



**Village of Rothbury
Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

2024-2028

Prepared by:

Village of Rothbury Council:

Vernon Talmadge, President
Deb Murphy, Treasurer
Brandy Williams, Clerk
Troy Voorhees, Trustee
Jim Fekken, Trustee
Mike Harris, Trustee
Autum Drake, Trustee
Dylan Zuniga, Trustee
Denise Kurdziel, Trustee

Planning Commission:

Mike Harris, Chairman
Brandy Williams, Secretary
Sandy Musick
Jerry Kooi
Domo Cruz
Stephanie Tallquist

Recreation Committee:

Brandy Williams, Director
Autum Drake
Denise Kurdziel

Prepared with assistance from:

Prein&Newhof
Engineers • Surveyors • Environmental • Laboratory

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The purpose of this document, the Village of Rothbury Parks & Recreation Master Plan, is intended to serve as a guide for present and future recreational resource development within the village, including park land, park facilities, recreational programs, and public open spaces. It advocates for land acquisition and park development based on a survey of village residents, population and housing trends, and a strategic analysis of recreation needs and opportunities.

To be effective as a guidance tool, it must be kept current, considering population shifts, development of new projects, and changing attitudes towards leisure activities.

Short-term goals, such as maintenance issues and small recreation facility improvements can be implemented quite easily with minimal costs. Long-term expansions/construction will require additional study and involvement of residents to work out the site-specific details. This plan is simply the foundation for these activities to occur. The focus of the plan is to identify the desires of residents and attempt to satisfy the recreation needs of the entire community.

Meeting the goals in this plan or revisiting the priorities as conditions change and/or funding opportunities arise will help in grant solicitation from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).

Community Description

Location:

The Village of Rothbury is located in Grant Township and Oceana County within the west central part of Michigan's Lower Peninsula near Lake Michigan. The actual total land area of the village encompasses 632 acres.

Geography:

There is not a great deal of elevation change within the village limits. The Carlton Creek system creates the highest degree of elevation change. The apparent highpoint is along Oceana Drive in the middle of town at 690.61 feet above sea level. There is another high point south of town at 688.97 feet.

Carlton Creek at the southeastern limit of the village has the lowest elevation at 669.28 feet. Aside from Carlton Creek, the apparent low point in town is Winston Road at the east village limits at 675.84 feet. The intersection of Winston Road and 88th Street is 684.05 feet. The same approximate elevation holds steady to the east and west.

Adjacent to Carlton Creek, are found numerous small wetlands. The abundance of many species of game fish makes Carlton Creek extremely well suited for recreational fishing. The Creek also has beautiful natural settings making it ideal for park sites.

Water Resources:

The entire Village is located within the White River Watershed. All of the drainage facilities in the village are owned and operated by the village. While most of the Stormwater system consists of ground-level ditches, there is some underground storm sewer along Michigan Avenue. All of the storm water drainage is directed toward Carlton Creek.

Land Cover:

A large portion of the village is forested. The vast majority of forestland is in private ownership. The most common forest types are maple-birch, oak-hickory, elm-ash-soft maple, and pine.

Wildlife Habitat:

There is a wide variety of wildlife species that inhabit the village. Numerous songbirds and other non-game wildlife are present along with whitetail deer, Eastern Wild Turkeys, small game animals and game birds. Broods of both Long-Horned Owls and Great-Horned Owls have been spotted within the village limits. A diversity of habitats, combined with a clean environment is critical to the wildlife in the village. An abundance of game fish is found in Carlton Creek. Anadromous trout migrate up through White Lake and the White River to Carlton Creek and its tributary. Steelhead is found primarily in the spring, although some fish ascend in the fall and over winter. Salmon run in the fall and provide both fishing and viewing opportunities on the creek. The fish and wildlife in the village provide many recreational opportunities including fishing, bird watching, photography and nature study.

History:

Many Indian tribes are known to have occupied what is now known as the Village of Rothbury. The largest tribes in the area were the Ottawa (Odawa), Chippewa (Ojibwa) and Pottawatomie. White traders and trappers were originally attracted to the area after the establishment of a fur trading post.

