



Stookey Township Parks & Recreation Master Plan

November 18, 2022



Planning Design Studio

In association with **Hutchison Solutions** and **Ballard*King & Associates**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Stookey Township Officials

Mark Bagby, Township Supervisor
Jim Lougeay, Trustee
Allen Scharf, Trustee
Ryan Stookey, Trustee
Dan Weaver, Trustee

Parks and Recreation Committee

Vance Vyers, Co-Chair
Mark Bagby, Co-Chair
Brad Dearborn
Karen Phillips
Gary Green
Patrick Dallas
John Paul Goelz

Planning Design Studio

Andrew Franke, PLA, ASLA, LEED GA
Jonathan Corbett, PLA, LEED AP
Julia Janovetz

Hutchison Solutions

Mary Jeanne Hutchison

Ballard*King and Associates

Darin Barr

MEPRD

Metro East Parks and Recreation District
generously provided up to 40% of the
funding for this report.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1 – Introduction	4	Appendix A:	A-1
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purpose of the Plan• The Park Master Planning Process• Document Organization		Park Assessment Surveys	
Section 2 – Data Collection	8	Appendix B:	B-1
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data Collection Process• Community Overview• Park System Overview• Other Recreational Opportunities• Community Input		On-Line Survey Results	
Section 3 – Analysis	23	Appendix C:	C-1
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Park Land Analysis• Park Land Distribution Analysis• Recreation Facilities Inventory• Park Summaries• Program & Operations		Stakeholder Summary	
Section 4 – Concepts and Master Plan	38	Appendix D:	D-1
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Recreation Vision• Concepts and Development Process• Program Statement• Master Plan Recommendations• Implementation Strategies		Meeting Notes	
		Appendix E:	E-1
		Order of Magnitude Cost Estimates	

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Plan

The township of Stookey, Illinois embarked on a Parks and Recreation Master Plan with the landscape architecture and park planning consultants at Planning Design Studio, the park and recreation strategic planning firm Hutchison Solutions, and the recreation consultants at Ballard*King & Associates in May of 2022. The goal of the master plan is to guide development of Stookey Township's parks and recreational programs over the next 10 years.

Park and recreation master plans are community-driven, meaning that public input is a critical component in the planning process. This ensures that the plan's recommendations are tailored to the needs and desires of the unique community. Park and recreation master plans build community support and enthusiasm for park improvements and new recreation facilities. Park master plans create a blueprint for implementing needed capital improvement projects. Strategically identifying and prioritizing projects allows the township to make the best use of available funds to achieve a high-quality recreation system. The plan also helps to identify funding strategies for the implementation of improvements. These strategies can multiply the impact of invested capital by

making use of creative alternate funding strategies.

The Park Master Planning Process

The Stookey Township park and recreation master planning process includes four primary phases:

1. Data Collection
2. Park Land and Facilities Analysis
3. Concept Development
4. Master Plan Development

The first phase, Data Collection, involves a broad collection of information on the existing conditions of Stookey Township's parks, an overview of the community context, and the regional recreation opportunities. The existing conditions of each park are assessed by both the planning team and township parks staff or officials. The Data Collection phase includes collection of public input through a community survey available online, a public town hall meeting, interviews with user groups that have a vested interest in the parks or could help further the plan, and presentations at the township Trustee Board meetings.

The Analysis phase is composed of a park land distribution analysis and a park facilities analysis. The park land distribution analysis examines the amount of park land available compared to benchmarks based on the township's population, and the distribution of park land throughout the township. The park facilities analysis compares Stookey Township's existing recreation facilities to benchmarks based on Stookey Township's population. The result of the analysis is a recommendation for additional parks or facilities that would help Stookey adequately serve the recreation needs of the entire township population.

In the Concept Development phase, the planning team synthesizes the information gathered in the previous phases into draft recommendations for each township park and for the park system overall. The recommendations include a concept map of potential locations for each new facility. The recommendations are then reviewed by the public, the Township Trustees, and Parks and Recreation Steering Committee.

The Master Plan Development phase incorporates all the feedback received in the previous phase into refined master plan recommendations. This phase includes the development of a program statement for the

master plan and outlines a vision for the parks and recreation system. Priorities are developed for the master plan recommendations and a phasing plan is developed that divides improvements into priority (0-3 years), mid-term (3-6 years) and long term (6-10 years) projects. Broad, master plan-level cost estimates are developed for each recommendation and each phase of development.

Community Input

As a community-driven plan, public input is gathered from the Stookey Township residents and park users throughout the planning process and is critical to creating a successful plan. Public town hall meetings are held during each phase of the planning process to keep the community informed and encourage public participation. The Data Collection phase included a public survey distributed both online and in print format that collected community input. Feedback on the park system was also gathered from township staff and key park stakeholders.

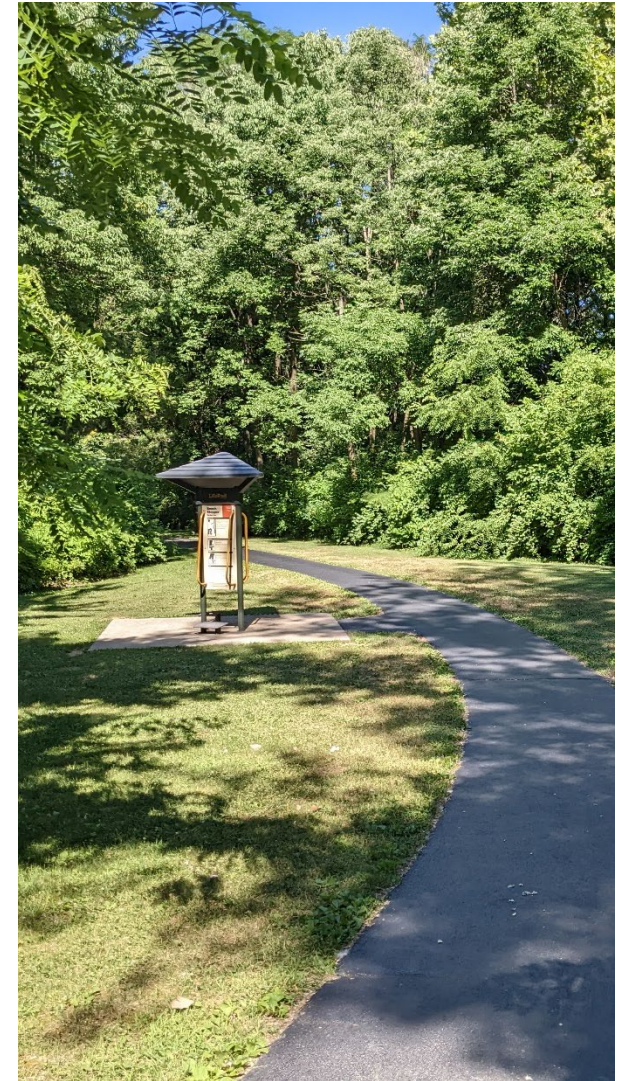
Implementing the Plan

Implementing the recommendations in the plan will be a phased process. Starting with one small demonstration project can help to build momentum and public support for the

improvements. The first projects should be important to residents and make a tangible difference in the community's use of the parks system. Grant opportunities should be sought out to maximize the funding available for improvements. Partnerships can be sought out as well, and key leaders in the community can help drive the plan forward, build support, and make progress. Establishment of a parks foundation can help raise money for improvements. Strategies are discussed further in the Master Plan section of this document.

Document Organization

The master plan document is organized by the project phases. Section two covers the Data Collection phase, section three is the Analysis phase, and section four includes both the Concept Development and Master Plan Development phases.



SECTION 2 – DATA COLLECTION

Data Collection Process

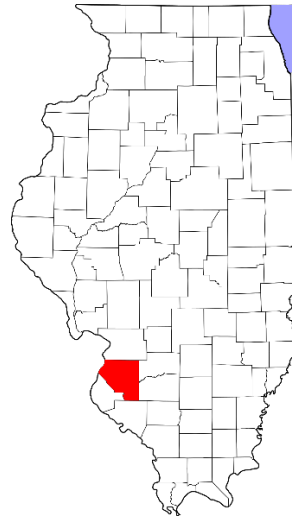
The first phase of the master planning process involves gathering a wide variety of information on the existing condition of Stookey Township's parks and contextual information on Stookey's community and region. Part of this phase is the compilation of a community profile with information on demographics, school districts, and local recreation opportunities outside the township park system. This phase also includes an inventory and review of the existing conditions within the park system. The parks are inventoried and assessed by the planning team.

An essential component of the data collection process is gathering community input through a public survey, interviewing important park stakeholder groups, and holding a public open house work session. The results of the community input process are summarized in this report.

Community Overview

Community Profile

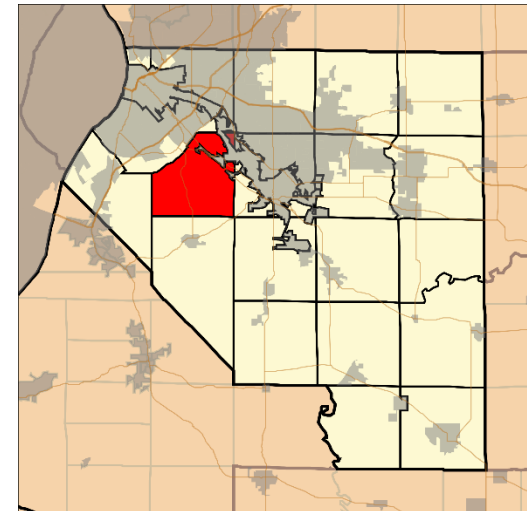
Stookey Township lies within St. Clair County in SW Illinois near the cities of East St. Louis and Belleville. The township is about 27.5 sq. miles in size and most of the land is comprised of rural farmland. Most of the township's population lives in the NE corner in a suburban area that is occasionally called "West Belleville" by locals. On the next page, Figure 2.1 shows the total population of each census block within Stookey Township to show where most of the population is located.



St Clair County, Illinois

Demographics

In 2020, Stookey Township had a population of 9,290 people. The township's median age is about 20% older than the county average at 46.5 years old. Approximately only 30% of the population is below the age of 30 years old. The largest age bracket in Stookey are the ages of 60-69, which make up about 17% of the township's population.



Stookey Township in St. Clair County

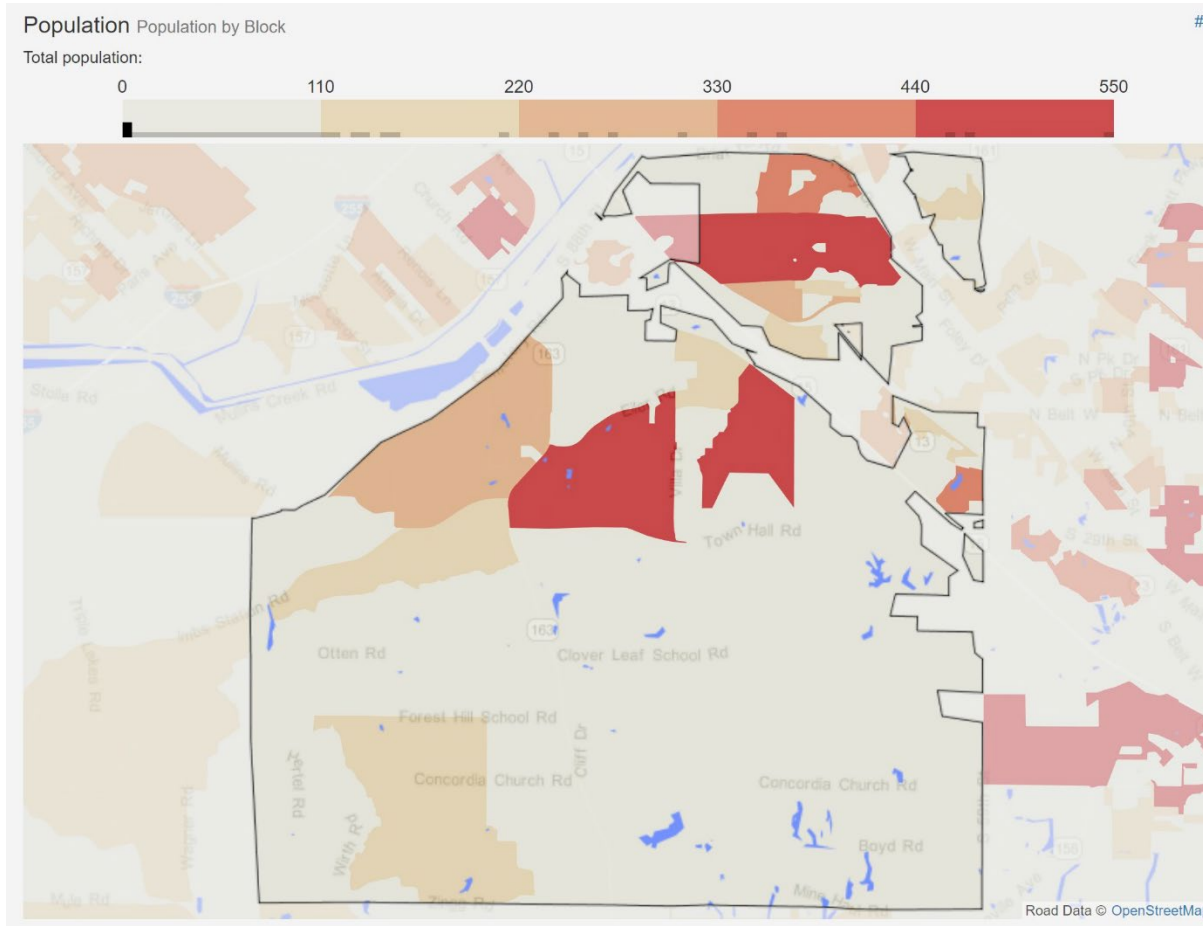


Figure 2.1: Total population of each census block within Stookey Township. The majority of people in Stookey Township live in the N-NE part of the township.

