

2023 Parks & Recreation Master Plan

City of Whitehall, Michigan



Goodrich Park Howmet Splash Pad

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

The City of Whitehall is located in northwest quarter of Muskegon County bordered on the west by White Lake and the north by White River. The City shares its eastern boundary with Whitehall Township and the southern boundary with Fruitland Township. The White River widens at the bridge between Whitehall and the City of Montague to form White Lake which flows into Lake Michigan. Whitehall is four miles east of Lake Michigan and eleven miles north of Muskegon.

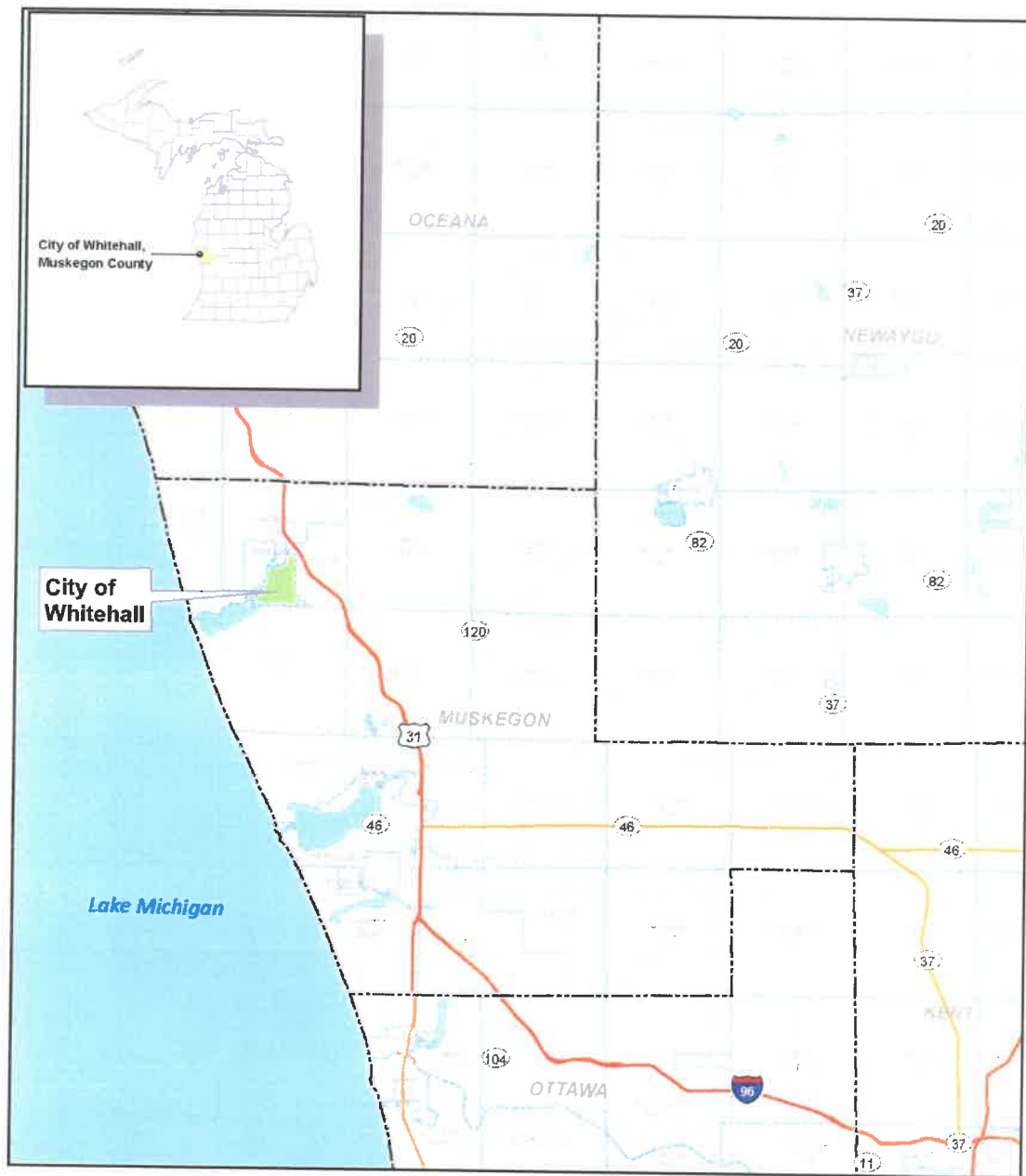
This Recreation Plan was developed for the City of Whitehall encompassing 3.2 square miles with a population of 2,909. The chart below depicts population trends for the City, surrounding communities, and County according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

	1990	2000	2010	2020
City of Whitehall	3,027	2,884	2,706	2,909
City of Montague	2,276	2,407	2,361	2,417
Fruitland Twp.	4,391	5,235	5,543	5,793
Montague Twp.	1,429	1,637	1,600	1,555
Whitehall Twp.	1,464	1,648	1,739	1,768
White River Twp.	1,250	1,338	1,335	1,383
Muskegon County	158,983	170,200	172,188	173,883

The median age of 44.7 years is 10% higher than the State average with the population fairly evenly distributed between residents under the age of 29, those 30 to 59 years old, and residents 60 years of age and older. 54% of the population is female.

