



# **MANCELONA AREA**

## **Parks & Recreation Plan**

November 2023 DRAFT



# Acknowledgements

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# Community Description

## INTRODUCTION

The Mancelona Community has adopted an updated five-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan following the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' (MDNR) standards and guidelines. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will serve as a guide to influence Village and Township officials' decision making for the future of recreational development across Mancelona. This plan is intended to incorporate five-year goals and objectives, as outlined by the community, into an action plan that will aid the community in how to spend financial and staff resources.

Since the COVID-19 global pandemic, the function of parks and recreation spaces has now shifted to even greater importance as more people rely on the outdoors as a form of socialization, exercise, and entertainment. This plan includes the change in the general recreation landscape and how current facilities, programming, and recreation goals in Mancelona ensure outdoor recreation accessibility in a new reality.

## COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Mancelona is located in northwest Michigan. It is approximately 35 miles east of Traverse City and 33 miles southeast of Charlevoix. Mancelona is also approximately 40 miles from Lake Michigan. Mancelona is a rural locality – in 2021, the combined population of residents in the Village and Township was 5,877. The Village's population was 1,555 residents, and the Township was home to 4,322 individuals. The US 131 Highway runs through the middle of the Village, going north to south from Petoskey to the southern Michigan border. US-131 connects to several other major highways like US-72 (East/West) and US-31 (North/South). These highways provide transit routes for goods and services as well as travelers to and from the Mancelona community.

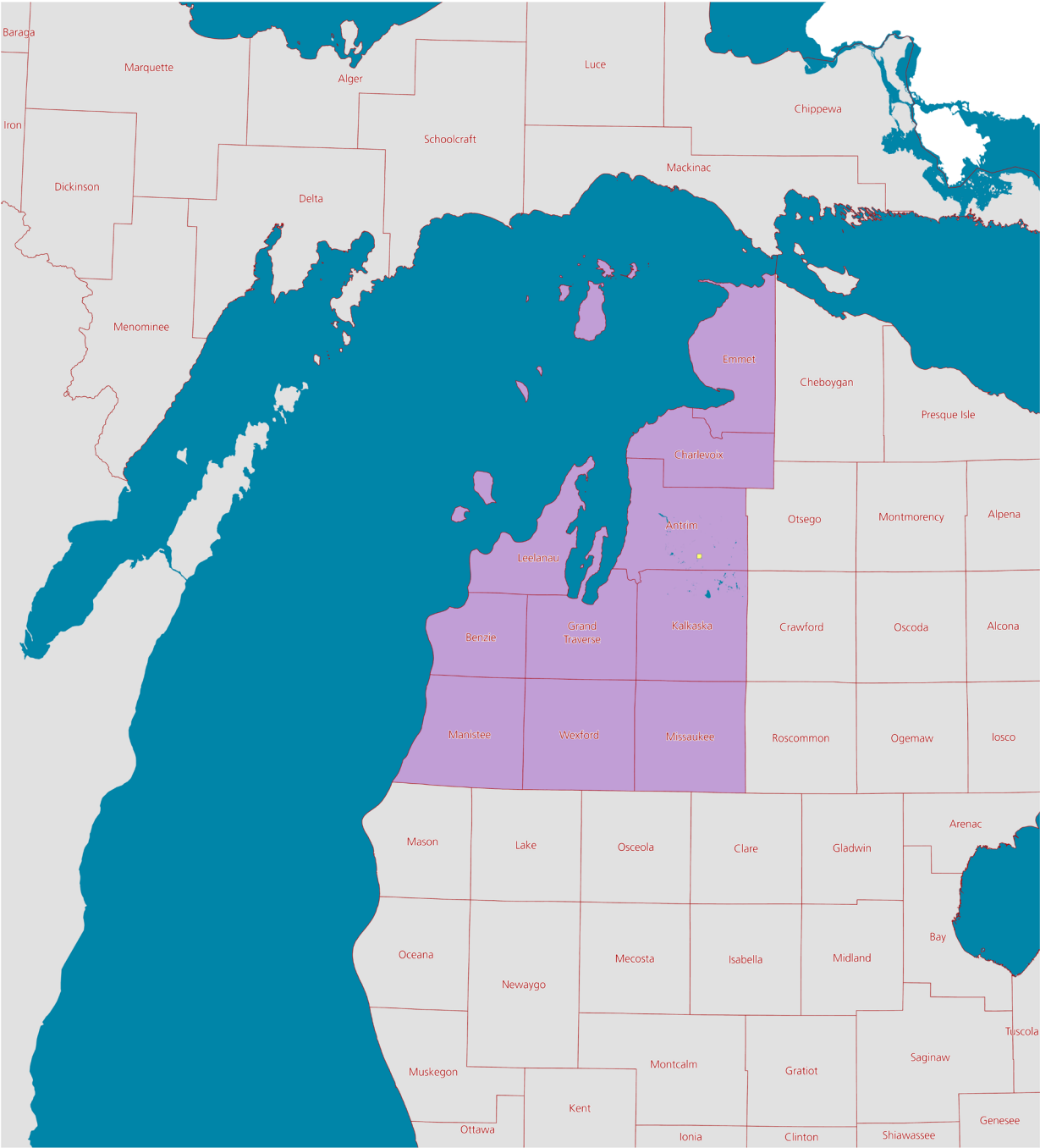
Mancelona Township and the Village of Mancelona are housed within Antrim County, a rural county in northwest Michigan. The county borders Charlevoix County to the north, Otsego County to the east, and Kalkaska and Grand Traverse Counties to the south. The western edge of Antrim County meets the east arm of the Grand Traverse Bay, providing direct access to Lake Michigan. Mancelona is in relative proximity to some of Michigan's larger northern cities such as Traverse City, Petoskey, and Charlevoix. The Village of Mancelona is situated within Mancelona Township, and the Township itself is bordered by Star Township, Chestonia Township, Kearney Township, and Custer Township. Blue Lake and Cold-Springs (Kalkaska County) sit just under Mancelona Township's southern border. Additionally, Village of Mancelona is a part of the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, the regional planning agency that includes Emmet, Charlevoix, Leelanau, Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Manistee, Wexford, and Missaukee Counties. The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments is outlined in purple on the map titled "Regional Map."

## DEMOGRAPHICS

When planning for parks and recreation, it is important to consider the demographic characteristics of the Mancelona community to ensure that all demographic groups are represented in decision making. The demographic information in this chapter was gathered from the following sources:



- » **1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 US Decennial Censuses.** The decennial censuses are the most accurate source of demographic information in the United States. 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

Map XX: Regional Map



## Regional Map

Sources: Michigan Open Data Portal, Village of Mancelona

-  Village of Mancelona
-  Michigan Counties
-  Networks Northwest Regional Planning Commission

10 Miles  
Beckett & Raeder, Inc.



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 better capture modern populations' information. 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 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.
- » **Esri Business Analyst.** Esri Business Analyst is proprietary software that presents privately generated market research data. It estimates Census and ACS data for geographic

configurations other than Census-defined tracts, blocks, and places.

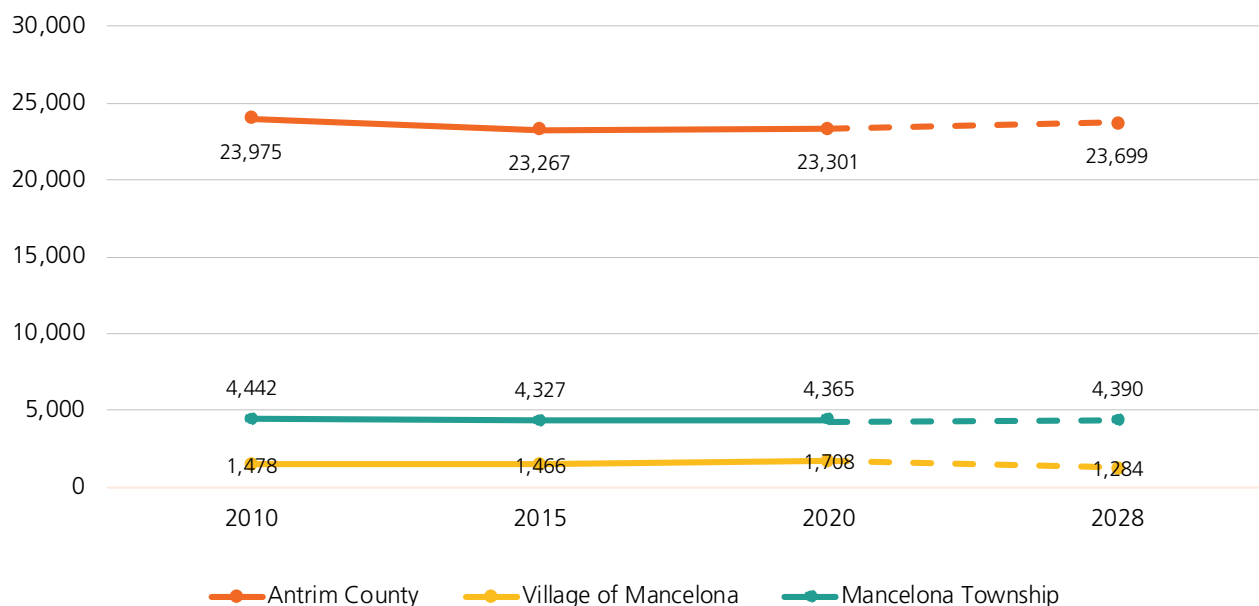
## Population

As of 2023, the Village of Mancelona has an estimated population of 1,318, approximately a 400-peron decline from 2020. This trend does not reflect growth trends in the larger Antrim County, which saw a population increase of 399 individuals between 2020 and 2023; Antrim's current population sits at 23,700 residents. ESRI Business Analyst projects that by 2028, the Village of Mancelona will continue to see population decline, estimating by 2028 the Village's population will be 1,284 residents. ESRI also projects that the county overall will see population stagnation, with a 2028 population estimate of 23,699—only two residents less than the current 2023 population. Planning for inclusive, clean, and safe recreational spaces can increase the Mancelona community's attractiveness to prospective residents and ensure that the individuals who currently live there are able to access green space without having to leave the community.

