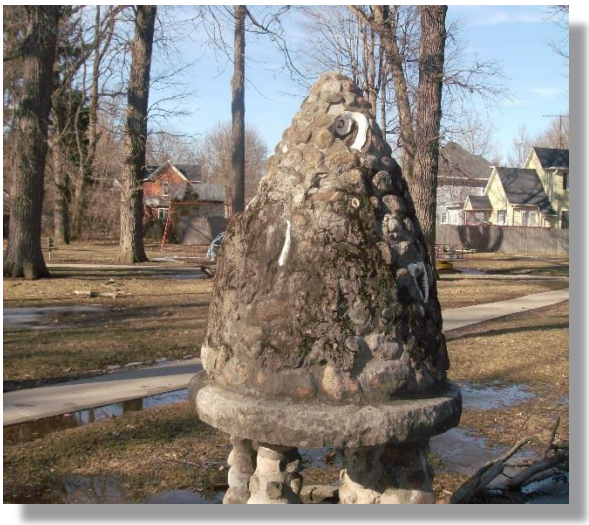
# CHARLOTTE AREA

## FIVE YEAR PARKS & RECREATION PLAN 2019-2023

DRAFT



Prepared by:

ROWE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES COMPANY

## Table of Contents


Charlotte Area ..... 1
Background ..... 1
Community Description ..... 2
- Administrative Structure ..... 3
- Parks and Recreation Budget ..... 3
- Relationships with School District(s), Other Public Agencies or Private Organizations ..... 4
- Programming ..... 4
- Role of Volunteers ..... 4
- Current Funding History ..... 6

Recreation and Resource Inventory ..... 9
- Private Recreation: ..... 10

Parks, Facility, and Program Inventory ..... 11

School Facilities: ..... 14

Regional Recreation Facilities and Park: ..... 16

Public Input and Planning Process ..... 22
Goals and Objectives ..... 23

Action Plan ..... 25

Conclusion ..... 29
- Funding ..... 29

## List of Maps

Map 2: Regional Location Map ..... 2

## List of Figures

Figure 1: City of Charlotte Organization Chart ..... 5
Figure 2: Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative FY 19-20 ..... 7
Figure 3: City of Charlotte Budget ..... 8

## List of Tables

Table 1: Population ..... 2
Table 2: Age Distribution (2017) ..... 2

## Appendix

Meeting Agenda
Survey Results
Notice of 30-Day Public Recreation Plan Review
Notice of Public Hearings
Minutes from Public Hearing
Resolutions
Minutes from the Meeting/Resolutions
Transmittal Letters
Post-Completion Forms for Grant Funded Projects
Non-Motorized Transportation Plan − City of Charlotte, Eaton County, Michigan
Certification Checklists

# Charlotte Area

## Five Year Parks and Recreation Plan

2019 – 2023

**Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative Members:**
Dave Bankhead – Chairman (Eaton Township)
Emily Williamson – Member (Eaton Township)
Deb Montgomery – Member (Carmel Township)
Vicki Montgomery – Member (Carmel Township)
Dan Christian – Member (City of Charlotte)
Yvonne Ridge – Member (City of Charlotte)
Julie O'Neill – Member-At-Large

**City of Charlotte:**
Tim Lewis – Mayor
Gregg Guetschow – City Manager
Ginger Terpstra – City Clerk
Bryan Myrtkle – Community Development Director
Amy Gilson – Director of Public Works

**Carmel Township:**
Steven Willard – Supervisor
Laura Goostrey – Clerk
Michele Wise – Treasurer

**Eaton Township:**
David Roberts – Supervisor
Charamy Cleary – Clerk
Beck Dolman - Treasurer

## Background

This Five-Year Parks and Recreation Plan was prepared by the Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative (CARC) with assistance from ROWE Professional Services Company. The purpose is to direct the evaluation and decisions for future park improvements, development, land acquisition, or other issues regarding recreation opportunities for the City of Charlotte, Carmel Township, and Eaton Township.

The Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative was developed in November 2009 for the purpose of providing an inter-local agreement to facilitate and support recreational opportunities for the citizens of the City of Charlotte, Eaton Township, and Carmel Township. The cooperative acts under the authority of Urban Cooperation Act, Act 7 of the Public Act of 1967, and Act 156 of Public Acts of 1917. Members of CARC, board members for Carmel Township and Eaton Township, along with the city council for Charlotte participated in the development of the plan.

The recreation plan is in accordance with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) requirements as stated in the "Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans". This document will allow for the pursuit of MDNR grants, as well as a basis for other funding opportunities. The plan is valid for five years from the date of resolution of adoption by each community.

The recreation plan for the Charlotte community provides a common direction for future development and enhancements to parks and other recreation opportunities for each municipality. The intent of this plan is to develop parks and recreational opportunities to provide safe, accessible facilities and more choices for healthier lifestyles and economic development.

This plan is divided into several separate sections that represent the planning process used in its development. In addition to this introduction, the plan contains:

- **Community Description** – An overview of the Charlotte community and current and projected social, physical, and economic characteristics.
- **Administrative Structure** – Identifies the entities responsible for administration of the park and recreation programs and facilities provided throughout the Charlotte Community.
- **Parks, Facility, and Program Inventory** – Describes the existing park facilities within the Charlotte community and programs provided in and around the community.
- **Planning Process** – Describes the participatory process by the community and other partners to prepare and adopt the plan.
- **Action Plan** – Summary of information collected that provides support for the suggestions and recommendations in accordance to the community's specific community goals.

## Community Description

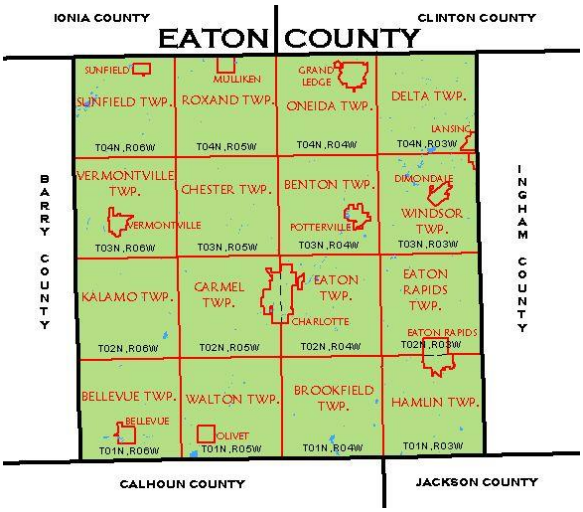
The Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative is located in central Eaton County; roughly 23 miles southwest of Lansing and 63 miles southeast of Grand Rapids. The communities represented in the cooperative include Eaton Township, Carmel Township, and the City of Charlotte. The charter townships of Benton, Chester, Eaton Rapids, Brookfield, and Walton also surround the communities. Table 1 shows the population for the communities within the cooperatives as well as the population trend from 1990 until the recent population estimate in 2017 based on the U.S. Census data.

| Table 1: Population | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Cities/Township** | **2000** | **2010** | **2017 (Est.)** |
| **Charlotte** | 8,389 | 9,074 | 9,062 |
| **Carmel Township** | 2,626 | 2,855 | 2,881 |
| **Eaton Township** | 4,278 | 4,073 | 4,083 |

Based on the U.S. Census data, the 2017 estimate for the communities shows a -0.13 percent change in population for the City of Charlotte, a 0.91 percent change in population for Carmel Township, and Eaton Township with a population change of 0.25 percent from 2010.

| Table 2: Age Distribution (2017) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Cities/Township** | **Under 19** | **20-24** | **25-44** | **45-64** | **65 and Over** |
| **Charlotte** | 2,356 | 618 | 2,456 | 2,144 | 1,488 |
| **Carmel Township** | 581 | 101 | 513 | 965 | 721 |
| **Eaton Township** | 1,172 | 181 | 835 | 1,160 | 735 |

The City of Charlotte is the county seat of Eaton County with numerous programs, activities, and entertainment that occurs in the city. The townships around Charlotte (including Carmel Township and Eaton Township) are rural agriculture with mixtures of retail trade and services. Commercial development and recreational activities are mostly contained within the City of Charlotte.




