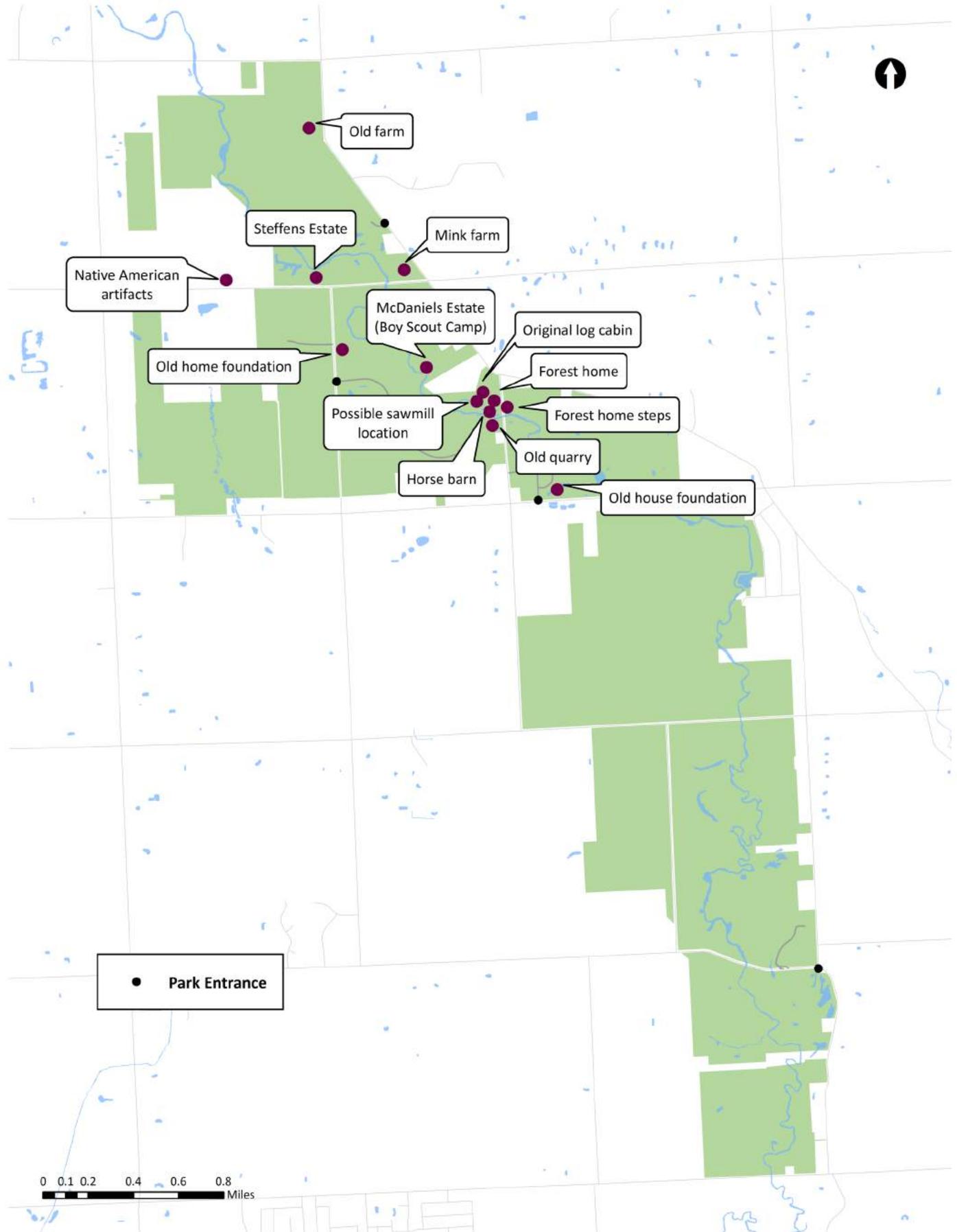


FARM CENTER

The Horse Barn and Dairy Barn located at the Farm Center were built in 1918 and serve as reminders of the long, important history of agriculture in southeast Michigan.

CAMP ROTARY

Camp Rotary was purchased from the Macomb County Rotary Camp and Training Association and became a part of Wolcott Mill in 1996. The legacy of the camp is preserved in the Little Mac Bridge, built by the Gratiot Council, Wolverine Chapter of the Telephone Pioneers of America in 1962.



Infrastructure **A**

Wolcott Mill is less developed than most other Metroparks and contains a smaller amount of infrastructure. The four nodes of activity—Farm Center, Historic Center, Camp Rotary and Golf Course—contain most of the buildings, utilities, roads, and trails in the park.

Unlike other Metroparks, the nodes of activity in Wolcott Mill are not connected by roads. Each one is accessible through a separate park entrance, and to drive from one to another requires exiting the park. Although these nodes will likely remain separated for vehicular traffic, plans are underway to improve non-motorized connections among the various centers of activity.

The Camp Rotary area of the park features extensive equestrian trails, which draw users from across the region. At the Historic Center, hiking trails trace the paths of previous inhabitants of the land and offer rural scenery.

The historic nature of the park means that the average building age is much higher than that of other parks in the system. Several date back to the mid 1800s. Although this preservation of these structures is important, they pose special maintenance challenges.

NEEDS

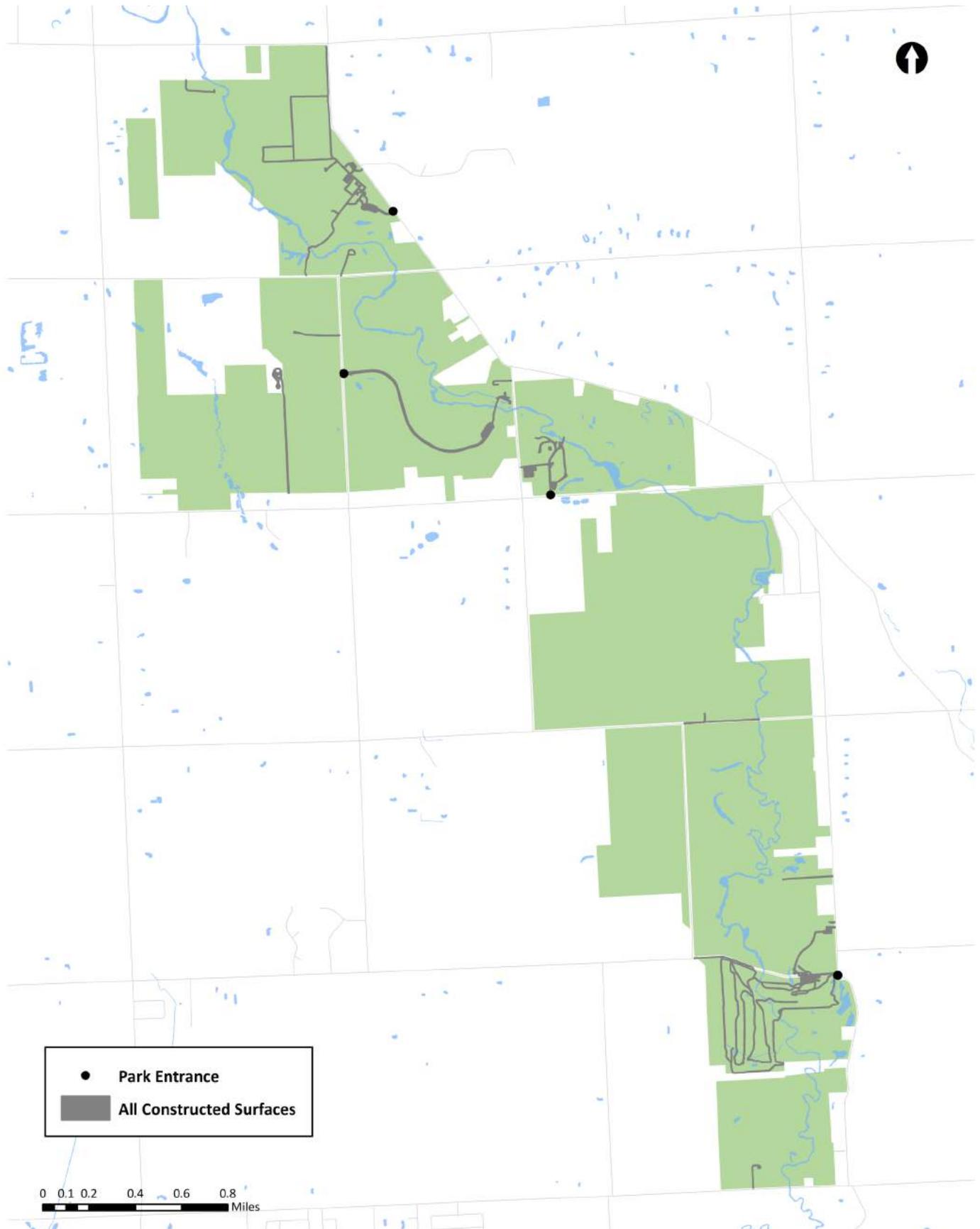
Increased connectivity between structures

Unification of structures will create accessible network throughout various park areas

OPPORTUNITIES

WOLCOTT MILL INFRASTRUCTURE	
Buildings	30
Avg bldg age	89
Active wells over 20 yrs	1
Paths & trail miles	27.48
Road miles	1.82
Playgrounds	1
Percent of park mowed	2.1
Picnic shelters	3
Sand volleyball courts	1
Baseball fields	2
Fishing platforms	1
Parking lot acreage	4.13





Facilities & Centers



Wolcott Mill features a number of facilities that define its character and enhance the recreational experience of visitors. Some of these either 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.

