



Birch Run Township Park and Recreation Master Plan 2022

Acknowledgements

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

About the Park and Recreation Plan for Birch Run Township

The Birch Run Township Board undertook the development of a five-year Master Plan in accordance with the Community Recreation Planning Guidelines (published by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources), for the principal purposes of:

- Developing wholesome quality of life activities for the residents of Birch Run Township.
- Evaluating the current inventory of parks and recreational facilities and to identify future needs of Birch Run Township.
- Identifying short-term strategies that would enhance existing parks and recreation opportunities for residents of Birch Run Township.
- Visualizing long-term strategies that would guide future parks and recreation development in Birch Run Township.
- Identifying and developing policies that would encourage the formation of partnerships that could support future parks and recreation opportunities.

A secondary purpose of the Birch Run Township Board in preparing a five-year Master Plan was to:

- evaluate the current condition of the Township Park and recommend improvements as needed
- increase awareness of the Township Park and thereby increase the daily usage through an effective awareness campaign targeted to the Township and user groups.
- identify a long-range management plan for the Township Park and future development.

In preparing the Master Plan, the Birch Run Township Board provided various forums for local communities, parks and recreation providers, and the general public to comment on perceived recreational needs and recommend potential solutions. The plan represents the Board's efforts to incorporate the public's requests within the current fiscal parameters of the Birch Run Township Board.

In 2011 and 2012, Birch Run Township made significant advances toward improving the quality and quantity of recreation opportunities for Township residents. Although parks and recreation development in Birch Run Township has been a lower priority historically, the past decade has seen a more active interest and, consequently, development efforts. Until 2015, the Township Board authorized a Park and Recreation Advisory Board to focus on the park and assist in organizing volunteers and interest groups for the betterment of the park. Members of the Advisory Board were able to: develop partnerships with the schools to construct additional playground structures; organize citizens to volunteer on constructing a concession stand building; meet with Birch Run Youth Sports, AYSO, Birch Run Historical Society, and other groups to identify needs and work together to meet those needs. This has demonstrated that the future potential for multiple partnerships in the community for the development of parks and recreation opportunities is considerable.

In 2015 the Department of Public Works (DPW) for Birch Run Township started overseeing activities at the Township Park facility. This included meeting with the Birch Run Youth Sports,

AYSO, Historical Society and other groups. The DPW is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of existing park facilities, as well as coordinate planning and implementation of any new projects.

The Master Planning process helped Birch Run Township identify users of the Township Park facility, thereby identifying some possibilities for future partnerships. Birch Run Township Park and Recreation facilities serve the residents of the Township of Birch Run, the Village of Birch Run, the Birch Run School District, and (because the school district encompasses Taymouth Township) it serves many residents of Taymouth Township. Taymouth Township does have its own park facility, but many residents use Birch Run Township Park due to sports leagues and the park's proximity to the schools.

Before any Park and Recreation Plan is officially adopted, it is vitally important to understand what the needs of the residents are, what recreational opportunities already exist, and what sort of programs and projects are needed for residents based on residents' age, ability, population, density, and the availability of recreational opportunities in neighboring communities. This plan has carefully considered input and suggestions from Birch Run Township area residents, officials, and other community stakeholders. This input is critical to the effective development of a plan that will meet the needs of, and enhance the quality of life of, all interested parties.

Section 2: COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Community Description section will describe the physical features of the community, the demographic characteristics of the community, as well as the social characteristics. Looking at the community from a variety of perspectives will give us a better understanding of the community and will help form goals for future planning.

Who has an interest in Birch Run Township Parks and Recreation?

The municipality known as Birch Run Township serves a couple of distinct, but co-dependent, communities. The main community is, of course, Birch Run Township as a whole. However, the Township includes the residents of the Village of Birch Run. The reason for this is that the village is a home rule village, which means the residents of the village are residents of both the village and the township. In addition, the Township Park serves the students of the Birch Run Area Schools, which includes many residents of Taymouth Township due to the fact that Birch Run School District encompasses Taymouth Township. Many of the sports leagues and community groups are residents of both townships. While understanding that the needs of everyone involved in the park will be part of the planning process, the main consideration will be for the residents of Birch Run Township as a whole.

GENERAL LOCATION

Birch Run Township is approximately 36 square miles and is located on the southern border of Saginaw County, and adjoins Genesee and Tuscola County's. The township is approximately 20 miles south of the City of Saginaw and 17 miles north of the City of Flint. The townships adjacent to Birch Run Township include Taymouth Township to the west, Frankenmuth Township to the northeast, Bridgeport Township to the northwest, Arbela Township (in Tuscola County) to the east, and Vienna Township (in Genesee County) to the south. The primary land uses of the community has included: residential, agricultural, recreational, commercial and industrial.



Historically, the primary residential areas served as a bedroom community for the manufacturing industries of the cities of Saginaw and Flint. While there were always commercial uses in the township, in the late 1980s the community began to greatly expand commercial development with the construction of an outlet mall. Fast food restaurants, medical offices, and other service businesses soon moved in. In the early 2000s, a large number of manufacturing companies moved factories outside of Michigan. With the loss of a large number of manufacturing entities, the employment base, and community use, has changed quite a bit over the past decade.

As stated previously, Birch Run Township encompasses the Village of Birch Run. The village is located in the southwest quarter of the Township, near the 136th exit off I-75.



SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

(all census data will be updated when the 2020 census data becomes available)

The 2020 population for Birch Run Township was 5,888 including the Village of Birch Run. Final numbers for 2020 indicate a 5.2% decrease in population in the last decade.

