



# Maple Ridge Township

RECREATION PLAN, 2025-2029



**CUPPAD**

ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

**MAPLE RIDGE TOWNSHIP, DELTA COUNTY**  
**3892 West Maple Ridge 37<sup>th</sup> Road**  
**P.O. Box 135**  
**Rock, MI 49880**  
**906-356-6311**

**Maple Ridge Township Resolution of Adoption**  
**For Maple Ridge Township Recreation Plan**  
**Delta County**  
**(September 30, 2025)**

WHEREAS, the Maple Ridge Township Board is made up of representatives from Maple Ridge Township, and

WHEREAS, the Maple Ridge Township Board began the process of developing a community recreation and natural resource conservation plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities, and

WHEREAS, residents of Maple Ridge Township were provided with a well-advertised opportunity during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the recreation and natural resource conservation plan, and

WHEREAS, the public was given a well-advertised opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the final draft plan for a period of at least 30 days, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on September 30, 2025, at the Rock Area Senior Center, 3892 W Maple Ridge 37<sup>th</sup> Road, Rock, Michigan 49880 to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the Maple Ridge Township Parks and Recreation Plan, and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing, the Maple Ridge Township Board voted to adopt said Maple Ridge Township Parks and Recreation Plan for 2025 through 2029

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Maple Ridge Township Board hereby adopts the Maple Ridge Township Parks and Recreation Plan.

Yeas: 5

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

Mike Lepisto, Supervisor  
Susan Sicotte, Clerk  
Barb Nummilien, Treasurer  
Sandra Beauchamp, Trustee  
Judy Trudell, Trustee

I, Susan Sicotte, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by the Maple Ridge Township Board at a Regular Meeting thereof held on the Thirtieth Day of September 2025.

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# Section 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE RECREATION PLAN

### 5-YEAR RECREATION PLAN

Every 5 years communities throughout Michigan update their recreation plans to ensure qualification for annual Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) funding opportunities.

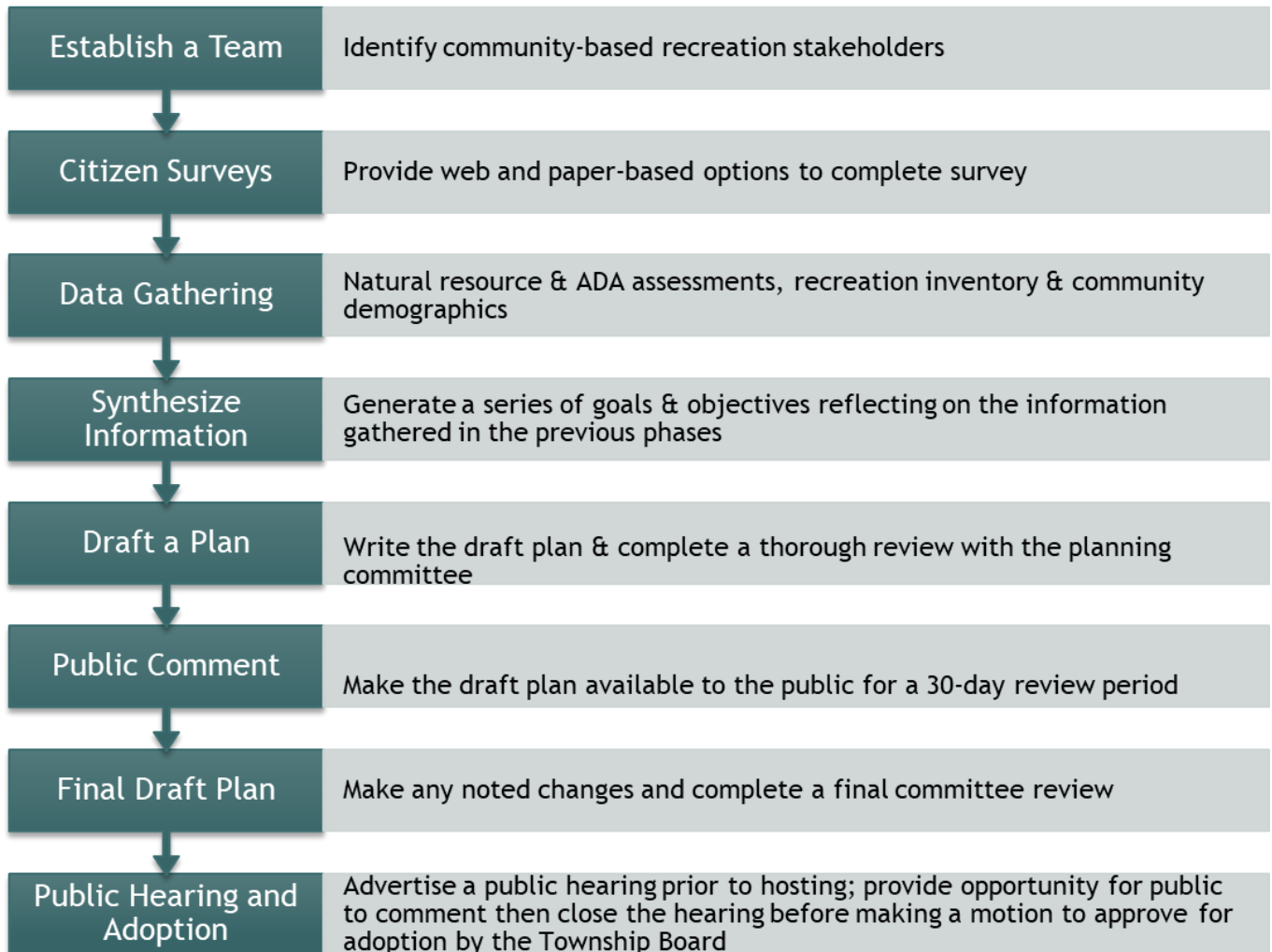
The 5-year recreation plan must adhere to a format defined by the MDNR and outline priority goals, objectives, and projects with the potential to be completed within the 5-year window and beyond.

This document synthesizes data on natural resources, community demographics, existing recreation assets, operational management, citizen input, and community partnerships to generate an all-inclusive map for recreation in the community. It describes community values, highlights common goals and objectives, and outlines strategies to achieve these goals.

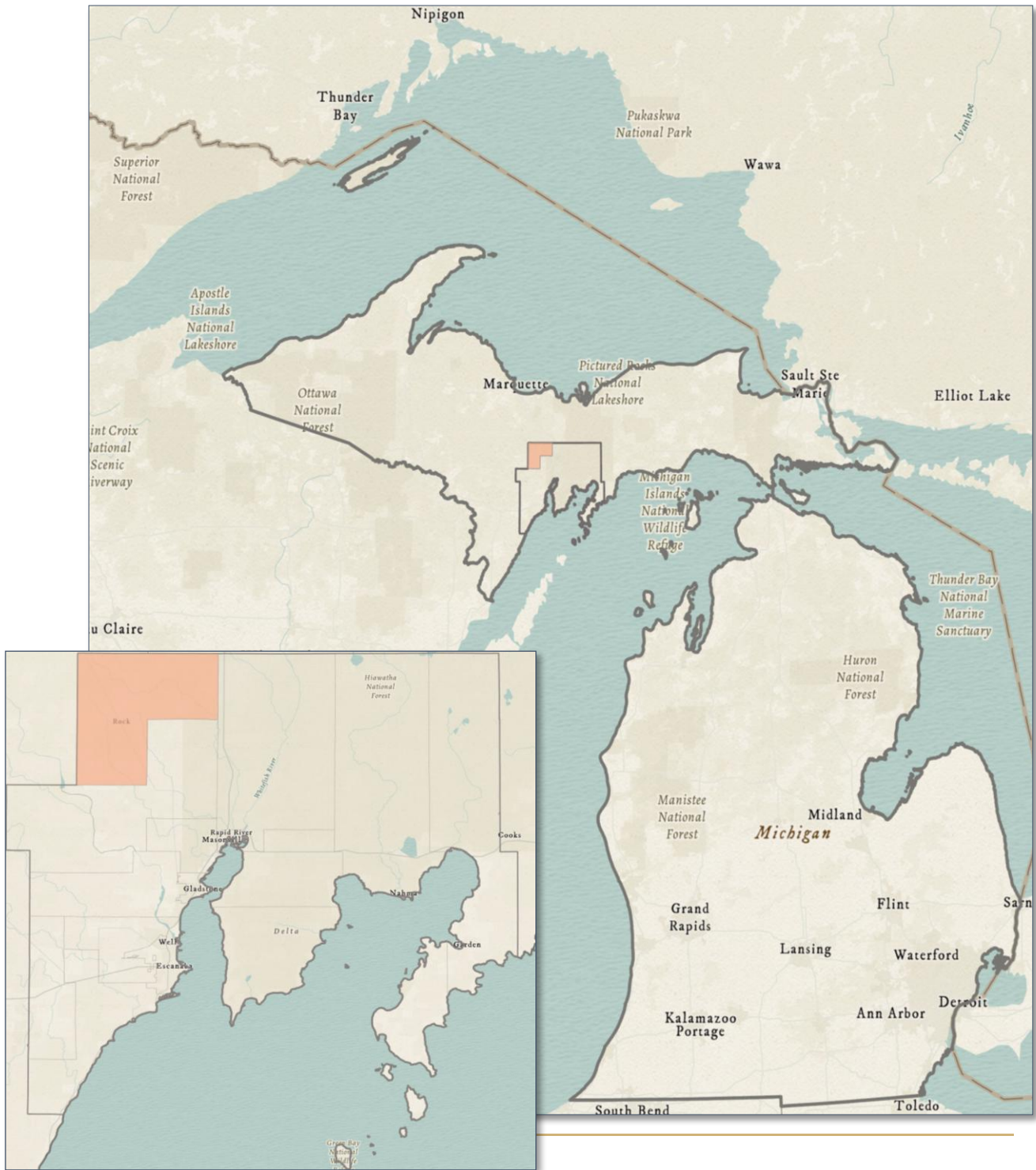
Looking beyond the 5-year window, this document will serve as a road map for future endeavors improving parks for decades to come. The 2025-2029 Recreation Plan will assist Township officials in determining priority projects.



# THE PLANNING PROCESS



# Section 2

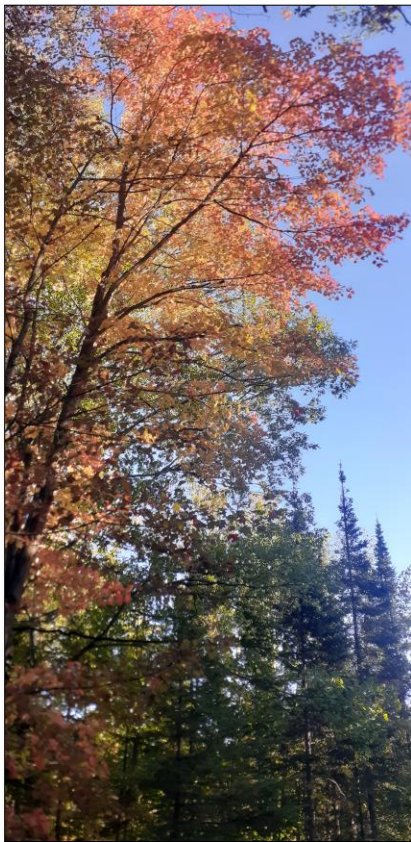


# MAPLE RIDGE TOWNSHIP

Maple Ridge Township, situated in the northwestern corner of Delta County, includes approximately 108.2 square miles. The majority of the commercial and governmental activities within the Township are found in the unincorporated community of Rock.



Several water resources pass through Maple Ridge Township, including three rivers. The Days River, Rapid River and Tacoosh River drain most of the Township. Boudreau Creek, Elm Creek, Indian Creek, Mud Creek and Squaw Creek also run through the Township. Use of these resources ranges from fishing and hunting to canoe and power boating. As of the 2020 census, Maple Ridge Township has a population of 694, and the American Communities Survey (ACS), estimates 703 residents as of 2022, most of whom are spread out across the township's rural and agricultural areas.



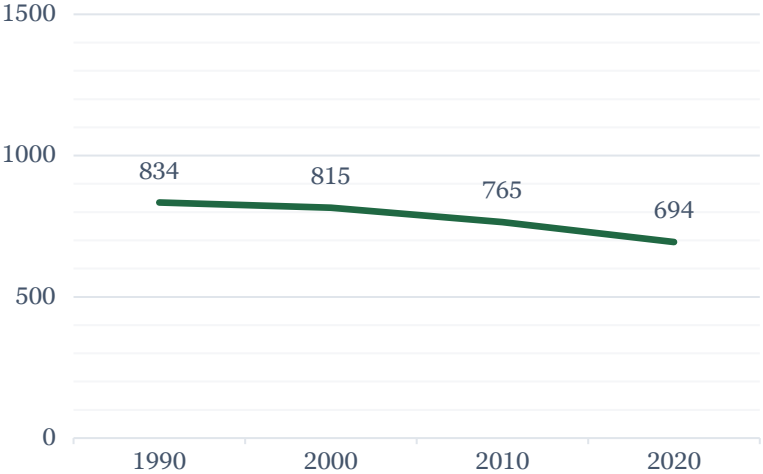
Before European settlement, the land that is now Maple Ridge Township was home to the Ojibwe people, one of the largest Native American tribes in the region. The Ojibwe lived throughout Michigan's Upper Peninsula and used the area's rivers, forests and lakes for fishing, hunting, and gathering. The local landscape provided abundant resources such as wild rice, fish, and maple sugar, all of which were integral to their diet and culture.

