

# Kent County, Michigan

## Multi-Jurisdictional Parks Study

Citizens Committee Meetings  
March 15, 2012

### Recommendations



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## Today's Meeting

- Recap findings summary
- Introduce and discuss consultants' recommendations
- Review additional information on multi-jurisdictional P&R web platform and common hiring process

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## Findings Summary

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- Parks and recreation in Kent County is best described as good, not great.
- Access to parks and recreation programming in Kent County is within national averages (parks somewhat above, recreation somewhat below) although not necessarily evenly distributed.

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## Findings Summary

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- Kent County P&R agencies have faced significant budget reductions. In some jurisdictions, continued economic challenges and associated declines in P&R spending threaten the quality of parks and access to recreation opportunities. Other communities continue to fair well in these challenging times.
- There are strong examples of P&R collaboration in Kent County.
- Kent County P&R agencies operate efficiently (at present levels of funding and programming).

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## Findings Summary

- In the absence of a governance structure and new funding sources, consolidation of P&R agencies may yield improvements in recreation programming and customer service, but will not yield significant operational efficiencies or cost savings.
- There is a broadly shared view that parks and recreation are key to the quality of life in Kent County, but different agencies have different priorities and there is no shared vision for a common approach across jurisdictions.

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## Efficiencies (existing resources)

- Few opportunities for operational efficiency improvements were identified in the course of the study.

Source	Current Situation
• Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staffing was difficult to measure as much is integrated elsewhere in responding jurisdictions</li><li>• Staffing already cut</li></ul>
• Capital equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not a significant amount of specialized equipment</li><li>• Outsourcing occurring</li><li>• Limited opportunities (geographic limit)</li></ul>
• Redundancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No significant redundancies identified</li></ul>

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## What the findings do not support

- County-wide parks and recreation consolidation
  - No existing governance structure
  - No significant financial ROI
  - Mixed record of success
  - Other, less extreme approaches available
- A county-wide millage (near term)
  - No shared vision
  - Competing priorities

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## Recommended strategy

Create an *infrastructure* for county-wide parks and recreation intergovernmental cooperation that can continue to grow based on experience and need.

*An opportunity to join forces to move from good to great.*

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## Recommendations

- Create a Kent Communities Parks and Recreation Authority (PA 321)
  - Broad purpose to support multi-jurisdictional P&R initiatives.
  - Kent County communities can opt in/out.
  - Representational board appointed by participating jurisdictions.
  - No staff (contract with participating jurisdictions for specific staff support if needed).
  - Collaborative funding opportunity (public/private)

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## Recommendations

- Implement specific, high-value projects, that benefit multiple (all) P&R jurisdictions.
  - Shared P&R web platform (Emerging technology offers opportunities for enhanced customer service, inter-jurisdictional collaboration and operational efficiency)
  - Multi-jurisdictional planning
    - Narrow (specific program areas)
    - Broad (countywide master plan)
    - Trails (Trails are a highly desired amenity and are generally multi-jurisdictional)

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## Recommendations

- Implement specific, high-value projects, that benefit participating P&R jurisdictions
  - Common metrics (NRPA PRORAGIS or MRPA plan)
  - Common hiring system for recreation program staff
  - Joint marketing
  - Shared programing
    - Special needs population
    - Fill an identified program gap

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## Recommendations

- Support the formation of additional multi-jurisdictional agencies where there is a strong case and community support for collaboration (Cedar Springs model)

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# Active.com

- **ActiveNet**

- Full featured recreation management solution
- Common citizen web portal for program registration and information
- Common marketing and promotion tool
- \$500K (preliminary estimate assuming 20 participating jurisdictions) for implementation & training
- If communities were to implement ActiveNet individually costs would range from \$10K-\$55K for each installation depending on modules implemented

