

# City of Bay City Park & Recreation Plan 2013-2017 Amendment

## Project Description:

The City of Bay City is amending the current Park & Recreation Plan to include a proposed project in Bigelow Park. Bigelow Park is described on page 43 of the current plan as follows:

Bigelow Park is located at the north end of Middleground Island and is approximately 11.8 acres. The property for the park was donated in 1929 as a gift from Charles Bigelow who operated a large saw mill on the riverfront. Additional land was purchased by the city in 1949. It was not until 1991 that it was developed into a park. The park contains an extensive footbridge that crosses the river channel and connects the park to Veterans Memorial Park and the Riverwalk. Playground equipment and a pavilion were constructed by the Bay City Lions Club. The pavilion is frequently rented for family unions, company picnics and other social events. The north end of the Middleground Island also contains a Victorian style building leased to the Rowing Club as a clubhouse, a Boys and Girls Club facility and a transient boat dock.

The proposed project within Bigelow Park is a new location for the Imagination Station Playground. The previous nineteen year old playground Imagination Station Playground located in Veterans Park was removed in 2015 due to general deterioration and chromated copper & arsenate contamination of pressure treated wood components. The leaching of chemicals over time also contaminated play area soils, which were removed along with the play structure.

Immediately following the demolition of the Imagination Station a project to replace the play area was organized as a joint partnership between the City and local community organizations. A citizen's Steering Committee has been established to assist in gathering public input and to participate in the both the development of the master plan, as well as guide specific play area improvements.

A number of sites were evaluated for the new playground, including two locations in Veterans Memorial Park. Since the play area is expected to be a prominent recreational feature, serving the needs of both residents and visitors, investigations have focused on potential sites located in the City's central parks area along the Saginaw River. The selection process concluded in December of 2015 with a public announcement that South Bigelow Park was determined to best meet the criteria established for the play area development including a clean environmental history and sufficient space for development needs.

The proposed master plan for this new development includes: the play area(s), parking, access improvements in the form of vehicular drives and pedestrian walkways, sanitary accommodations, utilities, lighting, signage, landscaping and site furnishings.

The play area will serve children in the pre-school through 12 year old age range. Unique and creative design solutions will be incorporated that will expand play opportunities beyond a centralized equipment location, and utilize site and landscape features to stimulate creative play

opportunities. The design will provide play experiences that support both the physical and cognitive development of children, incorporate educational features, and provide a high degree of accessibility. Ease of maintenance will be a consideration in both the design and selection of materials. It's expected that the play area and all related features will comply with American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards, Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) recommendations, and the Americans with Disabilities Act legislation.

## **The Planning Process and Public Participation**

An initiative began to plan for a replacement play area immediately following the Imagination Station's removal. The Bay Area Community Foundation (BACF) assisted to organize a steering committee called the "Friends of the Imagination Station", for purposes of working with City Staff to evaluate potential development sites, and to assist in selecting a design consultant. The Committee has also been involved in promoting this project, along with fundraising.

A survey and evaluation of 10 potential sites for the play area development was completed by the Steering Committee, and three sites were identified as best meeting the selection criteria established. The Steering Committee conducted a public meeting on December 17, 2015 at City Hall to review the selection process, receive public input, and officially announce the site rankings for the play area development. Those sites, and the order in which they were ranked, include: Veterans Park near the Trombly House (1<sup>st</sup>), Bigelow Park north of the Boys & Girls Club (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Putz Park (3<sup>rd</sup>).

To confirm their suitability for development, both the Veterans Park and Bigelow Park sites have recently undergone environmental testing performed by AKT Peerless. The Veterans Park site tested positive for contaminants in soil profiles below grade. Due to the historical uses of properties along the river corridor, the prevalence of contamination was not entirely unexpected. While these conditions do not present a health hazard as they presently exist, and could be mitigated for purposes of site development, the cost of doing so would be significant.

Environmental testing on the Bigelow Park Site was more favorable and did not reveal any contamination. Since it was determined that the final site selection would be based on the site that exhibited the most favorable conditions for development of the play area, and since the Bigelow Park site best meets the selection criteria, this site is being recommended as the project location.

