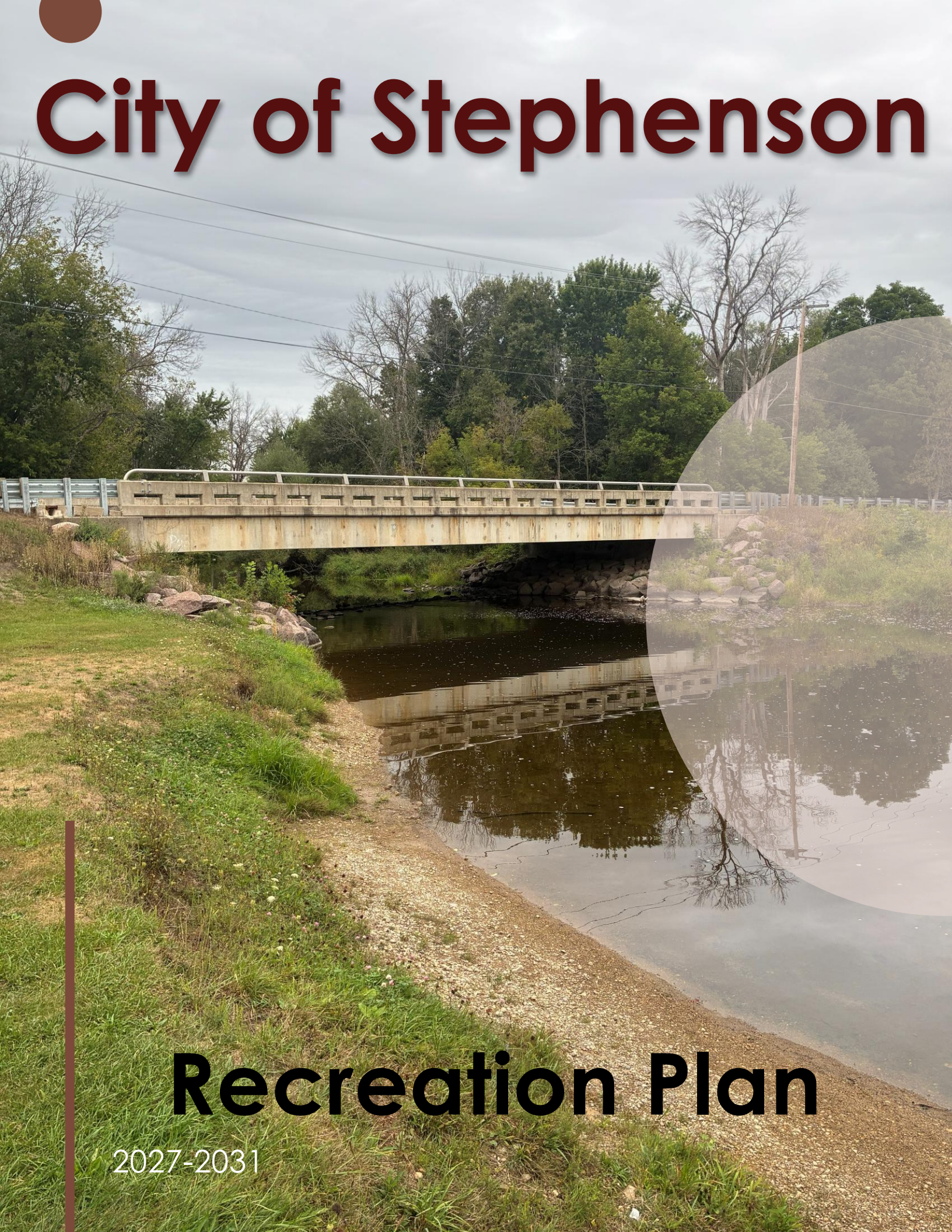
City of Stephenson



Recreation Plan

2027-2031

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Parks and Recreation Plan was developed by staff from the Central Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Commission (CUPPAD), supported by city staff, and steered and adopted by the City of Stephenson City Council, and made possible by members of the City of Stephenson community.

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John Starzynski

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Bill Fister
Howard Fedrickson
Martha Haight
Dale Parrett
David Solander
Brian White

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

5-YEAR RECREATION PLAN

A five-year Recreation Plan is a document that integrates data on natural resources, community demographics, existing recreation assets, operational management, citizen input, and community partnerships to produce a comprehensive roadmap for recreation development in the community. It describes community values, highlights common goals and objectives, and outlines strategies to achieve these goals.

The five-year Recreation Plan must adhere to a format defined by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and outline priorities, goals, objectives, and projects with the potential to be completed within the five-year window and beyond.

Every five years, communities throughout Michigan update their Recreation Plans to ensure qualifications for annual MDNR funding opportunities.

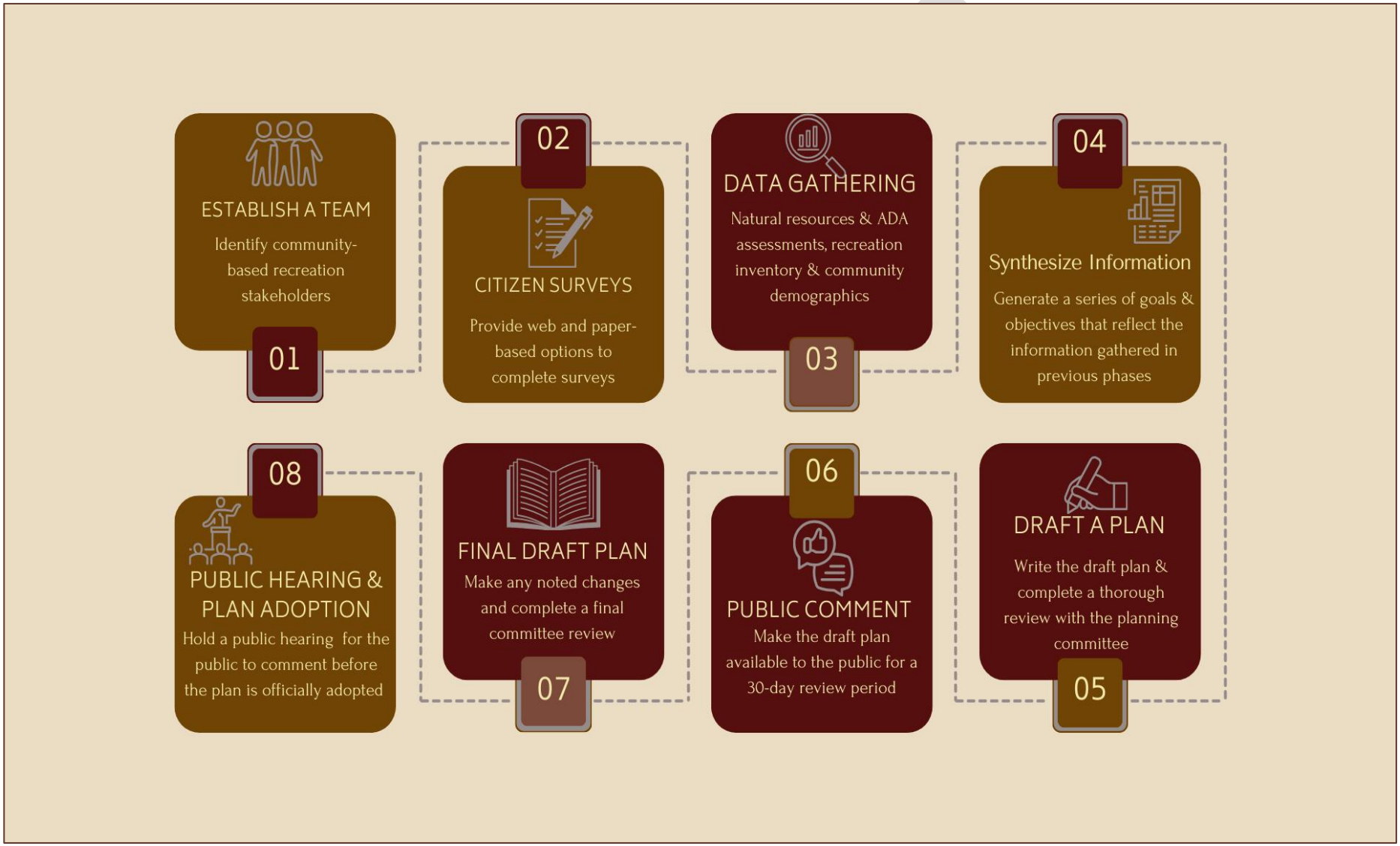
Looking ahead to the five-year window, this document will serve as a roadmap for future endeavors to improve parks for the current and next generations. The 2027-2031 Recreation Plan will assist boards and staff in determining priority projects.





