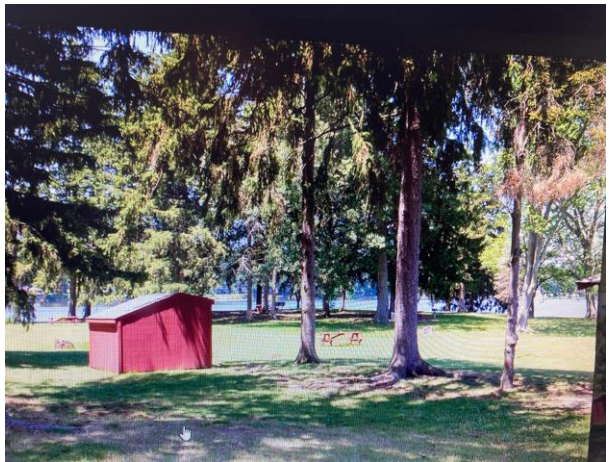




# PAW PAW COMMUNITY PARKS & RECREATION PLAN 2022 - 2027



Adopted by the Paw Paw  
Village Council on  
January 8, 2024

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you!

The participation and cooperation of community leaders, residents and members of local service organizations in the preparation of the 2022 – 2027 Community Parks & Recreation Plan was greatly appreciated and we thank everyone who participated in its development. The content of this Plan reflects the ongoing collaboration between residents, stakeholders, and the Village Council.

In particular, we acknowledge the efforts of:

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- Copy of Review Comments Received
- Minutes from January 8, 2024 Village Council Meeting
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- Transmittal Letter to Van Buren County, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
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# 1 - INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

Welcome to the 2022 - 2027 Community Parks and Recreation Plan by the Village of Paw Paw. This Plan reflects a vision for the future of Paw Paw's parks and recreation facilities, operations, and maintenance for the next five years. In addition, the Plan is intended to form the basis for future application for recreation grant funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and other granting agencies and foundations. The Plan was prepared in accordance with the MDNR's *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans*.



## PLANNING PROCESS

The Parks and Recreation Board of the Village of Paw Paw and the Paw Paw Village Council are responsible for guiding existing and future conditions of parks and recreation facilities and programs for community residents and visitors. The 2017 – 2021 Community Parks and Recreation Plan was updated in 2022 by the Parks and Recreation Board with assistance from Western Michigan University students. Since 2009, various needs to improve and expand the community's parks and recreation opportunities have been funded by the Village of Paw Paw.

The 2022-2027 Community Parks and Recreation Plan was prepared with the technical assistance of the Village Planning Consultant, Western Michigan University students, and with the active involvement of the Parks and Recreation Board. Citizen input received through guided reviews of key Plan components over several months and Village public hearings also contributed to this Plan. Following initial review by the Parks and Recreation Board, the Plan was submitted to the Village Council. Throughout the process, all meetings were open to the public and advertised pursuant to the Open Meetings Act. Notice of the public hearings was posted and published as required by the MDNR.

Major steps in the development of the Community Parks and Recreation Plan were as follows:



- **Kick-off Meeting** between the Parks and Recreation Board, Village Manager and Village Planning Consultant to discuss existing parks and recreation facilities, future recreation needs, and major objectives for the updated Parks and Recreation Plan.
- **Site Visits** to inventory existing facilities and determine changes since the 2017 update to the Parks and Recreation Plan.
- **Public Participation** via a community wide review and comment period on the existing facilities inventory, recreational goals and objectives and action plan. A park survey was completed in 2020
- **Meeting with Village Staff** and planning consultant on the formulation of the goals and objectives, and review of the action plan.
- **Initial Draft of the Plan** issued on December 7, 2023 followed by a published notice of the 30-day review and comment period.
- **Public Comments** received during the 30-day review and comment period.
- **Meeting of the Village Council**, held on January 8, 2024 to hold a public hearing on the 2022-2027 Parks and Recreation Plan and to adopt the Plan.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN

### **TASK ONE: COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

The first task was to obtain a general description of Paw Paw’s physical and social features, specifically those instrumental in shaping the framework for recreational activity in the community. Current information was available from the recently updated Master Plans for the Village of Paw Paw. The community description is found in Chapter 2.

### **TASK TWO: PARKS & RECREATION INVENTORY & PARK SYSTEM ANALYSIS**

The parks and recreation inventory includes descriptions of facilities within the Village, including both Village-owned properties and recreational facilities operated by other entities, such as the Paw Paw School District. The information provided includes the acreage, barrier-free accessibility rating, primary service area, available recreation amenities, and descriptions of the physical attributes of the facilities and is found in Chapter 3. Based on the data collected through the inventory process, each facility was then classified in accordance with national and state guidelines.

To provide a broader picture of the recreational resources in the community and of the region, the inventory was expanded to include public/private recreational amenities located within 10 miles of the Village boundaries, which encompassed the entirety of Paw Paw and Antwerp Townships. This additional information can also be found in Chapter 3.

### **TASK THREE: ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE & FUNDING**

Chapter 4 includes the community’s administrative and organizational structure for its parks and recreation facilities, a review of the parks and recreation expenditures and revenue sources, and the grant history of funding received from the MDNR.

### **TASK FOUR: GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

Chapter 5 details the results of the public engagement effort and the resulting recreational goals and objectives of the Village. Further, the goals

and objectives were reviewed for alignment with the recreational plans of adjacent communities and the Region 8 Prosperity Plan.

**TASK FIVE: ACTION PLAN**

Taking into account the analysis, goals and objectives and public input results, a five-year action plan was created. The action plan provides the Village a checklist of what projects are to be accomplished, when and where they will occur, who will accomplish them, how much they will cost, and potential funding sources. The action plan is set forth in Chapter 6.





## 2 - COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION



Paw Paw is a desirable place to live, with historic village charm, unique and beautiful natural assets, and a claim as one of the premier wine growing and processing areas in the Midwest.

The Downtown District is the heart of the community. Located centrally at the intersection of Kalamazoo Street and Red Arrow Hwy/Michigan Avenue, downtown Paw Paw is a walkable, pedestrian-

friendly corridor with neighborhood-servicing retail businesses and restaurants.

Paw Paw was settled in 1828 and named for the pawpaw trees that still grow along the Paw Paw River. Today, pawpaw trees are less common in the area, due to the clearing of forests. Trees can be found in the Village. The Village of Paw Paw has a beautiful setting and bountiful natural resources, primarily water and soils. Just as with much of southwest Michigan, the area has an ideal climate for fruit production. This was recognized by early settlers to Van Buren County and the Village.

Paw Paw Village celebrates a rich historical and cultural heritage with its neighboring Townships of Paw Paw and Antwerp. The community's history of wineries and distilleries has provided the area with the renowned annual Wine & Harvest Festival.



The Village of Paw Paw is fortunate to be located at the confluence of the East and West (also referred to as the South branch) branches of the Paw Paw River that feed the 172-acre Maple Lake. Built by the Village in 1907, the reservoir was built to provide power and flood control; however, the dam no longer generates electricity. The lake provides many recreational opportunities, including fishing, boating and kayaking, and the marshy lowlands surrounding the river and lake offer a natural habitat for a wide variety of woodland and wetland species.

The presence of the lakes in both Paw Paw Township and the Village of Paw Paw and the numerous related parks and recreational sites located in the center of the community have encouraged continued support of the civic realm within the Village, as well as a very active life for community residents and visitors.

