



City of Hillsdale
Baw Beese Park System
Master Plan

2022-2027 Edition

Plan Approval and Adoption

Hillsdale City Planning Commission September 21, 2022
Hillsdale City Council _____, 2022
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

The 2022-2027 edition of the City of Hillsdale Baw Beese Park System Master Plan will expire on December 31, 2027

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Chapter 1

Community Description

City of Hillsdale Baw Beese Park System Master Plan

A priority of the City of Hillsdale is to develop and implement a master plan which responds to the recreational desires of its citizens and to plan for enhancements to the park system. A sincere effort was spent in developing this plan which represents the projected needs for facilities and services in the City. For example, the plan provides a clear picture of the recreational opportunities available in the City park system. Nontraditional recreation opportunities such as historic districts and structures are also catalogued as well as traditional parks and recreation facilities.

Location

The City of Hillsdale is located in central Hillsdale County, close to Michigan's border with Northwest Ohio and Northeast Indiana (please see the Regional Location Map). Michigan Highway 99 (M-99) traverses the community and United States Highway 12 (US-12) is located to the north as it traverses the Village of Jonesville. Those thoroughfares provide access to the urbanized areas of Jackson, Ann Arbor, Detroit, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, and Grand Rapids. The City of Hillsdale has an area of 6.23 square miles.

Chapter 2

Administrative Structure

City of Hillsdale Baw Beese Park System Master Plan

Authorization

In response to identified recreation needs, the Hillsdale City Council developed the City of Hillsdale Baw Beese Park System Master Plan under the authority of Public Act 156 of 1917 (Recreation and Playgrounds). The act “authorizes cities, villages, counties, townships and school districts to operate systems of public recreation and playgrounds” (emphasis added) and allows them to:

- “operate a system of public recreation and playgrounds; acquire, equip and maintain land, buildings or other recreational facilities; employ a superintendent of recreation and assistants; vote and expend funds for the operation of such system.”
- “operate such a system independently or they may cooperate in its conduct in any manner which they may mutually agree; or they may delegate the operation of the system to a recreation board created by any or all of them, and appropriate money, voted for this purpose, to such board” (emphasis added).

The act also allows park systems to operate on “(1) property under its custody and management; (2) other public property;” and “(3) private property, with the consent of the owners.”

A copy of PA 156 of 1917 is available online at [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(jydpab552soxemek3mee3h55\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-156-of-1917.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(jydpab552soxemek3mee3h55)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-156-of-1917.pdf)

Organizational Structure

- **City of Hillsdale.** The responsibility for Hillsdale’s parks and recreation programs is divided among several authorities. For example, the Department of Public Services is responsible for parks and recreation facility maintenance and the Recreation Department administers the municipality’s recreation programs. Planning for the parks and recreation system is provided by the Planning Commission. The City may also utilize volunteers for specific programs and projects. City Council maintains final authority over Hillsdale’s parks and recreation facilities and programs.

Sources of Funding

The City of Hillsdale identifies several potential sources of revenue for their recreation facilities and programs:

- general tax fund dollars
- grants awarded for specific projects; and
- participation fees for recreation programs and use of park facilities; and
- donations from the general citizenry and philanthropic organizations.

General fund tax dollars are used for the maintenance and programming of City parks and recreation facilities and cemeteries as well as their administration, including the cost of producing this Plan. Grants are generally awarded for the acquisition of parkland and the development of a park or recreational facility (e.g., trails, playgrounds, picnic shelters, sports facilities, etc.). Donations to be used at the discretion of the City for a specific facility or program are also accepted. A portion of the local match required of most grants may also come from the City or donations. Grants for parks and recreational facilities are likely to come from several sources:

■ **The Michigan Department of Natural Resources**

- The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund
- The Land and Water Conservation Fund¹

■ **The Michigan Department of Transportation**

- The Transportation Enhancement Program¹

¹ This is a Federal program administered locally by the State of Michigan.

