

**St. Charles Area Recreation Plan
2013-2017**

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This 2013-2017 St. Charles Area Recreation Plan was completed by the St. Charles Area Park Committee with assistance from S & R Environmental Consulting of St. Charles, MI. Earlier versions of the plan were completed with assistance from Spicer Engineering of Saginaw.

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Preface

Recreation and open space are important to the residents of the St. Charles area. Recognizing this concern, community officials have led an effort to develop a Parks and Recreation Plan aimed at improving and developing recreational resources in the St. Charles area.

In accordance with the State recommended five-year cycle for recreation planning, this plan covers the five-year period 2013-2017. The content and process follow requirements of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for a community recreation plan.

This document is intended to serve as a guide in the planning for future park and recreation opportunities, services, and implementation. Population shifts, new development, and changing attitudes towards leisure have added additional pressures to the community's existing parks and recreation system, thus increasing the need for both short and long range planning. Recommendations such as land acquisition, facility expansion and construction, and even the design of a neighborhood park improvement, will require additional study or involvement of residents in order to address the site-specific details. This plan lays the foundation for these activities.

Implementation strategies are identified over the next five years, at which time the plan will again be updated. The delineation of these improvements will aid St. Charles in grant solicitation from the DNR and other sources and long-range capital improvement budgeting. Additionally, during the next five years, it is important for the community to reference the plan and make appropriate priority adjustments as conditions change and funding opportunities arise.



Gazebo in Coal Miners' Area Park

I. Community Setting

This plan covers all aspects of recreation for the greater St. Charles area. This includes the communities of the Village of St. Charles, St. Charles Township, Fremont Township, Brant Township, and the St. Charles Community School District. These communities are largely rural, and they serve as bedroom communities for residents who work in the Saginaw, Midland, and Flint metropolitan area. This plan is an update of the 2008 Village of St. Charles Area Recreation Plan that has now been expanded to encompass a larger regional area.

The Village of St. Charles serves as the local recreation provider for the surrounding townships and the residents of the St. Charles Community Schools, because those areas are rural in nature and do not have any park facilities of their own. Seats are allowed for representatives from St. Charles Township, Brant Township, Swan Creek Township, and the St. Charles Community School District on the St. Charles Area Park Committee. St. Charles Township, Brant Township, Fremont Township, and Swan Creek Township all regularly contribute to the parks and recreation budget of the Village of St. Charles.

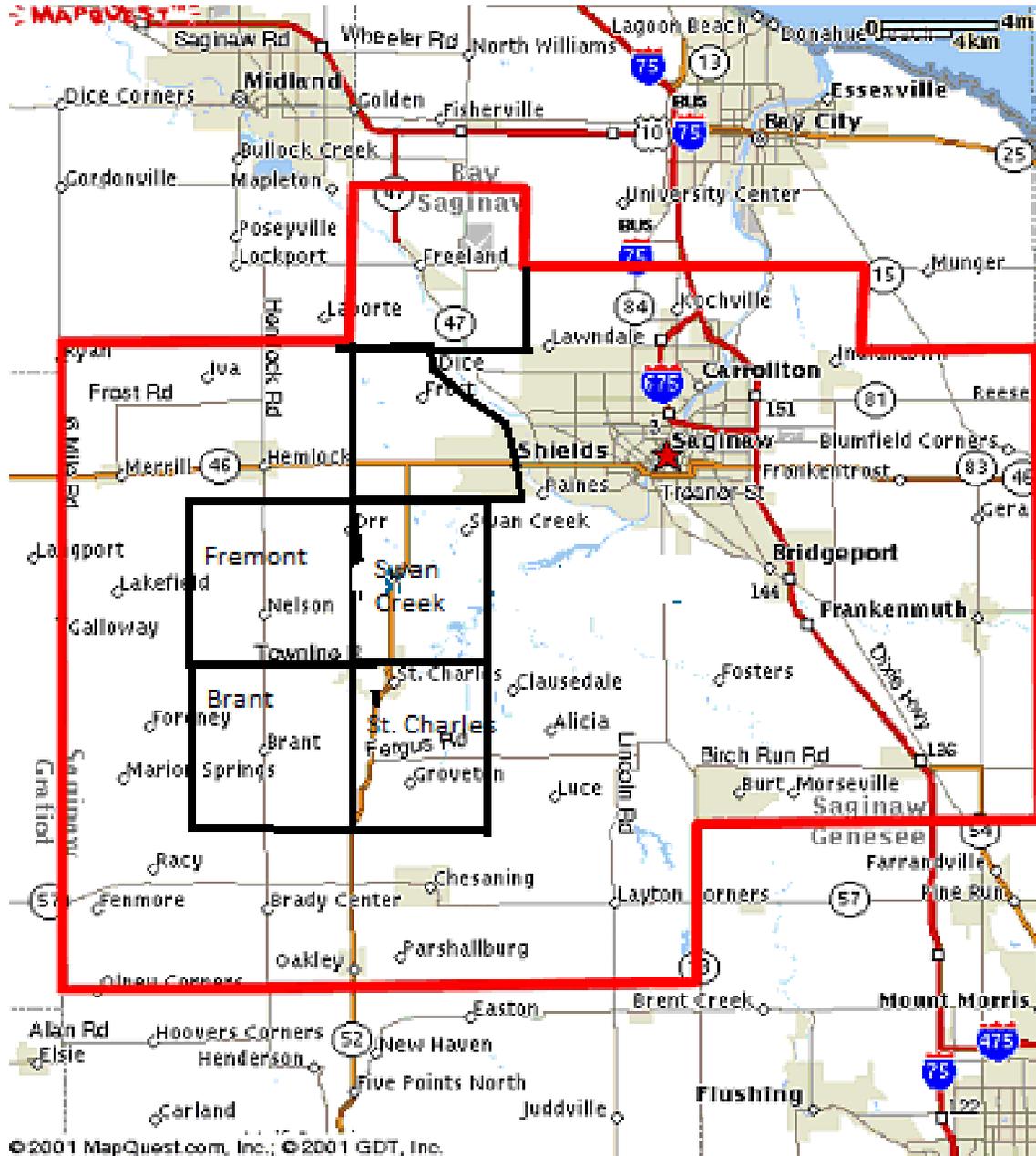
St. Charles is located in central Saginaw County. Fremont Township is northwest of St. Charles. Brant Township is west of St. Charles, and St. Charles Township is south of St. Charles. Most of the Village lies within St. Charles Township. Some of the northern portion of the Village lies within Swan Creek Township and a small portion of the western side of the village lies within Brant Township. The populations in 2010 of the various jurisdictions that are included in this Area Recreation Plan are listed below.

