

INTRODUCTION

Calvin Township, a zoned, general law Township, understands the importance of recreation to the Township's quality of life. This community recreation and park plan is a general, long range development tool to help establish how to make the best use of funds received to upgrade, develop and maintain the Township park, land and buildings, while looking at the current and future needs and opportunities of the community and its residents. This plan is intended to cover the period of 2012 through 2017. This plan will also make the Calvin Township Recreation and Park Plan eligible for grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to assist the county in reaching its goal.

The planning process was a combined effort of the Township's Advisory Committee and the Township Needs Assessment Committee. The plan demonstrates the need for expansions, improvements and upgrades that are needed for the park, to continue to provide enjoyable leisure activities to its residents and surrounding communities.

In addition to the members of the Township's Committees, the interested citizens of Calvin Township provided their input and help lay the basis for the preparation of this Park and Recreation Plan, with the last public hearing held October 13, 2011 at 6:00 p. m.

The assessment and community input has placed the Township in line with developing an effective recreation plan and provided an inventory of existing recreational area needs, estimated future needs, and offered numerous suggestions on how to preserve and enhance the visual quality of the Township and its park.

This plan is considered a working document and will be frequently used as a tool to achieve and maintain for guidance and updated as necessary.

The Plan focuses on providing its residents an improved quality of life through recreational opportunities, including a safe and user-friendly environment. Aside from providing these benefits and opportunities for the Township residents, the park will provide the same benefits to adjoining Townships and nearby communities and schools, providing all the opportunity to experience both active and passive recreational pursuits.

This recreation plan was prepared for Calvin Township for the purpose of expanding the use of the existing William J. Robinson Community Center and the Dr. Otis E. Newsome Memorial Park as well as adding and connecting other trail ways, to enhance the potential for greater utilization and exposure of the natural features within the park. The following Park and Recreation Plan includes statements of long- range goals, priorities affecting the short-term objectives and a proposed five year action plan.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

This recreation plan has been developed for Calvin Township and represents the jurisdiction of Cass County.

Location:

Calvin Township is a rural community located in central Cass County in the southwestern part of the State of Michigan. The community is situated between two highways US12 and M60 (Michigan State Highway) which connect too other highways through Michigan. Calvin Township is bordered on the south by Mason Township, on the east by Porter Township, on the north by Penn Township and on the west by Jefferson Township. The Village of Cassopolis is the County Seat to all Townships and villages within the county and is the primary employer center.

The Township location is considered an easy access and contains thoroughfares to the larger metropolitan areas such as, Three Rivers and Kalamazoo, Michigan and Elkhart, Mishawaka and South Bend, Indiana. Calvin is also located just north of the Indiana Toll Road which is a major highway connecting Indiana to Illinois and Ohio. The Toll Road entrance is approximately six miles from southern Calvin Township.

Calvin Township is 34.4 square miles in size.

The population of Calvin Township is 2,041.

The latitude of Calvin is 41.851 N. The longitude is -85.927 W.

It is in the Eastern Standard time zone. Elevation is 830 feet.

Transportation

The main mode of transportation within the Township and throughout the county is by personal automobile.

Calvin Township is presently served by the Cass Public Transit system which provides Dial-A-Ride transportation, a demand-response system. Dial-A-Ride provides door-to- door service around the various areas in Cass County.

Environmental Issues

Residential development is generally scattered along the county and Township road system with concentrations around the lakes. There are no industrial sites presently located in the Township.

Zoning

Calvin Township zoning was adopted in 1997. The Township is mostly zoned Agricultural.

See Appendix A, for the zoning map

School District

The Township is served by two public school districts: Cassopolis Public Schools and Edwardsburg Public Schools and a private school located on the camp grounds of Camp Wagner located within the Township.

Natural Features

Natural resources are perhaps the most important factors influencing the initial settlement of an area.

An initial focus of this plan is to create a park recreation plan to expand and enhance the natural beauty and open space areas of the Otis Newsome Park. The existing natural spring feed pond is in need of restoration. The wetlands and water features could support or enhance recreational activities and will expose the residents and visitors to a greater experience and connection of nature.

