

# Allegan County Parks, Recreation and Tourism



## Presentation to

## Board of Commissioners

## August 14, 2025

- Overview of Parks and Recreation
- Recreation Plan

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# Overview of County Parks System

6 Day Use Parks

2 Rustic Campgrounds

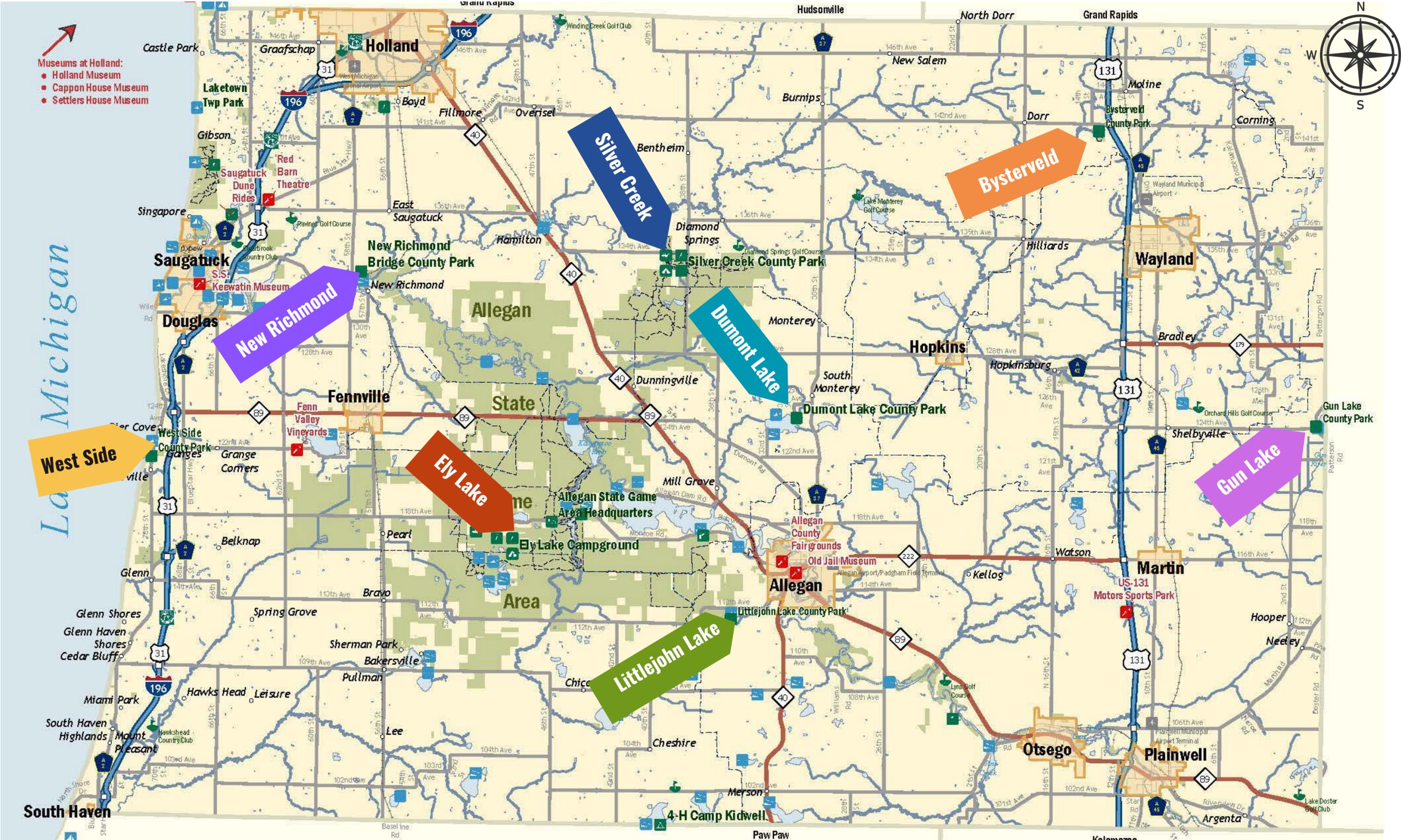
Heritage Trail

3 Watercraft Launches

60 miles of Equestrian Trails



- Museums at Holland:
- Holland Museum
  - Cappon House Museum
  - Settlers House Museum



