

**Community 5 Year Recreation Plan for  
The City of Charlotte, Eaton Township, and Carmel  
Township**

**Eaton County, Michigan**

Prepared by:  
**Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative**

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## Charlotte Community 5 Year Recreation Plan

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## Community Description

This recreation plan has been developed by the Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative (CARC), which is a partnership between the City of Charlotte, Eaton Township, and Carmel Township. The CARC includes two representatives from each entity as well as one at-large community representative who is a resident of one of the participating entities. The effort of the CARC is directed at meeting the recreational space and facilities needs for the greater Charlotte community and this plan represents one tangible example of the collaborative work done by the representatives of the CARC. The plan is intended to provide the Charlotte community with a comprehensive plan for addressing the identified recreational space and facility needs from 2011-2016.

### Community Locations

The community of Charlotte is the County Seat of Eaton County, and is located 18 miles South of Lansing, 35 miles North East of Battle Creek, and 32 miles North West of the City of Jackson. The City of Charlotte is located at exit 60 and 61 on I-69, 24 miles North of the I-94/I-69 interchange, and 15 miles South of the I-96/I-69 interchange. A regional Location Map of the Charlotte community is shown in Figure 1. Additional maps detailing the boundaries of both the City and Township are in Figures 2 and 3 respectively.

### Population Statistics

The population of the community includes approximately 15,293 persons. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 8,389 persons reside in the city of Charlotte, 4,278 reside in Eaton Township, and an additional 2626 reside in Carmel Township. *This is a population increase of 0.8% from the 1990 census.* Little growth within the City or Townships are expected, however, increases in population will occur within the townships at a higher rate than the city, as more undeveloped land is currently available for housing within the Townships. *Density within the city is much higher with 1,947 persons per square mile compared with 134 persons per square mile in the Township.* The Charlotte School District covers *85 square miles* encompassing 2/3 of Eaton County. The Charlotte Public School District currently *has 1,136 students* registered as attending with a School District population of approximately *15,000*.

## **Administrative Structure**

The Administrative Structure section defines the organizational structure for the Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative, City of Charlotte, Carmel and Eaton Townships. The Charlotte Public Schools is no longer associated with the current agreement, however, invitations have been extended to the administrative body for consideration. A description for each individual governing body is included.

### **Charlotte Area Recreational Cooperative**

In the spring of 2008 the governing bodies for City of Charlotte, the Township of Eaton, and the Township of Carmel each decided independently to not renew their contracts with the Charlotte Public Schools for the administration of community recreation programs. These decisions resulted in the dissolution of the Charlotte Recreation Council which, here to for, had been functioning as the recreation planning and guidance body for the greater Charlotte community.

In the fall of 2008, after the dissolution of the Charlotte Recreation Council, representatives from the City of Charlotte, the Township of Eaton, and the Township of Carmel agreed that there was a need to work collectively in support of recreational opportunities within the community. The consensus among the municipality representatives was that the greatest need within the community was the development and maintenance of recreational facilities. A decision was reached to form an entity primarily focused on the development and maintenance of facilities, fields, and spaces that enhance recreational and sport offerings. A working group was formed for the purpose of drafting an inter-local agreement, under the authority of the Urban Cooperation Act, Act 7 of the Public Acts of 1967, as amended; Act 156 of the Public Acts of 1917, as amended; and Act 35 of the Public Acts of 1951, as amended, that would establish the structure through which the three municipalities could work collectively to achieve the stated goal.

In February of 2010, a final draft of the inter-local agreement was presented to the governing bodies of each of three municipalities for their approval. The agreement called for the formation of the Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative (CARC). The purpose of the CARC is to facilitate and support varied recreational opportunities principally for the residents of the City of Charlotte, the Township of Eaton, and the Township of Carmel. Resources allocated and/or generated through the establishment of the CARC will be directed toward, but not limited to, the development and maintenance of facilities, fields, and spaces that enhance recreational and sport offerings. See Appendix A for a copy of the inter-local agreement establishing the CARC.

The CARC has the following powers, authority and obligations:

- Contract with any other governmental units, public agencies, or private persons or organizations as appropriate to carry out CARC functions or fulfill CARC obligations.
- Authorize user fees and accept funds, grants, voluntary work, or other assistance, to carry out CARC functions and obligations from any source, public or private, including, but not limited to, local governmental funding, user fees, state and federal grants, and private donations. Any application for grants or other public funding shall be communicated to the Parties.
- Conduct and carry out any program, activity or function which advances and directly relates to the purposes expressed in agreement forming the CARC.
- Expend funds for the acquisition of real property and for construction, operation, and maintenance of recreational equipment and facilities when the property is available for and used for recreation. Approve and authorize purchases and expenditures.
- Acquire and hold, by purchase, lease with or without option to purchase, grant, gift, devise, land contract, installment purchase contract, bequest, or other legal means, real and personal property inside or outside the territory of the Parties. The property may include franchises, easements, or rights of way on, under, or above any property.
- Provide for the maintenance of all of the real and personal property of the Cooperative

The CARC is guided by a governing board consisting of two representatives from each of the participating municipalities plus one at-large member who is a resident of one of the municipalities. There is currently no full or part-time staff employed by the CARC.

To ensure coordination between the CARC and the parks and recreation department within the participating entities, one of the representatives appointed by each of the entities is a member of that groups governing body. In the case of the City of Charlotte, which is the only one of the three participating entities that has a separate parks program, the second representative appointed by the City Council is a member of the City's Parks Committee.

Since the Charlotte Public Schools (CPS) currently possess a majority of the facilities available in the community for organized sports (i.e. baseball, softball, soccer, etc.) the CARC is collaborating with CPS through facility lease agreements in order to ensure the availability of facilities for youth sports programs within the community. These include Charlotte Junior Orioles (CJO) softball and basketball

programs as well as AYSO soccer programs.

The CARC is establishing working relationships with the private community organizations that are currently offering youth and adult recreation programs. Included among these are Hayes Green Beach Hospital, AYSO Soccer, Charlotte Junior Orioles (CJO), Charlotte Disc Golf Association (CDGA), and the Charlotte Tennis Association (CTA). Representatives from the organizations are regularly invited to attend CARC meetings and to provide input regarding program and facility needs within the community.

CJO (Charlotte Junior Oriole) Sports programs, currently offer a feeder program to the Charlotte Public Schools system that includes youth football, baseball, t-ball, and basketball programs . The school has also made available to both public and private groups the use of their facilities, for an hourly fee, such as athletic fields and buildings facilities to host games or recreational programs. Arrangements can be made through the office of the Charlotte Public Schools, Community Education. The following programs are offered:

- Adult High School completion
- Adult Enrichment – classes designed for Charlotte adults to pursue new hobbies and interests
- Student Enrichment – opportunities for Charlotte school children to pursue activities which are not a part of the regular curricula
- Community Recreation – several sports leagues and other activities are coordinated for recreational purposes
- Community Services – other programs and services for community enrichment

### **Carmel Township**

The 2010 U. S. Census of Carmel Township established a population of 2,855. The City of Charlotte lies on the easterly side of the township and has a population of 9,074.

Carmel Township is primarily a rural and agricultural community approximately 20 miles southwest of downtown Lansing. Potterville and Eaton Rapids are located approximately 10 miles from Carmel Township. The Township is zoned using the Eaton County Land Development Code with Eaton County administering and enforcing the zoning code. Residential uses are scattered throughout the township with most development along county roads and near the City of Charlotte. There are some commercial development properties primarily located near the City.

Water resources in Carmel Township are limited to drains, creeks, rivers, and several small ponds. The headwater of the Thornapple River is located in Carmel

Township and could be considered the most significant water resource in the township.

Transportation is primarily county roads in a north/south, east/west grid with a major highway I-69, and a major state highway M-79.

The 2010 census count of 2,855 residents reflects an increase of 8.7 percent from 2000-2010. This exceeded the estimates of The Tri-County Planning Commission which had forecast only a 1.4 percent increase for this same time period.

The median age of residents within Carmel Township is 38.5 years, with the largest number of residents, 742, being between the age of 45 and 64 years. The following table provides an overview of the complete age distribution of the population.