Village of St. Charles	2,054
Brant Township	2,026
Fremont Township	2,057
St. Charles Township	3,154
St. Charles Community School District	6,657

To arrive at the population served by the plan, one must understand how the U.S. Census counts people who reside in a Village and further examine the School District Population. Persons who reside in a village are also counted within the township or townships where they are located. Of the 2,054 residents of the Village of St. Charles, 31 are residents of Brant Township, 1,894 are residents of St. Charles Township, and 129 are residents of Swan Creek Township. The St. Charles School District encompasses all of the Village of St. Charles and portions of Brant, St. Charles, Swan Creek, Fremont, and Marion Townships.

The population served by this plan is the sum of the entire populations of Fremont Township (2,057), Brant Township (2,026), and St. Charles Township (3,154) as well as the portions of Swan Creek Township and Marion Townships that are in the St. Charles Community School District. School district populations are not broken down by governmental units, but estimates can be made. Geographically, approximately 75% of the

land in Swan Creek Township is within the St. Charles School District. There were 2,357 people in Swan Creek Township in 2010. Seventy-five percent of that number is approximately 1,768. Marion Township has a population of 938 people and approximately 5% of the land in Marion Township is in the St. Charles School District. Five percent of 938 is approximately 47 people. Thus, the population served by the plan is and estimated at 9,052 which is the sum of 2,057 and 2,026 and 3,154 and 1,768 and 47.



Location of the participating communities

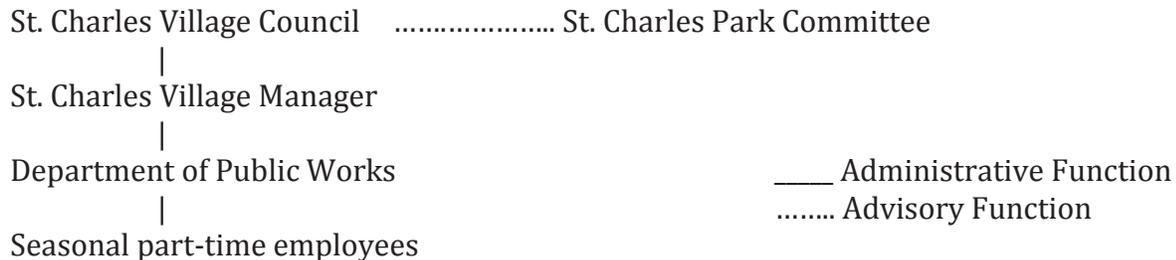
II. Administrative Structure

St. Charles is organized as a General Law Village in the State of Michigan. The Village Council is comprised of a Village President and six council members. Day to-day operations of the Village are handled by the Village Manager. The Village Council is ultimately responsible for the policy and financial decisions relating to parks and recreation in the Village.

An Ad Hoc Area Park Committee meets regularly to provide guidance and policy advisement for the St. Charles Parks. Several communities can be represented on the Park Committee. These include the Village of St. Charles, St. Charles Township, Swan Creek Township, Brant Township, Fremont Township, and the St. Charles School District. Brant Township is not currently represented on the Park Committee. Traditionally, the Townships have made annual contributions to the St. Charles Parks. St. Charles Township, Brant Township, and Fremont Township do not have any parks in their communities, so they rely upon the Village of St. Charles to be the provider of parks and recreation facilities for their residents.

The day-to-day operation of the parks in St. Charles is handled by the Village Manager. The Department of Public Works is responsible for maintenance of the facilities and grounds and it hires an extra person in the summer for mowing grass.

VILLAGE OF ST. CHARLES PARKS DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION CHART



Budgets

Parks and recreation functions in St. Charles are funded from the general fund of the Village of St. Charles and contributions from the general funds of St. Charles, Brant, Fremont, and Swan Creek Townships. Revenue is also generated from pavilion rentals and donations.

Budgets for the past two years, current year, and upcoming year are listed below.

	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-13</u>
Operation & Maintenance	\$89,118	\$95,812	\$51,322	\$58,133
Capital Expenditure	\$33,800	\$11,000	\$ 7,000	\$10,000

Programming & Volunteers

The Village of St. Charles currently offers no recreational programming. Other recreational programs in the community include a men's softball league, youth baseball and softball, and Music in the Park. A wide variety of community volunteers run these programs. Community volunteers also help with an annual beautification day in May. Many high school students help clean up the public spaces and plant flowers across town, including in the park area.



