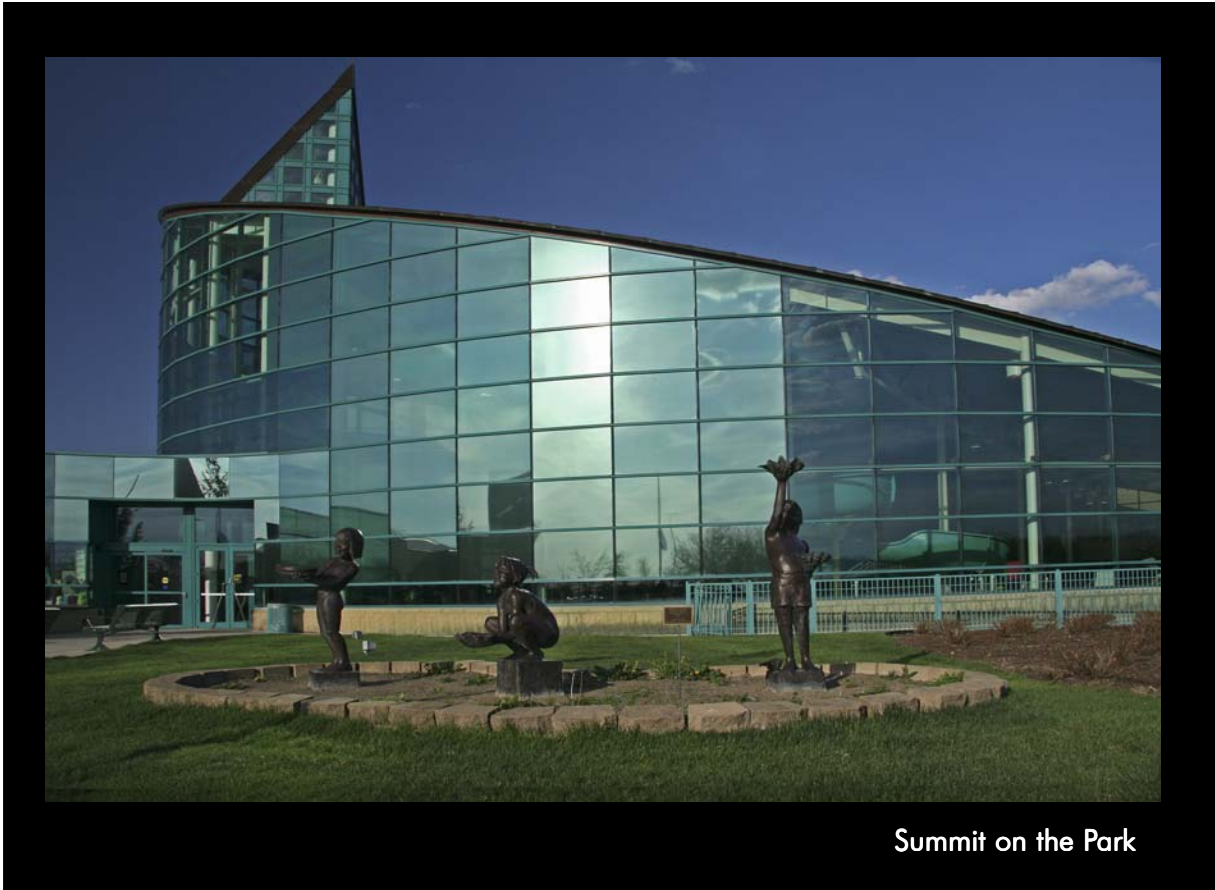


CHAPTER ONE



Executive Summary

Introduction

This Comprehensive Master Plan for Canton's Leisure Services Department is one of several plans that the department has developed to guide its future decision making about recreation programming and facilities. This plan acts as an "umbrella," bringing the other recreational planning documents together as well as providing supportive information for each plan.

The document inventories recreation facilities and programming, identifying areas where new or expanded services may be needed or desired to meet the Township's recreation goals. It also provides results of the most recent public opinion focus groups and surveys that give the community up-to-date direction for recreation planning. The document also provides components of the other planning documents, such as budgets, goals and policies, and specific future capital expenditures for each segment of Canton Leisure Services. This plan is designed to be an easy-to-use reference for staff and residents.

Community Description

Originally part of Plymouth Township, Canton became an independent township in 1834 and became one of Michigan's first Charter Townships in 1961. Essentially a rural community for much of its history, the core of Canton's population centered on "village" communities. Canton now boasts a population of over 80,000 people but approximately one-fifth of the Township's 36 square miles still remains in active agricultural uses and rural open space. A large number of acres are currently under review for future development and will change significantly in the future. The most dramatic change in the community over the past five years has been the rapid westward movement of new development.

Canton is located in western Wayne County about halfway between Ann Arbor and Detroit (twenty miles east of Ann Arbor and twenty-five miles west of Detroit). I-275 links the community north to I-696 and I-96 and south to I-94 and the Detroit Metropolitan Airport. A regional map is located on the next page.

Non-motorized transportation currently consists of pathways in several community parks, subdivision sidewalks, and along some major streets. Water and sewer service are available in most areas of the Township and have generally followed the westward development.

Canton's topography is relatively flat. However, some variation in topography occurs in the northwest portion of the Township, where the terrain is gently rolling. The Township's soils are characterized by a clay plain with hills and ridges of sand and gravel and has 4,693 acres of wetlands. The main waterways include the Rouge River, Fellows Creek, Willow Creek, Tonquish Creek and their various tributaries, each with an associated flood plain.