Table 1: Age Distribution of Carmel Township

Age Group	Number of Residents
Under 5	150
5-19	637
20-24	107
25-44	723
45-64	742
Over 65	267

The distribution of male and females within the populations was nearly equal in 2000 with just a slightly higher percentage of females. The racial distribution in 2000 was 97.7 percent of the residents identifying as Caucasian and less than one percent identifying as African American, Native American, or Asian respectively. Nearly two percent (1.8%) of the residents identified as being from races other than those previously identified.

The median family income in Carmel Township was \$53,229 in 2000.

### **City of Charlotte**

The City of Charlotte lies entirely within the boundaries of Eaton County, and functions as the “county seat”. The 2010 U. S. Census of the City of Charlotte established a population of 9,074 which is a 2.7 percent increase from 2000. Carmel Township lies to the southwest of the City of Charlotte, and Eaton Township lies to the east of the City of Charlotte.

The City of Charlotte is primarily a service-related community (with limited mixed industrial), but has employment centers in Lansing and other surrounding communities. The work force of the city is mostly blue collar with some

professional people, service industry, technicians and specialty workers.

Approximately 10% of the land in the city is used for agriculture and related uses. This includes being actively used for farm development. Forty percent is in residential use, including single family homes, rental units and manufactured home parks. Commercial and industrial use is 20%, 15% of the land area is for semi-public uses such as churches, cemetery, etc., 10% is in public parks, and 5% is in the I-69 right of way. The land in the City of Charlotte is mostly gently rolling to flat. There are some wooded areas of no significant size, and the Battle Creek River runs through the City in the southern area.

The City of Charlotte has its own zoning ordinance(s) in effect and also administers and enforces them (copies available upon request).

The City of Charlotte has several major state highways that intersect the area, the most significant of which is M-50. The I-69 corridor is adjacent to the City of Charlotte and has three interchanges. The Canadian National Railway bisects the city, and there is a municipal airport within the city limits. The city of Charlotte maintains its local and state roads utilizing several funding mechanisms including ACT 51 money and general funds.

In 2000, the median age of City of Charlotte residents was 34 years with the largest number of residents (2,367) being between the ages of 25 and 44 years. Table 3 provides an overview of the complete age distribution of the population.

**Table 2: Age Distribution for City of Charlotte**

Age Group	Number of Residents
Under 5	602
6-19	1,851
20-24	558
25-44	2,367
45-64	1,722
65 and over	1,186

The population of City of Charlotte in 2000 included slightly more females (4,287) than males (4,102). Ninety-six percent of the residents identified as Caucasian with less than one percent of residents identifying as African American, Hispanic, Native American, or Asian respectively.

The City of Charlotte has no significant water resources other than the Battle Creek River. It has a variety of fish and wildlife associated with it. There are no significant known environmental issues at this time.

The City of Charlotte adopted a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority program, and utilized the initial assessment grant monies awarded at the state and federal levels, to reclaim land that qualifies for said grants.

### **Eaton Township**

Eaton Township has a land area of 32.5 square miles. The 2010 U. S. Census of Eaton Township established a population of 4,073. The City of Charlotte lies on the westerly side of the township boundaries and has a population of 8,389.

Eaton Township is primarily an agricultural community with approximately 65% of the land used for agricultural and related uses. There is a Farm Bureau Elevator and a small number of commercial enterprises. The Township is zoned using the Eaton County Land Development Code with Eaton County administering and enforcing the zoning code. Many residents are employed in Lansing and other surrounding communities. The work force is a mix of blue and white collar with some professional people, technicians and specialty workers.

Eaton Township is located approximately 15 miles southwest of downtown Lansing. Potterville is located approximately 6 miles, and Eaton Rapids is located approximately 5 miles from Eaton Township. Residential uses are scattered throughout the township with most development along county roads and near the City of Charlotte. There are some commercial development properties primarily located near the City.

Eaton Township has no significant water resources other than the Battle Creek River and a couple of small man-made lakes. There are a few old gravel pits which have been allowed to fill with water, and all are on private property.

Transportation is primarily county roads in a north/south, east/west grid with a major highway I-69, and M-50 runs east and west in the northern half of the township. The Township is also served by the Eaton County road system with 23.7 miles of primary paved roads and numerous secondary roads.

In 2000, the median age of Eaton Township residents was 37.5 years with the largest number of residents (1,251) being between the ages of 25 and 44 years. Table 2 provides an overview of the complete age distribution of the population.

Table 3: Age distribution for Eaton Township

Age Group	Number of Residents
Under 5	289
5-17	874

18-24	276
25-44	1,251
45-64	1,167
65 and over	421

The population of Eaton Township in 2000 included slightly more females (2,161) than males (2,117). Ninety-seven percent of the residents identified as Caucasian with less than one percent of residents identifying as African American, Native American, Hispanic, Native American, or Asian respectively.

The median family income in 2000 was \$57,870.

### **Recreation Funding**

#### **Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative (CARC)**

Annual funding for the CARC is established by an allocation of funds from each of the participating entities in the amount equivalent to \$1.65 per resident, based on the most recent official population statistics for each party available from the United States Census Bureau, or 0.5 mill of the respective portion of tax revenue generated through the Inter-local Agreements established between and among the parties prior to establishment of the CARC, whichever is greater.

The CARC Board annually prepares a proposed budget that includes all sums necessary to carry on obligations, goals and initiatives. The proposed budget is submitted to the Clerk of each Party by January 2 of each year. The governing bodies of each entity review and either approve as presented, or as modified, the annual budget, no later than May 30 of each year, and approval of the budget by the entities must be unanimous.

The participating entities, individually or collectively, may, at any time, elect to allocate additional funds to the CARC. Funds for CARC may also be generated through user fees, grants and donations from any source, public or private, including, but not limited to, local governmental funding, individual users, state and federal grants, and private donations.

The annual budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year was \$30,386. Of this, 27% (\$8,250) was allocated to general operations of the CARC, 33% (\$10,000) was allocated to fund facility usage and improvements for the current year, and 40% was placed into a facility investment reserve fund intended to support long-term, large scale initiatives such as property/facility acquisition and development.

### **Carmel Township**

Carmel Township is governed by a five (5) member elected Township Board consisting of the offices of Supervisor (1), Clerk (1), Treasurer (1), and two (2) trustees. The residents of Carmel Township elect a Township Supervisor to implement the directives received from the Board and maintain the daily operations of the Township.

The Township does not currently own or maintain any recreation facilities, but does jointly support the Charlotte Area Recreational Cooperative, and has two (2) members on the CARC Board.

Items within the budget directly expended for recreation include \$5,000 toward the CARC agreement.

### **City of Charlotte**

The City of Charlotte is a city incorporated under state law, with a Council-Manager form of government with seven (7) elected commissioners, including a mayor whom is elected by common vote, as is allowed by the city charter.

The City Council appoints the City Manager to fulfill the position of Chief Administrator for the City.

In the City of Charlotte, the Council holds the sole authority for appropriating funds to support the CARC. Two representatives appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Council serve on the CARC board.

In addition to participating and funding the CARC, the City operates its own parks and recreation properties. The Departments of Public Works, under the directions of the City Manager, provides for the administration and maintenance of all City-owned parks and recreation properties. Security for the parks is provided by the Charlotte Police Department. Community volunteers provide additional recreational maintenance and programming.

The City of Charlotte maintains an annual parks and recreation budget, which includes Department of Public Works salaries attributable to parks, operating expenses, utilities, and support of the community programs for a total of \$107,700 for FY 2010-11.

### **Eaton Township**

Eaton Township is governed by a five (5) member elected Township Board

consisting of the offices of Supervisor (1), Clerk (1), Treasurer (1), and two (2) trustees. The residents of Eaton Township elect a Township Supervisor to implement the directives received from the Board and maintain the daily operations of the Township.

The Township does not currently own or maintain any recreation facilities, but does jointly support the Charlotte Area Recreational Cooperative, and has two (2) members on the CARC Board.

Items within the Township's budget directly expended for recreation include \$10,000 allocated for parks and recreation, a significant portion of which is directed to the CARC.

