Torch Lake Township
Planning Commission (PC)

Regular Meeting Agenda

Monday, November 16, 2026

7:00 PM

Community Services Building, Torch Lake Township, Michigan

Please turn off cell phones.

Public Hearing/Public Comment Rules:
Fill out comment card at the back of the room if you wish to speak. Turn into the secretary.
Each member of the public will be given 3 minutes to address the Planning Commission.
Comments should be directed at the Chair.
Please no clapping or cheering.

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Consideration of Agenda
4. Conflict of Interest
5. Approval of Meeting Minutes from October 19, 2026
6. Public Comment on Agenda Items
7. Correspondence
8. Unfinished Business
9. New Business
    a. Park and Recreation Plan

10. On-Going Reports

    1. Zoning Administrator's Report
    2. PC Representative to ZBA Report
    3. TLT Board Representative on PC Report

11. Public Comment

12. Concerns of Commission

    A. Chair
    B. Members
    C. Consultant

13. Adjournment

Torch Lake Township
Planning Commission (PC)

Regular Meeting Agenda

Monday, October 19, 2026

7:00 PM

Community Services Building, Torch Lake Township, Michigan

DRAFT

Present: Clarke, Walker, Carleton, Petersen
Absent: Graves
Others: S. Schroeder
Audience: 7
Recording Secretary: M. Merchant

1. Call to Order-7:00 PM

2. Pledge of Allegiance-recited

3. Consideration of Agenda-approved by consent

4. Conflict of Interest-none

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 17, 2026-with one change. Petersen/Carleton 4-0

6. Public Comment-none

7. Correspondence-none

8. Unfinished Business-none

9. New Business-
    a. Master Plan Review: Open House Results-Approximately 60-70 people attended the open house. Highest interest focused on a design workshop for Eastport and Torch Lake Villages with regards to the community's desire for development. Sara will put the results together in a comprehensive summarizing document to be presented at next meeting.

       November PC meeting will review the development of the Master Plan. If all members are satisfied, the next step will be to send it to the Township Board for distribution followed by a 63-day distribution period.

10. On-Going Reports

    1. Zoning Administrator's Report-47 Permits issued this year. Loughrey has obtained permission from the ZBA to move forward with obtaining permits from the county.
    2. PC Representative to ZBA Report-none
    3. TLT Board Representative on PC Report-none

Denise Walker gives a brief overview of a planning class she took through Michigan State University where she learned about "placemaking" and how community involvement can evolve over time helping communities reach their goals.

11. Public Comment-

12. Concerns of Commission

    A. Chair-none
    B. Members-none
    C. Consultant-none

13. Adjournment-Petersen/Carleton to adjourn at 7:36 PM. Passes4-0

project memorandum

B R i
Beckett&Raeder
Landscape Architecture
Planning, Engineering &
Environmental Services

Date: 11.13.2026

From: Sara Schroeder, AICP
To: Torch Lake Planning Commission

Project: Draft Park and Recreation Plan

---

initiative

Possible Motion: Motion to distribute plan for 30 day review period and recommend the Township adopt Park and Recreation Plan following required public hearing.

Enclosed in your packet is an updated draft Park and Recreation Plan. Edits include comments from the Supervisor following the Township Board review and the addition of the September 2026 Open House. To keep this draft on schedule for a February 1 submission to the State the Planning Commission will need to review and forward to the Township Board for them to schedule a public hearing.

Beckett & Raeder, Inc.
535 West William
Suite 101
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

734.663.2622 ph
734.663.6759 fx

Petoskey Office
113 Howard Street
Petoskey, MI 49770

231.347.2523 ph
231.347.2524 fx

Traverse City Office
148 East Front Street
Suite 307
Traverse City, MI 49684

231.933.8400 ph
231.944.1709 fx

Grand Rapids Office
100 Cesar E. Chavez Ave
SW Suite 300
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616.585.1295 ph

www.bria2.com



TORCH LAKE TOWNSHIP

Parks & Recreation Plan

November 2026 DRAFT

Acknowledgments

B R i
Beckett&Raeder

List of Maps/Tables/Figures

Table of Contents

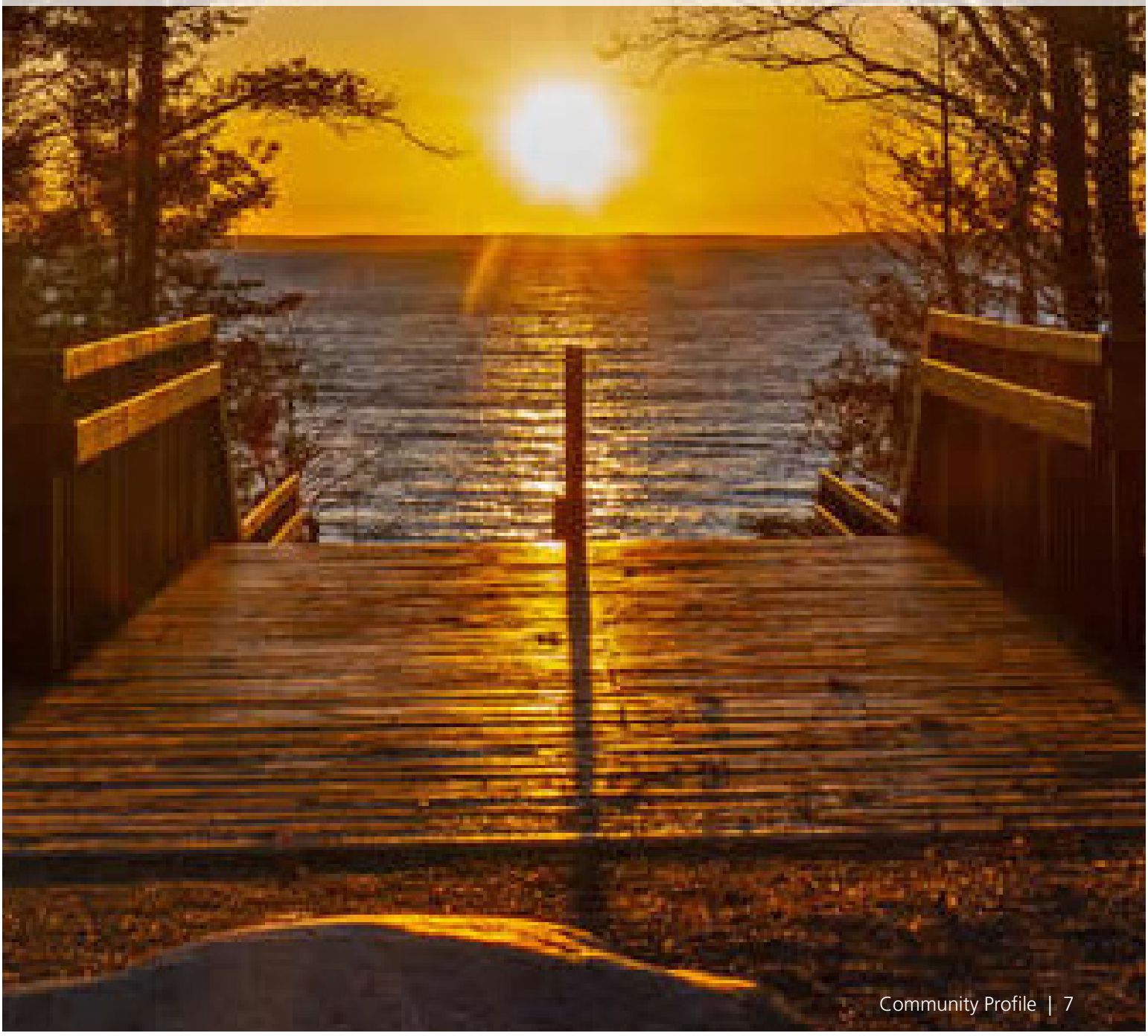
1. Community Profile 7
2. Administrative Structure 15
3. Recreation Inventory 19
4. Planning Process 23
5. Implementation 31
Appendix 35

This page intentionally left blank.



1

Community Profile



This Parks and Recreation Plan for Torch Lake Township was created in accordance with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) guidelines. This Five-Year Parks and Recreation Plan will guide future decision making in parks and recreation development, budgeting, and grant funding.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Torch Lake Township is located in northwest Michigan within Antrim County and is bordered by Banks Township to the north, Milton Township to the south, Lake Michigan to the west, and Torch Lake—with a small section of Central Lake Township—to the east. The Township's geography is uniquely defined by its proximity to two prominent water bodies: Lake Michigan and Torch Lake.

One of fifteen townships in Antrim County, Torch Lake Township is accessible primarily via US-31, which connects the area to Traverse City approximately 30 miles to the south and Charlevoix about 16 miles to the north. Additional access is available via M-88 from nearby communities such as Central Lake, Bellaire, and Mancelona. Antrim County lies in the northwestern portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. It is situated roughly 260 miles northwest of Detroit and about 320 miles north-northeast of Chicago. Several major Michigan cities are within 200 miles, including Grand Rapids (140 miles), Lansing (170 miles), and the Saginaw-Bay City region (150 miles). The cities of Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, and Jackson are each around 200 miles south.

Torch Lake Township encompasses 15.2 square miles of land and is known for its natural beauty and recreational appeal. Often referred to as part of Michigan's "Gold Coast" or "Sunset Coast," the Township features rolling wooded terrain, protected sand dunes, and extensive shorelines along both Lake Michigan and Torch Lake. These shorelines are celebrated for their scenic bluffs, sandy beaches, and clear, high-quality waters that support diverse aquatic life such as lake trout, whitefish, and cisco. Maintaining the pristine condition of these waters is essential to preserving the area's environmental health and recreational value. For those seeking a quieter alternative to more urbanized areas, Torch Lake Township offers a rural lifestyle with access to natural amenities, quality schools, and year-round outdoor activities like fishing, boating, and hunting.

