

PARK MANAGER'S REPORT, JUNE 18TH, 2019

PARK PLANNING

Gallup Universal Access Playground:

There has been ongoing maintenance and design adjustments to the Rotary Centennial Universal Access Playground at Gallup Park to modify the site design to better accommodate the use patterns and desire lines that have been created by the playground users. The City has been coordinating with the landscape architects who designed the playground to make sure the original design intent is preserved while accommodating the demands of this highly used playground. These include re-thinking plant bed locations, adjusting plant material, and looking for ways to improve circulation on site.

The Rotary Club of Ann Arbor is working with staff on sponsoring interpretive nature signage around the playground. Ann Arbor Parks, the Leslie Science & Nature Center, and Huron River Watershed Council have been coordinating on concepts for content.

Farmer's Market:

The Ann Arbor Public Market Advisory Commission (PMAC) approached Parks about studying options for constructing removable side walls on a section of the existing Farmers Market structure. The intent of this method is to provide winter protection by enclosing the sides for wind protection and exploring the possibility of radiant heating to improve comfort for both market vendors and customers. . Because of the existing market structure's age, little is known about the condition of the foundations or the structural design of the existing vendor canopies, so it is necessary to explore ways of securing sidewalls that are independent from the existing structure.

Kohler Architecture is currently under a 3-year professional services agreement with the Parks Department and has been hired to develop two design concepts and cost estimates for this project, which will allow the Parks department and PMAC to determine the functional and financial feasibility of this approach.

Veterans Park Flagpole Memorial:

The Ann Arbor branch of the American Legion approached the Parks Department about funding a flagpole near the park sign at Veterans Memorial Park by the intersection of Jackson and Maple roads. This project will also include a sidewalk path, small brick plaza, and additional plantings near the sign. The City is currently getting quotes for this work with the intention of installing it this summer.

Coordination with Washtenaw County Parks:

- Ann Arbor Parks has been coordinating with Washtenaw County Parks on their 5-year Recreation Master Plan goals and objectives.
- Ann Arbor Parks is providing input on an interpretive master plan for the Border-to-Border trail, funded by Washtenaw County Parks.
- Staff are reviewing a draft report on the feasibility study for the Barton to Bandemer pedestrian tunnel connection and the expansion of the Border-to-Border trail through Barton Nature Area.

Other Miscellaneous Work:

- Ann Arbor Parks met with Pickleball advocates to explore a pilot project using temporary tape to delineate pickleball courts within the existing tennis courts at Veterans Memorial Park.
- Ann Arbor Parks will be meeting with members from the Friends of the Ann Arbor Skatepark to develop a seating plan that can be implemented as gifts and memorials are donated to the parks.
- Hillary Hanzel, Park Planner, presented the Argo Site Improvements grant application to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund Board. The DNR selects only a handful of applications to present to the Board at this stage in the grant process.
- For updates on other capital projects presently underway, please refer to item 11-A, *Park Planning Capital Project Update*, under Communications in your monthly packet.

NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

- In April, NAP hosted 9 workdays, focusing stewardship efforts on controlling spring invasive species, such as Dame's Rocket, Garlic Mustard, and Bitter Cress. In May, NAP pulled nearly 7000 pounds of invasive species!
- NAP hosted 17 workdays with 439 volunteers in May, including 174 students from Community High School who pulled 2,540 pounds of invasive plants!
- NAP spread 15.5 pounds of native seed received as part of a National Wildlife Federation grant to help improve NAP's prairie and wetland habitats for pollinators.
- This spring NAP performed 121 controlled burns in 17 different nature areas, for a total of 103 acres burned.
- NAP's Breeding Bird Survey Kickoff was attended by 10 volunteers, 8 of whom were new to the program. There are over 30 total volunteers participating in the program this year. Several "Special Concern" bird species have been found in city parks as part of our Breeding Bird Survey. These include Prothonotary Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Red-shouldered Hawk.
- NAP's Turtle Steward Training was attended by 30 volunteers. 38 people are signed up to participate in the program this year, and 1/3 are returning volunteers.
- The red-backed salamander was discovered for the first time at Narrow Gauge Nature Area. Red-backs are common in eastern forests, but are missing from many of our parks, probably due to past logging.
- NAP found a red-bellied snake in Marshall Nature Area. This is the first time this species has been found in this park, and only the 3rd record we have of this species anywhere in the city.
- Garter snake hibernacula (overwintering refuges) were discovered at the Leslie Science and Nature Center and Sugarbush Park. NAP only knew of a very few possible hibernacula in our parks. In our climate, refuges where snakes can get safely below the frost line are a vital resource for their survival.
- At Island Park, a pair of Great Horned Owls fledged 2 owlets in April. Staff temporarily closed the wooden foot bridge near the nest to give owls space from crowding photographers.
- In March, Tina Stephens NAP's Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator, attended a training in Illinois on Prescribed Fire Implementation.