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THE PLANNING PROCESS



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Section 2

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

CITY OF STEPHENSON OVERVIEW

The City of Stephenson is located in the south-central portion of Menominee County in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and covers over one square mile. The City prides itself on its community values and natural beauty. Stephenson strives to maintain and improve its parks and recreation facilities to further enhance the quality of life for visitors and residents alike.

According to the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year estimates, the City has a population of approximately 902 residents. The City is one of two cities in Menominee County in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

The City of Stephenson is strategically situated with excellent access to regional transportation networks. The City is served by U.S. Highway 41, which runs north-south. The local street system follows a more traditional north-south and east-west grid pattern, providing convenient connectivity throughout the community. In addition, the 2022-2030 Superior Regional Non-Motorized Transportation Plan & Investment Strategy supports pedestrian and bicycle mobility, further enhancing transportation and recreation opportunities within the City

The City of Stephenson has a distinguished park system. The City owns and operates four parks that provide a variety of recreational opportunities, including basketball courts, baseball fields, tennis courts, horseshoe pits, a seasonal ice rink, playgrounds, and picnic areas. These facilities serve as important gathering places for residents and visitors while supporting healthy lifestyles. The surrounding area further enhances recreational opportunities through abundant access to hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, and other outdoor activities.

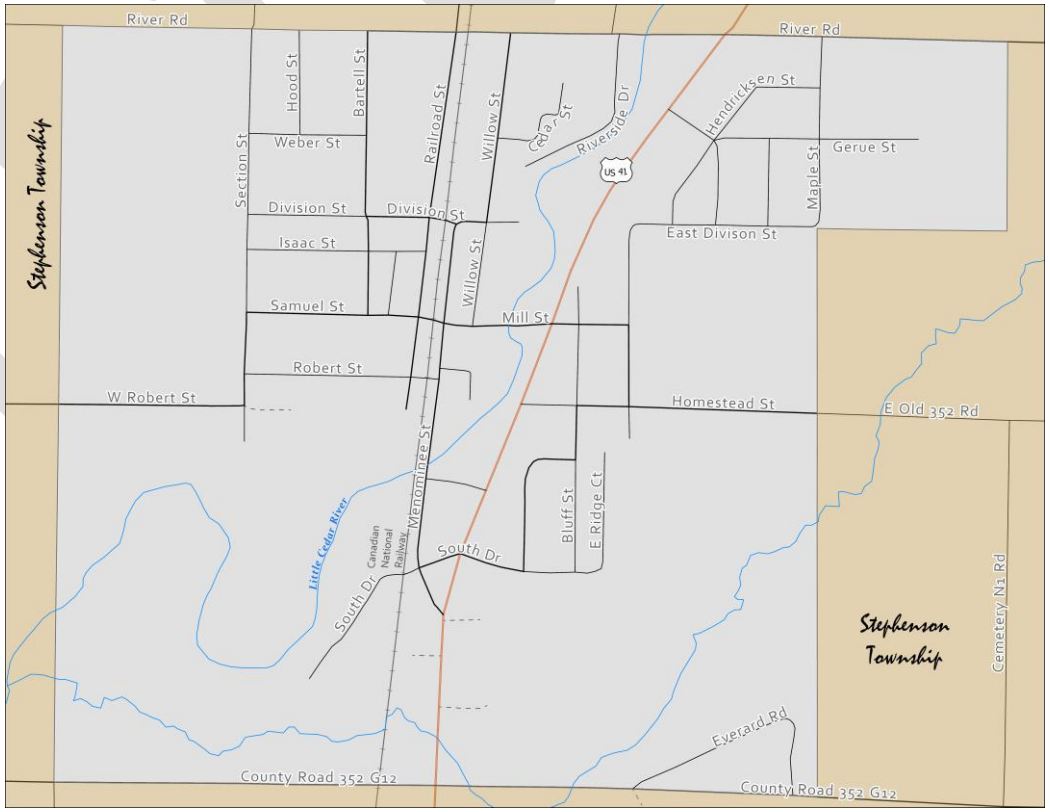
The City of Stephenson's defining characteristics are its natural resources and scenic landscapes. The Little Cedar River offers recreational opportunities for paddle sports, fishing, wildlife observation, and nature appreciation. The river's scenic character, combined with the area's forests, wetlands, and open spaces, contributes significantly to the community's identity and quality of life, making the City of Stephenson an attractive destination for residents and visitors alike.

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REGIONAL SETTING







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CITY OF STEPHENSON HISTORY

The City of Stephenson has a rich cultural heritage that spans centuries, beginning with its original inhabitants and evolving through distinct periods of development that have shaped today's community.

Indigenous Heritage



Long before European settlement, the area was part of the ancestral homeland of the Menominee Nation, whose historic territory spanned much of present-day northeast Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula, including the Menominee River watershed and lands that would later become the City of Stephenson.

Beginning in the seventeenth century, as the balance of tribal populations shifted throughout the Great Lakes region, Anishinaabe peoples, including the Ojibwe (Chippewa), Odawa (Ottawa), and Potawatomi Nations, collectively known as the Council of Three Fires, expanded their presence throughout the Upper Peninsula. For generations, the Menominee Nation and Anishinaabe communities hunted, fished, traveled, traded, and carried out cultural and spiritual traditions across the Michigamme region, developing a profound connection to its forests, rivers, lakes, and wetlands.

Their stewardship of the land and waterways, combined with their enduring cultural presence, has played a significant role in shaping the region's history, heritage, and identity. Today, the contribution and continuing legacy of the Menominee Nation and Anishinaabe peoples remain an important part of the area's story and are increasingly recognized and honored by local communities.

Early Settlement

During the 1870s, James Valentine settled in what would later become the City of Stephenson. He constructed three small buildings along Railroad Street on the site where the Stephenson Family Restaurant stands today.

In the early 1870s, the Chicago and Northwestern Railway commissioned the construction of a rail line connecting Menominee and Escanaba. The United States government granted the right-of-way for the railway between the city limits of Menominee and Escanaba, and the line was completed within a year. When rail service began in 1871, the small village of Stephenson was strategically situated nearly halfway between the two communities. This location proved advantageous, as steam locomotives required regular stops to replenish their water supplies. As a result, Stephenson quickly became an important and necessary stop in the railroad's daily operations, securing its place in the region's transportation network.