European settlement of the area began in 1865 when Chicago and North Western Railway workers established what would become the community of Rock. Today, Rock continues to serve as the township's primary commercial and governmental center, maintaining its role as an important rural hub for the surrounding area.

The township derived its name, Maple Ridge, from a nearby elevation heavily covered with sugar maple trees.

# COMMUNITY DATA

Figure 1. Maple Ridge Township Population from 1990 to 2020, U.S. Census Bureau Data



Population growth is an important factor in influencing land use decisions of a community. If the population is growing, there is often a greater need for public services, parks, and facilities. A decreasing population can affect the need to and ability of local governments to provide and maintain recreation facilities and programs. From 1990 to 2020 the population of Maple Ridge Township decreased from 834 residents to 694.

Compared to the other municipalities in Delta County, Maple Ridge’s population has decreased more drastically than others.<sup>1</sup>

**Delta County  
Population Change  
2000-2020**

**-4%**

**Maple Ridge Township  
Population Change  
2000-2020**

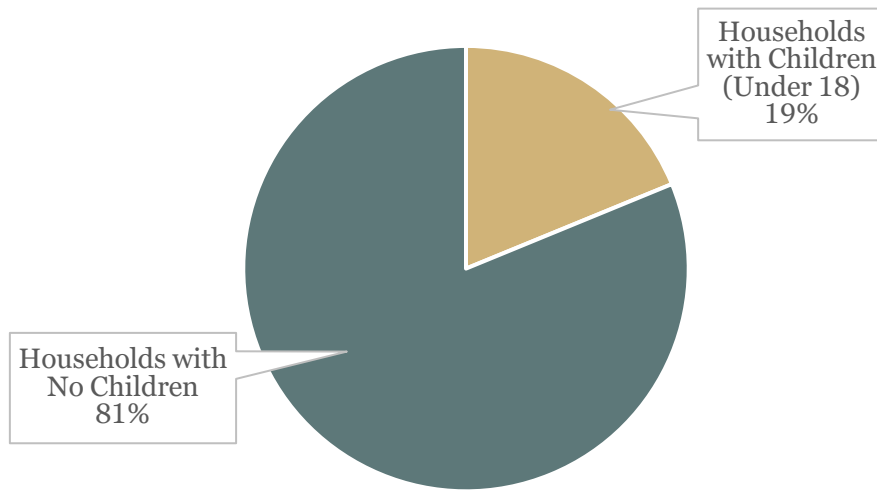
**-15%**

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census & 2020 Decennial Census

*Table 1. Population Change in Delta County, 2000-2020, U.S. Census Bureau*

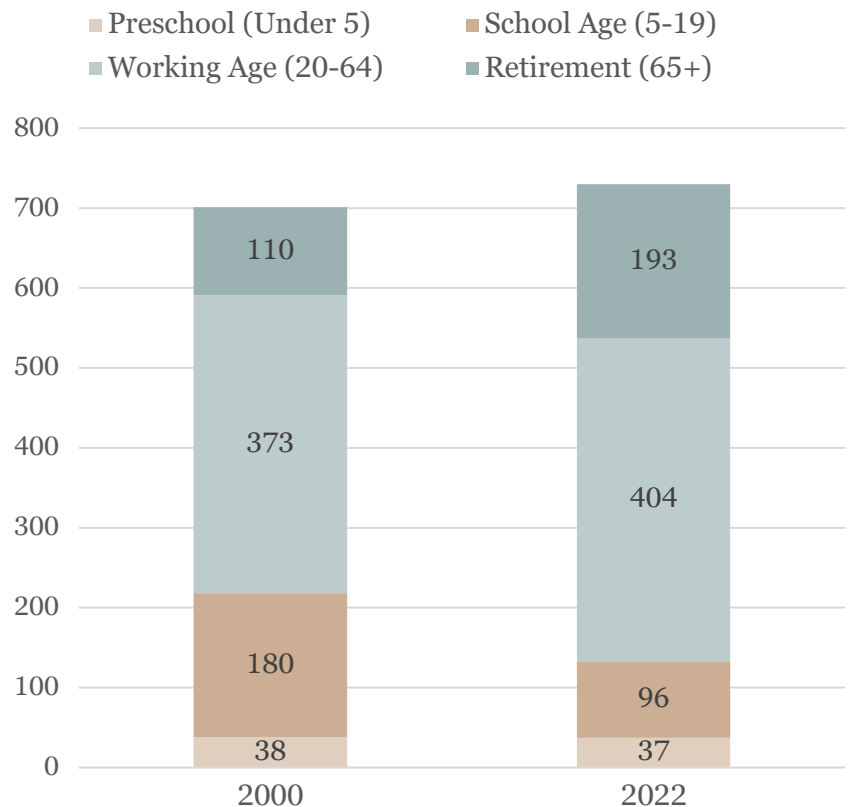
<b>Municipalities in Delta County</b>	<b>2000 Population</b>	<b>2020 Population</b>	<b>Percent Change from 2000 to 2020</b>
Baldwin Township	748	700	<b>-6%</b>
Bark River Township	1,650	1,595	<b>-3%</b>
Bay De Noc Township	331	300	<b>-9%</b>
Brampton Township	1,062	1,023	<b>-4%</b>
City of Escanaba	13,119	12,450	<b>-5%</b>
City of Gladstone	5,065	5,257	<b>4%</b>
Cornell Township	559	565	<b>1%</b>
Ensign Township	783	746	<b>-5%</b>
Escanaba Township	3,511	3,496	<b>0%</b>
Fairbanks Township	327	297	<b>-9%</b>
Ford River Township	2,225	2,019	<b>-9%</b>
Garden Township	820	772	<b>-6%</b>
<b>Maple Ridge Township</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>-15%</b>
Masonville Township	1,867	1,645	<b>-12%</b>
Nahma Township	506	468	<b>-8%</b>
Wells Township	5,155	4,876	<b>-5%</b>
Delta County	38,520	36,903	<b>-4%</b>

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), 2022 data, there are currently 319 households in Maple Ridge Township, with an average household size of 2.29. Of those 319 households, approximately 60 have one or more members under the age of 18.



18.8% of households in Maple Ridge Township have children, which is lower than is seen in Delta County generally, at 23.4%, and the state with 26.3% of households with children.

As illustrated in the graph to the right, the age distribution from 2000 to 2022 indicates an aging demographic. When planning for future park developments and improvements the community must consider the needs of this group as well as incorporate features to attract young families securing a steady population well into the future.



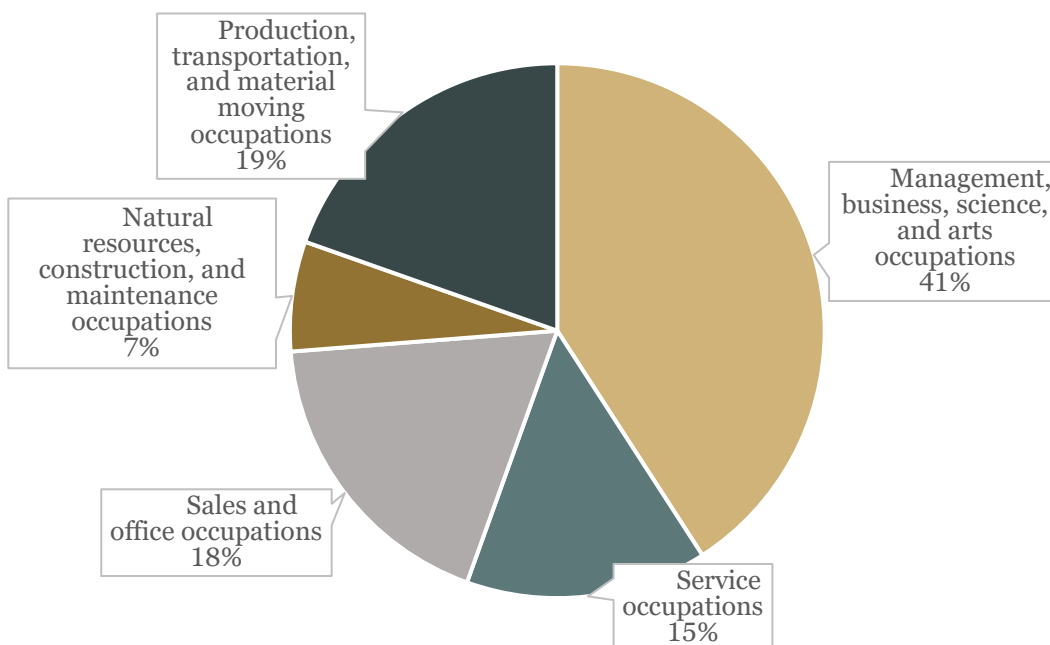
An additional data point to consider when planning for recreation within a community is the quantity of persons with a disability. Almost 18% of the population is estimated as having a disability, which is a significant portion of the community. The township must incorporate accessibility upgrades into community projects, meeting universal accessibility standards wherever possible. This topic is explored in greater detail in Appendix C. Maintaining cleared access paths throughout the winter and providing accessible all-season recreation options would be a great asset for the community and its residents of all ages and ability levels.

## ECONOMIC PROFILE

Maple Ridge Township, like much of Delta County, has a diverse economic foundation rooted in natural resources, manufacturing, and tourism. Median income in Maple Ridge Township is higher than that of Delta County, and just under the State median, illustrated below.

Maple Ridge	Delta County	Michigan
<b>\$66,339</b>	<b>\$53,852</b>	<b>\$66,986</b>

Maple Ridge Township maintains a diverse workforce of 323 civilian employees (age 16 and over), distributed across various sectors and employment types. The township's employment profile reflects a mix of private sector, government, and entrepreneurial activity.



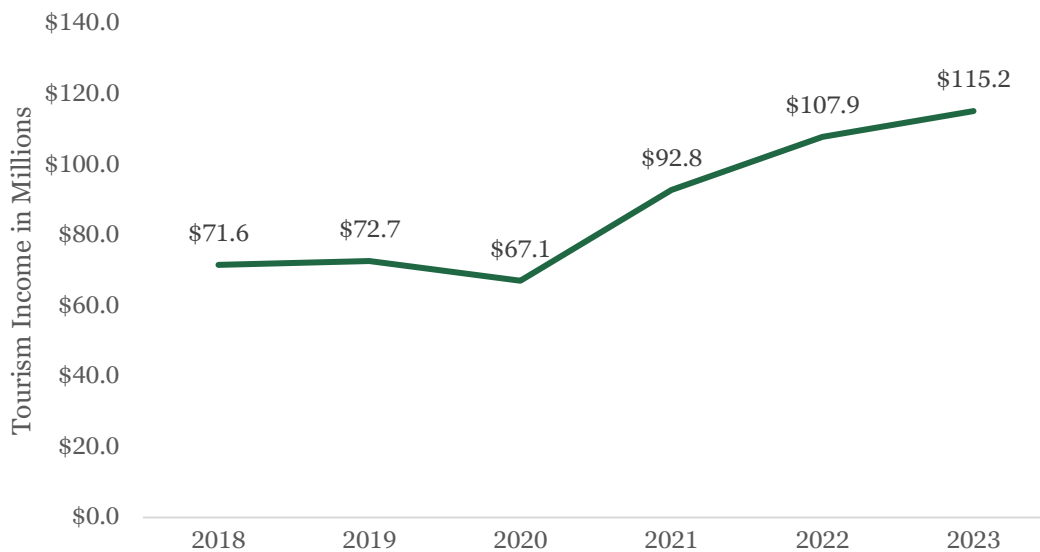
This employment diversity, combined with the region's growing tourism sector discussed in the following section, suggests potential for recreation investments to

support continued economic development through both direct and indirect employment opportunities.

## TOURISM & RECREATION ECONOMY

Delta County has emerged as a leading tourism destination in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, experiencing significant visitor growth. Tourism spending reached \$115.2 million in 2023, from \$71.6 million in 2018<sup>2</sup>, establishing the county as a major contributor to the region's recreation economy.

Figure 2. Delta County Tourism Income, in Millions, 2018 - 2023



Maple Ridge Township is positioned to capitalize on this tourism growth through strategic recreation development. The township's natural amenities, including access to state forest lands, complement the broader regional recreation network. Enhanced recreation facilities would serve both the growing visitor population and township residents while strengthening connections to regional trail systems and water access points.

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<sup>2</sup> Pure Michigan 2023 Tourism Economic Impact, County Data: <https://www.michigan.org/industry/researchandreports>

# Section 3

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Maple Ridge Township possesses a rich and diverse natural environment that provides the foundation for recreational opportunities and contributes significantly to the community's quality of life. This section examines the key natural features that inform recreation planning, including land cover, wildlife habitats, geology, soils, topography, and hydrology. Understanding these natural systems is essential for developing recreation facilities that work in harmony with the environment while providing sustainable opportunities for outdoor recreation.