## Age Distribution

Mancelona Township and the Village of Mancelona are both host to a population that is generally younger than the rest of Antrim County. From 2010 to 2020, the median age of each of the

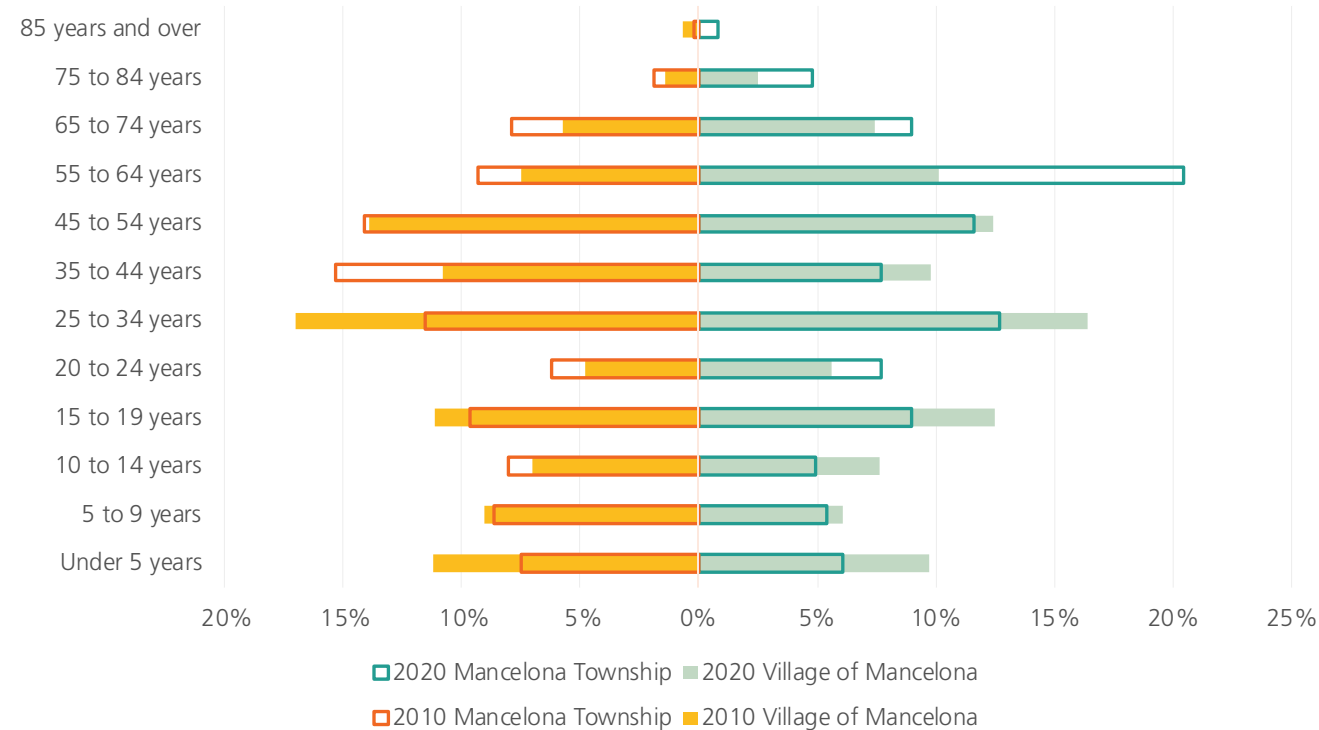
Figure XX: Population Changes , 2010 to 2020



Source: ACS 5- Year Estimates, ESRI



Figure XX: Age Distribution of the Village of Mancelona and Mancelona Township, 2010 to 2020



Source: ACS 5- Year Estimates

three jurisdictions rose, but by varying degrees. The Village of Mancelona is the youngest jurisdiction of the three – the median age in 2010 was 28.9 years, rising by just under two years in 2020 to 30.5 years. Though still younger than Antrim County, Mancelona Township’s median age experienced the greatest increase during the decade between 2010 and 2020. In 2010, the Township’s median age was 33.5 years, increasing by just about six years to 39.4 years in 2020. Conversely, Antrim County’s median age remained over a decade greater than both Mancelona communities – in 2010, the County’s median age was 46.3 years, rising to 51.6 years in 2020.

The figure titled “Age Distribution of the Village of Mancelona and Mancelona Township, 2010 to 2020” illustrates the distribution of various age cohorts in the Village and Township for the years 2010 and 2020. The distribution of age cohorts reflects the relationship between both communities’ median ages for both years – the portion of the Village of Mancelona’s population that is younger than 20 generally exceeds the portion of each age group in the Township, and the opposite is true for residents aged 55 and older in both communities.<sup>1</sup>

For both Mancelona communities, the relationship and relative population composition of each demographic group has remained steady from 2010 to 2020 – the most notable changes for each age cohort and community are observed in the portion of the population that is aged 10- to 14-years, 35- to 44-years, and 45- to 54-years. In 2010, the portion of Mancelona Township’s 10- to 14-year-old population exceeded the prevalence of the cohort in the Village of Mancelona; however, in 2020, this trend is reversed as the Village’s portion of this cohort exceeds the proportion it comprises in the Township. The same trend applies for the 35- to 44-year-old cohort, and to a greater extent. While the portion of residents within this age group remained largely the same for the Village (10.8% in 2010 to 9.8% in 2020), the Township experienced a decrease in the cohort’s presence from 15.3% to 7.7% over the course of the decade. Though to a lesser degree, this trend is also true among 45- to 54-year-olds in both communities.

Race & Ethnicity

Mancelona Township and the Village of Mancelona, much like the larger Antrim County, are primarily homogenous in race and ethnicity as 94.1% and 90.3% of residents (respectively) identify as white.

Table XX: Disability by Age, 2021

Age	Hearing Difficulty	Vision Difficulty	Cognitive Difficulty	Ambulatory Difficulty	Self-care Difficulty	Independent Living Difficulty
Under 18 Years	0%	0%	10.7%	0.6%	0.6%	X
18-35 Years	1%	1.7%	5%	3%	2.2%	1.7%
35-64 Years	8.1%	9.1%	8.3%	25.7%	7.2%	13%
65 Years and over	15%	7.5%	2%	27.9%	0.0%	15.6%

Source: ACS 5- Year Estimates

Residents of Hispanic or Latino origin are the second most populated group (2.3% and 3.0%, respectively). Similarly, Antrim County's population is comprised of 95% white residents with 3% of the population identifying as Asian, making it the second most populated group. Diversity in a community ultimately boosts inclusivity among residents. It is important to plan for residents of all racial and ethnic backgrounds to ensure that community members feel supported and have access to recreational opportunities that inherently honor culture and heritage.

## Disability

Disability is another vital demographic characteristic to account for in parks and recreation planning because it is important to have accessible parks and recreational facilities for all abilities. The table titled "Disability Characteristics by Age" indicates the disability status of Mancelona Township and the Village of Mancelona's population by specified age groups.

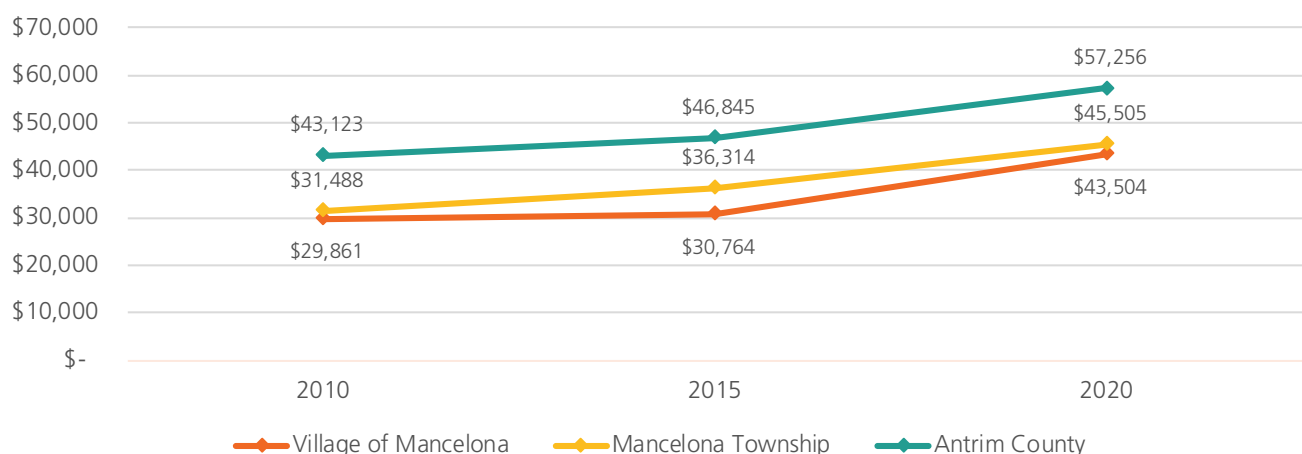
Mancelona's largest concentration of residents with varied disabilities are in the 65 years and over group. It is imperative to accommodate individuals of all abilities through the implementation of Universal Design. Universal Design is the practice of designing and constructing facilities and amenities that are accessible to all users, regardless of age, disability, or other factors. Implementing Universal Design is a way to promote overall increases in accessibility throughout all parks and recreation facilities so that every resident can enjoy the local recreation options.

## SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS

### Income & Poverty

From 2010 to 2020, the Village of Mancelona, Mancelona Township, and Antrim County have each experienced an increase of approximately \$14,000 in median household income. The figure titled "Median Household Income, 2010 to 2020" illustrates these changes for each community at

Figure XX: Median Household Income



Source: Decennial Census, ACS 5- Year Estimates

**Table XX: Recreational Expenditures**

<b>Recreation Category</b>	<b>Average Amount Spent</b>	<b>Potential Spending Index</b>
TV/Video/Audio	\$878.57	65
Entertainment/Recreation Fees/ Admissions	\$404.61	57
Toys/Games/Crafts/Hobbies	\$102.10	64
Recreational Vehicles and Fees	\$93.69	62
Sports/Recreation and Exercise Equipment	\$153.12	55

Source: ESRI

three different points. While the median income of each geography has changed to a similar magnitude over the past decade, the Village of Mancelona has experienced the most dramatic increase from 2015 to 2020 as the median household income increased by less than \$1,000 during the five years between 2010 and 2015. Over the course of these ten years, the relationship between the relative wealth of each community has remained the same. Antrim County has maintained a median household income \$10,000 or more than both Mancelona communities while Mancelona Township's median household income has exceeded the Village anywhere from \$1,600 to \$5,500. <sup>2</sup>

A 2021 United Way report identifies the cost of basic needs for each county in Michigan, and the number of households that are ALICE - an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). ALICE households are those which earn more than the federal poverty level but less than the basic cost of living. The ALICE report of Michigan found that in 2021, 47% of households in Mancelona lived below the ALICE threshold and may have been struggling to make ends meet. Similarly, the Village's poverty rate in 2021 indicated that 24.7% of residents live below the poverty level. Compared to Antrim County, where 9.8% of residents live below the poverty level, Mancelona's poverty rate is 14.9% higher.<sup>3</sup>

### **Recreational Spending**

Using ESRI's Business Analyst, a software package that estimates consumer spending patterns, a comparison can be made between the average amount spent on recreational goods by Village of Mancelona residents compared to national averages. The table titled, "Recreation Expenditures," outlines that Village residents,

on average, spend the most on TV/Video/Audio equipment; the average amount spent in 2023 was \$878.57. The second largest expenditure for Village residents is Entertainment/Recreation Fees and Admissions, with residents spending \$404.61 on average in 2023. This category includes fees such as tickets to parks or museums, fees for participant sports, fees for recreational lessons, and membership fees for social/recreational/health clubs. ESRI's Business Analyst also calculates the spending potential index (SPI) which measures how much Mancelona residents spend compared to the national average. An SPI of 100 indicates that Mancelona residents spend exactly like the national average. Residents of the Village of Mancelona spend less than the national average in every major recreation category.<sup>4</sup>

## **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

### **Built Systems**

Because US-131 runs directly through the middle of the Village of Mancelona, the village has a dense land use pattern given the surrounding rurality. The Village utilizes much of the space for residential housing, which is identified by the yellow spaces on the Existing Land Use Map. Orange spaces indicate vacant residential parcels, which are concentrated in several pockets around the Village. Much of Mancelona's commercial and industrial development sits along the US 131 corridor with commercial businesses along the western border of the municipality. On the western side of US 131, the Village follows a more diverse land use pattern featuring schools, commercial, exempt, and residential properties. The eastern half of Mancelona is more homogeneous in residential development but includes a large industrial site in the northeastern corner of the Village. Vacant

properties are identified by the light pink, light purple, and orange parcels on the Existing Land Use Map. High amounts of vacant parcels can affect Mancelona's growth and economic development. It is important to consider how to continue to bring new residents and new businesses into the area while repurposing the current vacant buildings and not constructing new developments where they are not needed.

## Motorized Transportation

The US-131 corridor in Mancelona provides direct connection to several state roads and highways. 131 meets US-31 in the north and US-72 in Kalkaska which offer both North-South and East-West connections by highway. Additionally, the Village and Township are both served by Antrim County Public Transportation, a door-to-door transportation service that runs throughout the County. There are no fixed public transportation routes in the Village. Offering fixed public transportation routes can offer Village residents the opportunity for cheap, safe, and timely transportation to and from recreation facilities and parks.

## Non-Motorized Transportation

Non-motorized transportation refers to transportation by biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing. In the Village of Mancelona, there are few non-motorized transportation opportunities, however, there are multiple state- and privately-owned trails within short distance from the Village borders. Mancelona is in proximity to Grass River Rail Trail, a 2.2-mile state owned natural area trail in Alden, Michigan. Furthermore, just outside the Village borders there is a trailhead for one part of the North County Trail, a 23.9-mile trail that spans from Mancelona Township to Kalkaska. Shanty Creek and Schuss Mountain each have privately owned trails just northwest of the Village in Bellaire, Michigan. Planning for non-motorized transportation routes offers residents of the region the chance to commute between municipalities easily, safely, and with the ability to enjoy northern Michigan's beautiful natural resources.

## NATURAL SYSTEMS

### Wetlands

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines wetlands as areas where water covers soil or

is present near the surface of the soil year-round or for shifting periods during the year. Because the Village of Mancelona is not in a coastal area, it has inland/non-tidal wetlands. This type of wetland is most commonly found in floodplains, along rivers and streams, often referred to as riparian wetlands, or in isolated depressions like basins and potholes, and along the borders of lakes and ponds. Under the general "inland wetland" category, there are several smaller wetland classifications. The types of inland wetlands in Mancelona are freshwater emergent wetlands and freshwater forested/shrub wetlands. Currently, the Village has approximately 8.4 acres of freshwater emergent wetlands and 0.6 acres of potential wetlands restoration area.

Currently, Mancelona follows State of Michigan regulations for wetland protection, portrayed by the bright yellow areas on the Wetlands map. It is imperative that wetland preservation strategies are updated to ensure protection of the ecological benefits they promote such as stormwater management, clean drinking water, and ecological habitat for many local species.

### Forests

Tree canopy coverage is low to moderate in the Village of Mancelona. The largest concentration of trees is in the southeastern part of the municipality, where tree coverage reaches up to 94%. Trees can provide a variety of positive effects including urban cooling, air purification, and erosion control, to name a few. Using existing park land to both preserve and increase tree canopy coverage can be a good starting point.

## CONCLUSION

Mancelona Township and the Village of Mancelona follow similar trends to many rural, northern Michigan municipalities. The Village's aging population and lack of trail systems indicate a need for parks and recreation planning. By planning for a variety of facilities, recreation opportunities will be more likely to meet the needs of Mancelona residents of various ages, abilities, and incomes. It is important to both preserve and enjoy northern Michigan's rich natural ecology and resources by ensuring that recreation opportunities align with environmental stewardship.

## Sources

- 1 United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates 2021
- 2 United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate 2020, S190
- 3 United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate 2021, S1701
- 4 ESRI Business Analyst, Recreation Expenditures 2023



# Administrative Structure

## ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

### Village Council

The Village's park and recreation system and programs are governed and/or directly managed by the Village Council. The Village of Mancelona Council is comprised of five total members, one (1) president and four (4) trustees that oversee the Village's large-scale operations. Each of the council members are elected by Village residents and serve on other committees such as the Downtown Development Authority, the Mancelona Area Planning Commission, and the Village Planning Commission. The Council is responsible for hiring a Clerk and a Treasurer and overseeing expenses and funds needed to run daily operations within the Village's recreational system.<sup>1</sup>

Collectively, the Council works to ensure the health, safety, welfare, and financial well-being of the Village while also facilitating partnerships that improve infrastructure and expand the Village's recreational opportunities. Mancelona does not have a park commission, so it falls on the Village Council to approve grant submissions and regularly adopt a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

### Township Board

The Township Board is comprised of five (5) total members, one (1) supervisor, one (1) clerk, one (1) treasurer, and two (2) trustees. Regular meetings of the Mancelona Township Board are held on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m., in person, at Mancelona Township Offices; 9610 S M-88 Highway, Mancelona.

### Public Works

The Village's Public Works Division utilizes two (2) employees to maintain roads, sidewalks, parks, and other grounds or activities within the Village.

To maintain these public spaces, the Public Works Division is responsible for area water and sewer services, regular street maintenance, snow removal, yard waste removal, and curbside brush pickup.<sup>2</sup>

The division also has two (2) full time and one (1) seasonal maintenance employees.

### Mancelona Area Planning Commission

The Mancelona Area Planning Commission (MAPC) was established under the Michigan Planning Act, PA 33 of 2008. MAPC is responsible for handling all powers and duties enabled to a planning commission, except for zoning. It is comprised of the Village President, the Township Supervisor, and five other commissioners—two (2) from the Village and three (3) from Mancelona Township. The current Mancelona Area Recreation Plan and the Mancelona Area Master Plan were both adopted under the authority of the MAPC.<sup>3</sup>

### Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

The Village of Mancelona's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) works to improve the downtown area. Through grant funding, the DDA has worked to add decorative elements to the Village's streets as well as helped to construct new sidewalks, build a farmer's market pavilion, and install adult exercise equipment at railroad park, among other projects that beautify the community. The DDA works under the board President, Vice President, and Secretary with a total of nine (9) current members and one (1) vacant seat. Under the authority of the DDA, the Village has adopted the "Development Plan and Tax Increment Financing Plan" that outlines how to spend its funds.<sup>4</sup>

## BUDGET & FUNDING

The Village General Fund remains the primary source of funding for park maintenance,



improvements, and activities. Of the \$48,500 allotted to the 2023-2024 budget, a little over a quarter (28.8%) goes to wages. The other larger costs are for equipment rental, electricity, supplies, and fringes. It is not anticipated that over the next five years, this budget will change substantially.

PARTNERSHIPS & PROVIDERS

The Mancelona Area facilitates several partnerships that provide support for parks and recreation opportunities. The Village and Township work with the Community Resource Development (CRD), the Mancelona Downtown Development Authority (DDA), and the Mancelona Chamber of Commerce to help with recreation projects and activities. The Village and Township also partners extensively with Antrim County. More specifically, the Antrim County Conservation District has aided in planning efforts for Wetzel Lake and several other recreation projects. Other conservancy organizations including the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy have played an integral part of ensuring that recreation facilities do not disturb the existing ecosystems while still enhancing residents’ experience within these areas.

Finally, the Village and Township also partner with local and regional organizations to host events for the area that utilizes park facilities. These events include the Bass Festival, Mancelona Buck Pole, White Pine Stampede, and several more.<sup>5</sup> Because partnerships and collaboration are extremely important to the future of recreation in the Mancelona Area, the establishment of a Parks and Recreation Commission could serve to oversee these partnerships as well as work to facilitate more partnerships in the future.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers have an important role in supporting recreation in the Mancelona Area. Volunteers’ labor and talents are utilized on a project-by-project basis throughout the Village and Township. Their continued assistance relieves financial pressures when developing recreational opportunities in the Village and Township.<sup>6</sup> With the help of volunteers, the Village and Township can continue developing recreation opportunities for the area without a harsh financial burden.