PARK OPERATIONS

Park Operations coordinated numerous recreation facility improvements, including:

- Cobblestone Farms ADA Restroom Construction.
- Softball/Baseball Field Renovations at Veteran's Memorial, West and Southeast Area Parks
- Installed new gutters at Eberbach Cultural Arts Building and the Farmers Market
- Installed new slide pump at Fuller Pool, and a reconditioned circulation pump for the main pool at Fuller.
- Coordinated repairs at the Ann Arbor Skate Park.
- Coordinated repairs to the Island Park Bridge.

Playground Safety:

The first round of playground safety inspections was completed. Parks has 81 playgrounds around the City that need to be inspected on a regular basis for safety and compliance. Scott Spooner, Park Deputy Manager - Maintenance, attended Certified Playground Safety Inspector training.

Tree Care:

Staff met with Davey Trees for a kick-off meeting on Parks Tree Care. Davey is under a standing contract with the Parks department to provide on-going tree care. Pruning will be conducted in order to remove deadwood from trees in the parks and promote healthy growth. The pruning is scheduled for this season and will happen at the following parks:

- Winewood Thaler
- Maryfield Wildwood
- Huron Highlands
- Windemere
- Scheffler
- Meadowbrook

Each park will be posted with signs alerting the park users that tree care will be happening a couple of weeks before crews will arrive.

Park Mowing:

Parks are scheduled to be mowed every 14 days, however the schedule can be greatly impacted by the weather. For the past few months, rainy conditions, coupled with occasionally warm, sunny days, have presented challenges for mowing. Additionally, some parks have low-lying areas that have been too rain-soaked to mow. Mowing equipment also has the potential to get stuck or be damaged if staff are not mindful of certain areas. When the weather does permit us to mow, staff work longer days and the weekends to catch up. Mowing takes place at over 100 locations with hundreds of acres to be covered. On a typical day 12 people are assigned to mowing.

Community Outreach:

Scott Spooner, Park Maintenance Manager, attended a second grade class at Angell School and talked about the park system, including how parks are maintained and how there is a system in place (A2Fixit.com) for people to communicate with the City when something needs attention. The class will go to Burns Park to look for improvements at the park as part of their Government Studies class. The ideas for improvements will then be shared with Scott. This is a great way to teach young people about municipal services.

Scott Spooner visited Saline Middle School and acted as a judge for a class assignment on National Parks.

