



Greg Beilfuss - Chief Planner
IDNR – State Parks: Community Grants and Trails
402 W. Washington St., W298
Indianapolis, IN 42204-2782
(317) 232-4071

May 16th, 2025

Katrina Vedo
Trail Creek Park Board
211 Rainbow Trail
Trail Creek, IN 46360

Dear Katrina,

The DNR Division of State Parks planning staff has reviewed the final draft of the 2025-2030 Trail Creek Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The plan meets the Department of Natural Resources' minimum requirements for local parks and recreation master plans. This letter certifies that your community **is eligible to apply for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grants through this office in the 2025 grant year**. A new plan will be due on November 15th, 2030 at which time your current LWCF grant application eligibility will expire.

If you haven't already, we strongly recommend that you contact our grant section chief as soon as possible about future grant applications. The grants staff can assist in your grant application process. They can be reached by phone at: (317) 232-1295 or by e-mail at: nsimmons@dnr.IN.gov.

We support your planning efforts and encourage your participation in the grant programs administered by the Division of State Parks. If you require further information regarding planning, do not hesitate to call me at: (317) 232-4071 or by e-mail at: gbeilfuss@dnr.IN.gov.

Sincerely,

Greg Beilfuss
Chief Planner - IDNR Division of State Parks, Community Grants and Trails

ECC – Katrina Vedo, Plan Author



Small Town Fill-In-The-Blank 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan Template

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Small Town Fill-In-The-Blank (FITB) Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Community Information

Community Name: **Town of Trail Creek**

Community's Home County: **Laporte**

Mailing Address of Park Department (If applicable) or Municipal Building (Please include a PO BOX # if needed):

211 Rainbow Trail, Trail Creek, IN 46360

Phone Number of Park Department (If applicable) or Municipal Building:
(219) 872-2422 (Town Hall)

Fax number of Park Department (If applicable) or Municipal Building:
(219) 878-1235

Year Plan Created: **2024-2025**

Plan Author Information

Name: **Katrina Vedo**

Address: **211 Radtke Dr, Trail Creek, IN 46360**

Phone number: **(219) 256-4144**

Email (if available): **katwerner89@gmail.com**

Park Board Statutory Compliance and Board Contact Information

Under Indiana State Statute (usually I.C. 36-10-3 or 36-10-4), Park Boards have some basic requirements to meet under the law, which includes:

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- Staggered terms of service (member terms all expire on different years)
- No member of the local government fiscal body (council, Mayor, etc.) may serve on a Board
- Under Town governments (unless waived by ordinance by the Town), no more than two members of any political party may serve on a board. Third Class Cities (>35,000 population) do not have this requirement

To illustrate that this park board complies with State Statute, choose which one of the three options below applies to YOUR Board.

Has/is the Park Board (Choose whichever is applicable):

1. No more than two members of any Political party OR
2. If a Town municipal government, has the Town “waived” the political party stricture under IC 36-10-3 or 36-10-4? **Yes**
3. In a Third-Class City? **Yes**

Park Board President’s Name: **Katrina Vedo**

Park Board President’s Term Expiration: **12/31/2025**

Address: **211 Radtke Dr. Trail Creek, IN, 46360**

Phone number: **(219) 256-4144**

Email (if available): **katwerner89@gmail.com**

Park Board Vice-President’s Name: **Katie Stahoviak**

Park Board Vice-President’s Term Expiration: **12/31/2025**

Address: **403 Spruce Drive, Trail Creek, IN, 46360**

Phone number: **(219) 878-4511**



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Email (if available): **katedo2001@yahoo.com**

Park Board Secretary's Name: **Megan Beach**

Park Board Secretary's Term Expiration: **12/31/2025**

Address: **2540 S Roeske Av, Trail Creek, IN, 46360**

Phone number: **(219) 873-4511**

Email (if available): **bell_7@hotmail.com**

Park Board Member's Name: **Vacant**

Park Board Member's Term Expiration:

Address: _

Phone number:

Email (if available):

Park Board Member's Name: **Vacant**

Park Board Member's Term Expiration:

Address:

Phone number:

Email (if available):

[Not all park boards will have one of these members; leave it blank if you don't]

Park Board Ex-Officio Member (appointed by either library board or school trustees) Name:

Park Board Ex-Officio Member's Term Expiration:

Address:

Phone number: _

Email (if available): _

List the paid staff of the Park Department



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Job Title: **Town Council member and Park Board Liaison**

Name: **Laura Saenz**

Address: **620 Black Oak Drive, Trail Creek, IN**

Phone Number: **(219) 221-0670**

Email (if available): **lsaenz@townoftrailcreek.in.gov**

Job Title: **Street Department**

Name: **Dave Baker**

Address: **209 Rainbow Trail**

Phone Number: **(210) 872-4780**

Email (if available): **Streetdept@townoftrail.in.gov**

Definition of Planning Area (what is the outer limit of the area your parks serve, and where do all your users come from?): If your community serves a significant number of

users from outside your town limits, then also describe how far out this 'service boundary' extends; for example: "Our planning area is our town limits plus XX miles radius"

The town of Trail Creek can be found in Coolspring and Michigan Townships in LaPorte County, Indiana. The planning area for the Town of Trail Creek extends into Michigan City, approximately 20 miles radius.