Table XX: Village & Township Budget

Costs	Village Actual 2022 - 2023	Village Budget 2023-2024	Village Estimate 2024-2025	Township Actual 2022-2023	Township Budget 2023-2024	Township Estimate 2024-2025
Wages	\$10,652	\$14,000	\$15,000			
Fringes	\$6,770	\$12,500	\$13,000			
Supplies	\$3,922	\$5,000	\$5,000			
Building supplies	\$250	\$500	\$500			
Contractual services	\$690	\$500	\$500			
Heat	\$730	\$500	\$500			
Electric	\$2,975	\$5,000	\$5,000			
Equipment rental	\$6,205	\$8,000	\$8,000			
New equipment	--	\$2,500	\$25,000			
Total	\$32,194	\$48,500	\$72,500			

Source: Village of Mancelon Budget 2024-25

## Sources

- 1 Village of Mancelona, Village Operations, <https://villageofmancelona.org/>
- 2 Village of Mancelona, Department of Public Works, <https://villageofmancelona.org/department-of-public-works/>
- 3 Village of Mancelona, Mancelona Area Planning Commission, <https://villageofmancelona.org/mancelona-area-planning-commission/>
- 4 Village of Mancelona, Downtown Development Authority, <https://villageofmancelona.org/downtown-development-authority/>
- 5 Village of Mancelona, Mancelona Area Recreation Plan 2019-2023 p.6, <https://villageofmancelona.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Mancelona-Area-Rec-Plan-FINAL-2019-2023.pdf>
- 6 Village of Mancelona, Mancelona Area Recreation Plan 2019-2023 p.6, <https://villageofmancelona.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Mancelona-Area-Rec-Plan-FINAL-2019-2023.pdf>





# Recreation Inventory

A variety of recreation opportunities are available to Mancelona area residents and visitors. These opportunities are fundamental to the overall quality of life, and can serve as a strategic asset in new economic activity and community enhancements. To capitalize and build on these assets, the Village and Township must consider current recreation facilities within a local and regional context, and determine gaps, needs, and priorities.

The following recreation inventory is based on information acquired through site visits, Village and Township representatives, recreation stakeholders, and a review of local and regional plans. The map on page 9 shows the location of Village and Township owned facilities, as well as other public recreation facilities in the area. Following the map key and grant history, additional information is provided on Village and Township owned (or maintained) facilities, including facility type/purpose, size, service area, amenities, and accessibility. Information is also provided on the trails and private facilities, and public recreation opportunities in the surrounding area.

Accessibility evaluations of the parks and recreational facilities were completed by representatives of the Village and Township with the assistance of planning consultants using the criteria provided in the MDNR Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plans (MDNR, 2016). These criteria are based on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. To assist with the assessments, the planning committee referenced the New England ADA Center "Checklists." See the text box below for the ranking system used to complete evaluations of the Village and Township facilities.

## GRANT INVENTORY

The Village of Mancelona has received one recreation grant from the DNR. A copy of the DNR Grant History is included on page 20. The required Post Completion Self Inspection Reports are included in the Appendices.

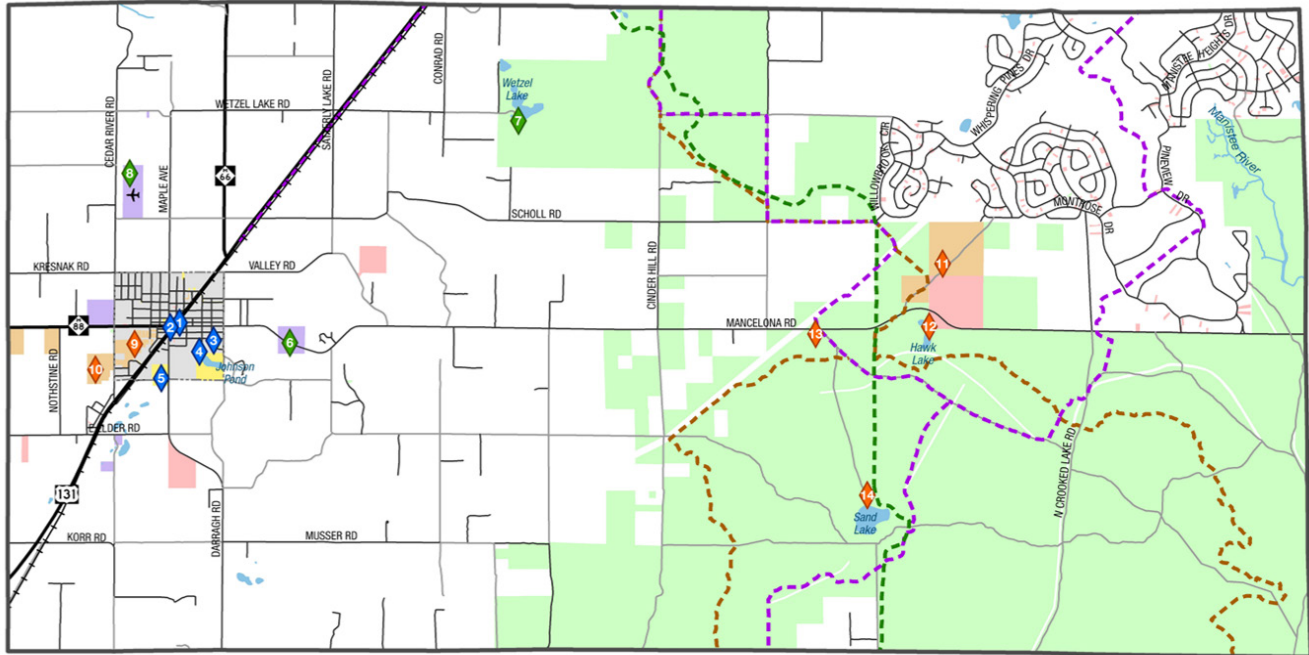
### Accessibility

The term "accessible" or "accessibility" refers to the ability of a wide range of people to easily access a facility. Examples of accessibility needs in parks may include wheelchair ramps, paved trails or pathways, or handrails. Communities are required to comply with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which provides minimum standards for accessibility.

The following ADA Ranking system was used to complete evaluations:

- 1 = none of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 2 = some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 3 = most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines
- 4 = the entire park meets accessibility guidelines

## Map XX: Mancelona Area Recreation



### Mancelona Area Recreation



Networks Northwest

Data Source | Michigan Geographic Data Library; Antrim County; Networks Northwest

Map Scale | 1:74,441

Date | 10/1/18

Table XX: Recreation Map Key

Map ID	Name	Ownership	Facility Type
1	Railroad Park*	Village of Mancelona	Park
2	Triangle Park*	Village of Mancelona	Park
3	Cran Park*	Village of Mancelona	Park
4	Johnson Pond*	Village of Mancelona	Nature Area
5	Palmer Park*	Village of Mancelona	Park
6	Leshner Park*	Village of Mancelona	Unimproved
7	Wetzel Lake*	DNR / Antrim County	Park / Unimproved Access
8	Mancelona Municipal Airport	Mancelona Township	Airport
9	Mancelona Public Schools	Mancelona Public Schools	School Facilities
10	Mancelona Public Schools	Mancelona Public Schools	School Facilities
11	Mancelona School Forest	Mancelona Public Schools	Unimproved
12	Hawk Lake	Antrim County	Unimproved
13	Snowmobile / ORV Parking	DNR	Parking
14	Sand Lake Trailhead	DNR	Parking

\*Additional information provided on pages 20-23.

Figure XX: Grant History



**GRANTS MANAGEMENT**  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Thursday, November 16, 2023

## GRANT HISTORY

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### Grantee

**Village of Mancelona - Antrim County**

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**Project No.** 26-00609

**Project County:** Antrim

**Project Year:** 1975

**Project title:** Palmer Park Development

**Project Status:** Grant Closed

**Grant Amount:**  
\$13,574.16

### Scope Item

Fenced tennis courts (2)

**Project Description:** Develop Palmer Park to include 2 fenced tennis courts, and LWCF sign

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**Project No.** RP19-0104

**Project County:** Antrim

**Project Year:** 2019

**Project title:** Village of Mancelona Palmer Park Improvements

**Project Status:** Amendment Signatures Required

**Grant Amount:**  
\$52,900.00

### Scope Item

Access Pathway 5' - 6' wide

Bench(es)

Paved ADA Parking Space(s)

Pavilion

Pickleball Court

Picnic Table(s)

Recycle Bin(s)

Signage

Trash Bin(s)

**Project Description:** Development to improve recreational opportunities and access at Palmer Park, the Village of Mancelona's most popular and heavily used park, including pickleball courts, outdoor pavilion area and other amenities.

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**Total number of projects:** 2

**Total Amount of Grant Given** \$66,474.16



### TRIANGLE PARK (PERRY ANDRESS PARK)

Located at the downtown intersection, this small triangular park is visible to many. Concerts are held here during the summer months by the Chamber of Commerce. Public input indicates strong community support for these events, and an interest in additional concerts.



### LEGION PARK

Less than one acre, this small park is located at the southeast corner of US-131 and East State Street. The park houses a Veteran memorial and tank.



### RAILROAD PARK

This community park is located at the Northeast corner of US-131 and East State Street. Although less than one acre in size, the park features a pavilion, playground, and outdoor fitness stations. Public restrooms are connected to the information booth located across the railroad tracks. Parking is located next to the pavilion (paved) as well as the playground (unpaved). The parking area on the north end is available to snowmobiles in the winter. In addition to serving Village residents and snowmobile users, the park offers travelers passing through Mancelona with a place to stop with easy on and off access and two parking lots.

Railroad Park is the site of a number of community events, such as the Farmers Market and Buck Pole. The Buck Pole is hosted by the Mancelona Regional Chamber of Commerce every year on November 15 and 16. The event is enjoyed by hunters and locals who gather to admire bagged bucks and enjoy a bonfire, warm food, and prizes. The pavilion is also available for rent.

Public input indicates that this is one of the more commonly used park facilities in the Village. Suggestions were made for additional restrooms.

