

Golden Township Recreation Plan

2019-2023

Prepared by:

Golden Township Board

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I. Community Description

The following information describes location, makeup and focus of Golden Township, Oceana County, Michigan. These characteristics provide the foundation upon which this 5 Year Park and Recreation Master Plan are developed and are described as follows.

A. Jurisdiction

Golden Township is located in the northwestern quadrant of Oceana County at T15N and R18 W with nearly seven miles of shoreline on Lake Michigan. The Township is uniquely diverse with the eastern 2/3 of the township agricultural and low density residential in nature and the western 1/3 a mixture of residential and commercial development of a seasonal nature driven by the access to Silver Lake, Lake Michigan, and the sand dunes. It has two small inland lakes and 40 acres of township owned woodland. This plan is developed to address the recreational needs of this entire area.

B. Plan Focus

The focus of this plan is to enhance the recreational opportunities at existing parks by upgrading facilities, establish a plan for increased recreational opportunities on township properties, further development of Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes, expand the non-motorized pathway network and acquire additional recreational land for community recreational purposes as it becomes available.

II. Administrative Structure

This section details how the Township operates, relative to park and recreation planning and administration, and how the Park and Recreation Plan will be administrated and funded.

A. The Golden Township Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

The committee is a volunteer group formed under authority of P.A.157 of 1905 to advise the Township Board on matters pertaining to the planning, development, funding, operation and administration of leisure time and recreational facilities in the Township in pursuit of the goals and objectives of this 5 year Park and Recreation Master Plan. The Township Board will be the final authority for all decisions relating to their recommendations. The township treasurer will be a member of the advisory committee.

B. Organization

Appendix A describes the organizational system used to administer the plan.

C. Programming

Appendix B details current and proposed budgets and the capital projects proposed by the plan.

D. Funding Sources

All expenditures related to the implementation of the Park and Recreation Plan shall be funded from general fund by designated line item in the Township annual budget. Grant sources will be sought through local, regional, state and federal agencies as well as individual and business contributors. An individual has set a trust fund to enhance the Mears area parks. Business contributors will be utilized for highest priority need improvements to provide universal access, comfort, diverse activities, and attractive appearance for the community and acquire additional land or use rights where appropriate and available. There is also a strong volunteer network forming in the community that assists with planning, coordinating contributions and assisting with general maintenance and event operation.

E. Relationships

A relationship with the Silver Lake Sand Dunes Chamber of Commerce, The Friends of Silver Lake, and West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission has been established for studying the recreational needs of the Silver Lake area. The MDNR Park Division at the Silver Lake State Park has worked with the Township in the past and will be a valuable resource for the planning and administration of this plan. The advisory committee members represent a broad cross section of the community and interact with a variety of community organizations and citizen groups which involves the Silver Lake business community as well as the township as a whole. Regional trail administrators continue to provide direction and assistance with planning and development of the township's and regional pathway network and connectivity.

III. Recreation Inventory

A. Methods Used to Conduct the Inventory

The inventory of recreational facilities and programs was conducted by visiting each parcel of township property and evaluating its current and potential uses. A parcel that is available and is being considered for acquisition as an addition to the Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes was also evaluated. Plats and assessor blue line maps were used to determine the size of each parcel. Existing private and quasi-public facilities were also inventoried.

1. Round Lake Park is a 2-acre park that serves the township as well as the entire county.

2. Golden Township Lake Michigan Park is a 1.5-acre park that serves the township as well as the entire county.
3. Johnson Square Park is a mini park of .75 acres serving the Mears neighborhood and neighboring township residents.
4. Golden Township Nature Area is a 40-acre natural resource area serving the township.
5. Lake Michigan Shores Nature Area is a 45-acre natural resource area serving the township.
6. The Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes acquisition with assistance from MNRTF was completed in 2012 and the land is now ready to serve the Silver Lake neighborhood, outlying township residents, seasonal residents and transient visitors. The land is currently used for community celebrations and events through special permission from the township. It is also situated on the Silver Lake-Mears bike trail and will become the primary trailhead and rest/comfort stop in the township for trail users of all abilities and interests.

B. Maps

1. Maps are included in the Master Plan Appendix C showing the location and general configuration of each of the existing parks, including the Master Plan for the Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes with the anticipated development phases.

C. Park and Recreation Area Facility Descriptions

1. Round Lake Park is an undeveloped public access to a small inland fishing lake. It has an area for parking, rustic family picnicking and a launch area for small boats.
2. Golden Township Lake Michigan Park provides access to Lake Michigan. It has a paved parking lot with handicap spaces, public beach and picnicking. There is a small stream flowing through it for wading.
3. Johnson Square Park is a neighborhood park that serves the township and the region with a gazebo used for community concerts and weddings, a walkway with decorative lighting and open area used for an Arts & Crafts Show each summer. Playground, pickleball and basketball courts, covered picnic area and benches.
4. Golden Township Nature Area is a 40-acre undeveloped natural resource property consisting of pine and hardwood woodlots that has potential for nature trail development and day use activities.

