



Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Village of Sparta, Michigan





Parks and Recreation Master Plan

VILLAGE OF SPARTA &
SPARTA TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN

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01. Welcome

The Village of Sparta initiated the development of a 5-Year Parks and Recreation Plan to create a vision for the future and guide decision-making for parks and recreation facilities. This plan is the result of the efforts of community leaders, key Village organizations, staff, and residents over the past several months. This document's primary objective is to set forth the goals that are conceived by the community for recreation in the Village, satisfying the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) requirements for a Parks and Recreation Plan.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a road map for parks and recreation decisions (including facilities and programming) made in the next five years, as well as projected future needs. The Plan includes all of the required elements of a Parks and Recreation Plan and therefore qualifies the Village of Sparta for funding through the MDNR. The process taken to prepare the Plan gives the Village a better understanding of the needs and wants for parks, recreation, cultural facilities, and programming going forward.



02. Community Description

This Parks and Recreation Plan encompasses the Village of Sparta. The Village is in Kent County, located 6 miles North of the City of Grand Rapids, along the eastern edge of State Highway M-37. The Village is approximately 2.5 square miles in area.

Demographics Description

In order to determine its Parks and Recreation needs, the Village considers how many people will use recreation amenities, what program they will participate in, and what types of facilities they will need. We must understand these existing demographic conditions and past trends in order to appropriately anticipate and plan for the future needs of the community.

The following sections correspond to the demographic data gathered from the U.S. Census. The most recent data comes from the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates. The ACS is conducted every year and samples a percentage of the community on topics such as population, economics, housing, etc. Further, another portion of the demographic information contained in this document largely derives from the United States 2020 Census.

Population and Households

Over the last decade, the population of the Village of Sparta has remained relatively stable compared to nearby communities, with a growth rate of 2.5%. This lower growth rate is comparable to that of the state as a whole. While the growth was relatively stagnant in Sparta, Kent County grew at a rate of 9.2%. While Village parks are created and maintained for its residents first and foremost, our parks can also invite guests from the surrounding area to our community. Increasing populations in neighboring areas could lead to increased visitors. Keeping track of the Village’s growth might also help to predict future revenues that affect our parks budget, or increased attendance that would affect maintenance and programming demands.

While the population has slightly increased, the number of households overall has declined slightly, at a rate of -1.4%. This slight decline is consistent with the fact that the Village’s average household size has increased. This may indicate the presence of more multi-generational households, wherein grandparents move in with their adult children, or where adult children choose to stay at home with their parents for longer periods. In any given community, many reasons could lend to this trend; it may be caused by financial constraints which require people to consolidate their households, or a result of an aging population which needs more support from family members. Ultimately, the change in Sparta has not been dramatic by any means, but it is relevant especially when compared to nearby communities.

Table 1: Population Growth Comparisons

	Michigan	Kent County	Sparta	Rockford	Cedar Springs	Kent City	Sparta Twp.
2010	9,883,640	602,622	4,140	5,719	3,509	1,057	9,111
2020	10,077,331	657,974	4,244	6,142	3,627	1,262	9,426
% Change	2.0%	9.2%	2.5%	7.4%	3.4%	19.4%	3.5%

Source: 2010 and 2020 United States Decennial Census

Table 2: Household Growth Comparison

	Michigan	Kent County	Sparta	Rockford	Cedar Springs	Kent City	Sparta Twp.
2010	3,843,997	227,177	1,707	2,211	1,298	406	3,342
2020	3,980,408	244,795	1,683	2,553	1,579	414	3,319
% Change	3.5%	7.8%	-1.4%	15.5%	21.6%	2.0%	-0.7%

Source: 2010 and 2020 United States Decennial Census

Table 3: Average Household Size Comparison

	Michigan	Kent County	Sparta	Rockford	Cedar Springs	Kent City	Sparta Twp.
2010	2.53	2.58	2.43	2.5	2.67	2.82	2.82
2020	2.45	2.62	2.60	2.46	2.29	2.83	2.64
% Change	-3.2%	1.6%	7.0%	-1.6%	-14.2%	0.4%	6.2%

Source: 2010 and 2020 United States Decennial Census

Age

As of the 2020 US Census, the median age in Sparta is 36.8. Sparta’s median age is slightly older than Kent County, but younger than Michigan’s median age. The slightly younger median age in Kent County can be due to the fact that the City of Grand Rapids and adjoining cities such as Walker and Kentwood are within Kent County. Sparta’s median age falls in the middle when looking at neighboring municipalities.

The most occurring age group in Sparta is adults 20-44 years old. Another interesting trend is that Sparta’s retirement age population and school age population are very similar. The distribution of age groups can be very helpful in informing potential park needs. The 20-44 age group is referred to as Family Forming, because this group makes up most new parents and parents with younger children. An increase in this group can correspond to higher birth rates in the community, showing a need for more child-oriented park infrastructure. Retirement-aged individuals are also more likely to use parks, but they tend to have their own interests and needs in terms of park features. Further, trends are showing that Retirement-Aged folks are taking a larger role in childcare for grandchildren and other family members. Therefore, with a rise in grandparents as caregivers, the need for all-inclusive parks amenities is more important than ever.

Because Sparta’s median age falls within the family forming age category, it is important to consider planning for schools, parks, youth recreation programs, and other entertainment opportunities. Including these features when planning will increase Sparta’s appeal to families. Another important age trend to consider when planning would be the aging population. Sparta has a healthy population of retirement age and mature family age individuals. Considering mobility, and accessibility will benefit not only aging populations, but the entire community.

Table 4: Median Age Comparisons

	Michigan	Kent County	Sparta	Rockford	Cedar Springs	Kent City	Sparta Twp.
2020	39.8	35.4	36.8	37.2	39.6	33.2	36.5

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Table 5: Population Age Groups, Village of Sparta

Age Group	2020	% of Population
Pre-School Age (Under 5)	287	6.5%
School Aged (5-19 years)	773	17.6%
Family Forming (20-44)	1,568	35.7%
Mature Families (45 to 64)	1,020	23.2%
Retirement (Over 65)	742	16.9%
Total	4,390	

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Table 6: Age Groups, Sparta Township

Age Group	2020	% of Population
Pre-School Age (Under 5)	640	6.8%
School Aged (5-19 years)	2,053	21.8%
Family Forming (20-44)	2,996	31.8%
Mature Families (45 to 64)	2,556	27.1%
Retirement (Over 65)	1,181	12.5%
Total	9,426	

Natural Resources

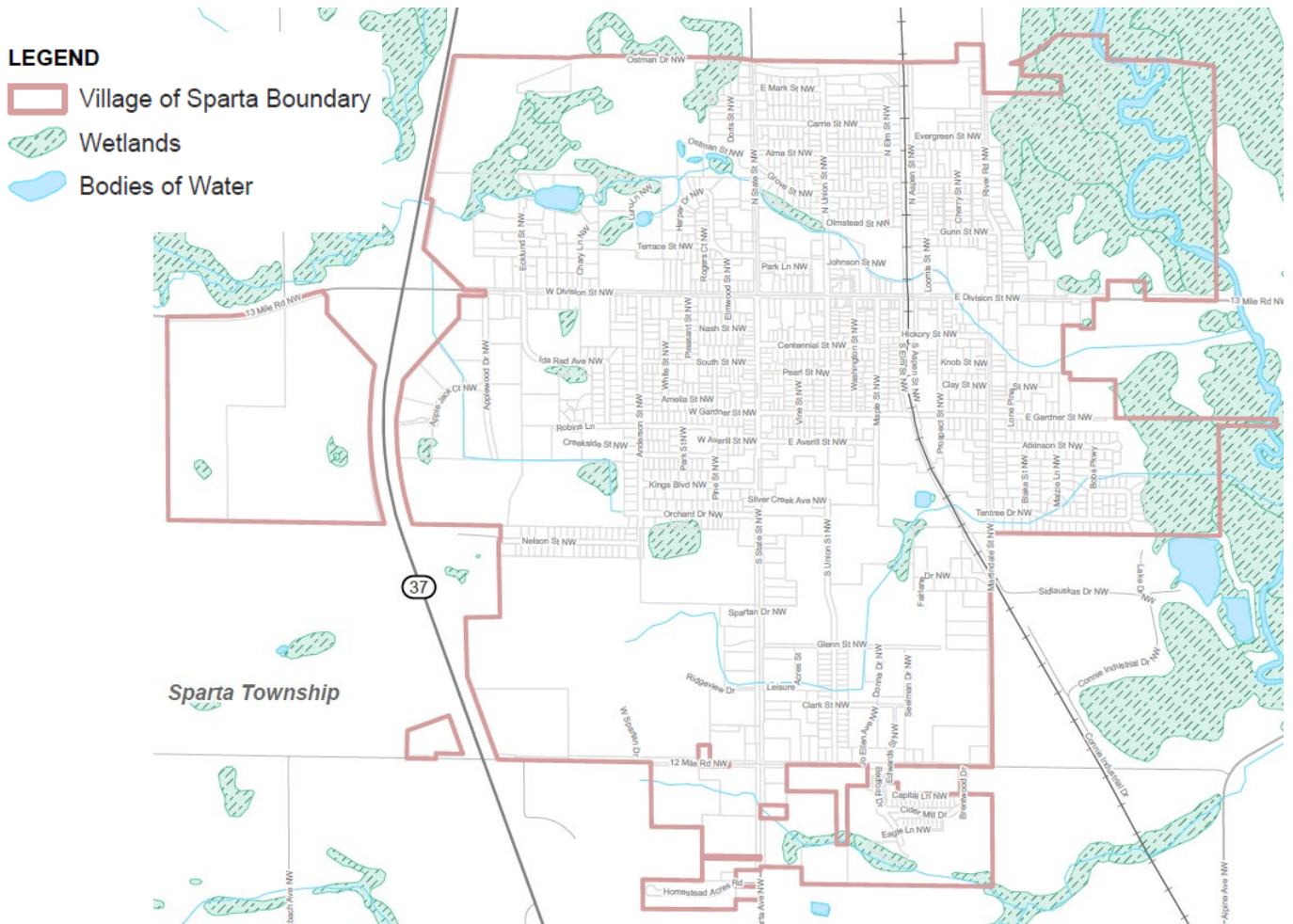
Natural resources are valuable assets for communities. They influence the types of development and economic activity that can happen in a location. In Sparta, the prominent natural resource is water. Preservation of water and wetland resources ensures that future generations continue to benefit from these resources.

Hydrography

The major water resource in Sparta is the Rogue River, which cuts through the Northeast corner of the Village and connects with the Grand River. Nash Creek flows west to east through Sparta and feeds into the Rouge River. There are no lakes in Sparta, only a few ponds.

Wetlands

With the Rogue River running north-south on the eastern portion of the Village, a large area of the Village is comprised of wetlands. Wetlands are typically designated and monitored by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Wetlands in Sparta consist of “soil areas which include wetland soils” and “wetlands as identified on the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) and MIRIS maps.”



