

The Township of Port Austin, Michigan

Parks & Recreation Master Plan
For the Period 2024-2029



Port Austin Reef Light

Photo: Port Austin Reef Light Association

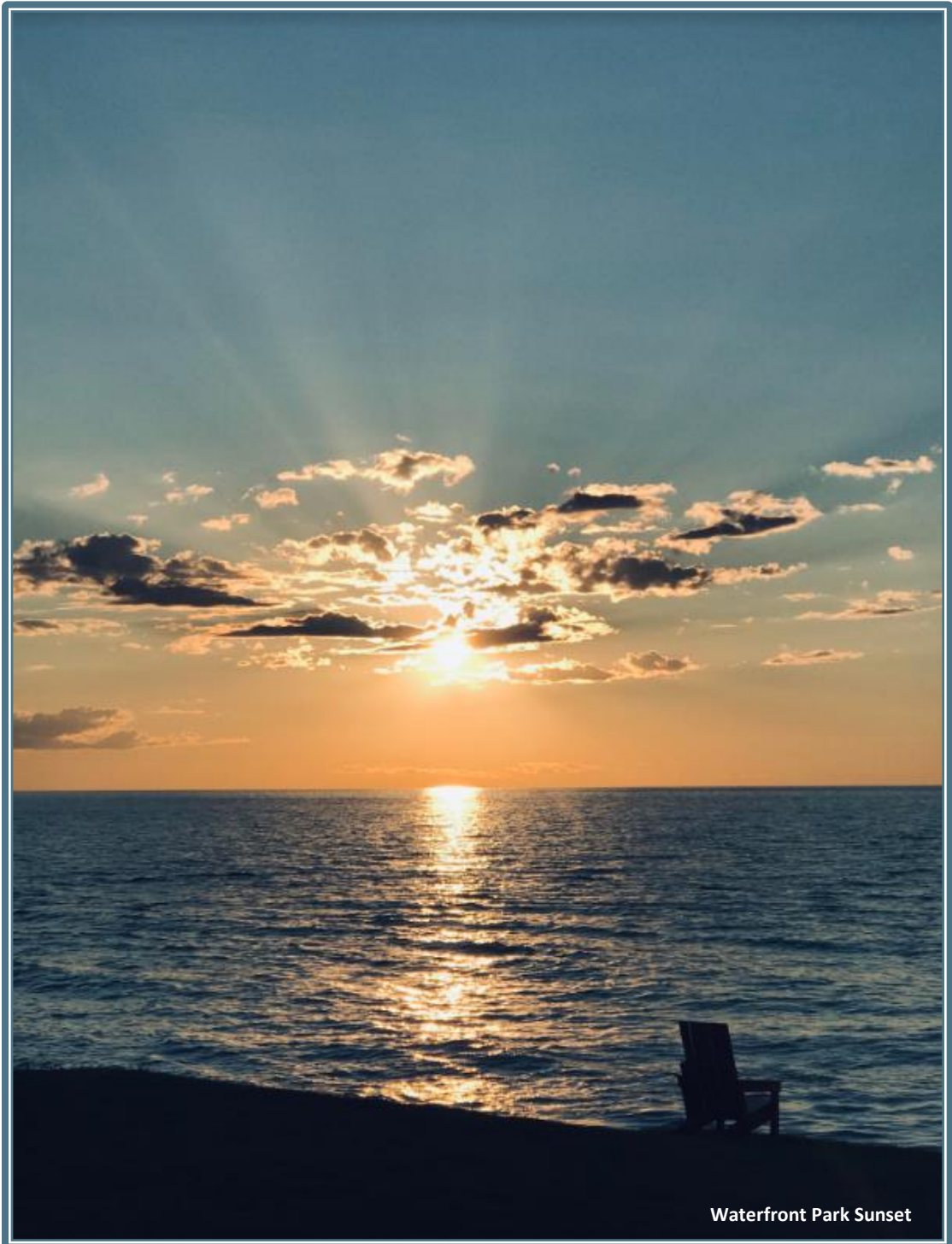
Adopted: March 19, 2024

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Plan Adoption

Section I



Waterfront Park Sunset

Plan Adoption

Township Board Meeting Minutes

*Copy of
Township Board Meeting Minutes
Documenting Plan approval*

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given that the Township of Port Austin will be conducting a Public Hearing on February 21, 2024 at 4:30 pm, at the Port Austin Welcome Center, West Spring Street, Port Austin, Michigan.

This hearing is scheduled to consider adopting a Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This Plan must be approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources prior to submitting grant applications. The Plan may be viewed at the Township Hall or on the Township website beginning on January 22, 2024.

Comments are welcome in person or in writing.

For more information, please call the Township Hall at (989) 738-6808.

Port Austin Township Clerk

Resolution of Adoption
Parks and Recreation Master Plan
for Port Austin Township, Huron County, Michigan

WHEREAS, the Port Austin Township Planning Commission has undertaken a planning process to determine the recreation and natural resource conservation needs and desires of its residents during a five-year period covering the years 2024 through 2029, and

WHEREAS, the Port Austin Planning Commission is made up of representatives from Port Austin Township and the Village of Port Austin, and

WHEREAS, the Port Austin Planning Commission began the process of developing a community recreation and natural resource conservation 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 Port Austin Township 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 recreation and natural resource conservation 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 February 21, 2024, at the Port Austin Welcome Center to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the Port Austin Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Port Austin Township Planning Commission has developed the plan as a guideline for improving recreation and enhancing natural resource conservation for Port Austin Township, and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing, the Port Austin Township Planning Commission voted to adopt said Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Port Austin Township Planning Commission hereby adopts the Parks and Recreation Master Plan for 2024-2029.

Yeas: BRONSON, WILLIAMS, PETTIT, BOSWELL

Nays:

Absent: ZIMMERMAN

I, Tyler Pettit, Chairman of the Port Austin Township Planning Commission, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by the Port Austin Township Planning Commission at a Special Meeting thereof held on the 15th day of March, 2024.



