



WILLOW AND OAKWOODS MASTER PLAN





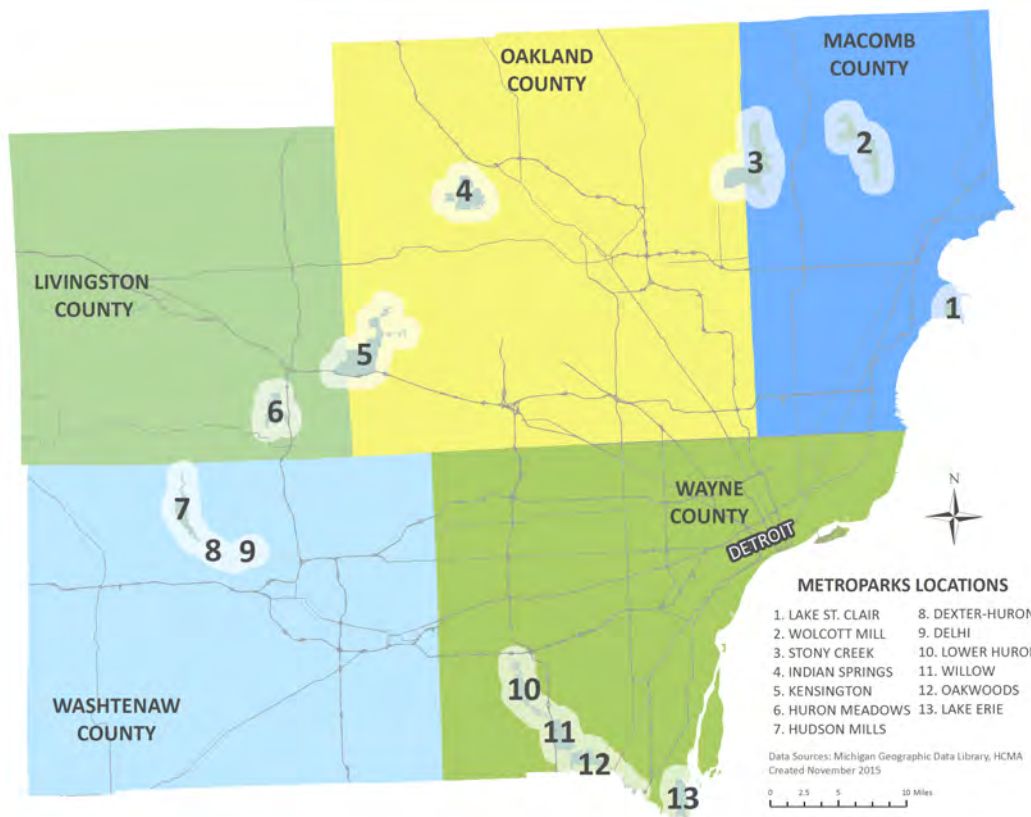


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INTRODUCTION

DRAFT

About the Metroparks

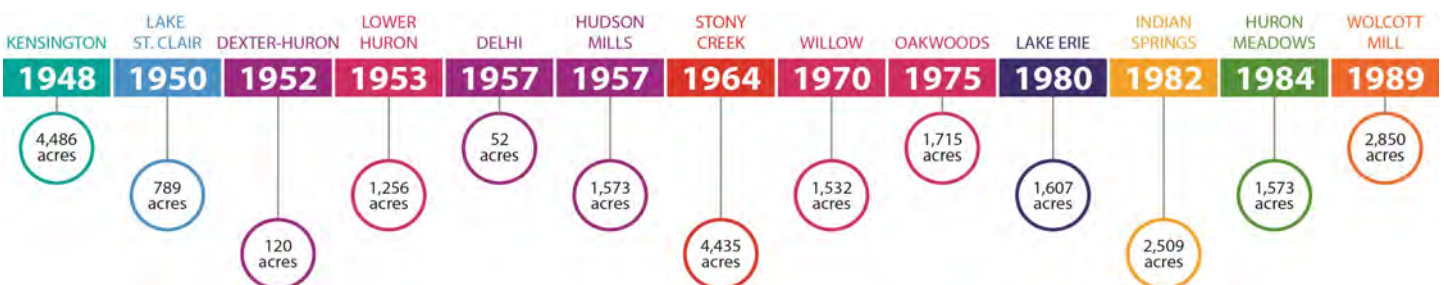


The Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority was sanctioned by the Michigan State Legislature in Act No. 147 of the Public Acts of 1939. Named after the two longest rivers within its boundaries, the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority is a regional park agency consisting of 13 Metroparks encompassing approximately 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 .2140 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.

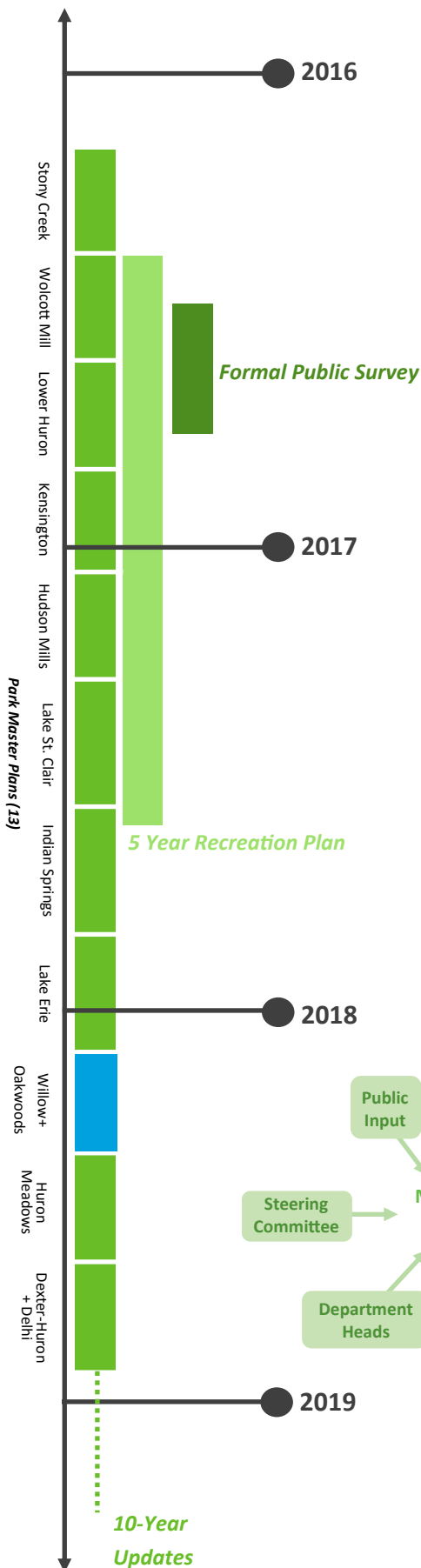
Administrative Departments provide administrative support to operations, and guide the organization towards its mission.

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.

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



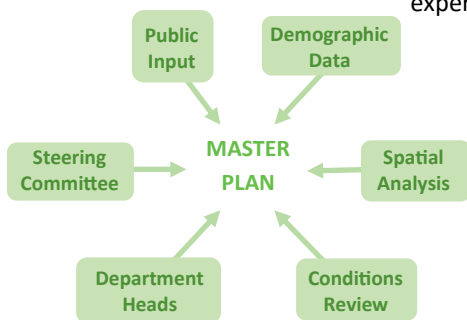
Planning Process



Several factors contribute to the recommendations that will be proposed for Willow and Oakwoods 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 parks and significantly influences plan recommendations. A master plan steering committee was formed to include park employees with exceptional knowledge of both Willow and Oakwoods along with the surrounding community, who along with the experienced Metroparks department heads provide their professional opinions.

In 2016, the Metroparks Planning Department 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. Some master plan timelines may be extended or delayed if the Board of Commissioner’s recommend further public input following their review of the draft plan. 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.

Public input gathered at the Willow Master Plan Open House on 1/27/2018



WILLOW & OAKWOODS TODAY DRAFT

Character

The following responses to our questionnaire highlight the many facets of Willow and Oakwoods that form a unique experience. Visitors appreciate the wide range of recreational activities available at the parks, especially those related to the trails, natural resources, and golf. They see them as contributing to the surrounding community.

NEEDS

Continue to draw diverse range of visitors to the park

Build on park character to attract new visitors

OPPORTUNITIES

Our family loves the **Nature Center** with all the animals and learning about nature!

Miles and miles of **connected bike and water trails**.

The metroparks are a world class disc golf system. **They have embraced and successfully integrated this sport into the park system.**

We really enjoy the metroparks! **Very well maintained and all of the staff are friendly and knowledgeable.**

This is a beautiful and safe park. My husband enjoys **kayaking on the Huron River and the access to the river** is very helpful.

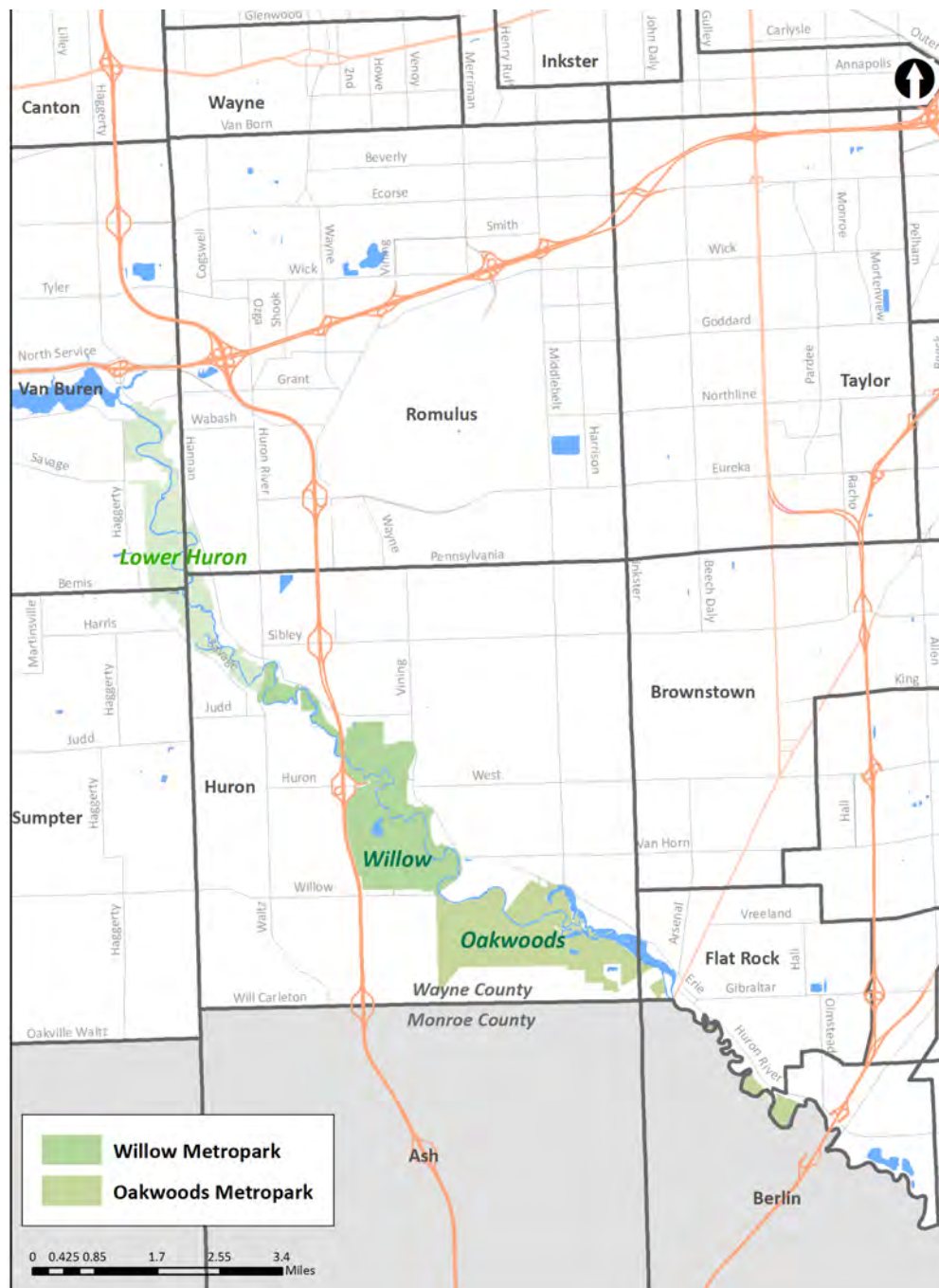
Love **Washago Pond!**



Location

Willow and Oakwoods Metroparks are located in Wayne County, near the border with Monroe County. Both parks are within Huron Township. Oakwoods partially extends into the City of Flat Rock.

At their northernmost extent, Willow reaches Huron-River Drive, and to the east Oakwoods abuts the Huron River. Their western boundary is Waltz Road, and to the south they extend to the county line. The parks are situated on the Lower Huron River, and include a portion of the trail running from Lower Huron Metropark to Lake Erie Metropark, a segment of the Iron Belle Trail.



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.