Waterfall at Lumberjack Park



Landscaping at Lumberjack Park

III. Recreation Inventory

To plan for parks and recreation in the future, one needs to examine the types of facilities that currently exist in St. Charles. 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 below was prepared using previous inventories and a 2012 survey that included complete walk-overs of each park by the Village Manager. In addition, two meetings of the Area Park Committee were held at Coal Miners' Area Park and Depot Park in the fall of 2012 to review facilities. This inventory includes changes since the 2008 plan update.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

The Village of St. Charles owns and operates three parks. The largest park is known as Coal Miners' Area Park, and the smaller ones are called Lumberjack Park and Depot Park. Each park is described below.

Coal Miners' Area Park (formerly called St. Charles Area Park)

Type: Community

Size: 34.29 acres

Service Area: Greater St. Charles Area

Purpose/Use: All-purpose park that meets community based recreational needs.

Recreational Facilities:

- Playground
- Walking Trails
- 3 Ball Diamonds
- In-line Skating Surface
- Horseshoe Pits
- 2 Basketball Courts
- Art Kiosks
- Gazebo
- Volleyball Court
- 2 Picnic Pavilions
- Sledding Hill
- Ice Skating Rink
- Disc Golf Course

Support Facilities:

- Paved & Gravel Parking
- Restroom Building
- Water fountain
- Other park amenities: benches, trash receptacles, bike racks

Accessibility: 3 - most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines (see accessibility discussion on page 12)

Grants Received:

- 26-01236, 1981
- BF90-232, 1990, Pool Renovation, Paved Walking/Parking

- BF93-193, 1993; Emergency Pool Repairs - Replace underground pipes, rehabilitate gutters, etc.
 - 26-01571, 2001; Park Pathway and Restroom Renovation – The pathway is still in place and is a popular feature in the park. The restrooms are open and operational.
 - TF05-010, 2005; St. Charles Area Park Land Acquisition, \$45,700
- For the acquisition of two separate parcels that are contiguous to the St. Charles Area Park. The purchase was completed in September of 2007. The parcels added in 2007 are shown in the aerial photo below shaded white.

Coal Miners' Area Park



A 1.29 acre parcel added in 2012 is shown in yellow.

Lumberjack Park

Type: Neighborhood

Size: 8 acres

Service Area: Greater St. Charles Area

Purpose/Use: All purpose park that also serves as the southern trailhead for the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail which is a linear park owned and operated by the Saginaw County Parks Department. Lumberjack Park is actually two parcels that surround the entrance to the Rail Trail.

Recreational Facilities:

- Playground
- Picnic Area
- River Frontage
- Pavilion
- Waterfall feature
- Horseshoe Pits
- Volleyball
- Gazebo

Support Facilities:

- Paved parking
- Portable Restrooms
- Other park amenities: benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, picnic tables

Accessibility: 2 - some of the park meets accessibility guidelines (see accessibility discussion on page 12)



Lumberjack Park

Grants Received: TF-87-164, 1987; Bad River Acquisition

Depot Park

Type: Mini-Park

Size: Less than one acre

Service Area: Greater St. Charles Area

Purpose/Use: Passive recreation adjacent to former railroad and Depot area and the current site of the St. Charles Area Museum.

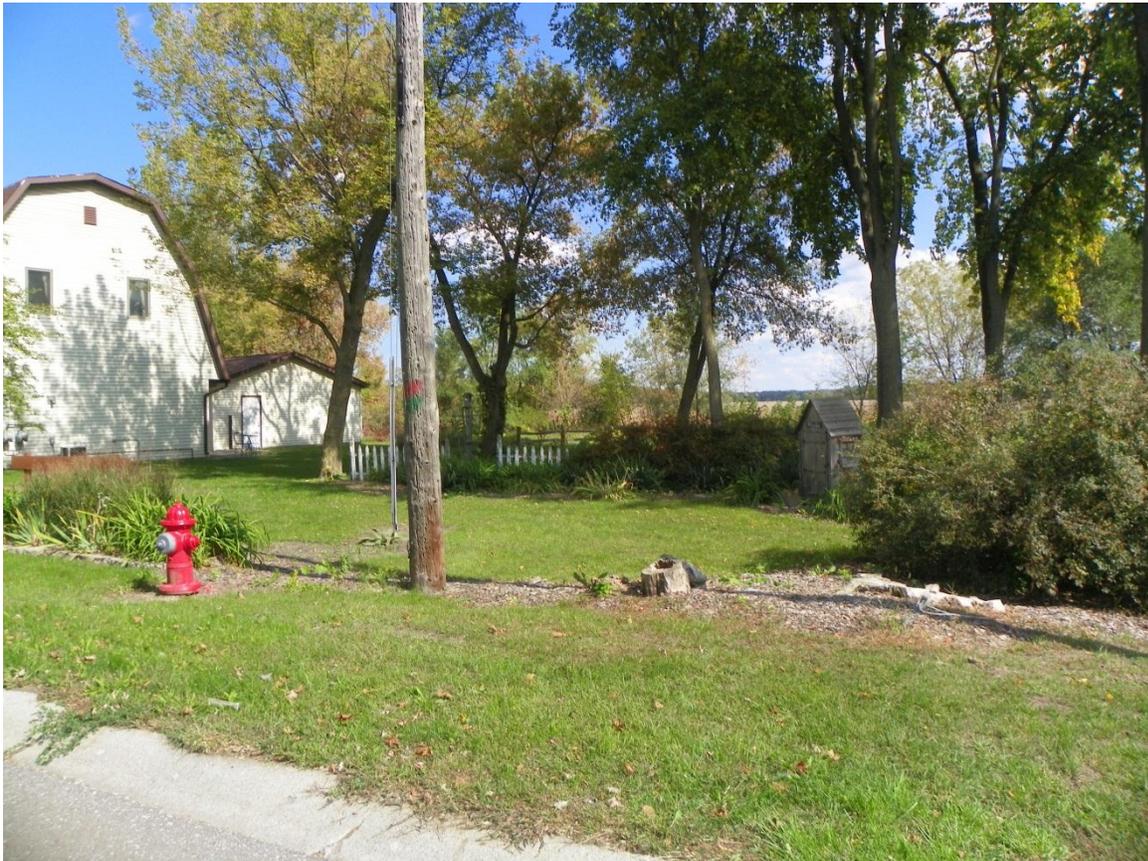
Recreational Facilities:

