

PARKS AND RECREATION 5 YEAR RECREATION PLAN

TOWNSHIP OF THOMAS, Saginaw County, Michigan

2025 - 2030



Draft

September 5th 2024



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The purpose of the 2025 Recreation Plan for Thomas Township is to provide direction for the community regarding the future development of recreation resources. The plan is intended to be used by the Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Commission, Board of Trustees as well as the Parks and Recreation Department for guiding decisions concerning recreation, parks and public open space.

Township Manager

Deidre Frolo

Thomas Township
Board of Trustees

Robert Weise, Supervisor
Michael Thayer, Clerk
Steve Witt, Treasurer
Tara Deline, Trustee
Katie McDonald, Trustee
Craig Monahan, Trustee
David Sommers, Trustee

Thomas Township
Parks & Recreation Commission

Scott Branch, Chairman
Craig Aimar, Secretary
Angela Alworden
Craig Blower
Annie Hoffman
Dean Rusch
DJ Sova

Parks & Recreation Staff

John Corriveau, Director
Tyler Sutherlund, Assistant Director
Susan Prevost, Parks Receptionist

Recreation Facilities

Roberts Park
Roethke Park
Community Park
Day Park
Thomas Trail - Linear Trail Park
Nature Center & Preserve

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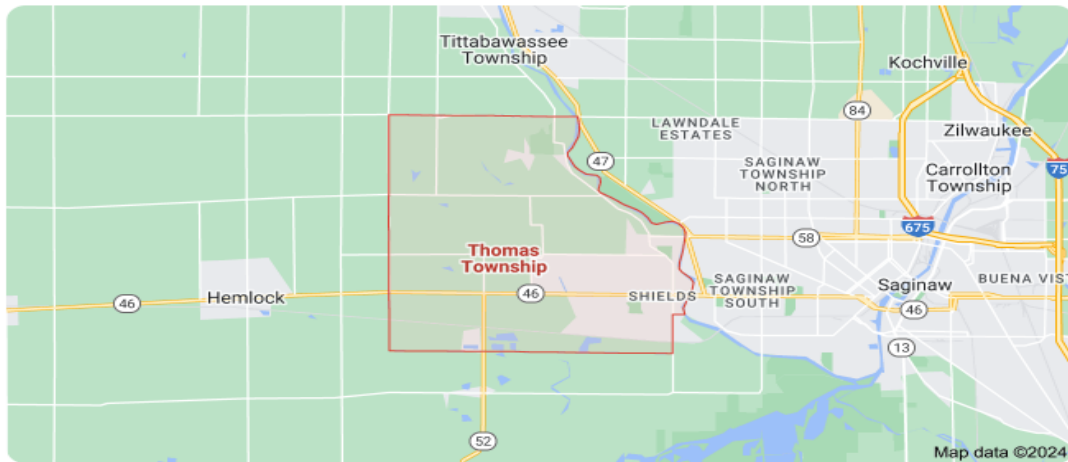
I. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Community Description section describes the physical features, social and demographic characteristics. This gives us a good understanding of the community and can assist with the formation of goals for future recreation improvements.

A. General Location

Thomas Township is approximately 32 square miles in size and located in Saginaw County. It is 3 miles from the City of Saginaw, 14 miles from Midland, and 4 miles from MBS International Airport. The Township is home to various communities including: Swan Valley (Shields area) and southern portions of Freeland. Currently, Thomas Township is primarily a residential and agricultural community with a moderately sized commercial corridor along M-46, and four manufacturing development areas, which are growing due to the expansion of the solar industry in the United States.

The Township falls within three area school districts: Swan Valley, Hemlock and Freeland. Swan Valley Schools are physically located in the Township. Township residents who attend Hemlock and Freeland schools are bused to these schools outside Township boundaries.

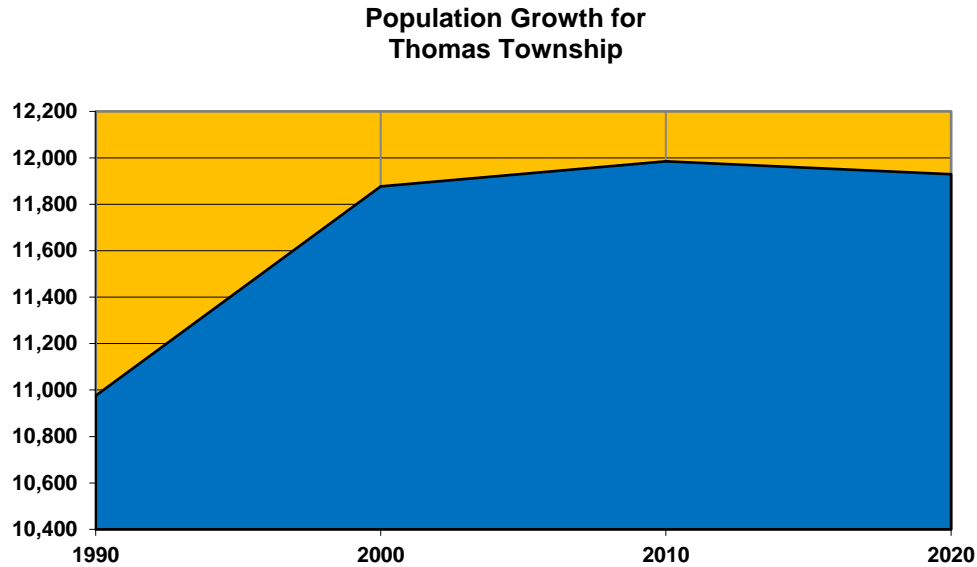


For this recreation plan, the Township boundaries will be used as the service area even though recreational activities at Hemlock and Freeland schools may be considered beneficial to Thomas Township residents. Parks, facilities and school facilities within the Township have space for Township residents, as well as residents in adjoining areas.

In general, the Township is a balanced community consisting of both urban and rural/agricultural land uses. The urban area is concentrated mostly around the Gratiot (M-46) corridor. Industrial and commercial business provide a solid employment base.

B. Social Characteristics

The Township's population had increased dramatically in the 1990's, but has since slowed. The population numbers represent the 2020 census figures.



The 2020 population breakdown is as follows:

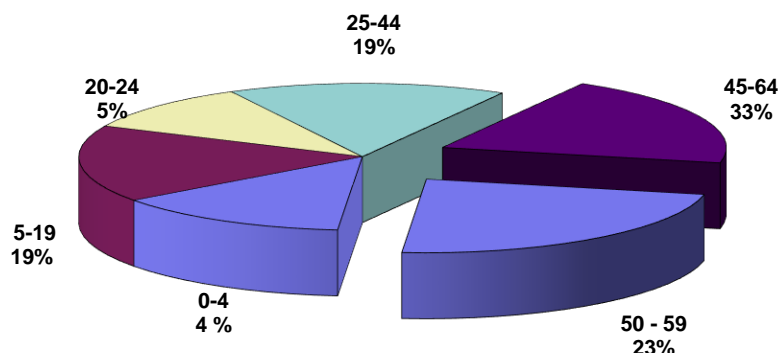
Age	% of Population	2020 Population
0-9	8.50%	1,010
10-19	10.70%	1,273
20-29	6.60%	784
30-39	10%	1,183
40-49	12.70%	1,512
50-59	14.50%	1,722
65+	17.40%	2,065
70-79	13.10%	1,556
80+	6.60%	782

The 2020 Census figures document a decrease in population in Thomas Township, from 11,929 in 2010, to 11,869 in 2020 down 1%. Age breakdowns have changed since the 2000 Census figures, which makes actual comparisons by age group an estimate. It must be noted that the age of the Community's population is changing, with decreases in the 0-40 age range, and a 14% growth in the 40-80+ age range.

The Townships location, available water and sewer utilities, large open land tracts and excellent schools make it ripe for continued population growth.

Age concentrations haven't really changed over the past 15 years. In 2010, the largest age concentration was in residents aged 40 - 65. In 2020, the largest concentration was still in the age range of 40 – 65. The age concentration will require different areas of emphasis within the recreation programs of Thomas Township now and in the future focusing more on adult based recreation. The following graph illustrates the percentage of residents in the 40 – 65 ages compared to those 0 – 39 and 70 – 80+.

Thomas Township Age Concentrations



While the population of Thomas Township has changed, the percentage of males to females has remained nearly the same. Males are 47% of the total population, females are 53%.

The following chart shows that the population is comprised of predominantly white individuals with few minorities. The Township has a higher level of education and higher level of income than the County as a whole. The population density is highest within the Gratiot Road area located east of the Swan Creek.