5. Lake Michigan Shores Nature Area is a 45 acre undeveloped natural resource property of woods and wetlands with access to Lake Michigan. The area is currently used for limited access to Lake Michigan and nature observation.
6. Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes is an approximately 6-acre parcel of open and wooded land with a stream and wetlands in the heart of the Silver Lake commercial district. Acquisition of adjoining parcels will provide additional much needed open area for parking, restroom facilities, gatherings for festivals and families, nature trails, rest area for bicyclists and walkers and an improved access to Silver Lake. It currently has a sound stage for concerts, covered picnic area, and playground providing outdoor recreational uses for township residents and visitors and connected to state land and other off-street circulation routes in the business area.
7. Golden Township Turtle Sanctuary is a ½ acre wetland home to 3 species of turtles: Painted, Snapping, and the state protected Blanding. This area has been studied by Professor Dennis Merritt for 3 years. The research has shown a population of 300 turtles. The area is currently undeveloped.

D. Accessibility Assessment

1. Round Lake Park rating 1; none of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.
2. Golden Township Lake Michigan Park rating 2; some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.
3. Johnson Square rating 4; most existing facilities meets accessibility guidelines.
4. Golden Township Nature Area rating 1; undeveloped land.
5. Lake Michigan Shores Nature area rating 1; undeveloped land.
6. Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes rating 4; all facilities meet accessibilities guidelines.
7. Golden Township Turtle Sanctuary rating is 1: undeveloped.

E. Other Public Park Facilities

1. Silver Lake State Park; 198 campsites on the East side of Silver Lake and 1600 plus acres of Lake Michigan sand dunes with designated areas for dune buggies, pedestrians and beach for swimming on the west side of Silver Lake.
2. Cedar Point County Park; 3.54 Acres with paved parking area, portable bathrooms, picnic area and stairway access to the Lake Michigan beach.

3. Little Point Sable Lighthouse State Park; Paved parking area, public tours of the lighthouse and Lake Michigan swimming beach.
4. Hart Montague Bike Trail State Park; 3.6 miles of the 26-mile rails to trails park for biking, hiking, rollerblading, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing is located in the township and was connected to Silver Lake and Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes with the Mears to Silver Lake trail in 2010.

F. Quasi-Public Facilities

1. Mears Methodist Church; Parking lot, indoor meeting facilities
2. West Golden Wesleyan Church; indoor meeting facilities, food pantry
3. Cornerstone Community Church
4. Dunkard Brethren Church
5. Grace Adventures Camp; 338 Acres of multiuse property with camping, church, physical and spiritual training facilities.
6. Hart Public Schools: 80 acres including Morris Lake access.

G. Private Facilities

1. Val-Du-Lakes R.V. Resort; 87 sites
2. Silver Creek R.V. Resort; 181 sites, swimming pool, and camp store.
3. Jellystone Park; 200 sites, camp store, swimming pool and family activities.
4. Silver Lake Resort and Campground, 191 sites, camp store, swimming pool, and playground.
5. Sandy Shores Campground; 212 sites and swimming pool.
6. Silver Hills Resort; 105 sites, swimming pool and playground.
7. Hideaway Campground; 220 sites, camp store, food service, swimming pool.
8. Craig's Cruisers; go-carts, video arcade, miniature golf.
9. Dunetown Mall, small shops
10. Sierra Sands at the Dunes Motel
11. Dunes Waterfront Resort
12. Silver Sands Motel

G. DNR Recreation Grant Inventory

Golden Township has received MNRTF Grants for acquisition and improvements to Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes.

IV. Planning and Public Input Process

A. Planning Methods

The methodology used for the preparation of this plan was a combination of comparison of generally accepted recreation standards and a park system evaluation approach to determine generalized community needs for recreation in the township. The more important recreational needs for the Township include active play facilities for children and teenagers in the Mears area and in the more populated outlying areas as well as additional park land for community events and neighborhood play in the Silver lake area. Attractions for the many seasonal visitors include Lake Michigan, Silver Lake, the sand dunes, the wooded and natural open spaces and the numerous commercial family entertainment attractions available in the Silver Lake commercial district. Golden Township already uses and owns some undeveloped land in the township; however there is a need to obtain additional land in growing areas that can be developed to meet existing and future park and recreation needs and expectations expressed by the citizen input comments.