Past trends in population include:

- From 1960 to 1980, the population steadily increased over 37% from 3,451 residents to 5,488 residents
- There was a decline of 3.5% of the population from 1980 to 1990 resulting in a total of 5,354 people. This resulted from 204 residents moving out of the Village of Birch Run. Even though the Village lost residents during this decade, the Township of Birch Run gained 70 residents during the same time period.
- From 1990 to 2000 the Township increased in population by 1.35% resulting from an increase of 83 residents. The final population count for 2000 was 6,191 residents.

- From 2000 to 2010 the Township decreased in population by 2.6% resulting in a decrease of 158 residents. The final population count in the 2010 Census was 6,033.
- From 2011 to 2020 the Township decreased in population by 5.2% resulting in a decrease of 145 residents. The final population count in the 2020 Census was 5,888.

The Township has a fair split of residents by gender, with 51.1% (3,009) being Male and 48.9% (2,879) being female.

Of the Township population, 95.2% (5,605) are white. The remaining 4.8% (283) of residents are ethnic minorities, comprised of African Americans, American Indians, Hispanic/Latinos, Asian or Pacific Islanders.

The population of the Township is fairly well distributed by age. The highest population concentrations are found in the 0 – 19 and 50 – 65 age brackets and represent 47.9% of the total population in Birch Run Township. It is significant for park and recreation planning to note that the largest numbers of population consist of under 19 and over 50. Children and retired persons are larger consumers of recreation.

Source: US Census 2020

There are a total of 2,376 Housing Units in Birch Run Township. Of those, 160 are unoccupied, leaving a total of 2,246 households in the Township. Of these households, 66.9% are classified as families. The average household size of Birch Run Township is 2.41 people per residence; down from 2.56% in 2010. Roughly 24.5% (582) of the households have individuals 18 years of age or younger.

Source: US Census 2020

SPECIAL POPULATION GROUPS

Senior Citizens: Based upon the analysis of social characteristics revealed in the 2020 Census, Birch Run Township has a relatively high senior population group. Seniors have different needs in recreation facilities than younger people: for example pathways vs. playgrounds. In addition, those on fixed incomes may need low cost recreational opportunities.

Disabled Individuals: The US Census 2010 study showed that approximately 18.7% of the population had disability issues. With those statistics as a baseline, of the 65 and older residents in the Township, who numbered 884 in the 2010 Census, between 165 and 226 residents over 65 have a disability issue. For the population as a whole, using the 2010 Census statistics, between 1128 and 1544 residents have some form of disability that might impair mobility. The US Census 2020 study showed that approximately 11.3% of the population now has disability issues. With those statistics as a baseline, of the 65 and older residents in the Township, who numbered 1,085 in the 2020 Census, approximately 294 residents over 65 have a disability issue. For the population as a whole, using the 2020 Census statistics, approximately 649 residents have some form of disability that might impair mobility. Those with disabilities, especially mobility related disability issues, there are distinct needs that should be considered in planning for recreation and parks.

Low to Moderate Income: Only 7.4% of individuals and 4.1% of families within Birch Run Township reported as being below the poverty level on the 2020 Census. 10% of those 65 and

older reported as being below poverty level. These aren't large portions of the population, but they are still significant and represent a need to be met.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Transportation

Dixie Highway runs diagonally through the western half of the Township. This roadway serves as a local route between Saginaw, Birch Run, and Flint. Gera Road (aka M83/54) runs north and south through the eastern half of the Township and extends west along Birch Run Road to Interstate 75 (I-75).

Gera Road (M83/54) serves as a connection between the City of Frankenmuth to the City of Clio and the City of Flint. It is heavily used by rural commuters working in these three cities. Gera Road is also used to connect with I-75. Interstate 75 crosses through the southwest corner of Birch Run Township. This expressway has an interchange at the eastern border of the Village of Birch Run.

The Township is located within 25 miles of both MBS international Airport in Saginaw and Bishop International Airport in Flint. A major trunk line for the C&O Railroad System runs through the southwest corner of the Township. It provides major Railroad connections through the state.

Exit #136 in Birch Run Township is the second busiest interchange on the entire length of I-75, from northern Michigan to southern Florida. Orlando is the only exit that exceeds Birch Run. Birch Run is a small community, but it is a major stop for tourists and experiences a lot of tourist and pass through traffic. The amount of traffic generated has a huge impact on the community and on every aspect of planning, including parks and recreation.

Soils

There are two main soil associations in Birch Run Township: Pipestone-Granby-Wixom association and Parkhill-Wixom association. The northern two thirds of Birch Run Township are comprised of Pipestone-Granby-Wixom association soils. These soils are used primarily for cultivation for crops and woodlands. When provided with adequate drainage, these soils can be used for site development. The major concerns without adequate drainage are wetness, blowing soil and in woodland areas, plant competition, seedling mortality and equipment limitation.

The southern third of the Township is mainly formed with soils from the Parkhill-Wixom association. These soils are mostly used for cultivated crops when provided adequate drainage.

Certain areas of these soils may be unsuitable for site development due to wetness and moderately slow permeability.