3-15-24

IC1924 (Rev. 3/19/2021)

Plan Adoption

Letter to Huron County Michigan Planning Commission

March 20, 2024

William Renn, Chairman
Huron County Planning Commission
250 East Huron Avenue
Room #102
Bad Axe, Michigan 48413

Subject: Port Austin Township Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Dear Mr. Renn,

The Port Austin Township Parks & Recreation Master Plan was recommended by the Port Austin Township Planning Commission on March 15, 2024, and adopted by the Port Austin Township Board on March 19, 2024, by authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, after holding a public hearing for this Plan on February 21, 2024.

Signed: _____

Title:

Copy: Mary E. Babcock
866 Bayview Dr.
Port Austin, Michigan 48467

Plan Adoption

Letter to East Michigan Council of Governments

March 20, 2024

Sue Fortune, Executive Director
East Michigan Council of Governments
3144 Davenport Avenue
Suite 200
Saginaw, Michigan 48602

Subject: Port Austin Township Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Dear Ms. Fortune,

The Port Austin Township Parks & Recreation Master Plan was recommended by the Port Austin Township Planning Commission on March 15, 2024, and adopted by the Port Austin Township Board on March 19, 2024, by authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, after holding a public hearing for this Plan on February 21, 2024.

Signed: _____

Title:

Copy: sfortune@emcog.org

Plan Adoption

Record of Submission to
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

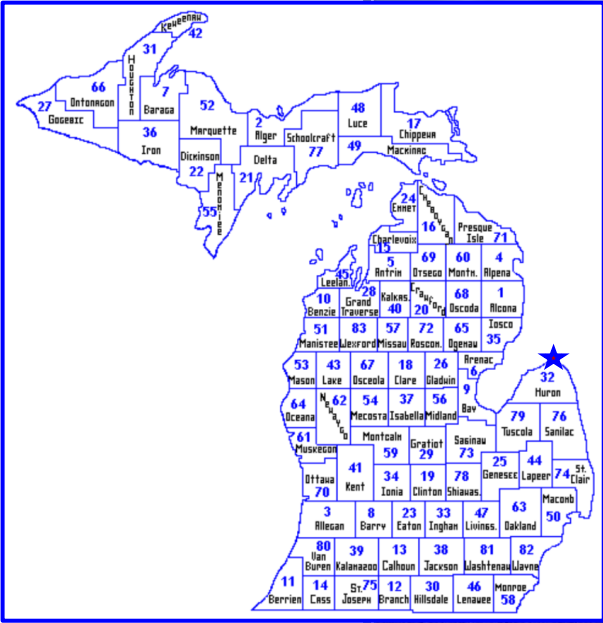
Parks and Recreation Master Plan submitted to:

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grants Management
through the MiGrants online application system.

<https://migrants.intelligrants.com/>

Community Profile

Section II



Graphic Depiction:
<https://www.michigan.gov/som/about-michigan/michigan-counties>



Graphic Depiction:
 Huron County Michigan Geographic Information System (GIS)

Community Profile

Port Austin Township Overview

The Township of Port Austin is located at the “tip of the thumb” in Michigan’s Huron County, as illustrated on Map “A”. The Township is bordered by Lake Huron to the east and west. It encompasses both Grindstone City to the east, and the Village of Port Austin to the west. Along the Lake Huron shoreline, the Township features residential homes and summer cottages in a quiet rural setting.

Perimeter access to the Township is provided by State of Michigan Highway M-25. The highway originates sixty-five miles to the southwest in Bay City and continues 100 miles along the shoreline to Port Huron. North/south access is supplied by M-53, originating in Detroit, approximately 130 miles to the south.

The region was initially populated by lumbermen and farmers. As the lumber industry moved on, the agriculture industry expanded, accompanied by an emerging tourist economy. Owing to the accessibility to metropolitan Southeast Michigan, combined with a serene lakeshore lifestyle, Port Austin became an ideal setting for a resort and retirement community. The Township and its surrounding shoreline are especially well-suited for vacation, seasonal, and year-round lifestyles.

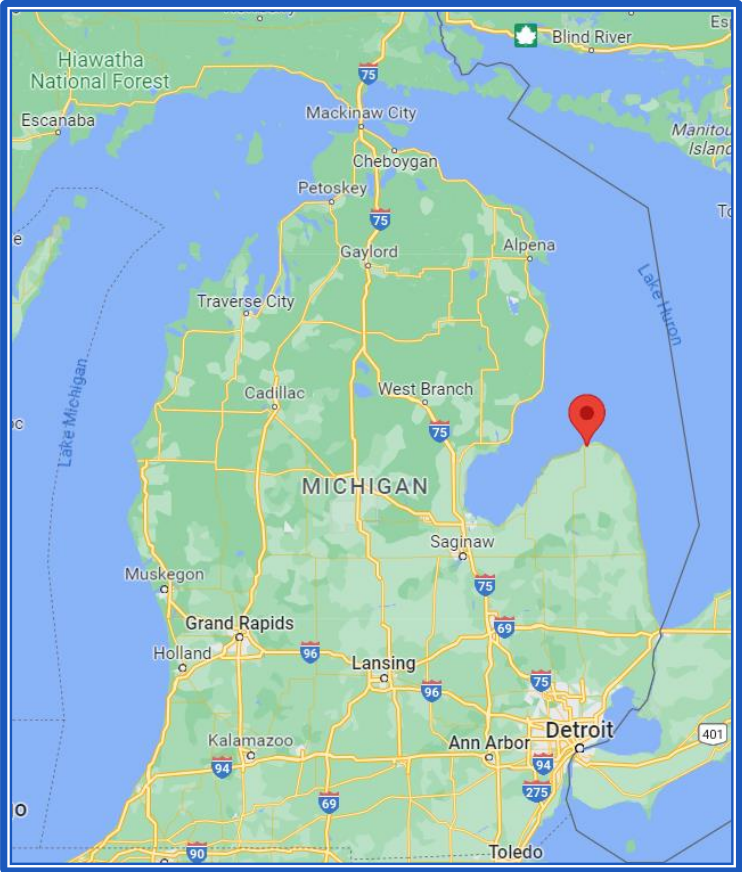
Community Profile

Port Austin Township

Map "A"