Natural Features and Landscape (Possible Sources: County Extension Agent, local colleges/universities, high school biology teachers, DNR regional foresters or biologists)

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What are some of the natural features and landscapes of your community? [discuss items such as tree species/vegetation; soils; lakes, creeks, rivers, and wetlands; wildlife] (1-2 paragraphs)

The Town of Trail Creek was established along Trail Creek which is a portion of the Trail Creek watershed and flows into Lake Michigan. The town is known for its homes with an abundance of trees and wooded areas. Common native trees include several species of oak, pine, and sassafras. The terrain is mostly flat, but there are some gradual hills and slopes near the stream bank. Trail Creek's soil is predominantly sandy with some areas of loamy soil due to its proximity to Lake Michigan. Trail Creek is a haven for squirrels, birds, and occasionally deer and turkey. The creek has been given the designation of a stream for trout and salmon._

Why might these features be important to your park system? Are there positive or negative impacts of these natural features in your community or parks? (For Example: Is your town especially attractive due to many mature trees? Is there an issue in your parks with invasive species like bush honeysuckle or emerald ash borer? Does your town experience flooding, and does it affect your parks too?) (1-3 sentences)

The town of Trail Creek is home to many lifelong residents. It has three parks, a wealth of trees, proximity to fishing, and beautiful Lake Michigan, which make it appealing to families and nature lovers. However, Trail Creek does have some issues that need attention. Trees are abundant in the residential areas, but the parks are very open and have little shade and vegetation. The lack of vegetation and trees can contribute to runoff, flooding, and storm water pollution, particularly in the south end near Welnetz where the land is at a lower elevation. To help mitigate this problem an MS4 program is in place to help reduce flooding and stormwater

pollution. In addition, rain/butterfly gardens could be placed in areas where rainwater tends to collect. This would not only help prevent runoff but also benefit butterflies, birds, and other wildlife.

In both surveys and community input meetings, the public indicated their desire for more green spaces and shade in the parks. Some ideas are to plant more trees, install butterfly gardens, and even rehabilitate Congdon Park to its original state with native trees and vegetation, and possibly create trails. The park could benefit from the addition of more native trees and plants to combat the lack of shade and vegetation. Homeowners often plant invasive species without realizing it. The area is commonly invaded by garlic mustard, rosa multi flora, and burning bush. Indiana offers a range of programs and resources that can aid communities in increasing the number of trees and native plants in public spaces. In addition, there are programs that educate citizens on the importance of indigenous plants and trees and the impact of invasive species. The Park Board could consider hosting a native plant sale with information on invasive species and rain gardens.

Man-Made, Historical, and Cultural (Possible Sources: local historical society, chamber of commerce, festival committees, town clerk, town surveyor)

List some of the man-made features in your community [such as: highways, industrial parks, railroads, airports, business districts, community-wide sidewalk network, trails] (1-2 paragraphs)

Trail Creek has residential areas with 948 single family homes and one small apartment complex. Governmental building includes the Trail Creek Town Hall, Police Station, and Street Department. There are also two churches, and commerce structures such as a business plaza, the Moose Lodge, and a gas station. The town has three parks, Nelson Park, Congdon Park

and Pritz Park, which is also the location of Ollies Bark Park. Trail Creek is situated in the middle of two highways on the north and south sides.

Nelson Park has a large field, and playground equipment, two swings, a restroom with a concession stand attached, two baseball fields, bleachers, a dugout, and a basketball court. There are undesignated grass parking spaces around the perimeter on Whippoorwill Avenue and Edgemoor Drive. At Congdon Park, there is a large field, a playground, a concession stand, two baseball fields, bleachers, dugouts, play equipment, and two tennis courts, as well as a parking lot. Pritz Park contains a dog park which has a fenced-in area for dogs to play, picnic tables, benches and a gravel parking lot.

The restroom with the concession stand at Nelson is partially operable. The concession stand has been used during festivals, but the restroom is out of service indefinitely and it would cost a significant amount of money to fix them. The Michigan City Parks and Recreation Department has a reciprocal agreement with the Town of Trail Creek to use the baseball fields at Nelson and Congdon without any charge. In exchange, Michigan City provides port-a-potties and maintains the baseball fields during the t-ball season, approximately April 1st to August 1st. Due to its location and costs, Pritz Park does not have any restroom facilities at all.

The majority of Trail Creek's population is older adults over the age of 55. Elderly and small children are particularly impacted by the lack of amenities, such as restrooms and shaded areas. This is evident in the survey data because the second most requested amenity/facility is restrooms. To solve this problem, the park board is considering renting port-a-potties from April to November at Nelson and Congdon parks. Shade is another issue that needs to be addressed. Many of the parks in Trail Creek are large open fields. Planting trees in

the parks would be an affordable option, at least in the long run. Shelters and sun sails over bleachers or sitting areas are a more immediate but expensive option.

In August 2023, the Park Board was advised by a playground inspector/contractor about safety and maintenance concerns regarding Nelson and Congdon Parks. The playground equipment is approaching the end of its lifespan and will need to be replaced within the next 5-10 years. There are several amenities that require removal or repair/maintenance due to safety concerns. Nelson's aluminum slide is a potential strangulation risk because its edges can catch a drawstring and cause a child to be strangled. The swings at Congdon need to be removed as they are unstable and pose a risk of breaking.

