



*Sandhill Crane Roundabout Sculpture*



City of Jackson

## **Recreation Plan**

2024-2028 Edition

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**Approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission**

January 3, 2024

**Adopted by City Council**

~~January 16, 2024~~

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*Horace Blackman Park*



Chapter 1

**Community Description & Administrative Structure**

## Community Description

A priority of the City of Jackson is to develop and implement a recreation plan which responds to the recreational desires of its citizens and plans for enhancements to its parks, trails, and recreation programs. A sincere effort was spent in developing this plan which represents the projected needs for recreation facilities and services in the City of Jackson. For example, the plan provides a clear picture of the recreational opportunities available to residents regardless of who provides them. Nontraditional recreation opportunities such as historic districts/structures and shopping opportunities are catalogued as well as traditional parks, trails, and recreation facilities.

### Location

The City of Jackson is in the center of Jackson County which is situated in south-central Lower Michigan, close to the border with Northwest Ohio and Northeast Indiana. Interstate Highway 94 (I-94) and United States Highway 127 (US-127) converge just north of the City, earning the area the nickname of 'Crossroads of Michigan' (See Map 1 in Appendix A). Those roads connect Jackson directly to Ann Arbor and Detroit to the east, Battle Creek and Kalamazoo to the west, Lansing to the north, and Toledo to the southeast. The City of Jackson has a total land area of approximately 10.8 square miles.

### A Brief History

First occupied by the Pottawatomie Indians, Jackson was the crossing place of two great trails, the St. Joseph, and the Washtenaw. A Federal Act was passed in 1829 to survey Jackson County and Horace Blackman, the first white settler, arrived that year. He came from New York to investigate the region and found dense woods, a beautiful river in a little valley, and an Indian campground.

Jackson may be best known for hosting the first Republican Convention on July 6, 1854. It was selected as the site of the first Republican Convention due to its involvement in the Underground Railroad. Hundreds of influential Michigan citizens made the pilgrimage to Jackson.

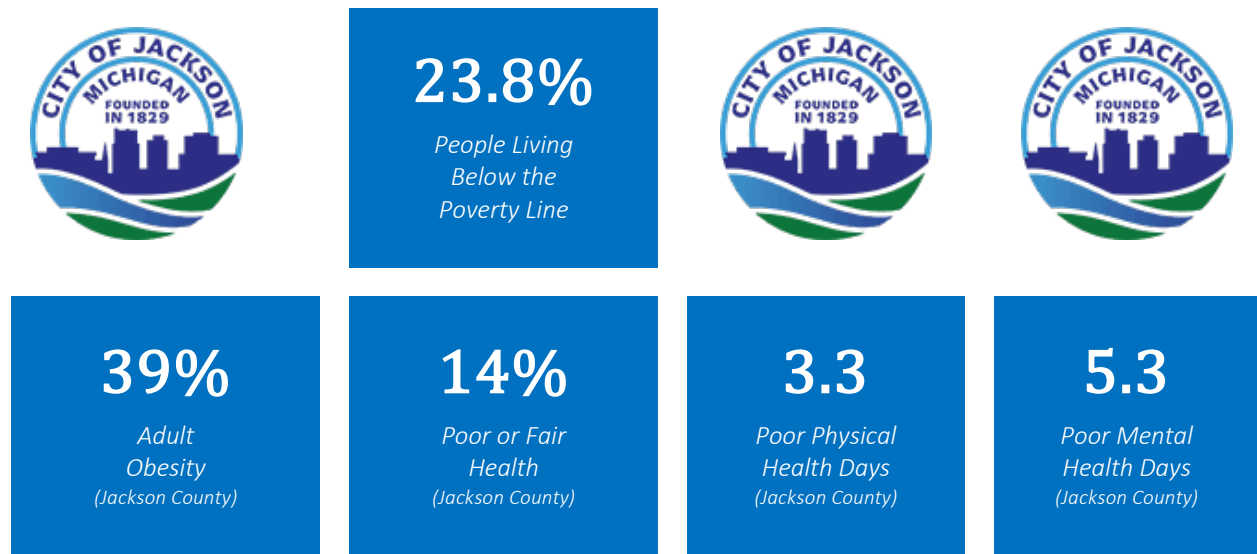
The original state prison may have been responsible for Jackson's industrial boom in the mid-1800s. The prison provided a source of cheap labor for factories, making the City a very attractive place to do business. However, the practice of using prisoners for labor in private industry was prohibited by the Michigan legislature in 1909.

By the 1930s, Jackson had been transformed from an agricultural community to a bustling city of 55,000 with several tall buildings built of limestone and marble. Although the population of Jackson has declined since then, the City is still known for its many fine parks.

### A Brief Socioeconomic Summary

The demographic composition of Jackson influences its recreational needs. Pertinent demographic components follow a series of infographics. Most of the data was obtained from the *2021 American Community Survey* (ACS) which is a product of the U.S. Census Bureau. The health-related information was obtained from the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps 2023 database*, a program of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and pertains to all of Jackson County.





## Administrative Structure

The authority to provide public park systems and recreation programs is granted by the State of Michigan. The City of Jackson's park system is established under the authority of Public Act 156 of 1917 ([MCL 123.51 et seq](#)). The act allowed for the creation of the City of Jackson Parks and Recreation Commission and the Ella W. Sharp Park Board, by Jackson City Council. The act also allows for the recreation millage through Jackson Public Schools. The Public Arts Commission was created under Ordinance No. 2015.13 by the City Council.

## Organizational Structure

The Ella W. Sharp Park Board is responsible for planning, constructing, maintaining, programming, and administrating Ella W. Sharp Park and the City of Jackson Parks and Recreation Commission is responsible for the entire system of city parks and trails. The Board and the Commission are also charged with studying various recreation needs, advising City Council on recreation issues, and making appropriate budget requests (see the organizational chart). The Public Arts Commission advises City Council with the goal of improving the quality of public spaces and making Jackson a better place to live.

The [Ella W. Sharp Park Board of Trustees](#) is comprised of the following members:<sup>1</sup>

- One member of the City Council appointed by the Council.
- Four city residents appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council.

The following members comprise the [Parks and Recreation Commission](#):

- One member of the City Council and four city residents appointed by Council.
- One member of the Jackson Public Schools' Board of Education and three school district residents appointed by the Superintendent and approved by the Board.

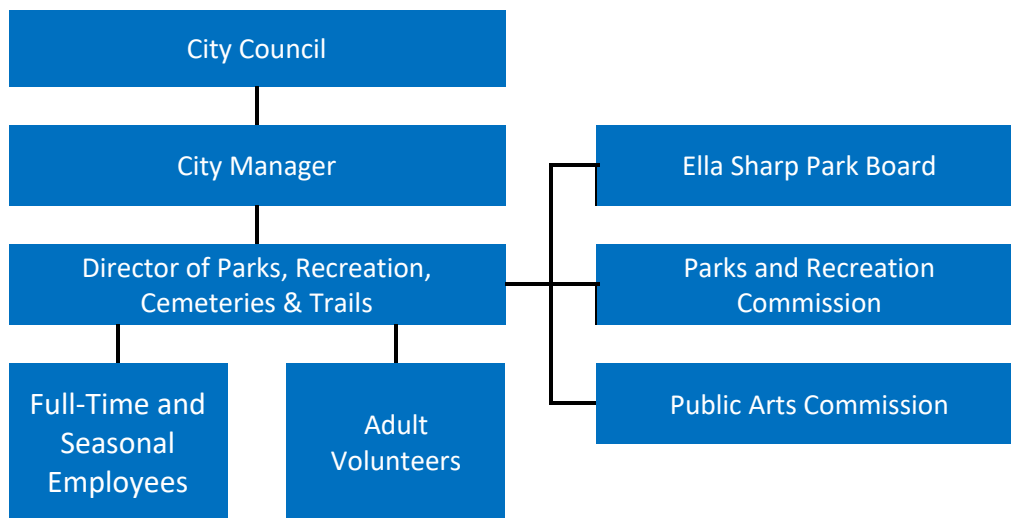
<sup>1</sup> Please note that three of the four city residents appointed to the Parks and Recreation Commission are also appointed to serve as members of the Ella W. Sharp Park Board.

- Three ex-officio members (e.g., the City Manager, the Chair of the City Planning Commission, and the Superintendent of Jackson Public Schools)

The [Public Arts Commission](#) is comprised of the following members:

- Five members nominated by the mayor and appointed by City Council
- Up to three ex-officio members (e.g., the City Manager or their designee, a City Council member, and a representative of the Ella Sharp Museum of Art and History)

### Organizational Chart



The City’s park and trail system and public art collection are administered in conjunction with its cemetery program within the Department of Parks, Recreation, Cemeteries and Trails. The Director reports to the City Manager and City Council as well as the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Ella W. Sharp Park Board, and the Public Arts Commission. The Director oversees the 14 full-time employees and 350 seasonal employees who maintain parks and provide recreation programs. Approximately 200 adults volunteer to coach youth sports each year and service groups volunteer to help with park cleanup. Members of People for the Parks and Trails also volunteer their time and energy. Many of the members of the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Ella Sharp Park Board, and the Public Arts Commission are volunteers as well.

### Parks and Recreation Budgeting

The parks and recreation budget of the City of Jackson illustrates a substantial commitment to its parks and trails system and recreation programs. The parks and trails system’s operating budget for 2023-2024 is \$3,308,353. The capital budget for the parks and trails system that year was \$1,042,979 and the budget for the public art collection was \$18,000. It is important to note that the capital budgets for the parks and trails system and public art collection fluctuate on an annual basis, based upon allocations from City Council and any grants and/or donations secured for a specific project.

## Sources of Funding

The City of Jackson utilize a variety of funding sources for recreation:

- General tax fund dollars.
- Recreation program millage through Jackson Public Schools.
- User fees from the golf course, the pool, and other facilities and recreation programs.
- The Ella W. Sharp Endowment Fund.
- Grants and donations awarded for specific projects.

General tax fund dollars are used by the City for the maintenance of its parks and trails system and public art collection, including the cost of producing this plan. Revenues from an endowment fund contribute to the maintenance of Ella W. Sharp Park. The user fees charged for various facilities (i.e., golfing, skateboarding, pavilions, etc.) contribute to the maintenance of those and other facilities within the park system. Finally, a millage through Jackson Public Schools, and the user fees charged for recreation sessions and sports seasons, fund the recreation programming provided by the City. A millage renewal will be considered by voters residing within the Jackson Public Schools district in 2024.

Grants are sought from various state, federal, and philanthropic sources for the acquisition of parkland and trails, the development of specific parks (e.g., playgrounds, picnic shelters, sports facilities, etc.), recreation programs, and the acquisition/curating of pieces of public art. Donations from the public and various service organizations for a specific park, facility, or program are also accepted. A portion of the local match required of most grants may also come from the general fund or donations. Many grants for parks and recreational facilities are likely to come from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources through the [Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund](#) and the [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#)<sup>2</sup>.



Section 10 of Public Act 51 of 1951 ([MCL 247.660](#)), states that “a reasonable amount, but not less than 1% of” funds allocated to the state or a county, city, or village “shall be expended for construction or improvement of non-motorized transportation services and facilities.” That set-aside can be used to fund “an improvement in a road, street, or highway which facilitates non-motorized transportation . . . or improvement of a sidewalk in a city or village, or any other appropriate measure.” The Michigan Department of Transportation and the City of Jackson receive funding through Act 51. Coordination with those entities could result in the expenditure of Act 51 funds on nonmotorized projects proposed within this document.



## Relationships with Other Recreation Providers

The City of Jackson is not the only supplier of parks and recreational opportunities to its residents.

### Schools

School districts are significant suppliers of parks and recreational opportunities to their students and boosters as well as the public. Jackson Public Schools (JPS), which maintains recreation facilities within the City and provides recreation programs to its students and boosters, is part of the Jackson County Intermediate School District (ISD). The ISD provides educational services to residents and local districts.

<sup>2</sup> This is a Federal program administered locally by the State of Michigan.

Jackson County Parks is supported by a 0.5 millage passed 2018 for a 10-year term. It supports parks operations and various capital improvements (e.g., playgrounds, boat and kayak/canoe launches and fishing piers, trail maintenance/connections, beachfront/swimming area improvements, permanent park restrooms; etc.).

Jackson Public School Millage  
Renewal for  
Public Recreation & Playgrounds  
**VOTE YES**  
August 6, 2024

JPS has also sponsored a millage to fund the vast array of recreation programs provided by the City for decades, making them available to residents throughout the district rather than just the City. Voters approved the current 0.5 mills version during the summer of 2014 and will be asked to renew it again in 2024. The millage is used to keep fees for recreation activities down and provide more events for the youth and seniors. The Department of Parks, Recreation, Cemeteries, and Trails provides many activities and events (see Chapter 2) for 100,000+ participants annually. Unfortunately, answers to the City’s 2023 recreation survey (see Chapter 3) illustrate the public’s confusion between the recent countywide Jackson County Parks millage (used for operations and capital improvements) with the school district-wide City of Jackson Parks millage (used exclusively for recreation programming). The City needs to educate the public about their different uses and allay any fears school district voters may have that they are “double-taxed” prior to the 2024 millage election.



**Local, County, State, and Private Parks and Recreation Facilities**

Jackson County Parks also provide recreational opportunities for Jackson residents and Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park and James J Keeley County Park (i.e., the county fairgrounds) are located in the City. Although state facilities are not located in Jackson, City residents benefit from the state game, wildlife, and recreation areas; state historic parks; and state parks provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) throughout Jackson County and beyond. The townships surrounding Jackson also maintain parks and/or trails. A variety of private entrepreneurs and quasi-public agencies also provide recreation facilities and programs in and around the City.

The City of Jackson participates with other local governments in the County in planning for and providing recreation facilities as evidenced by the *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan (2020)* which addresses the recreational use of nonmotorized facilities. The City also participated in the development of the *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan (2017)*.

**Public-Private Cooperation**

The City cooperates with various other public and private organizations to enhance its park system. For example, the Department of Parks, Recreation, Cemeteries, and Trails partners with People for the Parks and Trails, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving Jackson's public parks and trails through volunteering, fundraising, advocacy, and equity. Volunteer projects are open to everyone, and volunteers can just show up to events and work. Equipment is provided by the City although volunteers are welcome to bring their own work gloves and hydration. Events often have coffee and water provided and the time commitment is usually around 90 minutes.



Ella Sharp Park is the location of Jackson’s Hot Air Jubilee every summer at the invitation of the City. The event began in 1983 when a group of Hot Air Balloon enthusiasts came up with the dream of a family friendly event. Since then, the Jubilee has grown to host thousands of people who gather to view 25-30

balloons from around the country and participate in friendly rivalry and contests. People attending the event can also participate in craft booths, the Kids Kingdom, Vendors, and an Auto Show.



The Ella Sharp Museum and Hurst Planetarium campus occupies eleven buildings on six acres within Ella Sharp Park at the invitation of the City. The Hadwin Center connects seven galleries featuring changing art, science, and history exhibits as well as permanent exhibits of Jackson history, wildlife art, and a beautiful clock collection. Regularly scheduled tours of Ella's farmhouse and family-friendly shows in the Hurst Planetarium complete the museum's public offerings. The campus also includes an outdoor public art collection. The museum's annual Art, Beer & Wine Festival is also held in the park.



Other partners include, but are not limited, to the following:



- Active Jackson Coalition: Making Walkable, Bikeable, & Accessible for All – The City's Engineering Department participates in Coalition meetings.
- Jackson Public Schools (JPS) – The City partners with JPS on the Recreation Millage and uses JPS facilities for some on its recreation programs.
- Jackson County Parks – The parks departments of the City and County share some equipment.
- Grow Jackson – The City hosts a Grow Jackson community garden, which provides fresh produce, at the Howard Woods Recreation Complex.
- Jackson Young Professionals – The City cooperated with the Jackson Young Professionals and various Downtown property owners in Bright Walls, an installation of more than 75 murals, painted from 2018-2022 during annual festivals when the public could witness the artists at work.
- Juneteenth Community Celebration & Resource Fair – Jackson's Juneteenth event takes place annually at the Martin Luther King Recreation Center in the Howard Woods Recreation Complex.
- Jackson College, the Jackson School for the Arts, and the Jackson Symphony – These organizations hold classes at the Martin Luther King Recreation Center in the Howard Woods Recreation Complex.
- Jackson County Intermediate School System – The ISD maintains plantings at Ella Sharp Park and the Ella Sharp Museum.
- Jackson County Daffodil Society – The Society plants bulbs in City and County parks.
- Jackson Pickleball Association – The City works with the Association in the maintenance and usage of pickleball facilities in Ella Sharp and Lions Parks.
- Save the Youth – The City cooperates with the organization which mentor kids.
- B2 Watchers Neighborhood Group – The City cooperates with the Watch Group which is active on the City's Northeast side.
- Friends of Loomis Park – The City partners with the organization regarding the caretaking of Loomis Park.





*Elmdale Street Trail*



Chapter 2

## **Recreation and Resource Inventories**

To plan for future parks, trails, and recreation facilities it is important to prepare complete inventories of existing resources and facilities. The following inventories are comprised of all known parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs, and public art collections available citywide, not just those owned and managed by the City of Jackson. Each park, recreation facility and program, trail, and piece of public art owned by the City was visited by its ad-hoc consultant in order to generate complete inventories. City recreation programs and public art pieces as well as the parks and trails owned by other entities were identified through local knowledge and review of current and historic documents and maps.

### **Parks and Recreation in the City of Jackson**

The City of Jackson provides a system of parks, recreation facilities and programs, trails, and pieces of public art. That system is supplemented by parks and trails provided by Jackson County and surrounding townships, the State of Michigan, and other organizations.

#### **City of Jackson Parks & Trails**

Before providing an inventory of each City Park and Trail, the following infographics and word cloud provide a summary of the entire system.



<p><b>1</b></p> <p><i>Golf Course w/ 2 Simulators &amp; 1 Learning Center</i></p>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p><i>Museum &amp; Planetarium</i></p>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p><i>Nature Trail &amp; Sledding Hill</i></p>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p><i>Skatepark &amp; Water Park (Pool)</i></p>
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mlk equality trail  
**downtown jackson**  
 trail  
 trail access  
 marker playground  
 public art **park**  
 monument full basketball court

<p><b>24</b></p> <p><i>Parks w/ Benches/ Seating</i></p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p><i>Parks w/ Walkways</i></p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p><i>Parks w/ Landscaping</i></p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p><i>Parks w/ Playgrounds</i></p>
<p><b>14</b></p> <p><i>Parks with Picnic Tables</i></p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p><i>Parks with Basketball Courts &amp; 2 w/ Half Courts</i></p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p><i>Parks w/ Nonmotorized Trail Access</i></p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p><i>Parks w/ Markers &amp; Monuments</i></p>
<p><b>7</b></p> <p><i>Parks w/ Public Art</i></p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p><i>Parks w/ Softball Fields</i></p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p><i>Parks w/ Picnic Pavilions/Shelters</i></p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p><i>Parks w/ Tennis Courts</i></p>



There are 29 city parks within Jackson (please see Map 2 in Appendix A). Most neighborhoods, apart from the industrial southeast, are within a 10-minute walk of a park (please see Map 3 in Appendix A).

**City of Jackson Parks**

No.	Name	Type*	Ac.	BFA	No.	Name	Type*	Ac.	BFA
1.	Austin Blair Park	N	0.7	4	16.	Horace Blackman Park	C	1.3	4
2.	Best Field	C	6	1	17.	H. Woods Rec. Complex	C	10	3
3.	Betsy Butterfield Park	N	0.5	4	18.	Kiwanis Park	N	1.3	4
4.	Beech Tree Park	C	1.1	4	19.	Lions Park	N	8.6	2
5.	Bloomfield Park	N	2.4	4	20.	Loomis Park	C	14	3
6.	Bucky Harris Park	C	0.3	4	21.	New Leaf Park	N	0.2	4
7.	Downt. Riverfront Park	N	0.9	4	22.	Nixon Park	C	17.1	3
8.	Ella Sharp Park	R	538.2	2	23.	Norm Cregar Park	N	0.2	3
9.	Elnora Moorman Plaza	N	0.1	4	24.	Optimist Park	N	0.1	4
10.	Emma Nichols Garden	N	0.1	4	25.	Rotary Park	N	1.9	2
11.	Exchange Park	N	3.7	1	26.	Under The Oaks	C	0.1	2
12.	Friendship Park	N	0.2	1	27.	W. George Wade Park	N	0.4	4
13.	Ganson Street Park	N	0.4	4	28.	Withington Park	C	0.6	4
14.	Grand River Mem. Park	N	0.1	1	29.	Workers Memorial Park	N	7.3	3
15.	Grover Leake Park	N	0.3	4				618.1	

\*R = Regional C = Communitywide N = Neighborhood


**Barrier-Free Access**

It is important that the parks, trails, and recreation facilities operated by the City of Jackson be accessible to people with disabilities. After all, it is estimated that 16.3% of City residents had some type of disability in 2021 according to the ACS, and 7.8% had an ambulatory difficulty. Accordingly, all the parks provided by the City were also rated according to their level of barrier free access.<sup>3</sup> The number listed under the BFA column in the City of Jackson Parks table listing those parks equate to the barrier-free rating listed above.

Key	Description
1 =	none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
2 =	some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
3 =	most of the facilities/park area meet accessibility guidelines
4 =	the entire park meets accessibility guidelines
5 =	the entire park was developed/renovated using the principal of universal design

<sup>3</sup> The analysis of barrier free access was provided by the City of Jackson based upon its knowledge of the parks and understanding of barrier-free access. A professional analysis may produce different results.

**Park and Recreation Facility Matrix**



	Amphitheaters/Stages	Baseball Fields	Full Basketball Courts	Half Basketball Courts	Benches/Seating	Disc Golf Course	Dock/Water Trl Access	Dog Park	Fire Pit	Golf Course	Golf Learning Center	Landscaping	Little Free Library	Marker/Monument	Mini-Golf Course	Museum & Planetarium	Nature Trails	Nmt Trls & Trl Access	Picnic Tables	Playgrounds	Pickleball Courts	Picnic Pavilions/Shelters	Public Art	Recreation Centers	Skate Park	Sledding Hill	Soccer Fields	Softball Fields	Tennis Courts	Walkways	Water Park		
Austin Blair Pk	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-		
Best Field	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Betsy Butterfield Pk	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Beech Tree Pk	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Bloomfield Pk	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	
Bucky Harris Pk	X	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Dntwn Riverfront Pk	X	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Ella Sharp Pk	-	-	X	-	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	-	X	-	
Elnora Moorman Plz	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Emma Nichols Gdn	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Exchange Pk	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	
Friendship Pk	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Ganson Street Pk	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Grand River Mem Pk	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
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Kiwanis Pk	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
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New Leaf Pk	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Nixon Pk	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	X	-	X	X	-	
Norm Creger Pk	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Optimist Pk	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Rotary Pk	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	-	
Under the Oaks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
W George Wade Pk	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Withington Pk	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	
Workers Mem Pk	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-

### City Park and Recreation Facility Inventory

The parks in the park system are divided into three types. Ella Sharp Park is a regional park given that it attracts people from outside of the Jackson Area. Various other parks are designated as communitywide given that they contain a unique component that is utilized by all Jackson residents. For example, Best Park contains the City's only baseball field which is utilized for tournaments. Beech Tree Park contains Betty's Dog Park and Bucky Harris Park has a fire pit. Horace Blackman Park hosts the True Community City Center which contains an amphitheater, the Glidden Parker Art Glass Mural, and a local art showcase. The Howard Woods Recreation Complex contains the Martin Luther King Recreation Center and Loomis Park contains the Boos Recreation Center. Nixon Park contains the only public pool and skating park in the park system, Under the Oaks commemorates the political convention which helped create the Republican Party and Withington Park contains the City's war memorials and is the site of annual Veteran's Day celebrations. All other parks are designed to serve as neighborhood parks.

#### 1. Austin Blair Park (See Map 4 in Appendix A)

Neighborhood Park  
600 S. Jackson Street  
0.7 acres

Austin Blair Park is a small park south of Downtown Jackson, named after Gov. Austin Blair, who came from Jackson and served as Michigan's Governor during the Civil War. The park contains:

- Landscaping, with walkways and benches/seating,
- 1 playground, and
- a Michigan Historical Marker for Gov. Austin Blair (a marker/monument).

#### 2. Best Field (See Map 5 in Appendix A)

Communitywide Park  
1304 Lewis Street  
6.0 acres

Best Field, located on Jackson's east side, is named after the Best Family of Jackson. The park contains:

- 1 baseball field with benches/seating used for baseball tournaments.

The Jackson County Horseshoe Club is adjacent to the park.

#### 3. Betsy Butterfield Park (See Map 6 in Appendix A)

Neighborhood Park  
2101 S. West Ave.  
0.5 acres

Betsy Butterfield Park, designed as a memorial to Betsy, is a small park on Jackson's southwest side. The park contains:

- Landscaping, with benches/seating, picnic tables, and walkways,
- 1 playground, and
- a sculpture of children playing leapfrog (public art).

#### 4. Beech Tree Park (See Map 7 in Appendix A)

##### Communitywide Park

400 N. Blackstone St.

1.1 acres

Beech Tree Park is located within walking distance of Downtown Jackson. It is named for an award-winning beech tree which was removed due to a lightning strike. The park contains:

- Walkways with benches/seating, and picnic tables, and
- Betty's Dog Park, comprised of separate areas for big and small dogs.

#### 5. Bloomfield Park (See Map 8 in Appendix A)

##### Neighborhood Park

1305 W. Michigan Avenue

2.4 acres

Bloomfield Park is located on Michigan Avenue, west of Wisner Street. The park contains:

- Landscaping with benches/seating, picnic tables, and walkways,
- 1 full basketball court and 2 half basketball courts,
- 2 tennis courts,
- 1 playground, and
- access to the Michigan Avenue Street Trail (nonmotorized trails and trail access).

#### 6. Bucky Harris Park (See Map 9 in Appendix A)

##### Communitywide Park

190 W. Michigan Avenue

0.3 acres

Bucky Harris Park is a small park located in Downtown Jackson behind the City of Jackson sign wall. Its name honors longtime Jackson resident Charles "Bucky" Harris. The park contains:

- Landscaping with benches/seating, picnic tables, and walkways,
- 1 stage,
- 1 fire pit,
- a Bright Walls mural (public art), and
- Michigan Historic Site markers for Jacksonburg Public Square and Abolitionists in Jackson and a Bucky Harris Park "The Jackson Underground Railroad Tour" marker (markers/monuments).

