

**YATES TOWNSHIP  
PARKS AND RECREATION  
MASTER PLAN  
2013 – 2017**



**Yates Township  
Lake County, Michigan**

**ADOPTED MARCH 20, 2012**

# Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	
Community Description	
• Location	4
• Lakes and Rivers	5
• Soils	5
• Government Structure	6
Demographics	
• Population	6
• Age	6
• Race	6
• Income & Employment	7
• Housing	7
Recreation Inventory	8
Description of Planning Process	8
Description of the Public Input Process	8
Goals and Objective	9
Action Program	10
Appendix	

# INTRODUCTION

## Mission Statement

*“The mission of the Yates Township Parks and Recreation Commission is to enhance the quality of life through the preservation, protection and promotion of the natural resources, cultural heritage, tourism and the provision of quality leisure time activities which would otherwise not be available to Yates Township residents.”*

Over the past few years, much has been written regarding the future of Yates Township and specifically the community of Idlewild. Five such documents are:

*“Idlewild National Resource Team – Final Report”*  
*“The Economic Development Action Strategy, Idlewild, Michigan”*  
*“Comprehensive Master Plan, Yates Township, Michigan”*  
*“Idlewild Cultural Resources Management Plan”*  
*“Flamingo Club Feasibility Study”*

Contained within these documents are the thoughts, recommendations, goals and objectives of the permanent and seasonal residents, civic leaders, business people, and others who are tied to Idlewild’s rich cultural and historic past. These documents speak primarily of the area’s cultural heritage, cultural economic development, the natural resources and recreational opportunities Yates Township has to offer. However, in order to be eligible for parks and recreation development and land acquisition grants on the state and federal levels, Yates Township must submit to the State of Michigan, Department of Natural Resources - Parks and Recreation Division, a separate document which addresses specifically proposed parks and recreation developments and land acquisitions plans for the next 5 years. This document, entitled “Yates Township – 5 Year Parks and Recreation Plan” will outline future goals, objectives and actions steps in the public arena.

To complete the” Yates Township – 5 Year Parks and Recreation Plan”, the State of Michigan requires the township to include responses to 7 required elements. The **required elements** within this plan include, but are not limited to:

1. Community Description
2. Administrative Structure
3. Recreation Inventory
4. Description of the Planning Process
5. Description of the Public Input Process
6. Goals and Objectives
7. Action Program

We will draw upon the information contained within the three documents listed above to respond to the majority of the required elements as well as community input to complete this plan.

# COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

*(AS TAKEN FROM THE YATES TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN MAY 2010)*

Parks and recreation facilities are an integral part of the livability of Yates Township. To ensure a high quality of life, parks and recreational facility considerations should be an integral part of all land use and facility planning efforts. To address the importance that recreation plays in the character and quality of life of Yates Township, the community developed a Five-Year Recreation Plan in 2008 to outline future considerations. Figure 10: Community Facilities Map depicts modern community facilities. To provide context Figure 11a: Historic Community Facilities Map & Figure 11b: Historic Community Facilities Map depict early community facility planning efforts.

While there is ample land available for use of residents and visitors in the form of State and Federal Government public lands, Yates Township lacks sufficient park and recreation opportunities. Williams Island is the only park currently managed by Yates Township. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently constructed the Idlewild Lake Park located along the eastern shoreline of Lake Idlewild.

The Yates Dial-A-Ride Transit service provides critical transportation services to the community, including providing access to the area's human services agencies and senior center. The Henrietta Summers Senior Center serves as an information center and gathering space for community members. The future expansion of the Township Memorial Library will provide improved access to library resources and further enhance opportunities for community interaction.

Due to the relatively static number of school-aged children and projected population trends, Yates Township has no plans to form an independent school district. School enrollment projections should be continually updated to correspond with development and population changes.

Yates Township has a rural character, with a full-time population of approximately 714 persons, increasing in the summer with seasonal residents and visitors <sup>5</sup>. It is governed by the Township supervisor, clerk, treasurer and two trustees. Services run by the township include the Yates Township fire department and Yates Township Dial-A-Ride. Other services, such as law enforcement, are handled by Lake County. Yates Township encompasses 35.4 square miles of land, with almost half of the land owned by the Federal and State government, including the Manistee National Forest.

Yates Township benefits from its access to U.S. Route 10 (US-10) and Michigan Highway 37 (M-37), providing connections to nearby employment centers such as, Grand Rapids, Traverse City and Lansing. The historic significance of Idlewild provides a significant cultural heritage and business base that can be leveraged to increase tourism and economic growth.