**Map 1: Regional Location Map**

Primary transportation connections to the communities include I-69, BL-69, M-50, and M-79. I-69 runs east to west connecting the Fort Wayne to Lansing. Business Loop 69 (BL-69) is a 5-mile loop around the City of Charlotte. M-50 and M-79 are trunk line routes that connect to cities and communities on the west side of the state. There is an airfield located northeast of the central business district of Charlotte, Fitch H. Beach Airport for smaller aircraft; also, Capital Region

International Airport is located nearby for passenger transportation. Public transportation in Eaton County is provided by EATRAN which provides curb-to-curb public transportation throughout the county.

The area is relatively flat with gently rolling prairies. The highest elevation in Charlotte is 909 feet. Current land uses include mostly agricultural/farmland, light industrial, and residential. The Charlotte community is geographically located near the Battle Creek River Watershed and the Thornapple River flood plain. Local natural resources include regulated wetland areas, forests, and wildlife.

### *Administrative Structure*

CARC is a "Michigan municipal corporation" that operates within the communities of Eaton Township, Carmel Township, and the City of Charlotte. This partnership has been in existence since November 2009 and provide park facilities in the community. Membership in CARC, or representation by the communities is done by a seven-member board composed of residents from the three communities. Two members each are appointed, by the township or city council boards, from Eaton Township, Carmel Township, and the City of Charlotte; with one member appointed by CARC board as an "at-large" position. CARC has a yearly budget that is passed by the board; however, budget amendments must be approved by the governing bodies represented through CARC.

The City of Charlotte is an incorporated city with a Council-Manager form of government, with an elected city council of seven individuals (including the Mayor). The City Council appoints the City Manager. The City of Charlotte also coordinates park maintenance, operating expenses, and utilities through the Department of Public Works (DPW).

Eaton Township is governed by a five-member elected Township Board consisting of a supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and two trustees. The supervisor is the head of government in the township.

Carmel Township also has a five-member elected Township Board with a supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and two trustees. Daily operations of the township are delegated to the Township Supervisor.

The City of Charlotte, Eaton Township, Carmel Township and CARC are four separate entities and each can apply for DNR grants for the respective communities. CARC grants are overseen by the City of Charlotte as the organization's fiduciary agency. The CARC works to provide the community with recreational opportunities for the residents to enjoy.

### *Parks and Recreation Budget*

Currently, funding for property maintenance are made available through the City of Charlotte and CARC. Attached to this section is the current budget for 2018-2019 for the City of Charlotte Parks and Recreation Fund as well as CARC Fiscal Year 2019-2020 revenue and expenses. Figure 2 and Figure 3 shows the budgets for CARC and the City of Charlotte. Eaton Township has previously allocated $10,000 in the yearly budget for parks and recreation and Carmel Township also allocates $5,000 to support CARC yearly.

### *Relationships with School District(s), Other Public Agencies or Private Organizations*

The City of Charlotte and the surrounding townships are serviced by the Charlotte Public Schools. The city, townships, and school district work independently to provide engaging programs for the residents of the community along with recreational opportunities for students and community members. At various intervals thought collaborative partnerships exist to bring together the entities in the community for activities. Charlotte Public Schools opens its swimming pool to the community for a fee. The school district has also recently hired a youth recreation coordinator to provide additional recreational programming for area youth. Another partnership within the community exist between the cooperative and the Hayes Green Beach Hospital. The hospital, through Charlotte AL!VE, has implemented programs in the community to support healthy living and lifestyle choices. Some of these programs provided from AL!VE include fitness classes, health and wellness services, cooking demonstrations, rehabilitation, and therapy classes. These services are available to the residents for a user fee. Additionally, Eaton Area Senior Center services the senior population in Eaton County and is in the city. Some of the programs that are offered by the Eaton Area Senior Center include dances, car shows, and health clinics. The City of Charlotte previously has worked with the county and other organizations within the county to develop the non-motorized transportation plan in 2013. The non-motorized plan is in the appendix.

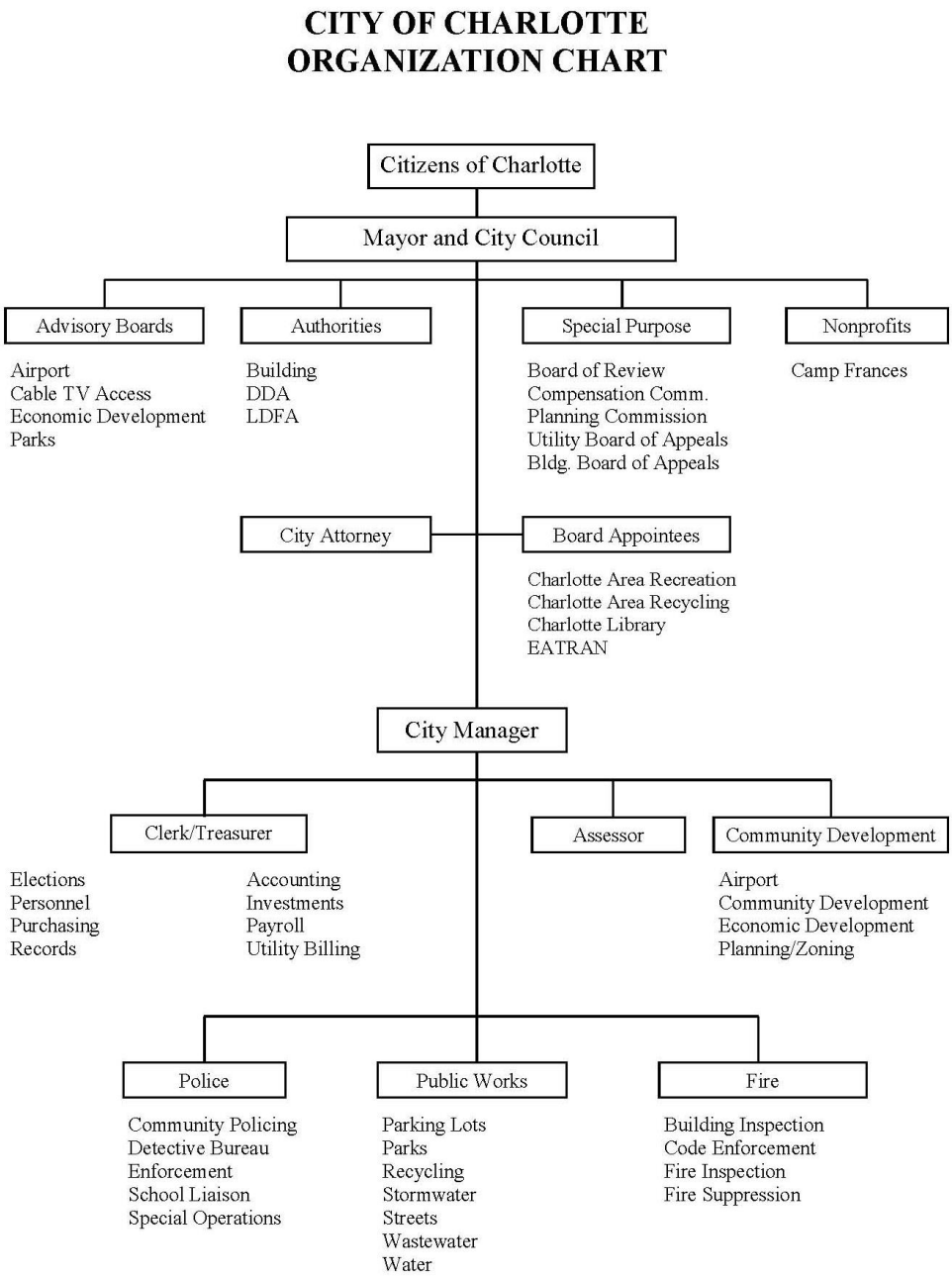
### *Programming*

CARC does not coordinate programming in the community. The main responsibilities of the cooperative are for facilities and operations. Programs in the community are coordinated through the Charlotte Public Schools, various church and volunteer groups, and the Hayes Green Beach (HGB) Hospital. The city also hosts Charlotte Rising, an event in April that brings together the business community to promote small businesses. Other festivals and functions occurring during the tear include the Charlotte Bluegrass Festival in June, Charlotte Celebrates in mid-June, the Michigan Nordic Fire Festival in February/March, Eaton County Fair in July and Charlotte Frontier Days in September.

