

THREE OAKS PARKS & RECREATION 5-YEAR PLAN 2023-2027

A JOINT PROJECT OF THE VILLAGE OF THREE OAKS AND THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP



BERRIEN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank You!

The participation and cooperation of community leaders, residents and members of civic organizations in the preparation of the Three Oaks Parks & Recreation 5-Year Plan 2023-2027 – a Joint Effort of the Village of Three Oaks and Three Oaks Township is greatly appreciated and we thank everyone who participated in its development. The content of this Plan reflects on-going collaboration between residents, stakeholders, Village Council, and the Township Board.

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ALSO THANKS TO

Aidan Sullivan - Architectural Intern 2022
Gigi Carroll – Parks & Recreation Board 2019-2022
Colleen Newquist – Village Council 2018-2022

THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP

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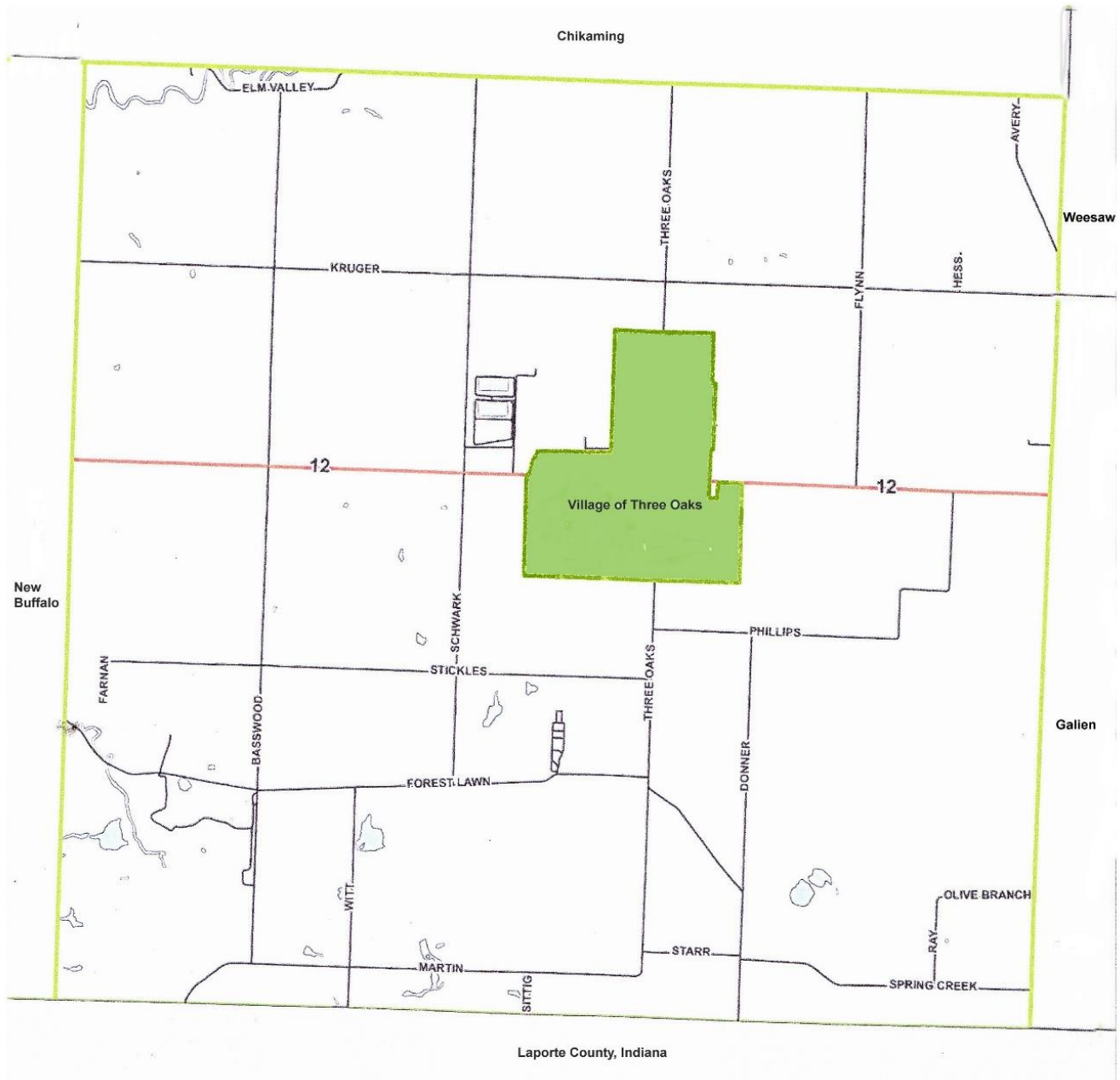


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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *Three Oaks Parks & Recreation Plan 5-Year Plan 2023-2027* (Three Oaks Parks & Recreation Plan). This plan reflects a vision for the future of Three Oaks' parks and recreation facilities, their operations, maintenance, and enhancements for the next five (5) years. It serves as a roadmap of future recreation facilities and programs by considering existing parks and programs in the Village and Township and the anticipated demand for additional or improved recreation facilities.

This plan forms the basis for potential recreation grant funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and other agencies and foundations. Three Oaks' Plan was prepared in accordance with MDNR's *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Spaces and Greenway Plans*.

Both Three Oaks Township and the Village of Three Oaks appreciate the significant contribution of recreation to the quality of life and physical health of its citizens. This recognition is manifested in the desire to combine the Township and Village parks and recreation efforts with this plan being the first formal joint effort. By this action both hope to improve the local park systems, recreational amenities, and preservation of natural areas.

This *Three Oaks Parks & Recreation Plan* provides a policy and decision-making guide regarding future improvements. Key planning issues are identified, a clear set of goals and objectives is outlined, and specific implementation projects are identified. This plan reflects this community's deep concern for the natural beauty of its surroundings, a strong commitment to strengthen the sense of community, commitment to the health and well-being of its citizens, and a desire to heighten awareness of local and regional amenities. It outlines the preferred future for parks and recreation and a comprehensive plan to realize it. This plan will focus on particular challenges rather than restrict the effort to a more general overview.



THREE OAKS' PLANNING PROCESS

KEY STEPS

The *Three Oaks Parks & Recreation Plan* was prepared by the Three Oaks Parks & Recreation Board, with technical assistance and active involvement of Village and Township Administration.

The preliminary work involved review by the board of the previous Village and Township park and recreation plans as well as other community recreational documents. The board then reviewed the facility inventory, amenities, and accessibility. Following that the board sought to identify the parks and recreation facility inventory, catalog the amenities and update accessibility assessments, with updated demographic and community profiles in mind.

Citizen input through an online survey, public engagements and a public hearing also contributed to this Plan. Following initial discussion with planning commissions in the Village and Township, and a draft Plan review by the Parks and Recreation Board, the Three Oaks Parks & Recreation Plan was submitted to Three Oaks Village Council and Three Oaks Township Board for adoption. Throughout the process, all meetings were open to the public. Notices were posted beforehand, and where required, advertised in the newspaper, as provided by the Open Meetings Act. The planning process kicked-off in March of 2022, and finished with the adoption of the Plan in December, 2022.

This Plan will act as Three Oaks' play book for community building as it relates to parks and recreation over the next five years.

IMPORTANCE OF PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEMS

Both the Village and Township take pride in this park and recreation system as a healthy system affords residents and visitors with a higher quality of life standard. The benefits of creating and maintaining a quality park and recreation system include:

- Greater opportunities for a healthy lifestyle,
- Natural beauty,
- Environmental gains and benefits,
- Rises in adjacent property values,
- Encouragement of economic development, which in turn, can further attract investments,
- Social and fun,
- Sense of place and identity

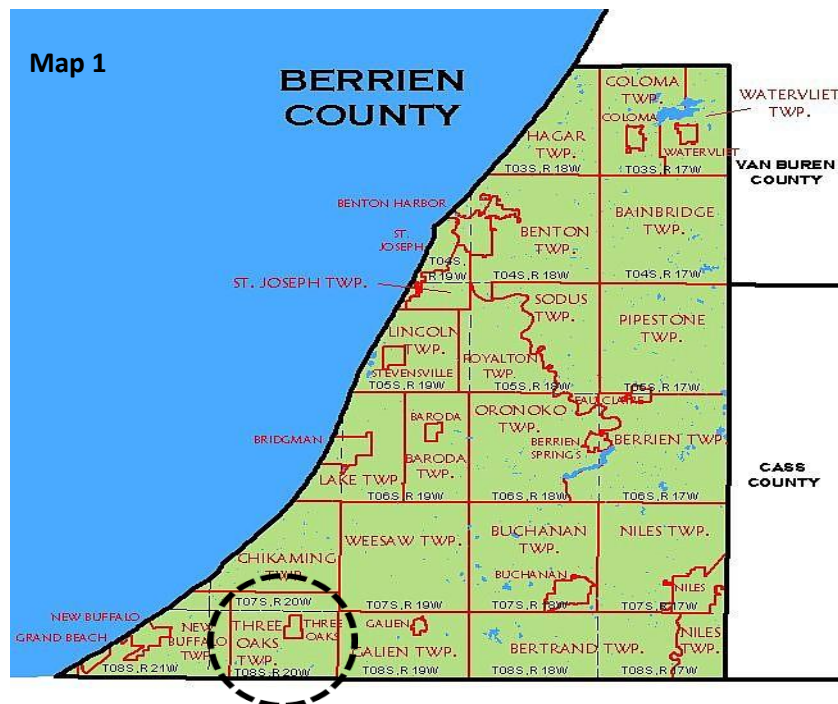
The intent of this Plan is to afford all members of Three Oaks the opportunity to participate and enjoy the parks and recreation facilities, and to provide gathering spaces for community building.

CHAPTER 2

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Three Oaks Township is located in the southwest corner of Berrien County and is adjacent to LaPorte County, Indiana. The Township includes 23 square miles, compared to the 36 square miles common in most Lower Michigan townships. The Village of Three Oaks, a municipality distinct from the Township is situated in the center of the Township and occupies approximately one square mile. It is the only Village in Three Oaks Township. The community is approximately 6 miles east of the City of New Buffalo, 25 miles south of the St Joseph/Benton Harbor area, 62 miles southwest of Kalamazoo, and 25 miles northwest of South Bend, Indiana. The City of Chicago is roughly 65 miles to the west.

Map 1. Illustrates the Township's location in a regional context.



The Township and Village have enjoyed a history of collaboration, and by uniting the master plans, the joint planning efforts are strengthened and are expected to continue into the future.

The area that became Three Oaks was initially settled in 1850, with its first business serving the rail line between Chicago and Detroit. Smaller communities once existed in the Township, but now in name only. Originally called Chamberlain's Siding, after founder Henry Chamberlain, the settlement became a village in 1867 and was renamed Three Oaks after three distinctive trees near the railway that engineers and passengers used as a marker.

Throughout its history, Three Oaks has been known for its patriotism. In 1899 the community raised \$1,400 (equivalent to over \$49,000 in 2022) for the Dewey Cannon Memorial to the battleship USS Maine. This was the largest amount per capita of any community in the country, which awarded the cannon to Three Oaks. Placed in a village park in downtown Three Oaks, later named Dewey Cannon Park, on June 28, 1900 it was dedicated by President William McKinley who attended a ceremony in the park along with heroes of the Spanish-American War. Continuing this patriotism the community hosts the World's largest Flag Day Parade each year since 1951. Festivities include a weekend of events in the parks, such as 'Art in the Park', fireworks, pageants, and concerts.

With a strong retail base, park space, institutions, and public facilities, the Village continues to act as a draw for residents and visitors alike. Named as one of the best Midwest small towns to visit by the Chicago Tribune in 2022, Three Oaks is known throughout the world for the Apple Cider Century bicycle ride, which traverses the township roads and into neighboring New Buffalo Township and La Porte County, IN. This event draws over 6000 visitors to the community, and utilizes several of the parks for hosting the riders and families and entertainment.

Three Oaks has become a major wedding destination for SW Michigan drawing folks from all around the area and Chicagoland. Among others, major venues include Journeyman Distillery, Froehlich's, the Three Oaks Community Garden, Carver and Dewey Canon Parks located right in the heart of downtown, Three Oaks has become a preeminent wedding spot.

The classic 1989 holiday film, Prancer, was set right in Three Oaks, and much of the filming was done on site throughout the Village and Township. We continue to celebrate that holiday spirit with an annual lighting of the gazebo in Dewey Canon Park.

This community is ideally situated to take advantage of the abundant historical, cultural and institutional facilities located in the surrounding communities as well as the abundant natural features and resources of Three Oaks.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS – TOWNSHIP

Three Oaks Township is a rural southwest Michigan community defined by agriculture, rivers and streams, pastoral view sheds, open spaces, and proximity to the Lake Michigan shore. Over 10,200 acres, or 69% of the Township's area is classified as being agricultural based on property classification information.

Residential development in the Township has primarily been limited to scattered single family acreage home-sites fronting on major roads. No quadrant has experienced significantly more residential growth than another. The Township has remained rural and has not experienced considerable demand for suburban-type residential development, such as sprawling subdivisions or conventional strip malls.

Commercial land uses are concentrated along US-12, the main east-west corridor through the Township. These uses are generally intended to serve residents of the local community. Larger establishments exist outside the Township.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS – VILLAGE

The Village of Three Oaks is a traditional small town with an historic core, grid street system, and abundant amenities. It is the geographic, political and cultural center of the community and is more densely developed than the Township, and includes a walkable downtown area. The main street area, along Elm Street, includes a strong retail base, service establishments, restaurants and entertainment venues. There are two parks centrally located in the business district which draws many activities and offers visitors a relaxing spot while enjoying all the Village has to offer.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS – OVERALL

With the passage of recreational marijuana facility ordinances in the Village in 2020, and ordinances in the Township currently in the planning stages, the development impact is unknown.

SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

In our parks and recreation planning effort, it's helpful to review trends in population change and key characteristic of the community.

Three Oaks Township overall has experienced population decline. Although the decreases are minor according to the US Census. Between 1970 and 2020 Three Oaks Township lost 492 residents. For many townships in Michigan, this was a time of rapid suburbanization. However, Three Oaks Township's population loss is generally consistent with trends in the surrounding rural areas, and appears to be caused by regional factors beyond the control of local governments. (The population of the Village accounts for approximately 57% of the total population.)

Three Oaks Township		
Table 1 Population Change		
Year	Population	%change
1970	2894	
1980	3045	5%
1990	2952	-3%
2000	2949	-1%
2010	2574	-14%
2020	2402	-7%

Table 2 Age Distribution in Three Oaks Township of the total population of 2402 persons, 1370 reside in the Village.

