

Multi-Jurisdictional Recreational Authority Feasibility Study

Twenty Four Findings:

Finding 1: Parks and recreation spending in the Marquette Community can fluctuate from year to year

Finding 2: Per capita spending on parks and recreation in the City of Marquette is substantially higher than in the two townships

Finding 3: Per capita spending on parks and recreation in the Marquette Community is lower than the median established by many large cities

Finding 4: Current spending for parks and recreation in Marquette is comparable to similar Michigan communities but far greater over the last four years

Finding 5: Capital expenditures can significantly increase municipal parks and recreation budgets in a given year

Finding 6: The largest source of funding for parks and recreation is the General Fund

Finding 7: The City of Marquette has several recreation facilities that generate revenue, but costs are not always covered

Finding 8: The City of Marquette oversees and facilitates several recreation programs that generate revenue, but costs are not always covered

Finding 9: Schools are a significant resource for recreation facilities

Finding 10: The Marquette Community has a wide variety of parks and recreation facilities, but access to these parks and recreation facilities varies between the three jurisdictions

Finding 11: Participation in youth recreational programs has remained steady or is decreasing

Finding 12: Recreational organizations in the greater Marquette Community have identified a need for additional facilities

Finding 13: Participation in recreational programs is consistent with national trends

Finding 14: A substantial amount of the citizens who participate in recreational programs and use City park facilities live outside the City of Marquette

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Finding 15: Participants at the September 9, 2013, stakeholder meeting believed the Heartwood Forestland Property and Trails should be the primary focus of a multi-jurisdictional effort

Finding 16: The City cannot sell or donate park land to another party

Finding 17: The City of Marquette, Marquette Charter Township and Chocolay Township are already engaged in some forms of inter-agency cooperation and service sharing

Finding 18. Parks and recreation have significant financial impacts on the Marquette Community

Finding 19: There is already a Recreation Authority in the Community, one that is very highly regarded

Finding 20: Somewhat different priorities for recreational cooperation have been expressed by the three jurisdictions

Finding 21: Portions of the Heartwood Forestland Property located in Sands Township have been conveyed to Marquette Charter Township through a 425 Agreement

Finding 22: The City of Marquette has expressed conditional interest in selling portions of the Heartwood Forestland Property

Finding 23: Recent purchase offers have been rejected by the City based on the conditions above

Finding 24: Final decisions on exactly how the Heartwood Forestland Property should be used have not been made

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Ten Conclusions

Conclusion 1: There appear to be adequate opportunities to participate in recreational programs and enough facilities to support individual and team recreational activities in the Marquette Community

Conclusion 2: User fees do not offset the costs to the City of providing for and facilitating recreational programs and maintaining park facilities

Conclusion 3: Recreational program providers appear willing to contribute to the upkeep and maintenance of recreation facilities

Conclusion 4: There is a broadly shared view that parks, trails and recreation programs/events contribute to the identity and quality-of-life of the greater Marquette Community, and there is a broadly shared view that parks, trails and recreation programs/events greatly contribute to the community's economy

Conclusion 5: Without an independent governing body and funding source, consolidation of parks and recreation facilities may yield some improvements in providing for maintenance, but will not yield significant operational efficiencies or cost savings

Conclusion 6: Good cooperative potential exists between the City of Marquette, Marquette Charter Township and Chocolay Charter Township, although the full extent and potential of cooperation remains unclear

Conclusion 7: There is a broadly shared view that large portions of the Heartwood Forestland Property should be preserved in perpetuity and used to support an extensive network of trails

Conclusion 8: Formal cooperation centered on the Heartwood Forestland Property presents challenges that must be addressed by the three jurisdictions

Conclusion 9: There is already a strong and well-supported recreational collaboration in the community that has both independent funding and governance

Conclusion 10: Trails and trail connectivity have consistently been identified as important recreational priorities in all three jurisdictions

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Four Study Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Focus on trails as a common starting point for collaboration

Recommendation 2: Work together to develop a specific plan with a common focus

Recommendation 3: Leverage current strengths

Recommendation 4: Investigate a conservation easement for recreational portions of the Heartwood Forestland Property

Short-Term Action Items

- Determine the administrative framework of the Committee (e.g., composition and representation of the board, etc.)
- Adopt resolution creating the Inter-Municipal Committee
- Appoint representatives to the Committee
- Establish and post meeting schedule

Next-Term Action Items

- Meet regularly to develop a clear and specific plan for the formal recreational collaboration, including a preferred structure, specific projects, specific costs and timelines, and sources of funding
- Work on a mutually beneficial resolution to the issues surrounding the Heartwood Forestland Property
- Investigate additional opportunities for recreational collaboration around mutually beneficial assets that could be assumed by a formal Recreational Authority in the future