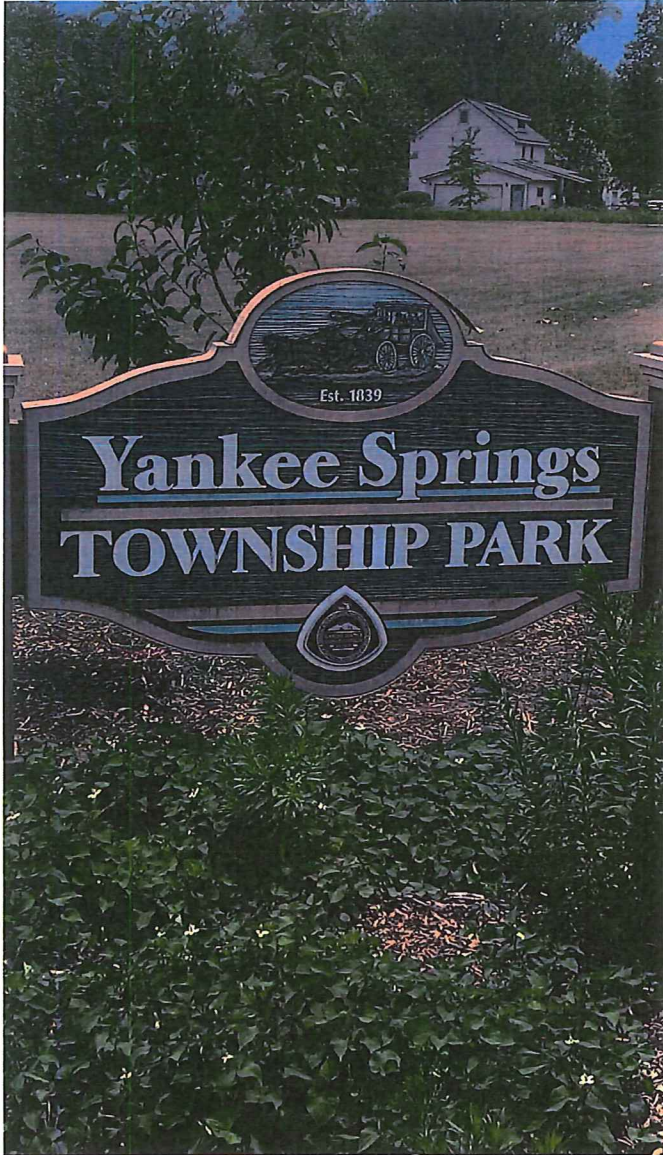




# YANKEE SPRINGS TOWNSHIP

## Parks and Recreation Plan 2023-2027

ADOPTED ?? 2022



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### **Yankee Springs Township Board**

Rob Heethuis, Supervisor  
Mike Cunningham, Clerk  
Deb Mousseau, Treasurer  
Dave VanHouten, Trustee  
Larry Knowles, Trustee

### **Yankee Springs Parks and Recreation Committee**

Sandra Marcukaitis, Chair  
Deb Tomko, Secretary  
Rob Heethuis, Board of Trustee Representative  
Kaye Evans  
Catherine Getty  
Chuck Schira

Prepared with assistance by:

williams&works

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## Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION





## Introduction PURPOSE OF PLAN

A community's park and recreation plan can serve a variety of purposes. A plan can guide local decision-making for park and recreational amenities. It can also provide a set of goals that the community can work to achieve or ideas to coalesce around. The planning process has brought Yankee Springs Township together to outline a series of strategic priorities that can be funded over a given period and will contribute to its vitality and character.

Completion of a park and recreation plan also establishes the five-year eligibility for recreation grants to be administered through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). This is a five-year plan that reflects the desires of the Yankee Springs Township community. Public input was gathered via a community survey, three focus groups, and conversations with Township leaders. The input provided by the public, local MDNR staff, and other stakeholders were critical in the direction outlined in the action plan and goals of the plan. The Yankee Springs Parks and Recreation Committee, which is charged with overseeing the development of the park in the Township was the project steering committee. The inclusive, community-based planning process

provided a formal framework for the Township to consider, develop, and establish their future park and recreation goals and action plan.

