



City of Eaton Rapids
Quality of Life Department

2017 Accomplishments

&

2018 Visions

The Quality of Life in Eaton Rapids

From day one, we have worked to instill the slogan “Creating Community through People, Parks and Programs.” The idea, that parks and recreation opportunities lead to a higher Quality of Life for residents and visitors in a community, is one that is echoed in towns across Michigan both small and large. Our focus continues to be keeping Eaton Rapids on the map, making our community one that people want to enjoy, to work here, to live here and to play here. We are a unique community, and capitalizing on that sense of community pride is critical.

Our recreational opportunities continue to expand, connecting those in our community in positive, meaningful ways. Whether it is cheering on our youth at a sporting event, or socializing at the Playground of Dreams, residents continue to tell us that their free time is important to them. The social and physical health and wellness of our residents drives our decision making.

Quality of Life has an economic impact as well; revenues increase from local participation in recreation programming, and tourist traffic continues to climb. Through special events such as the 4th of July Festivities and Eaton Rapids Air, or the opening of the Outdoor Recreation Center, the community sees thousands of friends and family travel to our town to enjoy our recreational opportunities. Direct revenue to the City is combined with tourism related dollars to make the impact of what we do even more valuable to the community.

Programming and Special Events Review

Youth Basketball

2017 saw the second full season of the City managed youth basketball program, saw an increase in participation from 2016 to nearly 200 local youth participating. Games were played Saturdays at the Middle School and employed 12 high school and college aged officials. New for 2017 was the “Beyond the Scoreboard” Sportsmanship incentive program where players were nominated for their on-court efforts and blindly drawn for MHSAA Boys Basketball Finals Tickets.

Community Easter Egg Hunts

In April, the City hosted two Community Easter Egg Hunts. The first being a traditional hunt held at the ERPS Football Stadium for ages 0 - 12. An Estimated 450 children searched high and low for 3,000 eggs as well as participated in face Painting, crafts and other games. The same evening, a Teen Flashlight hunt was offered on GAR Island with 83 teens in attendance searching for 500 camouflaged eggs and attempting to solve a cipher for additional prizes.

Youth Baseball/Softball

2017 also saw another increase for the youth baseball and softball program over 2016 numbers, with the largest increase in ages 8-10 years old boys baseball. In total over 400 kids signed up to participate. Games were played during the week. 23 high school, college and adults were on staff to act as site supervisors, umpires and scorekeepers.

Adult Softball Programs

2017 saw a slight decrease in Adult Softball Numbers, which is a local, state and national trend. Men's and Coed Slow Pitch offerings were held featuring 18 total teams.

Music and Movie Series

The Summer Movie and Music series in the Park was another success story for 2017. With financial support from AT&T, we were able to offer 11 movies (including 4th of July) and 6 concerts. Movie attendance seemed on par with 2016, with the most successful movies being recent releases and animated family movies. "Date Night" movies and throwback 80's movies were also well attended. Concert attendance was sparse with the exception of the better known regional bands.

USA Softball of Michigan Tournaments

The City hosted 2 USA Softball of Michigan State Qualifying Tournaments and 1 State Championship for adults in May, June and August of 2017, bringing into town a total of 47 adult softball teams, 560 athletes and over 700 spectators to the ballfields and an Estimated Economic Impact figured at \$16,225.

4th of July Festivities

The City hosted the annual 4th of July festivities with an expanded parade, kids zone, live entertainment, and fireworks.

Eaton Rapids Air 2017

In partnership with Woodland Travel, the City once again took the lead on this unique event that brought more than 90 Air Stream trailers to our town. An emphasis on local opportunities (combined with good weather) saw an increase in downtown foot traffic and economic impact for the community as downtown business were busy all weekend. Daily schedules played host to nightly entertainment, headlined again by the Sea Cruisers. Back again was the CASA Superhero 5k, with nearly 200 runners and walkers.

Letters to Santa

After the success of 2017, the Letter to Santa Program was held once again, with nearly 450 letters being responded to including letters from Florida, Indiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

Programming and Special Events Vision for 2018

The City's programming and special event offerings continue to be a critical component of the Quality of Life as defined by our residents through surveys and word of mouth. Looking forward to 2018, we would like to continue to offer the above programs as well as expand on recreational opportunities. Looking at local and regional trends, there are opportunities to work with Community Education on the use of their building for recreation classes and drop in programming such as PickleBall.

