

# Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan for Perry, Michigan

MSU Higher Education



**Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan for Perry, Michigan  
2013-2018**

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**Introduction and Benefits of Outdoor Recreation**

Outdoor recreation is critical to the quality of life and the economic health of Perry. Public parks provide places for all to enjoy and interact with nature, friends and family. They may provide natural resources like rivers, wetlands and forests as well as human made facilities such as sports fields, picnic areas and trails. They welcome residents and visitors, benefiting both the participants in recreation as well as those businesses who serve them with food, fuel, sporting goods, souvenirs, etc.

Outdoor recreation is a voluntary use of one’s free time. It provides for enjoyment and fulfillment and is vital to a healthy and well-balanced life. Public recreation venues are especially valuable as they bring the community together and are available to all, regardless of economic or social status. This link to others and the natural world reminds each of us of the interrelatedness of our world and our dependency on clean air, water and living resources.

**Rationale for the Plan**

Perry’s previous plan expired within the past decade. Since that time, the City has been ineligible to receive state or federal grants to support the acquisition of land for outdoor recreation or the development of facilities for the same purpose. These grants, such as the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), are substantial. The MNRTF was created by Michigan voters in the state constitution in 1984 and solely provides monies for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation lands and facilities. Its money is derived from royalties and lease payments on state owned minerals such as oil, natural gas and hard rock minerals. This takes a one-time funding benefit from a non-renewable resource and provides lasting good from this windfall.

In the 2011-12 funding cycle, the MNRTF provided almost \$20 million to local units of government to buy land for outdoor recreation and to develop outdoor recreation facilities. Most funds to local units were provided at a rate of 3 state dollars matching every 1 local dollar. Some local units were able to purchase land with the selling landowner donating 25% of the appraised value, thus providing the local unit share and limiting the out of pocket costs to the local unit for

acquisition to the price of the appraisal. However, without a plan, Perry is not eligible to access these funding sources. To date, Perry has not received any acquisition or development grants from the MNRTF.

Finally, by following the DNR prescribed planning process to develop an outdoor recreation plan, the City openly and transparently involves citizens in decision making and setting the future direction for locally owned public outdoor recreation opportunities. This is done by involving residents through various public input opportunities such as public meetings and surveys to determine their outdoor recreation needs. The planning process also takes into account the track record of the City in maintaining existing outdoor recreation resources and the opportunities already provided by surrounding jurisdictions and the private sector.

### **Required Plan Content**

The DNR requires the following for an approved plan:

- Community Description
- Administrative Structure
- Recreation Inventory
- Resource Inventory
- Description of the Planning Process
- Description of the Public Input Process
- Goals and Objectives
- Action Program

Perry's Plan fully meets these requirements.

### **Community Description**

Perry is a small city located in located in southwestern Shiawassee County. The City was established in its current location in 1879. The first settlers arrived in the Perry Area in 1836. They settled in the area south of the current

city limits near the intersection of M-52 and Ellsworth Road. In 1879, as a result of the development of the Chicago-Port Huron Railroad line through the county, the City uprooted itself to its current location to utilize the services of this railroad line. Many residences and the Methodist Church were moved to their current locations as well.

The community experienced a fire in 1913 which destroyed much of the downtown and nearby businesses. The next decade was taken to completely re-develop the downtown and its residents' homes. They also followed up with constructing a water works system, which was completed in July 1914. In 1964, the Village was incorporated into a City, and the community has grown at a moderate rate since. The development of the Interstate Highway system (I69) assisted in making the City of Perry more accessible to neighboring and distant communities.

In 1995 Perry real property had a state equalized value \$24,588,230 and a taxable value of \$24,205,056. In 2011, the SEV had risen to \$49,096,900 and the taxable value to \$44,977,110.

There are no major watercourses or other major natural resource assets in the City.

Perry's population has grown 6% from 2000 to 2010, with a population of 2,188 in the 2010 census. The public school district serving the City's residents is the Perry Public Schools. Housing stock is generally single family residential, with 66% of the occupied homes occupied by owners and 34% by renters.

The Vision for the City of Perry 2010-2040 Master Plan is "to provide a solid plan and recommended guidelines to lead the City of Perry through the 21<sup>st</sup> century, integrating increased innovative planning practices (including "Smart Growth" principles), providing opportunities for increased residential, commercial and industrial growth along strategic transportation corridors, while also trying to maintain and sustain the small-town community atmosphere, sustaining essential services for the City, and maintaining the current statutes for the City".

Newspapers include the Lansing State Journal, the Shiawassee County Argus Press and the Perry Independent. A community newsletter is mailed to residents four times a year.

Perry is represented at the state level in the 22nd Senate District by Senator Joe Hune and in the 85<sup>th</sup> District by Representative Ben Glardon. At the federal level, the Township is represented in the Senate by Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, and in the House of Representatives 8th Congressional District by Mike Rogers. The Representative on the Shiawassee County Board of Commissioners is John Plowman.

The City maintains an active, up-to-date website at <http://www.perry.mi.us/index.shtml>. The site provides information and news on public hearings, bids, meeting schedules, agenda, current events and opportunities to get involved in City government. Readers seeking additional information on Perry should consult the Perry Master Plan 2010-2040.

### **Demographics**

The 2010 U.S. Census provides a breakdown of residents by race for the following races. This information is based strictly on responses received filling out the Census. In the City of Perry, 2,119 individuals (or 97.6%) identified themselves as White (Caucasian), seven (7) individuals (or 0.31%) as Black (African American), eight (8) individuals (or 0.37%) as American Indian, six (6) individuals (or 0.27%) as Asian, thirty-seven (37) (or 1.69%) as Hispanic/Latino, thirty-six (36) individuals (or 1.65%) as Biracial, and ten (10) (or 0.46%) as Other.

The 1990, 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census presents data which provides for population by age group. Based on this data, the following age distribution was given for the City of Perry. Table 5-1 below shows the 1990, 2000 and 2010 Census breakdown by age group. The 45-64 age group saw a 10% increase, as a result of the baby-boomer generation entering this age cohort, and the 65+ age group saw small growth, whereas all the age groups under age 45 saw declines in the overall percentage of the total population. Based on this pattern, it is expected that the 65+ age group will see alarge growth over the next 10-20 years.

The median age of residents of the City of Perry in 2010 was 34.1years. The median age has grown consistently over the last twenty years. In 1990, the median age was 29.8years and in 2000, it was 32.6years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990, 2000, 2010; Perry Master Plan 2010-2040.

## **Administrative Structure**

### **Roles of Commissions/Advisory Boards**

Perry is a 3.18-square mile charter law City governed by a Mayor and elected six-member Council. The board meets at 7 p.m. the first and third Tuesday of each month in Council Chambers housed within the lower level of Perry City Hall, 203 West Polly Street, Perry, Michigan.

The City Clerk, Treasurer, Assessor, Building Inspector, DPW Superintendent and Police Chief are appointed positions.

City government also includes positions on boards, committees and commissions, giving residents many opportunities to be directly involved in City government. Residents currently have an opportunity to serve their community by serving as a member of the Board of Review; Building Authority; Cable Commission; Local Officers Compensation Commission; Pension Committee; Planning Commission; Shiawassee Council on Aging; Southwest Shiawassee Emergency Services Alliance; and Zoning Board of Appeals.

### **Department, Authority, Staff Description and Organization Chart**

#### Membership of the City Council:

- Mayor Ross DeLau
- Tom Chaput

- Greg Wekwert
- James Huguelet, Mayor Pro-Tem
- Karen Potter
- Karen Davis
- Joanne O’Berry

The City Council is responsible for managing Perry parks. They have delegated responsibilities for maintaining park infrastructure and grounds to the Department of Public Works (DPW).