RECREATION FACILITIES

- Since January 1, 2019 parks has hired 308 seasonal employees to support operations, with 139 employees added in the month of May and 90 added in April. All seasonal employees receive training that covers Department wide expectations along with facility specific operational information.
- The three City outdoor pools are popular end of the school year party destinations for local schools.
 - Ann Arbor Open – 25 kids
 - Dicken 5th grade – 52 kids
 - Eberwhite 4th and 5th grade – 160 kids
 - Bach 5th grade – 55 kids
 - Abbott 5th grade – 50 kids
 - Haisley 4th and 5th grade – 115 kids
 - Burns Park 4th grade – 96 kids
 - Mitchell 4th grade – 70 kids
 - Pattengill 3rd grade – 90 kids
 - Pattengill 4th grade – 100 kids
 - Allen 4th grade – 100 kids
- The City has updated its breastfeeding policy at the pools to better accommodate mothers and infants. Breastfeeding is now permitted in areas of the pool where mothers and infants would likely be, such as zero depth entry areas and shallower portions of the pool.
- Staff are implementing various measures to educate the public about PFAS. Signage for “do not eat the fish” and “avoid foam” are installed at multiple locations along the Huron River and at the Liveries. Copies of the signage are attached at the end of this report. Other recreational facilities will have information regarding PFAS scrolling on their TV monitors. The City of Ann Arbor is exploring the installation of hand-rinsing stations in close proximity to the City’s canoe liveries this summer. This will be in addition to hand-washing facilities available in public restrooms at the liveries. Campers at Gallup and Argo River Camps are mailed information regarding PFAS, similar to information shared with campers last year regarding ticks. More information regarding PFAS is available here: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/water-treatment/Pages/PFAS-Information.aspx>
- Cooler and wetter weather has been a challenge this spring and early summer. A few facts to consider:

- Average rainfall in April is typically 3 inches. This year we received 6.5 inches.
- Average June rainfall is typically 3.5 inches. Halfway through the month we've already had 3.6 inches of rain with more forecast to arrive. Total June rainfall in 2017 was 1.37 inches, in 2018 it was 3.2 inches.
- May of this year had one day when temperatures reached 80 degrees. Last year there were 14 days. June has had 2 days in the 80's so far. Last year we had 14 and the year before we had 18 days.

Canoe Liveries

- The Argo and Gallup River Camps filled quickly. Each week throughout the summer there are 20 6th-9th grade campers at Argo and 30 2nd-5th grade campers at Gallup.
- The Argo and Gallup Canoe Liveries opened for the season. Gallup is open every day 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Argo is open weekends only until Memorial Day weekend. Starting Memorial Day weekend both Argo and Gallup will be open 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day.
- River Kids, a preschool instructor-led program offered at the Gallup Park Livery, started in May and continues throughout the summer with programs offered 3x/week. Each week a caregiver and their child explores the river world by paddling a kayak, canoe or paddleboat. Discovering river critters with fishing, stories, art and play rounds out the fun.
- Recreational Kayak and Stand Up Paddle Boarding classes are held in June and July in the evenings. Participants learn basic paddling strokes, techniques and safety before heading out to explore Argo and Gallup Ponds.
- Night Paddles are held one evening a month for venturing out on Gallup Pond for a full moon paddle.

Veterans Memorial Park

- The rink season ended in May with a record number of total participants (over 1,100) in our instructional ice skating program.
- Participants in the adult hockey league were emailed a survey at the conclusion of their season so that staff can continue to improve this popular offering.
- New pool deck doors from lobby were installed and have been well received by the facility users.
- Shade structures, similar to the ones at Fuller, will be installed this season.

Farmer's Market

- This year marks the 100th birthday for the Farmer's Market! We will be partnering with the downtown library to host an exhibit in July and August. In the meantime, you can check out old photos and memories here: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/Parks-Recreation/parks-places/farmers-market/Pages/Market-History.aspx>
- Food Truck Rallies take place the first Wednesday of every month from 5 – 8pm, with 15 + trucks. After the Rallies end for the evening we are partnering with the Michigan Theater to offer an outdoor movie on a big blowup screen.
- Guest Chef Cooking Demos are the third Wednesday of every month from 11 am – 1 pm. Chefs from nearby restaurants offer cooking tips and samples for customers.