GOLF COURSE

The golf course at Wolcott Mill features beautiful landscapes, including the North Branch of the Clinton River. However, the clubhouse and other amenities are aging, and the course generates the least revenue of all Metroparks courses. Therefore, closing and repurposing the Wolcott Mill golf course is a possibility in the future.

CAMP ROTARY

A multi-activity center for kids, provides camping spaces for organizations, visitor ceremonies and receptions. Host camping, rental facilities for groups and meetings, fishing, hiking, and an observatory.

Shorian Lodge

This lodge is a popular venue available for scout and youth groups for overnight camping stays. The building, located at Campy Rotary, accommodates 34 people.

Observatory

This building is operated and maintained by the Warren Astronomical Society, which holds events there.

Activity Building

Built in 1964, this building is rented out for picnics, parties, and other gatherings and can hold up to 120 people. It features a beautiful view of the Clinton River.

HISTORIC MILL

This grist mill was built in the 1840s and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It allows visitors to learn about the importance of such mills to the economic history of the region. The age of the building means that maintenance can be extensive, as seen in the recent remodeling.

FARM CENTER

This fully-functioning dairy farm allows visitors, including many children, to learn about agricultural practices and the process of bringing food from the farm to the table. With baby goats, sheep, and pigs born every spring, it also allows visitors to experience up-close the farm animals they may only see from a distance.



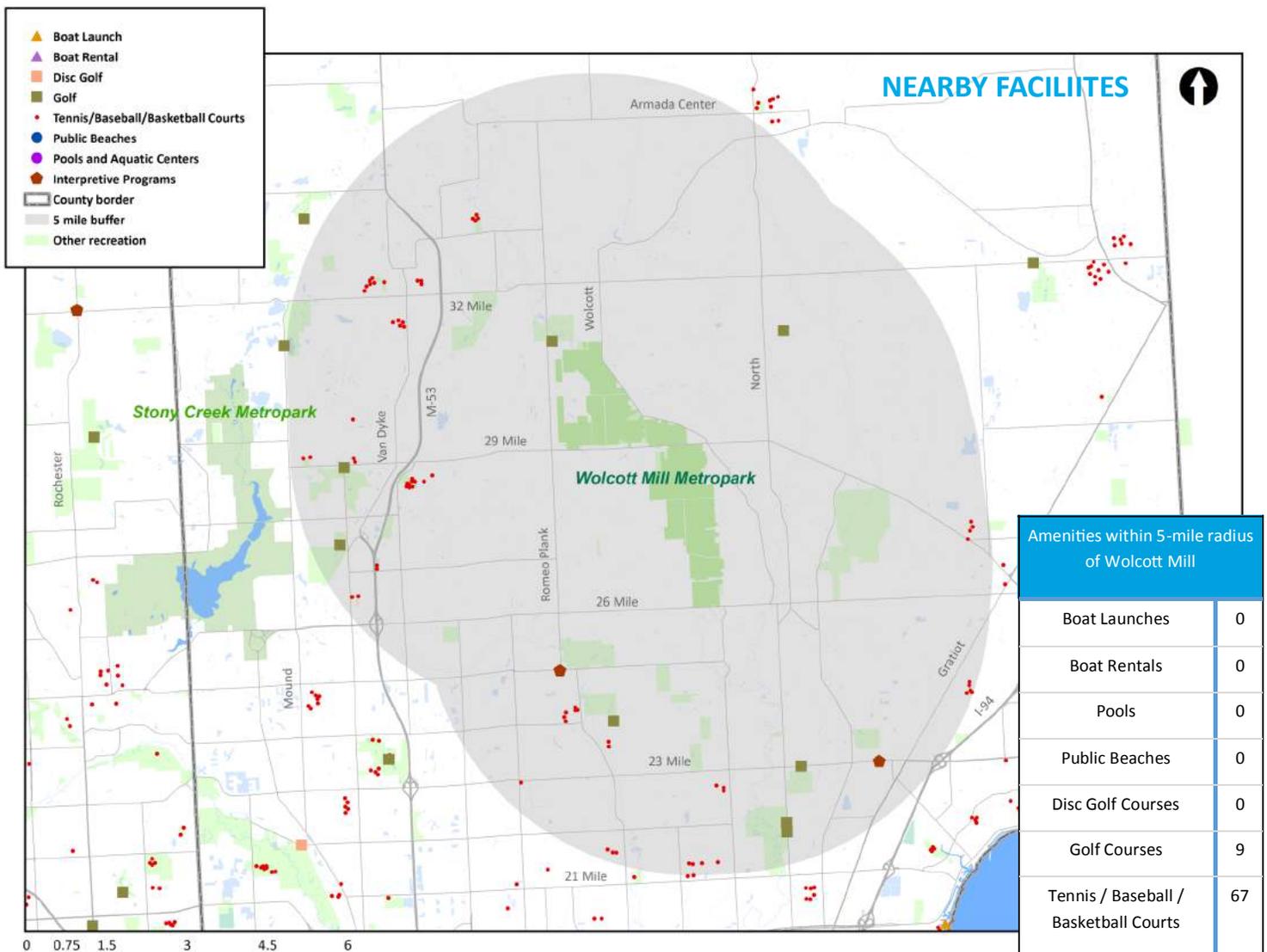
The Metroparks are moving towards a more data-driven approach to locating facilities. In order to best serve the residents of southeast Michigan and use resources wisely, the Planning Department has identified the location of similar facilities and programs. The goal for future development is to avoid 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 Wolcott Mill. Several golf courses exist within ten miles of the park boundary, but very little other recreational offerings can be found nearby. Although there are a few clusters of court and field sports nearby, even these are scarce in the immediate surroundings of the park.

NEEDS

- Increased space for interpretation and interactive learning, as well as events
- Work towards a park with unique, well-maintained facilities that meet all visitors' needs

OPPORTUNITIES



NEEDS

Work with county to address park boundary issues

Create good working relationship with neighbors and partner organizations

OPPORTUNITIES

LEASES

In a unique arrangement, parts of Wolcott Mill land have been leased to local farmers for agricultural production, for periods of three years. This serves to generate revenue, preserve the land from development, and support the farming heritage of the area.

GRANTS

A small segment of Wolcott Mill is encumbered in perpetuity—meaning it may not ever be converted into a non-recreational use. This particular park did not receive grant funding, but the parcel was used to mitigate the conversion of land in Stony Creek into non-recreational use when a cell tower was constructed.

GAPS

Pieces of land comprising Wolcott Mill remain largely disconnected from one another. Trail connections are being planned and considered to unify the park.

RIGHTS-OF-WAY

Rights-of-way are a concern in areas where a road not owned by the Metroparks divides or has the potential to divide park land. There are six sets of roads in Ray Township that raise this concern, and they are highlighted on the next page.

