

City of Lowell

Parks and Recreation Plan 2023 - 2027



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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE OF PLAN

The City of Lowell Parks and Recreation Plan is the result of a community-based effort that will contribute to the enhancement and vitality of Lowell. With members of the public providing valuable feedback through the community survey, a series of three focus groups with local stakeholders, and leadership provided by the Lowell Parks and Recreation Commission, the plan has set forth a vision that will continue to help the City.

This is a five-year plan that reflects the desires of the City of Lowell community. The Lowell Parks and Recreation Commission, who is charged with providing direction and leadership with matters concerning parks and recreation in the City, provided project direction as the project steering committee. There were three main ideas that emerged during the community engagement process: 1) Continued parks maintenance; 2) Enhanced City park wayfinding; and 3) Investments to create accessible recreational spaces. These ideas resonated with the Parks and Recreation Commission members, and became the formal framework in which the City used to consider, develop, and establish the Parks and Recreation Goals and Action Plan.

The completion of the Parks and Recreation Plan also establishes the five-year eligibility for recreation grants administered through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Therefore, this plan is intended to meet the requirements and provisions set forth by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for the development of community park, recreation, open space, and greenway plans.

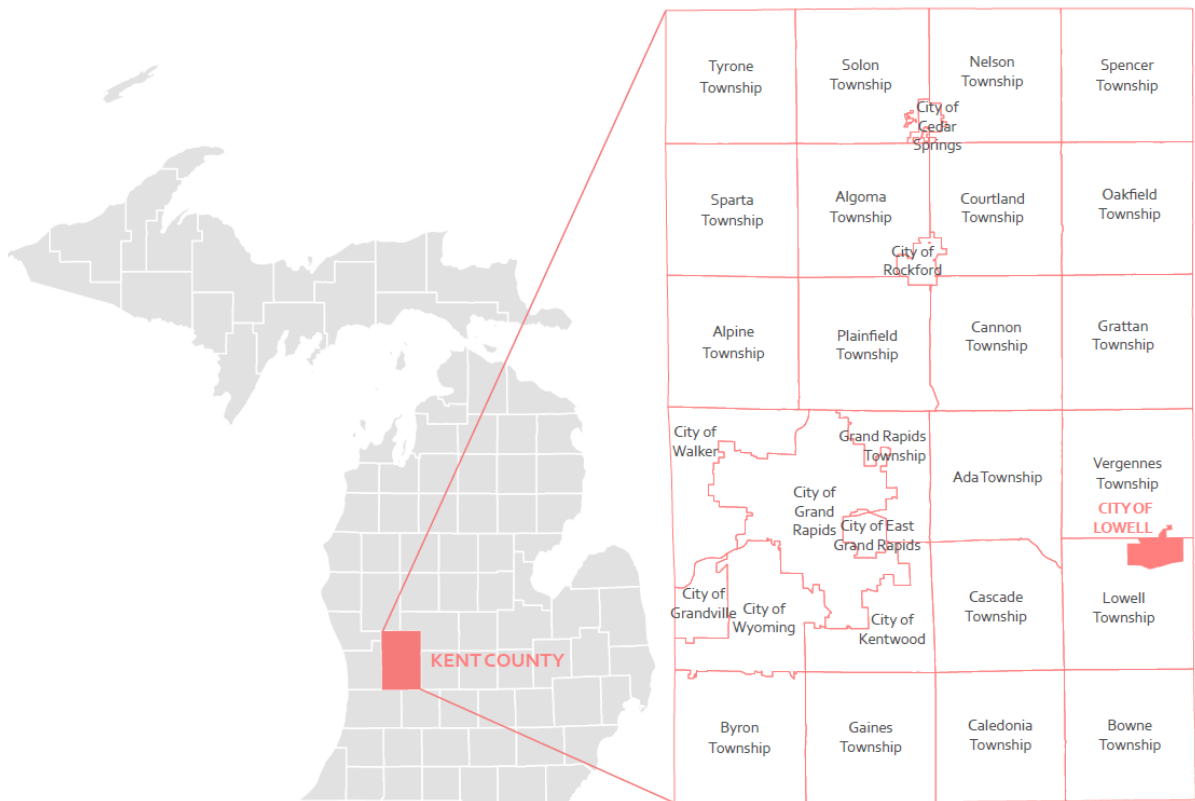
The City of Lowell is excited to have an updated plan that reflects the community's needs and desires. The Plan will direct the future development of parks and recreation facilities, amenities, and services over the next five years and beyond. By coming together, the community has worked hard to determine how best to continue to use its resources to support the parks and recreational amenities.

CHAPTER 2 COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Location

The City of Lowell is located on the southeastern border of Kent County, about 15 miles east of the City of Grand Rapids, the nearest metropolitan area. Though the community is still considered rural, the suburbanization of the West Michigan community is affecting the growth and development of Lowell. The City is bisected by state highway M-21 and 5 miles north of I-96 interstate highway. There are a number of trails that run through and to the community. There is also an airport located just north of the City.

Much of the population in the City lives north of M-21 due to the extensive Grand River floodplain and poor soils on the south side of the highway. New residential development is found primarily on the edges of the east and west City boundaries.



Brief History

The area that surrounds the confluence the Flat and Grand Rivers has been occupied by people for hundreds of years. Before the French and British came here in the 1600s and 1700s, Michigan was home to several tribes. In Lowell, the Odawa/Ottawa were a part of the larger Anishinaabe, or "original people," that shared share a common language, customs and beliefs. In the first decades of the 19th century, the village was led by Wabiwindego and Keewaycooshcum, and later by Cobmoosa, all great Odawa leaders. The Odawa remained at

their village on the Flat River until 1858, when they moved to a reservation at Manistee, Michigan. The modern City of Lowell was founded in 1831 by Daniel Marsac as a trading post with this existing Odawa village, built on the south bank of the Grand River. In 1847, he purchased land on the north side of the river and platted it as "Dansville". In 1851, a post office was established there named "Lowell" after the township. The community was replatted in 1854 and renamed after the post office. It incorporated as a village in 1861.

Topography

The City has a striking topography that is shaped by the two rivers flowing through its municipal boundaries. The winding Flat River has ebbed and flowed over time, shaping the area along and near its banks. The heart of the downtown, which happens to be near the Flat River, is flatter, along with much of the western portion of the City. The eastern side of the community has steeper slopes and is more hilly. Areas along the Grand River are also flat and don't contain much change in topography.

Hydrology

The Grand River and Flat River heavily influence the City of Lowell. The Flat River cuts through the middle of the City, running north to south, and emptying into the Grand River. The Grand River runs along the City's southern edge. The rivers were each formed during the last glacial period.

Flood waters

The areas along the Grand River within the City of Lowell are prone to seasonal flooding, especially in the spring time. The developed neighborhoods and the portions of downtown Lowell that lie along the Flat River do not frequently flood. A common area that does flood is near the convergences of the Flat and Grand Rivers.

Vegetation

There are a few prime woodlands due to the sandy soil composition in the area. Where woodlands can be found, they contain hardwoods including ash, elm, maple, and willows in lowland areas and beech and oak trees in highland areas. Many tree stands are also located along the banks of the Flat and Grand Rivers and within a few isolated pockets in the City. Much of the land is developed and urbanized.

Demographic Information

The following are population and housing trends in the City of Lowell that may influence the recreation needs and desires of the community.

Population. The total population for the City of Lowell for the 2020 census is 4,237 people. It has remained fairly stable in the last twenty years, fluctuating by less than 500 people in the last 50 years. There has been a general increasing population trend, which follows the increase in population that has occurred in many west Michigan communities.

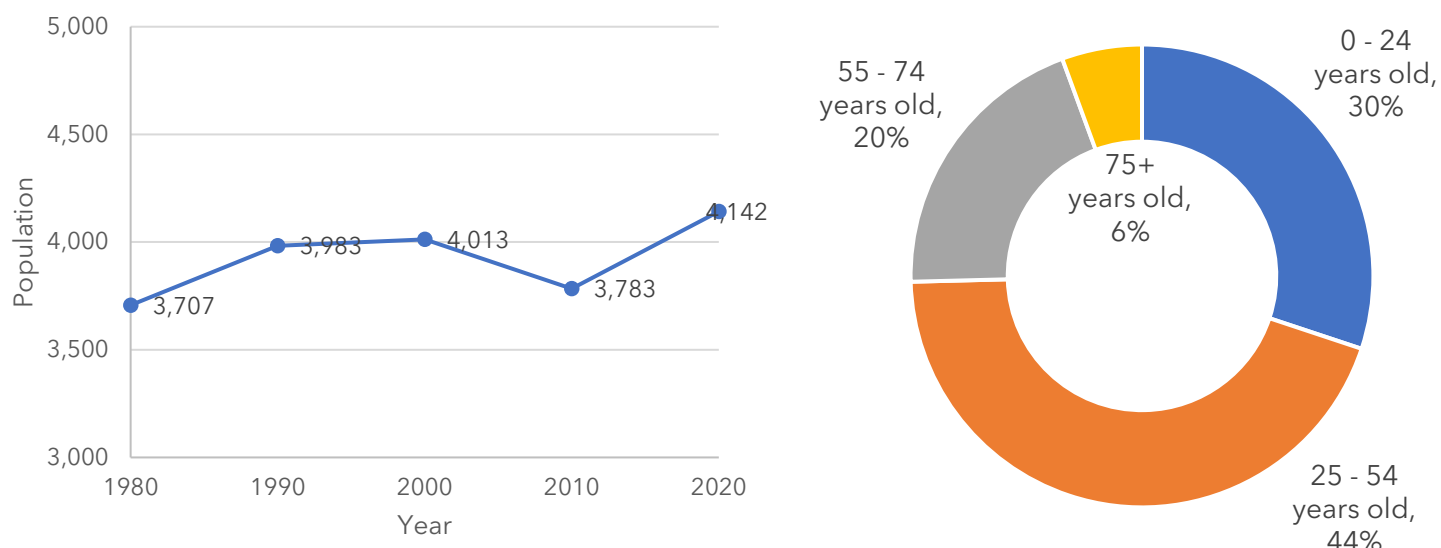


Figure 1 & 2 City of Lowell Population Characteristics 1980 – 2020
Source: US Census

In 2020, the median age of residents in the City was 36.8 years, as compared to 36 years in Kent County and 39.8 in Michigan. The City of Lowell’s population ranges in age. The circle graph above provides a breakdown of the age demographics for the community. Middle-aged people comprise a large proportion of the City’s population. Young people under 18 years old make up a quarter of the population. People aged 65 to 74 years of age comprise 8.6% of the population, and people over 75 years of age 5.6%.

Race & Ethnicity. Lowell has historically been a primarily white community. According to the 2020 US Census, of the 4,142 residents, 93% identified as White (3,726) and 1% (43) identified as Black or African American. There were 56 residents who identified as Some Other Race, 21 residents who identified as Asian, and 18 residents who identified as American Indian and Alaska Native. 190 residents identified as Latino as their primary ethnicity.

Household Data. The median household income for the City was \$64,492, as compared to in \$72,021 Kent County and \$63,498 for the state of Michigan. The median home value for City residents was \$162,100. The average household size is 2.53 within in the City according to the 2020 US Census, as compared with 2.5 people found from the 2010 US Census.

Labor Force. In the City of Lowell, 97% of the civilian labor force is employed. The median household income is \$64,492. The average commute to work time was 23 minutes for City residents, 82.6% of people commuted alone. About 6.4% of people carpooled to work, while 4.7% of residents worked at home. Employment status from 1980 – 2020 is listed below.

Employment	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Total Labor Force	1,746	1,939	2,027	1,926	2,059
Employed	1,621	1,865	1,938	1,744	1,996
Unemployed	125	74	89	182	63
Unemployment Rate	7.2	3.8	4.39	9.4	3.1
Employment Rate	92.8	96.2	95.6	90.6	96.9

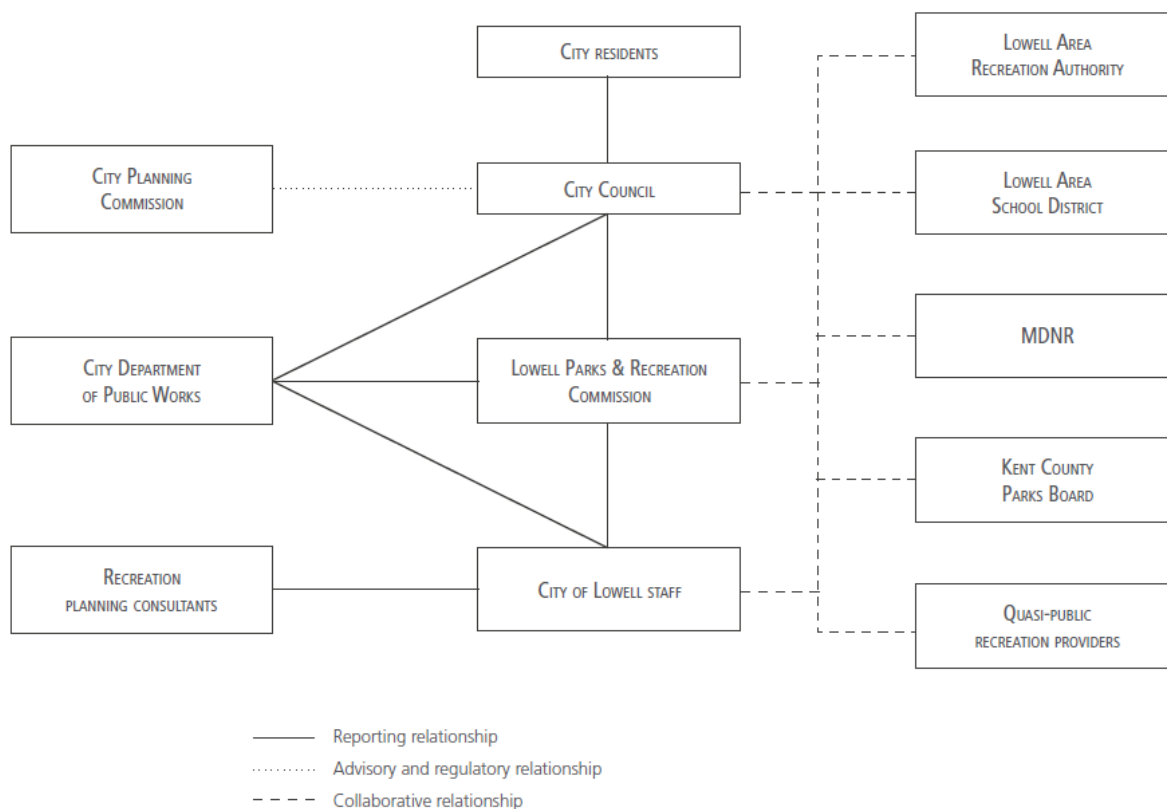
CHAPTER 3 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

City Organization Structure

The City Council is comprised of 5 members, including the Mayor. The residents elect members of the City Council, which provides the direction for City staff and represents the City's residents. Daily City tasks are performed by the City Manager, Clerk, Treasurer, and a number of city staff in the following departments: Public Works, Police, Community Development, Parks and Recreation, Fire Area Fire Department, and Human Resources.