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<sup>5</sup> Community characteristic data used for the Plan was assembled by Applied Geographic Solutions (AGS) using the United States Census American Community Survey, United States Postal Service and commercial source zip+4 level delivery statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Internal Revenue Service statistics, and the Experian Insource database

Like all of Lake County, the Township features relatively low-density. The Township is racially diverse with a population that is 68.4% White and 27.3% African American. Other races make up 4.3% of the population.

The community features a slightly higher than average number of families with school-aged children between the ages of 5 - 19 at 23%; the national average is 21.8%. Many adults between the ages of 20 to 44 leave the community to seek outside employment opportunities. The opposite can be said for ages 45 to 84; recent trends indicate more retirees moving to the community, leading to an older average population than most of the United States.

Yates Township has a lower than average medium household income of \$28,522, which is considerably less than the state at \$44,702. This corresponds to a disproportioning level of poverty at 27% compared to the state's average of 7.4%

Yates Township has a high percentage of high school graduates. However, Yates Township along with Lake County has a much lower percentage of residents with advanced college degrees compared to Michigan and United States.

The Township experienced steady population growth between 1970 and 2000. There was a slight decrease in population between 2000 and 2007. West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission projects that the Township's population will increase to 1,248 by the year 2035.<sup>6</sup>

Lake County's population is expected to nearly double by 2035. An increase in Yates Township population is expected to result in a slight increase in population density from 21.5 persons/square mile to 22.4 persons/square mile. Of the projected growth, most of it will be in the 55 and older age group. At the same time, the age group 15-19 will experience the largest decline in population.

### **Land Use**

Yates Township is predominantly rural with an abundance of natural wetlands and woodlands. Since its inception, Idewild has remained the community's cultural and economic center featuring most of the community services and amenities. Yates Township also features two smaller residential communities, Marquette Springs and Lake Connamaria.

Land use in Idewild is predominantly residential, featuring mostly detached single-

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<sup>6</sup> Forecast data was provided by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC). Caution is advised at the local unit projection level because these projections may not account for in and out migration.

family houses of modest size as allowed under current zoning regulations. The largest proportion of Yates Township is zoned agriculture or is state or federally owned land. Federal and State owned forest lands comprise half of Yates Township. Residential land use consists of 90% of taxed land in the Township.

### **Water**

There are five natural lakes and one man-made lake in Yates Township. Idlewild Lake is the largest lake within the Township with over 100 acres of surface water. Idlewild Lake is within the Pere Marquette River watershed, with no inlets or outlets. The deepest point in Idlewild Lake is about 22 feet, with roughly 70% of the lake shallower than 15 feet. Idlewild Lake has a diverse population of fresh water fish, including bluegills, black crappie, rock bass, northern pike, green sunfish, largemouth and small mouth bass, blunt rose minnow and more. The other lakes are Paradise Lake, Tank Lake, Switzer Lake, and Little Bullhead Lake. Little Bullhead Lake is the smallest and is located on the southwest corner of the Township.

Lake Connamara is a man-made lake located in the southwest corner of the Township. It is approximately 40 acres and was made from a former basin depression and was constructed by building a levee between a tributary of the Pere Marquette River, South Branch and relocating Broadway road. The middle and south branches of the Pere Marquette River and Blood Creek also run through the Yates Township. The south branch of the Pere Marquette River and its tributaries are a part of the Wild and Natural River system and are frequently visited and enjoyed by canoe aficionados and fishing enthusiasts. There are several public access points to the river from Broadway Street.

### **Manistee National Forest**

The Manistee National Forest encompasses almost half of Yates Township with wetlands and wooded areas. Around three thousand acres of the Idlewild community is located within the Manistee National forest.

### **Soil Considerations**

Much of the soil in Yates Township is sandy and infertile and therefore of low value for agricultural or forestry purposes. Yates Township contains two distinct soil associations, the Rubyicon – Grayling and the Rubyicon - Montcalm association. The Rubyicon – Grayling soil association which covers most of the community is a sandy, well-drained acidic soil, droughty and infertile, and would be considered low fertile for agricultural purposes or for forestry. The other soil type found in the community is Rubyicon–Montcalm, which is also a soil of low fertility, well drained and droughty. The two soils create more pronounced contours. The slopes tend to lead to moderate and severe problems for dense development and erosion hazards could occur.

The soil conditions also present constraints for development. They quickly absorb septic tank effluents due to high permeability and the inadequately filtered effluents could

contaminate and pollute the ground water supplies. This is a critical concern for the lakes which do not have inlets and outlets thereby resulting in possible stagnation problems. However, these soils are favorable for recreational development.