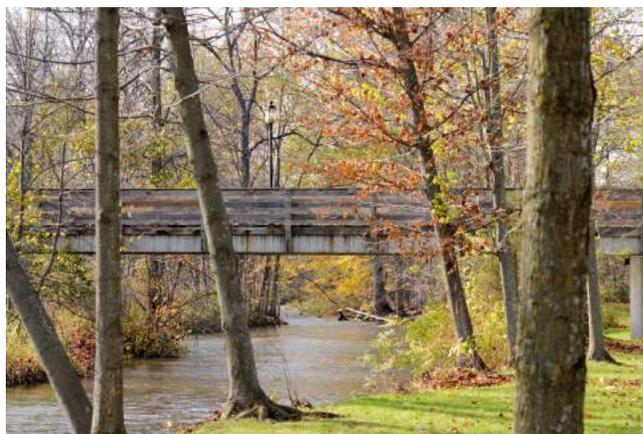
ENCROACHMENTS

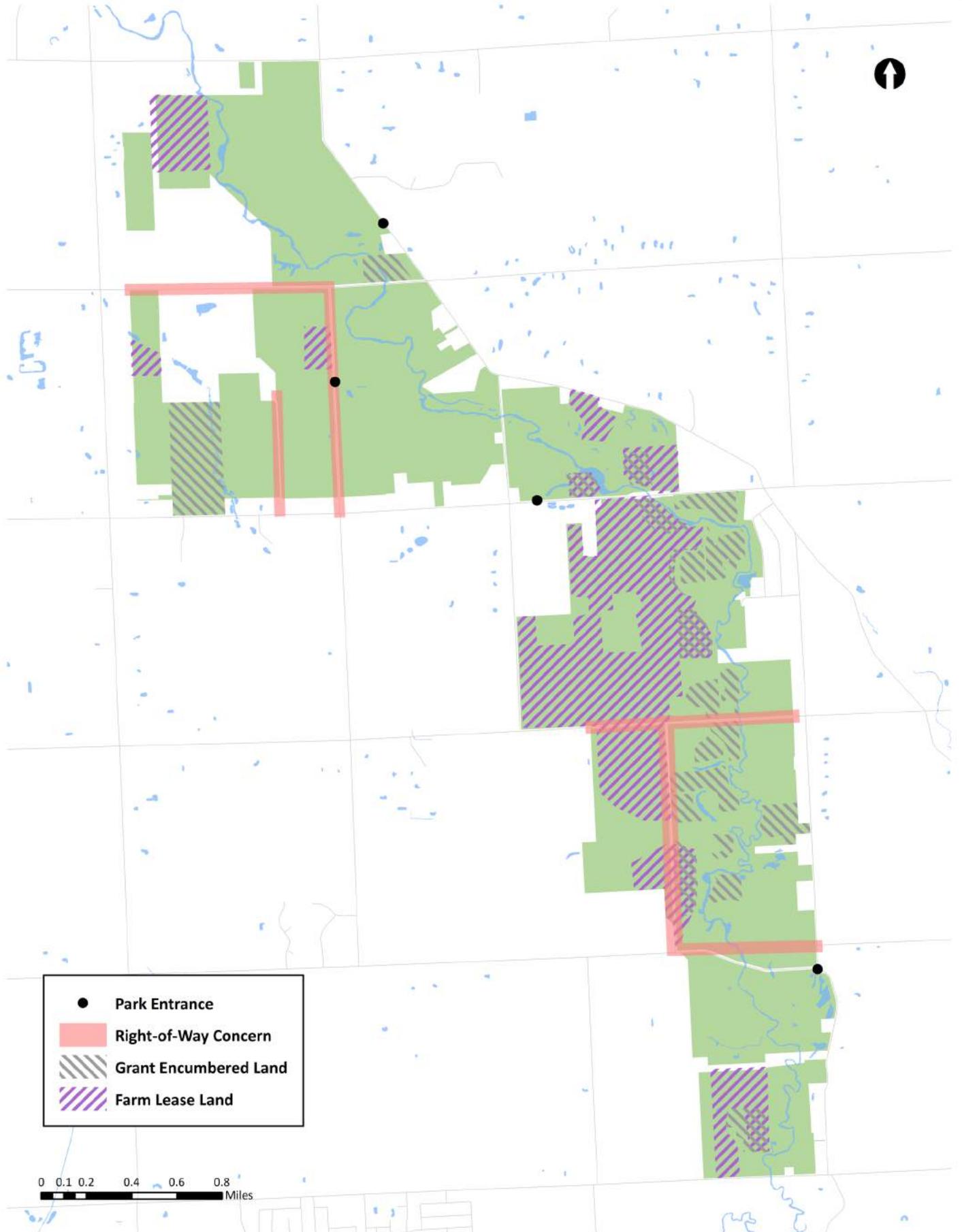
The Planning Department has worked with Wolcott Mill park staff to identify external encroachments on park boundaries. These include individuals mistakenly building on park property, dumping waste, or breaking through fence lines. Together with a new combined map of county parcels in relation to historic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

Some areas of the park have been subject to muddbogging, which involves driving a vehicle through a pit of mud or wet area. The park does not have facilities to support this activity, and illegal muddbogging has caused deterioration of natural resources and damage to restored wetlands.

INFORMAL ACCESS

These are areas where visitors have access into the park from areas that are not designated as entrances. These areas impact visitor counts, park pass revenue, and the safety of park guest. These areas should be rerouted and closed.





Wayfinding

Vehicular Wayfinding

Standardization

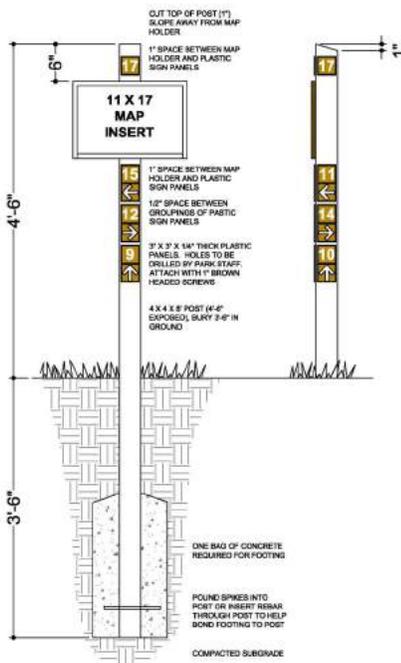
Currently Metroparks include signage installed at various times with various standards and designs. This does not reinforce the parks working together as a system and can be confusing for visitors. As older signs reach the end of their lives, they will be replaced with new, standardized signs.

Simplicity

In many parks, including Wolcott Mill, 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.



NEEDS

Replace outdated, confusing, inconsistent signs

Create consistent, convenient wayfinding system to give visitors confidence

OPPORTUNITIES

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.



Due to the small number of interior park roads within Wolcott Mill Metropark, the majority of directional signs will be either pathfinder signs installed on country and local roads or trail wayfinding signs oriented towards pedestrians.

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 availability of trails for various users in comparison to user group demand. It will also lead to more standardized maintenance and rule enforcement processes.

NEEDS

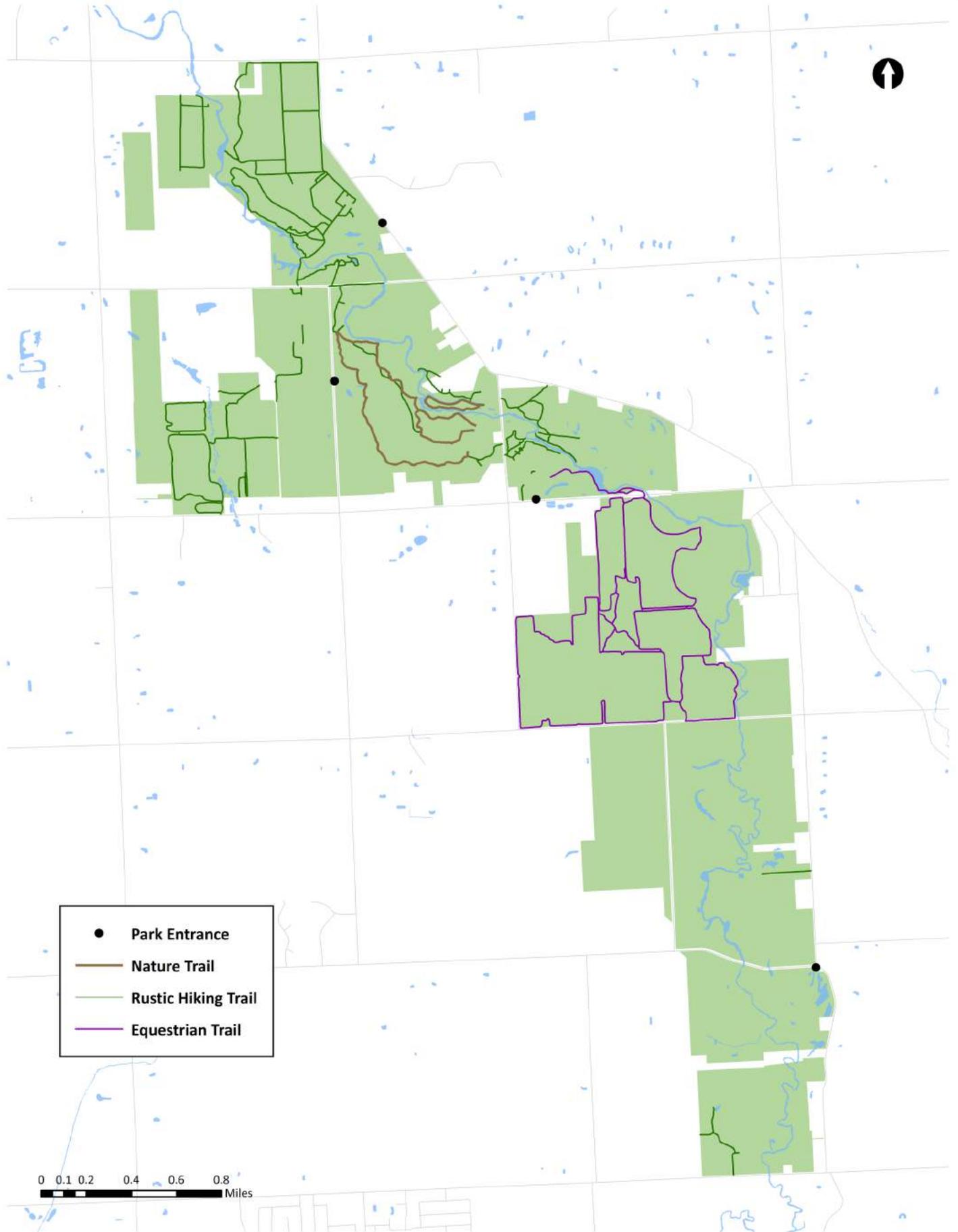
Update trail system to include informal paths

