



Acknowledgments

December 6, 2024 DRAFT

Township Board

Jim Busch, Supervisor
Toni A. Yaklin, Clerk
Ann Marie Moore, Treasurer
Tracy Butcher, Trustee
Patrick Major, Trustee

Atlas Township

7386 S. Gale Road
Grand Blanc, MI 48439
www.atlastownship.com
Ph (810) 636-2548
Fax (810) 636-6244

Master Plan and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee

J. Michael Rembor, Chair
Jan Bohlen
Jim Busch
Tracy Butcher
Jeff Dawley
Paulette Johnson
Adam Kline
Kurt Schulte
Sean Trowbridge
Greg Thurk
Mike Varacalli

Technical Assistance Provided By:



500 Griswold
Suite 2500
Detroit, MI 48226
www.wadetrim.com

This page intentionally left blank.

Table of Contents

December 6, 2024 DRAFT

1. Introduction & Community Description	1
Jurisdiction of this 5-Year Recreation Plan	1
Community and Regional Context	1
Plan Purpose and Report Organization	3
2. Administrative Structure	5
Township Administration	5
Parks and Recreation Budgets	6
Role of Volunteers and Organizations	6
Relationships with School Districts and Other Public Agencies	7
3. Recreation Inventory	9
Introduction	9
Park Classification System	10
Atlas Township Parks and Recreation Facilities	10
Local Recreation Programs	11
School Park Facilities and Programs	13
Village of Goodrich Parks	14
Other Local Parks and Recreation Facilities	14
Genesee County Parks	14
Iron Belle Trail	16
Barrier Free Accessibility	16
MDNR Recreation Grants History	16
4. Planning & Public Input Process	17
Planning Process	17
Public Engagement and Input	17
5. Recreation Needs Analysis	21
Introduction	21
Relevant Local and Regional Recreation Planning Efforts	21
Parkland and Park Facility Analysis	24
National Recreation Trends	26

6. Action Program	27
Introduction	27
Goals and Objectives	28
Recreation Improvement Recommendations	29

Appendices	
Appendix A: Funding Sources	
Appendix B: Adoption and Transmittal Documentation	



Chapter 1: Introduction & Community Description

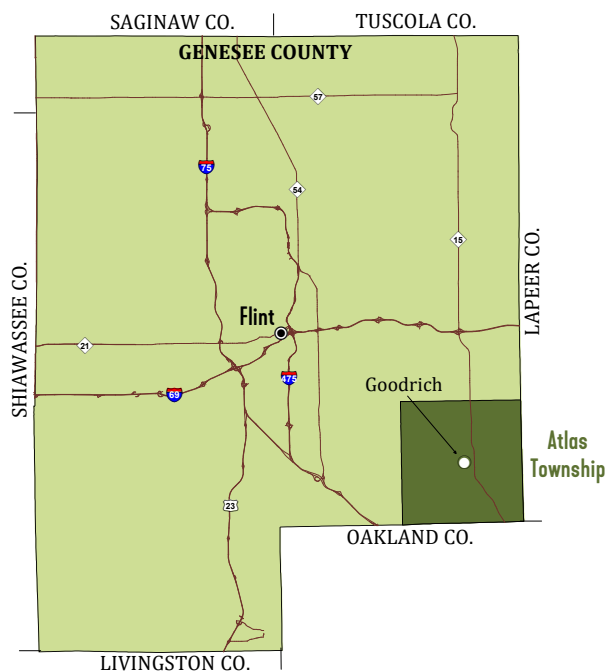
Jurisdiction of this 5-Year Recreation Plan

This 2025-2029 Recreation Plan was prepared for Atlas Township, located within Genesee County, Michigan. The plan's jurisdiction covers only those current and future recreational facilities and programs owned and administered by Atlas Township. Although the Village of Goodrich is located within Atlas Township, this recreation plan does not specifically address Village-owned and operated parks and recreation facilities. The Recreation Plan's timeframe begins in calendar year 2025 and extends through calendar year 2029, making the Township eligible to seek grant funds from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) during that time period.

Community and Regional Context

Atlas Township is located in the southeastern corner of Genesee County, Michigan, approximately 16 miles south-east of the City of Flint and 55 miles northwest of the City of Detroit. The Village of Goodrich is located in the center of the Township. Atlas Township is a place where people have chosen to live, work, and play, and, therefore, is a place where certain services and facilities are required. Recreational services, religious institutions, governmental facilities and a host of other facilities are woven together by physical infrastructure and communication routes.

Atlas Township is predominantly rural with an emphasis on preserving its historical character and agricultural heritage. The Township recognizes the role that adjacent communities and regional entities play as the primary provider of recreational facilities and programs within the area.



Atlas Township's location within Genesee County



Atlas Township is dominated by rural, agricultural, and very low density residential land use

Population Growth

Atlas Township has a total population of 6,330, according to the 2020 U.S. Census (not including the Village of Goodrich). Since 1970, Atlas Township has experienced a 173.4 percent increase in population - a growth rate that has outpaced all adjacent communities, Genesee County, and the State of Michigan. Atlas Township's high rate of growth is influenced by its shared border with Oakland County, the northern portion of which has seen significant growth as a result of the sprawling expansion of the Detroit metropolitan area. Population growth is an important factor that influences many land use decisions within a community and the larger marketplace. Simply put, if the population of an area is growing, there will likely be a need for more housing, commerce, industry, parks and recreation, public services and facilities, and roads.

Age Trends

Atlas Township's median age in 2021 was 46.1 years, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates. This is higher than all surrounding communities, except for Groveland Township, Genesee County (40.4), and the State of Michigan (39.8).

Statistics indicate that Atlas Township's population is aging. The median age of Atlas Township's population rose from 39.3 years to 46.1 years between 2010

and 2021, an increase of 17.3 percent. In comparison, the median age for the State of Michigan increased by only 3.1 percent during the same period. In terms of the change in total percentage of the population by age group, the largest increase occurred within the 65 to 74 years age group (+7.3 percentage points).

Physical Characteristics

In terms of land use, Atlas Township is dominated agricultural, open space, and single family residential uses. Agricultural lands, open spaces and/or undeveloped properties account for 57.8 percent of the Township's land area. Single family residential land use presently occupies 37.5 percent of the total Township area. Most of the area's multiple family residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional land uses are concentrated within the Village of Goodrich.

According to the "Soil Survey - Genesee County, Michigan" as published by the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), soils in Atlas Township are generally well suited for the production of crops commonly grown in the county including corn, field beans, soy beans, small grains, and alfalfa. More than 75 percent of the land in the Township is classified as either Prime Farmland or Farmland of Local Importance.

There are several lakes within the governmental limits of Atlas Township. Larger lakes include Shinanguag Lake (238 acres), Atlas Mill Pond (51 acres), Gale Lake (15 acres), Seeley Lake (13 acres), Cummings Lake (6 acres) and Kuhn Lake (2 acres). Besides their obvious aesthetic and recreational benefits, lakes serve as natural retention areas for stormwater runoff, act as a groundwater recharge resource, and also tend to moderate the microclimate in proximity to its shores. Protection of these natural assets should be given high priority in future land use planning decisions.

Surface drainage in Atlas Township is accomplished by a system of natural drainage ways, creeks, and county drains. Included is Cummings Drain, Thread Creek, Zimmerman Creek, Branch Creek, Kearsley Creek, Hoyle Drain, Hasler Creek, and Raddison Drain. Several areas of the Township, particularly along these watercourses, are prone to flooding during major wet weather events.

According to National Wetlands Inventory data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, there are several large and small wetland areas are scattered around Atlas Township. They are particularly concentrated in the northwestern portion of the Township along the Kearsley Creek, Cummings Lake and Seeley Lake.

United States Geological Survey (USGS) data for Atlas Township show the existence of numerous woodlands throughout the community. These likely second- and third-growth woodlands are valuable as wildlife habitat and for aesthetic enjoyment. In total, woodlands cover approximately 22 percent of the Township.

Plan Purpose and Report Organization

As Atlas Township continues to grow, residents have come to realize the high quality of life the community offers. The community has placed great importance on providing open spaces and maintaining a rural character. These investments are integral to the health and vibrancy of the Township.

The Atlas Township Recreation Plan 2025-2029 is meant to provide guidance for decision-makers for future improvements and development of parks, recreational facilities, and programming which serve Atlas Township's residents. In accordance with the State of Michigan's five-year cycle for recreation planning, this 2025-2029 plan provides an evaluation of the overall Atlas Township parks and recreation system to determine where improvements can be made as envisioned by the Township.

The Plan is divided into six chapters. In addition to this introduction chapter, the Plan contains:

- **Administrative Structure.** Summarizes the Township's administrative structure, specifically with regard to recreation facilities and programs
- **Recreation Inventory.** Describes the specific parks, facilities, and programs provided within and around Atlas Township
- **Planning and Public Input Process.** Documents the planning process followed to develop this Plan and the public input received
- **Recreation Needs Analysis.** Analyzes recreation program and facility needs
- **Action Program.** Identifies the Plan's goals, objectives, and recommendations and a 5-year investment plan.
- **Appendices.** Two appendices are included to supplement the Plan including:
 - Funding Sources
 - Adoption and Transmittal Documentation

This page intentionally left blank.



