

ACTION PROGRAM

Because this Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to be a guiding document for the City of Midland in terms of goals and capital improvements, the City worked hard to determine the need for different improvements and activities. Thus, this section of the Master Plan introduces its action plan that will guide the actions of the Parks and Recreation Commission for the next five-years. It has three elements. First, based on the analysis of the Community Survey, Community Input Session, Comparison to Standards, and the Service Area components that were described in the Recreation Planning Process section on pages 25 - 34, eight broad goals were developed. The rationale for each goal is also included. Then, with the goals described, several objectives for each goal are listed. The justification for each objective was based on the analysis described in the goal narrative statements. Each objective can be thought of as either a general policy statement or an action item. And finally, these policy statements are then listed on the Capital Improvements Schedule on page 57. This schedule includes a timeframe and cost for completing each action item.

Goals

GOAL A: Make existing community parks more user-friendly

Comments solicited from the Community Input Session held in November showed a strong desire by Midland residents to have a parks system that continues to improve and enhance its incredible family of existing parks. Although many indicated an appreciation for the opportunities the park trails afforded, some thought they could be more inviting and welcoming. For instance, one participant noted there was a lack of rest areas along the Rail Trail. Another individual thought it would be a good idea to have additional grilling and picnicking areas in places where trails meet water. Others mentioned the need for more trashcans at some of the more popular parks, such as Plymouth and Emerson Parks, and the Rail-Trail. Some participants also pointed out that some parks lack adequate protection from the sun and suggested more shade trees, benches, and picnic tables would help make the summer days in Midland more enjoyable. Data compiled from the Community Survey distributed in October also show that respondents feel it is a priority for Midland City Parks to focus on the maintenance of existing parks for the next five years. Respondents also felt it was important to upgrade the current parks facilities. Figure 25 on page 30 illustrates how the community values making existing parks more user-friendly. Comments from the survey, especially question #17 - *What do you like least about parks in the City of Midland* - also showed a desire to create friendlier parks. For example, comments described needs for better restrooms, improved cleanliness and appearance of park grounds, and more covered areas for

picnicking. Some comments also mentioned the lack of outdoor swimming facilities and deficiencies in terms maintenance at existing swimming facilities. Similar concerns about swimming facilities were also brought up at the Community Input Session.

GOAL B: Develop linkages for non-motorized traffic from neighborhoods to community parks and attractions

At the November Community Input Session it was clear Midland residents wanted more opportunities to access City parks and trails either by bicycle or by foot. A dedicated citizen shared his vision and plan for paved non-automotive connections between the Rail Trail, the downtown business district, work centers such as Dow Chemical, the Midland Mall, and City Forest. The plan showed preliminary concept maps depicting proposed routes between these major activity centers. Momentum for this idea in Midland seems to be building. In December, at an event independent from the drafting of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan, an organization calling itself STARPAC - Safe Trails and Roads for Pedestrians and Cyclists - formed in Midland and is committed to a "healthier and safer community, excellent roads, and trail systems for all human-powered activity." In addition, representatives from the Chippewa Nature Center presented a trail feasibility study that showed how a new trail leading from the Tridge area could connect to the Chippewa Nature Center. Results from the survey also indicate that existing park users would benefit from more non-motorized linkages to parks. Question #8 - *Why do you and/or your family visit the City of Midland Parks?* - shows that two of the top three reasons stated for visiting City parks involve trails and other pedestrian-oriented connections. As Figure 23 on page 29 indicates, walking is the number one reason stated by respondents for visiting City parks, and at 42%, bicycling is third.

GOAL C: Develop partnerships to acquire property or use of property in areas shown to be deficient in park area and those areas which are newly annexed

Per the MDNR recommended service areas for Block, Community, and District Parks, the City of Midland has areas that are not served by these park types. Figure 31 on page 36 shows the combined extent of the service area ranges: a 0.25 mile radius for Block Parks, a 0.5 radius for District Parks, and a 1.0 mile radius for Community Parks. These radii are shown as the blue areas and the City limits are indicated by the red outline. Areas north of US-10 near the Midland Mall, Eastman Avenue, Jefferson Avenue, and Waldo Avenue are under-served. In addition, neighborhoods west of Dublin Avenue and south of North Saginaw Road are not served. However, the Rail-Trail bisects this area and could easily

be considered a park that serves these residents were it not for its linear nature. Amenities such as restrooms are not close by, however, parking is available off Dublin Road.