The water table throughout the Township is considerably deep and the high soil permeability reduces drainage problems in the area. The natural drainage courses in the eastern part of the Township are imperfect and inadequately formed.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Population

From 1990 to 2000 Lake County's total population increased from 8,583 to 11,333; however Yates Township has maintained a steady population since 2000. The 2000 census reflects a population of 714 persons and future census projections reflect a population of 772 persons in the year of 2006. The census statistics also reveal that there were 342 males and 372 females in 2000.

## Age

The 2000 census data reveals that the median age was 43.3 years of age for residents of Yates Township. Of the population of 714 people, only 55 were under the age of 5 years, there were 526 persons that were 18 years and older and 157 persons that were 65 years old.

## Race

The 2000 census shows us than the majority of the population within Lake County is White. The largest minority to this population is African Americans which make up approximately 11.17% of the population.

<b>Race</b>	<b>Population</b>
Total	11,333
White alone	9,595
Black or African American alone	1,266
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	114
Asian alone	17
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	4
Some other race alone	65
Two or more races	272

The racial composition in Yates Township in the year 2000 shows that the largest minority is African Americans. Approximately 42% of the population consisted of African American while other ethnic groups made up 521% of the Yates Township population in 2000.

## Income & Employment

In 1992 a report conducted by Five CAP for Lake County revealed that the national poverty rate was about 14.5% with Lake County almost double that percentage with 26.4% of the population living below the poverty line. The 2000 census revealed that

19.4% of the population was below the poverty line 28.30% of this estimate was under the age of 18 and 12% was over the age of 65.

The median household income was \$26,622 and \$32,086 for families. In 2000 the U.S. Census estimated Yates Township labor force was composed of approximately 219 individuals, which is about 41.4% of the population.

### **Housing**

The 2000 census indicates that Lake County has a total of 13,498 units about 34.8% was occupied in 2000 while the majority of the housing stock, 65.1% was vacant. Of the 13,498 housing units 1,256 of those units belonged to Yates Township and makes up 9.3% of the housing stock I Lake County. Only 24.5% of the housing stock in Yates Township is occupied wit the remaining 75.5% vacant. However, the majority of the Township is occupied with the remaining 75.5% vacant. However, the majority of the occupied units are inhabited by the home owners, approximately 75.6% while only 25.4% of the population that occupy the housing units in Yates Township are renters and not owners.

# ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Yates Township is a general law township formed under Michigan's Charter Township Act of 1947. Yates Township is subordinate to Lake County. Yates Township has a fire department which also services Cherry Valley Township. Yates Township is required to perform assessment administration, tax collection and election administration. The day-to-day administrative duties of the township rest with the Yates Township Supervisor, George Walker, Jr. Legislative policy is the responsibility of the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Walker is assisted by the following township boards and administrative staff:

## **Yates Township Board of Commissioners**

George Walker, Jr., Township Supervisor  
Marian Caldwell, Township Clerk  
Jacqueline Patterson, Treasurer  
Willie Ross, Trustee  
Ronald White, Trustee

## **Yates Township Planning and Zoning Commission**

Sam Rogers, Chair,  
Ernest Harris, Vice Chair,  
John O. Meeks  
Ronald White, Township Liaison  
Willard P. Englehardt  
Esther Ward  
Anthony Granelli  
Marilyn Burns  
Thomas Ellis

## **Yates Township Administrative Staff**

George Walker, Jr., Township Supervisor  
Marian Caldwell, Clerk  
Deborah Walter, Deputy Clerk  
Jacqueline Patterson, Treasurer  
Kerry Graham, Deputy Treasurer  
Mark Barnett, Assessor  
Tammy Applewhite, Blight  
Patricia Williams, Senior Citizen Director  
John Barnett, Fire Chief  
James Williams, Assistant Fire Chief  
Eric Meehan & Emil Williams, Maintenance

The township budget for general operating expenses is 7 mils which yields approximately \$28,500 per mil. The township also levies a special assessment for services such as street lights, garbage pickup, the fire truck, the Fire Department and one police officer from the Lake County Sheriff's Department. The general operating budget covers expenses for

the salaries for the administrative staff, senior center, grounds and landscaping, election expenses, Board of Review expenses, Planning and Zoning Board expenses, computer control, and library control.

# RECREATION INVENTORY

The recreation inventory provides: 1) a description/inventory of recreation opportunities within Yates Township’s political boundaries, 2) a description/inventory of recreation opportunities within Yates Township’s political boundaries under private control, 3) a description/inventory of recreation opportunities **outside** of Yates Township’s political boundaries, 4) maps showing locations of facilities and 5) a description of Yates’s Township barrier-free compliance status. The importance of this inventory is in its use for identifying and assessing the community’s needs within our present parks, recreation services and facilities.

