

**CITY OF NORTON SHORES**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN**

**Prepared by:**  
**The City of Norton Shores Finance Department**

**For:**  
**The City of Norton Shores City Council**  
**and Planning Commission**

**February 2011**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One – Community Description.....	3
Introduction.....	3
Location .....	3
Land Use .....	3
Natural Resources .....	4
Population Characteristics .....	5
Summary .....	6
Chapter Two – Administrative Structure.....	6
Historical Budgets and Expenditures.....	6
Parks and Recreation Division Funding.....	8
Recreation Programs .....	9
School Facilities Used for Recreation Programs .....	10
City Owned Parks and Related Facilities.....	11
City Recreation Programs .....	12
Chapter Three - Recreation Inventory.....	13
Parks and Recreation Inventory .....	13
Parks and Recreation Area Descriptions.....	14
Accessibility Assessments .....	16
DNR Recreation Grant Inventory .....	16
Chapter Four – Description of the Planning and Input Process.....	16
Introduction.....	16
Summary of Community Input .....	17
Chapter Five – Goals and Objectives.....	18
Chapter Six - Action Program.....	19
Conservation Cluster Ordinance.....	19
Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.....	20
Recreation Projects .....	20
Lake Harbor Park .....	20
Churchill Athletic Association.....	20
Black Lake Park .....	20
Bike Paths .....	21
Hidden Cove Park .....	21
Ross Park.....	21

## **CHAPTER ONE - COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The following narratives provide an annotated description of the physical and cultural characteristics of the City of Norton Shores. The items included were chosen for their specific influence on this particular Parks and Recreation Plan. A more detailed analysis may be found in the City of Norton Shores Master Plan.

### **LOCATION**

The City of Norton Shores, formerly Norton Township, was incorporated in 1968; it is the newest of Muskegon County's seven existing cities. The city is in the Muskegon metropolitan area on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, lying just to the south of the Cities of Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, and Roosevelt Park. This location places Norton Shores in one of the county's major growth areas: the Muskegon/Grand Haven corridor.

The city is approximately 189 miles northwest of Detroit, 180 miles northeast of Chicago, 104 miles northwest of Lansing, and 40 miles northwest of Grand Rapids. Highway connections are made with Grand Rapids, Lansing, and the Detroit metropolitan area via I-96 and with Chicago via US-31, I-196, and I-94. These federal and state routes connect the city with a population of approximately 15 million persons in twelve other Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (U.S. Census Bureau designation) within three hours' driving time.

### **LAND USE**

The general character of land use in Norton Shores is that of a moderate to low-density residential community with expanding commercial and industrial development. The population increase between 1960 and 2000 reflects primarily new residential growth for Norton Shores, at a rate that exceeds any other political unit in the county. The city's residential expansion has been confined to primarily single-family structures although the City did see the construction of three new apartment developments recently years, the first since the late 1970's. In recent years, however, Norton Shores has also absorbed a substantial portion of the new commercial and industrial development within the metropolitan area. Most of the commercial growth has been related to population shifts and increases and improvements to the city's existing transportation network. The major commercial nodes have been maintained around the intersections of Norton Avenue and Henry Street, and Airport and Grand Haven Roads, and a new node is developing at the US-31/Sternberg Road interchange. Other commercial concentrations have developed along Airline Road and Getty Street. Industrial activity is concentrated in the older northwest section of the city south of Sherman Boulevard, in the Airport Business Park near Ellis Road, and in the City's Industrial Park.

Land uses in the public and quasi-public categories consist mainly of school and religious facilities, which are located throughout the more built-up portions of the city. One of the city's largest and most dominant features is the Muskegon County International Airport. This facility occupies about 750 acres immediately south of Mona Lake, accounting for approximately four percent of the city's total land area. The airport represents the second-largest single land use in the city, following only by Hoffmaster State Park.