The early industries in the Village were logging and farming. As with most of Michigan, settlers saw that the abundance of quality wood resources and inexpensive transportation by water made the village an excellent place to lumber. As a result of those fires, Rothbury's "business district" became situated along the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Winston Road.

Due to the removal of most of the Village's old growth forests and conversion of lands to agricultural uses, the logging industry disappeared. Farming became the prominent industry at the turn of the century. Soon, however, the rapid growth of Muskegon and its diversifying industrial base replaced agriculture as the dominant economic force in the area. In years past, the village's economy was almost exclusively dependent on Kurdziel Iron, one of the largest employers in Oceana County. However, over the past several years, the resort industry has seen growth through the expansion of the Double JJ Ranch and Golf Resort.

Demographics:

When planning for the recreational needs, one of the most important components is to understand the demographics and the social make-up of the community. The village demographic data has been compared to Grant Township and Oceana County to provide a broader picture of the social characteristics. The information below was gathered using the 2020 United States Census Bureau, and it should also be noted that the Census data does account for people visiting or residing in the Village during the summer months.

Population: The village’s population has been steadily increasing over the past few decades. As the population increases, so will the need for recreational facilities for both residents and tourists.

Jurisdiction	2000	2010	2020
Village of Rothbury	372	432	462
Grant Township	2,936	2,976	3,002
Oceana County	26,873	26,570	26,659

Age: The village has a good distribution of ages, with a decent amount of people in each category. Knowing the spread of age groups is important for creating recreational opportunities that can serve everyone.

Age	Village of Rothbury	%	Grant Township	%	Oceana County	%
Under 18 years	143	31.0%	823	27.4%	5,972	22.4%
18 to 64	242	52.3%	1,753	58.4%	15,169	56.9%
65 years and over	77	16.7%	426	14.2%	5,518	20.7%

Gender: The gender distribution within the village is nearly 60/40.

Jurisdiction	Male	Female
Village of Rothbury	268	194
Grant Township	1,555	1,447
Oceana County	13,648	13,011

Disabled Persons: If park and recreation facilities are not barrier free, many of these residents will be limited in participating in recreational activities.

Population	Village of Rothbury	%	Grant Township	%	Oceana County	%
Disabled Persons	82	17.7%	447	14.9%	4,319	16.2%

Race: The racial composition of the village and surrounding area is majorly white.

Race	Village of Rothbury	%	Grant Township	%	Oceana County	%
White	364	78.8%	2366	79%	21191	79%
Black	2	0.4%	18	1%	123	0%
Native American	6	1.3%	27	1%	195	1%
Hispanic or Latino	54	11.7%	418	14%	4108	15%
Asian	0	0.0%	16	1%	69	0%
Native Pacific Island	0	0.0%	0	0%	4	0%
Two or more	35	7.6%	145	5%	890	3%
Other	1	0.2%	12	0%	79	0%

Household Income: All communities have a median household income lower than the State.