Current recreational programs offered by the township are described on pages \_\_\_\_\_. This is followed by a location map of all Community and Senior Centers (page \_\_\_\_\_) that are operated by the township or other charitable organizations.

## Yates Township Recreation Inventory

Yates Township Town Hall	Houses Township office, library and Assessor’s Office. Serves as the Idlewild Community Center.
Henrietta Summers Sr. Center	Operates an exercise room, meeting rooms, laundry room, kitchen, game room and community room.
Former Flamingo Night Club	Community Room – Facility Currently Closed
Williams Island	Boat launch, playground, beach, bathhouse
Gaseous Point Park	Peninsular park.
Snowmobile Depot	Building Currently Closed!

## Michigan Department of Natural Resources Recreation Inventory

Lake Idlewild Access Park	Boat launch, vault toilet, community garden w/ hand pump, pathways, benches and fishing piers.
Switzer Lake Boat Access	Boating Access Site
Paradise Lake Boat Access	Boating Access Site
Pere Marquette Trail	Multi-use Trail, Day Campground

## Inventory of Private Recreation Facilities

Manistee National Forest	
Idlewild Lot Owner Association Building	Community Center & Basketball Court
Idlewild Historic and Cultural Center	Community Center and museum
Good Shepherd Church Campground	Undeveloped site that was used for group camping

# DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Yates Township Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan is based upon a planning process that includes the results of past planning efforts, community input and community visioning.

## **Past Planning Efforts**

Over the past 10 years, Yates Township has focused its planning efforts on economic development, cultural economic development and a comprehensive master plan for the township. Each of these areas resulted in a separate document containing specific goals, objectives and recommendation for future actions. Each document addressed some aspects of parks and recreation and the natural resources of Yates Township. What follows are excerpts from the documents as it pertains to the future of parks, recreation and natural resources in Yates Township. It also should be noted that historic preservation, as a planning topic, was a part of each document and resulted in Idlewild receiving five state historical markers, historic preservation assessment by SHPO of all Idlewild properties, and designation as a National Register of Historic Places Community with national significance

*Taken from:*

***“Economic Development Action Strategy – Idlewild, Michigan”***

***Recognizing Idlewild’s national and historic significance, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm created the Idlewild, Michigan Transformation initiative to foster the revitalization, preservation and celebration of Idlewild. A key component of this initiative is an Inter-Agency Transformation Team, which includes representation from participating state and federal agencies/departments, Idlewild/Yates Township representatives and others. Monthly team meetings, also known as State Partner Meetings, serve as a forum for state agency discussion, policy development and implementation, collaboration and programming synergy.***

***The Idlewild, Michigan Transformation Initiative’s vision is to assist Yates Township residents and property owners in preserving, restoring and developing Idlewild as a national and international destination. Its goal is to help Yates Township achieve prosperity by leveraging Idlewild, Michigan’s natural environment, historic buildings and sites, cultural heritage, creative talent and other assets to spur financial investment and economic growth. While much has been accomplished, still more remains to be done in the coming months and years, toward achievement of the community’s vision for Idlewild by 2012. ....***

***To address these concerns, the Michigan Department of History, Arts, and Libraries (HAL), the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) selected Jacobsen/Daniels Associates to develop this Economic Development Action Strategy for Idlewild.***

***The Strategy recognizes and uses Idlewild's unique cultural heritage and natural assets to encourage and leverage economic opportunity. The Strategy offers the Idlewild community realistic guideposts and phased action steps toward achieving an appropriate balance between accommodating quality residential/retirement/resort living, historic preservation, new development, business enterprise, entertainment, and recreation and tourism. While the planning horizon of this Strategy is from 2008-2012, many initiatives will live on well beyond that time frame.***

The restoration of the Flamingo Club on Williams Island is an excellent example of a project with great economic and cultural potential. This plan lays out a strategy, action steps, objectives and recommendations to bring this project to reality.

Public Involvement: The community participated in the formulation and adoption of this planning document through eight State Partner Meetings. Several stakeholder interviews were conducted to learn relevant viewpoints that had a bearing on the development of the plan. The selected stakeholders were a diverse group including business owners, residents, governmental representatives, and State Partners. And over 30 residents, business owners and community members all interested in sharing their ideas and learning how Economic Development applies to their community attended two Visioning sessions.

The second major planning document is entitled "***Cultural Economic Development Readiness Initiative***" by the National Resource Team.

