

# WOLCOTT MILL METROPARK MASTER PLAN



5 Year Update to 2016 - 2026

**DRAFT**



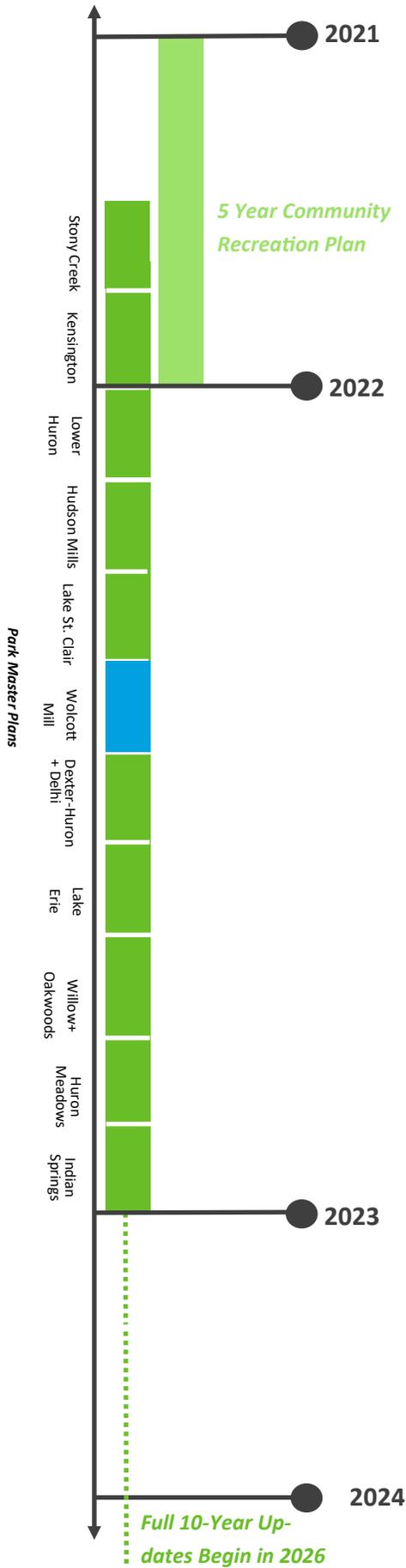
# Introduction

## Planning Process

The five-year update is an opportunity for each of the 13 Metroparks to review their master plan and make sure it is still relevant. This review includes 1) major changes to facilities, infrastructure and programming in the park; 2) updated needs and opportunities; 3) completed action items; and 4) any new actions necessary to implement the goals and policies for the park. One of the most important components is the public input collected through meetings, questionnaires, and online comments, all of which influence plan recommendations. A master plan steering committee was formed to include park employees with exceptional knowledge of Wolcott Mill and surrounding community who, along with the experienced Metroparks administrative department heads provided their professional opinions.

The Planning and Development Department also included updates to the demographic and spatial data to inform recommendations. Demographic data looks at the density, age, income, language, and other factors of the regional population. Spatial data, usually analyzed through Geographic Information System (GIS) 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 staff conducted 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 with this review every five years. However, they focus on park developments over ten years, and will be updated through a more comprehensive planning process at the end of the planning horizon.



The Steering Committee met on 06/14/2022

# REVENUE

## Revenue Sources

### 2021 Operations Revenue

Revenue Source	2021 Total
Tolling	34,124.00
Group Camping-Shorian Lodge	8,450.00
Activity Center Rental	13,925.00
Picnic Shelter Reservations	2,169.00
Special Events	320.00
Interpretive	4,471.00
Farm	128,743.00
Miscellaneous	2,347.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>175,565.00</b>

REVENUE TRENDS—2016-2021

### NEEDS

Address falling tax revenue

Direct resources to higher revenue,  
lower expenditure areas

### OPPORTUNITIES

The Metroparks 2021 General Fund revenue equaled \$59,729,968. Wolcott Mill’s 2021 operations revenue was \$194,550, comprising about 1% of all Metroparks revenue.