Income and Education

In 2020, the median household income was slightly higher than the county average at \$63,255. Likewise, the poverty rate in the township was lower than the surrounding county at 8.6% of persons below the poverty line. Of the 4,400 housing units, roughly 80% are owner occupied with the remaining 20% being renter occupied.

Approximately 94% of the township population has graduated from High School which is slightly higher than the county. A further 34% hold a bachelor's degree or higher which is 20% higher than St. Clair County.

Diversity

Approximately 85% of the township's population is classified as White and 12% are Black. Only 1% of the population is classified as Hispanic. This is less diverse than the county which has a much higher Black population of around 30% and a Hispanic population of around 5%.

Stookey Township's Future

Stookey Township has been slowly losing population over the last 30 years. The list below shows the last 4 census totals for Stookey Township.

- 1990 – 10,596
- 2000 – 10,088
- 2010 – 9,895
- 2020 – 9,290

This slow population decline is not limited to Stookey Township alone as many neighboring cities in the immediate region have also seen similar population declines.

The park and recreation master plan's goal is to create a plan for the next 10 years. While we don't know if the population in Stookey Township will continue to decline or stabilize around current levels, the 2020 population will be used as a baseline for the park land and recreational facility needs analysis. This analysis, found later in this report, is used to help understand if the people of Stookey Township are being adequately provided enough parkland and recreational facilities as would be expected for a community of this size and population.

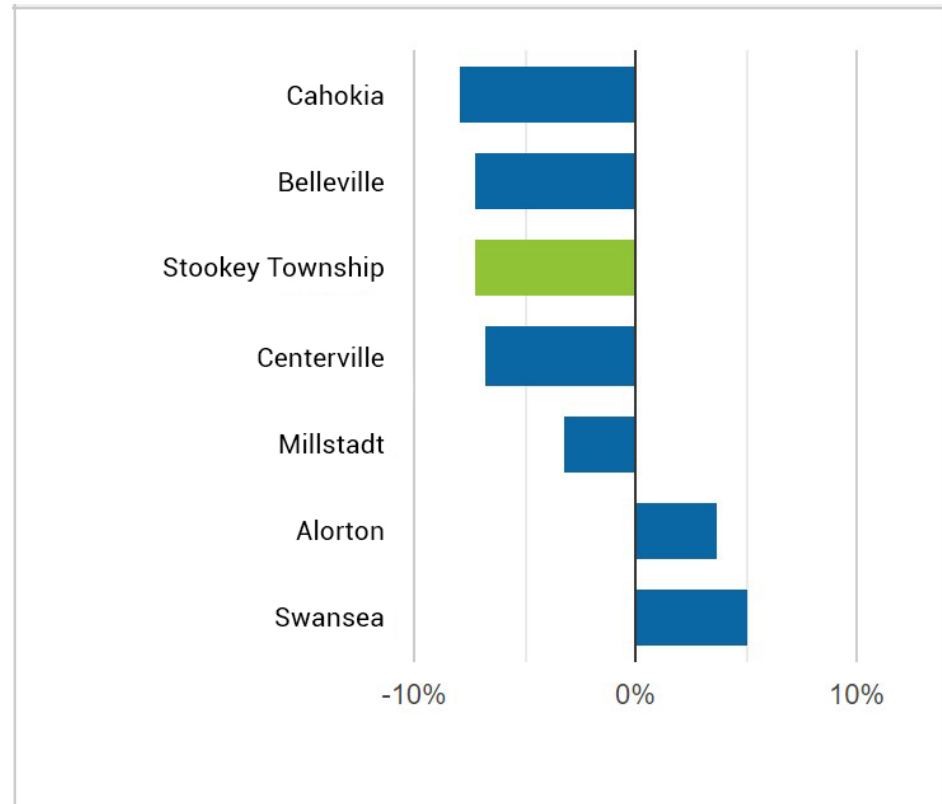


Figure 2.2: Stookey Township population change from 2010 to 2020 in comparison to other nearby cities and towns.

School Districts

Public School districts in this region are separated so that High Schools are in their own districts separate from districts with elementary and middle schools. The following are the public schools and districts that cover the Stookey Township area.

Belleville Township High School District No. 201

District #201 is the High School district that covers all Stookey Township. The district has 2 high schools, Belleville High School East and Belleville High School West, but the west school is the one most Stookey families attend.

Bellville West High School is located on the eastern boundary of Stookey Township along Frank Scott Parkway West. The large campus has 5 ball fields, 2 football fields, a soccer field, a running track, 8 tennis courts, and a large loop walking path around the whole campus.

Harmony Emge School District No. 175

District #175 covers the NE corner of Stookey Township where the majority of Stookey's population is concentrated. The district has two schools, Ellis Elementary School and Emge Junior High School.

Ellis Elementary is located a few blocks SE of Stookey Athletic Park and has 2 playgrounds, a multi-use court, and a loop walking trail. Emge Junior High School is located a few blocks south of Stookey Township Park and has a multi-use court, a soccer field, and a loop walking path.

Millstadt Community Consolidated School District No. 160

District #160 covers a broad portion of Stookey Township. The district has 2 schools that are both located within the village of Millstadt, Millstadt Primary Center and Millstadt Consolidated School.

Millstadt Primary Center handles pre-K through 2nd grade. Millstadt Consolidated School handles grades 3 through 8. Both schools sit on either side of Millstadt's Village Park. Besides having access to the Village Park facilities, the Primary Center has a playground and the Consolidated School has a playground and a multi-use court.

Signal Hill District #181

District #181 covers a small strip in the northernmost portion of Stookey Township which includes neighborhoods that branch off Foley Drive. The district has just one school called Signal Hill Elementary School that covers Pre-K through 8th grade. The school has 2 playgrounds, 2 baseball fields, a soccer field, a running track, and multi-use court.

Private Schools

Stookey Township is also served by several private schools. These include Our Lady of Queen of Peace Catholic School, Blessed Sacrament School and Althoff Catholic High School. Both elementary schools often rent fields at Stookey Athletic Park.

Park System Overview

Stookey Township first started managing parks around 2008 after the apartment complex next to the Dorchester Swim and Tennis club was demolished and the open space was converted into Stookey Township Park.

In 2022, Stookey Township doubled the amount of parkland under management by acquiring the West End Khoury League ball fields located next to the Township Hall and Road District facilities. Many longtime residents of the community grew up playing recreational baseball or softball at the Khoury League fields. However, recreational trends have changed over the years leading to waning popularity of local recreational ball teams towards select travel teams. After the onset of COVID in 2020, many of the Khoury League complexes in the region closed and did not reopen.

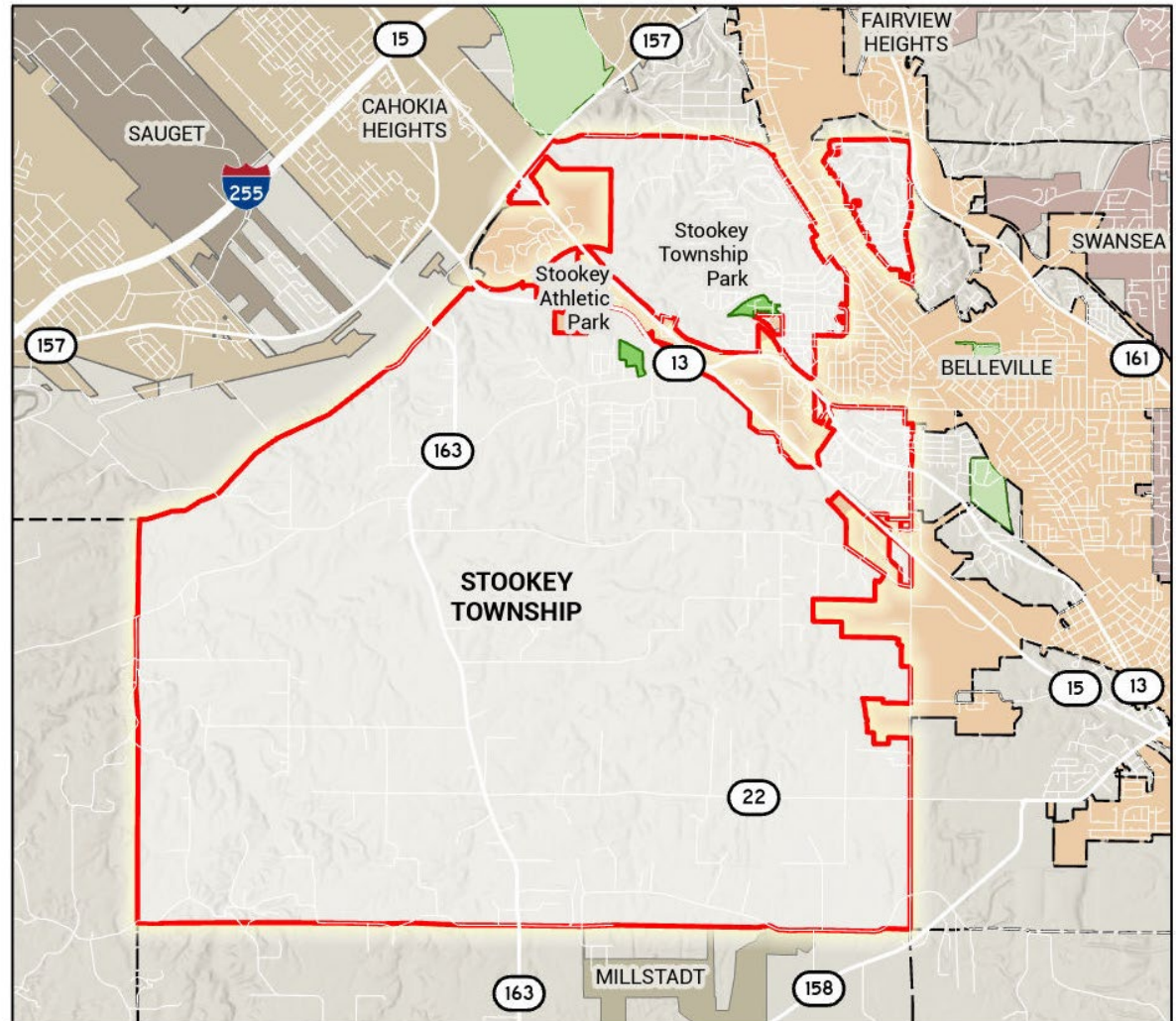


Figure 2.3: Map of parks in Stookey Township.

Stokey Township Park

Stokey Township Park is a 21.2-acre park located just off 74th Street and Arlington Drive next to the Dorchester Swim and Tennis Club. The wedge-shaped parcel is bounded on the NW and SW sides by railroad tracks and apartments on the South and East sides.

The east half of the park was formally the site of apartments before they were demolished in 2005 and the land turned into open parkland around 2008. As a result, much of the eastern half of the park is fairly flat and easily accessible. The western half of the park is made up of dense woodland and is mostly inaccessible and unused by park visitors.

The park has two fenced-in playgrounds that recently had their safety surfacing replaced with a poured-in-place surface. Close to the playgrounds is a concrete block restroom building that has a small covered sitting area on the north side. In the north-central part of the park is a fenced in dog park that has a small drinking fountain. Finally, looping around most of the open park space is a 0.5 mile asphalt walking trail that includes 10 exercise stations spaced out along the length of the trail.



- | | |
|----------------|---|
| A: Playgrounds | C: Dog Park |
| B: Restroom | D: Walking Trail with Exercise Stations |

Figure 2.4: Map of Stokey Township Park.



Current park sign along 74th Street.



Concrete block restroom facility.



One of two playground structures.



One of the 10 exercise stations



Drinking fountain at the Dog Park.



Western portion of walking trail.

Stookey Athletic Park

Stookey Athletic Park is a newly acquired 19.2 acre park located next to the Stookey Township Hall and Highway Department facilities. The Township recently took over operations and ownership of the ball field sports park from the West End Khoury League organization who managed the park for the last several decades.

The park was designed primarily for recreational youth baseball and softball and has 10 ball fields of various sizes laid out throughout the park. The all-grass fields #8, #9, & #10 in the back (NW) are also sometimes used for soccer. A combined concessions, restroom, and maintenance facility building is located in the middle of the park. The restrooms are small and not ADA compatible and have not been usable for over a decade so a temporary portable restroom has been set up for additional accommodation.

Currently, three of the fields are regularly maintained and rented out to teams for practice and/or games. The large gravel parking lot in the front of the park (south end) is also rented out to a tree trimming company to park their trucks.



- A: Ball Fields
- B: Concessions / Restroom

Figure 2.5: Map of Stookey Athletic Park.



Front of park along Eiler Road.



Existing concessions, restroom, and maintenance building. Restrooms are small and not ADA compatible.



Many of the infields are covered with weeds that have built up over multiple growing seasons.



