



2025-2029 MASTER PLAN

Your
Community



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Introduction

The following is an official document adopted by the Calhoun County Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) and the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners (BOC). The Master Plan provides an inventory of all parks and open spaces available for public use in Calhoun County. From this inventory and public input processes, the county has identified needs and opportunities for park development in Calhoun County, setting the stage for the next five years for the Calhoun County Parks and Recreation Department.



Mission Statement

The Calhoun County Parks and Recreation Commission is committed to engaging, partnering, and collaborating with the community to improve and sustain our parks and open spaces, preserve the unique features of the natural environment, and enhance quality of life through increased access to recreational activities.

Vision Statement

The Calhoun County Parks and Recreation Commission enhances the quality of life in Calhoun County by improving, sustaining, and preserving parks and open spaces and providing recreational opportunities.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles serve as the central guidelines for the Parks and Recreation Commission.

- Engage community members, experts, organizations, and local government units in the decision-making process regarding park development.
- Establish sustainable uses of community open space and natural features to meet the community's needs for structured recreation and passive enjoyment of the outdoors.
- Ensure responsible stewardship of the natural resources within the county park system.
- Provide recreational opportunities for all county residents to enhance the health and wellness of the community.



Community Description

Calhoun County is situated in south-central Michigan, strategically located between Chicago and Detroit. It is traversed by Interstate 94, the state's primary east-to-west transportation route, making it a hub for potential urban and economic growth. The County encompasses 19 townships, 4 cities, 4 villages, and the Pine Creek Reservation of the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi.

History

The county purchased Kimball Sanitarium, now named Kimball Pines, in the 1960's and when it opened in May 1975, it was Calhoun County's first major recreational development.

In 1972, the county purchased 4,200 feet of river frontage which is now Riverside Park. This acquisition joined Kimball Pines and Historic Bridge Park to create one long contiguous piece of parkland divided by a railroad.

The much loved Historic Bridge Park, previously known as County Park, existed as a roadside park from the early 1900s. In the late 1980s, the roads and bridges connecting the park were assessed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and deemed substandard. Consequently, F Drive North was rerouted making the park more walkable and visitor friendly.

The department's largest park, Ott Biological Preserve, was assembled in pieces over a span of 84 years. In 1911 the first 105 acres were acquired by Jay R. D. Snyder and Edward Brigham. An additional 151 acres were purchased by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg in 1946 and all of the land was deeded to Albion College. In 1977, the county purchased the 256-acre park from Albion College for \$56,000. The final 42 acres were donated by Mr. Alex Sutarek, bringing the total to 298 acres in 1995.

The county-owned and managed these four park properties until 1996, when the parks department was transferred to the Parks Board of Trustees at the Calhoun County Road Commission. When the Calhoun County Road Commission was dissolved in 2012, management was returned to the county. The Office of Community Development and an appointed Parks and Recreation Commission were established and now operate the parks.

The county reached national headlines when an Enbridge Energy Pipeline ruptured in 2010. The approximately

843,000 gallons of oil left a massive clean-up effort in its wake. Yet, because of those efforts, the Kalamazoo River is less polluted, more navigable, and sees more recreational users every year.

The latest park was added in 2014 when the Calhoun County Trailway's Phase 1 was completed. The 5.28 mile Trailway connects all of the parks and provides a non-motorized path for pedestrians and bicycle use. The eight-year project was led by the Calhoun County Trailway Alliance, Calhoun County, and many local and statewide financiers.

Administration

The Calhoun County Board of Commissioners and the appointed County Administrator/Controller oversee the management and administration of all the county agencies, including the parks department. Also, in the State of Michigan, Public Act 261 of 1965 established that the Board of County Commissioners may create a Parks and Recreation Commission. Calhoun County identified this as a goal in its 1971 Regional Parks and Open Space Plan and appointed the first Parks and Recreation Commission shortly thereafter. The County Board of Commissioners appoints the Parks and Recreation Commissioners as the governing body that addresses and makes recommendations for parks and recreation management. The role of the Parks and Recreation Commission is advisory, with all final decisions being made by elected officials. Decisions to submit grants and purchase land are under the purview of the BOC.

The Calhoun County Parks and Recreation Commission consists of ten members of whom eight are appointed by the County Board of Commissioners one of which must be a county commissioner. A representative of the Calhoun County Water Resources Office and the Chairperson of the County Planning Commission are also members of the Parks and Recreation Commission by statute.

The Parks and Recreation Commission publishes its annual schedule no later than the last meeting of the previous year. Meetings are bimonthly on the first Thursday of the month from 4:00-5:30 pm. Regular meetings of the Commission are held in Room 3-700 in the Calhoun County Building, 315 West Green Street, Marshall, Michigan, unless otherwise posted.



Administrative Structure

Calhoun County Staff

The Community Development Assistant Director oversees the parks department and works closely with the Parks and Recreation Commission, County Commissioners, and County Administration. The manager oversees the development of the county parks recreation system and is responsible for park planning, managing personnel, events, capital improvements, funding, budgets, and other duties as assigned. The manager reports to the Director of Community Development, who oversees a collaboration of multiple community-focused departments.

The County employs a year-round Parks Coordinator who manages the day-to-day maintenance and operations of the parks department. The department also hires several seasonally full-time Park Stewards who are responsible for daily maintenance such as lawn care, landscaping, and janitorial services.

Volunteers & Partnerships

Volunteers and partnerships are an integral part of Calhoun County Parks. The list below is not exhaustive but sheds light on some of the department's most valuable partners.

Calhoun County Trailway Alliance

The Trailway Alliance is responsible for funding the maintenance and operation of the 5.3-mile portion of the Calhoun County Trail built in 2014. The group is instrumental in deciding on the direction of trails and also developing trails throughout the county. The parks manager and a member of the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners sit on the steering committee of the alliance.

North Country Trail Chief Noonday Chapter

The North Country Trail (NCT) has a network of chapters throughout the United States that manages over 5,000 miles of trail. The local chapter is very active and can often be seen marking, clearing, maintaining, or patrolling the trail. Many of the individual volunteers that the parks department utilizes are also members of the local NCT chapter.

BCK CISMA

The Barry-Calhoun-Kalamazoo Coordinated Invasive Species Management Area (BCK CISMA) is a collaboration that houses an invasive species educator and treatment specialist. BCK CISMA has the equipment and staff to treat invasive species throughout its service area. Calhoun County's Parks Manager currently sits on the steering committee of the BCK CISMA and utilizes their expertise to help manage invasive species in Calhoun County Parks.

Volunteer Groups and Individuals

Many community members volunteer regularly providing tree planting, weeding, painting, and other in-kind services. Volunteers may come from Boy Scout troops, churches, or are simply dedicated citizens.

Calhoun County Solid Waste Department

The Solid Waste Department has been instrumental in increasing the eco-friendliness of our parks system by supplying funds and expertise to increase recycling in the parks.

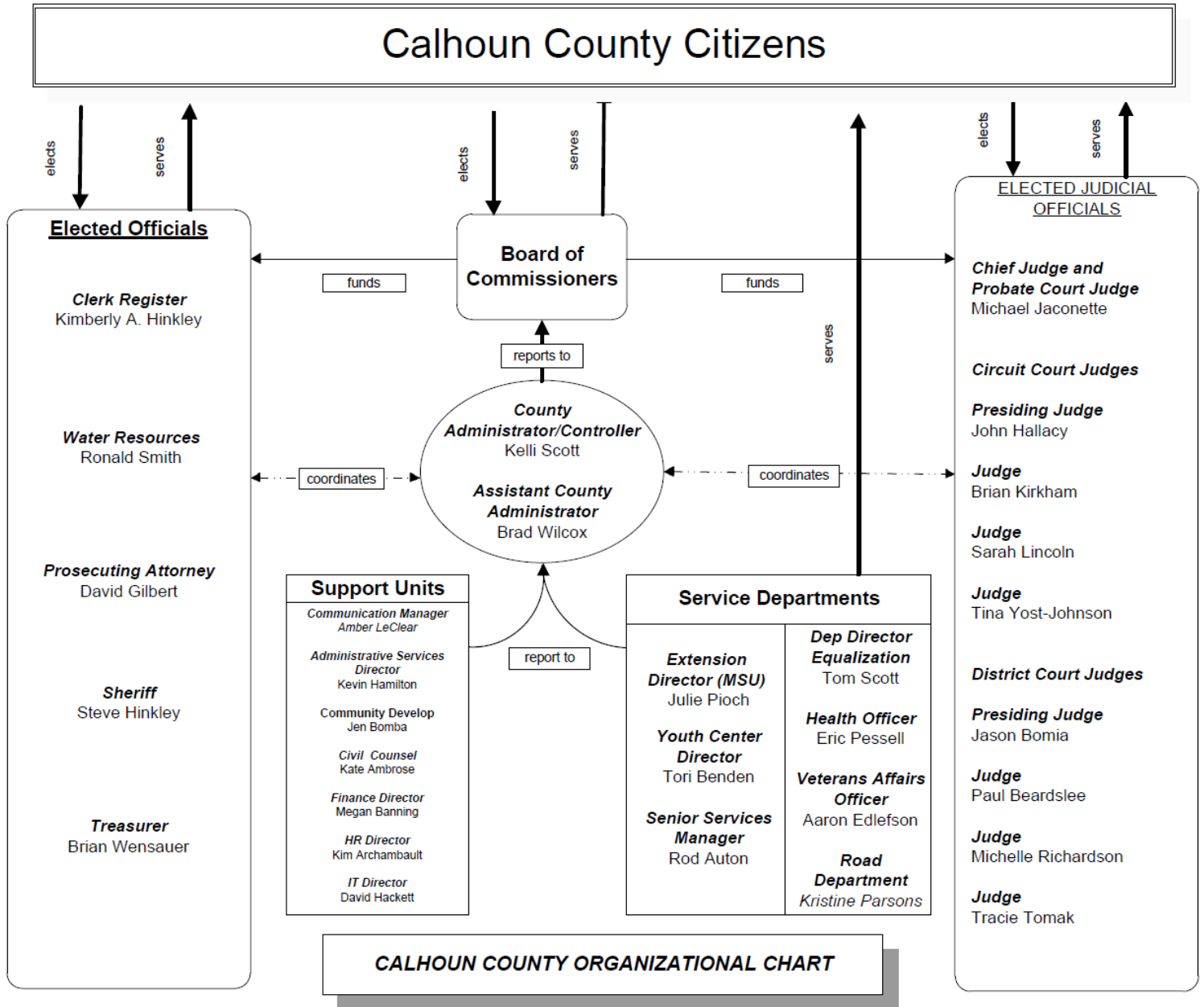
Other Partners

Throughout the work of the parks department various other partners and experts are often a resource for the department, and at times, are critical to the work.

Below is a list of the various partnerships that the Calhoun County Parks Department has utilized.

- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance
- Kalamazoo River Watershed Council
- Michigan Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials
- Michigan Recreation and Park Association
- Calhoun County Sheriff's Office
- Emmett Township Police
- Kellogg Community College

Administrative Structure



*The Parks Department falls under the direction of the Community Development Department.



Administrative Structure

Budget Process

For the 2025, the county parks and recreation budget included approximately \$835,000 in expenses and revenue of approximately \$1,075,000. This includes a portion of the department manager's salary, the parks coordinator, and seasonal staff. Much of the funding for the parks department is devoted to upgrading Calhoun County Parks through DNR grants which require a minimum 20% match, which in 2025, includes funds to remodel the North Branch Boat Launch and Historic Bridge Park.

Revenues are derived from four areas:

- The Calhoun County Parks Millage.
- Pavilion and park rental revenue.
- An endowment established by Enbridge Energy for the maintenance of improvements at Historic Bridge Park.
- The County Trailway Alliance and Calhoun County Government have agreed that the alliance will establish an endowment to maintain the Calhoun County Trailway. 100% of expenses on the Calhoun County Trail are reimbursed by the Trailway Alliance.
- Various federal, state, and local grants.