Wolcott Mill’s budgeted 2020 operations revenues are \$175,565, while estimated 2020 operations expenses are \$1,552,922. Property tax and other revenue will subsidize 88.7% (\$1,377,357) 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.

# 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

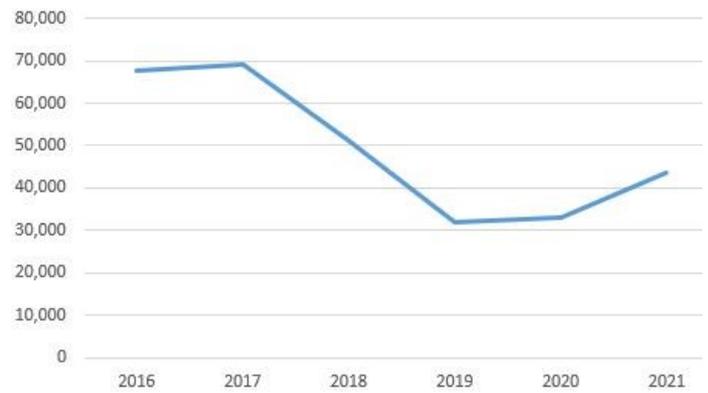
### NEEDS

Add tollbooths where needed

Collect more robust visitor data

### OPPORTUNITIES

VEHICLE ENTRIES 2016-2021



Wolcott Mill Metropark 30-Mile radius



# Programs & Events

## NEEDS

Increase revenue and visitation

Draw visitors through programs that highlight unique historic and agricultural themes

## OPPORTUNITIES



Trail riding event



Baby goats at the Babies, Babies! event



Interpretation at Maple Sugaring Festival

### 2022 Integrated Marketing Plan

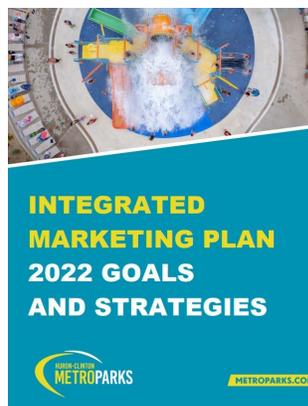
Educational and public programs looked much different than “average” in 2020. Staff adjusted to ever-changing situations of the pandemic to continue serving visitors on multiple platforms using virtual and hybrid programs, as well as small-group, in person, outdoor programs. These new practices will carry over into 2022 and staff will continue working collaboratively to provide exciting new experiences for the Lower Huron communities in ways that are safe and engaging.

### 2020-2022 Recreation Programming Plan

In 2022, the Metroparks amended the 2020-2022 Community Recreation Plan to include a Recreation Programming Plan.

An important element of programming is accessibility and ensuring all programs, events, and services are compliant with the American Disability Act (ADA) requirements.

To achieve this, the Metroparks has begun self-evaluation of all programming and services offered by each department. Each program was categorized into groups of similar activities (e.g. programs, events, activities) and will then be analyzed each activity in terms of vision, hearing, and mobility barriers that may exist.



# 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

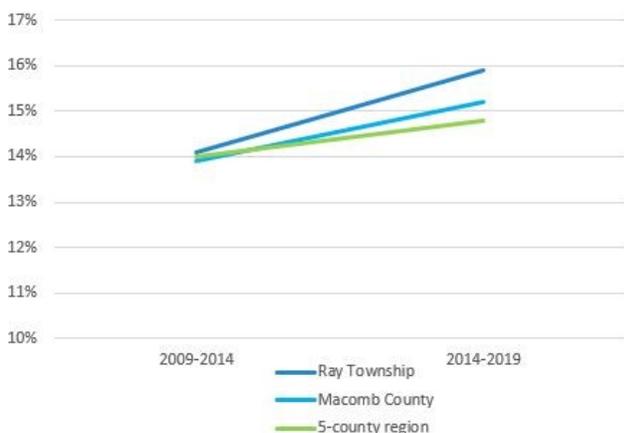
The 5-county region shows a very low and falling number of households without access to an automobile. However, the percentage of such households is rising throughout the Ray Township and in Macomb County.