### *Role of Volunteers*

Volunteers are an extremely important part of the recreational and programming that provide activities for the residents in the community. Various church groups, the Rotary Club, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scout troops often partner with the community to provide services. The Charlotte Junior Orioles (CJO) is the largest volunteer organization in the community. They provide football, baseball, softball, basketball, and cheerleading programs for youth in the area. These programs are run by volunteers and are attended by community members. These programs and volunteer organizations work in cooperation with CARC, Eaton Township, Carmel Township, and the City of Charlotte.

**Figure 1: City of Charlotte Organization Chart**



*Current Funding History*

The City of Charlotte has received funding by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for the purpose of renovations and site improvements for the parks in Charlotte. The city also has acted as a grantee for CARC for the purpose of developing a 22.71-acre parcel into a recreational complex. Those projects include those listed in Figure 1 through Figure 3.

**Figure 1: City of Charlotte Grant Information:**

| CITY OF CHARLOTTE<br>PARKS AND RECREATION GRANT HISTORY | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| YEAR | PROJECT NAME | DESCRIPTION | AMOUNT | STATUS |
| 1994 | Bennett Park Improvements<br>26-01556 | Develop multi-use building, paved entrance road and parking with security lighting and restroom renovations. | $39,685.58 | Closed |
| 2000 | Bennett Park Trail<br>26-01562 | Develop 3,500 LFT of paved 10' wide multi-use trail, interpretive signage, site furniture for accessibility to playgrounds, picnic area, and access to the Battle Creek River. | $89,500.00 | Withdrawn |
| 2000 | Bennett Park Trail<br>CM00-049 | Develop 3,500 LFT of paved 10' wide multi-use trail, interpretive signage, site furniture for accessibility to playgrounds, picnic area, and access to the Battle Creek River. | $134,250.00 | Closed |
| 2002 | Lincoln Park Stake Park<br>26-01595 | Development of a skate park, walking trails, portable restrooms, utilities, and parking. | $166,000.00 | Closed |
| 2015 | Charlotte Area Rec. Complex Development Project<br>26-01760 | First phase includes an access road, entry sign, accessible aggregate parking lot, ball diamond, accessible walkway from ball diamond to the parking lot. | $75,000.00 | Closed |

**Figure 2: Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative FY 19-20**

**FUND BALANCE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Fund Balance @ 6/30/17** | **167,047** |
| + | YTD 17/18 Revenues | 40,749 |
| - | YTD 17/18 Expenditures | (25,991) |
| | **Fund Balance @ 6/30/18** | **181,805** |
| + | Budgeted 18/19 Revenues | 105,200 |
| - | Budgeted 18/19 Expenditures | (201,500) |
| | **Projected Fund Balance @ 6/30/19** | **85,505** |
| + | Budgeted 18/19 Revenues | 30,500 |
| - | Budgeted 18/19 Expenditures | (30,000) |
| | **Projected Fund Balance @ 6/30/20** | **86,005** |

**CASH ON HAND**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Cash-on-hand @ 6/30/17** | **167,047** |
| + | YTD 17/18 Revenues | 40,749 |
| - | YTD 17/18 Expenditures | (25,991) |
| | **Cash-on-hand @ 6/30/18** | **181,805** |
| + | Budgeted 18/19 Revenues | 105,200 |
| - | Budgeted 18/19 Expenditures | (201,500) |
| | **Cash-on-hand @ 6/30/19** | **85,505** |
| + | Budgeted 18/19 Revenues | 30,500 |
| - | Budgeted 18/19 Expenditures | (30,000) |
| | **Projected Cash-on-hand @ 6/30/20** | **86,005** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Professional Services** | | | |
| Legal | | | $ 2,000 |
| **Contractual Services** | | | |
| Grass Cutting | | | $ 1,500 |
| ECDC- Soil Erosion Permit | | | 500 |
| | | Total | $ 2,000 |
| **Contributions to Others** | | | |
| Special Projects | | | $ 45,000 |
| Misc | | | 500 |
| | | Total | $ 45,500 |
| **Capitla Outlay- Equipment** | | | |
| Misc | | | $ 500 |
| **Facility Development** | | | |
| Softball Field-Drainage Fixes | | | $ 5,000 |

**Figure 3: City of Charlotte Budget**

**Operating Needs**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Department 825 - Parks & Recreation** | | |
| **Professional Services** | | |
| 5 Year Parks and Recreation Plan | | $ 13,000 |
| River Bank Stabilization | | 5,000 |
| | Total | $ 18,000 |
| **Contractual Services** | | |
| Grass Cutting | | $ 10,000 |
| Waste Removal | | 2,200 |
| Eaton County Community Corrections Crew | | 1,800 |
| Weed Control | | 1,000 |
| Miscellaneous Services | | 1,000 |
| | Total | $ 16,000 |
| **Special Purpose Expenses** | | |
| Science Camp | | $ 3,000 |
| **Contribution to Others** | | |
| CARC Annual Contribution | | $ 15,000 |
| **Capital Outlay - Equipment** | | |
| Miscellaneous Equipment | | $ 7,000 |
| **Capital Outlay -Bennett Park** | | |
| River Bank Stabilization | | $ 20,000 |
| **Capital Outlay - Dean Park** | | |
| Repair Pavilion Soffit | | $ 4,000 |
| **Capital Outlay - Pocket Park** | | |
| Pocket Park Construction | | $ 200,000 |
| Pocket Park Engineering | | 15,000 |
| | Total | $ 215,000 |

## Recreation and Resource Inventory

The Recreation and Resource Inventory was conducted during a site visit in late March. The following chart is a summary of the local recreation facilities available. They have been categorized by jurisdiction, as well as classification based on size and type of facility.

