



West Traverse Township
Parks & Recreation Plan



January 2025



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1

Background

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Located on the northern edge of Little Traverse Bay and nestled in the western portion of Emmet County, West Traverse Township lies within the northwest area of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula. Compared to the rest of Michigan’s townships that typically span 36 square miles, West Traverse is one of the smallest in the state, comprising approximately 13 square miles of land area. The distinctive size and contour of the Township are shaped by the adjacent shoreline of Lake Michigan, lending it an irregular outline. Given its geographic location, West Traverse Township contains some of the most beautiful and diverse geographical and ecological lands in the state worthy of protection. Its residential neighborhoods and agricultural lands also define West Traverse.

Population

As of 2022, the population of West Traverse reached 1,796 residents. This is a rise of 6.9% from the 2012 figure of 1,680 residents.¹ This growth outpaced the overall population growth of Emmet County, which saw a smaller increase of 3.9% during the same ten-

Table 1: Population Growth for West Traverse and Emmet County

	2012	2022	Growth Rate
West Traverse Township	1,680	1,796	6.9%
Emmet County	32,799	34,072	3.9%

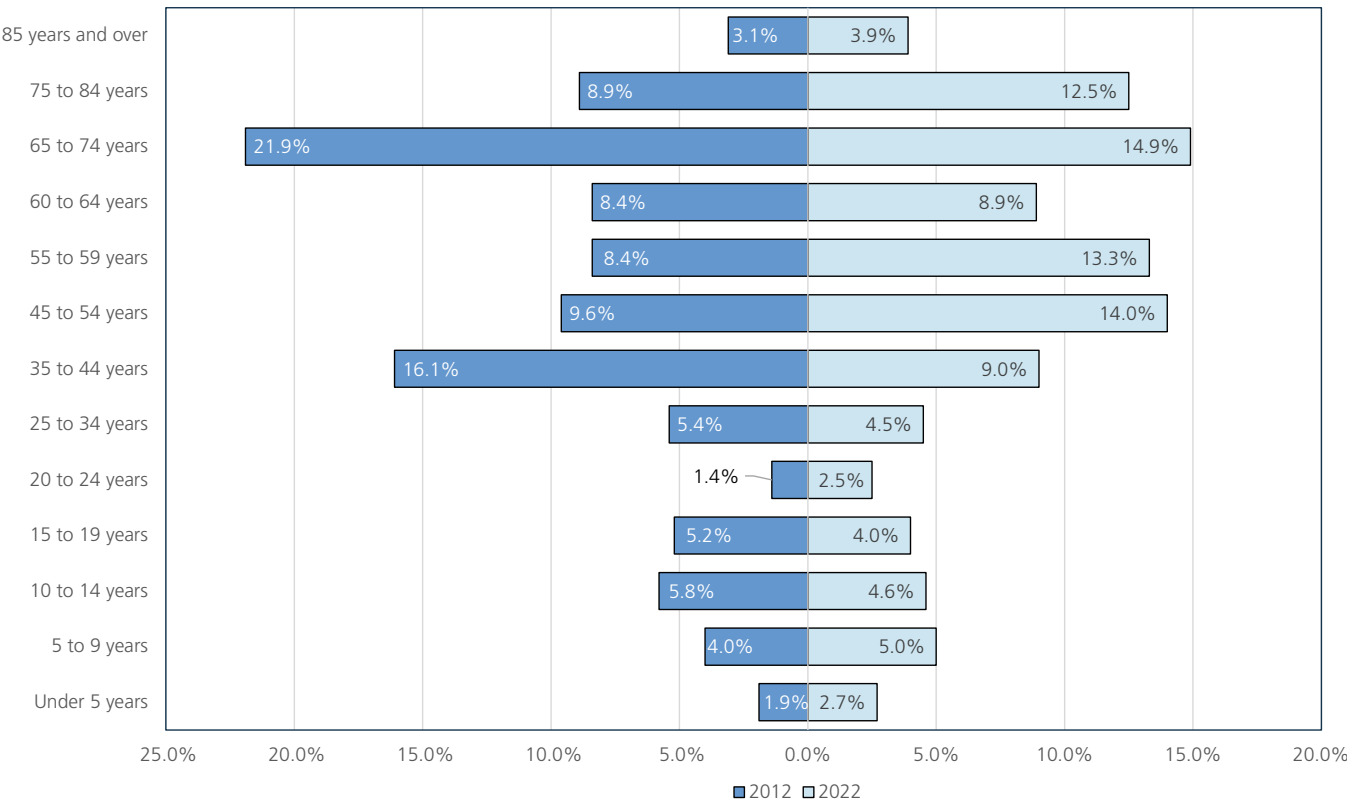
Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimate, DP05

year period. A growing population poses a potential land use conflict. While more homes may be needed to accommodate more households, more land could also be needed to meet a larger demand for open and recreational space.

Age

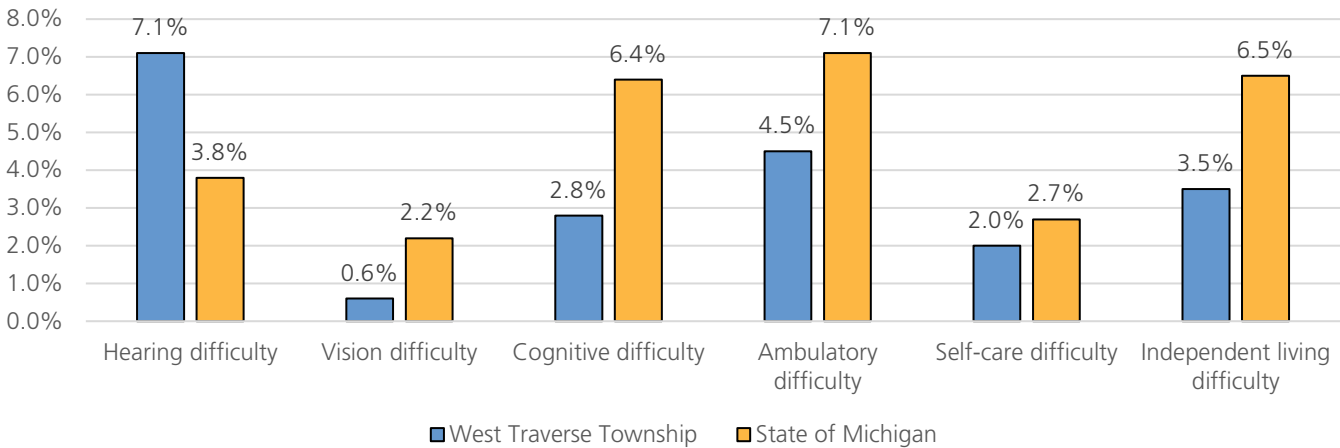
In the current demographic distribution of West Traverse Township, a notable lean towards older age brackets is evident. Approximately, one-third (31.3%) of the populace is aged 65 and above, while more than half (53.5%) are 55 and

Figure 1: Population Pyramid of West Traverse in 2012 & 2022



Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimate, DP05

Figure 2: Disabilities in West Traverse Township and Michigan in 2022



Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimate, S1810

older. The community's median age stands at 55.5 years—a figure that is markedly higher than the median age of 40.3 years for Michigan as a whole. Comparatively, back in 2012, the median age in West Traverse was 43.1 years, aligning more closely with Michigan's present median age. The substantial rise of 12.4 years in the median age within a decade suggests West Traverse has grown increasingly popular among the elderly demographic. This demographic trend may also be partly due to the economic barriers that preclude younger families from residing in West Traverse. However, the median age still increased as the population percentages in all other age categories above 44 years witnessed an increase over these ten years.²

Given that West Traverse Township has a smaller proportion of college-aged adults (ages 18 to 24) and working-age adults (ages 25 to 64) compared to the state of Michigan's averages, the Township faces a need to attract not only younger demographics but also residents of all ages. Developing West Traverse's parks and recreation infrastructure is a potential solution to attracting younger adults and families who are seeking a balanced lifestyle and activities for children. Younger adults are increasingly drawn to recreation hubs centered around developed public assets like biking, skiing, and hiking. By investing in these facilities, West Traverse can create a vibrant community hub where people of all ages can come together to socialize, stay active, and enjoy the outdoors. This not only enhances the quality of life for residents but also contributes to the

overall appeal of the area, making it an attractive destination for new families and professionals seeking a dynamic living environment.

Moreover, incorporating universal design principles can further enhance the inclusivity of these spaces, ensuring that younger children have ample opportunities for play and exploration while accommodating the needs of older age groups. This effort is vital to sustain the increasing number of residents who are no longer in the workforce. This demographic shift necessitates a strategic approach to the development of amenities, services, and infrastructure that accommodate the preferences and needs of an aging population while simultaneously attracting and retaining younger community members.

Disability

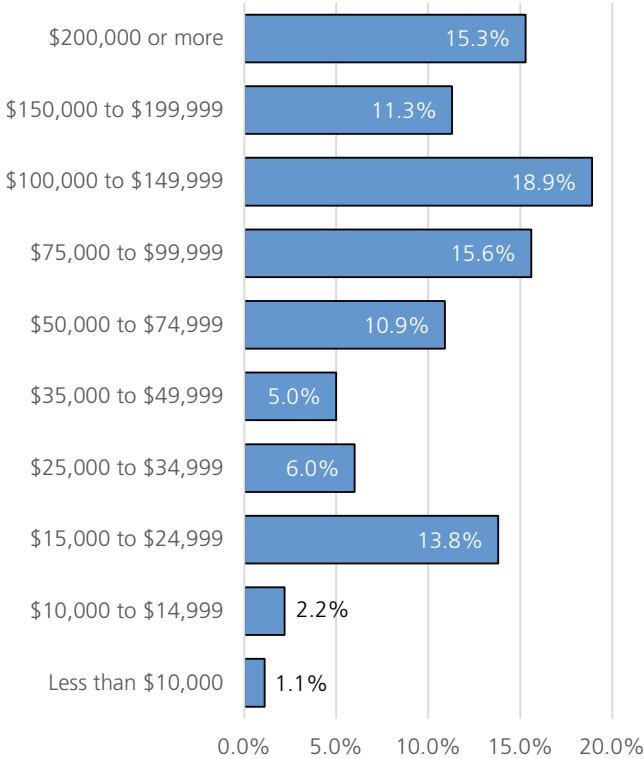
Disability is an important factor in recreational planning because it can significantly impact how and what assets residents can access. In West Traverse Township, the disability rate is 12.4% among the general populace. For those between the ages of 65 to 74, and 75 or older, the rates of disability are more pronounced, at 26.9% and 36.9%, respectively. These figures are relatively consistent with Michigan's overall disability rate of 13%. Notably, the rate of disability in West Traverse's population aged 75 and older is meaningfully lower than Michigan's average of 45.1%. The most frequently reported disability within the Township is related to hearing, affecting 7.1% of the populace.³

Given the demographic shift in West Traverse Township towards a higher proportion of senior residents, it is reasonable to anticipate a corresponding rise in the prevalence of disabilities. In response to this demographic trend, the Township should prioritize investment in universal design principles. These principles advocate for the integration of accessibility features into the initial stages of development, rather than retrofitting separate accommodations later. By doing so, West Traverse Township would foster an environment of inclusivity, ensuring ease of access for individuals of all ages and capabilities.

Household Income

In 2022, West Traverse Township reported 806 households with a median household income of \$90,132, considerably exceeding the state median of \$66,986. Compared to Emmet County's median income of \$69,690, the Township's median income surpasses that of its county by roughly 29.3%. Nevertheless, amidst this fiscal advantage, West Traverse's median income demonstrated a modest growth of only 2.0% over the past

Figure 3: Household Incomes in West Traverse Township in 2022



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, DP03

decade, from 2012 to 2022. This increment is modest when placed alongside the substantial growth experienced state-wide and throughout Emmet County, where median incomes surged by 38.2% and 37.5%, respectively, within the same timeframe. The restrained income growth in West Traverse Township may be primarily influenced by its demographic composition, notably an aging populace that has mostly stepped back from the active workforce and relies on a fixed income.⁴

Employment

The Bureau of Labor Statistics collects employment data by observing the labor force, which includes all people in the civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and older who are either working or actively looking for work. Those in the labor force are classified as either employed or unemployed.⁵

In West Traverse, 57.0% of the population participates in the labor force, a figure that is notably lower than both the state of Michigan's participation rate of 61.5% and that of Emmet County at 61.9%.⁶ This lower labor participation rate can be attributed to West Traverse's high proportion of retired residents. This demographic characteristic allows more residents to enjoy increased leisure and recreational time. To meet these needs, West Traverse Township can improve the community's quality of life by improving park and recreational services.

