



Village of Elk Rapids

FIVE-YEAR COMMUNITY RECREATION PLAN

Parks & Recreation Commission

The Community Recreation Plan guides the future development of recreational opportunities within the Village of Elk Rapids as well as the continuing enhancement of recreational amenities. It provides a concise description of the Village's plans and policies for current and future recreation.

This plan was adopted by the Elk Rapids Village Council on January 17, 2023, and expires on December 31, 2027.

Village of Elk Rapids | 231.264.9274
315 Bridge Street | elkrapids.org



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ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Statecraft – Elise Crafts – Consulting
 Brennen French Arts – Graphic Design

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document is truly a love letter to the beautiful and dynamic area that we live in and the fantastic people that we share it with in community. While this plan is a Michigan Department of Natural Resources required document to receive grant consideration, the dedicated folks who put this together hope you will read about how our community values our shared history and goals, takes pride in our recreational resource, and how we plan on improving our recreational assets and opportunities in the next five years.

A special thank you to the committed volunteers on the Parks & Recreation and Harbor Commissions who have spent extra hours to engage with the community, review several drafts, and for their vision that made this plan come to life. Their input and inspiration based on community comments will help implement the goals through recreation and harbor efforts in the years to come.

Thank you to all the individuals who have shared pictures for the plan that show off the natural beauty of our community, including but not limited to Trustees Laura Shumate and Melissa West, 2021 Summer Intern Lauren Benitez, and Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

Appreciation is to be extended to specific staff and Consultant Elise Crafts who devoted significant time and effort to complete this plan for submission. Elise took on this project and created a concrete timeline and assigned responsibilities to make this plan a reality. She designed, improved, administered, and analyzed the survey results that molded the goals for recreation in our community for the next five years. Village Manager Bryan Gruesbeck provided guidance, advise, and tremendous leadership throughout the development of this plan. Thanks to Planning/Zoning and Community Development Administrator Kerri Janisse who helped coordinate meetings, updated data and content, and edited. Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka took pictures of the community, designed, updated and edited this document.

Finally, a huge thank you to all community members, elected & appointed officials, village staff, consultants, and stakeholders who shared their input for this collaborative plan. It takes a village, and this is evident through all the constructive feedback received to put this plan together.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE 2023 FIVE-YEAR ELK RAPIDS COMMUNITY RECREATION PLAN

The Village of Elk Rapids, nestled in a 2.0 square mile area in Antrim County, located in the northwest region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, values recreation as a key aspect of Village life and development. Boating, kayaking, swimming, and fishing are just a few activities that Elk Rapids offers. Residents and visitors alike can also walk, run, bike, or sunbathe on sandy beaches, picnic on Lake Michigan's Grand Traverse Bay or listen to music in the park.

The Community Recreation Plan guides the future development of recreational opportunities within the Village of Elk Rapids as well as the continuing enhancement of recreational amenities, and it provides a concise description of the Village's plans and policies for current and future recreation. The Plan has been developed with respect to the 2018 Coordinated Master Plan for the Village of Elk Rapids and Elk Rapids Township.



Figure 1: Locational Map of the Village of Elk Rapids in the Northwestern portion of Michigan's lower peninsula.

CHAPTER 1: COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Located in a 500 square mile watershed where the beautiful chain of inland lakes flow into Grand Traverse Bay of Lake Michigan, the Village of Elk Rapids is a charming place to live, work, and enjoy our bountiful, available recreation.

People who love and believe in our community have generated new investments and volunteers lead events that have once again made our community attractive and desirable. Our harbor, vibrant businesses, and natural beauty draw visitors from land and water to enjoy all we have to offer. People come for the lakes, the climate, and the walkability of our safe and caring neighborhoods. But our diverse medical amenities and high-quality education system also attract people of all ages and backgrounds who now want to call our community home. More and more are going to come as they seek places that offer economic opportunity, environmental security, prosperity, and quality of life, and we must be ready to take advantage while ensuring healthy aquatic and land ecosystems now and for the future.

We want to become a truly sustainable community that stops riding these waves of growth and despair. We have water capacity to accommodate growth, but we need to address housing affordability to attract a workforce that diversifies our population and our businesses' needs. Yet, we have limited land for development within the village. We need to address access to daycare for that growing workforce, we need affordable high-speed internet for the new businesses and people, and we need a better array of businesses that go beyond only those related to tourism. These needs and issues don't stop at the municipal boundary. The entire region is dealing with these issues, which means we must work together on the solutions. We will capitalize on, and secure, our natural and built assets while working with our regional neighbors, to ensure the long-term prosperity of current and future, rural and urban residents alike.

OUR SHARED COMMUNITY VISION

Elk Rapids region is a year-round community offering prosperity and an amazing quality of life for all.

WHAT WE VALUE AS A COMMUNITY

Communications and Engagement – Listening is a crucial part of success. As is communicating with intention and visibility. The Elk Rapids region believes in simple and clear communication through a variety of mediums to ensure all residents are included in decisions and conversations for their community's future.

Inclusive Community – The Elk Rapids region is building an inclusive and diverse future to ensure long-term success. Through housing affordability, asset planning and engagement; Elk Rapids region is committed to building an abundant community for families, seasonal workers, professionals, seniors and semi-retirees, and visitors alike.

Community Investment – Committed to attracting the right investment for the region. Investments that are aligned with intentional direction and growth for a prosperous future. A sustainable community with enduring success for our businesses, school systems, and the region

Collaboration – Elk Rapids region success depends on collaboration and pooling resources. Whether it is labor, housing, water, recreation, economic prosperity, or environmental challenges are best addressed by working together to find long-term solutions that ensure the prosperity of the citizens and businesses in the region.

These values have corresponding action plans as agreed upon by the 13 Ways Steering Committee, which is a coalition of local leaders in business, nonprofits, and government who worked with the 13 Ways Inc. to assess the community and find positive ways to progress. To view the Strategic Vision document that the 13 Ways Team presented to the Elk Rapids community, please follow this link: <https://growthzonesitesprod.azureedge.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/1412/2022/12/Strategic-Vision-Final.pdf>



Figure 2: Aerial view of the Island House Park and the Edward C. Memorial Harbor in the distance. Photo courtesy of 2021 Summer Intern Lauren Benitez.



Figure 3: Black & White picture of Elk Rapids pre-1950.

HISTORY OF ELK RAPIDS

The history of our community is almost as old as the country itself. What began as a port became a designed resort community. The location and growth of industries grew the population to almost 3,000 by 1900. The village served as the commercial center, with people from across the region drawn to the hotels and shops lining River Street. Unfortunately, by 1916 industry operations ceased and by the Great Depression the population had decreased to less than 600 residents. But that wasn't the end of our community. Investments in a new marina and US 31 caused a tourism boom as visitors became residents, and once again our community thrived with energy and new businesses. At the turn of the millennium our community was once again facing challenges as main street businesses closed and buildings became dilapidated. Our community has faced many ups and downs throughout its history.

The Village of Elk Rapids had its beginnings in the 1840s when surveyor Abram S. Wadsworth built a cabin in the area and became the first permanent non-native settler. In the spring of 1852, Wadsworth laid out the village of Stevens, which in 1858 became the town of Elk Rapids, the first in Antrim County.

Hydropower has been an intrinsic part of the Village's economic life since the very beginning. The first water powered sawmill was installed in the early 1850s on the site of the current powerhouse's bypass spillway. By 1871, the Elk Rapids Iron Company had also constructed a water powered, four-story grist mill and wooden powerhouse at that site. The sawmill went through several rebuilds and upgrades before being relocated to the site of the current powerhouse. The mill, grist mill and wooden powerhouse were razed in 1915 as the supply of

Northern Michigan White pine became exhausted and, in 1916, were replaced at the lower level of the present dam/ powerhouse structure. In 1929-1930, the current, more elaborate building was built.

The dam plays an essential role in maintaining the natural features and recreational opportunities which make the Village of Elk Rapids so unique. The local tourism-based economy has, for all practical purposes, grown up around the dam. The water levels the dam have maintained Elk and Skegemog Lakes since the mid-nineteenth century. If the dam were removed, the lakes' water levels would decrease. By acting as a barrier to invasive species migrating from Lake Michigan into the Chain of Lakes, the dam also preserves the lakes' fisheries.

The County has demonstrated its commitment to relicense the dam and refurbish it, making it a permanent presence in our community. Antrim County completed a \$250,000 restoration and repair project in 2018, using historic photos as a guide to restore the original appearance.

The **Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor** has been a Village project for over 50 years. It was expanded twice during the late 1980s. This modern facility is one of the largest and most popular on Lake Michigan's Grand Traverse Bay. In 2012, courtesy floating docks and 22 boat slips were added to the Elk River Landing in the Upper Harbor.



Figure 4: Elk Rapids Hydro-Electric Plant, also known as the Elk Rapids Dam. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.



Figure 5: View from the Lower Harbor Docks late in the season. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.



Figure 6: Elk Rapids Township Hall located on River Street just west of the downtown area. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

The *Elk Rapids Township Hall*, built in 1883, is one of only fourteen flat-floored opera houses remaining in the United States. Rare features found in this magnificent structure are its tin ceiling, raked stage and the historic stage curtain, now a digital replica of the original.

POPULATION AND AGE

The 2020 Census estimated the Village of Elk Rapids population to be 1,530 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates). However, as a popular vacation destination with many amenities which make it a high-quality place to live, this number swells in the summer months with the influx of seasonal residents and tourists.

The median age in the Village is 60.3, an increase of 2.2 years from 2018. This median puts the Village 8.7 years above the current County average of 51.6, and 21 years over the state average of 38.8 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

In discussing the population of the Village of Elk Rapids, it is important to note that these numbers do not reflect the actual number of persons in the area during the summer months. This situation can be seen throughout much of northern Michigan. A 2020 Northwest Michigan Seasonal Population Analysis found that Antrim County's population grows from 23,4300 (annual population) to 60,000 during the summer months (networksnorthwest.org). The large influx of seasonal residents has a tremendous impact on the area's economy, recreation needs, and opportunities. Activity and demand for recreation facilities climbs dramatically, necessitating added maintenance by the Village for trash removal, landscaping, and other upkeep.



Figure 7: Community members and visitors enjoy the beach at Veterans Memorial Park. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

TRANSPORTATION

The Elk Rapids transportation network, as elsewhere in the state, is heavily focused on the automobile, but there are legacy and emerging alternatives.

Non-Motorized Transportation

The Village of Elk Rapids was designated a Pure Michigan © Trail Town in 2021 thanks to the hard work of the Trail Alliance volunteers. This designation allows the village and businesses to market our community as a trail-loving place and attract more year-round visitors who enjoy these types of recreational opportunities. The village is committed to non-motorized recreational opportunities for community members and visitors alike to enjoy.

The village serves as an ideal location to connect the existing trails that have been developed by Top of Michigan Trails Council, which provides recreational trails through Charlevoix, Emmet, and Cheboygan counties, as well as Traverse Area Recreation Trail (TART) in the Grand Traverse region. These trails provide important safe areas for many recreational activities such as jogging and walking, skateboarding, biking, and rollerblading.

Nakwema Trailway

TART has an ambitious goal to connect the Traverse City trail networks, linking the communities of Traverse City, Acme, Elk Rapids, Eastport, Norwood, and Charlevoix. The trail will pass through beautiful scenery and provide access to parks, beaches, natural areas, communities, and other destinations along the US-31 corridor, now known as the Nakwema Trailway. This recreational trail promotes all sorts of activities including hiking, biking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, among others. The project builds on the vision for over a decade of community groups working to make the trail connections. In 2020, the Elk Rapids Village Council approved the proposed route through the Village of Elk Rapids.

Local and Federal Bike Routes

Elk Rapids has established several bike trails throughout the Village. Resident and visiting cyclist are encouraged to travel along existing bike routes, including South Bayshore to Ottawa to Oak Street then to River Street; Industrial Park Drive to Ames Street, the US Bicycle Route 35 along Bridge Street; among several others. To view a comprehensive map of all the bike routes in town, [please click here](#). Motorists are encouraged to share the road along all these bike paths in town.



Figure 8: The Village was presented this plaque for becoming a Pure Michigan © Trail Town. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.



Figure 9: Elk Rapids residents enjoying the 2021 community event which celebrated trail accessibility in the village. Photo courtesy of Trustee Melissa West.

Public Transit

The public transportation system serving the Village of Elk Rapids is the Antrim County Transportation Agency (ACT), which provides dial-a-ride service to all residents of the county. The Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor also provides courtesy transportation for transient boaters within Village limits.

Public bus service is available in nearby Traverse City. Indian Trails Bus Company services include charters, tours, shuttles, airport transfers, casino runs, as well as daily scheduled routes throughout Michigan to Chicago, Milwaukee, and Duluth.