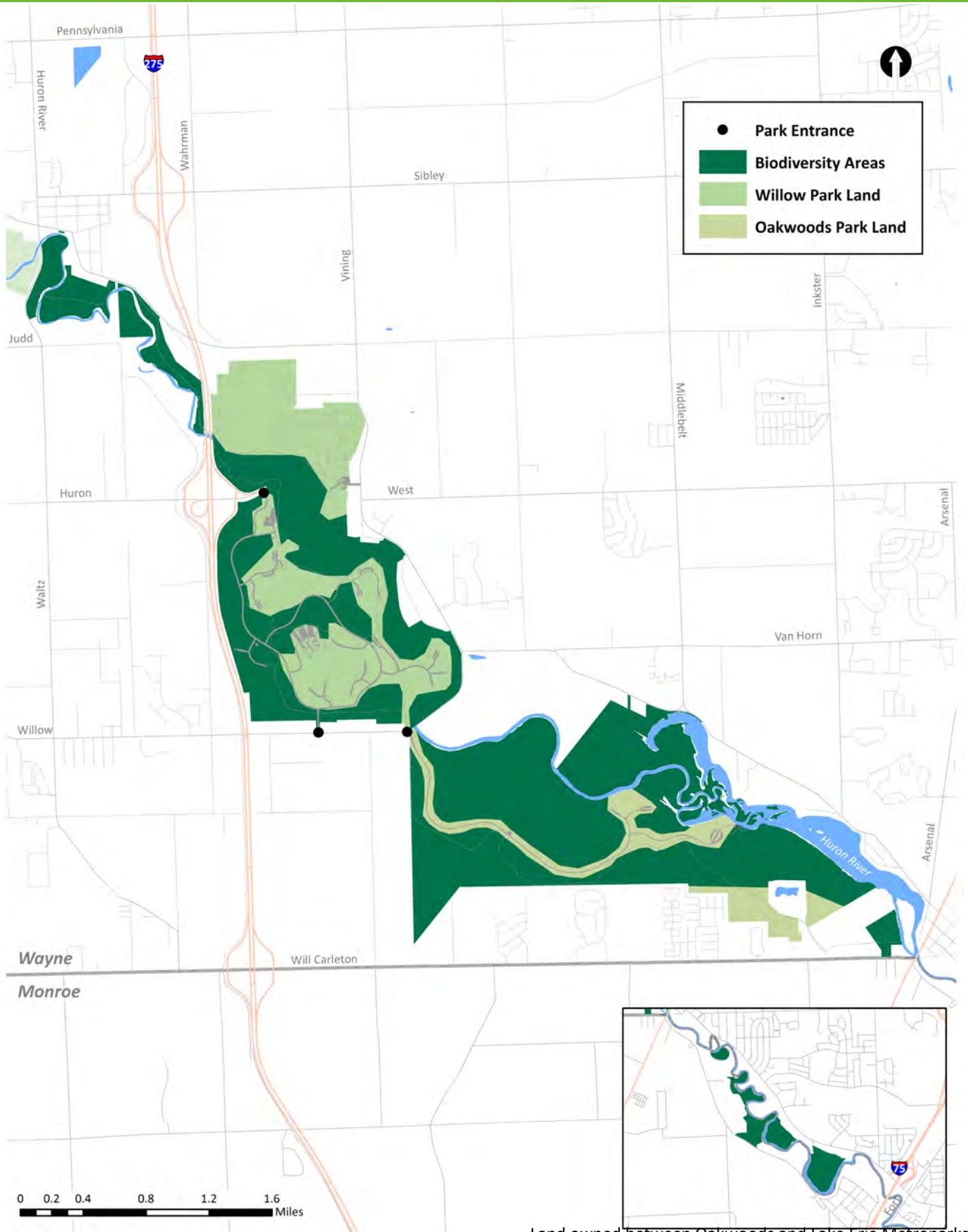


Biodiversity Areas

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 Willow and Oakwoods.

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 (Floristic Quality Index) 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



Land owned between Oakwoods and Lake Erie Metroparks

NEEDS

Better educate the importance of preserving cultural features

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

OPPORTUNITIES

Huron River

A large portion of both Willow and Oakwoods are recognized for important historic and cultural resources known to be present along both sides of the Huron River. Activities, management, and development within these areas shall be sensitive to the cultural resources and provide opportunities for visitor understanding and education.

Willow

The portion of Willow near the south entrance was part of the Wyandot Reservation from 1818-1842. A cabin once stood here where Mary McKee, granddaughter of a Wyandot chief, was born in 1838. She would remain here until 1843, when her family was relocated to Kansas. Later, she would return to the Midwest and share her knowledge of Wyandot culture and history with an anthropologist. The Wyandot of Anderdon Nation today operate as a tribal government and also as a 501(C)(3) non-profit and actively participate as a stakeholder for both parks. Willow Metropark contains



Original survey map of 1818 with additional notes added in 1852, particularly as related to the Native Americans.

Cultural History



Voyageur canoe ride as an interpreter shares a bit of history along the Huron River.

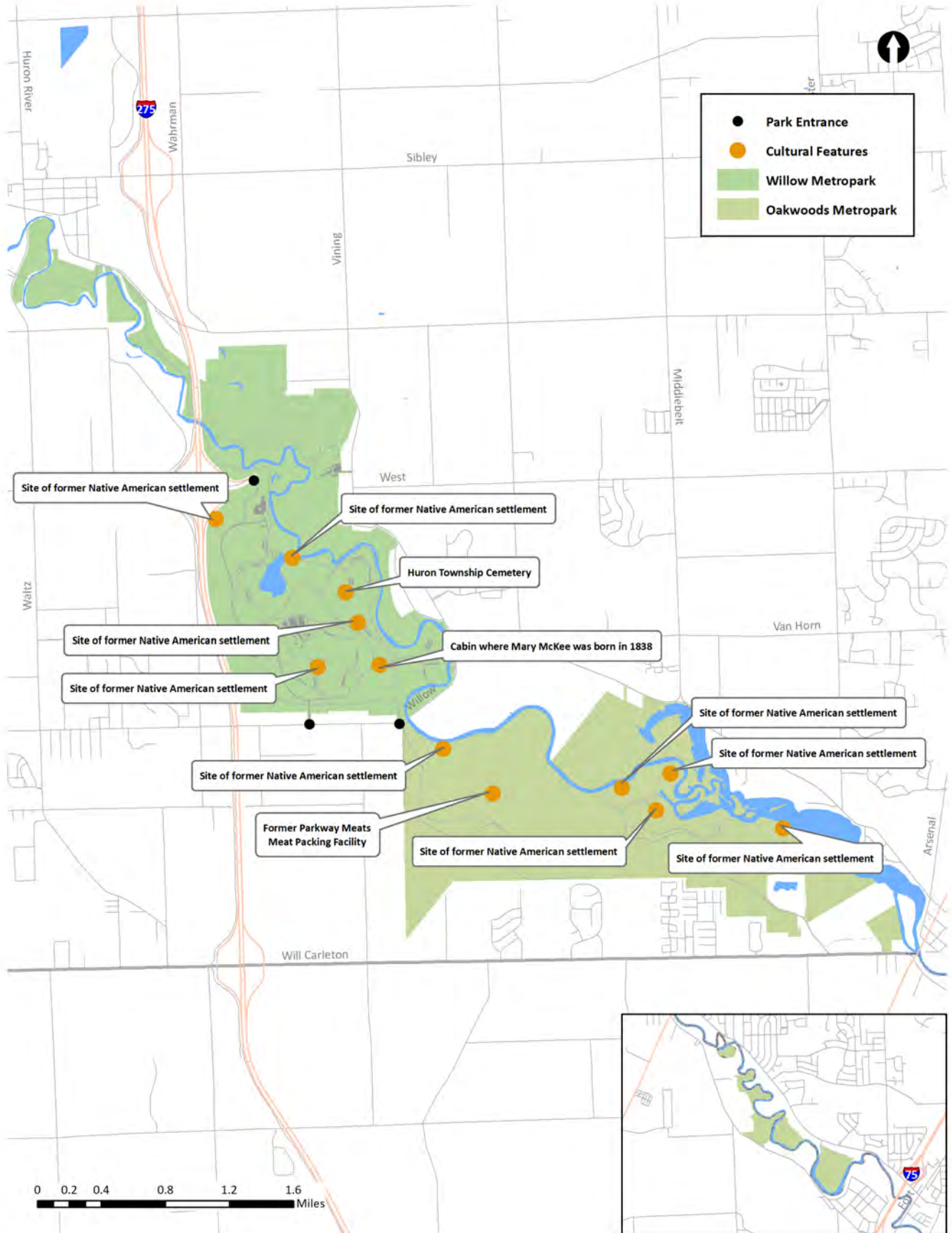
a historic cemetery, known as the Huron Township Cemetery or "Fay and Smith Cemetery." It is located between Big Bend and Indian Ridge.

Oakwoods

The vast majority of Oakwoods was also part of the Wyandot Reservation under the Treaty of St. Mary's. Numerous archaeological digs have been performed within the park by staff and other experts. These digs have revealed both historic and prehistoric artifacts, showing that people have been utilizing this site for thousands of years. The center of the park is the former site of a meat packing plant. This area contains a wealth of historical artifacts, many dating back 50-100 years, when there were houses located along the Old South Huron Rd.



House where Mary McKee was born, built in 1811 by her grandfather Chief Quo-qua.



Land owned between Oakwoods and Lake Erie Metroparks

Infrastructure

In order to serve the varied needs of park visitors, Willow and Oakwoods contain a number of buildings, surfaces, facilities, and activity areas. Many of these were constructed years ago or decades ago and may require replacement in the near future.

The infrastructure necessary to maintain the activities available in Willow and Oakwoods includes roads, parking lots, bridges, trails, utilities, and much more. Since maintaining infrastructure is costly, it is important going forward to avoid overbuilding. Collocating facilities will help to minimize paving, utilities, and reduce maintenance. Although Willow and Oakwoods Metroparks are relatively isolated from other large recreation areas, a goal in the planning process is to ensure that the facilities in the park complement others nearby rather than create duplication.



NEEDS

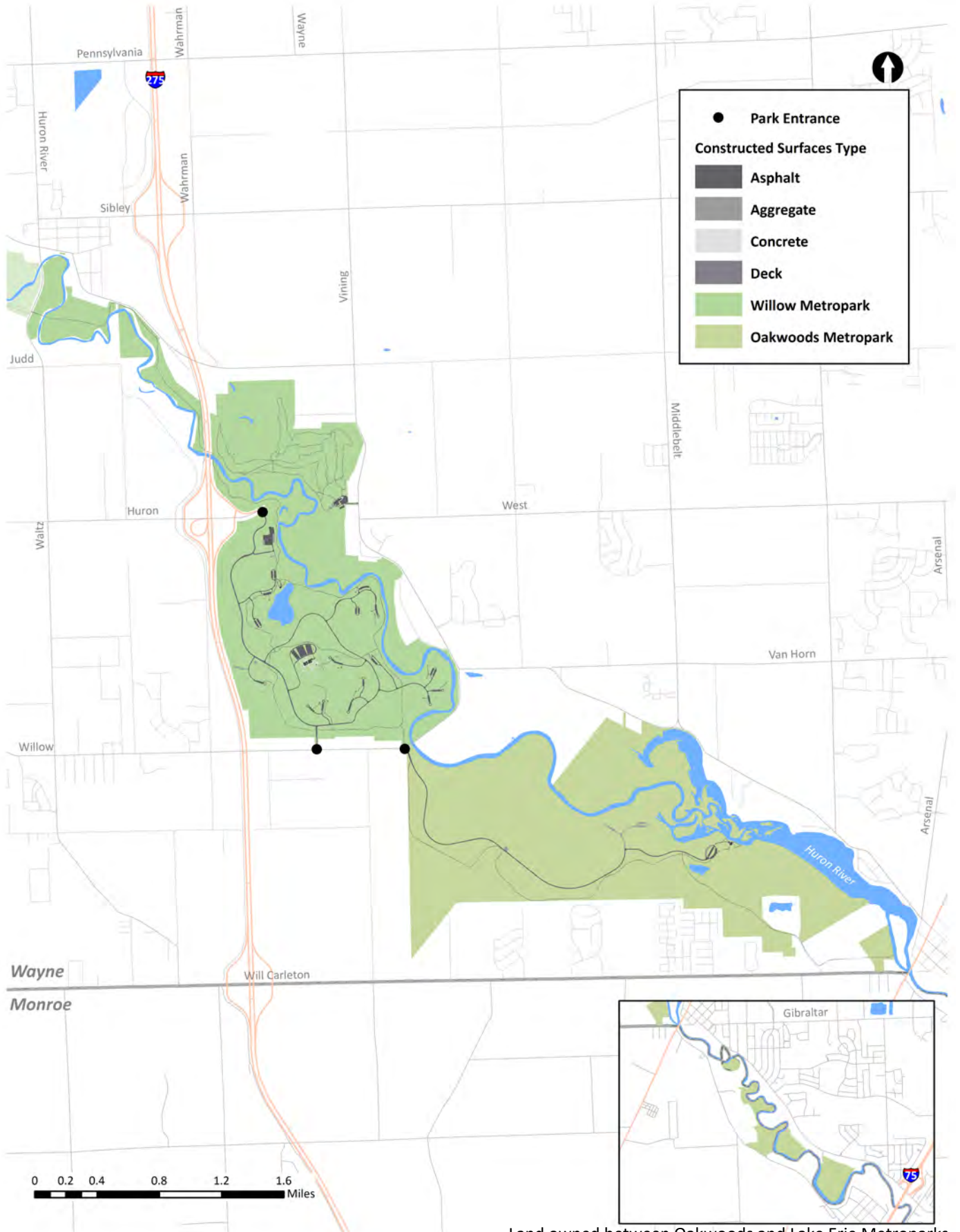
Address aging and overbuilt infrastructure

