

Chapter 4

Description of the Public Input Process

Heart of the Lakes Area Recreation Plan

A variety of methods were employed to incorporate public input into the development of this recreation plan:

Heart of the Lakes Recreation Commission Brochure

A brochure about the Heart of the Lakes Recreation Commission was sent to Area households during the summer of 2006 via their local unit of government; often in conjunction with tax bills (please see Appendix E). It provided information about the Heart of the Lakes Area, its residents, and the Commission. The brochure also included suggestions for becoming involved in the planning process:

1. Providing comments to your local government
2. Filling out the recreation survey
3. Attending the open house
4. Reading and commenting on the Plan during its one-month review period

Recreation Survey

A short 3-question survey was included in the Heart of the Lakes Recreation Commission Brochure which solicited information on the types of recreational facilities Area residents want as well as the need for recreation. A total of 76 surveys were returned, almost exclusively from Napoleon Township.

The first question concerned the amount of recreational facilities and opportunities available to Area residents. Approximately 59% of respondents (n=75) thought that they were not adequate an approximately 37% considered them to be adequate. Approximately 4% of respondents had no opinion.

	Yes	No	N/A
1. Do you believe that adequate recreational opportunities and facilities are provided to Area residents?	28	44	3

The second question concerned the number of times respondents visited an Area park or recreation facility within the last year. Approximately 45% of respondents (n=64) visited between 1 and 10 times over the year although approximately 36% made no visits. Approximately 16% visited a parks and/or facilities between 11 and 20 times and 3% made more than 20 visits.

	None	1-10	11-20	>20
2. How many times have you visited an Area park or recreation facility in the past 12 months?	23	29	10	2

The third question asked respondents to identify the recreational facilities and services they would like to see provided in the Area; a total of 17 facilities were suggested (see above). The top 5 facilities and/or services picked by respondents (n=237) were:

1. Multiuse Trails — 19%
2. Swimming — 11%
3. Ice Skating — 10%
4. Water Parks — 9%
5. Tennis — 6%
 Sledding — 6%
 Rock Climbing Wall — 6%

3. **What types of recreation facilities and services would you like to see provided to Area residents?**

Multiuse Trails	43	Rock Climbing Wall	11	Soccer	8
Field Hockey	3	Skateboard Park	7	Frisbee Courses	4
Basketball/Softball	14	Football	7	Obstacle Courses	6
Tennis	14	Ice Skating	24	Sledding	14
Soccer	8	Swimming	25	Water Park	21
Tetherball	1	Skiing	4	Other	17
				Total	231

The third question also provided an ‘other’ category. The facilities and services (n=17) included under this listing were grouped into the following categories:

1. Other Trails
2. Other Aquatic Facilities and Services
3. Other Miscellaneous Facilities and Services

Other Trails	9
ATV (with camping)/off road toys	5
Horseback riding	1
Walking trail from schools to library	1
Shoulders on roads do make walking and biking safer	1
Walking/jogging track with play area	1
Other Aquatic Facilities and Services	2
Remove water fowl and feces from swimming area at Wolf Lake	1
Paddle boats	1
Other Miscellaneous Facilities and Services	6
All would be best	2
Baseball	1
An amusement park would be awesome	1
Summer teen (activity) recreation program	1
Anything would be more than what the Township provides (schools do ball sports)	1
Total Other	17

Those facilities can also be placed in and ranked by the following groupings:

1. Aquatic Facilities and Services — swimming, ice skating, water parks, and other aquatic facilities/services — 31%
2. Trails — multiuse trails, obstacle courses, and other trails — 25%
3. Sports Facilities — basketball/softball, tennis, volleyball, soccer, field hockey, and football — 23%
4. Winter Activities — skiing and sledding) — 8%
5. Rock Climbing Walls — 5%
6. Skateboard Parks — 3%
7. Frisbee Courses — 2%
8. Other Facilities — 3%

Respondents (n=6) also used the 'other' category to provide the following groupings of comments and concerns:

