

The Township of Port Austin, Michigan

Parks & Recreation Plan
For the Period 2024-2029



Port Austin Reef Light

Adopted: **Date, 2024**

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Plan Adoption

Section I



Waterfront Park Sunset View

Plan Adoption

Township Board Meeting Minutes

Copy of
Township Board Meeting Minutes
Documenting Plan approval

DRAFT 1/16/2024

Port Austin Township

Parks and Recreation Plan

Resolution of Adoption

WHEREAS, the Township of Port Austin has undertaken a planning process to determine the recreation and natural resource conservation needs and desires of its residents during a five-year period covering the years 2024 through 2029, and

WHEREAS, the Port Austin Township Board is made up of representatives from the Township and Village of Port Austin, and

WHEREAS, the Port Austin Township Planning Commission began the process of developing a community recreation and natural resource conservation plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities, and

WHEREAS, residents of the Township were provided with a well-advertised opportunity during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the recreation and natural resource conservation plan, and

WHEREAS, the public was given a well-advertised opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the final draft plan for a period of at least 30 days, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on (date) at the Port Austin Township Hall to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the Port Austin Township recreation and natural resource conservation plan, and

WHEREAS, the Port Austin Township Planning Commission has developed the plan as a guideline for improving recreation and enhancing natural resource conservation for the Township, and

WHEREAS, after the public hearing, the Port Austin Township Board voted to adopt said recreation and natural resource conservation plan.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Port Austin Township Board hereby adopts the Port Austin Township Parks and Recreation Plan.

Yeas:
Nays:
Absent:

I, (name), (title), do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and original copy of a resolution adopted by the Port Austin Township Board at a Regular/Special Meeting thereof held on the (___ day of _____, 20__.) <> (signature and title)

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given that the Township of Port Austin will be conducting a Public Hearing on **Date** at 5:00 pm in the Port Austin Township Hall, 8751 N. Hellems Rd., Port Austin, Michigan.

This hearing is scheduled to consider adopting a Five Year Recreation Plan. This Plan must be approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources prior to submitting grant applications. The Plan may be viewed at the Township Hall beginning on **Date**.

Comments are welcome in person or in writing.

For more information, please call the Township Hall at (989) 738-6808

Debra Hubbard

Port Austin Township Clerk

Plan Adoption

Letter to Huron County Michigan Planning Commission

Date

William Renn, Chairman
Huron County Planning Commission
250 East Huron Avenue
Room #102
Bad Axe, Michigan 48413

Subject: Port Austin Township Parks & Recreation Plan

Dear Mr. Renn,

The Port Austin Township Parks & Recreation Plan was recommended by the Port Austin Township Planning Commission on **DATE**, and adopted by the Port Austin Township Board on **DATE**, by authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, after holding a public hearing for this Plan on **DATE, 2024**.

Signed: _____
Title

Copy: Mary E. Babcock
866 Bayview Dr.
Port Austin, Michigan 48467

Plan Adoption

Letter to East Michigan Council of Governments

Date

Sue Fortune, Executive Director
East Michigan Council of Governments
3144 Davenport Avenue
Suite 200
Saginaw, Michigan 48602

Subject: Port Austin Township Parks & Recreation Plan

Dear Ms. Fortune,

The Port Austin Township Parks & Recreation Plan was recommended by the Port Austin Township Planning Commission on DATE, and adopted by the Port Austin Township Board on DATE, by authority of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, after holding a public hearing for this Plan on DATE.

Signed: _____
Title

Copy: sfortune@emcog.org



Plan Adoption

Submission to Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Five-year Recreation Plans and plan amendments must be submitted to DNR Grants Management through the online application system, MiGrants, found at:

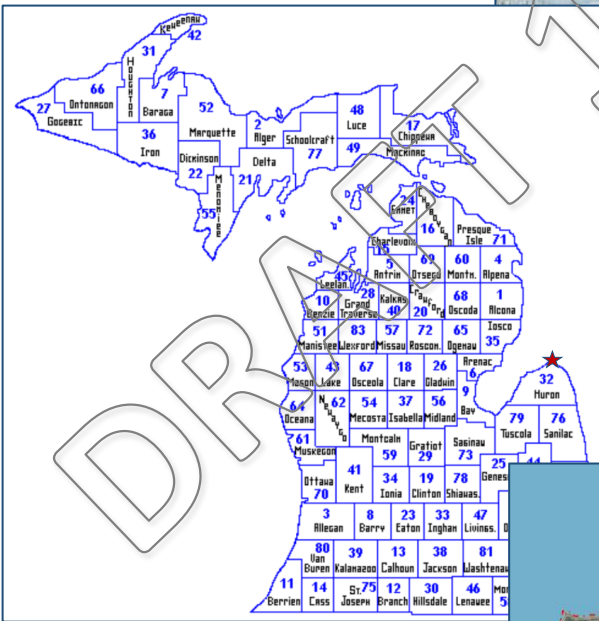
MiGrants.Intelligrants.com.

Submission due by February 1

DRAFT 1/16/2024

Community Profile

Section II



Community Profile

Port Austin Township Overview

The Township of Port Austin is located at the “tip of the thumb” in Michigan’s Huron County, as illustrated on “Map A”. The Township is bordered by Lake Huron to the east and west. It encompasses both Grindstone City to the east, and the Village of Port Austin to the west. Along the Lake Huron shoreline, the Township features residential homes and summer cottages in a quiet rural setting.