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A devastating fire later struck the community, destroying much of the downtown business district. The blaze spread from Robert Street to the south to Samuel Street, consuming 27 buildings. At the time, many business owners carried little or no insurance, and firefighting equipment was limited by the technology of the era. In response to the disaster, Stephenson residents reached an agreement with the City of Menominee to obtain a used six-man, steam-powered fire pump, greatly improving the community's ability to combat future fires.

Transition to Modern Era

Prior to becoming a Home Rule City, Stephenson operated under Michigan's fifth-class designation. During the late 1960s, community leaders recognized the need for a modern charter that would better address the city's future growth and administrative needs. A delegation of five local citizens toured neighboring cities to study their forms of government and municipal services. Their investigation included a review of city finance, fire and police protection, building regulations, sewer and water systems, and electric utility services. Each community employed different approaches to providing these services, giving the delegation valuable insight into municipal governance.

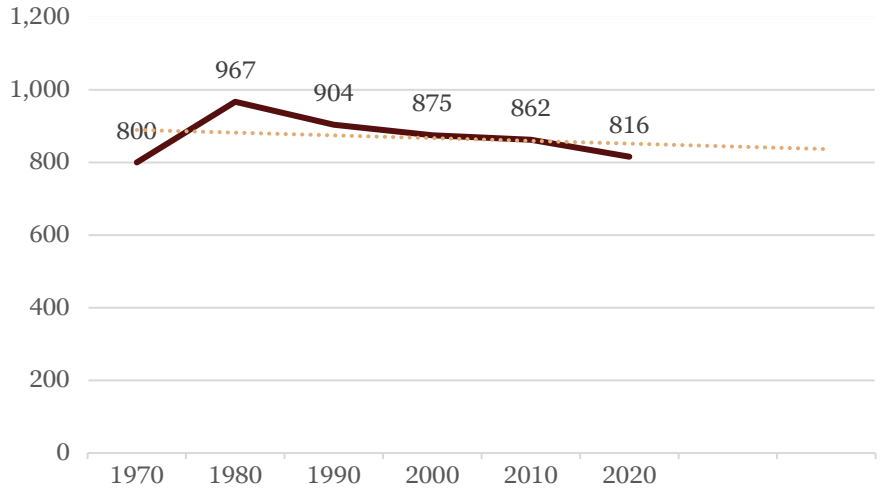
During their visits, the delegation obtained copies of city charters from other communities and brought them back to Stephenson for review. A Charter Commission was subsequently appointed to examine the materials and draft a new charter tailored to the needs of the City of Stephenson. Following months of study and preparation, members of the Charter Commission approved the proposed charter, and the first election conducted under the new charter took place on April 7, 1970. On December 22, 1970, new council members were sworn into office at the Bank of Stephenson. The City of Stephenson became incorporated in 1898 and became a Home Rule City in 1969. These transitions marked a significant milestone in Stephenson's history, providing the city with greater local authority and a framework for modern municipal governance.

COMMUNITY DATA

Population growth is an important factor influencing a community's land-use decisions. If the population is growing, there is often a greater need for public services, parks, and facilities. A declining population can affect the need for, and the ability of, local governments to provide and maintain recreational facilities and programs.

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The City of Stephenson's population has steadily decreased over the past four decades.



The City's population peaked at 967 in 1980 and has declined steadily to 816 in 2020.

The 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimate indicates a population increase to 902 residents.

This continual downward trend is notable, as it may cause future strains on local services, including parks and recreation, and on many other factors affecting the workforce and the economy.

City of Stephenson Population Change 2000-2024	Menominee County Population Change 2000-2024	Michigan Population Change 2000-2024
+3.0%	-9.9%	+1.3%

Regional context is important when considering recreation planning. The City of Stephenson (+3.0%) and the State of Michigan (+1.3%) have experienced modest growth since 2000. Menominee County (-9.9%) has experienced population decline. This suggests similar challenges and opportunities throughout the region, where maintaining and enhancing quality-of-life amenities, such as recreational facilities, becomes increasingly important for retaining residents and attracting new families.

The population changes within Menominee County have not been uniform across all municipalities, with some communities, such as Harris Township, showing growth (+13.3%), while others, such as Cedarville Township, experienced a more significant decline (-15.7%). The City of Stephenson (-3.7%) ranks in the lower-to-middle range of county municipalities, suggesting that targeted recreation investments could help position the city competitively within the region.

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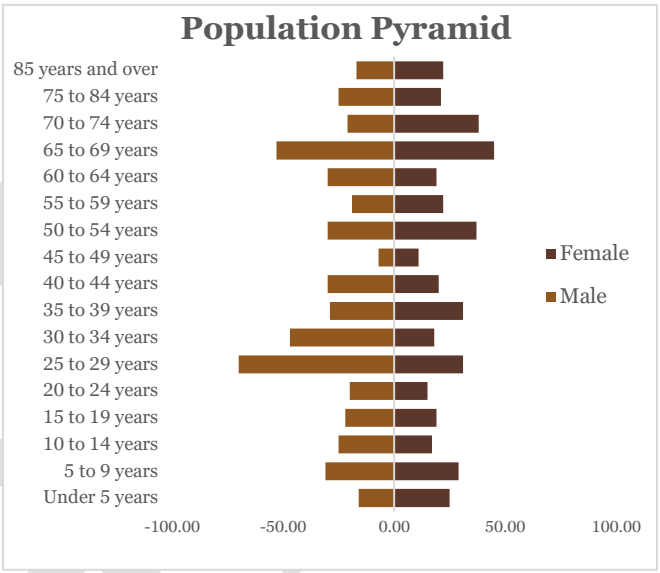
Table 1. Population Change in Menominee County, 2000-2020, U.S. Census Bureau

Municipalities in Menominee County	2000 Population	2020 Population	Percent Change from 2000 to 2020
Cedarville Township	287	242	-15.7%
Dagget Township	756	614	-18.8%
Faithorn Township	207	239	15.5%
Grouley Township	429	451	5.1%
Harris Township	1,865	2,113	13.3%
Holmes Township	310	341	10.0%
Ingallston Township	1,073	924	-13.9%
Lake Township	555	501	-9.7%
Mellen Township	1,254	1,109	-11.6%
City of Menominee	9,160	8,488	-7.3%
Menominee Township	3,895	3,364	-13.6%
Meyer Township	1,075	992	-7.7%
Nadeau Township	1,160	1,090	-6.0%
Spalding Township	1,726	1,599	-7.4%
City of Stephenson	**847**	**816**	**-3.7%**
Stephenson Township	697	616	-11.6%
Menominee County	25,326	23,502	-7.2%

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AGE DISTRIBUTION

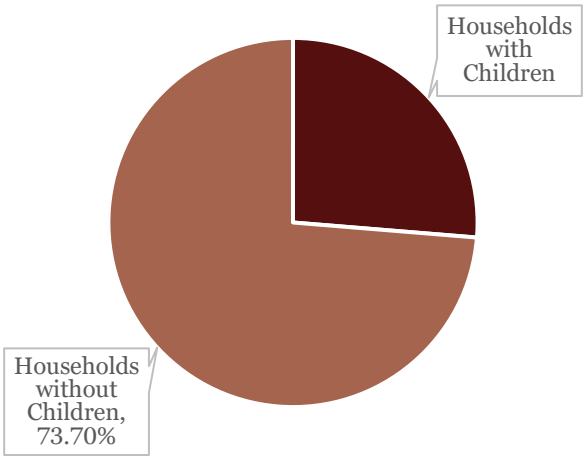
The age distribution of the City of Stephenson has remained relatively stable over time with important implications for current and future planning efforts. The 2024 American Community Survey (ACS)5-Year Estimates age pyramid indicates a largely stationary population structure. Typically represented by a more rectangular or square-shaped pyramid, a stationary age distribution reflects a community with a relatively balanced population across age groups and limited overall growth or decline.