Draw new visitors to the park with a high-quality trail network

OPPORTUNITIES

Trail Type	Miles in park	Allowed Uses	Prohibited Uses	Surface
Rustic Trail	15.13	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.
Nature Trail	3.03	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.
Equestrian Trail	8.62	Horses and Pedestrians; cross-country skiing is permitted in the winter on designated trails only.	Motorized vehicles, pedestrians, bikes, snowshoes and pets.	Typically dirt single track, trail widths vary.

Wolcott Mill has a less developed trail system than most other Metroparks, and many park patrons use informal trails or service paths for recreation. In particular, the rectangular trails in the western section of the park were previously used as tractor paths for farms but are currently maintained by the park for hiking. These have been classified as rustic trails due to their limited use restrictions and limited maintenance. In the future, the Metroparks will work towards defining and enhancing trails that fit well with the overall plan of the park and user needs. Displaying frequently used trails on official park maps will be a priority.



Accessibility

To remain compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Metroparks are responsible for ensuring that all 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 and updating the less accessible park amenities, so that all guest can enjoy the park with their own capacities. A survey of several areas has resulted in a list of accessibility issues at Wolcott Mill. 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
Historic Center	1	ADA Parking—Striping is incorrect, no signage. The access ramp will be blocked if a car parks in the first space.
Nature Trails	2	Work towards creating an accessible trail within the park.
Farm Center	3	-Picnic Shelter near the Playground does not appear to be accessible. Pave the +/-20' that is needed at the shelter.
	4	-Picnic Shelter Tables – Additional ADA tables are needed.
	5	-Picnic Shelter Grills – Consider replacing with ADA grills. The large grills don't meet ADA requirements. -Fishing Platform – Currently not accessible.
Lower Picnic Shelter	6	A pathway may be desired from the shelter to the Farm Center for access to restrooms, buildings, etc.
Small Animal Building	7	The transition into the building does not allow access for wheelchairs.
Camp Rotary	8	The Little Mac Bridge is not accessible.
	9	ADA parking spaces are needed near the restrooms and for picnic shelters. Access paths should connect parking, shelters, and restrooms.

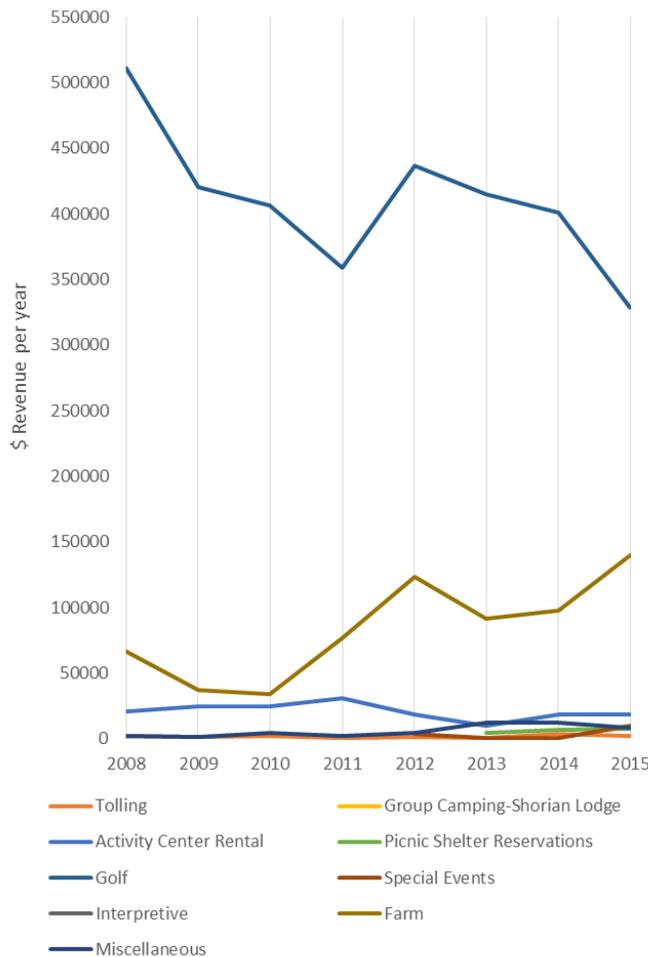
REVENUE

Revenue Sources

2015 Operations Revenue

Revenue Source	2015 Total	% of Revenue
Tolling	2,303	0.4%
Group Camping-Shorian Lodge	9,537	1.7%
Activity Center Rental	18,550	3.3%
Picnic Shelter Reservations	7,300	1.3%
Golf	328,618	59.2%
Special Events	9,943	1.8%
Interpretive	30,500	5.5%
Farm	140,135	25.2%
Miscellaneous	8,266	1.5%
	555,152	100%

REVENUE TRENDS—2008-2015



NEEDS

Address falling tax revenue

Direct resources to higher revenue, lower expenditure areas

OPPORTUNITIES

The Metroparks 2015 General Fund revenue equaled \$48,477,108. Wolcott Mill's 2015 operations revenue was \$555,152, comprising about 1% of all Metroparks revenue.

Wolcott Mill's budgeted 2016 operations revenues are \$550,178, while estimated 2016 operations expenses are \$1,706,316. Property tax and other revenue will subsidize 67.8% (\$1,156,138) of the Wolcott Mill operating budget.

Unlike the other Metroparks, Wolcott Mill has entrances without tollbooths, meaning that tolling revenue consists mostly of annual pass sales. HCMA is in the process of installing tollbooths where they are missing in order to address this issue, so future data will likely show a spike in revenue and visitor numbers.

REVENUES TRENDING UPWARD

Farm (includes interpretive programs at Farm Center), Special Events

REVENUES TRENDING DOWNWARD

Golf, Activity Center Rental

The areas in which budgeted 2016 operations revenues are projected to exceed budgeted 2016 expenditures are Tolling, Group Camping, and Shelter Reservations. It is important to note that the sale of bridle tags is not included under tolling revenue.

Revenue

Visitors

Wolcott Mill Metropark is a regional park and can draw from the 2,888,800 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.

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.



Popular Wolcott Mill Farm Center

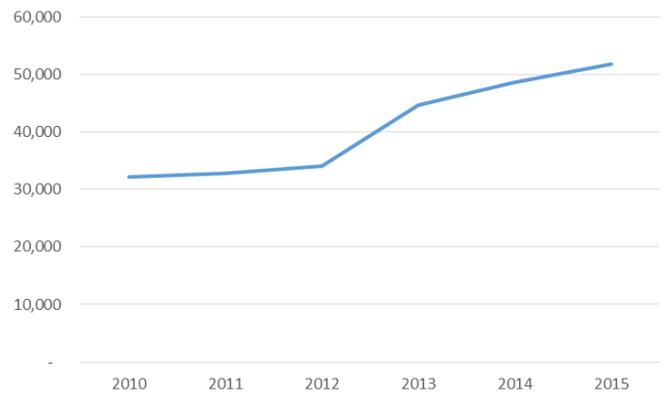
NEEDS

Add tollbooths where needed

Collect more robust visitor data

OPPORTUNITIES

VEHICLE ENTRIES 2010-2015



Wolcott Mill Metropark 30-Mile radius



Programs & Events



Trail riding event



Baby goats at the Babies, Babies! event



Interpretation at Maple Sugaring Festival

NEEDS

Increase revenue and visitation

Draw visitors through programs that highlight unique historic and agricultural themes

OPPORTUNITIES

Wolcott Mill holds an average of eighty interpretive programs each year. Programs and events include:

- Dairy Festival
- Maple Syrup Festival
- Maple Sugaring
- Civil War Reenactments
- Harness & Hitch
- Fun on the Farm
- Walk in Wednesday
- I Love Wolcott Farm Center Day
- A Brief History of Milling
- Babies, Babies!
- Spring Break Activities
- Farmer's Camp
- Classic Cars at the Mill
- Johnny Appleseed Festival
- Our Thanksgiving Heritage

Event Type	# of Events
Harness & Hitch	8
Walk-in-Wednesdays	5
Historic Center Events	26
Camp Rotary	2
Farm & Gardening Events	5
Reenactments	1
Festivals & Fairs	6

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES

Population

The population in Ray Township, the community surrounding Wolcott Mill Metropark, is distinct from the rest of the region and the county and faces some unique challenges.