| | | Acreage (approx.) | Ball Diamonds | Tennis Courts | Picnic Area | Playground Equipment | Horseshoes | Shelter | Boat Launch | Nature Trails | Playfield (Open Space) | Restrooms | Basketball Court | Volleyball Courts | Natural Areas | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Charlotte Area Recreational Cooperative (CARC) Facilities** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Charlotte Area Recreation Complex | 22.71 | ■ | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | City-owned, CARC has 25-year lease |
| | **City of Charlotte Park Facilities** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Bennett Park | 117 | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | Camp Frances included in the park property; 5.4 miles of hiking trails. 8 miles mtn bike trails. |
| | Samuel A. Combs Park | 4.3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | Business/Industrial Park |
| | Dean Park | 2.52 | | | | ■ | | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| | Gateway Memorial Park | 0.2 | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | Entrance sign to community |
| | Lincoln Park | 19 | | | | | | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | | | | 24-hole disc golf skate park, skating rink, sledding hill, and radio control car course |
| | Oak Park | 1.54 | | | | ■ | | ■ | | | ■ | | | | | |
| | Snell Park | 0.31 | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | Welcome sign and planting beds |
| | Southridge Park | 0.34 | | | | ■ | | | | | ■ | | ■ | | | |
| | Eaton County Fairgrounds Area | 42 | | | ■ | | | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | | | | Leased by Eaton County Fair; owned by the city |
| | **Local Public Facilities** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | Acreage (approx.) | Ball Diamonds | Tennis Courts | Picnic Area | Playground Equipment | Horseshoes | Shelter | Boat Launch | Nature Trails | Playfield (Open Space) | Restrooms | Basketball Court | Volleyball Courts | Natural Areas | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Charlotte Community Library | | | | | | | ■ | | | | ■ | | | | Meeting location |
| | Eaton Area Senior Center | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | User fee for access to location; county senior center, meeting location |
| | Eaton County Courthouse and Museum | | | | | | | ■ | | | | ■ | | | | Public and private events |
| | **Schools** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Charlotte Senior High School | 111 | ■ | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | Indoor swimming pool (Charlotte Aquatic Center), Charlotte Performing Arts Center, and football field |
| | Charlotte Middle School | 111 | ■ | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| | Charlotte Upper Elementary School | 111 | ■ | | | ■ | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| | Galewood Elementary School | 10 | | | | ■ | | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | Playground equipment |
| | Parkview Elementary School | 33 | | | | ■ | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| | Washington Elementary School | 10 | ■ | | | ■ | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| | **Carmel Township Park Facilities** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Township Property (Park) | 24 | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | Undeveloped |
| | **Eaton Township Park Facilities** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Township Property (Park) | 6 | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | Undeveloped |

### *Private Recreation:*

There are private recreational facilities that are located within the Charlotte community that provide recreational activities for residents. These facilities are privately operated and, in some cases, require a

user fee for admittance. They are included in the recreation analysis because they meet a specific need in the community. These private facilities include:

- **Bowling Alley:** Char Lanes
- **Dance:** Campbell Dance Studio, Brenda's Dance & Gymnastics Academy, Dance Conservatory
- **Golf Courses:** Maple Brook Golf Course, Sparks Broadway, Twin Brook Golf Club, Butternut Brook Creek Golf Course, Greenbriar Golf Club, Rolling Hills Golf Course, Arrowhead Golf Club
- **Fitness Clubs:** AL!VE, Snap Fitness Charlotte, Cheryl's Gymnastics
- **Martial Arts:** Watermans Tang Soo Do, Martinez ATA Martial Arts
- **Miscellaneous:** Field of Dreams

## Parks, Facility, and Program Inventory

The Recreation Master Plan includes an inventory of recreation facilities programming and events that occur within Charlotte; as they provide information about the development of the action plan. Understanding the specific facilities and events available to the Charlotte community will aid decision making in the future. The following summaries address existing conditions and the accessibility of the park properties regarding compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). In general, all construction since 1991 was required to comply with these guidelines. A general ranking for each park was determined through site visits as follows:

1 = None of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
2 = Some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
3 = Most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
4 = The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
5 = The entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design.

The following is a summary of the current recreational properties in the **City of Charlotte**.

❖ ***Bennett Park***

- *This also includes Veterans Memorial Park, Memorial Tree Park and Camp Francis.*

Size: 117 Acres
Age Groups Serve: All Ages
Location: 1305 Cochran Avenue – Charlotte, MI 48813
Facilities: Picnic facilities, hiking and nature trails, 6 horseshoe pits, 3 playground sites, restroom building, 8 miles of mountain bike trail, 5.4 miles of hiking trails, and paved parking.
Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 2) There are some barrier-free facilities at this park and the site does have barrier-free parking but some of the amenities within the park need to be upgraded to provide for universal accessibility.

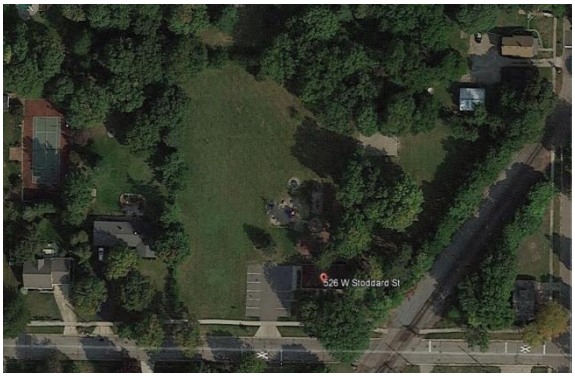
DNR Recreation Grants: 26-01556 (Bennett Park Improvements – 1994), 26-01562 (Bennet Park Trail – 2000), CM00-049 (Bennett Park Trail – 2000)

❖ ***Samuel A. Combs Park***

Size: 4.3 Acres
Age Groups Serve: All Ages
Location: Parkland Drive – Charlotte, MI 48813
Facilities: Business/Industrial Park
Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 1) The site is currently a part of an industrial park in the community that does not have any current playground equipment. No improvements have been done on the park.

❖ ***Dean Park***

Size: 2.52 Acres
Age Groups Serve: All Ages
Location: 526 W. Stodard Street – Charlotte, MI 48813




Facilities: Pavilion, restroom facilities, play structures and equipment, basketball court, and green space for open area activities.
Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 2) There are some barrier-free facilities at this park and the site does have barrier-free parking but some of the amenities within the park need to be upgraded to provide for universal accessibility. Playground equipment needs barrier-free safety surfacing and an accessible path to the basketball court could be constructed.

❖ ***Gateway Memorial Park***

Size: 0.2 Acres
Age Groups Serve: All Ages
Location: N. of Cochran Avenue (at Packard Highway) – Charlotte, MI 48813
Facilities: Entrance signage
Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 1) Site is currently where the entrance sign for the community is. There is no playground equipment and/or improvements at the site.

❖ ***Lincoln Park***

Size: 19 Acres
Age Groups Serve: All Ages
Location: 714 S. Lincoln Street – Charlotte, MI 48813
Facilities: 13,000 SFT skate park, 24-hole disc golf course, pavilion, skating rink (roller blade and ice) sledding hill, radio control car course, and restroom facility.
Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 3) Lincoln Park recently had some revisions done to the site that included the addition of a restroom facility; however, the site has gravel parking with no paved accessible spaces.
DNR Recreation Grants: 26-01595 (Lincoln Park Skate Park - 2002)

❖ ***Oak Park***

Size: 1.54 Acres
Age Groups Serve: All Ages
Location: Seminary/Clinton Streets – Charlotte, MI 48813
Facilities: Playground structure, gazebo, "old stone fountain", and open grass area.
Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 2) The site has had some universal design components installed but the site still lacks universal access throughout the entire park.

❖ ***Snell Park***

Size: 0.31 Acres
Age Groups Serve: All Ages
Location: 200-270 Upland Avenue – Charlotte, MI 48813
Facilities: Welcome sign and planting beds
Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 1) Site is currently a pocket park used as one of the thoroughfares into the community.

❖ ***Southridge Park***

Size: 0.34 Acres

Age Groups Serve: All Ages

Location: Clinton/Third Streets – Charlotte, MI 48813

Facilities: Play structures, basketball court, benches, and grills.

Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 2) Site has had some renovations and improvements to the park to increase ADA/ universal design. Other amenities at the park such as the basketball court need to be renovated or repurposed to current park standards.

**Eaton Township** does not currently have any properties that are owned or operated by the township; the lone park facility within the township is Crandell Park which is under the authority of Eaton County Parks.

The following is a summary of the current properties in **Carmel Township**.

❖ ***Undeveloped Land***

Size: 24 Acres

Age Groups Serve: All Ages

Location: Beech Street

Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 1) Site is currently undeveloped; the township is gathering information from the township residents on potential plans for the site. The current location is also where the township hall is now.

