

Planning Process

For purposes of this plan, the Fremont Area communities include the City of Fremont, Dayton Township, Sheridan Charter Township and Sherman Township. The four units understand and realize that, especially in regard to the provision of recreation, they function as a single community. In 2000, the City of Fremont, Sheridan Charter Township and Dayton Township joined forces to produce the first Fremont Area Recreation Master Plan. Since then, Sherman Township has joined the partnership in its vision to create an area-wide recreation plan that will enable the communities to provide recreational opportunities for their residents in the most efficient, effective and fiscally responsible manner.

Plan Development Process

The process of developing the Recreation Master Plan was carried out by the Recreation Advisory Committee. The Committee was originally created in 2000 to help develop the first community-wide recreation master plan. Today, this committee comprises of one representative from Dayton Township, one from Sherman Township, two from Sheridan Charter Township, one from the Fremont Public Schools and four from the City of Fremont. Committee members were asked to serve because they represented a diverse cross-section of community interests and due to their active and vocal role in recreation throughout the years. The committee's primary responsibility was to oversee the task of preparing and recommending a Recreation Master Plan for the Fremont Area. The Committee meets monthly as needed and held five special meetings for this renewal process. The four communities also hired a non-profit consulting firm to assist them with the planning process.

Community Description

Data for the community description portion of the plan was gathered from a number of different sources including the US Census Bureau, Soil Conservation Service, Newaygo County, West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, City of Fremont, Dayton Township, Sheridan Charter Township, Sherman Township and MIRIS (Michigan Resource Information System). The data was gathered, compiled, mapped and presented to the Recreation Advisory Committee at their second meeting. The agenda for the second meeting also included an overview of the planning process, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) requirements, a revised work plan and schedule and a preliminary draft community description section of the document.

Recreation Inventory

Site visits were conducted at each park within the City of Fremont, Sheridan Charter Township, and Dayton Township for the first Area Recreation Master Plan in 2000. For this plan, the location of each park, public and private school and private recreation facility was re-inventoried and mapped to reflect new facilities, including facilities located in Sherman Township. The Recreation Inventory portion of the plan discusses the various programs, activities and events that are offered throughout the four

communities and the Fremont Public School District. This information was gathered directly from staff as well as community brochures. Information regarding programs and facilities outside of community boundaries was gathered to establish opportunities in the general proximity of the Fremont Area communities. The revised draft Recreation Inventory was distributed and reviewed with the Recreation Advisory Committee at their January 2007 meeting.

Administrative Structure

Information regarding the existing organizational structure of recreation operations in the area were documented including operations and financials in regard to the Public School District. Duties of the various City, Township and school employees were also gathered from staff and summarized within the body of the text.

Basis for Action

The Basis for Action portion of the plan was outlined and portions completed for presentation to the Advisory Committee at their January and February, 2007 meetings. This chapter includes information on national and state trends, acreage deficiencies by community and neighborhood, park land per capita analyses and facility standard analyses as well as a depiction of the current service area radii for the varying hierarchy of parks within the community. A community-wide survey was conducted and referenced, and an annual notice was published inviting public input on the annual update of the Capital Improvement Schedule. Also included are the summaries and results of the public input throughout the planning process as well as data on participation at numerous facilities and programs.

Action Plan

The Action Plan of the document details the culmination of the Committee's research and discussions into recommended goals, guidelines and capital improvements for the next five years. The results of the background studies, recreation inventory, needs analysis, community input and Advisory Committee discussions were used to create this portion of the plan. The Committee conducted a brainstorming session at their early February, 2007 meeting in regard to goals, guidelines and capital improvements. These ideas were synthesized and presented to the Committee again at their second February, 2007 meeting where they were further refined. Scheduling issues were also discussed at the February 2007 meeting regarding the plan completion, public hearing and adoption dates. The Action Plan was finalized at an Advisory Committee Meeting in late February, 2007.

Public Involvement Process

The involvement of the public was a high priority throughout the development of this plan. Several opportunities and venues were available to the public throughout the planning process, the focus of which is discussed below.

Park & Recreation Advisory Committee

Public involvement opportunities began with the creation of the Recreation Advisory Committee. This group of residents (as is detailed in the body of the text) is a nine-member committee established to oversee the Master Planning process. Committee members include representatives not only from geographically diverse areas of the four communities but are people who represent many of the primary issues including operation, maintenance, funding, programming and coordination. This committee dedicated much of their time and effort to see the entire planning process through and produce a document that is thorough and provides direction for the City of Fremont, Sheridan Charter Township, Sherman Township and Dayton Township over the next five years and beyond. The public was invited to participate in Advisory Committee meetings and made several comments on the plan in general as well as identifying recreation needs throughout the community. Notices for Advisory Committee meetings were published in the local newspaper.

Community Opinion Survey

In January 2007, the Fremont Area Communities contracted with the *Research Services of Northwestern Michigan College* to conduct a telephone survey with registered voters of the Fremont Community. Based on a total population of 8,106 registered voters, a random sample of 260 was targeted for a 95% confidence level, +/-6 margin of error. A total of 261 surveys were completed. Questions covered various topics related to the use and provision of recreation. These questions and results are summarized in the Basis for Action section of this plan.

Town Meetings

As part of the comprehensive planning process, the Recreation Advisory Committee held one Town Meeting to discuss preliminary sections of the recreation plan and results from the community-wide survey. In addition, public input was solicited.

Summaries of the comments made at these meetings can be found in the Basis for Action section of this plan.

Project Website

To further support the comprehensive planning process, a project website was established, providing interested citizens with information regarding the planning process, meeting dates, contact information, *draft* sections of the plan and opportunities for public comments.

Public Hearing

Minor edits were made to the plan per Committee and staff comment and a legal notice of a public hearing was published in the local newspaper with copies of the draft document made available at the Fremont Community Public Library. The public hearing was held in March 19, 2007. Meeting minutes can be found in Appendix D.

Adoption

At their regularly scheduled March 19, 2007 meeting, the Fremont City Council adopted the Fremont Area Recreation Master Plan by resolution. (See Appendix D)

At a special March 2007 meeting, the Dayton Township Board adopted the Fremont Area Recreation Master Plan by resolution. (See Appendix D)

At their regularly scheduled March 20, 2007 meeting, the Sheridan Charter Township Board adopted the Fremont Area Recreation Master Plan by resolution. (See Appendix D)

At a special March 22, 2007 meeting, the Sherman Township Board adopted the Fremont Area Recreation Master Plan by resolution. (See Appendix D)