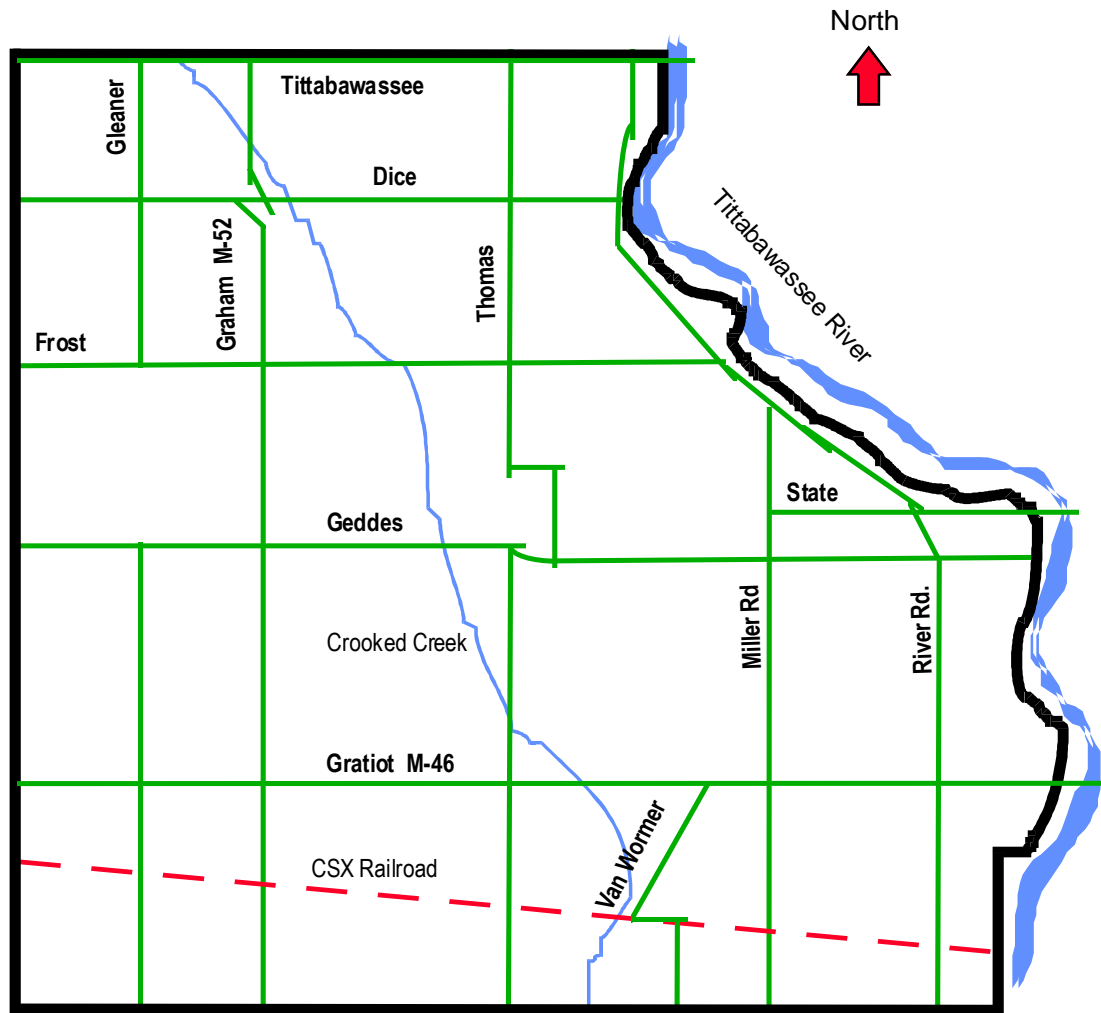
Race	Percentage
White	90.7%
Hispanic	5%
Black	1.4%
Asian /Pacific Islanders	1.5%
American Indian	0.25%
Other	1.15%

The Township has a very strong commercial recreation base such as the Apple Mountain Golf and Skiing Resort, the Crooked Creek Sports Complex, Swan Valley Golf Course and the Valley View Golf Course. Private golf courses such as these and other commercial recreational facilities have become popular attractions, adding to the economy of the Township. While the economy as a whole in Michigan is stagnant and receding, Thomas Township continues to see industrial growth in major expansions at four of our manufacturing industries.

C. Transportation Systems

The main highways in Thomas Township include: East-West State Highway M-46 (Gratiot Rd.), and North-South State Highway M-52 (Graham Rd. north to Gratiot). State Road, Gratiot Road and Tittabawassee Road provide East-West crossings of the Tittabawassee River. Primary North-South roads are River Road and Miller Road.

With MBS International Airport just three miles from the Township's northern border, and 7.5 miles from the Gratiot Road area, air service is very convenient. The Chessie System Railroad is also available as it runs across the southern portion of the Township.



D. Physical Characteristics

Just as it is important to analyze the cultural characteristics of the community to determine local preference for recreation planning, it is also important to determine the physical characteristics to understand its limitations and the opportunities it provides.

This section deals with the landform, water features, vegetation, wildlife of the area, as well as other important physical characteristics.

1. Topography and Drainage

Two main watercourses influence the Township: The Tittabawassee River and Swan Creek. These rivers and their tributaries help to form the topographical features—gently rolling land, with slight depressions and knolls. The topographic variation is generally about 30 feet from the 595-foot sea level near the Tittabawassee River and up to 625 feet from sea level in the western area of the Township.

The water quality of both the Swan Creek and Tittabawassee River is described as “medium” with occasional problems such as toxic conditions, dissolved solids, turbidity and nutrient enrichment. While not suited for swimming, they do, however, provide aesthetic value for other recreational activities. The Tittabawassee River is well known nationally for its walleye fishery. Numerous boats can be seen in the river during peak walleye fishing times. It has also started to develop a reputation as a scenic canoeing route with river otter and eagles sighted regularly. Currently, there are no public access sites for the Tittabawassee River or Swan Creek in Thomas Township.

Elevated levels of dioxin within the Tittabawassee confluence are continually being studied. This situation continues to progress through the testing phases, and has now entered into a phase of remediation. This process has proven to be slow, and tedious, however this section of the river is scheduled for remediation in 2016. Once the remediation has taken place, we are hopeful our unfunded river parcel will have a chance to be partially grant funded.

The impact has been great in our Township, with testing showing high levels along the riverfront; however, remediation will prove to be difficult due to the seasonal flooding which takes place on a yearly basis. The Township’s groundwater is potable, with a high mineral content, and is less than 10 feet below ground surface. Most of the Township receives municipal water from Lake Huron via the City of Saginaw water system. There are several wooded wetlands and marshes adjacent to the Swan Creek and Tittabawassee River as well as a narrow strip of wetlands along their lengths.

2. Vegetation and Wildlife

Approximately 20 percent of Thomas Township is wooded with most acreage in the western half and northern sections. These areas provide interesting sites for recreational facilities. The areas near the streams and rivers provide suitable homes for many game animals including: pheasant, ruffed grouse, turkey and white-tailed deer. Woodlots with nearby agricultural or open land are also attractive to these animals. The wetlands are suitable for many types of waterfowl.

3. Soils

As with a majority of the area, Thomas Township's geological structure consists of sand lakebed from glacial conditions. Some areas in the northwest and southwest are composed of clay. Soils in the Township consist of Sisson silt loams, Kibble very fine sandy loams and Pella silt loams-Kibble fine sandy loams. These soils usually drain poorly and are moderately limited for septic disposal systems.

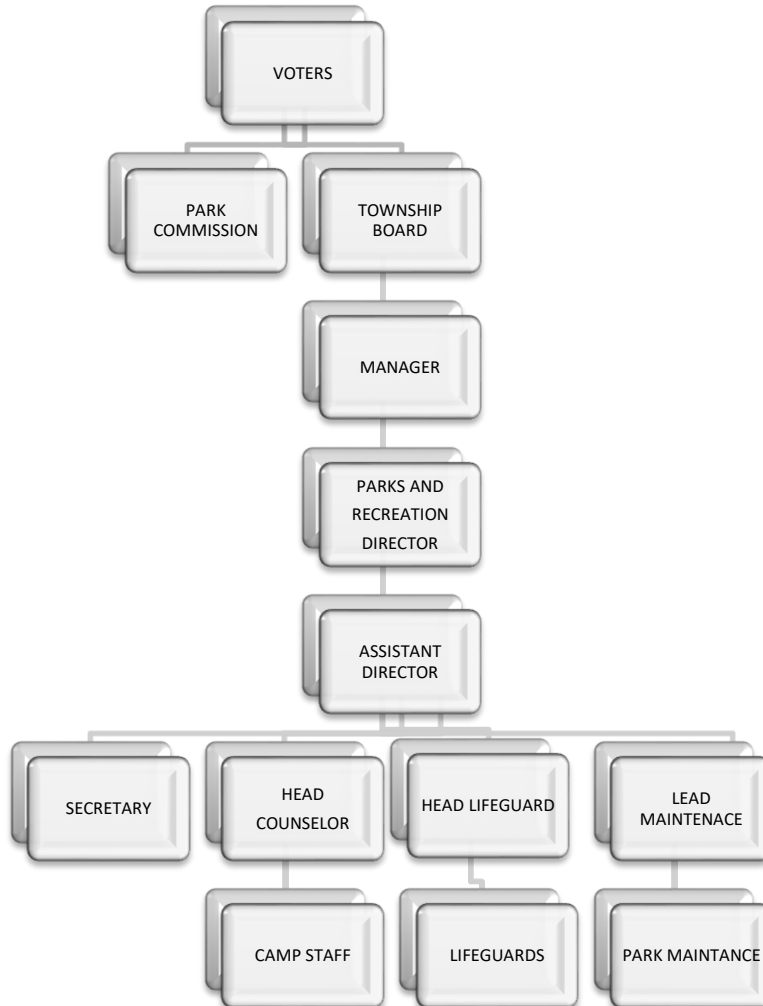
The two large areas in the south-central section and the west central section of the Township also consist of sands that drain very poorly. Limitations for septic tanks are moderate to severe in these areas. They are, however, ideal for agricultural activities. The greatest area of natural features is located west of the Swan Creek.



II. Administrative Structure

Parks and recreation activities in Thomas Township play a major role in the community. Since a full time, Recreation Director was hired in 1980, the types of recreational activities and facilities have increased just as the number of residents has also increased. In 2017 we created a full time Assistant Director position to help share the work load and allow the Director more time to create programs and work on grants.

To understand how the Township recreation system is managed, an organizational chart is shown below.



The responsibilities of carrying out parks and recreation programs are shared by 2 separate organizations, the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Township Board. The Township Manager and Parks and Recreation Director provide the management of the policies and finances for the Township Parks and Recreation Department.

**Parks and Recreation
Commission**

Develops goals and policies for
facilities and programs

Township Board

Provides major financial support
hires Parks and Recreation Director

Other organizations that provide recreation assistance include: the Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, the Swan Valley, Hemlock and Freeland School Districts, adjacent Townships, and various community groups. Through informal cooperation, these groups work with the Township administrative officials to provide comprehensive recreation activities for both Township and the surrounding area residents at a reasonable cost.

Financing

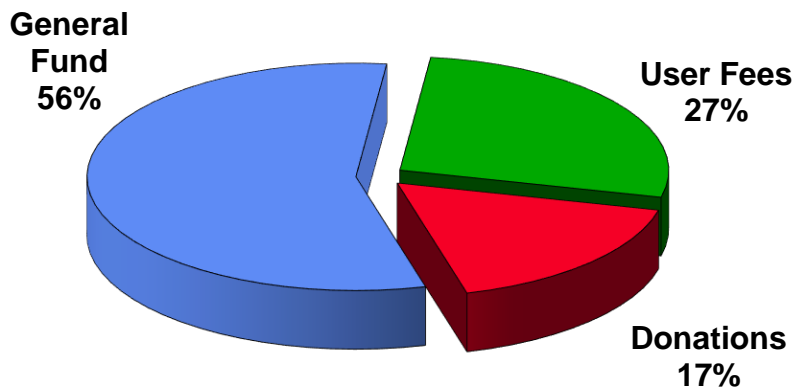
The parks and recreational facilities of Thomas Township are funded through user fees, donations and the Township's general fund. Approximately 27% percent of all the necessary funds for the parks come from user fees.

