

Hamilton Township Clare County, Michigan

Parks and Recreation Plan

Prepared for:

Hamilton Township Board

Members:

Gerald Thomas Vaughn, Supervisor
Andrea Wallace, Clerk
Denise Goodenow, Treasurer
Michael Iutzi, Trustee
Michael Conway, Trustee

By The:

Hamilton Township Planning Commission

Kelly Bennett, Chair
Jesse Fritz, Vice Chair
Linda Barkell, Secretary
Marsha McKee, Trustee
Michael Conway, Board Representative

Adopted: October 2, 2025

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INTRODUCTION

The residents of Hamilton Township enjoy recreation through Clare County Parks and Recreation and various private businesses. To provide recreational activities for the residents, then the township must take an active role in the delivery of recreational opportunities.

The recreation plan was prepared by the Hamilton Township Planning Commission. The recreation plan is intended to guide decisions affecting development of the township's recreation facilities and programs.

- **Community Description** – An overview of the townships current and project social, physical and economic characteristics.
- **Administrative Structure** – Identifies the entities responsible for administration of the park and recreation programs and facilities provided throughout the township.
- **Parks, Facility and Program Inventory** – Describes the park, facilities within Hamilton Township and programs provided in and around the township.
- **Planning Process** – Describes the process by the community; process will discuss community description, recreation inventory, public participation, analysis, action program and plan completion and adoption.
- **Basis for Action** – Summary of information collected that provides support of the suggestions and recommendations in accordance with Hamilton Township's specific community goals.
- **Action Plan** – Identifies the plan's goals and objectives, all project and system recommendations and a 5-year plan for investment.

The Parks and Recreation Plan will be used as a foundation for future recreational facility and programming improvements through Hamilton Township; as well as investments and policies that continue to support a healthy quality of life for the residents in the community.

Township History

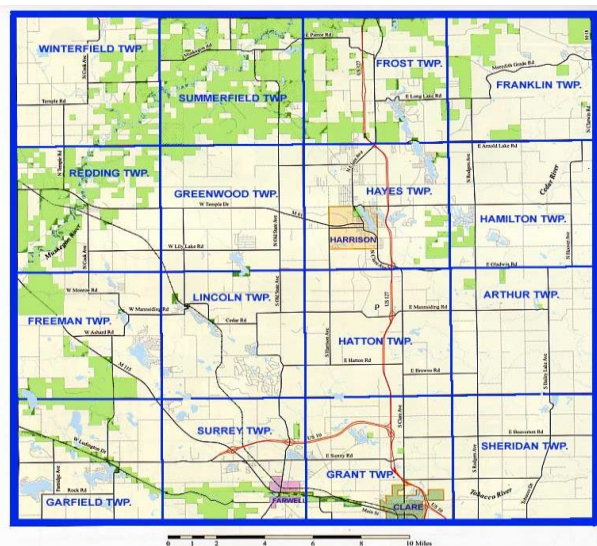
Hamilton Township was established by the state legislature in 1885 when the logging boom was in full swing in Clare County, and money and people poured into the area in search of jobs cutting, hauling and milling the valuable trees that grew here. In fact, the township was named after the owner of the Hamilton & McClure lumbering firm. However, once the trees were cut, jobs disappeared, and by the end of the 19th century the township and entire county fell into a deep depression. In the years that followed, farmers in search of cheap land settled the area and were soon joined by tourists in automobiles coming to hunt, fish, and relax. It wasn't until the end of WWII that tourism really began in earnest as a growing middle class from cities like Detroit and Flint began to buy and build cottages and homes in Hamilton Township to relax or retire. Today, longtime residents, new arrivals and visitors continue to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere the township offers.

Regional Location

Hamilton Township is a rural community of approximately 2,000 people, located in the northeast quarter of Clare County in the central region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The Township reflects the traditional six-mile by six-mile congressional boundary, comprising approximately 23,300 acres. Hamilton Township is located three miles east of the City of Harrison (approximately 2,000 population) and five miles west of the Village of Gladwin (approximately 3,000 population). Principal surrounding townships are Franklin to the north, Sage to the east in Gladwin County, Arthur to the south, and Hayes to the west.