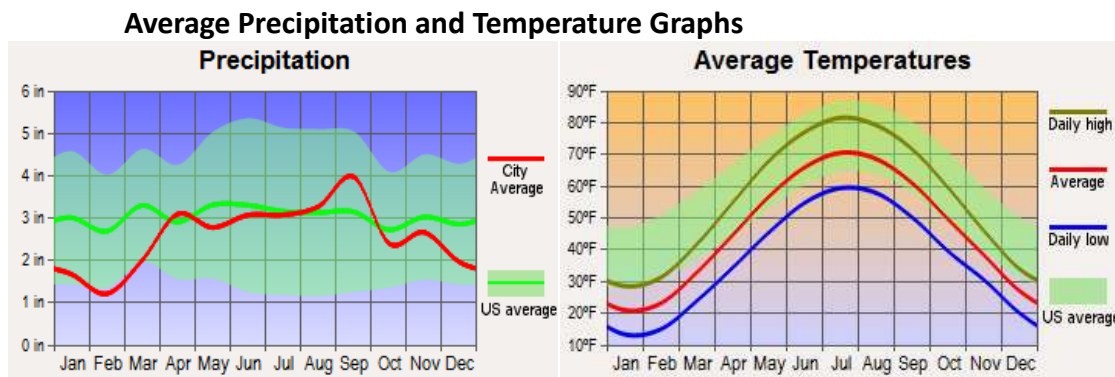
Land Use

The Village of Birch Run is located within the southwest quarter of the Township and is the only incorporated area. The remainder of the Township is primarily flat and level and is primarily dedicated to agricultural uses, with scattered residential subdivisions, a mobile home park and large lot single family residences. Most of Birch Run Township is rural in nature. The majority of land is used for agricultural and single-family residential purposes.

The shops at Birch Run represent an intense commercial use which has influenced greater commercial development along Birch Run Road, Gera Road, Dixie Highway and South Beyer Road.

Climate

Weather and temperature are always a major influence on recreation. Typical readings for the Birch Run area include average winter temperatures of 23.8 degrees Fahrenheit, with an average daily minimum of 16.9 degrees. The average daily summer temperature is 69.7 degrees Fahrenheit with the average summer high temperature being 81.3 degrees Fahrenheit.



Total annual precipitation is 28.84 inches. Of this total, almost 18 inches of precipitation falls between April and September. This period encompasses the growing season for most crops.

Winter recreational activities that necessitate frozen water surfaces are limited to between mid-December and mid-March. During this period, people participating in these activities must be cautious because of fluctuating low temperatures and wind chill.

Some basic weather facts for Birch Run Township, MI 48415

(Source: <http://www.weather.com/weather/wxclimatology/monthly/graph/48415>)

- On average, the warmest month is July.
- The highest recorded temperature was 108°F in 1936.
- On average, the coolest month is January.
- The lowest recorded temperature was -28°F in 1916.
- The maximum average precipitation occurs in September.

Extreme Weather Activity

Historically, the Birch Run Area has tornado activity above the Michigan state average. It is 103% greater than the overall U.S. average. On the 8th of June 1953, a category F5 (max. wind speeds 261 – 318 mph) tornado 10.9 miles away from the Birch Run Village center killed 106 people and injured 844 people and caused between \$5,000,000 and \$50,000,000 in damages. A few years later, on the 12th of May 1956, a category F4 (max. wind speeds (207 – 260) tornado 18.2 miles away from the Village of Birch Run killed 3 people and injured 116 people and caused between \$500,000 and \$5,000,000 in damages.

When it comes to earthquakes, Birch Run-area historical earthquake activity is also above Michigan state average. It is 98% smaller than the overall U.S. average. On the 2nd of September,

1994 at 21:23:06, an earthquake, magnitude 3.5, Intensity II – III occurred 51.7 miles away from the Village center.

Source: <http://www.city-data.com/city/Birch-Run-Michigan.html#ixzz2OBIC2b6>

Topography

Birch Run Township is part of the Saginaw lowland. The terrain is mostly flat with some gentle slopes. Elevations in Birch Run Township are some of the highest in Saginaw County, at up to 753 feet.

Vegetation

Birch Run Township's vegetation is typical of South East Central Michigan. It is dominated by deciduous trees except where land has been cleared for agricultural, turf, development and other uses.

A key area of concern with vegetation in Birch Run Township is with the emerald ash borer (EAB). The EAB attacks all ash trees regardless of size unless expensive insecticide treatments are regularly applied. This is of special concern in a park setting where dead and dying Ash Trees could present a public safety hazard. There are also financial obligations associated with it.

Section 3: ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The Birch Run Township Board is solely responsible for providing recreational opportunities for its residents.

In 2015 the Department of Public Works (DPW) for Birch Run Township started overseeing activities at the Township Park facility. This included meeting with the Birch Run Youth Sports, AYSO, Historical Society and other groups. The DPW is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of existing park facilities, as well as coordinate planning and implementation of any new projects.

The following shows the organization structure of the Birch Run Township Park and Recreation operations. All Township expenditures for parks and recreational purposes are approved by the Township Board.

Birch Run Township Board – Legislative body appropriating money for park and recreation function and passing park and recreation related ordinances.

Birch Run Township Board Members at the adoption of this plan:

- Ray Letterman, Township Supervisor
- Corey Trinklein, Township Clerk
- Karen Parlberg, Township Treasurer
- Fred Sheridan, Township Trustee
- Kurt Kiessling, Township Trustee
- Dale Trinklein Jr, Township Trustee
- Chris Watts, Township Trustee

FINANCING

Funding for the parks and recreation programs and facilities in Birch Run Township is provided by general funds. The only user fees collected for the programs or facilities are pavilion reservation fees and rental fees for the baseball diamonds and soccer fields. The Township allows the exclusive use of the park pavilion and bathrooms to those who make reservations and the fees cover the cost of supplies and clean-up of the reserved facilities.