Like most of the Midwest, Whitehall has seen some recent extreme weather fluctuations. Over the last ten years we experienced winter temperatures well above average and almost no snowfall resulting in very low lake levels then a return to normal with record cold temperatures and extreme snowstorms bringing the area lakes to normal levels but producing large amounts of runoff and sedimentation but the water continued to rise to record levels swamping adjacent properties and closing major streets. This cycle will need to be taken into consideration when planning any development near bodies of water.

This Master Plan will focus on wide ranging passive to active recreational opportunities within the City's ten parks encompassing 300 acres. The City does not provide organized recreational activities.



June 3, 2014

Map 1 **Regional Location Map**

City of Whitehall, Michigan

LEGEND

-  Interstates
-  US Highways
-  State Highways
-  Surrounding Counties
-  Surrounding Municipalities
-  City of Whitehall

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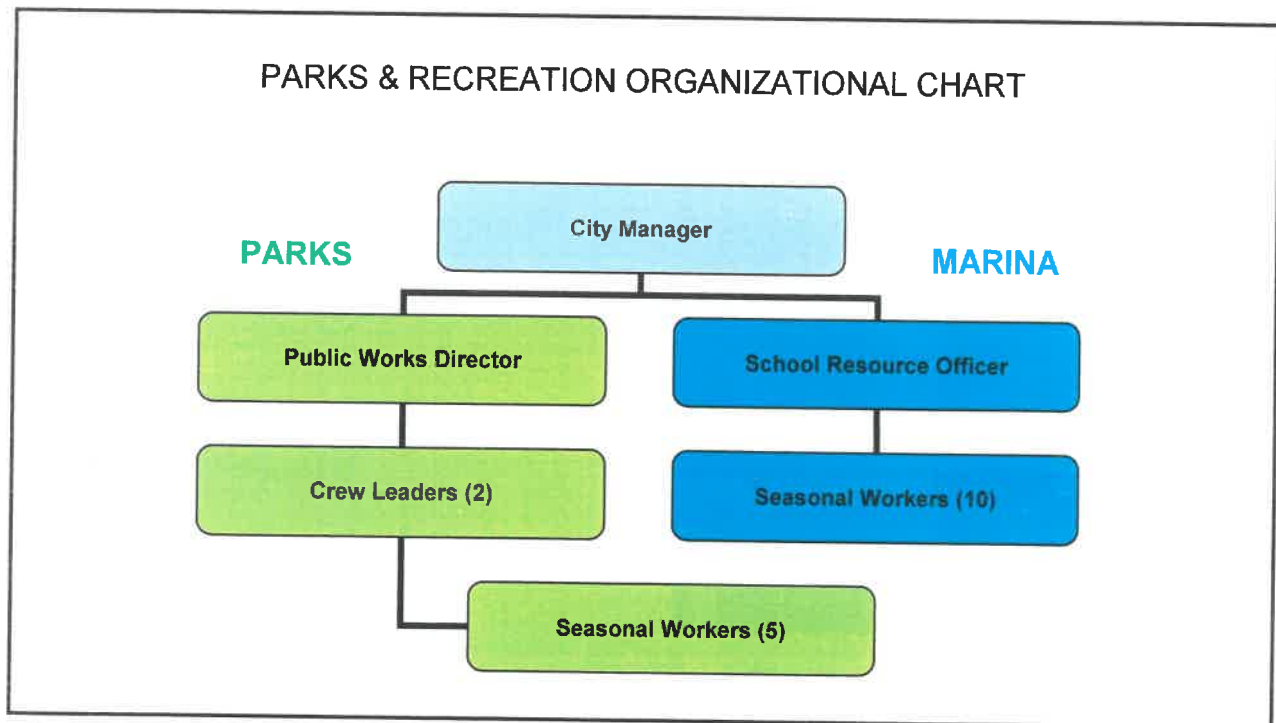
Data Source: Michigan Geographic Framework, Michigan Center for Geographic Information, Version 8a

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The City functions with a weak mayor form of government under the City Charter adopted in 1977. The City Council, acting as the Parks and Recreation Committee, establishes policies for the use, development, and funding of the parks and recreation facilities. They retain the authority to commit funds, accept grants, and purchase property. The Council meets twice a month and consists of seven members. The Planning Commission and Marina Advisory Committee act as advisory boards making recommendations on long term planning and major projects. Planning meets monthly and the Marina Advisory Committee meets twice per year.

The daily administrative functions are carried out under the direction of an appointed City Manager. Park and recreation activities fall directly under the supervision of the Public Works Director. Two full time crew leaders oversee the daily operations and maintenance along with a summer seasonal crew. The Department of Public Works six full time maintenance workers are utilized on an as needed basis for large projects and heavy equipment operation.

The City uses the Police Department School Resource Officer to oversee the operations of the marina. College and high school students are hired on a seasonal basis to run the daily operations.