The daily operations and maintenance of the City's parks is handled by the Department of Public Works, in addition to other tasks including the operations and maintenance of the water and sanitary sewer systems, sidewalks, city streets, and the City of Lowell cemetery. The department director leads, but department staff also take a lot of pride and ownership while working in the parks. There are 176 total acres of parkland that the City oversees. The organizational chart below shows the relationship between the various groups involved in recreation.

City of Lowell Parks Planning Administrative Structure



City Parks & Recreation Commission

Lowell has a volunteer Parks and Recreation Commission comprised of five total members. Four members are appointed by the City Council and the fifth member is a City Council

member. The Commission is responsible for providing planning and direction of the City's parks and reports directly to the City Council. The Commission works with the City Planning Commission to ensure that the goals of both commissions are aligned and to determine where recreation activities should occur. The City Council received recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Parks and Recreation Commission also works with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to help create meaningful plans and to fund improvements.

City Parks & Recreation Budget

For the FY 2022 - 2023 budget a total of \$247,793 has been budgeted for administrative and operating expenses for City Parks. Approximately \$5,000 of the budget has been set aside for signs. The primary source of the fund in the City's general fund, and some local sports organizations through user fees. Other "Friends of" groups can also be contacted to potentially provide additional funding or "in-kind" donations.

There are some other funds that the City Parks have available for its use in FY 2022 and 2023. In addition to the General Fund, the City expects to receive \$3,500 in Park User Fees and \$1,500 from the Kent County Youth Fair. Park user fees are revenue generated from the City renting ball fields and the pavilion at Creekside Park. The Kent County Youth Fair has an agreement to pay the City for the almost exclusive use of Recreation Park. There is also \$9,920 from the Lee Fund, a local endowment for parks improvements, that the City has available.

City of Lowell FY 2022 - 2023 Park Budget	
Administration	\$81,743.99
Operations/Maintenance	\$100,050.00
Capital Outlay	\$66,000.00
Total	\$247,793.99
<i>Lee Fund Available</i>	<i>\$9,920.00</i>
<i>Park User Fees (expected)</i>	<i>\$3,500.00</i>
<i>Kent County Youth Fair contribution (expected)*</i>	<i>\$1,000.00</i>
<i>*The Kent County Youth Fair is expected to end the exclusive-use agreement with the City by the end of 2022.</i>	

CHAPTER 4 RECREATION INVENTORY

This chapter provides an overview of the parks and recreation facilities and programs available in the City and an accessibility assessment.

Accessibility

Per the Michigan Department of Natural Resources guidelines, an assessment of the accessibility of each park to people with disabilities is required in this recreation plan. This assessment considers the accessibility of the park facilities and the access routes to them. The accessibility grading system is based on compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) through a five-point system as defined in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. MDNR Grading System for Accessibility	
Accessibility Grade	Definition
1	None of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
2	Some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
3	Most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
4	The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
5	The entire park was developed/renovated using the principles of universal design

Operations and Maintenance

The City's Department of Public Works maintains the City of Lowell park system. Additional staff is added in the summer to help with the parks. The City does grounds maintenance, equipment repair, care of athletic fields, and other related activities. Other support is provided by quasi-public sport organizations and area church groups.

City Parks

Recreation Park

This 30-acre park is located along the northwest corner of the confluence of the Flat River and the Grand River. The park parallels Hudson Street and includes the City's Lowell Waste Water Treatment Plant. The park has been home to the Kent County Youth Fair for decades. The County is expected to end its relationship with the City and park space this year, opening up the grounds to an alternative recreation future. The site has also been home to the high school football field and includes bleachers and a scoreboard. Other facilities in the park

include baseball and softball fields with lights, fire rings, rustic camping facilities, and a boat launch on the Grand River.

The softball field is located at the north end of the park and directly abuts the King Milling facility. It is the only softball facility with lights in the community, and also has dugouts and covered bleachers. There is a restroom that serves the football and softball areas as well as a small concession stand.

The City owns two buildings on the site that are currently not being used as recreational facilities. The King Memorial Building was once the location of an outdoor pool and is currently leased to the Kent County Youth Agricultural Association. The Foreman Building is currently used as a storage facility for the City's Department of Public Works.

The City of Lowell leases a large portion of the Recreation Park area to the Kent County Youth Fair which is a major attraction. The fair organization owns several exhibit and livestock buildings on the property which also includes a horse arena. The heaviest use of the fairgrounds has occurred annually in July/August when the Kent County Youth fair has been held here for a week. However, the use of the park grounds is likely to significantly change, as the Kent County Youth Fair is planning on ending their lease of the property with the City this year. In addition to the fair, there are other numerous, yet smaller events that take place at the fair-grounds throughout the spring and summer including horse shows, rodeos, and music concerts.



Considering the variety of facilities available at this park, parking facilities are sometimes inadequate. A portion of the areas for parking are paved, but the majority occurs in grassed areas.

Recreation Park contains a substantial amount of open space along the Grand and Flat Rivers. Some of this area is devoted to rally-type, travel-trailer camping during the Youth Fair and other events. There are no defined camp sites and limited facilities are available for this activity. Much discussion has occurred regarding the development of a modern campground in the park.

In 2019 the City undertook the Lowell Recreation Park Engagement Summary and Design Plan. Through this community engagement project, a concept for a future Recreation Park was developed. Conceptual site plan elements include tent and RV camping, a tree top bridge crossing, a boardwalk along the river, a boat and kayak launch, gardens that act as a dual-use for storm water retention, and more. More information on the process and result can be found in the plan.

Accessibility Score: 1

Creekside Park

Upgrades over the years have made this a popular park. Located on the west side of the City on Gee Drive, it is accessible from Foreman Street and Alden Nash Rd. The park includes three little league baseball fields, one softball field, one large and two small soccer fields, a beach volleyball court, two horseshoe pits, and a community garden. The centerpiece for the park is a large wooden play structure that was built with volunteer labor from throughout the community in 1994. In addition, the park features a large picnic shelter, restrooms, and a concession stand. A paved and partially-lit pathway connects the park to Cherry Creek Elementary and the Valley Vista subdivision.

This park serves as a community-wide facility used for organized soccer, baseball and softball programs, as well as for many other family leisure pursuits.

Accessibility Grade: 2

Richards Park

Between Elm and Spring streets, this 1.6 acre park is located in a neighborhood one block from the Flat River. The park contains a play lot, playground, large slide, half basketball court, benches, a small boat launch, and a path. A concrete pad is flooded in the winter for ice skating and provides a smooth surface for summer roller skating. Parking is available on the adjacent streets.

Accessibility Score: 2

Stoney Lakeside Park

Located along the Grand River on South Bowes Road, the park includes a 27-acre lake. The lake affords opportunities for swimming, fishing, and boating. Other facilities include a beach, a skate board park, restrooms, playground, parking lot, picnic tables, picnic pavilions, grills, two horse shoe pits, and a 31,000 square foot fenced dog park.

Accessibility Score: 1

McMahon Park

Located off of Shepard Boulevard SE, the 0.25-acre park is a wooded lot in a residential neighborhood. Amenities include benches and a sledding hill.

Accessibility Score: 1

Scout Park

Located at the north end of Washington Street next to the Flat River, the 27-acre park has been a dedicated meeting place for local Boy Scout troops for years. Park facilities include the Boy Scout Cabin that was constructed in the 1950's and an open hill area used for sledding in the winter. The North Country National Scenic Trail route also passes through the property.

Accessibility Score: 1

Riverwalk Park/Showboat Area

The area has a boat launch, an ADA accessible canoe/kayak launch for the Flat River. A new bathroom building was completed in 2021. Benches and picnic tables can be found along the riverfront and the lawn near the Englehardt Library which serves as festival venue. This area is now formally considered a City park. This constantly evolving, popular downtown amenity has helped shape the identity of Lowell for over 20 years.

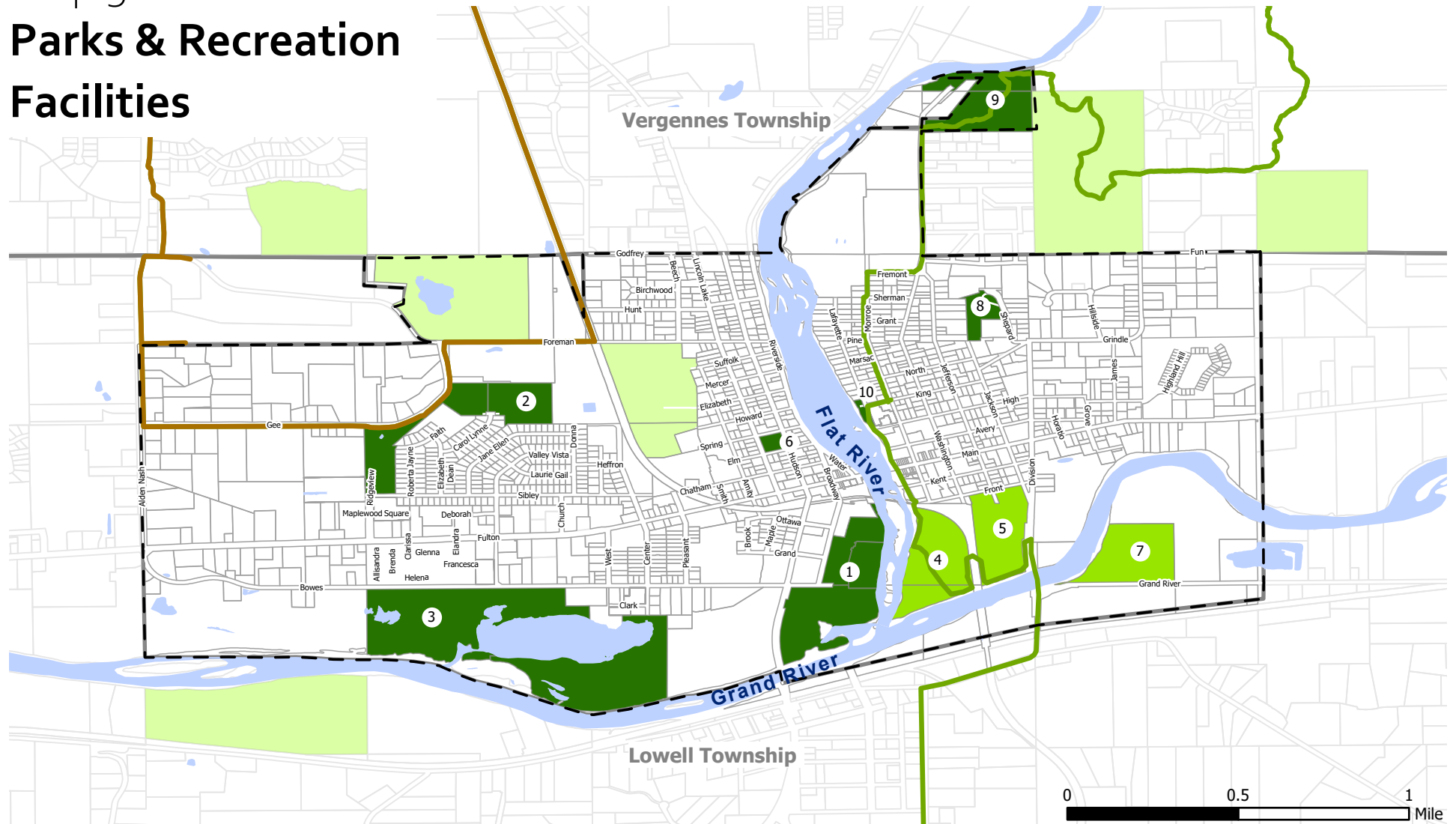
Accessibility Grade: 4

Other City of Lowell Properties

Upper Bridge Property, Moose Property, and Rogers Property

Three pieces of property comprise a single location for a future potential city park. Located on the south side of the Grand River, the 20-acre, vacant Upper Bridge Property is just east of the bridge. The Moose and Rogers properties are two parcels that comprise a total of about 33 acres. Located on the east side of the Flat River, both properties are wooded. All properties lie within the floodplain. Donated to the City for park use, there are no current plans for the properties. These properties, owned by the City, are not formally designated as

Map 5 Parks & Recreation Facilities



Legend

- City Park
- City Park-like Property
- Other Property
- City of Lowell
- North Country Nation Scenic Trail
- Existing Non-Motorized Trails

- 1. Recreation Park
- 2. Creekside Park
- 3. Stoney Lakeside Park
- 4. Rogers Property
- 5. Moose Property
- 6. Richards Park
- 7. Upper Bridge Property
- 8. McMahon Park
- 9. Scout Park
- 10. Lowell Riverwalk



park at this time.

Other Parks and Recreation Facilities

Public/Quasi-Public Facilities

Lowell Area Recreation Authority & Lowell Area Trailway (LARA)

In late 1990's, the City of Lowell, Lowell Township, and Vergennes Township began receiving feedback from residents indicating a strong desire for recreational trails. In 1997 the Lowell Area Community Fund was established with the gift of \$12.7 million from Lowell resident Harold J. Englehardt. A number of community meetings were held to determine how the funds should be spent. One of the important themes that emerged was a strong desire for trails. A legal framework was developed and adopted in November 2004 by the City of Lowell, Lowell Township, and Vergennes Township to create LARA, making the organization an officially recognized and empowered entity.