Horace Blackman Park is adjacent to the park across Jackson Street.

#### 7. Downtown Riverfront Park (See Map 10 in Appendix A)

##### Neighborhood Park

N. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive

0.9 acres

The Downtown Riverfront Park is located along the Grand River on the southeastern side of Downtown Jackson. The park contains:

- Landscaping with benches/seating and walkways,
- The Martin Luther King Equality Trail (nonmotorized trails and trail access)
- 1 amphitheater, and
- the Stacked Arch sculpture (public art).

The Consumers Energy Campus is adjacent to the park.

#### 8. Ella Sharp Park (See Map 11 in Appendix A)

##### Regional Park

3225 Fourth Street

538.2 acres

Ella Sharp Park, which makes up much of the southwestern border of the City, is named for Ella Sharp, a prominent Jackson resident who donated her family farm. It is the largest city park and contains:

- Landscaping with benches/seating, walkways, picnic tables, and a rose garden,
- 1 eighteen-hole golf course with a clubhouse, 2 putting greens, and 2 golf simulators,
- 1 golf learning center (driving range),
- 1 eighteen-hole miniature golf course with clubhouse,
- 1 eighteen-hole disc golf course,
- the Ella Sharp Museum and Peter F. Hurst Planetarium, a private nonprofit organization located in the park, with an outdoor public art garden (public art),
- 4 Pickleball/tennis courts off W. Hickory,
- 2 lighted softball fields,
- 4 softball fields,
- 1 full basketball court,
- 10 soccer fields
- 1 playground (Carters Corners) and various other playground equipment throughout the park,
- 2 picnic shelters, including the historic rotunda,
- the PAKA Trail and Elmdale Street Trail (nonmotorized trails and trail access),
- a nature trail, and
- 4 WW1 memorial plaques, the Ella Wing Merrimack Sharp memorial, and the Nancy Lapinski memorial (markers and monuments)

#### 9. Elnora Moorman Plaza (See Map 12 in Appendix A)

##### Neighborhood Park

152 E. High St.

0.1 acres

Elnora Moorman Plaza is named after Elnora Moorman, Jackson's first African American and woman to serve on the City Commission (now City Council). The park contains:

- Landscaping with walkways benches/seating, and a little free library, and
- the MLK Equality Trail (nonmotorized trails and trail access).

**10. Emma Nichols Garden (See Map 13 in Appendix A)**

## Neighborhood Park

Michigan Avenue

0.1 acres

Emma Nichols Garden, located in Downtown Jackson, is a tribute to Ms. Nichols, who was a former slave who settled in Jackson. The park contains:

- Landscaping with a walkway and benches/seating,
- An explanatory marker about Emma Nichols (monuments and markers), and
- Several Bright Walls murals (public art)

The park is adjacent to the outdoor seating area for Veritas, a local restaurant.

**11. Exchange Park (See Map 14 in Appendix A)**

## Neighborhood Park

300 E. Mansion St.

3.7 acres

The Exchange Park, named after the Exchange Club of Jackson, is located on the City's south side. The park contains:

- Benches/seating,
- 1 playground,
- 1 softball field,
- 2 full basketball courts, and
- 2 tennis courts (unused).

**12. Friendship Park (See Map 15 in Appendix A)**

## Neighborhood Park

1039 Chittock Avenue

0.2 acres

Friendship Park is a small undeveloped park located south of Downtown Jackson.

**13. Ganson Street Park (See Map 16 in Appendix A)**

## Neighborhood Park

638 W. Ganson Street

0.4 acres

Ganson Street Park is a small park on the City's northwest side. The park contains:

- Landscaping, with walkways and benches/seating, and
- 1 playground.

**14. Grand River Memorial Park (See Map 17 in Appendix A)**

## Neighborhood Park

114 W. Pearl Street, 49201

0.1 acres

Grand River Memorial Park is a small park located in Downtown Jackson near Louis Glick Highway on the Grand River. The park contains:

- Landscaping, and
- 1 dock (dock/water trail access).

The park is adjacent to the City's Farmers Market.

#### 15. Grover Leake Park (See Map 18 in Appendix A)

Neighborhood Park  
152 E. Prospect Street  
0.3 acres

Grover Leake Park is named for the prominent local businessman who donated the land. It's the first public space in Jackson to be named for an African American. The park contains:

- Benches/seating and walkways.

#### 16. Horace Blackman Park (See Map 19 in Appendix A)

Communitywide Park  
200 W. Michigan Ave.  
1.3 acres

Horace Blackman Park, named for Mr. Blackman, an early settler of Jackson, is the City's oldest park and was enlarged following the removal of the old Consumers Energy headquarters. The park contains:

- Landscaping with walkways, benches/seating, and picnic tables,
- the True Community City Center which contains an amphitheater, the Glidden Parker Art Glass Mural, and a local art showcase (public art),
- a series of chimes along Michigan Avenue (public art),
- 1 playground, and
- a decorative fountain honoring The National Humane Alliance, Firemen's and Policemen's Monuments, a Harold White Sr. Monument, "May Peace Prevail on Earth" markers in multiple languages, a marker commemorating that the St. Joseph Trail crossed Jackson's first town square here, a stone marker commemorating "Edward Pomeroy Post No. 48 of the Grand Army of the Republic", and the First Congressional Church "The Jackson Underground Railroad Tour" marker (monuments and markers).

Bucky Harris Park is adjacent to the park across Jackson Street.

#### 16. Howard Woods Recreation Complex (See Map 20 in Appendix A)

Communitywide Park  
1107 Adrian St.  
10.0 acres

The Howard Woods Recreation Complex is located southeast of Downtown Jackson. The park contains:

- the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center (recreation center),
- Walkways with benches/seating, and picnic tables,

- 1 picnic shelter,
- 1 playground,
- 2 full basketball courts,
- 1 tennis court
- 2 softball fields, and
- The MLK Equality Trail (nonmotorized trails and trail access).

#### 18. Kiwanis Park (See Map 21 in Appendix A)

##### Neighborhood Park

1521 Blakely Ave.

1.3 acres

Kiwanis Park, named after the Kiwanis Club of Jackson, is located on the north side of Jackson. The park contains:

- Landscaping with walkways, benches/seating, and picnic tables,
- 1 picnic shelter, and
- 1 playground.

#### 19. Lions Park (See Map 22 in Appendix A)

##### Neighborhood Park

1025 N. Blackstone St.

8.6 acres

Lions Park, named for the Lions Club of Jackson, is located on Jackson's north side. The park contains:

- Walkways, benches/seating, and picnic tables,
- 1 picnic shelter,
- 2 full basketball courts,
- 2 pickle ball courts,
- 2 softball fields.
- 1 playground, and
- the Lions Park Trail (nonmotorized trails and trail access).

#### 20. Loomis Park (See Map 23 in Appendix A)

##### Communitywide Park

210 Gilbert St.

14.0 acres

Loomis Park, named after former Mayor Peter Loomis, is located on Jackson's east side. The park contains:

- the Boos Recreation Center (recreation center),
- landscaping with walkways, benches/seating, and picnic tables,
- 1 playground, including a set outdoor adult exercise equipment,
- 1 picnic shelter,

- 1 sledding hill, and
- 2 basketball courts.

#### 21. New Leaf Park (See Map 24 in Appendix A)

##### Neighborhood Park

1930 Fourth St.

0.2 acres

New Leaf Park is a small park. The park contains:

- Walkways, and
- the MLK Equality Trail (nonmotorized trails and trail access).

#### 22. Nixon Park (See Map 25 in Appendix A)

##### Communitywide Park

400 E. North St.

17.1 acres

Nixon Park, named after William Nixon, a Jackson police officer killed in the line of duty, is a sizable park on Jackson's north side with lots to offer. The park contains the following:

- skate park, including an inline hockey rink,
- water park (pool),
- walkways with benches/seating and picnic tables,
- 2 picnic shelters, and
- 2 softball fields

The park is across the street from St. John's School and its playground, soccer fields, little league fields, and a basketball court.

#### 23. Norm Creger Park (See Map 26 in Appendix A)

##### Neighborhood Park

700 S. Pleasant Ave.

0.2 acres

Norm Creger Park, named for a Jackson firefighter who died while fighting a fire in 1982, is located on the City's east side. The park contains:

- Walkways and benches/seating, and
- 1 playground.

#### 24. Optimist Park (See Map 27 in Appendix A)

##### Neighborhood Park

933 N. West Ave.

0.1 acres

Optimist Park, named after the Optimist Service Club of Jackson, is a flash of green in the busy N. West Avenue commercial corridor. The park contains:

- Walking path, benches/seating,
- 1 full basketball court, and
- 1 playground.

#### 25. Rotary Park (See Map 28 in Appendix A)

##### Neighborhood Park

1413 Deyo St.

1.9 acres

Rotary Park, named for the Rotary Club of Jackson, is tucked into the east side Jackson. The park contains:

- Walkways with picnic tables,
- 1 full basketball court,
- 1 tennis court
- 1 softball field, and
- 1 playground.

#### 26. Under The Oaks (See Map 29 in Appendix A)

##### Communitywide Park

418 Second St.

0.1 acres

Under the Oaks is a small park with a big history. On July 6, 1854, a large gathering of anti-slavery supporters gathered around Franklin and Second streets where the present-day park is located. Some attribute this event as the start of the Republican Party, making Jackson the birthplace of the party. The park contains:

- a stone monument commemorating the birth of the Republican Party, a Michigan Historic Marker for Under the Oaks, a Call to the Convention marker, Under the Oaks memorials, and an Under the Oaks the Jackson Underground Railroad Tour marker (monuments and markers).

#### 27. W. George Wade Park (See Map 30 in Appendix A)

##### Neighborhood Park

1100 Plymouth St.

0.4 acres

W. George Wade Park is named after W. George Wade, the founder of the adjacent Lily Missionary Baptist Church. The park contains:

- walkways with benches/seating, and picnic tables, and
- 1 playground.

The Lilly Missionary Baptist Church campus is adjacent to the park.

#### 28. Withington Park (See Map 31 in Appendix A)

##### Communitywide Park

410 W. Michigan Ave.

0.6 acres

Withington Park, named after a Civil War General from Jackson, is located on the west end of Downtown Jackson. The park contains:

- landscaping with walkways and benches/seating,
- the Defense of the Flag sculpture (public art), and
- the Women of Military Service monument, the In Memory of Our Unknown Soldiers of the Civil War ( Mothers, Daughters, Sisters, and Lineal Descendants of the Men Who Offered Their Lives in the Defense of the Nation) monument, the Spanish War monument, the World War 1 monument, the World War 2 monument, the Korean War monument, the Viet Nam War, monument, and the Global War on Terror monument (monuments and markers).

**29. Workers Memorial Park (See Map 32 in Appendix A)**

Neighborhood Park

701 S. Martin Luther King Dr.

7.3 Acres

Workers Memorial Park was named to honor COVID-19 frontline workers and those killed in workplace accidents. The park contains:

- landscaping with walkways, picnic tables, and benches/seating,
- 1 full basketball court,
- 1 half basketball court,
- 1 playground, and
- the MLK Equality Trail (nonmotorized trail & trail access)

**Recreational Trail Inventory**

The City’s parks are supplemented by an emerging regional trail system (please see Maps 33 and 34 in Appendix A). Several trails in this system are already in use, including the 14.7 miles already provided by the City. Nonmotorized trails account for 10.6 miles and street trails account for the remaining 4.1 miles.

**Jackson Area Trails**

No.	Name	Limits	Type*	Mi.	BFA
1.	MLK Equality Tr.	Consumers Energy Campus to Weatherwax Rd.	N	9.0	4
2.	Lions Park Tr.	North St. to Monroe St.	N	0.5	4
3.	PAKA Tr.	MLK Equality Trail to Horton Rd. Tr.	N	1.1	4
4.	Mechanic St. Tr.	Michigan Ave. to North St.	S	0.9	4
5.	Kibby Road Street Tr.	Cascades Pk. Connector to Internal Trs.	S	0.3	4
6.	Brown St. Tr.	Cascades Pk. Internal Tr. to Michigan Ave. St. Tr.	S	1.1	4
7.	Michigan Ave. Tr.	Brown St. Tr. to Michigan Ave. Tr.	S	0.9	4
8.	Elmdale St. Tr.	West Ave. to S. Jackson St.	S	0.9	4
9.	Horton Rd. Tr.	PAKA Tr. to Weatherwax Tr.	O	--	--
10.	Weatherwax Tr.	Horton Rd. Tr. to MLK Equality Tr.	O	--	--
11.	Cascades Park Connector Tr.	MLK Equality Tr. to Kibby Rd. Street Tr.	O	--	--
12.	Cascades Park Internal Tr.	Around the Cascades Pk. Lagoons	O	--	--
13.	High St. Trail	Cascades Park Internal Tr. to Spring Arbor Rd. Tr.	O	--	--

\*N = Nonmotorized S = Street O = Other

14.7

The MLK Equality Trail ranges from the Consumers Energy Campus in Downtown Jackson southwest to Weatherwax Road, just outside of the City in Summit Township, along an abandoned railroad corridor. The Falling Waters Trail (a Jackson County Parks facility) extends from Weatherwax Road to the Village of Concord along the same corridor. The Mechanic Street Trail, starting from Michigan Avenue and extending through the Armory Arts Complex (at North Street), and the Lions Park Trail, starting from North Street to Monroe Street along the Grand River, comprise a nonmotorized trail north of the Grand River in Downtown Jackson. The Mike Levine Lakelands State Park Trail currently extends from Parnall Road in Blackman Township northeastward to Whitmore Lake near US-223. Extensions from the Consumers Energy Campus to Mechanic Street and from Monroe Street to Parnall Road are proposed. Taken together, these trails comprise the portions of the Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance's Great Lake to Lake Trail #1 and the Hiking Section of Michigan's Iron Belle Trail. Taken together, these nonmotorized trails function as a regional park. All of the following trails function as communitywide parks.

The PAKA Trail extends from the MLK Equality Trail along West Avenue and through Ella Sharp Park. The PAKA Trail links to the Horton Road Trail in Summit Township. The Weatherwax Trail extends from the Horton Road Trail to the Falling Waters Trail. Those trails create a nonmotorized loop connecting neighborhoods in the City of Jackson and Summit Township, as well as connections to the MLK Equality Trail.

Jackson County maintains a trail in the southwest corner of the City which connects the MLK Equality Trail to Sparks Foundation (Cascades) County Park at Kibby Road. The City maintains a street trail along Kibby Road to Denton Road, connecting to the internal trail system serving Cascades Park. That trail system in turn connects to the City's Brown Street Trail from High Street to Michigan Avenue. The Brown Street Trail also connects with Michigan Avenue Street Trail from Brown Street to Downtown Jackson. These nonmotorized trails and street trail also provide a loop through the City connecting to different portions of the MLK Equality Trail. There is also a trail along High St. connecting the internal trail system serving Cascades Park and the Spring Arbor Road Trail which extends westward to Lumen Christi School.

Finally, the Elmdale Road Street Trail extends from Fourth Street to South Jackson Street, mainly along Elmdale Road. Sidewalks along south Jackson Street extend from the Elmroad Street Trail to the MLK Equality Trail. This trail and a section of sidewalk provide yet another loop and connection to different points along the MLK Equality Trail. The City plans to convert the South Jackson Street sidewalks into a street trail.

The Region 2 Planning Commission, the City of Jackson, and Jackson County published a non-motorized plan that covers all of Jackson County entitled the [Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan](#), in 2020. The plan addresses recreation as well as mobility concerns and provides an update to the *Jackson County Regional Trailway Study* completed in 2002. Potential trail projects throughout Jackson County, which will augment the emerging trail network described above, are identified in this document.

### **Recreation Events and Programs.**

The City of Jackson provides a wide variety of recreation programs. Many of the programs are offered at the Boos Center, the King Center, and the Nixon Skate and Water Parks. However, it must be pointed out that many of the recreation providers listed above also provide recreational programs.

- **Boos Center Programs**
  - Strength & Stretch w/ Michelle Woods
  - Movement matters
  - Sit and Stay Fit
  - Open Gym
  - Zumba w/ Gayle Hyde
  - Power Pump w/ Michelle Woods
  - Pop Pilates w/ Allie Baldwin
  - Fun-n-Fit w/ Kit Spoelstra
  - Zumba w/ Michelle Woods
  - Barr Pilates w/ Allie Baldwin
  - Thirsty (for Yoga) w/ Laurie Lewis
  - Tai Chi
  - 16 and Older Drop-in Basketball
- **King Center Programs**
  - After School Program Elementary/Middle School
  - High School Basketball
  - 30 and Over Basketball
  - Open Ping-Pong
  - Girls Open Gym
  - Adult Open Basketball
  - Adult Open Volleyball
  - High School Open Gym
  - King Center Summer Youth Program
  - Women's Open Gym
  - King Center Senior Program
- **Nixon Park**
  - Water Park Hours
  - Skate Park Hours
  - Customer Appreciation
  - Party Room Rental
- **Ella Sharp Park Golf**
  - Adult Golf Lessons
  - Youth Golf Lessons
  - Youth League (Ages 8 to 14)
- **Annual Special Events/Rentals**
  - Santa Calls
  - Jamie McKibbin Memorial Daddy/Daughter Dance
  - Mother/Daughter Tea
  - Det. Tigers Fam. Game at Comerica Pk.
  - King Center Facility Rental
  - Sharp Park Picnic Shelter Rental
  - Sharp Park Wedding Reservations
- Kiwanis Picnic Shelter Rental
- Boos Center Rental
- **Walking Programs**
  - Walk, Roll and Stroll Jackson
- **Youth Programs**
  - Fall Youth Soccer (K through 8th grade)
  - 1st and 2nd Grade Flag Football
  - 3rd and 4th Grade Flag Football
  - 5th and 6th Grade Flag Football
  - Youth Gymnastics: 3- and 4-year-olds, 5- to 7-year-olds, and 8+ years old
  - K through 3rd Grade Boys Instructional Basketball Program
  - K through 3rd Grade Girls Instructional Basketball Program
  - 4th-5th-6th Grade Basketball League
  - High School Basketball League
  - Jackson Symphony Orchestra/King Center Music Class
  - Jackson School of the Arts/King Center Dance Class
  - Cheer Camp
  - King Center After School Program
  - Holiday & Snow Days at the King Center
  - Youth Gymnastics
  - Corey Pryor Track and Field Camp
  - Wrestling Camp
  - Pickleball Camp
  - Youth Soccer Camp
  - First Ever E-Sports Camp
  - Jeremy Patterson Boys Basketball Camp
  - Drive, Put, and Disc Golf Camp
  - Youth Volleyball Camp
  - Nacoya Weatherspoon Girls Basketball Camp
  - Youth Football Camp
  - Summer Youth Cheer Camp
  - Kindergarten Co-ed Soccer
  - 1st Through 6th Grade Soccer
  - Middle School Co-ed Soccer
  - Youth Tennis Lessons with Nick rush and Cat Carroll
  - Al Glick Baseball/Softball League

- **Active Aging Program**
  - Boos Bingo
  - Walk this Way!
  - Movement Matters
  - Sit and Stay Fit
  - Fun and Games
  - Worth-a-Try Events
  - Monthly Luncheons
  - Beginner Line Dancing
  - Tai Chi
  - Senior Travel Program
  - Senior Splash
- **Adult Programs**
  - Drop-In Soccer
  - Adult Fall Soccer
  - Co-Ed Drop in Volleyball
  - Women's Indoor Volleyball League
  - Boos Center Exercise Classes
    - Gayle's Zumba
    - Allie's Pilates
- Kit's Fun-n-Fit
- Laurie's Yoga
- MLK Center Adult Programs
  - Men's 30 and Over Open Basketball
  - Adult Open Gym
  - Women's Open Gym
  - Adult Open Volleyball
  - Open Ping-Pong
- Michelle's Exercise Classes
  - Strength and Stretching Class
  - Power Pump Class
  - Zumba
- Water Aerobics
- Winter Golf League
- Summer Water Aerobics
- Adult Golf Lessons
- Adult Tennis Lessons with Cat Carroll
- Women's Doubles Tennis League
- Spring Adult 6-v-6 Co-ed Soccer
- Summer Adult Co-ed Soccer

### Public Art

Public art is also an important component of Jackson's parks and recreation system.

Bright Walls was a public art and mural festival founded and run by the Jackson Young Professionals. From 2018 through 2022, annual festivals hosted artists from across the globe and brought more than 75 murals to Downtown Jackson, creating a new destination in the community.



Please visit the [Bright Walls](#) website for more information.

Sculptures and other public art installations adorn Downtown Jackson (e.g., Louise Nevelson's 'Summer Night Tree' on Michigan Avenue, Glidden Parker's art glass mural depicting the story of electricity in Horace Blackman Park, Zigzag next to the post office, etc.). The Ella Sharp Museum campus has an extensive sculpture collection in Ella Sharp Park. Some of the other city parks and cemeteries also host public art (e.g., Lorado Taft's 'In Defense of the Flag' in Withington Park and 'Memory' in Woodland Cemetery, etc.). New public art installations have also been installed in roundabouts at the intersections of Kibby Road and Denton Road, West Avenue and 4th Street, 4th Street at the entrance to Ella Sharp Park, and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and Morrell Street.



New public art installations in Jackson are approved by the City Council, as advised by its Public Arts Commission.

### Butterfly Gardens

The City also recently introduced butterfly gardens throughout Downtown Jackson at various street intersections: Michigan Avenue and Blackstone Street, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and Courtland Street,

Courtland Street and Mechanic Street, Courtland Street and Jackson Street, Mechanic Street and Pearl Street, Pearl Street and Jackson Street, and Pearl Street and Jackson Street. The wedges created by the intersection of the streets and sidewalks at intersections are planted in native species which will attract butterflies and other beneficial insects. Those wedges are roped off and signs were installed explaining their purpose.

#### Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has awarded 20 recreation grants to the City of Jackson for a total investment of \$3,000,750. Please see the following recreation grant history table for complete listings of those grants.

No	Park Name	Project No.	Year	Grant Amount	Scope Items, Project Description, and Current Usage
1.	Rotary Play-ground	26-00186	1969	\$4,100	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> Basketball court, drainage, fencing, grading, and lighting.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> Installing fence, grading, providing, installing basketball/skating rink surface and lighting.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>
2.	Jackson North St. Recreation Center	26-00415	1971	\$184,000	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> Bathhouse, outdoor ice rink/skate park, and swimming pool.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> Develop 6 acres to include swimming pool, outdoor ice rink and bathhouse.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>
3.	Exchange Park Playground	26-01023 P4	1977	\$30,000	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> 2 basketball courts, 2 tennis courts, demolition of existing building, site improvements, and storage building.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> demolition of existing building, site improvement, 2 tennis courts, 2 basketball courts, storage building, and LWCF sign.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>
4.	Nixon Memorial Park	26-01060 K1	1978	\$85,000	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> 4 ball fields with fencing, backstops, benches, bleachers, and storage building.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> 4 ballfields with fencing, backstops, player's benches, bleachers, storage building, drinking fountain, paved entrance drive, tot lot, and playground equipment.</p> <p><b>Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>

No	Park Name	Project No.	Year	Grant Amount	Scope Items, Project Description, and Current Usage
5.	Loomis Park	26-01121	1980	\$45,000	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> 2 basketball courts, 2 tennis courts, parking w/walkway, picnic facilities, and play equipment.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> Develop 2 basketball courts, 2 tennis courts, 4 car parking areas, and a walkway for the tennis courts and playground equipment, and picnic facilities.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>
6.	Optimist Play-ground	26-01199	1981	\$41,000	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> Ballfield improvements, basketball court, fencing, playground, and utility building.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> Develop utility building, tot lot area, playground equipment, ball field improvements, fencing, basketball court, and LWCF sign.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> The recreation facilities were replaced in 2023.</p>
<del>7.</del>	<del>Optimist Park Acquisition</del>	<del>26-01280</del>	<del>1985</del>	<del>\$12,500</del>	<p><del><b>Scope Items:</b> N/A.</del></p> <p><del><b>Project Description:</b> Acquisition of 3.3 acres.</del></p> <p><del><b>Current Usage:</b> The project was withdrawn.</del></p>
8.	Jackson Martin Luther King Park	26-01461	1986	\$45,000	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> 1 tennis court, 2 basketball courts, parking, play area, and wire burial.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> 2 basketball courts, 1 tennis court, play areas, wire burial, and parking.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>
9.	Nixon Park Improvement	BF90-281	1990	\$60,000	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> Irrigation for two fields, picnic shelters, picnic tables/grills, and play equipment.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> Construction of two picnic shelters, irrigation of two ballfields, installation of picnic tables and play equipment.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>
10.	King Center Picnic Shelter	BF91-176	1991	\$37,500	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> Asphalt path, electrical supply, picnic shelter (30' x 50'), picnic tables (min. 30), and a drinking fountain with water line.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> To construct a picnic shelter with an asphalt path, 30+ picnic tables, electrical service, and drinking fountain.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>

No	Park Name	Project No.	Year	Grant Amount	Scope Items, Project Description, and Current Usage
11.	Lions Park Improvements	26-01520	1992	\$26,400	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> Picnic equipment, picnic shelter, and playground.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> Picnic shelter, play and picnic equipment.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>
12.	Sharp Park Land Acquisition	TF96-056	1996	\$101,250	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> N/A.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> Acquisition of 27 acres for a natural area in Ella Sharp Park.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>
13.	Grand River Greenway/Trail	TF97-113	1997	\$119,000	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> N/A.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> Acquire 5 parcels of land along the Grand River immediately east of Airline Drive to Cooper Street to develop a downtown riverfront park.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>
14.	Nixon Park Improvements	CM99-208	1999	\$640,000	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> Building renovations, in-line skating/hockey rink, interactive water play system, skateboard area, swimming pool renovations, and waterslide.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> Renovation of pool and development of a water slide, interactive water play area, in-line hockey rink and a skateboard park at Nixon Park.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>
15.	Bloomfield Park Courts Resurfacing	TF11-081	2011	\$70,000	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> MNRTF sign and resurface basketball/tennis court.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> Development to include resurfacing of the basketball and tennis courts in Bloomfield Park.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.</p>
16.	Riverwalk to Inter-City Trail Development	TF14-0268	2014	\$300,000	<p><b>Scope Items:</b> Trail (8'-10' wide).</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> The proposed project extends the Inter-City Trail to the edge of Downtown Jackson. The new segment will connect the current trail</p>

No	Park Name	Project No.	Year	Grant Amount	Scope Items, Project Description, and Current Usage
					terminus at the Howard Charles Woods, Sr., Recreation Complex to the edge of Downtown via: (1) the abandoned railroad right-of-way stretching from the Inter-City trail eastward to Beldon St.; (2) the recreation complex; and (3) the Cooper Street. right-of-way. <b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.
17.	Fourth Street Connector Development Project	TF15-0097	2015	\$300,000	<b>Scope Items:</b> Trail (6' wide or more). <b>Project Description:</b> Development to construct a half mile of trail that will tie into the City of Jackson's Inter-City Trail, which is part of the Iron Belle Trail and is the main corridor that ties together regional trail systems in the Jackson area. The trail will connect to the popular Ella Sharp Park, a middle school, an elementary school, residential areas, and a small commercial district. <b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.
18.	MLK Equality Trail Lighting Project	TF19-0146		\$300,000	<b>Scope Items:</b> Trail <b>Project Description:</b> Development of trail lighting from Prospect Street to Weatherwax Road on the Martin Luther King (MLK) Equality Trail. The trail section from the MLK Community Center at Morrell Street to Weatherwax Road is the most used pathway in the city. This portion of the trail is well used by adults and youth commuting to school and work each day along with travelers visiting the city. The trail is located on an old rail bed in a forested location. The lights will enhance safety and increase use by the public. <b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.
19.	Martin Luther King Jr. Equality Trail	TF21-0103	2021	\$300,000	<b>Scope Item:</b> Trail 8' wide or more. <b>Project Description:</b> Development project to renovate and increase the width of a trail from Prospect Street to S. West Avenue in Jackson. This is a highly used area of the trail system and needs upgrading to meet ADA guidelines. This trail will connect to the regional Falling Waters Trail.

