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Preparing Recreation Master Plans

Michigan State University

Cooperative Extension Service

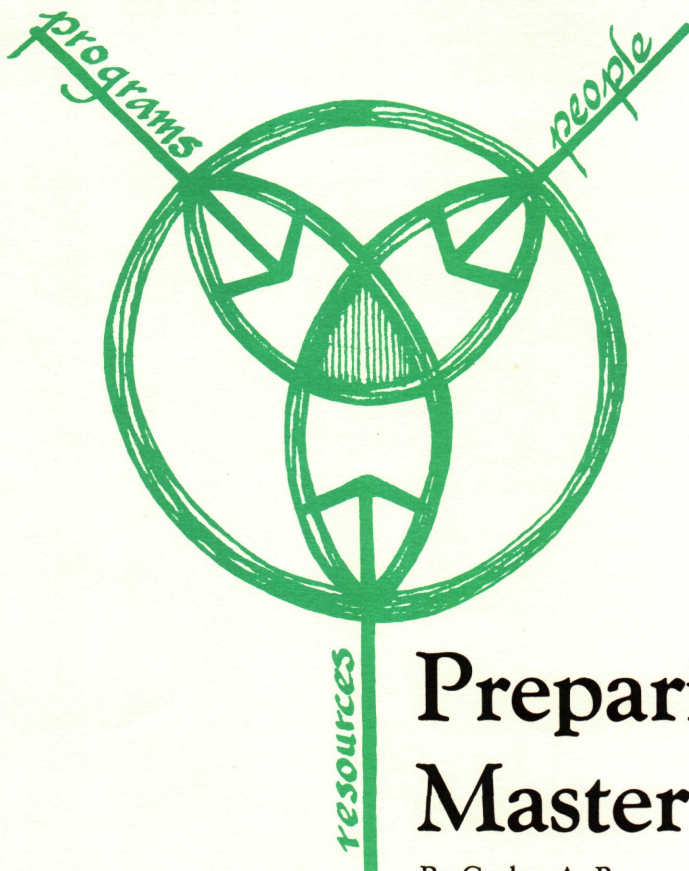
Gaylan A. Rasmussen, Extension Specialist Park and Recreation Resources

February 1985

4 pages

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*"The good Lord is makin' more  
people, but He aint makin  
no more land."*

*Will Rogers*

# Preparing Recreation Master Plans

By Gaylan A. Rasmussen, Extension Specialist,  
Department of Park and Recreation Resources

*A recreation master plan should identify and show how resources can provide recreational experiences for the people of today, tomorrow, and for future generations.*

## Outline of Procedure:

- review and adoption of the plan by the Park and Recreation Commission
- provide a letter of transmittal
- outline the administrative structure
- produce a demography profile
- review of natural features and recreation programs
- identify recreational facilities and review conditions
- adopt specific recreation standards
- establish 10-year goals
- establish 5-year objectives with a financial schedule
- provide master plans for each recreational area before any development begins



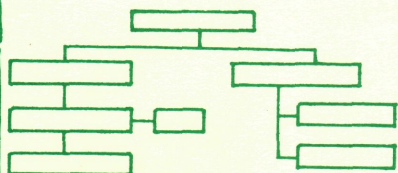
- **Review and Adoption of the Master Plan**

The local governing body should pass a resolution indicating a review and adoption of the recreation plan by the Park and Recreation Commission or other responsible agency.

- **A Letter of Transmittal**

This letter establishes the direct line of communication between the local government unit and recreation committee. This establishes the responsibility for plan implementation. Using the local government letterhead, a letter signed by the commission chair is submitted with the plan to the local unit. This should be done in connection with public hearings. A copy may be sent to the Regional Planning Agency for approval. This is necessary if matching funds are sought from state or federal funding programs.