***The National Resource Team is composed of six inter-disciplinary professionals with extensive experience and credentials in cultural tourism, tourism economics, community organization, community planning, public humanities and arts programming, physical planning, historic preservation, landscape architecture, and architecture.***

From their work, ten recommendations were developed and carried forward for future planning and action.

- 1. All efforts should be made to preserve Idlewild as an inhabited functioning community. Great care will be required to enhance the quality of life of the residents, preserve the dignity of the residents and authentic physical character while advancing economic growth.***
- 2. The Idlewild community and State of Michigan must approach this project in a strategic manner. The strategic framework must include regional collaboration and partnerships.***
- 3. Invest in a community building process concurrent with major program and physical master planning.***

***4. Preservation of land, and landscape, must become as high a priority as preservation of structures. A detailed and comprehensive “land genealogh” should be created for each property in Idlewild.***

***5. Place greater local emphasis on environmental stewardship and historic preservation as integral with all quality of life issues in Idlewild. Protection and quality enhancement of natural resources must become the top community action item.***

***6. A legal self-governing structure must be developed to allow Idlewild to plan and manage in its own behalf.***

***7. Creative business formats, such as a small business incubator and locally owned food co-op, must be encouraged and evolve with traditional mature commercial scenarios and formats.***

***8. Develop a “special projects” structure to produce more effective State interdepartmental collaboration on Idlewild, and similar, projects.***

***9. Commit strategic State funding/budget for a major long-term involvement.***

***10. Ensure that all cultural, historic and physical planning will be facilitated by competent professionals experienced in African American historic cultural and community planning.***

It is from this report that the goals, objectives and proposed projects relating to the preservation on the natural resources of Yates Township, the formation of a Parks and Recreation Commission and the development of public/private partnerships are derived. This report was adopted by and submitted to the State of Michigan, Department of History, Arts and Libraries.

The third document entitled, “***Comprehensive Master Plan – Yates Township, Michigan***”, was adopted by the Township Board of Trustees and Planning Commission in May 2010.

***This Plan is designed to be comprehensive and accessible. It is an intermediate step between summarizing the desires of the community, and policy development and implementation. The Plan is divided into four (4) chapters providing an overview of the planning process, community characteristics, comprehensive planning elements, and the opportunities for the implementation of planning elements. This Plan provides a platform for continued community dialogue as master planning concepts are implemented. The elements of this plan should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to respond to market conditions, development, and changes in community desires.***

***1***

***1 Section 125.329 of the Michigan Township Planning Act stipulates, “At least every 5 years after the adoption of the plan, the planning commission shall review the plan to determine whether to commence the procedure to amend the plan or adopt a new plan”.***

*The Yates Township Master Planning process involved community residents, business owners and elected officials, with the assistance of planning experts, working together to identify and develop concepts that would lead to the realization of opportunities for community development and growth.*

*During the planning process, community residents were invited and encouraged to take part in defining their vision for the community. The opportunity for input and comments was provided through State Partner meetings, Planning Commission meetings, a public hearing and a public open house. Notices of these meetings were published in the Ludington Daily News, the Cadillac Evening News and the Lake County Star. Yates township residents, business owners, community members and other stakeholders who were interested in sharing their ideas and learning more about the comprehensive master plan attended a public open house on June 18th, 2009.*

From this document, the goals, objectives and proposed projects related to facilities and the development of a Parks and Recreation Commission were derived.

The fourth planning document was the “*Idlewild Cultural Resources Management Plan*” which provided a historical assessment of Idlewild's significant public properties and specific steps for longer term rehabilitation and maintenance. As a result, the township has a blueprint for managing these important cultural resources.

The final planning document entitled “*The Flamingo Feasibility Study*” provides a professional assessment of the condition of the facility, rehabilitation needs, citizen recommendations for its use, development cost estimates and management options for the township. As a result of the plan, rehabilitation of the Flamingo was identified as priority by the Idlewild Centennial Commission and Yates Township. When completed it will provide, the first phase of historic Idlewild's downtown development toward economic recovery.

### **Community Input**

The draft of this plan will be presented to the Yates Township Board of Trustees on February 21<sup>st</sup>. Copies of the draft will then be distributed to the Township Hall Library, churches and nearby schools. An ad will be placed in the local paper announcing the draft plan and the locations of the places where the document can be viewed. There will also be a public hearing on the draft plan prior to the adoption of the plan on March 20, 2012. This will also be announced in the newspaper.

