



Community Parks and Recreation Plan
For the Village of Decatur
For the Years 2015-2019

In accordance with guidelines from the
Michigan Department of
Natural Resources

Prepared by:
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**Village of Decatur
Community Parks and Recreation Plan**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, parks and recreational resources have provided a structure and aesthetic identity to communities. These resources have been identified as a precious asset because they increase property values, provide natural recreation, enhance animal and plant habitat, contribute to clean air and water, and help preserve and protect the historic character and identity of the area. In today's society of financial, social and economic pressures, the need for passive recreational facilities is essential.

This plan has been developed with the intention that it shall be used as a guide for the development of parks and recreation within the Village of Decatur. This plan will highlight the current status of Village Parks as well as lay a foundation for the future of the Village Parks and Recreation facilities and programming.

This plan takes into account the desires of the community for a multitude of recreational opportunities. It also focuses on the needs of the community in the development of goals and objectives. The final product of this plan is a set of strategic recommendations that will guide the Village to its goals.

II. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Village of Decatur is a General Law Village incorporated within the Township of Decatur in Van Buren County. Van Buren County is bordered by Allegan County, Kalamazoo County, Cass County, Berrien County, and Lake Michigan. Located in Southwest Michigan, Decatur is home to approximately 1,819 residents (based on the 2010 US Census).

The Village of Decatur is comprised of many different types of building and land uses. Housing is primarily single or two family homes with a multi-unit apartment complex for seniors and a multi-unit apartment complex that is for subsidized and affordable housing. The central business district comprises the downtown area and is home to restaurants, service industries, and some shopping. There are also large industrial complexes spread throughout the Village.

The area surrounding the Village is comprised of two townships, Decatur and Hamilton. Many visitors come to the greater Decatur area during the summer to enjoy outdoor recreational opportunities such as boating, fishing, and swimming. Wintertime activities include ice-fishing and snowmobiling.

The Village of Decatur serves as the central place for commerce for the area. Decatur is also home to restaurants that are frequently visited by those from the neighboring townships. There is a symbiotic relationship between the Village and both municipalities; frequently the municipalities work together on large projects including a joint fire authority.

This recreation plan has been developed specifically to guide Parks and Recreation Development for the Village of Decatur while also understanding that the Village, through our parks, is the primary source of recreation for residents of not only the Village but also both Hamilton and Decatur Township.

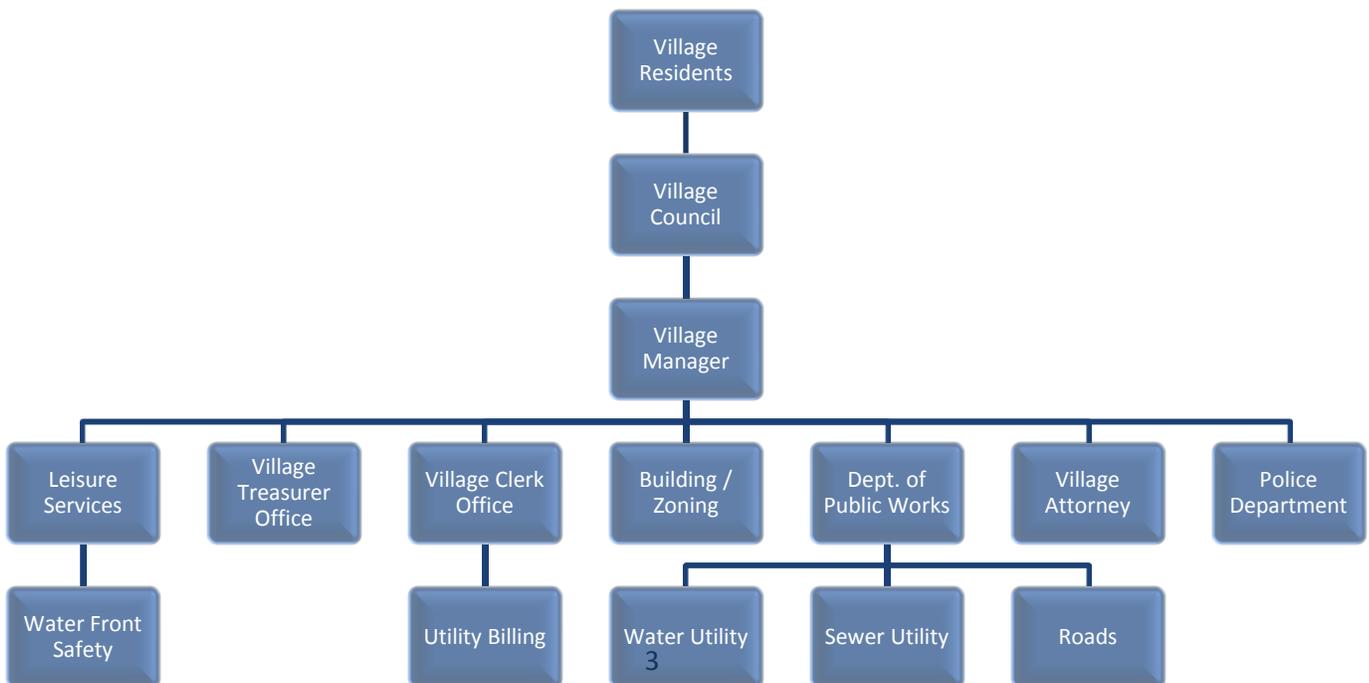
III. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The following section identifies the administrative structure for the Village of Decatur. It also describes the functions regarding parks and recreation for the Village.