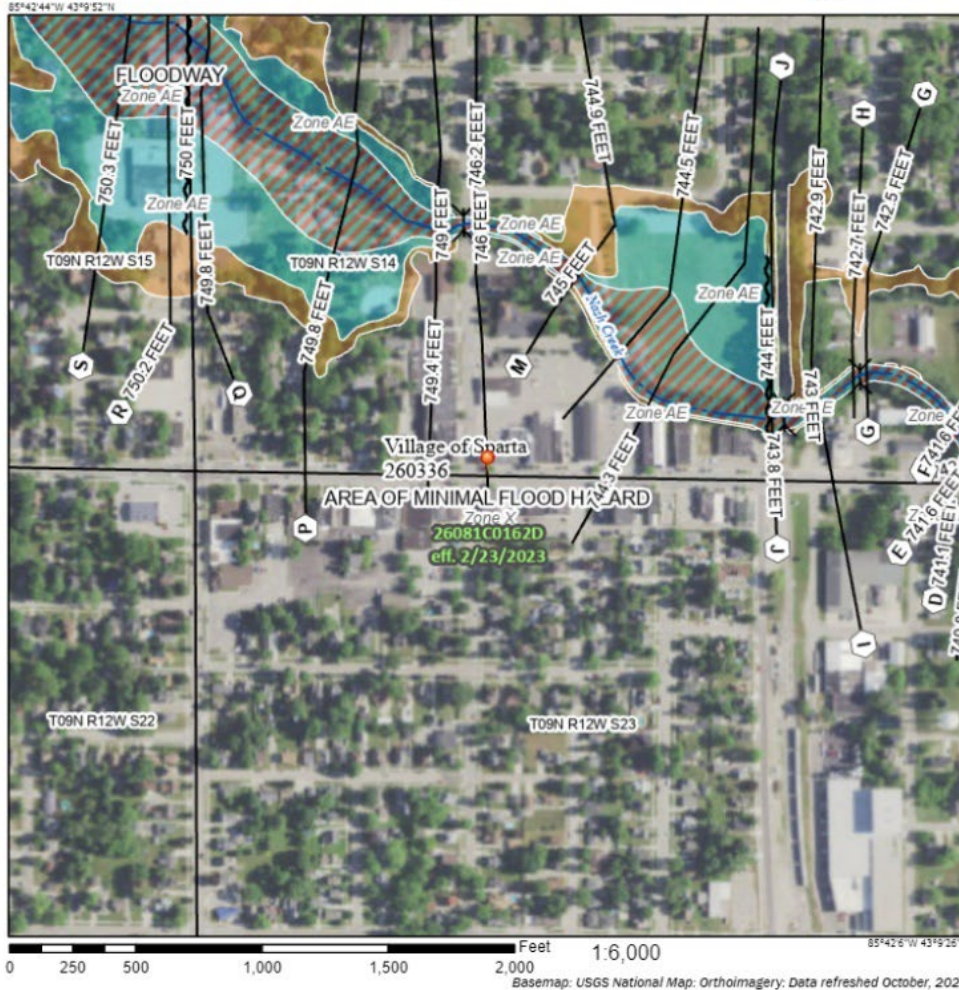
Flood Plains

In 1983, the Federal Emergency Management Agency published a Flood Insurance Study of the Village of Sparta. The study concludes that the principal flood problems occur along Nash Creek when high runoff causes the stream to overflow. The areas along Nash Creek fluctuate between 500-year and 100-year flood zones. This means they have a 0.2% to 1% chance of flooding. Much of the village is located in minimal hazard flood zones, meaning they are very unlikely to experience flooding. Overall, the flood hazards in Sparta are minimal.

Topology

Given that the Village of Sparta is located in Michigan, the topography of the Village can be generally described as flat. The elevation of the Village of Sparta is approximately 800 feet above sea level. As such, it can be concluded that the Village generally is not comprised of high elevations, hills, or other topographical characteristics.

National Flood Hazard Layer FIRMette



Legend

SEE FIS REPORT FOR DETAILED LEGEND AND INDEX MAP FOR FIRM PANEL LAYOUT

SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

- Without Base Flood Elevation (BFE) Zone A, X, AGG
- With BFE or Depth Zone AE, AO, AH, VE, AR
- Regulatory Floodway

OTHER AREAS OF FLOOD HAZARD

- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard, Areas of 1% annual chance flood with average depth less than one foot or with drainage areas of less than one square mile Zone X
- Future Conditions 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard Zone X
- Area with Reduced Flood Risk due to Levee. See Notes, Zone X
- Area with Flood Risk due to Levee Zone D

OTHER AREAS

- NO SCREEN Area of Minimal Flood Hazard Zone X
- Effective LOMRs
- Area of Undetermined Flood Hazard Zone D

GENERAL STRUCTURES

- Channel, Culvert, or Storm Sewer
- Levee, Dike, or Floodwall

OTHER FEATURES

- Cross Sections with 1% Annual Chance Water Surface Elevation
- Coastal Transect
- Base Flood Elevation Line (BFE)
- Limit of Study
- Jurisdiction Boundary
- Coastal Transect Baseline
- Profile Baseline
- Hydrographic Feature

MAP PANELS

- Digital Data Available
- No Digital Data Available
- Unmapped

The pin displayed on the map is an approximate point selected by the user and does not represent an authoritative property location.

This map complies with FEMA's standards for the use of digital flood maps if it is not void as described below. The basemap shown complies with FEMA's basemap accuracy standards.

The flood hazard information is derived directly from the authoritative NFHL web services provided by FEMA. This map was exported on 5/9/2023 at 1:26 PM and does not reflect changes or amendments subsequent to this date and time. The NFHL and effective information may change or become superseded by new data over time.

This map image is void if the one or more of the following map elements do not appear: basemap imagery, flood zone labels, legend, scale bar, map creation date, community identifiers, FIRM panel number, and FIRM effective date. Map images for unmapped and undetermined areas cannot be used for regulatory purposes.

Transportation and Circulation

The transportation system provides a backbone for accessibility and helps guide how people will travel between various activity centers within the city and to other nearby communities. The transportation system encompasses more than the roadway system to include all the means by which residents move around within the city and regionally, whether by public transportation, bicycling and walking, air, rail, or other means.

Arterials

Arterial roads provide rapid transportation between nearby communities or between the major activity centers of the city. There are two arterials in Sparta: M-37 and Division Street. M-37 partially forms the western boundary of the Village and connects Sparta to Grand Rapids in the south. Division Street runs east and west and intersects through the downtown commercial corridor of Sparta.

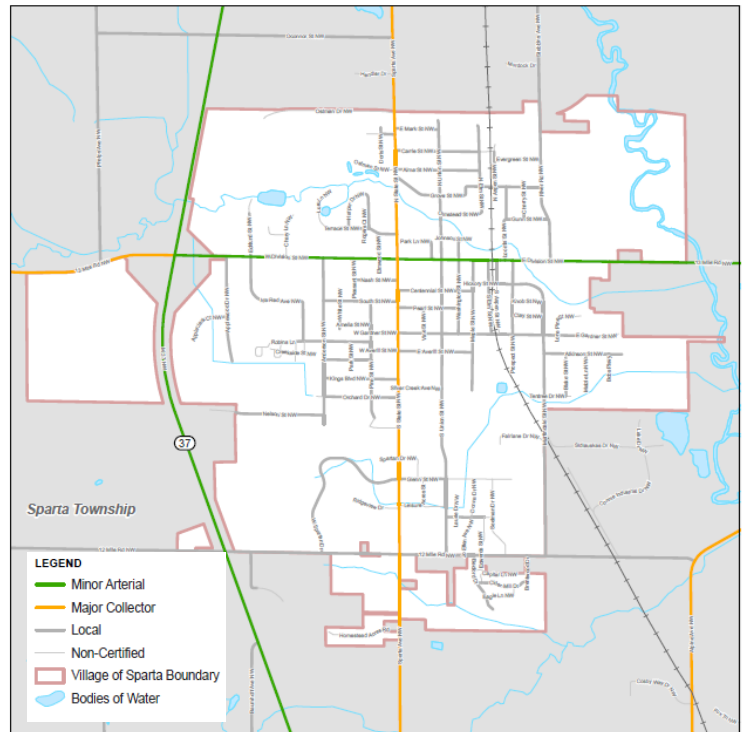
Access is generally available to these streets but should be carefully controlled to ensure traffic conflict points are limited. Shared driveways with shared parking and cross access, should be considered along these roadways, along with limitations on the total number of driveways and curb cuts.

Collectors

Major collectors channel traffic from local streets serving various land use areas to the arterial streets. There is only one collector street in Sparta: State Street. Collector streets should be designed to allow for logical and convenient access to destinations and to limit the frequent use of local streets for through traffic. Rights-of-way usually run from 66 feet to 84 feet.

Local Streets

Local streets serve internal traffic within specific areas and connect those areas with the major streets. These streets are generally not continuous for any great length. The majority of streets in Sparta are local streets. The local street is intended to provide immediate access to adjacent property. Traffic control devices may be installed to protect and facilitate movement of traffic. However, those devices would not be as elaborate as those on major streets. All streets not otherwise classified may be considered as Local Streets and generally have a 66-foot right-of-way.



Sidewalks

Sparta is a small community, and walkability to commercial areas from residential areas is feasible. Many residential areas and main roads in Sparta have sidewalks on at least one side of the road. However, there is room for improving the sidewalk network by adding sidewalk on both sides of the street and increasing residential sidewalks. Additionally, there is a lack of sidewalks in industrial areas.

Air Transportation

The Village of Sparta owns and operates the Paul C. Miller Municipal Airport. This airport is located outside the Village limits and is home to over 75 aircraft, a flight school, and a charter service. The runway is 4,000 feet long and 75 feet wide. The airport has 55 aircraft hangers and does have fuel for sale onsite. The airport does not rely on tax dollars for operations, but rather relies on the 15,000 average operations.

The nearest major airport is the Gerald R. Ford International Airport located in Grand Rapids approximately 35 minutes southeast from Sparta. The airport offers domestic flights around the United States, as well as connections to Canada.