DATA SOURCES

The demographic information in this Plan came from the following sources, in this preferred order:

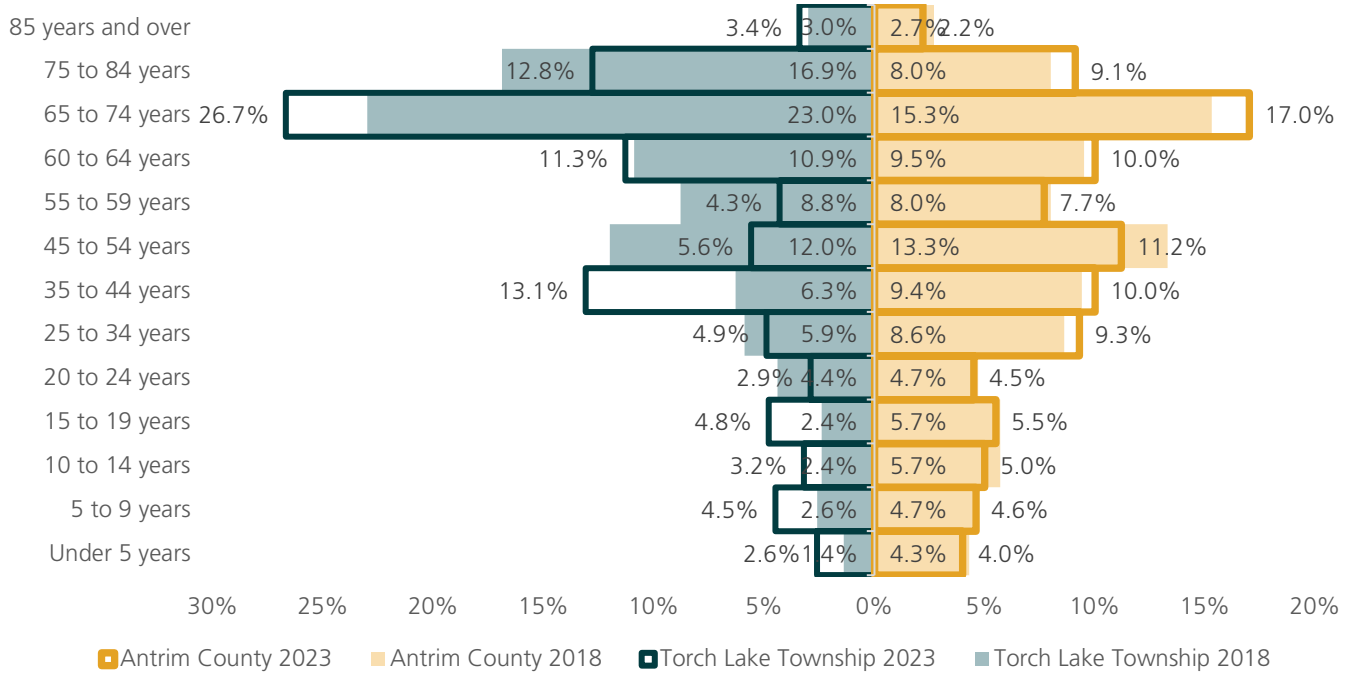
- **US Decennial Censuses.** The decennial censuses are the most accurate source of demographic information in the United States, though the information is limited. Mandated by the United States Constitution, the aim of the decennial census is to count 100% of the US population. Because the decennial census has been operating since 1790, it offers a valuable reference point to illustrate how populations have changed over time. While the decennial census has been administered for over 200 years, the questions have shifted to reflect cultural changes. For example, one's history of rebellion against the United States is no longer a question on the form. Information collected in the most recent counts includes information about age, sex, race, the relationship between household members, and household tenure.
- **American Community Survey.** The American Community Survey (ACS) replaced the "long-form" Census questions beginning in 2000, collecting the same types of information about social, economic, and housing conditions on a continual basis. Including these questions in the decennial census would be more resource-intensive and could reduce the response rate for the more critical decennial census. The ACS is not a complete survey of the United States but a sample. A random selection of households receives the ACS every year, and the Census Bureau uses the responses to create estimates for the rest of the population. Because the ACS is a sample, smaller communities require multiple years of sampling to create accurate estimates. Communities with fewer than 20,000 people must be sampled over 60 months to create estimates, and these estimates are referred to as 5-year estimates. This plan will use ACS 5-year estimates, as Torch Lake Township's population is under 20,000 people.

Table XX: Population 2000-2020

	2000	2010	2015	2020	% Change 2000-2020
Torch Lake Township	1,159	1,331	1,183	1,212	4.6%
Antrim County	23,110	23,975	23,267	23,431	1.4%
State of Michigan	9,938,444	9,877,574	9,900,571	10,077,331	8.4%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census Bureau, P1; American Community Survey, DP05 Range of % Margin of Error: N/A

Figure XX: Population Pyramid, 2018-2023



Source: American Community Survey, DP05 Range of % Margin of Error: ± 0.1% to 6.4%

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Population

Torch Lake Township's population has experienced modest growth over the past two decades, increasing from 1,159 residents in 2000 to 1,212 residents in the 2020 Census—an overall rise of 4.6%.[1] Similar population increases were observed throughout Antrim County and the State of Michigan during this period. According to the American Community Survey, the Township's estimated population in 2023 was 1,564.[2] While this suggests a potential uptick—possibly influenced by the growing trend of remote work enabling people to live farther from traditional employment centers—the estimate carries a high margin of error due to the Township's relatively small population size.

Age Distribution

The figure "Population Pyramid, 2018-2023" shows age distribution in Torch Lake Township and Antrim County for the years 2018 and 2023. The data shows that the population in Torch Lake trends towards the elderly, with 42.9% of all residents being 65 and older in 2018; interestingly this same figure remained 42.9% in 2023.[3] In 2018, 19.1% of residents were under 35 years old, a figure that increased to 22.9% in 2023.[4] Communities with elderly populations need a variety of recreational activities that cater to different abilities and interests, including social events, physical activities, and opportunities for creative expression and engagement. Additionally, enhancing intergeneration activity offerings can help to increase community cohesiveness.[5]

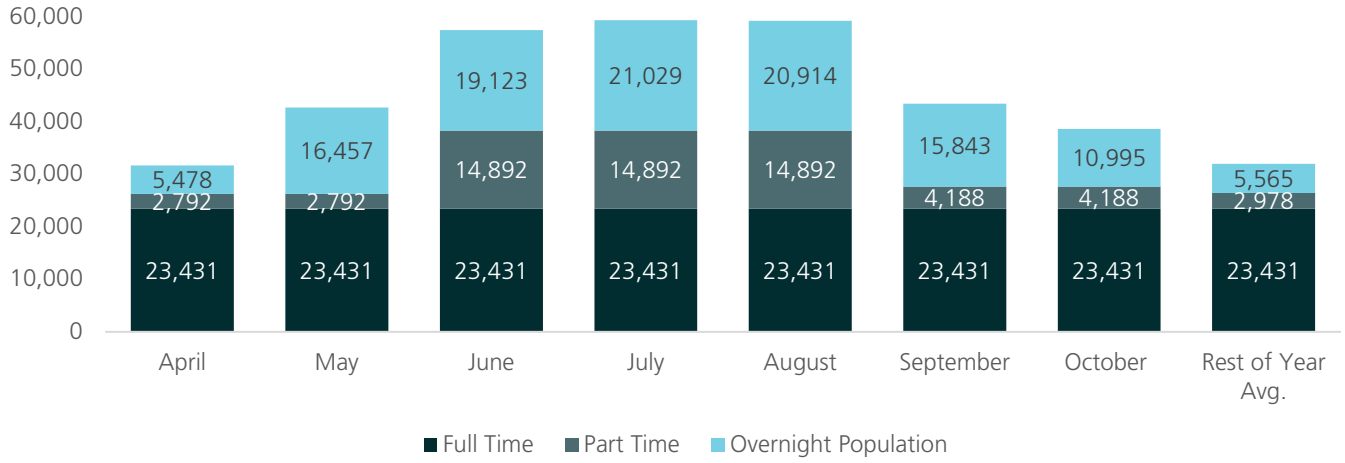
Table XX: Racial Composition in Torch Lake Township, 2023

	Torch Lake Township	Antrim County	State of Michigan
Total population	1,564	23,876	10,051,595
White	96.7%	93.9%	74.8%
All Other Races*	3.3%	2.8%	19.4%
Two or More Races	1.6%	4.0%	6.3%

Source: American Community Survey, DP05 Range of % Margin of Error: ± 0.1% to 2.2%

*Includes: Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and other.

Figure XX: Average Population of Antrim County by Month



Source: Networks Northwest Range of % Margin of Error: N/A

Racial Composition

The table titled "Racial Composition in Torch Lake Township, 2023" indicates that the racial makeup of both Torch Lake Township and Antrim County is predominantly white, with over 96% of residents identifying as such.[6] The next largest racial group in the Township is American Indian or Alaska Native, comprising approximately 3% of the population. Compared to statewide figures, both the Township and the County exhibit significantly less racial diversity.[7]

Seasonal Population

It's important to note that the U.S. Census and American Community Survey do not fully reflect the seasonal population fluctuations in Torch Lake Township—particularly during the busy summer months. Since the Census is conducted on April 1st, many part-time residents who winter elsewhere are not included in the count. Although respondents are instructed to list their primary residence as the place, they live for more than half the year, this guideline is often misunderstood or disregarded, sometimes for tax-related reasons, resulting in an undercount.[8]

To provide a more accurate picture, Networks Northwest monitors seasonal population trends across 10 counties in Northwest Lower Michigan, including Antrim County. Their 2022 Seasonal Population Study for Lower Michigan reported that while Antrim County had a permanent population of 23,431, the summer population more than doubled—rising to nearly 60,000.[9] A detailed monthly population estimate is illustrated in the figure titled "Average Population of Antrim County by Month."