The LARA volunteer group was formed in 2004 to research ways to better the recreation opportunities for Lowell area residents. The group is led by the LARA Board that consists of an elected official from Vergennes Township, Lowell Charter Township, and the City of Lowell. There are also 3 representatives from each municipality and one jointly appointed representative. The goal of the cooperative effort is to provide an equal voice in the LARA recreation planning efforts among the three communities.

The focus of LARA has been the planning, design, and construction of trails to serve the community. Phase 1 of the system was realized in 2011 with the installation of a 3.2-mile trail connecting the Flat River Valley Rail Trail to the Wittenbach/Wege Agriscience & Environmental Education Center. In 2018, construction was completed on the trail connecting Alden Nash Rd. from Gee Dr. to W. Main Street (M-21) to the Lowell Township North Park. In 2014 and 2015, LARA worked with the MDNR to identify alternative routes to connect the Fred Meijer Rail Trail system through the Lowell community. In 2022, LARA is working with MDOT using a Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant to complete a connection from Lowell Township Park and an existing part of the LARA trail network to Hudson Street, with future hopes of connecting across the Grand River via a pedestrian bridge to the Fred Meijer Grand River Valley Trail along Grand River Avenue and abandoned rail corridor.

Fred Meijer River Valley Rail Trail

Located in central Michigan, the Fred Meijer River Valley Rail Trails are a system of inactive rail corridors being redeveloped as trails. There is also an effort to explore developing water trails on adjacent rivers along the area. The "pedal and paddle" network is a great opportunity to develop a variety of recreational experiences. The Fred Meijer Midwest Michigan Rail Trail Network connects Gratiot, Montcalm, Ionia, Kent, Clinton, and Shiawassee counties. The cities of Greenville and Lowell serve as "Trail Hubs" where various segments of

local and national trails will intersect. When completed, the Network will serve the communities of Owosso, Ovid, St. Johns, Fowler, Pewamo, Muir, Ionia, Saranac, Lowell, Belding, Greenville, Stanton, Edmore, and Alma, as well as the greater Grand Rapids, Lansing, and Saginaw regions.

The City of Lowell is located in the center of the 125-mile regional rail trail system. The rail corridor is abandoned and contiguous with the exception of the approximate 2.5-mile gap through the City of Lowell, where the rail will remain active to serve King Milling, Michigan Wire, and other potential industries. The LARA trail system also connects to the regional trail system.

Grand River Riverfront Park

Located adjacent to the Grand River, the 80-acre Lowell Charter Township park has one developed recreation area designed to serve the Township's residents. Located on the south bank of the Grand River across from the City's Stoney Lakeside Park, the facility provides a broad range of field sports and natural area amenities for organized and casual use. The park is handicapped accessible and has a playground, soccer fields, picnic area, concession stand, bridge river crossing, natural areas, a lacrosse field, benches, a gazebo, wetlands education area, fishing area/dock, trails, accessible frontage along the Grand River, canoe/kayak launch, restrooms, paved walkways, and parking.

Fallasburg Park

Located about 4 miles north of Lowell, this is a 458-acre Kent County Park along the Flat River. The park contains one of the State's few remaining covered bridges. Facilities include picnic areas, softball diamonds, frisbee golf, and playground equipment. Hiking and cross-country ski trails are found throughout the park, including the designated route for the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Saranac-Lowell State Game Area

The 1,800-acre non-contiguous land area is located northeast of Lowell in Kent and Ionia counties where hiking, bird watching, hunting, canoeing/kayaking, and other recreational activities are allowed.

Ionia Recreation Area

Located 8 miles east of the City, this is the nearest state park to Lowell. The park offers fishing, camping, swimming, equestrian, and other recreational opportunities.

North Country National Scenic Trail

The North Country National Scenic Trail is a premier footpath that stretches for about 4,800 miles from North Dakota to Vermont. Providing ample opportunities to hike in a variety of natural and built environments, through cities, villages, woodlands, and wetlands, the trail is a destination sought out by aspiring, recreational, and professional hikers. Passing through Michigan, the trail goes through the Saranac-Lowell State Game Area and the City of Lowell. A portion of the Michigan Iron Belle Trail hiking route follows a portion of the North Country National Scenic Trail. The national headquarters for the North Country National Scenic Trail is located in downtown Lowell, near the geographic center of the trail. The City is also an official Trail Town.

Senior Neighbors Center

This facility is a converted home located on the west side of Hudson Street, across from Recreation Park. The building can accommodate 40 people, and serves as the activity center for the Senior Neighbors organization. Activities within the center include lectures, arts and crafts programs, daily meals, and other group programs. Large events like dances or special programs such as exercise classes are held elsewhere. The Center also sponsors regular outings and similar activities for the senior population in the area.

Churches

St. Mary's Church, one block west of Richards Park, and First United Methodist Church, at Avery and Jackson, contain small areas with playground equipment used for church programs and are generally available to the neighborhood. Wesleyan Church contains a half basketball court, play equipment, and picnic tables with shelter.

Flat River Banks and Islands below the Main Street Dam

The City owns the land but it remains undeveloped. This is a popular access point for fishing along the Flat River. However, access limitations, flooding, and extensive poison ivy are some of the challenges that would need to be addressed before developing a formal program for recreational activity, however the open space is of value to the community. The islands have the potential of providing access between Recreation Park and the Rogers property via a future bridge.

Flat River Banks above Main Street

In April 2010, the west bank of the Flat River between Elm Street and Main Street was studied to determine the options available to stabilize the bank against erosion.

Cooper Wildlife Area

Located off of Foreman Road, the area is northwest of the city limits and is connected to the LARA trail. The land was donated to the Lowell Educational Foundation in 2002. The area includes a hardwood forest populated by deer, turkeys, and other wildlife. Donated for educational purposes, the area is underused due to a lack of defined access and programs.

Kent County Bike Routes

Though there are no designated bicycle routes within the City's boundaries, several Kent County trails are located on roads outside the city limits. A trail runs between the City of Lowell and Fallasburg Park on Lincoln Lake Avenue. There is wide-shoulder along 7 ½ miles of Grand River Avenue in Lowell Township from Alden Nash to Buttrick Avenue which can be used by people who bike or walk.

Lowell Area School Recreation Facilities

Lowell High School

The school lies outside City Limits, but provides indoor and outdoor facilities available to Lowell residents for a fee. Classrooms are used for adult recreation programs and the gymnasium is available for basketball and volleyball. The football stadium, track, softball and baseball fields, 8 tennis courts, and a soccer field are restricted to school use.

Unity High School

A former elementary school, this building is located on High Street and houses the Unity High School alternative education program. Its outdoor facilities include an open grassy play area, benches, and modern playground equipment. A multi-purpose room is located within the building.

Lowell Middle School

This site is 7.3 acres and is located on Foreman Road. The site includes 6 tennis courts, a baseball diamond, a softball diamond, 6 outdoor half-court basketball courts, parking facilities, and a gymnasium.

Bushnell Elementary School

The elementary school contains a gymnasium, a large outdoor play area, and an open asphalt area with two basketball hoops.

Cherry Creek Elementary School

The large elementary school occupies several outdoor facilities including 6 half-court basketball courts, a softball field, and a high school baseball field. A 1,200-seat gymnasium, multi-purpose room, and classrooms are available for community use. The property also has approximately 20 acres of protected wetland and a 2-acre pond encircled by a foot path that are used by the school for nature study and by the local residents for fishing and walking. There is an abundance of wildlife in the area including waterfowl, reptiles, and amphibians. The property also connects to the LARA trail system.

Wittenbach/Wege Agriscience and Environmental Education Center

The Wittenbach Center adjoins the Wege Foundation Natural Area for a combined 141 acres of natural area. The area serves as an outdoor classroom for Lowell Area Schools and the greater Lowell community. The trail system is open year-round to the public during daylight hours for hiking. A community garden provides residents the opportunity to rent a garden plot March through November.

Recreation Programs and Events

There are a number of recreation programs and events available in the City. A summer concert series has been a popular event, drawing several hundred people on Thursday nights to the downtown Riverwalk area, home of the historic Showboat. Lowell's school district provides an adult education program in its facilities. Facilities are also available to the public on a fee basis for a variety of leisure recreation activities. The Senior Neighbors is another active organization responsible for programming events for the senior population in the community, including a variety of leisure and support programs.

Lowell Area Schools (LAS) is the organization primarily responsible for programming in the area. Working in cooperation with the City and the YMCA, LAS schedules league play and organized team use of the many fields (excluding Burch Field) and schedules activities at the school facilities for youth basketball, open use of the gyms, adult leagues, gymnastics, and similar kinds of programs.

Waterway Inventory

Lowell is located at the confluence of the Flat River and the Grand River and has a variety of river access points within its boundaries that are used as recreational amenities.

Unimproved Water Access Locations

These locations allow access to local waterways, but without significant infrastructure. They are designated access points for carry-down boats, canoes, and kayaks. Local parks that have this kind of facility include Recreation Park and Stoney Lakeside Park.

Improved Water Access Locations

These locations have formal launching facilities, and are designated water access points for carry-down boats, canoes, and kayaks. The Lowell Riverwalk has this type of facility that includes an ADA accessible canoe/kayak launch.

Unimproved Boating Access Site

Recreation Park and Stoney Lakeside Park both have a boat launch with a concrete launch pad that are for water crafts.

Boating Access Site

The Lowell Riverwalk contains a formal boat launch with a ramp and supporting infrastructure.

Previous Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grants

The following is a list of past DNR grants that have been awarded to the City of Lowell.

Project No.: BF89-119

Project Year: 1989

Project Title: Bowes Road/Lake Park Improvements

Project Status: Grant Closed

Grant Amount: \$47,000

Scope Elements & Description: Excavate and fill beach, pave parking lot, picnic tables/grills, shelter/restrooms. This project is to develop Bowes Road/Lake Park including beach development, picnic area, shelter, restrooms and parking.

Project No.: TF11-066

Project Year: 2011

Project Title: Flat River Amphitheater Park Extension

Project Status: Grant Closed

Grant Amount: \$300,000

Scope Elements & Description: Boat dock, concrete walkways, decking, demolition, earthwork, electrical, irrigation, kayak/canoe launch, landscaping, MNRTF sign, permit fees, shoreline stabilization. Development to included replacing existing concrete amphitheater with a new greenspace park located on the Flat River. Project also includes kayak/canoe launch, boat dock, walkways, and observation/fishing area.

Project No.: TF21-0056

Project Year: Will be constructed in 2023

Project Title: River Valley Rail-Trail - Lowell Connector

Project Status: Under Design

Grant Amount: \$300,000 MDNR TF (Total project cost = \$1,432,000; MDOT TAP grant = \$707,000 Elements: 2.1 miles 10 ft. paved non-motorized trail, signage, benches

CHAPTER 5 PLANNING & PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

Planning Methods

The City of Lowell Parks and Recreation Plan was initiated to provide direction for future City parks and recreation projects, administration, and ongoing operation and maintenance. The timetable for review and approval began with a kickoff meeting with the Parks and Recreation Commission (the project steering committee), and ended with local support of the Plan in early 2023. Community input was gathered by working with members of the City's Parks and Recreation Commission, facilitating three unique focus group meetings, and by the public completing the community survey.

Numerous tools can be used to determine the recreational needs of a community. One way to assess a community's needs is to compare metrics or data. Another way is to use a systems planning approach to identify local issues, priorities, and levels of service that can be determined via community input to inform the planning process. Both of these methods are employed in the City of Lowell Parks and Recreation Plan.

Comparison to Park Metrics

One method of evaluating need is to compare the City's facilities with those of other communities using some standardized measure. This approach was used as a first step to identify any "glaring" recreational deficiencies that may exist in Lowell. The recreation classification system and facility development standards developed by the National Recreation and Park Association has data on different types of parks, their desired site characteristics, size, and service area. The following tables provide a comparison with recreation development standards and classifications systems to help inform the planning process:

Mini-Park	
Use	Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens.
Service Area	Less than ¼ mile radius
Desirable Size	1 acre or less
Acres per 1,000 Population	0.25 to 0.5 acres per 1,000 population
Desirable Site Characteristics	Within neighborhoods and in close proximity to apartment complexes, townhouse development or housing for the elderly.
Mini-Park in City of Lowell	McMahon Park

Neighborhood Park / Playground	
Use	Area for intense recreational activities such as field games, court games, crafts, playground apparatus area, skating, picnicking, wading pools, etc.
Service Area	¼ to ½-mile radius to serve a population up to 5,000 (a neighborhood)
Desirable Size	15+ acres
Acres per 1,000 Population	1 to 2 acres per 1,000 population
Desirable Site Characteristics	Suited for intense development. Easily accessible to neighborhood population geographically centered with safe walking and bike access. May be developed as a school park facility.
Neighborhood Park in City of Lowell	Creekside Park

Community Park	
Use	Area of diverse environmental quality. May include areas suited for intense recreational facilities, such as athletic complexes, large swimming pools. May be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation, such as walking, viewing, sitting, picnicking. May be any combination of the above, depending upon site suitability and community need.
Service Area	Several neighborhoods. 1-to-2-mile radius.
Desirable Size	25+ acres
Acres per 1,000 Population	5 to 8 acres per 1,000 population
Desirable Site Characteristics	May include natural features such as water bodies and areas suited for intense development. Easily accessible to neighborhood served
Community Parks in City of Lowell	Stoney Lakeside Park

Regional Park Preserve	
Use	Area of natural quality for nature-oriented outdoor recreation such as viewing and studying nature, wildlife habitat, conservation, swimming, picnicking, hiking, fishing, boating, camping, and trail uses. May include active play areas. Generally, 80% of the land is reserved for conservation and natural resource management with less than 20% used for recreation development.
Service Area	Several communities. 1 hour driving time.
Desirable Size	1,000+ acres; sufficient area to encompass the resource to be preserved and managed.
Acres per 1,000 Population	Variable
Desirable Site Characteristics	Diverse or unique natural resources such as lakes, streams, marshes, flora, fauna, and topography.
Regional Park Preserves near City of Lowell	Saranac-Lowell State Game Area

Systems Planning

When using the systems planning approach to parks and recreation development, using the results of the public engaging can be used to guide the development of recommendations. A series of three focus groups were held to further explore the three themes of (1) the passive use of recreation spaces, (2) exploring the relationship with the local sports programs, and (3) creating accessible recreation spaces and programs. A community survey was also conducted during the fall of 2022. The results of the public engagement activities are found in the Appendix. Based on the results of these efforts, the following highlighted issues and results were used to guide the development of the goals, objectives, and action plan.