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# Active.com

- **Active Content Manager (ACM)**

- Provides a single portal for all participating jurisdictions, but allows each community to have their own content.
- Easy-to-use website content management solution that allows non-technical staff in each jurisdiction to update and manage content.
- \$75K (preliminary estimate assuming 20 participating jurisdictions) for implementation & training
- If communities were to implement ACM individually costs would range from \$30K - \$50K each install

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## Active Citizen Request (ACR) and Knowledgebase

- Centralized, automated system to effectively track, route and manage all citizen inquiries and requests for service
- The knowledgebase allows the internal and external sharing of consistent information
- The knowledgebase can manage training materials and online delivery to appropriate staff
- \$125K (preliminary estimate assuming 20 participating jurisdictions) for implementation & training
- If communities were to implement ACR & KB individually costs would range from \$30K - \$75K each install

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# PA 321 Recreational authorities

- Formed by two or more municipalities (city, county, village, or township)
- School districts may be participating members (with some geographic limitations)
- Participating jurisdictions can opt out by legislative resolution but not during period millage is levied
- Broad purpose allowed
  - May acquire and hold property (parks, open space, conservation land, trails)
  - May build and operate facilities
  - May offer recreational programming (not intent of law)

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## PA 321 Recreational authorities

- May accept or secure a wide range of funding (grants, fees, member contributions, State appropriations, debt and millages)
- Millages must be approved by all (each) participating jurisdictions
- Millages limited to 1 mill for 20 years

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## PA 321 Recreational authorities

- Elected or appointed board (odd number of members)
- Board member qualifications, method of selection, terms of office, and method of filling of vacancies determined by the participating jurisdictions and defined in the articles of incorporation
- May include board members from non-member jurisdictions (schools, P&R commissions, advocacy groups)

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# Newaygo Community Recreational Authority

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- Formed in 2006
- Member Communities
  - City of Newaygo
  - Brooks Township
  - Garfield Township
  - Croton Township
  - Everett Township (later withdrew)
- Completed a joint Recreation and Natural Resources Conservation Plan (making them eligible for DNR grant funding) in 2007

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# Newaygo Community Recreational Authority

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- Board
  - Comprised of two appointed representatives from each participating jurisdictions
  - Additional member (Newaygo County Parks Director) appointed by the Newaygo County Parks Commission (not a member jurisdiction)

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# Newaygo Community Recreational Authority

- Funding

- No millage or debt
- Each member community contributes
- The Newaygo Public Schools contribute \$2,000 a year (no formal affiliation)
- Authority has been successful in getting grant funding
  - Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (parks improvements)
  - \$309,000 from Freemont Area Community Foundation (facility improvements)
  - 2 grants in 2010

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# Newaygo Community Recreational Authority

- *Multi-jurisdictional recreation improvement program*
- Projects and properties under authority control:
  - Community building (rental for banquets, weddings, etc. which is near their Welcome Center)
  - Skate park (maintained by Newaygo DPW)
  - Two baseball diamonds in the City of Newaygo (maintained by Little League)
  - Upgraded several soccer fields (maintained by AAYSO)
  - Provides the equipment for the fields
  - Built stairs along a trail (trail maintained by volunteers)
  - Development of non-motorized trails linking the Winter Sports Complex with the North Country Trail and Downtown Newaygo

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# Newaygo Community Recreational Authority

*The Authority is one of the most positive things we have done for this community. The Authority has allowed us to focus on providing for facilities that affect the entire region while maintaining our own autonomy for township initiatives.*

Les Salacina, Brooks Township Supervisor

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## Next steps – Phase II

1. Local review of report and recommendations
2. Form task force to establish authority
  - a. Assess community support and define priorities
  - b. Define board composition/representation
  - c. Define organization structure (UCA authority or P&R authority)
  - d. Write articles of incorporation and other necessary governance documents
3. Establish authority
  - a. Develop work plan
  - b. Secure initial funding
  - c. Implement initial project(s)
  - d. Develop long-term strategic plan (or similar planning document)

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