Approximately 3 fields have been kept in playable condition.



Screen fence with Road District maintenance yard has collapsed in several locations.



Entrance drive is narrow at ~17' wide and no shoulder on the west side.

Other Recreational Opportunities

Several other parks, greenways, and recreational opportunities that are managed by public organizations exist nearby that also serve the people of Stookey Township. The parks and recreation master plan needs to take these other opportunities into account when analyzing and making recommendations for the township. The following is a brief description of these recreational opportunities.

Bellville Parks

The city of Bellville has four parks that are located within 3 miles of Stookey Township and also serve the people of Stookey.

- *Bellevue Park*
A 31-acre park that is Bellville's first park. It is situated around a 3-acre fishing lake and features gentle rolling terrain with walking trails, a stone lodge event facility, nature playground, tennis & pickleball courts, and a performance stage. Several community programs are held at the park including Camp Quackers, a Fishing Derby, and Concerts in the Park.

- *Bicentennial Park*
Bicentennial Park is located off 17th St and IL Rt 15 and includes walking trails, fishing lakes, frisbee golf, playgrounds, pavilions and restrooms.
- *Citizens Park*
Belleville's largest park features 45 acres and is located in the SW quadrant of the city near Route 13. The park includes 3 large baseball/softball fields, BMX bicycle ramps, 3 BBQ pavilions, 9-hole disk golf, and a playground. An additional 14-acre parcel of land is located within the park and is owned by the organization that donated the park to the city. It also features a lighted football field.
- *Pleasant Hill Park & Jaycee Park*
These twin parks of 22-acres and 17-acres are located next to each other just NW of downtown Bellville near the St. Clair County Jail. A railroad line splits the two parks with a single road providing the only connection between them. Jaycee Park features 3 soccer fields. Pleasant Hill Park features 2 baseball fields, a playground, two BBQ pavilions, and tennis courts.

Fairview Heights Parks

The city of Fairview Heights has one park that serves Stookey Township.

- *Moody Park*
The 87-acre park is Fairview Heights' main city park. It contains 3 baseball fields, 2 playgrounds, a football field, 6 pavilions, tennis and pickle ball courts, sand volleyball courts, walking trails, a lake, and a dog park. City festivals like the Midwest Salute to the Arts are also held in the park.

Millstadt Parks

The village of Millstadt located just south of Stookey has one main park located between both of the Millstadt Schools that serves some of the residents in southern Stookey Township.

- *Millstadt Park*
The 19-acre park has 5 baseball fields, 2 tennis courts, 2 playgrounds, a swimming pool, 6 BBQ pavilions, and a mile of walking paths. In addition to the park features, both schools adjacent to the park also have additional features such as playgrounds and walking paths that are sometimes available to park visitors.

Caseyville Township

- *Former Khoury League Fields*
Caseyville Township recently took over control of the Khoury League Fields located next to Fairview Height's city hall. This arrangement is similar to how Stookey acquired the Stookey Athletic Park land. This baseball complex features 9 baseball fields that are in a similar condition as the fields at Stookey Athletic Park.

Cahokia Heights

The recently merged city of Cahokia Heights has one park that could serve some of the residents of north Stookey Township.

- *Centerville Park*
The 28-acre park was the main park in the former city of Centerville and features a baseball field, 3 basketball courts, a football field, a BBQ pavilion, and a playground.

State of Illinois

- *Frank Holten State Recreation Area*
The 1,050-acre park is located just north of Stookey Township and provides several recreational activities not found in other nearby parks including boating, fishing, archery, and golf.



Figure 2.6: Moody Park during the annual Midwest Salute to the Arts festival.

Community Input

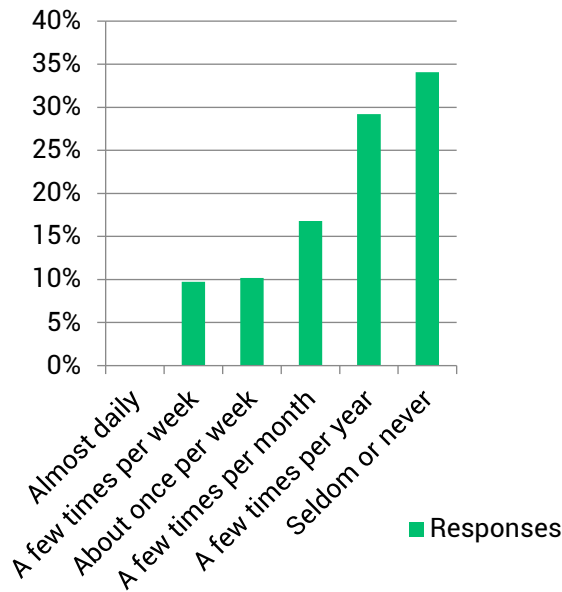
Community input is a critical component of a community-driven parks and recreation master plan. The primary purpose of the parks and recreation department is to serve the community, and the needs of each unique community should drive development. For this master plan, the community provided input through a public survey, user group interviews and a public meeting. The feedback from each of these methods is summarized below.

Community Survey

Residents were asked to complete an on-line survey to hear their thoughts about the park and recreation opportunities in and around Stookey Township. The survey was open for approximately four weeks (05/31/2022 – 06/27/2022) and received 228 respondents. The following is a summary of the results of the survey and comments received.

- 84% of respondents indicated they were a resident of Stookey Township
- Nearly all respondents were over 31 years old with 50% of respondents 31-54 years old and 46% were 55+ years old.

Question 3: On average, how often do you and/or members of your household visit Stookey Township Parks?



On question 3, over 50% of respondents indicated that they visit Stookey Township parks “just a few times a year” or “seldom or never”. On question 4, when asked which Stookey parks they visited during the past year, 65% indicated Stookey Township Park but only 15% indicated Stookey Athletic Park.

Questions 5, 6, and 7 asked about satisfaction of Stookey parks, the importance of park and recreation programs in Stookey Township, and the impact of Stookey parks on life, property values, and health.

- Stookey Township Park received an average rating of 3.81 out of 5 on how satisfied people were of the park. Stookey Athletic Park received an average satisfaction rating of 3.08 out of 5.
- Respondents strongly indicated that it is very important for Stookey Township to provide high quality parks and recreation programs and facilities (4.6 out of 5).
- 73% of respondents gave a high rating of 4 or 5 (out of 5) indicating parks in Stookey Township have a high impact on their life, property values, and health.

On question 9, a variety of recreation activities and programs were listed with respondents asked to indicate if they or others in their house had a desire to participate in the activity or program if it was offered by Stookey Township. The most popular recreational activities / programs selected were:

- Community Events (Craft Fairs, Festivals, Food Trucks) (90%)
- Farmer's Market (90%)
- Wellness Programs (74%)
- Walking / Hiking Group (73%)

The most popular additional activities / programs that people gave that were not included in the provided list were:

- Concerts or movies in the park.
- Splash pads or affordable swimming pool.

Questions 11-14 asked respondents to list the four most important programs / events to household members in different age groups.

- The most important programs for **ages 18 and younger** included:

- Baseball/Softball
- Camps
- Basketball
- Soccer

- The most important programs for **ages 19-30** included:

- Farmers markets
- Health/wellness programs
- Festivals
- Walking/running
- Arts/crafts
- Martial arts

- The most important programs for **ages 31-54** included:

- Farmers Markets
- Walking/Running groups and trails
- Yoga/Zumba
- Arts & Craft programs
- Community Events/Festivals

- The most important programs for **ages 55+** included:
 - Walking/Hiking/Running
 - Community Events/Festivals
 - Pickleball
 - Health/Wellness

Questions 15-18 asked about [Stookey Township Park](#). The most used park features indicated were the playgrounds and the walking trail. The highest priorities for improving existing features were the walking trail and the Restroom/Pavilion.

Additional suggestions for improvements to Stookey Township Park include:

- Splash pad or water feature
- Shade seating, fencing, and larger paved entrance to dog park
- Pickleball courts
- Crosswalk at 74th street
- Disk golf
- Rentable pavilions

Questions 19-22 asked about [Stookey Athletic Park](#). While the most used feature were the ball fields, over 35% of respondents indicated they had no knowledge of the park or have never been there. The highest priority for improving existing features include the Restrooms and the Ballfields.

Additional suggestions for improvements to Stookey Athletic Park include:

- "Multi use park for things beyond fields"
- "Grossly underutilized"
- "Walking trail / bicycle trail"
- "Walking trail and playground"
- "Need better appearance"
- "Needs to work on improvement in facilities and organization to serve youth sports development and yet serve neighborhood park needs"



Figure 2.7: Survey respondents said improving the walking trail and the restroom/pavilion at Stookey Township Park is an important priority.

Stakeholder Groups

The planning team conducted stakeholder group interviews during June of 2022. Interviews were arranged by the Stookey Township Supervisor and conducted in person and virtually to accommodate the participants schedules. The following groups and organizations were interviewed during this process:

- Schools
- Seniors
- Neighborhoods
- Clubs
- Sports/Renters
- Parks and Recreation Committee Members
- Stookey Township Board of Trustees

Each session lasted approximately one hour. Every group was given a brief overview of the planning process and the importance of community input to that process. The participants were made aware that no comments would be linked with any individual, and the comments would be recorded as general concepts rather than verbatim. The interviews were organized around the following questions:

1. What are the positive and negative aspects of the Stookey Township Parks?
2. What potential amenities would you like to have added to the parks in Stookey Township?
3. What are your top five priorities for amenities that should be added to the parks in Stookey Township?
4. What problems/concerns do you have regarding the amenities that are currently offered in the parks in Stookey Township?
5. What could be done better to meet your recreation needs?
6. What adjustments should be made to parks (and park facilities) based on COVID?

The complete summary of the stakeholder responses can be found in Appendix C. An abbreviated summary of those responses is listed below:

What are the positive and negative aspects of the Stookey Township Parks?

Positive:

- *Nice community asset (especially Stookey Township Park).*
- *Great location relative to local schools.*

Negative

- *Communication & advertising is very poor.*
- *Stookey Athletic Park is very run down and needs significant improvements.*

What potential amenities would you like to have added to the parks in Stookey Township?

- Add a splash pad.
- Add a farmer's market.
- Athletic Park:
 - Add a playground
 - BBQ Pavilions
 - Walking Trails
 - Pickleball Courts
 - Space for local Festivals

What are your top five priorities for amenities that should be added to the parks in Stookey Township?

Short Term:

- Add Pickleball to bring people in now.
- Programing if renting fields to outside groups.

Long Term:

- Township really needs more programing.
- Make Khoury League Park useable (to start bringing in some revenue)

- Invest in Khoury League Park.
- The park needs feature diversity to attract and cater to a wide variety of people and ages.
- Improve the park's curb appeal.

What problems/concerns do you have regarding the amenities that are currently offered in the parks in Stookey Township?

- No crosswalks at 74th street, so it is hard for close neighborhoods to walk to Stookey Township Park.
- Highway Department maintenance yard & facilities near Stookey Athletic Park are very unattractive.
- Keep it maintained.

What could be done better to meet your recreation needs?

Stookey Athletic Park:

- Would like to see the right kind of things that add value.
- Make sure parks cater to all ages.
- Improve connectivity to Schools & Parks.

- Needs to generate money to support itself. (ex: pay for field lights to turn on)
- Tie into the St. Clair trail plan.

What adjustments should be made to parks (and park facilities) based on COVID?

- Township should just maintain bathrooms.

Public Meetings

In addition to the survey and stakeholder interviews, public meetings were also held to collect additional feedback. At the first public meeting, participants came together in a group and were asked to answer five questions about their thoughts on parks and recreation in Stookey Township. A brief summary of some of the feedback received is as follows:

What are the positive and negative aspects of the Stookey Township Parks?

Positive:

- Playground well done.
- Plenty of parking
- Benches by Playground are covered.

Negative

- Signage & awareness
- Branding
- Accessibility
- Must drive to get there

What are your top five priorities for amenities that should be added to the parks in Stookey Township?

- Safety
- Shade & Sun
- Trails, Playground
- Lighting along walkway & paths
- Dog park
- Nice toilets

What could be done better to meet your recreation needs?

- Ability to host tournaments
 - Baseball / Softball
 - Soccer
 - Min. 4 to 5 fields to host tournaments
- Attractions for tourist money

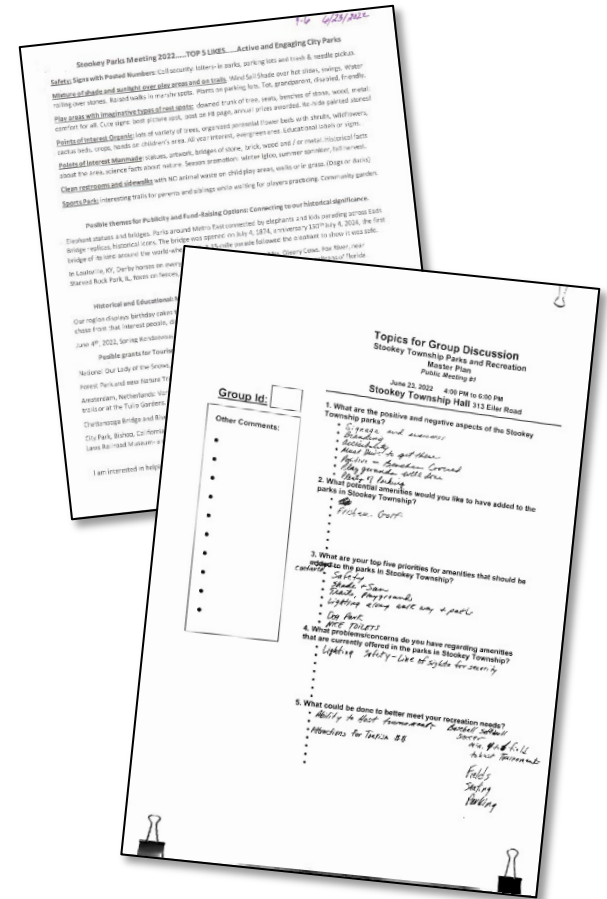


Figure 2.8: Feedback received from the first public meeting (see Appendix D).