No	Park Name	Project No.	Year	Grant Amount	Scope Items, Project Description, and Current Usage
					<b>Current Usage:</b> All facilities and improvements are maintained and still in use.
20.		TF22-0121	2022	\$300,000	<p><b>Scope Item:</b> Trail 8' wide or more.</p> <p><b>Project Description:</b> The project description is the same as Project No. TF21-0103, except that the limits of the project extend from S. West Avenue westward to the Optimist Shelter.</p> <p><b>Current Usage:</b> Project completion is expected in 2024 or 2025.</p>

### Jackson County Parks and Other Municipal Parks

Jackson County Parks maintains a couple of regional parks in the City of Jackson. James J. Keeley County Park is located at the intersection of Ganson and Jackson Streets, just north of Downtown Jackson. The 39.7-acre park contains the Jackson County Fairgrounds and the American 1 Event Center. The Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park is located on Brown Street in Jackson and Summit Township. The 482.5-acre park contains the Cascades (an illuminated waterfall built on a 500-foot hill with six giant fountains, musical accompaniment, and museum), the 18-hole Cascades Championship Golf Course, the 9-hole Cascades Executive Golf Course and Driving Range, the Cascades Manor House, Cascades Ice Cream Co., the Cascades Rotary Community Band Shell, and a disability-accessible fishing pier. The Vandercook Lake County Park is also located nearby in Summit Township. The Townships of Blackman and Leoni maintain some community parks. Summit Township provides several nonmotorized trails which supplement the trail systems maintained by the City and County.



### Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Although most of its facilities are not located within Jackson or its surrounding townships, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is a significant provider of regional parks and recreation facilities in Jackson County.

- **State Parks.** No state parks are located in the City or its surrounding townships. However, the DNR maintains the following parks which extend partially into Jackson County: Meridian-Baseline State Park, Walter J Hayes State Park, and Watkins Lake State Park.
- **State Recreation and Game Areas.** No state recreation or game areas are located in the City or its surrounding townships. However, the DNR maintains the following state game and recreation areas which extend into Jackson County: Waterloo Recreation Area, Grass Lake State Game Area, and Sharonville State Game Area.



- **DNR Boat Launches.** Finally, no state boat launches are located in the City. However, the DNR does maintain boat launches in Leoni Township: Center Lake, Gilletts Lake, and Leoni Township Park (Center Lake).

## Local Schools

Schools also provide a variety of recreational facilities. For example, elementary schools provide numerous playgrounds aimed at different age groups and sports fields. Middle and high schools provide football fields, ball diamonds and tennis courts. Elementary, middle, and high schools provide gymnasiums.

[Jackson Public Schools](#) covers almost all of Jackson and portions of Blackman, Liberty, Napoleon, and Summit Townships and maintains the following facilities (see Map 35 in Appendix A):



- Cascades and Elementary Schools
- Dibble Elementary School
- Hunt Elementary School
- Northeast Elementary School
- JPS Montessori Center
- Sharp Park Academy
- Middle School at Parkside
- Fourth Street Learning Center
- Jackson High School
- Jackson Pathways
- John R. Lewis Elementary School

East Jackson Community Schools covers a small part of southeastern Jackson and portions of Blackman, Leoni, Summit, and Waterloo Townships. Michigan Center Schools also covers a small part of southeastern edge of the City and a portion of Leoni Township. Northwest Community Schools abuts the City and covers portions of Blackman, Henrietta, Rives, Tompkins, and Sandstone Townships. Vandercook Lake Public Schools also abuts Jackson and covers a portion of Summit Township.



## Private and Quasi-Public Parks and Recreation Facilities

Various private and quasi-public institutions also provide recreation facilities in Jackson and the surrounding townships.

- **Golf Courses.** There are 5 private golf courses in addition to the public courses located in Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park and Ella Sharp Park. Lakeland Hills Golf Club and Pine Hollow Golf Course are in Leoni Township and the Country Club of Jackson, Grande Golf Club, and Hickory Hills Golf Course are in Summit Township.
- **Campgrounds.** There are 2 private campgrounds. Greenwood Acres Campground and Oak Tree Travel Trailer Camp are both located in Leoni Township.
- **Nature Preserves.** There is 1 private nature preserve. The Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Audubon Sanctuary is in Leoni Township.
- **Recreation and Sport Centers.** The YMCA provides a variety of sports and recreational activities at its center in Downtown Jackson and a satellite facility at Fergusons Corner in Summit Township. The Optimist Ice Arena, the Allskate Fun Center, and the Salvation Army playground are also located in the City (see Map 36 in Appendix A). Finally, there are 2 bowling alleys. JAX60 is in Blackman Township and Suburban Lanes is in Leoni Township. The Jackson County Horseshoe Club is adjacent to Best Field.

## Other Public and Private Facilities with Recreational Benefits

Various other facilities in Jackson and the surrounding townships provided publicly and privately also have recreational benefits:

- Local Colleges.** There are 3 college campuses. Baker College's local campus is in Blackman Township, north of the Jackson County Airport. Spring Arbor University is in the unincorporated village of Spring Arbor. Jackson College's main campus is in Summit Township and its W.J. Maher Campus is in Blackman Township. Many colleges provide access to collegiate sports and athletic facilities. County residents can also avail themselves of the other recreational facilities and programs hosted by those institutions, including Jackson College's George E. Potter Center.
 
- Jackson District Library.** The Jackson District Library (JDL) provides access to books and other items of entertainment (e.g., audio books, CDs, DVDs, etc). The Carnegie Library is in Jackson (see Map 36 in Appendix A), the Eastern Branch is in Leoni Township, the Meijer Branch is in Blackman Township, and the Summit Branch is in Summit Township.
 
- Airports.** Airports provide opportunities for recreational flying as well as transportation. Reynolds Field—Jackson County Airport is in Blackman Township.
- Cemeteries.** Cemeteries provide important green space in urban areas that can be used as safe places to walk/exercise and contemplate nature (see Map 36 in Appendix A). Mount Evergreen and Hebrew Cemeteries are in Jackson. Hillcrest Memorial Park is in Blackman Township. Woodlawn and St. John's Catholic Cemeteries are in Summit Township. There are also various smaller township and private cemeteries.
- Sidewalks.** Most of the City of Jackson's streets have sidewalks. Sidewalks also occur in other parts of the surrounding townships. Those sidewalks are used for exercise as well as transportation and may even connect with non-motorized trails.
- Shopping and Dining.** Many people enjoy shopping and going out to eat. Consequently, Downtown Jackson is a recreation destination because of its restaurants and shops.
- Historic Sites.** Jackson County contain many historic sites that have local, state, and/or national significance. The National Register of Historic Places contains 15 sites in Jackson. A total of 18 sites in the City were included on the list of Michigan State Historic Sites. The City of Jackson's Under the Oaks Neighborhood is a locally designated historic district and the City has also designated 42 other local historic districts.

## Resource Inventory

In addition to parks and recreation facilities, the City of Jackson is also home to a wide variety of cultural and natural resources.

## Topography

With a change in elevation of 152 feet, the City's topography can be described as gently rolling and moderately hilly (see Map 37 in Appendix A). The high point of 1,066 feet above sea level is in southwestern Jackson, south of Kibby Road and west of West Avenue. The low point of 914 feet is located along the Grand River near North Street.

## Water Resources

The City of Jackson and its surrounding area is in the Upper Grand River Watershed and drains into the Grand River. The watershed can be broken down into various sub-watersheds, several of which cover the City (see Map 38 in Appendix A). The Grand River is the major aquatic resource in Jackson, followed by the lagoons in Cascades Park. Floodplains and wetlands are located along the Grand River as it traverses the City but are also located in other parts of Jackson.

## Transportation

The City of Jackson and its surrounding townships share a well-connected transportation system. Interstate 94 (I-94), located north of the City, provides access to the major metropolitan areas of Chicago and Detroit. US Highway 127 (US-127), located east and north of Jackson, provides access to the Lansing area and other points north as well as Adrian and Toledo to the south. Michigan Highway 50 (M-50)—which traverses the City utilizing portions of Cooper Street, Louis Glick Highway/Michigan Avenue, and West Avenue—also serves as Business Loop 127 (BL-127). Michigan Highway 106 (M-106) provides an additional connection to I-94.

## Land Use

The Future Land Use Classification map contained in *JACKSON: ready for what's NEXT*, Jackson's 2016 community master plan establishes a 'Core Mixed Use' area for Downtown Jackson as well as a variety of corridors (see Map 39 in Appendix A). A 'Health and Office' area has been designated along Michigan Avenue, east of Downtown. A 'Mixed Use Arts and Cultural Corridor' is planned along the Grand River, north of Downtown. 'Gateway Corridors' are proposed along state highways at the borders of the City. The traditional mix of 'Residential', 'Residential and Office', 'Neighborhood Commercial', 'Regional Commercial', 'Industrial Commercial', and 'Industrial' areas are envisioned for most of Jackson.





*Horace Blackman Park*



Chapter 3

## **Public Involvement**

## Description of the Planning Process

The steps utilized to develop this edition of the *City of Jackson Recreation Plan* included:

1. The City of Jackson recognized the need to update its Recreation Plan.
2. City of Jackson Parks, Recreation, Cemeteries, and Trails Department contracted with its ad hoc consultant, Grant Bauman, to facilitate the development of this edition of the *City of Jackson Recreation Plan* in the spring of 2023.
3. The ad hoc consultant conducted a comprehensive onsite review of each city park and trail in Jackson from early- to-mid-summer 2023 and presented the results to the Parks and Recreation Commission on August 16, 2023.
4. The Parks and Recreation Commission conducted a recreation survey targeted at the public from September 6, 2023, through October 8, 2023, and the ad hoc consultant summarized the results of the public involvement effort in late October of 2023.
5. The ad hoc consultant updated the *Community Description & Administrative Structure* (one), *Recreation and Resource Inventories* (two), and *Public Involvement* (three) chapters of the Plan in late October of 2023.
6. The Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the information provided by the ad hoc consultant in the first three chapters of this Plan with the Parks and Recreation Commission on November 1, 2023, to provide it the information it needs to develop the Plan's Goals and Objectives and Action Program.
7. The Parks and Recreation Commission developed the Goals and Objectives and Action Program elements of the Plan on November 15, 2023.
8. The Parks and Recreation Commission released this edition of *City of Jackson Recreation Plan* for public comment on November 29, 2023.
9. The Parks and Recreation Commission provided the plan for public review from December 3, 2023, through January 3, 2024.
10. The Parks and Recreation Commission held a public hearing on January 3, 2024. The Plan was approved by the Commission and recommended for adoption by the Jackson City Council after the public hearing was closed.
11. ~~The Jackson City Council adopted the Plan on January 16, 2024.~~

## Description of the Public Input Process

A variety of methods were employed to incorporate public input into the development of this plan.

### Survey

A survey was conducted online from September 6, 2023, through October 8, 2023, via SurveyMonkey®. A paper version of the recreation survey was also provided to people who did not wish or had no opportunity to utilize a computer. The recreation survey was advertised on the City of Jackson Website ([www.cityofjackson.org](http://www.cityofjackson.org)), as the following screenshot verifies. A flier notifying the public about the opportunity to provide public comment was posted at City Hall, the Boos Center, and the Martin Luther King Center. There was a total of 143 survey returned, including five paper surveys.

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The original item was published from 9/5/2023 4:26:00 PM to 10/9/2023 7:05:02 AM.


**City News Stories**

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Posted on: September 5, 2023

**[ARCHIVED] Take the Jackson Parks & Recreation Survey**

Jackson residents have an opportunity to give feedback on the future of the City's parks system. The City of Jackson Parks and Recreation Department is in the process of revising its master plan. To make sure resident input is included in the plan, the City has launched a Parks and Recreation Survey.



The short survey, which is available in paper and digital formats, officially launched on Wednesday, Sept. 6 and will be open through Sunday, Oct. 8. The 14-question survey asks residents about their park experiences, program participation, and what kind of offerings they'd like to see in the future. After the survey closes in Oct., responses will be reviewed by City staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission for use in the new Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Once completed, the master plan will be used as a guide for improvements to the parks system over the next five years.

Parks and Recreation Director Kelli Hoover says feedback from residents is important to improving the parks system. "Past surveys were instrumental in our department creating a disc golf course and expanding pedestrian trails, so this information really is valued by the City," Hoover said. "We welcome the feedback and appreciate the support from residents."

The digital Parks and Recreation Survey is available on the City website, [cityofjackson.org](http://cityofjackson.org). Paper copies of the survey can be found at the Parks and Recreation Department, 5th floor of City Hall, 161. W. Michigan Ave.

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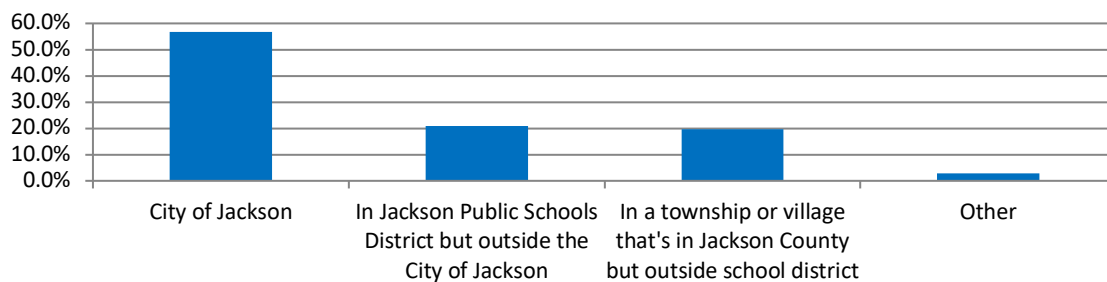
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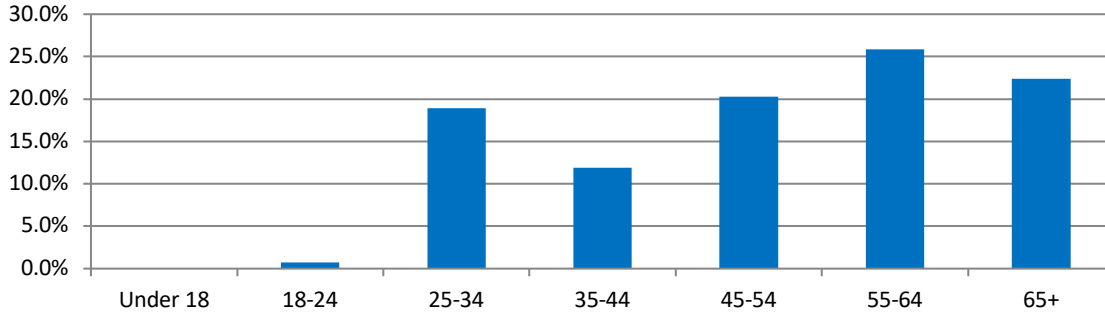
1. **Where do you live?**

Approximately 56.6% of respondents lived in Jackson. Approximately 21.0% lived elsewhere in the Jackson Public Schools school district (the JPS is the source of the millage which contributes to the operating budget for the Jackson City Parks system). Approximately 19.6% of respondents lived elsewhere in Jackson County. Approximately 2.8 % lived outside of Jackson County. [n=143]



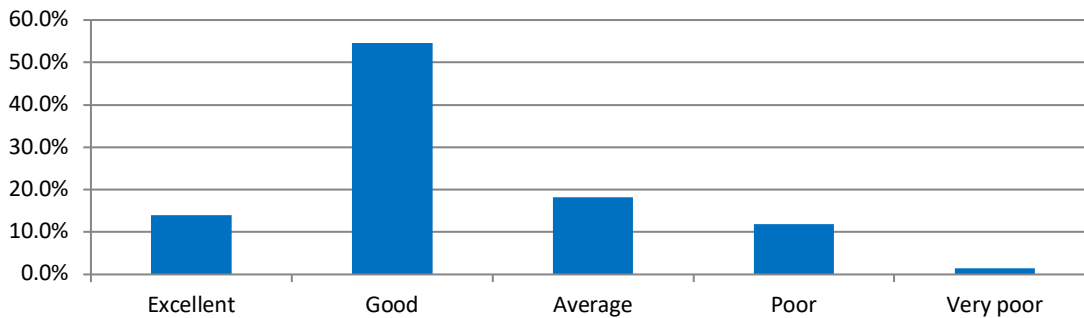
2. **What is your age?**

Approximately 25.9% of respondents were 55 to 64 years old. Approximately 22.4% of survey takers were 65 years old or older. Approximately 20.3% of respondents were 45 to 54 years old. Approximately 18.9% of survey takers were 25 to 34 years old. Approximately 11.9% of respondents were 35 to 44 years old. Approximately 0.7% of survey takers were 18 to 24 years. No respondent was 18 years old or younger. [n=143]



3. **How do you rate the City of Jackson parks system?**

Approximately 68.6% of respondents rated it excellent (54.6%) or good (14.0%), 18.2% rated it average, and 13.3% rated it poor (11.9%) or very poor (1.4%). [n= 143]



The following specific comments were provided by the respondents:

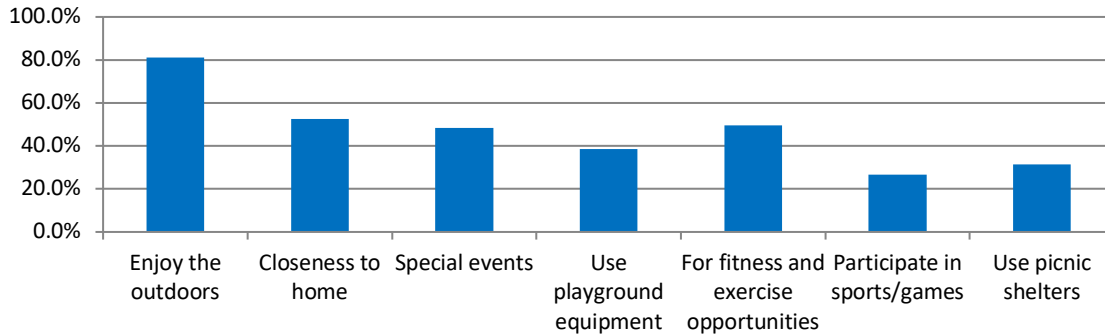
- Some parks could use maintenance/more regular cleaning.
- We just moved here, so we are fairly new to knowing every park still. Loving what we have experienced so far.
- Jackson is a third world cesspool of criminal nitwits.
- Many of the playgrounds are fairly new or updated. However, Cascades Park playground is overdue for a complete overhaul.
- For our size (population) I think our parks system is good but like anything, our parks system are getting better with time and ideas.
- Needs to incorporate more natural elements like rock, trees, etc. Also, need more under age 4 friendly play structures. Glen Arbor has a park where equipment is designed for both parent and child which is great. Sensory gardens would be cool too.

- Amazed at the variety of offerings, maintenance, and just overall exceptional park programming.
- Large parks are mismanaged a bit and in great need of maintenance.
- I use mountain bike trails in Ella Sharp Park.
- The city lacks maintenance of its structures and grounds keeping. They remove shade trees, use materials that more toxic to our health/environment and continue to uphold only the suggestions of the state or the employees which do not reside within the limits. The parks need full-time directors that care about the buildings, their surroundings, and the constituents. A reallocation of funding would do our parks systems much good. A sincere focus on what the people in the respective areas of the parks need/want is greatly needed. The parks department seems to be the last to get funding, when a simple 5% payout to all employees (not including emergency services, fire, police) that make in excess of \$75k annual income would generate a decent amount to fulfill the needs. A city that is clean, free from rubbish with clean-shady operational parks is a city that others will take pride in. The better effort the city makes to bettering the area, the better effort its residents will make to uphold it.
- Love the new equipment and safe feeling.
- U guys need to do more for all the kids.
- Putt-putt needs repaired.
- The park system Should offer more Programs for the Children at an Early Age and Continue until they are Ready for junior high school. Keep them Engaged and the Kids will have more Hope.
- Don't particularly like how some of the streets are blocked off in Ella - I believe this could be a safety issue. What if someone has a medical emergency? What if someone needs to have a friend or family member pick them up while walking or running in a timely manner and the person can't get in? There are other scenarios. Seems like it's a disservice to the public due to a few incidents.
- We need a park for children with disabilities such as autism, children with wheelchairs etc.
- There is not the proper upkeep on equipment at city owned fields.
- Lack of continued maintenance after city pours money into them.
- They're not very safe. I don't feel comfortable visiting them.
- Sharp Park roads are closed.
- Unsafe conditions in many of the parks due to over abundance of homeless and gang activity.
- Honestly as a mom of three I do love our parks. However, I think that it would be better if our city had a free splash pad like all of our surrounding communities. We have a lot of lower income families in Jackson and to give the option to take their kids to play for free would be a huge benefit. I saw a toddler mom get turned away for bringing her 1½-year-old because she thought toddlers were free.
- No funding on the north side. Nothing being done at lion's park.

#### 4. **Why do you visit a park/recreation facility?**

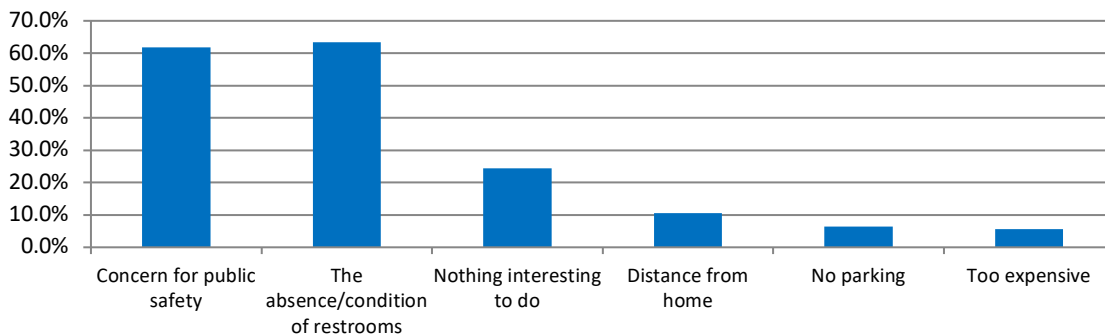
'Enjoy the outdoors' was the reason approximately 81.1% of respondents chose for visiting a park or recreation facility. Approximately 52.5% of respondents cited 'closeness to home'. Approximately 49.7% of residents identified 'for fitness and exercise opportunities'. Approximately 48.3% cited 'special events'. 'Use playground equipment' was chosen by approximately 38.5% of respondents.