Chapter 2: Administrative Structure

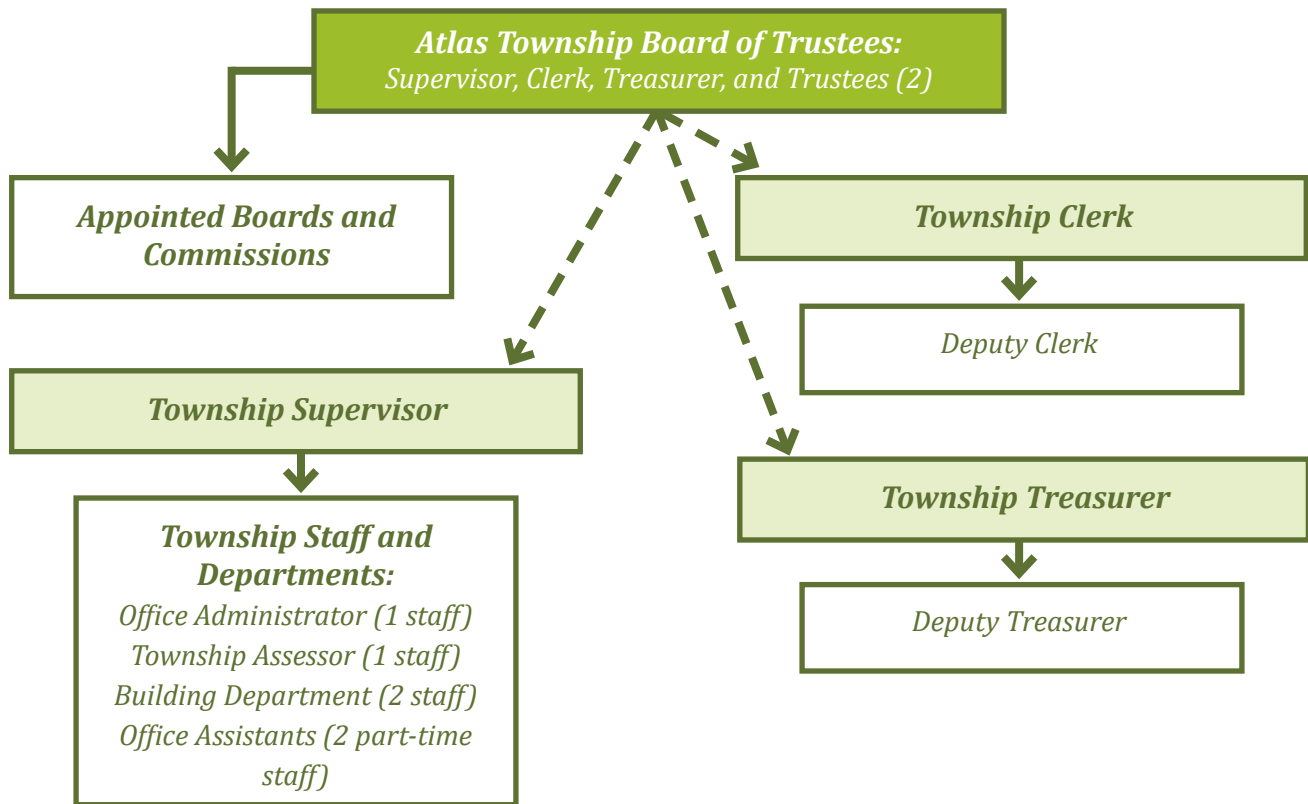
Township Administration

Atlas Township does not presently own or operate any parks or recreation facilities. Given this, it has not established a formal recreation commission or committee, and does not employ any staff who are dedicated to the management of recreational facilities or programs. Ultimately, the Township Board has final authority for any matters related to parks and recreation facilities and programs.

An organizational chart is included on the next page. The Atlas Township Board consists of elected officials including the Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer, and two Trustees. Collectively, the Township Board is the primary policy making body in the Township, responsible for personnel rules, the budget, bonding, and intergovernmental contracts. The Township Board is responsible for enacting and enforcing ordinances, coordinating public services (police, fire, community services, maintenance of public properties, etc.), and a wide variety of additional duties.

As noted in the organizational chart, the Township employs a variety of staff, including an office administrator, assessor, building official, building administrator, deputy clerk, deputy treasurer, and two part-time office assistants. Some staff are full-time while others are part-time/seasonal.

Atlas Township Organizational Chart



Parks and Recreation Budgets

Expenditures for parks and recreation would fall under the Township's General Fund, which contains a line item for Recreation & Culture. The Township's current year General Fund budget and budgets from the prior two years are highlighted in this section.

Fiscal Year 2023/24

General Fund Budget

Total Revenues - \$1,889,585

Total Expenditures - \$1,797,585

- Recreation & Culture Fund - \$42,353

Fiscal Year 2022/23

General Fund Budget

Total Revenues - \$1,562,986

Total Expenditures - \$1,526,986

- Recreation & Culture Fund - \$27,931

Fiscal Year 2021/22

General Fund Budget

Total Revenues - \$1,148,954

Total Expenditures - \$1,194,954

- Recreation & Culture Fund - \$24,306

Recreational Pathways Fund

Additionally, the Township maintains a Recreational Pathways Fund, with a current balance of \$345,207 as of the FY 2023/24 budget. This "nonmajor governmental fund" is restricted for the development of recreational pathways only.

Role of Volunteers and Organizations

As a small township, Atlas Township has limited monetary and staff resources to dedicate toward parks and recreation. Therefore, it must rely on citizen volunteers and volunteer organizations to support culture and leisure programming and other quality of life initiatives.

An example is the volunteer Walk, Bike, Run citizen group. Walk, Bike, Run Atlas Township is an unofficial, community led group focused on increasing the amount of non-motorized paths within Atlas Township.

Walk, Bike, Run is led by two co-chairs. The group holds regular monthly meetings open to the public. They have secured funding from several sources for different projects. Sources include :

- Genesee County Metropolitan Alliance
- Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Trails Fund
- Atlas Township
- Grand Blanc Township

Most of this funding is from state and federal sources, with matching requirements provided by local funds. The group's involvement in Atlas Township has been a driving force behind enhanced non-motorized pathways in the community.

Another example volunteer organization is the Goodrich Soccer Club, which is operated by non-paid parent volunteers who live in the Goodrich area. They are a member of the Michigan State Youth Soccer Association and provide soccer programming for youth within the Goodrich and Atlas Township community.

Relationships with School Districts and Other Public Agencies Involved in Recreation

Atlas Township is served by three public school districts: Goodrich Area Schools, Davison Community Schools, and Grand Blanc Community Schools. These three school districts maintain facilities which are open to the public through various community education and community activity programs. They also maintain parks and recreational facilities, which, when not in use for school activities, may be made available for general public use. Atlas Township maintains strong relationships with the three public school districts within the area to promote shared interests, including related to parks and recreation.

Atlas Township has a long-standing relationship with Genesee County Parks. This relationship is especially important, as Atlas County Park (owned and operated by Genesee County Parks) is the largest, public recreational facility within the Township. An example of local coordination with Genesee County Parks is the recent improvement of the Atlas County Park with walking trails, signage, benches, and parking improvements that was spearheaded by local groups including Walk, Bike, Run Atlas Township.

This page intentionally left blank.



Chapter 3:

Recreation Inventory

Introduction

Developing a complete inventory of facilities, programs, and events is an essential component of a five-year recreation plan, as it provides the base of information for developing the Action Program. Understanding the facilities, programs, and events that are available to area residents will assist decision making in the future.

The **Recreational Facilities Map** highlights the locations of all recreational facilities in Atlas Township. This inventory includes public facilities as well as privately-owned (commercial and non-profit) facilities that are available to the public.

Inventory Process

The following inventory and subsequent analysis were developed using the recommended park classifications and facility guidelines of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). These guidelines were developed in 1983 and are used to help identify needed recreational facilities in the community. While they provide a baseline for measuring whether existing facilities meet community needs, the Township should balance these guidelines with other needs evident in the community.

Park Classification System

Table 2-1 shows the suggested NRPA classification of local parks. The NRPA has established these generally recognized standards for classifying types of parkland as a means for determining the primary purpose or use of existing facilities within a community.

Local, municipally-operated parks generally fall into one of three categories based on size and function: mini-park; neighborhood park; and, community park. Mini-parks are small parks within neighborhoods that serve residents within the immediate vicinity. Neighborhood parks are somewhat larger and provide amenities for residents generally within a one-half mile radius. Community parks are larger parks, with varying facilities and amenities, that meet the needs of residents generally within a 1½ mile radius. Beyond these three “standard” park types, the NRPA also recognizes specialized park types, such as sports complexes, natural resource areas, greenways/pathways, and trails.

Atlas Township Parks and Recreation Facilities

Atlas Township does not presently own or maintain any parks properties or facilities. The only Atlas Township managed recreational amenity is the shared use path system - Atlas Pathway.

Atlas Pathway

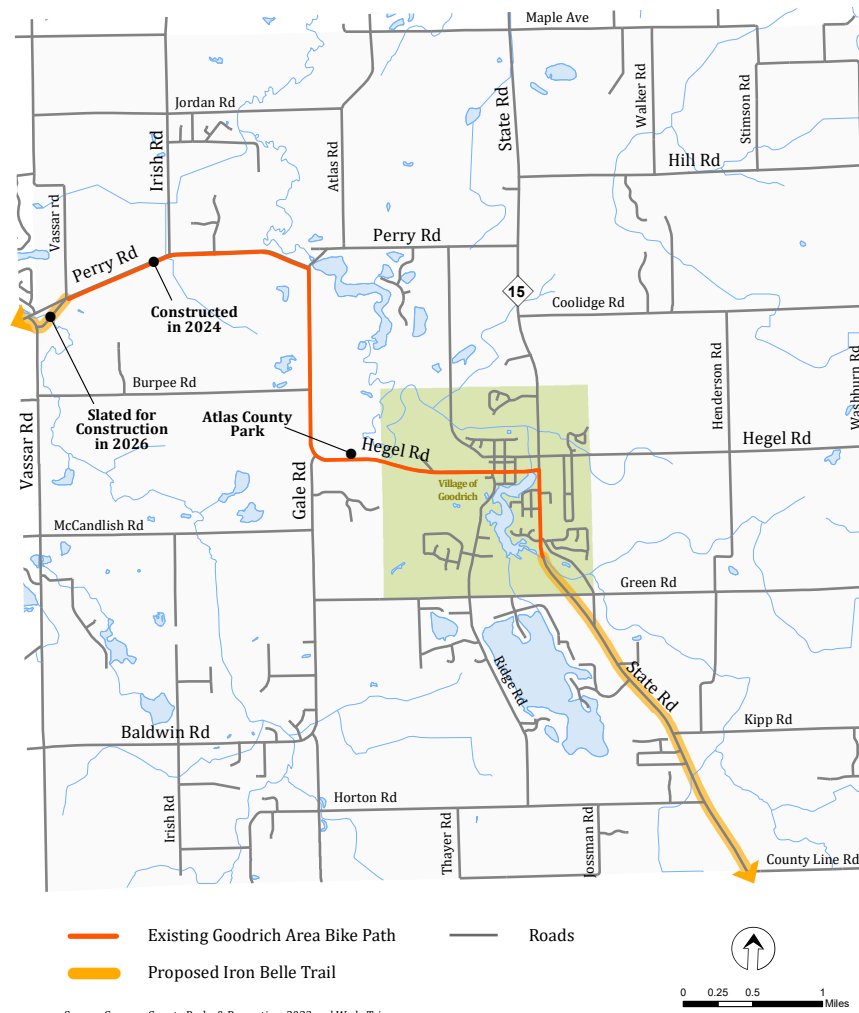
Discussed in more detail later in this chapter, the state-wide Iron Belle Trail route (consisting of existing and proposed segments of trail) runs through Atlas Township and the Village of Goodrich. A portion of this trail system has been completed within Atlas Township - the Atlas Pathway. The Atlas Pathway is a shared use path that is located within Genesee County road right-of-way but is maintained by Atlas Township.

The Atlas Pathway starts at the Village of Goodrich border and runs along both Hegel Road and Gale Road. The pathway connects the unincorporated community of Atlas (located at the intersection of Gale and Perry Road) with the Village of Goodrich. Important public

Park Type	Description	Service Area	Setting	Typical Size
Mini	- Small specialized parks that serve the needs of residents in the surrounding neighborhood, often with playgrounds. - Provides daily places for those who cannot travel	¼ mile	Residential	2,500 sq. ft. to one acre
Neighborhood	- Multi-purpose facilities that serve a local recreational and social focus. - Provides both active and passive recreation.	¼ mile to ½ mile	Away from main roads	Five to ten acres
Community	- Meets larger community-wide needs. - Preserves unique landscapes and open spaces.	½ mile to three miles	Varies	30 to 50 acres
School	- Facilities located on public school property. - Generally used for school athletic programs but maybe open to the public.	Determined by school location, age of student population, and site size		
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to a larger site.	Strategically located	Variable	40 to 80 acres
Natural Resource Areas	- Lands set aside for preservation due to significant natural resources, landscapes, or aesthetics. - May be used only for passive recreation.	Determined by the resource, site location, and size		
Greenway/Pathway	- Linear parks generally measured in feet/miles rather than acres - Can link parks together for a continuous park. - Predominately designed for non-motorized exercise (walking, running, bicycling) and safe travel.	Depends on available resources and location		
Cross-Country Ski Trail	- Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross-country skiing. - Loop trails often included in larger parks.	Depends upon suitable available location		
Equestrian Trail	- Trails developed for horseback riding. - Maybe developed as multipurpose trails with hiking and mountain biking (where conflicts may be managed).	Depends upon suitable available location		

"A Recommended Classification System for Local and Regional Recreation Open Space and Trails," National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). 1983 and updated in 1995.