### **Community Visioning**

A community meeting will be held where residents will get an opportunity to participate in a “Strategic Storytelling Workshop”. This workshop will allow each participant to tell a story about their most memorable Idlewild experience. Once told, participants will identify what they valued most about their experience. They will also be able to tell about the recreational experience they had. What activities and facilities were involved in this experience? From this exercise, much can be gathered about what might be needed to allow more positive experiences as those expressed.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS**

The draft of the Yates Township Five Year Parks and Recreation Plan was presented to the Township Board of Trustees on February 21, 2012. It was also distributed to the following locations for public review.

Yates Township Hall Library, 6437 S. Nelson Rd.  
Idlewild Post Office, Essex Road  
Flamingo Club Information Board, Lake Drive, Williams Island  
Henneria Summers Senior Center, 723 S. East Lansing Street  
Old Township Library, on Baldwin and Tacoma Rd.

At each location, citizens can complete a “Draft Yates Township Parks and Recreation Plan – Response Form” for their input. Their comments will be compiled and submitted to the Township Board of Trustee and reviewed at the Public Hearing. Copies of those responses are included in Appendix \_\_\_\_.

A special Public Hearing on the document will be scheduled for March \_\_\_\_, 2012 at the Township Hall. Those comments will be taken under consideration and incorporated in the draft document for final approval by the Board of Trustees on March 20, 2012. A copy of the notification is included in this draft as well as the resolution of adoption.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Contained within the three documents mentioned in the “Introduction” are goals and objectives for Yates Township and the community of Idlewild. For the purposes of this plan, those goals and objectives that speak to the park, recreation and the natural resources of Yates Township will be extracted and used for this plan. Additional goals and objectives may be inserted as we gather new public input via public meetings and hearings. Based on the findings of these documents and the resulting input from the planning process, the following goals and objectives has been formulated to address the needs of the township.

## **I. Develop a Yates Township Parks and Recreation Commission**

*The Yates Township Parks and Recreation Commission will strive to provide within its human and financial resources a means to accomplish its mission over the next five years. While the financial resources of Yates Township are very limited, its human resources are strong and this Commission is an excellent example of the human resources of this Township. The Commission will ensure that the goals and objectives of this plan will be carried out and future developments include consideration of recreation and entertainment facilities and activities. The Commission will consider the following projects during the next five years.*

- A. Improve and expand snowmobile trails and RV parking
- B. Construct the Idlewild athletic field and perform playground improvements
- C. Provide improved facilities and landscaping on Williams Island
- D. Rehabilitation of the historic Flamingo Club on Williams Island
- E. Develop a five acre community park

## **II. Develop a Natural Resource Management Plan**

*The Township should protect and preserve the natural resources of the community in a way that is consistent with the development goals of the community.*

- A. Form a Natural Resource Management Plan Committee
- B. Identify and enlist key partner, i.e. MDNR, National Forest, MUCC, etc.
- C. Conduct inventory and survey of natural resources features
- D. Designate management plans for each natural resource feature

## **III. Develop Non-Motorized Facilities Plan**

*A non-motorized facilities plan should be developed that provides walking and bicycling linkages between residential, commercial, municipal, recreation, and areas of historical significance. In addition, opportunities to provide for equestrian travel should be incorporated where appropriate. Walking and bicycling can lead to positive health improvements, environmental protection, community development, and enhance the quality of life for resident and visitors.*

- A. Provide signage linking walking and bicycling facilities with points of interest; including the Idlewild Historic Walking and Bicycling Tour.
- B. Develop multi-use trails connecting the central business district with community and recreation facilities around Paradise Lake and Idlewild Lake.

- C. Provide bicycle parking at community and recreational facilities and sites of interest.
- D. Create bicycle lanes or shared-use roadway signage along major transportation corridors.
- E. Connect the DNR trail to the Central Business District.

**IV. Encourage public/non-profit/private partnerships and improve the community's social and economic quality of life.**

- A. Consolidate community and recreational facilities so that they are located near each other and are supported by housing development.
- B. Develop facilities that provide for the cultural needs of the community.
- C. Serve the existing and future demand for community and recreational facilities.
- D. Provide a balance of recreational infrastructure to meet the present and planned needs of the community.
- E. Develop areas for recreational purpose and restore areas that are currently used for recreation.