SECTION 3 - ANALYSIS

Introduction

The second phase of the master planning process is the analysis of park land quality, park land distribution, and recreation facilities based on industry standards. This analysis provides a baseline to evaluate if Stookey Township needs more park land, which parts of the township might be under-served by parks, and what facilities the township could add to better meet the recreational needs of its residents.

The *park land analysis* is an evaluation of the total amount of park land and the amount of park land within each park size category. The first part considers park land owned and maintained by Stookey Township and is compared to benchmarks based on Stookey's population. The second part includes other public parks within a certain radius of the township that are available for Stookey residents to use.

The *park land distribution analysis* evaluates the extent to which residents in all parts of the township have walkable access to park land. The results can indicate areas in which the township could consider adding new park land.

The *recreation facilities inventory* compares the availability of various types of recreation

facilities within Stookey Township compared to benchmark standards based on Stookey Township's population. The first part evaluates only recreation facilities owned and maintained by Stookey Township. The second part includes nearby recreation facilities managed by other public organizations (such as nearby cities and public schools) that are available to the residents of Stookey Township to use.

Park Land Analysis

The park land analysis is an evaluation of the amount of park land available to the residents of Stookey Township. The first step considers only parks owned and maintained by the township, while the second part also includes park land near the township available for public use. Each park is classified into a park type category based on its size in acres from standards created by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). Each park type has a benchmark need (in acres) per 1,000 people

and a service area radius, which represents the maximum distance that people are typically willing to travel to visit that type of park. For instance, a person might drive up to 30 miles to visit a large Regional Park but would only be willing to walk one quarter of a mile to visit a Mini Park. The park types and the size range are listed below, and Figure 3.1 shows the park categories, their size ranges, the standard of acreage needed of each type per 1,000 people and the service area radius of each.

- Neighborhood Park 5-15 acres
- District Park 16-79 acres
- Metropolitan Park 80-249 acres
- Regional Park 250+ acres

Stookey Township Park, at 19.2 acres, and Stookey Athletic Park, at 21.2 acres, are both classified as District Parks. District Parks typically have a service area reaching out 3 miles from the park.

Park Type Category	Size Range	Park Land Needed Per 1,000 People	Park Type Service Area (Typ. Max Travel Distance)
Neighborhood Park	5-15 acres	1.5 acres	1 mile
District Park	16-79 acres	2.4 acres	3 miles
Metropolitan Park	80-250 acres	4 acres	5 miles
Regional Park	>250 acres	6 acres	30 miles

Figure 3.1: NRPA park type categories, size range, acreage needed per 1,000 people, and service area travel distance.

When considering only park land owned and maintained by Stookey Township, Stookey has enough District Park acreage. However, the standard suggest that the township would need and additional:

- 14 acres of Neighborhood Park
- 37 acres of Metropolitan Park
- 56 acres of Regional Park

A summary of park needs is shown in Figure 3.2 to the right with the Stookey Township owned park acreage needs shown in the third column.

In addition to Stookey Township owned and managed park land, residents also have access to nearby park land operated by other public entities. The second part of this analysis considers these other parks located near Stookey Township whose service area overlaps part of the township and partially serve people in Stookey Township. This includes neighborhood parks within 1 mile and District parks within 3 miles. Nearby Metropolitan Park and Regional Park acreage was also limited to within 3 miles despite their service areas reaching farther. More than enough required acreage in those categories is achieved within 3 miles and it

	Standard Acreage Needed	Stookey Township Owned Total Acres	Stookey Township Owned Need (-) or Surplus Acres	Existing Non-Stookey Township Owned Park Land Acres	Total Park Land Need (-) or Surplus Acres
Neighborhood Park (5 ac. - 15 ac.)	14	0	-14	0	-14
District Park (16 ac. - 79 ac.)	22	40	18	223	241
Metropolitan Park (80 ac. - 249 ac.)	37	0	-37	87	50
Regional Park (250 ac. +)	56	0	-56	1,080	1,024
Park Land Total Acreage Need:	129	40	-89	1,391	1,302

Figure 3.2: Stookey Township - park land analysis on acreage needed.

is not necessary to continue looking further out for a need that is already well met.

The parks included are listed in Figure 3.3 with the owner, size, and park type classification listed.

The analysis suggest that Stookey Township has a surplus of park land acres in all categories except neighborhood parks (need 14 acres) when including nearby park land owned and operated by other entities.

Parks Within 3 Miles of Stookey Township*	Owner / Managing Entity	Park Size (Acres)	Park Type
Jaycee Park	Belleville	17	District
Former Hourly League Fields	Caseyville Township	18	District
Millstadt Park	Millstadt	19	District
Pleasant Hill Park	Belleville	22	District
Centerville Park	Cahokia Heights	28	District
Bellevue Park	Belleville	31	District
Citizens Park	Belleville	41	District
Bicentennial Park	Belleville	48	District
Moody Park	Fairview Heights	87	Metropolitan
Frank Holten State Recreation Area	State of Illinois	1,080	Regional

* Neighborhood Parks within 1 mile of Stookey Township

Figure 3.3: Stookey Township – existing non-Stookey Township owned park land.

aPark Land Distribution Analysis

The park land distribution analysis evaluates the distribution of park land within Stookey Township. The examination of how evenly park land is distributed throughout the township can be used to reveal areas that are under-served in regards to close access to parks. The park land distribution standard is to have a park within walking distance for each Township resident. For this analysis, a maximum theoretical walking distance of one mile was used for District, Metropolitan, and Regional Parks.

Figure 3.4 on the following page shows the Park Land Distribution Map. All parks within 1 mile of the township were overlaid on a map showing the whole Township. Each park is given a 1-mile buffer showing its theoretical walkable service area. Public schools were also added to the map since their recreational facilities are usually available to the public when school is not in session. Schools were shown with a ½-mile buffer which represents the smaller service area that they serve.

Residential land use areas were highlighted to show which areas people lived. It is

assumed that Agricultural, Industrial, and Commercial land uses do not need access to walkable parks, and that Stookey Township should focus their resources on serving residential areas.

Looking at the analysis map, three residential areas are shown which do not have access to local parks or public-school recreation facilities.

Area A: This isolated section of the township is comprised of a low density neighborhood built along the steep hills and valleys as typically found along the Mississippi River eastern bluff line. Development of any new (5+ acre) large sized park parcels would be costly and difficult. In addition, there is poor connectivity between each of the neighborhood streets and walking is very difficult for many of these residents. This area is located close to the Metro BikeLink Trail that runs along the Metrolink rail corridor.

Legend:

- Stookey Township Boundary
- Residential Areas
- Stookey Parks
- Parks - 1 Mile Service Area
- Parks by Others within 1 mile
- Parks by Others - 1 mile Service Area
- ⚓ Schools
- Schools - 1/2 mile Service Area

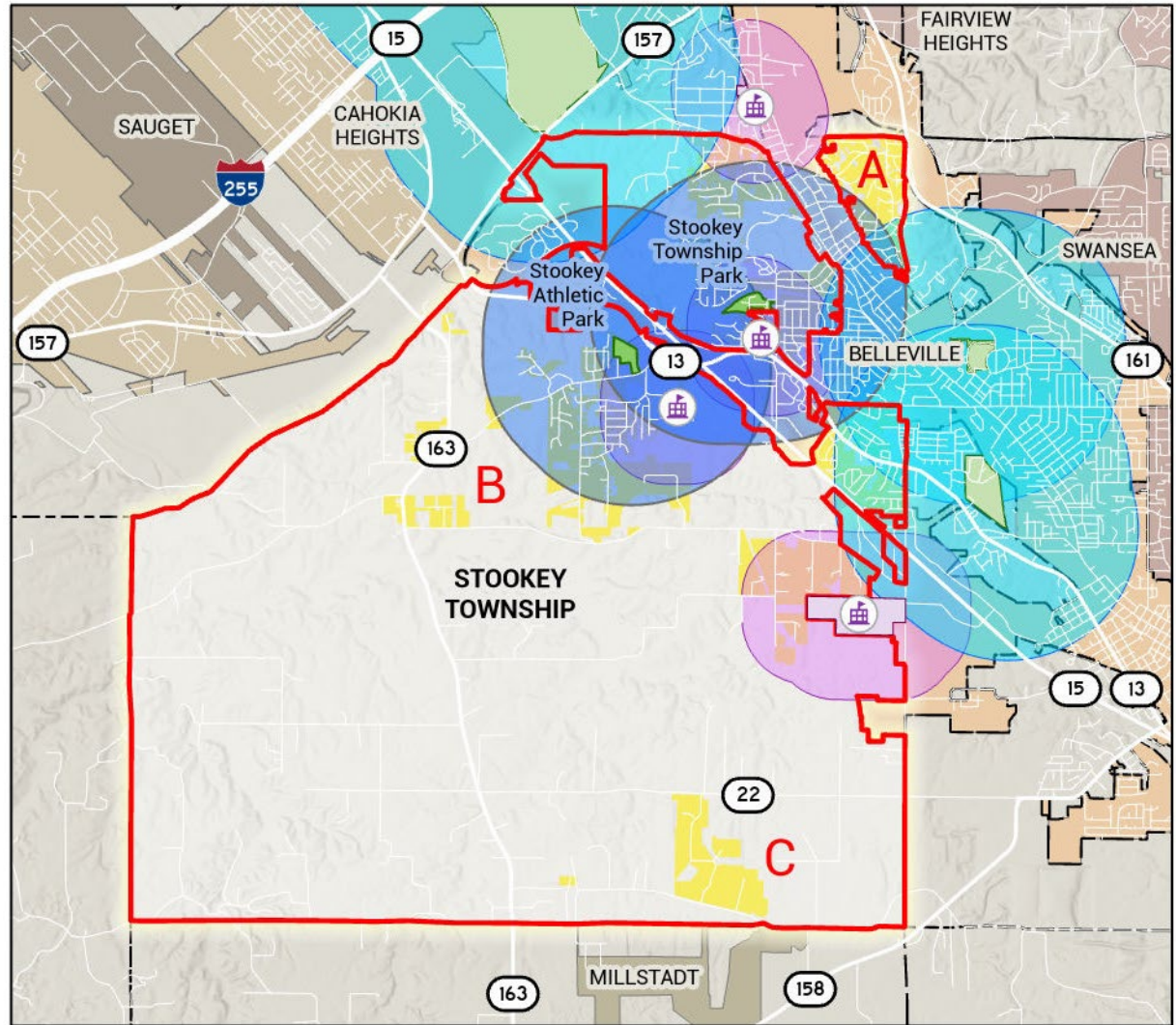


Figure 3.4: Park land distribution analysis.

Recommendations: Stookey Township might consider working with the city of Belleville (which completely surrounds this area) to help provide a park in the area. The park could serve both these residents and the adjacent Belleville residents who similarly do not have nearby park access.

Area B: The small residential neighborhoods in this area are located close to the intersection of Eiler Road and Hwy 163. The residents living here would benefit from having a park within walking distance to their homes. If the township decides to build another park or has land donated, this area would be the best location for a future neighborhood park.

Area C: This residential neighborhood is comprised of homes on 5-acre lots each. With each family having at least 5 acres of open space, it is reasonable to assume that their walkable recreation needs are met and there is little need for additional local neighborhood park access. The township should focus their limited recreational resources on helping other areas that have greater needs for neighborhood park access.

Recreation Facility Inventory

The recreation facility inventory compares the availability of various park and recreation facilities to standard benchmarks based on Stookey Township's population of 9,290. Each facility has its own benchmark that represents the standard demand for that facility. The recreation facilities that were inventoried, the standard need for each, and the facility demand for the Stookey Township are shown in Figure 3.5.

The benchmark standards used in this analysis use the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) 2022 Park Metrics. The standards selected are an average taken from comparable communities to Stookey Township with the following properties:

- Population less than 20,000
- Park & Recreation Budgets less than \$500,000
- 250 or Fewer Acres of Parkland
- <10 Full Time Employees (FTE)
- Population Density <500 people per Square Mile
- Cities Located in the Midwest

The first part of the analysis inventoried only facilities owned and managed by Stookey Township. The results of this analysis show that Stookey Township falls short of benchmark standards in about 1/3rd of the recreational categories. These categories include:

- Park Land Acreage (Need to more than double current amount)
- Trails (need 7 miles)
- Basketball Courts (need 1 court)
- Picnic Area Shelters (need 3)
- Playgrounds (need 1)
- Tennis Courts (need 1 court)

Like the park land analysis, a second part of the recreation facilities inventory included facilities managed by public entities other than Stookey Township. Facilities were surveyed at a distance within 3 miles from Stookey Township. This also included facilities at public schools within a 1-mile distance (see Figure 3.6). All non- Stookey Township facilities were calculated at ½ the actual quantity due to the assumption that they may not always be available to use by Stookey Township residents.