The role of the Parks and Properties Committee is to research ideas/information provided by City Council or through other means regarding improvement and/or enhancement of City Parks and Properties; make recommendations to City Council regarding its findings; and upon approval, implement/oversee projects. In addition, it is their responsibility to adopt and implement the five-year Park and Recreation Plan.

Parks & Properties Committee

- Joanne O’Berry, Chair
- Karen Davis
- Karen Potter
- George Dunn

The Planning Commission relates to the Parks and Property Committee in that the two entities work together to promote growth and proper land use, including Perry parks. The Planning Commission plans for improvements to existing parks, and targets areas for future parks. It is their responsibility to develop and maintain a long-term Master Plan for the city, which outlines a vision, goals and objectives for how the City is to look into the short-term and long-term future.

Planning Commission

- Brad Sharlow - Chair
- Mindy Galbavi
- David Shirey
- Carol Sanford
- Greg Wekwert
- Justin Shaulis
- Tom Chaput

**Park and Recreation Programming/Programs/Volunteers**

Perry has up to seven major recreation events/festivals: the annual “Winterfest/Mudge Festival” in February (weather permitting); the “Easter Egg Hunt” in Spring; the Easter Egg Hunt (Sponsored by Perry Baptist Church) and EGGstravaganza (Sponsored by the PerryFest Committee); City Wide Yard Sales held annually in May; National Night Out (Sponsored by the Perry Police Department); and the annual “PerryFest” in September. The largest of these is PerryFest, which is a community wide celebration of Perry.

Park and recreation programming is providing by the City of Perry, citizen volunteers and non-profit organizations to which many local residents belong. This includes the Perry Police Department, the DPW, faith based organizations, athletic leagues, etc. Key programming that occurs seasonally across the year is focused on youth athletics at the city parks (baseball, softball, T-ball, soccer, basketball, etc.).

Key volunteer contributions include time, labor, merchandise for events and funding for both operations and capital improvements. Organizations that provide assistance include, but are not limited to, the Greater Perry Area Lions Club and the Perry area Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

In addition to the above-mentioned efforts, the City has also worked with the Perry School District to promote school/student sponsored activities; and involve student groups in City-sponsored activities. The district has used the City park facilities to host softball/soccer practice/games/tournaments as well as end-of-season banquets and class gatherings.

### **Current Funding Sources and Park and Recreation Budget**

The Park and Recreation budget is derived from \$8,000.00 of general fund money annually appropriated for parks & recreation in the Perry City budget and approved by City Council. PerryFest Inc. provides funds as available for various capital improvement amenities to enhance the parks. The Greater Perry Area Lions Club provides volunteer labor when possible.

### **Relationship with Schools, Other Public Agencies and Private Organizations**

The Perry school facilities provide an important park and recreation asset to the City of Perry and residents in nearby townships. For example, at the Lower Playground in Summer 2013, the Perry Schools hosted a 3-on-3 basketball tournament inviting students from all ages to participate on selected Friday evenings. The City provided volunteers to help serve this event. City residents also utilize other school facilities such as the track at Perry High School and the playground at Perry Elementary School. However, educational/student uses of these facilities take precedence of over broader community use.

### **Recreation and Resource Inventory**

Using the websites of Owosso, Corunna, Durand and Shiawassee County as well as the Michigan Department of Natural resources and closely reviewing the park and recreation opportunities within the City of Perry using the senior author's judgment based on his 34-year professional career in park and recreation management and planning through Michigan State University, the following recreation resources are available in Shiawassee County, which encompasses the City of Perry.

#### **State Owned Recreation**

The State of Michigan has key facilities and lands that help meet outdoor recreational needs. Unfortunately only two of these areas are located within Shiawassee County and only one is currently developed to allow public use. Each offers slightly different opportunities and activities that contribute to the diversity of the area.

#### *Rose Lake Wildlife Research Center*

Located in both Clinton and Shiawassee Counties, this area is owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and is comprise of over 3,500 acres of rolling hills, lakes and wetlands. The area is managed for wildlife research and wildlife associated recreation. It offers hunting and other outdoor recreation opportunities for people within several surrounding counties. The area has been developed with many parking areas, 15 miles of marked trails, skeet shooting, rifle ranges, youth group camping and is also a favorite place for non-motorized trail activities. The area is managed primarily for small game, wildlife habitat and is a site for the State's pheasant and wild turkey release programs. Hunting is also permitted in various locations within the area during the appropriate seasons.

#### *Fred Meijer CIS Rail-Trail*

This railroad right of way was purchased in the 1990s. This runs from the western edge of the City of Owosso to the City of Ionia. There are 6 miles of the proposed trail in Shiawassee County. Development is slated to begin on the trail in summer/fall 2013, with major construction in 2014 stretching from Owosso to Ionia.

#### *Sleepy Hollow State Park*

While there are no state parks in Shiawassee County, the closest state park is located in Clinton County's Victor Township, directly adjacent to Shiawassee County. The park encompasses over 2,600 acres of land. The South Maple Drain winds through the site and is the source of the 410 acre Lake Ovid, an impoundment located in the center of the park that is a popular cool water fishery. The park contains a modern campground, a primitive organization campground, three picnic areas, a half-mile beach, 16 miles of non-motorized trails, a boat launch, fishing piers, and hunting during the appropriate seasons. Mountain biking and cross country skiing are also popular uses of the various trails. Several playground areas are also located adjacent to the picnic areas providing swings, slides and other equipment.

## Shiawassee County Parks

Shiawassee County is home to seven parks, five of which are along the Shiawassee River. More than 50 combined acres of mixed woodlands, lowlands, bluffs, and woodland prairie offer opportunities for hiking, fishing, canoeing, and family gatherings in the warm months or cross-country skiing and sledding during the winter. There are pavilions, picnic tables, grills, play equipment, horse shoe pits, sand volleyball courts, trails, and viewing decks. No formal programming exists, but individuals, families and groups can use pavilions with cooking facilities available for rent from Memorial Weekend through Labor Day weekend and beyond as weather permits. The available parks are:

- *Geeck Road* on the Shiawassee River. It has a pavilion, several free standing picnic tables with grills, and a canoe launch.
- *Henderson Park*, a 28 acre park is in the Village of Henderson with riverside bluffs and Shiawassee River bottomlands. It provides 3 pavilions with playgrounds, numerous free-standing picnic tables with grills, two ball fields, horse shoe pits, trails, a bluff overlook, restroom facilities, and potable water. Canoe access and a primitive boat launch can also be found at the east end of the park.
- *Kerby Park* is located just east of Corunna, Kerby Park includes the former Kerby School and has three pavilions as well as a playground, numerous free-standing picnic tables with grills, a sand volleyball court, an open field play area, and restrooms. No potable water available.
- *Lytle Road* is a small wayside park is located on the Shiawassee River. It has two picnic tables with grills and a canoe launch.
- *Shiatown Park* is a 6 acre park is located on either side of the historic Shiatown Dam includes the Old Shiawassee Town Square. It has a short trail, two pavilions with play areas, picnic tables with grills, horse shoe pits, pit toilets, canoe access and potable water.
- Two other parks are currently decommissioned: *Pinegrove* on M52 near Oakley and *Davis* near Vernon.