Existing Trails/Iron Belle Trail Route Map



facilities are located along the Atlas Pathway, including the Atlas Valley Country Club, Atlas Township Hall, Goodrich Middle School, Oaktree Elementary School, Goodrich High School, and Atlas County Park. This trail sees heavy use from residents, particularly between the schools and the Village.

An additional segment of the Atlas Pathway was completed in the Fall of 2024. This new segment runs along Perry Road from the unincorporated community of Atlas to Mancour Drive. Walk, Bike, Run Atlas Township spearheaded the pathway expansion effort and helped secure outside funding sources, while Atlas Township provided local matching funds for the expansion project. With the completion of this segment, only a short segment remains to be completed along Mancour Drive to the Grand Blanc Township border. This final segment is slated for construction in 2026.

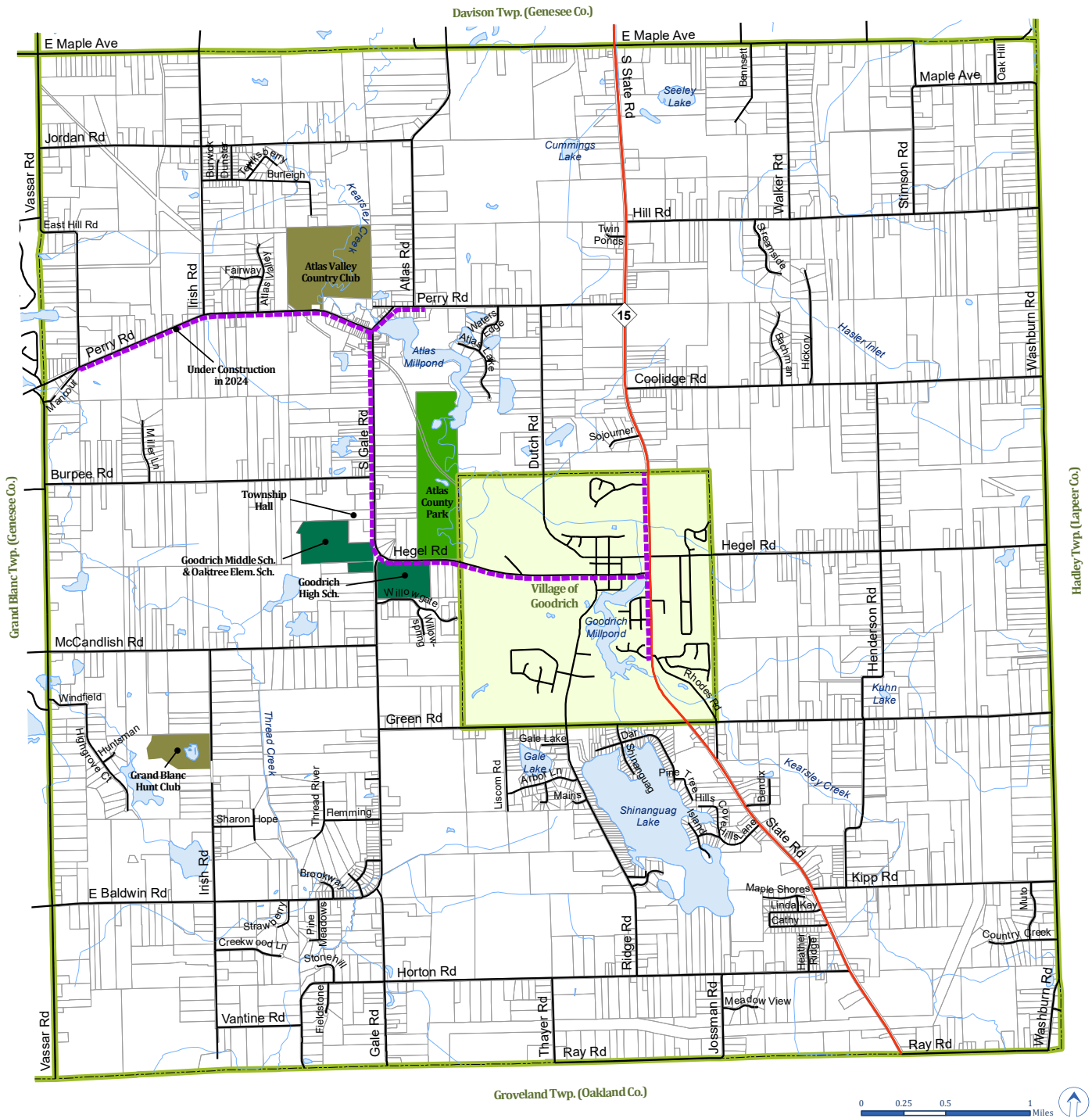
Local Recreation Programs

Although not directly affiliated or overseen by Atlas Township, several local community groups are engaged in recreational programming.

Goodrich Soccer Club

Goodrich Soccer Club is a designated 501c(3) charity by the IRS and a Michigan limited Liability Corporation operated by non-paid parent volunteers who live in the Goodrich Area. They are a member of the Michigan State Youth Soccer Association. There are two levels of play for a youth soccer player to participate: 1) recreational soccer league for children from preschool to teen age years; and, 2) travel (or competitive) teams designed to grow skills further and faster.

Recreation Inventory Map



Goodrich United Methodist Church

Located on M-15 within the Village of Goodrich, the United Methodist Church offers pickleball and open gym to the public throughout the year.

School Park Facilities and Programs

School-aged children in Atlas Township attend one of three school districts which serve the community: Goodrich Area Schools, Davison Community Schools, and Grand Blanc Community Schools. These three school districts maintain facilities which are open to the public through various community education and community activity programs.

Because they are not owned by the Township and are subject to limitations at the discretion of the respective school boards, school facilities are not officially counted in the community parks and recreation land inventory. However, school open space, gymnasiums, meeting rooms, athletic fields, and playgrounds all contribute to the larger recreation system and warrant consideration.

Goodrich Area Schools

The Goodrich Area School district covers almost all of Atlas Township. In addition to serving almost all school-aged children in the Township, three of the four schools within the district are located in Atlas Township: Oaktree Elementary, Goodrich Middle School, and Goodrich High School. Goodrich Area Schools generally allow outdoor facilities to be used by the public when not in use for school functions.

Goodrich High School contains most of the district's facilities. The high school contains three natural grass multi-use fields, one artificial multi-use field, one track oval, one baseball diamond, one softball diamond, eight tennis courts, a weight room, and two gymnasiums. Lastly, the high school provides a stage in its auditorium and a performing arts facility which houses practice rooms and music rooms for the choir, orchestra, and concert bands.

The middle school offers a gymnasium as well as one music room, a stage in the cafeteria, a playground, one football field, two ball diamonds, and six soccer fields.

Oaktree Elementary contains another gymnasium with a small stage, three soccer fields, one playground, and one tot lot. All playground equipment is ADA accessible.

Lastly, Goodrich Area Schools host a number of community recreation programs and events. The high school provides facilities for local Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball, travel softball/baseball, travel volleyball leagues, and karate.

Goodrich Community Education Program

Operated by Goodrich Area Schools, the Community Education Program currently offers a softball/baseball program for children between the ages of 4 and 13. Funding for the program is obtained through user fees and an operating budget established by the school board. Activities, classes, and programs are held at the various schools.

Davison Community Schools

Davison Community Schools services are available for Atlas residents who live in the northeastern portion of the Township. Davison Community Schools does not have any schools located within the boundary of Atlas Township; however, the schools are in close proximity and provide key services to the residents of Atlas.

Davison Middle and High Schools are located in and around the City of Davison. The closest school facility to Atlas Township is Gates Elementary School, which is located near the intersection of Irish and Atherton Road. Gates Elementary's amenities are located within and behind (east) the school. These include a large playground, one outdoor basketball court, a gymnasium, two ball fields, and three soccer fields.

Davison Middle School contains a football field, one indoor basketball court, a track oval, two ball fields, and a multi-use field.

Davison High School maintains a gymnasium, auditorium, ten tennis courts, eight soccer fields, one multi-use field, three football fields, one baseball field, one softball field, one multi-use field, and a track oval.

Davison Community Enrichment and Recreation

Davison Community Schools has worked hard to deliver widely-available recreational opportunities to area residents. Known as Davison Community Enrichment and Recreation (DCER), this program is governed by a consortium of local governmental agencies including the City of Davison, Davison Township, and Davison Community Schools. Registration fees are required for program participation.

Grand Blanc Community Schools

Residents living in the northwestern area of the Township are serviced by Grand Blanc Community Schools. The vast majority of Atlas residents within the Grand Blanc school district area send their children to Myers Elementary school just west of Vassar Road. The elementary school provides a small gymnasium with stage, two sets of playground equipment, two outdoor basketball courts, a soccer field, and a large multi-use field.

Middle school aged children attend Grand Blanc East Middle School on Perry Road. East Middle provides a large gymnasium, one multi-use field, one track oval, three baseball diamonds, and one softball diamond.

Grand Blanc High School is located in the City of Grand Blanc. It provides a gymnasium, auditorium, music room, indoor swimming pool, indoor basketball court, ten tennis courts, two baseball diamonds, one softball diamond, and one football field.

Village of Goodrich Parks

Although not under the jurisdiction of Atlas Township, the Village of Goodrich operates several parks which are readily accessible to Township residents. A description of these village parks is included below.

Goodrich Commons Park

Goodrich Commons Park is located along Kearsley Creek between Erie Street and Hegel Road. The park offers tennis, basketball, play equipment, and picnic areas. Residents utilize the park facilities and the open space areas are popular for community events, family reunions, picnics, and fund-raisers. A path was recently constructed providing easier access to the park from Hegel Road.

Huron Street Park

The village purchased a 40 foot by 60 foot piece of land on the Goodrich Mill Pond to provide access to the pond for fishing.

Kearsley Creek Park

Totalling 6 acres, this site features frontage on Kearsley Creek, and includes wetlands, floodplain, significant vegetation, and upland area. The park is located behind Ried Elementary School. This site protects the sensitive ecosystem along this segment of the Kearsley Creek. In the future, the village intends to encourage similar preservation from adjoining sites that could develop. Current park plans for the site include a trail

system, play equipment near Cemetery Street, and a seating/picnic area.