- Benches
- Flower Gardens and Mowed Area

Support Facilities:

- Paved parking
- Benches

Accessibility: 2 – some of the park meets accessibility guidelines (see accessibility discussion on page 12)



Depot Park

Other Recreational Facilities

Several other recreational facilities are located within St. Charles or in the nearby area. They provide additional recreational facilities and services to area residents. The Saginaw Valley Rail Trail runs through St. Charles. Its southern trailhead is located in Lumberjack Park, and the trail runs approximately 10 miles north and east out of St. Charles through Swan Creek Township.

Another County Park, Ringwood Forest, is located two miles west of St. Charles in Brant Township. It is a 160-acre wooded parcel with three miles of trails, a picnic pavilion, and a canoe launch on the Bad River.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns a five-acre parcel of land in St. Charles on the north side of the South Branch of the Bad River. A boat launch and local DNR field office are also located there. This field office serves as the headquarters for the Shiawassee River State Game Area, which is located east of St. Charles. The Shiawassee River State Game Area abuts the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge. These two wildlife areas encompass more than 16,000 acres and are havens for migratory birds and other wildlife. Controlled goose hunts and deer hunts are held each year at the National Wildlife Refuge. Visitors use the trail system for bird-watching, cross country skiing, and hiking.

The Village of St. Charles owns and operates a waterfowl observatory on four acres adjacent to the DNR field office. Live birds can be observed in a fenced enclosure in a landscaped area during warm weather months.

The Hartley Outdoor Education Center is a 320-acre facility owned and operated by the Saginaw County Intermediate School District. The facility contains an education center, one-room schoolhouse, log cabins, Coal Mine Museum, Farm education facility, an extensive trail network, and sledding hills. It includes overnight facilities and is used primarily as an outdoor education center for Saginaw County school children.

Private recreational facilities in the St. Charles area include Kimberley Oaks golf course, an 18-hole facility near the west Village limits. The STC Pro Bowling Center is also located in St. Charles.

St. Charles Community Schools owns several recreational facilities that are used by the community. These include ball diamonds, playground, track, gymnasium and football fields. These facilities are located at the complex located south of Walnut Street. Three separate school buildings are housed within this complex: St. Charles High School, Thurston Middle School, and St. Charles Elementary School. The district complex also includes a large stand of woodlands on the western and southern side on the property.



Bad River Boat Launch



Elementary School Playground

Accessibility

Creating a park system that is safe, accessible, and usable to all individuals within the community, including those with disabilities, is essential. An Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance assessment of the St. Charles parks was conducted during 2012. The assessment consisted of a visual inspection of each park in regards to access, circulation in relation to the park facilities.

A grading system has been developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources 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 to five as shown below. As noted in the inventory listing, the Coal Miners’ Area Park was rated a “3”, most of the park meets accessibility guidelines, and Lumberjack Park and Depot Park were rated “2”, some of the park meets accessibility guidelines. At Coal Miners Area Park, the handicap parking spots do not have signs. At Lumberjack Park, the parking lot is fully accessible. However, there is no access to the playground area or the portable restroom. Handicap access is provided to the pavilion, drinking fountain and waterfalls.

Accessibility

Grade

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Definition

- None of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines.
- Some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines.
- Most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines.
- The entire park meets accessibility guidelines.
- The entire park was developed/renovated using the principles of universal design.

The Village's intent is that future improvements at the parks in St. Charles will meet accessibility guidelines. The village may wish to develop future improvements using the principles of universal design. Universal access to outdoor recreation has been defined as creating environments that are usable by all people of all abilities, to the greatest extent possible, by enabling independent use and ensuring full, inclusive participation in all aspects of the outdoor recreation experience. In other words, providing universal access means going beyond the minimal legal requirements of existing state laws and regulations to create environments in which there is not separation or stigmatization of people with differing abilities.

Natural Resources

The most significant natural resource in St. Charles is the Bad River. The North and South branches of the Bad River flow into the village from the west and join in downtown St. Charles. The river and its branches have many scenic views, and they are popular spots for fishing, boating, canoeing, kayaking, and snowmobiling. They also provide access into the Shiawassee State Game Area and the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge. Other natural resources in the area include various stands of woodlands, some of which are located within the St. Charles Village limits. The State Game area and the National Wildlife refuge discussed earlier in this section are also important natural resource areas that are already protected from development.