## City Owned Parks and Recreation

### *City of Owosso*

The city park system has 250 acres of public open space. There are twelve traditional parks, meaning places with their own defined boundaries. The James Miner River Walkway is the city's thirteenth park that is a linear system with a "tributary trail" at Fisher Redi-Mix, the Lions Club Park, and the skate park along its route. Four of the parks are located along the Shiawassee River. The largest park is Collamer Park at the south end of the city with 164 acres. The smallest park is Fayette Square in the center of the City at 1.1 acres.

- The Regional Natural Resource Area park at Collamer Park has the size and characteristics of a landscape that is outstanding in characteristics, vistas and water interest.
- Community Parks serve areas greater than neighborhoods and serve a variety of recreation needs. At Bentley Park, Grove Holman, and Harmon Partridge Park, pavilions, open space, landscaping, swimming, tennis, playgrounds, exercise paths, benches, and basketball offer the variety one should expect from a multi-purpose park.
- Special Use Parks are located at Curwood Castle Park and Fayette Square where historic significance, formal gardens, and cultural outlets clearly signify the principle uses for these unique settings. Rosevear Park, although small-sized, has returned to a natural area park with a winding drain (stream-like), forested glades and a nicely terraced gully offering interesting terrain breaks.
- Sports Complex Parks denote places dedicated to programmed athletic fields. Bennett Field, Rudy DeMuth Fields and Hugh Parker Soccer Complex contribute respectively to the youth baseball, softball and soccer traditions of Owosso.
- Greenways. The James Miner Walkway straddles the Shiawassee River and connects to the regional bikeway system to Corunna. The park plan has elements to improve connection of parks to one another and selected neighborhoods.

### City of Durand

- Trumble Park is located at the intersection of N. Saginaw St. & Monroe Rd. It provides a picnic pavilion, BBQ grills, picnic tables, volleyball court, lighted basketball courts, rest rooms, playground and gazebo.
- Optimist Park is located at the intersection of S. Saginaw St. & Fauble St. It provides two picnic pavilions, BBQ grills, 2 Softball Fields, rest rooms, playground, lighted basketball courts and a lighted roller/ice rink.
- There are also two park tot-lots with playground equipment: Fitch Park and Shaw Park.
- The Parks and Recreation Department sponsors summer recreation activities, which are held at both Trumble and Optimist Parks.

### City of Corunna

- McCurdy Park is located on the Shiawassee River and provides a historic village, softball field, community center, picnic pavilions, in-line skate park, playground, horseshoe pits, sledding, community gardens and river access. The historic village is operated by a non-profit organization (Friends of the Historical Village). The softball field is operated by the non-profit Corunna Softball Commission. The park is considered a regional park due to its many assets that serve the Shiawassee County community and beyond.
- Heritage Park is located on the Shiawassee River and provides recognition for those important to the heritage of Corunna.
- Brady Street Boat Launch is on the Shiawassee River and provides access for carry in craft and fishing.
- Mitchell Fields Softball Complex is operated by the non-profit Corunna Softball Commission.

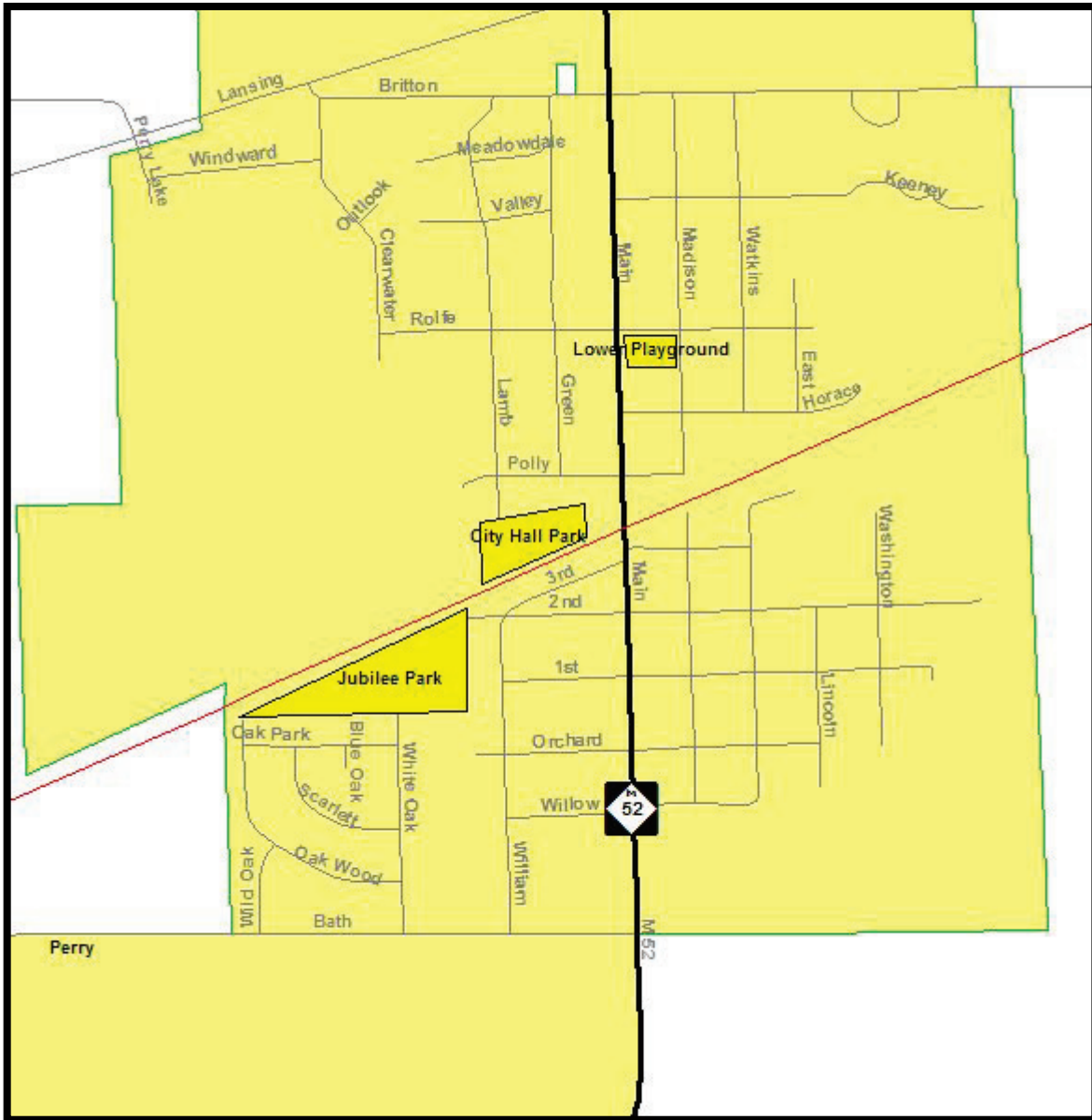
### **City of Perry**

The City of Perry has two city parks: Jubilee and Veteran's Memorial. In addition, the Perry Public Schools have an area informally designated as a public park, the Lower Playground. The three parks were inspected by the senior author on May 31, 2013. For each park, an overview of the facilities, as well as an accessibility evaluation is provided. The primary service area of all parks is the City of Perry and the surrounding townships of Woodhull, Perry, Bennington and Antrim.

A map of the three parks within the City of Perry is found on the next page.