Current and projected annual budgets are depicted in the charts below. Funding for operations and maintenance for the parks and the pathway come from general property tax levies. Capital expenditures are heavily dependent upon grant funding and the occasional private donation. The City's Tax Increment Finance Authority has provided capital funding and grant match allocations for the marina and parks that are within its district. The marina generates revenue for expenses from boat slip rentals and fuel sales. Seasonal and transient slip rates are regulated through the Waterways Commission.

PARKS DEPARTMENT

	FY22/23	FY23/24	FY24/25	FY25/26	FY26/27
O & M	\$175,700	\$183,000	\$190,000	\$198,000	\$206,000
Capital	<u>\$25,000</u>	<u>\$200,000</u>	<u>\$100,000</u>	<u>\$100,000</u>	<u>\$100,000</u>
	\$200,700	\$383,000	\$290,000	\$298,000	\$306,000

WHITE LAKE PATHWAY

	FY22/23	FY23/24	FY24/25	FY25/26	FY26/27
O & M	\$9,900	\$10,300	\$10,700	\$11,100	\$11,600
Capital	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$5,000</u>	<u>\$0</u>
	\$9,900	\$13,300	\$10,700	\$16,100	\$11,600

MARINA OPERATING BUDGET

	FY13/14	FY14/15	FY15/16	FY16/17	FY17/18
Revenues	\$168,300	\$175,000	\$182,000	\$189,000	\$197,000
O & M	\$125,300	\$130,000	\$136,000	\$141,000	\$147,000
Capital	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$40,000</u>	<u>\$40,000</u>	<u>\$40,000</u>	<u>\$50,000</u>
	\$43,000	\$5,000	\$6,000	\$8,000	\$0

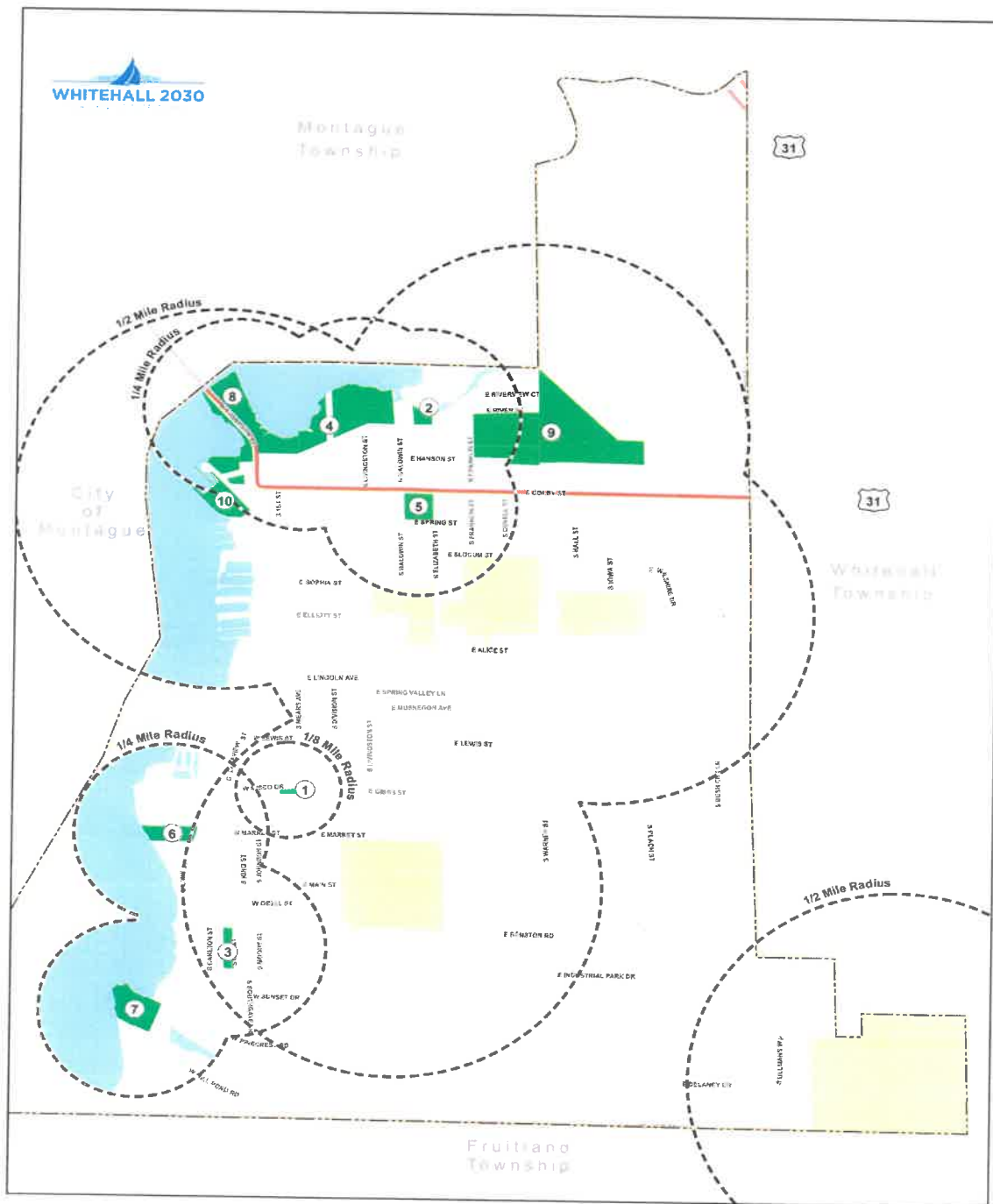
The City coordinates financial and maintenance support for the use of parks and athletic fields with the West Michigan Snowmobile Association, White Lake Area Community Education, White Lake Area Youth Sports Club, White Lake Chamber of Commerce, White Lake Little League, White Lake Snow Farmers, and Whitehall District Schools. Most of these organizations are volunteer run. Community Education provides enhanced recreational services for resident senior citizens with a senior millage pass through from the City.