1. No Improvements are Needed

2. Financial Concerns

No improvements are Needed	4
None; no others (our parks are enough); none (this is not a township responsibility)	3
Don't do anything that would make our lakes more crowded than they all ready are (!!!) and increases traffic on our dirt roads which are all ready a mess!!	1
Financial Concerns	2
We only want recreation if our taxes don't go up. (I pay 30% more tax than city residents and my sewer bill is higher than when I lived in the city and paid water and sewer)	1
What we have is fine (financial restraint)	1
Total Comments and Concerns	6

Public Meeting (Open House)

An open house for Area residents was held on Saturday, September 16, 2006 by the Commission at the Napoleon Township Hall between 8:00 am and 12:00 noon. A press release was sent to area media outlets prior to the event in addition to the brochure sent out over the summer (please see Appendix E). The Columbia School District also sent fliers home with some of its students. Despite these attempts the open house was not well attended. The few who attended were interested in the maps and tables which provided them with information about the recreational facilities available in the Heart of the Lakes Area.

One Month Review Period

The recreation plan was submitted for public comment for a one month period beginning on **December 5, 2006** and ending on **January 8, 2007**. The plan was available for review in the offices for the Townships of Norvell, Napoleon, and Columbia, the Village of Brooklyn, and the Columbia School District, as well as the Brooklyn and Napoleon Branches of the Jackson District Library. The recreation plan was also available for review online at: www.villageofbrooklyn.org (Village of Brooklyn), www.twp.columbia.mi.us/ (Columbia Township), www.napoleontownship.us/ (Napoleon Township), and <http://scnc.csd.k12.mi.us/> (Columbia School District).

The one-month review period was publicized in the Heart of the Lakes Recreation Commission brochure which was sent to Area households during the summer of 2006 via their local unit of government; often in conjunction with tax bills (please see Appendix E). A press release was also sent to the local media (please see Appendix E).

Commission Meetings

All meetings of the Heart of the Lakes Recreation Commission are open to the public. The meetings are also scheduled for Saturday mornings in an effort to make them more convenient to the general public as well as the members of the Recreation Commission.

Public Hearing

A public hearing on the recreation plan was held on *Thursday, January 11, 2007* at 7:00 pm in the Napoleon Township Hall, during a meeting of the Heart of the Lakes Recreation Commission. The meeting took place prior to the vote on the resolution recommending adoption of the recreation plan by the township boards, village council, and school board. Legal notices were published in the Jackson Citizen Patriot, the daily countywide paper and the Brooklyn Exponent, a weekly publication distributed in the Area (please see Appendix E). The public hearing was also announced in a press release sent to local media and the brochure sent out over the summer (please see Appendix E). The following comments were received during the meeting:

- ✘ Install interpretive signage along the trails
- ✘ Handicap accessible recreation facilities are needed.

Both of those comments are consistent with the intent of the Heart of the Lakes Recreation Plan.

Other Planning Efforts

Comprehensive and other recent planning efforts in each of the member units of local government often included a recreation component:¹

Jackson Community Comprehensive Plan

“The purpose of [the Jackson Community Comprehensive Plan] is to establish policies to guide the future growth and development of the Jackson Community. These policies, established at the community-wide level, are intended to assist local units of government, including the County’s villages, townships, and the City of Jackson as they develop, amend, and implement their community plans, and zoning ordinances.” A total of 16 goals and their associated policies and actions were developed. Several of those goals had a recreation component (please see Appendix B for a full listing of the policies and actions associated with the goals):

¹ Each of these planning efforts included a public involvement component.

