Meridian Township
2027-2031 Five-Year
Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Vision Statement: Creating community through people, parks and programs

Mission Statement: To enhance quality of life by providing diverse parks, facilities, and recreation opportunities that inspire people to learn, play, create, and connect in a safe, welcoming community.

Acknowledgments

Meridian Township Board

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Angela Demas, Clerk

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Township Manager

Tim Dempsey

Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Staff

Courtney Wisinski, MPH, Director of Parks & Recreation

Kati Adams, Parks and Land Preservation Superintendent

Hannah Pachucki, Administrative Assistant

Mike Devlin, Parks & Recreation Specialist

Alex Zegarzewski, Parks & Recreation Specialist

Allison Goodman, Park Naturalist

Emma Campbell, Stewardship Coordinator

Tom Cary, Farmers' Market Manager

Cherie Wisdom, Senior Center Coordinator

Approved by the Meridian Township Parks Commission on November 10, 2026

Approved by the Meridian Township Board on December 8, 2026

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Executive Summary

Meridian Township's parks, open space, pathways and recreation programs are essential components of the community's culture. Parks and programs meet the needs of residents and serve as a major attraction for businesses and township residents.
The years following the COVID-19 pandemic transformed how communities view parks and recreation. While Meridian Township has long recognized the value of its parks, trails, open spaces, and recreation programs, the events of 2020 reinforced their essential role in supporting the health, resilience, and quality of life of our residents.

During a time marked by uncertainty, stay-at-home orders, and social distancing, parks became one of the few places where people could safely connect with nature, exercise, and experience a sense of normalcy. A simple walk on a trail, time spent in a neighborhood park, or access to open space became more meaningful than ever. As visitation reached record levels, Meridian Township residents developed a renewed appreciation for parks as critical public infrastructure that supports physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being.

Throughout the pandemic, the Parks and Recreation Department responded quickly to changing public health guidance while remaining committed to keeping parks, trails, and natural areas accessible whenever possible. Staff adapted operations, modified programming, expanded communication efforts, and worked diligently to provide safe opportunities for recreation and connection.

That renewed appreciation has continued well beyond the pandemic. Across the nation, communities have recognized that parks are not simply amenities, but they are essential infrastructure that strengthens public health, protects natural resources, supports economic vitality, fosters community connections, and improves overall quality of life.

As Meridian Township prepares this Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan, we build upon the lessons learned over the past several years. This plan reflects a community that values accessible parks, vibrant recreation opportunities, environmental stewardship, and inclusive spaces where residents of all ages and abilities can gather, recreate, and connect with nature. It also recognizes the growing importance of resiliency, sustainability, and strategic investment to ensure that our parks and recreation system continue to meet the evolving needs of current and future generations.

The Parks and Recreation Department remains committed to "Creating Community through People, Parks and Programs" by cultivating a strong sense of place, fostering healthy lifestyles, preserving Meridian Township's remarkable natural resources, and providing exceptional recreational opportunities that enhance the lives of everyone who calls Meridian Township home. This Master Plan serves as the roadmap for achieving that vision over the next five years and beyond.

It is intended that the Master Plan will fulfill the following goals:

1. Document broad-based public input regarding current and future parks and recreation needs and priorities of Meridian Township residents.
2. Document the needs and desires of current Meridian Township.
3. Provide the Park Commission, department staff, and other community stakeholders with information to guide parks and recreation planning for the next five years and beyond.
4. Project the needs of current and future residents based upon demographic trends and public input.

This Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan describes the park and recreation opportunities in Meridian Township and establishes goals, objectives and an overall vision for the community's parks and recreation future. It is intended to be a planning tool and guide for future decision-making and application of resources. This plan follows the guidelines and requirements established by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to provide eligibility for MDNR grant funding. The required plan content includes the following chapters:

1. **Community Description.** This section includes the character and demographics of the population that are served by the township park and recreation services

2. **Administrative Structure.** This section outlines the township and parks and recreational organization structure, partnerships and volunteer efforts, and relationships with the local school districts and other public agencies for recreation, programming, and funding sources that are available for the parks and recreation department. Meridian Township is well organized, with a professional park staff that leverages available resources to maximize the recreation opportunities to its residents.
3. **Recreation Inventory.** A thorough listing of park programs and facilities is included. Analysis of these facilities includes comparison to National Standards as well as how they meet local demands. An accessibility assessment helps identify opportunities to eliminate physical barriers to recreation. Funding sources for each park are included, as well as status of each grant funded park as part of the appendix. Land use and environmental features are identified that help shape opportunities and constraints for park development. The township has ample public landholdings, with only a percentage of developed parks supporting the demand for various activities. There are many recreation partners and volunteers that can and will continue to help support recreation to the community.
4. **Planning Process**. The parks and recreation staff prepared the master plan, with guidance from the elected Park Commission and other township staff members. The preparation of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan provided opportunities for citizens to play a key role in defining the future of parks and recreation in Meridian Township.
5. **Goals and Objectives**. This section outlines the guidelines that shape the intent for future facility and program development within the community. They describe the character and vision that can be applied as opportunities are evaluated by the township regarding park and recreation improvements.
6. **Action Plan**. The Action Program is the section of the plan that identifies how the township intends to meet, or work towards meeting goals and objectives over the next five years. Specific projects that were identified during the planning process are described and an explanation provided as to how they will meet the goals and objectives. The citizens of Meridian Township have continually demonstrated their support for the maintenance, stewardship and development of quality parks, natural areas, and recreation facilities. Past surveys revealed strong local support in favor of continued development and maintenance of the existing facilities.

Community Description

Community Description

Location Description and Population Information

The community of Meridian Township lies along the eastern border of East Lansing and the campus of Michigan State University and near the Michigan State Capitol. Centrally located in the palm of Michigan's hand, Meridian Township has nestled within its borders two healthy and active communities; Haslett and Okemos. A smaller portion of the Township is comprised of East Lansing and Williamston mailing addresses.

Founded in the early 1800's along the Red Cedar River as a trading point, Meridian Township residents enjoy quiet, safe, and well-maintained connected neighborhoods with outstanding schools, exceptional public safety, and plenty of parks, pathways, and recreational opportunities for visitors and families to enjoy. With natural beauty on roads, interurban pathways, and a vibrant business corridor, Meridian Township is a great atmosphere for families, seniors, and young professionals.

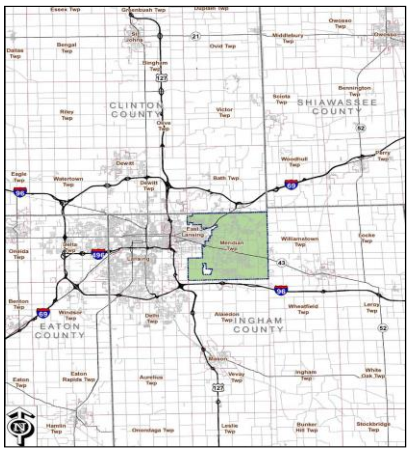
A destination for raising families from before the turn of the century, Meridian Township offers an array of quiet neighborhoods and an abundance of natural beauty with four seasons of outdoor activities.

With a park system that has 933 acres of parkland in 30 parks and 959 acres of land preserves, Meridian Township welcomes visitors from surrounding areas to its parks and to the largest lake within 25 miles of the State Capital, Lake Lansing.

Quick Facts

- 2020 Census population: 43,916
- 2025 population estimate: 44,869
- 2020–2025 estimated population growth: 2.2%
- Land area: 30.56 square miles
- Households: 18,912 (2020–2024 ACS)
- Bachelor's degree or higher: 65.9% (age 25 and older)
- Median household income: $86,909 (2024 dollars)
- Township parks: approximately 933 acres across 30 sites
- Township land preserves: approximately 959 acres

Meridian Township is the local government unit that includes the unincorporated communities, school districts, and census-designated places of Haslett and Okemos. The Township takes its name from the Michigan Meridian, the prime north-south survey line, which runs through the township. It is from this line that all townships were surveyed and measured.
Meridian Township originally encompassed 36 square miles, bounded generally by Coleman Road on the north, Jolly Road on the south, College and Abbott Roads on the west, and Meridian Road on the east. Annexations and intergovernmental agreements have modified the western boundary. The Township now contains approximately 31.7 square miles in total, including 30.56 square miles of land. Michigan State University borders the Township on the southwest, and downtown Lansing is approximately eight miles west.



Meridian Township Residents

Parks, recreation facilities, and natural areas have a fundamental impact on the character and quality of life in Meridian Township. Residents have long expressed a strong commitment to maintaining the quality of their community, including its neighborhoods, natural resources, award-winning schools, and high-quality public services.

The Charter Township of Meridian takes great pride in providing a high quality of life for its residents and families. The community is diverse in its values, experiences, ages, interests, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This diversity creates both opportunities and challenges for the Parks and Recreation Department as it works to provide inclusive leisure experiences, programs, facilities, and natural spaces that meet the needs of current and future residents.

The Parks and Recreation Department recognizes that community needs and expectations continue to evolve. Staff members actively pursue continuing education, professional development, and participation in local, state, and national professional associations to strengthen their knowledge and ability to effectively serve the community. Staff also contribute their time and expertise through volunteer service with community organizations and professional groups at the local and state levels.

Education is an important priority within the Meridian Township community. The Township has a highly educated population, with 67.1% of adults age 25 and older having completed four or more years of higher education. This high level of educational attainment is reflected in the diverse range of professional, technical, educational, and other occupations represented throughout the community.

These community characteristics provide an important foundation for the Parks and Recreation Department's planning efforts. Understanding the educational, socioeconomic, cultural, and demographic characteristics of Meridian Township helps the Department develop programs, facilities, and services that are responsive to residents' needs while supporting the community's long-term quality of life.

Demographic Information

Population size, age, income, disability, cultural background, and household characteristics influence demand for facilities, program affordability, communications, transportation, and accessibility. Decennial Census counts are used for historic population change, while the most recent five-year American Community Survey estimates are used for community characteristics.

Population Trends

Measure	Value	Change
2010 Census population	39,688	—
2020 Census population	43,916	+10.7% since 2010
2025 population estimate	44,869	+2.2% since the 2020 estimates base

Table 6. Population Trends

Meridian Township added 4,228 residents between the 2010 and 2020 censuses. The 2025 estimate indicates continued moderate growth. Planning should therefore focus both on maintaining existing assets and on adapting services for incremental growth and changing household needs.

Population Characteristics

Characteristic	2020–2024 estimate
Households	18,912
Persons per household	2.31
Persons under the age of 18	20.6%

Characteristic	2020–2024 estimate
Persons age 65 and older	16.8%
Female residents	50.9%
Foreign-born residents	18.2%
Language other than English spoken at home, age 5+	21.8%
Residents under age 65 with a disability	6.3%
High school graduate or higher, age 25+	97.8%
Bachelor's degree or higher, age 25+	65.9%
Median household income	$86,909
People in poverty	13.1%
Mean travel time to work	20.7 minutes

Race and Ethnicity

Race or ethnicity	Share of population
White alone	68.5%
Black or African American alone	4.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.8%
Asian alone	14.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.0%
Two or more races	10.8%
Hispanic or Latino, of any race	6.5%

The Township's demographic profile supports a broad and inclusive approach to recreation. Children, college-age adults, working households, and older adults all represent substantial user groups. The foreign-born population and the share of residents who speak a language other than English at home reinforce the value of culturally responsive outreach. Disability and poverty estimate also support continued attention to universal design, transportation, information access, and affordable programs. Race categories are reported as "alone"; Hispanic or Latino origin is reported separately and may overlap the race categories.

Potential Conservation Areas Assessment

Meridian Township was actively involved in the recent Potential Conservation Areas Assessment that was developed by Tri-County Regional Planning. This report identifies and ranks Potential Conservation Areas (PCA's) remaining in Eaton, Ingham, and Clinton Counties. Potential Conservation Areas are defined as places on the landscape dominated by native vegetation that have various levels of potential for harboring high-quality natural areas and unique natural features. In addition, these areas may provide critical ecological services such as maintaining water quality and quantity, soil development and stabilization, pollination of cropland, wildlife travel corridors, stopover sites for migratory birds, sources of genetic diversity, and floodwater retention. ("Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties… Potential Conservation Areas", John Paskus, Senior Conservation Scientist, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, 2008). (See Appendix A)

Greenspace Plan

The private consulting firm, Greenway Collaborative, Inc., prepared The Meridian Township Greenspace Plan in May 2004. The plan grew out of Township residents' wishes to protect the area's natural resources while accommodating new development. There is a

desire that growth come not at the expense of water quality, natural systems, and wildlife, rather, that new development be used as a tool to permanently protect key natural and cultural resources and enhance the Township's sense of place.

The plan outlines ways in which growth and development in the Township can continue to occur while simultaneously protecting the natural systems and community character of the Township. The Greenspace Plan is multi-faceted, reflecting the input of the citizens of Meridian Township. It is structured to preserve and enhance the community character by establishing a green space system that incorporates:

- Wildlife corridors that link existing natural preserves
- Scenic roadways that preserve views of natural areas
- Key waterways, adjacent wetlands and upland buffers
- Walking and biking routes that link parks, schools and other community resources
- Agricultural lands
-

According to the Greenspace Plan, green spaces and pathways must remain interconnected to be functional to both people and wildlife. This plan identifies key areas in Meridian Township to preserve and to maintain the health of the entire system. The vision of the plan is to "provide a network of green spaces and non-motorized linkages that will protect and connect valued natural and cultural resources, provide linkages to adjacent communities, and improve the quality of life for Township residents."

Township millages & Ordinances

The public support for these recommendations and the importance of parks and recreation was substantiated by successful passage of related ordinances and millages.

Millage Information

The dedicated Parks Millage has supported acquisition, operations, maintenance, equipment, and facility development since 1984. The previous authorization expired at the end of 2025. A 0.6503-mill renewal is scheduled for the November 3, 2026, General Election ballot. The Township's recommended 2027 budget anticipates approximately $1.57 million in Parks Millage revenue; future receipts remain subject to voter approval and annual Headlee rollback calculations.

Activity	Amount
Administration	$261,098
Harris Nature Center	$601,942
Park Maintenance	$293,932
Park Development/Acquisition	$1,134,600
Total	$2,291,572*

- Parks Millage: 0.6503-mill renewal proposed for the November 3, 2026, ballot; the previous authorization expired in 2025.
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Pathway Millage: 0.3333 mills authorized through 2028 (0.3260-mill estimated effective rate for 2026) for pathway development and maintenance.
- Community Services Millage: 0.1483 mills authorized through 2031 (0.1460-mill estimated effective rate for 2026) for recreation, human services, and the Meridian Senior Center.
- Land Preservation Millage: 0.1000 mills authorized through 2029 (0.0984-mill estimated effective rate for 2026) for acquisition and management of protected open space.

Ordinance Information

- Park Ordinance. Chapter 54 of the Meridian Township Code of Ordinances establishes rules for Township parks and recreation areas. https://ecode360.com/28777617
- Wetland Protection Ordinance. Chapter 22 establishes local wetland protection requirements and coordinates local review with state-regulated wetlands. https://ecode360.com/28776358
- Land Preservation Ordinance. Chapter 22 establishes the Township's framework for acquiring and managing land for preservation. https://ecode360.com/28776215
- Land Clearing Ordinance. Chapter 22 regulates land clearing and helps prevent premature clear-cutting before required approvals are obtained. https://ecode360.com/28776644

Environmental Features

Geology

The underlying geology of Meridian Township and the surrounding area was formed by the glacial advances and recessions that covered much of Michigan. Two primary geological formations underline the Meridian Township area. The first 100 feet below the surface consists of glacial till or deposits that were laid down and contoured by glacial activity. This layer has created landforms specific to glacial terrain including eskers, moraines, kames, drumlins, and kettles. Below this layer of till is several hundred feet of sedimentary rock that was formed out of the deposits from the lakes that covered Michigan during the Paleozoic Era.

Topography

The glacial action that deposited till over the base sedimentary rock also created the surface topography of Meridian Township. The terrain in Meridian Township ranges from level to gently rolling. The highest points in Meridian Township are found in Sections 34 and 35, just north of Jolly Road near the Southeast corner of the Township. The elevations at these points are approximately 925 feet above sea level. From these two points, the ground slopes down rapidly to the west and north. The lowest natural point in Meridian Township is in Section 17, at the Red Cedar River, and is 845 feet above sea level. The flood plains of the Red Cedar River, Herron Creek, Mud Lake Drain and Pine Lake Drain are generally the lowest areas in Meridian Township.

Hydrology

The 1976 Meridian Township Floodplain Study identified the Red Cedar River and its tributaries as areas of primary concern with respect to flooding in Meridian Township. This study indicated that development along the Red Cedar River is primarily residential in the Okemos-East Lansing area and primarily undeveloped or agricultural to the east of Okemos. The other residential development within the floodplain is along Pine Lake outlet, north of Haslett Road. Local ordinance regulates future floodplain usage and limits it to residential and recreational purposes. Floodplain areas vary in width from a narrow, winding strip, 100 feet wide, to a large plateau, 2,500 feet in width. Meridian Township is comprised of approximately 620 acres or 3.1 percent of lakes, rivers and large drains.

In 1991, the wetlands in Meridian Township were inventoried and mapped by J. & L. Consulting Services (See Appendix A). This inventory was based on the definition of a wetland as stated in the Administrative Rules of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, June 22, 1988, and in the Goemaere-Anderson Wetland Protection Act 203 of 1979. The WPA 203 regulates wetlands over 5 acres in size. The Meridian Township Wetland Ordinance was adopted in 1992 to regulate wetlands that are between 1/4 of an acre and 5 acres in size.

The 2000 Land Use survey calculated that the Township is comprised of approximately three percent of open water. This includes Lake Lansing, the Red Cedar River and Mud Lake. Lake Lansing is approximately 450 acres, and its watershed area is approximately 2,500 acres (extending into Clinton County). The Red Cedar River flows Westerly through Meridian Township for an approximate

distance of nine miles. It has total fall of 14.9 feet and is fed by four main tributaries. The ten-acre Mud Lake and its tributaries drain the northern two-thirds of Meridian Township into the Red Cedar River. Herron Creek, Smith Drain and Sloan Creek drain the southern third of the Township. In addition, there are several other natural and man-made ponds which are scattered throughout Meridian Township.

Soils

Most of the soil in Meridian Township were formed by glacial deposits and vary greatly throughout the area. These soil types have limitations and uses associated with their characteristics. The factors that determine whether soil is suitable for recreational use are permeability and fertility, level of flooding and wetness, and stability. The soils can be characterized into the following five types:

- Urban Land-Marlette-Capac (UMC) Association - urban land and nearly level to hilly, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy soils. Stability for recreational use: Poor
- Marlette-Capac-Owosso (MCO) Association - nearly level to rolling, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy soils. Stability for recreational use: Fair
- Houghton-Palms-Edwards (HPE) Association - nearly level, very poorly drained muck soils. Stability for recreational use: Poor
- Oshtemo-Houghton-Riddles (OHR) Association - nearly level to hilly, well drained very poorly drained, sandy, loamy, and muck soils. Stability for recreational use: Fair to Favorable
- Marlett-Oshtemo-Capac (MOC) Association - nearly level to steep, well drained to somewhat poorly drained loamy and sandy soils. Stability for recreational use: Fair to Favorable

Glacial soil deposits throughout Meridian Township include recessional moraines, eskers, pitted outwash plains, lacustrine plains, and old glacial drainage ways. These glacial soils are highly variable and range from well-drained sandy loams and clay loams to pockets of poorly drained soil. (See Appendix A).

Climate

Meridian Township lies within the cool humid continental climate region. The Great Lakes winds have a moderating influence over the climate within this region. The mean annual temperature of the area is 48.92-degree Fahrenheit, the average annual snow fall is 51.1 inches, and the mean annual precipitation is 3.33 inches. Sixty-nine percent (69.18%) of the total area rainfall occurs from April through October. Meridian Township is in the Lansing metropolitan area which is impacted by lake effect from the Great Lakes.

Vegetation

Meridian Township has a diversity of vegetative communities and species. Most of the Township contains areas of woodlots, fields, and wetlands near residential areas, office and commercial parks, and agricultural fields. Due to the mix of land uses and plant communities, most of the vegetation in the Township is considered edge or transitional from one community to another. Typically, these areas include a mix of plant species from both communities, and diversity in these edges can be very high.
These areas, along with parcels still in private ownership, provide homes for a great variety of plants and wild animals, which are integral parts of a healthy environment, and which add significantly to the quality of life for Township residents.
Meridian Township was once part of a large hardwood forest that covered most of Michigan. Now, only dispersed woodlots remain. Most of the larger remaining mature woodlands are concentrated along the Red Cedar River, major drains, and lowlands of Meridian. A variety of trees are found in these woodlots. For example, mixed mesophytic' hardwood stands (e.g. beech-maple) are present in moist upland areas while oaks and hickories are dominant on drier sites. Species such as red and silver maple, ashes, cottonwood, sycamore, box elder, swamp white oak and black willow are found in bottomland forest and on flood plains. This natural combination of wetlands and drains precludes extensive uses of these areas and acts to preserve the remaining wooded acres.

State listed endangered plans in Meridian Township include Compass Plan (Silphium liciniatum), Sideoats Grama (Bouteloua curlipendula) and Prairie Coreopsis (Anacis palmata). Threatened plants including Blue-eyed Grass (Sisyrinchium bellum), Rock Cress (Boechera dentata) and ginseng (Panax quinquefolia) along with several species of sedge (Carex spp.) are also known.

Many of the most unique and valuable open spaces and natural areas have received protection as Township or County parks. There are still several areas in private ownership that represent significant ecological and economic resources to residents and businesses. The Township has been proactive in the identification and acquisition of the most important and sensitive habitats.

