

Basis For Action

Many elements must be considered prior to the decision-making process of establishing a prioritized capital improvements schedule for the next five years. Communities must be aware of recreational trends, national standards, participation data at existing facilities and community opinion, as well as demographic trends and the capability of the land and its surroundings. This section attempts to consolidate the various factors that must be acknowledged and the abundance of aspects, perceptions, and ideas that need to be filtered and categorized to produce the prioritized needs of the community. Because there are so many factors which will ultimately determine needs, caution should be taken to not analyze each piece of information individually, but integrate them to produce the “big picture.”

National Recreation Activity Survey

It is important to be aware of recreation trends occurring nationally and in Michigan to be able to anticipate which activities will incorporate a large number of participants and which activities show the greatest growth in popularity. The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) conducts national surveys that measure activities by participation and percent change from the previous survey. The definition of participation includes those persons seven years and older who have participated in the activity more than once during the year of the survey. The following table ranks activities by the highest participation in 2005 and compares it to the level of participation in 2000.

In 2005, Exercise Walking (86.0 million), Swimming (58.0 million), Exercising with Equipment (54.2 million), Camping (46.0 million) and Bowling (45.4 million) were the top five activities that people participated in at least once a year. This marks a change from a 1998 survey in which the top five activities included Exercise Walking, Swimming, Camping, Exercising with Equipment and Fishing.

From 2000 to 2005, the number of people enjoying kayaking and rafting increased dramatically by over 141% from 3.1 million to 7.6 million. Additionally, the number of people enjoying paintball, archery, target shooting, muzzle-loading and hunting with a bow and arrow increased by 50%, 49.5%, 47.5%, 43% and 41.2% respectively. The number of people who enjoyed weightlifting and working out at the club also increased by 43% and 44.3% respectively. Those activities that experienced the greatest decreases in participation from 2000 to 2005 were in-line roller skating (-39.9%), cross-country skiing (-19.9%) and backpack/wilderness camping (-13.7%).

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) also conducts national surveys that measure activities by participation on a state by state basis. This data is used to create a state-by-state index. The index is established by dividing the state’s percentage of participants in a particular activity by its percentage of the U.S. population. For example, Florida has 13.2% of the total participants in salt-water fishing and 5.4 % of the U.S. population. This yields an index of 243, indicating that Floridians are more than twice as likely (2.43 times, to be exact) to participate in salt-water fishing as the national average. The state-by-state index is based on a sampling of 20,000 U.S households. Only sports with at least seven million participants nationally are included in the study. The following table ranks the top five activities in 2003.

State Index, Michigan: 2003

Index	Sports
209	Golf
148	Bowling
147	Softball
146	Hunting with Firearms
140	Camping (vacation/overnight)

National Sport Participation: 2000 v 2005

	Sport	2000	2005	Percent Change 00 - 05
1	Exercise Walking	86.3	86.0	-0.3%
2	Swimming	60.7	58.0	-4.5%
3	Exercising with Equipment	44.8	54.2	21.0%
4	Camping	49.9	46.0	-7.8%
5	Bowling	43.1	45.4	5.3%
6	Fishing	49.3	43.3	-12.1%
7	Bicycle Riding	43.1	43.1	0.1%
8	Billiards/Pool	32.5	37.3	14.5%
9	Weightlifting	24.8	35.5	43.0%
10	Workout at Club	24.1	34.7	44.3%
11	Aerobic Exercising	28.6	33.7	17.7%
12	Basketball	27.1	29.9	10.4%
13	Hiking	24.3	29.8	22.6%
14	Running/Jogging	22.8	29.2	28.2%
15	Boating, Motor/Power	24.2	27.5	13.6%
16	Golf	26.4	24.7	-6.5%
17	Target Shooting	14.8	21.9	47.5%
18	Hunting with Firearms	19.1	19.4	1.5%
19	Baseball	15.6	14.6	-6.4%
20	Softball	14.0	14.1	0.8%
21	Soccer	12.9	14.1	9.8%
22	Backpack/Wilderness Camping	15.4	13.3	-13.7%
23	Volleyball	12.3	13.2	7.7%
24	In-line Roller Skating	21.8	13.1	-39.9%
25	Skateboarding	9.1	12.0	32.9%
26	Tennis	10.0	11.1	10.9%
27	Scooter Riding	11.6	10.4	-10.4%
28	Football (tackle)	7.5	9.9	33.0%
29	Mountain Biking (off road)	7.1	9.2	30.5%
30	Paintball Games	5.3	8.0	50.0%
31	Kayaking/Rafting	3.1	7.6	141.4%
32	Skiing (alpine)	7.4	6.9	-6.7%
33	Archery (target)	4.5	6.8	49.5%
34	Water Skiing	5.9	6.7	13.6%
35	Hunting w/Bow & Arrow	4.7	6.6	41.2%
36	Snowboarding	4.3	6.0	37.7%
37	Muzzleloading	2.9	4.1	43.0%
38	Hockey (ice)	1.9	2.4	25.4%
39	Skiing (cross-country)	2.3	1.9	-19.9%