- × Create a Walkable Community
- × Historic Preservation
- × Culture
- × Preservation of Open Space

Jackson County Regional Trailway Study 2002

The Jackson County Trailway Committee (JCRTC) was initiated by residents of Jackson County active in the development of Trailways. The process of developing the Trailway Vision Plan began with two public meetings. Both meetings provided information to the public and were intended to gain input to guide the vision plan. The Trailway Vision Plan is a map of Jackson County showing the potential trail routes. The following excerpt and map highlight the portion of the plan pertinent to the Heart of the Lakes Areas (please see Appendix D for a detailed summary of the entire Study):

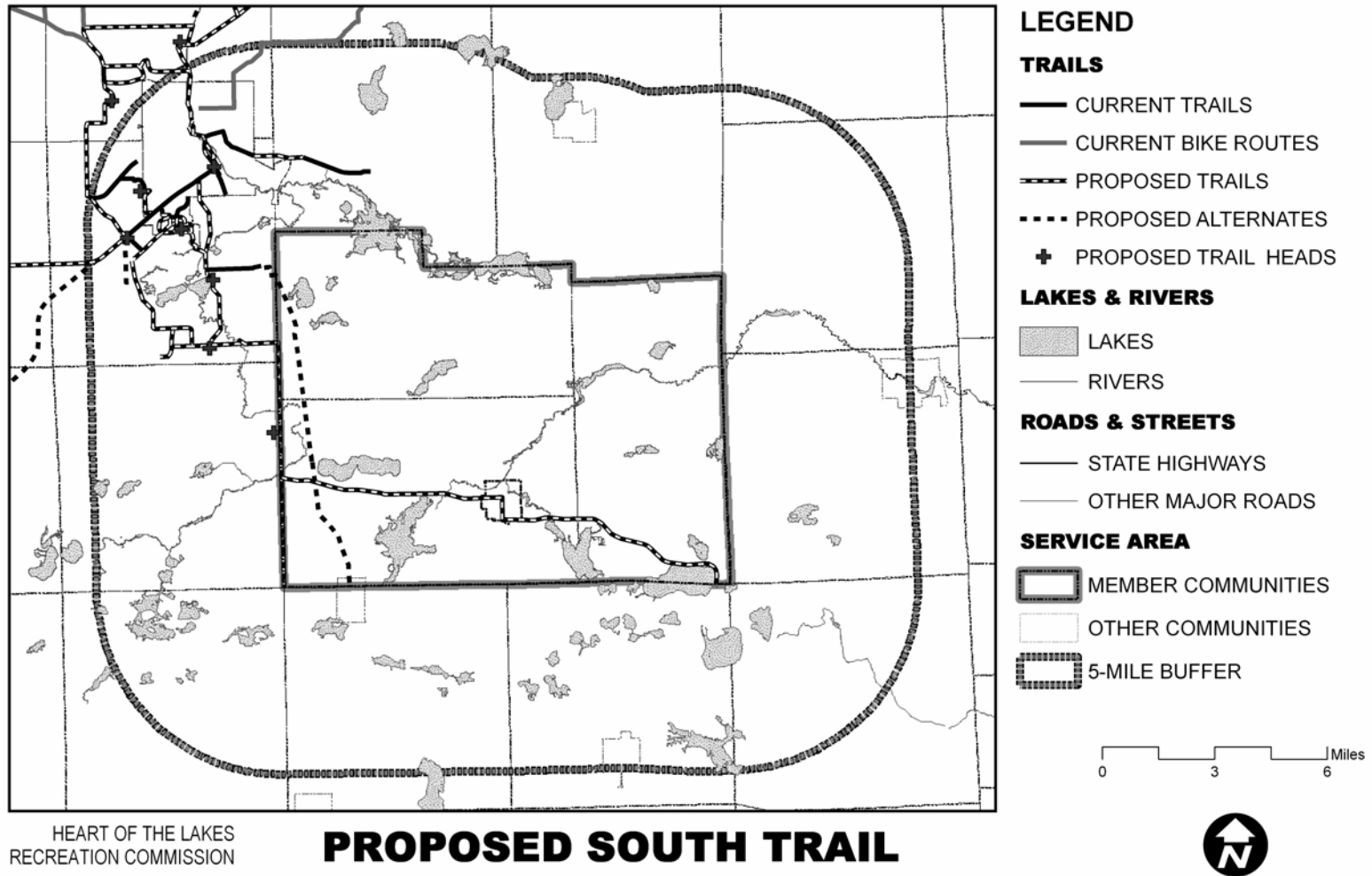
South Trail – 19.5 Miles

“The South Trail is proposed to run parallel to U.S. 127 within the right-of-way of the highway. The trail would be designed to use previously built but now abandoned highway bridges and road bed. These areas will accommodate a proposed trail. Austin Blair Roadside Park might be a possible trail head, with approval of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). . . . The main route has an arm that stretches from U.S. 127 through Brooklyn to the W.J. Hayes State Park [via Jefferson Road and M-124 (the existing Mark Harrison Trail)]. This trail has the potential of connecting to the River Raisin Greenway, currently under development, in Tecumseh, Michigan.”