The Village of Decatur is a General Law Village. The Village is governed by a Village Council which consists of six Trustees and one Village President. These positions are elected to four year terms by the residents. These are the only elected positions in the Village of Decatur. The Village Council is responsible for appointing positions, approving projects, establishing budgets, and serving on various committees.

The following positions are appointed by the Village Council: Village Manager, Village Treasurer, Village Clerk, Police Chief, and Director of Public Works. The Village currently employs twelve full-time employees, four seasonal summer employees, four crossing-guards during the school year, and three part-time employees.

Village of Decatur Organizational Chart



Parks and Recreation in the Village of Decatur

The Village of Decatur operates a small Parks and Recreation Department. The Village Manager serves as the Director of Parks and Recreation. The Village’s five parks are maintained by the Village Department of Public Works. The Village of Decatur Public Works staff is comprised of a Director, a Foreman, two full-time Technicians, and one part-time summer Technician. The DPW center of operations is located at 114 Eli Street in the Village of Decatur.

The only Village ran Recreation program is the Village’s Water Front Safety Program. This program is run during the summer at the Village Public Beach at Red Woolfe Park. This program consists of Life Guards ensuring the safety of swimmers and swim lessons taught by the Head Life Guard/Swim Instructor.

Parks and Recreation Budget

GL NUMBER		2014-15 AMENDED BUDGET	2015-16 ADOPTED BUDGET
Dept 751-PARKS AND RECREATION			
101-751-703.000	SALARIES-LEISURE SERVICES	9,653.00	9,312.00
101-751-703.010	OVERTIME	75.00	100.00
101-751-703.050	SALARIES-LIFEGUARDS	11,650.00	12,000.00
101-751-703.051	TEMPORARY SALARIES	2,000.00	2,300.00
101-751-715.000	FICA/MEDICARE	1,785.00	1,807.00
101-751-717.000	WORKMAN'S COMP.	590.00	600.00
101-751-756.000	SUPPLIES & MAINTENANCE	3,250.00	3,000.00
101-751-901.000	PRINTING/PUBLISHING	500.00	100.00
101-751-921.000	ELECTRIC	550.00	550.00
101-751-930.000	REPAIRS	4,500.00	2,000.00
101-751-943.000	EQUIP.RENTAL TRANSFER	8,500.00	9,250.00
101-751-958.010	LIFEGUARD CERTIFICATIONS	362.00	600.00
101-751-959.000	MISCELLANEOUS	0.00	50.00
101-751-964.000	REFUNDS	140.00	0.00
101-751-985.000	COMMUNITY PROJECTS	8,900.00	9,000.00
Total Expenditures		53,455.00	50,669.00

Table 1: Parks and Recreation Budget

The swim lesson program follows a Red Cross curriculum and is open to swimmers of all ages and ability levels. During the summer of 2014 there were over 60 participants in the swim lesson program.

Admin Table 1 above shows the budget for Parks and Recreation for the current Fiscal Year. Also shown is a prospective budget for the next Fiscal Year. Funding for Parks and Recreational programming and maintenance comes from a variety of sources. Funding is provided from the Village General Fund, private donations, grants, and registration fees from swimming lessons. During the past two years, approximately \$50,000 has been budgeted for parks operation and maintenance, recreation programming and capital improvements.

Volunteerism in the Village of Decatur's Parks and Recreation Programs

The Village of Decatur often utilizes volunteers in maintenance and beautification roles in Village Parks. Volunteer organizations, including the Optimist Club (and for 2015 Modern Woodman) often plant flowers in the pocket park in the Downtown District. A nearby children's summer camp is also involved in projects assisting the Village in beautification of parks. Camp Lake of the Woods is a highly respected and sought after summer camp program. One of the programs that are offered is a community service program. These children will take on a project, such as painting park benches.

No other formal relationships have yet been formed to have private organizations maintain or operate any parks or recreation programs.

Partnerships and Relationships with Schools and other Public Agencies

The Raider Romp Park was built in 2001. This park is a prime example of partnerships and community collaboration in the Greater Decatur Area. Raider Romp Park is located on the grounds of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Decatur Post. While the Playground and

Restrooms are owned and maintained by the Village, the VFW owns a covered pavilion, grills, and picnic tables that are open to all who wish to use them. The park was also constructed using funds gathered through a collaborative fundraising campaign.