Graphic Depiction: <https://www.google.com/maps>



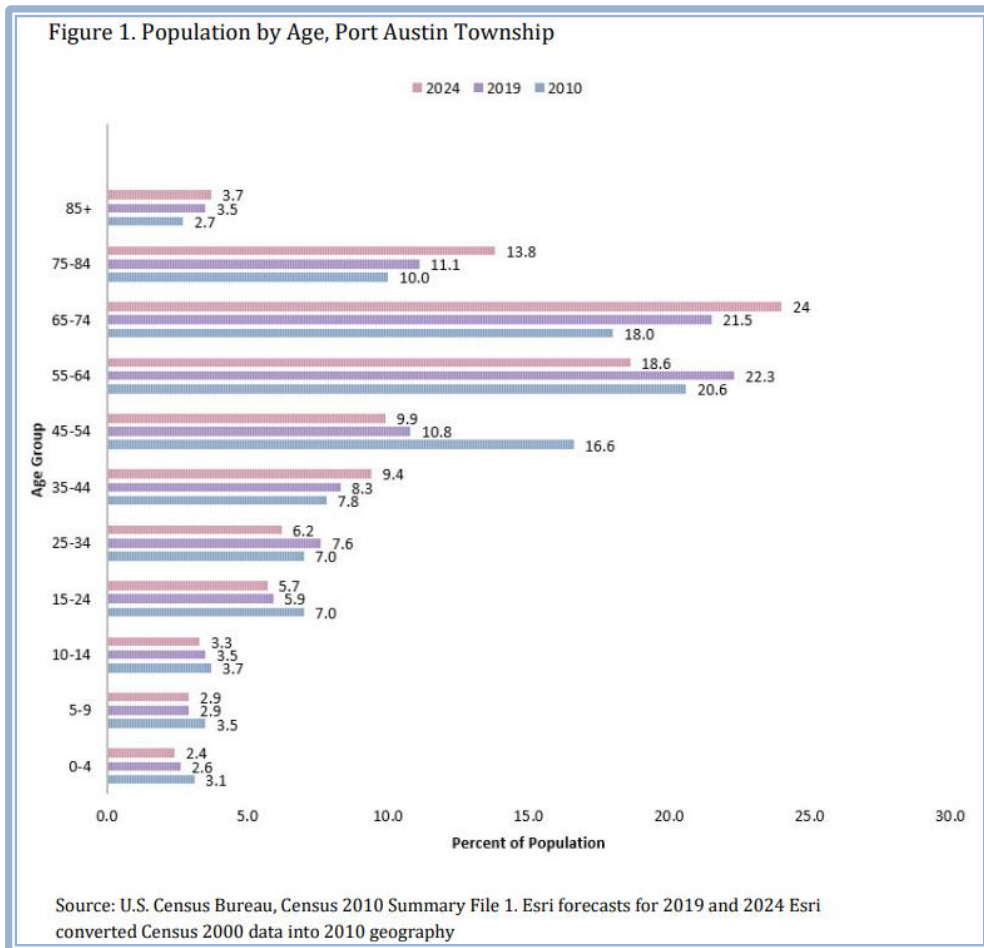
Graphic Depiction: <https://www.google.com/maps>

Community Profile

Social Characteristics

A major consideration in the development of a recreation plan is to know the character of the community. The following chart reflects permanent residents of Port Austin Township. It does not reflect the seasonal population, nor does it include transient population.

The 2019 population of the Township was 1385, with a median age of 59.3. The age distribution is detailed in Figure “1” below. The Township had 1602 housing units with average of 1.93 family members per household. The median household income was \$45,136.



Community Profile

Physical Characteristics

The land use of Port Austin Township is denoted in the following Zoning Map “B”, while the Village zoning districts are detailed on Map “C”. The future land use for the Township as defined in the Master Plan is exhibited on Map “D”. Development is both public and private in nature.

Port Austin Township topography can be described as flat to gently rolling. Elevations range from lake level at 577 feet above sea level to 623 feet within a short distance inland. Much of the Township appears as flat grasslands and cultivated fields. The shoreline is interspersed with woodlands, sandy beaches, rocky shores, water features and wetlands. These characteristics are illustrated on Map “E”.

Topsoil is a combination of sand, gravel, clay and loam. Channels of sand are several miles wide in places, and can be five to ten feet thick. Sandstone beneath the soils are forty to 300 feet beneath the surface.