## Map: City of Perry Parks



Accessibility will be rated using the standard of:

- 1=none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 2=some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 3=most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 4=entire park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5=entire park developed/renovated using principals of universal design

### Jubilee Park

This park of 8.5 acres is bounded on the east by fuel tank storage, on the north by the railroad tracks and on the south by a neighborhood. It provides a picnic pavilion with some tables, grills, some older playground equipment (including a merry-go-round, large metal swings and a jungle gym), a newer tot swing, a sledding hill, a softball diamond, parking for at least 40 vehicles (although difficult to determine as no striping and no parking barriers/bumpers, restroom facilities (men's and women's locked during the inspection with padlocks and a sign to call a phone number if one wanted to use the

restrooms), a sizeable area of mowed, hardscrabble turf (more than 5 acres) and 40 foot parallel concrete strips that were apparently once shuffleboard courts. A new paved sidewalk enters the site from the south (opposite the parking lot) from a cul de sac with a vehicle turnaround but no apparent parking. This is convenient for those who enter the park on foot or bicycle from the neighborhood to the south.

In terms of accessibility, the site is generally flat and firm. The firmness is readily apparent as even though May 2013 has had almost four inches of rain the surface was dry and firm. There are paved walkways between the pedestrian entrance at the south side of the park and the restrooms and pavilion. None of the walkways have slopes greater than 5% or a cross slope or crowning that is greater than 1% and all are in reasonable repair. It was not possible to assess the accessibility of the restrooms as they were padlocked. Considering this was on a Friday at 3:00PM, it is reasonable to assume that they are inaccessible as no one could use them when they are locked during regular park hours. This is not a design issue, it is an operations issue. The picnic tables would accommodate a wheel chair on either end of the table and are in a paved pavilion with access on a paved sidewalk that has no lip of an inch or greater between the sidewalk and the pavilion. There were no clearly noted handicapped parking areas in the parking area. Parking for someone with a disability perhaps would be best accomplished in the cul de sac at the south entrance as that sidewalk connects to the restrooms with the pavilion, while if one approached from the designated parking area, there is no sidewalk connection. The playground equipment is not accessible. This park receives an accessibility rating of 3, with concern related to parking for those with disabilities, access from the designated parking area to core facilities and the lack of bathrooms during normal park/business hours.

Other key challenges beyond accessibility rest with maintenance. First, the bleachers and benches for the softball diamond are in poor condition, especially the benches. Second, the west side of the sledding hill is rapidly eroding, creating a hazard and an eyesore as well as an environmental impairment. Third, what appears to be some discontinued BMX track structures (abrupt small hills, jumps, wooden structures, etc.) are located directly behind and west of the sledding hill. This area should be restored to a more natural slope and properly vegetated as should the west side of the sledding hill. The rest room building has a considerable amount of graffiti including over a Land and Water Conservation Fund plaque, indicating that this building was constructed in part with federal land and water funds and perhaps the land was purchased with the same. This building needs to be cleaned up and the restrooms available for use during the time the park is open for public use.

#### *Veteran's Memorial Park*

This park of 4.2 acres is south and west of the Perry Municipal Building and north of the railroad tracks. It is in much better condition than Jubilee Park, which is located on the south side of the railroad tracks to the southwest of Veteran's Memorial Park. The park has a small picnic pavilion (6 tables), a seventh separate picnic table and grills, restrooms, a soccer area, sledding hill, a small softball field, two distinct monuments to veterans and a number of large deciduous trees that provide considerable shade. There is striped, paved parking for at least 68 regular vehicle and 5 handicapper parking places.

In terms of accessibility, there is sufficient handicapper parking. All handicapped parking connects by sidewalk with the restrooms, picnic pavilion, separate picnic table/grill area and both of the monuments to veterans. All the picnic tables in the pavilion, while apparently made by volunteers, are accessible with room for a wheelchair to sit up to the table at either end. There is no lip of an inch or more between the sidewalks, restrooms, pavilion or veteran monuments. The restrooms were open, clean and accessible using ADA standards with appropriate grab rails, turning radius in the stall, door that opened with less than 5 pounds of pressure, handles instead of knobs on the door, stall and sink. The height of the sink was appropriate for one in a wheel chair and the light switch was less than 42" from the floor. In summary, these well designed and maintained restrooms were a stark and positive contrast to the poorly maintained and padlocked restrooms in Jubilee Park a mere 250 yards away. This park gets an accessibility rating of 5 as the site is firm, has sidewalks at appropriate slopes throughout all major facilities, has fully accessible restrooms and appropriate handicapper parking. While some areas of the grounds have a slope greater than 5%, the ground is firm and there are ways to navigate so those steeper slopes are not encountered when away from the sidewalk system.

There are few significant operational or maintenance issues with this park. In general it is a well maintained park. It is missing at least two major trees that were removed sometime in the past and have apparently not been replanted. While there is some shade, the remnants of the large stumps are still visible. Burying those remnants and replanting in an adjacent location with a long lived hardwood that is moderately shade and use tolerant would be positive for both aesthetics and shade. The soccer goal is not anchored and has rusty, fairly sharp supports sticking out in the back, which may be a hazard to players and an invitation for tipping the nets over or other vandalism. This should be remedied.

#### Lower Playground Park

This park is not owned by the city, but by the Perry Public schools. It is slightly more than an acre and features well developed basketball courts, a small soccer area, a pavilion without picnic tables, a portajohn that is not accessible and minimal parking (approximately 8 cars parallel parked along Rolfe Street. It is bound by Rolfe Street on the north, M52 on the west and Madison on the east. The park has a strong youth focus with the basketball courts and the soccer area providing the majority of recreation opportunity. The courts are attractive and were being used by a number of pre-teen and teenage youth to play basketball as well as others on bicycles that were socializing when the park was inspected.

In terms of accessibility, there is no handicapper parking and the portajohn is not accessible. It has a lip greater than one inch to enter it and it cannot accommodate a wheelchair. While the turf in the park is firm and relatively flat except for the far eastern end which has a significant slope up toward Madison St., facilities are not available for those with disabilities to successfully use the park. This park is rated as a 2 for accessibility. To improve this rating, at the very least an accessible portajohn with a lip of less than one inch would need to be placed in the park and appropriate parking provided for those with disabilities.

Key operational issues with this park relate to a lack of shade (other than the pavilion which has no seating), minimal parking, a lack of access for the disabled and no picnic tables in the pavilion.

#### **DNR Recreation Grant Inventory**

As of June 2, 2013 DNR Grants Management reports that Perry has not received an acquisition grant or a development grant from the MNRTF, nor have they received a development/renovation grant from the Recreation Passport Grant Fund (RPGF).

#### **Summary**

As the inventory and community description illustrate, Perry has relatively few recreation facilities nearby, with no state parks in the County and only a portion of one state wildlife area. Perry has three established parks, two managed by the City of Perry and one by the Perry Public Schools. For the City, there is not an overriding need to acquire additional parkland, rather the City needs to make better use of the existing parkland through development of new facilities, renovation of existing facilities and better maintenance. However, Perry is lacking non-motorized trails and non-motorized connection to key community assets within the City and beyond.

#### **Planning and Public Input Process**

The planning process used is what the DNR, in the Guidelines for the Development of Community Park and Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans, characterizes as the “systems approach to planning”. The needs of the community are assessed by multiple levels of public input and translated into a framework for meeting the physical, spatial and facility requirements to satisfy those needs.

The process began with a request from Planning Commission Chair Brad Sharlow in September 2012 for the senior author to update Perry’s lapsed Park and Recreation Plan. Dr. Nelson made a presentation to the Perry Planning Commission on October 1, 2012 detailing the plan update process, to which the Perry Planning Commission agreed. Dr. Nelson then agreed to pursue the plan and funding to assist Perry. He applied for a Higher Ed Technical Assistance project grant from the MSU EDA University Center for Regional Economic Innovation program to fund this planning effort. The proposal was approved October 8, 2012 and the project funded by the Regional Economic Innovation program.