The Bad River is a significant natural resource in the St. Charles Area.

Comparison to Standards

The Recommended Classification System for Local and Regional Open Space from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources defines five types of parks that may be applicable to St. Charles.

- Mini-Park
- Neighborhood Park
- School-Park

- Community Park
- Large Urban Park

A mini-park is less than one acre in size and is less than 1/4 mile from a residential setting. It is used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs. Neighborhood Parks are generally five to ten acres in size and they serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood in more densely populated urban settings. Their service area is generally 1/4 to 1/2 mile. School-Parks can combine parks with school sites to help meet the recreational space needs for the community. Community Parks serve a broader purpose than Neighborhood Parks. They have more amenities and usually serve two or more neighborhoods within 1/2 to 3 miles and are generally 30 - 50 acres in size. Large Urban Parks are generally 50 acres or more in size, and they serve a broader purpose than a community parks. They focus on meeting community based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.

St. Charles has approximately 42 acres of park land for its 2,054 citizens. General industry standards would suggest five to ten acres of regional park land per 1000 citizens, or approximately 11 - 22 acres of regional park land for St. Charles. This would imply that St. Charles has adequate regional park land for its citizens.

More recent park guidelines indicate that one must also consider the “Level of Service” desired by the community. If St. Charles residents’ recreational needs are met with the existing amount of park land and facilities, then that amount may be considered sufficient. However, if their needs are greater, the Village may need more park land. This is why the community input portion of a recreation plan is so important. The Village needs to understand the wishes of the community it serves in order to provide the level of service desired by the residents.

As a supplement to the recommended standards for park acreage, data from the Sporting Goods Association (SGA) can help in understanding recreation trends. Knowledge of national recreation trends helps in anticipating 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. The table on the following page shows the results of the 2011 SGA survey, providing information on the top 30 sports or activities. The definition of *participation* includes persons seven years and older who have participated in the activity at least once during the year of the survey. Sports activities that are growing in popularity may warrant a facility expansion. Various types of exercising including walking, running/jogging, use of treadmills, and weightlifting have become much more popular over the past 12 years.

2011 Sports Participation Ranked By Total Participation

Numbers are persons (in millions) participating more than once. Percent changes are from 2010.

Sport	Total	Percent Change	Sport	Total	Percent Change
Exercise Walking	97.1	1.3	Target Shooting	19.6	-1.2
Exercising with Equipment	55.5	0.3	Boating (Motor)	16.7	-17.0
Swimming	46.0	-11.4	Hunting With Firearms	16.4	0.6
Camping	42.8	-4.3	Soccer	13.9	3.0
Aerobic Exercising	42.0	8.9	Tennis	13.1	7.0
Bicycle Riding	39.1	-1.6	Baseball	12.3	-1.9
Hiking	39.1	3.8	Backpacking	11.6	3.7
Bowling	34.9	-10.6	Table Tennis	10.9	-15.2
Work-Out At Club	34.5	-4.8	Softball	10.4	-4.2
Weightlifting	29.1	-7.4	Volleyball	10.1	-5.1
Fishing (freshwater)	28.0	-6.4	Fishing (saltwater)	9.7	0.7
Basketball	26.1	-2.9	Dart Throwing	9.3	-11.2
Yoga	21.6	6.9	Football (Tackle)	9.0	-3.0
Golf	20.9	-4.3	Kayaking	7.1	26.6
Billiards/Pool	20.0	-16.9	Skiing (Alpine)	6.9	-7.1