Undeveloped land exists throughout the Norton Shores community while the largest percentage is found south of Porter and Ellis Roads. Some of these undeveloped land areas present significant opportunities for the preservation, conservation, and enrichment of recreational resources within the city.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The City of Norton Shores covers an area larger than any other incorporated unit in Muskegon County: 15,582.9 acres, or 24.3 square miles. The city has approximately 6.4 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline stretching along its western edge. The shoreline not only provides sand beaches and water sports opportunities, it also contains the unique wooded dunes that create an environment that is particularly interesting and varied.

Also within the city are two inland lakes that are used extensively for boating and fishing. Mona Lake has an area of 647.9 acres and is a "drowned river" whose narrow, twisting form and many inlets offer good opportunities for boating and fishing. The shore of Mona Lake is almost completely consumed by residential development. Black Lake lies at the southern edge of the city, bounded on three sides by primarily vacant or undeveloped lands, a significant portion of which are owned by the City of Norton Shores.

Norton Shores is well-drained, with small tributaries and drainage courses leading to Lake Michigan and to Mona and Black Lakes. The largest of these tributaries is Black Creek, which flows into Mona Lake. These drainage ways flow westward toward Lake Michigan, and many represent potential greenbelts through the tree cover that develops along their courses. Norton Shores also has many large wooded areas, but most of its natural features, as noted above, are closely related to water areas and drainage courses. Such features tend to occur in linear patterns, and thus may be termed "environmental corridors." The linear pattern becomes evident in an examination of the natural resource base map. Norton Shores' large network of environmental corridors illustrates the many prime recreational resources within its corporate limits, occupying a disproportionately large share within the county.

Due to a high water table, drainage is a challenge facing the community, and care must be taken to maintain an effective drainage system. This means keeping natural streams and water courses open, in addition to avoiding development in the city's floodplain areas. Although historically one solution to drainage problems is to channel the natural surface drainage into an enclosed storm sewer system, this practice is not advocated for Norton Shores. If an extensive enclosed storm sewer system is constructed, the opportunity for recreation and open space development along the drainage ways will

be lost. It is also unlikely that the drainage problem would be solved by such an approach. In terms of both cost effectiveness and sound environmental practice, it probably would be better to acquire drainage areas and make the few necessary physical improvements than to embark on a major drainage construction program. In long term, the acquisition program will provide far greater benefits for the community than an artificial storm sewer system.

Existing recreational land uses occupy approximately 1,746 acres, or 11% of the city's total land area. These facilities may be classified into two general categories: 1) public areas and facilities and 2) quasi-public and private facilities.

The major public facilities include Hoffmaster State Park, seven city parks and eleven school facilities. The principal quasi-public and private areas include the Elks Park, Maranatha Conference Camp, Elks Lodge/Golf Course, riding stables, marinas, and private clubs. The major city-owned public parks are located on the east (Hidden Cove Park) and south (Ross Park and Black Lake Park) sides of Mona Lake and a boat club exists in the eastern portion as well. The third public park is the recently expanded Lake Harbor Park, which is on the west end of Mona Lake and runs next to the Mona Lake Channel, with the park's western border lying on Lake Michigan.

Ownership of open space, recreation land in Norton Shores may be summarized as follows:

State-owned areas	797.91 acres
City-owned areas	334.47 acres
School district-owned areas	170.41 acres

For the most part, existing recreational land uses are spread out throughout the community. Potentially, some concentration should result from linkages with the lakes and watercourses, wooded areas, interesting topography, and the dune environment. These natural features have combined to attract recreational activities by virtue of their geographic location or their on-site recreation resources. Thus, many existing recreational facilities are concentrated along the Lake Michigan shoreline and adjoining dunes, but are unconnected and unrelated to one another. Other recreational facilities are less dependent upon natural conditions than on the man-made environment; school facilities are a prime example. The pattern of school recreational facilities reflects the pattern of residential development over time and the schools' locational link to that development.

## **POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS**

The City of Norton Shores has 22,527 residents as of the 2000 Census. Thus, it is the county's second most populous political unit. The City's own development policies have had a substantial influence on both the amount and the quality of population and overall growth. Norton Shores has adopted a policy to guide growth carefully via its Master Land Use Plan establishing staged development areas and priorities. Population growth has been orderly, and the city has been able to encourage the quality of development and a stronger financial base while providing the necessary public services and facilities with increased efficiency and reduced tax input.