Redevelop park areas to better serve visitors and the environment

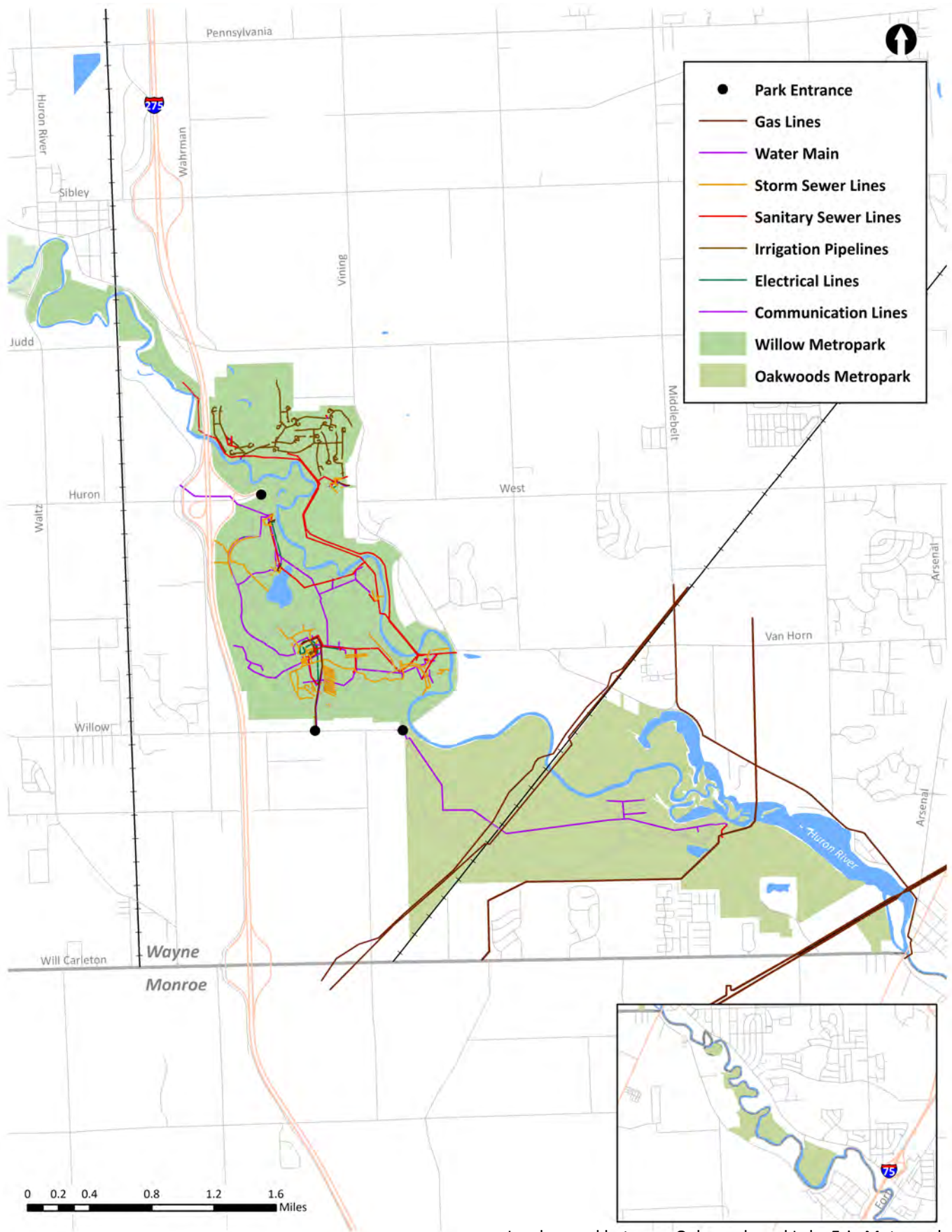
OPPORTUNITIES

Infrastructure		
	Willow	Oakwoods
Public bldgs / avg age	6 / 37	1 / 43
Service bldgs / avg age	8 / 34	1
Comfort stations / avg age	7 / 34	0
Road miles	6.08	3.04
Parking lot acreage	16.91	4.05
Playgrounds	10	0
Percent of park mowed	21	3.5
Picnic shelters	8	0
Sand volleyball courts	2	0
Baseball fields	1	0
Fishing platforms	1	0
Tennis courts	0	0
Ice skating rinks	0	0
Basketball courts	2	0
Public canoe/kayak launches	1	2





Land owned between Oakwoods and Lake Erie Metroparks



Land owned between Oakwoods and Lake Erie Metroparks

Facilities & Centers

Willow and Oakwoods feature a number of facilities that define their 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.

Willow Pool

The Willow Pool facility offers a family waterslide, water basketball, spray features, and a zero depth pool. A large food bar is located adjacent to the water facility.

Willow Golf Course

The 6,394 yard, par 71 golf course is characterized as having long, narrow tree-lined fairways, with water features on nine holes. Willow Metropark golf course includes a starter building, driving range, practice green, and cart paths.

Willow Disc Golf Course

The 24-hole Willow Disc Golf Course is characterized as mostly flat terrain with the longest hole over 700 feet. The course begins near the Acorn Knoll picnic area.

Washago Pond (Willow)

Washago Pond includes a rental center for single and tandem bikes along the hike-bike trail and paddleboats, character boats, rowboats, and kayaks available for the pond. The facility also includes restrooms, boat rental slips, and a shoreline fishing boardwalk.



Oakwoods Nature Center

The Nature Center is the centerpiece and an important component to the cultural and natural resources at Oakwoods, one of the least-developed parks in the Metroparks system. The facility provides interpretive programs, surrounding trails, and Voyageur canoe access to the Huron River for visitors.



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 courses, boat launches, neighborhood sports facilities, and interpretive programs that compete with those offered at Willow and Oakwoods. Relatively few of these facilities and programs available in the five-mile radius can be built upon the park’s unique and significant features. This may present opportunities for these two parks to meet the recreational needs of the area in new ways distinct from other recreational opportunities moving forward.

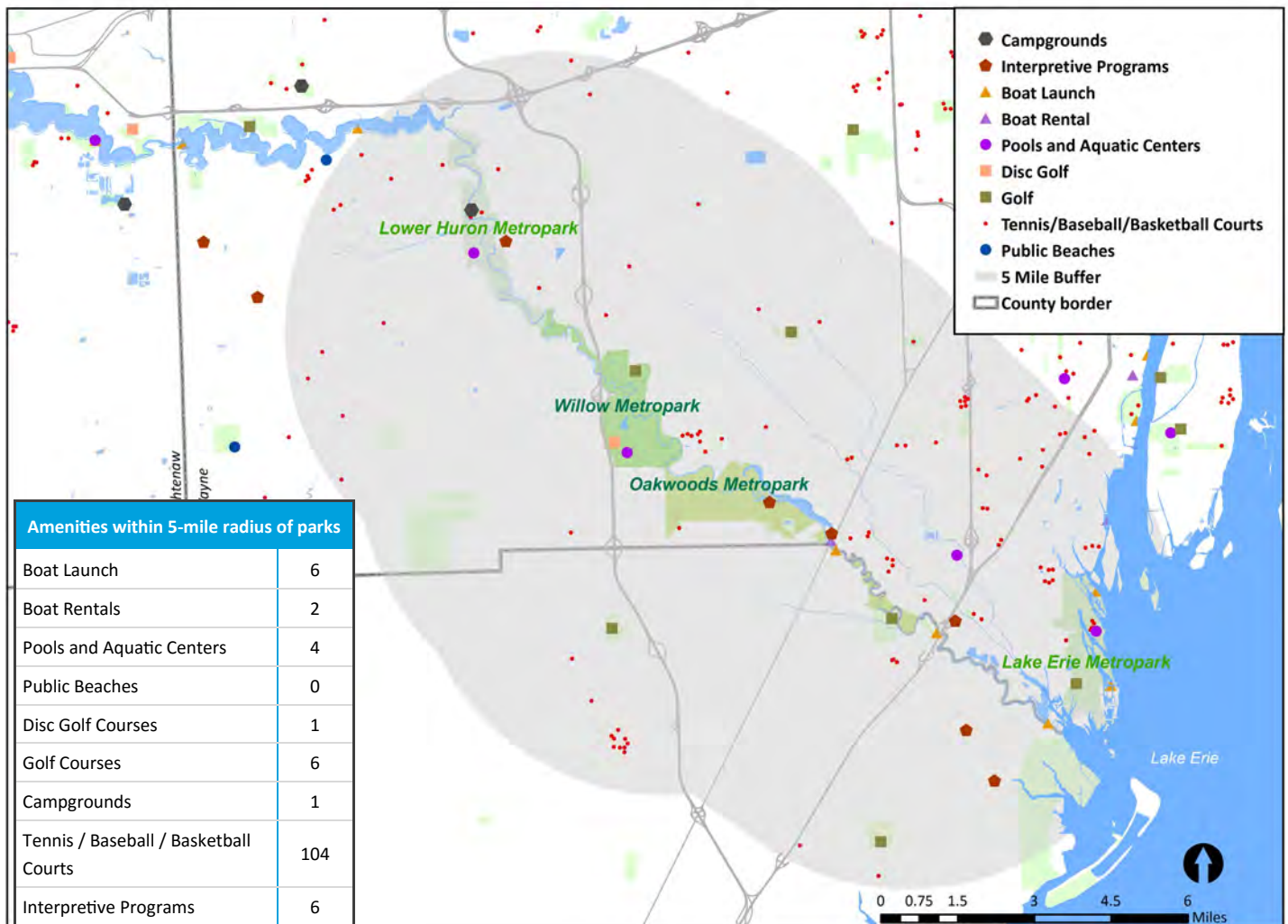
NEEDS

Identify areas of facility duplication for repurposing and consolidation

Provide unique recreational facilities to draw visitors from across the region

OPPORTUNITIES

NEARBY FACILITIES





NEEDS

- Work with county and local communities to address any park boundary issues
- Create good working relationship with neighbors and partner organizations

OPPORTUNITIES

Grants

Over its history, Willow has received two grants from the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) for the renovations and repurposing of buildings and general maintenance. 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. The entire park (100%) of Willow is encumbered, as shown on the following page.

Oakwoods Metropark is one of the least-developed parks in the system. Subsequently, no land is encumbered in this park.

Encroachments

The Planning Department has worked with Willow-Oakwoods 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 Metroparks-created parcels, this will help staff resolve existing property issues.

Since Oakwoods abuts several residential areas, it is important to work with neighbors to discourage illegal 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 parks 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.

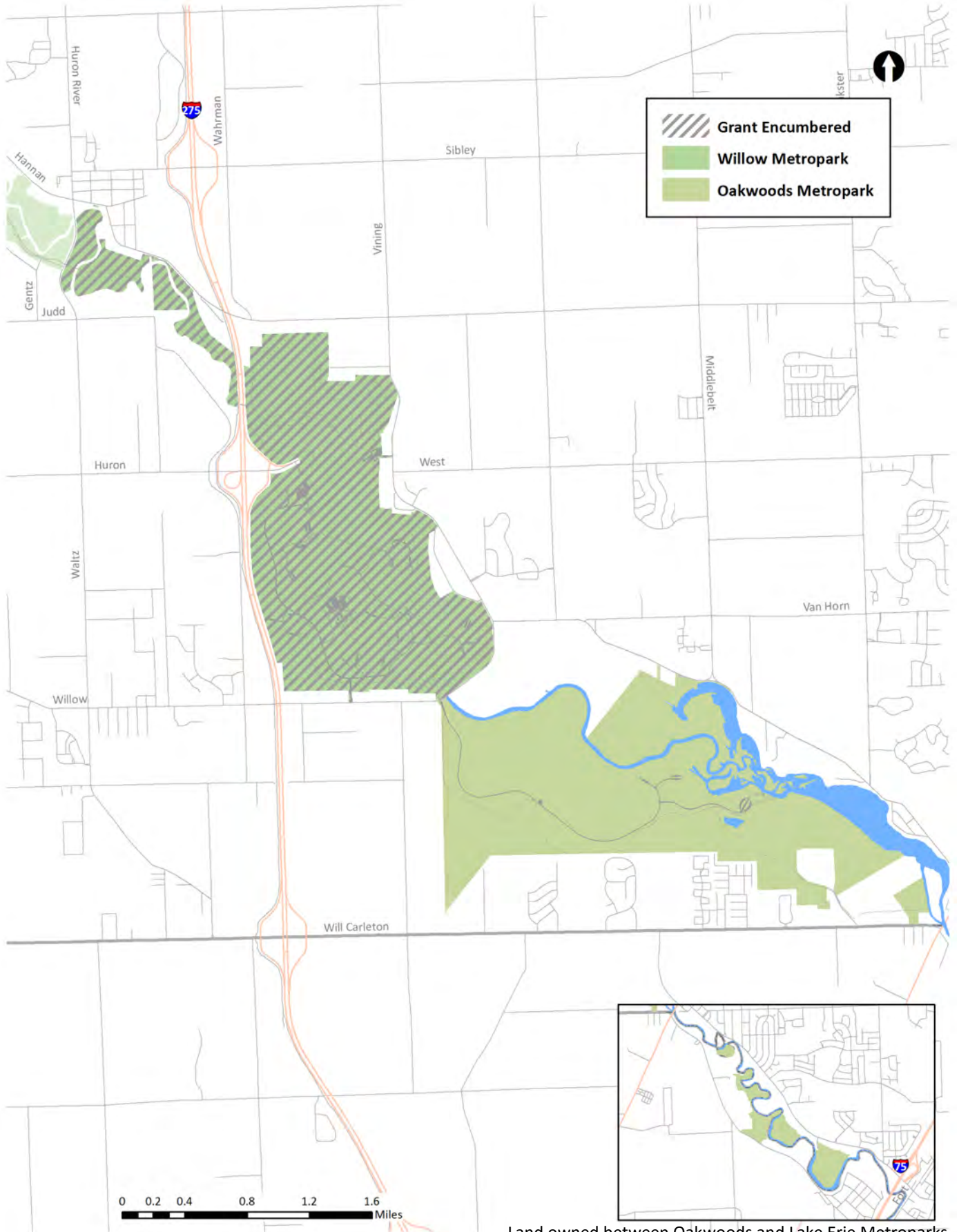
Easements

Willow and Oakwoods contain various utility easements, meaning that utility providers are allowed 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. This will help create the vision of a clean, efficient park system.

Adjacent Property Uses

Surrounding the parks is predominantly single family residential. The western boundary of Willow is the 275 interstate highway corridor. Other land use include agricultural, and small portions of industrial and commercial properties.





Land owned between Oakwoods and Lake Erie Metroparks

Wayfinding

Vehicular Wayfinding

Standardization

Recently Metroparks updated signage installed at various times with various standards and designs. This did not reinforce the parks working together as a system and could be confusing for visitors. As older signs reached the end of their lives, they were replaced with new, standardized signs.