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.

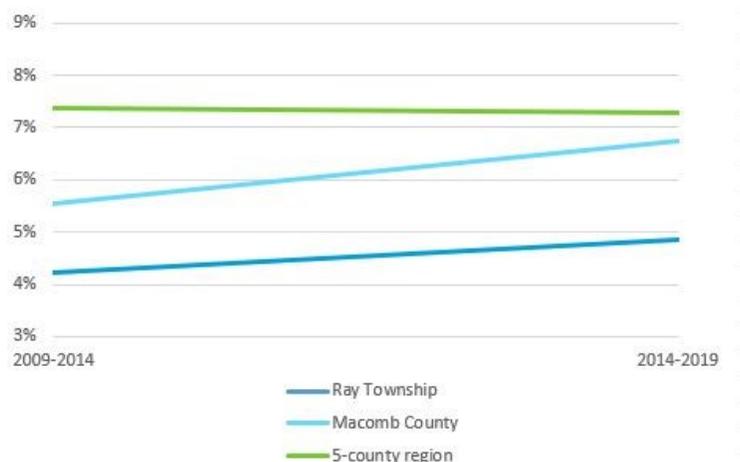
As shown in the map below, Wolcott Mill is located in the more rural, low-density area of southeast Michigan, with an average of less than one thousand residents per square mile. This creates unique land use and park access challenges and opportunities.

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 2009-2014 through 2014-2019 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)

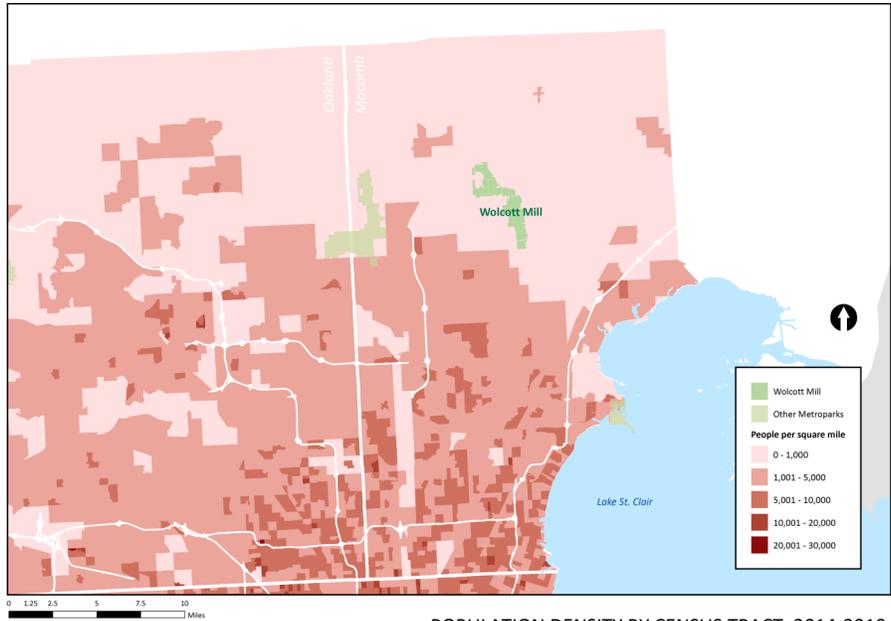


CHANGE IN PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO CARS AVAILABLE, 2009-2014 through 2014-2019 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)