A publicly advertised Quality Based Selection (QBS) process for retaining a qualified design consultant was also completed. Steering Committee members and staff representatives from the City and Community Foundation received and reviewed resumes from nine design firms. Following that review, the four highest ranked firms were invited for interviews. From that field of four firms, OHM Advisors, with offices located in Saginaw Michigan, was determined to have the highest qualifications to provide the necessary design services. Services to be provided include surveying the site and researching utility records to develop a scaled base map of existing site conditions, developing preliminary designs for all proposed features including parking, sidewalks,

play area features, sanitary and shelter facilities, along with site amenities including benches, signage, lighting and landscaping.

The consultant facilitated a process that provided ample opportunities for public input into the design, which ultimately will conclude with the development of a site master plan for the project, along with detailed plans, specifications and cost estimates for constructing the improvements.

### **Action Plan (Chapter 6, page 92)**

The following Goals and Objectives apply to the newly proposed Imagination Station Playground:

**Goal:** Provide facilities and services that meet the diverse recreational needs of residents and visitors to the community.

- Provide a balanced recreation system characterized by a variety of active, passive and cultural opportunities.
- Provide a recreation system that reflects the needs of all users.
- Emphasize quality of facilities and programs rather than quantity, especially in view of existing budget constraints.

**Goal:** Continue efforts to enhance the river corridor.

- Execute Master Plans for Wenonah and Veterans Memorial Park to reduce activity conflicts, and rehabilitate areas to better support both current and future uses.
- Capitalize on opportunities to expand use of the river, by providing improved access for a variety of activities like fishing, boating and walking.
- Strengthen pedestrian connections to parks within and from neighborhoods.
- Strengthen both physical and pedestrian connections to parks within and from business districts.
- Join with other entities to promote the river as a major recreational resource.

**Goal:** Adopt a sound planning basis for future park developments.

- Develop master plans for all parks identifying needs and improvements.
- Continue to assess community needs
- Continue to monitor leisure trends to validate future improvements and to exploit the opportunity to modify or add services.
- Develop a “Maintenance Impact Statement” for all proposed park improvements.
- Insure sufficient funding is available to support all new developments or programs.
- Focus on the rehabilitation of existing facilities.
- Identify and modify underutilized facilities.

**Goal:** Ensure current and future park facilities comply with all facility use and development standards.

- Perform regular safety inspections on all play equipment.
- Inspect all park areas for compliance with the “American with Disabilities Act”.
- Develop a transition plan to address barriers to accessibility.
- Incorporate universal accessibility and safety standards into all new designs.

**Goal:** Continue to develop partnerships with entities to program and maintain facilities.

- Renew agreement with Bay County for continued cooperative programming and maintenance of community park areas.
- Promote cooperation and resource sharing among recreation providers.
- Support volunteer efforts to maintain and improve park areas.
- Pursue “community service opportunities” with the local court and school systems.
- Inventory potential maintenance needs
- Where feasible, design facilities for multi-purpose uses.

## **Short-term Planning Recommendation & Strategies (page 95)**

### **Master Planning**

Developing master plans for individual parks provides an opportunity to analyze the comprehensive needs of each park, rather than simply considering potential improvements separately. The focus of the master planning process centers on the opportunity to improve and restore park features, while at the same time ensuring that parks continue to meet community needs for both active and passive recreational uses. This Park and Recreation Plan strongly encourages the development of individual park plans, guided by public input to determine future needs and improvements.

### **Notice of Availability of the Draft Plan Amendment and Public Hearing**

The Bay City Planning Commission received a presentation by the Park’s Manager on January 18, 2017. The presentation described the master plan public input process and improvements being made. The Notice of Amendment Availability was published in the Bay City Times on February 2, 2017 for an additional public meeting held on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The City Commission received a presentation of the project during a February 13, 2017 City Commission meeting prior to the public hearing for the amendment on February 20, 2017.

In addition to the required notices, Bay City’s five Citizens District Councils with each being approximately 10-12 members were provided information about the project and plan amendment on February 1, 2017. The draft plan amendment and support documents was posted on the City’s website as well.

### **Capital Improvement Schedule (page 103) to add**