Access to Hamilton Township is provided by US-127 and M-61. US-127 travels north and south through the state, connecting the Lansing area to the south with Graying and I-75 to the north, and passes within three miles of the Township's west boundary. M-61 serves as the Township's southern border, connecting M-115, (25 miles to the west) with the City of Standish (40 miles to the east). Exit 170 along US-127 provides direct access to M-61. Regional access is also available from several commercial airports including the Clare Municipal Airport, Clare County Airport, and the Gladwin Zettel Memorial Airport.

Map 1 – Location Map

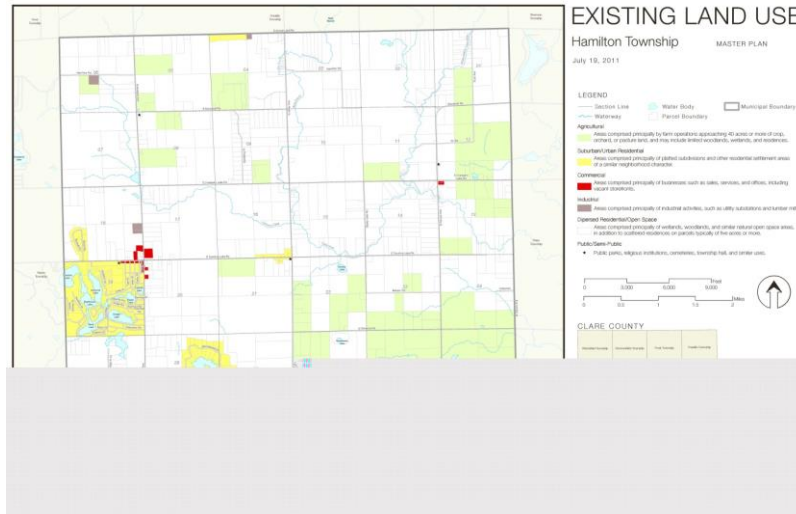


The Hamilton Township Parks and Recreation Plan is being prepared for and covers the entire jurisdictional boundaries of the township. In addition, the Plan will focus on a wide scope of community recreation objectives within the township and strive to address the needs of all residents.

Existing Land Use

The vast majority of Hamilton Township is characterized by loamy and sandy soils. The township's topography can be generally described as rolling but ranging from nearly level to grades approaching 15% and more in instances.

Map 2 – Existing Land Use Map



Population

The 2020 U.S. Census recorded a Hamilton Township population of 1,791 persons, a decrease of >1.0% from its 2010 population of 1,829 persons. The township's population has increased 355% since 1940 when its population was 504. Since 1940, the township has had varying periods of population growth and decline. Its strongest growth period, the 1970s, resulted in a 100% increase in population. Its sharpest decline -11.7% was in the 1940s.

Table 1 - Hamilton Township Population Projections

Projection Trend	Year 2020	Year 2030	Year 2040
Very Low Growth Trend (6.3%)	1,944	2,067	2,196
Low Growth Trend (12.6%)	2,059	2,319	2,611
Historical Trend (25.2%)	2,290	2,867	3,589
High Growth Trend (50.4%)	2,751	4,137	6,222

Climate

Hamilton Township: located in a region with cold winters and warm summers, which provide the residents with a wide variety of weather patterns. Average annual precipitation varies from 1.31" to 3.69" with winter snowfall and summer rainfall. Average temperatures vary from 9 degrees in January to above 70 degrees in July.

Drainage and Water Resources

Hamilton Township is characterized by approximately 350 acres of open surface waters such as lakes, rivers and streams (1.5% of the township). An additional 3,300 acres are characterized by wetlands. According to the U.S. Geological Service, the township is home to approximately 15 lakes greater than five acres in size and approximately half of these lakes, located in the township's southwest quarter. Perhaps of greatest significance are the seven named lakes in Section 19 and around which much of Dodge City was founded. The lakes include Townline Lake, Boathouse Lake, Icehouse Lake, Sand Lake, Dodge Lake, Haven Lake, and Canada Lake. These lakes range in size from approximately four acres (Canada Lake) to 40 acres (Townline Lake, a portion of which extends into Hayes Township). However, the largest of the township's lakes is the western half of Springwood Lakes in Section 29. The west half of Springwood Lakes covers approximately 70 acres and flows into its eastern half in Section 28, which covers approximately 20 acres.