Source: nsga.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm.pageid=3346



Walking trails in Coal Miners' Area Park



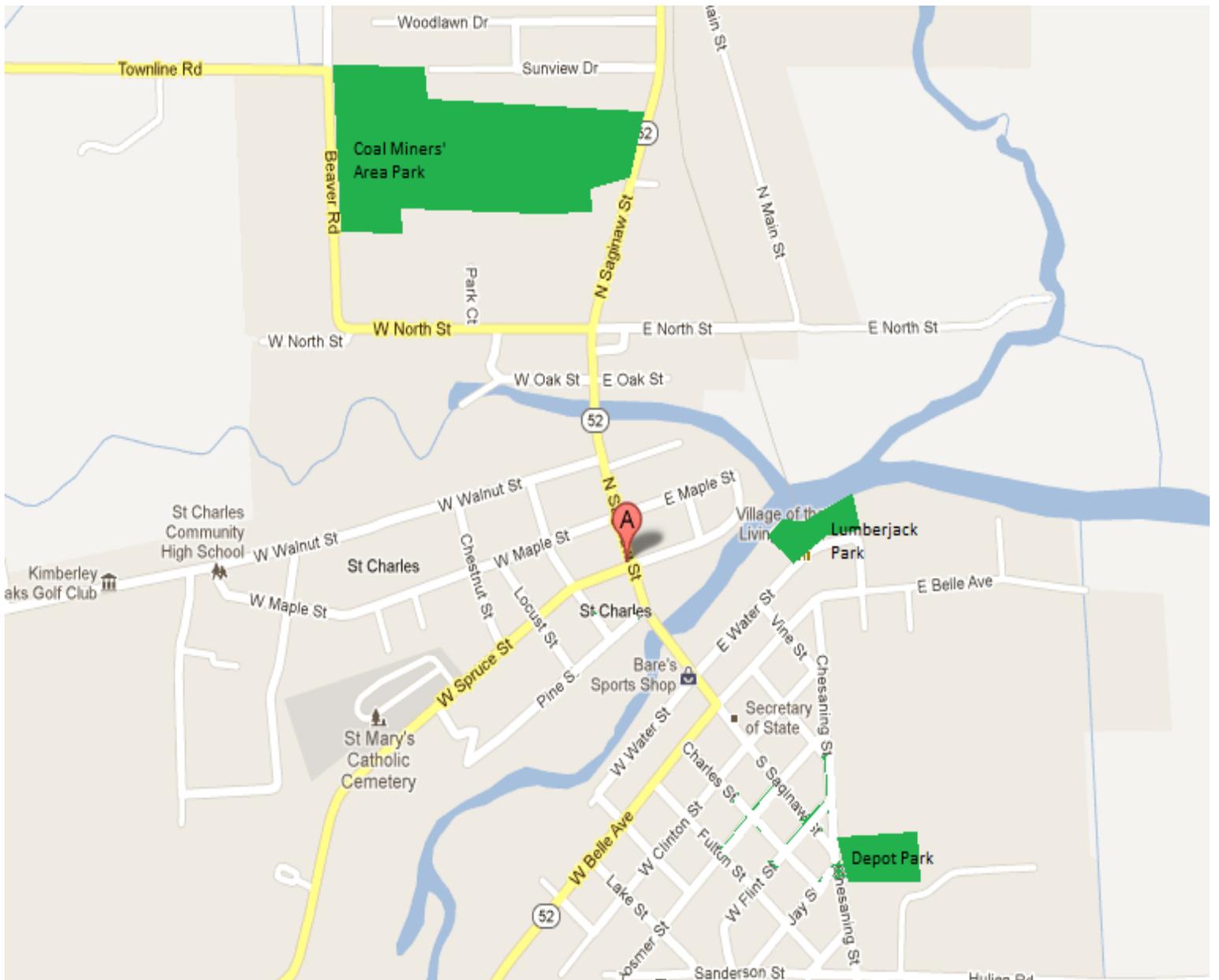
Waterfall, Landscaping at Lumberjack Park



Pavilion at Lumberjack Park



Disc Golf Course at Coal Miners' Area Park



IV. Community Input

To comply with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation Open Space and Greenway Plans, the St. Charles Area Park Committee surveyed in 2007 Board Members of Brant Township, Fremont Township, St. Charles Township, the Village of St. Charles, and St. Charles Community Schools. It also conducted an Open House to gather input regarding recreation in the St. Charles area. The latter effort obtained opinions from more than 50 parents and children. A summary of suggestions and comments are provided at the end of this section.

In 2011 and 2012 numerous discussions among community leaders occurred with citizen input during decision-making about park and recreation changes in the St. Charles area. These included decisions to close the St. Charles pool to swimming, support relocation of the St. Charles Area Museum, and construct a fountain, and series of ponds and waterfalls in and along the South Branch of the Bad River near Lumberjack Park. In addition, after a draft of this Plan update was made available for 30 days in the offices of each of the communities participating in the plan, a well-advertised public hearing was held on November 7, 2012 at the St. Charles Village Hall.

Recreation Plan Community Input

November 11, 2007

St. Charles Elementary School

PARK IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS & COMMENTS (RECREATIONAL FACILITIES)

- Area park has a lot to offer.
- We play ball at the park.
- We use the baseball diamonds.
- Need lights at the ball fields.
- Would like “soft surface” for play equipment.
- More playground equipment / improve playscape. (+4)
- Would like a larger playscape – with different levels for different age kids.
- Like new playscape equipment. (+3)
- Kids love big boat.
- Replace teeter totter at Lumberjack Park.
- Fix light near Lumberjack Park.
- Like swings / tire swing – Like Boat & Merry-Go-Round.
- Would like a bigger slide.
- Play equipment at Lumberjack Park.
- Would like a “BIG” Jungle Jim
- Upgrade tennis courts. (+2)
- Would like a sledding hill, more winter activities (i.e. ice skating, snowboarding, etc.). (+8)

- Like ice skating rink.
- Increase size of ice skating rink.
- Warming house for skating area.
- Need a real skate park for kids.
- .More equipment / improvements at Skate Park. (+2)
- Do not use the pool much.
- Please improve pool – use for lessons.
- Pool is pretty good.
- Need nets for basketball courts, like to use them.
- Would like volleyball area. (+1)
- The paved paths to all park amenities are very important, it helps my wife, who’s in an Amigo, get close to kids.

PARK IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS & COMMENTS (SUPPORT FACILITIES)

- Need more picnic tables/grills at the main park.
- Would like restrooms to be more available. (+1)
- Would like flushable bathrooms.
- Need good drinking fountains, fountain near ball park has bad water. (+2)
- Much less dirt and dust at parks.
- Need to control vandalism done to the parks.
- Possibly put in bags for dogs.

OTHER GENERAL COMMENTS

- Love the concerts in the Park.
- Improve the bank area on the Bad River.
- Fishing opportunities (i.e. dock, boat launch). (+2)
- Extend rail trail.
- Rail trail is a safe place for children to ride.
- Love the rail trail. (+12)
- Would like more landscaping, especially at school.
- Interested in basketball league for kids.
- Need more activities for older kids.
- There’s a lack of things to do in this area.
- Overall, everything is very good in St. Charles.