Sources of Funding

The primary source of funding for the Calhoun County Parks Department is the Calhoun County Parks Millage. This 5-year, 0.2 mill tax, which was initially approved in 2020, raises approximately \$950,000 a year to operate, preserve, acquire, maintain, and develop parks in Calhoun County.

Each year, 50% of Parks Millage funds are used for County parks, and 50% of funds are allocated to cities, townships, and villages for their parks. The allocation to local governments is based on population size, with additional funds available for park amenities in rural communities, improving river access, and matching grant funds. A full list of park projects accomplished over the last four years can be found at www.calhouncountymi.gov/parksmillage.

State and federal grant programs are also necessary for the future development of parks and recreation in Calhoun County. Grant programs administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources include the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, which derives income from oil and gas leases and matches local funds for parkland acquisitions and park improvements. Other funds through DNR include Recreation Passport Grants and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. There are also grants available from the Michigan Department of Transportation and various federal sources.

Gifts, donations, and bequests are also possible funding sources. Gifts and memorials for specific tree plantings, park benches, playgrounds, picnic shelters, picnic tables, bridges, and trails are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Lastly, public/private partnerships can provide revenue or in-kind donations and increase the visibility of programs and events throughout the community. Partnerships with the Kalamazoo River Community Recreational Foundation and the Calhoun County Trailway Alliance are two current examples that benefit the entire county.



Park Inventory

Calhoun County's Parks

Calhoun County Government owns a relatively small portion of the overall parks in the County. With only seven parks, and the majority of them in one township, the Calhoun County Parks system aims to find gaps in services county-wide to ensure everyone has the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors.

The majority of Calhoun County Parks are located in Emmett Township which has four county parks, all connected by the Calhoun County Trail. The County also owns Menwabek Meadow Park in Albion Township and North Branch Boat Launch. The following pages briefly describe each park and detail various needs and opportunities within the park. Many of the needs and opportunities are discussed further in the action plan section. The Calhoun County Parks Commission reviewed, discussed, and approved the following parks inventory throughout the master planning process.

Accessibility

The Calhoun County Parks and Recreation Commission's goal is to provide reasonable accommodations to facilitate the opportunity for all to utilize all facilities, regardless of ability. To that end, the parks department conducted an accessibility review of our parks. The park's manager visited all the parks to see how many ADA-compliant amenities were at each park. Each park has been assigned an accessibility score from one to five where 1=none of the park amenities meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, 2=some, 3=most, 4=all, and 5=the facility meets the Principles of Universal Design.

One out of five Michigan citizens, approximately two million people, experience a disability according to the Michigan Centers for Independent Living.

According to recent Calhoun County census data:

- 5.9% of those under 18 are identified as having a disability,
- 17% of those aged 18 to 74 are identified as having a disability,
- 46.6% of those over 65 are identified as having a disability,

Of Calhoun County's population, 21,707 people have been estimated as having a disability in our community, which is almost one person for every seven people in the population.



Park Inventory

Grant History

Below is an inventory of State grants received by Calhoun County Government.

Project #	Grantor	Year	Park	Amount	Description	Status
	MDNR	1975	Kimball Pines	\$156,000.00	Construction	Closed
26-00690	MDNR	1976	Ott Preserve`	\$28,000.00	Property acquisition	Closed
26-01039	MDNR	1978	Historic Bridge Park	\$15,000.00	Improvements	Closed
	MDOT	1996	Historic Bridge Park	\$228,560.00	133rd Road Bridge	Closed
STE 13900, 43852A	MDOT	1999	Historic Bridge Park	\$403,540.80	20 Mile Road Bridge	Closed
TF99-193	MDNR	1999	Ott Preserve	\$231,962.00	Improvements	Closed
	MCACA	2002	Historic Bridge Park	\$4,500.00	Sculpture	Closed
STE 13446,	MDOT	2003	Linear Trail	\$20,000.00	County Linear Trail	Closed
	MDOT	2003	Bike Path	\$215,306.00	Wattles Bike Path	Closed
STE 0313 (341) 50920A	MDOT	2005	Historic Bridge Park	\$300,000.00	Charlotte Highway Bridge	Closed
TF10-031	MDNR	2010	Calhoun County Trail	\$500,000.00	Construction	Closed
12-029	MDNR	2012	Ott Preserve	\$2,300.00	Fence Improvements	Closed
13411-111572	MDOT	2014	Trailway	\$1,075,592.00	Construction	Closed
TF17-0210	MDNR	2017	Albion Trailhead	\$231,900.00	Property acquisition	Closed
TF19-0067	MDNR	2019	Albion Trailhead	\$300,000.00	Construction	Closed
TF20-0153	MDNR	2020	Kimball Pines	\$193,400	New Entrance	Closed
TF22-0105	MDNR	2022	Ott Preserve	\$250,800	Bathroom Construction	Active
TF24-0043	MDNR	2024	North Branch Boat Launch	\$222,000	Construction	Pending
TF24-0199	MDNR	2024	Historic Bridge Park	\$400,000	Boardwalks and ADA Access	Pending



Park Inventory

Historic Bridge Park

Location: 14930 Wattles Rd., Battle Creek

Size: 26.7 acres

Accessibility assessment: 3 - Most amenities meet accessible design standards

Primary service area: Calhoun County

Description

Historic Bridge Park, formerly known as County Park, sits along the Kalamazoo River and Dickinson Creek and can be seen from I-94. The park offers many recreational opportunities such as picnicking, walking/hiking, biking, boating, and wildlife observation.



Needs and Opportunities

The majority of improvements in Historic Bridge Park are from 2012 which leaves the park in very good condition. Ongoing improvements include shoreline stabilization, invasive species removal, native plantings, an additional pavilion near Charlotte Highway Bridge, erosion control near Dixon's Bridge, and bridge painting. A copy of the Historic Bridge Park Development plan is provided in the appendix which includes the addition of an event space, additional parking and entrance, and trails.

Accessibility

Four of the five historic bridges are handicap accessible through the boardwalks and pathways. The fifth bridge is only accessible by stairs. In 2012, improvements increased access to park users with the addition of:

- **Parking with 2 accessible parking spaces, 55 car parking spaces, and 2 large boat/bus parking spaces.**
- **ADA-compliant restrooms**
- **Two accessible wooden picnic tables**
- **Accessible launch for canoes and kayaks**

Though many of the amenities in the park are accessible, there is still a need for accessible playground amenities. The current playground equipment is designed for use between ages 5 and 12 but does not meet accessibility standards. There is also potential to build ADA access to the Charlotte Highway Bridge through a grant submitted in 2024.



The most unique aspect of Historic Bridge Park is its meticulously restored bridges that make up a series of short trails. The restored bridges serve not only as part of a pedestrian path but also as a "hands-on" exhibit of Michigan's transportation history and the technology of wrought iron and steel fabrication. There are five restored bridges within the park and an original tunnel bridge beneath the railroad.

Other noteworthy additions to the park include enhancements provided by Enbridge Energy as part of their EPA settlement following the oil spill in 2010. An investment of approximately \$1,000,000 included the addition of a playground, a pavilion, restrooms, a handicap-accessible kayak launch, pathways, picnic tables, grills, and interpretive signage.

Park Inventory

Ott Biological Preserve

Location: South Parking - 1129 Olive St., Battle Creek
North Parking - 410 Jameson St., Battle Creek

Size: 298 acres

Accessibility assessment: 2 - Some amenities meet accessible design standards

Primary service area: Calhoun County

Description

The Ott Biological Preserve is located just east of Battle Creek in Emmett Township. This greenspace includes 298 acres of natural habitat open to the public for hiking, exploring fauna, and observing wildlife.

Within the preserve are two spring-fed kettle lakes, large wetlands, and ridged uplands. Well-developed hardwood forests of the uplands include black, red, and white oaks; pignut and shagbark hickories; and flowering dogwood. Common tree species of the lowland hardwood forests are yellow birch, red maple, black ash, and spicebush. From the tree line to the water's edge is an interesting habitat called prairie fen. These fens support carnivorous plants including the purple pitcher plant, bladderworts, and several orchid species.

The park is home to over five miles of trail including portions of the North Country Trail, Calhoun County Trail, Iron Belle Trail, and Great Lake to Lake Trail. The Calhoun County Trail traverses the outer edge of the preserve and is a great route for bikers and families. Other trails meander through the middle of the Ott and navigate the park's wetlands and eskers, only allowing foot traffic. The park can be accessed via the northern and southern parking lots. Each lot contains a sign, kiosk, and bike rack, with a bathroom added to the south lot in 2024.



increase nature programming in Ott Preserve including nature walks, school trips, research, species identification workshops, and an on-location nature center. A copy of the Ott Preserve Site Layout Plan is provided in the appendix.

Accessibility

The park consists of rustic trails of varying slopes that traverse wetlands and can erode rapidly. Though the trails are maintained regularly, many do not meet accessibility standards. Though some of the natural slopes will pose a challenge, the Calhoun County Trail does meet ADA and ASHTO standards as much as is able. The surface is generally firm and stable with a few exceptions. The parking lot at the Arlington Road entrance has 21 parking spaces of which two are handicap identified. The Jameson Road entrance has 30 parking spaces of which one is handicap identified. Both parking lots are accessible to a portion of the Calhoun County Trail that runs through the Preserve.

Needs and Opportunities

The Ott Preserve needs substantial conservation efforts to maintain the park's habitat. Flooding caused by beavers is threatening many species in the preserve. Also, invasive species such as phragmites and oriental bittersweet have established themselves in the preserve. Additional attention is needed to treat invasive species and manage the natural landscape. Erosion control is also an ongoing issue along the trails. Lastly, there are opportunities to



Park Inventory

Kimball Pines Park

Location: 1158 East Michigan Ave., Battle Creek

Size: 117 acres

Accessibility assessment: 2

Primary service area: Greater Battle Creek area

Description

Kimball Pines is located off Michigan Avenue, behind the Calhoun County Medical Care Facility in Emmett Township. It was formerly known as Kimball Sanitarium until it was purchased in the 1960s and became part of the Calhoun County park system.

In the 1930s and 1940s, 100 acres of plantation pines were planted at this location. The park also features deciduous woodlands, ponds, and a creek that is a tributary of the Kalamazoo River.



Needs and Opportunities

The opportunities in Kimball Pines are numerous. Although the county has added a new entrance, enhanced parking, and made substantial improvements to habitat and trail development, much more needs to be accomplished. Deferred capital repairs include renovating the bathroom

and maintenance garage, both inside and out. Lastly, invasive species have overtaken many acres of the park and should be taken seriously as a threat to its natural habitat.

Accessibility

Through a MNRTF grant in 2021, ADA parking lots were added, along with a paved trail through the newly reconstructed entrance meadow. The grant also facilitated accessible improvements, including a new pavilion and universally designed picnic tables and grills. Additionally, the Calhoun County Trail, which runs along the north, west, and south perimeters of the park, is accessible, with a section that was paved in 2020 to help residents and visitors of the nearby care facility access the park.

In May 2011, the majority of the park's pine trees were toppled by straight-line winds. Since then, the park has transformed as the downed trees were logged and sold.

In the past, the park hosted the Silver Leaf Renaissance Faire and featured a professional-level disc golf course. The eighteen-hole disc golf course has since been restored, with beginner and expert tee pads to accommodate all skill levels. The site includes two restroom facilities, although only one is open at this time. Various trails wind through the southern end of the park, including an offshoot of the North Country Trail. A copy of the Kimball Pines Site Layout Plan is provided in the appendix.



Park Inventory

Calhoun County Trail

Trailheads: 14930 Wattles Rd., Battle Creek
1158 East Michigan Ave., Battle Creek
1129 Olive St., Battle Creek
410 Jameson St., Battle Creek
904 East Emmett St, Battle Creek

Size: 5.3 miles

Accessibility assessment: 2 - Some amenities meet accessible design standards

Primary services area: Calhoun County



Description

In 2014, the 5.3-mile Calhoun County Trail was constructed along a parks corridor in Emmett Township. It begins where the Battle Creek Linear Path ends and traverses various open space easements, Ott Preserve, and Kimball Pines before ending at Historic Bridge Park. Additional sections of the trail may be constructed in the future, ultimately crossing Calhoun County to connect communities and provide residents with a safe place to walk, run, or bike.



