



**Master Plan**  
**Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department**  
**2006-2015**

Park Board Approved 1/23/07

Master Plan for the Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department

2006-2011

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

The City of Bowling Green's Master Plan lays out a strategy for each area of operation; this is an update to the 1987 Parks and Recreation chapter. Public input forms the basis of this Master Plan, including a citywide survey, junior-high and high school survey, focus groups and public meetings, comments from our park users, and meetings with recreation organizations. It is our desire to make the best decisions possible and truly meet the needs of our community through the parks and recreational programs and services.

The focus of this Master Plan is, first and foremost, to maintain and improve the resources we have. The reader will see that much of the proposed activity is devoted to repair, maintenance and program improvements. Funds for these projects will come from the Parks and Recreation property tax levy and 3-½% of the income tax devoted to parks, grants, user fees and donations. Currently, there is roughly \$80,000 each year that can be devoted towards major repairs in the budget and there are over \$1.5 million in basic repairs identified in this report.

Based on public comment, there are many new park activities and facilities that the community dreams of creating over the next 10 years. Some of the most desired are included in this Master Plan. Funding for new facilities, like an indoor pool or creation of paved walking trails require large sums of money that are generated through creative funding, bond issues and a capital improvement levy.

For ease of reading, this Master Plan is broken into ten sections. If you have the electronic version of this plan, you can click on the section of interest in the table of contents and navigate quickly to that site. Readers can find information on each park under the site plan section, including major maintenance projects. The idea of a walking and multi-purpose trail that spans the city has been broken out into a separate section. Land acquisition and care for native plants and animals ranked in the top three community priorities for the Parks and Recreation Department, each is addressed in a separate section of the plan. Other sections include a program plan, service improvements in operations and maintenance and a discussion of funding for the items included in this plan.

This final version of the Master Plan includes public comments received during its circulation as a draft in 2006. This is also a work in progress, so please continue to provide us with feedback on what we are doing. Together, we can create a clear direction to keep improving the parks and enriching the lives of those in the community. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Michelle T. Grigore, Ph.D.  
Director of Parks and Recreation

## II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

### A. Mission and Core Values

The Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department provides programs and facilities that enhance the quality of life of the citizens of Bowling Green. Our core values are, “Willingness to Serve, Excellence in all We Do, Building Community, and Creating positive Experiences”.

### B. Audience Served

The residents of Bowling Green are our primary audience, although the Parks and Recreation Department also serves youth and families in areas as far north as Perrysburg and Toledo, as far south as Rudolph and Cynet, to Bradner and Pemberville on the east and Grand Rapids and Tontogany on the west. Estimates of city population vary from 30,000 to 32,000 people.

The population of Bowling Green based on 1990 and 2000 census data (Table 1) is changing; we are sustaining growth in our older population. In fact, 71% of the City’s growth is in the 45-54 year age group. This trend is manifesting itself in active, older adults who use the parks as a social and recreational outlet.

Table 1. Population Trends for BG based on Census Data

AGES	1990 TOTAL	%	2000 TOTAL	%	CHANGE FROM 1990
<5	1056	3.8	1089	3.8	+33
5 TO 9	1103	3.9	944	3.2	-159
10 TO 14	969	3.4	1054	3.6	+85
15 TO 19	5279	18.7	5445	18.4	+166
20 TO 24	9488	33.7	9151	30.9	-337
25 TO 29	2007	7.1	2041	6.9	+34
30 TO 34	1390	4.9	1227	4.1	-163
35 TO 44	2367	8.4	2513	8.5	+146
45 TO 54	1442	5.1	2477	8.4	+1035
55 TO 59	620	2.2	789	2.7	+169
60 TO 64	569	2	640	2.2	+71
65 TO 74	989	3.5	1082	3.7	+93
75 TO 84	637	2.3	838	2.8	+201
85+	260	0.9	346	1.2	+86
TOTALS	28176		29636		+1460

Census trends for Ohio between 2000 and 2003 show that the State sustained a 2% drop in the number of children under 5 years of age, the same loss for young adults (20 –44 yrs of age) and an increase of 8% in the population of adults age 80-84 years of age. In Wood County, the population of children under 5 years of age dropped 4.5% from 2000 to 2003 (Sentinel Tribune, Oct 8, 2004, pg 8). This trend is reflected in the projections of BG City Schools who are also estimating fewer elementary children to be educated over the next 5 to 10 years. Bowling Green State University student numbers continue to climb as enrollment increases. But students have on-campus recreational activities that appear to limit their usage of the City parks. College-age adults continue to be major users of the sand volleyball and disc golf course at Carter Park, but are not observed in great numbers at our other city parks.

From a health standpoint, rates of childhood adult obesity are at all-time highs; the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that one in three children are overweight or obese and the problem is worsening. Overweight adults in Wood County increased from 28% to 38% in the period from 1992 to 2000. This increase continues at an alarming rate. The Wood County Community Health Assessment, completed by the Wood County Health Hospital and Health Department in 2002, shows that Wood County has a higher incidence of death due to diabetes and coronary heart disease than nationwide averages. Both of these diseases are mitigated by active lifestyles, something that Parks and Recreation can address.

### C. Parks and Facilities

The Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department has grown since the City Park was added as the City’s first park in 1929. The parks overseen by the Department include:

- **Bellard Park**- less than an acre at Kenwood and Sandridge Roads. Bellard Park is a shady green spot with paved walkways in a quiet neighborhood of the City.
- **Bowling Green Community Center**- A 79,000 square foot building on 20 acres at the corner of Newton and Haskins Road. The Community Center was constructed through a partnership between the Ohio Army National Guard, the Wood County Board of MRDD and the City of Bowling Green. The Parks and Recreation Department

operates the building for the partners which includes classrooms, gymnasias, a fitness center, multipurpose exercise room, indoor track, and a children's activity room sponsored by the BG Kiwanis Club. A prairie planting and window-on-wildlife bring nature to the Community Center and provide places for people to relax and enjoy. A walking trail through the prairie is planned for the Community Center. Reservations and rentals for all BG City Park programs and rental facilities can be made at the Community Center.

- **City Park-** is 82 acres along Conneaut Ave with a 9-hole golf course leased to the BG Country Club. The City Park is a former Wood County Fairground site and is the city's most popular park. Thousands of people use the park and its buildings and shelters for walking, playing, swimming, softball, basketball, in-line skating, horseshoe games, summer camps, picnics, public concerts, family reunions and meetings. It is a great place for multi-generational activities.
- **Carter Park** – is 56 acres located on Campbell Hill Road, ¼ mile south of E. Wooster St. Begun with a 14.6-acre donation, the park has grown to 56 acres and houses the adult softball complex, Pee Wee Baseball complex, sand volleyball courts, a disc golf course, picnic shelters and play equipment.
- **Conneaut/Haskins Park-** is located on 7 acres at the roadway intersection. This park was the former site of a water reservoir for the City and now serves as a major sledding hill in winter and summer practice fields for open play in summer.
- **Dunbridge Road Soccer Fields** – 2-acres located behind the Municipal Court on Dunbridge Road. There are two regulation size soccer fields used by youth and adults for programming and competition.
- **Kenwood/Napoleon Park** – approximately 66 acres of future parkland exist on this site; the City owns approximately 12 of those acres. This area will be developed in partnership between the City of Bowling Green and Wood County Park District into a wetland nature preserve with walking trails and ponds.
- **Raney Playground** – less than an acre at Buttonwood Ave and Sandridge Road. This open play field provides undeveloped green space for neighborhood children and adults.
- **Simpson Garden Park-** is an 11-acre site on the corner of Wintergarden Road and Conneaut Avenue. A private fundraising campaign to raise \$700,000 will combine with \$800,000 in funds from the Parks and Recreation Department to develop a beautiful public garden for the Community. Seasonal flower displays and casual seating will border quiet walkways in this refuge from everyday life. The Simpson Building provides meeting rooms, orientation areas, restrooms and drinking fountains for the adjacent gardens and serves as the Administrative Office for the Parks and Recreation Department. Garden construction is slated to begin in 2006.
- **Wintergarden/ St.John's Nature Preserve** – was leased as a City Park in 1953. It grew from 10-acres to over 100 acres of walking trails and natural areas dedicated to environmental education and enjoyment. The Rotary Nature Center provides classroom and meeting space and a window on wildlife area. There is also an extensive nature library in the Nature Room for the public to enjoy.

The Parks and Recreation Department offers a wide array of services and facilities for residents of Bowling Green and the surrounding area. Table 2 lists those amenities by park.

Table 2. Amenities at BG City Parks

Service	Bellard Park	Carter Park	City Park	Community Center	Conneaut Park	Raney Park	Simpson Garden Park	Wintergarden/ St John's Nature Preserve	Dunbridge Road Soccer Fields
Baseball		x							
Basketball			x						
Classrooms/ Meeting rooms			x	x			x	x	
Cross-country skiing								x	
Disc Golf		x							
Fitness Equipment				x					
Fitness Classroom				x			x		
Food Concessions		x	x						
Golf			x						
Group Picnic Shelters		x	x						
Gymnasium				x					
Hiking				x				x	
Horseshoes			x						
In-line Skating			x						
Indoor Track				x					
Nature Study								x	
Picnicking		x	x						
Play fields	x	x	x		x	x		x	
Playground equipment		x	x						
Public Garden							X*		
Restrooms		x	x	x			x	x	
Sledding					x				
Soccer		x							x
Softball		x	x						
Youth Programs			x	x			x	x	
Swimming/Water Play			x						
Volleyball		x	x						
Walking			x	x			x	x	

\* being built as fundraising allows

#### **D. Programs and Services**

The Department also offers a wide variety of programs, which vary by age group and range from sporting activities to nature education and volunteerism. Each summer, the Department publishes a booklet listing of the recreational programs offered. Fall, Winter and Spring programs are advertised in a full-page ad in the local paper, The Sentinel-Tribune. The Family Aquatic Center offers open swim and swim classes for 10 – 12 weeks each summer. Summer camps, sport camps, league play for youth and adults, drop-in nature programs, pre-school nature and sport programs, arts and crafts, fitness and wellness classes, concerts, picnics, family activities and special community-wide events are all offered. For a detailed discussion of current and future programming, please see the Program Plan section of this Master Plan.

#### **E. Community Needs**

Since November 2004, the Parks and Recreation Department has been holding public meetings and forums, conducting surveys and evaluating customer comments to determine the most important recreational needs of the Bowling Green Community:

- The Parks and Recreation Board, the Staff, and the Parks and Recreation Foundation provided input into the process of creating this Master Plan beginning in late 2004.
- A community recreational needs assessment was mailed to 5,000 households in January 2005 with a 12% return rate. The 605 respondents provided indispensable information on their current perception of the parks, their programming and facility needs, and what top projects the Department should pursue over the next five to ten years.
- This was followed up with a needs assessment administered in May 2005 to Junior High and High School students at the public school to ensure this portion of the population was well represented. Three hundred thirty one surveys were returned.
- General public forums, held at the beginning of 2005, provided additional input to combine with survey results.
- Specific public forums on Wintergarden, Carter and City Parks, Adult Softball and Youth Programming, held in late 2005 and early 2006, yielded information for the Master Plan in these targeted areas.
- Program participant surveys and customer comment cards from the Community Center also played into the development of this Master Plan for Parks and Recreation.

Summary reports of the above community input are available in the Parks and Recreation Department; results of the community recreational needs assessment are shown below. The Master Plan represents the Department's best efforts to include the highest priority needs expressed through these meetings, surveys and forums. Additional information is also required to complete certain areas of this plan due to funding concerns for pressing needs like an indoor pool, additional parkland or a citywide multipurpose trail system.

#### Recreational Needs Assessment Summary- Mailed to 5,000 Households in Bowling Green

Seventy-three percent of the respondents use Bowling Green Parks and Recreation facilities for their leisure activities. They also use Bowling Green State University (61%) and Wood County Park District (46%) as major recreational service providers. Yet 64 percent of respondents felt that some or all of their recreational needs were not met. Some of the priority needs voiced by survey participants include:

- Social and cultural programs (64%)
- Paved walking/biking trails (59%)
- Indoor swimming pool/water park (47%)
- Indoor fitness/exercise facility (42%)
- Nature education (33%)
- Outdoor swimming pool/water park (25%)
- Playgrounds (21%)
- Indoor ice rink (17%)
- Sports leagues (15%)
- Crafts (15%)
- Gymnasium (13%)
- Summer camps (10%)
- Youth soccer (10%)
- Adult softball (10%)
- Outdoor tennis courts (10%)
- General play fields (10%)

In looking at the use of Bowling Green Parks and Recreation facilities, respondents noted the following:

- 81% use City Park
- 60% use Wintergarden/St. Johns Nature Preserve
- 42% use Carter Park
- 32% use the Conneaut Park sledding hill

- 16% use Simpson Garden Park
- 9% use the West Poe Rd. Recreation area (High School property)
- 8% use the Dunbridge Rd. soccer fields

Survey participants were also asked about their satisfaction level with Bowling Green Parks and Recreation programs and services. Restrooms and drinking fountains are areas that could be improved as well as providing more walking and biking trails and addressing the aging aquatic complex. Satisfaction is high (60% or better) with current maintenance, the program brochure, rental facilities, playgrounds and walking trails.

Survey contributors were asked to help determine the community's aquatic facility needs and what course of action the Department should take regarding the aging pool at City Park. The top two reasons respondents would use a pool is for recreation (55%) and exercise (47%). Thirty percent of the people would use a warm water pool for therapeutic purposes. Twenty-five percent of the participants would also make use of swim lessons at an aquatic facility. While the BG Swim Club is a strong presence in the community and engages over 100 swimmers, only .05 percent of the respondents listed competitive swimming as a primary or secondary activity for a new indoor pool. Sixty percent of the survey participants feel that a new indoor pool at the Community Center on Haskins and West Newton Roads is an important project to pursue in coming years. Fifty-five percent also feel renovating the outdoor pool at City Park is important. About one third of those asking for a pool said both of these aquatic facilities (the indoor pool and the outdoor pool at City Park) were a top priority.

