

The Huron Valley Trail bike and pedestrian path (Lakelands Trail State Park), runs from the South Lyon boundary to the northern boundary of the Township, following the path of the former Grand Trunk Western Railroad. The Huron Valley Trail offers the opportunity to connect the more densely populated area of the Township and the City of South Lyon with recreational facilities to the north.

Evaluation and Analysis

For planning and management purposes, recreation professionals classify park and recreation facilities based on the type of facility and expected usage. Frequently, a six-tier classification system is used, as follows:

I. Mini-Parks

Recreation Standards. Mini-parks are small, specialized parks, usually less than an acre in size, that serve the needs of residents in the surrounding neighborhood. A mini-park may serve a limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens.

Characteristics of Lyon Township. There are no public mini-parks in Lyon Township at this time. However, the need for mini-parks is addressed partially by subdivision, condominium, and apartment, common areas, and some elementary school facilities.

Comments/Recommendations. *Specific areas should be designated within community parks and school facilities to address the needs of specialized groups such as tots and seniors. A playground for tots is located in the James F. Atchison Memorial Park. A senior center is currently located at the South Lyon High School, and meeting facilities for seniors are located in the same building as the Township Library.*

II. Neighborhood Parks

Recreation Standards. Neighborhood parks are typically multi-purpose facilities that provide areas for intensive recreational activities, such as field games, court games, crafts, playgrounds, skating, picnicing, etc. Neighborhood parks are generally 15 acres or more in size and serve a population up to 5,000 residents located within a quarter- to half-mile radius from the neighborhood they serve.

Characteristics of Lyon Township. McHattie Park, located in the City of South Lyon, is classified as a neighborhood park. In addition, schools (Dolsen, Sayre, Bartlett, Kent Lake, Brummer, Salem and Hardy Elementary Schools, Millennium and Centennial Middle Schools) provide many recreation opportunities normally found in neighborhood parks.

An opportunity exists to develop a neighborhood park in the center of the Township, on land acquired by the Township upon approval of the Elkow Farms Planned Development. The

parkland is 60 acres in area, but approximately 2/3 of the land is occupied by wooded wetlands. The parkland was conveyed with certain conditions that are described in the following excerpt from the Planned Development Agreement:

“Proposed Park. The Zapf Property and a portion of the Smith Property, consisting of in excess of 60 acres, is proposed to be preserved for future park, open space recreation and/or natural area. Upon the Township’s execution of this Agreement, and as a condition to this Agreement taking affect, developer shall have recorded a conservation easement with respect to the Zapf Property and a portion of the Smith Property in the form attached hereto as Exhibit 6. To the extent an alternative conservation easement in a form mutually agreed upon by Developer, the Township and the Oakland Land Conservancy is worked out, the Developer agrees to substitute said alternative conservation easement for the one attached hereto as Exhibit 6 and to execute and record same as provided for herein. The conservation easement shall provide, among other things, that: the park area shall not be developed or improved for residential or other uses except as set forth in the easement, notwithstanding the residential zoning classification; if requested in the future by the Township Board, the park area shall be dedicated to the Township for use as a public park, recreation area or natural area, or any combination thereof; and that such conservation easement may not be amended, revised or removed without the written consent of the Township Board.

- a. **Farming.** A portion of the Zapf Property is currently being farmed. The current farming operations may continue until the Property is transferred to the Township or land conservancy as provided above and the Township or land conservancy requests that the farming operations be terminated. If the land is still being farmed, Developer shall be given at least six (6) months prior written notice of the request for transfer of the Zapf Property. Hitech shall be responsible for acceptable restoration of the agricultural fields.
- b. **Oil Well.** There is currently one operating oil well on the Zapf Property, which operates pursuant to an oil and gas lease agreement (“Oil Lease”) originally recorded in Liber 8779, Page 369, Oakland County Register of Deeds, as thereafter modified and amended. The operation of the oil well is governed by the Oil Lease and other applicable law. Income from the oil well shall continue to be paid to Ruth Zapf for the remainder of her life or until she assigns or relinquishes that right. Thereafter, the oil well income shall belong to the owner of the Zapf Property, whether that be the Township, a land conservancy or homeowner’s association. This oil well is excluded from the Conservation Easement.”