Several age cohorts stand out in the City of Stephenson's age distribution: 25-29 accounts for 101, or 11.2%, of the total population, while those 65-69 represent 98, or 10.9%. Together, these demographic trends highlight the presence of both a growing senior population and a substantial young adult workforce. ‘

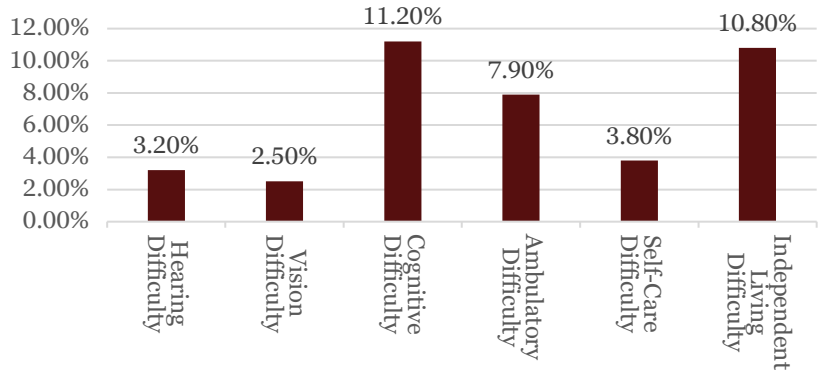
This stable age distribution presents important conditions for recreation planning. As the senior population continues to grow, there will be an increasing need for accessible facilities that accommodate mobility limitations, provide comfortable seating and shade, and support social interactions and active lifestyles. At the same time, the strong presence of young to middle-aged adults suggests demand for diverse recreational opportunities, including amenities and programs that serve young families, promote outdoor activity, and accommodate a variety of interests and lifestyles. By planning for both demographics, the City can ensure its recreation system remains inclusive, responsive, and relevant to all ages.

According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 2024 data, there are currently 376 households in the City of Stephenson, with an average household size of 2.26. Of those 376 households, approximately 26.3% have at least one member under 18, which is in line with the statewide rate of 27.1% of households with children. This lower percentage of households with children reinforces the importance of creating recreational facilities that can serve multiple generations and attract young families to the community.



DISABILITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Approximately 19.0% of residents in the City of Stephenson report living with some type of disability. Understanding the specific types of disabilities present in the community is essential for creating inclusive recreation opportunities.



The data reveals that cognitive difficulties and independent living difficulties are the most common disability types among the City of Stephenson residents, affecting 11.2% and 10.8% of individuals, respectively.

These statistics have direct implications for recreation planning, as accessible design features are essential for residents with mobility and sensory challenges.

Recreation facilities that incorporate universal design principles not only comply with ADA requirements but also create more welcoming and inclusive environments for all users. Strategic investments in accessible trails, clear signage, and barrier-free facilities will ensure that recreation opportunities are available to all City of Stephenson residents regardless of ability.

ECONOMIC PROFILE

The City of Stephenson has a diverse economic foundation that reflects both its character and its connection to local industries and diverse businesses.

The figures below indicate the 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

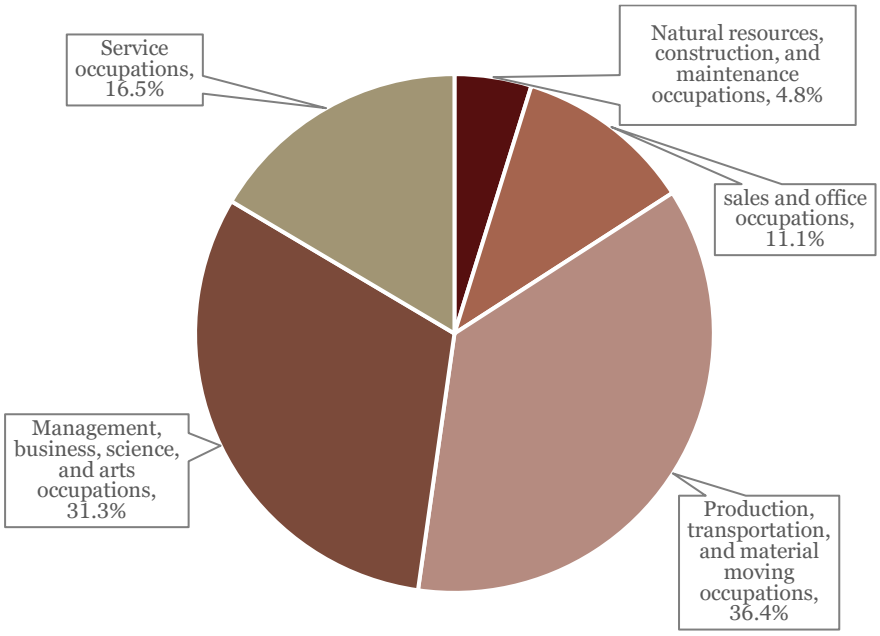
City of Stephenson Median Income	Menominee County Median Income	Michigan Median Income
$44,600	**$56,435**	**$72,875**

The City's median household income of $44,600 is $11,835 below the Menominee County average of $56,435 and about $28,275 below the state median of $72,875.

While the City's median income is significantly lower than the state and county averages, this income profile presents both strengths and opportunities for recreation planning within the city. Strategic investments in recreation infrastructure could help

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strengthen the City's economic position by enhancing quality of life, supporting property values, and potentially attracting new residents and businesses.



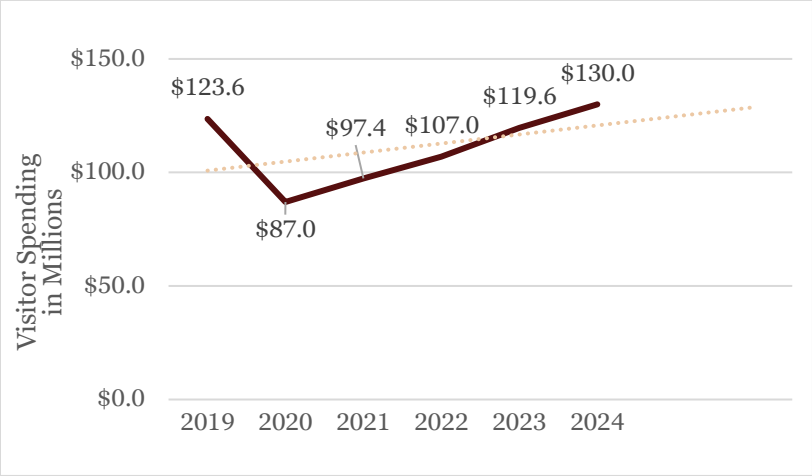
The City of Stephenson maintains a workforce of approximately 375 civilian employees (age 16 and over), distributed across various sectors and employment types. The City's employment profile reflects a diverse economic base, with significant representation in production, transportation, and material-moving occupations, as well as in management, science, business, and art occupations.