The 2018 Eaton Rapids Air has a set date of 9/13-16 and will begin planning meetings in February.

4th of July festivities will need to focus on revenue generating more than ever as the LDFA withdrew their \$4000 commitment to the Fireworks. Planning is underway already in securing amenities.

We are looking at the possibility of only hosting 4 Concerts for 2018, partly due to the budget, but also in an attempt to secure better regional talent in hopes of drawing larger crowds.

Surveys have gone out through social media in regards to the public's favorite movie choices for the 2018 series to continue to offer this family friendly program.

Parks and Facilities Projects Review

Howe Memorial Park

This Spring saw some pretty devastating flood waters hit the park, which took most spring rentals for travel leagues out of the equation. DPW, Wastewater and Water crews spent a considerable amount of time pumping and clearing water and restoring the ballfields and pathways to useable levels.

Dugouts fences were added to Diamonds 2, 3 and 5

The concession stand did not operate for the summer of 2017, however Some rehabilitation and renovations occurred on the interior of the Concession Stand to get the building in a functioning and cosmetic working order.

Replacement boards were installed on the Pedestrian Bridge

The Basketball pole (only had one installed) and skate park equipment were removed and relocated to Rails End Park

Construction on the PickleBall Court fencing was started by the Electrical Department

2018 Vision - Based on where Fall projects were left off, and discussion from the Quality of Life Board the following items would be addressed:

- Finalize construction on the PickleBall Courts
- Finalize construction on the Concession Stand
- Purchase and chain up to 8 new picnic tables
- Replace grills by Pavilion 1, install new grills by pavilion 2
- Renovate Diamond #2 infield surfacing
- Formalize Pavilion Reservation Signage

Mill Pointe Park

Mill Pointe continues to be a park of possibility with plenty of discussion in 2017 regarding upgrades and development in the area to better visitor experience.

The EZ Dock was installed (but will be relocated to Mill Pond for 2018 as required by the original grant)

A Fire Pit/Patio was installed

Construction began on a walking path to the fire pit as well as a patio for an ADA Accessible picnic table and bench replacement by the North Point public launch.

2018 Vision - Based on where Fall projects were left off, and discussion from the Quality of Life Board the following items would be addressed:

- Finalize construction on the walking path/picnic table patio and benches
- Install a bike rack
- Finish the install of the Rapids Appreciation Plaques
- Apply for a DNR Passport Grant to build a small pavilion and/or changing rooms.
- Continue to work with the Grand River Watershed and State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan on developing the area as a "Grade A" Launch.

Oak Ridge Park (Northwestern)

The subcommittee for the property located behind Northwestern School began meeting in April 2017 with two primary goals; 1) Establish an action plan for the first year of the park and 2) develop a new name for the park.

After a lengthy discussion regarding the value between the parks history and the natural elements, Oak Ridge Park was decided. This was presented and approved by all parties.

An Action plan was developed and focused on signage and immediate needs of the park such as brush clearing and tree removal

The front entrance sign was purchased for M50, however, based upon the area of the easement, the sign could not be installed (at this time) in a manner that would be visible without violating our sign ordinance.

Parking lot signs were purchased and installed and parking spaces were painted

The Maintenance agreement was signed by City and Township Officials.

Rachel Loren, a local Girl Scout attaining her Silver Award presented project ideas to the Committee and QOL Board including the construction of Wood Duck and Owl Habitat Boxes, clearing and mulching the amphitheater area.

The ERPL Story walk was updated and repaired after some light vandalism.

The ERPS Tree sale was extended to March 2018, to identify and remove up to 40 trees from the property (based on the original sale agreement)

2018 Vision - Based on where Fall projects were left off, and discussion from the Quality of Life Board and Oak Ridge Committee the following items would be addressed:

- Installing the M50 Park Sign
- Purchasing and installing new trail maps
- Grading both the Oak and Trillium Trails
- Install a Split Rail Fence along North Edge of Parking Lot
- Lay slag material along Oak/Trillium Trails
- Survey East property line

GAR Island Park

Restoration of the Gazebo began using DDA funds including repairs to the roof.