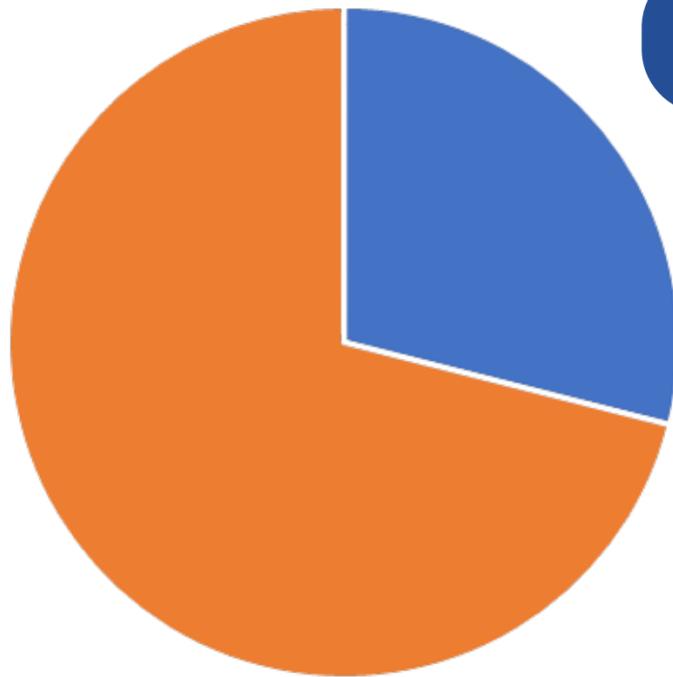
## Key Amenities/ Activities



- Picnic Areas (& pavilion rentals)
  - Rustic Camping
  - Sightseeing
- Hiking, Fishing, Kayaking
  - Equestrian Riding
  - Playground Equipment
- Year-round park programs with the Outdoor Discovery Center (snowshoeing, birds of prey)
  - Open/Green space
  - Swimming/Beaches
    - Watercraft Usage
      - Bird Watching
    - Basketball/Volleyball
  - Softball/Baseball Fields
    - Disk Golf
  - And much more...