GOAL D: Enhance methods to publicize parks and recreation facilities and events

Although survey questions #5, #6, and #7 indicate a high visitation rate for Midland's parks - nearly 59% of survey respondents say they use the parks more than two times a month during the summer months - it is clear that winter usage is low. As Figure 22 on page 28 illustrates, one-third of respondents do not visit City parks at all during the winter months. This pattern may be indicative of typical human behavior during the snowy season, however, at the Community Input Session, a number of attendees mentioned a need for more winter activities. Clearly, the abundance of outdoor winter facilities - cross-country skiing at City Forest, outdoor ice rinks at Emerson Park, sled hills at Revere and Birchwood Parks, and the four toboggan runs at City Forest - indicate a lack of understanding by some citizens of the available activities at Midland City Parks. One individual also provided specific thoughts on signs. This person noted there needs to be more directional signage to lead people to the parks. Although this may not seem like a surprising revelation in of itself, at least three individuals at the session had independently commented that they did not know the City of Midland had so many parks.

GOAL E: Prioritize new recreation activities and innovations

The Community Input Session showed how committed Midland residents are to diversifying the range of available recreation activities for themselves and others. Some people were interested in the possibility of a professional croquet course that conformed to the specifications of the United States Croquet Association. Individuals representing an Ultimate Frisbee organization said that their playing fields are only 50 by 100 yards in size, flat, and low maintenance. Other individuals expressed an interest in a new swimming pool, paintball, and a BMX track. There was some discussion on the potential need to designate certain places as dog-run-only areas. This would allow dog owners to give their pets exercise and opportunities for socialization. Ideas for a new ice arena were extensive and elaborate. This corroborated with the results of question #14 from the survey: *What are the three most-needed recreation facilities or activities in the City of Midland?* Figure 26 on page 31 shows that a new ice arena was the top choice at 12.9%.

GOAL F: Ensure parks continue to be accessible for the disabled

The MDNR *Community Recreation Plan Guidelines* require an evaluation of existing facilities to determine if they are barrier-free. As such, even though the 2000 Census shows that just over 13% of

the population in the City of Midland has a disability (Figure 9), it is just good planning sense to ensure accessibility to all parks for everyone in the City of Midland, regardless of one's ability. Individuals concerned about disability and accessibility issues attended the Community Input Session and shared their thoughts. Playgrounds should be universally accessible. Ball fields and basketball areas should be usable by the disabled. There is a need for more paved nature trails. Improvements to signage should include Braille and symbols. More parking areas need paved connections from the lot to park amenities. Design of new facilities should cluster amenities together to ensure, for example, that distances between pavilions, restrooms, and parking lots are not too great. Question #15 from the survey addressed ways to make the City park system more user-friendly for the disabled. Only 10% of the respondents indicated that they were either disabled or had someone who lived with them that was disabled. Of greatest concern for these respondents were needs for accessible restrooms, accessible parking, paved trails, and flatter or easier grades. Other concerns are noted in Figure 27 on page 31.

GOAL G: Explore ways to ensure playgrounds are safer and more inviting for children

At every chance to solicit feedback from the public, the issue of playgrounds was consistently mentioned. Although not always ranked as a top concern, question #8 from the survey showed that children's playground equipment is an important reason for visiting Midland City Parks (Figure 23). About 43% of the respondents cited this reason, the second most popular park activity. It is clear that playgrounds are on the minds of City residents. In the write-in portion of question #11 - *Which of the following is the biggest factor impacting your decision to visit City parks?* - over 6.5% of the respondents that wanted to document a specific park facility or element mentioned children's playground equipment. These respondents were a subset of the 18% that replied to the *specific park facility or element* portion of question #11 shown in Figure 24 on page 30. Question #14, about the most-needed recreation facilities, also documents the prevalence of concerns over playgrounds (Figure 26). Some comments from question #17, about things respondents liked least about Midland City Parks, showed some dissatisfaction with the quality and the age of existing playground equipment. At the Community Input Session, there was a concern about the ability of existing equipment to meet the accessibility needs of all children. There was also another separate comment about a need to have more interesting play equipment.

