Chapter 9
Goals, Strategies, & Action Items
The five goals identified in the following section define the over-arching direction for the St. Joseph County Parks and Recreation Department for the next five years. The goals focus on short-term and long-term approaches spanning all facets of the parks system from natural resources to administration and facilities. Also outlined are specific strategies to achieve each goal.

These goals and strategies were defined through the master planning process. They:
- Reflect the department’s mission and philosophy
- Respond to the expressed needs and desires of the community
- Align with important feedback from parks staff, parks board, and stakeholder groups
- Respond to the anticipated constraints and opportunities for the next five years

While many of the strategies in this section can be funded with the current and projected operating budget, others will require other funding sources such as grants and/or donations to achieve. The Action Plan which follows assigns a proposed time line and potential funding sources for each strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST. JOSEPH COUNTY PARKS 2019-2023 GOALS AND STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Protect and Enhance County Natural and Cultural Resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Reduce invasive and non-native species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Control nuisance wildlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Enact sustainability initiatives throughout all programming, maintenance, and development efforts</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 Protect and maintain health of local water resources and contributing areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.5 Protect and maintain health of existing park natural and cultural resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.6 Add park land where it aligns with St. Joseph County Parks’ goals and values</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**2. Reinforce Activities and Programs that Highlight the Connection Between Nature, Public Health, and/or Economic Development** |
- Create/evaluate programs that combine nature and the different facets of health |
- Create and maintain partnerships for planning and initiatives |
- Create/maintain partnerships for programs, activities, and events |
- Promote/market activities, programs, and events that emphasize this goal |
- Upgrade and implement new technology |

**3. Develop Administration, Staffing, and Succession Plan(s)** |
- Create a training and development plan for leadership and staff |
- Develop strategies for the Parks Foundation Board and future Parks Boards |
- Focus on employee culture |
- Expand volunteerism strategically |
- Relieve stressed staff positions |
- Leverage new and existing revenue streams |

**4. Improve and Update Existing Park Facilities and Equipment** |
- Upgrade buildings and shelters |
- Develop plan for re-use or demolition of amphitheater |
- Maintain roads and utility infrastructure |
- Purchase new vehicles and equipment for maintenance and other park-related activities |
- Improve accessibility and universal design implementation |
- Develop new, unique amenities |
- Maintain/enhance existing amenity spaces and enhance visitor experience |
- Continue development of paved and unpaved trails |

**5. Prioritize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within St. Joseph County Parks** |
- Create workforce recommendations that employ equity, inclusion, and diversity best practices |
- Develop and prioritize facilities, amenities, and programs that foster diversity and inclusion |
- Create partnerships with organizations that work with underserved populations |
- Reflect diversity, equity, and inclusion values in internal and external communications |
### GOAL #1

**Goal 1 - Protect and Enhance County Natural and Cultural Resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Reduce invasive and non-native species</td>
<td>Monitor and treat Vinca</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear invasives from Spicer Lake field and mow annually end of October</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Re-treat invasives around ponds</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treat oriental bittersweet and Chinese Yam on amphitheater hedge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In landscaped areas, remove non-native shrubs and replace with natives</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Control nuisance wildlife</td>
<td>Apply deer management strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete annual nest depredation/egg adding for goose control</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Address habitat modifications for goose control (less manicured lawns, more native grasses, shoreline management)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor beaver population and employ management strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 Enact sustainability initiatives throughout all programming, maintenance, and development efforts</td>
<td>Reduce mowed areas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use native plants for landscape plantings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Support existing and expand pollinator habitat throughout parks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Invest in repairs and upgrades that save energy</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 Protect and maintain health of local water resources as well as their contributing areas</td>
<td>Stock the pond at Ferrettie - Baugo Creek County Park</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor invasives around ponds</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stabilize eroding shorelines</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employ localized erosion, runoff, and water quality control measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.5 Protect and maintain health of existing park natural and cultural resources</td>
<td>Manage Beverly D. Crone Restoration Area in partnership with Department of Public Works</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Establish 3-year mow cycle</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mow and treat paths</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brush cut Studebaker letters to reduce understory competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.6 Add park land where it aligns with the St. Joseph County Parks’ goals and values</td>
<td>Add park land contiguous to existing parks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farmland northwest of Bendix Woods County Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Property surrounded by St. Patrick’s County Park (between ND-LEEF and SIMS fields)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wetland parcels near Spicer Lake Nature Preserve</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seek opportunities to add park land to underserved areas</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**GOAL #2**