‘Use picnic shelters’ was selected by 31.5% of respondents. ‘Participate in sports/games’ was selected by approximately 26.6% of respondents. [n=143]



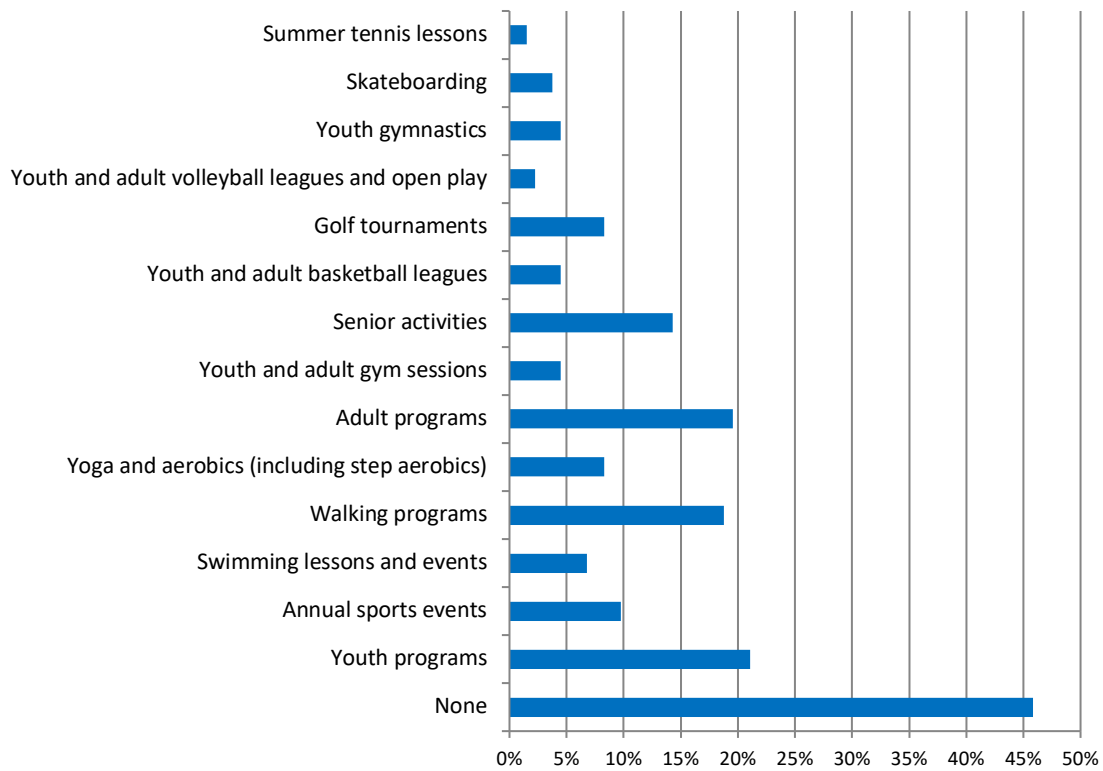
**5. What discourages you from visiting a park/recreation facility?**

A ‘concern for public safety’ was identified by 61.8% of respondents as a factor discouraging visits to parks and recreation facilities. The ‘absence/condition of restrooms’ was chosen by approximately 63.4% of respondents. ‘Nothing interesting to do’ was selected by approximately 24.4% of respondents. ‘Distance from home’ were selected by approximately 10.6% of respondents. ‘No parking’ was identified by 6.5% of respondents. ‘Too expensive’ was identified by 5.7% of respondents. [n=123]



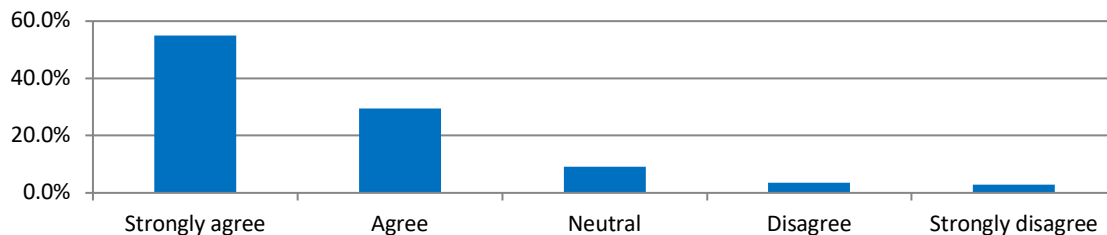
**6. What recreation programs do you participate in?**

Approximately 45.9% of respondents answered ‘none’ to this question. Approximately 21.1% participated in ‘youth programs’. ‘Adult programs’ were identified by 19.6% of respondents. ‘Walking programs’ accounted for approximately 18.8% of responses. Approximately 14.3% participated in ‘senior activities’. Approximately 9.8% of respondents chose ‘annual sporting events’. ‘Yoga and aerobics (including step aerobics)’ and ‘golf tournaments’ were both identified by 8.3% of respondents. Approximately 6.8% of respondents chose ‘swimming lessons and events’. Approximately 4.5% of respondents chose ‘youth and adult gym sessions’, ‘youth and adult basketball leagues’, and ‘youth gymnastics’. ‘Skateboarding’ was selected by 3.8% of respondents. Approximately 2.3% of respondents chose ‘youth and adult volleyball leagues’ and open play yoga’. Approximately 1.5% of respondents identified ‘summer tennis tournaments’. [n=133]



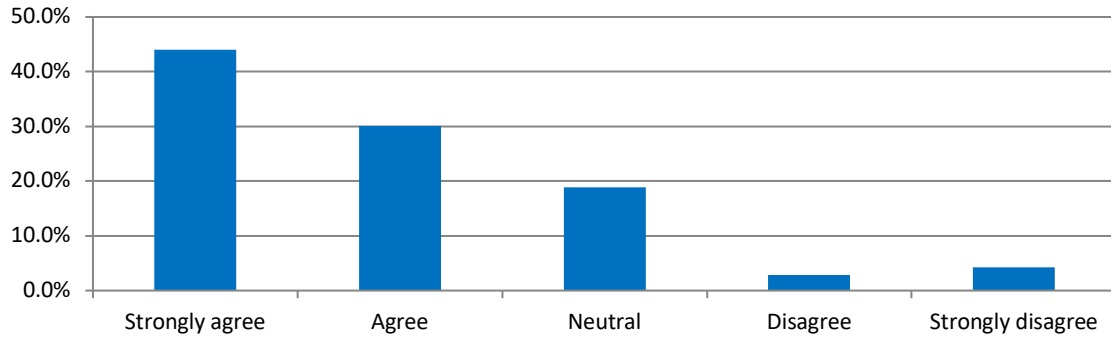
**7. A trail system should continue to be developed in the City of Jackson and surrounding areas.**

Approximately 84.5% of all respondents strongly agreed (54.9%) or agreed (29.6%) that a trail system should continue to be developed in the City of Jackson and the surrounding area. Approximately 9.2% were neutral. Approximately 6.3% of respondents disagreed (3.5%) or strongly disagreed (2.8%) with the proposal. [n=142]



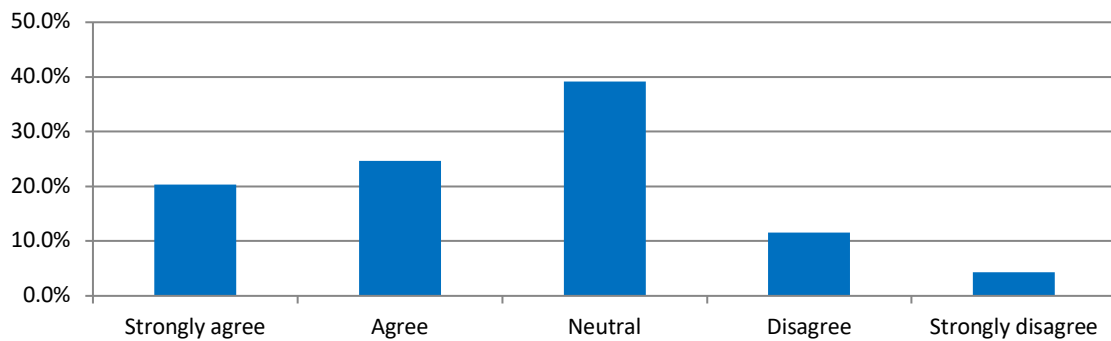
**8. Canoe/kayak launch sites should be provided along the Grand River.**

Approximately 74.2% of respondents strongly agreed (44.1%) or agreed (30.1%) that canoe/kayak launch sites should be provided along the Grand River. Approximately 18.9% were neutral. Approximately 7.0% of respondents disagreed (2.8%) or strongly disagreed (4.2%) with the proposal. [n=143]



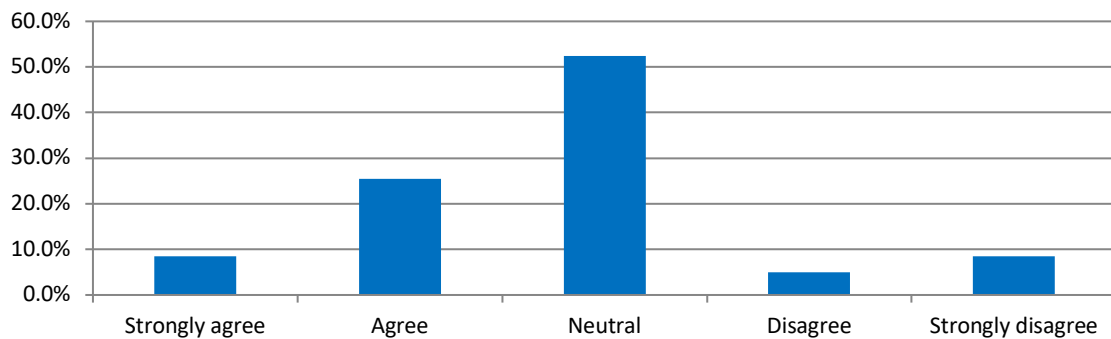
**9. Would you use a community garden?**

Approximately 44.9% of all respondents strongly agreed (20.3%) or agreed (24.6%) that they would use a community garden. Approximately 18.9% were neutral. Approximately 16.0% of respondents disagreed (11.6%) or strongly disagreed (4.4%) with the proposal. [n=138]



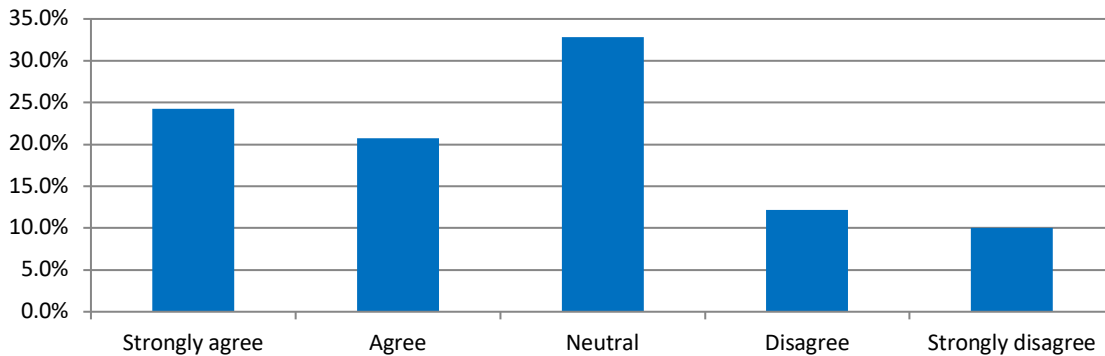
**10. Should the underutilized tennis courts be converted to pickleball courts?**

Approximately 34.0% of all respondents strongly agreed (8.5%) or agreed (25.5%) that the underutilized tennis courts be converted to pickleball courts. Approximately 52.5% were neutral. Approximately 13.5% of respondents disagreed (5.0%) or strongly disagreed (8.5%) with the proposal. [n=141]



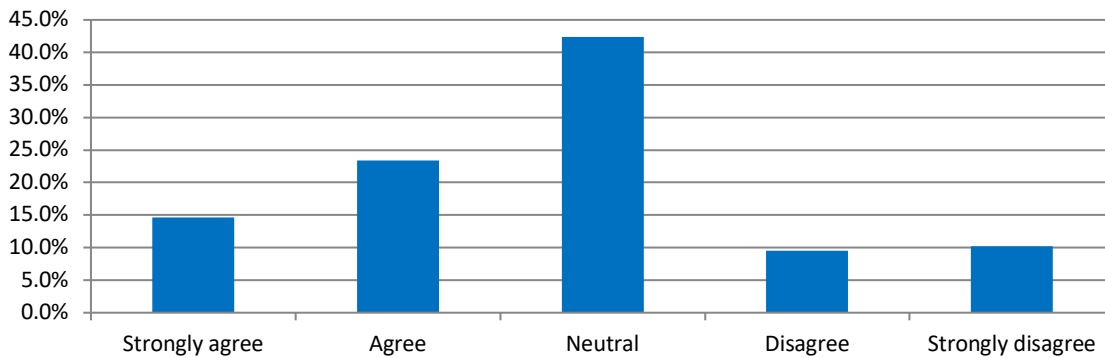
**11. Should public art be installed in every park?**

Approximately 45.0% of all respondents strongly agreed (24.3%) or agreed (20.7%) that public art should be installed in every park. Approximately 32.9% were neutral. Approximately 22.1% of respondents disagreed (12.1%) or strongly disagreed (10.0%) with the proposal. [n=140]



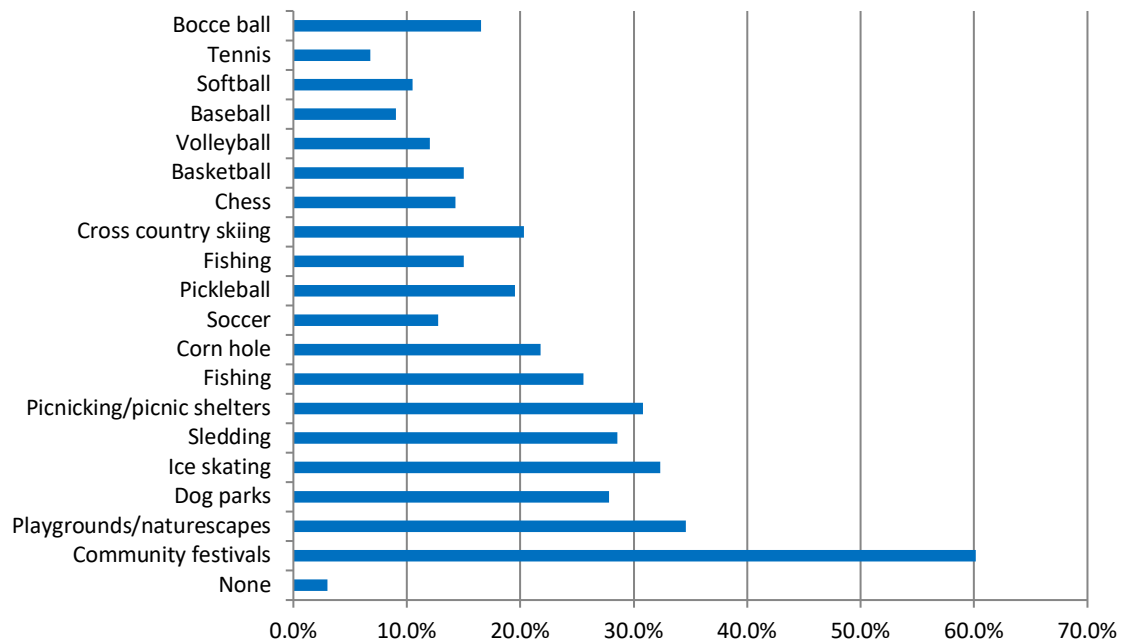
**12. Does the City need a deer harvesting program?**

Approximately 38.0% of all respondents strongly agreed (14.6%) or agreed (23.4%) that the City needs a deer harvesting program. Approximately 42.3% were neutral. Approximately 19.7% of respondents disagreed (9.5%) or strongly disagreed (10.2%) with the proposal. [n=137]



**13. Is there an activity you'd like to see more of in City of Jackson parks?**

Approximately 60.2% of survey takers identified 'community festivals'. 'Fishing' was identified by 40.6% of respondents. Approximately 34.6% identified 'playgrounds/naturescapes', 32.2% picked 'ice skating', and 30.8% desired 'picnicking/picnic shelters'. Approximately 28.6% identified 'sledding', 27.8% picked 'dog parks', 21.8% desired 'cornhole' and '20.3% chose 'cross-country skiing'. Approximately 19.6% identified 'pickleball', 16.5% picked 'bocce ball', 15.0% desired 'basketball', and '14.3% wanted 'chess'. Approximately 12.8% chose 'soccer', 12.0% desired 'volleyball', 10.5% picked 'softball', 9.0% asked for 'baseball', and 6.8% selected 'tennis'.



14. **What have you seen at parks and recreation facilities in other communities that you would like to see in City of Jackson parks?**

The following specific comments were provided by the respondents:

- I participate in the Active Living Program and it has been a life changer for me! Thank you Julie and her staff for working so hard to offer dynamic and relevant activities to me and others.
- For the chair exercise at Boos Center Director should have bluetooth speaker and small clip microphone (not headset) to better accommodate the many seniors with hearing issues.
- Bowling games installed - food courts. In Detroit, they have a lot of fun things to do in the parks to do downtown and other ones too. Bowling installed to play, food courts with seating and tables. Have outside games. Have dancing Friday and Saturday nights with music to dancing. Have exercising like in gyms to keep in fit. I would like to see this all this to happen in Jackson. I use to go with the Trippers for Detroit on the Rise to see all around Detroit. Detroit changed a lot for the better. I love pretty paintings in the Building.
- Would like to see a larger water park
- Permanent restrooms, more trash pick-up, nicer, more picnic tables.
- Equipment designed for older/taller kids to play on and with :)
- Areas for infants , toddlers separate with shade.
- More focused youth programs!! More affordable for parents! We have got to find a way to get everyone involved!!
- Do the smooth brained troglodytes born in this dumpster fire have a genetic drive to throw trash on the ground?

- Would love to see an area dedicated to small child playing, with sensory equipment, climbing structures, and “housing” where kids can let their imaginations run free.
- I think the actions the city is taking are overall for the better. However, our second large public park playground equipment is rusting and breaking down.
- We really like the water park in Ypsilanti. Larger off leash dog park with walking trails would be incredible.
- More public launches for Kayaking on lakes not grand river. More trails that are dog friendly.
- Other cities have parks of an appreciable size with adequate parking and are not heat islands. Jackson has some very tiny parks with absolutely zero parking. Not very inviting.
- Paddle boats.
- Public fishing areas, running trails.
- More things for kids to do. They need to be outdoors in the fresh air.
- Exercise/fitness things.
- What are the parks I visit is over on the Ann arbor side, they have boat launches that are well kept for kayakers and the river is kept pretty clean, Jackson is working on it but you guys need some help..... it's a slow process.
- Public swimming pools!
- Zip line.
- More for children than the same play equipment every other park has. Kids only want to be at the play areas, and then there is nothing to do in those areas for the adults.
- Recycling.
- Pretty much we have similar things that other cities are offering; we just have to get out there and show up and show out. Utilize the facilities that we have available.
- Roped play equipment. Play equipment that is designed for adults to use alongside their children. Bike lanes. Natural plays apes (nature playgrounds). Shaded areas (trees, pavilions). Outdoor art. Outdoor music wall. Check out Fayetteville WV parks!
- I would like to see more playground equipment geared for 2 to 4 year olds. And as long as I am commenting I would really like to see the playground worked on at the corner of W. Michigan and Thompson. With the swings so close to Michigan Avenue the noise and view takes away the pleasure. Maybe they could be moved to a quiet area.
- I would like to see the ceramics classes return to Ella Sharp and other art offerings in the facilities. Would also like to see parts of Ella Sharp Gated and closed when the park is closed and reopened each day-similar to some larger parks across the country. Safety in the more remote portions of the park are concerning and closing access to the majority of the park when it is closed would alleviate some of that concern. The concrete barriers are extremely unattractive and make the otherwise beautiful park look trashy. Simple lockable swing gates that lock could be a more attractive, flexible and better alternative to the jersey blocks. Thanks for reading.
- Mountain bike / hiking trails.
- More possibilities for nighttime use/events. Movies, star gazing, etc....
- Interactive trails (workout stations), more tables with shade (metal umbrella tables, festivals, opportunity for public transportation routes for those without vehicles!!!
- No drug paraphernalia. No homeless activity. No drug sales.

- i like what city is doing for small parks around Jackson but somehow cascade park is been ingnored. this is one the main attraction in Jackson and i think its playground needs to be ad-dressed.
- Na.
- Mountain bike trail opportunities. Modern restrooms.
- "Activated spaces in the downtown parks, food trucks, events, bands at the band shell down-town, beer garden event or wine and jazz event in the downtown park with music.
- Less mowed lawn in large open fields, allow these areas to naturalize, walking trails can be cut throughout and some larger 1-2 acre field areas should be left mowed. The natural area at Cas-cades behind the golf driving range is a great example of this, MORE areas managed in this way. Naturalized not mowed is the FUTURE!!!
- Swings, hammocks, slides, play areas and natural gathering spaces & seating throughout the parks especially at cascades, see Omaha's River front park for examples. Cornhole, bocce ball, swings gathering spaces are interspersed throughout the park."
- Shady and more scenic area to walk. A circuit, not a trail.
- Better lighting Is needed and also installation of AED for emergencies.
- Sponsorship of the parks by local businesses. The city residents spend way to much money on parks when the city should be advocating new business rather than pushing new business away. Grow Jackson, not lose business and residents.
- Adult outdoor exercise equipment.
- Nice, well maintained restrooms. Art adds to enjoyment. Activities for youth, especially preteens n teens, volleyball, skating for example.
- New updated playground equipment. Increase number of garbage cans around the park that get changed on regular basis.
- "Disc Golf courses.
- Trails linking each city park. Bathrooms.
- Guides to the other City parks.
- Pickleball courts.
- Like to see the addition of dedicated bike lines in roads that connect to our parks and paved trails. Also markers that describe the local flora and fauna.
- More art - Art trails, interactive art installations, vendors, markers describing tree species or bird species in the area.
- I find it very difficult to sign up for parks and rec activities. If I do hear about something it is via a flyer that comes home with my child and too close to the event to plan accordingly. Online sig-nup and digital payment is a necessity these days. I'd love to see more water fitness offerings, especially in the evenings or on weekends. Typically, the times are geared toward seniors and not working adults. I'm sure Nixon is expensive to staff but the open season is too short and it would be nice to swim on Sundays like in Washtenaw County. Lastly, parks are feeling increas-ingly unsafe. I loved taking my family to events at cascades, but all the fighting and lack of crowd control has made it feel scary and we've started going to nearby communities instead.
- More bike paths, off leash dog parks.
- Skating rink, tobogganing run, upgrade sledding, go carts.

- Areas designed for and with the youth in mind. More events for our teens. A larger community maternity banquet for expecting mothers that helps support expecting moms. An outdoor dj mixer for teens near a kinetic-energy roller pad/arena. New bike trail park with ramps. Horse-back riding options back at Ella Sharp. An overall more natural/holistic approach to children's play. Less chemical hydroseeding of the newly constructed play areas, less chemically treated mulch. More cork-based playgrounds. A facilities director that cares about the community in every rec center. Summer youth employment/city cleanup crews again. More youth programs at every park facility. It seems that Boos Center has been more focused on programs for our aging community, which is great, but our kids/teens do not have as many options available to them anymore at that facility. Arts and crafts days. A seasonal midway. Ice bumper cars at the Nixon ice rink. Longer pool operation hours. Free/heavily discounted swim lessons for tots and kids that reside here. Canopy boardwalk/bridges thru the woods near Northeast Elementary. Horse races/track. Zipline/ropes courses. A horticulture club/group that allows any resident to participate in the growing of the city trees, shrubs, flowers, and greenery that our parks could use. A beekeeping field. A butterfly garden. Acrobatics and aerial arts classes. Interactive br soccer and other such games for an after-school program. Double dutch education and competitions. Late night astronomy/ star gazing platforms equipped with a large telescope (cascades or ella sharp). A croquette course. A fully staffed teen drop-in center with vr equipment, pool tables, Foosball, arcade style games.
- POOL.
- Active fountains and areas to access water.
- I would love to see exercise machines like they have in Lansing.
- More walking trails.
- More lighting at city parks.
- Water park.
- More organized outdoor exercising, line dancing & swimming like we had at Ella Sharp in the early evenings.
- A seasonal outdoor Ice-Skating rink.
- At Ella Sharp Park there are concrete roadblocks at two locations. My issue with that is the way they are put prevents residents with disabilities to get past them. A wheelchair can't go through the openings which are in the grass off the concrete road/path. Our parks should be accessible to all of our city residents no matter what.
- Security cameras.
- Baseball leagues for the youth had them when I was younger in my age Generation Security Guards Adult fitness Centers.
- Outdoor turf soccer fields, with walls for small sided games with lighting. Similar to Beacon soccer fields in Lansing - <https://www.lansingsports.org/listings/beacon-soccer-field-down-town/4135/>
- Jackson Parks are one of our best resources!
- Going to an open pickleball court with 3 other friends and play with just my friends - not be bothered by groups that think they own the courts and can institute a rotation system and force their way onto the court we are playing on.

- Park for children with disabilities. They deserve to have fun also.
- PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE UPGRADE THE LIGHTS AT ELLA SHARP SOFTBALL FIELDS AND LIONS PARK ITS AMAZING THE AMOUNT OF MONEY TEAMS PAY TO PLAY YEAR IN AND YEAR OUT AND STILL YOU ARE JUST NEGLIGENT TO THEM.
- Lawn bowling, archery, bird watching, geocaching, adult playground or outside fitness.
- Signs that dogs must be on leashed and enforced.
- More water parks for the children. I believe the kids should have the opportunity to do what they like to keep out of trouble. Art should only be provided if done by local artist.
- Adult women over 40 basketball league. Ann Arbor and Lansing offer them.
- Movies or other entertainment.
- Cross country ski or snow tube rental.
- Cameras capable of night vision.
- I would like to see more adult Rec leagues for basketball and football. I would also like to see more “free agent” opportunities for the adult programs rather than needing to sign up as an entire team.
- I would like to see more wheelchair accessibility. More kayak and bike rentals.
- Safety! Things to do beside walk trails. You’ve already ruined the kiddie corral that kids worked for decades to build. We need more ATV trails and no more walking trails! There’s no reason all of us should have to go up north most weekends to ride ATVs when we have plenty of places to ride in Jackson County.
- No roads closed in all parks, dredge lagoons make them deeper wider sell the dirt \$20.00 per yard when dried takes time to dry great for gardens should pay for itself plus more than plant catfish in the lagoons at Cascade Park bring it back to life houses on West Ave were built on a swamp.
- Larger/nicer outdoor sports complexes for youth and adults. More dog friendly parks. Water feature at a park for kids.
- Working lights at all city softball fields.
- A decent dog park! Where we came from, a paid dog park option with nice benches, water accommodations and places to park!
- I believe the people involved at the top have the best interest of community members...however, something needs to be done about the homeless and gangs that infiltrate public parks. Tax payers have a RIGHT to a clean and healthy park...without fear of safety!!!!
- More community festivals.
- Varied seating options.
- More free events, especially in this economic climate.
- More things for seniors. Cheaper activities.
- Shuffleboard maybe?
- Playgrounds with colorful, flat rubberized ground covering; a carousel; gift shop/retail/snack shop.
- Other cities are expanding their park acreage. Jackson just sold most of Optimist Park and shrunk it down to a thumbnail size of what it used to be. We should be expanding our Green space not our fast food options.

- Paddleboats back at cascades! Would also enjoy cleaner, more inclusive and safer playgrounds (ex. foam padding instead of mulch)
- No drug dealers. Things for the kids to do in safe places. Get the police more in contact with the youth. Other than the south side or east side of town.
- More paved pedestrian trails in parks. Ella Sharp Park could be so much better for walking, running and biking if the streets were permanently closed and made into trails.
- I also think some parks could be converted into community gardens or nature centers with native plants. So many of our parks go unused and that would be a beneficial land use for everyone.