NEEDS

Meet the needs of a changing regional population

Develop an accessible, welcoming park with something for everyone

OPPORTUNITIES

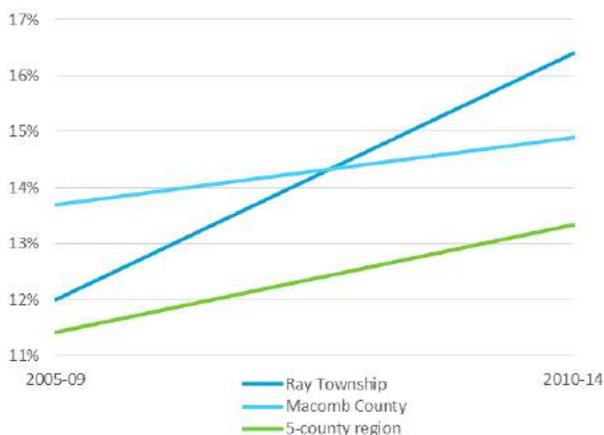
Ray Township shows a very low and falling number of households without access to an automobile. However, the percentage of such households is rising throughout the region and in Macomb County.

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.

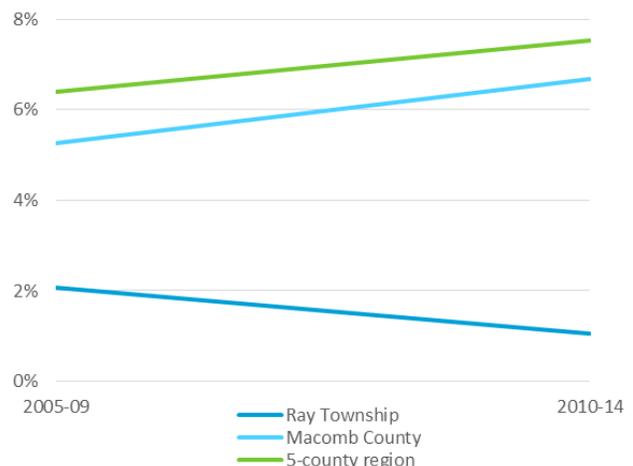
As shown in the map below, Wolcott Mill is located in the more rural, low-density area of southeast Michigan, with an average of less than one thousand residents per square mile. This creates unique land use and park access challenges and opportunities.

Both the region at large and the area surrounding Wolcott Mill have been aging rapidly, following a nationwide trend. Ray Township has seen a very steep rise in percentage of older adults, overtaking Macomb County as a whole and greatly surpassing the region.

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.



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

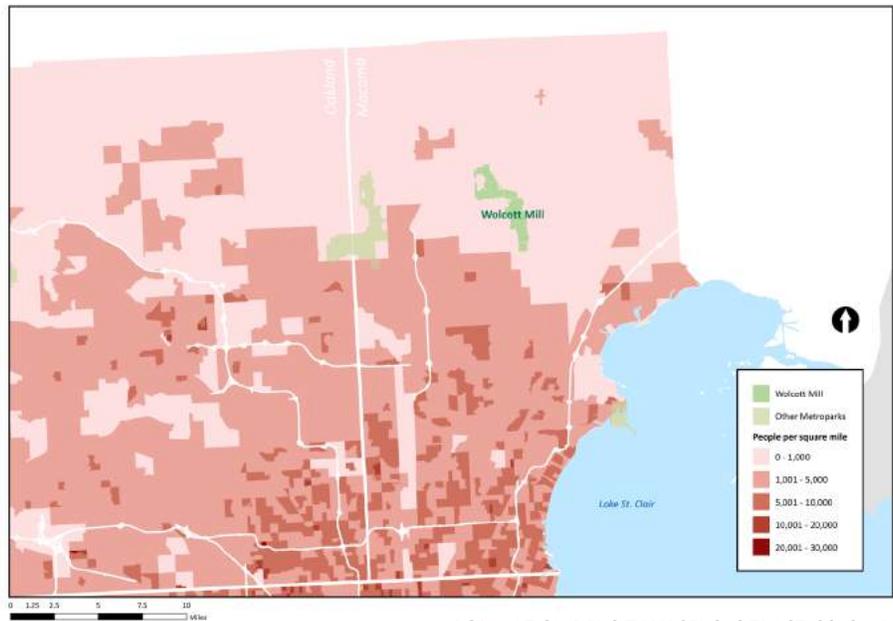


CHANGE IN PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO CARS AVAILABLE, 2005-09 through 2010-14 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)

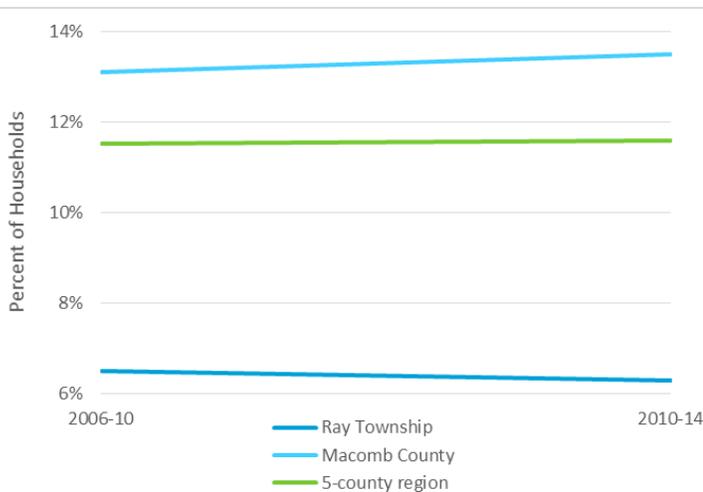
Community Influences

While on average the 5-county region is falling in population density, this is largely driven by population losses in Wayne County. Macomb County has seen a slight increase in population density, and Ray Township has seen almost no change in average population density. If development increases in the area surrounding Wolcott Mill, the park will have to adapt to serve a changing population.

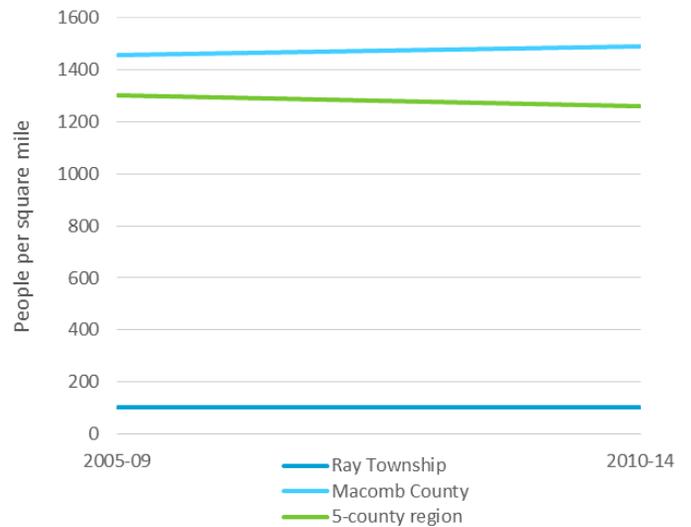
Although most households in the area still speak English as their first language, in many counties a growing number of households speak other languages at home. Macomb County has seen an increase in the percentage of these households. Ray Township has a much lower percentage of these households and the percentage has in fact dropped over the past ten years. Still, due to the overall rise in 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 LANGAGE BESIDES ENGLISH AT HOME, 2006-10 through 2010-14 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)



CHANGE IN AVERAGE POPULATION DENSITY, 2005-09 through 2010-14 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)