## LAND COVER & WILDLIFE

Maple Ridge Township's landscape features a diverse mosaic of natural and managed ecosystems that create exceptional habitat diversity and recreational opportunities. The land cover analysis reveals a township dominated by forest ecosystems, with significant wetland areas and limited agricultural development, reflecting the broader ecological characteristics of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

## LANDSCAPE TYPOLOGIES



WETLANDS



DECIDUOUS FORESTS



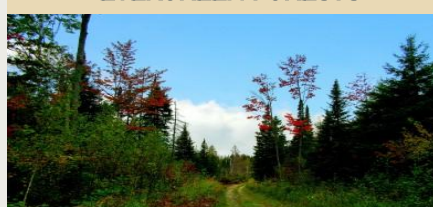
CULTIVATED CROPS & PASTURE



EVERGREEN FORESTS



SHRUB & SCRUB



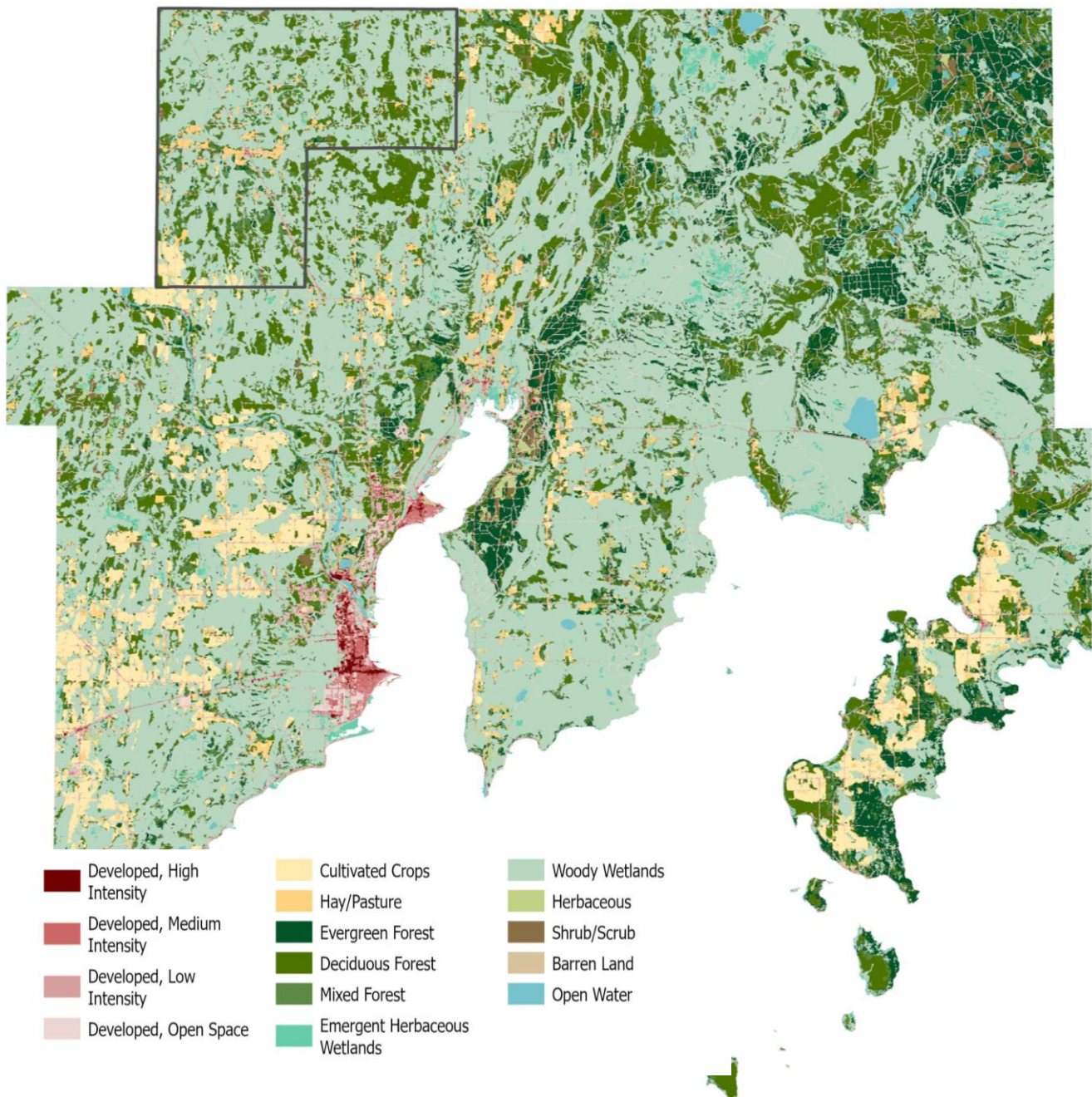
MIXED FORESTS



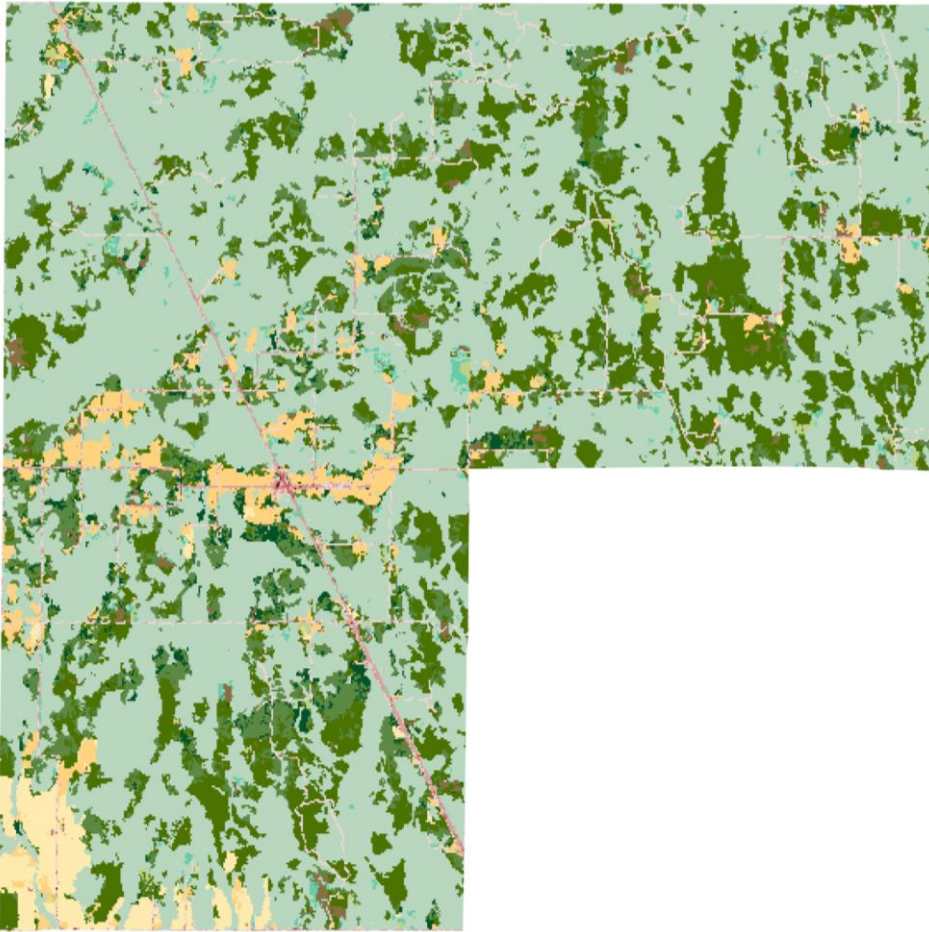
MAINTAINED TURF

## Land Cover Distribution

As illustrated in the land cover map, the township's landscape is predominantly characterized by a diverse mosaic of natural ecosystems. Woody Wetlands (shown in light green) cover extensive areas throughout the township, forming complex patterns that are particularly prevalent in the central and eastern sections. Large stretches of forest - including Evergreen Forest, Deciduous Forest, and Mixed Forest (shown in various shades of dark green) - make up a significant portion of Maple Ridge Township. Agricultural areas including Cultivated Crops and Hay/Pasture (shown in yellow and orange tones) appear in scattered patches, along



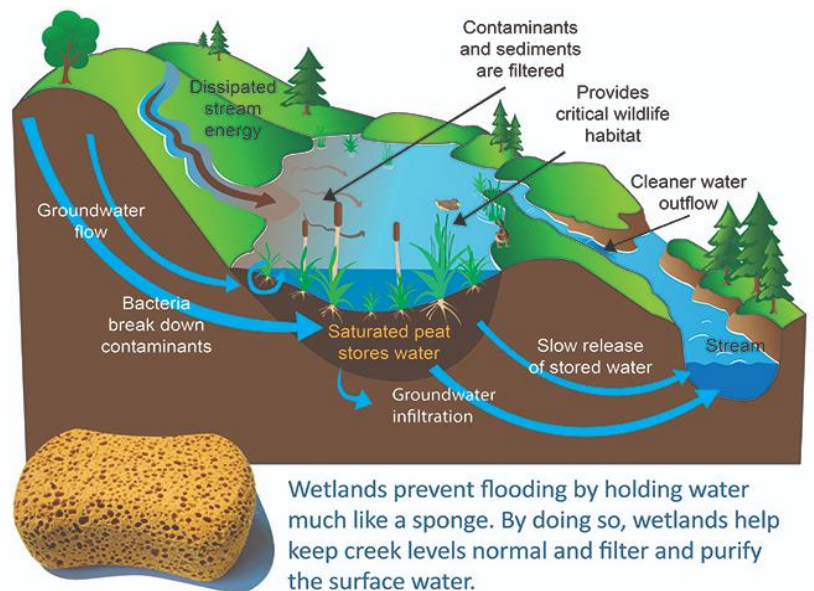
with areas of Shrub/Scrub land (shown in brown). Developed areas (shown in red tones) remain minimal, reflecting the township's rural character.



**Forest Ecosystems:** The Evergreen Forest, Deciduous Forest, and Mixed Forest areas (shown in dark green shades) demonstrate the substantial forest coverage that defines much of the township's character. The Deciduous Forest areas include the sugar maple stands that gave the township its name, while the Mixed Forest areas represent diverse northern hardwood and coniferous forest communities. These forested areas provide crucial habitat corridors for wildlife movement and support diverse recreational activities.

**Wetland Systems:** The Woody Wetlands (light green areas) represent extensive wetland systems that form significant ecological zones throughout the township, creating complex mosaics with forested uplands. Additionally, smaller areas of Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands (bright green areas) appear in select locations. These diverse ecosystems - including marshes, swamps, and peatlands - perform critical environmental functions that benefit both wildlife and the human community.

Wetlands function as natural infrastructure, acting as natural



Wetlands prevent flooding by holding water much like a sponge. By doing so, wetlands help keep creek levels normal and filter and purify the surface water.



Kettle Creek Conservation Authority



Ontario



sponges that absorb excess water during heavy rainfall or snowmelt and slowly release it during drier periods, helping prevent flooding and maintain stable water levels in the Days River, Rapid River, and Tacoosh River systems. They also serve as natural water filtration systems, capturing contaminants and sediments as water moves through wetland vegetation and soils, resulting in cleaner water flowing into streams and groundwater. From a recreation perspective, these wetland systems provide unique opportunities for wildlife viewing, photography, birdwatching, and nature study, offering experiences that connect visitors to the township's natural heritage while supporting diverse wildlife populations.

**Agricultural and Developed Areas:** Agricultural lands including Cultivated Crops (yellow areas) and Hay/Pasture (orange areas) appear as scattered patches throughout the township, primarily in areas with suitable soils and topography. The developed areas (shown in various intensities of red - High, Medium, Low Intensity, and Open Space) are concentrated primarily in and around the community of Rock, reflecting the township's rural settlement pattern with most development clustered in the primary service center.

### Threatened & Endangered Species

Maple Ridge Township's natural areas provide habitat for several threatened and endangered species that require special consideration in recreation planning. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, multiple species with varying levels

## THREATENED & ENDANGERED SPECIES

#### PROPOSED THREATENED



Monarch Butterflies

#### THREATENED



Canada Lynx

#### PROPOSED ENDANGERED



Tricolored Bat

#### ENDANGERED



Gray Wolf



Dwarf Lake Iris & Pitcher's Thistle



Northern Longeared Bat



Ruffa Red Knot

of conservation concern may be present within the township's diverse ecosystems. These species range from proposed threatened status to federally endangered, reflecting the high ecological value of the township's forests, wetlands, and transitional habitats.