### JACKSON: ready for what's NEXT

[Jackson's 2016 community master plan](#) recognizes the importance of parks and recreation in creating a thriving municipality. For example, the Community Assets subsection under the Values and Goals section of the document notes the following (see page 9):

*Past Story: Cultural, recreational, and historical assets proceeded from successful economic conditions. Though widely agreed to be pleasant and perhaps beneficial, their role was considered nonessential.*

*Future Story: The City of Jackson recognizes that cultural, recreational, and historical assets are drivers as well as products of a knowledge-based, entrepreneurial economy. The preservation, development, and promotion of these assets will be prioritized to meet their irreplaceable role in the attraction and retention of talent.*



The Placemaking section also notes the following (see page 49):

*In its most general usage, “placemaking” refers to the act of building places that attract people. To ensure this appeal, the process is rooted firmly in public engagement and the scope of address stretches beyond technical considerations to bring into focus “people-centered” parts of the experience of place, such as cultural offerings and breadth of choice in transportation and housing. The concept originates in the mid-century writings of urban thinkers Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte, but has gained momentum through the New Urbanist movement beginning in the 1990s. Michigan signed on in a big way in 2011, when Governor Rick Snyder announced a broad collaboration of state agencies and community advocates called the “Sense of Place Council” dedicated to economic development through strategic placemaking.*

*This shift in strategy is a direct result of the “new economy.” Under the old industrial paradigm, communities offered companies inexpensive land and access to heavy-duty transportation and raw materials, and those companies in turn offered jobs which attracted people and generated wealth in the community through wages. The value of the physical environment was primarily determined by the profit that could be yielded by exploiting it. In the new economy— whether*

*we prefer to describe it as knowledge, creative, information, or digital—talented workers rather than large corporations are the primary generators of wealth.*

*These workers can and do choose a living environment first, and then look for or create a job. So rather than making attractive offers to companies, communities must make themselves attractive to people. Decades of theoretical inquiry into this subject combined with recent intense empirical research affords us the essential elements required for the creation of what the MPlace partnership calls “quality places”:*

- *Mixed uses*
- *Walkable, compact built form*
- *Well-designed public spaces*
- *Multiple transportation options*
- *Multiple housing options*
- *Preserved historic structures*
- *Community heritage*
- *Arts, culture, and creativity*
- *Recreation*
- *Green places*
- *Links to regional rural and natural places*

*Jackson is one of the 14 urban areas identified by the state as “most important to target for strategic placemaking.” Collectively, research has found these urban areas, where 82% of the population lives, to be the economic engines of the state. Calculated per capita, the share of GDP, exports, and jobs in these areas is approximately 20% higher than in rural areas. They are also the places with enough population density and infrastructure to support walkability and transportation choice, and they serve as “centers of commerce and culture” to the surrounding region. The Sense of Place Council believes that careful attention to the preservation and enhancement of the placemaking characteristics that already exist within the community, and strategic placement and development of those that are less well represented, can point the way to true revitalization for both the City and the state.*

The Assets and Amenities section of the plan notes the following about Open Space and Recreation (see pages 64 to 67):

*When asked to name one word that described the City of Jackson, participants in nearly every group at every workshop mentioned the community’s parks. The enviable collection of recreation resources is crowned by two jewels, the Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park and Ella W. Sharp Park, Museum, and Golf Course, both results of Jackson’s past wealth and bestowed to the community by its citizens. These parks together provide approximately a thousand acres of recreation in the southwest corner of the community that serve the entire region and host attractions such as the Cascades that have the potential to draw from further.*

*Jackson County and the City of Jackson are preparing a Joint Recreation Plan concurrently with the writing of this master plan, and it is the intent of this plan to support the vision, goals, and action items identified therein. From the more comprehensive perspective, recreation assets are one area in which Jackson is already well-positioned within the new economy, and its unique, diverse, and strong set of offerings should be cohesively branded and marketed widely.*

*One circumstance which may help cultivate this opportunity is the continued expansion of interest in a nonmotorized network throughout the City and with connections throughout the region.*

*The development of a nonmotorized trail network is one of the five goals identified in the recreation plan, as first outlined in the 2002 Jackson County Regional Trailway Study. The County’s “Falling Waters Trail,” the first study item to be implemented, recently received some unexpected confirmation of its utility: when data from the online fitness application “Map My Run” was aggregated geographically, the trail was clearly delineated. Linking existing parks to the nonmotorized network offers ready-made destinations throughout the network, provides an opportunity to increase exposure to parks by using them as reference points, increases activity within parks by directing circulation through them, and contributes significant land area which is already free of vehicular traffic to the nonmotorized network. Through careful management of this momentum toward trail use, Jackson can seek a multiplier effect throughout its recreation and even overall economic systems.*

*Careful management and maximized benefit are already the cornerstones of the community’s recreation planning. Understanding that users largely make their recreation choices on a regional scale, the collaboration between the City and the County should be a fundamental strategy to pool resources and decrease service duplication. The 2015 plan acknowledges the success of this strategy by seeking to replicate it: the first goal is to “develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation with other local communities and recreation providers.” The plan also prioritizes renovations to existing parks and recreation facilities over the acquisition of new ones, citing support from the 2013 Citizen Opinion Survey and economic conditions, but continues to provide for the possibility of new park development for underserved areas, natural resources protection, and in the case of unique opportunities.*

### Other Planning Efforts Impacting City of Jackson Parks

The City of Jackson also participates in various regional nonmotorized trail planning and water trail planning efforts (see Maps 33, 34, 40, and 41 in Appendix A).


**Nonmotorized Trails.** A regional nonmotorized trail is emerging in Jackson County. The Hiking Trail of the State of Michigan’s *Iron Belle Trail* and *Route #1* of the *Great Lake-to-Lake Trails* are proposed to traverse the County from Munith in its northeast corner to Concord in its southwest corner, utilizing the same corridor. Major portions of the corridor are already completed, including the Martin Luther King Equality Trail, which traverses the City of Jackson, and Jackson County Parks’ *Falling Waters Trail*, which traverses the Townships of Summit, Spring Arbor, and Concord and the Village of Concord. The Mike Levine Lakelands Trail State Park extension currently traverses the Townships of Waterloo, Henrietta, and Leoni. The proposed section traversing Blackman Township and connecting to the Lions Park Trail will complete the connection to the Jackson once it is developed. Other trails also traverse portions of Jackson County.


- **Hiking Trail of the Iron Belle Trail.** “The Iron Belle Trail is Michigan’s showcase trail that touches hundreds of municipalities and crosses through 48 different Michigan counties. Using existing trails, networks and some new connections, the trail extends more than 2,000 miles from the far western tip of the Upper Peninsula to Belle Isle in Detroit on a biking trail and hiking trail.



The biking route utilizes many of the state’s existing bike paths, bike lanes, and signed, designated biking routes as it travels up the east side of the state, while the hiking route utilizes sidewalks, trails, and the 1,000-mile plus North Country National Scenic Trail traveling up the west side of the Lower Peninsula” (see [Iron Belle Trail – Two Routes, One great Trail](#)).

- Route #1 of the Great Lake-To-Lake Trails.** “The last three decades in Michigan’s trail movement have been about securing individual trails of all types: abandoned rail, utility corridors, road rights of way, and more. Today, Michigan can extend these trails east and west to reach from one Great Lake to another, weaving in many communities and tourism attractions along the way. The Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance has identified 5 Great Lake to Lake Trail routes across the state” (see [Lake to Lake Trails - Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance](#)). Route #1 of the Great Lake-to-Lake Trails will connect South Haven (Lake Michigan) with Port Huron (Lake Huron), utilizing the MLK Equality Trail/Falling Waters Trail corridor in the Jackson area.


- Other Recent Efforts that Augment the Corridor.** There have been several local efforts to augment the MLK Equality Trail/Falling Waters Trail corridor. The City of Jackson joined with Summit Township and Jackson County to submit complementary Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) applications to construct trails that connect Ella Sharp Park and Sparks Foundation (Cascades) County Park to the MLK Equality Trail/Falling Waters Trail corridor and each other and to provide trail loops in Summit Township and the City of Jackson. The local governments received Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF) grants in 2015 for the Horton Road Trail Development Project (TF 15-0069), the Fourth Street Connector Development Project (TF-15-0097), and the Sparks Park Inter-City Trail Connector Development Project (TF 15-0092) and all 3 trails are now open to the public. The Horton Road Trail and the Fourth Street Connector link with each other, the Weatherwax Trail, and the MLK Equality Trail to provide a connection to Ella W. Sharp Park as well as a trail loop. The Sparks Park Inter-City Trail Connector provides a connection between the trails in Sparks Foundation County (Cascades) Park, the MLK Equality Trail, and City of Jackson sidewalks and bike lanes to provide another trail loop.
- Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan.** The Region 2 Planning Commission, the City of Jackson, and Jackson County adopted a [nonmotorized plan](#) that covers all of Jackson County in 2020. It provides an update to the *Jackson County Regional Trailway Study* completed in 2002. Potential on-road and off-road nonmotorized projects throughout Jackson County (including those described above) will be identified in this document. **The Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan is adopted by reference as part of this plan.**


- On-Road Nonmotorized Transportation.** Apart from freeways, the City of Jackson’s streets are available for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. **Consequently, this Recreation Plan states that the City of Jackson supports the goal of complete streets**, which “means roadways, planned, designed, and constructed to provide appropriate access to all legal users in a manner that promotes safe and efficient movement of people and goods whether by car, truck, transit, assistive

device, foot, or bicycle,” as defined by Section 10 of Public Act 51 of 1951 ([MCL 247.660](#)), as amended. Accordingly, City of Jackson Parks officials will advise the City and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) on future street projects within Jackson regarding the inclusion of appropriate nonmotorized facilities (e.g., sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, etc.).

**Water Trails.** Water trails are comprised of canoe/kayak launch sites connecting together signed stretches of river (and lakes) maintained for paddling. The [Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan](#), adopted by the Upper Grand River Watershed Council in 2017, proposes a water trail through the City of Jackson. The Upper Grand River Water Trail flows through Jackson as well as its surrounding townships (see Map 40 and Map 41 in Appendix A). Each of the proposed access sites have been identified for one of several improvement schemes, as described in the trail development plan. Type “A” sites should stand out as the “signature access sites” for the water trail, provide as many amenities as possible to paddlers, be ideal for novice paddlers, should be well signed (wayfinding and informational kiosk), and featured prominently on maps. Type “B” sites should be clearly visible from the water, be signed (but probably do not require a kiosk), and provide a landing area in between the Type “A” sites (or in some cases, access for more experienced paddlers). Type “C” sites are generally adjacent to roads with high speed-limits and no formal parking. In some instances, these are sites where parking and unloading watercraft was determined to be undesirable, unsafe, and harmful to the surrounding landscape. These sites have the potential to become developed (into a Type “B” site) at some time but are currently not a priority. That trail was recognized as a state-designated water trail by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) in 2018. Please see the water trail development plan for a complete listing of the proposed canoe/kayak launch sites. **The Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan is adopted by reference as part of this plan.**



**Note.** *The nonmotorized and water trail plans summarized above went through their own public comment and approval processes. During one meeting it was suggested that: The developing regional nonmotorized and water trail systems will attract tourists to the City of Jackson. Signage along the trail systems is needed that directs them to existing lodging, restaurants, and other attractions. Opportunities for additional trailheads throughout the systems should also be explored.*

**Ella Sharp Park.** A group identifying themselves as the ‘Rad Dads’ made a presentation before the Ella W. Sharp Park Board of Trustees during their November 15, 2023, meeting and proposed the development of a new multipurpose recreation facility within Ella Sharp Park. According to the group, “The addition of a cutting-edge bouldering, [pump track], and skatepark within the Ella Sharp Park footprint gives access for community members of all ages to explore and experience free and accessible outdoor activities that promote exercise and make Jackson a destination. The inclusion of food options within this new upgrade adds additional benefits to maximize the full list of offerings within Ella Sharp Park and provides families with activities that can keep them engaged in Jackson for an entire day.” Another group providing public comment during the November 19, 2023, meeting advocated for a pétanque court next to the miniature golf course.

Bouldering, according to Wikipedia, “is a form of free climbing that is performed on small rock formations or artificial rock walls without the use of ropes or harnesses.” A pump track, according to Wikipedia, “is a circuit of rollers, banked turns and features designed to be ridden completely by riders

‘pumping’—generating momentum by up and down body movements, instead of pedaling or pushing. It was originally designed for the mountain bike and BMX scene, and now, due to concrete constructions, is also used by skateboard, and accessible to wheelchairs.” A skatepark, according to Wikipedia, “is a purpose-built recreational environment made for skateboarding, BMX, scootering, wheelchairs, and aggressive inline skating. A skatepark may contain half-pipes, handrails, funboxes, vert ramps, stairsets, quarter pipes, ledges, spine transfers, pyramids, banked ramps, full pipes, pools, bowls, snake runs, and any number of other objects.” According to the ‘Rad Dads’, this concept goes far beyond the skatepark located in Nixon Park. Pétanque, according to Wikipedia, “is a sport that falls into the category of boules sports (along with raffa, bocce, boule lyonnaise, lawn bowls, crown green bowling). In these sports, players or teams play their boules/balls towards a target ball. In pétanque the objective is to score points by having boules closer to the target than the opponent after all boules have been thrown. This is achieved by throwing or rolling boules closer to the small target ball, officially called a *jack* or by hitting the opponents' boules away from the target, while standing inside a circle with both feet on the ground. The game is normally and best played on hard dirt or gravel. It can be played in public areas in parks or in dedicated facilities called *boulodromes*.”

A master plan for Ella Sharp Park was adopted in 2013 (see map below) and has been consulted by the Ella W. Sharp Park Board, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and City Council. For example, the Disc Golf Course proposed in the plan was constructed. The new softball complex, off-road trails, and parking lot resurfacing proposed in the Action Program for this document are also included on the park master plan.



### City of Jackson Website

The City’s website provides information to the public: [www.cityofjackson.org](http://www.cityofjackson.org). For example, a link to the public comment draft of this plan and background information regarding how to submit comments on it was posted to the website’s homepage during the 30-day comment period. Webpages are dedicated to the [Department of Parks, Recreation, Cemeteries, & Trails](#), which contains links to listings of parks and trails, community centers, and recreation programs; the [Parks and Recreation Commission](#); the [Ella W Sharp Park Board](#); and the [Public Arts Commission](#). In addition, the website’s [Recreation & Culture](#) page contains links to [Black History](#), the [Bright Walls Murals Map](#), [City Parks](#), [Community Centers](#), [Downtown Jackson](#), [Ella Sharp Museum](#), [Historic District Sites](#), [Jackson County Parks](#), [Recreation Programs](#), and [Women’s History](#).

## Public Comments at Parks and Recreation Commission Meetings

Meetings of the Parks and Recreation Commission are open to the public and there is an agenda item for public comment. A news release (see below) was also sent out regarding the meetings held on the 1st, 15th, and 29th of November 2023. The following comments were received during those meetings.

**November 1, 2023.** Aaron Dimick, representing People for the Parks and Trails, stated that he appreciated the closing of some roads in Ella Sharp Park due to the added safety. Lighting is needed as well as permanent closure of the streets identified above. He also stated that there is underutilized space in the parks that could be used for community gardens and natural areas. Mr. Dimick concluded by stating that a deer cull is needed.

**November 15, 2023.** Phil Preston, Blackman Township Treasurer, informed the Commission that he is involved in developing a recreation plan update for his municipality and he wanted to see what the City is doing so that they can create a partnership. For example, the Township is planning new pickleball courts. Greg Stevenson, representing the 'Rad Dads', would like to see a new multi-purpose recreation facility in Ella Sharp Park which would include a skate park, bouldering park, pump trail, and modular facilities for food and bathrooms. Christen Vincent, representing a local women's softball league, would like to see new lights installed at the Lions Park softball fields.

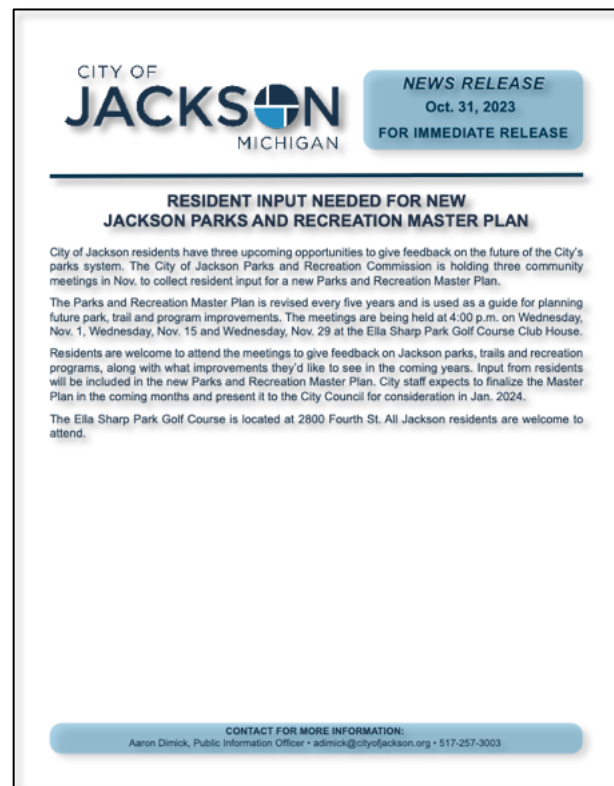
**November 29, 2023.** Julie Garrison, speaking for herself, Ann Masa, and Lyn Hoskin (also in attendance), proposed building a pétanque court that can be used by the City's growing elderly population as well as younger residents. Walt Branham, who learned the game in France, explained that small but heavy balls and a target ball are provided by participants. All the City would need to provide is a gravel court. He concluded by informing the Commission that it is the third most popular ball support in Europe.

## Public Involvement and Plan Adoption

Public involvement was also an integral part of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan approval process.

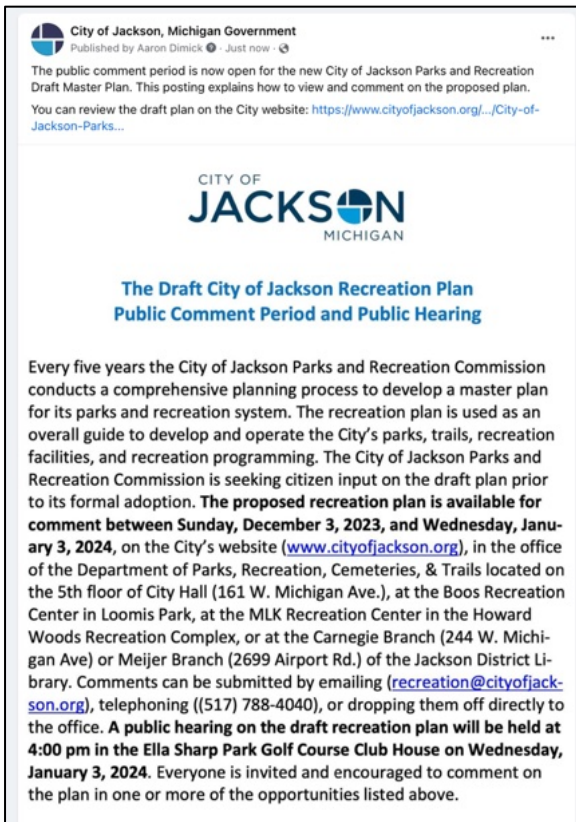
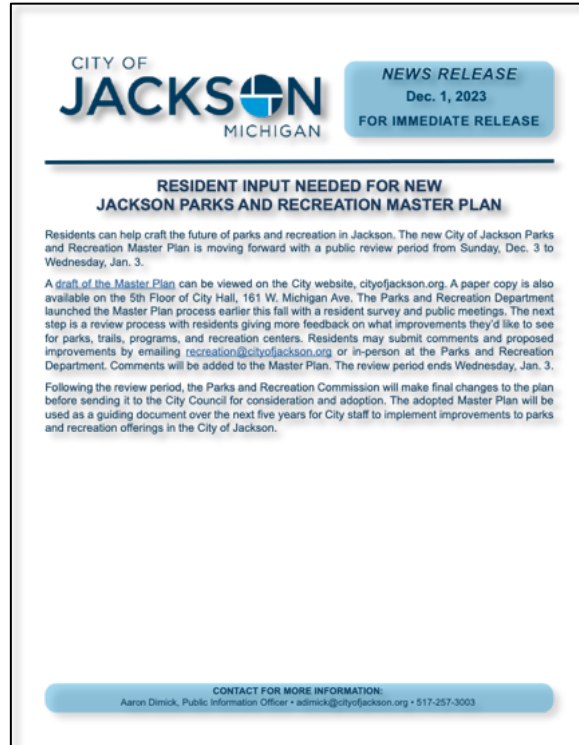
### Commission Meetings

All meetings of the City of Jackson's Parks and Recreation Commission are open to the public, including those summarized in the previous section.



### One Month Review Period

The recreation plan was submitted for a one-month public comment period which began on December 3, 2023, and ended on January 3, 2024. The plan was available for review in the offices of the City’s Department of Parks, Recreation, Cemeteries, and Trails on the 5th floor of City Hall as well as online at [www.cityofjackson.org](http://www.cityofjackson.org) and local library branches. A news release issued by the City follows, two screenshots from the City’s website, and a flyer, all of which promote the opportunity to review and comment upon this document.

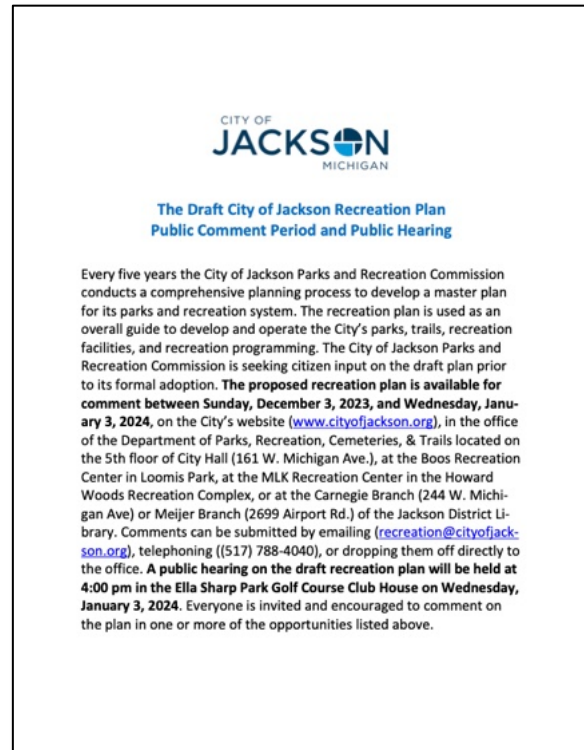


The following public comments were submitted during the 30-day comment period:

- “Please do not make Nixon a Splash pad. Jackson needs at least 1 outside pool in the city even if it is not as good for lessons etc.

Also, don't forget about Lions Park on Blackstone. Maybe it does not get used as much as those parks located on the south side, but it may be important to residents. It is hard to know how many kids are in the area" (*Diane Toman*).

- "I would like to submit paving the "mud hole" parking lot on Birchwood Drive in Ella Sharp Park, by the soccer fields. Also, is there some kind of drainage that can be done- soccer games get canceled frequently because of too much rain and the field will get destroyed- maybe if the parking lot gets paved that would help direct the water elsewhere" (*Christy Davis*).
- I think that the park should have more available to do. Obstacle Equipment, Outdoor Exercise Equipment, Swimming Pool NEEDED, Large Circle for ROLLER SKATING. Add more concrete space by the pavilions so people can at least have room to dance and enjoy more space, this is REALLY NEEDED. Also need a fence put up around kiddy coral; that place is dangerous (*Sheliaf Pfeifer*).
- Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the draft Parks Master Plan. I live in the City between Cascades and Ella Sharp and am in those parks and on the MLK Equality and PACA trails almost daily. I also attend many events in the downtown parks.
  1. First some of the items from the Plan that I thought were particularly strong:
    - Consideration of a deer cull at Ella which I feel is absolutely needed. It is virtually impossible to garden in this part of town and I'm seeing dead deer on the side of Kibby road too often.
    - Consideration of pétanque/boules courts. Having lived several years in Europe, I have seen how they become an important gathering space for the community, particularly for elders who might otherwise be isolating. They are best suited to city centres where players can grab a coffee or other beverage to enjoy while playing. This would be a far better fit in the parks within the social district downtown than at Ella.
    - Resurfacing the MLK Equality Trail to Weatherwax Road will make a LOT of bikers I know happy. It's uncomfortable in its current state.



- The additional trail development is all great, notably connecting the armory area with downtown. Also, the 4th/Greenwood trail to downtown will be a great addition. Although seems like it would have been more efficient to add a bike lane during the recent resurfacing of Greenwood.
2. Some content from the plan that should be reconsidered:
- The investments planned for Ella Sharp Park are excessive considering:
  - Its location far from the more densely populated parts of the city. Consequently, it is a somewhat remote destination for many where only a few somewhat privileged neighborhood kids can just go and play. I am there multiple times per week and unless there is a special event or something like soccer there, the playground, trails and park in general is a ghost town.
  - It is approximately 75% surrounded by Summit Township NOT the City. I acknowledge the JPS millage partially funds the City Parks, but it is the minority of City Parks funding. Parks funding should be invested based on impact to City (and to a lesser extent) JPS constituents.
  - Regarding the Ella projects suggested in the draft Plan:
  - A new or reimagined softball complex is a poor investment. The sport has been in decline for many years and burning City funds on new facilities is not going to reverse that. The existing fields are already serviceable (especially considering the low numbers of players). Further, softball is not a sensible sport to invest in transformative placemaking for our community. A few smaller ticket maintenance items such as improved bleachers would represent better stewardship of City funds rather than a new complex. I would ask that a return on investment study be performed before spending on softball facilities with particular focus on how those dollars help City constituents. I suspect the vast majority of softball players are from outside the City and probably half are not even JPS residents. Why should the City subsidize recreation for residents of these other communities over taking care of our own?
  - If the initiative for off road trails at Ella proceeds, I hope it addresses the rogue modifications made over the past few years adding obstacles and “features”. These made the trails less enjoyable and more dangerous and shouldn’t be on City-sponsored trail system.
  - Bouldering and pump track again would benefit few city kids and I suspect be very underutilized due to the location.
  - There is no mention of the Ella Sharp rose garden in the Plan. It has a lot of deferred maintenance and is not well cared for by the City. It should be a source of pride for the “Rose City” but has become an eyesore. Would like to see some budget allocated to improvements and improved care and feeding there.