Rail Transportation

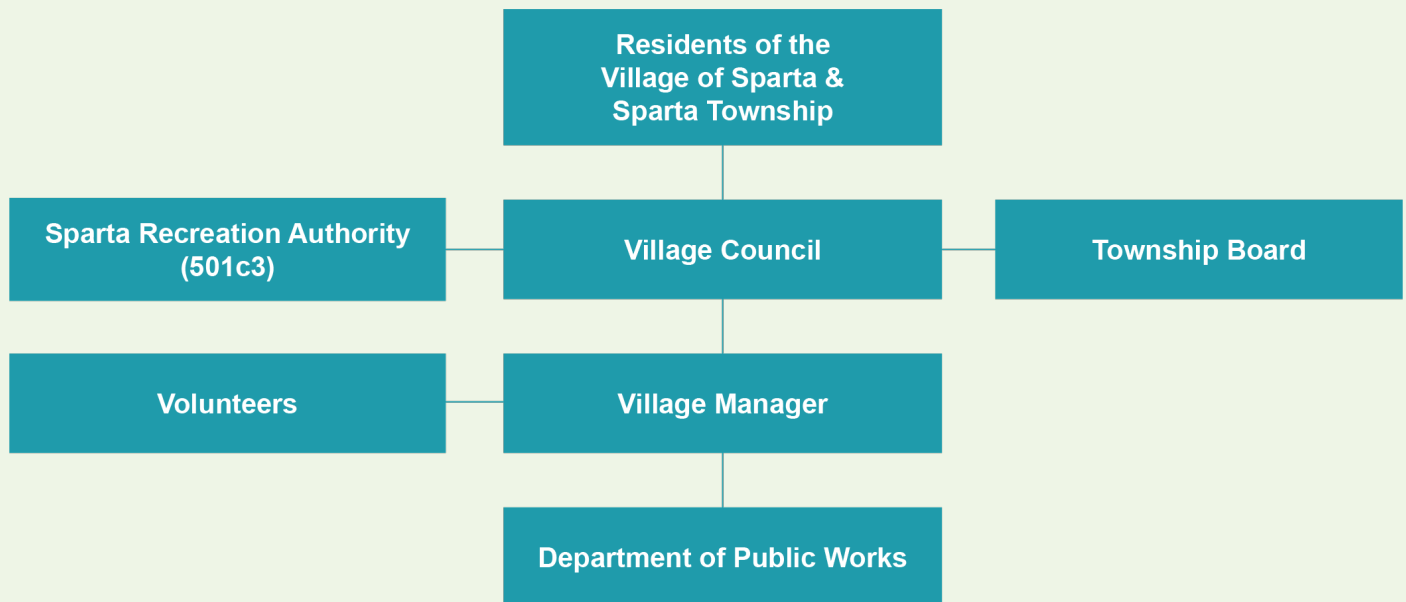
While historically there existed a passenger rail that connected Sparta to Grand Rapids and Newaygo, there is presently no passenger rail station in Sparta. The nearest passenger rail service to Coopersville is from Amtrak in Grand Rapids. Amtrak runs a direct train service to Chicago from Grand Rapids via the Pere Marquette route. However, there is a Thruway connection in Rockford, approximately 10 minutes Southeast of Sparta. This is a bus route that connects to the Grand Rapids Amtrak station.



03. Administrative Structure

At its most basic level, the decisions, policies, programs, and projects undertaken by the various Departments in the Village derive from the Village's commitment to provide high-quality services and increased quality of life for residents and taxpayers. The Village Council is the highest governing body of the Village, while the day-to-day services are administered and implemented by the Village Manager. Below includes a representation of the administrative structure of the Village, and a brief description of how these Departments, boards, commissions, and staff work together.

Department, Authority, and/or Staff Organizational Chart



Roles of Commissions, Village Staff, and Advisory Boards

Village Council

The Village Council is the legislative governing body of the Village. Members of Village Council are typically voted in by the public. The Council holds public meetings each month at the Sparta Civic Center. Council is responsible for the various decision-making activities in the Village, such as budget allocations and approvals, hiring of Village leadership, implementation of strategic planning for both long-term and short-term goals, and more. The Council President's role functions much like the "Chairperson" of the Village Council. The President serves as a liaison for the Village and is involved with communication processes between the Council and staff.

The Village Council ultimately approves the Village's annual budgets and expenditures for the various parks and recreation facilities. Further, the Village Council delegates and provides the overall direction for the Village Manager's roles and responsibilities.

Village Manager

The Village Manager is appointed by the Village Council. In general, the Village Manager's main responsibility is to ensure that the day-to-day process carried out by the Village are completed on time and on budget. The Manager is responsible for the administration of all Village departments. The Village Manager is a full-time position.

In terms of parks and recreation, the Village Manager is responsible for providing direction to the Public Works Department for park maintenance and improvement activities and maintaining communications with the applicable recreation boards and committees (SRA and SARA). Further, the Village Manager is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the annual budget allocations as approved by Council.

Public Works Department

The Department of Public Works is responsible for the following tasks:

- Maintaining and repairing 24 miles of local streets
- Mowing and maintaining almost 60 acres of park property
- Raising and lowering all flags on Village property
- Maintenance, repair, and upkeep of approximately 55 miles of underground utilities
- Road maintenance activities
- Snowplow of Village streets in winter
- Clearing approximately 7 miles of Village sidewalks and trails
- Provides staff at the airport (5 full-time and 1-2 seasonal)

With the guidance, directions, and management from the Village Council and the Village Manager, the Public Works Department successfully upkeeps and maintains all of the Village-owned parks and recreation facilities. These activities including mowing, planting, installations, trash cleanup (as applicable), and other necessary activities.

Sparta Recreation Authority (SRA) and Sparta Area Recreational Association (SARA)

The Sparta Recreation Authority (SRA) is a semi-governmental authority that was created out of a need for collaboration among Sparta-area local units of government to address parks and recreation needs. The SRA consists of representatives from the Village of Sparta, Sparta Township, and the Sparta Area Recreational Association (SARA). The SRA also is involved in the management, organization, improvements, and other affairs associated with the Sparta Sports Park.

SARA is a nonprofit organization that serves as a fundraising entity for the development and construction of a youth recreation facility, the Sparta Sports Park. The SARA is comprised of representatives from area youth organizations, including Little League, Youth Soccer (FC Ridge), Rocket Cheerleading, Youth Rugby, and Youth Football.



School District Involvement

The Village of Sparta School District (Sparta Area Schools) owns and operates 5 schools within the Village limits. These schools include:

- Sparta Early Childhood Center
- Ridgeview Elementary School (K-2nd)
- Applevue Elementary School (3rd-5th)
- Sparta Middle School (6th-8th)
- Sparta High School (9th-12th)

Sparta Middle School and Sparta High School offer various sports open for student enrollment. School facilities within the Village of Sparta include several recreation amenities for the whole community to enjoy. These facilities are described further in the next Section of this document.

Sparta Area Schools do not offer recreation programs, youth lessons, or youth teams outside of standard school sanctioned athletics.

Sparta Township

The Village of Sparta and Sparta Township maintain a close and collaborative relationship in terms of land use planning, and parks and recreation activities. The Township currently owns and maintains the “Library Park” which is located in Downtown Sparta. The Township also includes the Bette Memorial Park, which is located at 13 Mile Road and Phelps Avenue, just west of the Village limits.

It should also be recognized that The Sparta Sports Park is owned and maintained jointly by Sparta Township and the Sparta Recreation Authority.





04.

Annual & Projected Budgets for Operations, Maintenance, Capital Improvements, and Recreation Programming

The Table on the following page includes a full breakdown of the Village of Sparta Parks and Recreation financials. This includes budget information for Village parks and recreation facilities from 2017-2023.

Table 2: Parks and Recreation Facilities Budget, 2017-2023

DESCRIPTION	Balance as of 4/14/2023	2023 Original BUDGET	BALANCE AS OF DECEMBER 31,					
			2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Salaries	10,657.38	39,991.00	41,042.31	49,746.58	34,489.69	36,842.55	33,031.24	20,091.18
Salaries - Part Time	2,281.91	18,092.00	14,821.27	24,353.03	11,838.18	11,538.83	10,016.15	7,095.75
Health Insurance	3,238.44	11,222.00	8,330.47	8,595.45	9,752.07	7,986.61	8,553.92	7,034.99
Life Insurance	23.37	103	87.71	88.98	101.27	93.43	93.36	74.88
Workers Comp	82.99	500	468.23	410.61	420.38	997.87	975.02	983.36
MESC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social Security	959.7	4,443.00	4,155.61	5,501.32	3,401.25	3,697.27	3,289.34	2,077.42
MERS Benefits	1,809.17	9,127.00	8,778.76	12,132.98	7,274.72	6,635.07	6,951.71	3,860.66
Operating Supplies	5,835.18	10,000.00	14,673.88	12,136.53	2,451.56	7,672.30	8,407.73	4,922.55
DPW Clothing Allowance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	128.06
Contracted Services - General	4,185.58	25,000.00	25,253.75	22,014.32	19,428.30	18,871.96	22,129.32	15,417.28
C/S Engineering	0	4,000.00	4,169.91	0	0	0	5,200.00	5,366.00
Electric	829.51	2,500.00	2,400.80	2,749.05	3,124.74	2,913.54	3,359.73	3,430.83
Water/Sewer Bills -Splash Pad	0	2,000.00	1,730.52	1,625.32	1,270.90	11,289.53	6,298.25	0
Repair & Maintenance	679.57	5,000.00	3,330.86	8,378.36	5,415.55	5,730.54	105.96	1,057.70
Equipment Rent	1,388.14	13,000.00	15,714.16	12,486.07	7,649.51	9,194.34	8,960.40	8,295.06
Miscellaneous	0	300	0	60.43	50	303.38	357.8	292.18
Celtic Festival	0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Winter Activities	0	500	0	0	0	0	0	0
Insurance & Bonds	345	500	356	349	331	284	280	179
Capital Outlay	4,875.00	72,000.00	10,306.83	7,484.87	8,671.58	1,769.40	21,348.83	83,751.23
Transfers	0		0	0	8,697.82	8,540.00	5,000.00	4,000.00
TOTALS	\$37,190.94	\$218,278	\$155,621.07	\$168,112.90	\$124,368.52	\$134,360.62	\$144,358.76	\$168,058.13

The following table includes a breakdown of expenses for the Sparta Recreational Authority (SRA) from 2017-2023:

Table 3: Sparta Recreational Authority Expenses, 2017-2023

DESCRIPTION	03.31.2023	03.31.2022	03.31.2021	03.31.2020	03.31.2019	03.31.2018	03.31.2017
Grant Income	0	55,448.10	145,917.60	173,634.30	0	0	0
Sparta Township	45,000.00	90,388.00	25,000.00	0	25,000.00	35,000.00	0
Concession Sales	30,679.80	10,738.38	0	0	0	0	0
Use and Admission Fees	2,700.00	1,825.00	0	0	0	0	0
Interest Income	94.31	67.96	304.64	798.22	720.37	281.91	825.38
Contributions and Donations	11,800.00	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Income	7,997.70	13,750.00	150,833.26	106,662.96	51.46	0	0
Transfer from DDA							
Transfer from SARA	0	0	50,000.00	100,000.00	160,000.00	80,000.00	304,473.11
Total - Revenues	98,271.81	172,217.44	372,055.50	381,095.48	185,771.83	115,281.91	305,298.49

Current Funding Sources

Currently, the revenue/funding source for Village’s parks and recreation amenities derives from the Village General Fund. The funding sources for the SRA in 2022 include:

- Gifts and contributions (these usually apply on a project-by-project basis. Gifts and contributions from the SRA and Sparta Township typically are intended for special amenities, such as the statue improvement to Lamoreaux Brothers Veterans Park and are not often a consistent source of funding for the Village parks and recreation system).
- Federal grants
- State grants

Expenditures

As noted in the table above, the expenditures for the Village parks and recreation facilities include:

- Salaries/insurance/benefits
- Utilities (water, electric, sewer)
- Operating supplies
- Equipment rentals
- Festivals and events
- DPW expenses (e.g., uniforms)
- Repairs and maintenance

Role of Volunteers and Organizations

As described above, the Sparta Recreation Authority (SRA) is responsible for the upkeep, management, planning efforts, and programming for Sparta Sports Park. Many of the Village's (and region's) organized sports activities are conducted at the Sparta Sports Park, which is a relatively new facility constructed in April 2021. The SRA group is comprised of volunteers with a mission to continue offering, and improving upon, the exemplary sports activities in the area.

Further, the Sparta Area Recreation Association (SARA) is comprised of volunteers who donate time and efforts to seek out and secure funding opportunities to accomplish various improvements to the Sparta Sports Park.

The area's various youth teams, including baseball, rugby, football, cheerleading, and soccer are operated by volunteer coaches, management teams, and other applicable organizational groups.

