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# Executive Summary

## *DeWitt Area Recreation Plan*



The communities of DeWitt Township and the City of DeWitt joined with the DeWitt Area Recreation Authority (DARA) to update the 5-year recreation plan. Under the direction of DARA, the three entities updated the plan according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans.

An inventory was completed of the existing public parks and available recreational programming in DeWitt and DeWitt Township. The parks inventory included location maps, the facilities and amenities available in each park, and an accessibility assessment. DeWitt Township has nine developed park facilities and two undeveloped parcels totaling 200 acres. The City of DeWitt has ten developed park facilities and one undeveloped parcel totaling 41 acres. General industry standards would suggest that this is more than enough park land for the current population.

The communities gathered input from citizens through an on-line survey, having the plan available for public review and comment for 30 days, and through public hearings. Special attention was given to obtaining input regarding the recreational needs of those with disabilities, assess the potential recreational importance of non-motorized transportation and recreational opportunities for an aging population.

Those who participated in the various forms of input were generally very pleased with the existing park facilities. Walking and biking paths were mentioned most often as an additional recreational need in the community. Other potential improvements that were frequently mentioned by the participants were restrooms, a splash park, canoe/kayak rental and drinking fountains.

Using the existing inventory, community input, and several existing planning documents that related to parks and recreation, the three entities developed seven recreational goals to guide the community for the next five years.

**Goal 1:** Provide quality leisure time activities with special consideration given to improving health and fitness.

**Goal 2:** Provide safe, broad community-based recreation opportunities that improve the overall quality-of-life for all DeWitt area residents.



**Goal 3:** Provide non-motorized pathways for recreational and transportation use.

**Goal 4:** Develop recreation opportunities that focus upon and take advantage of DeWitt area water resources.

**Goal 5:** Acquire and retain public land for future generations.

**Goal 6:** Create community awareness of DeWitt area recreational opportunities and promote them to citizens and visitors.

**Goal 7:** Continue to embrace and enhance regional collaboration for recreational programs and facilities.

Objectives were developed to further assist in carrying out the purpose of the various goals.



With goals and objectives in place, each community and DARA developed a prioritized action plan of tasks and improvements to help them work toward accomplishing the established goals. **The projects with the highest priority for each of the entities are:** (See pages 35 - 38 for the complete action plan lists.)

**DeWitt Charter Township**

- Add a fire pit at Granger Meadows Park.

- Add parking at Waters Edge Park.

**City of DeWitt**

- Explore opportunities for developing a skate park with a skating users group.
- Investigate ways to expand parking at Riverside Park.
- Repave parking lot and purchase grounds equipment for Sports Park.

**DARA**

- Explore the opportunity for recreational partnerships with neighboring townships.



### **Area Wide Initiatives**

- Continue to work with Clinton County partners on the development and implantation of a non-motorized transportation plan.

A draft plan was developed and made available for public review for at least 30 days. After that, required public hearings were held to hear any additional comments. The plan was then adopted by DARA, the City of DeWitt and DeWitt Township and it was submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for approval.



# Introduction



## *A Joint Recreation Plan for the City of DeWitt, DeWitt Charter Township and the DeWitt Area Recreation Authority*

The DeWitt Community has developed a Recreation Plan to serve as a guideline to improve recreation facilities and develop new recreational opportunities. To that end, this document forms the basis to guide policy for implementation of improvements and new initiatives that will meet the recreational goals and interests of the DeWitt area community.

Before any recreation plan is adopted and enacted, it is first important to understand what the needs of the residents are, what recreational opportunities already exist, and what sort of projects and programs are relevant for residents based on age, ability, population, density, and the availability of recreational opportunities in neighboring communities. This plan has carefully considered input and suggestions via active communication from area residents, officials, and other community stakeholders. This input is a critical component to this plan, and, together, the voices of the DeWitt Community have united to update the recreation plan to enhance the quality of life for everyone.

The foundation for the development of the DeWitt Area Recreation Plan was based on the following goals:

Involve the community in the process to update the five-year Recreation Plan,

Inventory and map existing DeWitt recreational facilities,

Build common ground among DeWitt area stakeholders in addressing the future recreational needs and priorities of the Community,

Enable the City of DeWitt, DeWitt Township and the DeWitt Area Recreation Authority (DARA) to be eligible for financial assistance based upon the Recreation Plan,



Facilitate interagency collaboration in establishing recreation goals, objectives, and actions, and

Continue to support and implement improvements for barrier-free, Universal Access to DeWitt area parks.

Consistency with and expansion upon goals and objectives set forth in existing planning documents that deal partially or wholly with recreation:

- Clinton County Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan (2008 – 2012)
- DeWitt Township Open Space Ad Hoc Committee Report (May 2007)
- DeWitt Township Comprehensive Development Plan (2005) (2012 Update)
- City of DeWitt Comprehensive Development Plan (2008 – 2018)
- Protecting and Restoring the Upper Looking Glass River: A Watershed Management Plan (February 2008)

Broadly speaking, DeWitt area officials intend to use this plan to guide their work on all future recreational and parks projects within the City of DeWitt and DeWitt Township. It is also a strategic document that articulates specific goals to various agencies and organizations that fund local recreational and parks improvement projects. Specifically, this plan is developed in accordance with the guidelines for Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans published by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). A five-year, MDNR-approved Recreation Plan is necessary for the governmental entities to pursue MDNR-administered grants. This Recreation Plan is written for the City of DeWitt and DeWitt Township. It covers all aspects of recreation within these communities.



# Community Description

## About the DeWitt Area



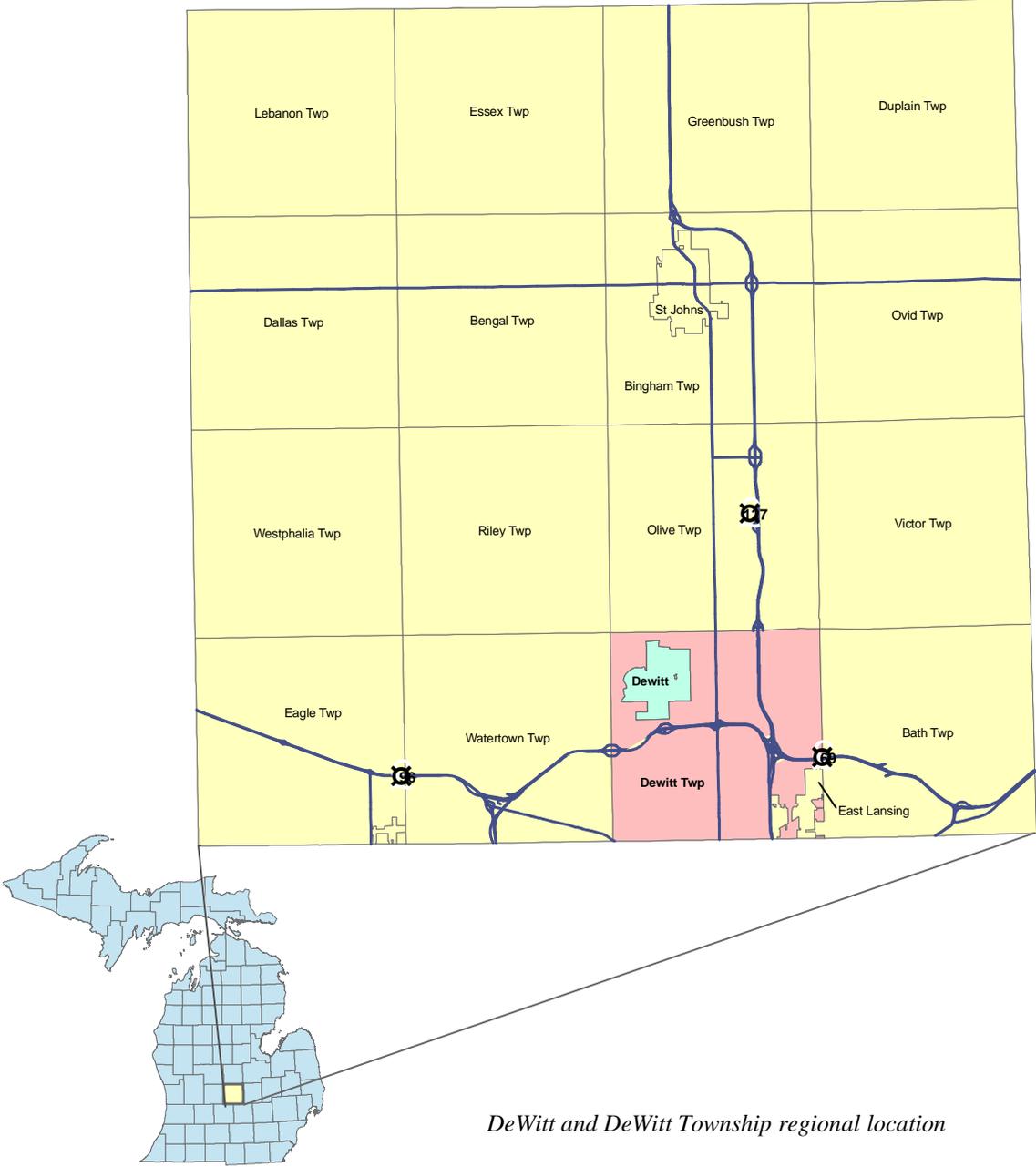
The City of DeWitt and DeWitt Township are suburban communities located north of Lansing, in Clinton County. According to the 2010 U.S. census, the population of the City of DeWitt was 4,507 and the population of DeWitt Township was 14,321. Census estimates for 2007 show that the City population has decreased by **4.15%** and the Township population has increased by 15.21%. Some important demographic statistics from the 2010 Census are shown in Figure 1, below, providing a brief snapshot of the area.