Wildlife

Meridian Township residents recognize wildlife as an integral and valuable part of the landscape and the experience of Township life. There is a diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats in Meridian Township, and an abundance of wildlife species that have adapted to human presence. Although much of the Township is developed, there remains a significant amount of high-quality riparian, wetland, and upland habitat that supports populations of native species of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Many of these are known as "backyard" or "edge" species, including: mammals (e.g., White-tailed deer, Red Fox, Fox Squirrel, Woodchuck, Raccoon, and Opossum); birds (e.g., Cooper's Hawk, American Goldfinch, Downey Woodpecker, and Northern Cardinal), reptiles (e.g., Eastern Garter Snake, Eastern Milk Snake, Common Map Turtle and Painted Turtle) and amphibians (e.g., Spring Peeper, Wood Frog and Blue-spotted Salamander). Approximately 33 native species of amphibians and reptiles, 258 native bird species and 35 species of mammals have been observed in the Township.

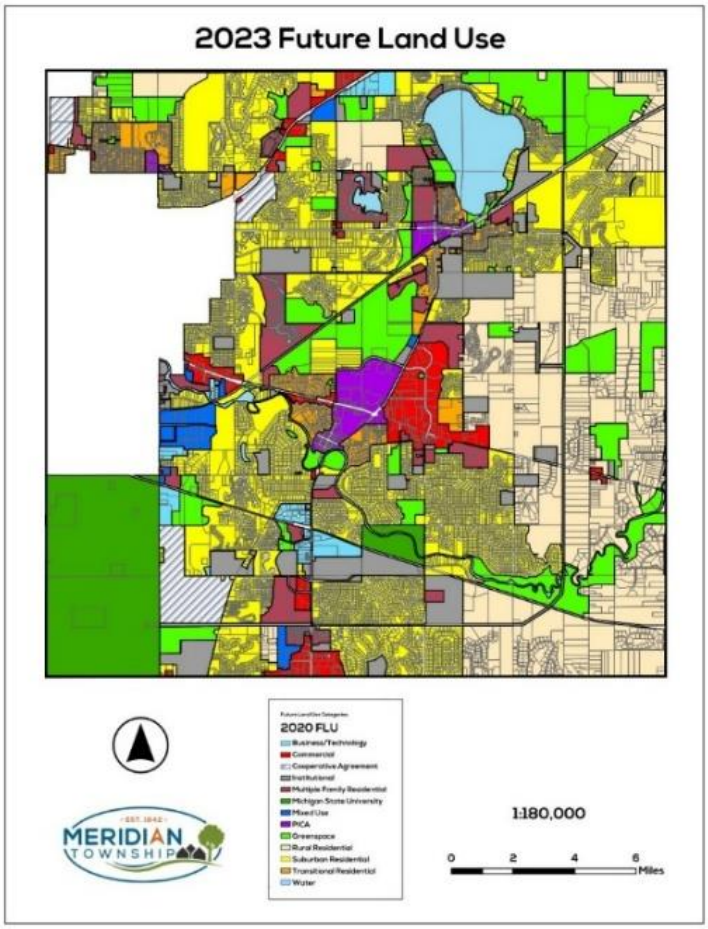
The Davis Foster Land Preserve has confirmed (Capital Area Audubon Society) breeding pairs of the state-endangered Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii)*. These grassland nesting birds live and reproduce in the restored native grassland on the property from April-October. The endangered Long-eared Owl (*Asiootus*) and Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) formerly nested in the greater Lansing area. Potential breeding habitat still exists for these species in Meridian Township, though recent breeding has not been confirmed.

The Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*), listed as a species of special concern, and the threatened Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene Carolina*) are presently breeding in the Township. Several unlisted amphibian species thought by biologists to be declining in parts of Michigan also breed in the Township, including the Western Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*) and the Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*). There is several other wildlife species found in Meridian Township that are listed as endangered, threatened or special concern including the Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*), Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*), Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*)and Blanchard's Cricket Frog (*Acris blanchardi*).

The Meridian Township Land Preservation program is currently acquiring and managing properties to maintain the environmental and natural characteristics of the land and to support wildlife habitat in the community. Wildlife habitat is one of the scoring criteria for acquiring new land preserves and management activities focus on improving ecosystem health to support native wildlife. The Davis Foster restored grassland being home to Henslow's Sparrow is a great example of the success of the program.

Future Land Use and Development

Meridian Township covers approximately 31.5 square miles, including slightly over a square mile of water bodies within the Township. Land use in Meridian Township is dominated by detached, single-family homes, representing well over half of the developed land in the Township. This was driven by huge migration to the Township in the 1970s, as the region grew around a rapidly growing Michigan State University. Approximately 57% of the land in the Township has been developed or improved, whether with a single-family home or the Meridian Mall. Most of the vacant land in the Township (61%) is undevelopable, often owned by a governmental agency or a homeowner's association. This includes substantial land preserved by the Township, which has pushed development to more infill sites along already developed corridors. This is borne out by the redevelopment of the Haslett Village Square shopping center, currently underway, and the continual efforts to redevelop the Village of Okemos area at Hamilton and Okemos Roads. These mixed-use projects continue to be an important part of the future development in the Township, while still representing a low percentage of the total land use coverage. This is due in large part to changes in the economy and the need for additional, more affordable housing options close to transit and jobs. Multiple family housing is still abundant, with over 7,500 rental units available at multiple price points. The office market has softened substantially since the COVID-19 pandemic, but the Township remains one of the region's office hubs, anchored by the Headquarters of Delta Dental on Okemos Road. Industrial land use remains extremely limited, with only three small pockets throughout the Township.



Administrative Structure

Administrative Structure

Role of Township Board

The Meridian Township Board governs the Charter Township of Meridian. The Board is comprised of seven elected officials: Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer and four Trustees. The Board appoints a Township Manager to implement its policies. All Department Directors report directly to the Township Manager.

Role of the Park Commission

A five-member elected Park Commission, established under Michigan Compiled Law (MCL 41.426) is an elected policy-making board whose role is to oversee the park system. The Park Commission schedules 12 regular meetings and various special meetings as needed throughout the year. The Director of Parks and Recreation provides staff support to the elected Park Commission whose members prioritize park planning, design, acquisition and development. A member of the Park Commission also serves as a liaison to the Land Preservation Advisory Board.

Role of the Land Preservation Advisory Board

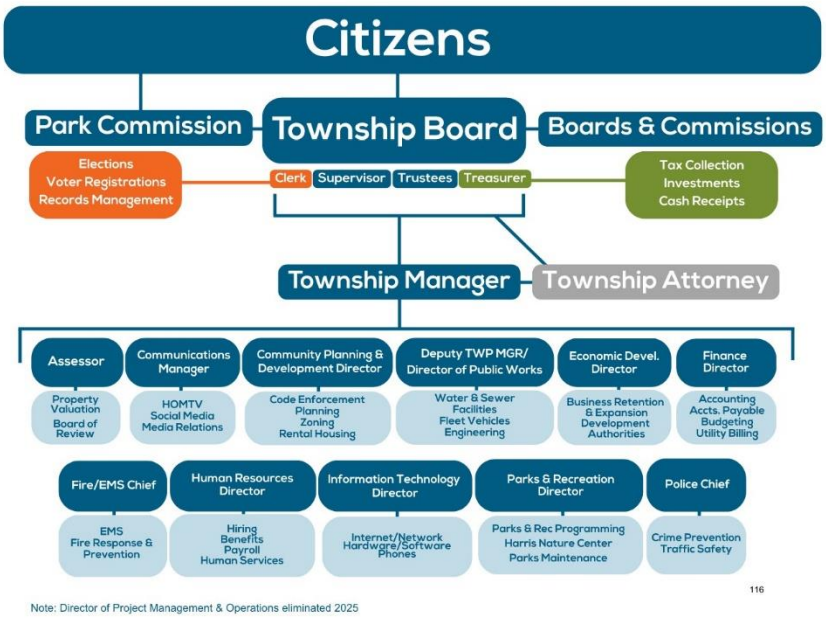
The Land Preservation Advisory Board is an appointed body responsible for recommending land in the Township to obtain for the protection and preservation of open space and special natural features. The board also recommends the best management practices and oversees ecological restoration efforts in current land preserves.

Role of the Environmental Commission

The Environmental Commission advises the Township Board, officials, and staff on matters pertaining to environmental protection, management of natural resources, water conservation and preservation of open space. The commission is also responsible for the duties of the wetland board; thus, it serves an advisory role in setting policy guidelines on wetland issues, reviews wetland use permits and develops and promotes wetland education and stewardship.

Parks and Recreation Administration and Staff

The Director of Parks and Recreation for the Charter Township of Meridian reports directly to the Meridian Township Manager and is responsible for managing all full-time and part-time Parks and Recreation staff members. The Parks and Recreation Department staff serve as the Township liaison to the Park Commission, Land Preservation Advisory Board, Friends of Historic Meridian, Meridian Senior Center Advisory Board, Nokomis Cultural Heritage Center, Harris Nature Center Foundation Board, Meridian Conservation Corps, and various community organizations.



Other Environmental Planning Organizations

Meridian Township staff members regularly attend and support other organizations such as the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Harris Nature Center Foundation, Friends of Historic Meridian, Meridian Conservation Corps, Friends of the Lansing Regional Trails, Lansing Oar and Paddle Club, Friends of the Red Cedar River, and the MSU Red Cedar River Workgroup.

Role of Parks and Recreation Department

The Meridian Township Department of Parks and Recreation was established in 1999. The Department is led by the Parks and Recreation Director and includes administrative, recreation, natural-resource stewardship, nature-center, senior-services, market, and park-maintenance personnel. Full-time employees are supported by part-time and seasonal staff who help deliver recreation programs, environmental education, special events, facility operations, and maintenance. The organizational chart and current Township budget provide the authoritative staffing details for this planning period.

Role of Volunteers

The Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Department, Park Commission, and the Land Preserve Advisory Board have made a priority of engaging residents in volunteer projects and programs. Meridian Township engages volunteers in several ways including youth sports coaching, farmers' market, organized volunteer days throughout the parks and land preserves, Meridian Conservation Corp, Meridian Deer Management program, classroom projects for local schools and various other events throughout the year.

Meridian Conservation Corps

The Meridian Conservation Corps is a program devoted to increasing community involvement in our parks and preserves. It is a vehicle to grow awareness of volunteer opportunities involving the care and conservation of Meridian Township's local green spaces. Natural areas are important for the physical and mental well-being of human life. The goal of this program is to engage the community around sustainable land management of Township parks and preserves, as well as educate the public on stewardship practices they can implement on their own land.

Harris Nature Center Foundation Board

The Harris Nature Center Foundation (HNCF) was created in 2008 to support activities and improvements to the Harris Nature Center that are beyond the regular operations supported by the Park Millage. The HNCF has its 501(c)(3) designation and can acknowledge donations for tax purposes. Through grants, fundraising events, donations, and in-kind services, the HNCF has raised money for the ongoing School Bus Scholarship Program, a fully accessible birding observation deck with commercial grade binoculars and a paved trail, a river overlook outdoor classroom space, the purchase of snowshoes fo r programs and rentals and the creation and ongoing upgrades to features in the Nature Exploration Area. The Harris Nature Center Foundation Board strives to successfully act on industry trends to bring visitors into nature through immersion activities and natural play opportunities.

Friends of Historic Meridian

The Meridian Historical Village is in picturesque Central Park in Okemos, Michigan, and contains historic buildings relocated from other locations and carefully restored to their original 19th century style. The Village is operated by the Friends of Historic Meridian, a non-profit organization formed in 1974 to create and sustain an active appreciation of local history. In 2025, the executive director of the Historical Village and the board president of the Friends of Historic Meridian met to update the memorandum of understanding with Meridian Township. The Friends of Historic Meridian preserve and maintain the interiors of the historic buildings, sponsor community events in the Village, and hold free public lectures. The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the mowing/landscaping, snow/de-icing, and exterior structural repair. A few buildings are available to the public for rentals, including the nineteenth century replica chapel that is used for weddings and other special events. The Village hosts almost 2,7 00 schoolchildren annually on weekdays during the school year. The busiest months are between September-November and March - June. To learn more about the Historical Village, visit www.meridianhistoricalvillage.org.

Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center Board

The Nokomis Cultural Heritage Center (NCHC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the history, arts, culture, and language of the Native American Anishinaabe people—the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi nations. It fulfills this mission through educational programs, presentations, exhibitions, and special events for people of all ages. The Center hosts over 50 onsite programs and events annually, serving groups of 5 to over 100 visitors, and conducts outreach programs across lower Michigan, including partnering with Michigan State University and our school programs where we do over 150 presentations in a school year. In addition, NCHC develops special projects, publications, and exhibitions to further support its cultural preservation efforts.

Meridian Garden Club

The Meridian Garden Club, a 501(c)(3), began in 1970 and has approximately 100 members. The Club is responsible for planting and maintaining numerous gardens near the administration building, Central Park and the Meridian Historical Village. In addition, they hold educational sessions about gardening and a plant sale to provide funds for their gardens.

Haslett Beautification Association

In 2005, residents gathered and formed the Haslett Beautification Association (HBA). The group spearheaded a non-profit organization that collects donations for the purpose of creating public gardens along the commercial areas of Haslett, Lake Lansing, and Marsh Roads. The mission of HBA is to improve the aesthetic appearance of downtown Haslett and encourage businesses to invest in the downtown. HBA has a strong history of fundraising and creating public improvements in downtown Haslett, which benefit businesses, residents, and visitors. HBA currently maintains 12 flower beds and has created public improvements including benches and a welcome sign.

Relationships with School Districts, Other Public Agencies and Private Organizations

The Township has continued to foster strong partnerships with the Haslett and Okemos School Districts and Libraries, Boy and Girl scouts, civic organizations such as the Haslett-Okemos Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs, businesses, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, and Lansing Oar and Paddle Club. Other partnerships have been formed with recreation groups including Haslett Youth Recreation Association, Haslett Baseball Club, Okemos Baseball Club, Okemos and Haslett Soccer Clubs, neighborhood associations and civic groups.

The Meridian Senior Center believes that staying active is a key to physical and emotional well-being for everyone, especially older adults. The Senior Center was created to provide a friendly, welcoming atmosphere for persons age 55 and over to gather and engage in programs and social activities. The Senior Center works to provide relevant programs and services to meet the ever-changing lifestyle needs of older people throughout the community.

Communications

The Department of Parks and Recreation utilizes the following methods to inform the public of programs, services and facilities:

- ***Prime Meridian Magazine*** – This annual publication magazine is sent to 27,500 households, businesses, and PO boxes in Meridian Township and promotes recreation programs, events, and activities, as well as other Township news and information. The magazine is also available at Township Hall, the Meridian Service Center, Okemos and Haslett Libraries, Harris Nature Center, and online.
- ***Meridian Township Website –*** Meridian Township Website – The Meridian Township website is managed by the Communications Department and, in 2026, underwent a complete redesign to make it more user-friendly.
- ***Email*** – The Department utilizes email as a communication and promotional tool to program participants. Email, social media, the Township website, and RecDesk have replaced flyers (which were once the most effective promotional method). Flyers are still utilized, but on a more limited basis.
- **Monthly Email Newsletters (Meridian Happenings and The Playbook)** – Two monthly newsletters are sent out to 10,000 subscribers. *Meridian Happenings* focuses on Township-wide news and events, where *The Playbook* is a Parks and

Recreation Department-specific newsletter that highlights various programs, events, the Harris Nature Center, Meridian Conservation Corps, and more.

- **RecDesk** – RecDesk is the online registration program that the Department utilizes, which also supports credit card registration. This program provides direct marketing opportunities via broadcast email through the system of current and former program participants.
- **HOMTV** (Haslett, Okemos, Meridian Television) – HOMTV is Meridian Township's government access channel, which televises Township Board and Commission meetings, provides election coverage by filming candidate interviews, and provides other programming to highlight the community of Meridian Township. HOMTV is available on Comcast channel 21 for residents living in Meridian Township and East Lansing. It is also available online via YouTube and Swagit.
- Swagit: https://meridianmi.new.swagit.com/views/200/live
- YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/user/21HOMTV
- **Social Media** (Facebook/Instagram/Nextdoor/YouTube/LinkedIn) – Meridian Township has 20 social media accounts to help connect with community members. In addition to the main Township accounts, there are two Parks and Recreation-specific accounts (Facebook and Instagram)

- **Press Releases** – Press releases about parks and recreation pr ograms and events are published regularly to 27 local media outlets.
- **Radio and TV Interviews** – Parks and Recreation staff are regularly interviewed on local television and radio stations about current programs and activities.
- **Word of Mouth** – The Department relies on recommendations from current and former participants and its local partners to build interest and awareness of parks and recreation programs.

Funding Sources and Budget Information

Parks, recreation, and land preserves are funded and maintained primarily through the Park Millage, Land Preservation Millage, and the General Fund. Meridian Township has millages that support parks, pathways, seniors, land preservation, and recreation. To leverage local funds for community improvements, the Township places a high priority on obtaining grant funding, engaging volunteer support and working cooperatively with neighboring communities to expand funding and services.

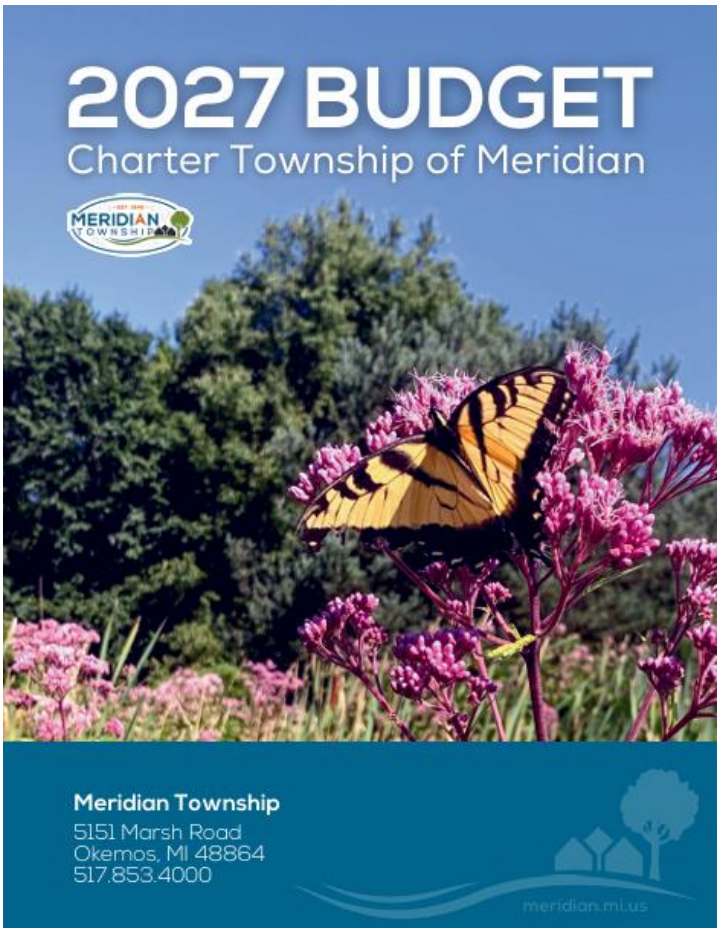
The Township uses state, federal, county, foundation, and private grants to leverage local millage and General Fund resources. The Township has used Michigan DNR grants for 32 projects with reported grant amounts totaling $3,560,492. Four listed projects totaling $412,975 were withdrawn; closed projects and the executed 2021 trail agreement total $3,147,517. The Township's broader staff grant inventory also includes Ingham County, foundation, utility, and other non-DNR awards.

