CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN

Civic Collaboration - 2024

COMMUNITY – RECREATION – BELONGING

City of South Haven

MC

TEAM SOUTH HAVEN

Ajier Awan

I am a first year student from Jonglei State-Bor, South Sudan, pursuing a double major in Public Health with a focus in nutrition and Human and organizational leadership development and a minor in Entrepreneurship. I am part of One Africa, a student organisation for African and African American students and part of ENC bible study group. As well, I worked at Alpine Bagel which ensures that students get bagels. Besides on campus involvement, I work virtually with "Education Needs All (ENA)" as head of the fundraising department. ENA is a non-profitable organisation founded by South Sudanese students abroad to ensure that students access education. My hobbies are: meaningful conversations, outdoors activities, reading, playing basketball and volleyball, journaling, cooking and swimming.

Donn Rhys Mondano

I'm a freshman studying Computer Science with minors in PPE and French at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I'm incredibly passionate about the field of technology and am interested in exploring the many facets it has to offer. On campus, I'm deeply involved with the UNC Clef Hangers. I serve as a current Publicity Director and have served as the Winter Concert Manager in the past. I'm also involved with the University's tech-focused professional fraternity, Kappa Theta Pi.

Guillermo Estrada

I am a first year student from Goldsboro, North Carolina pursuing a major in Media and Journalism with a focus in advertising and public relations. I am part of the Board of Directors of the Daily Tar Heel and UNC's Student Alumni Association as the Public Information Officer, as well as philanthropy chair for the Kappa chapter of Pi Kappa Phi, working to raise awareness and financial support for those living with disabilities.

Raygan Hawkins

I am a first year student from Sandy Ridge, North Carolina. With the plan to become a Physicians Assistant, I am studying Exercise Science and Communications, with a minor in Biology and Health/Society. I am extremely passionate about community service and have created a mental health project that I am actively involved in. On campus, I enjoy participating in the "Active Minds" club, intramural sports, and attending sporting events.

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OUR VISION

Community - Recreation - Belonging

Our vision for the area of South Haven envisions a vibrant and inclusive community where recreational opportunities foster a strong sense of belonging and connectedness among all residents.

Our vision is to transform our public spaces (such as the Riverwood development) into dynamic hubs that promote recreation, social interaction, and cultural expression. This vision brings priority to the development and maintenance of recreational amenities through the implementation of a community recreational center and complex. By fostering a culture of active living and community engagement, we aim to enhance the overall quality of life for South Haven's citizens, cultivate civic pride, and position South Haven as a model for recreational excellence. In our plan, we provide ideas ranging from a dog park development to defining the role of a recreational director in South Haven.

By providing enriching recreational experiences for children and families, we aim to create a compelling reason for residents to establish deep roots in South Haven, contributing to the long-term vitality and growth of the city.

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KEY FINDINGS

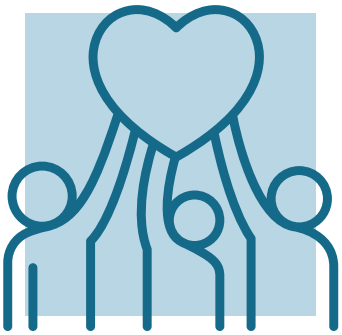
In conversations with key stakeholders, advocacy groups, and local citizens, the following takeaways can be made on the current state of parks and recreation in the City of South Haven

Emphasis on Recreation

The City of South Haven recognizes the vital role that recreation plays in fostering a vibrant and healthy community. Both indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities have been voiced as a priority by residents and advocacy groups alike. Outdoor enthusiasts have expressed a strong desire for expanded, wide range of activities, however express their disdain for the lack of city run recreation. On the indoor front, community members have highlighted the need recreational facilities that can accommodate a variety of sports, fitness programs

Time is of the Essence

Frustrations are visible among community members on the extensive timelines that have been created for different SHARA and Park projects, with one example being 14th Avenue Park. If decisions are made on new developments, the City of South Haven should ensure a speedy process or formulate a set plan with directed funding to ensure the completion of each project.



Community Brings Retention

Our research indicates that South Haven lacks adequate recreational facilities for families. This deficiency poses challenges for raising children in the area. To maintain and grow its community, South Haven should prioritize the development of family-oriented recreational amenities.