2018 Vision - Based on where Fall projects were left off, and discussion from the Quality of Life Board the following items would be addressed:

- Re-Landscape the area surrounding the Gazebo
- Repair the Gazebo steps
- Repaint the Gazebo

Rails End Park

The City's newest recognized park located by the Public Safety building came about through discussions that began in 2016 with the QOL Board as well as public surveys and community forums where the need to have a dedicated park space for teens that would alleviate community concerns regarding the Playground of Dreams was of primary concern.

Two 60' x 90' Asphalt pads were laid after road construction was completed.

Basketball backboards, poles and rims were installed

Two Park Signs were installed on the SE and NW corners of the park.

2018 Vision - Based on where Fall projects were left off, and discussion from the Quality of Life Board the following items would be addressed:

- Stripe the basketball court
- Install up to 20 arbor vitae trees along Line and Lake Street
- Repair and repaint existing skate park amenities
- Construct and install new skate park features (grind rails and half pipe)
- Deliver graffiti rock as identified by Electrical crew
- Install brick paver path to court areas

Hogsback Disc Golf Course

In late Fall plans began to be discussed and several site visits were conducted in open areas around town where a potential disc golf course could be brought to Eaton Rapids. The City owned property on Hogsback was identified as a prime location based on the natural terrain and features. Using the 8 donated (from ERPS) disc baskets as well as purchasing 10 additional baskets, an 18-hole course is currently being designed by Jake Zemla, one of the area's top Disc Golfers.

2018 Vision - Based on where Fall projects were left off, and discussion from the Quality of Life Board the following items would be addressed:

- Work with Mr. Zemla on a final course design that takes into account all concerns addressed (solar field safety)
- Build Tee Box forms and Basket forms
- Develop Maintenance Plan
- Advertise and host a grand opening event

Biggs Park

2018 Vision - Install the playground system from Northwestern

Central Bark (Dog Park)

The Dog Park has experienced issues regarding software and mechanics which prevented the City from fully operating the facility as intended, however things seem to be on the right path now.

Play structures were built and delivered by DPW Staff

The City's contracted software company and gate company met on site to determine issues surrounding the malfunctioning gate.

A new gate controller was purchased.

New signage was installed.

Two New Dog Droppings stations were installed.

Designed tri-fold advertising brochure.

2018 Vision - Based on where Fall projects were left off, and discussion from the Quality of Life Board the following items would be addressed:

- Install new gate controller
- Begin selling key fob passes for the 2018 season
- Host Spring Grand Re-Opening
- Clear and maintain "on-leash" walking paths

Adopt-a-Park Program

In Spring of 2017, the City re-launched the Adopt-a-Park Program and sent informational brochures and letters to various clubs and service groups.

The NHS and Interract Club at ERPS held a clean-up event for Earth Day at the Playground of Dreams picking up litter and debris, and spreading 50 yds of new playground mulch.

The ERPS Wood Working class built Floral boxes to be placed on Knight and State St. Bridges.

Independent Bank cleaned and trimmed Pocket park.

GFCW cleaned McArthur Park.

Two "Red Hat" Groups (Ladies and Hotties) planted flowers on Knight and State St Bridges.

Eaton Rapids Rotary Club power washed the Amphitheater.

A new Logo for the Adopt-a-Park program was developed.

2018 Vision - Continue to advertise the program and recruit additional groups for projects in and around town

Outdoor Recreation Center

After a soft opening in August of 2016, the Eaton Rapids Outdoor Recreation Center opened officially in spring of 2017. With a focus on kayak rentals and some small concession items and live bait, the ORC brought in over \$16,000 in rental revenue. With wages totaling \$10,503 and the purchase of new kayaks and basic operating expenses (not including the lease payments), the ORC saw a net profit over \$2000 for the 2017 season despite periods of time with low water.

The ORC offered the following rental services: Stillwater Kayak Rentals, Trips to Bunker and McNamara Landings, Shuttle Services, Tube Rentals to Bunker Landing, and local Bike Rental by the hour

Rentals to Bunker Landing were roughly 80% of all trips purchased.