Air

Traverse City Cherry Capital Airport, approximately 15 miles from Elk Rapids, provides primary air transportation for the region. Other options exist in Grand Rapids, Pellston, Manistee, MBS (Tri-cities), Lansing, and Flint.

Rail

A railroad line used to terminate in Elk Rapids, however, the abandoned line is now privately owned. The proposed Ann Arbor to Traverse City and Petoskey train service has received funding for additional planning studies with the help from the “Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity” (RAISE) program. This presents an exciting opportunity for travel options in the region.



Figure 10: Aerial view of downtown Elk Rapids and US-31 Highway Beyond. Photo courtesy of 2021 Summer Intern Lauren Benitez.

Streets and Highways

Major arterials within the community include U.S. 31, River Street, Ames Street, Cairn Highway and North and South Bayshore Drive. Three bridges convey traffic over the Elk River and spillway.

Shared-lane bicycle markers are now used on major roadways in anticipation of the Nakwema Trailway extension as part of the existing TART non-motorized. The trail will meander through the village to the north end of Elk Rapids.

The Ames Street development project is also prioritizing walking and biking throughout the district. This key project will also address the pedestrian boardwalk that goes under the US-31 highway bridge, which will create a safe crossing from Ames Street to the west side of the village.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Once famous for its clay, used in brickmaking and limestone for smelting, Elk Rapids continues to value its waterways and agricultural land.

Topography

The bedrock in the Village consists of Berea Sandstone, Bedford Shale, and Ellsworth Shale. The surface geology of the Village is dominated by medium-textured glacial till, composed of non-sorted glacial debris, loam and silt loam texture with variable amounts of cobbles and boulders.

The surface geology of the Village was formed 10,000 to 12,000 years ago by glacial activity. Numerous advances and retreats by these glaciers resulted in the locally complex pattern of erosion and deposition. The drainage channels scoured by the glaciers resulted in depressions oriented linearly from the northwest to the southeast. Along the lakes the geological composition is primarily lacustrine sand and gravel. This type of sand and gravel typically occur as former beaches and near offshore deposits of the glacial Great Lakes.

The Village is located on two peninsulas bounded by Grand Traverse Bay, Elk River, and Elk Lake. The topography of this area is flat to gently rolling and drains directly into Grand Traverse Bay, Elk Lake, and Bass Lake, as shown in the Topographic Map on the previous page. The only major area of topographic relief is a slight escarpment in which the topography elevates approximately 40 feet at the southern part of the west side of the Village. The contours on the topographic map were digitized from the USGS quadrangle sheets available in GIS format from the State of Michigan Center for Geographical Information.

Hydrological Features

Elk Rapids has some of the finest freshwater resources in the world, both surface and ground water. The 2018 Elk Rapids Collaborative Master Plan reflects the importance of water quality to area residents. The Plan's goals and objectives for the Village support the protection of our water resources.

Topographic Map

Village of Elk Rapids

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Legend

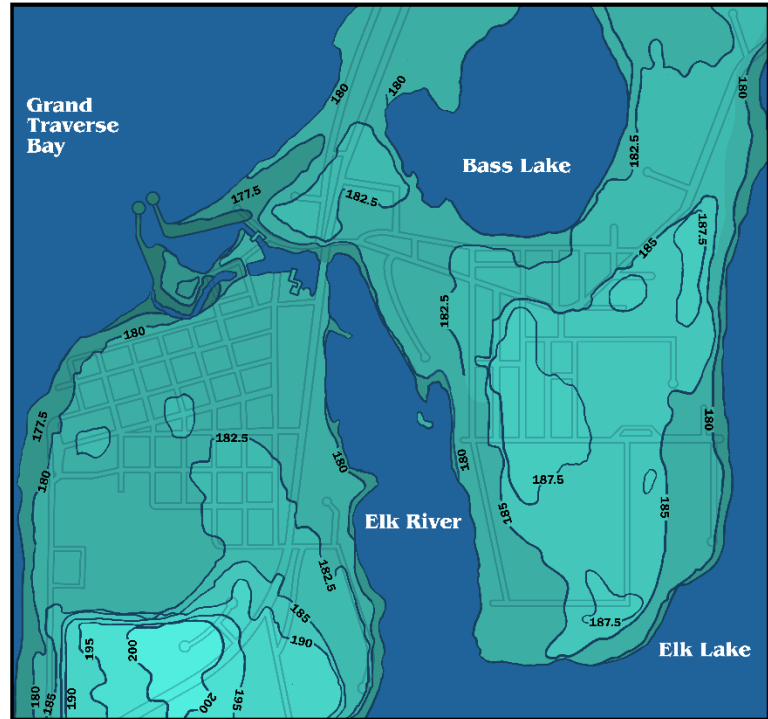
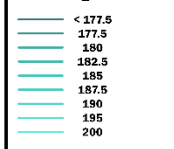


Figure 11: Topographical Map of the Village of Elk Rapids.



Figure 12: Aerial view of the Island House and pedestrian bridge over Elk River. Photo courtesy of Summer Intern 2021 Lauren Benitez.

Surface Water

One of the greatest attractions for residents and visitors to Elk Rapids are the area's natural landscapes, most notably the surface water resources. The Elk River serves as the outlet for the Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed, which covers approximately 503 square miles in the counties of Antrim, Charlevoix, Grand Traverse, and Kalkaska. With an exception for the dams at Elk Rapids and Lake Bellaire, the Chain of Lakes are navigable by small craft.

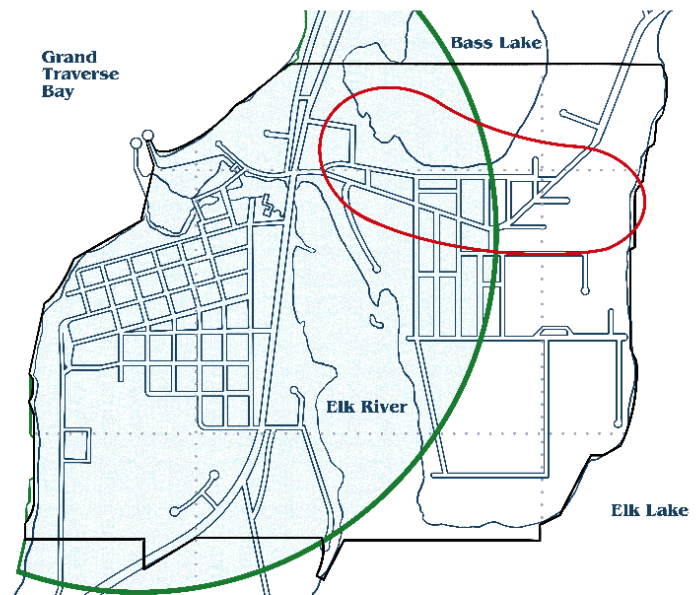
Within the Village there are 1.6 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline and nearly seven miles of frontage on inland lakes and rivers. These lakes, rivers and their associated streams and

creeks offer scenic and recreational amenities to Village residents and visitors.

Elk Lake and Bass Lake are part of an ongoing comprehensive lake monitoring program being conducted by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. Visit <https://www.watershedcouncil.org/cwqm.html> for the results of the most recent data collection.

Groundwater

The entire Village relies on groundwater for drinking water, either from the municipal wells for those served by the municipal water system or from individual wells where municipal water is not available. The 'Aquifer Vulnerability to Surface Contamination in Michigan' map, prepared by the Center for Remote Sensing and Department of Geography at Michigan State University, reveals that the Village is in an area in which the vulnerability of drinking water aquifers to surface contamination is high. This vulnerability is caused by the presence of highly permeable soils over highly sensitive drift lithology (layers of clay and permeable sands and gravels). Due to this aquifer vulnerability, wellhead protection measures are in place for the municipal water wells.



Groundwater Recharge Area

Figure 13: Groundwater recharge area in the village.

Lakes, creeks, and wetlands are important for surface drainage, groundwater recharge and wildlife habitat. The well recharge area for the two municipal wells in Elk Rapids are shown above. Note that the third municipal water well located near the Department of Public Works has a well-defined recharge area that is indicated by the oval-shaped segment, encompassing mainly the Ames Street commercial corridor, the residential area to the south of Bass Lake, the southern end of Bass Lake and extending across part of the Elk Rapids Golf Course to Elk Lake. By comparison, the municipal water well, located at the Veteran's Memorial Park near the shoreline of Grand Traverse Bay, has a less-defined recharge area by a radius of approximately one mile encircling the well area. Alterations to the watershed features in each of these areas can contribute to flooding, poor water quality, and loss of valuable wildlife habitat.

Elk River Shoreline Assessment

At the request of the Village of Elk Rapids, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council assessed the riparian corridor in Elk Rapids along the Elk River. The project area included the river and the riparian corridor downstream of the village boundary and Burnett Foods. For this project riparian corridor was defined as land adjoining both sides of the river to 100 feet. The assessment took place on June 7-8, 2022, with a brief follow-up survey on July 19, 2022.

This report came up with several recommendations for the Village to pursue to protect the shore of the Elk River, including eradicating certain invasive species, controlling particular plants, and monitoring plant life “annually for 3-5 years thereafter to ensure long-term effectiveness of the control treatment and to make sure native plants get re-established.” The report went on to establish guidelines for landscaping and beautifying the river corridor to improve the water quality and natural environment of this important community asset.

[To read the full report, please click this link.](#)



Figure 14: View from the Island House pedestrian bridge along the Elk River, eventually leading to the spillway. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

Local Wildlife

Several wildlife species reside in the village and surrounding areas. Avid bird watchers have seen several types of birds, including bald eagles which nest near Elk Lake, Michigan's State bird the Robin, Baltimore Orioles, Black-Capped Chickadees, Common Loons, Northern Cardinals, Northern Flickers, and Wilson's Warbler, to name a few.

Walleye, trout, northern pike, perch, bass, black crappie, muskellunge, whitefish, northern pike, and bluegill are species found in Bass Lake, Elk Lake, and the Elk River. Sixty-nine different species of fish have been identified in the Chain-of-Lakes Watershed by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. The Elk River Chain of Lakes fishery management strategy includes stocking and periodic surveying of fish populations. Brown trout, steelhead, and various species of salmon are found in Grand Traverse Bay. The Michigan Department of Resources has identified the Elk Rapids Bay area as a key spawning ground for Cisco Whitefish. Many of the current recreational areas in the Village of Elk Rapids cater to recreational fishermen. Dam Beach Fishing Park and the Kids Pond are examples of popular fishing spots in the village.

Habitat for populations of songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds, muskrat, mink, and raccoon are provided by the wetlands and lakeshores within the Village. The predominant mammal species found in the Village of Elk Rapids are squirrel, fox, raccoon, mink, muskrat, skunk, rabbit, and deer.

Local nonprofit Green Elk Rapids, which consists of volunteers whose mission is "to enhance our community by engaging in thoughtful and educational experiences based around our environment, its flora and fauna and how we can improve our quality of life." This group provides a monthly almanac of wildlife sightings and natural wonder in the Elk Rapids area. You may view the archive of this almanac at

<https://www.greenelkrapids.org/elk-rapids-almanac.html>.



Figure 15: Digitally painted birds including the Northern Cardinal (top right), Wilson's Warbler (top left), Baltimore Oriole (middle left), Northern Flicker (middle right), Common Loon (bottom left), and Black-Capped Chickadee (bottom right).
Courtesy of Brennen French Arts.



Figure 16: End of the Elk River at Veterans Memorial Park, commonly referred to as the “Chute.” Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Environmental quality is of great concern for area residents. The April 2005 Survey Summary Report, approved in late 2005 and reviewed in 2012 by the Village Planning Commission, lists the following partial areas of strong consensus in environmental issues:

Areas of Consensus on Environmental Issues

- Protect lake water quality.
- Protect scenic views of the water.
- Protect groundwater quality to preserve the quality of well water.
- Protect air quality.
- Protect safe biking along streets.
- The importance of Elk Rapids continued work on new image policies to preserve the scenic view areas in the Village.
- Agreed or strongly agreed that Elk Rapids should work on new environmental/growth management policies to develop comprehensive protective measures for properties and waterways adjacent to construction sites during construction of any building.
- Protect the informal lifestyle and slow pace of life.



Figure 17: Solar panels that were installed at the Wastewater Treatment Plant site in 2021 to help the Village create green energy and save on the rising cost of energy. Photo courtesy of 2022 Summer Intern Ted Arnold.