- **Administrative Structure Outline**



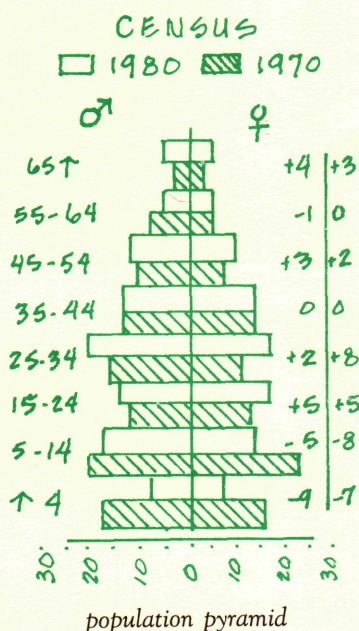
A brief history dealing with the **enabling resolution** or ordinance establishing a park and recreation division is appropriate.

Administrative **flow-charts** show responsibilities within the structure and succinctly describe positions and their relationships within the organization.

Past grants, methods of financing, method of operation and programming techniques may be included in this section.

A **community description or map** should be used to show land use, school and park locations, and the relationship between public and private recreation areas.

- **Demography Profile**



**Population profiles** identify social patterns, age groups, school enrollment, ethnic groupings, and male/female ratios.

A **census** may be taken every decade. It is wise to align the census tract boundaries with township boundaries. If this is not possible, an aerial photograph can be used to determine the percentage of development in different areas of a tract.

It is recommended that the **zoning, land use maps**, as well as **taxing records** and **building permits**, be aligned along the census tract boundaries. This will systematize all data that will be used in updating future recreation plans. **If matching funds are sought, the recreation plan must be updated every five (5) years.**

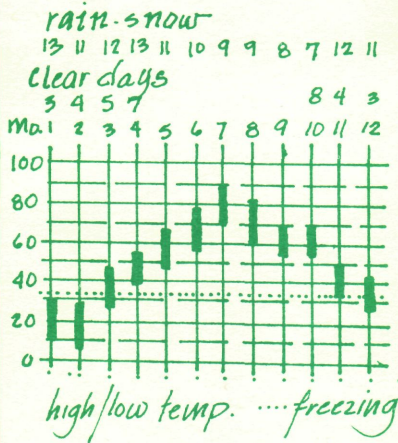
A **population pyramid** will show a breakdown of age groups in both the male and female groupings. From this graphic, an elementary and secondary school projection is easily understood. A total picture of the tax base support is apparent. The move-in and move-outs will also be reflected in the pyramid.

A **per capita income study** is useful for tax support projects as well as comparison with surrounding areas.

A map of the geographic distribution of housing, color-coded yearly, will show trends and establish relationships to schools, parks, shopping centers, etc. This map will also show **transportation routes** throughout the study area. Since commercial zones and businesses are identified, an employment map can determine the percentage and type of resident employment.



• **Natural Features**



A **land use and land cover map** shows current uses of land; land left undeveloped; bog areas; open bodies of water; drainage channels and streams; as well as **vegetation patterns**.

**Climate mapping** will compare temperature, humidity, precipitation across the 12 months. The high and low temperature range will show when rain will turn to snow and how long the natural ice can be expected during the winter months. Including the number of sunny days in each month will help calendar recreation programs.

**Topographic mapping** will show the minimum slopes associated with drainage and maximum slopes associated with safety.

**Soils** dictate land use construction compatibility, type of vegetation, drainage and percolation rates, ground water levels, geological formations, i.e. Eskers, and soil associations.

When the natural features are identified, **wildlife patterns** and types can be studied.

• **Recreation Programs**

Recreational programs should be evaluated by number of participants, **season** of the event, **resident** and **nonresident** participation, age groups, and **sponsoring agency**. Libraries may have passive recreation programs.

**Cooperative agreements** between schools, churches, private and public agencies should be noted and explored.

• **Recreation Facilities**

park and/or school  
1 2 3 4 5

softball	NY	2C	2P	2C
tennis	2B	1D	-	
Pavillion	-	1A		
fishing	N	Y		
SWIM	Y	Y		

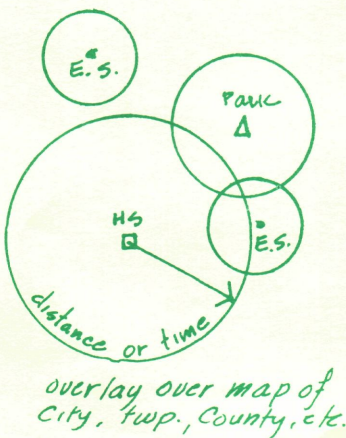
activities

A **listing** of all public-oriented facilities (parks, school grounds, golf courses) should be analyzed according to the type of active and passive recreation. The number and condition of facilities should also be noted. These can be **mapped** to show relationships in time or distance.