Funding for one or both projects will be problematic as participants indicated they favored user fees and fundraising to finance new recreational facilities over property or sales taxes. The idea of using an income tax for revenue was suggested by a few respondents, but was not included as a formal option in the survey. It is interesting to note that, despite the preference for private funding, 73 percent of the respondents indicated that they would vote for or might vote for a ballot issue to fund the projects of highest priority to themselves and their families.

To help formulate a long-range plan for the Department of Parks and Recreation, survey participants were asked two different ways to list the top projects they felt we should pursue. The results were consistent in both questions and are as follows:

Table 3. Top Projects for Parks and Recreation to Pursue from Mailed Survey

		Number	Percent
#1	Recreational trails	297	0.49
#2	Open Space acquisition	237	0.39
#3	Indoor pool	200	0.33
#4	Manage for native plants/animals	183	0.30
#5	Update outdoor pool	159	0.26
#6	Teen Youth Center	127	0.21
#7	Simpson garden park development	101	0.17
#8	Preservation of Needle Hall	100	0.17
#9	Improve existing programs/services	99	0.16
#10	Increase care for existing facilities	98	0.16

Recreational Needs of Jr. High and High School Students in Bowling Green

A modified version of the community recreational needs assessment was prepared for administration through the schools because of the low number of teens represented by community survey mailed to 5,000 households on the City's utility bill mailing list. Thanks are directed to Hugh Caumartin, Superintendent of BG City Schools, Jeff Dever, the principal at the High School, Lee Vincent, the principal at the Jr. High School and the teachers who administered the surveys.

When asked which parks they have used in the last year, BG High School and Jr. High students listed City Park (64%), Wintergarden (20%), Carter Park (15%) and the sledding hill at Conneaut and Haskins (1%). This order of use compares to that of the adult respondents who listed City Park, Wintergarden, Carter Park and the sledding hill as their top four parks.

Sixty eight percent of these students used parks and recreation facilities and/or recreational programs in the last year. This is slightly less than the seventy three percent of the adult survey respondents that used such programs and services.

When asked which programs and services they would participate in, the students ranked these at the top vote getters:

Social/ cultural programs	44%
Canoeing and kayaking	37%
Camping	34%
Weight training	31%
Basketball	28%
Climbing	28%
Backpacking/hiking	27%
Cooking	27%
Sports leagues	27%
Tennis	27%
Football	26%
Adventure trips	25%
Theater	25%

When asked to pick the top 5, they listed the following programs/services:

Canoeing and kayaking (30%)
Social/cultural programs (28%)
Camping (23%)
Weight training (23%)
Basketball (20%)
Dance classes (19%)

When asked what they would like to see added to our parks and recreation facilities, our students responded as follows:

Table 4. Top New Facilities Teens Would Like to See in Bowling Green

	Number	Percent
Indoor Swimming/ Water Parks	178	0.54
Teen Center	154	0.47
Indoor Fitness/Exercise	125	0.38
Indoor Ice Skating Rink	124	0.37
Outdoor Swimming/ Water Parks	117	0.35
Paved Walking/Biking Trails	114	0.34
Outdoor Tennis Courts	82	0.25
Gymnasiums	73	0.22
BMX Course	69	0.21
Outdoor Basketball Courts	68	0.21
Soccer Fields	70	0.21
Outdoor Skate Park	67	0.2
General Play Areas	60	0.18
Outdoor In-line Rink	57	0.17
Playgrounds	44	0.13
Softball Field	44	0.13

When asked what they felt about a list of projects the Department of Parks and Recreation could pursue over the next five years, the students listed the following as important to very important:

Table 5. Top Projects for Parks and Recreation to Pursue from the Teen Survey

Acquisition of open and green space	0.63
Recreational trails	0.62
Update outdoor pool at City Park	0.58
Expand programs	0.56
Improve care of existing facilities	0.55
Water park and play areas	0.54
New indoor pool at Community Center	0.50
Mange for native plants/animals	0.48
Teen Youth Center	0.43
Simpson Garden Park	0.42

**F. State and National Trends in Recreation**

Ohio issues a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) on a regular basis to document trends and recreational needs; the most current report was issued in 2003. The top ten recreational activities statewide are:

- Wildlife Observation
- Walking/Jogging
- Gardening
- Scenic Automobile Drives
- Swimming in Pools
- Road/Paved Trail Bicycling
- Golf
- Playground Activities
- Fishing
- Hiking

The U.S. Census Bureau also tracks participation in recreational activities. Data from the Sept. 25, 1998 Census shows the following national top ten sport activities:

- Exercise Walking
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Exercising with Equipment
- Camping
- Bowling
- Fishing
- Billiards
- Baseball
- Hiking

Fishing and billiards are not currently offered through BG Parks and Recreation, but are available from other providers in the area. The other activities are available in some form through the parks department.

Parks and recreation planning experts have developed recommended standards for use in the planning of parks and recreation facilities. These standards, although general in nature, provide a basis for evaluating existing facilities, as well as projecting future needs based on a projected population figure. Some of the more common recommended standards are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

**TABLE 6: PLANNING STANDARDS FOR SPECIAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

Facility	Standard/Per Persons	Currently Existing in BG Parks
Baseball Diamonds	1 per 6,000	4 Pee Wee
Softball Diamonds (and/or youth diamonds)	1 per 3,000	4 Adult, 1 Youth Softball
Tennis Courts	1 per 2,000	6 at High School Recreation Area
Basketball Courts	1 per 500	2 Indoor at Community Center, 1 Outdoor at City Park
Swimming Pools - 50m	1 per 20,000	1 at City Park with diving well
Skating Rinks (artificial)	1 per 30,000	1 outdoor in-line rink at City Park
Neighborhood Centers	1 per 10,000	None at Parks
Community Centers	1 per 25,000	1 at Newton and Haskins Rds
Outdoor Theatres (non-commercial)	1 per 20,000	1 stage at City Park, 1 amphitheater to be built at Simpson Garden Park
Golf Courses (18-hole)	1 per 25,000	1 9-hole at City Park under BG Country Club

Source: Buechner, Robert D. (1971). *National Park Recreation and Open Space Standards*. Washington D.C.: National Recreation and Park Association, June

**TABLE 7: PLANNING RECREATIONAL SPACE REQUIREMENTS**  
**Acres/1000**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>People</b>	<b>Size Range</b>	<b>Population Served</b>	<b>Service Area</b>
Play lots	*	2,500 sq. ft. to 1 acre	500-2,500	Sub-neighborhood
Vest-pocket parks	*	2,500 sq. ft. to 1 acre	500-2,500	Sub-neighborhood
Neighborhood Parks	2.5	Min. 5 acres up to 20 acres	2,000-10,000	1/4 - 1/2 mile
District Parks	2.5	20-100 acres	10,000-50,000	1/2 - 3 miles
Large, urban parks	5.0	100+ acres	1 for each 50,000	Within 1/2 hour driving time
Regional Parks	20.0	250 acres	Serves entire pop. in smaller communities; should be distributed throughout larger metro areas.	Within 1 hour driving time

**Special areas\***

Includes parkways, beaches, plazas, historical sites, floodplains, downtown malls, small parks, tree lawns, etc. No standard is applicable.

Note: The National Recreation and Park Association recommends that a minimum of 25 percent of new towns, planned unit developments, and large subdivisions be devoted to park and recreation lands and open space.

In preparing this Master Plan document, the Parks and Recreation Department recognizes that state and national trends need to be tempered with local needs. Sections 3 – 7 of this Master Plan include recommendations for programs and services based heavily on Bowling Green’s demographics, local recreational needs, existing resource providers, and economic challenges, balanced with what we know of national recreational trends.

### **III. FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS**

#### **A. AQUATIC FACILITY**

##### **Existing Conditions**

Community input indicates a strong desire to build an indoor aquatic facility at the new Community Center. This would allow year round use of the pool and possibly bring additional amenities like a warm water therapy pool, splash park, etc. to the city. There is also a strong attachment to the aging outdoor pool at City Park. The condition of the City Park facility is as follows:

##### **Main Pool**

The outdoor pool at City Park has been in existence in its current footprint since 1963. Over the years many changes have taken place to improve the facility for patron use and operations. Some of these include the water slide, new gutters and, most recently, the liner installed in 2003.

##### **Water Works Pool, Sand play and Sand volleyball areas**

By 1991 the original wading pool needed extensive repairs to continue operating more than a season or two. The Water works pool, Hags sand play unit and the sand volleyball area were added to the aquatic complex in 1994. The old “kiddie” or “wading” pool was filled in and a shade structure built over the site in 1993.

##### **Buildings**

There are four buildings currently on the City Park aquatic complex site. They are the Bath House, Guard House, Main Pool Pump House and Water Works Pool Pump House.

##### **Existing Maintenance and Repair Issues**

There are many concerns within the physical structures at the aquatic complex:

The Bath House was built in the 1964 and contains a front desk area, concession stand, changing / shower rooms, restrooms and a small storage area for Parks and Swim Club use. Some of the major problems with the building are leaking roof, unstable mortar, falling and crumbling ceiling blocks, insufficient concession area and rotting metal doors. There have been some complaints about space in the changing areas. There is only one service window at the concession stand to serve patrons that are inside the pool area and long lines have been the result during busy hours.

The Guard House was built in the mid-1980's. This physical layout of the structure is not compatible for the intended use. There are no windows and there is little ventilation in the changing areas. Current problems with the building today are ventilation, the overhangs and roof.

The main pool pump house is one of the original structures built in 1964.. As filtration and chlorination systems have upgraded, the shell of the building has remained the same. The filter equipment currently in use was installed in 1986. Problems with this facility include an aging and hard to manage filter system, leaking roof, interior ceiling blocks crumbling to the floor, a rusting balance tank and insufficient storage for supplies and equipment. There are still valves and a strainer basket that need replacement.

The water works pump house was built with the other improvements in 1994. Other than seasonal upgrades from normal wear and tear, this building is fine.

The Main Pool tank was undergoing repairs and re-painting every spring through the 1980's up to 2003 when the liner was installed. The liner is guaranteed to last 10 years according to the manufacturer. The bridge that separates the shallow areas of the pool will need some repair work due to crumbling concrete. The concrete pool deck is heaving and cracking in spots and, at minimum, these areas should be replaced. The overhead light pole bases are crumbling and the light poles are rusting. The concession patio area concrete slab is cracking and unstable. The curb around the shade structure and slide area is crumbling and needs to be replaced. The overall aesthetics around the main pool have not changed in over 30 years.

The “Hags” interactive sand play structure is at the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced; it will be removed in 2006 because it is unsafe. The sand volleyball area is underutilized and could be used as a site for a future water play area.

##### **Information from Community Recreation Needs, Public forum, Public Comment period**

See page 7 for a summary of community input from the recreational needs survey regarding the aquatic complex. A public forum on City Park was held and summarized on page 15 under the City park section. During the public comment period on

the draft Master Plan document, members of the BG Swim Club attended the Aug 2, 2006 public Planning Commission meeting and conveyed their strong desire to improve the city’s aquatic facility. A copy of the transcript from that meeting is available at the City’s Administration Building. Three other comments were received on the draft plan: One citizen wrote to the park office to recommend an indoor/outdoor facility and express need for a warm water therapy pool; One person wrote to comment on the need for an outdoor pool and the need for it at City Park because of its central location in the city; and a couple stopped by the Park and Recreation office to express their desire to keep the pool at City Park.

**Strategies for 2006-2015**

There is strong sentiment from the Community to build an indoor pool at the Community Center; there is also an expressed desire to keep the outdoor pool at City Park, despite its deteriorating conditions. To determine the best course of action for a citywide Aquatic Facility, additional research will have to be completed to assess what the “pool of the future” will look like. Table 6 below shows the activities and timeline required for this planning and construction. The liner in the main pool is guaranteed until 2012, providing time to plan for the future.

The following is a list of possible scenario’s concerning an Aquatic Facility that the citizens of Bowling Green will need to consider:

- Rehabilitate the existing outdoor pool and support facilities to last to 2022. At some point, a replacement liner will no longer be the solution and the pool will have to be rebuilt.
- Add a splash park where the sand volleyball court is and rehabilitate existing pools and facilities to last to 2022.
- Replace the main pool and support facilities. Price will be a big factor, as this is a multi-million dollar option.
- Remove the main pool, bathhouse, pump house and guard house and replace with splash park concept where the pool is. Keep the sand play and Water Works pool. The pool moves to the Community Center.
- Remove all existing pools and facilities and replace with a splash park. No sand play or Water Works pool remain. Return the rest of the site to green space and move the pool to the Community Center.

**Goals and Strategies for the next ten years**

During the next few years, the maintenance staff will continue to repair, paint and replace the aging facilities and equipment. The building identified by the participants in the City Park Forum that needs to be addressed soon is the renovation of the bathhouse. If this pool is to remain for the next ten years, total renovation of this structure is necessary for the bath house including: roof work, interior and exterior walls, reconfiguration of the concession and locker areas and a new front desk area. Another possibly is to tear down the existing structure and build a new one.

Public planning sessions in early 2007 will yield the Community’s decision on the future of the aquatic facility at City Park and the indoor pool at the Community Center. The next three years will be spent securing funding for these projects. If funding is provided, construction of the aquatic facility or facilities will begin in five years.

<b>Table 8. Maintenance, Repair and Capital Improvement Plan for Aquatic Facilities 2006-2015</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>
2006	Get pricing and put public program and survey together on aquatic facility
2007	Community forums to create a plan
2007	Final proposal before Council and the public
2008	Seek funding for construction if that is the option: State funds, Capital Improvement Levy?
	Begin construction planning if funded by the public
	Begin construction on facility or facilities if funded by the public

**Funding**

Funding for the City’s aquatic needs will be a major challenge for the Parks and Recreation Department. It is the most costly construction item on the Master Plan, especially if the final plan includes an indoor pool at the Community Center and an outdoor pool at the City Park. A combination of State and local funding, taxes and private donations will be needed for a project estimated at a minimum to run \$5-\$12 million. Partnerships with other agencies for the construction and operation of the aquatic facility will help reduce the financial burden, but decrease the amount of time the pool or pools are available to the general public.