## **Wildlife, Fish and Water Resources**

The City of Charlotte, Carmel and Eaton Townships are on the dividing line between the Battle Creek River watershed and the Thornapple River flood plain.

### **Battle Creek River Watershed**

The Battle Creek River Watershed covers 196,750 acres (307 square miles in northern Calhoun, southeastern Barry, and southern Eaton Counties). Land use consists primarily of agriculture followed with forestland, wetland, and urban/rural/non-farm. The headwaters of the Battle Creek begin at the Duck Lake/Narrow Lake areas as the Battle Creek Drain. As it leaves Narrow Lake, it heads north through the City of Charlotte, southwest through the Village of Bellevue, and finally south towards the City of Battle Creek, where it empties into the Kalamazoo River and ultimately joins Lake Michigan. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality identified the Battle Creek River as one of the leading tributaries contributing sediment and phosphorus to the Kalamazoo River. Designated uses for the Battle Creek River are agricultural, warm water fishery, indigenous aquatic life and wildlife, industrial supply, recreation, and partial body contact recreation and total body contact recreation with regard to the aesthetic beauty in the watershed.

### **Wetlands**

Wetlands are an integral part of the entire watershed system. A wetland is defined as lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 1979). Wetlands have the ability to help control floods, filter run-off that may be carrying non-point sources of pollutants such as fertilizers, sediment, and pesticides, and provide valuable habitat for various wildlife and plant species. Classes of wetlands that still exist within the watershed

include aquatic bed, emergent, forested, open water/unknown bottom, scrub-shrub, unconsolidated bottom, and unconsolidated shore. A majority of these wetlands are forested and follow the main stem of the Battle Creek River and Wanandoga Creek. Only 10% of wetlands remain in the Battle Creek River Watershed. This is a result of the historical settlements of Michigan. Settlers began to drain Michigan's landscape to alleviate malaria cases caused by mosquitoes and for the development of farmland.

## **Forests**

Forests are a fundamental part of the watershed ecosystem. The Battle Creek River Watershed's landscape is comprised of only 13% of forests. Riparian-forests follows most of the main stream of the Battle Creek River, Wanandoga Creek and Ackley Creek. These forested corridors are an integral part of the floodplain and provide shade for streams and help anchor stream banks. Much of the forested areas within the watershed are heavily fragmented as a result of deforestation for new development and cropland. Forests are not only valuable economically, but are beneficial biologically. As forests continue to become fragmented, habitats are being destroyed.

It is very important that the forests that still remain within the watershed are managed properly. Good management of a timber stand will not only provide biological diversity, but also valuable forest health. Most of the forested areas in the watershed are privately owned. Landowners should seek professional advice on use reputable consultants and sawmills. Protection of the riparian-forest along stream corridors for floodplain functions will provide continuous corridors. These forested areas within the watershed are significant to the aesthetic beauty and function of the watershed. Land use planning will be a fundamental force in protecting these resources through local government.

## **Fisheries**

The Battle Creek River maintains a quality fishery that receives little attention from anglers except around population centers in Charlotte, the City of Battle Creek, and select road crossings. The Battle Creek River is a warm water system that contains both warm and cool water fish species whose predator base is dominated by small mouth bass and northern pike. Currently, channel catfish are actively managed and stocked by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment in the Verona Impoundment in the lower most reach of the river where it provides urban fishing opportunities in the City of Battle Creek.

The MDNR has historically managed the Battle Creek River as a warm water river system; however, water temperature data collected by the MDNR in summer 2001 documented that the upper reaches of the Battle Creek River and its tributary stream, Indian Creek, maintain summer water temperatures that would be

indicative of a coldwater system. Further, during a 2002 fisheries survey mottled sculpin were sampled in Indian Creek. Mottled Sculpin are considered an indicator species found in coldwater systems.

Maintaining and restoring fisheries habitat is important in order to maintain and improve fish diversity and fish populations in the Battle Creek River. Historical and current practices that negatively impact fisheries habitat and stream stability such as channelization of tributaries and the main channel, storm water discharge and, land use changes will continue to negatively impact fisheries resources.

### **Recreation and Tourism**

The Battle Creek River Watershed has a plethora of opportunities to explore and discover valuable social, natural, and historical features. Many state, county, city, and township parks can be found throughout the area. There are public access sites to lakes and rivers for fishing, boating, canoeing, and kayaking opportunities, historical museums, structures and monuments, summer festivals, camping, hiking, biking, running, walking, protected lands, and sanctuaries. Recreation and tourism opportunities within the watershed are often underutilized.

Access sites to the Battle Creek River include Bennett Park in Charlotte. Several road stream crossings within the watershed also provide user access. An expansion of state, county, city, and township parks that provide access to the Battle Creek River and its tributaries to the public will be important in protecting resources that are valuable to the watershed. Residents that are more acquainted with the Battle Creek River and/or its tributaries will create a better affiliation and appreciation of the watershed and its resources.

### **Thornapple River Floodplain**

On March 13, 2002, the Tri-Agency Team met at the Charlotte USDA Service Center and reviewed the proposed Thornapple River Floodplain Management Study. This is a report of their findings.

### **General**

The Thornapple River and its floodplain provide a unique and biologically important corridor in south central Michigan. The floodplain contains bottomland hardwoods in the lower stretches and is a combination of woodland, pastureland and cropland in the upper reaches. The corridor provides excellent habitat for a wide range of wildlife species and is vital for the fisheries resources of the Thornapple River. However, the river and its floodplain are under increasing pressure of development. Floodplain development for residential and agricultural purposes will adversely impact this unique and important corridor by reducing habitat and fragmenting the corridor.

## **Wildlife Habitat**

The floodplain of the Thornapple River provides a continuous band of bottomland hardwoods in its lower reaches. This band provides a safe corridor for wildlife species to move through a landscape broken up by agricultural fields, residences, commercial developments, roads, and woodlots. This band through Barry and Eaton Counties is very important for migrating warblers, songbirds such as the black capped chickadees, blue jays, sparrows, and mammals such as squirrels, raccoons, red fox, deer, and recently river otter.

The forests, pastures, and cropland of the floodplain provide important wildlife habitat for a wide range of wildlife species. The corridor also ensures that animals can safely move through the area which helps maintain the genetic diversity of the populations.

## **Threatened and Endangered Species**

A review of the threatened and endangered species database indicates that the lower floodplain is a known location for the Indiana Bat. This federal and state listed endangered species uses the forested floodplains of the Thornapple River for summer nursery colony sites. The bat lives under the loose bark of trees such as silver maple and feeds on insects in the area. Retaining the forested floodplains in an undisturbed state is very important for this bat.

In the fall, the Indiana Bat returns to hibernating caves in the Ohio Valley. The Indiana Bat is restricted to a very few caves during the winter and therefore especially vulnerable to disturbances at those sites.

## **Fisheries Habitat**

The Thornapple River provides habitat for a wide range of fish species. The river is known for its good small mouth bass fishery in certain stretches. Other species found in the river include northern pike, rock bass, black crappie, pumpkinseed, common shiner and fathead minnow.

## **Thornapple Lake**

Thornapple Lake is approximately 409 acres in size and is 30 feet deep at the maximum. Water areas less than 20 feet deep account for 76% of the surface area. The Thornapple River inlets the lake from the east end and outlets at the west. This important lake depends upon the quality of the Thornapple River and its watershed. The lake is a very popular recreation area. The MDNR has a public access launch site on the southeast end of the lake. The lake is stocked with northern muskellunge and walleye. The lake is one of two "brood stock" sources for northern muskellunge. Eggs and milk are collected from muskies in the lake in the spring and used for the current statewide muskellunge stocking program.



## RECREATION INVENTORY

The Recreation Inventory section provides an inventory of existing public parks and recreation facilities. In generating this inventory, CARC Board utilized a pre-existing list of parks and recreational facilities and then cross-referenced that list with the community master plans for each of the communities covered by this plan. In addition, CARC Board members consulted staff and governing board members of participating communities and the Charlotte Public Schools to ensure the accuracy of the inventory.