Additionally in May, the City purchased a used ADA Accessible van and a used kayak trailer and had ORC graphics, logos and contact information added.

July 3 and 4 were the two biggest dates for sales and rentals.

The ORC employed 4-6 employees at any given time.

2018 Vision:

- Continue to offer the outdoor recreation experience to residents and visitors.
- Work with the River Recreation Sub-Committee on offering lessons, special trips and special events focused on the River.
- Expand advertising efforts on attracting qualified staff for the 2018 season.
- Investigate hiring a seasonal intern with an Outdoor Recreation concentration to act as operating manager at the ORC.

Arts Council

The Eaton Rapids Arts Council began meeting in March 2017 with 6 initial members. The first general meetings were used to identify the roles and responsibilities of the group and identifying potential projects for 2017.

Three project areas were developed after much discussion including:

- Community Mosaic Tile Fundraiser - In partnership with Your Creative Escape, the sale of tiles launched during the 4th of July. This project invited residents and visitors the opportunity to paint a 4x4 tiles to be placed as part of an overall mural display to be placed at the time the Hall Street Park development, however it is looking like the location will have to be moved. Revenue (after costs from YCE are covered) from the sale of the tiles would go to future arts projects in and around town
- River Wall Murals - Initial concept plans were developed to paint a variety of murals along the West Sea Wall on the Grand River from the GAR Island pedestrian bridge to the wall behind Eaton Federal Savings Bank. This project concept is still in the planning stages and will continue to be a goal of the Arts Council.
- Scarecrow Competition - This event saw several businesses and community members design and build scarecrows for display along Main Street.

The City was approached by the Arts Council of Greater Lansing about being a community of focus through their outreach and advocacy efforts. Eaton Rapids was selected to represent Eaton County (Mason and St. Johns for Ingham and Clinton Counties respectively). A Community Arts Forum was held in which 26 arts minded community members met under direction of the Arts Council of Greater Lansing to brainstorm and identify two arts projects. After much discussion and voting, the two projects were identified:

- Illuminating the River
- Welcoming Archway into the Community

A second Arts Forum was held to further identify the details of the Illuminating the River concept, in which 16 community members were present. Area of focus driving this second meeting was to create a Working Action Plan for the project including looking at potential partners, marketing and funding sources.

Eaton Rapids was gifted (with a match - TBD) up to \$2500 from the Lansing Regional Prosperity Initiative for the Illuminating the River Project.

2018 Vision:

- Expand the current Arts Council, captivating the support expressed in the Fall from the community
- Continue the design aspects of the Illuminate Project and realize construction and completion in Summer of 2018
- Identify areas of potential funding (grants, sponsorships, fundraising) for the Illuminate the River Project.
- Expand Community led arts offerings including:
 - Arts and Craft Fairs
 - Community Arts Competitions and Gallery opportunities

Curb Appeal Grant Program

The 2017 cycle of the Curb Appeal Grant Program saw an increase in applicants over 2016 (6) with 11 approved applicants totaling \$4,795.71 in reimbursable funds. Only 9 of the 11 applicants completed their projects and returned receipts and reports for payment.

2018 Vision:

- Continue to offer the program in 2018, increase advertising to the community about the opportunity.
- Work with Building Official Hummel on identifying potential residents based on his inspection reports.
- Identify a new approval committee for 2018

Outreach and Partnerships

Continued to foster relationships with the following external groups and agencies:

- Michigan Recreation & Park Association (mParks) and Southern Michigan Recreation and Parks Association
- USA Softball and USA Softball of Michigan
- Eaton Rapids Chamber of Commerce
- Eaton Rapids Health Alliance and Eaton Rapids Medical Center
- Eaton Rapids Community Alliance
- Michigan Main Street
- Ingham County Parks
- Eaton County Parks
- Eaton Rapids School District
- Local Travel Sport Clubs (ERBC, LAX, ERYFL, ERYBA)

These accomplishments were only made possible through the support garnered from the community. As we look towards 2018 and beyond it is projects like these that Create Community utilizing our People, our Parks and our Programs.