Seasonal/Climate

The moderating influence of Lake Michigan upon the community is quite strong throughout the year. Because of the prevailing westerly winds, spring and early summer temperatures may be somewhat cooler than experienced in central and eastern Michigan.

Calvin Township gets 36 inches of rain per year. The U. S. Average is 37 inches of rain. Snowfall in the Township is 36 inches. The average U. S. City gets 25 inches of snow per year. The number of days with any measurable precipitation is 127.

On average there are 173 sunny days per year in Calvin. The July high is around 84 degrees. The January low is 15. The comfort index, which is based on humidity during the hot months, is a 48 out of 100, the high being more comfortable. The average on the comfort index is 44.

Topography

The topography of Calvin Township is low density, wetland and farm land. Elevation is 830 feet above sea level, which is approximately 300 feet higher than the 580 foot elevation of Lake Michigan. The unique topography of the Township makes it compatible with good recreation, development and human activity.

See Appendix B, for the topography©.

Water, Wildlife and Wetland

There are numerous lakes, streams and creeks in Calvin Township. These natural resources are widely valued throughout the community. Small lakes dominate the landscape of the Township. The lakes accommodate mostly recreational uses with only a few lakes experiencing dense residential development and public access. Calvin Township is the only Township within Cass County that has access to fourteen lakes; lakes that flow within the Township boundaries. The Township also contains 7 percent of its land area in wetlands. Most of the Township lies within the Christiana Creek watershed, for which a non-point pollution prevention study was completed in 1991.

The Township has deer, wild turkey and black fox which roam throughout the Township as well as the many birds, squirrels, beavers and raccoons and other wildlife that crawls around the creek bed.

Vegetation

Many varieties of vegetation can be found in Calvin Township, the vegetation that exists throughout the Township is on flat rolling terrain characterized by many small streams connecting small to medium sized lakes and several woodlots. Tree types include elm, maple, walnut, willow, cottonwood, apple, cherry and Calvin also has plentiful fruits including strawberries and blackberries.

Wildflowers, ragweed, crabgrass and clover are found, there are marsh and aquatic plants; such as cattails and water lilies. The wooded area presents valuable recreational resources and natural functions which can be valuable to human settlement and are also aesthetic assets to a region.

Land Use Patterns

The Township consists primarily of residential households. Agricultural land use is small with few farms. There are no industrial sites. Twenty-four (24) percent of the area that is forested is entirely comprised of small, privately owned wooded lots scattered throughout the Township.

Soil

Calvin Township includes three soil associations. The Houghton Association, found in the southwest corner and surrounding the "Chain of Lakes", is particularly poor for building, being very poorly drained and mucky.

The Cassopolis-Riddles-Teasdale Association varies greatly in slope and in how well it drains. If well-drained and sufficiently level, those loamy soils may be good for farming, including some prime farmland soils, or for building where appropriate for septic.

The Kalamazoo-Oshtema Association, with slopes from 0 to 6%, has well drained, loamy soils, and in sufficient levels, is good for building and also provides the best farmland soils to be found in the area.

Based on soil type, 85 % of the Township is classified as having severe limitations for septic. When analyzed for suitable building, over half or 52% of the Township shows either moderate to severe limitations. When combined, less than 8% of the Township's area is appropriate for development.

Coordinated Planning

This Recreation Park Plan seeks to build on the natural resource base of Calvin Township and provides residents and visitors with the opportunity to experience both active and passive recreational pursuits. The Calvin Township Recreation Plan will allow for improvements to the existing park facilities and extend these resources to clean up and rehab the natural pond that is on Township property. This Plan will also allow for the building of bike trails to connect to other Cass County trails already existing within the county and provide programming.

Township Improvement

In 2011 improvements were made around certain lakes in the Township providing 'city' water and thereby reducing the number of personal wells in the area.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

A board of elected officials governs Calvin Township. They are responsible for overseeing the welfare of the Township. At the time of this Recreation Plan there is no Parks Trustee Board therefore, the elected board officials acts in this capacity with help from the Township advisory committee. From the yearly general funds budget the board manages and finances its own maintenance and park enhancements.