Source: NSGA, Industry Research & Statistics - Sports Participation 2005. Ranked in order of participation in 2005.

National Planning Standards

In the process of determining and prioritizing needs, it is not only important to understand the national and state -wide trends in terms of participating levels and popularity, but it is also imperative to compare the provisions of local recreation facilities to published standards. This comparison of existing facilities to standard acreage and facility requirements may be used as another tool to determine needs within the Fremont Area.

Acreage Standards

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provides a recommended park classification system, which recognizes that open space serves people at different levels. This classification system is also recognized in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, *Guidelines for the Development Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans*. The classification system categorizes open space as either mini-parks, neighborhood parks or community parks. The desirable characteristics relative to the size and acreage provisions per 1,000 people are again listed:

- **Mini-Park**
Service area of less than ¼ mile in radius with a desirable size of one acre or less. The standard is 0.25 to 0.50 acres per 1,000 people.
- **Neighborhood Park**
Service area of ¼ to ½ mile in radius with a desirable size of at least 15 acres. The standard is 1.0 to 2.0 acres per 1,000 people.
- **Community Park**
Service area is 1 to 2 miles in radius with a desirable size of at least 25 acres. The standard is 5.0 to 8.0 acres per 1,000 people.

NRPA standards were established in the early 1980's and do not necessarily represent current popular recreation activities. The most current addition of the NRPA, *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* does not include acreage provisions and states;

Facility standards are useful as guidelines, but that a community should determine what mix of facilities best meets its specific needs. The primary concern of park and recreation administrators is to see that there is enough park land, located in the right places, at the right time people are there to use it.

NRPA acreage provisions and classification standards are still widely used across the country to address community recreation needs. For the purpose of this plan update, the NRPA acreage standards applied in the 2000 Fremont Area Recreation Master Plan was again applied to existing park acreage in the Fremont Area to begin to determine any additional needs in terms of land acquisition.

For purposes of the Community Park analysis, the Fremont Area (Fremont, Sheridan, Dayton and Sherman) is considered **one community**. In terms of recreation, this is generally how recreation is provided and operated. The following table indicates the projected 2010 population for the Fremont Area as a whole, as well as the individual municipality and Townships.

Populations

	2000 Census	2010 Census
Dayton Township	2,002	1,949
Sheridan Township	2,423	2,510
Sherman Township	2,159	2,109
Bridgeton Twp	2,098	2,141
City of Fremont	4,224	4,081
Fremont Area	12,906	12,790

Community Parks

The following table applies the NRPA standard for community park land, which stipulates a desired standard of 5.0 to 8.0 acres per 1,000 people, to the existing acreage within the Fremont Area, which for these purposes is considered one community in relation to the year 2010 population. As the table indicates, the community as a whole reveals no acreage deficiencies in terms of availability of community park land. It should be noted that this does not take into consideration the type or availability of facilities nor the distance those people located in the outlying townships must travel to reach these parks.