The Calhoun County Trailway is owned and managed by the parks department, while the Calhoun County Trailway Alliance is responsible for raising funds to maintain the Trailway through an endowment held at the Battle Creek Community Foundation.

Needs and Opportunities

The Trailway Alliance continues to fundraise to reach its agreed-upon endowment goal of \$500,000. Additionally, ongoing maintenance needs must be addressed, including invasive species treatments and erosion control. Programming can also be added to the trail to enhance usage and encourage activity. In 2019, the first Calhoun County Trail Run attracted 80 runners and has become an annual event. Other opportunities include children's programs, cross-country meets, guided nature walks, and more.



Accessibility

The non-motorized Trailway is suitable for pedestrians, wheelchairs, and bicycles, and it was built as an ADA-compliant trail. Unfortunately, some areas may prove difficult for many users due to natural slopes along the trail. A paved surface would help everyone navigate these slopes more easily and reduce erosion. Additionally, signage could be added to indicate which trails are accessible for those using mobility aids.

Park Inventory

Ménwabek Meadow Park

Location: M-99 & Condit Road, Albion, MI 49224

Size: 65 acres

Accessibility assessment: 4

Primary service area: Eastern Calhoun County

Description

In 2019, Calhoun County purchased what eventually became Ménwabek Meadow Park. The park serves as a trail hub for the Great Lake to Lake Trail, Iron Belle Trail, North Country National Scenic Trail, and Albion River Trail, all of which intersect in close proximity to the 65-acre park. A Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant funded the first phase of development, which included a paved trail, parking, signage, waste bins, and more. A copy of the Site Layout Plan is provided in the appendix.

Needs and Opportunities

The park has become an active area hiking and biking in Calhoun County. Future phases of development may include additional trails, restrooms, camping facilities, pavilions, and more.

Accessibility

The main trail through the park is accessible and the parking lot exceed accessibility standards. Future developments such as a pavilion should consider accessible components.



Park Inventory



Riverside Park (Undeveloped)

Location: 14930 Wattles Rd., Battle Creek

Size: 74 acres

Accessibility assessment: n/a

Primary service area: n/a

Description

Riverside Park shares the same entrance as Historic Bridge Park and is situated at the end of the park's main drive. The park runs along the bank of the Kalamazoo River and features wetlands and meadows that attract a diverse array of wildlife. A copy of the Riverside Park Site Layout Plan is included in the appendix.

Needs and Opportunities

Calhoun County has worked with a consultant to assess the feasibility of creating a wetland boardwalk and trail system through Riverside Park. The study included preliminary drawings, specifications, and cost estimates. Developing this area would introduce a new type of park to Calhoun County's system, emphasizing wetland species, conservation, and nature observation. Establishing a formal park would also help mitigate vandalism, poaching, off-roading, and other prohibited activities currently occurring on the property.



North Branch Boat Launch

Location: Custer Drive, Battle Creek

Size: 40 acres

Accessibility assessment: 1

Primary service area: Western Calhoun County

Description

North Branch Boat Launch is owned by the county and is currently being used as a boat launch but has not been maintained as such. The property was used as an access point to the river during the 2011 oil spill which provided improved river access, but a lack of formal maintenance has left the property in disarray for many years.

Needs and Opportunities

In early 2024, the County received \$180,000 from Enbridge Energy's Kalamazoo River Community Recreational Foundation to improve North Branch Park in Bedford. These funds provided the matching funds to a much-needed improvements grant to complete entrance grading, paving, parking, picnic tables, trash receptacles, concrete boat launch, sand kayak launch, and landscaping. These improvements meet the county's need to provide safer access to the Kalamazoo River.

Accessibility

There are no accessible features in the park. Additional phases of development could include accessible features such as picnic tables, launches, and parking.



Park Inventory

Calhoun County Parks															
Park Name	Address	ACRES	Restrooms	Pavilion	Grills	Playground	Picnic	Hiking	Parking	Benches	Boat Launch	Disc Golf	ADA Accessible	Accessible to water	
Menwabek Meadow Park	M99 & Condit Rd, Albion	65													
Historic Bridge Park	S Wattles Rd, Battle Creek	26.7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Kimball Pines	1150 East Michigan Ave, Battle Creek	116.9	X					X	X	X		X			
Ott Biological Preserve	Arlington St, Battle Creek	298						X	X	X					
Riverside Park	S Wattles Rd, Battle Creek	74.4													
North Branch Boat Launch	Custer Drive Battle Creek	40									x			x	



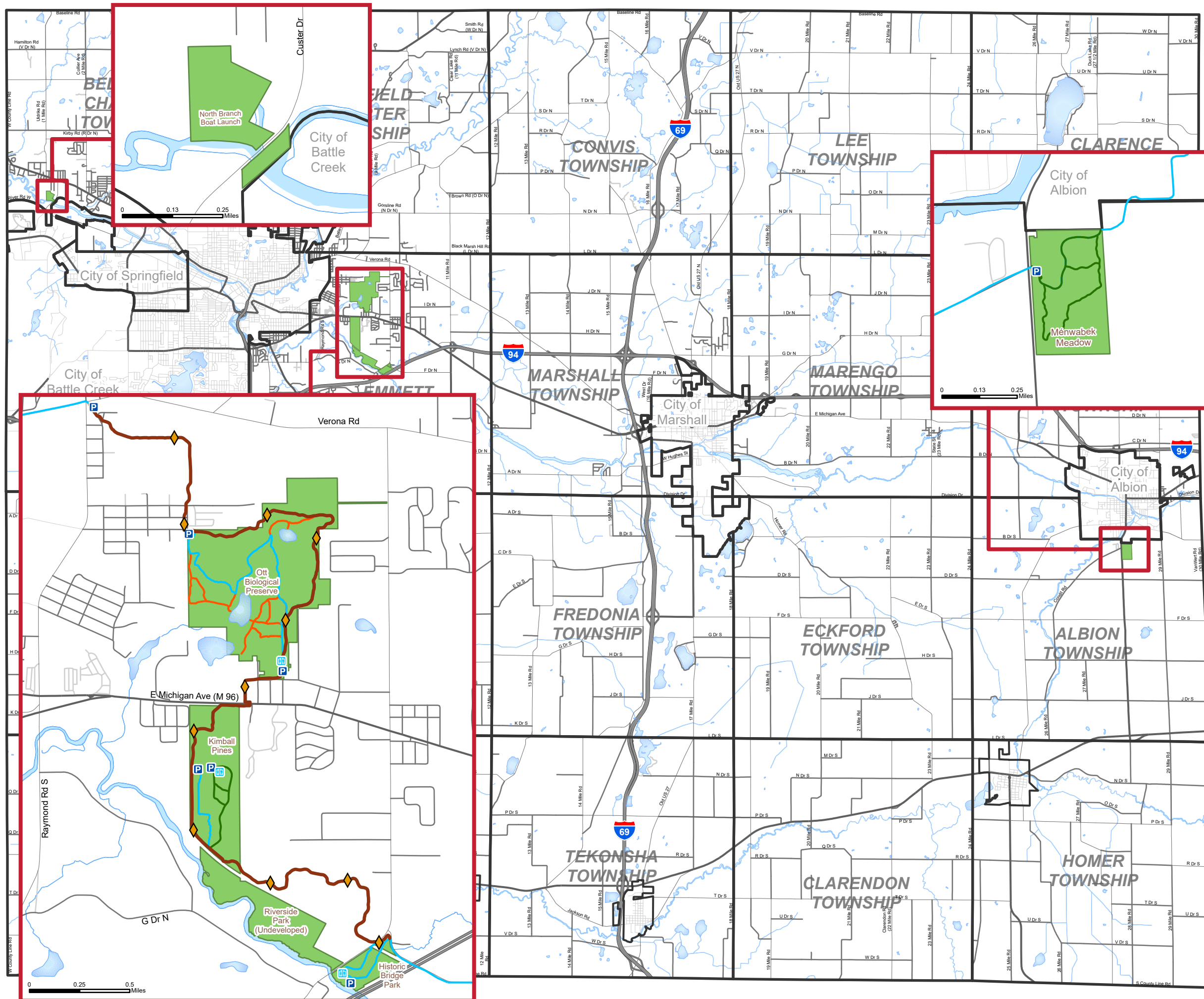
County Owned Parks

-  County Owned Parks
-  Calhoun County Trailway
-  CCT - Half-Mile Markers
-  Ott Trails
-  Kimball Pines Trails
-  Ménwabek Meadow Trails
-  North Country Trail
-  Parking
-  Restrooms
-  Municipal Boundary

0 2.5 5 Miles



Map Created by
Calhoun County GIS, 2024



MAP A

Government Entity or Other Agency Owned Parks



Map ID	Name	Address	Ownership	Acres
2	Brookside Park	Cross St & Bruce Ave	Bedford Township	139.41
3	Skeet Gehrman Park	Bedford Rd (State Hwy 37)	Bedford Township	21.58
6	Hart's Lake	Stanley Dr, Battle Creek, MI	Calhoun County Conservation District	4.93
9	Historic Bridge Park	S Wattles Rd, BC, MI	Calhoun County Government	42.34
10	Kimball Pines	1150 East Michigan Ave, BC, MI	Calhoun County Government	101.56
11	Ott Biological Preserve	Arlington St, BC, MI	Calhoun County Government	329.25
12	Riverside Park	S Wattles Rd, BC, MI	Calhoun County Government	47.15
32	Bailey Park	1350 Capital Ave NE	City of Battle Creek	64.4
34	Claude Evans Park	320 Washington Ave N	City of Battle Creek	26.69
35	Cliff Street Park	195 Cliff St	City of Battle Creek	116.9
36	Fell Park	Parkridge Dr	City of Battle Creek	294.47
37	Festival Park	25 S McCamly St	City of Battle Creek	74.39
38	Friendship Park	Capital Ave NE/State St W	City of Battle Creek	0.97
39	Hamblin Park	480 Hamblin Ave	City of Battle Creek	0.79
40	Hamilton Park	151 Academy St	City of Battle Creek	0.12
41	Horseshoe Bend Park	480 Wagner Dr	City of Battle Creek	0.16
42	Irving Park	311 North Ave	City of Battle Creek	1.99
43	Julia Milner Park	88 Roseneath Ave	City of Battle Creek	0.78
44	Leila Arboretum	992 W Michigan Ave, B.C.	City of Battle Creek	7.43
45	McCamly Park	Washington Ave N/Michigan Ave W	City of Battle Creek	5.95
46	McCrea Park	190 McCrea Dr	City of Battle Creek	7.29
47	Meachem Park	80 Meachem Ave	City of Battle Creek	0.81
48	Monument Park	Division St N/Michigan Ave E	City of Battle Creek	7.6
49	Piper Park	260 Sherman Rd	City of Battle Creek	21.58
50	Post Park	800 E Michigan Ave	City of Battle Creek	12.68
51	Prospect Park	Washington Ave S	City of Battle Creek	0.02
52	Quaker Park	135 Fremont St	City of Battle Creek	0.07
53	Stellrecht Park	85 Bennett St	City of Battle Creek	1.78
54	Wave Park	McCamly St	City of Battle Creek	48.64
55	Willard Beach Park	Capital Ave SW	City of Battle Creek	0.87
56	Woodland Park & Nature Preserve	14175 Helmer Ave	City of Battle Creek	0.53
64	Begg Park	503 Military Ave	City of Springfield	97.02
65	Rothchild Park	Helmer Rd	City of Springfield	798.53
66	Upton Park	Upton Ave	City of Springfield	4.97
68	Angler's Bend	11 Mile Rd	KRCRF	1.18
70	Paddler's Grove	S River Dr, Battle Creek, MI	KRCRF	89.68
77	Fort Custer Recreation Area	5163 Fort Custer Dr, Augusta, MI	United States of America	0.86
88	Greenwood Park	153 Wood St N	Washington Heights Community Ministries	1.7
90	Mill Race Park	Capital Ave SW	WK Kellog Foundation	0.79
91	Brookside Annex	Corner of Cross & Wellington	Bedford Township	2.05
92	Markham Park	Corner of Markham Ave and Duane St	Bedford Township	2
93	Algonquin Park	127 Algonquin Street, Battle Creek, MI 49037	Bedford Township	46.85
94	North Branch Boat Launch	Custer Drive, Battle Creek	Calhoun County Government	0.36