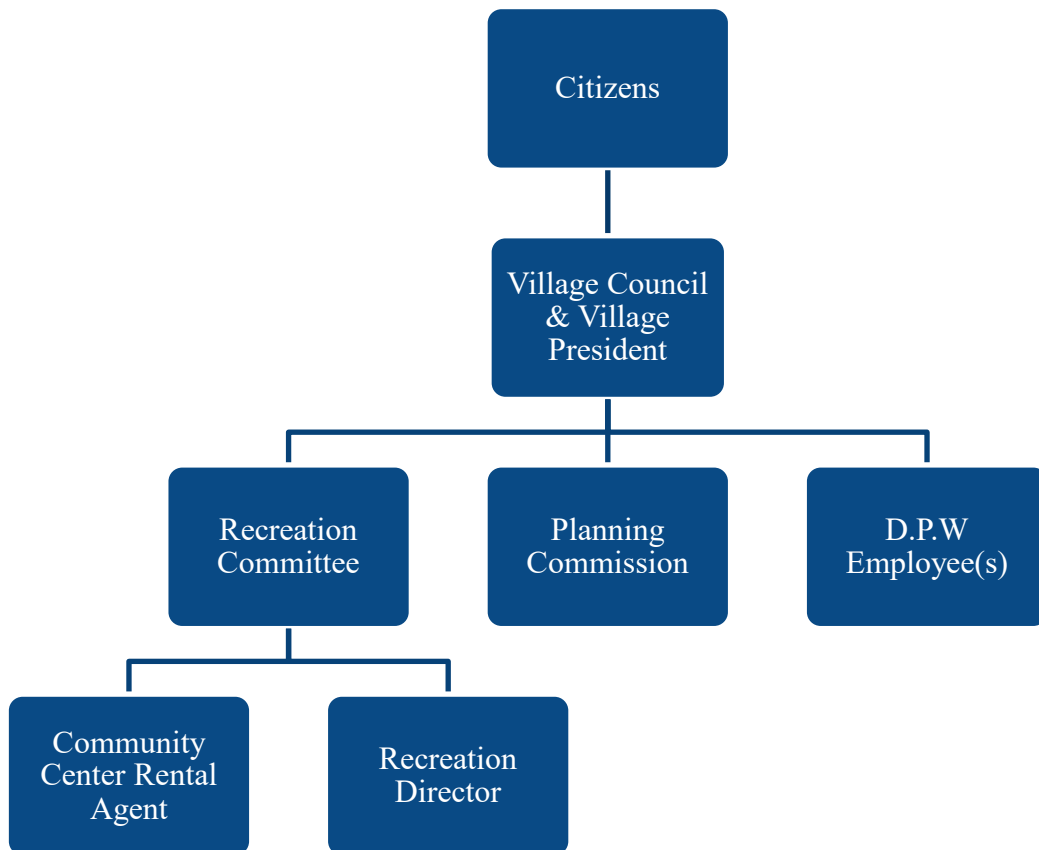
Jurisdiction	Median Household Income
Village of Rothbury	\$ 41,667
Grant Township	\$ 49,545
Oceana County	\$ 56,545
Michigan	\$ 66,986

Administrative Structure

The Village of Rothbury Council has the authority to provide village park and recreation facilities, while the planning commission has been given authority for long-range recreation planning. Village residents, of course, have a direct influence on both the planning commission and village council, as all meetings are open to the public for comment. The village president has been designated by the village council to supervise the Department of Public Works.

The Village Council is responsible for conducting the general business of the village. A standing recreation committee advises the Council concerning parks. This committee develops information, alternatives, and recommendations on village park activities.

The Village Council intends to conduct public hearings for projects that will be developed using State and/or Federal grants. The purpose of the hearings will be to allow the people in the community the opportunity to voice their support, concerns, comments, or questions on these projects. Public input and citizen involvement is always encouraged for all village park and recreation projects.



Relationships

Relationships with Other Agencies

The village does not currently work with any local groups or agencies, but would consider a partnership should the possibility arise.

Volunteers

The village is always looking out for new volunteer partners to help in any capacity possible.

Parks Budget and Funding

Parks & Recreation Annual Budget

Operation and maintenance for village parks is paid for through General Fund appropriations. In 2023 the general fund obligated approximately \$49,000 available for parks operation and maintenance. The proposed 2024 budget is increased to \$69,000. The only fees collected are through Community Center rentals and Baseball team, no funding is derived from park user fees.