For purposes of reporting the level of accessibility for the parks and other spaces in this report for people with disabilities, the CARC used the scale identified by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. This scale is as follows:

- 1 = none of the facilities/parks areas meets accessibility guidelines
- 2 = some of the facilities/parks areas meets accessibility guidelines
- 3 = most of the facilities/parks areas meets accessibility guidelines
- 4 = the entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5 = the entire park was developed/renovated using the principles of universal design

### **Public Parks**

Public Recreation and open space within the Charlotte community includes ten parks within the City of Charlotte and the surrounding participating Townships, and six public school sites.

### **Bennett Park**

Bennett Park is a community park located in the City of Charlotte, in Section 19, Township 2 North, Range 4 West, of Eaton Township, Eaton County, Michigan. The park is located at the south end of the City, east of Cochran Avenue and adjacent to the 40-acre Eaton County Fairgrounds, which lies directly to the north. The park is bounded by the City limits to the south and east and Cochran Avenue to the west. The park is approximately 117-acres in total area. Within Bennett Park, there are separate use areas referenced as Veterans Memorial Park, Camp Frances, as well as the Historic Courthouse site. The daily use area, or more "active" recreational area, comprises approximately 53.3 acres in total area. Access is provided to the north half of the park from the west off Cochran Avenue. Additional access is provided to Camp Frances on the south end of the park again from the west side via Cochran Avenue.

The park is heavily wooded with a mature deciduous forest. In the southwest corner

and along the northern border are stands of mature evergreen trees. The area north of the river also has mowed grassy areas among the mature deciduous trees.

In 2002, thanks to a grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (CM00-0049), approximately 1,500 linear feet of handicap-accessible paved trails were constructed in Bennett Park. These trails allow all residents, regardless of any mobility restrictions, to get closer to nature. Along with the trail improvements, sightlines within the park were improved, benches were installed, and some



added explain

The trail has been maintained by the City of Charlotte, Department of Public Works and remains in very good condition. An intended Phase II of the trail project will include an extension of the trail to cross the Battle Creek River and create an additional 1.1 mile loop that will travel along the south

l-69 and then

### Structures

- 2 pavilions
- Pedestrian bridge
- Ranger Station
- Water Department storage building
- Well building
- 1 restroom facility

### Parking Facilities

- 3 paved parking lots with a total of 81 spaces
- 1 large unimproved parking area with approximately 50 spaces

### Recreation

- 
- Paved, accessible walking path
- All-terrain bike trails
- 1,500 lineal foot river trail with seating  
(Funded by a 2002 DNR Grant, # CM00-0049)
- 6 Horseshoe pits
- 4 playground areas
- Fishing opportunities
- 1 basketball court
- Picnic facilities

- Grills and drinking fountains

#### Utilities

- Sanitary, water, and electrical service provided to existing restrooms

#### Accessibility Rating: 2

### **Camp Frances**

Camp Frances is an area within Bennett Park that has a cabin, which was donated for use by youth organizations. The 1,000 square foot building includes restrooms, a kitchen and fireplace. The wooded setting and fire bowl provides for outdoor education events within the City limits. There is an unimproved trail link to the adjacent facilities within Bennett Park. Ground maintenance is provided by the City and the cabin is maintained by a separate non-profit entity. Interest in the camp for day and overnight programming is relatively high, however the facility is limited due to the lack of dedicated sleeping quarters in the building and limited annual funding allocations.

#### Accessibility Rating: 1

### **Combs Park**

Combs Park is located in the City of Charlotte, in Section 6, Township 2 North, Range 4 West, of Eaton Township, Eaton County, Michigan. The park is more specifically located in an existing industrial park on the north end of the City. It is bounded by Lipsey Drive to the west, Linn Products to the south, Protech to the north, and undeveloped land to the east. The park is approximately 4.3 acres in total area. No access is currently provided to the park. This property was gifted to the City to be developed as a public park, contingent that no tree removal would be enacted.

#### Accessibility Rating: 1

### **Dean Park**

This 2.52 acre neighborhood park is located on Stoddard Street, west of the railroad tracks. This the site of the most recent parks improvement project within the City. In conjunction with the local Rotary Club a pavilion and restroom facility was constructed in 2008. The project also included the addition of a small dedicated parking lot. This project was one of the projects that appeared in the 2005-2010 Capital Improvement Program. The park includes several grills and benches along

with a variety of play structures and a basketball court. None of the play structures are handicap accessible. Park identification is limited to a small traffic sign posting hours.

Accessibility Rating: 2

### **Gateway Memorial Park**

This small, .2 acre park is located at the north end of Cochran Avenue at Packard Highway. It includes plantings and a City welcome sign. Park identification is limited to a sign posting hours and the park name.

Accessibility Rating: 1

### **Lincoln Park**

Lincoln Park is a special use park located in the City of Charlotte, in Section 13, Township 2 North, Range 5 West, of Carmel Township, Eaton County, Michigan. The park is more specifically described as being located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Shepherd Street and Lincoln Street. The park is bounded to the north by Cherry Street, to the south by Shepherd Street, to the west by Lincoln Street, and to the east by the CN North A



The park is approximately 19 acres in total area. Within this space there is a 24-hole disc golf course, a sand volleyball court, and a 13,000 square foot skate park. The remainder of the space consists mostly of mowed lawn with mature and young deciduous and evergreen trees in the western third of the park. The remainder is covered by tall grasses and small stands of scrub trees and shrubs. Most of the vegetation on the eastern two-thirds of the park will need to be monitored over time due to previous activities and resulting existing conditions. As these trees mature, and/or die, more advantageous species should be planted to help establish a more traditional park-like character.

The 13,000 square foot skate park is the product of Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grant (26-01595). The skate park is maintained by the City of Charlotte Department of Public Works and is widely used by members of the local community as well as by skaters, bikers, and boarders from many neighboring communities. The park is widely recognized as being one of the premier skate parks in the area. In an effort to enhance the skate park as well as the surrounding disc golf course and overall park area, the City of Charlotte is partnering with the Charlotte Rotary Club to construct a pavilion and bathroom facility on the premises in 2012.

### Structures

13,000 square foot concrete skate park (Funded by DNR Grant #26-01595)  
Sand volleyball court  
Passive picnic area  
Open recreational opportunities  
24 hole disc golf course

### Parking Facilities

Gravel parking area

### Utilities

- Electrical service provided to parking lot lighting
- Sanitary service along Lincoln Street
- Water service on both Shepherd Street and Lincoln Street

Accessibility Rating: 1

## **Oak Park**

This 1.54 acre neighborhood park is located at Seminary and Clinton Streets in the City of Charlotte. One of its hallmarks is the canopy of old-growth oak trees. Half the park includes lawn area centered about a gazebo with two tree benches, two grills, one stone fountain and a barrier free drinking fountain. Sidewalks connect the playground which includes one modular play structure, two metal climbers, one three-seat swing with toddler seat, one sand digger, one four-seat swing, one metal slide, one small dome climber, one whirl, and one four-seat rocker. Most equipment is in good condition, although some may be outdated. Park identification is limited to a small traffic sign posting hours and the park name.

Accessibility Rating: 2

## **Snell Park**

Snell Park is .31 acres of a 50-foot wide median located between Sheperd Street and M-50. Its features include a large canopy of trees, one grill, and a picnic table. The park contains a City welcome sign and planting bed. Park identification is limited to a small traffic sign posting hours. This park is seldom used due to its unprotected borders with Sheperd Street and M-50 and the high traffic volume on M-50. Its primary function is to serve as green space for the surrounding

neighborhood and community as a whole.

Accessibility Rating: 1

### **Southridge Park**

This park is a .34 acre neighborhood park located along Clinton Street adjacent to the former Southridge School, which now functions as the Michigan Works facility. The play structures consist of two sets of swings, several climbing apparatuses, and a basketball court. Virtually all of the equipment in this park is outdated. The park also features one grill and two benches. The park is partially bordered by a four-foot high fence. Safety surfacing and accessibility issues need to be addressed. Park identification is limited to a small traffic sign posting hours.

Accessibility Rating: 1

### **Veterans Memorial**

Veterans Memorial Park is located on the south side of the Battle Creek River on Cochran Avenue. The park contains large stone markers and plantings as memorials to local veterans. There is no established parking area for visitors; it shares an unpaved drive with Camp Frances.

