

Community Parks and Recreation Master Plans

Parks, recreation, and open space are essential components of a community. They attract investment to a community, serve as a focus for community involvement, and increase a community's quality of life.

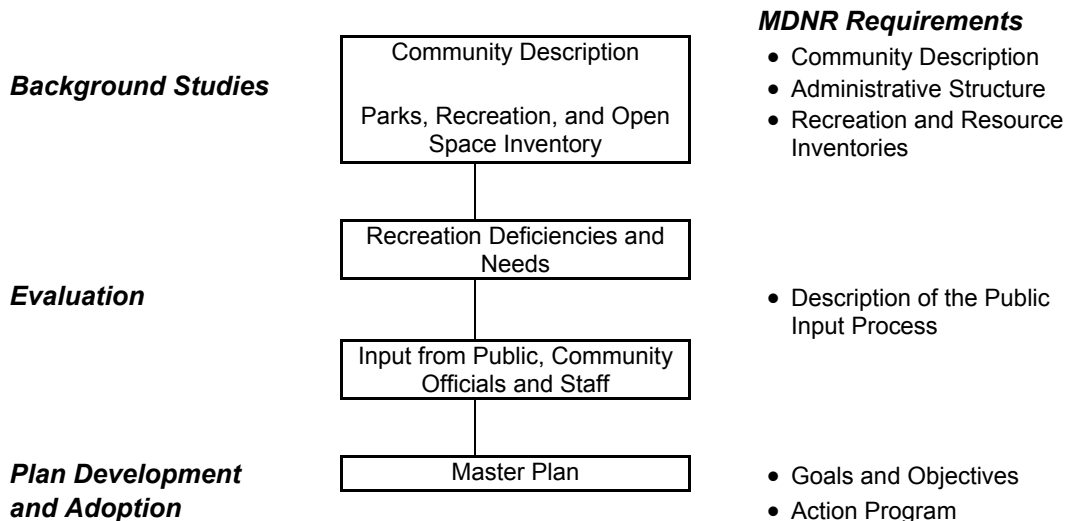
The purpose of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to guide the development of a community's parks, open spaces, recreation facilities and programs. It serves as a road map to set priorities and allocate resources. If the plan meets the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) guidelines, the community is eligible to apply for MDNR grants. These guidelines have recently been revised (*Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans*, 12/20/2004) and changes are highlighted below.

The process used to generate a Community Recreation Plan consists of three phases: background studies, evaluation and plan development.

Background studies involve gaining an understanding of the community being planned for – both the community of people to be served and the park and recreation resources which the community has to offer. This first task consists of a description of the socio-economic characteristics of the population, the natural resources, and land use patterns along with an inventory and evaluation of the park facilities and recreation program the community currently offers.

The second phase in the planning process includes evaluation and analysis of the resources to determine recreation deficiencies and needs. Public input to assess needs is sought at this level. Setting priorities based on the goals, objectives, and the budget of the community's Parks and Recreation Commission is an important task associated with this phase.

The last phase in the process involves plan development and adoption. General goals and objectives as well as a more specific action program are formulated. The following diagram illustrates the planning process and its correspondence to the MDNR requirements.



Recent changes to MDNR “Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans” (Rev. 12/20/2004) are in effect since January 2005. The major changes are highlighted below.

- *While a general understanding of the social and physical characteristics of the community is still needed, it is no longer necessary to include extensive demographic information in the report.*
- *Two methods of public input are now required. This may include a community survey or a workshop **and** a public hearing held as part of the meeting of the governing body or parks commission at which the plan is presented for adoption.*
- *It is no longer necessary to include a Capital Improvement Schedule outlining specific project, cost and year actions would be undertaken. The Goals and Objectives and the Action Program are sufficient to provide a guide for future improvements.*
- *Once completed, the draft plan must be subject to public review and comments for a period of at least thirty days.*
- *Public notices of the availability of the draft plan for public review and comment as well as the notice for the public hearing must now be published at least one week in advance in a newspaper with general circulation within the area covered by the plan.*