Budget Summary

Fund or activity	2025 actual	2026 budget	2027 recommended
Park Millage Fund revenue	$1,664,852	$2,017,966	$2,080,385
Park Millage Fund expenditures	$920,484	$2,296,848	$2,291,572
General Fund recreation revenue	$186,378	$194,730	$179,800
General Fund parks and recreation expenditures	$983,066	$1,027,300	$1,019,339
Senior Center revenue	$215,389	$207,700	$213,072
Senior Center expenditures	$120,917	$160,000	$165,000
Land Preservation revenue	$609,753	$396,637	$387,799
Land Preservation expenditures	$196,940	$310,097	$384,249

2027 Recommended Expenditure Detail

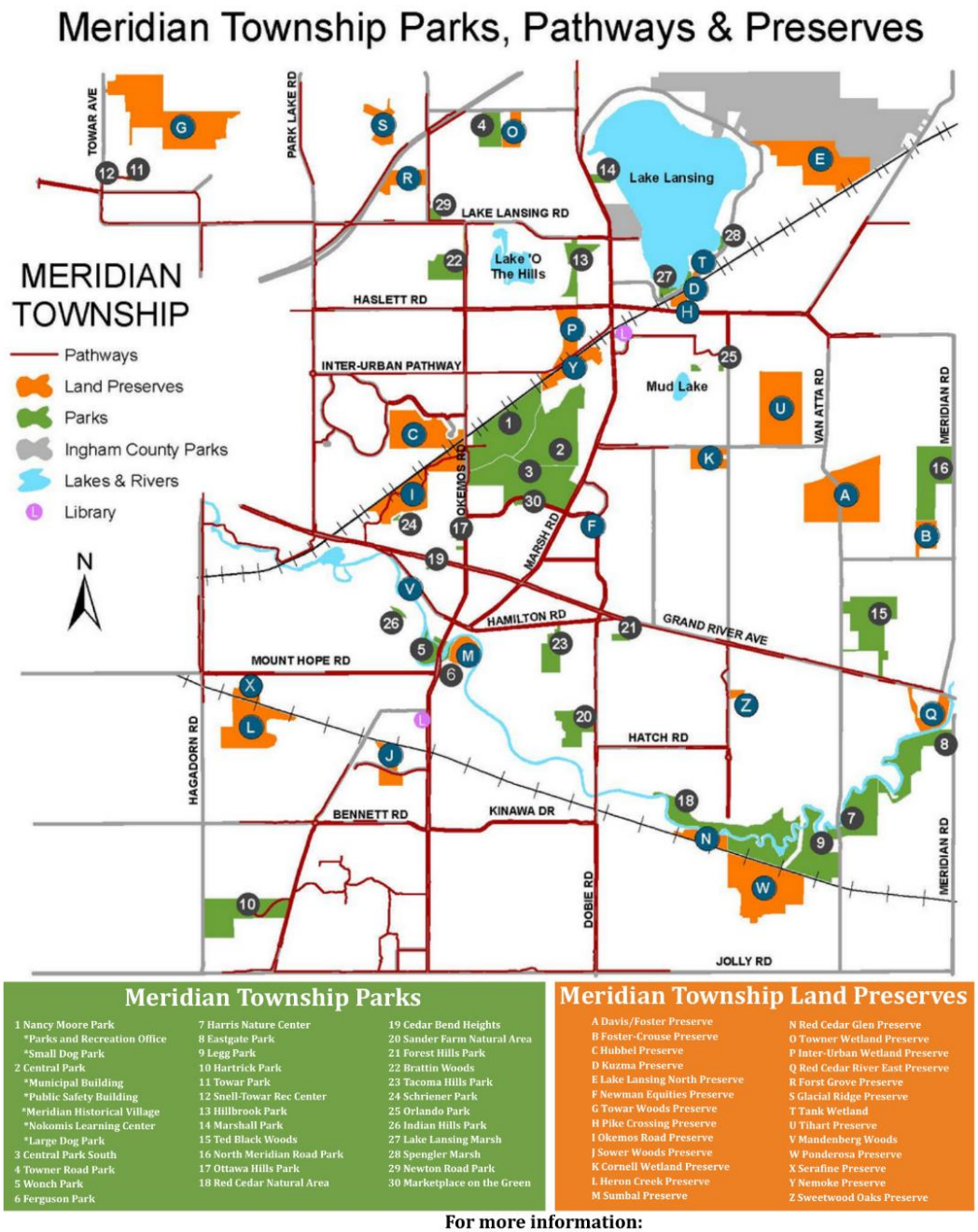
Fund	Budget activity	2027 recommended
Park Millage	Administration and operations	$261,098
Park Millage	Park maintenance	$293,932
Park Millage	Harris Nature Center	$601,942
Park Millage	Park development and acquisition	$1,134,600
General Fund	Park Commission	$7,240
General Fund	Administration and operations	$128,793
General Fund	Recreation	$329,020
General Fund	Park maintenance	$554,286
Senior Center	Operating supplies	$15,000
Senior Center	Contractual administration	$150,000
Land Preservation	Administration and operations	$384,249



Recreation & Natural Resources Inventory

Recreation and Natural Resources Inventory

The Township's park, recreation, and open space inventory includes Township-owned parks, natural areas, land preserves, pathways and recreational facilities. In addition to Township-owned parks, Meridian Township residents have access to recreation spaces provided by Haslett and Okemos Schools and Ingham County Parks. Non-Township owned park and recreational resources are included to fully understand the extent of park and recreational opportunities for township residents; therefore, they are listed as separate inventories within this plan. This inventory was conducted in-house by Township staff from the Parks and Recreation Department, Engineering Department, the Department of Neighborhood and Economic Development and the Department of Community Planning and Development.



Community-Owned Parks, Natural Areas and Facilities

<u>Mini Parks:</u> 4 parks totaling 5.63 acres

1. **Cedar Bend Heights Park; 2280 Kenmore Drive, Okemos - 0.33 Acres**
   - **Park Description:**
     - **Amenities: Play structure, sidewalks, picnic table, park sign, landscaping, picket fence, grill and benches.**
   - **History of Park Acquisition and Development**
     - **2002: The Meridian Township Park Commission purchased this parcel in response to neighborhood support**
     - **2004: The park was developed utilizing Park Millage funds and money raised by residents who sold fence pickets.**
     - **2012: Additional landscaping was added to the park.**
     - **2024: Upgraded/replaced some playground features.**
   - **Future Park Development Plans:**
     - There are no future development plans aside from maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

2. **Ottawa Hills Park; 4980 Hillcrest Avenue, Okemos - 3 Acres**
   - **Park Description:**
     - **This park includes playground equipment, a sidewalk, picnic area, tether ball, and half-court basketball court.**
   - **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
     - 1984-1986: Ottawa Hills Park has two non-contiguous parcels: one was donated in 1984 by Wayne Clinton and is located on Okemos Road. This parcel serves as a preserved natural wetland. The other parcel (which is the main section of the park) was purchased in 1986 from Marion Jergo for $5,600 and is located on Hillcrest Avenue.
     - 1998: Playground equipment and a basketball court were installed.
     - 2001: Swings were added to the park.
     - 2018: Tetherball was added to the park; basketball court surface was improved; an Eagle Scout built a “ball” bin; and a Lending Library was added.
     - 2025: A new playground was installed to replace the original.
   - **Future Park Development Plans:**
     - There are no future development plans aside from maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

3. **Schriener Park; 5039 Algonquin Way, Okemos - 1 Acre**
   - **Park Description:**
     - This park has open green space area and is maintained for neighborhood use. There are no additional park amenities.
   - **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
     - Schreiner Park was acquired through a donation from Ernst and Elfreida Schreiner in 1980.
   - **Future Park Development Plans:**
     - There are no future development plans for this park.

4. **Orlando Park; 1275 Orlando Drive, Haslett - 1.3 Acres**

- **Park Description:**
  - The park has two non-contiguous parcels; an open greenspace which was developed as an active park and a heavily wooded outlot, located down the street from the main park and referred to as Orlando Park Outlot "B".
  - This accessible park includes a gazebo, a play structure geared toward older children, a play structure geared toward younger children with a slide, swings, and a rocking/spring toy.
  - The park features a paved loop walking path with "Story Walk" signs along the paved path guiding park users to participate in storybook related activities, bicycle rack, grill, benches, and gardens.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1955: The land for Orlando Park came under Township ownership in 1955 when it was acquired for Public Works wells and a water tower, which were removed in 1966.
  - 1980: The open grassy area in the park was utilized as a seasonal ice-skating rink.
  - 2008: The open parcel was developed as a neighborhood park and the play equipment, gazebo, pathway, bicycle rack, game table, benches, and gardens were installed.
  - 2014: Additional trees were planted in the park.2016: A series of signs called a "Story Walk" were installed along the paved pathway. This project was fully funded by the Haslett Library. The signs invite the park visitor to participate in an activity, e.g. "Walk like a bear to the next page."
  - 2016: New accessible play equipment was also added to the park. The new equipment is geared toward younger children and features a climbing slide structure that incorporates an artistic flower that spins and casts colorful shadows, swings, bongo drum toys, and a rocking piece for young children.
  - 2024: Replaced one of the playground structures due to wear and tear.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - There are no future development plans aside from maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

<u>Neighborhood Parks</u>: 10 parks totaling 100.1 acres

5. **Indian Hills Park; 4730 Tacoma Drive, Okemos - 3 Acres**

- **Park Description:**
  - Indian Hills Park is an open grassy area that lies within the Indian Hills neighborhood. It is entirely open space with benches and trees.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1929: Indian Hills Park was platted as a public park for neighborhood residents.
  - 2015: The Indian Hills Neighborhood Association purchased a bench for the park.
  - 2023: Memorial bench donated and installed.
  - 2025: Three native flowering trees were planted.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - There are no future development plans aside from maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

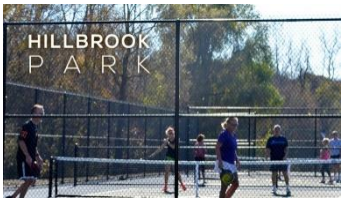
6. **Ferguson Park/Sumbal Natural Area; 4540 Okemos Road, Okemos – 5.7 acres**

- **Park Description:**
  - Ferguson Park is a well-visited park located on the Red Cedar River near downtown Okemos. The park features play equipment, benches with river views, picnic tables, canoe launch, an accessible restroom, paved pathways, and parking.

- This park is also used on an annual basis by local schoolchildren as a release site for the "School Salmon in the Classroom" science project.

- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1971: The original four acres were acquired through a donation from the Ingham County Road Commission.
  - 1999: An additional 1.7 acres were donated to the park by adjacent property owners Ghulam and Sufia Sumbal.
  - 2001: The park was renovated with grant assistance from the Clean Michigan Initiative Recreation Bond Program. Improvements included upgrading the accessibility of the canoe launch, restrooms, picnic area and playground improvements, and stream bank stabilization activities.
  - 2004: Meridian Township Land Preservation Millage Funds acquired 25 acres adjacent to Ferguson Park along the Red Cedar River from Ghulam and Sufia Sumbal that provides a beautiful, wooded property along the river.
  - 2013: Schoolchildren planted trees in the park through a Grand Learning Network grant.
  - 2014: Numerous diseased and dead trees were removed from the park, due to the devastating infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer insect.
  - 2016: School children planted 10 trees in the park with funding through the "Right Tree, Right Place" Consumer's Energy grant.
  - 2016: The wooden park fencing along Okemos Road was replaced with black aluminum fencing.
  - 2021: Painted interior and exterior of the restroom building.
  - 2022: Resurfaced the parking lot.
  - 2023: Installed a new roof on the restroom building, installed new picnic tables and a bench in the park.
  - 2024: Upgraded/replaced some playground features.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - Future development plans include improving the canoe/kayak launch, updating the restroom, landscape maintenance, streambank stabilization.

7. Hillbrook Park; 1747 Lake Lansing Road, Haslett - 25.4 Acres



- **Park Description:**
  - Hillbrook Park is located west of the corner of Lake Lansing Road and Marsh Road in Haslett. This accessible park features play equipment, a large open grassy area, a wetland, picnic area, tennis/pickleball courts, a half-court basketball court, natural wooded trails, a ball diamond with bleachers, drinking fountain, parking area, and landscaping.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1957: The park began as a 5.7-acre donation in 1957 by the Couchois-Miller families, developers of the Hillbrook Subdivision.
  - 1974: Additional acreage of natural area was purchased extending from Lake Lansing Road to Haslett Road. This linear area includes natural trails, picnic area, and a second paved parking area.
  - 1972: With assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, recreation facilities were installed.
  - 1986: With assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, recreation facilities were installed.
  - 2016: There were major updates and improvements made to the park, particularly the tennis courts and playground area. The tennis courts were completely renovated and redesigned to include: one tennis court, three pickleball courts, and one half-court basketball court. New vinyl-coated fencing, nets and posts were installed. The gates and paved access point to the courts were replaced for the purpose of improving accessibility. The existing playground equipment was removed and replaced with two structures: one for young children and one for older children. Swings and benches were also added to the playground area, and an accessible picnic table was added to the paved picnic area.
  - 2016: An Ingham County drain project was planned for the wooded portion of the park which called for the removal of some of the trees. As a result, the County provided 29 beautiful new replacement trees. Many were installed around the play area to provide shade.
    - 2019: A 9-acre adjacent property was added to the overall park acreage as a donation from Marsh Pointe.

- 2019: The Ingham Co. Drain Office made improvements to the drain that runs through the park and replaced a bridge. Drain work continued until 2021.
- 2023: Pickleball/tennis/basketball courts were resurfaced and painted; windscreens were added to the perimeter of the courts; AED defibrillator was installed.
- 2024: Upgraded/replaced some playground features and replaced drinking fountain.
- 2026: Provided preventative maintenance and paint on courts.

- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - Future development plans include: the creation of a rain garden, the addition of nature based interpretive signage, stewardship of the natural wooded area, tennis court features such as benches and a kiosk, new ball diamond, fencing and trail improvements.

8. Marshall Park; 6105 Marsh Road, Haslett - 5 Acres

- **Park Description:**
  - Marshall Park features play equipment, swings, a basketball court, parking, paved pathways, and a picnic area.
  - The park received its name in honor of the Marshall Brothers, the first settlers of Meridian Township in 1836.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1974: Marshall Park was purchased in 1974 for $11,505 with funding support from a Department of Natural Resources Recreation Bond grant.
  - 1975: Amenities were added to the park through the Department of Natural Resources Recreation Bond grant. Amenities included a basketball court, picnic area, parking lot, landscaping, backstop and drinking fountain.
  - 1996: Playground equipment was added with money collected by Haslett Middle School students.
  - 2004: Swings were added along with a pedestrian pathway that runs through the park connecting Marsh Road and Bliss Street.2006: The outdated backstop was removed to create a grassy open play field.
  - 2009: A demonstration area was added in the southeast corner of the park to filter storm water, in cooperation with the Lake Lansing Homeowners Association and the Meridian Township Engineering Department.
  - 2021: Three memorial benches and landscaping were added to the park.
  - 2024: Installed a new accessible playground; swing set received new paint and swings; native plants were installed to help absorb water in the area.
  - 2025: Resurfaced parking lot and basketball court.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - Future development plans include: the installation of bioswales to assist with watershed management in the Red Cedar Watershed, including Lake Lansing.
  - Plans may include maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

9. Towar Park; 6160 Towar Avenue, East Lansing - 4 Acres

- **Park Description:**
  - Towar Park is in the East Lansing School District area and serves residents in the northwest portion of the Township. This park is also the home of Snell-Towar Recreation Center, which provides year-around programming for youth, seniors and teens. This is Meridian Township's only community recreation center.
  - This linear park runs East-West from the Edgewood Village Apartment complex to Rutherford Street (a total of 3 blocks).
  - Park amenities include sidewalks, a full-court basketball court, playground equipment, youth ball field, picnic areas, a recreation center, skateboard equipment, rain gardens, and paved parking.
- **Park History and Development:**
  - 1969: The four-acre park is acquired by the Township through the donation or purchase of 13 city lots.
  - 1980: The park was developed to include sidewalks, a full-court basketball court, playground equipment, youth ball field, picnic areas, a recreation center, skateboard equipment and paved parking.

- 2008: The Ingham County Drain Commissioner's office constructed rain gardens throughout the neighborhood as an ecological way to address storm water runoff issues in the Towar Gardens neighborhood. As part of the project, rain gardens featuring beautiful flowers were created in the park.
- 2015: The baseball diamond was removed and replaced with an open grassy area that is utilized by the summer recreation program as open play space.
- 2023: Upgraded the outdoor lights at the park and around the building.
- 2024: Replaced slide on the playground structure and upgraded outdoor lights in the park and around the building to LED.

- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - Additional plans may include maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

10. Wonch Park; 45455 Okemos Road, Okemos - 15 Acres

- **Park Description:**
  - Wonch Park is on a bend along the Red Cedar River on the west side of Okemos Road.
  - This fully accessible park features an accessible pavilion, drinking fountain, paved loop pathway, playground equipment, swings, restroom, picnic areas, outdoor exercise equipment, benches, and a paved parking lot.
  - Park visitors enjoy fishing in the "beach" area along the river and use Wonch Park as an informal canoe/kayak launch.
- **Park History and Development:**
  - 1969: Wonch Park was purchased from Theodore Wonch for $40,660 through the Township's General Fund.
  - 1975: The Haslett Okemos Rotary constructed a pavilion in the park. Included was playground equipment, swings, a restroom, picnic areas, and paved parking lot.
  - 2001: The restrooms were renovated to meet accessibility requirements.
  - 2008: Master plans were developed to renovate Wonch Park. Plans included a loop pathway, improved river access and viewing areas, a new pavilion, expanded parking, and an outdoor plaza area.
  - 2012: A fair number of dead or dying trees were removed from the park. This allowed more sun to enter the park and made it seem more inviting to visitors.
  - 2012: A paved universally accessible loop pathway (2,055 lf) was constructed through a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. The path meanders along the river at a very gentle slope. For improved accessibility, a paved access path was also constructed to link the existing play structure with the new paved pathway.
  - 2016: Major improvements included a new pavilion and paved access path and patio with ample room for maneuvering, new recycled picnic tables, a drinking fountain with a water-bottle filler, parking area renovation, and the installation of outdoor exercise equipment. The aged pavilion was demolished and replaced with a new pavilion that includes electricity, something that is highly desirable for pavilion rentals. Accessible picnic tables made of recycled material replaced the old, worn picnic tables. The drinking fountain/water-bottle-filler is the first of its kind in our park system and features a fountain at an accessible level for wheelchair users.
  - 2016: The Township was awarded a grant from Greenfields Outdoor Fitness which allowed us to install accessible outdoor exercise equipment. The exercise equipment is permanently installed in pods that are located along the side of the paved pathway.
  - 2016: The wood fencing along Okemos Road was removed and replaced with black aluminum fencing. A new bright green traffic bridge was also constructed along Okemos Road in 2016. This bridge includes a wide, paved pedestrian pathway and greatly improved non-motorized transportation access to the park. The parking lot was also resurfaced and striped.
  - 2016: A community mural was painted by over 200 visitors to the 2016 Celebrate Meridian Festival. The mural's artist is resident, Kelly Boyle.
  - 2018: Three "Disco Fish" sculptures were donated by the Meridian Township DDA and installed.

- 2021: Painted the interior of the restroom building and upgraded the lights inside the restroom building.
- 2024: Replaced slides on the playground structure.

- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - Future development plans include: the development of a kayaking/canoe launch, eventually replacing the play structure, and the development of riverside viewing areas and platforms.
  - Additional plans may include maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

11. Newton Road Park: 6025 Newton Road, East Lansing - 5 Acres

- **Park Description:**
  - Newton Road Park is an open area that was developed for the purpose of providing much-needed athletic fields. The park has a small parking lot (19 cars) and a drop-off area. The fields are intended to be utilized as practice fields.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1992: The property was purchased by Meridian Township in 1992 for $48,500 for the development of a fire station.
  - 2009: The Park Commission received the parcel as a donation by the Township for the development of a neighborhood park. A park master plan was developed to include over three-acres of athletic fields, a split-rail fence with wildflower plantings, a paved walking path, driveway and 19-car parking lot, and a small play structure.
  - 2010: The site was graded, seeded, and eight trees were planted.
  - 2014: The athletic fields were developed using recommendations from MSU Turf Management experts, landscaping and a gravel parking area were installed.
  - 2015: Park development included paving the 19-car parking lot, installing landscaping and a vinyl split-rail fence along Lake Lansing Road.
  - 2016: A paved loop drop-off area was added to the parking area.
- **Current Park Use:**
  - This large, open field is utilized as a practice field for lacrosse, flag football and youth soccer.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - The development of a paved, loop walking path around the perimeter of the park.
  - The installation of a play structure (utilizing donations from adjoining neighborhood).
  - Planting wildflower or ornamental grasses planted along the split-rail fence on Lake Lansing Road.

12. Brattin Woods: 5851 Okemos Road, Haslett - 22.2 Acres

- **Park Description:**
  - Brattin Woods is a beautiful hardwood forest with an open-water wetland. Amenities include a gravel loop path, wetland overlook deck, and a paved parking area.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1986: Brattin Woods was purchased from Margaret Brattin and the Estate of John Brattin. The property was acquired utilizing$100,000 from the Park Millage Fund.
  - 1997: A 0.5-mile nature trail loop trail was constructed by an Eagle Scout candidate.
  - 2005: Jeff Wells donated a 0.33-acre area to host a small parking area. The paved parking area was constructed for nine cars.
  - 2009: An Eagle Scout candidate added a beautiful pond overlook deck.
  - 2010: The loop trail was improved with gravel surfacing and the Okemos Kiwanis constructed benches that were placed along the path.
  - 2010: Volunteers spread gravel along the entire 0.5-acre path through the park.
  - 2019: An adjacent 2.2-acre parcel was donated and was added to the overall acreage.

- **Future Park Development Plans:**
    - Future development plans include the development of a trail head sign and bench/resting area along with an interpretive sign that describes the history of the property.
    - Additional plans may include maintenance of the parking area, trail, wetland overlook, benches, and any other improvements to improve accessibility.

13. Forest Hills Natural Area: 4625 Northview Drive, Okemos – 4.0 acres

- **Park Description:**
    - Forest Hills Natural Area is a wooded area that adjoins the Forest Hills subdivision. Its trails serve as off-road routes for many of the neighborhood children traveling to and from school or nearby stores. It is used extensively by the neighborhood for dog walking and nature observation.
    - Each year the Forest Hills Neighborhood Association conducts a volunteer clean-up effort.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
    - 1987: Forest Hills Natural Area was acquired from the Goff family.
    - 2025: The neighborhood worked with the Township staff to complete native plantings along the drain in the park.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
    - Additional plans may include maintenance of the existing trails, and the possible construction of a split-rail fence along the property lines.

14. Tacoma Hills Park: 1815 Hamilton Road, Okemos – 22 acres

- **Park Description:**
    - This property borders Hamilton Road on the north and the former Edgewood Elementary School on the south. It is primarily utilized by adjacent property owners for walking. Its primary feature is an open, successional field that has a loop trail, nearly a mile in length.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
    - 1988: The land was donated to Meridian Township by the Ingham County Drain Commission as part of the Spross Drain Improvement Project.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
    - Additional plans may include vegetation management, maintenance of the existing trails, and the possible construction of boardwalks along the wet portions of the trail.

<u>Community Parks:</u> 8 parks totaling 665.30 acres

15. Central Park: 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos – 187.8 acres (this includes park areas, historical village, Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center, Town Hall, Public Safety and Farmers' Market).