Three Oaks Township, Berrien County, Michigan table 2						
	Total		Male		Female	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Total population	2,402	±302	1,251	±246	1,151	±146
AGE						
Under 5 years	126	±52	65	±42	61	±30
5 to 9 years	261	±135	197	±130	64	±36
10 to 14 years	118	±40	56	±28	62	±26
15 to 19 years	99	±47	23	±14	76	±44
20 to 24 years	113	±50	66	±33	47	±34
25 to 29 years	201	±87	81	±42	120	±75
30 to 34 years	114	±56	75	±45	39	±19
35 to 39 years	66	±31	33	±20	33	±18
40 to 44 years	147	±46	77	±29	70	±26
45 to 49 years	144	±61	68	±35	76	±36
50 to 54 years	124	±43	68	±29	56	±26
55 to 59 years	182	±75	98	±65	84	±28
60 to 64 years	279	±68	170	±53	109	±37
65 to 69 years	204	±60	106	±29	98	±45
70 to 74 years	59	±23	15	±11	44	±19
75 to 79 years	91	±34	40	±20	51	±22
80 to 84 years	46	±19	6	±8	40	±17
85 years and over	28	±16	7	±8	21	±12
SUMMARY INDICATORS						
Median age (years)	44	±3.6	42.4	±6.6	45.2	±3.9
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	108.7	±24.1	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)

SOURCE: data.census.gov ACS 2020

Table 3

Population by Age Range – Village Only

In Village of Three Oaks, Berrien County Michigan

Total Population 1370 ACS 2020

Measure	Value	Margin of Error (MoE)
Under 5 years	5.9%	± 2.3%
Under 18 years	27.7%	± 7.7%
18 years and over	72.3%	± 7.7%
65 years and over	16.2%	± 4.3%

To put this rate of population change into perspective, it is appropriate to compare the community with its neighbors. Table 4 compares a 40 year population in Three Oaks Township to that of other communities in southern Berrien County, and is based on US Census information.

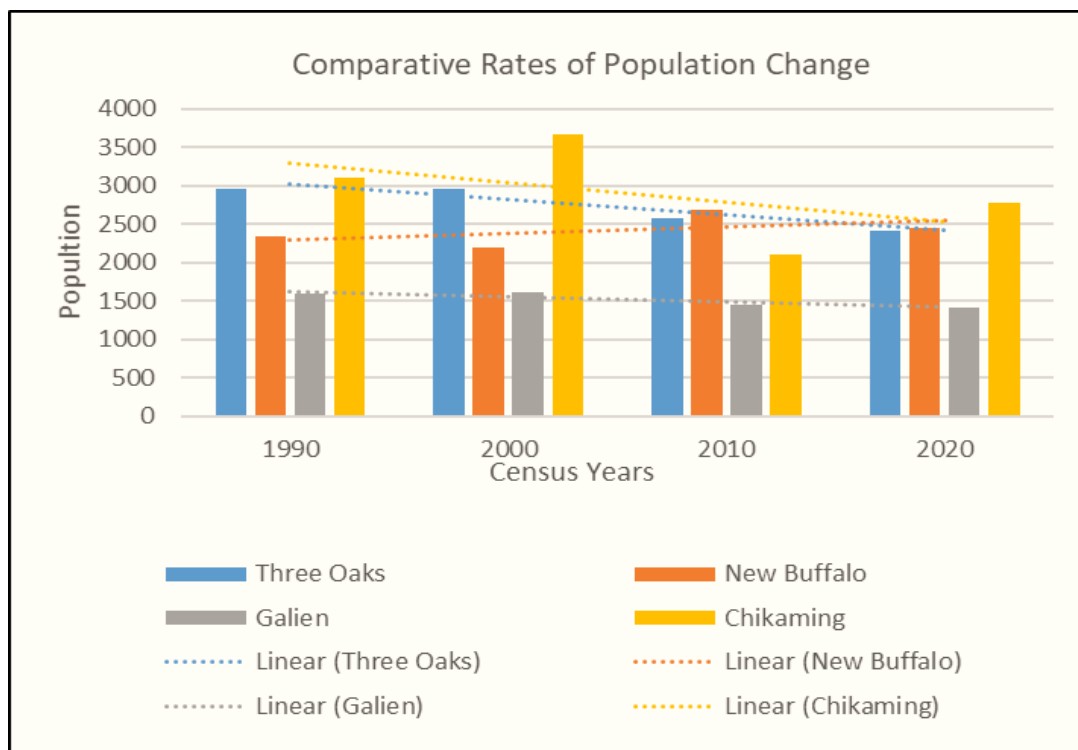


Table 6 Population with a Disability

This chart indicates the estimated number of persons with a disability residing in the Township. In planning for improvements to parks it is important to consider the needs of those with disabilities. The 2020 Census reports that approximately 15% of Three Oaks Township residents have some disability, and approximately 10% have an ambulatory disability. Comparatively, of the total Michigan population of 10,000,000 per the 2020 Census, 2.3 million, or 23% have some disability.

In summer months, the entry of a tourist population may increase the number of persons with disabilities. The Township and Village have noted that the senior citizen population in the area swells during tourist season, which may increase the need for facilities designed for those with some mobility limitations.

Three Oaks Township, Berrien County,		
Population with a disability		
	Estimate	Margin of Error
Total civilian noninstitutionalized	356	±109
SEX		
Male	177	±62
Female	179	±67
AGE		
Under 5 years	0	±11
5 to 17 years	28	±20
18 to 34 years	29	±18
35 to 64 years	155	±72
65 to 74 years	84	±52
75 years and over	60	±28
WITH AMBULATORY	233	±80
Population under	5	±7
Population 18 to 34	7	±11
Population 35 to 64	97	±55
Population 65 years	124	±53

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

PUBLIC ACT 156 OF 1917: PUBLIC RECREATION SYSTEM, POWERS OF MUNICIPALITY is an act authorizing cities, villages, counties, townships and school districts to operate systems of public recreation and playgrounds.

SECTION A: Any City Village County or Township may:

1. Operate a system of public recreation and playgrounds
2. Acquire, equip, and maintain land, buildings or other recreational facilities, employ a superintendent of recreation and assistants.
3. Vote and expend funds for the operation of such a system.

The joint Village of Three Oaks- Three Oaks Township organizational structure in regards to recreation is shown in the following diagram. Providing park and recreation opportunities to the community begins at the top with the residents, who entrust these assets to the Village Council, Township Board and The Parks and Recreation Board, with staff support.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE





Timbertown USA
Watkins Park

KEY RECREATION PLAYERS

1. Township Board

A five (5) member board, maintains final authority over all recreation facilities in the Township. Final authority over joint recreational activities is shared equally with the Village Council.

2. Village Council

A seven (7) member board, the Council maintains final authority over all recreation facilities in the Village. Final authority over joint recreational activities is shared equally with the Township Board.

3. Park & Recreation Board

The Three Oaks Parks and Recreation Board serves as an advisory body to oversee the management and budgetary decisions regarding parks in the community. The Board meets once per month and includes representation from the Village Council, and Village and Township members. Currently the board is comprised of six village members and one township member. This mix is meant to promote cross-jurisdictional and regional prosperity.

4. Residents, Volunteers and Community Organizations.

Three Oaks strongly relies on volunteers and community organizations to maintain a quality parks system for the community. Volunteer citizens not only make up the Three Oaks Parks and Recreation Board, but also assist with the planning and organization of community events and festivals held within the parks. Contributing organizations include but are not limited to The Rotary Club of Harbor Country, The Three Oaks Masonic Lodge, Three Oaks American Legion Post 204, Three Oaks Spokes Club, and Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Their continued investment and dedication to parks is a vital component to the vitality and beautification of the Three Oaks park lands. Additionally, maintenance and upgrades to the facilities desired by the Board are often completed or implemented by volunteers in order to reduce the cost of the projects.

FUNDING

Primary funding for the maintenance and programming of the Village of Three Oaks' recreation facilities comes almost entirely from sub-accounts of the general fund. Alternative sources include donations from individuals / private organizations and grants awarded for specific projects, all of which are continuously pursued.

Table 6 details the Village budget expenditures. Overall, the 2023 budget represents an increase from previous budgets.

The Township does not currently have a formal Parks and Recreation budget, and funding is with general fund dollars. The Township Board oversees budgeting and allocates the appropriate funding based on projected needs.

Table 7 details the Township expenditure history. Overall, the 2023 projected expenditures projected by the Township Board represents an increase from previous years.

Currently, throughout Three Oaks, there are no independent revenue sources for parks and recreation, such as user fees, millage, etc. with the exception of small fees for facility use in three of the Parks: Dewey Cannon, Watkins, and Carver. The majority of revenue is transfers from the general funds with only a small amount coming from independent revenue sources.

The Township and Village of Three Oaks have enjoyed a partnership regarding provision of services in the community to jointly improve quality of life for residents of both jurisdictions. In the past the Township has assisted the Village in funding facilities or activities. Two examples are 1) the Watkins Park Ball Field lighting, and the Carver Park Pavilion.

The Village and /or Township may seek a small millage to help fund the parks and recreation budget. Any decision on whether or not to seek a millage will depend on the fiscal constraints of the general fund (s) and the specific needs of the parks and recreation goals expected to be realized both in the near future and long-term.

GRANT HISTORY

Neither the Village of Three Oaks or Three Oaks Township have received any grants from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Recreation Passport Grant Program, Clean Michigan Initiative Recreation Bond Fund or the 1988 Recreation Bond Fund. However, both have graciously been the recipient of grants from Southwest Michigan Realtors, The Pokagon Fund, and Rotary District 6360, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), Three Oaks Spokes Club, and the Masonic Lodge. The contributions from these entities have enabled Three Oaks to successfully complete parks and recreation projects and improve the quality of the Three Oaks' recreation system.

VILLAGE

TABLE 6 PARKS & RECREATION
BUDGET EXPENDITURE HISTORY

<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>	<u>EXPENDITURES</u>
2023 (PROJECTED)	\$44,925
2022	\$37,442
2021	\$43,026
2020	\$38,119
2019	\$25,345
2018	\$35,583
2017	\$65,122

TOWNSHIP

TABLE 7
PARKS & CULTURE
BUDGET EXPENDITURE HISTORY

<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>	<u>EXPENDITURES</u>
2022-2023 (BUDGET)	\$3,500
2021-2022	\$2,765
2020-2021	\$1,869
2019-2020	\$3,440
2018-2019	\$4,314
2017-2018	\$3,161
2016-2017	\$7,465

CHAPTER 3

GREEN & BLUE FRAMEWORK

Understanding Three Oaks' environmental setting is critical when planning for recreation facilities and the connections between them. The location, topography, and existing environmental features all influence the types of facilities, amenities, and programs that are best suited for implementation.

The Green and Blue Framework chapter describes the benefits and challenges associated with Three Oaks' location and natural resource features. Also included within this chapter is the Three Oaks existing formal park system, with an inventory of the current recreational amenities provided at each facility and a description of recreational facilities that are available outside of Three Oaks. The existing recreational facilities and land devoted to such uses then provides the backdrop for analysis and comparison to MDNR standards to determine where the Three Oaks is excelling or may have room for improvement.

Additionally, this chapter follows a holistic, regional approach to environmental quality, transportation linkages, parks and recreational facilities, and other assets. The Village of Three Oaks and Three Oaks Township seeks collaboration with not only each other and Berrien County, but also within the larger region of southwest Michigan.

NATURAL FEATURES FRAMEWORK

Three Oaks green & blue framework highlights the Three Oaks' many natural assets, including open spaces, waterbodies, and wetlands.

WATERWAYS AND DRAINAGE

Three Oaks Township boasts several tributaries and one river that navigate through the terrain. The Galien River rises from the outflow of Dayton Lake in Bertrand Township and flows west from the Village of Galien. The Galien passes through the northwest corner of the Township. The South Branch of the Galien River, a separate tributary, rises in northern Indiana and flows north through the Township's southwest corner. The other significant tributary in the Township is Spring Creek, which rises in the northeast corner of LaPorte County, Indiana, flowing north from Galena Township into Three Oaks Township. Several small inland lakes exist in the Township and cover approximately 70 acres, or 0.5% of the Township's total land area of just over 23 square miles. Overall in Berrien County there are 8,141 acres of surface water, accounting for 2.2% of the total area of the county. The Township portion of the County's water surface is only 0.8%

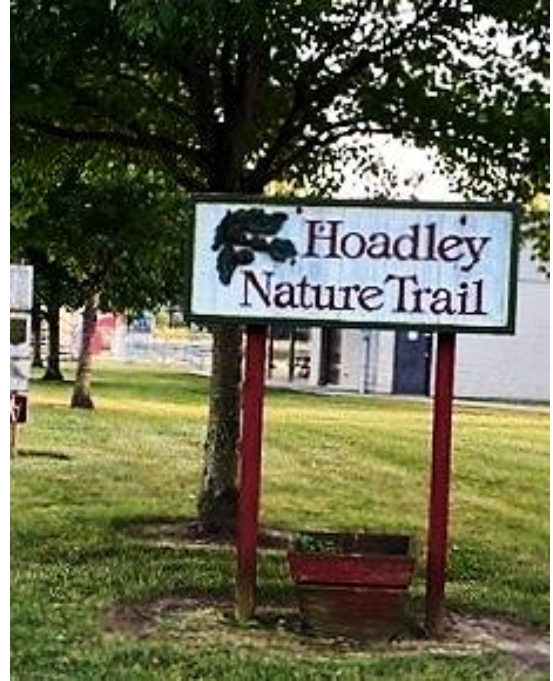
The lakes in the Township have the potential to provide aesthetic and recreational values while also functioning as natural retention and groundwater recharge basins. Public access points are not currently provided, but might be to offer citizens the opportunity to enjoy these water features.

Within the village there are no significant natural waterways, except for a few minor creeks on the northwest side of the community. The Schwark Drain, a manmade watercourse built to ease the drainage problems, cuts across the southwest side of town, through Watkins Park. Water in Three Oaks eventually drains into the Galien River and then into Lake Michigan.