Government Entity or Other Agency Owned Parks

Map A

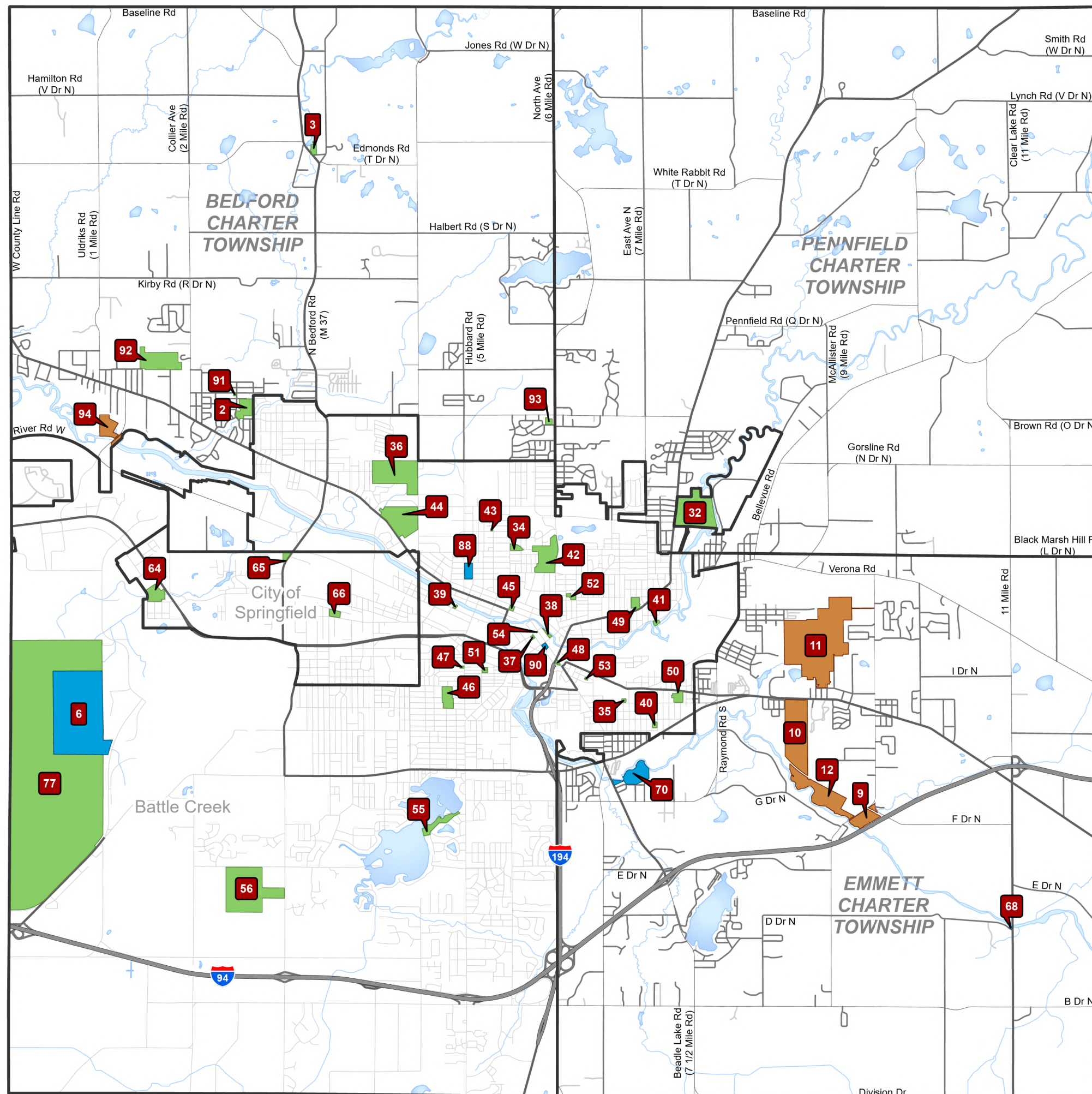
-  Municipal Boundary
- Park Type**
-  County
-  Government Entity
-  Other Agency

0 1 2 Miles

BEDFORD CHARTER TOWNSHIP	PENNFIELD CHARTER TOWNSHIP	CONVIS TOWNSHIP	LEE TOWNSHIP	CLARENCE TOWNSHIP
CITY OF BATTLE CREEK	EMMETT CHARTER TOWNSHIP	MARSHALL TOWNSHIP	MARENGO TOWNSHIP	SHERIDAN TOWNSHIP
LEROY TOWNSHIP	NEWTON TOWNSHIP	FREDONIA TOWNSHIP	ECKFORD TOWNSHIP	ALBION TOWNSHIP
ATHENS TOWNSHIP	BURLINGTON TOWNSHIP	TEKONSHA TOWNSHIP	CLARENDON TOWNSHIP	HOMER TOWNSHIP



Map Created by
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MAP B

Government Entity or Other Agency Owned Parks



Map ID	Name	Address	Ownership	Acres
4	Calhoun County Fairgrounds	720 Fair St, Marshall, MI	Calhoun County Agricultural & Industrial Society	66.12
5	Brandt Woods	25297 H Drive N, Albion, MI	Calhoun County Conservation District	1.63
7	Holt-Rice Creek	19606 Partello Rd, Marshall, MI	Calhoun County Conservation District/MIDNR	17.34
57	Brooks Memorial Fountain Park	Fountain Circle	City of Marshall	0.73
58	Brooks Nature Area	18 1/2 Mile Rd, Marshall, MI	City of Marshall	1.11
59	Carver Park	Exchange St/Michigan Ave	City of Marshall	7.18
60	Ketchum Park	Montgomery St	City of Marshall	7.9
61	Marshall Athletic Fields	1201 W Michigan Ave	City of Marshall	2.2
62	Sherman Park	200 Block of Linden	City of Marshall	2.79
63	Stuart's Landing	603 Homer Rd	City of Marshall	0.57
69	Ceresco Greens	116 Marshall St, Marshall, MI	KRCRF	0.12
71	Saylor's Landing	15 Mile Rd, Marshall, MI	KRCRF	17.02
73	Grever's Nature Center	Verona Rd, Marshall, MI	Marshall Public Schools	144.74
74	Bernard W Baker Sanctuary	15 Mile Rd, Bellevue, MI	Michigan Audubon Society	1.08
75	Voorhees Sanctuary	24 Mile Rd/O Dr N, Lee Township	Michigan Audubon Society	149.23
95	Clarence Township Hall	27052 R-Drive N, Albion, MI 49224	Clarence Township	0.32
96	Convis Township Hall	19500 15 Mile Rd, Marshall, MI 49068	Convis Township	21.32
98	Lee Township Hall	23045 21 Mile Rd, Olivet, MI 49076	Lee Township	14.23
99	Marengo Township Hall	14021 23 Mile Rd, Albion, MI 49224	Marengo Township	1.5
102	Grand St Park	228 W Michigan Ave, Marshall, MI	City of Marshall	10.16
103	Peace Park	219 W Michigan Ave, Marshall, MI	City of Marshall	18.27
104	Garvin Park	613 Union St, Marshall, MI	City of Marshall	3.73
105	Allcott Park	Allcott St	City of Marshall	5.45
106	Cook Park	Corner of Linden & Kalamazoo	City of Marshall	6.97



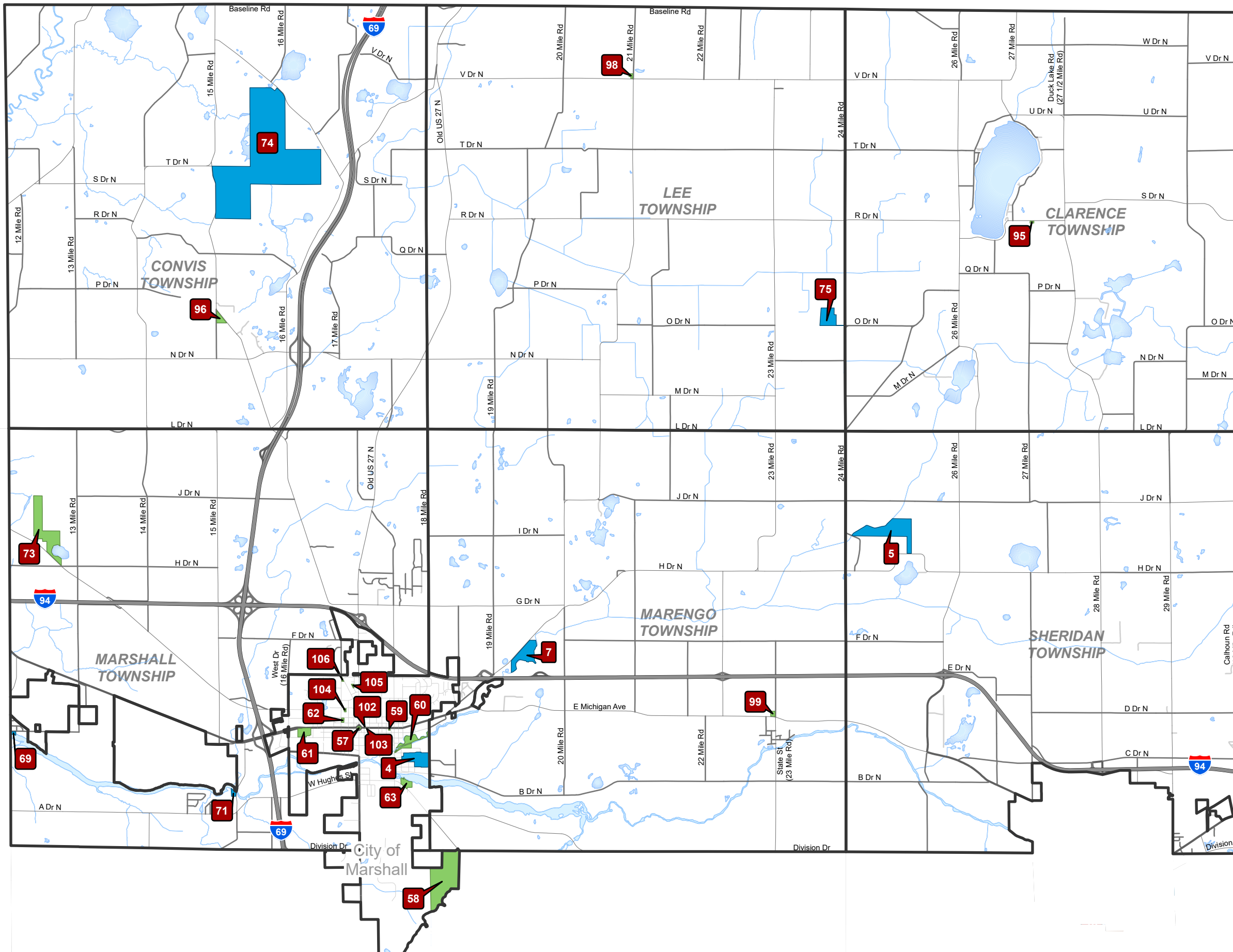
Government Entity or Other Agency Owned Parks

Map B

-  Municipal Boundary
- Park Type**
-  County
-  Government Entity
-  Other Agency

0 1 2 Miles

BEDFORD CHARTER TOWNSHIP	PENNFIELD CHARTER TOWNSHIP	CONVIS TOWNSHIP	LEE TOWNSHIP	CLARENCE TOWNSHIP
CITY OF BATTLE CREEK	EMMETT CHARTER TOWNSHIP	MARSHALL TOWNSHIP	MARENGO TOWNSHIP	SHERIDAN TOWNSHIP
LEROY TOWNSHIP	NEWTON TOWNSHIP	FREDONIA TOWNSHIP	ECKFORD TOWNSHIP	ALBION TOWNSHIP
ATHENS TOWNSHIP	BURLINGTON TOWNSHIP	TEKONSHA TOWNSHIP	CLARENDON TOWNSHIP	HOMER TOWNSHIP