Resource Inventory

Recreation Inventory

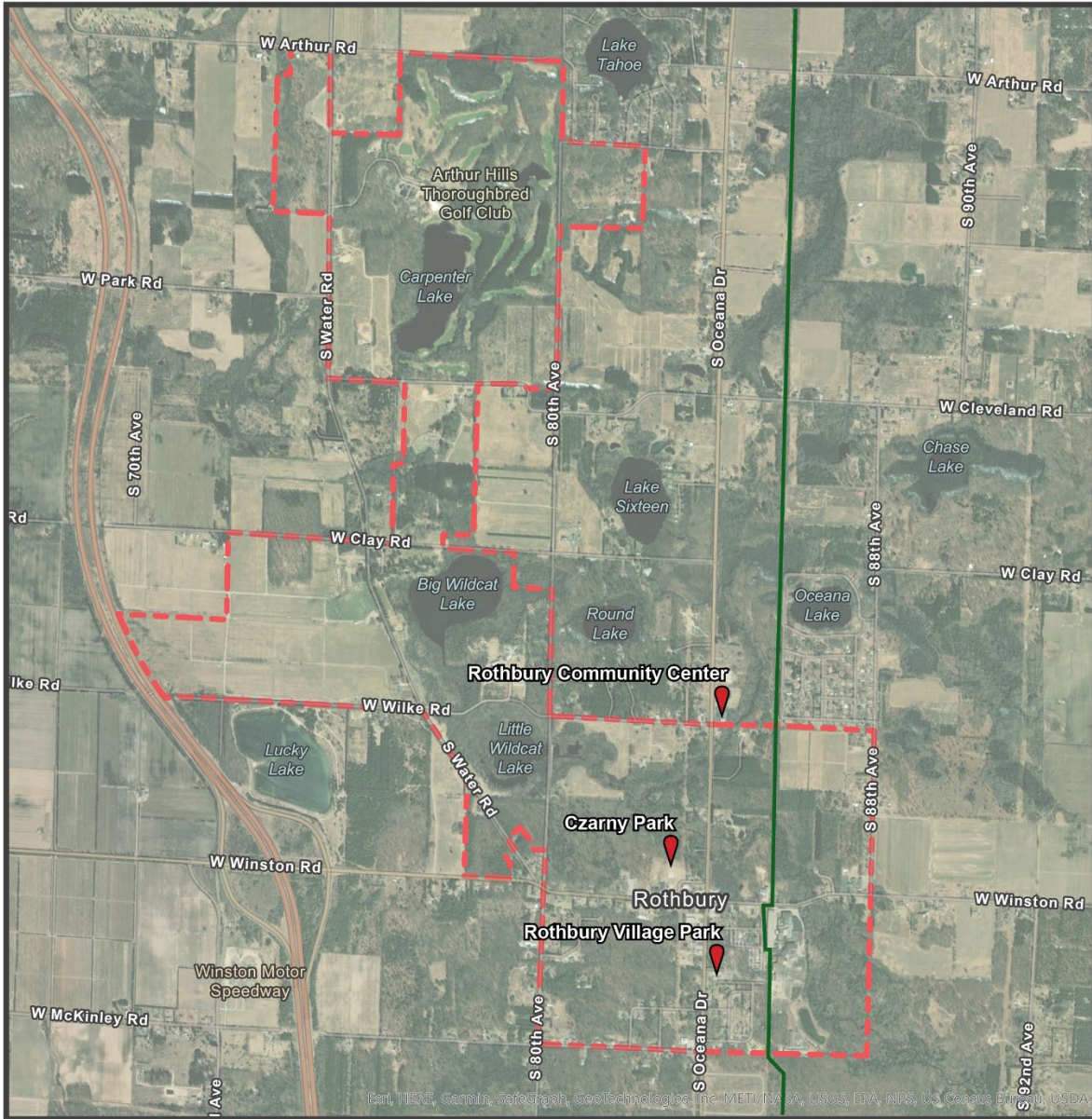
The Village of Rothbury is concerned with providing recreational opportunities to all village residents. Nearby entities such as Grant township, Oceana County, and the State of Michigan also provide recreational facilities and programs to residents in the surrounding area. The Village of Rothbury and their consultant, Prein & Newhof, conducted a tour of the parks to evaluate current conditions and talk through potential future improvements. The parks have also been evaluated for accessibility using the accessibility assessment criteria set forth by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Community Recreation Planning




Recreation is an increasingly significant role in a family's decision to move to a community. In addition, recreational facilities provide an opportunity for entertainment and give younger people within the community a place for constructive leisure time. The village currently hosts community events such as Easter egg hunts and holiday parties at Rothbury Community Park.