Employment

The U.S. Census Bureau defines the labor force as all individuals age 16 and older who are either employed, unemployed, or serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. The civilian labor force includes only those who are employed or actively seeking employment.[10]

As of 2023, 1,395 Torch Lake Township residents were eligible to participate in the labor force, with a participation rate of 44.3%. Of those participating, 44% were employed at the time of data collection, while approximately 0.3% of the total population was unemployed. The Township's official unemployment rate—calculated as the percentage of unemployed individuals within the civilian labor force—stood at 0.6%.[11] A majority of residents (55.7%) were not participating in the labor force, which aligns with the Township's age profile, as many residents are senior citizens who are likely retired.

Income and Poverty

In 2023, the median household income in Torch Lake Township was $85,972, up 16.6% from 2018 (when the median household income was $73,750).[12] The figure median represents the middle value in an ordered list of data values. The median is the very middle value and is a more reliable figure than the mean (average) of a dataset because it is not skewed by very high or very low figures in the dataset. Incomes in Torch Lake Township are significantly higher than Antrim County and the State of Michigan, which are approximate to each other.[13]

Table XX: Labor Force Participation, 2023

	Torch Lake Township
Population 16 years and over	1,395
Labor force	44.3%
Employed	44.0%
Unemployed	0.6%
Not in labor force	55.7%

Source: American Community Survey, DP03

Range of % Margin of Error: ± 0.3% to 7.9%

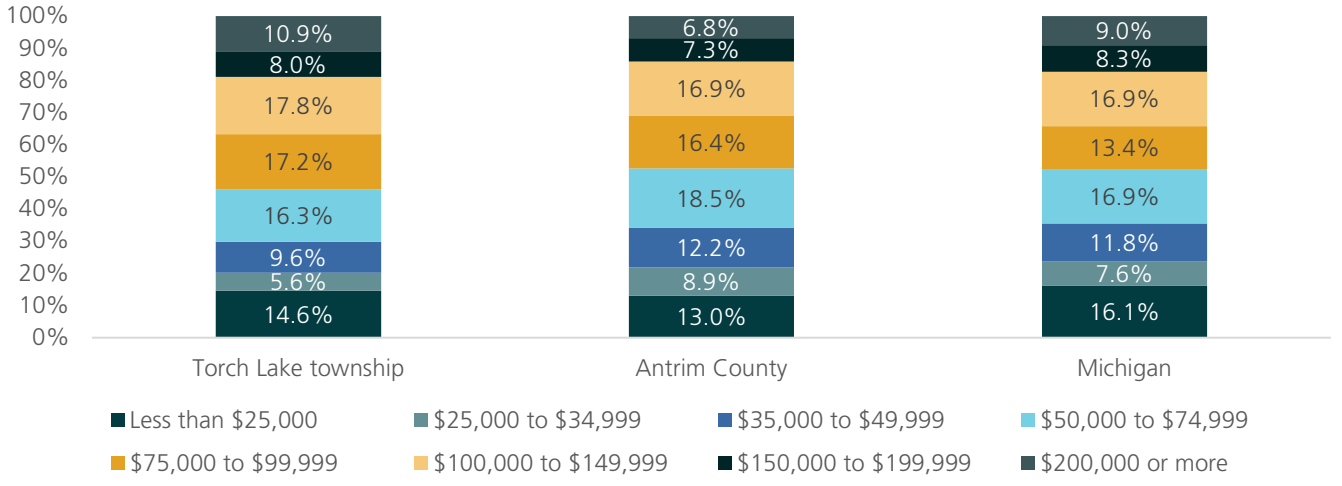
Table XX: Median Household Income, 2018 & 2023

	Torch Lake Township	Antrim County	State of Michigan
2018	$73,750	$52,589	$54,938
2023	$85,972	$71,421	$71,149
% Increase	16.6%	35.8%	29.5%

Source: American Community Survey, DP03

Range of Margin of Error ($): ± $286 to $13,008

Figure XX: Household Incomes, 2023



Source: American Community Survey, DP03

Range of % Margin of Error: ± 0.1% to 8.2%

Table XX: Households in Poverty, 2023

	Torch Lake Township	Antrim County	State of Michigan
All people	11.0%	9.4%	13.1%
Under 18 years	12.4%	13.4%	17.5%
65 years and over	11.6%	6.0%	9.3%
All families	6.2%	5.3%	8.8%
With related children of the householder under 18 years	14.8%	11.1%	14.4%
Married couple families	4.3%	3.0%	4.2%
Families with female householder, no spouse present	42.3%*	20.5%	25.1%

Source: American Community Survey, DP03

Range of % Margin of Error: ± 0.1% to 14.8%
*In Torch Lake Township, limited data led to a margin of error of 39.4%.

The Federal Poverty Level (FPL), or federal poverty guidelines, is a yearly income benchmark used to assess eligibility for a range of federal assistance programs and benefits, with thresholds varying by household size.[14] In Torch Lake Township, 11.0% of residents were living below the FPL in 2023. Poverty rates were notably higher among single female-headed households and families with children.[15] Household income is an important metric in recreation planning because lower-income households are more likely to face barriers to accessing recreation assets due to factors like transportation and cost of participation.[16] By ensuring that recreation amenities are available throughout the Township and that programming is affordable, Torch Lake can help to ensure all residents are able to receive enrichment through recreation and interpersonal interactions.

Table XX: Federal Poverty Guidelines, 2023

Persons in Family/ Household	Poverty Guideline
1	$14,580
2	$19,720
3	$24,860
4	$30,000
5	$35,140

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Disability

Compared to the County and State, Torch Lake Township residents have a lower disability rate. Just 10% of the total population is disabled in some form, compared to 15.9% in the County, and 14.2% statewide.[17] While the rate is lower compared to other areas, 1 in 10 residents do have a disability which should be considered in recreation planning for Torch Lake Township. When designing recreational spaces, the Township should consider barriers to access and ensure that they are modified so that all may use these spaces, employing Universal Design concepts will help to increase access for all.

Table XX: Population with Disability, 2023

	Torch Lake Population	With a disability	% with a disability	Antrim County % with a disability	Michigan % with a disability
Under 18 years	225	12	5.3%	8.3%	4.9%
18 to 64 years	669	60	9.0%	13.7%	12.2%
65 years and over	670	85	12.7%	24.7%	32.2%
TOTAL	1,564	157	10.0%	15.9%	14.2%

Source: American Community Survey, S1810

Range of % Margin of Error: ± 0.1% to 8.9%

Sources

1 U.S. Census Bureau, P1, 2000-2020

2 American Community Survey, 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP05.

3 American Community Survey, 2018 & 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP05.

4 Ibid.

5 National Recreation and Park Association, Parks and Recreation Supports Older Adults, 4-8-2025, https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/2ebf5a9eed0a493a8ea1c74bf5735aa1/nrpa-older-adults-report.pdf

6 American Community Survey, 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP05.

7 Ibid.

8 U.S. Census Bureau, About the Decennial Census, 4-7-2025, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census.html

9 Networks Northwest. 2022 Seasonal Population Study, 4-7-2025, www.networksnorthwest.org/news-events/news/new-study-looks-at-seasonal-population-seasonal-workforce-and-short-term-rentals-in-northern-michigan.html

10 U.S. Census Bureau, Glossary, 4-7-2025, https://www.census.gov/glossary/#term_Laborforce?term=Labor+force

11 American Community Survey, 2015 & 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP03.

12 American Community Survey, 2015&2023 5 Year Estimates, DP03.

13 Ibid.

14 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Poverty Guidelines, 4-8-2025, https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines

15 American Community Survey, 2015 & 2023 5 Year Estimates, DP03.

16 Kenzie, et al., National Institute of Health, Neighborhood Income Matters: Disparities in Community Recreation Facilities, Amenities, and Programs, 4-8-2025, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25006598/

17 American Community Survey, 2023 5 Year Estimates, S1810.

This page intentionally left blank.