Simplicity

In many parks, including Willow and Oakwoods, an abundance of signage was not necessarily useful for directing visitors. Efforts were made to minimize the duplication of signs to express sign information simply in order to 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 at Willow and Oakwoods include shared use (hike-bike), ski, nature and rustic hiking, 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, new trail wayfinding signs were completed at Oakwoods Nature Center which 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



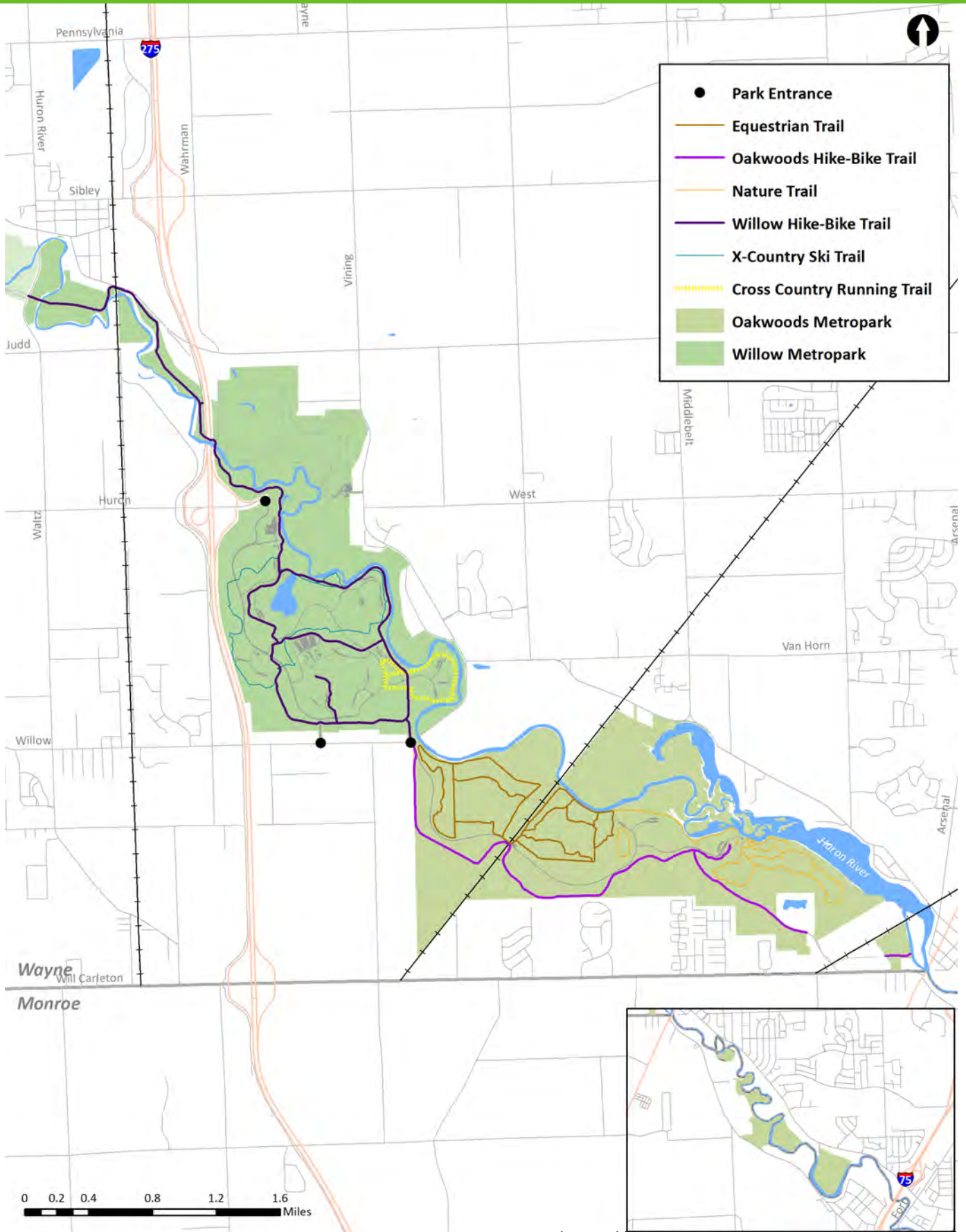
Trails

As part of the master planning process, staff have categorized and defined the various types of trails in Willow and Oakwoods, 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 other trail types within the parks. It will also lead to more standardized maintenance and rule enforcement processes.



Park	Trail Type	Miles	Allowed Uses	Prohibited Uses	Surface
Both	Shared-Use Trail (Hike-Bike Trail)	11.58	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.
Oak	Nature Trail	4.69	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.
Both	Cross-Country Ski Trail	6.74	Cross-country skiing only. Many are used for other activities during the summer.	Motorized vehicles, snowshoes, hiking, bikes, horses, and pets.	Snow covered.
Oak	Equestrian Trail	6.82	Horses and Pedestrians; cross-country skiing is permitted in the winter on designated trails only.	Motorized vehicles, bikes, snowshoes and pets.	Typically dirt single track, trail widths vary.
Both	Huron River Water Trail	11	Canoeing and kayaking	Other uses are present in river but are not considered part of water trail.	Water

Willow and Oakwoods include approximately 30 miles of trails. The shared use hike-bike trail connects to the Iron Belle Trail, the longest state trail in the nation with two paths to hike or bike between Belle Isle Park in Detroit and Ironwood in the Upper Peninsula. Both parks also abut the Huron River and include a segment of the Huron River Water Trail, which is approximately 11 river miles in length.



Land owned between Oakwoods and Lake Erie Metroparks

Accessibility-Willow

To remain compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 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 identifying areas where improved access is needed so that all guests can enjoy the park. A survey of several areas has resulted in a list of accessibility issues present at Willow Metropark. These areas are highlighted below and shown on the map on the following page.

NEEDS

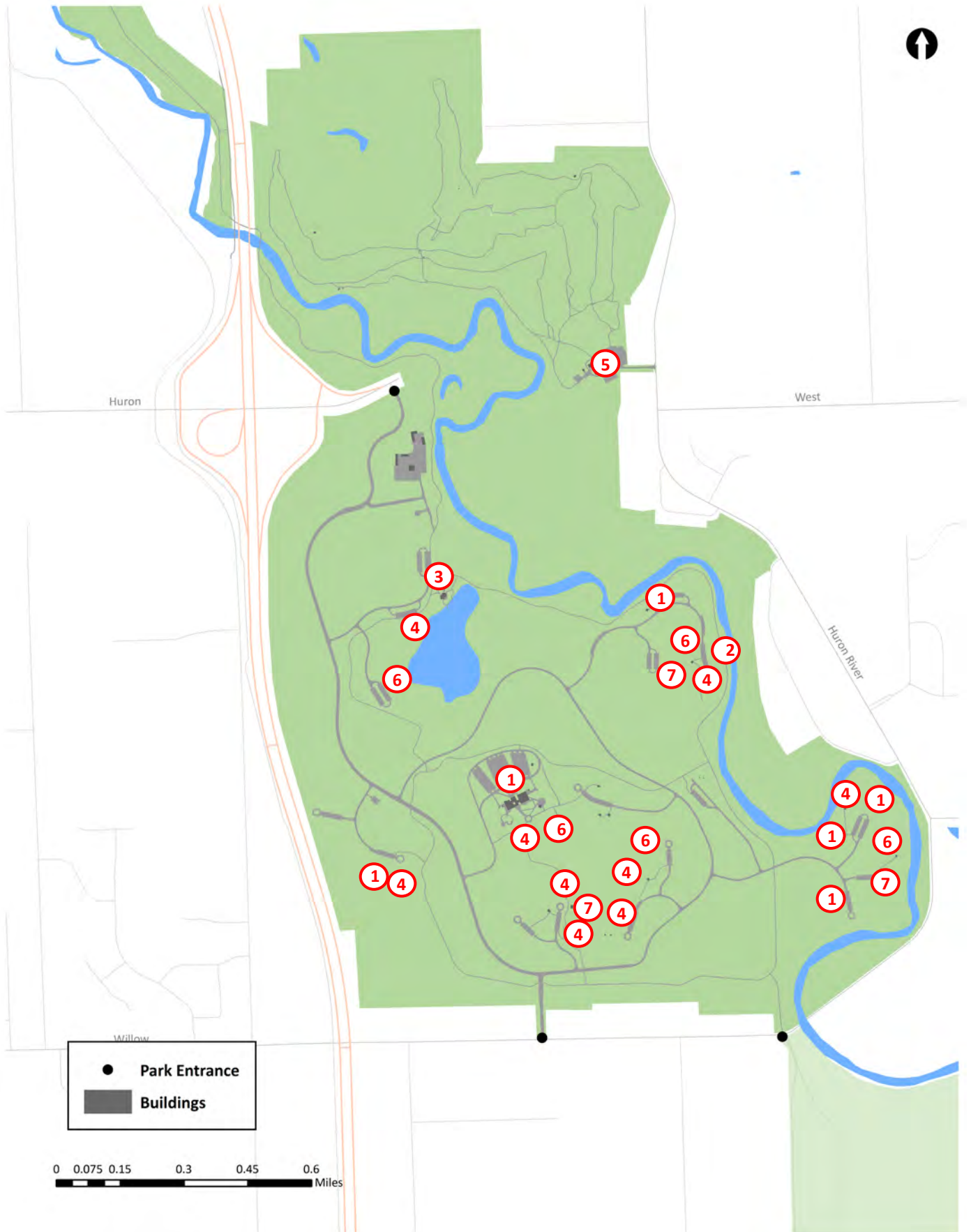
Pursue improvements to park accessibility

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

OPPORTUNITIES

Area	ID #	Description
Restrooms	1	Restrooms need to be updated for accessibility at Golf Course, Big Bend Picnic Area, Willow Activity Center, Chestnut Picnic Area
Canoe/Kayak Launch	2	Accessible kayak launch system and accessible route from parking lot
Washago Pond	3	Parking lot signs and accessible route to building entrance and fishing area
Playgrounds	4	Accessible route to playgrounds at Elder Creek, Big Bend, Washago Pond, Activity Center, Fox Meadows, and Chestnut
Golf Course	5	Accessible route from parking lot to entrance and connections to bag drop area
Court Games	6	Accessible route to Court Games and fields at Washago Pond, Activity Center, Big Bend, and Chestnut picnic area
Picnic Areas	7	Parking lot improvement at Chestnut, Elder Creek, Fox Meadows, and Flint Woods picnic areas

By working with the ADA Checklist provided by the ADA National Network and the Institute for Human Centered Design, the Metroparks are able to prioritize accessibility improvements of facility entrances, services, public restrooms, and other park amenities. The areas mentioned, in addition to others, were identified using the recommended methods for all HCMA parks.



Accessibility-Oakwoods

Area	ID #	Description
Restrooms	1	Accessible restrooms at Cedar Knoll and accessible route to them
Canoe/Kayak Launch	2	Accessible kayak launch system and accessible route from parking lot
Nature Center	3	Parking lot sign
Cedar Knoll Launch	4	Accessible kayak launch system and accessible route from parking lot



Revenue Sources

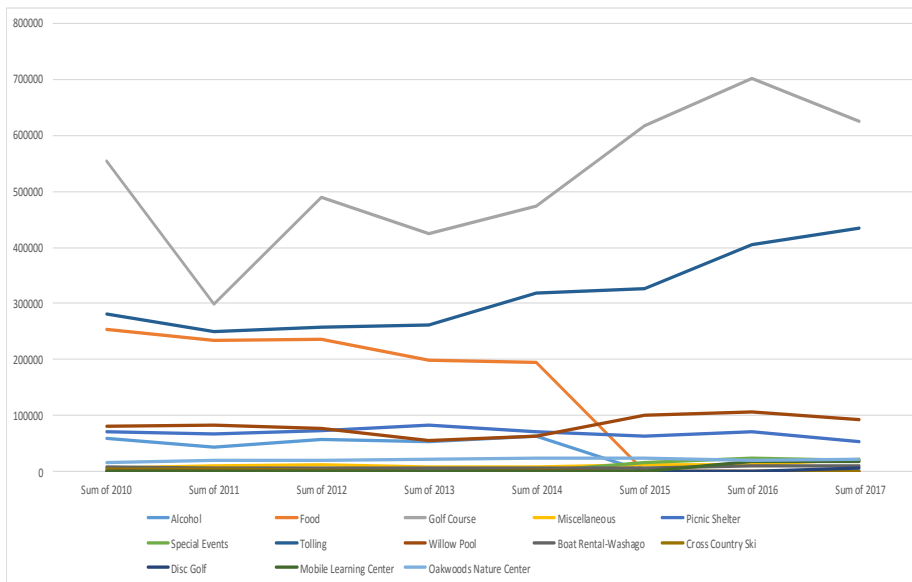
NEEDS

Diversify sources of revenue

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

OPPORTUNITIES

2010-2017 Revenue Trends



The Metroparks 2017 General Fund revenue equaled \$51,974,301. Willow and Oakwoods 2017 operations revenue was approximately \$1,228,132, comprising 2.4% of all Metroparks revenue.

Lower Huron, Willow, and Oakwoods combined budgeted 2018 operations revenues are \$2,905,455, while estimated 2018 operations expenses are \$6,277,199. Property tax and other revenue is estimated to subsidize 54% (\$3,371,744) of the Lower Huron/Willow/Oakwoods operating budget.

As the chart illustrates, the majority of revenue for Willow and Oakwoods (approximately 51%) comes from the golf course.

2017 Operations Revenue

Revenue Source	2017 Total	% of Revenue
Golf Course (Willow)	625,771	51
Tolling (Willow-Oak)	434,740	35
Pool (Willow)	92,622	8
Nature Center(Oak)	22,319	2
Boat Rental-Washago (Willow)	10,068	1
Picnic Shelter (Willow)	18,700	1
Disc Golf (Willow)	6,848	1
Mobile Learning Center (Oak)	17,064	1

TOTAL: 1,228,132



Visitors

Willow and Oakwoods Metropark are regional parks and can draw from the approximately 3,008,000 Michigan residents that live within a 30 mile radius (approximately a 45-minute drive) of them. Certain events and activities may draw visitors from greater distances.

Vehicle entries are combined for Lower Huron, Willow, and Oakwoods Metroparks, and have hovered between 506,650 and 608,921 since 2010, slightly declining over the years but overall moderately stable. Weather often plays a role in attendance to the park; activity areas greatly affected by weather are the trails, Nature Center, golf course, and the Willow Pool. This may explain the peak in attendance visible in 2010.

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.