Accessibility Rating: 1

## **Additional Community Recreation Areas**

### **AL!VE**

AL!VE is an 80,000 sq. ft. facility, \$18 million Healthpark, located on an 18-acre park-like setting, on the North-West outer city limits of Charlotte. AL!VE will offer an integrated set of health and wellness resources to the Charlotte and surrounding communities. The first construction phase, resulting in more than 42,000 square feet, is estimated to be completed by fall of 2011. This first phase will include the following areas:

- Journey (Women's Health)
- Empower (Outpatient Rehabilitation)
- Nourish (Café)
- Relish (Teaching Kitchen)
- Soar (Activity Gym)
- Explore (Indoor and Outdoor Walking Trails)
- Ponder (Courtyard Garden)
- Bridge (Transitional Workout Area)
- Collaborate (Staff Area).

Private donations and grants are being solicited to construct Phase II, which includes:

- Grow (Child/Youth areas)
- Move (Fitness/Wellness)
- Fuse (Integrative Medicine)
- Gather (Conference rooms)
- Renew (Locker Rooms)
- Expanded Indoor and Outdoor Walking Trails.

Hayes Green Beach Hospital (HGBH), who has spearheaded this project, envisions that AL!VE will be a catalyst for health and wellness in mind, body, and spirit; integrating traditional medical services with proactive health and wellness initiatives. But AL!VE goes well beyond HGBH – through a variety of collaborative arrangements with individuals and organizations in the region, AL!VE represents an innovative and integrated approach to how services are delivered, as well as what those services are.

Accessibility Rating: 5

### **The County Fairgrounds Area**

The 42 acres that comprise the County Fairgrounds are owned by the City of Charlotte and leased to the Eaton County Fair Board. The fairgrounds contain exhibit barns, horse stables, racetrack, and miscellaneous structures.

Accessibility Rating: 2

### **Football and Tennis Facilities**

Adjacent to Bennett Park to the north is a special use area owned and maintained by the City of Charlotte. This space features the former high school football field and four tennis courts. The football field is used predominantly by the Charlotte Junior Orioles (CJO) youth football program. The tennis courts are used by community members as well as by the high school varsity and junior varsity tennis programs as a practice facility.

Accessibility Rating: 1

### **Charlotte Public School Facilities**

Charlotte Public School Facilities include a high school and middle school complex and four elementary school facilities.. Each of the schools is located on sites which provide additional recreational opportunities for the community. Individuals and organizations can rent facilities for recreational use.

Indoor facilities include:

- 2 full-size gymnasiums, one at the high school and one at the middle school
- Swimming facility - The Charlotte Aquatic Center was constructed in 2004 and features a main competition pool that is used for child and adult swim lessons, Red-Cross Life Guard certification programs, lap swimming, and open public swimming. There is also a warm-water exercise pool that functions as a site for water aerobics and other water exercise courses, toddler swim lessons, and for rehabilitation programs in conjunction with Hayes Green Beach Hospital. This is a fully accessible facility.

Outdoor facilities include:

- 400 meter track – open use for running and walking
- Football field
- 2 softball fields
- 2 baseball fields
- Soccer field
- Practice soccer field
- Rotary Park Soccer Complex – 2 mid-size fields and 4 small youth fields

## **Social and Cultural Venues**

### **Charlotte Community Library**

The Charlotte Community Library is located in downtown Charlotte between Bostwick and Sheldon Streets. The library is a 12,500 square foot building that was renovated in 1995. The library hosts a number of programs including youth summer activities and a monthly movie schedule. The library maintains 19 public computers of which 12 have internet access. The library is also a wireless internet “hotspot” within the community.

Accessibility rating: 3

### **Charlotte Performing Arts Center**

Opening in 2004, the Charlotte Performing Arts Center (CPAC) hosts nationally known events, as well as rental events and Charlotte Public School District events. The center holds 825 guests and features an orchestra pit, cushioned stage floor and professional quality acoustical engineering. The Charlotte Performing Arts Center is located adjacent to the Charlotte High School. A full list of events can be found at [www.cpacpresents.com](http://www.cpacpresents.com).

Accessibility rating: 3

### **Eaton Area Senior Center**

The Eaton Area Senior Center provides social, educational, economic and recreational program that enrich the lives of seniors in the greater Eaton county area. The Center provides opportunities for socialization, games, recreation, and guest speakers. The Center is open to residents of Eaton County age 55 and older and requires a small membership fee. The Center is also used by many local business, service, and private groups for social events and public gatherings.

Accessibility rating: 4

### **Courthouse Square Association & Historical Museum**

The Eaton County Historical Museum is housed in the historic Eaton County Courthouse constructed in 1885. The building is of a Renaissance Revival architectural style and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The building and site are owned and maintained by the Courthouse Square Association, a non-profit group. Major renovation of the building occurred in 1999. In addition to serving as a historical museum, the facility is also available for weddings and other private and public events. The courthouse lawn serves as a venue for numerous community events including festivals and the annual, weekly farmers market in the summer and fall months.

Accessibility rating: 2

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS**

This current plan is based, in part, upon work previously done in the development of the 2005-2010 Charlotte Area Recreation Plan developed by the members of the then operational Recreation Council. That plan was completed with assistance from *Capital Consultants, Inc.* and included, among other information, data collected from several surveys including one conducted by Carmel Township as well as one completed by Middle and High School students. The 2005-2010 plan included a capital improvement program featuring 22 projects that had been identified based upon the results of those surveys and joint discussions with the various constituent groups (i.e. Charlotte Public Schools, City of Charlotte, Charlotte Area Senior Center, etc.). Only one of the 22 projects was actually completed during the 2005-2010 time-frame: a new pavilion and restroom at Dean Park.

Starting in the fall of 2009, the CARC Board conducted a series of meetings with representatives of the various youth sports programs in the community. Included in these discussions were the Charlotte Junior Orioles basketball, softball, football, and cheerleading programs and the AYSO and CASL soccer programs. These discussions centered upon the existing status of the respective programs as well as current and future facility needs.

Members of the CARC Board also entered into conversations regarding recreational needs and the development of this plan with officials and members of the following organizations:

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- Hayes Green Beach Hospital
- Eaton County Senior Center
- Eaton Intermediate School District
- Charlotte Step-by-Step (community walkability committee)
- City of Charlotte Parks Advisory Board
- Charlotte Disc Golf Association
- Charlotte Tennis Association

An article about the development of the plan and encouraging public comment was printed in the two local newspapers, The County Journal and The Charlotte Shopping Guide. These articles described the CARC and its effort to develop a new version of the recreation master plan. In addition, the articles contained information about how interested individuals could review copies of the draft plan and submit ideas to members of the CARC Board.

The draft plan was made available for public review for a period of 30 days from January 15<sup>th</sup> to February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at the Charlotte Area Public Library, Charlotte City Hall, Eaton Township Hall, Carmel Township Hall, and on the websites of both the City of Charlotte and Eaton Township.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The CARC has developed the following goals and objectives regarding recreation in the Charlotte area for the next five years:

Goal	Objective
1. Reduce the cost of participating in youth and adult recreation programs in order to increase participation of individuals who currently cannot afford to pay for these programs.	Provide free or low-cost gymnasium space for all youth and adult basketball programs through the renovation of former middle school facilities.