2 Administrative Structure

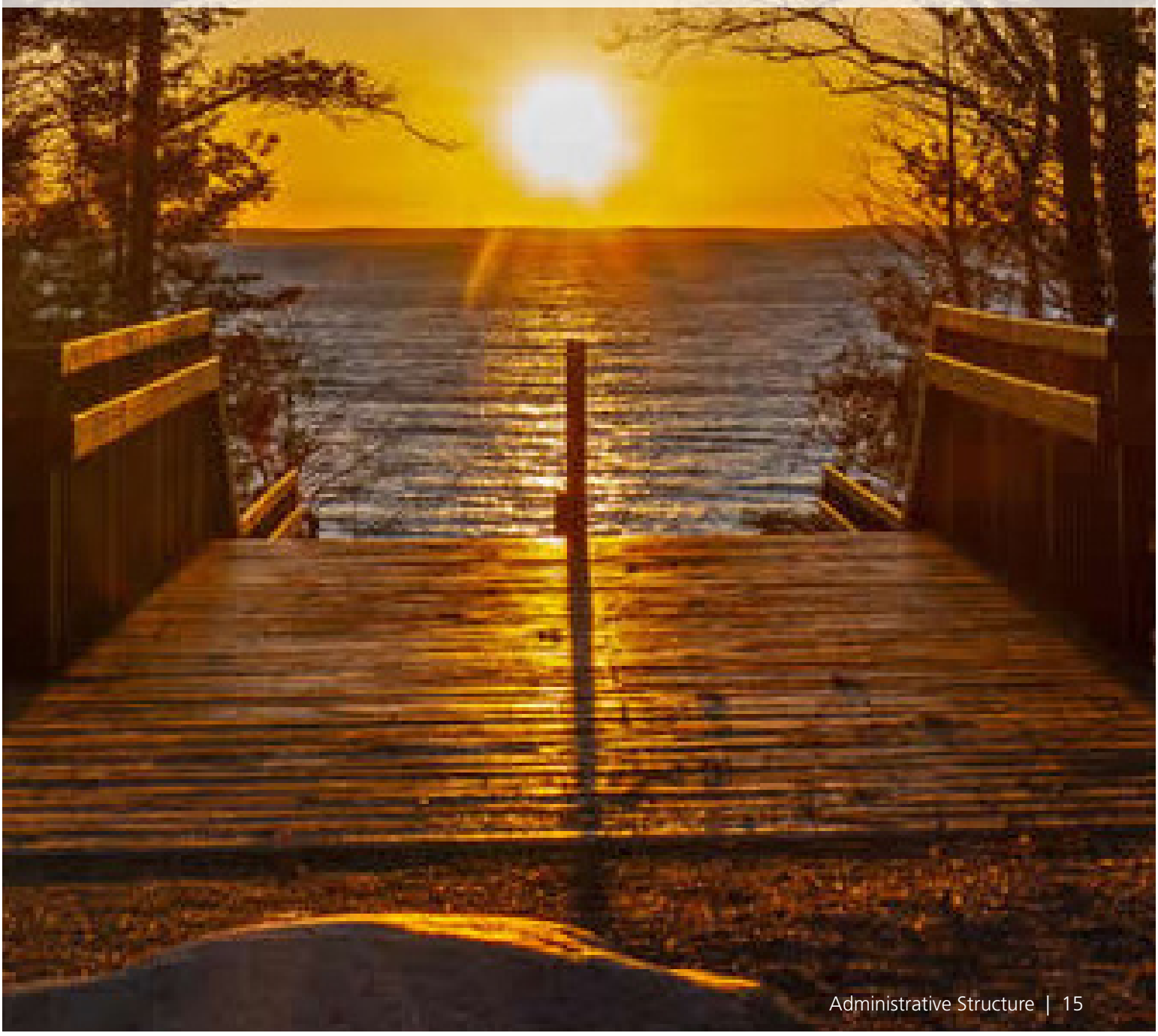
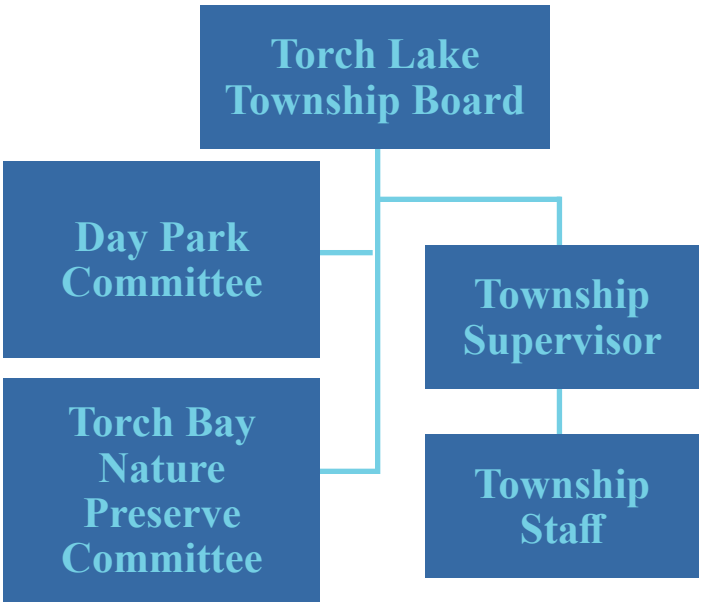


Figure XX: Organization Chart for Torch Lake Township



ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Torch Lake Township's parks and recreation system is overseen by the Township Board, which holds ultimate decision-making authority for all recreation-related matters. A Day Park Committee and Torch Bay Nature Preserve Committee, appointed by the Board, serves in an advisory capacity to support the development and implementation of the Township's recreation goals. The Committees make recommendations on recreation policies, park improvements, and project priorities. The Recreation Committees also function as a conduit for public input, helping to ensure that the community's recreational needs and concerns are communicated to Township leadership. Day-to-day park operations and maintenance are carried out by Township staff, contractors, and volunteers under the direction of the Township Board.

BUDGET AND FUNDING

The budget proposed for parks and recreation in the 2025-2026 fiscal year (FY) in Torch Lake Township is $65,480. The table "FY 2025-2026 Budget" shows the budget broken down by line items, as well as the pervious budget years.[1]

GRANT HISTORY

Torch Lake Township has actively sought and received grant funding in the past to support the acquisition and development of its park and recreation facilities. Recent grant applications for the Day Park have been rejected by the State. According to records from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the Township has obtained grants for the improvement or establishment of the following park and recreation sites within its boundaries:

- **Grant# TS 91-340 - Torch Lake Day Park** Acquisition of 3.58 acres, with 196 feet of frontage on Torch Lake. (1991)
- **Grant# TF 93-308 - Torch Bay Trail & Beach** Acquisition of approximately 37 acres of forest and dunes with 720 feet of frontage on Lake Michigan. (1993)

Table XX: FY 2025-2026 Parks Budget

	2023-2024 Budget	2024-2025 Budget	2025-2026 Budget
Wages	$18,715	$20,512	$16,250
Contract Services	$4,181	$4,537	$11,010
Janitorial	$14,452	$20,964	$17,920
Electric	$842	$2,373	$2,000
Repairs	$882	$6,020	$3,800
Grounds Maintenance	$8,398	$7,000	$6,500
Day Park Building Improvements	$39,501	$21,577	$8,000
Total	**$86,971**	**$82,983**	**$65,480**

Source: Torch Lake Township 2025-2026 Budget

COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer participation plays an important role in recreation projects throughout the Township. The Township's committees are made up of volunteers and individuals are also engaged on a project-by-project basis—often providing in-kind labor to support grant applications or help implement park improvements. Members of the community also help to clean the Township's natural and recreational spaces by picking up trash and cleaning trails on an informal basis.

Torch Lake Township lies within the boundaries of both the Elk Rapids and Central Lake school districts; however, neither district currently plays a formal role in the Township's recreation planning or programming.

The Township typically collaborates with Antrim County, particularly on the development of non-motorized trails and bike infrastructure. Ongoing coordination with Antrim County, local conservancies, the Upper Torch Lake Association, area Tribal Governments, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) will be important for expanding and enhancing recreational opportunities across the Township.

Source

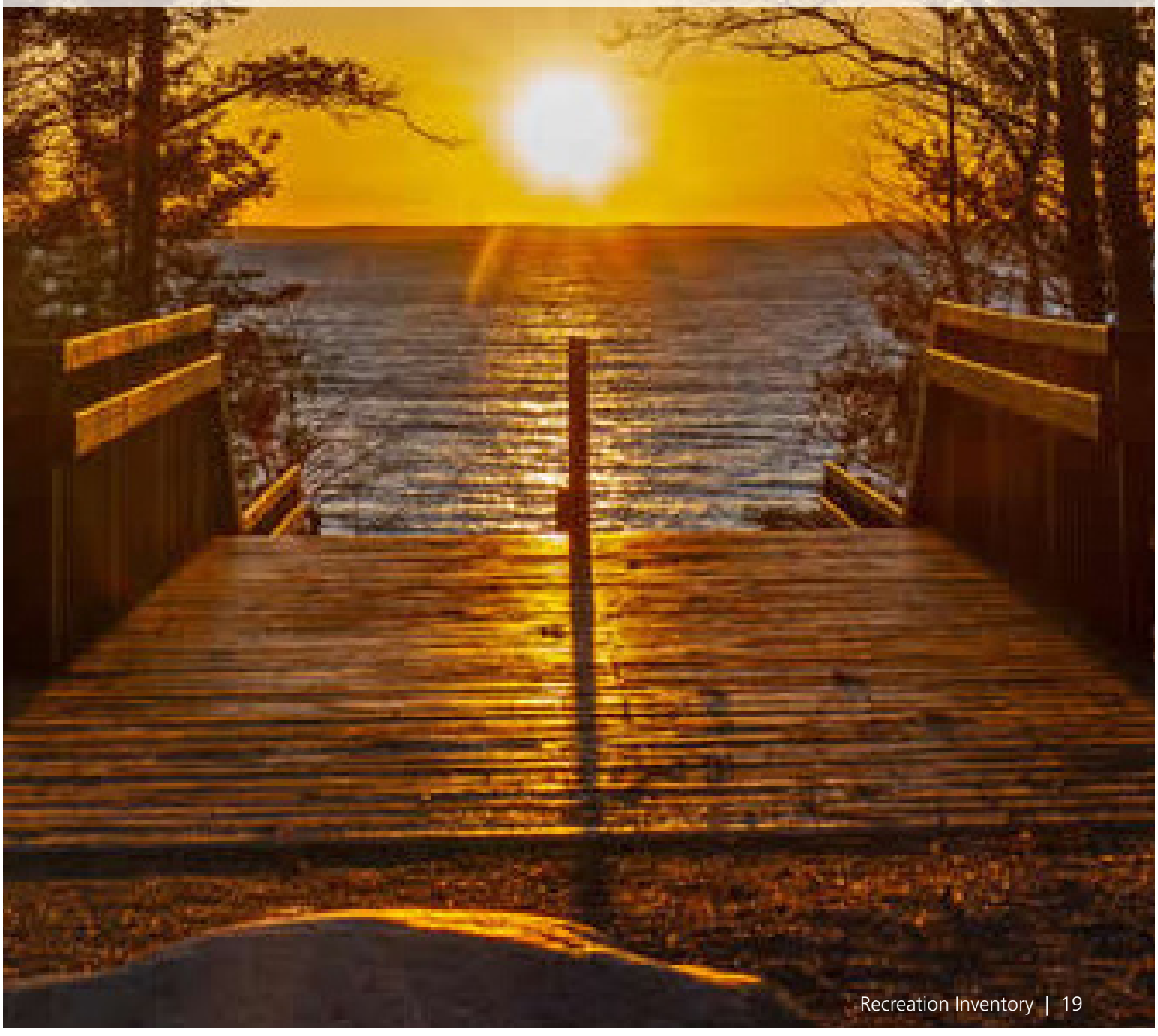
1 Torch Lake Township, 2025-2026 Budget, 4-8-2025, https://www.torchlaketownship.org/budgets/BUDGET%20DRAFT%20FYR%202025-2026.pdf

This page intentionally left blank.



