

2023

Annual
Report

GENESEE
COUNTY
PARKS



A Commission of Genesee County

ANNUAL REPORT CONTENTS

Page 1....Mission Statement

Page 2.....Message from the President

Page 3.....Day Use Parks

Page 5.....For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum

Page 7.....The Mounds & Tollbooths

Page 8.....Wolverine Campground

Page 9....Crossroads Village

Page 11.....Huckleberry Railroad

Page 12.....Park Rangers

Page 12.....Marketing

Page 13.....Flint State Park

Page 14.....Keep Genesee County Beautiful

Page 15....FYE 2022 Actuals

MISSION STATEMENT

VISION

Parks bring people together.

MISSION

Genesee County Parks is dedicated to quality recreational opportunities for everyone and preservation of natural resources.

CORE VALUES

Vision: We see, anticipate and lead with integrity of character and create positive change.

Consistency: We maintain a standard of serving the community and doing business that treats all the same.

Customer Service: We strive to provide our guests with a quality experience from all interactions in our parks.

Integrity: We can be trusted to do what we say we are going to do with consistency, character and transparency.

Stewardship: We are committed to the responsible management of our natural resources.

Teamwork: We recognize the strength in our collective knowledge and skills to provide a greater service to our community and guests.



In 2023, Genesee County introduced a framework known as the Common Purpose, uniting all county departments through Core Values and Priorities. These essential priorities were shaped by insights gathered from employee feedback obtained during surveys, meetings, and training sessions held back in 2019. Within this framework, the vision, mission, and core values of Genesee County Parks seamlessly integrate, showing a common purpose between the parks and all the departments of Genesee County.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

2023 COMMISSIONERS

Greetings. As expected, 2023 was another great year for Genesee County Parks.

The Genesee County Parks & Recreation Commission and staff continue to look for ways to improve experiences in the Parks for our visitors. This past year we had the return of a popular event from years ago. For the first time in many years, hydroplane races returned to Genesee County Parks. The first Mott Lake Regatta was held in August. This event featured inboard hydroplane boats racing around the lake at speeds up to 150 mph. The race proved to be popular with great attendance. Plans are in the works for this event to return in August of 2024. Keep an eye out for updates.

The Parks also partnered with Thetford Township to develop a new disc golf course at Buell Lake County Park.

We completed the master plan process for the full park system and a separate master plan for For-Mar Nature Preserve and Arboretum. A master plan assists the Parks Commission in prioritizing projects as funding becomes available. Also, with a master plan in place, we are eligible to apply for grants through the State of Michigan to fund these improvements.

Staff at Genesee County Parks work hard to bring a variety of programming opportunities to our residents. For-Mar Nature Preserve and Arboretum offers a multitude of different programs for all age groups. For a list of programs, visit our website at geneseecountyparks.org. You will find many opportunities to choose from when visiting your Genesee County Parks.

After many delays, the improvements at Wolverine Campground will be open for business this camping season. We know our campers will appreciate the new bathhouses and restrooms. The additional 50 new campsites will provide opportunities for more visitors to the area.

Planning continues on the Flint Riverfront Restoration Project. This project is finally at the stage where residents will see many improvements over the next few years. If you see a notice for public comment on any phase of the project, please attend and offer your ideas. These improvements are for you, the residents of Genesee County, and we value your input.

Finally, when you read this, the Parks Commission will be in the process of searching for a new Director. Barry June has decided to retire, effective April 12, 2024, after serving the Parks for over 16 years, the last 5 years as Director. Parks Commissioners thank Barry for all he has done to make the Parks successful. Under his leadership there have been many improvements in the Parks. Barry has upheld the fine tradition and dedication of all the Park Directors before him. We wish him best of luck in retirement.