The Village also has a partnership with the Decatur Public Schools (DPS). The Schools own and maintain an outdoor track that is open to all who wish to use it. The Van Buren District Library (VBDL) also runs many different recreational programs for children focusing on reading and learning. Also throughout the year the VBDL offers the opportunity for children to participate in different arts and crafts programs and educational presentations.

IV. RECREATION INVENTORY

Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory

To conduct the Recreation Inventory, a few methods were utilized. First to determine the presence or absence of recreational opportunities at each park a checklist was created. The checklist listed a number of recreational opportunities. The process for the checklist was to observe whether the features were present and then to rate the quality of the features.

Next to describe each park, past Community Parks and Recreation Plans were utilized as well as community maps and information available through Van Buren County. It was also necessary to research which parks had been developed utilizing any grant assistance for the purpose of reporting on the condition and status for all Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities.

Please see Appendix A for a map showing the location of all the Village Parks.

DDA PARK

Recreational Opportunity	Yes/No	Condition
Open Play Area	N	
Natural Area	Y	Fair
Scenic Walkway	N	
Hiking Trails	N	
Basketball	N	
Softball/Baseball	N	
Tennis	N	
Sand Volleyball	N	
Horseshoes	N	
Playground Equip	N	
Parking	Y	Good
Picnic Tables	N	
Benches	Y	Fair
Grills	N	
Signage	N	
Refuse Area	Y	Good
Community Center	N	
Public Restrooms	N	
Picnic Shelter	N	
Performance Area	N	

Table 2: DDA Park Inventory

In the year 2000 the Village of Decatur Downtown Development Authority established and constructed the DDA Park. The park is located at the corner of St. Mary's Street and Phelps Street right across from Village Hall. The park has a gazebo that provides shading to visitors while they sit at the benches underneath. This park's location makes it popular with residents and those who have employment in the area.

Of the facilities available at the DDA Park, most are in good condition. The natural area and landscaping does require a great deal of care and regular maintenance and the benches are in need of new paint. There is no sign

to identify the park.



The park is approximately 0.2 acres in size and offers visitors a chance to sit at one of the different benches, enjoy a drink from the water fountain, or gaze at the different vegetation that decorates the park during the warm months. The park has also been utilized in the past as a location for the Decatur Farmer's Market.

RAIDER ROMP PARK

Raider Romp park was built in 2001 as the culmination of a very successful community effort for fundraising, design, and construction. The park is located on Veteran's Memorial Drive between Phelps St and School St. The park is located on the approximately 7 acre Veterans of Foreign Wars post. The VFW owns a pavilion with picnic tables and grills for those who visit the park.



The Raider Romp Park serves the neighboring residences. Land use near the park is mostly residential as well as the large parcel of land owned by the VFW post. The park has public restrooms that are maintained by the Village of Decatur. The restrooms are secured with a lock and are closed during the winter to avoid freezing of pipes. A paved parking lot is available at the south end of the park for visitors who travel by car.

Recreational Opportunity	Yes/No	Condition
Open Play Area	Y	Good
Natural Area	N	
Scenic Walkway	N	
Hiking Trails	N	
Basketball	N	
Softball/Baseball	N	
Tennis	N	
Sand Volleyball	N	
Horseshoes	N	
Playground Equip	Y	Good
Parking	Y	Good
Picnic Tables	Y	Good
Benches	Y	Good
Grills	Y	Good
Signage	Y	Fair
Refuse Area	Y	Fair
Community Center	N	
Public Restrooms	Y	Fair
Picnic Shelter	Y	Good
Performance Area	N	

Table 3: Raider Romp Inventory

SOUTHSIDE SKATE PARK

In April of 2003 a master plan was developed for a Village-owned site at the corner of Beers St and Williams; the goal of the plan was to develop a park for teenage residents. The plan included a skate park, a basketball court, a pavilion, sidewalks, and a paved parking lot. The site is approximately



21,000 square feet. The park serves as the major recreational opportunity on the south side of the Village. The park has signage to identify the park rules and the status as a project funded by the DNR’s Land and Water Conservation Fund. Please see Appendix B, for the Master Plan for this park.

In 2005 the first phase of the park’s development was completed. This phase consisted of developing and constructing the Skate Park. The Skate Park is over 4,000 square feet. There are ramps for skaters to use. The Skate Park is fenced to allow for the Village to control access.



In 2009 the second phase of the park’s development was completed. This phase consisted of constructing a basketball court that can be used by residents and visitors. A fence was constructed on the east side of the court to protect basketballs from rolling into the street.