<p>2. Increase opportunities for young girls to participate in quality softball programs that are equivalent to those currently offered in the young boy's baseball program.</p>	<p>Develop 2 dedicated softball fields for use by local youth softball programs.</p>
<p>3. Increase recreation opportunities for community members who have physical challenges or disabilities</p>	<p>Improve accessibility at community parks and neighborhood parks.  Install a barrier-free play area within one of the existing parks.</p>

<p>4. Promote individual and community wellness by enhancing walkable access to and within parks and recreation spaces.</p>	<p>Develop connectivity paths between key recreation facilities and locations within the community.</p> <p>Complete Phase II of the river walk trail within Bennett Park.</p> <p>Work in cooperation with Hayes Green Beach Hospital for the completion of the ALIVE center which will include an indoor walking path that will be open to the public for general exercise use.</p> <p>Construct a park on the 4+ acre wooded parcel located in the Combs industrial park that would include a pavilion, parking area, and accessible path. Park would provide employees of businesses within the Combs Industrial Park, as well as other community members, with a site for outdoor dining, group events, relaxation and wildlife observation.</p>
<p>5. Promote wellness and healthy lifestyles .</p>	<p>Renovate and improve existing outdoor recreation facilities</p> <p>Construct a park on the 4+ acre wooded parcel located in the Combs industrial park that would include a pavilion, parking area, and accessible path. Park would provide employees of businesses within the Combs Industrial Park, as well as other community members, with a site for outdoor dining, group events, relaxation and wildlife observation.</p>
<p>6. Increase non-motorized interconnections with surrounding communities</p>	<p>Develop trails for non-motorized use connecting to Eaton Rapids, Potterville, Bellevue, Nashville, and Vermontville</p>

<p>7. Increase awareness and appreciation for local natural resources and the environment.</p>	<p>Increase accessibility to streams, grasslands, woodlands, and other water.</p> <p>Construct a park on the 4+ acre wooded parcel located in the Combs industrial park that would include a pavilion, parking area, and accessible path. Park would provide employees of businesses within the Combs Industrial Park, as well as other community members, with a site for outdoor dining, group events, relaxation and wildlife observation.</p> <p>Support the development and promotion of the newly reestablished Camp Francis organization in efforts to create a nature and wildlife education center.</p>
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## **ACTION PROGRAM**

The following list of action items represent some of the initiatives that were identified throughout the development of this planning document. These action items represent specific ways in which the CARC and the participating communities can work to reach the goals and objectives identified above. This is certainly not a comprehensive list of all potential action items that may be considered over the course of the five years covered by this plan, but represents some of the most significant items contributed by members of the community who have been involved in the development of this plan.

### **Action Item: Tennis Court Enhancement Initiative**

The CARC, in consultation with the Charlotte Tennis Association (CTA), identified as a priority the need to refurbish and enhance the existing community tennis facilities located adjacent to Park. The existing facility is comprised of four tennis courts enclosed by a chain link fence with back stops. The best estimates generated by the CTA and the CARC were that no significant maintenance work had been completed on the courts within the past 25 years.

The CTA began the initial refurbishing project in the summer of 2010. The project included the removal of existing crack sealants, cleaning of court surfaces, refilling cracks and abrasions, and refinishing and striping each of the surfaces. The total cost for this project was estimated at \$3,500. The CTA began the project through individual donations and volunteer labor. In August of 2010, the CTA

approached the CARC for assistance in an effort to complete this phase of the project. The CARC agreed to support the initiative by allocating \$3,200.

The second phase of the project includes maintenance to the fencing surrounding the courts as well as installing new wind screen and new nets. This second phase is projected to be implemented in the spring of 2011.

A third phase of this project involves the completion of a feasibility study for two additional courts to be added in the vicinity of the existing tennis facility. The existing four tennis courts are currently used as practice facilities by the Charlotte High School boys and girls tennis teams but are inadequate for conducting interscholastic competitions. In addition, general community interest and use often exceeds the current available space. The intent is for the feasibility study to be completed in 2011-12 followed by a determination of a plan of action based upon the results of said study.

#### **Action Item: Basketball Court Space Development**

The CARC entered into discussions with the Charlotte Junior Orioles (CJO) basketball program, the local youth developmental basketball program, in the winter of 2010 regarding the adequacy of existing facilities to support their programming efforts. Due to scheduling conflicts and costs associated with using gymnasium space at the Charlotte High School and Middle School, the CJO program conducted its 2009-10 season at the AIM High sports facility located in Delta Township. Based on these discussions, the CARC believes it is a priority to establish more indoor basketball court space within the community.

Phase one of this initiative is to complete a feasibility study regarding the refurbishing of the gymnasium space that exists in the old middle school located in the central business district of the City of Charlotte. The former school now exists as the "Old School Village" which is a mixed use facility containing apartments and office space. The facility is owned and operated by local residents who have expressed a willingness to work with the CARC in completing this feasibility study and in the effort to refurbish the gymnasium space for use recreational use.

Based upon the results of the feasibility study, the CARC will make a determination of how to best proceed with the project. It is hoped that through existing CARC funding as well as local contributions, that one of the two gymnasium spaces within the facility could be refurbished in 2011.

If the feasibility study indicates that the second gymnasium space has the potential for redevelopment the CARC will seek grant opportunities to complete the project in 2012-2013. It is believed that this second gymnasium space will require a substantially greater amount of work if it is determined that the project is feasible.

**Action Item: Softball Field Development**

The CARC entered into discussions with the Charlotte Junior Orioles (CJO) softball program, the local youth developmental softball program, in the winter of 2010 regarding the adequacy of existing facilities to support their programming efforts. Due to scheduling conflicts the CJO program could only play its games on the existing fields at the Charlotte High School and Middle School. All of the practices for each of the teams in the program were conducted in a grass parking lot area located within the Eaton County Fair Grounds facility. The space is wholly inadequate to function as a practice facility given that there are no backstops, base lines, fences, or level field space. In addition, there are no bathroom facilities available. While the parents and volunteers who run the program do their best to clear the playing surfaces of rocks and other debris, the unlevel ground creates a significant risk for injuries to players. Based on the conversations with the CJO program, the CARC established as a priority the development of 2-3 softball fields within the local community.

Phase one of this project to be completed in 2011 is to identify sites that would be appropriate for the development of fields. This will include sites currently owned by the City of Charlotte, Eaton Township, and Carmel Township as well as privately owned properties. If needed, this phase will include the establishment of projected cost for purchasing or leasing of those spaces identified as feasible for the project.

Phase two of the project to be completed in 2011-12 will be to enter into a lease or purchase agreement if needed and to complete a plan for the development of the fields in order to identify a budget for completion of the project.

Phase three of the project will be to seek adequate funding sources that would enable the project to be started with an anticipated completion date of spring of 2014. Until this project is completed, the CARC will be attempting to work with the City of Pottersville to explore the possibility of the CJO program using fields at the Lake Alliance complex for practices and/or games.

**Action Item: Eaton Twp. Park Development**

Eaton Township has conducted preliminary conceptual work for the development of a 5 acre parcel of land that it currently owns. Some of the initial concepts include the softball fields and a barrier free play facility. The CARC will be working with Eaton Township to move beyond the conceptual phase of this project by identifying necessary resources and facilitating partnerships with other community organizations. This site could be used to address the identified need for softball fields within in the community while also helping to address the need for

barrier free play structures.

**Action Item: Construct Phases II and III of the River Front Trail in Bennett Park**

This project is an effort to expand the existing trail river trail system within Bennett Park . Phase II of the river trail project would extend the trail, primarily on the south side of the Battle Creek River, to the east until the edge of the public owned property which extends to I-69. This trail extension would add approximately 1.1 miles of new trail. The trail would run along the river’s edge with a portion also accessing grassy meadow. The Phase II portion of the trail would also include an additional bridge to cross the river allowing for trail access from a parking area at the end of Paine Drive. This extension to the north side of the river sets the stage for Phase III of the river front trail which calls for the extension of the trail beyond I-69 to the east. Phase III also establishes a “spur” for the development of connectivity trails to the other parts of Charlotte and eventual larger extensions to reach surrounding communities.

The CARC will be working in conjunction with the Charlotte Step-by-Step organization, the City of Charlotte, and other community groups in efforts to explore financial resources, grant funding opportunities, and necessary land acquisition.

**Action Item: Land acquisition**

Over the next five years, the CARC will be conducting a comprehensive assessment of existing recreation facilities and properties utilizing the services of an external consultant. This focus of this assessment will be to determine the capacity of existing facilities and properties to meet the continuing recreational needs of the community. It is anticipated that as a result of this assessment there may be a need to acquire land for the development of future recreational spaces. At minimum, it is anticipated that land will be needed for developing softball fields and for further development of walking/exercise trails.