- Protect the Island House property and bridge.
- Protect strict traffic speed control on all streets in the village.
- Protect groundwater quality.
- Protect locally owned businesses.
- Protect recreational opportunities in Village harbors and parks, such as tennis courts, playgrounds, and so on.
- Protect tree-lined streets. Agreed or strongly agrees that Elk Rapids should develop additional combination bicycle paths and roller blade paths.
- Agreed or strongly agreed that Elk Rapids should work on new environmental/growth management policies to engage in joint efforts with surrounding counties and townships for developing zoning regulations which offer more protection to our shorelines.
- Protect noise control, especially in residential areas adjacent to commercial property.
- Agreed or strongly agreed that Elk Rapids should work on new image policies which would require all new development to be tied into to village sewer and water systems.
- Protect wetlands and natural areas.
- Agreed or strongly agreed that Elk Rapids should work on new image policies to create a walking community by connecting and extending sidewalks throughout the east and west sides of the village.
- Agreed or strongly agreed that Elk Rapids should develop additional bicycle lanes on or adjacent to roads.
- Agreed or strongly agreed that Elk Rapids should work on new environmental/growth policies to raise private funds to create bicycle and walking pathways around the village (like Charlevoix/Petoskey area).
- Very important that the Village should work on new image policies to preserve historic buildings.

Any planning, zoning, or operational issues that the community faces now or in the future should take these areas into consideration, because each of them have very strong community support.



Figure 18: Pedestrian path along the Isle of Pines that leads the the Elk Rapids District Library. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

CLIMATE

Elk Rapids is located just south of the 45th parallel, midway between the North Pole and the equator, therefore it has four distinct seasons.



Spring erupts in millions of cherry and apple blossoms. Photo of the Library Bridge accessible to pedestrians.



Summer has warm temperatures which are perfect for boating, swimming, golf and many other recreational activities. Photo of the Elk Rapids Golf Club along the shore of Elk Lake.



Autumn lingers as trees turn color and lose their leaves later than further inland. Photo of the Elk Rapids Government Center which hosts both the Village and Township.



In **winter**, the average annual snowfall is 150.4 inches for Antrim County (Source: Antrim County Road Commission). Photo of the Jack Blesma Pavilion at the Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor.

Antrim County Average Weather

Average January temperatures:

Average High: 34 degrees F

Average Low: 18 degrees F

Average Median: 26 degrees F

Average July temperatures:

Average High: 80 degrees F

Average Low: 56 degrees F

Average Median: 75 degrees F

Source: Midwest Regional Climate Center

Climate Change

Although the causes of global warming are disputed, climate change in northwest lower Michigan is taking place, nonetheless. Average temperatures are rising, and the frequency of severe storms is increasing. Given the unique geographical features of the village, boards and commissions had community conversations on climate migration and its consequences for the Grand Traverse region and all of Michigan in 2021. The community will continue to plan with climate change in mind.



ZONING

The Village of Elk Rapids is a fully zoned community. The Planning Commission sets the zoning districts, and the Village Zoning Administrator administers and enforces the zoning districts. Appeals against the Zoning Administrator's determinations are presented to the Village Zoning Board of Appeals. Please refer to the Elk Rapids Master Plan or Village website for the latest zoning information.

Figure 19: Pointing out areas on the Elk Rapids Zoning Map. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

CHAPTER 2: ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

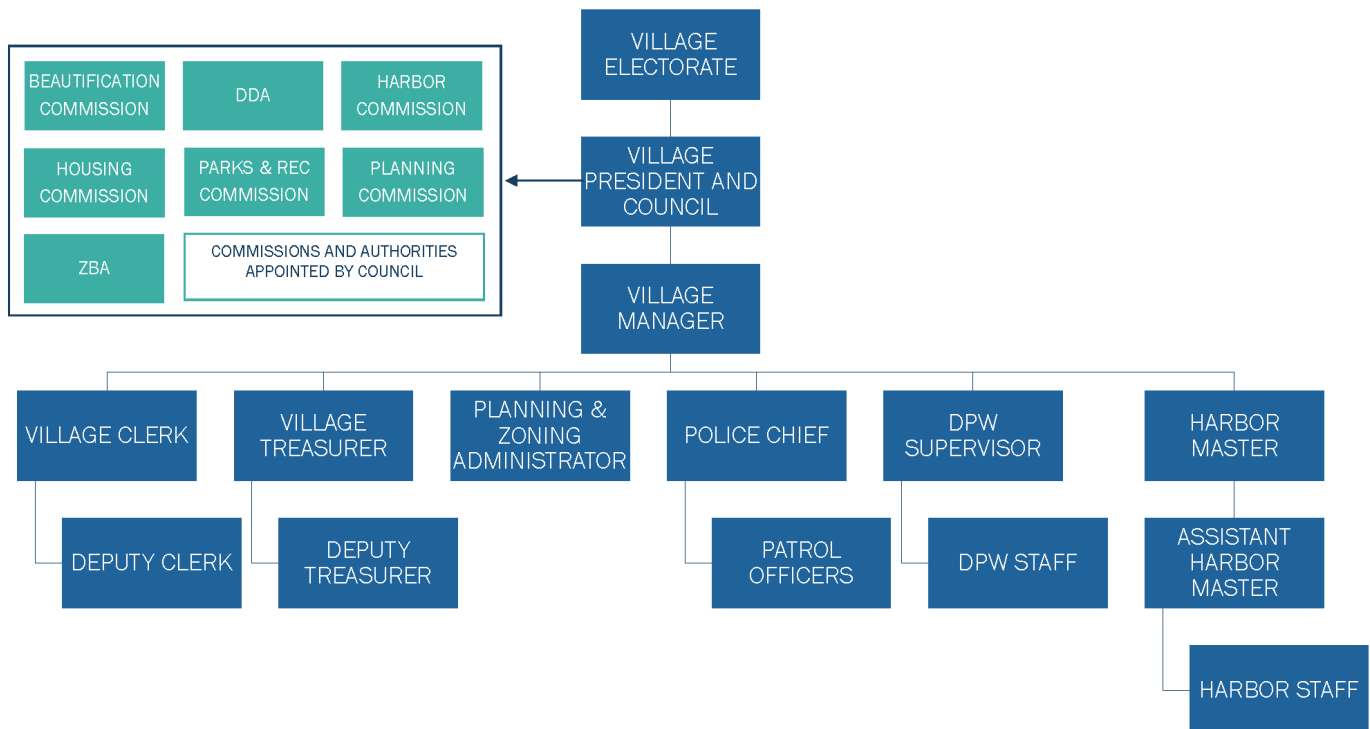
VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

The Elk Rapids Village Council has ultimate authority over the development and management of recreational facilities within the Village. The organization of the Village is shown in below.



Village of Elk Rapids

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Updated August 24, 2021

Figure 20: Village of Elk Rapids Organizational Chart which includes the electorate, elected officials, appointed officials, and operational staff.

Appointed commissions and authorities related to parks and recreation include the Parks & Recreation Commission, Harbor Commission, Beautification Commission and Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The Planning Commission reviews all recreation development proposals. Village staff members, under the village manager's overall direction, operate, administer, and maintain village recreational facilities. The following sections describe the roles of commissions, authorities, and staff.

VILLAGE COMMISSIONS AND AUTHORITIES

All Village Commissions and Authorities act as advisors to the Village Council, which approves or disapproves most recommendations. The commissions are described in brief and collaboration with the Parks & Recreation Commission, if any, is also explained. More information is available in the Village Code of Ordinances (visit the Village website or contact the Village for the Code of Ordinances).



Figure 21: Zupin-Anderson Garden on Dexter Street maintained by the Garden Club and the Beautification Commission. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

The Beautification Commission lead the charge to make the Village of Elk Rapids a Monarch City USA. In the summer of 2022, the Village Council approved Resolution 22-27 to proclaim Elk Rapids was a Monarch City USA, acknowledging that extra steps must be taken as a community to protect this endangered species that travels through the village. The council proclaimed:

“Villages and other local units of government play a crucial role in helping save the monarch butterfly, and the Village of Elk Rapids has declared an interest in becoming a Monarch City to be designated by Monarch City USA, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping the monarch recover city by city. We invite every community member of the Village of Elk Rapids to make a difference for the monarch by planting native nectar plants like milkweed to provide habitat for the monarch and pollinators in locations where people live, work, learn, play, visit, and worship. We encourage community members to take steps to eliminate the use of neonicotinoid pesticides in efforts to help protect pollinators such as the iconic monarch butterfly. It is our hope that other Michigan communities and localities across the nation will also help to ensure the monarch butterfly will once again flourish across the continent. The Village of Elk Rapids and the Beautification Commission are planting nectar producing plants to support the monarch population in village owned open spaces and native milkweed where appropriate; now therefore the Village President and Village Council of Elk Rapids proclaim this 5th day of June 2022 that the Village of Elk Rapids declares intent to become a Monarch City.”

Beautification Commission

The Beautification Commission works to improve the appearance of the Village by planning and implementing projects that add to the beauty of the public areas and preserve the tranquility of natural areas. The Commission was established July 17, 1978, for the purpose of creating programs that care for passive recreational sites and beautification throughout the Village. The Commission promotes activities that benefit and promote this program by encouraging participation of clubs, societies, and other community groups. The eight members of the Commission meet regularly and report to the Village Council on their activities.



Figure 22: The Village celebrated becoming a monarch city at Harbor Days. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

Downtown Development Authority

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) engages in long-range planning in cooperation with the staff and other commissions, including Parks & Recreation, to envision future economic vibrancy of the DDA districts, as well as preparing plans and undertaking economic improvement projects. The geographical boundaries of the current DDA include several parks in the Village. The DDA Plan lists pedestrian crossing and trail systems; and other Walkable Community Improvements among the projects that might be funded. For more information, please reference the current DDA Plan.

Harbor Commission

The Harbor Commission is comprised of seven members who meet monthly. The Village President appoints the members with the consent of the Village Council. One Village Council member is also appointed by the village president to sit on the Harbor Commission.

This commission, under authority from the Village Council, makes recommendations on plans, builds, operates, and maintenance of the Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor and the Elk River Upper Harbor. The harbor is overseen by the Harbormaster per Village Ordinance who in turn works with the commission and supervises seasonal dockworkers at the public harbor facilities. The commission also reviews all village projects that may affect the streams, lakes, rivers, and shorelines within the village.

Housing Commission

The Housing Commission is granted authority under Section 3 of the Public Act of 1933 as amended. The Commission has the following areas of interest: low-income housing; elimination of sub-standard housing; control and supervision of all parks and playgrounds forming a part of a housing development under its jurisdiction; and all other matters that involve housing, especially public or subsidized housing under its jurisdiction. One member of the commission shall be a resident of public or subsidized housing.

The Housing Commission oversees the administration of Noble Pines, a public housing option for senior citizens. The commission is working toward expanding this housing opportunity and other options such as workforce housing to increase living accessibility in the Village.

The Elk Rapids community recognizes the immediate need for workforce housing and has formed a Housing Task Force to aid in efforts to realize the regional housing needs. Staff and volunteers are considering options to build affordable housing in the Village and in the surrounding area such that housing is accessible to all regardless of socioeconomic circumstances.



Figure 23: A tree blooming in Downtown Elk Rapids and businesses in the background. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.



Figure 24: Noble Pines Apartments, public housing for seniors in the Village of Elk Rapids.

Parks & Recreation Commission

This Parks & Recreation Commission works in an advisory capacity regarding the development of parks and recreational programming within the Village of Elk Rapids. Its main concerns are parks, public access sites, seasonal recreational facilities, and recreational activities. The Village President appoints the members on this commission with the consent of the Village Council. One of the members is a Village Council representative, who is also a voting member of the commission. At least four of the members of the commission shall reside within the boundaries of the Village. The Parks & Recreation Commission must meet at least six times a year and these meetings must be open to the public.

The Parks & Recreation Commission was established under Public Act 156 of 1917 in June of 1993 by Ordinance Number 223. The primary role of the commission is to make recommendations to the Village Council regarding the development and maintenance of parks. The Commission also serves as a liaison between the Village Council and community members and keeps an open line of communication with Antrim County and neighboring townships, to be informed about possible shared recreational opportunities in the area. A yearly Parks & Recreation budget is also recommended to the Village Council by the Parks & Recreation Commission. The Village Council has final determination over the Parks & Recreation budget.



Figure 25: Yoga at Veteran's Memorial Beach during the commUNITY event that the Parks & Recreation Commission hosted in 2021. Photo courtesy of Trustee Melissa West.



Figure 26: Gavel behind council dais.
Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission reviews all development activities in the Village of Elk Rapids, including any new recreation projects. Such projects are subject to the Village's Zoning Ordinances. The Planning Commission also updates the Village Master Plan every five years and may opt to incorporate the Community Recreation Plan into the Master Plan by reference.

Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is comprised of five (5) members, four appointed by village council and one representative from the Planning Commission. Their duties include interpreting zoning ordinances, deciding on appeals from administrative decisions, and granting use and nonuse variances.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The village has several staff members as well as numerous volunteers that help it thrive. The Village staff includes the following positions:

- Village Manager
- Village Clerk
- Village Treasurer
- Planning/Zoning & Community Development Administrator
- Chief of Police
- Department of Public Works Superintendent
- Harbormaster
- Assistant Harbormaster
- Lead Wastewater Operator
- DPW Crew Members
- Deputy Clerk
- Deputy Treasurer



Figure 27: Staff and Council Members representing the Village at Evenings on River Street at Harbor Days 2022. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.



Figure 28: Volunteers helping Beautification Commission maintain public gardens throughout the village.

years past.

Volunteers & Community

Volunteers play a key role in the planning and maintenance of Village recreational facilities and operations. The appointed Commissions described above (Parks & Recreation, Harbor, Beautification, and Planning) all have appointed volunteers who are not compensated for their work. Most gardens under the jurisdiction of the Beautification Commission are maintained by volunteers from the Elk Rapids Garden Club. The Parks & Recreation Commission has occasional activities, such as roadside and stream bank cleanups which are manned by volunteers from the Commission as well as the public. The Village Ice Skating Rink is maintained for the most part by volunteers. Numerous community members of all ages volunteered Dam Beach to plant protective dune grass in

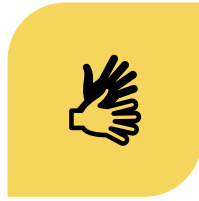
Volunteers play a very active role in most other aspects of Village community life, such as:

- Civic organizations such as Rotary, Lions, Masons, Boy/Girl Scouts, and many more.
- Schools, K-12.
- Elk Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce.
- Harbor Days Association that puts on our annual summer festival.
- Art Rapids!
- Elk Rapids Garden Club with more than 100 members.
- Friends of the Dam Beach
- Friends of the Elk Rapids District Library
- Historic Elk Rapids Town Hall Association
- Green Elk Rapids Days – a multi-day Village festival that celebrates our environment and features a super recycling day, sculptures made of trash, informative seminars, and exotic field trips.
- Civic organizations such as:
 - Elk Rapids Rotary Club
 - Elk Rapids Lions Club
 - Elk Rapids Masonic Lodge #275
 - Girl Scout Troop #8745
 - Scouts Troop #46
 - Among other dedicated organizations.
- Churches, which include are several in the Village.

INTER-AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS



**GREEN ELK RAPIDS,
ROTARY, LIONS CLUB, &
SERVICE ORGS**



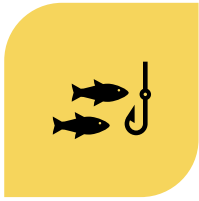
**ELK RAPIDS AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**



**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT
OF NATURAL RESOURCES**



**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY**



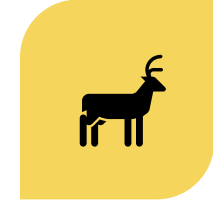
PADDLE ANTRIM



ANTRIM COUNTY



HARBOR COMMISSION



**ELK RAPIDS PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

The Parks & Recreation Commission interacts with other commissions as needed and establishes contacts with other park-related public entities within Antrim County for specific purposes. Parks & Recreation consults with community-based organizations such as the Elk Rapids School Board, the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, and the Lions Club to coordinate activities and exchange information. The Rotary and Lions Clubs are frequent contributors to recreational facility upgrading and construction in the Village. Parks & Recreation coordinates with Elk Rapids Schools when prudent. For example, surveys were distributed via email to gather input for this recreation plan. Other collaborations include Dam Beach cleanup, dune grass planting and education on water issues. Also, Parks & Recreation is considering collaborating with the schools to form a summer tennis program.

The Village, Village Manager, and the Harbormaster work with regulatory agencies including the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Army Corps of Engineers, and Antrim County Soil Erosion to obtain the necessary permits for future construction and maintenance at waterfront facilities in the Village.

The Antrim County Operator of Dams has expressed interest in working with the Parks & Recreation Commission to integrate the Elk Rapids Hydroelectric Dam into the Village park system. Note that the dam is strategically located on Dexter Street between the Lower Harbor/Dam Beach and Fishing Park on the North side and Upper Harbor and Elk River Landing to the South.

The Village also collaborates with several area nonprofits, such as the Watershed Center of Grand Traverse Bay, Paddle Antrim, Traverse Area Recreational Trails (TART Trails), Norte, among others to provide recreational opportunities and eco-friendly initiatives to the community.



The Village has partnered with TART Trails to bring the Nakwema Trailway through town.



Several eco-friendly initiatives in the Village have happened in collaboration with the Watershed Center, including several rain gardens and swales in recreational spaces and stormwater management projects.



The village provides Norte with storage for equipment. Safe rides around the Village are a priority, which include the weekly "slow roll" through the Village in summer months.



Paddle Antrim is currently working with the Village to increase the quality and accessibility for paddlers who use Rotary Park access to launch into the Chain of Lakes.



Figure 29: View of the Veterans Memorial Beach basketball and tennis courts, walking trail, and Lake Michigan shoreline. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

OPERATION OF VILLAGE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The Elk Rapids Department of Public Works (DPW) currently maintains all park facilities while employees of the school district maintain school recreation sites. As such, the operational budget for the village park facilities is part of the overall DPW budget.

The Village Council has full oversight of the affairs of the harbor facilities. Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor has 265 slips and launch ramps. In both the Upper and Lower Harbors, the revenue generated from the Harbor slips and launch ramp is used for operations, maintenance, future improvements, and projects associated with waterfront properties owned by the Village.

Rules and Regulations: Use of Village Recreational Facilities

Rules and regulations concerning the use of the various recreational facilities in the Village of Elk Rapids are governed by Village Code of Ordinances and Resolutions.

The Village of Elk Rapids has an existing agreement with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Harbor follows all State rules and regulations governing harbor and waterfront operations. The Village Manager and the Harbormaster are responsible for enforcing said rules. The rules and regulations not set forth by the DNR are recommended by the Harbor Commission to the Village Council. The Village Council is the final arbiter of those recommendations.

Recreational Programming

The Village helps conduct an annual Fishing Derby at Kids Pond for area children. The Village also introduced an Open Water Safety Class in 2022 that had over 50 participants. In addition, money has been budgeted to begin offering other recreational programming in the future. During the 2022 community survey, four-season activities, adult sports, educational activity, and family activity programming were selected most often by survey participants as programming they would be interested in participating in.

The Village partners with other organizations such as Norte, the Elk Rapids District Library, and the Elk Rapids Public Schools for additional recreational programming and facility use. The Village is proud to work with other organizations to provide spaces where programming can happen, like 5-K fundraisers for the schools, library programming at the Island House, and well-maintained streets for Norte participants to use throughout the year.



Figure 30: Instructor Allison Shumate teaching a student from the first Open Water Safety Program, created and sponsored by the Parks & Recreation Commission. Photo courtesy of Trustee Laura Shumate.



Figure 31: Norte booth at the 2021 community event sharing recreational opportunities with the village residents. Photo courtesy of Trustee Melissa West.

RECREATIONAL FUNDING & BUDGETING

The 2022/23 and projected 2023/24 operational budgets for parks and recreational facilities in the Village of Elk Rapids are provided below.

2022-2023 VILLAGE BUDGET: PARKS & RECREATION	
Item	Budget
Parks Maintenance (DPW)	\$8,531
Parks & Recreation Commission	\$62,785
Harbor Operation & Maintenance Enterprise	\$1,299,819
Harbor Capital	\$217,506
Harbor Construction	\$650,000
Harbor Bond	\$89,190

2023-2024 VILLAGE BUDGET: PARKS & RECREATION	
Item	Budget
Parks Maintenance (DPW)	\$6,696
Parks & Recreation Commission	\$88,447
Harbor Operation & Maintenance Enterprise	\$1,513,786
Harbor Capital	\$268,300
Harbor Construction	\$650,000
Harbor Bond	\$86,940

Funding Sources

Currently, most of the funds for recreational activities under the purview of the Parks & Recreation Commission come from the village general fund, made up of revenues from various taxes, licenses, fees for service, state revenue sharing, and private donations. Occasional special donations from civic groups and private individuals for specific purposes are received and applied. For example, the Elk Rapids Garden Club sponsors several public art initiatives such as the monarch butterfly mural at Veterans Memorial Park.

The Commission will also suggest fees for programming such as the Open Water Safety Lessons. Village Council has the final vote on any fees that are levied through the fee schedule as dictated through resolution.



Figure 32: Monarch butterfly mural organized and painted by high schooler Paige Peters and fellow classmates at Veterans Memorial beach, sponsored by the Elk Rapids Garden Club. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

Operational funds for the Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor are generated by revenues from the rental of boat slips as well as from the sale of related goods and services. The Harbor operates as an Enterprise Fund (standalone business).

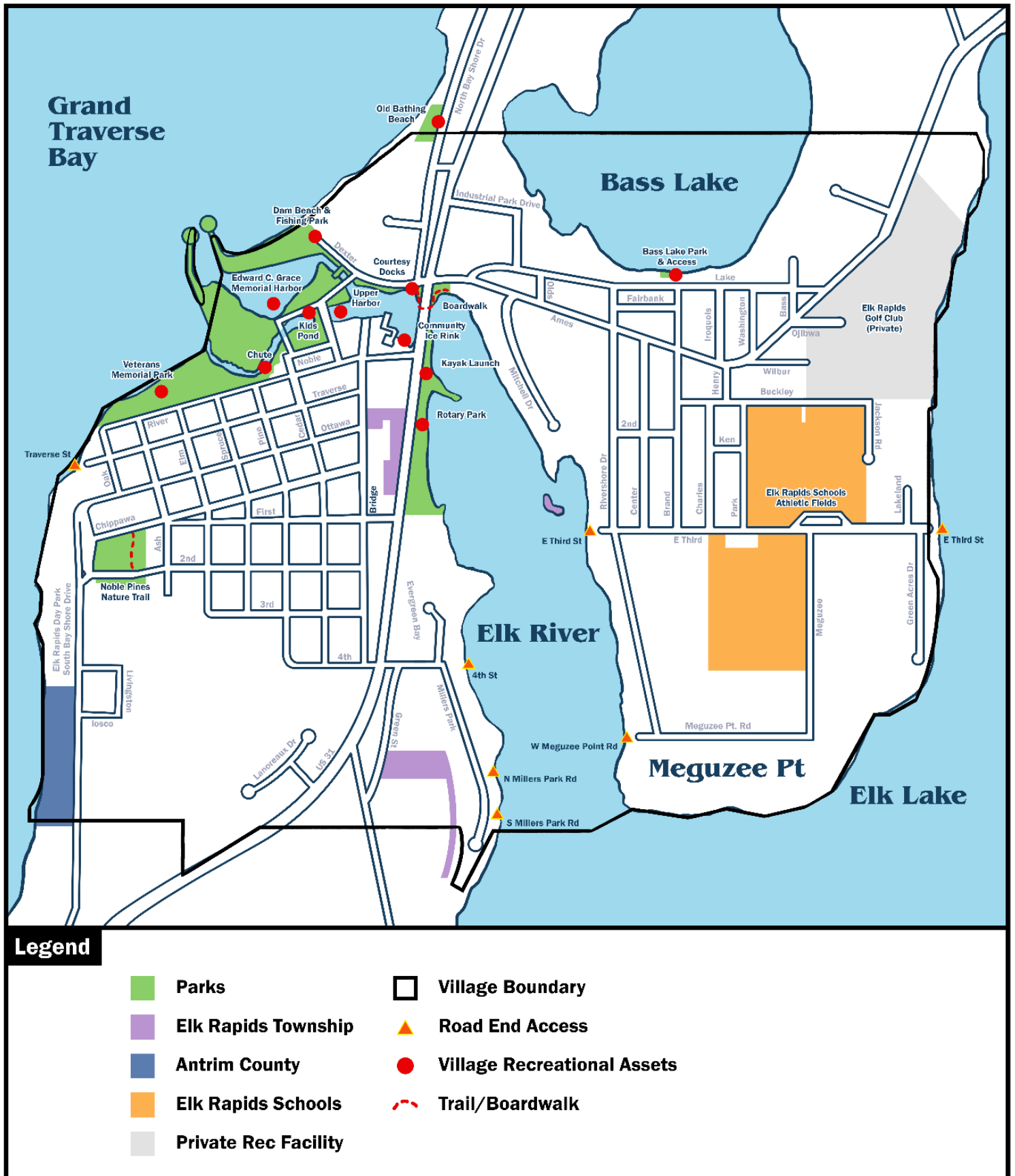


Figure 33: Map of recreational inventory throughout the village.

CHAPTER 3: RECREATION INVENTORY

This chapter provides an inventory of recreational facilities within the Village of Elk Rapids, followed by facilities owned by other agencies in and around the Village. Individual public water access sites have been included and mapped. An accessibility assessment is included following the inventory of recreation facilities.