Following the City of Perry’s acceptance of this arrangement, a widely publicized public meeting was held at the Perry Municipal Building on February 4, 2013 during the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting for the purposes of

a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis meeting about parks and recreation in Perry. This was publicized in the Shiawassee County Argus Press on January 24, 2013 (Appendix A) and listed on the City of Perry website prior to the meeting. Five members of the public as well as five members of the Planning Commission attended. Notes from the meeting are found in Appendix B. There was strong support to move forward with the plan and to ask about a series of possible park and recreation initiatives in the community needs assessment survey. All were supportive of a census of each Perry household for the community needs assessment survey. Based on the results of that meeting and the support of the Perry Planning Commission, the senior author developed a questionnaire that was mailed to each household in Perry to assess their recreational needs. Based on the responses to that questionnaire, the input from the public meeting, the recreation inventory of Perry, other cities in Shiawassee County, Shiawassee County and State of Michigan facilities in Shiawassee County and the judgment of the authors, a draft plan was submitted to the Planning Commission on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013. At a well-publicized regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting on June 17, 2013 the Planning Commission reviewed the draft plan and approved distribution of the plan for public input for 30 days through appropriate means including having it available at the City offices and on the City website (<http://www.perry.mi.us/index.shtml>). Following that review, a well-publicized public hearing on the plan by the City Council was held August 6, 2013 at which time the plan was adopted and integrated into the City of Perry Master Plan.

**Perry Recreation Needs Assessment  
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East Lansing, MI**

The needs assessment is presented using the questionnaire that was distributed to all City of Perry households in mid - April 2013 with a cutoff date of May 15, 2013 for receiving responses. Frequencies in the form of percentages are placed directly on the questionnaire, making it easy for the reader to follow the flow of the questionnaire and the information. The questionnaire was developed by the authors with potential action items based on public input received at a well-advertised public meeting at the Perry Municipal Building on February 4, 2013.

Of the 800 households receiving the questionnaire, 113 responded for a 14% response rate. Comparison of the demographic characteristics of respondent households to 2010 Census data suggest that the respondents were representative of the population of Perry in demographic terms (e.g. household size, percentage of households with children, etc.). All responses and commentary are in ***bold italics***. Responses given by less than 5% of respondents are typically grouped as “other” when lists are presented.

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**City of Perry  
PARK AND RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The Perry Community Outdoor Recreation Plan has expired. To be eligible for grant monies from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and other state and federal grant opportunities, the plan must be updated and follow DNR guidelines. Those grant monies provide up to a 3:1 match, meaning that for every \$1 the City puts up, the State through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund or other mechanism provides \$3 for the acquisition of outdoor recreation lands or the development of outdoor recreation facilities.

This survey is one of the methods to better understand the outdoor recreation needs of Perry residents and visitors and how those needs should be met over the next 5 years. It is a follow-up to a public “visioning” meeting held in conjunction with the Planning Commission meeting at the Municipal Building on February 4, 2013. One questionnaire has been provided for each household on Perry’s mailing list. Please take the 10 minutes necessary to respond and mail the survey back in the postage paid envelop to Dr. Chuck Nelson, 480 Wilson Road, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824. Your response is voluntary and you will remain anonymous. The data will be analyzed by park and recreation students from Michigan State University in developing the updated Perry Park and Recreation Plan. I look forward to your response if possible by April 20, 2013. Thanks for helping guide the recreation future of Perry.

**Dr. Chuck Nelson, Dept. Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies, Michigan State University and MSUE**

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Perry has two City-owned parks. The first, Jubilee Park, is located south of the railroad tracks and west of downtown. The second Veteran’s Memorial (VM) Park, formerly known as City Hall Park, is next to the Municipal Building on Polly St. A third public park is located on Perry Public Schools property, informally known as the Lower Playground.

1. Have one or more household members visited the Jubilee Park in the past 12 months? **50% Yes**  
**50% No**

1A. If **NO**, what is the ONE main reason your household doesn't use Jubilee Park?

- 30% *Boring/no interest/nothing to do*
- 13% *No kids in household*
- 13% *Don't use parks*
- 13% *Poor equipment/facilities/maintenance*
- 11% *Too old*
- 6% *Site is hangout/drug use*
- 6% *Don't know where it is*
- 2% *Other responses*

What ONE change would most encourage your household to use the Jubilee Park?

- 20% *More facilities/activities for kids*
- 20% *Better maintenance/accessibility*
- 20% *Nothing*
- 13% *More facilities/activities for adults*
- 7% *More facilities/activities for families*
- 7% *Better enforcement/security*
- 13% *Other responses*

2. If **YES**, please check ALL activities in which one or more members of your household participated while visiting Jubilee Park.

14% *Play/listen to music*    9% *Soccer*    45% *Walking/Hiking*    30% *Bicycling*    16% *Picnic*  
 20% *Community event*    14% *Private event/gathering*    29% *Relaxing/socializing*    5% *Basketball*    21% *Softball/baseball*  
 0% *In-line skate/skatebd*    57% *Playground*    18% *Other (please list: sledding, farmer's market)*

2A. For your household, what is the ONE most important reason of the above for visiting Jubilee Park ?

- 48% *Playground*
- 21% *Walk/hike*
- 9% *Softball/baseball*
- 5% *Community event*
- 5% *Relax/socialize*
- 12% *Other reasons*

2B. Please check your rating of the facilities in Jubilee Park.

<b>Athletic fields</b>	4% <i>Very Good</i>	32% <i>Good</i>	43% <i>OK</i>	21% <i>Poor</i>	0% <i>Very Poor</i>
<b>Restrooms/comfort facilities</b>	2% <i>Very Good</i>	27% <i>Good</i>	27% <i>OK</i>	36% <i>Poor</i>	7% <i>Very Poor</i>
<b>Playground</b>	2% <i>Very Good</i>	21% <i>Good</i>	34% <i>OK</i>	24% <i>Poor</i>	19% <i>Very Poor</i>
<b>Parking</b>	18% <i>Very Good</i>	42% <i>Good</i>	34% <i>OK</i>	6% <i>Poor</i>	0% <i>Very Poor</i>

2C. What is the ONE most important reason for any rating of "poor" or "very poor" for the facilities rated above? *Old, outdated, equipment/facilities in poor repair*

2D. Check your overall rating of maintenance at Jubilee Park? **4% Very Good 33% Good 46% OK 17% Poor 0% Very Poor**

2E. What ONE most important improvement would you suggest for Jubilee park?

- 65% *Better playground*
- 7% *Better maintenance*
- 5% *Better bathrooms*
- 5% *Don't invest money here*
- 11% *Other responses*

3. Have one or more household members visited VM Park in the past 12 months? **56% Yes**  
**44% No**

3A. If **NO**, what is the ONE main reason your household doesn't use VM Park?

- 39% *Boring/no interest/nothing to do*
- 30% *Don't know where it is*
- 14% *No kids in household*



3% *In-line skating/skateboarding* 50% *Playground*

0% *Other (please list: \_\_\_\_\_)*

6A. For your household, what is the ONE most important reason of the above for visiting the Lower Playground ?

- 38% *Basketball*
- 34% *Playground*
- 7% *Picnic*
- 7% *Community event*
- 14% *Other responses*

6B. Please check your rating of the facilities in Lower Playground.