Land Use and Zoning

Canton is generally perceived as a built-out and urbanized community. However, a good portion presently remains undeveloped. In 2000, approximately 41 percent of Canton's land was classified as cultivated land, woodlands, grasslands, water, and extractive by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG). This is compared to 28 percent for Wayne County and 77 percent for Washtenaw County. Canton's Comprehensive Plan (2004 land use plan) provides a long-range guide for the use of land within the community. It states four main goals that provide guidance for future development, public utilities, maintenance of the Township's character and the high-quality desired for future developments.

Demographics and Socio-Economics

The plan summarizes important demographic and economic characteristics of the Township's population, and how they have been changing over time. These characteristics are described as follows:

- Canton's population continues to grow.
- Residents represent a broad age range.
- Canton is a community of families with young children.
- In general, Canton residents have some discretionary income.
- Canton has residents with disabilities to plan for.
- Canton is becoming an increasingly diverse community.

Conclusions from these demographic changes include:

- The Township will provide additional facilities, programming and proper facilities maintenance.
- The Township will continue to develop and acquire parkland through donation and purchase if possible, ensure open space in new residential developments and seek to link the community through pathways and passive recreation areas.
- The growth in population and demographic makeup will require provision of facilities, programs, and services that accommodate specific needs.
- The Township will provide additional opportunities for the at-risk population and individuals with disabilities.

In summary, changes in the demographic makeup of Canton's residents will require continuous feedback between Canton staff and residents to ensure that the needs of the community are being met.

Administrative Structure

Canton Leisure Services is governed and managed by the Township Board of Trustees (elected) and the Leisure Services Advisory Committee (LSAC) (appointed). The Township Board is advised on recreation issues by the LSAC, and is the final authority on all decisions, policies and budgets. The LSAC has four sub-committees that study, discuss, and recommend strategic plans to Canton Leisure Services on the following topics: revenue enhancement, marketing and communication, program development, and partnerships/collaborations. Another advisory committee that was established in 2003 is the Cultural Arts Commission. This Commission also makes recommendations to the Board, but concentrates its efforts on promoting and advocating the arts.



Canton Leisure Services consists of two divisions: Recreation and Facilities, and Park and Facility Maintenance. The Recreation and Facilities Division is responsible for all recreation programming, administration, and the guest services operation at several of the Township's indoor facilities. The Park and Facility Maintenance Division is responsible for indoor and outdoor maintenance of the Township's recreation facilities and other buildings, such as the Municipal Complex, Public Works buildings, and historic sites. Another important partner in providing high level service to residents are the numerous volunteers who give of their time to supervise and plan many recreation programs in the Township.

As described in the introduction to this section, the Comprehensive Master Plan is an "umbrella" document that supports the other Canton Leisure Services' planning documents, including the Leisure Services Strategic Plan, the Administrative Manual, Operations Manual, and Marketing Plans.

Community Input

In developing the Canton Leisure Services Comprehensive Master Plan, the Township hosted ten focus group meetings and distributed a community input survey to a random sample of five percent of the Township's residents. Public input is vital to the development of the Five Year Action Plan and its outcomes. Responses to these measurements shared similar themes, which are summarized here:

- Residents feel that recreational programming and facilities strengthen the Community and make Canton a desirable place to live.
- The most popular parks/facilities include Heritage, Griffin, and Flodin Parks, and Summit on the Park, the Splash Pad, and golf courses.
- The chief factors cited for not using facilities are perceived high cost, and difficulty in reaching the facility due to distance, traffic volumes, or parking.
- The list of desired new amenities was long. The most prominent was for greater passive recreation including public trails, gardens and nature areas. Additional facilities included an outdoor pool, off-leash dog park, and athletic fields. Additional programs included more adult, senior and therapeutic classes and cultural arts and performance activities.
- Respondents thought that limited private sponsorship of programs was acceptable as long as it was appropriate for the event.
- There was little agreement on how tax dollars should be spent, however, strong support was shown for seniors, sports/recreation programs and therapeutic recreation.



Recreation Inventory

The Canton Leisure Services Comprehensive Master Plan provides descriptions of all the Township-owned recreation facilities and associated programs. It also describes recreation facilities associated with local school districts, private recreation providers, and area subdivisions. The Plan outlines how the Township has leveraged the benefits of the school and private recreation facilities within the community by partnering with them to expand the leisure opportunities for Canton's residents. This chapter also outlines the efforts the Township has made to ensure that its facilities and programs are accessible to people with disabilities.

Trends and Goals

While the Canton Leisure Services Strategic Plan outlines the trends in the Township and the department's goals for future improvements, they have also been included in this Comprehensive Master Plan to help the reader understand the action items in the last chapter of this document.

Several of these trends were identified by the changing demographics discussed earlier. The trends specifically address cultural, social and demographic changes, the changing economy of the region, new uses for technology, the Township's desire for environmental stewardship, and continuing the Township's commitment to historic preservation. The Leisure Services goals directly address these trends to define how the department will serve the Canton community into the future.



Pheasant Run Golf Club

Five Year Action Program

The last chapter of the Canton Leisure Services Comprehensive Master Plan describes the process the Township used to determine the focus of recreation facility and programming improvements over the next five years. Action items were identified in four different ways: through the 2000 Leisure Services Comprehensive Master Plan, by the Leisure Services Advisory Committee, through the focus group meetings, and lastly the community survey. Lists of actions were analyzed based on twelve different strategic need factors and ranked according to how many needs would be met by each proposed action. The actions that emerged are then described in detail at the end of the chapter.

