

City of Plainwell
Five-Year Parks and Recreation Plan
Executive Summary
2007



Prepared By

Emilie Schada
Economic Development Manager
The City of Plainwell

October 2007

Introduction

This report contains information about how people living in and around Plainwell feel about the city parks and recreation facilities. The purpose of the survey was intended to gauge public opinion to help define the city's role in fulfilling the recreational needs of city residents, identify areas for improvement in the city's current park system, as well as to prioritize the long-range use of the city's resources for recreational purposes.

The survey was available to all residents and business community members of Plainwell through various methods: the website, direct emails to subscribers to Plainwell's newsletter (400 on mailing list), door-to-door canvassing (over 500 distributed to households near parks, including West Bridge, Hicks, Sherwood, around Kenyon Park, and around Thurl Cook Park), and available at City Hall. The survey's availability was also publicized widely through local media sources, including the *Union Enterprise* and the *Allegan County News*.

Survey Methodology

Purpose

This survey was conducted to serve the following purposes: 1) to obtain information about people's recreational preferences; 2) to assess the frequency that people use city parks; 3) to understand more about the facilities and amenities which people would like to see expanded in the parks and 4) to identify where areas of improvement exist within the city's parks and recreation system.

Participation and Distribution

Plainwell consists of seven parks and surveys were distributed door-to-door to households around them. Going beyond this number, the survey was distributed through a web-based software program which accomplished the need to garner a diverse range of perspectives of people who reside throughout the city.

A total of 126 surveys were returned.

The survey was kept as concise as possible and included 26 questions, five of which were open-ended affording and encouraging honest and candid responses.

Survey Demographics

Method by which survey was obtained	Frequency	Percent
Hand Delivered Door-to-Door	15 Returned	12
Emailed or Obtained on Web-Based Survey	111 Returned	88
Total	126	100.0

Survey Results

Survey Question One: Confidential (street addresses) withheld from this report.

Survey Question Two:

How Frequently do you or Members of your Household Frequent Hicks Park?	Frequency	Percent
At Least Once a Year	44	42
At Least Once a Month	32	31
Never	15	14
Daily	3	3
Total	104	100.0

Frequent Comments:

- When activities occur there, I go
- During Island City Festival
- It is very convenient from home
- Great for kids
- I enjoy the River Walk section there
- Could use some swings

Survey Question Three:

How Frequently do you or Members of your Household Frequent Fannie Pell Park?	Frequency	Percent
At Least Once a Year	40	40
Never	26	26
At Least Once a Month	19	19
Never	11	11
Daily	4	4
Total	100	100.0

Frequent Comments:

- When events occur there, I go
- Good meeting place
- Good picnic area
- I love the Gazebo
- I enjoy the River Walk section there

Survey Question Four:

How Frequently do you or Members of your Household Frequent Sherwood Park?	Frequency	Percent
Never	32	33
At Least Once a Year	29	30
At Least Once a Month	20	20
At Least Once a Week	15	15
Daily	2	2
Total	98	100.0

Frequent Comments:

- Great playground
- Enjoy eating ice cream there
- Great place for kids
- My kids enjoy walking over from library
- Could use restrooms

Survey Question Five:

How Frequently do you or Members of your Household use Thurl Cook Park?	Frequency	Percent
Never	50	50
At Least Once a Year	28	28
At Least Once a Month	12	12
At Least Once a Week	7	7
Total	99	100

Frequent Comments:

- Unaware of where park is...
- Good picnic area
- Tennis court needs improvement

Survey Question Six:

How Frequently do you or Members of your Household use Kenyon Park?	Frequency	Percent
Never	66	67
At Least Once a Year	14	14
At Least Once a Month	10	10
At Least Once a Week	7	7
Daily	1	1
Total	98	100

Frequent Comments:

- Unaware of where park is...
- Football
- Soccer

Survey Question Seven:

How Frequently do you or Members of your Household use Darrow Park?	Frequency	Percent
Never	75	81
At Least Once a Year	11	12
At Least Once a Week	3	3
Daily	2	2
Total	1	3

Frequent Comments:

- Unaware of where park is...
- Nice view of river
- Never heard of it

Survey Question Eight:

How Frequently do you or Members of your Household use the River Walk?	Frequency	Percent
At Least Once a Month	31	29
At Least Once a Year	31	29
At Least Once a Week	23	24
Daily	7	7
Never	7	7
Total	95	100

Frequent Comments:

- No Brainer- the River Walk is beautiful
- I use it several times a week
- I should use it more than I do
- The changes here in the city have made me use it more
- Great for kids- safer than crossing the streets

Survey Question Nine:

How often do you or Members of your Household use Neighborhood or School Recreation Facilities "After School" Hours?	Frequency	Percent
Never	43	46
At Least Once a Month	22	23
At Least Once a Year	15	16
At Least Once a Week	12	13
Daily	2	2
Total	94	100

Frequent Comments:

- Gardens at Gilkey
- Trails
- Track at High School

Survey Question Ten:

The Top Five* Facilities that People would like to see Expanded to City Residents	Frequency	Percent
Non-Motorized Pedestrian Paths	52	16
Music Venues in Park-Like Settings	49	15
Ice Skating Rink (Outdoor)	43	13
Public Art in Park-Like Settings	35	11
Playgrounds	25	8
Skate Park	24	7
Recreational Center	24	7
Total Number of Responses	328	100

* "Skate Park" and "Recreational Center" are included given how they were both one response away from being included in the "top five" facilities that people would like to see expanded

Frequent Comments:

- Ice Rink at Sherwood, Thurl Cook, or Kenyon
- Volleyball at Thurl Cook
- Focus on Hicks Park/Fannie Pell area and Sherwood
- Music fall/spring (middle school or PHS jazz band) art at Hicks, soccer fields at airport

Survey Question Eleven:

We would like to know how you feel about the following statements.	Frequency	Response
Parks are Important to Our Community	1.2	Strongly Agree
There Should be More Activities Taking Place in the Parks	1.9	Agree
I am Satisfied with the Park Facilities in the City	2.2	Agree
More Park and Recreation Space is Needed in My Area of the City	2.2	Agree
There Should be More Neighborhood Parks in the City	3	No Opinion
There Should be More Tot Lots in the City	2.6	Agree to No Opinion

Frequent Comments:

- Holiday decoration should be at Sherwood now that River Walk has been continued

- A dog park would be great
- Ice skating rink and skate park would also be high on my list
- Art in the Park would be a nice addition
- Plainwell has always been such a pretty town and the parks help to make it so along with Theresa keeping the flowers watered. Good job, Theresa!
- Perhaps more children events, art shows, family activities maybe monthly events planned in the park with themes/holiday activities for tot to teen

Survey Question Twelve:

Do you feel there is need for Additional Bike Trails, or the Linking of Existing Bike Trails in the City?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	60	49
No Response	32	26
No	31	25
Totals	123	100

Frequent Comments:

- Use the mill (4)
- Along the river (3)
- Around perimeter of city (5)
- Across 131 and 89 (3)
- At Thurl Cook (3)
- Fix the Trestle (1)
- Trails should link and connect downtown, schools and river

Survey Question Thirteen:

Do you feel there is a need for the Linking of Existing Bike Trails in the City?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	54	45
No	34	28
No Response	33	27
Totals	121	100

Frequent Comments:

- Use the mill
- North Main (11)
- 106th, 102nd, 10th Street, Marsh Road
- Not sure where they exist now

Survey Question Fourteen:

Do you feel that Additional Non-Motorized Public Access, such as Docks and Canoe Ramps, should be Provided to the Kalamazoo River?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	65	50
No Response	35	30
No	25	21
Totals	111	100

Frequent Comments:

- Any recreational use of the river should be encouraged
- It will bring more people to the city, especially with the connection of the Heritage Water Trail and Canoe the Kazoo
- At Sherwood Park as that is where most of the canoes get out anyway
- The docks and canoe ramps right now aren't visible
- We live on the river and have yet to see a single person on it. It's not utilized enough
- We have enough river access

Survey Question Fifteen:

