

THE TOWN OF VERNON PARKS AND RECREATION FIVE YEAR MASTER PLAN



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The Town of Vernon Jennings County, Indiana

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Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Executive Summary

The Vernon Department of Parks and Recreation presents this five year master plan for the maintenance and improvement of the park properties of the Town of Vernon, Indiana. The plan first provides a background of both the town and the park and recreation properties, including an inventory of park properties and assets, a summary of collaborations and partnerships, as well as a description of recent budget/grants/projects, local natural and man-made features, socio-economic data, and accessibility/universal design.

These factors are taken into consideration for their implications for the uses of the parks and their programming, as well as how they guide planning efforts in the future. This information must all be clearly established and then analyzed, as the Park's Board needs a strong foundation before beginning the planning process.

After setting up the context and background of the town and its parks, the public participation methods are then described. The town pursued three different methods of obtaining public input: survey, public input session, and interview. A synopsis is provided for each method, as well as information about attendance, advertisement methods, and execution (the materials used can be found in the appendix).

Following this is a needs analysis, which uses information from previous sections of the plan, as well as brainstorming from both the author and the Board. Following these sections is a priorities list and action plan schedule, which are based on the rest of the plan's contents. These sections will act as a guide for the development of Vernon Department of Parks and Recreation within the next five years. Additionally, there are two short sections added to provide more clarity about potential funding sources and for how the board will continually update the document.

As Vernon is a historic community with a strong tie to the Muscatatuck River, much of the plan's contents will relate back to this, and take into consideration as to how it may affect the town in the future. This plan aims to ease the difficulties in operating the town's parks and recreation facilities, specifically in the context of a small, rural community.

In towns like Vernon, resources and staff are often limited, making the process of community development much more difficult. The creation of the master plan will provide the community with the details and direction the board plans to take in the next few years, as well as its justification. This document is intended to strengthen the interconnectedness of the community, as it relies on the involvement and feedback of the public that will ultimately assist the board in determining how the parks properties can be best used to accommodate the needs of the community.

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Mission

Generally, as the Town of Vernon continues to improve its resources, it also seeks to sharpen the purpose and direction of its parks and recreational facilities. By creating a five year master plan, the town may better communicate with the public about the development of local parks and programming. This plan will serve as a public guide for what projects are likely to be initiated within the next five years, as well as explain the process for their completion. The inclusion and education of the public may allow Vernon to offer recreational opportunities that better fit the needs and desires of the community, while also being within the capacity of the town to execute. Communication with the public is important, and this document will facilitate dialog between the community and the Vernon Department of Parks and Recreation.

Park Board Description

The Town of Vernon Parks and Recreation Board was first established in 2024, and has since undergone the process of installing board members by way of mayoral appointments. There are currently no paid staff, nor is there a specific building designated for the administration of the Department of Parks and Recreation. The address provided is that for Town Hall and Clerk-Treasurer's Office. The board of the Department of Parks and Recreation operates under the authority of the Town of Vernon, which the town council initially created by motion 2024. The Historic Vernon Trail, the soccer field, and the Vernon Gym were the impetus for the creation of a board. There are currently four members serving on the board, one designated as the president, and the other three serving as other officers and members. The board meets on the Monday prior to the monthly town council meeting on the second Thursday of every month, located inside The Vernon Gym.

Town Goals

- Promote and develop a walking community.
- Increase the use of the town's natural features.
- Continue to expand the gym as a community center.

Community Overview

The Town of Vernon was first founded in 1815 by United States surveyor John Vawter, who had begun the Town's construction with the intention of creating a livable community. In this process, an elevated railroad was constructed, as well as the first public playground in the State of Indiana. Being founded only a year before Indiana was granted official statehood, the town is abundant in learning opportunities about Indiana history. Today, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and has historical markers located all around the community. As one of the older communities in Indiana, Vernon is unique for its historic town charter. Despite Indiana law restricting mayor elections to communities with populations of 2,000 or more residents, the local charter that was established before statehood, allows for a mayoral election process every two years. This charter does not have any partisan restrictions, and does not hold any primaries.

Vernon also serves as the county seat for Jennings County, being the smallest community in Indiana to do so. As the county seat, Vernon is the location of the county courthouse and the county government center building that houses numerous county offices, including the meeting location of the county commissioners and council.

Though Vernon's population has seen an overall decline throughout its history, the Town continues to invest in its park and recreational facilities through the help of the community. The residents and local government often work together to complete projects for the town, as seen in the recent completed of the Vernon Historic Trail and the renovation of the Vernon Gym. However, there are certain difficulties, such as limited staff and funding, that Vernon hopes to combat in the future to further enable community growth.

Creation Process

The five year master plan was first drafted by an intern. While creating the original draft, the intern was a rising second year at the University of Chicago. The internship extended from June 2nd, 2025 to September 12th, 2025, in which the creation of a five year master plan draft was the main objective. The document was drafted by an intern due to an issue of limited capacity, as local government staff could not dedicate the time needed for completion. The intern began the draft by researching documents uploaded to the IDNR website, which detailed how to complete a five year master plan for a parks and recreation entity.