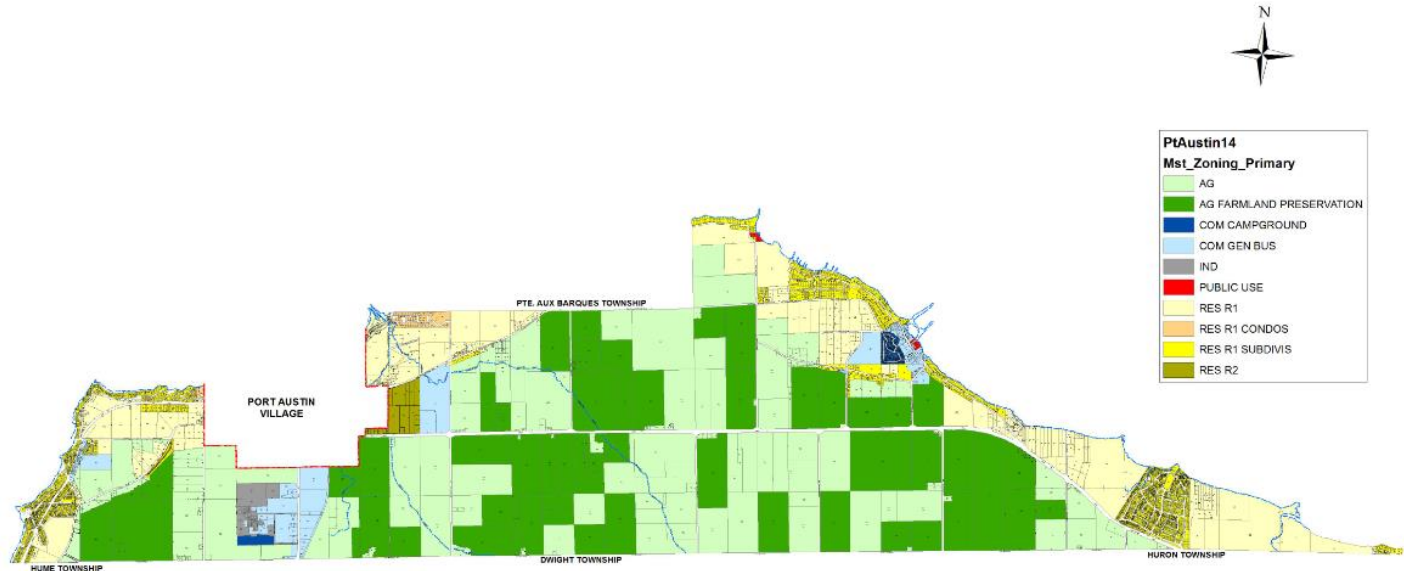
Climate in the Township experiences a full range of seasons, with temperatures ranging from approximately 16 to 29 degrees Fahrenheit in January and 60 to 79 degrees in July. The average number of days below zero degrees is eleven per year, and above 90 is eight. Average annual rainfall is approximately 31 inches and snow is about 48 inches.

Community Profile

Physical Characteristics

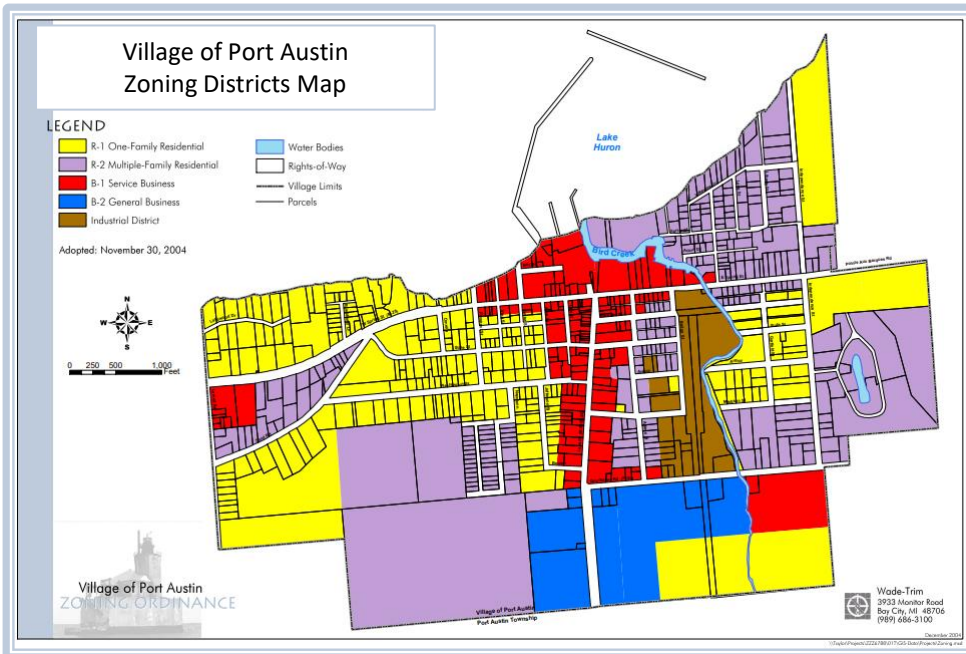
Map "B"

PORT AUSTIN TOWNSHIP ZONING



PREPARED BY:
Huron County Equalization/GIS Department
Bad Axe, Michigan

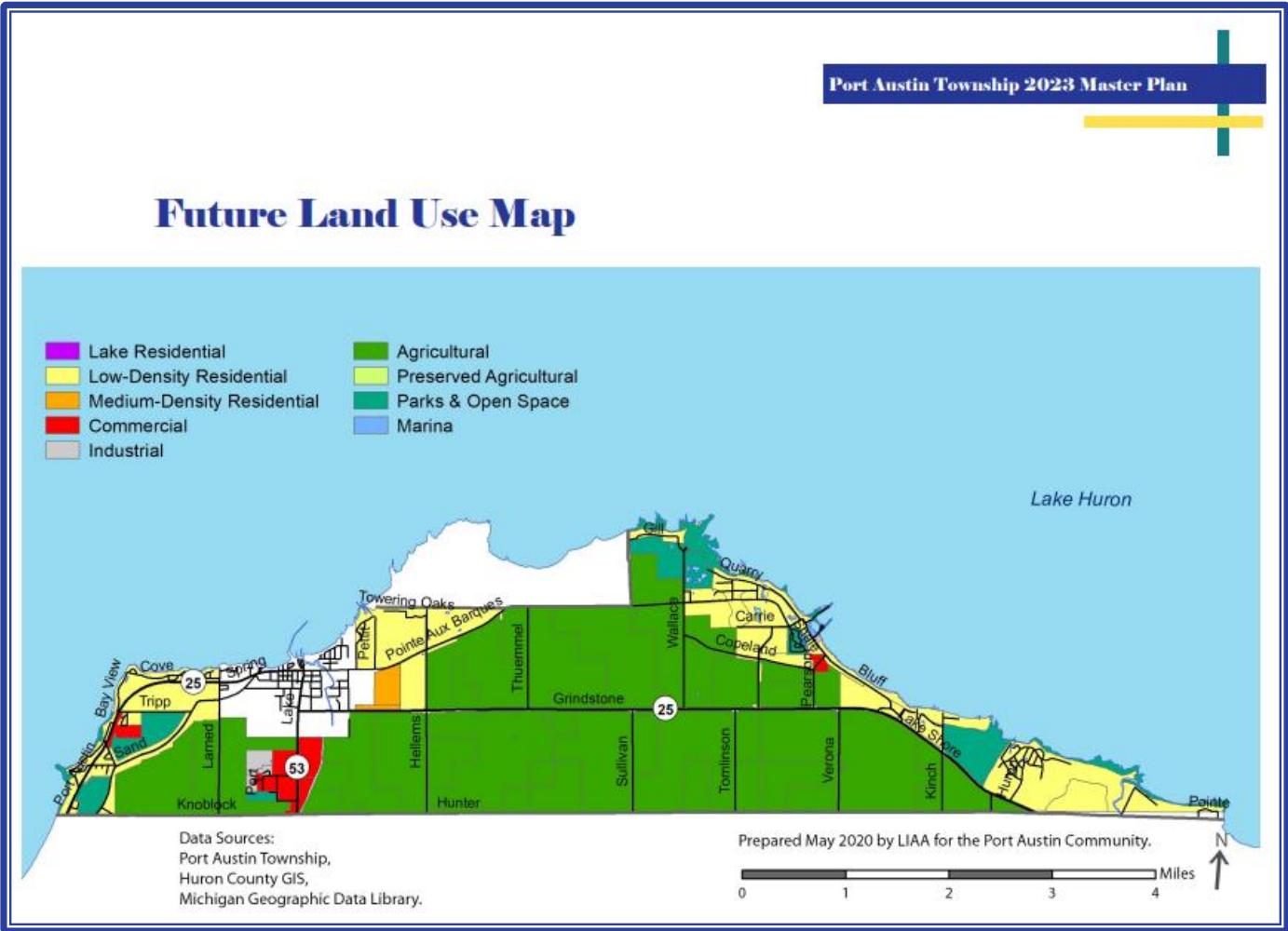
Map "C"