The 2010 Census shows the population of the Mears neighborhood is low to middle income in the 30 to 55 age range. The youth population is mostly in this area. Over 21 percent of the township population is between the ages of five to nineteen years. Nearly eighteen percent of the population is between the ages of 60 to 74 years. Children want playground equipment, soccer fields and a place to ride their BMX bikes while the adults are looking for more passive parks where they can meet, conduct picnics and events and enjoy walking and nature observation. Travel distances to Hart or Shelby make it important to have these recreational opportunities in Mears and throughout the township. Because of the seasonal and retired residents and the transient population, the Silver Lake Area is primarily middle to upper middle income and generally in the 45 and over age group. The public input meeting showed a need for more park improvements in the Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes for recreational activities and comfort including restrooms, pedestrian and bicycle rest area, natural area, play opportunities such as basketball, pickleball. and a neighborhood play area for families to augment the existing park at Lake Michigan with walk able and bike able facilities in the core residential and business neighborhoods.

Most of the park lands in Golden Township are undeveloped. Using the standards developed by the National Recreation and Park Association there are many areas in which the parks and open space area of the township are lacking. A review of the

accessibility standards of the ADA points to more needs to make the parks fully accessible to all ages and abilities with paved parking, restrooms and universal access facilities.

B. Public Input Process

The first steps in developing this plan were to make available a survey form online and at the township offices, issue a press release in the Oceana Herald Journal, a newspaper of general circulation in the township and on the Mears radio station, heard all over the township. Next hold a public forum advertised in the Oceana Herald Journal, soliciting input from the public by mail, e-mail or in person at the township offices. A summary of responses is included in the appendix. The forum provided information on the perceived needs in the township as well as Silver Lake and the Mears areas. The survey was also distributed to members of the Friends of Silver Lake.

C. Goals and Objectives

1. Goal

Continue development of Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities to use for family, group and community gatherings by adding more parking; nature trails with boardwalks exercise stations and observation areas; community information center and shelter with restrooms. Accessory buildings for storage, additional shade trees, potable water, walks/trails and stream/wetland restoration are the highest priority improvements.

Objective

Work with business people, community members, citizens, foundations, Chamber of Commerce, funding organizations and government agencies to fund park enhancements.

2. Goal.

Develop the Golden Township Turtle Sanctuary to provide for active and passive recreation and educational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities and protect this wetland ecosystem.

Objective

Work with civic, educational, and government sources to provide signage, trails, and viewing areas with exercise equipment.

3. Goal

Develop existing vacant or underused township land for well-planned public use and enjoyment for all ages and abilities while maintaining and protecting the natural character and features of the land. Improvements will include parking; access areas, walking trails with observation and interpretation nodes; restroom/comfort facilities; and site appropriate play areas and facilities.

Objective

Obtain funds to improve Round Lake Park with an improved small boat launch ramp and parking, beach access area, picnic area and comfort station. Create nature areas, trail heads and walking trails with viewing decks and trail markings for hikers and X-country skiers at all existing township natural areas.

V. Action Program

1. 2019

Submit grant applications to further develop 6.5-acre parcel in the Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes neighborhood in the central business district to construct a park to meet the goal and objective to provide the community with a park to build a community center with restrooms, a shelter, and plaza with tables and grills for informal gatherings and community events. The park will provide a badly needed central area for festivals; reunions; neighborhood recreation facilities; a rest area for walkers, bicyclist and shoppers; and additional parking for park users. The wooded area with a stream and diverse plant communities provides a unique “in town” opportunity for a nature trails, interpretive signage, viewing decks and quiet rest

areas. Grant monies from all available funding sources will be necessary for the acquisition of this very important parcel of land.
\$300,000

2. 2019

Seek community support for and establish local match funding to apply for funding assistance to acquire and develop property adjoining the existing Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes. Clear areas and construct trails with community volunteers and local contributions to enhance accessibility to the natural area in the park. Seek financial contributions for trails, teaching stations, interpretive signage, exercise equipment and related priority improvements.

3. 2019

Use available donations and township funds to apply for local, state and federal grant funding assistance to improve existing Silver Lake access from Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Dunes.

4. 2020

Build a dock, improve the boat launch and beach area and add picnic tables and a porta-jon at Round Lake Park to meet the goal and objective of providing better opportunities for residents at existing, particularly, water access parks. Volunteers, donations and grant-in-aid funding assistance will be sought through all available local, state and federal sources.

