

Comstock Township, Michigan
Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan
2015–2019



Parks and Recreation Commission

2012–2016

Linda Law, Chair

Judy Joling, Vice Chair

Gillian Stoltman, Secretary/Treasurer

Michael Hough, Commissioner

Sharon Spears, Commissioner

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
<i>Mission Statement</i>	2
<i>Values and Principles</i>	2
<i>Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats</i>	3
<i>Vision Statement.....</i>	3
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.....	3
<i>Development of Goals and Objectives</i>	3
<i>Goals</i>	4
<i>Objectives and Action Steps.....</i>	4
a) <i>Services</i>	4
b) <i>Finances and Resources.....</i>	7
c) <i>Operations</i>	8
APPENDICES	10
<i>Appendix A Description of Comstock Township.....</i>	10
<i>Appendix B Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Department Assets.....</i>	11
<i>Appendix C Barrier-Free Accessibility.....</i>	14
<i>Appendix D Other Recreational Facilities.....</i>	16
<i>Appendix E Administrative Structure</i>	19
<i>Appendix F Funding</i>	21
<i>Appendix G Potential Land Acquisition & Undeveloped Properties</i>	22
<i>Appendix H Future Projects List / Action Plan</i>	23
<i>Appendix I Planning and Public Input Process</i>	25
<i>Appendix J Documents</i>	28
<i>Recreation Grant History and Reports</i>	29
<i>Public Notices</i>	42
<i>Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes.....</i>	45
<i>Community Survey.....</i>	74
<i>Park Surveys.....</i>	78
<i>Special Strategic Planning Minutes</i>	83
<i>Comstock Township Board Meeting Minutes.....</i>	105
<i>Resolution</i>	128
<i>MDNR Certification Checklist.....</i>	129
<i>Letters of Transmittal.....</i>	131

INTRODUCTION

Mission Statement

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission works on behalf of the citizens of Comstock Township to build a healthy community and a sustainable environment by promoting active lifestyles and strong individuals and families through parks, programs and partnerships.

Values and Principles

- a) *Innovation:* The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission seeks and supports innovative and creative ways to deal with issues and trends in our community. The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission embraces change and encourages flexibility so that the District can benefit from new and unique opportunities.
- b) *Excellence:* The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission strives for excellence in providing exceptional parks, facilities and programs.
- c) *Integrity:* The community can trust and rely on Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission and its staff to deliver services based on our core values.
- d) *Equity:* The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission provides parks, facilities and programs in a fair and equitable manner, so that residents from all neighborhoods and of diverse abilities, incomes, languages and socio-cultural groups have equal access to affordable services.
- e) *Stewardship:* The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission strives to be an ethical and responsible steward of the District's financial, physical, natural, environmental, historical and cultural resources. Through sound management and best practices, the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission creates a legacy for future generations.
- f) *Respect:* The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission treats all people with respect and dignity. The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission commits to bringing out the best in ourselves and others, honoring the diversity of people, ideas and cultures within the organization and the community.
- g) *Safety:* The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission provides safe and inviting parks, recreation facilities and programs for social interaction and enjoyment.
- h) *Accountability:* The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission strives to be responsive and accountable to the people we work with and serve. The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission carries out its mission in a manner that builds public trust. Through public engagement, the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission is responsive to the changing needs of our community.
- i) *Fun:* The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission recognizes the importance of play in the lives of all residents and strives to build our community on a foundation of fun.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

- a) Strengths
 - i) A community with strong sense of family, friendship, common cause and equality of opportunity
 - ii) A variety of township parks with the potential to meet a wide range of needs and desires for recreation, relaxation and productive activities for Comstock residents
 - iii) A stable departmental administration
- b) Weaknesses
 - i) Lack of funding internal and external to Comstock Township
- c) Opportunities
 - i) Energetic community with an interest in pursuing improvements by collaboration between governmental and non-governmental entities in the community
 - ii) Increased incentives to improve the economic conditions and quality of life in Comstock Township
- d) Threats
 - i) A challenging economy with accompanying stresses on the community

Vision Statement

Comstock Township Parks will be

- viewed by Township residents as valued components to enhance the quality of life.
- considered valuable assets for recreation, relaxation and learning in Comstock Township.
- considered as a source of pride for our community.
- recognized as safe and healthy environments in which individuals, families and friends choose to spend time.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Goals and Objectives section of the strategic plan provides goals for the future of parks and recreation within the community. These goals have been written for the plan based on public input for current and future recreational opportunities. Each goal is further defined by the objectives that follow. The Action Plan section identifies proposed projects and programs that help meet these goals.

Development of Goals and Objectives

A draft of the Goals and Objectives was developed and reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission at its August 11, 2014, meeting. The development of the Goals and Objectives is based on citizen comments received at public meetings, from surveys, as well as Parks and Recreation Commission members. Those statements then served as the frame of reference in reviewing the proposed projects and action plan items. The final version of the Goals and Objectives appear within this plan.

(The Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed all initial public input and inventory information that was collected. Based on this information, subsequent development began on the Action Plan as part of the public meeting on July 14, 2014.)

Goals

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission aims to

- a) improve the quality of life for Comstock residents by providing safe, pleasant and accessible recreational parks and facilities for Comstock residents.
- b) conduct the business of the Parks and Recreation Department in accordance with sound fiduciary principles for the benefit of the people of Comstock Township.
- c) seek the resources required to function and expand effectively.
- d) establish partnerships with businesses, governmental entities, local and regional parks and recreation programs and services.
- e) anticipate and prepare to meet challenges by continually assessing and prioritizing programs, services and community needs.
- f) provide responsible environmental stewardship and preservation of our green spaces with recreation, relaxation and learning opportunities for everyone.
- g) increase the awareness and usage of Comstock Township parks.

Objectives and Action Steps

a) Services

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

- i) provide accessible, convenient, safe and attractive parks and facilities.

Accessibility, convenience and safety are essential to a positive recreation experience. The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will provide clean and inviting parks and facilities including high-quality facilities that foster community pride and parks that are conveniently located and designed for easy access to people of diverse backgrounds.

Action Steps

- (1) Conduct accessibility reviews and develop an implementation strategy to remove existing barriers at parks and facilities for people with and without disabilities. Renovate existing facilities and/or develop new facilities that meet or exceed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards to expand recreational opportunities for all residents.
- (2) Coordinate trail planning efforts with agencies to ensure that city and regional trails connect with major destinations such as community and regional parks, community centers and green space, schools, libraries, business districts and transportation centers. Likely agencies with which to coordinate such efforts are the Parks Foundation of Kalamazoo County, the Kalamazoo County Parks, City of Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County, Michigan Department of Transportation, and the Kalamazoo Road Commission.
- (3) Develop a long-term acquisition strategy to identify priorities for property acquisition to address needs in underserved areas.
- (4) Recognize the importance of other regional parks, urban parks and green space within Comstock Township, but neither owned nor maintained by the Comstock Township, in satisfying overall park needs. Some examples include Kalamazoo River Valley Trail, River Oaks Park, Chipman Land Preserve, Donald R. and Hilda T. Myers Nature Preserve, Marc's Marsh, KEKA Preserve and other green space.
- (5) Improve communications by creating a new handout with map and photos of all park spaces. Update website to include social media opportunities such as electronic newsletters, interactive opportunities and financial transactions.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

ii) support active living that contributes to a healthy community.