Of West Traverse's labor force, the unemployment rate is 3%, which sits right around Michigan's unemployment rate of 2.9%.⁷

Table 2: Labor Force Statistics for West Traverse Township in 2022

Employment Status	Number of Residents	% of Residents
Employed	849	54.0%
Unemployed	47	3.0%
Not in Labor Force	675	43.0%

Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimate, DP03

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- » West Traverse Township spans 13 square miles along Little Traverse Bay's shoreline and boasts a varied ecological landscape optimal for recreation.
- » With 31.3% of West Traverse Township's population over the age of 65 and a median age of 55.5, the Township exhibits a need for increasing public recreational development and infrastructure to attract younger age groups.
- » The disability rate stands at 12.4% overall, with higher rates among the older age groups; universal planning strategies can help to accommodate younger and older residents alike.
- » The median household income stands at \$90,132, which is significantly above the averages for Michigan and Emmet County; such income levels suggest a greater capacity for leisure activities in the community.
- » West Traverse Township's labor force participation rate of 57% falls short of state and county averages, suggesting a greater demand for recreational activity within the community.

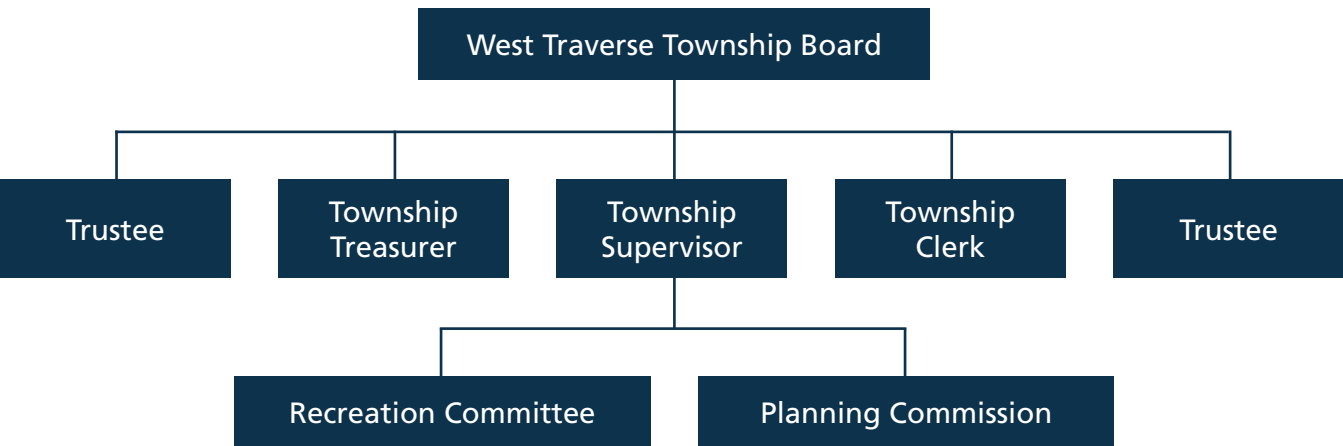
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- 2 American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP05.
- 3 American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, S1810.
- 4 American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP03.
- 5 Bureau of Labor Statistics, Concepts and Definitions, 3-21-2024. www.bls.gov/cps/definitions
- 6 American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP03.
- 7 American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Estimates, DP03.



Administrative Structure

Figure 4: Administrative Organizational Chart



Voting residents of West Traverse Township elect the five-member Township Board that manages West Traverse Township. The Township Board directs all West Traverse Township operations including all determinations regarding recreation areas in the Township. The Township Board also appoints members to the Planning Commission and the Recreation Committee, who then make decisions regarding planning, zoning, and parks and recreation.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

An elected five-member Township Board manages West Traverse Township. This Board directs all West Traverse Township operations and as such makes all determinations regarding recreation. This Five-Year Parks and Recreation Plan was prepared by a private consultant firm which was hired by the Township Board.

Funding for approved projects, operation, facility maintenance, and facility improvements, is financed by the West Traverse Township General Fund. This extends to capital development projects of recreation areas, parks, and the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve. In addition, State Revenue Sharing and property tax collections may be used to fund various projects, as well as the possibility of state and federal grants that will be applied for in the future.

PARTNERSHIPS

West Traverse Township maintains a distinctive partnership with The Little Traverse Conservancy through Thorne Swift Nature Preserve. Situated within the Township, this tract of land boasts Lake Michigan frontage and was generously donated to the Conservancy under the condition that it be developed into a Nature Center accessible to West Traverse Township residents without charge. To support the management of this preserve, which includes beach frontage, taxpayers of West Traverse Township contribute 0.25 mills or less annually. Additionally, West Traverse Township allocates funds to the City of Harbor Springs to support operational and maintenance expenses associated with communal recreational and park facilities such as the City Beach, the Skatepark, the Geraldine Ford Park and its Boat Launch.

RECREATION BUDGET

During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, West Traverse Township appropriated \$106,439 towards its Recreation and Culture budget, which is 12.9% of total primary government expenses (\$822,656 during the 2022-23 financial year). For 2023, the Township allocated \$25,000 for trail maintenance at Township owned properties, including the Ridge Road property, this figure was increased to \$30,000 for 2024.



3

Recreation Inventory

With a generous provision of 132 acres of Township property dedicated to parks and recreational areas, the Township of West Traverse is a haven for those seeking active and passive leisure pursuits.¹ West Traverse Township boasts an expansive average of 82.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents—standing tall against the national median of 13.0 acres.² The following is an inventory of existing recreational facilities owned by the Township, as well as some general information on private and regional facilities that are accessible from the Township.

Recreation facilities are classified below as being within the Township limits or outside the Township limits, a nature preserve or working forest, a private facility, or a regional facility. Information for this plan was gathered from the American Community Survey, ESRI, state of Michigan, Township staff, and the Township's Recreation Committee. Each recreation site was visited and inspected for available amenities, conditions, and accessibility.

The State of Michigan requires that parks be given an accessibility rating based on an assessment of each location. Accessibility of parks is evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5:

- » 1: none of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
- » 2: some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
- » 3: most of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
- » 4: the entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- » 5: The entire park was developed/renovated using the principles of universal design

TYPES OF PARKS IN WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP

- » Recreation Facilities within West Traverse Township
- » Recreation Facilities not in West Traverse Township
- » Nature Preserves / Working Forests
- » Recreation Facilities in the City of Harbor Springs

RECREATION FACILITIES WITHIN WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP

1. Thorne Swift Nature Preserve

Natural Resources Area – Area: 36 acres

Thorne Swift Nature Preserve includes Michigan beach frontage and is accessed from Lower Shore Drive. As a cooperative effort with the Little Traverse Conservancy, Thorne Swift Nature Preserve is maintained for the enjoyment of nature trails, interpretive walks, swimming and special courses in interpretive studies. The preserve covers approximately 36 acres of land and includes 950 feet of Lake Michigan frontage and 500' of beach access. It includes a mix of sandy dunes and low-lying swampy areas with cedar forests and mixed hardwood stands that surround a pond. This preserve is not ADA-accessible.

Amenities include:

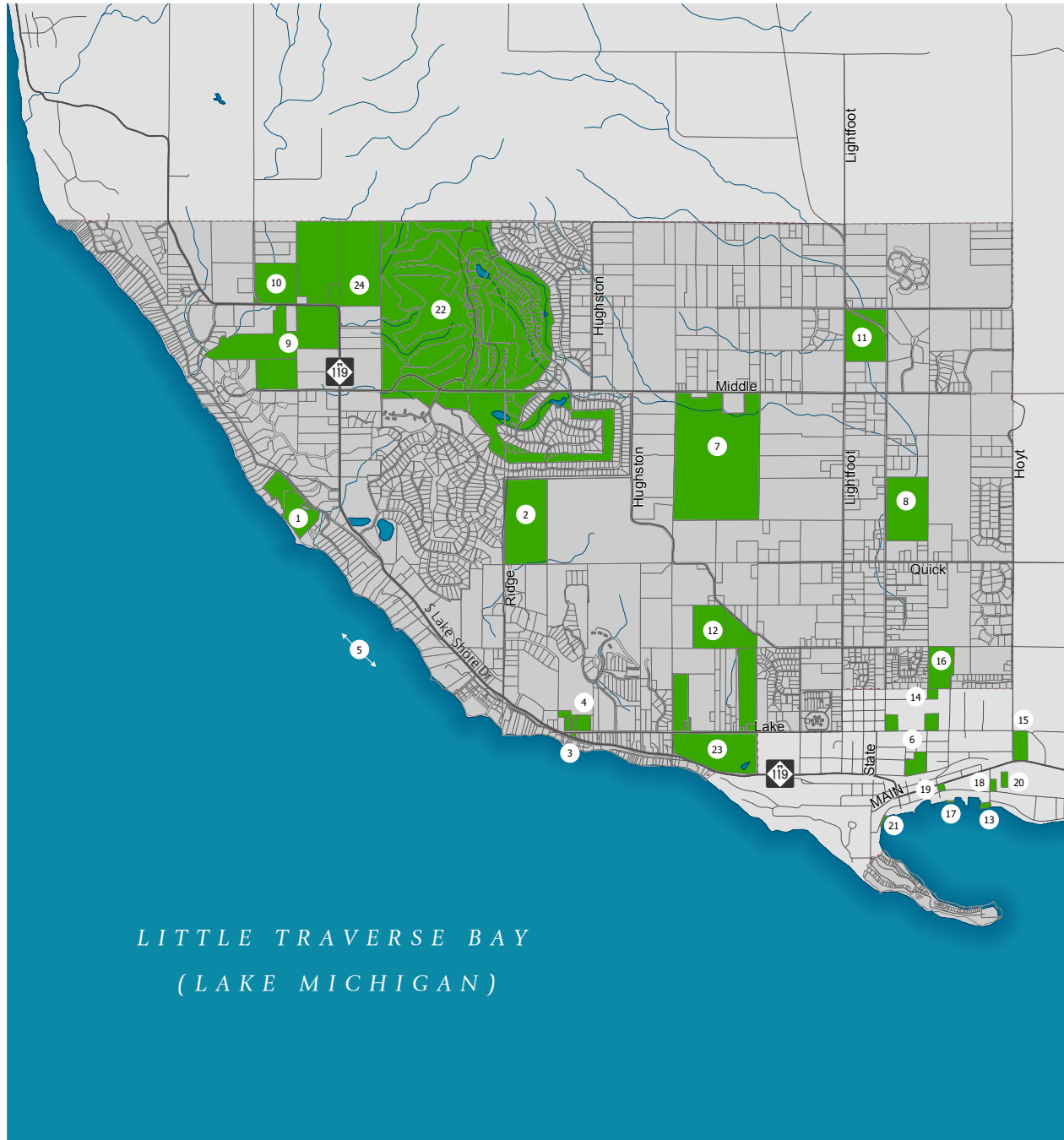
- » Trails
- » Dune observation platform
- » Pond observation platform
- » Pavilion
- » Beach Access
- » Seasonal guided programs
- » Restrooms³

Accessibility 2 - Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines



Thorne Swift Nature Preserve.
Source: West Traverse Township

Map 1: Recreation Facilities



Recreation Facilities

Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal, West Traverse Township, Emmet County

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1: Thorne Swift Nature Preserve | 14: Tennis courts |
| 2: Ridge Road "Township 80" Natural Area | 15: Harbor Springs Skatepark and Baseball Fields |
| 3: West Traverse Township Hall | 16: Kiwanis Park |
| 4: Cook Family Homestead | 17: Josephine Ford Park |
| 5: Lake Michigan Frontage | 18: Jean Jardine Park |
| 6: Harbor Springs Area School District | 19: Shay Park |
| 7: Consuelo Diane & Charles L. Wilson Jr. Working Forest Reserve | 20: Harbor Springs Deer Park |
| 8: David H. Irish Nature Preserve | 21: Zorn Park Beach |
| 9: Five Mile Creek Nature Preserve Area | 22: Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club |
| 10: Seberon "Boo" Litzenburger Nature Preserve | 23: Harbor Point Golf Course |
| 11: Charles S. Winston Jr. Nature Preserve | 24: Pond Hill Farm |
| 12: Morris-de la Vergne & Luettjohann Garver Nature Preserve | |
| 13: Zoll Street Beach | |

2,500 Feet
Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

2. Ridge Road "Township 80" Natural Area

Undeveloped Open Space – Area: 81.4 acres

The Ridge Road "Township 80," is a natural area and a favored destination for hunting, hiking and cross-country skiing by locals. The landscape features a range of topographies from moderate to steep slopes and is enveloped by a forest of mature trees, which provides an inviting environment for these recreational activities. These hiking and skiing trails weave through the adjacent Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club with snowmobile routes adjacent to Ridge and Griffin Roads. Access to Ridge Road "80" is commonly achieved by walking or limited parking on Griffen and Ridge Roads.