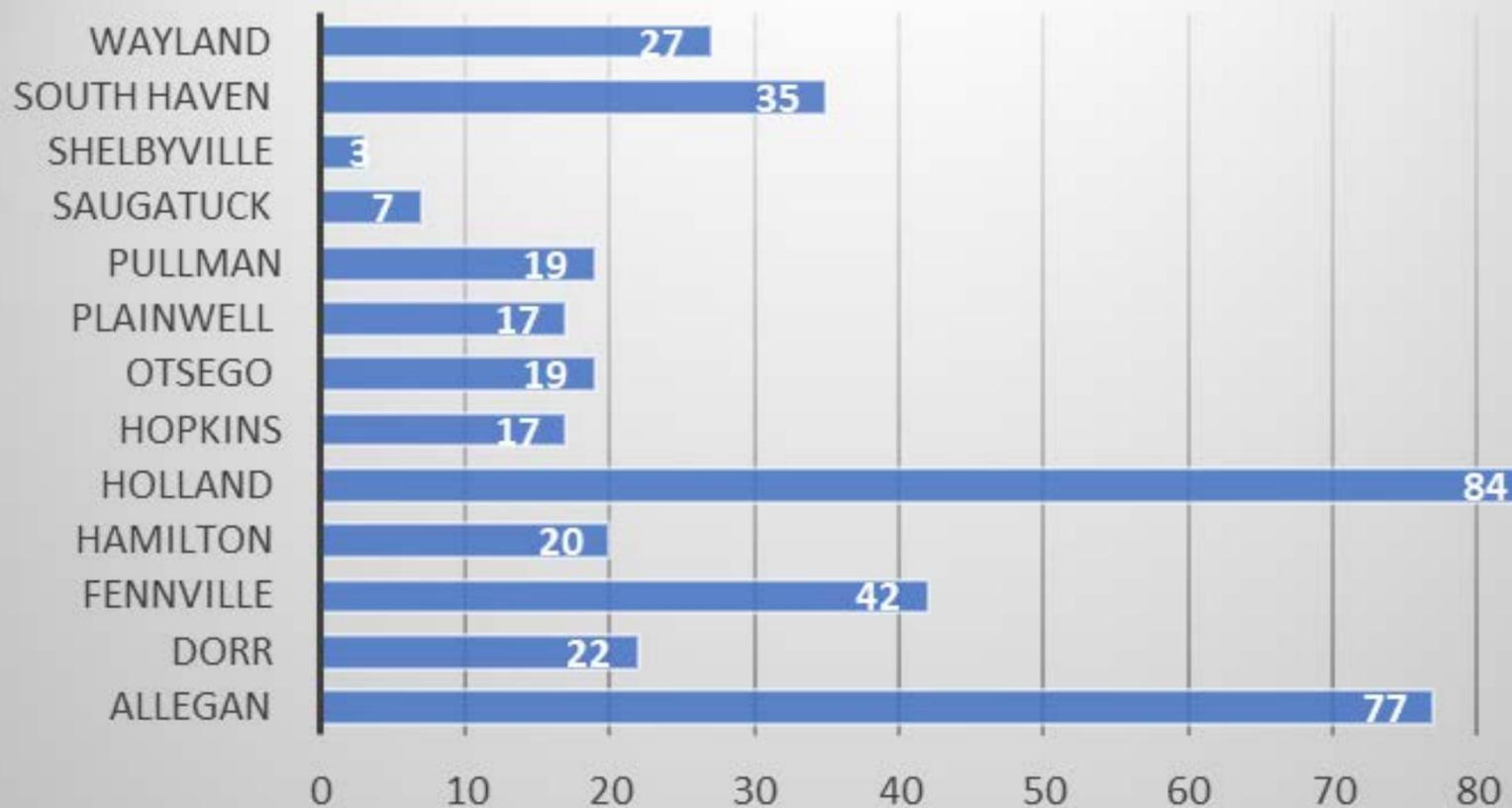


# 3 Year Campground Reservations

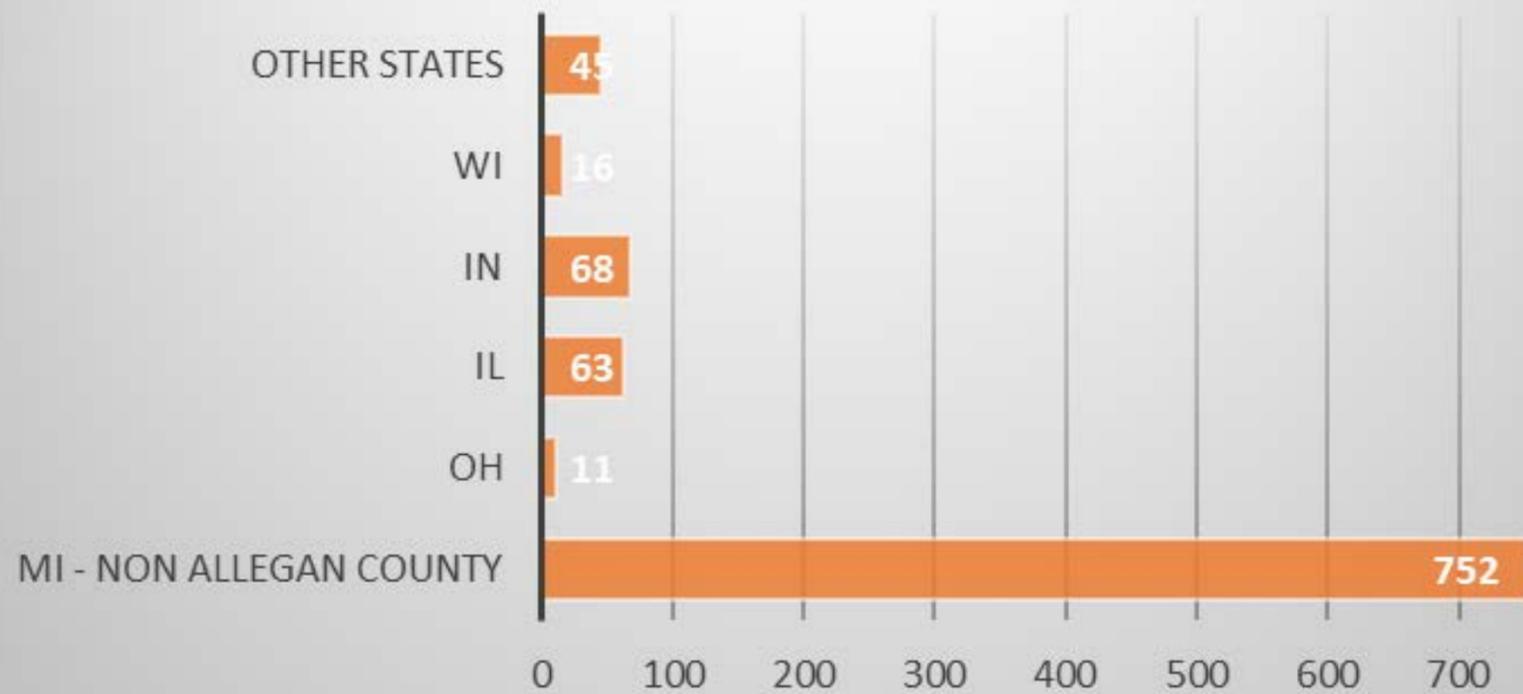


■ In Allegan County ■ Out of Allegan County

## Total by City Within Allegan County



## Total By State and Non-Allegan County in MI

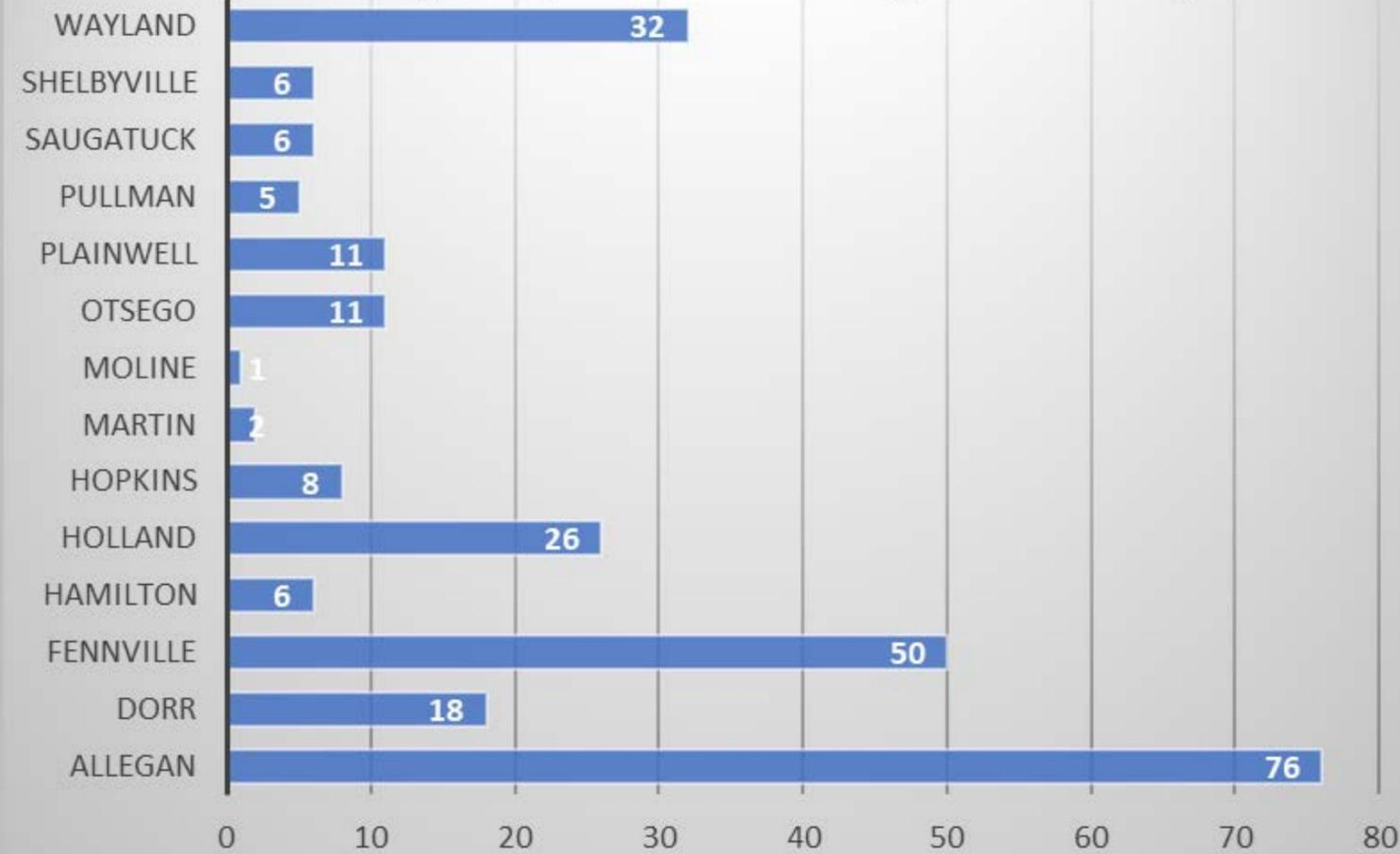


# 3 Year Pavillion Reservations

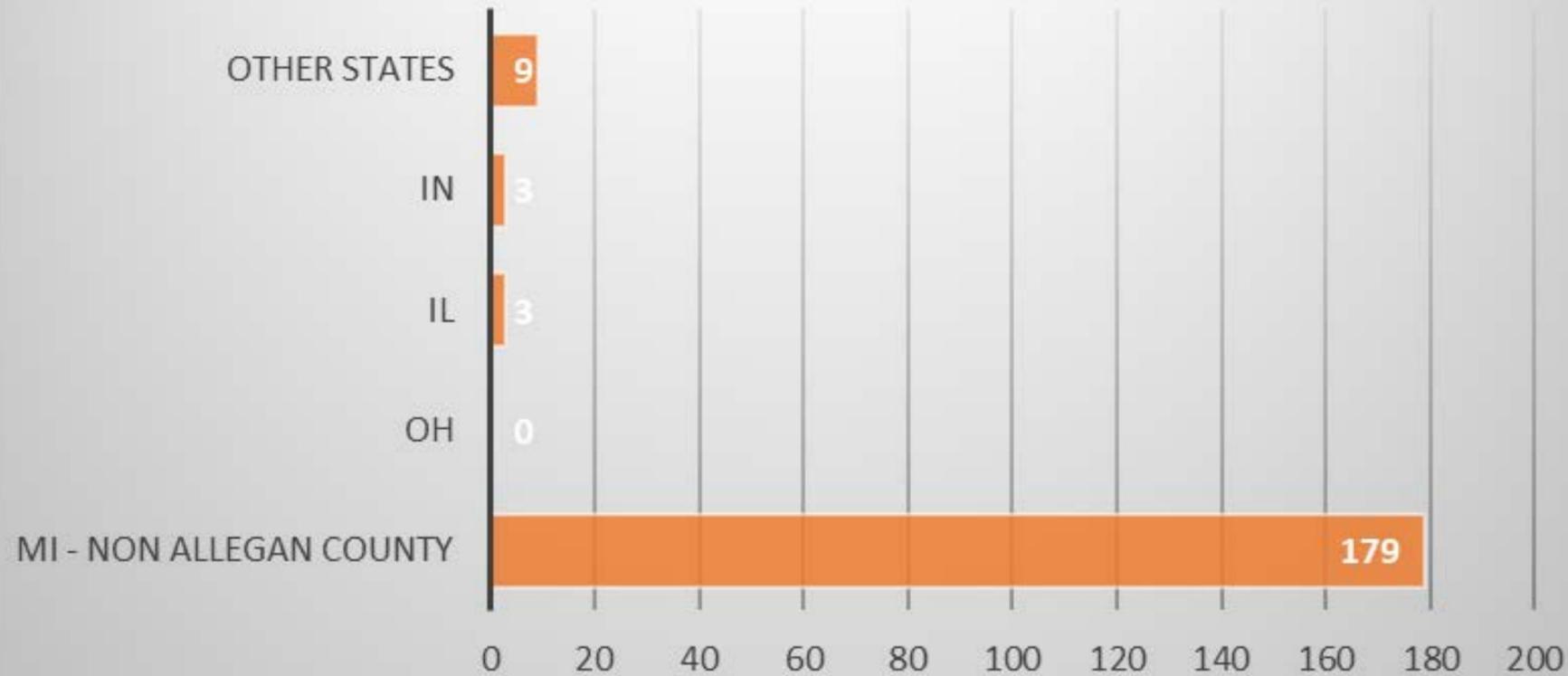


■ In Allegan County   ■ Out of Allegan County

## Total by City Within Allegan County



## Total by State and Non-Allegan County in MI



# Economic Impact of Parks and Recreation

## Visitors

- Annual increase in year-round usage of parks and campgrounds

## Economic Impact

- Food & Dining: restaurants, cafes, bars, ice cream, takeout
- Recreation: rentals, tours, charters, guided activities
- Attractions: museums, nature centers, cultural events
- Shopping: groceries, farmers markets, general stores

## Park & Recreation Benefits

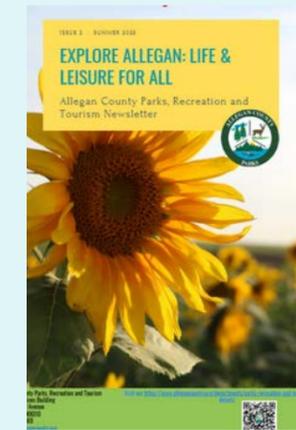
- Parks and outdoor amenities attract talent, younger working professionals, and families.
- Green spaces promote wellness, reduce stress, and support work-life balance.
- Affordable recreation helps employers appeal to a diverse workforce.
- Parks foster community pride, connection, and a sense of belonging.



# Recent and In-Progress Initiatives

## At the Parks...

- Ely Lake playground
- Disc golf course at Littlejohn
- New entrance signs