Health and wellness are critical elements of a livable community. Providing recreation services and attractive, engaging parks is a key means of achieving this goal. Personal health and wellness require opportunities to be physically active, mentally and emotionally recharged and socially engaged. The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will make Comstock Township a better place to live, work and play by supporting healthy lifestyles for all ages.

Action Steps

- (1) By January 2016, develop communications (web-based and in print) to encourage participation in outdoor activities in natural settings, relative to all of Comstock Township parks, other public outdoor resources and their amenities.
- (2) Work with existing agencies/organizations and public services to encourage utilizing parks and park spaces as they develop active outdoor recreational opportunities.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

iii) protect and restore the natural environment for conservation and learning.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will protect, conserve and restore Comstock's natural resources, providing opportunities for the community to enjoy and learn about nature and the outdoors. The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will promote the ethics of conservation and sustainability.

Action Steps

- (1) Develop and install informational materials on the flowers, trees, shrubs, birds and animals associated with Robert Morris Park, McLinden Trails, Jan Schau Wildflower Walks and River Villa Park by April 2017.
- (2) Develop and install informational materials providing directions and distances for the trails located in the Jan Schau Wildflower Walks, River Villa Park and McLinden Trails by April 2017.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

iv) provide affordable and high-quality recreational experiences for a diverse community.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will provide affordable recreation experiences that meet the needs of our diverse community, including residents of all ages, abilities, family compositions and economic and cultural backgrounds. These experiences will reflect quality and excellence.

Action Steps

- (1) Assess user fee structure yearly and make changes as necessary based on market-based comparisons and current and/or forecasted economic conditions.
- (2) Secure additional revenue sources and/or sponsorship partners to subsidize user fees by June 2016.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

v) *collaborate in responsible economic and community development.*

Parks and recreation help fuel the region's economy and make the Township more livable. Diverse recreation and cultural opportunities and signature attractions bring residents, businesses and tourists to the Township. For these reasons, the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will be an important partner in promoting economic development throughout the region by providing services, parks and open spaces to improve the quality of life for workers in business areas and residents in our neighborhoods.

Action Steps

- (1) Actively engage in the Comstock Charter Township strategic planning and master plan processes and development.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

vi) *maximize community resources through partnerships with surrounding governmental and non-governmental agencies.*

Partnerships are a key resource that the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will use to leverage community resources, while minimizing duplication of effort. The Commission will be a leader in forging and nurturing relationships that forward the Township's mission by moving toward formalized partnerships that ensure equity and tangible benefits to all parties.

Action Steps

- (1) Seek opportunities to connect neighborhood parks to nearby schools, libraries, community centers, etc., by holding periodic discussions with these agencies/groups.
- (2) Conduct an annual review of not-for-profit/non-profit Township activities for which financial or other resources are requested and prioritize them according to need and available resources. In this way the Commission will be able to partner with other agencies to enhance the quality of life in Comstock Township, while exercising fiscal responsibility in utilizing residents' taxes.
- (3) Evaluate enhancements to facilities for continued relationship and growth with Baseball Players Association (BPA) and United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) tournament organizations to not only benefit Comstock Township Parks Department, but also bring money into the community.
- (4) Research and establish opportunities for involving handicapped individuals.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

vii) *continue to support the development of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (a non-motorized pathway system aka the trail-way) through the Township and its immediate connections to provide healthy lifestyles through exercise, enjoyment of the environment, and non-motorized opportunities linking homes, schools, parks and commercial areas.*

Action Steps

- (1) Include regular updates on the progress of the trail-way through Comstock Township at Parks and Recreation Commission meetings, its minutes and Township meetings.
- (2) Include information on and links to the trail-way in Township Parks and Recreation newsletters and web site.
- (3) Evaluate on-street bikeways as connectors to meet the growing needs of non-motorized vehicles and to utilize the existing parks and trail access points to leverage economic growth and quality of life within the community.

- (4) Participate as a Commission or designated individuals, in all Kalamazoo River Valley Trail workshops, discussions and stakeholder meetings, as called by the Kalamazoo County Parks Department.
- (5) Participate in assisting the Parks Foundation of Kalamazoo County in seeking the matching funds necessary to bring the Comstock phase of the River Valley Trail to fruition.
- (6) Work with the Kalamazoo County Parks Department and the Parks Foundation of Kalamazoo County to develop a plan to maximize the benefits of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail through Comstock Township by September 2015.
- (7) Seek outside funding for a master plan that connects trails to parks, schools and business areas in coordination with the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail by May 2015.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

viii) develop and implement plans to minimize contamination by enteric bacteria of the beach and swimming areas at Robert Morris Park.

Action Steps

- (1) Maintain regular monitoring of the water in the swimming area of the park, in conjunction with the Kalamazoo County Division of Environmental Health.
- (2) Provide information to users of the Park on the need for monitoring and the steps that are being taken to safeguard their health.
- (3) If necessary, take measures to close the beach in the event the bacterial load is too high.
- (4) Implement physical barriers to deter geese and other wild fowl from accessing the beach and areas around the beach.
- (5) Educate and train park attendants and maintenance employees on the proper steps to remove wild fowl from the beach area.
- (6) Continue to create natural barriers, including an increased growth of native plants, which rebuild the shoreline to deter geese from the beach/water's edge areas.
- (7) Research and work with DNR to address the problem of geese at the parks.
- (8) Implement plan with park staff to ensure proper goose clean-up processes and regular beach dragging to slow water run-off into the lake during rains.

b) Finances and Resources

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

i) assure that adequate resources are obtained and dispersed in a manner consistent with ethical and fiduciary standards for a public entity.

Action Steps

- (1) Provide sufficient funding for the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Department to fulfill its mission and meet goals for services.
 - (a) Submit at least two applications during each year to obtain financial resources necessary for capital development and maintenance of the park facilities which allow renovation of existing facilities and/or development of new facilities that meet changing recreational needs and desires.
 - (b) Collect user fees as appropriate to offset the overall cost of using public facilities.
- (2) Assure that appropriate accounting practices are implemented in all financial activities conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department.
- (3) Continue to make the annual budget and monthly updates available for public review at all regular Commission meetings.