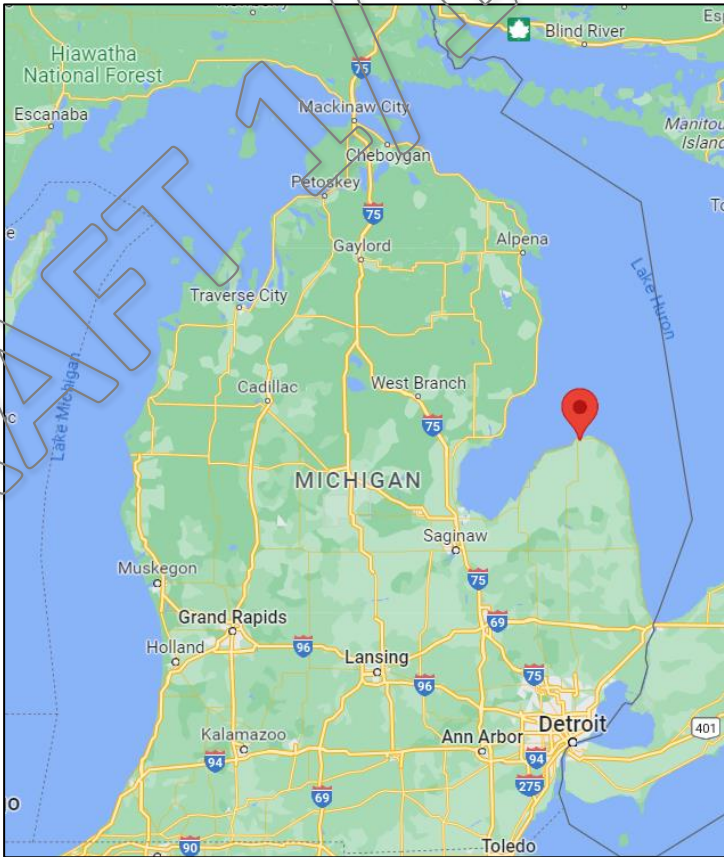
Perimeter access to the Township is provided by State of Michigan Highway M-25. The highway originates sixty-five miles to the southwest in Bay City and continues 100 miles along the shoreline to Port Huron. North/south access is supplied by M-53, originating in Detroit, approximately 130 miles to the south.

The region was initially populated by lumbermen and farmers. As the lumber industry moved on, the agriculture industry expanded and a tourist economy emerged. Due in part to its geographic location, Port Austin became an ideal setting for a resort and retirement community. The Township and its surrounding shoreline are especially well-suited for vacation, seasonal, and year-round lifestyles.

Community Profile

Port Austin Township

Map "A"

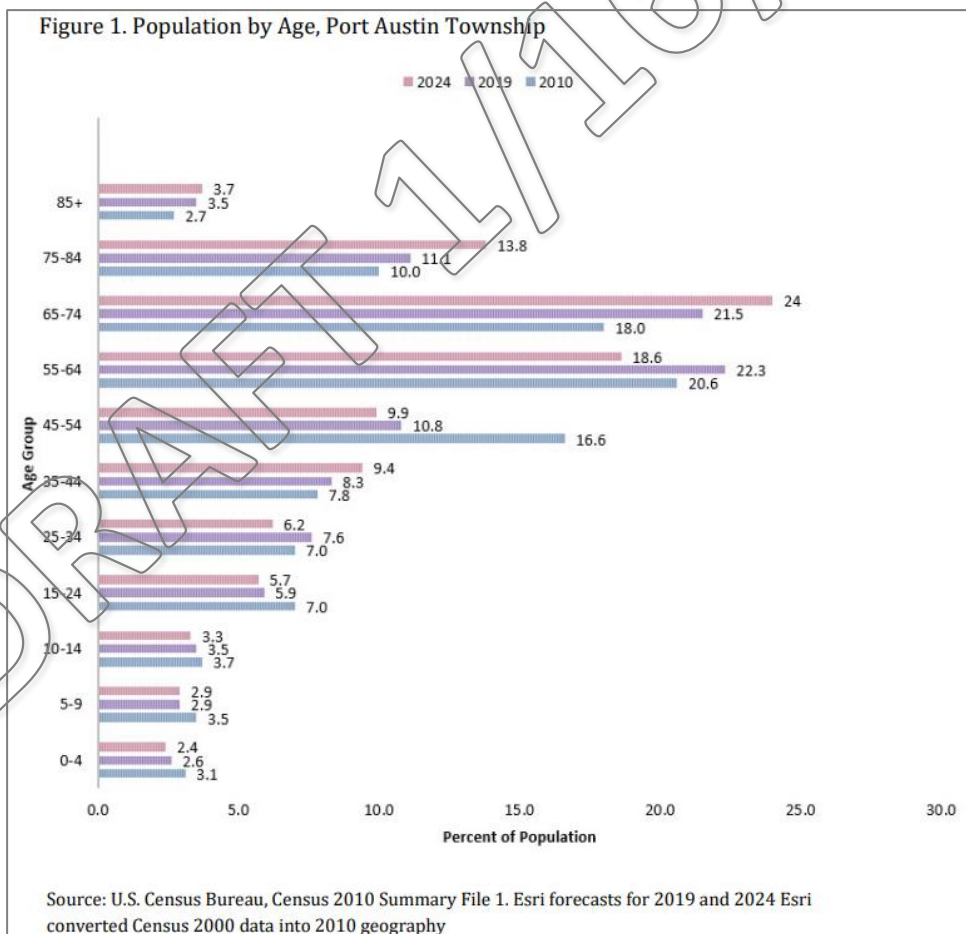


Community Profile

Social Characteristics

A major consideration in the development of a recreation plan is to know the character of the community. The following chart reflects permanent residents of Port Austin Township. It does not reflect the seasonal population that occupies summer dwellings, nor does it include transient population.