In 1997, Thomas Township established a fund with the Saginaw Community Foundation (SCF) as a method of creating a long-term source for some park development funding. The Parks and Recreation Commission and the Township Board continually inform the citizens of Thomas Township about the fund and its benefits and to encourage donations. Currently, the Fund balance is just over **\$186,000.00**. Under an agreement with SCF a maximum of 5% of this fund's earnings is allowed to be used each year for specific projects.

In 2010 the Thomas Township Parks Association was formed as a 501(3) (C) organization to raise funds for the parks. This gives residents the ability to give to a specific project that all of their donation will go towards, which was a request by many individuals and organizations for the parks.

The chart below delineates the source of funding for Thomas Township's parks and recreational facilities annually.

Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Funding Sources



Relationship(s) with School Districts, other Public Agencies or Private Organizations

Other organizations that provide recreation assistance include: the Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, the Swan Valley, Hemlock and Freeland School Districts, adjacent Townships, and various community groups. Through informal cooperation, these groups work with the Township administrative officials to provide comprehensive recreation activities for both Township and the surrounding area residents at a reasonable cost.

Volunteers

Thomas Township Parks and Recreation use volunteers for many of our programs. The local schools and Universities have hundreds of kids in need of getting volunteer service hours

each year. We gladly accept these requests and use them for special events held each year such as the Haunted Train and the Christmas Train and Festival of Lights. Not only do we have a great youth volunteer program, but we also receive a lot of help from retired individuals, parents and local business.

Grants currently funded by Michigan Department of Natural Resources

TF21-0066 Nature Preserve Trail and Amenities (2021) Active

Past grants funded

BF91-030 Roethke Park Barrier Free (1991) Closed

CMOO-230 Roberts Park Improvements (2000) Closed

TF10-087 Roberts Park Improvements (2010) Closed

26-01706 Roberts Park Soccer Field Development (2010) Closed

TF13-007 Roethke Park Land Acquisition (2013) Closed

TF17-0042 Thomas Township Nature Preserve Expansion (2017) Closed

26-01829 Nature Preserve Trail and Amenities (2019) Closed

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

A. Introduction

The purpose of the 2025 Recreation Plan for Thomas Township is to provide direction for the community regarding the future development of recreation resources. The plan is intended to be used by the Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Commission, Board of Trustees as well as the Parks and Recreation Department for guiding decisions concerning recreation, parks and public open space.

This Plan is an update of the 2020 recreation plan. It should be updated every five years to meet the eligibility guidelines set forth by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for obtaining state and federal grants.

B. Plan Development

The 2025 Recreation Plan for Thomas Township was prepared by the Township Staff under the direction of the Township Manager, the Parks and Recreation Director, the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Board of Trustees. Work on the Plan has been ongoing since 2024. The Plan was completed in stages and presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission at a series of public meetings. Major steps in the development of this plan were as follows:

1. Initial review of the 2025 Plan by the Township Manager and Park Director.
2. Site visits of the parks by the Township Manager and the Park Director to inventory and review park buildings, equipment and upkeep.
3. Meeting with the Parks and Recreation Commission to review inventory and existing programs.
4. Initial draft of plan presented and discussed at Park Commission meeting.
5. Revisions were made based on discussions with the Parks and Recreation Commission.
6. Revised plan was presented to and approved by the Township Planning Commission at a public meeting.
7. The Plan was presented to the Township Park Commission and the public in general at an advertised public hearing, whereupon it was subsequently approved by the Commission.
8. Revisions were made to the Plan based upon input from the public and then Park Commission at the public hearing.
9. The Plan was presented to the Township Board of Trustee's and approved at a public meeting.
10. The final plan was forwarded to the DNR for review and eventual approval.

IV. RECREATION INVENTORY

Detailed inventories of existing recreation facilities are shown on the following charts, as well as the park locations on the Township map. The inventory list includes Township parks, County parks, regional recreation, Schools and Commercial recreation.

Following the maps and charts, a description of each Township Park is given describing its amenities, programs and level of use.

Parks	Symbol	Acreage	Ball Diamonds	Football/Soccer	Basketball	Volleyball	Pickleball Courts	Disc Golf	Picnic Area	Playground Equipment	Open Space	Nature Trails	Farmers Market	River Front	Shelter	Kayack Launch	Restrooms	Classification	Comments
Community Park	1	4.5																NP	Relocated and New
Day Park	2	4																NP	Sledding Hill
Roethke Park	3	73.5																CP	Pool, Lake, Volleyball
Roberts Park	4	76																CP	Softball, Soccer, Disc Golf, Trails
Nature Preserve	5	85																CP	Open Land w/Nature Center
Thomas Trail	6	3.18 mi																CP	Hardsurface trail
Schools/Churches																			
Community Baptist	7																		
Swan Valley Middle School	8																		
Shields Elementary																			
Havens Elementary	9																		
Swan Valley Highschool	10																		
County Parks																			
Imerman		102																RP	
Haitthco		78.3																RP	Lake, Splash Park
Saginaw River Headwaters Rec		334																RP	
Commercial Recreation																			
Crooked Creek Sports Center		117																	
Valleyview Farms Golf Club		111																	
Swan Valley Golf Club		120																	
Saginaw Gun Club		62																	
Saginaw Field & Stream		158																	
Apple Mountain		268																	
Regional Recreation																			
Shiawassee Natl. Wildlife Refuge		9,104																RP	National Wildlife Refuge
Price Nature Center		186																RP	
Shiawassee State Game Area		10,900																	
Rinbgwood Forest		186																RP	
Bay City State Park		2,000																RP	Saginaw Bay Frontage
Crow Island State Game Area		3,500																	

Classifications

NP = Neighborhood Park

CP = Community Park

RP = Regional Park



Community Park

Area 4.5 acres

Location 249 North Miller Road

Park Classification: Neighborhood Park

Accessibility Guidelines: 3 (most of the park meets MDNR accessibility guidelines)

Community Park was redone in 2024 as part of the townships new municipality building project. The park has been relocated south across the parking lot and features a full-size outdoor basketball court, 6 pickleball courts, and 2 separate play equipment zones dedicated to ages 0 – 5 years of age and 5+ years of age. There is a sidewalk that runs through the middle of the park with a drinking fountain and benches. The sidewalk will eventually connect to nearby restaurants and picnic areas located just south of the park. Community Park has handicap parking available and the sidewalks and entry to the park are Handicap Accessible. The Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Commission continue to adapt and create more barrier free accessibility when able to better serve our community and its residents.



Day Park

Area: 4 acres

Location: 700 South River Road

Park Classification: Neighborhood Park

Accessibility: 2 (some of the park meets MDNR accessibility guidelines)

Day Park has handicap parking available. The Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Commission continue to adapt and create more barrier free accessibility when able to better serve our community and its residents.



Roethke Park

Area: 73.5 acres

Location: 400 Leddy Road Saginaw 48609

Park Classification: Community Park

Accessibility: 3 (most of the park meets MDNR accessibility guidelines)



Roethke Park is our 2nd largest park. The park features an outdoor swimming pool, 2 miniature trains, day camp, summer concerts, walking paths, mountain bike paths, sand volleyball courts and a catch & release fishing pond.

Roethke Park is also host to our Thomas Township Parks and Recreation's largest fundraising event. The Haunted Train ride which has been running for over 35 years and sees nearly 4000 attendees each year.

Roethke Park has handicap parking available and the sidewalks and entry to the pool and Depot Building including bathrooms are Handicap Accessible. The Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Commission continue to adapt and create more barrier free accessibility when able to better serve our community and its residents.

Roberts Park

Area: 77.5 acres

Location 455 South Miller Road Saginaw 48609

Park Classification: Community Park

Accessibility: 3 (most of the park meets MDNR accessibility guidelines)

Roberts Park is our largest park and what we refer to as our sports park. Roberts Park features 4 softball diamonds, 3 full size soccer fields, walking trails, fishing pond, play areas for kids, a 9 hole disc golf course, 3 sand volleyball courts and is home to the Thomas Township Farmers Market. This park is located in the heart of the community along the business corridor.

In 2017 we purchased the property to the west of Roberts Park owned by the Shields Men's Club which included a large pavilion, restroom building, pole barn and large grass area for parking. The total footprint of this property was 7.76 areas

In 2019 we purchased the property to the south of Roberts Park to create the 9-hole Thompson Memorial Disc Golf Course. The plan is to purchase an additional 9 acres next to the course to make the course a full 18-hole course. Expanding the course will be a great addition to the community. Once complete, we hope to be a destination disc golf course for the region.

Roberts Park has handicap parking available and the sidewalks and entry to the pavilions and bathrooms are Handicap Accessible. There is also a ramp sidewalk path that leads to the soccer fields for wheelchair access. The Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Commission continue to adapt and create more barrier free accessibility when able to better serve our community and its residents.



Nature Preserve

Acres: 85 acres

Location: 6640 Gratiot, Saginaw 48609

Park Classification: Community Park

Accessibility 3 ((most of the park meets MDNR accessibility guidelines)

The Nature Preserve is our newest park. This park has some gravel walking trails, a kayak launch, a 16-foot-tall observation deck, picnic areas, rustic trails and a nature center. In the future there will be fishing platforms and more gravel trails with viewing areas. The park features natural grasslands, the Tittabawassee River, a Heron Rookery along with numerous other wildlife for all to enjoy.



The Thomas Trail Linear Park

Area: 3.18 miles long, 10 feet wide

Location: Trail begins .83 miles north of 8215 Shields Drive Saginaw 48609. Trail ends in James Township where it connects with the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail.