Joe Krapohl, President

Genesee County Parks & Recreation Commission

Joe Krapohl
(Citizen Representative)

James Washington, PhD
(Citizen Representative)

Anne Figueroa
(Citizen Representative)

Domonique Clemons
(Citizen Representative)

Mike Keeler
(Citizen Representative)

Michelle Davis
(County Commissioner)

James Avery
(County Commissioner)

Jeff Wright
(Ex-Officio)

Cathy Lane
(Ex-Officio)

Gloria Nealy
(Ex-Officio)

DAY USE PARKS



Mott Lake Regatta

Welcome to the Genesee County Parks' 2023 Annual Report – a testament to our unwavering dedication in safeguarding natural resources while cultivating community involvement and upholding environmental responsibility. Through the trials and successes of the past year, our parks have remained sanctuaries for discovery, learning, and leisure, catering to both locals and visitors.

This report illustrates our pursuits, milestones, and the efforts made to enrich park amenities, ensuring their sustainability and fostering a lasting impact. Join us on this reflective journey as we commemorate the accomplishments of the past year, including recreational and infrastructure enhancements, and setting the course for an even more dynamic future for Genesee County Parks.

Mott Lake Regatta

"War of The Wake" materialized as an exceptional summer event organized by The Marine Prop Riders, spearheaded by Genesee County Parks Deputy Director Patrick Linihan, with collaborative support from various divisions and staff within Genesee County Parks. This weekend spectacle successfully revived hydroplane boat racing in Genesee County after a hiatus spanning decades.

The hydroplane boats roared with incredible speed across the water surface creating a thrilling atmosphere along the shores of Mott Lake at Bluebell Beach. The event, attended by nearly 3,000 individuals, unfolded seamlessly, benefitting from nearly perfect weather conditions that enhanced the racing and viewing experience.

The collaborative efforts and seamless execution of this event underscore its significance. "War of The Wake" has left an indelible impression and is poised to return in 2024, promising the continuation of this event for hopefully many years to come.

2023 TOTAL EMPLOYEES		474	
TOTAL SEASONAL	427	TOTAL FULL TIME	47
KGCB	8	MAINTENANCE	133
CROSSROADS VILLAGE	124	HUCKLEBERRY RAILROAD	18
FOR-MAR	37	MOUNDS	10
TOLLBOOTHS	16	WOLVERINE CAMPGROUND	20
PARK RANGERS	61		

GENESEE COUNTY PARKS ACRES

LAND AVAILABLE FOR RECREATION

GENESEE RECREATION AREA	4,460
HOLLOWAY REGIONAL PARK	5,860
CITY OF FLINT PARKS PARTNERSHIP	1,800
LINDEN, FOR-MAR, BUELL & FLUSHING	950
FLINT STATE PARK	234
TOTAL LAND	13,304

WATER AVAILABLE FOR RECREATION

MOTT LAKE	650
HOLLOWAY RESERVOIR	1,975
BUELL LAKE	178
FLINT RIVERFRONT	29 Miles



Genesee County Maintenance Services

Genesee County Parks is responsible for maintaining over 55 miles of roadways, 21 miles of paved trails, 122 parking lots and 124 buildings. To effectively maintain all of this infrastructure we have to constantly upgrade our maintenance equipment and staff knowledge to ensure all amenities available to the public are in tip top shape. During 2023 we upgraded our fleet by purchasing a new Caterpillar road grader, tracked loader and skid steer loader. We also purchased a New Holland Tractor with a side arm mower to maintain the edges of our 66 miles of roadways and paved trails.

Buell Lake Disc Golf Course

A joint effort between Genesee County Parks and Thetford Township resulted in the successful creation and launch of the Buell Lake Disc Golf Course—an 18-hole course that intertwines the beauty of nature with the thrill of the game. With a mix of tight, wooded lines and expansive, rolling hills, players traverse a landscape that offers a thrilling variety of shots weaving in and out of the woods.

Updated Landscaping

The renewal of the Parks Administration Building landscape was a significant undertaking during the spring. We revitalized the garden bed on the building's west side, replacing old materials with native plants and shrubs, enhancing the area's natural beauty.

Additionally, the Stepping Stone Falls Garden underwent a thorough renovation. The southern bed was replanted with native perennial and shrub species, replacing the existing plant material. For-Mar staff monitored irrigation throughout the growing season, ensuring optimal plant health and vitality, fostering an environment that thrives with indigenous plant life.