S.W.O.T Analysis

Strengths:

- Parks are distributed fairly around the town
  - South Haven has a wide array of parks with plenty of accessible points. With some being near beach access and neighborhoods, it allows for outdoor recreation to flourish.
- Very accessible public beaches
  - City provides low cost/free parking with ample space and business opportunity.
- Safety is excellent
  - South Haven pride itself on having a safe environment around its beaches and downtown, places where the community can congregate without fear of crime.
- Vibrant downtown community
  - Exceptional businesses and restaurants that help attract people to several nearby parks/beaches and help bring tourism dollars to local businesses.
- Walking trails
  - The city's walking trails provide scenic routes for the average Joe all the way to intense runners.

Weaknesses:

- Lack of recreation programming
  - While there are many parks and fields, recreational programming is virtually non-existent. There are little city supported programs that extend past the public school system.
- Quality of sports fields
  - Many sports fields, apart from the high school, are in poor condition and in need to be renovated.
- Communication and promotion
  - CVB website lacks many park opportunities and information on recreational programming, potentially due to the lack of recreation opportunities.
- High focus on seasonal outdoor activities
  - South Haven centers focus on outdoor activities, rather including indoor opportunities to utilize throughout the entire year.

Opportunities:

- Outdoor recreation facilities e.g biking trails, basketball, volleyball and pickleball
  - Riverwoods provides ample space (50 acres) of opportunity for outdoor or indoor courts and biking trails.

- Dog Parks
  - With Riverwoods and other potential areas, the possibility of a dog park can be made possible.
- Repurposing of existing parks to meet other needs
  - Revitalizing lesser-traffic parks for other community needs can bring more attention
- Recreational programming
  - With the upcoming millage vote, if passed, South Haven could use those funds to hire someone with the time and capability to coordinate engaging recreational opportunities for all ages.
- Recreational indoor center
  - Riverwoods provides a unique opportunity to invest in the recreational expansion of South Haven to better support programming.

Threats:

- Different interests from different age groups
  - Many working families will not have the time or accessibility to advocate for age-specific programming, potentially causing an imbalance of programs for middle age groups.
- Seasonal changes
  - While there is a plethora of outdoor recreation, South Haven falls short in indoor recreation, creating a threat to its own community. While there are facilities through the High School, it does not provide enough accessibility and space for the entire community.

Defining the Role

Millage Parks and Recreational Director

In August, residents of South Haven will vote on a proposed millage that would fund the position for a South Haven Recreation Director *if* approved by voters, SHARA and the City of South Haven would receive dedicated tax revenues to develop, operate, and maintain parks and recreation amenities and programming for the greater South Haven area.

Ensuring South Haven is fully prepared in the event the recreation millage passes is of utmost importance. With sustainable funding in place, one of the first priorities would be hiring a Recreation Director to oversee and lead SHARA's and the city's initiatives.

The Recreation Director role would be vital to improving parks and recreation offerings off the ground successfully. Key responsibilities would include:

- Conducting a comprehensive assessment of the community's recreation needs and interests across all ages and demographics.
- Developing a strategic plan with short and long-term goals for new parks, facilities, trails, amenities, and program offerings.
- Creating an operational plan and policies/procedures for efficiently managing parks, properties, staff, volunteers, partnerships, etc.
- Rolling out an engaging line-up of recreational programs, community events, and other services based on assessment data.
- Establishing collaborative relationships with schools, local organizations, businesses, and surrounding communities to maximize resources.

- Actively promoting participation through effective marketing and outreach.
- Identifying and pursuing grant opportunities to supplement the recreation millage revenues for projects and initiatives.
- Providing ongoing leadership to continuously improve and expand and recreation for the public.

The Recreation Director would report directly to the City of South Haven and to the SHARA board/authority and work with other stakeholders. Pending millage approval, SHARA and South Haven could use this opportunity to prioritize defining and prepare the hiring process to recruit a highly qualified director.

Providing South Haven with a recreational director, also allows for the opportunity to expand on the role and utilize an indoor recreational facility to create engaging programming for all ages.

RIVERWOODS DEVELOPMENT

Investing in Community and Recreation

South Haven community members and stakeholders have expressed a need for an indoor recreation center to provide activities during the winter months. Many families currently leave town to access recreational facilities elsewhere, diminishing South Haven's attractiveness as a year-round community.

Utilizing the Riverwoods property to create a multi-purpose recreation facility would benefit both the physical health of residents young and old as well as strengthen the fabric of civil society in South Haven. Such a center could host a variety of athletic and cultural activities, fostering greater community engagement and vibrancy throughout the year. Investing in this quality-of-life amenity would enhance South Haven's appeal as a livable city with robust recreational opportunities for all seasons.