Most of the older original play equipment is hardly used and is in poor condition. Many pieces do not have a safety surface underneath (spring riders, climbing ladders and dome, merry-go-round). It would be more cost-effective to remove the old, unused equipment rather than installing a safety surface. It must also be noted that all elevated equipment requires an adequate safety surface. The use of a safety surface can significantly reduce injuries, especially from falls. Any future equipment must meet safety standards.

Other safety/maintenance issues include the concession stand in Congdon Park. The stand is in deterioration and attracts hornets during the summer and should be taken down. It's unlikely that the concession stand at Congdon will be used in the future, so fixing it wouldn't be practical. The fences along the baseball fields need to be replaced or repaired because it would be easy for someone to get hurt on. The tennis courts at Congdon Park are not currently accessible to the public due to disrepair. It was suggested by one bid that replacing them with tennis/pickleball courts would cost the Town \$110,000. The park board plans to gather more quotes or find an alternative solution

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Why might these features be important to your park system? (For Example: Can users reach your parks safely from their neighborhoods on foot or by bicycle? Why or why not? Are your parks far away from your neighborhoods? Do lots of third/fourth-shift employees in your town mean that there's a need for "off-hours" recreation options? (1-3 sentences)

The presence of parks in a community makes it a friendlier and more attractive place to live. Amenities such as t-ball areas, playgrounds, sports facilities, a safe place to walk and run promote physical and mental health and foster community connections.

It is important for parks to be easily accessible, yet Trail Creek lacks many sidewalks. Although the parks are surrounded by homes, there are many homes that are farther away. This can make it difficult for the elderly or children to reach the parks because they need to walk in the street or drive to the parking areas to get there. Furthermore, the playgrounds in Nelson and Congdon do not have accessible routes from the parking areas or street to the equipment, nor do they have continuous connections to other amenities.

One of the major priorities of the Park Board is to install a walking path around the perimeter of Nelson Park. Since Trail Creek does not have sidewalks that residents can use for recreational purposes (walking, biking, roller-skating etc.). A walking track would be beneficial to all levels of fitness by promoting physical activity in a safe place instead of walking in the street.

List some of the historical/cultural features in your community [such as: local historical societies, re-enactment groups, historical markers or sites, community theatre groups, artist colonies, community bands, festivals, special events, significant or prominent ethnic/cultural groups, etc.] (1-2 paragraphs)

From the survey and public input meeting, the most popular recreational program requested was 'family events and activities'. These types of programs are a great way to celebrate local culture and connect with other members in and around the community. A few festivals, including Fall Festivals and a Centennial Festival, have taken place in the town over the years. These festivals have been a great way to introduce arts crafts, music, and business from all different backgrounds. During the month of October, the Trail Creek police department holds a "Trunk-or-Treat" party at Nelson Park. Another excellent place to connect with arts and culture is Lakeshore School of Performing Arts in Evergreen Plaza. This school provides music and dance lessons to people of all ages.

Why might these features be important to your park system? Do any of these groups or events work with your parks in any way? Could or should they? (1-3 sentences)

The parks are a wonderful location for events and community engagement. The Park Board hopes to partner with other local businesses and organizations to reach a wider audience and promote the local economy.

Social and Economic Factors (Possible Sources: US Census, StatsIndiana, Chamber of Commerce, City-Data.com, etc)

Total community population: 1,983

Community member's median age: 42.4

Percentage of community living at or below poverty level: 9.1%

Percentage of community under the age of 5: 6.7%

Percentage of community over the age of 65: 25.4%

Percentage of community members with a disability:

Breakdown of community by race/ethnicity:

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- % White: 86.8
- % Black or African American: 7.4
- % American Indian and Alaska Native: 0.0
- % Asian: 0.0
- % Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.0
- % Some Other Race: 0.0
- % Two or more Races: 3.1
- % Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (of any Race): 9.9

Median household income: \$65,929

<https://data.census.gov>

<https://www.statsamerica.org/town/>

Largest employers in community (list 3-4 businesses or organizations):

Note: Most residents are employed outside of the community. Dollar General, Memos Restaurant and Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Most current unemployment figure (percentage of unemployed people; community-wide; use County data if town/city data is unavailable): 9.9 %

<https://www.statsamerica.org/town/>

Discuss how these social and economic factors in the community affect the provision of parks and recreation [For example: sliding fee scales for the poorest park/program users, effect of many 2nd/3rd-shift employees available to use evening programs and facilities, need for senior/youth/teen programs if that demographic is growing, etc.]: (2-3 paragraphs)

Economic factors influencing the parks include a lack of local economy, small size, tax base and low to moderate income levels. The limited Town Funds need to be spent on essential things like police department, fire department, maintenance, development and town employees. Thus, less money is allocated to the park budget. Also, with so few businesses it is difficult to find those willing to donate or sponsor events for the parks. The lack of infrastructure or home improvements in Trail Creek is another factor to consider because less money is generated from tax revenues which could also be used to help fund park improvements, programs and events.