In addition to its many lakes, Hamilton Township also includes numerous rivers, creeks and smaller and intermittent water courses. The most significant are Cranberry Creek and the Cedar River including the West Branch and Middle Branch of the Cedar River. Cranberry Creek flows east from Hayes Township through the central region of the township. The North Branch of the Cedar River flows south from Franklin Township to the central region of the township as well. These two water courses merge just north of the center of the township and form the main branch of the Cedar River. The Middle Branch of the Cedar River also flows south from Franklin Township into the northeast corner of the township and continues to flow south before merging with the main branch of the Cedar River. The Cedar River continues to flow easterly into Sage Township and subsequently flows into Tobacco River near Beaverton in Gladwin County. The Tobacco River flows into the Tittabawassee River and the Tittabawassee River flows into the Saginaw River which empties into the Saginaw Bay. This interconnectivity of water courses illustrates how land use and development policies and practices in one community can impact water resources in many other communities.

The Cedar River and its tributaries flow through approximately two-thirds of the township. The principal exception is the southwest quarter of the township where portions drain to the west by way of Mostellar Creek and into which Sand Lake flows. Other portions drain to the east and south including into the expansive Spike Horn Swamp to the east and south of the Springwood Lakes, which flows into the Spike Horn Creek just south of the township. Howland Creek, which originates at Howland Lake in Section 34, flows southeast into Arthur Township and drains southern portions of the township's southeast quarter.

Drainage in Hamilton Township is facilitated through its network of lakes, rivers and creeks, and is also supported by expansive wetland areas that collect and store significant volumes of runoff.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

This section of the Parks and Recreation Plan describes how the resources and recreational programming within the township are administered as well as how the Plan was developed. Roles and positions within the township are identified, along with information regarding projected budgets and previous revenue and expenditures for Hamilton Township.

Parks and Recreation Committee

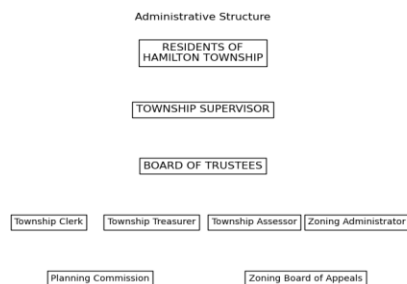
Hamilton Township does not have a parks and recreation committee. In the future, it is recommended to incorporate a structure under some type of oversight committee formulated by the residents of the community and overseen by the township board of trustees.

The Planning Commission is the body directly responsible for creating the Hamilton Township Parks and Recreation Plan.

Hamilton Township Board of Trustees

Hamilton Township Board of Trustees holds the final authority regarding parks and recreation planning and development under the authority of MCL 41.421 (Michigan Compiled Laws) and Act 157 of the Public Acts of 1905. The township supervisor is the executive officer and presides over the township board of trustees. Members of the township board of trustees are elected.

Figure 1 – Administrative Structure



Budget

Hamilton Township currently allocates no money in its budget for parks and recreation development.

Funding History

Funding for park maintenance and improvement is currently taken from the General Fund with future funds to come from pavilion user fees and special event fees. Apart from Township funds, other possible funding sources for parks and recreation in the township include the MDNR, private foundations, community service organizations, and community fund-raising.

Programming

No Hamilton Township recreational programming exists currently. Maintenance of the public spaces is provided by the trustees and private maintenance companies by contract. Many community services groups exist in the area, which in the short term could be relied upon providing some maintenance of new facilities. As facilities grow, staff positions will have to be modified.

Relationships with School Districts, Other Agencies, Groups, and Volunteers

Hamilton Township is represented by Harrison Community Schools and Gladwin Community Schools.

There are numerous groups in Clare County that are potential partners for recreation opportunity development in Hamilton Township.

Role of Volunteers

With the absence of a parks and recreation department, volunteers in Hamilton Township will be extremely important for success.