NEEDS

Improve park interaction with community

Invest in good working relationships with surrounding government agencies

OPPORTUNITIES

Ray Township

- Growing residential uses
- Continued preservation of farmland
- Greenway and trail connections
- Acquiring land for community parks

Macomb County

- Enhancing role in recreation through shared services and collective efforts
- Goal is to establish dedicated parks and recreation department
- Continuing to invest in Macomb Orchard and Paint Creek trails

Clinton River Watershed Council

- WaterTowns green infrastructure improvement suggestions

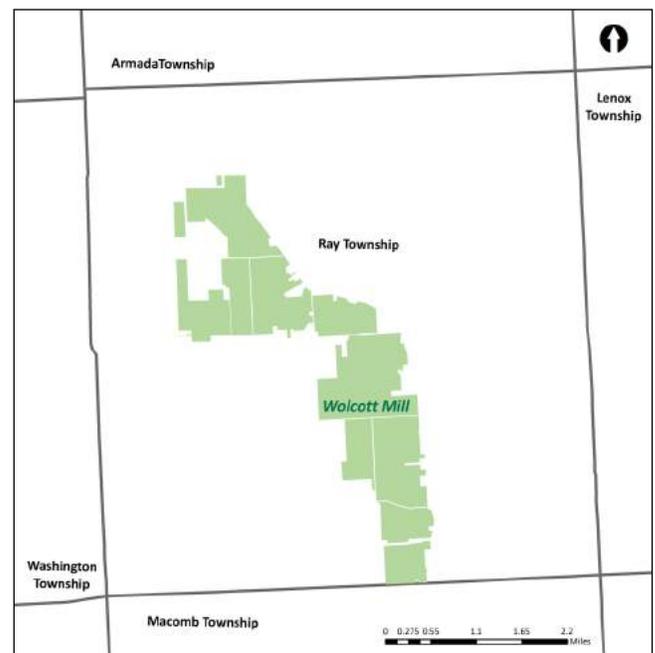


Projects & Initiatives

Understanding the goals and plans of the municipality containing Wolcott Mill is essential for a collaborative, comprehensive planning process. To begin, planning staff researched the published master plan of Ray Township, which entirely contains the park. This provided a basic idea of the planned direction of the community, especially regarding land use, development, and recreation.

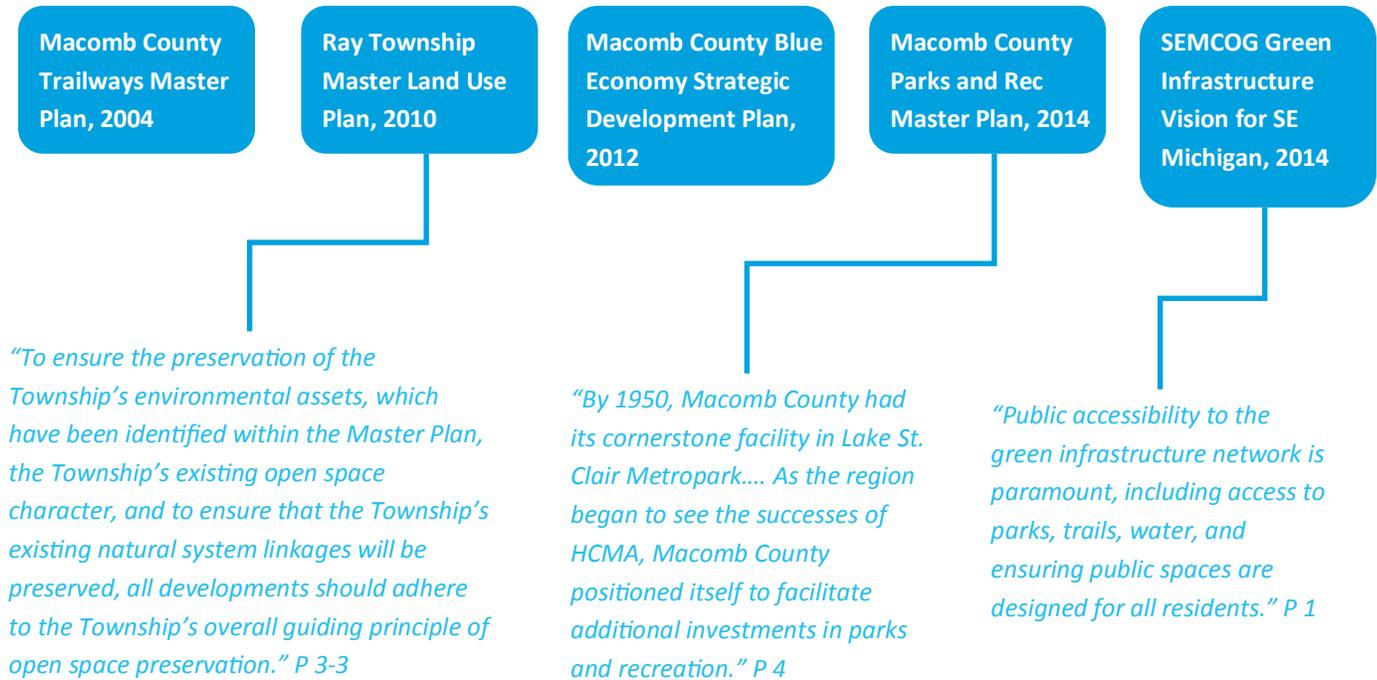
Ray Township still contains a large amount of vacant and agricultural land, along with growing residential uses. The master plan focuses on an expected transition to more of the residential dominance found in neighboring municipalities, and how to minimize conflicts and protect valued resources. It identifies farmland as particularly valuable, for its addition to the rural character of the township, its contribution to the local economy, and its need for relatively less intensive municipal services.

MUNICIPALITY MAP



Community Influences

Relevant Planning Documents



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

Ray Township is currently reviewing its 2010 Master Plan and has published several alterations, mostly involving land uses in specific areas of the municipality. The general goals and character of the plan remain approximately the same.

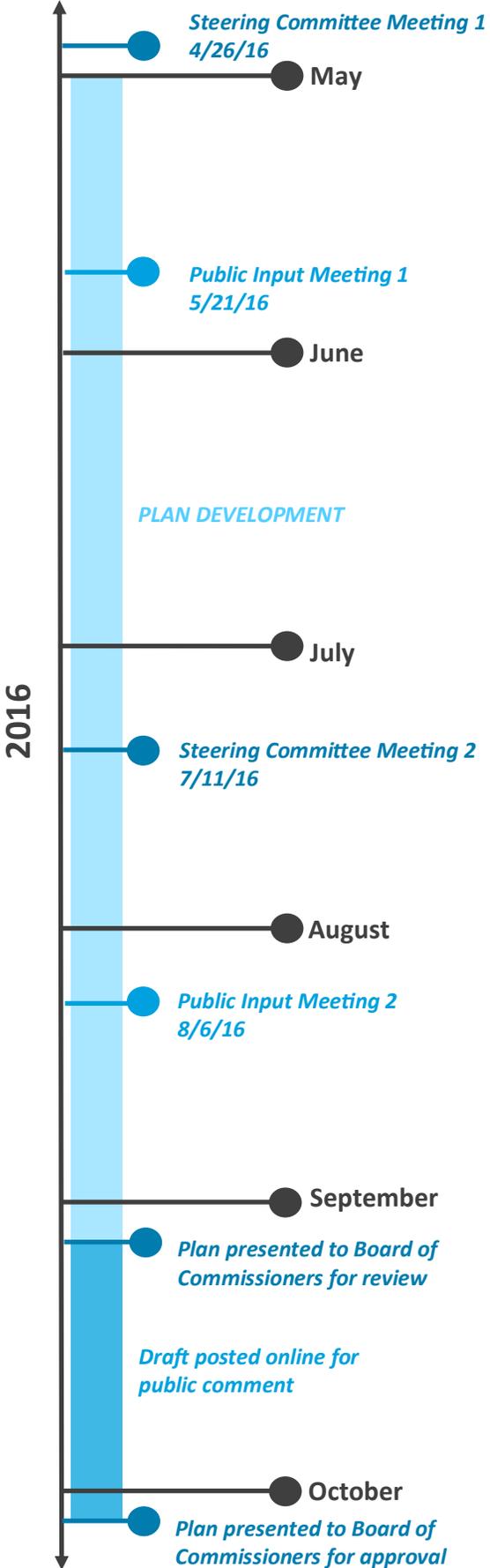
Macomb County does not have a Parks and Recreation Commission and maintains only a few county parks. Therefore, Wolcott Mill may play a larger role than other Metroparks in meeting everyday, neighborhood-level recreation needs.