**Action Item: Enhance barrier free access at all City parks**

The CARC intends to improve access to and facilities at existing park and recreation areas within the community. This effort will help balance recreational opportunities for both active and passive participation, and for all levels of physical and mental abilities, by enhancing or constructing natural and built facilities. The CARC is investigating funding opportunities. They are also communicating with the City Department of Public Works to see about including this work with other future City sidewalk construction.

## **Acknowledgements**

The CARC would like to recognize the following people for their assistance in developing this document:

Amy Schoonover, Director of Public Works for the City of Charlotte for the information and materials she provided to support this project.

Gregg Guetschow, City Manager for the City of Charlotte for providing guidance and professional advice throughout the preparation process.

Patrick Sustrich, Director of Health and Wellness Services, Hayes Green Beach Memorial Hospital for his support and involvement in the development of this plan.

## **Appendix A**

### **Interlocal Agreement for Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative**

This Interlocal Agreement is effective on and after 20th day of November, 2009, provided it is approved by the City of Charlotte, a Michigan municipal corporation, whose address is 111 E. Lawrence Ave., Charlotte, Michigan 48813 (“Charlotte”); the Township of Eaton, a Michigan municipal corporation, whose address is 3981 E. Clinton Trail, Charlotte, Michigan 48813 (“Eaton”), and the Township of Carmel, a Michigan municipal corporation, whose address is 1959 W. Kalamo Hwy., Charlotte, Michigan 48813 (“Carmel”) (collectively, “the Parties”).

#### **ARTICLE I – AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE**

1. Authority
  - a. This Interlocal Agreement establishes a Recreation Cooperative under the authority of the Urban Cooperation Act, Act 7 of the Public Acts of 1967, as amended; Act 156 of the Public Acts of 1917, as amended; and Act 35 of the Public Acts of 1951, as amended.
2. Purpose
  - a. The purpose of this Interlocal Agreement is to facilitate and support varied recreational opportunities principally for the residents of the City of Charlotte, the Township of Eaton, and the Township of Carmel. Resources allocated and/or generated through the establishment of this Agreement will be directed toward, but not limited to, the development and maintenance of facilities, fields, and spaces that enhance recreational and sport offerings.

#### **ARTICLE II – RECREATION COOPERATIVE**

1. Name

The name of the body formed by way of this agreement is the Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative (C.A.R.C.).
2. Board
  - a. The CARC shall be governed by a Board composed of seven (7)

members as follows:

- i. Two (2) members appointed by the City of Charlotte Board and residing in Charlotte.
- ii. Two (2) members appointed by the Eaton Township Board and residing in Eaton.
- iii. Two (2) members appointed by the Carmel Township Board and residing in Carmel.
- iv. One (1) citizen-at-large member appointed by the CARC Board and residing in one of the Parties' territory.

3. Appointment and Removal
  - a. The Parties shall appoint their respective CARC members, who shall serve at the pleasure of the respective appointing body. The Parties' governing bodies may remove their respective Board members by Resolution at any time, with or without cause.
  - b. The Citizen-At-Large appointee must be a resident of one of the Parties. To ensure equal opportunity in representation, the appointment of the Citizen-At-Large will occur in a rotating fashion among the Parties in the following order: Eaton, Carmel, Charlotte. If the Board is unable to identify an interested candidate from the appropriate Party at the time of that Party's designated order in the rotation, the Board may appoint a citizen from the next Party in the order of rotation. An at-large member may be removed from the CARC Board for any reason at any time, with or without cause, by a 2/3 majority vote of the entire remaining membership of the CARC Board.
1. Terms of Office
  - a. The Parties shall appoint their initial two (2) Board members such that one will serve a one year term and the second shall serve a two year term. All future Board members appointed by the Parties shall serve for a term of two years, or until their successors has been appointed and take office.
  - b. The initial Citizen-At-Large appointment will occur within 30 days of the completion of the Parties' initial appointments. The initial Citizen-At-Large and all future appointed Citizens-At-Large shall serve a two year term.
  - c. With the exception of the initial CARC appointments, Board member terms of office shall begin on July 1<sup>st</sup> each year.
2. Vacancies
  - a. Any vacancy on the CARC Board arising for any reason shall be filled by appointment within thirty (30) days of the vacancy to serve the remainder of the unexpired term.
3. Compensation
  - a. Members of the CARC shall not be paid by the CARC for attending meetings of the CARC or of the CARC Board.

4. Officers
  - a. The CARC Board shall elect at its first meeting to occur after July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, from its membership, a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary/Treasurer, who shall hold respective offices for terms of one year and/or until a successor is elected.
  - b. Vacancies in any office shall be filled by the Board within thirty (30) days of the vacancy, for the remainder of the unexpired term.
5. Officer Responsibilities
  - a. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Board and shall have all privileges and duties of a Board Member.
  - b. The Vice-Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Board at which the Chairperson is absent.
  - c. The Secretary/Treasurer shall make and keep, all records, reports, and minutes required by this Agreement and applicable law and shall serve as the Board signatory for financial transactions.
6. Meetings
  - a. CARC shall meet no less than once per quarter. CARC, at its first meeting after July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, shall establish a regular meeting schedule which shall be posted at the offices of the parties in similar form and within similar times as required by law for governmental meeting schedules.
  - b. Special meetings of the CARC may be called by the Chairperson or, in the absence of the Chairperson, by the Vice Chairperson, with at least eighteen (18) hours prior notice provided to the members of the CARC Board.
  - c. The Board shall comply with the requirements of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, Act 267 of the Public Acts of 1976, as amended.
7. Quorum
  - a. In order to conduct business a minimum of four (4) members of the CARC Board must be present.
8. Voting
  - a. Five affirmative votes shall be necessary for the CARC Board to take any official action at a regular or special meeting.

9. Minutes
  - a. Complete written minutes of all CARC meetings shall be kept in compliance with applicable provisions of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, with copies sent to all CARC members and the Clerks of the Parties as soon as reasonably possible after a CARC meeting.
10. Rules
  - a. The Board shall adopt rules to govern its meetings.
11. Registered office
  - a. The registered office of the CARC shall be the office of the City of Charlotte, 111 E. Lawrence Ave, Charlotte, MI 48813. The CARC Board may designate another location as the registered office.
12. Records
  - a. CARC shall comply with all provisions of the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, Act 442 of the Public Acts of 1976, as amended.

### ARTICLE III – POWERS

1. General Powers
  - a. The CARC shall have the following powers, authority and obligations:
    - i. Contract with any other governmental units, public agencies, or private persons or organizations as appropriate to carry out CARC functions or fulfill CARC obligations.
    - ii. Authorize user fees and accept funds, grants, voluntary work, or other assistance, to carry out CARC functions and obligations from any source, public or private, including, but not limited to, local governmental funding, user fees, state and federal grants, and private donations. Any application for grants or other public funding shall be communicated to the Parties.
    - iii. Conduct and carry out any program, activity or function which advances and directly relates to the purposes expressed in this Interlocal Agreement.
    - iv. Expend funds for the acquisition of real property and for construction, operation, and maintenance of recreational equipment and facilities when the property is available for and used for recreation. Approve and authorize purchases and expenditures.
    - v. Acquire and hold, by purchase, lease with or without option

to purchase, grant, gift, devise, land contract, installment purchase contract, bequest, or other legal means, real and personal property inside or outside the territory of the Parties. The property may include franchises, easements, or rights of way on, under, or above any property.

- vi. Provide for the maintenance of all of the real and personal property of the Cooperative.
- vii. Exercise all powers and take such actions as are authorized by State law and this agreement.
- viii. The authority to sue and be sued.

## 2. Limitations of Authority

- a. CARC shall be subject to the following limitations on its authority. Annually, by January 2 of each calendar year, the Board shall submit a budget to each of the Parties for approval, which shall identify the specific obligations, goals, and initiatives proposed to be carried on for the ensuing year, together with the projected costs for those obligations, goals, and initiatives. The CARC does not have the power or authority to levy any type of tax or to issue any type of bond in its name. CARC shall not or in any way indebted any of the parties except in accordance with a budget approved by the Parties.

## 3. Insurance

- a. The CARC shall obtain policies of insurance, as part of its budget, for comprehensive and other appropriate and necessary purposes. The CARC shall have the parties hereto named as “named insureds”, on the comprehensive liability and property damage insurance policy.