Community Parks Standards and Deficiencies in Acres: 2010

Community	Fremont / Standard	Community Parks	Park Acreage	Deficiency
Fremont Area	37 / 5 to 8 acres			
		Branstrom Park	108.9	
		Fremont Lake Park	19.8	
		Veterans Memorial Park	2.4	
		Newaygo County Fairgrounds	28.2	
		Sheridan Boat Launch	6.5	
		Sheridan Twp. Property	168	
		Fremont High School	7.2	
		Fremont Middle School	69.1	
		Pine Street Athletic Field	16.3	
		Providence Christian High School	20	
		Robinson Lake Public Boat Launch	3.6	
		Sherman Twp. Boat Launch and Beach	0.38	
		Fremont Industrial Park - Natural Outlets	20.1	
		Total	474.98	0

Neighborhood Parks

A similar analysis was conducted on the neighborhood parks within the Fremont Area. As was specified in the Recreation Inventory, the Fremont Area contains 11 parks that have been categorized as neighborhood parks due to their size and/or amenities.

The NRPA standard for neighborhood park land, which stipulates a desired standard of 1.0 to 2.0 acres per 1,000 people, was applied to the existing acreage within the Fremont Area, which for these purposes is considered one community in relation to the year 2010 population projections.

As the table below indicates, according to these standards, Dayton and Sherman Township do not contain any neighborhood parks and are deficient in neighborhood parkland by 2 to 4.7 acres. Sheridan Charter Township and the City of Fremont are not deficient in neighborhood parkland. It should be noted that both public and private schools have been categorized and included in the analysis as neighborhood parks. These schools are often times available and used for recreation, but are not true public parks due to their limited availability and funding issues.

An acreage analysis for mini-parks was not conducted due to the obvious results. Only two parks, the Clubview Park and the Fremont Avenue Tot-Lot are considered to be mini-parks. Mini-parks and neighborhood parks do not play as an essential role in the more rural areas where yards and open space are available and abundant for the use of township residents.

Neighborhood Parks Standards and Deficiencies in Acres: 2010

Community	Total/Standard	Neighborhood Parks	Park Acreage	Deficiency
Dayton Township	2.0 to 4.1 acres		0	2.0 to 4.1 acres
Sheridan Township	2.4 to 4.9 acres		2.8	0
Sherman Township	2.3 to 4.7 acres			2.3 to 4.7 acres
City of Fremont	4.2 to 8.5 acres	Beebe's Natural Park	0.4	
		Arboretum Park	9.5	
		Cherry Hill Park	2.8	
		Pathfinder Elementary	22.7	
		Daisy Brook Elementary	13.9	
		Pine Street Elementary	10.8	
		Fremont Comm. Edu. Center	10	
		Christian Middle School	13.4	
		Christian Elementary School	3.9	
		Cornerstone Christian Academy	3.6	
		Total		91.5

Per Capita Park Land

A parks land analysis was conducted by governmental unit to determine the public park acreage per 100 residents in each community. In this analysis, the population estimates for 2005 were used. The following table illustrates the park acreage per 100 residents by governmental unit. This table illustrates only ‘public’ park land per 100 residents.

Per Capita Park Land

Governmental Unit	Public Park Acreage per 100 residents
Fremont Area	3.5
Sheridan Charter Township	7.2
Dayton Township	0.0
Sherman Township	0.2
City of Fremont	4.8

The relatively low population within Sheridan Charter Township tends to skew the acreage per resident figure, considering there are only two public parks within the Township, the boat launch and the undeveloped 168-acre Township property. Overall, within the Fremont Area, there are 3.5 acres of public park land per 100 people.

Park Service Areas

As has been referenced, each type of park (community, neighborhood and mini) has different service areas. The community park service area is a one- to two-mile radius, neighborhood parks serve an area between 1/4- to 1/2-mile radius and mini parks serve a radius of less than 1/4 mile. The following two maps illustrate the service areas for these types of parks within the Fremont Area. This analysis assists in identifying areas of the community that are under- served in regard to the availability of recreational land.

As Map 7 reveals, the entire City is currently served by Community Parks (two-mile radius). Those areas, served by the community parks located within the City, extend beyond the City limits into Sheridan Charter, Sherman and Dayton Townships. Those people residing generally between 24th Street, the southern border of Sheridan Charter Township, Luce Avenue and Comstock Avenue and areas around Robinson Lake and Crystal Lake in Sherman township have community park facilities that are fairly accessible. Beyond that, most residents of the Fremont Area cannot easily (within two miles) access a community park facility.