The existing positive relationship between the Township and the MDNR Yankee Springs Recreation Area staff could be a boon for the local community. The open communication between the two agencies could spur future opportunities that could be mutually beneficial regarding recreation, community development, economic development, and natural resource stewardship.

Yankee Springs Township is excited to have a park and recreation plan that reflects the community's needs and desires. The Plan will direct the future development of facilities, amenities, and services over the next five years and beyond. By coming together, Yankee Springs has worked hard to determine how best to continue to use its resources to support the park and recreational amenities offered to the community.

## Chapter 2

# COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION



## Community Description



Yankee Springs Township is the northwest part of Barry County, abutting the Allegan County Line. The Yankee Springs State Game Area is a popular destination that may draw many people to the area. It is surrounded by Thornapple Township, Irving Township, Rutland Township, Hope Township, and Orangeville Township in Barry County and Leighton Township, Wayland Township, and Marin Township in Allegan County. M-179 runs from east to west through the center of the Township, and US-131 is six miles to the west. Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids are the nearest metropolitan areas. Approximately 70% of the Township is either covered by water or state-owned property.

Yankee Springs Parks and Recreation Plan

## TOPOGRAPHY & HYDROLOGY

The variety in elevation and landforms can be attributed to the glaciation that took place in Michigan more than 10,000 years ago. Heavily carved by the glaciers, the area has many sandy soils as well as hills and lakes that formed during this period.

There are eight significant lakes in the Township, with Gun Lake being the largest. Gun Lake is also one of the largest inland lakes in the Lower Peninsula. Barlow Lake, Cobb Lake, Payne Lake, and Bassett Lake are surrounded by waterfront development. Baker Lake, Chief Noonday Lake, Long Lake, Hall Lake, McDonald Lake, Shaw Lake, and Deep Lake are within State lands and are not surrounded by development. Many creeks and drains flow through the community. The Thornapple River jogs into the Township briefly at the northeastern corner.

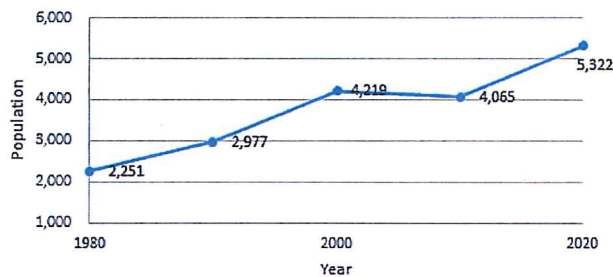
Wetlands are also abundant across the landscape. They are primarily found in the center of the Township extending northeast from Gun Lake along the chain of lakes towards Bassett Lake. Many of the wetlands are protected as they lie within state-protected areas. Also of note is that many of these areas are larger than five acres in size, and are subject to be regulated by federal law.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

The population in the Township has generally increased over the last fifty years, more than doubling since 1980.

**Figure 2.1 - Yankee Springs Township Population 1980-2020**



In 2020, the median age of residents in the Township was 44.3 years, as compared to 42.2 years in Barry County and 39.8 years in Michigan. The two largest population groups in the Township are people under 19 (20.9%) and 30-39 years of age (19.6%).

The median household income for the Township was \$74,716 compared to \$65,557 in Barry County. There are a total of 1,871 households and 2,585 housing units, according to the 2020 U.S. Census. The total number of housing occupied units were 2,059 and there were 526 vacant units, which includes units that weren't occupied, units that were for sale, rented units that weren't occupied, and units that were a part of vacation rentals. The homeownership rate in the Township is 89.8% as compared to 84.0% in Barry County. The average commute to work time is 29.3 minutes for Township residents. Eighty-eight percent of commuters drove alone, while 0.0% walked, and 7.3% worked at home.