3

Recreation Inventory



Having a detailed understanding of the recreation assets used by a community is a key component of recreation planning. To understand the condition and status of recreational facilities in Torch Lake Township, an inventory of existing facilities was conducted. This inventory is intended to provide a comprehensive description of the current parks and recreational offerings that are available to recreational users across the Township. While this section accounts for facilities in the Township, including those managed by other groups in Torch Lake, and others will be mentioned in this section, only facilities operated by the Township are fully inventoried.

Beyond detailing the type, quantity, and quality of amenities at each park and recreational facility, this assessment documents the condition of amenities and park accessibility, per State of Michigan requirements. The condition of each park's amenities was assessed as "poor," "fair," "good," or "excellent," and accessibility was evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5:

- 1: None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.
- 2: Some of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.
- 3: Most of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.
- 4: The entire park meets accessibility guidelines.
- 5: The entire park was developed/renovated using the Principles of Universal Design.

PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Universal design is a concept of the implementation of design standards in buildings and environments that makes them accessible and inclusive for individuals of all ages, sizes, abilities, and disabilities. Its aim is to develop spaces that are convenient and functional for everyone, enabling full participation in a community. Examples of universal design in a community include large print signage, ramps instead of stairs, curb cuts for wheelchair access as well as strollers. Universal design has seven principles encompassing design for all:[1]

- **Principle 1: Equitable Use** - The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
- **Principle 2: Flexibility in Use** - The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- **Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use** - Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
- **Principle 4: Perceptible Information** - The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
- **Principle 5: Tolerance for Error** - The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- **Principle 6: Low Physical Effort** - The design can be used efficiently, comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.
- **Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use** - Appropriate size and space is allotted for approach, reach and manipulation regardless of physical characteristics such as size or mobility.



Torch Lake from Day Park.
Source: torchlakedaypark.org

INVENTORY OF RECREATION FACILITIES

Facilities Owned by Torch Lake Township

Torch Lake Township is a naturally rich recreation area, situated on a narrow moraine between Torch Lake to the east and Lake Michigan to the west, with most of its boundary comprised of shoreline. The area's varied climate supports a wide range of year-round recreational activities. Within an hour's drive, residents and visitors have access to ski resorts, golf courses, tennis courts, boat charters, marinas, parks, campgrounds, sailing and boating facilities, ball fields, hunting and fishing areas, nature trails, protected natural lands, and other major tourist amenities.

Many facilities in Torch Lake Township have features that align with universal design standards and improve access to the recreation options in the area. These features include handi-capped parking, accessible bathrooms at the Day Park, and accessible portable restrooms in other parks. While some facilities are left largely undeveloped to preserve natural features, some additional standards, such as improved pathways, would allow for more access while still preserving much of the site.

Facilities Not Owned by Torch Lake Township

Beyond recreation facilities owned by Torch Lake Township, there are also facilities, both public and private that are present In the Township but owned by another entity. These facilities are owned by Antrim County, the State, and a non-profit. Recently a private group purchases property at the corner of M 88 and US 31 to provide a trailhead for the Nakwema Trailway under development. These facilities provide recreational options and enjoyment for residents of Torch Lake Township as well as those in surrounding areas.

Table XX: Recreation Facilities Owned or Managed by Torch Lake Township

Facility Name	Size	Amenities	Accessibility Score
William Good Day Park and Torch Lake Dock and Ramp	4 acres	200' Torch Lake Access, beach, restrooms, picnic area, playground, volleyball, basketball court, two pavilions, dock and single lane boat ramp and parking area, adjacent to the Day Park	5
Drive Boat Ramp	Less than 1 acre	Concrete boat launch on Torch Lake	--
Torch Bay Nature Preserve *Property managed by Township	38 acres	Natural area, nature trails	3

Table XX: Public Facilities Not Owned by Torch Lake Township

Facility Name	Size	Amenities	Ownership
Potential Nakwema Trailway Trailhead (corner of M 88 & US 31)	5 acres	None	Non-profit
Michigan Trail North – Access Site	66 feet, comprised of 2 separate adjacent lots	Lake Michigan Access	Antrim County Road Commission
Michigan Trail South	--	Lake Michigan Access	Antrim County Road Commission
Barnes Park	163 acres	Campground, beach on Lake Michigan, restrooms, bath house, picnic area, playground, baseball field, two pavilions	Antrim County
Torch Lake Access Site	4.5 acres, with over 500 feet of beach frontage	Beach on Torch Lake, restrooms, boat launch	State

Source

1 UC Berkeley, Disability Access & Compliance, Universal Design Principles, 4-16-2025, dac.berkeley.edu/services/campus-building-accessibility/universal-design-principles



4

Planning Process

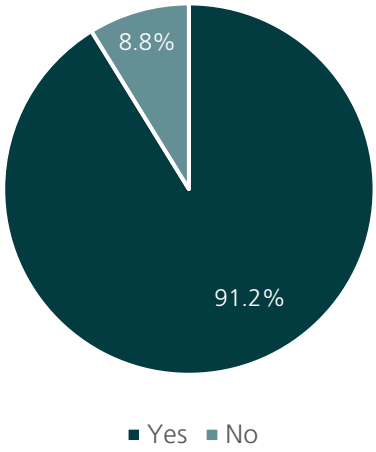
For the Torch Lake Township parks and recreation plan, public engagement was facilitated through a survey made accessible to residents online and an open house event in September, 2025. An addition open house was held in September 2026. The survey and open house were done in combination with input for an update to the Township Master Plan. Both forms of public engagement informed the suggestions, strategies, and opportunities promoted by this parks and recreation plan.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The survey was advertised by mailing, newpaper advertisements, emails, as well as in paper form that was available for completion at Township Hall. During the survey period from July 18 to September 4, 2025, the Township collected 456 responses from community members. A summary of this survey as well as a distillation of key takeaways are included in this document.

Question: Do you live in Torch Lake Township?

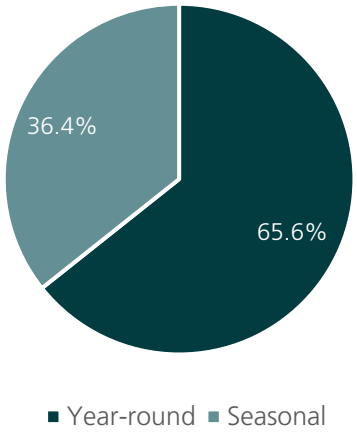
Total Responses: 441



The overwhelming majority of survey respondents (over 9 out of 10) live in Torch Lake Township, indicating this survey successfully captured input primarily from residents.

Question: Are you a seasonal or year-round resident?

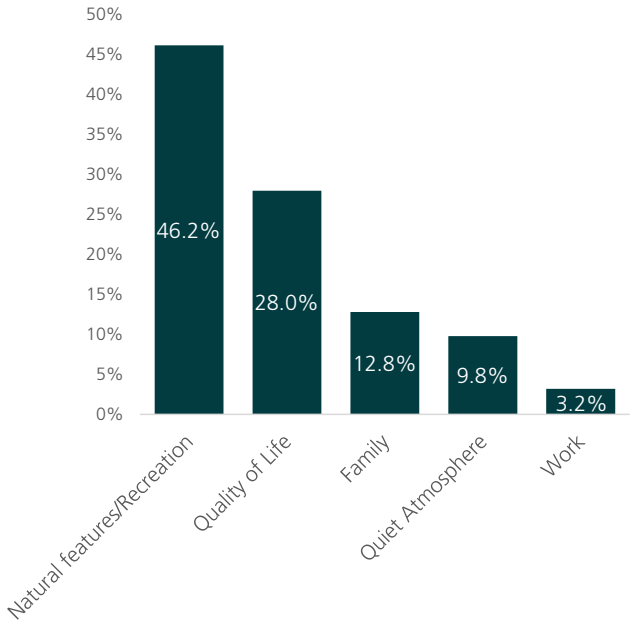
Total Responses: 456



The survey reveals a mixed community composition in Torch Lake Township with roughly a 2:1 ratio of year-round to seasonal residents among respondents.

Question: What is the main reason you decided to live/own property in Torch Lake Township?