## School Facilities:

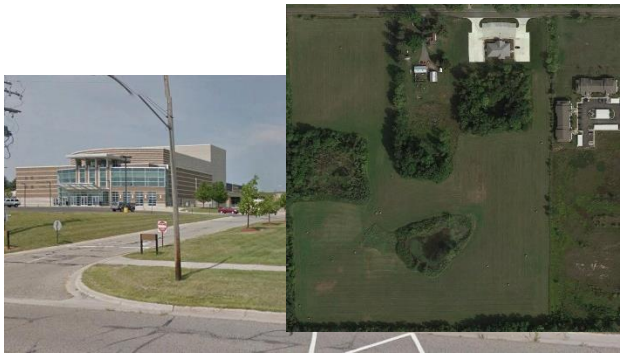
❖ ***Charlotte Senior High/Middle School***

Size: 111 Acres

Age Groups Serve: All Ages

Location: 378 State Street – Charlotte, MI 48813

Facilities: 6 basketball courts, 3 soccer fields, 3 baseball fields, 3 softball fields, 2 soccer fields, competition lap pool exercise pool (Charlotte Aquatic Center), auxiliary gym, climbing wall, wrestling area, 2 – indoor gymnasiums, Charlotte Performing Arts Center, Football stadium (seating for 4,500), and track.



Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 4) The High School and Middle School sites have recently been constructed. Minor improvements could be made to provide for added universal design with sidewalk connections and additional ADA parking.

- ***Charlotte Upper Elementary School***

  Size: 111 Acres

  Age Groups Serve: All Ages

  Location: 1068 Carlisle Highway – Charlotte, MI 48813

  Facilities: 6 basketball courts, 3 soccer fields, 3 baseball fields, 3 softball fields, 2 soccer fields, competition lap pool exercise pool (Charlotte Aquatic Center), auxiliary gym, climbing wall, wrestling area, 2 indoor gymnasiums, Charlotte Performing Arts Center, football stadium (seating for 4,500), and track.

  Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 4) The Upper Elementary School site is included in the Middle/High School complex. Minor improvements could be made to provide for added universal design with sidewalk connections and additional ADA parking.

- ***Galewood Elementary School***

  Size: 10 Acres

  Age Groups Serve: All Ages

  Location: 512 E. Lovett – Charlotte, MI 48813

  Facilities: 2 basketball courts, ballfield, soccer field, playground, and small indoor gymnasium

  Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 3) Currently the site is the Early Elementary building for the district. Improvements have been made to provide universal design and accessibility but additional improvements to the parking area could enhance universal access.

- ***Parkview Elementary School***

  Size: 33 Acres

  Age Groups Serve: All Ages

  Location: 301 E. Kalamo Street – Charlotte, MI 48813

Facilities: Basketball hoops, 2 ballfields, playground equipment and indoor gymnasium. Property also includes the Rotary Park which has 5 soccer fields and a storage facility.

Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 3) Site has had some improvements with accessibility with the parking lot connections to the building. Additional universal design components could be provided.

- ***Washington Elementary School***

  Size: 10 Acres

  Age Groups Serve: All Ages

  Location: 525 High Street – Charlotte, MI 48813

  Facilities: Includes open field for soccer, playground, and indoor gymnasium.

  Accessibility: (Accessibility Ranking – 3) Significant renovation have been made over the years to provide universal design and access to the building. Improvements could be made to the parking lot.

## Regional Recreation Facilities and Park:

Regional recreational facilities within the service area offer unique natural features that provide outdoor activities such as wildlife habitats, boating, hiking, and trails. Many of these amenities are readily available to the residents of the Charlotte community through Eaton County Parks, private regional recreational facilities, and through MDNR.

The City of Charlotte and CARC lies within Eaton County.

**a. Crandell Park – Eaton County Parks**

Size: 432 Acres

Age Groups Served: All Ages

Facilities: Undeveloped natural area, bird/wildlife watching, walking/running/hiking trails, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, non-motorized boating.

**b. Fitzgerald Park – City of Grand Ledge (Leased by Eaton County Parks)**

Size: 78 Acres

Age Groups Served: All Ages
Facilities: Parking area, restroom facilities, 4 picnic shelters, 2 picnic areas, playground, 2 ball fields, basketball court, sand volleyball court, horseshoe pit, 18-hole disk golf course, canoe landing and rental, fishing along the Grand River, trails for hiking and cross-country skiing, sledding hill, and nature center.

**c. Lincoln Brick Park – Eaton County Parks**
Size: 90 Acres
Age Groups Served: All Ages
Facilities: Parking area, 2 picnic shelters, playground, interpretive center/museum, and trails.

**d. Fox Memorial Park – Eaton County Parks**
Size: 160 Acres
Age Groups Served: All Ages
Facilities: Parking area, restroom facilities, 3 picnic shelters, playground areas, volleyball court, small lake with swimming beach, fishing dock, public observatory, and nature trails for hiking/cross-country skiing.

**e. Optimist Youth Camp – Eaton County Parks (Operated/Maintained by Charlotte Optimist Club)**
Size: 20 Acres
Age Groups Served: All Ages
Facilities: Parking area, tent camping, bunkhouse with wood stove and hand pump, restrooms, picnic shelter, nature trails, and a large wooded area (Groups Only).

**f. Duane Tirrell Roadside Park – Eaton County Parks**
Size: 0.5 Acres
Age Groups Served: All Ages
Facilities: An artesian well, picnic area, road shoulder parking lot.

**g. Butler Park Public Access – Eaton County Parks (Leased by City of Bellevue)**
Size: 0.5 Acres
Age Groups Served: All Ages
Facilities: Concrete boat ramp, picnic area, and parking lot.

**h. Dyer Kiln Historical Site – Eaton County Parks**
Size: 0.5 Acres
Age Groups Served: All Ages
Facilities: Historic kiln, gravel parking area, and picnic area.

**i. Keehne Environmental Area – Eaton County Parks**
Size: 17 Acres

Age Groups Served: All Ages
Facilities: Parking area, picnic areas, 2 ponds, boardwalk system, nature trials, and cross-country ski trails.

**Additional Parks in Eaton County:**

- Fulton Park (City of Lansing)
- Woodcreek Park (City of Lansing)
- Anderson Park (Delta Township)
- Delta Mills Park (Delta Township
- Erickson Park (Delta Township)
- Grand Woods Park (Delta Township)
- Hawk Meadow Park (Delta Township)
- Hunter's Orchard Park (Delta Township)
- Lake Delta (Delta Township)
- Leland Park (Delta Township)
- Lootens Park (Delta Township)
- Mount Hope Park (Delta Township)
- Player's Club Park (Delta Township)
- Sharp Park (Delta Township)
- Colonial Park (City of Grand Ledge)
- Elaine Dible Memorial Park (City of Grand Ledge)
- Alliance Park (City of Potterville)
- Potterville City Park (City of Potterville)
- Veterans Memorial Park (City of Potterville)
- Sunset Hills Park (City of Potterville)
- Biggs Park (City of Eaton Rapids)
- Hall Street Park (City of Eaton Rapids)
- Howe Memorial Field (City of Eaton Rapids)
- G.A.R. Island Park (City of Eaton Rapids)
- J.B. Bradley Park (City of Eaton Rapids)
- McArthur River Park (City of Eaton Rapids)
- Memorial Park (City of Eaton Rapids)
- Scott Munn Riverwalk (City of Eaton Rapids)
- County Fairgrounds (City of Charlotte)
- Jefferson Park (City of Bellevue)
- Washington Park (City of Bellevue)
- Rotary Park (City of Olivet)
- Township Park No. 1 (Hamlin Township)
- Township Park No. 2 (Hamlin Township)
- Lions Community Park (Village of Dimondale)
- Danford Island Park (Village of Dimondale)
- Fitzgerald Field (City of Grand Ledge)
- Island Park (City of Grand Ledge)
- Jaycees Park (City of Grand Ledge)
- Oak Park (City of Grand Ledge)
- Sunfield Village/Van Buren Park (Village of Sunfield

**Private Schools in the Area:**

- Charlotte Seven Day Adventist School
- Maple Country Amish School
- St. Mary's Elementary School

**Recreational Programming in the Charlotte Area:**

Programming in the Charlotte Area is primarily conducted through Charlotte Junior Orioles (CJO) and Charlotte Public Schools. Other volunteer groups in the community also provide recreational support that provides services for residents in the community.