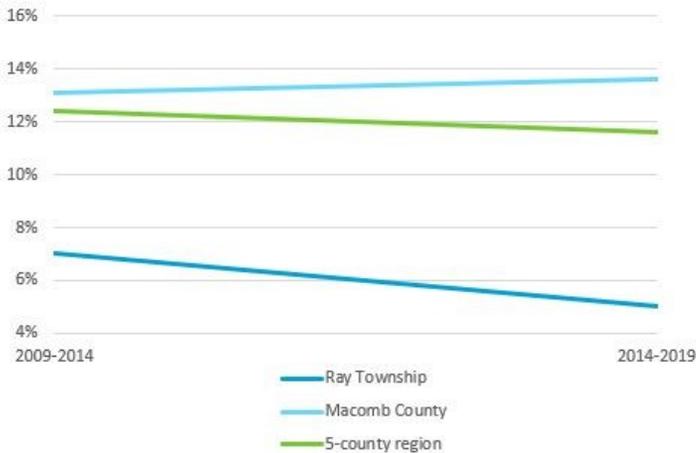
# Community Influences

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.

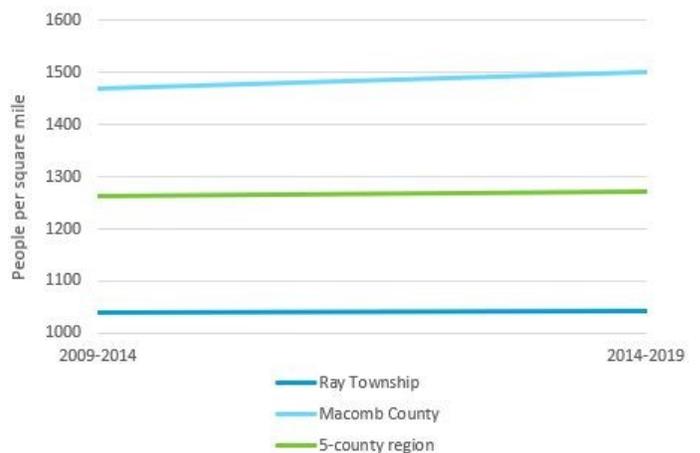
Although most households in the area still speak English as their first language, in Macomb County there is a growing number of households speak other languages at home. Ray Township has a much lower percentage of these households and the percentage has in fact dropped over the past ten years. Still, 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, 2014-2019



CHANGE IN PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS SPEAKING LANGUAGE BESIDES ENGLISH AT HOME, 2009-2014 through 2014-2019 (Source: US Census American Community Survey)



CHANGE IN AVERAGE POPULATION DENSITY, 2009-2014 through 2014-2019 (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

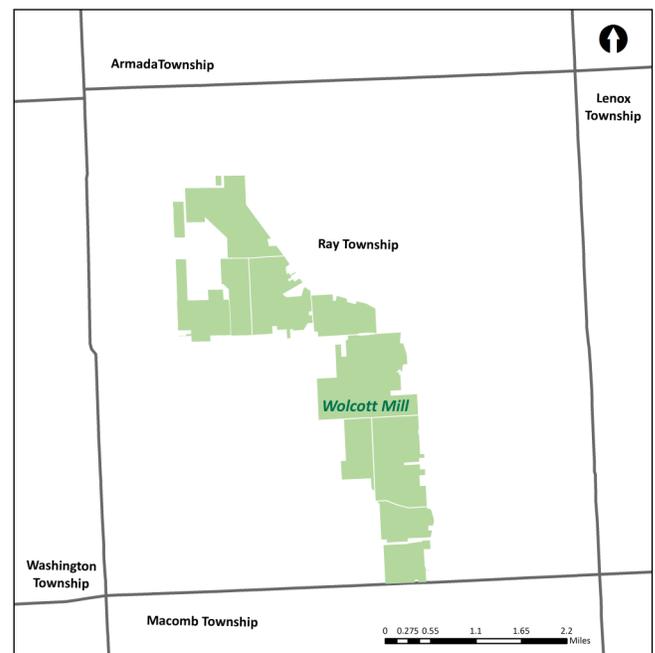


# Projects & Initiatives

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.