RECREATION INVENTORY

The City owns and operates nine parks; three paved pathways for use by pedestrians, bicyclist, and snowmobilers; two natural areas; two social gathering areas; and one marina public spaces encompassing 380 acres and 3.5 miles of dedicated paved pathways for use by pedestrians, bicyclist, and snowmobilers. Accessibility will be improved at all parks and facilities in conjunction with any overall development improvements. City staff conducted a physical review of existing parks and facilities by updating a prior list to develop the following:

NAME	TYPE	AMENITIES	SIZE
Covell Park	Community Accessibility-4	Boat launch, boat cleaning station, community art work, fishing deck, paved parking, picnic tables, seasonal port-a-johns, veterans memorial	3.9 acres
Downtown Social District	Community Accessibility-3	Alcohol allowed social district bordering three eating and drinking establishments	1.5 acres
Funnel Field	Regional Accessibility-3	Baseball and softball fields, basketball and tennis courts, paved parking, playground equipment, restrooms, soccer field	14. acres
Gee Park	Neighborhood Accessibility-1	Playground equipment	1.6 acres
Goodrich Park	Regional Accessibility-3	ADA motorized swing, benches, fishing deck, gazebo, grills, paved parking, picnic shelter, picnic tables, playground equipment, restrooms, splash pad	8.5 acres
Lions Park	Neighborhood Accessibility-4	Boardwalk, interpretive station, paved parking, picnic shelter	3.5 acres
Mill Pond	Community Accessibility-1	Fishing, paved parking, seasonal port-a-john	4.6 acres

Norman Park	Neighborhood Accessibility-1	Bench swing, picnic table	1 acre
North Mears Promenade	Regional Accessibility-5	Benches, gas operated fire pit, lighted sledding hill, paved parking, restrooms	0.8 acres
Slocum Park	Community Accessibility-2	Benches, city hall complex, paved parking, tennis court	2.4 acres
Slocum Switchback	Neighborhood Accessibility-5	Benches, community artwork, paved pathway	525 feet
Svensson Park	Community Accessibility-2	Bird sanctuary, bridge, hammock pergola, paved parking, picnic tables, playground equipment, small craft launch, wetlands	3.7 acres
Veterans Memorial Park	Neighborhood Accessibility-3	Veterans memorial	.25 acres
White Lake Municipal Marina	Regional Accessibility-3	50 boats slips, fuel sales, paved parking, sewage pump out, restroom, showers	3 acres
White Lake Pathway	Regional Accessibility-4	Benches, community art work, flower gardens, native landscaping, seasonal port-a-johns, wooden bridges	2.2 miles
White River Floodplain	Regional Accessibility-1	Conservation easement, river restoration	330 acres
White River Trail	Community Accessibility-3	Foot bridge, paved pathway	1,600 feet



Whitehall District Schools and White Lake Area Community Education provide recreational activities and facilities including playgrounds, tennis courts, baseball and softball fields, soccer fields, indoor golf, football/soccer field, and outdoor track and field. The Viking Athletic Center provides indoor turf for baseball, softball, and soccer; basketball courts; walking track; and training facilities.

Other nearby regional recreational opportunities can be enjoyed at Duck lake State Park, Hickory Knoll Golf Course, Meinert County Park, Michigan's Adventure, Muskegon Luge Adventure Sports Park, Muskegon State Park, Old Channel Golf Course, Owasippe Boy Scout Camp, Pioneer County Park, Trailway Campground, and White Lake Golf Club.

MDNR RECREATION GRANT INVENTORY

The following recreational sites have been partially or fully funded through the generosity of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION
White River Marshland Preserve Grant 26-00284	Acquisition - 93 acres of floodplains bordering the south side of the White River and the northern city limits preserved as a natural habitat for flora and fauna. The property abuts other City owned property for a combined 200 acres of preserved marshland. The site is still open to the public. The land is still present. There has been no use conversion.
Goodrich Park Marina Grant 26-0119	Development - 50 slip marina with landscaping, irrigation, parking, sidewalks, bathhouse, utilities, sewage pump-out, play equipment, benches, drinking fountain, picnic tables, and marine radio. The marina is still open to the public. The facilities are still present. There has been no use conversion.
Funnell Field Grant BF93-377	Development - Baseball and softball fields, restroom, paved parking, accessible walk, irrigation, handicap drinking fountains, soccer field, basketball court, removal of deteriorated building. The park is still open to the public. The facilities are still present. There has been no use conversion.
Svensson Park Grant MNRTF 90-009	Development - Parking, boat launch, play structure, grills, picnic tables, footbridge, sand volleyball courts, landscaping. The park is still open to the public. Most of the grant funded facilities are still present. The sand volleyball courts have been removed due to a lack of use and replaced with native species growth. There has been no use conversion.