#### NATURAL FEATURES FRAMEWORK . . . for Recreational Planning

**Topography:** Paw Paw's topography is relatively flat with minor slope variations near the rivers and Maple Lake. The area south of I-94 between County Road 665 and M-40 is the highest elevation and the area north of Maple Lake on the southwest corner of 51st Avenue and M-40 is the lowest.

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**Water Features:** The East and West (South) branches of the Paw Paw River flow north into the Village and join near the south end of Maple Lake at Michigan Avenue to form the LaCantina Basin. The river flows north from the Maple Lake dam to the main stream of the Paw Paw River. With the confluence of two river branches and a lake impoundment within its borders, the Village plays a critical role in addressing Paw Paw River watershed issues.

Upstream from Maple Lake is Briggs Pond, a small impoundment of the West Branch just above its confluence with the East Branch. It is fed by a significant wetland that separates the southeast from the southwest portions of the Village. This pond is also impacted by sediment and agricultural run-off, as well as by the industrial brownfields just to the south.

The Village has approximately 185 acres of wetlands and 249 acres of wetland-type soils, as defined by the National Wetlands Inventory. These areas are important habitats for a diverse array of plants and animals that are key to Watershed health. Wetlands also contribute to the beauty of the area.

## ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK . . . for Recreational Planning

***Paw Paw's arts, entertainment and recreation sector*** has experienced a significant increase in employees. In 2000, this sector was ranked fifth in the Village, and elevated to first in 2014. The sector had an increase of approximately 172 percent from 2000 to 2014. This increase is due to the expansion of the tourism market in Paw Paw, specifically wine tasting and production. **The Village's popularity is expected to continue to grow with** more and more tourists visiting each year.

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***A commuter population*** with relatively low travel times to work has implications for Village land use. Nearly 80 percent of commuters still use their private cars to travel to work; however, approximately 14 percent are walking or biking (see Figure 5). **The growing trend in Paw Paw (5.5 percent increase since 2010) to walk or bicycle for the daily commute to work** needs to be addressed during future Village planning projects. In addition, providing a wide array of housing options, a small town setting, a unique downtown and recreation opportunities has aided and will continue to aid in retaining and attracting residents. The key is being able to offer a lifestyle that is not available near larger employment centers.

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***Tourism*** represents a significant economic engine for Paw Paw and the State. Over 320,000 jobs, with income of \$10.6 billion, were sustained by the traveler economy in Michigan in 2014. Traveler-supported employment represents 6.2% of all employment in the state. Travel in Michigan generated nearly \$2.4 billion in state and local taxes and \$2.5 billion in Federal taxes in 2014.

The Paw Paw area and Van Buren County is home to many important regional tourism destinations, such as wineries, resorts, lakes and auto racing, among others. In addition, there are over 3,000 homes held for seasonal or vacation use within 30 minutes of Paw Paw. Van Buren County receives a significant number of seasonal visitors with its many vacation homes/cottages. Camping is another spending category that appears strong relative to the State average. The Michigan Wine Industry is of particular importance in the Southwest part of the state. St. Julian Winery and the Warner Winery located in Paw Paw are two of many vineyards and wineries in southwest Michigan.



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**Common Ground.** Paw Paw Township and the Village of Paw Paw not only share a history and common boundaries, they share a common major transportation corridor; community ‘gateways’; waterfront areas; and, recreational assets. Their potential for a successful economic future is tied together.

## 3 - PARKS & RECREATION INVENTORY

### INVENTORY OVERVIEW

A physical inventory of existing local and regional recreational facilities was conducted in September 2023. An inventory of park amenities and equipment was recorded and reviewed with regard to location, acreage, quantity, accessibility, and condition.

Thirteen (13) parks and recreational facilities are located within the Paw Paw community, including a small urban park owned by Van Buren County, a water trail, several natural resource areas, a sports complex, and parkland with waterfront amenities. The Existing Recreational Assets Map details the facilities respective locations.

### PARKS & RECREATION CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

For planning and management purposes, recreation professionals classify parks and recreation facilities based on the type of facility and expected usage. The MDNR's *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans* recommends the following classification system for 'local and regional recreation open space and trails':

#### MINI-PARKS

Mini-parks are small, specialized parks, usually less than an acre in size, that serve the needs of residents in the surrounding neighborhood. A mini-park may serve a limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens. Mini-parks usually serve people within a radius of a 1/4 mile.

#### NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood parks are the basic unit of the park system and typically focus on informal active and passive recreation. These parks serve a population up to 5,000 residents located within a 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile radius.

#### COMMUNITY PARKS

Community parks typically contain a wide variety of recreation facilities to meet the diverse needs of residents from several neighborhoods and may include areas suited for intense recreational facilities, such as athletic complexes and swimming pools. These parks usually contain other facilities not commonly found in neighborhood parks such as nature areas, picnic pavilions, lighted ball fields, and concession facilities. Community parks serve a 1/2 mile to 3 mile radius.

#### REGIONAL PARKS

Regional parks typically offer recreational amenities that service several communities within one hour of driving and can focus on preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. These parks are often 200 or more acres in size but can vary depending on the recreational uses.

#### NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS

Natural resource areas are generally lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources and frequently include remnant landscapes, open space or visual buffers within communities.

#### GREENWAYS

Greenways are developed for one or more modes of recreational travel, such as hiking, biking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. Greenways link other parks or components of the recreation system, community facilities, commercial areas, and other focal points, although in smaller towns they sometimes primarily provide recreational access to natural areas.

#### SPORTS COMPLEX

These facilities are generally heavily programmed athletic fields. They are typically at least 25 acres in area and are strategically located throughout the community.

#### SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

Special use facilities are typically single-purpose recreation facilities, such as historic amenities, nature centers, outdoor theaters, interpretative centers, or facilities for the preservation or maintenance of the natural or cultural environment.

#### PRIVATE PARKS/RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

These facilities are privately owned but contribute to the public park and recreation system.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Each recreation area has been evaluated on how well it serves people with disabilities. Parks and other facilities are rated on a 1-5 scale, according to the following criteria:

- 1 - None of the facility/park area meets ADA accessibility guidelines.
- 2 - Some of the facility/park area meets ADA accessibility guidelines.
- 3 - Most of the facility/park area meets ADA accessibility guidelines.
- 4 - The entire park meets ADA accessibility.
- 5 - The entire park was developed / renovated using the principles of universal design.



All of the facilities in the Village have an accessibility rating of 2, 3, or 4 (and a few with a rating of 5). While these facilities include elements that are handicapped accessible, the routes to reach some of the facilities do not comply.

## VILLAGE OF PAW PAW PARKS AND RECREATION INVENTORY

### COURTYARD PARK (COUNTY PARK)

**Classification:** Mini-Park

**Area:** 0.7 acres (30,492 sq. ft.)

**Accessibility Assessment:** 5

**Primary Service Area:** Downtown Paw Paw and as a location for regional events

Courtyard Park is located in the central business district and contains scenic landscaping, picnic tables and a gazebo. The area provides a space to enjoy eating and sitting outside. Courtyard Park is both connected by pathway to the Carnegie Community Center and located next to the Van Buren County Time



Capsule Museum. Its central location is ideal for visitors of the Village’s civic buildings. The park is under the jurisdiction of Van Buren County.

The park hosts two annual arts and crafts event in the park and neighboring streets. These occur during the Paw Paw Days events and the Wine and Harvest Festival.