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Using the guidance of Greg Beilfuss, Chief Planner at the IDNR, the intern first drafted a timeline for completion. Each section of this timeline was given a rough, moving deadline. This was then presented to the Vernon Parks Board, and laid the foundation for the drafting process. A public input meeting was held to assess the opinions of the community. Several interviews were held with community leaders, to obtain opinions from those with stake in the community. A survey was also sent out, which was posted both online and on paper.

Following the completion of these methods, a rough needs analysis section was created, which then led to the drafting of the priorities and action plan schedule. By researching the information available on the Town of Vernon website, the first draft of the master plan was completed by September 12th, 2025.

Though facing challenges in finding reliable online resources, the completed draft was ultimately facilitated through collaboration with community leaders and local board members. After September 12th, the Vernon Parks Board, as well as involved community members, will undergo the process of correcting and editing the draft to be ready for submission to IDNR by November 15th.

After receiving the draft back from IDNR, the master plan will undergo another phase of editing, and host a final public presentation of the plan for final edits. The plan will also be adopted by the board with the official adoption document attached to the plan. The final version will be submitted to IDNR for approval by April 15th, 2026.

Planning Area

Vernon parks and recreational programs attract both regional and local users. The Commons Park is the most locally utilized entry point to the Muscatatuck River for those kayaking and canoeing. The Vawter Recreational Complex hosts visitors from across the state for youth soccer, local residents for basketball programs and a diverse demographic for library events. Our Art and History Park host a regional crowd during our festivals and special events. The volume and diversity of our park visitors provide a significant economic opportunity for our local businesses. The Town of Vernon is committed to the improvement, expansion and development of our facilities and programs to continue attracting visitors and therefore propel economic growth.

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Vernon is relatively an hour from three major cities, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Cincinnati. Being located in the middle of three major metropolitan areas, visitors often find themselves passing through Vernon during long commutes or road trips. Vernon serves as a pit stop for travelers, as well as a connection point between neighboring communities. The area's history and vast publicly protected nature preserves also help attract visitors from across the region.

Vernon is also located in Jennings County, which is considered to be part of South Central Indiana. The Jennings County Parks and Recreation department has briefly included some of the parks in Vernon in their own county wide master plan. The Town of Vernon will not account for any parks and programming outside of town limits, but will likely collaborate and receive assistance from other communities.

Goals of the Master Plan

- To clearly outline the future of the parks and recreation in the Town of Vernon.
- To accurately assess the needs of the community, and develop a written plan to meet those needs.
- To lay the foundation for the Vernon Department of Parks and Recreation.
- To ensure that the parks and programming in the Town of Vernon are maintained and updated, and overseen by a designated department of the town.

Goals of the Parks and Recreation Board

- To continuously analyze the conditions of the parks and programming in Vernon, and push for action whenever necessary.
- To further the development of the community through the safeguarding of the local natural landscape and resources.
- To oversee the partnership and collaboration efforts made by the Town of Vernon with parks and recreation organizations of other communities.
- To advocate for improvements that best suit the needs of the community, and eliminate ideas or plans that do not benefit the parks and programming of Vernon.

Goals of the Parks and Recreation Department

- To create a version of the Town of Vernon that has strong kayaking opportunities, increased walkability within the town, a maintained natural landscape, and a variety of accessible recreation.
- To ensure that the parks and programming in Vernon are accessible to all residents, and suit people of a variety of needs or abilities.
- To serve the community of Vernon by efficiently carrying out plans of actions concerning the improvement of local parks and programming.
- To act as a representative for the community's local parks and recreational facilities.

Resources Used

Due to the limited amount of information available on the Town of Vernon, the intern took advantage of information derived from a number of resources and entities, which have been listed below:

- Jennings County Soil and Water Conservation District. <http://jenningsswcd.org/>
- United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/>
- Purdue University Department of Agriculture. <https://ag.purdue.edu/>
- The Town of Vernon. <http://www.vernonindiana.org/index.php>
- USDA Census of Agriculture. <https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/>
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources. <https://www.in.gov/dnr/>
- Indiana Department of Environment Management. <https://www.in.gov/idem/>

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Other Plans

The master plan required several resources in its completion, as described above. Some of those also included taking inspiration from the plans of nearby communities, or those showcased as relevant examples by IDNR. These communities and their plans have been listed below:

- Jennings County, Indiana.
<https://jcparksRecreationcom/mission.php>
- North Vernon, Indiana.
https://www.northvernon-in.gov/news_detail_T19_R106.php
- Madison, Indiana.
<https://www.madison-in.gov/egov/apps/document/center.egov?view=detail&id=971>
- Bartholomew County, Indiana.
<https://www.bartholomew.in.gov/images/Departments/ParksandRecreation/BCPBMP2019.pdf>
- Newburgh, Indiana.
https://www.newburgh.in.gov/community/newburgh_park_system/index.php
- Williamsport, Indiana.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10qnCk53Uquq3ULhWf6sx15JttC8h0KHI/edit>