Chapter 3

Recreation and Resource Inventories

City of Hillsdale Baw Beese Park System Master Plan

Park Inventory

The recreation inventory is comprised of all parks and recreation facilities and programs available to the residents of the City, not just those owned and managed by the local units of government. The facilities and programs were identified through local knowledge and review of current and historic documents and maps.

Municipal Parks and Recreation Facilities

The City of Hillsdale provides ten formal parks which contain a variety of recreation facilities. Waterworks Park, Owen Memorial Park, Sandy Beach Park, and the Baw Beese Trail form an important component of the City's park system centered on Baw Beese Lake. The other parks are distributed throughout Hillsdale.

CITY OF HILLSDALE PARKS

	NAME	ACRES	FACILITIES	BFA*
A	SAM LOPRESTO PARK	5.8	2 BASEBALL DIAMONDS, GREEN SPACE	1
B	MRS. STOCKS PARK	8.8	PAVILION WITH ELECTRIC, PICNIC TABLES, GARDENS AND LANDSCAPING, SCULPTURES, POND WITH FOUNTAINS, ISLAND, ST. JOSEPH RIVER	2
C	WATERWORKS PARK	8.3	PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT, GRILLS, DNR BOAT LAUNCH, FISHING AREAS, SWIMMING AREA, PICNIC TABLES, PARKING AREA, PORTABLE RESTROOM FACILITIES	1
D	OWEN MEMORIAL PARK	37.3	2 PLAY AREAS, 2 PAVILIONS WITH ELECTRIC AND WATER, GRILLS, PICNIC TABLES, BENCHES, FISHING AREAS, SWIMMING AREA, DISC GOLF COURSE, GREEN SPACE, BOAT SLIPS, 2 WHARF, PORTABLE RESTROOM FACILITIES	2
E	SANDY BEACH PARK		BEACH, PLAYGROUND, GRILLS, PICNIC TABLES, 2 SAND VOLLEYBALL COURTS, REGULATION SIZE BASKETBALL COURT, BOAT SLIPS, DOCKING SYSTEM, CONCESSIONS/PLUMBED RESTROOMS	
F	KEEKOOSE PARK	3.3	BASEBALL DIAMOND WITH SEATING, PLAYGROUND, GREEN SPACE	1
G	FIELDS OF DREAMS	58.6	3 BASEBALL FIELDS (2 SCOREBOARDS), 2 SOCCER FIELDS (1 SCOREBOARD), PAVILION, BLEACHERS, BENCHES, PLAYGROUND, CONCESSIONS, PLUMBED RESTROOMS, IRRIGATION 2 SYSTEM, STORAGE BUILDING WITH INDIVIDUAL UNITS	

H	COLD SPRINGS PARK	2.1	PICNIC TABLES, PLAYGROUND, GRILLS, OPEN PLAY AREA, STREAM, POND	1
I	ORVILLE MYER PARKWAY	13.4	GREENSPACE	1

Soils

The primary soil types within the City of Hillsdale are placed in the Fox-Boyer Association which is characterized as “nearly level to steep, very deep, well drained sandy loams and loamy sand outwash plains.” The remaining soils are placed in the Riddles-Hillsdale Association which is characterized as “gently sloping to steep, very deep, well drained, loamy soils on ground moraines and end moraines.”²

Topography

The wetlands around the St. Joseph River in the City of Hillsdale are a low point with an elevation of 1,066 feet. Baw Beese Lake and portions of the City of Hillsdale have an elevation of 1,099. High points are located along the western edge of the City of Hillsdale with an elevation of 1,197 feet.

Land Use

Commercial uses predominate along M-99 (please see the Future Land Use map) and industrial uses are recommended adjacent to that area. Public/quasi-public uses are recommended along parts of the St. Joseph River, the Barber Lakes, and Baw Beese Lake. Residential uses are recommended for the majority of the City of Hillsdale.