## HARRIS/MILLER STREET PARK

**Classification:** Mini-Park

**Area:** 1.2 acres

**Accessibility Assessment:** 3

**Primary Service Area:** Village of Paw Paw

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The Harris/Miller Street Park is situated in the middle of a block located between North Harris Street and Miller Street. The park contains a basketball court and picnic tables.

## HAZEN STREET PARK

**Classification:** Mini-Park

**Area:** 0.1 acres (4,356 sq. ft.)

**Accessibility Assessment:** 4

**Primary Service Area:** Village of Paw Paw; Maple Lake Residents

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The Hazen Street Park represents open space on the southwest edge of Maple Lake. The west side of the park is bordered by sidewalk while its east boundary offers a beautiful view of the lake. The park is an ideal place for rest and relaxation.

This park is maintained as a natural shoreline per the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership.

## LAKE FRONT (SOUTH SHORE) PARK

**Classification:** Mini-Park (See below for regional park information)

**Area:** 1.3 acres

**Accessibility Assessment:** 4

**Primary Service Area:** Village of Paw Paw and central festival and event venue for the greater region



This park contains an amphitheater, a boardwalk, 2 boat docks, one capable to be used for canoes and kayaks, and picnic tables and grills. The South Shore Park provides the public the opportunity to engage in boating, picnicking, musical, and walking activities on the south shore of Maple Lake.

This parks has a regional impact and serves are regional population.

The park hosts the Paw Paw Wine and Harvest Festival, Paw Paw Days and Paw Paw Uncorks the Arts festivals. As such, the park attracts visitors from Indiana, Illinois and throughout Michigan.



The summer Concerts on the Lake are presented at the amphitheater. These free concerts attract hundreds from the greater area each Sunday afternoon/evening.

The amphitheater is also a location for weddings.

## MAPLE CITY VETERAN’S MEMORIAL PARK



**Classification:** Mini-Park

**Area:** 0.1 acres

**Accessibility Assessment:** 4

**Primary Service Area:** Village of Paw Paw

This pocket park is located at the junction of East Main Street, East Michigan Avenue and Brown Street. The park is home to a combined War World I, World War II, Korean & Vietnam War Memorial and an Afghanistan-Iraq War Memorial and contains benches and a small stage. The park is owned by the local

American Legion which hosts annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day activities at the Park.

## MAPLE LAKE/MAPLE ISLAND

**Classification:** Regional Park

**Area:** Maple Lake -172 acres, Maple Island - 5 acres

**Accessibility Assessment:** 4

**Primary Service Area:** Village of Paw Paw and greater area as a site for weddings, reunions, group outings and special events



Maple Lake is a natural lake (impoundment) used for fishing, boating, swimming, and general water recreation. Maple Island, accessible by footbridge, provides a playground area, picnic tables, 2 pavilions, and restrooms. Primary use is fishing, swimming, picnicking, and play for younger children.



This park hosts large local and regional group picnics, outings, and reunions.

Wedding services are common at this park.

## **SUNSET PARK**

**Classification:** Neighborhood Park (see below for regional impact)

**Area:** 4.5 acres

**Accessibility Assessment:** 4

**Primary Service Area:** Village of Paw Paw and the greater area for outings and events

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This park contains a boat \ kayak launch site and dock, picnic tables and restrooms on a seasonal basis. This park is located on the northeast corner shore of Maple Lake. The park provides opportunity for fishing, boating, canoe/kayaking, swimming, and picnic activities. This park has its own parking area. Pedestrian walking access to the park is limited.

Various clubs and organizations from the great region schedule fishing tournaments throughout the year.

The boat launch area has hosted boat cleaning demonstrations as a method to fight the spread invasive species.

## **UPPER/LOWER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARK**

**Classification:** Neighborhood Park

**Area:** 1.5 acres (portion of 38.1-acre total school site)

**Accessibility Assessment:** 4

**Primary Service Area:** Village of Paw Paw; Paw Paw School District

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This park contains playground equipment for elementary school-age students. It is located on the north side of North Street and also provides opportunity for picnic activities.

## TYLER FIELD

**Classification:** Regional Park

**Area:** 10 acres

**Accessibility Assessment:** 2

**Primary Service Area:** Village of Paw Paw and regional groups for events, outings and reunions.



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Tyler Field houses a football field, running track, baseball field, and Kid's Paradise Playground. The facility is home to Paw Paw Rocket Football and the Paw Paw Corkers vintage baseball club. Kids Paradise provides a place for play for younger children. All of whom come from the greater Paw Paw area.

On any given day, attendance from outside Paw Paw is greater than the attendance from the Village itself.

The pavilion at this park is reserved on a regular basis by families and school districts for their outings and reunions.



## FOUR PRAIRIES OPEN SPACES

**Classification:** Natural Resource Area (Planned)

**Area:** Each open space is 75 feet wide and between 204 and 265 feet in length

**Accessibility Assessment:** 4

**Primary Service Area:** Residents/businesses on southeast side of Briggs Pond



Four Prairies are grass covered blocks of land that are undeveloped and located directly south of Lion Island near both houses and businesses.

This area is planned for redevelopment as the original prairie that covered the land is this part of the Village. The development will include educational kiosks along the winding pathway.

## LA CANTINA BASIN, LIONS ISLAND, BRIGGS POND

**Classification:** Natural Resource Area

**Accessibility Assessment:** 2

**Primary Service Area:** Village of Paw Paw

Lions Island represents open space that is surrounded by Briggs Pond (27.4 acres, including wetlands) and the confluence of the East and West (South) Branches of the Paw Paw River (La Cantina Basin).

This area is mostly undeveloped with the exception of Kaiser Bridge that crosses the damn at the northern edge of Briggs Pond and connects the parking lot on the northern shore of Briggs Pond to the opposite shore. A greenway path also extends south from the south end of Kaiser Bridge and



connects to the Rotary Bridge at the south east end of the park. Lions Island plays a more scenic role than recreational with its views of Briggs Pond, wetlands, and the East Paw Paw River. Paths for portaging canoes and kayaks are present on the island.

## ROTARY CANOE/KAYAK

### LAUNCH/PAW PAW WATER TRAIL

**Classification:** Special Use Park

**Area:** 0.4 acres (17,424 sq. ft.)

**Accessibility Assessment:** 2

**Primary Service Area:** Village of Paw Paw; Paw Paw Township, and the Two Rivers Coalition events



The canoe/kayak launch is located north of Maple Lake and offers a safe entry into the Paw Paw River.

The Two Rivers Coalition offers frequent canoe and kayak outings on the Paw Paw River, Maple Lake, and the West (South Branch) of the Paw Paw River.

## PAW PAW MIDDLE SCHOOL

**Classification:** Sports Complex

**Area:** 59.5 acres      **Accessibility Assessment:** 5

**Primary Service Area:** Village of Paw Paw; Paw Paw School District



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Paw Paw Middle School's sports complex contains 6 soccer fields, 4 tennis courts, a football field, running track (including facilities for track-related field events - - shot put, and discus), and 6 baseball and softball fields. The complex also provides a concession area and restroom facilities. Its purpose is to provide a sports recreation area for both the middle school teams and local youth teams, including Paw Paw Little League and American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO).

## REGIONAL INVENTORY

The regional inventory consisted of the review and compilation of regional recreational facilities, including a regional non-motorized pathway system and a regional water trail system. Paw Paw Village and the surrounding area is considered 'wine country' and is well served by active agricultural lands and an abundance of inland lakes. Identified assets include numerous agri-tourism operations, private recreational facilities, and water resources. The Village of Paw Paw Recreational Facilities within 10 Miles Map provides an overview of the broader service area.