**Goal #2 - Reinforce Activities and Programs That Highlight the Connection Between Nature, Public Health, and/or Economic Development**

2.1 Create/evaluate programs that combine nature and the different facets of health
- Maintain current successful programs and activities
- Establish new user groups
- Expand adventure programming
- Acquire orienteering equipment

2.2 Create and maintain partnerships for planning and initiatives
- Collaborate with Shirley Heinze Land Trust, MACOG, and St. Joseph County Economic Development for conservation planning
- Collaborate with Visit South Bend Mishawaka to enhance attractions for tourism
- Collaborate with MACOG for trail initiatives

2.3 Create/maintain partnerships for programs, activities, and events
- Support related agency and organizations’ Master Plans
- Support related agency and organizations’ public engagement and outreach efforts
- Support related community initiatives where applicable
- Enhance communications with teachers
- Promote connections to nature for children
- Create cooperative programs with ND-LEEF
- Partner with Saint Mary’s, University of Notre Dame, and Indiana University South Bend for cooperative research and outreach

2.4 Promotion and marketing of activities, programs, and events that emphasize this goal
- Quantify the environmental value of the parks’ greenspace
- Utilize park logo on all materials, facilities, vehicles, and uniforms
- Develop interpretive displays and signage that tell the stories within the parks

2.5 Upgrade and implement new technology
- Expand offerings on website to include permits page
- Develop social media guidelines and responsibilities
- Implement online registration
- Acquire digital signage displays for park entrances

**GOAL #3**

**Goal #3 - Develop Administration and Staffing Capacity**

3.1 Create a training and development plan for leadership and staff
- Offer continuing education opportunities
- Encourage growth of employees through opportunity and responsibility
- Create document that summarizes parks’ annual accomplishments and achievements

3.2 Develop strategies for Parks Board and Parks Foundation Board
- Develop recommendations for future Parks Board appointments
- Work to align Parks Board, Park Foundation, and Parks Department strategies and efforts
- Advocate for the parks with county officials
- Encourage diversity while discussing parks’ leadership with county officials
- Build capacity of Parks Foundation for fundraising

3.3 Focus on employee culture
- Enhance employee workspaces and environment
- Hold employee events to promote culture
- Increase transparency to help build trust
- Inspire employee autonomy

3.4 Expand volunteerism strategically
- Develop volunteer policies and procedures
- Train staff members for managing and training volunteers
- Increase strategic recruitment of volunteers and volunteer groups

3.5 Relieve stressed staff positions
- Add position(s) for Natural Resources Manager and Marketing/Promotions
- Determine opportunities for improved volunteer utilization
- Expand full-time maintenance staff
- Expand internship opportunities and part-time hours

3.6 Leverage new and existing revenue streams
- Maximize revenue from programming
- Analyze gate fees and/or rental fees and increase when appropriate
- Expand partnerships and sponsorships
- Utilize grants to fund projects and programs
- Develop a plan for a bond proposal to fund future projects
### GOAL #4: Improve and Update Existing Park Facilities and Equipment

#### 4.1 Upgrade buildings and shelters
- Tackle deferred maintenance backlog, budgeting, and forecasting
- Remove Hofferth Shelter at Ferrettie-Baugo Creek County Park
- Obtain new chairs in red barn
- Implement County Energy Audit recommendations
- Upgrade public restrooms at Bendix Woods County Park to meet current ADA standards
- Explore funding for Studebaker Shelter conversion to overnight facility at Bendix Woods County Park
- Replace carpet in white barn office
- Re-skin maintenance shop at Bendix Woods County Park
- Build program storage building at St. Patrick’s County Park