# ARTICLE IV – FINANCE

## 1. Fiscal Year

- a. The fiscal year of the CARC shall be from July 1 through June 30 annually.

## 2. Funding

- a. Initial funding for the CARC shall be established by a contribution from the Parties in the amount equivalent to \$1.50 per resident, based on the most recent official population statistics for each party available from the United States Census Bureau, or the funds accrued by the respective entity for use on joint projects in fulfillment of the Interlocal Agreements established between and among the parties prior to the establishment of this agreement, whichever is greater.
- b. Annual funding for the CARC shall be established by an allocation of funds from the Parties in the amount equivalent to \$1.65 per resident, based on the most recent official population statistics for each party

available from the United States Census Bureau, or 0.5 mill of the respective portion of tax revenue generated through the Interlocal Agreements established between and among the parties prior to the ratification of this Agreement, whichever is greater.

3. Additional Funding
  - a. The Parties, individually or collectively, may, at any time, elect to allocate additional funds to the CARC.
  - b. Funds for CARC may also be generated through user fees, grants and donations from any source, public or private, including, but not limited to, local governmental funding, individual users, state and federal grants, and private donations. Any application by CARC for grant funding or other public funding shall be communicated to the Parties prior to submission of application.
  
4. Annual Budget
  - a. The CARC Board shall prepare budgets and appropriations acts in the manner provided by sections 14 to 19 of the Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act, Act 2 of the Public Acts of 1968, as amended. The CARC Board shall annually prepare a proposed budget in such detail as required by Parties, which shall include all sums necessary to carry on obligations, goals and initiatives. The proposed budget shall be submitted to the Clerk of each Party by January 2 of each year. The governing bodies of each Party shall review and either approve as presented, or as modified, an annual budget, no later than May 30 of each year, and approval of the budget by the Parties must be unanimous.
  - b. The Parties shall pay to the CARC their respective financial commitment on or before July 1st at the commencement of the fiscal year. The CARC treasurer shall invoice the parties annually.
  - c. Approval of the Parties' governing bodies shall be required for any amendments or transfers of approved CARC budget line items that exceed \$500.
  
5. Fiscal Agent of CARC
  - a. The Board shall appoint a Fiscal Agent for the CARC who shall have the responsibility of custody and control of all funds of the CARC.
  - b. The Fiscal Agent shall make, or cause to be made, a full and complete financial report to the Board and to the governing bodies of each Party, of the CARC's financial transactions at the end of the fiscal year. Such report shall include an annual audit of CARC, and report on the audit and auditing procedures, in the manner provided by sections 6 to 13 of the Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act, Act 2 of the Public Acts of 1968, as amended. The audit shall also be in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards as promulgated by the United States general accounting office and shall satisfy federal regulations relating to federal grant compliance audit requirements.
  - c. The funds received or set aside by the Fiscal Agent for the CARC shall

be held in a separate fund and accounted for separately from the other funds of the Fiscal Agent

6. Administration

- a. The CARC Board shall administer the financial aspects of the CARC. All expenditures shall be approved by the Board prior to being paid by the Treasurer.
- b. The CARC is an independent corporate entity separate and distinct from the Parties. Administration of the financial aspects of CARC or any other acts done by any of the Parties in assistance or in cooperation with CARC shall not have any effect upon, nor change the status of CARC, nor create any legal responsibility by any of the Parties for acts or obligations of CARC.

ARTICLE V – TERMINATION AND DISSOLUTION

1. Termination of Participation

- a. A party may terminate its membership in CARC and its participation in this Interlocal Agreement as of June 30 in any year by written notice to the CARC Board and to the governing bodies of the other Parties no later than April 1<sup>st</sup> of the year in which such termination shall be effective. If notice of termination is given, that Party shall remain liable for all obligations incurred by CARC pursuant to this Interlocal Agreement prior to the actual termination and according to the budget approved for that fiscal year.
- b. A Party's participation in CARC by way of this agreement may be terminated or rescinded by a referendum of that Party's residents not more than 45 days after the approval of the agreement by the governing body of the local governmental unit.

2. Dissolution

- a. When any of the parties terminates its participation under this Agreement, CARC shall be dissolved unless the remaining Parties deem it advantageous to continue CARC. If the CARC is terminated or dissolved, after meeting any and all obligations and debts of CARC, the real and personal property and assets owned by CARC shall be distributed to the Parties in kind or sold by agreement of the Parties, with each Party receiving an amount of property and assets in proportion to the respective contributions made by each Party to CARC. Any property, either real or personal, which was donated or

provided by one of the Parties shall remain the property of said party.

#### ARTICLE VI – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

1. Amendments
  - a. This Agreement may be amended, in whole or in part, by written agreement of all of the Parties.
2. Applicable Laws
  - a. The CARC Board shall fully comply with applicable local, Michigan, and federal laws, regulations, grant conditions and contract provisions.
3. Effective Date
  - a. This Interlocal Agreement shall be in full force and effect on the date first written above.
4. Duration
  - a. This Interlocal Agreement shall remain in effect and continue for a period of twenty (20) years, unless terminated at an earlier date in accordance with its terms.
5. Effect of Agreement
  - a. This Interlocal Agreement shall be binding upon and serve to the benefit of the Parties and their respective successors.
6. Severability
  - a. Should any section of this Interlocal Agreement be held by a court or arbitrator of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, illegal or unconstitutional, such holding shall not be construed as affecting or invalidating the remaining sections or parts of this agreement, which shall remain in full force and effect.
7. Notices
  - a. Any notice, demand or communication required, permitted, or desired to be given under this Interlocal Agreement shall be deemed effectively given when personally delivered or mailed by first class mail, addressed to the recipient Party at the addresses identified in the first paragraph above. Any changes to the above addresses shall be promptly communicated to the other Parties in the manner described above.
8. Governing Law
  - a. This Interlocal Agreement has been executed and delivered in and shall be interpreted, construed and enforced pursuant to and in accordance with the laws of the State of Michigan. All duties and obligations of the parties created hereunder are performable in Eaton County, Michigan and Eaton County, Michigan shall be the venue for any legal action between the Parties that may be brought in connection with or arise out of or by reason of this Interlocal Agreement.
9. Assignment

- a. No assignment of this Interlocal Agreement or the rights and obligations there under shall be valid without the specific written consent of all the Parties, which shall not be unreasonably withheld.
10. Waiver of Breach
- a. The waiver by any Party of a breach or violation of any provision of this Interlocal Agreement shall not operate as, or be construed to be, a waiver of any subsequent breach of the same or other provision hereof.
11. Dispute Resolution
- a. All disputes between the parties under this Interlocal Agreement shall be initially submitted to facilitative mediation. The mediator shall be whomever the parties mutually agree upon within 15 days of written notice of a request for mediation. If the parties cannot agree, counsel for each of the parties will each select an attorney who practices in Eaton, Clinton or Ingham Counties, and those selected attorneys shall then select by mutual agreement an attorney who is on the Ingham County Circuit Court Contract Mediation Panel to act as the mediator. Unless the time limits are mutually waived, the facilitative mediation shall be heard within 30 days of the appointment of the mediator. Each party shall bear equally the costs of the facilitative mediator. If the dispute is not resolved by mediation, each party is free to exercise their rights as provided by law.
12. Gender and Number
- a. Whenever the context hereof requires, the gender of all words shall include the masculine, feminine and neuter, and the number of all words shall include the singular and plural.
13. Article and Other Headings
- a. The Article and other headings contained in this Interlocal Agreement are for reference purposes only and shall not affect in any way the meaning or interpretation of this Interlocal Agreement.
14. Entire Agreement
- This Interlocal Agreement supersedes all previous or contemporaneous contracts and constitutes the entire agreement between the parties. No Party shall be entitled to benefits other than those specified herein. No oral statements or prior contemporaneous written material not specifically incorporated herein shall be of any force and effect, and all the Parties specifically acknowledge, in entering into and executing this Interlocal Agreement, they rely solely on the representations and agreements contained in this Interlocal Agreement and no others.
15. Counterparts
- a. This Agreement may be executed in any number of counterparts and each such counterpart shall be considered a valid original.