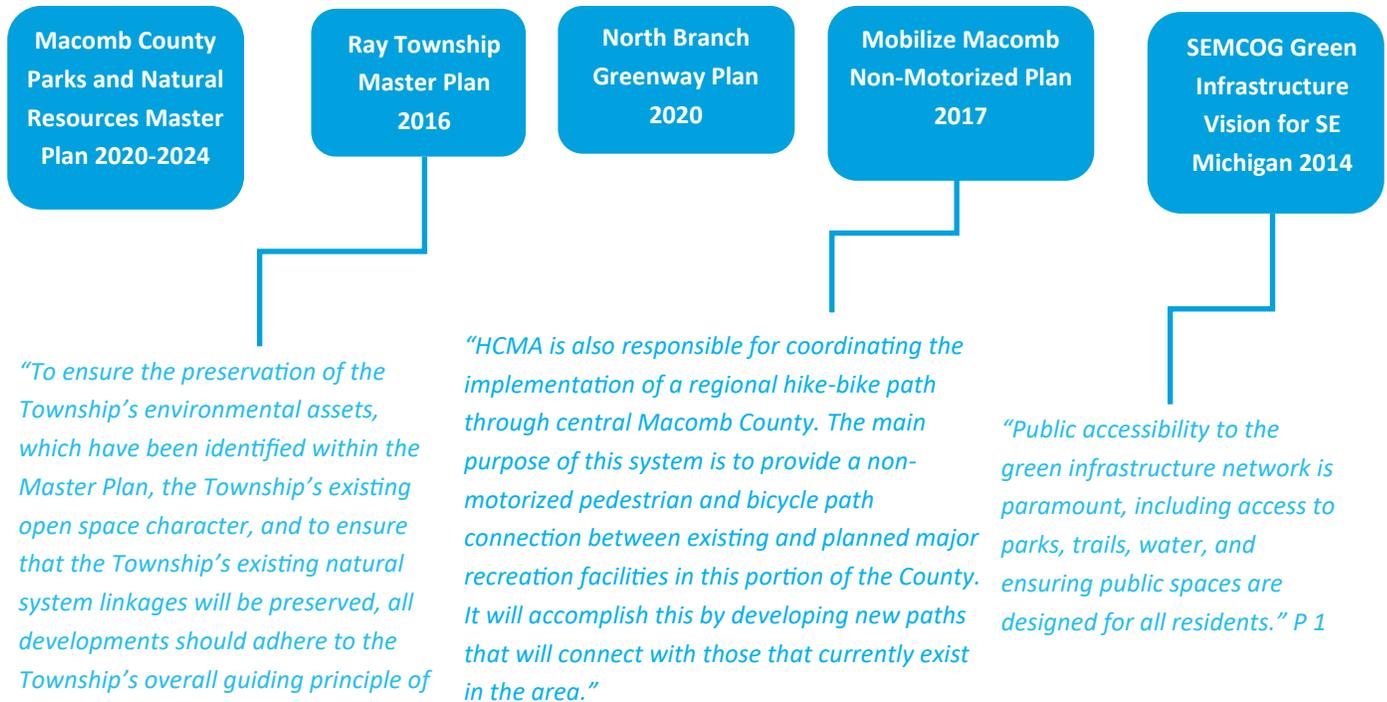
MUNICIPALITY MAP





# 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.

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

### 2022 Community Needs and Assessment

ETC Institute administered a needs assessment survey for Huron-Clinton Metroparks (HCMA) during the Spring of 2022. The survey was administered as part of Metroparks’ efforts to establish and priorities improvements to the parks system, which included 13 parks covering more than 25,000 acres in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Livingston and Washtenaw counties. The survey and its results will guide HCMA in taking a resident-driven approach to making decisions that will enrich the future of the community and positively affect the lives of all residents in southeast Michigan.

ETC Institute mailed a survey packet to a random sample of households in Livingston County, Macomb County, Oakland County, Washtenaw County, Wayne County (outside the City of Detroit), and the City of Detroit.