**Figure 1**  
**Selected Census Data for Comparison in DeWitt, DeWitt Township, and Michigan**

	DeWitt	DeWitt Township	Michigan
Population – 2000 Census	4,702	12,143	9,938,444
Population –2010 Census	4,507	14,321	9,883,640
% of Population 65 & older	9.8	14.0	20.7
% of population under 18	25.1	25.3	17.4
Median age	38.3	38.2	39.1
% bachelor’s degree or higher	45.4	29.7	25.9
Median Household income	\$76,091	\$60,815	\$48,411
Per capita income	\$35,891	\$30,241	\$25,681
Average household size	2.97	2.51	2.53
Median housing value	\$186,900	\$146,200	\$121,700



DeWitt Township is approximately 31.5 square miles in size. The City of DeWitt, which is located in the northwest corner of the Township, comprises approximately 3 square miles. The communities are part of the Tri-County Region, comprised of Clinton, Ingham and Eaton Counties. The rural-suburban environment of the communities makes them a desirable place to live for people employed in the greater Lansing area.





Two major expressways bisect DeWitt Township. I-69 carries traffic from east to west across the middle of the township, south of the City of DeWitt. US-127 carries traffic from north to south across Michigan, bisecting the eastern half of the Township. Another major transportation component in the area is the Capital City Airport, located in the extreme southwest corner of the Township.

According to the 2005 DeWitt Charter Township Comprehensive Development Plan, the main land uses in the township are for agricultural (38%) and residential purposes (22%). Approximately 34% of the township land is considered to be developed. According to the 2008 City of DeWitt Comprehensive Development Plan, the majority of land developed or planned for is single family detached housing.



# Administrative Structure



## *How Parks and Recreation Works in the DeWitt Area*

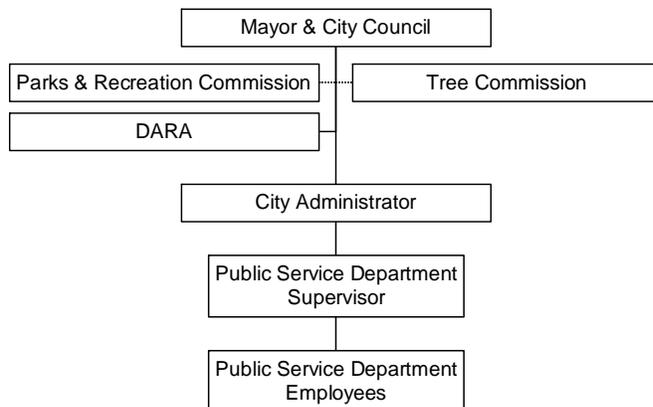
The City of DeWitt and DeWitt Township and the DeWitt Area Recreation Authority each have their own structure for parks and recreation functions while still working cooperatively in many areas. The details of each are described below.

### **City of DeWitt**

The City of DeWitt is a Home Rule city that operates under a Mayor-Council form of government. The City Council consists of six members elected at-large with an elected Mayor. The City Administrator handles the day-to-day operations of the City.

In 1977, the City of DeWitt formed the Parks and Recreation Board to advise the City Council on parks and recreation related issues. In July of 1997, the City approved an ordinance establishing the Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery Commission. The five member advisory commission is comprised of one representative from the city council and four at-large residents who serve three year terms. Members are appointed by the Mayor with the approval of the city council. They meet on an as-needed basis.

**Figure 2  
City of DeWitt  
Organization Chart  
Relevant Parks and Recreation Functions**



The City of DeWitt has a six member Tree Commission that plans for the care of trees and shrubs in parks, along streets, and in other public areas. As part of the DeWitt Area Recreation Authority agreement, the City appoints



3 members to the DARA Board of Commissioners that serve on staggered 3-year terms.

The DeWitt Public Service Department takes care of maintenance for the park system. The department is staffed by a supervisor and five employees. Part-time employees are used on an as-needed basis.

Sources of funding for parks and recreation in the City of DeWitt include the City General Fund, park facility rentals (pavilions, gazebo, soccer field, softball field, etc.), and occasional donations. Budget information for the City of DeWitt is shown in Figure 43 below.

**Figure 3**  
**City of DeWitt Parks and Recreation Budgets**

	Fiscal year ending 6/30/13	Fiscal year ending 6/30/14
Operations & Maintenance	\$28,574	\$61,699
Programming	\$26,045*	\$27,109*
Capital Expenditures	\$3,070	\$29,450

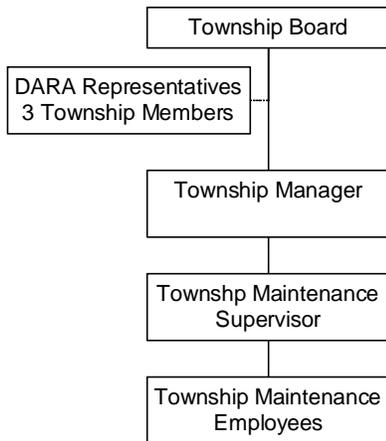
*\*includes approximately \$30,000 each year as a contribution to the DeWitt Area Recreation Authority*

**DeWitt Charter Township**

DeWitt Charter Township operates under an elected seven member Township Board form of government. The township manager is responsible for the day-to-day business operations of the township. As part of the DeWitt Area Recreation Authority agreement, the Township appoints 3 members to the DARA Board of Commissioners that serve on staggered 3-year terms. See Figure 5 on the following page.

The Maintenance Staff is responsible for maintaining the parks. This staff includes a supervisor and three staff workers. The majority of recreation programming in DeWitt Township is done by DARA. The Township does sponsor an annual Meadows Celebration festival that is held in Granger Meadows Park.

Figure 4  
**DeWitt Charter Township  
 Organization Chart  
 Relevant Parks and Recreation Functions**



Sources of funding for parks and recreation in DeWitt Township include the Township General Fund, park facility rentals, and occasional donations. Budget information for DeWitt Township is shown below. These will be constructed in conjunction with a planned Miracle League baseball field.

Figure 5  
**DeWitt Charter Township Parks and Recreation Budgets**

	2013	2014
Operations & Maintenance	\$122,980*	\$137,450*
Programming	N.A.	N.A.
Capital Expenditures	\$81,579	\$110,700

*\*Includes approximately \$65,000 per year for DARA and \$25,000 per year for the Meadows Celebration.*

### **DeWitt Area Recreation Authority (DARA)**

The DeWitt Area Recreation Authority was formed in July of 2003 by the City of DeWitt and DeWitt Charter Township. DARA was formed as an independent governmental organization to provide recreation programming for the City of DeWitt and DeWitt Township.

DARA is staffed by an executive director and a program coordinator who work out of the DeWitt Township Community Center. They are governed by a Board of Commissioners comprised of three township representatives and three city representatives who are each appointed by their respective governmental units. Members serve in staggered three-year terms. DARA hires various part-time as



needed employees to assist with programs and sports leagues. These include referees, umpires, day camp and program leaders.

DARA runs a wide variety of sports leagues, special events, and recreational classes for youths and adults. DARA relies heavily upon volunteers to coach and lead different activities. Approximately 350 volunteers assist each year with the numerous programs that DARA offers. A listing of programs offered in 2008 – 2009 is shown on the following below. They include sports leagues, sports camps, day camps, instructional activities, family activities, and one day fun events.

### **DARA Recreation Programs**

**Youth Programs**

- Indoor Soccer
- Floor Hockey
- Baseball
- Softball
- Flag Football
- Soccer
- Basketball
- DeWitt Wrestling Club (partnership)
- Dodgeball
- MRPA Basketball Skills Competition
- Pitch, Hit, & Run Competition
- Punt, Pass & Kick Competition
- Pre-School Sports Starter
- Basketball Camp
- Cheer Camp
- Summer Day Camp
- Spring Break Day Camp
- SierraRose Horse Farm Camp
- My Education Connection Science Camps
- Lacrosse Camp
- Golf Classes
- DNR Hunter Safety

- Tiny Tumblers
- Holiday Craft Night
- Drop Your Kids Off
- Bubble Party
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Flashlight Pumpkin Hunt
- Indoor Yard Sale

**Adult Programs**

- Softball
- Open Volleyball
- Tennis
- Golf lessons
- DNR Hunter Safety
- Jazzercise
- Power Cooking

**Family Programs**

- Super Bowl Party Shootout
- Big Truck Day
- Concerts in the Park

DARA works cooperatively with the City and Township as well as the DeWitt School District for use of facilities to run their programs. For example, in the City, DARA uses McGuire Park, Riverside Park, DeWitt Sports Park, and the City Hall area for soccer and softball fields. In the Township, DARA uses Valley Farms Park, Granger Meadow Park, and the DeWitt Township Community center for soccer fields, football fields, softball fields, inline hockey rink, gymnasium, and activity



rooms. Other groups that DARA cooperates with include the DeWitt Chamber of Commerce, the DeWitt Library, and the DeWitt Wrestling Club.