Brooklyn Community Survey and Comprehensive Plan

Brooklyn conducted a community-wide survey during the winter of 2005 in order to solicit public input into the Comprehensive Plan then under development by the Village.² Several questions were asked specifically about recreation:

² The survey was sent out with the Village’s water bills and there was a 26.2% return rate. Please refer to Chapter 7 of the Village of Brooklyn Comprehensive Plan for further detail.



✘ ***Do you feel that adequate recreational opportunities and facilities are provided to Village residents?***

One half of the respondents (n=116) did not “feel that adequate recreation opportunities and facilities are provided to Village residents.” However, 41% thought that existing opportunities are adequate. Some of this opinion may be attributable to the older age of the typical resident.

✘ ***How many times have you visited a Village park or recreation facility in the past 12 months?***

Over 2/3 of respondents (n=124) “visited a Village park or recreation facility” 1 to 10 times “in the past 12 months.” However, 22% of respondents had not visited a Village park in the past year.

✘ ***What types of recreational facilities and services would you like to see provided to Village residents?***

The top five responses of the respondents (n=129) include the following: 1) hiking and biking trails (61.2%); 2) swimming (37.2%); 3) ice skating (35.7%); 4) skateboard park (34.1%); and 5) rollerblade/scooter trails (34.1%).

Sidewalk networks can also be considered to be recreation facilities. In recognition of this consideration the following question from the survey is also germane:

✘ ***The village should construct sidewalks to serve pedestrians on all Village streets even if it means increasing the millage rate.***

Almost 1/2 of respondents (n=127) thought the “Village should construct sidewalks even if it means increasing the millage rate.” However, over 1/4 of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The responses recorded above influenced the development of goals for Brooklyn. The following goals from the Village’s comprehensive plan also pertain to recreation:

✘ **Transportation, Objective 4**

Facilitate intergovernmental cooperation in the provision of a multimodal transportation system.

✘ **Action 13** – Develop a Non-motorized plan by the end of the 2nd quarter of fiscal year 2008- 2009. The Plan will:

- ✦ Upgrade the sidewalk system by making repairs, filling in gaps, providing new facilities, making it ADA accessible, and reviewing village policy).
- ✦ Explore the establishment of a regional trail network that augments the Village's sidewalk system (i.e., MIS trail and other possible trails).

✦ **Recreation, Objective 5**

Increase the opportunities for recreation in the Village and the surrounding area by participating in the Heart of the Lakes Recreation Commission.

- ✦ **Action 14** – Develop, amend, and update a 5-year recreation plan for the Village and the Irish Hills Area on a regular basis through participation in the Heart of the Lakes Recreation Commission
- ✦ **Action 15** – Provide a new park/playground on the west side of the Village. Develop an implementation strategy by the 3rd quarter of fiscal year 2008-2009.
- ✦ **Action 16** – Develop a master development plan for each recreation facility in the Village (i.e., Swain's Memorial, The Square, etc.) by the 4th quarter of fiscal year 2010-2011.

2005-2009 Recreation Plan: Jackson County, Michigan

The County of Jackson developed its recreation plan in 2005. The following objectives from that report are pertinent to the Heart of the Lakes Area:

- ✦ **Objective C (Goal 1):** Work with other units of local government to assist in the planning and development of trail links to the Falling Waters Trail, as identified in the Jackson County Regional Trailway Plan.
- ✦ **Objective D (Goal 3):** Develop new partnerships with the community and local schools to benefit county parks.