**FACILITIES, PROGRAMMING,
PROJECTS, & BUDGET**

Park Facilities

The Town of Vernon is home to several parks and recreational facilities, with its inventory consisting of five properties. The sum of all the parks and facilities totals 8.58 acres. As Vernon was first established in 1815, so was the first park, known as The Commons. Sometime after, the town established the Vawter Recreational Complex (The Vernon Gym) and The Art and History Park. The Town has recently added The Vernon Historic Trail and The Alley to its inventory as well.

Some of the features of each property are not used or maintained equally. There has also not been a large increase in usage or visitors within the past ten years as the populations of Vernon and North Vernon continue to decline. However, the recent opening of new amenities, as well as the introduction of The Vernon Historic Trail, has caused renewed interest by the community in the Vernon parks and recreation facilities.

Vernon residents that live within the town boundaries are located near all five of the parks and recreation facilities. They are encouraged to also use the parks and facilities in nearby communities, such as North Vernon, but ultimately have better walking access to those in town. Residents of Jennings County outside of town are encouraged to use the parks and programs located in Vernon.

Being a small, historic community in rural Indiana, the upkeep and maintenance of these facilities has proved to be challenging. Not only do the historic buildings require consistent work in preserving their historic elements, but also require adequate funding. Also, the addition of new parks and facilities has been difficult to ensure while dealing with a consistently declining population. Local community leaders and officials have recently spearheaded projects to develop the construction of The Vernon Historic Trail in Vernon, as well as maintaining the existing properties.

Each park's location undergoes regular maintenance efforts, but many occur more often during the spring and summer seasons. These maintenance efforts include tasks such as mowing, weeding, spraying, cleaning, and winterizing. These tasks are typically accomplished by volunteers or official Town staff. Inspections may also occur, in which the electrical health, plumbing health, structural integrity, and overall physical safety are professionally evaluated and improved upon for each property.

The Vernon Gym

The Vawter Recreational Complex, also known as The Vernon Gym, has two addresses, the old front door for the school is 29 Washington Street, and the side entrance to the gym is 28 South Street, all Vernon, IN 47282. The two addresses were needed as the old front door does not have nearby parking, and is not ADA accessible. Most visitors had been using the gym doors, and this gym entrance and parking are now both ADA accessible and recognized by 911 as a point of service.

This facility takes up approximately 5.1 acres. Major facilities and amenities include the old school building, the old school field, the outdoor restroom facility, and the outdoor playground.

This facility once served as a K-12 public school, but was retired in 1965, with space used for other elementary schools during construction of new facilities into the 1980's. Subsequently it was used as storage and fell into disrepair. Now it serves the community as a recreation and community center. The Muscatatuck United Soccer Club hosts their practices and games at this facility, and even motivated the construction of the outdoor restroom facility. The Vernon Gym may also be used to host community events or other small social gatherings. People are welcome to rent this property, as well as community rooms, by going to the Town of Vernon, IN official website, which lists all relevant information and requirements.

Muscatatuck United Soccer Club uses this property in the summer and fall seasons, regularly hosting practices and games at the old school field. This property also contains a branch of the Jennings County Public Library, which is open for use to the community every week. The Town of Vernon Clerk-Treasurer's office has moved inside the old school building as well. The move has required the Town to complete the renovation of a physical office, which will better allow residents to pay their water bills. Moving forward, the Vernon government is likely going to increase its presence inside this building, which will mean renovating more rooms and creating more offices.

The Commons

The Commons is located on Commons Street, with the restroom at 101 Commons Street and the Shelter at 105 Commons Street. This park takes up approximately 2.5 acres of land. Major facilities and amenities include the outdoor restroom facility, the playground, the shelter house, the labyrinth, picnic benches, and as main trailhead for the Trail. Additionally, there is a river access point located at this park, which must be maintained.

This park is the first public playground established in the state of Indiana, and was created in the same year the Town was founded. This park is free to use, though there are limitations to what hours of the day visitors may take advantage of this. Community events may also take place at this property, such as Ghost Walk and “Muscadaduck.”

The Art and History Park

The Art and History Park is located at about 90 East Brown Street, Vernon, IN 47282. This park takes up approximately 0.2 acres of land. Major facilities and amenities of this park include the walking trail and the picnic benches. This park was once known only as “Rat Row,” which has meant a change in designation for the Town to facilitate. There are no specific hours visitors are allowed to visit, as well as no specific organization that regularly uses this park. This park is free for all users.