Stookey Township Park Facility/Amenity Standards and Needs

Recreation Facility	Recommended Standard Used for this Plan ¹	Facility Demand ³	Stookey Township Facility Inventory	Facility Need (Stookey Township Facilities Only)	Other Facilities within 3-miles (shown at 1/2 actual quantity) ⁴	Facility Need (Including Facilities Owned by Others)
Park Land Acres (per 1000 people)	8.9	8.9	4.3	4.6	12	0
Trails (Miles)	7	7	1	7	3	4
Baseball / Softball Diamond (Residents per field)	4,424	2	8	0	16	0
Basketball (Residents per Court)	5,552	1	0	1	3	0
Community & Recreational Centers (Residents per Center)	15,979	0	0	0	0	0
Dog Park (Residents per park)	21,139	0	1	0	1	0
Football (Residents per field)	12,666	0	0	0	2	0
Golf Course (9 Hole) (Residents per Course) ²	25,000	0	0	0	4	0
Lakes and Ponds (Residents per Acre) ²	14,000	0	0	0	107	0
Multi-Use Court (Residents per Court)	9,639	0	0	0	0	0
Outdoor Amphitheater (Residents per Amph.)	28,515	0	0	0	1	0
Aquatic Center (Residents per pool)	20,664	0	0	0	1	0
Picnic Area Shelter (Residents per Pavilion) ²	2,000	4	1	3	16	0
Playground (Residents per playground)	3,438	2	1	1	9	0
Skate Park (Residents per park)	43,026	0	0	0	0	0
Soccer Fields (Residents per field)	5,178	1	2	0	4	0
Tennis Court (Residents per court)	4,980	1	0	1	8	0
Volleyball Court (Residents per court) ²	10,795	0	0	0	2	0

¹ Standards from 2022 NRPA unless noted

² Standards from Planning Design Studio

³ Based upon Stookey Township's estimated 2020 population of 9,290

⁴ Excludes Neighborhood Parks and Schools more than 1 mile from Stookey Township

After accounting for all the facilities managed by both Stookey Township and other nearby public organizations, the analysis finds that the township is only lacking in the amount of trail miles.

Figure 3.5: Stookey Township - Recreation Facility Inventory and Need.

Belleville Township High School District No. 201	Harmony Emge School District No. 175	Signal Hill District #181
Bellville West High School	Ellis Elementary School	Signal Hill Elementary School
	Emge Junior High School	

Figure 3.6: Schools within 1 mile of Stookey Township.

Park Summaries

Stookey Township Park

Stookey Township Park is currently in good condition and most observations and recommendations are smaller upgrades to improve the park even more.

Observations

- Park and amenities are very well maintained.
- Locations below do not meet ADA requirements.
 - Playground Swing Area
 - Picnic Table Sites
 - Benches along walking path lack companion seating
- Upper open space may be a location for future community event venues.

- Fence panel sections belong to apartment buildings but need repair/replacement.
- Ornamental grasses should be incorporated into a bed to reduce mowing effort. Individual plants should be spaced closer so they create a mass.
- Tree work is needed throughout the park including deadwood removal, stump and vine removal, and sucker removal.
- None of the benches along the walking path have companion seating for wheelchair users.

Recommendations

- Remove existing stumps
- Relocate small trees 10-15 feet from edge of walking path and plant additional trees within this zone.
- Consider programming 1-3 special events in open space (eastern portion) that includes 2 food trucks in existing parking lot and portable stage.
- Consider expanding the nature trail through back forested part of park (if topography allows)
- Change the park entrance sign to make it clear that there is a park here.
- Add a second entrance sign by the apartment entrance.
- Consider adding low level bollard lighting for early evening and morning users.

Stookey Athletic Park

Stookey Athletic Park was recently acquired from the Khoury League and all the facilities are very old and in poor condition. Many of the observations and recommendations involve significant changes to the park.

Observations

- Only 3 ballfields are currently in playable condition. (2, 4 and 5)
- Existing building will require extensive repairs and modifications to make useable. Demolition and reconstruction most likely best option.
- Parking lot and roads need to be reconstructed with asphalt surfacing.
- All existing amenities are active type recreation.
- No dumpster for trash collection.
- Fencing along adjacent Road District Yard is in poor condition.
- No ADA restrooms and no restrooms with handwashing capability. The current restrooms are unusable. No simple modification to the existing restrooms will bring them up to ADA standards. The septic system needs to be replaced or connected into sewer system.

Recommendations

- Two possible alternatives:
 - Adapted plan keeping Fields 2, 4 and 5.
 - New master plan to reconstruct the park over 7 years.
- Add a mix of community-oriented amenities like:
 - Walking path
 - Playground
 - Pickleball
 - Splash Pad
- Consider approaching the adjacent Legion to share use of their field.
- Consider storing park maintenance equipment in adjacent Road District yard as either a temporary phasing solution or a permanent solution.



Un-used Field #10 of Stookey Athletic Park.

Programming & Operations

Funding Strategies

Stookey Township has a population of approximately 10,000 individuals which equates to approximately 4,300 housing units. The primary method of funding for the Township is through property taxes.

The Parks Department, based on their most recent budget, has identified three different methods of funding. Property tax is the primary method, but the Township also identifies the opportunities of interest income and rental income. The other obvious opportunity that the Parks Department has for funding is through obtaining grant dollars.

The 2022-2023 budget for the Parks Department is approximately \$35,000 total. This includes maintenance, maintenance service-equipment, engineering fees, electric and gas, water, sewer, supplies, fuel, and trash. It does not include the dollars associated with the park stewards that maintain the parks. The dollars for the park stewards comes from the Township general fund. Additionally, there is a separate Parks Capital Project Fund budget item. This number fluctuates from year to year.

The reality of the Township is that based on their structure and size, there are very limited resources for the Township, and even fewer with respect to Parks. The Township can fund between \$350,000-\$500,000 annually in capital projects Township wide.

As the Township moves forward, they have a number of different options that they could consider.

- **Grants.** The Township has had some success in the past applying for and receiving grant funding. As they begin to identify projects through the master planning effort, they should continue pursuing grant opportunities. The biggest challenge associated with pursuing grants is the application process. It takes time and resources to pursue grant funding and has already been identified those are limited in the Township.

In addition to looking for grant opportunities for capital projects, the Township may always want to look at the possibility of grants that would fund programming. Currently the bulk of programming that the Township does is

through some form of partnership. In the future, and based on the implementation of the master plan, they may want to consider pursuing grants that would fund some level of programming within the parks.



- **Gift Program.** Upon completion of the master plan the Township should consider the implementation of a gifting program. A gifting program identifies opportunities for groups, individuals, or estates where they can gift dollars in a meaningful way to them and to the department.
- **Friends of Parks.** It is not uncommon to have a non-profit arm that is focused on projects in the parks, raising awareness of the parks, and fundraising for projects in the park. The organizations are loosely associated with the Township but would work directly with the Township to identify funding needs.
- **Park Stewards.** The individuals that are in these roles for the Township are extremely vested in their positions. In interviews it was not uncommon to hear them reference times when they “check-in” on the respective parks. The other advantage of these individuals is that they have been in their positions for some time. They have a great deal of institutional knowledge and seem very willing to adjust based on the needs of the community.

Weaknesses

- **Budget.** The biggest weakness of the Township is the dollars they have associated for operations and for capital projects. The dollars associated with operations make it challenging to do extra things in the parks. The dollars associated with capital projects are allocated Township-wide. As those dollars are limited it often means that each collective group within the Township must “wait their turn” for dollars to be available.
- **Staffing.** While the Park Stewards are a strength, they are limited. It is very realistic to assume that there are days

where individuals are not in the parks. As such needs could go unattended.

- **Website.** The Township website, while packed full of good information, has no information on the parks or the park system. In the interviews with the Park Stewards, in that they felt many residents of the Township were unaware of the two parks and the amenities within those parks.
- **Awareness.** There is a feeling, see previous bullet point, that many residents in the Township are unaware of the parks and the associated amenities. This can be challenging, in particular if the Township were to go to the residents to seek additional funding for park operations or capital projects.
- **Programming.** Outside of special events, there is not a significant amount of programming done by the Township in their Parks.

Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threats (SWOT)

Strengths

- **Property.** The Township has 2 parks in their system, and both are significant size. The other advantage of the property that the Parks Department manages is that they have two very distinct focuses.

Opportunities

- **Partnerships.**

- **Service Organizations.** The Township has several service groups in the area that are looking for opportunities to positively impact the community. The Planning Team would recommend being proactive with those groups and giving them ideas of what they could do in the parks to be helpful. The key to this partnership is the proactive nature. If the Township is not proactive in identifying the need and a time frame, opportunities may be lost.
- **School District.** There is a school located in proximity to Stookey Athletic Park and the children that attend are users of the park. Involving those students in "clean-up" efforts is an opportunity to facilitate this partnership. Also, as that park evolves and gains amenities, the children will be natural facilitators to getting their parents to the park.
- **American Legion.** The Legion is located adjacent to Stookey Athletic Park. If there is the interest in hosting

adult-age tournaments at this park, the Legion may be engaged regarding concession, and or liquor sales for the tournament. Additionally, the Legion could be approached regarding field sharing opportunities, especially in the instance of future tournaments.

- **Other Municipalities.** The communities of O'Fallon, Belleville, and Fairview Heights all have significant parks and recreation offerings. Specific to programs, there may be an opportunity for the Township to work with those agencies and facilitate participation of their residents in their program offerings.
- **Expansion.** Both parks are in the north / northeast corner of the Township, which is where there is the greatest population concentration. Given that, there may be the opportunity in the future expand the parks and acquire park property in other areas of the Township. It is important to note that if more park property were acquired, it would also require additional funding.
- **Special Events / Community Gatherings.** With the park system there is an

opportunity to leverage existing and future partnerships to host a variety of special events in the park system.



Threats

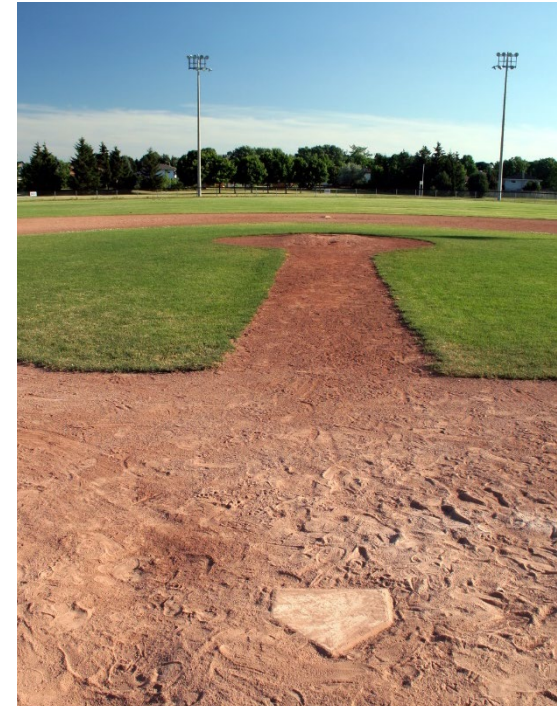
- **Lack of Awareness.** A significant threat to the Township and the implementation of the master plan is the lack of awareness of the parks by residents of the Township. This will be particularly true if the Township were to seek any additional funding for the operations or capital improvement of the parks.
- **Other Municipalities.** The other municipalities in the area have already been identified as a potential partner, but at the same time they could be a threat to the park system. If residents feel that all of the parks and recreation needs are being met by these other providers, combined with a lack of awareness, it could make them very apathetic to the future of the parks.
- **Budget.** It will be very important that as changes are made to Stookey Athletic and Stookey Township Parks that the future budgets reflect the future needs of those parks. There is a strong possibility that the future needs of the Athletic Park will require a higher level of service than what is currently being provided.
- **Turn Over.** The diligent work that the Park Stewards do has already been

highlighted, as is the fact that most of them have been with the Township for some time. It will be important for the Township to continue to engage the Stewards to ensure that when they leave or retire from the Township, the institutional knowledge that they possess is not lost.

Programming

The Township is in a unique position in that they do not have any dedicated staff to address the programming needs of the community. The Planning Team is not suggesting that this is an immediate need, however it is something that the Township may want to consider in the future.

The following are activities that could take place once the master plan has been implemented. It is also important to note that most of these activities are either maintaining current participation levels or growing based on regional and national statistics.



- **Diamonds (Baseball/Softball).** Both softball and baseball are activities that take place on diamonds and there will be multiple fields located at Stookey Athletic Park. On a national level the participation rate in both baseball and softball have stayed relatively consistent since 2005-2010 time frame. While this participation has remained consistent prior to that there were dramatic decreases in participation, specific to

adult leagues. Since that decrease in 6, 8, 12 week leagues, there has been an increase in adult travel tournaments. There has also been an increased focus on youth sports and growth in competition participation.

To facilitate programming and tournaments at Stookey Athletic Park it will be important for the Township to seek out partnerships. Those partnership could be in the form of the school district using facilities, other municipalities using Township facilities to run programs, and working with tournament directors to make them aware of the facility.