Projected Budget

Local Unit Name: [OBJ]	Hamilton Township
Local Unit Code: [OBJ]	36140
Current Fiscal Year End Date: [OBJ]	June 30, 2025
Fund Name: [OBJ]	General Fund

The township budget for general operating expenses is \$664,645.87. The general operating budget covers expenses for the salaries for the administrative staff, grounds and landscaping, election expenses, Board of Review expenses Planning and Zoning Board expenses.

PARKS, FACILITY AND PROGRAM INVENTORY

Hamilton Township officials and the Planning Commission worked closely to generate a detailed recreation and resources inventory for the township. Several methods were used to assist in conducting an inclusive inventory.

The first method used in conducting the recreation and resources inventory included an extensive tour of the township and the recreation facilities with its jurisdiction. Secondly, township officials along with the Planning Commission reviewed maps of the township and identified the location and amenities of each recreational facility. Finally, during the public meeting attendees were presented with the recreational facilities map and asked to comment and provide additional input regarding the facilities and resources in the township.

Township Park Facilities:

Hamilton Township Park – Located at the Hamilton Township Hall, this park currently has a pavilion. The park is adjacent to Dodge City, a community of full and part-time residents. Dodge City is the largest community in the township.

Size: 17 acres with 15.5 dedicated to the park

Age Groups to Serve: All

Location: 3042 N. Rodgers Avenue, Harrison, Michigan

Facilities: The township hall is the governmental center of Hamilton Township.

Barrier Free Accessibility: Park = 1 Township Hall = 4 This facility is barrier free.

DNR Grants: SPARKS 2024

Courtney Parking lot and Boat launch -

Artisian Well -

The Iutzi Center (formerly known as Mennonite Church)

State Forest - The forest is managed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and permitted activities include hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing and camping.

Size: Approximately 500 acres

Age Groups to Serve: All

Location: Section 30

Facilities: No facilities

Barrier Free Accessibility = 1

Privately-Owned Facility Inventory

Dodge City Campground

Devils Knob Golf Course

School Facilities

Harrison Community Schools include four different schools and serve K-12 children in the City of Harrison and surrounding areas.

Harrison Community Schools

- Robert M. Larson Elementary Gymnasiums, playground equipment, basketball courts, ball fields with backstop, recreational open space and nature trail; Hughes Memorial Field: Football and Track
- Harrison Middle School
- Harrison High School
- The Hive Alternative Ed

Gladwin Community Schools include four different schools and serve K-12 children in the City of Gladwin and surrounding areas.

Gladwin Community Schools

- High School
- Intermediate School
- Elementary School
- Junior High School

Well-developed public-school complex which includes an Elementary School, Intermediate, and High School on a large site. Outdoor recreation facilities include fields for baseball/softball, track, football, and soccer along with stadium seating, playgrounds and play structures at the Elementary and Intermediate Schools. Indoor facilities include gyms and multi-purpose cafeteria. All facilities are handicapped accessible. The Junior High has six outdoor basketball backboards on hard surface play area, open play field and gymnasium.

Mid-Michigan College - Harrison Campus sits on 560 acres of beautiful, wooded land. As a service to the community, the College and various community groups have developed trails through the property for the public to enjoy.

These trails are open all year long for walking, running, biking, snow shoeing, and cross-country skiing. There are four trails that make up the trail system.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Facilities

Wilson State Park – City of Harrison

Size: 36 wooded acres with a sandy beach on Budd Lake

Age Groups Served: All Ages

Location: 901 N. First Street, Harrison, MI

Facilities: Camping facilities, swimming beach, pavilions, playground, play equipment. [08]

Clare County Parks and Recreation Facilities

Harrison City Park – City of Harrison

Age Groups Served: All Ages

Location: 915 Spruce Street, Harrison, MI

Facilities: Tennis courts, playground equipment, pavilions, baseball field, softball field, horseshoes, picnic areas, restrooms and shelters.