- Respondents indicated that **parks, trails, and open spaces** were **very important** to their household's quality of life.
- Respondents indicated that the **top three benefits** of parks and recreation in the Township were to **provide opportunities to enjoy nature/outdoors, protect the natural environment and wildlife**, and **improve health and wellness**.
- **Maintaining the existing parks** was the most important way to continue to provide park and recreation facilities for respondents.
- Survey results showed that **community members frequently visit City parks**, including Creekside Park and the Riverwalk, demonstrating that the community enjoys and values the parks.
- **Residents appreciate** the **variety of park and recreation** amenities offered by the City, and investments should be made in those spaces based on feedback from the community survey and focus group conversations.

- Consider seeking partnership opportunities with local sports programs that will balance the growing desire for polished sport amenities and the City's limited resources.
- The following are the **common themes** that emerged from the **focus groups**:
 - Many of the **recreation facilities** in the City are **outdated**
 - **Better marketing** is needed for **park locations** and amenities within the parks
 - Trails are popular among residents
- The need for **more accessible recreational spaces and places** was identified in the results of the community survey and confirmed through dialogue with focus group members.
- Creating stronger, better **connections and access to water** (rivers, lake, pool, splash pad, etc) was talked about during the focus groups and supported by results of the community survey.

Parks and Recreation Analysis

Considering the results of the standardized park metrics analysis, along with the systems planning approach that included the results of the community engagement tasks provides a great resource in developing a list of needs for the City of Lowell Parks and Recreation system. With the focus being on supporting the maintenance and long-term, sustainable investment in the facilities, this will provide an important way to continue to meet the recreational needs of the community.

Public Meeting and Plan Adoption

Following preparation of the Plan, citizens were provided an adequate opportunity (at least 30 days) to review and comment on the Plan prior to the official recommendation by the Lowell Parks and Recreation Commission and adoption by the City of Lowell City Council.

A draft of the Plan was submitted to the Lowell Parks and Recreation Commission and City staff for their review and comments. A notice was published in the local newspaper (_____) on _____, notifying the public of the availability of the plan to provide them the opportunity to review and comment. The plan was available for public review at City Hall and the City's website. Suggestions received to improve the plan were incorporated into the document, which was then revised and finalized.

The City of Lowell City Council adopted the plan on _____.

CHAPTER 6 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Considering community input and the existing conditions of the City of Lowell, the following goals and objectives were developed to form the foundation of the Plan. The goals are intended to help the community aspire to accomplishing big ideas, and are considered attainable through long-term, focused efforts. The objective statements are more specific and may be regarded as milestones to achieving the goal.

The goals and objectives were developed to address the recreation needs and deficiencies. They are intended to be the official policy of the City of Lowell on recreation matters. Goals and objectives help to provide direction in order to identify appropriate projects and programs.

Goal 1. The City of Lowell parks and recreation system will contain accessible, well-maintained, and plentiful parklands that are responsive to the needs of its citizens.

Objectives

- A. Create a Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement and Deferred Maintenance Plan that will be used to identify the cost, resources needed, and priority level to systematically address park and recreation maintenance needs for City facilities and programs.
- B. Develop a prioritized list that provides guidance to update outdated recreation facilities and spaces.
- C. Update the recreation plan at least every five years to ensure that the City is in good-standing to receive DNR park and recreation grants.
- D. Seek public input when making major changes to City park and recreation spaces.
- E. Consider developing a volunteer, "Friends of the City of Lowell Parks" group to support the City's efforts to maintain and support the parks.

Goal 2. Provide places and spaces where people of all ages and abilities can recreate for health, wellness, and fun.

Objectives

- A. Look for opportunities that balance the preservation of unique natural recreation spaces while allowing people access and unique experiences in a variety of ways across the City's park system.
- B. Seek opportunities to develop accessible spaces when redeveloping, updating, or creating park and recreation areas.
- C. Continue to cultivate a diverse array of recreational spaces that allows citizens to move and play.
- D. Find pragmatic ways to partner with local sports leagues and programs that allow the mutually beneficial development of sports that grows Lowell's character.

Goal 3. Ensure that the City's parks and local trails are identifiable and have a strong sense of connection.

Objectives

- A. Develop and implement a wayfinding system for the City's parks.
- B. Develop a marketing strategy to provide a better sense of connection and available amenities to residents and visitors.
- C. Provide an updated City Parks and Recreation website that is easy to maintain for city staff yet provides up-to-date information on each park like location, general amenities, and hours of operation.

Goal 4. Invest in and maintain access to the local rivers and lakes that allows for a variety of recreational opportunities.

Objectives

- A. Support the development and maintenance of accessible watercraft launch sites and public swimming areas.
- B. Support ways to develop a canoe/kayak business for the community.
- C. Promote educational opportunities and programs that allow all members of the community to participate safely in water-related recreational activities.

Goal 5. Consider designating undeveloped natural areas within the City for future park areas.

Objectives

- A. Develop a set of criteria or rationale that can be used to identify and prioritize potential areas that could become formal City parks.
- B. Consider the purpose of each new formal park, its intrinsic value, and how it can contribute to the uniqueness of the City's park system.
- C. Pragmatically consider the cost and maintenance needs that will be placed on City resources.

CHAPTER 7 ACTION PROGRAM

The City of Lowell is looking to continue to develop the park and recreation facilities. A series of action plans was developed to help City staff and officials track the ways that the priorities in each park could be implemented. The actions plans are developed for all City parks based on input from the community, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and City staff. The action plans are organized by park, relate to specific plan goals, have a priority level based on their level of importance and ability to be implemented along with cost information. There is also an action plan for actions that should be considered for all City parks. Actions plans were not developed for the Upper Bridge Property/Moose and Rogers Properties as they are not official City parks.

Cost Estimates and Source

The table also includes cost opinions. The actual costs for improvements can vary significantly based on a variety of factors. The source of the funds for implementing a project could be the City's Parks budget, grants from the DNR, other grant programs, or any kind of donation from "Friends" or other non-profit organizations.

All City of Lowell Parks

Task	Relates to Goal(s)
Destination and wayfinding signage	3
Marketing of parks/amenities, online information, update regularly	1,2,3
Park improvements to include materials and equipment for people with special needs	1,2
ADA and Seniors accessibility opportunities	1,2
Pavement repairs of walkways and parking areas (crack fill, seal, overlay, etc.)	1,2
Replace/ad picnic tables and charcoal grills	1
Upgrade drinking fountains to include bottle filling stations	1

Recreation Park Action Plan

Task	Relates to Goal(s)	Priority	Cost Opinion
Implement Engagement Summary Design plan	1,2,3,4	Med	\$5,000,000
Replace lighting at Burch Field (football field)	1,2	Med	\$15,000/light
Replace lighting at baseball field	1,2	Med	\$15,000/light
Replace baseball field dugouts/backstop	1,2	Med	\$10,000
Pave baseball field parking lot	1,2	Med	\$50,000
Improve boat launch facility	1,2,4	Med	\$20,000

Replace/re-establish track around Burch Field	1,2	Low	\$35,000
Grand River Water Trail	1,3,4,5	Low	\$30,000
Restrooms for water trail/launch facility	1,2,4	Low	\$200,000
Connect islands and Moose/Roger property	1,2,3,4,5	Low	\$1,000,000

Creekside Park Action Plan

Task	Relates to Goal(s)	Priority	Cost Opinion
Rehabilitate/replace Creekside Kingdom	1,2	High	\$100,000
Add pathway from play area to pavilion	1,2,3	High	\$50 per foot +/-
Insulate/re-side/add-on to concession/bathroom building	1	Med	\$75,000
Add Pickleball/tennis courts	1,2	Med	\$75,000 each
Replace footbridge over creek	1,2,4	Med	\$20,000
Electrical improvements to pavilions	1	Med	\$10,000
Additional baseball fields (2)	1,2	Low	\$50,000
Add lights to athletic fields	1	Low	\$15,000/light
Re-establish skate rink under large pavilion	1,2	Low	\$20,000
Increase parking	1,2	Low	\$15,000

Richards Park Action Plan

Task	Relates to Goals	Priority	Cost Opinion
Replace fall safety material beneath playground structure	1,2	High	\$10,000
Add irrigation system	1	High	\$20,000
Improve landscaping/flowers	1	High	\$10,000
Restrooms/storage building	1,2	Med	\$200,000
Add picnic shelter/pavilion	1,2	Med	\$25,000
Repair/replace ice rink		Med	\$20,000
Add climbing structure for young children		Med	\$50,000
Add splash pad		Low	\$75,000

Stoney Lakeside Park Action Plan

Task	Relates to Goals	Priority	Cost Opinion
New/updated existing informational signs (2)	1,3	High	\$6,000
Add Park lighting	1	High	\$15,000/light
Improve ADA accessibility (ramps to beach, foot wash/shower)	1,2,4	Med	\$50,000

Replace/rejuvenate beach sand	1,4	Med	\$10,000
Sidewalk access from Bowes Road into Park	1,2	Med	\$50 per foot +/-
Level sand volleyball area	1	Low	\$5,000
Add basketball court	1,2	Low	\$30,000

Scout Park Action Plan

Task	Relates to Goals	Priority	Cost Opinion
Formalize parking area	1,3	Med	\$50,000
Improve entrance into park (gate/signage/landscaping, etc.)	1,3	Med	\$10,000
Add boat/canoe/kayak launch	1,4	Med	\$100,000
Improve existing trails through Park and along water	1,2,4	Med	\$25,000
Add picnic area/shelter/picnic tables/grills	1,2	Med	\$15,000
Add mountain biking/cross-country ski trails	1,2	Low	\$15,000

Riverwalk Park/Showboat Area Action Plan

Task	Relates to Goal(s)	Priority	Cost Opinion
Reconstruct/rehab Riverwalk path area (Main St. to High St.)	1,2,4	High	\$1,000,000
Extend Riverwalk south of Main St.	1,2,4	Med	\$1,000,000
Upgrade all irrigation systems	1	Med	\$25,000
Fence/screen boat launch porta potty	1	Med	\$1,000
Add irrigation to planters (include light poles)	1	Low	\$50,000
Install river fountains	1	Low	\$50,000
New pavilion north of library	1,2	Low	\$25,000

Additional Recreation Improvements

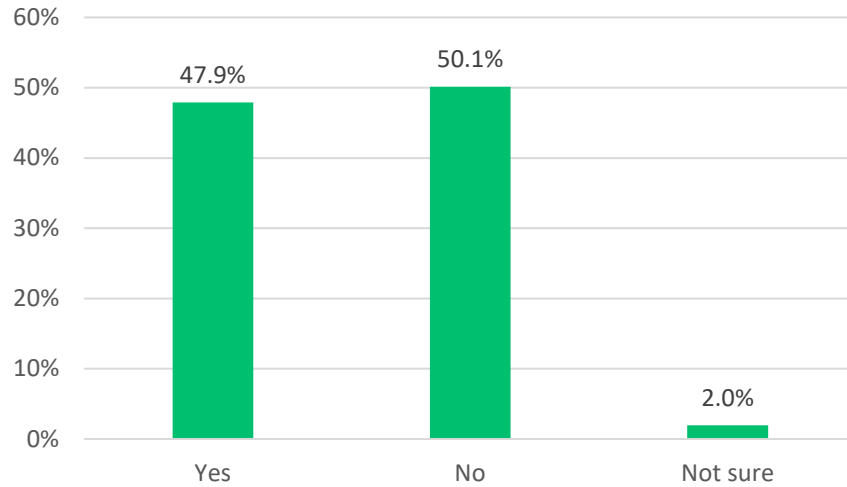
The Veteran's Memorial located at 202 East Main also requires occasional maintenance. Future repairs would include replacing flag poles and repairing or replacing park lighting.

Community Engagement Report

**A summary of the community engagement activities for the
City of Lowell Parks & Recreation Plan 2023 - 2027**

**City of Lowell
Parks & Recreation Plan
Community Survey Report
July 2022**

1. Do you live in the City of Lowell?



If you do not live in the City of Lowell, please indicate where you live. Answers in Table below.