FOR-MAR NATURE PRESERVE & ARBORETUM



Over the past year, For-Mar has achieved significant milestones, highlighting its commitment to community engagement and forward-thinking initiatives. The completion of the For-Mar Master Plan was a collaborative effort, involving community surveys and input sessions aimed at shaping the preserve and arboretum’s future course. This new master plan, the first since 1979, sets the stage for the Nature Preserve and Arboretum’s next stage of development.

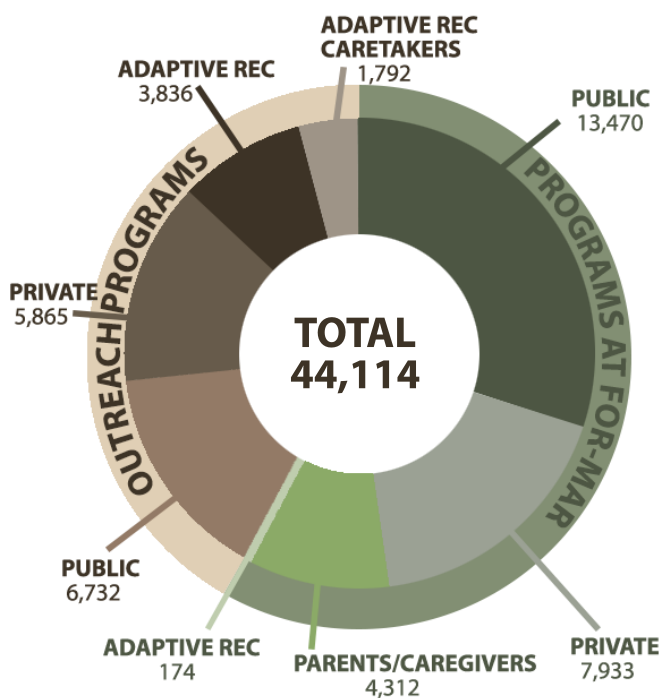
For-Mar's programming experienced substantial growth, expanding its in-house programs to engage a wide audience. Notably, the adaptive recreation and adult outreach programs saw increases. This focus on adaptive recreation and adult outreach programs exemplifies For-Mar's dedication to meeting diverse community needs.

Key events like the 8th Annual School Day BioBlitz and the Nature Pop-up series drew substantial participation from the community, fostering strong collaborations with various organizations. In-person outreach efforts successfully connected with a growing number of individuals, demonstrating an upward trend in engagement from the previous year.

The expansion of our Citizen Science programs yielded impactful projects, notably collaborating with the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Flint. This collaboration resulted in the installation of native plants in flood-prone areas at For-Mar. Additionally, this program extended to identifying and monitoring vernal pools in Richfield County Park, Bluegill Boat Launch, and The Hogbacks.

For-Mar's events at Bluegill Boat Launch, provided enriching experiences to students

FOR-MAR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



through programs like the Wilderness Inquiry Canoe-mobile Program, supported by funding from the CS Mott Foundation. Additionally, community-oriented events like the Get Kids Outdoors event during Michigan's free fishing weekend, furthered environmental education opportunities by distributing free fishing poles to kids.

In partnership with The Disability Network consultants, our team dedicated efforts to improve accessibility. This included establishing a universal Garden Education Space and developing accessible pathways. The initiative was made possible by the generous support of The Friends of For-Mar, which funded the creation of ten raised garden beds.

The completion of the For-Mar Amphitheater involved building a three-tiered stone structure in the former gravel parking area adjacent to the treehouse. These tiers were seeded with grass while the back slopes received a mix of wildflower seeds, transforming the space into a picturesque setting ideal for gatherings and events.

A remarkable makeover took place at the Visitor Center, showcasing a stunning forest habitat mural by Kevin Burdick and custom cabinets by Todd Baker.

Efforts to control invasive black locust trees continued this year. Stumps near the Visitor Center were treated with herbicide, followed by grinding and smoothing once the leaves wilted, contributing to our ongoing management of these invasive species.

2023 also saw the introduction of the innovative Project Search program, which marked a pioneering step in Genesee County, creating opportunities for young adults with disabilities to secure competitive jobs.