The majority of DARA’s funding comes from two sources. The first major source of funding is from program fees. These comprise approximately 57% of the funding. The second source is a contribution from each of the municipalities (DeWitt and DeWitt Township). This comprises approximately 41% of the funding for DARA and it is divided based upon the number of program participants in each community. A third, minor source of funding is miscellaneous contributions and sponsorships.

DARA Budget data for 2013 and 2014 is shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**  
**DeWitt Area Recreation Authority Budgets**

	2013	2014
Operations & Maintenance	\$219,965	\$224,197
Programming	\$45,361	\$37,655
Capital Expenditures	\$0	\$0



# Inventory

## *Parks in DeWitt Township and the City of DeWitt*



In order to plan for parks and recreation in the future, one needs to examine the types of facilities that currently exist in the DeWitt area. It is also helpful to compare these existing facilities to various standards as one measure of the adequacy of the parks and recreation facilities in the community. The inventory was completed by updating the inventory used in the previous plan. The respective City, DARA or Township staff worked together to complete any updates or revisions. A review for accessibility was also completed for each of the parks and its features.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) defines several types of parks according to its Recommended Classification System for Local and Regional Open Space. Several of these are applicable to and found within the DeWitt Area.

A **Mini-Park** is less than one acre in size and is generally less than 1/4 mile from a residential setting. It is used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs. **Neighborhood Parks** are generally 5 - 10 acres in size and they serve as the recreational and social focus of a neighborhood. Their service area is generally 1/4 to 1/2 mile and they are generally “walk-to parks”. **School-Parks** can combine parks with school sites to help meet the recreational space needs for the community. Mini-parks, neighborhood parks, and school parks all tend to be part of a smaller municipal park system such as is found in a city or village. **Community Parks** serve a broader purpose than Neighborhood Parks. They have more amenities and usually serve two or more neighborhoods within 1/2 to three miles and are generally 30 - 50 acres in size. In the DeWitt area several of the smaller parks are classified as community parks because they serve the entire community.

A **Special Use** facility is oriented toward single-purpose use, such as a soccer complex. A **Natural Resource Area** is land set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering. A **Large Urban Park** is typically 50 to 75 acres and its focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and



open spaces. A **Park-Trail** is a multipurpose trail located within greenways, parks and natural resource areas.

### **DeWitt Area Park Land**

The DeWitt area has a good mix of all types and sizes of park facilities ranging from mini-parks to Natural Resource Areas and Large Urban Parks. There are parks with many active sports amenities such as playgrounds, ball diamonds, soccer fields and there are nature and wooded parks that emphasize passive activities and protection of natural resources such as woodlands and the Looking Glass River.

**DeWitt Township has nine developed park facilities** and two undeveloped parcels. Four of the developed facilities are clustered and connected together in the southern portion of the township near BR-127 and State Road. These are the Community Center, Valley Farms Park, Ruthroff's Ridge Disc Golf Course, and Granger Meadows Park. Two other small parks, Valley Turner Park and Coleman Road Park are also located in this general area. This southern area of the township is more densely developed for residential use so it makes sense that there is a large concentration of parks located here.

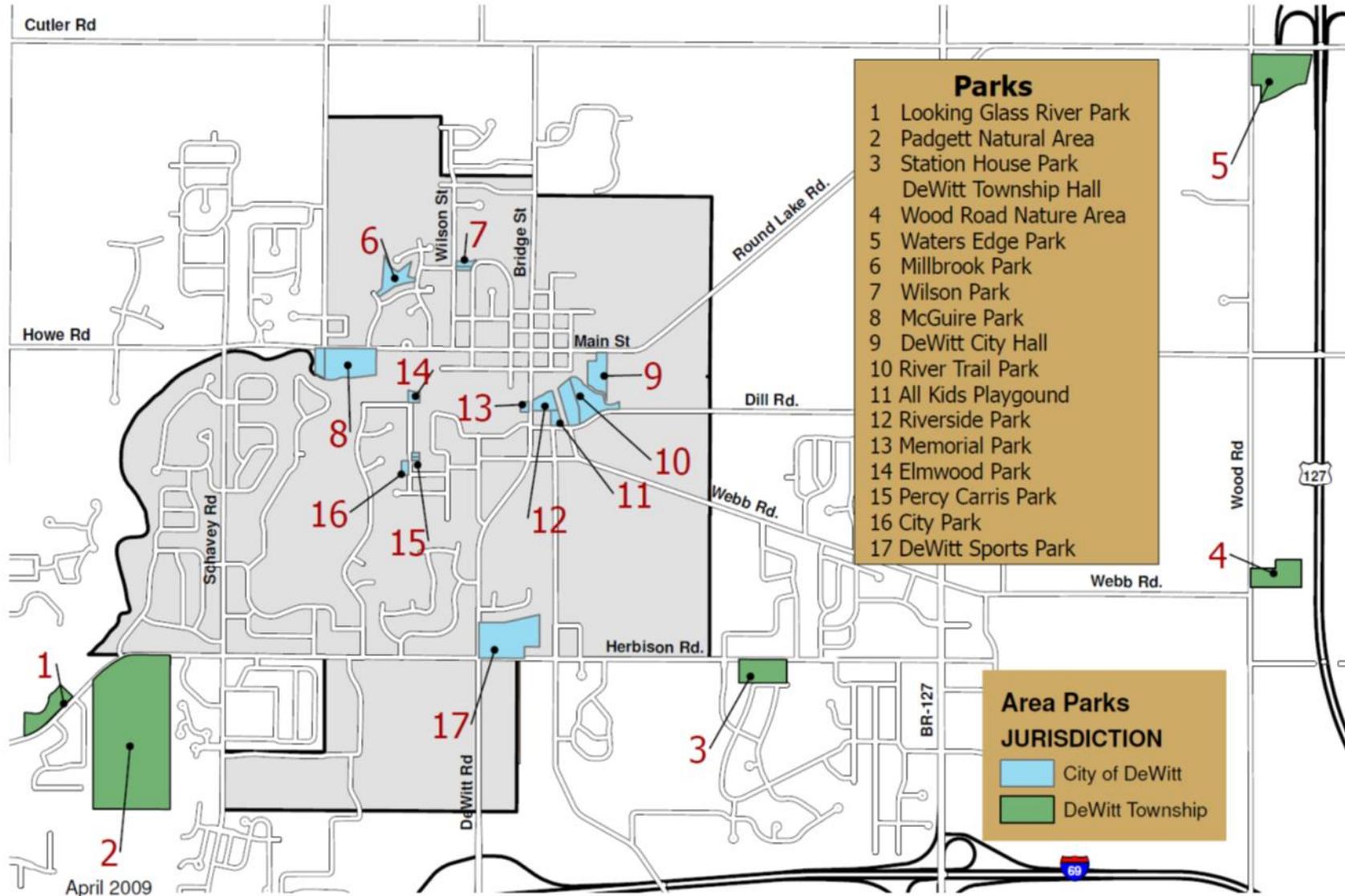
The remaining three developed parks, Looking Glass River Park, Padgett Natural Area, and Station House Park, are located in the northwest portion of the Township, close to the City limits.

**The City of DeWitt has ten developed park facilities**, and one undeveloped parcel. As with the township, several of their parks are clustered together and connected by sidewalks or trails. The four parks that are clustered are Memorial Park, Riverside Park, the All Kids Playground, and River Trail Park. DeWitt City Hall is located just across the river from River Trail Park and it contains parking and a trail connection to River Trail Park.

DeWitt's two largest parks, McGuire Park and Sports Park also offer the most active sports amenities. The remaining four developed parks, Percy Carris, Millbrook Meadows, Elmwood, and Wilson Street are smaller parks serving local neighborhoods.

Charts and maps showing amenities and other data regarding all of the City and Township controlled parks are shown on the following pages.