Park Amenities: Nonmotorized trails

Accessibility: 1 - None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

3. West Traverse Township Hall

Built in the late 1800s, West Traverse Township Hall formerly served the community as the area's Grange Hall. The building is now used as the location of Township offices, as the Township's election precinct, and a public meeting place.

Accessibility: 3 - Most facilities meet accessibility guidelines



West Traverse Township Hall.

Source: West Traverse Township

4. Cook Family Homestead

Undeveloped Community Park – Area: 10 acres

The Cook Property is located within the southern sector of West Traverse Township. Bounded to the south by West Lake Road, it is neighbored to the north and east by the Windward Association. This expansive green space is home to mature hardwood trees and open fields. Notable on the site are two substantial septic systems, servicing approximately 28 lots in the Forest Beach Association and an additional 15 in the Pine Trail Association. The property also encompasses a residential garage, two barns, and provides a parking lot for additional parking at Township Hall.

Accessibility: 1 - None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

5. Lake Michigan Frontage

West Traverse Township has approximately 9.1 miles (48,300 feet) of Lake Michigan frontage. Miles of beach line the lake along stretches of roadway throughout the Township.

Accessibility: 1 - None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

RECREATION FACILITIES NOT IN WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP

6. Harbor Springs Area School District

The Harbor Springs School District provides gymnasiums at the elementary, middle, and high schools, a community pool, a performing arts center, soccer fields, Shay playground, Ottawa Stadium, tennis courts, baseball fields, and outdoor running tracks.

Accessibility: 5 - The entire facility was developed using the principles of universal design

NATURE PRESERVES / WORKING FORESTS

7. Consuelo Diane & Charles L. Wilson Jr. Working Forest Reserve

Spanning 248 acres, the Consuelo Diane and Charles L. Wilson Jr. Working Forest Reserve stands as one of the most expansive protected areas near the City of Harbor Springs. Situated along Middle and Hughston roads, approximately 3.5 miles north of Harbor Springs, this reserve has extensive trails and exemplifies the stunning blend of forests, hills, and fields characteristic of northern Michigan.⁴

Accessibility: 1 - None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

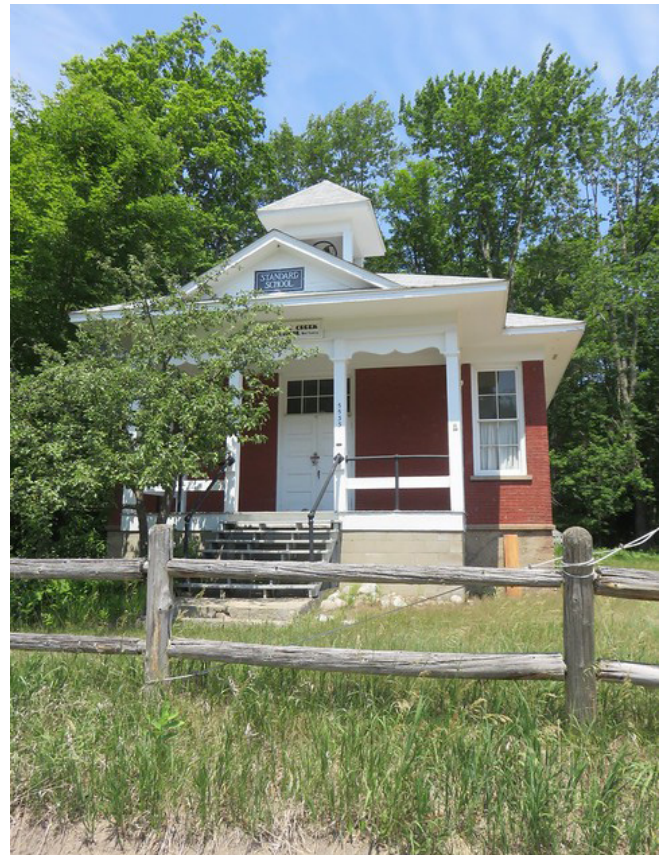
8. David H. Irish Nature Preserve

Spanning 60 acres and named after one of the Little Traverse Conservancy's founders, board and committee member, David Irish. It contains 60 acres of rolling, open fields, historically used for agriculture.⁵

Accessibility: 1 - None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

9. Five Mile Creek Nature Preserve Area

Five Mile Creek is a tributary of Little Traverse Bay in West Traverse and Friendship Townships. It flows into the Bay five miles north of Harbor Springs. This creek is used for fishing and recreation.⁶



Old Schoolhouse at Five Mile Creek.

Source: West Traverse Township

The preserve also includes a 30-acre nature area that is located just beyond the Five Mile Creek Nature Preserve. Mostly rolling hardwoods with some forested wetlands along Five Mile Creek.⁷

Accessibility: 1 - None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

10. Seberon "Boo" Litzenburger Nature Preserve

A 40-acre sanctuary with 1,280 feet of frontage along Five Mile Creek, named after one of the Little Traverse Conservancy's founders. It features a diverse landscape of transitioning fields, traditional forests, and a cedar swamp, highlighted by a lookout platform and bridge overlooking the scenic creek. The preserve offers a nearly 1-mile out-and-back trail system with moderate walking difficulty, including a steeper hill.⁸

Accessibility: 1 - None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

11. Charles S. Winston Jr. Nature Preserve

This 50-acre nature preserve is located just north of the Middle Road and State Road intersection. The property was purchased in 2005 with donations to the Harbor Springs Greenbelt Program and protected in honor of a long-time Conservancy board member Charles Winston Jr.⁹

Accessibility: 1 - None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

12. Morris-de la Vergne & Luettjohann Garver Nature Preserve

Located in West Traverse Township about one mile north of Harbor Springs on Hughston Road. Bill and Kim Morris donated funds to purchase this property in honor of their families. It is 30 acres in size.¹⁰

Accessibility: 1 - None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

RECREATION FACILITIES IN THE CITY OF HARBOR SPRINGS

West Traverse Township and the City of Harbor Springs cooperatively provide swimming beaches (Zorn Park), softball fields, a sledding area (Kiwanis Park), a boat launch (Ford Park), along with an outdoor ice-skating rink/skateboard park (Skate Park) which are used by West Traverse Township residents. The Township shares the operational and maintenance costs of these facilities (through a millage) with the City of Harbor Springs.

13. Zoll Street Beach

Zoll Street Beach is located on Bay Street just East of the Central Business District. One of the most popular beaches in the area. Dogs are permitted but must be on a leash. Amenities include a beach, a swimming raft, a grassy picnic area with picnic tables, and seasonal restrooms.¹¹

Accessibility: 2 - Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

14. Tennis courts

A total of 8 tennis courts are available to the public. They are located at the eastern extent of Fairview Street just past the Harbor Springs Department of Public Works. Restrooms are on site and paths around the courts make this site ADA accessible.¹²

Accessibility: 3 - Most facilities meet accessibility guidelines

15. Harbor Springs Skatepark and Baseball Fields

This complex is located adjacent to Bay Bluffs Emmet County Medical Care Facility and includes a large Skatepark with multiple ramps, two pickleball courts, and three baseball diamonds at Reynolds Field. This space includes a concession area and restroom. Parts of this complex are paved and ADA-accessible.¹³

Accessibility: 3 - Most facilities meet accessibility guidelines

16. Kiwanis Park

Kiwanis Park is the spot for all-season fun in Harbor Springs with a rentable building, disc golf, playground, and sledding hill. This park is heavily used by residents of the City and surrounding townships throughout the seasons and is the center for family fun. Harbor Springs intends to make improvements to Kiwanis Park to expand the winter park activities available soon. Plans for improvements include an ice-skating rink, a building update, parking re-configuration, and a tow rope or magic carpet.¹⁴

Accessibility: 2 - Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

17. Josephine Ford Park

This park is predominantly for the launching of watercraft on Little Traverse Bay. Amenities include boat and kayak launch areas, parking, a dock, a picnic area with tables and grills, and seasonal restrooms. This park is ADA-accessible.¹⁵

Accessibility: 3 - Most facilities meet accessibility guidelines

18. Jean Jardine Park

This area is a grassy field park with picnic tables and is not developed. It is located behind City Hall, and restrooms in this building are accessible during business hours. This park is ADA-accessible.¹⁶

Accessibility: 3 - Most facilities meet accessibility guidelines



Harbor Point Golf Course.
Source: West Traverse Township



19. Shay Park

This is an undeveloped park in the downtown area that has a picnic area and views of the bay. It is a popular place in the downtown for workers to eat lunch. The park has the historic Shay Steamer Yacht on display, with future plans to display a Shay Locomotive.

Accessibility: 1 - None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

20. Harbor Springs Deer Park

This park, located behind the police department, is fenced in and inhabited by a small herd of Whitetail Deer. A popular location for wildlife viewing up close, there are picnic tables so visitors can enjoy a meal while watching. Restrooms are nearby at City Hall.

Accessibility: 2 - Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

21. Zorn Park Beach

Zorn Park in Harbor Springs offers a sandy swimming beach. There is a square swimming raft tethered offshore within the swimming boundaries of the park. The park also contains a bathhouse, playground, and a mineral well.

Accessibility: 1 - None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

PRIVATE FACILITIES

22. Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club

Birchwood Farms Golf and Country Club contains approximately 1,200 acres. The area is owned by private individuals and provides several recreational opportunities for its members including cross-country skiing trails, golf, hiking trails, tennis and pickleball courts, and a swimming pool.

Accessibility: 2 - Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

23. Harbor Point Golf Course

Harbor Point Golf Course is an 18-hole golf course. The property is privately owned and operated by the Harbor Point Association. Currently, the course is semi-private and is open to the public after certain hours.

Accessibility: 2 - Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

24. Pond Hill Farm

This is a family-owned farm property spanning 173 acres, located at 5699 South Lakeshore Drive in Harbor Springs. In 2007, the family opened a restaurant on the farm that served sandwiches. It quickly gained in popularity and now offers full course meals. The property also has a winery with products made from fruit grown on the property and offers recreation and entertainment options.

Accessibility: 2 - Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines

REGIONAL PARKS

Petoskey State Park

Petoskey State Park is located approximately 6 miles from West Traverse Township on the northeastern edge of Little Traverse Bay. The park offers sandy beaches and provides day-use areas as well as camping facilities.

Wilderness State Park

Wilderness State Park is located approximately 25 miles from West Traverse Township on the northwestern tip of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

The park offers many miles of trails, as well as undeveloped natural lake frontage, boat ramps, and campgrounds.