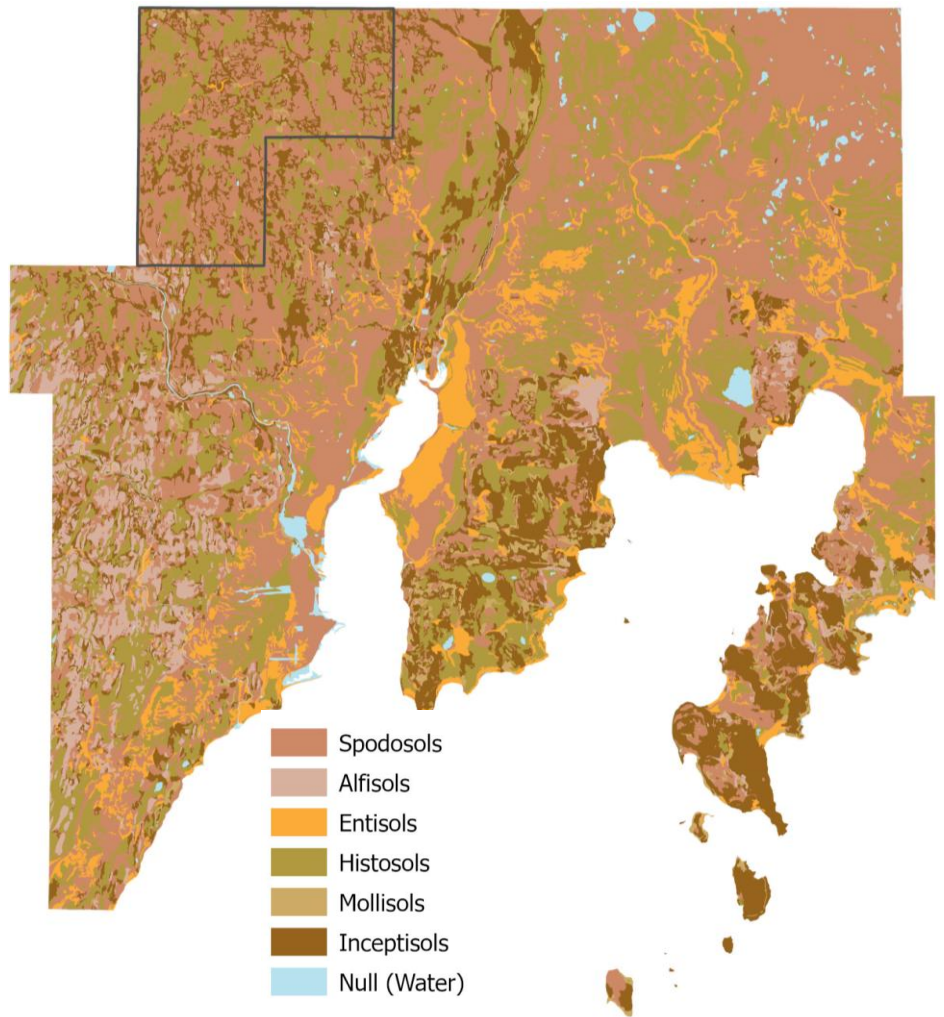
## GEOLOGY & SOILS

Geology and soils provide the foundation for all forms of life and its related activities. The geological foundation of Maple Ridge Township was shaped primarily by glacial processes during the last ice age, which ended approximately 10,000 years ago. Glacial deposits, including till, outwash, and lacustrine sediments, form the parent materials for the township's soils and influence drainage patterns, topography, and vegetation.

Generating an understanding of these baseline layers is critical to developing a well-rounded and feasible vision for future development and preservation measures. The uppermost materials within the township were deposited by glaciers thousands of years ago. These define most topographical features including lakes, valleys, hills, and streams. The primary geologic base within Delta County includes Trenton Limestone.

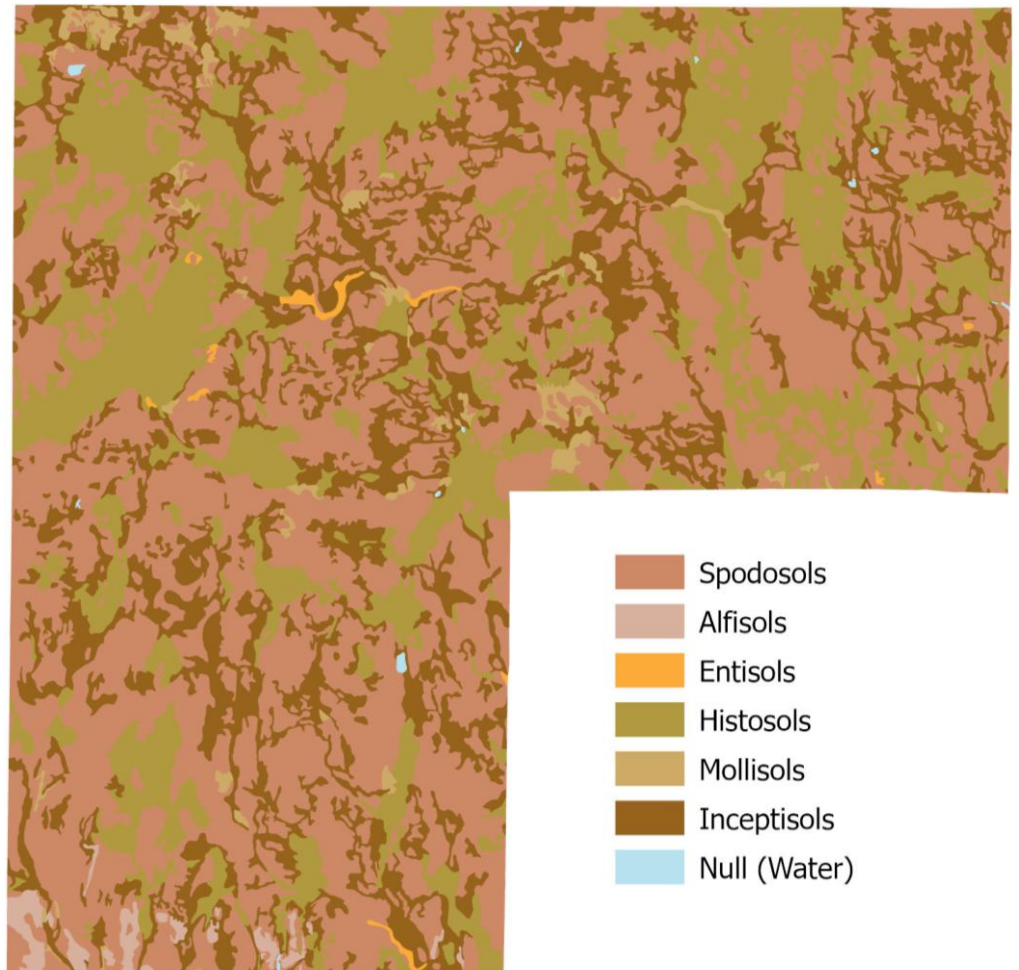
The soil type composition throughout Maple Ridge Township displays a distinct pattern of soil distribution that directly influences both natural ecosystems and recreation development potential:

**Spodosols** (shown in brown) dominate the township's landscape, comprising the majority of soils throughout the central, northern, and western areas. This extensive coverage reflects the township's predominantly forested character, as these acidic forest soils are most prevalent in coniferous and mixed forest areas. The dominance of Spodosols throughout much of the township indicates areas



where careful consideration of drainage and load-bearing capacity will be essential for any facility development.

**Histosols** (shown in olive/yellow-green) occur in distinctive patches concentrated in the township's numerous wetland areas and poorly drained depressions. These organic soils are particularly visible around water bodies and in low-lying areas between ridges, corresponding directly to the Woody Wetlands shown in the land cover analysis. While unsuitable for facility development, these areas provide unique recreational and educational opportunities.



**Inceptisols** (shown in darker brown) occur in smaller, scattered areas throughout the township, often in areas of moderate development potential that may be suitable for certain types of recreation facilities with appropriate site preparation.

**Mollisols** (shown in tan) appear in limited areas but represent the township's most fertile soils. These areas may be well-suited for athletic fields, landscaped recreation areas, and facilities requiring stable, nutrient-rich soils.

**Alfisols** (shown in light brown/tan) appear in significant patches scattered throughout the township, often in transitional zones and areas with better drainage characteristics. These areas represent some of the more favorable locations for recreation facility development due to their moderate fertility and better structural properties.

**Entisols** (shown in orange) appear primarily along waterways and represent young, undeveloped soils. These areas often present challenges for development due to frequent flooding or poor structural properties but may offer opportunities for water access and riparian recreation activities.

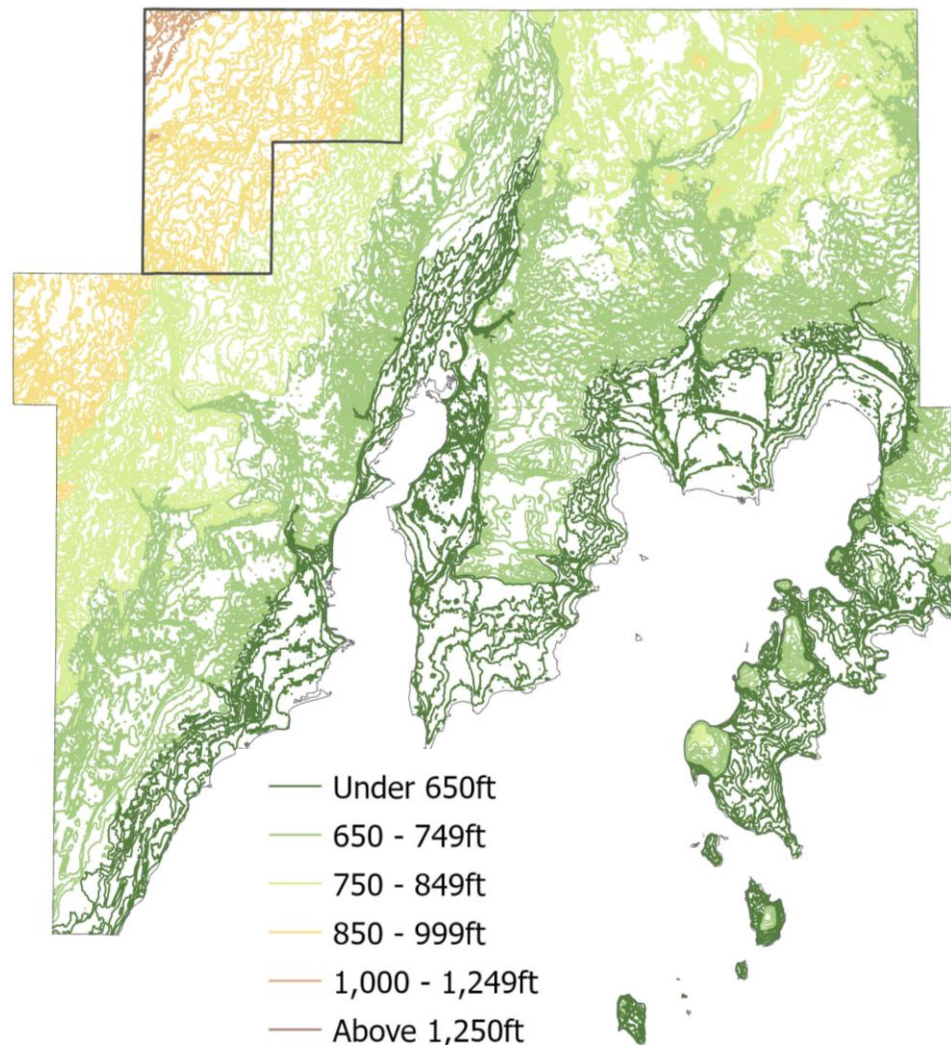
## HYDROLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

Maple Ridge Township's topography reflects the complex glacial history of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, creating a diverse landscape that supports varied recreational opportunities. The topography features varied elevation patterns generally characterized by gently rolling terrain and numerous wetland areas.

Within Delta County's diverse topographic landscape, Maple Ridge Township sits in an area that ranges from lower-lying areas to elevated inland forests.

The western portions of the township typically contain higher elevations, while elevations gradually decrease moving eastward through the township.

This topographic pattern influences drainage patterns and creates the township's characteristic mix of upland and wetland areas.



This varied topography was shaped primarily by glacial processes, creating distinctive landscape features including pothole wetlands formed in glacial depressions, elongated ridges following former ice movement patterns, and outwash plains where glacial meltwater deposited sediments. The resulting terrain creates natural drainage patterns that feed the township's extensive network of streams and wetlands while providing diverse recreational opportunities from water-based activities to upland hiking and wildlife observation.

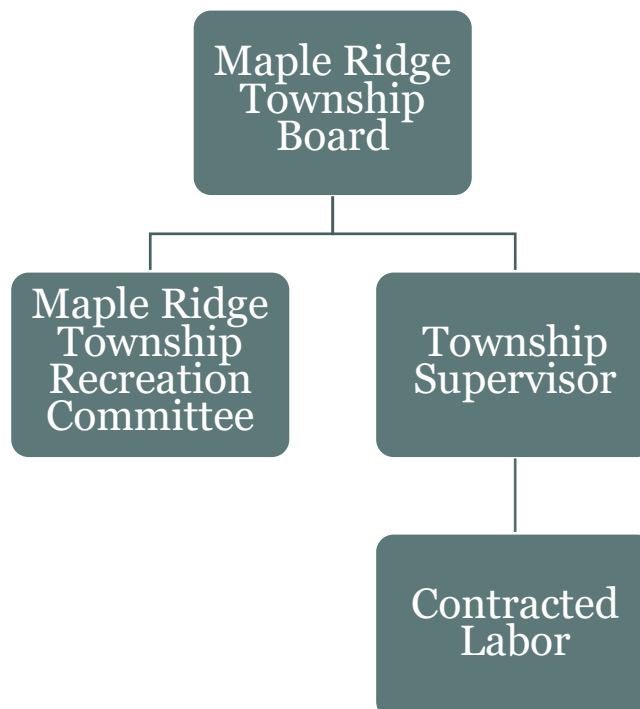
# Section 4

## ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Under Public Act 156 of 1917, the Maple Ridge Township Board appointed the Maple Ridge Township Recreation Committee to be responsible for parks and recreation planning and development. The Maple Ridge Township Recreation Committee is comprised of seven (7) members whose residences, interests and backgrounds present a strong representative view of the Township's overall population. The Committee meets on an as needed basis to formulate, update, review and submit input on the five-year plan.

The Township Board is ultimately responsible for the maintenance of the recreation facilities. This five-member elected governing body is responsible for the implementation of the recreation capital improvement program to ensure limited funds available are spent on projects that produce maximum benefits to the entire community. The Township Board hires seasonal employees to mow the grass, pick up litter, remove snow and other general maintenance duties at the township facilities. Funds for wages and supplies come from the Township's general fund.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



# BUDGET INFORMATION

Any expenses needed for supplies come from the Township's General Fund. The Township Board has the authority to commit funds for parks and recreation, accept grants and purchase land on behalf of the community.