WOODLANDS

Since so much of the land around in the Township is used for farming, large woods or forests are not common. However, there are remnant forested areas, primarily consisting of deciduous trees. The bulk of these woodlands appear to correspond with wetland areas or follow the tributaries. Approximately 4,446 acres or 30% of the Township, were classified in the 1992 National Land Cover Dataset as open lands or woodlands. Forested lands provide ground cover, maintain water tables and retard water runoff. Sizeable stands of trees are important elements of the rural character of the Township providing wildlife habitat and aesthetic values for residents. Although most of these lands are privately owned, they surely provide some recreational opportunity. The Three Oaks Township Conservation Area provides 151 acres of prairie, forest and wetlands.

The Village has a healthy number of street trees and other vegetation in residential districts. Additionally there are two wooded areas within the Village – one at the southern end of Watkins Park, known as Hoadley Trail, which features nature trails, and one south of Indiana Street, where the Three Oaks Woods subdivision has been built with minimal impact on the tree canopy.



TOPOGRAPHY

Three Oaks Township and surrounding areas are very flat, the result of glaciers grinding down any roll for the land during the most recent Ice Age. Those same glaciers left southern Michigan and northern Indiana with extremely fertile farmland. Because of the topography, the ground often gets a spongy consistency after a rainstorm or snowmelt, causing drainage issues, notably with the Village.

THREE OAKS RECREATION INVENTORY AND VARIETY

This inventory and analysis of facilities was conducted by the Three Oaks Parks & Recreation Board with support of the Township and Village planning, with the intent to develop a thoughtful and comprehensive perspective. The following elements were sources of information and consideration.

- The first-hand knowledge and informed opinions of leadership and interested and committed citizens who participated in public input associated with this plan.
- National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPS) standards.
- The distinctive social and natural character of the Three Oaks.
- Trends in funding and plans for new facilities.
- Availability and proximity of regional or nearby facilities.

THE NRPA has established generally recognized standards for classifying types of parkland based on size and function. These designations have been adopted by the MDNRE; and provide one method of defining the purpose and use of facilities. Public facilities in the Three Oaks are classified using this system

In total, Three Oaks features eight (8) public recreation facilities. Within the Village of Three Oaks there are five (5) parks, with over 34 acres of land. In the Township there are three (3) parks, with over 150 acres. There is also a series of non-motorized pathway/trail systems though-out the Three Oaks. Each of the Three Oaks' parks and recreation facilities have different types of amenities and opportunities for a wide variety of recreation experiences.

The following inventory and the Parks and Recreation Facilities Map detail the amenities currently available at each facility and the facility's respective location.

CHAMBERLAIN PATH

Classification: Mini Park

Accessibility: Level 5

Chamberlain Path is a small park in the heart of downtown Three Oaks. The path connects Elm Street to Generations Drive with an ADA walkway and ADA accessible benches. Lighting was added in 2020 and eight perennial planters are placed in the park and maintained by volunteers. Landscaping and sculptures complete the park.

There is frequent pedestrian activity along Chamberlain Path and Generations Drive giving walking access to The Region of Three Oak Museum, the Acorn Theater, the Journeyman Distillery and Staymaker Restaurant. There is also a vehicular driveway on the south side allowing traffic access.



DILLARD PARK

Classification: Neighborhood Park

Accessibility: Level 3

Dillard Park is a neighborhood park located on the north side of town at the corner of Cherry and Walnut Streets. It has been generally well-used through its life and is a staple for children of the community. In 2011 and 2016, all equipment was replaced with a play gym for 2-5 year olds and a swing set for older children. Additional swings were added in 2018. Planters have also been built by the Village's Department of Public Works (DPW). Five large planters house pollinator perennials; which are grown to replenish plantings in the other parks in support of bees and butterflies and as giveaways at park open house educational events. Four additional large planters form a natural barrier for playing children, and were planted with perennials and small flowering shrubs by the local garden club. As a result, Dillard Park is always busy with kids and families enjoying the outdoors, swinging, climbing and tossing balls in a beautiful park environment. There are existing mature trees offering shade as well as trees planted in the past few years in honor of Arbor Day.

DEWEY CANNON PARK

Classification: Community Park

Accessibility: Level 3

This centrally located park is the site of the beloved Dewey Cannon. This Spanish American War cannon was awarded to Three Oaks in a nationwide fundraising campaign, and dedicated in 1900 by President William McKinley. Generations of families and visitors have taken photos with the cannon as the backdrop.

In the summer, this park plays host to 'Music in the Park', a weekly free concert series sponsored by Harbor Arts. A variety of artists are featured, including the South Shore Concert Band, which kicks off the series each year with a patriotic concert on Flag Day Weekend. This series is held in the beautiful Gazebo in the center of the park, and along with the cannon, is the heart of the park. The central gazebo is used for weddings and family gatherings, as well as community events.



The park is known throughout the country as the trail head of the Apple Cider Century Bicycle Tour, and is also the starting point to many other recreational bike rides for the regional bike path system.

The 501c3 Art and Education Center operates at the north end of the park, with an open-air theater at the rear that opens into the park. The Center hosts drama, film and music, giving expanded options to those already available at the Gazebo.

Two bicycle racks have been placed at the west edge of the park, each with a recognition plaques for the donor. Benches and picnic tables have been added and/or replaced in recent years. During the summer of 2021, additional picnic tables were added to provide residents and visitors with more outdoor dining space options.

CARVER MEMORIAL PARK

Classification: Community Park

Accessibility: Level 5

Situated at the corner of Elm and Ash Streets, Carver Memorial Park is the gateway entrance to the Village. Originally Memorial Park, it was renamed Carver Memorial Park in the 1970's, and is dedicated to Three Oaks' only Vietnam fallen soldier, Randall Carver. Now considered the memorial park, it contains memorial and historical markers. Most recently added is the 'fallen soldier's monument honoring all soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice. Other historical markers have been repaired, cleaned and resituated for better display. The rock noting the original Three Oaks School was moved to near the sidewalk, and the original Three Oaks School foundation can be found around the perimeter of the pavilion. A remnant of the front door lintel of the Three Oaks High School reading "High School" memorializes the now demolished school.



The redesign and updates to Carver Memorial Park over the past ten years have truly created a beautiful area that acts as a community gathering place and outdoor event space. The pavilion hosts many private and public gatherings, including the annual tree lighting event in December and Art in the Park during the annual Flag Day celebration. The ADA compliant pathways and benches encourage gatherings for all. Three Oaks is proud of this accomplishment.

ACCESSIBILITY RANKINGS

Providing accessible facilities that may be utilized by persons with varied disabilities is one of Three Oaks community goals. Each district owned facility is evaluated for compliance to the ADA Standards of Accessible Design. Recreation facilities are rated on a 1-5 scale, as defined by MDNR:

- 1 None of the site elements meet ADA accessibility guidelines
- 2 Some of the site elements meet ADA accessibility guideline
- 3 Most of the site elements meet ADA accessibility requirements.
- 4 The entire recreation facility meets ADA accessibility.
- 5 The entire recreation facility was developed/renovated using the principles of universal design.

Within the Village, facilities have accessibility rankings of 2, 3, 4 or 5. While most of the recreation facilities include elements that are handicapped accessible, some routes to reach such facilities are lacking in compliance. This is being addressed on an ongoing basis. The Township facilities, generally have an accessibility ranking of 1 or 2 due to the type of parks.

WATKINS PARK

Classification: Community Park

Accessibility: Level 2

Watkins Park is by far the largest park in the Village. Located on the southwest side of town at the end of Nel's Drive, south of Locust Street, it features a playground, baseball fields, basketball hoops, a pavilion and party space. The Schwark Drain Wetlands and the Hoadley Nature Trail, incorporated within the boundaries of Watkins Park, offers walking trails and is the focus for expansion of several environmental and recreational activities in the future.

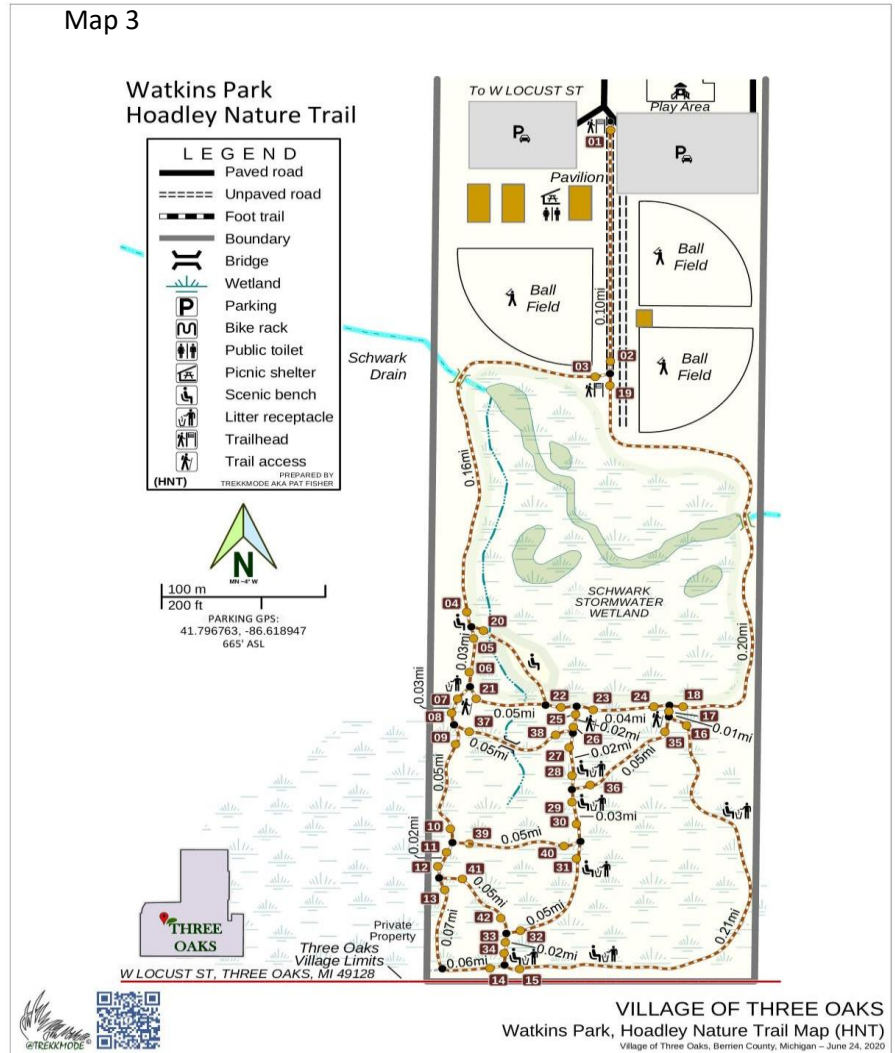
Cooperating with the Berrien County Drain Commissioner, Friends of Harbor Country Trails and the Rotary Club of Harbor Country, plans are being developed to connect Hoadley Trail and Schwark Drain Wetlands area into the Berrien County Hike and Bike trail plan. Once accomplished these trails would connect Township Conservation Area trails with current trails throughout the County and beyond. The trails have recently been greatly improved through a partnership with The Rotary Club of Harbor Country. Both Watkins Park and Hoadley Trail were donated by the respective families to enhance the quality of life for Three Oaks residents and guests. An essential additional five acres was purchased and donated by The Three Oaks Spokes Club in the 1980s.

The baseball fields are the home to Three Oaks Little League, a popular spring and summer activity involving much of the local and surrounding communities. The two smaller fields are for 9-12 year old's and feature floodlights, the larger fields are for 13-14 year olds. Both are used by other teams and leagues as well. In addition there are also basketball hoops available and maintained.

There is also a playground, known as Timber Town, built in the "timber town" style with wooden towers and interconnected by tunnels, bridges, slides and other play scapes. Bryan Volstorf, mayor of Three Oaks from 1984 -2000 mobilized a group of community members in a volunteer effort to build the playground. Volunteers and the Village continue to maintain with staining and upkeep, as well as a special chemical free mulch base.

The park has a covered pavilion. Community members may reserve the pavilion for a small fee and have use of the restroom and food serving facilities. Future plans for the park include more ADA elements, such as walkways, sporting opportunities and tree scapes.

Map 3



SHEDD CEMETERY

Classification: Community Park
Accessibility: Level 2

Located on the north side of Spring Creek Road in the south east quadrant of the Township, this small cemetery, named for an early settler family, recorded its last burial in about 1932. It is known that eight veterans are buried here, seven from the Civil War and one from the War of 1812. Forgotten by most, but not abandoned, in recent years, the Rebecca Dewey Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) has 'adopted' the cemetery and partnered with the Township to restore and maintain this historical and sacred site. The Township maintains the property, and the DAR has undertaken to remap locations of graves, reset and restore headstones, and discover who is buried here.



Three Oaks American Legion Post 204 joins with the DAR each December for the national "Laying of the Wreaths" ceremony at the cemetery in conjunction with Wreaths across America. The DAR has also established a pollinator garden, erected a flag pole, installed a prayer and reflection bench and added a sign at the entry. It is a meaningful and beautiful spot for reflection.