Grants are available but some grants are reimbursement based, meaning they need to be paid upfront, and money will be reimbursed after completion. Applying for large grants that are reimbursed is not feasible for our small town. The best option for Trail Creek is to apply for non-reimbursed grants or smaller reimbursed grants. Note: The town cannot depend only on grants to finance park projects. Every year, the park budget needs to allocate funds for ADA improvements, and projects on the action plan schedule. In addition, the park could use sponsorships, donations, program fees, and fundraising events to help finance projects.

In terms of social factors, the survey the data suggested that there is a need for more programs and accessible facilities especially for older adults. During t-ball season, the parks are a popular destination for children and adults from Michigan City and Trail Creek. The park and Recreation board can use the opportunity to reach out to more people in the community to raise awareness about the programs and events being offered (in the future). This could also, benefit the park department financially by increasing the number of participants in fee-based programs or fundraising opportunities. The income could then be used to fund more inclusive facilities and programming.

In summary, economic and social factors are intertwined. By attracting more visitors to the parks and increasing customer spending at local businesses, Trail Creek could improve the local economy. The town's extra business could lead to a boost in sales tax revenue. Providing additional revenue can help support community development, infrastructure improvements, other public services and ultimately the parks in Trail Creek. Furthermore, the rising interest in our parks could result in increased funding possibilities because sponsors would benefit from the surge in business._

Park Department Information and Facility Inventory

List all park properties owned and/or operated by the Community, and for each one, provide the following information:

- Name of park
- Address or nearest street intersection
- Approximate number of acres
- Major facilities/amenities on the site: [Include items such as: playgrounds, accessible playgrounds, sports fields, trails, beaches, restrooms, campgrounds, horseshoe pits, pools or water features, nature centers, etc.]

Nelson Park (4.30 acres)

Whippoorwill Avenue and Edgemoore Dr.

Playground, open field, two swing sets (one ADA and one infant), aluminum slide, one bench swing, spring riders, climbing arch and climbing ladder, two baseball diamonds with dugouts, bleachers, scoreboard, restroom, concession stand, shelter with picnic tables, basketball court, and a bulletin board.

Congdon Park (3.34 acres)

209 Rainbow Trail

Playground, open field, swing set, spring riders, monkey bars, climbing arch, merry-go-round, two tennis courts, two baseball diamonds with dugout, bleachers, scoreboard, concession stand, shelter with picnic tables, parking spaces, and a bulletin board.

Pritz Park/ Ollie's Bark Park (2.46 acres)

Pinetree Dr.

Two fenced-in areas for dogs to run, benches, picnic tables, (including one handicap table)

List the approximate yearly total budget by year for your department for the past several years:

2025: \$16,500

2024: \$16,500

2023: \$14,034

2022: \$4,308

2021: \$5,204

Major sources of budget and/or revenue [such as town/city appropriations (tax-based), TIF, Bonds, fees, rentals, etc.]

The major source of revenue is town appropriations (tax based). Determined each October for the following year.

Short discussion of effects that your budget has had on your department [good, bad, or indifferent] (1 paragraph)

The budget has limited or prevented the repair, replacement, and upgrades to the parks. This includes updating equipment and facilities to meet ADA standards, as well as upgrading or

removing old or unsafe playground equipment. Trail Creek's parks have a lot of potential, but they are currently struggling due to a lack of funding.

Short list or discussion of other sources of recreation lands or facilities in or around your community [such as: YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Township parks, County parks, other nearby communities, schools and school playgrounds/facilities; [especially if your department has any kind of competitor or partner relationship with these other providers]: (Either in bullet form or 1-2 paragraphs)

Michigan City is the neighboring town of Trail Creek. There are numerous schools, parks, playgrounds, and community centers in Michigan City. Places to visit include Washington Park Beach, Michigan City Area Schools, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, senior center, Library, Zoo, golf course, multiple gyms, Historical Society, and Center for The Arts. Libraries are an excellent location for the community. The organization frequently hosts events and programs for people of all ages, including children, teens, adults, and seniors. Joy Elementary School is in Michigan City and is within walking distance of Trail Creek. At Joy, you can find a playground, after-school programs, and clubs. Many children living Trail Creek, walk to Joy Elementary every day.

Recreational opportunities for both youth and adults are available through the Michigan City parks department. This includes baseball/softball, soccer clubs, basketball clubs, golf clubs, and senior programs. Furthermore, they have given valuable feedback during our community input meeting. The MC Parks Department's help has been invaluable in obtaining information about grants, developing a successful park plan, locating vendors and playground inspectors As well as, providing important feedback during the Community Input Meeting.

Accessibility and Universal Design

NOTE: See the “IDNR Planning Guidelines for 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plans”

document for an in-depth look at both Federal accessibility law and requirements concerning accessibility in general for your park system. Below are the IDNR basic accessibility documentation requirements for this master plan.

What programs and facilities in your park system are currently accessible? [discuss items like: parking, accessible routes connecting parking and all accessible amenities, pools, restrooms, play areas, trails, sports fields, etc., as well as programs, services, and activities] (2-3 paragraphs or a bulleted list)

Nelson Park

In 2024 we installed a new swing at Nelson Park. This swing set includes an ADA full body swing, wheelchair ramp, and engineered wood fiber (EWF) safety surface.