- **Park Description:**
    - Central Park is a diverse area offering many recreational, cultural, and nature appreciation opportunities.
    - **Municipal Complex:** The Municipal Complex is in the southeast quarter of Central Park. This area contains the Township Municipal buildings (including the Township offices, Public Safety Building, entrance drives and parking lots), Farmers' Market pavilion, soccer fields, Historical Village, Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center, and a pond. This section of the park also includes restrooms, interpretive facilities, sidewalks, a pavilion, picnic areas, natural trails, historic structures, playground and paved parking.
    - **Historical Village:** The Historical Village includes seven buildings. (See more on building details under Park Facilities).

        - The pond in the Historical Village is regularly stocked with fish, which creates successful fishing opportunities for many first-timers. This dock is regularly used by school groups as part of field trips.
    - 2013: An accessible game table and paved access pad were installed near the Farmers' Market pavilion, using funds from a grant from LINC (Liaison for Inter-Neighborhood Connectivity, a local group).
    - 2015: The Claire Twohy gardens located near the pavilion were renovated to include butterfly-friendly plantings. An interpretive sign was installed near the gardens.
    - Numerous shade trees have been added to Central Park in recent years, which is important in all our parks due to the devastation of the Emerald Ash Borer infestation that began around 2006.
    - 2016: A master plan was developed for all Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park. The intent of the master plan is to develop improved non-motorized transportation connections; improved accessibility; and to develop a park identity for this busy and somewhat disconnected park area.
    - 2016: Addition to the Barnes House to serve as office space for Friends of Historic Meridian staff; landscape enhancements to the flower garden areas. The ground was broken for the Garden Club's "Plant It Pink" Garden.
    - 2018: Interpretive Signage in the Historical Village: We installed and held a ribbon cutting for interpretive signs in the Meridian Historical Village. Haslett Okemos Rotary Club funded six new interpretive signs that artistically describe life in the late 1800's and the history of the structures located in the Village.
    - 2022: Performed a building assessment on all structures for future maintenance planning.
    - 2023: Installed a new roof on the Farmhouse, Barnes House and Barn; upgraded all lights in the Chapel to LED; new paint on the School House and Chapel; upgraded electrical in the Barn; purchased three robot mowers to maintain the lawn.
    - 2024: Planted a memorial tree and installed a plaque to honor the George & Diane Grettenberger family; Chapel received ceiling repairs, new roof, addition of gutters and porch repairs; siding repairs and new paint on the Barn and Corn Crib; brick repairs and ceiling repairs in the General Store.
    - 2026: Resurface the parking lot and clean/seal roof on Tollgate House; paint Tollgate House.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
    - 1966: The first parcel of land was purchased from Maynard and Doris Unruh for $47,306.
    - 1978: The Farmers' Market Pavilion was constructed in 1978 with federal grants and Township General Fund dollars to provide a shelter for the Meridian Farmers' Market. The pavilion includes restrooms, electricity and drinking fountains.
    - 1986: 74 acres of Central Park were generously donated by George and Louis Eyde.
    - 2005: 8.8 acres were partially donated by the Ledebuhr family and purchased for $212,500 with Park Millage funds.
    - 2011: Meridian Township received a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant to construct an accessible fishing dock. This dock was constructed in the Historical Village section of Central Park. In addition to the fishing dock, an interpretive sign, bench, and accessible paved pathway were added to the dock area.
    - 2011: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed a storage locker for fishing rods and tackle that are available free-of-charge to park visitors.
    - 2015: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed benches along the fishing pond.
    - 2020: A 1/3-mile paved pathway/boardwalk; fishing dock; and trailhead was added to the park. It runs east and west between the Town Hall area and Central Park South.
    - 2020: A restroom was added to the Historical Village along with an improved pathway that improves the connection between the area around the Central Park Pavilion and the Historical Village.
    - 2024: Upgraded/replaced some playground features; repaired and stained all picnic tables in the pavilion; complete renovation of the pavilion including paint, upgrades to the restrooms, new ceiling and lights and the addition of barn doors.
    - 2025: Installed Farmers' Market 50th Anniversary murals on the front of the pavilion; additional handicap parking spaces added in front of the pavilion.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
    - In 2016 a master plan was developed for all Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park.
    - Plans call for primary non-motorized transportation corridors in the form of "promenades" that will be comprised of wide paved pathways and boardwalks; a covered basketball pavilion; art walk; pond enhancements; fishing dock at Central Park South; expanded parking; a doggy playground; and landscaping.

- Additional plans may include vegetation management, maintenance of the existing trails, and the possible construction of boardwalks along the wet portions of the trail.

16. Central Park South: 1990 Central Park Drive, Okemos – 15 acres

- **Park Description:**
  - The 15-acre Central Park South provides an access point to over three miles of nature trails in Central Park and provides shoreline fishing opportunities. This park also includes a picnic area and paved parking.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1984: Acquired in 1984 for $125,250
  - 1998, an asphalt pathway and bridge were constructed across the Mud Lake Drain to connect Central Park South to Gaylord C. Smith Court and Nancy Moore Park.
  - 2004: A paved pathway was constructed from Central Park South north to Nemoke Trail, providing non-motorized connections from the Haslett area to the Meridian Mall.
  - 2019: Construction of the 3-acre Large Dog Park. This space is fenced and has an electronic access system. The park includes a natural pathway that meanders through the woods, an open grassy area for play, and a doggy drinking fountain.
  - 2020: Fishing dock was installed at Central Park South and is connected by the Central Meridian Regional Pathway, which runs east-west for 1/3 of a mile from the pond to the Town Hall parking lot. An extension of the paved pathway was constructed along the east side of Central Park South.
  - 2021: An Eagle Scout constructed outdoor dog agility equipment in the park.
  - 2022: Installed five floating islands on the pond.
  - 2024: Installed split rail fence for wetland buffer project.
  - 2026: Resurface the parking lot.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - Additional plans may include vegetation management, maintenance of the existing trails, a boardwalk/paved path on the east side of the pond with a shaded fishing platform, and parking.
  - In 2016 a master plan was developed for all Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park. The Parks Department has been making progress with the plan and in 2021, two major developments were constructed: the Central Park Regional Pathway and the Gateway Path and Restroom in the Historical Village.
  - Plans include an art walk within the woods along the east side of Central Park South Pond.

17. Hartrick Park: 3685 Hulett Road, Okemos – 60 acres

- **Park Description:**
  - Hartrick Park is in the southwest quadrant of the Township, just north of Okemos High School. This park includes restrooms, sidewalks, pavilion, flagpole, playground equipment, grills, gravel trail, paved trail, wetland overlook platform, wetland pond, picnic areas, two baseball/softball fields, two youth soccer fields, paved and gravel overflow parking.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1988: Meridian Township purchased 30 acres of land for $330,000
  - 1989: An additional 30-acres were donated by the James and Tass Hartrick family
  - 2003-2004: Hartrick Park was developed with $488,125 of grant assistance from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund in.
  - 2011: Township enhanced the wetlands with native plantings.
  - 2012: Eagle Scout candidates constructed a ½ mile long gravel trail along the south edge of the park through the wooded area. An additional section of gravel was added by the township to create a connection between the Okemos softball diamonds and Hartrick Park.
  - 2013: Paving was added around the flagpole and bleachers to improve accessibility.
  - 2015-2016: Certified monarch-waystation gardens were added to the park. The gardens were planted by schoolchildren.

- 2016: Covered dugouts were installed on two ball diamonds.
- 2017: Michigan Audubon Society installed chimney swift box with the assistance of the Okemos High School Earth Club
- 2023: Upgraded the backstops on the baseball fields; installed gravel overflow parking lot.
- 2024: Upgraded/replaced some playground features.
- 2025: Received and installed a new bike repair station that was donated.

- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - Additional plans may include maintenance and any necessary replacement of park amenities that have outlived their anticipated lifespan or other improvements to improve accessibility.

18. Nancy Moore Park: 1960 Gaylord C. Smith Court, East Lansing – 40 acres

- **Park Description:**
  - This park was the township's first athletic complex and includes restrooms, paved and natural trails, picnic pavilion, restrooms, two baseball/softball fields, two soccer fields, two sand volleyball courts, a full-court basketball court, grills, playground equipment and a parking lot.
  - Nancy Moore Park is located adjacent to the Meridian Township Service Center in which the Department of Parks and Recreation is housed.
  - Many of the trees in the park were provided through the Township's Adopt-A-Tree program, and two gardens have been installed in memoriam.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1989: Nancy Moore Park was acquired from Doug Federau for $156,000 and was developed into the Township's first athletic complex.
  - 1990-1992: Park development was financed through the MDNR Quality of Life Recreation Bond Program.
  - 1992-1995: Development of the athletic complex.
  - 2004: The parking lot was paved and has space for 164 cars.
  - 2005: A paved trail was added that connects to Nemoke Trail in Haslett along an existing utility easement.
  - 2009: Two horseshoe pits were added to the park.
  - 2015: The pavilion was re-sided, and a memorial garden was developed near the ball diamonds with an accessible path and bench. Other improvements included ball diamond safety fencing, new recycled and accessible picnic tables, paved pathway repairs, parking lot resurfacing, the installation of handmaid benches by the Okemos Kiwanis, garden renovations, and the planting of eight trees from a Michigan State University Federal Credit Union "Go Green" grant program.
  - 2016: An Eagle Scout candidate constructed our first Gaga ball pits.
  - 2016, the sand volleyball courts were renovated with new Lake Michigan beach sand.
  - 2019: Construction of the 2-acre Small Dog Park. This space is fenced and has an electronic access system. The park includes an open grassy area for play, fencing, and a doggy drinking fountain.
  - 2023: Upgraded the backstops on the baseball fields and replenished volleyball courts with Michigan beach sand.
  - 2024: Upgraded/replaced some playground features.
  - 2026: Upgrade pavilion and restrooms
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - Additional plans may include new play equipment, new pavilion, shaded picnic pods, vegetation management, pathways around the parking area and maintenance of the existing trails.
  - In 2016 a master plan was developed for all Central Park, including Central Park South and Nancy Moore Park. Plans for Nancy Moore include expanded parking and re-designing the circulation patterns of the parking between Nancy Moore Park and the Service Center.

19. North Meridian Road Park: 5191 N. Meridian Road, Okemos – 60 acres

- **Park Description:**
  - North Meridian Road Park was purchased to provide recreational opportunities for residents in the eastern portion of the Township. The park has 40.6 acres of upland and 19.4 acres of wetland.
  - Park amenities include athletic fields, a large sledding hill, nature trails and boardwalks, paved parking lot, year-round restroom, and a drinking fountain.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1991: North Meridian Road Park was purchased from Judy Linn for $165,000.
  - 1998: A sledding hill was created.
  - 2002: Play equipment and a paved parking lot were added.
  - 2010: The Township received a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant for development of a year-around universally accessible restroom facility and accessible walkways.
  - 2011: The heated restroom, a drinking fountain, and accessible paved pathways were constructed.
  - 2015: Two sand volleyball courts were constructed.
  - 2017: The Township constructed a pavilion.
  - 2022: Constructed and installed a Sled Library for the sledding hill.
  - 2023: Replenished volleyball courts with Michigan beach sand
  - 2024: Upgraded/replaced some playground features; replaced drinking fountain.
  - 2026: Resurface the parking lot.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - Additional plans may include expansion of the existing parking lot, a cricket field and associated amenities.

20. Towner Road Park: 2055 Towner Road, Haslett – 23.58 acres

- **Park Description:**
  - Towner Road Park is a large community park located in the northern portion of the Township. It features ball diamonds, athletic fields, a paved walking path, parking, a pavilion, restroom, and pickleball courts.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 2007: The Township acquires 22 acres of land from Ron Applegate for $432,255 on a land contract.
  - 2010: The Township demolished the golf driving range building.
  - 2015: The Township acquired a 1.58 parcel that adjoins the park on the north-west corner. The additional land is designed as active parkland. This addition resulted in a total park area of 23.58 acres.
  - 2016: The 1.58-acre parcel of land originally had residential structures, and they were demolished and the area was graded. The additional land will be utilized for park development.
  - 2007: Master planning for the park began and plans were finalized in 2016.
  - 2017: Construction of the park was completed in 2017. The park includes two ball diamonds, athletic fields, restroom building, paved pathways and boardwalks, landscaping, pickleball, parking and utilities.
  - 2022: Installed new foul poles on the baseball fields and installed an AED defibrillator.
  - 2023: Upgraded the backstops on the baseball fields and installed new shade structure for the pickleball courts
  - 2024: East baseball field was resized and resurfaced; upgraded drainage system on the east baseball field.
  - 2025: West baseball field was resized and resurfaced; installed 2 new accessible playgrounds; installed eco-mats at the bottom of the stairs on the soccer fields to help with drainage.
  - 2025: Installed two ADA compliant play structures.
  - 2026: Provide preventative maintenance and paint on courts.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
  - Additional plans may include replacement of the pickleball courts, construction of cricket batting cages.

21. Meridian Riverfront Park - 204.0 Acres

- **Park Description:**
  - The Meridian Riverfront Park consists of three parks totaling 204 acres. They include Harris Nature Center, Eastgate Park and Legg Park.
- **Harris Nature Center: 3998 Van Atta Road - 48 Acres** Park Description:

  - The Harris Nature Center is located along the Red Cedar River in a beautiful, wooded area interspersed with meadows and a white spruce woodlot. The Nature Center offers environmental activities and outdoor recreational opportunities focusing on protecting, promoting and interpreting the Red Cedar River. Within the park are a Nature Building and the Nature Exploration Area, both of which encourage visitors to engage with nature through cognitive experiences and physical interactions.
  - The Nature Center building is in a 60-year-old house that was renovated in 1997 into a public nature center that offers interpretive exhibits, live animal displays, nature murals by local artists, resource library, screened patio, and environmental programs for schools and the public.
  - The area outside the Nature Building is enhanced by native plant landscaping, a picnic area, river overlook deck, live Red-tail Hawk exhibit, interpretive signage, small pond, fire pit with amphitheater seating, canoe launch, fishing dock, storage barn, 20 paved parking spaces and overflow parking on grass.
  - Within the natural park area there is a 1/2-mile paved loop trail and numerous natural trail paths with small interpretive signs installed in the 1990's. Benches are available along the trails and short boardwalks span chronically wet sections of the paths. With the help of volunteers, Wood Duck nest boxes are maintained within the wetlands and Bluebird nest boxes are located within meadow habitat. Trails are multi-use for walking, running, bicycling, skiing and snowshoeing.
  - The Nature Exploration Area is a place where people can intuitively interact with nature. This project was begun in 2012 with the creation of a climbable Turtle Sculpture. Additional features are the Log Jam for climbing and balance; the Sticks and Stones for building; the Spider Web for climbing and contemplation; the Michigan Fossil Dig for digging and imaginative play; 3 interpretive signs provide fossil education; the Gathering Circle includes a stage, bench seating and available electricity for organized programs or general public seating and play.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1986: Harris Nature Center's property was purchased with Land and Water Conservation funds from Paul and Vila Allen for $240,000.
  - 1996: The Nature Center was created out of a 45-year-old house.
  - 1997: The parking lot and nature trails were developed. Nature Center opened on July 22, 1997.
  - 2014: Ingham County Road Department (ICRD) replaced the Van Atta Road bridge by the Nature Center entrance and Legg Park trail entrance. The bridge includes a pedestrian walkway on the west side. As part of their construction plan, the ICRD constructed a new fishing dock/platform on the bank of the Red Cedar River.
  - 2015: Lansing Oar and Paddle Club (LOAPC) constructed a rustic canoe launch on the east side of Van Atta Road.
  - 2019: Natural Exploration Area is constructed and includes a log jam, mole hole, fossil dig area, and improved fire pit.
  - 2020: An accessible bird observation/overlook with viewing scopes was added.
  - 2021: A waterless restroom and accessible pavilion were constructed. Pavement, electricity, and a water bottle filling station were also added to the park area around the Nature Center building.
  - 2022: Constructed and installed snowshoe racks for rentals; HNC Foundation funded a new section of paved trail leading to the birding observation platform.
  - 2023: Exterior upgrades to the building including new siding, stonework and paint; purchased new recycled plastic picnic tables; HNC Foundation funded the purchase/installation of two new play features (dragonfly seesaw and Log Crawl through tunnel) for the Nature Exploration Area.
  - 2024: Replaced split rail fence; replaced the railing on the overlook deck; upgraded indoor classroom and office lighting to LED; installed new LED walkway lights; resurfaced parking lot; installed new interactive

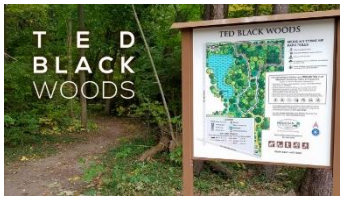
weather panel and Log Jam feature in the Nature Exploration Area funded by the HNC Foundation; enhanced the Fossil Dig play feature with a concrete bed to hold the fossils in place.
    - 2025: Received the Rotary Club of Haslett/Okemos River trail kiosk and installed at the kayak/canoe launch.
    - 2026: Installation of an ADA compliant floating dock constructed a new exterior bird enclosure and upgraded parking lot lights to Dark Sky Friendly.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
    - Plans include enhancement of the nature exploration area, new expanded interpretive signage along trails, repairs to existing pathways and trails, installation of water fed bathrooms, and wayfinding signage related to the future Red Cedar Water Trail.
- **Eastgate Park:** 4203 S. Meridian Road, Okemos – 53 acres Park Description:

    - Eastgate Park is located on the far eastern edge of the township and has frontage on the Red Cedar River. It has a large, open grassy area, pavilion, paved pathway, gravel parking, and a bicycle pump track.
    - A trail-head sign and trail markers direct visitors along the 1.4-mile natural river trail.
    - Blue bird houses are located near the pavilion and are regularly maintained. This park includes sidewalks, natural trails, picnic pavilion with grills, open grassy area and accessible parking.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
    - 1986: Eastgate Park was purchased in with the assistance of a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant.
    - 2002: A paved walkway was added from the parking lot to the pavilion.
    - 2009: Residents who are also members of the Michigan Mountain Bike Association constructed a bicycle pump track in the eastern portion of the park.
    - 2014: Numerous large trees were donated by a resident and were planted near the bicycle pump track and wooded edge of the park.
    - 2014: Mountain bike enthusiasts added various stunts to the pump track.
    - 2019: The Outdoor Adventure Club continues to maintain and add various stunts to the pump track.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
    - Plans could include paving the parking area, trail and pathway maintenance, maintenance of the bicycle pump track, and installing a cricket pitch.
- **Legg Park:** 3891 Van Atta Road, Okemos – 103 acres Park Description:

    - Legg Park is located on the west side of Van Atta Road following almost ¾ mile along the south bank of the Red Cedar River. It is partly wooded and partly open and features wetlands, Sloan Creek, natural walking trails, gravel entry drive, gravel parking on the west side of the park, and a small, paved parking area near the entrance on the east side of the park.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
    - 1980: A portion of this park was developed with a gravel entry drive, pavilion, parking lot and natural trails with grant assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
    - 2013: Plans were developed to include additional recreational amenities including a dog park and habitat improvements in the southeastern portion of the park.
    - 2015: The park entrance area was improved. The park entry drive was paved, and a small five car parking area was developed. Numerous large trees were donated by a resident and were planted near the park entrance.
    - 2022: Installed a new split rail fence at entrance/gate.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
    - 1979: 70-acres were acquired from Louis and Joan Legg (55-acres donated and 15-acres purchased).
    - 1994: An additional 31.7 acres were purchased from the Legg Family for $96,000 for the purpose of developing future athletic fields. This area is commonly referred to as Legg Park South.
    - 1994: Dr. Mason and Christine Cobb donated 1.58 acres near adjacent to the existing river trail system.

- **Future Park Development Plans:**
    - Plans may include: the development of a wetland bank, trail and boardwalk improvements, and improved access.

22. Ted Black Woods: 540 Grand River Avenue, Okemos – 74.92 acres (formerly known as Van Atta Woods Park)



- **Park Description:**
    - This park contains beautiful hardwoods and assorted wildflower species. It has been allowed to progress naturally with minimal improvements from the Township. There are two access points to the park with small parking lots: one on Van Atta Road (gravel) and Grand River Avenue (paved). There are 1.2 miles of nature trails.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
    - 1973: The central 68-acres of Van Atta Woods were acquired for $95,000 from Andrew and Kathryn Pavlik.
    - 1989: An adjacent parcel on Grand River Avenue was purchased from James and Shirley Harding for $130,000 with Park Millage funds to improve public access and paved parking area for park visitors.
    - 2004: Two interpretive signs were added to the trails and were funded by a U.S. Forest Service grant.
    - 2009: An additional .92 acres were added as a donation/purchase from the family of former Park Commissioner, Environmental Commissioner, Township Board Trustee, famed bird expert, Ted Black. The 0.92-acre parcel is located on the northwest corner of the park and will serve as an additional entrance to access the trail system. As part of the donation agreement and as an opportunity to honor Ted Black for his many years of service to the Meridian Township community, the entire Van Atta Woods Park was renamed "Ted Black Woods Park".
    - 2010: Brian Van Order, owner of Michigan Demolition and Excavation, donated demolition of the house structure and restoration services on the site. Joe Pennoni, owner of Rapid Tree Removal Service, removed numerous dead, diseased, stressed and hazardous trees on the site and in the wooded area of the park.
    - 2011: A small gravel parking area, fencing and gate were added at the Van Atta Road entrance to the park. An interpretive sign to recognize Dr. Ted Black was installed near the trail head. Eagle Scout candidates have made numerous park improvements that include benches, a wetland overlook, and trail development and improvement.
    - 2011: An Eagle Scout candidate made trail improvements to the park.
    - 2012: An Eagle Scout candidate developed a gravel path and made four Aldo Leopold benches for the Van Atta Road entrance area.
    - 2016: A wetland overlook was constructed by an Eagle Scout Candidate near the Van Atta Road entrance.
    - 2024: Redesigned and resurfaced parking lot.
- **Future Park Development Plans:**
    - Plans may include: an outdoor pavilion and gathering spot, native bird-friendly plantings, bird viewing opportunities, pathway enhancement, sign enhancement, and invasive species management.