Location	Number of Respondents
Lowell Township	79
Vergennes Township	55
Grattan Township	9
Ada	8
Alto	7
Boston Township	6
City of Lowell	4
Clarksville	2
Belding	2
Saranac	2
Keene Township	1
Stanwood	1
Wyoming	1
Texas	1
Cedar Springs	1
Cascade Township	1
Sparta	1
Orleans	1
Illinois	1
Rural	1
Eastgate	1
Ohio	1

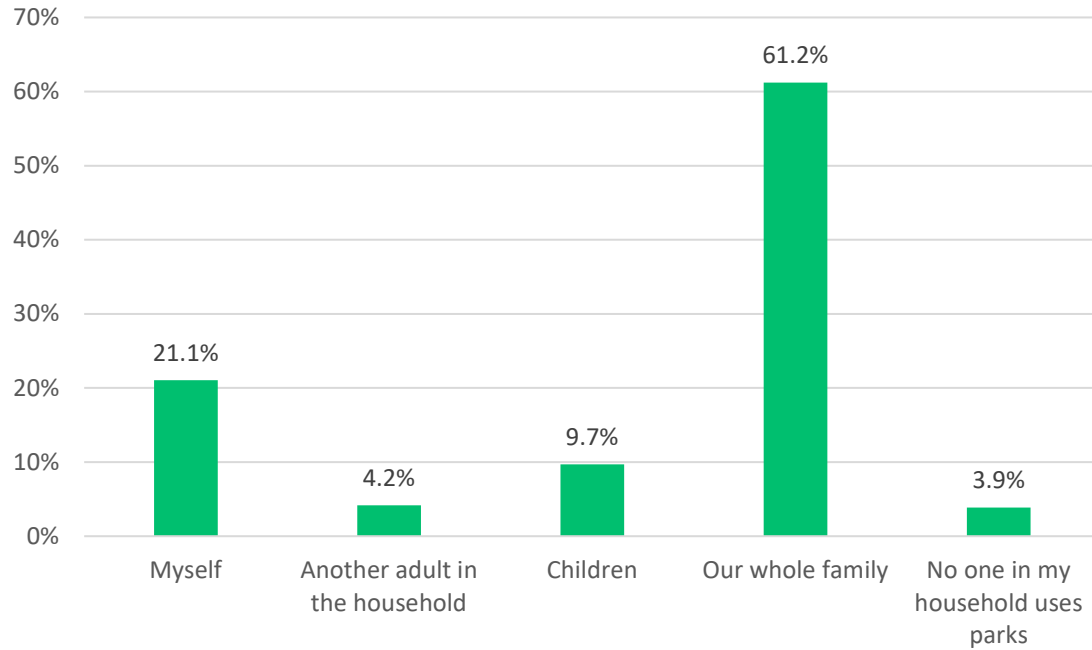
Answered	359
Skipped	4

2. What is your age?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Under 18	0.28%	1
18 to 24	3.31%	12
25 to 34	20.72%	75
35 to 44	30.11%	109
45 to 54	17.40%	63
55 to 64	14.92%	54
65 to 74	11.88%	43
75 or older	1.38%	5
	Answered	362
	Skipped	1

3. Who in your household is the most active user of parks?

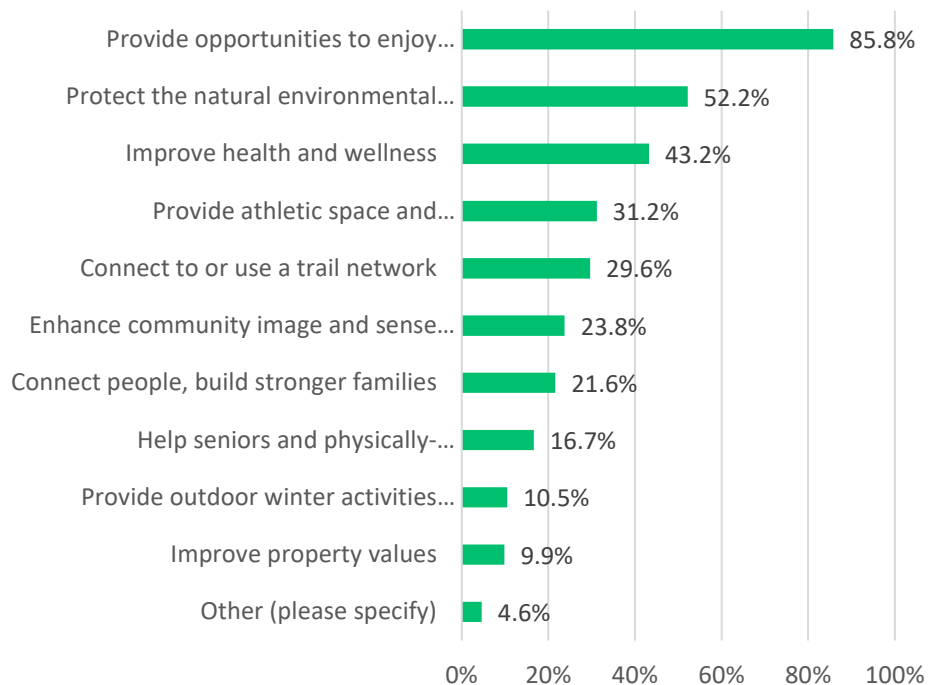


Answer Choices	Responses	
Myself	21.05%	76
Another adult in the household	4.16%	15
Children	9.70%	35
Our whole family	61.22%	221
No one in my household uses parks	3.88%	14
	Answered	361
	Skipped	2

4. How important are parks, trails, open space, and natural areas to you and/or your household's quality of life?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very important (3)	77.64%	250
Somewhat important (2)	21.12%	68
Not important (1)	0.93%	3
No opinion (0)	0.31%	1
	Total	322
	Weighted Average	2.76
	Answered	322
	Skipped	41

5. Which of the following benefits of parks and recreation are most important to you? (Please select your top three).



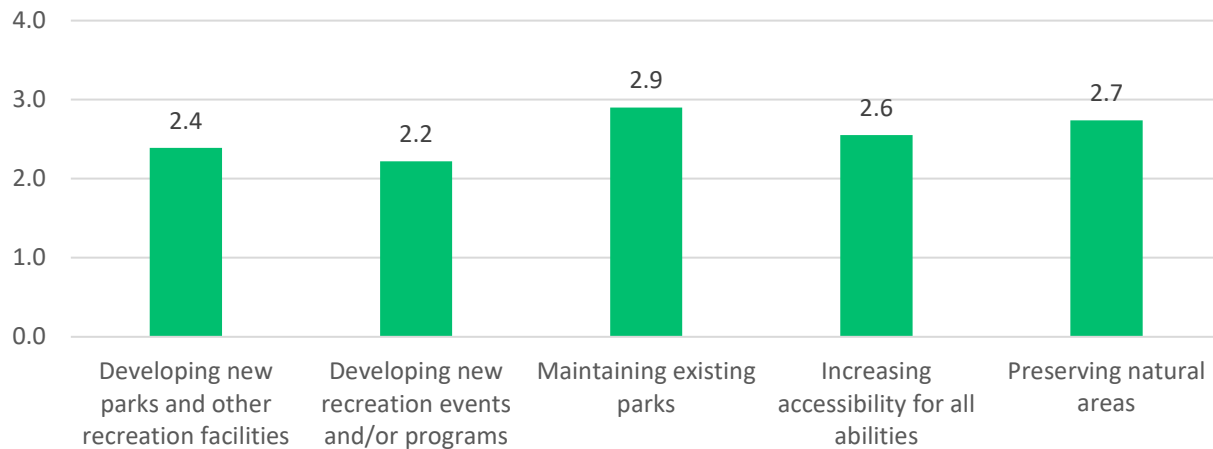
Other (please specify):

- Safe, modern playground/space for children
- Wide-open spaces are important
- Hunting and fishing
- Dog park
- Spend active time with my dogs
- Water play area in the summer through splash pad
- Fishing docks and locations

- Safety in All Parks
- Safe place for kids to play, more importantly we need accessibility playgrounds for our youth in wheel chairs
- Children areas
- Just to have someplace free to go. Life is so expensive
- More fields (baseball-football)
- Hunting and Camping
- Safe walking trails
- Leave it as is, natural. It is fine the way it is.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Provide opportunities to enjoy nature/outdoors	85.80%	278
Protect the natural environment and wildlife	52.16%	169
Improve health and wellness	43.21%	140
Provide athletic space and opportunities	31.17%	101
Connect to or use a trail network	29.63%	96
Enhance community image and sense of place	23.77%	77
Connect people, build stronger families	21.60%	70
Help seniors and physically-challenged people remain active	16.67%	54
Provide outdoor winter activities (snowmobiling, cross country skiing, etc.)	10.49%	34
Improve property values	9.88%	32
Other (please specify)	4.63%	15
	Answered	324
	Skipped	39

6. How important are the following in improving the park and recreation facilities in the City of Lowell?

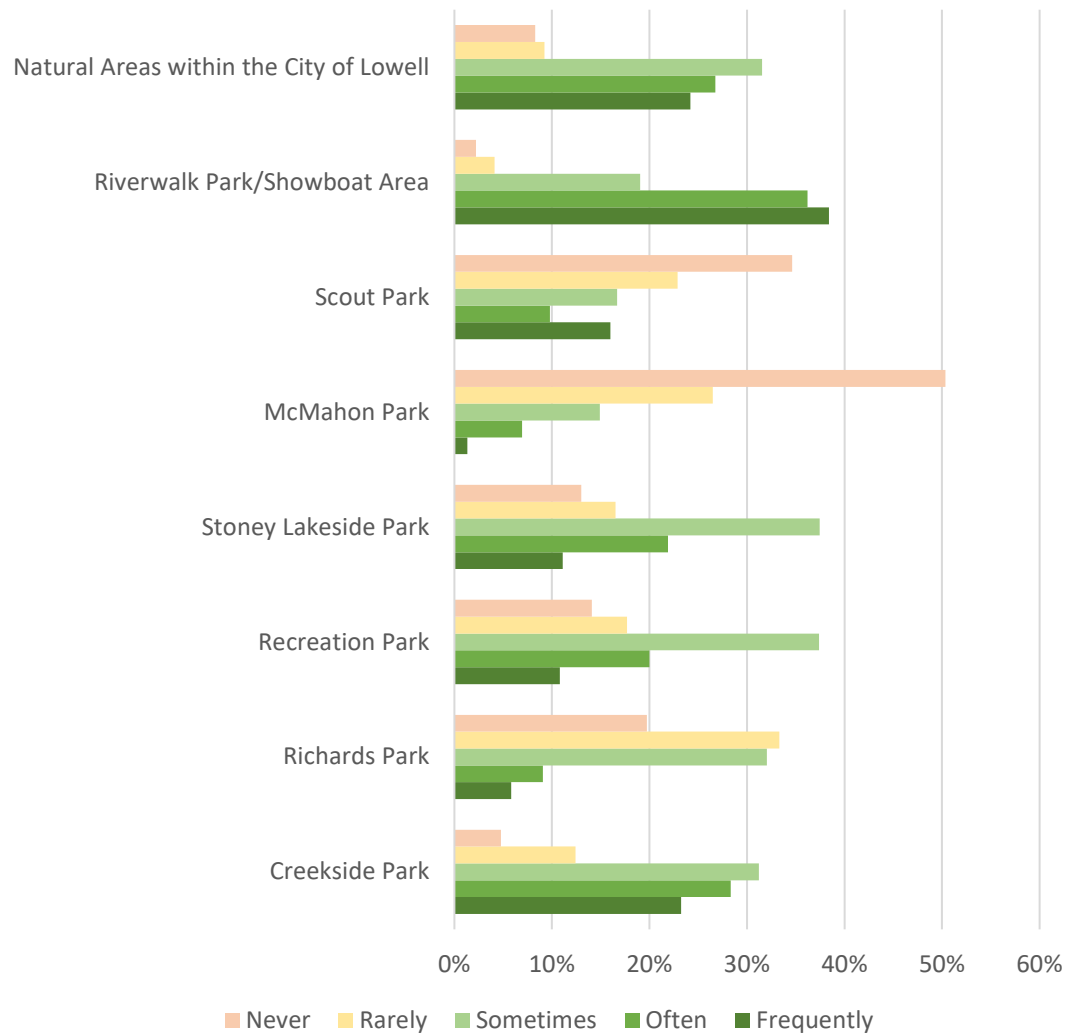


Other (please specify):

- Building a Splash Pad
- Community pool
- Security
- More camping availability
- Preservation of our N Country Trail System, Scout Park, etc.
- Accessibility is not necessary at ALL parks. We have a nice variety of parks and the purposes should not all be the same.
- Do not develop scout park.

Answer Choices	Very Important (3)		Somewhat Important (2)		Not Important (1)		No Opinion (0)		Total	Weighted Average
Developing new parks and other recreation facilities	50.5%	161	39.5%	126	8.5%	27	1.6%	5	319	2.4
Developing new recreation events and/or programs	39.3%	125	45.3%	144	13.2%	42	2.2%	7	318	2.2
Maintaining existing parks	90.7%	293	8.7%	28	0.6%	2	0.0%	0	323	2.9
Increasing accessibility for all abilities	67.5%	216	24.1%	77	4.4%	14	4.1%	13	320	2.6
Preserving natural areas	79.8%	257	16.2%	52	2.5%	8	1.6%	5	322	2.7
							Answered		323	
							Skipped		40	

7. How frequently do you visit the following City of Lowell parks/areas?

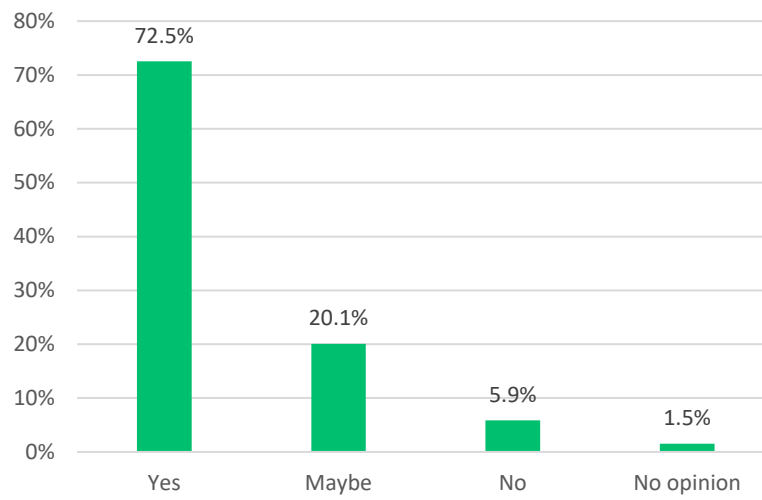


Other (please specify):

- Grand river pickle ball courts and walkway
- Wittenbach Agriscience Center
- Rogers and Moose Properties (North Country Trail)
- Please build a neighborhood park in Eastgate, Lowell Township
- Creekside kingdom
- Grand River Park
- Trailhead and Riverwalk often
- Creekside Kingdom
- Honesty don't know where Scout and McMahon are
- Grand River Riverfront Park
- Riverfront frequently
- Dog park