Recreational Opportunity	Yes/No	Condition
Open Play Area	Y	Fair
Natural Area	Y	Fair
Scenic Walkway	N	
Hiking Trails	N	
Basketball	Y	Good
Softball/Baseball	N	
Tennis	N	
Sand Volleyball	N	
Horseshoes	N	
Playground Equip	N	
Parking	Y	Poor
Picnic Tables	N	
Benches	Y	Fair
Grills	N	
Signage	Y	Fair
Refuse Area	Y	Fair
Community Center	N	
Public Restrooms	N	
Picnic Shelter	N	
Performance Area	N	

Table 4: South Side Skate Park Inventory



RED WOOLFE PARK



Red Woolfe Park is located at the west end of Pine Street. This park is the only public beach on Lake of the Woods. This park serves the entire Decatur-Hamilton Community.

This park is approximately 2.5 acres in size and is the primary source of recreation during the summer months in the



Village of Decatur. The park has playground equipment, a picnic shelter, picnic benches, a public restroom and shower,

volleyball facilities, grills, and a swimming area. The area is fenced for safety purposes and the

Recreational Opportunity	Yes/No	Condition
Open Play Area	Y	Good
Natural Area	Y	Good
Scenic Walkway	N	
Hiking Trails	N	
Basketball	N	
Softball/Baseball	N	
Tennis	N	
Sand Volleyball	Y	Poor
Horseshoes	N	
Playground Equip	Y	Poor
Parking	Y	Fair
Picnic Tables	Y	Good
Benches	Y	Good
Grills	Y	Fair
Signage	N	
Refuse Area	Y	Fair
Community Center	N	
Public Restrooms	Y	Poor
Picnic Shelter	Y	Fair
Performance Area	N	

Table 5: Red Woolfe Park Inventory

park is open from Memorial Day until Labor Day from 12:00pm until 8:00pm. During this time, Lifeguards are on duty. Swimming lessons are offered at this park. The beach house and restrooms were constructed using Land and Water Conservation Funds in 1979.



FIRE STATION PARK

Built in 1991 Fire Station Park is situated at the west Village Limits on Delaware Street (M-51). This park comprises approximately two acres of land with its entrance located on West St. Mary’s Street. There is a small area for parking located on St. Mary’s Street.



Recreational Opportunity	Yes/No	Condition
Open Play Area	Y	Fair
Natural Area	N	
Scenic Walkway	N	
Hiking Trails	N	
Basketball	N	
Softball/Baseball	N	
Tennis	Y	Poor
Sand Volleyball	N	
Horseshoes	N	
Playground Equip	Y	Fair
Parking	Y	Poor
Picnic Tables	Y	Fair
Benches	Y	Fair
Grills	Y	Poor
Signage	Y	Poor
Refuse Area	Y	Fair
Community Center	N	
Public Restrooms	Y	Poor
Picnic Shelter	Y	Fair
Performance Area	N	

Table 6: Fire Station Park Inventory



This park has a playground, a small pavilion with picnic tables and grill, and two paved tennis courts. Two restrooms are located at the western edge of the park. A small system of sidewalk connects the pavilion with the tennis courts.

The playground equipment at this park is rather old but has worn well. Benches are located near the playground equipment to offer a spot for people to sit while supervising children playing on the equipment. The tennis courts are in need of a reconstruction as they are over twenty years old.

Accessibility Evaluation of Village Owned Recreational Facilities

DDA Park – The DDA Park is barrier free when considering accessibility. Sidewalks and walking paths make the park accessible.

Raider Romp Park – The Raider Romp Park does provide barrier-free access to the pavilion, restrooms, and play area. The play area however, does is not barrier-free due to the woodchips that line the ground.

Southside Skate Park – The Southside Skate Park is currently not barrier free for accessibility. Without paved parking or a path of sidewalks to connect the park it would make travel very difficult in a wheelchair.

Red Woolfe Park – Red Woolfe Park does contain barrier free access to the beach area, pavilion and restrooms via side walk. There is no barrier free access to the volley ball court and the playground equipment due to the lack of sidewalk there.

Fire Station Park – There is not currently any sidewalk connecting the parking area to the pavilion. The pavilion and tennis courts are connected via sidewalk. It should be considered to add additional sidewalk to enhance accessibility.

Overall Assessment of Village Owned Recreational Facilities

The Village operates and maintains five parks. The parks range in age from over fifty years old to under ten years old. Because of this age difference in the parks, some are in much better overall condition than others. The older parks, Red Woolfe and Fire Station Park are both in a state that will require attention in the future. Playground equipment will need to be upgraded, facilities should be improved, and there is the potential to offer more recreational opportunities at these parks.

Previous Grant-Assisted Parks

The Village of Decatur has been fortunate to be the recipient of previous Grant Assistance for three different park projects. These projects have been the bathhouse/restroom project at Red Woolfe Park (Project Number 26-01060 L3), Fire Station Park (Project Number BF89-102), and the Southside Park Skate Board Park (Project Number 26-014648). All told, the Village of Decatur has received over \$96,000 in grant assistance for the development of Parks

and Recreation. Post-Completion, Self-Certification Report Forms are on file with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and are updated every five years; the next update will take place in 2018.