New Stone Amphitheater at For-Mar



Get Kids Outdoors Event

FOR-MAR'S 2023 GRANTS

GRANTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES	AMOUNT
STELLA AND FREDERICK LOEB CHARITABLE TRUST	\$10,000
FRIENDS OF FOR-MAR FOUNDATION	\$2,000
FRIENDS OF FOR-MAR FOUNDATION	\$600
FRIENDS OF FOR-MAR FOUNDATION	\$2,265
FRIENDS OF FOR-MAR FOUNDATION	\$3,400
FRIENDS OF FOR-MAR FOUNDATION	\$2,000
DESIGNS BY NATURE, EAST	\$300
FLINT RIVER WATERSHED COALITION	\$700
VOICE OF FLINT	\$75
UM FLINT	\$700
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER FLINT	\$4,532.50
HAP SPONSORSHIP	\$1,200
CS MOTT	\$18,000
GRANT TOTAL	\$45,772.50

THE MOUNDS, TOLLBOOTHS &



Vehicles lining up Moundsgiving morning

The Mounds ORV Park had another busy season in 2023. Over 8,500 passes were sold including 623 seasonal passes. Overall usage was comparable to previous seasons. The addition of private filming events helped boost park revenue while keeping the park open to all customers during the events. Improved brush hogging in the spring and trail clearing in the fall has helped greatly improve trail conditions. New branded merchandise was released on Thanksgiving, adding to the much-anticipated yearly event. The Mounds continues to remain Michigan's Premier Off Road Vehicle Park.

Walleye Pike and Bluegill Boat Launches received numerous improvements during the 2023 season. After years of customer feedback, a 15ft custom dock extension was fabricated by the Huckleberry Railroad staff and installed on the primary dock at Walleye Pike. This extension allows easier access to accommodate larger watercraft and was well received by park users. Extensive painting of booths and

restroom buildings along with improved parking repairs were also completed. The Kayak Rental Station and ADA Launch at Bluegill Boat Launch received much praise from park systems across the state and won the mParks 2023 facility design award.



Deputy Director, Patrick Linihan and Parks Operations Manager, Anthony Walter accepting mParks award

WOLVERINE CAMPGROUND



New 8 station kayak rental unit

The operational landscape of the 2023 season proved to be dynamic and fruitful, marked by a substantial increase in campsite utilization, record-breaking revenue, and overwhelmingly positive feedback from our patrons regarding their park experience. Wolverine Campground opened at the end of April for the third consecutive season and greeted campers amidst ongoing construction and heightened activity.

Despite the temporary inconvenience, the enthusiasm among campers for the campsites and restroom facilities under construction was extremely high. The construction of 50 additional full hookup campsites continued throughout the summer and is now approaching completion, alongside the imminent finalization of three state-of-the-art shower restroom facilities. This extensive project, nearing its conclusion, holds the promise of significant and enduring benefits for both our valued customers and the overall park system.

2023 MOUNDS, CAMPGROUND & BOAT LAUNCH TOLLBOOTH STATS

THE MOUNDS	8,672 PASSES SOLD
WOLVERINE CAMPGROUND	14,204 NIGHTS RESERVED
BOAT LAUNCHES	7,504 PASSES SOLD



New shower/restroom facilities

Beyond these major developments, notable additions this summer encompassed the establishment of an 8-station Kayak rental unit, the creation of new walking trails near the Old Beaver Picnic Area, the introduction of a little library book-sharing initiative, and the provision of additional seating at Buttercup Beach for the second consecutive year. Furthermore, our commitment to enhancing the overall camper experience included improvements in landscaping and flood control, accompanied by various adjustments geared toward optimizing campsite conditions, including the addition of concrete pads. These strategic enhancements collectively underscore our dedication to providing a superlative and sustainable recreational environment for years to come.

CROSSROADS VILLAGE



2023 Crossroads Village Tractor Show

The past year has been a testament to our ongoing commitment to growth and community engagement at Crossroads Village. We faced challenges such as varying weather conditions and managing costs while striving to increase attendance. To tackle this, we revamped our marketing strategies, amplified our social media presence, introduced new events, and maintained stellar customer service. The result? A promising outcome. For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, Crossroads saw an overall increased attendance of over 13,800 guests, totaling 122,932 visitors for the year. The Halloween and Christmas programs account for the bulk of these numbers, but even the summer season saw an increase of almost 4,800 visitors, totaling 33,918 guests.