The Township's recreation funding primarily comes from the General Fund, with specific recreation allocations varying year by year.

## The General Fund amounts overtime:

FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
\$190,366	\$157,207	\$240,103	\$213,137	\$217,470

## Township recreation expenses:

	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
<b>Grounds</b>					
Mowing	\$6,000	\$6,500	\$6,500	\$6,500	\$6,500
Snow Removal	\$400	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
Maintenance	\$2,500	\$3,000	\$1,600	\$7,349	\$3,200
<b>Recreation</b>					
Supplies	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,170
Utilities	\$1,600	\$1,800	\$1,800	\$1,800	\$1,800
Improvements	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$1,500	\$2,600	\$3,000

# VOLUNTEERS/COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The area Little League organization helps maintain the ballfields during the playing season. Funds for supplies come from the Township’s general fund. The Township is willing to work with a variety of volunteer groups to improve recreational opportunities in the Township.

A local music in the park group organizes and promotes a summer concert series at the West Side Park. This is funded primarily through fundraising efforts and community foundation grants.

School clubs such as the National Honors Society, Key Club, and Ecology Club volunteer to help maintain township parks as a means to gain community service hours. This relationship has been a very positive one for the township.

# Section 5

## RECREATION INVENTORY

### PARK CLASSIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has developed standards to help measure existing recreation systems and provide baseline standards for equitable park access. A typical park and recreation system offers one park for every 2,323 residents served, with 10.4 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Due to its lower density population, Michigan's Upper Peninsula tends toward having a higher acreage of parkland per resident.

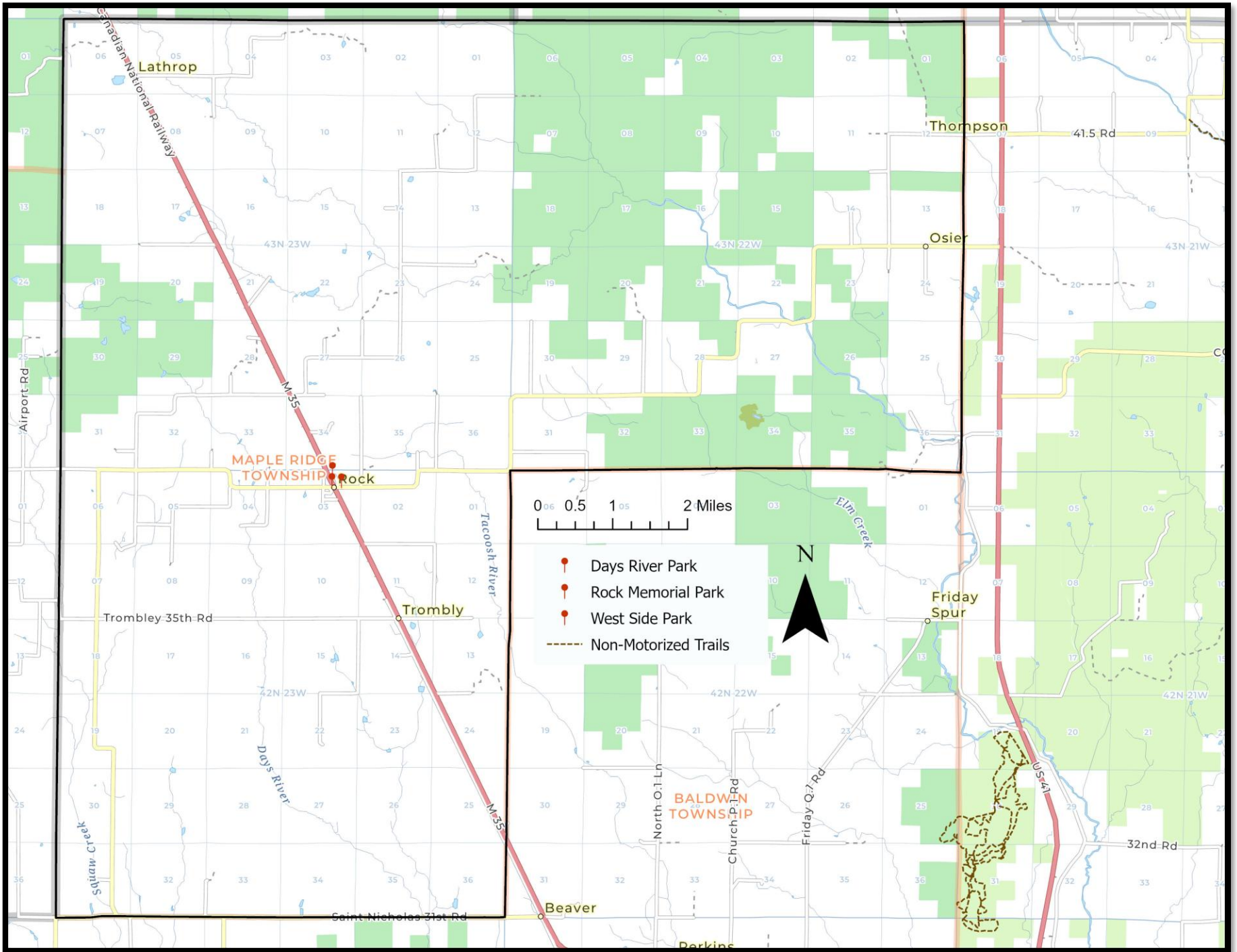
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>Service Area (radius)</b>	<b>Size (Acres)</b>	<b>Acres/1,000 pop</b>	<b>Uses</b>
<i>Mini-Park</i>	<1/4 mi	1 or less	0.25 to 0.5	Specialized facilities serving concentrated population
<i>Neighborhood Park</i>	1/4 to 1/2 mi	15+	1 to 2	Areas for intense recreation activities
<i>Community Park</i>	1 to 2 mi	25+	8 to 10	Areas for diverse recreation activities
<i>Regional Park</i>	1 hr drive	200+	5 to 10	Large natural areas for outdoor recreation

### MAPLE RIDGE TOWNSHIP RECREATION ANALYSIS

Using NRPA standards as a framework, we can evaluate Maple Ridge Township's current recreation facilities. With a population of 694 residents, the township provides two developed park facilities that serve different neighborhood needs: Rock Memorial Park functions as a neighborhood park with community gathering spaces and playground facilities, while the West Side Park serves as a specialized facility for its immediate neighborhood and community events.

While NRPA standards suggest certain acreage ratios, these metrics were developed primarily for urban and suburban communities. Rural communities like Maple Ridge Township often function differently, with residents having access to abundant natural areas and regional recreational facilities.

The following inventory details both township-owned facilities and other recreational resources available to residents.



# TOWNSHIP-OWNED RECREATION FACILITIES

## ROCK MEMORIAL PARK



### Facility Description

**Location:** East Rock across from the Firehall

**Size:** Approx. 1.5 acres

**Type:** Neighborhood Park

#### Features:

- Ball Diamond
- Tennis/Basketball court
- Playground equipment
- Pavilion
- Picnic area
- Open space
- Paved parking area
- Benches
- ADA accessible restroom
- Veteran's Memorial
- Water supply
- Internet Access

### Accessibility Assessment

**ADA Rating:** 3 out of 5

#### Key Issues:

- Playground equipment lacks proper safety surfacing
- Some amenities not connected by accessible pathways
- Additional accessible parking improvements needed



# WEST SIDE PARK

## Facility Description

**Location:** West Rock, directly off M-35

**Type:** Mini-Park

**Features:**

- Pavilion
- Gazebo
- Benches
- Township Christmas Tree
- Electricity
- Parking
- Water supply
- Parking

## Accessibility Assessment

**ADA Rating:** 3 out of 5

**Key Issues:**

- Improvements needed for accessible routes
- Additional seating and shade needed
- Accessible parking improvements needed
- No ADA compliant restrooms available at the site



# DAYS RIVER PARK

## Facility Description

**Location:** Rock, directly off M-35

**Type:** Mini-Park

**Features:**

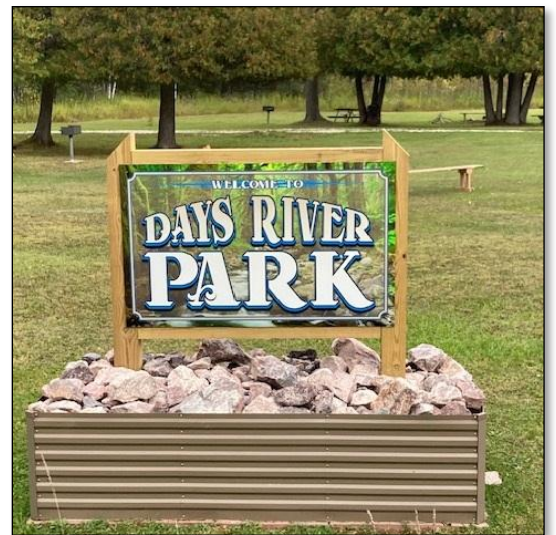
- Playground equipment
- Grills
- Outhouses
- Picnic tables

## Accessibility Assessment

**ADA Rating:** 3 out of 5

**Key Issues:**

- Shelter or sun shading needed
- No ADA compliant restrooms available at the site
- No safety features by the river



# PROGRAMMING

Maple Ridge Township's recreation programming leverages its facilities through community partnerships and volunteer involvement.

## West Side Park Events

The West Side Park hosts a popular summer concert series, called “Rock the Park” on Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8:30 PM. This well-attended program brings the community together for outdoor entertainment and social gathering. The new pavilion enhances this programming by providing improved facilities for performers and attendees.

## Community Partnerships

The area Little League organization helps maintain the ball fields at Rock Memorial Park during the playing season, with maintenance supplies provided through the Township's general fund.

## Volunteer Programs

Several local school organizations contribute to park maintenance and improvement:

- National Honor Society
- Key Club
- Ecology Club
- Robotics Club



These student volunteers help maintain township parks while gaining valuable community service hours. This partnership has proven particularly beneficial for both the township and participating students.

## Holiday Celebrations

West Side Park serves as a focal point for community gatherings, particularly during the holiday season with its Township Christmas Tree serving as a centerpiece for winter festivities.

The Township is open to expanding its recreation programming through additional partnerships with volunteer groups and community organizations.

# OTHER RECREATION RESOURCES IN MAPLE RIDGE

## Escanaba River State Park

**Location:** Located across Alger, Delta, Marquette and Menominee Counties

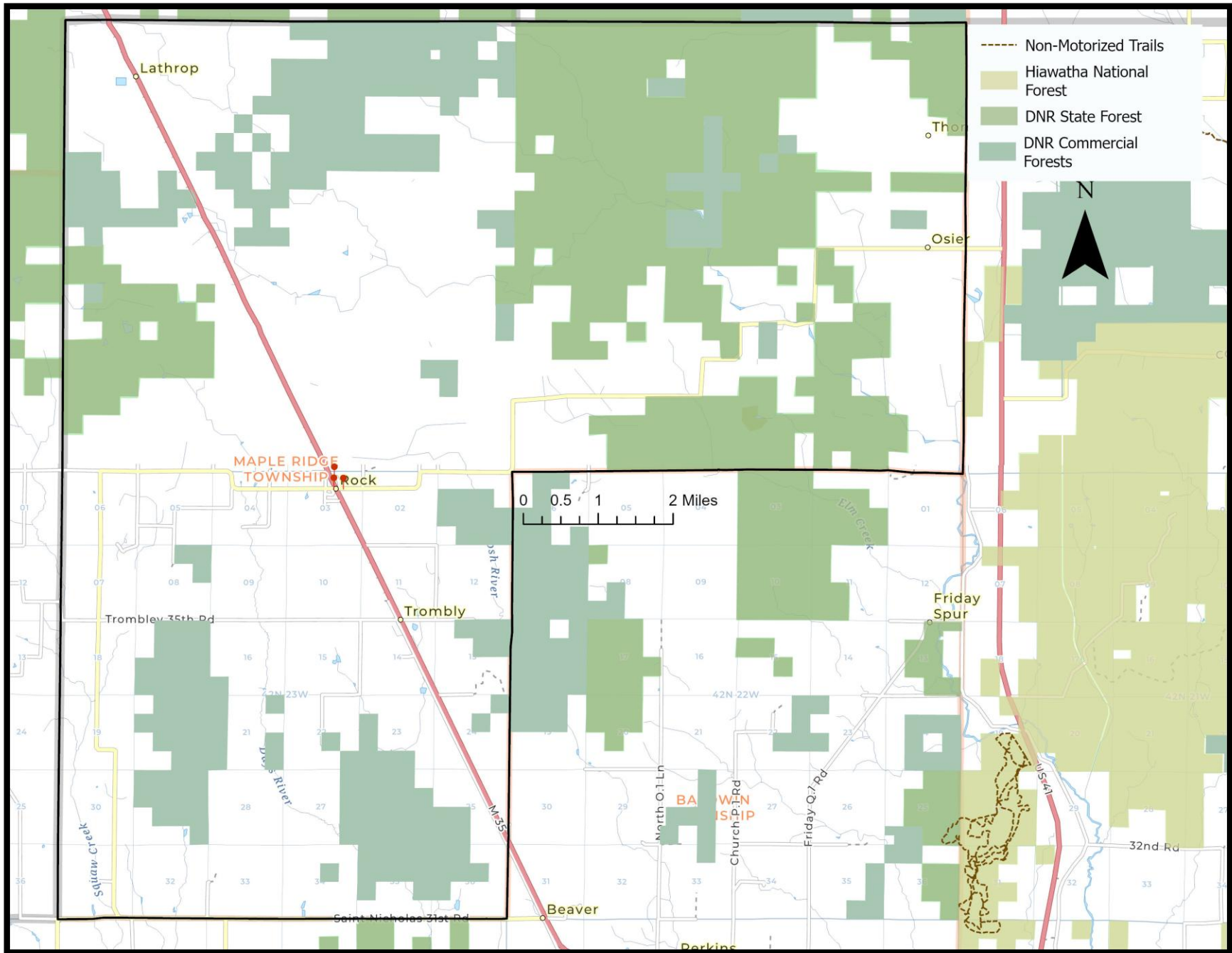
**Maintained by:** Michigan Department of Natural Resources

# REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORKS & NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

TRAIL NAME/TYPE	LOCATION
<b>RAPID RIVER CROSS COUNTRY SKI TRAIL NETWORK</b>	Masonville Township
<b>EAST BRANCH WHITEFISH RIVER CANOE ROUTE</b>	Masonville Township
<b>BAY DE NOC/GRAND ISLAND TRAIL</b>	Masonville Township
<b>DNR ORV/SNOWMOBILE TRAILS</b>	Baldwin & Brampton Township

## NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL GAP

Maple Ridge Township currently has no dedicated non-motorized trails, pathways, or bicycle infrastructure. The township's recreation system consists entirely of traditional park amenities without any connecting trails or dedicated walking/biking paths. This represents a significant gap in local recreation infrastructure, particularly given the township's abundant natural areas that could support trail development and residents' expressed interest in nature-based recreation opportunities.