Accessibility: 4 (entire park meet accessibility guidelines)

The Thomas Trail was completed in 2013 with an addition completed in 2018 and hosted its first 5K run/walk in June of 2013 as part of the community event called Shields Festival. The trail begins off Miller Rd and goes along the Consumers power line for 3.18 miles and connects to the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail System.

The Thomas Trail has handicap parking available and the sidewalks to the trail are Handicap Accessible. The Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Commission continue to adapt and create more barrier free accessibility when able to better serve our community and its residents.



A. Recreation Programs

Recreation programs in Thomas Township, both supervised and unsupervised, have a large participation. In fact, the total number of participants in Thomas Township Recreation Programs is 32,797, almost triple the population of the Township as a whole. This demonstrates the support and willingness of the citizens to participate and use the recreational facilities and programs provided to them.

Activity		Participants	Totals
Youth Sport Programs			
	Spring Soccer	280	
	Fall Soccer	220	
	Boys Basketball	95	
	Girls Basketball	85	
	Basketball Clinic	131	
	Soccer Clinic	174	
	Flag Football	90	
	Archery	200	
			1,275
Youth Programs			
	Day Camp	300	
	Before and After Camp	105	
	Swim Lessons	150	
	Nature Center Programs	500	
			1,055
Adult Sports Programs			
	Sand Volleyball	162	
	Men's Slowpitch Softball	120	
	Yoga	150	
			432
Seniors			
	Senior Swingers	115	115
Special Events			
	Haunted Train Ride	3,500	
	Winter Wonderland	1,000	
	5K Run/Walk	220	
	Picnic in the Park	200	
	Farmers Market	10,000	
			14,920
Family			
	Pool	3,200	
	Pickleball	2,300	
	Disc Golf	2,200	
	Train Ride	2,200	
	Pavilion Rentals	5,100	15,000
TOTAL			32,797

B. REGIONAL RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Several regional recreational opportunities are outside of Thomas Township's boundaries. They are discussed to show the diversity of the area and to bring to our attention how some opportunities are satisfied through regional facilities.

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

This 9,104-acre area located in the center of Saginaw County is dedicated to protecting waterfowl and wildlife. Included in this area are two hiking trails, one seven miles in length and another four miles in length. The main trail offers hiking, biking and cross-country skiing opportunities and is outfitted with two observation platforms equipped for waterfowl watching. The second trail, located just southeast of Thomas Township, also offers hiking, biking and cross-country skiing opportunities.

Shiawassee State Game Area

Adjacent to the south and west of the National Wildlife Refuge is the Shiawassee State Game area. This 10,900-acre area provides hunting, canoeing, hiking and fishing opportunities. Because this high use area offers a diversity of uses, it is sometimes difficult to access for residents through its dirt road entrance and poor parking area. Many people utilize the make-shift boat ramp to traverse through the river system.

Price Nature Center

The Price Nature Center again provides regional hiking and cross-country skiing trails. This is an area with natural heavy woodlands of oak, beech, maple and pines. The size of this area is 186 acres and it provides year-round access. Price Nature Center is located on Sheridan Road, about 20 minutes southeast of Thomas Township.

Ringwood Forest

Very similar to the Price Nature Center, this area was dedicated for park use due to its old growth trees and logging history. Various types are visible on the scenic hiking trails. This area is located about 10 minutes southwest of Thomas Township.

Bay City State Park

The Bay City State Park is located on Saginaw Bay frontage. This heavily used State Park offers more than scenic beauty and beaches. It also has five miles of nature trails that wind through Tobico Marsh and a lagoon with a fishing pier.

Chippewa Nature Center

The Chippewa Nature Center is located north of Thomas Township in Midland Township, Midland County. It is a 1,200-acre private nature center open year-round to the public and it is one of the largest private nature centers in the United States. Boasting a full slate of activities and educational programs, the Chippewa Nature Center sees upwards of 50,000 visitors on a yearly basis.

Crow Island State Game Area

The Crow Island State Game Area is situated along the Saginaw River and lies on either side of M-13. Crow Island straddles the Saginaw and Bay County lines and features 3,500 acres of marsh, forest land, and cropland. The marshlands provide important habitat for nesting and migrating ducks, geese, herons, terns and other wetland birds. The marshes are also home to muskrats, beavers, frogs, turtles, snakes, and plenty of other wetland critters. Crow Island is intensively managed for waterfowl and other wetland wildlife.

V. BASIS FOR ACTION

Introduction

Thomas Township has applied several different methods in determining the community's recreational needs. In 2024 the Township produced and distributed a community survey to 5,000 of its citizens. The Township also utilized the services of Survey Monkey, a do it yourself survey production. The residents were invited to a public meeting to look at and discuss the Recreation Plan. Comparisons were also made with recreational standards versus what the Township currently has. The results of this survey, along with continual monitoring of program interest, public input and financial considerations are evaluated annually through an annual self-assessment process during the budget and capital improvement program review. In addition, the Parks and Recreation Commission members have discussed options and ideas as a group and have determined additional goals from these discussions.

These factors are addressed within the following Basis for Action segments.

Community Survey

See Appendix H

Comparison to Standards

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has adopted a set of standards to assist in determining the needs for certain recreational facilities based on the population of the community. The table below shows the comparison of the standards to the actual Thomas Township facilities.

Item	State Standards *	Thomas Township	Deficiency*
Park Land (acres)	10 acres/1000 population	167 acres (5 parks)	-
Ball Field	1/3000	4	-
Outdoor Basketball	1/5000	1	1
Volleyball	1/5000	6	-
Soccer	1/10,000	3	-
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	1	-
Picnic Areas	1/5000	9	-
Playground	1/3000	4	-

* The estimated 2020 population figure of 11,869 was used in determining the standards.

Overall, the Township compares quite well to the recommended State Standards guidelines. The above figures do not include the available school facilities in the community, when considering this, it compares even more favorably. There is only one area showing a deficiency, we are only short one Basketball Court.

Discussed Recreation Opportunities

In 2012 the Township purchased the Nature Preserve property with the concept of making it a Nature Center/Preserve. The remediation cleanup project was completed in 2023. In 2018 we purchased the Heritage Building with a Michigan Trust Fund Grant. This building connects to the Nature Preserve property and has been converted into a Nature Center. A kayak launch was installed in 2024 and the hope is to add fishing platforms into the river and walking trails around the remainder of the property for wildlife viewing also.

In the Township's Master Plan some specific recreational goals are discussed:

1. Cooperate with the state of Michigan and adjoining communities in the development of recreation and community facilities.
2. Promote the development of existing recreational facilities and preserve sufficient open space to satisfy the needs of the Township residents.

These goals are acknowledged and considered an integral part of the basis for action for future recreational development.

VI. ACTION PROGRAM

ROETHKE PARK

Roethke Park is Thomas Township's second largest and park. Roethke features such amenities as a large pond for fishing, hiking trails, band shell, playground area, swimming pool and a train. It also has three covered pavilion areas that are popular for summer party rentals. We are always looking for ways to update and improve our parks for the safety and enjoyment of our visitors. Outlined in the following paragraphs are some projects we are undertaking at Roethke.

We have let the people who own the 80 acres south of the park that if they ever wanted to sell, we would be interested. That 80 acres was part of the original 160 that Carl Roethke owned when he built the park before it was owned by Thomas Township.

Due to the erosion run off into the pond, the depth has decreased. With winter temperatures along with shallow depths, the pond to freezes through and the fish to die off. To remedy this problem from happening again, the pond needs to be dredged. The pond has since been restocked with fish. Our catch and release fishing pond is one of the favorite past times of visitors and day campers.

Another project that needs to be addressed is to add a basement to the park's depot building to serve as a storm shelter along with an addition to the train garage. With having two trains, the garage is full not allowing for much room to work on repairs. This is a much-needed safety precaution that needs to be added to our park. Currently the park's pool house is the designated storm shelter located over 100 feet away, which is a safety issue when we have our day campers (children 12 years of age and younger) located in the depot building. More room is needed in the train barn to allow for our train mechanic to have the proper space to safely and effectively work on our trains.

The popularity of the pool has brought up the request for a splash pad to be put into the pool area, with the closure of the pool in St Charles our pool usage has increased. With the amount of people using the park for swimming, day camp and special events we need to repair our current parking lot and expand it. During busy days our visitors have to park on Leddy Road and walk into the park which is not safe for the elderly or small children.

Roberts Park

Roberts Park is our sports park featuring a new soccer complex that was built in 2015 consisting of a large pavilion, restrooms, garage and concession stand. Roberts Park has 3 full size soccer fields, 4 softball diamonds, walking trails, disc golf course, sand volleyball, 3 pavilions and the Thomas Township Farmers Market. In 2018 we purchased the Shields Men's Club which adjoined the park. This property consisted of a very large pavilion, garage and bathroom building. The property also has a large grass field used for parking.

The next identified enhancements needed are, a large pavilion at the north end of the park, more walking trails, dog park, expansion to the Thompson Memorial Disc Golf Course, a splash park, a bridge over the pond and age-appropriate play areas by soccer fields.

Linear Park (Thomas Trail)

In 2013 the Thomas Trail was constructed connecting Thomas Township to the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail System. The trail is very popular and highly used. It hosts the Thomas Township Trailblazer 5K run walk used as a fund raiser for the trail system. In 2018 we

added .83 miles of trail from Shields Drive North along the Consumers Right of Way to North Miller Road. In 2017 Roberts Park trails were all connected to the Thomas Trail.

Day Park

The Day Park is our open space Park with a footprint of 4 acres. We want to keep this Park area primarily for activities that need open space. The parks' sledding hill is a major attraction come winter as sledding areas are hard to find. In 2010 we added two small picnic table pavilions near the parking lot. In 2014 we added two parking lot street lights due to the amount of people using the sledding hill in the dark during winter. We would like to add a small playscape to this park.

Community Park

Community Park is located just behind the Township offices. Community Park was redone in 2024 as part of the townships new municipality building project. The park has been relocated south across the parking lot and features a full-size outdoor basketball court, 6 pickleball courts, and 2 separate play equipment zones dedicated to ages 0 – 5 years of age and 5+ years of age. There is a sidewalk that runs through the middle of the park with a drinking fountain and benches. The sidewalk will eventually connect to nearby restaurants and picnic areas located just south of the park

The archery program has become a huge success and the construction of an indoor archery range at this park was also recommended. We would also like to turn the old parks office into a room to hold fitness classes, senior programs, and arts and crafts programs.