MAP C

Government Entity or Other Agency Owned Parks

Map ID	Name	Address	Ownership	Acres
33	Binder Park Zoo	7400 Division Dr	Binder Park Zoo	0.37
72	Leroy Township Park	871 Graham Lake Terrace	Leroy Township	2.03
76	Burlington Roadside Park	M-60, Burlington, MI	Michigan Department of Transportation	33.84
78	John Wilson Park	N Capital Ave	Village of Athens	3.33
79	Downtown Burlington	122 W Main St, Burlington, MI	Village of Burlington	5.97
86	Cheney Park	E Randall St, Tekonsha, MI	Village of Tekonsha	90.59
87	Durham Park	N Church/ Park St	Village of Tekonsha	847.35
100	Newton Township Hall	11033 9 1/2 Mile Road, Ceresco, MI 49033	Newton Township	34.97
101	Tekonsha Township Hall	166 Spires Pkwy, Tekonsha, MI 49092	Tekonsha Township	3.03



Government Entity or Other Agency Owned Parks

Map C

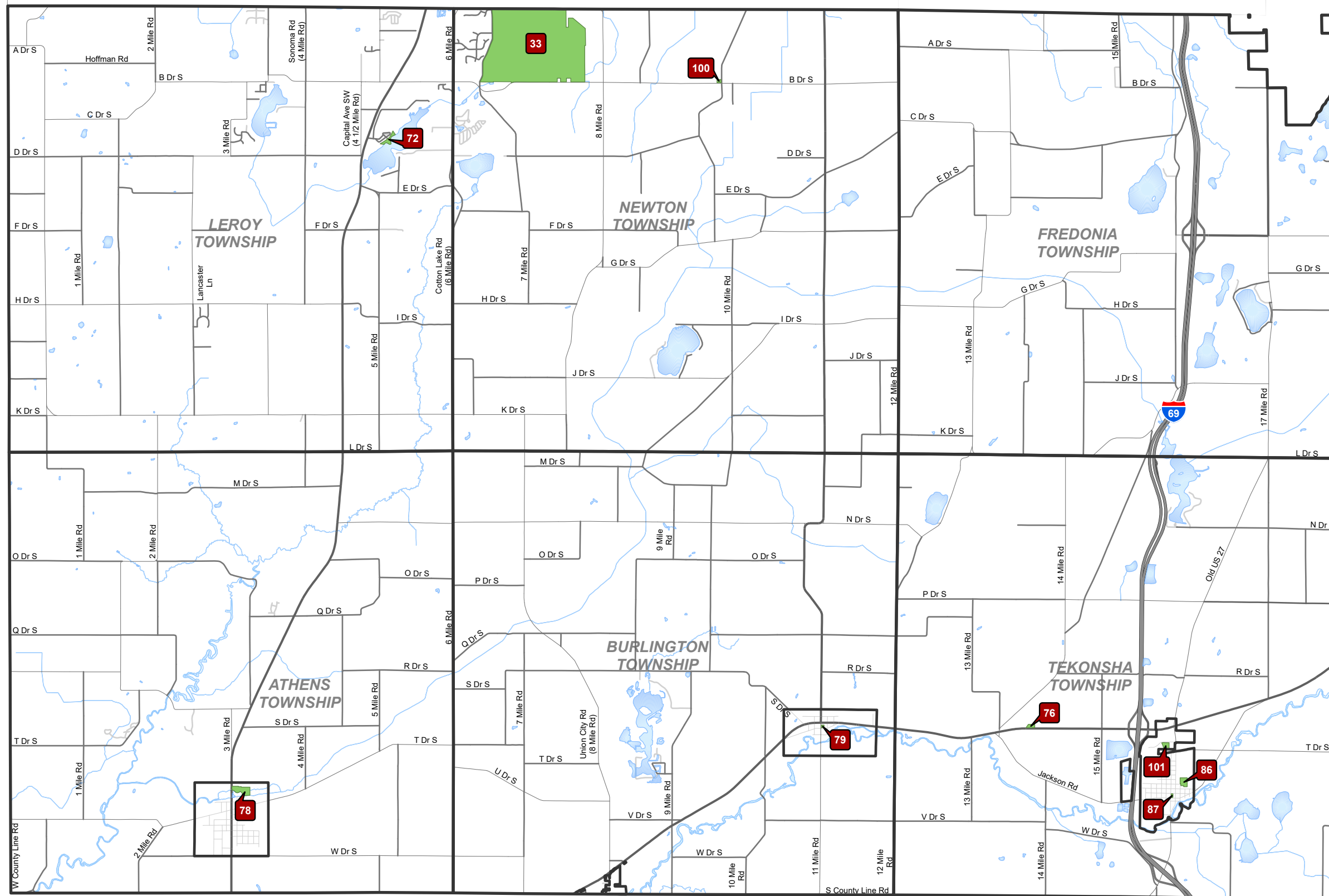
-  Municipal Boundary
- Park Type**
-  County
-  Government Entity
-  Other Agency

0 1 2 Miles

BEDFORD CHARTER TOWNSHIP	PENNFIELD CHARTER TOWNSHIP	CONVIS TOWNSHIP	LEE TOWNSHIP	CLARENCE TOWNSHIP
CITY OF BATTLE CREEK	EMMETT CHARTER TOWNSHIP	MARSHALL TOWNSHIP	MARENGO TOWNSHIP	SHERIDAN TOWNSHIP
LEROY TOWNSHIP	NEWTON TOWNSHIP	FREDONIA TOWNSHIP	ECKFORD TOWNSHIP	ALBION TOWNSHIP
ATHENS TOWNSHIP	BURLINGTON TOWNSHIP	TEKONSHA TOWNSHIP	CLARENDON TOWNSHIP	HOMER TOWNSHIP



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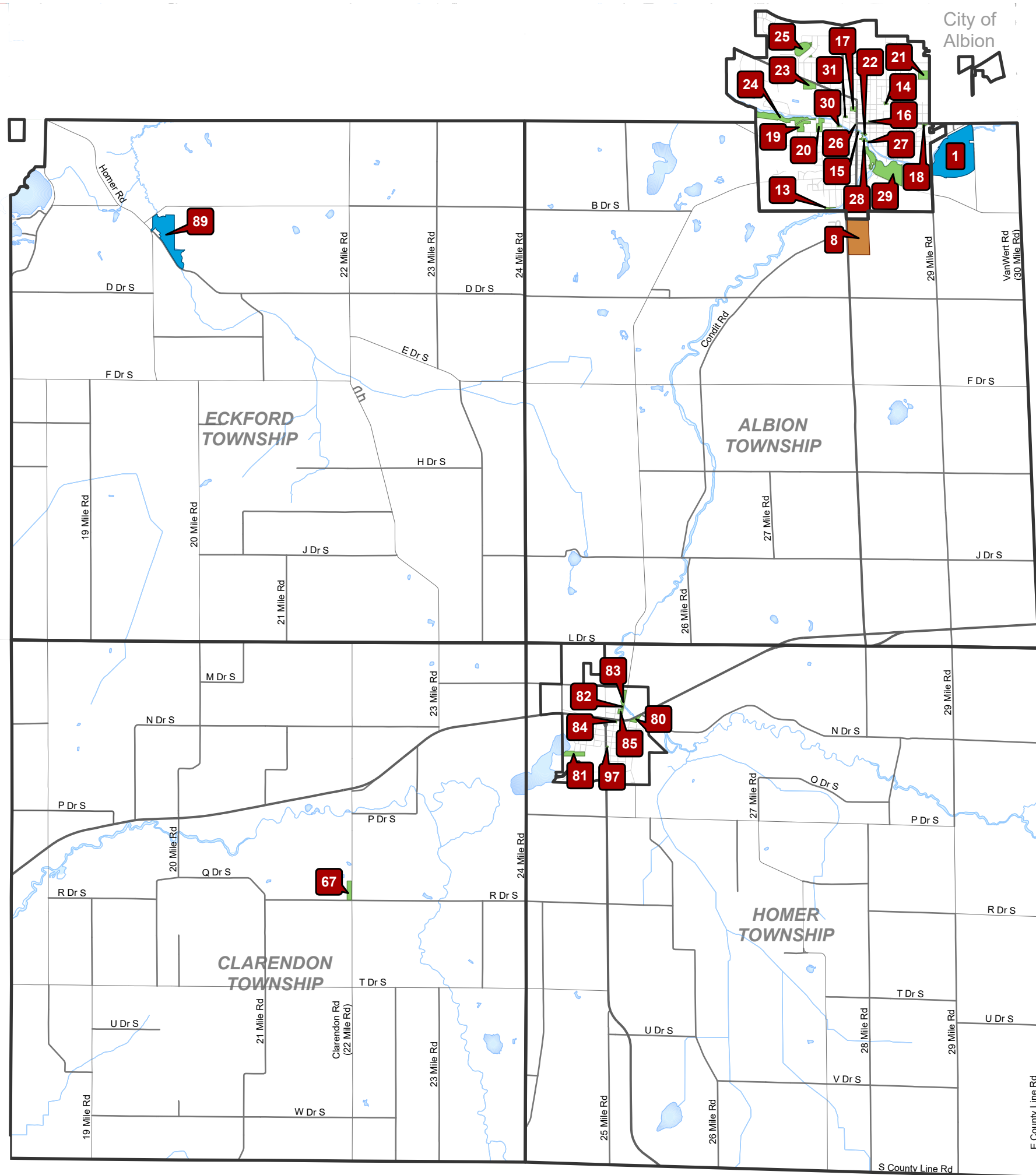
MAP D

Government Entity or Other Agency Owned Parks



Map	Name	Address	Ownership	Acres
1	Whitehouse Nature Center	Albion College, Albion, MI	Albion College	1436.95
8	Ménwabek Meadow Park	M99 & Condit Rd, Albion, MI	Calhoun County Government	14.27
13	Barnes Park	Water St	City of Albion	0.9
14	Berrien Dog Park	E Pike St/Division St	City of Albion	2.49
15	Bournelis Park	Cass St/Superior St	City of Albion	8.21
16	Collaboration Corner	Michigan Ave/Monroe St	City of Albion	0.64
17	Crowell Park	N Superior St	City of Albion	4.56
18	Gold Star Park	Michigan Ave/Clark St	City of Albion	0.34
19	Harris Field	790 W Cass St	City of Albion	1.83
20	Holland Park	Albion St/W Cass St.	City of Albion	7
21	Ketchum Field	1000 East North St	City of Albion	0.79
22	Lloyd Park	East Cass St	City of Albion	9.77
23	McAuliffe Park	Austin Ave	City of Albion	61.07
24	McClure Park	West of Albion St on Kalamazoo river	City of Albion	1.82
25	McIntosh Park	Hoaglin Dr	City of Albion	0.5
26	Molder Park	N Superior St	City of Albion	54.45
27	Porter Street Canoe Dock	Porter St	City of Albion	3.29
28	Stoffer Park / Market Place	211 Market Place	City of Albion	28.79
29	Victory Park / Rieger Park	112 W Cass	City of Albion	1.08
30	Washington Street Park	Washington St	City of Albion	8.33
31	Weatherford Garden	Between Clinton St and Eaton St, north of railroad	City of Albion	0.17
67	Clarendon Township Park	22 Mile Rd, Homer, MI	Clarendon Township	2.01
80	Grist Mill Park	M-60, Homer, MI	Village of Homer	3.08
81	Lakefront Park	Waterman St, Homer, MI	Village of Homer	1.56
82	Homer Linear Park	N Webster St, Homer, MI	Village of Homer	4.61
83	Homer Roadside Park	Webster St, Homer, MI	Village of Homer	0.06
84	Water Tower Park	M-60	Village of Homer	0.04
85	Webster Street Park	Webster St, Homer, MI	Village of Homer	1.1
89	Wildercreek Conservation Club	19833 D Dr S, Marshall, MI	Wildercreek Conservation Club	0.8
97	Homer Township Hall	420 S Hillsdale St, Homer, MI 49245	Homer Township	0.67