# Section 6

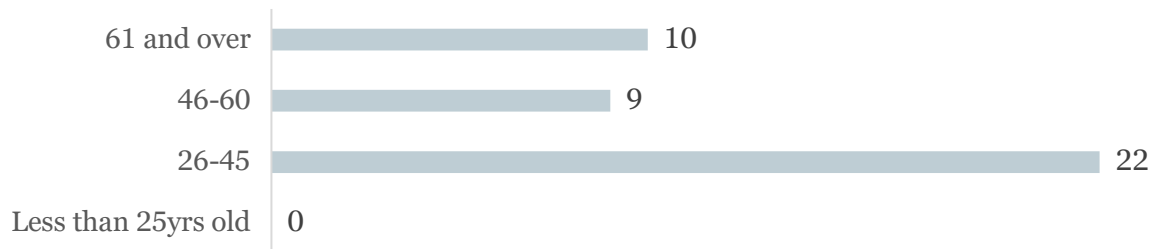
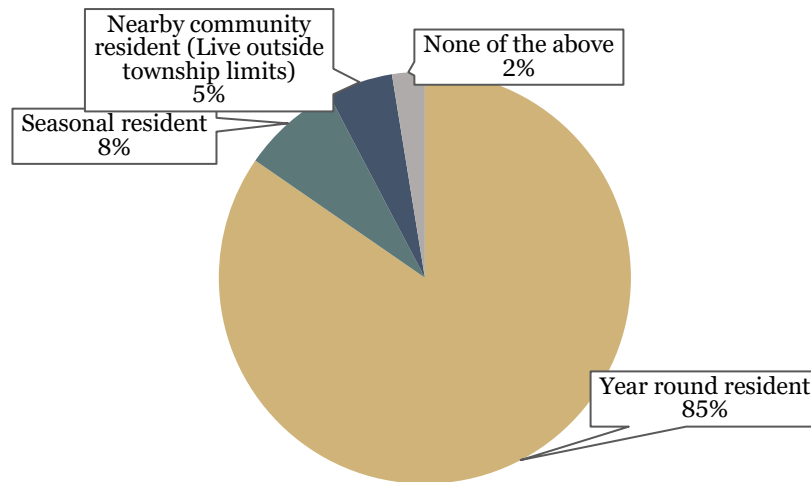
## COMMENTS & ISSUES SCOPING

### COMMUNITY INPUT

A community survey was administered at the beginning of the planning process. The survey was distributed online via SurveyMonkey and was advertised through township communications, the local newspaper, and on the Delta County website. There were 41 completed surveys received and processed. The input received is illustrated in this chapter and helped define the township's priorities for future parks and recreation endeavors.

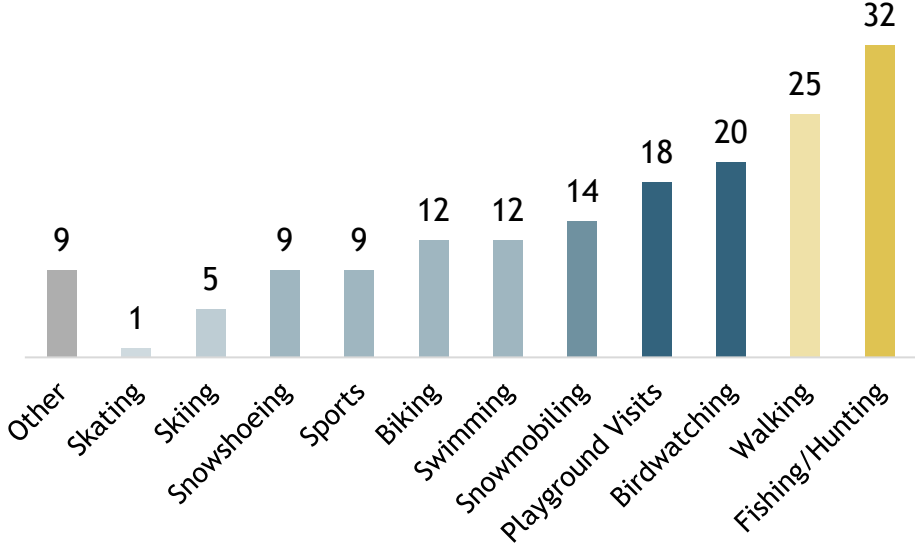
### WHO TOOK THE SURVEY?

**Of the 41 survey respondents:**



# CURRENT RECREATION ACTIVITIES

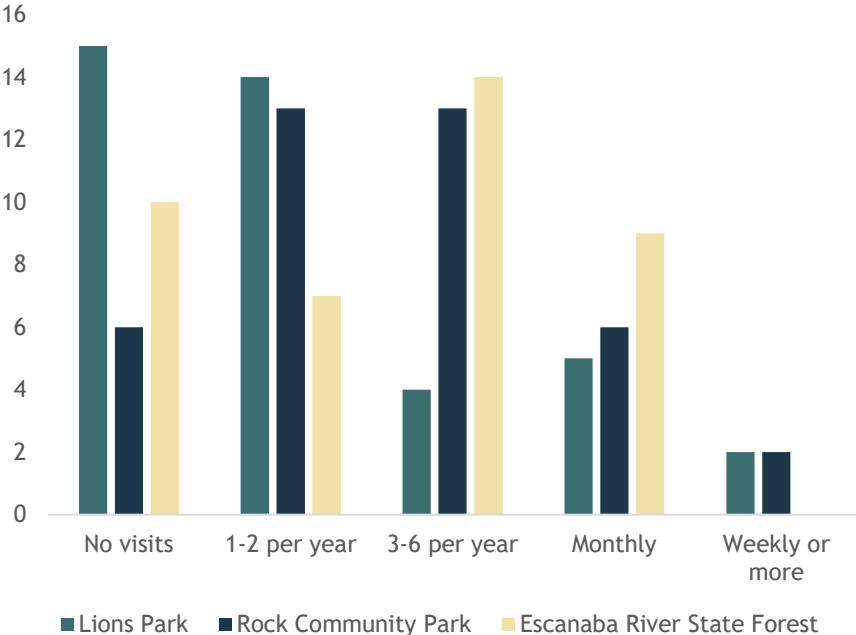
The most popular activities among respondents were:



More than half of all respondents selected Hiking/Walking on trails. Almost 80% of respondents selected hunting/fishing, making it by far the most popular recreational activity of survey respondents.

Other responses included golfing, camping, gardening and ORV riding.

# FACILITY USAGE



Residents were asked about their current usage of recreational facilities in Maple Ridge Township. Specifically, the Rock Memorial Park, Days River Park (formerly known as, and referred to in the survey as Lions Park, Rock), and the Escanaba River State Forest. Rock Community Park is the most frequently used facility, with 54% of respondents visiting at least 3-6 times per year.

Days River Park (called Lions Park in the results) shows the highest rate of non-use (32% never visit), but those who do use it tend to be younger families/residents. Most regular users (monthly or more) are in the 26-45 age group.

Several respondents indicated they would use facilities more if they were updated or better maintained, particularly those in the 26-45 age group with children.

## WHAT RESIDENTS VALUE

Several common themes emerged when residents were asked what they value about recreation in Maple Ridge Township:

*"Safe, clean playground & park"*

*"Living in a rural area, it's important to have recreational opportunities right in our hometown"*

*"Friendly people, Family oriented"*

*"Peaceful and clean"*

*"Ability to do this opportunity without having to drive"*

*"Country setting; not many people"*

## WHAT RESIDENTS WANT TO CHANGE

When asked what they would like to change about recreation in Maple Ridge Township, residents shared various suggestions, often including a desire to have more diverse activities, better maintenance, and improved facilities:

*"A walking/biking path from the center to the park so seniors could walk there simply"*

*"Better toilets at park"*

*"Have more things for kids to do. Also, maybe a league for things like pickleball or summer volleyball"*

*"Offer outdoor movies in the park on an inflatable screen"*

*"More all ages events"*

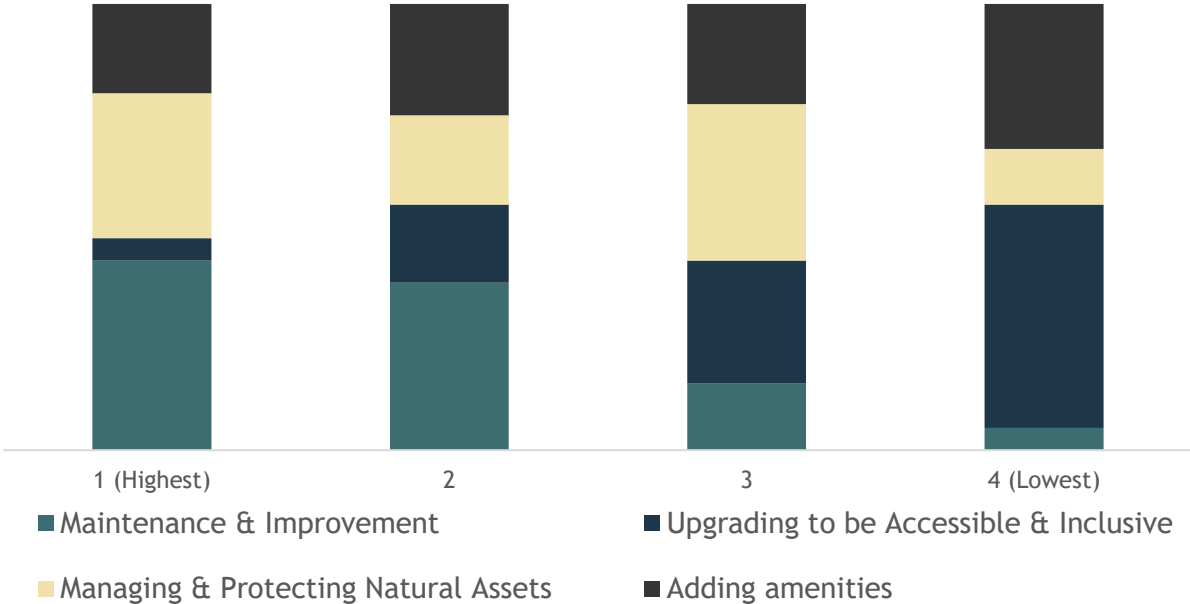
*"They need to increase. The township has several properties it could utilize for hiking, snowshoeing, etc."*

*"Easier access to pickle ball net, work on dam at west rock park, walking trail"*

*"A play set for kids aged 5-10, something for teenagers to do"*

# PRIORITY RANKINGS

Survey respondents ranked their priorities for recreation development:



Almost 50% ranked Maintenance & Improvement as the top priority.

The input received through this process has been incorporated into the goals and objectives of this recreation plan.

## ADDITIONAL PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

In addition to the community survey results detailed above, the township conducted a comprehensive public input process to ensure broad community engagement in the recreation planning process.

## 30-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The draft recreation plan was made available for public review and comment from August 28 to September 30, 2025. The plan was accessible through:

- Township office (during business hours)
- Senior Center
- Rock Community Federal Credit Union
- CUPPAD’s website (<https://cuppad.org>)

Public notice for the comment period was provided through:

- Notice in the Daily Press on Friday, August 29, 2025
- Public bulletin posting at Township Hall and Senior Center
- Social media announcements

## COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING REVIEW PERIOD

There were no comments received during the public review period.

## PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing was held on September 30 at the Township Hall (3892 West Maple Ridge 37<sup>th</sup> road) to gather additional community input on the draft plan. The hearing was advertised through:

- Notice in the Daily Press on August 29, 2025
- Posted notices at Township Hall and Senior Center
- Social media announcements
- Delta County's website (<https://deltacountymi.gov>)

3 community members attended the public hearing. Key discussion points included:

- No comments regarding the recreation plan draft
- Concerns were raised about sufficient outreach in the community
- Establishing a stronger social media presence was discussed

## PLAN ADOPTION

Following the public input period and hearing, the Recreation Plan was presented to the Township Board for adoption on September 30, 2025. The plan was adopted through Resolution No. [X], incorporating public feedback received throughout the process.