The stone benches are currently a main feature of the park, as these were designed to represent significant moments of history, while still showcasing local art skills of the community. This art project was done by former Jennings County Middle School students. One bench was recently removed, which has brought up the question of what to fill the empty space with. The Town has been able to add a custom made art sculpture at this park, as well as a dog waste clean up station, and painted trash can.

The Alley

The Alley is located West of Pike Street, between 25 and 35 North Pike Street, Vernon, IN 47282. This facility takes up approximately 0.05 acres of land. Major facilities and amenities include the iron entry sign and wall mural. The iron entry sign reads “The Town of Vernon,” while the mural depicts local culture and history. The Alley has only recently been used for recreational purposes, and has since undergone beautification efforts. No organization partners or collaborates with the Town to use this property. Future development of The Alley has been proposed, but this document will ultimately decide the nature of those proposals.

The Trail

The Trail crosses the peninsula in Vernon, stretching from The Commons to the Water Street Trailhead, and connects at two river access points. As it runs across the length of the Town and does not have one address, the Trailhead is at 101 Commons, the Overlook is at 31 South Street, and the Water Street Trailhead is at 80 West Jackson. This walking trail takes up approximately 0.73 acres of land. Major facilities and amenities include the restroom at the commons, the overlook, and the paving and signage.

The Trail is part of the Next Level Trails project (DNR NLT 02-08), which is funded by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The Jennings County Parks and Recreation, the Jennings County Council, and the Jennings County Community Foundation provided matching funds for grant money allocated for this project. This is the largest town project since the installation of the first sewer and water system. This facility better connects residents to the nearby Muscatatuck Park. The property is also free to use, and does not have specific hours designated for people to visit. Parts of this trail cross through the most densely populated parts of Vernon, and may serve as a path for residents to walk from their homes to other parts of the Town. Part of the trail connects to the Jennings County Park System by following along the Muscatatuck River. This section is considered unimproved and rated as a black diamond Mountain Biking and Hiking trail.

Recent Improvements, Projects, & Grants

The Vernon Gym has undergone a series of renovation efforts within the past few years, which supports the Town goal of making the property a community center. Improvements include window renovations, classroom renovations, addition of a vertical chair lift at the main stairwell, and addition of small AC units, and fiber optic internet service and Wi-Fi. Larger projects include the addition of an outdoor restroom facility and outdoor playground. Interns and hired staff have helped in renovating this property, as they have helped in maintaining the cleanliness of the building, and the installation of new fixtures.

During the summer of 2025, the Town Hall was moved to the inside of The Vernon Gym. This meant that The Town Clerk-Treasurer's Office must also be moved to this property, which then required more renovation to facilitate. A room once dedicated to school alumni now houses the Clerk-Treasurer Office, with new signage added to indicate this change to residents, to both the inside and outside of the property.

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In February of 2026, the Jennings County Community Foundation granted the Town \$75,000.00 for renovation of the men's and women's restrooms at the gym. The Town in partnership with the Friends of Historic Vernon will be responsible for obtaining additional funds. Design drawings to comply with current ADA and building codes will be prepared and permits obtained, and then quotes solicited from qualified contractors. It is anticipated the construction work will be complete by late 2026. This project was originally targeted in the Action Schedule for 2028.

Apart from The Vernon Gym, the historic railroad in Vernon will also be undergoing renovations in the future. The Muscatatuck Bridge, located by The Commons, will undergo construction once approved for a specific grant. The completion of the grant application will be made possible with the help of outside consultants. Once the application is approved in 2025, construction will shoot for completion by the year 2028.

In recent history, many projects have been completed through the use of grant money. The Town utilizes staff to consistently look for and apply to grants, which help aid the financial strain often faced by rural communities like Vernon. These grants have been extremely impactful in developing the parks and recreation of Vernon, and should continue to be utilized in the future, as the designated budget and tax revenue will be insufficient. Several impactful grants on local parks and recreation include the Next Level Trails project, an MHS grant, and the Building Socially Connected Communities grant.

Programs/Recreational Opportunities

Different kinds of programming and recreation exist within The Town of Vernon. Some occur more consistently throughout the year than others, and some even depend on the maintenance of the community parks. Muscatatuck United Soccer Club, Perceptions Yoga, Mindfulness, and Art, The Jennings County Historical Society, and Jennings County Public Library provide regular recreational opportunities for the Jennings County community, and act as the most consistent partners with the Town of Vernon.

The Muscatatuck United Soccer Club

The Muscatatuck United Soccer Club hosts soccer games and practices at the old school field at The Vernon Gym. This organization allows the youth to play soccer together, in both competitive and non competitive settings. This organization works to connect the greater Jennings County community, as those living in the nearby area are permitted to join should they meet the criteria. Ultimately, this organization allows young people who are interested in soccer to develop their skills and play competitively with other youth.

The outdoor restroom facility built at The Vernon Gym was intended to support this organization, since the restrooms inside of the old school building are currently in need of repairs. At this restroom facility, a mural has been painted on the exterior walls, reading "Muscatatuck United." Additionally, the amount of parking space at The Vernon Gym has recently increased, in order to accommodate the influx of visitors during soccer seasons.