This diverse employment base represents a significant asset for recreation planning, as it provides a community with varied skills, schedules, and interests that can contribute to recreation facility development, maintenance, and programming through both professional expertise and volunteer participation.

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TOURISM & RECREATION ECONOMY

Menominee County has emerged as a leading tourism destination in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, experiencing significant visitor growth. Tourism spending reached $130 million in 2024, establishing the county as a major contributor to the region's recreation economy.



While tourism spending in Menominee County experienced a sharp decline during 2020 due to the pandemic, it has shown a strong recovery, with around a 67% increase over the last four years and, in 2023-2024, an 8.7% increase, one of the highest in the Upper Peninsula Region.

The recovery demonstrates the resilience of the County's tourism sector and its continued importance to the local economy.

With $130 million in visitor spending in 2024[1] Menominee County accounts for 7.9% of all tourism expenditures in the Upper Peninsula Region and .04% of Michigan's total tourism economy. This positions the county, tied for fourth, as the largest tourism destination in the Upper Peninsula Region, behind only Mackinaw, Marquette, and Chippewa, and tied with Delta.

Menominee County can continue to expect stable to increased spending in the tourism and recreation economy based upon the projected trendline. The County has continued to see increases in visitor spending, with the only anomaly being that of 2020 due to the pandemic.

For the City of Stephenson, this growth in regional tourism presents substantial opportunities. The City of Stephenson has exceptional recreation and natural features – including the Little Cedar River, Erickson Park, Firemen's Park, and additional local businesses offering a variety of experiences.

The combination of a diverse regional economy and growing regional tourism provides the City of Stephenson with multiple pathways for economic development through recreation planning.

[1] Pure Michigan 2024 Tourism Economic Impact, County Data: https://medcmi.sharepoint.com/:x:/s/ExternalWebLinks/IQBfkVT3F9xNT44_ySCTA8SVAVnd1COlvPzYitcuFCMjOxc?e=6zLn2Z

CHAPTER 3

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

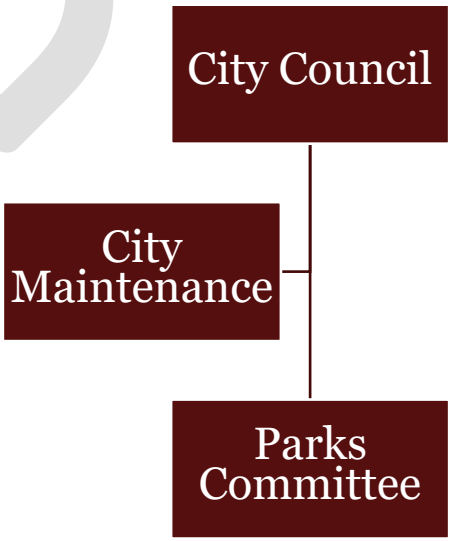
Planning for and providing park and recreation services, programming, and open space for a community requires staff (or volunteers) and funds to purchase recreation land and open spaces and to develop, operate, and maintain them. This section describes how the park and recreation functions are carried out in the City of Stephenson

CITY ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The City of Stephenson operates under a mayor-council form of government consisting of a mayor and a six-member City Council. The City Council is responsible for establishing policies, approving budgets, and overseeing the implementation of recreational development. In carrying out these responsibilities, the Council works to ensure that the City's limited resources are invested in projects that provide the greatest benefit to the community as a whole.

City employees are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of recreational facilities, including grass cutting, snow plowing, painting, and other routine tasks. The City Council's Parks Committee is responsible for overseeing the development of the Recreation Plan, facilities, and programming.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE



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BUDGET INFORMATION

Category	2025-2026	2026-2027
Salaries	**$19,220**	**$20,181**
Repairs and Maintenance	**$5,000**	**$5,000**
Park Events	**$3,500**	**$3,500**
Capital Outlay	**$3,000**	**$3,000**
Total Parks, Recreation, & CIP	**$30,720**	**$31,681**

CURRENT FUNDING SOURCES

Local Revenue Sources:

- **General Fund:** This fund is the general operating fund of the City. It is used to account for all resources except those required to be accounted for in another fund. The main revenue sources for the General Fund expenditures include property taxes and State shared revenues. Parks Funds are accounted for under the General Fund.

CAPITAL OUTLAY PLAN

Capital Outlay: The City of Stephenson annually reevaluates its Capital Outlay Plan. As part of the next review cycle, the City will assess recreation-related capital improvement projects and determine whether higher-cost recreational improvement should be incorporated into the Capital Outlay Plan.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The City of Stephenson would like to thank all the sponsors, supporters, vendors, business owners, and volunteers who make the following events possible.

Spring (March-May)

- Concerts in the Park
- Mid-County Horseshoe League Indoor Tournament

Summer (June-August)

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- Flea Market
- Concerts in the Park
- 4th of July Celebration – every other year (*2027)
- Mid-County Antique Power Club Lawn Mower Pulls

Fall (September-November)

- Flea Market
- Truck or Threat Show - October

Winter (December-February)

- Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony - December

For full event and promotion details, visit the City of Stephenson website.

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CHAPTER 4

RECREATION INVENTORY

CITY OF STEPHENSON RECREATION

The City of Stephenson has a total of four owned and operated recreation facilities and parks. These four accommodate a variety of opportunities for a broad spectrum of recreational pursuits in the City for residents and visitors alike.

PLANNING METHOD

The primary method used to develop the City of Stephenson Recreation Plan is equity planning. This process involves developing a survey to assess and prioritize parks based on public input, local funding sources, and community priorities.

System planning is a broader approach that aims to create a cohesive and interconnected recreation system. It focuses on identifying spatial gaps in service and access. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) can guide communities in further analyzing parks and recreation facilities. NRPA offers insights and analytics related to parks and recreation development, including park metrics, budget guidance, and spatial analysis.

The Recreation Inventory uses modified NRPA-developed park types and definitions as identified below:

- **Mini-Park:** Specialized facilities serving concentrated populations.
- **Neighborhood Park:** Areas for intensive recreation activities.
- **Community Park:** Areas for diverse recreation activities.
- **Regional Park:** Large natural areas for outdoor recreation.
- **Special Use Park:** Areas specialized for single-purpose recreation activities such as marinas, campgrounds, etc.

PARK ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires all public facilities to be accessible to persons with disabilities. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) uses the following accessibility grading system for parks and recreation facilities:

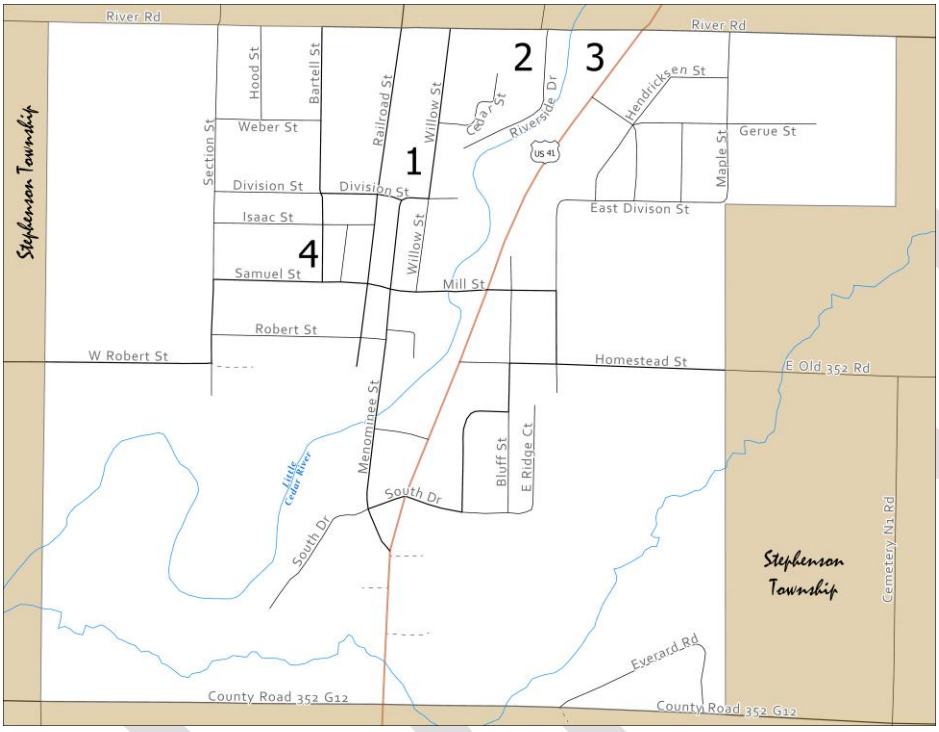
1. None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.
2. Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.