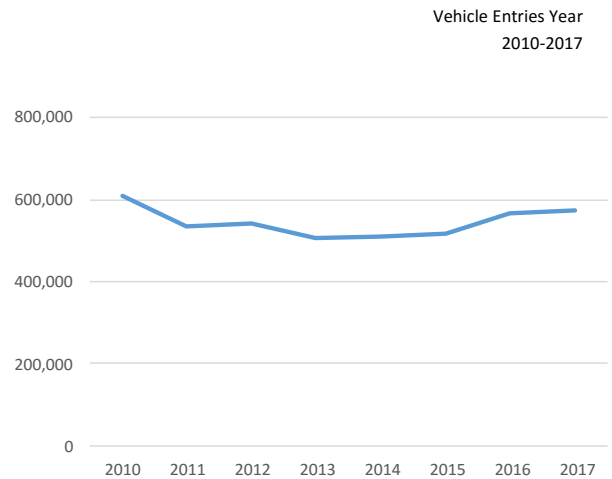


NEEDS

Target market strategy

Take advantage of proximity to urban population to grow revenue and system awareness

OPPORTUNITIES



Programs & Events



NEEDS

Increase revenue and visitation

Build on enthusiasm of Willow and Oakwoods visitors with exciting, engaging programs and events

OPPORTUNITIES

Willow and Oakwoods hosts dozens of events each year, organized either by park staff or outside groups. Many of these are interpretive programs for both children and adults to explore the natural and cultural assets of the park. Some promote artistic enrichment, and others encourage physical activity or advocate for a cause. The significance of the Huron River with Michigan's first residents-both Native and European is an important component in the parks for providing context to many of the interpretive programs for visitors.

Recent events include:

- Connecting Children with Nature Camp for Adults
- Senior Scramble Willow Golf Course
- Oakwoods Nature Camp
- Woodland Fairy Adventure Days
- Time with Toddlers Week
- Vernal Pools are Cool
- Nature Art Camp
- Pokemon Go Camp
- Critter Camp
- Tadpoles
- Explorers Club
- Junior Championship Willow Golf Course
- Outdoor Survival Camp for Kids
- Dream Catcher Workshop
- Animal I.D.– American Mink
- Night Hike and Bonfire
- Early Bird Hike and Breakfast
- Maple Sugaring Through the Ages
- Fireworks
- Muck Fest

Population

The percentage of households without access to an automobile is gradually rising in the region and in Wayne County. However, the municipalities directly surrounding Willow and Oakwoods show a modest trend downward in households without access to an automobile. 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.

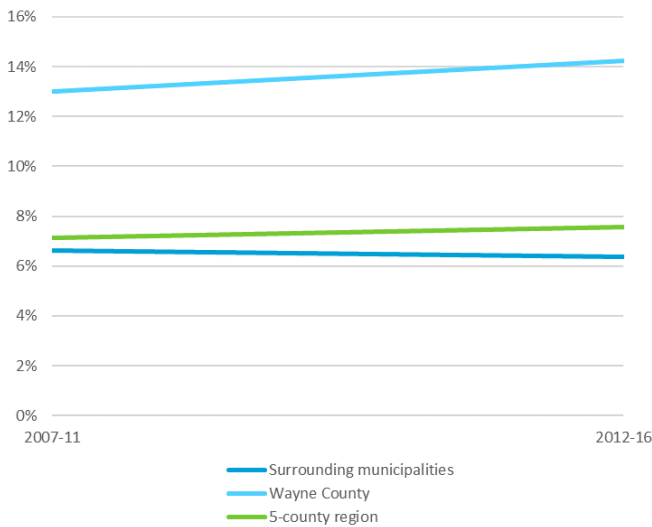
The percentage of individuals over 65 years of age is rising quickly in the region, in Wayne County, and most dramatically in communities surrounding the parks. Older adults have distinct needs, often requiring accommodations for mobility and accessibility of park features such as trails and buildings. This is important to keep in mind when planning the future of a park serving an older population.

NEEDS

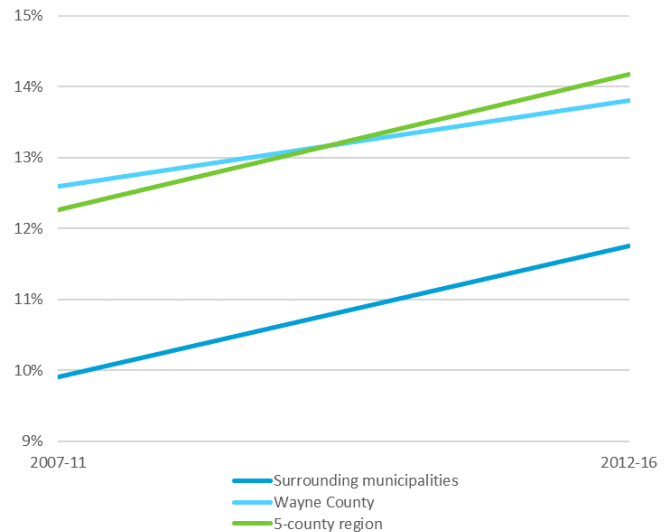
Address changing needs of new population demographics

Draw new users with a connected, accessible, welcoming and safe park environment

OPPORTUNITIES



CHANGE IN PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO CARS AVAILABLE, 2007-11 through 2011-15 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)

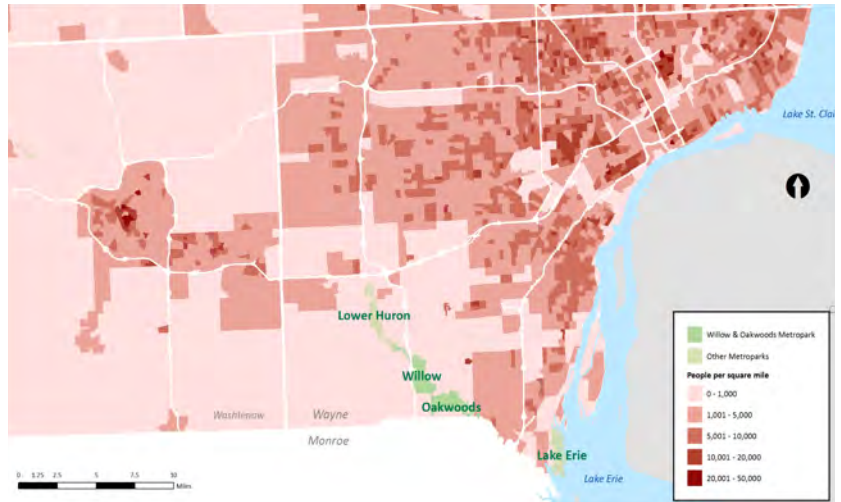


CHANGE IN PERCENT OF POPULATION OVER 65 YEARS, FROM 2007-11 through 2012-16 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)

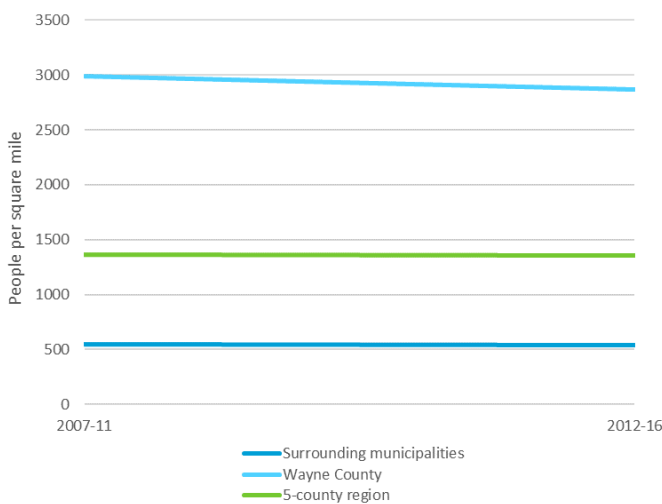
As shown below, Willow and Oakwoods are located in a lower residential density area than many other Metroparks, with the majority of land use characterized as residential. The areas directly bordering the park have an average population between 0 and 1,000 people per square mile. Associated with the noted demographic change will be the impact on housing trends. The aging baby boomers will seek different housing options than past generations of seniors. The desire will be for mixed use walkable environments with more compact smaller housing units, along with more time for passive recreational opportunities that will continue to increase in the surrounding communities.

The population density of the 5-county region, Wayne County, and surrounding municipalities is slightly decreasing overall. Staying aware of development changes in the area will be important to gauge recreation needs.

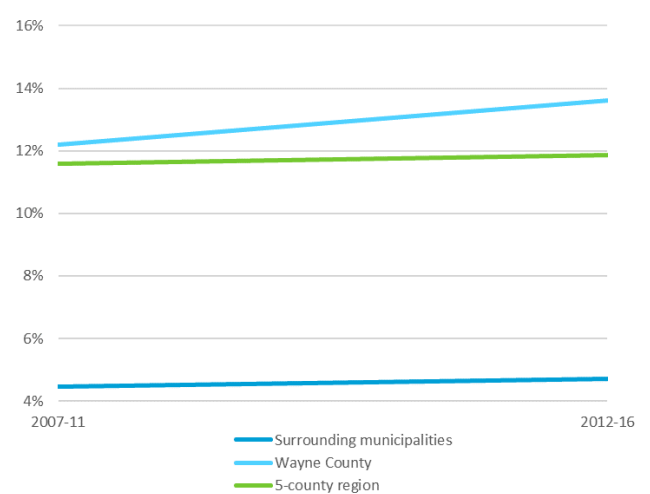
Although most households in the area still speak English as their first language, the communities around Willow and Oakwoods along with Wayne County and the region at large are seeing a slight increase in households speaking languages other than English at home. Because of this growing linguistic diversity the Metroparks are working towards more universal signage design, with a focus on easily understandable symbols.



POPULATION DENSITY BY BLOCK GROUP, 2012-16



CHANGE IN AVERAGE POPULATION DENSITY, 2007-11 through 2012-16
(Source: US Census American Community Survey)



CHANGE IN PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS SPEAKING LANGUAGE BESIDES ENGLISH AT HOME, 2007-11 through 2012-16 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)

NEEDS

Improve connectivity within the park and with the community

Create good working relationship with surrounding municipalities

OPPORTUNITIES

Understanding the goals and plans of municipalities and other organizations bordering and/or containing Willow and Oakwoods is essential for a collaborative, comprehensive planning process. Planning staff researched previous park plans along with the published master plans and recreation plans of surrounding municipalities, counties, other agencies. These provided a basic idea of the direction planned for each, especially regarding land use, development, and recreation.

Wyandot of Anderdon Nation, Six Points Master Plan

- The Six Points Village in nearby Gibraltar, Michigan project brings forward awareness of ecology, archeology, history, Indigenous issues, biodiversity and cultural anthropology.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2014-2018 Huron Charter Township

- Continued partnership with the various area public and private recreation providers. This includes collaborating and coordinating with the metroparks to provide for the efficient administration of parks and recreation services.

Detroit Heritage River Water Trail Vision Plan

- The Detroit Heritage River Water Trail goes through the Detroit, Huron, Rouge and Raisin Rivers and offers many opportunities for canoeing and kayaking in the region. The water trail follows the Huron River through Willow and Oakwoods with river access and a canoe/kayak launch.

New Boston Overall Improvements, 2015

The on-road non-motorized facility improvements in

 Projects/Initiatives

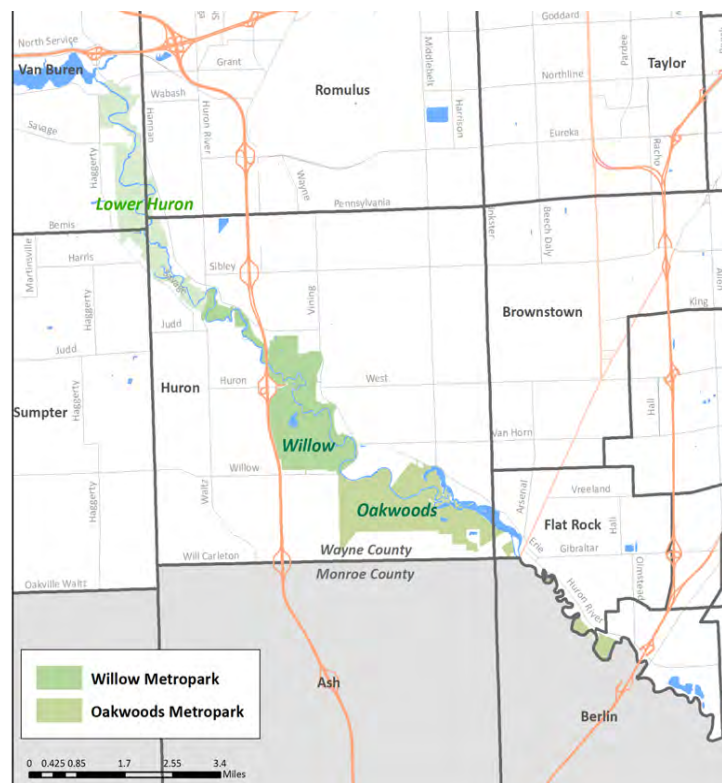
surrounding communities will fill in the gaps to achieve regional connectivity for non-motorized users. The metroparks will need to plan in collaboration for these improvements with potential water trail facilities and hike-bike trail connectors.

Downriver Linked Greenways Initiative (DLGI) Master Plan, 2009 Update

- Twenty-one (21) communities, along with many partners including Huron-Clinton Metroparks, stepped forward and began to map how various trail connections could be made, completed a master plan, and currently being implemented community wide.