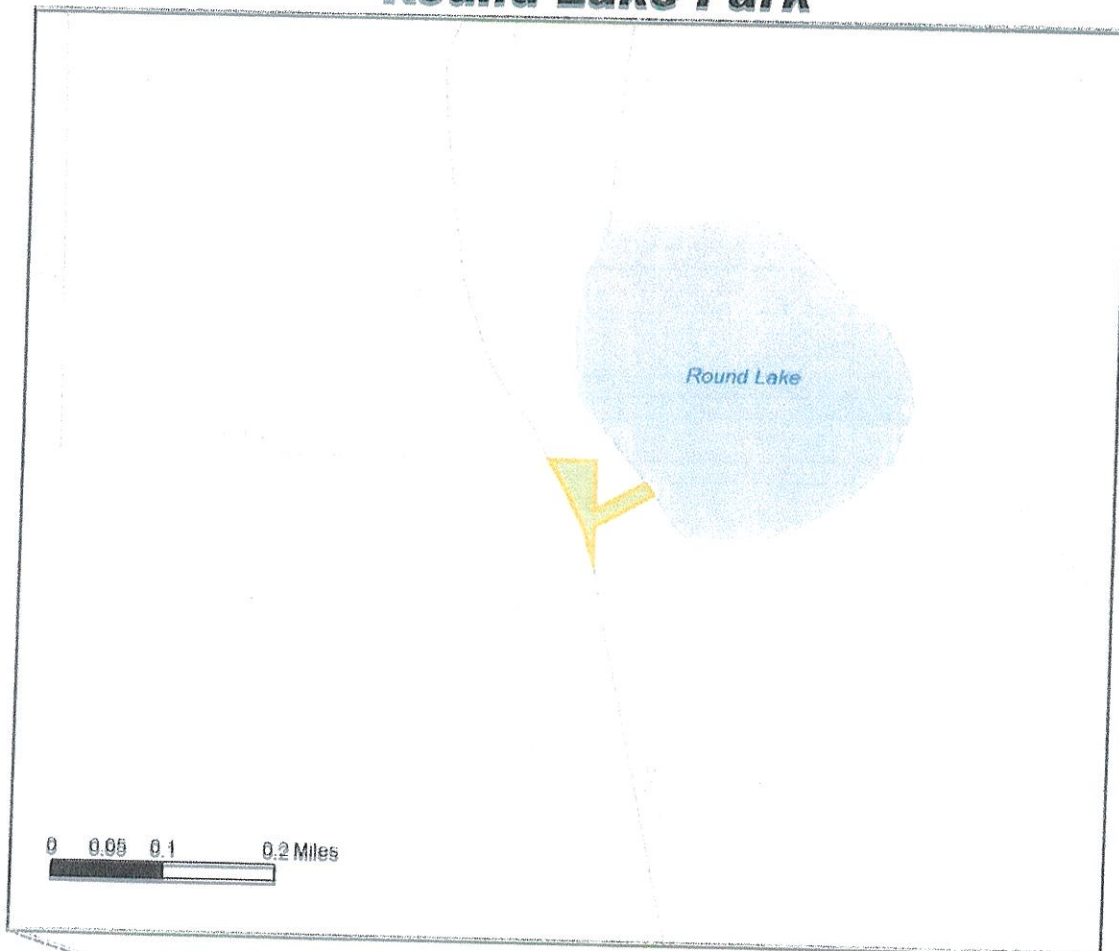
5. 2021

Plan and develop an educational trail system around the Turtle Sanctuary. Seek assistance from Professor Merritt and funding from local, state and federal sources.

6. 2022

Work with local groups, agencies and the school district to construct access and nature trails on the vacant, natural township properties to meet the goal and objective to provide residents with outdoor recreational opportunities and activities.

Round Lake Park

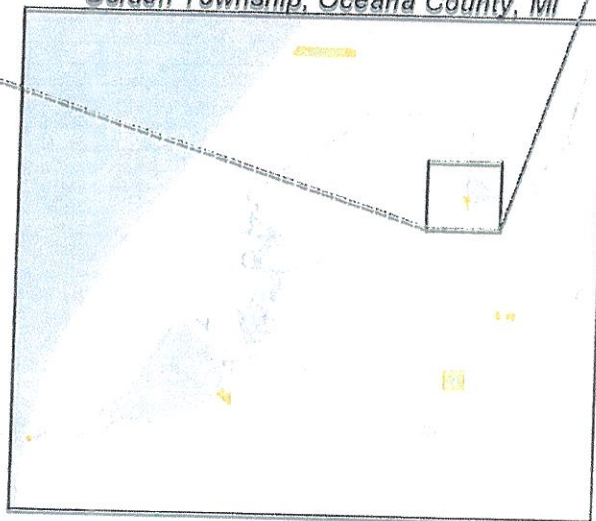


Golden Township, Oceana County, MI



Map Created by
WMSRDC
WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
September 2008

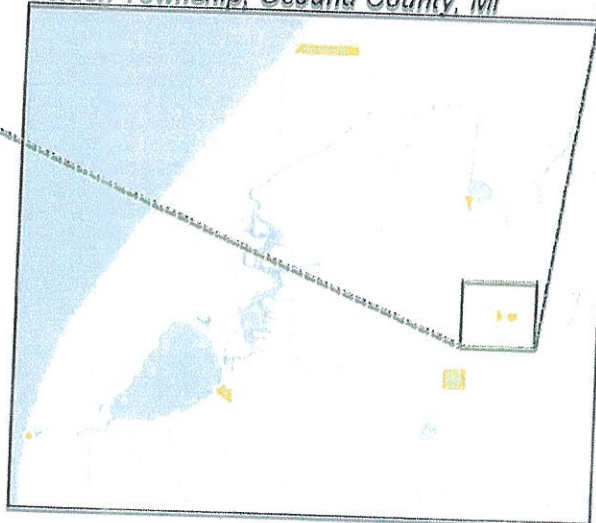
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Johnson Square