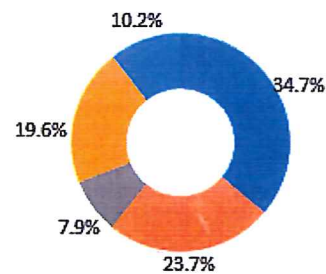
ALICE is the acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed - the households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county. According to the 2019 Michigan ALICE Report, 37% of households are below the ALICE threshold in Barry County. Yankee Springs Township is in Barry County.

## EDUCATION

Many Township residents have completed some level of college education. 35% of residents have attained a high school degree or equivalent.

**Figure 2.2 - Educational Attainment**

- High School or equivalent degree
- Some college, no degree
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate or professional degree





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## Chapter 3

# ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE



## Parks & Recreation Inventory

The Township Board is comprised of five members that are elected at-large to four-year terms. Current members of the Township Board are Rob Heethuis (Supervisor), Mike Cunningham (Clerk), Deb Mousseau (Treasurer), Dave Van Houten (Trustee), and Larry Knowles (Trustee). The role of the Township Board regarding the Township park and recreation facilities and programs is to approve planning, development, programming, and maintenance within the park and establish the annual fiscal budget. Yankee Spring's Township Organizational Chart is found on the next page.

## TOWNSHIP PARKS BUDGET

The Township Park is funded by the Township and state and local grants. The 2022 annual budget for parks, recreation, and culture operation and maintenance is \$239,590. Of those funds, \$12,000 is dedicated to maintenance. The table below provides more detailed information.

**Table 3.1 - 2022/23 Township Recreation & Culture Budget**

Parks Expenditure	\$39,590
Assigned Trail Development	\$100,000
ARPA Park Funds*	\$100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$239,590</b>

\*This is a one-time fund

## YANKEE SPRINGS PARK COMMITTEE

The Yankee Springs Township Community Park is administered and financed by the Yankee Springs Township Board. The Yankee Springs Park Committee is an advisory panel to the Township

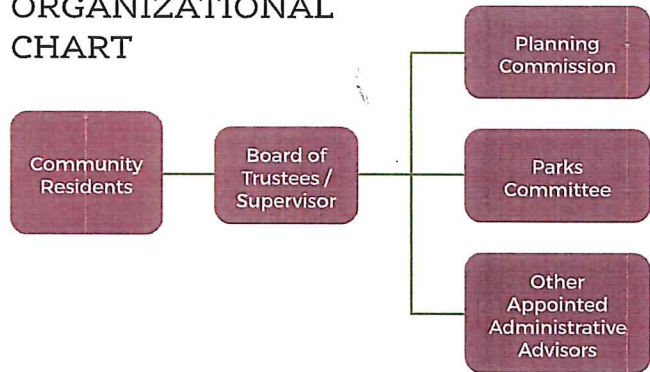
Yankee Springs Parks and Recreation Plan

Board and has served the Township since 1999. The group of volunteers provides an advisory role in park and recreation facility planning, development, maintenance, and programming. The Committee is responsible for the overall development of the Parks and Recreation 5-year Plan, and is submitted to the Township Board for final approval.

## VOLUNTEERS

The Township Park has received continuous support and stewardship from the General Federation of Women's Club / Gun Lake Area for years. This long-standing volunteer group is active in the local community. The Women's Club, as it's informally known, takes care of the berms in the park and has held park-specific fundraisers. They were also involved in the development of this park and recreation plan.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



**Chapter 4**

**PARKS & RECREATION INVENTORY**



## Parks & Recreation Inventory

This chapter provides an overview of the park and recreation facilities and programs available in the Township and an accessibility assessment.