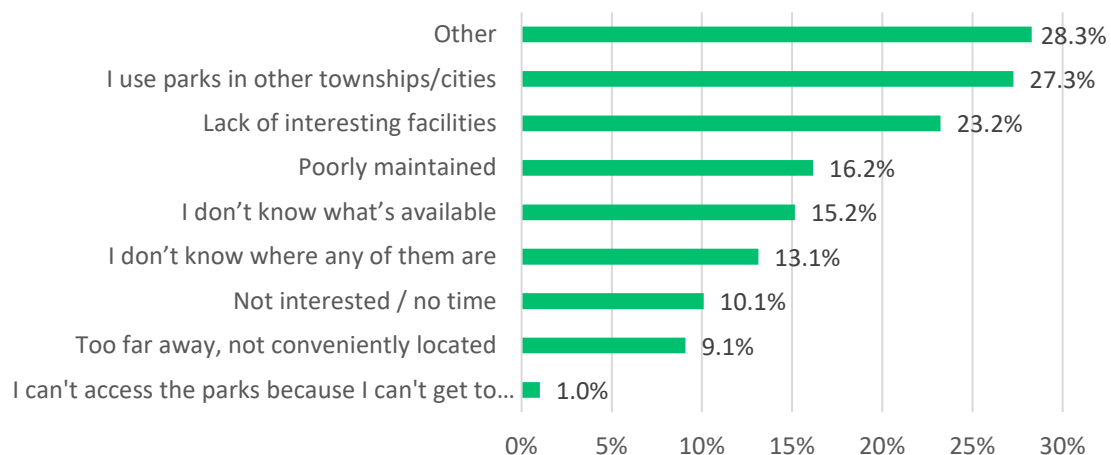
Answered	321
Skipped	42

8. Would you or anyone in your household benefit from the addition of parks, trails, and/or recreation facilities?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	72.53%	235
Maybe	20.06%	65
No	5.86%	19
No opinion	1.54%	5
	Answered	324
	Skipped	39

9. If you do not currently use the parks in the City of Lowell, what is the reason? (Please select all that apply).

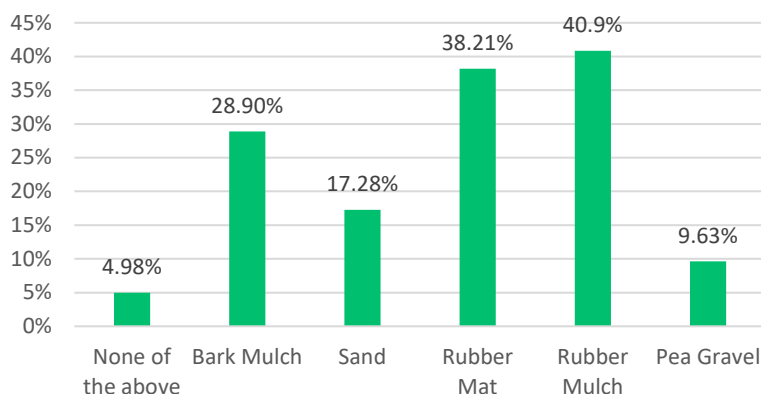


Other (please specify):

- Mostly because of people. For most of the summer, on weekends there is some, kind of something going on at the river walk, and it takes up all the close parking at the Riverwalk. Open alcohol is also a drawback, it's just a matter of time before it becomes a problem!
- Outdated equipment/play sets
- I have a nice yard
- I would use Riverwalk more and invite my running group but the bathrooms are locked.
- We use the Bridge Park, but mostly go to other parks. Nobody uses City of Lowell Parks. We tried when we first moved here but... I'd say three Library Park and Richards Park were most often used.
- Not sure where they all are
- My wife and I use the NCT from Lowell Scout Park to Fallasburg quite frequently
- Lack of stimulating play equipment for children/no play equipment for children
- Need Pool
- Mosquitos get bad in the summer
- I live in the country on acreage, I have plenty of land to enjoy
- Restroom availability
- Never heard of McMahan Park, some of the others are more for playgrounds I like the walking paths at grand river park in the twp.
- Never heard of three of the parks and maintenance upkeep
- No restrooms
- Busy working
- We walk the Bridge Park daily
- Now live in Ohio
- We enjoy walking the trails at Wege Center on Vergennes and the trails at the NE corner of Alden Nash and Foreman...
- Mobility problems
- Lack of restrooms

Answered	99
Skipped	264

10. What kind of ground covering are you or your household interested in for play structures/playgrounds?

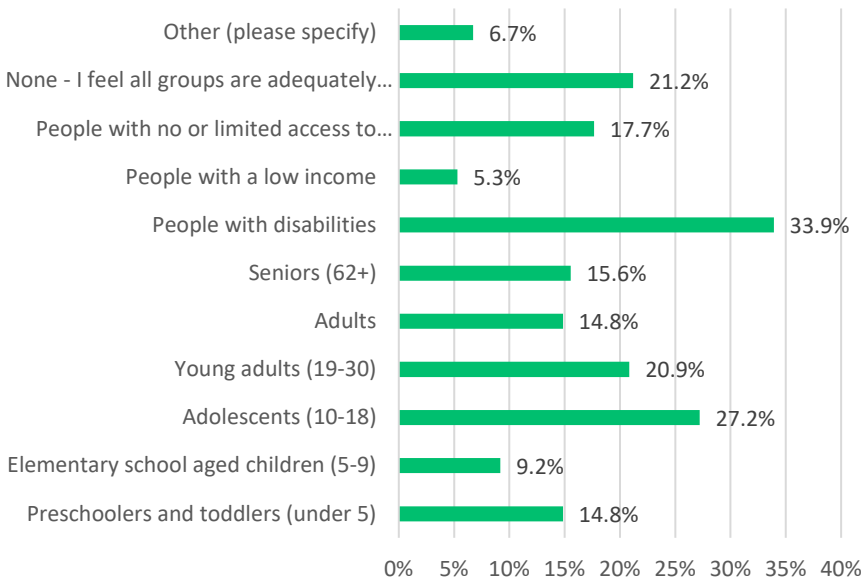


Answered	33
Skipped	330

11. Please list any other types of ground coverings that you or your household might be interested in for play structures/playgrounds?

- Natural surfaces such as grass!
- Pool
- Grass (if maintained)
- Instead of more play structures, I prefer green space
- Natural grass
- Clover. Yes, really. And no need to mow.
- Recycled rubber
- Please build a splash pad
- Grass
- Something that is easy to maintain lasts a long time and is not toxic for kids.
- I would look into which was most earth friendly and cost effective.
- Pea gravel at Creekside makes it very hard for kids to play with sandals or Crocs, and so they take them off, and get slivers from the equipment
- would love a splash pad
- I have no opinion on this
- Grass
- Grass
- Moss
- doesn't apply to me
- Not sure
- No preference. I think a variety is good
- All research points to bark mulch being the best for impact and reduction of concussion.
- grass
- turf
- I just really hate stones. No more stones
- Fiber mulch. Design for kids
- Splash pad! Would be so fantastic to have for the hot summers in the city.
- My daughter is in a wheel chair. Appreciate the harder surface she needs but also understand the softer surfaces for others.
- Types of ground cover can vary by Park and by the amount of use each one receives. We don't need to have the most expensive type at all of the parks.
- Rubber mat is best for inclusive play area, for wheelchairs
- Natural white clover.
- Grass

12. Which groups do you feel are under-served by current recreation services and amenities? Please check all that apply.

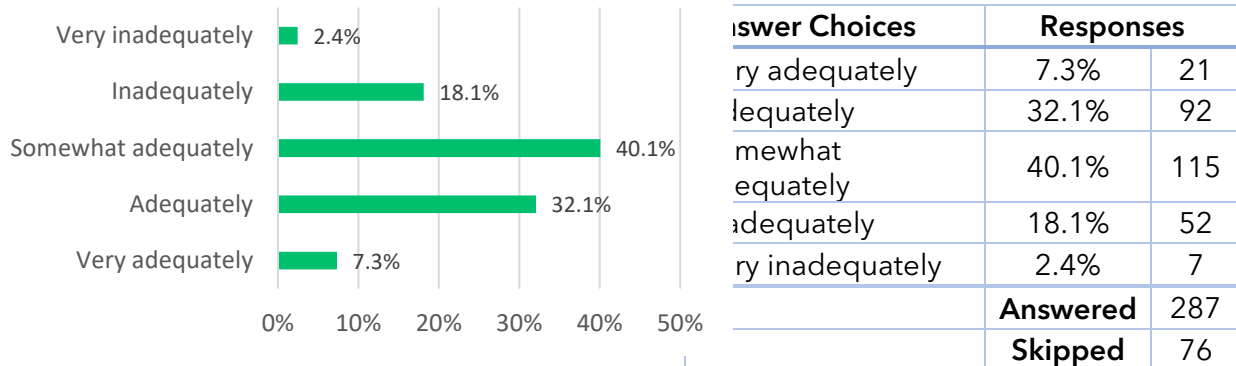


Answered	283
Skipped	80

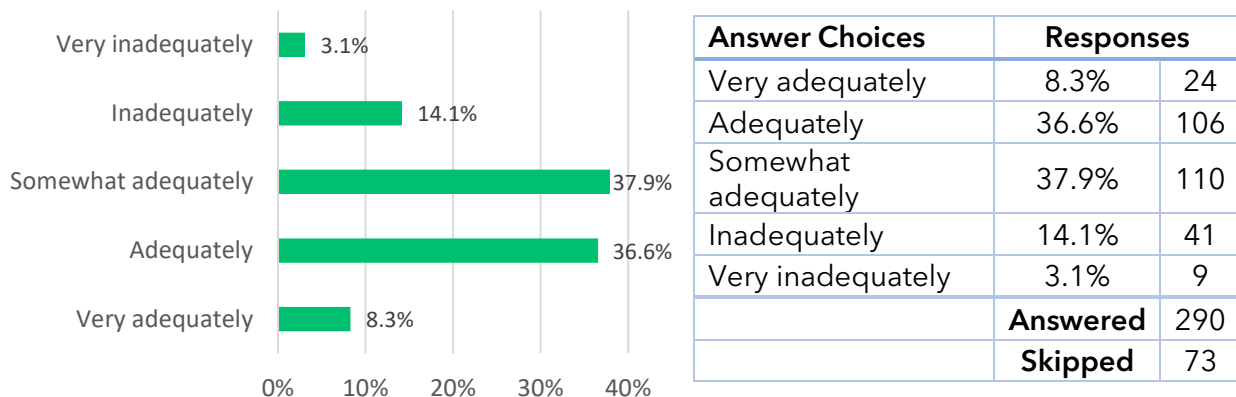
Other (please specify):

- Almost everything has a child-theme or demographic
- Hunters and fishermen
- Walking trails at parks need more benches
- There isn't much access to playgrounds for people living just west and north of Meijer. I see big plans for a trail south of town. Why? What use does it serve other than recreation? I people walking the sidewalk near Meijer (since it's the ONLY grocery store in town and they're in direct sun. They're exposed. Why can't we have trails that serve a purpose? Why are low-income residents of Eastgate overlooked, too?
- Dogs
- I am not informed enough to make a choice
- Athletes. Our softball and baseball facilities are terrible compared to neighboring communities.
- I don't feel I know enough to answer this
- I'm not super familiar with all of the parks
- I don't know
- Unsure
- Depends on park
- locked restrooms are an issue
- No comment
- Not sure, so no opinion
- I do not have an opinion or don't have enough information to form one
- What on earth are #'s 14 and 15 talking about?
- Those desiring water access to area rivers

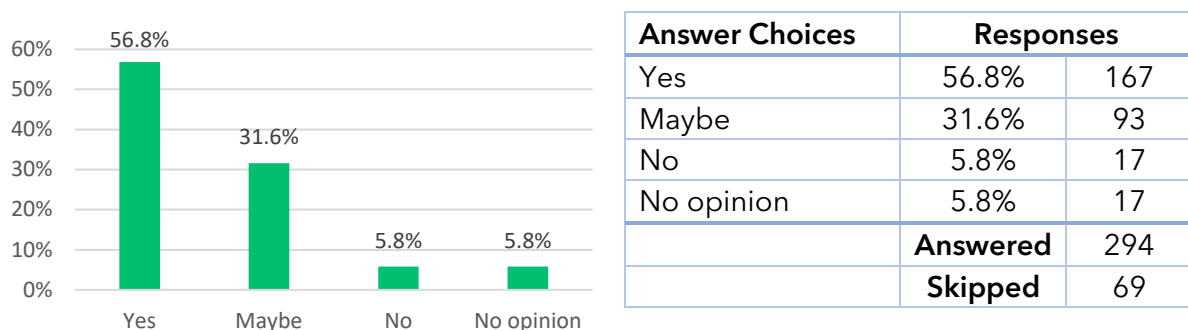
13. How adequately do you feel that the community is served by area programming (camps, sports leagues, outdoor education)?



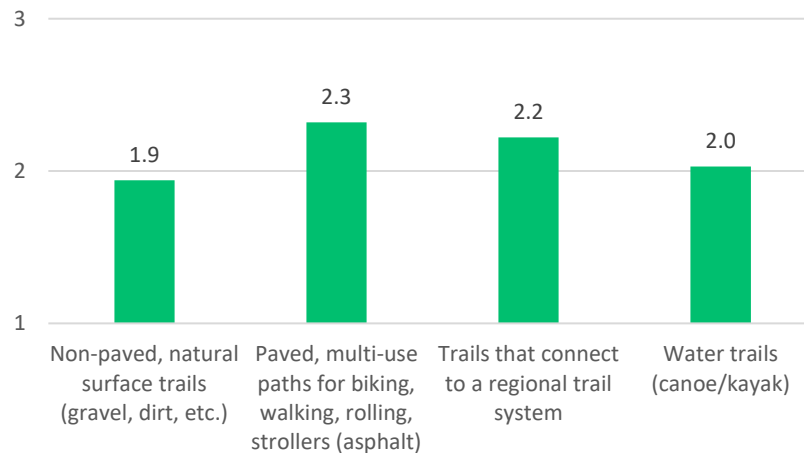
14. How adequately do you feel you an/or household is served by non-motorized infrastructure (sidewalk, bike lanes, etc.)?



15. Would you or anyone in your household be interested in the development of water trails/"blue ways" and related facilities along the Flat River and/or Grand River in the City of Lowell?