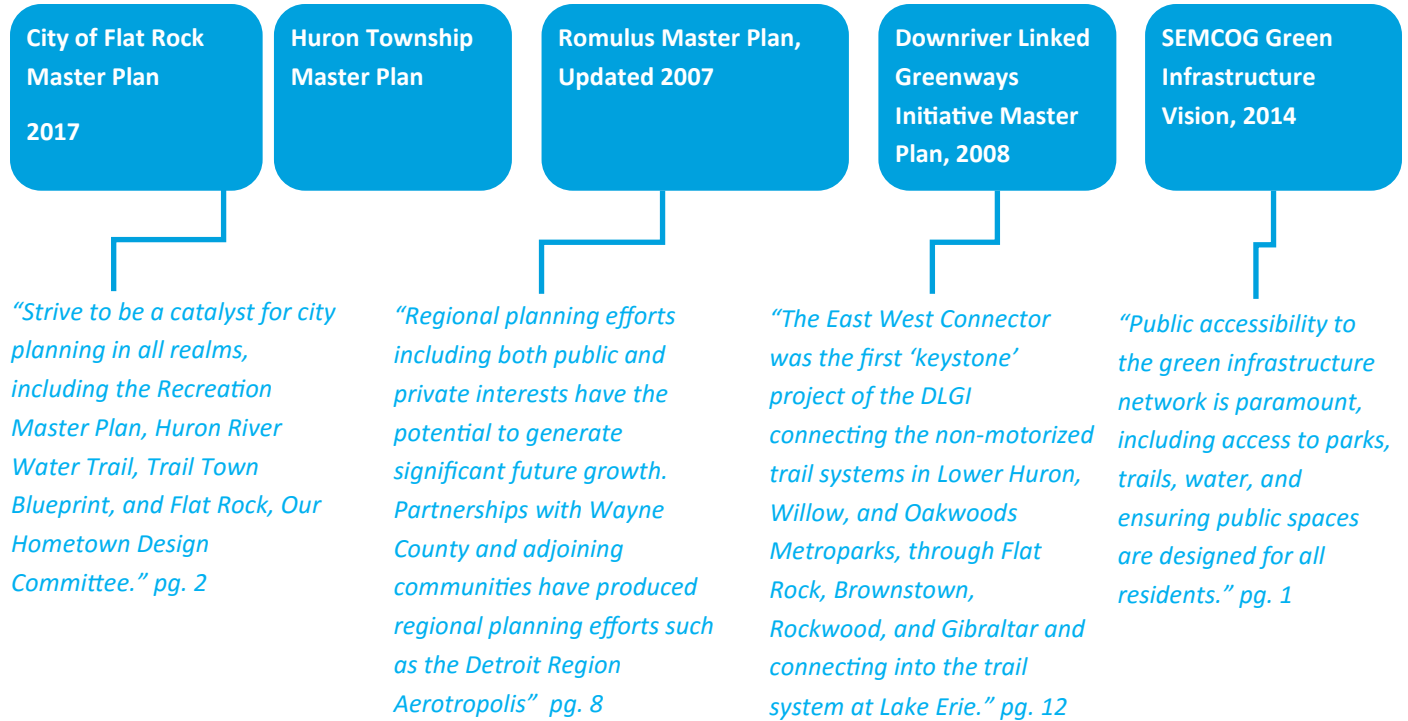
Interpretive Plan for the Huron River National Water Trail, December 2017

- The purpose of this plan is to help communities and stakeholders incorporate heritage on the lower reach of the nationally designated Huron River Water Trail, from Flat Rock to Lake Erie, which will create a more meaningful trail experience and a greater sense of place.



MUNICIPALITY MAP

Relevant Planning Documents

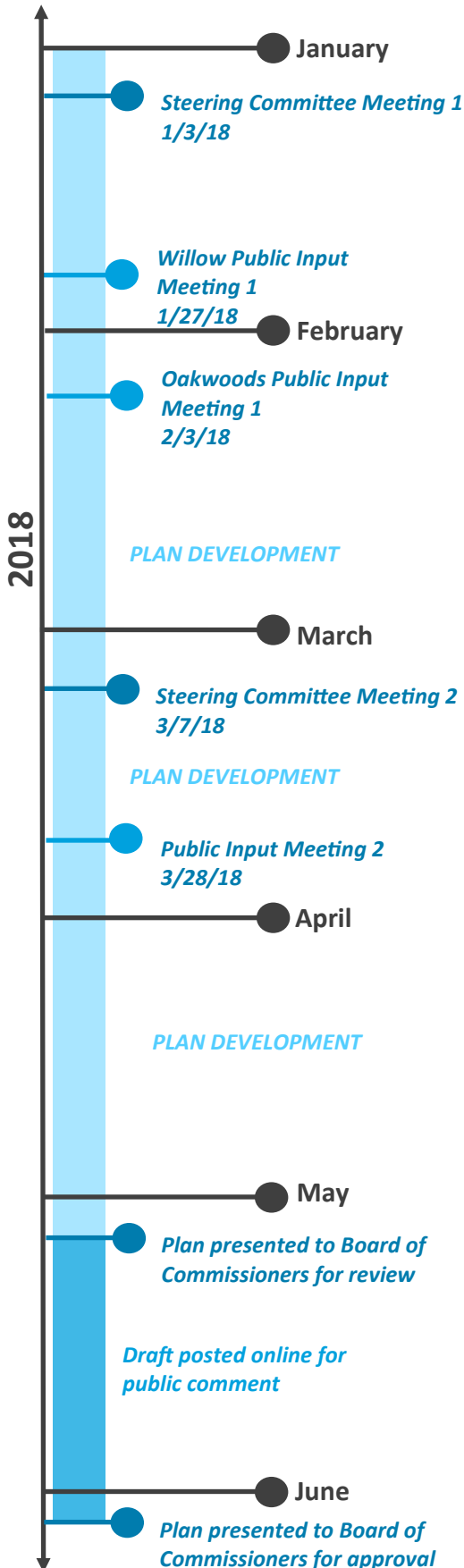


Since the development and land use decisions of bordering communities and other governmental agencies directly impact the park, these neighbor master plans were reviewed and taken into account when creating this document. The opinions and ideas expressed by residents and leaders in these municipalities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

Willow and Oakwoods Metroparks are 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 Willow-Oakwoods 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.



← Outreach Process



Since these parks belong 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 parks 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 for each park with community members to gather initial ideas about the direction of the park. A general park feedback survey for both parks was posted online and advertised by Metroparks social media.

These 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 held for both parks, and feedback was collected, analyzed, and incorporated into a draft Master Plan document.

This document was posted online in May 2018 for final public comment, which influenced the final Master Plan sent to the Board of Commissioners for approval in June 2018.

Public Meeting 1 - 1/27/18 (Willow) & 2/3/18 (Oakwoods)

- 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

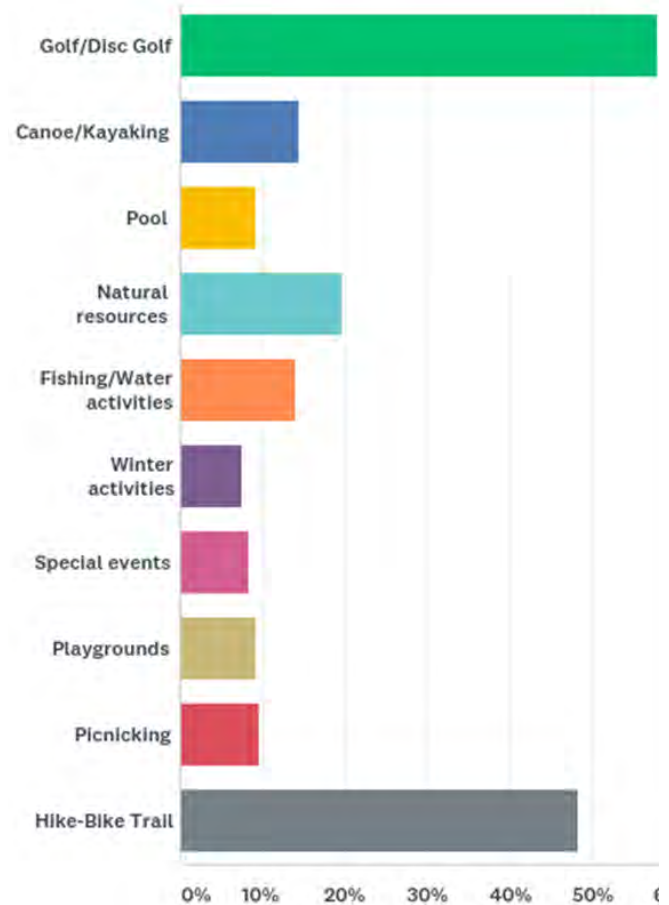
Public Meeting 2 - 3/28/18

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

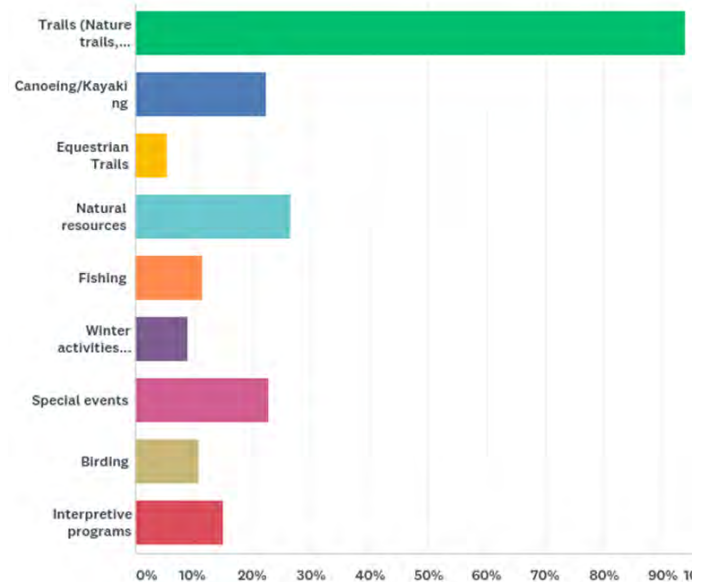
Results

Participants in the survey and in public meetings included a large number of disc golf enthusiasts. They expressed appreciation for the Willow disc golf course, but felt the drainage issues needed to be addressed for greater use and access. They also desired upgrades and amenities to the disc golf facility. Popular feedback on Willow also suggested improvements in maintaining the hike-bike trail, and natural areas within the park. Other themes included access and amenities which included consideration for lower fees, water trail access, and suggesting a wide range of improvements including fitness equipment, kayak launch improvements, resting benches and mile markers along the hike-bike trail. Input gathered specific to Oakwoods had the great majority of the responses favoring greater access to the park from adjoining neighborhoods with connections to the hike-bike trail. This was followed by facilities and infrastructure which included upgrades to the Nature Center and modernizing restroom facilities. Other popular feedback included amenities along the trails and more safety and signage investments. In addition, many respondents commented on not wanting anything done with regards to improvements in the park and respecting its natural setting.

Favorite part or activity at Willow?



Favorite part or activity at Oakwoods?



An online questionnaire for both Willow and Oakwoods was developed to gather general information about park visitors and their use of the park as well as recommendations for improving features and amenities offered at the park. The survey was made available for the duration of the planning process online as well as hard copies available at the public meetings, park office and at the Oakwoods Nature Center for distribution.

Willow Questionnaire Response

Trails

- Mile markers(3)
- More unpaved trails(4)
- More hike-bike trails(2)
- Snowmobile trails
- Resurfacing
- Mountain bike
- Equestrian
- Exercise equipment
- Groomed ski trails(8)
- Hike-bike maintenance(14)

Amenities

- Concessions at Washago Pond
- Ski rentals(4)
- Sand volleyball courts
- Bathrooms(6)
- Picnic tables
- Gazebo at Washago
- Playground updates/new areas
- Disc golf updates web/social media
- Water fountains year round
- Canoe/kayak rentals(4)
- Snow shoe rentals
- Paved shoulders to roads
- Native American displays
- Dog friendly places
- Steps on sledding hill
- More pool features
- DIA
- Tennis courts
- Skate skiing
- Gaga ball pit

- Volunteer outreach program
- More family activities(ie. movies)(2)
- More tween, teenager activities
- Swim exercise programs for adults
- More special events
- Eliminate track and field events

Environment

- Log jams
- Increase natural habitat(6)
- Re-establish oak openings
- Wildlife viewing area(2)
- More tree plantings
- Less mowing
- More bird houses

Maintenance

- Disc Golf drainage issue(63)
- Cemetery road plowing
- Regular grass mowing
- Activity center
- Trash cans/recycling(2)
- Bathrooms(3)

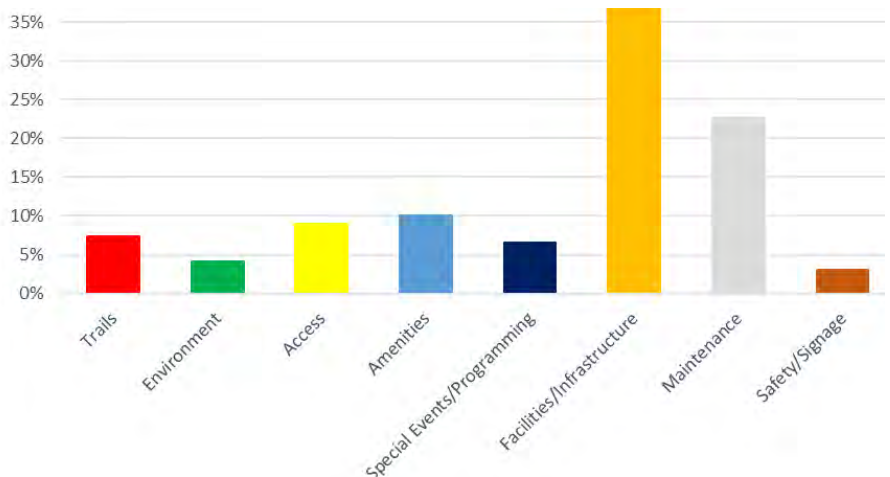
Special Events/Programs

- Music in band shell(2)
- River based recreation programming
- Ski lessons
- More programs for adults
- Sand volleyball league



This chart shows the distribution of questionnaire response topics, as categorized by planning staff. Some responses fell into more than one category, so they add up to more than 100%.

*Uncategorized responses lacked specific suggestions or consisted of only positive remarks.