Further, the natural area located on the northeast side of the Village (where the Rogue River flows) has several unpaved walking trails that are currently maintained by a group of volunteers and interested citizens. These walking trails are improved with dirt and/or woodchips.

Lastly, the "Far Hill" disc golf course located in the Village, in the Sports Park, is maintained by Sports Park staff and volunteers.





05. Inventory of Recreational Facilities and Programs

The physical inventory of local facilities consisted of site inspections of all Village parks and recreation sites. An inventory of park equipment and facilities was recorded and reviewed with regard to location, acreage, quantity, quality, accessibility, and condition. The regional inventory consisted of review and compilation of regional park facilities.

Municipal Facilities

Currently within the Village of Sparta, there are eight parks. Six of these are owned by the Village, one is owned by Sparta Township, and one is owned and maintained jointly by Sparta Township and the SRA.

The following table illustrates the existing inventory of recreational equipment and fields at these facilities. Play areas include various fields for organized games such as baseball, football and soccer. Hard court areas include basketball fields. Passive areas include picnic areas or nature/hiking trail/foot paths.

The inventory indicates that the Village has quite a few field sports areas, such as soccer fields and baseball fields. The Village does not have a large number of hard-court sports areas for basketball, pickleball, or tennis. Further, most of the Village's parks have facilities for passive recreation and resting, such as walking paths, benches, bleachers, pavilions, gazebos, and other similar structures. A majority of the Village's parks also include portable restroom facilities and trash receptacle structures.

Existing Parks Inventory

The methods of conducting the inventory included site visits to parks and evaluation of available amenities, discussions with Village staff and residents regarding the state of parks, and comparison to state and national standards. The parks site visit was conducted on April 11, 2023 and was completed by the Village Manager, DDA Director, Village President, and planning consultant at McKenna.

This plan encompasses eight parks and facilities (including the largely open space nature preserve with walking trails), covering over 224 acres. The following maps depict the location of each park facility within the Village of Sparta, as well as the general area of population served within a 10-minute walk.

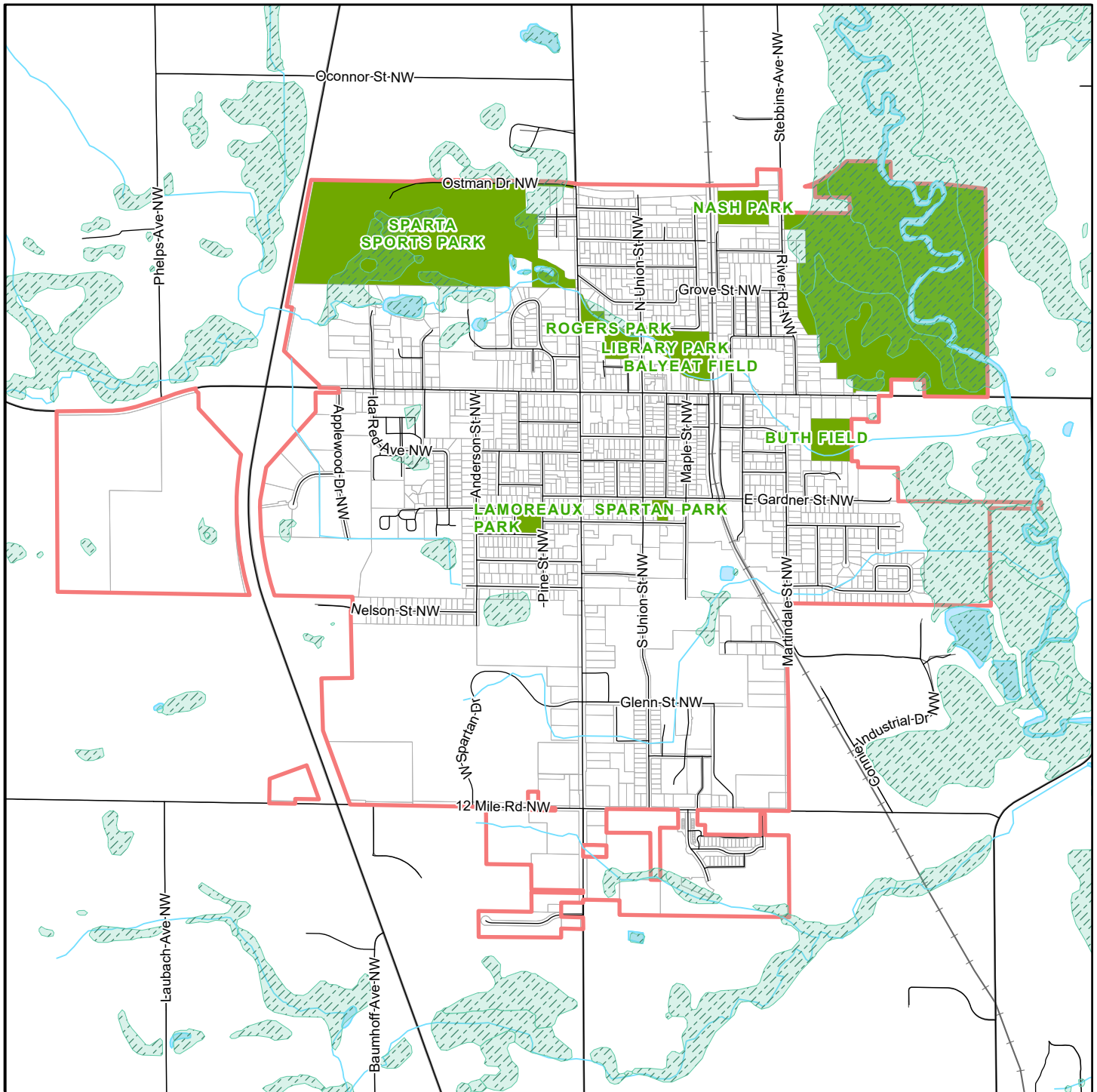
The Walkability Assessment map on the following pages concludes that the southern portion of the Village is underserved by Parks facilities. A vast majority of the Village's parks are located within the Downtown area (or immediately adjacent) and the northern portion of the Village. This is likely due to the fact that the Village's wetland and floodplain areas are predominantly located on the northside of the Village, thus presenting more opportunities for parkland. It should also be acknowledged that the Village is largely built-out. New parkland is likely to be located in areas that otherwise would be deemed unbuildable.

The Table below includes a summary of all the current facilities located in each of the Village's parks.

Park Name	Acres	Access Score	Hard Court	Play Equipment	Sports Field/Court	Passive Areas	Other
Balyeat Field	6.88	3	-	-	Soccer (x2)	Walking trails	Boardwalk Bleachers
Buth Field Dog Park	6	2	-	-	-	Benches	Dog park
Lamoreaux Brothers Veterans Memorial Park	2.69	3	-	Jungle gym Swings	Baseball Soccer	Picnic tables Open lawn Pavilion/gazebo Benches	-
Library Memorial Park	0.85	3	-	-	-	Walking trails	Benches
Nash Park	10	2	-	-	Baseball	Nature area/greenspace	-
Rogers Park	4.7	3	-	Jungle gym Swings Splash pad ADA swings Sandbox	Volleyball (x2)	Walking trails Pavilion/gazebo Picnic tables	Band shell
Sparta Nature Park	103	1	-	-	-	Walking trails Open Space	-
Spartan Park	1.01	1	Basketball Roller hockey	Skate park Jungle gym	-	Benches	Benches
Sparta Sports Park	89	3	-	Jungle gym	Multi-purpose field (x3) Baseball (x9) Disc golf	Walking trails Benches Picnic tables	Concessions Bleachers Restrooms

Access Score Key:

- 1 = None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
- 2 = Some facilities meet accessibility guidelines
- 3 = Most facilities meet accessibility guidelines
- 4 = The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5 = The entire park was developed using the principles of universal design



Park Inventory

Village of Sparta, Kent County, Michigan

May 26, 2023

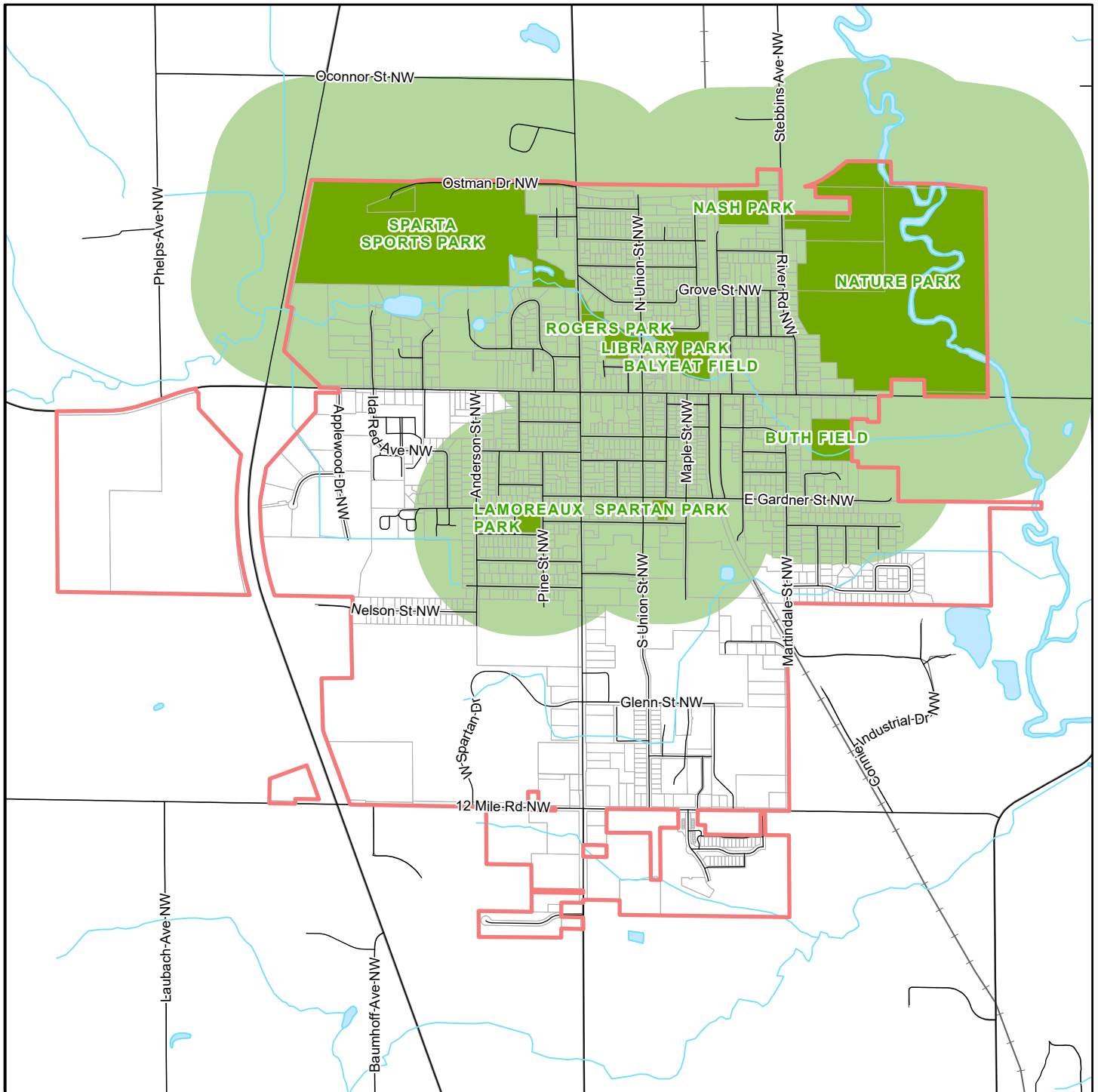
LEGEND

- Village of Sparta Parks
- Village of Sparta Boundary
- Bodies of Water
- Wetlands



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Village of Sparta, 2022. McKenna, 2023.