- Long-term forest management
- Heritage Trail updates



## Community Engagement...

- Newsletter
- Theatre Ad
- Social media posts
- Food trucks at West Side
- Community calendar to Parks webpage
- Partnership with ODC/DNR for community programming





## Allegan County Parks



2025-2029 Recreation  
Plan



- Sets a unified vision for parks and recreation
- It's our playbook for community building regarding parks and recreation!
- Creates eligibility to apply for grants from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

**Provides an assessment and inventory of current parks and recreational facilities. This is a collaborative effort by the Community, the Parks Advisory Board, Staff, and the Board of Commissioners**



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Section 6: Goals & Objectives	Goal 1	Goal 2
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Goal 3	Section 7: Action program	2025-2029 Priority Items/Action

## Section 1

Community Description (pg. 7)

## Section 2

Administrative Structure (pg. 14)

## Section 3

Recreation Inventory (pg. 18)

## Section 4

Resource Inventory (pg. 63)

## Section 5

Planning Process (pg. 64)

## Section 6

Goals & Objectives (pg. 68)

## Section 7

Action Program (pg. 74)

Link to Plan

[2025-2029 Allegan County  
Recreation Plan](#)

Recreation Plan QR code:



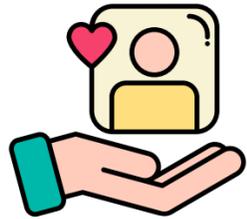