Total Responses: 456

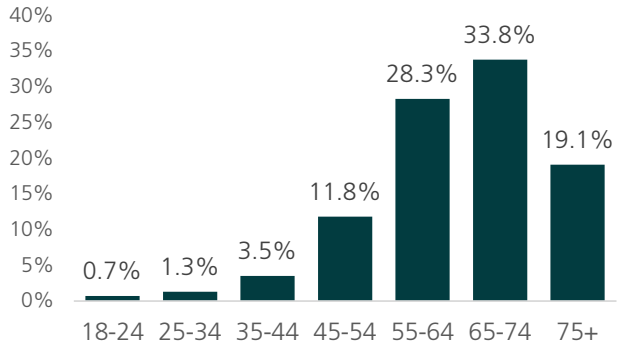


This data reveals Torch Lake Township as primarily a destination community chosen for its natural amenities and lifestyle benefits rather than economic opportunity. Residents are likely highly invested in preserving the environmental qualities

and peaceful character that originally attracted them. This could influence priorities around development, environmental protection, and maintaining the rural atmosphere that defines the community's appeal. The strong emphasis on natural features suggests residents would likely support policies that protect water quality, preserve green spaces, and maintain recreational access. This is evident of the recent adoption of the Septic Inspection and Property Transfer Ordinance.

Question: What is your age range?

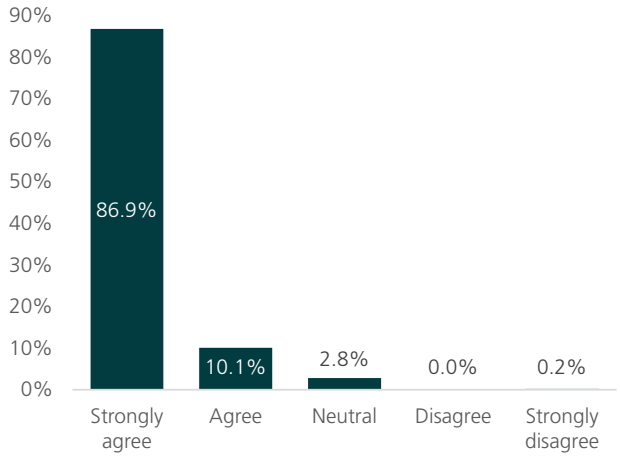
Total Responses: 456



More than 80% of all respondents were aged 55 years or older. Though not representative of the overall population age distribution, it shows that a large portion of older residents are engaged with recreation opportunities in Torch Lake Township. This age profile suggests priority needs around accessibility improvements and age-friendly recreation infrastructure.

Question: Natural features (lakes, streams, forests, wetlands, etc.) are important to my quality of life and should be protected.

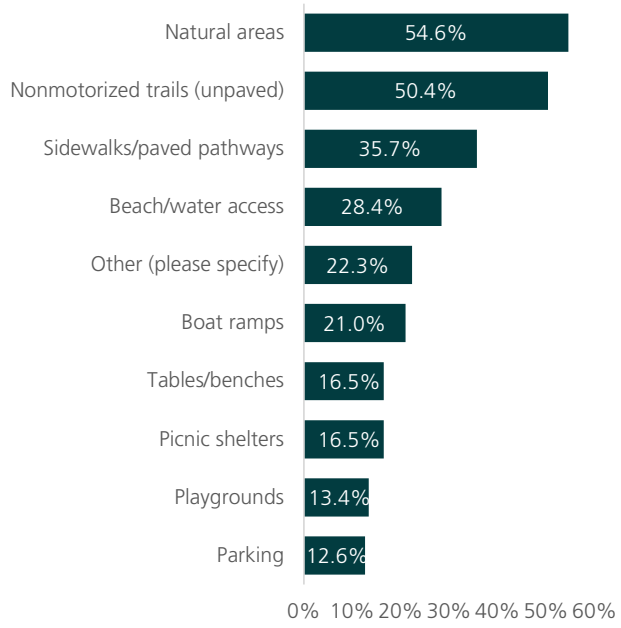
Total Responses: 456



Nearly all (96.7%) respondents either strongly agree or agree that natural features are important and should be protected, representing one of the strongest unified opinions in community surveys.

Question: What type of recreational facilities would you like to see more of in Torch Lake Township? (Check all that apply)

Total Responses: 381



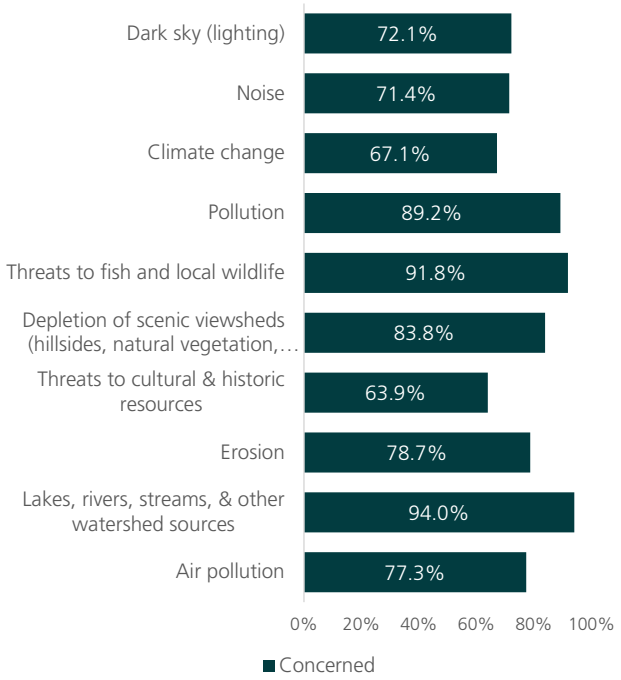
Survey responses indicate that residents of Torch Lake Township are most interested in natural areas (54.6%) and unpaved nonmotorized trails (50.4%), making these the highest priorities for future recreational development. Sidewalks and paved pathways also received strong support (35.7%), showing a clear demand for improved walkability and connectivity within the community. Additionally, beach and water access (28.4%) and boat ramps (21.0%) are seen as important amenities, reflecting residents' desire for greater opportunities to enjoy the township's waterfront resources. It is important to note that there is limited land, funding, and availability for many of these improvements.

There was also space for additional comments that received just over 80 responses. Many respondents expressed a strong desire to maintain the township's natural, quiet character and limit additional recreational development, with several emphasizing that existing facilities are sufficient and concerns about attracting more tourists and

spending tax dollars on public amenities. Lastly, there was notable interest in specific improvements, including pickleball courts, bike trails, better trail connections (such as the Nakwema and TART Trails), improved boat access, and enhanced facilities like restrooms, benches, and picnic areas.

Question: Please state your level of concern with each of the topics below:

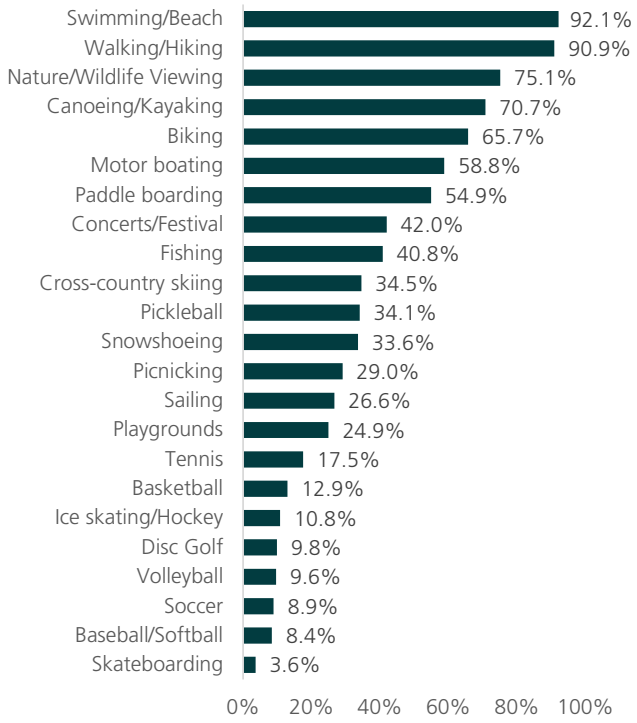
Total Responses: 425



This question gave the following options for each of the ten topics: Extremely Concerned, Concerned, Neutral, Unconcerned, Extremely Unconcerned. All topics received higher than 50% of responses stating that they were either Extremely Concerned or Concerned. Lakes, rivers, streams, and watershed sources emerged as the top concern at 78% extremely concerned/concerned, followed closely by threats to fish and local wildlife at 76%, and general pollution at 75%. These findings strongly align with the community's core values around natural features and reflect the recreational and ecological priorities that originally attracted residents to the area. Moderate-high concern issues include erosion (65%), depletion of scenic viewsheds (64%), and air pollution (62%), while lower priority issues encompass climate change (55%), threats to cultural and historic resources (52%), noise pollution (51%), and dark sky lighting concerns (48%).

Question: What recreational activities do you and members of your household enjoy? (check all that apply)

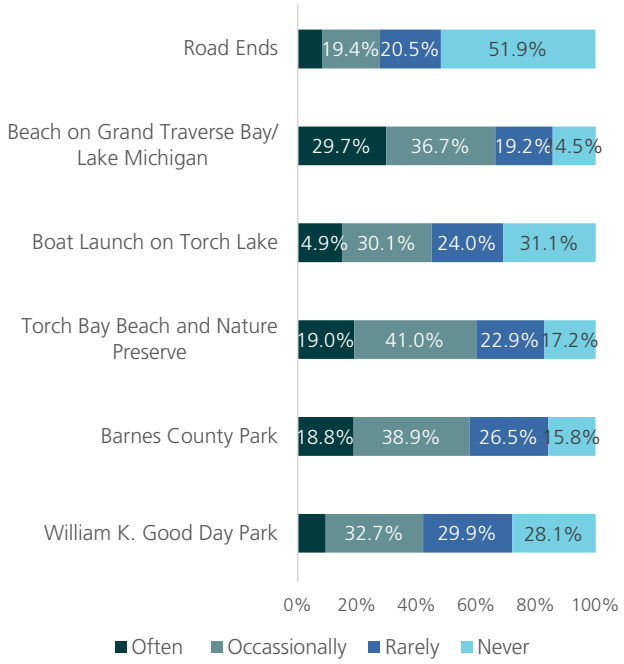
Total Responses: 417



Based on the survey responses about recreational activities enjoyed by household members, the data reveals a community deeply connected to water-based recreation and outdoor activities. Swimming and beach activities appear in nearly every response, making them the most popular pursuits, closely followed by walking, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, and motor boating. Nature and wildlife viewing also ranks among the most frequently selected activities, indicating residents value the natural environment and outdoor experiences.