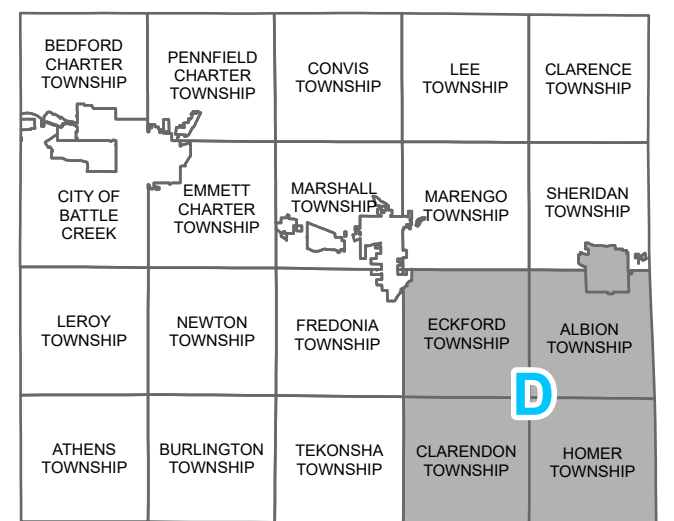




Government Entity or Other Agency Owned Parks Map D

-  Municipal Boundary
- Park Type**
-  County
-  Government Entity
-  Other Agency

0 1 2 Miles



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Campgrounds				
Name	Address	City	Amenities	Water access
Calhoun County Fairgrounds	720 Fair St	Marshall	Electric, pumping station, subject to event schedule	No
Camp Turkeyville	18935 15 1/2 Mile Rd	Marshall	Pool, store, showers, laundry, internet & cable, volleyball, horseshoe, fish pond, playground, community room, and restaurant	No
Hide Away Hills Family Campground	21901 Collier Avenue	Battle Creek	Indoor heated pool, hot tub, dart boards, board and card games, ping pong, reading area/library, fireplace, pool tables, TV lounge, and rustic camps sites	Pond
Quality Camping Inc	5775 Old Us Highway 27 S	Tekonsha	Handicap facilities, flush toilets, a swimming pool, laundromat, playground, fishing, beach, swimming, camp store, recreation room, building rental	Nottawa Lake
Rockey's Campground	19880 27 1/2 Mile Rd	Albion	Wi-Fi, beach, swimming, fishing, playground, boating, game room, pavilion, laundry, RV repair, mini golf	Bass Lake
Tri Lake Trails	219 Lyon Lake Rd	Marshall	Hiking, swimming, beach, fishing, boat ramp, mini golf, playground, shuffleboard and picnic area	Lakes



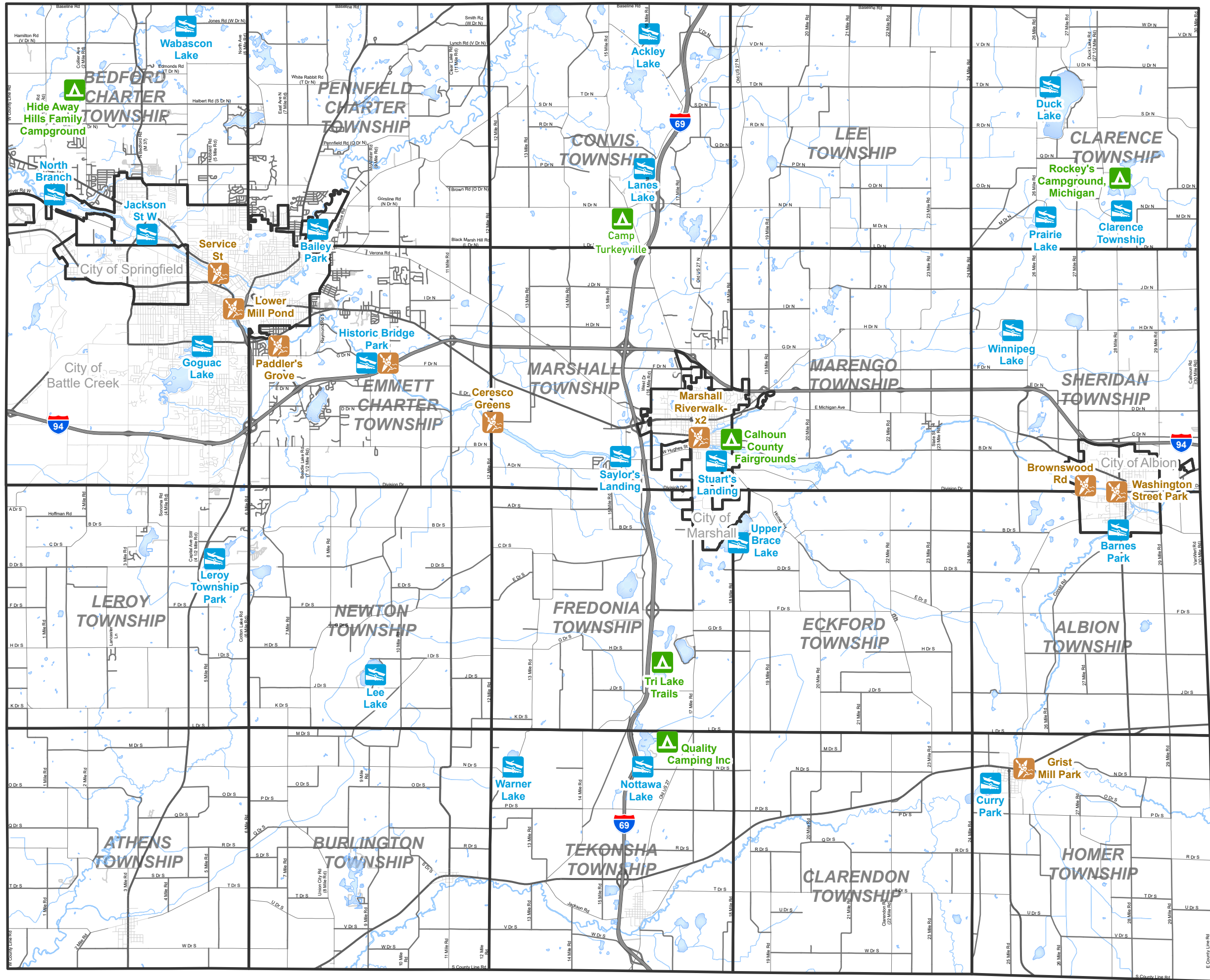
Public Boat Launches		Ramp Code	Courtesy Pier	Toilets	Water Acres
Site Name	Location				
Wabascon Lake	Bedford Township	2		YES	70
20th Street, Kalamazoo River	Bedford Township	2		NO	
Barnes Park, Kalamazoo River	City of Albion	2	NO	NO	
Porter Street, Kalamazoo River	City of Albion	2	NO	NO	
Washington Street, Kalamazoo River	City of Albion	4	NO	NO	
Bailey Park, Battle Creek River	City of Battle Creek	2	NO	YES	
Goguac Lake	City of Battle Creek	2	YES	YES	352
Lower Mill Pond, Kalamazoo River	City of Battle Creek	2	NO	NO	
Stuart’s Landing, Kalamazoo River	City of Marshall	2	YES	YES	
Marshall Riverwalk, Kalamazoo River	City of Marshall	4	NO	NO	
Duck Lake	Clarence Township	2	YES	YES	630
Prairie Lake	Clarence Township	2	YES	YES	62
Gordon Lake	Clarence Township	2	YES	YES	18
Lanes Lake	Convis Township	2		YES	23
Ackley Lake	Convis Township	2	NO	YES	
Upper Brace Lake	Eckford Township	2	YES	YES	56
Paddler’s Grove, Kalamazoo River	Emmett Township	4	Yes	NO	
Historic Bridge Park, Kalamazoo River	Emmett Township	4		NO	
Angler’s Bend, Kalamazoo River	Emmett Township	4	NO	NO	
Grist Mill, Homer, Kalamazoo River	Homer Township	4		NO	
Curry Park, Homer Lake	Homer Township	2	YES	NO	240
Leroy Township Park, Graham Lake	Leroy Township	3		YES	143
Saylor's Landing, Kalamazoo River	Marshall Township	2		YES	
Ceresco Greens, Kalamazoo River	Newton Township	4	NO	NO	
Lee Lake	Newton Township	2	YES	YES	116
Winnipeg Lake	Sheridan Township	3		YES	31
Nottawa Lake	Tekonsha Township	2		YES	116
Warner Lake	Tekonsha Township	2	YES	YES	58

Ramp Codes

2 - A hard-surfaced ramp, in areas of limited water depth or lake size, where launching, retrieving, and use of larger boats may be difficult.

3 - A gravel-surfaced ramp.

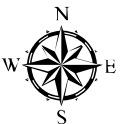
4 - A carry-down launching area. Site does not have an improved ramp and is suitable for launching cartop boats and canoes only.



Campgrounds & Public Boat Launches

-  Municipal Boundary
-  Campground
-  Boat Launch
-  Kayak/Canoe Launch

0 2.5 5 Miles



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Trailways		
Trail Name	Owner	Total Length in Miles
Albion River Trail	City of Albion	1.6
Battle Creek Bike Path	City of Battle Creek	15.12
Battle Creek Linear Park	City of Battle Creek	40.34
Calhoun County Trailway	Calhoun County	5.28
Homer Linear Park	Village of Homer	0.79
Marshall Riverwalk	City of Marshall	1.56
North Country Trail		56.41*

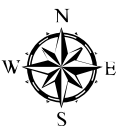
* The North Country Trail is over 5,000 miles long. The number reported is the length through Calhoun County.