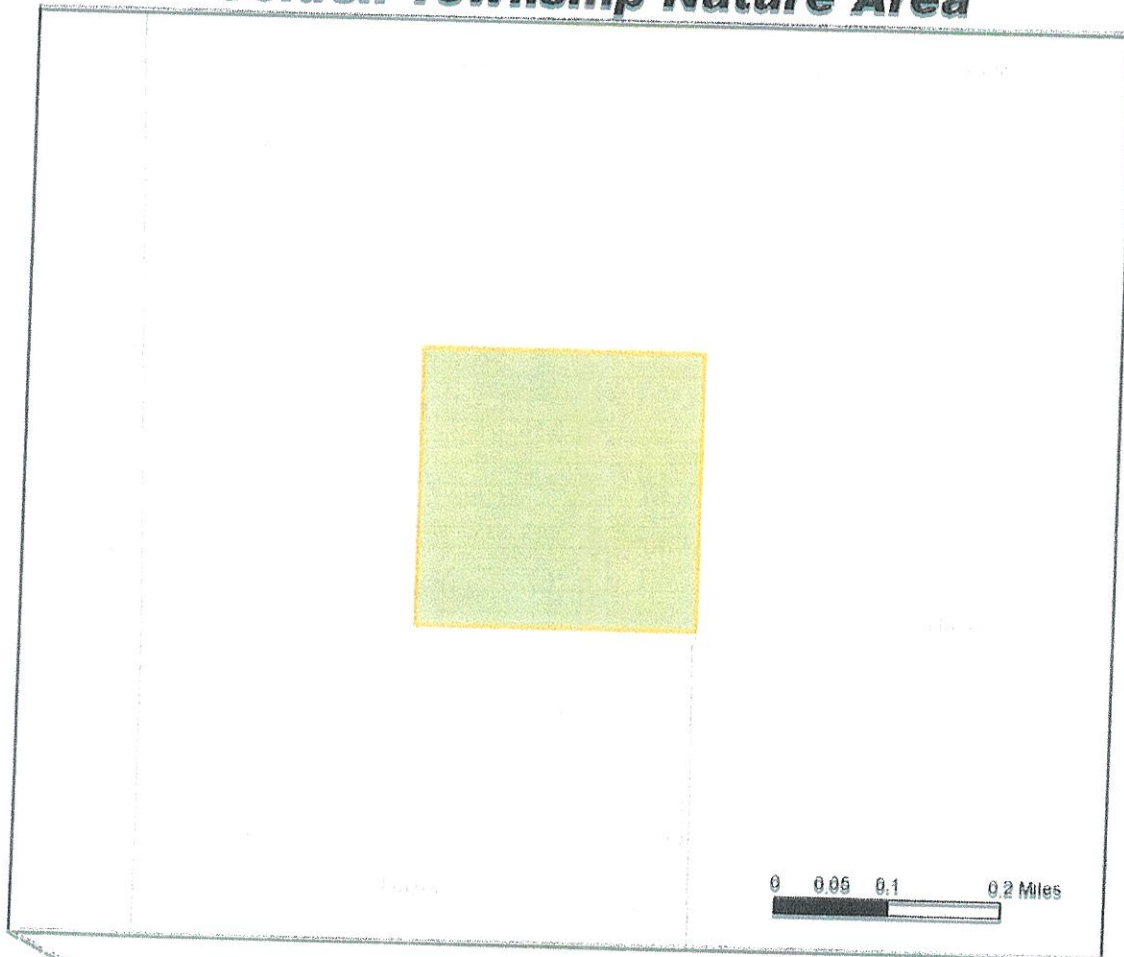
Golden Township, Oceana County, MI



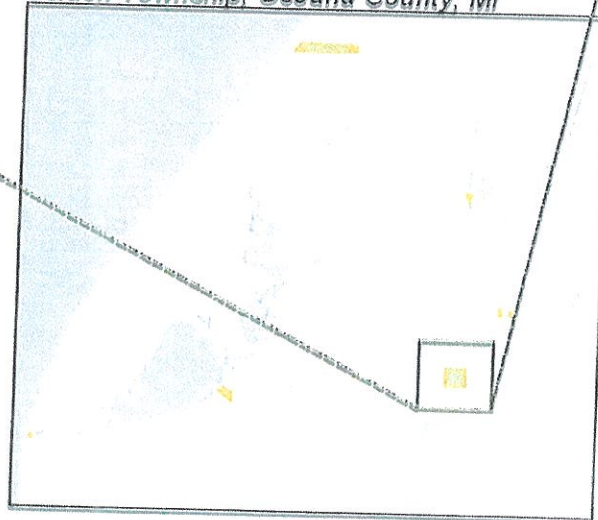
Map Created by
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Base Map Information Source:
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Information, 2008