Park Walkability Assessment

Village of Sparta, Kent County, Michigan

May 26, 2023

LEGEND

- Village of Sparta Boundary
- Bodies of Water
- 10-Minute Walk Radius
- Village of Sparta Parks



Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Village of Sparta, 2022. McKenna, 2023.



Village of Sparta Parks

Balyeat Field

190 OLMSTEAD STREET
6.88 ACRES

General Description/Purpose

Balyeat Field is located in the northeastern portion of the Village, just north of Downtown Sparta. One of the key unique factors of this park is that it is located adjacent to the Downtown connected by an ADA accessible boardwalk over Nash Creek. The current use of this park is largely for soccer and other field sports activities. The park does not include play equipment or other infrastructure.

Accessibility Score

Given that the park is generally open land, and the boardwalk is ADA accessible, this park's accessibility score is a three (3). Further, the park's parking area includes one (1) parking space allocated for those with disabilities. However, it should be noted that the large open space/grass area in the park may be difficult for those who use wheelchair or walking assistance apparatuses may find the park difficult to navigate given the lack of paved walking trails around the site.

Amenities

Balyeat Field has two soccer fields and a parking area. This park facility also includes portable restrooms, trash receptacles, and bleachers. Balyeat Field also consists of a large area of open space. This park also includes an ADA accessible boardwalk that connects to downtown businesses and parking areas.

Potential Future Improvements

As described further in the Action Plan of this document, the future improvements within the next 5 years for Balyeat Field may include (see Appendix for conceptual drawing of parking improvements):

- Obtaining an engineer or licensed architect to create a park master plan.
- Expanding the parking area to accommodate more vehicles (with ADA designated spaces).
- Creating a designated area for a public gathering space.
- Establishing paved walking trails throughout the park.
- Constructing a new boardwalk in the southern portion of the park to cross over Nash Creek and connect to the existing boardwalk (and Downtown businesses).
- Constructing a multi-purpose skating rink to be utilized for various activities throughout the year.
- Preserving greenspace and open space for future events in the north portion of the park area.
- Other amenities as deemed appropriate.



Buth Field Dog Park

440 E. DIVISION STREET/13 MILE ROAD
6 ACRES

General Description/Purpose

The Buth Field Dog Park was once a baseball diamond and park facility located in the eastern portion of the Village. Since then, the park has been remodeled and transformed into a popular dog park. Buth Field Dog Park does not include any other amenities.

Accessibility Score

The Dog Park itself does not have any paved areas, which may be difficult for those who use a wheelchair or require walking assistance to navigate. Therefore, the accessibility score for the Buth Field Dog Park is a two (2). It does not appear the parking area has designated spaces for folks with disabilities. Accessible parking can be found on the north side of the park site, where there is a paved parking lot for existing commercial businesses.

However, the open space nature of the park does offer less obstacles for those who may have visual impairments or require walking assistance.

Amenities

Includes a large fully enclosed area for large dogs and a smaller fully enclosed area for both large and small dogs. The Dog Park also includes bench areas, which were once dugouts for the baseball diamond. Further, the park includes a drinking fountain for dogs.

Potential Future Improvements

To improve the dog park facilities, the Village may explore options to purchase play equipment and toys for dogs. Further, the Village may relocate the fence currently separating the small dog and large dog area to allocate more space for small dogs. This will likely entail another drinking fountain for the small dog area. Additionally, the park will include more benches, shade, and seating/resting areas for dog owners.



Lamoreaux Brothers Veterans Memorial Park

256 PARK STREET
2.69 ACRES

General Description/Purpose

Lamoreaux Memorial Park is located in the central area of the Village, just southwest of Downtown Sparta. The Park is designed to primarily accommodate the needs of the immediately adjacent houses and neighborhoods. The Park is essentially “squared” and surrounded by residential homes, making it a popular destination for families.

Accessibility Score

This Park is accessible to adjacent neighborhoods and is surrounded by sidewalks. However, the park does not include any internal paved or internal walking paths. The children’s play equipment is not ADA accessible (including the swings). However, the park does include open area that may be suitable for individuals with visual impairments. Therefore, the park accessibility score is a three (3).

Amenities

There is a T-Ball baseball diamond, picnic shelter area, children’s play equipment, swings, benches, water fountain, and open lawn area. A veteran’s memorial statue dedicated to three Sparta residents who were killed in action during World War II, the Lamoreaux Brothers, and a granite memorial rest, are located in the park. Additionally, this park includes portable restroom facilities and trash receptacles. Parking for this park is located on the street, around the periphery of the parkland.

Potential Future Improvements

The future improvements to this park include general upkeep and maintenance activities and several tree plantings for more shaded areas. The Village may create a park master plan with public engagement activities to determine other future amenities.



Library Memorial Park

80 N UNION STREET
0.85 ACRES

General Description/Purpose:

Library Park is owned by Sparta Township. The primary purpose of this park is to provide a rest area for shade and several walking paths, located directly adjacent to Downtown Sparta. This park area is largely greenspace and also includes a small cottage-like structure that was once the location for Village events, such as for Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny.

Accessibility Score:

The pathways located within the park appear to be at an adequate grade for wheelchair accessibility and for folks with visual impairments. However, the sidewalks are approximately 5 feet in width. A wider sidewalk may be more beneficial for folks with walking impairments. The accessibility score for Library Park is a three (3).

Amenities

The park serves as a memorial to those who lost loved ones on September 11th, 2001. The park includes a pathway along the south side of Nash Creek and connects to the pedestrian bridge spanning the creek.

Potential Future Improvements

The Village will engage in discussion with Sparta Township to identify any future uses for the small cottage located on the park property. Future improvements to the Library Park will also tie into the Village's long-range vision for Downtown Sparta. This includes working alongside the Township to determine desired amenities and the highest and best uses for this space.



Nash Park

350 N ASPEN STREET
10 ACRES



General Description/Purpose

Nash Park is located in the northeastern portion of the Village, adjacent to the wetland areas and the Rogue River. The park generally serves the neighborhoods located on the north side of the Village. This park includes a baseball diamond and bleachers.

Accessibility Score

This park includes a parking area within close proximity to the baseball field. However, the activities available at this park do not include ADA-accessible equipment, or all-inclusive design. The park does not include any paved paths or walking trails. However, due to the open space nature of the park, it is likely that individuals with mobility impairments could navigate around without obstacles. Because of these factors, the accessibility score for Nash Park is a two (2).

Amenities

This park includes a Little League baseball diamond with informal parking. The remaining acreage is undeveloped green space and a natural area.

Potential Future Improvements

Future improvements to Nash Park may include the construction of a hard-court sports area, such as a basketball or tennis court. In the future, the Village and/or Township may find it necessary to improve this park with more amenities that have not yet been determined but will remain consistent with the intent of this Plan. This may include a Park master plan with public engagement components to develop a future vision.

Rogers Park

152 N STATE STREET
4.7 ACRES

General Description/Purpose

Rogers Park is the Village's most popular park. It is located just north of the Downtown core. Rogers Park includes several amenities that makes it attractive to residents and visitors of all ages, including a bandshell for events, picnic and shaded areas, walking paths for passive recreation opportunities, and more. Rogers Park is also connected to the Sparta Civic Center, which is where many of the Village's public meetings and indoor events are held.

Accessibility Score

As stated, Rogers Park includes an ADA accessible swing. However, the current playground equipment (jungle gym) does not appear to be all-inclusive design. Walking paths within the park are paved and connect to adjacent parking areas. Therefore, the park's accessibility score is a three (3).

Amenities

Rogers Park has a plethora of high-quality amenities. These include:

- Paved walking trails around the park that connect to Downtown, Civic Center, and Library Park
- Playground equipment (including swings)
- ADA swing
- Bandshell
- Bike parking
- Pavilion and picnic area
- Splash pad
- Two volleyball courts

Potential Future Improvements

To improve on the Village's most popular recreation feature, the Village will consider the following improvements to Rogers Park throughout the next 5 years:

- Expanding the splash pad for more toy and play equipment and rubber surfacing
- Maintaining the walking paths and cleaning up banks of the River
- Connecting the walking paths across the street to provide easier access to Downtown Sparta
- Hard court sports area



Spartan Park

164 E GARDNER STREET
1.01 ACRES

General Description/Purpose

Sparta Park is generally designed to accommodate older children. The Park serves directly adjacent neighborhoods and homes. This Park is also located adjacent to some of the Village's commercial and industrial land uses, south of Downtown.

Accessibility Score

Spartan Park is not very accessible to those with ADA needs. Due to the nature of the skate park and basketball court, as well as the playground equipment, Spartan Park does not meet many inclusive design best practices. Adjacent parking area and pavement may assist those with wheelchair or walking assistance to navigate the site. Spartan Park's accessibility score is a one (1).

Amenities

This park was built for the use of skateboards and roller blades. There is playground equipment (not inclusive design) and a basketball court. This Park also includes portable restroom facilities, benches, and trash receptacles.

Potential Future Improvements

Future improvements to Spartan Park may include:

- Play equipment upgrades.
- Hard court sports facilities.
- A plan to mitigate the existing drainage issues.
- A Spartan Park Master Plan.
- Play equipment to better suit users of all ages.



Sparta Sports Park

377 N. STATE STREET
89 ACRES

General Description/Purpose

The Sparta Sports Park was completed in April 2021. This Park is a popular regional asset and includes many amenities to accommodate several different field sports. The purpose of the Sports Park is to provide a large space to host games, practices, tournaments, and other related events for the area's youth sports teams. This Park was developed as a result of a multi-jurisdictional effort and collaboration among several entities and organizations, including the Village, Sparta Township, the SRA, and interested residents.

Accessibility Score

The Sparta Sports Park is a new facility, completed in 2021. Although the Park does not have inclusive design play equipment, the Park does include an adjacent parking lot and paved walking paths to access the entire site. Therefore, the accessibility score is a three (3).

Amenities

The Sparta Sports Park includes the following amenities and facilities:

- 3 multi-purpose fields (soccer, rugby, football)
- 9 baseball fields
- Disc golf course
- Walking paths
- Concessions
- Expansive parking lot
- Restrooms
- Benches and bleachers
- Playground
- Pavilion

Potential Future Improvements:

Future improvements to the Sparta Sports Park include:

- More walking trails
- Expanded parking lot
- Hard-court sports area (e.g., basketball or tennis)



Sparta Nature Park

660 E DIVISION ST
103 ACRES



General Description/Purpose

Due to the wetlands and floodplain within this area of the Village, the Sparta Nature Park is intended to remain a large nature preserve within the Village. The area is intended for passive recreation opportunities, such as walking, scenic overlooks, bird watching, and other similar activities.