Hayes Township Park – City of Harrison

Size: 30 acres

Age Groups Served: All Ages

Location: 2051 E. Townline Lake Road, Harrison, MI

Facilities: Ball Fields and Restroom

Private Recreation Facilities

There are private recreational facilities located in surrounding areas of Hamilton Township that provide recreational activities for residents in the township. These facilities are privately operated and, in some cases, require a user fee for admittance. They were included in this parks and recreation analysis because they meet the specific needs of the community. The private facilities that surround Hamilton Township include:

Snowbird Lanes – Bowling
Harrison Sportsmen Club – Archery/Rifle Range
Devils Knob – Golf 9 holes
Tamaracks – Golf 18 holes
Snow Snake – Golf 18 holes/Skiing/Tubing
Putter Golf
Duggan's Canoe

While programming is provided through various other recreational service providers in Clare County, Hamilton Township does not have a structured parks and recreation program. Many residents participate in the recreational programs offered through Clare County Parks and Recreation Department.

Recreation Inventory Analysis

Hamilton Township seeks to provide recreation for the community. The root problem is lack of funding to implement different activities and leverage financing to develop park amenities, such as playground equipment, a picnic shelter, pavilion and walking paths.

As Hamilton Township continues to evolve, it's important for the township to continue to explore different funding sources to develop and provide maintenance for the park property. Partnerships with school districts in surrounding communities should also be encouraged to provide those outdoor recreational opportunities and programming.

There is an interest in the community for the development of walking and nature trails. Residents currently use township roads, which can be dangerous. Having a designated walking trail would encourage more people to walk.

PLANNING PROCESS

Hamilton Township Planning Commission gave direction for this Parks and Recreation Master Plan to be developed for the purpose of providing a guide for future facilities, programming, and funding sources. The planning process resulted in a plan that reflects the needs and ideas of the township residents. The following process is explained below.

- Community Description – The process began with an analysis of the township’s physical and social characteristics. These characteristics included location, history, transportation systems, natural features and population information.
- Recreation Inventory – Hamilton Township currently owns five pieces of property that have not been developed. The recreation inventory took into consideration all facilities that are available in the township. A list of private businesses that provide recreational programming, neighboring community facilities, state park, county parks, and other locations in the surrounding area that provides recreation opportunities for residents.
- Public Participation – Through CMF/DNR Sparks grant 4 community events were held 2023/2024
- Analysis – Was provided by CMF and the result is the Grant agreement.
- Action Plan – Upon completion of the analysis, goals and objectives were determined to provide the framework for the action plan.
- Plan Completion – Will be in compliance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act 33 of 2008. MCL 125.3801-125.3885

BASIS FOR ACTION PLAN

The preceding sections of the recreation plan provided information into current operations and development of park property in Hamilton Township. The basis for the Action Plan is meant to evaluate the information collected to summarize the needs and priorities for future park and recreational facilities, existing park land and programming within Hamilton Township.

There were numerous resources involved in the recreational analysis of Hamilton Township. Public input was essential in and discovering the priorities of the residents. Public input was gathered at community engagement events in coordination with the CMF/DNR Sparks grant application process and various board meetings. Residents were given the opportunity to express their concerns and ideas for additional recreation within the township. Next, the park land currently under the ownership of the township was analyzed in terms of size, location and function, followed by an analysis of recreational facilities within the township.

Hamilton Township Park land has not been developed. Residents would like to see the park property developed into a mixed-use community with walking paths and playground equipment for recreational enjoyment of all ages. We have incorporated indoor pickle ball into our facility. Along with the recreational component, the discussion has also been to incorporate a senior civic/community center. Many residents have expressed a sincere determination to provide recreational opportunity for the residents of the township. As the township continues to provide opportunities for recreational trails and non-motorized transportation throughout the area, the township should continue to evaluate the option for additional properties to be used as walking trails.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

An overall guide for the parks and recreation goals of Hamilton Township will be to focus efforts on developing recreational facilities and creating programming that will promote opportunities for social interaction and healthy living. Of the goals and objectives listed, the top priorities ranked in order include:

- Develop recreational fields and park facilities for use by residents.
- Create programming for the recreational facilities in Hamilton Township.

Provide safe, community-based recreation opportunities.

From the information collected through the community events, the intent of Hamilton Township should be to provide recreational facilities that are safe and accessible to all residents in the community. It's imperative to develop programming that would encourage use of those facilities.