- (4) Purchase and utilize parks and recreation tracking software by February 2016 to improve documentation capabilities and reporting processes.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

- ii) create diverse, stable and predictable funding strategies to provide the resources required to build, maintain and operate our system of parks and programs.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will use a variety of long- and short-term funding strategies to provide dependable funding for parks and programs. These strategies may include grants, private contributions/donations, foundations (public-private partnerships), bonds, voter-approved measures, maintenance and operating levies, property and sales taxes. The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will balance cost recovery goals with the needs of the community. New revenue-generating ideas, such as entrepreneurial projects and joint ventures, will be explored and considered as future funding opportunities.

Action Steps

- (1) Submit at least two grant requests during each year for the maintenance or expansion of Parks services or facilities.
- (2) Seek cooperative funding sources by collaborating on grant submissions for programs and services with existing agencies and programs.

c) Operations

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

- i) create an innovative, efficient and effective organization that is responsive to changing community needs.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will respond efficiently to the community's changing priorities and needs.

Action Steps

- (1) Involve community members in planning, designing and implementing park and programming opportunities to more effectively be accountable and creative in meeting community needs.
- (2) Strive to be accessible and responsive to the community it serves, creating new policies, procedures and technologies in response to changing needs over time.
- (3) Create an integrated marketing and communication strategy to help increase awareness and appreciation of the diverse scope of our offerings, and to generate support and use of our system.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

- ii) assure that the Parks and Recreation Department is administered in a professional manner that is consistent with the ethics and values of the Commission and citizens of Comstock Township.

Action Steps

- (1) Assure that the administration of the Parks and Recreation Department is conducted in a manner that is
 - (a) Compliant with all relevant federal and state laws.
 - (b) Efficient and effective in conducting the business of the Parks and Recreation Department.

- (c) Fiscally responsible in adherence to the established budget, financial policies and procedures of Comstock Township.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

- iii) provide professional development opportunities for administrative personnel.

Action Steps

- (1) Provide training in software and applications as needed.
- (2) Support expected attendance at the Annual Conference and other professional development opportunities of the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association and other related or applicable organizations (if funds are available).

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

- iv) objectively assess the parks director's performance.

Action Steps

- (1) Annually conduct an evaluation of the performance of the Parks and Recreation Director and provide feedback.
- (2) Following this review, goals will be set for the next 12 months.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

- v) maintain clean and safe facilities.

Action Steps

- (1) A plan for maintenance, upgrade and environmental stewardship for each park will be developed by July 2015. Its annual review will be included in the annual report.
- (2) Commissioners will conduct at least 6 reviews/inspections of all parks during each year and provide written reports to the Director.

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission will

- vi) assure that all staff will be well-trained, courteous and knowledgeable about their jobs and the parks.

Action Steps

- (1) Prepare and implement training and orientation for each new permanent, temporary and seasonal worker.
- (2) Conduct a customer satisfaction survey once each year at Robert Morris Park.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Description of Comstock Township

Comstock Township is located in the northeastern region of Kalamazoo County situated in the southwest corner of the Lower Peninsula of the State of Michigan. Comstock is a suburban area near the City of Kalamazoo and includes both the Comstock and Galesburg business districts.

The Township Limits incorporate approximately thirty-five square miles of area within Kalamazoo County in southwest Michigan. The Charter Township of Comstock is bounded by four townships: Richland Township to the north; Charleston Township and the City of Galesburg to the east; Pavilion Township to the south; and Kalamazoo Township and the City of Kalamazoo to the west. The Township includes a mix of land uses including residential, business, light industrial and agricultural.

From the 2010 U.S. Census,¹ the population of Comstock Township was 14,854 people, a growth of 7.3% since the 2000 US census. Comstock Northwest Census Demographic Profile (CDP) ranked 19th in the state for percentage increase in population (21.98%) in 2010.² Of the population, 7,547 (50.8% were female) and 7,307 (49.2%) were male. The median age of residents was 38.9 years, with 20.3% of the population under the age of 18 years and 13.3% over the age of 65 years. Of the 6,059 households in the township, there were 201 households in which three or more generations live and 1,669 persons who live alone.³ African-Americans constituted 5.6% of the population, an increase of 1.5% since the 2000 census. The number of Hispanic persons increased from 232 in 2000 to 441 in 2010.⁴

The population density of Comstock Township in 2010 was 445.9 persons per square mile and the housing unit density was 199.1 units per square mile. A substantial part of the 33.3 square miles that comprises Comstock Township is agricultural, primarily bedding plants. In the 3.17 square miles that comprise the urbanized area of Comstock (Comstock Northwest CDP), the population density in 2010 was 1,721 persons per square mile and the housing density was 882.6 units per square mile. The Township's population had a higher level of high school graduation (86.2%) than the state average (83.4%). Poverty affected 7.1% of the population in 2010, the same proportion as in 2000.

¹ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census, Demographic Profiles for Michigan. Released 5 May, 2011.

² Ibid.

³ Source: http://datadrivendetroit.org/web_ftp/Census/SF1/COUSUB/D3_SF1_2607717680.pdf accessed on 7/3/2014.

⁴ Ibid.

Appendix B

Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Department Assets

Celery Street Park

Celery Street Park serves primarily as a neighborhood park. The facilities include an open green space, playground equipment, picnic table shelter and basketball court. Parking is located along the adjacent street.

Cooper Park

Cooper Park is located around an abandoned mill pond. The park is a passive green space that provides attractive views and wildlife viewing. Park facilities include play equipment, scattered picnic tables and benches, as well as a waterfall popular with residents at the mouth of the mill pond.

Fleetwood Park

Fleetwood Park is located adjacent to a residential neighborhood and serves primarily as a neighborhood park. The park was recently developed with Access to Recreation Grant funds to include a universally accessible pathway, play equipment, shelter with picnic table and benches.

Fred McLinden Nature Trails

The Fred McLinden Nature Trails include many walking trails along meadows, hills and woods. It also provides limited walking access to Campbell Lake. This site includes a gravel parking lot and natural surface trails. The property is owned by the City of Kalamazoo and the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission maintains it by agreement.

Green Meadow Park

Green Meadow Park is located in the southeast corner of the township. The facilities include a baseball diamond used by athletes 11–14 years old, a gravel parking lot and additional open green space.

Jan Schau Wildflower Walk

The Jan Schau Wildflower Walk is a natural area with a public access off the Kalamazoo River. The park is directly adjacent to the River Villa Preserve, and includes natural surface trails. Parking is available at the adjacent Comstock Community Center.

Merrill Park

Merrill Park is a popular park located within the Comstock Business District on the Kalamazoo River. The park includes a ball diamond, open green space, play equipment, picnic shelter, picnic tables, a boat launch, basketball court, restroom building and parking lot. Due to its central location, the park is also used for community special events and recreational programs.