## Overview of the Planning Process & Public Input

- October 2023 - Review and update goals and objectives
- October 2023 - February 2024 - Public recreation plan/park user survey
- February 2024 - Review data from:
  - 2022 National Community Survey
  - Board of Commissioners Survey
  - Recreation Plan/Park User Survey
  - County Demographic Analysis
- April 2024 - Public input session
- June 2024 - September 2024 - Draft available for review
- October 2024 - Public hearing/Parks Advisory Board approval

(Section 6: page 73)



## Feedback - Community Desired Priorities from Data Collected



- Park/Recreation Programs
- Walking and Bike Trails (year-round)
- Variety of Year-Round Recreation Opportunities
- Safety/Security/Customer Service at Campgrounds/Parks (Increase Staff Presence)
- Improved Technology (Wi-Fi/Pay Machines/Electric)

TO-DO



- Improved Water Access (Lake & Rivers) Including :
  - ADA access at West Side County Park
  - Improved Access at Gun Lake County Park
- Modernization of Campgrounds & Campsites
- Access & Accessibility in Allegan State Game Area
- Improved Road and Parking at Parks and Campgrounds
- ORV Trails





# Goals and Objectives

## Recreation Plan

### Goal 1: Recreation Development

(Section 6: page 71)

Provide safe, broad community-based recreation opportunities, facilities, and programs that improve the overall quality of life year-round for all Allegan County residents and tourists.