The current, approved spending allotment for 2021 is as follows:

Description	2020-21	2021-22
Contractual Services	\$51,000.00	\$22,795.00
Waste and Rubbish Disposal	\$2,100.00	\$2,100.00
Electric	\$900.00	\$900.00
Repair and Maintenance	\$500.00	\$1,000.00
Capital Outlay	\$0.00	\$8,400.00
Total Budgeted	\$54,500.00	\$35,195.00

Recreational programming and facility development has traditionally looked to a variety of funding sources to supplement local property tax revenues, and Birch Run Township will continue to seek support from the following sources as it works toward attainment of the objectives set forth within this plan:

- Michigan Department of Natural Resources funding through Land and Water Conservation Fund, Natural Resources Trust Fund, and other funds as they are available
- Special gifts or contributions from local citizens or organizations supportive of recreational programs
- Housing and Community Development funds eligible for capital expenditure, or other federal funding that may be available
- General Obligation bond issues, supported by the community for special project
- Special millage, also subject to voter approval, for major programs
- General fund appropriations for projects that can be phased in projectable increments

As Birch Run Township looks to the future, new methods of maintaining parks and recreation services may have to be explored. In addition to the financial sources listed above, new approaches to intergovernmental cooperation might be studied, along with increased public-private partnerships. The Township is willing to consider new or combined methods of funding to meet tomorrow's needs so that as need arises, so will the necessary resources and support.

Section 4: RECREATION INVENTORY

RECREATION INVENTORY

In order to plan for parks and recreation in the future, Birch Run Township examined the types of facilities that currently exist in the area. It is also helpful to compare existing facilities with various standards as a method of measuring adequacy of the parks and recreation facilities in the Township. The table below inventories all of the public, private, and regional recreation opportunities in, and near, Birch Run Township. The chart below shows exactly what is available

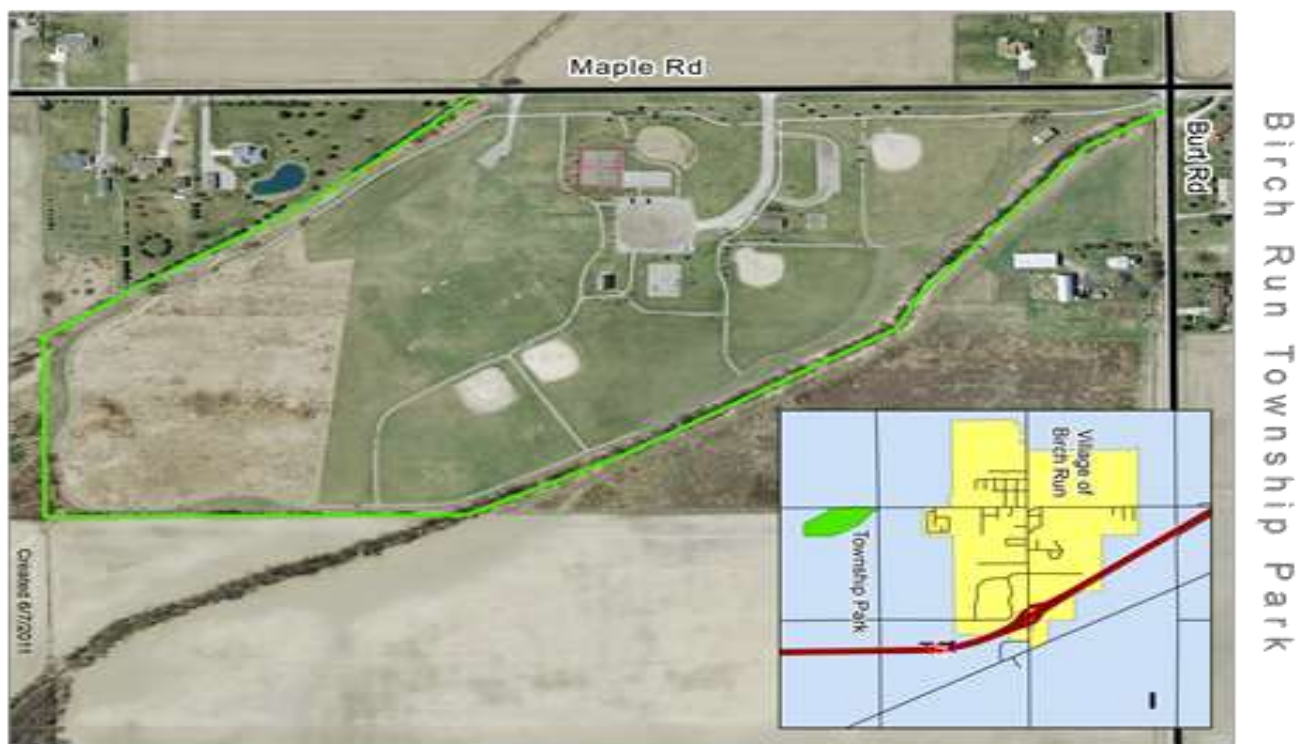
at each facility as well as the acreage. Using this inventory, we can compare the Township's recreation opportunities with the predetermined national standards.