SPRING CREEK SCHOOL

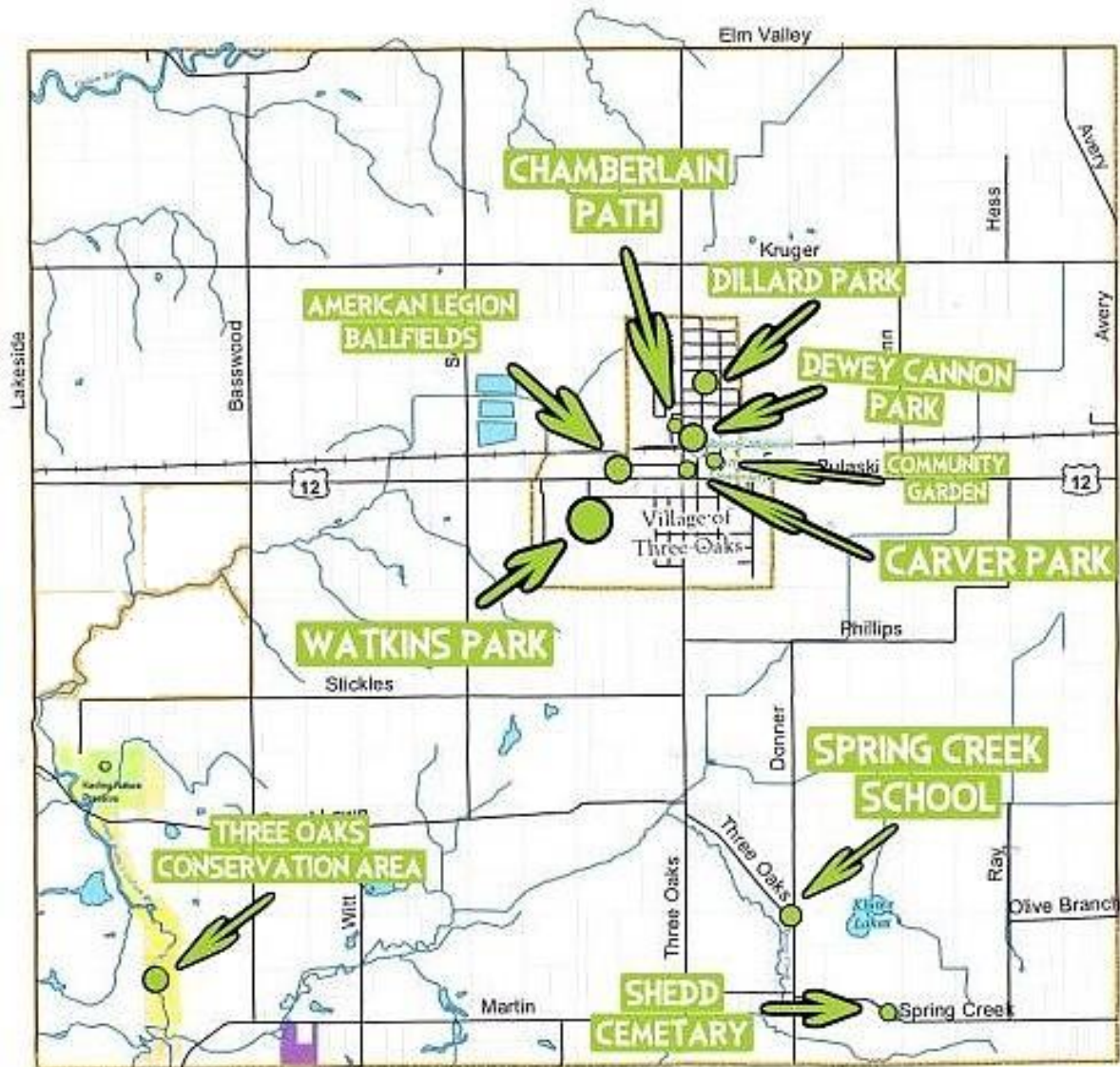
Classification: Community Park
Accessibility: Level 4

The Spring Creek School sits on a triangular-shaped property almost one acre in land area, at the corner of Three Oaks Road and Donner Road, owned and maintained by Three Oaks Township. The single-room schoolhouse was built in 1886 by farmers, merchants and loggers for the purpose of educating their children. Of the 7000 one-room schoolhouses that once operated in Michigan in the 1800's, only 29 are restored and maintained as historical educational sites.

A restoration project is currently underway, funded by a grant award from The Pokagon Fund, The Frederick Upton Foundation, a William J Deputy matching grant, and private donations. Begun in 2019, progress slowed during 2020-2021 but



is now entering the second phase. The plan is to renovate the structure which may be classified as Special Use facility for the community. A parking lot, cement walkway, handicap ramp and an ADA compliant restroom is under construction with completion in 2023. A portion of the grounds is used as a trailhead staging area related to the Backroads Bikeway trail system, a network of 12 distinct loops- or routes- via secondary roads throughout the region ranging from 5 miles to 60 miles in length, and organized by the Three Oaks Spokes Bicycle Club, host of the Apple Cider Century Bike Tour.



LEGEND

Village Parks:

- ❖ Carver Park
- ❖ Chamberlain Path
- ❖ Dewey Cannon Park
- ❖ Dillard Park
- ❖ Watkins Park

Township Parks:

- ❖ Three Oaks Township Conservation Area
- ❖ Shedd Cemetery
- ❖ Spring Creek School

Other Recreational Facilities

- ❖ Legion Ball Fields
- ❖ Three Oaks Community Garden

MAP 4

THREE OAKS PARKS & RECREATION 5-YR PLAN BERRIEN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Existing Recreation Facilities

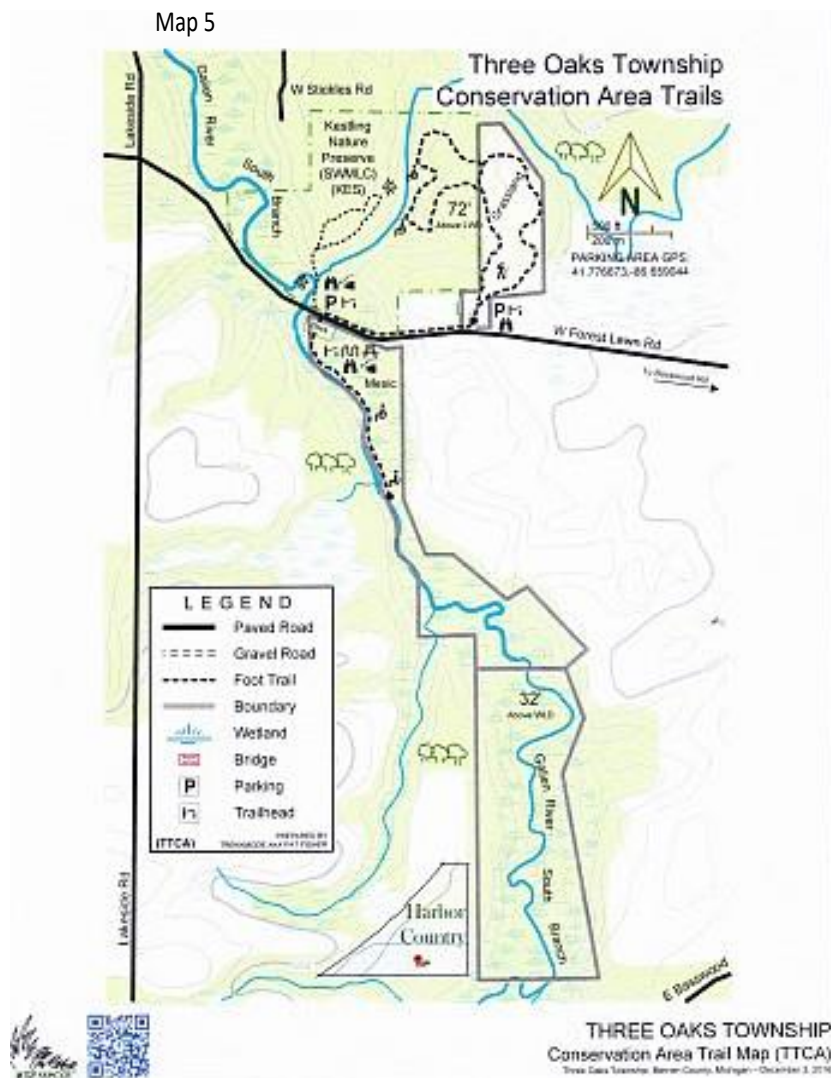
THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP CONSERVATION AREA

Classification: Natural Resource Area

Accessibility: Level 2

At the entry of the Conservation Area, a gravel parking lot exists to serve visitors. One third of the land is defined as a natural prairie; and must be mowed once every three years to maintain the quality and integrity of the grasslands. The Township Conservation Area combines with the Kesling Nature Preserve to provide about 70 acres of contiguous preserved lands that can be used for nature interpretation, walking, hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, fishing, and wild life viewing, with a viewing deck. The Township maintains the parking lot, including snow removal for events, and mows the hiking paths through the prairie semi-annually. This 15 acre property is adjacent to the Kesling Nature Preserve.

Kesling Nature Preserve was established in 2004 by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy. The 55 acre preservation area includes a half-mile trail loop, a one mile trail loop, and incredible scenic views overlooking forested tributaries. This facility is not owned or maintained by the Township, but is available for public use via the Conservation Area, and may be classified as a Natural Resource Area. It shares the same attributes as the Conservation Area.



Additionally, the Township acquired approximately 80 acres of beautiful wooded property along the South Branch of the Galien River. This property has access from Forest Lawn Road and is almost directly across from the Three Oaks Township Conservation Area and Kesling Nature Preserve; creating a cluster of natural resource preserves in the southwest quadrant of the community. Although this property is not directly connected to the 15 acre area described above, the Township considers this the southern segment of the Three Oaks Conservation Area; and combined with the northern segment, the preserved lands total a cumulative 95 acres. Combined with the Kesling Nature Preserve, the southwest quadrant of the Township offers 150 acres of natural area for residents and visitors of Three Oaks.

This land cluster boasts significant wildlife habitat and is a popular destination for bird-watching. In fact, the State threatened Yellow-throated Warbler is known to nest here, eagle nests are seen, and there is an extensive blue heron rookery.

The Berrien County Hikers host several informative hikes here each year, and have been a primary volunteer organization for keeping paths cleared, educating the public, and involving other groups such as fisherman to help maintain this waterway and wildlife sanctuary.

NON-MOTORIZED PATHWAYS / TRAILS SYSTEM

Classification: Non-Motorized Pathway/Trail System

Accessibility: n.a.

Three Oaks is the center of the Backroads Bikeway – an informal network of 12 regional bikeways, with routes ranging from 5 miles to 60 miles in length. The 5-mile Spring Creek Trail stays within the Township and close to the Village, while longer trails like the Grand Mere Trail, the Posey Hill Trail, and the Warren Woods Trail stretch to more distant destinations – the Lakeshore, Indiana, and Warren Woods State Park, respectively. The Backroads Bikeway is organized by the Three Oaks Spokes Bicycle Club, and these trails provide the routing for their annual Apple Cider Century Bicycle Tour, and are popular with locals and visitors alike.

ADDITIONAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

THREE OAKS COMMUNITY GARDEN

The Community Garden was established in 2011 with Three Oaks Township's grant award from The Pokagon Fund. It is located on township land, behind the River Valley Three Oaks Elementary campus, south of the railroad tracks and just east of the historical Three Oaks train station. The garden, with the colorful perennial beds around the perimeter is a popular place for summer weddings and gatherings, and is part of our pollinator planting network.



It is a true “community” garden. Community volunteers manage participation of gardeners, educational and celebratory events held over the seasons, and maintenance of the grounds. In addition to a rental fee, the Village supports the garden with funding for soil, organic tea applications and general maintenance. The Township supports the garden with funding for water, tools and equipment, and insurance. Located in the entry kiosk that frames the garden, is a Little Free Library. Benches in the sheltered kiosk allow visitors to sit and enjoy the garden or read in a natural setting. A rain garden collects water and provides habitat for pollinators.

NON-VILLAGE RECREATION FACILITIES

Within the Village there are two other recreational facilities. The American Legion fields, along Memorial Drive near Linden Street offer baseball and softball. Three Oaks Elementary School, at Ash and Hickory Streets, has playground equipment and the only field in the Village suitable for soccer, lacrosse or football. The playing fields surrounding the elementary are partially owned by the River Valley School District, and partially owned by Three Oaks Township.



The region surrounding Three Oaks is well supplied with parks of various types. Across the state line is Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, which offers lakefront beaches and sand dune recreation. Other Lake Michigan beaches include Grand Mere, Warren Dunes and Indiana State Parks, while both Michigan and Indiana have inland State Parks in the region—Warren Woods in Chikaming Township, Michigan and Potato Creek in North Liberty Indiana.

Three Oaks does not provide formal recreational programming for its residents, but there are several options available through adjacent communities and private providers.

Table 8: National/State/County Parks

Recreation Name	Location	Description
IN Dunes	Porter, IN	20+ miles of lakeshore with around 200 foot high dunes.
Grand Mere	Stevensville, MI	1 mile shoreline and 3 inland lakes, connected by hiking trails.
Warren Dunes	Bridgman, MI	6 miles of trails, 3 mile shoreline, largest dune rises 260 feet above lake.
Warren Woods	Chikaming Twp., MI	The last forest of its kind in MI, located near Three Oaks.
IN Dunes	Beverly Shores, IN	One of the most unique ecosystems in the Midwest.
Potato Creek	North Liberty, IN	A large lake surrounded by unique ecosystems and an interpretive nature center.
Silver Beach	St. Joseph, MI	St. Joseph's most popular beach, includes both river and lakefront amenities.
Love Creek	Berrien Springs, MI	Skiing, hiking, mountain biking, woodlands, and a nature center.
Glassman Park (phase I)	New Buffalo Twp., MI	MI Nature habitat, fishing areas, trails and kayaking.
Galien River County Park	New Buffalo Twp., MI	Fishing, hiking trails, natural areas, water sports (kayaking) and treetop overlook.
Berrien County Youth Fair	Berrien Springs, MI	Annual fair in August, along with other events and festivals.
Spicer Lake Nature Preserve	New Carlisle, IN	Home to many endangered species, features educational amenities.
St. Joseph Cty Fairgrounds	Mishawaka, IN	Annual fair in July, along with other events and festivals.
Bendix Woods	New Carlisle, IN	Major stop on the Northern IN Art & Earth Trail.
Creek Ridge County Park	MI City, IN	Series of boardwalks allow all visitors chance to experience entire trail system.
Patriot Park	MI City, IN	Serves a variety of sports leagues from around MI City.
Red Mill County Park	LaPorte, IN	Mostly a nature preserve with multi-use trails for hiking and biking and a rental hall
Bluhm County Park	Westville, IN	One of the area's best wildflower viewing with a variety of trails for various use
Luhr County Park	LaPorte, IN	Nature Center and gift shop available with four eco-systems and a free fishing site
Kingsbury Fish and Wildlife	Kingsford Heights, IN	Features fishing, hunting, a shooting/archery range and boat launch



Sunset at Warren Dunes State Park

Table 9: Additional Local Parks / Recreation

Recreation Name	Location	Description
Ox Creek Parkway	Benton Harbor, MI	Greenway through Benton Harbor
Jean Klock Park	Benton Harbor, MI	Beach and lakefront recreation
Maiden Lane Park	St. Joseph, MI	Community athletic fields
Robert Feather Park	Berrien Springs, MI	Community park for Berrien Springs
Plymouth Park	Niles, MI	Public 9 hole golf course
Fort St. Joseph Park	Niles, MI	Historic fort built in 1691
Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Ctr	Niles, MI	Garden, forest, trails, conservatory with art and other enrichment opportunities
Central Park	Mishawaka, IN	Playing fields and walkway along river
Marshall Park	South Bend, IN	Neighborhood park amenities
Boehm Park	South Bend, IN	Community athletic fields
Leeper Park	South Bend, IN	Neighborhood sports facilities, walking trails
Rum Village Park	South Bend, IN	Urban oasis with nature trails
LaSalle Park	South Bend, IN	Neighborhood gathering place
Potawatomi Park	South Bend, IN	Zoo and Water Park
Blackthorn Golf Club	South Bend, IN	Golf Course
McCoy Creek Rec Area	Buchanan, MI	Community park for Buchanan
Bourissa Hills Park	New Carlisle, IN	Tennis courts and wooded space
Chikaming Park	Chikaming twp., MI	Natural habitats and walking trails
0 New Buffalo Park	New Buffalo, MI	Lake MI beachfront
Krueger Park	MI City, IN	Wooded area with pavilions
Washington Park	MI City, IN	Civil War Memorial and Zoo
Hanson Park	MI City, IN	Riverfront trails and sports facilities
Motts Park	MI City, IN	Nature trails and woodlands
Fox Park	LaPorte, IN	Lakefront park and concert venue
Soldier's Memorial Park	LaPorte, IN	Regional lakefront amenities
Village Park	LaPorte, IN	Historic recreational facilities
Prairie Meadow Park	Westville, IN	Hosts annual pumpkin festival
Coffee Creek Park	Chesterton, IN	4 miles of trails through unique habitat
Dogwood Park	Chesterton, IN	Neighborhood sports facilities

RECREATION SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

COMPARISON TO STATE AND FEDERAL STANDARDS

The type of parks and their location, number of amenities, and distribution throughout the Village and Township are all components that are assessed together as a recreation system analysis.