- Kids activities are offered the first Wednesday of every month from 10 am – 1 pm

GIVE 365

- GIVE gave a Parks Presentation to the American Association of University Women group in May.
- GIVE organized the 'Goats at Gallup' project which is utilizing goats to clear invasive vegetation. Ten goats are clearing and eating poison ivy and buckthorn on two of Gallup's islands between June 6th and June 27th. This pilot project is part of an ongoing effort to clear out overgrowth and invasive shrubbery as park staff work toward a long term maintenance plan. The program has been very well received and has attracted a fair amount of media coverage. To learn more you can attend a 'Goat Walk and Talk' on Wednesday, June 19th from 10am – noon or Monday, June 24th from 6-8. For more information: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/Parks-Recreation/GIVE365/Pages/Goats-at-Gallup.aspx>
- Adopt-a-Park has had a great kick-off to the season with six neighborhood park clean ups on Saturday, May 18th at Allmendinger Park, Burr Oak Park, Glacier Highlands Park, Greenbrier Park, Winewood Thaler Park, and Wurster Park. These park adopters and their neighbors came together to beautify their park and get it in tip-top shape for the summer. Projects included weeding, planting flowers, mulching trees, removing invasive vegetation, and more.
- GIVE coordinated volunteer support for A2 Blooms Day, LSNC Earth Day, and Huron River Day.
- In May, GIVE coordinated 17 volunteer events, reaching 302 volunteers that gave 740 hours of their time and planted over 2,200 plants and flowers.

Mack & Fuller Pools

- Mack Manta Rays neighborhood swim team took 3rd out of 12 teams in the SMSL championship for their best-ever showing.
- Last year, Fuller Pool Day Camp had a total of 564 campers. We increased our maximum amount of spaces from 590 to 655. Currently, there are 620 campers registered.
- Due to the increase in popularity of the Fuller Day Camp, six camp sheds have been installed at Fuller to help with group storage. Next time you are out there take a look at the 6 brightly colored sheds
- Dive-in Movies are back at Fuller this year:
 - July 20 – Little Mermaid
 - Aug 3 – The LEGO Movie 2 : The Second Part
 - Aug 17 – Jaws

Buhr Pool

- A new handicap step entrance for the pool was installed.
- A new water heater was installed.
- Last year, Buhr Pool Day Camp had a total of 433 campers. We increased our maximum amount of spaces from 440 to 550. Currently, there are 472 campers registered.

Senior Center

- The Senior Center has recently updated its lobby furniture.

- The Concerts in the Park series is back again this year. The Ann Arbor Senior Center hosts four concerts at Burns Park over the Summer. This year's lineup:
 - Gemini (Gemily) – Sunday, July 28, 3- 4:30 pm
 - Dan Hall – Sunday, August 4, 3 – 4:30 pm
 - Guy Louis – Sunday, August 11, 3 – 4:30 pm
 - Matt Watroba – Sunday, August 18, 3 – 4:30 pm

Cobblestone Farm

- Cobblestone Farm is usually booked 18 months in advance for weddings and events. Currently, there is an event booked for October 16, 2020 and a reservation has been set for Saturday November 14, 2020.
- During the month of June, City of Ann Arbor Park Shelters are booked a total of 162 times with an estimated 11,700 people in attendance.
- The Customer Service staff at Cobblestone are responsible for handling special events applications for events that take place in parks. Special events are defined by events larger than 75 people or are competitive in nature (runs, tournaments, etc.) From January 1st – June 30th, there have been 80 events that have occurred or are in process

Huron Hills and Leslie Park Golf Courses

- The golf courses are participating in a program called Monarchs in the Rough. Habitat loss, pesticides and intensifying climate events have caused monarch populations to decrease significantly over the past 20 years. In an effort to reverse the decline, Audubon International has teamed up to partner with North America's golf courses to establish monarch habitats in out-of-play areas. These habitats are vital to supporting the monarch's breeding and migration patterns.
- Leslie Park is now part of the Arthur Hills Golf Trail. Arthur Hills redesigned Leslie Park Golf Course in 1994 and is the architect of numerous fine golf courses across the State. Inclusion in the golf trail should draw new visitors to the course.
- On course improvements includes resodding the tee on number 7 at LPGC, and the bunker on number 9 is getting rebuilt.
- Golf partners with NAP on controlled burns. The 2013 Traver Creek Streambank Stabilization project planted many native species along Traver Creek and burns are a good way to keep put invasives. Video and still images of the burn is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7vIZwUaDzc&t=13s>
- The 9th annual Good Friday Golf Scramble on April 19th was cancelled due to weather and saturated conditions.