Willow Questionnaire Response (continued)

Safety/Signage

- Trail wayfinding signs(2)
- Remove basketball from pool
- No swimming signs
- Control the geese
- Security patrolling trails(2)
- Dog rule signs/enforcement
- Improve pedestrian crossing at Willow Road
- Improve signage at entrance

Access

- Cut grass in Chestnut area and keep open in winter months
- Relax geocaching policies(2)
- Free/lower cost disc golf(9)
- Direct disc golf fees for disc golf improvements(2)
- Stop closing Big Bend area
- Better access and use for school groups

- Better bathroom access (open hours park is open)(2)
- Maintain river access
- Improve kayak access
- Lower/freeze fees(8)
- Shared pass amongst vehicles
- Accessible playground areas
- Offer night time skiing
- Consistent hours
- Appreciate Washago bathroom facilities open year round

Facilities

- Dog park(2)
- Add and/or relocate disc golf course(48)
- Enjoy water activities
- Disc golf improvements (pin locations, basket updates, restrooms)(76)
- Better kayak/canoe/boat

- launches(6)
- Rebuild skate park

Other

- Beautiful as it is(3)
- Willow golf course is always in great condition



Oakwoods Questionnaire Response

Trails

- More equestrian trails
- Mountain bike trails(6)
- Fat tire trails
- Groomed ski trails(2)
- Advertise trails
- Connect to other parks(3)
- More hiking trails
- Smart phone apps
- Trail maintenance(9)

Environment

- Plant trees/wildflowers(3)
- Upgrade butterfly garden(2)
- Improvements for hawk/owl(3)
- Keep park natural(3)
- Information on flora/fauna
- Less mowing
- More trash cans/recycling
- Enjoy open areas and wildlife

Maintenance

- River shoreline clearing
- Trails(12)
- Nature Center
- Parks always look clean

Amenities

- Bathrooms(3)
- Ski rentals(5)
- Boat launches(2)
- Shoreline fishing
- Canoe/kayak rentals(4)

- Zip line/high ropes course
- Stable for horses
- Outdoor playground(5)
- Picnic shelter
- Interactive buildings
- Snowmobiles/ATVs(2)
- Water fountains/refill(4)
- More winter activities
- Trail related amenities
- Geocaching(3)
- Concessions
- Warming station

Special Events/Programs

- Senior activities
- River based programs
- Flyers for events
- Hands on activities at NC
- Children, pre-teen, teens
- Smaller individual programs
- Increase volunteer outreach

Safety/Signage

- Interpretive signage
- More exhibits
- Increase security
- Rule signs

Access

- Connections to local neighborhoods(128)
- Kayak access(6)

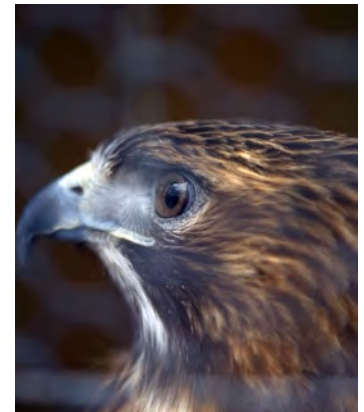
- Extend Nature Center hours
- Bridge on equestrian trail
- Military discount/lower fees(2)
- Open restrooms
- No charge for drop offs

Facilities

- Canoe/kayak launch(11)
- Dog park
- Nature Center updates(19)
- Camping
- Longhouse (historical significance)

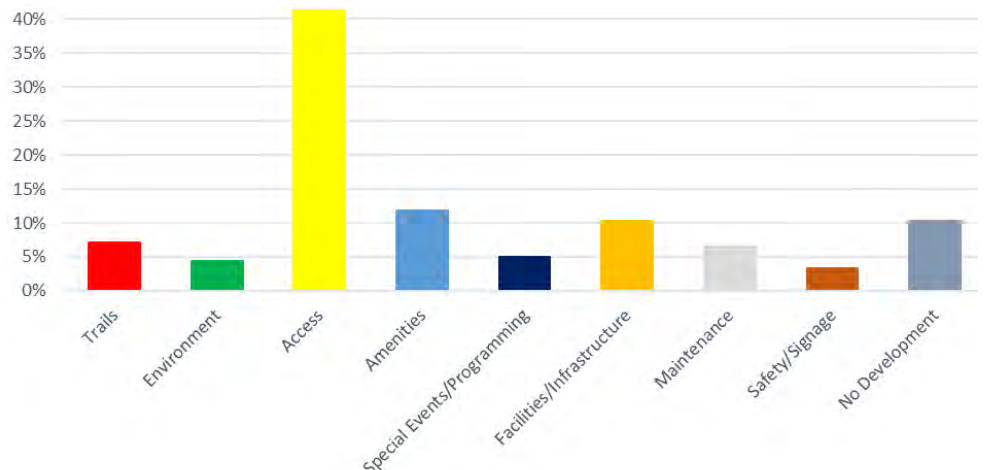
Other

- No development(17)
- Bigger budget(2)
- Staff makes the park(9)
- Park underutilized(2)
- Buy land for deer population
- Great park and treasure for community



This chart shows the distribution of questionnaire response topics, as categorized by planning staff. Some responses fell into more than one category, so they add up to more than 100%.

*Uncategorized responses lacked specific suggestions or consisted of only positive remarks.

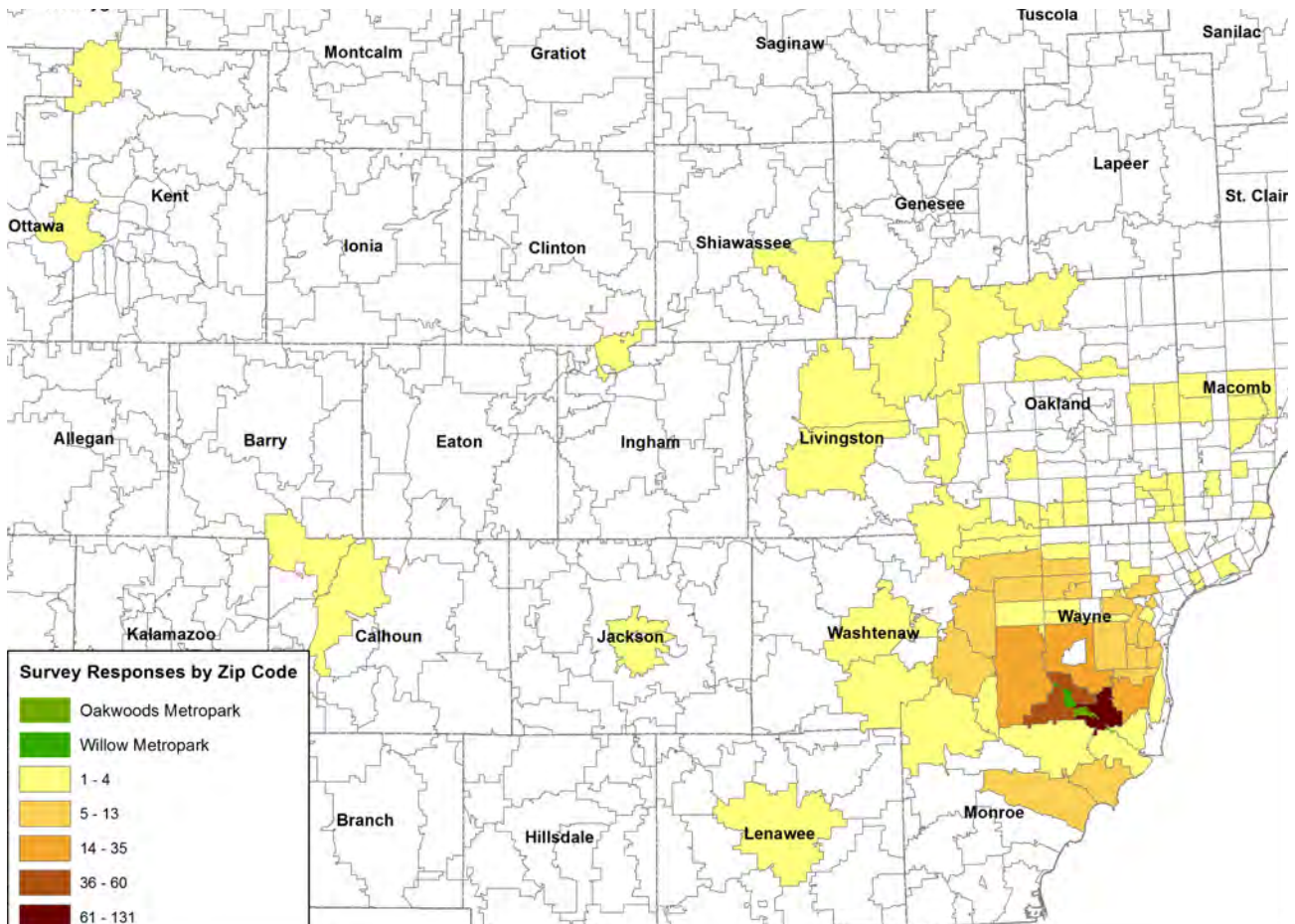


Participation



The Willow and Oakwoods Master Plan online and hard copy questionnaires received a total of 277 and 219 responses, respectively. In addition, 80 individuals attended the three public meetings. As shown below, the questionnaire drew responses from the entire southeastern metropolitan Detroit region and beyond, but were mostly concentrated around the park itself.

Survey Response Zip Code Map



NEEDS

Incorporate variety of opinions and user groups into master plan

Create vibrant park through robust, transparent public outreach

OPPORTUNITIES



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

- Continue to draw diverse range of visitors to the parks
- Define and protect areas with important biodiversity features
- Better educate the importance of preserving important cultural features
- Address aging and overbuilt infrastructure
- Identify areas of facility duplication for repurposing and consolidation
- Work with county and local communities to address any boundary issues for both parks
- Replace outdated, confusing, inconsistent signs
- Pursue improvements to park accessibility
- Diversify sources of revenue
- Target market strategies for facilities (Nature Center, pool facility)
- Increase revenue and visitation
- Address changing needs of new population demographics
- Improve connectivity within the parks and with the community
- Incorporate variety of opinions and user groups into master plan
- Maintenance of facilities for successful operations



Opportunities

- Build on both parks character to attract new visitors
- 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
- Ensure that users of all abilities feel empowered to take full advantage of the park
- Offer new and exciting activities/programs to visitors of the parks to both boost tolling and gather user fees
- Take advantage of proximity to urban population to grow revenue and system awareness
- Build on enthusiasm of Willow-Oakwoods visitors with exciting, engaging programs and events
- Draw new users with a connected, accessible, welcoming and safe park environment
- Create good working relationship with surrounding municipalities
- Maintenance plans and scheduling for facilities (hike-bike trails)



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 parks over the next ten years.

Large Facilities

Park	Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Wil	Relocate and develop new park office (from Lower Huron to Willow)	Eng	Plan, Ops, Maint	Foundation, Contractors, Consultants	\$ 2,000,000	x		
Wil	Implement Willow Pool selective redevelopment strategy	Eng	Plan, Ops, Maint	Foundation, Contractors	TBD		x	x
Wil	Implement Washago Pond selective redevelopment strategy	Eng	Plan, Ops, Maint	Foundation, Contractors	TBD	x	x	
Wil	Golf Course: replace irrigation lines, underground fuel storage (UST) with above-ground (AST)	Eng	Ops, Maint	Contractors	\$ 2,000,000	x		
Oak	Develop playground at the Nature Center	Plan	Ops, Maint	Foundation, Contractors	\$80,000		x	
Oak	Implement Nature Center interpretive exhibit plan	Int	Maint, Ops, Eng	Foundation, Contractors	\$ 350,000	x		



Infrastructure / Small Facilities

Park	Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Both	Accessibility improvements, including interiors, walkways,	Eng	Plan, Ops	Contractors	TBD	x	x	x
Oak	Replace tollbooth	Eng	Ops, Maint	Contractors	\$ 140,000	x		
Both	Paving projects: main park roads, parking lot overlays as	Eng	Ops, Maint	Contractors	TBD	x		
Both	Implement infrastructure reduction strategy throughout parks	Eng	Ops, Plan, Maint	Contractors	TBD	x		
Wil	Replace Willow Pool playground	Plan	Eng, Ops, Maint	Contractors	TBD		x	
Wil	Hike-bike trail connectivity improvements throughout park	Eng	Plan, Ops, Maint	Contractors	TBD		x	x
Wil	Create rustic hiking trail system utilizing cross-country ski trail routes	Ops, Maint	Plan, NR	staff time	TBD	x		
Wil	Partially relocate disc golf course to Acorn Knoll picnic area	Ops, Maint	Plan, NR	staff time	TBD		x	

Natural Resources

Park	Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Both	Fisheries Assessment and creel survey	NR		MDNR	\$25,000	X		
Both	Vegetation Management (annual)	NR	Plan, Ops		\$30,000	X	X	X
Both	Hazardous Waste Removal (annual)	NR			\$1,000	X	X	X
Both	Early detection, rapid response. Invasive species surveys and control in high quality natural areas (annual)	NR	Int	NGOs	\$10,000	X	X	X
Both	Herpetological assessment of the park	NR		Consultant	\$9,000	X		X
Both	Utility Corridor Greenspace Improvements	NR	Int, Ops, Plan	TNC, Utilities	\$25,000	X	X	X
Both	Conduct Prescribed fire in adapted native communities	NR			\$15,000	X	X	X
Both	Oak wilt monitoring and prevention (annual)	NR	Ops	MDNR	varies	X	X	X
Both	Deer cull to maintain deer at roughly 15/square mile.	NR	Law		varies	X	X	X
Both	Shoreline Erosion Survey and Planning	NR			\$10,000	X		
Both	Shoreline Stabilization and Improvements	NR		Contractor	\$50,000	X		
Both	Comprehensive wildlife surveys and mapping (Birds, insects,	NR	Int	MNFI, Consultant,	\$35,000	X		X