The 2019 population of the Township was 1385, with a median age of 59.3. The age distribution is detailed in Figure 1 below. The Township has 1602 housing units with average of 1.93 family members per household. The median household income was \$45,136.



Community Profile

Physical Characteristics

The land use of Port Austin Township is denoted in the following Zoning Map “B”, while the Village zoning districts are detailed on Map “C”. The future land use for the Township as defined in the Master Plan is exhibited on Map “D”. Development is both public and private in nature.

One can describe Port Austin Township topography as flat to gently rolling. The steepest slopes tend to be along the shoreline. Elevations range from lake level at 577 feet above sea level to 623 feet within a short distance. Inland topography of the Township appears as low, flat grasslands and cultivated fields. The shoreline is interspersed with woodlands, sandy beaches, rocky shores, water features and wetlands. These characteristics are illustrated on Map “E”.

Topsoil is a combination of sand, gravel, clay and loam. Channels of sand are several miles wide in places, and can be five to ten feet thick. Sandstone beneath the soils are forty to 300 feet beneath the surface.

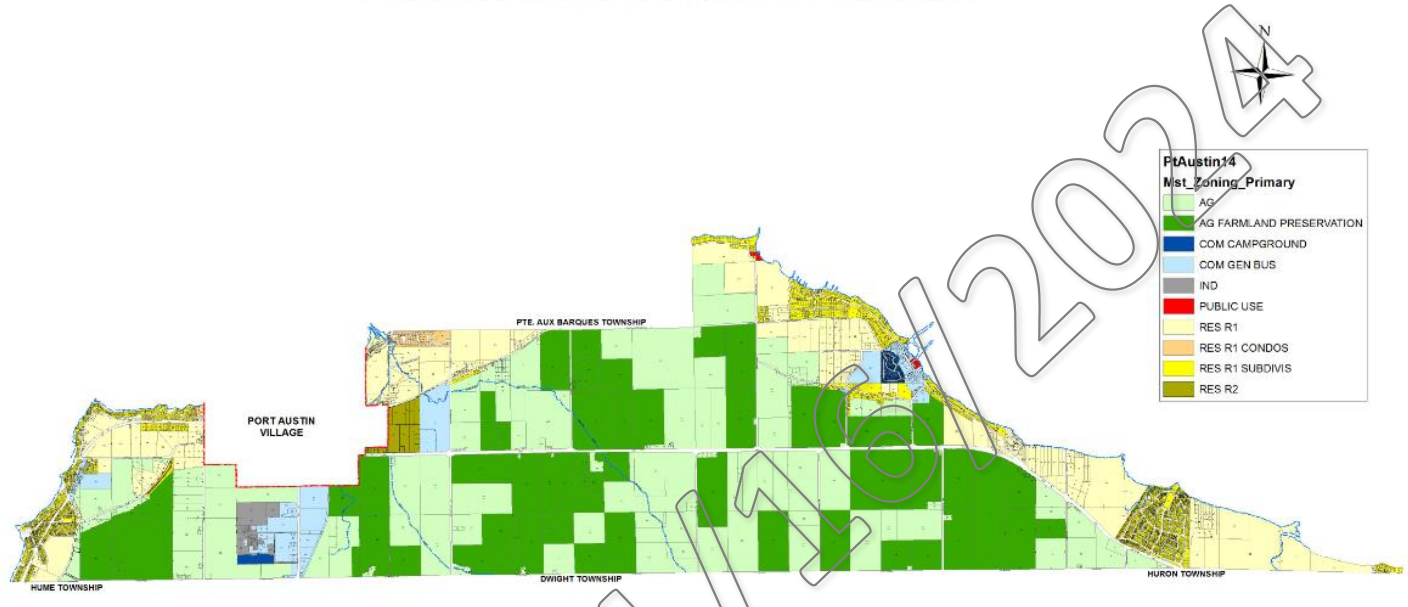
Climate in the Township has a full range of seasons, with temperatures ranging from approximately 16 to 29 degrees Fahrenheit in January and 60 to 79 degrees in July. The average number of days below zero degrees is eleven per year, and above 90 is eight. Average annual rainfall is approximately 31 inches and snow is about 48 inches.

Community Profile

Physical Characteristics

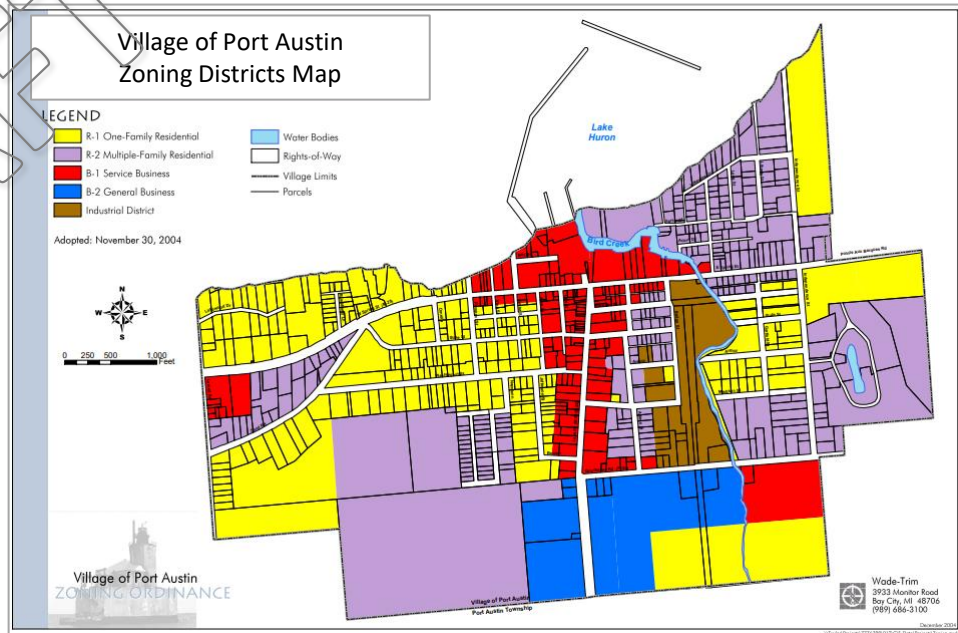
Map "B"