GOAL H: Protect and preserve significant natural features at appropriate parks

The broadest concern for protecting natural features in the City of Midland was present at the Community Input Session. An organization concerned about greenways and open space presented ideas

for beautifying the City while balancing the needs of passive and active outdoor recreation activities. Another individual stressed the need to develop the rivers that run through town as a natural resource that everyone can enjoy. Green space was also a concern, specifically to find ways to preserve it while dealing with the impacts of development. Preservation of open space was also one of the top priorities mentioned on the survey, ranking higher in importance than acquisition of new lands for parks and the development of new parks and facilities (Figure 25). From the survey, over 1 in 5 respondents stated wildlife viewing was a popular reason for visiting City parks (Figure 23).

Objectives

Objectives listed under each broad goal are not listed in any order of priority. See the Capital Improvements Schedule on page 57 for the execution of each objective.

A. Make existing community parks more user-friendly

1. Continue the high level of maintenance and upkeep at parks and park restrooms to ensure their continued use.
2. Enforce park rules and regulations to ensure safe and attractive park environments.
3. Install additional benches at strategic locations along trails.
4. Install additional barbeque grill stands near picnicking areas.
5. Determine the feasibility of new pavilions for shade and family gatherings. Construct if found feasible.
6. Construct new pavilions for shade and family gatherings.
7. Construct or supply new rest areas and restrooms at specific locations.
8. Improve and enhance parking lot capacity at select parks.
9. Improvements to the pool and shower facility at Plymouth Park.
10. Complete funding for the Plymouth Park pool.
11. Add bike racks at specified City parks.

B. Develop linkages for non-motorized traffic from neighborhoods to community parks and attractions

1. Link neighborhoods, via physical connections such as walkways, bikeways, and trails, to designated parks.
2. Improve upon existing linkages from major parks and recreation corridors to the City road network.

3. Work with community groups to explore linkage options.
- C. **Develop partnerships to acquire property or use of property in areas shown to be deficient in park area and those areas which are newly annexed**
1. Study the acquisition of new parks in sections of the City that lack adequate park space.
 2. Explore options for cemetery expansion and acquisition.
- D. **Enhance methods to publicize parks and recreation facilities and events**
1. Improve and upgrade directional signage to City parks for motorized vehicles.
 2. Implement an attractive pedestrian-oriented system of park informational and directional signs throughout the City park system.
- E. **Prioritize new recreation activities and innovations**
1. Determine the feasibility of a new croquet field.
 2. Consult with local residents to determine best site within the City of Midland to play ultimate Frisbee.
 3. Determine the feasibility of a new swimming pool.
 4. Determine the feasibility of designating areas at certain parks for dog-run only areas. Designate areas if found feasible.
 5. Continue work on proposed new ice arena.
 6. Investigate potential use and location for paintball activities. Construct if found feasible.
 7. Investigate potential use and location for a new BMX track.
- F. **Ensure parks continue to be accessible for the disabled**
1. Build more paved connections from parking areas to pavilions, activity areas, and attractions.
 2. Future park improvements should incorporate elements of Universal Design
- G. **Explore ways to ensure playgrounds are safer and more inviting for children**
1. Remove and replace any *ASTM F 1487* (Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use) or *CPSC* (U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission) non-compliant play equipment.
 2. Assess existing playground equipment.

H. **Protect and preserve significant natural features at appropriate parks**

1. Develop parking lot standards that include requirements for pervious parking surfaces so as to minimize run-off from non-point source pollution.
2. Provide, where feasible, undeveloped natural areas within the parks system and within individual parks.