The M-119 Tunnel of Trees Scenic Heritage Highway Route

The M-119 Tunnel of Trees Scenic Heritage Route runs along the Lake Michigan coast between West Traverse Township and Cross Village. This span is designated as a Scenic Heritage Route because of its natural beauty and the community's commitment to its integrity.¹⁷

Sources

- 1 West Traverse Township, 2006 - 2011 Recreation Plan.
- 2 National Recreation and Park Association, Agency Performance Review, www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/agency-performance-review/.
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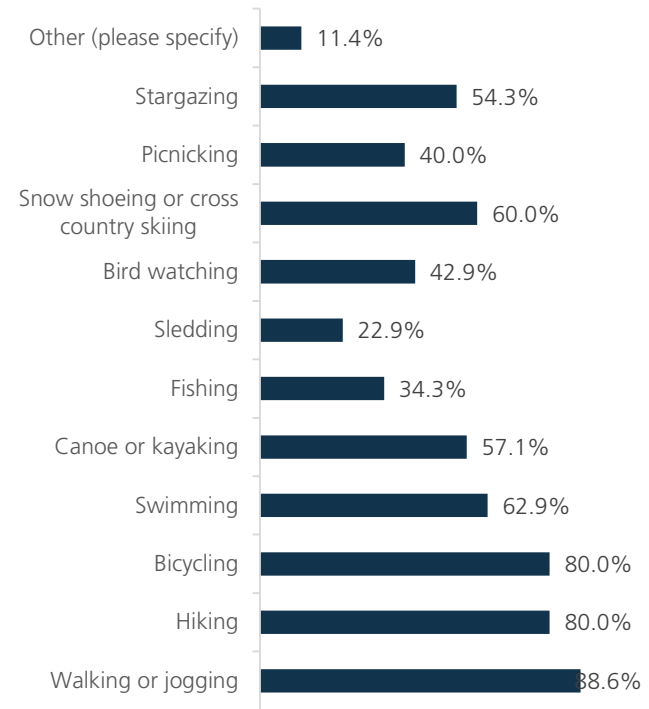
4 Public Input

West Traverse Township has updated its Park and Recreation Plan, focusing on its recreation inventory and re-prioritizing specific projects. A key component of this update was community engagement.

To gather input, a community survey was made available to West Traverse residents and the public from May 2 to August 30, 2024. A total of 37 community members responded to the survey. The survey was promoted through notices on the Township website, flyer postings in public areas, and a weekly ad in the Harbor Light newspaper, which enjoys high circulation and readership in the Township.

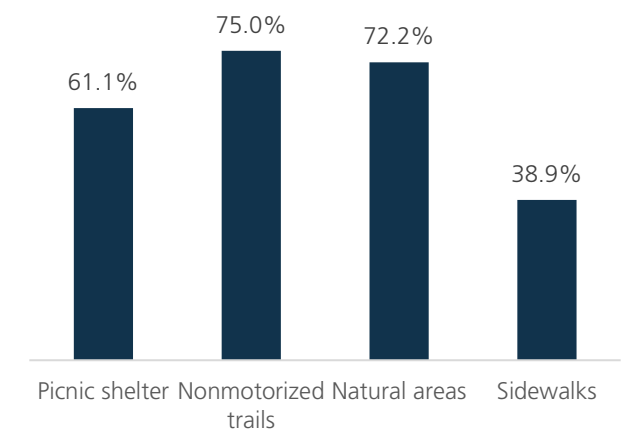
A summary of the survey results is presented on the following pages.

Q1. Please select all the recreational activities you enjoy



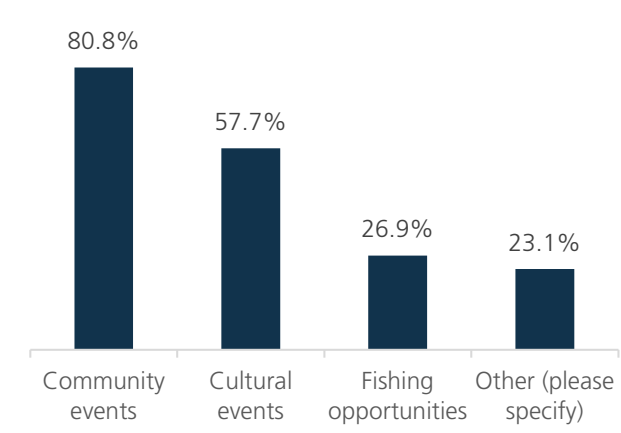
Respondents to the survey said that they participate in many recreational activities. The most popular are “walking or jogging” (88.6%), “hiking” (80%), and “bicycling” (80%) all with more than 4 out of 5 respondents saying that they enjoy doing it. Four other activities “swimming”, “snow shoeing or cross-country skiing”, “canoe or kayaking”, and “stargazing” all had more than 50% participation among the people who completed the survey.

Q2. What type of recreation facilities would you like to see in West Traverse Township? (Choose All that Apply)



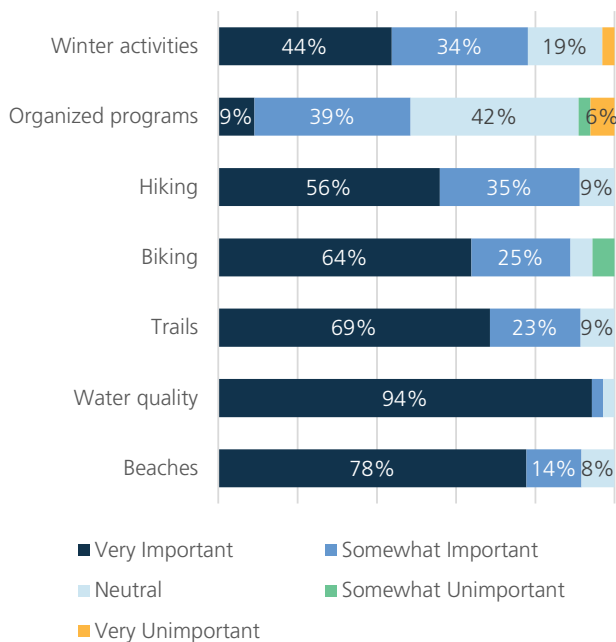
Respondents to the survey showed what new facilities they would like to see. “Nonmotorized trails”, “natural areas”, and “picnic shelters” all have a high rate of desire.

Q3. What type of recreation programs would you like to see offered in West Traverse Township? (Choose All that Apply)



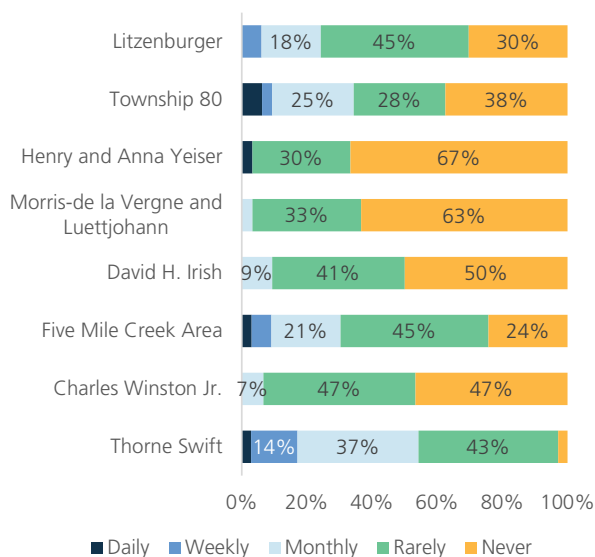
People who completed the survey desire more engagement and connectivity within the West Traverse community. When asked what types of recreation programs they would like to see both “community events”(80.8%) and “cultural events” (57.7%) were the highest voted options. Both types of events would bring more options for the community to gather. Almost one-quarter of respondents selected the “other” option. Responses with this option included more options for elderly residents to be outdoors, outdoor educational options, as well as pickleball courts.

Q4. How important are the following in West Traverse Township?



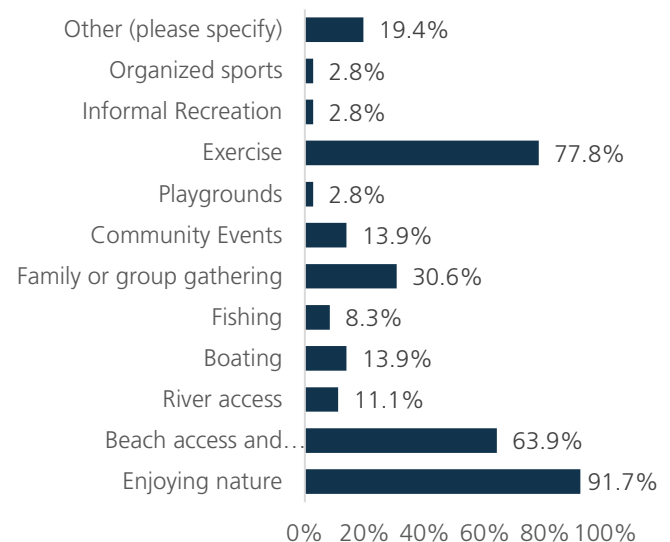
According to respondents, “beaches” and “water quality” are the top two most important factors related to recreation in the Township. The water resources are what led many to visit and reside in Northern Michigan. It is paramount that these are protected. “Trails”, “biking”, and “hiking” all received a high number of votes as well showing the importance of outdoor exploration to the community.

Q5. How often do you visit the following recreational areas?



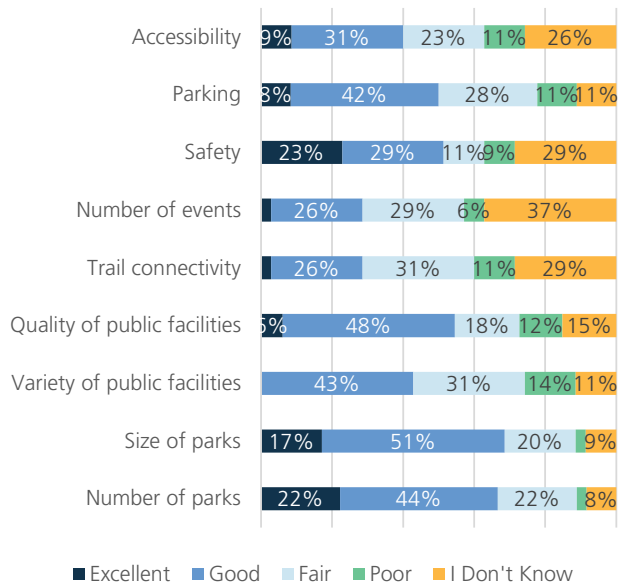
The most visited recreational area in the Township is Thorne Swift Nature Preserve. This is not surprising as it is one of the largest areas in the Township with a well-developed trail network as well as a variety of areas to visit including Lake Michigan lakefront, dunes, swamps, and observation areas. Five Mile Creek, Township 80, and Litzenberger all had about one quarter of respondents say they visit monthly or more.

Q6. Why do you visit public parks or recreational facilities in the Township or Emmet County?



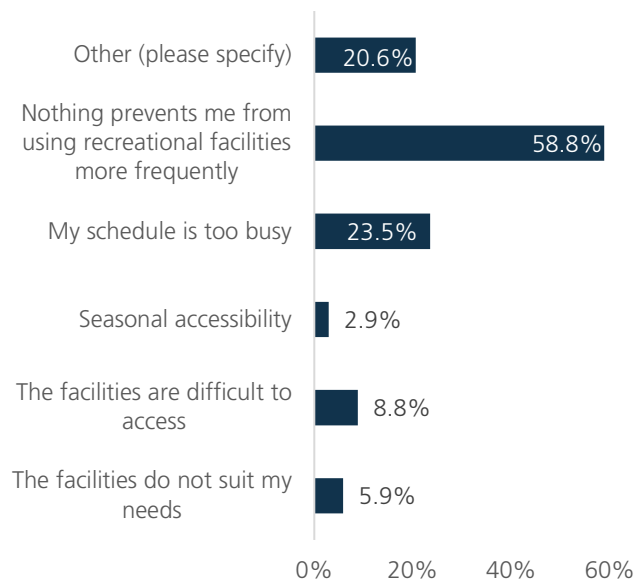
Those who completed the survey visit Township recreation areas for three main reasons: “enjoying nature”; “exercise”; and “beach access and swimming”. Respondents to the “other” option said that they like to walk their dogs and bicycle.

Q7. Rate the following characteristics of West Traverse Township parks and recreation facilities?