- **Rectangles (Soccer).** There are a variety of activities that can take place on rectangular shaped fields. Those activities include football, lacrosse, field hockey, and soccer. Tackle football has seen a decrease in participation, specifically in the last 5 years, prior to that participation was consistent. Along with the decrease in tackle participation has come an increase with touch and flag football. Lacrosse, at one time was the fast growth rectangle participation activity in the country. That growth

occurred on both coasts of the country and has grown inward. Another activity that has experienced growth, but has been mainly in metropolitan population centers, like St. Louis, is field hockey. The biggest challenge with field hockey is the requirements of the field surface, which pushes many providers towards synthetic turf. While soccer participation on the adult level has been stagnant the participation in youth soccer has exploded.

If the Township wants to implement these types of programs, they will have to use the same methods outlined for diamonds.

- **Exercise Walking.** At both Stookey Athletic Park and Stookey Township Park there are opportunities for walking trails. As an activity exercise walking has been the most participated activity across the country for the past 20 years, and the rate of participation continues to increase. If the Township wants to facilitate this type of drop-in activity it will be very important for them to increase awareness of the parks and what is in them.

- **Pickleball.** There is the possibility of introducing outdoor pickleball courts in the master planning effort. As an activity, indoor and outdoor, pickleball is growing at a significant rate nation-wide. There are retirement communities in Florida and the southwest region that are currently being designed around pickleball. This growth pattern, from the upper age groups down to the younger, is one of the things that makes pickleball popularity unique, as it is typically reverse. The other benefit of pickleball is that many of the participants do so via drop-in, casual, participation. In other words, having an amenity like this would not require the Township to coordinate leagues.
- **Inside-Out.** While not a specific program there is a significant push within parks and recreation for activities that take place inside to move outside. Some of these activities might include aerobic exercise, boot camp-like programs, yoga, etc. All these activities have either maintained a consistent rate of participation or increased in the past 10-15 years. While these are typically coordinated activities, the benefit to the

Township is that outside groups, in some cases local private providers, can use the Township parks.

- **Drop-In Participation.** It is challenging to program a park for every minute of the day. However, a hallmark of government operated parks and recreation systems is the idea of drop-in use. Ensuring that the parks are available for people to use on a casual, non-coordinated, way is an essential service to the residents of the Township.

Program Provider Role

The Planning Team typically defines the method for delivery of programs as the following.

- **Staff Run.** These programs are offered by the Township and are run by staff, both full-time and part-time, and can take place on a seasonal or annual basis.
- **Third Party.** These programs are run by a third-party contractor. These instructors are paid on a contract basis and there is typically a revenue split between the contractor and the Township.



Rentable pavilions being used at Moody Park as part of the Midwest Salute to the Arts Festival that is sponsored by both public and private organizations.

- **Rental.** These programs are run by an outside group that is renting facility space from the Department.

For the foreseeable future, the Planning Team would envision that the Township would offer programs through the rental method, or the third-party method.

Program Pyramid

The program pyramid is a tool that helps organizations identify where they are at in regard to the delivery of programs and services. It also helps illustrate the ability to generate revenue v. the market for services.

The pyramid provides a visual explanation of the market for services, community v. individual benefit, and cost recovery. It also provides 4 categories or programs that fall into the pyramid, illustrating that as one moves up the pyramid the market decreases, the individual benefit increases as does the cost recovery.

The Township does not currently have a cost recovery philosophy because they are not offering organized recreation programming to the community. However, this provides guidance for future efforts, it also provides some guidance to the Township on where their fee structure may need to be for rental of facilities that focus on Enhanced or Specialized programs at Stookey Athletic Park.

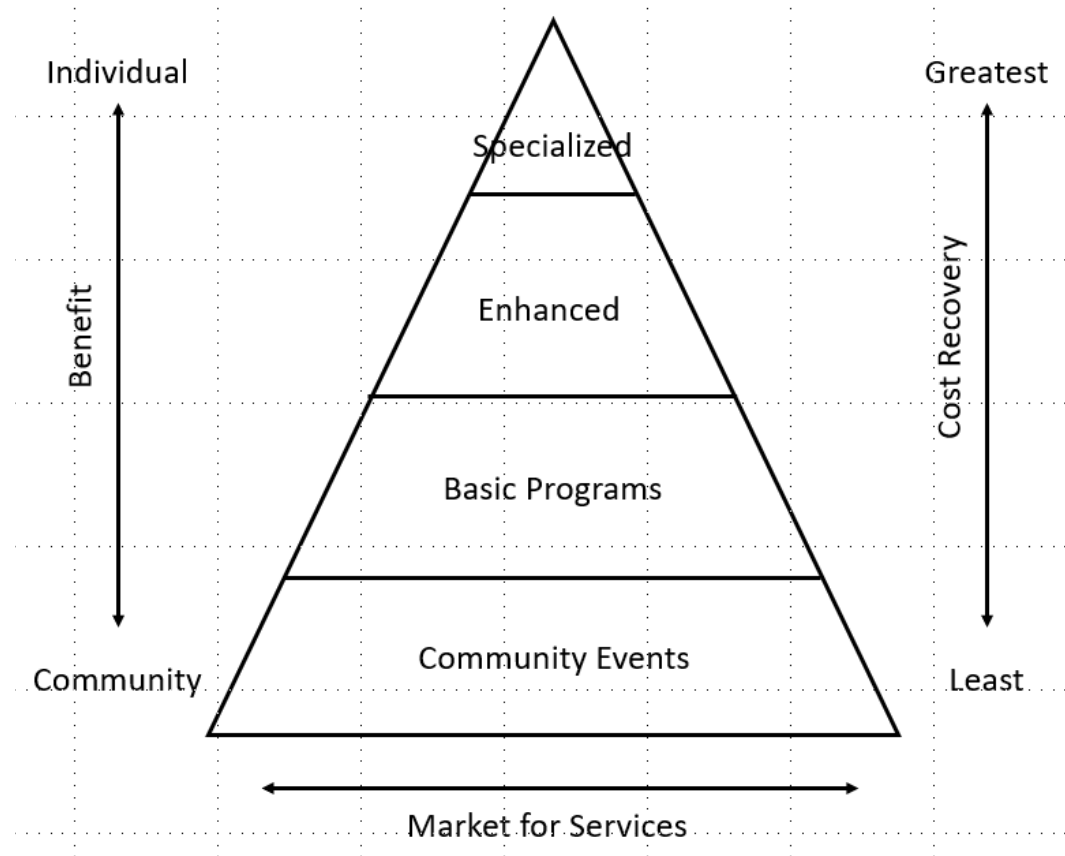


Figure 3.7: Program Pyramid

SECTION 4 – CONCEPTS AND MASTER PLAN

COMMUNITY RECREATION VISION

The Stookey Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan envisions Stookey Township excelling at meeting the current and future recreation needs of its community and providing high quality recreation amenities to its residents and visitors alike. Stookey Township can leverage its location near the greater Belleville area by creating and promoting parks and recreation attractions that will draw visitors from the larger surrounding region.

A proposed neighborhood park near Highway 163 and Eiler Road in the central portion of the township will fulfill the need for between 5 and 15 more acres of neighborhood park land that was identified in the park land analysis. Implementation of future MEPRD trails will greatly increase recreational connectivity to the larger region and afford Township residents access to more and varied recreational amenities.

An analysis of Stookey Township Park revealed a need for additional improvements and amenities to make this park an even better township asset. Consideration of this park as a possible location for community special events represents a significant improvement in recreation programs offering by the township.

Perhaps the most impactful improvement on the community will be the complete re-visioning of the township's recently acquired West End Khoury League fields. Now known as Stookey Athletic Park, this new facility when completed will offer new baseball/softball fields, soccer fields, and a variety of community recreational amenities. Surrounding this entire facility will be a walking path intended to help meet the communities need for additional trails.

In total the vision of this master plan, when completed will represent a significant improvement in the recreational offerings available to Stookey Township residents.

CONCEPTS AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

From the Data Collection and Analysis phases of the planning process, the planning team formed initial concepts for each park and for the park system overall. These concepts were presented to the township and to the public in a Town Hall format. Feedback received from the township and the community was incorporated into the concepts, which were refined into the master plan recommendations.



Dog Park at Stookey Township Park

Initial Concepts

The initial park concepts included improvement recommendations for each park and ideas for expanding the Stookey Township park system, which are listed below.

Stookey Township Overall Master Plan

- New park land considerations:
 - Explore a dedicated space for a Farmers Market and/or community event space (Festivals, Food Trucks, Craft Fairs).
 - Create a long-range plan to build multi-use paths along major roads to increase connectivity and help residents safely get to parks (significant grant opportunities exist for trails).
 - Any new park land acquisition should be Neighborhood size (5-15 acres).

Stookey Township Park

- Remove existing stumps.
- Consider programming 1-3 special events in open space (eastern portion) that includes 2 food trucks in existing parking lot and portable stage.
- Consider expanding the nature trail through back forested part of park (if topography allows).
- Change park entrance sign to make it clear that there is a park here.
- Add a second entrance sign by the apartment entrance.
- Consider adding low level bollard lighting for early evening and morning users.
- Repair sections of fence that are in disrepair or develop a solution that is visually compatible.

Stookey Athletic Park

- Two possible alternatives:
 - Adapted plan keeping Fields 2, 4 and 5
 - New master plan reconstructed over 7 years.
- Add a mix of community-oriented amenities like:
 - Walking path
 - Playground
 - Pickleball
 - Splash Pad
- Consider approaching the adjacent Legion to share use of their field.
- Consider storing park maintenance equipment in adjacent Road District yard as either a temporary phasing solution or a permanent solution.

PROGRAM STATEMENT

1. Stookey Township Park: Enhance the recreational opportunities in order to create a neighborhood park that can also support community events, while preserving its natural environment.

2. Stookey Athletic Park: Reimagine the park as two combined parks that offer both athletic and community park amenities. Most importantly, this park will be a place where all ages of the community can come together for social gathering and sport. Conceptually, the park will be a venue for youth of all ages to learn and participate in a wide range of sports.

3. New Neighborhood Park: Create a new neighborhood park with amenities to meet the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, implement trails connecting to this park including multi-use paths along major roads to increase connectivity and help residents safely get to the new park.

4. Other Master Plan Considerations:

- Allow expansion of programming and revenue generation through community events, starting at Stookey Township Park and eventually including the open space planned as park of the Stookey Athletic Park improvements.
- Facilitate the implementation of the planned MEPRD trails planned to occur within and adjacent to Stookey Township.



Covered Picnic Table at Stookey Township Park

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS:

STOOKEY TOWNSHIP OVERALL MASTER PLAN

Summary of Needs

The analysis of Stookey Township revealed a lack of park land near Highway 163 and Eiler Road. Additionally, trails were identified as a need throughout the community. Improvements to the Townships two existing parks are key component of the overall master plan.

Recommendations

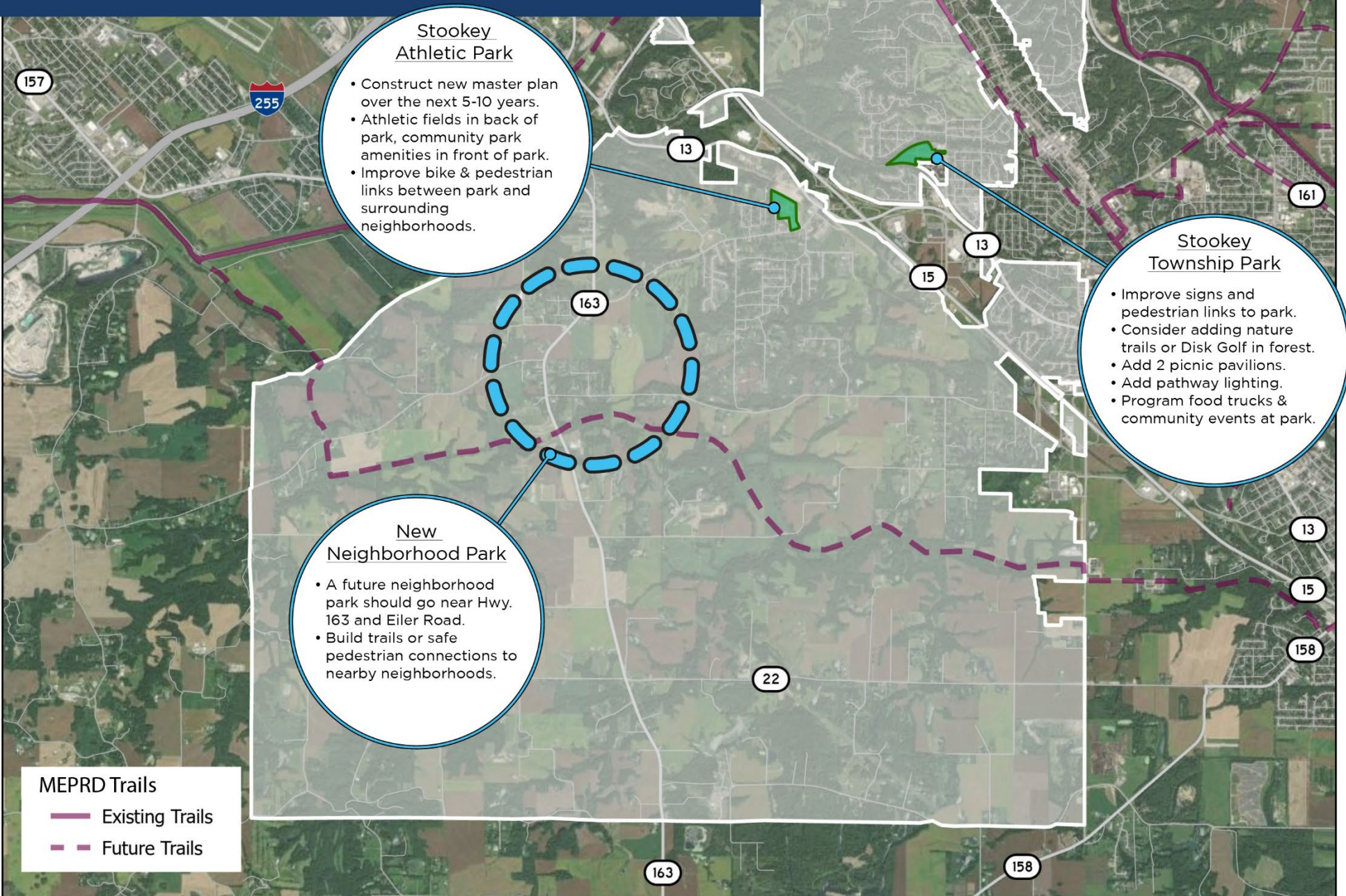
The overall master plan map below outlines the improvements to the Townships two existing parks, which are described in detail in this section of the document. It also identifies future park land acquisition for a neighborhood park ranging from 5-15 acres in the area near Highway 163 and Eiler Road. A specific site has not been determined but the Township should continue to seek acquisition opportunities as they become available. Also shown on the overall master plan map, are MEPRD trails, both existing and future. The implementation of the future trails in partnership with other organizations should remain a priority of the Township. The township should remain cognizant of the existing MEPRD trails as if develops a



Building multi-use trails along Eiler Road will help connect both Stookey Athletic Park and the township hall with all the nearby neighborhoods.

long-range plan to build multi-use paths along major roads to increase connectivity and help residents safely get to parks.