Wolcott Mill 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. Therefore, recreation and green infrastructure plans were also considered in creating the Wolcott Mill 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 Macomb Orchard Trail is a valuable resource in the county, a paved path for bicycling and walking stretching 24 miles from Shelby Township to Richmond. HCMA has a seat on the Trail Commission, and opportunities for connecting to Wolcott Mill may be explored in the future.

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. These ideas were taken into account, along with staff feedback and other data, in developing initial recommendations.

Project Ideas 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 presented to the Board of Commissioners for review in September and then posted online for public comment, which influenced the final Master Plan sent to the Board of Commissioners for approval in October.

Public Meeting 1 - 5/21/16

- 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 - 8/6/16

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

Results

At the first public meeting, participants used the pom-pom investment activity to articulate their interest in equestrian trails, a popular feature of Wolcott Mill Metropark. The second most popular choice was the Farm Center, another area unique to Wolcott Mill and an engaging place to bring children for education and entertainment. Camp Rotary and 4H activities also secured a number of votes.

The survey responses, both written and submitted online, demonstrated more clearly the desire for more extensive, interesting, and identifiable trails for all different user groups. Survey participants also expressed a general need for more activities to be offered at the park, such as expanded fishing areas and playgrounds and activities for children. Finally, the survey highlighted park access issues such as fragmentation among the various sections of the park and limited hours of operation.

At the second public meeting, participants learned about the various factors influencing the master plan projects and explanations of proposed project details. Participants commented the bridge and pavilion should be maintained at Camp Rotary and suggested pursuing Dark Sky Site certification due to the observatory. There was a general consensus that the park must be better advertised, especially through print media targeted towards older adults.

A few participants mentioned concerns from Ray Township citizens over the price of admission to the park. A Ray Township official proposed a collaboration at the Historic Center to preserve and curate historic documents.

Finally, individuals voiced strong support for greater trail connectivity and especially favored expanding the equestrian trails.

Q7 What would make your visit to Wolcott Mill Metropark more enjoyable overall?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 166

Enjoy Volunteers Love Entrance Activities Play Mill
Longer Park Annual Farm Petting Events
Think Offer Job Trails

Q6 What can be done to improve your favorite area or facilities for your favorite activity?

Answered: 77 Skipped: 146

Activities Paved Camp Parties Park Fishing
Animals Cow Barn Farm Restrooms
Trails Petting Zoo Mill Golf Playground
Nature Events Scout Love Think



Survey Response Topics

Activities

- More fishing opportunities
- More activities for children
- Running and biking opportunities
- More activities in general
- Make disc golf available
- Greater Car Club involvement
- More equestrian activities

Access

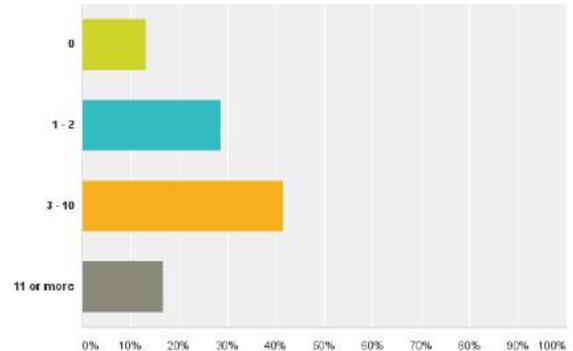
- Better signage on trails
- Trails and/or roads connecting areas of park
- Keep parks accessible to all income levels
- Closer handicapped parking
- Extend hours past 5pm
- Stay open 7 days a week
- Create entrance to Mill off Wolcott Rd

Facilities

- More hiking trails and scenic vistas
- More equestrian trails
- More/improved playgrounds
- Food service area
- Updated restrooms
- More animals
- More picnic areas and shelters
- More benches
- Dog-friendly spaces

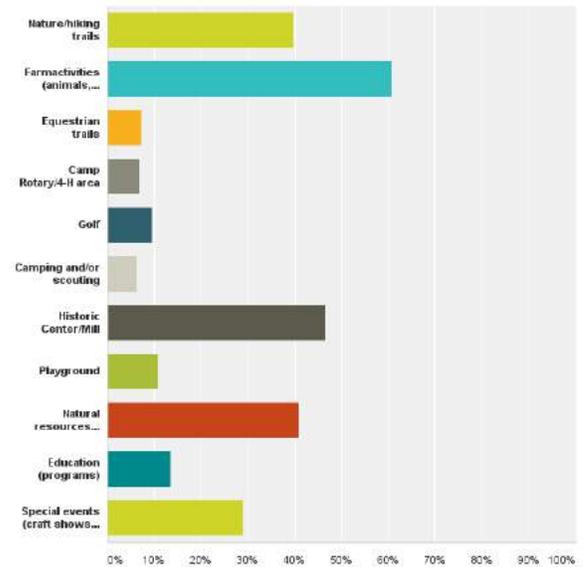
Q3 Approximately how many times do you visit Wolcott Mill Metropark in a year?

Answered: 221 Skipped: 2



Q5 What is your favorite part of the park or activity within Wolcott Mill Metropark? Examples are given for each category. (Choose up to 3.)

Answered: 175 Skipped: 47



Participation

The Wolcott Mill Master Plan online survey received over 220 responses, and over twenty individuals attended the two public meetings. As shown in the map below, the greatest number of responses came from Ray Township and the municipalities to the south and west. Nearly every zip code in Macomb County is represented by at least one respondent. Few responses were gathered from Wayne and Livingston counties, and none from Washtenaw County. The distribution of respondents suggests that more can be done to spread awareness of Wolcott Mill and all it offers.