### ACCESSIBILITY

Per the Michigan Department of Natural Resources guidelines, an assessment of the accessibility of each park to people with disabilities is required in this recreation plan. This assessment considers the accessibility of both the facilities themselves (as appropriate) as well as the access routes to them. The accessibility grading system is based on compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) through a five-point system as defined in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 - MDNR Grading System for Accessibility**

Accessibility Grade	Definition
1	None of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
2	Some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
3	Most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
4	The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
5	The entire park was developed/renovated using the principles of universal design



## TOWNSHIP PARK

### Yankee Springs Township Community Park

The 9.5-acre park is located in the southwest part of the Township, north of Gun Lake and south of 179, accessible from Parker Drive. Facilities include picnic tables, a half-mile walking path, a multi-sport court for tennis and pickleball, a basketball half-court, a softball diamond, a soccer field, a pavilion, and parking. Water has been added and sewer is available in the street. Electric, cable, and telephone utilities are underground. Landscaping improvements include trees, shrubs, flowers, benches, and signage.

Accessibility Grade: 2

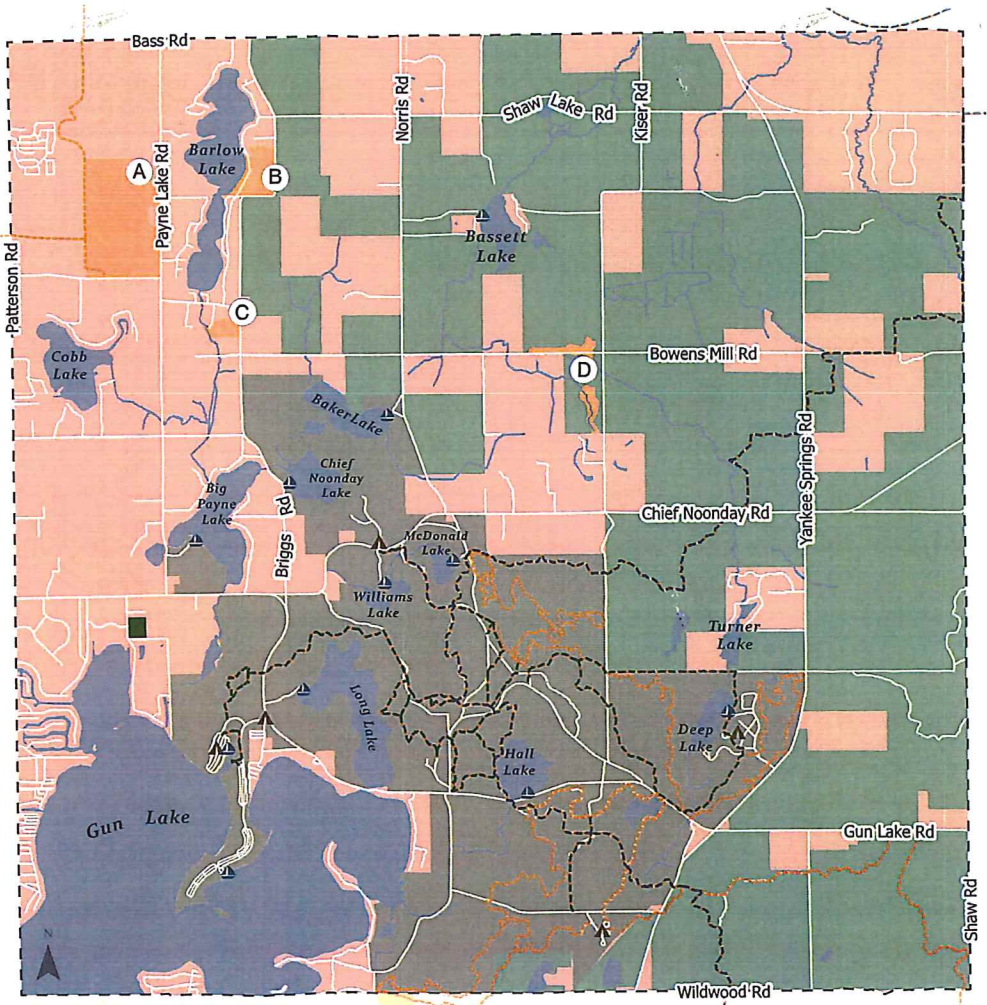
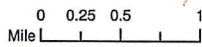
# Map 1