White Lake Pathway Grant TF 01-081	Development – 7,450 lineal feet of 12' wide paved path, bridges, board walk. The pathway is still open to the public. The facilities are still present. There has been no use conversion.
Goodrich Park Renovations Grant TF 05-086	Improvements - Play structure and walkways, picnic shelter with restrooms, fishing deck; all barrier-free. The park is still open to the public. The facilities are still present although the fishing deck was severely damaged due to high waters and is under repair and some items were replaced under the Land and Water Conservation Grant 26-01119. There has been no use conversion.
White Lake Pathway South End Grant TF 07-037	Development - 7,655' lineal feet of 12' wide paved path, interpretive signs. The pathway is still open to the public. The facilities are still present. There has been no use conversion.

WHITE LAKE MUNICIPAL MARINA

The White Lake Municipal Marina is located in Goodrich Park at 100 Lake Street, adjacent to the downtown on White Lake with direct access to Lake Michigan. The marina has 50 slips offering both transient and seasonal slips. The number of seasonal slips is regulated by the Waterways Commission. The marina has had a waiting list for seasonal slips over the last few years. All slips and the renovated bathhouse are ADA accessible. Site improvements will be included in this Master Plan with detailed drawings developed at a later date. The marina is marketed through the DNR Reservation System, White Lake Visitors Guide, the City's website and Facebook page, and the occasional trade magazine.

The City does not anticipate any near future dredging needs. The marina was on a ten year cycle having dredged in 1990, 2000, 2012, and again in 2013 with emergency funding from the DNR. A combined 6,060 yards were dredged in 2012 and 2013 with disposal on an adjacent city owned site.

MARINA MAINTENANCE and REPLACEMENT

Annual Maintenance Schedule	
Repairs and Maintenance Building	\$10,500
Annual Supplies Office, Operating, Concessions	\$900
Annual Services Weed Control	\$4,600

Minor Infrastructure Replacement		
Aquasweep Aerators	2022	\$1,100
Dock Posts	2023	\$5,000
ADA Chair Lift	2024	\$7,000
Major Infrastructure Replacement		
West Pier Repairs	2024	\$100,000
Pier and Dock Replacement	2026	\$950,000

COMPARISON TO RECREATION STANDARDS

To identify possible recreational deficiencies, a comparison was made using standards found in the 2022 National Recreation and Park Association Agency Performance Review. Whitehall, with a population of 2,909, was compared to communities with a population of less than 20,000 - the smallest sample group in the Review.

	National Average	Whitehall	Above/Below National Average
Residents per Park	1 for every 1,233	24 for every 2,323	Above
Park Acres per 1,000 Residents	12.9	15.1	Above
Miles of Trails	14	2.6	Below
Park FTEs per 10,000 Residents	8.9	10.3	Above
Expenditures per Capita	\$93.01	\$72.40	Below
Expenditures per Acre	\$7,823	\$4,781	Below

Residents per Playground	1,986	727	Above
Residents per Basketball Court	3,750	1,455	Above
Residents per Youth Baseball Field	3,107	1,455	Above
Residents per Tennis Court	2,723	1,455	Above
Residents per Youth Softball Field	5,399	1,455	Above

Whitehall is below the national average in miles of trails but as a fully developed community with 19 miles of sidewalk and a very active walking population, this is not considered a local deficiency. Whitehall falls below averages for expenditures. Meeting the national average would require increased funding between 22% and 38%. The City does not have a dog park, swimming pool, skating park, ice rink, or dedicated pickle ball court. All are considered beyond local financial capabilities.

PUBLIC INPUT

The Whitehall City Council adopted prioritized goals in December of 2021 following a public brainstorming session led by a professional facilitator. The adopted list included a dozen parks related goals which have been incorporated into this Plan.

The City developed an on line survey asking the same three core questions that were asked as part of the 2015 Master Plan update. This provided insight into the potential changes in opinion on the use, maintenance, and enhancement to the parks.

The public was afforded the opportunity to submit written comments during the 30 day plan availability period. Input was also solicited during public meetings held by the Master Plan Committee held on November 7 and 21. Comments will also be taken during the January 3 Planning Commission public hearing; the January 10 City Council Work Session; and the regular Council meeting scheduled for January 24.

DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The focus of this Master Plan is to repair, maintain, and enhance existing parks and recreation facilities. New, additional, and expanded facilities will be in the secondary tier of goals. The deteriorating, 40 year old wooden signs will be replaced in all of the parks.