<i>Athletic fields</i>	18% <i>Very Good</i>	46% <i>Good</i>	25% <i>OK</i>	7% <i>Poor</i>	4% <i>Very Poor</i>
<i>Restrooms/comfort facilities</i>	5% <i>Very Good</i>	24% <i>Good</i>	19% <i>OK</i>	24% <i>Poor</i>	29% <i>Very Poor</i>
<i>Playground</i>	10% <i>Very Good</i>	31% <i>Good</i>	38% <i>OK</i>	14% <i>Poor</i>	7% <i>Very Poor</i>
<i>Parking</i>	4% <i>Very Good</i>	36% <i>Good</i>	25% <i>OK</i>	21% <i>Poor</i>	14% <i>Very Poor</i>

6C. What is the ONE most important reason for any rating of "poor" or "very poor" for the facilities rated above? *Lack of restrooms, poor maintenance*

6D. Check your overall rating of maintenance at Lower Playground. 4% *Very Good* 52% *Good* 37% *OK* 4% *Poor* 4% *Very Poor*

6E. What ONE most important improvement would you suggest for the Lower Playground?

- 38% *More facilities/activities for kids*
- 29% *Better restrooms*
- 14% *More enforcement/security*
- 10% *Better maintenance*
- 5% *Better athletic fields/courts*
- 5% *Other responses*

**NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

7. If Perry were to provide additional outdoor recreation opportunity to residents and visitors, please list the ONE type of outdoor recreation opportunity/facility/activity that your household would most strongly support.

- 39% *Non-motorized trails*
- 20% *Playground*
- 7% *Skate park*
- 5% *Swimming pool*
- 5% *Athletic fields*
- 4% *Farmer's market*
- 4% *Adult recreation facilities (e.g. horseshoes, shuffleboard, etc.)*
- 16% *Other responses (each less than 4% of respondents)*

8. At the February 4, 2013 Perry Planning Commission meeting, citizens and Planning Commission members suggested these options as potential additional or renovated public outdoor recreational opportunities to be provided by Perry. Please check the box that best characterizes your level of support for each opportunity.

Opportunity	Strongly Support %	Moderately Support %	Neutral %	Moderately Oppose %	Strongly Oppose %	No Opinion %
Acquire land for park with pond/lake based recreation opportunities	29	21	16	10	21	3
Develop recreation facilities for park with pond/lake based recreation opportunities	29	24	18	8	19	3
Develop skate park with funds raised for this purpose	19	18	32	9	14	7
Develop disc golf at one or more existing public spaces	12	29	32	9	10	7
Develop a splash/spray park on an existing public space	31	34	16	8	7	4
Develop/renovate existing playgrounds/playscapes	58	20	10	4	2	5
Develop a system of walkable/bikeable trails in Perry to link populations and assets such as parks, schools, other recreation facilities, etc.	72	19	4	2	1	2
Plan with other local entities and Shiawassee County to develop a linked set of walkable/bikeable trails in Shiawassee County that link to Perry	66	22	6	2	1	2
Develop community garden(s) on existing public spaces	31	40	17	1	7	4

9. Please list any other suggestion for land acquisition or development to support outdoor recreation in Perry. ***Thirty-three respondents provided a suggestion and most were repeats of their priorities above in Q 8. There were no new suggestions made by more than 2 respondents.***

#### ABOUT YOUR HOUSEHOLD

These household questions help interpret how your views relate to others in like circumstances.

10. How many years have you lived in Perry? ***Ave. 23 years, median 20 years and range from 1-70 years***

11. What is your age? ***Ave. 50 years, median 50 years and range from 25-90 years of age***

12. Check whether you rent or own your home in Perry. ***11% Rent 89% Own***

13. How many people live in your household including you? ***Ave. 2.9, median 3.0 and range from 1-7. One person households=14%, two person households = 33%, three person households = 18%, four person households = 21%, five person households = 9%, greater than five persons = 4%.***

14. How many are younger than 18? ***48% of households responding had one or more persons 18 or younger in the household***

#### ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please provide any other comments you have about Perry's park and recreation needs.

**38 respondents provided additional comments. All are entered verbatim in italics.**

- Almost nonexistent at this point- what is there for teens to do? Both winter and summer- particularly in the evenings.*
- Any improvements would be greatly appreciated by everyone in the community.*
- Any improvements would promote the beautification of Perry. I support park improvements not only for personal reasons, but for draw of new residents.*
- Any trails would be a huge asset.*



- *As mentions above...we are in a "school of choice" state. So, the town needs way better athletic fields and athletic equipment in order to compete with the neighboring towns that are stealing our students.*
- *Even though I do not participate in these activities, I do support the city's efforts.*
- *Find a way to protect what he have from vandalism before you put more money and time into it. Make it safe for the community.*
- *Focus on parks and bringing young families to our city.*
- *I am not interested in paying higher taxes or fees. I do think we can be better custodians to what we have. I also this it would be a good idea to partner with the school district to provide recreational areas.*
- *I can't stress enough the need for playground equipment geared toward young children and toddlers. Also, the police might want to do some regular rounds to check on what goes on behind the hill at the end of Jubilee Park.*
- *I enjoy our parks and recreations, it's a small town and it's nice to keep a small town feelings. Family and friends and getting together for fun and games.*
- *I have large family gatherings- using the "parks" would be nice if they were more user friendly*
- *I strongly support any efforts toward the development of bike trails especially trails that would connect with other regional trail systems.*
- *I strongly oppose the development of walkable/bikeable trails in Perry because I'm assuming it may or will infringe upon private property owners land and raise their taxes without their consent. Like the city has done numerous times with their sidewalk development.*
- *I wouldn't be opposed to a dog park.*
- *I'm all for park and recreation needs in Perry. It's just that I have no need for them but would support some needs.*
- *If improving parks, especially Jubilee, there needs to be more law enforcement to monitor traffic down W. 3rd-Williams Rd as many houses have children and pets and most traffic do not comply with traffic speeds around there. Also, worries about house on corner of \_\_\_\_\_ streets. Discouraging potential people as it is an eyesore.*
- *In order to use the Jubilee Park there needs to be additional seating or picnic tables other than the pavilion.*
- *Need for police or city officials to drive-by or check Lower Playground several times a day. Teens smoking, drinking, and sexual activities. If I can see it so can you. I would be willing to help keep lower playground safe and clean and keep a safe haven for kids. There is so much this town could do to keep teens off streets and events they can do to raise money to help provide events for the younger generation. I live on Main Street in Perry. Rarely do I see police patrolling. The lower playground is used mainly for smoking, drinking, and sexual activities. I see this a lot: broken glass, trash, etc. I reported for 3 weeks that the basket hoop was broken and the plexiglass all over the ground and nothing was done. We use to have teen dances at lower playground and ice skating in winter. It was packed full of all ages. It's a shame that this city cannot provide a safer haven for the community.*

*Streetlights are a joke, provides very little light and drug free school zone, ha ha. You see kids smoking pot right across the street from elementary and on hill by high school. I'm sorry this is a complaint letter, but I used to love this town. Now it seems the only people or businesses the town really supports concern alcohol. I'm so tired of drunks racing down M-52 on Main Street why can't police see this? It's Main Street which all 3 bars are on and I see it every day. Just want to be able to proud of our community as of now,it sucks.*