One of the goals of the existing Recreation Plan is to Preserve and Enhance Recreation Opportunities Centering Around the River. Do you Agree with this Goal?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	87	69
No Response	34	27
No	5	4
Totals	126	100

Frequent Comments:

- I think the river adds to the charm of the city. I think more can be done to highlight this feature of the city.
- The river is one of the greatest assets of the city!!!
- Absolutely! That's why we're called the Island City...
- The clean up, promotion of fishing, are all attractions that can bring tourists and greater income to the area, specifically to the heart of downtown

Survey Question Sixteen:

Do you think the River Walk should be Extended?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	77	61
No Response	35	28
No	14	11
Totals	126	100

Frequent Comments:

- At least to the library
- Possibly with a foot bridge connect the east and west side of river
- Extended and enhanced
- To neighboring communities
- It would be nice if possible

Survey Question Seventeen:

An Additional Goal of the Recreation Plan is to Add Trails and Acreage to Thurl Cook Park, Located on the East Side of the City. Do you Agree with this Goal?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	65	71
No Response	12	13
No	13	14
Totals	91	100

Frequent Comments:

- Yes, this is an underused area
- Yes, it's close to four major neighborhoods
- Yes, combine it with the mill
- No opinion, we're too far away
- Not sure which one is Thurl Cook
- Depending on expense
- No- focus on the heart of downtown instead

Survey Question Eighteen:

What Kind of Additional Facilities or Amenities would you like to see at Thurl Cook Park?

- None (14)
- Bathrooms (8)
- Play Equipment for kids, not just tots (8)
- Walking Trails (7)
- Bike Trails (5)

Skate Park (4)
 Ice Rink (4)
 Dog Park (3)
 Volley Ball (3)
 Soccer (3)
 Tennis (3)
 Football (3)
 Another Band Shell (3)
 Art (2)
 More police protection (2)

Survey Question Nineteen:

How Strongly Would you Agree to Support the Following Methods for Funding?	Frequency	Response
Grants	1.5	Strongly Agree
Gifts and Donations	1.7	Agree
General Fund	2.0	Agree
Millage/Bond Issue	2.9	No Opinion
Disagree	3.8	Disagree

Frequent Comments:

- User fees- you have to be kidding
- Keep parks accessible to all people
- Keep taxes down: non-tax payers could pay

Survey Question Twenty:

How Many People in your Household are in the Following Age Groups?	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
0-5 Years	19	9%
6-15 Years	26	12%
16-25 Years	17	8%
26-35 Years	24	11%
36-45 Years	33	15%
46-55 Years	39	18%
56 + Years	39	18%

Survey Question Twenty One:

How Long have you Lived in Plainwell?	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
More than 12 Years	42	42%
10-12 Years	13	17%
4-6 Years	10	11%
7-9 Years	8	11%
1-3 Years	8	11%
Less than 1 Year	8	11%
Totals	76	100%

Survey Question Twenty Two:

In your Opinion, are there Areas in the Park System that Need Improvement?	Frequency	Percent
Yes with Comments	49	
No	21	
No Opinion	9	
Yes	5	

Frequent Comments:

- Bathrooms (5)
- Clean up and general maintenance (6)
- Always room for improvement (3)
- Yes- More trails (3) including a pedestrian walk way across 131
- I'm satisfied (3)
- Publicity and signage (3)
- Safety: child fence along river, safer guard rail on Trestle (3)
- Thurl Cook needs more play things and tennis courts fixed (3)
- Hicks needs more things for small kids (2)
- Skate Park (2)
- River Access (2)
- Better Landscaping (2)
- Parks need to be more family friendly
- Sprinkling Systems
- Police patrols
- Soccer
- Extend River Walk
- Concession at ball diamonds
- More comfortable seating
- More parking
- Exercise sites

Survey Question Twenty Three:

In your Opinion, what are the Greatest Attributes of the City Park System?