VILLAGE PARKS

Elk Rapids is blessed with numerous waterfront parks.



Figure 34: Aerial view of Veterans Memorial Park recreational facilities and available rental equipment in partnership with Bayfront Beach and Bike store. Photo courtesy of 2021 Summer Intern Lauren Benitez.



Figure 35: Village resident posing by the monarch mural at Veterans Memorial Park. Photo courtesy of Planning/Zoning and Community Development Administrator Kerri Janisse.

Significant improvements have been made to the park's facilities over the years, and the Village continues to make improvements to facilities as needed. In 2021, the Parks and Recreation Commission hosted the "commUNITY Event", which attracted community members to enjoy the park and participate in various activities at Veterans Memorial Park. Several stakeholders and collaborative partners such as Elk Rapids Public Schools, TART, Paddle Antrim, and Green Elk Rapids had booths to showcase local recreational opportunities. The commission hopes to plan another commUNITY event to make this a regular event.

Veterans Memorial Park

Veterans Memorial Park is located on East Grand Traverse Bay and features an expansive beach, playground, beach volleyball, three tennis courts including one dual-use pickleball court, two basketball courts, hard surface children game areas, picnic tables, grills, public restroom facilities, open green space, and a Veteran's memorial. A paved pathway runs from the island footbridge at River Street and Pine Street and continues the length of the park to River Street and Ash Street. Parking is available along River Street for the entire length of the park. This popular community park is just over eight (8) acres.

The site has great potential for people using the proposed Traverse City to Charlevoix Trail, commonly referred to as the Nakwema Trailway. It is situated along a significant portion of the in-town trail which was approved by Village Council in 2020.

Veterans Memorial Park had the highest reported usage among survey respondents. This location is very popular with residents and visitors with its vast amenities along the shore of Lake Michigan.



Figure 36: Elk Rapids High School Jazz Lab playing at the commUNITY festival hosted in Veterans Memorial Park. Photo courtesy of Trustee Melissa West.

Rotary Park & Kayak Launch

Rotary Park is located on Elk River next to the Chamber of Commerce. The community park features a pavilion with covered picnic tables, grills, a large fireplace, and three storyboards mounted on the inside wall of the picnic pavilion. These storyboards have a modern design and feature historical photos and descriptions of the greater Elk Rapids area. The park and two water access sites here are located on an 8-acre Village parcel along with the Elk Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce. The Farmer's Market is held at on these grounds adjacent to the Chamber through the summer months. The public can rent out the pavilion at \$25.00 per four-hour block by scheduling through the village office for use.



Figure 37: Aerial view of Rotary Park, which hosts the Elk Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce. Photo courtesy of 2021 Summer Intern Lauren Benitez.

A dock that extends into Elk Lake from the pavilion at Rotary Park is one of two access sites. Kayak access from this site needs improvement. To the north of the pavilion is the “Kayak Launch.” This site features a small boat ramp, a dirt/gravel turn-around, and trash receptacles. Parking at this site is limited and boaters often park their vehicles and trailers in the Rotary Park or Chamber parking areas. The access is used by both Village residents and paddlers from the surrounding region. Survey responses indicate an interest in improving access at the kayak launch and making it accessible to people with different types of abilities.

Rotary Park is a key water access site along the Paddle Antrim Chain of Lakes Water Trail. The 2017 Chain of Lakes Water Trail Plan identifies several improvements for water access specifically at the Rotary Park pavilion site. In addition, the 2018 Community Recreation Plan, stakeholders voiced support for improvements to accessibility in the park, which sparked a collaboration between the Village Government and Paddle Antrim to pursue state funding through private funds and state grants to improve these facilities. Community members have noted that improvements such as restrooms, an accessible launch, wash station, rain garden, and improved parking. The Rotary Park improvement plan, which is in the funding phase, has noted additional improvements in their plan.



Figure 38: View from the water of the Rotary Park Pavilion and swans enjoying the calm waters along the Elk River. Photo courtesy of 2021 Summer Intern Lauren Benitez.

When asked to share ideas for improvements in Rotary Park during the 2022 community survey, respondents noted that they were excited about the planned improvements stemming from the 2018 planning process and offered overall support for water access site and accessibility improvements throughout the Village, generally.

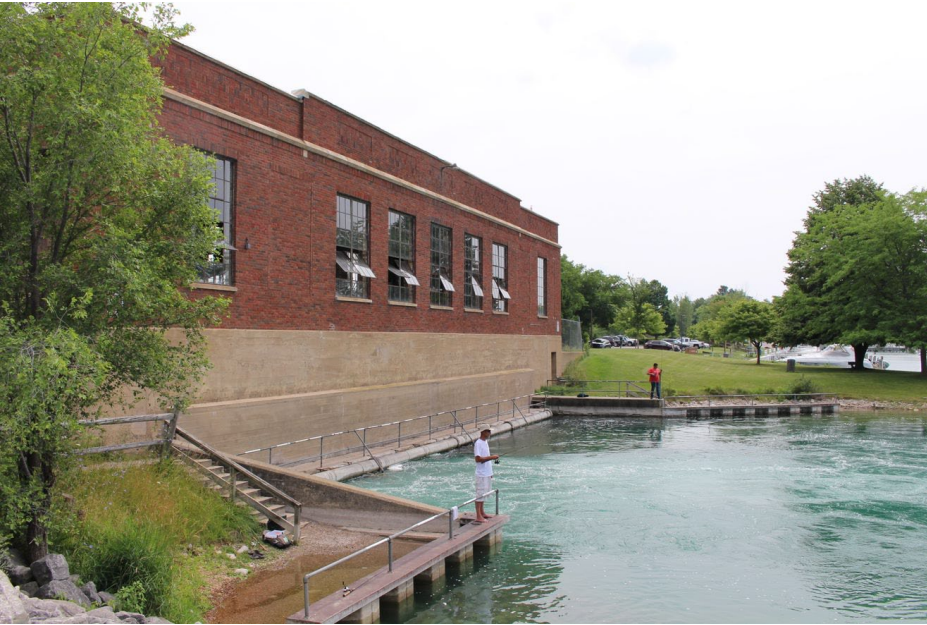


Figure 39: Fishing docks behind the Elk Rapids Hydro-Electric Dam near the Dam Beach. Photo courtesy of 2021 Summer Intern Lauren Benitez

Dam Beach and Fishing Park

Dam Beach and Fishing Park is located on the bay side of the power dam and encompasses 8.3 acres of land and around 3,500 feet of waterfront on Grand Traverse Bay, Elk River, and the harbor. The Village of Elk Rapids leases the park property from Antrim County. The community park is popular among residents for both its swimming beach and year-round fishing opportunities. Its amenities include three accessible fishing piers, a rustic beach volleyball area, picnic table, bike racks, fire pit, and parking. Porta Johns are maintained at the site once the bathrooms are shut down for the season. An eight-foot-

wide sidewalk connects Dexter Street to the beach and fishing parking area for improved safety and ease of access from town. A paved sidewalk runs the length of the west shore of the property. The site has great potential for people using the proposed Traverse City to Charlevoix Nakwema Trailway.

Results from the 2017 recreation plan survey indicated a desire for improved bathrooms. Based on this community input, the Village sought and received funds to develop improved signage, restroom facilities, and paved parking lot.

For information on conservation and management of this park, please refer to the Village's [Dam Beach & Fishing Park Management Plan](#).



Figure 40: Shoreline of the Dam Beach in the off-season. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

Old Bathing Beach

Located on North Bayshore Drive, this community beach is primarily undeveloped and used by residents. The park area is just over one acre in size and includes a pristine beach, picnic tables, an interpretive sign, and gravel parking area. In 2022, this beach was used for Open Water Safety Lessons organized by the Parks & Recreation Commission for community members and visitors alike. A vast majority of those who participated were village residents, but the classes are open to all. The commission plans on continuing this and other recreational programming opportunities to increase safety. Per the 2022 community survey, respondents offered that these classes are a positive addition to Parks and Recreation programming in Elk Rapids.



Figure 41: Community members enjoying the sunset at the Old Bathing Beach. Photo courtesy of Village Trustee Laura Shumate.

Kids Pond

On the downtown portion of Elk River, between the spillway and the Cedar Street Bridge is Kids Pond. Over 500 feet of boardwalk meanders along the north bank of the river, and people of all ages come to fish. Kids Fishing Day is held annually at the pond hosted by village volunteers. The crystal-clear waters are popular for fishers and outdoor enthusiasts of all ages and is a frequented walking path in the village near the downtown area. There are several gardens around the pond and boardwalk that are maintained by the Department of Public Works, the Beautification Commission, and community volunteers.



Figure 42: The Kids Pond attracts fishers and recreational enthusiasts of all backgrounds and ages to view the beautiful water and wildlife at the end of the Elk River. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.



Figure 43: The Island House is the home of the Elk Rapids District Library which is at the top of the Elk Rapids Isle of Pines. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

Island House Park

One of the most iconic recreational areas in the Village is the Island House Park, which is located on the Isle of Pines with the Elk River to the South, Harbor to the East, and Grand Travers Bay to the North. This park houses the Elk Rapids District Library, which provides exceptional services to Village residents as well as community members in Elk Rapids and Milton Townships. The Village maintains the historic building and grounds.

There are several programming opportunities that the library coordinates at the Island House, including:



- Story Time: Busy Bodies Thursday afternoons and sensory story time Friday mornings.
- Pokémon Club Sunday, once a month.
- Tech Help Tuesdays and Thursday drop in.
- Crafternoons: family craft day once a month.
- Wonder Wednesday after school program: stem activities and snacks, once a month for school aged kids.
- Adult Maker activities once a month.
- Summer Reading Program June-August.

Figure 44: Story Time on the lawn of the Island House Park, organized by the Elk Rapids District Library. Photo courtesy of the Elk Rapids District Library.

Bass Lake Park & Access

This mini-park and water access site is located on the south shore of Bass Lake. The site is less than one acre in size, and includes a picnic table, grill, gravel parking area, and gravel launch to the lake.

Results from the 2022 community survey indicate that respondents would like to see landscaping improvements and increased amenities at this small site such as improving the boat launch site, parking area, grassy lawn, and recreational opportunities. Residents on the lake note that it could be utilized for winter recreation such as ice fishing, skating, hockey, and more. Funding is being sought for a proposed plan design by Inhabitect, LLC.



Figure 45: Aerial view of the Bass Lake Public Access. This site has the potential for significant improvement to increase community recreational opportunities. Photo courtesy of 2021 Summer Intern Lauren Benitez.

Community Ice Rink

In partnership with the Elk Lake Marina, the ice rink is located on the corner of US-31 and River Street, which leads to Downtown Elk Rapids. The ice rink is open to the public and has been a part of Elk Rapids for more than 30 years (located at its current location since 2021). Survey results from 2022 indicate an interest in improving the conditions of the rink during the winter months. Free skates and other equipment are available for use.



Figure 46: Skaters enjoying the Community Ice Rink that is housed at the Elk Rapids Marina. Photo courtesy of the Elk Rapids Marina.

The Parks & Recreation Commission is having conversations on improving the ice rink amenities to elongate the skating season. Currently, the liner is not refrigerated, so use is up to sometimes unpredictable winter weather in Northern Michigan. Unseasonably high temperatures have delayed opening the rink or make it so the Village must ask community members to stop using the rink in the middle of the season if temperatures get too high, as was the case in the 2022-2023 winter season. Having an improved liner with a refrigerant system will help stabilize the rink and provide a steady season for those who enjoy skating. This beloved recreational experience is a priority to help provide winter sports opportunities the Elk Rapids community.



Figure 47: Aerial view of the lower harbor that access the Grand Traverse Bay on Lake Michigan.

Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor

Surrounded by beaches and located on the West side of downtown Elk Rapids, many boaters frequent Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor. Located on both the Grand Traverse Bay (Lower Harbor) and Elk River (Upper Harbor), the facilities are some of the finest in Michigan, featuring 213 slips in the Lower Harbor and 50 in the Upper Harbor as well as a pavilion, bathhouse, launch ramps, fuel pump, Wi-Fi, and other amenities.

Knowledgeable and helpful staff members welcome all boaters to the marina and boat launch. The harbor also offers slips in Elk Lake and a boat launch for you to explore and enjoy the Antrim County Chain of Lakes. Boaters and the public enjoy well maintained, enhanced, and unique Harbor amenities. The downtown district of Elk Rapids is just a few steps away. There are fine and casual dining, extensive shopping, antique shops, art galleries, community events, farmers markets, festivals, and outstanding recreational opportunities. Staff invites you to make Elk Rapids your port of call.



Figure 48: Many community events are hosted at the Harbor, including Coffee with Council, Village Annual Reports, community yoga classes, and more. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.