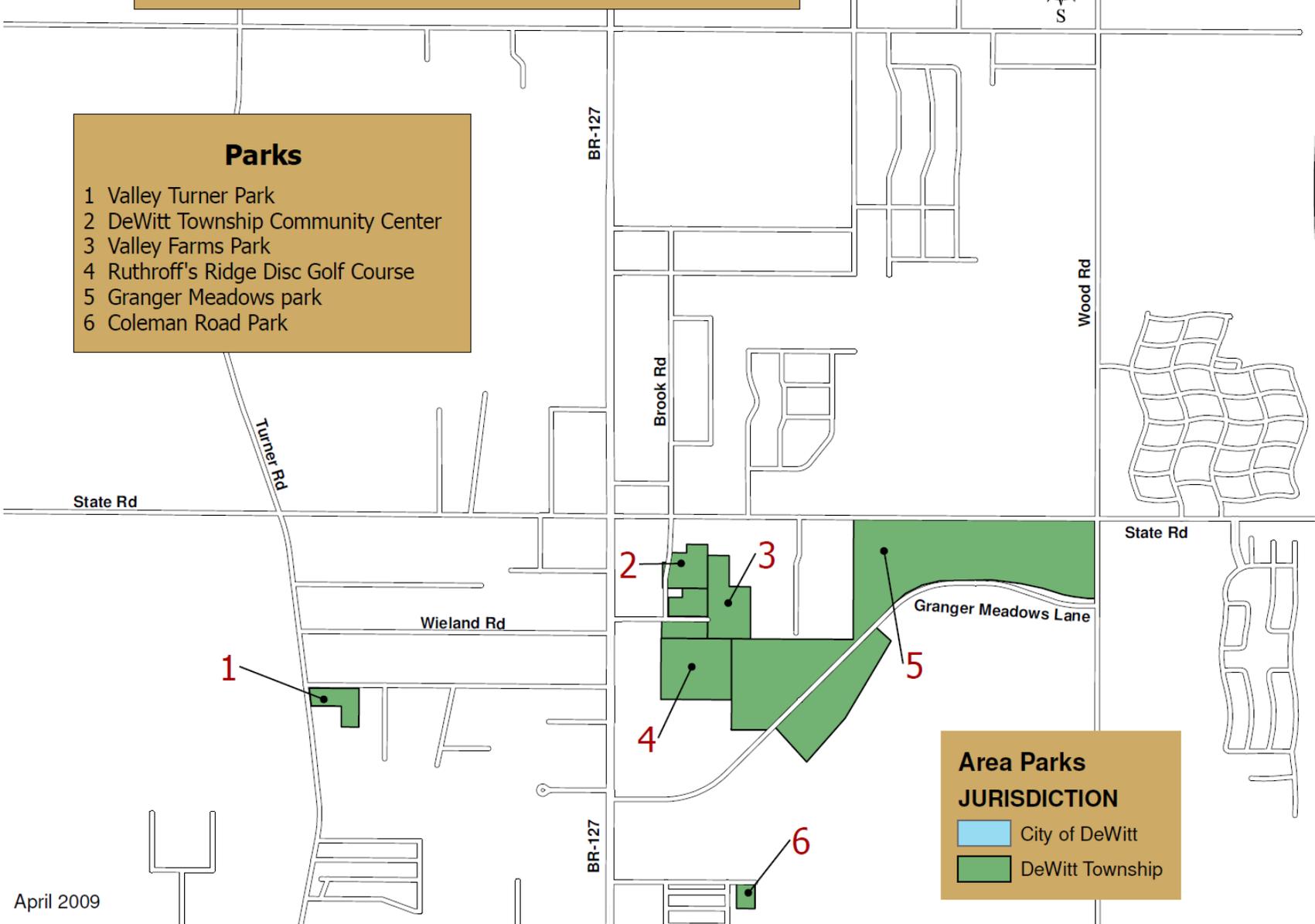
# DeWitt Area Parks - Northern



# DeWitt Area Parks - Southern



- Parks**
- 1 Valley Turner Park
  - 2 DeWitt Township Community Center
  - 3 Valley Farms Park
  - 4 Ruthroff's Ridge Disc Golf Course
  - 5 Granger Meadows park
  - 6 Coleman Road Park





**Figure 7  
DEWITT TOWNSHIP RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

	Coleman Rd	Granger Meadows	Looking Glass Riverfront	Paodget Natural Area	Ruthruff's Ridge Disc Golf	Station House Park	Twp. Community Center	Valley Farms	Valley-Turner	Waters Edge	Wood-Webb
Park Type*	MP	LUP	CP	NRA	SU	MP	NA	CP	MP	NA	NA
Service Area*	NB	DA	DA	DA	DA	NB	DA	DA	NB	NA	NA
Accessibility*	1	3	2	3	2	4	4	3	1	NA	NA
Acres	1.3	75	5.2	69.4	11.6	2	NA	13	3.4	11	7.6
Activity Rooms							2				
Ball Diamond		1						3			
Basketball	x	x						x			
Canoe Launch			x								
Disc Golf					x						
Grills		x	x	x				x			
Gymnasium							x				
Horseshoes								x			
Ice Skating		x									
Inline Skating		x									
Mutli-purp. field								2			
Pavilion		3						3			
Picnic Area	x			x	x	x		x	x		
Playground	x	x				x		x	x		
Pond		x									
Restroom		x		x			x	x			
Sand Volleyball								x			
Sledding Hill		x									
Trails		2.6 m		1.497				.29			
Waterfront Access			x								

\* See explanation below City of DeWitt Recreational Facility Chart on the following page.

**Figure 8  
CITY OF DEWITT RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

	All Kids Play Ground	City Park	Elmwood Park	McGuire Park	Memorial Park	Millbrook Meadows	Percy Carris	Riverside Park	River Trail Park	Sports Park	Wilson Street
Park Type*	SU	NA	MP	CP	MP	NP	MP	CP	CP	SU	MP
Service Area*	DA	NA	NB	DA	DA	NB	NB	DA	DA	DA	NB
Accessibility*	5		1	2	2	1	2	3	5	3	1
Acres	1	1	.7	4	1.5	5.2	.4	3	9	14.5	.75
Ball Diamond										2	
Basketball				x							
Gazebo					x						
Horseshoe Pit			x								
Open Playfield					x	x					x
Pavilion				2				1	1		
Picnic Area			x	x							
Playground	x			x		x	x	x	x	x	
Pond											
Restroom				x				x	x	x	
Sand Volleyball											
Lacrosse/Soccer				1						1	
Trails/Paths				x	x				x		
Waterfront Access				x	x			x	x		

**\*Park Type**

MP = Mini Park  
 NP = Neighborhood Park  
 NRA = Natural Resource Area  
 CP = Community Park  
 LUP = Large Urban Park  
 SU = Special Use Park  
 NA = Not Applicable (undeveloped)

**\* Service Area**

NB = Neighborhood (approx. ½ mile)  
 DA = Entire DeWitt Area  
 NA = Not Applicable (undeveloped)

**\*Accessibility**

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



**Status Report for Grant Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities** – The MNRTF database lists two grants for the City of DeWitt and one for DeWitt Township.

- TF97-140 Dill and Riverside Parks Development – City of DeWitt
- TF89-139 Park Land Purchase – City of DeWitt
- TF03-208 Water’s Edge Park Acquisition – DeWitt Township

All properties are still maintained and functioning as public parks.

**Other facilities** - Other public and semi-public park facilities in the DeWitt area include the recreational facilities located around the six buildings in the DeWitt Public School system. DARA works with the DeWitt Public Schools to use some of these facilities for its activities.

There are several private subdivision parks in DeWitt and DeWitt Township for use by the residents of those subdivisions. In DeWitt Township Arbor Meadows, Springbrook Hills, and Springbrook Hills East account for approximately 10 acres of park land. Recreational facilities in those parks include groomed lawn areas, fountains, picnic pavilions, and tennis courts. In DeWitt, there are also two small beachfront parks known as East and West Beaches on Lake Geneva. These parks are private and controlled by the Lake Geneva Homeowners Association. The East and West Beaches have sand beaches and swimming areas, picnic tables, benches, charcoal grills, bike racks, play equipment and handicapped restroom facilities. Sand volleyball is available at East Beach and horseshoes pits are available at West Beach.

Prairie Creek Golf Course is a public golf facility located in the City of DeWitt.

**Comparison to Standards**

General industry standards suggest a minimum of 5 to 10 acres of park land per 1,000 citizens. With an estimated 2007 population of 16,845, the recommended park acreage for this community would range from 84 to 168 acres. The City of DeWitt has 41 acres of park land and DeWitt Township has 200 acres for a combined total of 241 acres. This would indicate that the area has more than enough park land for its citizens. However, this is a very broad and general standard that simply looks at the total amount of park land but doesn’t consider other important factors as discussed below.

More recent park guidelines indicate that one must also consider the “Level of Service” desired by the community. If DeWitt residents’ needs are met with the existing amount of park land and facilities, then that amount is sufficient. However, there may be additional needs based upon the unique recreational demands of this



community. For example, a community may have an abundance of acres of wooded park land but it may not have many sports fields or pavilions or trails. This is why the community input portion of a recreation plan is so important. The Parks and Recreation Commission needs to understand the wishes of the community it serves in order to provide the Level of Service desired by the residents. Further, if the community is growing or if there are other significant demographic changes, it may need to plan for additional park land or facilities.

As a supplement to the recommended standards for park acreage, data from the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA) is another way to help understand recreation trends. It is important to be aware of national recreation trends to be able to anticipate activities which will incorporate a large number of participants and those which show the greatest growth in popularity. The SGMA conducts an annual survey that analyzes the size of sports product markets in order to determine sports participation trends. Results of the ~~2007~~ **2012** Sports and Fitness Participation Report are given in Appendix A.

## **Accessibility**

Creating a park system that is safe, accessible and usable to all individuals within the community, including those with disabilities, is essential. A grading system has been developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to easily identify those parks and facilities which are most and least handicap accessible and usable, based on the ADA guidelines. The accessibility grading system uses a five point system ranging from one, none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines, to five, the entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design.

An Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance assessment of DeWitt City and DeWitt Township parks was conducted during the fall of 2014. The assessment consisted of a visual inspection of each park in regards to access, circulation in relation to the park facilities. As noted in the inventory listing charts on the previous pages, some of the parks do not meet all criteria for handicap accessibility. Each community is dedicated to continuing its efforts towards improving accessibility at each of its parks when improvements are made. This includes accessible parking, paths, restrooms, activity areas, amenities and signage.

## **Natural Resources Inventory**

When studying parks and recreation resources in a community, it can be worthwhile to examine significant natural resources that may be in need of conservation or protection. In the DeWitt area, the most significant natural resources would most likely be considered to be the water bodies, the woodlands, and the wetlands. The

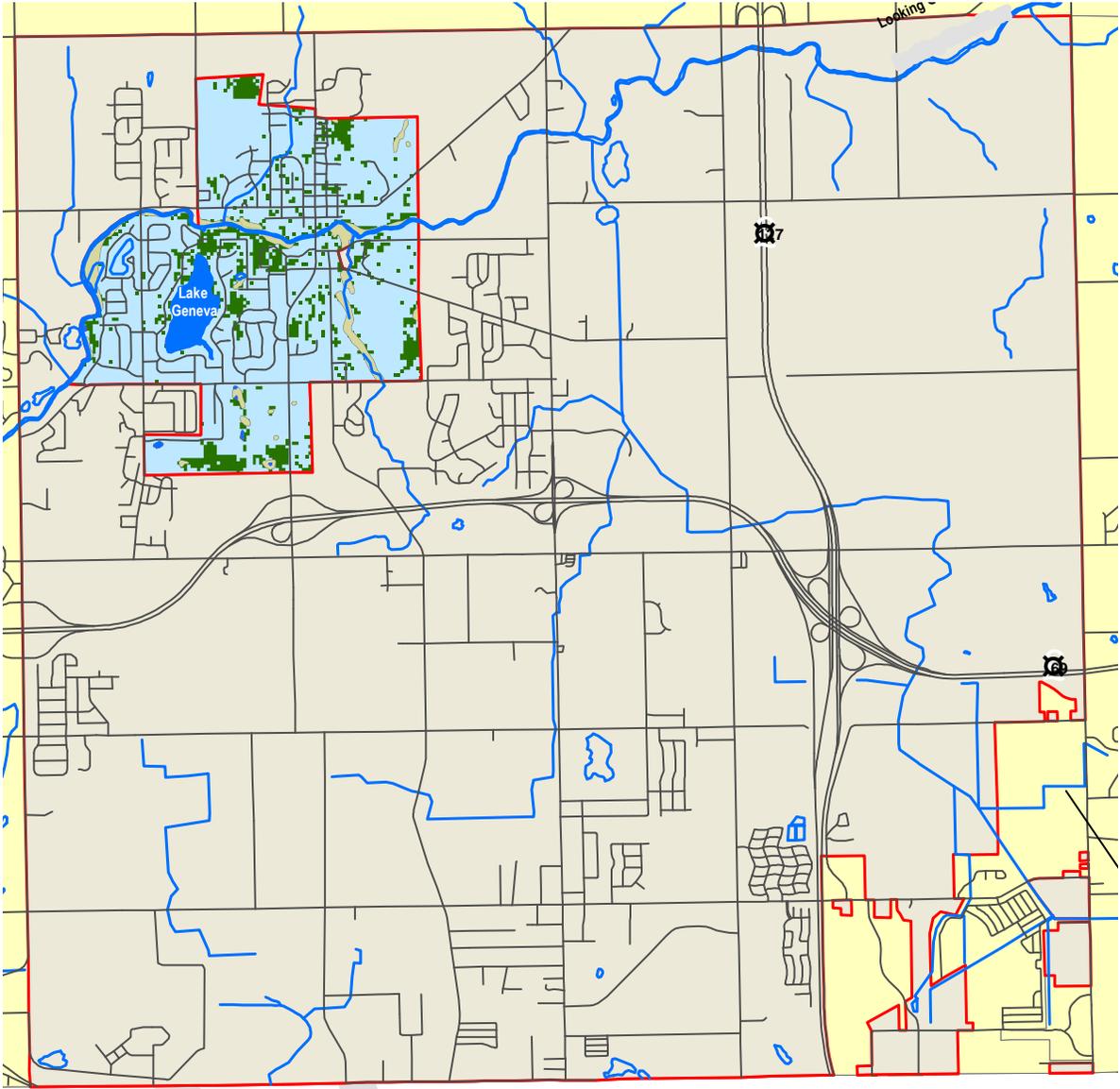
Looking Glass River and Lake Geneva are important bodies of water in the area. The Looking Glass River is approximately 75-miles long, flowing east to west into the Grand River in Portland. The River has no dams and it borders many wetlands and woodlots. Lake Geneva is a private lake in DeWitt that is managed and maintained by the subdivisions that surround it. There are several other large ponds/small lakes in the community as well as small streams and county drains.

Woodlands and wetlands are scattered in small to medium sized tracts across the City and Township. A map showing waterways, woodlands and wetlands is shown at the end of this section.

It should be noted that DeWitt Township completed a valuable Open Space study and report in May of 2007. Open Space can also be considered a natural resource of a community. The study showed that approximately 30% of the land in DeWitt Township was public or private open space. The executive summary of that plan provided four recommendations for creating, maintaining, and preserving open space in the Township:

- ▶ Maintain current land holdings
- ▶ Strengthen open space techniques and incentives
- ▶ Support regional public and private space preservation efforts
- ▶ Develop a program for future land acquisition.

See the appendix for the executive summary of the Open Space report.



- Dewitt
- Dewitt Twp
- Wetlands
- Woodlands
- Open Water



## Dewitt Area Natural Resources

Sources: National Wetlands Inventory; 1992 Clinton County Land Cover Data; Michigan Geographic Data Library



# Community Input

## *Listening to the Community*



To comply with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation Open Space and Greenway Plans, the DeWitt Community offered several different opportunities for public input along with a 30 day period for review and comment on the draft plan.

The first opportunity for public input was an on-line survey. It was made available through home page links on DARA's website, DeWitt Township's website, and the City of DeWitt's web site. Various e-mails with a link to the survey were sent by community leaders encouraging citizens to complete the survey and forward the message to their local contacts. Specific results from that survey are discussed later in this section.

The second opportunity for public input came at public hearings before the City of DeWitt, DeWitt Charter Township and DARA.

The online survey and public hearings were well publicized with flyers, e-mails, on various websites, and with notifications in the local newspaper.

After the draft was completed in January of 2015, it was advertised as available for public review and comment for 30 days in the offices of each of the communities participating in the plan. It was also posted on the three entities web sites. Final public input opportunities were at advertised public hearings held on April 27th at the DeWitt Township Hall, City of DeWitt on April 28<sup>th</sup> and DARA on May 7th.

### **On-line survey**

The survey was available for approximately 3 weeks from the middle of January of 2015 through early February of 2015. Highlights and important findings from the



survey are discussed in the paragraphs below. Complete answers from the survey are available in the Appendix.

**About the respondents**

One hundred twenty-five people responded to the DeWitt online survey. The survey received a good cross section of responses in terms of age, size of household, and residency, these statistics are shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 9**  
**DeWitt Parks and Recreation Survey**  
**Respondent Characteristics**

<i>Age</i>	<i>Response Percent</i>
Under 18	0%
18 – 29	6%
30 - 39	38%
40 – 49	29%
50 – 64	22%
65 and older	6%

<i>Number in Household</i>	<i>Response Percent</i>
1	3%
2	23%
3 - 5	68%
6 or more	6%

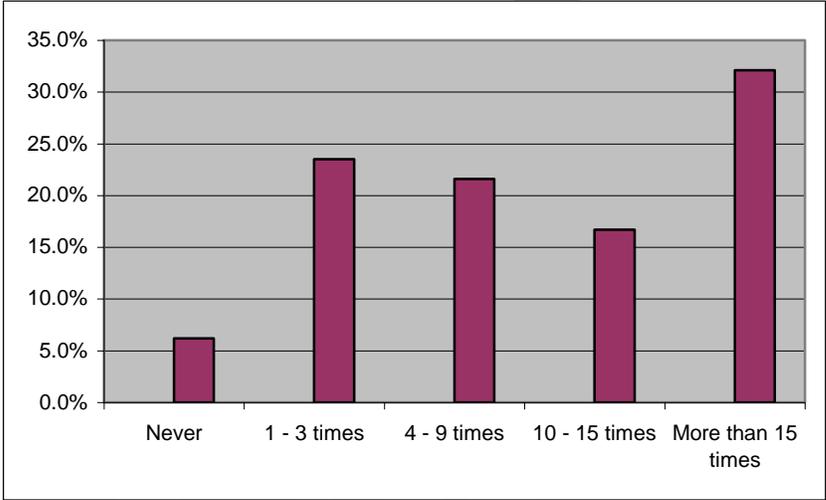
  

<i>Residency</i>	<i>Response Percent</i>
City of DeWitt	30%
DeWitt Township	67%
Elsewhere	2%



### Frequency of Park Usage

Question #1 asked respondents how many times they had used a DeWitt Area park in 2014. More than 35% of the respondents used a DeWitt Area park more than 15 times. Another 16% had used a park between 10 and 15 times. This means that over half of the survey respondents were, in general, heavy park users. A chart showing the responses is shown below.