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3. Most of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.
4. The entire park meets accessibility guidelines.
5. The entire park was developed using the principle of universal design.

Each recreation facility in this inventory includes an accessibility rating based on this scale. These ratings were determined through on-site evaluations and reflect current conditions at the time of assessment.

RECREATION INVENTORY MAP



City of Stephenson Recreation Facilities

1. American Legion Memorial Park
2. Erickson Park & Jacob Parrett Memorial Field
3. Fireman's Park
4. Weber Park

KEY

- Playground
- Picnic Area
- Sports
- Ice Skating
- Horseshoes

Park Activities

Park	Activities
American Legion Memorial Park	Picnic Area
Erickson Park & Jacob Parret Memorial Field	Playground, Picnic Area, Sports, Ice Skating
Fireman's Park	Picnic Area, Horseshoes
Weber Park	Sports

AMERICAN LEGION MEMORIAL PARK

Facility Description

Location: Railroad Street

Type: Mini-Park

Size: 1.7 acres

Features:

- Picnic Area
- Owen F.P. Hammerberg Military Commemoration
- Historical Military Equipment & Artifacts
- Flea Market
- Decorative Plantings

Current Status: This downtown mini-park is located adjacent to the railroad tracks and serves as a gathering space for the community flea market, held four times a year. The park provides a welcoming place for residents and visitors to relax, read a book, enjoy a meal, or take a short break downtown, with benches, seating, and decorative plantings throughout the site. Its central location and role as an event space contribute to the vibrancy of the downtown area.

Accessibility Assessment

ADA Rating: 2 out of 5

- Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.

Accessibility Notes:

- Gazebo and picnic area are not fully accessible.
- Continual evaluation of accessibility guidelines to ensure inclusivity.









ERICKSON PARK & JACOB PARRET MEMORIAL FIELD

Facility Description

Location: Riverside Drive

Type: Community Facility

Size: 9.65 acres

Features:

- Baseball Field with dugouts, electronic scoreboard, and bleachers.
- Ice Rink & Warming Shelter
- Pavilion
- Multi-Use Pavilion
- Practice Football Field
- Open Space
- Playground Equipment
- Story Walk
- Picnic Area with Pavilion
- ADA Restrooms

Current Status: This community park is located along the Little Cedar River and provides a variety of recreational opportunities for all ages. The park features playground equipment for children, open space for football practices and a seasonal ice rink during the winter months, and baseball fields that support local games and athletic activities. A large multi-use pavilion serves as a gathering place for community events, picnics, and larger group functions, making the park a focal point for both active recreation and community gatherings.



Accessibility Assessment

ADA Rating: 2 out of 5

- Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.

Accessibility Notes:

- Some playground equipment may not be fully accessible.





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FIREMAN'S PARK

Facility Description

Location: US-41

Type: Mini-Park

Size: 2.8 acres

Features:

- Pavilion
- Picnic Area
- (4) Illuminated Horseshoe Pits
- Open Space
- Hiking Trail to Erickson Park

Current Status: This mini-park along the Little Cedar River, just off US-41, provides a scenic setting for both passive and active recreation. The park features a picnic area with a pavilion, open space for informal recreation, and illuminated horseshoe pits that extend opportunities into the evening hours. A hiking trail connection to Erickson Park enhances access to outdoor recreation, making the park a convenient destination for picnicking, relaxation, and enjoying the natural riverfront setting.



Accessibility Assessment

ADA Rating: 2 out of 5

- Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.

Accessibility Notes:

- Pathways and trails in some areas may present mobility challenges.
- Continual evaluation of accessibility guidelines to ensure inclusivity





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WEBER PARK

Facility Description

Location: Samuel Street

Type: Mini-Park

Size: .9 acres

Features:

- Tennis Court
- Basketball Court

Current Status: This mini-park, located adjacent to Stephenson City Hall, provides opportunities for active recreation and well-being and is within walking distance of downtown. The park features a tennis court and basketball court that support exercise and community use. Its convenient location makes it an amenity that contributes to health, wellness, and quality of life while enhancing the community's walkability and livability.



Accessibility Assessment

ADA Rating: 3 out of 5

- Most of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.

Accessibility Notes:

- Continual evaluation of accessibility guidelines to ensure inclusivity.





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GRANT HISTORY

Year	Grant #	Park Name	Description	Status	Grant Amount
1977	26-00952	Fireman's Park	Develop a large multi-use all-season pavilion.	Closed	$5,028
2000	CM00-114	Erickson Park	Develop picnic shelter with tables, grills, and horseshoe pits.	Closed	$175,000

OTHER AREA PARKS

Heidenreich Park

- **Location:** Dagget Street – Dagget Township
- **Features:** Baseball Field
- **Status:** Open to the public
- **Significance:** Provides additional recreation opportunities for youth baseball and Little League programs, helping support organized sports and outdoor recreation.

Mellen Township Park

- **Location:** US-41 – Mellen Township
- **Features:** Pavilion & picnic area illuminated baseball field with bleachers, playground equipment, and vault toilets.
- **Status:** Open to the public
- **Significance:** Expands recreation opportunities for youth sports and playground activities by providing facilities that support organized baseball, active play, and family-oriented outdoor recreation.

Bailey County Park

- **Location:**US-35 – Ingallston Township
- **Features:** Sandy beach area on Lake Michigan/Green Bay with integrated trails and a picnic area.
- **Status:** Open to the public – owned and operated by Menominee County
- **Significance:** Expands recreation opportunities for swimming, hiking, and picnicking, and shoreline enjoyment. The park provides public access to Lake

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Michigan and offers scenic waterfront views, making it a destination for visitors seeking outdoor recreation and a nature-based experience.

Kleinke Park

- **Location:** M-35 – Ingallston Township
- **Features:** A 27-acre park and campground on Lake Michigan/Green Bay with 30 campsites offering 20/20/50-amp hookups. Other amenities include a heated shower building with flush toilets, vault toilets centrally located in the park, a camper sanitation station, over a square mile of sandy beach, playground equipment, and a pavilion.
- **Status:** Open to the public. Camping reservations are available through Menominee County. The park is owned and operated by Menominee County.
- **Significance**: Expands recreational opportunities, providing campground accommodations along the Lake Michigan/Green Bay shoreline. Its combination of camping facilities, beach access, playground equipment, and picnic amenities enhances the site.