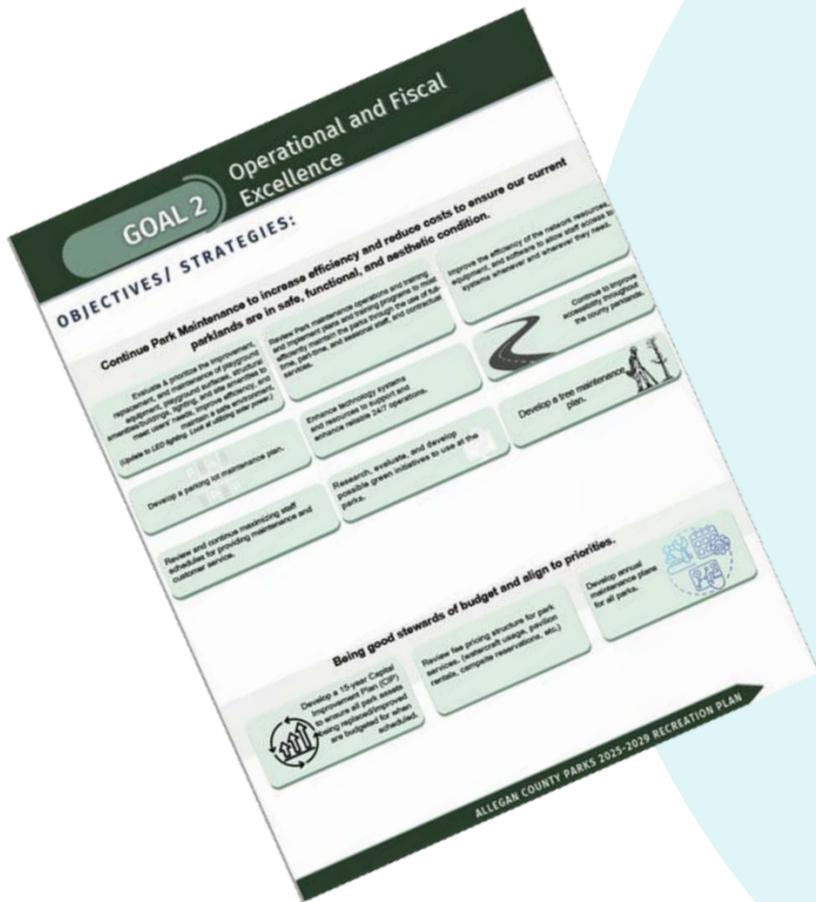
Support and/or provide pathways and waterways for recreational and transportation use within our park system and focus upon linking, schools, parks, neighborhoods, cities, business areas, local destination points, and regional trail systems.

Develop recreation opportunities that focus upon and take advantage of Allegan County water resources.

Create Improvement & Development Plan



# Goals and Objectives Continued..



## Recreation Plan



(Section 6: page 72)

## Goal 2 Operational & Fiscal Excellence

**Continue Park Maintenance to increase efficiency and effectiveness and ensure our current parklands are in safe, functional, and aesthetic condition.**

**Being good stewards of budget and align to priorities.**

# Goals and Objectives Continued..

## Recreation Plan



(Section 6: page 73)

### Goal 3: Promotion, Health, Education and Preservation

Provide transparent, accurate, and timely information to Allegan County and park users through integrated marketing activities.

Provide leisure time activities with special consideration given to improving health, wellness, and fitness.

Promote the preservation, protection, restoration, and education of Allegan County's natural and cultural resources.





# Recreation Plan - Priority Items from Community input

Continue Providing High-Quality Maintenance and Operations

Update Signage/Branding

Long-Term Forest Management Plan

Increase Partnerships/Collaboration

Recreation Programming - Add In House

Funding Evaluation



Capital Improvements

- West Side Park ADA beach access
- Gun Lake Park improvements
- Modern (water & electric) campground at Littlejohn
- New Richmond Park improvements
- Modernize Bysterveld Park
- Silver Creek Campground Improvements -Phase 1



## Desired future state:

Action Plan for all Parks (Section 7: page 75)

### High-Quality Maintenance and Operations

- Operations Budget
- Capital Budget
- Park Services
- Promoting the health of individuals, families, and youth
- Clean, safe, and operational