1. **ST JULIAN WINERY:** Located off I-94, exit 60. Named Tasters Guild "Winery of the Year" in 1998, offers free tours year-round and tasting of over 50 award winning wines, juices & spirits. St. Julian hosts approximately 35,000 visitors each year.
2. **WARNER VINEYARDS:** A picturesque winery nestled along the banks of the Paw Paw River with a covered bridge, and a 100-year-old historical building.
3. **ACKLEY LAKE:** Distance - 1.1 miles. A 65-acre lake with public access through adjoining Maple Lake.
4. **BROWNWOOD LAKE:** Distance - 2.1 miles. A popular fishing lake with a variety of fish, including Largemouth Bass, Muskie and Northern Pike.
5. **SPEICH FARMS:** Distance - 2.3 miles. Growing, packing, and shipping operations for hundreds of acres of blueberries, asparagus and grapes.



6. **BROOKSIDE FARMS:** Distance - 3 miles. A family-owned & operated blueberry farm with u-pick and ready-picked purchase options.
7. **MANDIGO FARMS:** Distance - 3 miles. Offers u-pick and ready-picked strawberries and provides an area with picnic tables with umbrellas.
8. **EGLY LAND & CATTLE COMPANY:** Distance - 4 miles. Local farm where Red Devon & Devon cross cattle graze daily on lush irrigated pastures.
9. **HERITAGE GLEN GOLF CLUB:** Distance - 5 miles. Acclaimed as one of Michigan’s most scenic golf courses, set in the heart of wine country. A championship course with wide open fairways that have a taste of Scottish links design.
10. **BRUSH CREEK CAMPGROUND:** Distance – 7 miles. A campground with rustic and modern sites.
11. **CODY KRESTA VINEYARD & WINERY:** Distance - 5 miles. A small, family winery specializing in hand-crafted wines produced at this vintage 1882 homestead.
12. **LAKE CORA HILLS GOLF CLUB:** Distance - 5 miles. A sporty, challenging public golf course and pub rolled into one, the course lives-up to its reputation as a dynamic course for all players and for supporting junior golf, women’s golf, corporate events, family outings and charity fundraisers. It also hosts frequent tournaments for public play, ranging from fun and creative games to the Van Buren County Amateur Championship.
13. **FORMULA K FAMILY FUN:** Distance - 5 miles. A Premier Family Entertainment Center for miniature golf and paintball.
14. **ALMENA TOWNSHIP FARMER MARKET:** Distance - 6 miles. Every Saturday, June – September.

15. **WESTVIEW FARM:** Distance - 6 miles. Offers u-pick or ready-picked sweet cherries, tart cherries, peaches, pears, plums, apples, grapes and pumpkins.
16. **BONMEGO TREE FARM:** Distance - 6 miles. Precut or u-cut Christmas tree farm
17. **BEAR-FOOT FARMS:** Distance - 6 miles. Organic farming on display.
18. **Berry Brothers:** Distance - 7 miles. A 400-acre commercial blueberry farm with an on-site retail store.
19. **BADGER COUNTRY CHRISTMAS TREES:** Distance - 8 miles. Precut or u-cut Christmas tree farm.
20. **WOLF LAKE HATCHERY VISITOR CENTER:** Distance - 8 miles. Located on 78 acres of fish rearing ponds all open to the public. Visitors can learn about all aspects of fisheries science and the history of fishing in Michigan through displays, multi-media programs, and interpretive materials. The visitor center offers free guided tours of the hatchery. An official Michigan Wildlife Viewing Area.
21. **WAHMOFF FARMS:** Distance - 8 miles. Over 150 acres of choose-&-cut Christmas trees.
22. **LAZY L EQUESTRIAN FACILITY:** Distance - 9 miles. Michigan Horse Boarding Farm
23. **HENSON ACRES:** Distance – 9 miles. Small local farm specializing in the raising of animals.
24. **THREE MILE LAKE:** A 176-acre lake with a depth of 35 feet deep at its deepest point and a variety of fish including Bluegill, Largemouth Bass, Panfish and Rock Bass.
25. **HARVEST MOON ACRES:** Distance - 9 miles. Offers family fall-time activities, including a five-acre corn maze, a hay bale slide, ziplines, shooting gourds on our slingshots.

26. **VERHAGE FRUIT FARMS:** Distance - 9 miles. Offers a variety of farm-based produce and baked goods for sale, as well as seasonal activities such as zip lines, pony rides, apple picking, and hay rides.
27. **29th ST FARM STAND:** Distance - 9 miles. Local farm providing fresh produce and bright floral bouquets for sale.
28. **APPLE-A-DAY FARM:** Distance - 10 miles. A local farm with u-pick and ready-picked sweet cherries and apples.
29. **PIONEER POINT PARK CAMPGROUND:** Distance - 10 miles. Located in the heart of grape country, the facility can accommodate all types of camping and offers cottages for rent.

## REGIONAL GREENWAYS/BLEUEWAYS

**KAL-HAVEN TRAIL:** 33.5 miles long. A linear multi-use trail that links Kalamazoo, a major southwest Michigan city, to South Haven, a Lake Michigan resort area. The trail starts in South Haven on North Bailey Avenue and ends in Kalamazoo on 10th Street. The Kal-Haven Trail is a railroad bed that has been converted to a trail with a limestone/slag surface. It is usable for all non-motorized bicycles, hiking, and snowmobiling when there is a 4-inch snow base. It connects to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail.

**PAW PAW RIVER WATER TRAIL:** The water trail is planned to run from 60<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Village of Paw Paw through Van Buren and Berrien County. The planned water trail is 68 miles long. The Paw Paw River's West (South) branch headwaters are upstream of the Village of Paw Paw in Decatur Township in southern Van Buren County. The river joins the St. Joseph River in Benton Harbor, just above its mouth at Lake Michigan. The Paw Paw River Water

Trail will offer 68 miles of paddling through mostly wooded flood plains colored brightly during the fall with Paw Paw trees. Segments of the water trail vary in difficulty and include, beginners, intermediate and advanced paddling segments. The paddling along the river is mostly remote and very scenic in places.

**EAST BRANCH – PAW PAW RIVER:** 8.4 miles long. A second order designated trout stream, The East Branch is a coldwater stream that joins the West Branch in the Village of Paw Paw. Its tributaries include Cook Drain, Mattawan Creek and Paw Paw Lake in Kalamazoo County. This branch carries less sediment and nutrients than the West (South) branch. There are conservation easements along the East Branch.

**WEST (SOUTH) BRANCH – PAW PAW RIVER.** The West Branch is a coldwater stream that joins the East Branch in the Village of Paw Paw. Its tributaries include Eagle Lake Drain, Lawton Drain, Gates Extension Drain and Three Mile Lake Drain. The designated uses of Coldwater Fishery and Other Indigenous Aquatic Life and Wildlife are impaired due to known sedimentation and low dissolved oxygen (DO) levels. Most of the West Branch flows through nearly level, very poorly drained soils which have moderate water capacity and slow surface runoff. Nutrients, pesticides and increased water temperature are suspected to be threatening water quality. The only known source of sediment are stream banks. Agricultural lands are a suspected source of sediment, nutrients, pesticides and increased water temperature. The West Branch ranges from 11 to 24 feet wide with an average depth of 1.3 feet. The Village of Paw Paw has an ongoing management to restore the water quality of Maple Lake. This effort includes working with upstream property owners to install best

management practices to reduce sediment and nutrient loading which negatively impact Maple Lake.