The elected officials report to the residents, and the various committees and boards report to elected officials.



Roles of the advisory committee:

The Township Advisory Committee are volunteers who have taken on the ownership of overseeing the park; advising on upgrades, park needs, playground equipment, safety and problem solving.

Through the combined efforts of the advisory committee those individuals volunteered their time, sharing input and, assistant developing the community needs assessment.

See Appendix C, for a list of the current elected officials and Advisory Committee.

PROGRAMMING/BUDGET/FUNDING SOURCES

Programming:

Municipalities have the responsibility of acquisition, development, operation and programming of public recreational facilities and services for the frequent short-term use of local residents.

The Township is not currently responsible for any programs at the center or the park. There are many organizations that use the center and park at no charge to host their events and provide services to the people they serve, such as; festivals, fairs, cook outs, open-house celebrations, and class and family reunions. The various events have had varied participation, ranging from 10 to 500 in attendance.

There is no revenue producing programs offered by the Township. The facility is for all residents to undertake passive and active recreational pursuits. Greater exposure of the facilities through the park improvement and expansion of the nature trail are expected to increase the desirability of such facilities for future events.

FUNDING SOURCES

Funding History:

In 1980 the Township received a grant from the State of Michigan U. S. Department of Natural Resources for an entrance road, parking lot, open shelter, restrooms, well with pump and play area. In 1984, an additional grant from the Department of Natural Resources for trails, site improvement/landscaping, play and picnic equipment was received. In addition to grants the Township's general fund is used for improvements and maintenance.

See Appendix J, for State of Michigan U. S. Department of Natural Resources Grant information

Current Funding Sources

Currently, the Township does not have any outside funding sources for park improvements. The Township Board expects to work with the Township Advisory Committee, grantors and other volunteers and private sources to match any State or Federal funds received.

In September 2009 the Township applied for a Sauk Trail Grant to upgrade the Township Park, and was unsuccessful in the grant process, and thereafter used their general funds to make the improvements. It is the intent of the Township to have an approved Recreation Plan with the DNR (Department of Natural

Recreation) to help the Township apply for DNR Recreation Grants and other opportunities that a successful recreation plan will support.

BUDGET

The Township's fiscal year is April 1 to March 31. The projected budget for the fiscal year 2012 is \$231,000. The Township estimates that the Township annual budget will continue to have an approximate annual budget of \$200,000. The Township pays their operations, maintenances and improvements to their park, roads and cemeteries under this general fund.

Appendix D, copy of 2012 Budget

The Township has received a small nominal donation of funding for playground equipment and improvements for the park from a private sector. They expect to receive additional funding from other private sources to match any State and Federal Funds.

ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS

The Township governing board in partnership with a volunteer Township advisory committee has seen a need and taken on the responsibility of making a difference in the Township Park. Through their combined efforts they help developed a community needs assessment. The Committee understands that a strong recreation plan could open doors for park upgrades and improvements. The Committee helps to chair community input sessions and are willing to volunteer their talents, time and equipment to help improve the park. These community volunteers gave of their time and talents to assist in the development of this recreation/park plan.

See Appendix C, for a list of volunteers.

Relationships with School Districts, Other Public Agencies or Private Organizations

The Township is served by two public school districts: Cassopolis Public Schools and Edwardsburg Public Schools and a private school located on the camp grounds of Camp Wagner located within the township. All schools are aware of and welcome to use the Calvin Township park facilities whenever requested. In addition, other organizations such as the Pee Wee Leagues, and 4-H clubs do use the facilities for meetings and games.

Description of the Relationship between the Authority or Commission and the Recreation Departments of Participating Communities.

The Township is located in Cass County which has a Parks and Recreation Department. The Township is in good standing with that Department and requests are referred to the Township from the Department as appropriate.

RECREATION INVENTORY

The goal of Calvin Township Park and Recreation Plan is to provide recreational facilities and programs that preserve and enhance the Township natural resources and provide our residents with various opportunities to experience them, with the objective of enhancing their quality of life, as well as complementing other existing park systems within the county with unique types of facilities and uses.