Location	Completed Surveys	% Precision
<i>Livingston County</i>	479	±4.5%
<i>Macomb County</i>	511	±4.3%
<i>Oakland County</i>	583	±4.1%
<i>Washtenaw County</i>	514	±4.3%
<i>Wayne County (Outside Detroit)</i>	407	±4.9%
<i>City of Detroit</i>	405	±4.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,899</b>	<b>±1.8%</b>

The table above shows the number of completed surveys collected in each of the six sampling areas. The table also shows the margin of error at the 95% level of confidence for each area.

The results presented in this report have been weighted to represent each sampling area’s share of the population of the Huron-Clinton Metroparks service area. The weighted results give more weight to the responses from the larger sampling areas, including Macomb County, Oakland County, Wayne County (outside Detroit), and the City of Detroit, and similarly gives less weight to the responses of the smaller sampling areas, including Livingston County and Washtenaw County

### Priorities for Parks & Recreation Facility Investments in the Huron-Clinton Metroparks Service Area

The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on Parks and Recreation investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weighs:

- the importance that households place on each facility/amenity/ activity/program
- how many households have unmet needs for the facility/

Facility	Priority Investment Rating (PIR)
<i>Trails-paved, multi-use (walking, biking)</i>	189.2
<i>Beaches</i>	174.7
<i>Natural areas</i>	145.7
<i>Trails-unpaved, nature trails</i>	139.7
<i>Trails-unpaved, hiking</i>	137.2
<i>Nature centers</i>	114.2
<i>Canoe/kayak launch sites</i>	110.2
<i>Outdoor swimming pools</i>	107.9

## Results

### Macomb County

The table below shows the Priority Investment Ratings (PIR) for parks and recreation facilities, based on the PIR analysis conducted using the data from Macomb County households. The following nine facilities were rated as high priorities for investment:

- Beaches
- Paved multi-use trails for walking and biking
- Unpaved trails, nature trails
- Natural areas
- Unpaved trails for hiking
- Outdoor swimming pools
- Canoe/kayak launch sites
- Nature centers

Facility	PIR	Priority
Beaches	181.5	High Priority (PIR=100-200)
Trails-paved, multi-use (walking, biking)	180.6	
Trails-unpaved, nature trails	138.1	
Natural areas	128.1	
Trails-unpaved, hiking	125.2	
Outdoor swimming pools	116.3	
Canoe/kayak launch sites	111.7	
Nature centers	107.2	
Fishing banks or docks	98.0	
Canoe/kayak rentals	96.4	Medium Priority (PIR=50-99)
Picnic tables	82.2	
Playgrounds	81.0	
Picnic shelters	80.1	
Camping areas-RVs	70.6	
Splash pad (water play area)	67.7	
Waterslides	66.1	
Trails-mountain biking	62.9	
Camping areas-primitive sites	58.3	
Camping areas-group sites	57.7	Low Priority (PIR=0-49)
Golf courses	52.9	
Golf driving ranges	46.5	
Boat docks	37.5	
Boat ramps	37.2	
Marinas	29.6	
Disc golf	28.0	

The table below shows the Priority Investment Ratings (PIR) for parks and recreation programs, based on the PIR analysis conducted using the data from Macomb County households. The following 16 programs were rated as high priorities for investment:

- Concerts
- Movies in the park
- Bird/wildlife watching program
- Camping
- Pet-friendly programs
- Walking clubs/programs
- Guided nature hikes
- Art/photography

Program	PIR	Priority
Concerts	200.0	High Priority (PIR=100-200)
Movies in the park	141.6	
Bird/wildlife watching programs	136.3	
Camping	136.2	
Pet-friendly programs	135.4	
Walking clubs/programs	128.6	
Guided nature hikes	115.2	
Art/photography	111.2	
Astronomy programs	99.3	
Fishing programs	97.4	Medium Priority (PIR=50-99)
Guided canoe/kayak tours	97.1	
Water fitness programs	91.2	
Environmental education programs	88.8	
Natural/cultural history programs	87.2	
Golf lessons	81.1	
Swim lessons	63.8	
Farm educational programs	61.9	
Boating classes	58.6	
Guided motorized boat tours	48.6	Low Priority (PIR=0-49)
Programs for people with disabilities	47.2	
Golf tournaments	32.8	
Running clubs/programs	32.5	
Homeschool programs	21.5	
Virtual programs	20.2	

