BENDIX WOODS COUNTY PARK

The first park in the St. Joseph County Parks’ system, this property was donated to the newly formed Parks Board in 1966 by the Bendix Corporation and has its roots in automotive history. Originally part of the Studebaker Proving Ground, the site is home to the historic half-mile long “STUDEBAKER” sign planted in 1933 by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The sign was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records in 1987 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. A hiking trail passes through the letters.

The former Studebaker Clubhouse, a large colonial revival building, now houses park offices and a Children’s Discovery Room. Built in 1926, the brick structure is a designated Local Landmark and is also on the National Register of Historic Places. The Park is a destination site on the Studebaker-Bendix Heritage Trail.

In the southwest portion of the park, a 27-acre state-dedicated nature preserve protects a beech-maple climax woodland showcasing a spectacular spring ephemeral display of large-flowered trillium. The preserve was the first non-state-owned public land to be dedicated by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

A 4.5-acre prairie created near the eastern boundary of the Park provides pollinator habitat and is a study site for area universities. A significant number of interpretive programs are offered at the Park, including wildflower and tree programs, bird hikes, pond studies, and maple syrup activities. Sugar Camp Days in March is the largest annual special event coordinated by County Park staff and includes tours of the sugar house, artisan demonstrations, a pancake breakfast, and children’s activities.

Fall hayrides, a sledding hill, picnic facilities, hiking, and mountain bike trails round out the recreational offerings.