## RECREATION SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

The type of parks and their location, distribution throughout the community, and amenities are assessed together as a recreation system. The following analysis compares Paw Paw’s recreation system with state and national standards regarding service areas, acreage and number of facilities.

### Service Area Analysis

MDNR establishes a recommended service area for each park classification to identify areas in a community that area lacking access to recreation facilities. The service area for each park type is as follows:

Mini-Park	<0.25 mile walkability service radius
Neighborhood Park	0.25 – 0.5 mile service radius
Community Park	1.0 mile service radius

The Existing Recreational Assets Map illustrates that Paw Paw’s park system extends to a majority of the existing and planned neighborhoods within the Village and the downtown core. Of note is the walkable access to park facilities in the heavily populated waterfront areas in the Village and the Village Revitalization Area, a prime node earmarked for residential development.

The southern half of the Village, though not currently residentially developed, is outside of this walkability range. Pursuing a continuation of the non-motorized trail system that exists to the south into the Village would link future neighborhoods in this area to existing parks and provide recreational opportunities to new residents without adding a new facility.

## Acreage Analysis

The following table compares the park acreage in Paw Paw to national guidelines for Michigan communities. These standards are general in nature and do not consider the quality of the facility or local differences that affect the community's facility needs. However, even as an indicator, it highlights a surplus of mini- and neighborhood parkland available to Village residents and the recreational potential a non-motorized trail would offer in expanding access to active recreation.

Facility Type	NRPA - Min Acreage/1000 Residents	Paw Paw Min Recommended Acreage*	Paw Paw Actual Acreage	Surplus/ Deficiency
Mini Parks	0.25 acres	0.85 acres	3.4 acres	+ 2.55 acres
Neighborhood Parks	1.0 acres	3.5 acres	11 acres	+ 7.5 acres
Community Parks	5.0 acres	17.5	10 acres	-7.5 acres
Non-Motorized Trail	Variable	Variable	2 miles under consideration	n/a

*\*Based on 2014 ACS Population Count of 3494*

## Facilities Analysis

MDNR also recommends a certain number and type of recreational facilities for a community based on population size. The following table compares the facilities in Paw Paw to the MDNR standards.

Facility	MDNR Standard	Paw Paw Recommended Count*	Paw Paw Actual Count	Surplus/ Deficiency
Basketball Court	1/5,000	0		- -

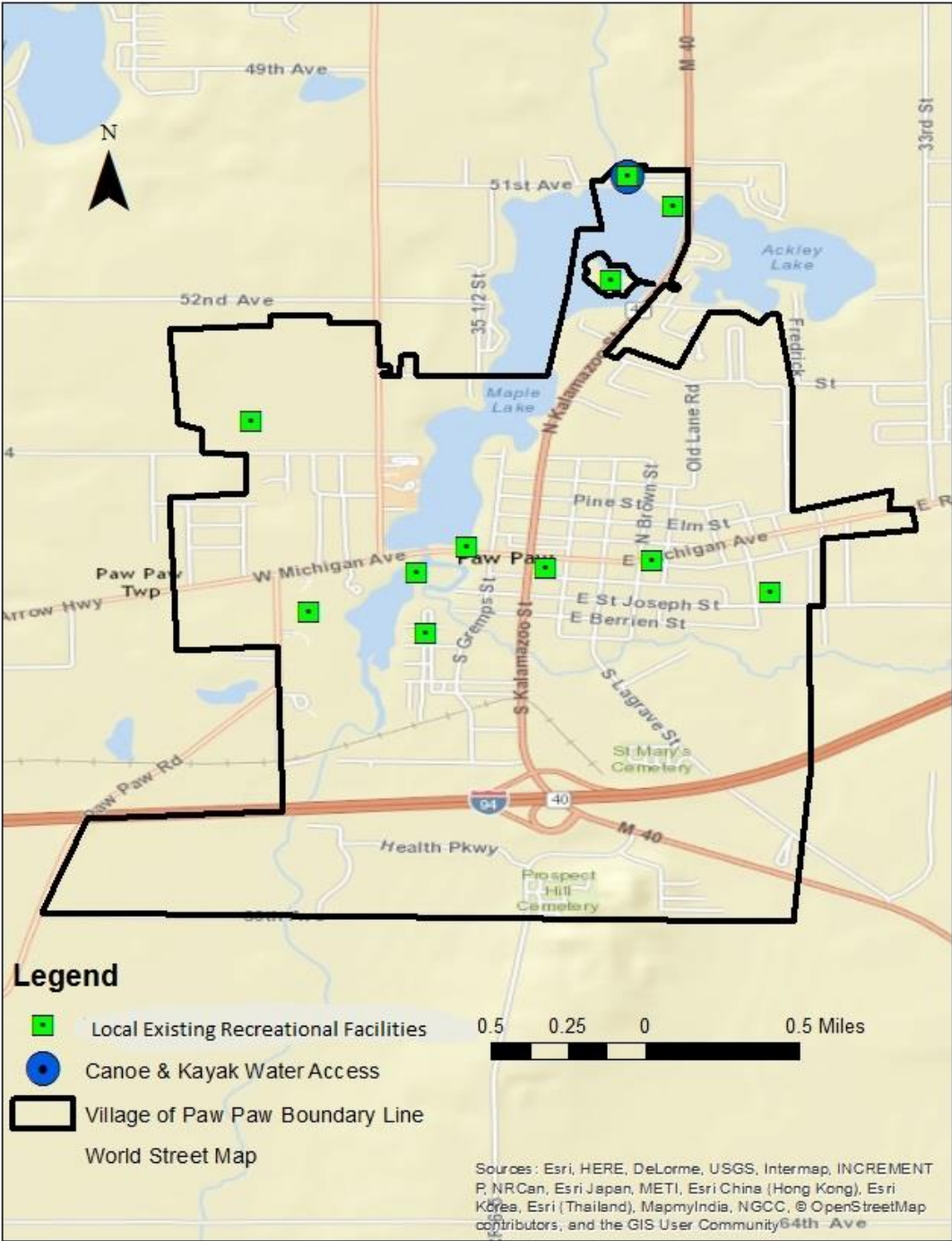
Baseball/Softball Field	1/5,000	0	1	+ 1
Football Field	1/20,000	0	1	+ 1
Soccer Field	1/10,000	0	0	- -
Tennis Court	1/2,000	1	0	-1
Volleyball Court	1/5,000	0	0	- -
½ Mile Running Track	1/20,000	0	1	+ 1
Greenway/Trail System	1 system per region	1	1	- -

*\*Based on 2014 ACS Population Count of 3494*

Although the Paw Paw Middle School is within the Village limits, it remains a part of the Paw Paw School District. As such, the recreational facilities provided there were not calculated in the facility count for the Village. Nevertheless, the Middle School facilities are routinely used by community residents.