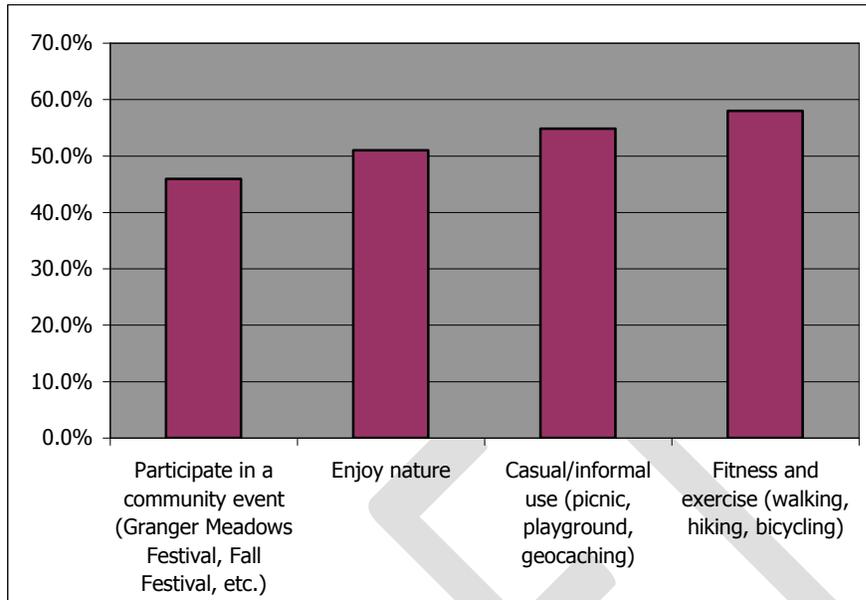
*Figure 10 – “How many times did you use a Dewitt Area park in the past year?” More than half of the respondents had visited a park 10 times or more in the past year.*

### Parks that Respondents are Visiting

Question #2 and #3 asked which parks that respondents visited in the City of DeWitt and DeWitt Township, respectively. The most popular parks in the City were Riverside Park and Sports Park. In DeWitt Township the most visited parks were Granger Meadows Park, The Township Community Center, and Valley Farms Park.

### Reasons for going to City Parks

Question #4 asked, “Why do you visit parks in the DeWitt Area?” Respondents could check from a list of 10 all of the reasons why they used the parks in the past year. Four reasons were checked by more than 50% of the respondents: fitness and exercise, casual/informal use, enjoying nature, and participating in a DARA program. See Figure 11.



*Figure 11 –The four most popular reasons for visiting parks in the DeWitt Area*

### **Evaluating general aspects of parks and recreation in the DeWitt Area**

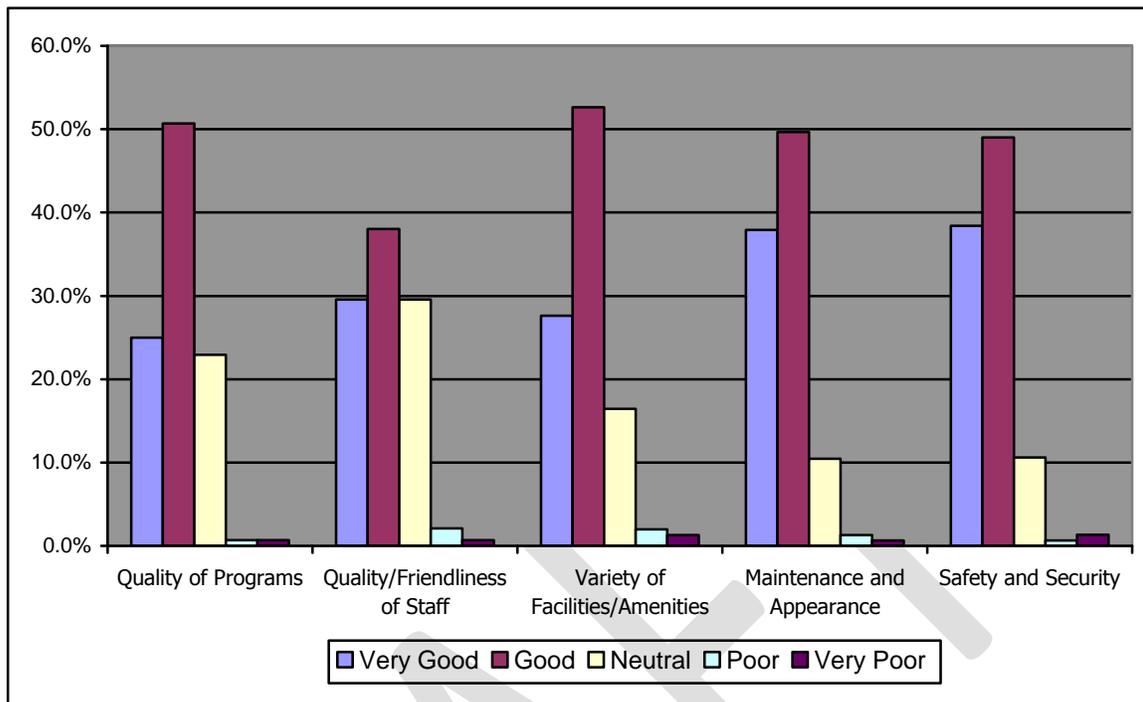
Question #5 asked respondents to evaluate five aspects of parks and recreation in the DeWitt area on a five point scale ranging from very good to very poor. All five factors scored very well with at least 76% of respondents rating each aspect good or very good. Maintenance and appearance scored the best with 91% of respondents rating it as good or very good. Scores for safety and security were nearly identical with 89% rating that feature as good or very good. Results are shown in Figure 10.

### **Additional features and amenities needed**

Question 6 offered a list of 14 possible features or amenities that could be added to DeWitt area parks. Respondents were asked to check all those they wanted to see added. They could also write in amenities that were not listed.

The features or amenities mentioned most often were walking/biking paths (51%), splash park (50%), canoe/kayak rental (38%) and a dog park (34%). Ten respondents wrote in other amenities that they wished to see added. Some of the more common responses were a swimming pool and ice rink.

Figure 13 shows the responses to question 6.



**Figure 12** – Responses from Question #5 were quite favorable when people were asked to evaluate various aspects of parks and recreation in the DeWitt area.

**Figure 13**  
**DeWitt Parks and Recreation Survey**  
**Potential Facilities to be Added – Question 6**

Facility/Amenity	Response percent
Walking/Biking Paths	51%
Splash Park	50%
Canoe/Kayak Rental	38%
Dog Park	34%
Restrooms	30%
Bandshell/Open Air Amphitheater	30%
Mountain Bike Course/Trail	25%
Playgrounds	23%
Drinking Fountains	22%
Basketball Courts	17%
Disc Golf	12%

**Developing a New Township Park**

Question 7 asked respondents about potential improvements for an undeveloped park in DeWitt Township that will be known as Water’s Edge Park. Respondents were offered seven different amenities and asked to rate them as “Important to add”, “Not needed”, or “Not sure”. More than half the respondents felt it was important to add four of the amenities: walking trails, picnic areas, canoe launch, shore fishing. Those responses are show in Figure 14 below.

**Figure 14**  
**DeWitt Parks and Recreation Survey**  
**Important Facilities to add at Water’s Edge Park**

<i>Facility/Amenity</i>	<i>Response percent</i>
Walking Trails	86%
Picnic Areas	81%
Canoe Launch	71%
Shore Fishing	55%
Nature Signs and/or Displays	48%

**Land Acquisition**

Question 8 asked the respondents feelings regarding two statements related to land acquisition in the DeWitt area. 73% agreed or strongly agreed that partnering with others in the preservation of agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive open space. 70% agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to pursue land acquisition for active recreation.

**Aging Population**

Question 9 asked the respondents “what senior activities would you participate in if they were available?” Respondents could check from a list of 13 all of the activities they would participate in. Of the responses, 46% indicated they would participate in fitness/nature walks, 40% fitness classes and 38% swimming/water aerobics.