Village Hall Site

The village purchased land north of the downtown along State Road and developed a new Village Hall and Department of Public Works facility. The buildings sit on three acres with some available land for a possible small-scale passive park and the lower level of the building can be used for meetings or classes.

Other Local Parks and Recreation Facilities

Several facilities are located within Atlas Township that are privately owned, but may generally be available to the public for a fee or as part of club membership. These include:

Atlas Valley Golf Club

The Atlas Valley Golf Club is located on the north side of Perry Road, west of the unincorporated community of Atlas. This facility is open to members as well as the general public for a fee. In addition to the golf course, the club offers a bar and grill, banquet hall, pickleball courts and an outdoor pool.

Grand Blanc Huntsman's Club

The Grand Blanc Huntsman's Club is located on 80 acres in the southwest quadrant of Atlas Township. The club features a clubhouse (with kitchen facilities), four skeet fields, and pistol and rifle ranges (25-, 50-, 100- and 200-yards). Membership is open to all persons.

Genesee County Parks

Genesee County Parks manages Michigan's largest county park system with more than 11,000 acres of property. One Genesee County Park -- Atlas County Park -- is located within Atlas Township. The remaining parks are spread throughout Genesee County. A listing of the facilities provided at each park is provided below. Not included in the listing below, the Genesee County Parks also operates four parks in partnership with the City of Flint which are located within Flint. These four parks include Flint Park Lake Park, Max Brandon Park, McKinley Park, and Thread Lake Park.

Atlas County Park

Atlas County Park contains 150 acres of land and is located on the north side of Hegel Road, just west of the Village of Goodrich. The park is open to the public from 8 am to sunset every day. The park is an ideal location for outdoor enthusiasts. Visitors can traverse diverse landscapes, with many trails that wander through

fields and ponds. Fishing opportunities abound along the banks of Kearlsey Creek, which meanders through the property. Visitors can launch kayaks or canoes for a scenic paddle to Atlas Millpond. A small parking lot is found near the Hegel Road entrance.

Formerly privately owned, this property became public through a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund along with local matching funds.

Other County Parks

Although not described in detail, below is a listing of the other Genesee County Parks along with the major facilities found within each park.

Bluebell Beach

- Pavilions
- Walking trail
- Beach
- Splash pad

Crossroads Village & Huckleberry Railroad

- Historic village and railroad

Stepping Stone Falls

- Man-made waterfall feature
- Picnic areas

Bluegill Boat Launch

- Boat launch
- Snowmobile areas

Buell Lake County Park

- Ball diamonds
- Pavilions
- Picnic areas and playground.
- Fishing site
- Radio-controlled model airplane field
- Snowmobile area

For-Mar Nature Preserve and Arboretum

- Nature preserve
- Arboretum
- Hiking trails

Davison Roadside County Park

- Sledding hill
- Picnic area
- Pavilion

Linden County Park

- Ball diamonds
- Beach
- Cross-country ski trails
- Paved multi-use trail

- Intermediate sledding and toboggan hill
- Pavilions
- Picnic areas and playground
- Snowmobile area
- Tennis courts

Flushing County Park

- Ball diamonds
- Cross-country ski trails
- Pavilions
- Picnic areas and playground
- Tennis courts

Everett A. Cummings Center

- Equestrian complex
- Waterfowl hunting
- Snowmobile area

Mounds Off-Road Vehicle Area

- ORV area

Richfield County Park

- Ball diamonds
- Bicycle motocross track (BMX)
- Canoe launching site
- Cross-country ski trails
- Pavilion
- Picnic areas and playground
- Snowmobile area
- Tennis courts

Goldenrod Disc Golf Course

- 18 basket disc golf course
- Snowmobile area

Hogsback Area

- Hiking
- Fishing
- Horseback riding
- Dog training area
- Cross country skiing

Walleye Pike Boat Launch

- Boat launch
- Picnic area
- Snowmobile areas

Wolverine Campground & Buttercup Beach

- Campgrounds
- Beach
- Outdoor activities

Iron Belle Trail

As noted earlier, the Iron Belle Trail travels through Atlas Township and the Village of Goodrich. The Atlas Pathway segment has been completed, with the exception of the small segment along Mancour Drive to the Grand Blanc Township border, which is slated for construction in 2026. The segment along M-15, south of the Village, is also incomplete. Atlas Township supports the efforts to complete the Iron Belle Trail within the Township limits.

The Iron Belle Trail is a state trail that is envisioned to traverse Michigan from Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood in the western Upper Peninsula. This trail is being built to offer two different non-motorized options, one route will be for bicycles (eastern side of the State) while the other route will be for hiking (western side of the State). The bike portion of the Iron Belle Trail is the one which traverses Atlas Township.

Barrier Free Accessibility

The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) required all areas of public service to have barrier-free accessibility, including parks and recreation facilities. The evaluation of the parks and facilities in Atlas Township includes an assessment of their barrier-free access. In accordance with the MDNR standards, facilities were evaluated to determine if persons with limited sight, hearing, mobility and comprehension can safely and independently access and use the park or facility. The following evaluation system (**Table 2-2**) was used to rank each facility's accessibility: Seeing as Atlas Township does not own or operate any parks, the rating scale has been applied only to the Atlas Pathway (**Table 2-3**).

Table 2-2 Levels of Park Accessibility	
Level	Characteristics
0	- Completely undeveloped and left in a natural state. - No paved surfaces.
1	- Not accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities. - Few paved areas. - Facilities such as play equipment and picnic areas are not easily accessible.
2	- Somewhat accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities - Either the parking or pathways are paved, but not both. - Many of the facilities, such as play equipment or picnic areas, are not easily accessible.
3	- Mostly accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities. - Most of the parking and pathways are paved. - Some of the facilities, such as play equipment or picnic areas, are accessible but may not be completely barrier-free.
4	- Completely accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities. - Parking areas and pathways are paved. - Most of the facilities, such as play equipment or picnic areas, are easily accessible.
5	- Completely accessible and designed using the principles of Universal Design. - Enables all environments to be usable by everyone, regardless of age, ability, or situation.

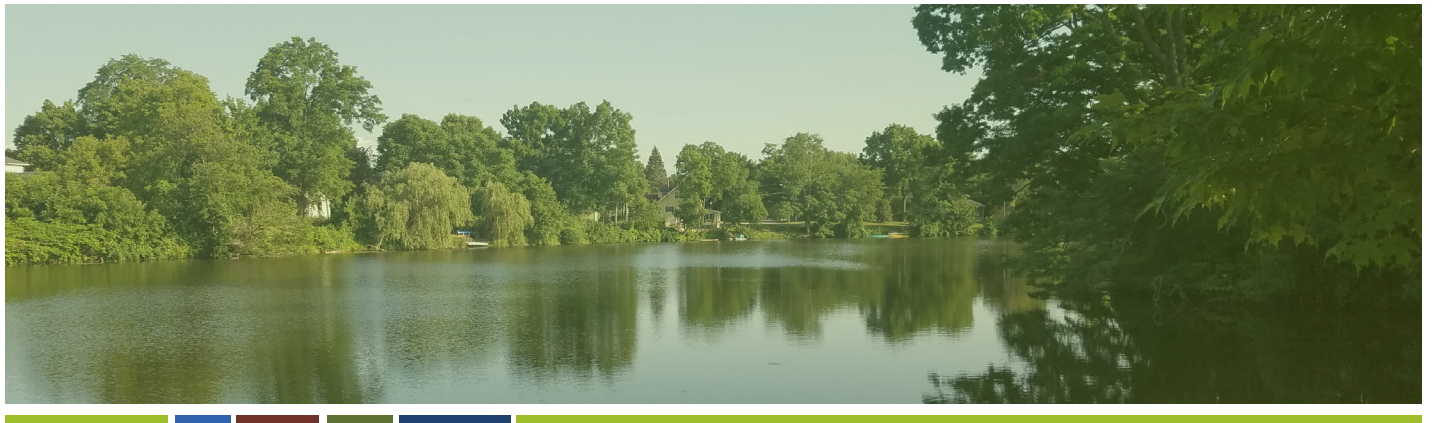
Table 2-3 Atlas Township Accessibility Rating		
Facility	Miles	Accessibility Rating ¹
Goodrich/Atlas Trail	2.5	4

¹ See Table 2-2 for levels of accessibility

MDNR Recreation Grants History

Atlas Township has not applied for or obtained any recreation grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in the past.

Although the construction of the Atlas Pathway was supported by a MDNR Trust Fund Grant, the official applicant was Genesee County Parks, not Atlas Township.



Chapter 4: Planning & Public Input Process

Planning Process

The 2025-2029 Atlas Township Recreation Plan was prepared under the direction of a steering committee consisting of members of the Township Board, Planning Commission, and the public. The Recreation Plan was prepared concurrently with the development of a new Township Master Plan. The planning process started in the Summer of 2023 and featured several opportunities for public engagement on parks and recreation needs. These engagement activities, and the input received, are summarized in this chapter.

The draft Recreation Plan was made available for public review in December 2024, well in advance of the public hearing. The availability of the draft plan and the upcoming public hearing was officially noticed and published in the _____ on December __, 2024. A public hearing on the draft Recreation Plan was held in front of the Township Board on January __, 2025. After holding the public hearing, the Atlas Township Board adopted the Recreation Plan by resolution at their January __, 2025 meeting.

Public Engagement and Input

The public engagement opportunities held during the planning process included an online survey and a public open house. These activities, and the feedback received, are summarized below.

Online Citizen Survey

An online survey was made available to the public in the Fall of 2023. The survey was advertised on the Township's website, social media outlets, and the local newspaper. Hard copies of the survey were also made available at the Township offices during business hours. A total of 463 surveys were completed. The results of the survey are summarized below.

Filters were applied to the survey results to evaluate differences in opinion between various segments of respondents. For the purposes of this analysis, the following four respondent segments were considered:

1. **Younger Respondents** (29 years or younger – see Question #1 – 40 total)
2. **Older Respondents** (65 years or older – see Question #1 – 92 total)
3. **Atlas Residents** (Atlas Township residents only – see Question #3 – 337 total)
4. **New Residents** (lived in Atlas Township between 0 and 9 years – see Question #4 – 110 total)

The survey summary narrative, below, identifies instances where differences in the responses across the respondent segments were especially notable.

Age

The age of the survey respondents saw notable variation, with people age 30 to 49 representing the highest group of respondents (38%), followed by respondents age 50 to 64 (34%).

Household

Most (35%) of respondents said there were only two individuals living in their household. Less than 10% said they lived alone. 24% said 3 people and the remaining 32% said 4 or more people lived with them.

Residence Status

73% of participants said they lived in Atlas Township, 24% said they lived in the Village of Goodrich, and the remaining responses varied. Popular write-in responses included Hadley, Davison, and Grand Blanc.

Residence Tenure

The majority (39%) of respondents have lived in Atlas Township for more than 20 years. The second highest response was those who have lived in the Township between 10 to 19 years (22%). Among the Older Respondents segment, 65% have lived in the Township for more than 20 years.