PORT AUSTIN TOWNSHIP ZONING



PREPARED BY:
Huron County Equalization/GIS Department
Bad Axe, Michigan

Map "C"



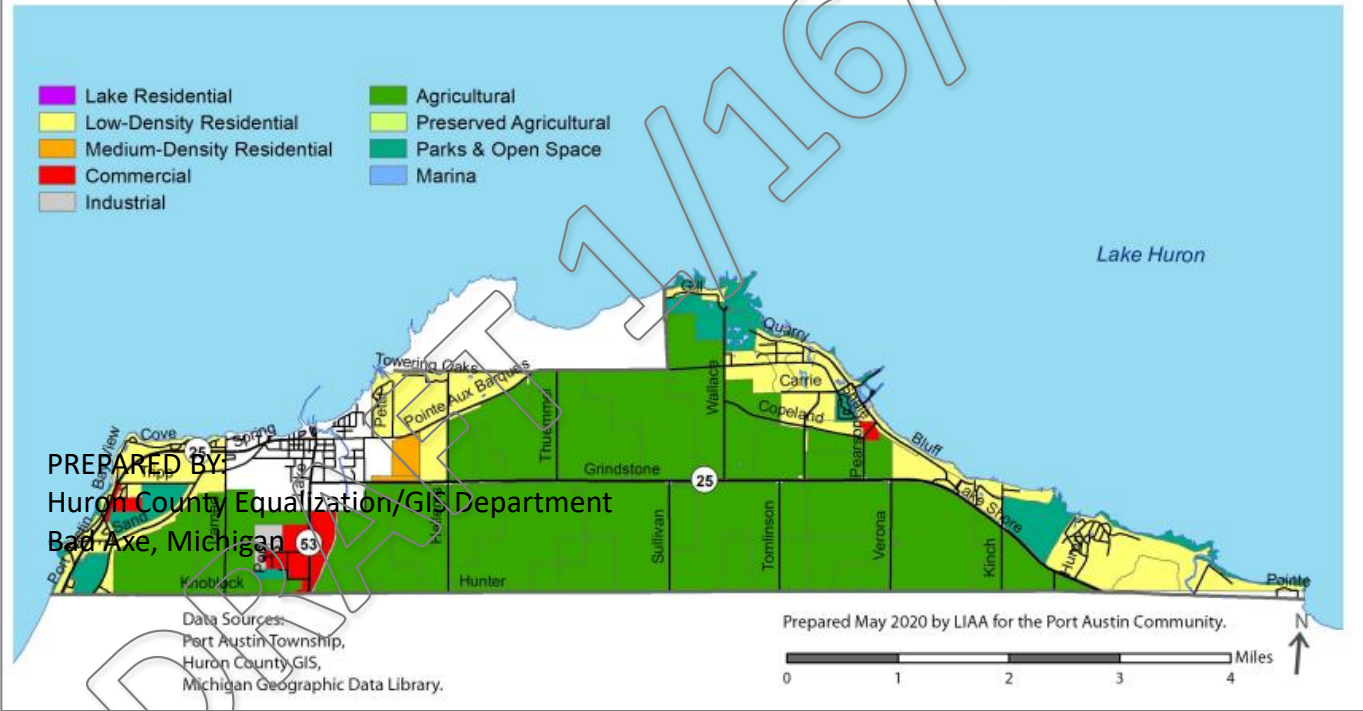
Community Profile

Physical Characteristics

Map "D"