- Provide ADA accessible playground equipment and activities within the park property that are appropriate for all age groups.
- Develop community recreational activities that will be used by residents.
- Leverage various organizations and groups for short-term maintenance of the park property.
- Provide recreation activities that will promote active living and wellness.
- Develop pavilion and picnic area.
- Develop biking and walking trails throughout the site and to provide ADA accessibility to activity areas. Winter activities could include snowshoe, cross country skiing, and ice skating.

ACTION PLAN

Hamilton Township Park property is not being utilized. The possibilities for property are endless. Although Hamilton Township does not have a defined parks and recreation department, the process of identifying potential recreational activities is essential in the development of Hamilton Township.

Community Involvement/Fund Raising

Hamilton Township does not currently have a funding source for financing park projects. To offset the financial burden of implementing projects, the township should develop a process to involve residents and community members by supporting the park. Organizing community neighborhood support through an “Adopt-A-Park” program would be one way. However, fundraising will be required. Incorporating philanthropic organizations and enterprises for funding through volunteer groups would be essential. Businesses would also be vital to the success of the parks programs for sponsoring and/or programming.

Safety

As the park property is developed into a recreational area, it is essential that safety be a high priority. Park monitoring should take place as the park property becomes developed and to ensure that no vandalism occurs. Neighborhood groups can be helpful in ensuring the safety and maintenance of the park.

Partnerships with School Districts

- Hold concerts.
- Develop walking trails that provide outdoor education programs for environmental classes.
- Hold sporting events.

These proposals are tentative based on the needs of the school district and the necessity of providing those services to the community. Plans may change depending on the interest of the community members of Hamilton Township.

Funding

There are grant opportunities and programs exist that are useful in leveraging funding for projects.

- **Michigan Recreation Passport**
- **MDNR Grants**
- **Corporate Grants**
- **Private Grants**
- **Donations**

Conclusion

Hamilton Township continues to be an important part of the region. The recreation potential of the area offers opportunities and activities for the residents to be engaged in. The purpose of this plan is to promote the township park properties. By implementing the recreation plan, Hamilton Township will be able to provide the residents of the township with amenities, programming, and activities that will promote active living.

APPENDIX A

This section includes the resolutions for adoption by the Hamilton Township Planning Commission and the Hamilton Township Board of Trustees.

All correspondence from the municipalities is included in this section.

Hamilton Township Planning Commission

**Resolution of Endorsement for the
2025 – 2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

RESOLUTION NO. _____

WHEREAS, development of adequate parks and recreation facilities require a pro-active plan based on a combination of community input, analysis of existing conditions, analysis of the basic needs for current and future residents, parks and recreation planning expertise, as well as prioritized improvement programs and potential funding opportunities; and

WHEREAS the foundation of the plan is established with the Action Plan Framework consisting of an overall goal and supporting objectives; and

WHEREAS, the plan provides test and maps of detailed recommendations for park and recreation facilities, and recreations programming with a prioritized list of proposed capital improvements for the next five years; and

WHEREAS the planning commission board has prepared Hamilton Township Parks and Recreation Plan which includes all the above elements; and

WHEREAS, said plan is represented to meet the requirements of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, thereby making the authority eligible for State and Federal grants administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources; and

WHEREAS the township followed a planning process that contained public involvement, including community events and reviewing the collected information; and

WHEREAS the Planning Commission of Hamilton Township does support the development and potential for recreational programming and activities throughout the township;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Planning Commission hereby endorses and recommends to the township board to adopt the recreation plan for the township.

Motion by: _____, supported by: _____, to endorse the Hamilton Township Parks and Recreation Plan.

Ayes:

Nays:

Absent:

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

Dated: _____

Kelly Bennett, Chair

I, Linda Barkell, Secretary of the Planning Commission for Hamilton Township, do hereby certify that Resolution No. _____ was duly adopted at a regular meeting of the Planning Commission held on _____.

Linda Barkell, Secretary

APPENDIX B: MEETING AGENDAS

STATE OF MICHIGAN)
COUNTY OF CLARE

Hamilton Township Clerk

Notary Public in and for the County of _____,
_____, State of Michigan

My Commission Expires: _____, 20____