Frequent Comments:

- Multiple sites and diverse options, there's something for everyone (16)
- Landscaping and well kept (16)
- The River Walk connecting them (14)
- No opinion (13)
- Beauty (9)
- Convenience (6)
- Easily accessible (5)
- The River (5)
- That they exist at all (4)
- Safety (3)
- Concerts (3)
- Old fashioned style
- Community interaction (3)
- The Flower Program (2)
- Benches
- Free
- Family friendly
- Summer recreation sites with shade provided (2)
- Volleyball

Survey Question Twenty Four:

Which Park do you Frequent the Most? Why?

Frequent Comments:

- Hicks because of close proximity, location, atmosphere (25)
- Sherwood because of playground, river, proximity, atmosphere, basketball, and ice cream (20)
- Thurl Cook because of proximity, playground, good for dogs (11)
- River Walk (10)
- None (10)
- Fannie Pell: activities, canoeing, quiet (8)
- Kenyon: Ball diamonds, dogs play (4)
- Darrow: Proximity, fishing (3)
- All (2)
- Unsure

Survey Question Twenty Five:

Which Park do you Frequent the Least? Why?

Frequent Comments:

- Thurl Cook because it's too far away, not enough playground equipment, hidden away from open areas, never heard of it, crime, tennis courts aren't useable, and no restrooms (23)
- Darrow because it's the largest distance from home, limited, small, never heard of it, needs a dock (18)
- Kenyon because there's no water, shade or anything to do, never heard of it (11)
- None because I don't know where some of them are (5)
- No comment (4)
- Fannie Pell because no playground equipment (2)
- Hicks because no need to

Survey Question Twenty Six:

Any Additional Comments?

Frequent Comments:

- No (18)
- Parks make city attractive
- Parks drew us to the area. Visitors always comment
- Our parks are clean and well taken care of (3)
- Use the river (2)
- More publicity for parks (4)
- We need a place to walk our pets
- Add geocaching sites hid and maintained by city parks and rec
- It's good to see the progress in Plainwell (3)
- Thanks for all that you do
- A couple of swings at Hicks Park would be nice
- Love the ideas Plainwell has but can't afford to pay
- Rather than develop more parks, wouldn't it be wiser to keep the ones we have in tip-top shape (2)
- A dog park adjacent to Thurl Cook would be much more neighbor-friendly use of land than what now occurs with unauthorized motorized "toys" all eroding the property and creating high noise levels. There's already parking for this type of usage.
- Any expansion of the parks for walking trails, bikes or enhancing access to the river sounds very exciting. Aesthetically, the parks and the city look beautiful and are well attended too. Staff should be very proud of the way Plainwell looks! Thank you for my input.

- Thurl Cook: There has been some equipment replaced, but there should be more swings and things for the 2-6 year old children. The tables should be replaced at least 3, and it should be advertised. The park is in such a good location (upper park) for small children, no traffic, no river, etc. It's a shame it's not used. In the winter, it would be nice for some benches for kids to rest on. I mentioned ice skating for parents and children and something for hockey. Otherwise, the hockey players take over the ice rink. I have no children or grandchildren in town. These are suggestions from my observation of a lovely park that's being underused except when there's snow!

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based upon the survey results.

- Publicize parks through signage and so that they have a prominent presence on website
- Offer more activities in parks
- Have a "park hop" event with art engaging the art community, residents and businesses

Appendices

A. Survey

YOU ARE INVITED....



Photo compliments of Island City Photo Contest Winner

**TO A PUBLIC INPUT SESSION TO DISCUSS
PLANS FOR THE CITY OF PLAINWELL'S
PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES.
THE INCLUDED SURVEY CAN BE
RETURNED TO CITY HALL BEFORE OR
DURING THIS MEETING.**

DATE: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2007

**TIME: 5:30 PM TO 6:30 PM PRIOR TO THE CITY
COUNCIL MEETING AT 7:00 PM**

LOCATION: CITY HALL, 141 N. MAIN ST.

**PURPOSE: AS PART OF THE CITY'S FIVE-YEAR
RECREATION PLAN UPDATE**

**QUESTIONS: CALL EMILIE SCHADA, CITY OF
PLAINWELL, AT 685-6821**

CITY OF PLAINWELL FIVE-YEAR PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN QUESTIONNAIRE

The City of Plainwell is presently in the process of updating the existing Parks and Recreation Plan for the community. You can help determine the future of city parks by filling out and returning this questionnaire.