Water Resources

The St. Joseph Watershed covers the entire Hillsdale area. The river flows through the City of Hillsdale south to north and the Hillsdale Mill Pond is an impoundment of the river. Baw Beese Lake, Bull Head Lake, Winona Lake, and the Barber Lakes are located on the periphery of the City of Hillsdale. Wetlands are located primarily along the peripheries of local rivers and streams. These resources offer the opportunity to educate students about the importance of aquatic resources, the natural and manmade features which affect them, and the need to protect them.

² All information is adapted from the Soil Survey of Hillsdale County, Michigan.

Chapter 4

Goals and Objectives

City of Hillsdale Baw Beese Park System Master Plan

Goals and Objectives

The following mission statement was developed for the plan:

To provide diverse, year-round recreational opportunities for all, enhance our natural setting and make the City of Hillsdale a destination for recreation.

The following goals and objectives were developed to implement the mission statement:

#1	<p>Enhance current and develop new opportunities for Hillsdale area residents and visitors to participate in a variety of recreational activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Continue to manage website and social media sites providing up to date information with regard to activities and facilities; andb. Develop a youth advisory board; andc. Assist in the development of community festivals and events; andd. Partner with local entities, including schools to develop environmental education/nature center and other community wide recreation programs; ande. Partner with other organizations to develop recreation and wellness programming and facilities for senior citizens; andf. Explore funding opportunities for the improvement and development of recreational facilities; andg. Continue with park renovations/improvements/developments creating recreation destinations within the City; namely the Baw Beese component and trails connectivity.h. Continue to explore new recreation program opportunities.
#2	<p>Create a community identity that enhances the City's positive attributes and natural resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Identify and promote existing recreation opportunities as they relate to what makes the area unique; andb. Create branding, wayfinding, logos, etc.... as they relate to that which sets the area apart; and

- c. Collaborate with area businesses, industry, and educational institutions that serve the recreational consumer; and
- d. Develop a signature festival; and
- e. Continue to develop the Recreation website.

#3

Improve the area park system by enhancing existing facilities and planning for expansion of additional recreational spaces.

- a. Continue to develop and promote the Baw Beese component of the park system as a recreation destination; and
- b. Explore and determine feasibility of campground development/expansion; and
- c. Improve existing parks and facilities and equipment; and
- d. Explore funding of recreational opportunities; and
- e. Promote connectivity of the park system through trails; and
- f. Create uniform wayfinding and parks identification systems; and
- g. Encourage year-round use of parks; and
- h. Encourage public participation in renovation of local parks.

#4

Expansion and improvement of trails in the City.

- a. Continue to promote trail system development with emphasis on loops; and
- b. Construct a trail connecting the Jonesville Rail Trail to the Hillsdale Baw Beese Trail; and
- c. Participate in placemaking focus groups to design and help implement ability to walk/Promote opportunities to walk/bike to destinations, i.e. downtown districts, parks, schools, etc.; and
- d. Encourage non-motorized transportation to destinations through promotion (i.e.; signage, bike racks, parking); and
- e. Develop printed and electronic mapping systems of current and proposed trails available to the public via publication and internet.

Background Information

Input into developing the goals and objectives listed above included:

- existing recreation facilities available to City residents, regardless of the provider;
- the health, age, and disabilities of City residents;
- possible funding and acquisition opportunities for land and facilities; and
- responses from the recreation survey and the trail network map.

#1. Enhance current and develop new opportunities for Hillsdale area residents and visitors to participate in a variety of recreational activities

The Hillsdale Area is rich with a multitude of recreation facilities and programs as well as natural resources, however; more needs to be done to promote and increase opportunities to enjoy those community assets. Ongoing development of the website must continue providing current recreation information which will peak the interest of its viewers.

The development of a youth advisory board, development of community festivals, and environmental education are examples of areas of improvement and expansion of the recreational experience in the area. These objectives bring forth the realization of the importance of alternative funding be it through business/industry, fee structures, grants or volunteer services.