Realistically, a bond or tax levy will be needed for the Aquatic Complex, whether rehabilitation, replacement or new construction is selected by the Community. Rebuilding the pool house (\$220,000 est.), roofs for the Guard House and Pump  
2/20/2009

House (\$20,000 est.) and rebuilding the deck along the entire pool (unknown cost at this time) are required even if the old pool remains. A replacement liner for the old pool would need to be budgeted for 2012 (\$75,000 - \$150,000) along with a replacement slide (\$5,000) and additional shade for the pool deck (\$8,000). If the condition of the pool's concrete shell deteriorates more by 2012, it may make a replacement liner impossible.

Yearly operating costs for multiple aquatic facilities will also exceed the current tax revenue for the Department. An increase in the 1.4 mil levy for Parks and Recreation or an increase in the income tax devoted to parks and recreation will be required to operate two pools. User fees will also have to be raised in order to support the operation of the pool or pools because the existing pool has lost money for the last 10 years. The addition of a pool to the Community Center will also make it very difficult to "break even" at the facility due to increased staffing, operation and maintenance costs.

## II. FACILITY AND SITE PLANS

### B. CARTER PARK

#### **Existing Conditions**

Carter Park began with a 14.6-acre gift from the Everett E. Carter Family in 1973 and grew another 47 acres in the 1990s with the addition of softball and baseball fields. A Land and Water Conservation Grant was used to improve the site with fencing and play equipment. Today, Carter Park is mainly an athletic park used for active recreational opportunities including softball, baseball and disc golf.

The park's facilities consist of a disc golf course, youth baseball diamonds and batting cages run by the Pee Wee Association, an adult softball complex with concession stand and four fields, two sand volleyball courts, a large open field used occasionally for soccer or overflow parking, four picnic shelters, one public restroom open seasonally, a water tower by the entrance used for storage, and two age-specific playground structures. The park is used year round but receives heaviest use in the spring and summer when athletic leagues and events are occurring. Neighbors also use the park for walking and sunning and families appreciate and use the pre-school appropriate playground regularly.

The geology of Carter Park makes it a challenge to maintain facilities and landscaping. The bedrock is very close to the surface, within inches in some locations. Blasting was used to install the softball field lights and sewer lines are close to the surface, requiring a pumping station. Much of the landscaping is installed above ground, in mounded beds to provide enough soil for the roots. Trees that tolerate high alkalinity and shallow root systems are required for the site. Drainage and irrigation lines are also difficult to install and maintain under site conditions. Drain tiles run west to the I-75 ditch, which frequently fills with rainwater and reduces any runoff from the playing fields.

#### **Information from Community Recreation Needs, Public forum, Surveys**

The 2005 community needs survey showed that 42 % of the respondents used Carter Park. When respondents were asked to list their top recreational activities baseball/softball came out as number ten (16%), and when asked to list the top recreational activities attended in the last year, sports was number three (47%). Carter Park is the center of outdoor adult sports activity for the Parks and Recreation Department. There is also great potential to increase the passive recreational use of the park by meeting the community's number one need for walking trails.

The focus group on Carter Park drew no comments from the community, and two Softball Forums provided input from nine players. Their suggestions focused primarily on rules and ideas to keep league costs low. They did, however, have some suggestions for safety improvements, including fencing extended out along the axis and protective netting over bench areas. One attendee noted that our softball complex was the second best in the area. When asked about moving the adult complex to a new site, the players present at the two forums expressed different views or did not comment. Some thought a move to another site with more normal bedrock and drainage conditions would be good, others felt that the current location near I-75 was preferable.

Meetings with Pee Wee show a strong desire on the part of this group to expand their services to more diamonds and to offer more youth ball playing opportunities. Keeping the current youth baseball tournaments in town is a high priority, and more diamonds are needed to achieve this. The possibility of acquiring land south of the existing park is low due to acreage costs. Expansion of Pee Wee facilities would be possible if the adult program moved to another site. Also, Wood Lane has expressed an interest in partnering to build another softball complex to meet their increasing need for consumers.

#### **Strategies for 2006-2015**

<b>Table 9. Maintenance, Repair and Capital Improvement Plan for BG Carter Park 2006-2015</b>
<b>CARTER PARK PROJECT</b>
Public restroom renovation: roof, all interior fixtures, paint, lighting, ceilings, floor
Epoxy seal and paint floors of hub bldg
Picnic grill replacement
Replace hub drinking fountain
Improve infield playing surface
Replace maintenance bay garage door in hub building
Safety netting installed at ball diamonds if grant secured
Signage, entrance improvements
Upgrade security lights around hub building

Tree replanting for disc golf course, landscaping around restroom and new storage building
Replace hub roof, windows, flooring, add fan
Outfield irrigation and grading
Maintenance/sand volleyball building added
Parking lot improvements as funding allows
Improve outfields, warning strips
Sideline fence extension
Remodel hub building
Improve outfield lighting
Install crushed gravel walking trail around park
Parking lot improvements as funding allows
Replace play equipment, add shade structure
Parking lot improvements as funding allows
Parking lot improvements as funding allows
Improve hub bldg restrooms

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

**Pee Wee Lease**

The lease for the south baseball complex, first signed by BG Pee Wee League, Inc. in 1989, will remain in effect until 2039. There is an option in the lease to renew it for an additional 50 years after that time. Due to budgetary constraints, it is unlikely that the adult softball program will move from Carter Park to a new site. If funding were available and the Community desired this outcome, Pee Wee’s lease could be expanded to the north fields.

**FUNDING**

The Parks and Recreation Department currently receives \$600,000 from the property tax levy and \$300,000 of that is earmarked for maintenance and repair of facilities. All of this funding is currently required to maintain existing facility safety and cleanliness. There is less than \$80,000 each year that can be budgeted for major maintenance. Sponsorships, grants, and donations will be sought to help fund the improvements, but public tax dollars will continue to be the most reliable way of securing steady monies for capital improvements and major maintenance. Many of the projects listed above may have to be put on “hold” under the current Parks levy income.

## FACILITY AND SITE PLANS

### C. CITY PARK

#### **Existing Conditions**

City Park was home to the Wood County Fairgrounds for years before being turned over to the City of Bowling Green for use as a park in 1928. Needle Hall, built before 1900 as Floral Hall, still stands as a remnant of the time when fair exhibit buildings dotted the landscape. The first concrete swimming pool and the softball diamond were built between 1929 and 1932 with the help of the WPA. The current pool, bathhouse and the diving well were completed from 1963-1964. A large part of the old Fairgrounds was leased to the Bowling Green Country Club, starting in 1936 in order to operate a semi-private golf course.

The City Park is perhaps the most versatile of all our parks. City Park's family aquatic center is the major draw for park users in the summer months. Swimming and picnicking during the warm season in the five open shelters are the most popular uses. The Veteran's and Scout buildings provide indoor spaces for group activities throughout the year. Outdoor basketball courts and an in-line skating rink offer space for two popular sports. Of course, the playground and play areas have been a major daily draw for well over 75 years. It is common to see park users walking their dogs, fitness walking around the loop, or just sitting under a tree with a friend. There is interest in the community to expand our natural resources interpretive programming at City Park to include a butterfly garden, tree identification and park history signage.

#### **Existing Facilities**

- Shelter Houses – Kiwanis, Kiwanis Memorial, Martin, Stone and Hoffman.
- Buildings – Veterans Memorial (1900-1908), Scout Building (1909-1915), Needle Hall (pre-1900) and the Maintenance building (1980's?).
- Outdoor Restrooms – Two (year-round, heated).
- Aquatic complex – Two pools, two pump houses, bathhouse, guardhouse.
- Athletic facilities – Basketball courts (1950's), Youth softball diamond (1950's), roller hockey rink (1998).
- Play Equipment – Main playground area (2005), stand alone swing set (1950's).

#### **Information from the Community Recreation Needs Survey, Focus Groups and Public Comment period**

An overwhelming percentage (81%) of respondents from the 2005 Recreational Needs Assessment Survey indicated that they use City Park. This held true for the Junior High and High School survey as well. As our most popular park, City Park generates a great deal of interest and emotional attachment. Many of the top activities, which the Community wants the Department to pursue, are applicable to City Park including recreational trails, open space acquisition, a teen youth center, updating the outdoor pool, adding a water park and play area, and preservation of Needle Hall.

The City Park forum participants listed the park's central location, the variety of activities, the old trees and the pool as its top strengths. Aging facilities, the condition of the pool bathhouse, and the unsafe use of a shared roadway by cars, pedestrians and bike traffic are considered major weaknesses. The use of the golf course (and quarry) for parkland and walking trails were the top opportunities noted by the group for City Park. They also expressed concern that the golf course land remain as parkland, that the community center not be a drain on City Park programs (including moving the pool) and that there be a tree replacement plan in place for the aging trees that give the park its flavor.

In addition to the forums and surveys, the Community Coalition for Youth and Families has formed a subcommittee to address the need for a skate park in the City. This facility could be built at City Park utilizing the parking area near the maintenance building and in-line rink. The committee is working closely with area youth to design the facility and seek funding for it. There is a woody, disjunctive section of the park along the old railway line leading to Haskins Road. This site might be suitable for a BMX course, as it is unofficially being used for this purpose at the present time in an unimproved state. Several children and parents have expressed an interest in such a course.

During the public comment period on the draft master plan the following items were received: a written request to implement a walking trail around the roadway at City Park and to continue the lease with the BG Country Club; a copy of a letter to the Editor calling for continuation of the lease with the BG Country Club; a couple who stopped in to comment that they want to see a golf course stay at the City Park and maintain what we currently have at the park; and a call from a citizen who was concerned about losing the golf course because he currently walks his dog along the trail system there.

Strategies for 2006-2015

<b>Table 10. Maintenance, Repair and Capital Improvement Plan for BG City Park 2006-2015</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>CITY PARK PROJECT</b>
2006	Picnic grill replacement
2007	Needle Hall gutters and downspouts
2007	Sidewalk replacement – CDBG funds
	Needle Hall replace rotting wood
	Pool House replacement if funding allows
	Guard House replacement
	Roof repair on shelter houses
	Veteran's Building: replace rotted front entry, repoint foundation, replaced damaged brick
	Secure funding and install preschool play equipment
	Pool House replacement
	Guard House replacement
	Maintenance bldg: replace garage doors, rebuild floor drain, replace windows, office flooring
	Pool Filter House door and roof replacement
	Walking trail installation to get pedestrians off roadway
	Eli Joyce Pressbox renovation: new doors, roof, siding, windows
	Pave basketball courts, enlarge to accommodate a runoff area
	Pave approach to maintenance bldg.
	Needle Hall replace roof, repoint foundation
	Girl Scout Building: replace doors, add heat to restrooms, reconstruct curbs/walkways, replace floors
	Renovate Depot/office bldg.
	Maintenance yard fencing replaced or removed
	Rehab the in-line rink sideboard, gates, etc.
	Renovate Eli Joyce fields: rebuild infield, replace fencing and cap, remove old drinking fountain pads, extend infield to fence line to eliminate grass strips
	Needle Hall renovate interior, replace rotted wood, add door/window screens to keep insects and animals out
	Needle Hall stage renovation or replacement
	Add air conditioning to Veteran's Building if funding allows
	Reconfigure kitchenette in Veteran's Building
	Create plan for increased accessibility throughout City Park
	Create indoor play area in Needle Hall if interest merits it and funding is available
	Veteran's Building: replace flooring, doors, windows and HVAC system
	Depot Building: repoint brick, replace flooring, reconstruct heaved sidewalk

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

Teens in Bowling Green have expressed the need for a Skatepark and BMX Course. A committee has been formed in 2006 to study the feasibility of adding these facilities to City Park.

## Strategies for 2006-2015

<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>
2007	Create plan for one or both projects with student focus group
	Secure funding from grants, sponsors
	Install skatepark, formalize BMX site if funding allows

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

### **Bowling Green Country Club Lease**

The lease for the 9-hole golf course and quarry runs through 2025. If the Community decides to use this property for open parkland, the City can terminate the lease after Dec. 31, 2015 with a two-year notice. Should the lease be terminated prior to 2025, the City will assume any secured debt of the Bowling Green Country Club, Inc. While this timeline lies at the far end of this 10-year plan, the Country Club will need ample notification of any change in the lease arrangement and the community will need time to carefully consider the benefits of the existing golf course and potential benefits of the converted parkland. This appears to be a controversial issue based on several letters and comments from the public. The idea of using the leased land for public parkland was promoted as a high priority item by the public focus group session on City Park during Summer 2006.

### **Funding Issues**

Funding for maintenance and improvements to City Park will need to come from many sources. The existing park levy produces \$600,000, with roughly half dedicated to maintenance and repair of park facilities. A paved multi-purpose trail costs \$150,000 per mile and the existing City Park loop measures just a mile. Renovation and repair of the buildings and grounds is also costly. Grants will be sought to help accomplish some of the projects, but it is estimated that additional public funds would be needed for major improvements, like the outdoor pool renovation.

## FACILITY AND SITE PLANS

### D. WINTERGARDEN/ ST. JOHN'S NATURE PRESERVE

#### **Existing Conditions**

The history of the Wintergarden/St. John's Nature Preserve is rich and varied. Native Americans once followed the sand ridges in the preserve in search of game and lived on the edges of the prairie. Our pioneer ancestors also followed the ridges as they began to settle in this area over 200 years ago. In 1841, Stephen St. John, an attorney and farmer from New York State purchased and settled on what is now the Bordner Meadow portion of the preserve. He farmed row crops and also had cattle and hogs, which he pastured in St. John's Woods

The City of Bowling Green Water Works purchased the Wintergarden property and the northern portions of the St. John's property in the 1940s where wells were drilled to provide the city with a fresh water supply. In 1954, the Rotary Club of Bowling Green began a day camp for local children, and in 1969, Wintergarden Lodge was built to support these camps, scouts, and other community meetings and events with \$60,000 from the City and help from the Jaycees. American Youth Hostels operated the lodge as an overnight hostel until 1993. At that point, the Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department began renovating the lodge as a Nature Center with \$40,000 from the Bowling Green Rotary Club. The facility was then re-named the Rotary Nature Center.