Congdon Park

Two handicap parking spaces in front of Congdon Park, two handicap spaces in front of town hall, one picnic table with handicap extension, wheelchair accessible sidewalk attached to parking lot.

Pritz Park (Ollie's Bark Park)

One picnic table with handicap extension

What programs and facilities in your park system are currently NOT accessible? [discuss items like parking, lack of accessible routes between accessible park amenities, pools, restrooms, play areas, trails, sports fields, etc., as well as programs, services, and activities] (2-3 paragraphs or a bulleted list)

Due to the small budget, and no established park board for several years. The parks have been neglected, and important repairs and ADA updates have fallen through the cracks. The public has indicated that they would like to see more inclusive equipment and facilities. It is crucial that our parks be accessible and inclusive to all ages and abilities, allowing for both physical and mental benefits. Our parks need significant accessibility updates and currently do not meet ADA guidelines, which are also part of the International Building Code. The Trail Creek Park Board is committed to becoming fully ADA compliant. Thus, all projects, improvements, and updates will be designed to comply with ADA standards. The following list contains steps we plan to take to replace playground equipment with ADA compliant playground equipment, surfacing, and routes._

1. Remove old unsafe play equipment
2. Prepare areas for new equipment
3. Install new accessible equipment
4. Install new accessible safety surfacing underneath the accessible play equipment
(Engineered Wood Fiber, Foam Tile, etc.?)
5. Install accessible mini-ramps from the accessible safety surfacing to the accessible route.
6. Build/connect accessible routes that connect all other accessible amenities and other areas of the parks.
7. Install accessible parking, signage, striping, including required number of van accessible spaces.

The ADA Compliance Report recommends the following:

Note: A copy of an ADA compliance report from June 22, 2023, will be included, but it does not include Pritz Park. The Park Board will inform the IDNR of any new or updated reports that become available

Nelson Park

Four handicap parking spaces that are centrally located with access to walkways in either direction, connecting 5 ft wide sidewalks to/between the following: baseball fields, bleaches, shelters, picnic tables, concession stand, and basketball court. Also, handicap extensions on picnic tables, two 6 ft squares in baseball area for wheelchair viewing (one at each field), barrier free entrance to playground and other play equipment (some play equipment still needs safety surface underneath). Also, the public expressed their desire to have an accessible walking track around the perimeter of the park, accessible playground equipment, and ADA restroom facilities.

Congdon Park

Connecting 5 ft wide sidewalks to/between the following: baseball fields, bleaches, shelters and concession stand, tennis courts, barrier free entrance to tennis courts, playground and other play equipment (some play equipment still needs safety surface underneath). Two 6 ft squares in baseball area for wheelchair viewing (one at each field), another 6ft square wheelchair viewing area at tennis court and ADA restroom facilities are available.

Pritz Park (Ollie's Bark Park)

A flat surface for handicap parking (it's a gravel parking lot), two handicap parking spaces, 5 ft wide sidewalks around perimeter of fence.

What methods does your park board or department use to notify the public about ADA's nondiscriminatory requirements, and accessible facilities programs and services in your park system? [discuss items like park board kiosk notices or fliers, information kept available at the



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park department itself, notices posted online, and/or printed in brochures or other print media]
(1-2 paragraphs or a bulleted list)

The ADA resolution is available on the town website, on the bulletin boards at Nelson, Congdon and Pritz Park. Copies are also available at town hall. In the ADA resolution, the Town of Trail Creek will make all reasonable modifications to policies or programs to accommodate people with disabilities. Anyone who requires auxiliary aid or a modification of policies or procedures should contact the ADA coordinator. The ADA coordinator is also responsible for investigating complaints that the Town has violated. The coordinator will have 15 days to meet with the complainant to discuss the possible resolutions. The ADA coordinator is then to respond in writing to the complaint and explain the position of Trail Creek and offer a resolution.

Who on your board or local government staff would a member of the public contact if they had a question, comment, or issue with accessibility in your park system, programs, or activities?

Name/Job Title: Crystal Frever/ Town Clerk-Treasurer

Address: 211 Rainbow Trail, Trail Creek, IN 46360

Phone number: (219) 872 2422

Email (if available): cfrever@townoftrailcreek.in.gov

A hard copy with original signatures of the ADA/ABA/Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Section 504 Accessibility Compliance Form should be sent in to the DNR-Outdoor Recreation Local Master Planner when this plan is finalized: Has the Form been signed, dated, and a hard copy sent in to DNR-OR? (Circle/highlight one answer) **YES** / NO

A PDF of the blank form is available for free download online at: <https://www.in.gov/dnr/state-parks/recreation/planning/park-planning-information-and-guidelines/>

Public Participation

NOTE: IDNR-OR requires at least one random public input method (such as a survey) and one non-random method (such as stakeholder interviews, public meetings, etc).