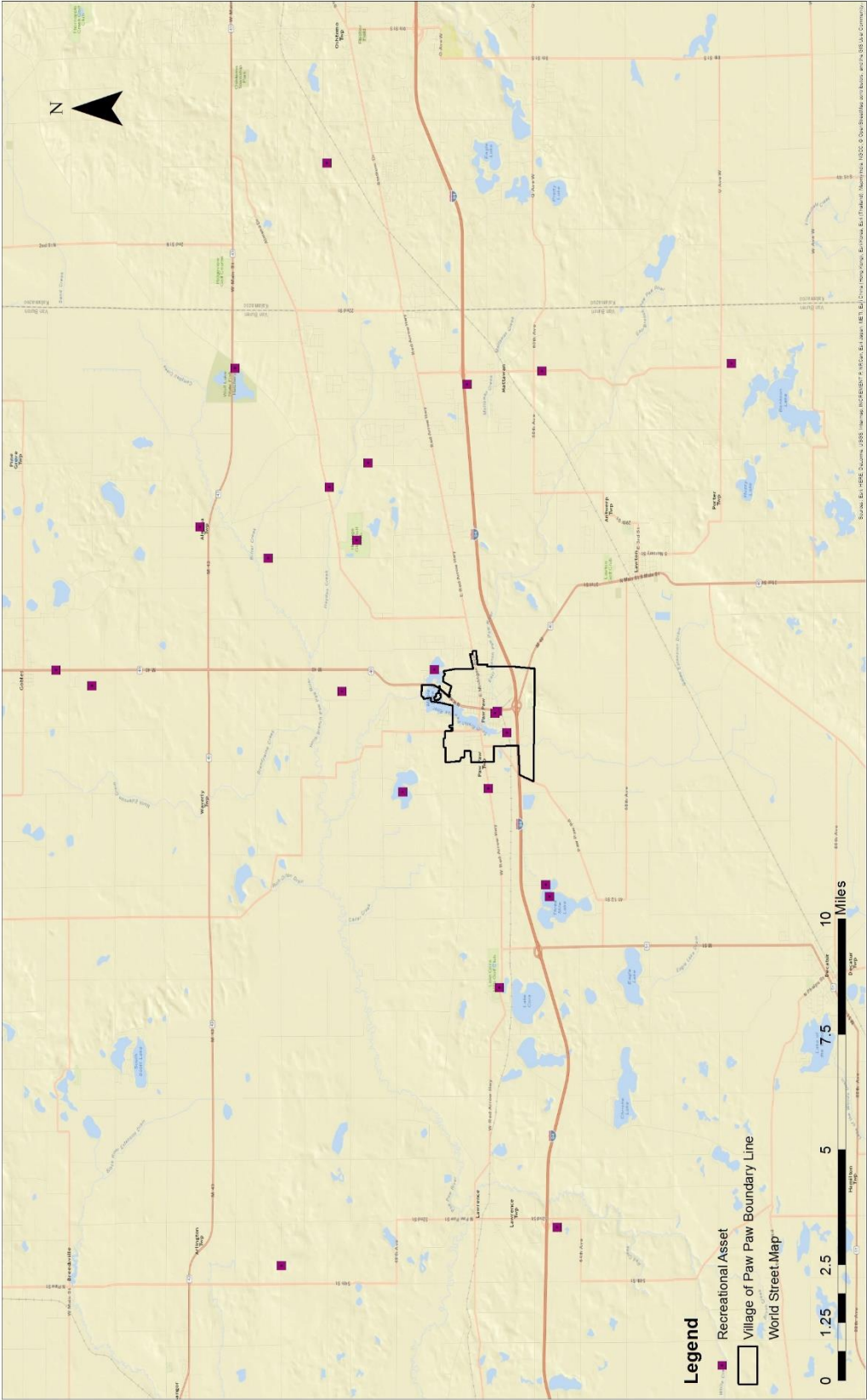
Clearly, the Paw Paw has done a capable job of providing recreational facilities for the community consistent with recommended standards and would far exceed the standards if the count included the facilities of the school district. To that end, continued coordination with the Paw Paw School District in providing access to recreational facilities is recommended.

### Village of Paw Paw Existing Recreational Assets





Village of Paw Paw Recreational Facilities Within 10 Miles



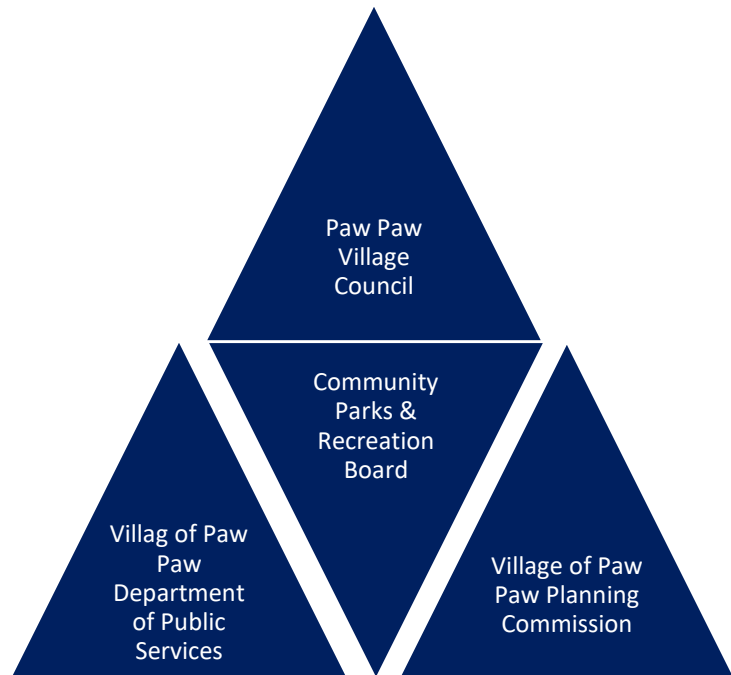
## 4 - ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE & FUNDING

### ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

Daily operations and maintenance of Paw Paw’s parks and recreation facilities are the responsibility of the Department of Public Services (DPS). The DPS is responsible for the maintenance of the parks, streets, and the municipal water/ sewer system, and consists of a staff of 15 full-time personnel. In addition to permanent staff, seasonal employees are retained, as needed.

The Parks and Recreation Board works with the DPS to facilitate the implementation of recreation policies, facilities, programs, and services and works in concert with the Village Planning Commission. The Parks and Recreation Board is a duly appointed body with membership from both the Village and the Township.

*Administrative Organization Chart*



### VOLUNTEERS & COLLABORATION

As is common in smaller communities, the Village relies heavily on volunteers and service organizations in order to maintain a quality parks and recreation system.

Volunteer citizens and service organizations often assist with the planning and organization of community-wide events and festivals and are a critical component of the upkeep and development of parks and recreation facilities in the

community. A sample of the service organizations active in parks and recreation efforts in Paw Paw include the following:



- Athletic Boosters
  - Boy Scouts
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Downtown Development Authority
  - Historical Society
  - Little League
  - Lions Club
  - Paw Paw District Library
- 
- Rocket Football
  - Rotary Club
  - Girl Scouts
  - Various Religious Organizations
  - Wine & Harvest Festival

Collaboration regarding the development, operation, and maintenance of future parks and recreation projects is also supported. The Village proposes to work with the Paw Paw School District, the Downtown Development Authority, surrounding municipalities, non-profit organizations, and volunteers to achieve greater parks and recreation opportunities and improve access. Potential future partnership projects include working with the Paw Paw School District on a Briggs Pond pathway and collaboration with municipalities in the region on the development of the Van Buren County Trail and the Paw Paw River Water Trail.



## PARKS & RECREATION FUNDING

The funding for parks and recreation facilities in Paw Paw is a sub-account of the Village’s General Fund and is annually adopted by the Village Council. The Village has actively pursued alternative funding sources for additional capital improvements through grant programs and private donations.

During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the Parks and Recreation budget was \$142,010.00 Major expenditures included building improvements, equipment rental, operating supplies for the DPS, and electrical utilities.