LOCATION	SCOPE OF DEVELOPMENT	ESTIMATED COST
Community Pool	Support and coordinate with Whitehall Schools for construction of a pool.	\$10,000,000
Covell Park	Maintain wetlands; add picnic tables and grills; install a vault toilet; build a shelter and a boardwalk along the riverbank.	\$94,300
Downtown Pocket Park	Develop a park utilizing a closed alley with high top tables, landscaping, and restrooms.	\$160,000
Downtown Social District	Continue development of the District with high top tables and viewing binoculars; extend the pedestrian promenade by closing North Mears.	\$328,000
Funnell Field	Replace restrooms and playground equipment; resurface basketball courts; repair and expand parking; develop a dog park, skate park, and a nine hole disc golf course.	\$487,700
Gee Park	Install play structure and a fencing.	\$72,500
Goodrich Park	Replace picnic tables, grills, swing set, and lights; repair drinking fountains, irrigation lines, and fishing deck; add benches, fencing, and shade covering to the splash pad; install game tables and security cameras.	\$139,700
Lions Park	Repair boardwalk, viewing deck, and electrical outlets; develop a small craft launch site.	\$36,500
Mill Pond Park	Maintain natural vegetation; add trash cans and a vault toilet.	\$56,000

Norman Park	Enhance views; install grills; repair staircase.	\$12,400
Sail-away Park	Construct pedestrian friendly park connecting the waterfront to the downtown with benches, picnic tables, game tables, decorative walkways, and landscaping.	\$760,000
Slocum Park	Construct restroom; install fitness trail and pickle ball courts; complete the removal of the tennis and shuffleboard courts.	\$215,000
Svensson Park	Maintain natural vegetation; replace bench swing with a static bench; install a vault toilet.	\$57,000
Veterans Memorial Park	Repair concrete seams in the memorial.	\$20,000
White Lake Municipal Marina	Repair and enhance west pier; replace slip posts; replace static concrete docks with composite floating docks.	\$1,062,000
White Lake Pathway	Replace surface in Covell Park; install vault toilets and art work; add picnic tables.	\$240,000
White River Trail	Maintain pathway surface, landscaping, and viewing corridors.	\$10,000
White River Wetlands	Maintain natural vegetation; connect to White River Trail; install boardwalks.	\$200,000

ACTION PROGRAM

The Action Program for the City provides a timeline for implementing the goals over the next five years as developed by the Master Plan Committee, supported by the public, recommended by the Planning Commission, and approved by the City Council. Actual implementation will be reliant on available funding with a lot of support from outside sources.

	PARK	PROJECT	EST. COST
Summer 2023	Downtown Park	Benches, Decorative Walkway, High Top Tables, Landscaping, Public Restroom	\$160,000
	Goodrich Park	Repair Fishing Deck	\$50,000
	Sail Away Park	Benches, Decorative Walkway, Game Tables, Landscaping, Parking, Picnic Tables	\$760,000
Summer 2024	Funnell Field	Basketball Court, Parking, Play Structure, Restrooms, Signs	\$405,000
Summer 2025	Goodrich Park	Fencing, Grills, Irrigation, Lighting, Security Cameras, Swing, Signs	\$83,700
Summer 2026	Gee Park	Fencing, Play Structure, Signs	\$72,500
Summer 2027	Lions Park	Dock, Electricity, Signs	\$36,500
	Norman Park	Grills, Stair Repairs, Signs	\$12,400
	Svensson Park	Swing, Signs	\$7,000

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Notice of Draft Plan for 30 Day Public Comment