Nature Preserve

The Township purchased 67 acres from Saginaw County in 2012 for the purpose of creating a Nature Preserve with walking trails, elevated board walks, rustic canoe/kayak launch and some fishing platforms along the Tittabawassee River.

In 2018 the Township purchased the Heritage Insurance Building for the purpose of creating a Nature Center. This building was built across the Reinke Drain for the purpose of access the 67 acres located behind it which we purchased in 2012. we now have access for our residents and guest to enter the park with the renovations to the building. The plan for the Nature Center building is to be a nature education center, history center and possible STEM programming with regional schools. In 2019 an additional 13 acres was acquired along the North side of the property to make it the 85 acres it is today.

A kayak launch was installed in 2024 by the parking area. The demand for a canoe/boat launch along the river has been needed for years as there is not boat launch in Thomas Township for residents to use or for our Fire and Rescue Squads to access the river in emergencies, we feel this was a great addition to the Nature Preserve property.

We are working on a 2021 Trust Fund Grant to add additional trails and seating areas as well as fishing platforms and viewing areas for park users to enjoy. The hope is to have this project complete in the spring of 2025.

Additional Park land

Acquiring Park land north of Gratiot Road was important to residents according to a survey we sent out and we hope to add parks in that area. Possible concepts are playscapes, baseball fields and walking trails.

VII. PLAN REVIEW AND ADOPTION

This section is intended to provide a review of the plan and its proposed actions. It also documents the fact the Thomas Township Board of Trustees, the Township Planning Commission and the Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Commission did actively engage in the process to prepare and approve a recreation plan for the residents of Thomas Township.

ACTION PLAN REVIEW

Roethke Park

1. Build addition on Depot building and train garage.
2. Dredge pond
3. Resurface and expand parking lot
4. Build a splash park
5. Elevated board walks for trails in wet areas
6. Add more playscapes/play equipment

Roberts Park

1. Add age-appropriate play structures by soccer fields
2. Add bridge over pond
3. Build additional parking area/expand existing parking area.
4. Dog park
5. Build a splash park
6. Disc Golf Course Expansion with shade structure and restrooms

Day Park

1. Add play area/structure

Community Park

1. Build archery/multi use building
2. Build a restroom facility

Thomas Trail (Linear Park)

1. Continue trail north to connect with Tittabawassee Township trail system and the Iron Bell Train System. The route we are considering is along North River Road to Tittabawassee Road.

Wildlife preserve/Nature Center

1. Stem Tree House
2. High Ropes Course
3. Outdoor Amphitheater area
4. Create wildlife habitat areas
5. Repair dike around Nature Preserve
6. Boat Launch

Dice and River Roadside Park

1. Add deck for viewing river, observation area
2. Add stairs or path to river edge
3. Add more parking
4. Install bike racks and tables

Frost and River Roadside Park

1. Add deck for viewing river, observation area
2. Add stairs or path to river edge
3. Add more parking
4. Install bike racks and tables

Additional Park Land

1. Acquire Park land north of Gratiot Road
2. Install parking and play equipment

Capital Improvement Schedule 2024/25-2029/30

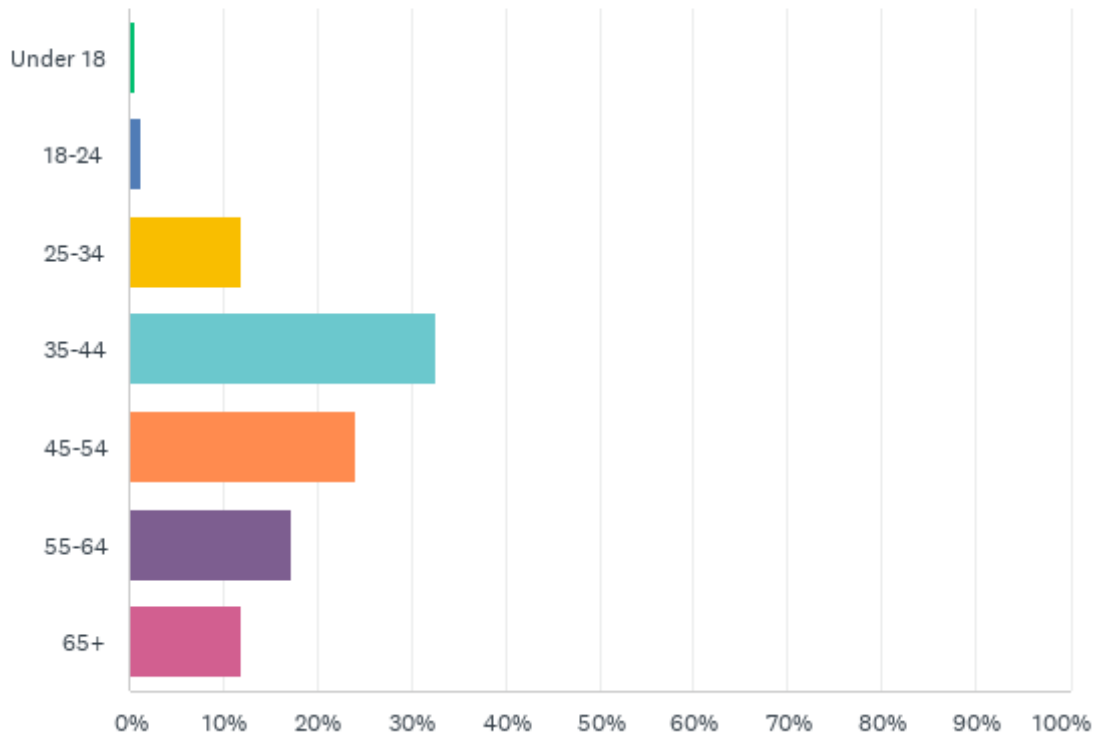
Capital Improvement Project Summary

General Fund Parks & Recreation

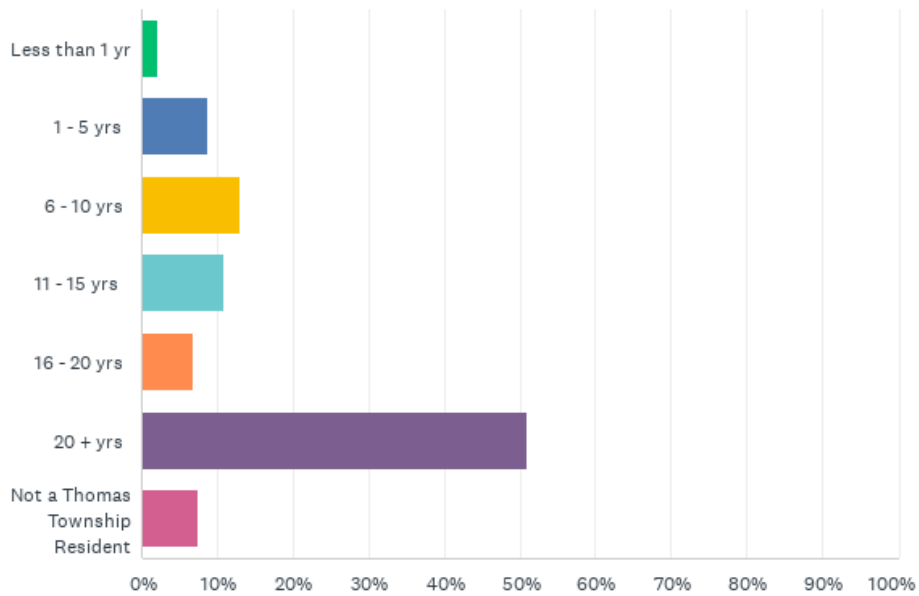
Project Number/Description	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	TOTAL
1 Roberts Park Playscape		\$35,000					\$35,000
2 Land Purchase Trinklien for Roberts		\$56,000					\$56,000
3							
4							\$0
5							\$0
6							\$0
TOTALS	\$0	\$91,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$91,000
General Fund		\$50,120					\$50,120
Federal/State Grants		\$40,880					\$40,880
Donations/local grants/in kind services							\$0
Parks Capital Improvement Fund							\$0
Thomas Township Parks Association							\$0
Park Fund General Operating							\$0
NRDA FUNDS							\$0
General Fund Reserved for Prop. Purchase							\$0
TOTALS	\$0	\$91,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$91,000

APPENDIX H

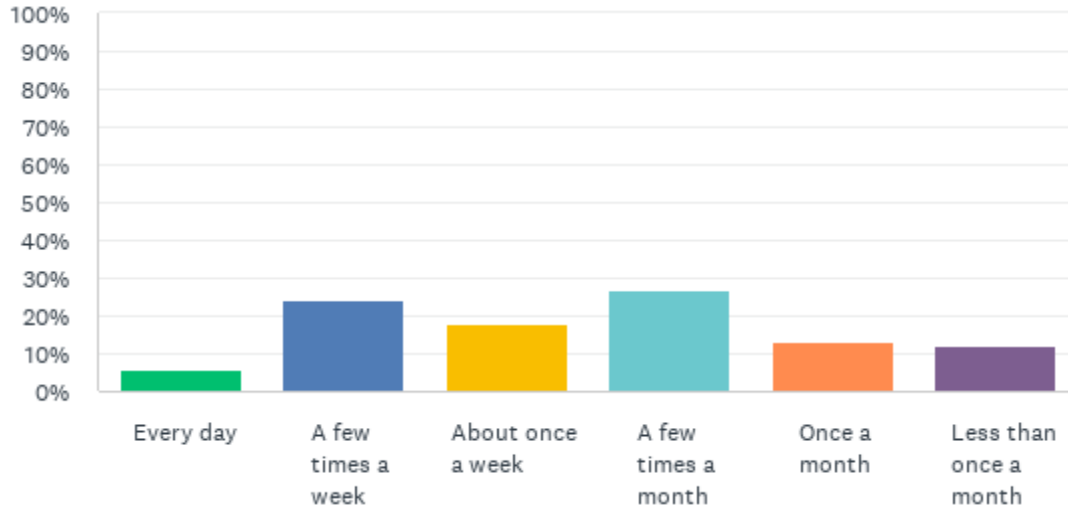
Q1 What is your age?