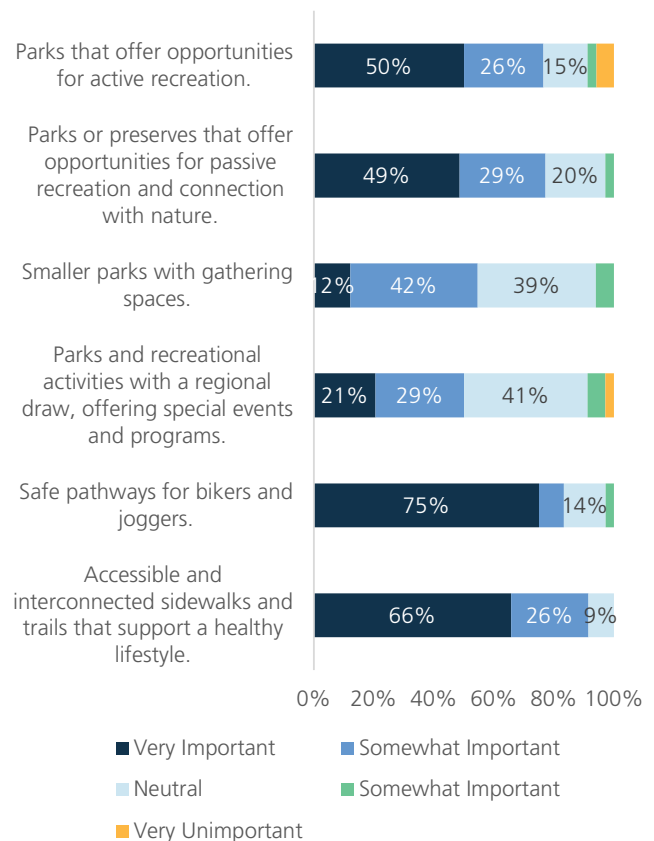
This question was intended to gauge public opinion on a variety of aspects of recreation facilities. All categories had a majority of respondents rating them fair or better showing that overall perception around recreation facilities is positive. The community is overall very satisfied with the number of parks and the size of parks. Though still reasonably positive, some of the lower rated choices were “safety”, “accessibility”, and “parking”.

Q8. What prevents you from using area recreational facilities more frequently? (Check all that apply)



This question was added to the survey to determine what may be limiting factors to why residents don't use recreation facilities as much as they could. Almost three out of every five (58.8%) respondents said that “Nothing prevents me from using recreational facilities more frequently”. Just under one in four respondents (23.5%) stated that their schedules were too busy to use recreational facilities. Other respondents that don't use facilities said that they are difficult to access (8.8%) and that they can only access seasonally (2.9%), showing that more work could be done to allow more people to enter these areas. Responses to the “other” option are related to the lack of options, including the lack of pickleball which was a trend throughout this survey.

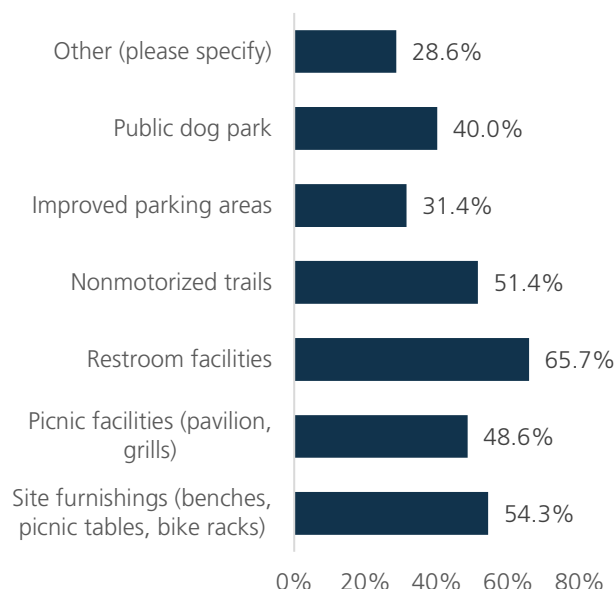
Q9. Please rate the following statements:



This question showed that once again recreation area access is of high importance for the community. The top two statements were “Safe pathways for bikers and joggers” and “Accessible and interconnected sidewalks and trails that support a healthy lifestyle” both relating to access and mobility. “Parks or preserves that offer opportunities for passive recreation and connection

with nature” and “Parks that offer opportunities for active recreation” were also ranked highly in importance to the community.

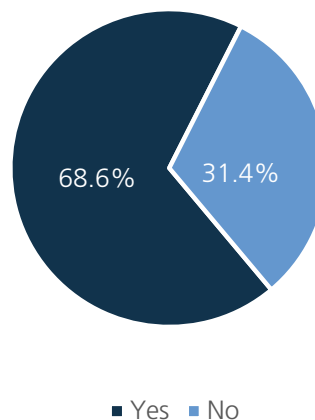
Q10. West Traverse Township owns a large vacant property that is being considered for recreational improvements. What types of facilities or amenities would you like to see added to the property? (Check all that apply)



This question was intended to receive comments relating to the Township 80 property. However, because the Township owns multiple large vacant properties, it is not clear which property the responses might relate to.

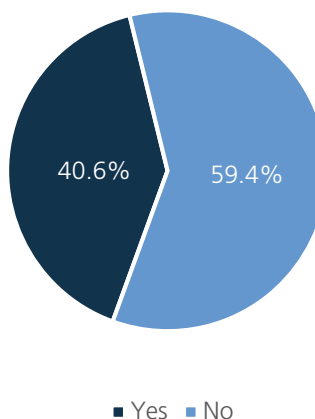
Reviewing the responses as they may relate to multiple properties; vacant sites being considered for development as a recreation space are desired to be versatile sites according to the community with requests for “restroom facilities” from almost two-thirds (65.7%) of survey respondents. Amenities like benches, picnic tables, and bike racks, pavilions, grills, and nonmotorized trails all being desired by more than half of respondents. Those who provided comments on the “other” option once again mentioned pickleball courts, while others wanted more information on the specific property that is being discussed. Considering these responses, a developed site could serve the community as a place for Township residents to spend the day with their family and friends.

Q11. Would you support a millage or other source of Township funding to provide for the items you identified in Question #10 above?



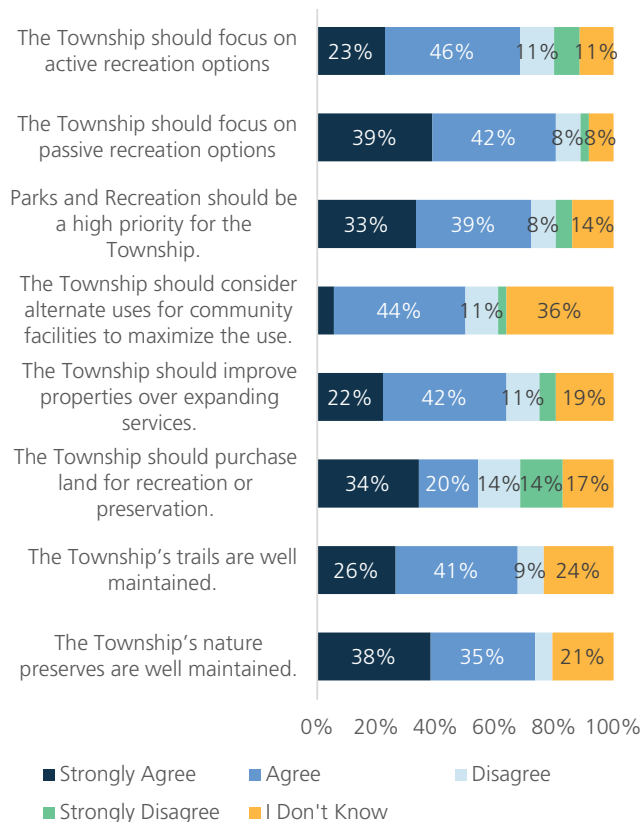
Most respondents said that they would be supportive of a property tax millage to fund the development of the property from question 9.

Q12. Would you be interested in volunteering to support increased recreational activities in West Traverse Township?



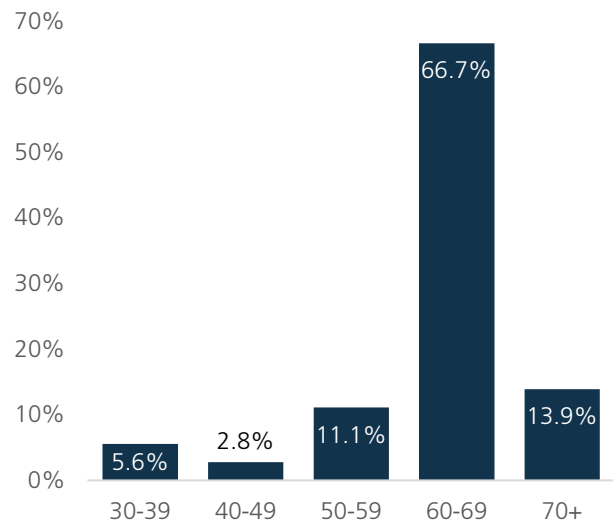
Just over 40% of respondents said they would be willing to volunteer to support increased recreational activities. Although this does not reflect the majority of survey takers, the responses do show a willingness to volunteer and that many people really care about recreation spaces in the community.

Q13. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:



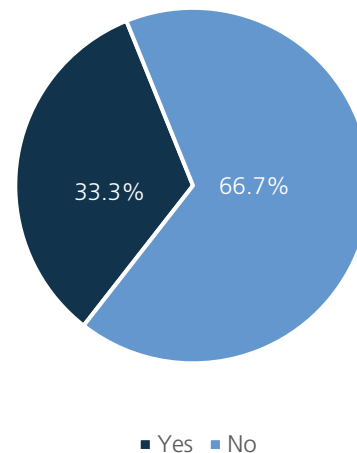
The survey responses reveal strong support for parks and recreation in West Traverse Township, with a majority of respondents expressing satisfaction. Notably, 73% believe the Township's nature preserves are well maintained, and 67% feel the same about the trails. A significant 72% agree that parks and recreation should be a high priority, and 81% support a focus on passive recreation options. Additionally, 64% favor improving existing properties over expanding services, while 69% agree with focusing on active recreation options. However, there is slightly less consensus on purchasing land for recreation, with 54% in favor.

Q14. What is your age range?



Two-thirds (66.7%) of respondents were in their 60's, with another 13.9% of respondents being over 70 years old. Engagement was low among respondents under 60, with no one under 30 years old participating in the survey.

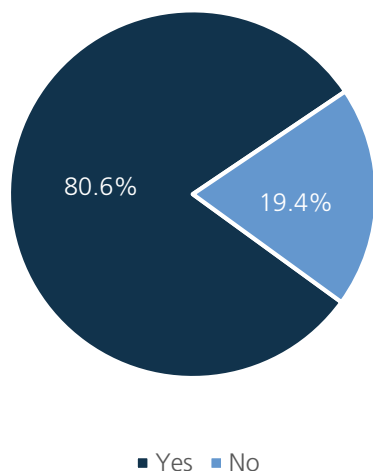
Q15. Do you have children living in or regularly visiting your household?



One out of every three households in the responses had children living in or visiting their household regularly, while the other two-thirds said that they did not. Considering the older average age of respondents this is not surprising. While these households with children living in them as well as those who have children visiting are low relative to those that do not, they should still be considered while planning recreation activities. According to the National Center for Education in Maternal

and Child Health, recreation opportunities in a municipality make it more likely that families will want to visit and live in these areas. By focusing on having recreation spaces for children the Township could attract new residents and attract more economic activity.

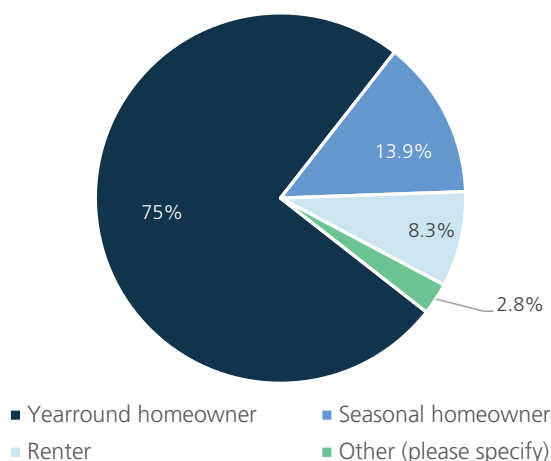
Q16. Are you a West Traverse Township resident or property owner? (Township residents and property owners pay property taxes to West Traverse Township)



Q17. If you are not a West Traverse Township resident or property owner, please provide the township and county where you reside.

Those who responded to the survey but did not reside in or own property in the Township, live nearby in Harbor Springs or within Emmet County.

Q18. Which of the following best describes your residential status?



The survey results indicate that most respondents are year-round homeowners, comprising 75% of the participants. Seasonal homeowners make up 13.9%, while renters account for 8.3%. A small percentage, 2.8%, responded “other”, saying that they live in the Township 6 months of the year. This distribution highlights that most of the survey feedback likely reflects the perspectives of permanent residents.

Q19. Please leave further comments here that can help guide the future of parks and recreation opportunities in West Traverse Township.