Notice of Public Hearing

Minutes from Public Hearing

Minutes from Meeting to Pass Adopting Resolution

Adopting Resolution

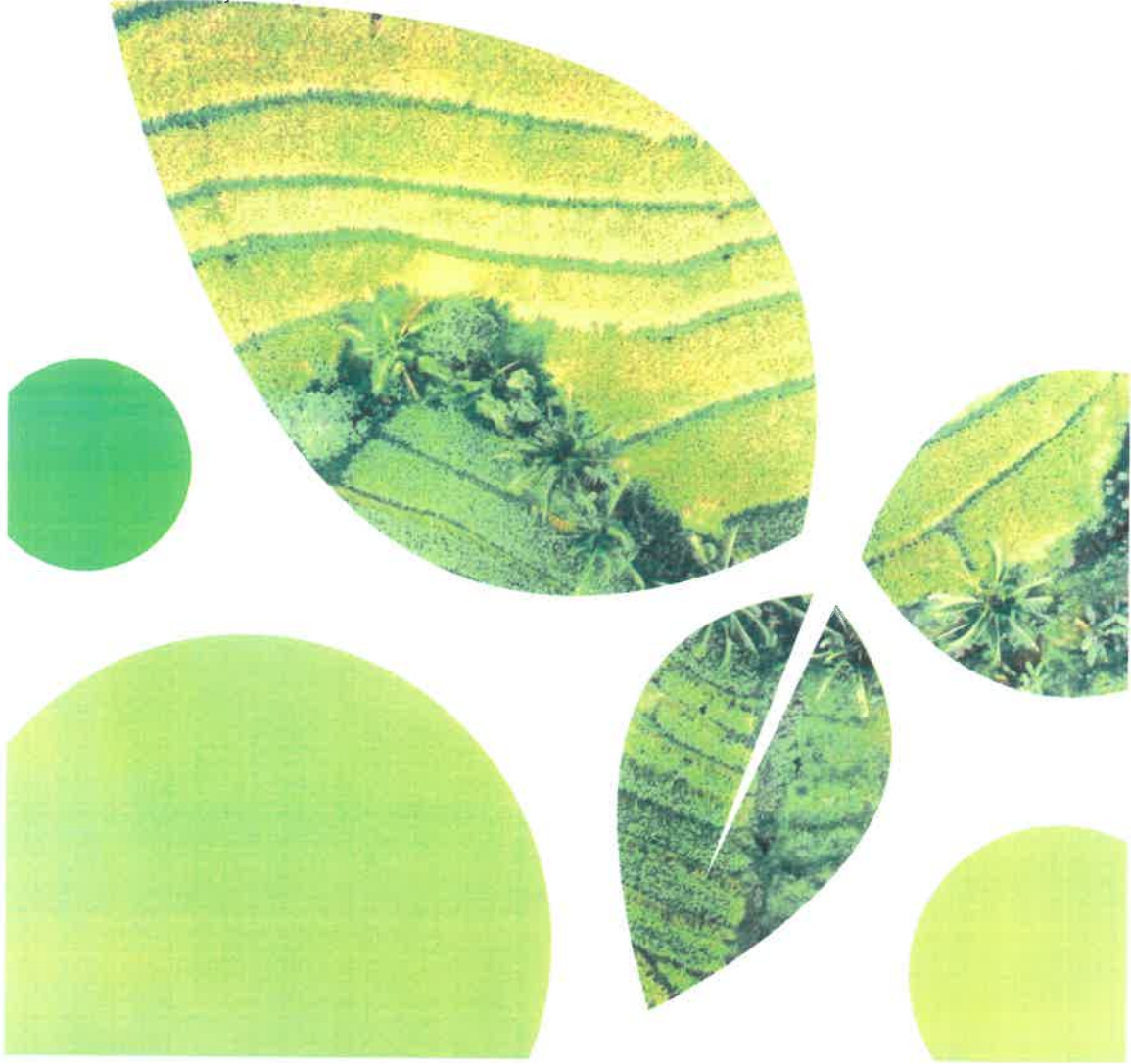
Transmittal Letter to Muskegon County

Transmittal Letter to WMSRDC

Community Survey

Parks Master Plan Committee

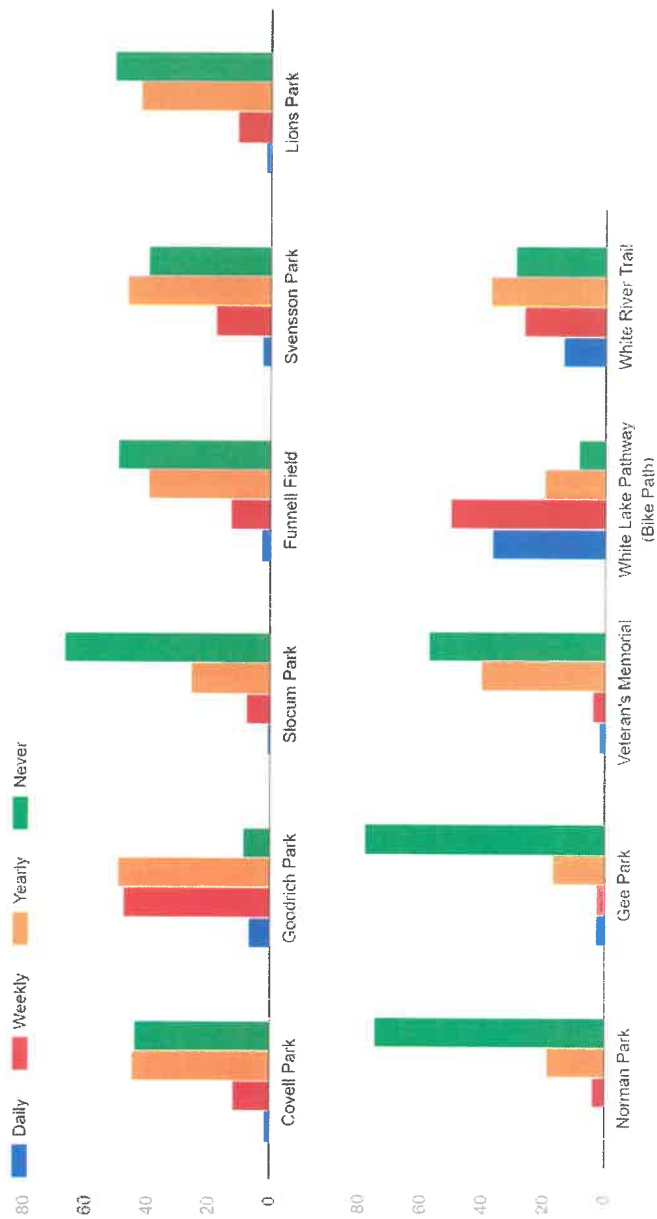
2022 Survey Results
119 Responses





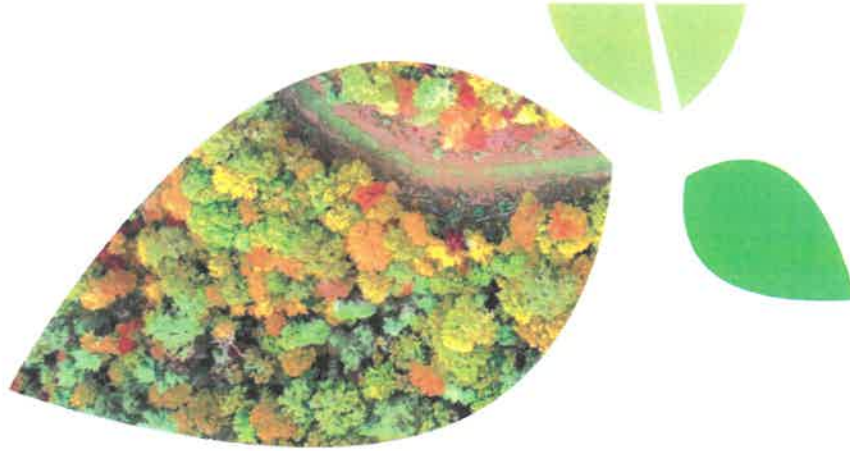
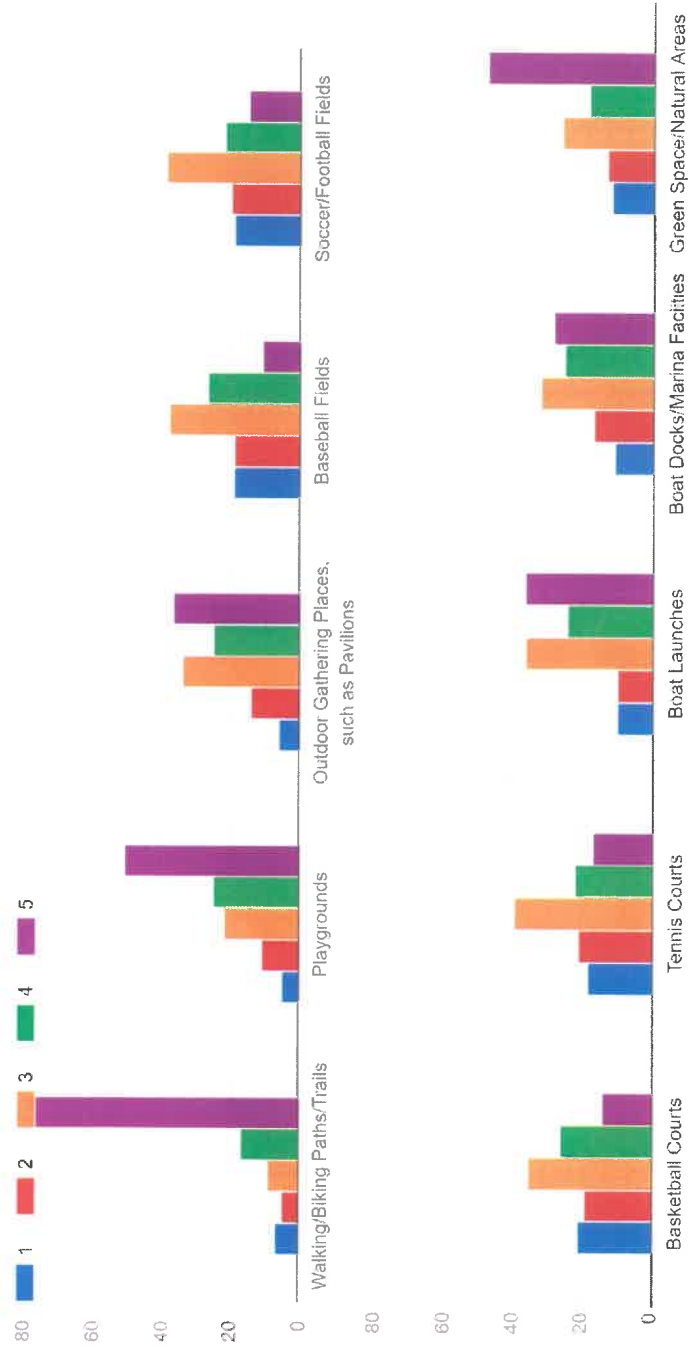
How often do use the parks

How often do you use each of the following parks and recreational facilities?



Rate importance of improving EXISTING facilities

Please rate the importance of improving the following EXISTING parks and recreation facilities in or around the City from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (extremely important):



Rate importance of BUILDING MORE facilities

Please rate the importance of BUILDING MORE of the following parks and recreation facilities in or around the City from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (extremely important):