Our exceptional staff is the core of our success. Their creativity, compassion, and dedication is key. We retained over 90 seasonal staff throughout the programs, an impressive 89% returning.

Crossroads Village thrives on the dedication of our volunteers, vital to our environment and guest experiences. The unwavering support from groups like the Genesee County Master Gardeners, Genesee County Herb Society, Mid-Michigan Railway Historic

Society, Friends of the Carousel, and our daily volunteers has been pivotal. Their collective efforts, including restoring the iconic 1910 C.W. Parker Superior Wheel's lighted star, have greatly enriched our park.

This year, notable upgrades graced our Village. The Lakeside Grill received a comprehensive makeover, sporting new siding, paint, and a revamped roof. Additionally, new boardwalks were installed at the Wisner Barn and strategic points, enhancing the Village's charm and accessibility. These improvements reflect our dedication to enhancing our facilities for the enjoyment of our visitors.



School Days

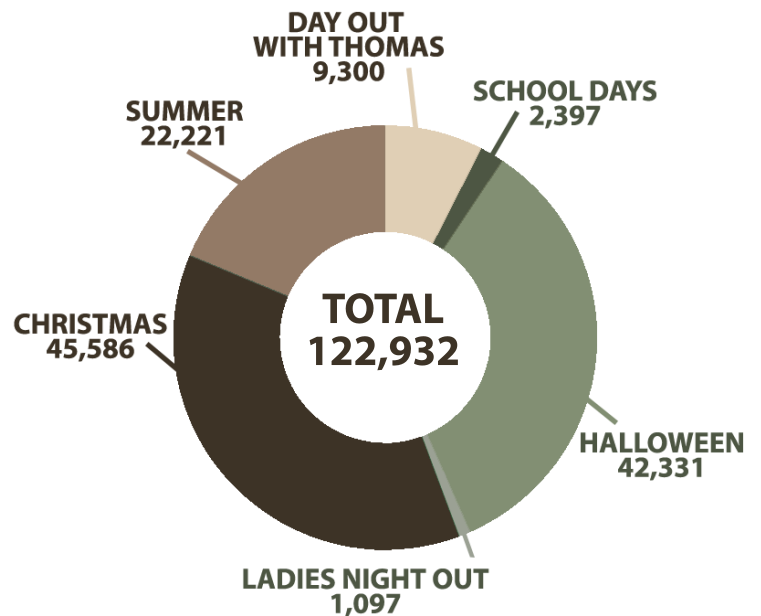


Crossroads Village hosts a wide variety of events each year, including Genesee County Day, Crossroads Village Tractor Show, Railfans, and Day Out with Thomas. For 2023, we wanted to think of ways to thank our visitors and our community for being so supportive over the years. We expressed our gratitude by adding more discounted days to our calendar. The inaugural Touch-A-Truck event drew over 1,200 visitors, spotlighting our maintenance team and their equipment.

This year, our collaboration with the Genesee Intermediate School District brought Project Search to our parks. This program provided invaluable on-the-job training to students with disabilities, filling nine seasonal positions across various parks. Their hard work and dedication has been exemplary, and we eagerly anticipate continuing this partnership into the 2024/2025 school year.

Crossroads Village remains committed to growth, community involvement, and providing exceptional experiences. As we move forward, we're excited about the prospects that lie ahead and the continued support of our visitors and community.

VILLAGE ATTENDANCE



HUCKLEBERRY RAILROAD



Newly enlarged coach restoration shop



Jackson 900 Tamper

Throughout the past year, Huckleberry Railroad has achieved remarkable progress, elevating its operational capabilities and infrastructure.

The addition of a Jackson 900 Tamper to our equipment inventory has fortified our capacity for precise and efficient tamping operations. Tamping lifts and levels the track, ensuring a safe and comfortable ride for our patrons. Furthermore, the extension of the Depot's siding by 100 feet has notably enhanced logistical capabilities and operational efficiency.