V. Goals & Objectives

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 and possibly for tourists/visitors. More specific goals must be based on the demographic characteristics of the population served and the physical and environmental characteristics of the area.

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 the most specific. It identifies specific projects. The action plan can also include organizational, staffing, programming, public information, and operation and maintenance actions.

The St. Charles Area Park Committee formulated the following goals and objectives based upon the various methods of community input and the demographic and physical characteristics in the area.

GOAL 1

Provide safe broad community-based recreation opportunities that improve the overall quality of life for all residents of the St. Charles area.

There are very few other public or private recreational opportunities outside of the public parks in St. Charles. The Park Committee wishes to provide facilities that appeal to the largest proportion of potential recreational participants so as to improve the quality of life for those in the St. Charles area.

Objective – Continue to add amenities to the St. Charles park facilities based upon community input.

Community input is a solid indicator of what residents in the community want in terms of recreational facilities and programming. The Park Committee will continue to plan its improvements based upon the needs expressed in formal and informal input sessions.

Objective – Acquire more park land to meet the needs of the St. Charles area residents.

Objective – Expand riverfront recreational opportunities in St. Charles. The Bad River is a wonderful natural resource in the St. Charles area. The Village's existing park on the river, Lumberjack Park, could offer more in terms of taking advantage of the riverfront. If other riverfront property becomes available, the Village may want to consider acquiring it.



Lumberjack Park

GOAL 2

Provide recreational facilities and programming that allows for social interaction for all age groups.

The St. Charles parks serve as community gathering points and social center for the Township. Formal and informal programs and facilities allow for social interaction of participants (i.e. picnic-goers) and also for spectators (i.e., Little League fans and concert-goers). These help to provide a sense of togetherness and connectivity to the area.

Objective – Investigate options for providing more recreational programs for St. Charles area residents.

Objective – Add recreational facilities that appeal to an aging population. Most of the current programming in the area is focused on youth. As the population in the area ages, the Park Committee and other groups in the community may want to consider adding more programs and facilities for other age groups. Many residents who are of the “Baby Boom” generation are retiring and are looking for leisure time activities.

GOAL 3

Continue to improve and upgrade St. Charles recreational and support facilities so as to offer the community parks that it can be proud of.

Park facilities are among the most visible indicators of a community’s identity and pride as well as local tax dollars at work. The Park Committee wishes to provide quality facilities that show that St. Charles is an active community that takes pride in its public facilities.

Objective – Keep park facilities safe and well maintained.

Objective – Add support facilities so as to improve the ease of use in the parks.

GOAL 4

Provide recreational opportunities for people with disabilities.

The Park Committee wishes to provide recreational opportunities for all area residents, including those with disabilities. The aging population will have increased needs for accessible facilities. Over the years, the Park Committee has improved the accessibility of the facilities in the park and wishes to continue to do so.

Objective – Make sure that all improvements and upgrades to park facilities are handicap accessible.

GOAL 5

Improve the health and fitness of St. Charles area residents.

Because there are limited opportunities for fitness and recreation in the St. Charles area, the Park Committee wants to continue to provide and expand its programs and facilities so that residents of the community can enjoy the health benefits of physical fitness.

Objective – Continue to add multi-use paths to encourage non-motorized transportation in St. Charles.

Objective – Evaluate existing facilities and programming in terms of fitness opportunities for the community.

Objective – Look for partnering opportunities among local communities, the School District, and other organizations who wish to provide recreational programming.



Coal Miners' Area Park

VI. Action Program

With goals and objectives in place, the St. Charles Park Committee was able to develop a 5-year action program to work toward accomplishing the goals and objectives. The Action Program details the direction the community wishes to take over the next five years in order to maintain and improve the quality and diversity of area park and recreation opportunities.

Projects were 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 Section V. Potential capital improvements described in this Plan have been established not only to provide a framework for decision makers but also to enable the Village to apply for grant funding for these proposed projects. The project list is not a fixed element and is neither all inclusive or exclusive. The schedule reflects the results of the input received from Village Staff, participating communities, board members, and input from the community open house.

1. ACTION ITEM – Convert the former Water Tower to an Observation Tower/Deck.

Priority – 5

Relates to Goal – 1, 3

Rationale/Discussion

Providing a new use for the existing tower structure could be very beneficial for the community. The former water tower could be used as a vantage point over the wide ranging flatlands in the community. Users could view the Shiawassee Flats State Game Area and the Shiawassee National Wildlife Area. The vantage point would become a destination point on the Saginaw County Rail Trail which can serve to increase visitors and tourism in the area.

2. ACTION ITEM – Construct a series of ponds and waterfall in Coal Miners' Area Park near the old well house.

Priority – 4

Relates to Goal – 1, 3, 4

Rationale/Discussion

Ponds and waterfalls would be an interesting and aesthetically pleasing feature to add to Coal Miners' Area Park. An existing vein well provides a continual source of water in the park.

3. ACTION ITEM – Construct a Fishing Platform on the existing Rail Trail Bridge.

Priority – 2
Relates to Goal – All

Rationale/Discussion

The need for additional fishing opportunities was mentioned at the 2007 community input open house.

4. ACTION ITEM - Create a multi-use path loop that runs from the Rail Trail connector near Sunview Drive on the east-side of M-52 following south along M-52 through St. Charles to the waterfowl observatory and then west along the north bank of the South Branch connecting to a new bridge that crosses the North Branch to meet back at the Rail Trail.