The Red Woolfe Park Bathhouse/Restroom project was completed in 1979. The project was to demolish and remove the existing bathhouse and to construct a new bathhouse with restrooms and changing facilities. The building also has the capacity to serve as a concession stand during the time that the park is open. While the building is currently over thirty-five years old, it remains very usable and in relatively good repair.

The Fire Station Park Project was rather comprehensive. Completed in 1989, the project was to develop a community park for both active and passive recreation. The project included the development of tennis courts, playground equipment, a picnic area, and a pavilion. The roughly twenty-five years since installation have taken a toll on the tennis courts and they are in need of a resurface. The playground equipment, though outdated, is generally in good repair. The picnic area remains in good condition.

The Southside Skate Board Park was originally planned to be built in three phases. The first phase was completed with the assistance of DNR Grant Funds. This phase consisted of creating the actual skate board park section of the park. This was completed in 2005 and remains in good condition. Phase two consisted of the construction of basketball courts and was completed in 2009. The park remains unfinished as the third phase of the project calls for the construction of a pavilion and restrooms as well as a paved parking area.

The Southside Skate Park is the only park for which a master site plan was developed, see Appendix B.

IV. PLANNING PROCESS

This Parks and Recreation Community Plan is the third such plan created for the Village of Decatur. The previous plans were completed in 1998 and in 2003. Both utilized different methods of public input and planning. Both plans created goals and action steps to guide the development of Parks and Recreation in the Village of Decatur. This plan attempts to build on these first plans.

A Parks and Recreation Committee was created comprising of representatives from the Village Council, the Van Buren District Library, Decatur Public Schools, as well as Village Administration. This group first reviewed past plans to discuss projects left over from the previous plans. This information was used to create a list of potential Parks and Recreation Improvement Projects. A survey was then created to gauge each project and its importance to the residents of Decatur (see V. Public Input Process for more details).

Also, as described in the Recreation Inventory, the current condition of Village Facilities was assessed. This information was then discussed by the Parks and Recreation Committee and utilized, along with the information gathered through the surveys, to assess the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Village of Decatur's Parks and Recreation opportunities. This information, as well as community specific demographic information, was then used to help formulate goals and improvement projects for Village Parks and Recreation Facilities.

V. PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

Public input is an important aspect to the planning process. Not only does gathering public input help guide the development of the plan but it also helps develop a sense of ownership of the plan with the public.

The first method of soliciting public input was through a survey. The survey was developed by looking at the action steps and projects that were not completed from the previous Community Parks and Recreation Plans. Participants were asked to rank the importance of these projects and were given an opportunity to add other suggestions.

Once survey was completed and a draft plan was developed the plan was posted on the Village of Decatur Website and paper copies were available for public review. This public review period lasted for approximately 42 days prior to the adoption of the plan by the Village Council. The draft plan was posted on December 22, 2014 and adopted on February 2, 2015. No public comments were received for the draft plan.

The night of adoption of the 5-Year Community Parks and Recreation Plan a public hearing was held. This was the final opportunity for public input into the plan. Once the public hearing was closed the Decatur Village Council adopted the plan via resolution.

VI. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This section describes the goals and objectives that have been created based on the following information: past Community Parks and Recreation Plans, public input and feedback from the community survey, the recreation inventory, the community demographics, and a strengths and weaknesses analysis.

Past Community Parks and Recreation Plans

The Village of Decatur created Parks and Recreation plans in both 1998 and 2003.

During the creation of these plans many different action steps were developed and many of these were completed. Early in the process of the development of this plan, the previous plans were analyzed to determine which projects were completed and which were outstanding.

Once this information had been compiled the information was discussed with the Parks and Recreation Committee. The committee put together a list of the top ten outstanding Parks and Recreation improvements that had yet to be completed and this information was then put together into a community survey.

Public Input – Community Survey

Public input was sought utilizing a community survey. This survey listed ten different recreational opportunities that had been identified in past Community Parks and Recreation Plans but had yet to be developed. Participants were asked to rank the opportunities based on the importance and their desire to see them developed.

To rank the importance of each project, each response was weighted (a response ranking an item 1 would be equivalent to 10, 2 would be 9, and so forth). The total weighted number was then divided by the total responses to give an average - points per response. The highest possible would be 10 and the lowest would be 1. A score of 10 would indicate that the item is

the most important to the respondent and a score of 1 being the least important to the respondent.