	Symbol	Acreage	Ball Diamonds	Basketball	Football/Soccer	Tennis Courts	Picnic Tables	Playground Equipment	Playfield (open)	Nature Trails	Waterfront Property	Shelter	Boat Launch	Fishing	Restrooms	Comments
Parks																
Local Parks																
Birch Run Township																
Birch Run Township Park	1	50														Sled Hill, Path
Taymouth Twp Park																Sled Hill, Walk Path, Volleyball
Evergreen Subdivision Pk	2	0.6														Baseball, Open Field
Birch Run Village																
Veterans Memorial Pk	10															Pavilion, Benches
Commercial Recreation																
Alpine Mountain Golf	3															Putt Putt Golf, Go Karts
Dixie Motor Speedway	4															Auto Racing
Wilderness Trails Animal Zoo	5															Zoo
Pineridge RV Campground	6															RV Park, Campground
Schools																
Birch Run High School	7															¼ Track, Basketball
Marshall Greene Middle School	8															Basketball
North Elementary School	9															Playscape, Basketball
County Parks																
Imerman Park		102														
Haithco Park (w/ 40a Lake)		78														
Saginaw Valley Rail Trail 9.5 miles																
Price Nature Center		186														
Ringwood Forest		160														
Veterans Memorial Park																

		Comments	Restrooms	Fishing	Boat Launch	Shelter	Waterfront Property	Nature Trails	Playfield (open)	Playground Equipment	Picnic Tables	Tennis Courts	Football/Soccer	Basketball	Ball Diamonds	Acreage	Symbol
Parks																	
Regional Recreation																	
Frankenmuth Memorial Park																	
Frankenmuth Heritage Park																	
Shiawassee Wildlife Refuge																9104	
Price Nature Center																186	

Birch Run Township Park Description

Birch Run Township has only one park facility wholly owned and operated by the Township. Birch Run Township Park is classified as a **Community Park**. It is 50 acres in size. The park serves the entire Township of Birch Run, the Village of Birch Run, the School District of Birch Run, and parts of Taymouth Township via various sports leagues organized by Birch Run Youth Sports and AYSO. Park facilities include two entrances, three parking areas (one paved, 2 gravel), a covered pavilion, four baseball diamonds, two tennis courts, an historic schoolhouse, two playground areas, a walking path, picnic areas, concession building, restrooms, sidewalks, open grass areas, and 3 soccer fields.



REGIONAL RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES DESCRIPTIONS

There are several regional recreational opportunities outside of Birch Run Township's boundaries. They are discussed to show the diversity of the area and to bring to our attention how some opportunities are satisfied through regional facilities.

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge:

This 9,104 acre area located in the center of Saginaw County is dedicated to protecting waterfowl and wildlife. Included in this area are two hiking trails, one seven miles in length and another four miles in length. The main trail offers hiking, biking and cross country skiing opportunities and is outfitted with two observation platforms equipped for waterfowl watching. The second trail also offers hiking and cross country skiing opportunities. The acreage includes a variety of wildlife habitat, emergent marsh, forested wetland, and prairies. It is a beautiful refuge.



Price Nature Center:

The Price Nature Center again provides regional hiking and cross country skiing trails. This is an area with natural heavy woodlands of oak, beech, maple and pines. The size of this area is 186 acres and it provides year round access. Price Nature Center is located on Sheridan Road, about 20 minutes northwest of Birch Run Township.

Frankenmuth Memorial Park:

This park offers a band shell, rose garden, ice skating, softball diamonds, tennis courts, sledding hills, the Memorial Pool, concession stand, a boat launch, restrooms and a fitness trail. This area is the site of summer concerts in the park, Fourth of July fireworks and several other community events. It is located seven miles northeast of Birch Run.

Frankenmuth Heritage Park:

This park is the home to a number of Frankenmuth's festival, including the Bavarian Festival. This park facility offers picnic shelters, lighted ball diamonds, playground equipment, sand volleyball, a river walk and restrooms. It is located seven miles northeast of Birch Run Township.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background from 2014 - 2021

The Township was successful in meeting most of the action items in the previous Master Plan. There were 12 distinct projects outlined in the 2014 Master Plan. The Township has been committed to parks and recreation and was able to accomplish many of those goals, as well as a few additional projects that were recognized as needs during the last decade. A list of accomplishments during that time period follows.

- Improved picnic pavilion
- Improved park pathway by fully repaving it
- Put park path on a crack sealing maintenance schedule
- A Ga-Ga Ball Pit was built through community donations
- Rebuilt and refinished playground equipment including train and large slide
- Performed much needed repairs to the old Schoolhouse

BARRIER FREE COMPLIANCE

Creating a park system that is safe, accessible and usable to all individuals, including those with disabilities, is essential. A grading system has been developed by the MDNR to help communities identify the status of their parks. The grading system was developed based on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. The accessibility grading system uses a 5 point scale ranging from 1, where none of the facilities/park meet accessibility guidelines, to 5 where the entire park was developed or renovated using the principles of universal design.

In order to ensure compliance to state and federal barrier free laws, the Township is fully committed to complying with these rules in the design and construction of future parks and park amenities. Specifically, the township is committed to ensuring accessibility in all future development, including:

- Pathways to and from parking to any new facilities
- Pathways to and from all activity areas
- All future activity areas developed will meet accessibility requirements
- Surfaces of all development plans will meet accessibility needs
- Upgrade existing facilities / structures that do not meet accessibility standards

Of the existing park facilities, an assessment was done to determine accessibility. According to the MDNR Accessibility Grading System, Birch Run Township Park rates a “3” grade, “most of the facilities/park meets accessibility guidelines.” Most of the park has achieved accessibility since the last Master Plan. Accessibility was one of the goals in the previous plan. There are still two parking areas that are gravel where accessibility could be improved by paving.

Facility		Parking	Pathways to/from Parking	Pathways to/from Activity Areas	Activity Areas	Restrooms	Amenities	Surfaces	Signage
Township Park									
Compliant									
Deficient									
Recommendations	While there has been significant improvement in accessibility in the park, and especially in surfaces, there is still room for improvement. One of the parking areas was paved to increase accessibility to the park, but we have two additional parking areas that are gravel that can be paved to improve accessibility.								
Included in Action Plan									

DNR Recreation Grant Inventory

The Guidelines book requirements for Master Plans includes a requirement for a DNR Recreation Grant Inventory. It is recommended that the community contact the Grant Coordinator to acquire all necessary information to assure accuracy. The following information was obtained from Grant Coordinator, Tamara Jorkasky on 9 May 2013.