In line with our ongoing dedication to safety and reliability, our tie replacement program led to the replacement of 600 railroad ties, ensuring the sustained integrity of our tracks.

Expanding our train car storage capacity by an additional 250 feet has provided protection against weather-related damage for all our cars.

In a significant development, our coach restoration shop underwent enlargement. This expansion signifies an investment towards improving our ability to restore and maintain our rolling stock. It empowers us to better preserve our historical treasures and elevate the overall visitor experience.

The Huckleberry Railroad also started the teardown process of Locomotive #464, a significant step towards upgrades and maintenance within our locomotive fleet. This is the first step to getting #464 back in service.



Staff working on Village siding extension

PARK RANGERS

The Park Ranger Division showcased exceptional performance this season, ensuring safety and order across all our parks, beaches, and campgrounds. Their presence was notably strong at major events held at Flint Riverfront Park, Crossroads Village, and Bluebell Beach, creating a welcoming yet secure environment.

In 2023, we introduced civilian Marine Patrol Rangers. Predominantly stationed at Holloway Reservoir, they also contributed to maintaining safety during the Mott Lake Regatta. These Marine Patrol Rangers aided stranded boaters at Holloway Reservoir and effectively deterred misconduct through vigilant patrols during peak periods.

Our Park Rangers not only upheld law enforcement within Genesee County Parks but also collaborated with other law enforcement agencies in apprehending multiple suspects accused of serious felony crimes.

To bolster safety measures, there was an increased presence on bike paths during the summer. The Patrol Vespa motor scooter was utilized for multiple shifts weekly, while the Patrol Bicycle was frequently deployed on weekends. Users of the bike path consistently commended the assurance of having Rangers on patrol.

This year witnessed a significant rise in patrol hours at Flint State Park. Rangers were required to conduct on-foot patrols, especially along the riverfront near the Fountain area. A dedicated Ranger now actively engages with the homeless population that frequents Flint State Park, striving to foster better relationships within that community.

MARKETING

During the past year, our team achieved significant milestones in enhancing our digital footprint and operational capabilities. We successfully completed a thorough website overhaul, ensuring a more engaging and user-friendly online platform. We also introduced the new position of CRV Event Coordinator, expanding our capacity to organize and manage events effectively at Crossroads Village.

Our efforts included updating and optimizing our photo library, ensuring a rich visual resource for our communications. Furthermore, we developed media kits tailored for revenue-producing parks, strategically positioning them for increased revenue opportunities and visibility.

Our efforts led to a substantial expansion of our social media reach, amplifying our community engagement and impact across various platforms. These initiatives collectively reinforce our commitment to innovation, efficiency, and broader audience outreach in advancing our mission.



Chief Ranger, Dave Dwyre riding with the CRIM sports kids



Genesee County Parks branding on Facebook Post

2023 DIGITAL MARKETING STATS

PEOPLE REACHED BY ADS	1,660,200
CLICKS ON ADS	72,370
WEBSITE VISITORS	867,237
PEOPLE REACHED BY FACEBOOK POSTS	3,079,075

FLINT STATE PARK



Rendering of the new Flint State Park

The Flint Riverfront Restoration Project has widened in scope to become part of the State Park in Flint.

Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission entered into a 30-year agreement, in March of 2023, with the State of Michigan to construct, manage and maintain the new State Park in Flint and Genesee County.