## PARKS & RECREATION

Yankee Springs Township, MI

- Township Park
- Yankee Springs Recreation Area
- Barry State Game Area
- Other Recreation Areas
- River Lakes
- DNR Hiking Pathways
- DNR Linear Trails
- North Country Trail
- Campgrounds
- Boating Access Sites

- A Yankee Springs Golf Course
- B YMCA Camp Manitou-Lin
- C Historic Bowens Mill
- D Bowerman-Barry Prairie





## OTHER AREA PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

### North Country Trail

The North Country National Scenic Trail is the longest in the National Trails System, stretching 4,800 miles across eight states from North Dakota to Vermont. The Trail traverses through more than 160 federal, state, and local public lands, including 10 National Forests, four areas of the National Park Service, and over 100 state parks, forests, and game areas. It winds along three of the Great Lakes, past countless farmlands, through large cityscapes and vast prairies, over many rivers and streams, and through the famed Adirondacks. In this part of Michigan, the trail runs north to south through the western side of Barry County. This trail section is overlooked by the Chief Noonday Chapter of the North Country Trail Association as they build, maintain, protect, and promote the trail that is located within Calhoun, Kalamazoo, and Barry counties.

### Yankee Springs State Recreation Area

With 5,200 acres located completely within the Township, the Yankee Springs State Recreation Area is a destination visitors travel to across the state. The year-round park has space for popular winter activities like cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and ice fishing. Other amenities include a horseback-riding trail, camps sites, picnic facilities, boat launches, fishing and swimming, volleyball courts, playground equipment, trails, and hunting in designated areas. Modern camping is provided along Gun Lake and rustic camping is available at Deep Lake. Three special points of interest in the park are Devil's Soup Bowl (a glacially carved kettle formation), Graves Hill Overlook, and The Pines, accessible from the extensive trail system.

### Barry State Game Area

Abutting the Yankee Springs Recreation Area, the Barry State Game Area is a total of 16,784 acres and is one of the largest continuous blocks of public land in southern Michigan. Much of that land lies within the Township boundaries. Maintained by the DNR, the vast natural area provides miles of trails and seasonal hunting and fishing opportunities. Barry SGA provides critical habitat for a myriad of game and non-game species and supports over 1,500 acres of high-quality natural communities. Barry SGA contains over 10,000 acres of forest and close to 800 acres of high-quality forest.



### **Gun Lake Casino**

The Gun Lake Casino is located southwest of the service area in Allegan County's Wayland Township. The facility offers a variety of gaming machines, stations, and tables and is affiliated with the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, sometimes referred to as the Gun Lake Tribe.

### **Gun Lake Park**

The Allegan County Park, formerly known as "East Side Park," has over 450 feet of beachfront property. Other amenities include a playground, basketball court, picnic tables, grills, covered pavilion, boat launch, and modern restroom facilities. Fishing is allowed at the park. Many amenities are ADA accessible.



### **Orangeville Township Park**

Park facilities include a playground, two ball diamonds, volleyball courts, a pavilion, and fields for other outdoor gatherings and sports. Phase I of the path is about 0.5 miles, and Phase II will have an adjoining nature trail.

### **Son-Life Camp & Retreat Center**

The 40-acre, privately-owned retreat center contains space for the Daisy Park Campground and summer camp. Facilities include cabins, a retreat center with meeting space, offices, a game room, bathrooms and showers, a dining hall, recreation fields, a variety of outdoor activity areas (archery, tomahawks, gaga, moleball, volleyball, low initiatives, and more) and a waterfront area (beach, shallow and deep swim areas, blob, canoes, kayaks, paddleboards, paddleboats, speed boat tubing) set on a beautiful lake. There is a 20-site campground with water and electricity hook-ups for all sites, called Daisy Park Campground.