Port Austin Township 2023 Master Plan

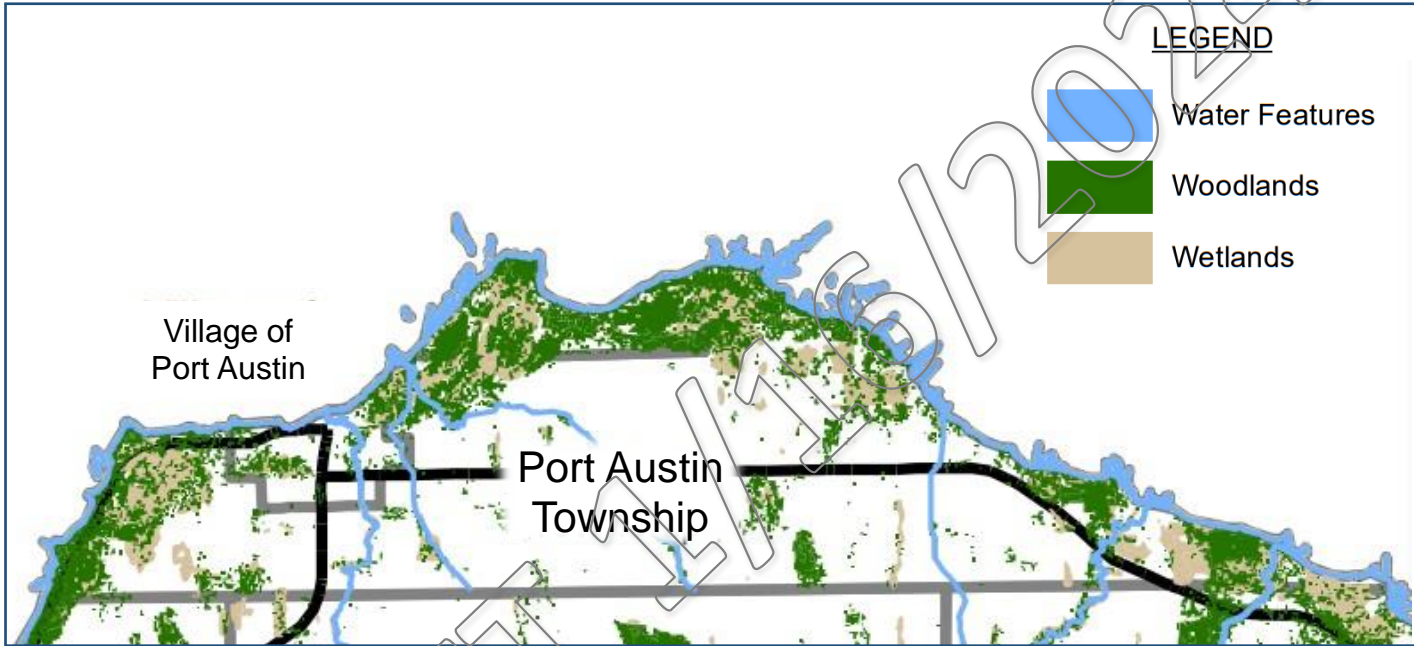
Future Land Use Map






Community Profile

Natural Features

Map "E"



LEGEND

-  Water Features
-  Woodlands
-  Wetlands

Village of
Port Austin

Port Austin
Township

Source:
Michigan Geographic Data Library

Spicer
group

SAGINAW'S OFFICE
230 S Washington Ave
Saginaw, MI 48607
Tel. 989-754-4747
www.SpicerGroup.com

Date

November 2019

Administrative Structure

Section III



Administrative Structure

Port Austin Township is administered by an elected Supervisor and five elected trustees, collectively comprising the Township Board. The Board meets monthly at the Township Hall. The five-member Planning Commission is appointed by the Board and schedules five regular meetings during the year.

The Treasurer prepares a budget for each fiscal year based on historical data and/or current needs and projections of all. The budget as a whole is then presented and discussed at a public hearing. Following the public hearing, the budget is reviewed and approved at a regular meeting of the Township Board.

It is the responsibility of the Treasurer and Clerk of the Township to make timely payment as approved by the Board, and for the record keeping/minutes of same.

All decisions concerning parks and recreation are made by the Township Board, based on information supplied by the Planning Commission.

Recreation Inventory

Section IV



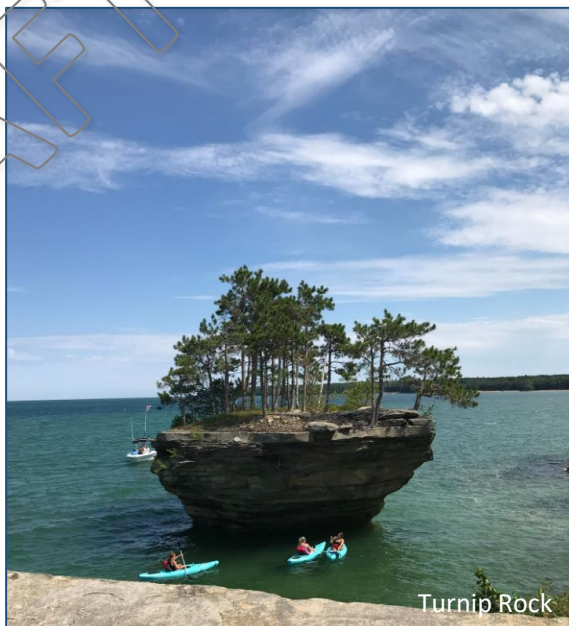
North Breakwater and
Pedestrian Walkway

Recreation Inventory

The Township is home to two County beachfront parks, two state parks, and five private campgrounds. The following is an inventory of recreation opportunities available in and around Port Austin Township. All are noted on the accompanying Location Map “F”.

NATURAL FEATURES

- Lake Huron: Known for its turquoise water, beaches, sand dunes, wetlands, forest and river systems. At the tip of the thumb, the lake is the perfect setting to enjoy incredible sunrises and sunsets. Activities for the entire family include swimming, boating, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, SCUBA diving and snorkeling.
- Turnip Rock and Thumbnail Point: This popular attraction is located just off the Lake Huron shoreline along the 103-mile Tip of the Thumb Heritage Water Trail. The layered rock eroded over thousands of years, forming its unique shape. Surrounded by private property, it is only accessible to the public by water.
- Broken Rocks Kayak Trail: Along the trail to the west, kayakers journey past the formations known as the Twin Sisters and Broken Rocks on their way to visit Flat Rock.
- Thumb Area Bottomland Preserve: Much of the eastern Port Austin Township waters are included in the 276 square mile Lake Huron preserve. Divers search for shipwrecks in excellent visibility conditions.