STOOKEY TOWNSHIP PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN



STOOKEY TOWNSHIP PARK

Summary of Needs

Stookey Township Park and associated amenities are very well maintained. Several locations lack ADA accessibility including the playground swing area, and the picnic table sites. The benches along the walking path lack ADA compatible companion seating. The upper open space is a suitable location for future community event venues. The fence panel sections along the south edge of the site belong to the apartment buildings but need repair. Several sections of the fence need replacement. The township may want to consider incorporating ornamental grasses into a bed to reduce mowing effort. Individual plants in this bed should be spaced closer so they create a mass. Tree work is needed throughout the park including deadwood removal, stump and vine removal, and sucker removal. The existing wooded area in the lower section of the park holds tremendous opportunity to experience nature.

Recommendations

Two options have been developed for Stookey Township Park. This first option proposes development of a trail system within the existing wooded area of the park in order to provide more access and enjoyment of this natural area. The second option proposes creating a 9-hole disk golf course that is primarily located within the wooded area. The lists provided below outline a series of projects prioritized based on an anticipated implementation time period. The trail and disk golf options are included in these project lists.



The park entrance sign should be updated to make it clearer that this is a park and not just an entrance to the township.

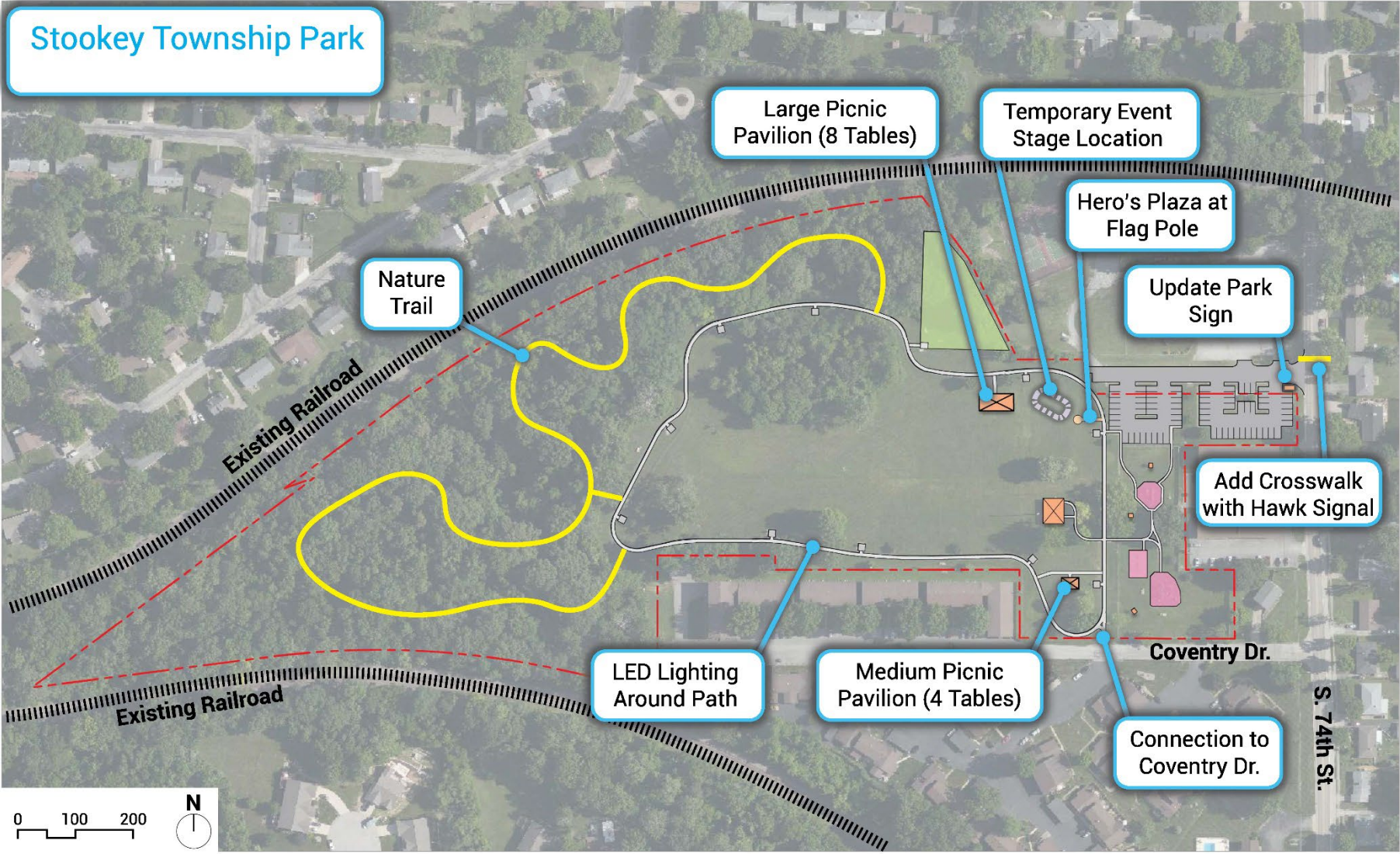


Figure 4.1: Master Plan of Stookey Township Park. This option shows the nature trail option being built in the undeveloped western woods.



Figure 4.2: The alternative par-3, disk golf course shown in the undeveloped western woods instead of the nature trail.

Priority Projects (0-3 years)

- LED Pathway Lights: \$45,000
- Hero Plaza: \$8,000
- Landscape Amenities and Entrance Sign Modification: \$18,000

Mid Term Projects (3-6 years)

- Large Pavilion (1): \$342,075
 - Pavilion Structure: \$250,000
 - Tables: \$22,000
 - Concrete Sidewalks: \$29,575
 - Electrical Distribution: \$12,500
 - Electrical Receptacles: \$28,000
- Small Pavilion (1): \$156,075
 - Pavilion Structure: \$75,000
 - Tables: \$11,000
 - Concrete Sidewalks: \$29,575
 - Electrical Distribution: \$12,500
 - Electrical Receptacles: \$28,000

Long Term projects (6-10 years)

- Nature Trail: \$355,900*
 - Topo Survey & Master Planning: \$40,000
 - Brush Clearing Activities: \$45,000
 - Earthwork Activities: \$35,000
 - Asphalt Pavement: \$57,900
 - Trail Bridges (2): \$80,000
 - Contingency & Fees: \$98,000
- Disk Golf: \$267,445*
 - Topo Survey & Master Planning: \$40,000
 - Brush Clearing Activities: \$55,000
 - Earthwork Activities: \$8,000
 - Disk Golf Bridges (2): \$80,000
 - Holes, Tees Baskets & Signage: \$10,800
 - Contingency & Fees: \$73,645
- HAWK Signal on 74th Street: \$125,000

A few notes on the costs listed above.

- A breakdown of costs for each park is provided in Appendix E.
- The cost numbers provided for the projects listed above do not include a 20% contingency or 15% design and construction services fees, except for the Nature Tail and Disk Golf options. These percentages should be added to any costs listed above.
- Asterisk(*) indicates that the Nature Trail and Dick Golf are alternative options for the wooded area of Stookey Township Park.

STOOKEY ATHLETIC PARK

Summary of Needs

Stookey Athletic Park, formerly known as West End Khoury League Fields, has been minimally used in the past several years. As a result, only 3 ballfields are currently in playable condition. (2, 4 and 5) The existing building will require extensive repairs and modifications to make useable. Demolition and reconstruction most likely the best option. No ADA restrooms exist on the site and no restrooms have handwashing capability. Portable restrooms are provided when the fields are used for games. The parking lot and roads need to be reconstructed with asphalt surfacing. There is no dumpster for trash collection. All existing amenities are active type recreation. The fencing along adjacent Road District Yard is in poor condition.

Recommendations

TWM Engineers has developed a preliminary site plan for reconstruction of the facility. It includes a mix of baseball/ softball fields and overlay soccer fields, amenities including a large playground, a combination restroom/concessions/shelter/garage building and a perimeter walking trail. As part of this master planning process, the concept for Stookey Athletic Park evolved into a dual-purpose park that in addition to the amenities listed above, it also included a community park. Amenities associated with the community park portion of the park include pickleball courts, a volleyball court, a rentable pavilion and shifting the proposed large playground from the rear of the park to the front community park area. A small playground will be in the previous location of the large playground. The Township Hall parking lot will be expanded to include additional parking spaces that will also serve the park when needed. Most importantly, a large open community greenspace will be located at the front of the park. This greenspace will serve as overflow parking for the park when needed, but it can also be the location for community events.

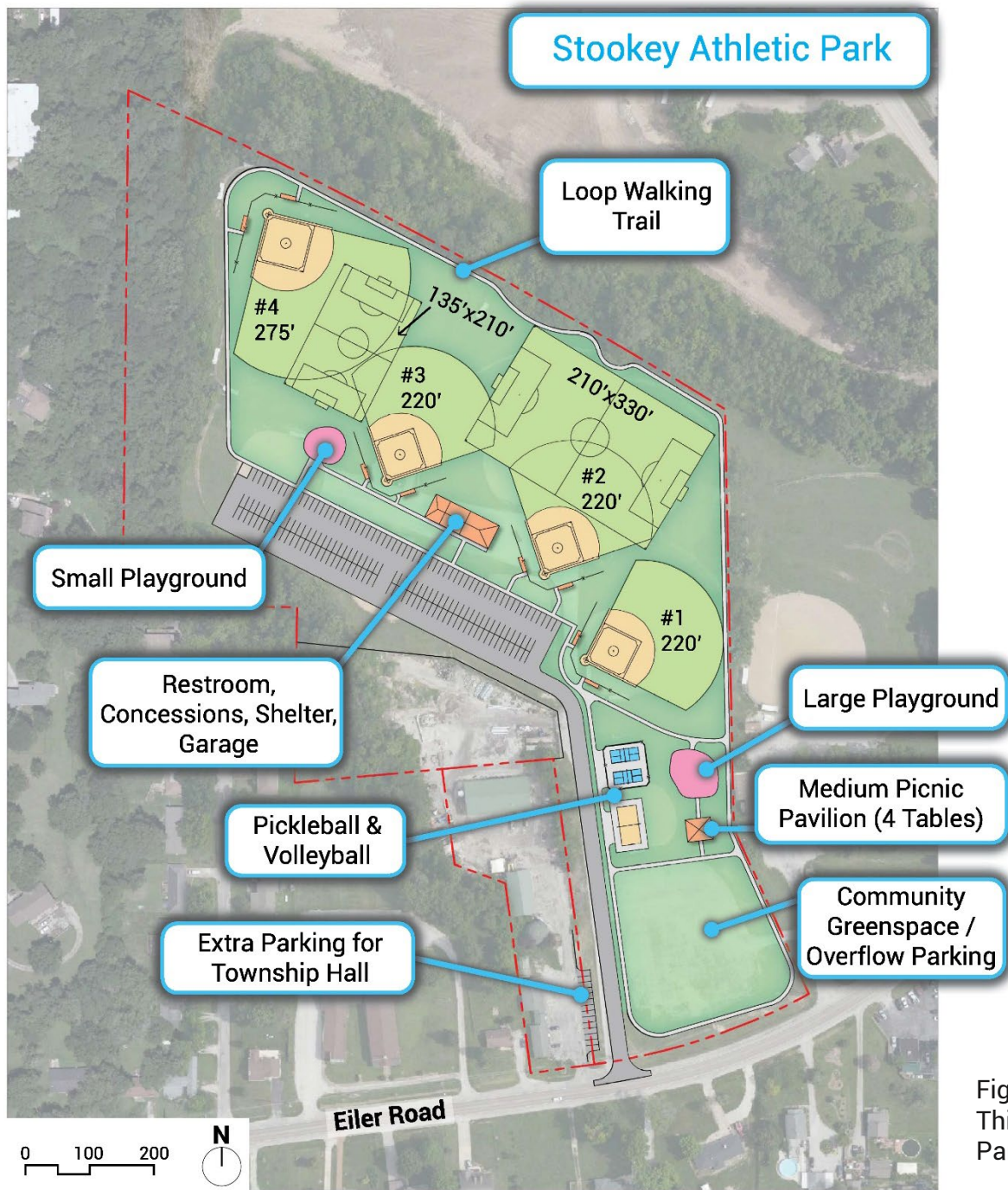


Figure 4.3: Master Plan for Stookey Athletic Park. This is the preferred layout selected by the Stookey Park Board.