The renovation of Sandy Beach has created a recreation destination along the Baw Beese Lake park system in the City of Hillsdale. It has spawned the need for a Baw Beese Master Plan outlining a plan for all of the parks and the Baw Beese Trail for upgrades and continuity, enhancing the entire system. The City of Hillsdale provides a wide variety of programs and the Hillsdale Community Schools provide additional recreation programming to its student body.

As improvements are made and programming is expanded, funding becomes crucial. Building strong relationships with business and industry is of most importance. Promotion of recreation as a key factor in a stable, healthy environment and its impact on business and industry is key.

#2 Create a community identity that enhances the City's positive attributes and natural resources

The creation of a city brand promoting area recreation opportunities and natural resources will help to create this identity. The drafting of this plan which highlights non-traditional as well as traditional recreation facilities and programs and natural resources is an important first step. Sustaining a webpage on the City's website is also needed if the creation of a brand for the city is to be realized. The cooperation of area businesses is also needed to create a brand, especially those that serve recrea-

tional consumers. Another way of creating a city identity is through a signature festival. The promotion of recreation and natural resources should also encourage greater usage of recreational facilities and programs which will result in a healthier community.

#3 Continue to improve the area park system by enhancing existing facilities and planning for expansion of additional recreational spaces

The City of Hillsdale, in collaboration with local service clubs, has spent the last nine years focusing on the enhancement and renovation of its park system. Re-energizing the parks, many of which have historical value within the City, will help to improve recreational opportunities for residents of all ages and attract visitors into the area. The Baw Beese component of the park system is comprised of three parks: Waterworks Park, Sandy Beach, and Owen Memorial Park, along with a large portion of the Baw Beese Trail. Sandy Beach has been a focus for the local Rotary Club. With vast improvements which include a renovated beach front, a new play area, enhanced sand volleyball courts, the addition of an outdoor basketball court, and a revitalized concession stand/restroom facility, Sandy Beach has regained its vitality winning two "Best of the Best" awards for best Local Tourist Attraction and best Family Amusement destination. Playground equipment at Owen Memorial Park has experienced a facelift with the help of Key Opportunities, a local non-profit organization that helps those citizens who are handicapped/disadvantaged. New playground equipment is part of a bigger plan for park improvements, but will have to be done as funding becomes available. Plans being made in collaboration with a local business to make drastic improvements to the nine hole disc golf course and plans to repurpose the vacant house that sits on the property is on the horizon. Bronze nature sculptures created and donated by a local artist (Heritage Association) will begin to appear along the Baw Beese Trail for users to enjoy as they use the trail.

A strong partnership between the City of Hillsdale, Hillsdale Garden Club, and the Mrs. Stock's Park Committee has resulted in an award winning renovation to Mrs. Stock's Park in downtown Hillsdale over the last several years. Expansion of the gardens continues and projects such as plumbed restrooms, sheltered picnic tables, and additional entertainment areas are being planned for as funding is obtained.

Cold Springs Park, one of a handful of neighborhood parks has been adopted by the local Kiwanis Club. The park consists of two artesian wells, a stream, pond, and vintage play equipment. The vintage play equipment has been refurbished and is being reinstalled. The Club is making plans to do a multi-phase restoration of the park in an attempt to bring the park back to life and make it a place for the neighborhood to enjoy once again. Projects such as this have sparked conversations with regard to refurbishment of other small parks in the City as well.

As improvements to the parks are being made, special attention is being placed on improving and creating barrier free access to restroom facilities, parking, and play equipment. Also significant in the planning is compliance with recreation guidelines for safety. Due to budget constraints, safety upgrades have been limited. The City's Recreation Department continues to inventory and evaluate the needs for safety upgrades with a certified playground inspector. Because of the vastness of play areas in the City, improvements will be made in phases. Environmental awareness is also a focus in the design process, particularly along the waterfront and parks containing ponds and streams. Areas of interest and concern are preserving/restoring natural habitats and shoreline erosion restoration/prevention. A marina exists along Baw Beese Lake consisting of 152 dock slips. With shoreline erosion being an ongoing issue, construction of new seawalls and refurbishment of existing seawalls is one step toward slowing the erosion problem currently facing the City's waterfront parks.