## **SUMMARY**

The City of Norton Shores is, in general, a growing middle-class and well-educated community. The influence of these factors on the demand for recreational opportunities is also clear. Open-space can be expected to be increasingly valued by a community that will experience population growth and urbanization. Because the population of Norton Shores is increasing, this also influences the demand for recreation and open-space opportunities, tending to make such opportunities highly desirable to the community.

Because of these factors, the City will be called upon to provide a large array of recreational opportunities. The provision of these services must keep pace with population growth while also recognizing the dynamic forces that will tend to change the character of Norton Shores as it develops.

## **CHAPTER TWO - ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

The Mayor serves as the chief executive officer of the City. The City Administrator serves as the administrative officer of the City. There are five departments within the City that report directly to the City Administrator: Administrative Services, Finance, Fire, Police and Public Works.

The City of Norton Shores Planning Commission acts as the planning body for the Parks and Recreation Division under the 1913 PA90 Act. The Finance Department oversees the budgeting and operation of the Parks & Recreation Division. The Finance Director is also the Parks & Recreation Superintendent. The Parks & Recreation Superintendent has a full-time account clerk who facilitates the division's operations.

## **HISTORICAL BUDGETS AND EXPENDITURES**

The City of Norton Shores has a strong commitment to the maintenance and improvement of its recreational facilities. This commitment has been exhibited over the years through consistent budgeting and planned improvements and programming. The following table illustrates the annual budgets and expenditures over the past five years.

## HISTORICAL PARKS AND RECREATION BUDGET

SPRING/SUMMER RECREATION	<u>*YEAR</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>EXPENDITURES</u>
	2006	\$ 75,450	\$ 60,811
	2007	68,455	55,557
	2008	52,475	46,088
	2009	55,343	51,039
	2010	52,195	53,325
	2011	28,617	

FALL/WINTER RECREATION	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>EXPENDITURES</u>
	2006	\$ 45,923	\$ 43,066
	2007	46,572	45,130
	2008	47,305	41,755
	2009	48,169	46,777
	2010	48,468	46,846
	2011	25,608	

RECREATION PROGRAMS	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>EXPENDITURES</u>
	2006	\$ 126,818	\$ 110,056
	2007	115,550	100,826
	2008	108,622	97,645
	2009	108,945	95,064
	2010	100,947	92,840
	2011	90,600	

PARK DEV. & MAINT.	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>EXPENDITURES</u>
	2006	\$ 232,248	\$ 204,300
	2007	231,663	212,069
	2008	239,012	227,150
	2009	234,817	226,862
	2010	229,280	214,415
	2011	161,681	

ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>EXPENDITURES</u>
	2006	\$ 37,392	\$ 32,455
	2007	34,836	29,611
	2008	33,227	27,784
	2009	33,402	28,021
	2010	31,172	28,204
	2011	24,273	

**TOTAL CULTURAL AND RECREATION BUDGET**

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>EXPENDITURES</u>
2006	\$ 517,831	\$ 450,688
2007	497,076	443,193
2008	480,641	440,422
2009	480,676	447,763
2010	462,062	435,630
2011	330,779	

\*Fiscal year runs July 1 to June 30

Source: City of Norton Shores “Program Budgets” FY-2006-2011

**PARKS AND RECREATION DIVISION FUNDING**

Funding for park development and maintenance is provided by General Fund millage through the Finance Department. This funding comes under the cultural and recreation category and the program is Park Development and Maintenance. Capital improvement funding for the action plan is provided by Capital Improvement Fund millage and grant monies.