Peer Park

Peer Park is located on the west side of an old mill pond south of Cooper Park. The park serves as a passive green space with scattered picnic tables and benches, as well as having historic memorials. Parking is along the street adjacent to the park.

River Villa Preserve

River Villa Preserve is located east of the Jan Schau Wildflower Walk. Parking is available at the Comstock Community Center located west of the Jan Schau Wildflower Walk. The park has natural surface trails and offers public access to the Kalamazoo River. In addition to the natural trail, a portion of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail winds through the River Villa Preserve.

Robert Morris Park

Robert Morris Park provides public access to Campbell Lake. Facilities at the park include a swimming beach, picnic shelters and tables, an 18-hole disc golf course, horseshoes, sandlot volleyball, playground equipment, shoreline fishing, restrooms and concession stand.

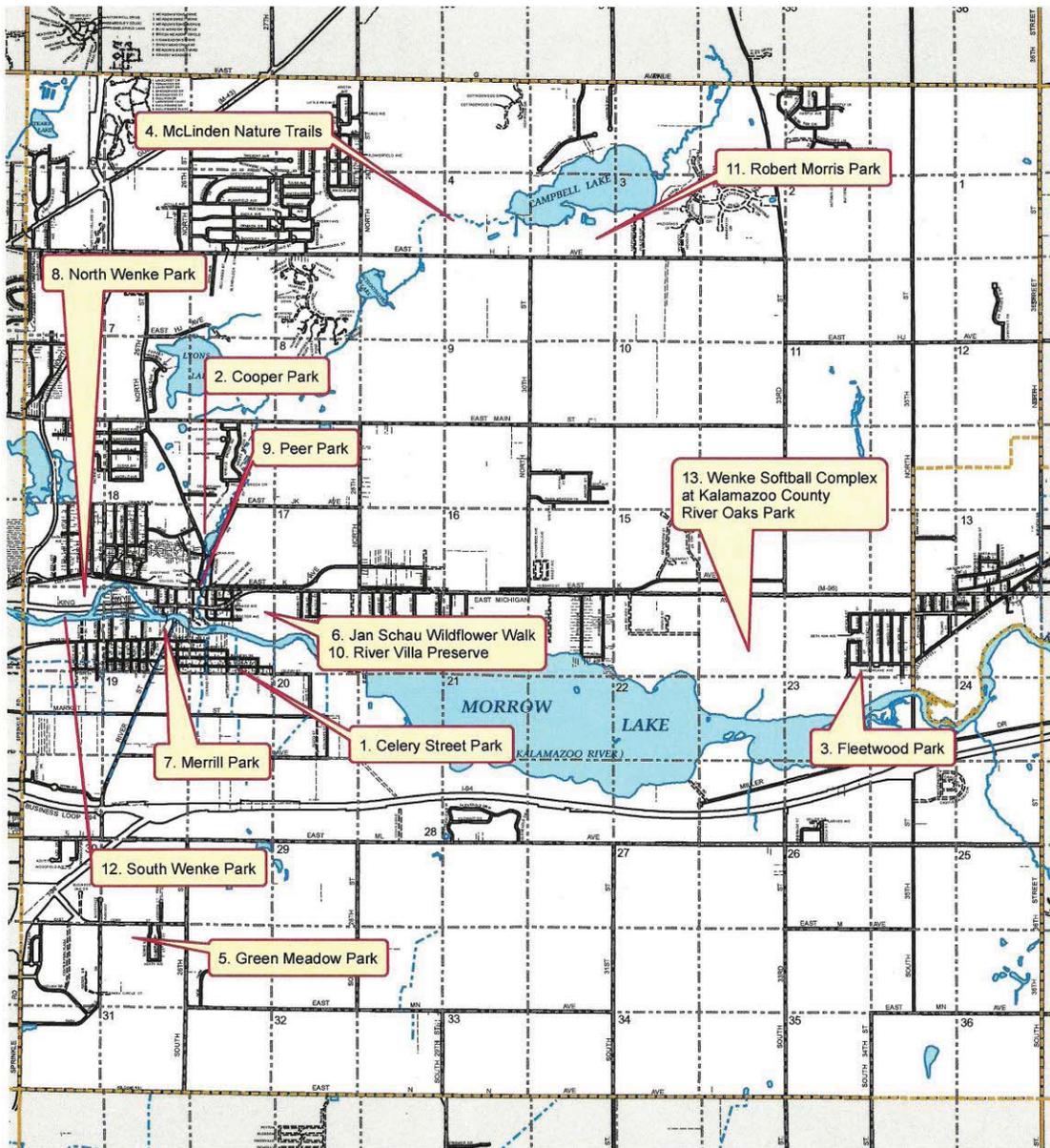
Wenke Parks—North and South

North Wenke Park and South Wenke Park are located on either side of King Highway along the Kalamazoo River. Both parks provide river access, shoreline fishing, scattered picnic tables and parking. South Wenke Park has a scenic lighthouse on the bank of the Kalamazoo River across from Merrill Park.

Wenke Softball Complex

The Wenke Softball Complex is located on land owned by Kalamazoo County Parks known as River Oaks County Park. The ten-acre Wenke Softball Complex has four diamonds, parking, shelter, playground equipment, concession stand and restrooms. The map (next page) includes both the Wenke Softball Complex and the larger River Oaks County Park.

Parks	Map Number	Acerage	Softball Fields	Baseball Fields	Basketball Court	Disc Golf	Picnic	Shelter	Playground Equipment	Nature Trails	Swimming	Boat Launch	Off-Shore-Fishing	Restrooms	Water Access	Barrier-Free
Celery Street Park	1	2			X		X	X	X							
Cooper Park	2	3					X		X				X			
Fleetwood Park	3	3					X	X	X							X
Fred McLinden Nature Trails	4	400								X						
Green Meadow Park	5	16		X												
Jan Schau Wildflower Walk	6	10								X						
Merrill Park	7	4		X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	
North Wenke Park	8	2					X						X			X
Peer Park	9	1					X						X			X
River Villa Preserve	10	2								X						
Robert Morris Park	11	40				X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
South Wenke Park	12	1					X	X					X			X
Wenke Softball Complex	13	40	X	X			X	X	X					X		



Comstock Charter Township
 Kalamazoo Co., Michigan
 Park and Recreational Facilities Locations



This map is intended for reference purposes only. While it is intended to be an accurate graphic representation, its accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, neither Comstock Charter Township nor Prein&Newhof shall be held liable for its contents. Any conclusions or information derived from this map is at the users sole risk.

Appendix C

Barrier-Free Accessibility

The Comstock Parks and Recreation Commission is dedicated to improved quality of life for Comstock residents by providing safe, pleasant and accessible recreational parks and facilities for them. The objectives and action plans that outline our intentions to accomplish this goal require adequate funding, as well as the support from the people of Comstock Township, the governing board and administration.