A **matrix** listing types of recreation vertically and the parks and/or schools across the top can show not only the number of facilities provided, but also the condition of the facilities. The condition of the facility may be categorized into the following: **A** — excellent playing condition, **B** — needs maintenance, **C** — needs rebuilding, **D** — not usable.

Produce a **map** identifying significant local, county, state, federal, and private recreation facilities both in, and adjacent to, the study area. This provides an overall picture of the availability of facilities and their relationship to existing communities and neighborhoods. Expensive duplication can be avoided.

Use concentric circles around the facilities to show travel distance and/or time from any part of the study area. The optimum service distance for the following facilities is established by national standards. These are: grade schools, 1/2-mile service radius; middle and senior high schools, 1 1/2-mile radius; neighborhood parks, 1/2-mile radius; community playfield, 1 1/2-mile radius; township-wide park, 2-mile radius; regional park, 3-mile radius.





## • Adopt Standards

*two popular sources:*

- National Recreation and Park Association (N.R.P.A.)  
*Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*

3101 Park Center Drive  
Alexandria, VA 22302

- Urban Land Institute  
*The Denver Background*  
1200 10th St., N.W.,  
Washington, D.C. 20013

1300 10th St., N.W.,  
Washington, D.C. 20013

There must be a method to determine the balance between the **recreation facilities and population**. This is done by adopting a set of "nationally recognized" standards.

It is not important what standards are adopted. It is important to use the same standards in both evaluation of the facility/population balance and in the design and planning of new facilities.

**Facility standards** are usually based on units per 1,000 population, i.e.

neighborhood park:	1.5 acres/1,000 population
baseball:	1 field/1,000 population
basketball:	1 court/5,000 population
horseshoes:	1 set/2,000 population
golf course:	1 course/20,000 population

Standards also give minimum acreage requirements for various activities as well as school sites and types of parks.

A **pallet of parks** must be adopted by the governing body as recommended by the Director of Parks. These parks will range from a playlot ( $\frac{1}{4}$  acre/1,000) through community playfield (1.5 acre/1,000) to a regional park (10 acres/1,000).

## • 10-Year Goals

*long range goals*

Ten-year goals are in the form of statements, in general terms, that express the community's recreational desires. These goals will serve as a guide for recreational facility and program development.

These represent a **community's commitment** to future recreation needs.

## • 5-Year Goals and Financial Schedule

Five-year objectives or goals are achievable accomplishments that make 10-year goals obtainable.

These objectives represent **tasks to be completed**. They should be derived from a master plan used to determine the sequence of development of each individual park in the recreation system.

The **financial plan** parallels these five-year goals. The financial support can be projected over the same five-year period.

Monies from **local budgets, fees, private funds, federal funds, state funds, and other sources** should add up to the established project costs.

A master plan (drawing) should be completed for each park in the system. This will establish the best proximity of uses and determine the best circulation pattern. For a complete understanding of the "site development process," see Extension Bulletin E-1252.

If state or federal funding is considered, a detailed site drawing of the development is required. Pre-applications must be submitted. A follow-up visit of the determining officials will precede the approval for obtaining funding in a priority ranking system.

A private consultant should be used when complex comparisons and problems exist. Any development that combines research, program development, analysis,

synthesis, and preliminary design should be directed by someone with experience in the design process.

Since the "contract documents" are a combination of written specifications and control drawings, a qualified designer should be responsible for the completion of these documents.

### References:

Recreation Services Division, D.N.R., P.O. Box 30028,  
Lansing, MI 48824  
DeChara, Joseph, Lee Koppleman, Urban Planning and  
Design Criteria, Van Austin Reinholdt, 1975  
N.R.P.A. Recreation Standards

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