Recreation Inventory

HISTORY

- Grindstone Historic District: An outcropping of Marshall Sandstone can be found throughout four counties in Michigan's Thumb. At the eastern edge of the Township is Grindstone City. During the era from 1830 to 1910, Grindstone City produced the premier grinding wheels in the United States.
- Huron City Museums: The museum is located halfway between Port Austin and Port Hope Michigan. Huron City was founded by Langdon Hubbard as a lumber town in 1854. His descendants are keeping the history alive by caring for the buildings and artifacts he left behind. The museum is open for public tours in July and August.
- Port Austin History Center: Located one mile east of the Village on Pointe Aux Barques Road. The museum presents the history of the Port Austin area, including Grindstone City and Port Crescent. It is situated on ten acres of wooded grounds, and features walking trails as well as several other historic buildings; including a log cabin, log barn, a 19th century Grindstone City house, and a 1950's barbershop.
- Port Austin Reef Lighthouse: The Lighthouse is located off the shore between Port Austin and Pointe Aux Barques. The Port Austin Reef Light Association was organized in 1988 and acquired the light from the United States Coast Guard with the purpose of restoring the facility. Major restoration efforts are underway.
- Pointe Aux Barques Lighthouse: Located just southeast of the Township boundary, the lighthouse is one of the ten oldest in Michigan. It was originally constructed in 1848 of stone taken from the Lake Huron shoreline. The keeper's house and tower have been completely restored and the museum is open to the public.



Port Austin History Center



Recreation Inventory

CULTURE

- Huron County Nature Center & Wilderness Arboretum: Located west of Port Austin, between Sleeper State Park and Port Crescent State Park, the Huron County Nature Center & Wilderness Arboretum features 280 acres of preserved wilderness. The site is open year-round and offers visitors trails, bird watching and educational opportunities.
- Port Austin Artist “Bee Barn”: The Port Austin Artist in Residence (AiR) program facilitates dynamic dialogue between artists and the community, beginning with the Barn Art project. AiR created a residence for artists, through the purchase and renovation of the barn. Artists stay in the Bee Barn and create art inspired by Port Austin.
- Port Crescent Dark Sky Preserve: One of six dedicated dark sky preserves in the State. The space promotes the study of astronomy. It is an ideal place to see the northern lights, constellations, and meteor showers in addition to stars and planets.
- Water Tower Park: The park covers approximately 1.4 acres. In the fall of 2017, a butterfly house was opened, and in 2018 a community vegetable garden was installed by the North Huron High School Future Farmer’s Association. The harvest is free to community residents. Recently added to the park is an outdoor gallery of sculpture and fine art.
- Outdoor Art Installations: By reimagining the iconic barn in a creative way, visiting artists have transformed three Port Austin area barns into art installations. In addition to the barns, Port Austin also owns several pieces from the Detroit Institute of Arts Inside/Out collection. Works are installed throughout the area.
- Veterans Memorial Park: The Memorial honors individuals from all branches of the United States military.



Thumb Artist Bee Barn



Veterans Memorial Park

Recreation Inventory

WATERFRONT PARKS

- Bird Creek Park: The beach offers sunbathing and swimming. The park also features a gazebo, boardwalk, playground, splash pad, half basketball court and a bathhouse facility. The park is owned by the Huron County Road Commission and is currently leased and maintained by the Village.
- Jenks Roadside Park: This quiet park features sandy beach access, grills, picnic tables and restrooms.
- North Breakwater and Pedestrian Walkway: A 575 ft. pedestrian walkway connects to the 1925 ft. north breakwater. This walkable structure provides public viewing of Lake Huron, sunrise/sunset, the Lighthouse, passing freighters, and fishing.
- Veterans Waterfront Park: The park is approximately two acres in size and located at the foot of the pedestrian walkway to the breakwater. A landscaped walkway carries foot traffic through the park to the beach and breakwater. A pavilion offers picnic tables and a magnificent view of the lake. The park also features a children's playground and a fitness park.
- Port Crescent State Park: The park is home to a dark sky preserve, three miles of sandy shoreline, a modern campground and boardwalk. It also offers visitors ample opportunities for fishing, canoeing, hiking, cross-country skiing, birding and hunting.
- Sleeper State Park: This park is 723 acres of forest, wetlands, sandy beach and dunes located on the Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron. Visitors can watch both sunrises and sunsets on the bay, relax in the shade and seclusion of the campground or roam the trails of the ancient dune forests.
-Source: Michigan DNR
- Lighthouse County Park: Home to the historic Pointe Aux Barques Lighthouse. The waterfront has rocky shores, so it is not ideal for swimming, but offers camping, rustic cabin rentals, tent sites and hiking.

Recreation Inventory

HARBOR/MARINA FACILITIES

- Eagle Bay: Situated between the Village of Port Austin and Grindstone; it features public access for fishing, kayaking, and a picnic area.
- Grindstone Harbor: Anglers enjoy fishing for salmon, lake trout, steelhead, walleye and small mouth bass. The harbor offers campgrounds, charter fishing and boat launch facilities. Privately owned transient boat slips are available in varying numbers season by season.
- Port Austin Boat Launch Facilities and Slips: Presently there are 48 State-owned boat slips, eighty privately owned slips, as well as public and private boat launches. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has completed a renovation of the Port Austin Harbor, featuring floating docks and updated boat launch sites. An on-site bathhouse was completed in 2012.
- Port Austin Harbor: The 1400 ft. northeast breakwater, in conjunction with the north breakwater, combine to create a harbor of refuge; attracting pleasure and fishing vessels. The northeast structure is a rubble wall, and is not accessible to pedestrians.
- Port Crescent Day Use Park: Boasts a three-quarter mile fitness trail, cross country skiing and handicap accessible fishing facilities.