The **Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)** requires public accommodations that provide goods and services to people with disabilities on an equal basis with the rest of the general public. In addition, it seems prudent to also consider the principles of Universal Design (***the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design***).

It is well known that new facilities must meet the minimum of barrier-free accessibility requirements; however, the regulations also require that existing structural architectural and communication barriers be removed in public areas of facilities when their removal is *readily achievable*. It appears possible to achieve the removal of some existing barriers by making simple changes to the physical environment, once an initial assessment is made along with a barrier removal transition plan.

Recently an on-going assessment has begun using the help from the local Disabilities Resource Center and tools such as checklists and guidelines, which readily identify accessibility problems and solutions in existing facilities. After this assessment is accomplished, an implementation plan will be developed that specifies what and how improvements are needed to remove barriers, as well as when each solution will be carried out.

Robert Morris Park

During the last five years a major DNR grant was obtained to build an accessible restroom facility in Robert Morris Park, Comstock's largest and most visited park. Along with the new facility, changes were made to remove barriers in parking spaces, paths to the beach and picnic pavilions. Better signage was installed.

Merrill Park

Another more developed and highly visited park is Merrill Park. The restroom is old and does not adequately accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities. Other aspects of Merrill Park do not meet accessibility requirements. An adequate survey of the total acreage needs to be a priority as we look into possible grant funding for this popular park.

Wenke Softball Complex

This complex was originally built just after ADAAG was established. The ball diamonds and player shelters have recently undergone some improvements. Pathways exist, but stop short of bleachers, etc.

Celery St. Park, Cooper Park, Green Meadow Park, Peer Park, Fred McLinden Nature Trails, Jan Schau Wildflower Walk, River Villa Preserve, North Wenke Park, and South Wenke Park

Most of these parks were originally developed prior to the ADAAG and do not meet current standards. The individual parks, as shown in Appendix B vary in purpose and each must be assessed for compliance to the ADAAG technical provisions.

Fleetwood Park

The park has an accessible playground, walking pathway and covered picnic facilities which appear compliant with ADAAG.

Appendix D

Other Recreational Facilities

Regional Recreational Opportunities

The Charter Township of Comstock is located within Kalamazoo County. Comstock residents can access many other park and recreational facilities within Kalamazoo County, as well as state and county parks in adjoining counties. The Kalamazoo County Parks Department has one park located within the Township and several others within an easy driving distance. In addition, the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail runs through the Township. The City of Kalamazoo is also adjacent to the Township. These and other recreational opportunities are listed below.

Kalamazoo County Parks

Comstock Parks and Recreation maintains a cooperative agreement with the Kalamazoo County Parks Department to lease the Wenke Softball Complex which includes ball fields for public use.

The Kalamazoo County Parks has seven parks located throughout the County with one park located within the Township. For more information see <http://www.kalcounty.com/parks/>.

Kalamazoo County Expo Center & Fairground

The County Fairground is located on 120 acres of land. Facilities include the Kalamazoo County Expo Center, a grandstand with track, fair buildings and a 220-space campground. The Expo Center is a 90,000-square foot facility that holds over 100 events each year.

Cold Brook County Park

Cold Brook County Park is a 276-acre facility providing recreation and boating access to Blue, Long, and Portage lakes. Facilities within the park include a ball field, picnic areas, swimming, fishing, 44 campsites, disc golf, hiking and volleyball.

Markin Glen County Park

This 160-acre park is located on the Kalamazoo River and includes both active components and passive nature areas. Facilities include two ball fields, 38 campsites, fishing, hiking, swimming, tennis courts and picnic shelters. The Kalamazoo River Valley Trail runs through this park.

Prairie View County Park

Prairie View County Park is 210 acres in size and provides public access to both Hogsett and Gourneck lakes. Facilities within the park include multiple picnic shelters, playground equipment, dog park, swimming beach, rustic boat launch, sand volleyball, sledding, access to ice fishing and shoreline fishing, groomed cross-country ski trails, heated lodge and restrooms.

River Oaks County Park

River Oaks County Park is located within Comstock Charter Township and provides a portion of the park for use as the Township's Wenke Softball Complex. The park is 330 acres in size and provides public use of 20 soccer fields, picnic shelters, splash pad, dog park, volleyball court, boat ramp, playground, restrooms, trails and a boat launch access to the Kalamazoo River.

Scotts Mill County Park

This 110-acre park has a historic grist mill and miller's house located on the property with a large mill pond. Facilities include a picnic shelter, playground equipment and natural surface trails. The pond is available for both shore and ice fishing.

Kalamazoo River Valley Trail

The Kalamazoo River Valley Trail is a non-motorized pathway that is partially constructed, with planned connections to the entire region including joining the Kal Haven Trail to the west and the Battle Creek Linear Park to the east. The pathway runs directly through the Charter Township of Comstock, providing easy access for Township residents. For further map and details see www.kalcounty.com/parks/krvt.

Fort Custer State Park

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources maintains Fort Custer Recreation Area which is located to the east of Comstock Township. For further details see <http://www.michigandnr.com/parksandtrails/Details.aspx?id=448&type=SPRK>.

City of Kalamazoo—Mayors Riverfront Park

The City of Kalamazoo maintains a number of parks to which Comstock residents have access. This includes the Mayors Riverfront Park which provides sports fields where local soccer and semi-professional baseball teams play. For further details see: http://www.kalamazoocity.org/portal/government.php?page_id=120

Comstock Community Center

The Comstock Community Center (CCC) is the primary non-profit 501c3 agency that serves the residents within the Charter Township of Comstock in Kalamazoo County. It offers recreational programming for all persons within the community. The facilities include a large multi-purpose room with a kitchen, classrooms and an outdoor playground. The Center is the primary provider of daily community programming for seniors for seniors, youth and families by operating four comprehensive service programs: Adult Activities, Volunteer Coordination, Children and Youth Development and Program Development.

The Community Learning Center (CLC) was created as a division of the Comstock Community Center to help local children and youth grow and develop their fullest potential. The Center collaborates with numerous agencies to deliver a broad range of services that are offered both free and for a fee. For further details see <http://comstockcc.com/>.

Hickory Ridge Golf Course and Driving Range

A private golf course open to the public with 27 holes is located within the Township. For further details see <http://golfhickoryridge.com/>.

Eastwood Little League

Eastwood Little League is a non-profit volunteer-based community group. The Eastwood Little League site located within the Township has nine ball diamonds with parking, concessions and restrooms. For further details see <http://www.eteamz.com/ewll/>.