## PREVIOUS MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES GRANTS

The following is are past DNR grants that have been awarded to Yankee Springs Township.



**GRANT NUMBER:** 26-01696

**DATE RECEIVED:** August, 2010

**AMOUNT:** \$50,000

**PARK NAME:** Yankee Springs Township Park

**ELEMENTS DEVELOPED:**

- Multi-sport court (tennis, pickleball, basketball)
- Goals for basketball
- Permanently-mounted metal benches
- Engineering and signage



**GRANT NUMBER:** 26-01631

**DATE RECEIVED:** April 7, 2005

**AMOUNT:** \$30,000

**PARK NAME:** Yankee Springs Township Park

**ELEMENTS DEVELOPED:**

- Playground equipment
- Net goals for soccer Fields
- Featherwood ground cover for playground
- One-half mile paved walking path
- Bleachers
- Fencing

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## MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

### **Natural Resources Trust Fund**

"Provides grants to local units of government and to the state for acquisition and development of lands and facilities for outdoor recreation or the conservation of natural resources. This is the only grant program for land acquisition. Requires 5-year recreation plan. Must apply through MiGrants."

### **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

"Provides grants to local units of government and to the state to develop land for public outdoor recreation such as: trails, picnic areas, beaches, campgrounds, boating access and fishing areas. Requires 5-year recreation plan. Must apply through MiGrants."

### **Recreation Passport Grant Program**

"Provides funding to local units for the development of public recreation facilities. This includes the development of new facilities and the renovation of old facilities and can also be used for indoor facilities. Must apply through MiGrants."

### **Michigan Spark Grants**

"Provides grants to local units of government or public authorities legally established to provide public recreation. The grants will help local communities across the state who want to create, renovate or redevelop public outdoor opportunities for residents and visitors - especially those communities adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic."

### **Boating Infrastructure Grants**

"Provides federal funding assistance for the design and construction of public recreational harbor facilities serving transient boaters. Local units of government, public universities and private facilities are eligible to apply."

### **Waterways Program Grants**

"Provides financial and technical assistance for design and construction of public recreational boating facilities, including state-sponsored harbor and mooring facilities. Only local units of government and public universities are eligible to apply. Applications require the development of a 5-year recreation plan for harbor projects."

## OTHER GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

### **Transportation Alternatives Program**

While not a MDNR grant program, the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a competitive grant program that uses federal transportation funds designated by Congress for specific activities that enhance the intermodal transportation system and provide safe alternative transportation options.

For the most up-to-date grant opportunities, please visit [Michigan.gov](https://www.michigan.gov).

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## Chapter 5

# PLANNING PROCESS & PUBLIC INPUT



## Planning Process & Public Input

### PLANNING METHODS

The Yankee Springs Parks and Recreation Plan was initiated to provide direction for future Township parks and recreation projects and administration as well as ongoing operation and maintenance. The timetable for review and approval began with a kickoff meeting with the Yankee Springs Township Parks and Recreation Committee (the project steering committee), and ended with adoption of the Plan in early 2023. Community input was gathered by working with members of the Committee, facilitating three unique focus group meetings, and by the public participating in a community survey.

Numerous tools can be used to determine the recreational needs of a community. One way to assess a community's needs is to compare metrics or data. Another way is to use a systems planning approach to identify local issues, priorities, and levels of service that can be determined via community input to inform the planning process. Both of these methods are employed in the Yankee Springs Parks and Recreation Plan.