- City-run food options at Ella Sharp would be a mistake. Food is not a core competency of City government much less the parks dept. This capability would be better served by a network of strong relationships with more agile providers such as food trucks or catering services. Otherwise, this will become a long term burden for the City in the form of long term assets to manage, staffing, procurement and waste.
3. Missing Items that should be addressed by the Plan or otherwise addressed by Parks operations:
- The City and Parks department has made some nice investments in the past and then not taken care of them. I'm disappointed that there is no strategy or actions in this draft Plan to address the management of existing assets to maximise their potential. This results in wasted resources and missed opportunities for community recreation. For example:
    - The costly and much needed bathrooms at Bucky Harris are permanently closed as far as I can tell. Instead of solving the problems that were occurring there, the City just closed them as an easy out.
    - The very nice fire pit at Bucky Harris seems to be permanently disabled. Again it seems this was an easier solution for the City than solving the problems that were happening in the park.
    - The butterfly gardens were a failure. I have seen them done well in other communities, but they will need oversight and care to not be eyesores.
    - Horace Blackman is a world class park that is often spoiled by homeless encampments. It doesn't feel safe, compromises what is otherwise fantastic events in the venue and does not advance the City's placemaking initiatives.
    - Ella Winter street closures were mentioned in several public comments, but I don't see any actions in the Plan to reopen them. Closing these streets in winter took away an important recreational opportunity. With City sidewalks rarely cleared of snow and ice and the Equality Trail not treated with salt, the Ella Sharp roads were the safest place to walk and run after the snow and ice comes. Worse, the stated objectives for the closures have not been met. The dumping and donuts in the grass simply moved to more visible areas of the park. I also suspect the "extra" winter maintenance for that 1 mile of road is outweighed by the labor to move the blockades in and out of position several times per year. Please keep those roads open year round!
    - The Plan mentions that Parks department is responsible for public art yet there isn't a single action in the Plan related to it. What is the Department's public art strategy and priorities for action? It seems to be a gross oversight in this draft Plan. One idea could be to move Summer Night Tree so that it no longer suffocates in its current location. It's probably a \$5+ million dollar statue that is hard to appreciate where it. It is certainly not getting the attention it deserves, whereas mediocre works occupy prominent roundabouts.

- Safety is mentioned in several public comments yet there are no Action priorities related to making the parks safer.
- Jackson’s overall public health is not strong. Many parks would benefit from small fitness stations where people without access to a gym or who just want to be outside could get a little workout in.

Thanks for considering my feedback. I hope it can help shape the content final Master Plan (*Russ Desy*).

### Letters of Transmittal

The adjacent letters of transmittal were sent to Jackson County and the Region 2 Planning Commission via email on December 5, 2023, alerting them to the planning effort and inviting them to comment on the document.

### Public Hearing and Plan Approval


A public hearing on the recreation plan was held on January 3, 2024, at the Ella Sharp Park Golf Course Club House, during a special meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission. The following public notice was advertised in the *Jackson Citizen Patriot* on November 30, 2023, which also publicized the one-month review period documented in a previous section. Unfortunately, no one from the public attended the hearing and no additional comments were provided to the Parks and Recreation Commission. The following Resolution of Approval was then passed by the Commission, as documented in the following meeting minutes; the Commission then had a special meeting on January 9, 2024, to approve those minutes. ~~Based on that recommendation the Jackson City Council passed the following Resolution of Adoption on January 16, 2024, in the Council Chambers located on the 2nd floor of City Hall, during a regular meeting.~~



**Jackson Citizen Patriot**  
LEGAL AFFIDAVIT

ADM: 0010796996 Total \$109.66

State of Michigan, )  
County of Jackson, )  
I, Sha, being duly sworn, deposes that he/she is principal clerk of MLive Media Group, that Jackson Citizen Patriot is a public newspaper published in the city of Jackson, with general circulation in Jackson county, and this notice is an accurate and true copy of this notice as printed in said newspaper, was printed and published in the regular edition and issue of said newspaper on the following date(s):  
Jackson Citizen Patriot 11302023

  
Principal Clerk of the Publisher

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of November 2023

TEASHA R. PAYNE  
NOTARY PUBLIC, STATE OF MI  
COUNTY OF MICHIGAN  
COMMISSION EXP. FEB. 24, 2026  
ACTING IN COUNTY OF MI

Notary Public

The Draft City of Jackson Recreation Plan, Public Comment Period and Public Hearing. The City of Jackson Parks and Recreation Commission is developing a comprehensive recreation plan for all parks and recreation facilities in the city. The recreation plan is used to develop and operate the City's parks, trails, recreation facilities, and recreation programming. The City of Jackson Parks and Recreation Commission is seeking citizen input on the draft plan. The proposed recreation plan is available for comment through Sunday, December 3, 2023, 8:00 p.m. on the City's website (www.ci.jackson.mi.us) or by visiting the City's office at the Department of Parks, Recreation, Amenities, & Tourism, 400 East Fourth Street, Room 100, Jackson, Michigan 49201. The City's website (www.ci.jackson.mi.us) will also have a link to the draft plan. Comments can be submitted by email to recreation@ci.jackson.mi.us or by mail to the City's office. A public hearing on the draft recreation plan will be held on Wednesday, January 3, 2024, at the Ella Sharp Park Golf Course Club House. The hearing is open to all citizens. The hearing will be held from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 3, 2024. The hearing is free of charge. The hearing is open to all citizens. The hearing is open to all citizens. The hearing is open to all citizens.

**CITY OF JACKSON MICHIGAN**

Approval of the  
City of Jackson Recreation Plan  
2024-2028 edition

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Commission is made up of representatives from the City of Jackson and Jackson Public Schools, and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Commission began the process of developing a recreation plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by Michigan's Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities, and

WHEREAS, residents of the City of Jackson and the Jackson Public Schools were provided with well-promoted opportunities during the development of the draft 2024-2028 edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the recreation plan, and

WHEREAS, the public was given a well-promoted opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the final draft of the 2024-2028 edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan from Sunday, December 3, 2023, through Wednesday, January 3, 2024, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, January 3, 2024, at the Ella Sharp Park Golf Course Club House (2800 Fourth St.) to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the 2024-2028 edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan, and

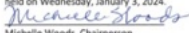
WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Commission has developed the plan as a guideline for improving recreation for the City of Jackson, and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing, the Parks and Recreation Commission voted to approve said 2024-2028 edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan and recommend its adoption by City Council.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Parks and Recreation Commission hereby approves the 2024-2028 edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan.

Yeas: 3 Nays: 0 Absent: 3

I, Michelle Woods, Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Commission, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by the Parks and Recreation Commission at a Special Meeting thereof held on Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

  
Michelle Woods, Chairperson  
City of Jackson Parks and Recreation Commission

**JACKSON**  
Founded 1829

**CITY OF JACKSON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**  
MEETING MINUTES  
January 3, 2024

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The City of Jackson Parks and Recreation Commission met at the Ella Sharp Park Golf Course Club House and was called to order at 5:01 p.m. by Chairperson Michelle Woods.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Present: Chairperson Michelle Woods, Councilmember Will Forgrave, Scott Damich, and Cathy Moore.

Absent: Pamela Fitzgerald, Jeffrey Beal, Jonathan Greene, and Daniel Mahoney.

Also present: Kelli Hoover, Andrew Sargent, Grant Bauman, and Eric Terrian.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:**

Motion was made by Will Forgrave, seconded by Scott Damich to approve the minutes. Vote was done by voice with all in favor. Motion carried.

**ANNOUNCEMENT FROM MEMBERS AND CITY STAFF:** none.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Motion was made by Cathy Moore, seconded by Scott Damich to amend Item B under New Business to review the plan and approve and recommend adoption to City Council. Vote was done by voice with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion was made by Cathy Moore, seconded by Will Forgrave to approve the agenda as amended. Vote was done by voice with all in favor. Motion carried.

January 3, 2024 1

**COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:**

No comments were offered by the public.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Public Hearing for the Parks and Recreation Department Five (5) Year Plan from 2024-2028.**

Motion was made by Will Forgrave, seconded by Scott Damich to open the public hearing.

No members of the public were present to offer comments during the public hearing.

Motion was made by Will Forgrave, seconded by Scott Damich to close the public hearing. Vote was done by voice with all in favor. Motion carried.

**B. Review of Plan, Approve and Recommend Adoption by City Council**

Motion was made by Will Forgrave, seconded by Scott Damich to remove the last sentence in the second paragraph on page 3-20 and add "see map below". Vote was done by voice with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion was made by Will Forgrave, seconded by Cathy Moore to approve the recreation plan and authorize Michelle Woods to sign the resolution and pass it on to City Council for adoption. Vote was done by voice with all in favor. Motion carried.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**A. Future Agenda Items**  
None.

**B. Next Meeting:** February 14, 2024

**ADJOURNMENT:**

No further business being offered, a motion to adjourn was made by Scott Damich, seconded by Cathy Moore. Chairperson Woods adjourned the meeting at 5:35 p.m.

January 3, 2024 2



**Adoption of the  
City of Jackson Recreation Plan  
2024-2028 edition**

**WHEREAS**, the Parks and Recreation Commission is made up of representatives from the City of Jackson and Jackson Public Schools, and

**WHEREAS**, the Parks and Recreation Commission began the process of developing a recreation plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by Michigan's Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities, and

**WHEREAS**, residents of the City of Jackson and the Jackson Public Schools were provided with well-promoted opportunities during the development of the draft *2024-2028 edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan* to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the recreation plan, and

**WHEREAS**, the public was given a well-promoted opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the final draft of the *2024-2028 edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan* from Sunday, December 3, 2023, through Wednesday, January 3, 2024, and

**WHEREAS**, a public hearing was held at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, January 3, 2024, at the Ella Sharp Park Golf Course Club House (2800 Fourth St.) to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the *2024-2028 edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan*, and

**WHEREAS**, the Parks and Recreation Commission has developed the plan as a guideline for improving recreation for the City of Jackson, and

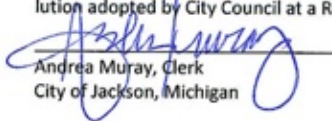
**WHEREAS**, after the public hearing, the Parks and Recreation Commission voted to approve said *2024-2028 edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan* and recommend its adoption by City Council.

**WHEREAS**, the *2024-2028 edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan* was then presented to City Council for adoption.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, City Council hereby adopts the *2024-2028 edition of the City of Jackson Recreation Plan* and directs the Department of Parks, Recreation, Cemeteries, and Trails to submit it to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Yeas: 7, Nays: 0, Absent: 0.

I, Andrea Muray, Clerk of the City of Jackson, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by City Council at a Regular Meeting thereof held on Wednesday, January 16, 2024.

  
Andrea Muray, Clerk  
City of Jackson, Michigan



*People Picnicking in Horace Blackman Park*



Chapter 4

## **Vision, Goals & Objectives, & Action Program**

## Vision

The vision provided by this recreation plan can be summarized in the following statement:

***Provide all persons with a variety of well-maintained and programmed parks and recreation facilities at the neighborhood, community, and regional levels.***

## Goals & Objectives

The following goals and objectives will help the City of Jackson to fulfill the vision summarized above:

### 1. **Develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation with other local communities and recreation providers.**

The City will investigate and implement various ways of communicating, collaborating, and cooperating with the other local providers of recreation in order to:

- Provide adequate parks and recreation facilities and programs throughout the City of Jackson and the surrounding area.
- Avoid the duplication of facilities and services.

### 2. **Develop trail networks**

The City will continue its collaborative efforts with other local governments and organizations in the development of the trail networks traversing Jackson:

- **Nonmotorized trails.** The *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan* is adopted by reference as part of this plan. The City of Jackson will implement pertinent portions of the plan as opportunities arise and resources become available as well as other complementary projects.
- **Complete Streets.** The City of Jackson supports the goal of complete streets, which “means roadways, planned, designed, and constructed to provide appropriate access to all legal users in a manner that promotes safe and efficient movement of people and goods whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot, or bicycle,” as defined by Section 10 of Public Act 51 of 1951 ([MCL 247.660 et sec](#)), as amended. Accordingly, City of Jackson Parks officials will advise the City and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) on future street projects within Jackson regarding the inclusion of appropriate nonmotorized facilities (e.g., sidewalks, bike lanes, paved shoulders, trails, etc.).
- **Water trails.** The *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan* is adopted by reference as part of this plan. The City of Jackson will implement pertinent portions of the plan, as well as complementary projects, as opportunities arise, and resources become available.



### 3. **Renovate existing parks and recreation facilities**

Concentrate efforts on improving existing parks maintained by the City of Jackson:

- Upgrade existing parks and recreation facilities as needed.
- Improve existing parks and recreation facilities to meet (and exceed where possible) the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Provide new/improved recreation facilities as opportunities arise (e.g., aquatic facilities, pickleball courts, playgrounds, etc.).
- Add community gardens and nature areas to parks and other municipal properties where feasible.
- Introduce public art to each park as opportunities arise, in cooperation with the Public Arts Commission and other public/private partners.
- Study and determine if existing underutilized recreation facilities should be converted to other uses.
- Improve the safety of parks and recreation facility patrons and increase the positive impact of parks on their surrounding areas:
  - Continue to install vandal resistant facilities.
  - Continue to improve a consistent and systematic park maintenance program.
  - Improve traffic control within parks.
  - Study the need for a new deer harvesting program, centered on Ella Sharp Park, and institute it if warranted.
- Implement the master plan created for Ella Sharp Park

### 4. **Provide recreation programs and events**

Provide a variety of recreation programs which the community enjoys, and attempt to involve everyone as a participant, coach, or spectator.

- Continue to provide the various recreation programs provided by the City of Jackson and identify ways of expanding that programming whenever appropriate.
- Continue to allow special events such as the Hot Air Jubilee and Juneteenth celebrations in city parks.
- Provide educational and conservation programs regarding the natural resources found throughout city parks.



### 5. **Develop new parks as opportunities arise**

Opportunities for the acquisition and development of new parks should not be ignored even though the City of Jackson will concentrate on the redevelopment of existing parks and recreation facilities.

- Provide new neighborhood, communitywide, or regional parks (as applicable) in underserved areas.
- Protect natural resources (i.e., forests, wildlife habitat, and wetlands) and to create and/or preserve needed open space.
- Partner with property owners throughout Jackson and public/private organizations to convert underutilized land to natural areas throughout the city.
- Provide a venue for a new recreation facility which cannot be accommodated in any existing park.



### **Background Information**

Input into developing the goals and objectives listed above included:

- Existing recreation facilities and programs available to City residents, regardless of the provider.
- The health and disabilities of City residents.
- Opportunities for acquiring land and facilities.
- Other plans that address specific recreational needs.
- Existing potential public-private partnerships.
- Survey responses and other opportunities for public comment.

**Develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation.** A variety of the factors identified in the recreation plan support the need to develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation among recreation providers. Other factors identify where those lines already exist:

- **Recreation and resource inventories.** Jackson and a variety of public, quasi-public, and private entities provide parks, trails, and recreation facilities and programs. People rarely restrict their activities—including recreation—to a single jurisdiction. Accordingly, Chapter 2 (Recreation and Resource Inventories) already provides an overview of the parks, trails, and recreation facilities and services available to residents, regardless of the provider. An official from Blackman Township called for a partnership with Jackson during public comment at the November 15, 2023, meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission.
- **Regional plans.** *Jackson: ready for what's Next*, the City's current master plan, recognizes the importance of parks and recreation in creating a thriving municipality. The City of Jackson partnered with Jackson County and the Region 2 Planning Commission to develop the *Jackson City +*

*County Nonmotorized Plan*. The City also participated in the development of the Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance’s *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan*. Both recreation-related documents rely upon the jurisdictions the proposed trails traverse to develop the facilities in a cooperative manner. The plans were also subject to public scrutiny (see Chapter 3).

- **Recreation Programming.** The Jackson’s recreation programs are funded through a millage levied on residents within the area served by Jackson Public Schools (JPS), which extends beyond the city limits into the majority of Summit Township and smaller portions of Blackman Township and other municipalities. Consequently, participants in recreation sessions and sports seasons living within the district are charged a smaller user fee than participants living within another school district (see Chapter 1). JPS also provides team sports and other recreation programs directly to its students and boosters. Other quasi-public and private recreation facilities in the Jackson Area also sponsor recreation leagues and programs.

**Develop trail networks.** A variety of the factors identified in the recreation plan support the development of a non-motorized trail network:

- **Survey responses.** Approximately 84.5% of all respondents strongly agreed (54.9%) or agreed (29.6%) that a trail system should continue to be developed in the City of Jackson and the surrounding area. Approximately 74.2% of all respondents strongly agreed (44.1%) or agreed (30.1%) that canoe/kayak launch sites should be provided along the Grand River (see Chapter 3).
- **Regional plans.** The *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan* and the *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan* provide blueprints for nonmotorized and water trails that will traverse Jackson and the surrounding area as they are developed. They were subject to public scrutiny (see Chapter 3). The proposed water trail will connect with plans in other watersheds to extend the trail all the way to Lake Michigan. The major routes within the nonmotorized plan connect with other statewide trails.
- **The health of residents.** The 2021 *American Community Survey* estimates that 16.3% of City residents were disabled in 2021 and 7.8% had an ambulatory disability. The *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* 2023 database estimates that 39% of adults in Jackson County were obese and 14% were in poor or fair health. Residents also had an average of 3.3 poor physical health days and 5.3 poor medical health days. (see Chapter 1).

**Renovate Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities.** A variety of the factors identified in the recreation plan support a focus on the renovation of existing parks and recreation facilities over the development of new parks:

- **Survey responses.** When asked ‘How do you rate the City of Jackson Parks system?’, a significant minority (13.3%) rated the system as poor (11.9%) or very poor (1.4%). Related comments stated that: ‘Some parks could use maintenance/more regular cleaning’, ‘Large parks are mismanaged a bit and in great need of maintenance’, ‘There is not the proper upkeep on equipment at city owned fields’, ‘Lack of continued maintenance after city pours money into them’, ‘They’re not very safe’, ‘I don’t feel comfortable visiting them’, and ‘Unsafe conditions in many

of the parks due to [an overabundance] of homeless and gang activity'. When asked 'What discourages you from visiting a park/recreation facility?', 61.8% cited a 'concern for public safety' (see Chapter 3).

- **Disabilities of residents.** The 2021 *American Community Survey* estimates that 16.3% of City residents were disabled in 2021 and 7.8% had an ambulatory disability (see Chapter 3).

**Provide Recreation Programs and Events.** A variety of factors identified in the recreation plan support recreation programs and events:

- **Survey responses.** Approximately 49.7% of residents identified 'for fitness and exercise opportunities'. Approximately 48.3% cited 'special events'. And 'participate in sports/games' was selected by approximately 26.6% of respondents.
- **City of Jackson Recreation Millage.** The City's recreation programs are funded through a millage levied on residents within the Jackson Public Schools district. That millage was renewed and expanded from 0.2 mills to 0.5 mills in the summer of 2014. The fact that this millage increase passed indicates strong support for recreation programming and events. The existing millage will be up for renewal again in 2024.
- **The health of Jackson County residents.** The 2021 *American Community Survey* estimates that 16.3% of City residents were disabled in 2021 and 7.8% had an ambulatory disability. The *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* 2023 database estimates that 39% of adults in Jackson County were obese and 14% were in poor or fair health. Residents also had an average of 3.3 poor physical health days and 5.3 poor medical health days.

**Develop New Parks as Opportunities Arise.** A variety of the factors identified in the recreation plan support the development of new parks under certain circumstances:

- **Taking advantage of opportunities.** The City may wish to take advantage of opportunities for new parks when they arise even though it is focusing on the renovation of existing parks. An excellent example of this are the butterfly gardens established at various street intersections in Downtown Jackson. This idea could be expanded to portions of parks and other locations throughout the community. Approximately 44.9% survey respondents were in favor of a community garden. A representative of People for the Parks and Trails stated that there is underutilized space in the parks that could be used for community gardens and natural areas during public comment at the November 15, 2023, meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission.
- **Trail networks.** The development of the nonmotorized and water trail networks as proposed in the *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan* and the *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan* cannot be accommodated solely in existing parks. As noted above, 84.5% of recreation survey respondents were in favor of continuing to develop nonmotorized trails and 74.2% were in favor of installing canoe/kayak launch sites on the Grand River. The health benefits attributed to the use of nonmotorized trails are also a factor in favor of new trails. This is important due to the health of City and County residents listed above.

## Action Program

Please see the Action Program map for the location of the various projects, *listed in alphabetical order and not all inclusive* (see Map 42 in Appendix A).

### Park Development

- A. **All parks.** New signs and new recycling trash cans and system.
- B. **Exchange Park.** New playground, landscaping, fencing, and walkways.
- C. **Lions Park.** New softball field bleachers and fencing and parking lot resurfacing.
- D. **New Leaf Park.** New gazebo/picnic shelter and parking lot resurfacing.
- E. **William Nixon Memorial Park.** Parking lot resurfacing, splash pad, and update the building.
- F. **Rotary Park.** Playground, picnic shelter, landscaping, and walkways.
- G. **Ella Sharp Park.** New softball complex (e.g., 4 fields, bleachers, parking, lighting, etc.), new pickleball courts, new off-road trails, parking lot resurfacing, a bouldering park, a skate park, a pump track, bathrooms, and food facilities.
- H. **Under the Oaks Park.** New layout and landscaping.
- I. **Workers Memorial Park.** Adopt a master plan, playground, basketball court(s), landscaping, and walkways.
- J. **Howard Woods Recreation Complex.** New basketball courts, MLK Recreation Center addition, playground, outdoor adult exercise equipment, picnic shelter, and splash pad.



### Trail Development

- K. **All trails.** New wayfinding signage, recycling, and trash cans.
- L. **MLK Equality Trail.** Resurface from the Optimist Shelter westward to Weatherwax Road.

#### New Trails:

- M. Art 634/Armory Arts to Downtown along Mechanic Street.
- N. Downtown Riverfront Park/Consumers Energy Campus northward to Mechanic Street, crossing the Grand River.
- O. S. Jackson Street Trail from the Elmdale Street Trail to the MLK Equality Trail.
- P. Loomis Park to Downtown along E. Michigan Avenue.
- Q. New Leaf Park to Downtown Jackson along 4th Street and Greenwood Avenue.



## Background Information

The Plan's goals and objectives are the basis for the action program listed above.

**Develop lines of communication, collaboration, and cooperation.** Proposed trail and trail improvements/enhancements will further the development of the nonmotorized trail network proposed in the *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan*, a multijurisdictional, collaborative, and cooperative document developed for the City of Jackson and the rest of Jackson County. This is also true for the canoe/kayak launch sites proposed along the Grand River in the City of Jackson and identified in the *Upper Grand River Water Trail Development Plan*.

**Develop trail networks.** The proposed trails and trail improvements/enhancements will further the development of a nonmotorized trail network in Jackson County and connections to statewide trail projects, a goal of this plan and supported by the *Jackson City + County Nonmotorized Plan*, a document adopted by reference as part of this recreation plan.

**Renovate Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities.** Most of the projects included in the Action Program will improve existing parks and the recreation facilities located in them, a goal of this plan and supported by many responses to the survey conducted for this recreation plan.