**Recreation Inventory Analysis:**

Based on the site visit by ROWE, the following needs were identified at various locations:

**City of Charlotte Park Facilities:**

**Bennett Park** improvements made to its pathway connections in the park. The current playground equipment should be updated. The existing tennis courts are owned by the city and are located to the northwest of the park. The courts need drainage improvements and resurfacing. Camp Frances is a rustic campground that would benefit from improved trail links to the park that are accessible from the parking lot. Veterans Memorial Park is a part of Bennett Park and shares a border with the Battle Creek River. Bennett Park also includes a 5.4 mile hiking trail and 8 miles of mountain bike trails. The site is currently undeveloped and is used as a memorial by the community. Memorial Tree Park is also contained within Bennett Park and is currently tendered to by the city.

**Samuel Combs Industrial Park** is not a recreational park; but is used as an industrial park. There have been attempts previously to incorporate certain parts of the park as a recreational area; however due to the Combs Park Ordinance, the park is to remain in its natural form. No trees currently in the park can be removed. The city seeks to ensure that the ordinance is maintained and that the park remains a natural site.

**Dean Park** is a smaller community park that has some accessible parking, but most of the park amenities are not accessible. The basketball court should be updated along with some of the playground equipment.

The City of Charlotte has two smaller parks that are not used for recreation; those parks are **Gateway Memorial Park** and **Snell Park**. The parks currently have no playground equipment or amenities on the sites. At Snell Park there are currently tables and grill areas for community members to utilize

**Lincoln Park** has recently been renovated and has a new pavilion and restroom facilities but still has a gravel drive and parking lot. Accessible parking should be added. Connecting routes to the new restroom and pavilion areas will provide universal access. Across Shepherd Street is an extension to the park that includes a skating rink, sledding hill and RC-controlled cars track. This site can be updated to provide additional resources an amenities for the park facility.

**Oak Park** has had some amenities added to the site, however the playground equipment and connecting routes to the site need to be improved to allow for universal access. Most of the playground equipment does not have safety surface but rather has woodchips around them. This does not provide universal access to the amenities.

**Southridge Park** has had some improvements to some of the playground equipment to provide an ADA-accessible swing. The basketball court needs to be redeveloped due to the loss of a backboard. Additional elements of universal design can be incorporated into the site (i.e. safety surfacing around playground).

**Eaton Township Park Facilities:**
Eaton Township currently does not have dedicated park land that has park amenities on-site. The township has purchased 6 acres located behind the Dunham's Sports store on Lansing Road. Some of the benefits of the proposed site are the proximity to residential houses and the fact that a trail already exists across the site that connects the neighborhood to the sporting goods store. Some of the constraints include the location of the park behind an existing building. Access to the site can be provided from Kimberly Drive.

**Carmel Township Park Facilities:**
Carmel Township has recently acquired 24 acres of property behind the township offices on Beech Street. The site provides various opportunities for development and is relatively an open field. The township has been seeking input from the township residents as to the future development of the site.

**Charlotte Area Recreation Complex:**
The 22.71-acre site is in the Combs Industrial Park and is owned by the city but is leased to CARC on a 25-year lease. The site currently has a softball field, gravel drive, and parking lot. The site has universal design accommodations as well from the parking lot to the field. However, this was only Phase One of a multi-phase project with CARC. Other plans for the site include additional parking, softball fields, and lighting.

Partnerships with other organizations in the community (Charlotte Junior Orioles, Rotary Club), Boy Scout groups, and working with the Charlotte Public Schools are valuable to the continued success of providing recreational services to the area. Many of the additional recreational or programming opportunities exist through these partnerships. The Charlotte Aquatic Center and Charlotte Performing Arts Center are connected to the existing school facilities in Charlotte and are open to the community to use for various functions and programming.

As addressed in the survey results from the community, the respondents felt that the community needs to concentrate on making improvements and renovations to existing park facilities rather than acquiring new properties. The undeveloped properties that the communities have should be further discussed with residents about the specific needs of the area for specific recreational purposes. Based on those results, grant funds and fundraisers could be done to raise additional revenue to provide these improvements to existing facilities and expanding park opportunities in others.

**Standards for Need:**

The MDNR has adopted a set of standards to determine the need for certain recreational facilities based on the population of the communities. The following table compares the facilities located in the Charlotte community as identified in the Recreation Inventory to the state's recreational standards.

| Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative Inventory and State Recreation Standards | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Item** | **Public Facilities** | **School Facilities/Others** | **State Standards** | **Community Standards** | **Need 2019** |
| **Park Land (acres)** | 145.2 | 164.0 | 10/1,000 | 160.3 | Need |
| **Soccer Field** | - | 6 | 1/20,000 | 1 | Need |
| **Hiking Trail (mi.)** | 5.4 | - | 1/5,000 | 3 | Exceeds |
| **Playground** | 4 | 4 | 1/3,000 | 5 | Need |
| **Ball Fields** | - | 5 | 1/3,000 | 5 | Need |
| **Outdoor Basketball Court** | 2 | 3 | 1/5,000 | 3 | Need |
| **Ice Rink** | 1 | - | 1/20,000 | 1 | Meets |
| **Fishing Access (ft.)** | - | - | 1,000/1,000 | - | N/A |
| **Picnic Area (tables)** | | | 1/200 | | |
| **Outdoor Swimming Pools** | - | - | 1/40,000 | - | N/A |
| **Swimming Beaches** | - | - | 1/25,000 | - | N/A |
| **Sledding Hills** | 1 | - | 1/40,000 | 1 | Need |
| **Bicycle Trails/Walkways (mi.)** | 8 | - | 1/40,000 | 1 | Exceeds |
| **Tennis Courts** | 4 | - | 1/40,000 | 1 | Exceeds |

According to the information recorded during the initial site visit, there are certain amenities to park properties in the Greater Charlotte Community that need to be replaced or purchased to meet the state recreation standards. Some of these amenities include additional park land, public-owned soccer fields, and ball fields. Most of the deficiencies exist in areas where the school district currently provides these facilities for community recreation. Charlotte Public Schools has many of the park amenities such as ball fields, swimming facilities, and football/soccer fields on the sites of their schools.

Future development in Carmel and Eaton Township can also meet these needs. In addition to these categories, there is a lack of environmental education/nature-based facilities in the community. Acreage within the city may available by expanding recreational opportunities at Bennett Park for use.

As noted, most of the amenities and facilities for recreational programming are in the city limits of Charlotte. To make up the deficiencies that exist in the area, the community must be proactive in providing these services and recreational activities that are accessible to all the residents.

## Public Input and Planning Process

The Planning process for the recreation plan started with a kick-off meeting that was held on March 13, 2019. During that meeting, the goals and objectives, action plan, and information regarding the plan were discussed with the community and stakeholders. The previous recreation plan was also made available to review and updated based on the current facilities that have been redeveloped or improved. For public input, an online survey was developed and made available during a Charlotte Rising event, through public schools, the library, and using various methods of social media platforms. The survey allowed the residents of the City of Charlotte, Eaton Township, and Carmel Township to respond about the community park facilities and potential improvements. The survey was conducted from April 15 until May 15, 2019 and was made available through QR codes through cellular devices and by an online website. Results from the survey were shared with members of CARC. The survey results are included in the appendix. The cooperative (along with the City of Charlotte) worked with ROWE Professional Services Company to develop the action plan and goals and objectives. The survey results are included the appendix.