Relation to Community

87% of people who took the survey live in Atlas Township. 14% work in Atlas, 13% attend school, and 11% own a business in the Township.

Positive Aspects

When asked what Atlas Township's most positive aspects are, the 5 most popular answers were:

1. Rural or small town character (75%)
2. Safe neighborhoods and community (64%)
3. Quality of the school district (52%)
4. Limited or no congestion (51%)
5. Friendly people or atmosphere (40%)

Three of the four respondent segments listed these same top 5 positive aspects in the same order or frequency. The Younger Respondents segment was unique from the other segments, featuring these top 5 positive aspects:

1. Access to non-motorized transportation (trails, bike paths, sidewalks, etc.) (45%)
2. Quality of housing and neighborhoods (42%)
3. Safe neighborhoods and community (39%)
4. Quality of the school district (35%)
5. Rural or small town character (32%)

Negative Aspects

When asked what Atlas Township's least favorable aspects are, the top 5 least favorable aspects were:

1. Lack of dining options (48%)
2. Lack of shopping, retail, and service options (36%)
3. Lack of access to high speed internet (34%)
4. Lack of entertainment options (30%)
5. Housing costs (18%)

Lack of dining options was the top choice across all four respondent segments. However, there were some differences between the respondent segments:

- Younger Respondents included lack of community spirit or civic mindedness, blighted or deteriorating businesses, and blighted or deteriorating homes or neighborhoods in their top 5 least favorable aspects
- Older Respondents included lack of senior services in their top 5
- Atlas Residents included loss of rural or small-town character in their top 5
- New Residents cited lack of recreation options in their top 5

While lack of access to high speed internet was a common answer for all respondents overall (34%), it was not a common answer among Younger Respondents, with only 13% citing it as an issue.

What Would You Change?

Participants were given the option to provide a write-in response about what they'd change about Atlas Township. Some of the most common answers included improving road quality, paving dirt roads, lower taxes, stopping new housing developments, more non-motorized paths, and a higher quality grocery store in the area.

Recreation Facilities

Respondents were given a list of recreational facilities and were asked to indicate whether more should be developed or enough are available in Atlas Township. The recreational facilities receiving the greatest number of votes for "more should be developed" included:

1. Nature areas (54%)
2. Bike paths/hiking/walking trails (52%)
3. Canoe/kayak launches (44%)
4. Multi-use pathways (42%)
5. Sledding hills (38%)

Recreational facilities which received the least number of votes for "more should be developed" included golf courses (7%), cricket fields (7%) and tennis courts (13%).

Generally, the Older Respondents, Atlas Residents and New Residents segments had similar preferences for the types of recreational facilities that should be developed. Younger Respondents had more unique preferences with canoe/kayak launches (43%), disc golf courses (43%) and spray parks/splash pads (40%) receiving the highest number of votes for "more should be developed."

Recreation Funding

Participants were asked if they would support increased taxes to provide funds for recreational facilities. Overall, 39% said yes, 39% said no, and 22% said they were undecided. The Younger Respondents and New Residents segments were generally more supportive of increased taxes to fund recreational facilities, while the Older Respondents and Atlas Residents segments were generally less supportive.

Recreation Access

Overall, 79% of respondents said they most commonly get to parks and recreation facilities by car, while 12% said bike and 9% said they walked. Among Younger Respondents, the most common answer was bike (47%).

When asked if it was convenient and safe for them to access the nearest park or non-motorized trail by walking or biking from their home, answers varied widely. 43% either agreed or strongly agreed, 42% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 15% were neutral.

As the survey closed, respondents were asked to share any barriers they face when trying to access nearby parks or non-motorized facilities. Common answers included lack of facilities and the need to drive in order to access facilities. The most common answer was a lack of sidewalks.

Public Open House

Atlas Township hosted a Public Open House in June 2024 as part of the Recreation Plan development process. The open house was attended by 30 citizens. The open house provided an opportunity for citizens to view and weigh-in on parks and recreation issues including parks and recreation needs and proposed non-motorized trails.

One of the stations set up during the public open house encouraged attendees to share their thoughts and ideas related to:

1. Where new parks and recreation facilities should be located
2. The size, scale, and/or character of new parks and recreation facilities
3. The source(s) of funding to support these new facilities

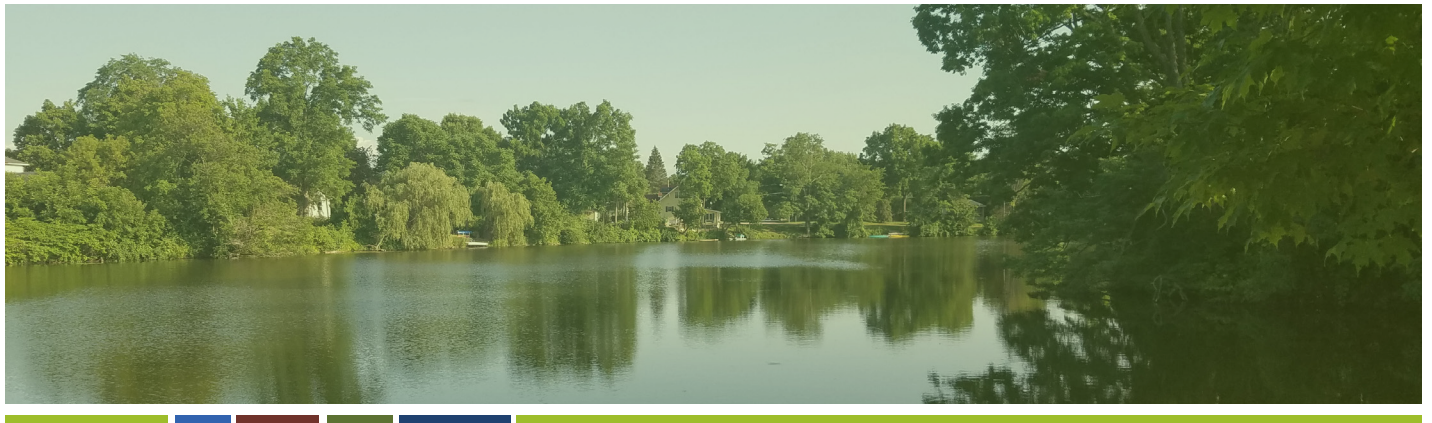
Another station presented a proposed trails system vision for Atlas Township. Attendees were encouraged to add comments about the proposed trail system.

Comments received during the Public Open House showed broad support for parks and recreation facilities, including trails. Specific comments included the need to develop new outdoor recreational activities, new trail facilities, and to provide public access to the Atlas Mill Pond.

Public Hearing

A properly noticed public hearing was held on January ____, 2025 in front of the Atlas Township Board.

[insert description of any comments received during the public hearing]



Chapter 5: Recreation Needs Analysis

Introduction

An essential task in the recreation planning process is to determine the needs of the community. The first step in determining community needs was to engage and seek input from the community. This was accomplished through the public engagement opportunities summarized in Chapter 4. In addition to public input, this chapter employs several methods to reveal recreation needs, including an analysis of relevant local and regional recreation initiatives and comparing the Township to established recreation standards.

Relevant Local and Regional Recreation Planning Efforts

Village of Goodrich

Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2015-2020)

The Village of Goodrich Parks and Recreation Master Plan serves to provide an overall vision and direction for the improvement and development of parks and recreation facilities. It includes a brief description of the community, a description of the administrative structure that supports the public parks, a recreation inventory, and the documentation of the planning process.

The plan acknowledges the current deficiency of local parkland in the area. A special incentive to acquire more land, similar to the land acquired for the Atlas County Park, is stressed throughout the document.

Atlas Township Trail Plan/ Walk, Bike, Run Atlas Township (2023)

The Walk, Bike, Run Atlas Township group consists of residents and local officials working towards expanding trails within Atlas Township. The group facilitated a trails survey in 2022 and prepared a trail plan in 2023. The trail plan includes a long-term vision for the development of new trails. The following trail priorities are outlined in the plan:

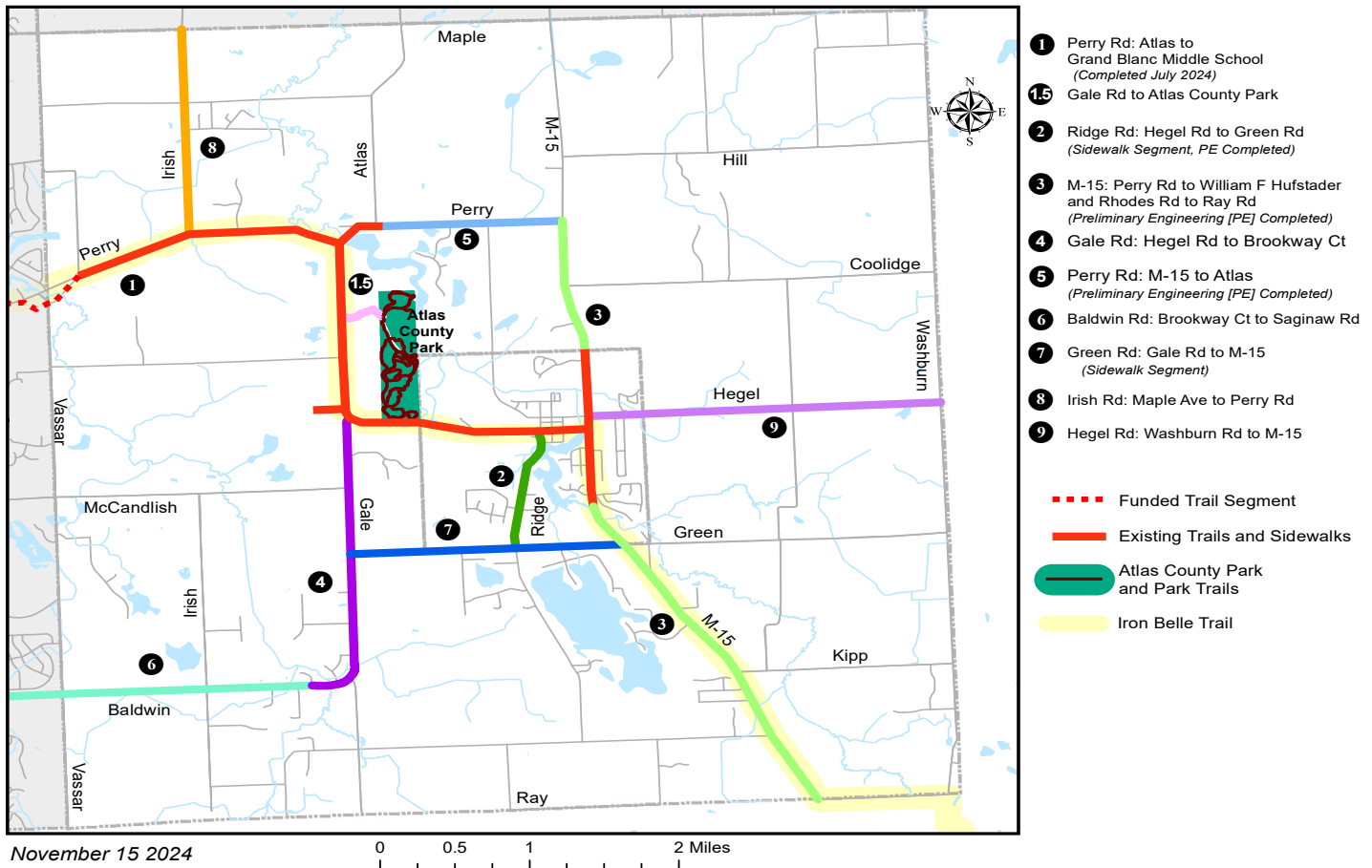
1. Perry Road: Atlas to Grand Blanc Middle School (under construction as of Fall 2024)
2. Trail spur from Gale Road connecting to Atlas County Park
3. Ridge Road: Hegel Road to Green Road
4. M-15: Perry Road to William F. Hufstader and Rhodes Road to Ray Road
5. Gale Road: Hegel Road to Brookway Court
6. Perry Road: M-15 to Atlas
7. Baldwin Road: Brookway Court to Saginaw Road
8. Green Road: Gale Road to M-15
9. Irish Road: Maple Avenue to Perry Road
10. Hegel Road: Washburn Road to M-15

Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission 5-Year Plan (2019-2024)

The Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission has created the “Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission Five Year Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan” as a tool to guide the development and preservation of the Genesee County Parks system in a manner that is consistent with its mission of “providing affordable, quality recreational facilities and programs to all citizens of Genesee County, and to act as a conservator of publicly-held recreational lands and facilities, historical structures, and educational facilities”.