Perceptions Yoga, Mindfulness, and Art

Perceptions Yoga, Mindfulness, and Art studio is located at 139 IN-3, Vernon, IN 47282. This 501(c)3 organization partners with the Town of Vernon to provide the community with free and low cost programming, much of which is related to yoga, art, or mindfulness. Although they do not operate on Vernon Parks and Recreation property, they do partner with the Town to ensure consistent programming. This organization also assists in increasing the amount of art projects completed in Vernon.

Events hosted by Perceptions often take advantage of the parks and properties in Vernon. An example would be the Lollygag event, which takes its participants to different parks and has them interact with other community members in a controlled and organized environment. This group has also hosted local art shows and galleries, displaying art created by community members.

Jennings County Public Library

A branch of the Jennings County Public Library was moved inside of The Vernon Gym in 2025. This branch is known as the Butler-Stott-Crowe Library Branch, and is open every week on Monday and Wednesday from 2 pm to 6 pm, as well as Saturday from 10 am to 2 pm. The name is homage to the founders of Butler University, Franklin College, and Hanover College, as all had ties to Vernon and Jennings County. This library provides additional recreation in Vernon, and was responsible for the renovation of a new room in The Vernon Gym, and partners with the Town on the reservation system for gym and room rentals. This branch regularly hosts small events on this property, and has a growing amount of media for the community to take advantage of, which comes at no cost.

Jennings County Historical Society

Currently located at 134 Brown Street, Vernon, IN 47282, the Jennings County Historical Society was first founded in 1985, serving as a 501(c)3 organization. This organization aims to preserve and showcase the history of Jennings County, which is done by hosting events and maintaining a small museum. The museum is more formally known as The North American House Museum, which is also the headquarters for this organization. This Jennings County Historical Society has over 10,000 items in the archive, and utilizing this, seeks to educate the community about local history.

Originally incorporated for the purpose of preserving Vernon history, the organization now pays attention to that of the entire county, inviting all residents to explore the past of their community. The events and museum are free to participate in, though should there be any kind of fee or cost, it is done in the interest of raising money for future operations.

Events hosted by the Jennings County Historical Society include the Sassafras Tea Festival, the Home and Garden Tour, the Ghost Walk and Mystery Dinner, and Christmas at the North American House. Other kinds of special programming are also hosted by this organization, and is given notice online by searching for the official website.

Budget Information

As the Vernon and Parks and Recreation department has only been established as of 2024, there has not yet been any payments made for staff. However, the Town of Vernon has kept a record of maintenance and construction efforts, which is described below. It is important to note that there are not always projects initiated/completed each year, and may often depend on the activity of the community overall.

Within the past five years, major improvements have included that on the Labyrinth at The Commons, completed in 2020 and totaling up to \$5,000 in costs. In 2024, the Alley underwent the addition of an iron entry sign, costing \$2,500, along with the creation of a mural, costing \$500. Also in 2024, through the use of grant money, The Trail cost an estimated \$1,150,000 in replacement costs, which was made for a restroom, overlook, and paving/signage. Major sources of funding come from grants, local donations/partnerships, and the budget of the Vernon government.

However, a budget was recently created by the Town for the newly established Parks and Recreation Board, totaling up to \$2,500. As the primary source of funding in the past has not been from an actual operating budget, this will likely be used only for additional support. Total funds for the development of new projects typically exceed this amount, so The Parks and Recreation department may use this designated allowance to first grow within itself for the next five years, and then eventually fund and support larger initiatives. The Parks Board looks forward to growing this budget, prioritizing projects to be supported by this, and outlining specific purposes for future designated funding.

NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPE

Natural Features and Landscape

The Town of Vernon is largely surrounded by the Muscatatuck River, as the town sits on a peninsula. This river provides a variety of recreational opportunities to both Vernon residents and regional visitors and even has a large impact on the surrounding natural environment. The Commons Park borders the river and is widely utilized by kayakers, fisherman and canoers. The Vawter Recreational Complex provides an overlook over the Muscatatuck. Though residents and visitors can observe a variety of plant and animal species, the natural features and landscape specific to our community are largely under researched and thus are understood best using research gained from online sources, specifically those detailing the natural environment of Jennings County as a whole.

The Land and The Wildlife

The Alley Park and Art Park are both located in the center of the town and do not border the river. The alley does not house any natural vegetation or wildlife. However, local species are used in potted planters to enhance the spaces. The Art Park has a few native tree species which require pruning and maintenance. This plan will increase the variety and quantity of native plants in this space to improve aesthetics and provide habitat for more local species of insects and wildlife. Meanwhile, the Commons Park borders the river and provides a different habitat and maintenance challenge. Approximately a third of this park is in the flood plain and requires routine cleaning and landscape maintenance. High water can bring debris into this space requiring removal. The riverbank does offer a natural habitat of local tree species and wildlife. The other two thirds of the Commons Park is higher ground and hosts a different ecosystem compared to the flood plain. This portion is populated with a variety if local tree species. The town monitors the health and safety of our tree population a couple times a year and hires tree professionals to prune, trim and occasionally remove trees as needed.