Accessibility Score:

Because this site is unimproved, current trails are unpaved, and the area does not have a dedicated parking lot, the accessibility of this park is a one (1).

Amenities

This is an undeveloped natural area with unpaved walking trails. Volunteers have created unimproved nature paths on dry sections of the property for sightseeing and nature walks. The property is mostly wetland soils and heavily vegetated.

Potential Future Improvements

The future intent is to expand the trail system within the Sparta Nature Park. Further, the Village may also seek to build a parking lot for easier park access.

School Facilities

The school facilities in the Village of Sparta include a few amenities available for public use. Near Appleview Elementary, the school owns and operates 8 tennis courts, which can be available to the public by reservation. Further, the High School includes a track, which may also be used by the public, provided that school sanctioned activities are not taking place.

Recreation Programs

The various area recreation program offered in the Village of Sparta include:

- Sparta Little League
- Sparta Area Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO)
- Sparta Youth Football
- Sparta Youth Cheerleading
- Sparta Youth Rugby

The youth programs listed above are not owned and operated by the Village of Sparta. These recreation programs are maintained by private organizations.

Sparta Civic Center

The Village of Sparta owns, maintains, and operates the Sparta Civic Center. This is a facility open to the public and available for rent. Many renters host private events in this space, such as business meetings, showers, and wedding receptions. The Civic Center is located directly adjacent to (and connected with) Rogers Park. The Civic Center is also the location for the Village's regularly scheduled meetings.





06. Description of the Planning Process

Understanding, inventorying, and analyzing the Village's existing facilities informs the basis and priorities for the Action Plan. This Section provides a closer look into the Village's current facilities and compares the existing conditions with general best practices for facility standards.

Existing Facilities Analysis

The table below outlines recreation standards recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. These standards recommend minimum standards for different recreation facilities based on existing and projected population. According to this analysis, the Village of Sparta generally meets and exceeds all recommended standards for multiple facilities such as sports fields/courts, swimming facilities, and other recreation activities.

However, it should be noted that the Village of Sparta does not own or maintain the 8 tennis courts. As previously stated, the tennis courts are owned and operated by the school district and are available to the public by reservation. Therefore, it is recommended that the Village establish a space for tennis/pickleball courts at one of the park facilities. Based on the standards below, the Village should provide two tennis courts. Recommendations for additional facilities are included further in this Section.

Certain parks within the Village with large open space areas, such as Nash Park, serve as prime opportunities for new public amenities that can address program deficiencies.

Table 4: Existing Facilities Analysis

Facility	Recommended Standard	Suggested Amount Based on Population 4,244	Total Existing in Sparta	Recommended Need	Surplus (+) /Deficiency (-)
Basketball Courts	1/5,000	1	1	0	0
Tennis/Pickleball Courts	1/2,000	2	8	0	+6
Volleyball Courts	1/5,000	0	2	0	+2
Baseball Fields	1/5,000	0	10	0	+10
Softball	1/5,000	0	1	0	+1
Football Fields	1/20,000	0	3	0	+3
Soccer/Multi-Purpose Fields	1/10,000	0	5	0	+5
Golf Courses - 9 hole	1/25,000	0	0	0	0
Golf Courses - 18 hole	1/50,000	0	0	0	0
Driving Range	1/50,000	0	0	0	0
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	0	0	0	0
Ice Rinks	1/20,000	0	0	0	0
Running Track (1/4 mile)	1/20,000	0	1	0	+1
Playgrounds	1/3,000	1	4	0	+3
Picnic Areas	None Published	0	2	0	+2
Cross-Country Ski Trails (miles)	1/10,000	0	0	0	0
Sledding Hills	1/40,000	0	0	0	0
Horseback Riding Trails (miles)	1/50,000	0	0	0	0

Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all citizens have access to all facilities provided by the Village regardless of physical disability. Each of the Village's parks should be updated to ensure ADA accessibility and compliance in terms of:

- Pathway resurfacing
- Sidewalk resurfacing
- Play structure equipment
- Benches and pavilions
- Signage

The Village of Sparta does not have any inclusive or ADA accessible park equipment, other than one ADA/wheelchair accessible swing located in Rogers Park. A majority of the Village's parks and recreation amenities are centered on sports fields and team play, with a few playground equipment in several areas. Further, most playground areas utilize mulch as the base underneath play equipment, which does not lend for universal design best practices. The Village has a number of paved walking paths that can accommodate individuals with disabilities, but in general are approximately 5 feet in width. According to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NPRA), the following guiding principles should be implemented when planning for inclusive playground design:

1. **Equitable Use** (design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities)
2. **Flexibility in Use** (design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities)
3. **Simple and Initiative Use** (design is easy to understand, regardless of user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level)
4. **Perceptible Information** (design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities)
5. **Tolerance of Error** (design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions)
6. **Low Physical Effort** (design can be used efficiently and comfortably, with minimum fatigue)
7. **Size and Space for Approach and Use** (appropriate size and space are provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility)

Throughout the duration of this Plan, and with park improvement projects, there is need to achieve more accessibility to Sparta's parks in terms of ADA compliance and non-motorized facilities and connectivity.



The image above shows an example of an inclusive playground. Consider elements such as a hard/rubber ground, wider play structure equipment, areas for rest, play equipment on the ground, and more.

Program Deficiencies



This is an example of pickleball court. These facilities can be designed to accommodate both tennis and pickleball activities.

Although the Village of Sparta does not have facility deficiencies when considering the standards as recommended by the NRPA (due to its population size), the Village does have notable gaps in the parks and recreation system that pertain to the following facilities/amenities:

- Tennis/pickleball courts
- Inclusive playgrounds/play equipment
- Adult fitness and wellness stations
- Adult and senior programming
- Benches and shaded areas
- Permanent restrooms
- Village parks staffing

The planned improvements to be implemented within the next 5 years are indicated in the parks inventory section as described earlier in this document as well as in the Action Plan. We note that it may be advantageous in the Village's long-range planning efforts to employ a Parks and Recreation director, or other parks-related staff to assist with the development of more robust programming, grant applications and administration efforts, and others. Parks staff members would report directly to the Village Manager.

While some of these deficiencies may not be addressed within the next 5 years. The Village can include these facilities in long-range planning efforts. It is the understanding that future park and play equipment upgrades, such as swings and jungle gyms, will be replaced with inclusive/ADA recommended equipment.

Sidewalks and Pathways

The Village is committed to ensuring that all neighborhoods and popular destination areas (e.g., schools, Downtown, etc.) are connected through a sidewalk or bike path network. The Village is the recipient of a Safe Routes To School grant, which, when complete, will fill several gaps within the current sidewalk system.



In general, nonmotorized and sidewalk connectivity priorities should include:

- Sidewalks within the central business district (on both side of the street).
- Sidewalks connecting the central business district to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Sidewalks to connect schools to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Pathways to connect to larger County and regionwide systems.
- Pathways to connect to local systems, filling nonmotorized gaps.

The Village's 2023 Master Plan update will further address and prioritize upcoming and future non-motorized and sidewalk project efforts.

Safety

Safety and the perception of safety are important to increasing the use of existing parks. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a program adopted nationally that increases the perception of safety for a normal user and the perception of risk for a would-be offender. CPTED "is [the] proper design and effective use of the built environment which can lead to a reduction in the incidence and fear of crime and an improvement in the quality of life" (National Crime Prevention Institute, 1986). Four principles are utilized:

1. **The placement of physical features**, activities and people in such a way as to maximize visibility (Natural Surveillance);
2. **The physical guidance of people coming and going from a space** by the judicious placement of entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping and lighting (Natural Access Control);
3. **The use of physical attributes that express ownership**, such as fences, pavement treatments, art, signage, and landscaping (Territorial Reinforcement); and
4. **Maintenance.**

The Village of Sparta is committed to ensuring that all parks and municipal buildings are safe and welcoming to all visitors and citizens.

NATURAL SURVEILLANCE

Criminals are less likely to attempt a crime if they are at risk of being seen. Likewise, we are likely to feel safer when we can see and be seen.

Any architectural design that enhances the chance of being seen, is a form of natural surveillance.

NATURAL ACCESS CONTROL

Part of creating a controlled space is focusing on entry and exit points into buildings, parks, parking lots, and neighborhoods.

CPTED

Crime Prevention
Through
Environmental
Design

TERRITORIAL REINFORCEMENT

The use of physical attributes to create defined lines between owned and public spaces, such as fences, signage, landscaping, lighting, etc.

A well-maintained property creates a sense of territory for legitimate users of that space and shows that the owner or manager cares for and will defend the property against crime.

IMAGE

The Elements of CPTED

ADDITIONAL IDEAS THAT SUPPORT CPTED EFFORTS

Activity support fosters community interaction. Criminal acts can be discouraged in public spaces when we encourage activities in those spaces by residents, visitors, and other legitimate users.



07. Grant History

Since 1976, the Village of Sparta (and associated entities) have been awarded the following grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Table 5: Grant History

Project	Project #	Grant Amount	Project Type	Status
Rogue River Park Acquisition	92-275	\$33,750	Acquisition	Complete – open to the public
Rogue River Park Acquisition	93-327	\$14,600	Acquisition	Complete – open to the public
Sparta Recreation Complex, Parking Lot and Pathway (awarded to SRA)	17-0239	\$225,000	Development	Complete –open to the public
Land and Water Grant (awarded to SRA)	26-01771	\$150,000	Development	Complete – open to the public



08. Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1:

Provide diverse and exciting recreational opportunities for all residents.

1. Upgrade all park amenities as feasible.
2. Invest in modern equipment that is fun, safe, equitable, and sustainable.
3. Provide a wide variety of activities, facilities, and amenities.
4. Ensure that newly popular facilities, such as pickleball courts, are provided to the public.

GOAL 2:

Ensure all residents have access to parks amenities in their neighborhood.

1. Identify residential areas that are outside a convenient walking distance (10 minutes) from an existing park.
2. Identify areas the Village owns or could acquire for the development of new parks or expansion of existing parks.
3. Expand the park system by adding new parks in underserved locations.
4. Ensure parks have adequate and appropriate space nearby for parking vehicles, where deemed necessary and appropriate.
5. Continue working with all Village departments to ensure sidewalks are constructed to reach all parks.
6. Continue working with all Village departments to ensure all infrastructure surrounding parks is in working order and supports the needs of the park users.

GOAL 3:

Design all parks to be welcoming, accessible, and fun for all potential users.

1. Involve the community and the general public in parks improvement decisions.
2. Understand the needs of the neighborhood when planning parks improvements.
3. Understand the potential users of a park when designing parks improvements.
4. Understand the potential for vandalism or other negative influences when planning parks improvements.
5. Maintain and update the signage that identifies City parks.
6. Promote events and activities in parks.
7. Promote opportunities for residents to invest in parks themselves, such as community gardens, neighborhood clean-ups, and community art projects.

GOAL 4:

Improve existing trail system and expand connectivity between parks and throughout the Village and surrounding region.

1. Identify areas for potential new trails and paths.
2. Increase multi-use paths within the Village.
3. Connect existing trails to each other.
4. Connect existing and new paths to regional trails.
5. Ensure the maintenance of existing trails and proposed trails.
6. Improve awareness of existing trail system through community outreach and education.
7. Improve wayfinding signage to identify trails.
8. Preserve natural features, and ensure trails provide access to these features.