The local school systems are a large source of recreational activities provided to the village, heavily directed towards school age children. The Village of Rothbury is currently served by both Montague and Hart Public Schools.

Overall Village Parks & Recreation Inventory Map



Legend

-  Village of Rothbury Park
-  Hart - Montague Trail
-  Village Boundary

Czarny Park

Size: 3.45 Acres

Location: The end of Grant St. just off Winston Rd.

Description: Czarny Park features a ballfield, green space, and play equipment. Everything is available for use by the community and can be reserved.



Rothbury Community Center

Size: 1.4 Acres

Location: 7160 S Oceana Dr, Rothbury, MI 49452

Description: Originally operated by the Rothbury Sports and Recreation Club, it is now operated and maintained by the village parks department. This 5,600 square foot building featuring a large 80- foot by 50-foot open hall, 18-foot by 30-foot meeting room, bathrooms and kitchen.



Rothbury Village Park

Size: 6.5 Acres

Location: Next to the Rothbury Village Hall

Description: Rothbury Village Park is located near the Village Offices and is joined by an extension of the Hart-Montague State Park Trail right-of-way. The park functions as a rest area for trail users and provides open space that is used for community events. A portion of the park is well shaded but also has a playground with swings, a picnic area and shelter, tennis courts, basketball courts, and permanent restrooms.



Village Owned Parks & Recreation Resources

Name	Type	Acres	Accessibility Rating	Amenities
Czarny Field	Public Park	3.45	1	Ballfields, play equipment, green space
Rothbury Community Center	Community Center	1.4	3	Community center with event and entertainment space
Rothbury Village Park	Public Park	6.5	2	Picnic shelter, restrooms, amenities, play equipment, trail access

Accessibility Scores:

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

Other Parks and Recreation Resources

Name	Owner	Acres	Description
Hart – Montague Trail	n/a	n/a	HMA non-motorized bike trail
Henderson Lake Nature Center	Montague Twp	106	Nature preserve with an accessible walking path, pavilions, and disc golf course.
Clear Springs Nature Preserve	Montague Twp	100	Nature preserve with hiking, walking, and family activities.
White River Campground	Private	94	Campground and recreational access to the White River
Meinert Park	Muskegon Co	182	Park with Lake Michigan beach access, hiking trails, and overlooks.

Grant Inventory

The Village of Rothbury has been fortunate enough to be awarded several MDNR grants over the years, please see the chart below for more details. All grant funded facilities are still functioning and open to the public.

GRANT ASSISTED PARKS					
PROJECT #	PARK NAME	DNR FUNDS RECEIVED	PROJECT YEAR	DESCRIPTION	GRANT STATUS
	Rothbury Village Park	\$ 9,000	1992	Picnic Shelter Restrooms	Closed
	Rothbury Village Park	\$ 22,000	1993	Play Structure, Bike Racks, Grills, Paved Walkways	Closed
	Rothbury Village Park	\$ 45,000	2014	Play Structure	Closed

Planning Process

Public Input

The Village of Rothbury values the opinions and views of its residents and helped develop the following process to gather the community’s thoughts by:

- The consultant, Prein & Newhof, worked with the village over the course of several months via phone, email, Zoom, and face to face meetings.
- Held a public meeting on 11/14/2023 to gather public thoughts on the parks system and how they envision the village moving forward.
- Making digital and hard copies of the survey available to all residents that asks specific questions of the current parks and their goals for the future.
- The Draft Plan was made available for public for 30 days to allow for public comment.
- Held a public hearing prior to adopting the park plan on 1/16/2024.

Survey Summary Results

Between both the public meeting and the public survey, the village was able to gather feedback from residents regarding ideas for future park renovation and programming needs. Most of the comments and ideas collected discuss possible improvements to Czarny Park, focusing mostly on field and playground renovations. Other comments asked for additional outdoor recreation areas for things like disc golf and dog parks, while some included winter activities like ice skating or sledding.