The plan has a particular focus on improvements to the existing county-owned park facilities, such as Atlas County Park. For the Atlas County Park, the plan states its intention to support improvements to the park and will continue to investigate land acquisitions for park land designation and development.

Trail Priorities from Atlas Trail Plan



This report outlines the current state of Genesee County's trail network. The plan noted more than 92 miles of non-motorized pathways will have been constructed in Genesee County by the end of 2020. However, the plan also noted that the existing non-motorized pathways are not completely interconnected. Therefore, a key objective of the plan is to outline potential trail connections for an interconnected system. Additional goals of the plan include alternative transportation, safety for all users, recreation opportunities, and providing resources for implementation and education.

- Tier 1 – short-term priorities (1-10 years)
- Tier 2 – mid-term priorities (11-20 years)
- Tier 3 – long-term priorities (beyond 20 years)

1. Gale Road from Hegel Road near Goodrich Middle School northward to Perry Road. This segment has already been completed.
2. Perry Road from Gale to M-15. Approximately 1.5 miles.
3. Hegel Road from the existing trail along a Consumer's Energy corridor northwest to Gale Road near Perry Road. Approximately 2.5 miles.

Genesee County Trail Priorities for Atlas Township and Surrounding Area (2023)



Parkland and Park Facility Analysis

A combination of sources were used in this section. All requirements and quartile ranges used to measure the Township’s park and trail inventory were from the NRPA’s 2023 Agency Performance Review. National statistics on youth program participation is from the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) and the Aspen Institute Project Play’s The State of Play report from 2022. This information helps understand how Atlas Township is serving their residents’ recreation needs at present and may be used to identify potential areas of focus or improvement.

Number of Parks

The following guidelines are provided by the NRPA’s 2023 Agency Performance Review. The Agency provides a range containing a lower quartile, median, and upper quartile values for residents per park within a jurisdiction. For jurisdictions with a population of less than 20,000, the range is 666 residents (lower quartile), 1,225 residents (median), and 2,042 residents (upper quartile). According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Atlas Township’s population is 6,330 (not including the Village of Goodrich). To meet each range (lower quartile, median, or upper quartile), Atlas Township would need either 10 small, 5 medium, or 3 large parks, respectively. Presently, Atlas Township does not have any parks under Township control, meaning residents are under-served.

Total Parkland

The following guidelines are provided by the NRPA’s 2023 Agency Performance Review. The Agency provides a range containing a lower quartile, median, and upper quartile values for acres of parkland per 1,000

residents within a jurisdiction. For jurisdictions with a population of less than 20,000, the range is 6.0 acres (lower quartile), 13.0 acres (median), and 21.1 acres (upper quartile). According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Atlas Township’s population is 6,330. To meet each range (lower quartile, median, or upper quartile), Atlas Township would need at least 6 acres of parkland to meet the lower quartile range. Presently, Atlas Township does not have any parks under Township control, meaning residents are under-served.

Parkland by Park Type

Based on a regulation previously suggested by the MDNR, Atlas Township’s parkland and recreation inventory was compared to the guidelines set by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA, 1983 and updated in 1995). Although the NRPA’s guidelines were set over thirty years ago, this helps to establish minimum community needs in terms of land area and number of facilities. The NRPA guidelines are based on the population of the study area. **Table 3-1** shows the results of the parkland analysis for the Township. It reveals a need for Township-owned parkland in each of the mini-park, neighborhood park, community park and sports park categories. Based on population alone, Atlas Township is in need of additional acreage devoted to parkland.

The acreage standard analysis (except for the regional park analysis) is based only on Township-owned parks. It should be noted that several other recreation facilities, including school facilities, are located within or near the Township and serve its residents. These recreation facilities should be taken into consideration in combination with the results of the acreage standard analysis for Township-owned parks.

Table 3-1 Township Parkland Acreage Analysis				
Park Classification	NRPA Guideline (acres per 1,000 residents)	Recommended for Atlas Township (acres based on Twp population)	Existing Park Acreage	Surplus or Deficiency
Mini Parks	0.375	2.36	0	-2.36
Neighborhood Parks	1.75	11.03	0	-11.03
Community Parks	6.5	39.69	0	-39.69
Sports Parks	Variable – 40 to 80 acres is optimal	40	0	-40
Non-Motorized Trails	Variable	Network to connect destinations	N/A – Gale/Hegel Path	N/A
Regional Parks	7.5	47.25	192	144.75

¹ Regional Parks include Atlas County Park (Atlas Twp) Owned by Genesee Count, Goodrich Schools Facilities, and Village of Goodrich Parks

Park Facilities

The following guidelines are provided by the NRPA's 2023 Agency Performance Review. The Agency provides recommendations for the number of indoor/outdoor recreation facilities needed within a jurisdiction based on population. Atlas Township's parkland and recreation inventory was compared to the guidelines set by the NRPA. **Table 3-2** takes these guidelines and applies them to Atlas Township and the recreational facilities located within the Township, adjacent to the Township (predominately at adjacent school facilities), and a reasonable travel distance. The values found

in the "MDNR Guidelines" column of the table are for jurisdictions with a population of less than 20,000.

Caution must be taken when interpreting recommendations based on these guidelines because they may not represent current popular activities and trends. Population-to-facility ratios tend to oversimplify the purpose of recreation planning, which is to address the specific needs of the community, based on its own particular resources and resident preferences/demands so that the plan best suits the community's desires for recreation.

Table 3-2

Analysis of Atlas Township Recreation Facilities

Park Facility	NRPA Guidelines (pop. per Facility)	Recommended (based on Twp population)	Existing (Owned and operated by Atlas Township)	Surplus or Deficiency	¹ Existing (All Jurisdictions within Atlas Township)
Playgrounds	2,014	3	0	-3	4
Basketball courts	3,729	2	0	-2	5
Diamond fields: baseball-youth	3,114	2	0	-2	8
Tennis courts (outdoor)	2,805	2	0	-2	10
Rectangular fields: multi-purpose	3,859	2	0	-2	4
Dog park	11,100	1	0	-1	0
Diamond fields: softball-adult	5,800	1	0	-1	1
Diamond fields: softball-youth	5,079	1	0	-1	1
Diamond fields: baseball-adult	7,627	1	0	-1	8
Community gardens	8,178	1	0	-1	0
Swimming pools (outdoor)	9,745	1	0	-1	0
Rectangular fields: soccer-youth	3,600	2	0	-2	13
Multiuse courts: basketball, volleyball	5,093	1	0	-1	3
Totlots	5,816	1	0	-1	1
Rectangular fields: soccer-adult	6,955	1	0	-1	4
Skate park	10,726	1	0	-1	0
Rectangular fields: football	8,637	1	0	-1	2
Pickleball	3,252	2	0	-2	4
Regulation 18-hole courses	9,587	1	0	-1	2
Driving range stations	4,555	1	0	-1	1
Multipurpose synthetic field	9,518	1	0	-1	1
Ice rink (outdoor)	8,045	1	0	-1	0
Rectangular fields: cricket	n/a	n/a	0	0	0
Rectangular fields: lacrosse	9,786	1	0	-1	0
Overlay field	8,707	1	0	-1	0
Rectangular fields: field hockey	1,800	4	0	-4	0
Rec centers	9,745	1	0	-1	0
Community centers	8,829	1	0	-1	0
Senior centers	14,000	0	0	0	0
Performance amphitheater	11,100	1	0	-1	0
Nature areas	10,633	1	0	-1	1
Aquatics centers	11,650	1	0	-1	0
Stadiums	9,250	1	0	-1	1
Teen centers	14,593	0	0	0	0
Indoor ice rink	8,000	1	0	-1	0
Arena	5,531	1	0	-1	0

¹ Facilities include those owned and operated by the Goodrich School District, Genesee County, and Private Entities

Trail Facilities

The following guidelines are provided by the NRPA's 2023 Agency Performance Review. The Agency provides a range containing a lower quartile, median, and upper quartile values for trail miles within a jurisdiction. For jurisdictions with a population of less than 20,000, the range is 2.0 miles (lower quartile), 4.0 miles (median), and 10.0 miles (upper quartile). To meet each range (lower quartile, median, or upper quartile), Atlas Township would need at least 2 miles of trails to meet the lower quartile range. Presently, Atlas Township has 4.03 miles of trails within the Township limits, according to GIS information, with more expected in the coming years. Thus, Atlas Township is at the median value for a community of its size.

Service Area Analysis

It is important to consider the type of parks, their location, and their disbursement throughout the Township. When evaluating parks and recreation service areas, it is important to specifically consider where the residents of the community live. The NRPA establishes a recommended service area for each park classification to determine which areas in Atlas Township are lacking easy access to parkland. By mapping these service areas, the township can see what areas are under-served. Regional parks are not included in this analysis because of their large (30 mile) service area. Generally based on the NRPA standards, the recommended service areas for local park types are as follows:

- Mini Parks ¼ mile
- Neighborhood Parks ½ mile
- Community Parks 1.5 miles
- Sports Complex 3 miles

As previously mentioned, Atlas Township does not have any parks of their own. Based on national guidelines, this makes its residents under-served.

National Recreation Trends

Recreation trends occurring nationally may provide insight into activities that have shown the greatest growth in popularity. Organizations such as the Nation-

al Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) and the Aspen Institute Project Play conduct national surveys that measure sports participation across the country.