### COMPARISON TO PARK METRICS

One method of evaluating the need is to compare the Township's facilities with those of other communities using some standardized measure. The recreation classification system and facility development standards developed by the National Recreation and Park Association have data on different types of parks, their desired site characteristics, size, and service area. The following tables provide a comparison with recreation development standards and classifications systems to help inform the planning process:

Use	Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population or specific groups such as tots or senior citizens.
Service Area	Less than ¼ mile radius
Desirable Size	1 acre or less
Acres per 1,000 Population	0.25 to 0.5 acres per 1,000 population
Desirable Site Characteristics	Within neighborhoods and near apartment complexes, townhouse development, or housing for the elderly.
Mini-Park near Township	None

Use	Area for intense recreational activities such as field games, court games, crafts, playground apparatus area, skating, picnicking, wading pools, etc.
Service Area	¼ to ½-mile radius to serve a population up to 5,000 (a neighborhood)
Desirable Size	15+ acres
Acres per 1,000 Population	1 to 2 acres per 1,000 population
Desirable Site Characteristics	Suited for intense development. Easily accessible to neighborhood populations geographically centered with safe walking and bike access. May be developed as a school park facility.
Neighborhood Park in Township	Yankee Springs Township Park

Use	Area of diverse environmental quality. May include areas suited for intense recreational facilities, such as athletic complexes, large swimming pools. May be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation, such as walking, viewing, sitting, and picnicking. May be any combination of the above, depending upon site suitability and community need.
Service Area	Several neighborhoods. 1-to-2-mile radius.
Desirable Size	25+ acres
Acres per 1,000 Population	5 to 8 acres per 1,000 population
Desirable Site Characteristics	May include natural features such as water bodies and areas suited for intense development. Easily accessible to neighborhood served
Community Parks near Township	Barry State Game Area

Use	Area of natural quality for nature-oriented outdoor recreation such as viewing and studying nature, wildlife habitat, conservation, swimming, picnicking, hiking, fishing, boating, camping, and trail uses. May include active play areas. Generally, 80% of the land is reserved for conservation and natural resource management with less than 20% used for recreation development.
Service Area	Several communities. 1 hour driving time.
Desirable Size	1,000+ acres; sufficient area to encompass the resource to be preserved and managed.
Acres per 1,000 Population	Variable
Desirable Site Characteristics	Diverse or unique natural resources such as lakes, streams, marshes, flora, fauna, and topography.
Regional Park Preserves in Township	Yankee Springs State Recreation Area

## SYSTEMS PLANNING

When using the systems planning approach to parks and recreation development, the results of the public engagement can be used to guide the development of recommendations. A series of three focus groups were held to dialogue with the following groups:

1. Local Michigan Department of Natural Resources Leadership,
2. Gun Lake Area Women's Club, and
3. Survey respondents who provided their contact information

A community survey was also conducted in July 2022. There were 277 individual surveys were completed. The results of the public engagement activities are found in the Appendix. Based on the results of these efforts, the following highlighted issues and results were used to guide the development of the goals, objectives, and action plan.

- The top three benefits of parks and recreation by survey respondents were:
  1. Provide an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors
  2. Improve health and wellness
  3. Provide athletic space and opportunities

- Many comments made by survey respondents regarded their admiration and use of the Township Park. This was confirmed during the focus group discussions with local residents.
- Survey respondents indicated that improving and maintaining the existing Township Park is the most important way to improve the park and recreational facilities in the community.
- Pedestrian connectivity was very important to over half of the respondents in the survey.
- Nonmotorized routes are highly desired, as supported by the results of the community survey and dialogue during the focus group discussions.
  - There is continued support to develop a trail to connect the Township Park and the Yankee Springs State Recreation Area
  - Having a nonmotorized route along M-179 continues to be desired by the community.
- The Gun Lake Area Women’s Club is passionate about the Township Park and feels a strong connection to the community.
- During the focus group, having more events at the Township Park was discussed and supported, as it would draw more people out to the facility.
- Developing more facilities at the park would be beneficial
  - More pickleball courts
  - More amenities for youth
  - Accessible facilities would provide options for people of all ages and abilities

## PARKS AND RECREATION ANALYSIS

Considering the results of the standardized park metrics analysis, along with the systems planning approach that included the results of the community engagement tasks provides a great resource in developing a list of needs for Yankee Springs Township. With the focus being on supporting the maintenance and long-term, sustainable investment in the facilities, this will provide an important way to continue to meet the recreational needs of the community.

