

Planning and Public Input

The HARBOR Area Community joint recreation planning effort was initiated in June of 2005 after five of seven local governments and HARBOR, Inc. signed an agreement letter articulating a commitment to the cooperative development of the plan. (see *Appendix*) This *HARBOR Area Recreation, Trails and Open Space Plan* was developed as a result of this cooperative effort.

In 2005, a Recreation Working Committee was formed and met regularly to provide essential feedback and local insight into each phase of the process. Public Meetings were also held to confirm findings. The Planning Process included the following phases which are discussed in detail in this chapter:

- Phase I: Inventory and Fact Gathering
- Phase II: Analysis
- Phase III: Public Involvement
- Phase IV: Development of Plan Goals
- Phase V: Drafting the Plan
- Phase VI: Plan Adoption

THE RECREATION WORKING COMMITTEE

Designated representatives from each jurisdiction joined together at the start of the planning process to form a Recreation Working Committee. The committee has guided a public planning process that encouraged citizen participation and open dialogue. This core group of public officials and interested citizens has met regularly during the planning process and convened several public meetings giving citizens the opportunity to shape a plan that is unique to the HARBOR Area Community.

Composition: The Recreation Working Committee was comprised of representatives from each of the formally participating jurisdictions along with several other key community members. In addition, several individuals from non-participating jurisdictions participated informally.

Mike Heinz	City of Harbor Springs
Fred Geuder	City of Harbor Springs
Bill Dohm	Little Traverse Township
Joe Chattaway	Little Traverse Township
Bill Wiechmann	Pleasantview Township
Rob Parson	Friendship Township
Dale Scott	Friendship Township
Ron Krause	Readmond Township
Tom Bailey	Little Traverse Conservancy
Doug Fuller	SEE-North / Little Traverse Conservancy
Carolyn Sandford	West Traverse Township
Howard Wood	Cross Village / Outdoorsman's Club
Dave Larson	HS Public Schools
Danna Widmar	HARBOR, Inc.

Meeting Schedule: Starting on June 9, 2005, the Recreation Working Committee began meeting regularly to provide feedback on the results of the planning process. The meetings (see *Appendix* for available minutes) were held primarily at Harbor Springs City Hall and Harbor Springs Middle School and occurred on the following dates:

June 9, 2005
August 9, 2005
October 4, 2005
November 22, 2005
January 10, 2006
February 14, 2006
March 7, 2006
April 11, 2006
June 27, 2006
November 14, 2006

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Phase 1: Inventory and Facts Gathering involved reviewing the most recently created recreation plans and recreation expenditures for each jurisdiction plus other relevant recreation plans, including:

- City of Harbor Springs Recreation Plan (1994); Recreation Expenditures (2004)
- Little Traverse Township Recreation Plan (2005); Recreation Expenditures (2004)
- West Traverse Township Recreation Plan (2000); Recreation Expenditures (2004)
- Pleasantview Township (no written plan); Recreation Expenditures (2004)
- Friendship Township Recreation Plan (2001); Recreation Expenditures (2004)
- Readmond Township Recreation Plan (2000); Recreation Expenditures (2004)
- Cross Village Township Recreation Plan (2001); Recreation Expenditures (2004)
- Harbor Springs Public Schools (no written plan); Recreation Expenditures (2004)
- Emmet County Recreation Plan (plan year 2004)

These plans, consultation with Recreation Working Committee members, and on-the-ground fact checking were all used to establish the Recreation Inventory. A number of local community surveys and other local documents were reviewed for pertinent recreation information including:

- Emmet County Survey (1991)
- M-119 Scenic Corridor Study (Little Traverse Conservancy (1993)
- Visioning Survey/Drawing that resulted in establishment of HARBOR, Inc (2000)
- Friendship Township Community Survey (2003)
- Open Space Task Force Plan (2004)
- West Traverse Township Community Survey (2005)
- Readmond Township Community Survey (2005)

Phase II: Analysis included a recreation needs assessment of the HARBOR Area Community that was conducted through several analytical and interactive activities over the course of the planning process. These activities included a formal comparison of HARBOR Area Community recreation facilities with national recreation facility standards, a review of all recent relevant recreation surveys, individual meetings with locally relevant organizations and several well-attended public community meetings.

An initial comparison of existing HARBOR Area Community recreation facilities with national standards was a useful tool in determining the recreation deficiencies of the HARBOR Area Community. Table 5 in the Recreation Inventory Chapter displays this comparison. NRPA standards were established in 1983 and do not necessarily represent current popular recreation activities such as skateboarding and disk golf. In addition, the most current addition of the NRPA *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* states *that facility standard are useful as guidelines, but that a community should determine what mix of facilities best meets its specific needs*. Furthermore, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, *Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans* highly recommends *that standards be used in conjunction with other methods to determine recreation deficiencies and priorities*. This same sentiment was voiced from community members who indicated that achieving a system that is above minimum standards in regard to quality of facilities is desirable for the HARBOR Area Community. The public input process is described more below.

Phase III: Public Involvement occurred over the course of 6 months and included several community-wide public meetings. These meetings invited extensive public participation and comment. The first public meeting provided an informative introduction to the joint recreation effort and invited comments concerning organized recreation within the HARBOR Area Community. Subsequent public meetings included activities that were specifically designed to understand trail and open space needs. Additionally, a public meeting that invited the comments from locally elected and appointed officials was held in March of 2006.

Participants throughout the public involvement process included representatives from the township boards, city council, planning commissions, governmental staff, community organizations, and many interested citizens. In addition, HARBOR, Inc. Executive Director, Danna Widmar, provided presentations to community organizations and conducted interviews with locally involved citizens.

The broadly publicized and well attended meetings are discussed on the following page. Minutes and lists of participants, as available, are provided in the *Appendix*.

January, 2006 Public Meeting: This meeting was intended to get the discussion going. We wanted to find out how our communities connected and how could we do more to plan cooperatively for recreation.



Local Officials and Citizens Plotting Trails

February, 2006 Public Meeting: This meeting brought many different recreation interests together with the goal of understanding the current system of services; determining the perceived deficiencies; and finding out what the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were to recreation in the HARBOR Area Community.



Understanding Recreation

March, 2006, Public Meeting: This meeting was intended for all local elected and appointed officials as well as any member of the public. The goal of the meeting was to inform the public of the findings of the recreation planning process to date - the results of the inventory and analysis, the compilation of surveys, public meetings to date and common goals shared among the community.



Local Officials Getting the Facts and Offering Suggestions

May, 2006, Public Meeting, Trails & Open Space Interests: This final meeting was intended to delve more deeply into the issue of trails and open space corridors to understand more clearly the community needs and wants.

Phase IV: Development of Plan Goals began with a compilation of the goals outlined in the various Recreation Plans. The common themes that were found in the separate Recreation Plans were summarized. Goals and Objectives for this plan were then drafted to address those areas where a gap in services exists. The Goals and Objectives were discussed within the Recreation Working Committee and reviewed by local boards.

Phase V: Drafting the Plan occurred from June to October of 2006. Land Information Access Association and HARBOR, Inc. staff were charged with drafting the written plan. This draft plan required the translation of goals and objectives into concrete plan proposals. Numerous Recreation Working Committee discussions were held to determine feasible action steps and a workable organizational structure from which to pursue plan implementation. Upon completion, the draft plan was submitted to Recreation Working Committee members for review and edits.

Phase VI: Plan Adoption will occur after final edit/amendments to the plan.