This category provides for the maintenance of Avondale Park, Chapman-Veurink Park, Hidden Cove Park, Lake Harbor Park, Hess Street Park, Ross Park, Black Lake Park, and the former Churchill Athletic Association property (Porter Road). This funding also maintains other city-owned grassed land parcels including the lawn and shrub areas at the Municipal Building, forty-six (46) sewer lift stations, 3.5 miles of Seaway Drive median, three (3) parcels in Roodmont, Industrial Center median, Norton Shores Branch Library, Manitou Boulevard, the Public Works garage and some Seaway Drive shoulder areas.

Listed below are statistics about the facilities that are funded under the Park Development and Maintenance category:

2010

Acres of park area maintained	342
Number of parks maintained	8
Number of other land parcels maintained	53
Picnic permits issued at Ross Park (groups of 50+)	48
Ball field permits issued at Ross Park	8
Daily/weekend park attendance – Ross Park	100/300
Number of picnic tables	
A. Ross Park	415
B. Lake Harbor Park	25
C. Avondale Park	15
D. Hidden Cove Park	12
E. Chapman-Veurink Park	2
F. Hess Street Park	2

No hard statistics are available on the usage of city parks other than Ross Park. Ross Park is used for city-run slowpitch softball leagues, the annual Arts & Crafts Fair, as well as many family reunions, shop picnics, etc. The addition of electricity to the open-air picnic shelter has helped keep the park a popular location for community picnics. Other examples of city park usage include Hidden Cove Park which is used throughout the year for local veterans' activities due to the presence of the Vietnam Memorial adjacent to the park. The Churchill Athletic Association is used from spring through fall for recreational soccer and girls' softball leagues. Lake Harbor Park is used extensively all year round, but especially from spring through fall for picnics, beach activities, and hiking on the many miles of trails within the park. Other city parks also see significant use as neighborhood parks.

The Norton Shores Parks & Recreation Division and the Mona Shores Public Schools cooperate jointly in a number of recreational programs. This exchange of facility use has worked well for many years. The City does not reimburse the school for the use of any facilities. The City has provided the use of the Norton Shores Branch Library's Community Room for the school's Senior Citizen Program and the Library Meeting Rooms are available to school groups free of charge.

### **RECREATION PROGRAMS**

1. Instructional Tennis – We offer instructional tennis for students in 1<sup>st</sup> grade – 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We offer both Beginner and Intermediate level classes for 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> graders and 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> graders.
2. Men's Summer and Fall Slowpitch Leagues – City slowpitch leagues are held at the three fields at Ross Park. Both Summer and Fall leagues have shown strong demand over the last few years, with the number of teams near or at capacity each of the past three years.
3. Hockey – Students from KDG-12<sup>th</sup> grade participate in this self-supporting program. All of the games are played at L.C. Walker Arena in Muskegon. Numbers have slowly declined the past years because of the growing number of travel hockey teams.
4. Little Cheers/Pom-Pons - This self-supporting program is for students from D.K. - 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This is a Saturday morning program held in the Community Room at the Norton Shores Library. The Fall 2010 classes were the largest in the past several years.
5. Arts & Crafts Fair – This annual event (35 years in 2011) is held at Ross Park. We've averaged 185 craft vendor sites over the last four years, and crowds in excess of 12,000. This remains the City's biggest single event.

## **SCHOOL FACILITIES USED FOR RECREATION PROGRAMS**

### **Mona Shores Public Schools**

Mona Shores Middle School                      Tennis courts for instructional tennis

Ross Park Elementary                              Tennis courts for instructional tennis

### **Norton Shores Branch of the Muskegon County Library**

1. Senior Citizen's meeting site
2. Organizational meetings held for adult recreation programs.
3. Saturday morning program site in the Fall and Spring for Little Cheers and Pom-Pons.
4. Large recreation staff meetings

**MAP 1  
CITY-OWNED PARKS AND RELATED FACILITIES**

**Recreational Sites In Norton Shores**

**Parks**

1. Hess Park
2. Ross Park
3. Lake Harbor Park
4. Avondale Park
5. Black Lake Park
6. Chapman-Veurink Park
7. Hidden Cove Park
8. C.A.A. Property

**Tennis Sites**

9. Mona Shores Middle School
10. Ross Park Elementary

## CITY RECREATION PROGRAMS

In addition to the previously discussed Park Development and Maintenance Program, the cultural and recreation portion of the City budget encompasses two other categories of recreation accounts: Recreation Programs and the Arts & Crafts Fair.