- *None.*
- *Not needed, waste of money.*
- *Paved parking.*
- *Perry needs a real park. Not a giant rock, not the school playground that the kids play on every day a school, not Jubilee "park". We need a real colorful, modern, safe, fun park. Thanks for listening.*
- *Perry parks are very poorly taken care of. We need to improve the parks we now have*
- *Thank you for the "feedback" opportunity. This aides in building trust and character for our community where with a community is known by its actions.*
- *The athletic fields provided for the community are adequate and well maintained. However, the playground equipment and area can be seen and dangerous.*
- *The parks are in good locations, they just need to be updated.*
- *The parks in Perry lack popularity and leave the visitor with the idea that the park is environmentally dull as well as personally irritating sometimes. Parks are a great asset to a community. That old gravel mining area with its ponds and woods in Perry, could, with intelligent foresight be converted to one of mid-Michigan's top city parks. (large acreage)*
- *There's stuff for kids to do including the park. For once, do something park-wise for the 40 year and older age for the park. That will keep the kids off.*
- *They are fine.*
- *We have young grandchildren and would love to have a great park to take them to*
- *We like the old style equipment not just jungle gyms and bars. Teeter totters and merry go rounds are fun.*
- *We never go to any Perry parks because they are all rundown. We have to drive to Owosso or Williamston. It would be nice to stay in our own town.*
- *We really need equipment for toddlers to play on*
- *We really need good places to walk/ride bikes that are safe especially from traffic- we just don't have that- it will be great for health of community.*
- *We would love to be outside. To have activities for the kids and a place to run and bike would be wonderful.*

- *We wouldn't use the parks because of our ages and where we live, but we walk and ride bikes and run, so the trails would be great.*
- *Would enjoy natural areas with walking trails, would like to have nice play structures for young kids. I would hate to see the old gravel pit used as water area for the parks.*

In summary, the two city-owned Perry parks, Jubilee and Veterans Memorial, were used by half or more of the respondent households. The Lower Playground was used by a smaller proportion of the respondent households. None of the parks received an outstanding report card when respondents rated their athletic fields, restroom/comfort facilities, playgrounds and parking areas. However, Veteran's Memorial was generally perceived as a strong community asset. When asked what improvements could be made to the existing parks, developing facilities for children, especially more modern, safe and inviting playground facilities were the most common suggestion. When asked an open-ended question about what additional outdoor recreation opportunity citizens would like in Perry, respondents were most likely to suggest non-motorized trails followed by playgrounds. When asked to rate a set of recreation opportunities identified by a February community visioning session that included the Planning Commission, non-motorized trails, playgrounds and community gardens received the most favorable response. The demographic characteristics of respondents suggest that the respondents were relatively characteristic of the population of Perry, with a slightly higher proportion of respondents having children under 18 in the household than the 2010 Census indicated and a slightly higher proportion living in homes they owned rather than rental properties. Since this questionnaire was sent to every household in Perry (a census), all had an equal chance to respond regarding their use of Perry parks and their preferences for future outdoor recreation opportunity in the city. This provides a reliable and valid perspective of the recreational preferences and needs for the residents of the City of Perry.

### **Goals and Objectives**

Based on the needs assessment, the input from the public meeting, the recreation inventory of Perry, neighboring cities in Shiawassee County and Shiawassee County as a whole, the judgment of the senior author and the input of the Perry Planning Commission, the following goals and objectives are proposed.

#### **Goals**

Over the next five years, there are four major goals. The first is to bring the existing parks to an acceptable standard of maintenance and facilities. This would mean that Jubilee and the Lower Playground would be comparable to Veteran's Memorial in providing permanent, functioning, accessible restrooms, have appropriate site maintenance and universal access. Second, is to develop a functional system of non-motorized transportation and trail opportunities in Perry linking community assets and surrounding communities and their assets. Third is to develop a high quality playground/playscape in one or more of the Perry Parks. Fourth is to develop a disc golf course in a public location. The interest in a community garden has already been met in late Spring 2013 by the DPW providing such a facility including access to water for watering, good soils, vehicular access, etc. on property they manage. Each of the four goals is strongly supported by the responses to the Perry Recreation Needs Assessment conducted in April/May 2013.

#### **Objectives**

1. Bring Jubilee Park and the Lower Playground up to a standard of maintenance and facilities seen at Veteran's Memorial Park. This would mean that each facility and each park as a whole should have no serious maintenance or accessibility issues. Further each park should be managed as an asset that Perry is proud to have be a window on the quality of life in this developing community. Key partners may include neighborhood groups, local civic/service organizations, youth and adult softball/baseball organizations and Perry Schools.
2. Develop a non-motorized transportation/trail system in Perry connecting recreational and community assets. This may use existing roads and their rights of way, sidewalks and newly developed trails dedicated to non-motorized use. This will be done in conjunction with broader planning efforts for non-motorized circulation planning at the local, county and regional level and may also integrate with efforts of many non-profit organizations representing a variety of non-motorized trail users, Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, health interests, schools (e.g. Safe Routes to Schools), etc.

3. Develop a significant, modern playground/playscape at one park. The park with the most space in which to site such a development is Jubilee. It would also be a centerpiece of a park that lacks a focal point. It is also directly connected to neighborhoods to the south as well as having substantial parking. This may provide the impetus to bring the entire park up to the level of care clearly shown for Veteran’s Memorial, which is a scant 200 yards away on the northwest side of the rail line. Key partners would be neighborhood groups and civic/service organizations. Fundraising for such an endeavor would be likely to be highly successful.

4. Develop a disc golf course in a park or parks. Again, because of the space available and the need to convert a neglected park area to a productive use, the southwestern portion of Jubilee on the eroding side of the sledding hill may be a useful location. Information would need to be gathered about soil quality, any flooding concerns, etc. However, this would provide more friendly uses, eyes and ears and community interest in this portion of the park that appears to have received little positive use and management. Key partners may include local business that serve visitors (e.g. restaurants, gasoline stations, etc.), youth interests, Perry Schools and civic/service organizations.

5. Support the newly developed DPW community garden through information, promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, involvement in a farmer’s market and other means.

**Action Plan**

The action plan is designed to lay out a calendar of events. This is not a rigid schedule, rather it is a hoped for timetable. The action plan also does not commit the City to the dollar amounts listed. It may be that financial circumstances necessitate waiting to apply for a grant or that costs come in below those estimated. It is instead a guideline that details the intentions of the City. It should also be noted that the primary grant source noted is the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) and the Recreation Passport Grant Fund (RPGF). Both have a maximum match rate of 3:1, meaning for every one dollar the local unit puts up, the MNRTF or RPGF will provide three. Those funds do not include maintenance costs. This means that any improvement will have long term operating costs. However, development of lower maintenance facilities, greater public interest in existing parks and more partnerships with local organizations can all reduce maintenance costs to the City as well as grow support for efforts to meet the recreational needs of Perry residents and be an engine of community growth and pride. In particular, all future design/construction should emphasize low maintenance, sustainable features.

Year	Action	Possible Funding Sources	Total Estimated Cost for all Funding Sources
2013-14	Develop non-motorized trail plan in conjunction with partners in other units of government	City funds, local fundraising, DALMAC Fund, Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance, National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program	Up to \$7,500
2014-15	Develop a playground/playscape, renovate restrooms for accessibility, upgrade athletic field/facility and develop disc golf course (likely in Jubilee Park)	MNRTF, RPGF, City of Perry, civic/service organizations, local fundraising	\$100,000
2014-16	Develop accessible restrooms in Lower Playground and provide appropriate picnic facilities	Perry Schools, City of Perry, civic/service organizations, local fundraising	\$50,000
2015-17	Develop a non-motorized trail system in Perry with appropriate links to partner communities. Integrate into larger city development plans emphasizing walkable/bikeable community. Incorporate non-motorized transportation with improvements in street scape, repaving projects, etc.	MNRTF, MDOT, Shiawassee County, City of Perry, civic/service organizations, DALMAC Fund, local fund raising, etc.	Up to \$100,000

It is also important to note that these funds are contingent on Perry maintaining existing parkland and its facilities into the future. Improved maintenance is highlighted in the Perry Community Development Plan.