Being a small Township it is necessary that the elected officials protect and enhance through zoning, dedication and easement, the unique natural features of the township for the permanent enjoyment and education of the residents of the Township.

Park and Recreation area inventory

The Dr. Otis Newsome Park is the only existing public recreation facility available within Calvin Township at the present time. It offers a wide variety of opportunities and activities for area residents and visitors. These include barrier free parking, and community center.

The Dr. Newsome Park is a public park sharing grounds with the William J. Robinson Community Center, thus meeting the community needs for both indoor and outdoor recreational space. They both are located on Mt. Zion Road, east of Calvin Center Road in section 22 and sit on 19 of the 44 acres own by the Township.

The 1.77 acres of park within the 19 acres is surrounded by farmland and woods and is fenced in with the community center and a fenced in parking lot. Included within the fenced park is a softball field, basketball court, bleachers, tables, grills and playground equipment and pavilion, (all in need of upgrading). Additionally there is a natural spring feed pond, stocked with fish. Unfortunately this public access pond has been used as a dumping ground and is in need of being brought back to its natural state.

Area Pee Wee Leagues use the softball field and local residents have fished from the pond.

The nature trail within the park is overgrown and in need of maintenance and improvement.

The Township Community Center provides the residents of Calvin and surrounding Townships, hikers, bicyclers and many other visitors, a place to have many leisurely activities.

Appendix E, MAP OF PARK

Recreation Deficiencies

The site has a variety of natural features including open space, timbered areas and some surface water. The site is ideally located and has all the natural amenities which make it an excellent public recreation area. The recreation deficiencies identified by the citizens relate primarily to the condition of playground equipment and un-evenness of the park grounds.

RESOURCE INVENTORY

Calvin Township owns 44 acres including the two acres already improved for park use. Much of this acreage is unimproved, containing natural resources to expand the park usage for trails, and paths while preserving natural resources such as trees, foliage, wildflowers and spring fed pond, as well as space for additions and improvements.

ACCESSIBILITY

Barrier-Free Compliance

The Township of Calvin is responsive to the current barrier-free guidelines governing building related improvements. The existing park facilities are easily accessible. The playground equipment is not handicap accessible, but accessibility could easily be achieved with improvements made during implementation of Capital Improvement Projects.

Although significant progress has been made in implementing handicap accessibility to existing park and recreational facilities, continued steps must be made to eliminate all barriers.

DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING PROCESS/PUBLIC INPUT

The Township of Calvin is constantly trying to find ways to improve their parks and recreational facilities. Public input is absolutely critical. When citizens are included in the problem-solving and decision making process, they share in the ownership of the solutions to their community's problems and are thus said to "buy in" to those solutions. Empowered citizens tend to be more active and to participate more fully with their government.

A major step was a completion of a 5 year recreation plan and approval.

DESCRIPTION OF PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

The planning process used to prepare the 2012-2017 Township Recreation Plan involved three (3) basic phases: data collection, analysis and plan development and open forum from the residents and elected officials. The data collection phase involved a review of other Township planning documents, collection and analysis of community demographic data. The Township being small in size gives residents the opportunity for direct input on the park and recreation planning process. Special meetings are called in the event that decisions need to be made base on the public input.

The plan goals and objectives then served as the basics for selecting projects for inclusion and prioritization in recreation plans.

Calvin Township received Michigan Department of Natural Resources & Environment Grant funds for acquisition of park development in 1980 & 1981.

See Appendix J, for DNR grant

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The 5-year Recreation Plan was initiated in response to an obvious need to help the elected officials and advisory board find resources to upgrade and improve the Township Park. This 2012 recreation plan includes a community need assessment and public input, and both are beneficial to developing a capitol campaign.