Exploring and determining the feasibility of campground development and expansion seems sensible. While campgrounds such as Gateway Campground and 6 Lakes Campgrounds in Hillsdale are quite popular and continue to grow in popularity, exploring and determining the feasibility of further campground development and expansion is a positive direction.

The MDOT Hill-Jo Trail, a transportation/commuter trail, is a non-motorized connection from Hillsdale to Jonesville with access to recreation and commercial facilities located in the City of Hillsdale and Jonesville. The Baw Beese Trail connects Downtown Hillsdale with its Baw Beese park component and Hillsdale College. Many City of Hillsdale streets are also served by sidewalks, providing further connections. However, there are opportunities for additional connections to other parks.

Encouraging the year-round use of parks is a goal of the City of Hillsdale. While none of the parks offer organized winter activities, Hillsdale County Lewis Emery Park offers tobogganing. Residents occasionally pick up some cross country skiing in the parks and on private property as well as sledding/tobogganing, and ice skating.

#4 Expansion and improvement of trails in the City and Township

It has been demonstrated that existing trails and sidewalks already connect many of the recreational facilities located in the Hillsdale Area. However, there are opportunities for additional connections to other parks. Hillsdale County GIS and Michigan State University Extension collaborated in 2009 for the purpose of developing trail connectivity throughout the Hillsdale County area. A State approved Recreation and Pathways Plan details a trail network for the Hillsdale County Area, highlighting a trail connecting the Jonesville Rail Trail with the existing Baw Beese Trail of the City of Hillsdale. The plan proposes trails which connect the participating jurisdictions creating a sense of connection among the communities, promoting recreation destinations and encouraging health and fitness.

Chapter 6

Action Program

City of Hillsdale Baw Beese Park System Master Plan

Action Program

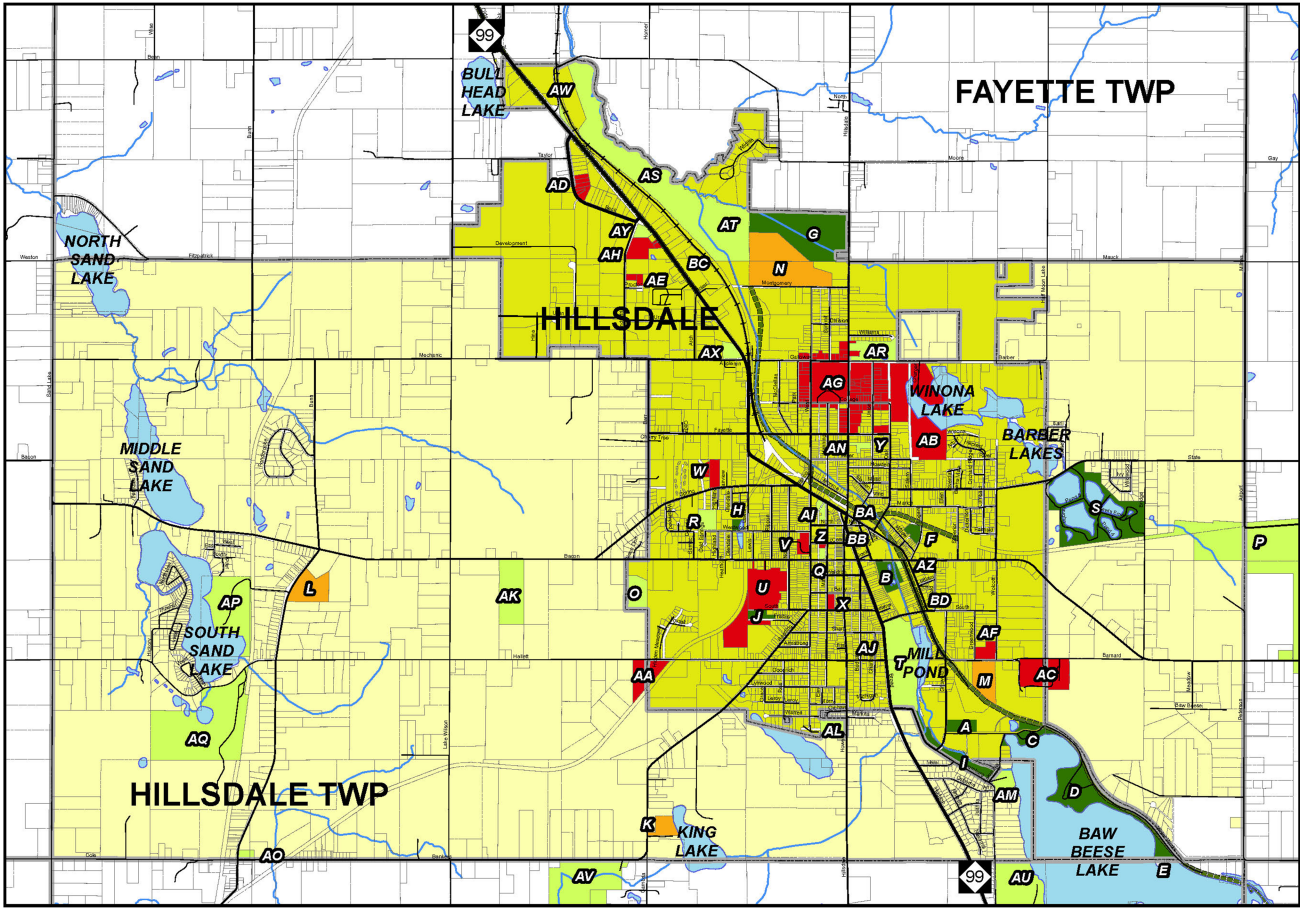
The action program selected for the 2022-27 planning period contains the following initiatives:

1. Continue to enhance current informational websites with links to other sites within the County (CIS, GIS, Senior Services Center, businesses, etc.) highlighting available recreational opportunities and natural resources. Continue open and current dialogue with the public through social media.
2. Develop a Festival Committee to create and promote a signature festival in the area. Work through Hillsdale Business Association in the Downtown District and local vendors to create and develop community involvement and a sense of unity.
3. Work with schools on the development of nature centers and environmental projects. Develop a Youth Advisory Board representative of all ages to participate in the development of the above mentioned activities as well as expansion of new recreational opportunities in the area.
4. Continue to work on expansion of recreational programs and opportunities made available to the community. Work with business owners and artisans to collaborate on and promote workshops and classes.
5. Continue to develop a wayfinding signage system throughout the community through focus groups thereby creating visibility to local sites and vendors as well as flow and continuity within the area.
6. Develop a Baw Beese Park System Master Plan and continue renovation and development to the chain of lake front parks encouraging expansion of recreational opportunities. Continue "adopt a park" projects through service groups and residential districts in order to improve and maintain local/neighborhood parks.
7. Continue to develop city identity by way of branding, logos and festivals through involvement with local focus groups.
8. Maintain discussion with MDOT concerning improvements to the Hill-Jo Trail along M99. Continue to prioritize future trails projects based on topographical and community need thereby creating opportunity for economic networking and growth throughout the area.