### 1. Recreation Program Accounts

This category includes those recreation programs which are offered on a “pay their own way” basis. If the response is not sufficient to pay all the costs for a particular program, that program is canceled. This kind of programming enables the Parks & Recreation Division to offer programs and special events which might not otherwise be offered, especially during periods of time when general fund dollars are at a premium and new activities and programs are kept to a minimum.

Program Objectives: To provide a variety of recreation programs and services for all age groups which are not offered in regular programming.

#### Programs

	<u>2010</u>
A. Hockey	154
B. Little Cheers	87
C. Pom-Pons	54
E. Slowpitch – Fall	
Teams	48
Individuals	576
F. Slowpitch – Summer	
Teams	56
Individuals	672

### 2. Arts & Crafts Fair Accounts

Held each year on the third Saturday in August, the Arts & Crafts Fair promotes arts and crafts within the community and provides exhibitors the opportunity to display their crafts, as well as providing visitors the chance to enjoy an excellent fair. The Arts & Crafts Fair is a self-funding program with exhibitors paying a nominal fee for display space. These fees, along with food concessionaire fees, offset the cost of presenting the fair.

Program Objectives: To provide for the Arts & Crafts Fair, an annual event hosted by the Parks & Recreation Division, attracting visitors and promoting tourism for the City. Exhibitors and visitors are attracted from the local area as well as throughout Michigan and surrounding states.

Program Use and Attendance

	<u>2010</u>
Crafts Fair Exhibitors	150
Crafts Fair Food Vendors	5
Crafts Fair Attendance	12,050

## **CHAPTER THREE - RECREATION INVENTORY**

### **PARKS AND RECREATION INVENTORY**

The recreation inventory was conducted during on-site inspection of all parks and recreational facilities. The City of Norton Shores has eight (8) developed sites used for parks and recreational purposes. These sites are Avondale Park, Black Lake Park, Chapman-Veurink Park, Churchill Athletic Association Property, Hess Park, Hidden Cove Park, Lake Harbor Park, and Ross Park.

In addition to these City-owned parks, facilities of the Mona Shores Public Schools and the Muskegon Public Schools are utilized by City residents for a variety of programs.

1. Avondale Park – Neighborhood Park
  - A. 2 Acres
  - B. Neighborhood Service Area
  
2. Black Lake Park – Community Park
  - A. 45.55 Acres
  - B. Community Service Area
  
3. Chapman-Veurink Park – Neighborhood Park
  - A. 2 Acres
  - B. Neighborhood Service Area
  
4. Churchill Athletic Association Property – Sports Complex
  - A. 40 Acres
  - B. Community Service Area
  
5. Hess Park – Neighborhood Park
  - A. 1 Acre
  - B. Neighborhood Service Area
  
6. Hidden Cove Park – Neighborhood Park
  - A. 20 Acres
  - B. Neighborhood Service Area

7. Lake Harbor Park – Community Park
  - A. 189 Acres
  - B. Community Service Area
  
8. Ross Park – Community Park
  - A. 43 Acres
  - B. Community Service Area

**PARKS AND RECREATION AREA DESCRIPTIONS**

Each City-owned park is listed with a brief description of the park and the number of recreation and support facilities.