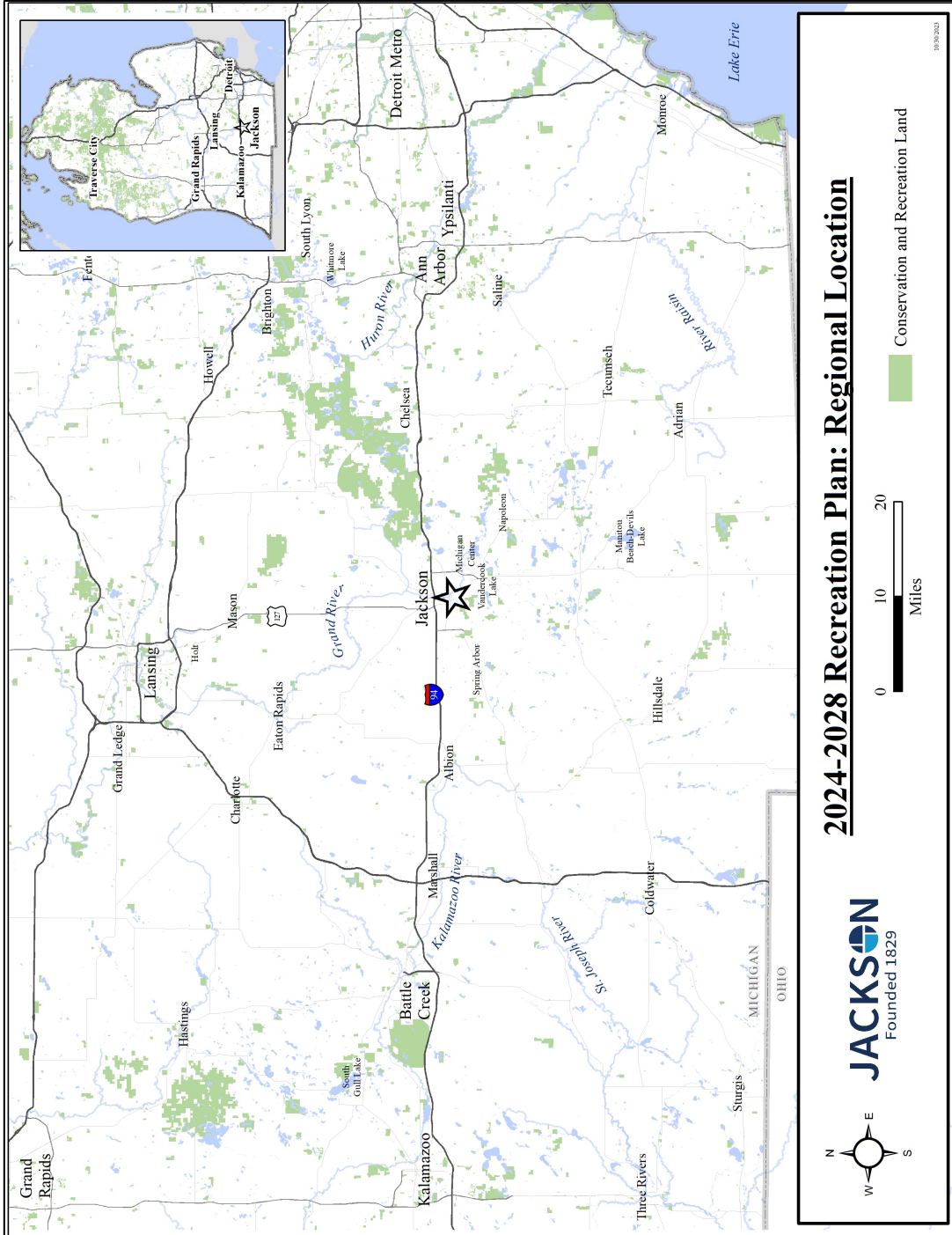


*Family Enjoying a Playground*

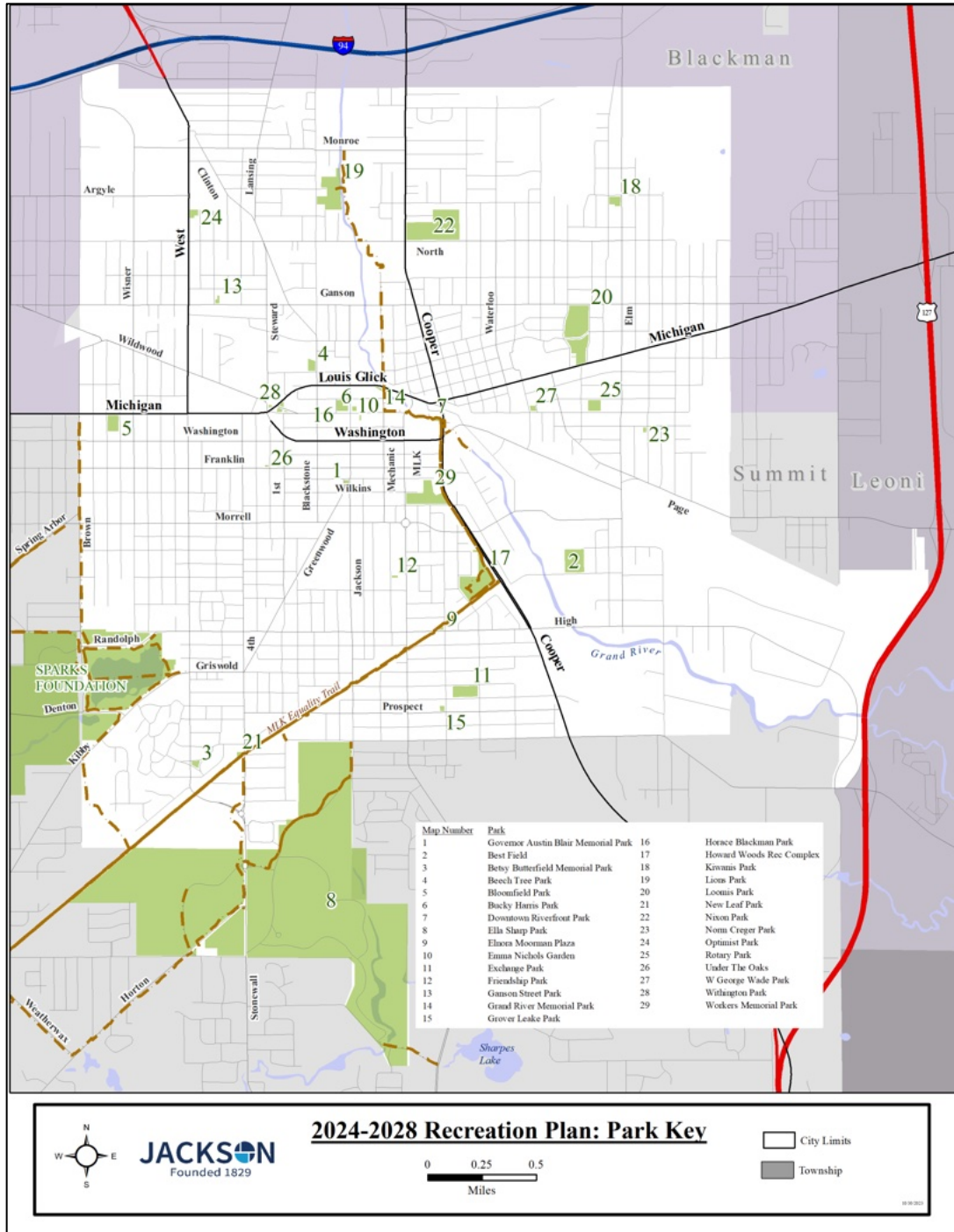
CITY OF  
**JACKSON**  
MICHIGAN

Appendix A  
**Mapping**

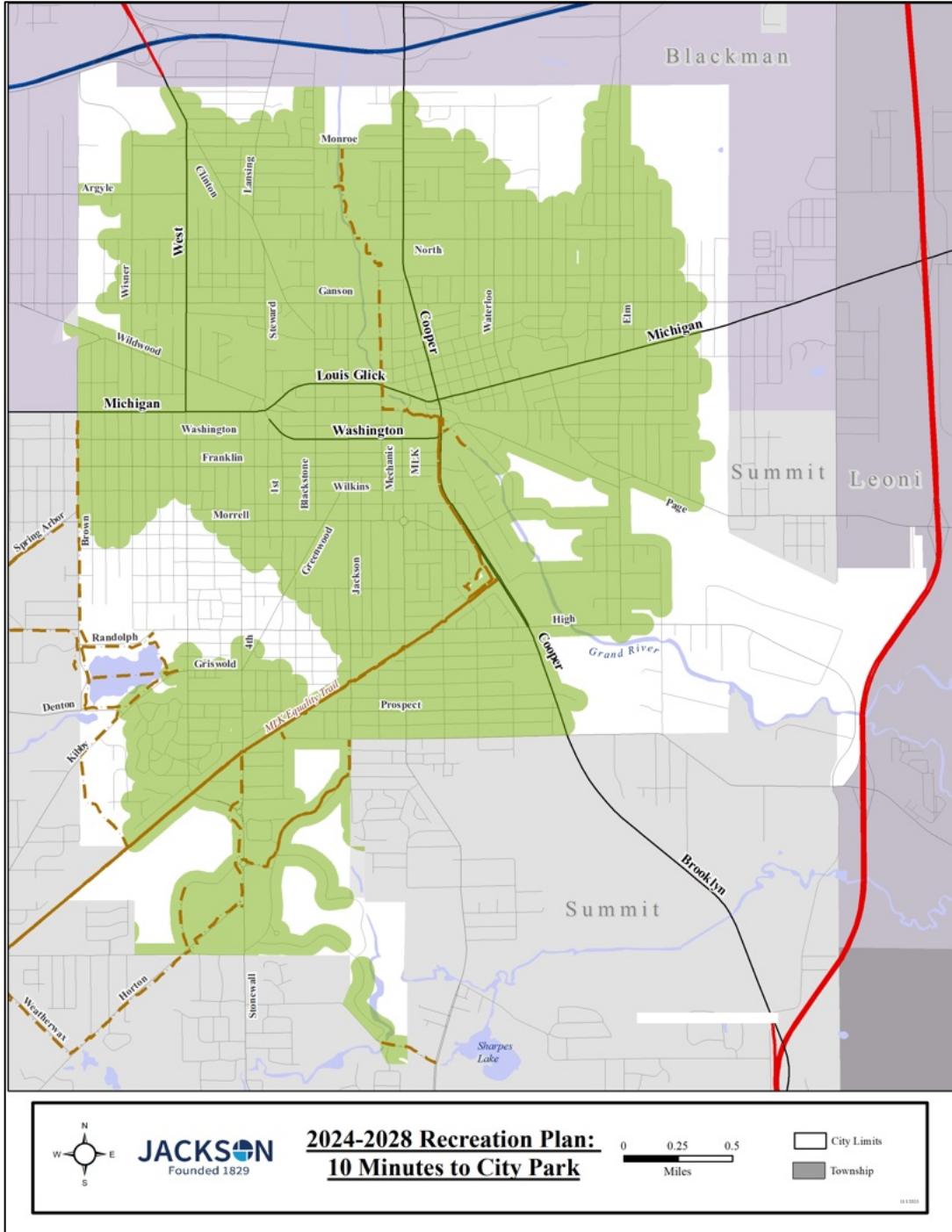
Map 1  
Regional Location



Map 2  
City Parks



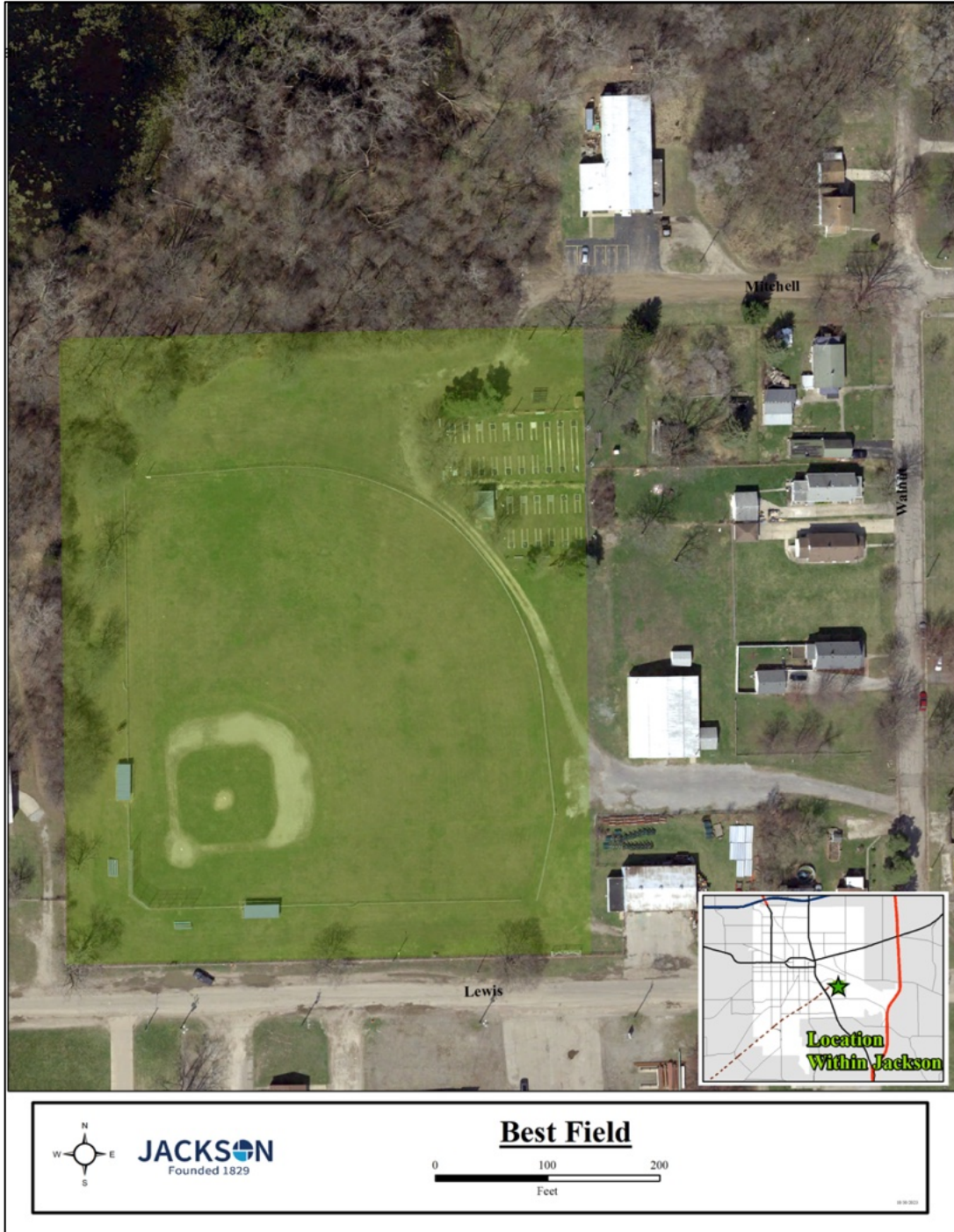
Map 3  
**10 Minutes to a Park**



Map 4  
**1. Austin Blair Park**



Map 5  
**2. Best Field**



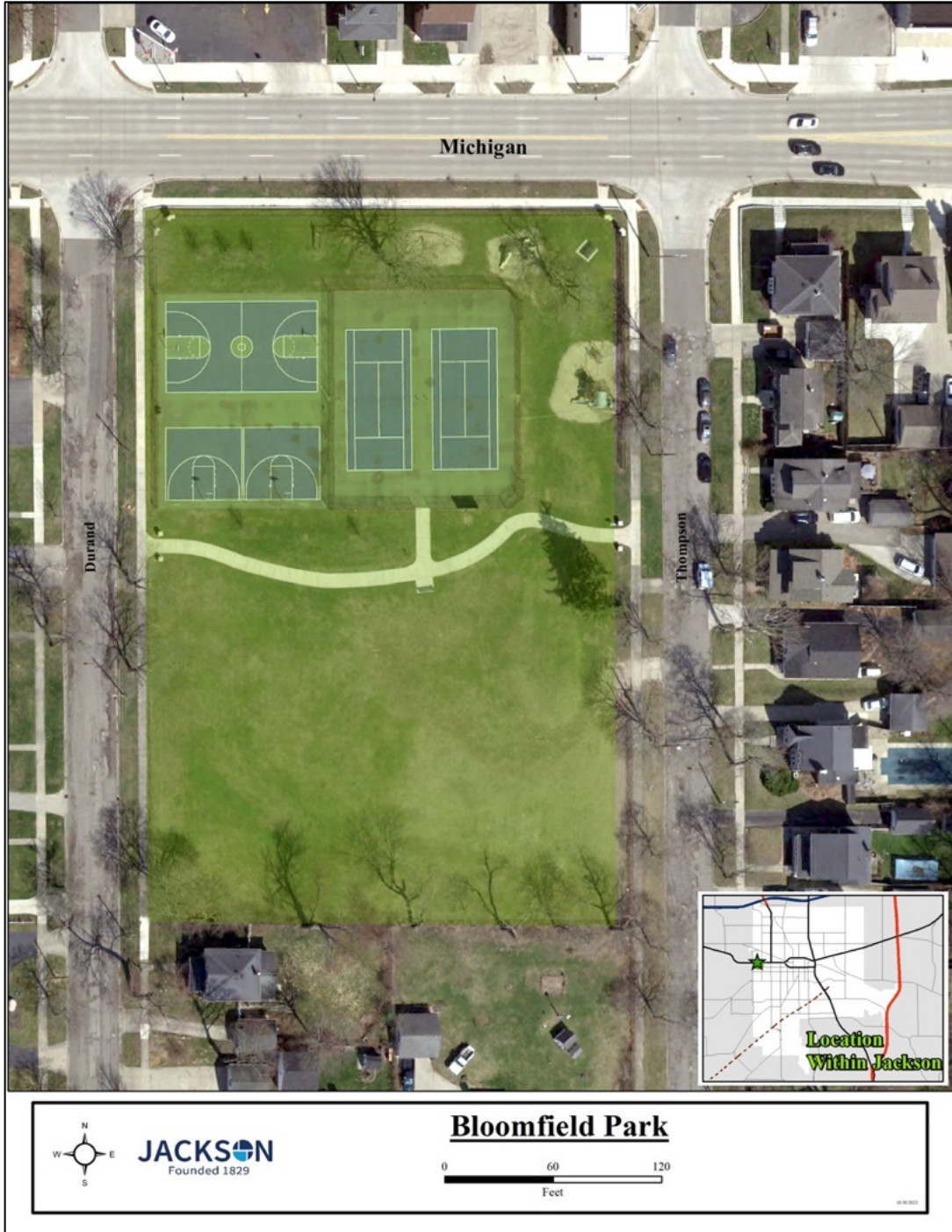
Map 6  
**3. Betsy Butterfield Park**



Map 7  
**4. Beech Tree Park**



Map 8  
**5. Bloomfield Park**



Map 9  
**6. Bucky Harris Park**



Map 10

**7. Downtown Riverfront Park**



Map 11  
**8. Ella Sharp Park**



Map 12  
**9. Elnora Moorman Plaza**



Map 13  
**10. Emma Nichols Garden**



Map 14  
**11. Exchange Park**



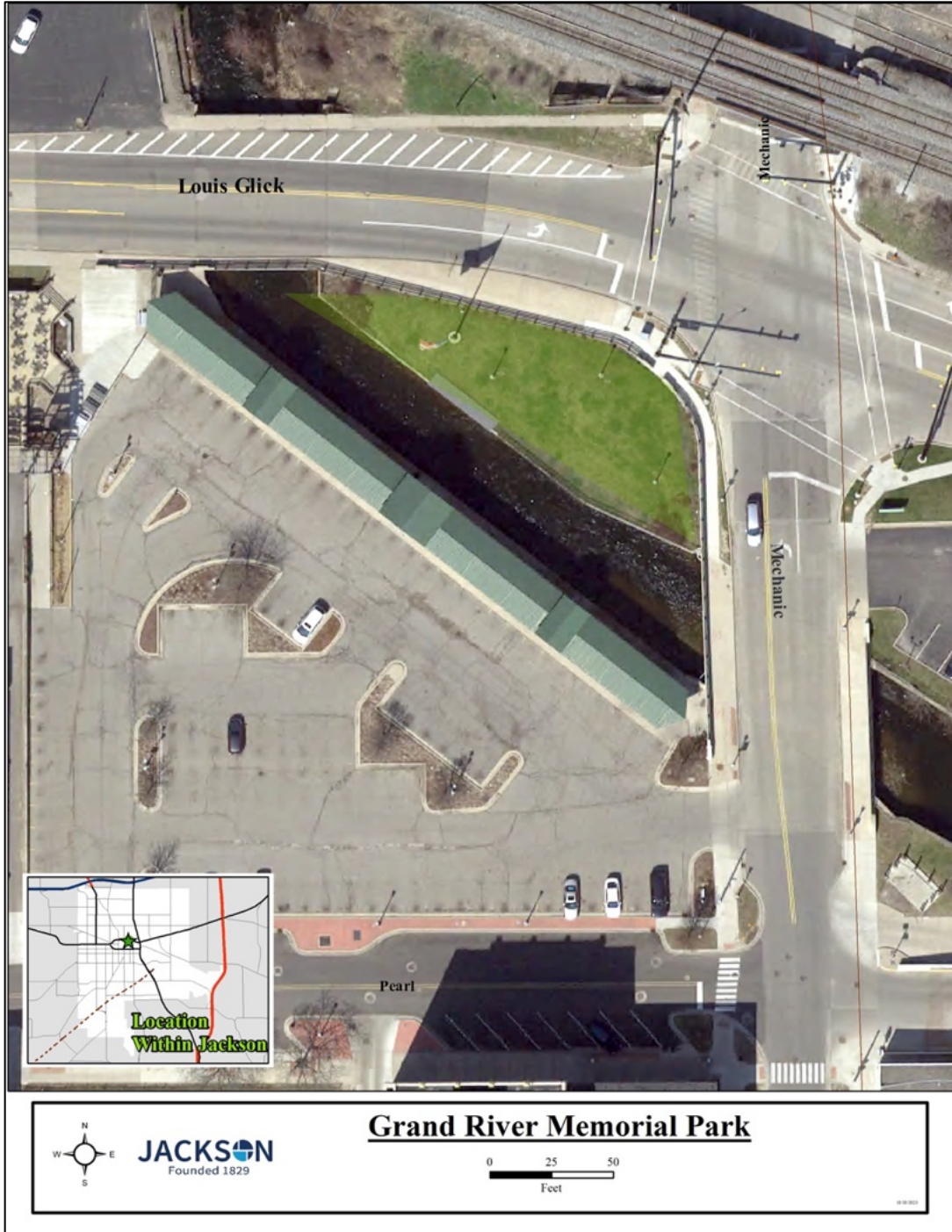
Map 15  
**12. Friendship Park**



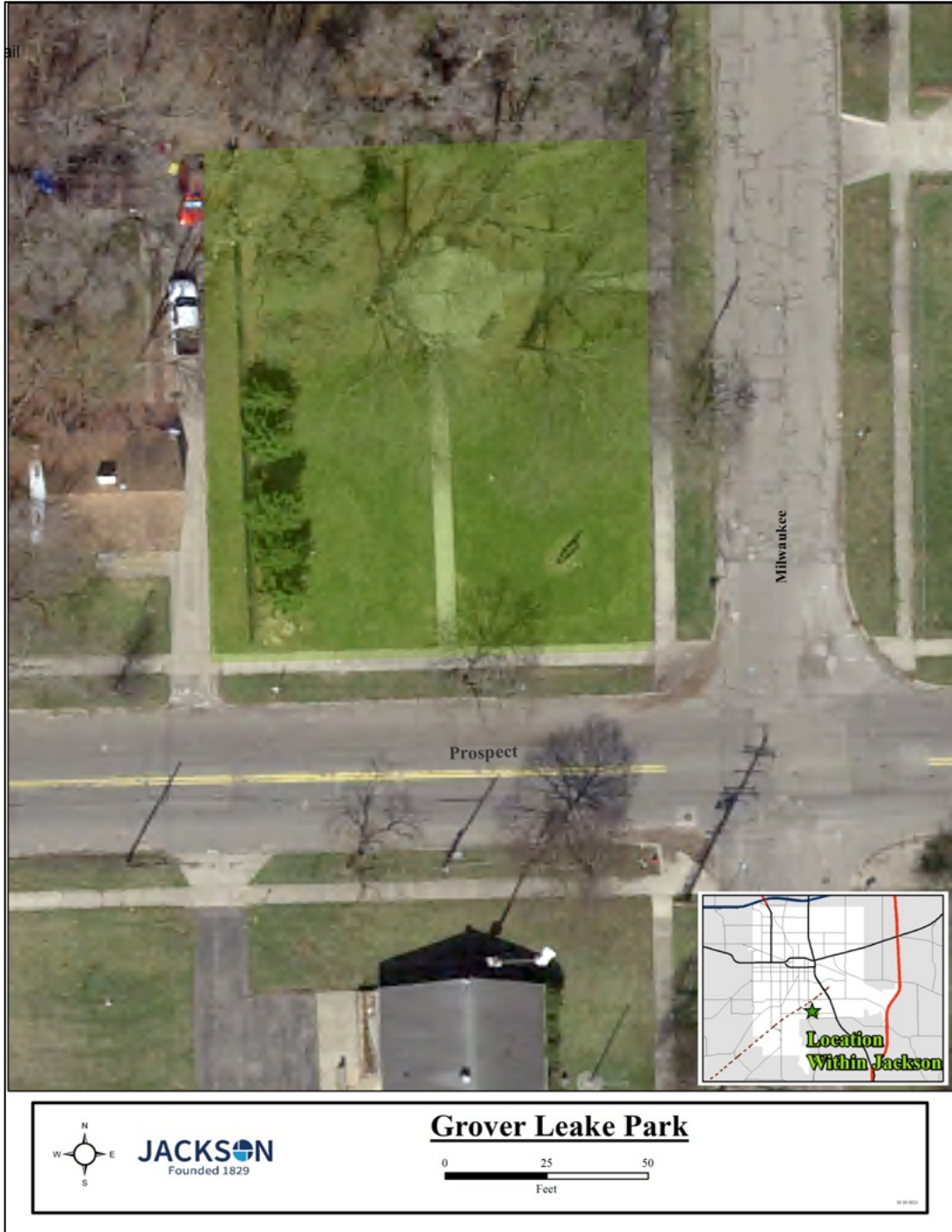
Map 16  
**13. Ganson Street Park**



Map 17  
**14. Grand River Memorial Park**



Map 18  
**15. Grover Leake Park**



Map 19  
**16. Horace Blackman Park**



Map 20

### 17. Howard Woods Recreation Complex



Map 21  