Fennville, a town of just 1,700 residents, boasts an impressive multi-purpose recreation facility that attracts approximately 100-120 visitors daily. The centerpiece is a dividable basketball court that can accommodate various activities like pickleball, volleyball, and indoor soccer. This versatile space was made possible through a millage approved by the public school system, which also grants priority usage to school sports teams.

Framing the facility as an investment in children's well-being and education was key to garnering community support for the millage. By integrating it with the school system, Fennville's families could see tangible benefits for their children beyond just recreation. This model showcases how a modest community can develop quality amenities through strategic partnerships and by appealing to shared values around youth development.

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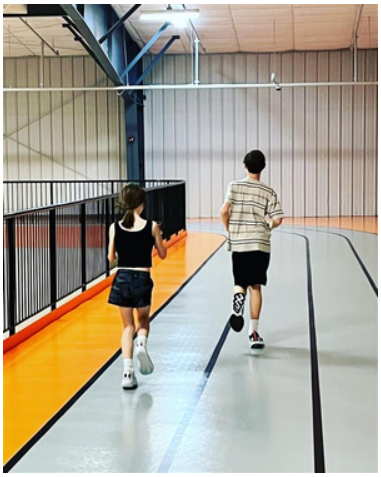
Based on industry averages, the construction cost for a recreational center can range from $150 to $300 per square foot, depending on the factors mentioned above. Here's a rough estimate assuming a 15,000 square foot facility with basic amenities and finishes:

- Construction Cost: $2,250,000 - $4,500,000 (at $150 - $300 per square foot)
- Site Preparation and Utilities: $200,000 - $400,000
- Professional Fees (architects, engineers, permits): $250,000 - $500,000
- Furnishings and Equipment: $300,000 - $600,000
- Contingency (10%): $300,000 - $600,000

Total Estimated Cost: $3,300,000 - $6,600,000

Photos and Inspiration



Riverwoods Dog Park

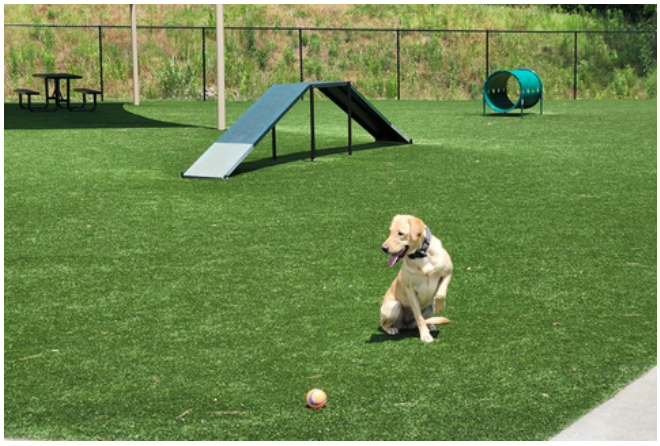
A dog park in South Haven would benefit dogs by providing a safe space for exercise and socialization, vital for their health. It would also serve as a community hub for pet owners, promoting interaction and responsible pet ownership, ultimately enhancing the quality of life and creating a dog-friendly environment. Creating a 5-acre dog park with separate areas for large and small dogs would involve several components and associated costs. Here's an estimated cost breakdown:

1. Site Preparation:
   - Clearing and the land (5 acres): $29,000
   - Grading (5 acres): $66,000
2. Fencing:
   - Chain-link fencing (6 ft high, around the perimeter): $25,000+ (5 acres)
   - Internal fencing to separate large and small dog areas: $5,000 - $10,000
   - Double-gated entry systems: $2,000 - $4,000
3. Amenities:
   - Shade structures or pavilions: $5,000 - $15,000
   - Benches: $1,000 - $3,000
   - Waste stations with bags and receptacles: $500 - $1,500
   - Water fountains (for dogs and humans): $2,000 - $4,000
   - Signage: $500 - $1,500
4. Landscaping:
   - Trees, shrubs, and mulch: $3,000 - $8,000
   - Irrigation system (if needed): $64,000
5. Other Costs:
   - Engineering and design fees: $5,000 - $10,000
   - Permits and inspections: $1,000 - $3,000
   - Contingency (10-15% of total cost): $10,000 - $20,000
6. Parking Lot
   -Gravel parking (.3 acre) : $24,000

Total Estimated Cost: $300,000 - $350,000

Please note that these estimates are approximate and can vary based on the specific location, material choices, and any additional features or amenities desired. It's recommended to consult with local contractors and landscapers for more accurate pricing.