Golden Township Nature Area



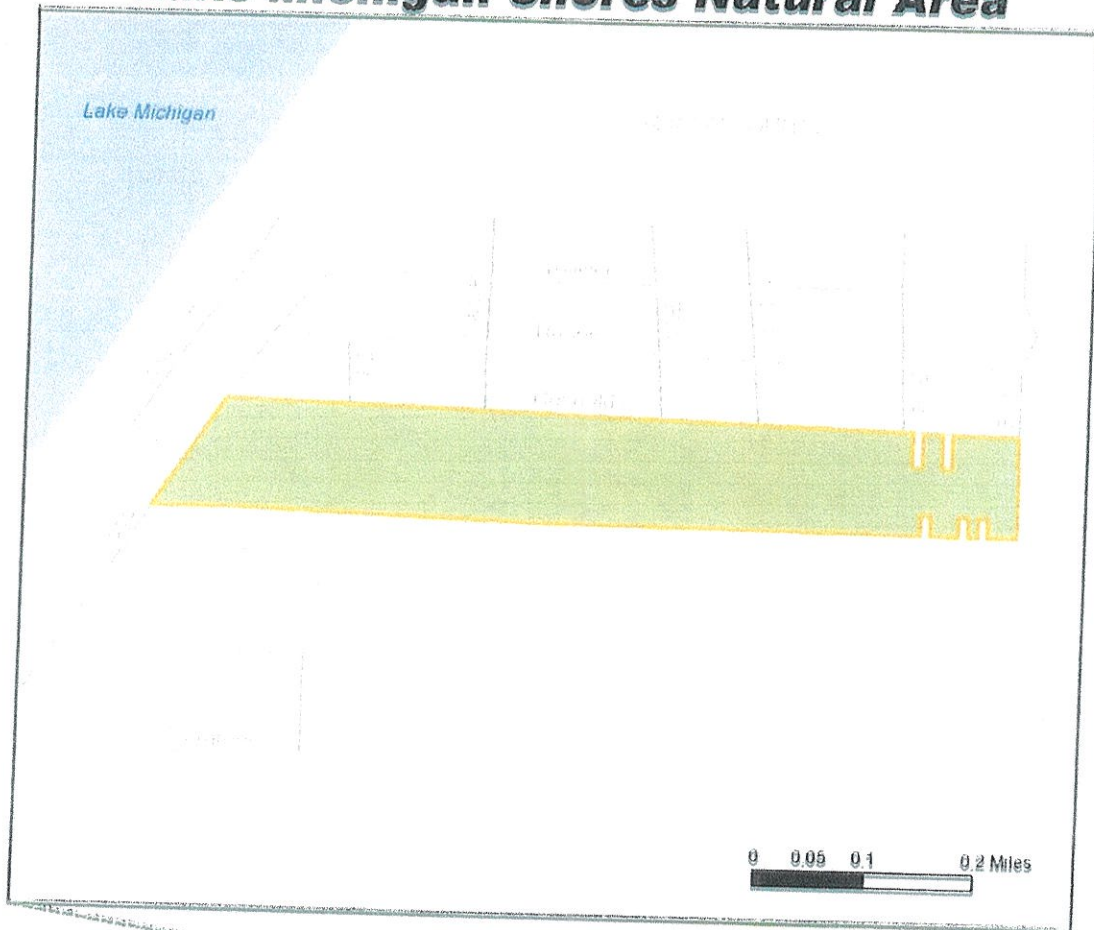
Golden Township, Oceana County, MI



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Base Map Information Source:
Michigan Center for Geographic
Information, 2008