Grant #1

Project Title: Birch Run Community Park (Buster Brown Park)

Project Description:

Project Status: Converted Site

Project No. 26-00743 Project Year: 1976

Grant Amount: \$47,500.00

CONVERTED SITE - Parking, fencing for softball field, color coat of tennis courts, playground equipment, lighting of softball field, tennis courts, landscaping, LWCF sign, basketball courts, 2 sets of bleachers, electricity to restrooms, concession stand.

Project Elements:

parking
fencing of softball field
shuffleboard court system
color coat tennis courts
playground equipment
lighting of softball field & tennis courts

restroom with utilities
landscaping
2 sets of bleachers
extension of electricity to restrooms
concession stand
basketball court

Grant #2

Project Title: Township Park Trail System

Project Description:

Project Status: Closed
Project No. 26-01582 Project Year: 2001
Grant Amount: \$66,500.00

Construct an 8 foot wide path throughout the Township Park, providing barrier-free accessibility to all activity areas and creating a fully accessible recreational path.

Asphalt pathway (9300' long, 8' wide)
Park benches

Grading, seeding, cleanup
Signage and road striping

Section 5: PLANNING & COMMUNITY INPUT

Process of Plan Development **PLANNING METHODS**

In the process of developing the 2014 plan, the former Park Advisory Board applied several different approaches to determine recreation needs in the community. They started off by identifying a list of goals to be accomplished in the planning process.

- Invite the entire community to be involved in the planning process
- Identify and map existing Birch Run Area recreational facilities
- Build common ground and develop consensus among the township stakeholders to address the existing and future park and recreational needs of the area
- Enable the Township to be eligible for financial assistance based on the Recreation Plan

Once some basic goals were identified, the former Park Advisory Board reviewed each of the planning methods outlined in the MDNR's guidelines booklet to determine the best course for planning for the Township's future park and recreation needs. Upon review, it was decided that a combination of Standards Comparison and Systems Approach would provide the best foundation for a 5-year Master Plan for Birch Run Township.

STANDARDS COMPARISON PLANNING

To meet the Standards Comparison planning goals, the former Park Advisory Board's first step was to review the MDNR's suggested facility development standards for a community the size of Birch Run Township and compare the Township's facilities to the recommended standards. The table below is the result of that study.

Suggested Facility Development Standards

Item	State Standard	Birch Run Township	Deficiency
Park Land (acres)	10 / 1,000 population	50 acres	10
Badminton	1 / 5,000 population	0	1
Baseball/Softball Fields	1 / 5,000 population	2	0
Basketball	1 / 5,000 population	1	0
Soccer Field	1 / 10,000 population	2	0

Softball	1 / 5,000 population	2	0
Tennis	1 / 2,000 population	2	1
Volleyball	1 / 5,000 population	0	1
Walking Path	1 / region	1	0

As the table shows, according to the guidelines given by the MDNR is the *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans*, the Township has 4 identified deficiencies. These areas are:

- Quantity of land acres
- 1 Badminton Court
- 1 Tennis Court
- 1 Volleyball Court

These deficiencies are according to the 2010 Census results. The current population is expected to be fairly stagnant due to the reduced level of employment base in the Township and Village.

SYSTEMS APPROACH PLANNING

Listening to Residents of Birch Run Township

After the goals for developing the plan and the Standards Comparison was completed, Birch Run Township determined that a couple of opportunities for public input were needed. While established standards are important, it is equally important to know the needs and desires of the community being served. Listening to the residents of the Township was extremely important in the process of developing this Master Plan. The first opportunity for public input was a public review session that was held from November 22nd to December 27th, 2021. The second opportunity for input was at a public hearing held on February 8th, 2022.

SECTION 6: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Action Plan

–This section is the actual Action Plan that was developed. The Birch Run Township Board formulated the following plan based upon the characteristics of the community, the demographics of the community, the input gathered through the 2012 survey process, the 2012 focus group, the December 2021 public meeting and other factors.

GOAL I: Develop and Improve Passive Recreation Opportunities in Birch Run Township Park and throughout the Township to meet the recreation needs of all age groups and levels of ability.

The 2012 survey and input processes ranked the Picnic Pavilion and Picnic areas the highest need. Picnicking is one of the main uses in the Township Park. With the two largest population groups being 65+, and younger children, improving this type of passive recreation for these user groups is a main priority. There is currently only one covered Picnic Pavilion. It is usually rented every weekend for family reunions/gatherings. In addition, with the high use of the park for sport events, it is popular with spectators and sports players alike for resting and eating. All of this demonstrates a need for additional covered picnic areas for park users. In addition, grills, picnic

tables, and utilities will be needed for each covered area. These additions will meet the needs of users and allow for more groups to gather at the park.

OBJECTIVE 1: Construct additional pavilion in the park

OBJECTIVE 2: Construct covered picnic areas in the park

OBJECTIVE 3: Provide picnic tables, grills, etc. for each picnic area

GOAL II: To develop additional non-motorized pathways, for recreation throughout Birch Run Township.

The second area of need identified by the 2012 input process involved pathways. The existing paved park pathway is one of the *most used* facilities in the park. It is used on a *daily basis – year round*, even though it is not plowed in the winter. Improving active recreation opportunities will improve the health of the community, provide transportation routes, and recreational opportunities for the residents of the Township. The existing pathway provides ADA accessibility to the entire township park. Beyond that, it also provides 1.75 miles for walking, biking, running, etc. Pathways meet the active recreation needs of a broad spectrum of ages and user groups.