#### 4.2 Develop plan for reuse or demolition of amphitheater
- Brainstorm ideas for repurposing facilities
- Find new partners
- Obtain prices for full reroof
- Obtain prices for teardown

#### 4.3 Infrastructure and road repairs
- Pave roads and parking lots and make all accessible parking ADA compliant
- Repair or replace road lighting
- Determine need for new entrance at St. Patrick’s County Park
- Upgrade well house at St. Patrick’s County Park
- Build lanes into tube hill, grade drainage swale at base at St. Patrick’s County Park

#### 4.4 Purchase new vehicles and equipment for maintenance and other park-related activities
- Purchase new mowers
- Purchase new canoe/kayak rental vans
- Purchase new tubing equipment and storage
- Replace snow-making equipment
- Update machinery such as bulldozers, mowers, groomers, and tractors
- Update rental equipment, such as skis, canoes, life jackets, kayaks, and snowshoes

#### 4.5 Improve accessibility and universal design implementation
- Establish path from Bendix Woods County Park playground to restroom
- Repair sidewalk to Baugo Station

#### 4.6 Develop new amenities to enhance visitor experience
- Evaluate outdoor archery range potential
- Evaluate ropes course/adventure course
- Evaluate large conditioned event/rental space
- Evaluate canopy walk at St. Patrick’s County Park near the wetland
- Establish natural playground
- Evaluate need for disc golf course at Bendix Woods County Park
- Develop a site plan for the Anderson Road Property
- Add lighting to ski trails
- Build boardwalk around Spicer Lake

#### 4.7 Continue development of paved and unpaved trails
- Add and improve trail wayfinding signage
- Install measured walking trail-surfaced
- Connect to regional trails in collaboration with MACOG
- Continue planning with Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail group for linkage
- Plan for universal signage on Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail

### GOAL #5: Prioritize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within SJC Parks

#### 5.1 Create workforce recommendations that employ equity, inclusion, and diversity best practices
- Create recommendations for staffing and hiring that support these values
- Prioritize diversity in staff advancement
- Create diversity and inclusion recommendations for Parks Board, Foundation Board, partnerships, and associated groups

#### 5.2 Develop and prioritize facilities, amenities, and programs that foster diversity and inclusion
- Improve accessibility and universal design implementation
- Evaluate new and existing programs so they support diversity and inclusion
- Develop programs and activities that target underserved user groups

#### 5.3 Create partnerships with organizations that work with underserved populations
- Work with organizations such as La Casa De Amistad, Kroc Center, Neighborhood Resource Connection, etc.
- Look to reduce barriers that prevent underserved populations from using the parks

#### 5.4 Reflect diversity, equity, and inclusion values in internal and external communications
- Develop multi-lingual interpretive displays, signage, and brochures
- Analyze print, social media standards, and internal communications for inclusion, equity, and diversity
Chapter Ten
Implementation
IMPLEMENTATION

FUNDING RESOURCES

Recommendations in the Action Plan section of this Master Plan include operational expenses, maintenance expenses, and larger capital expenses. With a limited annual budget, park systems often need to be creative in finding resources for funding. Leveraging a variety of funding resources will be essential in the Parks Board’s efforts to implement some of the items identified in the plan.

Non-Reverting Operating Funds
Non-Reverting Operations Funds are appropriated by the Parks Board for operational expenditures matching grant or special projects. This fund is sourced from program and event fees, sale of merchandise or concessions, user fees, and rental fees.

Non-Reverting Capital Funds
Non-Reverting Capital Funds are created for the purpose of acquiring land or making specific capital improvements. This is funded by sale of park property, equipment, or any special user fees established by the Parks Board.