The survey responses reflect a range of opinions and suggestions regarding parks and recreation in West Traverse Township. Participants expressed appreciation for the development of a recreational plan and praised Thorne Swift and Township 80 for being well-maintained. However, there is a call for better visibility and accessibility of other Township properties, as many residents are unaware of their locations. Several respondents emphasized the need for continued funding and improvements for Thorne Swift and suggested partnerships with local organizations like the Friendship Center to enhance accessibility for the aging population, particularly on paved and plowed trails. Concerns were also raised about the maintenance of conservancy lands, with a focus on preventing littering and illegal activities. Additionally, some respondents advocated for more family-friendly parks, the restoration of historic barns near the Township Hall, and the introduction of a bike lane on M-119. There were also opinions in support of an additional millage for park upgrades, which suggests that participants are enthused about expanding recreational opportunities and amenities in West Traverse Township.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM PUBLIC INPUT

1. **High Participation in Recreational Activities:** A large majority of respondents engage in outdoor activities such as walking or jogging (88.6%), hiking (80%), and bicycling (80%), indicating a strong community interest in these forms of recreation.
2. **Desire for Improved and Expanded Facilities:** Respondents expressed a strong desire for new recreational facilities, particularly nonmotorized trails, natural areas, and picnic shelters. There is also interest in adding amenities like restrooms, benches, and pavilions to existing or new sites.
3. **Importance of Beaches and Water Quality:** The survey highlighted that “beaches” and “water quality” are viewed as the most important aspects of recreation in the Township, underscoring the community’s connection to the region’s natural water resources.
4. **Support for Passive Recreation and Accessibility:** There is significant support for passive recreation options and the need for safe, accessible pathways and trails. Accessibility, particularly for aging residents, was a recurring theme in the feedback, with suggestions for partnerships to improve trail accessibility.



5

Implementation

The goals, objectives, and action plan are designed to shape future decisions regarding recreation, aligning closely with the community's values and priorities. These goals were formulated through a comprehensive process that included analyzing current facilities, gathering public input via the 2024 Community Survey, consultations with recreation stakeholders, and reviewing various local and regional plans and strategies. To effectively implement these goals, objectives, and actions, it is crucial to grasp their respective roles and their interconnectedness. Understanding these dynamics ensures a coherent approach to achieving our recreational objectives.

Goals offer broad guidance and outline the desired future state. They address specific needs and issues but remain general in nature.

Objectives are concrete steps that help achieve the broader goals and are designed to be attainable.

Actions detail the specific steps required to meet objectives. A single strategy may support multiple objectives, or an objective may need several strategies to be achieved. These actions also identify the implementation tools, such as zoning changes, and the key stakeholders responsible for fulfilling the goals and objectives.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Maintain and Improve parks and recreational facilities and identify opportunities for new spaces

- » Continue to provide, maintain, and enhance parks and recreational facilities and amenities for both residents and visitors.
- » Keep the 5-year recreation plan up-to-date and ensure it meets DNR approval to maintain a dependable stream of funding.
 - » Continually communicate with the public and seek information from the taxpayers of West Traverse Township so that we know that the recreation plans are moving in the right direction and so that we may be prepared for future needs and interests.
 - » Periodically send out questionnaires to determine interest in becoming involved with any of the projects in this plan.
 - » Publish these updates on the West Traverse Township website.
- » Promote and support public art installations, community events, and festivals in parks and civic spaces.
- » Explore opportunities to introduce additional recreational activities at existing parks and facilities to better attract and retain both residents and visitors.
- » Develop or upgrade amenities to expand recreational opportunities specifically for the area's youth.
- » Increase the Township's capacity to plan effectively for parks and recreation.
- » Work with the West Traverse Township Board in identifying possible lands that have the potential to be donated to either West Traverse Township or to the Little Traverse Conservancy.
- » Work with the West Traverse Township Planning Commission and the West Traverse Township Board to look at zoning changes that would set aside open space for recreation in new subdivision developments.

- » Advocate for improved accessibility across all parks and recreational facilities.
- » Work with HARBOR, Inc. and neighboring townships to advance this goal.

Provide nonmotorized transportation options and outdoor recreational opportunities, taking advantage of the physical characteristics of the land of this Township while meeting the expressed needs of its taxpayers.

- » Improve and/or develop trail systems through open space areas in which interest has already been established.
- » Prepare trails that can be used for biking and hiking in the spring, summer, and fall seasons and then be used for snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing in the winter season.
- » Working with HARBOR, INC. and neighboring townships to provide main non-motorized trails routes for the purpose of transportation and recreation that pass through West Traverse Township.
- » Provide pedestrian routes between activity centers and focus on the more developed areas of the Township for sidewalk construction and expansion.
- » Continue evaluating and improving the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve.
- » Develop policies and directives to establish construction and maintenance schedules.

Provide facilities and programming that encourage those living in this community to want to be outside, engaging in physical, healthful, and educational activities that enhance their lives

- Establish a system that keeps Township taxpayers informed of the status of recreational/educational programs at the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve.

Educate the public on the value of understanding the natural world around them and the benefits of environmental conservation.

- » Provide information relative to the flora and fauna and ecology of the specimens in that area.
- » Encourage more “guided” programs throughout the Township’s trail systems.
- » Provide information relating to the recreational opportunities within the Township and region.
- » Incorporate informational and directional signage within the Township’s recreation areas.

Work closely with neighboring townships to enhance the recreational opportunities of the entire community.

- » Continue associations with neighboring townships relative to ways that there can be more enhanced sharing of facilities and programs.

Incorporate Action Items from the West Traverse Township Sidewalk, Trail, and Pathway Plan to give better access throughout the Township and make it safer for the community to be active.

Goals of the Plan are as follows:

1. Provide a safe and effective pedestrian circulation system in specified areas of the Township for citizens and residents.
2. Provide safe and effective pedestrian routes to schools, parks, churches, and businesses.
3. Establish methods for financing the capital improvements, repair, and maintenance of the pedestrian system.
4. Develop a systematic program to maintain pedestrian routes in a usable and safe condition.
5. Maintain administrative policies that promote the coordination and efficient management of resources directed toward planning and implementation of the pedestrian system.
6. Comply with the legal requirements that impact the development of the pedestrian system.
7. Provide methods to allow public participation in developing or revising routes/priorities

ACTION PLAN

Ridge Road 80 Acre Parcel

2025-2027

- » Bike Trail: If a bike trail is to go from State Road to M-119, parts of this property could be used for a connecting link from Griffin Road to Ridge Road which directly connects to M-119. In this case, a trail suitable for biking would have to cut across this parcel.
- » Improve access from Ridge Road.
- » Survey property and secure for recreational purposes.
- » Stabilize the current snow-shoeing trails and cross-country skiing trails. Develop signage that assists new users of these trails in terms of directions and to indicate any natural areas of interest.
- » Assess need for small pavilion for rest during the winter sports season but also usable by hikers in the summer.

2027-2028

- » Continue to work on an appropriate bike trail should this become the chosen bike route to M-119.
- » Build a small parking area off Griffin Road and make improvements to Griffin Road.

2028-2029

- » Build a pavilion for recreational users of this property.

2029-2030

- » Continue to evaluate the needs of the users of this parcel.

Thorne Swift Nature Preserve

2025-2027

- » Continually work with The Little Traverse Nature Conservancy as to any areas of recreational needs that should be enhanced, improved, or added to the Preserve.
- » Create a Township Parks & Recreation Director position that would be responsible for the administration of the Thorne Swift Nature Preserve and other recreational areas and facilities.

Implement items from the West Traverse Township Sidewalk, Trail, and Pathway Plan to create more accessibility and safety throughout the Township.

Category 1 - Highest Priority

- » **Cemetery Road:** Connecting the Cemetery Road sidewalk north to Lakeview Cemetery and onto Hughston Road.
- » **State Road:** Extend the existing sidewalk on State Road to Franklin Park.

Category 2 - Medium Priority

- » **Hughston Road:**
 - » Add a pathway or widen the paved road shoulder connecting Cemetery Road to State Road.
 - » Create a pathway to Quick Road along State Road.
- » **"Township 80":** Maintain and improve trails on the Township owned 80 acres (Tax ID# 24-16-15-03-300-001). Add parking areas and property to enhance trail network around this property.
- » **Quick Road:** Add a pathway from State Road to Hoyt Road.
- » **Ann Street:** Add a sidewalk from City limit to Hughston Road.

Category 3 - Low Priority (5-7 Years)

- » **Lake Road:** Add a lane on the shoulder of Lake Road from City of Harbor Springs limit to M-119.
- » **Hughston Road:** Either add a pathway next to or widen the paved road shoulder from Cemetery Road to Middle Road.
- » **Lightfoot Road:** Add a sidewalk from Middle Road to Hughston Road.

Low Priority (7-10 Years)

- » **Middle Road:** Mark and widened the paved road shoulder from Hughston Road to M-119.

Long Term Conceptual Priority

- » **M-119:** Create a bike lane on M-119 or across private property connecting Lake Road to Lower Shore Drive.

Map 2: Sidewalk, Trail, and Pathway Map

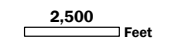


Sidewalk, Trail, and Pathway Map

Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal, West Traverse Township, Emmet County

 West Traverse Township Boundary

-  Category 1
-  Category 2
-  Category 3
-  Category 4

 2,500 Feet
Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

Appendix

- A. Resolution of Adoption
- B. Township Board Meeting Minutes
- C. Parks Commission Meeting Minutes & Resolution
- D. Public Hearing Notice
- E. 30-Day Public Review Notice
- F. Survey Flyer
- G. Letters of Transmittal

A. Resolution of Adoption

WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION:
WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP 2025-2030 PARKS & RECREATION PLAN

RESOLUTION # 1-2025

WHEREAS, West Traverse Township has undertaken a planning process to determine the recreation and natural resource conservation needs and desires of its residents during a five year period covering the years 2025 through 2030; and

WHEREAS, West Traverse Township began the process of developing a community recreation plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities; and

WHEREAS, residents of West Traverse Township were provided with well-advertised opportunities during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the recreation and natural resource conservation plan, and

WHEREAS, the public was given a well-advertised opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the final draft plan for a period between November 13, 2024, and December 17, 2024; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held by the West Traverse Township Recreation Committee on December 17, 2024, to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the West Traverse Township Parks and Recreation Plan; and

WHEREAS, West Traverse Township has developed the plan as a guideline for improving recreation and enhancing natural resource conservation for West Traverse Township; and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing date, the West Traverse Township Board of Trustees voted to adopt the West Traverse Township 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the West Traverse Township Board of Trustees hereby adopts the West Traverse Township 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Plan.

Motion by Trustee: DAVE GREEN second by Trustee: JAY OLSON

YEAS: 5: GREEN/BAKER/OLSON/HOLLINGSWORTH/MURPHY

NAYS: _____

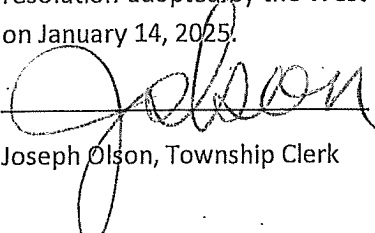
ABSTAIN: _____

ABSENT: _____

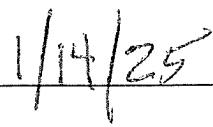
A. Resolution of Adoption

RESOLUTION ADOPTED

I, Joseph Olson, Township Clerk, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by the West Traverse Township Board of Trustees at a Regular Meeting thereof held on January 14, 2025.



Joseph Olson, Township Clerk



Date

B. Township Board Meeting Minutes

**WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP
BOARD MEETING
Tuesday January 14, 2025
6:00 p.m.**

Supervisor Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Olson, Hollingsworth, Murphy, Baker, Green

Absent: none

Visitors: Linda Hoisington, Jamie Buchanan, Scott Sergeant, Kathy & Steve Erber, John Baker

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Approve agenda & additional items: Additional items were added; H: Audit Engagement Letter, I: Curbside Recycling, J: Personnel Committee Update. **Hollingsworth made the motion to approve the agenda as amended. Olson seconded. Approved by consensus. All ayes.**

Public comments: none

Approve minutes of regular meeting on December 10, 2024: **Green made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Hollingsworth seconded. All ayes.**

Review correspondence not included below: none.