## PUBLIC MEETING AND PLAN ADOPTION

Following the preparation of the Plan, citizens were provided an adequate opportunity (at least 30 days) to review and comment on the Plan before the official recommendation by the Yankee Springs Township Parks and Recreation Committee and adoption by the Yankee Springs Township Board

A draft of the Plan was submitted to the Yankee Springs Township Parks and Recreation Committee and Township staff for their review and comments. A notice was published in the local newspaper (\_\_\_\_\_) on \_\_\_\_\_, notifying the public of the availability of the Plan to provide them the opportunity to review and comment. The plan was available for public review at the Township and the Township website. Suggestions received to improve the Plan were incorporated into the document, which was then revised and finalized.

The Yankee Springs Township Board adopted the Plan on \_\_\_\_\_.

## Chapter 6

# GOALS & OBJECTIVES







## Goals & Objectives

### VISION

Yankee Springs Township envisions a community park system where children and adults can socialize and participate in athletic activities, families can enjoy picnic meals, and residents can enjoy health benefits from athletic activities as well as a system of paved paths. An added benefit will be the occasional opportunity to watch wildlife and enjoy the beauty of the park's naturalized plantings, woods, and wetlands.

After evaluating community demographics, existing recreation facilities, community input, and previous planning priorities, the Parks and Recreation Committee compiled the following goals and objectives:



## Parks & Recreation Improvements

**GOAL:** Yankee Springs Township will improve existing and future park facilities with modern, accessible, and relevant equipment and amenities.

- **Objective 1:** Design facilities in compliance with ADA requirements and strive to achieve universal design.
- **Objective 2:** Examine future park needs and desires as the Township grows and changes and construct new amenities when needed or desired.
- **Objective 3:** Explore funding opportunities for park development, including the DNR Trust Fund Recreation Grants Program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the Recreation Passport Grant Program.

## Parks & Recreation Maintenance

**GOAL:** Yankee Springs Township will proactively maintain park facilities and amenities so that they continue to be safe, accessible, and usable.

- **Objective 1:** Repair or replace damaged, worn, or obsolete facilities and amenities.
- **Objective 2:** Ensure the safety of park facilities by routinely evaluating amenities for wear and tear.
- **Objective 3:** Regularly clean the park and provide designated location(s) for refuse.

## Land Acquisition

**GOAL:** Yankee Springs Township will strategically acquire land for park uses and expansions when opportunities become available that align with the vision, goals, and objectives of this Plan.

- **Objective 1:** Identify potential opportunities for existing park expansions.
- **Objective 2:** Investigate and acquire land for recreational purposes when opportunities arise.

## Programming

**GOAL:** Yankee Springs Township will encourage the utilization of Township park facilities for programming, community building, and placemaking.

- **Objective 1:** Explore opportunities for special events in Yankee Springs Township Park.
- **Objective 2:** Partner with organizations interested in utilizing Yankee Springs Township Park for programming, leagues, and other activities.



Yankee Springs Parks and Recreation Plan



## Non-motorized Facilities

**GOAL:** Yankee Springs Township will enable safe, accessible, and convenient nonmotorized trails and trail connections for use by all ages and abilities.

- **Objective 1:** Provide non-motorized trail connections between the Yankee Springs Township Park, Yankee Springs Recreation Area, and the M-179 business community.
- **Objective 2:** Continue to maintain a walking loop trail at Yankee Springs Township Park.
- **Objective 3:** Ensure all facilities are designed and built to be ADA accessible and strive for universal design.
- **Objective 4:** Coordinate with the Barry County Road Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation to ensure that roads are designed to accommodate nonmotorized users.

## Chapter 7

# ACTION PROGRAM