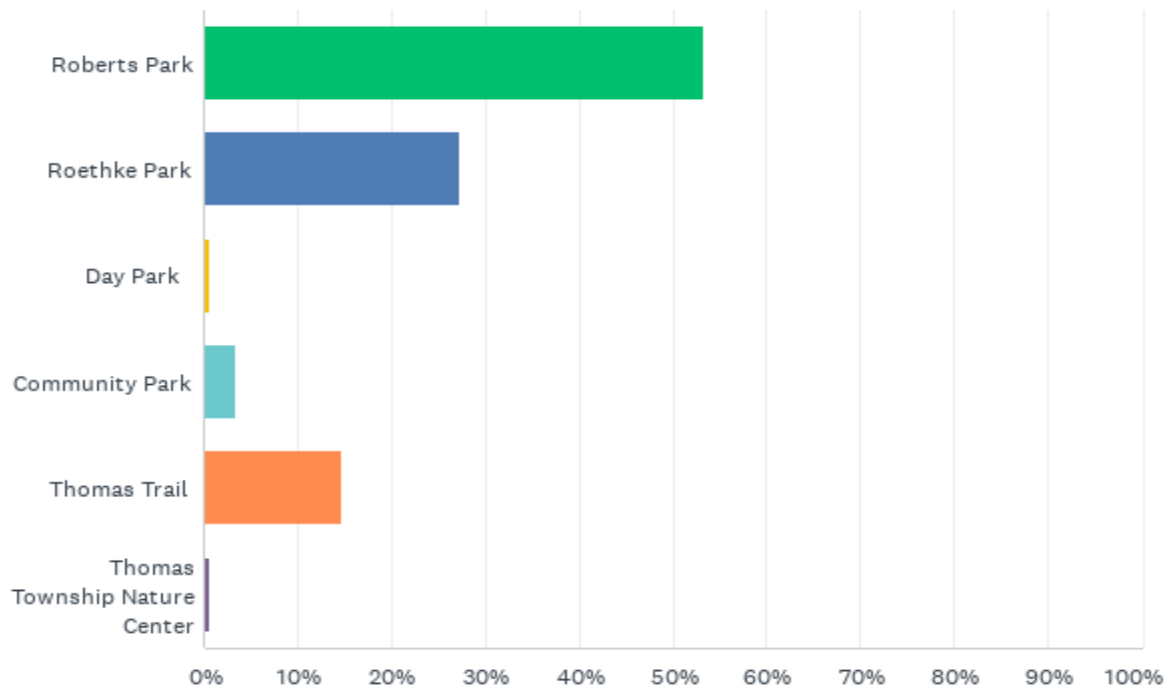
Q2 How many years have you lived in Thomas Township?



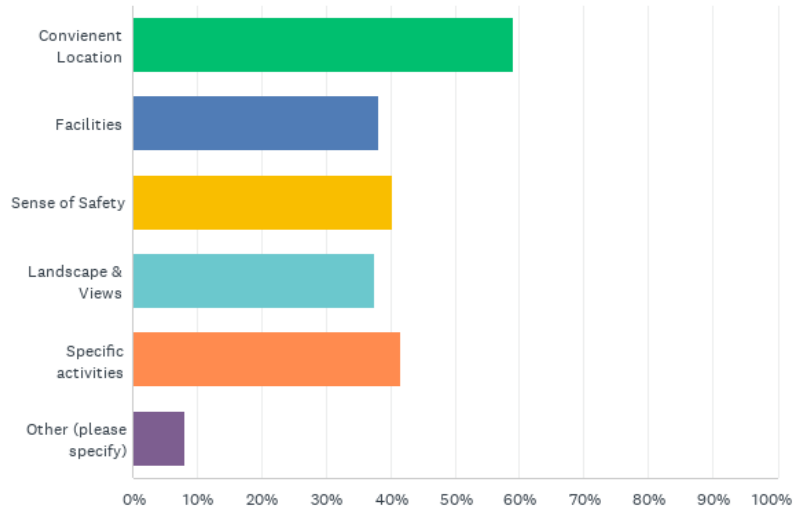
Q3 How often do you visit Thomas Township Parks?



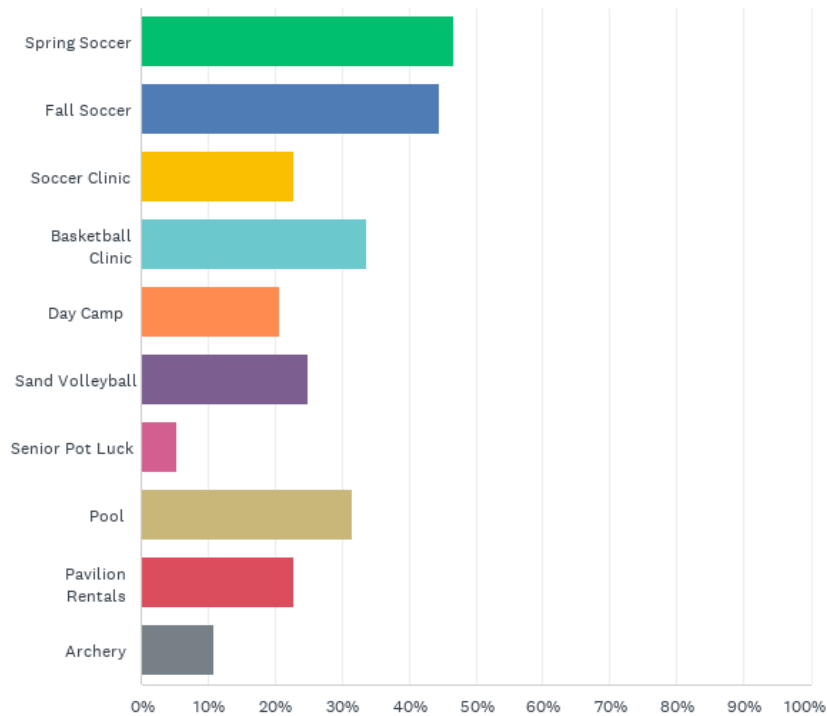
Q4 Which Thomas Township Park do you visit the most?



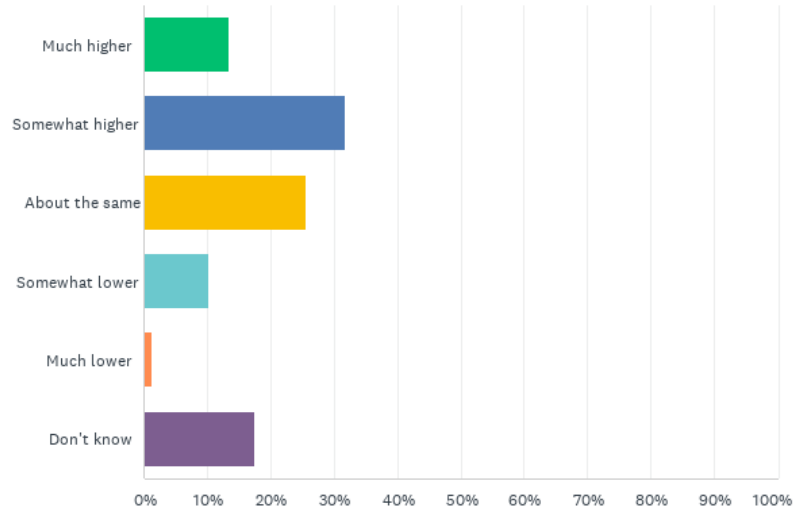
Q5 Which of the following is the biggest factor impacting your decision to visit Thomas Township Parks? Please select all that apply



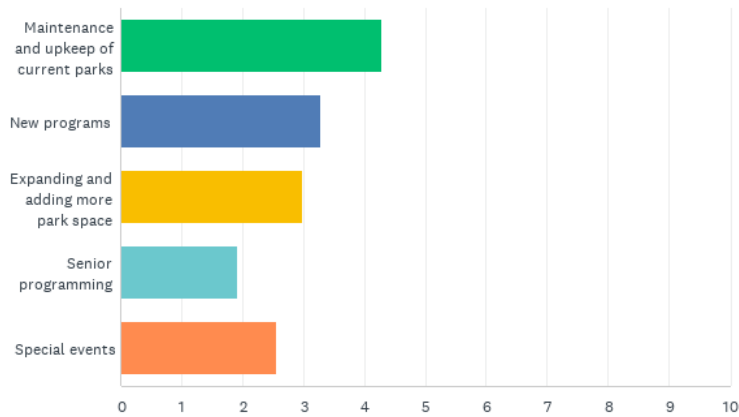
Q6 Please Indicate all of the Thomas Township programs you or members of your household have participated in during the past 12 months.



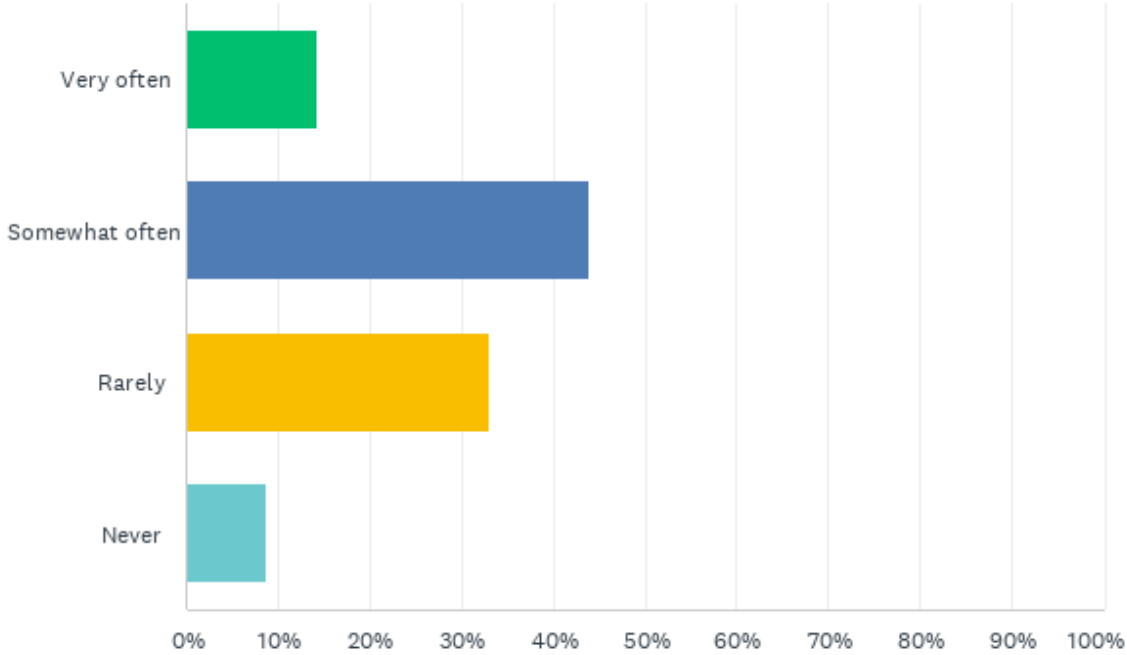
Q7 Compared to other communities how would you rank Thomas Township Recreation programs?