In discussing the local topography, Vernon does not have a significant elevation range, as the difference between the highest and lowest point is less than 100 meters. This is in part affected by the small area of land that the community inhabits, being that of 0.21 square miles. As may be inferred, a community taking up less land results in a smaller likelihood of variation in the natural environment, which is the case for Vernon. Using online resources from Purdue University Department of Agriculture, the soil in Jennings County is described as moderately thick loess over weathered loamy glacial till. Additionally, Jennings County is part of the Southern Hills and Lowland Region.

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Looking at the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, Jennings County appears to have nearly 20% of in use farms being used as woodland, while the majority are being used as cropland (about 71%). In considering how the land in Vernon may be best used, the Town may either encourage more tree planting to increase tree coverage, or orient more activities/facilities to farming/crop interests. However, it should be considered how much of a necessity it is to the community to increase tree coverage, since some may feel efforts would be best placed within another development project.

Some of the specific tree species often found within Vernon include Flowering Crabapple, Honey Locust, Sugar Maple, and Red Oak. More species are listed in Ordinance No. 123, which also explains the process of maintaining trees in Vernon, and what constitutes a tree as a “Street Tree.” This ordinance also created a Town Tree Board, which is no longer active. Looking to the future, initiatives could be made to increase the variety of tree species existing within Vernon, or increasing the amount of those already there. As well, the Town could revise this tree ordinance, and increase maintenance of “Street Trees.”

Using information found by the Jennings County Soil and Water Conservation District, the invasive species of Jennings County are remedied through both chemical and mechanical processes, since each species responds differently to each removal method. Some invasive species of the county include Poison Hemlock, Winter Creeper, Privet, and Canada Thistle. This organization continually monitors these invasive species, and does needed maintenance on the landscape to prevent their return after eradication.

The River

The Muscatatuck River is an important water feature to discuss for the Town, as it directly impacts the landscape and residents of Vernon. When heavy rain and storms roll in, the river rises and encroaches on the surrounding land and wild/plant life, including the land used for planting and taking care of animals (such as domesticated pets). While there are no areas specifically designated for farming, many residents use the land they own/rent to take care of small gardens or crops. When the river rises, it can change the texture of the soil being used by the community, in turn damaging crops and plants, and even washing away items laid close to the river. In certain cases, the river has caused extreme flooding for residents, and brought up safety concerns during rain and storm seasons.

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Vernon has not experienced devastating flooding or storms within recent years, with the last tornado occurring in Jennings County in 2019. Jennings County is also not found to be at a high risk of storm or wind damage, though this small risk equally affects all residents of the county. Additionally, there is not a significant risk of earth quakes, wild fires, or hurricanes in the area. Jennings County has put in place warning sirens in residential areas in the case of a tornado, allowing residents to take heed of incoming storms.

In terms of what the residents of Vernon can take advantage of given the natural resources and landscape, the river often provides fishing and kayaking opportunities. With the river stretching far beyond the bounds of Vernon, residents are able to travel throughout the region by kayak. Specifically, Vernon is able to provide the community with river banks, which can be used as either starting or end points for kayaking or swimming. A popular river bank is located at The Commons, which also provides a view of the elevated railroad in Vernon, which sits right above the river.

Potential/Unused Land

Additionally, there are bare plots of land nearby the river at The Commons, which can be used by residents for a variety of activities. Certain spots have been designated as a labyrinth or pollinator garden, but are not consistently maintained, and are thus potential areas for recreation. The old school field at the Vernon Gym may also be partitioned for other activities or organizations, either on occasion or regularly. The Art and History park is also largely unused, apart from a gravel walking trail and stone benches. While this is a designated park, the land itself is largely not in use, and may be better utilized for purposes relating to local art and history.

All this commentary in this paragraph is about current properties. There are no plans at this time to acquire any additional property for the parks.

Reflection

In designing a plan that best serves the interests and needs of the community, the dominance of the Muscatatuck River is very important to consider, as this is not only naturally dominant, but also culturally. The community is affected by the river's likelihood for flooding, as well as recreational opportunities it provides. While the small amount of land mass of Vernon invites concerns about how to use this limited amount of space, this is ultimately supported and impacted by the river, and may be used to guide discussions on local development. However, it is still important to be able to consider the parks and recreation of Vernon without the presence of the river, as this will give those not inclined to the related activities some alternatives for involvement.