Community Profile

Physical Characteristics

Map "D"



Community Profile

Natural Features

Map "E"



Source:
Michigan Geographic Data Library



SAGINAW'S OFFICE
230 S Washington Ave
Saginaw, MI 48607
Tel. 989-754-4747
www.SpicerGroup.com

Date November 2019

Administrative Structure

Section III



Administrative Structure

Port Austin Township is administered by an elected Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer and two elected trustees, collectively comprising the Township Board. The Board meets monthly at the Township Hall. The five-member Planning Commission is appointed by the Board and schedules five regular meetings during the year.

The Township Board prepares a budget for each fiscal year based on historical data and/or current needs and projections of all. The budget as a whole is then presented and discussed at a public hearing. Following the public hearing, the budget is reviewed and approved at a regular meeting of the Township Board.

It is the responsibility of the Treasurer and Clerk of the Township to make timely payments as approved by the Board, and for the record keeping/minutes of same.

All decisions concerning parks and recreation are made by the Township Board, based on information supplied by the Planning Commission.

Recreation Inventory

Section IV



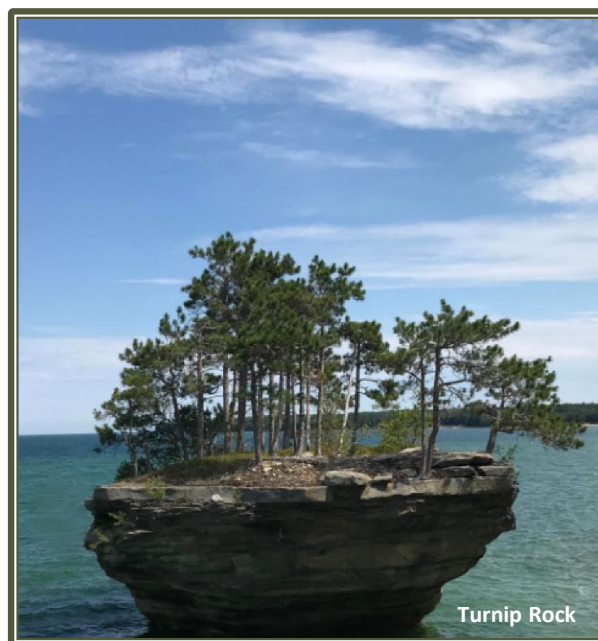
North Breakwater and
Pedestrian Walkway

Recreation Inventory

The following is an inventory of recreation opportunities available in and around Port Austin Township. All are noted on the accompanying Location Map “F”.

NATURAL FEATURES

- Lake Huron: Known for its clean water, the tip-of-the-thumb Huron lakefront is the perfect setting to enjoy incredible sunrises and sunsets. Family activities include swimming, boating, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, diving and snorkeling.
- Turnip Rock and Thumbnail Point: This popular attraction is located just off the Lake Huron shoreline along the 103-mile Tip of the Thumb Heritage Water Trail. The rock eroded over thousands of years, forming its unique “turnip” shape. Surrounded by private property, it is only accessible to the public by water.
- Broken Rocks Kayak Trail: Along the Heritage Water Trail to the west, kayakers may paddle past the formations known as the Twin Sisters and Broken Rocks on their way to visit Flat Rock.
- Thumb Area Bottomland Preserve: Much of the eastern Port Austin Township waters are included in the 276 square mile Lake Huron preserve. Divers may search for shipwrecks in excellent visibility conditions.



Recreation Inventory

HISTORY

- Grindstone Historic District: Marshall Sandstone can be found throughout four counties in Michigan's Thumb. At the eastern edge of the Township is Grindstone City. During the era from 1830 to 1910, Grindstone City produced the premier grinding wheels in the United States.
- Huron City Museums: Huron City was founded as a lumber town in 1854. The museum is located halfway between Port Austin and Port Hope. The museum is open for public tours in July and August.
- Port Austin History Center: Located one mile east of the Village on Pointe Aux Barques Road, the museum presents the history of the Port Austin area, including Grindstone City and Port Crescent. It is situated on ten acres of wooded grounds and features walking trails as well as several historic buildings; including a log cabin, log barn, a 19th century Grindstone City house, and a 1950's barbershop.
- Port Austin Reef Lighthouse: The Lighthouse is located off the shore between Port Austin and Pointe Aux Barques. The Port Austin Reef Light Association was organized in 1988 and acquired the light from the United States Coast Guard with the purpose of restoring the facility. Major restoration efforts are underway.
- Pointe Aux Barques Lighthouse: Located just southeast of the Township boundary, the lighthouse is one of the ten oldest in Michigan. It was originally constructed in 1848 of stone taken from the Lake Huron shoreline. The keeper's house and tower have been completely restored and the museum is open to the public.