Shakey Lakes Park

- **Location:** G-12 Road – Lake Township
- **Features:** A 240-acre park and campground surrounded by four lakes – Resort Lake, East Lake, Baker Lake and Bass Lake. The campground features 128 electrical hookup sites and 10 primitive campsites to accommodate your preferred style of camping, including four handicapped accessible sites located on pavement to ensure everyone can enjoy this beautiful park. Other amenities include heated shower buildings with flush toilets, several vault toilets throughout the park, two boat launches, a swimming area, playground equipment, hiking trails, and pavilions.
- **Status:** Open to the public. Camping reservations are available through Menominee County. The park is owned and operated by Menominee County.
- **Significance:** Expands recreational opportunities, providing campground accommodations near multiple lakes. Its combination of camping facilities, swimming areas, hiking trails, picnic areas, and pavilions enhances the site.

Stoney Point Boating Landing

- **Location:**M-35 – Ingallston Township
- **Features:** Hard-surfaced boat launch with parking and a vault toilet.
- **Status:** Open to the Public - owned and operated by Menominee County
- **Significance:** Expands recreation opportunities by providing public access to the waters of Green Bay and Lake Michigan for boating, fishing, and other water-based recreation activities. The facility offers a safe, accessible launch

that enhances outdoor recreation and enjoyment of Lake Michigan and Green Bay.

PRIVATELY-OWNED FACILITIES

906 Golf Course

- **Location:** Walnut Road
- **Features:** Pristine 9-hole golf course, chipping range, putting green, cart rentals, and pro shop.
- **Status:** Call for Tee times.
- **Significance:** Provides golfing for visitors and residents. Situated only a few miles away from local restaurants and shops.

REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORKS

Iron Belle Trail: The Iron Belle Trail is a statewide trail system spanning more than 2,000 miles from Ironwood in Michigan's Upper Peninsula to Belle Isle, Detroit. The nearest segment is located near the Menominee County border, approximately 20 miles from the City of Stephenson.

As the longest designated state trail system in the United States, the Iron Belle Trail provides substantial recreational, tourism, and economic benefit to communities along its route. The trail supports a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities along the way while generating local spending and enhancing regional destination tourism.

Although a direct connection between the City of Stephenson and the Iron Belle Trail is not currently feasible due to the distance involved and the need to coordinate across multiple municipalities, pursuing future connectivity opportunities remains worthwhile. Establishing connections to the regional trail network could expand recreational opportunities for residents, support tourism and economic development initiatives, and strengthen the City's link to Michigan's broader system of non-motorized recreation corridors.

Hidden Coast: The Hidden Coast Scenic Byway stretches over 62 miles near the Lake Michigan Shoreline from Menominee to Gladstone, following much of the historic Anishinaabe Sault and Green Bay Trail. With rich history and cultural heritage, the byway features numerous museums and interpretive sites that highlight the region's past.

Travelers can enjoy over 25 scenic overlooks offering breathtaking views of Michigan's shoreline. The Hidden Cost also showcases exceptional natural beauty and offers abundant recreational opportunities. Many facilities are publicly owned and include parks, waterways, forests, hiking and biking trails, boat launches, marinas, and campgrounds. Making it ideal for history and outdoor enthusiasts.

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OFF-ROAD VEHICLE TRAILS

The City of Stephenson features a limited network of off-road vehicle (ORV) trails, offering riders access to outdoor recreation throughout the area. In addition, the City has adopted an ordinance allowing ORV's to operate on designated local streets, provided operators comply with all City regulations and meet Michigan's vehicle code and registration requirements.

For easy navigation and trip planning, an interactive map of ORV trails is available – CLICK HERE

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Section 5

SCOPING & FEEDBACK

COMMUNITY INPUT

The City of Stephenson City Council held regular meetings throughout the development of the City of Stephenson 2027-2031 Recreation Plan. The City gathered early input during these meetings and incorporated it into the plan's development process. The board also developed and reviewed responses as described below and integrated the results into the overall plan.

SURVEY FINDINGS

The City administered a community survey at the beginning of the process to gather input from residents and stakeholders on recreation priorities and preferences. The survey ran from September 4, 2026, to October 23, 2026, online via SurveyMonkey, with flyers posted at the City of Stephenson Hall and advertised on social media. The City distributed flyers and printed copies of the survey throughout the City. The survey generated community engagement, with 76 completed surveys received and processed. Respondents reported the following: 15.79% have children under 18 in their household. (39.48%) of respondents reported visiting Erickson Park at least weekly. (24.32%) would be interested in volunteering for park or recreation projects or programming, while (54.04%) were unsure at the time.

COMMUNITY VALUES

The survey included extensive qualitative feedback highlighting what users value most about recreation in the City of Stephenson, as summarized below.

Park Cleanliness & Maintenance

Respondents highly value clean, well-maintained parks, which contribute significantly to overall park satisfaction and experience. Respondents frequently noted that parks are safe and well cared for, which enhances the user experience and encourages regular use. Well-maintained facilities and grounds also help support community events, recreation programs, and gatherings, reinforcing parks as an important community asset and destination for residents and visitors alike.

Family-Friendly Recreation

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Family-friendly recreation opportunities are a valuable community asset. Survey respondents frequently emphasized the importance of playgrounds, recreational programs, youth sports, and community events that give families opportunities to spend quality time together. Amenities such as pavilions, playgrounds, athletic facilities, and family-oriented events were commonly identified as key attractions that are family-friendly, creating lasting memories. These recreation opportunities foster community connections, encourage active, healthy lifestyles, and enhance overall quality of life for residents of all ages.

Recreation Location

Residents highly value convenient access to parks and open spaces, which contributes significantly to community recreation. Survey respondents frequently noted the importance of conveniently located parks, which make it easier for everyone to participate in recreational activities and enjoy outdoor amenities. In particular, respondents consistently identified Erickson Park as a premier community asset because of its central location, ability to serve as a gathering place, and trail connection to Firemen's Park.

KEY PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED

The survey results revealed clear priorities for recreation development in the City of Stephenson, as summarized below.

Youth Facilities & Opportunities

Survey respondents expressed a strong interest in expanding and enhancing recreational opportunities for youth throughout the community. Comments frequently focused on improving existing facilities, increasing youth-focused programming, and developing new amenities that support active recreation for children and teens. Suggested improvements included modernized playground equipment, ADA-accessible pathways, enhanced ballfields, a new play area at Erickson Park, a sledding area, a splash pad, expanded youth recreation programs, sledding opportunities, an additional softball field, and a dedicated teen center.

These recommendations reflect the community's desire to provide diverse, accessible, and engaging recreational opportunities that serve youth and families. Investing in these recreational opportunities ensures facilities remain accessible, modern, and welcoming to all users, meeting the needs of current and future generations.

Parks & Recreation Expansion

Survey respondents expressed a strong interest in expanding parks and recreation opportunities throughout the community. Many comments focus on the need for additional recreational amenities, new programming opportunities, and facilities that serve a wider range of ages and interests. Respondents emphasized the importance of

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continuing to invest in recreation opportunities that enhance quality of life, encourage healthy lifestyles, and attract residents and visitors to the community.

Suggested improvements include tennis and pickleball courts, volleyball courts, disc golf, indoor recreation and fitness facilities, basketball courts, a skate park or bike park, a public swimming pool, art-focused park amenities, paintball, an escape room, a dog park, and an RC (radio-controlled) car park.