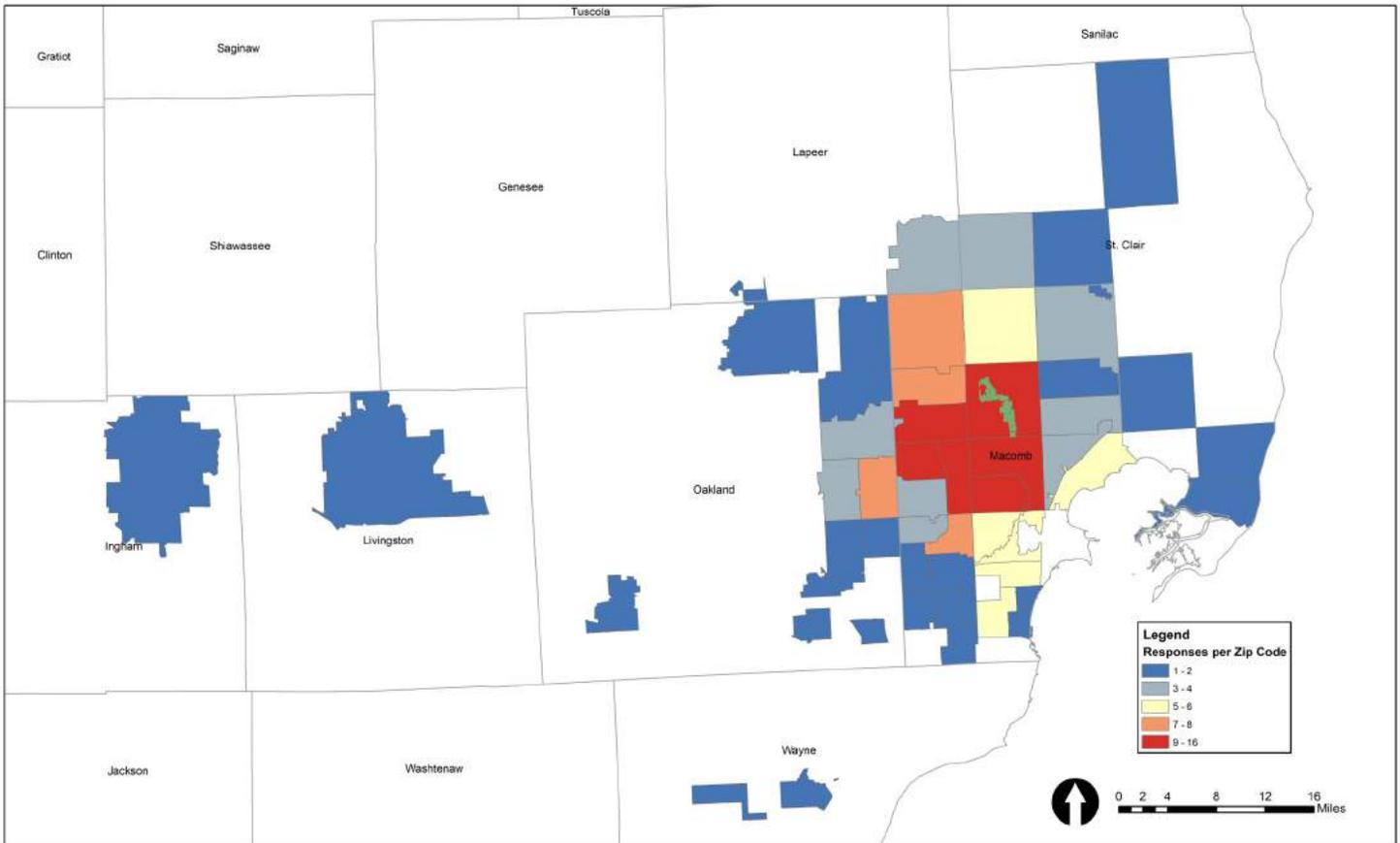
NEEDS

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
- Preserve features of historic structures
- Increased connectivity between structures
- Increased space for interpretation and interactive learning, as well as events.
- Work with county to address park boundary issues
- Replace outdated, confusing, inconsistent signs
- Update trail system to include informal paths
- Pursue improvements to park accessibility
- Address falling tax revenue
- Add tollbooths where needed
- Increase revenue and visitation
- Meet the needs of a changing regional population
- Improve park interaction with community
- Incorporate variety of opinions and user groups into master plan



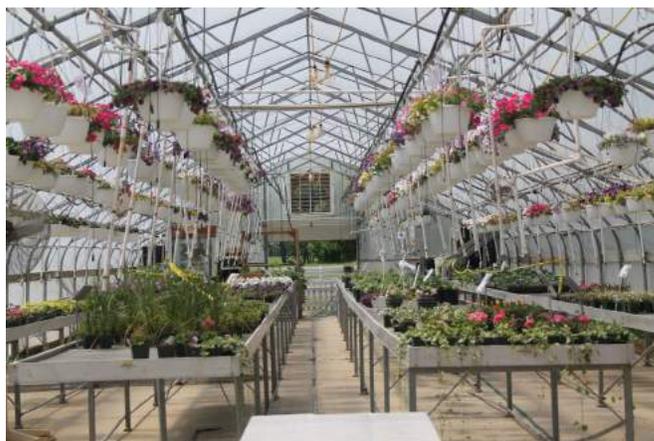
Opportunities

- Expansion of available events and activities at park
- Create a resilient network of biodiverse areas in the park
- Draw new visitors with programming/education based on history of park
- Unification of structures will create accessible network throughout various park areas.
- Work towards a park with unique, well-maintained facilities that meet all visitors' needs
- Create good working relationship with neighbors and partner organizations
- Create consistent, convenient wayfinding system to give visitors confidence
- Draw new visitors to the park with a high-quality trail network
- Ensure that users of all abilities feel empowered to take full advantage of the park
- Direct resources to higher revenue, lower expenditure areas
- Collect more robust visitor data
- Draw visitors through programs that highlight unique historic and agricultural themes
- Develop an accessible, welcoming park with something for everyone
- Invest in good working relationships with surrounding government agencies
- 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.

Large Facilities

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2017-2021)	Mid-Term (2022-2026)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Implement Golf Course plan	Engineering	Planning, NR	Contractors, TBD		X	X	
Rebuild original sheep barn at Farm Center	Engineering	Planning	Contractor		X		
Implement Farm Center selective redevelopment plan	Engineering	Planning	Contractors, TBD			X	X
Implement Historic Center redevelopment plan	Engineering	Planning	Contractors			X	X
Renovate exhibits at Historic Center	Interpretive	Operations	Contractors			X	



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 short-term accessory storage shed at Farm Center	Engineering	Planning, Operations		TBD	x		
Replace Farm Center playground structures	Planning	Engineering, Operations	Contractors	\$85,000.00	x		
Implement trail development plan	Engineering	Planning	Contractors		x	x	x
Install small check-in structure at Camp Rotary	Engineering	Planning, Operations				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 projects (list developed annually)	NR	Operations		various	x	x	x
Floodplain/wetland restoration	NR			TBD		x	x
Grassland/farmland restoration	NR				x	x	x



Signage

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2017-2021)	Mid-Term (2022-2026)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Wayfinding/directional signage updates - parkwide (including trails)	Planning	Maintenance, Operations		\$15,000.00	x		
Install interpretive and wayfinding signage at Historic Center	Interpretive	Planning, Operations			x		



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)
Golf Course plan: utilize the system-wide golf study (forthcoming 2016) to develop a plan for the future of the golf course	Planning	NR, Engineering, Operations, Maintenance		staff time	x		
Farm Center selective redevelopment plan: retain some existing buildings, incorporate additional elements where possible	Planning	Engineering, Operations, Maintenance		staff time	x		
Trail development plan for facility connectivity	Planning	NR, Engineering, Operations, Maintenance	Ray Township, Macomb County	staff time	x		
Explore development of a main park entrance on Wolcott Road between the Historic Center and Camp Rotary	Planning	Engineering, Operations, Maintenance	Ray Township, Macomb County	staff time	x	x	
Historic Center redevelopment plan: new multi-purpose building to include event space, comfort station, office space, classroom; demolish existing comfort station building	Planning	Engineering, Operations, Maintenance		staff time	x		

Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2017-2021)	Mid-Term (2022-2026)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Camp Rotary revenue generation strategy: activities to supplement 4-H and camping uses	Operations	Planning		staff time	x		
Monitor Little Mac bridge at Camp Rotary for safety purposes	Engineering	Maintenance		staff time	x	x	x
Delineate all trails for inclusion on park maps	Planning	Graphics		staff time	x		
Fishing access study - Clinton River North Branch	NR	Planning	Clinton River Watershed Council		x		
Natural features inventory and assessment	NR			staff time	x		
Water quality monitoring	NR			staff time	x	x	x
Fish habitat assessment - North Branch Clinton River	NR			staff time	x		





Key Projects

Golf Course

2017-2026

With a clubhouse dating to 1950, the golf course faces substantial challenges that will require significant investment if it is to continue. Utilities updates, cart barn construction, and cart fleet replacement will all be necessary in the near future, and within the next five years the clubhouse will need to be rebuilt. If the golf course does not remain open, the land could be repurposed as passive recreation.

Issues:

- Significant investment needed to update building, cart fleet
- Numerous competing courses in area

Opportunities:

- Analyze course revenue and expenditures in a system-wide golf study to determine best course of action
- Possibility to repurpose land



Need for updated building

Farm Center

2017-2026+

Built in 2003 (barns built in 1918), the Farm Center is the most popular area of the park, drawing families with its emphasis on learning about the agricultural experience. The dairy farm is fully functional and focuses on preserving breeds of dairy cows. Along with the Beyond the Seed garden, greenhouse, playground, and Farm Center building with interpretive elements, this is an area that has experienced success and has even greater potential with selective redevelopment.

Issues:

- Need for more animal space
- Need for classroom and office space

Opportunities:

- Rebuild original sheep barn
- Create redevelopment plan
- Incorporate food/retail element



Need for more classroom/office space

Action Plan

Historic Center

2022-2026+

Containing buildings from the 1800s, the Historic Center draws visitors to learn about the way of life hundreds of years ago. The serene mill pond and clusters of trees make it a highly scenic area, desirable for weddings and other events. However, there is need for a structure to accommodate such events, as well as upgraded restrooms, class space, and exhibits.

Issues:

- Need for classroom space
- Need for event structure
- Need for more engaging activities within Mill

Opportunities:

- Create redevelopment plan
- Renovate exhibits



Trail Development

2017-2021

The mapped, signed trails that currently exist in Wolcott Mill are the Historic Center nature trails (Mother Earth, Mill Race, Settlers), and the equestrian trails accessed from Camp Rotary. The rustic trails north of the Little Mac Bridge at Camp Rotary are also in the process of being mapped. A plan is needed to identify what areas of the park could benefit from creation of additional trails, and how they might contribute to greater connectivity through the park as a whole.

Issues:

- Few trails
- Lack of signage/mapping
- Lack of connections within park

Opportunities:

- Plan to study trail development
- Mapping existing trails



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. Buildings will be rebuilt and retrofitted to improve ease of access, and paved paths will be constructed to better connect parking with recreational activities.

- **Farmland restoration projects**

When parkland leased out for agricultural purposes returns to recreational use, the land must be restored so that it can be a rich environment capable of supporting a variety of animal and plant life.

- **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 areas they are patched or repaved.

- **Fishing access study**

Several survey respondents expressed a desire for more fishing opportunities in the park. This study will determine the extent to which more fishing areas are needed and the most favorable locations.