*Accessibility: 3 - Accessible picnic tables and designated accessible parking at the pavilion could be added to improve accessibility.*





## PALMER PARK

Palmer Park is a 29-acre community park located in the southeast corner of the Village on Palmer Park Road, just off US-131. The park includes a large playground, pavilion, basketball court, two tennis/pickleball courts, three baseball fields, and a nine hole disc golf course. Each of the ball fields are equipped with dugouts and metal bleachers. The park is largely wooded, aside from the ball fields and courts. The Palmer Park Pavilion includes a full kitchen, indoor and outdoor eating areas, and restrooms. The pavilion is available for rent through the Village for family reunions, graduation parties, birthday parties and other gatherings. The park property on the south side of Palmer Road includes part of the disc golf course and additional parking. Parking is available here for snowmobiles in the winter.

The Village and Township are the park's primary service area. However, the park also serves Antrim County and beyond with the use of its ball fields for Little League (the park is home to the Mancelona Youth Baseball and Softball Program) and winter snowmobile parking.

Results from public input indicate that Palmer Park is the most commonly used Village or Township park facility. Suggestions were made for basic improvements to the restrooms, parking lot, lighting, landscaping, tables, and benches. New facilities such as a skate park, pickleball and tennis courts, and walking trail were also suggested and further discussed.

*Accessibility: 3 - There are paved ramps to the pavilion's picnic area and restrooms. There is one signed handicap accessible parking space next to the pavilion, however, there is no paved parking. Access to the ball fields and playground equipment is not paved.*



## JOHNSON'S POND

This 37-acre natural area is located in the southeast corner of the Village at the end of Danforth Street. The site primarily serves the Village and nearby Township residents. The access road and parking area are not paved, and there are no recreation facilities. Children use the pond for fishing and hunting for turtles and frogs. Every year, there is a fishing contest for kids 14 and under on the opening day of trout season. The Village has been hosting this event annually for over 50 years.

The natural area has also been used as an educational platform. The Jordan River National Fish Hatchery and Communities in Schools Choose Success have teamed together in a project called Imaginature. This collaborative effort has been made possible by a federal grant to provide area kids with an outdoor experience.

Public input and discussion among stakeholders indicates an interest in trail development and amenities such as benches.

*Accessibility: 1*

## MANCELONA MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

The Township owned airport facility is equipped with two grass runways, three hangers, and a grass parking area. The airport is seasonal (it is not plowed in winter) and is not staffed. The airport has been approved for remote controlled aircrafts. The Township is looking into adding restroom facilities at the site.

*Accessibility: 1*



### CRAN PARK

Cran Park is a 2-acre community green space located in the southeast corner of the Village, off Washington Street. The park was donated by William Cran to the Village of Mancelona to be used as a scenic area. The park includes open green space and a labyrinth. This park being updated with new plantings by the school.

*Accessibility: 1*



### WETZEL LAKE PARK

The park is leased by Antrim County from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and maintained by Mancelona Township under an agreement with the County. The day-use park offers visitors a scenic setting just north of the Village of Mancelona in Mancelona Township.

Wetzel Lake is a popular swimming hole for residents of the surrounding area. The park is also equipped with an unpaved boat launch for non-motorized access, picnic tables and grills, and two portable toilets.

Trail development around Wetzel Lake and potentially connecting to the North Country Trail has been of interest to recreation stakeholders and the public for a number of years, and continued to be a part of the discussion throughout this planning process.

Public input also indicated a need for improved maintenance at Wetzel Lake Park and an interest in improved beach conditions. Recently the parking lot and picnic areas were updated for users.

*Accessibility: 1*



### LESHER PARK

This 40-acre Township forested area is located on County Road 38. The property was gifted to Mancelona Township and is restricted to a preserve. There is no designated parking.

*Accessibility: 1*

## REGIONAL RECREATION ASSETS

A variety of additional public and private recreation opportunities are available in the Mancelona area and surrounding region, including a diversity of trails, downhill skiing, snowmobile facilities, and hunting. Additionally, residents can also access several golf courses within a 20-minute driving radius. Forested land also accounts for 65% of Mancelona Township's total land area, and a significant portion of this is located in the Mackinaw State Forest. Much of this land is available for public use.

To the east in Otsego County there are recreational opportunities at Otsego State Park, Hidden Valley Resort, Sylvan Treetops Resorts, many motorized and non-motorized trails.

To the south in Kalkaska County there are opportunities for canoeing/kayaking and fishing on the Boardman and Manistee rivers. There are also many motorized and non-motorized trails in Kalkaska, including the Kalkaska Area ORV Trail, the Blue Bear Snowmobile Trail, the North Country Trail, and the Shore to Shore Trail. The Seven Bridges Natural Area and the Skegemog Swamp Pathway are also within Kalkaska County.

To the north and west, within Antrim County, there are many recreational opportunities including abundant water access, including to Lake Michigan, Torch Lake, Intermediate Lake, Bass Lake, Elk Lake, and Lake Bellaire. Also, within the County are Shanty Creek/Schuss Mountain Resort, Glacial Hills

Pathways, Grass River Natural Area, and parts of the Skegemog Nature Preserve.

## TRAILS

Mancelona Township is host to a number of significant trail systems, including the North Country Trail and state-owned ORV and snowmobile trails. Input received during the planning process indicate a strong interest in both motorized and non-motorized trail development. An understanding of these trail systems is important in identifying opportunities for trail linkages and enhancements.

### Motorized Trails

The Mancelona area is known for its well groomed snowmobile trails and designated Off-road vehicle (ORV) trails. Thousands of snowmobilers travel the trails in and around Mancelona, Pinney Bridge, Jordan River Valley, Lakes of the North and Starvation Lake during the winter months. The Jordan Valley Trail Council, a member of the Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), is responsible for maintaining these trails. It relies on the work of its volunteer groomer operators. ORV use is not permitted on the State snowmobile trails.

Mancelona has the only designated off-road vehicle (ORV) trail in Antrim County. The Kalkaska Cycle Trail is an 89 mile ORV trail that extends from Antrim County south into Kalkaska County. The Michigan Cross Country Cycle Trail (MCCCT) also runs through central Mancelona Township, and

## Trails

Trails are pathways that are used recreationally or for transportation by a variety of users, including snowmobilers, hikers, ORV users, bicyclists, and horseback riders. Motorized trails include those that were designed to accommodate motorcycles, ORVs, or snowmobiles, while hiking, biking, horseback riding and cross country skiing are among uses permitted on non-motorized trails. Multi-use trails are those designed to accommodate multiple user types simultaneously, such as pedestrians and cyclists. Other trails might be designed and designated for certain uses, such as hiking trails, a bike path, or snowmobile or ORV route. Close, convenient and connected trail networks encourage physical activity, with benefits in community health. In addition, trails have been found to have significant economic impacts, generating tourism and visitor spending in retail sales, hotel stays, and restaurant visits. Snowmobilers, ORV riders, and mountain bikers—many of whom travel to the region specifically for access to trails—contribute substantially to local and regional economic activity. Trails are an important and desired quality of life amenity, and can help draw new residents and visitors to the area.



extends hundreds of miles, connecting many trail systems throughout Michigan's lower peninsula.

Snowmobiles and off-road vehicles (ORVs) are authorized to use road shoulders on County road rights-of-way, and a number of motorized trails are available on public land (see Chapter 3, Recreation Inventory). Trail opportunities for ORVs were expanded with Public Act 288 of 2016, which opened state forest roads to ORV use (unless otherwise indicated).

Public and stakeholder input throughout this planning process indicate an interest in enhancing connectivity of the area's motorized trail systems as well as improving access and wayfinding to the Village.

### Non-Motorized Trails

The North Country Trail (or Iron Bell Trail) comes vertically down through Mancelona Township. Stretching 4,600 miles over 7 states, from New York to North Dakota, the North Country Trail is the largest National Scenic Trail in the US. The trail enters Antrim County from Charlevoix County and exits through Mancelona Township into Kalkaska County. The Jordan Valley 45 Chapter is responsible for developing, maintaining, protecting, and promoting this section of the North Country Trail.

Public and stakeholder input also indicate an interest in enhancing the area's non-motorized trails through trail development and improved connectivity among existing trail systems, community/recreation assets, the Village, and nearby communities. Trail development was discussed at various sites throughout the Village and Township including Wetzel Lake, Johnson Pond, and Palmer Park. Discussions around enhancements to the North Country Trail included developing connections and wayfinding between the Trail and the Village, redeveloping the trail in areas where it follows a two-track, and a connection to a future Wetzel Lake trail.



*North Country Trail.*



# 4 Community Engagement

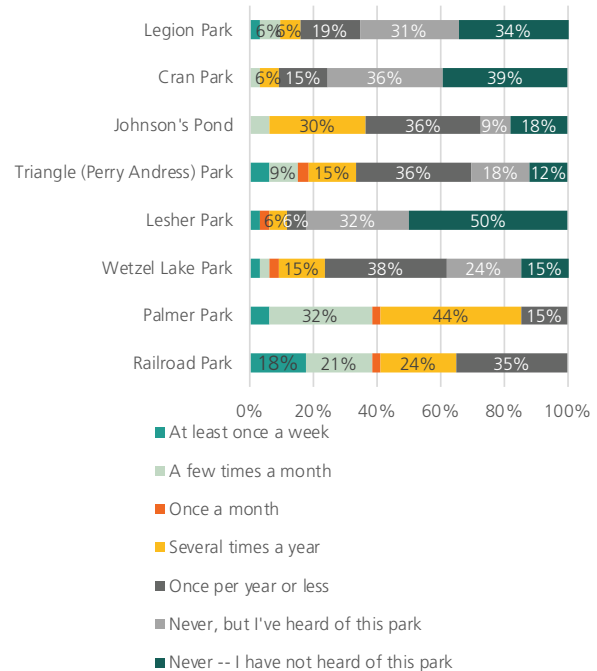
## INTRODUCTION

Community engagement is a key component of identifying the community's most prevalent needs and desires for the future of parks and recreation in the Village and the Township of Mancelona. The planning process included an online survey was open for the month of September in 2023 and consisted of 20 questions regarding the current and possible recreation offerings with the Village and Township of Mancelona. The survey intended to collect residents' current perspectives and priorities of the Village and Township recreation resources. The survey received a total of 34 responses. The responses are summarized below.

## PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN SURVEY

### Q1. How often do you use the following facilities?

Survey respondents indicated that Railroad Park, Palmer, and Wetzel Lake Park were used most frequently. Railroad Park had the highest number of respondents who said that they visit the park at least once a week. Legion Park, Cran Park, and Leshar Park had the highest number of respondents that had never visited nor heard of the park. Approximately 50% of survey respondents have never visited nor heard of Leshar Park.



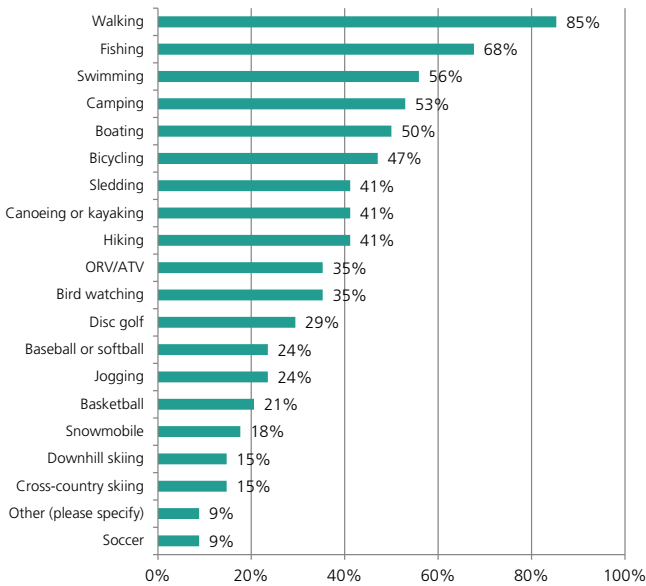
### Q2. Please select all the recreational activities that you enjoy:

According to survey respondents, 85% of survey-takers enjoy walking as a form of recreational activity. Fishing and swimming were the second and third most popular activities enjoyed by respondents. Soccer, skiing, and snowmobiling were among the least preferred recreational



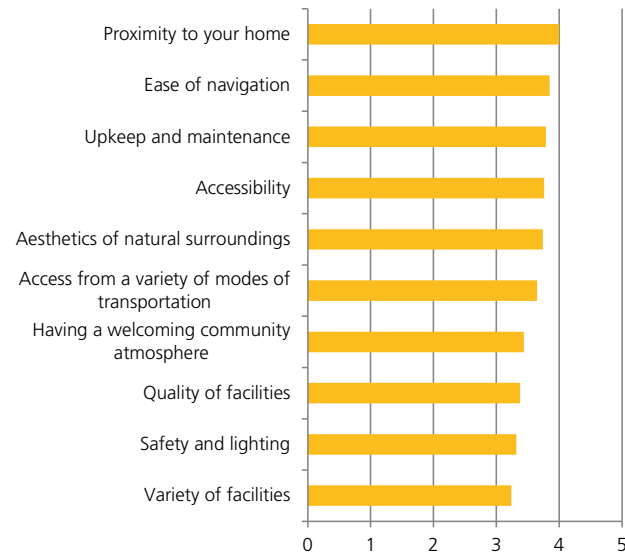
ORV Trail.

activities, with less than 10% of respondents who enjoy playing soccer.



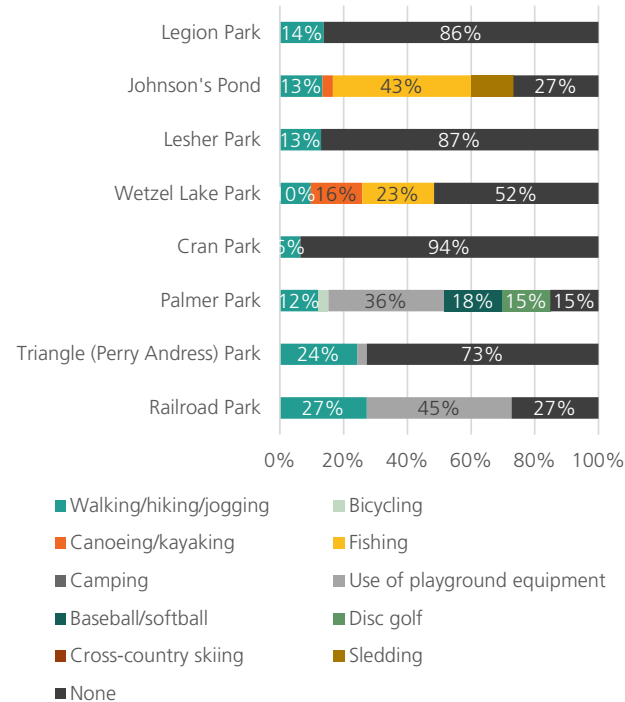
*Q3. Based on your own experiences, please rate Mancelona's current park and recreational offerings about the following elements:*

The average rating per recreational offering shows survey respondents value the proximity of the parks to their homes (received a 4 out of 5). Similarly, so does the ease of navigation and the upkeep and maintenance of Mancelona's parks and recreational offerings. Respondents ranked the variety of Mancelona's recreational offerings, safety and lighting, and the quality of the facilities the lowest.



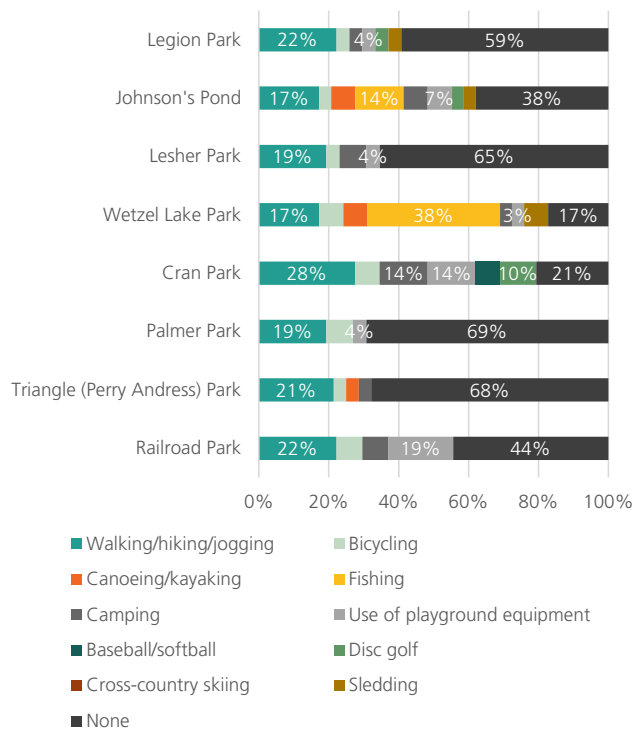
*Q4. Please describe the activities you participate in at the following parks.*

Overwhelmingly, the majority of respondents said that there are no activities that they currently participate in at Legion Park, Lesher Park, Wetzel Lake Park, Cran Park, and Triangle Park , while walking, hiking, and biking were the second most popular activities for these parks. At Railroad Park and Palmer Park, the use of playground equipment was a popular activity among respondents.



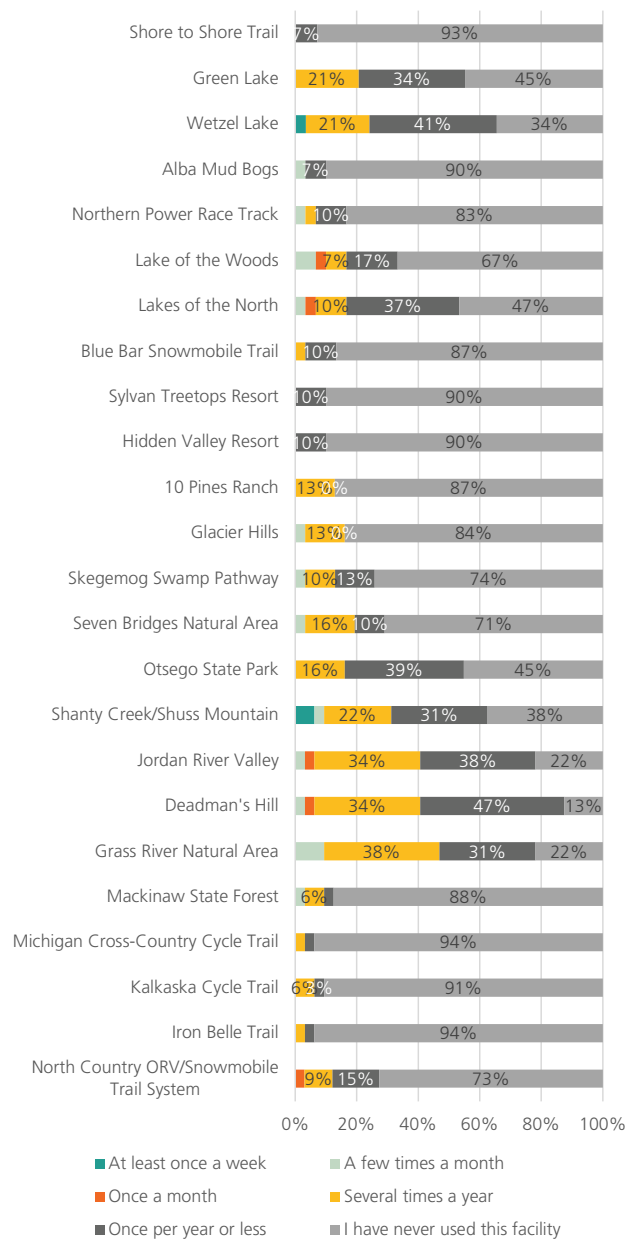
*Q5. Please describe the activities that you would like to do at the following parks.*

The majority of respondents said there are no activities that they would enjoy doing at Triangle Park, Lesher Park, Wetzel Lake Park, and Legion Park. However, walking, hiking, and jogging were identified as the most preferred hypothetical activities in these parks. Another example of this desire is that most respondents said that walking, hiking, and jogging was the most popular activity that they would like to do at Palmer Park. Lastly, the majority of respondents indicated they would like to fish at Johnson's Pond.



**Q6. Please select any additional recreational facilities that you utilize within the community as well as how frequently you utilize them:**

When asked about their utilization of additional recreational facilities within the community, respondents most frequently mentioned using Grass River Natural Area, Deadman's Hill, Jordan River Valley, and Shanty Creek/Schuss. However, for the other recreation options, the majority of respondents indicated that they had never used these facilities.