## **Appendix A: Meeting Notice of Initial Visioning Session February 4, 2013 in Shiawassee County Argus Press**

### **Perry officials seek input on parks**

**By CHRISTINA GUENTHNER, Argus-Press Staff Writer | Posted; Thursday, January 24, 2013 10:45 am**

PERRY - The Perry Planning Commission is looking for community input to help sculpt a new parks and recreation plan for the city.

Community members are encouraged to provide ideas during the Planning Commission meeting at 7p.m. Feb. 4 at the Perry Community Building, 203 W. Polly St.

The plan is being developed and written for the city by Dr. Chuck Nelson and students from Michigan State University's Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies with grant funding from a different arm of MSU.

"The goal is to put ideas and thoughts on the table and have a discussion," Nelson said. "Our job is to listen, then we'll use our professional judgment to put together a good plan."

Planning Commission Chairman Brad Sharlow stressed the importance of community participation.

"It 's extremely important that we get as many people out as we can," he said.

The Feb. 4 meeting will be the first of a number of opportunities the public will have to provide input, Nelson said - a survey will be sent out following the meeting, and public comment will be taken when a rough draft of the plan is submitted and before the final plan is adopted.

Sharlow said this survey will be different than one recently circulated regarding the city's master plan although information from the master plan survey will be taken into account for the parks and rec plan

The partnership came about after Sharlow approached a different professor at the university - one who taught a planning course he had taken - with the hope of getting some help with the parks and recreation plan. That professor put him in touch with Nelson, who has completed parks and rec plans for Williamston, Maple Rapids and Clinton County, among others.

Sharlow says the plan will help the city "prioritize what the community's needs are, and what they want done."

Developing a parks and rec plan will also make the city eligible to receive grant funding from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and other state and federal sources. Planning Commission members hope to use grants to acquire, develop and renovate park and recreation opportunities identified in the plan.

Nelson said he helped Perry get a \$2,500 grant from the MSU Center for Community and Economic Development, which will cover an hourly wage for students who work on the plan, in addition to other expenses like mileage and postage.

"If the city would have gone to a consultant from a private firm it would have cost them about \$10,000," Nelson said.

With the partnership with MSU, "it's not going to cost the city a dime," Sharlow said.

"It's kind of a win-win for everybody," Nelson said. "It also helps students gain expertise in their field."

He hopes to have a complete plan submitted to the city by mid-May .

Ultimately, Nelson hopes having a parks and rec plan in place will improve the city.

"Perry is a desirable place to live," he said. "One of the things people look for when they're shopping around for a place to live is a good quality of life, and a big part of that is recreation."

Brad Sharlow also plans to address the city's parks and rec plan during a community presentation about the city's master plan, at 7 p.m. Feb. 12 in the Perry Middle School auditorium.

## **Appendix B: Perry Park and Recreation Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats**

Perry Municipal Building

As Part of Regularly Scheduled Planning Commission Meeting 2/4/13

7:00PM

Phil Garcia and Shannon Mazurie, Undergraduate Students

I-Chun (Nicky) Wu, Graduate Student

Dr. Chuck Nelson, Associate Professor

Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies

Attendance: 5 citizens at large, 5 Planning Commission members, 3 MSU students, Dr. Nelson

**Overview:** Planning provides road map to future and makes Perry eligible for state and federal grants to acquire lands and develop/renovate park and recreation facilities.

- Three different grants
- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
  - 3 (state):1 (local) match
  - Acquisition and development
- Recreation Passport Grant
  - 3 (state):1 (local) match
  - Focus on renovation of existing facilities and development of new facilities
- Land and Water Conservation Fund
  - 1:1 match
  - Development of new facilities
- Planning funded by grant obtained by Dr. Nelson
  - From MSU Center for Community and Economic Development
  - Grant to assist communities and engage MSU students in planning efforts
- Plan development will follow DNR Certification Checklist
  - Will take place between February – June of 2013

### **Facilitated Discussion of Community Interests in Parks and Recreation**

Dr. Nelson led group through Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats input session.

#### **Strengths**

- The community itself is close knit
- Once something is started, and everyone is onboard, the community is strong
- There are numerous activities
  - Youth level sports such as community football, soccer, etc.
  - Different festivals
  - Perryfest, which is held every September
- Fantastic high school band
- New pavilion outside of Municipal Building extensively used
  - Weddings, churches, music events, Easter egg hunt
  - Firefighters and Police utilize the pavilion
  - Volunteers constructed the pavilion
    - VFW, Lions and citizens at large were valued partners
- Mudge Hill
  - Used for winter activities

- Mudgefest
- Chili cook-off
- Recycling Committee active in Perry

### Challenges

- Jubilee Park needs maintenance
  - Playground equipment is outdated
  - Isolated
  - Vandalism
    - Lighting, monitor/presence
  - Night hours: people were vandalizing the picnic tables
  - School had to take out the picnic tables
- Main St. Playground
- Jubilee bathrooms are locked up
- Lack of money to fund park development and maintenance
- Interest in skate park
  - Never built
  - Currently have a fraction of money needed to construct from fundraising
- Park and recreation functions not under single umbrella organization
  - City owns parks
  - Non-profit athletic leagues
  - School is involved in certain aspects
    - Seems splintered
- No non-motorized trails
- Lack of activities for adults
  - Especially for seniors
- Lack of playscapes for kids, families
- Not a destination for visitors
- Lack of knowledge regarding grants for recreation development

### Opportunities

- Build skate park
- Develop a trail in Perry along the railroad tracks
  - Later eventually connect to longer trails around the city
  - Link to Owosso/Corunna area and trail development along M21
  - Rail trail system
- Bicycles are already used heavily in Perry
  - Consider a bike oriented trail in Perry with connections to other trails
- Cooperate with Shiawassee County park and recreation and trail planning efforts
- Lions club will provide labor to renovate Jubilee Park
- Need water based park
  - Interest in a splash park
  - Wanting a lake/pond area for ice skating, fishing, etc.
  - Consider former sand/gravel operation that has been slated for development but that has lagged due to economic conditions
    - Perry Lakes Subdivision
- Develop community garden(s)
- Apply for and use federal and state grants
- Partner with adjacent townships
  - Possibilities with Recreation Authorities Act and other intergovernmental cooperation tools
- Disc golf course



- Brings in diverse group of visitors
- Local businesses, sponsorship, fund raisers,
- Community sponsors are possible
- Perryfest proceeds partially go to the community parks
  - Interest in developing outdoor theatre/stage
  - Would be beneficial for Perryfest
  - Need to consider accommodating more visitors to Perryfest
- Hosting 5k races/events
  - Fundraising recreation events
  - Would be more possible with non-motorized trail(s)
- Dog park

**Threats:**

- Lack of funding
- Need to work out better ways to coordinate/partner with the schools
- Developing an efficient and effective plan for long term maintenance of park and recreation sites and facilities

Dr. Charles Nelson  
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This report outlines the importance and benefits of public, accessible outdoor recreation. Through research and input from the community of Perry, this report also outlines a plan of action and recommendations for making Perry's parks and public spaces more numerous, more accessible, and beneficial for all who reside in the community.



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