The following comparisons are made between Three Oaks population and the state and national standards for service areas, acreage, and number of facilities. Overall, Three Oaks has a strong formal parks and recreation system and within the last ten years, has made considerable efforts towards improving recreation facilities and making them more accessible to neighborhoods and other community destinations.

SERVICE AREA ANALYSIS

MDNR establishes a recommended service area for each park classification to identify areas in the community that are lacking access to recreation facilities. The service area boundary for each type of park is as follows:

Mini-Park	>0.25 mile walkability service radius
Neighborhood Park	0.25 – 0.5 mile service radius
Community Park	1.0 mile service radius

As illustrated on the Park and Recreation Inventory and Service Areas Map, Three Oaks' formal park system extends to the majority of the Village's existing or planned neighborhoods, especially within the downtown core and most of the north side of the Village. This is considered exceptional park service as individuals living within these areas have at least walkable access to two or more park facilities. However, several neighborhoods are outside of this walkability range, especially within the southeast portion of the Village. Building upon the existing non-motorized / trail system and linking neighborhoods to parks is one way to improve access and expand recreation opportunities for residents without the creation of an entirely new park facility. The three Township parks, in the less densely populated township, are accessible by motorized as well as non-motorized routes at greater distances than parks within the Village.

ACREAGE ANALYSIS

Table 10 evaluates Three Oaks' park acreage to national guideline for Michigan communities. As a state-wide measure, these standards are general in nature and do not always reflect the quality of the facilities, the character of the community, or other local differences that impact community recreation facility needs. Thus, in evaluating the results, the actual conditions and trends present in the Village and Township must be accounted for.

Even so, as a baseline indicator, Table 10 highlights the surplus of all park land that is available to residents. In addition, the presence of the Non-Motorized / Trail System throughout provides additional access to parks and active recreation. Overall, the land dedicated and reserved for parkland far exceeds minimum standards.

Table 10 Service Area Recreational Inventory

Facility Type	NRPA Guidelines for Minimum Acreage per 1,000 Residents	Three Oaks Minimum Recommended Acreage	Three Oaks Actual Acreage	Surplus/Deficiency
Mini Parks	0.25	0.94 acres		
Neighborhood Parks	1.00 acres	1.60 acres	2.22 acres	+ .62 acres
Community Parks	5.00 acres	7.95 acres	31.87 acres	+ 23.92 acres
Regional Park	7.5			
Linear Park				
Natural Resource Area	variable	variable	150 acres	150 acres
Non-Motorized / Trail System	variable	variable	1.0 linear miles	n/a

based on 2020 ACS population counts of 3747 individuals

FACILITIES ANALYSIS

Additionally, MDNR recommends a certain number and type of recreation facilities for a community based again on its population size. Table 3.4 compares Three Oaks recreation facilities to the MDNR standards. Although the Three Oaks Elementary School, and other institutional recreational facilities, are within the Village and Township limits, they remain part of the River Valley School District and therefore were not calculated in the facility count. It is however important the note that these institutional facilities including three Oaks Elementary and the American Legion, are heavily utilized by the community, and are a popular destination for Three Oaks residents.

Considering the 2020 population of the Three Oaks of 2402 (1,370 Village, 1032 Township) Three Oaks has done an exceptional job of exceeding MDNR standards for several types of applicable recreation facilities. Three Oaks will continue to pursue collaboration with the School System and other entities in order to provide residents with even greater access to recreational facilities, in order to create more inclusive environments for residents and visitors

Table 11: Three Oaks Recreation Amenities Standard/Analysis

Amenity Type	MDNR Standard	Three Oaks Suggested Amenity Count*	Three Oaks Actual Amenity Count	Surplus / Deficiency
Basketball Court	1 per 5,000	0	3	+3
Baseball / Softball Field	1 per 5,000	0	3	+3
Soccer Field	1 per 10,000	0	1	+1
Tennis Court	1 per 2,000	1	0	-1
Greenway / Trail System	1 per region	1	1	+1
Volleyball Court	1 per 5,000	0	0	-1

**Based on the 2020 ACS population count of 2402 individuals*

Although there is not an MDNR standard for pickle ball, our survey has noted that there is a far greater interest in this new sport than in tennis, and focus is centered on providing a minimum of two regulation courts in the near future.

CHAPTER 4

THREE OAKS' STRATEGY

Goals and objectives formulated by the community are the cornerstone of the recreation planning process as they form the framework for public and private decision-making. The purpose of this Plan is to provide a basis for public policy decisions and technical coordination in recreational development and to inject long-range consideration into the determination of near-term actions.

The goals and objectives, as outlined in this chapter were developed through the Parks and Recreation Board to incorporate park and recreation best practices, and were confirmed by the results of the public engagement process.

Three Oaks' strategy hinges on its ability to provide a variety of parks that are flexible spaces to serve multiple users, creating an inclusive space for the community, and visitors to enjoy.

This chapter details the public engagement process and key results and establishes Three Oaks' goals and various corresponding objectives.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The 2022 Three Oaks Parks and Recreation Survey was successful at gauging what members of the community, members of surrounding communities, and visitors want to see in our parks. The survey was promoted via flyers at over 20 Three Oaks establishments displaying a link to the online version, a QR code to the online version, and directions to obtain a paper copy at the Three Oaks Village Hall. Links were shared on Facebook and the Three Oaks Village website.

On May 14th a "Lemonade and Cookies" public engagement event was held in the Carver Park Pavilion. The purpose of this engagement was to involve the community, members of surrounding communities and visitors in this process. This was separately promoted as above. Additionally, this public engagement event was promoted by word of mouth, signage in the park and an invitation that was posted same as the flyers above, as well as distributed as hand-outs. Board members were available to answer questions, inform, and meet the public. To encourage more participation in the survey, the flyers were also distributed in the park during the event. Trees and a variety of pollinator perennials were giveaways to visitors. This included 24 white pine seedlings (Michigan state tree), white spruces, red maples and pollinator plants.





Carver Park Pavilion May 14, 2022 "Cookies and Lemonade"

Left to right: Resident Ryan McCauley, Park Board Member Tyler Ream, Village President Richard Smith, Park Board Member Ed White



KEY SURVEY RESULTS

ANALYSIS OF DISTRICT PARKS & RECREATION SURVEY – OVERALL

There were 266 respondents in total. 77% of respondents reported residing within the Three Oaks Parks and Recreation District (within the Village and/or Township of Three Oaks, MI). 19.5% of respondents reported living in nearby communities and visiting often and 3.5% of respondents reported only occasionally visiting Three Oaks.

Our parks are well used! 56% of respondents reported using the parks once a week or more. Another 29% of respondents said they used the parks once a month. About 15% said they used the parks a few times a year or less. Utilization could be increased even more by promoting our parks and available recreation facilities more to the public. Increased promotion was suggested by a few respondents amongst the write-in answers to questions.

Respondents reported being most familiar with Dewey Cannon Park and Watkins Park. The rest of the parks within the village were also well known, while folks were generally less familiar with township parks.

Folks overwhelmingly chose “Hiking paths in the woods” as the recreational activity they wanted to see more of. This was followed by a strong showing for biking paths and hardscape walking paths. Pickle ball, fishing, and bird watching had significant popularity as well. Improved hiking paths, biking paths, more landscaping and general attention to Mother Nature were popular among write-in answers throughout the survey.

Public restrooms were by far the most popular ‘additions to parks’ selected. Restrooms were also mentioned in write-in answers frequently. Improvements to existing facilities and increased lighting were also very popular requests.

Walking through the parks, enjoying live music, and hiking are the most popular activities respondents reported engaging in. This was followed by use of the playgrounds, dog walking, and use of the pavilions. About 46% of respondents reported utilizing the playgrounds in Watkins and Dillard Parks with their kids or family once a month or more.

31% of respondents reported not knowing the Three Oaks Township Conservation Area existed. About 50% of respondents reported visiting the area once a year or more and 19% said they might visit it someday. Increasing maintenance and awareness of the conservation area and trails would very likely boost its use. Hiking paths and nature areas were very very popular among respondents to the survey overall.

Hoadley Trail, the only hiking trail within the Village of Three Oaks, was used by 41% of respondents a few times a year or more. 16% said they used it once a year, 19% said ‘maybe someday’ and 23% said they did not know it existed. Again, increased maintenance and upgrades to trails and increased promotion and signage would greatly increase the trail usage.

The Three Oaks Community Garden is not currently park land, but respondents appeared to support the acquisition of it as park land with 50% saying it is ‘very important’ to the Three Oaks community and another 38% saying they were glad it existed.

The most popular potential addition to Watkins Park is a hardscape path back to Hoadley Trail followed by Pickleball Courts, improvements to the main pavilion and creating shade for Timber Town.

The most popular potential addition to Dewey Cannon Park, by far, was public restrooms. 52% of respondents chose this as their number one addition. 23% chose accommodations for the Three Oaks Farmers market and 13% chose upgrades to the pavilion to better accommodate live music.

Of the respondents that reported living within the Three Oaks Parks and Recreation District 57% said they would vote in favor of a millage to better fund Park and Recreation. Another 31% said it would take some convincing for them to vote yes and just 12% said they would vote no.

COMMUNITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals, as related to community planning, are general statements of ideals which the Village and Township strive to obtain. They also express a consensus of community direction for public and private agencies, groups, and individuals, and are long-range considerations that guide the development of specific objectives and actions.

Objectives are a means to achieve goals and identify the methods by which the goals of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan may be realized. The stated goals and objectives are grouped according to major community themes and developed using feedback from the public engagement surveys and the Parks and Recreation Board.

GOAL #1

Non-Motorized Connectivity –

Improve non-motorized connectivity in the community.

Objectives:

- Identify and pursue funding for additional sidewalks, trails, and pathways.
- Provide connections to parks, neighborhoods, and major areas of activity.
- Coordinate non-motorized planning with neighboring communities and Berrien County.
- Improve signage and access to non-motorized facilities.
- Utilize natural features areas as connections where possible.
- Create a better pedestrian crossing at railroad tracks and Elm Street.
- Provide a trailhead facility at junction of bike/non-motorized trails and amenities for users including items such as but no limited to restrooms, showers, lockers, water, vending machines, etc.

GOAL #2

Existing Facilities Maintenance and Improvement –

Continue to maintain and improve existing parks and recreation facilities.

Objectives:

- Provide continuous improvements and maintenance to the district park facilities and equipment to enhance and maintain them to working condition.
- Implement a district parks specific maintenance program that would include the maintenance and upgrade of equipment and railways as well as maintenance and restoration of Historical Markers and Landmarks.
- Identify and provide funding for annual improvements to community facilities that maintain or exceed current levels.
- Adhere to high standards of maintenance for all parks and recreation facilities.
- Continue to improve safety and accessibility at parks.
- Explore opportunities for the “greening” of the parks and facilities through improvements such as field maintenance, reestablishment of native plantings, storm water improvements, lighting upgrades and energy audits.

GOAL #3

Park Land Acquisition and Development –

Explore opportunities and provide funding for park site and land acquisition.

Objectives:

- Expand existing parks through the acquisition of available lots adjacent to or close to existing parks.
- Consider acquisition of sensitive environmental lands and natural resources for passive use of preservation.
- Acquire property or an existing building that would accommodate the construction of a Community and Fitness Center offering recreational activities to all ages.

GOAL #4

Maintain Amenities and Facilities at all Parks –

Maximize use of existing park sites by expanding facilities and amenities available to residents to further increase quality of life for residents and further encouragement others to visit and stay in Three Oaks.

Objectives:

- Include a broad range of facilities within each park where feasible, particularly addressing amenities and facilities currently lacking within the community.
- Develop park sites to their optimal use in consideration of changing community needs and resource limitations.
- Maintain a logical balance between active and passive pursuits in the parks.
- Develop covered gathering areas for festivals and events at downtown park site(s).
- Provide ancillary facilities to enhance the sites such as all season water fountains, grills, electricity outlets, controllable water sources, bleachers (at sports fields), and public restrooms.
- Provide facilities for activities currently not provided in the community, such as tennis, bocce ball and pickle ball courts.
- Provide for winter season recreation, such as restroom facilities and or facilities for cross country skiing.
- Utilize parks as signature facilities in the community and incorporate gateways.
- Coordinate with Harbor Country communities on regional recreation opportunities and trail connections.

GOAL #5

Serve All Populations with Parks and Recreation –

Provide a range of parks and recreation facilities to meet the leisure needs of all segments of the population.

Objectives:

- As Three Oaks continues to develop, ensure that the population continues to be served with a uniform distribution of facilities, in terms of both geography and population.
- Develop facilities to meet the physical needs and ability levels of all park users, including improving the accessibility of existing facilities.
- Provide facilities and amenities for park users of all ages.

GOAL #6

Preservation of Natural and Cultural Resources –

Protect natural and cultural features, such as wooded areas, wetlands, wildlife habitat, natural drainage ways, and historic structures and facilities.

Objectives:

- Identify important and recognized natural features and open spaces in the community.
- Preserve natural features within park sites to the maximum multiple-use character of the parks.
- Improve parks to fully utilize sites in a manner that results in a greater appreciation of the community's natural resources.
- Incorporate natural and historic resource protection, including protection of groundwater recharge areas, into the parks and recreation program whenever the opportunity presents itself.
- Identify funding for upgrades and maintenance of historic facilities in the community.
- Conduct Natural Features Inventory within the next five years to identify high priority sensitive areas for planning purposes.