Figure 49: Courtesy docks located at the US-31 boardwalk. These docks provide access for boaters enjoying the Chain of Lakes to come into the village to experience businesses and other amenities.

Courtesy Docks

The Harbor facilities include courtesy docks in both the Lower and Upper Harbor (Upper pictured here). The slips are available for 1-3 hour docking for residents and visitors to enjoy shopping or dining in the Village. The Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor financed these docks, but the docks do not generate any income for the harbor. These transient docks are for free use by the community members and visitors to encourage boaters to “dock, shop, and dine.”

The Chute – Lower Spillway

The Chute has become one of Elk Rapids' most unique recreation landmarks. The site is the third and smallest of three spillways in the Elk River and is popular for fishermen and swimmers. It eventually leads to the Grand Traverse Bay from under the Island House Bridge through Veterans Memorial Beach.

ROAD-ENDS

Road-ends provide water access at several locations on Elk Lake and Elk River. While these are not developed parks, they provide an important public access to water in Elk Rapids. Road-end access is primarily used by neighborhoods and residents of the area. In some cases, improvements such as benches, picnic tables, and parking are provided. Road-end public access points are located at the following streets and water bodies:

- Elk Lake Access – E. Third Street, East
- Elk Lake Access – E. Third Street, West
- Elk River Access – E. Third Street
- Elk River Access – E. Fourth Street
- Elk River Access – Meguzee and Rivershore Road End Access
- Elk River Access – Millers Park Road, North
- Elk River Access – Millers Park Road, South
- Grand Traverse Bay and Lake Michigan – Traverse Street
- Grand Traverse Bay and Lake Michigan – Ottawa Street and South Bay Shore Drive

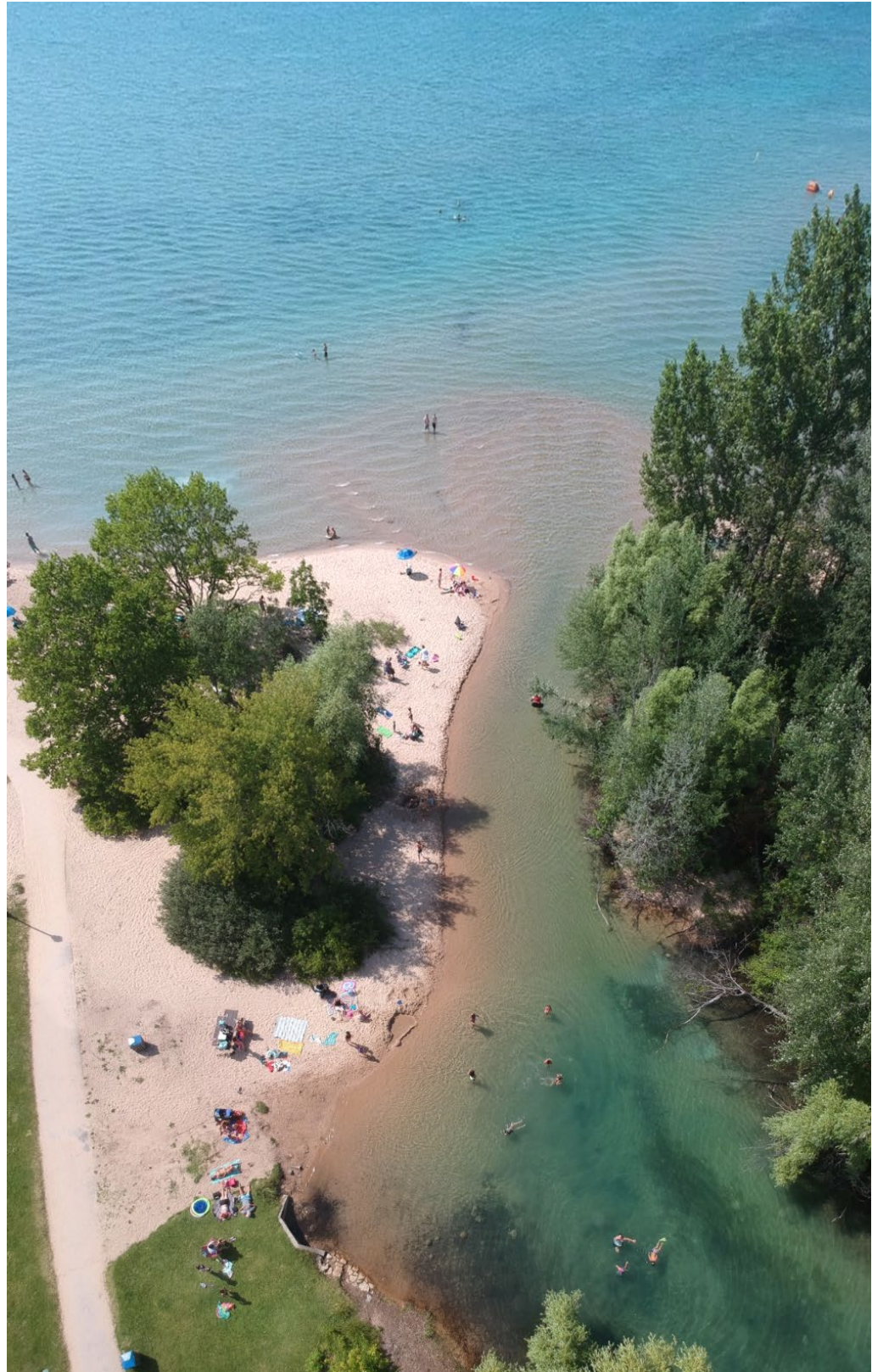


Figure 50: Community members and visitors enjoying the area south of the Chute which empties into the Grand Traverse Bay through Veterans Memorial Park. Photos courtesy of 2021 Summer Intern Lauren Benitez and edited by Brennen French Arts.

Nakwema Trailway Village of Elk Rapids Approved Route



Figure 51: In partnership with TART, the Village of Elk Rapids Council voted in 2020 on the above route to encourage safety, economic benefits, and scenic beauty by having the Nakwema Trailway come through the village. Map provided by TART.

NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS

Trails are pathways that are used recreationally or for transportation by a variety of users. Trail facilities enhance recreation opportunities and provide a unique opportunity to combine physical activity with transportation, linking destinations while providing alternatives to motorized transportation. Trail development and connections between existing trails are increasingly recognized as important economic strategies, generating tourism and visitor spending, and even drawing new and diverse residents.

The Village of Elk Rapids recognizes the importance of trail assets, which is why a group of volunteers known as the “Trail Alliance” sought the Pure Michigan © “Trail Town” designation for the Village. In 2021, the Village was on the official list of Trail Towns thanks to its involvement with trails such as the Nakwema Trailway that will come through town, the Walk of Art which is a unique trail in the Antrim County Day Park featuring several outdoor sculptures, and dedication to waterway trails such as the Pure Michigan © Chain of Lakes Trail that ends in Elk Rapids.

Planning is underway for a non-motorized trail called the Nakwema Trailway (pictured left) that would connect the northeast end of the existing TART trail to Elk Rapids, and continue north, connecting with the Little Traverse Wheelway in the City of Charlevoix. This would make the Village a compelling bicycle destination.



Figure 52: The Village was honored for becoming a Pure Michigan © Trail Town in 2022 at the Governor's Conference on Tourism.



Figure 53: Elk Rapids residents checking out the future site of the Nakwema trail in between Elk Rapids and Acme. Photo courtesy of TART.

The Elk Rapids Village Council voted on July 6, 2020 on [**Resolution 20-19**](#) to approve the in-town route for the Nakwema Trailway. This route was picked out of three different options because it was the best rated. Other route options included continuing US-31, which would bypass the downtown area, and Bridge Street, which was considered more dangerous due to a precarious intersection. For more information about the proposed trail and a copy of the Traverse City to Charlevoix Trail Concept Plan and Development Guide completed in 2015, visit <https://nakwematrailway.org/>.

The village also has [**several documents**](#) on the trail process of choosing the in-town route.

Input received during the 2018 planning process indicated a strong interest in trail development among residents. Many 2017 survey responses specifically indicated support for the development of a non-motorized trail that would connect Elk Rapids with Traverse City and Charlevoix. Based on this input and after an extensive public feedback process, the Elk Rapids Village Council voted to approve the in-town trail that goes through the safest route option through the Village.



Figure 54: Boardwalk that connects the East and West sides of town by allowing pedestrians to safely cross under the US-31 highway that bisects the village. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

the US-31 highway to better connect the east and west corridors of town. The Elk Rapids DDA has named this project as a point of interest to be included in their upcoming Strategic Economic Development Plan and the Village has added funding to the 2023-2024 proposed budget for research and engineering of the project.

Noble Pines Nature Trail

A rustic wood-chip nature trail was added in 2010 to the undeveloped parkland adjacent to the Noble Pines senior apartments. The entrance is off Second Street and Chippewa Street, winding through woodland and is less than ¼ mile long. Construction was done by volunteers from the local Boy Scouts, Sunrise Academy, and others. This path is maintained by the village's dedicated DPW crew and is used throughout the year by avid community walkers and joggers.

Boardwalk & Park

As part of an existing non-motorized transportation system, Elk Rapids has two sections of boardwalk that integrate with Village sidewalks. One is located along the north side of Kids Pond (Elk River) and is used for walking and fishing. The other, located near the U.S. 31 bridge provides excellent non-motorized connectivity between east and west Elk Rapids, without having to cross the busy road. At the west end of the boardwalk, a sidewalk continues through the park along the river. There is public land located along the north side of the Elk River between the Dexter Street bridge and the boardwalk that runs under the US-31 bridge.

There is a lot of interest in enhancing the boardwalk that goes underneath



Figure 55: Sign as seen from Second Street to help community members and visitors navigate to the Noble Pines nature Trail. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

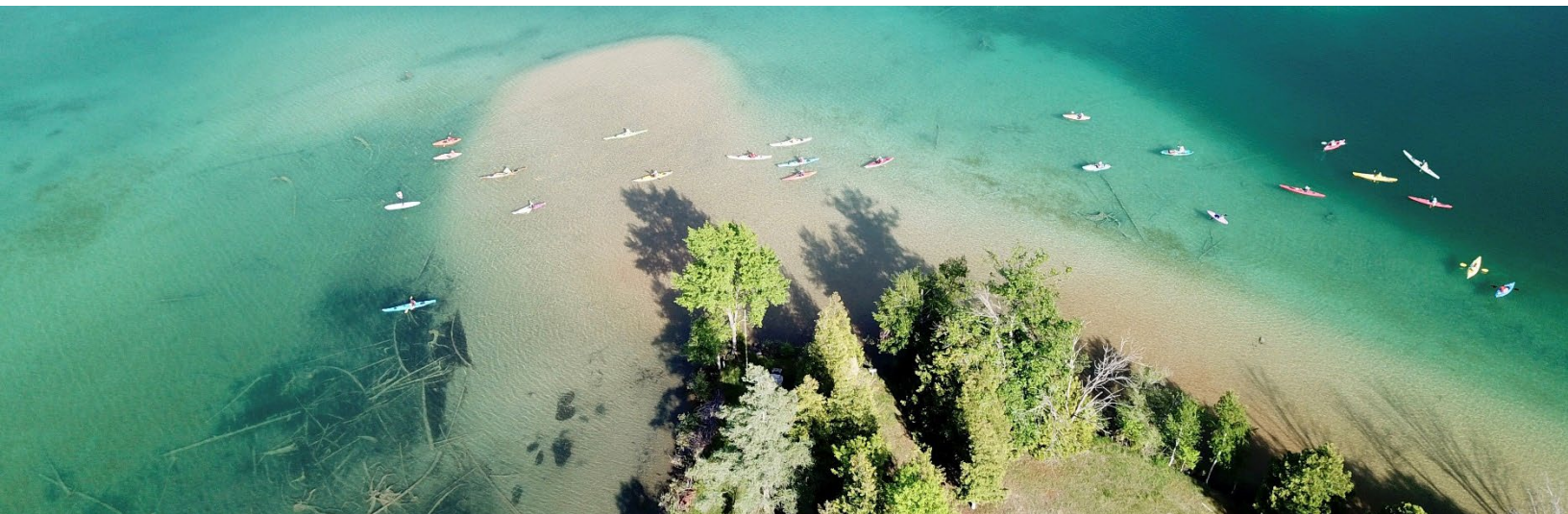


Figure 56: Paddlers near the end of the Chain of Lakes Pure Michigan © Waterway Trail. Photo courtesy of Paddle Antrim and drone photo taken by Andy Zender.