1. Future Programming Residents would like to see:
 - Dog Park
 - Carlton Creek Access
 - Year-round Community Activities
2. Top 3 reasons why people visit parks:
 - Close to Home
 - Natural Setting
 - Family Activity
3. Top 5 opportunities people would choose to participate in given the chance:
 - Disc Golf
 - Playgrounds
 - Picnic Areas
 - Paved Multi-purpose Trails
 - Non-Paved Multi-purpose Trails
4. The most needed park improvements are:
 - The replacement of old features.
 - Wheelchair accessible pathways.

Goals and Objectives

The information received from the public survey was analyzed to identify the goals and objectives of the local community.

Goal 1: Provide quality recreational opportunities for village residents.

Objectives:

- Maintain an approved Recreation Plan and apply for state and federal recreation grant monies.
- Maintain existing facilities in peak condition.
- Renovate Czarny Park to better suit the needs of the community.
- Expand the village non-motorized trail system and create more access points to the existing Hart-Montague Trail.
- Optimize the utilization of all existing facilities, including school properties.
- Better utilization of natural features such as Carlton Creek for recreational use.

Goal 2: Expand the parks system through developing existing property or acquiring new properties.

Objectives:

- Acquire, develop, and preserve the landscape with the highest potential for public recreational use.
- Expand the village non-motorized trail system.
- Develop/ renovate existing parks to match the needs of the community.

Goal 3: Provide recreational opportunities suitable for people of all ages within the community.

Objectives:

- Identify the different age groups and recreational needs of all residents, and work to meet those needs.
- Identify existing facilities and how to maximize their potential to better serve the community.

Goal 4: Provide accessible recreational facilities useable by all village residents.

Objectives:

- Develop and support community level recreation facilities and programs to promote participation of all residents. Including senior citizens, handicapped, and preschool populations.
- Make sure to apply the standards of universal access when possible, during future park developments.

Action Program

Following the responses given during the public meeting and survey there are four areas the village would like to focus its efforts. (1) Improvements to Czarny Park are the main item for the village to focus on. (2) Improvements to Rothbury Community Park. (3) Expand the village trail system through paved and non-paved trails. (4) Provide access to Carlton Creek.

Czarny Field/Playground

Improvements to Czarny Field in the northwest quadrant of the village have been identified. Baseball and softball groups primarily use this facility because of the sports lighting, but it should also be intended to serve the younger population. While the ball field features lighting, dugouts, fencing, and bleachers, these are all beginning to show their age and will soon need replacement/renovations. The existing light and power poles within the outfield are a major problem as well, these should be relocated to outside the field of play. At a minimum, additions include upgrading the play structure, ballfield features, multipurpose courts, new fencing, and an improved designated parking area.

Rothbury Community Park

Rothbury Community Park is centrally located within the village and is easily accessible for many village and non-village area residents. The park also provides an access point to the scenic Hart-Montague Trail. The community and local leaders have identified a need for several improvements that would benefit the Rothbury Community Park facility. These needs include improved rest room facilities, better overall park lighting, year around activities, and picnic areas.

Village Trail System

A trail system is an excellent recreational feature, and functions as important non-motorized circulation throughout the village. The village would continuing construction of multi-use non-motorized pathways beside the village streets to accommodate citizens using the sidewalk system. It is intended to link bicycle and pedestrian circulation from residential areas, recreation areas, the community center, and natural areas. To fully utilize the areas' positive natural features, the plan is to locate the more resource-oriented uses such as trails, nature areas, and fishing access, in the wooded areas adjacent to the Carlton Creek frontage.

Carlton Creek

The need for access to Carlton Creek in the village has been identified. Any new acquisition or development would be intended to serve both trail users and the local community. A suitable site for acquisition should have good access by the local street system and be centrally located to the majority of existing and proposed residential development areas. The facility should be located on open high ground, as much as possible, perhaps adjacent to the Hart-Montague Trail.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Supplemental DNR Attachments

Survey Results

Public Notices

Public Meeting Agenda / Minutes

Formal Resolution to Adopt the Plan