Photos and Inspiration



Riverwoods Outside Pickleball Courts

Pickle ball is a sport that can be enjoyed by people of all ages and skill levels. This inclusivity means it can bring together a diverse range of community members, fostering social interaction and engagement of different generations.

- Details
  - 8 courts
  - .34 acres of land
  - Outside lighting

1. Financial

-$22,000 per court

-$4,000 lighting

-$2,000 maintenance

Photos and Inspiration

Conclusion

Community – Recreation – Belonging

Recreation plays a pivotal role in enhancing physical health, fostering social connections, promoting mental well-being, and improving the overall quality of life for individuals of all ages. By providing spaces and opportunities for recreation, communities not only invest in the health and happiness of their residents, but also cultivate a more vibrant and cohesive social environment.

Disclaimer: These recommendations are based on our experiences and time that we have had here in South Haven. These recommendations are independent from any of the organizations or entities we worked alongside this summer.

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PROMOTING SHARA

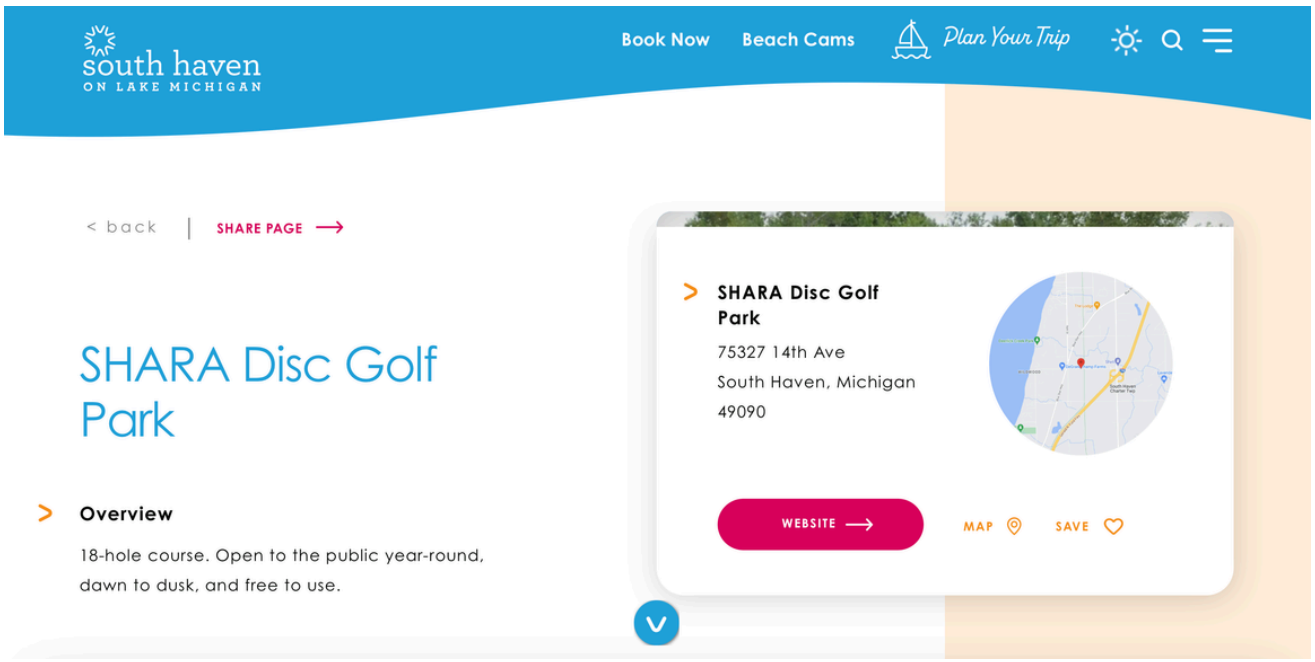
Addition of SHARA to the web

In conjunction with the South Haven Convention and Visitors Bureau, we were able to create updated descriptions and photographs for the numerous SHARA projects.

Coming Soon!

Features:

- Information and history on SHARA and the board
- Funding sources and revenue
- Updated park information, with listed amenities
- Updated photographs for better understanding of spaces
- Location and updated maps



Digital Copies

of This Packet and Presentation Slides

This Packet

Our Presentation

Prepared and produced by the 2024
Morehead-Cain Civic Collaboration Team
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Raygan Hawkins, & Rhys Mondano

These recommendations are
independent of organizations and
entities that participated in our research.