After the action plan, goals and objectives were developed, the plan was submitted back to the Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative (CARC) and to the individual communities for their review. The plan was advertised with a public notice and made available for a 30-day period from _____, until _____, 2019 at the Charlotte Area Public Library, Charlotte City Hall, Eaton Township Hall, and Carmel Township Hall. Electronic versions of the recreation plan were also made available on the websites of the City of Charlotte, Carmel, and Eaton Township. After the public had time to review the recreation plan, CARC and the various municipalities advertised and held a join public hearing for the plan on _____. The Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative (CARC) approved the recreation plan on _____,2019. The City of Charlotte approved the recreation plan on _____,2019. Carmel Township approved the recreation plan on _____,2019; and Eaton Township approved the recreation plan on _____,2019.

The final copy of the plan was uploaded to the MDNR website with a transmittal letter noting that copies had been sent to the local and regional planning agency for acceptance.

## Goals and Objectives

An overall guide for the recreation goals for the Charlotte area will be to leverage development, programming, and maintenance of park facilities by pursuing partnerships, grant funding, and volunteer efforts when appropriate.

### *Goal 1: Increase Non-Motorized Interconnections with Surrounding Communities.*

Continue the development of trails and non-motorized transportation alternatives that promote healthy living options. Work with the Eaton County Parks, Tri-County Regional Planning, and other communities to develop these routes that connect communities together by trails and pathways.

» Increased pedestrian traffic that would promote businesses in the communities.

» Propose potential internal walking routes around parks and local destinations to encourage additional use by residents.

» Collaborate with volunteer groups that would support programs that encourage non-motorized transportation.

### *Goal 2: Promote, Maintain, and Upgrade Existing Park Facilities.*

Based on the survey results collected from the residents in the Charlotte, Carmel Township and Eaton Township area, at least 50 percent of the respondents expressed a desire to upgrade the existing parks with another 22 percent that wanted to maintain existing parks and facilities. The responses speak to the fact that the community would rather see the parks improved and maintained than developing new facilities.

» Coordinate with block clubs/volunteer groups to increase park use and support.

» Conduct an inventory of existing equipment and create a priority list for repair or replacement.

» Provide park amenities that provide recreational access for all ages and abilities.

» Develop internal wayfinding in parks and upgrade existing signage.

» Develop a splash pad location.

» Ensure ADA accessibility/universal design at all park properties.

### *Goal 3: Pursue Grants, Partnerships, and Additional Funding Sources for Park Projects.*

With the increased cost of services in communities, additional resources are often sought to offset the cost of providing recreational services, maintenance, and operations. The Greater Charlotte community has many potential partnerships that would be useful in providing these additional resources to the community.

» Continue applying for grants to develop and renovate park properties.

» Developing recreational facilities based on sound fiscal policy, planning and sustainability.

» Encourage improved design of recreational facilities and equipment to reduce on-going maintenance costs.

» Continue partnerships with various organizations to assist with park clean-ups and potentially for handling minor improvements and renovations.

### *Goal 4: Evaluate Potential New Park Development Throughout the Community.*

Within the Charlotte community, there are properties that have been identified for potentially being used for park amenities. These locations are in the City of Charlotte, Eaton Township, and Carmel Township. The responses from the community were in favor of renovating and improving the current parks, so the intent of CARC should be not to acquire properties unless there is significant need expressed by the community.

» Conduct surveys and resident public hearings on potential park development.

» Work with various groups throughout the community to develop plans for recreational programming.

» Identify community recreational needs as vacant properties/undeveloped sites become available.

» Base new properties and opportunities on the ability to maintain the site and whether the achieved goal of recreational activities can be done.

## Action Plan

The Charlotte Area Recreation Cooperative, Eaton Township, Carmel Township, and City of Charlotte continue to offer quality recreational opportunities to support neighborhoods throughout the greater Charlotte community. Through the various park facilities, partnerships and volunteer organizations, residents have access to healthy lifestyle activities. The updated Parks and Recreation Plan will ensure preservation of recreational assets into the future and present new opportunities to improve the park systems.

The Action Plan is a framework for future decision making; the following recommendations are not listed in priority order. They are based on the goals and objectives listed within the plan:

- **Park-Specific Recommendations:** These include a listing of all potential projects for all the parks in the community.
- **System-Wide Initiatives:** Another important aspect of the planning process involves system-wide initiatives in order to accomplish objectives. These include projects such as ADA upgrades, and consistent enhancements.

### *Bennett Park/Camp Frances/Memorial Tree Park/Veteran's Memorial Park*

While Bennett Park has many amenities that support a large recreational facility, there are some features that could be improved:

- Renovate tennis courts near Bennett Park
- Redevelop playground equipment for universal design and access
- Renovate Bennett Park Trail

Many of the amenities around the park are still in good condition; but proper maintenance should be done to ensure the continued usage of the equipment. Residents also expressed that Bennett Park is the most familiar park.

### *Samuel A. Combs Park*

Combs Park has been listed as a business/industrial park. While there are open fields, agreement between the former owner and the city stipulated that the site remain natural with an ordinance protecting trees. Further options for the site include allowing the site to remain natural and use additional landscaping to highlight the natural features. Workers nearby currently use the park as a seating area to enjoy the outdoor scenic views.

### *Dean Park*

Dean Park is a community park that has seen some improvements to the parking lot area but other improvements for universal access and design need to be implemented.

- Renovate or replace playground equipment
- Renovate basketball court
- Provide connecting routes between playground equipment in the park
- Improve non-motorized routes (sidewalk connections) from the community

### *Gateway Memorial Park*

The site could be important to the development of a trailhead location or for non-motorized connections to other locations throughout the area. Additional signage may also be included (along with plant material).

### *Lincoln Park*

Lincoln Park has recently undergone some improvements that have provided modern restroom facilities along with pavilion and seating areas. However, the park could be used for additional recreational programming as well as improvements at of the skate park.

- Ensure universal design/accessibility by park amenities
- Install playground equipment on the site (ages 1-5 and 6-12)
- Adjust lighting at skate park

The park sits in the middle of a community; improving routes to the site would increase pedestrian traffic from the surrounding neighborhood.

### *Oak Park*

Oak Park is located close to downtown and has been classified as a community park facility.

- Renovate playground equipment
- Installation of safety surfacing around playground equipment
- Construct/install restroom facilities on-site
- Gazebo needs renovation

### *Snell Park*

Snell Park is a small pocket park located west of I-69 near M-50 and E. Shepherd Street. Snell Park is exactly ½ mile south of downtown; the development of a connecting route to the downtown area could be created at the park. Also, developing a gateway entrance for a potential trail would be a nice highlight for this site.

### *Southridge Park*

Southridge Park has previously had some site work done that has provided additional amenities to provide ADA accessibility to equipment. Additional improvements to the park include:

- Ensure universal design for all playground equipment
- Repair basketball court and hoops or repurpose basketball court into pickleball court
- Improve sidewalk routes around the site

Minor improvements to Southridge Park could be coordinated through volunteer organizations to make the site more universally accessible and updating the playground equipment.

### *Charlotte Area Recreation Complex*

Phase One of the complex was recently completed; however there are plans to add additional amenities to the site as well.

- Additional sports fields (i.e. Softball/Baseball)

- Installation of playground equipment
- Construction of restroom facilities
- Construct new pavilion on-site

### *Undeveloped Properties in the Community*

CARC and the municipalities of Carmel Township, Eaton Township, and the City of Charlotte have properties that are undeveloped that could be used for park property. The property behind the township hall in Carmel Township, and the property in Eaton Township need to be discussed within the community. Community stakeholder meetings can be conducted to review the specific needs for recreational programming.

Eaton Township does not currently have any properties but are constantly reviewing new opportunities to expand parks and recreational opportunities for the residents. Crandell Park does provide some recretaional opportunities for residents. Crandell Park currently is operated by Eaton County but it is in the township.