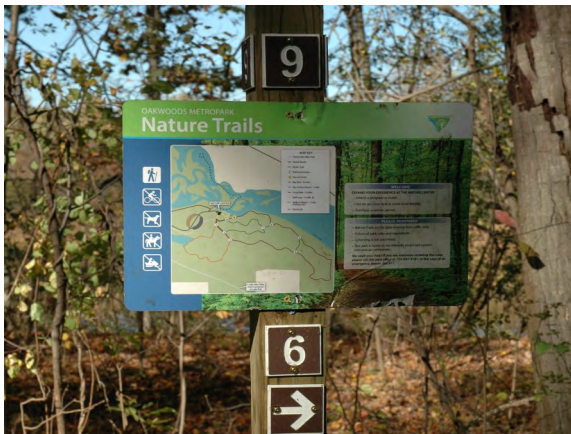
Natural Resources

Park	Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Wil	Green Infrastructure Improvements	NR	Plan, Eng		\$100,000	X	X	X
Wil	Indian Ridge Prairie Restoration	NR	Plan, Int	TNC	\$50,000	X	X	X
Wil	Washago Pond management (annual)	NR	Ops	Contractor	\$3,000	X	X	X
Wil	Willow Floodplain Restoration	NR	Plan, Eng		\$55,000	X	X	
Oak	Cedar Knoll Prairie Extension	NR	Plan, Int	TNC	\$100,000		X	X
Oak	Oxbow/Railroad Floodplain Forest Restoration	NR	Plan	TNC	\$55,000	X	X	
Oak	Grasslands Restoration	NR	Plan, Int	TNC	\$500,000	X	X	X
Oak	Butterfly Trail Grassland Improvements	NR	Int, Plan	TNC	\$50,000	X	X	X



Signage

Park	Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Oak	Develop and install interpretive signage	Int	Ops, Maint, Plan		\$ 5,000	x		
Both	Construct and install trailhead structures on hike-bike trail	Maint	Graphics, Plan, Ops		\$ 4,500	x		



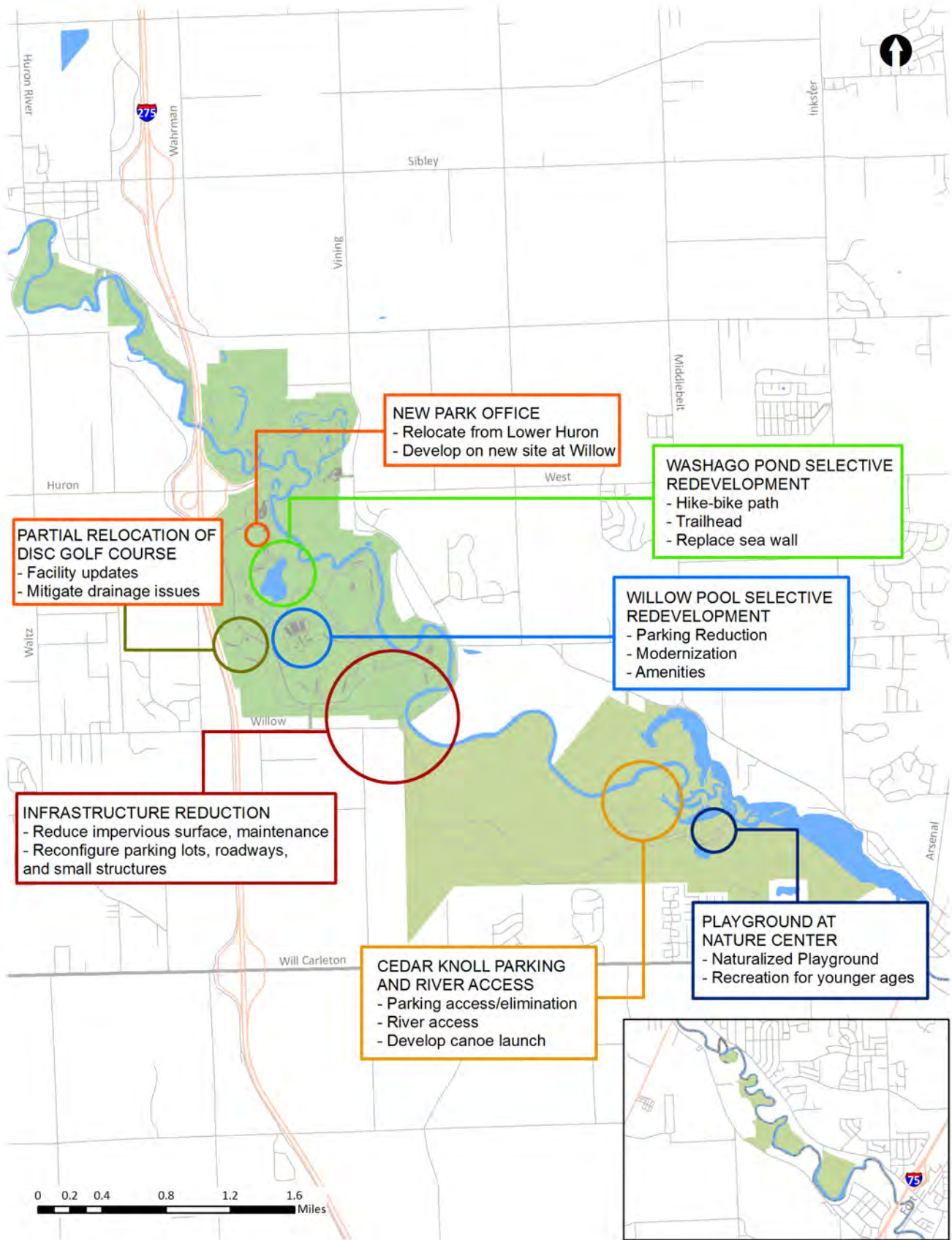
Area Plans/Studies/Initiatives

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:

Park	Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Wil	Willow Pool selective redevelopment strategy: reduce building and parking size, add small shelters and seating around pool, evaluate egress, incorporate employee meeting space, food truck space	Plan	Eng, Ops, Maint		staff time	x		
Both	Infrastructure reduction strategy: Reduce, eliminate, and/or reconfigure certain parking areas, roadways, small structures throughout parks	Plan	Eng, Ops, Maint, NR		staff time	x		
Wil	Washago Pond selective redevelopment strategy: develop aggregate loop trail with naturalized buffer (inc. pedestrian bridge), install trailhead structure, reconfigure trail crossing at service drive, congregate soccer from Big Bend, replace seawall/dockage	Plan	Eng, Ops, Maint		staff time	x		
Oak	Cedar Knoll parking and river access strategy: realign west parking lot closer to the river, develop formal canoe/kayak launch, replace pit toilets, eliminate east parking lot	Plan	Eng, Ops, Maint, NR		staff time	x		

Area Plans/Studies/Initiatives (cont'd)

Park	Description	Dept. Lead	Other Depts.	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2018-2022)	Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Long-Term (10+ years)
Oak	Nature Center playground concept plan, possibly include small rental shelter	Plan	Eng, Ops, Maint, Int		staff time	x		
Both	Explore opportunities for aligned entrances for both parks	Plan	Eng, Ops		staff time		x	
Oak	Nature Center interpretive exhibit plan	Int	Maint, Eng	Consultants	\$ 160,000	x		
Oak	Clear north side service drive access from Huron River Drive	NR	Ops, Maint		staff time	x		
Both	Sustainability initiatives	NR	Ops, Plan, Eng		\$18,000	x	x	x
Both	Establish Invasive Species Control Tracking Website	NR	IT	MNFI, MISIN	\$15,000	X		
Both	Stormwater monitoring	NR			\$5,000	x	x	x
Both	Review all proposed earthwork activities for potential impact on historic/cultural resources	NR	Int, Plan, Eng	SHPO, EMU	staff time	x	x	x
Both	Work with partners to record, protect and preserve artifacts and document sites when deemed necessary following investigation based on review	Int	Plan, Ops	EMU	staff time	x	x	x



Key Projects

New Park Office at Willow

2018-2022

The new park office will be relocated from Lower Huron to Willow and serve as the Lower Huron-Willow-Oakwoods park office. Building improvements and site improvements will comply with ADA. The design consultant has been selected. Design should be completed by the end of 2018, and construction is anticipated in 2019.

Needs:

- Standardization
- Modernization
- Accessibility

Solutions:

- Suitable site relocation at Willow
- Building modernization
- Landscaping/beautification



Willow Pool Selective Redevelopment

2023-2028+

The pool facility needs to develop strategies for building, site, and programming. Building improvements and site improvements will need to consider ADA compliance

Needs:

- Reduce building and parking size
- Amenities near pool
- Modernize meeting spaces and food services

Solutions:

- Partial removal of parking spaces
- Add picnic tables near pool
- Food trucks



Washago Pond Selective Redevelopment at Willow

2018-2027

At Washago Pond, site improvements include repairs to the water control structure. Also the hike-bike trail will be reconfigured to separate trail users from the service drive.

Needs:

- Access (water and trails)
- Trailhead improvements
- Replace seawall/dockage

Solutions:

- New hike-bike path
- Realign trail and service drive
- Modernization



Infrastructure Reduction at both Metroparks

2018-2022

The reduction of parking areas and roadways will be prioritized for both parks.

Needs:

- Reduce impervious surfaces
- Less maintenance
- Under utilized infrastructure

Solutions:

- Remove surface lots
- Reconfigure certain parking areas,
- Roadways, and small structures



Cedar Knoll Parking and River Access Strategy

2018-2022

At Oakwoods, improvements at Cedar Knoll promoting river access with additional amenities. The parking and river access strategy includes realignment of the west parking lot closer to the river, develop a formal canoe/kayak launch, replace pit toilets, and eliminate the east parking lot.

Needs:

- Parking access
- River access
- Water trail amenities

Solutions:

- Eliminate surface parking
- Add paths to river
- Develop canoe launch



Playground near Oakwoods Nature Center

2018-2022

Look to activate the dormant parking area west of the lot.

Needs:

- Amenities at Nature Center
- Playground concept plan
- Recreation for younger age groups

Solutions:

- Consider concept of naturalized playground
- Activate more of the parking area



Partial Relocation of Disc Golf Course at Willow

2023-2027

The public input provided strong support for partial relocation of the disc golf course to the Acorn Knoll parking area. Disc golfers would benefit from improved surface lot, restrooms, and forested upland area.

Needs:

- Facility updates
- Drainage issues
- Maintenance

Solutions:

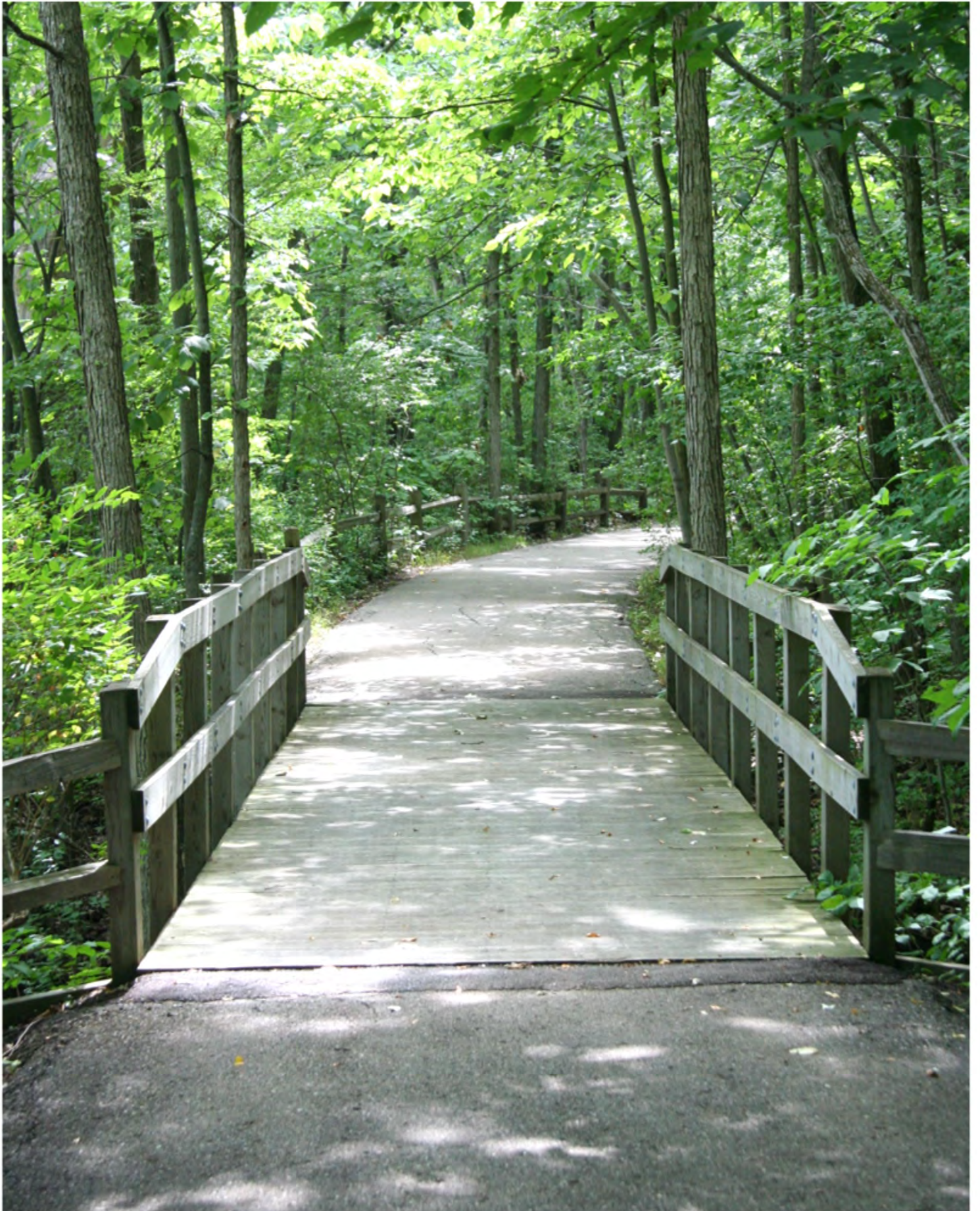
- Improved surface lot
- Restroom
- Relocation to mitigate drainage issues



Other Projects

- Hike-bike trail connectivity improvements at Willow
- Install trailhead structures on hike-bike trails for both Metroparks
- Implement Oakwoods Nature Center interpretive exhibit plan
- Grasslands restoration at Oakwoods
- Willow Golf Course: replace irrigation lines, UST with AST









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