Recreation Inventory

CULTURE

- Huron County Nature Center & Wilderness Arboretum: Located west of Port Austin, between Sleeper State Park and Port Crescent State Park, the Huron County Nature Center & Wilderness Arboretum features 280 acres of preserved wilderness. It offers trails, bird watching and educational opportunities. The site is open year-round.
- Port Austin Artist “Bee Barn”: The Port Austin Artist in Residence (AiR) program facilitates dynamic dialogue between artists and the community. AiR created a residence for artists, through the purchase and renovation of the barn. Artists live in the Bee Barn while creating art inspired by Port Austin.
- Port Crescent Dark Sky Preserve: One of six dedicated dark sky preserves in the State. The space promotes appreciation of astronomy with its striking view of northern lights, constellations, and meteor showers.
- Water Tower Park: The park covers approximately 1.4 acres. In the fall of 2017, a butterfly house was opened, and in 2018 a community vegetable garden was installed by North Huron High School Future Farmer’s Association volunteers. The harvest is free to the community. Recently added to the park is an outdoor gallery of sculpture and fine art.
- Outdoor Art Installations: By reimagining the iconic barn in a creative way, visiting artists have transformed three Port Austin area barns into art installations. In addition to the barns, Port Austin also owns several pieces from the Detroit Institute of Arts Inside/Out collection. Works are installed throughout the area.
- Veterans Memorial Park: This Memorial Park honors individuals from all branches of the United States military.



Recreation Inventory

WATERFRONT PARKS

- Bird Creek Park: The beach offers sunbathing and swimming. The park also features a gazebo, boardwalk, playground, splash pad, half basketball court and a bathhouse facility. The park is owned by the Huron County Road Commission and is currently leased and maintained by the Village.
- Jenks Roadside Park: This quiet park features sandy beach access, grills, picnic tables and restrooms.
- North Breakwater and Pedestrian Walkway: A 575 ft. pedestrian walkway connects to the 1925 ft. north breakwater. This walkable structure provides fishing access, public viewing of the lake, sunrise/sunset, the lighthouse and passing freighters.
- Veterans Waterfront Park: The park is approximately two acres in size and located at the foot of the pedestrian walkway to the breakwater. A landscaped walkway carries foot traffic through the park to the beach and breakwater. A pavilion offers picnic tables and a magnificent view of the lake. The park also features a children's playground and a fitness park.
- Port Crescent State Park: The park is home to a dark sky preserve, three miles of sandy shoreline, a modern campground and boardwalk. It also offers opportunities for fishing, canoeing, hiking, cross-country skiing, birding and hunting.
- Sleeper State Park: This park is 723 acres of forest, wetlands, sandy beach and dunes located on the Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron. Visitors can watch both sunrises and sunsets on the bay, relax in the shade and seclusion of the campground or roam the trails of the ancient dune forests. (Source: Michigan DNR)
- Lighthouse County Park: Home to the historic Pointe Aux Barques Lighthouse. The waterfront has rocky shores, so it is not ideal for swimming, but offers camping, rustic cabin rentals, tent sites and hiking.

Recreation Inventory

HARBOR/MARINA FACILITIES

- Eagle Bay: Situated between the Village of Port Austin and Grindstone; it features public access for fishing, kayaking, and a picnic area.
- Grindstone Harbor: Anglers enjoy fishing for salmon, lake trout, steelhead, walleye and small mouth bass. The harbor offers campgrounds, charter fishing and boat launch facilities. Privately owned transient boat slips are available in varying numbers season by season.
- Port Austin Boat Launch Facilities and Slips: Presently there are 48 State-owned boat slips and 80 privately owned slips, as well as public and private boat launches. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has completed a renovation of the Port Austin Harbor, featuring floating docks and updated boat launch sites. An on-site bathhouse was completed in 2012.
- Port Austin Harbor: The 1400 ft. northeast breakwater, in conjunction with the north breakwater combine to create a harbor of refuge; attracting pleasure and fishing vessels. The northeast structure is a rubble wall, and is not accessible to pedestrians.
- Port Crescent Day Use Park: Boasts a three-quarter mile fitness trail, cross country skiing and handicap accessible fishing facilities.

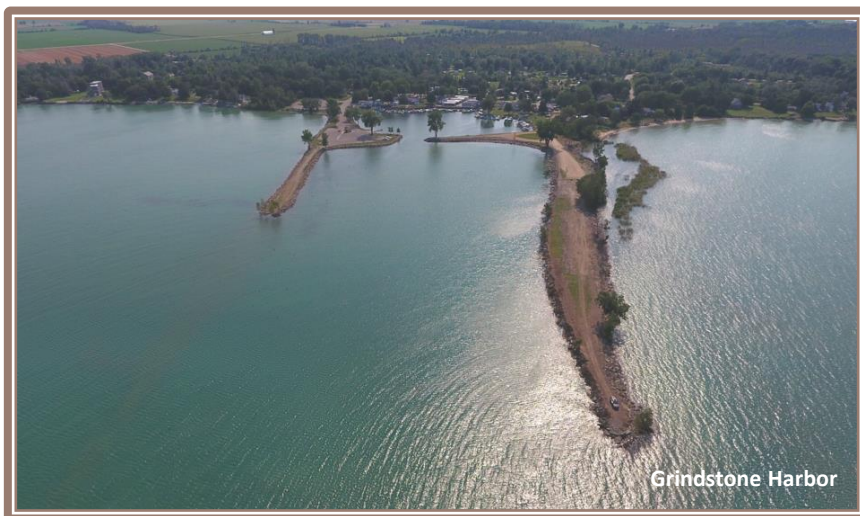
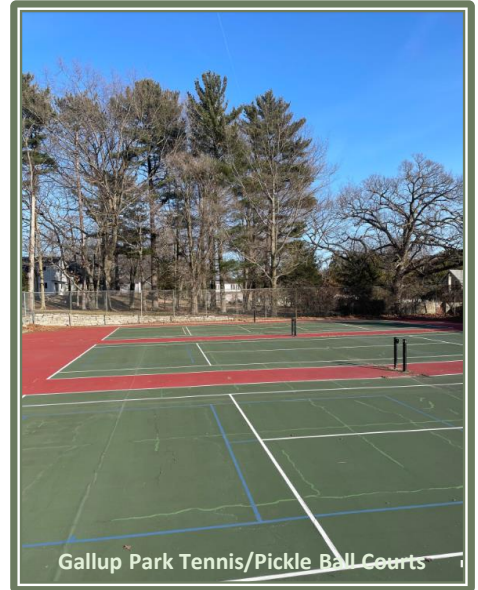