To ensure you record input from as many citizen points of view as possible, solicit input from a diverse cross section of local users AND non-users. Include people from:

- A variety of age groups, occupations, races and ethnicities
- Individuals with disabilities
- Other demographic groups who may be unique to your planning area
- Parents
- Park agency staff and volunteers
- Park users and non-users
- Seniors
- Youth

NOTE: One of the best ways to ensure good turnout for public meetings is to issue actual invitations by phone, web and/or mail to potential stakeholders in the community. Groups invited could include churches, scout troops, sports leagues, business associations, chambers of commerce, local park departments/boards, PTA/PTO groups, school boards, historical societies, service organizations (Lions, Optimists, Elks, Masons, Garden Clubs, etc.), senior centers, day care providers, United Way, Community Foundation staff, park program lists, single-parent support groups, fair and festival committees, arts and cultural groups and councils, etc. Getting on your local community calendar on local cable is a good meeting advertising method, as is a newspaper story, an internet page, radio/cable public service announcements, and brightly colored fliers with clear headlines posted in libraries, schools, and businesses downtown in the community. These items are normally free or low-cost; they do take some time, but it tends to be well-invested. Do your advertising and information a couple of weeks out, repeat it a couple of days in advance, and then provide reminders the day of, if necessary. Invite them, let them know that you value their time and input, be persistent in reminding them, and your turnout should increase.

Further details on meeting and survey methods and examples can be found in the following IDNR documents available for free download at: <https://www.in.gov/dnr/state-parks/recreation/planning/park-planning-information-and-guidelines/>

- “IDNR Planning Guidelines for 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plans”
- “Anytown, Indiana Example 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan”

- “IDNR Park and Recreation Master Planning Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQs are under the “Additional Information” heading)

When you document your public input effort in this plan, you must include the following information even if the methods are not successful:

- Types of methods used (questionnaire, public meetings, etc.)
- Date(s) and location(s) of the survey, meeting, or interviews
- Number of surveys sent
- Number of surveys returned
- Number of people/groups interviewed
- Number of members of the **public** attending public meetings (public meetings should **NOT** count members of the park board, government officials, consultants, or their families toward their total attendance figures)
- A synopsis of the comments gathered from each method
- Summary of all the input

Public meeting information: _

What date and time was the meeting held?

March 13th, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Where was the meeting held?

Trail Creek Town Hall

211 Rainbow Trail, Trail Creek, IN 46360

How did you advertise the meeting? [Could include things such as: direct invitations, newspaper articles, radio or cable TV public service announcements, fliers or posters in conspicuous public locations, internet, etc.] (1-2 paragraphs or a bulleted list)

- February 26th a banner was displayed on The Town of Trail Creek
- February 27th an announcement was posted on the Trail Creek Facebook page.
- February 28th a sign was attached to the front door of the Town Hall.
- February 28th a notice was published in the La Porte County Herald-Dispatch daily newspaper

- March 14th, 2025, advertisements were removed

How many members of the actual public showed up? [This does not count park board members, local government officials, park employees, or consultants]

Nine residents attended the meeting. Also, in attendance (but not in the official count) were the President and Vice President of the Park Board, the President of the Town Council, , the two council members (including one acting as the Park Board Liaison) and the clerk/treasurer. Also in attendance was a journalist from the Laporte News Dispatch.

Create a short list of the comments and issues discussed by the public at the meeting: (2-3 paragraphs or a bulleted list)

The park board discussed what a 5-Year Master Plan is and emphasized the significance of public involvement. Residents were dissatisfied with the lack of trails/walking paths, restrooms, programs for all ages, inclusive equipment, doggie bag stations, shade, benches, lending libraries, the condition of the tennis courts, insufficient parking and parking signage.

Despite obstacles, the community members were enthusiastic about the future of Trail Creek Parks, and they showed a desire to establish a stronger sense of community. The Park Board received many wonderful ideas and suggestions. One of the most popular topics was the installation of a walking track at Nelson Park and the addition of more programs and events. Senior programs such as tai chai and bingo, summer programs for kids, festivals, walk-a-thons, yoga, bingo, arts and crafts, games, and sports were just a few of the suggestions. These programs could potentially be funded through registration fees. It was suggested to hire High school and college students to lead some of the events and programs. Several

individuals expressed their interest in assisting in the organization, development and advertisement of these programs and events.

Another popular topic was to convert the tennis courts at Congdon into pickleball courts. One of the proposed ideas is to bring Congdon Park back to its natural state by adding native trees, vegetation, and perhaps trails. To enhance the utilization of fields, it was suggested to partner with Michigan City Parks and Recreation, to possibly establish a soccer club. In addition, we have been asked to plant more trees to provide shade and install butterfly gardens, lending libraries, and doggie bag stations. Another suggestion was recommended to put equipment in place that can be used by everyone, including swings with a weight capacity of 300 lbs., non-plastic slides, embankment slides, and sound gardens. Finally, we discussed finding better signage and parking solutions in Nelson Park.

Survey/group/individual interview information:

What kind of survey or interview method did you choose, and why? (What date and time was the survey or interviews held?) (1-2 paragraphs or a bulleted list)

The park board members decided to conduct a survey to meet the requirement for a random method of public input. The Park Board members agreed that the most straightforward way to gather input from the community is through a random survey. The paper and online survey was made available on January 26, 2025, and ended on February 25, 2025._

If you did a survey: How did you advertise it? [Survey advertising could include things such as: direct invitations, newspaper articles, radio or cable TV public service announcements, fliers or posters in conspicuous public locations, internet, etc.] (1-2 paragraphs or a bulleted list)

On January 23rd, 2025, the survey was advertised using the Town of Trail Creek Facebook page and a banner was posted on the Trail Creek Website. On January 26th the

survey was launched on the Town of Trail Creek website and paper copies were made available at Town Hall. The survey closed on February 25, 2025.