*[Note: Complete documentation of public notices, meeting minutes, and adoption materials can be found in Appendix A.]*

# Section 7

## VALUES, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### COMMUNITY VALUES

Based on survey responses and public input, Maple Ridge Township residents particularly value:

- Their quiet, beautiful woodland setting
- Proximity to nature and wildlife
- Family-oriented recreation opportunities
- Clean, safe spaces for recreation
- The ability to enjoy outdoor activities together
- Limited crowds and peaceful surroundings
- Access to year-round outdoor activities

The following goals and objectives emerged from community input and an analysis of existing recreation resources. They reflect both current needs identified through the 2024 community survey and ongoing priorities from previous planning efforts. The township's aging facilities, changing demographics, and strong environmental values shaped these objectives, with particular emphasis on accessibility, maintenance, and preserving natural character.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### GOAL 1: ENHANCE EXISTING PARK FACILITIES

**Primary Objective:** Upgrade Rock Memorial Park, Days River Park, and West Side Park to meet current accessibility standards and community needs while maintaining their established character.

#### **Objectives:**

##### 1.1 Improve Safety and Accessibility at Rock Memorial Park

- Upgrade existing playground equipment while maintaining mix of age-appropriate options
- Add safety surfacing under play equipment (currently placed on grass)
- Improve ball field with new turf, updated signage, batting net, and other facility enhancements
- Enhance accessible routes to ball diamond, tennis/basketball court, and playground

- Upgrade accessible parking area and pathways
- Improve ADA access to pavilion and picnic areas
- Maintain and enhance Veterans Memorial area

#### 1.2 Enhance Safety Infrastructure and Expand Amenities at Days River Park

- Construct a new covered shelter to provide weather protection for park visitors and enhance programming opportunities
- Install comprehensive water safety infrastructure, including strategically placed life ring stations, emergency signage, and improved emergency vehicle access to the riverfront
- Replace existing restroom facilities with new ADA-compliant structures

#### 1.3 Develop West Side Park

- Repair and maintain existing gazebo
- Design complementary amenities around the new pavilion
- Add ADA compliant restrooms
- Enhance grounds for concerts and community events
- Add seating and shade elements
- Consider expanded programming opportunities

#### 1.4 Enhance Support Facilities

- Maintain and improve existing restroom facilities to ensure cleanliness and functionality
- Upgrade and maintain gathering spaces to support multi-generational use
- Implement regular maintenance schedules for all park infrastructure

## GOAL 2: EXPAND RECREATION PROGRAMMING

**Primary Objective:** Develop diverse recreation options that serve all age groups while preserving the township's peaceful character.

### Objectives:

#### 2.1 Support Community Events

- Expand summer concert series utilizing new pavilion
- Partner with local organizations for events
- Create seasonal celebration opportunities
- Develop multi-generational activities

#### 2.2 Establish Volunteer Programs

- Continue to expand partnerships with local school clubs
- Improve communication about recreation opportunities

- Develop new volunteer opportunities for maintenance, event support, and programming

### 2.3 Establish Formal Recreation Committee

- Form a dedicated Recreation Committee to coordinate maintenance schedules and programming across all township parks
- Develop structured volunteer coordination system
- Create maintenance protocols and schedules for all facilities
- Organize community programming and events
- Serve as liaison between community volunteers and township operations

## GOAL 3: ENHANCE NATURE-BASED RECREATION

**Primary Objective:** Create opportunities for residents to enjoy Maple Ridge Township's natural setting through passive recreation. Addressing the township's current lack of dedicated trails and pathways identified in the recreation inventory, this goal prioritizes developing nature-based infrastructure that connects residents to the community's abundant forests, wetlands, and natural areas.

### Objectives:

#### 3.1 Develop Nature-Based Activities

- Create walking paths in appropriate areas
- Install educational signage about local ecology
- Establish native plant gardens
- Create wildlife viewing opportunities
- Consider seasonal nature programs

## IMPLEMENTATION FOCUS

These goals and objectives reflect community feedback and current conditions, focusing on:

- Upgrading existing facilities rather than creating new ones
- Improving accessibility to serve residents of all abilities
- Maintaining natural character that residents value
- Enhancing programming opportunities for all age groups
- Creating multi-generational recreation options that strengthen community bonds

Implementation will build on current assets while preserving the quiet, natural character valued by residents. Projects will be prioritized based on community need, available funding, and the township's capacity to maintain improved facilities over time.

# Section 8

## ACTION PLAN

Looking at the survey feedback, values, and goals, a plan of action was developed for the community's future in recreational facility development and programming. By no means is the chart below a comprehensive list of recreation projects as interests, demographics, and the environment are constantly evolving. The community will continue to revisit their recreation plan within future years and amend these priorities as needed.

## PRIORITY PROJECTS

Project	Description	Elements
Rock Memorial Park Renovation	Complete renovation focusing on safety, accessibility, and improved amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Replace aging playground equipment with modern, inclusive structures</li> <li>- Improve ball field with new turf, updated signage, batting net, and other facility enhancements</li> <li>- Add Pickleball facilities</li> <li>- Construct announcers booth</li> <li>- Install proper safety surfacing under all play equipment</li> <li>- Create accessible pathways to all amenities</li> <li>- Update picnic facilities and seating areas</li> <li>- Repair pavilion</li> <li>- Install security features including security cameras, motion-activated lighting, and other safety infrastructure</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Estimated Cost:</b> <b>\$50,000 - \$500,000</b></p>
West Side Park Development	Complete pavilion project and enhance surrounding area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Install complementary amenities</li> <li>- Improve grounds for events</li> <li>- Add seating areas</li> <li>- Expand parking facilities</li> <li>- Install permanent outhouse</li> <li>- Create accessible pathways</li> <li>- Install appropriate lighting</li> <li>- Enhance landscaping</li> <li>- Incorporate security enhancements (security cameras, motion-activated lighting, etc)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Estimated Cost:</b> <b>\$150,000 - \$250,000</b></p>

## PRIORITY PROJECTS CONT.

Project	Description	Elements
Days River Park Safety & Infrastructure Improvements	Upgrade essential infrastructure and add recreational amenities to improve park functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Install comprehensive water safety features (life ring stations, emergency signage)</li> <li>- Improve emergency vehicle access to riverfront</li> <li>- Replace existing outhouses with ADA-compliant facilities</li> <li>- Construct a small pavilion</li> <li>- Add playground equipment</li> <li>- Add security infrastructure including surveillance cameras, motion-activated lighting, and enhanced safety monitoring systems</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Estimated Cost:</b> <b>\$150,000 - \$350,000</b></p>
Nature Trail/Area Development	Develop nature trail facilities and install wildlife viewing areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluate options for Nature Area development</li> <li>- Install wayfinding signage</li> <li>- Create connections to other facilities</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Estimated Cost:</b> <b>\$25,000 - \$150,000</b></p>
Community Engagement & Coordination Development	Establish formal recreation committee and create programs to maximize facility use and community engagement through coordinated efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Form dedicated Recreation Committee</li> <li>- Develop structured maintenance schedules and volunteer coordination</li> <li>- Continue to expand and support concert series programming</li> <li>- Create seasonal events calendar</li> <li>- Establish nature education activities</li> <li>- Improve facility communications</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Estimated Cost:</b> <b>\$5,000 - \$20,000</b></p>

# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Short-Term (1-2 yrs)	Mid-Term (3-4 yrs)	Long-Term (5+ yrs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete West Side Park pavilion construction</li> <li>- Begin Rock Memorial Park assessment</li> <li>- Begin Days River Park safety and infrastructure improvements</li> <li>- Consider and assess potential locations for Nature area/nature trail</li> <li>- Improve communication methods</li> <li>- Create events schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement major Rock Memorial Park renovations</li> <li>- Develop nature area and trail plans</li> <li>- Expand community programming</li> <li>- Install water safety features at Days River Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete Days River Park facility upgrades</li> <li>- Construct nature area and trail system</li> <li>- Install educational and wayfinding signage</li> <li>- Complete all other planned improvements to recreation facilities</li> <li>- Address emerging needs</li> <li>- Consider additional recreation opportunities</li> <li>- Plan for future updates</li> </ul>

## PROJECT FUNDING SOURCES

Potential Grant Sources:	Local Funding Sources:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)</li> <li>- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)</li> <li>- Recreation Passport Grants</li> <li>- Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Transportation Alternatives Program</li> <li>- Delta County Community Foundation</li> <li>- The Michigan Health Endowment Fund</li> <li>- The Delta Conservation District</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Township General Fund allocations (current primary source)</li> <li>- Community fundraising initiatives</li> <li>- Potential partnerships with local organizations</li> <li>- Donations</li> </ul>

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibility
Township Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overall project oversight</li> <li>- Funding decisions</li> <li>- Grant application approval</li> </ul>
Township Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintenance oversight</li> <li>- Work planning and direction</li> </ul>
Recreation Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grant identification &amp; writing</li> <li>- Project maintenance</li> <li>- Planning recommendations</li> <li>- Community engagement</li> <li>- Project input</li> <li>- Programming suggestions</li> </ul>
Seasonal Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular maintenance</li> <li>- Basic repairs</li> <li>- Grounds keeping</li> </ul>

# PROJECT PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA

When implementing these projects, the township will consider:

**Immediate Priority:**

- Safety concerns requiring urgent attention
- Accessibility compliance issues
- Infrastructure failures

**High Priority:**

- Projects with confirmed grant funding
- High community impact improvements
- Cost-effective maintenance solutions

**Medium Priority:**

- Enhancements that improve programming capacity
- Projects requiring significant fundraising
- Expansions of existing successful programs

## BASIS FOR ACTION

The Action Plan outlined in this document is grounded in community input, demographic analysis, facility assessments, and careful consideration of available resources. Community survey results strongly support the proposed facility improvements, with maintenance and improvement ranked as top priorities. The community's feedback reflects a clear desire for updated play equipment, enhanced gathering spaces, improved accessibility, and better safety infrastructure while maintaining the natural character that makes Maple Ridge Township special.

Demographic trends support these priorities. Maple Ridge Township has experienced population decline, from 834 residents in 1990 to 694 in 2020. However, the township maintains a significant proportion of households with children (19% of households) while simultaneously serving a growing retirement-age population. Additionally, approximately 18% of residents have a disability, emphasizing the critical importance of accessibility improvements at current facilities.

The township's existing facilities present both opportunities and challenges. Rock Memorial Park serves as the community's primary recreation facility, offering a variety of amenities including a ball diamond, tennis/basketball court, playground equipment, pavilion, and Veterans Memorial. However, some features require updating, particularly regarding safety and accessibility. West Side Park, with its planned pavilion development, presents an opportunity to enhance community gathering spaces and expand programming. Days River Park requires significant safety and infrastructure improvements, including water safety features, ADA-compliant restrooms, and shelter facilities to serve the community effectively.

A critical gap identified through the recreation inventory is the complete absence of non-motorized trail infrastructure. Maple Ridge Township currently has no dedicated trails, pathways, or bicycle infrastructure, despite hiking/walking on trails being selected by more than half of all survey respondents as a desired recreational activity—making it the most commonly requested amenity. This represents a significant disconnect between community needs and available facilities, particularly given the township's abundant natural resources that could support trail development.

This infrastructure gap takes on strategic importance when viewed within regional planning context. The MDOT Superior Region Active Transportation Plan and Investment Strategy (2022-2030) identifies Delta County as containing 165.8 facility miles of non-motorized infrastructure, yet Maple Ridge Township contributes zero miles to this regional network. This positioning creates both a challenge and an opportunity: while residents currently lack local trail access, the township is exceptionally well-positioned to leverage regional planning initiatives and associated funding opportunities to address this deficiency.