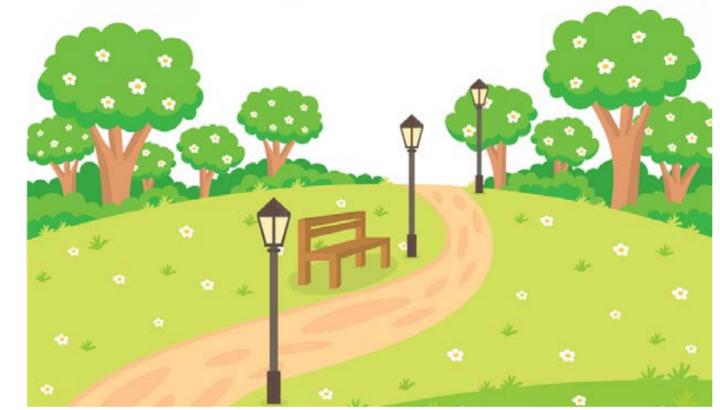
### Update Signage/Branding

- By updating signage regularly, information remains accurate, relevant, and effective in conveying messages to the intended audience.
- Signage maintains brand consistency, reinforces brand recognition and loyalty among customers and stakeholders



## Desired future state cont...

Action Plan for all Parks: (Section 7: page 75)



### Long-Term Forest Management Plan

- Benefits the health and resilience of the forest, related ecosystems and people for the present and future.



### Collaboration

- Maintain existing and build new relationships with a wide variety of public, non-profit, and private individuals and groups



## Desired future state cont...

Action Plan for all Parks: (Section 7: page 75)



### Recreation Programming

- As a natural resource-based park system, education of the natural features found in the parks is important both to enhance the enjoyment of the parks and to foster respect for and protection of the natural features.



### Funding Evaluation

- The Park Advisory Board identified “funding evaluation” as a key priority to help develop scenarios that can be used to determine long-term funding strategies, recommend appropriate fees, and support sustainable park operations. This effort will guide future fiscal planning and resource allocation.





## West Side Park Beach Access

**Approximate cost \$2,000,000**

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Restore ADA beach access and/or viewing points to Lake Michigan.



Desired future state:

Priority Identified Capital Improvements



## Gun Lake Park Improvements

Approximate cost \$550,500



- 
- Crosswalk,
  - Launch area (underwater),
  - Drive/launch area (above water).
  - Addition of lighting near the boat launch,
  - Security fencing,
  - Drainage,
  - ADA kayak launch,
  - New pay machine.





## Silver Creek Campground Improvements - Phase 1

Approximate cost \$600,000

- Modernizing some campsites
- Modern bathrooms with a shower house
- Add walking trails. (separate from Equestrian trails)





**Modern (water & electric)  
Campground at Littlejohn**

**Approximate cost \$1,500,000**

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- Placing a campground in the area where the current baseball fields are.
- Turn former concession building into shower house.



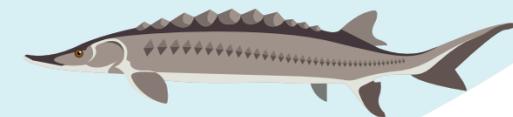


## New Richmond Park Improvements

Approximate cost \$500,000

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- Develop and install a kayak launch.
- Add an improved location closer to the river for the sturgeon trailer.
- Additional parking and no pay parking lot. Add a pay machine and gate at the current parking lot.
- Create an area for presentation and fish release near the river for education & sturgeon release opportunities.



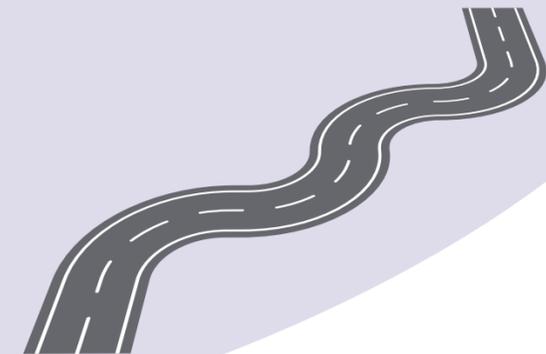
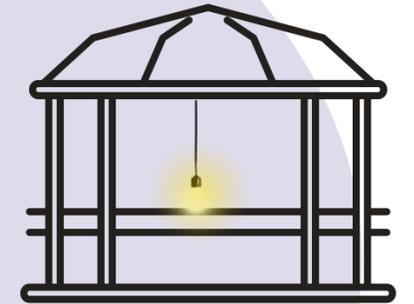