**Q7. Please share any comments about existing recreational spaces (listed in the previous question). What would you like to see more of?**

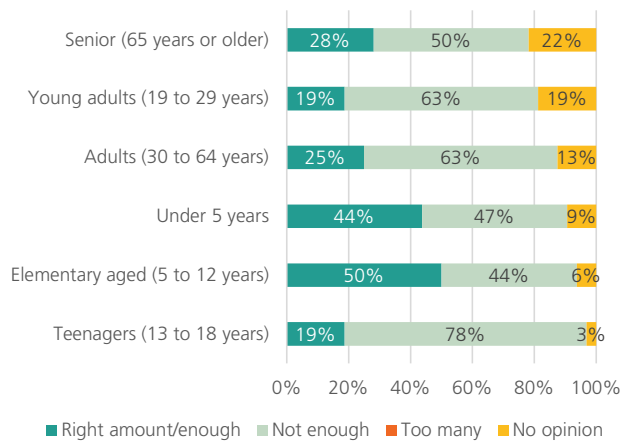
In response to the question about existing recreational spaces and what improvements respondents would like to see, the most frequently mentioned words in open-ended comments were "trails" and "parking." The size of the word indicates its popularity; the larger the word displays, the greater frequency it was mentioned.



Downtown Mancelona.

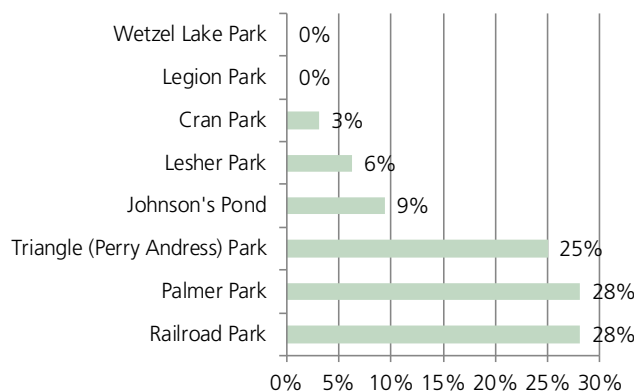
**Q8. Please rate the availability of recreational facilities and activities within the Village and Township for the following age groups.**

The survey results indicate that most respondents believe there is a lack of recreational facilities and activities in Mancelona for almost all age groups, but particularly for teenagers. Close to 50% of respondents stated that there are sufficient options for elementary-aged children and activities for children under 5. Additionally, survey participants indicated that there is a shortage of options for adults (30 to 64 years old), young adults (19 to 29 years old), and seniors (65 years or older).



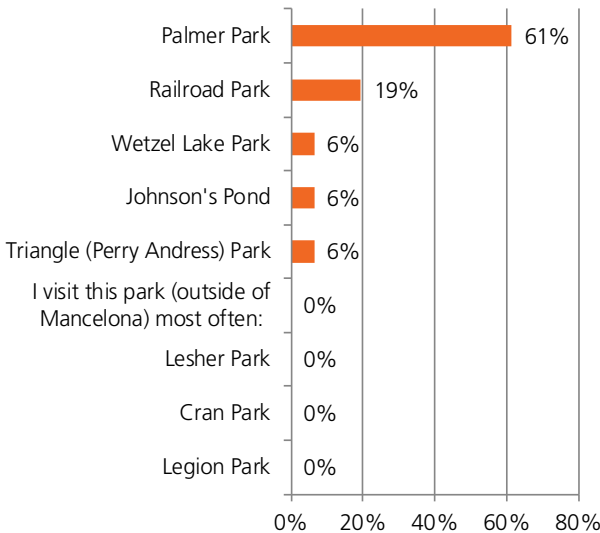
**Q9. Which Mancelona Park is closest to your house?**

Based on the survey responses, about 27% of respondents mentioned that Railroad Park or Palmer Park is the closest park to their house. Approximately 25% indicated that Triangle Park is the nearest, while just under 10% identified Johnson's Pond as their closest option. Only 7% stated that Leshar Park is the nearest, and less than 5% indicated Cran Park as their closest park.



**Q10. Which park do you visit most frequently? Please specify park(s) outside of Mancelona if those are the parks that you visit most often.**

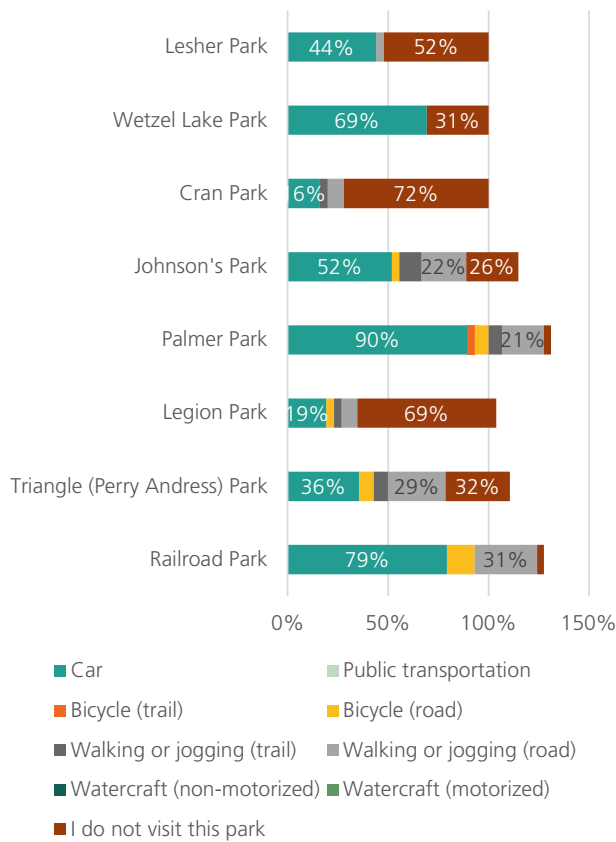
Approximately 62% of survey respondents visit Palmer Park most frequently, while just under 20% favor Railroad Park. Fewer than 10% identified Wetzel Lake Park, Johnson's Pond, and Triangle Park as their top choices for park visits. No respondents visit Leshar Park, Cran Park, or Legion Park most frequently.



**Q11. If the park you visit most frequently differs from the one closest to your house, why do you prefer this park?**

Survey respondents in Mancelona prefer a park different from the one closest to their house for various reasons. They believe that Mancelona needs trees to provide shade for cars at Railroad Park, and to support ball games and leisure activities. They are unsure how to access Leshar Park without trespassing, and they note that Triangle Park lacks play equipment for children and activities, as well as notes that shade and playgrounds are a draw.

**Q12. Please describe the methods of transportation you use to get to the following parks:**

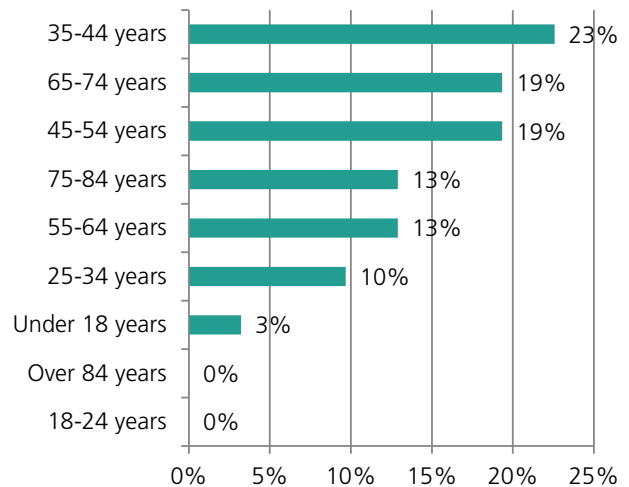


**Q13. Mini Parks are defined as parks less than one acre. These parks can provide affordable and impactful ways to increase green space and can be implemented in locations as small as a parking space. Where in Mancelona would you like a mini park? Be as specific and/or as imaginative as you'd like.**

Responses varied among survey respondents. One respondent suggested adding a 60 x 120 cement space for summer roller skating. Another said putting a mini park outside of town would be beneficial. One individual inquired about seeing Mancelona from a drone view and developed walkable parks on all four corners of the village/ township for families to picnic and play and for roadside travelers to stop at. Lastly, one respondent suggested adding trees along the roadside of Railroad Park.

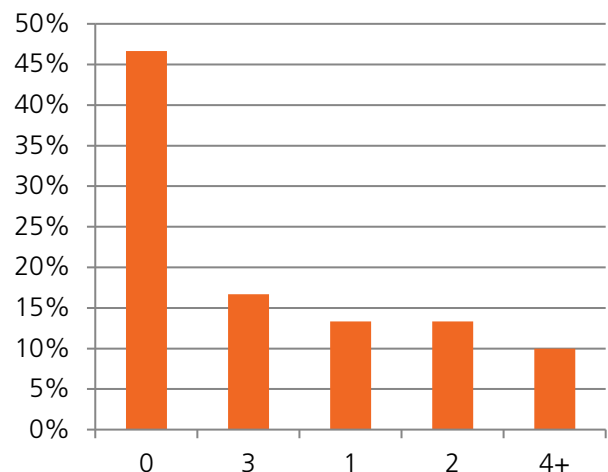
**Q14. What is your age?**

Approximately 23% of respondents are between the ages of 35 and 44 years old, while just under 20% are between 65 and 74 years old and 45 to 54 years old respectively. There were zero respondents between the ages of 18 and 24 or over 84 years old.



**Q15. How many members of your household are under the age of 18?**

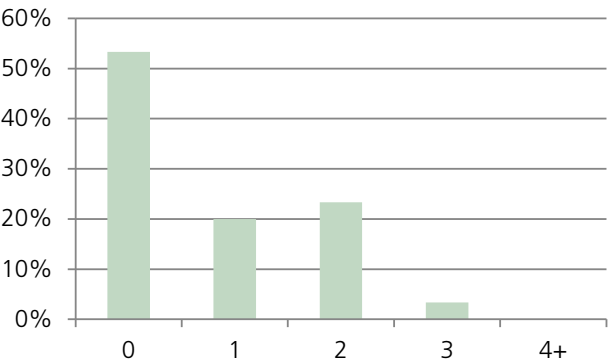
Just over 45% of survey respondents do not have a member of their household under 18. Approximately 16% of respondents have three members under the age of 18 in their household, 13% have one member under the age of 18, 14% have two members under the age of 18, and 10% have four or more members of their household under 18.