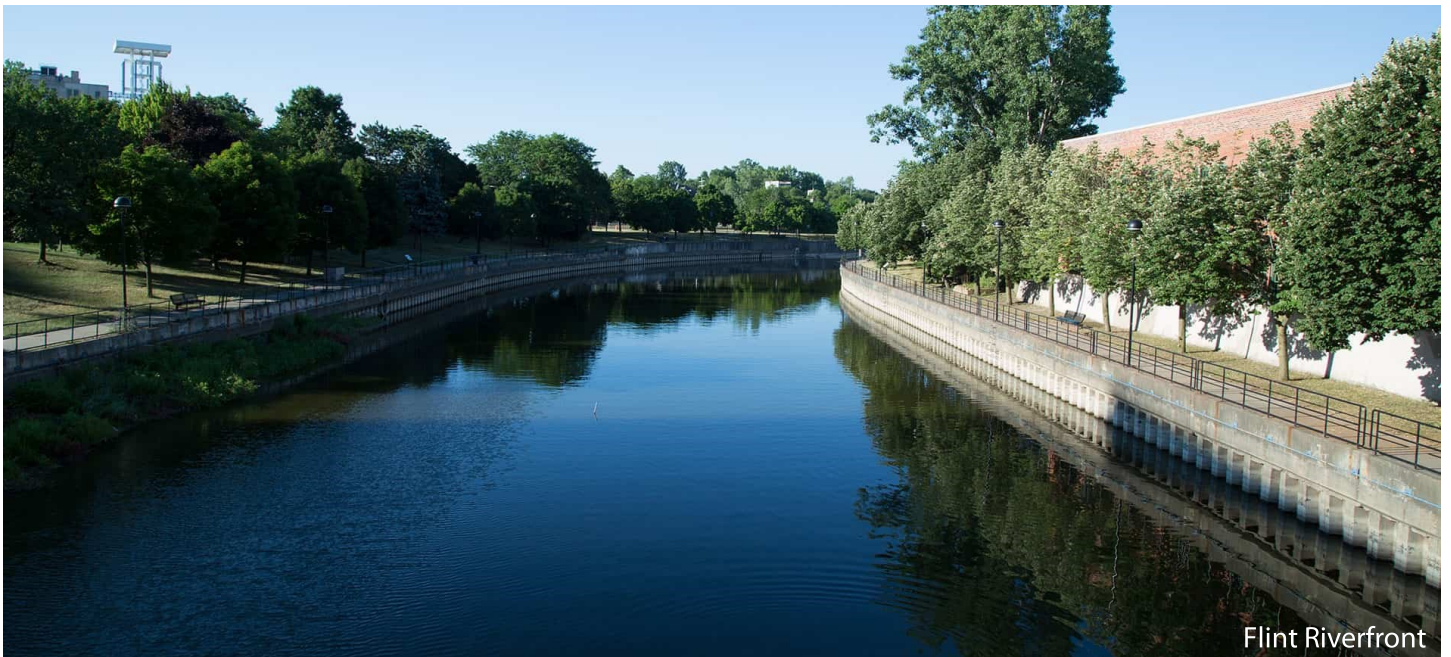
The State awarded the County \$30,130,090 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to help complete the Flint Riverfront Restoration Project along with other improvements planned for the State Park. These funds, along with other State and Federal grants, will provide a State Park in downtown Flint that will be a great asset for Flint and surrounding communities.

A \$40 million endowment was established at the Flint Community Foundation with \$18 million contributed by the C.S. Mott Foundation and \$22 million from the State of Michigan. Proceeds from this endowment are designed to maintain the new State Park in perpetuity.

Genesee County Parks is proud to work with the State of Michigan and the City of Flint to create the first State Park in Genesee County.



Chevy Commons



Flint Riverfront

KEEP GENESEE COUNTY BEAUTIFUL

Throughout the year, our initiatives have made a resounding impact, supported by the dedicated efforts of 3,366 volunteers who contributed 14,546 hours across 993 distinct events. Their commitment resulted in the clearing of 2,864 bags of trash and 1,930 bags of yard waste, underscoring our commitment to environmental stewardship.



Durant Park

A focal point this year was the activation of parks through programming. Collaborations with key entities like the GILLS Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area, Genesee Conservation District, the Crim, and others proved instrumental in providing diverse programming opportunities. Notably, we allocated \$60,000 to KGCB volunteers, enabling youth sports programs (funded by NRPA), physical activity initiatives (funded by mParks), and various events (funded through the Ruth Mott Foundation grant budget).



Volunteers cleaning up Ophelia Bonner Park

Strategic efforts were directed towards enhancing city parks, through crucial capital improvements. Playground repairs, installation of picnic tables and grills, tree and brush removal, as well as the revitalization of multiple gardens were among the initiatives undertaken to elevate these spaces for the community.

