

Chapter 5

Vision, Goals, and Objectives

City of Jackson & Jackson County Joint Recreation Plan

Vision, Goals, and Objectives

The vision provided by this recreation plan can be summarized in the following statement:

Provide all persons with a variety of well-maintained and programmed parks, recreation areas, and facilities at the neighborhood level in the City of Jackson and at the community and regional levels throughout Jackson County.

The following goals and objectives will help Jackson County and the City of Jackson to fulfill the vision summarized above:

1. Develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation with other local communities and recreation providers

Investigate various ways of communicating, collaborating, and cooperating with the other local providers of recreation in order to provide adequate facilities and programs throughout Jackson County as well as avoiding the duplication of facilities and services in any given sub-area of the county.

2. Develop a non-motorized trail network

Continue the efforts of both Jackson County and the City of Jackson to develop a non-motorized trail network:

- Continue to implement the Jackson County Regional Trailway Study.
- Encourage local governments to plan for and develop additional non-motorized trails which will supplement the framework proposed in the regional trailway study.

3. Renovate existing parks and recreation facilities

Concentrate efforts on improving the existing parks maintained by Jackson County and the City of Jackson:

- Upgrade existing parks and recreation facilities as needed.
- Improve existing parks and recreation facilities to meet (and exceed where possible) the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Improve the safety of parks and recreation facility patrons and increase the positive impact of parks on their surrounding areas.
 - Continue to install vandal resistant facilities.
 - Continue to improve a consistent and systematic park maintenance program.
 - Improve traffic control within parks.
- Implement the Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park Master Plan.

4. Provide recreation programs and events

Provide a variety of recreation programs which the community enjoys, and attempt to involve everyone as a participant, coach, or spectator.

- Continue to provide the various recreation programs provided by the City of Jackson and to identify ways of expanding recreation programming throughout Jackson County.
- Continue to allow special events such as the Civil War Muster and Juneteenth celebrations in county and city parks.

5. Develop new parks as opportunities arise

Opportunities for the acquisition and development of new parks should not be ignored even though Jackson County and the City of Jackson will concentrate on the redevelopment of existing parks and recreation facilities.

- Provide new mini, neighborhood, community, or regional parks (as applicable) in underserved areas of the city and county.
- Protect natural resources (i.e. forests, wildlife habitat, and wetlands) and to create and/or preserve needed open space in urban/suburban settings.
- Provide a venue for a new recreation facility which cannot be accommodated in any existing park.

Background Information

Input into developing the goals and objectives listed above included:

- Existing recreation facilities and programs available to city and other county residents, regardless of the provider;
- The health and disabilities of city and other county residents;
- Opportunities for acquiring land and facilities; and
- Responses from the Citizen Opinion Survey and the other opportunities for public comment.

Develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation

A variety of the factors identified in the Joint Recreation Plan support the need to develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation among recreation providers. Other factors identify where those lines already exist:

- **Recreation and Resource Inventories** — A variety of public, quasi-public, and private entities provide recreation facilities and programs. People rarely restrict their activities — including recreation— to a single jurisdiction. Accordingly, chapter 3 of this document already provides an overview of the parks and recreation facilities and services available to local residents, regardless of the provider.
- **Citizen Opinion Survey** — Responses to question #9 of the survey show strong support for cooperation among recreation providers. “Establish a City-County agreement for the operation of a metropolitan system?” received an average rating of 3.21 and “Cooperate in some other fashion by sharing personnel, equipment, and/or funds?” received an average rating of 3.29. Respondents were asked if they strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1) with those questions.

- **Jackson County Regional Trailway Study** — The parks departments of Jackson County and the City of Jackson; the townships of Blackman, Spring Arbor, and Summit; the Falling Waters Trail Committee; and the Lakelands Trail effort joined together to develop the Jackson County Regional Trailway Study, demonstrating that some cooperation, communication, and collaboration among recreation providers already exists.

Develop a Non-Motorized Trail Network

A variety of the factors identified in the Joint Recreation Plan support the development of a non-motorized trail network:

- **Citizen Opinion Survey** — Responses to several of the survey questions show strong support for non-motorized trails. For example, question #6 asks “should the city and county continue to develop a coordinated trail system?” The vast majority of respondents (86.8%) answered yes. Question #7 asks “is there an activity that you would like to see more of in the park/recreation facilities?” and question #8 asks “what have you seen at parks or recreation facilities in other cities or counties that you would like to see here?” Many of the “write-in” responses to both questions identified a variety of non-motorized facilities and events.
- **Jackson County Regional Trailway Study** — A framework of trails was developed in the document which was completed in 2002. Jackson County’s ‘Falling Waters Trail’ was the first study element to be implemented. The ‘River Artswalk,’ an extension of the City of Jackson’s existing ‘Inter-City Trail,’ will be constructed soon. The local recreation plans for the Heart of the Lakes Area, the Grass Lake Area, Leoni Township, the Village of Concord, and Summit Township include the proposed trail network as it flows through their jurisdictions and often expands the network to include other trails. The City of Jackson has also expanded upon the proposed trail network via its map of ‘Destination-Based Bike Routes.’
- **The health of Jackson County residents** — The 2008 edition of the Jackson Community Report Card and the Jackson Community Comprehensive Plan indicated that being overweight and obesity are significant local health issues. Promoting Healthy Weight in Michigan through Physical Activities and Nutrition recommends “developing, maintaining, and promoting the use of bike paths” as a tool for battling being overweight and obesity and their related health effects.