The Neighborhood/Mini Park Service Areas map (Map 8) illustrates those areas within the community that can access a neighborhood or mini-park, which tend to offer more passive recreation opportunities within one-half mile from their home. The map indicates that nearly all residents within Dayton and Sheridan Charter Townships do not have easy access to facilities offered in neighborhood/mini-parks.

This may not pose as significant an issue as the unavailability of community park land due to the fact that most people residing in the outlying Townships have relatively larger pieces of property and available open space to kick a ball, play catch and have a game of touch football. The map also identifies a significant portion of the City that is not served by neighborhood/mini-parks. This area is generally from Westwood Avenue west to the City limits.

Facility Standards

The NRPA has also published typical recreation facility standards that specify facility service areas, the number of facilities and the land area needed to service the population. Standards for facilities usually located within neighborhood and community parks are provided on the following table. These standards can be used in conjunction with the acreage standards to further identify the Fremont Area's recreation needs. Data in the Facility Deficiencies table compares the existing community recreation facilities to the NRPA published standards.

When comparing the public recreational facilities within the Fremont Area to published standards, it reveals that the area is not deficient in terms of those facilities analyzed and the published standards. This data, however, must be used in conjunction with other factors contained within this chapter and elsewhere in this document such as population projections, participation information and results of public input and surveys. While the comparison to national standards does not indicate any facility deficiencies, other known data such as participation levels, condition and scheduling issues must be referenced. For example, in a community such as the Fremont Area, where young children are abundant and soccer is a very popular sport, one soccer field would not be sufficient. The Fremont High School contains one indoor swimming pool. Therefore, the table reveals that the communities are not deficient in the provision of swimming pools. Current trends within the community must also be considered in order to interpret this data in the appropriate context. For example, while tennis may be experiencing an overall decline in the country, they may in fact be facilities and programs that are in very high demand within individual communities.

Recreation Facility Standards				
Activity/Facility	Minimum Space Requirements	Units Per Population	Service Radius	Location Notes
Basketball Court		1/5,000	¼ - ½ mile	Outdoor courts in neighborhood and community parks, plus active recreation areas in other park settings
Youth	2,400 – 3,036 sq. ft.			
High School	5,040 – 7,280 sq. ft.			
Ice Hockey	22,000 sq. ft. including support area	1/100,000	½ hour to 1 hour travel time	Climate important consideration affecting number of units.
Tennis Court	7,200 sq. ft./court 2 acres/complex	1/2,000	¼ - ½ mile	Best in batteries of 2 – 4 courts. Located in neighborhood/community park or adjacent to school site.
Volleyball Court	4,000 sq. ft.	1/5,000	¼ - ½ mile	Same as basketball court.
Ballfields		1/5,000	¼ - ½ mile	Part of neighborhood complex.
Baseball	3 – 3.85 acres	1/30,000		Lighted fields part of community complex. Softball fields may also be used for youth baseball.
Little League	1.2 acre	(lighted)		
Softball	1.5 – 2 acres			
Football Field	1.5 acre	1/20,000	15 – 30 min. travel time	Usually part of baseball, football, soccer complex in community park or adjacent to high school.
Soccer Field	1.7 – 2.1 acres	1/10,000	1 – 2 miles	Number of units depends on popularity. Youth soccer on smaller fields adjacent to schools or neighborhood parks.
Swimming Pool	½ to 2-acre site	1/20,000	15 – 30 min. travel time	Located in community park or school site.

Data from Roger A. Lancaster, Ed., Recreation Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, Alexandria, Virginia: National Recreation and Park Association, 1983, pages 60 – 61.

Recreation Facility Deficiencies Fremont Area				
Facility	Standard/ Population	Total/ Standard	Existing	Deficiency
Basketball Court	1 per 5,000	2	20 ^a	0
Ice Hockey	1 per 100,000	0	0	0
Tennis Court	1 per 2,000	5	10	(+5)
Volleyball Ct. (outdoor)	1 per 5,000	2	4	(+2)
Baseball	1 per 5,000	2	2	0
Baseball (Smaller)	1 per 5,000	2	10	(+8)
Football Field	1 per 20,000	0	1	(+1)
Soccer Field	1 per 10,000	1	2 ^b	(+1)
Swimming Pool	1 per 20,000	0	1	(+1)

^aWhile there are 20 basketball hoops within the public parks, none of which are full courts but rather individual hoops.