It is important to note that in-kind contributions from service organizations are also a critical funding source for the Village with volunteers offering their time and expertise on projects.

<b>FISCAL YEAR ACTUAL EXPENDITURES</b>	
2017 -2018	\$204,752.01
2018 - 2019	\$163,177.12
2019 - 2020	\$108,393.77
2020- 2021	\$134,193.27
2021 - 2022	\$148,791.96

*Source: Village of Paw Paw General Fund, 2016*

The table above summarizes the Village of Paw Paw Parks and Recreation budget from 2017-2018 through 2021-2022. The Village has invested considerably in building improvements and has put forth a strong effort to continually maintain and upgrade parks and recreational facilities.

## PARKS & RECREATION GRANT HISTORY

According to MDNR, the Village of Paw Paw has been the recipient of four grants in the past. These grants are described in detail below.

Project Title	Project Year (Project No.)	Grant Source	Grant Amount	Description	Project Closed
Community Park Development	1994 (TF94-157)	Grants Management, MDNR	\$169,900.00	Park improvements including 500' boardwalk, fishing pier/amphitheater, sidewalks, barrier-free ramp to Michigan Avenue walkway, canoe launch, expanded/paved parking lot, tables and grills.	Yes
South Maple Lake Park Restrooms	1999 (CM 99-085)	Grants Management, MDNR	\$20,000.00	Construction of restrooms to serve park users and boaters on Maple lake	Yes
Lion's Island Improvement	2000 (26-01557)	Grants Management, MDNR	\$14,416.00	Improvements to Lion's Island to provide a variety of recreational facilities, including picnic area, play equipment and boating/fishing dock with access to the Paw Paw River, Maple Lake and Brigg's Pond	Withdrawn
Maple Island Bridge	2023	MDRN	\$300,000	New bridge with fishing per	Open

Source: Grants Management, Department of Natural Resources

## 5 – GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### STRATEGY

This Plan will provide the basis for public policy decisions and technical coordination in recreational development within the Village.

*The Village of Paw Paw's strategy is to provide a variety of parks that are flexible spaces that serve multiple users.*

The goals and objectives set forth in this Chapter were developed through the Parks & Recreation Committee and Village Administration and incorporate recreation planning best practices and the results of the public input process.

**Goals** address general needs and establish the basis for setting specific programmed objectives. **Objectives** measure results that the community works towards accomplishing.

The following goals and objectives are numbered for identification purposes only. Each goal is considered to carry an equal degree of importance.

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### GOAL 1: MAINTAIN EXISTING COMMUNITY PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

- 1.1 Maintain all recreation-related buildings, structures and parks.
- 1.2 Repair and replace worn out and damaged equipment and amenities as necessary.
- 1.3 Improve barrier-free access to parks to comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA and the principles of universal access.)

1.4 Develop and implement a parks maintenance program.



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**GOAL 2:  
EXPAND AND DEVELOP NEW PARKS  
AND RECREATION FACILITIES /  
PROGRAMS**

- 2.1 Acquire equipment and facilities to keep pace with current design and regulatory standards, as well as the recreation needs of the community.
- 2.2 Include a broad range of facilities within each park, specifically addressing those facilities currently lacking in the community.
- 2.3 Respond to the desires of residents with regards to developing park facilities.



- 2.4 Ensure the Village population is served by a uniform distribution of recreational facilities.
  - 2.5 Provide facilities for park users of all ages.
  - 2.6 Support a variety of cultural and heritage based activities/events.
- 

**GOAL 3:  
DEVELOP FACILITIES FOR  
NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION**

- 3.1 Continue to improve sidewalk connections throughout the Village and promote non-motorized transit as a healthy transportation option. Significantly, pedestrian movement along S. Kalamazoo Street/M-40 is a priority, as is a walking path over the I-94 & M-40 overpass.
- 3.2 Develop bike lanes throughout the community to provide access to recreational facilities and other area points of interest.
- 3.3 Establish a non-motorized route that connects Maple Lake and the Briggs Pond area.
- 3.4 Develop an interconnected regional bike trail system with emphasis on Van Buren County Trail system connections.
- 3.5 Ensure sufficient bicycle, kayak, and canoe racks are located within parks to accommodate users and visitors who cycle to the parks.





**GOAL 4:  
PARTNER WITH OTHER ENTITIES  
TO PROVIDE RECREATIONAL  
OPPORTUNITIES**

- 4.1 Partner with the Paw Paw School District to ensure public access to school campus facilities.
- 4.2 Partner with the local biking organizations, the Van Buren County (Van Buren Trail), Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Paw Paw Township on trail and bike lane creation.
- 4.3 Collaborate with the Downtown Development Authority to provide bike lane and non-motorized trail connections through the downtown core and the Village’s recreation sites.
- 4.4 Partner with Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and the Two Waters Coalition on local water trail routes and access point creation.

**GOAL 5:  
COMPREHENSIVE  
PARK IDENTIFICATION /  
WAYFINDING SIGNAGE PROGRAM**

- 5.1 Create a uniform park identification signage design for consistency throughout the community park system.
- 5.2 Add instructional / directional park signage, consistent with main identification signs, to direct park users to activity areas .
- 5.3 Install watershed/waterway identification signage.
- 5.4 Incorporate wayfinding signage at park and recreation facilities to link to other community focal points and destinations.



- 5.5 Provide educational and interpretative signage along pathways, water bodies, and nature corridors.

## GOAL 6. MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE NATURAL AND AESTHETIC QUALITIES OF PARKS

- 6.1 Develop partnerships (i.e. academic and non-profit organizations) for design assistance to incorporate natural features into park design.
- 6.2 Enhance and expand the views to water bodies, woodlands, and wetlands from rights-of-way and non-motorized pathways.
- 6.3 Link open space areas to maintain wildlife and native plant corridors.
- 6.4 Apply waterfront protection measures to Maple Lake and its tributaries, including erosion control and shoreline naturalization.

## GOAL 7. MAINTAIN FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

- 7.1 Seek additional funding from outside sources for capital improvements, such as state and federal agencies and foundations.
- 7.2 Incorporate volunteers in projects when feasible to help maintain and monitor park and recreation facilities.
- 7.3 Continue to review and expand the maintenance program, as needed, to keep the parks and facilities aesthetically appealing and functional.
- 7.4 Consider the long-term maintenance costs associated with park and non-motorized trail acquisitions and improvements.

- 7.5 Review and update the Parks and Recreation Plan every five years, not only to maintain eligibility for grants, but to provide a guide for parks and recreation improvement efforts.

## 6 - ACTION PLAN

### ACTION PLAN & PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The action plan serves as a template for future projects as directed by the Parks and Recreation Board and is intended to be a flexible year-by-year list of improvements from 2022 - 2027.

Projects of the Action Plan should be reviewed on an annual basis and adjusted to respond to updated needs/conditions and funding opportunities. Proposed cost estimates are in 2022 dollars and are strictly preliminary.

Actual costs for each project will be more specifically determined as site surveys, programming elements, and engineering plans are developed, if applicable, as well as through further analysis of the proposed improvement. If funding levels are lower than required to implement the plan based on the schedule provided, then implementation could be stretched over additional years or the scope of the project condensed.