Appendix A

Maps

City of Hillsdale

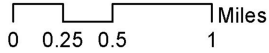


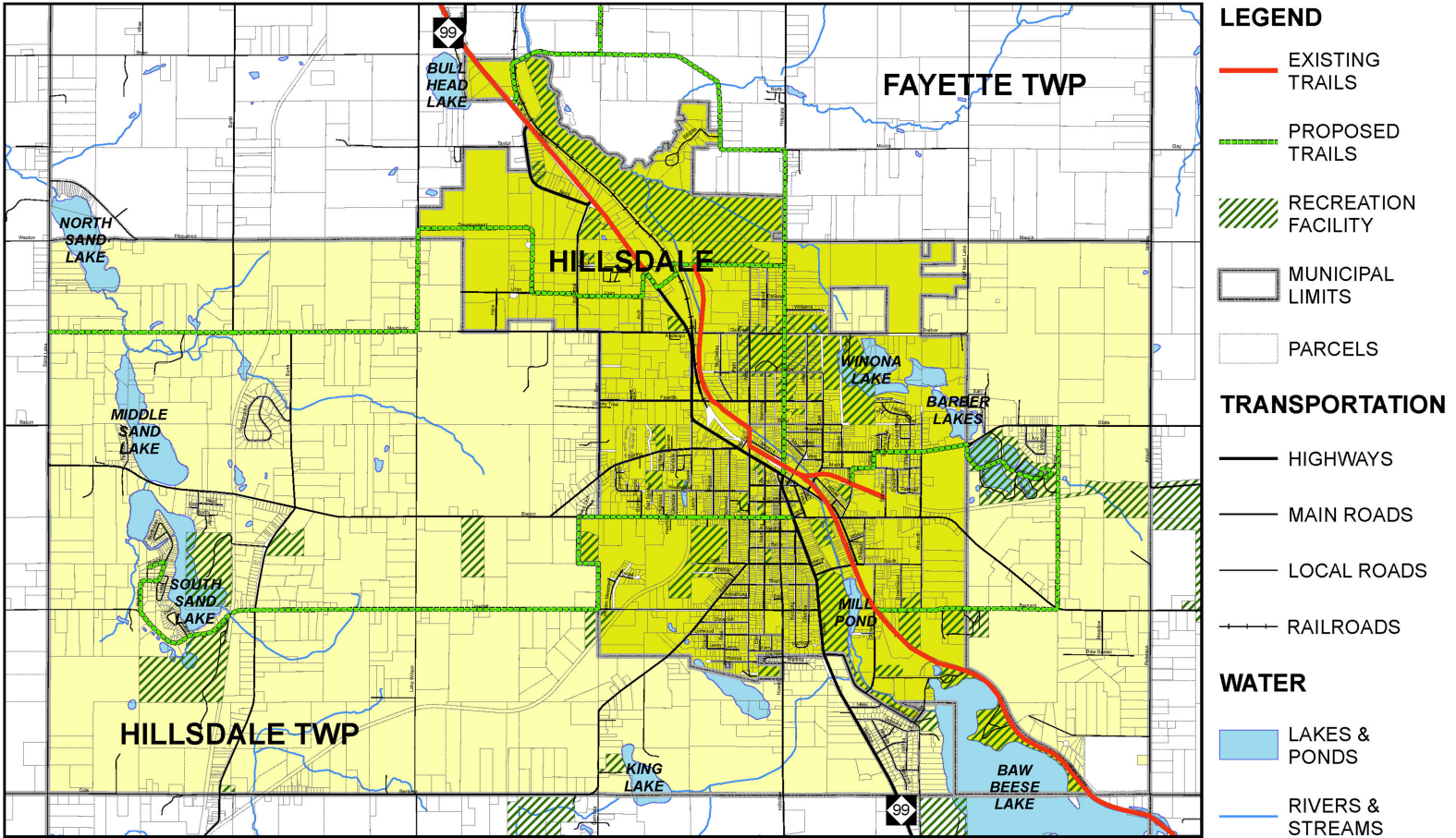
LEGEND

- CITY OR COUNTY PARK
 - SCHOOLS
 - OTHER RECREATION FACILITY
 - TRAIL
 - CEMETARY
 - MUNICIPAL LIMITS
 - PARCELS
- TRANSPORTATION**
- HIGHWAYS
 - MAIN ROADS
 - LOCAL ROADS
 - RAILROADS
- WATER**
- LAKES & PONDS
 - RIVERS & STREAMS