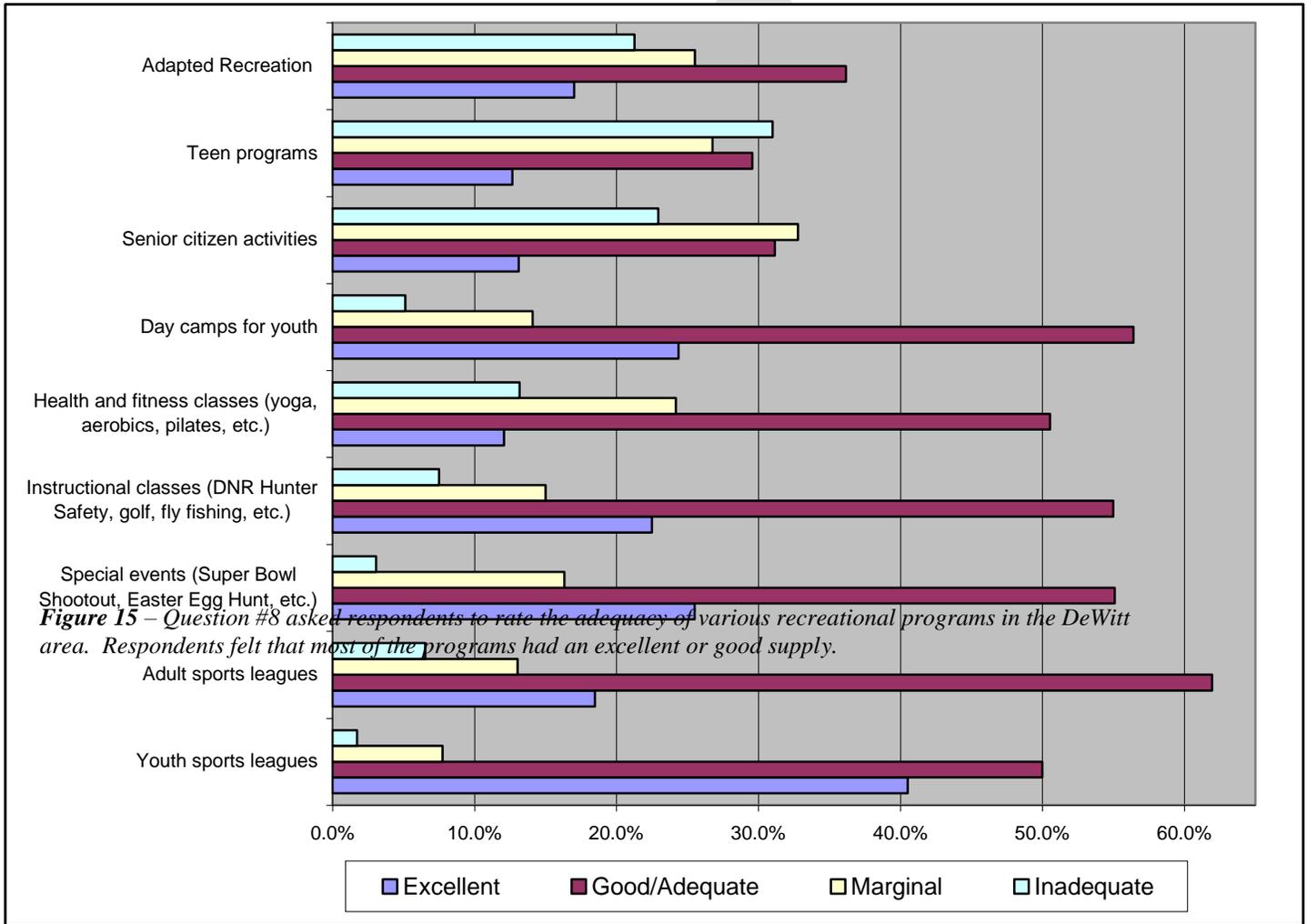
**Recreational Programs**

Questions 10 and 11 asked respondents about recreational programs in the DeWitt area. Question 10 asked respondents to rate the adequacy of various programs. Of those with an opinion, youth sports leagues, special events, and adapted recreation received the highest percentage of “excellent” responses. Adult sports leagues, special events, youth sports leagues, instructional classes, and health and fitness classes, had high percentages of “good” responses. Day camps for youths and senior



citizens activities scored the weakest in terms of adequacy of programs. Nearly 51% of respondents with an opinion felt that teen programs were marginal or inadequate and approximately 49% felt that senior citizen activities were marginal or inadequate. Figure 15 illustrates the responses.

Question 11 asked respondents to list any other types of programs they would like added. Approximately 30 respondents offered suggestions. Several of those were for facilities (swimming pool, ball fields) as opposed to programs. Program suggestions included more adult programs, swim classes for children.





**Shared Use Pathways**

Questions 12, 13 and 14 asked respondents to “rate your feelings regarding the following statements concerning shared use pathways in the DeWitt Area.” 83% of the respondents strongly agree/agree that Shared use pathways for non-motorized transportation would have a positive effect on the quality of life.

80% of the respondents strongly agree/agree that it is important to provide shared use pathways for non-motorized transportation to connect to community assets.

80% of the respondents strongly agree/agree that Shared use pathways should include on-road and off-road locations.

**Accessibility**

Question 15 asked respondents who had a person with a disability in the family about potential amenities that would make DeWitt parks more user-friendly. The question did not elicit many responses, but of those that did respond, paved trails, accessible parking, and flatter, easier grades were most frequently mentioned as being needed.

**Open ended responses**

Questions 16 and 17 asked respondents to fill in their own answers. Question 16 asked “What do you like most about parks in the DeWitt area?” Fifty-nine respondents wrote in an answer to this question. Common answers include the variety of parks, the paved paths, cleanliness, natural beauty, and well maintained.

Question 17 asked, “What is one thing you would do to improve parks and recreation in the DeWitt area?” Fifty-seven respondents answered with a variety of ideas. Some of the more common thoughts were more trails and connections, dog parks, adult activities, and better publicity of existing parks and activities.



# Goals and Objectives



## *Providing Recreation Opportunities for the DeWitt Community*

Developing goals and objectives is an important part of the recreation planning process. The overall goal of a parks and recreation department is, obviously, to provide recreation opportunities for the community and/or region it serves. More specific goals must be based on the demographic characteristics of the population served, the physical and environmental characteristics of the area, and the input of the community.

Goals are the broadest level. They are overreaching and general. Objectives carry out the purpose of the goal. The Action Program is the last level and it identifies specific projects and programs. The Action Program can include organizational, staffing, programming, public information, and operation and maintenance actions.

DARA, DeWitt Township, and the City of DeWitt formulated the following shared goals and objectives based upon the characteristics of the overall community, the input received at the community input session and the on-line survey. The goals and objectives below are considered to be consistent with and reflective of several other planning documents from the community and region. Those include:

- ▶ Clinton County Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan: 2008-2012
- ▶ DeWitt Charter Township Comprehensive Development Plan – 2005 (2012 Update)
- ▶ City of DeWitt Comprehensive Development Plan: 2008 – 2018
- ▶ DeWitt Charter Township Open Space Ad Hoc Committee Report - May 2007
- ▶ Protecting and Restoring the Upper Looking Glass River: A Watershed Management Plan, February 2008



**Goal 1: Provide quality leisure time activities with special consideration given to improving health and fitness.**

A community’s park system is a very visible and public reflection of how it values the environment and open space. Its recreational facilities and programs offer the community the opportunity to enjoy nature and take part in activities that will improve health and fitness. The DeWitt community realizes the importance of providing top quality park facilities and programs and it also wishes to continue to improve the health and fitness of its residents.

**Objective:** Provide both passive and active programming for a variety of ages and abilities of the population.

**Objective:** Add recreational facilities based upon recreation trends and input from the community.

**Goal 2: Provide safe, broad community-based recreation opportunities that improve the overall quality-of-life for all DeWitt area residents.**

The various methods of community input have provided many suggestions for improvements in park facilities and programs. The City of DeWitt, DeWitt Township and DARA will use these suggestions to guide their planning processes in the future. The community has also become aware of the recreational needs of special needs populations and is taking steps to offer facilities that will be inclusive for all. Two projects will work toward achieving that goal: the all kids playground in DeWitt and the planned Miracle Baseball Field in DeWitt Township.

**Objective:** Continue to add amenities to DeWitt park facilities based upon community input and need.

**Objective:** Provide recreational opportunities for people with disabilities.

**Objective:** Insure that improvements and upgrades to park facilities are handicapped-accessible, where feasible.

**Objective:** Continue program development for special needs populations, partnering with local and regional recreational providers, where feasible.

**Objective:** Add recreation support facilities to improve the overall user experience for park visitors.



**Goal 3: Provide non-motorized pathways for recreational and transportation use.**

Currently, paths are a high priority for many communities. The DeWitt area already has many paths, most of which are centered around the river. Citizens have asked that more paths be added to the community and that existing paths be connected. The path system needs to focus upon connecting residential neighborhoods to parks and local destination points as well as connecting parks to other parks. Further, there is a need to connect DeWitt’s non-motorized paths to those of neighboring communities

**Objective:** Expand the non-motorized pathways in the DeWitt area with a focus upon connecting existing parks, neighborhoods, local destination points.

**Objective:** Connect DeWitt’s pathways to neighboring communities.

**Goal 4: Develop recreation opportunities that focus upon and take advantage of DeWitt area water resources.**



Many survey respondents commented on the natural beauty of the Looking Glass River. They also felt it was important to develop recreational opportunities that took advantage of what the river has to offer. This can be important for local residents as well as those interested in visiting the community. In the latter sense, the Looking Glass River recreational opportunities can be seen as an economic development tool.

**Objective:** Develop opportunities, alone or in partnership with other agencies, to educate citizens about the area’s natural resources.

**Objective:** Enhance fishing, canoeing and kayaking opportunities on the Looking Glass River.



**Goal 5: Acquire and retain public land for future generations.**

As the DeWitt community continues to grow, local officials need to be conscious of the need for acquiring additional parkland. They also should look to local planning and zoning tools and cooperative arrangements to take advantage of alternate and additional uses for existing public space.