<u>Natural Areas</u>: 4 parks totaling 139.3 Acres

23. Lake Lansing Marsh: 1430 Lake Drive, Haslett – 46 acres

- Lake Lansing Marsh is located on the south end of Lake Lansing and is the primary fish breeding spot on the lake. It was donated to the Charter Township of Meridian by Donald and Marylan Bensen in 1962. A new park sign was added in 2022.

24. Spengler's Marsh: 5929 Lake Drive, Haslett – 3.3 acres

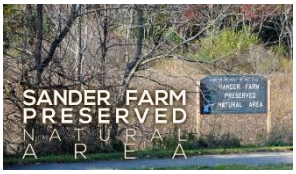
- This area is located on the southeast shore of Lake Lansing. The property was donated by Patricia Cleland and Barry Spengler in 1994 and is located on the southeast shore of Lake Lansing. A new park sign was added in 2022.
- **Future Development Plans:**

- Future development plans could include a boardwalk and nature viewing overlook.

25. Red Cedar Natural Area: 1455 Oscoda Road, Okemos – 56 acres

- The Red Cedar Natural Area is an area that is mostly wooded floodplain located on the north side of the Red Cedar River. The natural area also runs contiguous to the Shoals Subdivision. It is an important area for wildlife. Informal roadside parking is available, along Oscoda Drive, near the park sign.
- **History of Park Acquisition and Development:**
  - 1996: The property was deeded to Meridian Township by the Eyde Company.
  - 2001: An Eagle Scout developed a figure-eight nature trail that lies in the flood plain of the park on the north bank of the Red Cedar River.

26. Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area: 4344 Dobie Road, Okemos – 34 acres



- 2021: Meridian Township was given ownership of the Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area property, which had been protected under an open space easement agreement with the Township for over 30 years. The former owner, Dr. Maureen Sander, granted residents of Meridian Township permission to use the property for walking, picnicking, skiing, or other passive outdoor recreation activities for many years until her passing in 2020 leaving the land to the Township. A natural trail system meanders through the park and is the home to many bluebird boxes.

Meridian Township Facilities

27. Meridian Historical Village: 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos

The Historical Village, located in Central Park, is a collection of 19th century buildings moved from other locations and one modern reproduction of an Okemos church. The Village is maintained by the Friends of Historic Meridian, a nonprofit volunteer organization, focused on preservation of history and historic structures of Meridian Township. The Village has open hours for walk-through visits, presentations and special activities, and can be reserved by school groups for tours. Flowers, herbs, and vegetable gardens are planted in the Historical Village and maintained by Village volunteers and the Meridian Garden Club. Most of the facilities, sidewalks, and parking are accessible to people with disabilities.

The first building moved to the Village was the Grettenberger Farmhouse in January 1974. This restored structure represents a typical Michigan farmhouse of the period of 1860-1880. The Proctor Tollgate House followed in June 1974 and contains an interpretive exhibit on early transportation focusing on the necessity, development, and impact of plank roads. The one-room frame Randall School House was moved to the Village in 1987 followed by the brick General Store building in 1988. The Unruh Barn was added in 1991 and serves as the site for old-time chores. The Barnes House Inn and Tavern were moved to the Village in 1997 and houses interpretive displays and meeting space. A single-story office wing was added to the Barnes House in 2016. The Perkins-Copland Log Cabin was added to the Village in 2006.

The most recent addition to the village is the chapel, constructed in 2009. This chapel is the first "new construction" in the Village. All the other structures have been moved from other locations throughout the township. The chapel was built as a reconstruction of a 19th century church which stood on a hill in Okemos for nearly 100 years. It lies nestled among seven lovingly restored buildings from the 1800s. The non-denominational Chapel is available for weddings and small gatherings on a rental basis. Sidewalks, gazebo, paved parking and a pond also add to the charm of the area.

A fishing dock, interpretive sign, benches, and a paved pathway were added to the Historical Village section of Central Park in 2011 with funding assistance from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

28. Snell-Towar Recreation Center: 6160 Towar Avenue, East Lansing

The Snell-Towar Recreation Center was constructed in 1972 with funds from the Township General Fund and a Federal Community Development Block Grant. Operating, staffing and upkeep continue to be funded by the Township General Fund. Staffing is provided by a full-time coordinator who is responsible for providing youth development opportunities and senior activities for residents of the Towar Community. The Center has 14 parking spaces (13 non-handicap, one handicap). Snell-Towar Recreation Center is in the middle of Towar Park. Future renovations are planned to improve the functionality of this facility and increase its accessibility to individuals with a disability.

29. Marketplace on the Green: 1995 Central Park Drive

The Farmers' Market found a new home in 2020 within Marketplace on the Green. This area is located between Central Park South and the Meridian Mall and features a 15,000-sf pavilion, restrooms/office, stage, parking, bike parking, electricity, play equipment, and site furnishings. The market operates from May-October on Wednesdays and Saturdays with vendors selling a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and home-made products. The Market, which opened in 1978, has shown continued growth and popularity and in 2020 it was officially moved to Marketplace on the Green. Improvements to the park include:

- 2022: Additional amenities were added; including, a permanent POD structure for the food assistance program; restrooms with insulated ceilings and heat for year-round use; and constructed and installed new ice skate lending closet for the rink. The market is managed by a part-time market manager and assistant manager with assistance from a four-member elected advisory committee made up of farmers' market vendors.
- 2023: Installed windscreens to encompass the west wing and the stage.
- 2024: Installed AED defibrillator and installed additional permanent tables and chairs.
- 2025: Installed pole gates on the ring road for traffic control; received and installed a donated ASD Communication Sign; installed murals on the restroom building.

30. Harris Nature Center: 3998 Van Atta Road, Okemos

Harris Nature Center's property was purchased with Land and Water Conservation funds in 1986 from Paul and Vila Allen for $240,000. The Center is housed in a 45-year-old house that was converted in 1997 into a public nature center that offers environmental activities and outdoor recreation opportunities focusing on protecting, promoting and interpreting the Red Cedar River. The Center is staffed by two full-time Naturalists and a variety of part-time staff and volunteers. The Nature Center contains rotating displays that focus on the Red Cedar River and seasonal changes in nature. A Preuss Living River exhibit features a realistic mural, waterfall and live turtles. Programs offered include Chipmunk Storytime for preschoolers, Nature for Toddlers, summer day camps for pre-school through 6th grades, scout badge programs, guided walks, school programs and a variety of public programs throughout the year.

31. Nokomis Native American Cultural Center: 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos

In 1987, the Meridian Township Board applied and received a $100,000 grant from the Michigan Equity Program to build the Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center, a Native American cultural center. The funding provided a building housing a display/demonstration room, exhibit/meeting room, kitchenette, office, restrooms, and lobby entrance. The funding sources are tours, programs, gift shop sales, donations, memberships and competitive grants. By agreement, the Township owns the land and the building, but the Nokomis Native American Cultural Learning Center Board operates as a non-profit out of the building.

32. Meridian Senior Center: 400 N Okemos Road, Okemos

The Meridian Township senior citizens have been a focus of the Okemos Community Education department since 1970, providing activities such as luncheons, travel opportunities, recreation leagues and numerous special events. In 1990-1991 due to an increasing senior center population in the community, the Senior Center was also seeing steady growth with many requests coming in for additional space and programming. Motivated by this growth, Okemos Public Schools included plans for providing a larger space for the Senior Center in their 1991 bond issue.

Following the successful passage of the bond, a citizen's advisory committee was formed to assist in the development of the new center. In January 1995, a survey was prepared and distributed to approximately 4,000 Meridian Township senior citizens. Over 500 supportive responses were received. The Meridian Senior Center was officially opened on September 17, 1995.
On November 5, 2002, the proposed Millage for Senior Citizen, Recreation and Human Service Programs was passed for .1 mills. In 2011, the Meridian Senior Center left the umbrella of Okemos Community Education and moved to Meridian Township Parks and Recreation. On August 7, 2012, a proposed millage renewal with an increase of an additional .05 mills specifically designated for the Senior Center passed.

Due to the redevelopment of Chippewa Middle School, the Township is actively working to identify a new home for the Senior Center prior to the scheduled demolition of the portion of the middle school currently occupied by the Senior Center in September 2028.

Figure 2. Park Amenities and Accessibility Matrix

MDNR ADA Rating Scale 1-5
1. None of the facilities or park areas meet accessibility guidelines
2. Some of the facilities or park areas meet accessibility guidelines
3. Most of the facilities or 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

		Acreage	MDNR ADA Rating	Parking	Trails (N-natural | P-paved)	Natural Area with No Amenities	Lake | Pond | River | Drain | Wetland	Restrooms	Pavilion | Building(s) with set hours	Drinking Fountain	Electricity	Grill(s)	Picnic Area(s)	Fishing Access	Fishing Dock	Canoe | Kayak Launch	Boat Launch	River | Pond | Wetland Overlook Deck	Play Equipment	Nature Exploration Area	Story Book Trail	Soccer | Football | LaCrosse Fields	Baseball | Softball Diamonds	Basketball Court	Pickleball Court | Tennis Court	Sand Volleyball Court	Sledding Hill | Pump Track	Horseshoe Pits | Gaga Ball	Fitness Equipment | Dog Park	Open Space for Activities
1	Nancy Moore Park 1960 Gaylord C. Smith Ct	40	3	x	N|P		D	x	P	x	x		x						x			x	x	x		x		GB	DP	x
	Parks & Recreation Office							x	B																					
2	Central Park 5151 Marsh Rd	197	3	x	N|P		P	x	P	x	x		x	x	x			x	x			x						HP		x
	Municipal Bldg/Public Safety Bldg							x	B																					
	Meridian Historical Village		2					x	B																					
	Nokomis Learning Center		3					x	B																					
3	Central Park South 1990 Central Park Dr	15	3	x	N|P		P						x	x	x													DP		
4	Towner Road Park 2055 Towner Rd	23.6	3	x	P		W	x	P	x	x	x	x						x			x	x		P					
5	Wonch Park 4555 Okemos Rd	15	3	x	P		R	x	P	x	x	x	x						x										FE	x
6	Ferguson Park 4540 Okemos Rd	5.7	2	x			R	x		x		x	x	x		x			x											x
7	Harris Nature Center 3998 Van Atta Rd	48.4	3	x	N|P		R	x	B|P	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x										x
8	Eastgate Park 4203 S. Meridian Rd	53.1	2	x	N		R						x														PT			x
9	Legg Park 3891 Van Atta Rd	103	2	x	N		R		P			x																		x
10	Hartrick Park 3685 Hulett Rd	60.7	3	x	N|P		P	x	P	x	x	x	x					x	x			x	x							x
11	Towar Park 6166 Pollard Ave	4	2	x															x					x						x
12	Snell-Towar Recreation Center 6146 Porter Ave		3	x				x	B																					
13	Hillbrook Park 1747 Lake Lansing Rd	25.4	2	x	N		D			x		x	x						x				x	x	P/T					x
14	Marshall Park 6105 Marsh Rd	5	3	x									x						x					x						x
15	Ted Black Woods 540 Grand River Ave | 4714 Van Atta Rd	74	2	x	N		W						x					x												x
16	North Meridian Road Park 5191 N. Meridian Rd	60	2	x	N			x	P	x	x	x	x						x			x				x	SH	GB		x
17	Ottawa Hills Park 4980 Hillcrest Ave	3	2				D						x						x					x						x
18	Red Cedar Natural Area 1455 Oscoda Rd	56	1			x	R																							
19	Cedar Bend Hghts Nghbrhd Prk 2280 Kenmore Dr	0.33	3									x	x						x											x
20	Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area 4344 Doble Rd	34	1		N																									
21	Forest Hills Park 4625 Northview Dr	4	1		N								x																	
22	Brattin Woods 5851 Okemos Rd	22.1	2	x	N		W											x												
23	Tacoma Hills Park 1815 Hamilton Rd	22	1		N																									
24	Schriener Park 5039 Algonquin Way	1	1			x																								
25	Orlando Park 1275 Orlando Dr	1.3	2							x		x	x						x		x									x
26	Indian Hills Park 4730 Nakoma Dr	3	1			x																								x
27	Lake Lansing Marsh 1430 Lake Dr	46	1			x	L																							
28	Spengler Marsh 5929 Lake Dr	3.3	1			x	L																							
29	Newton Road Park 6024 Newton Rd, East Lansing	5	2	x									x									x								x
30	Marketplace on the Green 1995 Central Park Dr	2.43	5	x				x	P	x	x								x											

2022-2026 Parks & Recreation Master Plan Accomplishments

2022

1. **North Meridian Road Park**: Constructed and installed a Sled Library for the sledding hill.
2. **Harris Nature Center (HNC)**: Constructed and installed snowshoe racks for rentals; HNC Foundation funded a new section of paved trail leading to the birding observation platform.
3. **Towner Road Park**: Installed new foul poles on the baseball fields and installed an automated external defibrillator (AED).
4. **Marketplace on the Green**: Added a permanent POD structure for the food assistance program; upgraded restrooms with insulated ceilings and heat for year-round use; and constructed and installed new ice skate lending closet for the rink.
5. **Historical Village**: Contracted a building assessment on all structures for future maintenance planning.
6. **Central Park South**: Installed five floating islands in the pond.
7. **Ferguson Park**: Resurfaced the parking lot.
8. **Lake Lansing Marsh**: Installed a new sign.
9. **Spengler Marsh**: Installed a new sign.
10. **Legg Park**: installed new split rail fence at entrance/gate.

2023

1. **Towner Road Park**: Upgraded the backstops on the baseball fields and installed new shade structure for the pickleball courts.
2. **Nancy Moore Park**: Upgraded the backstops on the baseball fields and replenished volleyball courts with Michigan beach sand.
3. **North Meridian Road Park**: Replenished volleyball courts with Michigan beach sand.
4. **Hartrick Park**: Upgraded the backstops on the baseball fields and installed gravel overflow parking lot.
5. **Marketplace on the Green**: Installed windscreens to encompass the west wing and the stage.
6. **Historical Village**: Installed a new roof on the Farmhouse, Barnes House and Barn; upgraded all lights in the Chapel to LED; new paint on the School House and Chapel; upgraded electrical in the Barn; and purchased three robot mowers to maintain the lawn.
7. **Ferguson Park**: Installed a new roof on the restroom building; installed new picnic tables and benches.
8. **Indian Hills Park**: Installed a donated memorial bench.
9. **Hillbrook Park**: The pickleball/tennis/basketball courts were resurfaced and painted; windscreens were added to the perimeter of the courts; and AED was installed.
10. **Harris Nature Center (HNC)**: Provided exterior upgrades to the building including new siding, stonework and paint; purchased new recycled plastic picnic tables; HNC Foundation funded the purchase/installation of two new play features (dragonfly seesaw and Log Crawl through tunnel) for the Nature Exploration Area.
11. **Large Dog Park**: Used a forestry mulcher to eradicate the burrs and open the trails.

2024

1. **Harris Nature Center (HNC)**: Replaced split rail fence; replaced the railing on the overlook deck; upgraded indoor classroom and office lighting to LED; installed new LED walkway lights; resurfaced parking lot; installed new interactive weather panel and Log Jam feature in the Nature Exploration Area funded by the HNC Foundation; and enhanced the Fossil Dig play feature with a concrete bed to hold the fossils in place.
2. **Nancy Moore Park**: Upgraded and replaced some playground features.
3. **Hartrick Park**: Upgraded and replaced some playground features.
4. **Wonch Park**: Upgraded and replaced some playground features.
5. **Central Park**: Upgraded and replaced some playground features; repaired and stained all picnic tables in the pavilion; complete renovation of the pavilion including paint, upgrades to the restrooms, new ceiling and lights and the addition of barn doors.
6. **North Meridian Road Park**: Upgraded and replaced some playground features and replaced drinking fountain.
7. **Marshall Park**: Installed a new accessible playground was installed; swing set received new paint and swings; native plants were installed to help absorb water in an area that holds water; and resurfaced parking lot and basketball court.
8. **Cedar Bend Heights**: Upgraded and replaced some playground features.

9. **Orlando Park**: Upgraded and replaced some playground features.
10. **Marketplace on the Green**: Installed AED and installed additional permanent tables and chairs.
11. **Historical Village**: Planted a memorial tree and installed a plaque to honor the George & Diane Grettenberger family; the chapel received ceiling repairs, new roof, addition of gutters and porch repairs; siding repairs and new paint on the Barn and Corn Crib; and brick repairs and ceiling repairs in the General Store.
12. **Ferguson Park**: Upgraded and replaced some playground features.
13. **Hillbrook Park**: Upgraded and replaced some playground features and replaced the drinking fountain.
14. **Towar Park/Snell-Towar Recreation Center**: Upgraded and replaced some playground features and upgraded outdoor lights in the park and around the building to LED.
15. **Central Park South**: Installed split rail fence for wetland buffer project.
16. **Towner Road Park**: East baseball field were resized and resurfaced; and upgraded drainage system on the east baseball field.
17. **Ted Black Woods**: Redesigned and resurfaced the parking lot.

<u>2025</u>

1. **Ottawa Hills Park**: Replaced the playground.
2. **Indian Hills Park**: Planted three Michigan native flowering trees.
3. **Forest Hills Park**: Restored area by the drain with native plantings.
4. **Marketplace on the Green**: Installed pole gates on the ring road for traffic control; received and installed a donated ASD Communication Sign; and installed murals on the restroom building.
5. **Central Park**: Installed murals on the front of the pavilion; and additional handicap parking spaces in front of the pavilion added.
6. **Hartrick Park**: Received and installed a new bike repair station.
7. **Harris Nature Center**: Received and installed river trail sign.
8. **Towner Road Park**: The west baseball field was resized and resurfaced; installed two new accessible playgrounds; and installed eco-mats at the bottom of the stairs on the soccer fields to help with drainage.

<u>2026</u>

1. **Harris Nature Center**: Upgraded parking lot lights to Dark Sky friendly and installed floating kayak/canoe launch.
2. **Hillbrook Park:** Provided preventative maintenance and paint on courts.
3. **Towner Road Park**: Provided preventative maintenance and painting on courts.
4. **Central Park South**: Resurfaced the parking lot.
5. **North Meridian Road Park**: Resurfaced the parking lot.
6. **Harris Nature Center**: Received and installed river trail sign; and built new enclosure for injured birds.
7. **Nancy Moore Park**: Upgrade pavilion and restrooms.
8. **Small Dog Park**: Constructed a shelter and accessible walk to the shelter.
9. **Meridian Historical Village**: Cleaned and sealed roof on Tollgate House; and painted Tollgate House

<u>Parkland Additions</u>

1. 2+ acres of parkland at 5280 Okemos Road in Haslett, Michigan were added to the park system since 2019. The land was purchased with Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant funds and will be developed as a regional pedestrian/bicycle pathway trailhead in 2027.

Recreation Programming

Recreation programming in Meridian Township provides numerous opportunities to build partnerships with local businesses, service organizations, neighboring communities, schools, and other community partners. These partnerships, along with volunteer opportunities and program participation, help strengthen community connections and increase engagement with the Township's 933-acre park system.

Meridian Township offers a diverse range of recreational programs, activities, and special events throughout the year to meet the changing needs and interests of residents of all ages, from youth to seniors. Programs are offered during all seasons and include opportunities for active recreation, social engagement, education, outdoor experiences, and community connection.
The Department recognizes the importance of providing recreational opportunities that are accessible to a broad range of residents. Some youth programs are offered at no cost or with reduced fees through grant assistance and community partnerships, helping remove financial barriers and reach a broader segment of the community. Youth recreation programs emphasize positive youth development and provide opportunities for young people to develop healthy, active lifestyles, build relationships, and engage in their community.

The Township's *Prime Meridian* magazine and the monthly *Playbook* provides residents with information about Parks and Recreation programs, activities, facilities, and community events. Program information is distributed in print and online and is also available through the Meridian Township website. The Department uses a variety of communication methods to promote programs and events, including social media, press releases, the Township website, email communications, and direct outreach to current and former participants.

Online registration and digital communication have expanded the Department's ability to provide convenient access to program information and registration services. The Department continues to evaluate and improve its communication and registration methods to ensure residents can easily learn about and participate in available programs.

The following list provides a sample of the many programs, activities, events, and community initiatives offered or supported throughout the year by the Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Department.

Recreation Programs, Events, Enrichment, Volunteer Events

Youth Sports & Leisure: *Sporties for Shorties Soccer, Flag Football, Basketball*, *Softball*. *Kickball*, *Baseball*, *Tee-ball*, *Rugby Clinics*, *Nature Summer Camps*, *Chess Club*

Adult Recreation & Leisure: *Sand Volleyball, Adult Softball, Walking/Hiking/Biking, 50+ Fitness Workout,* Meridian Senior Center, *Various Fitness Classes (Pilates, yoga, etc.)*

Family Recreation & Leisure*: Halloween Adventures Sledding, Ice Skating, Celebrate Meridian, Meridian Pride Summer Concerts at Marketplace, Christmas in the Village, Heritage Fest, Meridian Farmers' Market, Dog Park Parties, 5-K Races*

Harris Nature Center Programs

Youth Nature Programs: *School programs to enhance curriculum*, *Summer Day Camp Nature for Toddlers Chipmunk, Story Time*, *Night out in Nature*, *Scout Badge Workshops*, *Volunteer opportunities*

Family Nature Programs: *Sensory Friendly Nights, Campfire Programs, Guided Walks, Dogs and Coffee guided walks, Snowshoe Rentals,* ***Adult Enrichment****, Gardening with Native Plants Class, Native Plant Sale, Edible Plant educational walks, Wildflower Walks, Wine in the Woods, Volunteer opportunities*

Deer Management Program Information

To help manage the overabundant white-tailed deer population within Meridian Township, a highly managed harvest is conducted annually on select Township properties during the regular archery season.