Carmel Township has been working on developing survey questions to dispense to the community for their input for the 24-acre site behind the township hall. Results from this survey should be availble before the next plan review.

### *System-Wide Initiatives*

For the future success of the recreational activities, there are some system-wide actions that must be accomplished for the parks system to be productive. Some of those items include programming, land acquisition, and safety.

**Programming:**
As discussed, CARC does not coordinate programs in the community and was developed to provide facilities. There are entities within the community that work with various programming and services that assist with healthy living and lifestyle choices. Most recreational programming is offered by the Charlotte Public Schools, HGB Hospital – AL!VE, and volunteer groups (Charlotte Junior Orioles and 4H). Some of these programs through Charlotte Pulbic Schools include swimming, sports, and the performing arts. Programming can be accomplished by reviewing the trends of the community members and working with various organizations and volunteer organizations to discover which groups and organizations would be best qualified to provide specific programming.

**Land Acquisition:**
In the future, CARC and municipalities should seek to acquire properties based on need and a plan to provide recreational services that are currently not being provided. The survey responders expressed a desire to see more properties improved rather then other properties acquired without a set plan.

**Safety:**
To promote usage of park properties, the community can address maintenance items promptly, provide oversignt and maintain clear visibilty in all park properties and detering vandalism in park properties.

Working with neighborhood groups/watches and with the public safety (police department) in the community are essential to ensuring that all residents and community members are safe and secured while they are in the park properties.

### *Programs*

To develop educational programs, the community should work with other groups (educational organizations) and others to acquire sources of funding, either through the MDNR or other philanthropic organizations, that could aid and maintain funding for improvements and various programs. These services of outdoor educational programming would best be served through the schools.

### *Partnerships with School Districts*

While the Charlotte Public Schools and CARC have worked together previously, the relationship with the school district should continue and CARC should work to provide additional resources and opportunities for the district to work with the cooperative. The school district also has a lot of recreational field acreage (baseball and softball diamonds, swimming facilities, performing arts, football/soccer fields, and open fields). Recently, Charlotte Public Schools has created a position to handle community relations. Recently, CARC awareded a grant to the Charlotte Public Schools for the purchase of athletic equipment for the athletic program. CARC and the school district can cooperate on programs and use of public facilites.

### *Recreational Trail Connections*

The Eaton County Parks and Recreation Five-Year Master Plan identifies the interest for developing county-wide pathway/trail systems. The intent is to work with the county planning commission, road commission, and various local organizations to lay out various trails that would promote county-wide access and transportation alternatives. Some of the amenities that would be located at these regional trailhead sites include trail maps, benches, mile markers, and interpretive signage with directional information. Along with regional trail connections, CARC also should investigate developing trail systems within the Charlotte area that promote healthy living and activity. The current sidewalk and pedestrian access in the community can be repaired and improved to ensure universal design and accessibility.

## Conclusion

CARC, the City of Charlotte, Eaton Township, and Carmel Township continue to provide recreational opportunities by creating community through people and parks. The potential for expanded services, park properties, and increased partnerships offer great opportunities for the community to continue to engage the residents. By implementing the changes outlined in the recreation plan, CARC and the various municipalities represented with the cooperative seek to promote active living and additional recreational programming within the community.

### *Funding*

Various grant opportunities and programs exist that are useful in leveraging funding for projects and property acquisition. A summary of funding resources in the state of Michigan include:

- Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF) – Provides funding assistance for the purchase of land (or interest in land) for recreation or protection of land because of its environmental importance or scenic beauty and the development of recreation facilities. This assistance is directed at creating and improving outdoor recreational opportunities and providing protection to valuable natural resources. The improvement grants are between $15,000 and $500,000 with a required minimum local match of 25 percent. Acquisition grants vary depending upon the value of property and local match amount; therefore, there is not a minimum or maximum amount. This grant is ideal for implementing community park plans and for land acquisition in the future. Applications are due in April and September of each year for acquisition projects and April of each year for development projects.

- Michigan Recreation Passport – Provides capital improvement plans and development projects in communities throughout Michigan. Projects must be in public recreation use for the life of the project rather than perpetuity. Indoor recreation facilities and existing park locations are eligible for the grant. The primary focus is on improving and renovating existing parks. The application deadline is April 1st, with a November grant award announcement. Duration of the grant usually runs three years. Minimum grant requests must be $7,500 with a maximum request of $75,000; there is a 25 percent match by the local municipality or organization. The 25 percent match can either be cash/credit (for locally assumed costs including labor and equipment) donations of goods and services from non-government entities, cash donations from non-governmental entities, or repurposed land.

- Special Millage – A property tax millage can be used to finance specific park and recreation projects such as parkland improvements and facility upgrades. A millage is an effective method to divide costs over time amongst all the taxpayers in the community to provide matching grant funds or finance projects outright. A millage allows more flexibility in how the money is utilized than a bond.

- Community Forestry Grants – To provide information and technical assistance to municipal governments, schools, nonprofit organizations, and volunteer groups for urban and community forest activities such as tree inventories, management plans, planting, and other maintenance activities. Criteria: Projects that develop or enhance urban and community forestry resources in Michigan. Project categories are: Management and Planning, Education and Training, Library Resources, and

Tree Planting. Applications are announced each summer (June and July), submitted to the Forest Resources Division, and then reviewed by division staff. Applications are approved, adjusted, or denied. Applicants are notified, and agreements signed. Grant requests may be up to $20,000, depending on the project type. Contact Forest Resources Division/Kevin Sayers at (517) 284-5898 or sayersk@michigan.gov.

- DTE Energy Tree Planting Grants – These grants are intended to increase the number of properly planted, established, and maintained trees within the service territory of DTE Energy. Applications are due annually each fall. Visit www.michigan.gov/ucf. Grant requests may be up to $3,000 each.

- Aquatic Habitat Grant Program (AHCP) – The AHCP began in October 2013 and will operate each year that funding is available. A total of approximately $1,250,000 will be available for the second-round of 2014 grant funding from the Game and Fish Protection Fund. The AHCP's purpose is to improve fish and other aquatic organism's populations by protecting intact and rehabilitating degraded aquatic habitat. Grant applications are due in November with award information available in April.

- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) – LWCF provides funding assistance for communities to acquire and develop land for outdoor recreation. The minimum award is $15,000 and the maximum of $500,000 with a 50 percent local match. The eligibility criterion emphasizes preservation of natural resources such as waterways. This grant is ideal for implementing community park plans for land acquisition in the future.

- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) – TAP is a competitive grant program that funds projects such as non-motorized paths, streetscapes, and historic preservation of transportation facilities that enhance Michigan's intermodal transportation system and provide safe alternative transportation options. These investments support place-based economic development by offering transportation choices, promoting walkability, and improving the quality of life. The program uses federal transportation funds designed by Congress for these types of activities. TAP grant funding requires matching funds of at least 20 percent of the eligible project cost.

- Public-Private or Public-Public Partnerships – Reduced funding at the public and private sector has created a need for various partnerships between public and private entities, as well as between two or more public entities, to accommodate specialized large-scale recreation demands. Crowd funding on-line has been a growing source to reach individuals as well. Several examples are provided below:
  https://www.rotary.org/myrotary/en/take-action/apply-grants
  https://kaboom.org/grants
  http://homedepotfoundation.org/page/grants
  http://www.tgci.com/funding-sources/michigan
  http://www.crowdfundingmi.com/1-2/

- The Michigan Municipal League has launched a website, www.crowdfundingmi.com, which will provide extensive background information, how to get started, as well as highlight successful funding

projects and serve as a clearing house for Michigan Investment crowdfunding projects as they develop. The website will also act as a portal to Fundraise and Localstake, two existing leading crowdfunding platforms. Although they both serve as web portals for crowdfunding investment, Fundraise lets you invest directly in local real estate. It will connect investors directly to individual properties online. Localstake helps connect businesses looking for capital with local investors.