**V. Locate and Construct an Outdoor Amphitheater**

*With the wealth of music festivals and music heritage on Idlewild, an outdoor amphitheater would be an ideal venue for festivals and music events. A permanent outdoor facility would be an excellent location to hold the may events that are held throughout each summer in an outdoor setting. This amphitheater would be located on Williams Island, northwest of the Flamingo Club.*

**VI. Develop a Green Belt along Pere Marquette River**

*To protect undeveloped and agriculture land and expand access to natural resources, Yates Township should develop a green belt along the Pere Marquette River. A green belt is a land use designation that seeks to create a connected system of natural land along a corridor that protects habitat, and enhances recreational opportunities.*

- A. Form a Pere Marquette Green Belt Commission
- B. Create conceptual plan involving public and key stakeholders
- C. Develop funding strategies and identify potential funding partners
- D. Contract with landscape architectural firm to develop plans
- E. Solidify financial planning per probable cost estimates
- F. Determine programmatic and maintenance responsibilities and objectives
- G. Execute plan

**VII. Evaluate Existing Recreation Facilities (Natural & Man-Made) and Identify Needs & Service Gaps**

*Recreational facilities, both man-made and natural, must be periodically evaluated and inspected to ensure safety and meaningfulness to the community being served. All existing playgrounds with equipment must be inspected to ensure compliance with the industry's standards. The same is true for all parks and natural recreational areas. Athletic fields, picnic tables, boating access sites, trails; campgrounds require constant upkeep and maintenance. Facilities and parks also need to be evaluated as to their relevancy to the community's needs and desires. This can only be accomplished through*

*continued contact and involvement with the community via regularly scheduled Commission meetings, surveys, public hearings and meetings with user groups.*

# ACTION PROGRAM

This Action Program will clarify the relationship between the Townships’ expressed goals and objectives and the projects listed in the Capital Improvement Schedule. The intent of this section is also to give the reader a better understanding of the projects and their appeal to the Yates Township residents. The items identified in the Capital Improvements Schedule meet the Goals and Objectives as follows:

Location	Project	Goal
Williams Island	Playground Improvement, Landscaping, facilities upgrade, drinking fountains	1,7
Township Hall	Improve athletic field/courts, playground renovation, tennis court, soccer field, drinking fountains	1,7
Location TBA	Improve & expand snowmobile trails & parking	1,2,3,7
Location TBA	Develop five acre community park w/ picnic shelter	1,7
Location TBA	Develop park w/ miniature golf course, walking, biking, exercise trails, playground equipment, pavilion, restroom and vendor station.	1,7
Location TBA	Performing Arts Amphitheater and “Walk of Fame”	1,5
Williams Island	Camper Cabin Village (10 Cabins @ \$40,000 ea.)	1,4
Williams Island	Develop Nature Center/Lodge w/ Community Gardens	1,2
Twp. Library	Renovate Library to include Community Room	1,4
Gaseous Point Park	Develop beach area and park w/ picnic tables and grills	1,2
Pere Marquette	Develop bike trails/Green Belt	1,3,6
Williams Island	Historic Flamingo Club Rehabilitation & Williams Island	1,4,7

## Project Descriptions

**Williams Island Playground Improvement:** Williams Island is the only park currently managed by Yates Township. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) recently constructed the Lake Idlewild Access Park. Williams Island is approximately \_\_\_\_ acres. Currently the island has a dirt/gravel boat ramp, bathhouse, beach area, and the former Flamingo Night Club. This project would improve boating access by installing a concrete boat ramp and pier, re-grading and installing new sand for the beach, renovation of bathhouse (ADA compliant), playground structure, picnic tables & grills and landscaping.

**Township Hall Athletic Fields/Courts:** Yates Township Town Hall houses the Township office, Library and the Assessor’s office. This facility was once used as the Township school. On the grounds exist an old basketball court and baseball field. This project would develop this area into a sports complex that features soccer fields, tennis courts, baseball diamond, basketball courts and playground equipment.

**Snowmobile Trails & Parking:** Yates Township has an abundance of recreation lands that can support numerous snowmobile trails and trail heads. This project will provide engineering services to map out a series of trails and trail heads for increased and improved snowmobiling in the Township. This project will also provide funding for a trail groomer and other equipment to keep the trails maintained.

**Community Park & Picnic Shelter:** The need for a five acre community park other than the Township Hall was expressed in several hearing and a recreation survey that took place in 2008. This park would primarily be for large picnics and would be equipped with picnic tables, grills, restroom, and a pavilion.

**Miniature Golf Course:** Yates Township has a high number of retiree who play the game of golf. There are no golf courses in the township or nearby. A miniature golf course and possibly a driving range will provide young and old access to golf as well as a new revenue stream for the township.

**Performing Arts Amphitheater:** A new location, other than Williams Island, should be identified to accommodate the rising number of participants in the Jazz Festivals that have occurred in the past 10 years. The amphitheater should be a mixture of natural and stadium seating. It should have the infrastructure (water, electrical, lights & sound) to support major concerts. Dressing rooms and restrooms should be included in this project.