Recreation Inventory

ATHLETIC FACILITIES

- Gallup Park: Encompassing nearly seven acres, this park provides a baseball diamond and a softball field, a tennis court, pickleball courts, a basketball court and a pavilion for picnics. In winter the pavilion is transformed into an ice skating rink, and the hill beside it is perfect for sledding and snowboarding. The surrounding grassy area is shaded by mature trees and provides a comfortable setting for public relaxation and enjoyment.



SERVICES AND INFORMATION

- Welcome Center: Built in 2010, the building is used as an office/information center for the Port Austin Chamber of Commerce. It also serves as a meeting place for non-profit organizations and private gatherings of up to fifty people.



Recreation Inventory

Accessibility Assessment of Recreation Facilities

Welcome Center: 5 - Entire building accessible with no barriers.

Bird Creek Park: 3 - Boardwalk and sand may limit mobility.

Water Tower Park: 3 - Barriers exist as there is no parking lot or sidewalk.

Veterans Waterfront Park: 5 - Fully accessible.

Gallup Park: 3 - Barriers exist in the form of a step down into baseball and softball dugouts.

Huron County Nature Center: 3 - Facility is fully accessible. Groomed nature trails may limit mobility.

Port Austin History Center: 3 – Primary building accessible with no barriers. Outbuildings less accessible due to their historic nature.

DNR Accessibility Grading System for Parks and Recreation Facilities	
Accessibility Grade	Definition
1	None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines
2	Some facilities meet accessibility guidelines
3	Most facilities meet accessibility guidelines
4	The entire park meets accessibility guidelines
5	The entire park was developed using the principles of universal design

Recreation Inventory

DNR Grant Inventory

Grant #26-00763: Land and Water Conservation Fund Development grant for Gallup Park. The primary goal of the project was construction of three tennis and one basketball court. The condition of the courts is good.

Grant #26-01586: Land and Water Conservation Fund Development grant for Veterans Waterfront Park. The project consisted of the installation of a playscape. The equipment is in good condition and as recently relocated to a different site within the park, as part of a large redevelopment project utilizing Grant #TF08-056.

Grant #TF08-056: Trust Fund development grant for Veterans Waterfront Park. The project consisted of a complete redevelopment of the park, including relocating the playscape, construction of a new pavilion, the addition of a new stone sea wall, and site grading. Match for the project included construction of the Welcome Center. The park is in excellent condition.

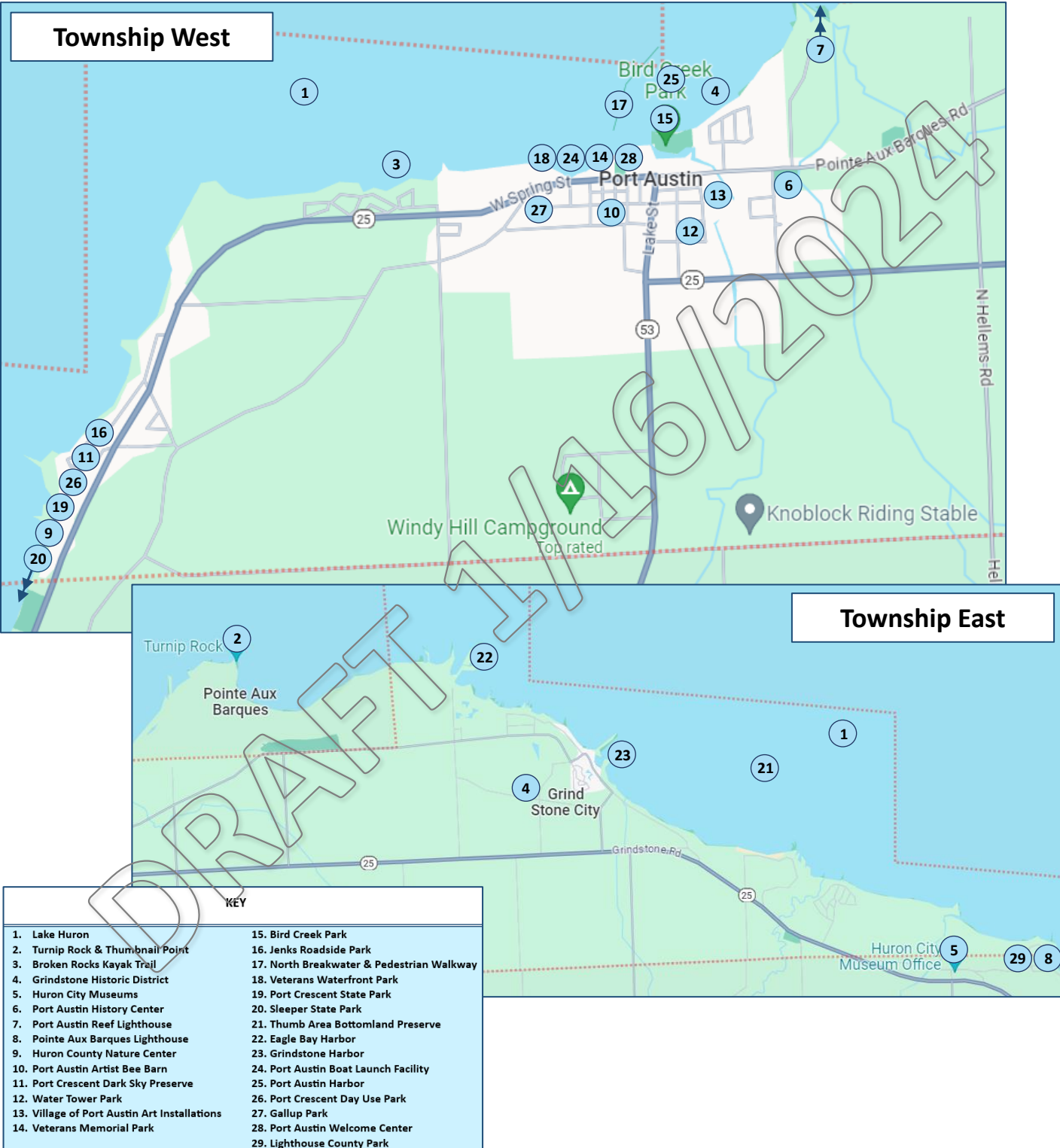
Grant #26-01688: Land and Water Conservation Fund Development grant for Gallup Park. The project consisted of installation of a playscape. A community build was organized for installation of the equipment.