GOAL #7:

Funding –

Develop stable sources of funding and practice sound fiscal management of the parks and recreation system.

Objectives:

- Pursue all available funding sources for capital improvements and operations and maintenance, including local sources, a parks and recreation mileage, state and federal grant programs, local businesses, community organizations and other sources.
- Explore opportunities for greater private sector participation in the provision of recreation and leisure services Three Oaks.
- Coordinate efforts with local interest groups and recreation providers and create partnerships for providing these resources throughout the region.
- Develop long-range projections of costs and revenues as a management tool.

CHAPTER 5

PLANNING FOR CHANGE



Three Oaks' Action Plan serves as a template for future projects and is intended to be a flexible, year-by-year list of improvements for 2023-2027. The Action Plan supports the goals and objectives for the Village and Township development, growth and enhancement through a comprehensive set of network improvements, policies and programs that are staggered over the five (5) year period.

Within this chapter, projects are identified which will develop the Three Oak's recreation system in a manner that provides a total recreation experience for the entire family. With the goal to continually develop facilities for active and passive recreation, competitive sports for children, adolescents, and seniors, along with picnic and gathering spaces, in natural landscapes. Three Oaks will continue to afford residents and visitors a high-quality park and recreation experience.

Detailed on the next several pages is the Action Plan, top six (6) projects for prioritization, and project descriptions to help guide and inspire responsible parties toward a common understanding and lay the groundwork for implementation.

ACTION PLAN

Three Oak's Action Plan is detailed in Table 5.1 which presents each of the proposed project titles, the anticipated time frame, estimated cost range, and potential funding sources / partnerships. Some park facilities contain various projects that are planned to occur over multiple years and involve coordination with other agencies. Other park and recreation facility projects involve targeted improvements that Three Oaks can implement quickly within one year and/or with the help of volunteers.

Cost range estimates for the Three Oaks Action Plan projects were derived in 2022 dollars and are strictly preliminary. Actual costs for each project should be specifically determined with the aid of site surveys, programming elements, and engineering requirements. If funding levels are lower than required to implement the project based on the schedule provided, the project's implementation time frame could be stretched over additional years or the scope of the project condensed.

Projects of the Action Plan will be reviewed annually by the Three Oaks Parks and Recreation Board and reported to the Village Council and Three Oaks Township Board, allowing for adjustments to respond to updated needs / conditions and the identification of funding opportunities.

TOP SIX PRIORITY PROJECTS

The following six (6) priority projects represent near-term investments that have the potential to create major and immediate improvements to the Village and Township parks and recreation system. These top five projects plus one additional for education of existing trees, were identified by Village and Township administration and the Parks and Recreation Board and serve as an excellent starting point for future prioritization and action.

1. Watkins Park Improvements
2. Public Restroom Facilities
3. Dewey Cannon Park Improvements
4. Tree Initiative and Tree City Designation
5. Three Oaks Township Conversation Area improvements.
6. Education

Full project descriptions are detailed on the following pages.

Time Frame Key:

Near Term	Less than 1 year
Mid-Term	1-3 years
Long-Term	Over 3 years

Estimated Cost Range Key:

\$	\$0-\$10,000
\$\$	\$10,001-\$500,000
\$\$\$	\$500,000+

Funding Sources and Collaboration Key:

GFV	General Fund-Three Oaks Village
GFT	General Fund-Three Oaks Township
D/P	Donation or Partnership
LSO	Local Service Organizations
CS	Corporate Sponsor
G	Grants (i.e.: MDNR, CDBG)
DDA	Downtown Development Authority
PCV	Planning Commission
PRB	Parks & Recreation Board
VC	Village Council
TB	Township Board
BC	Berrien County
BCDC	Berrien County Drain Commission
EGLE	Environment, Great Lakes & Energy

Table 12: Three Oaks Parks and Recreation Action Plan 2023-2027

Project	Time Frame			Estimated cost range	Funding Source(s) and collaboration
	Near-term	Mid-term	Long-term		
Park Maintenance	X			\$	GFV,GFT,LSO
Watkins Park Improvements	X			\$\$\$	PRB,GFV, LSO,CS,G
Public Restroom	X			\$\$\$	PRB,DDA,GFV, G, LSO, CS
Dewey Cannon Park		X		\$\$\$	PRB, GFV, G, LSO, DDA
Tree Initiative / Tree City Designation	X			\$	PRB, VC, LSO, G, DP
Three Oaks Conservation Area	X			SS	GFT, G, PRB, TB, LSO
Education	X			\$	PRB, LSO
Park and Wayfinding Signage Plan	X			S	GFV,GFT,G, PRB, LSO
Non-Motorized Pathway	X			\$\$	GFT, GFV, LSO, G, BC,
Natural Resource Inventory Project		X		S	PRB,VC,TB, EGLE,BCDC,G
Joint Three Oaks Village/Twp. Partnership			X	\$	PRB, VC, TB
Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update			X	\$	PRB, VC, TB

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

PARK MAINTENANCE AND FUNCTION

Three Oaks is fortunate to have a quality parks system with a wide variety of amenities dispersed through the community. To continue restoring parkland and maintaining existing facilities and amenities, the Joint Board anticipates creating with the participation of the Village Council and Township Board maintenance plans with responsibilities of each entity involved to ensure that the community is enjoying the full benefits of Three Oaks recreational assets. Also partnering with local service organizations to provide healthier lifestyle through exercise. A partnership exists with Rotary Club of Harbor Country whereby coordinating maintenance and improvements to parks has been ongoing over the past 10 years and will continue to develop. Additionally a relationship exists with Harbor Country Hikers to clear trails, install benches, and provide educational opportunities, as well as the DAR to maintain a cemetery park.

WATKINS PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Pickle ball was a popular response to the survey, and this sport is part of the planning in the improvements. Responding to an overabundance of car parking, pickleball courts are planned to cover a portion of an existing gravel lot. This will preserve lawn space while reducing costs through reuse of pavement sub-straight for the new foundation. The court location saves room for a meandering walking path around Timber Town, the large pre-existing playground frequented by children and their parents. The looping path will anchor nine (9) benches, offering respite for and enclosure through plantings, spaced along its 1600' cycle. New pathways are to be water permeable grid pavers, requiring a minimal 3" hand compacted underlay topped in decor gravel in fulfillment of ADA requirements.

Schwark Drain, a storm water pool built by Berrien County in 2008, comprises an ever scarce prairie wetland. A maintained 1.4 mile trail showcases the intact ecosystem of native flora and fauna. Existing portions of trail will be topped in RCA gravel, while new portions are lifted from the Drain's original 2008 plans: a 200' elevated boardwalk spanning the pond.



Leopold style bench at Hoadley Trail crafted and donated by Harbor County Hikers. Pictured: Byron Minton, Village Manager Dan Faulkner (background: Pat Fisher / Harbor Country Hikers President) August 2022

PHASE 1

ENHANCEMENTS FOR TIMBER TOWN

- Picnic area
- Planting of shade trees
- Pathway with benches around

ACCESSIBLE HARDSCAPE PATHS

- Weatherized Hoadley Trail
- Water permeable hardscape

ENCOURAGING ALTERNATE TRANSIT MODES

- Protected bike lane E/W on Locust St.
- Accessible entry to Locust St. sidewalk to North

PICKLEBALL COURTS

- Built upon a portion of the existing parking lot.

PARKING IMPROVEMENTS

- Adequate accessible spots per ADA guidelines

FUTURE PHASES

- Improved access to Hoadley Trail as well as the wooded trails behind.

WATKINS PARK

PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

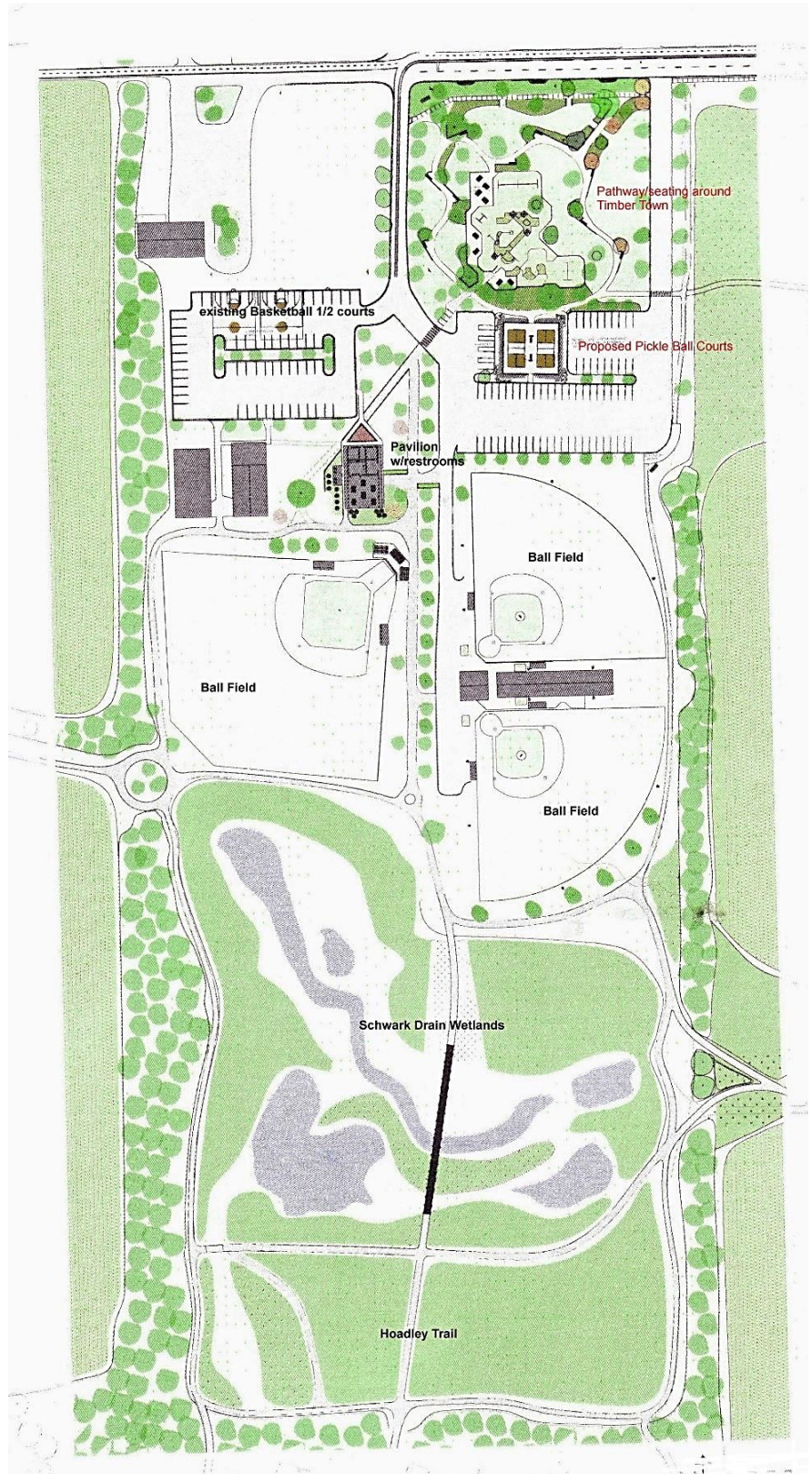
AND ESTIMATED COSTS

Table 13 Watkins Park Improvements - Estimate Costs

Item	Quantity / Unit	Item Cost
Vodaland HEXpave Paving System	7,000 SqFt	14,000.00
Vodaland EasyPave Grid	43,000 SqFt	90,000.00
Landscape Timbers	300 Ea	7,500.00
LED Pole Kit/Two 200 Watt LED + 18' Pole	2 Ea	3,200.00
Chain Link Fence	240 Ft	4,800.00
Concrete Curb	150 Ft	600.00
Asphalt ADA parking spots/2 Pickleball Courts	6,200 SqFt	31,000.00
Décor Pea Gravel	27 CuYd	2,025.00
RCA Grade #1 Base Gravel	64 CuYd	1,280.00
Pea Gravel (standard)	250 CuYd	8,750.00
Bench w/Recycled Materials	11 Ea	8,250.00
Trash Receptacles	4 Ea	4,000.00
Geotextile Fabric Roll 6' X 100'	60 Ea	4,200.00
Ramp Curb Cut	3 Ea	1,050.00
CrossWalk Marking	30 Ea	180.00
Basketball Court Striping	2 Ea	600.00
Pickleball Non-Slip Court Surface (bright red)	2 Ea	5,000.00
Rieth-Riley Mobilization	1 LSUM	3,000.00
Asphalt MNA2"	240 SqYd	3,900.00
6' Foot Root Bridge	200 #1	30,000.00
Bike Repair Stand	1 Ea	2,000.00
Rip Rap	30 CuYd	900.00
5-6' Shrubs (arborvitae)	14 Ea	2,100.00
Small Trees (Crabapple, Ginkgo, etc)	27 Ea	8,100.00
Large Trees (bald Cypress, White Pine, Etc)	8 Ea	3,000.00
Power Line Burial	1,200 Ft	
Fence Removal	500 Ft	
		<hr/> 239,435.00

note: all costs reflect Summer 2022 pricing

Map 6



PUBLIC RESTROOMS

Address the needs for a public restroom central to the business district and downtown recreational facilities and activities. This facility might best be placed in the centrally located Dewey Cannon Park but other locations are being considered. This was identified as a top priority in the 2022 Three Oaks Parks and Recreation District Survey.



2022 Proposed Rendering – A.J. Sullivan

DEWEY CANNON PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Design and implement park improvements, including

- Assuring the health of the mature trees whose canopy provided shade for events
- Maintenance and renovation of gazebo in the park
- Added landscaping sympathetic to the existing mature trees to enhance the enjoyment of the park
- Adding a pollinator area to link home and park gardens into an integral planned pollinator path.
- Add natural buffering to the side edge of the park to protect the trees from vehicles parking.
- Create ADA approved paths using a permeable substrate.

THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP CONSERVATION AREA

Maintain the integrity of a natural, wildlife conservation area, while making it more accessible.

- Parking lot improvements and maintenance
- Mapping of defined trails
- Prairie management
- Add fishing stations
- Seek to partner with Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy in exploring and implementing maintenance and funding alternatives with regard to upkeep.