The purpose of this survey is intended to gauge public opinion to help define the city's role in fulfilling the recreational needs of city residents, identify areas for improvement in the city's current park system, as well as to prioritize the long-range use of the city's resources for recreational purposes.

When you are finished, please send to the return address shown, or you may return them during the Parks and Recreation Public Input Session of **September 24, 2007 at 5:30 pm, City Hall** during which your ideas, input, and suggestions would be appreciated.

1. What street do you live on?
2. How frequently do you or members of your household use any of the city parks?

Parks

	Daily	At least Once/Week	At Least Once/Month	At Least Once/Year	Never
Hicks					
Fannie Pell					
Sherwood					
Thurl Cook					
Kenyon					
Darrow					
Riverwalk					

3. How often do you or members of your household use neighborhood or school recreation facilities "after school" hours?

- _____ Daily
- _____ At least once a week
- _____ At least once a month
- _____ At least once a year
- _____ Never

4. Place an "X" by no more than five (5) of the following facilities which you would like to see provided or expanded to city residents.

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| _____ Ball Diamonds | If so where? |
| _____ Music venues in park-like settings | If so where? |
| _____ Tennis Courts | If so where? |
| _____ Public art in park-like settings | If so where? |
| _____ Non-Motorized Pedestrian Paths | If so where? |
| _____ Playgrounds | If so where? |
| _____ Outdoor Volleyball Courts | If so where? |
| _____ Soccer Fields | If so where? |
| _____ Recreational Centers | If so where? |
| _____ Ice Rink Skating (outdoor) | If so where? |
| _____ Skate Park | If so where? |
| _____ Cross-Country Skiing Trails | If so where? |
| _____ Outdoor Basketball Courts | If so where? |
| _____ Other | Other |

5. We would like to know how you feel about the following statements. Please write the appropriate number on the line before each statement.

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

- _____ Parks are important to our community
- _____ I am satisfied with the park facilities in the city
- _____ More park and recreation space is needed in my area of the city
- _____ There should be more neighborhood parks in the city
- _____ There should be more "tot lots" in the city
- _____ There should be more activities taking place in the parks

6. Do you feel there is need for additional bike trails, or the linking of existing bike trails in the city?

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Yes _____ | No _____ (Additional Bike Trails) | If so where? |
| Yes _____ | No _____ (Linking Bike Trails) | If so where? |

Do you feel that additional non-motorized public access, such as docks and canoe ramps, should be provided to the Kalamazoo River?

Yes _____ No _____

7a. One of the goals of the existing Recreation Plan is to preserve and enhance recreation opportunities centering around the river. Do you agree with this goal?

Yes _____ No _____

7b. Do you think the river walk should be extended?

Yes _____ No _____

7c. An additional goal of the Recreation Plan is to add trails and acreage to Thurl Cook Park, located on the east side of the city. Do you agree with this goal?

7d. What kinds of additional facilities or amenities would you like to see at Thurl Cook Park?

8. How strongly would you agree to support the following methods for funding?

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

- _____ User Fees (charging people to use city recreation facilities)
- _____ Gifts and Donations
- _____ Millage/Bond Issue
- _____ General Fund
- _____ Grants

9. How many people in your household (family) are in the following age groups?

- _____ 0-5 years
- _____ 6-15 years
- _____ 16-25 years
- _____ 26-35 years
- _____ 36-45 years
- _____ 46-55 years
- _____ 56 + years

10. How long have you lived in the City of Plainwell?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- 10-12
- More than 12 years

11. In your opinion, are there areas in the park system that need improvement? Please be specific.

12. In your opinion, what are the greatest attributes of the city park system?

13. Which park do you frequent the most? Why?

14. Which park do you frequent the least? Why?

15. Any additional comments?

Thank you for completing this survey! Feel free to return this survey in person during the **September 24, 2007** Public Input Session at Plainwell City Hall, 141 N. Main Street, Plainwell, Michigan 49080 at 5:30 pm. You may also send it to the return address above.