1. Avondale Park – Neighborhood Park with Many Recreational Features
  1. Basketball Court
  2. Grills
  3. Horseshoe Pits
  4. Picnic Tables
  5. Playground Equipment
  6. Volleyball Area
  
2. Black Lake Park – Community Park
  1. Nature Trails
  
3. Chapman-Veurink Park – Small Neighborhood Park
  1. Grills
  2. Picnic Tables
  3. Play Equipment – Limited Play Area
  
4. Churchill Athletic Association Property – Sport Complex Deeded to City for Community-Wide Usage
  1. Grills
  2. Picnic Tables
  3. Play Equipment
  4. Girls’ Slowpitch Field
  5. 3 – Soccer fields
  
5. Hess Park – Newly Developed – The City’s Smallest Neighborhood Park
  1. Grills
  2. Picnic Tables
  3. Play Equipment

6. Hidden Cove Park – Large Neighborhood Park Ideal Fishing Area and Large Open Play Area
  1. 2 – Fishing Piers
  2. Grills
  3. Picnic Tables
  4. Play Equipment
  5. Restrooms
  6. Picnic Shelter
  7. Vietnam Memorial
  
7. Lake Harbor Park – 189 Acres – The City’s Largest Park with 4,000 Feet of Lake Michigan Frontage and Many Trails Through Wooded Dune Areas
  1. Boating Area
  2. Fishing Areas
  3. Grills
  4. Lookout Deck Over Mona Lake Channel
  5. Picnic Shelter
  6. Picnic Tables
  7. 2 – Restrooms
  8. Swimming Area
  9. Wooded Dune Walkway Overlooking Lake Michigan
  10. Stairs and walkway from beach to top of dunes near Whitey’s Woods
  
8. Ross Park – Available for Large Picnics, Softball Leagues, Swimming and Boating Areas on Mona Lake and Site of the Annual Arts & Crafts Fair
  1. Boating Area
  2. Frisbee Golf Course
  3. Grills
  4. 3- Horseshoe Pits
  5. Pavilion with Changing and Restrooms
  6. Picnic Shelter
  7. Picnic Tables
  8. Play Equipment on Beach
  9. Play Equipment-Tot Lot
  10. 2-Shuffle Board Courts
  11. 3-Softball Fields
  12. Swimming Area
  13. 2-Volleyball Areas

## **ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENTS**

Avondale Park – 3 – Most areas of the park

Black Lake Park – 2 – Some areas of the park

Chapman-Veurink Park – 2 – Some areas of the park

Churchill Athletic Association Property – 3 – Most areas of the park

Hess Park – 2 – Some areas of the park

Hidden Cove Park – 3 – Most areas of the park

Lake Harbor Park – 2 – Some areas of the park

Ross Park – 3 – Most areas of the park

## **DNR RECREATION GRANT INVENTORY**

<u>Grant Number</u>	<u>Appl. Year</u>	<u>Project Title</u>	<u>Status</u>
26-00180	1972	Norton Shores Park	Withdrawn
26-00512	1973	Mona Lake Park	Ballfields, pavilion, walking paths
26-00983	1977	Swett Property Aq.	Natural areas, swimming, picnicking
26-01330	1984	Lake Harbor Park	Natural areas, trails
26-01427	1985	Lake Harbor Park	Natural areas, trails
TF1020	1985	Lake Harbor Park Ex.	Natural areas, trails
TF98-114	1998	Lake Harbor Park Ex.	Natural areas, trails

## **CHAPTER FOUR – DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AND PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The formulation of goals and objectives is a critical part of any planning process. It is through the identification of the recreation deficiencies and needs in a community that such goals and objectives are developed, thereby clarifying and organizing the tasks to be accomplished. The goals and objectives for this parks and recreation plan have been formulated by using a variety of inputs; previous studies including community surveys, data from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Recreation Division, park master plans, facility inventories, citizen comments and input from staff professionals.

Goals are broad, long-range statements reflecting a general attitude or the policy intent of city officials. Objectives are specific courses of action that should be taken to accomplish the goals. Objectives are short-term, implementable and measurable. Based on these concepts, the previously discussed recreational needs, deficiencies and city characteristics, the following goals have been developed as a policy framework for the Norton Shores Parks and Recreation Plan. These goals will serve as a guide for the City Council and the Parks and Recreation staff. The objectives are presented in chapter six as part of the action plan.

## **SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT**

Several past surveys have solicited the opinions of Norton Shores residents concerning their attitudes regarding the City's future development. In all cases, the findings assign an extremely high priority to natural resource preservation and expansion of recreational facilities.