EDUCATION

The 2022 survey reinforced that local and area residents, as well as business owners are interested in learning more about environmental education of all kinds. The Parks & Recreation Board has been committed to education of issues affecting our park lands. In 2018, the Three Oaks Park & Recreation Board, together with ReLeaf Michigan, Berrien Conservation, SW x SW CLSMA, and MIDNR sponsored a “Protect Your Oaks Trees from Oak Wilt Disease” which was open to the public. It was well attended. Follow-up efforts were; developing a brochure, distributing ReLeaf Michigan brochures, and sourcing bookmarks concerning the disease and prevention that were inserted in the fall 2018 tax bills to all Three Oaks residents. Although plans were to follow-up with presentations yearly, we were unable to do so in 2020 and 2021. A planned presentation in 2023 is Oak Wilt Prevention/Identifying Invasives in collaboration with Berrien Conservation District and other resources. Other education opportunities include pollinator awareness, and water reserve issues. Costs are negligible.

PARK WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE PLAN

Continue to design and implement wayfinding signage at all parks, following a consistent theme that ties into the existing one. All trail signage should include a map with routes and incorporate travel times for each segment to help guide unfamiliar users.

NON-MOTORIZED PATHWAY / TRAIL SYSTEM CONNECTIONS

The Three Oaks is committed to providing pedestrian and bicycle pathways and connections throughout the Village, Township and beyond. The district will continue to develop pathways and connections, particularly linking the parks and recreation facilities. A district -wide plan for a multi-modal trail system is proposed, including bicycles, pedestrian, snowmobiles, and additionally incorporate local, County, State and other trail systems to ensure maximum connectivity, particularly to the Berrien County Trails.

With the high speed Amtrak rail line bisecting downtown Three Oaks, a preliminary study to consider a pedestrian overpass to connect Carver Park and the Community Garden on the south to the northern parks at Dewey Cannon Park is being considered. This would also benefit shopping in the downtown district, and provide further safety to pedestrians.

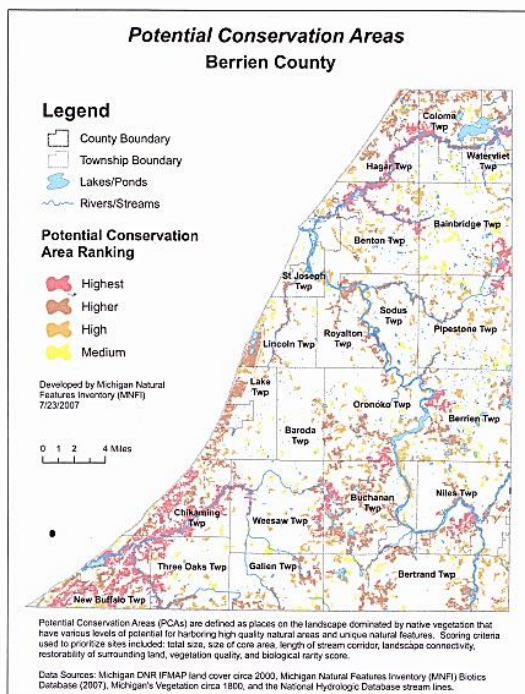
TREE INITIATIVE

Three Oaks Parks and Recreation is committed to teaming up with the Village Forests program, a collaboration between the Village and Rotary Club of Harbor Country, to budget for and plant 5 trees every year on park land within the Village. This will help ensure that Three Oaks not only keeps the designation of “Tree City” from the Arbor Day Foundation each year, but also adding a variety of new trees in areas that are lacking, and to eventually replace aging trees

NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

Three Oaks Parks & Recreation plans to aid the Village and Township in establishing and maintaining a Natural Resources Inventory. Our 2022 Parks survey revealed that citizens in and around Three Oaks see our wooded areas, waterways,

Map 7



residential trees and native plants and pollinators as vital to the community. An inventory of our natural resources will help us improve our stewardship of the parks as well as all surrounding land and waterways. It will also aid in the decision making of our Village and Township Planning Commissions, Zoning Boards, and Councils. The natural resources we have and seek to amplify and protect should guide all of our municipal infrastructure decisions in the future.

Understanding the natural resources we have and how to protect them is vital to protecting the environment and fostering resilience toward flooding, drought, extreme heat and all of the effects of climate change. With the deep agricultural history of Three Oaks ever present we must take steps to protect farmland and rich soils. Although Three Oaks has long been revered for its natural beauty, we recognize that beauty is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the importance of nature and the environment around us.

JOINT THREE OAKS PARTNERSHIP

Three Oaks Village and Township have established an improved, working relationship for the planning and management of their Parks and Recreation Boards, to maximize benefits for the Village and Township residents, who all enjoy the parks and recreation facilities of the area. A momentum had begun over the previous five years and has now developed into a joint parks effort between Three Oaks Village and Three Oaks Township, known as Three Oaks Parks and Recreation, to better serve the combined needs and future enhancement of recreation amenities, and further to solidify the cooperation and resource management through volunteerism, and funding sources.

PARKS AND RECREATION FIVE YEAR PLAN UPDATE

Update the parks and recreation master plan every five years (2028 deadline) to include Three Oaks Village and Township as the Three Oaks Parks & Recreation Plan, a joint effort of the Village of Three Oaks and Three Oaks Township.



SUMMARY – PLANNING FOR CHANGE

This concludes the Three Oaks 2023-2027 Five Year Parks & Recreation Plan and the vision of the future of our community parks, and the recreation they provide. Much of this vision was begun in past plans, and much has already been accomplished through the efforts of those visionaries. The impact of Three Oaks' varied parks - past, present and future, is undeniable.

Our focused 2022 Public Survey has driven this plan and over the next five years we expect to elicit the support of the community and organizations in attaining the goals set forth.

This plan intends to encourage active lifestyles, an understanding of our natural environment, and enhance cultural and musical experiences. In addition to a focus on nature, enhancing our cultural/musical opportunities and providing added sports amenities will keep this park system current with the needs and wants of residents and visitors alike.

A major focus throughout is ADA accessibility, and connectivity to the parks. We recognize the obstacles to the walkability and universal access, and intend to lay a strong foundation for change in the 2029-2033 Five Year Plan. All of this will provide a well-rounded life experience for all.

APPENDIX

CONTENTS

MDNR Plan Certification Checklist

Survey Distributed to Residents

Full Survey Results

30-day Comment Period and Public Hearing Notices – Village

30-day Comment Period and Public Hearing Notices –Township

Minutes from ----- , 202- Village Council Meeting

Minutes from the ----- , 202- Township Board Meeting

Plan Adoption by Village Council

Plan Adoption by Township Board

Transmittal Letter to Berrien County, Southwestern Michigan Commission

SURVEY DISTRIBUTED TO RESIDENTS

Three Oaks, Michigan Parks and Recreation Survey 2022

The Village & Township of Three Oaks, Michigan are seeking input for their joint 5 year Parks & Recreation Master Plan. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

*** Required**

Email * _____

Please select one of the residency options below. *

- I am a Three Oaks Village Resident
- I am a Three Oaks Township Resident outside of the Village
- I live near Three Oaks and visit often
- I occasionally visit Three Oaks, MI
- I might visit someday

Which of the following Three Oaks parks are you familiar with? Select all that apply. *

- Dewey Cannon Park (Village)
- Dillard Park (Village)
- Watkins Park (Village)
- Carver Park (Village)
- Chamberlain Path (Village)
- Shedd's Cemetery (Township)
- Spring Creek School (Township)
- Three Oaks Conservation Area (Township)

Which recreational activities would you like more access to in Three Oaks, Michigan? Please select 2-5 options. *

- Hiking paths in the woods
- Biking paths
- Tennis
- Pickleball
- Cross-country skiing
- Bocce ball
- Hard scape walking paths in parks
- Basketball
- Volleyball
- Fishing
- Bird watching
- Other:

Which additions to parks would be most important to you?

Select all that apply. *

- Lighting
- Better accommodations for live music
- Public Restrooms
- Signage with rules/ordinances
- Park equipment
- Exercise stations on hiking trails
- Improvements to existing hiking trails
- New trees
- Other:

How often do you utilize Three Oaks Parks in the Spring, Summer, and Fall? Select one. *

- Daily
- Once a week
- Once a month
- 2-3 times a year
- Once a year
- Maybe someday

Which park amenities do you utilize the most? Please select 2-5 options. *

- Enjoying live music
- Playing sports
- Playgrounds
- The little free libraries
- Walking through village parks
- Picnics
- The pavilions
- Hiking
- Park rentals
- Walking dogs
- Other:

How often do you or your kids utilize the playgrounds in Watkins and Dillard Parks? Select one. *

- Daily
- Once a week
- Once a month
- 2-3 times a year
- Once a year

- Never, but glad they are available

How often do you utilize the Three Oaks Township Conservation Area for hiking, fishing, or bird watching? Select one. *

- Daily
- Once a week
- Once a month
- 2-3 times a year
- Once a year
- Maybe someday
- I did not know they were there

How often do you visit hiking trails outside of Three Oaks? Select one. *

- Daily
- Once a week
- Once a month
- 2-3 times a year
- Once a year
- Maybe someday

How often do you visit Hoadley Trail in Watkins Park? *

- Daily
- Once a week
- Once a month
- 2-3 times a year
- Once a year
- Maybe someday
- I did not know it was there

How important do you feel the Three Oaks Community Garden is to the Three Oaks Community? Select one. *

- Very important
- I'm glad it's there
- Not that important
- I did not know it was there
- Which addition to Watkins Park most interests you? Select one. *
- Pickleball courts
- Bocce ball courts
- A hard scape walking path back to Hoadley Trail
- Shade for Timber Town
- Improvements to main pavilion

- Better picnic accommodations
- Other:

Please tell us any other thoughts you have about the future of Watkins Park by typing below.

Which addition to Dewey Cannon Park most interests you? Select one. *

- Public restrooms
- Accommodations for the Three Oaks Farmer's Market
- A hard scape walking path around the edge of the park
- Upgrading gazebo to better accommodate events
- Other:

Please tell us any other thoughts you have about the future of Dewey Cannon Park by typing below.

Please check all reasons that prevent you or members of your household from visiting the parks or using the recreation facilities in Three Oaks. *

- Nothing prevents me, I love all the parks
- I don't know where the facilities are
- Doesn't offer the right equipment
- Too far from residence
- Insufficient lighting
- Poor access to parks or facilities
- Facilities are not ADA accessible
- Other:

Would you be open to paying a millage to better fund Three Oaks Parks & Recreation? *If you don't vote in Three Oaks please select "I don't vote in Three Oaks" *

- Yes
- It would take some convincing
- No
- I don't vote in Three Oaks

WATKINS PARK 'WRITTEN ANSWER' SUMMARY

Below is a brief summary of the answers to the Watkins Park 'written answer' question on the Parks & Recreation survey along with a list of all of the written answers submitted.

SUMMARY:

Maintenance and upgrades to the existing playground equipment, pavilion, and nature trail at Watkins Park seem to be the most popular amongst respondents. This includes repairs to Timbertown (removal of graffiti, re-sealing wood, pest control, garbage control) and more maintenance of Hoadley Trail (reduce water/mud, removal of poison ivy, better signage back to trail, clearing brush and fallen trees).

Increased landscaping and trees is also a hot topic. This could tie into adding shade trees for Timber Town which is popular under the multiple choice Watkins question.

Pickleball courts, better ADA accommodations, more equipment for children, and a dog park are also all mentioned a handful of times each.

SURVEY QUESTION: 'PLEASE TELL US ANY OTHER THOUGHTS YOU HAVE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF WATKINS PARK BY TYPING BELOW'

ANSWERS:

"Having a nice, comfortable space for families to have graduations, showers or picnics and other spring through fall events. Meeting place for local groups to enjoy in a covered but open setting. Resident low rental fees with requirement of cleaning up and leaving space as found. "

"Bathrooms and more shade"

"Better ADA accessibility "

"isn't it mostly just used for little league?"

it's so removed from the center of the village I rarely go unless I'm heading out to Hoadley Trail"

"More signage to Hoadley Tr"

"Thanks for all your hard work! "

"Shade for timbertown would be great as well! "

"Dog park perhaps toward parking area not back near Hoadley. Increase native plants, reduce invasive species. Expand the park into adjacent lands as available".

"Better drainage on hoadley trail"

"The property that is for sale between Watkins park and the apartments and it could be purchased and utilized for indoor youth sports or other activities."

"Upkeep to what exists there"

"Resealing the wood would be a good idea."

"More accessible bathrooms and water fountains for kids."

"Constant pests in summer with the wood and mulch. Would like to see different materials used for better environment for the children without having to worry about bees and wasps. There needs to be improvements and modifications and additions for the CHILDREN of the community. They don't play pickle ball."

"Love that it's there but the trails are often too muddy to enjoy."

"We need to get more children involved "

"I love that this is the locals sports activity park. A great place for the local community to gather for all ages."

"Tennis"

"Better set up for 1.5-3 year olds; lots of the equipment is too large for them to play on independently "

"Dog park also handicapped equipment for wheelchairs"

"Better lighting and signage for walking trail with mile marker"

"I realize it's 'timber' town....but those wood shavings are a pain, they get in shoes, socks, clothes whatever and they poke you and give splinters. In Galien, their park has shredded tire on the ground and it's very soft (but dirty) and in New Buffalo they have a rubber floor that is super cool because there's no mess and the kids don't get hurt, I just wish it wasn't a dark color because it gets hot. I would love for there to be some sort of sprinkler system or something the kids could play in but I know that's not easily done."

"become the 'sports' park of Three Oaks. keep open spaces for activities, add a welcoming entry"

"a defined entry, perimeter trees"

"More dog parks!"

"Family and adult sports facilities"

"I'd like to see more walking trails"

"Is it possible to build a dog park in the area? It would be a great addition. You could charge a small annual membership fee to help pay for upkeep."

"Improve entry signage to Hoadley Trail & parking near the trail, maybe relocate entrance as it just looks like access to the baseball fields. Entry trail should go around the outfield maybe on the East side, not between the fields. The start has nothing to do with a nature trail. The sign on 12 is visually lost ."

"It needs to be better connected to the Hoadley Trail, and the wetlands/drain area needs to be restored to full ecological function."

"There is a lot of bees last year."

"Beautification. Flower beds."

"Splash Pad would be wonderful."

"Would love to see some shade and some repairs on the equipment."

"when I was a kid in 90s in three oaks, I would try to go on the trail in Watkins Park with a friend, but we would always run into some creepy dude. it's isolated and a bit scary. would not go alone there as a woman"

"Hoadley Trail always seems to be under water. I would like to walk it more with my kids before/after we go to Timbertown".