## Modernize Bysterveld Park

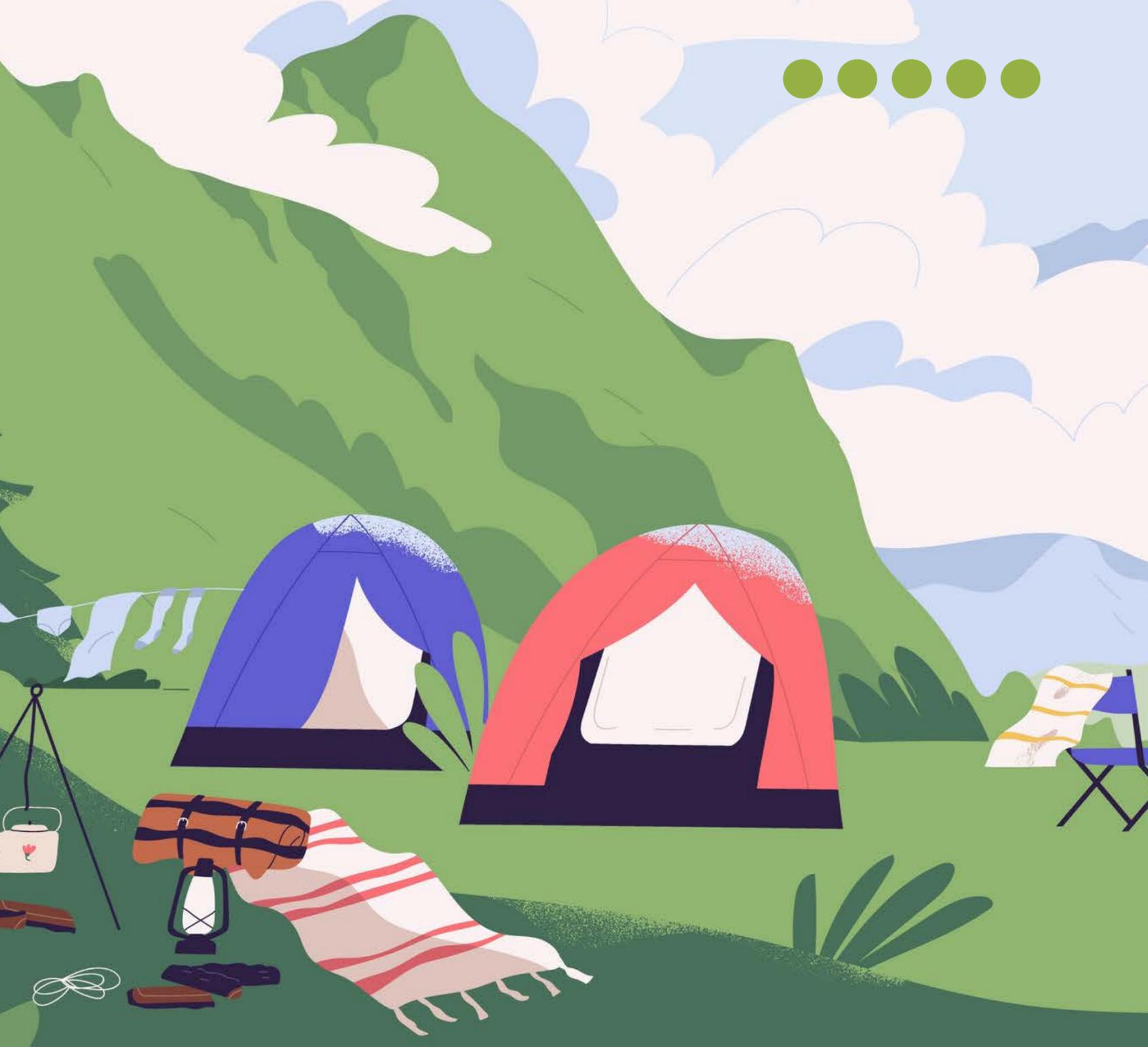
Approximate cost \$600,000

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- Modern restroom (running water & electric).
- Add electricity to the pavilion.
- Pave the entrance drive & parking lot to enable year-round use.



# Future Investments in Allegan County Parks



## Current State

- Local Revenue Sharing Payments (Casino) funds have financially funded the County's park operations and capital budgets for the past ten years.
- The current Local Revenue Sharing funds will not maintain the annual increase in operations, primarily from increases in personnel costs.





# Key Challenges



## Funding Constraints

- Without an additional funding source Parks is unable to:
  - Expand operations (increase staffing, add park programming, fund the increasing operations)
  - Replace Existing Assets (replacement of mowers, roofs, pavilions, restroom amenities, etc.)
  - Fund Capital Projects as identified by the community in the Recreation Plan (see Section 7: Action Program)

●●●●●  
**2025 - 2029 Allegan  
County Parks  
Recreation Plan  
next steps:**

**Board of Commissioners**

**Provide direction on priorities and funding levels outlined in the plan. A Board of Commissioners-approved Recreation Plan must be filed before applying for Department of Natural Resources (DNR) grant funding.**





# In Summary

It is essential that the Board of Commissioners define its priorities for parks and recreation to meet the goals and objectives, establish a unified vision for Allegan County Parks and Recreation, and enhance the quality of life for both residents and visitors. This includes identifying funding to support the completion of the Parks Advisory Board's recommended priorities.

## Goal 1: Recreation Development

Recreation Programming - Add In House

Capital Improvements

- West Side Park ADA beach access (\$2,000,000)
- Gun Lake Park improvements (\$550,500)
- Modern (water & electric) campground at Littlejohn (\$1,500,000)
- New Richmond Park improvements (\$500,000)
- Modernize Bysterveld Park (\$600,000)
- Silver Creek Campground Improvements - Phase 1 (\$600,000)

## Goal 2 Operational & Fiscal Excellence

Funding Evaluation

Long-Term Forest Management Plan

Continue providing High-Quality Maintenance and Operations



## Goal 3: Promotion, Health, Education and Preservation

Update Signage/Branding

Increase Partnerships/Collaboration

*Questions??*

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**Parks QR code:**