The park has grown far beyond the boundaries of the original Wintergarden Woods. In 1988, the large swamp forest of St. John's Woods was added through a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant to the City. The 22-acre Bordner Meadow was purchased in 1997 after a grass roots fundraising effort spearheaded by the Coalition for Green Space (now the Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Foundation). A local developer donated a portion of his property and sold the rest to the City in 2002, as citizens banded together again to raise the funds necessary to add the 7.5-acre Twyman property to the southeastern portion of the park. In 2005, a 19.6-acre woodland parcel was purchased via a long-term loan. The Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Foundation will work to raise the funds to pay off the loan over the next five years. The parcels together comprise just over 100-acres of natural area in the city limits. See the Natural Resource Plan section of this document for the many plant communities encompassed by Wintergarden/St. John's Nature Preserve. The 19.6-acre parcel is not yet open to the public and will not be developed until after the public fundraising campaign has secured its permanence as parkland.

#### **Existing Facilities**

Current facilities include:

- The Rotary Nature Center, a 2,000 square foot facility that houses a window on wildlife/nature room, staff offices, restrooms, rental room, and kitchenette.
- Four miles of maintained walking trails,
- Picnic tables, and benches for seating
- A large three- bay garage (currently leased by the Parks and Recreation Foundation),
- A 2,200 square foot three bedroom log home (currently leased by the Parks and Recreation Foundation to a renter to raise funds for land acquisition).

#### **Information from the Community Recreation Needs Survey and Focus Groups**

The Community's top recreational activities noted in the 2005 Community Needs Assessment include: walking, (#1 at 69%), bird watching, (#6 at 20%), and camping, (#11 at 14%). Sixty percent of the survey respondents said they use Wintergarden Park and 33% say would participate in nature education activities. When survey respondents were asked to identify top priority projects for the Parks and Recreation Department to pursue, management for native plants and animals appeared in the #4 spot. Walking trails and preservation of green space ranked in the top two.

On Thursday, November 3, 2005, a forum was held at the Rotary Nature Center. The following recommendations are the result of that meeting:

- The trails at the park should be maintained and kept free of roots, ruts, and debris.
- Research should be done to explore the development of a conservation easement for the preserve to ensure its continued use as natural area parkland.
- Restrooms should be made available to park users even when park staff are not on site. Some users want restrooms at the south end of the park because of its size and the location of the existing restrooms.
- The park board should consider limiting the amount and type of public rentals that take place at the Nature Center.
- Wintergarden should be connected in some way to the Slippery Elm Trail.
- Continued efforts should be made to ensure that all park visitors have an enjoyable experience and respect each other's use preferences.
- Continue to offer educational programs to the public for all ages.
- Increase awareness of the park and provide materials to the public that promotes natural resources recreation in BG.

- Continue to provide a safe, clean, natural, peaceful, green space for residents.
- Continue efforts to restore the park ecosystems by removing non-native and invasive plant species.
- Continue to provide trained and capable staff for the management of the site.

**Strategies for 2006-2015**

<b>Table 9. Maintenance, Repair and Capital Improvement Plan for Wintergarden/ St. John's Woods Nature Preserve 2006-2015</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>WINTERGARDEN/ ST JOHN'S WOODS NATURE PRESERVE PROJECT</b>
2006	Nature Center roof and fascia repair, remove interior door by drinking fountain
2006	Wet trail tile installation, re-route other wet trails
2006	Remove lawn bowling court, convert to play fields
2006-2007	Pave sidewalk into park from Wintergarden Road
	Replace flooring in office area of Nature Center
	Walking trail maintenance and improvements
	Entrance improvements at roadway and new signage
	Replace fireplace mantel, paint walls of nature center
	Parkland acquisition-fundraising campaign
	Sewer hook-up to existing house on park addition
	Electrical line burial on park addition
	Install second boardwalk if trail not rerouted
	Replace flooring in nature center
	Community forum to create plan for new parkland addition
	Create accessible restrooms in the park- could be outside door into existing restrooms?
	Install drinking fountain at south end of park
	Reconfigure kitchenette in Nature Center
	Replace wall paneling and mantel over fireplace in Nature Center
	Install trail system in park addition
	Open new addition to the public
	Move maintenance/storage to garage on new parkland addition
	Build restrooms at south end of park with drinking fountain
	Install observation platform at south end of park?

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

**Funding**

Funding for the projects at the Wintergarden/St. John's Nature Preserve will come from the Parks Fund, grants and donations over the next 10 years, with the exception of the purchase of the additional 19.6 acres of land on the southwest side, connecting the Slippery Elm trail to Wintergarden, and installation of new restroom facilities at the south end of the park. Grants will be sought to install restrooms and the multi-purpose trail. The Parks and Recreation Foundation will involve itself in a fund raising drive to pay for the cost of the new acreage once the Simpson Garden Park project has met its financial goals.

FACILITY AND SITE PLANS

E. SIMPSON GARDEN PARK

**Introduction and History**

Simpson Garden Park is an 11-acre parcel at the corner of Wintergarden Road and Conneaut Avenue. Eight acres of the site are undeveloped field; the other 3 acres holds the Simpson Building with a banquet hall, meeting rooms, restrooms, and Parks and Recreation Administrative Offices. The 8-acre parcel was owned by the City Utilities Dept. and served as a well field site for the community’s water source for 30 years. In the 1950’s the well field was no longer needed and the site served to hold spoils from utility work around the city and leaf compost.

By the 1990’s the city of Bowling Green had grown to surround the field, and adjacent homeowner’s began to wonder if a spoils site was the best use for this field. The community decided this field should become parkland and, in 1999, the field was turned over to the Department of Parks and Recreation. There was no formal parking for the site, so talks began with the adjacent property owner, The Church of the Nazarene, about a shared parking lot. The Parks Department and community wanted to build a public garden on the site of Bowling Green’s newest park.

The Church eventually decided to move to a new site to accommodate the rapid growth of their congregation, and the 3-acre site was purchased in 2000 with the help of a bequest from Violet and Newt Simpson and a long-term loan that the Parks and Recreation Department is paying down over the 15 years. The church was named the Simpson Building and the grounds named Simpson Garden Park in honor of the Simpsons.

In 2002, public forums were held and The Collaborative of Toledo, OH drafted a master plan for the Garden. This master plan forms the basis of the garden’s development with a few changes proposed in 2005 as part of the S-district site plan review process. Neighbors met and had input into this final plan of 2005; the Planning Commission and Bowling Green City Council approved it.

It is this approved site plan that is being developed at Simpson Garden Park. To raise funds for development of the Garden, a public/private partnership had to be formed between the City and the Parks and Recreation Foundation. The City Parks and Recreation Department will invest \$800,000 into the site by 2010 and the Foundation is committed to raising another \$700,000 to install the gardens and create a maintenance endowment for perpetual care.

A feasibility study was conducted in November 2004 that showed the community of Bowling Green supported and looked forward to the completion of the Garden. The 2005 Community Recreational Needs Assessment also listed the development of Simpson Garden Park as one of the top ten priorities for the Parks and Recreation Department in the next 5 to 10 years. The Parks Board has also listed the Simpson Garden Park as one of their top 3 priorities for the department over the next 5 years. Thus, community commitment and involvement are driving the development of the Simpson Garden Park.

**Strategies for 2006-2015**

<b>Table 10. Maintenance, Repair and Capital Improvement Plan for BG Simpson Garden Park 2006-2015</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>SIMPSON GARDEN PARK PROJECT</b>
2006	Corner Garden maintenance and improvement with Master Gardener volunteers
2007	Irrigation by Simpson Building installed
2007	Trail improvements as donations allow
2007	Construction of Rotary Amphitheater
2007	Seeding of wildflower garden in Sculpture Garden area
2007	Soil amendments added to Shade Garden
2007	Survey of property boundaries and permanent marking as budget allows
2007	Installation of Children’s Garden as donations allow
	Hire a Horticulturist to oversee the living collections
	Installation of Sensory Garden as donations allow
	Tree planting in Shade Garden as donations allow
	Sculpture Garden platform installations as donations allow
	Irrigation installation in Shade Garden

	Shrub installation in Shade Garden as donations allow
	Installation of entry kiosk, arch and street signage
	Replace worn carpeting in Simpson Building
	Install projector in ceiling of Banquet Room if funding allows
	Replace worn restroom fixtures, paint restrooms in Simpson Bldg
	Remove open counter in Simpson to increase security of offices
	Create Maintenance Plan for Garden
	Walkway paving to Rotary Amphitheater as donations allow
	Irrigation installation in rest of garden area as budget allows
	Installation of Bulb Gardens as donations allow
	Installation of groundcover on south hillside as donations allow
	Boundary split rail fence installation as budget or donations allow
	Waterfall, stream and bridge installation as donations allow
	Reflection Garden installation as donations allow
	Installation of sculpture in Sculpture Garden as donations allow
	Shade Garden perennials installation as donations allow
	Boundary split rail fence installation as budget or donations allow
	Upland Garden installation as donations allow
	Perennial Garden installation as donations allow
	Pergola built as donations allow
	Finish up gardens as donations allow
	Create and implement a Disease Control Program for the Garden

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

**Funding and Long Term Maintenance**

Funding for maintenance of the garden is not in place at this time; the Director estimates that a maintenance endowment of \$500,000 minimum will be necessary to provide partial funding for this purpose. The BGSU Foundation has pledged to provide a student internship program for the next five years to assist with the care of the plants. Additional support from the Natural Resource Staff will be required for supervision, volunteer coordination and garden maintenance and renovation tasks. It may be possible to utilize existing Staff for these purposes, but their ability to devote time to natural resources in the parks will be diminished.

The endowment will require on-going fundraising efforts throughout the life of the Garden. The initial fundraising campaign, run by the BG Psrks and Recreation Foundation, will raise \$300,000 for the endowment; an additional \$150,000 can be achieved through the sale of memorial engraved bricks for an entrance walkway. A Friends of the Garden group will be created as well as annual fundraising events and recognition programs to grow the endowment and keep pace with inflation. Community support is critical to the garden’s health and welfare in the long term

## FACILITY AND SITE PLANS

### F. EXPANSION OF THE COMMUNITY CENTER

#### **Existing Conditions – The Facility**

The Bowling Green Training and Community Center (the Center) is a 79,000 square-foot recreation facility that offers recreational, educational and social opportunities for all ages. It is located on 20-acres, owned by the State of Ohio, at the corner of Newton and Haskins Roads. The Center was built through a partnership between the City of Bowling Green, the Wood County Board of MRDD and the Ohio Army National Guard. It opened August 6, 2005 and includes:

- **Fitness Area** – a 4,300 square-foot fitness area with a full line of Star Trac and Woodway treadmills, ellipticals, and cycles as well as Paramount’s easy-to-use weight machines and dumbbells. With our Broadcast Vision system, you can accompany your workout with a wide choice of television programming.
- **Gymnasium** –Two regulation-size hardwood courts that can be used for volleyball, basketball and a variety of other sports activities, including leagues and drop-in recreational use. An adjoining commercial kitchen can also accommodate banquets and other major events seating 500 people.
- **Track** – The indoor track, consisting of walking and running/jogging lanes, is 1/8 mile long. Located on the second floor, the track offers a great view of the major activity areas of the community center and a wide view of the great outdoors through the many windows.
- **Multipurpose Room** – with a floating, hardwood floor designed specifically for group exercise, instructional dance, and other fitness programs. A variety of personal fitness equipment and professional instructors are available for structured class use.
- **Community Classrooms** –The two classrooms accommodate 44 – 100 people respectively and can be reserved by the Public for meetings and workshops.
- **Kiwanis Kids Clubhouse** – A supervised children’s activity area for 6-month to 9-year olds.
- **Lounge/Showers/Locker Rooms** –spacious locker rooms and family changing areas are available as well as a food vending area and lobby lounge.

#### **Existing Conditions - Natural Resources and Grounds**

The land surrounding the building was planted with a tall grass prairie seed mix supplied by Prairie Nursery of Wisconsin on May 13, 2005. The native grasses and flowers chosen for this mix represent plants that would have historically been found in the Bowling Green area. The prairie planted at the Community Center will help to salvage a part of Bowling Green’s natural history. The Parks and Recreation Department and the community of Bowling Green will benefit by saving money and resources, while contributing towards a healthy environment, providing habitat for wildlife and producing a pleasing scenery.

#### **Maintenance and Repair Issues**

The Center is a new facility and has few maintenance and repair issues at this time. Most of the equipment and building are under warranty since construction took place in 2005. The prairie will require spot weeding and seeding over the next three years. The formal landscape, sod and trees surrounding the building will also need to be watered, weeded and fertilized by Department Staff.

#### **Community Needs and Input**

The biggest issues for users of the Center (based on comment cards) are the lack of an indoor pool, additional space for court activities (basketball, indoor soccer, volleyball) and crowding in the fitness area that results in waiting time for strength training or cardiovascular equipment. These issues can only be solved if the Community Center is expanded beyond its current size. In 2007, Wood Lane has agreed to share their gymnasium with the City in exchange for Wood Lane consumer use of the City’s fitness area and track. This will help alleviate some of the overcrowding in the City’s gym.

Newspaper editorials and comments from individuals in the community suggest there is a need for a paved trail to connect the Center to Poe Road. The worry of how children will ride their bicycles to the facility motivates these comments. The existing Bike Route on Fairview and Newton is not acceptable as a bicycle trail.

The Parks Board has also made expansion of the Center a high priority project for the Department over the next 5 to 10 years. They would like to see an addition that could be used as a field house for indoor sports, as well as adding an indoor pool and a paved connector trail. Lastly, the Board has laid out a challenge to “connect” the Center to the community through our programming in order to grow the number of users and activities offered there.

There is also a need to find more space for soccer fields. The practice fields at the corner of Mitchell and Conneaut Roads is owned by the BG Schools and will not be available for this use in a few years. The Dunbridge Road Soccer Fields do not have restroom facilities and are considered by many to be “too far out of town”.