Photo: Justin Schnettler

Recreation Inventory

ATHLETIC FACILITIES

- Gallup Park: Encompassing nearly seven acres, this park provides a baseball diamond, softball field, tennis court, pickleball courts, basketball court and a pavilion for picnics. In winter the pavilion is transformed into an ice skating rink, and the hill beside it is perfect for sledding and snowboarding. The surrounding grassy area is shaded by mature trees and provides a comfortable setting for public events and relaxation.



SERVICES AND INFORMATION

- Welcome Center: Built in 2010, the building is used as an office/information center for the Port Austin Chamber of Commerce. It also serves as a meeting place for non-profit organizations and private gatherings of up to fifty people.



Recreation Inventory

Accessibility Assessment of Recreation Facilities

- 5 Welcome Center: Building accessible with no barriers
- 3 Bird Creek Park: Boardwalk and sand may limit mobility
- 3 Water Tower Park: Parking and walkways are compacted gravel
- 5 Veterans Waterfront Park: Fully accessible
- 3 Gallup Park: Barriers exist in the form of a step down into baseball and softball dugouts
- 3 Huron County Nature Center: Facility is fully accessible; groomed nature trails may limit mobility
- 3 Port Austin History Center: Primary building accessible with no barriers; outbuildings may be less accessible due to historic nature

DNR Accessibility Grading System for Parks and Recreation Facilities	
Accessibility Grade	Definition
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

Recreation Inventory

DNR Grant Inventory

The Department of Natural Resources awarded grants in support of the following projects in the Village of Port Austin:

Grant #26-00763: Land and Water Conservation Fund Development grant for Gallup Park. The primary goal of the project was construction of three tennis and one basketball court. The condition of the courts is good.

Grant #26-01586: Land and Water Conservation Fund Development grant for Veterans Waterfront Park. The project consisted of the installation of a playscape. The equipment is in good condition and was recently relocated to a different site within the park, as part of a large redevelopment project utilizing Grant #TF08-056.

Grant #TF08-056: Trust Fund development grant for Veterans Waterfront Park. The project consisted of a complete redevelopment of the park, including relocating the playscape, construction of a new pavilion, the addition of a new stone sea wall, and site grading. Match for the project included construction of the Welcome Center. The park is in excellent condition.

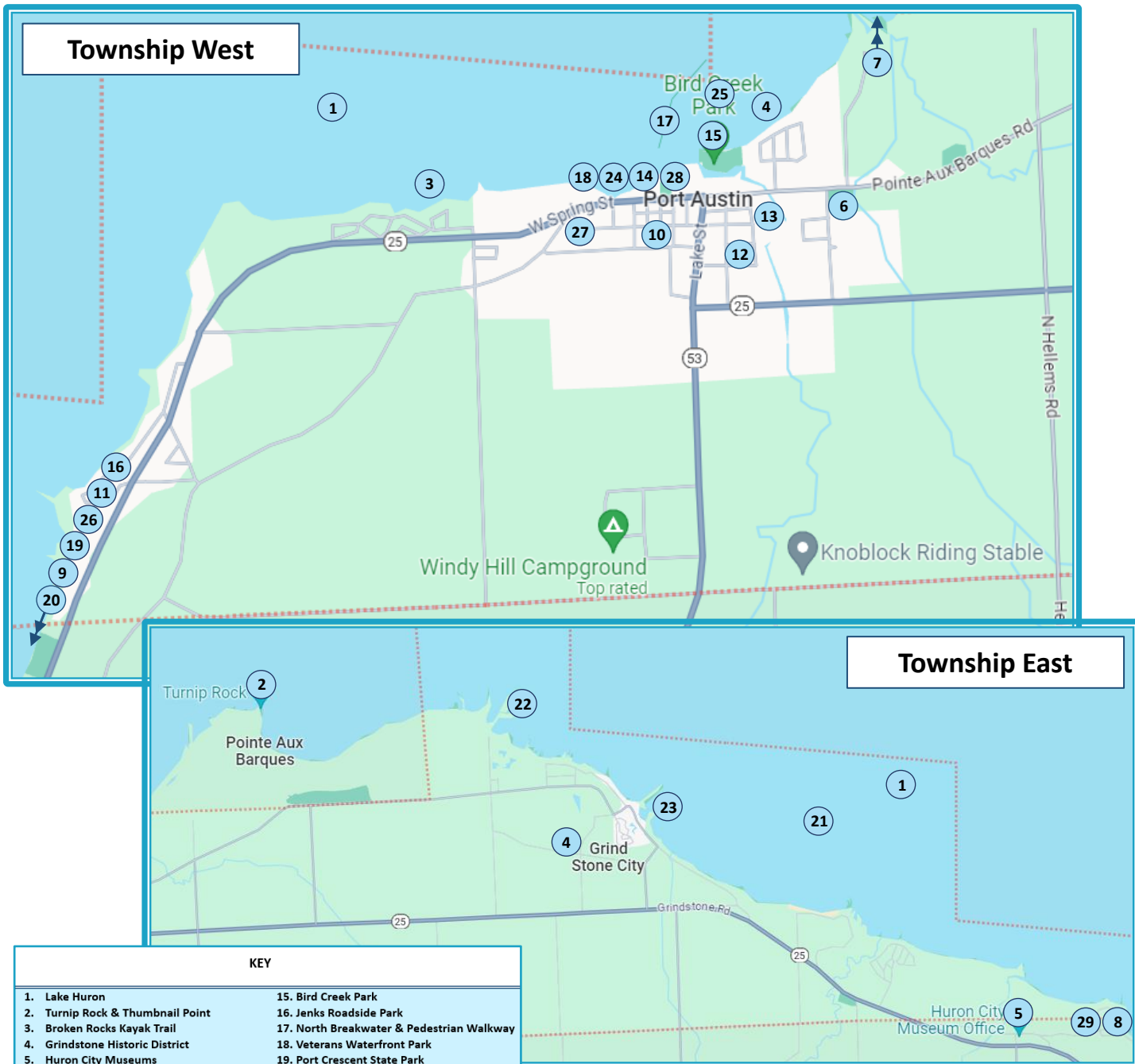
Grant #26-01688: Land and Water Conservation Fund Development grant for a Gallup Park playscape. A community build was organized for installation of the equipment.