The program began in 2011 in response to increasing concerns from residents regarding deer-related impacts throughout the community. These concerns included damage to landscaping and vegetation, an increase in reported vehicle-deer collisions, potential public health and safety concerns, and impacts to the ecological balance of natural areas.

In response, Meridian Township developed a Deer Management Plan establishing a structured and carefully managed program for harvesting white-tailed deer on selected Township- and County-owned properties. The program is intended to help maintain a healthier balance between the deer population and the available habitat while reducing conflicts between deer and the community. All parks and natural areas remain open to the public during the managed harvest. However, participation in the harvest is not open to the public. Access to Township properties for this purpose is limited to approved hunters who meet established qualifications and demonstrate the necessary experience and competency for safe bow hunting.

Township staff works closely with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to monitor conditions, evaluate the effectiveness of the program, and implement management practices that are appropriate for Meridian Township. Hunting locations are selected based on factors including property characteristics, deer activity, surrounding land uses, public safety, and the practicality of conducting a controlled bow-hunting program.

While the primary purpose of the program is deer population management, the program also provides an opportunity for responsible outdoor recreation and connects qualified participants with Michigan's hunting heritage and natural resources.

Other Public Recreation Sites

Public School Facilities

Meridian Township residents have a variety of open space and facilities owned by local school districts. The schools and the township cooperate in programming and facility usage. Several schools provide restrooms that are accessible to the public from the outside during night and weekend events.

Haslett Public School Sites

Haslett School District has six parcels of land that contain three elementary schools, a middle school, a high school, administrative buildings, open space and natural areas. A brief description of each of the Haslett Public School sites follows.

1. **Haslett Middle School:** 1535 Franklin Street, *2 Gymnasiums, Varsity Softball Field, 2 Outdoor Basketball Courts, 2 Youth softball/baseball fields*
2. **Haslett High School:** 5450 Marsh Road, *2 Gymnasiums, Indoor Community Pool 2 Tennis Courts Lighted Football Field Track*
3. **Haslett Community Education:** 1590 Franklin Street, *Multi-Use Room Youth Baseball Field Varsity Soccer Field Trails,* Lacrosse/Football Field Varsity Baseball Field, *Gymnasium (half-court basketball) used for activities other than basketball*
4. **Murphy Elementary School:** 1875 Lake Lansing Road, *Gymnasium Playground Equipment, Outdoor Basketball Court,* Outdoor Open Play Field
5. **Vera Ralya Elementary School:** 5645 School Street, *Gymnasium Playground Equipment*, *Outdoor Basketball Courts Youth Baseball Field, Soccer Field*
6. **Wilkshire Early Childhood Center:** 5750 Academic Way, *Playground Equipment*

Okemos Public School Sites

Okemos Public School District has ten parcels of land, nine of which are currently developed. They are as follows:

1. **Bennett Woods Elementary:** 2650 Bennett Road, *Gymnasium, Outdoor Basketball Courts, 1 Baseball Field, 2 Soccer Fields*
2. **Central Elementary School:** 4406 N. Okemos Road, *Gymnasium, Outdoor Basketball Court, Playground Equipment 2 Soccer Fields*
3. **Chippewa Middle School: 4000 N. Okemos Road**, L*ocation of Meridian Senior Center, 2 Gymnasiums,9 Tennis Courts*
4. **Cornell Elementary School:** 4371 Cornell Road
5. **Edgewood Elementary School** *(Closed in 2003-now open for Okemos Community Education offices and childcare),* 1826 Osage Drive, *Gymnasium, Outdoor Basketball Courts Small Pavilion, Small Sledding Hill Hiking Trails, Playground Equipment 3 Soccer Fields*
6. **Hiawatha Elementary School:** 1900 Jolly Road, *Gymnasium, Outdoor Basketball Courts Playground Equipment, 2 Soccer Fields Small Sledding Hill*
7. **Kinawa Middle School:** 1900 Kinawa Drive, *Gymnasium Indoor Pool 3Tennis Courts 3 Softball Fields, 3 Soccer Fields, Pond and Stream Playground Equipment Cross-Country Trail Weight Room*
8. **Okemos High School:** 2800 Jolly Road, *2 Gymnasiums Indoor Pool, 12 Tennis Courts, 2 Practice Sport Fields Indoor Track, Lighted Football Field Track, 2 Softball/Baseball Field Wetland, Nature Trail Wrestling Room, Outdoor Basketball Courts Playground Equipment, 3 Soccer Fields*
9. **Wardcliff Elementary School:** 5150 Wardcliff Drive, closed in 2009. The athletic fields are used by Okemos Soccer Club.

East Lansing Public School Site: East Lansing Public School District has one elementary school in Meridian Township.

1. **Donley Elementary:** 2961 E. Lake Lansing Road, *Gymnasium, Outdoor Basketball Courts, Playground Equipment, Softball Field, Soccer/Lacrosse Field*

Community Education Programs

Meridian Township residents are also served with recreational and enrichment opportunities offered by Okemos and Haslett Community Education Departments. Meridian Township works in partnership with these organizations to provide programs and facilities with minimal duplication of services. Examples of programs offered including childcare, music, arts & crafts, cooking, swimming adult fitness and wrestling.

Regional Parks and Facilities

Lake Lansing County Parks North and South (2 parks totaling 563 Acres)
Although Lake Lansing North and South are not Township parks, it is important to acknowledge them because they serve as **regional parks** and are located within the limits of Meridian Township. These parks, and the associated boat launch, are owned and operated by Ingham County Parks. Lake Lansing Park North is a 531-acre natural area park in Haslett. Access to the park is provided on the north side of Lake Drive. The park contains ten miles of trails, three picnic shelters, two public restroom buildings and picnic areas and softball diamond. A public boat launch is located on the north side of the lake-on-Lake Drive. A total of 120-acres were added to Lake Lansing North Park in 2010 with assistance from the Meridian Township Land Preservation Program.

Lake Lansing Park South is a 30-acre County Park and contains the only public bathing beach in Meridian Township. It is in Haslett on the northeast corner of Marsh and Lake Lansing Roads. In addition to the beach, offers a community band shell, bath house, beach, multi-purpose dock, summer snack bar, a playground at the beach, picnic grounds and three shelters.

Hawk Island Park (100 Acres)

Hawk Island is a county park in South Lansing on Cavanaugh Road, ¼ mile west of Aurelius, adjacent to and south of Lansing's Scott Woods Park. This 100-acre parcel which includes a 35-acre lake was purchased in January 1994. Amenities include a beach, splash pad, bathhouse and concession building, restrooms, six shelters, picnic areas, boat rental, playground, volleyball courts, paved trail around the lake, sledding hill and 17-acre dog park (owned by the City of Lansing and maintained by Ingham County Parks).

Potter Park Zoo (102 acres)
The Zoo, located in the city of Lansing, encompasses over 20 acres and features more than 500 individual animals representing approximately 160 different species. Through education, conservation, research and recreation, Potter Park Zoo provides a wonderfully wild experience for students and families. In 2006, a Potter Park Zoo Millage was passed, providing funding from Ingham County residents. In July 2007, the Zoo officially became an Ingham County managed facility. Although the ownership of the Zoo is in the city of Lansing, passage of a county-wide Zoo Millage put both the funding and management of the zoo to Ingham County Parks. The five-year, 0.5-mill levy (renewed for 2027 and ends in 2032) generates roughly $5.1 million a year to support Potter Park and the 20-acre zoo that bears its name on South Pennsylvania Avenue in Lansing.

Rose Lake State Wildlife Area, State of Michigan (4,140 acres)
Rose Lake State Wildlife Area is in Bath and Woodhull Townships. The research area is operated by MDNR and contains Rose Lake, Potter Lake and a portion of Mud Lake. Existing facilities provide activities such as hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, bird watching and nature observation. Most of the facilities provide limited access. Parking and roadways are around the perimeter with facilities located in the middle.

Michigan State University
Meridian Township residents can take advantage of the many park and recreational facilities on the Michigan State University Campus in East Lansing. These facilities include University Club, Munn Arena, Breslin Center, Museums, Children's Garden, Beal Gardens, Trails, Observatory, and the Wharton Performing Arts Center. These facilities provide residents with access to world-class cultural, sports, education and entertainment events and programs.

City of East Lansing
Meridian Township residents also utilize parks and recreation facilities owned and operated by the City of East Lansing. These facilities include Hannah Community Center, East Lansing Soccer Complex, Softball Complex, Patriarche Park and the Aquatics Center and adjacent 1.5-acre dog park.

Quasi-Public Recreation Facilities

Quasi-public sites in Meridian Township serve community members but are not publicly owned. Most of these are churches, private schools, or public utilities. Most have limited open space for future development. Quasi-public sites provide a very important function to the community. These sites, when located in neighborhoods, can provide space for active or passive recreation. A few of the sites have sports fields that are used by a variety of sport leagues, including baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, and football. These open areas can also be utilized as connections to Township parks, helping to create greenways throughout the community.

Several quasi-public sites have allowed limited, responsible use of their land. The Department of Parks and Recreation continues to work with these landowners to increase public access. Quasi-public sites can complement public lands within the community and "stretch" the availability of publicly owned facilities. Therefore, it is important for the Township to maintain an inventory of these sites, some of which may be available for purchase in the future.

Parkwood YMCA

This facility is the local branch of the YMCA of Lansing. It is located on the north side of Haslett Road on 5 ½ acres of land, between Park Lake and Okemos Roads. YMCA program offerings include youth sports, progressive swim lessons, health and fitness classes and assorted youth and camp activities.

Facilities offered at the YMCA include a 25-yard heated indoor swimming pool, indoor track with fitness classes held on the infield, five multi-use sport courts (racquetball, basketball, etc.), gymnastics and kids gym area, cardio-fitness center, Nautilus and free weight room and locker rooms. In addition, an outdoor sports slab, sand volleyball court, athletic field and a playground are located on the grounds. The YMCA is a non-profit membership organization, but all programs are open to the public.

Hope Soccer Complex

The Kenneth A. Hope Soccer Complex is a 30-acre premier complex with six playing fields that opened in September of 2000. It has been designed and developed to meet the growing need for quality fields for the Greater Lansing area soccer and lacrosse enthusiasts and tournament players statewide. This complex is located on Aurelius Road in South Lansing and is now under a private contractor for operation and maintenance.

Biggby Coffee Ice Cube East Lansing

This is a full-service ice arena located on Hannah Boulevard adjacent to the Michigan Athletic Club. It opened in 1999 and contains two ice rinks, locker rooms, private party space, skate rental area, concessions, and Impact Sports Performance training facility. Program offerings include public skating, hockey programs, instructional programs, and figure skating programs. This is the only ice facility in Meridian Township.

Fitness Clubs

*Michigan Athletic Club***,** *Court One East Athletic, Go Workout, State of Fitness, Anytime Fitness, Fitness Together, Snap Fitness, Jet Boxing & Fitness***,** *Planet Fitness, Club Pilates, Impact Sports Performance, East Lansing Crossfit* **,** *Barre & Company, Yoga Connect Haslett, Pure Method Fitness, Crunch Fitness, Powerhouse Gym East Lansing, F45 Training East Lansing*

Cultural Arts

*Wharton Center for Performing Arts***,** *Williamston Theater, Rahula Performing Arts Center***,** *Happendance***,** *School of Rock*

Golf Courses

Meridian Sun (18) Lake O' the Hills (9) College Fields (18), Indian Hills (9), X-Golf Lansing (Indoor Simulator)*, 24/7 Golf (Indoor Simulator)*

Trails, Pathways & Water Trails

Description of Trails in Meridian Township

Meridian Township provides a park approximately 2,000 steps (on your pedometer) closer to a healthier lifestyle. With 933 acres of parkland, with 20 miles of natural park trails, and approximately 90 miles of paved pedestrian and bicycle pathways, we have numerous opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy getting to their destination of choice along the Trails of Meridian. Trails and Pathways are funded through the Park Millage and Pedestrian/Bicycle Pathway millage. The pathway system is maintained by the Township's Parks and Grounds Maintenance Staff.

Ingham County Trail Information

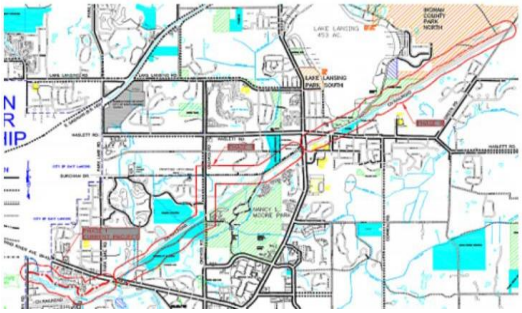
In November 2014, Ingham County voters approved a new 0.5 mill property tax millage to support the maintenance and development of a countywide regional trails and parks system. The millage was renewed by voters in 2020 and 2026. The overall goal of the Ingham County Regional Trails and Parks Millage Fund is to create and maintain a sustainable countywide system of recreation trails and adjacent parks within Ingham County.

Funds must be matched by the local community with their own funds, or in-kind services, or funds obtained from other sources such as state, federal or private grants. Eligible projects must fit the following categories: new construction; repair, rehabilitation, or long-term maintenance. Use of the millage revenue has also been used in recent years to provide funding for a new regional effort to make the Red Cedar River and Grand River navigable waterway trails.

Since 2014, Meridian Township has been awarded 16 Ingham County Trails and Parks Millage grants totaling $6,350,000. Meridian Township also secured a $1.7 million federal TAP grant and a $300,000 Natural Resources Trust Fund grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to:

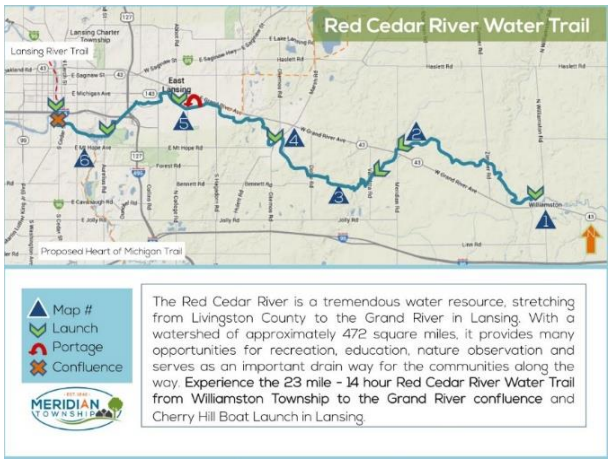
1. Build Phase I of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail from Hagadorn Road/Shaw Lane to Grand River Avenue/Park Lake Road.
2. Build Phase II of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail from Grand River Avenue/Campus Hill Drive to Okemos Road/Gaylord C. Smith Court.
3. Widen the existing pathway from Okemos Road/Gaylord C Smith Court to the Inter Urban Pathway as part of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail.
4. Build a new 10' wide pathway along Shaw Street to complete the connection from MSU Campus to Lake Lansing Park South.
5. To build Phase III of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail from Haslett Road to Green Road, which is currently scheduled to be constructed between 2026 and 2028. This trail will make the connection between MSU Campus and Lake Lansing Park North.
6. Construct a new boardwalk over the wetlands between Central Park Drive and Gaylord C Smith Court on the east side of Okemos Road.
7. Replace the Old Raby Road Culvert under the off-road trail that connects the Wildflower Estates neighborhood to the Inter Urban Pathway.
8. Repave the Inter Urban Pathway.
9. Repave the pathways in Meridian Township's Central Park, Central Park South, and Nancy Moore Park.
10. Repave the Hatrick/Ronald J. Styka Memorial Trail.

The MSU to Lake Lansing Trail has been talked about in concept for decades. In the 2000s, the Township and County secured a grant from the Natural Resources Trust Fund and a federal TAP grant to acquire the land and construct this regional trail. This earlier effort ultimately proved unsuccessful due to several factors, including the inability to secure the necessary easements. That is why it is more remarkable that Phases I and II of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail were constructed from 2022-2024.



Red Cedar Water Trail Information

In 2014, Meridian Township Parks and Recreation developed a water trail map to help to begin the establishment of a designated water trail along the Red Cedar River. A water trail (or blue trail) is a waterway adopted by a local community that is dedicated to improving family-friendly recreation opportunities such as fishing, boating, wildlife watching, and education about conserving land and water resources. Just as hiking trails are designed to help people explore the land, water trails help people discover rivers.



The Red Cedar River is a tremendous resource for outdoor enthusiasts throughout Mid-Michigan. Our water trail map provides information for paddlers to experience 23 miles of the Red Cedar River and maps the area from Williamston to the Grand River confluence at River Street Park / Sweeney's Landing in Lansing. The map highlights the locations of launches, portage areas, and local amenities such as restrooms and picnic areas along the route.

Our parks and recreation community survey revealed that residents are very interested in recreational paddling, fishing, and river access areas and the water trail plan helps provide guidance for the development of additional river access improvements and other amenities along the Red Cedar River.

The water trail map provides information for paddlers to experience 23 miles of the Red Cedar River, highlighting the stretch from Williamston to the Grand River confluence in Lansing. Highlights include the locations of launches, portage areas, and local amenities such as restrooms and picnic areas along the route. Many residents are already enjoying the recently completed canoe launch on the east side of Van Atta Road near the Harris Nature Center. The structure is regularly utilized for fishing, launching kayaks and canoes, and as an outdoor classroom area for Harris Nature Center day campers who are learning about the outdoors. Plans include features such as additional launches, pavilions, signs, and restrooms within our parks along the river. Many park visitors enjoy the Red Cedar for its fishing and paddling opportunities. In fall the river offers spectacular foliage viewing opportunities.

Meridian Township has partnered with Williamstown Township and the City of Williamston to improve the navigability and ecological health of the Red Cedar River. Through this partnership, the municipalities were awarded a conditional $500,000 grant from Ingham County Parks to remove woody debris and obstructions from the river. The grant was contingent upon the renewal of the Ingham County Parks millage in August 2026. Following the successful renewal of the millage through 2031, Meridian Township anticipates receiving its portion of the grant funding in 2028.

Recognizing the importance of maintaining the momentum of river-clearing efforts and based on the progress made by the partner municipalities in 2024, the municipalities requested $100,000 in interim funding to continue the work while awaiting the larger grant award. The $100,000 in interim funding was awarded to Meridian Township during the 2025–2026 fiscal year.

To date, Meridian Township, Williamstown Township, and the City of Williamston have committed various municipal funds toward the project to support ongoing river-clearing efforts. These investments have allowed the municipalities to continue addressing woody debris and improving conditions along the Red Cedar River while working toward a longer-term, sustainable funding strategy.

Land Preservation Program

Meridian Township's Land Preservation Program was established in 2000 to acquire, preserve, and protect natural areas throughout the Township that have unique or special natural features. Now the gift of permanence and the knowledge of those features will always be available for current and future generations to visit, appreciate, and enjoy.

The Land Preservation Program is supported by a township millage, passed by township residents in November 2000. 959 acres of the township's most beautiful, scenic and natural lands have been acquired through twenty-five (25) total properties comprised of forty-three (43) acquisitions. The original goal of the program set in 2000 was to acquire 600 acres, or 10% of available land.
Stewardship and land management programs for each individual parcel are currently being developed. The management plans outline the stewardship activities necessary to protect or restore the site.

Properties come into the program through fee simple purchase, donation, or a combination of the two. The Land Preservation Advisory Board continues to seek ecologically valuable woodlands, wetlands, and other green and open spaces that will provide a lasting benefit to our community.

Land Preserves: 25
Acquisitions: 45
Acres of Current Land Preserves: 959 acres
The original goal of the program set in 2000 was to acquire 600 acres, or 10% of identified available land; the Land Preservation Program is currently at 16.13%
Total acquisition costs = $9,559,708

Land Preserve Inventory

1. **Davis-Foster Preserve | 5120 Van Atta Road**
   - Area: 108.90 acres (2 parcels)
   - Year Acquired: 2006
   - Purchase Price: $1,650,000
   - Description: The Davis-Foster Preserve is a former farm; riparian and lowland hardwoods, shrub-scrub and emergent wetlands, and savannah grasslands and woodlands. The land has a historical barn that is over 100 years old still standing that was once part of the Davis family agricultural homestead. This preserve is good for birdwatching with reports of the rare Henslow's sparrow, Grasshopper sparrow, Woodcock, and several other species.
2. **Foster-Crouse Preserve | 250 Newman Road**
   - Area: 18.08 acres
   - Year Acquired: 2002
   - Purchase Price: Donation
   - Description: The Foster-Crouse Preserve is a mix of dry-mesic forest, wet meadow/emergent wetland, abandoned field, forested wetland, scrub-shrub wetland, and a disturbed second growth forest. The land was used historically for livestock grazing and logging. This preserve was the founding property for the Land Preservation Program and donated by 2 families: Richard and Gretchen Foster and Edward and Patricia Crouse in 2002.