GOAL 5:

Continue to maintain and provide maintenance for park facilities.

1. Maintain all parks to a high level of quality.
2. Modernize park facilities such as bathrooms and water fountains.
3. Ensure new park facilities and improvements have sufficient maintenance planning detailed.
4. Ensure annual maintenance budget is sufficient for the upkeep of all park and recreation facilities.
5. Obtain local and state funding to operate and maintain parks and recreation facilities.
6. Work with the community and volunteer groups to clean up parks.





09. Action Plan

The table on the following page is a summary of actions that the Village and its partners should undertake during the planning period, and beyond; these activities are discrete and consistent with the Goals and Objectives, public input received, and the analysis of the Village's parks and recreation needs. Specific details on the recommended Capital Improvements for each park facility are included further below.

Table 6: Action Plan

General Park Needs	Project Description / Implementation Tasks	Timeframe	Primary Responsibility
Southern Parkland	10-Minute Walk Analysis Map shows a gap in park facilities available to residents located in the southern portion of the village. The Village should consider new park facilities in this area, as feasible.	2027	Village Staff Village Council SRA
Hard Court Sports	Inventory analysis indicates that the Village does not have many hard court sports facilities outside of Spartan Park. The Village should consider implementing more hard courts sports facilities, such as tennis, pickleball, and basketball courts.	2024+	Village Staff Village Council SRA
Central Gathering Space	Balyeat Field includes a prime space to implement a community gathering space. This is located adjacent to Downtown and ample greenspace for additional passive recreation facilities, and/or event space.	2023/2024	Village Staff Village Council SRA Sparta Township
All-Inclusive Playground and other Facilities	Current playground facilities do not have many opportunities for ADA play equipment. The Village will consider and implement inclusive play equipment upgrades with general maintenance and replacement activities.	2023+	Village Staff Village Council SRA
Exercise Equipment Stations	Park facilities in the Village do not include fitness station infrastructure. With the general activities for equipment upgrades, the Village will consider adding these facilities.	2024+	Village Staff Village Council
Benches/Shaded Areas	The inventory analysis above includes the park locations that should include additional seating and shaded area opportunities.	2024+	Village Staff Village Council
Staffing	A Parks Department Director may be a valuable asset to the Village's staff. The Parks Director's role would include implementing the recommendations in this Plan, and liaison to the SRA.	2026/2027+	Village Staff Village Council SRA Sparta Township
Permanent Restrooms	Applicable parks would benefit from permanent restroom facilities. These include the Village's most popular parks, such as Rogers Park and Balyeat Field.	2027+	Village Staff Village Council

10. Capital Improvement Program

Table 7: Capital Improvement Program

Facility/Program	Priority	Proposed Improvements	Estimated Costs	Potential Funding Sources
Balyeat Field	A	Create a Balyeat Field Master Plan.	\$	MDNR GF SRA DDA PVT
	A	Repave, restripe, and expand the parking lot.	\$\$\$	
	B	Develop a community gathering space.	\$\$\$	
	B	Pave ADA compliant walking paths.	\$\$	
	C	Construct a new ADA accessible boardwalk across Nash Creek.	\$\$	

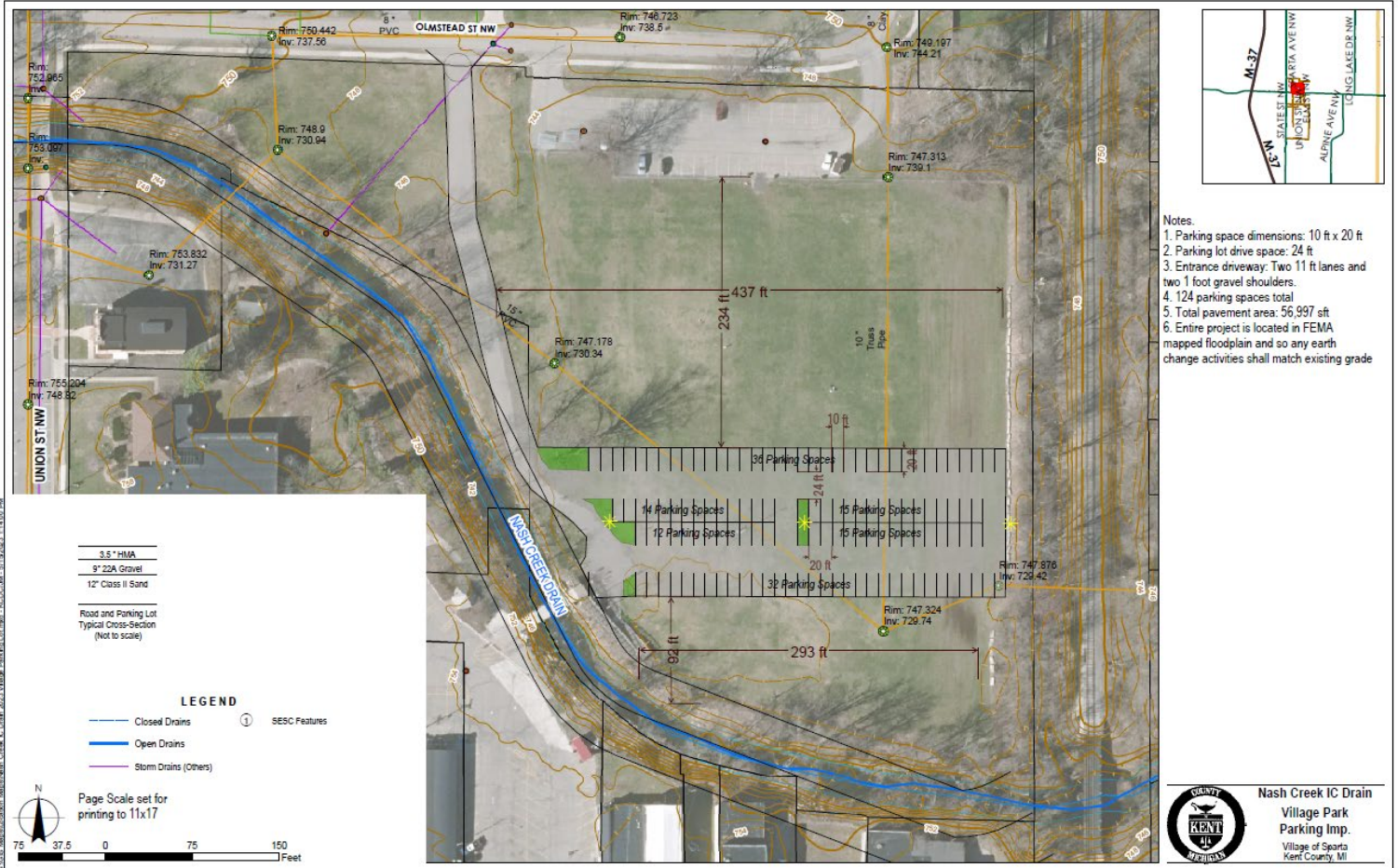
Facility/Program	Priority	Proposed Improvements	Estimated Costs	Potential Funding Sources
Buth Field Dog Park	A	Purchase dog play equipment.	\$	PVT, GF
	A	Relocate fencing to expand area for small dog play.	\$	
	A	Additional benches and seating.	\$	
Lamoreaux Brothers Veterans Memorial Park	B	Update Park Master Plan with public engagement.	\$\$	GF, MDNR, PVT
	A	Erect memorial Statue.	\$	
	A	Continue tree plantings.	\$	
	A	Place benches.	\$	
Library Memorial Park	B	Develop a Plan for the future of Library Park.	\$	GF, SRA
Nash Park	B	Develop a Park Master Plan for Nash Park improvements (e.g., hard-court sports, playground equipment, walking paths, etc.).	\$\$	GF, SRA
Rogers Park	B	Upgrade to inclusive play equipment.	\$\$\$	GR, MDNR, SRA, PVT
	A	Purchase more play equipment and expand the splash pad area.	\$\$\$	
	C	Clean up the banks of Rogue River.	\$\$\$	
Spartan Park	C	Upgrade to all-inclusive playground equipment.	\$\$	GF, MDNR, SRA
	B	Create a Park Master Plan to address play equipment upgrades, drainage issues, and other elements, including public engagement.	\$\$	
Sparta Sports Park	B	Construct Walking Paths (including engineering).	\$\$\$	GF, MDNR, SRA, PVT
	A	Expand the parking lot.	\$\$\$	
	C	Construct a hard-court sports area.	\$	
Sparta Nature Park	C	Construct walking trails.	\$\$\$\$	MDNR, SRA, PVT

PRIORITY		COST		FUNDING SOURCES	
A	Short Term: 1-2 years	\$	< \$50,000	DDA	Downtown Development Authority
B	Medium Term: 3-4 years	\$\$	\$50,000-\$150,000	GF	General Fund
C	Long Term: 5+ years	\$\$\$	\$150,000-\$300,000	MDNR	MDNR Grants
		\$\$\$\$	\$300,000+	PVT	Private (Foundations, Donors, other)
				SRA	SRA Contributions

Appendix

Appendix A: Balyeat Field Master Plan

Below is a conceptual rendering of future parking improvements to Balyeat Field.



- Notes.
1. Parking space dimensions: 10 ft x 20 ft
 2. Parking lot drive space: 24 ft
 3. Entrance driveway: Two 11 ft lanes and two 1 foot gravel shoulders.
 4. 124 parking spaces total
 5. Total pavement area: 56,997 sq ft
 6. Entire project is located in FEMA mapped floodplain and so any earth change activities shall match existing grade

Nash Creek IC Drain
Village Park
Parking Imp.
 Village of Sparta
 Kent County, MI

Appendix B: 30-Day Comment Period Publication & Public Hearing Notice

Manage Articles
 Home Page "News & Notes" Articles
 Village News and Notes Articles

[Open Website Page](#) [Add a New Article](#) [Return to Dashboard](#)

Sorted by Order of Online Appearance
 To edit an article, choose an Edit Article button from the table below.

- "Online" articles are presently showing on the Village of Sparta website.
- "Offline" articles are not showing on the website because they are not date-current. [Tip](#)
- "Queue" articles are waiting in the Approval Queue. Edit to place Online.

Edit Article Tip	Last Edit	Headline/Text	Photo	Docs	Links	Email	Start Date	End Date	Article Order Tip	Move or Copy	Delete
Online	19 Jun 23	Draft Parks & Recreation Ma...	No	1	None	None	19 Jun 23	31 Jul 23	↓ BT	Mv Cp	Delete
Online	12 Jun 23	Job Posting: Department of ...	No	1	None	None	12 Jun 23	12 Jul 23	↑ ↓ Tp Bt	Mv Cp	Delete
Offline	08 Jun 23	PUBLIC NOTICE	No	None	None	None	08 Jun 23	13 Jun 23	↑ ↓ Tp Bt	Mv Cp	Delete
Offline	11 May 23	Village of Sparta Seeks to Fil...	No	None	None	None	11 May 23	01 Jun 23	↑ ↓ Tp Bt	Mv Cp	Delete
Offline	11 May 23	New Village of Sparta Village...	No	None	None	None	14 Apr 23	10 May 23	↑ ↓ Tp Bt	Mv Cp	Delete
Offline	24 Apr 23	SPECIAL VILLAGE COUNCI...	No	None	None	None	24 Apr 23	02 May 23	↑ ↓ Tp Bt	Mv Cp	Delete
Offline	12 Apr 23	Fire Hydrant Flushing and M...	No	None	None	None	12 Apr 23	31 May 23	↑ ↓ Tp Bt	Mv Cp	Delete
Offline	29 Mar 23	PUBLIC NOTICE OF VILLAGE	No	None	None	None	29 Mar 23	31 Mar 23	↑ ↓ Tp Bt	Mv Cp	Delete

Welcome to Sparta
 Welcome to the Village of Sparta, Michigan

The warm and friendly Village of Sparta is located just north of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Sparta is a great place to raise a family and grow a business.