Renovate Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

A variety of the factors identified in the Joint Recreation Plan support a focus on the renovation of existing parks and recreation facilities over the development of new parks:

- **Citizen Opinion Survey** — Responses to several of the survey questions show strong support for focusing on the renovation of parks and recreation facilities. For example, question #9 (in part) asks respondents if they strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1) with the following statement: “Prioritize improving existing parks rather than adding new parks.” The average ranking for the question was 3.42, indicating solid support. Question #8 asks “what have you seen at parks or recreation facilities in other cities or counties that you would like to see here?” Many of the responses to the question indicate the need for new/updated playground equipment and picnic facilities as well as more and better maintained restrooms. Question #2 asks “how do you rate city and county parks and recreation facilities?” Although the majority of respondents rated the parks as excellent

(25.7%) or good (60.0%), a significant portion only provided a ranking of fair (13.2%) or poor (1.1%), indicating the need for park and recreation facility improvements.

- **Disabilities of residents** — A significant minority of residents countywide (17.3%) were disabled in some way in the Year 2000. The rate of disability within the city (20.5%) was even greater. Parks and recreation facilities should accommodate these people.
- **The economic downturn** — The county and city are affected by the same ongoing economic downturn their residents are experiencing. Unfortunately, this trend is likely to continue for some time in Michigan. Concentrating on existing parks, like the joint planning effort which produced this document and the ongoing Joint Operation Study, is an example of trying to ‘do more with less.’
- **Sparks Foundation County Park Master Plan** — A master plan for the park was completed in 2006, reflecting the status of the park as the jewel of the county’s park system. The various elements of the master plan were subject to public scrutiny. Implementing those elements will ensure that the park remains an important component of what people remember about Jackson County.

Provide Recreation Programs and Events

A variety of the factors identified in the Joint Recreation Plan support the development of a non-motorized trail network:

- **Citizen Opinion Survey** — Responses to several of the survey questions show strong support for special events. For example, question #4 (in part) asks respondents if they strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1) that attending “special events” is a reasons they “visit a park / recreation facility.” The average ranking was 3.17, which highlights the importance of special events to both park systems. Question #7 asks “is there an activity that you would like to see more of in the park/recreation facilities?” and question #8 asks “what have you seen at parks or recreation facilities in other cities or counties that you would like to see here?” Many of the “write-in” responses to both questions identified a variety of non-motorized events (i.e., “triathlons, half-marathons, the Citizen Patriot Running Series (5K run/walk), etc.) and cultural events (i.e., festivals, art/craft shows, children’s events, live music, etc.).
- **Joint Operations Study** — The importance of special events and sports/games was also recognized independently from the Citizen Opinion Survey. For example, the ongoing Joint Operations Study has identified the expansion of the popular city recreation programs countywide as a potential benefit of a metropolitan park system.
- **The health of Jackson County residents** — The Joint Recreation Plan recognizes that being overweight and obesity are significant local health issues. The availability of active recreation programs for all ages through the city provides Jackson Area residents with the opportunity for a more active lifestyle.

Develop New Parks as Opportunities Arise

A variety of the factors identified in the Joint Recreation Plan support the development of new parks under certain circumstances:

- **Taking advantage of opportunities** — The county and city may wish to take advantage of opportunities for new parks when they arise even though they are focusing on the renovation of existing parks. For example, the proposed demolition of the old Riverfront Hotel on the east side of Downtown Jackson —where Michigan Ave. and Francis St. converge at the Grand River— provides such an opportunity. Allegiance Health (the local hospital), the Enterprise Group (a local economic development group), Jackson County, and the City of Jackson are currently exploring the possibility of extending the green space created by the City’s Downtown Riverfront Park and the Consumers Energy Campus westward across Francis St.
- **Non-motorized trail network** — The development of a non-motorized trail network, as proposed in the regional trailway study and expanded upon in the recreation plans of a number of local governments, is a local priority. The development of the proposed linear park system cannot be accommodated in existing parks. The health benefits attributed to the use of non-motorized trails are also a factor in favor of these new parks.