**Williams Island Camper Cabin Village:** History points out that camping on Williams Island did happen utilizing small cabins instead of tents. Bringing back cabins for rental could provide a new revenue stream for the township. This project calls for the creation of 10 cabins to start complete with toilet facilities and a small kitchenette. Traditional tent and RV camping should be planned for areas outside of Idlewild, possibly the Manistee National Forest.

**Williams Island Nature Center & Community Garden:** Yates Township is surrounded by the Manistee National Forest. Nature abounds and the youth of the township should be exposed to it and be educated about the environment in which they live. A community garden will be developed next to the nature center so the youth will receive an education on food and good nutrition.

**Township Library Renovation:** Currently the library is located in the Township Hall. The Memorial Library sits empty waiting to be renovated and expanded. The project would include computer room, audio & video facilities, study rooms and meeting rooms.

**Gaseous Point Park:** This development located on Lake Idlewild will expand the beach/swimming area. A mooring area would be designated to allow for boaters to come to the peninsular, tie up their boats and have a picnic on land.

**Pere Marquette Green Belt:** The Pere Marquette Trail traverses through Yates Township. The land on either side of the trail is within the public domain. This project seeks to enhance and protect this property through the creation of a Green Belt. A green belt is a land use designation that seeks to create a connected system of natural land along a corridor that protects habitat, and enhances recreational opportunities.

## **Historic Flamingo Club Rehabilitation and Williams Island Improvements**

Idlewild must redevelop its downtown if it is to prosper as a twenty-first century resort community. Key to downtown redevelopment is rehabilitation of the historic Flamingo Club and improvement of Williams Island. During its heyday more than 300 businesses called Idlewild home. Today there are less than one dozen. Entertainment drove tourism. A quality in-door entertainment venue, like the Flamingo Club with its 300 – 500 seating capacity and star power, could become a tourism magnet. The Idlewild community, working in collaboration with professional planners and architects, envisioned a new robust downtown Idlewild as a part of an economic development action strategy and transportation vision. Idlewild needs a viable downtown; one that will provide jobs and business opportunity to attract and retain young families and qualified workers. The unemployment rate in Yates Township, home of the Idlewild, is 14.50%, with job growth -2.17%. Per capita income is \$18,289; average household income is \$34,585; 23.91% of households have income less than \$15,000; the largest age group is 55 to 59 years. Rehabilitation and reopening of the Flamingo Club would provide good paying, sustainable jobs and serve as a catalyst for business development and substantially contribute to the reduction of unemployment in the township and in Idlewild. Over \$1.5 million is required for the phased completion of this critically important project.

The Flamingo Club rests on the shores of the beautiful 105 acre Idlewild Lake. The Flamingo Club opened its doors in 1949 as an entertainment venue attracting local patrons, and tourists and entertainers from around the country and Europe. It once operated as a restaurant and bar alongside a night club, making it a “hot spot” for entertainment. The Flamingo Club was noted for its quality entertainers and extravagant interior and two large murals depicting flamingos. The Idlewild community would like the Yates Township owned Flamingo Club to become a multi-use and entertainment facility that is available year round and may accommodate a wide range of community functions. The facility has approximately 7,300 square feet of interior space and on-site parking. As a contributing property of the Idlewild Historic District, rehabilitation of the Flamingo Club must be made in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. A number of issues in this currently closed facility may be viewed as simply needing cosmetic renovation; however there are various elements that will likely require a substantial amount of work. Rehabilitation plan costs are estimated at \$1.2 million.

Outside the rehabilitated Flamingo Club, could be a “Walk of Fame” similar to Hollywood’s “Avenue of the Stars”. The “Walk of Fame” will enshrine the hundreds of entertainment, education, religious, civil rights and business notables that have visited as “Idlewild Stars”.

According to the State of Michigan Historic Preservation Office, “Originally known as Island Park, the island formed the center of activity for Idlewild from the earliest days of the resort. The island was the site of the first gathering place, the Clubhouse, and the location of the first overnight accommodations known as “doghouses” for their small size. The IIA (Idlewild Improvement Association) constructed the Oakmere Hotel on the island in the 1920s, which was purchased by Phil Giles in 1949. Giles added attractions, including a boat launch, amusement park, and the Flamingo Room. In 1956, entertainer/writer Mr. Ziggy Johnson reported the Club Fiesta (at the rival Paradise Club) and the Flamingo as “Two of the finest supper clubs you want to find. Not only that, the owners have spared no expense in bringing to the vacationers bigger shows that they can see in the city”. Lavern Baker, Little Willie John, and Butterbeans and Susie performed at the club.” Improvement plan costs for Williams Island are estimated at \$300,000.