Sparta Is Tradition. On this website, you'll find information about our parks, history, finances, and departments of the Village, as well as important links to the community, resources and document downloads.

Whether you are a long-time resident or new to the area, we want to help you, and we are glad you're here.

Pay Your Water/Sewer Bill Online

The Village of Sparta has recently switched over to BS&A Online to process water/sewer bills and property tax payments. [Click here to pay your bill online.](#)

Residents are encouraged to create a BS&A Online account, although it is not required to make a payment. Setting up an account will allow you to see the payment history, associate water/sewer...

Village News & Notes
Draft Parks & Recreation Master Plan Open for Comment

Sparta is requesting your feedback now through July 30, 2023, on the Village of Sparta Parks & Recreation Master Plan. An electronic version of the draft master plan can be accessed at the bottom of this article.

Feedback is welcome by emailing [Danielle Bouchard](#) with McKenna Associates or by mailing/dropping off written comments to the village office.

The village will hold a public hearing during the August 14th, 2023 Village Council meeting at the Sparta Civic Center, 7:00pm. Verbal/Written comments from the public will be accepted in person at this meeting.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Download a File:
[Draft Parks Master Plan \(PDF\)](#)

Job Posting: Department of Public Works Supervisor.

The Village of Sparta is accepting resumes for the position of Department of Public Works Supervisor. This is a working supervisor position which will be expected to oversee, coordinate and participate in a full range of construction, maintenance and repair activities associated with municipal

How May We Help You?

- Report a Concern
- Water/Sewer and Tax Payments
- Forms and Publications
- Maps
- Parks and Playgrounds
- Village Staff Directory
- Search Our Website

Event Calendar

Appendix C: Village Council Meeting Minutes

VILLAGE OF SPARTA
Kent County, Michigan
Village Council Meeting
Monday, August 14, 2023 at 7:00 PM
75 N. Union St. (Sparta Civic Center)

1. Call to Order The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm
2. Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 pm
3. Roll Call

President Robert Whalen, Council members Brenda Braybrook, Robert Carlstrom, Dave Cumings, Courtney Mais, Tom Peoples, and Bill Taylor.

Also Present: DPW Representative Chad VanSyckle, Rob Smith (Infrastructure Alternatives), DDA Director Elizabeth Morse, Police Sargent David Price, and Village Manager Jim Lower.

4. **Additions or Corrections to Consent Agenda and Business Agenda** Moved by Braybrook, support by Carlstrom. All approved.

One Correction is removing public hearing on Ordinance 23-07, 23-08, 23-09; will address those with public comment. Public hearing
Revised 23-09

5. **Public Comment for agenda items**
No public comment

6. **Public Hearing**

Ordinance 23-10 opened at 7:02 pm; presented by Jim Lower. Went through several committee meetings. Public Hearing closed 7:03 pm.

23-13 opened at 7:03 pm; published on website, source of several hearings. Final public hearing for comment on the Parks and Recreation Plan. Hearing closed at 7:04 pm.

7. **Old Business**

- A. Crack Sealing; bidding was received at \$49,588; Jim Lower presented the new revised bid, with corrected roads. Included in the packet is the breakdown and the map. Motion by Cumings, support by Mais to approve as presented. All approved 7-0.

8. **New Business**

- a. 23-07 Ordinance to Amend the Sparta zoning Ordinance: 3 ordinances and 1 resolution are in the packet. This went through the planning commission and it was recommended for approval. This has been discussed over the last several years in Village of Sparta. Motion by Carlstrom, support by Mais. No further discussion, all approved 7-0. Peoples, yes; Mais, yes; Taylor, yes; Carlstrom, yes; Braybrook, yes; Cumings, yes, Whalen, yes.
- b. 23-08 Ordinance to Enact a new Marijuana Licensing and Regulation Code, the actual licensing and regulatory structure. Motion by Braybrook, support by Mais. Peoples, yes; Mais, yes; Taylor, yes; Carlstrom, yes; Braybrook, yes; Cumings, yes; Whalen, yes.

- c. Ordinance 23-09 An Ordinance to Amend the Controlled Substances & Drug Paraphernalia Code, Motion by Mais, support by Carlstrom, no further discussion. Peoples, yes; Mais, yes; Taylor, yes; Carlstrom, yes; Braybrook, yes; Cumings, yes, Whalen, yes.
- d. Resolution 23-13 to establish the Marijuana License Application Form and Fees. Motion by Mais, support by Braybrook, no further discussion. Peoples, yes; Mais, yes; Taylor, yes; Carlstrom, yes; Braybrook, yes; Cumings, yes, Whalen, yes.
- e. Ordinance 23-10 A resolution to approve Repeal & repeal the Sparta Sewer Use Ordinance; George Davis of Davis & Davis Law Offices presented an Ordinance to provide tools to use as situations arise. The new provisions incorporate industrial pre-treatment and also DPW items such as specifications for pipes, buildings, etc. This is not currently required by EGLE but if at any point it does require it IPP program, this ordinance will satisfy their requirements. This is a fairly detailed document, with new tools as discussed at the utility meetings. Motion to approve by Mais, second by Cumings. Peoples, yes; Mais, yes; Taylor, yes; Carlstrom, yes; Braybrook, yes; Cumings, yes, Whalen, yes. Approved 7-0.
- f. Resolution 23-14 A resolution to Approve the 5 Year, 2024-2028 Parks & Rec Master Plan; Motion by Braybrook, support by Mais. No further Discussion. Approved 7-0.
- g. Kubota Purchase: rearranged CIP as a cab was unavailable when original CIP was passed, but now is available. The Equipment fund pool has enough money in the fund, and the budget amendments will be made at the year end to reflect the expense in 2023. Motion by Peoples, second by Taylor to spend 31, 697.67. No further discussion. Motion passes 7-0.
- h. DPW & Water Management Reorganization; a detailed memo was included in the packet reflecting the competitive market for attracting talent; this person will manage the water dept and the DPW dept including purely office work. In order to back fill the man power, an entry level man power DPW position would be hired. There is enough office work between DPW and Water Dept to justify the change in the department structure. The candidate under consideration has good experience in this type of field. Consensus to proceed with reorganization of DPW and Water Management position: Peoples, yes; Mais, yes; Taylor, yes; Carlstrom, Braybrook, Cumings, yes, Whalen, yes.
- i. Master Plan Presentation and Open for Public Comment: presentation from Danielle from Mckenna on major items in the document including the top goals/objectives of the plan, future land use plan, zoning recommendations. Next steps are full draft review with a 63 day comment period for the public. The Planning Commission passed a motion to recommend opening up the document for the 63 day comment period with revisions that can still be done; all neighboring communities and entities with stake in the planning review process will receive information on the 63 day comment period. Motion by Braybrook to open the 63 day comment period, support by Mais, motion passed 7-0.
- j. Village Manager 6-Month Review: The Village Council provided verbal feedback:
 - Peoples: excellent job, hit floor running, good job
 - Mais: think he is great, thought he was great from the beginning
 - Taylor: doing a fine job
 - Carlstrom: very satisfied with performance, appreciate the seriousness taken for the sewer issues that have been happening,
 - Braybrook: doing an outstanding job, reorganization is good and handled things that are happening; and appreciate the speed of which you are getting things done. Saving us money. I think that's great, and he is very approachable.
 - Cumings: gets things done, and also finding thing buried in the archives that needed to be addressed

Whalen: generally impressed with his dedication, ability to problem solve, ability to get things done; get along with employees, have their respect, very likable person, and very happy with his performance; brought things to light that council was unaware of.

Jim Lower, Village Manager commented: enjoyed working with the council; been a lot to work through, enjoy the people in the town, and thank you for the support, seems like a lot of level of trust and confidence, but having that support allows that to happen

Whalen, would like to suggest a raise to \$120,000 per year; entertain a motion to approve. Braybrook motion to approve; Mais support. Discussion if this is the average of towns similar to sparta, and understanding that can't make that type of jump "every time", with regards to compensation for job well done.

Peoples, at least what we can do for the job he is doing, doing an excellent job.

Peoples, yes; Mais, yes; Taylor, yes; Carlstrom, Braybrook, Cumings, yes, Whalen, yes.

Approved 7-0.

Village Manager Report

Exterior drawings for a new village hall and DPW will be on the agenda in the upcoming agenda, additionally the daycare sample RFP is able to be amended and hopefully at the upcoming meeting and insight to connect directly with daycare providers to send the RFP to.

Sargent Price: things are good at the police department; new officer started a couple weeks ago, and is in the early phases of training.

Airport: great fly in Saturday, with two new potential private hangers going up at the airport. 92 kids received free airplane rides with 28 were signed up from Sparta. Very well attended!

DPW: New trucks are coming in the next few weeks. Appreciate having the newer, updated equipment as it makes our job easier. New insignia decals are in process of being installed.

Communications: nothing further.

Payment of Bills 433,666.95 for July Payable. Motion by Taylor, second by Mais to pay July bills. No further discussion. Motion passes 7-0.

13. Public Comment: No public comment.

14. No Council Member Announcements

15. Adjournment at 8:07 pm

Appendix D: Resolution of Adoption

VILLAGE OF SPARTA KENT COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Resolution to Approve the 5-Year, 2024-2028 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Resolution #23-14

At a regular meeting of the Sparta Village Council, held in the council chambers at Sparta Village Hall (156 E. Division, Sparta Michigan 49345) on August 14, 2023, the following resolution was offered:

WHEREAS, the Village of Sparta has undertaken a planning process to determine the recreation needs and desires of its residents during a five-year period covering the years 2024 through 2028, and

WHEREAS, the Village of Sparta began the process of updating its community parks and recreation plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities, and

WHEREAS, residents of Sparta were provided with a well-advertised opportunity during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the 2024-2028 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and

WHEREAS, the public was given a well-advertised opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the final draft plan for a period of at least 30 days, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on August 14, 2023, at Village Hall, to provide an opportunity for all residents to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the 2024-2028 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Village of Sparta has developed the plan as a guideline for improving, maintaining, and enhancing recreation facilities in the Sparta community, and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing, the Sparta Village Council voted to adopt said 2024-2028 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Sparta Village Council hereby adopts the 2024-2028 Recreation Master Plan.

Yeas: Mais, Carlstrom, Taylor, Whalen, Cumings, Braybrook, Peoples

Nays: None.

Absent: None.

I, Katy Shelton, (Village Clerk), do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by the Village of Sparta Council at a regular meeting thereof held on the 14th day of August, 2023.



Katy Shelton, Village Clerk

Staff Acknowledgements

Village of Sparta

Robert Whalen, President
James Lower, Village Manager
Elizabeth Morse, DDA Director

Sparta Township

Dale Bergman, Supervisor



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Art Director