If you did a series of interviews, how did you choose who/what groups to interview? (1-2 sentences)

How many members of the actual public were invited to the interviews or responded to your survey? [This does not count park board members, local government officials, park employees, or consultants]

No# of members of the public responding or participating:

The survey was completed with a total of 64 responses. Fifty-nine (59) individuals filled out the Trail Creek survey online, and five (5) filled out paper versions. According to the clerk, the town hall is not visited by most residents due to the inconvenience of the office hours, and most residents pay their bills online.

Create a short list of the comments and issues discussed by the public at the meeting: (2-3 paragraphs or a bulleted list)

The survey posed 14 questions about demographics, reasons to visit parks, the most desired recreational programs and facilities, and whether users were disabled. According to the survey, most users reside in Trail Creek (92.2%), while the remaining 7.8% are from the surrounding area. Almost half the survey was completed by those over the age of 55 (44.3%), married (70.3%), and without children (62.5%). The top two activities people used parks for were outdoor time (54.7%) and play time with children (37.5%). Nelson Park received 65% of

the vote as the most popular park to visit. Also, noted is there are users who visit the parks with disabilities (17.2%). Family activities were the most preferred recreational program (70.5%), followed by fitness activities (57.4%). Walking paths and trails were the most desired feature by respondents (74.6%)

Needs Analysis

Your community's total acres of local parks and recreation land is: 10.6 acres

Your community's total population by the most recent US Census is: 2,060 people

The top five most common needs or desires expressed by the public during your public participation methods are: [List top five issues in any order] (A short, bulleted list is fine)

- Walking paths and trails
- More events and programs for all ages
- Restroom facilities available year round
- New accessible and inclusive equipment
- Repair and convert the tennis courts to pickleball courts

The top five most common needs or desires as listed by the park board/park staff are: [List top five issues in any order] (A short, bulleted list is fine)

- Update parks to comply with current ADA requirements
- More events and programs for all ages
- Remove and replace the old playground equipment
- Repair and convert the tennis courts to pickleball courts

Small Town Fill-In-The-Blank 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan Template

If your community could list just one large “dream” amenity or facility (regardless of cost) to create in the next ten years, what would it be?

“Dream” project’s name and possible location:

Rough guess cost estimate for the “dream” project:

“Trail Creek Pickle Ball Courts”, in Congdon Park at the currently decommissioned tennis courts. The council was given a quote of about \$110,000 to fix the courts and turn them into pickleball courts.

Community Map showing location of Parks (Possible sources: MapQuest, Google Maps, Yahoo Maps, Local/County GIS Office/Planning Department)

Attach a single-sheet 8-1/2” x 11” map to the final version of this plan, and highlight the locations of your parks, as well as any future potential sites for parks.

Maps were submitted by email on November 10, 2024

Priorities and Action Plan Schedule

Using both your public input and park board top five lists of expressed parks and recreation needs, combine the two lists to create a single top priority list (maximum of 10 priorities) of action items, and list them in rough priority order below (#1 being the highest priority, down to #10 being the lowest priority):

The priorities were based on the current availability of funds, potential grant opportunities, equipment safety, ADA requirements, and public needs/wants. According to the public, a walking track and pickleball court are the most desired amenities, however funding is required to make it a reality. Obtaining grants and raising money is a process that takes time and is not guaranteed, but the Park Board will do their best to

meet all the priorities in a reasonable and timely manner. The priority list and action plan are not set in stone, and adjustments may need to be made.

1. Find more sources of funding for projects and improvements (fundraising, program fees, grants, donations, sponsors)
2. Ensure port-a-potties are available from April to November
3. Create more park programs and events for all ages throughout the year
4. Update facilities to meet all current ADA standards
5. Remove old, unsafe equipment and install new accessible equipment
6. Build an ADA accessible walking trail/track at Nelson
7. Install more sources of shade and seating
8. Improve parking around Nelson Park
9. Create more green spaces throughout the parks with native trees and plants
10. Convert tennis courts into pickle ball courts

Once you have written your priority list, use it to fill in the empty table below to create your action plan schedule; spread the Priority List items out over the next five years so that your most expensive projects don't all happen at once:

Year	Site of work	Action taken	Cost Estimate	Potential Source of Funds
2025+	Park Board	Find more sources of funding to support priorities such as fundraising, donations, program fees, sponsors and grants	\$200 to \$1000 for advertising and supplies for fundraising	Park budget, Volunteers
2025-2026	Nelson, Congdon Park	Begin project planning & estimating for Parks	Currently under discussion	Park Budget
2025	Nelson, Congdon Park	<u>Rent ADA porta potty units.</u> *Nelson: Aug 2 nd to Nov 2 nd (MC provides units from April 1 st to Aug 2 nd)	*Nelson: 4-month rental \$920 *Congdon: 7-month rental \$1610	Park Budget

Small Town Fill-In-The-Blank 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan Template