Being so close to North Vernon, the two communities often share in what is available in Jennings County as a whole. The geography and urban landscape of Jennings County will likely facilitate Vernon's collaboration with the other nearby communities, like that of Seymour or Madison. Since the Muscatatuck River spans throughout different parts of South Central Indiana, this encourages the communities it occupies to collaborate on how to best make use of the river, and join together on conservation efforts. Collaboration is likely to become an important aspect of parks and recreation development in the Town of Vernon for the next five years, which the landscape will facilitate.



**MAN-MADE, HISTORICAL,
AND CULTURAL
FEATURES**

Man-Made, Historical, & Cultural Features

The Town of Vernon is notable for its historical significance, considering that since 1976, the entire Town of Vernon has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. No restrictions have ever been put in place regarding repairs or reconstruction of any building or property in the district.

Vernon boasts having the first railroad underpass west of the Alleghenies, which is still used today. The first Disciples of Christ Church in Indiana was established and located in Vernon. The Commons park is the first public playground in Indiana. Having so many “firsts,” visitors can easily take a day trip to the community and learn about Indiana history.

The Jennings County Historical Society is located in Vernon, which is an organization that invites people to explore Town history by observing artifacts and memorabilia specific to the community. Along with this, visitors may explore the Courthouse Square, as it is considered to be historically significant, but is still maintained for usage and visits. The Tunnel Mill has not been recently maintained, but still may be a relevant place for visitors to learn more about local history. The Vernon Gym (or known also The Vawter Recreational Complex) once served as the local school building, though was eventually retired to now act as a center for recreation and community programming. As many of these historical buildings are still in use, the maintenance of these features is especially important. Trains still pass through Vernon using the railroad, and cars still drive through the underpass daily. As many buildings were constructed up to nearly 200 years ago, they all require a certain amount of attention and maintenance to keep in use. Some construction materials have been unable to withstand the test of time, and are difficult to keep visually attractive for visitors. While they do serve as educational and recreational opportunities for Vernon, the ability to keep these open rests on the ability to monitor their aging conditions. Essentially, the town is tasked to both preserve the historic features of the community, while also making productive use of these to better serve residents.

Events, Festivals, and More

In addition to having historical architecture, Vernon also hosts a number of festivals and events each year, many of which celebrate the Town's history. For example, each year the Jennings County Historical Society hosts the Sassafras Tea Festival on the Courthouse Square, in which reenactors dress up as if they are living in the midst of the Civil War, and reenact the time that Vernon successfully steered Confederate troops from entering the community. There is a historic marker in Vernon that describes this event, naming it as “Morgan’s Raid” in 1863.

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

Other festivals and events include Fall Fun Night, Ghost Walk and Mystery Dinner, and the Muscadaduck. These events use Vernon's parks and recreational spaces to provide the community with socialization opportunities. While certain events are annual, some have not been able to be hosted every year, as the consistency of many events decreased after the COVID-19 pandemic. This presents the challenge of how to properly re-engage the public with the local parks and recreation, especially after the pandemic impacted the interconnectedness of Vernon. A potential solution could be focusing on popular interests found within the community, and then incorporating them into old Vernon traditions. This would require the parks and recreation department to increase their public engagement moving forward. During Fall Fun Night, the community throws toilet paper over the trees on the Courthouse Square, a long standing tradition that has stuck its place into countless fall seasons (65 years, to be specific). A trunk or treat is also set up on the square for trick or treaters on Halloween, and the Vernon Fire Rescue may even collaborate to provide candy for this event. Another fall tradition is Ghost Walk, which is an event that specifically celebrates the historical significance of Vernon, and is done by having youth perform ghost stories all around the Town after dark. The Duck Race (Also known as Muscadaduck) is an event hosted during the late summer that involves using the Muscatatuck River for racing rubber ducks against each other. This event is hosted by the Jennings County Lady Panthers Basketball Team, who often also invite food vendors for a small Muscadaduck festival in Vernon in the fall.

Though other community events also occur in Vernon, they are typically less consistent, or are relatively new to the community, so their development is not yet predictable. In particular, the Spring Tonic was revived in 2021, which had actually first started in the 1980s under the leadership of Orlo Blomquist, but had a brief hiatus in the mid 2000s. The Spring Tonic is an annual 5k race that uses the land in Vernon as a running trail, and brings together resources for anyone who may be interested in competing. The Jennings County Historical Society has begun to use the Art and History Park as a place to host their events. Vernon has also often hosted car shows during the summers, which are available to anyone who is able to attend. In the past, there would be significant activity in town during Labor Day, which sometimes included a festival or the blocking off of streets for events. This has not regularly occurred in recent years, though may happen again in the future given a demonstrated desire by the community.

Art in the Community

Vernon prides itself in celebrating not only the history of Vernon, but also the artistic spirit of the community. Murals can be found throughout the town, as well as public art pieces and dedications. Located near The Alley, one of the walls has a large mural dedicated to the Town of Vernon, depicting the Muscatatuck River, The Courthouse, the nearby railroad, the nearby underpass, and more. This was able to happen through organized community effort, which partnerships with local community leaders and artists facilitated. Perceptions Yoga, Mindfulness, and Art studio often works with the town to ensure that the community can participate in art related events and programming, and even lead projects that use artistic skills to beautify the Town. Earlier this year, the Town of Vernon was able to commission a local artist to create an original sculpture for the Art and History Park. In order to increase the output of art within Vernon, the town will continue to partner with Perceptions, commission local artists, and accept donations.