As a part of the City of Norton Shores Master Plan update in 2001, a community-wide effort to establish a broadly-held consensus about the preferred future of the community was undertaken. A study team comprised of nearly seventy community members participated in a 2-year process to aid the Planning Commission and City Council in the completion of the Plan and to serve as a "sounding board" for the Plan's goals. In addition, a community futuring session was held to identify and rank the various land use opportunities, with parks, recreation and open space being among them.

The quality of life for Norton Shores' residents will be enhanced through a combination of public and private recreation facilities and activities that serve the social and recreational needs of all. A community center with places for social activities, recreational facilities (e.g., pool) and programming to meet the needs of all, a system of bike and pedestrian paths, public access points to the area's natural features and a community-wide network of parks and open spaces were determined to be the key elements of the City's recreational framework.

In 2008 the City embarked on a 5-year update of the Master Plan. Part of that update included the completion of a Smart Growth Readiness Assessment Tool (SGRAT). This process helped the City identify areas where it can encourage and/or require land use elements to parallel the general growth management objectives of "smart growth". Elements reviewed included the creation of walkable communities, and the preservation of open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas.

Additionally, the City provided a 30-day review and comment period of the draft Open Space and Recreation Plan which was publicized in the local newspaper. Following this hearing, appropriate changes were made to the draft prior to presentation to the Planning Commission at a formal public hearing, and subsequently to the City Council for approval.

## CHAPTER FIVE – GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In 2002, the City of Norton Shores undertook an intensive analysis and review of the City's Goals and Objectives set forth in 1993. With the assistance of the firm Williams & Works, the City adopted a new ten-year Goals and Objectives statement that was published and communicated to the community. The goals & objectives reflected citizen concerns and comments during the City's two-year update of the Comprehensive Plan and input from the City Council and staff received from its citizens. The compilation along with the Comprehensive Plan, has guided the City in its planning and development efforts and served as the backbone of the current update to the Recreation Plan. There were two goals in particular which dealt with parks and recreation. Goal #3 states, "The City of Norton Shores will establish policies and programs to preserve, protect and enhance the City's natural amenities." This was to be accomplished through the following objectives:

1. Provide public access to Black Lake.
2. Develop a tree replacement program and plan and adopt a tree protection ordinance.
3. Participate in efforts to keep the Mona Lake Channel open.
4. Define access routes, build paths and supporting structures to protect critical dune from overuse.
5. Participate in the Mona Lake Watershed Study and evaluate its recommendations for possible action.
6. Require developers to use conservation design and natural buffers where appropriate.
7. Adopt enhanced landscape standards for site plan approval.
8. Acquire additional property with important natural features for public use, when available.

In addition, Goal #4 states, "The park and recreation facilities and programming of the community will be expanded and improved through regional coordination, new funding, and upgrading amenities." This goal was to be carried out through the following objectives.

1. Keep Parks & Recreation Plan current.
2. Develop park linkages by using drainage corridors and acquiring access right from property owners to connect park systems.
3. Maximize grant opportunities to enhance accessibility to park areas and public safety in parks.
4. Develop a donation program or gift catalogue for park amenities.
5. Increase cooperation with school systems in the areas of recreation planning, programming and facilities.

In addition, the following goals adopted by the City of Norton Shores for the previously approved Open Space and Recreation Plan are still being pursued by the community:

1. To pursue a program of resource management, viewing the City's natural resource base as a part of the total environmental system in which every decision affecting part of the system has ramifications in other areas.

2. To develop open space and recreational facilities as an integral part of all community service systems (i.e., to consider such facilities in coordination with area schools, utilities, transportation, and other service systems).
3. To provide facilities for a wide range of recreational opportunities responsive to the needs of Norton Shores' citizens of every age and income level.
4. To preserve the unique Lake Michigan, Mona Lake and Black Lake shore lands for recreational uses and open space.
5. To promote carefully guided residential development while encouraging recreational opportunities through the creation of common open space and neighborhood parks within these developments.
6. To encourage appropriate efforts by private enterprise to develop recreational facilities which complement those in public ownership.
7. To cooperate with other governmental jurisdictions in joint acquisition and development of facilities.