16. If there were more trails developed in the city, how should the different types of trails be prioritized?

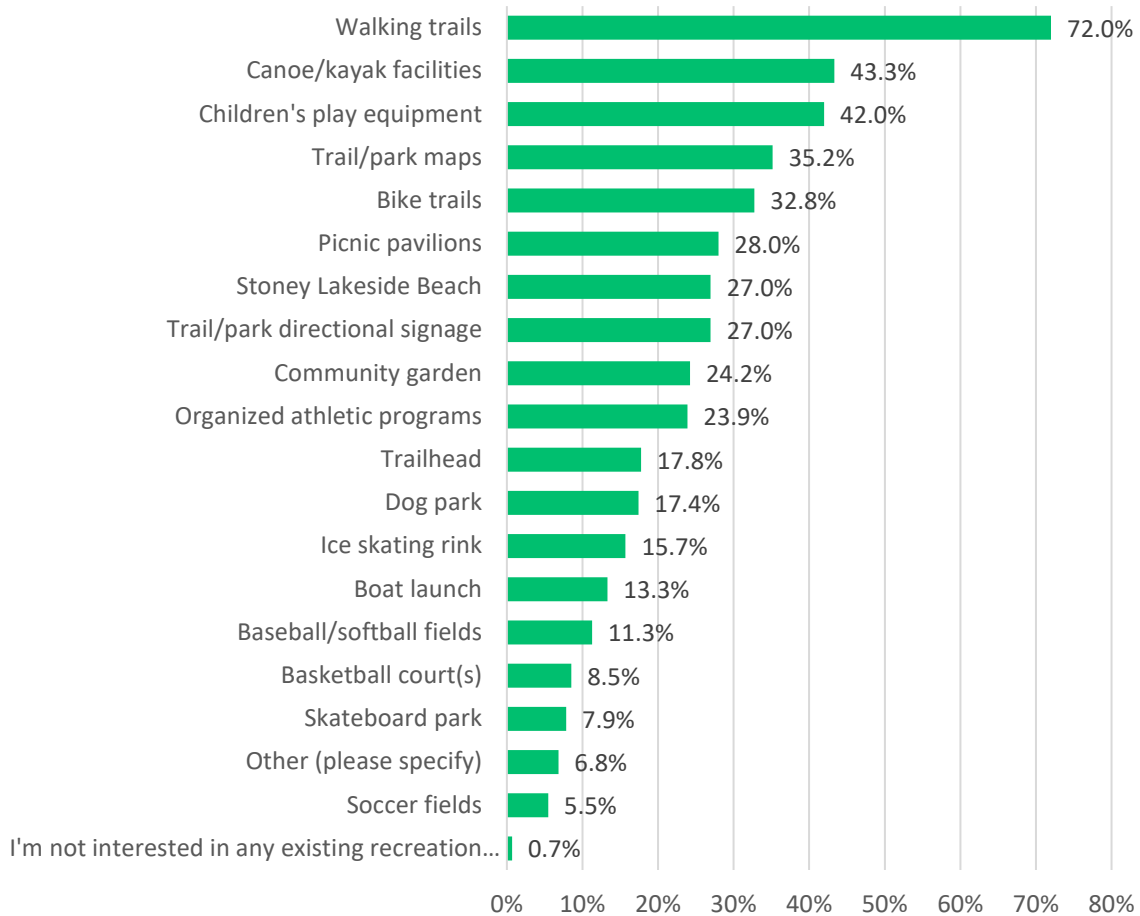


	High priority		Medium priority		Low priority		I don't know		Total	Weighted Average
Non-paved, natural surface trails (gravel, dirt, etc.)	28.9 %	82	41.6 %	118	23.9 %	68	5.6%	16	284	1.9
Paved, multi-use paths for biking, walking, rolling, strollers (asphalt)	48.9 %	139	36.9 %	105	11.6 %	33	2.5%	7	284	2.3
Trails that connect to a regional trail system	42.5 %	121	42.1 %	120	10.9 %	31	4.6%	13	285	2.2
Water trails (canoe/kayak)	33.7 %	95	42.6 %	120	17.0 %	48	6.7%	19	282	2.0
							Answered		288	
							Skipped		75	

Others (please specify):

- Aren't rivers natural "blue trails" already?
- water trails for family coming from nearby towns
- Knowing put in and take out spots and quesses at the time on the river would be helpful
- Waterpark, Pool
- I think we have plenty with the trails we have and Wittenbach/Wege center. and riverfront park
- Backpacking Trails
- Sidewalks - I thought people were supposed to fix their sidewalks (like I did!), or the city was going to do the repairs and add the cost to their taxes. MANY trip hazards all over town, not so good for us Senior Citizens. Falls are not good and broken parts take a very long time to mend.
- What is a water trail? This survey is confusing in many ways.

17. What EXISTING parks and recreation amenities, facilities, and services are you most interested in? (Please select your TOP five).

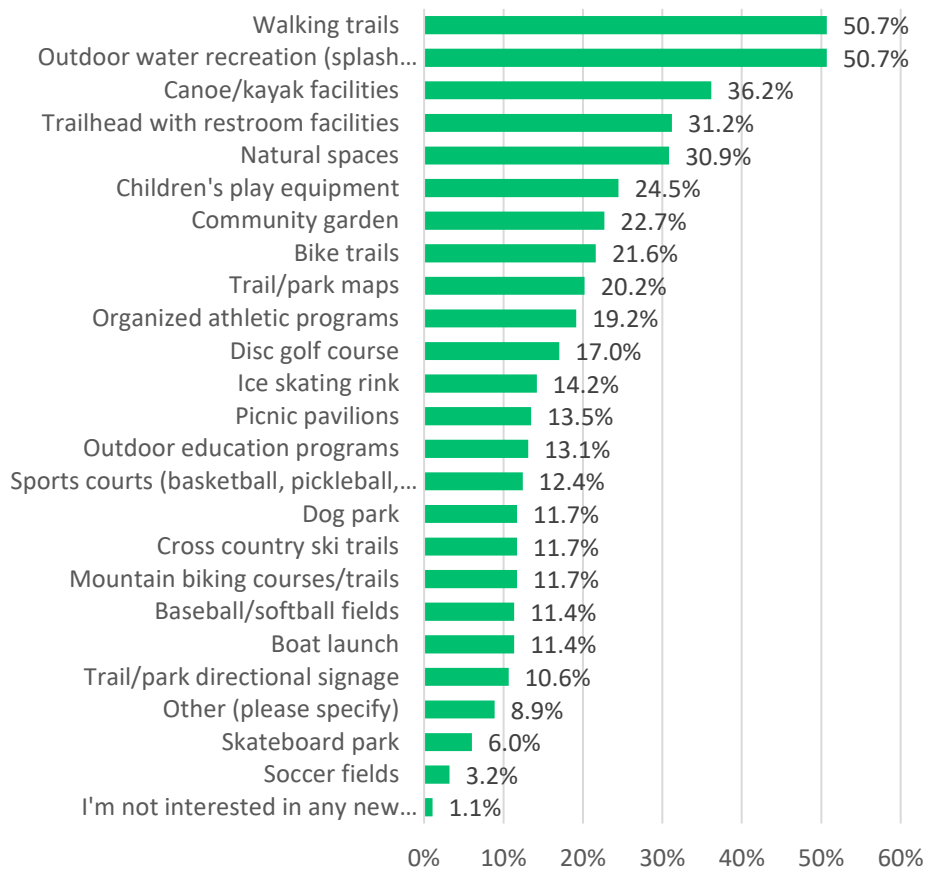


Others (please specify):

- Splash pad
- Fishing spots around Lowell
- Tennis courts
- Pool
- Public fishing
- Splash pad
- Parks on the East side of town
- Planet fitness
- Pool
- Year-round bathroom/porta-potty
- Treated Water park/pool
- Riverwalk/showboat
- Hunting Access
- The Boy Scout Park
- Scout Park
- Preserve ALL of the 27 ACRES of Scout Park--No "limited" development.
- Fallasburg Park
- McMahon Park tree work. To get a view
- Splash pad or public pool
- Volleyball

Answered	293
Skipped	70

18. What EXISTING parks and recreation amenities, facilities, and services are you most interested in? (Please select your TOP five).



Answered	282
Skipped	81

Others (please specify):

- Camping
- Some camping at Recreation Park when KCYF leaves
- Pool/community center
- Designated hunting/fishing locations
- Scout Park should remain natural.
- Pool and snow shoeing
- Splash pad
- Pool
- Pool
- Community swimming pool
- Pool, please
- Additional Park benches
- Splash pad
- Pool
- Splash pad
- Would be nice to have a public track like the high schools. I stop going when sports start.
- splash pad
- Hunting land
- Campground
- Development of any kind near or around Scout Park would degrade the character the scouts and others have enjoyed for so many years.
- Splash pad
- Splash pad
- Community pool
- Splash pad
- A Community Pool!!!

19. Please use the space below to provide additional comments regarding parks and recreation in the City of Lowell.

Comments:

- Grateful for everything that is offered between the City and Township.
- While I feel that access to all of Lowell is impacted by the very poor conditions of our streets, and now our water has been limited to every other day outside use age, and our power grid is also heavily overtaxed, in the summer. These things need to be addressed before anymore parks are built.
- I live near the rail- trail that runs from Lowell northward. Since it was resurfaced a couple years ago, it's been wonderful to see people enjoying it more than before. It would be even better if it was paved the entire way. I would love to see that happen!
- Make sure restrooms are available for little kids. Otherwise, we aren't able to stay and enjoy all the amenities you're creating for us to use.
- "A splash pad would be wonderful, and
- With a actual garden, with benches, paths, water fixtures. Something beautiful to walk to and sit around. "
- My daughter and I run a youth dog training/performance program associated with KCYF. We hope to utilize an emptied barn as a covered agility/training arena for our kids. We have a grant to pay for fencing.
- Na
- I think recreation park should be cleared of outdated buildings and an indoor/outdoor pool constructed.
- Development of the North Country National Scenic Trail. Remove existing road walk, develop trailhead(s), increase signage and awareness. Increase collaboration with the Association and National Park Service.
- Please have city staff open & lock the bathrooms at the Riverwalk.
- Overall, very pleased with the parks in Lowell. We make use of them regularly and our grand kids love them.
- "Please don't add to flooding by installing rubber in playgrounds. Rainwater needs to soak into the ground
- "
- Please consider expanding the farmer's market. It'd be nice to have another way to get groceries than Meijer
- The East side of town needs attention, a dog park, pickle ball courts, small picnic pavilions (like Saranac have)
- Please put a kayak dock or launch in Fallasburg
- Need an affordable gym option like planet fitness.
- "There is a park for everyone in this little town, and we love it!
- My household would really benefit from some skateboarding activities/lessons at the skate park.
- Although probably expensive, but a splash pad or mini water adventure plot would also be great for everybody!
- Keep up the awesome work!"

- A splash pad would be an incredible addition to the city of Lowell!
- Scout Park needs to remain a natural park. Our Scouts use this area regularly. It benefits them most if it remains as is. Scouting is important to our boys and a top reason we chose Lowell as our home.
- There are no water play areas. Lots of places in parks are overgrown full of bugs or dirty/ polluted. I would rather see fewer parks that are well maintained than lots of parks poorly maintained. Common areas need security cameras and regular police patrol with high rates of drug use and vandalism in the area.
- We need a pool in Lowell!
- Lowell needs a community indoor/outdoor pool
- Please include a citizen's group when making decisions about what to do with the fairgrounds.
- We really need a pool in this community.
- Would like to see more programming like fitness classes for adults, hiking, yoga in the park etc.
- Our area lacks a public pool.
- Hi! My husband and I recently move into Lowell; therefore, we haven't visited all the parks yet. We are excited to see the rest of the parks in the following weeks/months.
- Pool and splash pad pleeeeeeeeeeease
- Need to be better monitored.
- Stoney Lake boat launch needs deepens badly. Can barely get a row boat off the trailer.
- We love the playgrounds around Lowell; however, we need something that is accessible for our younger children in wheelchairs. There are so many ways to include them in play if we have the right equipment
- The city needs better connection to the biking trails in town. The city traffic downtown limits biking inside city limits, so I think the future outlook and accessing these trails is important.
- All this town has asked for is a community pool and yet there is nothing. Swimming is a much safer sport, yet the high school with all that ground space did not install. The YMCA moved to an area that could not support it. Give the people what they STILL want.
- I wish the dog leash ordinance was enforced more at the local parks. It is the reason I do not go to Scout Park and I have frequent issues with loose dogs at Recreation Park.
- Thanks for everything you do for Lowell & the community! *Pleeeeeeease* don't develop a community center at Creekside Park that would relocate ball fields, playgrounds, parking, etc. to be any closer to the Valley Vista subdivision property lines separated by the city fence... Please! Prettiest of pleases. BeGGiNg yOu.
- I'm hoping the city does the splash pad at Grand River Park
- I think using our natural spaces more effectively for outdoor/conservation opportunities and education would help the community a lot
- Lowell has some wonderful parks that really make the community a great place to live. The parks are well maintained for the most part.
- "We need to upgrade the little league fields as well as the football field.
- Let's make something our community can be proud of. "

- Family and athletic centered activities, maintenance
- Baseball field and availability is lacking
- Beyond sports, it would be nice to see programming focused on the environment that utilizes the space. Also, don't start sports programming before the restrooms are open or make sure there are more port o potties that are cleaned regularly.
- My boys play baseball and we need more fields / improved fields. Rec field lights need to be fixed. More basketball courts would be great too! Plenty for the little kids to do- not enough for young teens.
- "I believe that Lowell needs to provide more athletic facilities for youth sports of all kinds.
- Over the years city facilities in Lowell have been deteriorating badly. The city does nothing but Mower the grass. Local organizations that rent these facilities for athletic events can't afford to pay for upgrades on property there renting. The prices that these organizations pay should go towards upgrades ever year.
- This year along the city has lost 3 baseball softball fields.
- "
- Our family is NOT interested in any development at Scout Park!!!
- There is an awesome sliding hill at Scout Park. It could use some brush clearing before the upcoming season.
- Sports is covered through the schools. That should be a low priority.
- Do NOT allow development or any change to Scout Park!! There are plenty of other areas where the city can grow the tax base.
- We certainly do not need to add to the skate park-it is not used enough as it is, and adding a million-dollar budget to it to bring in out of town skaters will not help add to the fiscal town dollars.
- Great place to be active outdoors, but with city population increasing noticeably. We definitely need more natural areas for hiking and backpacking. Also, would love to see more acres in the Lowell state recreation land for hunting and camping.
- Scout Park is the most beautiful, would love to see enhancements here
- Although I do not currently live in Lowell, I grew up loving the parks, particularly Creekside Park, the Scout Park, and Fallasburg Park. When we come to visit my family, we continue to use these parks, and now my son is able to enjoy them as well. I look forward to seeing these parks preserved and maintained even as new parks are built into the community. Thank you!
- I would like to see the Boy Scout Park as a designated natural area that includes all the property the city owns. I would not like to see any of the property sold for housing once the old house is torn down. It should be added to the park as intended when the rest of the property was added to the park system as a natural area. Maybe add some simple kayak landing facility there.
- The red pine section of the NCT by the Scout Cabin is my favorite part of the NCT in Lowell. It is easily accessible and level for people with disabilities. I would hate to see this section be removed or developed.
- I really appreciate the connection to the NCT through the city and on north off Washington St.