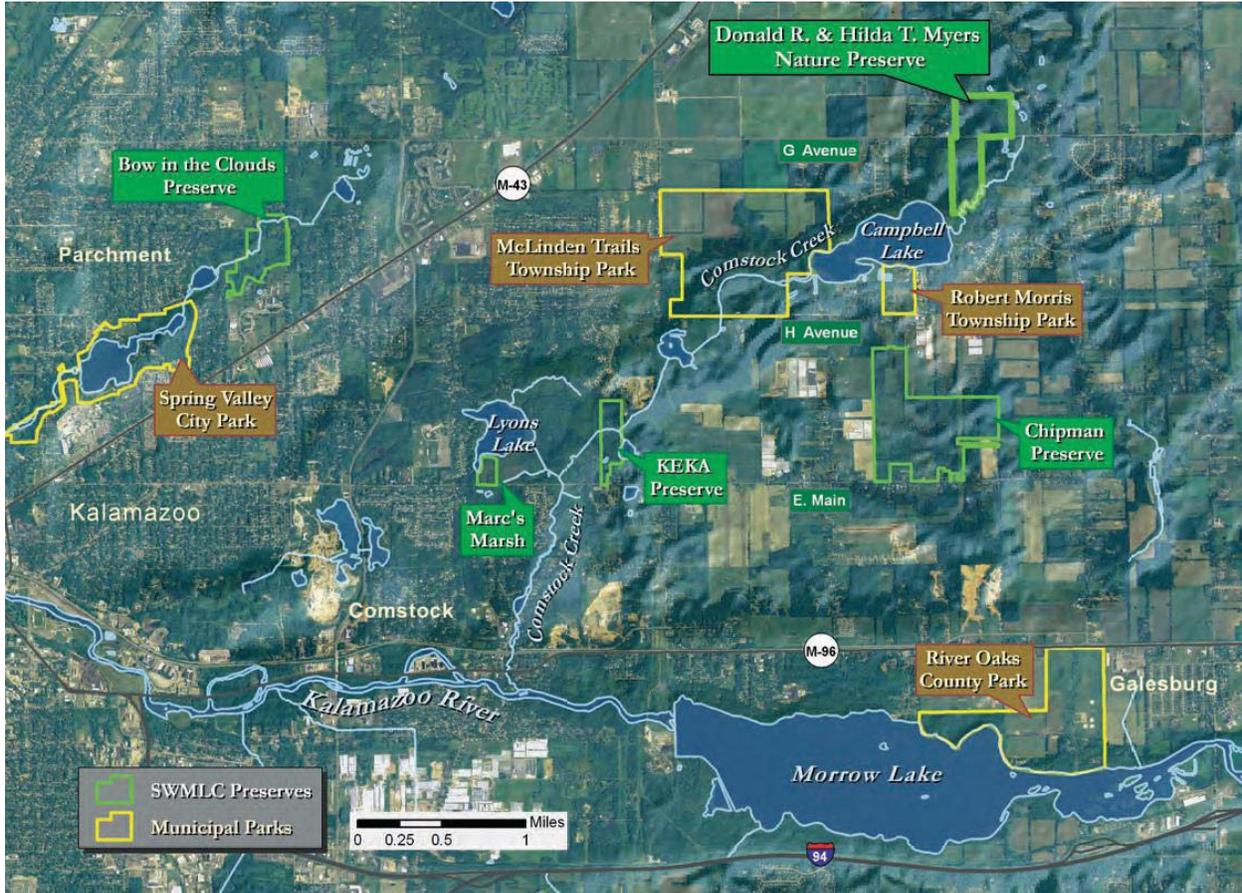
Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy

The Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC) is a nonprofit land conservancy created in 1991. SWMLC works in the nine counties of southwest Michigan to preserve wild and scenic places for today and keep them healthy for tomorrow. Kalamazoo County is fortunate to be a part of this as a recipient of its many benefits. For further details see <http://www.swmlc.org/>.

Chipman Land Preserve

This 228.8-acre preserve with five miles of easy-to-moderate mowed trails in upland habitat is open to the public.

The map below shows all SWMLC-protected properties and municipal parks within the Comstock Creek area and eastern Kalamazoo County. SWMLC preserves offer varying degrees of public access and total over 400 acres, in addition to acres of city, township, and county parks. Map created by Nate Fuller.



Appendix E

Administrative Structure

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission is a five-member elected body long established under Michigan Enabling Legislation Act 1905 PA 157. According to the 2000 edition of the book, Authorities & Responsibilities of Michigan Township Officials, Boards and Commissions authored by John H. Bauckham, this commission has authority to acquire, improve, maintain, manage and control Township parks and places of recreation, establish fees, and adopt rules and regulations (MCL 41.426(a-f)). This commission also has authority to operate a system of public recreation and playgrounds (MCLs 123.51-123.54).

The sitting Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission members were elected to a four-year term in November 2012 and began their tenure with the next month's meeting. The commission meets once monthly with the ability to call special meetings as necessary. Its officers are elected at each December meeting for the following year. The commission employs one full-time Parks and Recreation Director to administer the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Department. The Parks Director reports directly to the board and works closely with the board chair. The Parks and Recreation Director is responsible for all operations and seasonal employees, and works with the Commission to prepare and manage the yearly budget.

The current Commission members and offices are as follows:

Chair	Linda Law
Vice Chair	Judy Joling
Secretary/Treasurer	Gilliam Stoltman
Commissioner	Michael Hough
Commissioner	Sharon Spears
Parks and Recreation Director	Vanessa Hardy

Programming

Recreation programming options currently available through Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Department are adult recreational slow-pitch softball and youth baseball. The softball and baseball programs are run on a fee-based budget with the facility overhead for these programs being off-set by field rentals. Comstock partners with the Kalamazoo County Parks in the operation and programming of the Wenke ball field complex that is located in a county park within the township. The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Department also partners with the Comstock Community Center to provide daily swimming at Robert Morris Park for the children's summer recreation program, holiday programs, special events and volunteer recruitment. A partnership has been established with the Comstock Public Schools to provide the outdoor picnic-type facilities for a summer nutrition program.

Volunteers

Individual volunteers are involved in light maintenance or upkeep projects such as painting park structures and picking up litter. Larger maintenance or repair projects have depended upon generous community-based volunteer groups who give willingly of time, energy and equipment.

Relationships

As mentioned above, the Comstock Parks and Recreation Department has positively connected with the county, the schools, the community center and private organizers to make affordably accessible recreational programs and services available to the community. The Commission continually looks for opportunities to do more of this.

Appendix F

Funding

Primary funding for Parks and Recreation is provided by the General Fund of the Township. The Park Commission creates the budget for parks and recreation and makes a recommendation to the Township Commission for approval. The Township Commission reviews the request and appropriates funds for parks and recreation. The Township does not have a separate parks millage.