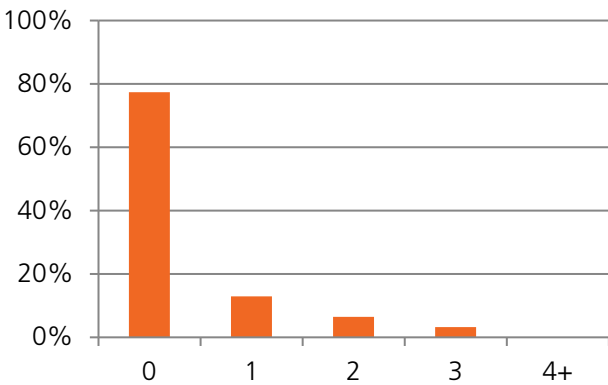
**Q16. How many members of your household are over the age of 65?**

Just over 50% of survey respondents do not have a member of their household over the age of 65. However, just over 20% indicated they have two members of their family over the age of 65, and approximately 20% have one member over the age of 65.



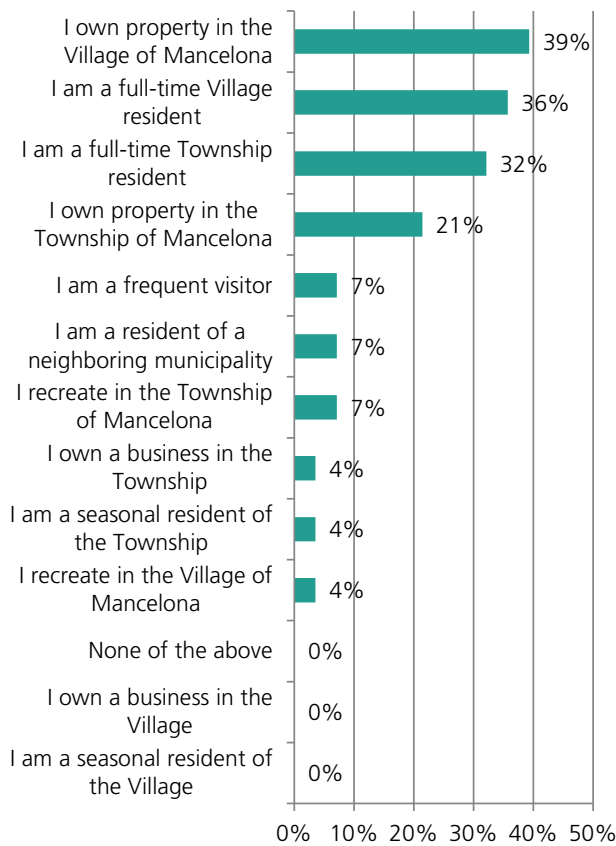
**Q17. How many members of your household have a disability?**

Most survey respondents do not have a member of their household with a disability. Just over 10% indicated that they have one family member with a disability, and approximately 5% said they have two family members with a disability.



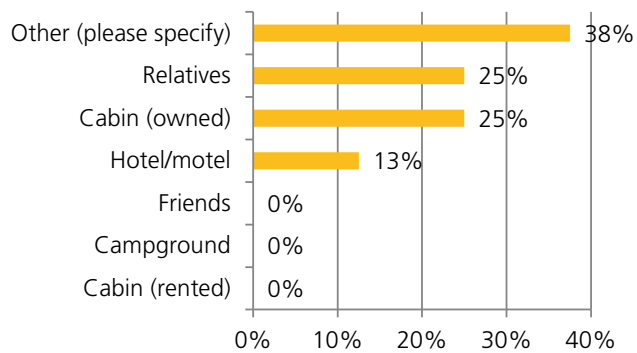
**Q18. Please describe your relationship to Mancelona. Select all that apply.**

The majority of respondents indicated that they live in Mancelona, while just over 20% said they own property in Mancelona. Other popular answers among respondents were “I am a frequent visitor”, “I am a resident of a neighboring municipality”, and “I recreate in the Township of Mancelona.” No respondents indicated their relationship to Mancelona as a business owner or seasonal resident of the Village of Mancelona.



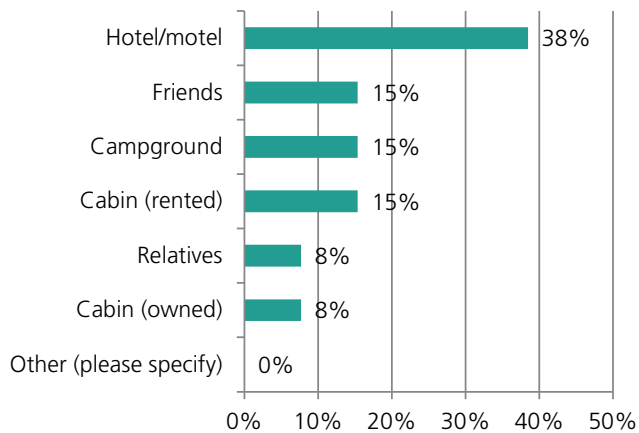
**Q19. If/when you visit the area, where do you typically stay?**

Just under 40% of respondents selected “other” when asked where they typically stay. 25% of respondents indicated they typically stay with relatives and 25% said they typically stay at a cabin they own.



*Q20. If/when you visit the area, where would you like to stay?*

Just under 40% of survey respondents noted that they prefer to stay in a hotel or motel when visiting the Mancelona area. The next most popular stay options were friends and campgrounds. The least preferred stay options among respondents are owned cabins and relatives.



*Q21. In what ZIP code is your primary (homestead) place of residence?*

The majority of respondents live in the zip code 49659.

*Q22. Please feel free to share any additional recreational elements or facilities that you would like to see in Mancelona.*

Survey respondents in Mancelona expressed a strong desire for the development of walking trails in their community.



# Goals, Objectives & Action Plan

The goals, objectives, and action plan are intended to guide future decisions about recreation in a manner that reflects the community's values and priorities. These goals were developed based on existing facilities, public input obtained through the 2017 Community Survey and 2018 Recreation Forum, discussions with the Joint Planning Commission and recreation stakeholders, and a review of other local and regional plans and strategies. In order to appropriately administer goals, objectives and actions it is important to understand the roles of each and their relationship to each other.

- » Goals provide general direction and serve as a description of the desired future. They address issues and specific needs, but are broad in scope.
- » Objectives are a means of achieving goals, and are attainable.
- » Actions set forth the specifics necessary to accomplish objectives. One strategy might be used to accomplish multiple objectives; or an objective might require multiple strategies. Action strategies identify implementation tools (such as zoning changes) and the players involved in meeting goals and objectives.

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### Maintain and improve parks and recreation facilities and opportunities

- » Continue to provide, maintain, and improve parks and recreation facilities and amenities for residents and visitors.
- » Maintain an updated and DNR-approved 5-year recreation plan.
- » Encourage and promote public art displays, community events, and festivals in parks and civic spaces.
- » Consider opportunities to create additional recreational activities at existing parks and recreation facilities to attract and retain residents and visitors.
- » Improve or develop new amenities to enhance recreational opportunities for the area's youth.
- » Expand capacity within the Village and Township to plan for parks and recreation.
- » Support improved accessibility at all parks and recreation facilities.

### Encourage, support, & promote enhanced recreation opportunities

- » Encourage, support, & promote additional affordable, family-oriented activities.
- » Encourage & support the development of tourism/visitor businesses and services infrastructure.
- » Explore partnerships with/between the Mancelona Chamber of Commerce and the Traverse City Area Visitors Bureau.



- » Encourage & support the acquisition or re-development of property for new recreation facilities and opportunities
- » Work with partners to explore opportunities to host events such as tournaments, competitions, races.
- » Co-market organized events with golf, skiing, water, fishing, and hunting.
- » Support efforts by the Explore 131 North marking group to promote the Mancelona area and the greater 131 Corridor as a trail destination.

### Enhance, support, and promote an interconnected motorized and non-motorized trail system

- » Support potential trail routes to link snowmobile and ORV trails
- » Support potential trail routes to link non-motorized trails
- » Support motorized trail access to the Village of Mancelona
- » Improve wayfinding between trails and the Village and community assets
- » Identify potential trail connectors to parks, schools, and other community resources
- » Work within ongoing coordinated trail planning efforts and with neighboring communities and stakeholders to develop and link trail systems
- » Leverage and link to existing nearby trails and recreation facilities such as the North Country Trail, Glacial Hills, and Shanty Creek/Schuss Mountain
- » Build relationships with TOMBA, MMBA, Jordan Valley Trails Council, and other trail user groups
- » Provide and promote services and amenities to trail users

## ACTION PLAN

### Parks and Recreation Committee

Expand the capacity and role of the Mancelona Area Planning Commission to include planning for parks and recreation in the Mancelona Area. The Commission would provide recommendations regarding parks and recreation policies and projects to the Village Council and Township Board, and the ultimate decision-making authority and responsibility for all park related projects would reside with the Village Council and Township Board.

### Park Facilities

- » Enhance or enlarge farmers market- Railroad Park/Market Pavillion.
- » Develop a skate park at Palmer Park. This would provide a desired amenity for youth in the community.
- » Improve the basketball court at Palmer Park.
- » Remodel the tennis / pickleball court at Palmer Park.
- » Improve connectivity between Palmer Park and the Village, schools, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- » Pursue partnerships with Antrim County, MDNR, Antrim County Conservation District, and user groups to support enhancing Wetzel Lake facilities and activities

### Trails

- » Support motorized trail access and connectivity by enhancing access to the Village and other recreation assets, providing a staging area, developing easements, and working with user groups, the DNR, and MDOT.
- » Explore and support trail development at Wetzel Lake
- » Explore the development of a loop trail at Johnson Pond
- » Explore the development of a paved loop walking trail around Palmer Park
- » Support trail connectors to parks, schools, and other community resources.

# Appendix