The results are below listed in accordance with those with the highest score:

- 1.) Upgrading playground equipment at all of the parks (average of 7.56 points per response)
- 2.) Creating a system of pedestrian trails and walking areas (average of 7.55 points per response)
- 3.) Developing indoor recreation opportunities (average of 6.3 points per response)
- 4.) Rebuilding the tennis courts at the Fire Station Park (average of 5.57 points per response)
- 5.) Developing soccer fields (average of 5.48 points per response)
- 6.) Establishing a paddle boat/canoe rental program at the public beach (average of 5.14 points per response)
- 7.) Improving parking facilities at all parks (average of 4.54 points per response)
- 8.) Finishing the South Side Skate Park with a pavilion and parking (average of 4.35 points per response)
- 9.) Constructing a rock-climbing wall at Raider Romp Park (average of 4.11 points per response)
- 10.) Developing an ice-skating rink (average of 4 points per response)

Along with ranking potential capital improvements, participants were asked if they had any other suggestions for the development of parks and recreation in the Village of Decatur. The three most frequent themes in these responses are listed below:

- 1.) Improving the current condition of Village parks
- 2.) Improving maintenance on existing parks
- 3.) Developing a dog park

Community Demographics

The Village of Decatur's Parks and Recreation facilities not only serve the Village residents but residents of the Greater Decatur Area. While the Village of Decatur is located in the Township of Decatur, Van Buren County, the greater Decatur Area is comprised of the Village of Decatur, Decatur Township, and neighboring Hamilton Township.

As of the 2010 Census, the Village of Decatur had a total population of 1,819 people. While this was a small decrease (approximately 1%) from the population at the 2000 Census, it still represents an over 3% increase since 1970. Since 1970 the population in both Decatur and Hamilton Township has also increased, though at a higher rate than the Village during the same

time. Table 7 below shows the population at each Census since 1970 for the three municipalities as well as Van Buren County. The population in the Greater Decatur Area reached its height during the 2000 Census where the total population for the three municipalities was 5,713.

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% Change Since 1970</u>
Village of Decatur	1,764	1,915	1,760	1,838	1,819	3.1%
Decatur Township	1,603	1,684	1,784	2,078	1,907	18.9%
Hamilton Township	1,167	1,586	1,679	1,797	1,489	25.7%
Van Buren County	56,173	66,814	70,060	76,263	76,258	35.7%

Table 7: Overall Population
Source: US Census 2010

Village of Decatur Population Based on Age					
	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Total population	1,819	100			
Under 5 years	141	7.8	45 to 49	119	6.5
5 to 9 years	126	6.9	50 to 54	122	6.7
10 to 14 years	149	8.2	55 to 59	104	5.7
15 to 19 years	151	8.3	60 to 64	79	4.3
20 to 24 years	94	5.2	65 to 69	70	3.8
25 to 29 years	144	7.9	70 to 74	54	3
30 to 34 years	114	6.3	75 to 79	43	2.4
35 to 39 years	123	6.8	80 to 84	44	2.4
40 to 44 years	108	5.9	85 years and over	34	1.9

Table 8: Population Based on Age

The Village of Decatur's population is spread near evenly across a large range of age groups. When split into groups that represent five year segments there is not one group that accounts for 10% or more of the population of the Village. The largest of these groups is the age range between 15 and 19 years old. Table 8 shows the span of the population based on ages. The spread of population based on age is important to take account of because each age group has different recreational needs and it is important to provide an opportunity for all ages, especially in a community in which all age groups are near equally represented.

Males in the Village of Decatur represent approximately 48% of the population where females represent approximately 52%. This split is very similar in Decatur Township (49% to 51% male to female respectively) and opposite in Hamilton Township (52% male and 48% female).

The 2010 Census revealed that there are 1,403 household in Decatur Township of which 701 households are in the Village and there are 551 households in Hamilton Township. Of these 2,655 households, 1,371 of them are families. Families with children under the age of 18 represent approximately 22% of the households in the three municipalities.

While only 17% of the total households in the Greater Decatur Area are renter occupied, the percentage is much higher within the Village limits. Within the Village of Decatur, over 36% of households are renter occupied. Renters often have less of an opportunity to provide their families with recreation as they are limited in the amount of household improvements they can make. It is important for those who are in rental situations to be provided with adequate opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Another factor that is important in determining a community's need to develop Community Parks and Recreation Facilities is the presence of poverty in the community. A

community with high instances of poverty is one that should have a focus on creating low cost recreation opportunities for families. While Van Buren County has an estimated 19% of the population living below the poverty level (based on the 2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate), that percentage is higher in the Village of Decatur; an estimated 28% of the population of the Village of Decatur lives below the poverty level.

The percentage of children living in poverty, according to the 2013 ACS, is over 37%. Also important is that over 44% of the population in the Village of Decatur is living within 150% of the poverty level. The high instances of poverty within the Village illustrate the importance of creating free and low cost recreation opportunities.

Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis

The Village of Decatur and the Village Parks and Recreation Facilities and programs have a number of strengths and weaknesses. By understanding these, goals are able to be better formulated and hopefully they can then be achieved.