Question: How often do you use the following Township recreational assets?

Total Responses: 415

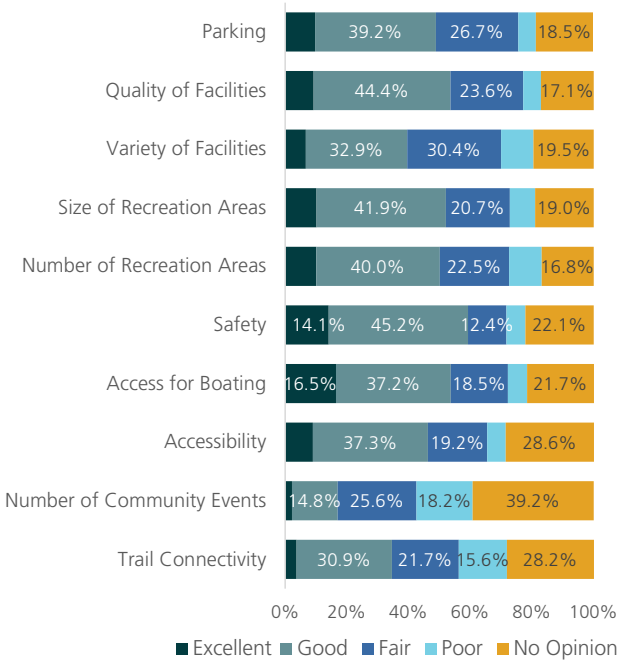


Looking at the survey responses for how often residents use Township recreational assets, the data shows varied usage patterns across the six facilities. The responses follow a frequency scale of Never, Rarely, Occasionally, and Often. William K. Good Day Park shows moderate usage with most respondents indicating "Occasionally" or "Rarely" using the facility. Very few respondents report "Often" usage, and a significant portion select "Never," suggesting this park may have limited appeal or accessibility for many residents. Barnes County Park demonstrates similar patterns with predominantly "Rarely" and "Occasionally" responses, though slightly fewer "Never" responses than Good Day Park, indicating somewhat broader community engagement.

Torch Bay Beach and Nature Preserve emerges as one of the more popular facilities, with a higher proportion of "Often" and "Occasionally" responses compared to the parks. This aligns with the community's strong preference for water-based activities, identified in the recreational preferences survey. Boat Launch on Torch Lake shows strong usage among those who participate, with many "Often" responses, though also significant "Never" responses, creating a polarized usage pattern that likely reflects the divide between boat owners and non-boat owners in the community. Beach on Grand Traverse Bay/Lake Michigan receives substantial usage across all frequency categories, with many residents reporting "Occasionally" or "Often" visits, reinforcing the community's connection to water recreation. Road Ends show mixed usage patterns, with responses distributed evenly across all frequency categories, suggesting these access points serve different purposes for different residents. When asked more specifically which road ends respondents were referring to using, Cresswell Road, Barnes Road, Traverse Bay Road, and Erickson Road were the most frequent responses. The overall pattern indicates that water-related facilities receive the highest and most consistent usage, while traditional park facilities show more moderate engagement levels.

Question: How do you rate the following Torch Lake Township parks and recreation amenities?

Total Responses: 412

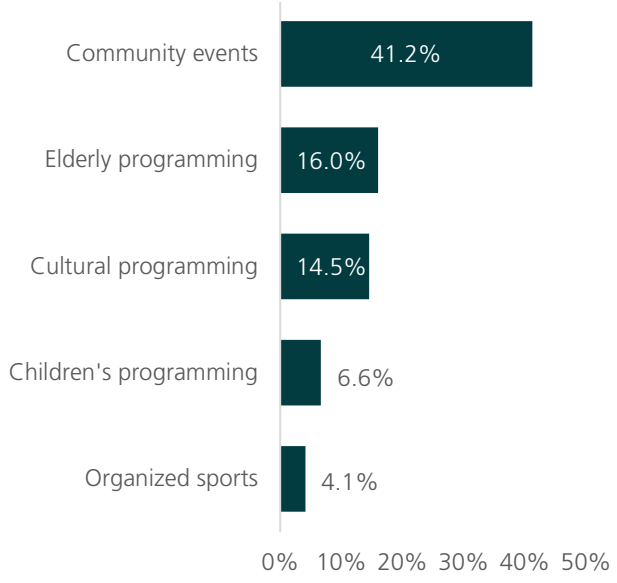


Respondents ranked various aspects of Township recreation amenities on a scale of Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, or No Opinion. Survey results show mixed opinions about Torch Lake Township's parks and recreation amenities. Safety received the highest positive ratings, with 59.3% of respondents rating it as excellent or good, followed by the quality of facilities (53.6%) and the size of recreation areas (52.1%). Access for boating also performed well, with 53.7% rating it positively. Accessibility and

parking received moderate satisfaction, with 46.3% and 48.9% positive ratings, respectively. On the other hand, several areas need improvement. Trail connectivity earned only 34.6% positive ratings, while 37.3% of respondents rated it fair or poor. The variety of facilities also scored lower, with nearly a third (30.4%) rating it as fair. The lowest-rated category was the number of community events, with just 17% positive responses and the highest percentage of respondents (39.2%) indicating no opinion, suggesting a potential lack of awareness or engagement. Overall, the results indicate that increasing programming, enhancing trail systems, diversifying facilities, and improving outreach should be top priorities moving forward.

Question: What type of recreation programs would you like to see offered in Torch Lake Township?

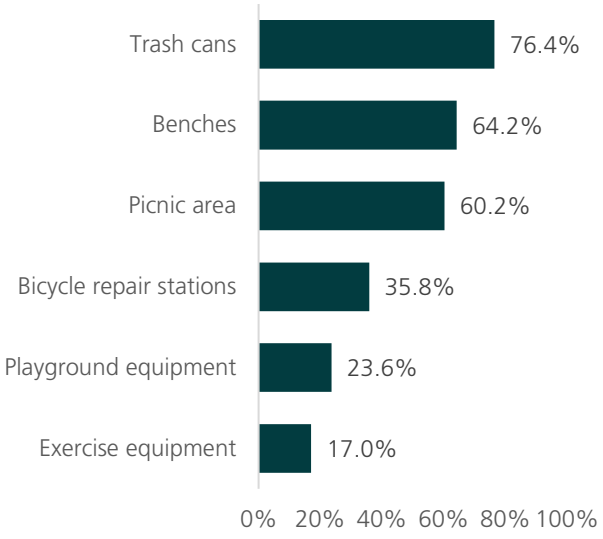
Total Responses: 318



Survey responses show that community events were the most desired type of recreation program in Torch Lake Township, receiving 41.2% of selections. It is important to note that community events have had mixed outcomes in the past. Other popular choices included elderly programming (16.0%), cultural programming (14.5%), children's programming (6.6%), and organized sports (4.1%), while 17.7% of responses fell under "other," reflecting a range of additional ideas. Open-ended comments revealed several key themes. A recurring request was for pickleball facilities, including both indoor and outdoor courts, highlighting its popularity as a growing sport and social activity. Some comments also suggested additional offerings such as bike paths, outdoor concerts, therapeutic pools, senior transportation, tennis courts, and library access. At the same time, several respondents voiced skepticism about expanding township programming, citing concerns about costs, taxes, or unnecessary duplication of nearby recreation opportunities. Others preferred to leave the area as it is, with no further development. Overall, the results suggest strong community support for expanded programming especially community events, cultural activities, and pickleball.

Question: A non-profit recently acquired 4 parcels totaling 5 acres at the northwest corner of M-88 and US 31, next to Barnes Park. Current plans are to add a trailhead as part of the Nakwema Trailway that will connect Traverse City to Charlevoix. What other amenities would you like to see included at this location?

Total Responses: 377



Survey results show the most desired amenities at the new trailhead site near M-88 and US-31 are trash cans (76.4%), followed by benches (64.2%), picnic areas (60.2%), and bicycle repair stations (35.8%). Playground equipment (23.6%) and exercise equipment (17.0%) were less common but still received support, reflecting interest in creating a comfortable, functional gathering space for trail users. Open-ended feedback emphasized restrooms as the top priority, with requests for permanent, portable, or year-round

facilities. Parking was also frequently noted as essential for accessibility. Beyond these basics, many residents supported expanded recreation such as pickleball courts, basketball or volleyball courts, a skatepark, splashpad, and dog park. Others suggested community gathering amenities like shelters, fire pits, and multipurpose rooms, as well as trail-supportive features such as hydration stations, recycling bins, signage, and e-bike charging. Overall, the feedback reflects a balance between strong demand for restrooms, parking, and basic facilities, enthusiasm for new recreation opportunities, and caution from residents about costs and growth. Approximately 25% of the Township's population completed this survey, suggesting that further community engagement efforts may be beneficial for specific projects.