Grant #TF10-093: Trust Fund Acquisition grant used to purchase property slated to be developed into a mid-town park.

Recreation Inventory

Port Austin Township

Map "F"



Planning Process

Section V

- Gather public input
 - ✓ Review current state
 - ✓ Discuss perceived recreational gaps
- Conduct Inventory
- Committee comprised of township officials and resident volunteers compile input:
 - ✓ Identify potential projects
 - ✓ Determine viability of ideas
 - ✓ Prioritize needs vs. wants
 - ✓ Prioritize short term vs. long term
- Draft recreation plan per committee recommendations
- Publish updated plan for 30-day public review
- Public meeting with Port Austin Township Board for review and approval
- Submit Port Austin Township letter of approval to the Huron County Planning Commission and East Michigan Council of Governments.
- Forward approved Recreation Plan to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Goals and Objectives

Section VI

The objective of the Port Austin Township recreation plan is to construct an infrastructure that supports all ages and fitness levels to engage in physical and social activities throughout the region.

The tourist sector of the Port Austin community increases the need for seasonal recreational opportunities. The core residential community has a reasonable expectation for recreational availability throughout the year.

In the current state, the focal point of recreational development is primarily centered in the Village. Outlying areas of the Township are absent a cohesive connection tying them to the Village center.

In a rural community such as ours, local government is closely tied to the voice of the public. This affords the opportunity to gather ongoing input relative to what is favored as well as what is unwelcome. This special relationship ensures that the public is faithfully represented.

Through the development and growth of parks, pathways and facilities designed for recreation of all ages and locales, the Township can support and grow its base by offering expansion of public services.

Goals and Objectives

Community Input

During development of the 2023 Port Austin Township Master Plan, a public workshop convened to provide feedback on the state of assets and opportunities within the Township. Figure “2” illustrates recreational opportunities presented at the workshop, and documented in the Master Plan.

Figure “2”

Appendix C: Preserve, Improve, Create

<u>Create</u>	<u>Tally</u>	<u>Create</u>	<u>Tally</u>
New industry/jobs (full time)	6	Town center	1
<input type="checkbox"/> More sidewalk connections	3	College internships	1
Signage	3	Disc golf	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Separated bike paths	3	New development around the gym	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Rollerskating/ice rink	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remove blight/old school	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Community center	2	Senior living community	1
Electric charging stations	2	Bridge to Bird Creek Park	1
Recycling center & program	2	Teen center	1
Splash pad	2	<input type="checkbox"/> Indoor recreation center	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Winter activities	2	Pharmacy	1
Agricultural tourism	1	Public restrooms	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Community swimming pool	1	<input type="checkbox"/> Health wellness living activities	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial kitchen	1	<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking trails	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobile trails	1	<input type="checkbox"/> Casino	1
Children’s museum	1	<input type="checkbox"/> Bike path to Grindstone	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Dog park	1	Urgent care facility	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Activities for families	1	More federal and state jobs	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Movie theater	1	Increase street lighting further out of town	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-motorized route plan	1	Public water and sewer along shore	1

Goals and Objectives

Section VI

Recreational projects identified for the forthcoming five years include the following:

- Walk/Bike/Cross-Country Ski path connecting the Village of Port Austin to Grindstone City. Construct warming stations along the trail.
- Designated snowmobile trail (separate from walk path).
- Build a land bank through securing abandoned, surrendered or seized properties for the purpose recreational development intended for public benefit.
- Construct an age-friendly community center with an indoor walking track, woodworking shop, recreation room, kitchen, mini theater, greenhouse and lap pool to afford recreational opportunities in all seasons.
- Develop open spaces that are handicap accessible at public easements to provide improved access to the Lake Huron shoreline.
- Fish cleaning station serving Port Austin, Eagle Bay and Grindstone Harbors to foster responsible recreational fishing practices and waste disposal.

Action Plan

Section VII

Action required to accomplish goals and objectives begins with identifying recreational opportunities and securing the necessary funding to bring projects to fruition.

Funding sources such as state and federal grants optimize the use of taxpayer dollars while supporting the needs and objectives of the community.

In cases where grants are unavailable, the utilization of low bid techniques, private donations, millages, fundraisers, volunteer labor and tax incentives may be applied.

DRAFT 1/16/2024

Action Plan

RECREATION PLAN TIMELINE

- Create draft plan November 8, 2023
- Draft plan available for public review and input Date
- Public hearing to adopt plan Date
- DNR submission of recreation plan adoption Date
- Grant plan application deadline Date

DRAFT 11/16/2024