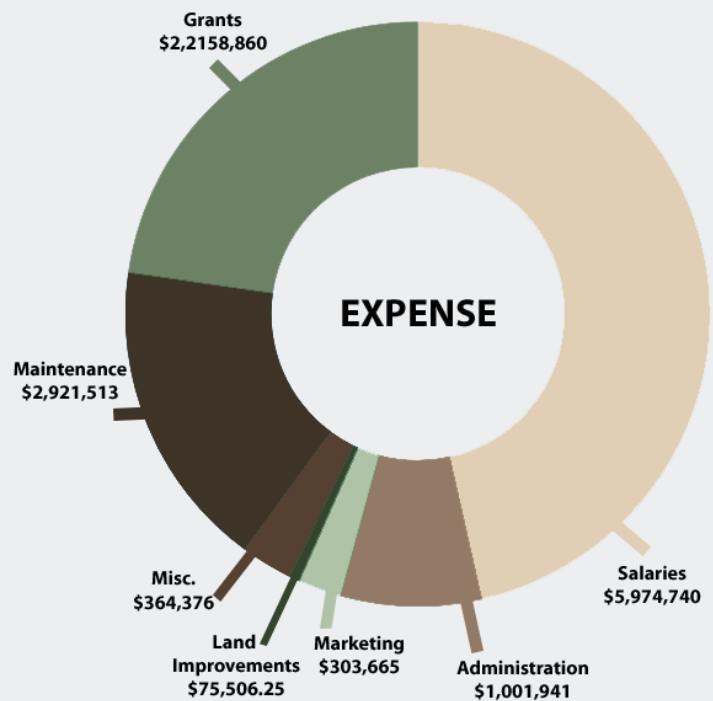
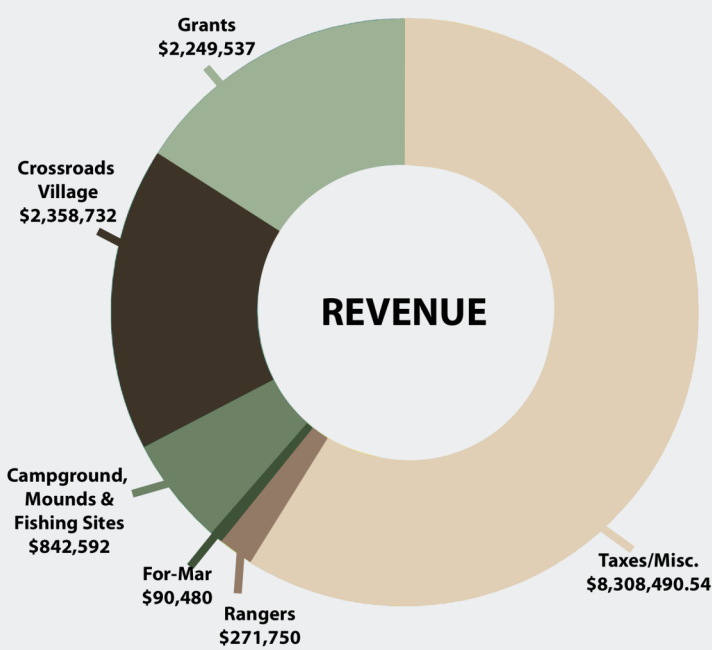
Our partnerships with Project Search, Transition Center, and Genesee County Parks resulted in hosting three interns at Keep Genesee County Beautiful, providing invaluable learning experiences.

A notable project with the FlintNOW Foundation involved the renovation of basketball courts at Durant Park and Riverside West Park. The Durant Park court received a vibrant mural by local artist Jamiersen Green, unveiling a revitalized space during a celebratory event on July 22.

2023 KGCB STATS

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS	3,366
NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER HOURS	14,546
VALUE OF VOLUNTEER HOURS	\$428,831
BAGS OF GARBAGE COLLECTED	2,864
BAGS OF YARD WASTE COLLECTED	1,930

FYE 2022 ACTUALS



GENESEE COUNTY PARKS
Get away. Right away.