## **CHAPTER SIX – ACTION PROGRAM**

The City of Norton Shores will work to accomplish the Goals and Objectives of the Recreation Plan through continued use of the Conservation Cluster Ordinance to preserve usable open space to prepare a Greenways plan to help link parks and open space, and to undertake specific recreation projects. In addition, encourage the importance of small neighborhood parks into new subdivisions.

### **CONSERVATION CLUSTER ORDINANCE**

As a result of the Master Plan process, the City adopted a Conservation Cluster Ordinance to require a minimum of 40% open space in the area of the City that was relatively vacant and contained usable open space. The intent was to preserve open space and corridors for residents' use and to help preserve the environmental amenities. The ordinance has proved useful in preserving open space and woodlands, but the City determined that the conservation cluster ordinance needed to be complemented with a Greenway plan to help identify open space area and to link developments and parks.

## **BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN**

In 2010, the City adopted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan as recommended in the recent Master Plan Update. The goal of the Plan is to create more walk-able neighborhoods both in existing developments and in future proposals. The Plan includes specific recommended locations for the placement of sidewalk and bicycle paths throughout the community, as well as guidelines for placement within new residential, office, and commercial developments. In adopting the plan, it was noted that the plan 1) promotes the health and safety of the City's residents, 2) provides enhanced access to parks and other facilities, and 3) adds another viable, cost-effective mode of transportation in the City.

## **RECREATION PROJECTS**

The City plans to accomplish the following specific projects within the next five years. The projects have been delineated by park.

### **Lake Harbor Park**

1. Develop a signed trail system to direct hikers and to educate users as to low impact hiking. Efforts will be made to remove trees from established trails so hikers will not "detour" into fragile areas. Walkways and/or platforms will be built in sensitive areas where feasible.
2. Six new pedestrian scale light fixtures will be installed along the above walkway. The City intends to solicit private donations for the fixtures and will implement the project when the program is fully funded.
3. Additional repair to the concrete wall along the road in Lake Harbor Park will be undertaken.
4. Develop a system of groomed cross-country ski trails throughout the park, along with signage at the main park area.

### **Churchill Athletic Association**

1. Work will continue on the development of soccer fields and facilities at the site in the accordance with the park master plan.
2. Sternberg Road will be extended to the park to provide better access and parking.

### **Black Lake**

1. Analyze and pursue opportunities to expand the park to preserve open space, wetlands and recreation opportunities.
2. Begin to implement elements of the Master Plan, in particular parking area and trail systems.

3. Analyze the feasibility of a launch facility for small, non-motorized watercraft.
4. Install raised walkways for access through marsh areas and to allow observation and/or fishing areas.

### **Bike Paths**

1. Pursue funding for a bike path on Wood Road to Black Lake Park entrance – West side.
2. Pursue funding for a bike path on Black Lake Road from Pontaluna Road to City boundary – both sides of road.
3. Pursue funding for a linear park along Lake Harbor Road from Pontaluna Road to the Lake Harbor bridge, as part of connecting the Spring Lake Township and the City of Muskegon linear park systems.

### **Hidden Cove Park**

1. Create a walkway between the Vietnam Memorial Park area and the main park.
2. Pave the driveway system.

### **Ross Park**

1. Install kayak/canoe launch area.
2. Install lights at three softball fields.
3. Resurface pathways throughout the park.
4. Analyze and consider plans to develop a dog park for community use.
5. Develop a system of groomed cross-country ski trails throughout the park, along with signage.
6. Construct a trail to a Mona Lake overlook with wood deck and picnic tables (on former obstacle course trail.)

In support of the above site-specific projects, the City will undertake a continued maintenance program of existing resources due to State funding cuts and reduced grant opportunities; the City must preserve the assets it already has in place. As opportunities are presented, the City will take advantage of opportunities in time and place to enhance the recreational resources in Norton Shores.