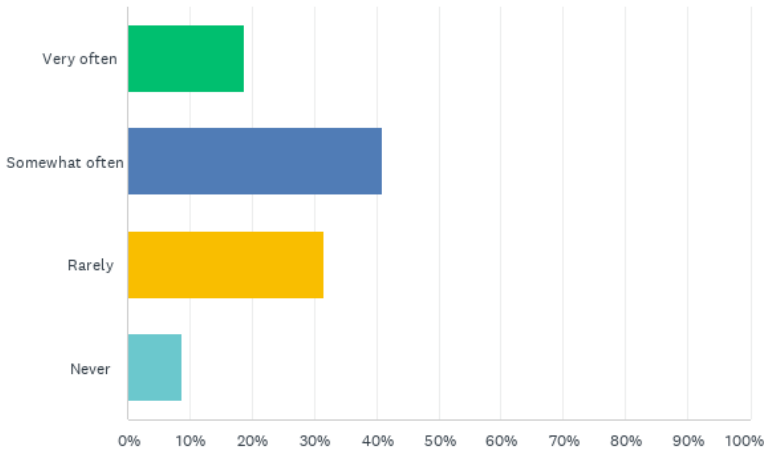
Q8 What should be the priorities of the Thomas Township Parks & Recreation Department over the next 5 years?



Q9 How often do you utilize the Thomas Township website?



Q10 How often do you utilize the Thomas Township Parks & Recreation Facebook page?



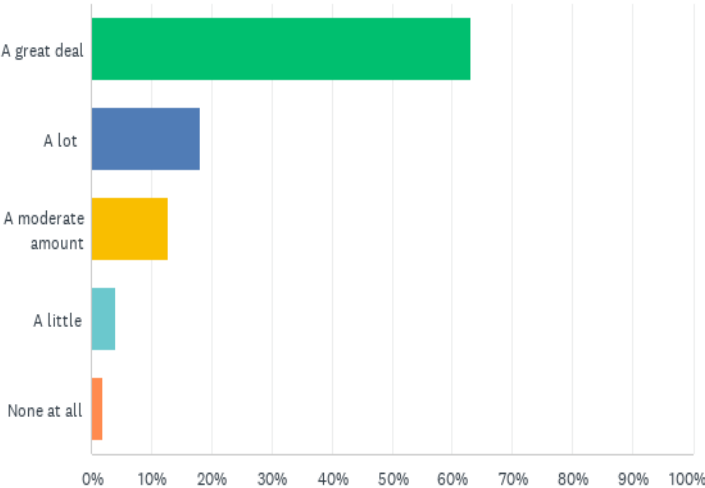
Q11

What programs or activities not currently offered would you like to see Thomas Township Parks & Recreation add?

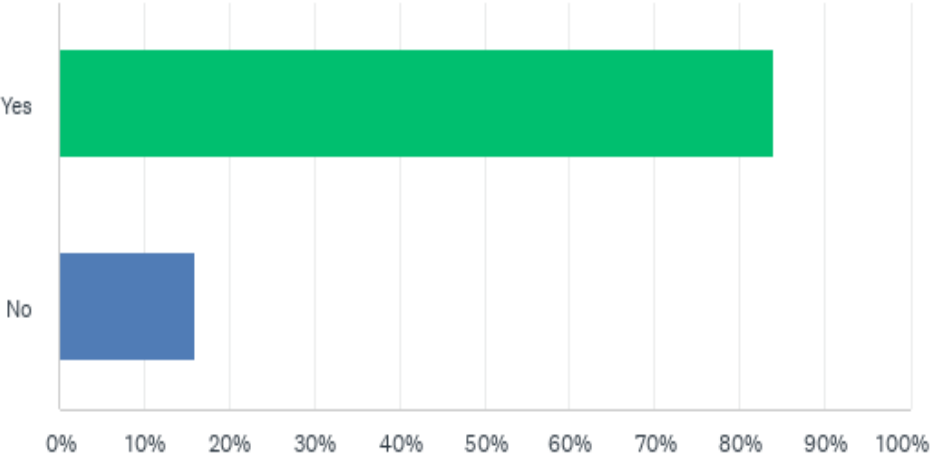
Senior activities x 9
Splash pad x 10
Dog park area x 7
More playground equipment at parks x 5
Full 18 Disc Golf x 4
More yoga
Meditation
Outdoor fitness park Fire pits
Animal tracks or habitat signs on the Rail Trail. Family
Scavenger Hunts through our parks where you take pictures or geocaching. Do we have Disc Golf yet?
Expansion of Thomas Trail system
Pickleball lessons
golf cart usage of trails
Craft or art classes
Maybe special events per season?
Football camp
More bathrooms at pickleball court
Rock wall
7th and 8th grade soccer!
Adult Flag Football.
Fine with what is currently offered.
Boat rentals at Roethke Park
I'd like to see more programs for kids that have to do with science and nature in a hands-on learning space
More child centered activities or fun events
Kids days - similar to Hayes Park in Freeland.
Skeet shooting

Night soccer games
Bring back more 🏠 🕒 hours.
Shuffleboard
Safer road crossings on the trail. More safety lights in the evenings.
Utilize the baseball and softball fields for tournaments.
Maybe add a set of horseshoe pits
tournament cornhole.
Bigger and improved community pool. Workout facility.
Outdoor fitness area.
Lacrosse
Community picnics
Satisfied with what we have
Adult rec leagues, maybe a kickball league?
I feel you do a great job
Kickball
3D Archery program
New pool locker rooms and pool updated
group fitness
Adult sport leagues
More infant/baby options
One-time daytime events, nature based in the park.
Guided hikes. More evening events at the nature center.
Kids triathlon

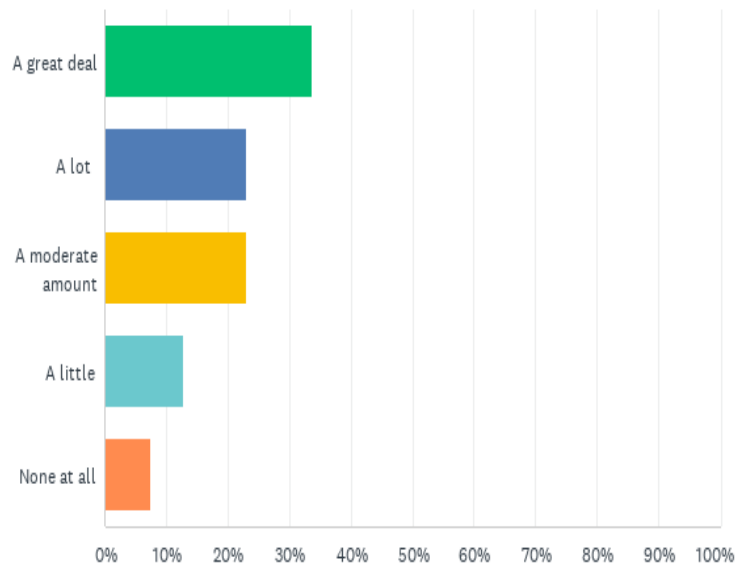
Q12 How do you feel the addition of the Thomas Township Farmers Market has been to the community?



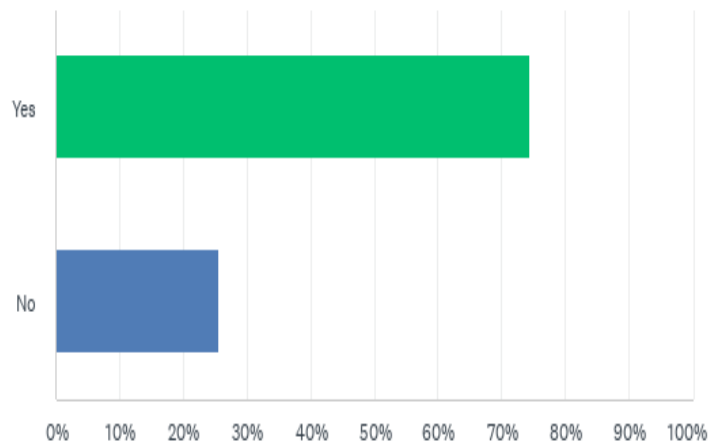
Q13 Have you attended the Thomas Township Farmers Market?