Local Income Taxes (LIT)
Local Income Taxes are the general name for the types of local income taxes, such as County Option Income Tax(COIT) and County Economic Development Income Tax(CEDIT). Revenue raised by LIT must be used for economic development projects or public capital projects and is controlled by the County Council.

General Obligation Bonds
General Obligation Bonds provide a funding source for larger projects that typically exceed funding available by other sources. Public hearings must be held and the County Council must approve any bonds being issued.

Recreation Impact Fees
Recreation Impact Fees are established by planning ordinances and assessed to new housing developments to fund facilities that serve that particular area. These funds are not to be used for maintenance or repairs on existing facilities.

St. Joseph County Parks Foundation
The St. Joseph County Parks Foundation (d.b.a. Friends of St. Joseph County Parks) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that assists the County Parks and Parks Board with funding park projects, enhancing programs, and acquiring new park property. They actively raise funds through donations and work with the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County to build the endowment fund for the County Parks.

Images to the left highlight potential amenities for capital improvement projects that utilize the resources, grants, and donations outlined in this section.
GRANTS AND FUNDING PROGRAMS

Recommendations in the Action Plan of this Master Plan include some larger capital expenses that may seem beyond the financial reach of the County Parks and community resources. Grants and funding programs will be essential in the Parks Board’s efforts to implement some of these items. A key consideration for the Parks Board is to be aware of grant opportunities and apply for grants for capital projects. Some of these include:

**IDNR Recreational Trails Program (RTP)**
RTP provides 80% grant dollars requiring a 20% local match for acquisition and development of multi-use trails with grants of up to $200,000.

**IDNR Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**
LWCF provides 50% grant dollars with 50% local match funding for the development of park facilities. The LWCF is best used for projects that involve land acquisition to expand park property.

**Next Level Trails**
This grant program from IDNR will provide several rounds of funding over the next few years to create local and regional trails with 80% state funds and requires a 20% local match.

**OCRA Quick Impact Placebased (QuIP) Grant**
This grant funds space enhancement projects that spark community conversation and creativity. It encourages partnerships between local government, residents, and community organizations and agencies.

**Patronicity CreatINg Places**
Patronicity partnered with the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority to provide a grant program based on crowdfunding. The Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCD) will match the dollars raised by the community up to $50,000.

**Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST Act)**
FAST provides 80% grant dollars with 20% local funding for transportation alternative projects. This includes pedestrian and bicycle trails, recreational trails, historic preservation, and environmental mitigation related to storm water and habitat connectivity. This could include monies for trails, associated parking, restrooms, and other basic improvements.

**IDNR, Division of Forestry**
Grants for community and urban forestry programs are available to assist with street and park tree inventories, management plans and tree planting. Grants range from $2,000 to $20,000 and require equal cash/in-kind match.

**Safe Routes to School (SRTS)**
This provides 80% grant/20% local funding to promote walkability in communities where school facilities are located.

**CDBG Funding**
OCRA provides funding for community development projects from Community Development Block Grants. The Historic Preservation Fund offers 50% matching grants for acquisition, restoration, and preservation of historic properties.

**Lily Endowment**
Lily supports facilities and programs that advance economic revitalization and community recreational opportunities. Lily Endowment announced a matching grant program with the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County to match $2 for every $1 donated through 2020.

**Community Foundation of St. Joseph County**
The Foundation partners with many organizations in the community to support projects related to social services, the environment, and the arts.

**Indiana Native Plant Society (INPS)**
INPS offers small grants to promote the appreciation, preservation, conservation, utilization and scientific study of the flora native to Indiana and to educate the public about the values, beauty, diversity and environmental importance of indigenous vegetation.

**IDNR Lakes and Rivers Enhancement Program (LARE)**
LARE offers grants to protect and enhance aquatic habitat for fish and wildlife, to ensure the continued viability of Indiana’s publicly accessible lakes and streams for multiple uses, including recreational opportunities.