**Objective:** Retain existing parkland and acquire new public lands to meet the recreational needs of the community.

**Objective:** Preserve and protect open space and other important natural features in the DeWitt area.

**Objective:** Encourage the use of drainage courses and utility easements for recreational purposes.

**Objective:** Develop programs for evaluating future land acquisition.

**Objective:** Preserve floodplains and wetlands for recreation use wherever possible.

**Goal 6: Create community awareness of DeWitt area recreational opportunities and promote them to citizens and visitors.**

Several respondents to the survey commented that they were not aware of all the parks in the DeWitt area. Some also mentioned not knowing about recreational programs. The DeWitt communities could also capitalize on the opportunity to promote its facilities to visitors, as well.

**Objective:** Develop print and web based media to describe existing recreational opportunities with DARA, the City of DeWitt, and DeWitt Township.

**Goal 7: Continue to embrace and enhance regional collaboration for recreational programs and facilities.**

As Michigan struggles through a recession, it is important to take advantage of regional collaboration as a cost effective way to offer recreational programs in the community. DARA is a wonderful example of the City of DeWitt and DeWitt Township working together to offer programs to the entire community. Further such collaboration with other neighboring communities, the county, and recreation related organizations will most likely prove to be an important component in continuing to provide quality recreation in the DeWitt community.



**Objective:** Continue to work with existing recreation partners in the community to provide programs, leagues, and special events.

**Objective:** Explore options for new and expanded partnerships to provide additional recreational opportunities.



# Action Plan



## *Potential Projects for the Next Five Years*

With goals and objectives in place, DARA, DeWitt Township, and the City of DeWitt each were able to develop 5-year action programs to work toward accomplishing the goals and objectives. The action program details the direction the three entities wish to take over the next five years in order to maintain and improve the quality and diversity of area park and recreation opportunities.

**The action items for DARA, DeWitt Township, and the City of DeWitt are shown in the tables at the end of this section.** Each entity has its own list of action items and there is a list of “community wide initiatives” that relate to joint action items or those items that have not yet been attached to a specific community.

Each action item was assigned a priority of 1 through 5 with 1 being most important and 5 being least important. Each action item relates to one or more of the numbered goals from the previous section entitled “Goals and Objectives”. Potential capital improvements described in this Plan have been established not only to provide a framework for decision makers but also to enable DARA, the City, or the Township, to apply for grant funding for these proposed projects.

The action item list is not a fixed element and is neither all inclusive nor exclusive. The schedule reflects the results of the input received from the on-line survey, City and Township staff, commission members, and the community open house. Future circumstances, especially availability of funding, may change priorities or require reprioritization of items.

### **Financing potential improvements**

Funding for parks and recreation capital improvements can come from a myriad of local, state, and federal programs. Grant funding is available for parks and recreation projects. However, applicants need to target potential funding agencies and programs very carefully so as to meet the specific



criteria required. By participating in joint and regional planning for recreational projects, communities can stretch dollars farther and still meet the needs of their citizens. Appendix D contains a current listing of programs and agencies that can provide funding for parks and recreation projects.

<b>DEWITT AREA RECREATION PLAN ACTION ITEMS 2010 – 2014 Area Wide Initiatives</b>		
<b>Project</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Relates to Goal #</b>
Identify public lands to acquire for new park assets	4	1, 2
Identify an area or current park to build a skate park in the DeWitt Community.	4	1, 2
Identify an area or current park to build a splash park and/or create a public swimming option.	4	1, 2
Continue to work with Clinton County partners on the development and implementation of a non-motorized transportation plan.	1	1, 2, 3, 7
Work with Clinton County to develop county wide parks that includes the southern tier of the county.	2	1, 2, 7
Add property and/or easements along the Looking Glass River for increased access/viewing	3	4
Create canoe livery rentals to take advantage of the Looking Glass River in the DeWitt Community.	4	1, 2, 6
Expand biking/trail system to link existing parks	2	1, 2, 3,
Work with churches and other property owners with sufficient land and parking to install additional playing fields to accommodate user group needs. (soccer, lacrosse)	2	1, 2, 7



<b>DEWITT AREA RECREATION PLAN ACTION ITEMS 2010 – 2014 City of DeWitt</b>			
<b>Park</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Relates to Goal #</b>
All Kids Playground	Add a variety accessible play stations to the park.	3	1, 2
City Hall Park	Construct Japanese Garden.	4	2
Elmwood Park	Install river viewing/fishing platform.	3	1, 2, 4
To Be Determined (TBD)	Explore opportunities for developing a skate park with a skating users group.	1	1, 2
Millbrook Meadows	Install/replace playground equipment as needed.	4	1, 2
Percy Carris	Install playground equipment as needed.	3	1, 2
Riverside Park	Investigate ways to expand parking.	1	2
TBD	Construct Band Shell.	3	2
McGuire Park.	Construct a Pedestrian Bridge Crossing over the Looking Glass River	2	1, 2, 3
Sports Park	Repave parking lot, purchase grounds equipment.	2	2
Wilson Street	Install play equipment.	3	1, 2
TBD	Continue to add property to the park system as land becomes available, particularly in underserved neighborhoods such as in the southern area of the City.	3	5
TBD	Develop a dog/bark park..	3	1, 2
Various Parks	Install cameras, sensor lights, or other vandalism prevention devices to park system.	3	1, 2



**DEWITT AREA RECREATION PLAN ACTION ITEMS 2010 – 2014**  
**DeWitt Township**

<b>Park</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Relates to Goal #</b>
Granger Meadows Park	Exercise Stations along the existing trail	2	1, 2
Granger Meadows Park	Fire Pit	1	1, 2
Granger Meadows Park	Rock Wall	4	1,2
Granger Meadows Park	Lights for softball field	3	2
Granger Meadows Park	Sprinkler system for softball field	3	2
Granger Meadows Park	Stage area	4	1, 2
Looking Glass River Park	New Pavilion	4	2
Padgett Park	Pavilion	4	2
Padgett Park	Dog Park	3	2
Padgett Park	Interpretive Signs	3	2, 6
Valley Farms Park	Lights for softball field	4	2
Valley Farms Park	Expand disc golf to 18 holes	3	1, 2
Valley Turner Park	New playground equipment	5	1, 2
Waters Edge Park	Parking	1	2
Waters Edge Park	Canoe Launch	2	1, 2, 4
Waters Edge Park	Fishing Pier	2	1, 2, 4
Waters Edge Park	Stage area	4	1, 2
Waters Edge Park	Community Garden	3	1, 2



<b>DEWITT AREA RECREATION PLAN ACTION ITEMS 2010 – 2014 DARA</b>		
<b>Project</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Relates to Goal #</b>
Expand programming for preteens, sports, youth councils and special events.	<u>2</u>	1, 2
Expand active and passive recreational programs for senior citizens.	2	1, 2
Expand programs for children and adults with physical or mental disabilities.	2	1, 2
Expand and seek opportunities for partnering with local organizations and community groups.	3	1, 2, 7
Explore the opportunity for recreational partnerships with neighboring townships.	1	1, 2, 7
Develop a marketing/media plan to include the use of an e-newsletter and social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter	3	6



# Summary & Adoption



*A plan supported by the entire community*

In its continuing effort to provide quality recreational opportunities for its citizens, the DeWitt community has developed a Parks and Recreation Master Plan as a tool to guide the development of community parks and recreational facilities and locations over the next five years. This plan is the latest effort by the local governmental officials in the DeWitt area to establish recreational goals and objectives for the community. The plan will also provide the City of DeWitt and DeWitt Township eligibility for grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to assist the community in reaching its recreational goals.

Data was collected about the participating communities including maps, demographics, park information and an inventory of existing facilities. This data was collected from a number of resources such as: city and township staff, the existing Recreation Plans, other relevant planning documents, various web sites (census, city and school district) and through field observations.

Community input was collected via an on-line survey, public review period and public hearings. Based upon the existing information and the community input, the DARA Board developed goals and objectives for parks and recreation in the DeWitt Area. Then, each community and DARA worked to develop their own action plan to accomplish the goals and objectives.

The draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan document and it was made available for review at DeWitt City Hall, the DeWitt Township Office, the DARA office and on the three entities web sites for at least 30 days beginning on March 16, 2015. This reviewing opportunity was advertised in the DeWitt-Bath Review. The final opportunity for community input occurred at the advertised public hearings held prior to adoption of the plan. These meetings were held on (DATE, Time location).

After the public hearings, the DARA Board of Directors adopted resolutions approving the plan. In the following weeks the DeWitt City Council and the DeWitt



Charter Township Board each adopted the joint recreation plan. Copies of those resolutions are included in Appendix E.



*Appendix A*

Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association 2008 Participation Report



*Appendix B*

Executive Summary - DeWitt Township Open Space Study & Report, May 2007



*Appendix C*

Community Input:

Flyers & Publicity

Open House Comments and Input

On-line Survey Results



*Appendix D*

Sources of Funding for Parks and Recreation Projects



*Appendix E*

Adoption Documentation:

- Notice of 30 Day Review
- Advertisement for Public Meeting
- Public Meeting Minutes
- Resolution Copies