^bOf the 8 soccer areas within the City, there is one game-quality field and two others which are used for games. The majority of soccer areas are for practice or junior fields.

Community Opinion Survey

In January 2007, the Fremont Area Communities contracted with the Research Services of Northwestern Michigan College to conduct a telephone survey with registered voters of the Fremont Community. Based on a total population of 8,106 registered voters, a random sample of 260 was targeted for a 95% confidence level, +/-6 margin of error; a total of 261 surveys were completed. Confidence intervals from individual jurisdictions are larger due to smaller sample sizes. Therefore the margin of error for each jurisdiction is +/-9.7% for the City of Fremont, +/-11.5% for Sheridan Charter Township, +/-13.2% for Dayton Township and +/-15.5% for Sherman Township. The table below shows specific frequency and percent of returns for each jurisdiction.

Community Survey Returns

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
City of Fremont	99	37.9	37.9
Sheridan Charter Township	70	26.8	64.8
Dayton Township	53	20.3	85.1
Sherman Township	39	14.9	100
Total	261	100	

Questions covered various topics related to the use and provision of recreation. The following are the key findings from the results. The survey, survey results and the survey final report can be found in Appendix C.

- Over half of respondents indicated they had visited Branstrom and Fremont Lake parks during the past year (56% and 58%, respectively), while 46% indicated they had visited Veterans Memorial Park. In addition, the majority or single largest group of respondents reported visiting these parks one to five times in the past year (Veterans Memorial Park - 55%; Branstrom - 54%; Fremont Lake - 49%).
- The majority of respondents (77%) indicated they had visited Fremont Lake in the past year, with 47% of those visiting the lake indicating they had done so one to five times over the course of the past year. Respondents most frequently cited swimming (35%), fishing (23%), and boating/waterskiing (21%) as activities they had participated in on the lake.
- Respondents most frequently reported they or their family members had participated in the following recreational activities: The Swirl (32%), Fremont Lake Playground (22%), and Branstrom Sledding Hill (19%). In addition, 41% of respondents indicated they had walked, hiked, biked, or inline skated on the Branstrom Nature Trails, while 30% indicated they had walked, hiked, biked, or inline skated on the Town & Country Path.
- The majority of respondents (80%) reported favoring the extension of the Town & Country Path around the west side of Fremont Lake south, then east to Sheridan Township boat launch/playground.
- The majority of respondents (73%) indicated they would like to see more non-motorized pathways developed that would extend into their jurisdiction and connect to other communities' path systems
- The majority of respondents (61%) indicated they would support an up to 1 mill request by the Recreation Authority to create new recreation facilities and/or improve or repair existing structures; 19% of respondents indicated they would not support the request and 20% indicated they are uncertain if they would support the request.
- When asked what kind of activities or amenities they would like to see if a recreation center were to be developed in the Fremont Area, respondents most frequently identified: indoor pool (22%) and indoor jogging/walking track (20%).
- The majority of respondents (51%) indicated they are somewhat satisfied with available recreational facilities and programs in the Fremont Area, with 76% reporting some level of satisfaction overall. When asked what satisfies them most about the available recreational facilities and programs, this group of respondents most frequently cited proximity (25%) and variety (25%).
- Respondents most frequently identified newspapers and word-of-mouth as sources from which they receive most of their information about recreation in the Fremont Area (62% and 58%, respectively).

- The majority of respondents (73%) indicated they would like to see the Fremont Community have more recreational facilities, with 77% of this group of respondents indicating they would be willing to contribute money to help pay for new recreational facilities.

Public Input

The Fremont Area Recreation Committee held public meetings on December 22, 2011 and January 30th, February 16th and March 15, 2012 at the Fremont City Hall and District Library. The meetings were held in the City Hall Council Chambers and Library Community Room so that attending public could be included in discussions and provide input. The meetings began with a brief overview of the purpose of the Recreation Plan, the status of work completed thus far, and the general purpose of the meeting. The meetings were then opened up to the public for comments. The following comments were received:

Concerning amenities for a potential indoor recreation center:

- Swimming Pool preservation
- Basketball Gymnasium
- Multipurpose Room
- Racquetball courts

Other items for the community:

- More Non-Motorized Paved Pathway

Participation and Use Data in Fremont Community Education Program

Data is compiled each year for several of the programs and facilities under the jurisdiction of the Recreation Enrichment Program. Participation and use data is particularly accurate and complete with regard to the participation levels of the majority of the programs with associated fees as well as the use of the school facilities for school and non-school use. The following table lists the participation levels for selected programs from 2003 to 2006.