"A basket ball court"

"More lights near timbertown and splash pad"

"I would love to have paths, ideally all season, wrap around the baseball outfields to elongate the trail on the eastern edge of the park; potentially parallel Locust East to better tie the park to the town and allow pedestrian through routing."

"I would just love to see updates. Timbertown was built "by us" when I believe I was in 3rd-4th grade. They asked us for ideas. I take my niece and nephew there now and it just seems a bit run down"

"It would be really nice for Watkins park to be updated, cleaned more. Every time we take our kids to timbertown there's a ridiculous amount of trash and graffiti through the playground."

"More volunteers to help keep it in top shape"

"Water feature for children would be great"

"A bike station, where I can add air to my bike tires or tighten any loose spokes."

"Have to promote it more. If I didn't know it was their I wouldn't know it existed "

"More baseball games"

"Would love it if the nasty, fascist graffiti would be removed more often."

"It's sad to see timber town specifically go down the way it has. When I was a kid it was SOO cool! It just looks fun down now. When I bring my kids we always bring a bag to pick up trash! More cans should be made available inside perhaps? Also bathrooms!"

"Redo the basketball area. At some shade and drinking fountains. Try to revive the Haunted house the city had yearly."

"Install an EV charging station"

"Creating shade for Timber Town by planting large trees in the open land next to it would also create a great natural picnic area for families."

"Outdoor gym equipment under shade and water station"

"Don't make accommodations for people visiting three oaks but for the people that live here "

"While the grandchildren were playing in timber town there were a lot of workers that frequented the port a potties. Not a good or bad thing just something that I noticed."

“Lighting for tennis & pickle ball courts.”

“Village should be current: pickleball is the fastest growing sport in the country! “

“Very interested in getting Pickleball courts and lighting to that we don't have to leave town to play!!”

“Love the park and walking trail and the conservative area. Would love to see a couple of pickle ball courts. Does not have to be at Watkins park. But close by and open for all.

The trails are not very well maintained and make for a rough walk.”

“Ice skating Rink”

“Pickle ball courts”

“Get rid of the poison ivy that is all over the Hoadley Trail! Also, more trail maintenance would be nice “

“Bike parking and covered picnic. Like spicer lake. Would also love an ornithology center. There isn't a good bird watching hub at round. Could partner with Cornell Lab of ornithology.”

“More entrances to Timber Town”

“Exercise equipment”

DEWEY CANNON PARK ‘WRITTEN ANSWER’ SUMMARY

Below is a brief summary of the answers to the Dewey Cannon Park ‘written answer’ question on the Parks & Recreation survey along with a list of all of the written answers submitted.

Summary:

Public bathrooms are mentioned a handful of times in these written answers. This is significant because that was also the most popular ‘single upgrade’ folks requested in the multiple choice question about Dewey Cannon. Music in the Park is popular amongst respondents and improvements to encourage more events and more live music is mentioned a few times.

Survey Question: ‘Please tell us any other thoughts you have about the future of Dewey Cannon Park by typing below.’

Answers:

“The walking path around would be good too. I see people making laps around the park for exercise. “

“An engineered wetland designed in tandem with a year round water feature/pond to better mitigate flash flooding. improve percolation through the clay layer. “

“Downtown certainly needs public restrooms”

“Better grilling area”

"It might be a great area to consider for farmers market"

"It's fine, put money towards other projects"

"It's history and no one knows its there no promotion "

"More events should be held there

"More restrooms and access to water."

"I would like to see public bathrooms and farmers market at Dewey but could pick all three."

"I'd love to see more porta John's during music in the park with over 100 plus people hydrating them selves and just one porta John ? I've seen people urinate in the back ally on these nights . Hopefully this can be provided until maybe public bathrooms in the future . "

"I'd like to see a demonstration rain garden and ephemeral pond with connecting rain swale from Elm Street. This would help to reduce stress on sewer infrastructure during "rain bombs.""

"More landscaping "

"Love listening to live music there."

"We love it! Give a place for the kids to play while the parents shop! "

"More tables & benches."

"Better utilize the space for events and applicable sports. It is a centralized location in town where you can easily access local businesses for additional growth and exposure".

"I would like to see public restrooms, lighting and sound system in the trees, more attention to the Music in the park and the future Market. Also, a water fountain."

"Move the cannon to corner, build a more functional gazebo, fix drainage, build restrooms, add play area."

"Love it for what it is"

"Could be a good hub for suggested walks and town history. Like walking trail through Buchanan. "

"Walking path along the edge. Maybe some playground equipment?"

"We enjoy the summer concerts."

SURVEY SUMMARY: THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP CONSERVATION AREA

43% of respondents are familiar with the Three Oaks Township Conservation Area. Hiking paths in woods (71%) , cross-country skiing (19.5%), fishing (24.1%) and bird watching (22.2%) were identified as activities residents would like more access to. “Mother Nature” is also a popular theme overall. Outdoor walking and nature paths were strongly supported by respondents throughout the survey. Utilization of the conservation area could be increased greatly by increasing promotion of the area, adding signage, and regular maintenance of the trails and parking lot.

SURVEY RESULTS: ‘ANY OTHER THOUGHT?’

Below is a brief summary of the answers to the ‘any other thoughts?’ written-answer question on the Parks & Recreation survey along with a list of all of the written answers submitted.

Summary:

Creating more kid-friendly and family-friendly activities and accommodations are mentioned a few times here as well as throughout the other written answer questions on the survey. Note that repairing and upgrading current playground equipment could help. Promoting our current playground equipment as well as the playground at the Three Oaks School could help. On that note, promoting the parks more and the facilities available is mentioned here and in other questions too.

Improved or added trails and nature walks are mentioned a few times. A couple folks mention paying more attention to the park land in the Township. Support is also shown for bathrooms, more landscaping, acquiring more land, and a dog park.

Survey Question: ‘Please tell us any other thoughts you have about the parks by typing below. ‘

ANSWERS:

“Keeping parks suitable for family oriented activities. Strolling baby, throwing frisbee, benches for sitting, and walking paths”

“Secure more land for parks before its gone”

“Better landscaping and paths would make them more attractive for hanging out. Better signage leading people to Hoadley trail. Bathrooms. “

“No more taxes. Raise money a different way. We are already paying for infrastructure for tourists and problems caused by tourists (parking!). We will oppose a millage for parks and recreation.”

“Connecting Watkins with a bike trail would draw more people to it. There's not a lot of talk or promotion of our parks.”

“Playgrounds in the township”

“Parkour equipment at one park would be great. “

“Tourism is great, but make things accessible for families and more kid-friendly events to boost morale for locals.”

“The lot next to Watkins park would be an amazing water splash pad for the town during summer months. Nothing crazy like NB but nice and simple. “

"ADA accessible"

"The shelter at Carver: skylights? Really? The entry to a community should be a showcase garden with flowering trees, flower beds, etc. to entice people passing by the actually stop and visit the area - not a picnic area; it is too noisy (traffic, half to shout to hear each other) and who would let a child roam/toss a ball or frisbie next to US 12? Please review professional literature on HOW TO and best practices before engaging, spending others' dollars on "hey, that sounds great" on an half-baked, unproven idea."

"Dog park"

"We should have a parks brochure"

"I feel like it would be cool to have scavenger hunt papers (of things found in nature) accessible on the trails so it is more interesting and occupies the kids on a nature walk."

"promote awareness that there is a good mix of parks and activities."

"promote the parks as a group"

"More attention paid to park space in Township overall"

"Just moved into town from a neighboring township, look forward to using the parks more as weather improves".

"Can we get the conversation going about connecting Three Oaks with Niles paved path and the new paved paths in Union Pier! Lets connect SW Michigan for runners and bikes!"

"Definitely need restrooms"

"Under landscaped and not well maintained or updated."

"Restoring the drain wetlands would also improve water quality for what flows to the Galien. So we have three important reasons to fix the wetlands- a great learning environment for kids, more hiking land, and improved water quality."

"The parks could be made more inviting with comprehensive beautification. AND PLEASE, NO MORE RED MULCH"

"Timbertown really needs some attention. It a great playground, but the condition is a shame."

"I love TO wouldn't want to live anywhere else."

THREE OAKS PARKS & RECREATION SURVEY 2022

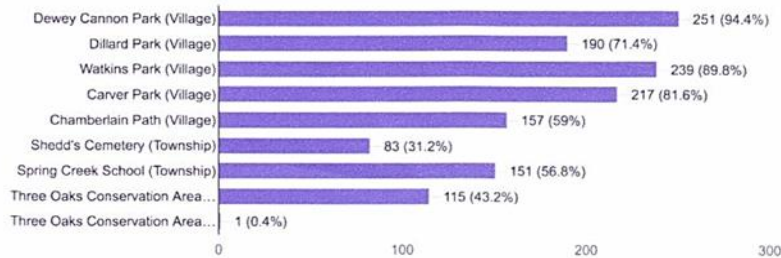
Please select one of the residency options below.

266 responses



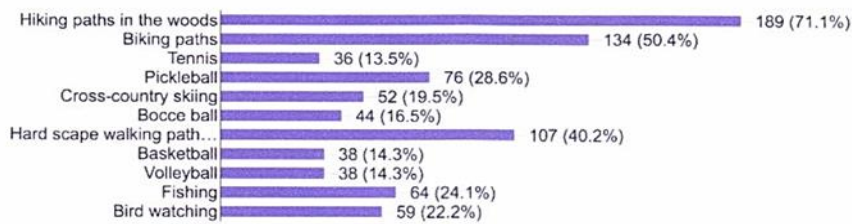
Which of the following Three Oaks parks are you familiar with? Select all that apply.

266 responses



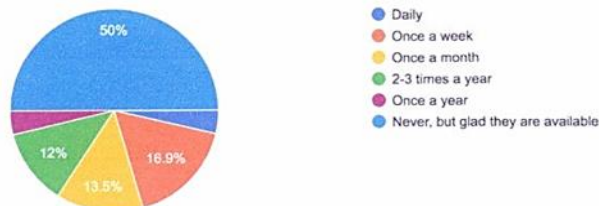
Which recreational activities would you like more access to in Three Oaks, Michigan? Please select 2-5 options.

266 responses

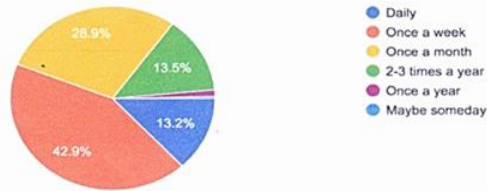


How often do you or your kids utilize the playgrounds in Watkins and Dillard Parks? Select one.

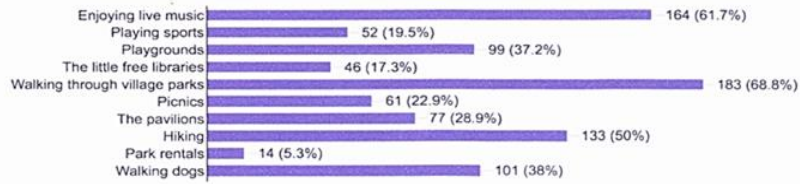
266 responses



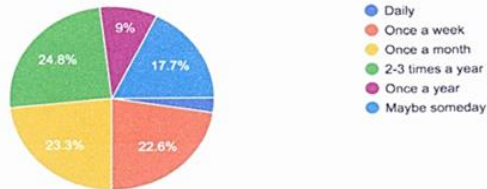
How often do you utilize Three Oaks Parks in the Spring, Summer, and Fall? Select one.
266 responses



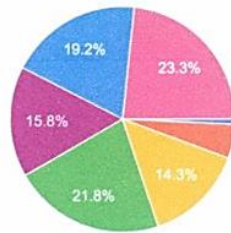
Which park amenities do you utilize the most? Please select 2-5 options.
266 responses



How often do you visit hiking trails outside of Three Oaks? Select one.
266 responses

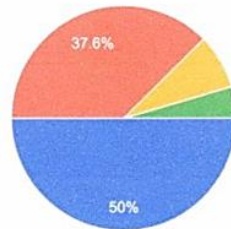


How often do you visit Hoadley Trail in Watkins Park?
266 responses



- Daily
- Once a week
- Once a month
- 2-3 times a year
- Once a year
- Maybe someday
- I did not know it was there

How important do you feel the Three Oaks Community Garden is to the Three Oaks Community?
Select one.
266 responses



- Very important
- I'm glad it's there
- Not that important
- I did not know it was there

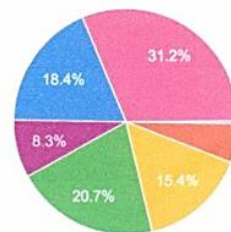
Which addition to Watkins Park most interests you? Select one.
266 responses



- Pickleball courts
- Bocce ball courts
- A hard scape walking path back to Ho...
- Shade for Timber Town
- Improvements to main pavilion
- Better picnic accommodations
- All the above
- Improvement of trail to and of Hoadley...

1/3 ▼

How often do you utilize the Three Oaks Township Conservation Area for hiking, fishing, or bird watching? Select one.
266 responses



- Daily
- Once a week
- Once a month
- 2-3 times a year
- Once a year
- Maybe someday
- I did not know they were there

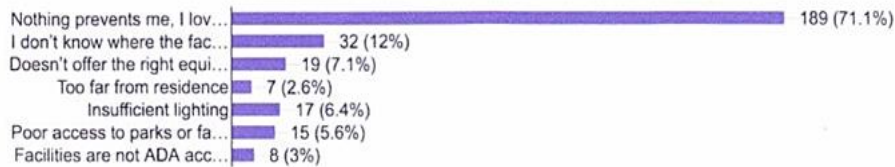
Which addition to Dewey Cannon Park most interests you? Select one.

266 responses



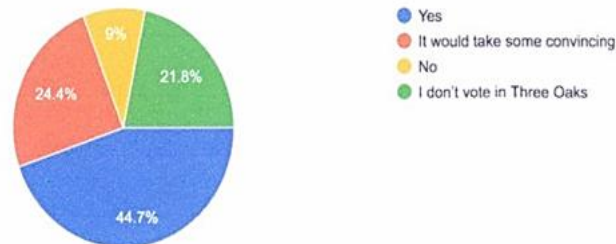
Please check all reasons that prevent you or members of your household from visiting the parks or using the recreation facilities in Three Oaks.

266 responses



Would you be open to paying a millage to better fund Three Oaks Parks & Recreation? *If you don't vote in Three Oaks please select "I don't vote in Three Oaks"

266 responses



Which additions to parks would be most important to you? Select all that apply.

266 responses