### Time Frame Key:

Near-term | Less than 1 year  
Mid-term | 1 – 3 years  
Long-term | Over 3 years

### Estimated Cost Range Key:

\$ | \$0 - \$100,000  
 \$\$ | \$100,001 - \$500,000  
 \$\$\$ | \$500,001 +

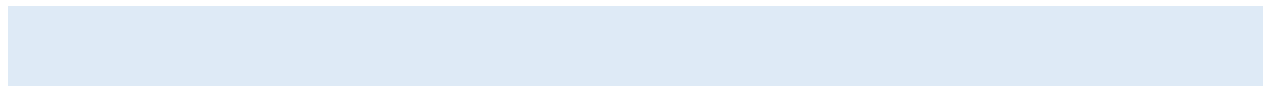
**Funding Sources & Collaboration Key:**

GF = General Fund  
 D/P = Donation or Partnership  
 LSO = Local Service Organizations  
 CS = Corporate Sponsor  
 G = Grants (i.e. MDNR, CDBG, MEDC)  
 DDA = DDA TIF Funds  
 PC = Planning Commission  
 PRB = Parks & Recreation Board  
 VC = Village Council  
 VBC = Van Buren County  
 PPT = Paw Paw Township  
 DEQ = Department of Environmental Quality  
 NRF = Natural Resources Fund  
**Millage = Parks.**

**ACTION PLAN: 2022– 2027**

Project	Time Frame	Estimated Cost Range	Funding Sources
Tyler Field: Restroom Building Improvements	N-T	\$10,000	Donation
Tyler Field: Additional Parking	M-T	\$	Village
Sunset Park: natural landscapes	L-T	\$10,000	Village
Non-Motorized Pathways: Michigan Ave to Railroad ROW + Briggs Pond Boardwalk	L-T	\$\$\$	GF, D/P
Maple Island Bridge Safety Improvement	M-T	\$300,000	GF, PRB

Non-Motorized Pathways: Maple Lake Phase	L-T	\$\$	GF, D/P, G, PPT
Tyler Field: BMX Park	M-T	\$	GF, G
Tyler Field: Shared Use Trail	M-T	\$\$	PRB, G
Village Revitalization Area: Trailhead Park; Dog Park	L-T	\$\$\$	GF, G
Waterfronts: Shoreline Erosion Control	N-T	\$	GF, DEQ
Maple Lake: Professional Services	N-T	\$	NRF
Park Signage	N-T	\$	GF
Water Lights	N-T	\$	GF, PRB
Water Fountain Feature	N-T	\$	GF
Briggs Pond/La Cantina Basin Feature	N-T	\$	GF
Four Prairies Park: Native Plants; Prairie Trail	M-T	\$	PRB, G
Miller Park: Tot Lot	M-T	\$	GF, PRB
Maple Lake/La Cantina Basin: Dredging	M-T	\$\$	GF, DEQ
Briggs Pond; 60 <sup>th</sup> Street; Railroad ROW: Canoe & Kayak Launches	L-T	\$	PRB, G
Sunset Park: Accessible Launch	M-T	\$	PRB, G
Maple Island: Restroom; Parking & Play equipment Improvements	M-T	\$\$	PRB, G
Sunset Park: Facility Improvements	N-T	\$	PRB
Parks & Recreation Plan Update	L-T	\$	PC



## PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS:

Tyler Field: Restroom Building Improvements – Demolition of the existing structure and building new bathroom, storage and concession building

Tyler Field: Additional Parking – Construction of pervious (permeable) surface parking areas.

Sunset Park: Natural landscape and pathway.

Non-Motorized Pathways: Michigan Ave. to Railroad ROW + Briggs Pond Boardwalk – Construction of a boardwalk from Ampey Road/railroad crossing north along the east side of the Briggs pond all the way to the existing greenway and the Kaiser Bridge.

Maple Island Bridge Safety Improvement – The walkway bridge from N. Kalamazoo Street/M-40 to the island would be repaired with this project.

Non-Motorized Pathways: Maple Lake Phase – An accessible pathway/greenway would be completed around the North end of Maple Lake.

Tyler Field: BMX & Inline Skating Park or Pathway – To allow for BMX biking or inline skating, this project contemplates either a separate facility or pathway around the perimeter of Tyler Field.

Tyler Field: Shared Use Trail – This project would result in a fitness shared use pathway around the perimeter of Tyler Field complete with fitness tasks along the route.

Village Revitalization Area: Trailhead Park – A proposed rail-n-trail route from Paw Paw to Lawrence would begin at this location (approximately 2.5 acres. Trailhead Park would feature trail access, parking, bathrooms, informational kiosk, an area for a Farmer’s Market, and an area for small and large dog park. The proposed water trail from Paw Paw to Benton Harbor would cross the rail-n-trail line.

Waterfronts: Shoreline Erosion Control – The Village of Paw Paw has completed approximately 300 feet of natural shoreline protection. The Village follows the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership guidelines for shoreline restoration. The Village has been a demonstration project for the program. Three members of the Village staff have been trained through the program.

Park Signage – Standard wayfinding signage for all parks would be the result of this project.

Water Lights – Underwater lighting off Lake Front Park (Shoreline Park) and along Sunset Park (near the former hydroelectric plant) would be installed as an attractive feature with this project. These would enhance the parks as a ‘place’.

Water Fountain Feature – An in-lake fountain, with lights, would be installed off the shore of Lake Front Park (Shoreline Park) enhancing the park as a ‘place’.

Briggs Pond/La Cantina Basin Feature – A rock waterfall feature would be added at the base of the spillway from Briggs Pond and to the aesthetic quality of this structure.

Four Prairies Park: Native Prairie Plants and Trail – The wide boulevard area would be planted with prairie grasses native to the area. A pathway through the greenway would be dotted with low-level educational kiosks explaining the prairie and the history of the area.

Miller Park: Tot Lot – This project improves the neighborhood mini-park with tot lot equipment and seating for parents/grandparents/guardians.

Maple Lake/La Cantina Basin: Dredging – Even with significant sediment and nutrient loading reduction, thanks to a 319 implementation grant, the basin would have 5,000 to 9,000 cubic yards of sediment removed every five years under this project. Additionally, similar amounts of sediment would be dredged from the south end of Maple Lake. This may include affordable amounts at least every five years. Dredged material would be handled as permitted by the MDEQ.

Maple Lake Dredging – Dredging particularly the south basin portion which has suffered from decades of sediment loading from the West (South) branch of the Paw Paw River.

Briggs Pond to 60<sup>th</sup> Street; along the West (South) Branch of the Paw Paw River. This part of the PPR Watertrail, including Trailhead Park’s (see Revitalization Area above). An Accessible Canoe & Kayak Launch, with parking, at Ampey Road is planned as part of the Paw Paw River Water Trail. This would allow paddlers to paddle upstream as well as downstream to Michigan Avenue where a short portage would take them into Maple Lake.

Lake Front Park and Sunset Park: Accessible Launches – This project would install accessible launches at the south end and north end of Maple Lake; one at Lakefront Park and one at Sunset Park.

Maple Island: Restroom; Parking & Play Equipment Improvements – This regional park facility would be enhanced with improved pervious (permeable) parking, additional playground equipment and improvements to the bathroom facility.

Sunset Park: Facility Improvements – Existing dock and boat launch would be improved as part of this project. Additional parking, picnic and grilling spaces would be added as well. An



accessible launch for canoes and kayaks would increase the paddling experience for many more people.

Parks & Recreation Plan Update – In 2020, the recreation plan would begin to be updated.

Natural Resources Management Plan – The Village maintains professional services to develop and monitor a comprehensive Lake Management Plan. Maple Lake remains the only Lake in Van Buren County with a comprehensive management plan in place. This expert resource advises the Village on a full range of tools to restore Maple Lake.