Thorne Swift Manager Report: none

Action Items:

- a. Business Platform Upgrade Proposal – Olson introduced Jamie Buchanan, representative from Common Angle IT Support and Consulting Co. Buchanan gave a presentation on an upgrade in the Support Package that the Township currently has, as well, as addressing the updating of and installing new software, Windows 11, and Microsoft 365. The benefit of upgrading to the Gold Package from the current Silver Package for the Township would include unlimited support and scheduling priority for issues that require assistance, enhanced email filtering, unlimited remote support, enhanced security, updated virus protection, MFA (Multi-Factor Authentication), unlimited Cloud Storage and updating the Township software to Microsoft 365. M365 would give users access to Excel, the Outlook email program, an enhanced/updated Word program, Calendaring along with other updated security features. Olson noted that the current email program, Webmail, is now unsupported and will phase out. Hollingsworth asked about the transition from what the Township currently has to the new software. Buchanan noted that transactions such as moving addresses from the Webmail program to the Outlook mail system will be seamless with no interruptions. Baker asked about Cloud storage, what would be backed up along with the frequency, i.e. daily or weekly.

1

Proposed: January 14, 2025

Accepted:

B. Township Board Meeting Minutes

Buchanan stated items such as contacts, calendaring, email and various other items would be backed up daily. Baker asked about the difference between Windows Defender and the Vigilant Frontline Virus protection programs. The Board thanked Jamie Buchanan for his time and the answering all their questions. **Green made the motion that the West Traverse Township board authorize the Clerk to move forward with the proposed technology solution as noted above and fully outlined in the Common Angle Proposal dated December 19, 2024. Baker seconded. Roll Call Vote: Baker – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes, Olson – yes, Murphy – yes. Five (5) ayes.**

- b. Parks & Recreation Report, Plan and Resolution Approval – The board was extremely impressed and pleased with the Recreation Plan and expressed their gratitude to the Recreation Committee for all their hard work. Green had questions about the number of responses from the survey. John Baker spoke to the flow and inclusion of items that will benefit the Township in the future. **Green made the motion to approve the Recreation Plan as presented. Olson seconded. Roll Call Vote: Baker – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes, Olson – yes, Murphy – yes. Five (5) ayes.**
- c. Barn Property Tree Removal update – The board discussed and reviewed the three bids for removal of the trees and dead limbs on the Cook property. **Green made the motion to award the tree removal bid on the Cook Property to Al & Jim's Tree Service at \$1900. Hollingsworth seconded. Roll Call Vote: Baker – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes, Olson – yes, Murphy – yes. Five (5) ayes.**
- d. Continued Discussion of new Township Hall – Discussion continued building a new Township Hall or refurbishing the existing hall. Conversation followed on the cost, lack of storage, privacy, Handicap Accessibility, and basic functionality. Olson stated an interest in retaining the Township Hall as a Cultural or Historical Site. Green mentioned a Township Hall downstate that the board should consider visiting.
- e. Birchwood Tax Appeal - Murphy informed the Board on a meeting with the Township Attorney and the Township Assessor pertaining to Birchwood Tax Appeal. Due to a letter received about a perceived conflict of interest, Murphy recused himself from the meeting with the Attorney and Assessor and requested a board member to sit in his stead. Green and Hollingsworth volunteered to co-partner during the appeal process.
- f. 2025 Poverty Exemption Policy & Guidelines – **Hollingsworth made the motion to approve the 2025 Poverty Exemption Policy and Guidelines as presented. Green seconded. Roll Call Vote: Baker – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes, Olson – yes, Murphy – yes. Five (5) ayes.**
- g. Millages – General (.9 mil), Road (.5 mil), Thorne Swift (.2 mil) – The board reviewed the millages and agreed no change was needed. **Green made a motion to approve the millages of General (.9 mil), Road (.5 mil), and Thorne Swift (.2 mil) as proposed. Hollingsworth seconded. Roll Call Vote: Baker – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes, Olson – yes, Murphy – yes. Five (5) ayes.**
- h. Audit Engagement Letter Approval – **Green made the motion for approval of Dan Smith and Company PC., audit proposal of \$7800.00. Hollingsworth seconded. Roll Call Vote: Baker – yes, Green – yes, Hollingsworth – yes, Olson – yes, Murphy – yes. Five (5) ayes.**
- i. Curbside Recycling – Baker discussed the possibility of Curbside Recycling in West Traverse Township. There was discussion of whether Associations would accept it, how that

2

Proposed: January 14, 2025

Accepted:

B. Township Board Meeting Minutes

would affect seasonal residents and the cost. The board asked Baker to provide a proposal and the board agreed to discuss it further at the February meeting.

- j. Personnel Committee Update - Murphy informed the Board that the Personnel Committee met last week to discuss pay increases. There will be a formal resolution prepared for the February meeting.

Reports and Updates:

- a. Clerk – Olson informed that Harbor Light has increased their “by-line” costs from \$8.75 to \$9.75. Olson noted he will be attending a seminar later this month by the MTA about the new state law for Paid Time Off. There were questions about whether it would affect the budget.
- b. Treasurer – Hollingsworth noted that eighteen out of 25 Sewer bills have been received as well as 990 tax bills thus far. February 14 is the due date. Hollingsworth will be in the office all day on 2-14 as well as 2-28. Hollingsworth also informed the board that the annual 425 Agreement was received and disbursed appropriately.
- c. Planning Commission – Green informed the board that the PC held their annual elections. The Chair, Hollerith, Vice Chair, Forster and Secretary, Osetek were re-elected. The PC is reviewing chapters in the Master Plan. Green informed the Board that the PC would like to have a meeting with the Township Board, ZBA and BOR in the Fall. Hollingsworth suggested the Board pursue giving the Planning Commission members a raise for their continued commitment and hard work.
- d. Zoning Administrator – Included in packet.
- e. Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee – None
- f. Supervisor – Murphy expressed his appreciation to the board for all the help, patience during the learning curve, and their hard work and dedication.

Approve payables & payroll – **Hollingsworth made the motion to approve the payables and payroll as presented. Olson seconded. All ayes.**

Public comments – Scott Sergent introduced himself.

Board comments – none.

Next Regular Meeting – **Next meeting, February 11, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.**

Supervisor Murphy adjourned the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Jay Olson, Clerk

Transcribed by: Amy Peters

C. Parks Commission Meeting Minutes & Resolution

West Traverse Thorne Swift – Rec Committee

Minutes and Public Hearing Dec. 17, 2024, 5:00 P.M.

Attending: DeCamp, Mooradian, Carbeck, Corlew, Baker, Ford, Hammond; also Ken Lane, Planner

Public Hearing:

- Open Public Hearing at 5:03, P.M.
- No attendees, but received a letter regarding the proposed Plan from Martha Lancaster and Doug Fuller (attached).
- Public Hearing closed at 5:15, P.M.

Meeting:

-Discussion re: proposed plan - add 'biking' to 'recreation facilities' on Pgs.9 &32, and to the map on P.16; remove Camp Pet-O-Sega from the map.

-After discussion of the proposed changes, the Committee passed a resolution and motion:

Motion by Decamp, seconded by Corlew:

"Now, therefore be it resolved that the West Traverse Township Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee hereby approves and recommends to the West Travers Township Board of Trustees the adoption of the West Traverse Township 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Plan, as a guideline for improving recreation for the residents and property owners of West Traverse Township, Emmet County."

The motion was approved unanimously.

-Planner will finalize the Rec Plan with the above changes and including the Lancaster, Fuller letter for presentation to the Twp. Board at their meeting on Jan. 14. If the Board approves the Plan as presented, or with amendments, it will be eligible for grant funding in 2025 if accepted by the DNR by Jan. 31, 2025.

Other Discussion:

-Recommend to the Board to prohibit motorized vehicles on the '80'excepting those needed for trail maintenance and grooming, as well as wheelchairs, scooters, and permitted e-bikes (must weigh less than 100 pounds, have a motor that provides no more than 250 watts, and has fully functional pedals).

-Election of chairperson of the Committee: Discussion that Stephanie Baker might be appropriate because she is the Board representative on the Committee, decided it is unfair because she has not had a chance to attend any meetings and is not present for this discussion; Baker will remain as Chairperson.

C. Parks Commission Meeting Minutes & Resolution

-Discussion re: an informational sign at the M-119 turnout just past the Birchwood entrance. This is probably an MDOT and Heritage Highway decision, and at the least there should be a fence along the blufftop to prevent visitors from trying to descend the bluff.

-Discussion re: fallen tree on the small Cook property barn roof; the Rec. Committee has discussed this property historically, but oversight of the property is up to the Board.

- Next meeting will be Jan. 15 at 5:00.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Baker

C. Parks Commission Meeting Minutes & Resolution

Martha Lancaster and Doug Fuller
7518 Ridge Rd.
Harbor Springs MI 49740

December 13, 2024

To: Ken Lane, Township Planner, and West Traverse Township Recreation Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to read and comment on the Draft Parks and Recreation Plan. It is very thorough and well-documented.

We are pleased at the multi-faceted nature of the needs assessment and plans going forward. A focus on expanding accessibility of trails and facilities is very important, with our aging population. We also support expanding safe routes for bikes and pedestrians.

Our chief comments refer to the Township 80. We live adjacent to the property and use it very frequently for hiking, skiing, and running. We know that it is very well-used, not only by Township residents, but also residents of neighboring areas and visitors (it is actually uncommon for us to go up there without encountering other trail users). But, we don't believe the survey adequately captured the complete level of utilization of this area.

We believe that most of the people using the trails on the "Township 80" also use those on the adjacent Ford property. But, many may not be aware (despite the excellent signage installed in recent years) that much of the trail system is on private property. The Fords have been extremely generous in allowing the public to use the trails which pass through their property. And, the Outfitter voluntarily grooms the trails there and onto Birchwood golf course lands for cross country skiing in winter (a fact which was not acknowledged by the Recreation plan and which is a HUGE recreational value to the Township). If a future owner of the property does not allow this public use, it will seriously diminish the recreational options available in our Township. As such, we want to strongly encourage the Township Recreation Committee and Board to consider expanding the property by seeking a purchase, donation, or bargain-sale of the adjoining property owned by Jeff and Karen Ford. Continuing use of these trails is, by no means, guaranteed unless the Township adds this to the "80."

In addition to providing continued use of these trails, the Ford Property -- in combination with the "Township 80" and some other adjacent properties -- appears to represent the largest contiguous block of undeveloped forested land in the township. Such unfragmented blocks of natural land are ecologically important, and preserving them would help realize the desire documented in the survey of protecting and enjoying nature.

A majority of survey respondents indicated that they feel the Township should purchase land for recreation. As noted, 54% of those responding to the survey agreed with this statement. But if you remove the 17% of respondents who did not have an opinion, 65% Agreed the Township should purchase property.

Adding the adjacent property to the Township 80 would be consistent with the following Goal and Objective included in the draft Plan:

C. Parks Commission Meeting Minutes & Resolution

Goal: Provide nonmotorized transportation options and outdoor recreational opportunities, taking advantage of the physical characteristics of the land of this Township while meeting the expressed needs of its taxpayers.

Objective: Improve and/or develop trail systems through open space areas in which interest has already been established.

We urge the Committee and Board to add a goal of expanding the Township 80 by acquisition of the adjacent property.

One aspect of the plan that was somewhat puzzling to us was the action plan item regarding a bike trail going from State Road to M-119 via the "Township 80." This item states that "a trail suitable for biking would have to cut across this parcel." We think it would be a great idea to have a dedicated trail following the unmaintained portions of Griffin and Ridge Roads. However, since this is currently a public road, motorized vehicles frequently drive through and cause significant ruts in the sandy road/trail which is counter-productive for passive uses such as biking and hiking. It would be ideal if the Township would request that the County Road Commission abandon these roads. Given the steep terrain, the idea of a new trail cutting diagonally across the "Township 80" does not seem environmentally appropriate or feasible. This aspect of the action plan needs more clarification and scrutiny.

Thanks again for all your work to provide good recreation opportunities in West Traverse Township.