	Number of Participants			% Percent Change
	<u>2003-04</u>	<u>2004-05</u>	<u>2005-06</u>	<u>2003-2006</u>
<u>YOUTH RECREATIONAL SPORTS LEAGUES</u>				
Fall Soccer (Co-Ed)	227	174	159	-30%
Spring Soccer (Co-Ed)	289	227	234	-19%
Tee-Ball (Co-Ed)	98	113	120	+22.4%
Coach Pitch (Co-Ed)	85	105	98	+15.3%
Boys' Basketball	110	83	72	-34.5%
Girls' Basketball	128	101	113	-11.7%
Co-Ed Basketball	92	87	61	-33.7%
Girls Softball Clinic	11	32	61	+454.5%
Fremonsters Wrestling (Boys)	51	52	50	-2.0%
FAST Swimming (Co-Ed)	44	39	41	-6.8%
Golf	47	65	24	-48.9%
	1,182	1,078	1,033	-12.6%
<u>YOUTH SUMMER ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES</u>				
Tennis Lessons	85	55	47	-44.7%
Swimming Lessons (including Summer Magic)	662	307	357	-46.1%
Volleyball Camp	55	64	---	-100%
Lady Packers B-ball Clinic	35	43	28	-2%
Boy's B-ball Clinic	35	29	---	-100%
Kids Dance	---	54	20	-63%
Kids Karate	---	85	95	+11.8%
Tumbling	199	172	247	+24.1%
	1,081	809	620	-42.6%
<u>ADULT SPORTS LEAGUES</u>				
Church League Slo-Pitch	127	106	83	-34.6%
Ladies' Church League Volleyball	65	60	74	+13.8%
Men's Church League Basketball	112	92	97	-13.4%
Men's Over-27 Fall Slo-Pitch	112	109	94	-16.1%
	416	367	348	-16.3%
<u>ADULT ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS</u>				
Karate (Youth Included 2003-04)	119	47	56	-52.9%
Senior Citizens	612	562	564	-7.8%
Shape-Up/ Dance Lessons	356	561	662	+86%
Computer Classes etc.	11	32	67	+509%
	1,198	1,202	1,349	+12.6%
<u>OPEN SWIM PERIODS</u>				
AM Swim	1,954	2,089	2,428	+24.3%
Family Open Swim	3,472	2,780	3,244	-6.6%
	5,426	4,869	5,672	+4.5%
<u>USE OF FREMONT SCHOOL FACILITIES</u>				
Swimming Pool	388	855	906	+133.5%
High School Gym	268	352	393	+46.6%
Multi-Purpose Room	231	236	209	-9.5%
Old Café	41	89	35	-14.6%
Media Centers	271	26	218	-19.6%
Middle School Gym (Old)	311	208	246	-20.9%
Middle School Gym (New)	389	429	277	-28.8%
Middle School Cafeteria	151	16	83	-45%
Pine Primary Gym	255	177	229	-10.2%
Community Ed Gym	400	511	375	-6.3%
Community Ed Commons/Community Rooms	352	150	51	-85.5%
Daisy Brook Gym	148	290	190	+28.4%
Daisy Brook Café	144	256	106	-26.4%
Pathfinder Gum	451	512	411	-8.9%
Pathfinder Pods	407	654	921	+126.3%
	4,207	4,761	4,650	+10.5%
<u>FREMONT FITNESS CENTER MEMBERSHIPS</u>				
1-Time	---	103	78	-24.3%
10-Pass	10	39	43	+330%
1-Month	9	37	40	+344.4%
3-Month	72	46	39	-45.8%
6-Month	12	7	3	-75%
1-Year	25	18	10	-60%
Staff	==	==	33	---
	214	250	246	+15%