Chain of Lakes Water Trail

A water trail is a designated route along a river, lake, canal, or bay designed for people using small, non-motorized watercraft like kayaks and canoes. The Chain of Lakes Water Trail is a state designated trail providing over 100 miles made up of 12 lakes and interconnected rivers for paddlers to explore and the Village of Elk Rapids is a key trailhead along the trail connecting individuals to our water resources. The Chain of Lakes is divided into the Upper Chain and Lower Chain, separated by a dam in the Village of Bellaire. This water trail is diverse with both small and large lakes, connected by meandering rivers, creating opportunities for all levels of paddlers to enjoy. The water trail connects people to the natural environment as well as vibrant communities. Whether kayaking, canoeing, paddle boarding or fishing, there are opportunities for all to explore.

Paddle Antrim, a regional non-profit corporation, leads, hosts, and facilitates the development and stewardship efforts for the Chain of Lakes Water Trail, and the Village of Elk Rapids is located at the end of the Pure Michigan © recognized water trailway. The nonprofit hosts the annual Paddle Antrim Festival which begins in the northern end of the chain of lakes and ends in Elk Rapids. Hundreds of kayakers, canoers, and other non-motorized boaters participate in this two-day event that celebrates our regional natural resources.

Please refer to the 2017 Chain of Lakes Water Trail Plan for more information about the trail planning and development.

Survey results from 2022 show that 69% of respondents (251 people) indicated that they participate in kayaking/canoing activities. Because of this, the Village is invested in maintaining the water trail and providing accessible water sport opportunities for all ages and abilities.

OTHER LOCAL ASSETS

Several additional recreational and cultural assets are available within the Village, including:



Figure 57: Elk Rapids Community Garden Sign. Photo courtesy of Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka.

Community Garden

A community garden was established in 2009 on the east side of Bridge Street and to the south of the police station. This land provides the opportunity for residents to have a small vegetable or flower garden near their homes. An upcoming public housing project is poised to be built where the garden is currently homed. The Village is collaborating with gardeners to relocate this important community asset.

Village Beautification Gardens

The Elk Rapids Beautification Commission and the Garden Club maintain more than a dozen beautiful gardens in Elk Rapids. All can be easily accessed by walking around the village. (elkrapidsgardenclub.com)

Elk Rapids Area District Library

The Elk Rapids District Library is in the historic Island House, which sits on over four acres also owned by the Village on the Isle of Pines, next to the harbor on beautiful Grand Traverse Bay. In addition to books, the library has audiobooks, DVDs, CDs, public computers, free Wi-Fi and outstanding programs for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

The library district includes the following members and contract areas: Elk Rapids Village, Elk Rapids Township, Milton Township, and Torch Lake Township. Patrons outside the district can use the materials in the library and have access to computers and the wireless Internet.

Elk Rapids Day Park

This county park is located between South Bayshore Drive and East Grand Traverse Bay. The park has a stunning beach, playground, bathhouse, and several nature trails. It also features the “Walk of Art,” an outdoor sculpture park developed in cooperation with Art Rapids. There is interest in starting a discussion between Antrim County and Elk Rapids about future uses for this park. In the [2021-2025 Antrim County Parks and Recreation Plan](#), the County mentioned in their goal one to improve and expand park facilities, including the Elk Rapids Day Park.



Figure 58: The entrance to the Walk of Art Trail at the Antrim County Day Park located in the Village of Elk Rapids.



Figure 59: Aerial view of the Elk Rapids Public School's Track and Field. Photo courtesy of 2021 Summer Intern Lauren Benitez.

Elk Rapids Golf Club

This nine-hole public golf course was established by the Village in 1922 as a municipal asset. Although now owned by Club members, it is open to the public with over 7000 rounds played by the public in 2022. During the winter a cross country ski trail is groomed with ski equipment provided by Norte. The trail is open to the public with donations accepted.

Elk Rapids Schools

Our public schools have a variety of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, including a gymnasium, tennis courts, soccer and football fields and a track. The schools and Village often collaborate regarding mutual use of these facilities.

Attendees of the 2022 Parks & Recreation Plan Open House wrote comments in support of the Village collaborating with the schools to create recreational programming opportunities. Existing facilities present potential sports and other programming chances for students as well as for community members.



Figure 61: Aerial view of the Elk Rapids Golf Club along the shore of Elk Lake. Photo courtesy of 2021 Summer Intern Lauren Benitez.



Figure 60: The US Bicycle Route 35 logo.

US Bicycle Route 35

The Village is lucky to host the US Bicycle Route 35 which starts off on US-31 Highway, turns onto Fourth

Street for a moment, diverts for the length of Bridge Street, goes onto River Street for a small stretch, turns onto Dexter Street, then rejoins the US-31 Highway. This trail is over 500 miles long and follows Lake Michigan's shoreline for the most part from Indiana up to Sault Ste. Marie. The trail is marketed toward long-distance touring cyclists who are experienced riders. For more information, [please check out the Michigan Department of Transportation webpage on US Bicycle Routes.](#)



Figure 62: Regional Recreation map surrounding the Village of Elk Rapids.

REGIONAL RECREATION ASSETS

Elk Rapids has many opportunities for recreation. The inventory below highlights sites from the surrounding region (and map below) which are used by Village residents for recreation.

Wilcox-Palmer-Shah Nature Preserve

This 41-acre preserve, a part of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, is located approximately two miles north of Elk Rapids. There is a very short trail and boardwalk from the parking area to the expansive beach.

Milton Township Parks

The Cairn Highway/Indian Road complex is in Kewadin, four miles northeast of Elk Rapids. It has facilities for volleyball, soccer, track & field, baseball, basketball, and tennis. Additional facilities include a playground, grills, pavilions, and picnic area. The Milton Township Waterfront Park in Kewadin has 200 feet of beach, boat launch, universally accessible kayak launch, pavilion, and universally accessible restrooms. The East Elk Lake Park, approximately seven miles from Elk Rapids, has Elk Lake access, a pavilion, and a picnic area. The Maplehurst Natural Area has hiking and biking trails over nearly 400 acres including a 60-acre lake. The Torch River Ridge Preserve has nearly 300 acres of scenic views and trails.

Petobego Natural Area

The Petobego Natural Area is at the northwest corner of Whitewater Township and is about five miles south of Elk Rapids. The dominant natural feature of the property is the 7,500 feet of Tobeco Creek that flows through the middle of the Natural Area and associated riparian wetlands, emptying into East Grand Traverse Bay.

Maple Bay Natural Area

Maple Bay Natural Area is a 450-acre property that straddles both sides of North U.S. 31. It is located approximately five miles south of Elk Rapids in Grand Traverse County. The natural area includes farmland and buildings as well as a wooded trail that leads to a beach on East Grand Traverse Bay.

TART Trail

The 32-mile-long TART Trail is a paved urban, non-motorized transportation corridor with an eastern end point at M-72 (Bates Road) in Acme Township, about 10 miles south of Elk Rapids, and a western end point at the M-22/M-72 intersection in Traverse City. The eastern trail section from M-72 to Lautner Road is two miles long, the trail then leapfrogs to Bunker Hill Road and continues for 8.4 miles to Traverse City. At its western end the TART trail connects to the Leelanau Trail, which runs north to Suttons Bay.

In 2020, the Elk Rapids Village Council voted to bring the Nakwema Trailway through the Village after an extensive public collaboration process.

ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

The accessibility evaluations for the Village of Elk Rapids parks and recreational facilities have been conducted by the Village Parks and Recreation Commission as part of the inventory process. The evaluations were based on the United States Access Board's Section 15 – Recreation Facilities, the Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities, Americans with Disabilities Act, and used the ranking criteria suggested by MDNR's Guidelines for the Development of Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans (2021). These criteria are based on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. The criteria are as follows:

ADA RANKING SYSTEM	
RANK	INTERPRETATION
1	None of the facilities meet accessibility guidelines.
2	Some of the facilities/parks meet accessibility guidelines.
3	Most of the facilities/parks meet accessibility guidelines.
4	All the facilities/park meets accessibility guidelines.
5	The entire park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design.

VILLAGE ASSESSMENT		
PUBLIC FACILITY	ASSET TYPE	RANK
Bass Lake Park & Access	Access Site	1
Boardwalk & Park	Trail/Park	2
Community Ice Rink	Park	1
Courtesy Docks	Access Site	2
Dam Beach and Fishing Park	Park	2
Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor	Harbor	4
Kayak Launch	Access Site	1
Kids Pond	Park	3
Noble Pines Nature Trail	Trail	1
Old Bathing Beach	Park	1
Rotary Park	Park	2
Veterans Memorial Park	Park	4

PRIOR GRANTS FROM DNR

The Village of Elk Rapids has received three grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in 1985, 1993, and in 2017. The 1985 grant funded improvements, including walkway, bollards, drainage, paved parking, and landscaping for River Street Park (now Veterans Memorial Park). These improvements were completed, and the park continues to be the well-maintained centerpiece of the Elk Rapids community. The 1993 grant also funded Memorial Park improvements and included repairing two tennis courts. In recent years, the Village received a DNR grant in 2017 to improve restroom accessibility and enhance signage at the Dam Beach. A copy of the DNR Grant History, which includes additional details on each, is included along with the required Post Completion Self Inspection Reports in Appendix D.

CHAPTER 4: RECREATIONAL GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & ACTION PLAN

The goals, objectives, and action strategies are intended to guide future decisions about recreation in a manner that reflects the community's values and priorities. The goals were developed based on review of existing facilities and public input as well as other local and regional plans and strategies. The order in which these goals, objectives, and actions appear does not represent a ranking of their importance or priority.

The Village Parks & Recreation Commission developed the following broad goals as part of the Parks & Recreation planning process in 2018. Based on the community input received in 2022, summarized in Appendix B of this document, the Commission confirms these goals are still relevant, appropriate, and inspiring today.

PARKS & RECREATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

Goals:

- Maintain and improve parks, facilities, and equipment in an efficient and safe manner to provide continuous operation with minimal interruption of patrons, ensuring safe, clean, and beautiful recreational areas.
- Meet the ever-changing needs and abilities of all residents and visitors by providing comprehensive, quality recreational activities.
- Promote and, where appropriate, preserve natural areas within the Village of Elk Rapids to enhance the region's environmental, aesthetic, and recreational qualities.
- Provide trails that link to existing state, county, and municipal open spaces, other trail networks (existing and planned), and nearby communities to provide a variety of recreation and transportation opportunities.
- Support and enhance public water access and quality.

To implement these goals, the Parks & Recreation Commission will pursue the following objectives and actions in 2023—2027. These were developed based on public input, parks and recreation priorities and capacity, and community development best practices.

Objective #1: Capacity Building

Build Parks and Recreation Commission internal capacity such that the Commission can continue to proactively and consistently respond to community needs and desires, maintain quality parks and recreation facilities, and work effectively with Village, local, and regional partners as collaborative opportunities arise.

Why is this important? *The Parks and Recreation Commission must have clear and consistent policies, budget, and resources to do their job effectively and support the Elk Rapids community's needs and desires.*

Actions to support Capacity Building

- a. Continue developing and updating an annual parks and recreation budget that is available to the public on the Village of Elk Rapids website.
- b. Work as a commission to identify board succession policies and process, including desired board composition and process for recruiting and selecting new board members.
- c. Work as a commission to identify administration and staffing needs to support ongoing/new parks and recreation activities, programming, and facility improvements.

Objective #2: Capital improvements

Using the 2022 online community survey results as a starting point, develop a list of physical improvement priorities for each recreation facility and water access facility in the Village of Elk Rapids, with anticipated timeframes and costs associated with each improvement.

Why is this important? *Identifying a list of planned capital improvements provides a clear, concise, and actionable to-do list for both the Parks and Recreation Commission and community to work on together.*

Examples of priorities may include continued maintenance and upkeep, accessibility improvements, new equipment, improved maintenance, and additional landscaping. Improvements that are already identified or in progress are:

Planned Capital Improvements:

- Support development of regional Nakwema Trailway, in collaboration with local and regional partners.
- Support Rotary Park improvements, in collaboration with local and regional partners.
- Develop docking system to connect East and West Elk Rapids.
- Identify and implement play structure improvements throughout park facilities.
- Identify and implement accessibility improvements throughout park and water access facilities.
- Address water drainage issues at Veterans Memorial Park.
- Continue making improvements to Village ice rink.
- Continue water safety programming and activities, in collaboration with local and regional partners.
- Identify opportunities for additional pickleball court striping.

Actions to support Capital Improvements Planning:

- a. Identify Parks and Recreation Commissioner to lead this objective.
- b. Find support to implement objective—Commissioner(s), staff, grant writing consultant, volunteers.
- c. Identify and seek funding sources for priority improvements.
- d. Implement priority improvements.

Objective #3: Accessibility

Ensure Village Parks and Recreation facilities are accessible to all for all to enjoy.

Why is this important?