CITY OF HILLSDALE AND HILLSDALE TOWNSHIP

RECREATION



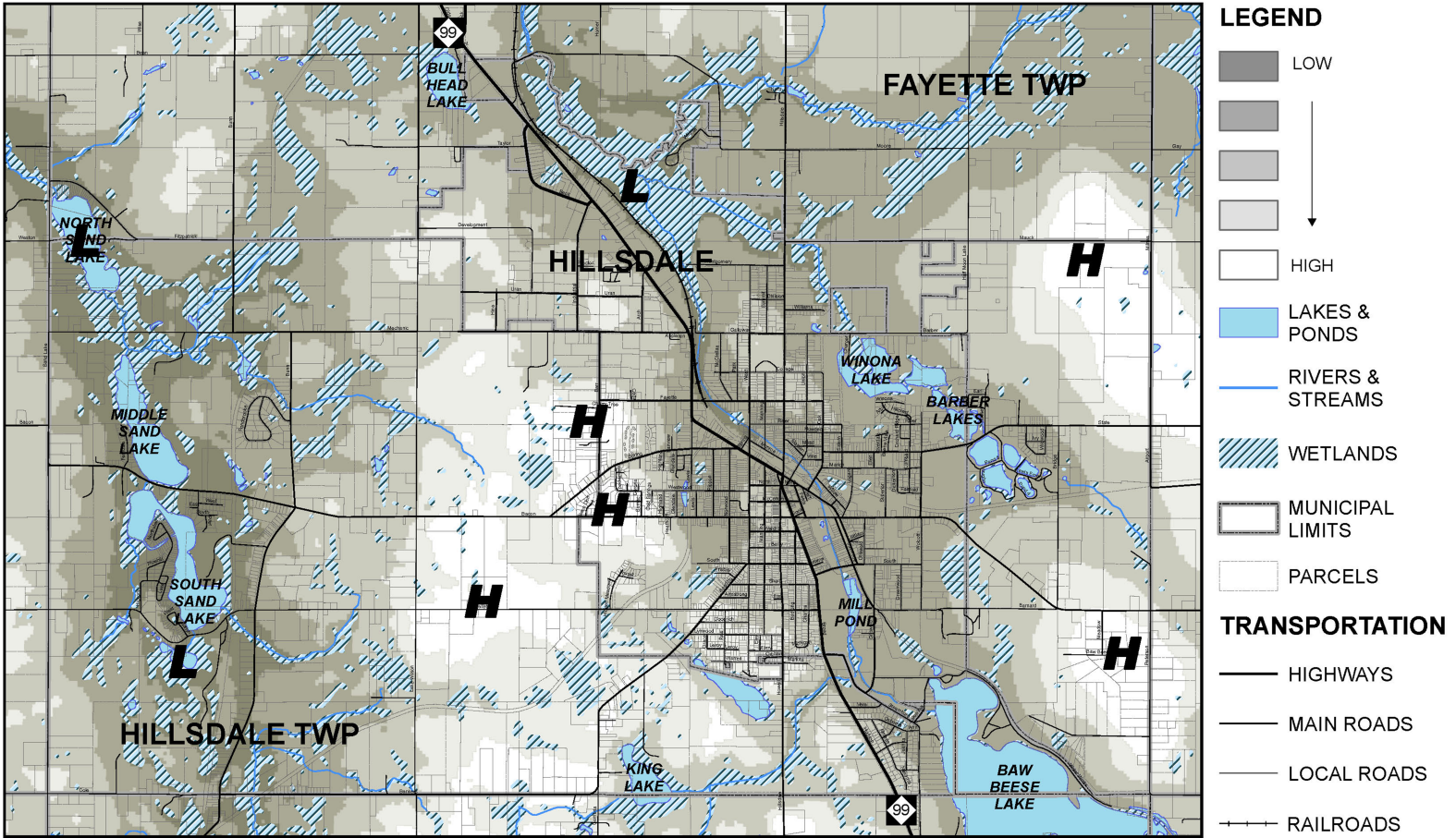


CITY OF HILLSDALE AND
HILLSDALE TOWNSHIP

TRAIL NETWORK

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles





CITY OF HILLSDALE AND
HILLSDALE TOWNSHIP

HYDROLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