Comstock Township Parks Dept. Budget 2015

REVENUES

Fund 101		2014 BUDGET	Proposed 2015 BUDGET
750	Parks Administration		
	Sub-total	\$1,075.00	\$1,075.00
752	Softball/baseball		
	Sub-total	\$90,600.00	\$90,600.00
753	Robert Morris Park		
	Sub-total	\$33,000.00	\$33,000.00
TOTAL REVENUES		\$124,675.00	\$124,675.00

EXPENDITURES

Fund 750	Parks Administration		
	Sub-total	\$116,684.00	\$131,344.00
752	Softball/Baseball		
	Sub-total	\$ 71,589.00	\$72,589.00
753	Robert Morris Park		
	Sub-total	\$60,776.00	\$63,576.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		\$249,049.00	\$267,509.00
	Revenues	\$124,675.00	\$124,675.00
	Expenditures	\$249,049.00	\$267,509.00
	Requested Funds from Township	(\$124,374.00)	(\$142,834.00)

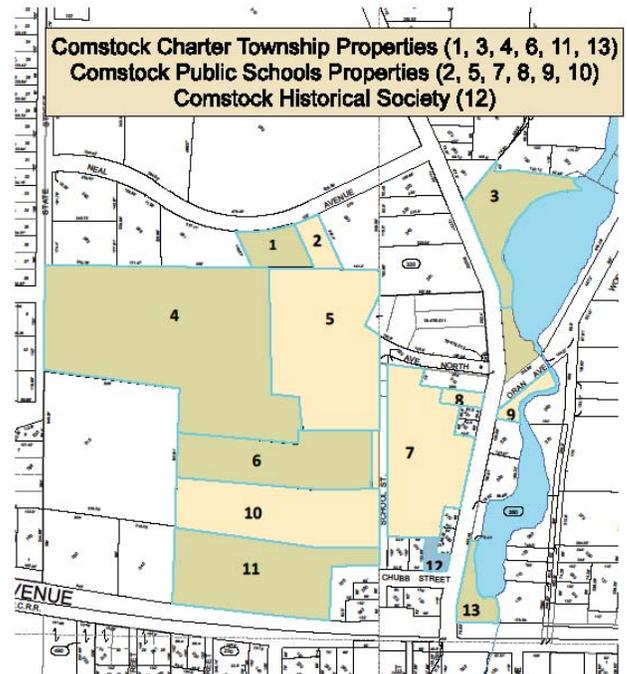
Appendix G

Potential Land Acquisition & Undeveloped Properties

Several key pieces of property have been identified for acquisition in conjunction with the township to link existing parks and expand the existing cemetery. Referring to the map on the right, parcels 7, 8, 9 & 10 that are currently owned by the Comstock Public Schools would provide key pieces of property for the Township. The addition of these would link existing township properties, parcels 1, 3, 4, 6, 11 & 13. These properties would be master-planned to include an expansion of the cemetery and one major park rather than the several smaller parks that are currently utilized individually.

The newly-formed large park would include areas for public water access, large areas for active sports, as well as areas for new recreational opportunities such as additional walking trails, picnicking and other activities that could utilize centralized parking and restroom facilities.

This large park would also be an excellent opportunity to provide a northern link of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail. There exists a tunnel under East Michigan and the parallel Railway that follows the water out of Peer Park to the Kalamazoo River. This tunnel was historically used for pedestrian traffic when the old high school was in use. Parcel #12 is the existing IOOF Hall owned by the Comstock Historical Preservation Society. This building is vacant and the Historical Preservation Society has expressed an interest in selling it to the Township. This could be developed into meeting space and museum.



This map is intended for reference purposes only. While it is intended to be an accurate graphic representation, no warranty, expressed or implied, is made by the Comstock Charter Township nor the Publisher of this map. No liability shall be assumed for any errors or omissions. Any conditions or restrictions set forth on this map shall be at the users sole risk.

Comstock Charter Township
Kalamazoo Co., Michigan
Exhibit B



- 1) Ball Field Parking Area
- 2) Bus Barn Road
- 3) Peer Park
- 4) Neal St. Ball Fields
- 5) Bus Barn Property
- 6) Township Cemetery
- 7) Old High School (Vacant)
- 8) Stairs to Old High School
- 9) Former Pump House
- 10) Former Parking & Tennis Courts
- 11) Old Football Field
- 12) IOOF Building
- 13) Cooper Park

Appendix H

Future Projects List / Action Plan

An initial list of potential project priorities was initially developed by the Park Commission as part of a special meeting on April 27, 2009. It has been updated for this five-year plan throughout the strategic plan discussion during monthly and special Commission meetings. Discussion of these priorities throughout these public meetings allowed for public input into the process. Based on the initial discussion, a preliminary list of priority project was developed and then further reviewed. This list includes projects such as new facilities within the parks as well as larger maintenance projects. It has been sorted by park site in alphabetical order. The projects are prioritized as a High Priority, Medium Priority, or Low Priority, as well as showing current status.

The initial list and modifications of project ideas were generated through the public recreation surveys, the public workshop, and ideas submitted to the Parks and Recreation Commission. Since 2009 some of these projects were accomplished, others may have either been removed from the priority list or changed status.

Park	Priority			Status
	High	Medium	Low	
All				
ADA Accessibility	X			
New signs				Completed
Paint Buildings				Completed
Dog Waste Signs & Cans				Completed
Themed Site Amenities				Omit
Unified Style/Color Benches & Trash Cans	X			
Celery Street Park				
Benches	X			
Picnic Tables	X			
Play Equipment	X			
Basketball Court Improvements	X			
Cooper Park				
Remove Dead Trees	X			
Pave Parking Area	X			
Fred McLinden Nature Trails				
Trail Distance Markers	X			
Dog Park				Omit
Parking Lot Maintenance	X			
Benches		X		
Trail Distance Markers	X			
Fleetwood Park				
Water Fountain & Bench Improvements				Completed
Green Meadow Park				
Upgrade Ball Diamond		X		
Merrill Park				
Benches	X			
Picnic Tables— paint and repair	X			
Resurface Drives & Parking	X			
Play Equipment Maintenance	X			
Group Picnic Shelter Improvements	X			
Restroom Upgrade w/security	X			
Master Plan & Grant Application	X			
Relocate & Upgrade Basketball Courts	X			

Park	Priority			Status
	High	Medium	Low	
<i>Robert Morris Park</i>				
Gate System Upgrade w/security		X		
Gate Building		X		
Fishing Dock		X		
<i>Peer Park</i>				
Remove Dead Trees		X		
Bridge over Waterfall Repair		X		
<i>River Villa Preserve & Jan Schau Wildflower Walk</i>				
New Benches	X			
Trail Distance Markers	X			
Kalamazoo River Valley Trail Connections/Embellishments	X			
<i>Wenke Softball Complex</i>				
Additional Ball Diamonds		X		

Appendix I

Planning and Public Input Process

The Planning Process Section for the 2015–2019 strategic plan includes a brief description of the process completed in the development of the 2010–2014 Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. This establishes the foundation that this next five-year strategic plan is being built upon.