Lake Michigan Shores Natural Area



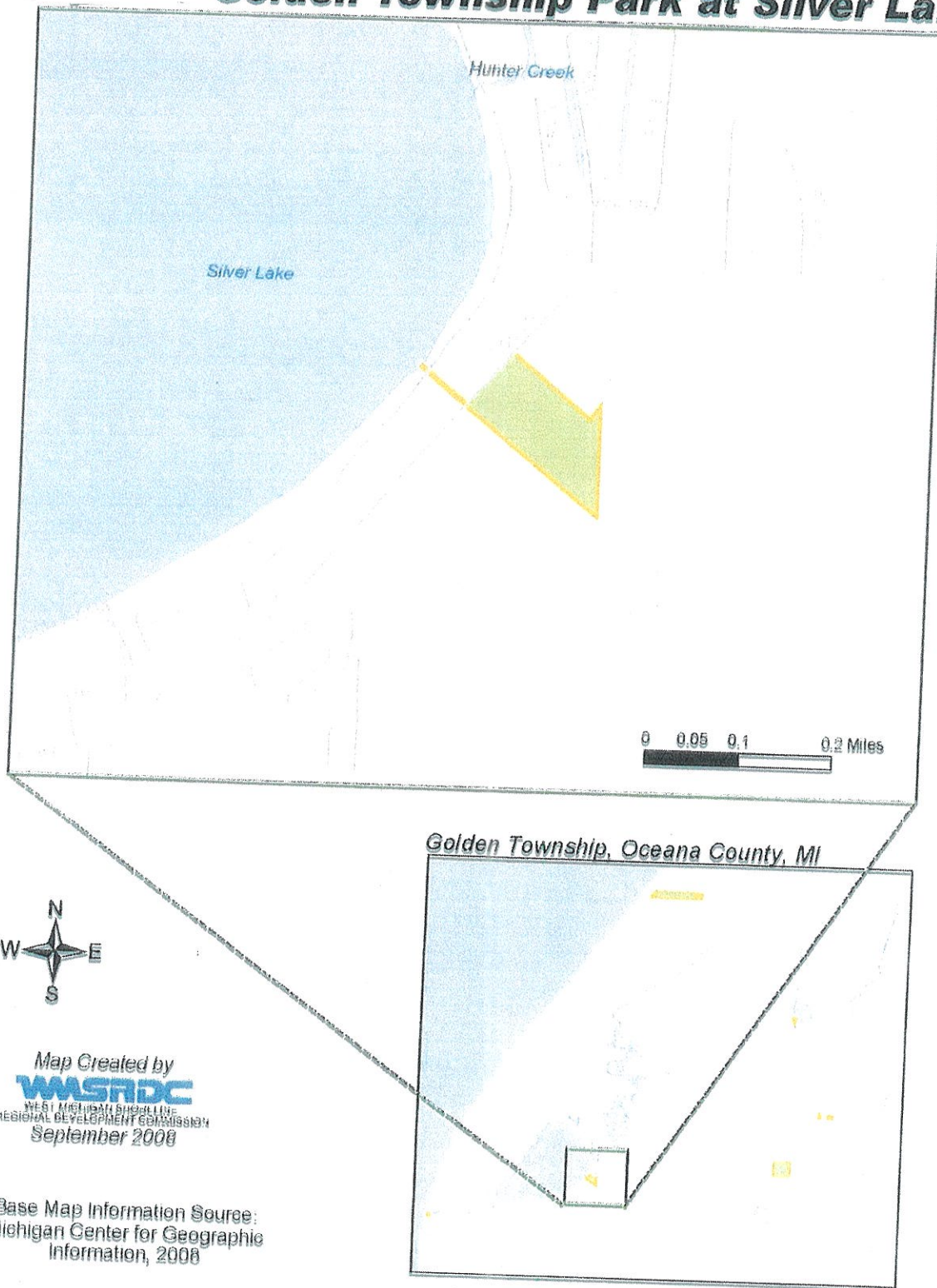
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Golden Township, Oceana County, MI