These recommendations reflect a desire for a broader, more diverse recreation system that offers opportunities for residents of all ages and interests. Expanding recreation facilities and programming can help meet evolving community needs while supporting the City's goals of promoting active living, community engagement, and year-round recreation opportunities.

Non-Motorized Connections

Survey respondents expressed interest in enhancing non-motorized transportation and recreation opportunities throughout the community. Comments often emphasized the need for safe, accessible, well-connected routes for walking, biking, hiking, and other outdoor activities. Improved trail connectivity was seen as a way to strengthen connections between neighborhoods, parks, recreational amenities, and local services while promoting healthy, active lifestyles.

Specific suggestions include constructing a year-round bridge connection between Firemen's Park and Erickson Park, developing snowshoeing and cross-country skiing trails for winter recreation, and expanding the network of walking paths, sidewalks, and trails throughout the community.

These recommendations highlight the community's desire for a more connected recreation and transportation system that supports year-round outdoor activities, improves connectivity, and provides safe opportunities for residents and visitors to travel, exercise, and enjoy the community's parks, natural resources, and services.

30-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The City of Stephenson completed the preliminary draft of the City of Stephenson 2027-2031 Recreation Plan at its [Insert Date] meeting and established a 30-day comment period from [Insert Date] in the *Menominee County Journal* to receive feedback on the draft plan.

PUBLIC HEARING

The City of Stephenson City Council held a public hearing and adopted the City of Stephenson 2027-2031 Recreation Plan at its regular meeting on [Insert Date] by resolution.

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CHAPTER 6

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: PROVIDE A WIDE VARIETY OF RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES IN THE CITY OF STEPHENSON.

Primary Objective: Upgrade and diversify recreational facilities to meet the evolving needs for all ages and abilities.

Objectives

1.1 Improve accessibility and barrier-free features for existing recreation facilities.
1.2 Improve park amenities and infrastructure to enhance user comfort, safety, and enjoyment.
1.3 Evaluate recreational facilities and programs regularly to ensure they continue to meet community needs.

GOAL 2: MAKE MAXIMUM USE OF THE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

Primary Objective: Provide year-round recreation opportunities.

Objectives

2.1 Recreation facilities and activities should be designed to facilitate the desired activities of the City's residents, while preserving local natural resources.
2.2 Continue to set a budget that allows for the maintenance and improvement of existing recreation facilities.
2.3 Prioritize the improvement, renovation, and replacement of existing recreational facilities before developing new park amenities.

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GOAL 3: PARTNER WITH RECREATION STAKEHOLDERS AND INTERESTED PARTIES

Primary Objective: Collaborate with Federal, State, Local, and community partners to enhance recreation opportunities.

Objectives

3.1 Coordinate with local, County, state, and regional partners to expand multi-use trail development.
3.2 Seek grant funding and other financial resources through Federal, State, Local, and private programs to support recreation improvement.
3.3 Foster public participation in recreation planning and programming.
3.4 Coordinate with the private sector to develop recreational opportunities that expand on existing natural resources.

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CHAPTER 7

ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan outlines the direction the City of Stephenson intends to take over the next five years to maintain, improve, and expand recreation opportunities throughout the community.

Based on survey feedback, community values, and established goals, the City created a framework for future recreational facility development and programming. The priorities identified in this plan represent the City's vision for enhancing recreation and improving quality of life for residents and visitors alike. This action plan is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all future recreation projects. Community interests, demographics, funding opportunities, and recreational trends will continue to evolve. As a result, the city will periodically review this Recreation Plan and its priorities to ensure they remain responsive to community needs and align with future opportunities.

PROJECT FUNDING SOURCES

Potential Grant Sources	Description
Menominee & Marinette Community Foundation	• Supports sports programming and nature-based projects that benefit Menominee County residents.
MDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	• Promotes active transportation projects
MDNR Natural Resource Trust Fund	• Provides grant funding for natural resource protection and outdoor recreation facilities.
MDNR Land & Water Conservation Fund	• Provides matching funding for acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation sites and facilities.

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MDNR Recreation Passport Grant	• Provides funding for creation, renovation, and development of public outdoor recreation sites and facilities.
MDNR Urban Community & Forestry (UCF)	• Provides funding to support tree planting, canopy expansion, and urban forest management.
MDARD Rural Development Fund	• Provides funding for projects that promote sustainability of land-based industries and support community infrastructure that benefits rural communities
Michigan Health Endowment Fund	• Provides funding for projects that create impacts on community health and wellness.
MEDC Public Spaces Community Places	• Creates partnerships with local businesses to fund community recreation projects.
Private Foundations	• Organizations that offer grants for community development and healthy environments
Non-profit Organizations	• Groups with an interest in outdoor recreation that provide funding, fundraising support, or services.

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PRIORITY PROJECTS

Park/Program	Description	Cost Estimates	Possible Funding Sources
Erickson Park	Construct walkways between the multi-use pavilion, baseball fields, parking lot, and playground.	$30,000	Private Donations Foundations MDNR Grants General Fund
	Construct multi-use Tennis/Pickleball Courts	$300,000	
	Construct lighting for Little League field	$80,000	
	Upgrade Playground Equipment	$145,000	
Fireman's Park	Construct an ADA-compliant restroom building.	$90,000	Private Donations Foundations MDNR Grants General Fund
Weber Courts	Reconstruct courts.	$100,000	Private Donations Foundations MDNR Grants General Fund
Trail Development	Develop non-motorized trails and connections.	TBD	Private Donations MDNR Grants MDOT Grants (TAP) General Fund

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BASIS FOR ACTION

The Action Plan outlined in this document is grounded in community input, demographic analysis, collaboration, and a careful assessment of existing recreation resources and opportunities.

The City of Stephenson is strategically located with direct access to regional transportation networks, including US-41, which runs north-south through the community. The City's identity is closely tied to its abundant natural resources and scenic landscapes. The Little Cedar River provides opportunities for wildlife observation, nature appreciation, fishing, and other water sports, while surrounding forests, wetlands, and open space contribute significantly to the community's character and quality of life. Together, these assets make the City of Stephenson an attractive place to live, work, and play.

The City's demographic profile highlights the importance of diverse and accessible recreation opportunities. Residents ages 25-29 represent the largest age cohort at 11.2% of the population, while those ages 65-59 account for 10.9%. Additionally, 19.0% of residents report living with some sort of disability. These demographics reflect both a strong working-age population, some with families, and a significant number of older adults. As a result, continued investment in barrier-free accessibility, family-oriented recreation, and amenities that support active aging will be important to meet community needs.

Community survey results demonstrated strong support for expanding youth sports opportunities and diversifying recreation opportunities for all ages. Survey responses also indicate a desire for improved recreation facilities, programs, and events that build upon the City's existing assets and strengthen overall quality of life.

Collaboration will remain a critical component of successful recreation planning and implementation. Partnership with local organizations, businesses, and state and federal agencies can help leverage resources, secure potential grant funding, and expand and enhance recreational opportunities throughout the community.

Implementation of projects identified in this plan will be guided by available land and financial resources, partnership opportunities, and long-term maintenance considerations. Project prioritization will consider grant funding availability, demonstrated community support, environmental impacts, habitat protection requirements, maintenance capacity, and overall community benefit. To ensure the plan remains relevant and responsive to changing conditions, the City of Stephenson will periodically review and update priorities as new opportunities emerge and community needs evolve. This adaptive approach will help maximize available resources while maintaining a focus on the City's recreation goals and commitment to partnership opportunities.

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