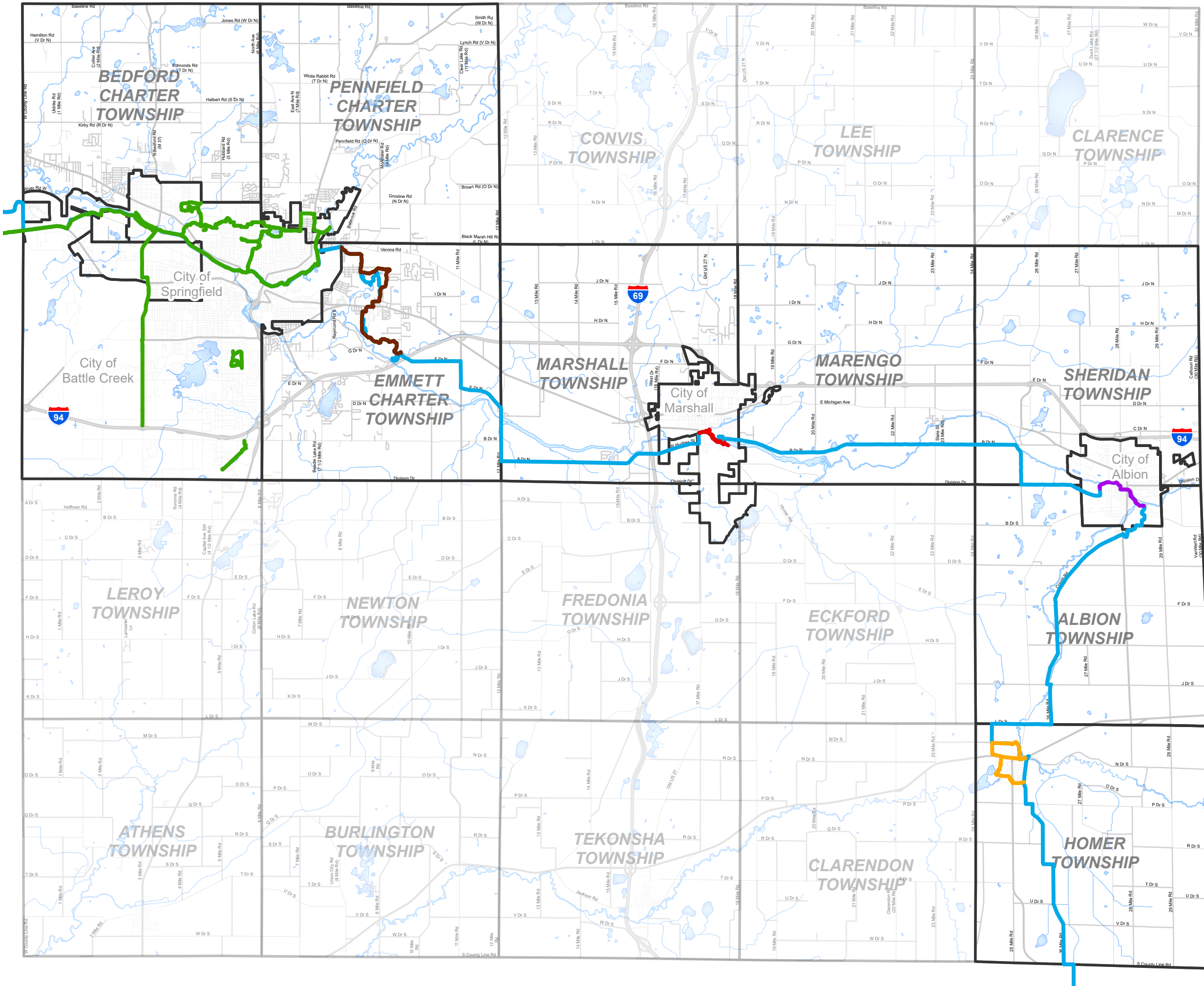
Trailways

-  Municipal Boundary
-  Albion River Trail
-  Battle Creek Linear Park
-  Calhoun County Trailway
-  Homer Linear Park
-  Marshall Riverwalk
-  North Country Trail

0 2.5 5 Miles



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Planning and Public Input

The Parks and Recreation Commission met every other month while working on this plan. Agenda topics focused on setting the timeline, creating the survey, reviewing goals and objectives, developing the action plan, and discussing public input recommendations and results.

The County also reached out to various groups to assist in the public outreach process. Numerous organizations, including news media, libraries, nonprofits, and government entities, helped disseminate the survey, resulting in 582 unique respondents. The survey included general questions about Calhoun County parks, maintenance, priorities, demographics, and potential property acquisition along the Kalamazoo River.

Throughout December 2024, the County received feedback on the draft Master Plan. The final form of public input was a public hearing at the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners.

Survey Results

The Calhoun County Parks survey included 13 questions and were designed to better understand who is using the parks what is most important to them. Responses were gathered from throughout Calhoun County but the majority came from the larger urban areas of Battle Creek, Marshall, and Albion and their surrounding townships. The age and income of our respondents varied greatly and reflects a cross-section of the population of Calhoun County.

The top answers to the open ended question “What other park facilities and/or recreational programming opportunities are needed in Calhoun County?” were:

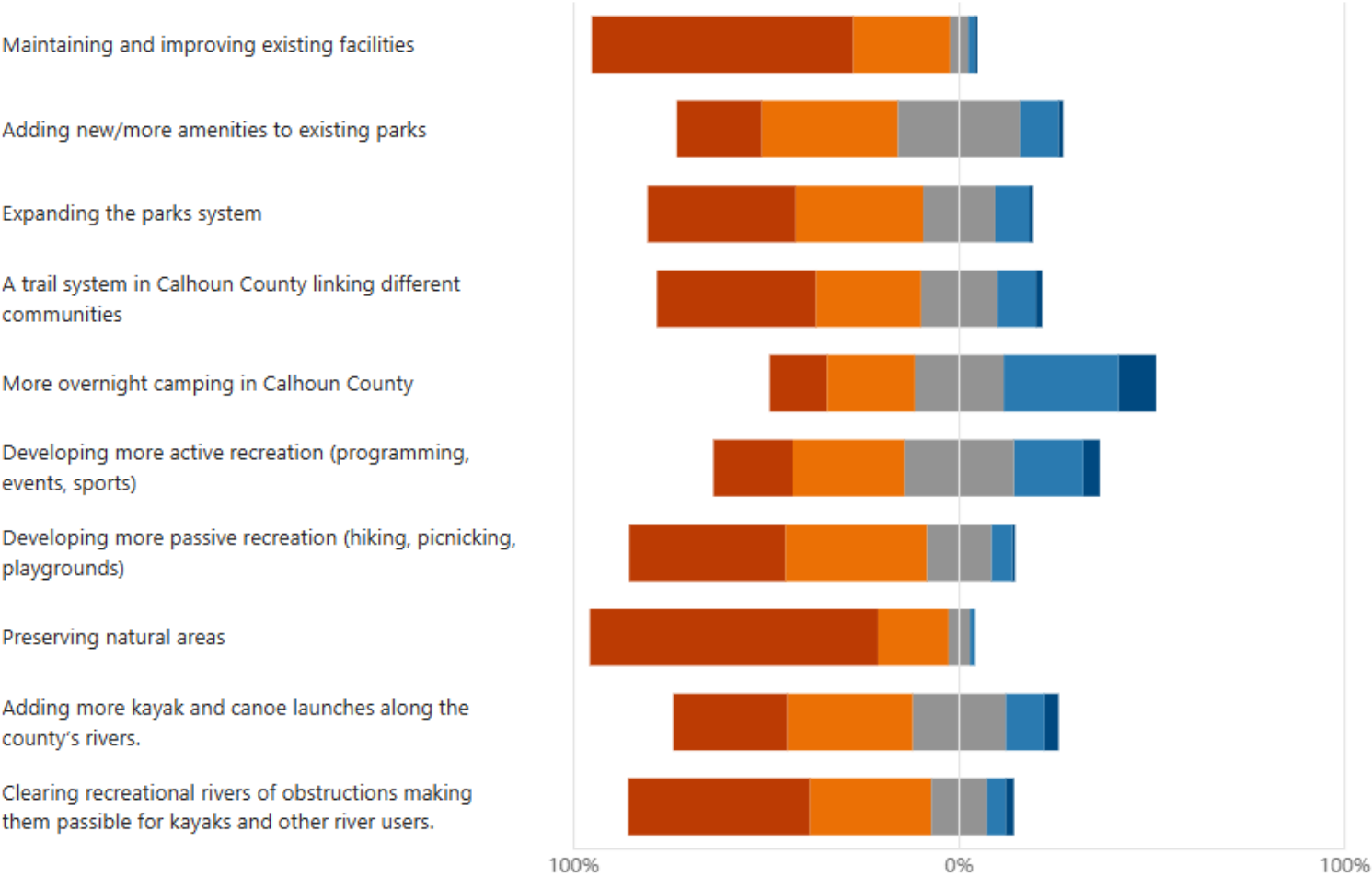
- **Trail Systems and Connectivity:** Respondents prioritized expanding and linking trails across the county, creating safe, off-road biking and hiking routes, and connecting major trail systems like Jackson’s Falling Waters, Kalamazoo’s River Valley Trail, and Battle Creek’s Linear Park.
- **Recreational Amenities:** There were frequent requests for more kayak and canoe launch sites, modern camping facilities, and expanded offerings like pickleball courts, disc golf courses, and updated playgrounds.
- **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Suggestions highlighted the need for ADA-compliant trails, shaded seating, and accessible parks in underserved areas to ensure equitable recreation opportunities.
- **Facilities and Maintenance:** Clean restrooms, trash/recycling bins, and consistent maintenance of trails, parking areas, and invasive species management were among the most common requests.
- **Youth and Family Recreation:** Some respondents emphasized the need for family-friendly amenities like splash pads, playgrounds, skate parks, and recreational leagues.
- **Environmental and Natural Attractions:** Suggestions included wildlife viewing areas, native plant gardens, and outdoor education programs to enhance environmental appreciation and stewardship.



Planning and Public Input

How important are the following:

Extremely important Moderately important Slightly important Not important No opinion



After reviewing the millage projects, how satisfied are you with how Calhoun County Parks has used millage funds to improve parks throughout Calhoun County?

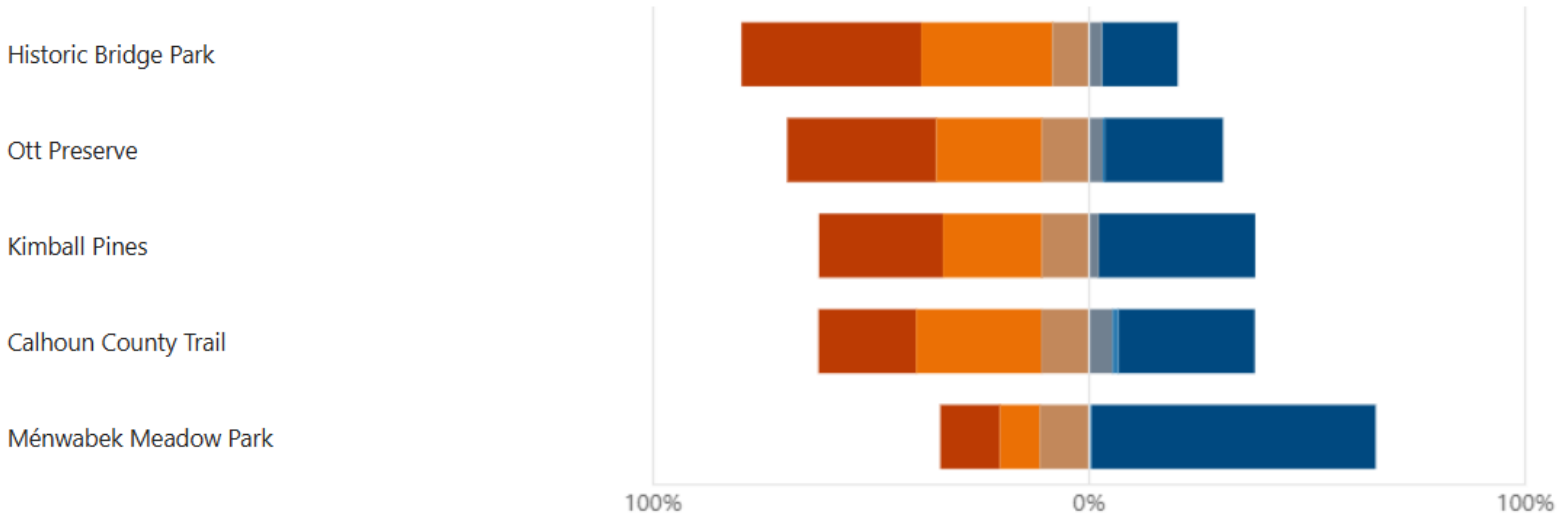
Very satisfied	238
Somewhat satisfied	211
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	77
Somewhat dissatisfied	33
Very dissatisfied	16



Planning and Public Input

How happy are you with the maintenance and upkeep of:

Very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied Somewhat dissatisfied Very dissatisfied
Unknown/no opinion



How could Calhoun County improve the millage?

Infrastructure Improvements: Respondents emphasized the need for better maintenance of trails, accessible facilities, and improved restroom and waste management services.

Safety and Security: Enhanced staff or police presence and measures to address illicit use and disruptive behavior in parks were highlighted as priorities.

Equitable Resource Distribution: Concerns were raised about unequal allocation of resources, with smaller townships and underserved areas requesting fairer investment.

Natural Resource Preservation: Many stressed the importance of protecting natural areas, avoiding overdevelopment, and managing invasive species effectively.

Expansion of Amenities: Suggestions included expanding long distance trails and adding dog parks, disc golf courses, splash pads, campgrounds, and better river access for recreational activities.

Communication and Engagement: Calls for greater transparency, proactive public input, and better promotion of existing facilities were common themes.

Fiscal Concerns: Respondents urged prioritizing maintenance over new developments and criticized perceived unnecessary spending.