People of all abilities deserve the opportunity to enjoy the variety of recreation and water access facilities in Elk Rapids. All people are “temporarily able bodied” as individual’s mental and physical abilities will naturally adjust as they age and experience new life events. It is critical that Elk Rapids parks and recreation facilities and programming is proactive and responsive with accessibility improvements, so that all people can recreate in Elk Rapids, now and in the future.



Figure 63: Accessible kayak launch in Elk Rapids’ neighboring municipality on Elk Lake, Milton Township. The Village is committed to investing in similar accessibility initiatives in recreation. Photo courtesy of Tom Vranich.

Actions to support Accessibility.

- a. Identify and prioritize accessibility improvements as part of the capital improvements planning objective.

Objective #4: Maintenance

Work with the Village of Elk Rapids DPW staff to create and publish online, an annual maintenance plan for each recreation and water access facility maintained by the Village. Paying particular attention to maintenance of trails, playgrounds, courts and fields, and river access, as these categories contained the highest number of no opinion/poor rankings by the community in the 2022 Parks and Recreation community survey.

Why is this important? Improving and/or adding parks and recreation facilities and amenities is important, but equally as important is maintaining what already exists. The community of Elk Rapids identified several maintenance needs for existing facilities in the 2022 online survey which will be helpful to both the Parks and Recreation Commission and community to have a clear understanding of how existing facilities are maintained.

Actions to support Maintenance:

- a. Identify Parks and Recreation Commissioner to lead this objective.
- b. Work with Village DPW staff to initiate maintenance plan.
- c. Publish maintenance plan annually on Parks and Recreation webpage.
- d. Identify and prioritize existing and enhanced maintenance as part of the capital improvements planning objective.

Objective #5: Community Volunteer Stewardship

Continue to invite the community to support and/or spearhead existing and new community programming utilizing parks and recreation facilities in the Village of Elk Rapids. Types of programming the community prioritized in the 2022 Parks and Recreation community survey includes four-season programs, adult sports, educational activities, family activities, and youth sports.

Why is this important? *The Parks and Recreation Commission relies on the Elk Rapids community for programming/activity/improvement ideas and support and the community expects their ideas will be taken seriously by the Commission. This is a wonderful relationship to continue fostering between an appointed board and the community. This serves and provides additional capacity to support a quality parks and recreation program in Elk Rapids.*

Actions to support Community Volunteer Stewardship

- a. Identify Parks and Recreation Commissioner to lead this objective.
- b. Work with Village staff to identify existing resources that can support objective startup.
- c. Find support to implement objective—Commissioner(s), staff, volunteer.
- d. Identify and seek funding sources for programming.
- e. Share progress with Village Council, Planning Commission, Beautification Commission, Green ER, etc. so that all are informed.

Objective #6: Communication

Develop a communications process to inform the community on the variety and of recreational and water access facilities that are available for community use. These opportunities to participate in upcoming programming activities and events, and the ways in which the community can engage in the work of the Elk Rapids Parks and Recreation Commission are essential.

Why is this important? *Robust and transparent communication between the Parks and Recreation Commission, local and regional partners, and community builds trust, encourages collaboration, and creates conditions for success. A total of 144 people provided their email address for future Parks and Recreation communications in the 2022 Parks and Recreation community survey, indicating that there is an audience eager for this activity.*

Actions to support Communication:

- a. Identify Parks and Recreation Commissioner to lead this objective.
- b. Work with Village staff to identify existing resources that can support objective startup.
- c. Find support to implement objective—Commissioner(s), staff, communications consultant, volunteers.
- d. Commit to regular communication schedule that is attainable and consistent, perhaps biannually or quarterly.
- e. Collaborate with Village partners for one-stop communication to the community.

Objective #7: Local and Regional Collaboration

Collaborate with local and regional organizations to implement parks and recreation improvements which extend within and beyond the Village of Elk Rapids. Examples could include the Nakwema Trailway, and Paddle Antrim planned improvements to Rotary Park.

Why is this important? *Individuals who reside within and outside of the Village of Elk Rapids use and support Village recreation and water access facilities. Organizations within and outside of the Village of Elk Rapids are working on parks and recreation improvements which will benefit the Village. It is in everyone's best interest to collaborate.*

Actions to support Local and Regional Collaboration

- a. Identify and prioritize regional parks and recreation opportunities as part of the capital improvements planning objective.
- b. Identify a point person to provide regular communications with local and regional partners.
- c. Work with local and regional partners to identify, support, and/or seek funding sources for priority improvements.
- d. Share progress with Village Council, Planning Commission, Beautification Commission, Green ER, etc. so that all are informed.



Figure 64: Community conversations on collaborating for recreational opportunities in the Village. Photo courtesy of Trustee Melissa West.

CHAPTER 5: HARBOR GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & ACTION PLAN

This chapter contains the goals, objectives, and strategies identified by the Village of Elk Rapids Harbor Commission as part of their 2023 planning process, which compliments the Village of Elk Rapids Parks and Recreation process but is a separate project.

A full copy of the harbor five-year plan, which includes specific details about the harbor such as hours of operations, annual operating budget, and annual maintenance activities, is available in Appendix A of this document.

Goal 1: Operational Excellence

Objectives:

- a. Provide high standards of service.
- b. Provide clean and family orientated spaces.
- c. Address safety and environmental issues quickly.
- d. Maintain a highly competent, friendly and customer orientated work force.
- e. Continue harbor's history of financial self-sufficiency.

Goal 2: Harbor Infrastructure and Facility Improvements

Objectives:

- a. Improve community access to Lake Michigan & Antrim County Chain of Lakes. with improved and additional Shopper Docks.
- b. Pursue innovative solutions to effectively manage parking areas.
- c. Complete improvements identified in Master Plan.
- d. Complete maintenance needs identified in Master Plan.

Goal 3: Compliance with Environmental Standards

Objectives:

- a. Minimize environmental impact through yearly training of staff.
- b. Ensure compliance with local, state, and federal regulations.
- c. Request environmental impact studies, obtain proper permits as required.
- d. Maintain "Michigan Clean Marina" certification.

Goal 4: Promote Safety Standards

Objectives:

- a. Identify & Improve safety issues for boaters & staff.
- b. Provide safety training for staff.

Goal 5: Align with the Village Master Plan

Objectives:

- a. Promote recreational boating, water related events, and community activities.
- b. Support kayak launch at Rotary Park in collaboration with Paddle Antrim.
- c. Seek community involvement, feedback, and support.

Goal 6: Financial Viability

Objectives:

- a. Fund financial reserves of \$1 Million by 2024-2025 fiscal year.
- b. Seek grants to fund future improvement projects.
- c. Reduce seasonal dredging by improving break wall entrance.

Harbor Objectives & Strategies

Goal 1: Operational Excellence

Objectives:

- 1. Provide the highest standards of service.**
 - a. Develop docking and/or launching training for staff.
 - b. Adjust docks, due to water level changes.
 - c. Review & respond to customer/boater on-line reviews or complaints within 48 hours of receipt.
 - d. Conduct slip holder surveys at end of season via Survey Monkey
- 2. Provide clean & family orientated spaces.**
 - a. Establish Gas Fire pit & yard-game area.
 - b. Maintain logs, Cleaning bathhouse & pavilion, dock walks, trash removal, etc.
- 3. Develop & maintain a competent, friendly and customer orientated work force:**
 - a. Develop job descriptions for staff.
 - b. Conduct Hospitality Training
 - c. Provide boat handling, safety and customer service training to all part time staff in May and June
 - d. Provide certification upon completion & testing.
- 4. Improve community access and egress points to the waters within the Village of Elk Rapids.**
 - a. Annually review and update the Harbor Five Year Plan
 - b. Complete dredging and placement of harbor entrance buoys prior to harbor opening.
 - c. Retain Consultant to develop alternatives to eliminate seasonal dredging of the lower harbor entrance.
 - d. Maintain Financial viability.
 - e. Review operational results for opportunities for profitability.

Goal 2: Harbor infrastructure and facility improvements

Objective:

- 1. Create financial reserves & seek grants to fund future improvement projects:**
 - a. Construct storage shed onsite.
 - b. Complete "riprap" maintenance along south shore of Pavilion
 - c. Upper Harbor I seawall & sidewalk repairs
 - d. Complete planned pavilion improvements
 - e. Retain Consultant to advise & estimate repairs to the Upper & Lower Harbors

Goal 3: Environmental Responsibility

Objective:

1. Protect water quality.

- a. Train all employees to identify environmental issues, and response protocol.
- b. Meet compliance deadlines.
- c. Permits and approvals received prior to starting work.
- d. Maintain the Bioswale and Rain Garden
- e. Provide educational materials to boaters.
- f. Environmental issues investigated, root causes identified, and corrective actions implemented immediately.

Goal 4: Comply with Safety Standards

Objective:

1. Improve safety.

- a. Provide OSHA training annually.
- b. Address safety issues immediately
- c. Develop line handling & docking procedures for staff.
- d. Document training.
- e. Maintain a harbor accident/close call log.

Goal 5: Align with the Village Master Plan

Objectives:

1. Promote boating, water related events, and community activities.

- a. Budget support for kayak launch in Rotary Park
- b. Continued support with activities.
 - Examples:
 - Support the Fishing Expo
 - Harbor Days participation
 - Support Parks & Recreation Swimmer Safety Classes

2. Seek community involvement, feedback, and support.

- a. Host “Coffee with the Commissioners” in July
- b. Attend ERYC meetings and solicit feedback.
- c. Harbor Commission members volunteer to attend Village Commissions and Committees (e.g., Parks & Recreation, DDA, Paddle Antrim, Green ER, etc.)
- d. Support “13 Ways” Village activities

Goal 6: Financial Viability

Objective:

1. Continue Harbor’s history of financial self-sufficiency.

- a. Harbor Commission to participate in budget recommendations.
- b. Yearly budgets to reflect Five-Year Plan Capital & maintenance priorities.
- c. Monitor and evaluate revenues and expenses.

CHAPTER 6: PLANNING PROCESS

Both planning and public input have been essential parts of updating goals and deriving an action plan. The 2023 Five-Year Community Recreation Plan was developed by the Parks and Recreation Commission and Harbor Commission. Consultant Elise Crafts of Statecraft assisted with the public input survey, analyzing the survey, updating goals, coordinating leadership meetings, and reporting to commissions and staff. Planning/Zoning and Community Development Administrator Kerri Janisse updated information throughout the plan and made sure MDNR requirements were met. Village Clerk Kaitlyn Szczypka published public notices prominently on the village website, in the local newspaper, and village social media accounts, took and inserted photos, collaborated with graphic designer Brennen French to update images and maps, designed the document, and prepared the plan update. The plan was developed according to MDNR guidelines.

Public Input

As part of the 2023 Village recreation plan update, the Village of Elk Rapids released a Recreation Survey in November 2022. The survey was prominently displayed on the village website, was published in the local newspaper of where to find the survey and made available in hard copy format. 380 surveys were received; 373 were submitted online, and seven hard copies were submitted to the Village offices. A report summarizing the results and feedback received from respondents is included in Appendix B of this plan.

An open house was held on November 16, 2022, from 10 AM to 7 PM. Fifteen community members stopped by throughout the day to give their input on the plan. The Parks and Recreation Commission and Harbor Commission reviewed and discussed the results from the surveys and open house event to better understand the community's preferences around parks and recreation.

Recreation Plan Review

The Village of Elk Rapids Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the draft plan at their December meeting and agreed to release the draft plan for public review. Notice was posted in the Elk Rapids News indicating that copies of the draft plan were available online at the Village website, as well as at the Village offices. Copies of the plan were also made available at other public offices in the Village. Comments were received from December 15, 2022, to January 14, 2023.

Public Hearing & Adoption

Following the 30-day public review period, the Village Council held a public hearing on January 17, 2023, to obtain additional public input and to review and discuss comments received during the 30-day review period. The Council amended the agenda to add Resolution 23-02 and approved the plan for submission to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources at their regular meeting on January 17, 2023. See Appendix C for the approval documents.

APPENDIX

A. Harbor Five-Year Plan

B. Public Input Results & Analysis

1. Village of Elk Rapids 2022 Recreation Survey Summary Report
2. Village of Elk Rapids 2022 Community Survey Raw Results (Online)
3. Village of Elk Rapids 2022 Community Survey Raw Results (Paper Copies)
4. Village of Elk Rapids 2023 Open House Report
5. Elk Rapids Harbor Commission 2023 Charette Report

C. Approval Documentation

1. Affidavits of Publication for Public Review and Public Hearing Notice
2. Public Hearing Minutes
3. Resolution of Adoption
4. Transmittal Letters

D. DNR Grants

1. Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grant History
2. Post-Completion Self-Certification Report – 26-01423
3. Post-Completion Self-Certification Report – BF93-192
4. Post-Completion Self-Certification Report – TF17-0110