3. **Hubbel Preserve | 5921 Okemos Road**
   - Area: 57.66 acres
   - Year Acquired: 2003
   - Purchase Price: Donation

- Description: The Hubbel Preserve is just 50 acres of 9 different natural communities which include emergent marsh, second-growth upland forest, forested wetland, emergent wetland, mixed emergent and scrub-shrub wetland, wet meadow, and mature upland forest. The land was historically used for agricultural crops and pasture. This preserve provides habitat for many different types of amphibians, birds, and mammals. It runs alongside Central Meridian Uplands and is only separated by the railroad crossing on Okemos Road.

4. **Kuzma Preserve | 5770 Carlton Street**
   - Area: 0.32 acres
   - Year Acquired: 2003
   - Purchase Price: Donation
   - Description: The Kuzma Preserve is 0.32 acres of disturbed uplands and emergent marsh. This land was historically donated to the Land Preservation Program by the Judy A. Kuzma Trust. Kuzma is one of the smallest preserves in the township but acts as an important buffer for storm runoff into the Lake Lansing watershed. This wetland has been used by Northern Pike for spawning as well as a resting spot for rare migratory waterfowl.

5. **Lake Lansing North Preserve | 1000 Wild Ginger Trail**
   - Area: 120 acres (3 parcels)
   - Year Acquired: 2010
   - Purchase Price: $675,000 (Township contribution toward DNRE Grant Purchase, approx. $1.2 million)
   - Description: The Lake Lansing North Preserve is 117 acres of mixed deciduous upland and lowland forest and forested wetlands that is a partnership between the Ingham County Parks and Meridian Township Land Preservation Program. The Township purchased the land as a Conservation Easement and works closely with Ingham County to increase stewardship efforts such as invasive removal, and controlled burns to regenerate oaks and rare native woodland flowers. The land has a historical pine stand that was planted by the Citizen Conservation Corp which was an initiative started under Franklin D. Roosevelt. This preserve is one of the most biologically diverse natural areas in the Township.

6. **Newman Equities Preserve | 5025 Central Park Drive**
   - Area: 13.41 acres
   - Year Acquired: 2004
   - Purchase Price: Donation
   - Description: The Newman Equities Preserve is 13.41 acres comprised of two natural communities which include a mixed emergent scrub-shrub wetland, and an upland forest. The land was historically donated to preserve a natural area within a commercially heavy portion of the township. This preserve is near several major roads making it easy to access nature in an urban setting. The trees along the roadway provide a serene break from the hustle and bustle of Central Park Drive.

7. **Towar Woods | 2948 Margate Lane**
   - Area: 124.8 acres (10 parcels)
   - Year Acquired: 2004 through 2008
   - Purchase Price: TOTAL $2,351,561:
   - Description: The Towar Woods Preserve is almost 125 acres of seven natural communities which include upland fields/scrub, wetland forests, regrowth forests, mature upland forests, logged upland forests, wetland fields/scrub, and oak groves. The land has been historically logged in some areas, but mature upland forests remain intact, containing trees over 200 years old. This preserve has several areas with high floristic and wildlife quality and is home to a native tree plantation. Native trees species have been planted and cared for by dedicated neighbors who are helping to create a diverse forest for future generations.

8. **Pike Crossing Preserve | 5763 Carlton Street**
   - Area: 5.5 acres (2 parcels)
   - Purchase Price: $25,000 + $2,507 (winter tax bill) = $27,507

- Description: The Pike Crossing Preserve 5.2 acres comprised of two natural communities of forest and wet meadow. This small tract of land acts as a valuable buffer for the Lake Lansing watershed and mitigates runoff in conjunction with the Kuzma Preserve and Spengler Marsh nearby. The land was historically an important holding site for agricultural products being loaded onto the nearby train for railroad transport. Northern Pike has been witnessed spawning at this preserve.

9. **Okemos Road Preserve | 5190 Okemos Road**
   - Area: 60.22 acres (2 parcels)
   - Year Acquired: 2005
   - Purchase Price: Partial Donation, $80,000
   - Description: The Okemos Road Preserve is just over 60 acres of 5 different natural communities which include mature upland forest, regrowth upland forest, open grass fields, forested wetland, and open marsh wetlands. The land was historically an agricultural site with areas that had been cultivated and used as pasture. This preserve includes a unique glacial mound and foundation from an old barn.
10. **Sower Woods Preserve | 2351 Sower Boulevard**
   - Area: 17.97 (5 parcels)
   - Year Acquired: 2005 through 2008
   - Purchase Price: TOTAL $240,242: 5.43 ac. $231,000 (2005)
     - 1.36 ac. $4,261 (2002)
     - 5.166 ac. $4,261 (2002)
     - 4.038 ac. $720 (2008)
     - 1.77 ac. $4,261 (2002)
   - Description: The Sower Woods Preserve is nearly 18 acres of seven natural communities which include mature wetland forest, regrowth wetland forest, upland forest, emergent wetland, scrub-shrub wetland, open water, and meadow. The land was historically part of a 100-year-old farm owned by Michigan State University Sociology Professor Dr. Christopher and his wife Virginia Judy Sower. It is home to one of the largest red oaks that date back to before the European settlers arrived. This preserve contains a diversity of native plants, many of which are planted and cared for by dedicated neighbors.

11. **Cornell Wetland Preserve | 5227 Cornell Road**
   - Area: 21.26 acres
   - Year Acquired: 2006
   - Purchase Price: $206,000
   - Description: The Cornell Wetland Preserve is just over 22 acres of five natural communities which include emergent wetland, upland field and scrub, regrowth forest, forested wetland, and upland forest. The land was historically purchased as part of the Greenspace Plan as a Priority Conservation Corridor. This preserve has some native lowland hardwoods such as elm, ash, and cottonwood trees, some of which turn into snags and provide valuable food and habitat for woodpeckers and hawks. This valuable wetland provides the benefit of storing flood water, decreasing flood damage and providing water during drought.

12. **Heron Creek Preserve | 2760 Sophiea Parkway**
   - Area: 91 acres (4 parcels)
   - Purchase Price: TOTAL = $1,460,000
     - A: $157,161
     - B: $216,369
     - C: $733,058
     - D: $193,412
     - 14-acre Serafine addition: $160,000 (2017)
   - Description: The Heron Creek Preserve has 91 acres of upland forest, emergent wetland, old field/scrub, and prairie grassland. The southwestern edge of the preserve is home to historic forest with large oak and maple trees and a pair of Barred Owls. Historically used for agriculture and mining of sand, a large portion of the preserve is disturbed with

large, man-made hills. A Great Blue Heron rookery (nesting site) can be observed when looking at the wetland located to the NW.

- Description: The Serafine addition to Southwest Meridian Uplands Preserve (currently known as the Heron Creek Preserve) is13.5 acres of rolling hills that are primarily upland field/scrubs with young successional upland forest bordering the edges. The land was historically used as an agricultural field primarily to produce hay. Many native plant species have been planted by dedicated neighbors and can be viewed along Mt. Hope Road and the central portion of the preserve. Serafine connects to Southwest Meridian Uplands Preserve: both are home to Herron Creek.

13. **Sumbal Preserve | 4538 Okemos Road**
    - Area: 20.31 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2004
    - Purchase Price: Donation
    - Description: The Sumbal Preserve is nearly 20 acres of two natural communities which include an upland forest and a forested wetland. The land has historic floodplain features including a "back swamp" and a "natural levee" which helps mitigate flooding from the Red Cedar River. This preserve is home to some rare and threatened species, such as the Green Dragon plant.

14. **Red Cedar Glen Preserve | 1389 Sylvan Glen Drive**
    - Area: 14.91 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2006
    - Purchase Price: $425,000
    - Description: The Red Cedar Glen Preserve is nearly 15 acres of six natural communities which include upland field/scrubs, floodplain forest, wetland forest/streams, regrowth forest, pine forest, and mature upland forest. Historically, small portions of the preserve were used for agriculture, but you can still find trees that date back to the 1800s. This preserve offers an opportunity for viewing diverse types of spring ephemerals, such as spring beauty and blood root. Rare bluestem goldenrods can be found growing here in the late summer and fall.

15. **Towner Wetland Preserve | 1941 Towner Road**
    - Area: 14.96 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2006
    - Purchase Price: $207,645
    - Description: The Towner Wetland Preserve is 15 acres of four natural communities which include upland field and shrub, scrub-shrub wetland, emergent wetland, and upland forest. The land has some portions that were historically deforested and used for agriculture and grazing but some of the original flora and fauna is still present. These areas are emergent wetland that is an authentic representation of the natural remnant habitat and is currently undergoing an ecological inventory and a search for rare species. This preserve is located adjacent to Towner Road Park and brings a natural and peaceful element to the recreational activities.

16. **Inter-Urban Wetland Preserve | 1727 Haslett Road**
    - Area: 24.78 acres (2 parcels)
    - Year Acquired: 2003-2004
    - Purchase Price: TOTAL= $93,000 [13.36 ac. ($50,000); 11.38 ac. ($43,000)]
    - Description: The Inter-Urban Wetland Preserve is just shy of 25 acres and is comprised of five natural communities: upland forest, forested wetland, scrub-shrub wetland, wet meadow, and open water wetland. The land was historically much drier but with urbanization water runoff has been directed to this area creating wetland communities. With proximity to the Inter-Urban Pathway, this preserve makes it easy to access nature in an urban setting. Sandhill cranes, and red-tailed hawks are frequent visitors.

17. **Red Cedar River East Preserve | 101 Grand River Avenue**
    - Howe (original preserve area)
        - Area: 9.14 acres (2 parcels)

    - Year Acquired: 2010
    - Purchase Price: $92,000
    - Description: Riparian hardwood forest
- Wangler (addition)
    - Area: 13.30 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2011
    - Purchase Price: $13,106.89 (tax- reverted property from Ingham County Land Bank)
    - Description: Adjacent to Red Cedar River, wooded, wetland, floodplain**s**
- The Red Cedar River East Preserve is 25 acres of wooded floodplain forest and riparian wetlands that run along the Red Cedar River. Historically the land was not logged, leaving behind some trees 100+ years old. This preserve has over 16 different tree species including some of the largest oak trees in the county. Explore this preserve and see if you can find one of these giants.

18. **Forest Grove Preserve | 6260 Fenwick Court**
    - Area: 25 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2010
    - Purchase Price: $400,000
    - Description: The Forest Grove Preserve is 19.92 acres primarily comprised of upland forest with pockets of small wetlands interspersed. The upland portion of the land was historically formed by a lateral moraine, or what is also referred to as an esker. This preserve's ridge is one of the highest elevations in all of Ingham County.

19. **Glacial Ridge Preserve | 2245 Saginaw Highway**
    - Area: 20.4 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2011
    - Purchase Price: $425,000
    - Description: The Glacial Ridge Preserve is just over 20 acres of forested wetland. The land was historically not logged, so many of the trees are over 100 years old. This preserve has a unique tulip poplar stand, which glows a golden yellow in the fall time. This preserve has a diverse wetland bordering Newman Road with species such as swamp rose, vervain, and common boneset.

20. **Tank Wetland Preserve**
    - Location: near Carlton and Lake Drive
    - Area: 2.51 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2016
    - Purchase Price: Donation
    - Description: The Tank Wetland Preserve is 2.25 acres comprised of two natural communities which include a scrub-shrub wetland and an emergent wetland. The land was historically donated to the Land Preservation Program by the Edward Felton Tank Revocable Trust. In conjunction with nearby preserves (Lake Lansing South & Kuzma), this preserve acts as a vital wetland buffer to Lake Lansing and is recognized in the National Wetland Inventory.

21. **Tihart Preserve (Linn Family)**
    - Location: Tihart Rd. between Cornell and Van Atta Road
    - Area: 90 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2018
    - Purchase Price: $600,000
    - Description: The Tihart (Linn) Preserve is 133.5 acres of four natural communities which include rolling uplands, emergent wetlands, old growth woodlots, and abandoned farm fields. The land was historically a mint and soybean farm that was part of the Van Atta homestead. Donated in part by the Linn family, it is currently undergoing plans for a wetland restoration, along with the planting of diverse native species. It provides a valuable

ecological corridor that nearly connects with nearby preserves, Davis-Foster and Tihart-Cornell Wetland. A pair of red-tailed hawks can be seen hunting the preserve, often perching on nearby power lines.

22. **Mandenberg Woods | 2265 Hamilton Road**
    - Area: 4 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2018
    - Purchase Price: $63,000
    - The Mandenberg Woods Preserve is just over 4 acres of primarily emergent wetland with pockets of forested wetland and upland forest. The land was historically purchased to provide a storm water buffer to the Red Cedar River that runs along the preserve's southwestern border. This preserve is near several residential areas, so it provides an opportunity to engage with nature close to home.

23. **Ponderosa | 3700 Ponderosa Drive**
    - 92 acres
    - Purchase Price: $485,100 (because we received a $514,900 MNRTF grant) – Total land value was 1.2 million
    - Year Acquired: 2018
    - Description: The Ponderosa Preserve is 97.2 acres of four natural communities which include wetland field/scrub, forested wetland, upland forest, and scrub-shrub uplands. The land was historically part of a significantly larger wetland but with recent developments the wetland areas became fragmented and only a few remain part of the100 year floodplain. This preserve hosts frequent wildlife sightings, with a known pair of Barred Owls that often call along the Northern edge of the preserve.

24. **Serafine Preserve | W. Del Mar Drive**
    - Area: 13.25 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2016
    - Purchase Price: $160,000
    - Description: The Serafine Preserve is just over 13 acres of upland deciduous woodlands, old field, and emergent wetlands adjacent to Herron Creek, which runs through the entirety of the preserve.

25. **Nemoke Preserve**
    - 12 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2018
    - Purchase price: $3,547
    - Description: The Nemoke Preserve is 14 acres comprised mainly of emergent wetland along with a small upland forest. The upland forest portion of this land was historically not logged so there are several large, mature oak trees. This preserve has some wonderful wetland plants such as plants such as sensitive fern, and vervain. Located near the Nemoke Apartments, they provide a natural scene for residents to take in.

26. **Sweetwood Oaks Preserve**
    - Area: 2.71 acres
    - Year Acquired: 2023
    - Purchase Price: $63,444
    - Description: The Sweetwood Oaks Preserve is mainly comprised of a small emergent and partly ephemeral wetland along with a small, forested area. The forested area is mostly comprised of younger white oak trees and mature white oak and maple trees. This area has most recently been vacant and is also comprised of native wetland plants such as jewelweed and sensitive fern.

Description of Stewardship and Land Management Activities

Meridian Township Land Management and Stewardship Coordination

The following is an outline of stewardship priorities and goals for Meridian Township's green space. Land management practices for each park and preserve will follow this outline as well as Meridian's Management Plan for Invasive Species.

Stewardship objectives for both parks and land preserves:

- Implementing land management on an ecosystem level to address the overall environmental health of the Township.
- Management of priority areas will improve ecosystem health, community health (physical & mental), as well as environmental outreach and education.
- Prioritization of management is continually evolving and based off species inventories of each site. Native plants, wildlife, and insect species are prioritized for invasive species management and habitat restoration.
    - Invasive species management will be applied according to the Invasive Species Adaptive Management Framework (fig. 1) following Integrative Pest Management (IPM) methods.
- Preservation and conservation of wetland sites and riparian areas is a high priority for stormwater management and flood mitigation.

Management plan creation: Management plans are currently being created by stewardship staff for priority parks and preserves that currently have the highest ecological value.

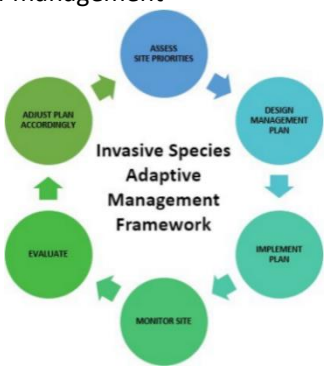
- Management plans include the following information:
    - Land use history utilizing historic vegetation data from the Michigan Natural Features Inventory, aerial photos and land use history documentation.
    - Information from Stewardship Plans created during the acquisition of the property.
    - Plant inventory lists
    - Wildlife observations
    - Past stewardship efforts
    - Current and future stewardship efforts

Site Prioritization:

- Priority management areas will have established native communities, increasing the likelihood that the area could be restored with the removal of invasive species.
- Historic vegetation maps will also be utilized to identify and map sites that have the potential to be more resilient due to their historic seed bank.
- Ongoing species inventory of both native and invasive species will aid staff in prioritization of sites and will help track success of management and ecosystem resilience.

Mapping & monitoring:

- Invasive management areas will be mapped utilizing GPS/ArcGIS for record keeping, which will aid in efficient and sound management as part of IPM practices.
- Records of management techniques & chemical information will be kept alongside maps for future evaluation.
- Volunteer opportunities for species inventory at each site will aid in monitoring the success of management
- Chemical application rates, and type of chemical will be analyzed for success and adjusted on an annual basis



Evaluation & adjustment of plans

All management plans and techniques will be evaluated on an annual basis to ensure best management practices are being implemented for each individual area. Changes will be made where necessary and may depend on numerous factors.

Education & outreach

Implement educational signage in parks & preserves, host community training workshops, & engage the community through volunteer stewardship.

Establishing Native Communities

- As invasive species are removed from targeted areas, it is important to monitor regrowth of native species and reseed areas that may need extra support.
- Volunteers and staff will collect seeds annually from Township properties to enhance local genetic diversity of native species.
- Through the Meridian Conservation Corps' Planting A Native Meridian program, residents learn about native species identification, seed collection and preservation, establishing native species in parks/preserves, and growing native species in their own yards.
- Expand educational signage about native species within parks and land preserves, and the ecosystem services they provide.
- Continue to host educational workshops, trainings, workdays and presentations on the environmental benefits of planting native species.

Prescribed Fire

Prescribed fire is an important management tool for the Township and is used for invasive species management, restoration of oak species and other fire-dependent species, and nutrient cycling. It is currently used at the following Township properties: Davis-Foster Preserve, Red Cedar Glen Preserve & Lake Lansing North Preserve. Staff plan to expand this program to include other natural areas in the future.

Description of Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory

The Meridian Township Parks, Preserves and Facilities inventory was updated using department records, the 2026 Parks, Pathways and Preserves Map, the 2026 parks amenities grid, field knowledge and observations, and information supplied by partner agencies. Parks are grouped by their primary function and service area to make the inventory easier to use. These classifications are planning categories, not mandatory acreage standards.

Park Classification Framework

Classification	Primary role	Typical local service area
Mini or pocket park	Small site serving a specialized or nearby neighborhood need	Approximately a 5-minute walk
Neighborhood Park	Everyday play, informal recreation, gathering, and open space	Neighborhood-scale; commonly a 10- to 15-minute walk
Community Park	Multiple active and passive facilities serving the broader Township	Community-wide
Regional Park	Large or specialized destination serving residents beyond the Township	Regional
Natural area or preserve	Conservation, habitat, trails, education, and nature-based recreation	Varies with resources and access

Accessibility Assessment

The accessibility of each park was evaluated using the Michigan Department of Natural Resources ADA Rating Scale (1 through 5). Figure 2 provides a general rating of each park according to the MDNR criteria. Efforts are constantly made toward improving accessibility in the parks.

MDNR ADA Rating Scale (1 through 5):

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.