# 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	Department Lead	Other Departments	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2022-2024)	Mid-Term (2024-2025)	Long-Term (2026+)	Status
North Branch Trails	Engineering	Planning, NR	Contractors,	TBD		x		Not Started
Farm Center Redevelopment plan	Engineering	Planning	Contractors	TBD	x			Ongoing
Historic Center Redevelopment plan	Engineering	Planning, Interpretive	Contractors	TBD		x		Not Started
Wagon Route to Park Center Mill	Engineering	Planning, NR	Contractors	\$600,000			x	



# Infrastructure / Small Facilities

Description	Department Lead	Other Departments	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2022-2024)	Mid-Term (2024-2025)	Long-Term (2026+)	Status
Pavement projects (list developed annually, as needed)	Engineering	Planning, Operations	Contractors	various	x	x	x	Ongoing
Accessibility improvements, including interiors and walkways - parkwide	Engineering	Planning, Operations	Contractors	various	x	x	x	Ongoing
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				Complete
Regional trail development plan	Engineering	Planning	Contractors		x	x	x	Ongoing
Install small check-in structure at Camp Rotary	Engineering	Planning, Operations				x		?



# Natural Resources

Description	Department Lead	Other Departments	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2022-2024)	Mid-Term (2024-2025)	Long-Term (2026+)	Status
Vegetation management projects (list developed annually)	NR	Operations		various	x	x	x	Ongoing
Floodplain/wetland restoration	NR			TBD	x	x	x	Ongoing
Grassland/farmland restoration	NR				x	x	x	Ongoing
Agricultural Lease, Land Acquisition	NR				x	x	x	Ongoing?



# Signage

Description	Department Lead	Other Departments	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2022-2024)	Mid-Term (2024-2025)	Long-Term (2026+)	Status
Wayfinding/directional signage updates - parkwide (including trails)	Planning	Maintenance, Operations		\$15,000.00				Complete
Install interpretive and wayfinding signage at Historic Center	Interpretive	Planning, Operations			x			Partially Complete
New Branding	Marketing, Interpretive	Planning, Operations						Ongoing





# 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	Department Lead	Other Departments	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2022-2024)	Mid-Term (2024-2025)	Long-Term (2026+)	Status
Redevelopment Plan for North Branch Trails	Planning	NR, Engineering, Operations, Maintenance		staff time		x		Not Started
Farm Center Redevelopment Plan	Planning	Engineering, Operations, Maintenance		staff time	x			Ongoing
Trail development plan for facility connectivity	Planning	NR, Engineering, Operations, Maintenance	Ray Township, Macomb County	staff time	x			Not Started
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		Not Started
Historic Center Redevelopment Plan	Planning	Engineering, Operations, Maintenance		staff time		x		Not Started

Description	Department Lead	Other Departments	Other Partners	Cost Estimate	Short-Term (2022-2024)	Mid-Term (2024-2025)	Long-Term (2026+)	Status
Camp Rotary revenue generation strategy: activities to supplement 4-H and camping uses	Operations	Planning		staff time	x			Not Started
Monitor Little Mac bridge at Camp Rotary for safety purposes	Engineering	Maintenance		staff time	x			Complete
Delineate all trails for inclusion on park maps	Planning	Graphics		staff time	x			Not Started
Fishing access study - Clinton River North Branch	NR	Planning	Clinton River Watershed Council		x			?
Natural features inventory and assessment	NR			staff time	x			Ongoing
Water quality monitoring	NR			staff time	x	x	x	Ongoing
Fish habitat assessment - North Branch Clinton River	NR			staff time	x			?