Priority Projects (0-3 years)

- Building Demo, Utilities, Restroom, Concession/Garage Construction
- Partial Pavement Demo, Road/Parking Lot and Field #4 Construction

Mid Term Projects (3-6 years)

- Field #3 & Soccer Field Construction
- Field #2 & Soccer Field Construction
- Field #1 Construction

Long Term Projects (6-10 years)

- Small Playground & Walking Trail Construction
- Pavilion/Playground/Open Space Construction
- Pickleball & Sand Volleyball Construction

Note: The community park components are currently listed as long-term projects. A second approach to implementation of these facilities could be to add them into the short term and mid-term projects and alternate their implementation with the athletic park facilities. Prices for the above projects related to the active recreation

components of the Stookey Athletic Park can be found in Appendix E.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The Stookey Township Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides a strategy of meeting recreation needs for the next 10 years. Implementation of the plan is a long-term process that requires updates as improvements are made or demands change. It is suggested that Stookey Township staff review the plan on a regular basis to maintain progress toward meeting the recommendations. For ease of future editing, this document has been prepared in Microsoft Word. The following section discusses implementation strategies that can assist the Township's effort to implement, fund, and accomplish the recommendations in this plan.

Funding / Acquisition Sources

Once a parks master plan has identified improvements, finding resources to implement the plan is the next critical item to accomplish. The following information describes the traditional sources of funding that may be utilized to fund the plan implementation.

Parkland Dedication Ordinance

Dedication of open space or payment of fees for park development by private developers can be negotiated in exchange for developmental considerations beyond those customarily permitted by planning and zoning requirements. Unless properly written and applied, a parkland dedication ordinance could result in a court challenge by a developer accusing the local government of illegally taking valuable land. To prevent this, the ordinance must provide that any land or funds will benefit the users of the new development. Fees in lieu of open space are used when it is not practical for a developer to donate land.

An important aspect of parkland dedication is land quality. Not every plot of ground is suitable for recreation. A typical ordinance will require that most of the land be dry, reasonably flat, and accessible by road. Some ordinances provide allowances for private recreation space. The idea is that the private amenities will reduce residents' need to use local public parks. Restrictive covenants and maintenance agreements are usually part of the conditions for allowing private recreation space to be given allowance.

Foundations

Another source of revenue for parks and recreation is through a foundation, such as a "Friends of the Parks" foundation. A Friends of the Parks foundation is classified as a community foundation, which build their endowments through contributions from several donors. They support charitable activities focused primarily on local needs. The advantages of a foundation include tax exemptions and tax deductibility. Illinois law must be consulted prior to inception in order to ensure compliance with local and national regulations governing the foundation.

Cooperative Use Agreements

A cooperative use agreement is an agreement between the school and the management group to share facilities. Both the school and parks department provide similar recreation facilities. By signing a cooperative use agreement, residents may use school facilities when not in use by the school. This agreement would allow the Township to expand its available parkland without taking on any additional maintenance responsibilities.

User Fees

As a practical matter, all over the nation communities are requiring users of some parks and recreation facilities to pay a daily fee for facilities used on a seasonal basis. This is primarily true of costly indoor recreation facilities and large labor-intensive outdoor facilities such as ballfield complexes and aquatic facilities that have high staffing and maintenance obligations. The goal of the operation and management of these facilities is to generate income sufficient to meet or exceed the cost of staff to operate and maintain them, and if possible, establish a profit margin that can support future improvements and expansions.

Bonds

The Township could utilize its bonding capacity to place a bond referendum on the ballot. With successful passage, the Township can sell bonds to raise capital for development / repair / improvements to the park system. Taxes are raised appropriately to retire the bond over the term of the bond. The bond money typically is available in a lump sum and used on the projects for which it was identified. Likewise, there is a time frame under which the bond money must be committed for use or it can be forfeited. The following are three types of

bonds that may be considered for recreation facility funding.

- General Obligation Bonds – Bonded indebtedness issued with the approval of the electorate for capital improvements and general public improvements and, usually, requires a general increase in property tax.
- Industrial Development Bonds - Specialized revenue bonds issued on behalf of privately owned, self-supporting facilities.
- Revenue Bonds - Bond used for capital projects which will generate revenue for debt service where fees can support repayment of the bond.

Lease / Purchase Financing

Facilities for public use can be financed and built through an entity separate from the township – either another public entity, a non-profit corporation set up for that purpose, a bank or leasing company, or joint powers authority. There are several types of lease purchase funding mechanisms, including certificates of participation in which investors can purchase tax free investments in the leased facility, and sales leaseback, which is a means for public entities to sell an existing facility to a

separate entity such as a nonprofit organization, an investor, or a group of investors. Improvements can be made by the separate entity who then leases the facility back to the public entity for an agreed to period of time and interest rate.

Public / Private Partnership (PPP)

PPPs can be used to develop expensive projects like sports complexes, community centers or ice rinks that have development costs beyond the means of a community. With a PPP project, the public entity develops a relationship with a private enterprise to jointly fund, construct and operate a recreation facility. In some cases, the public entity contributes the land that can be used for the facility and there may be tax advantages involved for the partnership.

Special Improvement District / Benefit District

These taxing districts are established to provide funds for certain types of improvements, which benefit a specific group of affected properties. Improvements may include landscaping, erection of fountains, acquisition of art, and supplemental services for improvement and promotion, including recreation and cultural enhancements.

Grants

Grant funding programs have been available at both the state and federal levels. Some of these grants are listed below. The State of Illinois also maintains a list of agencies offering grant programs. This information can be accessed from the following link: [https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/GATA/Grant s/CSFA.aspx](https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/GATA/Grant%20s/CSFA.aspx)

OSLAD

The OSLAD program provides up to 50% of funding assistance for land acquisition and development projects that serve a wide range of open space and recreation purposes. A portion of the state's real estate transfer tax serves as a dedicated funding source. OSLAD is the largest grant program that assists communities in meeting their diverse recreational needs. It focuses on providing basic close-to-home recreational opportunities, including land for parks and facilities like ballfields and playgrounds. OSLAD also supports the renovation of existing recreational facilities since aging infrastructure has become a major problem in many communities.

Illinois Bicycle Path Grant Program

The Bicycle Path Grant program assists with up to 50% of the costs for acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of public,

non-motorized bicycle paths and directly related support facilities. Revenue for the program comes from a percentage of vehicle title fees collected pursuant to Section 3-821(f) of the Illinois Vehicle Code. The primary objective of this grant is the development of bicycle paths and trails for safe and enjoyable use by the public.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF/LAWCON)

The federal LWCF program providing up to 50% project funding assistance, was the first local recreation grant program undertaken in Illinois. It has provided \$100 million over 30 years to local agencies in Illinois for land acquisition and development of public parks and recreation areas. As of August 2020, the program was fully and permanently funded by Congress and signed by the President with the passage of the Great American Outdoor Act.

Recreation Trails Program (RTP)

The federal "Recreational Trails Program" (RTP), was created through the National Recreational Trail Fund Act (NRTFA) as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and reauthorized by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). This

program provides funding assistance for acquisition, development, rehabilitation and maintenance of both motorized and non-motorized recreation trails. By law, 30% of each states' RTP funding must be earmarked for motorized trail projects, 30% for non-motorized trail projects and the remaining 40% for multi-use (diversified) motorized and non-motorized trails or a combination of either. The RTP program can provide up to 80% federal funding on approved projects and requires a minimum 20% non-federal funding match. Applications for grant assistance must be received by IDNR no later than March 1 of each calendar year. Awards are generally announced within 180 days following the application deadline date. Examples of eligible project activities include:

- Trail construction and rehabilitation
- Restoration of areas adjacent to trails damaged by unauthorized trail uses
- Construction of trail-related support facilities and amenities
- Acquisition from willing sellers of trail corridors by easements or simple title.

Park and Recreational Facilities Construction Program (PARC)

A program under Illinois DNR provides grants to eligible local governments for park and recreation unit construction projects and land acquisition. Grant amounts range from \$25,000 to \$2,500,000 and covers 75% of capital project cost for most applicants, 90% of capital project cost for Disadvantaged Communities. PARC grants must be used for “bondable” or “brick and mortar” projects. Eligible projects include demolition, site preparation and improvements, utility work, reconstruction or improvement of existing buildings or facilities, expansion of buildings/facilities and new construction of structures for indoor/outdoor recreation.

Land acquisition projects for public park recreation and conservation purposes include acquisition of land for the following: to construct new public recreation buildings, structures and facilities; to expand existing public recreation buildings, structures and facilities; general park purposes such as regional, community, and neighborhood parks and playfields; frontage on public surface waters for recreation use; open space/conservation purposes to protect floodplains, wetlands, natural areas, wildlife habitat, and unique geologic and biologic

features, and additions to such areas. The priority of the program is the renovation or construction of indoor recreation facilities since they are not eligible under other IDNR grant programs.

ITEP Funds

On December 4, 2015, the federal transportation bill, Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or “FAST Act” was signed into law. The FAST Act replaced the MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) with a set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program funding for transportation alternatives authorized under Section 1109 of the FAST Act (23 U.S.C.133(h)). 20 ILCS 2705-615 establishes supplemental state funding, set aside from the Road Fund, for projects in the categories of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and the conversion of abandoned railroad corridors to trails. At least 25% of projects funded will be directed toward projects in high-need communities and the local matching funds required shall be determined based on a sliding scale based on the Community Map score. Applicants may apply for up to \$2,000,000 maximum per project in ITEP funds.

GENERAL ACTION PLAN

It is reasonable to assume that the successful implementation of the master plan will be achieved by utilizing a combination of the previously mentioned funding sources. For the largest and most costly projects, the use of bonds, leveraged bonds, or similar local government financing is the most realistic. This method permits access to a large sum of money to complete the project in the shortest possible time frame, thus making the improvement available to the community in the near future. The amount of the bond should be fixed to ensure sufficient funds are generated to not only retire the bonds, but also provide for some level of operations and maintenance, as well as finance other smaller capital improvements to be completed by township staff on a labor and materials basis.

The small to medium projects should be funded by other sources such as grants, donations, and self-help activities. It is not possible at this time to identify a specific source for every project in the master plan as this is an interactive process that needs to be undertaken by the township. On larger facilities, maximizing the programming potential in terms of events, tournaments, clinics, league play, etc., with the goal of

recouping the cost of staffing, operation, and maintenance, should be the goal of funding the ongoing costs of these facilities.

Formal Plan Adoption

The first action item the Township should seek to accomplish is support of the Plan, and the formal adoption of the plan by the Board of Trustees. This gives the plan legitimacy and spreads the responsibility for its implementation throughout the organization.

Development of Plan Champions

The Township should continue to promote and encourage secondary support groups to champion the implementation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Ongoing Consensus Building

It is important that consensus building continue throughout implementation of the plan. An informed public with “knowledge” and “ownership” in the plan will help keep the process moving forward.

Master Plan Review and Update

It is also important that the master plan be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Therefore, the Stookey Parks and Recreation Committee shall review the Parks and Recreation Master Plan every two (2) years and update the plan accordingly based on

what has been constructed versus any changes in the needs of the parks.

Phasing

Completing recommendations in phases that can be implemented over time is a prudent approach to implementation. The focus of “priority” phases should be on improvements that have the most impact or highest priority among the residents or on improvements that improve the health, safety and welfare of the park users.

Recommendations that are not critical to park operations or usability, but nonetheless are desired aspects to the system, can be constructed later. Meanwhile, essential park elements can be constructed to serve residents in the near term. This approach allows the township to show results toward the improvements of the park system and can create a favorable climate toward future parks and recreation spending. By phasing the various components of the master plan, the Township will see recognizable improvement in the park system that would not be otherwise realized if it waited to implement each facility or component under an “all or nothing” method.

The Action Plan

The Action Plan focuses on three levels of action for implementing various aspects of the plan based on the preferred time frame for realization. These three levels are: Priority Project, Mid Term Projects and Long-Term Projects. These projects have been listed previously in the Master Plan Recommendations section of this document. Note that any priority project may be pre-empted by a strategic land acquisition opportunity.

Pilot Project

Starting off with one complete, high impact project can increase visibility and community support for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The project should be highly visible and increase the recreational opportunities in the Township. This creates tangible results that the community can observe and immediately start to utilize. This can also build momentum for the plan and help to recruit champions that will support and advocate for the plan's full implementation.