Park Name	DNR Rating	Park Name	DNR Rating
Nancy Moore Park	3	Central Park	3
Meridian Historical Village	2	Nokomis Learning Center	3
Central Park South	3	Towner Road Park	3
Wonch Park	3	Ferguson Park	2
Harris Nature Center	3	Eastgate Park	2
Legg Park	2	Hartrick Park	3
Towar Park	2	Snell-Towar Recreation Center	3
Hillbrook Park	2	Marshall Park	3
Ted Black Woods	2	North Meridian Road Park	2
Ottaway Hills Park	2	Red Cedar Natural Area	1
Cedar Bend Heights Neighborhood Park	3	Sander Farm Preserved Nature Area	1
Forest Hills Park	1	Brattin Woods	2
Tacoma Hills Park	1	Schreiner Park	1
Orlando Park	2	Indian Hills Park	1
Lake Lansing Marsh	1	Spengler Marsh	1
Newton Road Park	2	Marketplace on the Green	5

Grant Assisted Projects

The Michigan DNR grant history report lists 32 projects: 27 closed projects, four withdrawn projects, and one active project with an executed agreement. The table below represents township grant-assisted projects. As required, the updated post-completion self-certification reports are provided as an addendum to this Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

Grant	Park	Project Description	Amount	Year
26-00335	Hillbrook Park	Acquisition and development of 15.9 acres	$35,750	1972
26-00562	Toward Gardens	Acquire .63 acres	$3,281	1975
26-00750	Marshall Neighborhood Park	Basketball court, playground, landscaping, picnic tables, backstop, tennis, shuffleboard	$9,070	1976
26-01060 R	Central Park	Park shelter, trail, plantings, landscaping, signage	$5,035	1978
26-01060 S	Marshall Park	Parking lot, bollards, landscaping & site improvements	$4,595	1978
26-01060 T	Towar Recreation Area	Acquisition of .66 acres	$9,066	1978
26-01101	Legg Park	Acquisition of 55 acres through donation for public outdoor recreation	$68,888	1980
TF628	Eastgate Park	Acquisition of 70 acres of land with 4,650 feet of Red Cedar River frontage	$125,000	1982
26-01413	Central Park Phase II	Site development, landscaping, playground, athletic equipment, signs, trails	$9,182	1985
TF1078	Harris Nature Center	Acquisition of 60.5 acres of land along the south bank of the Red Cedar River including 2,980 feet of river frontage	$180,000	1985
26-01426	Meridian Riverfront Park	Gravel road, landscaping, entrance sign, picnic area, tables, grills, signage	$22,525	1986
TF87-212	Central Park North	Acquisition of 40 acres contiguous to existing 234-acre Central Park	$90,000	1987
BF89-437	Central Park North	Access road, athletic fields, basketball courts, landscaping, park & sports equipment, pavilion, picnic areas, signage and walkways	$115,500	1989
BF91-315	Central Park North Phase II	Baseball field fixtures, interpretive signs, natural trails and bridges, restrooms, sewer extension, electrical work	$47,000	1991
TF94-194	Harris Nature Center	Drinking fountain, entry drive, signage, overflow parking lot, overlook, parking, railings, rest stops and slag trail	$119,600	1994
CM99-173	Ferguson Park Renovation	Canoe launch, lawn restoration, play equipment, restroom renovation, resurface parking lot and drive, slope protection and erosion control	$150,000	1999
TF01-024	Hartrick Park Development	Accessible lookout, asphalt trails, boardwalk, entry drive and parking, ball diamonds, nature trails, pavilion/restrooms, site grading & utilities	$488,125	2001
26-01698	North Meridian Road Park	Concrete sidewalk, crossing striping, drinking fountain, restroom building, site prep, site utilities	$75,000	2009
TF09-068	Central Park Fishing Dock	Access path, fishing dock, interpretive signs, permit fees, site amenities	$30,000	2009
TF12-024	Wonch Park	2,055 linear feet of accessible asphalt pathway	$45,000	2012
TF15-0070	North Meridian Road Park	Accessible pavilion with grill and picnic tables	$50,000	2015
26-01768	Accessible Gateway Bridge and Restroom Building	Development of an accessible 14' wide gateway bridge and accessible restroom building located at Central Meridian Trail Connector	$150,000	2016
TF16-0087	Central Meridian Regional Trail Connector	Bench, bicycle fix station, bike rack, electric wheelchair charging station, boardwalk, fishing pier/dock, site amenities, signage, trail 6' wide	$272,500	2016
TF16-0088	Ponderosa Land Preserve	Acquisition of 89 acres of land	$514,900	2016
26-01791	Meridian Riverside Accessible Waterless Restroom	Access pathway 6' wide, landscaping, site amenities, restroom building	$50,000	2017
TF17-0174	Meridian Riverfront Park	Access pathway 6' wide, grill, landscaping, pavilion, picnic table, signage, site amenities and utilities	$50,000	2017
TF20-0096	MSU to Lake Lansing Acquisition	Acquisition of 1.8 acres for access and rest stop for trail users	$127,500	2020
TF21-0158	MSU to Lake Lansing Connector Trail	Boardwalk, entrance drive, fencing, landscaping, paved parking lot, signage, trail 8' wide, utilities	$300,000	2021

Description of the Planning Process

Description of the Planning Process

The 2027–2031 Parks and Recreation Master Plan addresses parks, recreation, trails, open space, and natural-resource conservation within Meridian Charter Township. The plan is prepared for the Township as a single eligible local unit of government. Regional partnerships—including work with Ingham County, neighboring municipalities, school districts, and Michigan State University—are described where they affect access, facilities, programming, trails, and natural resources.

Meridian Township prepared the 2027-2031 Parks and Recreation Master Plan using planning methods identified in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Guidelines for the Development of Community Parks and Recreation Plans. The process combined the recreation inventory, accessibility review, community and demographic characteristics, land use and natural resource information, budget and grant history, relevant Township and regional plans, and public input. Parks and Recreation staff and The Mannik & Smith Group reviewed these materials with input from the Park Commission, elected and appointed officials, Township departments, local schools, recreation partners, park users, stakeholders, and residents. The findings were used to establish goals, measurable objectives, and five-year implementation priorities.

NRPA Park Metrics Comparison

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) no longer presents a single national acreage standard that every community should meet. Its Park Metrics data provides peer benchmarks. NRPA specifically cautions that these figures describe participating agencies and are not standards. Meridian Township is compared below with agencies serving 20,000 to 49,999 residents in the 2025 NRPA Agency Performance Review.

Measure	Meridian Township	NRPA peer median	NRPA peer middle 50%
Residents per park	1,496	2,071	1,277–3,829
Park acres per 1,000 residents	20.8	10.9	5.7–17.5
Locally identified active-use acres per 1,000 residents	4.2	Not reported	Not reported

Meridian Township maintains approximately 933.36 acres across 30 park sites. Using the Census Bureau’s July 1, 2025, population estimate of 44,869, the township has about 20.8 park acres per 1,000 residents and one park per 1,496 residents. Both figures compare favorably with the NRPA peer medians. However, acreage alone does not establish service adequacy. Township estimates show that only about 190 acres are developed or otherwise suitable for active recreation; the remainder include woodlands, wetlands, floodplains, and other natural land. Land preserves are excluded from the parkland benchmark. Future decisions should therefore consider condition, accessibility, geographic distribution, programming, ecological value, and public priorities in addition to acreage.

System Planning

The system-planning approach considers Meridian Township's parks, preserves, pathways, facilities, and recreation programs as an interconnected public service system rather than as separate properties or activities. Consistent with DNR guidance, the township evaluated current conditions, community needs, levels of service, asset condition, maintenance capacity, accessibility, connectivity, environmental stewardship, funding, partnerships, and the role of other recreation providers. The park inventory and amenities information, parks and pathways mapping, grant history, budget information, surveys, public input activities, stakeholder meetings, and Park Commission discussion all informed this review.

This method supports a continuing cycle of assessment, investment, and evaluation. The township can use the plan to prioritize reinvestment in existing facilities, coordinate projects across departments and partner organizations, and align proposed improvements with available staff and funding. Progress can then be measured through the plan's five-year objectives, the capital improvement program, asset-management information, accessibility improvements, partnership activities, and annual public reporting. These measures will help the Township reassess conditions and adjust priorities as needs and resources change.

Equity-Based Planning

Equity-based planning was used to consider whether residents of different ages, abilities, incomes, backgrounds, neighborhoods, and recreational interests can access and benefit from the Township's parks and recreation system. The review considered physical accessibility, program cost, geographic access, transportation and pathway connections, the distribution and variety of recreation opportunities, and access to information. Community input reinforced the need to address mobility and accessibility barriers, improve trail navigability and park restrooms, provide opportunities for teens and older adults, offer a range of indoor and outdoor activities, and communicate more effectively with residents.

Equity and inclusion will remain implementation criteria throughout the five-year planning period. When evaluating capital projects, programs, partnerships, and communications, the Township should consider who will benefit, who may face a barrier to participation, and whether additional outreach or accommodation are needed. This approach is reflected in the plan's cross-cutting Inclusive Recreation priority and in its objectives for universal design, accessible parks and trails, safe nonmotorized connections, inclusive programming, affordable participation, and accessible public information.

Description of the Public Input Process

Description of the Public Input Process

Public input was gathered before completion of the draft plan through an online community survey, in-person input sessions, stakeholder conversations, and a Park Commission workshop. The outreach was designed to identify community priorities, test themes emerging from the survey, and involve residents and partner organizations in shaping goals and implementation priorities.

Early Public Input Activities

Date or period	Activity	Purpose
Spring–summer 2026	Online Parks and Recreation Master Plan Survey	Park and facility use, priorities, programs, stewardship, awareness, and respondent characteristics
July 9, July 30, and August 13, 2026	Public input sessions at Central Park Pavilion, Harris Nature Center, and Towner Road Park	Interactive input on barriers, facility improvements, goals, recreation opportunities, communications, and other needs
July 15, July 21, and July 22, 2026	Stakeholder meetings	Focused discussion with partners, schools, commissioners, staff, and community organizations
August 11, 2026	Park Commission workshop	Review of survey themes and discussion of goals, capital priorities, accessibility, conservation, partnerships, and communications

2026 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Survey

The township promoted an anonymous online survey through its website and community communications during spring and summer 2026. A total of 310 people participated, and individual closed-ended questions generally received between 299 and 307 responses. Because participation was voluntary and respondents were not selected through a probability sample, the results represent the views of participants and should not be treated as a statistically representative estimate of all township residents.

Survey topic	Key result
Overall system goal	55.4% ranked maintaining and improving existing parks and facilities first; natural-resource management was the next strongest overall priority.
Capital improvements	50.5% ranked improvements to existing amenities first. A permanent home for Senior Center programming and indoor recreation space also received substantial first-choice support.
Facilities and activities	Walking trails were important to 84.5% of respondents, nature trails to 74.3%, bicycle lanes and paths to 51.5%, playgrounds to 47.2%, and beach and lake facilities to 48.5%.
Programs	Children's programs received the highest "important" rating (50.8%), followed by concerts, shows and movies (44.9%), special events and senior programs (41.6% each), exercise and fitness (41.3%), and family programs (40.7%).
Stewardship	Trash removal from natural areas was important to 86.6%, invasive-species removal to 74.2%, wildlife habitat management to 69.0%, and wetland restoration to 62.1%.
Awareness	91.2% were very or somewhat aware of the department's range of services, while open comments still identified a need for clearer parks, preserves, trails, and program information.
Frequently visited destinations	Marketplace on the Green, Central Park, Nancy Moore Park, Harris Nature Center, Central Park South, and the Meridian Historical Village were among the most frequently used township destinations.

Open-Ended Survey Themes

Four questions invited narrative input: 165 respondents identified non-township parks and valued features; 218 described what they like most about Meridian Township Parks and Recreation; 182 described what they would change; and 132 offered additional considerations. Recurring themes included:

- Preserve the variety, proximity, natural character, trail network, maintenance quality, and family-oriented events that residents already value.
- Reinvest in existing assets, especially restrooms, playgrounds, ball fields, sport courts, parking, shade, drinking water, signs, and year-round comfort amenities.
- Improve trail and pathway connectivity, safe road crossings, bicycle access, wayfinding, longer routes, and links between neighborhoods, parks, schools, and regional destinations.
- Advance accessibility through paved or firm-surface routes where appropriate, accessible parking, inclusive play, universal design, and programs for residents with disabilities and older adults.
- Explore indoor and all-season recreation, a long-term home for the Senior Center, aquatics or splash-pad opportunities, teen activities, and flexible multigenerational space through partnerships and feasibility analysis.
- Continue stewardship of natural areas through invasive-species control, native plantings, wetland and wildlife-habitat management, litter removal, environmental education, and careful balancing of access with conservation.
- Improve communications so residents can more easily understand what each park or preserve offers, current trail conditions, program opportunities, construction schedules, and ways to participate.

Public Input Sessions and Stakeholder Meetings

The township advertised and hosted three evening public input sessions at geographically distributed park locations. They were on July 9, July 30 and August 13, 2026. Interactive boards asked several questions supporting the themes of the parks and recreation survey. Available written comments emphasized accessible trails, flush restrooms, indoor pickleball and gym space, teen programming, a long-term Senior Center solution, improved river access, native-species management, public art, communications, safety, and careful use of millage resources.

Three stakeholder conversations expanded on those topics. These were hosted virtually on July 15, July 21 and July 22, 2026. Participants highlighted the trail system, green space, Lake Lansing connections, Farmers' Market, Harris Nature Center, and Historical Village as defining strengths. They also identified needs for asset maintenance, wayfinding, water and shade, diverse play equipment, splash-pad and pickleball opportunities, accessibility, indoor recreation partnerships, environmental education, volunteer capacity, river access, and stronger marketing.

The August 11 Park Commission workshop reinforced the conversations around the maintenance of existing assets, accessible programs and facilities, connected park and preserve systems, conservation best practices, cultural relevance, partnerships, Senior Center planning, water quality, and storytelling about the land.

How Public Input Shaped the Plan

Public input consistently favored stewardship of current assets before major system expansion. It also supported five closely related priorities: community partnerships; park maintenance and strategic reinvestment; accessibility and connectivity; stewardship and sustainability; and communication.

Thirty-Day Review, Public Hearing, and Adoption

For the parks and recreation plan to be formally approved, it must follow the Michigan Department of Natural resources required approval process. This includes a mandatory 30-day public review, a publicly advertised and hosted public hearing, and formal adoption through resolution. Below are the final review dates, public notice documentation, summary of comments received and resulting revisions. Attached as an addendum to this plan includes the public hearing notice and certified minutes, Park Commission actions, Township Board resolution, and distribution documentation for the Ingham County and Tri-County regional planning agencies.

Required step	Status in this working draft
Minimum 30-day public review	Friday, October 9, 2026 – Monday, November 9., 2026
Public hearings	November 10, 2026, Parks & Recreation Commission
Park Commission action	November 10, 2026, recommendation to the Township Board
Township Board adoption	December 15, 2026
Distribution and MiGrants submission	Pending following adoption

Goals & Objectives

Goals & Objectives

The following goals and objectives were developed from the 2026 survey, public and stakeholder input, Park Commission discussion, staff experience, the recreation and natural-resource inventory, demographic information, related Township plans, and available funding. The goals describe desired long-term outcomes; the objectives and five-year measures provide direction for implementation and annual evaluation.

TO BE DETERMINED AND APPROVED AT THE OCTOBER 13, 2026 PARK COMMISSION MEETING

Action Program

Action Program

This section highlights a series of recommended actions that resulted from the process of preparing this Master Plan. The recommended actions are intended to guide the Park Commission and staff when making decisions regarding the priorities for the park and recreation needs of Meridian Township residents, businesses, and visitors for the next five years and beyond.
The action program was developed based upon input gathered from the community survey, public input meetings, township-wide planning efforts, demographic data, land use trends and efforts of adjacent communities. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP), developed by the Park Commission and staff for future park projects, future development projects and their associated costs (see supporting documentation). Many of the top park or facility additions identified through the process are in alignment with proposed park improvement projects in the CIP.

It is the responsibility of the Department of Parks and Recreation to provide services and programs that meet the needs of residents. The Department must be alert to the population and demographic trends in the Township and adjust accordingly. Meridian Township not only has to be aware of the aging population trend, the large population of college aged residents, but also the active children and families in the community.

2027–2031 Capital Improvement Program

The Park Commission and Parks and Recreation Department identified the following capital projects for the five-year planning period. Project timing, scope, and funding are planning estimates and may change as designs are refined, partnerships are developed, grants are pursued, and annual budgets are adopted. Public engagement and accessibility review should continue during design of individual projects.

Year	Project	Planning estimate	Potential funding
2027	Wonch Park kayak launch	$175,000	Park Millage
2027	Okemos Road regional trailhead	$499,600	MNRTF and Park Millage
2027	Nancy Moore Park play structure	$175,000	Park Millage
2027	Marketplace on the Green electrical upgrade	$75,000	Park Millage
2028	Hartrick Park parking-lot expansion	$300,000	Park Millage
2028	Marketplace on the Green sunshades	$50,000	Park Millage
2028	Marketplace on the Green restroom expansion	$100,000	Park Millage
2029	Harris Nature Center parking-lot expansion	$300,000	Park Millage
2029	Harris Nature Center flush restrooms	$200,000	Park Millage
2030	Towner Road and Hillbrook pickleball-court replacement	$500,000	Park Millage
2031	Hillbrook Park restrooms	$250,000	Park Millage and grants
2031	Nancy Moore Park loop trail	$500,000	Park Millage and grants
2031	Central Park splash fountain	$500,000	Park Millage and grants
2031	Meridian Riverfront Park trail improvements	$1,000,000	Park Millage and grants
2031	Wonch Park general improvements	$500,000	Park Millage and grants

Additional Considerations

Maintain and Improve Existing Parks and Facilities

The Township's existing park system includes aging infrastructure that requires ongoing maintenance, renovation, and reinvestment. Priority should be given to maintaining and improving existing parks, facilities, and amenities to ensure they remain safe, accessible, functional, and welcoming to the community.
Future improvements may include renovations or expansion of the Harris Nature Center and Marketplace on the Green, including potential expansion of Marketplace facilities to accommodate increased vendor participation and visitor use.

Trails and Pathways

Continued development and improvement of multi-purpose trails and pathways was a recurring priority identified during the public input process. Expanding pathways within parks and creating connections between parks and surrounding communities will improve non-motorized access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and joggers.
Future trail development should consider accessibility for people of all ages and abilities while also supporting connections to existing regional trail systems and community destinations. Where appropriate, trails and pathways should provide opportunities

for both transportation and access to natural resources.

Water Trail, River, and Fishing Access
Residents identified the need for safe, clearly identified river access for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, and other recreational activities. The Water Trail Plan identifies opportunities for access sites, improvements, and signage intended to provide a safe and enjoyable paddling experience.
Maintaining a navigable river presents ongoing challenges due to fallen trees, logjams, and other natural conditions along the river corridor. While some logjams are informally addressed by river users, there is no private canoe livery operating along the river to provide regular clearing or maintenance.
Future planning should consider appropriate partnerships, management strategies, access improvements, and signage to support safe and sustainable recreational use of the Red Cedar River.

Sports Fields and Facilities
There is an ongoing need to maintain and upgrade existing sports fields and facilities to support the safety, usability, and enjoyment of participants and spectators. Improvements should prioritize existing facilities and address demonstrated community needs while providing a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities.
Future improvements may include upgrades to athletic fields, supporting amenities, and facilities for emerging or growing recreational activities, including the development of a designated cricket field.

Land Acquisition and Easement Agreements
Strategic land acquisitions and easement agreements may provide opportunities to strengthen connections between existing parks, natural areas, and regional trail systems. The long-term potential of the Red Cedar River corridor remains an important consideration.

Future acquisitions and easements should be evaluated based on demonstrated community need, connectivity, accessibility, natural-resource protection, and the Township's ability to sustainably maintain and manage additional property. Where appropriate, these opportunities could contribute to a pedestrian and bicycle trail system connecting the Harris Nature Center with existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Meridian Township and surrounding communities.
Such connections could provide additional recreational and transportation opportunities while supporting access to natural resources and community destinations.

Programs and Services

Based on the community survey, respondents expressed strong appreciation for the programs, events, and recreational opportunities provided by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Residents frequently identified the variety of programs and activities, youth and family programming, special events, Farmers Market, concerts, Senior Center, and Harris Nature Center programs as valued community assets. Respondents also described the parks and programs as contributing to community connection, health, recreation, and quality of life.

The survey also identified opportunities to expand and diversify programming. Residents expressed interest in additional family activities, youth and teen opportunities, adult programs, enrichment activities, indoor recreation, and expanded Senior Center opportunities. Several respondents specifically requested additional art and cooking classes, year-round puzzle tournaments, sports leagues, and other activities that provide opportunities for social connection and active recreation.
Special events and the Farmers Market were frequently identified as strengths. Residents expressed interest in continued use and potential expansion of the Marketplace on the Green for events and programming. At the same time, several respondents indicated that greater promotion of existing programs, events, parks, and nature preserves is needed so that more residents are aware of the opportunities available throughout the Township.

The survey also highlighted the importance of partnerships. Respondents suggested stronger cooperation with Okemos and Haslett Public Schools, local sports organizations, neighboring communities, businesses, and other governmental agencies, particularly where shared facilities, programming, volunteers, or resources could expand opportunities for residents.

Focus Strategies for the Next Five Years

- Continue providing diverse family-focused programs and community events.
- Expand opportunities for youth, adolescents, and teenagers, including non-sport enrichment activities.
- Expand and diversify adult recreation and enrichment programs.
- Continue to support and evaluate opportunities for Senior Center programming and a suitable long-term facility, including active recreation and social opportunities.
- Explore additional art, music, cooking, educational, and social enrichment programs.
- Continue successful special events and explore opportunities for additional programming at Marketplace on the Green.
- Expand opportunities for indoor recreation and year-round activities, where feasible.
- Strengthen partnerships with schools, sports organizations, businesses, surrounding governmental units, and community organizations to share facilities, resources, programming, and expertise.
- Increase promotion and communication of existing programs, events, parks, and nature preserves so residents are more aware of the opportunities available.
- Explore opportunities for community-supported or sponsored programs that can increase access to activities for residents.

Communication

Effectively reaching the community and keeping residents informed is a primary goal and an essential component of a successful Parks and Recreation system. The community survey identified a need for greater awareness and promotion of existing parks, programs, events, and natural areas. Residents expressed appreciation for the opportunities currently available while also indicating that more information and promotion would encourage greater participation and use.

Focus strategies for the next five years include:

- Creatively promote all parks, preserves, programs, and recreational opportunities throughout the park system to increase awareness and participation.
- Meet with park neighbors and surrounding communities to discuss stewardship, park use, community needs, and potential future improvements or development opportunities.
- Continue to publish and distribute the Prime Meridian Magazine annually to residents throughout the community.
- Continue to utilize the Township website and social media platforms to promote programs, activities, events, parks, and other Parks and Recreation opportunities.
- Continue to utilize HOM-TV and other available media outlets to promote Parks and Recreation programs and community activities.
- Increase awareness of nature preserves and less-visible parks and facilities, particularly those residents may not know exist. Continue to provide high-quality programs and services that encourage positive word-of-mouth promotion and strengthen community engagement.
- Evaluate communication efforts periodically to identify opportunities to reach new audiences and residents of different ages, interests, and abilities.

Quality of Life Initiatives

Meridian Township is constantly promoting quality of life initiatives in the community. Some of these measures include:

- **"Complete Streets" Ordinance** - Meridian Township adopted in 2011.
- **"Meridian Township Greenspace Plan"** - adopted in 2004.
- **Meridian Township "Land Preservation Program"** - Millage to acquire and manage fragile lands in the community since 2000.
- **"Ingham County Trail Plan"**- Active participation with the Meridian Township portion in conjunction with Ingham County.
- **Meridian Township "Bicycle/Pedestrian Pathway Millage"** - Has developed almost eighty miles of pathway in the community.
- **"Climate Sustainability Plan"** – Adopted by Meridian Township Board 10.24.2017 https://www.meridian.mi.us/home/showpublisheddocument?id=12317
- **Protect Our Wetlands** – Environmental Commission initiative