According to the NSGA, based on a 2022 study, the following sports segments experienced growth rates over the past year (ranked by rate of growth):

1. Soccer (Outdoor) (18.6% growth)
2. Flag Football (15.8%)
3. Baseball (9.5%)
4. Cheerleading (9.5%)
5. Gymnastics (7.0%)

Conversely, the sports that saw the greatest decline in youth participation were:

1. Wrestling (-6.4% decline)
2. Track and Field (-6.0%)
3. Golf (-5.6%)
4. Lacrosse (-4.1%)
5. Swimming (Team) (-3.6%)

Much of the report centers around the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth sports. Low-contact outdoor team sports saw notable growth, while high-contact sports experienced some of the biggest declines (wrestling and lacrosse). According to the NSGA, fitness activities, open water sports, outdoor activities, and wheel sports segments have experienced increases over the last 5 years, while the individual sports and team sports segments have remained relatively flat.

The State of Play report from 2022, published by the Aspen Institute Project Play, provides insights into youth sports (ages 6-12) participation trends between 2008 and 2021 for the United States. According to the report, the most popular sports in 2021, in terms of total youth participation, were:

1. Bicycling (5.2 million participants)
2. Basketball (4.2 million)
3. Baseball (3.6 million)
4. Soccer (Outdoor) (2.1 million)
5. Tennis (1.7 million)



Chapter 6: Action Program

Introduction

This chapter details the direction that the Township wishes to take over the next five years in order to improve the quality and diversity of recreation opportunities within the community. This includes the establishment of goals and objectives to direct recreation operation as well as capital improvements to implement the recreation plan. Factors considered for this recreation planning program are:

1. Expected demand and need for future recreational activities
2. Results of the public engagement efforts
3. Regional plans and initiatives
4. Needs identified and observed by the Township
5. Funding sources and availability

Goals and Objectives

Before a specific program of recreation improvements can be prepared, general goals and objectives need to be established. These goals and objectives are intended to guide the overall recreation program over the next five years and beyond.

Goal #1

Promote and expand existing recreational opportunities within and outside of the Township to serve Township citizens.

Although Atlas Township does not presently operate any parks facilities or programs, it will continue to coordinate with public and private partners to provide its residents with high-quality recreational opportunities.

Objectives in Support of Goal #1

- Actively and regularly engage with Genesee County Parks, the Village of Goodrich, adjacent communities, and other recreation providers to provide parks facilities that satisfy citizen needs and contribute to the quality of life within the community.
- Seek new and expand existing partnerships with outside organizations, such as Genesee County Parks and the local public school districts, to provide programming to Atlas residents, including sports programs, youth programs, senior programs, and nature education/interpretive programming.
- Consider the needs of all Township citizens, including various age groups, income levels, and ability levels, when undertaking improvements to existing facilities and programs.
- Encourage new residential projects to include private parkland and/or open spaces to serve their residents.

Goal #2

Provide new parks, open spaces, and recreational opportunities to satisfy the needs of the citizens of Atlas Township.

Where opportunities arise, including outside funding sources, and when proper funds are set aside for future maintenance, Atlas Township may consider the development of new Township-owned and operated parks and park facilities. The rationale for providing additional Township park land stems from citizen desires and a deficiency of total acreage of parks in the Township, according to National Recreation and Park Association standards.

Objectives in Support of Goal #2

- Identify and evaluate potential properties, including existing Township-owned properties, which are most suitable for future park lands.
- Consider and support the acquisition of land for future active and passive recreation opportunities.
- Consider and support the acquisition of environmentally significant land (containing woodlands, wetlands, water bodies, etc.) for conservation and/or for passive recreational purposes.
- Seek to develop new river and lake access opportunities and facilities, such as canoe/kayak launches and fishing piers.
- Consider population densities when identifying new park locations. While there may be underserved areas, some are very rural and may not demand significant park land or programs.
- Consider the needs of all Township citizens, including various age groups, income levels, and ability levels, when evaluating new parks facilities and programs.
- Continue to monitor resident desires, local trends and preferences in recreation. Follow-up surveys and comment boxes could be used to solicit continued input.
- Identify and maintain a revenue source for future park maintenance. Funding for the long-term operations and maintenance of any new park facility should be identified at the outset of the project.

Goal #3

Maintain and enhance existing, and support the development of new non-motorized trails within Atlas Township to promote citizen mobility, recreation, and healthy living.

With the support of outside funding and in partnership with partner organizations, Atlas Township seeks to enhance existing trails and support the development of new trails, when proper funds are set aside for maintenance.

Objectives in Support of Goal #3

- Maintain strong relationship with Genesee County Parks, Walk, Bike, Run Atlas Township, and other local and regional trail providers to maintain and enhance local trail systems.
- Actively encourage that all new development in proximity to existing trails provide a link to promote increased usership of the facility.
- Encourage trail/sidewalk connections from existing trails to key destinations such as parks (specifically including Atlas County Park), school properties, and similar public and private institutional facilities.
- Consider an Adopt-A-Trail program for existing and future trail facilities.
- Encourage walking and bicycling as alternative transportation options to help reduce emissions and improve the environment.
- Explore opportunities for land acquisition adjacent or connecting to existing trail corridors and river corridors for future trail development.

Goal #4

Implement the recommendations of this plan as cost-effectively and efficiently as possible.

Budget constraints are a reality of small and rural communities. While Atlas Township has successfully navigated this challenge in the past, it is imperative to be mindful of deficiencies within the Township's funding sources.

Objectives in Support of Goal #4

- Coordinate the Action Plan with the Township's capital improvement program.
- Explore methods to encourage or require parks and recreation needs to be considered during the development review process.
- Regularly review budgetary needs and capital improvement needs and establish yearly priorities and responsibilities.
- Explore grant and alternative funding opportunities for improvement projects.
- Involve local residents, service groups and volunteer organizations in fundraising efforts to demonstrate strong community support and grassroots efforts.
- Evaluate the option of charging programming fees that balance operational costs with affordability.

Recreation Improvement Recommendations

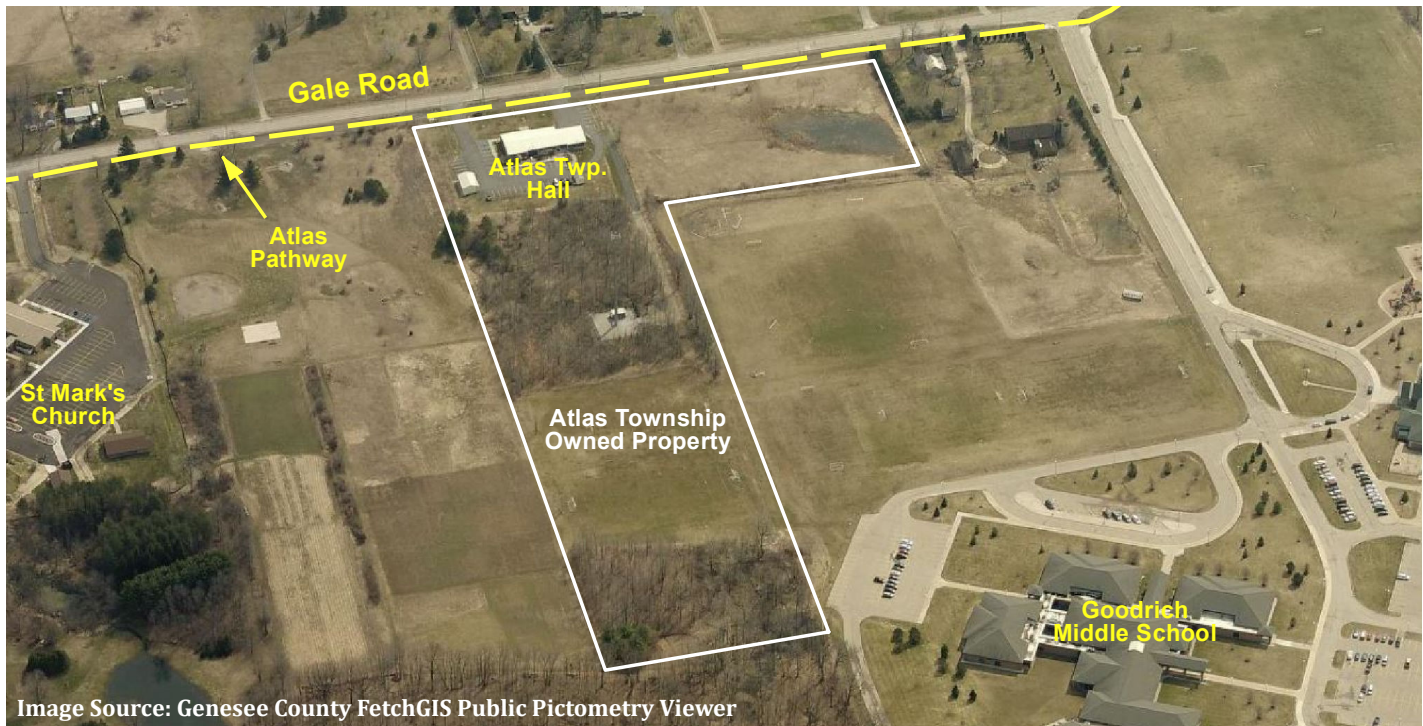
Potential recreation improvements for this Recreation Plan have been established to provide a guide and foundation for decision makers, and to enable the Township to apply for grant funding for proposed projects. The improvement recommendations are not "fixed" and are neither all inclusive nor exclusive. The improvement recommendations should be viewed as being flexible, as grant funding, land availability, citizen input, and other factors will determine the specific actions necessary to meet the plan's goals and objectives.

Potential Park Improvements at the Atlas Township Hall Property

In support of the goals of this Recreation Plan, Atlas Township may consider the use of existing Township-owned properties for the development of parks and recreation facilities.

The existing Township Hall property on Gale Road is of particular consideration for future recreational use. This approximately 11-acre property features the Township Hall building and parking lot near Gale Road. The property is adjacent to the Atlas Pathway located along Gale Road. The property also features a cell tower, but is otherwise undeveloped and could accommodate future recreational facilities. Presently, the Township allows a portion of this site to be used as soccer fields for Goodrich Middle School, which is located on the adjacent property.

Atlas Township Hall / Township-Owned Property



An initial step in the evaluation of this property for future park use is a feasibility study and concept plan. This study would include a more detailed investigation of site constraints, potential engagement with community stakeholders, and a concept plan for proposed recreational improvements. Once prepared, a second critical step would be to secure outside funding in support of park improvements.

Based on desires identified by citizens during the planning process, and deficiencies revealed as part of the needs analysis, potential future park facilities at the property could include:

- Walking path/nature trail loop
- Nature interpretive areas
- Playscape
- Soccer fields
- Multi-use sport courts (tennis, basketball, pickleball, etc.)
- Trailhead amenities for the Atlas Pathway

The feasibility study and concept plan is a recommended short-term project (1 to 2 years). The timeframe for park facility development is undetermined and is dependent on whether the Township Board decides to move forward with park improvements, followed by

seeking and securing grant funding to support park improvements. Costs for initial park facility improvements would likely be in the \$250,000 to \$500,000 range.