Goals and Objectives

In keeping with the mission and considering the public input gathered during the planning process, the following goals and objectives have been developed for the 2025–2029 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The goals outline the general concepts that the County aims to accomplish, while the objectives detail the specific actions to achieve these goals. Both the goals and objectives were created with input from the community and the County Parks and Recreation Commission.

Accessibility

All people deserve access to great parks, regardless of barriers. In Calhoun County, it is estimated that nearly one in seven residents has a disability. However, physical disabilities are just one limiting factor. Other barriers affecting park accessibility include social, emotional, and economic factors.

Goal: Ensure that all people, regardless of income, ethnicity, gender, ability, or age, can equally enjoy Calhoun County Parks.

- Objective: Provide more recreational offerings for individuals with accessibility limitations and seniors.
- Objective: Review new park developments and amenities from an equity perspective.
- Objective: Explore options for rural areas to have access to off-road hiking opportunities.

Community Outreach

Survey data indicated that 12% of respondents had not visited a Calhoun County Park in the last year.

Goal: Strengthen the park's brand with messaging that promotes Calhoun County Parks.

- Objective: Utilize social media, press, website, and printed materials to promote parks and events.

Goal: Improve and develop partnerships.

- Objective: Actively participate in partner events and meetings.
- Objective: Continually meet and communicate with current and potential partners to discuss current and future collaborations.

Parks Stewardship

The Master Plan survey indicated that the community prioritizes maintaining and improving existing facilities, as well as preserving natural areas as the most important aspects of the parks department.

Goal: Provide quality, safe and functional amenities at all county parks properties.

- Objective: Create, update, and utilize management plans to maintain and improve Calhoun County Parks.
- Objective: Develop and maintain year-round tasks lists to be included in maintenance and management plans.

Goal: Preserve Calhoun County Park properties and advocate for the protection of natural areas.

- Objective: Develop partnerships that provide expertise and services to assist in preservation work.
- Objective: Identify and attend training for staff and volunteers to increase conservation knowledge and abilities.
- Objective: Create an invasive species plan for Calhoun County Parks.
- Objective: Utilize volunteer days to address problem areas quickly while engaging the community.

Goal: Transform dangerous and/or inaccessible areas of the county's rivers into safe, clean, and accessible resources that benefit the entire community.

- Objective: Identify which rivers and sections are unsafe.

Community Wellness

Calhoun County ranks well below average in Michigan for overall health outcomes for its residents. This ranking includes low scores in the areas of access to recreational facilities and physical activity. There are many opportunities for the County to increase recreation and encourage improved health and wellness in the community.



Goals and Objectives

Goal: Explore additional recreational opportunities identified as most important to the public.

- Objective: Partner with the Calhoun County Trailway Alliance, North Country Trail Association, municipal governments, and others to develop future phases of the Calhoun County Trail.
- Objective: Create additional access to waterways in Calhoun County.

Goal: Explore programming options for county park properties.

- Objective: Identify demand for, and types of programs desired by the public.
- Objective: Develop parks programs that address community needs and provide a wide variety of opportunities for all persons regardless of income, ethnicity, gender, or ability.
- Objective: Create additional access to waterways in Calhoun County.



Funding

There are many opportunities for the development of the Calhoun County Parks and Recreation Department, but this work must be done in a fiscally responsible manner. The development of sustainable funding is critical to the future of the county parks programs.

Goal: Establish sustainable funding for the maintenance and operation of Calhoun County Parks.

- Objective: Establish criteria for reviewing resource limitations when considering improvements to existing parks.
- Objective: Leverage current and future funding sources to increase the overall impact of grants, allocations, and donations.

Goal: Seek funding for new park improvements and developments.

- Objective: Continue to aggressively pursue public and private grants, donations, and other funding sources for park improvements or acquisitions.
- Objective: Leverage current and future funding sources to increase the overall impact of grants, allocations, and donations.
- Objective: Create a long term park development plan that includes DNR grant request priorities.
- Objective: Explore the creation of a “Calhoun County Parks Foundation”.

Action Plan

The Action Plan outlines the projects that contribute to achieving the identified goals and objectives. It is important to note that many of the projects listed below may not be completed in the next five years; instead, they are potential items for exploration. The parks department staff and the Calhoun County Parks Commission will oversee the work outlined in this plan and determine which projects to implement.

Accessibility Projects

Additional accessible kayak launches

Developing ways for individuals with limited mobility to access our community's rivers and lakes provides everyone the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of Calhoun County's waterways. Accessible kayak launches, similar to the one at Historic Bridge Park, make kayaking easier for all and should be added at both new and existing launches, regardless of ownership.

Community Outreach Projects

Events

Events provide people with reasons to visit parks and help market properties. Ongoing events that should be continued include historic bridge tours, volunteer opportunities, and the Calhoun County Trail Race. New event opportunities could include a parks benefit dinner on the Charlotte Highway Bridge, a plant sale, Christmas light displays, self-guided audio tours, guided tours, nature walks, and other holiday events. While this list is not exhaustive, it serves as a starting point for future opportunities.

Park Maintenance, Conservation, and Development Projects

Livery Services

Waterways are one of Calhoun County's greatest resources, but they are underutilized. Unfortunately, there are no turnkey livery services in the county. While residents can rent kayaks or canoes, there are no transportation options available. This limitation hinders much of the population in Calhoun County from participating. Publicly available livery services should be explored to provide all residents the opportunity to enjoy our county's waterways.

Camping

Many respondents to the Calhoun County Parks Survey indicated a need for rustic camping options for North Country Trail hikers. Rustic camping should be situated near the North Country Trail and include restrooms, fire pits, and remote or same-day registration capabilities. Additionally, the Calhoun County Park rules will need to be amended to permit camping. Other communities that already host rustic camping should be contacted to share their expertise.

Conservation

Another important issue for park stakeholders is preserving the natural environment. Identifying and controlling invasive species, creating and improving habitats, and designing conservation-minded parks must be integral to the Calhoun County Parks system in the years to come.

Kimball Pines Park

Recent developments in Kimball Pines have significantly improved the park's condition and upkeep. However, the bathrooms and concrete pathways should be remodeled to meet and exceed ADA requirements. Additional opportunities include creating a master plan for the back section of the park, which could incorporate amenities such as an extra restroom, a dog park, and/or outdoor event space.

Historic Bridge Park

Historic Bridge Park is the most developed park in the county's system, but there's still room for improvement. A pavilion, new entrance, and parking area could be added to the Charlotte Highway Bridge area to create another wedding venue in the park. The lower pavilion is often busy, and an additional option would provide the public with more opportunities to host their events. Lastly, the bridges in Historic Bridge Park must be painted every 20 to 25 years.

Ott Preserve

To truly function as a biological preserve, enhanced stewardship of the natural resources in Ott Preserve is a must. This includes invasive species management, habitat restoration, and other conservation efforts. Additionally, Ott Preserve is home to beavers, which can disrupt the natural balance of wetlands in the park and should be



Action Plan

closely monitored. The Ott Biological Preserve Management Plan offers numerous guidelines and recommendations regarding beavers, invasive species, and more. Furthermore, the small lakes in the park provide excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing, warranting the creation of viewing platforms or docks. The county has also discussed adding an accessible trail to a lake overlook in Ott Preserve.

Riverside Park

Riverside Park has the potential to be developed into a nature park. It contains sensitive habitats, so development would be limited to low-impact activities such as hiking and nature observation. An ADA-compliant trail could lead users to the center of the park, where a nature overlook could be constructed. From there, more rustic trails and boardwalks would provide access through the wetlands and to the Kalamazoo River. Additionally, a paved drive and parking area should be added to the existing dirt turnaround in the park.

Ménwabek Meadow Park

Ménwabek Meadow Park was acquired in late 2019 and hosts a trailhead with trails throughout the property. Possible projects include rustic camping, a pavilion, additional trails, and programming.

Calhoun County Trail

Though the trail is funded by an outside source, maintaining the 5.3-mile trail is Calhoun County's responsibility. To reduce maintenance costs, it may be necessary to purchase equipment such as a pull-behind leaf blower/sweeper, tracked loader, and compactor, which will allow the county to complete projects in-house. Additionally, invasive species and weed control pose challenges along the trail. These should be addressed with an annual treatment schedule. Finally, the county should advocate for bike lanes, easements, and other improvements to enhance hiking and biking across Calhoun County for everyone.

Other County-owned Property and Potential Parks

There are other county-owned parcels of land that would make great parks. With funding as it stands, these parcels may not be developed in the next five-years. Still, the county should keep them in mind as new opportunities arise.

Properties include:

- Boat launches at Custer Drive/Kalamazoo River
- Division Drive parcels 15-331-003-00 and 15-321-003-00
- Winding Way Drive Land Bank Properties, parcels 52-0168-00-004-0 and 52-0168-00-002-0
- Land Bank properties should be explored as potential park development sites in the future.

Staffing

When the budget allows, the Calhoun County Parks Department should hire additional staff experienced in construction, remodeling, conservation, excavation, and landscaping. Having experienced staff members would enable the completion of more complex projects in-house, thereby reducing costs.

River Stewardship

River cleanup is hard and dangerous work but was identified as a priority in the survey. The removal of debris could be outsourced and volunteers could be used for monitoring efforts. Examples in other communities have utilized AmeriCops members, volunteers, and service organizations. A pilot project would likely focus on the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Rivers.

Preserving the Natural Environment

Preservation is the most frequently discussed topic in the open-ended responses of the Master Plan Survey. Amenities such as signage, QR codes, citizen science programs, bird boxes, and more could be explored as options for engaging visitors with the natural environment and Calhoun County Parks properties.

Action Plan

Community Wellness Projects

Trails and Parks As Economic Development

More young families are considering trails and parks as essential amenities in the communities where they choose to live. Although Calhoun County has a great network of parks, there is still more to be done to enhance parks and trails as attractions within our community. “Trails that connect multiple communities” emerged as one of the most important topics from the survey, highlighting the need for additional segments of the Calhoun County Trail. Furthermore, Calhoun County can capitalize on the multibillion-dollar biking and hiking industries by developing its system of national and regional trails, which includes the Great Lake to Lake Trail, Iron Belle Trail, and North Country Trail.

Water Trails

Trails don’t have to be limited to land. Water trails are becoming increasingly popular, and Calhoun County is already home to the Kalamazoo River Water Trail. The St. Joseph River and the Battle Creek River could also be designated as water trails through the DNR or Michigan Water Trail processes. However, these processes are not easy. They require the development of a plan that addresses components such as safety, stewardship, historic and cultural resources, educational opportunities, funding, signage, management and development, local land and water use laws, and marketing and promotion.

The Kalamazoo River Conservation Property

Calhoun County may have the opportunity to acquire a new 218-acre park located west of the city of Marshall. If acquired, the park could serve as a route for biking and hiking along the Calhoun County and North Country Trails. One objective is to establish a three-mile-long linear park that offers scenic views of the Kalamazoo River while providing opportunities for biking and hiking. It's important to note that the county does not currently own the land, and the community will have additional opportunities to provide feedback as the land acquisition process is finalized and funding opportunities are identified.

Below are the questions and corresponding feedback received from residents regarding the potential development and conservation of the property.

Rank the types of amenities you would like to see along the Kalamazoo River Conservation Property.

1. Hiking trails
2. River overlooks
3. Wildlife viewing areas
4. Bike trails

Rank the types of natural features and conservation practices you would like to see developed or enhanced.

1. Bird and animal habitat restoration
2. River and wetland conservation
3. Pollinator fields/gardens
4. Native prairies/meadows

Park Acquisition Projects

In the next five years, Calhoun County Parks and Recreation is not actively seeking new park properties, other than those previously mentioned. However, there may be instances where donors or organizations approach the county with opportunities for new parks. In such cases, opportunities will be evaluated based on their significance from recreational, conservation, and economic perspectives. If a project is deemed to have substantial value for the community, the Parks and Recreation Commission will need to decide how to proceed, including discussions on funding, maintenance, and development of any new property. Projects that will be given higher consideration include riverfront properties and those with significant conservation or natural resources value. Additionally, properties that connect the county through a network of trail systems—both rustic hiking trails and developed bike trails—are more likely to be considered.