For more specific information on the 2010–2014 strategic plan please refer to <http://www.comstockmi.com/Departments/COMSTOCKPARKSRECREATION.aspx>

Comstock Parks and Recreation 2010–2014 Strategic Plan

The plan was started by a hired consultant under the direction of the sitting Parks and Recreation Commission in early 2008. An entirely new Commission was seated after the elections in November 2008 which authored the primary portions of the plan that included a review of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (actual and perceived), the development of the mission statement, values and principles and vision statement. Two members of the 2008–2012 Commission (Dr. Gillian Stoltman and Dr. Linda Law) undertook the major writing responsibilities, guided the other Commission members, followed the procedures and included all necessary materials and documentation. Park properties were evaluated by each Commissioner, the interim Parks Director and two outside consultants. Input from residents came from a public workshop followed by an extensive Community Recreation Survey sent to 8,500 households. The information gathered led to the development of the goals, objectives and proposed action steps.

The 2008–2012 Parks and Recreation Commission made every attempt to utilize the strategic plan in policy development, budget planning and decision making. The 2012–2016 Commissioners (including Stoltman and Law) have also used the document as a major guide to focus their activities and direction since they began in November 2012.

Comstock Parks and Recreation 2015–2019 Strategic Plan

Understanding that the 2010–2014 Strategic Plan would need to be updated and re-submitted for approval during their terms of office, the current Commission members dedicated quality time and effort to review and assess the status of the stated objectives and action steps that consequently led to the goals set out for the past five years. The Commission has determined that some goals have been accomplished; however, much more needs to be done. Therefore the Commissioners agreed to use the 2010–2014 document (with modification) as the basis to move forward five more years. Documentation of these discussions and decisions are within the Commission’s minutes in Appendix J.

Key Persons Involved in the Process

The Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Director, Vanessa Hardy, has taken the lead with some assistance from the Commission Chair, to facilitate pulling together the planning elements, orchestrating the public input elements and directing timelines down to the final information gathering and publication. The Commission Secretary/Treasurer researched and summarized the most recent demographic data to include in the plan. All Commissioners have contributed in any number of ways: participating in public input sessions; strategic visioning in special township workshops; volunteering with survey administration; locating resources; and by providing input and insight into updating goals, objectives and action steps.

Tour of Existing Park Properties, Review of Facilities and Accessibility Assessment

Annually, from the month of March through July, each Commissioner visits every park for the purpose of monitoring conditions both natural and man-made, assessing equipment for safety and accessibility, observing usage and communicating with patrons. Results of these visits are presented in written form to the Parks and Recreation Director along with an opportunity for questions and discussion regarding these visits at the monthly meetings. Many of these group discussions lead to impromptu brainstorming sessions that result in suggestions for repairs, upgrades and ideas for possible future facilities or features. This active involvement by each elected official helps keep them in touch with the dynamic product under their stewardship and with the community that makes use of these wonderful township resources. Documentation of visits and discussions are in the Park Commission meeting minutes in Appendix J.

Commissioner Spears set up a meeting with Paul Eckland from the Kalamazoo Disability Resource Center in June 2014. Commissioners Spears, Law and Director Hardy met with Mr. Eckland at Robert Morris Park to discuss his assessment of the new facility and surrounding landscape renovations. Mr. Eckland detailed the procedures for accessibility assessment in the parks and provided information on reference and resource materials. This has been and will be beneficial in our continuing efforts to upgrade all park properties. Mr. Eckland has been kind enough to offer his services as needed.

Comstock Charter Township Citizen Engagement and Priority Survey, November 2013

Comstock was one of four townships in Kalamazoo County that participated in the services of the Cobalt Community Research Coalition which conducted a citizen survey that included specific questions regarding parks and recreation. A copy of the survey questions is in Appendix J. The summarized results may be found electronically at <http://comstockmi.com/Default.aspx?tabid=1849>. The various sections of the results of the survey are on the right-hand side of the page under “Citizen Survey – November, 2013.”

Charter Township of Comstock Strategic Visioning Workshops, January, February and March 2014

The Parks and Recreation Commission Chair and other Comstock community leaders, along with the Township Board of Trustees were facilitated by Julie Pioch of Michigan State University Extension to explore the history of the township, review current census information and community survey results, and engage in a variety of activities to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of Comstock today. They worked together to articulate a vision for the future of Comstock and came up with goal statements that they would like to see come to life within the next 10 years; a list of core values and guiding principles that should guide decision making in Comstock; a vision of Comstock in 2024; recommendations and next steps; and, suggested objectives/projects to accomplish in the next one to three years.

The final report, prepared by Ms. Pioch, MSU Extension can be found electronically at <http://www.comstockmi.com/Portals/22/StrategicVisioning2014.pdf>

Park Surveys

Surveys for Robert Morris Park and Wenke Softball Complex were administered over the summer season of 2014. Seasonal staff employed at both facilities randomly selected days from Memorial Day to Labor Day to distribute and collect surveys with specific questions created for the individual park. A comment section was provided. The results of these were discussed during regular Park Commission meetings and provided a helpful source of public input. Surveys and results are in Appendix J.

Park and Recreation Commission Meeting at Merrill Park, June 2014

A public forum was held during this Commission meeting regarding Merrill Park improvements. The minutes of this meeting along with citizen comments are in Appendix J.

Development of Plan Drafts

The initial draft of Strategic Plan 2015–2019 was developed to include the required sections as outlined by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The draft was reviewed and refined by the Parks and Recreation Commission at its meeting of September 8, 2014. A second draft was reviewed and approved during a special Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on September 22, 2014.

30-day Review Period and Public Hearing

On September 22, 2014, the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2015–2019 was made available for public comment along with the announcement of the public hearing scheduled for October 27, 2014, at a special Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. The public notices are in Appendix J.

Park Commission Recommendation for Adoption

Following the close of the October public hearing the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Commission unanimously approved the recommendation for adoption of the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2015–2019. The minutes are in Appendix J.

Township Commission Adoption

The Comstock Township Trustees formally adopted the Comstock Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2015–2019 at the November 17, 2014, Comstock Township Board meeting. The minutes and signed resolution are in Appendix J.

MDNR Certification Checklist

A copy of the Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plan Certification Checklist, completed with the appropriate signatures, is in Appendix J.

Submittal to MDNR

A copy of the transmittal letter to accompany the Comstock Township Parks and Recreation Plan 2015–2019 document for submittal to MDNR is in Appendix J.

Transmittal to West Michigan Planning Commission

This letter is in Appendix J.

Transmittal to Kalamazoo County Parks

This letter is in Appendix J.