The Village of Decatur currently maintains five major parks. In a Village that covers less than 1.5 square miles the ability to provide parks that serve nearly all of the community is one of the strengths. The Village operates the only public beach on Lake of the Woods and also operates a waterfront safety program. This shows a commitment to water recreation which is also a strength within the community. Other strengths for the community include: the relationships between different organizations and the Village, the relationships between the surrounding townships and the Village, the amount of different community organizations including religious organizations in the Village, and the ability to grow and develop on the existing recreational opportunities.

The major, current, weakness within the Village Parks and Recreation Facilities is the current age and status of the facilities. Many amenities are over twenty years old and are in need of upgrades. The available funding currently for Parks and Recreation is also a weakness as there is not currently enough money available to make significant upgrades and to increase the maintenance of the parks as they require due to their age.

These strengths and weaknesses give another perspective with which to formulate goals and objectives for this Community Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan.

Goals

With all of the information that has been collected, analyzed, and discussed the Parks and Recreation Committee formulated three major goals that shall drive the development of Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs within the next five years in the Village of Decatur.

Goal #1: The Village of Decatur Will Increase Maintenance on Village Parks

Consistent feedback from community surveys as well as informal citizen feedback reveals that residents would like to see more of a commitment to maintaining Village owned Parks and Recreation Facilities.

Objective: Increase satisfaction with maintenance of Village Parks.

In order to measure resident/user satisfaction of Village parks residents will be surveyed and asked questions relating to park maintenance.

Objective: Increase maintenance in all parks based on objective measures.

To accomplish this, Park Maintenance Review forms will be created and utilized to perform random inspections at parks focusing on safety and landscaping issues at all parks.

Goal #2: The Village of Decatur Will Upgrade Facilities at Existing Parks

It became clear during the planning process that the age of certain facilities is an issue that needs to be addressed. This will be accomplished by carrying out the following objectives.

Objective: Development plans will be developed for the two oldest parks in the Village, Fire Station Park and Red Woolfe Park.

In order to upgrade both of these parks it is necessary to fully assess the needs of each individual park, and the needs of those who utilize each park specifically. This will be done by creating less formal development plans for both parks.

Objective: Red Woolfe Park and Fire Station Park will both be updated

Upgrading the two oldest parks within the Village will be an extremely beneficial improvement for the Village of Decatur.

Objective: Phase 3 of the South Side Skate Park will be completed

The master plan for the South Side Skate Park is older than ten years and is still yet to be completed. This project is an important upgrade to improving facilities on the south part of the Village.

Goal #2: The Village of Decatur Will Increase Opportunities for Recreation

The Village Parks and Recreation Facilities are the only free or low cost facilities in the Village or the surrounding Townships. With high instances of poverty in the Village it is important that all of the area's residents have an opportunity for recreation.

Objective: The Village of Decatur will develop a system of pedestrian trails.

The Village of Decatur currently does not have a system of walking trails, bicycle lanes, or other designated non-motorized travel lanes. This is an important amenity to maintaining a healthy citizenry.

Objective: The Village of Decatur will develop at least one indoor recreation opportunity.

The climate in Southwest Michigan can be a harsh one during the winter. The Village currently does not have any indoor recreation opportunities. During the harsh winter Village residents need opportunities for recreation.

VII. ACTION PROGRAM

The following is a scheduled action program that is designed to help the Village of Decatur fulfill the goals and objects defined above. These specific steps shall act as a road map for future Parks and Recreation Improvements.

Year 1:

2015	Action Number 1
	<p>The Village of Decatur will create a development plan for Red Woolfe Park</p> <p>Location: Red Woolfe Park</p> <p>Estimated Cost: To be determined</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund</p> <p>Rationale: In order to effectively make upgrades to Red Woolfe Park it is important to develop a plan that has measurable objectives and action steps that meet the needs of that specific park.</p>

2015	Action Number 2
	<p>The Village of Decatur will locate and identify potential areas for trails or walkways.</p> <p>Location: To be determined</p> <p>Estimated Cost: To be determined</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund</p> <p>Rationale: This will be the first step in creating a system of pedestrian travel lanes within the Village of Decatur. This will promote walkability and should help to connect the community to the different parks and downtown area.</p>

2015	Action Number 3
	<p>The Village of Decatur will identify potential partners or producers of indoor recreation opportunities.</p> <p>Location: Yet to be determined</p> <p>Estimated Cost: Under \$1,000</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund</p> <p>Rationale: The Village does not currently own the facilities to provide indoor recreational opportunities, it will be necessary to partner with other organizations to do this and offer opportunities.</p>

2015	Action Number 4
	<p>The Village of Decatur will create a Park Maintenance Review Form for regular inspections at Village Parks.</p> <p>Location: Throughout the Village</p> <p>Estimated Cost: Under \$1,000</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund</p> <p>Rationale: Many of the aging parks present maintenance issues based on the age of equipment. This will provide an opportunity to objectively assess the status of maintenance at Village parks and to further evaluate needed improvements.</p>