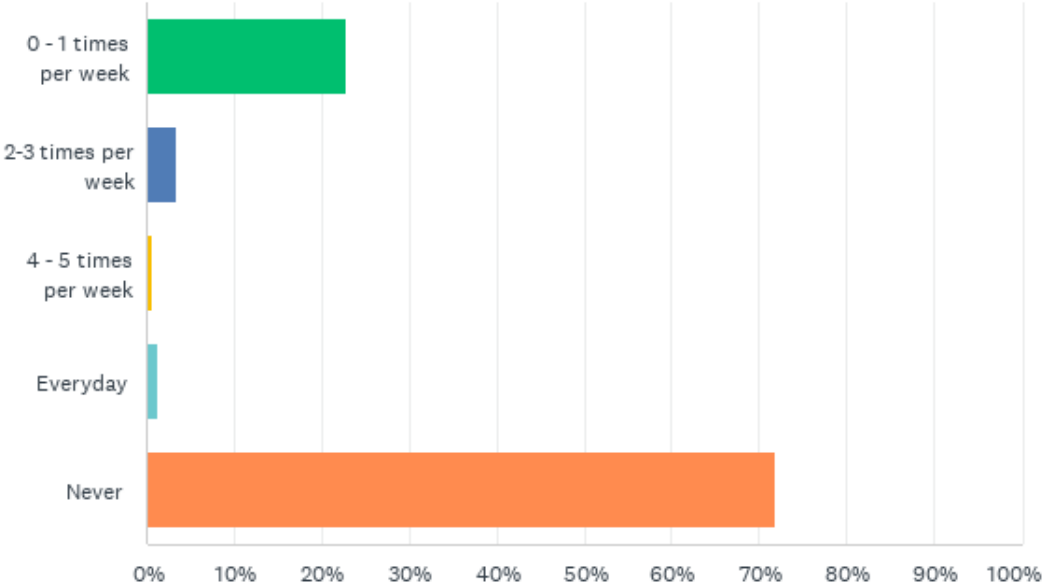
Q14 How do you feel the addition of the Thomas Township Nature Center & Preserve has been to the community and surrounding region?



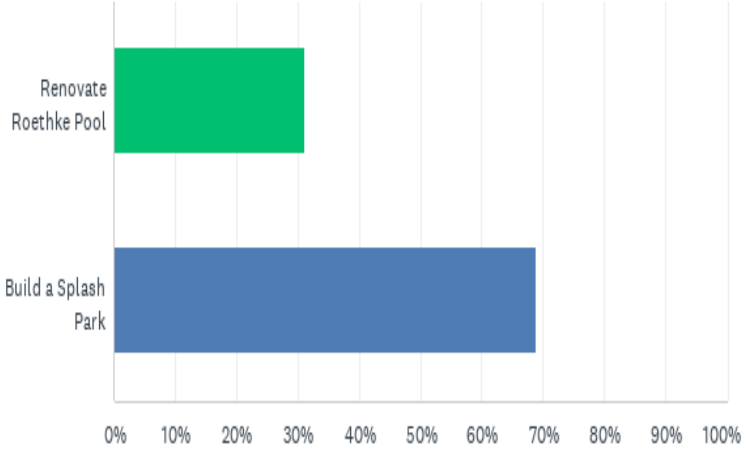
Q15 Have you visited or plan to visit the Thomas Township Nature Center & Preserve?



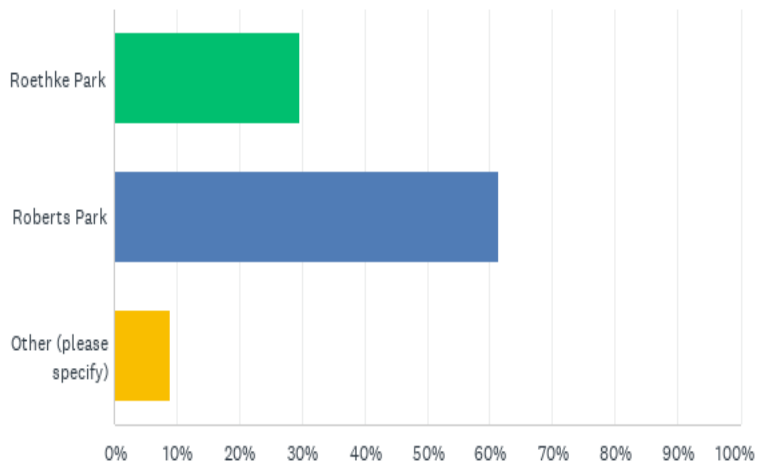
Q16 How many times per week do you visit the Roethke Pool?



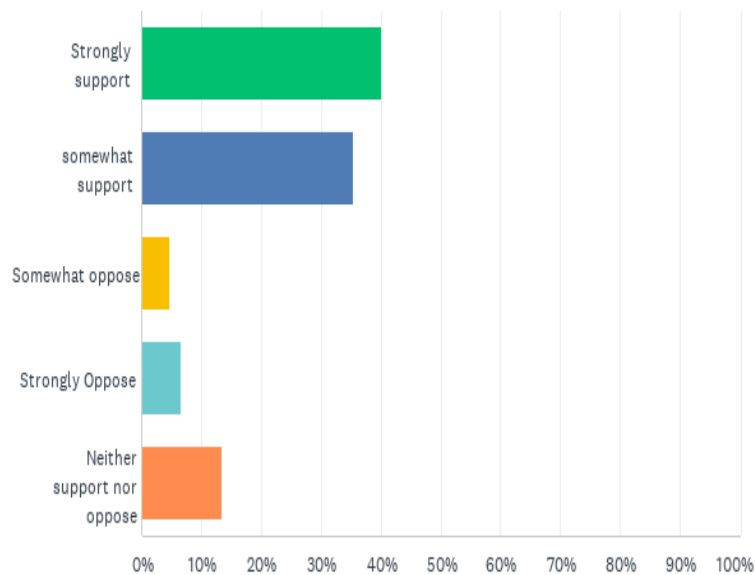
Q17 Would you like to see Thomas Township renovate the Roethke Pool or build a Splash Park in the Township?



Q18 Where do you feel would be the best location of a Splash Park if Thomas Township Parks & Recreation were to build one?



Q19 Due to the limited township parks budget, would you support a dedicated millage which would be used solely to ensure ongoing programming and facility maintenance in the parks?



Appendix I

Public Notices

0010909030-01

Ad Content Proof

Public Notices for Review of 5-Year Recreation Plan and

Public Hearing Notice for 5 year Recreation Plan

(Thomas Township, Mich) – The Thomas Townships Parks and Recreation Commission would like to announce that the Thomas Township five-year recreation plan draft is available for public review and comment starting on September 5th, 2024 through October 28th, 2024. The plan can be reviewed on the Thomas Township website www.thomastwp.org or at the Thomas Township Offices located at 249 North Miller Road. The 5-year Recreation Plan guides us on decisions to be made over the next five years regarding the parks and recreational programs operated by Thomas Township Parks and Recreation. This plan has to be submitted and accepted by the MDNR in order to be eligible for recreational grants. Concerns and comments are encouraged and can be made at a public review meeting on October 28th from 2:00 pm – 6:00pm at the Public Safety Board room located at 8215 Shields Dr. Saginaw, MI 48609 or at the 6:30 pm Parks Commission meeting on October 28th, 2024 at the Public Safety Board room located at 8215 Shields Dr. Saginaw, MI 48609 or in writing to the Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Director at 249 North Miller Road, Saginaw MI 48609 or emailed to Park1@thomastwp.org by October 28th 2024 at 5pm.

Public Hearing Notice
Thomas Township Board will be holding a Public Hearing for the Thomas Township 5-year Recreation plan on November 4th 2024. The purpose of this hearing is to allow residents to discuss and talk about the proposed plan with the Parks and Recreation Director and members of the Thomas Township Board. The board meeting will be located at the Thomas Township Public Safety Building located 8215 Shields Drive, 48609. Thomas Township will provide necessary reasonable

auxiliary aids and services to any individuals with disabilities who plan to attend this public meeting. Persons interested in such services need to contact the Thomas Township Manager's offices at 249 N. Miller Road, Saginaw, Michigan 48609, by phone at 989-781-0150, or by fax at 989-781-0290 at least five (5) working days prior to the meeting. In the case that advanced notice for accommodations is not possible, every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate the disabled.

Confidential Notice: This facsimile is intended only for its addressee and may contain information that is privileged, confidential or otherwise protected from disclosure. Dissemination, distribution or copying of this facsimile or the information by anyone other than the intended recipient is prohibited. If you have received this facsimile in error, please notify us immediately and return the facsimile by mail.

9/3/2024

11:16AM



Thomas Township
Saginaw County Michigan
249 North Miller Rd
989.781.0151
www.thomastwp.org

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC REVIEW
THOMAS TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION
DRAFT 2025 – 2030 5 YEAR PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

The Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Commission would like to announce that the Thomas Township Parks and Recreation 5-year Recreation Plan draft is available for public review and comment starting September 5th 2024. The plan can be reviewed on the Thomas Township website www.thomastwp.org, and at the Thomas Township Municipal offices located at 249 N. Miller Rd. The 5-year rec plan guides Thomas Township Parks and Recreation department on decisions to be made over the next 5 years regarding the parks and recreational programs. This plan is to be submitted and accepted by the Michigan DNR in order to be eligible for parks and recreational grants.

The Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Department will hold a public review on Monday, October 28th 2024 from 2:00p.m. to 6:00p.m. at the Thomas Township Public Safety Building, 8215 Shields Drive, Saginaw, MI 48609. This meeting is a chance for citizens to comment on the Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Draft 5 Year Recreation Plan for the years 2025 – 2030.

Thomas Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services to any individuals with disabilities who plan to attend this public meeting. Persons interested in such services need to contact the Thomas Township Manager's offices at 249 N. Miller Road, Saginaw, Michigan 48609, by phone at 989-781-0151, or by fax at 989-781-0290 at least five (5) working days prior to the meeting. In the case that advanced notice for accommodations is not possible, every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate the disabled.

Date Posted: September 4th, 2024



Thomas Township
Saginaw County Michigan
249 North Miller Rd
989.781.0151
www.thomastwp.org

**PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
THOMAS TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION
DRAFT 2025 – 2030 5 YEAR PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN**

Thomas Township Board of Trustees will be holding a public hearing on Monday, November 4th 2024 at 7:00p.m. located at the Thomas Township Public Safety Building, 8215 Shields Drive, Saginaw, MI 48609. The Public Hearing is a chance for citizens to comment on the Thomas Township Parks and Recreation Draft 5 Year Recreation Plan for the years 2025 – 2030.

Thomas Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services to any individuals with disabilities who plan to attend this public meeting. Persons interested in such services need to contact the Thomas Township Manager's offices at 249 N. Miller Road, Saginaw, Michigan 48609, by phone at 989-781-0151, or by fax at 989-781-0290 at least five (5) working days prior to the meeting. In the case that advanced notice for accommodations is not possible, every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate the disabled.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michael Thayer, Clerk

Date Posted: September 4th, 2024

Resolution Planning Commission

Resolution Park Commission

Resolution Board of Trustees