Potential Land Acquisition for a New Township Park

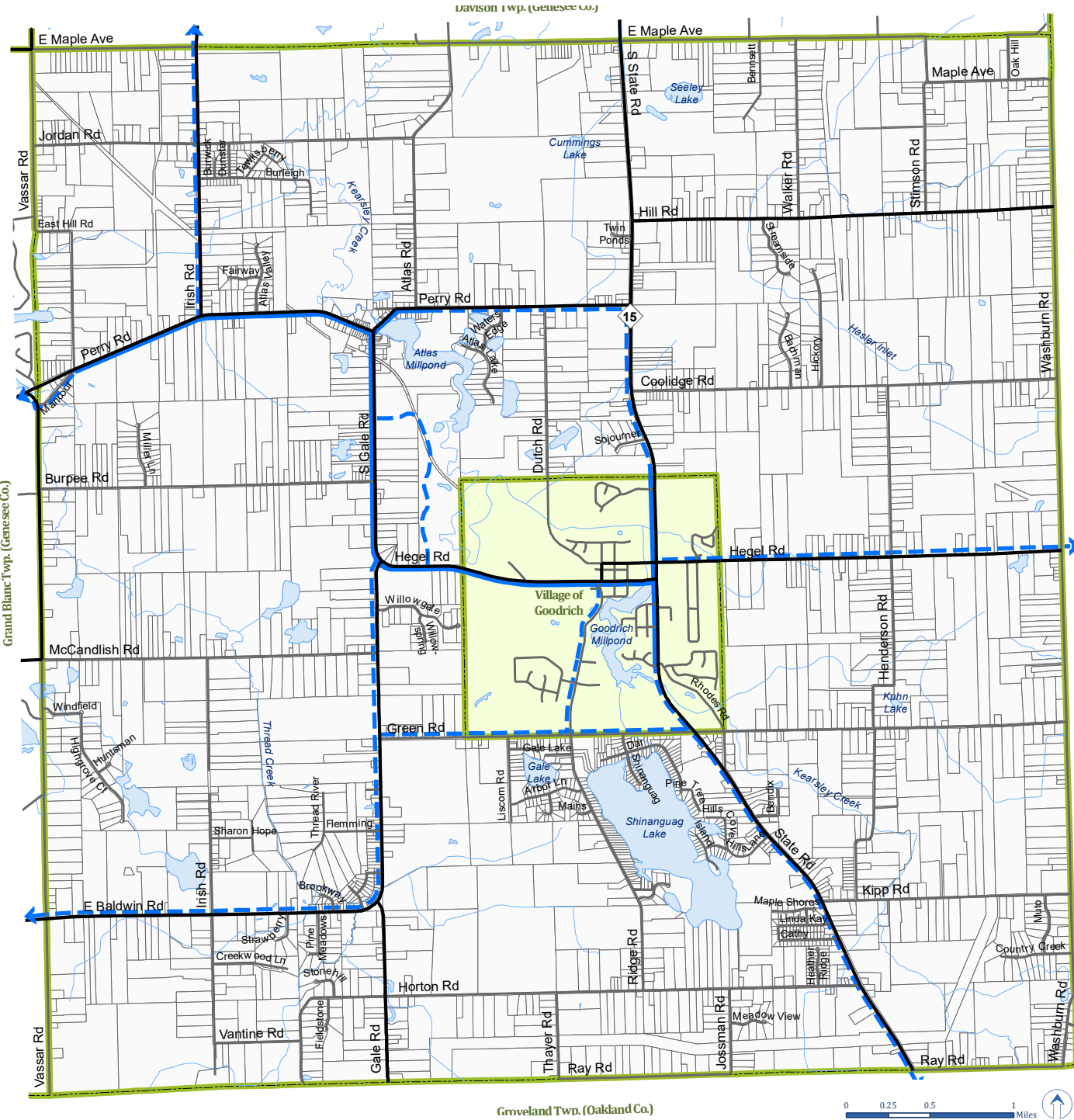
Although no specific property has been identified for this purpose, Atlas Township may explore potential land acquisition to serve as a location for a new Township park. The first step of this effort would be to identify potential property for purchase by the Township. The ideal property will be centrally located (accessible to Township residents), large enough to support a variety of recreational activities (20+ acres) and include naturally significant open space.

The timeframe for land acquisition is undetermined, as it is dependent on the availability of a suitable site, a willing seller, and a decision by the Township Board to move forward. The potential costs for land acquisition could range between \$1 and \$2 million, but could be supported through grant funding. Once land is acquired, costs for initial park facility improvements would likely be in the \$250,000 to \$500,000 range.

Non-Motorized Trail Development

Consistent with Goal #3 of this Recreation Plan, to enhance existing and support the development of new non-motorized trails, a proposed trails map has been prepared to illustrate potential future trails within Atlas Township. This proposed trails map is consistent with the recommendations of the Genesee County Non-Motorized Trail Plan and the Atlas Township Trail Plan. The recommended trail segments are not “fixed” and are neither all inclusive nor exclusive. This Recreation Plan intends for adjustments to be made to the trail priorities based on adjusted priorities of the Atlas Township Board and other opportunities that may arise, particularly funding opportunities. Atlas Township intends to seek funding from MDOT and the MDNR to assist with implementation of proposed non-motorized improvements. However, it is also the intent that Atlas Township have a plan for ongoing maintenance of any future trail in place prior to approving new trail segments.

Potential Trails Map



Circulation Plan:

- Major Roads (Arterials and Collectors)
- Local Roads
- Existing Shared Use Pathway
- Proposed Shared Use Pathways

Base Layers:

- Active PA 116 Farmland Development Agreement
- Private Airstrip
- Streams and Creeks
- Water Bodies
- Municipal Limits
- Parcel Lines

Parcel Source: Genesee County Equalization, 2022.



Chapter 5: Appendices

Appendix A: Funding Sources

Potential funding sources from outside entities for recreation, non-motorized, and environmental restoration projects change and evolve on a regular basis. Understanding available funding programs, their requirements and deadlines requires continuous monitoring. A few of the more common funding sources have been detailed here as a reference and resource. These are in addition to traditional funding methods such as the general fund, millages, community development block grants, bonds, DDA's, etc.

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, offered through the MDNR, provides funding for both the purchase of land (or interests in land) for recreation or protection of land because of its environmental importance or scenic beauty and the appropriate development of land for public outdoor recreation use.

Goals of the program are to: 1) protect Michigan's natural resources and provide for their access, public use and enjoyment; 2) provide public access to Michigan's water bodies, particularly the Great Lakes, and facilitate their recreation use; 3) meet regional, county and community needs for outdoor recreation opportunities; 4) improve the opportunities for outdoor recreation in Michigan's urban areas; and, 5) stimulate Michigan's economy through recreation-related tourism and community revitalization.

Any individual, group, organization, or unit of government may submit a land acquisition proposal. However, only state and local units of government can submit development proposals. All proposals for grants must include a local match of at least 25% of the total project cost. There is no minimum or maximum for acquisition projects. For development projects, the maximum grant request amount is \$300,000. Applications are due in April.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federal appropriation to the National Park Service who distributes funds to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for development of outdoor recreation facilities. In the past, this program has been used for a variety of recreational development purposes, including trailway systems, playgrounds, picnic areas, skate parks, ball fields, soccer fields and walking paths. The maximum grant request amount is \$300,000, with a minimum match of 50% of the total project cost. Applications are typically due in April of each year.

Recreation Passport

The Recreation Passport grant is a relatively new grant offered by the MDNR. The objective for the program is to provide funding to local units for the development of public recreation facilities. This includes the development of new facilities and the renovation of old facilities. The program emphasizes renovations to existing facilities and providing unmet recreation needs. The maximum grant request is \$150,000, with a minimum match of 25% of the total project cost. Applications are typically due in April of each year.

Transportation Alternatives Program (MDOT)

MDOT's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a competitive grant program that uses federal transportation funds designated by Congress for specific activities that enhance the intermodal transportation system and provide safe alternative transportation options. TAP was created by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), signed into law in July 2012. TAP continued as a set-aside to the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program with the passage of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), signed into law in December 2015. Approximately \$24 million is available annually. Of this, \$17 million is available through a competitive grant process administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Office of Economic Development (OED). Another \$7 million is available through a competitive grant process administered by metropoli-

tan planning organizations (MPOs) in urban areas with populations greater than 200,000.

Eligible activities that relate to the implementation of this Parks and Recreation Plan include:

- Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles. Includes new or reconstructed sidewalks, walkways, curb ramps, bike lane striping, wide paved shoulders, bike parking, bus racks, off-road trails, bike and pedestrian bridges and underpasses.
 - Paved shoulders four or more feet wide
 - Curb lane width greater than 12 feet
 - Bike lanes
 - Pedestrian crosswalks, sidewalks
 - Shared use paths 10 feet wide or greater
 - Path/trail user amenities
 - Grade separations
 - Bicycle parking facilities
 - Bicycle accommodations on public transportation
- Provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists. Programs designed to encourage walking and bicycling by providing potential users with education and safety instruction through classes, pamphlets and signage.
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian and bicycle trails). Acquiring railroad rights-of-way; planning, designing and constructing multi-use trails; developing rail-with-trail projects; purchasing unused railroad property for reuse.

A minimum 20% local match is required for proposed projects and applications are accepted on an on-going basis.

Safe Routes 2 School Program

The Safe Routes 2 School (SR2S) Program is a national movement to make it safe, convenient and fun for children to bicycle and walk to school. When routes are safe, walking or biking to and from school is an easy way to get the regular physical activity children need to succeed. In Michigan, the program is sponsored by the Michigan Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and has gained momentum over the past few years. Michigan's SR2S program makes schools eligible for transportation enhancement funds, providing for infrastructure improvements and education campaigns. The purpose of the program as defined in the federal legislation is:

- To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;
- To make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and
- To facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

To be eligible, schools must be registered, attend a day long training session, and develop a Walking Audit in order to be eligible to apply. SR2S funding is 100 percent federal; no match is required. 70% of the funding must be used for infrastructure projects, 10% for non-infrastructure projects, and 20% for either. For more information, go to: www.saferoutesmichigan.org

Michigan Spark Grant

The Spark Grant is a \$65 million grant program to help local communities that want to create, renovate or redevelop public opportunities for residents and visitors—especially those whose economic opportunities and health were hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Administered by the DNR, Michigan Spark Grants support projects that provide safe, accessible, public recreation facilities and spaces to improve people's health, introduce new recreation experiences, build on existing park infrastructure and make it easier for people to enjoy both indoor and outdoor recreation. This grant opportunity is possible because of the Building Michigan Together Plan, signed in March 2022, which included a historic infusion of federal funding in our state and local parks. The purpose of the program as defined in the state legislation is:

- Leverage federal, state, local and private resources toward a sustainable public recreation development program.
- Provide a clear, simple and equitable grants distribution process in support of public recreation.
- Align project partners and community organizations so resources are maximized, and roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined and balanced.

Appendix B:

Adoption and Transmittal Documentation

1. 30-Day Draft Review Notice
2. Public Hearing Notice
3. Minutes from the _____, 2024 Public Hearing
4. Township Board Adoption Resolution
5. Copy of Letter Transmitting Adopted Plan to Genesee County Planning
6. Copy of Letter Transmitting Adopted Plan to East Central Michigan Regional Planning Commission
7. Community Park and Recreation Plan Certification Checklist