**Strategies for 2006-2015**

<b>Table 11. Maintenance, Repair and Capital Improvement Plan for BG Community Center 2006-2015</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>COMMUNITY CENTER PROJECT</b>
2006	Prairie installation and maintenance
2006	Landscape maintenance and replacement
2006	Window on Wildlife Installation
2006	Secure easements for walking trail to Community Center
2007	Play area installation for Kiwanis Kids Clubhouse
	Walking trail graveled or paved to Community Center from Wren (up Haskins Road)
	Apply for funding for paving walking trail to Community Center
	Finalize community input and plan for expansion of Community Center if desired
	Secure funding for expansion projects – State Funds, Capital Improvement Levy?
	Secure funding for expansion projects – State Funds, Capital Improvement Levy?
	Begin construction planning for expansion projects if funding permits
	Pave walking trail if funding permits
	Possible construction of aquatic facility and/or other expansion projects (see Table 6)
	Completion of expansion projects

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

**Soccer Fields**

The practice fields at Conneaut Ave and Mitchell Road is owned by the BG City Schools and surrounded by residential housing. School officials have indicated that this field will not be available for public use after 2011. Contingency plans need to be made to accommodate the needs of area residents for soccer. There are also soccer fields for game play behind the Municipal Court on Dunbridge Road. Many consider these fields too far out of town and they do not have restroom facilities. If funding is available, it would make sense to consolidate the game and soccer fields in one place, near the Community Center. The Parks and Recreation Department will move soccer practice to Carter Park and Conneaut Park in 2007.

**Strategies for 2006-2015**

<b>Table 11B. Soccer Field Provision Plan</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>
2007	Designate alternative practice fields in existing parks as BG City Schools phase out our use of the Conneaut/Mitchell property
2008	Look for additional green space to consolidate practice and game fields around Community Center, also possible site of new park (see Table 11A above for timeline)

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

**Funding Issues**

Funding for a possible Aquatic Facility, Field House, expansion of the fitness area, or purchase of land is beyond the normal Parks and Recreation Budget. The City’s General Fund, State and Federal dollars, grant funds and donations would all be needed to make any of these items a reality. Partnerships with other agencies to build a pool or Field House would reduce the cost, but also reduce the time these facilities are available for use by the general public. Operating costs for the Center will also go up as facilities are expanded. User fees will need to keep pace with these costs if the “break even” goal of operating the Center is to be maintained. As a side note: a field house for soccer and other indoor sports opened in nearby Rossford, OH in late-2006.

FACILITY AND SITE PLANS

G. CONNEAUT PARK

The acreage at the corner of Conneaut and Haskins has never been formally turned over to the Parks Department; it is still owned by the City Utilities Department. The site held a portion of the City reservoir for drinking water and is now used as a sledding hill and open play field by the Community. The Department of Public Works provides maintenance for this open space. Past attempts to develop this site with picnic shelters, parking lots, play equipment, etc. has met with strong opposition from neighbors. Conneaut Park currently consists of a parking lot, play fields and a sledding hill.

**Strategies for 2006-2015**

<b>Table 12. Maintenance, Repair and Capital Improvement Plan for BG Conneaut Park 2006-2015</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>CONNEAUT PARK PROJECT</b>
2007	Get official designation as parkland
	Add signage
	Upgrade steps and railing on sledding hill
	Install drinking fountain
	Replace damaged landscape material, add rocks for protection

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

H. KENWOOD/NAPOLEON PARK

The City and Wood County Park District own a significant natural area along Kenwood and Napoleon Roads. The sixty-five acre site will be developed over the next five years in partnership with the Park District. A boardwalk, ponds and wetlands will be constructed. Nearby schools can walk to the site for naturalist programming and nature exploration. Park information kiosks will feature programs and services offered by both park agencies.

**Strategies for 2006-2015**

<b>Table 13. Development Plan for Kenwood/Napoleon Parklands</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>
2007	Create basic park plan with Wood County Park District
2007-2009	Seek grant funds to develop the park
2010	Begin trail installation and park development

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

I. SAFETY TOWN

Kenwood School is the site of Safety Town, a tiny version of Bowling Green used to teach safety classes to pre-school through elementary-age children each summer. The Parks and Recreation Department maintain the site and program, in conjunction with many other partners in the community. Maintenance needs include replacing the rusting and fallen fencing and repainting signs and structures to improve appearance and durability of this outdoor “city”. Leadership BG 2006 has adopted Safety Town and will make most of these improvements in 2006. Future discussions should include the viability of existing location and shade structures that might be needed on the hot blacktop parking lot site; the ash trees at the site are at risk from the Emerald Ash Borer.

**Strategies for 2006-2015**

<b>Table 14. Maintenance, Repair and Capital Improvement Plan for Safety Town 2006-2015</b>	
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SAFETY TOWN PROJECT</b>
2006	Replace fencing, repair posts damaged from cars hitting them
2006	Repaint signs, seal picnic tables
2006	Replace old traffic light and cross-walk signals
2006	Replace storage shed
	Replace ash trees with other trees or shade structures

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

**J. RANEY PARK**

Raney Park is an open lot with a hedgerow and two weathered park benches set in the neighborhood of Buttonwood and Sandridge. It is used by children as a play field. Improving the look of this City Park has become a goal of the Bowling Green Tree Commission:

**Bowling Green Pride Program - BG Tree Commission**

Goals - To improve the Raney Playground and Bellard Park by cleaning up the properties, upgrading the landscaping with tree removal and replacement, creating butterfly/hummingbird gardens along the east side of Raney Playground, adding a bench at Bellard Park, add a screen landscape along the red fence, creating butterfly/humming bird gardens at Bellard Park, pruning the trees, add new mulch.

Objectives - To use volunteer groups along with City staff from Arborist Division, Public Works, Parks & Recreations, Utilities (Electric/ Water/Sewer) to clean up the sites and help with the landscaping upgrades. The City Arborist and Tree Commission have taken the lead and met with neighbors to secure their support for the project.

**Strategies for 2006-2015**

<b>Table 15. Maintenance, Repair and Capital Improvement Plan for Raney Park 2006-2015</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>RANEY PARK PROJECT</b>
2006	Irrigation and garden installation
2006	Tree replacement
	Kiosk and signage added

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

**K. BELLARD PARK**

Bellard is a wooded lot at the corner of Kenwood and Sandridge Roads. It has two sidewalks running through the green space. See the Bowling Green Pride Project above for details of improvements proposed for this site.

**Strategies for 2006-2015**

<b>Table 16. Maintenance, Repair and Capital Improvement Plan for Bellard Park 2006-2015</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>BELLARD PARK PROJECT</b>
2006	Irrigation and garden installation
2006	Tree replacement
	Kiosk and signage added

**\*dependent upon funding and resource availability**

#### **IV. WALKING AND MULTIPURPOSE TRAIL PLAN**

##### **Existing Conditions:**

There are commonly used places for walking and bike riding in Bowling Green including: the loop at City Park, the golf course adjacent to City Park, the Woodland Mall, the Bowling Green State University Ice Arena, Wintergarden Park, Carter Park, Stone Ridge Golf Course, and within neighborhoods that have low traffic. Walking and running also take place at the Bowling Green Training and Community Center and the BGSU Student Recreation Center tracks. Bicycling takes place on the Slippery Elm Trail and on some streets designated for bicycle travel. Bikes are also used on many other streets in the city whether they are designated as a bike route or not. Children also tend to ride the City sidewalks.

##### **Existing Issues and Concerns:**

The Parks and Recreation Department would like to accomplish several goals with a multi-purpose trail plan: 1. Connect City Park with the Slippery Elm Trail, 2. Connect the Community Center to Poe Road with an off-road trail, 3. Provide a connection between the Community Center and Hull Prairie Road, which is currently designated as a connector to the Maumee River Bridge Crossing trail, to help close a gap in the trail plan for Northwest Ohio and 4. Connect areas of business with residential areas, schools and parks so that people could safely walk, skate or bicycle to their destination and leave their cars at home.

There are two on-street Bike Routes, approved by the Bicycle Safety Commission, that connect the Slippery Elm Trail to City Park. The first runs straight north up Maple Street from the Slippery Elm Trail to City Park. The second runs to Gypsy Lane, Sandridge Road and then Wintergarden to Conneaut. From Conneaut, the route runs east to City Park. Both of these adopted routes are deemed unacceptable by most cyclists due to the narrow design of the streets themselves, or due to the heavy volume of traffic and non-existent berm and shoulders on these roadways. If on-street routes are to be considered seriously as bikeways within the city, then parking traffic on Maple Street needs to be limited to one side and a painted bike lane added on the opposite side, and Gypsy Lane, Wintergarden Road, and Conneaut Avenue must be widened with painted bike lanes added for the safety of riders.

There has been concern since the inception of the Community Center at Newton and Haskins that the public should be able to access it by bicycle. The staff of the Parks and Recreation Department would like to accomplish this task but has concerns over the construction cost of such a trail, which runs \$150,000 per mile. A sidewalk currently runs the west side of Haskins from Poe to near Wren. A crossing of Haskins Road would require a pedestrian- or cyclist-activated walkway light and off-road paving from Wren north to the Community Center. Easements from adjacent property owners would also have to be obtained.

##### **Information from the Community Recreation Needs Survey and Focus Groups**

The information from the 2005 Community Needs Assessment regarding, “the top five recreational activities you or members of your family have engaged in during the past 12 months” include walking, (#1 at 69%), biking, (#3 at 41%), and jogging, (#9 at 17%). When survey respondents were asked, “what needs do you or your family have for existing or additional recreation and aquatic facilities”, 59% expressed a need for paved walking/biking trails. When survey respondents were asked to identify the highest priority project for the Parks Department to pursue, their number one choice was recreational trails.

Information from Focus Groups: The need for trails that connect the parks, the Community Center, and the Slippery Elm Trail was mentioned in several of the forums that served as arenas for public input. Many attending the parents forum stated, “No pedestrian or bike access to Community Center”, as a weakness, and that, “Bike paths, more in general and one that includes the Community Center and Nature Center”, was the most important opportunity to pursue. The participants at the Wintergarden/St. John’s Nature Preserve Forum felt that a great opportunity would be to provide a, “connection to the Park District at N. end of bike, (Slippery Elm), trail – east of the trail”. The City Park Forum participants felt that bicycle and pedestrian use on the road was a significant weakness, and that the former railroad property at City Park could be used as a trail of some kind to connect to Haskins Road.

Strategies for 2006-2015

<b>Table 17. Regional Trail System</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>
2006	Hold public forums on possible trail system as part of City's Transportation Plan update
2006	Partner with Wood Co. Park District to create a connector trail system between Slippery Elm Trail and Hull Prairie Road
2007	Secure easements for trail to Community Center on Haskins Road
	Secure funding for trail to Community Center on Haskins Road
	Install gravel trail to Community Center as funding allows
	Secure funding for connector trail between Slippery Elm Trail and Hull Prairie Road
	Create trail plan to link Slippery Elm Trail with Wintergarden Park
	Install connector trail sections as funding allows
	Install connector trail sections as funding allows
	Install connector trail sections as funding allows

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

**Funding Issues**

Funding for the trail improvements will be investigated as the City of Bowling Green and the Wood County Park District decide upon the development of an operable plan. Between the two organizations funding for trail linkage can be developed at the federal, state, county and city levels. By working with the Park District and the City Grants Administrator, each entity can share resources and experience in writing and applying for grants.

## V. LAND ACQUISITION PLAN

The need to purchase land to provide recreational outlets and to support the existing high quality of life for Citizens of Bowling Green is a priority for the Parks and Recreation Department as we look to the future. This is also a main concern reflected by the community:

- The 2005 Community Recreational Needs Assessment listed recreational trails and open space acquisition respectively as the top two community priorities for the Parks and Recreation Department to pursue.
- 2006 Focus groups also expressed their concern about the expansion of Bowling Green through residential development around the periphery of the city limits and all the annexations and demands for services that this expansion entails.
- Council meetings and referendums are increasingly focusing on issues resulting from this urban expansion and citizen desire for some control over what their City will look like in the future.

In response to the community, the Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department will create a land acquisition plan for the next ten to fifteen years. The actual parcels will not be made public due to the possibility of variable prices for land based on demand, but landowner contacts will be made and willing sellers sought for prime parcels. Criteria for these parcels will be developed in 2006 and will include the community's desire to have walking trails and to preserve native plants and animals as expressed in the Recreational Needs Assessment as the #1 and #4 most important items to address over the next 10 years. The areas of most rapid growth will also be targeted for potential parkland due to the need for people to be within close proximity to recreational areas.

Conservation easements will be explored to protect open space without actual acquisition. Partnerships such as easements with landowners adjacent to existing or future parkland, enable the Department to protect valuable green spaces on a financially limited budget. But such easements also require the public to respect the landowner's right to privacy and limitation on use.

A Partnership with Wood County Park District will be pursued to help develop the parkland at Kenwood. A stronger working alliance with the City's Utility Department will be created to help design valuable green spaces around storm water areas and larger utility parcels. The Parks and Recreation Department will welcome other potential partners and engage them in discussion about how to best protect the green spaces that exist throughout the City of Bowling Green. We will hold a land use forum to talk about linking green spaces and community places through a trail system (see Trail Plan).

Existing funding for land acquisition is extremely limited; the green space fund currently accumulates roughly \$80,000 annually. Parkland is expected to run from \$20,000 to \$40,000 an acre depending upon its value for development. A new park would need to be 40 to 80 acres in size, even if it is not developed into a highly programmed recreational area. To help meet the need for land acquisition funds, the Parks and Recreation Department will pursue State grants and the possibility of an impact fee on new development in the City. The Department will also hold community forums about preferences for various funding vehicles for parkland purchase that will allow the community to achieve its goals. Such funding may include a capital improvement levy or income tax assessment to fund the projects of highest importance to the community, including land acquisition.

As part of the land acquisition plan for the next 5 years, fundraising efforts to pay for the 19.6 acres of woodland west of Wintergarden Park will continue until the \$480,000 loan repayment can be made. The Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Foundation is leading the fundraising efforts, but park Staff provides support for committees, mailings, donation tracking and thank you letters. The green space fund may be tapped to help with this acquisition, making future land purchases through that fund questionable until 2015.

Defining criteria for parkland, such as minimum size or recreational value, will be undertaken. Establishing protection and consistent zoning for parkland is an issue that has been expressed by members of the public. In the next 5 years, the Department of Parks and Recreation will present some criteria and protection strategies to the Park Board and, ultimately, City Council for discussion and approval.

Parkland is currently managed by both the Department of Parks and Recreation and Department of Public Works. Staff from Public Works assume turf and garden maintenance for almost all the parks and assists in major construction projects. Before new parkland is acquired, the ability to properly maintain it must be examined and the resources present to accomplish the task. Thus, any acquisition plan will be created in consultation with the Public Works Director and Municipal Administrator.