**18. Kiwanis Park**



Map 22  
**19. Lions Park**



Map 23  
**20. Loomis Park**



Map 24  
**21. New Leaf Park**



Map 25  
**22. Nixon Park**



Map 26  
**23. Norm Creager Park**



Map 27  
**24. Optimist Park**



Map 28  
**25. Rotary Park**



Map 29  
**26. Under the Oaks**



Map 30  
**27. W. George Wade Park**



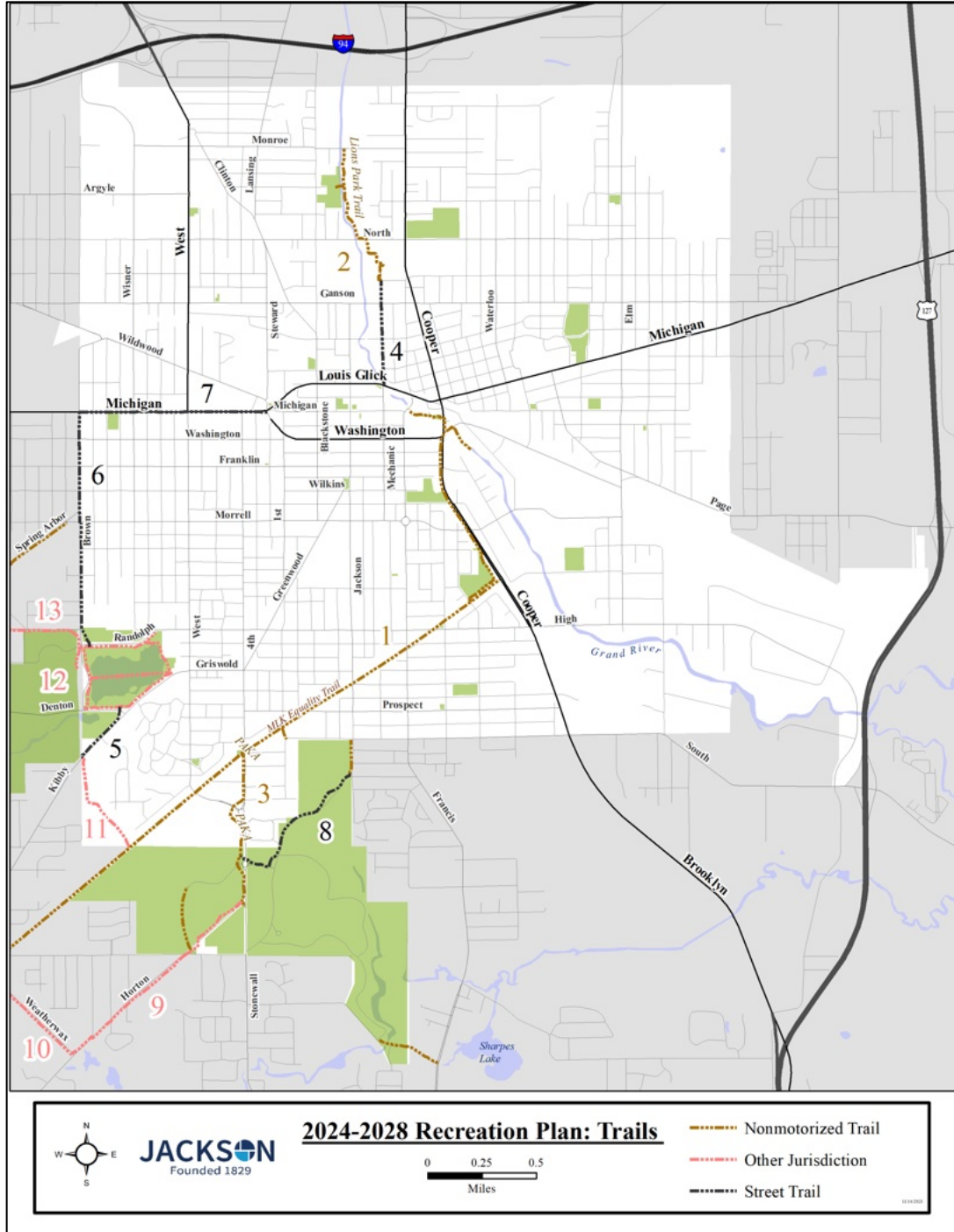
Map 31  
**28. Withington Park**



Map 32  
**29. Workers Memorial Park**

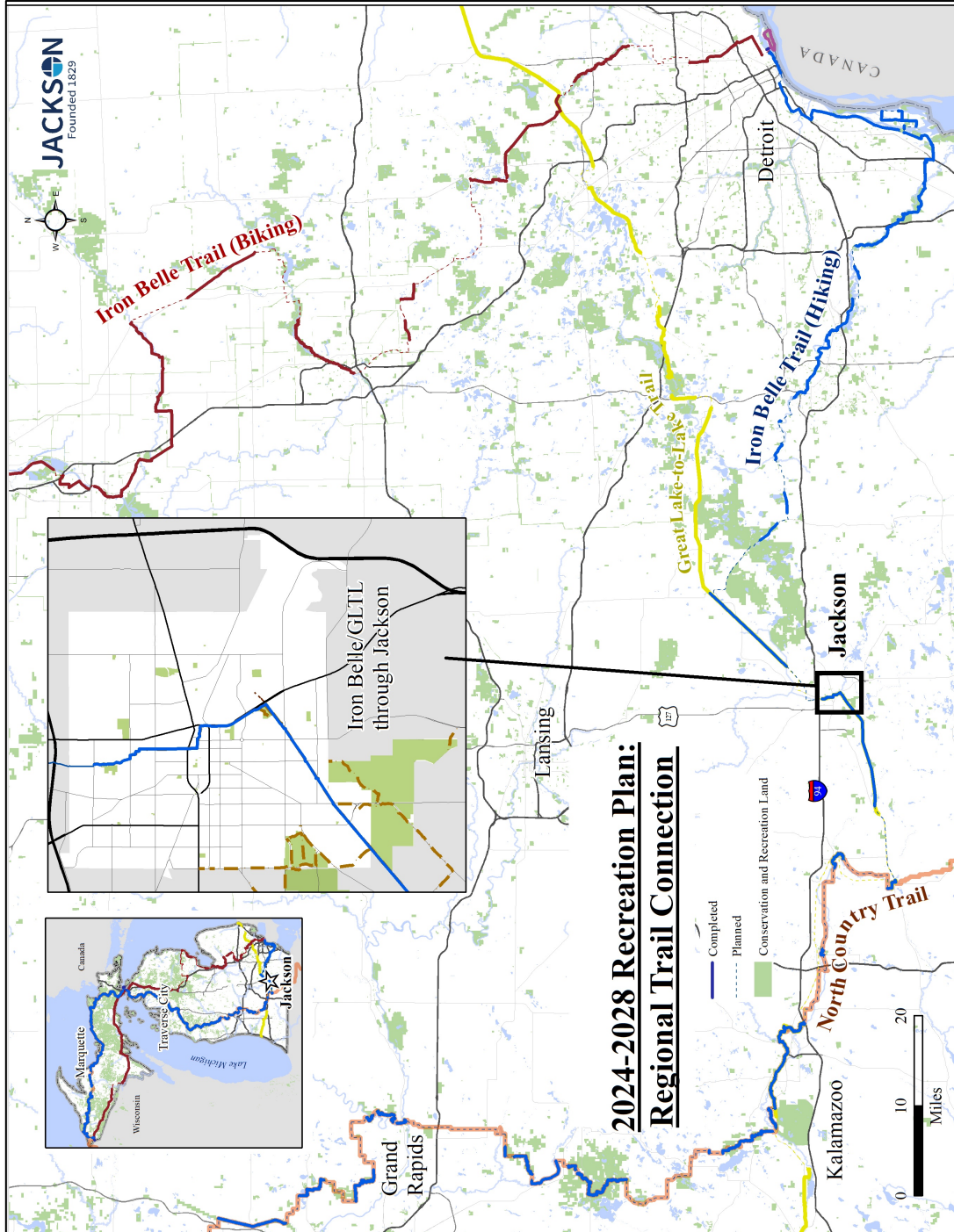


Map 33  
**Existing Local Nonmotorized Trails**

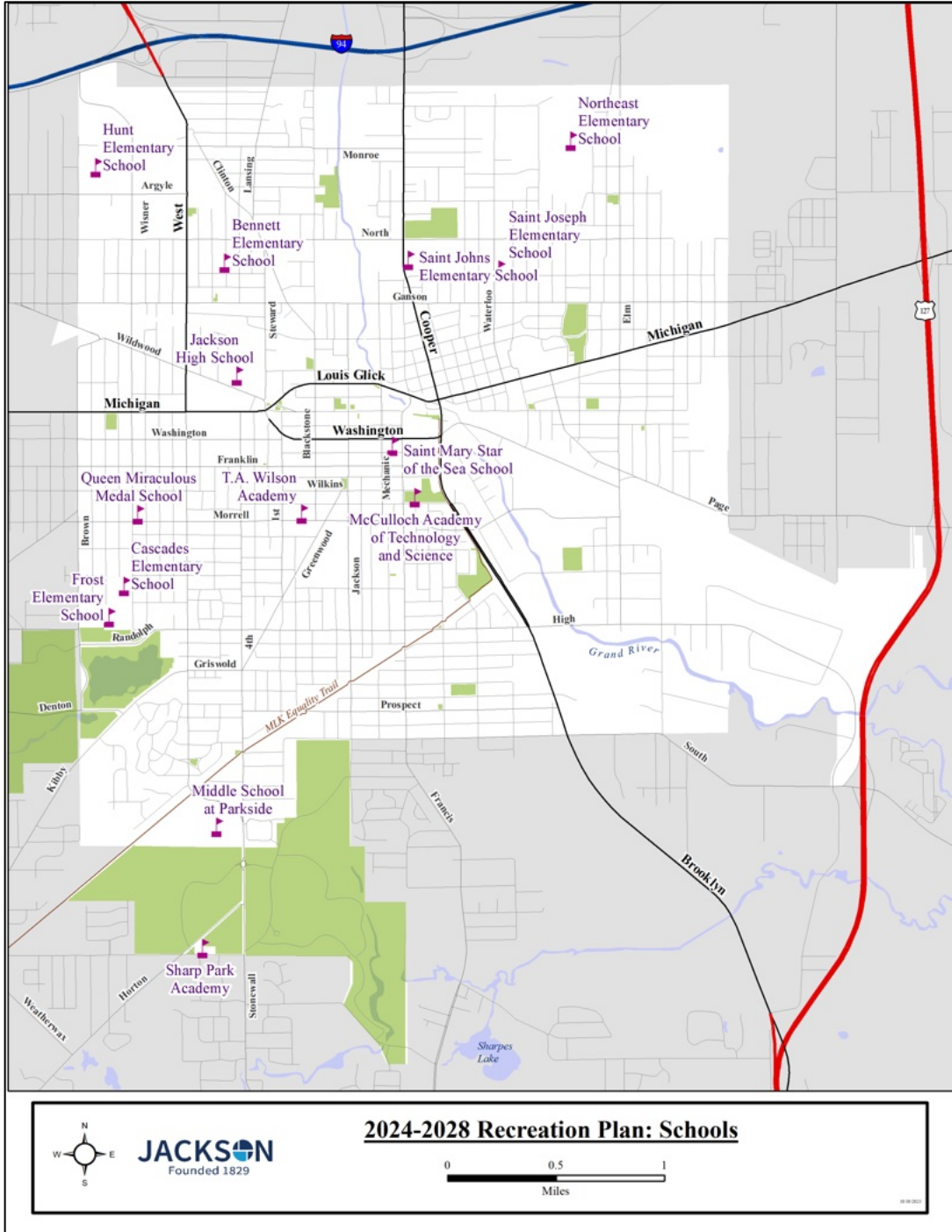


Map 34

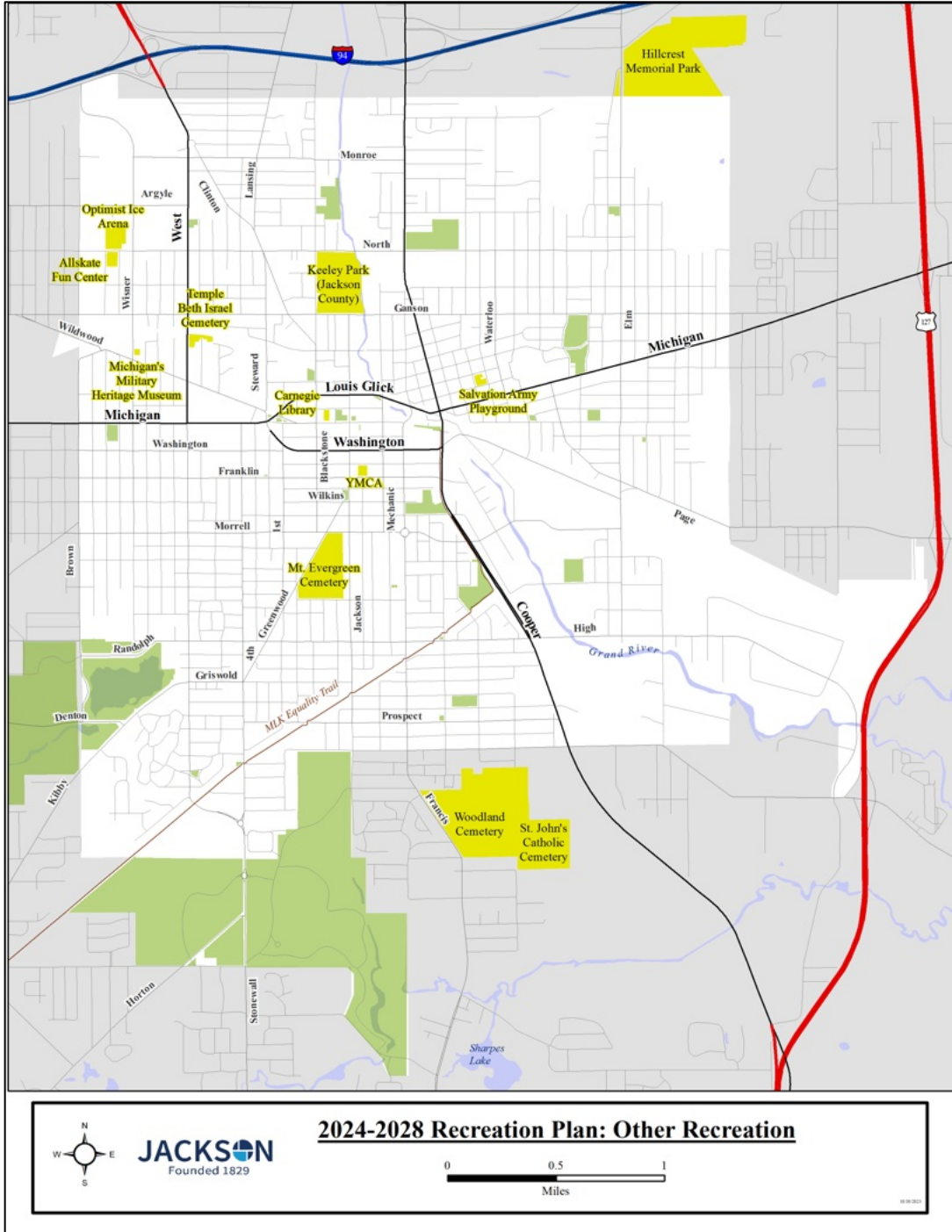
### Regional Nonmotorized Trails



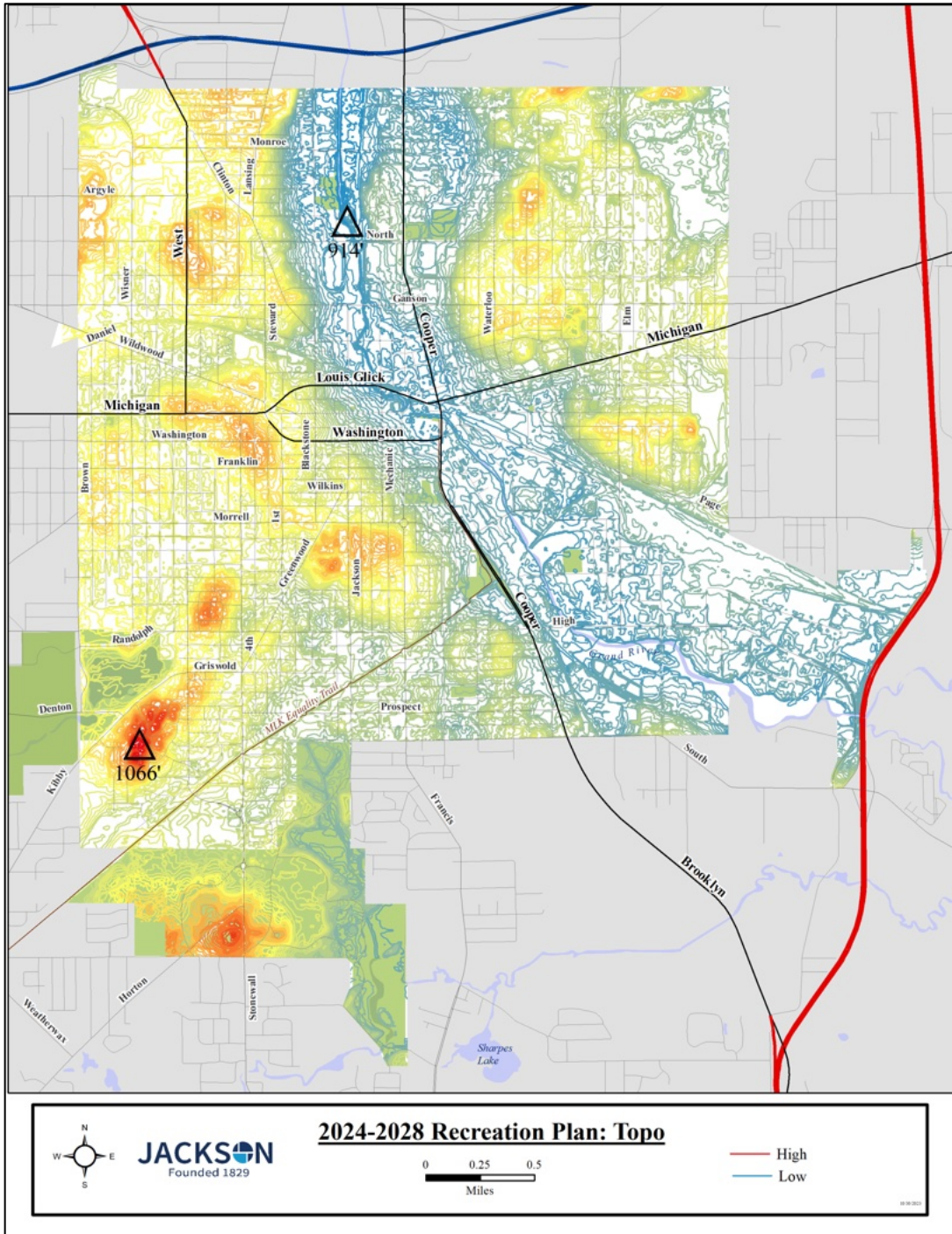
Map 35  
**Jackson Public Schools Campus**



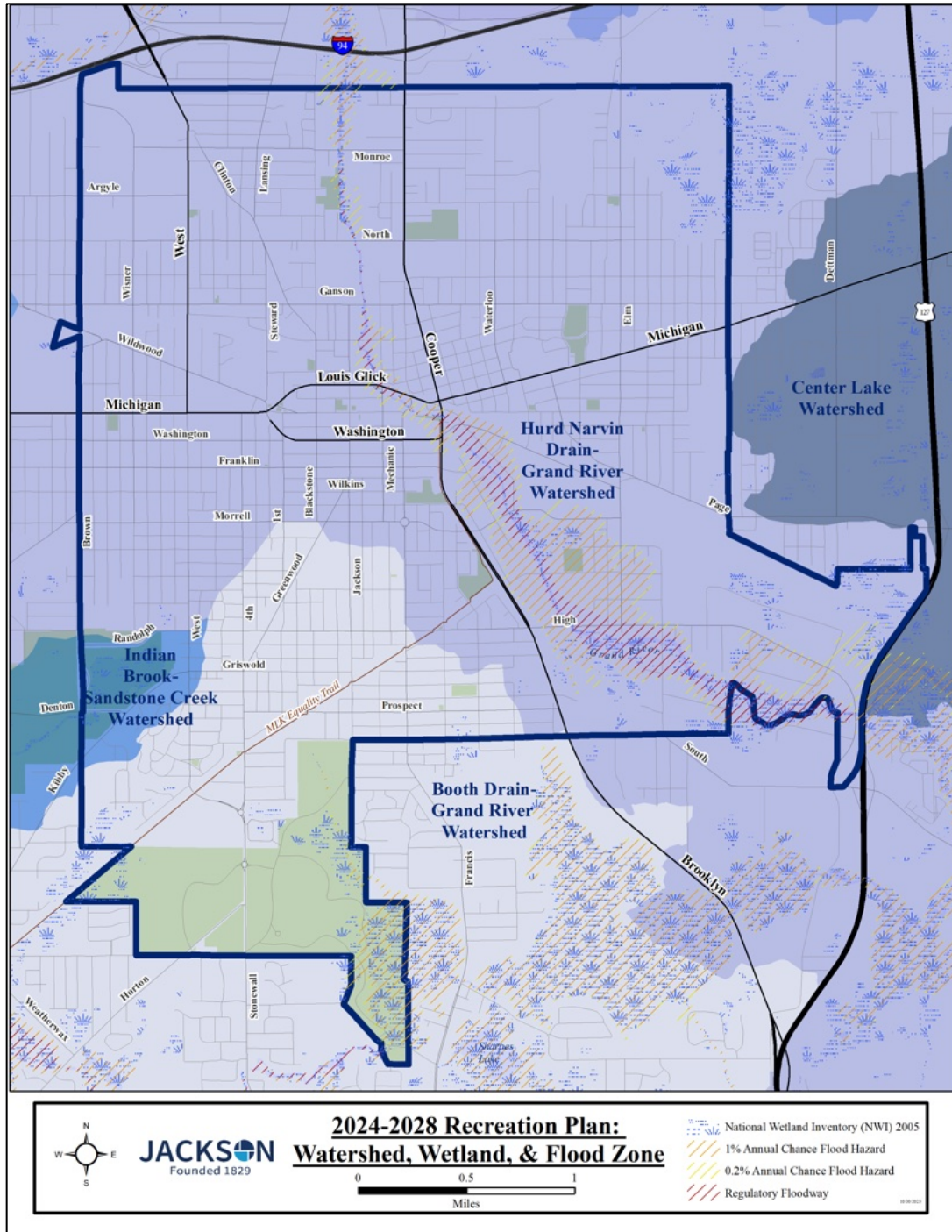
Map 36  
**Other Recreation Facilities**



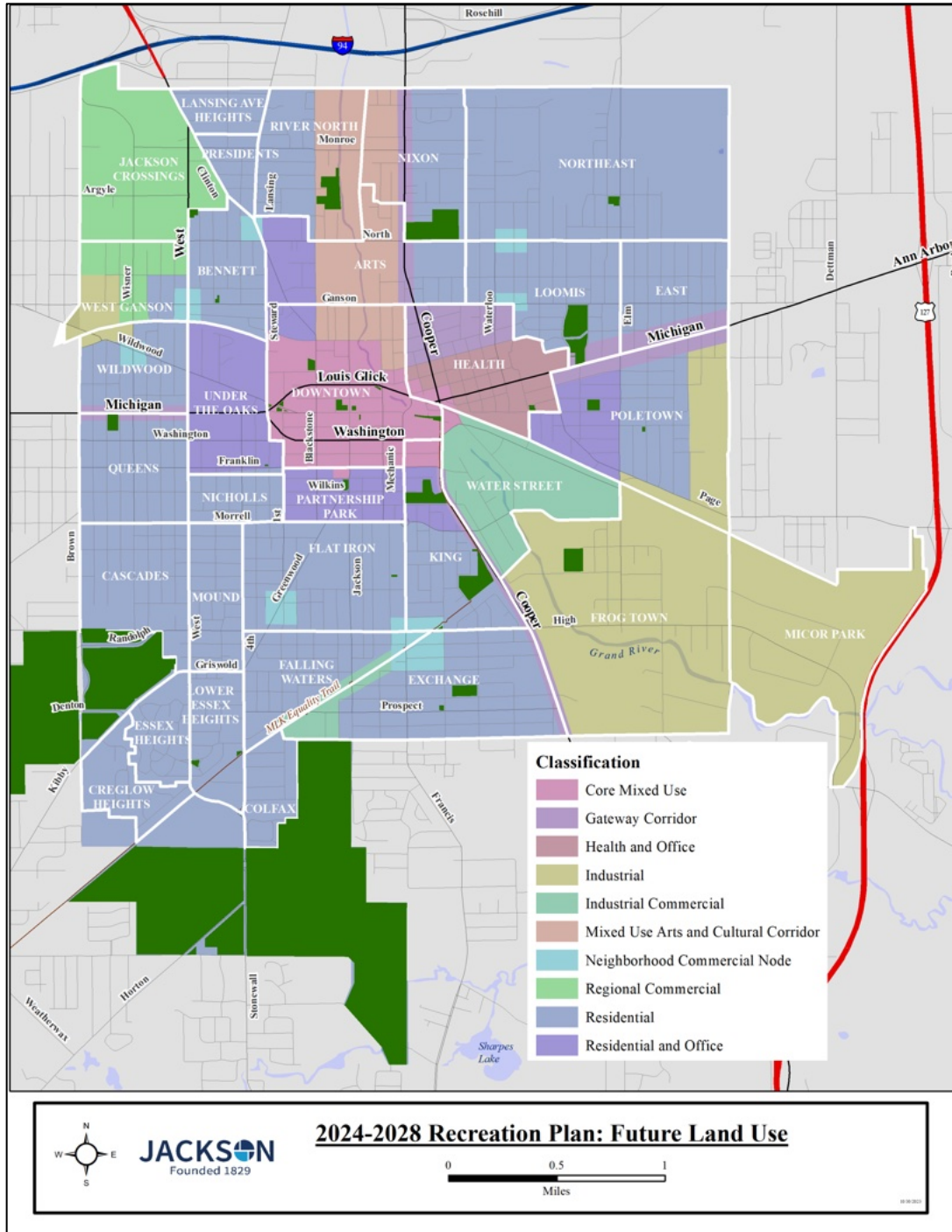
Map 37  
**Topography**



Map 38  
**Watersheds, Wetlands, and Flood Zones**

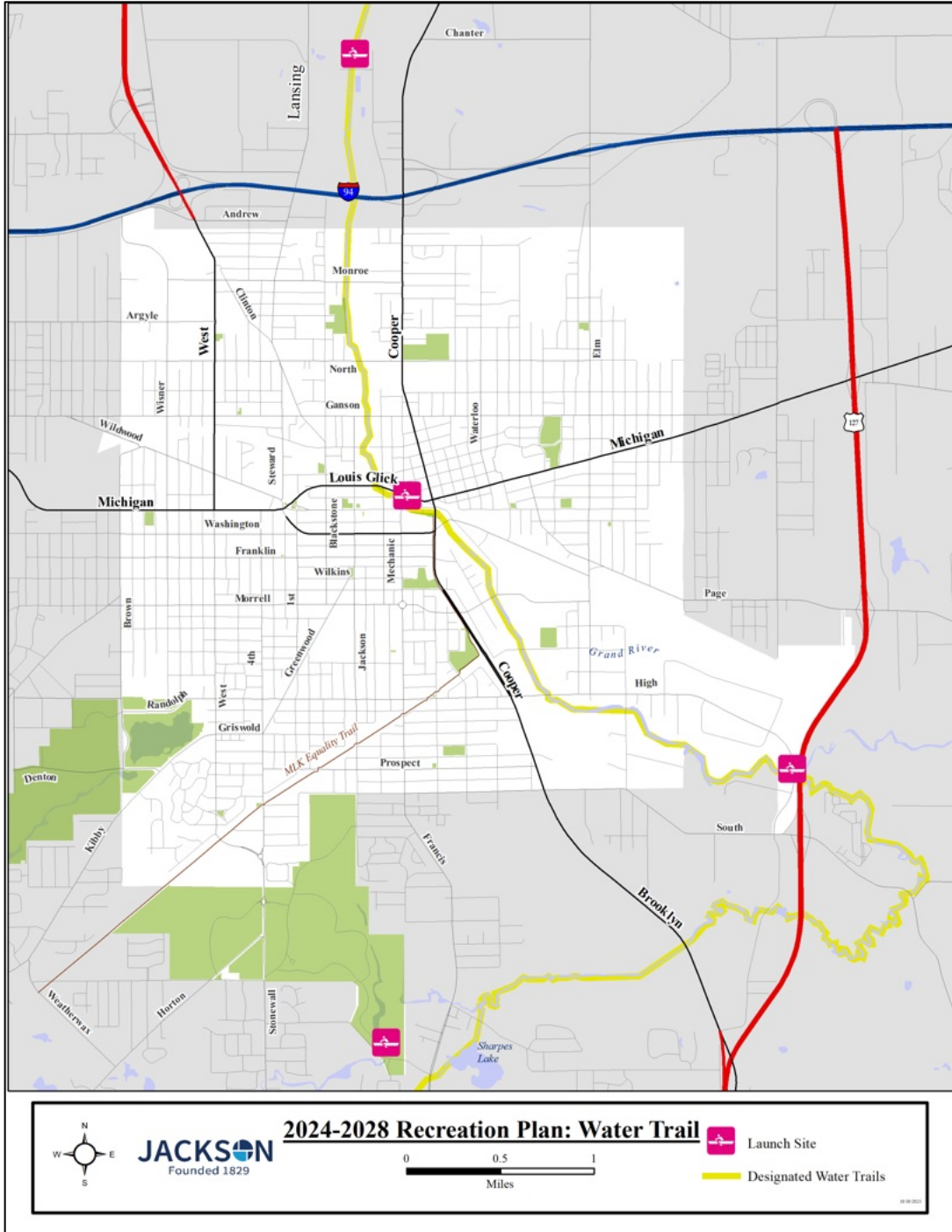


Map 39  
Future Land Use





### Map 41 Upper Grand River Water Trail



### Map 42 Action Plan