Year 2:

2016	Action Number 5
	<p>The Village of Decatur will create a 3 phase plan to develop walking and pedestrian trails.</p> <p>Location: Throughout the Village</p> <p>Estimated Cost: To be determined</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund, Private Donations,</p> <p>Rationale: It is a goal to provide pedestrian trails, by developing this in a phased manner funds can be secured and allocated as needed.</p>

2016	Action Number 6
	<p>The Village of Decatur will pursue funding for the Red Woolfe Park Development Plan.</p> <p>Location: Red Woolfe Park</p> <p>Estimated Cost: \$5,000</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund, Private Donations, and Potential DNR Grants</p> <p>Rationale: In order to effectively implement the Red Woolfe Park Development Plan, funding outside of the Village General Fund will be needed.</p>

2016	Action Number 7
	<p>The Village of Decatur will utilize the partnerships developed in year 1 to offer the first indoor recreation opportunity within the Village.</p> <p>Location: To be determined</p> <p>Estimated Cost: To be determined</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund, Private Donations, Participation Fees</p> <p>Rationale: To provide indoor recreational opportunities during the winter will give residents the opportunity to enjoy recreation during a time when they traditionally have been unable</p>

2016	Action Number 8
	<p>The Village of Decatur will create a development plan for Fire Station Park</p> <p>Location: Fire Station Park</p> <p>Estimated Cost: To be determined</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund,</p> <p>Rationale: In order to effectively make upgrades to Fire Station Park it is important to develop a plan that has measurable objectives and action steps that meet the needs of that specific park.</p>

2016	Action Number 9
	<p>The Village of Decatur will complete the third phase of the Southside Skate Park including a pavilion, parking lot and restrooms.</p> <p>Location: Southside Skate Park</p> <p>Estimated Cost: \$35,000</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund, Private Donations, Land and Water Conservation Funds</p> <p>Rationale: Providing a picnic area to this park will make the park more available to families and those who wish to view those participating in activities at the Skate Park.</p>

Year 3:

2017	Action Number 10
	<p>The Village of Decatur will pursue funding for the Fire Station Park Development Plan.</p> <p>Location: Fire Station Park</p> <p>Estimated Cost: \$5,000</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund, Private Donations, and Potential DNR Grants</p> <p>Rationale: In order to effectively implement the Fire Station Park Development Plan, funding outside of the Village General Fund will be needed.</p>

2017	Action Number 11
	<p>The Village of Decatur will utilize the partnerships developed in Year 1 to offer the second indoor recreation opportunity within the Village.</p> <p>Location: To be determined</p> <p>Estimated Cost: To be determined</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund, Private Donations, Participation Fees</p> <p>Rationale: To provide indoor recreational opportunities during the winter will give residents the opportunity to enjoy recreation during a time when they traditionally have been unable</p>

2017	Action Number 12
	<p>The Village of Decatur will implement the Red Woolfe Park Development Plan.</p> <p>Location: To be determined</p> <p>Estimated Cost: \$125,000</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund, Private Donations, Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants</p> <p>Rationale: Implementing a developing plan at the Village’s oldest and most visible park will be a major improvement that can be enjoyed for many years.</p>

2017	Action Number 13
	<p>The Village of Decatur will implement the first phase of the pedestrian trail development.</p> <p>Location: To be determined</p> <p>Estimated Cost: To be determined</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund, Private Donations,</p> <p>Rationale: This will be the first step in the process to develop a system of pedestrian trails.</p>

Year 4

2018	Action Number 14
	<p>The Village of Decatur will implement the Fire Station Park Development Plan.</p> <p>Location: To be determined</p> <p>Estimated Cost: \$65,000</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund, Private Donations, Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants</p> <p>Rationale: Implementing a developing plan at one of the more versatile parks will be a major improvement that can be enjoyed for many years.</p>

2018	Action Number 15
	<p>The Village of Decatur will implement the second phase of the pedestrian trail development.</p> <p>Location: To be determined</p> <p>Estimated Cost: To be determined</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund, Private Donations,</p> <p>Rationale: This will be the second step in the process to develop a system of pedestrian trails.</p>

Year 5:

2019	Action Number 16
	<p>The Village of Decatur will implement the third phase of the pedestrian trail development.</p> <p>Location: To be determined</p> <p>Estimated Cost: To be determined</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund, Private Donations,</p> <p>Rationale: This will be the final step in the process to develop a system of pedestrian trails.</p>

2019	Action Number 17
	<p>The Village of Decatur will develop the next 5-Year Community Parks and Recreation Plan.</p> <p>Location: Throughout the Village</p> <p>Estimated Cost: Under \$10,000</p> <p>Eligible Funding Source: Village of Decatur General Fund</p> <p>Rationale: The Village will need to reassess and create a new plan in order to continue making improvements for Village Parks and Recreation.</p>