Strategies for 2006-2015

<b>Table 18 . Green Space Preservation and New Parkland</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>
2006	Development Plan created for Kenwood/Napoleon Parkland in partnership with Wood County Park District
2006	Identify potential parkland, secure offer to purchase so grants can be sought
	Apply for grant funding for impact fee program creation
	Acquire grant funding for partial purchase of parkland and for impact fee program creation
	Introduce legislation for potential Impact Fee program to fund new parkland purchase
	Wetland and pond created at Kenwood/Napoleon Parkland
	Acquire grant funding for partial purchase of parkland
	Seek additional funding for new parkland: Capital Improvement Levy? Impact Fees?
	Acquire parkland if funding is available
	Trail system created at Kenwood/Napoleon Parkland
	Public forums to create plan for access/development of new park if land purchased
	Develop public access for new parkland if purchased

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

## **VI. NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION PLAN**

### **Introduction**

The Natural Resources component of the Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department has been growing steadily since the creation of Wintergarden/St. John's Nature Preserve (WGSJNP) and Rotary Nature Center (formerly known as Wintergarden Park and Lodge) as a site dedicated to nature education and habitat restoration.

The need to conserve natural resources in order to provide passive recreational and educational opportunities while enhancing the quality of life for the Citizens of Bowling Green is one of the top priorities of the Natural Resources Staff.

Objectives include:

- To preserve local biological diversity
- To maintain healthy natural habitats
- To coordinate natural areas management and restoration with volunteer opportunities

The community has expressed its interest in this issue and is supported by the 2005 Community Recreational Needs Assessment and the 2005/6 Focus Groups.

- The Recreational Needs Assessment ranks the Wintergarden/St. John's Nature Preserve (the most significant natural resources based park) as the # 2 park in usage (60% of respondents utilize the preserve)
- The Recreational Needs Assessment also ranks the #4 most important item to address over the next five years as "manage for native plants and animals"
- The Nov. 3, 2005 Wintergarden/St. John's Nature Preserve and Rotary Nature Center Public Forum listed several strengths related to natural resources conservation including (#1) trails were not paved, (#2) the flora and fauna [in general] and (#5) prairie restoration
- The February 2, 2006 City Park Forum cited the #2 strength as "old trees and wildlife habitat"
- The January 22, 2006 Parents Forum cites the #3 strength as "Nature Center programming as a whole" which is directly related to the availability of natural resources

When evaluating and planning for natural resources conservation it is important to keep in mind several components: The Natural History of the Area, Volunteers and Education, and Natural Areas Management and Habitat Restoration.

### **The Natural History of the Area**

The natural habitats historically found in northwest Ohio, at the time of European settlement, were greatly shaped by the impact of the last Ice Age. As the glaciers and lakes repeatedly advanced and retreated the landscape was altered, scraped away and flattened. This geologic process combined with the heavy clay soil resulted in an area of poor drainage, later to be known as the Great Black Swamp. Ten thousand years ago, a predecessor to Lake Erie known as Lake Warren, deposited sand along its edges. The deposits of this ancient lake are the sand ridges that run through Wood County today. Although Wood County was dominated by swamplands at the time of European settlement, lush prairie grasses, flowers and open oak savannas were also found where Bowling Green is located.

### **Volunteers and Education**

One of the main objectives of the Natural Resources Conservation Plan is to incorporate natural areas management with volunteer opportunities in order to educate the citizens of Bowling Green about their natural heritage and instill in them values of land stewardship. Projects that typically utilize volunteers include trail maintenance, picking up trash, weed removal, seed collection, planting of seeds and transplants, plant and animal monitoring, and assisting with prescribed burns.

### **Natural Areas Management and Habitat Restoration Projects**

The Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for a variety of vastly different sites located throughout the City. Each of these sites contain some component of natural resources to be managed by the Natural Resources Staff in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Maintenance staff, the Public Works Department, and the City Arborist. From the large, shade-providing oak trees of City Park to the remnants of historic oak savanna at the Wintergarden/St. John's Nature Preserve, there is a diversity of valuable natural resources located in Bowling Green. There is also the potential to further enhance existing sites and expand natural resources conservation in the future through land acquisition and encouragement of open space preservation (see details in the Land Acquisition Plan).

It is important to note that the terms natural areas management and habitat restoration are not always interchangeable. All Parks and Recreation sites contain natural resources to be managed; however, only certain sites (WGSJNP and the Bowling Green Training and Community Center) are undergoing restoration projects to alter and enhance the flora and fauna

contained within. The Natural Resources Staff has been taking an adaptive management approach to these restoration efforts, which entails seasonal and annual evaluation of progress.

Techniques and Tools used to achieve habitat restoration:

- Manual and chemical removal of non-native and invasive plant species
- Prescribed burning
- Mowing
- Planting both seeds and transplants
- Monitoring of flora and fauna

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### Wintergarden/St. John's Nature Preserve

This 109-acre site includes a degraded oak savanna, an old farm field (with early successional prairie plants making a natural appearance and comeback), an enhanced wetland, a second growth woodland and mature swamp woods. The preserve has the potential to host a variety of habitats, which help one to visualize what the Bowling Green landscape looked like at settlement. This includes the Great Black Swamp, oak savanna, tallgrass prairie, shortgrass prairie, wet prairie and wetland habitats. The preserve has been undergoing restoration efforts through selective land management techniques in order to enhance/create these targeted habitats since 1998. In restoring native habitats to the Wintergarden/St. John's Nature Preserve, staff have used local genotypes of flora from Wood County and northwest Ohio.

### Bowling Green Training and Community Center Prairie

The land surrounding the building was planted with a tall grass prairie seed mix supplied by Prairie Nursery of Wisconsin on May 13, 2005. The native grasses and flowers chosen for this mix represent plants that would have historically been found in the Bowling Green area. The prairie planted at the Community Center will help to salvage a part of Bowling Green's natural history. The Parks and Recreation Department and the community of Bowling Green will benefit by saving money and resources, while contributing towards a healthy environment, providing habitat for wildlife and producing a pleasing scenery.

### Simpson Garden Park

Infrastructure improvements are currently in progress at the site of the future Simpson Garden Park. Master gardeners have designed, planted and maintained the first garden of the park near the building and have begun caring for the landscaping surrounding the building as well. The Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Foundation is currently conducting a fundraising campaign for the park. A detailed site plan has been developed; for more information please see the Simpson Garden Park section of this Master Plan.

### **Other Parks and Recreation Sites**

- City Park – The large, old historic oak trees set the stage for this central park. The infestation of Gypsy moth larvae has the potential to weaken the health of the trees due to defoliation. Several landscaping beds are scattered throughout the park. A large portion of the public-owned land is currently leased to the Bowling Green Country Club and utilized as a golf course. This parcel also includes an unused, fenced-in quarry pond.
- Carter Park – A nice cove of mature trees with spring wildflowers is found between the disc golf course and the ball fields.
- Kenwood/Napoleon – The land is in public ownership; however, it is not open to the public at this time. Future development includes wetland and aquatic habitats.
- Conneaut Park – Open lawn, trees, a created hill for sled riding and a scrubby hedgerow are the natural elements found at this park.
- Raney/Bellard Parks – Open spaces with trees and lawn.

### Urban Forestry Management Plan for Parks and Recreation Department

The City Arborist completed an Urban Forestry Management Plan for Parks and Recreation in 2005. Highlights of the plan relevant to the Natural Resources Conservation Plan include:

- A five-year maintenance schedule with park trees beginning in 2010 (all park trees not part of large natural areas were inventoried in 2005).
- Assisting Parks and Recreation with hazard tree inspection, tree selection (by providing a Master Tree Planting List), landscape designs, and the coordination of contracts for tree purchases and plantings.
- Leading Parks and Recreation in a Gypsy Moth Suppression Plan for City Park.

### Memorial Tree Program

A record keeping system was recently developed in 2005 and will be maintained by the Natural Resources Staff using GIS.

### **Plant and Animal Monitoring**

The current plant and animal monitoring programs at the WGSJNP consist of:

- An overall plant list
- Spring wildflower blooming dates
- Bluebird box nestling reproductive success
- Frog and toad diversity
- Butterfly, moth, damselfly and dragonfly diversity
- An overall bird species list

### **Strategies for 2006-2015**

<b>Table 19. Natural Resource Conservation Plan</b>	
<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>
2006	Formal land management plan for Wintergarden created
2006	Gypsy moth suppression plan implemented at City Park
2006	Create tree replacement plan for Carter Park
2006	Clean up hedgerow at Conneaut Park
2006	Add butterfly/hummingbird gardens to Raney and Bellard Parks
2006	Natural resource restoration and monitoring activities
2007	Continue to monitor and improve prairie planting at the Community Center
2007	Expand self-guided nature interpretation to City Park
2007	Survey/mark Simpson Garden Park boundaries
2007	Create land management plan for City Park
2007	Develop a tree replacement plan for City Park
2007	Implement tree replacement plan at Carter Park and Conneaut Park
2007	Explore habitat enhancement options at Carter Park
2007	Natural resource restoration and monitoring activities
2008	Survey and mark Wintergarden Park boundaries
2008	Seed areas of the prairie at the Community Center that need improvement
2008	Phase out Nature Center rentals/ convert to dedicated nature information facility
2008	Create land management plan for Carter Park
2008	Create land management plan for Conneaut Park
2008	Create trail and interpretive plan for Kenwood/Napoleon parkland
2008	Natural resource restoration and monitoring activities
2009	Create land management plan for Bellard and Raney Parks
2009	Secure funding for Kenwood/Napoleon trails
2009	Survey and mark Carter Park boundaries
2009	Natural resource restoration and monitoring activities
2010	Install trails at Kenwood/Napoleon parkland
2010	Survey and mark Conneaut Park boundaries
2010	Five-year tree maintenance schedule is implemented
2010	Natural resource restoration and monitoring activities

\*dependent upon funding and resource availability

**Property Boundaries**

Because natural areas and green space are becoming scarcer within the city limits, the existing parks are sustaining increased pressure both from users and from residents who live along the property boundaries. Encroachment into public park lands occurs in the form of yard waste and trash dumped across property boundaries, mowing natural areas to turn them into lawn, cutting down trees and shrubs, removing wildflowers, “transplanting” unwanted animals and even construction of gardens, storage sheds and other outbuildings on public property. Some of this encroachment occurs because of unclear property boundaries, especially at Wintergarden/ St. John’s Nature Preserve.

In the next 5 years, the Parks and Recreation Department will contract with the City Surveyor to survey the exact boundaries of the parks. Boundary markers will be placed along the survey line to permanently establish where public parkland begins. The Parks and Recreation Department will urge increased enforcement of trespass and dumping regulations to protect our valuable parkland for future generations.

## VII. PROGRAM PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

#### Philosophy of Programming

Bowling Green Parks and Recreation strives to provide programming to meet the leisure needs of its citizens. We use our limited resources to partner, support and avoid duplication in programming offered by others in the area. Certain components of our programming have very specific philosophies, such as:

**Youth Sports** – Our youth sports programs and events are designed to offer kids a fun, non-threatening environment where they can learn the skills of the game and have FUN! We are a member of the National Alliance for Youth Sports and train coaches and parents that youth sports should be fun. The goal is to keep kids participating so they will remain active adults.

**Natural Resources** – The programming goal of the Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department's Natural Resources Staff is to facilitate an appreciation of the natural world through outdoor environmental education.

The objectives are:

- To interpret local natural and cultural heritage of the Bowling Green area in relation to all of northwest Ohio, the United States and the world
- To utilize experiential and hands-on approaches to educate participants regarding the outdoor environment while increasing their knowledge of ecological concepts and natural history
- To explore the human/nature relationship including the impact each has had on the other in the past, how this affects the present and how this can/will impact the future of the relationship
- To provide opportunities for Bowling Green residents to enjoy their leisure time passively recreating outdoors
- To promote the acquisition of stewardship skills through participation in land management activities, demonstration of leave-no-trace concepts and use of primitive survival skills

### SUMMARY OF CURRENT OFFERINGS

The Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department's programming can be organized into five main categories; Natural Resources, Sports, Recreation, Special Events and Fitness/Wellness. The listings that follow are a brief overview of what the department currently offers.

**Natural Resources** - Currently, three Natural Resources Staff members provide a diversity of year round programming opportunities for the Bowling Green community. Seasonal staff and volunteers are utilized to assist with programs. Volunteers assisting with programming include several area youth and adult residents along with Environmental Studies and Recreation students from Bowling Green State University.

Natural Resources programming falls into two general categories: planned public programs and special request programs. Since the majority of natural resources programming is education based and requires minimal supplies and materials, out-of-pocket fees generally do not apply. Fees are typically assigned only if materials or supplies are needed or there is a large amount of staff time utilized in preparation. Registration and cancellation policies for planned public programs follow those in place for the department. Drop-in participants are typically welcome for free general planned public programs since most programs do not exceed capacity. If participants choose to arrive without pre-registering, they run the risk of showing up for a program that has been cancelled due to low or no pre-registered participants. Special request programs are set up by the participant in direct communication with the natural resources staff and are most popular in the spring and fall.

#### Planned Public Programs

- **General Monthly Public Programs:** These programs are typically free, family-oriented nature hikes with a theme. Occasionally age restrictions apply.
- **Young Ones and Companions:** Young Ones and Companions is a monthly program for children ages *approximately* 2.5 to 5 years (this is flexible). Each month has a topic for the lesson/story time that is reinforced by a scavenger hunt or activity for the hike and followed up by an arts/crafts project. There are three weekday mornings per month for parents to choose from. A *non-refundable* fee of \$2 per child per program is charged to cover the cost of arts/crafts materials and to reserve the child's placement in the program.
- **Babies in the Preserve:** This monthly weekday morning program is designed for children 6 months to 2 ½ years, accompanied by an adult and a stroller worthy of travel on dirt paths or a backpack or sling. There is no set curriculum for each month, the program is more or less a chance for parents to get out of the house and go for a walk with their child and socialize with other children and parents. Children experience nature and parents learn how to identify hazards (i.e., poison ivy) and learn how to encourage their children to

enjoy the outdoors. Outside activities are weather dependent and up to the discretion of the adults. Hikes are not common in the cold months or when there are large masses of mosquitoes. The Nature Room serves as a passive play area and the Window on Wildlife serves as entertainment.