Sincerely,

Martha Lancaster and Doug Fuller

C. Parks Commission Meeting Minutes & Resolution

**WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP RECREATION PLAN
RECREATION/THORNE SWIFT COMMITTEE RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION AND RECOMMENDATION
TO TOWNSHIP BOARD FOR ADOPTION**

Resolution # 01-2024

WHEREAS, West Traverse Township, Emmet County, has undertaken a Five Year Parks and Recreation Plan which describes the physical features, existing recreation facilities, and the desired actions to be taken to improve and maintain recreation facilities during the period between 2025-2030; and

WHEREAS, a series of public meetings were held by the West Traverse Township Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee at the West Traverse Township Hall, which provided opportunities for citizens to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the Recreation Plan; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on the proposed plan on December 17, 2024, to accept additional comment on the Recreation Plan; and

WHEREAS, West Traverse Township, Emmet County, has developed the plan for the benefit of the entire community, and intends to adopt the plan as a document to assist in meeting the recreation needs of the community; and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing and consideration of the comments received, the West Traverse Township Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee voted to approve the Recreation Plan and to recommend the Recreation Plan to the Township Board for adoption.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the West Traverse Township Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee hereby approves and recommends to the West Travers Township Board of Trustees the adoption of the West Traverse Township 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Plan, as a guideline for improving recreation for the residents and property owners of West Traverse Township, Emmet County.

YEAS: Baker, Hammond, Mooradian, Ford, DeCamp, Carbeck, Corlew

NAYS: _____

ABSTAIN: _____

ABSENT: Arbaugh

RESOLUTION ADOPTED

As the Chairperson of the West Traverse Township Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee, I certify this is a complete copy of a resolution adopted at a meeting of the West Traverse Township Recreation/Thorne Swift Committee held on December 17, 2024.

/s/ John Baker, Chairperson

Date: December 30, 2024

D. Public Hearing Notice

**PUBLIC NOTICE
WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that West Traverse Township is currently working on its proposed 2025- 2030 Parks and Recreation Plan. The West Traverse Township Recreation Committee will hold a public hearing on the draft plan at a special meeting on December 17, 2024 at 5:00 pm. The meeting will be held at West Traverse Township Hall, 8001 M-119, Harbor Springs, MI 49740. The Recreation Committee will consider a recommendation to the Township Board on the draft plan immediately following the public hearing.

The draft plan is available for review and download on the homepage of the Township website at www.westtraversetownship.com. Written comments can be submitted via email to Township Planner Ken Lane at zoning@westtraversetownship.com or comment can be given verbally or in writing at the public hearing.

Affidavit of Publication

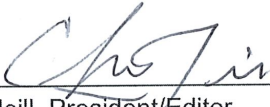
ATTACHED FIND PUBLICATION NOTICE

RE: West Traverse Township Public Notice 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Plan

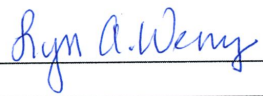
STATE OF MICHIGAN
COUNTY OF EMMET

Charles O'Neill being duly sworn, deposes and says that a legal notice, a true copy of which is annexed hereto, was published in the **Harbor Light Newspaper**, a newspaper printed and circulated in the State of Michigan and County of Emmet, on:

11/27/2024


Charles O'Neill, President/Editor

Subscribed and sworn before me this 2nd day of January, A.D., 2024²⁵

 (signature)
____ (print name), Notary Public,

Emmet County Michigan
My commission expires: _____
Acting in Emmet County Michigan

LYN A. WENZ
NOTARY PUBLIC, EMMET COUNTY, MI
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: 1-18-2027
ACTING IN THE COUNTY OF EMMET

E. 30-Day Public Review Notice

**PUBLIC NOTICE
WEST TRAVERSE TOWNSHIP**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that West Traverse Township is currently working on its proposed 2025- 2030 Parks and Recreation Plan. The West Traverse Township Board of Trustees will open the required 30-day public comment period on the proposed plan which will be open between November 13 to December 13, 2024.

The draft plan is available for review and download on the homepage of the Township website at www.westtraversetownship.com and can be viewed in person at the Township Hall, 8001 M-119, Harbor Springs, MI 49740. Please direct email comments to Township Planner Ken Lane at zoning@westtraversetownship.com.

The West Traverse Township Recreation Committee will hold a public hearing on the draft plan at a special meeting on December 17, 2024, at 5:00 pm. The meeting will be held at the West Traverse Township Hall. The West Traverse Township Board of Trustees will consider a recommendation for adoption of the plan at their regular meeting on January 7, 2025.

Affidavit of Publication

ATTACHED FIND PUBLICATION NOTICE

RE: West Traverse Township 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Plan

STATE OF MICHIGAN

COUNTY OF EMMET

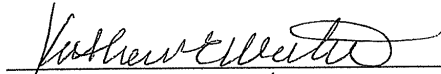
Charles O'Neill being duly sworn, deposes and says that a legal notice, a true copy of which is annexed hereto, was published in the **Harbor Light Newspaper**, a newspaper printed and circulated in the State of Michigan and County of Emmet, on:

11/20/2024



Charles O'Neill, President/Editor

Subscribed and sworn before me this 19 day of November, A.D., 2024



(signature)

Katherine E. Watson

(print name), Notary Public,

Emmet County Michigan

My commission expires: 8-19-25

Acting in Emmet County Michigan

KATHERINE E. WATSON
NOTARY PUBLIC, EMMET COUNTY, MI
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: 8-19-2025
ACTING IN THE COUNTY OF Emmet

E. 30-Day Public Review Notice



West Traverse Township

(231) 526-7361

[HOME](#) [TWSP BOARD](#) [PLANNING COMMISSION](#) [TAXES](#) [ELECTIONS](#) [ZONING](#) [ASSESSING](#) [REC COMM](#) [RESOURCES](#) [THORNE SWIFT](#)

As a service to our township residents we offer free Notary Services. The secretary and clerk are available to assist you
Mon – Fri 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

If you need an American Flag retired, feel free to drop it off at the office. We will make sure that it is retired respectfully and properly.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that West Traverse Township is currently working on its proposed 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Plan. The West Traverse Township Board of Trustees will open the required 30-day public comment period on the proposed plan which will be open between November 13 to December 13, 2024.

The draft plan is available for review and download on the homepage of the Township website at www.westtraversetownship.com and can be viewed in person at the Township Hall, 8001 M-119, Harbor Springs, MI 49740. Please direct email comments to Township Planner Ken Lane at zoning@westtraversetownship.com.

The West Traverse Township Recreation Committee will hold a public hearing on the draft plan at a special meeting on December 17, 2024, at 5:00 pm. The meeting will be held at the West Traverse Township Hall. The West Traverse Township Board of Trustees will consider a recommendation for adoption of the plan at their regular meeting on January 7, 2025

[West-Traverse-Twp-P-R-Plan_Report-DRAFT_2024-11-05.pdf](#)

Board Meetings:

2nd Tuesday of the month (except March) at 6:00 p.m. at the Township Hall.

Township Board Meeting Agenda

Next meeting December 10, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

View Meeting Packet

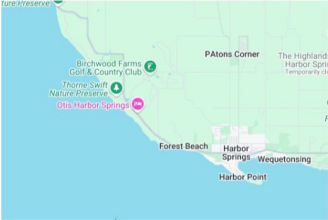
Planning Commission Meetings:

2nd Wednesday of the month (with some exceptions) at 6:00 p.m. at the Township Hall.

Planning Commission Meeting Agenda

Next meeting December 11, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

View Meeting Packet



West Traverse Township is located on the north side of Little Traverse Bay, in the western part of Emmet County, which is situated in the northwest region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. West Traverse Township is one of the smallest townships in the State comprising approximately 13 square miles of the County's 468 square miles of land area. The Township's irregular size and shape is due to the shoreline of Lake Michigan.

West Traverse Township Hall

8001 M-119

PO Box 528

Harbor Springs, MI 49740

Office Hours:

9:00 am - 1:00 pm, Monday - Friday

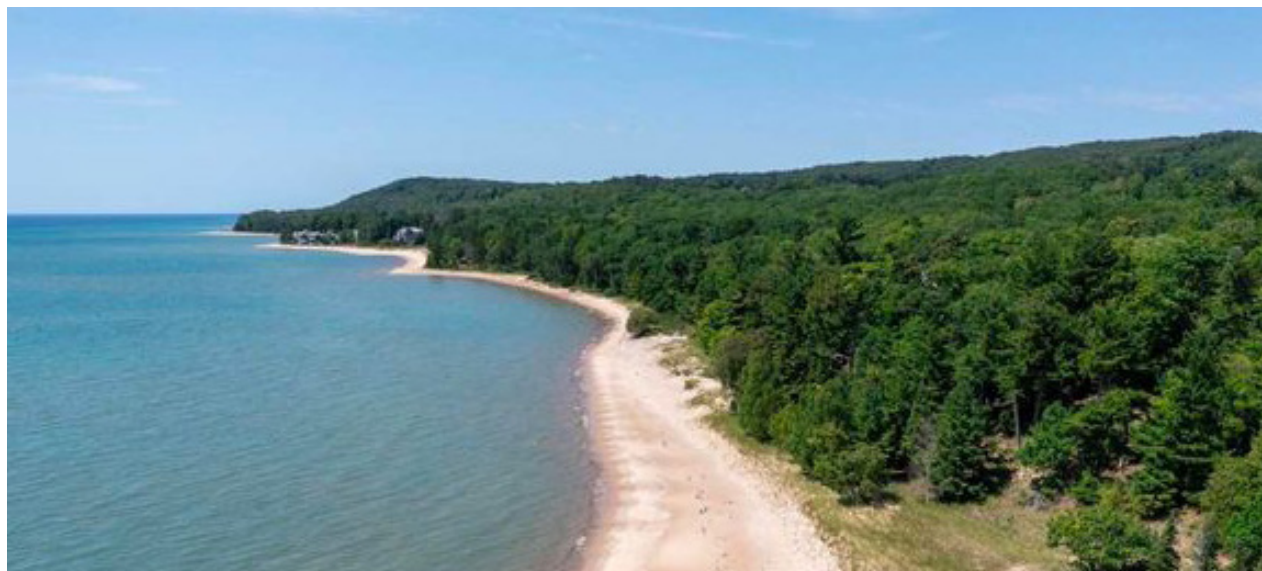
Phone: (231) 526-7361

Fax: (231) 526-0028

secretary@westtraversetownship.com

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Appendix | 49



West Traverse Township Parks & Recreation Plan COMMUNITY SURVEY

West Traverse Township is updating its Parks and Recreation Plan. The Plan update will allow the Township to inventory its parks and recreational services thoroughly, seek public opinion and direction about desired improvements, and prepare for future funding opportunities. Please help shape the future of West Traverse Township Parks and Recreational facilities and services over the next five years.

The survey should take less than 10 minutes. To complete the survey, use the QR code or link below.

Physical copies of this survey are available at West Traverse Township Hall (8001 M-119, Harbor Springs, MI 49740).



www.surveymonkey.com/r/WestTraversePR

G. Letters of Transmittal



Date: January 22, 2025

From: Ken Lane

To: **Emmet County Parks and Recreation Department**
Ryan Bauman, Director
200 Division Street
Petoskey, MI 49770

Project: **West Traverse Township 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

Enclosed: **Final Adopted West Traverse Township 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

Remarks:

Please find enclosed the final adopted draft of the West Traverse Township 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan for your review. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ken Lane
Planning & Zoning Professional
klane@bria2.com

Beckett & Raeder, Inc.
535 West William
Suite 101
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

734.663.2622 ph
734.663.6759 fx

www.bria2.com

Petoskey Office
113 Howard Street
Petoskey, MI 49770

231.347.2523 ph
231.347.2524 fx

Traverse City Office
148 East Front Street
Suite 207
Traverse City, MI 49684

231.933.8400 ph
231.944.1709 fx

Grand Rapids Office
5211 Cascade Road SE
Suite 300
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

616.585.1295 ph

G. Letters of Transmittal



Date: January 22, 2025

From: Ken Lane

To: **Networks Northwest**
Robert Carson, Community Development Regional Director
600 East Front Street, Ste. 205
Traverse City, MI 49685

Project: **West Traverse Township 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

Enclosed: **Final Adopted West Traverse Township 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

Remarks:

Please find enclosed the final adopted draft of the West Traverse Township 2025-2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan for your review. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ken Lane
Planning & Zoning Professional
klane@bria2.com

Beckett & Raeder, Inc.
535 West William
Suite 101
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

734.663.2622 ph
734.663.6759 fx

www.bria2.com

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113 Howard Street
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Traverse City Office
148 East Front Street
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Traverse City, MI 49684

231.933.8400 ph
231.944.1709 fx

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Suite 300
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

616.585.1295 ph