- DAILY i use the North Country Trail system near the Scout Park. I would be devastated if this area were to be developed. It would truly be a crime against nature. I've spoken to so many people who use that trail that have said it's one of the most beautiful sections in Michigan. It would be a shame to lose it. I also frequently use the kayak ramp in the river downtown. I think it should be left in the water well into the fall as I know for one, I kayak right up until the snow flies. It should also be installed earlier than it normally is. I enjoy my kayak as soon as the weather is mild and it's dangerous to try to launch a kayak from the boat launch as it gets extremely slippery to walk on.
- A splash pad is what we are MOST interested in and feel our cities toddlers could benefit immediately. It would be a great addition to our parks as the young children are underrepresented. Thank you!
- Love my city, love seeing any improvements.
- Preserve scout park
- Scout Park needs to stay available to the scout Troup and the community.
- Keep Scout Park available for use by the scouts and all residents of the area. Adding a disc golf course in town would be great!
- Please turn the people and dog drinking fountains back on.
- Your partnership with the Scouts is unique and probably a significant factor in the continued success of Troop 102 and even Cub Scouting in the area. Please ensure that property remains available for scouting use for future generations. The values being taught to the boys and girls of the area through the scouting program are essential for success in life, and they simply aren't being taught in school. Help keep scouting strong in Lowell.
- I love all of these potential future ideas. But part of being in nature is having the ability to explore areas that aren't just a paved trail or facility. Scout Park is a perfect example. It has some trails, but also has open areas, small wooded areas, a river and more. Developing this area more would be a mistake and a disservice to the Scouts who already do so much for our community.
- As someone that has seen the benefit of the boy scout program in my son and his friends (kids that are active and outdoorsy but are not interested in most sports) I feel very strongly that the scout cabin needs to be a resource that is preserved. The activities enjoyed by the scouts provide a very unique and important asset for the community. Development of other parks and recreation activities are also important, but not at the cost of diminishing the value of the natural atmosphere that the scout cabin provides for those young men. Adding a trailhead with restroom or a kayak/canoe access point or some north country trail maps/signage would be a nice addition to that location but please don't develop that property with anything that takes away from the natural environment to enjoy campouts and outdoor activities in a quiet and safe environment.
- The Scouts have worked very hard to maintain their area. The cabin and surrounding property are heavily used by the scouts for training and need to remain as it is. This troop has produced the highest number of Eagle Scouts and that is thanks to the facilities they have.
- My kids go to Scout Park. Amazing opportunity for both boys and girls.

- I would love more than anything for our city to get some sort of fountain or splash pad for kids to play in. My child is not a fan of the beach but loves water and being able to play with other kids.
- Fix the Sidewalks! They are Urban Trails for everyone but often more by children and seniors.
- The current skatepark is SEVERELY lacking. Only 3 main obstacles: the quarter pipe is too narrow; the middle section does not have adequate run up; the ramp is too narrow and the metal at bottom is not flush with the ground. Additionally, the ENTIRE skatepark's foundation is slanted northeast. We need to invest in this park and consult with ACTUAL skateboarders.
- Would love to have community gardens, splash pads for kids.
- Please leave scout park alone. The city provides no support to this area other than the city. Scouts maintain the lawn and fields, pick up the trash left behind. Deal with vandalism to the property and building. People think because the sign is there this is a public hang out spot. Please preserve this area for what it is and what it was intended for.
- We appreciate all the good work that's done to keep our city clean and the parks maintained. There are a lot of trees and bushes that encroach on the city sidewalks and it would be nice if they could be maintained also. Either tell the owners to do it or charge them and do it yourself. Same for the wintertime - we want our city to be walkable not only in the summer. Some people never shovel and we do ours regularly to make it safe for the kids walking to school and for us to enjoy walking on. The attitude that someone needs to call and complain before enforcement happens is not what the city's job is. Please enforce the ordinances on the books.
- Development of any kind near or around Scout Park would degrade the character of the (over) 27 acres the scouts and others have enjoyed for so many years. It is inconceivable that certain members of city government would even be considering "limited" development. More light needs to be shed on the history of this property.
- Creating and maintaining outdoor spaces is important. Keeping these spaces clean and litter free is important too. provide drinking fountains and refilling water bottle stations to reduce waste and reduce litter. Educate and encourage visitors to be a part of a litter free community and beautification at existing parks and any new park. Clean up after yourself but also clean up after others. Pick up one item of litter a day. Have recycling bins composting bins and trash bin
- We need a splash pad
- Use dispensary money to update Creekside to composite wood play structure and add basketball hoops. Also, would love to see a multi-sport complex added to Lowell, making our city a destination spot for traveling athletic tournaments
- Get a pool, please
- Please, no swimming pool.
- Trails linking to regional system would be amazing!
- The parks need updated trash cans and benches they look rough. After traveling with the sports teams, I think Lowell can do better making the sport areas-soccer baseball etc. better.

- We have wonderful park resources and potential with existing parks. We need to ensure adequate use as well as protection of the resources currently owned by the city.
- Updates and new things should only be done if we have the budget
- A pool would be fantastic! Everyone would become a member and it would raise our home's value. Plus, teenagers need a place to hang out in Lowell. We need a community center with a coffee/ pizza/ soda shop. Or putt putt! Tear down that gross Rollaway building. Put something cool there. Thanks!
- Very important to have restrooms available

KEY FINDINGS:

- Nearly half of the survey respondents reported living in the City of Lowell. Participants that reported not living within the City were largely from Lowell Township and Vergennes Township.
- A majority of respondents were between 25 to 44 years old.
- A majority of the participants responded that their whole family are active users of the parks in the City. Only a small percent of people responded that they do not use any of the parks.
- About 98.7% of the participants believed that parks, trails, open space, and natural areas are either important or very important to their household's quality of life.
- The top three benefits of parks and recreation that were most important to the participants were reported to be:
 - Providing opportunities to enjoy nature and outdoors
 - Protecting the natural environment and wildlife
 - Improving health and wellness
- The participants listed maintaining existing parks, preserving natural areas, and increasing accessibility for all abilities as the most important in improving the park and recreation facilities in the city of Lowell.
- The top three most visited parks were: Riverwalk Park/Showboat Area, Creekside Park, and Natural Areas within the city. The top three least visited park were: McMahon Park, Scout Park, and Richards Park.
- A majority of the respondents believed that they will benefit from an addition of parks, trails, and/or recreation facilities.
- The top three reasons as to why the participants did not currently use the park in the city were: they use the parks in other townships and cities, lack of interesting facilities, and poorly maintained amenities. Other reasons that the participants listed were the lack of restrooms, lack of/outdated play equipment, and mobility issues.
- Rubber mat or rubber mulch were the prime choices of ground covering for structures/playgrounds. Other responses also listed maintained natural grass as another option. Respondents also noted that rubber mat allows for children with disabilities to access the playground.
- People with disabilities and adolescents (10-18) were the top two groups that the participants felt were underserved by the current recreation services and amenities.
- A little more than half of the participants reported that they feel that the community is inadequately served by area programming (camps, sports leagues, outdoor education). The participants also listed that their household is somewhat adequately or adequately by the non-motorized infrastructure (sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.)
- More than 50% of the participants reported having interest in the development of water trails/blue ways and related facilities along the Flat River and/or Grand River in the City.
- Paved, multi-use paths for biking, walking, rolling, strollers (asphalt) were listed as the top priority if more trails are planned to be developed in the City followed by trails that connect to a regional trail system.

- Walking trails, canoe/kayak facilities, children's play equipment, trail/park maps, and bike trails were listed as the top five existing parks/facilities and services that the participants found most interesting.
- Walking trails, outdoor water recreation (splash pad, fountains), canoe/kayak facilities, trailhead with restroom facilities, and natural spaces were listed as the top five parks and recreation amenities, facilities, and services that the participants would like to see in the future. Participants also specifically mentioned a pool, hunting/fishing locations, campground as other amenities that could potentially be added to the City's parks and recreation areas.

City of Lowell Parks and Recreation Plan Focus Group Summary September 2022

Summary

Three focus groups were held in September 2022 to provide further community input and refined conversations regarding the City of Lowell Parks and Recreation Plan. The following is a summary of these three, individual meetings.

Focus Groups

1. Sports
2. Passive Recreation
3. Creating Accessible Recreation Spaces and Programs

Sports Focus Group Summary

Attendees: Tyson Hoffman, YMCA Soccer; Mike Minier, Lowell Little League; Keith Butler, Lowell Lacrosse; Jeff Phillips, DPW Supervisor; Dan Cznarecki, DPW Tanya DeOliveira, Williams & Works

- There are many activities for groups that use the parks. There will be need for **more facilities** in the near future due to growth and popular programs. (Good problem to have)
- **Average number of participants** for kid sport leagues:
 - YMCA Soccer 150 (8-10 kids per team)
 - Lacrosse 160 (K-8th grade)
 - Football 450
 - Little League BB 380
- **Strengths** regarding City's Parks and Recreation
 - Have adequate number of parks to meet resident's needs
 - **City staff** are willing to **work with residents** to address concerns, needs
- **Weakness** regarding City's Parks and Recreation
 - **Outdated facilities**
 - Other local communities have better facilities, especially for sports (Pinery Park)
 - Some locations lack parking
 - Bathrooms outdated
 - Concession at Burch Field needs work - would be used if updated
- **YMCA** would like to have **more sports programs for adults** - more as a social activity, and less focused on competition.
- Communication could be improved between City staff & Sports Directors
- City staff want to hear what needs to be improved, maintenance needs so that these can be addressed - in short term or long term. (Develop a priority list?)

- Desire for **indoor facility/community center**
 - Running
 - Gym space for sports camps
 - Fields for indoor play
 - Pool
- Need **better marketing** of recreation activities, park locations
- One word/statement to describe City of Lowell Parks and Recreation:
 - "They [The City] want to improve."
 - "Lowell does really well for a city of its size."
 - "Growing"

Passive Recreation Focus Group Summary

Attendees: Wendie Preiss (WP), Flat River Outreach Ministries; Kurt Lardie (KL), Englehardt Library; Theresa Mundt (TM), Rotary & Parks Board; Bruce Matthews (BM), Resident; Bill Schreur (BS), River Edge B&B; Brenda Schreur (BrS), River Edge B&B; Amanda Rogers (AR), LARA & Rogers Neighborhood Reality; Dan Cznarecki, DPW Tanya DeOliveira, Williams & Works

- City **parks have a diversity of programs and spaces** - more than just playgrounds and sports
- Kent County Needs Assessment showed that residents appreciate the trails.
- Each park:
 - Has its own opportunities
 - Many have water features/access
 - Spread out across community
- **Strengths** regarding City's Parks and Recreation
 - Parks should be protected for what they have and offer
 - Scout Park is unique - adjacent to Flat River, adjacent to State Game area
 - Diversity of parks
 - Appreciation of trails
- **Weakness** regarding City's Parks and Recreation
 - **Better marketing** to let community know park amenities. Mapping of each park with general information, distance to other parks, available amenities
 - **Better signage**
 - **Transportation** to parks
 - Need water stations for runners
 - Maintenance ("adopt-a-park" program)
 - Lack of park coordinator, City grant writer

- Could develop **relationship with a university** for **Parks and Recreation assistance** with research, grants, interns, etc.
- Events could be held to fund raise for City's Parks and Recreation program
- One word to describe City of Lowell Parks and Recreation:
 - "Equitable"
 - "Life-sustaining"
 - "Under-marketed"

Creating Accessible Recreation Spaces and Programs Focus Group Summary

Attendees: Shannon Hanley (SH); Tara Bieneman (TB), Senior Center & Schneider Manor; Theresa Mundt (TM), Roitery & Park Board; Casey Butler (CB), Parks Board; Dan Cznarecki, DPW Tanya DeOliveira, Williams & Works

- Great number of park space for community the size of the City of Lowell
- **Trails are popular** among residents.
- **Strengths** regarding City's Parks and Recreation
 - **Seniors enjoy** Riverwalk, outdoor concerts, Christmas Parade, walking along and to shops and restaurants downtown, pickleball (would like more)
- **Weakness** regarding City's Parks and Recreation
 - **Seniors lack space for activities.**
 - Need a Senior Center – looking for a new location
 - Larger facility with more rooms and more spaces for activities is needed
 - Can't reserve Riverwalk until beginning of each calendar year – makes event planning tough.
 - Some parks are not known by residents. **Better marketing is needed**, along with more information on parks' amenities.
 - Desire for pavement to be taken care of, no tripping hazards, and wheelchair accessibility
- Prefer **variety of accessible amenities across park system** instead of one accessible park.
 - Include sensory and developmental accessible amenities – not just based on mobility.
 - Cool to see an accessible single park
 - Accessible pads for wheelchair use
 - Toys on the playground with braille signage, sensory development elements, etc.
 - Maybe difficult to serve everyone with just one park
 - Many amenities across park system may be easier to achieve.

- Desire to for **more recreation** near and on **river area**.
 - Better space/better programing,
 - Canoe rental
 - Bike rental
- Planting no-mow/low-mow plants/grass to reduce mowing
- Ground cover preferred was rubberized materials.
- One word to describe City of Lowell Parks and Recreation
 - "Undiscovered"
 - "Opportunity"
 - **"Accessible but could be enhanced"**