OBJECTIVE 1: Expand the existing pathway within the park boundary

OBJECTIVE 2: Connect the existing park path with the Rail Trail in Genesee County

OBJECTIVE 3: Develop a more extensive pathway system within the township

GOAL III: Provide active play opportunities for ages 0 to 19, which has been identified as one of the largest population groups in the Township.

The 2012 Standards Assessment Tool showed that Birch Run Township meets the MDNR's recommended standards. However, the community has expressed a need for *additional and improved playground facilities*. While standards are one measurement tool, actual use is also very important in defining need within each individual community. The 2012 survey and public input opportunities identified a need for additional playground areas and equipment for the younger members of our community.

OBJECTIVE 1: Expand existing playground area

OBJECTIVE 2: Add playground areas in each of the identified usage areas

OBJECTIVE 3: Improve playground equipment in existing play areas

OBJECTIVE 4: As park property is acquired, add playground equipment to new park facilities

GOAL IV: Improve existing, and develop additional, parking facilities in the Township for recreation opportunities

Existing parking facilities are in need of improvement for ADA accessibility alone. However, there is also a need to expand parking facilities for the current levels of use. During AYSO and Birch Run Youth Sports scheduled events, the current levels of parking are *extremely* inadequate. With the planned expansion of park facilities, there will be even more need for increased and improved parking.

OBJECTIVE 1: Pave existing gravel parking areas to improve parking and ADA accessibility at Birch Run Township Park

OBJECTIVE 2: Add parking areas to meet the growing programming needs and in order to improve safety for all park users, but especially children

OBJECTIVE 3: Make parking facilities at any new park and recreational development a priority

GOAL V: Improve and develop additional public restroom facilities to meet the existing need, and to plan for such needs with all future growth

One of the common complaints heard during the 2012 input opportunities was related to restrooms. There is already a deficiency of restroom capacity for the current levels of use, expanding recreation opportunities in the park will increase the need for additional facilities. The deficiency is currently met with portable units. With any future development plans, adequate restroom facilities will also be a priority.

OBJECTIVE 1: Add restroom facilities in each of the usage areas to improve accessibility for various users

OBJECTIVE 2: As additional facilities are added to the park, include additional restroom facilities in the development to meet the projected need produced by additional facilities

OBJECTIVE 3: As additional park and recreation properties are developed, adequate public facilities will be a priority in development

GOAL VI: To create a broader awareness of the Township's recreational opportunities and to disseminate the available opportunities to all user groups

One of the obvious results of the 2012 survey was the lack of awareness of the existing recreation facilities and the park within the Township. There were many responses that indicated they were completely unaware of the available public recreation opportunities. Due to limited finances for marketing, it is important to create partnerships/collaborations with other public and private entities. Birch Run has opportunities to collaborate with adjacent communities and with private groups like the Chamber to promote opportunities within the community. Events such as the 4th of July parade, the only 4th of July parade in Saginaw County, among other things provide unique opportunities to promote Birch Run Township's Parks and Recreation opportunities and facilities.

OBJECTIVE 1: Actively work to promote Birch Run Township's parks, programs and recreation amenities

OBJECTIVE 2: Develop partnerships with local units of government, other recreation providers and other private entities within the community to promote Birch Run

GOAL VII: Acquisition and additional park land to meet the recreational needs of all ages and user groups in the community

Two items were listed in the 2000 – 2005 and the 2014 plan that continue to be a priority as opportunity arises. The two items in this category are the acquisition of additional park land and acquisition of historical and/or cultural buildings for the park.

OBJECTIVE 1: Additional park land was one of the deficiencies identified in the Standards Comparison part of the planning process. In addition, current use levels clearly demonstrate the existing facility does not meet the needs of the community. Additional park land should be considered as desirable land becomes available. Desirable land for a park should contain a number of features that could include:

- Adjacent to the existing park
- Adjacent to existing township property
- Adjacent to a neighborhood or larger population area that could be a mini-park
- Land with wooded areas
- Natural features / areas with high conservation value, especially that would allow for development of a Natural Area for education purposes
- Adjacent to potential trail sites, ie: that would allow or provide for connection to an existing trail system like the trail system in Clio
- Adjacent to, or wholly within, commercial areas that would provide benefits to the community

OBJECTIVE 2: Acquisition of historical and/or cultural buildings relates to the existing one room Schoolhouse that is located in the Township Park. A long-term goal of the Parks Advisory Committee is to create a small area within the park that promotes what is termed “edutainment,” a combination of education, entertainment and, in this instance, recreation. Basically, the goal is a mini-historic village in the park. These buildings could then be used for special events and programs. The Birch Run Historical Society would be primary collaborators in this project

GOAL VIII: To improve existing facilities at the Township Park

Another common complaint is the state of some of the existing facilities. The tennis courts and the basketball courts are currently in a state of disrepair, making it difficult for them to be enjoyed. Also, when it rains a lot, the soccer fields and baseball fields can become unusable due to being too soaked/flooded.

OBJECTIVE 1: To resurface the tennis courts to provide a safer environment to play on

OBJECTIVE 2: To resurface the basketball courts to provide a safer environment to play on

OBJECTIVE 3: To install drainage to alleviate water from pooling in low lying areas of park like soccer fields and baseball fields

SECTION 7: ACTION AND FINANCIAL PLAN

With the community's Goals and Objective identified, the Birch Run Township Board defined an Action Plan to move towards accomplishing the identified goals. The Action Plan details the park and recreation priorities of Birch Run Township over the next five years.