- **Fall/Spring Planned Public Volunteer Opportunities:** Planned volunteer opportunities for the public at Wintergarden/St. John's Nature Preserve are scheduled in the Fall and Spring. There are typically 4 or 5 sessions each season on Saturday mornings. Currently the morning is divided into two age groups. There is a 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade session from 9-10 AM and High School, College Students and Adults volunteer from 10:30 till noon.
- **Special Events & Parks and Recreation Foundation Affiliated Events:** There are several annual events at the Nature Preserve. Two Parks and Recreation special events are the Chili Walk (February) and the March for Parks (April). Two Foundation affiliated events are the Wine and Cheese Social (late September) and the Foundation Breakfast (early May).
- **Summer Camps:** The summer camps offered by the natural resources staff have grown and evolved greatly over the last five years. Currently there are two versions/curricula of Our Natural World which is a half-day camp designed for children ages 6-8. This camp focuses on nature appreciation and exploration. The staff offers a variety of activities to engage children in the out-of-doors and they learn about plants and animals through hands-on lessons, hikes, games, and arts and crafts projects. Adventures in Ecology & Natural History camp is for children ages 9-12 years old. This camp focuses on environmental education. The staff offers a variety of activities to engage children as they explore ecological concepts through an interdisciplinary approach, hands-on experiments, hikes and games. There are also two options for the Wilderness Explorers, a half-day camp for children 9-12 years old. These camps are held in conjunction with BGSU Outdoor Programs and focuses on challenging participants in outdoor adventure activities and survival skills, teambuilding games and stewardship of the environment. Off-site field trips are a highlight of this camp.

#### Special Request Programs

\*Special Request Programs and Group Volunteer Projects: These programs are designed to meet the needs of the group. Year-round general nature hikes and nature programs are available upon request for no out-of-pocket fee. Programs are scheduled at the convenience of the school or community group and can include evenings and Saturdays. Groups that have taken advantage of special request programs include scout groups, civic groups, schools, home-schooled children, day care facilities, senior centers or church groups. Programs are designed to meet the group's needs for general nature appreciation, volunteer hours, naturalist and forestry scout badges, and to supplement school curricula. A pamphlet entitled, "Hands-On Nature! Programs for Youth Organizations", is available for scout, 4-H and other youth group leaders.

\*Individual Volunteer Opportunities: are scheduled on an "as needed" basis to accommodate the interests/needs of the individual. Opportunities range from assisting with planned or special request programs to general fieldwork or restoration activities.

**Sports** – A variety of sports leagues, programs and events are held year round for youth and adult.

Youth sports offered include: winter basketball league, fall soccer league, summer softball league, winter curling program, junior high girls intramural volleyball league, junior high intramural basketball and six different Start Smart developmental programs in which the parent and child work together (basic, soccer, basketball, baseball, football and golf).

Adult sports offered include: summer softball leagues, fall softball league, volleyball leagues, basketball leagues, open gym basketball, drop in soccer, sand volleyball leagues, 3 on 3 basketball league, roller hockey, disc golf tournaments, lawn bowling, and tennis programming.

**Recreation** – is a broad category encompassing camps, aquatics and educational or cultural programs.

Camps are offered throughout the year for children from 3 ½ to 14 years old, and include: arts and crafts, basketball, baton, bowling, Britannia Soccer Camp, various Day Camps in the morning and afternoon, cheerleading, football, Girl Power Tween Camp, golf, tennis, lacrosse, softball, volleyball, various nature camps, roller hockey, Safety Town, soccer, dance, and track.

Nine different levels of Red Cross swim lessons are offered in the summer for children six months through 15 years of age including: Infant and Preschool Aquatic Program, Pre-beginner, Beginner, Advanced Beginner, Intermediate, Swimmer, Advanced Swimmer, Water Safety Instructor Aide, and Diving.

A wide variety of classes and programs are offered throughout the year for all ages including: Quilting, Holiday Happening, Mother/Son Western Rodeo, Mother/Daughter Teddy Bear Picnic, Father/Son Wiffle Ball Picnic, BooNanza Family program, Father/Son Olympics, Daddy/Daughter Dance, Family Groove dance program, Family Cooking program, Family Fun & Fitness Day, Junior High After School programs, After Hours @ the Community Center (7-9<sup>th</sup> grade), Microwave Cooking Class for youth, Glass Art Classes (all ages), Nutrition Series, Red Cross Babysitter Training and Red Cross "When I'm in Charge" class.

**Special Events** – Year-round special events occur mainly during the warmer months including: Adult Egg Scramble, National Employee Health & Fitness Day, March for Parks, Bike to Work Day, Concerts in the Park (7), Lunches in the Park (9), Family Picnics in the Park (5), Pet Show, Hershey Track & Field Meet, Free Day/Fun Days at the Pool (2), Back to School Bash at the Pool, MLB Pitch, Hit & Run, NFL Punt, Pass & Kick, Breakfast with Santa, Dinner with Frosty, March Madness Basketball Shootout and Park it and Read.

**Fitness/Wellness** – The department has been able to increase fitness programming thanks to the opening of the Community Center and the addition of fitness staff. Program expansions include: Sizzling Samples, Yoga, Spicy Step, Ballet for children and adults, Cardio Mix, Functional Fitness, Cruise to Wellness and partner programs with Wood County Hospital. Programs that existed prior to the opening of the center and will continue include: Walk City Park, Walk the Woodland Mall, Tae Kwon Do, Senior Exercise Classes, Body Recall Class, Chair Volleyball (55+) and Badminton (55+) if demand stays strong.

**Evaluation of current offerings**

Programs are evaluated both by staff and participants. An on-line program evaluation form will be implemented in 2006 to expand our users' abilities to give us input into program improvement. Outdated programs will be eliminated and new programs created as community demand changes over the next 5 years. Staying in touch with our participants and responding to their needs is critical to achieve our mission.

**Community input**

Community input provided through surveys, focus groups and user surveys includes: keeping a good variety of programs at a low cost, continuation of non-competitive youth sports opportunities, quality programs, an increase in art, music and cultural programming and in programs for 2-5 year olds

**Strategies for 2006-2015**

**Table 20. Program Plan**

<b>YEAR*</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>
2006	Create and implement new program evaluation procedure
2006	Safety Town curriculum follows Red Cross program closely
2006	Outdoor adventure programming increased
2006	Ropes challenge course added, programs offered
2006	Recreation provider information sharing is facilitated
2006	Introduce plyometric training programs at Community Center
2006	Expand fitness program offerings
2007	Expand preschool program offerings
2007	Continue and expand Jr High programming with PTO
2007	Participation in the national "We Can" program
2007	Install information kiosks at each park
2007	Camps meet most ACA standards
2007	Schools and scouts targeted for nature program expansion
2007	Volunteer programs expanded and coordination improved
2007	Introduce golf and football programs for youth
2007	Web and hard copy info developed on leisure providers in Bowling Green
2007	League play shortened to encourage more adult participants
2007	Expand special event programming
2007	Integrate National Park and Recreation Accreditation standards into programming
2007	Create partnerships with cultural program providers to meet community need for this type of programming, publicize and co-sponsor these programs
2008	Nature Center becomes staffed every day, open to the public
2008	Seek National Park and Recreation Accreditation for our programs and services

- 2008 Offer seasonal Horticulture/Gardening programs at Simpson Garden Park
  - 2009 Expand Horticulture/Gardening program at Simpson Garden Park
  - 2006-
  - 2011 Evaluate effectiveness and quality of programs, alter as community needs change
- \*dependent upon funding and resource availability

### **Resource Allocation & Budgeting**

Staffing & Facility Needs – The Community Center has proven to be a boon for recreational programming, however the department needs to develop accurate internal figures of program costs to set fees. With a limited budget, the Department must use these program fees to balance the cost of staffing, facility maintenance and equipment. Seasonal staffing will continue to be an important way to balance the budget, while offering greatly expanded summer programming and operation of the pool. But staff competence and program quality suffer as a result. The Department needs to find funding for permanent programming staff to ensure consistent service delivery. Partnering with other agencies will continue to expand our ability to offer recreational programs.

Private Sponsorships & Grant Funding – Currently the department relies on private sponsorships for many of our special events and youth and adult athletic leagues. Increasing these donations will allow the Department to recover costs and keep user fees reasonable. Grant funding will also be sought to expand our services. The Director will focus on securing private funds for the Department over the next five years.

### **Performance Measures & Improvement**

Staying in touch with our users is critical. User surveys and internal staff evaluations are completed for programs. They will be tracked and utilized to improve programs or eliminate those that are not successful. A new on-line survey process is being implemented in 2006 to help our users provide us with their comments. The online method should increase the response rate and aid in the analysis of data for reports.

The Recreational Needs Assessment will be administered again in 2010 to track local trends in program needs. National trends are monitored by Staff through the use of professional journals, web sites, list servers, and conferences.

Using national accreditation standards, the Parks and Recreation Department can compare its operations and programs to others and utilize these standards for operations. The accreditation process through the National Recreation and Park Association will be pursued in the next five years to measure and improve our services.

## VIII. General Maintenance Plan

### Improve security of existing facilities

Currently, renters are provided with keys or swipe cards to enter park buildings. In 2005, there were documented cases of people entering and using facilities without a rental contract or picking up a key. The Department is left to conclude that not all renters have returned their keys over the years. There were also frequent examples of windows and doors being left open after renters leave.

Locks should be changed on major rental buildings and no keys given out to the public to prevent loss and unauthorized use. There will be an increase in cost if this is to occur, both for the new lock and key system and for the staff to unlock and lock up buildings for renters. Having a staff person present at the end of the rental also makes it clear who is responsible for damage to the building; it is sometimes hard to assign damage to a rental. The Department will work with the Park Board to create and fund increased security in 2007.

There are some times of the year when vandalism is more likely to occur in the parks than others. Partnering with the Bowling Green Police Division to step up patrols during this time may help eliminate this vandalism. Increased patrols should also be requested during major softball tournaments to keep the participants and spectators on their best behavior. Patrolling the parking lot to eliminate illegal alcohol use during a tournament will also decrease the likelihood of fighting and facility damage.

### Increased Maintenance of Existing Facilities

By 2007, a preventative maintenance plan will be created for park facilities to halt deterioration at an early stage and prevent major repair costs later. The ability to implement preventative maintenance will be dependent upon adequate funding. Maintenance operation and procedure manuals will also be created and staff cross-trained in different parks to ensure a transfer of maintenance knowledge across the department. Training for staff will be provided in the annual budget to increase their knowledge base and proficiency in keeping our parks and facilities functioning at a high level.

### Capital Improvement Plan

The Parks and Recreation Department, along with other city departments, has a long-range improvement plan. This plan includes the major facility improvements highlighted by the Community as high-priority projects. The Capital Improvement Plan also lists sources of funding; grant funding and sponsorships are an unpredictable source of revenue and those projects funded by grants will not occur if funding is not available.

An equipment replacement plan will be created by 2007 to help predict the funding needed to replace vehicles, mowers, tractors and other items of major expense. Funding for equipment will come from the Parks and Recreation Fund.

### Strategies for 2006-2015

**Table 21. General Park Maintenance Plan**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>
2006	Create preventative maintenance plan, manuals
2007	Create equipment replacement plan
2007	Replace building locks, shift to staff supervised locking/unlocking of rental buildings
2007	Complete daily/weekly/monthly task lists for all facilities and follow them
2007	Create staff training and development plan to increase knowledge and skill base

## **IX. Operations and Management Plan**

To assure excellence and continual improvement in operations, the Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department will strive to meet national standards for parks. The National Recreation and Parks Association has established an accreditation program which outlines all of the elements necessary for quality operations and management. This program, overseen by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) will be implemented over the next 5 years. The CAPRA self-assessment manual will be used to guide standards of operation and maintenance for the department. Hallmarks of the CAPRA standards include:

- Agency authority, role and responsibility
- Planning
- Organization and Administration
- Human Resources
- Finance
- Program and Service Management
- Facility and Land Use Management
- Safety and Security
- Risk Management
- Evaluation and Research

### **Continuously Improving Operations**

The Parks and Recreation Department has the following plans in place to help achieve operational excellence:

- Cost Recovery Plan – adopted by Board 2006
- Business Plan for the Community Center
- Strategic Marketing Plan

### **Continuously Improving Services**

While the Department has integrated many of the CAPRA standards into operations, there are more that must be incorporated. Over the next 5 years, staff will develop and/or implement the following plans and procedures:

- Community Relations Plan
- Customer Service Plan
- Implementation of newly created Contractor Policies
- Improved evaluation and reporting of programs and services

### **Improved Monitoring and Supervision**

To assure quality services and a healthy workplace culture, Supervisors of the Department will be engaged in training programs to sharpen their skills and deepen their understanding of leadership and management. The Director will set clear expectations for supervisors. This master plan will form the basis of the annual goals and strategies set forth by the Department and tied directly to the work plans and performance appraisals used for the year.

Contractor-led programs will also be subject to staff supervision and monitoring to ensure quality programs and services for our customers. In-house evaluation of programs and customer comment cards will be used regularly to engage the Community of park users in a discussion of their expectations and needs. These will be integrated into Department operations and staff performance.

### **Staff Development and Competence**

Staff of Parks and Recreation will have a clear understanding of the important role they play in the Department. Job descriptions will be reviewed frequently and updated to reflect Operational policies and procedures have been established in past areas of confusion to provide consistent service levels across the Department and staff. These will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect the best management practices for our Community when it comes to Parks and Recreation.

