



SECTION VII: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The City of Ann Arbor parks, recreation and open space system exists to serve the needs and desires of the residents of the City and the Ann Arbor community by providing a full spectrum of recreational opportunities, preserving the natural environment, and enhancing the visual quality of neighborhoods and the City as a whole. The PROS survey showed that nearly 90% of respondents felt that Ann Arbor's parks, recreation and open space system is extremely important to their quality of life. A primary goal of the City is to maintain or improve upon this percentage, as it reflects how well the parks mission statement is being met.

CORE VALUES & MISSION STATEMENT

In 2012, Parks and Recreation staff developed a set of core values reflecting the desire to provide high quality, inclusive and enjoyable recreational experiences for the entire community. These values inform operations and focus staff's energy on areas of importance while striving to achieve the parks mission statement: Together we enrich life by cultivating exceptional experiences.

- a. Stewardship: Responsibly manage and care for natural, cultural, and physical resources for current and future generations.
- b. Exceptional Customer Service: Interact with all people in a professional, friendly and respectful manner, while striving to exceed expectations.
- c. Innovative Improvements: Foster an environment that supports and encourages innovation and dynamic creative solutions.
- d. Integrity: Build trust and maintain accountability by doing the right thing.
- e. Community: Work collaboratively to include and engage the full diversity of our community.
- f. Excellent Parks and Spaces: Provide safe environments, beautiful spaces, and a welcoming atmosphere.
- g. Fun: Have fun!

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and Objectives for the Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation system reflect the values of staff and the public, and provide direction for priorities to meet the expectations of the Ann Arbor community.

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The Goals and Objectives were developed from a number of sources, including the Parks and Recreation Mission Statement and Core Values, the Sustainability Framework Plan, the City’s Organizational Strategic Plan, the Capital Improvement Plan rating criteria, and input received from the PROS survey and public comment from various meetings, surveys, task forces, and focus groups.

GOAL 1: Provide an Exceptional Park Experience

Objectives

- a. Ensure access for all by prioritizing accessibility improvements to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, while striving for Universal Accessibility.
- b. Improve accessibility through staff training and the development of programming.
- c. Continuously assess and improve maintenance of parks and facility amenities.
- d. Improve natural surface trails for multiple uses including hiking and mountain biking.
- e. Establish protocols to promptly address safety concerns, as well as inspect and monitor park assets for safety compliance.
- f. Preserve the unique historic and cultural amenities within the park system by allocating resources for maintenance and restoration, and exploring alternatives if rehabilitation is not financially feasible.
- g. Maintain the ecological integrity of natural areas within the parks for the benefit of park users, natural communities and wildlife.
- h. Invest in rehabilitating aging park infrastructure including bridges, access roads, parking, and restrooms.
- i. Coordinate park enhancements with capital improvement projects, such as adding new trees, seating, and other amenities.
- j. Develop and implement a cohesive signage and wayfinding plan for the park system.
- k. Invest in staff development and retention, including recruitment, training, and mentoring, as well as providing technology and tools to improve workflow.

GOAL 2: Ensure that the Park System is diverse, equitable, and inclusive

Objectives

- a. Collect and analyze data to ensure that access to parks, park facilities and amenities, and programming, is equitably distributed throughout the park system.
- b. Develop and implement Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training for park staff to create an inclusive culture and provide a welcoming experience for all park users.
- c. Increase diversity of park staff at all levels through targeted hiring, development, mentoring, and retention processes.
- d. Establish partnerships with historically underrepresented groups to foster engagement, improve communication, and develop targeted programming.
- e. Provide diverse cultural, recreational and educational programming for all that is both affordable and accessible.
- f. Diversify volunteer opportunities to increase inclusion and participation by diverse groups.

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GOAL 3: Ensure that the park system is comprehensive, distinctive, and innovative

Objectives

1. Increase park connectivity through strategic parkland acquisitions and easements, as well as by connecting existing parks and trails into the City's non-motorized transportation and public transit systems.
2. Identify needs and develop partnerships to support the creation of additional public open space in areas that are currently underserved or projected to have increased demand through residential development.
3. Provide and promote a variety of year-round recreation experiences that promote an active and healthy lifestyle throughout the seasons.
4. Support intergenerational opportunities in parks with additional seating, trail accessibility improvements, and programming.
5. Respond to changing recreation trends with innovative amenities and programming that provide new experiences and create regional destinations.
6. Support design that is distinctive and reflective of the community and its unique character and natural features.
7. Develop cohesive planning and visioning for the City's riverfront parks and community-wide parks.
8. Develop natural playground features that connect children to the natural world and encourage creativity and imagination.
9. Explore the feasibility and potential location for a splash pad or other water play feature.
10. Program and activate parks, especially downtown, through community partnerships.
11. Expand staffing capacity to support park system growth and goals.

GOAL 4: Ensure that the park system is financially sustainable

Objectives

1. Secure short-term, mid-term, and long-term park capital improvement funding to bridge the gap in the City's existing Parks Maintenance and Capital Improvement Millage.
2. Develop new revenue streams for renovating and improving park amenities, such as through philanthropy and sponsorships, as well as developing public-private partnerships and strengthening current partnerships.
3. Increase capacity to identify, secure, and administer grants.
4. Develop a comprehensive infrastructure asset management program and prioritization model for capital improvements that monitors conditions, identified preventative maintenance, and budgets for the replacement of existing assets.
5. Prioritize limited resources and staff capacity on maximizing community benefits.

GOAL 5: Foster Environmental Stewardship and meet the City's A2 Zero Sustainability Goals

Objectives

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- a. Develop volunteer opportunities to enhance appreciation and maintenance of natural, historic, and cultural resources.
 - a. Engage volunteers in the City's natural areas to assist with ecological restoration, environmental education and species inventory efforts.
 - b. Create opportunities for volunteers to assist with park beautification and maintenance.
 - c. Support volunteer efforts to assist the City with maintaining historic or cultural resources.
- b. Explore options for alternative lawn maintenance and turfgrass use, including consideration of alternative plant species and groundcovers, conversion of select turfgrass into native grass prairie or wildflower beds, and increasing un-mowed areas of turf.
- c. Work with City's Office of Sustainability and Innovation to meet the City's A2 Zero Carbon Neutrality Plan goals in the park system
 - a. Strive to incorporate renewable energy, such as solar infrastructure, at park facilities
 - b. Update fleet and equipment to electric/alternative fuel sources
 - c. Significantly improve energy efficiency when renovating and when possible in new construction
 - d. Support alternative transportation through non-motorized infrastructure and connections.
 - e. Encourage recycling at parks and facilities by providing recycling containers and minimizing use of disposable products.
 - f. Increase resiliency of park facilities.
 - g. Quantify carbon storage and/or sequestration capacities of both City parkland and Greenbelt lands
- d. Use best practices for stormwater management when renovating existing parks or building new structures or amenities.
- e. Promote the provision of local food by supporting the Ann Arbor Farmers Market, providing space for community gardens and edible plants, and offering economic incentives for lower income individuals to purchase produce at the market.
- f. Restore and steward park natural areas for ecological resilience and conduct species inventories to assess biodiversity.
 - a. Utilize Integrated Pest Management approaches in stewardship activities
 - b. Leverage prescribed fire as an ecological restoration and management tool
 - c. Coordinate volunteers to support species inventory efforts and collaborate with partner agencies that support species-specific inventory efforts
 - d. Maintain databases of all species-related inventory data to inform ecological restoration activities.
- g. Implement the International Dark Sky Association lighting principles where feasible, to minimize the ecological impact of lighting in parks and natural areas.