See appendix F, for the Need Assessment

The assessment results determine that the park is a need and the park provides everyone a place to bring their families. They are concerned about the condition of the park and would like for the park and playground equipment to be

upgraded. The Calvin Township Board is aware of the need for improvements in its parks. These Planned improvements include:

- New Playground Equipment including for the handicapped
- ADA Tables
- New Bleachers
- Upgrade basketball court
- New Trash Receptacles
- Landscaping
- Improvement to the Nature Trail
- Restoring the natural spring feed pond
- Bike trails

At the time of this plan any grants applied for since 1980, have not been approved for funding. However, utilizing the Township Advisory Committee and other volunteers the Township has made the following improvements using Township general funds;

- Cleared overgrown tree roots
- Partial debris removed from one half of the nature trail
- Removed excess debris from the park
- Installed urinals and door latches on the outside facilities
- Restored the park pavilion
- Painted park playground equipment

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

The goal of this Plan was to provide a comprehensive recreation/park plan to upgrade, and improve as well as enhance the Township's natural resources and provide our residents with various opportunities to experience them, enhancing their quality of life, as well as complementing other community area parks.

Long Range Goals:

- To provide for the parks and recreational facilities most needed to serve the changing needs of the public while avoiding unnecessary duplication or competition with private enterprises.
- To continue working with the advisory committee to recruit, community organizations to help implement the park improvements.
- To continue to research and apply for funding to help implement park improvements and programs.

- Install lights on the walking trail
- Develop an Autism Garden
- Upgrade to handicap accessible playground equipment
- Build a new state of the art community center
- Return the pond back to its natural beauty

Short Term Goals:

- Develop a recreation/park plan for approval
- Demolish unsafe and/or outdated playground equipment
- Develop children's play area, including play equipment.
- Clean and paint playground equipment
- Paint and refurbish park pavilion
- Reseal parking lot
- Put in a new parking lot at the new Township office building
- New playground equipment

OBJECTIVES:

- To provide a basic document that will identify and detail recreation plan to meet the needs and demands of Calvin Township Residents and visitors.
- To promote and encourage the development of sufficient park and recreational facilities of the highest quality;
- To enhance the community's quality of life;
- To upgrade the park and playground equipment;
- Increase the visibility and awareness to the Township park to generate more interest and use;

- To provide a safe environment;
- Bring existing Township facilities to current ADA standards;
- To have ADA accessible playground equipment and outside facilities, and
- To find partners to partner with, to meet community recreational needs.

These goals and objectives remain the basis for future improvements to existing facilities and expansion of purposes of linkage through park development.

Financial plan

- To apply funding to complete renovation of the park based on this recreation/park plan, the need assessments and public input.
- To maintain, renovate and upgrade the playground equipment and Township park and its existing acres of land and facility and maximize its revenue producing potential where possible.

Capital Improvements and Recreation

- Construction of bike path
- Restoration of natural spring fed pond
- Purchase and installation of Playground equipment, including
- Handicapped accessible playground equipment.
- Lighting on walking trail
- New parking lot and resurfacing of old lot

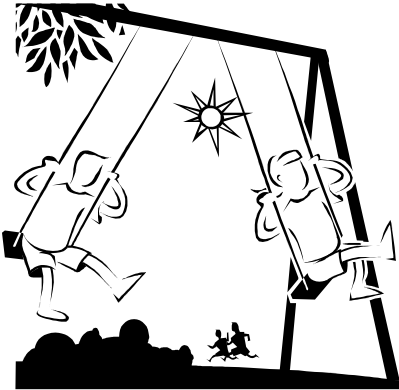
The capital development program for the next five years is based on the availability of funds derived from grants, gifts and donations or through the use of a revenue bond program. In the event the funds are received before anticipated schedule, certain projects could be advanced accordingly. The Capital Improvement budget will be concentrated in park areas.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEDULE:

Year 2012

Project: Develop Recreation/Park Plan
Funding: General fund
Estimated Cost: \$2,500
Responsibility: Township Board and Advisory Committee

Project: Paint old Play Ground Equipment
Funding: General Fund
Estimated Cost: \$1,500
Responsibility: Township Board & Advisory Committee



Year 2013

Project: Reseal Parking Lot at Community Center
Funding: General Fund & Grants
Estimated Cost: \$20,000
Responsibility: Township Board



Project: New Parking Lot at Township Hall
Funding: General Fund
Estimated Cost: \$45,000
Responsibility: Township Board