As a service provider, the most important resource of the Parks and Recreation Department is the Staff. Increasing Staff education, work experience and competence will be accomplished in the following ways:

- Creating and using staff development plans
- Encouraging and supporting professional memberships and training
- Requiring and supporting certification in certain areas of operation
- Providing professional training in leadership and management to Staff
- Creating focus and study groups to explore management and leadership topics

- Benchmarking and networking with other quality park and recreation agencies
- Linking performance appraisals with travel and training opportunities
- Whenever possible, allowing staff to perform in their areas of strength and seek assistance in strengthening areas of weakness
- Encouraging leadership across the ranks and recognizing good performance
- Creating a work environment where people feel they readily give and receive support and input

#### **Operational Security Plan**

The Parks and Recreation Department strives for clean and safe parks for the Community. We are responsible for judiciously spending the funds entrusted to us by the public and for ensuring the well being of our customers and our staff. To continue confidence in the parks, the following controls and procedures are in place:

- Fiscal Controls to track expenditures, revenues and the approved budget for the year
- Emergency Operations Plan to ensure rapid and appropriate response when unusual situations arise
- Communications Plan to provide accurate and timely information concerning both public and internal communication
- Inventory and tracking of major assets
- Safety Program and OSHA training
- Background checks on staff and volunteers who may work alone with children
- Driver Record Check and Drug Screening for employees who are driving vehicles

## X. Financial Plan

### Financing Capital Improvements and Land Acquisition

The Parks and Recreation Department has a \$1.8 million budget in 2007. Revenue from the property tax levy is just under \$600,000 (33%). This levy income will remain fixed until it expires in 2010. The City income tax dedicated to Parks and Recreation generates \$370,000 (20%); this income varies with the economy. Grants and donations are unpredictable sources of income, but have played a prominent role in constructing new facilities or in major maintenance of older buildings. Earned income (rental fees, program fees, pass sales, concessions, etc.) comprises almost 47% of the annual revenue needed to maintain the parks and programs. To keep pace with increasing wage, supply, equipment, utility and health insurance costs, these fees and costs have been raised slightly each year since 2004. This trend will continue into 2010, but may not provide enough funding to maintain existing services if other sources of funding decrease or remain stagnant.

Because the property tax levy amount was replaced at the current level (1.4 mills) and the State has phased out tangible property taxes for businesses (creating a 10% decrease in the amount received from the levy), no major increases in the Department's revenue budget are anticipated through 2010. Currently, about \$80,000 each year is available for major maintenance projects, but this master plan outlines over \$1.5 million in repairs and maintenance of existing structures. This does not include the \$480,000 campaign to complete the purchase of 19.6 acres west of Wintergarden/ St. John's Nature Preserve. Nor does it include estimates to repair, replace or create a new aquatic facility.

To ensure clean, safe parks, deteriorating structures can also be removed from parks. The elimination of the HAGS water play unit from the Aquatic Center in 2006 and the unsafe play equipment from Carter Park in 2007 are examples of proactive action that can be taken even if funding for replacements does not currently exist. But because of the Community's attachment to and historic nature of many of the buildings and structures, efforts will be made to seek funding for repair and replacement rather than demolition and removal whenever possible.

Researching past history of parkland and building acquisition and capital improvements in the Bowling Green City Parks has shown a mix of funding sources. The tables below illustrate the projects funded by the City's General Fund, Park Fund, donations and state/federal grants. This history of support from many sources will have to be repeated to accomplish all of the basic maintenance outlined in this plan. Expansions of service, like acquiring new parkland, building a bike/hike trail through the City, or a new indoor pool will require additional public funds; a property tax or income tax levy appear to be the most likely means of accomplishing the additional projects that the Community deems worthy of their tax dollars.

**Table 22. Park Capital Improvement/Major Maintenance Funded by the City's General Fund**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Funding</u>
pre-1900	Needle Hall	General Fund
1900-1908	Veteran's Building- south part	General Fund
1909-1915	Girl Scout building	General Fund
1916-1925	Veteran's Building - north part	General Fund
1916-1945	Depot Building created as restroom	General Fund
1950s?	Eli Joyce field	General Fund
1950's?	Teen shelter at City Park	General Fund
1950s?	Tennis courts at City Park	General Fund
1950s?	Basketball courts at City Park	General Fund
<b>1963</b>	Eli Joyce drainage	General Fund
1963	Pool reconfiguration-\$100,000	General Fund
1963	Pool filter house	General Fund
1964	Pool bath house- \$22,000	General Fund
1966	City Park shelter - on old wading pool	General Fund
1972	Carter Park fencing	General Fund
1972	Pool Bath House improvements	General Fund
<b>1975?</b>	High School recreation area	General Fund
1975	High School tennis courts	General Fund
1975	Vet/Am Legion Building	General Fund purchased building for \$22,000
1975	Vet/Am Legion Building facelift	General Fund
1976	City Park entrance	General Fund

1976	Girl Scout building- renovation	General Fund
1976	Veteran's Building renovation	General Fund
1978	Depot Building renovation at City Park	General Fund
1984?	Carter Park site grading	General Fund
1985	Carter tree planting - 100 evergreens	General Fund
1986?	Pool guard house	General Fund
1986	Pool filtration system	General Fund
1986	Veteran's Building renovation	\$5,000 General Fund, \$125,000 CDBG
1989	Pool gutter replacement	General Fund - \$110,000
1990	Carter Park roadway, parking and drainage	General Fund/Water Sewer Fund - \$122,768
1990?	City Park Maint building	Transfer from Lands and Buildings
	Parking at Veteran's Building	General Fund
	Sidewalks in City Park	General Fund
1994	Carter Park lighting project	est at \$27,000
1996	Veteran's Bldg. renovation	\$130,000
2002-2004	Community Center	General Fund (\$4 million)
2003-2006	Stone wall refurbishment - City Park	General Fund
2005	Playground at City Park	Donation-Wood Co. Pk District /General fund \$60,000
2006	Improvements at Raney and Bellard Parks	General Fund labor, materials, Donations from Community and Tree Commission

**Table 23. Park Capital Improvement/Major Maintenance Funded by the City's Park Fund**

1969	Wintergarden Lodge built	\$5,000 donation, \$30,000 Parks and Rec, \$15,000 borrowed
1986?	Carter Park drainage	Parks Fund
1988/89	Carter Park Hub Buildings/Softball fields	\$89,000 Parks Fund (\$55,000 loan), \$30,000 Rotary donation, \$10,000 Timken, \$7,000 State Home Federal- naming rights?
1989	Pool deck and arbors	Parks Fund- materials
1990	Carter Park infield material	Parks Fund
1991	Playground at City Park	Donation (\$5000 from Kiwanis, \$10,000 from others), Parks Fund (\$40,000), General Fund (?)- \$55,000 total project
1992-1993	Phase I - Pool renovation	City ordinance for \$33,795 for wading pool, slide (\$86,000) and sand volleyball - total \$350,000 (\$350,000 total borrowed- CDBG funds requested and denied, came from Parks Fund over time)
1994?	Splash pool at City Park	see Phase I in 1992- \$350,000 total project
1995	Eli Joyce field renovated and named	Parks Fund
1995?	Girl Scout Building roof	Parks Fund
1996	Mobile concession trailer	Parks Fund- \$20,000
1996	Carter Park Playground (2)	\$45,000 project - \$25,000 ODNR, \$15,000 Wood Co Solid Waste District, rest from Parks Fund?
1996-97	Carter Park Disc Golf Course	Parks Fund- \$4,500
1996	Needle Hall exterior stage	Parks Fund- \$8,000
1996?	Veteran's Building roof	Parks Fund

1997-98	In line rink restroom	(\$33,000 est. in 1996)
1999-2003	Dunbridge Rd. soccer fields	Parks Fund-\$15,000
2000?	Depot Building roof	Parks Fund
2002	Purchase of Simpson Bldg	Parks Fund- \$636,000
2003-2004	Pool liner	Parks Fund - \$65,300
2003	Waterworks pool leak repair	Parks Fund - \$10,000
2003	Pool concession stand metal shutters	Parks Fund
2004	E. Shelter house restroom - City Park	Parks Fund- \$60,825
2004?	Huffman shelter	Parks Fund?
2005	Simpson power line burial	Parks Fund - \$100,000
2005	Simpson well and pump	Parks Fund/Utilities- \$22,000
2005	Simpson drainage tile	Parks Fund
2005	Simpson soil mounding in Sculpture Garden	Parks Fund

**Table 24. Park Capital Improvement/Major Maintenance Funded by Donations**

1935	Original Pool	WPA
1935	Masonic stone shelter	Donation
1935	Stone wall at City Park	WPA
1950s	Eli Joyce press box	BG Softball Assoc. donation
1965	Girl Scout building- restrooms/plumbing	Am Youth Hostels donation
1960's?	Kiwanis shelter	Kiwanis Club donation
1960's?	Kiwanis Memorial shelter- renovated in 2000	Kiwanis Club donation
1969	Wintergarden Lodge built	\$5,000 Jaycees donation, \$30,000 Parks and Rec, \$15,000 borrowed
1974	Carter Park shelters in woods	Rotary Club donation
1976	Carter Park playground	Donations:Welcome Wagon, Jaycees, others
1988/89	Carter Park Hub Buildings/Softball fields	\$89,000 Parks Fund (\$55,000 loan), \$30,000 Rotary donation, \$10,000 Timken, \$7,000 State Home Federal- naming rights?
1990	Carter Shelter Houses	Kiwanis Club donation
1991	Playground at City Park	Donation (\$5000 from Kiwanis, \$10,000 from others), Parks Fund (\$40,000), General Fund (?)- \$55,000 total project
1994-1995	Wintergarden Lodge renovation	Rotary \$44,000, Parks Fund \$10,000
1994-95	Stone Shelter refurbished at City Park	Wood Co. Lodge- Free and Accepted Masons \$14,000
1997-98	In line rink	Donation- Simpsons gave \$200,000 (\$234,600 total cost)
2000-2001	Wintergarden window on wildlife	Parks and Rec Foundation
2001	Wintergarden sidewalk	Part donation/part \$3,000 grant
2006	Safety Town improvements	Home Depot, Wal-Mart, BG Comm. Foundation, Leadership BG Class of 2006

**Table 25. Park Capital Improvement/Major Maintenance Funded by Federal/State/Local Grants**

1977	Pool filtration upgrades	Federal Cost Sharing Funds
1980	Pool pump replacement	Federal Cost Sharing Funds
1978-1981	Tennis Courts at High School	Federal Cost Sharing Funds
1981	Restroom upgrade at Girl Scout bldg	\$8,000 Fed. Cost Share funds
1982	Needle Hall roof replacement	\$10,000 Fed. Cost Share funds
1985	Carter Park roadway	CDBG funds, \$60,000 in Fed Cost Share funds

1985	Carter Park restroom	Fed Cost Sharing (\$18,000)/CDBG/Land and Water (\$11,035)
1985	Carter - first 4 diamonds, backstops	ODNR grant \$\$28,186, CDBG \$102,000
1985/86	Carter Park seeding (field area)	Fed. Cost Sharing Funds
1985	Pool pump house wiring	\$12,000 from Fed cost share?
1991	Carter Park roadway paving	CDBG funds - \$97,050 for \$107,000 project
1994?	Splash pool at City Park	see Phase I in 1992- \$350,000 total project
1996	Carter Park Playground (2)	\$45,000 project - \$25,000 ODNR, \$15,000 Wood Co Solid Waste District, rest from Parks Fund?
2001	Wintergarden sidewalk	Part donation/part \$3,000 grant from Wood Co. Pk
2006	Safety Town improvements	Home Depot, Wal-Mart, BG Comm. Foundation, Leadership BG Class of 2006

**Table 26. Sources of Parkland Acquisition**

1989	Raney Park	Donation
1977	Safety Town	Donation: huge number of businesses, Bd.of Ed, Police, service clubs
1986	Wintergarden Woods	Donation
1988	St John's Woods	Donation (\$95,000 CDBG, Land and Water Fund)
1997	Bordner Meadow	Donation- \$160,000 total, coalition raised \$152,500 + \$7,500 from Wood Co Pk district
	Bellard Park	Donation
2002	Twyman Property- 5 1/2 acres	Donation of 5 acres - \$50,000 to purchase other 2 1/2 (Foundation and Green Space Fund?)
2002?	Community Center Property	Donation by landowner, transferred from City to State
2005	19.6 acres west of Bordner Meadow	Green Space Fund, bonds sold, \$480,000 Foundation fundraising campaign to complete purchase

To summarize, current revenue for Parks and Recreation alone will not support the repair, maintenance and capital improvements covered in this Master Plan. Bowling Green Parks and Recreation has a long history of using donations, grants, General Fund and Parks Fund money to provide quality facilities and programs for the Community. The next 10 years will be no different. Sources of funding for items in this Master Plan could include:

Private funding sources

- Partners for the pool - Wood Lane, YMCA, Swim Club?
- Sponsors for building renovations – Local service clubs have a long history of building philanthropy in the parks
- BG Park and Recreation Foundation – capital campaigns for Simpson Garden Park and Wintergarden
- Local foundations – through grants for programs and some capital projects
- Fundraising in the parks - community sponsorship program, banners, vending options, program underwriters, donation boxes at parks

Public funding sources

- State assistance/ appropriation – biennial budget process
- State/Federal grants – hard to get, but possible with perseverance and good projects
- Capital improvements levy – one time for specified projects and duration
- Income tax increase – higher percentage for Parks and Recreation Fund

## **IX. CONCLUSION**

This draft plan outlines strategies that the Bowling Green Parks and Recreation Department will pursue to continuously improve our facilities and services. Public input on this plan is an essential part of meeting community needs for green space, trails and recreational facilities and activities. We welcome your comments!

Bowling Green is a great place to live and work, and the park system adds to the quality of life in the City. Residents love their parks and have supported them for over 45 years with a dedicated Park Levy. The focus of the Master Plan is to maintain what we have so that the facilities will remain in great condition for future generations. We are also fortunate to have significant natural resources that require protection and management within the park system. Programming is also an integral part of the park experience in Bowling Green. This plan focuses on these three areas of operation: maintenance, natural resource preservation and program improvement.

But citizens have also expressed a desire for additional recreational opportunities including recreational trails, new parkland, and construction of an aquatic facility, which poses a challenge with the limited budget that the Parks and Recreation Department possesses. The parks levy and dedicated income tax monies provide enough funding to make slow, steady progress on maintenance and repairs, while providing staff for programs and services. New recreational facilities will require creative funding solutions. We want to engage the Community in a dialog about funding for the most important additions to their parks and come up with the best solution for our residents. Please share your thoughts through public meetings and written comments concerning this master plan.