		*Congdon: April 1 st to Nov 1 st	Total \$2530	
2025-2026	Varies based on type of activity and time of year	Create more programs and events for kids, adults, etc.	\$2,000-\$5,000 Varies depending on type of program, fees charged, and volunteers or paid workers	Park Budget, Program fees, Volunteers,
2025-2026	Nelson, Congdon	Remove old unsafe play equipment Prepare areas for new equipment (level surface)	\$300 to \$600 or more depending on size, complexity, materials, anchoring and disposal.	Sell metal for scrap and use money to help pay for removal, donate equipment in exchange for removal, sell equipment and use proceeds to help pay for costs, donated labor.
2026-2027	Nelson, Congdon	Build/connect accessible 5" wide pathways that connect all other accessible amenities and other areas of the parks.	Varies \$5.89 and \$12 per square foot Roughly \$10,000-\$15,000	Park Budget, Volunteers, sponsors, Grants
2026-2027	Nelson, Pritz	Install accessible parking, signage, striping, including required number of van accessible spaces.	\$1,500 to \$2,500 per space, depending on the complexity of the project and whether additional modifications, like ramps or signs, are needed.	Park Budget, Volunteers, Grants
2027-2028	Nelson or Congdon	Build an ADA accessible walking trail/track at Nelson	\$30,000-\$700,000 Depending on factors like terrain, materials, and labor costs	Park Budget, Program fees, fundraisers, Volunteers, donations, sponsors, Grants
2027-2028	Nelson, Congdon, Pritz	Create more green spaces throughout the parks with native trees and plants	\$100-\$1000	Park Budget, grants, fundraising, volunteers
2028-2029	Nelson, Congdon	*Install new accessible equipment *Install safety surfacing underneath new equipment *Install accessible mini-ramps from accessible safety surfacing to the accessible route.	\$150,000 to \$500,000 Depending on the size, type of equipment, features and availability of donated materials and volunteers	Park Budget, Program fees, fundraisers, Volunteers, donations, sponsors, Grants

Small Town Fill-In-The-Blank 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan Template

2029-2030	Nelson	Improve parking around Nelson Park (More parking)	\$2-\$3 per square ft	Park Budget, volunteers,
2030+	Congdon	Begin planning and grant research to build new or convert tennis courts into pickle ball courts	\$50,000-\$110,00 Depending on factors like size, materials, features, and current condition of tennis courts	Park Budget, Program fees, fundraisers, Volunteers, donations, sponsors, Grants

Final Public Presentation of the Plan

After the plan has been finished up to this point, it's time to have the public verify that they agree with or at least understand all the previous public input and the resulting action plan. To do this, simply set aside time during the next regularly scheduled park board meeting for public comment and invite the same participants from your earlier public input methods to return, listen to the final results of the plan, and provide their final comments.

- Time and date of final public presentation of the plan: 5:30 PM, April 10th, 2025
- Location: Trail Creek Town Hall
- Number of members of the public in attendance: 10

Discuss/List the primary comments made by the public during the meeting here: (1-2 paragraphs or a bulleted list)

The community was informed that the Priority List and Action Plan are not set in stone and may require changes. Throughout the presentation, they remained highly engaged and active. The Park Board received a great deal of additional ideas and suggestions for the action plan. A town council member who is obtaining estimates for the Park Board suggested installing pathways that connect from the parking lot then branch off to different areas of the park like the baseball fields, playground and the walking track. This suggestion was incorporated into the revised action plan.

There was a shift in interest from Nelson Park, which is the more centralized park to Congdon Park. The reason for this was that the baseball fields in Congdon Park weren't being used, and the park was a wide-open space that had plenty of possibilities. Unlike Nelson, which is currently used for baseball, basketball and perhaps soccer in the future. Thus, Congdon would be a more nature-based park while Nelson would be a more sports-based park. The Park Board agreed with this idea because it could potentially reduce costs due to fewer obstacles. Congdon Park was added to certain areas of the action plan (such as the walking track installation) due to the possibility of deciding which park to install after obtaining estimates. In addition, to help those with disabilities reach the parking lot more easily, the walking track could be a figure eight shape.

The Park Vice President brought forth the idea to connect a restroom to the outside of Town Hall at Congdon Park since there was already plumbing established. To determine which option is more cost-effective, this suggestion will be evaluated during planning and estimation.

Another member proposed that the Park Board purchase a piece of land with access to Trail Creek. There is currently no access to the creek itself in the Town of Trail Creek. This could be a possibility in the future if a grant was obtained. This could be taken into consideration during planning and estimating.

FINAL PAPERWORK:

A hard copy with original signatures of the park board resolution adopting the plan should be sent in to the IDNR-State Parks, Community Grants and Trails (DNR-SP-CGT) Local Park Planning Program contact when this plan is finalized: Has the document been signed, dated, and a hard copy sent in to IDNR-SP-CGT? (Circle one answer) YES / NO An example of the sign-off document is in the appendices of the “IDNR Planning Guidelines for Five Year Parks and Recreation Master Plans” available for free download online at:

<https://www.in.gov/dnr/state-parks/recreation/planning/park-planning-information-and-guidelines/>

END of PLAN TEMPLATE (see INSTRUCTIONS for submission info)