Year 2014

Project: Restore Nature Trail:
Funding: In-kind
Estimated Cost: \$4,500
Responsibility: Township Advisory Committee



Year 2014

Project: Lights on Walking Trail -Solar
Funding: Grant
Estimated Cost: \$7,500
Responsibility: Township Board & Advisory Committee



Year 2015

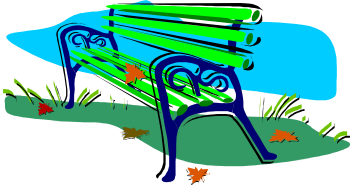
Project: Up-grade lights in Township Hall
Funding: General Fund
Estimated Cost: \$20,000
Responsibility: Township Board

Project: Remodel Township Community Center
Funding: Grants & General Fund
Estimated Cost: \$85,000
Responsibility: Township Board



Year 2016

Project: Remove old park equipment (table, benches, grills)
Funding: Grant
Estimated Cost: \$25,000
Responsibility: Township Advisory Committee & Township Board

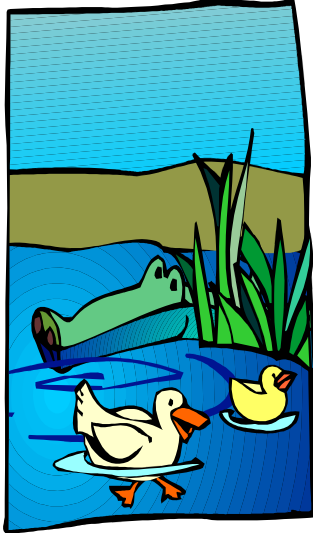


Project: New Playground equipment
Funding: Grant & General Fund
Estimated Cost: \$150,000
Responsibility: Township Board



Year 2017

Project: Bring Township pond back to Natural setting
Funding: Grant
Estimated Cost: \$55,000
Responsibility: Township Board & Advisory Committee



Project: Update Recreation Plan
Funding: General Fund & Grant
Estimated Cost: \$12,000
Responsibility: Township Board



DEMOGRAPHICS

The following is a summary of the social characteristics of the Township including, community population, employment trends, number and location of households, and population distribution. Unless otherwise noted the source for all data is City Data website. (City-Data.Com) and the Michigan Township Association website. www.michiganTownships.org.

See Appendix G, for Calvin Township Demographics

ACTION PROGRAM

Environmental quality should never be sacrificed in the interest of need satisfaction.

For the planning period, the following development projects should be considered.

Parks should generally provide at least basic facilities which include:

- ADA accessible playground equipment and toilets,
- A safe environment
- Bicycle trail
- Potable water supply for drinking, washing, and fire defense purposes
- Designated parking facilities
- Adequate access
- Identification of park entrance (s) and boundaries
- Nature and/or hiking trails, where practical

Facilities should always include features that will aid handicapped people including specialized walkways, hard surfaces walk-ways, wide doorways, grab rails in restrooms, special seating at picnic areas and at spectator events, and special playground apparatus.

SUMMARY

The Dr. Otis E. Newsome Memorial Park is presently a very complete facility for large groups. Many improvements are needed. Additional updated playground equipment, bleaches, tables and pavilion could be installed to better facilitate family and group activities.

Playground equipment within the park is limited and should be upgraded and expanded.

The community center and park certainly receive heaviest usage during summer months. Both facilities, though, have seen a considerable increase in use throughout the year for a variety of events and purposes, including funerals, festivals, pee wee leagues and 4-H club meetings.

Hence, the facility satisfies certain recreation demands not possible or even allowed at other public recreation areas. As such, use of the park should be considered in the context of its contribution to the county's overall recreation resources and not as a service facility apart from other recreation facilities.

The demand for outdoor recreation is influenced by the size, characteristics and geographic distribution of populations. The demand for trail recreation, motorized and non-motorized appears to be increasing.

Outdoor recreation land base is a significant challenge at the State level as well on the county and local level. Much of the infrastructure that supports outdoor recreation is aging and in need of substantial renovation to meet safety and security needs.