Key Takeaways

- **Survey Respondents:** Over 90% of respondents live in the township, with a 2:1 ratio of year-round to seasonal residents. More than 80% are aged 55 and over, highlighting the influence of older adults in shaping recreation needs.
- **Environmental priorities:** Nearly all respondents (96.7%) want natural features protected, with top concerns around water quality, wildlife, and pollution.
- **Recreation patterns:** The community is highly water- and nature-oriented, with swimming, hiking, kayaking, and wildlife viewing as top activities. Winter sports like skiing and snowshoeing also show strong participation.
- **Facilities:** Water access sites see the most frequent use. Trail connectivity and facility variety are seen as weak spots, while community events are rated lowest.
- **Future development:** Residents prioritize natural areas, trails, and walkability improvements, with less interest in playgrounds and parking. Many stress preserving the township's quiet, natural character.
- **Programming:** Community events are most desired, followed by elderly and cultural programming. Pickleball is a recurring request.
- **New trailhead site:** Trash cans, benches, picnic areas, and restrooms top the list of desired amenities. Parking and pickleball courts are also common requests, though some residents caution against overdevelopment.

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

2025 Open House

A community open house was held on September 15, 2025 at the Community Services Building, slightly south of the Township of Torch Lake. Approximately 65 community members attended the event to offer input on various topics regarding parks and recreation in the Township. The results of the open house are summarized below.

Recreational Facilities and Activities

What type of recreation facilities would you like to see more of in Torch Lake Township?

The most popular recreation facilities were non-motorized trails, natural areas, and beach/water access, indicating that the Township should prioritize these types of recreational facilities.

Type of Recreational Facility	Count
Non-motorized trails	24
Natural areas	22
Beach/Water access	11
Picnic shelters	5
Boat ramps	3
Playgrounds	3
Sidewalks	2
Tables/benches	0

Parking	0

What recreational activities do you and members of your household enjoy?

Of the 24 options provided, the seven recreational activities included in the following table were the most popular, receiving at least ten votes each. Other activities that garnered fewer than ten votes are listed in order of popularity: motorboating , sailing, fishing, playgrounds, snowshoeing, concerts/festivals, paddle boarding, tennis, baseball, basketball, disc gold, volleyball, picnicking, soccer, and skateboarding. It is important to note again that there is limited land, funding, and availability for many of these improvements.

Type of Recreational Activity	Count
Walking and Hiking	21
Biking	20
Nature/Wildlife viewing	14
Pickleball	13
Cross-country skiing	13
Swimming/Beach	10
Canoeing/Kayaking	10

Future Opportunities

What would you like Torch Lake Township to look like in 20 years?

One of the large focuses shared by participants to prioritize for the next 20 years was recreational amenities. In particular, community members identified that additional recreational spaces, such as hiking, biking, and walking trails should be developed in the Township. Another general opinion shared at the open house was that there should be additional spaces for younger children in the Township. Developing more outdoor recreational facilities geared towards the younger population in the Township may be beneficial.

Several community members additionally noted that the Township should retain many of its current features in the coming 20 years, especially regarding its natural amenities. As such, it is evident that the Township should continue to support its existing recreational facilities and amenities in the future.

What opportunities are in Torch Lake Village? What would you like to see?

Open house attendees identified five categories of opportunities to be pursued in Torch Lake Village. Two of these categories involve the Township's recreational facilities and amenities and are listed below. The other three categories of opportunities may be viewed in the Township's Master Plan.

» **Bike Trails:** developing new bike trail connecting Eastport and Torch Lake.

» **Recreational Facilities:** developing pickleball and tennis courts.

What opportunities are in Eastport Village? What would you like to see?

Five additional – and generally similar – categories of opportunities for the community of Eastport were identified by community members. Again, two of these categories directly involve parks and recreation facilities in the Township.

» **Recreation Facilities:** developing pickleball and tennis courts was largely popular among attendees.

» **Completing the trailhead:** continuing the development of the Nakwema trailhead was also highly anticipated by community members at the open house.

Key Takeaways

» The most prevalent interests shared by open house attendees were to expand the Township's non-motorized trails, support the natural areas, and develop additional recreational facilities, such as tennis and pickleball courts.

» The Township should preserve existing natural features and amenities, as this is a top concern of community members.

2026 Open House

A community open house was held on September 21, 2026 at the Community Services Building, slightly south of the Township of Torch Lake. Approximately 60 community members attended the event to offer input on various topics regarding parks and recreation in the Township. The results of the open house are summarized below.

Are any action items missing, unnecessary, unclear, or lower priority than others? Please use a sticky note to record your answers.

Comments under this question were mixed, with some stating that they are in favor of the increased visits to the Township's recreational facilities, while others were opposed due to increased parking and traffic. Two respondents requested the creation of a citizen-led recreation committee. One commenter supported removing toilets at the Nature Preserve to save tax dollars, while another was opposed to their removal, citing a cleaner beach. Another commenter highlighted the cleaner beach due to new trash containers placed at the Nature Preserve. A popular comment stated that the Township should focus on its own residents before trying to increase tourism.

Additional Funding

Would you be willing to pay additional property taxes, a millage, special assessment, user fees, donations, or another funding source for specific recreational improvements?

Both the 'Yes' and 'No' boxes saw exactly 16 votes. A few sticky notes placed under the 'Yes' box stated that they were in favor as long as funding went toward the proposed Nakwema Trail.

If additional property tax funding were considered, what annual cost per household would feel reasonable?

12 respondents selected '$100 per property', 3 selected '$200 per property', and 1 selected 'More than $200'. A few sticky notes placed under this question were opposed to increased funding, citing the instability of the Nakwema Trail project, bad timing due to prior storm recovery, and too many projects at once. One commenter suggested residents should elect to participate.

Miscellaneous Questions

How should the Township identify, protect, regulate, and maintain public road ends while preserving public access and minimizing conflicts?

Comments were mainly in favor of identifying road ends, especially the one at Creswell Road, with respondents stating that it is perfect for fire engine access, though boat launching should be discouraged there. One comment was in favor of properly delineating boundaries to not affect neighboring properties. A few comments were opposed, with one asking about the cost of this, and another stating that it should not be a priority, as the township has multiple waterfront access points.

What additional recreational needs do you see for the community?

Several respondents were in favor of adding pickleball courts to Day Park. Comments regarding the Nakwema Trail were mixed, with one highlighting the expensive nature of the project, while another stated it would be a valuable resource. One commenter stated that no additional recreational facilities are needed.



5

Implementation

Goals offer broad guidance and outline the desired future state. They address specific needs and issues but remain general in nature.

Objectives are concrete steps that help achieve the broader goals and are designed to be attainable.

Actions detail the specific steps required to meet objectives. A single strategy may support multiple objectives, or an objective may need several strategies to be achieved. These actions also identify the implementation tools, such as zoning changes, and the key stakeholders responsible for fulfilling the goals and objectives.

The goals, objectives, and action plan are designed to shape future decisions regarding recreation, aligning closely with the Township's values and priorities. These goals were formulated through a comprehensive process that included analyzing current facilities, public input, and input from Township officials. To effectively implement these goals, objectives, and actions, it is crucial to grasp their respective roles and their interconnectedness. Understanding these dynamics ensures a coherent approach to achieving our recreational objectives.

GOAL:

Maintain and improve parks and recreational facilities and identify opportunities for new spaces.

OBJECTIVES:

- Continue to provide, maintain, and enhance parks and recreational facilities and amenities for both residents and visitors.
- Prioritize the enhancement of the Day Park to continue ensuring that it is a premier recreation space in Torch Lake Township.
- Keep the 5-year recreation plan up-to-date and ensure it meets DNR approval to maintain a dependable stream of funding.
- Identify new spaces for recreational opprotunities
- Develop policies and directives to establish construction and maintenance schedules.
- Develop or upgrade amenities to expand recreational opportunities specifically for the area's youth.
- Increase the Township's capacity to plan effectively for parks and recreation.
- Work with the Township Board to look at zoning changes that would set aside open space for recreation in new subdivision developments.
- Advocate for improved accessibility across all parks and recreational facilities.

GOAL:

Provide indoor and outdoor recreational opprotunities, including non-motorized options.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve and/or develop trail systems through open space areas in which interest has already been established such as the Nakwema Trailway.
- Prepare trails that can be used for hiking in the spring, summer, and fall seasons and then be used for snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing in the winter season.
- Working with neighboring communities and trailhead owners to provide main non-motorized trails routes for the purpose of transportation and recreation that pass through Torch Lake Township such as the Nakwema Trailway.
- Provide pedestrian routes between activity centers and focus on the more developed areas of the Township for sidewalk construction and expansion.
- Explore opportunities to introduce additional recreational activities at existing parks and facilities to better attract and retain both residents and visitors.

» Provide facilities and programming that encourage those living in this community to want to be outside, engaging in physical, health encouraging, and educational activities that enhance their lives

» Work with local organizations to support events and programs that educate the community of recreation options in the area, wildlife, and the importance of exercise.

» Establish a system that keeps Township taxpayers informed of the status of recreational/ educational programs.

Table XX: Action Plan

Action Type	Time Frame	Funding Options
Torch Bay Nature Preserve		
Review amenities provided at the nature preserve	2027	Township
Enhance walkability, trail signage, maintenance, and trash removal	2027-2028	Township, Private
Road Ends		
Identify road ends by creating a map for the public	2027	Township
Provide signage to identify and inform public of property lines to reduce tresspass	2027-2028	Township, MDNR, Private
Other Items		
Seek organizations to utilitze existing facilities	Ongoing	Township
Examine opprotunities to acquire property to provide additional recreation facilities	Ongoing	Township
Look at creating a recreational committee or combining the existing committess to move recreational properties forward	2027	Township
Work with TART and property owners to pursue opprotunities to enhance Nakwema Trail and trailheads	Ongoing	MDNR

Appendix

A. Resolution of Adoption

B. Parks Board Meeting Minutes

C. Township Board Meeting Minutes

D. Public Hearing Notice

E. 30-Day Review Notice

F. Survey Flyer

G. Open House Flyer

H. Post Completion Forms

I. Letters of Transmittal

J. MDNR Checklist