Priority – 2
Relates to Goal – All

Rationale/Discussion

Construction of a bridge over the North Branch of the Bad River would provide an important piece of a route that would take Rail Trail Users into downtown St. Charles. The path described above would provide a safe loop through downtown so that Rail Trail users could detour through this area to stop at local restaurants and other businesses.



Walking Trail in Coal Miners' Area Park



Pavilion in Coal Miners' Area Park

5. ACTION ITEM - Improve ball diamonds at Coal Miners' Area Park.

Priority - 1

Relates to Goal - 1, 2, 3, 5

Rationale/Discussion

Several people at the 2007 Open House expressed a need for improving and upgrading the ball diamonds at Coal Miners' Area Park. Some suggested watering the diamonds using the water source in the Park. Another suggestion was to add lights to allow night use of the ball diamonds.

6. ACTION ITEM - Pave gravel parking areas in the Parks.

Priority - 3

Relates to Goal - 3, 4

Rationale/Discussion

A large lot in the Coal Miners' Area Park and a portion of the lot in Lumberjack Park are unpaved. Paving these lots would improve the aesthetics in the park and would improve accessibility.

7. ACTION ITEM - Refurbish tennis courts and basketball courts in Coal Miners' Area Park.

Priority - 2

Relates to Goal - All

Rationale/Discussion

The existing tennis courts and basketball courts are old and outdated. People who attended the open house noticed this and mentioned a need to update these facilities.

8. ACTION ITEM - Construct Skate Park in Coal Miners Area Park.

Priority - 5

Relates to Goal - 1,2,3,5

Rationale/Discussion

Community members have expressed interest in having a skate park. It would provide the youth of the activity with opportunity for physical activity.

9. Action Item - Add fishing platform, canoe launch, and boat dock at Lumberjack Park.

Priority - 3

Relates to Goal - All

Rationale/Discussion

The community has expressed interest in having expanded and improved waterfront amenities in St. Charles. A fishing platform, canoe launch, and boat dock would provide increased waterfront access to the Bad River and provide low cost opportunities for fishing.

10. Action Item - Add playground equipment to Coal Miners' Area Park and Lumberjack Park.

Priority - 3

Relates to Goal - 1,2,3

Rationale/Discussion

The need for playground improvements has been mentioned many times over the years. Some of the existing equipment is old and outdated, and users have expressed a general need for more equipment at both parks.

11. Action Item - Encourage and support extension of the County's Rail Trail from Lumberjack Park south to Hulien Road.

Priority - 2

Relates to Goal - 1,2 3,5

Rationale/Discussion

Extending the Rail Trail south would provide a link between Lumberjack Park, Depot Park and the new St. Charles Area Museum located just north of Hulien Road. The Museum has paved parking areas which could be used as staging areas for bicyclists to return to Lumberjack Park via the sidewalks through the downtown area. Use of this loop by bicyclists and hikers could provide a boost for downtown businesses. The cost of trail construction would be low in comparison to other Rail Trail segments because of the flat terrain. Few street crossings and no stream crossings would be involved.

12. Action Item - Transfer ownership of Depot Park to the St. Charles Area Museum and otherwise encourage and support expansion and improvements at the Museum.

Priority - 1

Relates to Goal - 1,2,3,5

Rationale/Discussion

The St. Charles Area Museum's leaders are seeking support to expand the Museum building to the north to allow building access for large items. The existing building has doors only 36 inches wide so the Museum cannot presently accept large items of historic value. The most cost-effective expansion would be to build on part of Depot Park. Since that mini-park has a theme related to the Museum and the Museum's leaders have a vested interest in maintaining and improving the park, there would be minimal loss of parkland.

13. Action Item - Improve riverbank areas on Village properties along West Water Street, at Lumberjack Park, and near the waterfowl observatory.

Priority - 3

Relates to Goal - 1,2,3

Rationale/Discussion

The area along Water Street on the south bank of the Bad River has no benches or other amenities to encourage even passive recreation. Minimal landscape improvements would also encourage more use of the riverbank area in Lumberjack Park.

14. Action Item – Convert the former swimming pool in Coal Miners’ Area Park to a splash park.

Priority – 1

Relates to Goal – 1,3,5

Rationale/Discussion

A splash park can be constructed and operated at relatively low cost and provide a prime summertime recreation facility for families with young children. Other communities in Mid-Michigan have found splash parks less expensive to operate and more popular than conventional swimming pools.



Roller Rink at Coal Miners’ Area Park

VII. Summary & Adoption

In its continuing effort to provide quality recreational opportunities for its citizens, St. Charles has developed a Community Parks and Recreation Master Plan as a tool to guide the development of community park and recreational facilities and locations over the next five years. This plan is the latest effort by the St. Charles area to establish recreational goals and objectives for the community. The plan will also provide St. Charles and the participating communities eligibility for grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other sources to assist the community in reaching its recreational goals.

Community input was formally solicited during a 30 day period preceding a public hearing on November 7, 2012. Based upon the existing information and the community input, the Area Park Committee developed goals and objectives for parks and recreation, and outlined an action program to accomplish those goals and objectives.

After the public meeting, the Park Committee adopted a resolution recommending approval of the plan by each participating community. In the following weeks each participating community adopted the joint recreation plan. Copies of those resolutions are included in the Appendix.



Playground Area at Coal Miners' Area Park

Appendix
Resolutions of Adoption