Potential projects are shown below. The potential capital improvements that are described have been established to provide a framework for decision makers in the Township, and to enable the community to apply for grant funding for the proposed projects.

The list below includes many projects, but it is a guideline only, it is not exhaustive. Projects and priorities might change as opportunities present themselves. Future circumstances, especially the availability of funding will influence which projects are addressed.

TOWNSHIP OF BIRCH RUN COMMUNITY PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN ACTION AND FINANCIAL PLAN 2022 - 2027

- Construct more pavilion / picnic areas
- Pave driveway and parking areas
- Expand parking areas
- Develop additional restrooms (not just porta-johns)
- Connect park pathway with all activity areas
- Connect park to other areas of the community via pathways
- Follow the developed park path maintenance schedule
- Add park lands
- Add historical buildings / facilities
- Expand playground / add playground areas and equipment

- Landscape improvements at Township Park
- Resurface tennis courts due to potential safety hazards
- Resurface basketball courts due to potential safety hazards
- Install drainage to alleviate water from pooling in low lying areas of park (i.e.: soccer fields, baseball fields and open grassy areas)

Development will occur as funds and opportunities develop. Assistance and collaboration will be solicited from all available sources and will include both physical and financial support. Local businesses, industry, service organizations and governmental agencies, and the school district will be solicited for monetary and material support. Associations such as scouts, church groups, school groups, and service organizations can provide hands on volunteer assistance, assistance with fund raising, and any other help identified. The goal in development of future facilities will be to encourage community involvement and collaboration.

Birch Run, as much of Michigan, has experienced a recession during the past decade or more. As a result, local monies for such projects are limited. In addition to local monies, grant opportunities will be explored for potential funding sources. Some grant sources that are being considered include:

- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Michigan Department of Transportation – Transportation Enhancement Funds
- Safe Routes to School
- Trust for Public Land
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
- Community Forestry Grant Program
- Community Foundations, Private Foundations, and Endowment Funds
- Coastal Program – Great Lakes – US Fish and Wildlife Service
- United States Tennis Association

**Resolution of Adoption
2022 Recreation Plan**

Resolution of the Birch Run Board of Trustees

WHEREAS, Birch Run Township did prepare an updated Park and Recreation Master Plan and held a public review session from November 24th until December 27th, 2021,

and,

WHEREAS, the Birch Run Township Board did hold a public hearing on said Park and Recreation Master Plan on February 08, 2022,

and,

WHEREAS, Birch Run Township accomplished some of the recreation goals and the need for additional recreation goals arose,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Birch Run Township Board of Trustees does hereby declare that it has reviewed and approved this Park and Recreation Master Plan as herein further described and prepared by Birch Run Township.

Date: _____

Clerk: _____

Birch Run Township Board
Notice of Public Review
Park and Recreation Master Plan 2022 Review Period

The Birch Run Township Board will hold a review period from Wednesday, November 24, 2021 until Monday, December 27th, to review and receive comments on the proposed Birch Run Township Park and Recreation Master Plan 2022.

The proposed master plan deals with plans for the future for the Birch Run Township Park 2022 - 2027.

A copy of the proposed master plan can be reviewed at the Township Office located at 8425 Main Street, Birch Run, MI 48415; at the Birch Run Township Library, 11935 Silver Creek Drive; or on the Birch Run Township website at www.birchruntwp.com. All written communications can be mailed and must be received prior to December 27th at 5:00 pm.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact the Birch Run Township Office at (989) 624-9773, Monday thru Friday, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm and 12:30 pm to 5:00 pm.

Corey Trinklein, Clerk
Birch Run Township

Birch Run Township Board
Notice of Public Hearing
Park and Recreation Master Plan 2022 Adoption

The Birch Run Township Board will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, February 08, 2022 at 7:00 pm in the Government Room located at 11935 Silver Creek Drive, Birch Run, MI 48415, to review and receive comments on the proposed Birch Run Township Park and Recreation Master Plan 2022.

The proposed master plan deals with plans for the future for the Birch Run Township Park 2022 - 2027.

A copy of the proposed master plan can be reviewed at the Township Office located at 8425 Main Street, Birch Run, MI 48415. All written communications can be mailed and must be received prior to the date of the hearing or presented at the time of the hearing. Verbal communication can be presented at the time of the Public Hearing.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact the Birch Run Township Office at (989) 624-9773, Monday thru Friday, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm and 12:30 pm to 5:00 pm.

Corey Trinklein, Clerk
Birch Run Township



Recreation Grant History

Applicant

Birch Run Township

Project No. 26-00743

Project Year: 1976

Project Title: Birch Run Community Park (Buster Brown Park)

Project Status: Converted Site

Grant Amount: \$47,500.00

Element

parking

fencing of softball field

shuffleboard court system

color coat tennis courts

playground equipment

lighting of softball field & tennis
courts

Element

restroom with utilities

landscaping

2 sets of bleachers

extension of electricity to restrooms

concession stand

basketball court

Project Description: CONVERTED SITE-Parking, fencing for softball field, color coat of tennis courts, playground equipment, lighting of softball field, tennis courts, landscaping, LWCF sign, basketball courts, 2 sets of bleachers, electricity to restrooms, concession stand.

Project No. 26-01582

Project Year: 2001

Project Title: Township Park Trail System

Project Status: Closed

Grant Amount: \$66,500.00

Element

Asphalt pathway (9300' long, 8'
wide)

Park benches

Grading, seeding, cleanup

Signage and road striping

Project Description: Construct an 8 foot wide path throughout the Township Park, providing barrier-free accessibility to all activity areas and creating a fully accessible recreational path.