Table 9-1

REGIONAL PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

	Kensington Metropark	Island Lake State Recreation Area	Huron Valley Trail	Lyon Oaks County Park	Maybury State Park
Acres	4,481	4,000	13 miles	1,041	944
Picnicking	x	x		x	x
Drinking Water	x	x		x	x
Toilets	x	x		x	x
Shelters	x	x		x	x
Play Areas	x	x		x	x
Tot Lot					
Swimming Beach	x	x			
Bathhouse-Food Services	x	x			
Boat Launch	x	x			
Boat or Canoe Rental	x	x			
Boat Launch	x	x			
Excursion Boat	x				
Canoeing	x	x			
Group Rental Facility				x	
Farm Learning Center	x				
Fishing	x	x			x
Golf (Regulation) or Driving Range	x			x	
Bike Trail	x	x	x		x
Hiking or Fitness Trail	x	x		x	x
Scenic Views	x			x	
Nature Trails	x	x		x	
Nature Center	x			x	
Interpretive Program	x			x	
X-Country Skiing	x	x			x
X-Country Ski Rental-Food	x				
Ice Skating	x				
Sledding	x				
Group Camp/Camping	x	x			
Hunting		x		x	
Snowmobiling		x			
Equestrian Trail	x				x
Shooting/Archery Range		x			
Riding Stable					x
Dog Park				x	
Disk Golf	x				
Mountain Biking		x			x

Sources: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Oakland County Parks, Huron-Clinton Metroparks

Table 9-2

COMMUNITY RECREATION FACILITIES INVENTORY

	Lyon Twp. ¹	South Lyon School District ²										City of S. Lyon ³		City of Novi ¹	Total		
	Lyon Township Community Park	School	South Lyon Community High School	South Lyon East High School	Millennium Middle School	Centennial Middle School	Bartlett Elementary	Hardy Elementary	Kent Lake Elementary	Salem Elem.	Brummer Elem.	Sayre Elem.	Dolsen Elem.	Mchattie Park		Volunteer Park	ITC Community Sports Park
Basketball Courts	1						1	1	1	1	1	1	1			2	10
Tennis Courts		8	8													2	18
Volleyball Courts																	0
Ball Fields	4	2	2			2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1		8	26	
Softball	0	3	2	2	1									2		10	
Multi-purpose field		5	2				1				1					9	
Football Fields		1	1	1							1					4	
Soccer Fields		1		3	1	3		2	1	1	3	1		2	6	24	
Golf Courses - 9 hole																0	
- 18 hole	6															6	
Driving Range																0	
Swimming Pool - Indoor		1	1													2	
- Outdoor																0	
Handball Courts																0	
Ice Rinks - Indoor																0	
- Outdoor																0	
Archery Range																0	
Running Track (1/4 mile)		1	1	1			1		1							5	
Playgrounds	1					2	1	1		1	1	1	1			9	
Field Hockey																0	
Disc Golf																0	
Picnic Areas	3												1			4	
Cross-Country Ski Trails																0	
Nature Trails									1							1	
Sledding Hills												1				1	
Tot Lots	1						1			1						3	
Metal Play Structures	2															2	
Swings	12														8	20	
Jungle Gyms	1														1	2	
Spring Riders	16															16	
Bike Paths	1														1	2	
Pavilions	3												1			4	
Shuffleboard													1			1	
Gymnasium		2		2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				13	

Sources: ¹Lyon Township Inventory, ²South Lyon Schools, ³City of South Lyon

Comments/Recommendations. *The NRPA recommends 1.0 to 2.0 acres of neighborhood park acreage per 1,000 residents. 2009 Population Estimate for Lyon Township is 13,907 residents. Based on this population estimate, between 12 and 14 acres of neighborhood parks are required. McHattie Park, measuring approximately 15 acres, surpasses this standard alone. However, comparison to national standards can be misleading. The geographic distribution of neighborhood parks (including elementary schools), is uneven with most of them located in the City of South Lyon with the exception of Dolsen Elementary School in New Hudson, Kent Lake Elementary School, and Hardy Elementary School. The northwest and southeast portions of the Township are under-served by neighborhood parks.*

III. Community Parks

Recreation Standards. Community parks typically contain a wide variety of recreation facilities to meet the diverse needs of residents from several neighborhoods. Community parks may include areas suited for intense recreational facilities, such as athletic complexes and swimming pools. These parks usually contain other facilities not commonly found in neighborhood parks such as nature areas, picnic pavilions, lighted ball fields, and concession facilities.

Characteristics of Lyon Township. The James F. Atchison Memorial Park, located atop and adjoining a former landfill overlooking I-96, is an example of a typical community park. It contains major sports facilities, a segment of the Huron Valley Trail, picnic facilities, tot lots and playgrounds, sports fields, and restrooms.