Survey responses and facility assessments indicate strong support for:

- Improving existing facilities before developing new ones
- Updating playground equipment and safety infrastructure
- Enhancing accessibility across all park facilities
- Developing nature-based trail infrastructure that connects residents to the community's natural areas
- Creating multi-generational recreation options
- Supporting community events and programming
- Maintaining natural character

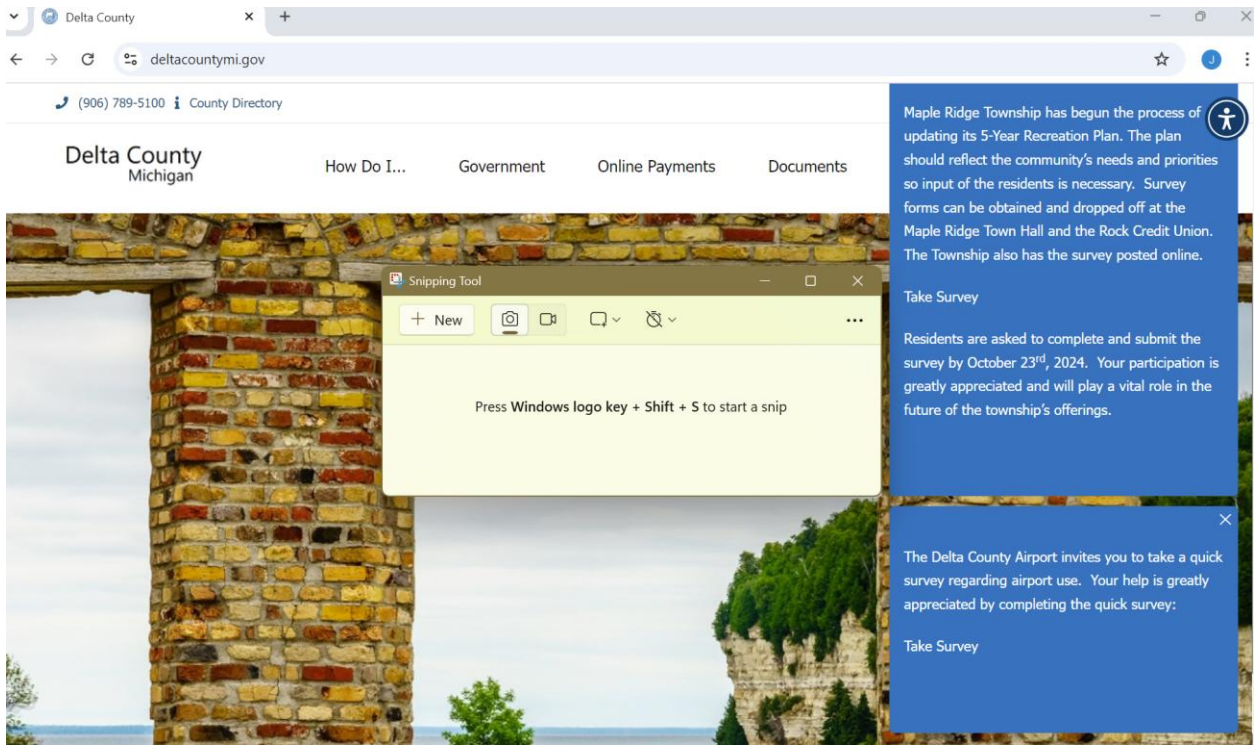
The implementation of these projects will necessarily be balanced against available resources and opportunities. The township must consider maintenance capabilities, potential funding sources, and partnership opportunities when prioritizing projects. Decisions about project timing and scope will be influenced by:

- Available grant opportunities, particularly for safety and accessibility improvements
- Demonstrated community support through continued public engagement
- Maintenance capacity and operational sustainability
- Potential impact on community needs and safety
- Partnership opportunities with local organizations and volunteers
- Alignment with regional planning initiatives that enhance funding eligibility

To ensure this plan remains relevant and responsive, the township will review it regularly and adjust priorities based on emerging opportunities and changing community needs. This process will help maximize the impact of available resources while maintaining focus on the community's core recreation priorities.

# Appendix A

## PUBLIC NOTICE & COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS



# Maple Ridge Township wants input on plan

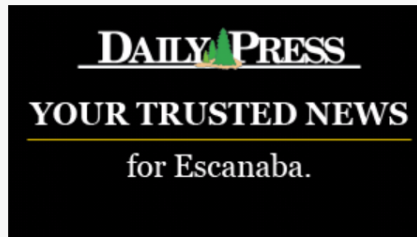
LOCAL NEWS

OCT 11, 2024

 SHARE  TWEET



ROCK — Maple Ridge Township has begun the process of updating its 5-Year Recreation Plan. The plan should reflect the community’s needs and priorities so input of the residents is necessary. Survey forms can be obtained and dropped off at the Maple Ridge Town Hall and the Rock Credit Union. The township also has the survey posted online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/B6WJDMX>.



# Appendix B

## GRANT HISTORY

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Maple Ridge Township has successfully secured and implemented several recreation grants over the past decades. This history of grant funding demonstrates both the township's commitment to recreation improvements and its capacity to manage grant projects effectively.

## MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (MDNR) GRANTS

### Memorial Park Upgrades and Renovations

- Application Number: RP12-460
- Grant Amount: \$30,600.00
- Year: 2012
- Status: Closed
- Project Scope: Development included ADA-compliant outdoor restroom facility and renovations to the tennis/basketball court and parking lot

### Rock Community Pavilion

- Application Number: 26-01506
- Grant Amount: \$10,298.92
- Year: 1991
- Status: Closed
- Project Scope: Construction of pavilion with electrical service, volleyball court, picnic equipment, playground equipment, and LWCF sign

## REGIONAL GRANTS

### Prosperous Places Mini-Grant

- Year: 2016
- Source: Regional Prosperity Council (administered by CUPPAD)
- Project Location: West Side Park

- Project Scope:
  - Gazebo foundation installation
  - Addition of park benches
  - Parking improvements
  - Landscaping enhancements

This grant history demonstrates the township's successful track record in securing and implementing recreation improvement projects. The completed projects continue to serve township residents, providing foundation for current recreation offerings.

# Appendix C

## UNIVERSAL ACCESS DESIGN GUIDELINES

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The following guidelines are based on the standards provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for creating accessible recreation facilities. These guidelines should be consulted when planning improvements to existing facilities or developing new recreation areas.

### GENERAL ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

- Minimum clear width of 36" for accessible routes
- Surface changes no greater than 1/4"
- Slopes less than 5%
- Firm and stable surfaces
- Head clearance of 80" minimum
- Clear space: minimum 30" wide by 48" deep at elements
- Maneuvering space: 60"x60" minimum at entries and direction changes

### TRAILS & PATHWAYS

- Walkways within a site: minimum 6-foot width, slopes under 2%
- Multi-use trails: minimum 8-foot width to allow side-by-side walking or passing
- Surface treatment: unitary surface (concrete, asphalt, stabilized aggregate)
- Intersections: contrasting colors/textures to indicate changes
- Regular rest areas with benches
- Clear signage and wayfinding
- Accessible amenities along routes (benches, drinking fountains)

### PLAYGROUNDS

- Both ramp and transfer access to play components
- Unitary safety surface (poured-in-place or rubber tiles)
- Transfer platforms at slides and climber entry/exit points
- Variety of accessible ground-level components

- High contrast colors to indicate level changes
- Accessible routes to all play areas
- Accessible seating nearby

## SPORTS FACILITIES & COURTS

- Accessible routes to both sides of fields/courts
- Accessible seating areas at various viewing locations
- Accessible gates wide enough for sports wheelchairs
- Clear space around all equipment and amenities
- Level surfaces throughout play areas

## PICNIC AREAS

- Accessible tables with extended tops or clear side space
- Firm surfaces around all amenities
- Accessible grills and fire rings
- Clear space on all sides of elements
- Connected to accessible pathways

## PARKING & ACCESS

- Proper number of accessible spaces
- Direct connection to accessible routes
- Located near facility entrances
- Clear signage and markings
- Level transitions to walkways

The DNR uses the following accessibility grading system for parks and recreation facilities:

1. None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
2. Some facilities meet accessibility guidelines
3. Most facilities meet accessibility guidelines
4. The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
5. The entire park was developed using the principles of universal design

# Appendix D

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## SUPERIOR REGION NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL PLAN INTEGRATION OVERVIEW AND SIGNIFICANCE

The MDOT Superior Region Active Transportation Plan and Investment Strategy (2022-2030) provides a comprehensive framework for non-motorized transportation development across Michigan's Upper Peninsula, including specific provisions that directly benefit Maple Ridge Township residents. This regional plan, developed collaboratively by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and regional planning agencies including the Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region (CUPPAD), establishes strategic connections that enhance recreational opportunities and transportation options for township residents.

## REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORKS ACCESSIBLE TO MAPLE RIDGE TOWNSHIP

### IRON BELLE TRAIL SYSTEM

**Current Status:** The Iron Belle Trail bicycle route currently follows US-2/US-41 through the southern portion of Delta County, providing regional connections approximately 15-20 miles south of Maple Ridge Township through communities like Rapid River and Escanaba.

**Regional Significance:** As part of Michigan's signature statewide trail system connecting Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood in the western Upper Peninsula, the Iron Belle Trail provides Maple Ridge Township residents with access to:

Long-distance bicycle touring opportunities via connections through Rapid River or Escanaba

Regional economic and tourism networks

Connections to other trail systems throughout the Upper Peninsula

**Access for Maple Ridge Township:** Residents can access the Iron Belle Trail system via M-35 southbound connections to US-2/US-41 corridors, with the closest access points in the Rapid River and Escanaba areas.

## US BICYCLE ROUTE 10 (USBR-10)

**Route:** Officially designated national bicycle route following US-2/US-41 through the southern portion of Delta County

**Regional Connection:** Part of the national bicycle route system providing transcontinental cycling connections

**Access for Maple Ridge Township:** While USBR-10 does not pass directly through Maple Ridge Township, residents can access this designated bicycle touring route via M-35 connections southward to the US-2/US-41 corridor.

## HIDDEN COAST HERITAGE TRAIL (M-35)

**Designation:** Pure Michigan Scenic Byway with Heritage Trail designation along the Lake Michigan coast

**Route:** The Hidden Coast Heritage Trail designation follows M-35 from Menominee to Escanaba along the Lake Michigan coast. M-35 continues north from Escanaba through the rural interior (including through Maple Ridge Township), but this northern portion is not part of the Heritage Trail designation.

**Regional Significance:** The Heritage Trail designation provides tourism and recreation value for the Lake Michigan coastal segment, and M-35 serves as a key regional connector from the Heritage Trail area northward through communities like Maple Ridge Township.

**Future Improvements:** The regional plan identifies M-35 shoulder improvements as needed for various segments, which would benefit all M-35 users including Maple Ridge Township residents traveling to access the Heritage Trail designation areas or other regional destinations.

## PRIORITY PROJECTS AFFECTING MAPLE RIDGE TOWNSHIP

The Superior Region plan identifies several priority projects that will enhance non-motorized transportation access for Maple Ridge Township residents:

### M-35 SAFETY AND ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

**Project Location:** The M-35 corridor, including segments that pass through or adjacent to Maple Ridge Township.

**Improvements:** Proposed separated shared use pathway or expanded signs and paved shoulder improvements

**Direct Benefits to Maple Ridge Township:**

- **Immediate Safety Benefits:** Enhanced safety for residents traveling along M-35, which provides direct access to West Side Park and serves as a primary township corridor
- Improved bicycle access to Lake Michigan recreation areas to the south
- Better connections to Escanaba's municipal facilities and services
- Enhanced access to existing City of Escanaba trail networks

## US-2 CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENTS

**Project Location:** Rapid River and broader US-2/US-41 corridor south of Maple Ridge Township

**Improvements:** Dedicated bike lanes, signage, and paved shoulder improvements

**Benefits:** Enhanced regional connections for township residents traveling south to access Iron Belle Trail and USBR-10 networks, improved safety for east-west regional travel

## REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY PROJECTS

**CR 426 Improvements:** Proposed shoulder and surface improvements connecting Escanaba to Cornell, providing alternative routes that could benefit Maple Ridge Township residents seeking connections to regional trail networks.

## ALIGNMENT WITH MAPLE RIDGE TOWNSHIP

### RECREATION PRIORITIES

## SUPPORTING TOWNSHIP GOALS

The Superior Region plan directly supports several priorities identified in Maple Ridge Township's recreation planning:

**Enhanced Connectivity:** Regional trail connections provide township residents with expanded recreation opportunities beyond municipal boundaries, addressing the rural township's need for diverse recreational access.

**Safety Improvements:** Proposed shoulder widening and safety enhancements along regional corridors provide safer non-motorized transportation options for residents traveling to regional destinations.

**Multi-Season Recreation:** The plan's emphasis on year-round facilities complements the township's goal of providing diverse recreational opportunities throughout all seasons.

**Nature-Based Recreation:** Regional trail connections provide access to extensive natural areas, supporting the township's objective of enhancing nature-based recreational opportunities.

## ECONOMIC AND TOURISM BENEFITS

Regional trail development supports Maple Ridge Township's economic interests by:

- **Increasing Property Values:** Proximity to regional trail networks enhances property desirability
- **Supporting Local Business:** Trail users often require services such as food, lodging, and supplies
- **Promoting Tourism:** Regional connections bring visitors through the township area
- **Grant Funding Opportunities:** Projects aligned with regional planning receive priority consideration for state and federal funding

## IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES

### FUNDING ADVANTAGES

Alignment with the Superior Region plan provides Maple Ridge Township with several funding advantages:

- **Enhanced Grant Eligibility:** Projects identified in the regional plan receive priority consideration for state and federal transportation funding
- **Technical Assistance:** Access to MDOT expertise and resources for project development
- **Regional Coordination:** Opportunities to partner with neighboring communities for larger, more impactful projects

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS

The township should consider developing connections that enhance regional trail access:

- **Trailhead Facilities:** Development of parking and information facilities to support regional trail users

- **Local Connections:** Creating safe routes connecting township parks to regional trail access points
- **Wayfinding Systems:** Installing signage that connects local recreation facilities to regional trail networks

## FUTURE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

### NATURE TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

When developing the township's proposed nature trail system, consider connections to regional networks that would:

- Provide loops connecting local trails to regional routes
- Create multi-day recreation opportunities
- Enhance the township's appeal to regional trail users

### PROGRAMMING OPPORTUNITIES

Regional trail connections create opportunities for:

- Hosting trail-related events and programming
- Developing partnership programs with regional trail organizations
- Creating educational programs about regional natural and cultural history

## ONGOING COORDINATION AND UPDATES

The Superior Region plan is maintained as a living document with regular updates. CUPPAD maintains current information and project updates at <https://cuppad.org/non-motorized/>, providing Maple Ridge Township with access to:

- Current project information and timelines
- Funding opportunity announcements
- Regional coordination opportunities
- Updated bicycle maps and route information

This regional planning framework provides Maple Ridge Township with a robust foundation for developing its non-motorized transportation connections while ensuring alignment with state transportation goals and maximizing opportunities for funding and regional cooperation. The comprehensive approach to safety, connectivity, and multi-modal transportation directly supports the recreation and transportation priorities identified by township residents and enhances the community's long-term recreational and economic development potential.