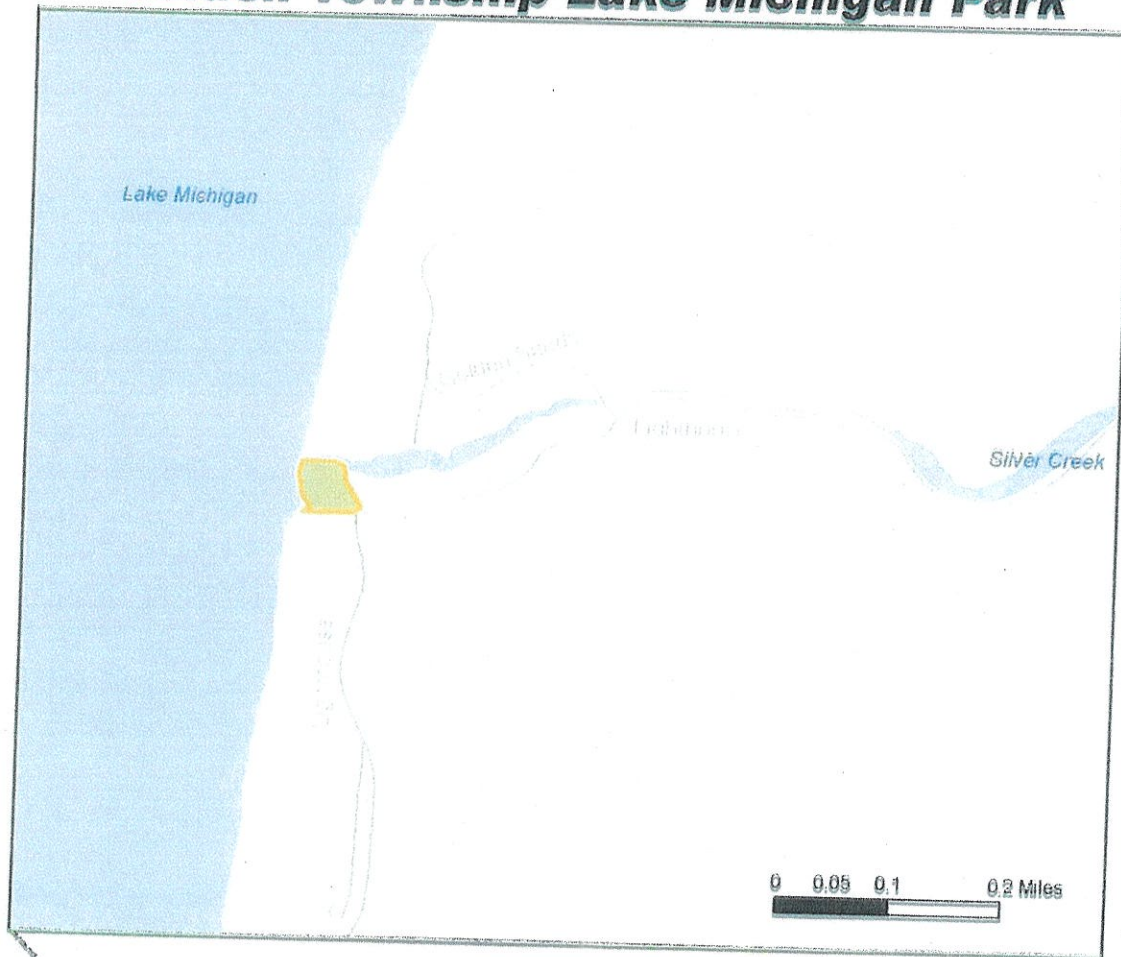
Golden Township Park at Silver Lake



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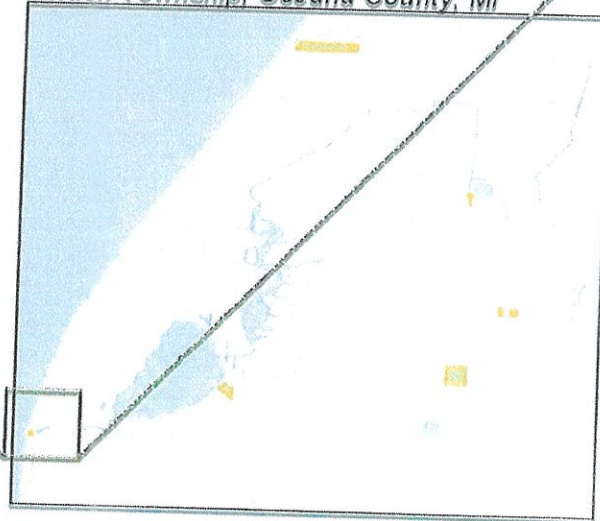
Golden Township Lake Michigan Park



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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
September 2008

Base Map Information Source:
Michigan Center for Geographic
Information, 2008

Golden Township, Oceana County, MI



Golden Township Park & Recreation Plan Survey

Golden Township's 5-year Park & Recreation Plan is about to expire. The process to write a new plan is beginning. This survey is the first step. A copy of the existing plan can be seen at the Golden Township Offices, 5527 W Fox Road, Mears during regular business hours. Responses may be through mail, or email to clerk@goldentownship.org Please respond by May 31, 2018.

1. There have been improvements to the Golden Township Park at Silver Lake Sand Dunes. What other enhancements would you like to see.

2. What kinds of recreational opportunities for residents would you like to see the township pursue.

3. What do you think is lacking in park, open space, and recreation in the township.

4. What do you like or dislike about the Channel Park at Lake Michigan.

5. Other Comments

Summary of Survey Responses

A survey of 5 questions was made available to township residents to gather input for preparing this plan. It asked for both positive and negative thoughts on the care, use, and development of recreational facilities in the township.

Major concerns centered on lack of restroom availability, need for physical activities, parking, trash handling, and water access.

Restroom buildings are preferred over currently used port-a-potties, practically at locations near water.

More opportunities for physical exercise, hiking/biking, cross-country ski trails, pickleball, basketball, shuffleboard courts, and horseshoe pits.

Access to Round Lake, Silver Lake and Morris Lake for boat launch and fishing. Picnic and swimming areas. Lake Michigan swimming.

Better trash containers and removal.

Respondents were approving of new developments in recreational opportunities at Silver Lake and Mears in the last 5 years and looking to the township to continue that trend throughout the township in the next 5 years.