Grant #TF10-093: Trust Fund Acquisition grant used to purchase property slated to be developed into a mid-town park.

Recreation Inventory

Port Austin Township

Map "F"



Maps: <https://www.google.com/maps>

Planning Process

Section V

- Gather public input
 - ✓ Review current state
 - ✓ Discuss perceived recreational gaps
- Conduct Inventory
- Committee comprised of township officials and resident volunteers compile input:
 - ✓ Identify potential projects
 - ✓ Determine viability of ideas
 - ✓ Distinguish needs from wants
- Draft recreation plan per committee recommendations
- Publish draft plan for 30-day public review
- Host public hearing
- Planning Commission vote to adopt
- Public meeting with Port Austin Township Board for review and approval
- Submit Port Austin Township letter of approval to the Huron County Planning Commission and East Michigan Council of Governments
- Forward approved Recreation Plan to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Goals and Objectives

Section VI

The objective of the Port Austin Township parks and recreation master plan is to construct an infrastructure that supports all ages and fitness levels to engage in year-round physical and social activities throughout the region.

The tourist sector of the Port Austin community increases the need for seasonal recreational opportunities. The core residential community has a reasonable expectation for recreational availability throughout the year.

In the current state, the focal point of recreational development is primarily centered in the Village. Outlying areas of the Township are absent a cohesive connection tying them to the Village center.

In a rural community such as the Port Austin area, local government is closely tied to the voice of the public. This affords the opportunity to gather ongoing input relative to what is favored as well as what is unwelcome. This special relationship ensures that the public is faithfully represented.

Through the development and growth of parks, pathways and facilities designed for recreation of all ages and locales, the Township can support and grow its base by offering expansion of public services.

Goals and Objectives

Community Input

During development of the 2023 Port Austin Township Master Plan, a public workshop convened to gather feedback on the state of assets and opportunities within the Township. Figure “2” illustrates recreational opportunities identified at the workshop as documented in the Master Plan.

Figure “2”

Appendix C: Preserve, Improve, Create

Create	Tally	Create	Tally
New industry/jobs (full time)	6	Town center	1
<input type="checkbox"/> More sidewalk connections	3	College internships	1
Signage	3	Disc golf	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Separated bike paths	3	New development around the gym	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Rollerskating/ice rink	3	<input type="checkbox"/> Remove blight/old school	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Community center	2	Senior living community	1
Electric charging stations	2	Bridge to Bird Creek Park	1
Recycling center & program	2	Teen center	1
Splash pad	2	<input type="checkbox"/> Indoor recreation center	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Winter activities	2	Pharmacy	1
Agricultural tourism	1	Public restrooms	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Community swimming pool	1	<input type="checkbox"/> Health wellness living activities	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial kitchen	1	<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking trails	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobile trails	1	<input type="checkbox"/> Casino	1
Children’s museum	1	<input type="checkbox"/> Bike path to Grindstone	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Dog park	1	Urgent care facility	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Activities for families	1	More federal and state jobs	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Movie theater	1	Increase street lighting further out of town	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-motorized route plan	1	Public water and sewer along shore	1

Goals and Objectives

Section VI

Recreational projects identified for the forthcoming five years may include the following:

- ❑ Walk/Bike/Cross-Country Ski path connecting the Village of Port Austin to Grindstone City. Construct comfort stations along the trail.
- ❑ Designated snowmobile trail, separate from walk/bike path.
- ❑ Build a land bank through acquiring available properties for the purpose recreational development intended for public benefit.
- ❑ Construct an age-friendly community center with an indoor walking track, woodworking shop, recreation room, kitchen, mini-theater, greenhouse and lap pool to afford recreational opportunities for all seasons.
- ❑ Develop open spaces that are handicap accessible at public easements to provide improved access to the Lake Huron shoreline.
- ❑ Fish cleaning station(s) serving Port Austin, Eagle Bay and Grindstone Harbors to foster ecologically responsible recreational fishing practices and waste disposal.

Action Plan

Section VII

Action required to accomplish goals and objectives begins with identifying recreational opportunities and securing the necessary funding to bring projects to fruition.

Funding sources such as state and federal grants optimize the use of taxpayer dollars while supporting the needs and objectives of the community.

In cases where grants are unavailable, the utilization of low bid techniques, private donations, millages, fundraisers, volunteer labor and tax incentives may be applied.

Action Plan

RECREATION PLAN TIMELINE

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Initiate Draft Plan | November 8, 2023 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Draft Plan Available for Public Review | January 22, 2024 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing | February 21, 2024 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planning Commission Approval | March 15, 2024 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Township Board Approval | March 19, 2024 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department of Natural Resources Submission | March 29, 2024 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DNR Grant Plan Application Deadline | February 1, 2025 |