Comments/Recommendations. *The 140-acre James F. Atchison Memorial Park far exceeds the NRPA's standard acreage requirements (69.5) for community parks based on Lyon Township population. Community parks typically serve neighborhoods within a 1 to 2-mile radius. Even if the existing high school and middle school are included in the service boundary evaluation, the northeast and southeast portions of the Township are underserved. The ITC Community Sports Park in Novi, located adjacent to the southeast portion of the Township, does serve this area, as does the South Lyon East High School on Ten Mile. However, the ITC Sports Park does not provide passive recreational activities and access to the school facilities may be limited. Therefore, the southeastern section of the Township may be underserved. In summary, the Township is adequately served based on acreage standards, but there are geographic deficiencies, and some of the community parks lack critical elements that would make them full service parks.*

IV. Regional/Metropolitan Parks

Recreation Standards. Regional parks are typically located on sites with unique natural features which are particularly suited for outdoor recreation, such as viewing and studying nature, wildlife habitats, conservation, swimming, picnicking, hiking, fishing, boating, camping and trail use. Many also include active play areas.

Characteristics of Lyon Township. The Township is served by several regional parks located nearby, including: Island Lake State Recreation Area, Kensington Metropark, and Lyon Oaks County Park.

Comments/Recommendations. *Regional parks typically serve several communities within a one hour drive. There are an abundance of regional park facilities in proximity to residents of Lyon Township.*

V. Linear Parks

Recreation Standards. Linear parks are areas developed for one or more modes of recreational travel, such as hiking, biking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, canoeing and/or pleasure driving. Some linear parks include active play areas. Linear parks are often built along utility rights-of-way, abandoned railroad lines, bluff lines, vegetation patterns, and roads. The Huron Valley Trail, for example, was developed on a former GTW railroad right. Linear parks often link other parks or components of the recreation system, community facilities, commercial areas, and other focal points.

Characteristics of Lyon Township. The 13-mile Huron Valley Trail is the backbone of the linear park system in Lyon Township, providing non-motorized access to Island Lake Recreation Area, Kensington Metropark, Lyon Township Community Park, Lyon Oaks County Park, and other points of interest.

Comments/Recommendations. *Although the Township has sufficient acreage allocated to linear parks based on accepted standards, all of the parks are located in the north end of the Township or in South Lyon. The lack of park facilities in other portions of the Township can be addressed partially by improving non-motorized access on existing roads, pursuant to the Complete Streets legislation.*

VI. Private and Special Use Facilities

Recreation Standards. Special use recreation facilities are typically single-purpose recreation facilities, such as golf courses, nature centers, outdoor theaters, interpretative centers, or facilities for the preservation or maintenance of the natural or cultural environment.

Characteristics of Lyon Township. Several special use recreation facilities are located in or near Lyon Township including Witch's Hat Depot State Historic Site, six golf courses, a driving range, and one bowling establishment.

Comments/Recommendations. *Lyon Township is in the early stages of developing a recreation program, focusing primarily on facilities in the James F. Atchison Memorial Park. Recreation programming could be expanded in the future by forming public-private partnerships, such as with the golf courses, thereby providing residents with a greater variety of opportunities.*

As Table 9-3 illustrates, Lyon Township exceeds national park standards for most of the park categories. The proximity of recreation facilities is cited by many residents as one of the most attractive features of the community.

The one category in which the Township does not meet national standards is the provision of mini-parks. Although there are no municipal mini-parks, park and open space areas within residential developments, as well as school playgrounds, provide the same function as mini-parks. Proposed residential developments that do not have ready access to existing parks and recreation facilities should be encouraged to create their own park areas.

Tables 9-3 and 9-4 evaluate how the Township meets the need for specific recreation facilities. In most instances, the Township exceeds the recommended number of facilities for a community of its size.

With such an abundance of recreation facilities, one of the critical challenges for the Township will be the continual maintenance and upgrading of existing facilities.

The difficulties of this challenge can be mitigated by developing an Operations Plan for Parks and Recreation, which should include development goals, a maintenance program and annual budget. It should also contain periodic inventory of recreational equipment with an evaluation of the condition and need for replacement of the equipment.

Although the Township exceeds the recommended area standards for parkland, the distribution of the parks presents a problem of accessibility (see Map 17). It would be desirable to provide pathways for non-motorized travel between parks and residential areas to improve accessibility and to give residents another way to enjoy the Township's natural features.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives have been developed as a result of thorough analysis of the Township's physical and population characteristics and evaluation of existing recreation facilities, including municipal, school, and privately owned facilities. For the purposes of this analysis, the City of South Lyon and Lyon Township were considered as a single recreation service area, so facilities in the City were also inventoried and evaluated.