The Area

In terms of the community work force, the main employer is the Jennings County government, as many staff of this government body work at the Courthouse. In the Courthouse, Jennings County residents may have court hearings or legal documents approved, as well as speak with different officials within the county. This building acts as a center point for the Town of Vernon, and attracts people to either complete legal processes or explore community history. The Jennings County Government Office is also located in Vernon (also known as the Annex), which hosts County Council Meetings, and houses dozens of Jennings County government employee offices. As Vernon holds the county seat for Jennings County, many government employees ultimately find their duties drawing them back to Vernon. This factor is important for the Town to consider in parks planning, as it brings in residents from the rest of Jennings County, and gives Vernon an opportunity to showcase its resources.

Highway 7 runs through the middle of Vernon, and splits between Highway 7 and 3 once headed south. This highway often hinders the ability of residents to safely cross the street or use the sidewalks, since a significant amount of traffic is brought in via the highway, especially during before and after work hours.

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

Just north on Highway 7, the City of North Vernon has a population of over 6,000 people, and is home to North Vernon Elementary School, Jennings County Middle School, and Jennings County High School. Though Vernon has the county seat, North Vernon has a larger population, so residents of Vernon and North Vernon may visit each community regularly. Since North Vernon has the larger population, Vernon residents may travel there for the increased amount of business, education, and recreational opportunities. The Parks Board should consider how this may repel people from using the parks of Vernon, as they may be frequently leaving the Town, and if this problem could be remedied through collaboration with the North Vernon Parks and Recreation.

Transportation and Connection

There is not any form of public transportation within the Town of Vernon, nor in any part of Jennings County. The town combats this by having sidewalks and walking trails in different parts of Vernon, though the amount of these sidewalks is limited, and not available for use by all residents. There is available parking for cars in the Town, but not in abundance, as there is not a large amount available, a sufficient parking lot, or a large number of handicap parking spots. The Vernon Trail is complete, so this is currently available to residents for use, but the river section to Muscatatuck County parks and facilities is not equally available to all residents. This section is unimproved along the river, and serves as a Black Diamond Mountain Bike and Hiking trail.

The only ways for Vernon residents to access the facilities in North Vernon is by bike, car, and foot. There are no sidewalks or bike lanes connecting Vernon and North Vernon, though there is a land mass bordered on both sides of the Muscatatuck River, which connects the two communities. This land mass is often called The Narrows, and the Town has adopted a resolution to provide walking access along this corridor. There is no designated pedestrian or bike access on the narrows, so passage on foot or bike may be unsafe. Vernon residents are not able to stay within Vernon to go to the hospital, receive a formal education, or go to the grocery store. For this reason, Vernon may one day in the future work on implementing a better intercommunity transportation system.

Reflection

Many pass through Vernon to get to nearby cities, like The City of Madison, or even The City of Louisville. This community also serves as an important resource for understanding local history, being of Vernon, North Vernon, Jennings County, and even Indiana as a whole. While the geographic location and historical significance of Vernon serve as strengths, as well as governing importance, the town ultimately faces questions of how to properly develop its parks and recreational opportunities. Though the community often celebrates history through the parks, this could be unappealing to those without a specific interest in history. Instead, some residents may want to see new projects be developed that do not require them to have any background knowledge of the Town. As well, in the interest of increasing the output of art within Vernon, the same issue may arise, as while art pertaining to history is popular, there may also be desire demonstrated by residents to see original art, without any relation to local history.

The maintenance and renovation of the physical parks themselves are also an important discussion topic for the Vernon Parks and Recreation. While some of the community may feel it is important to preserve as much of the architectural history as possible, which includes the parks, it may also be felt that the Town should renovate these facilities to be more accessible and safe. As well, building upon and improving the conditions of these parks would be a way for residents and visitors to host events and activities at these properties, rather than go to Muscatatuck Park or the North Vernon City Park. The line would need to be found between preserving local history, and ensuring that the parks and facilities are still able to be efficiently used by the community.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

Social and Economic Factors

In order to accurately assess the needs of the community, relevant socio-economic data was researched and then analyzed. The following data is concerned with that of The Town of Vernon, which was found by searching on the United States Census Bureau data profiles official website, as well as the StatsIndiana website. These websites based their data off of that collected in the 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. However, being a small community, certain information was unavailable or had a large margin of error, so the information for North Vernon or Jennings County was added instead.

The demographics of the City of North Vernon are important to consider in developing an agenda for Vernon Parks and Recreation. Residents of both communities often visit one another, so while there may not be a sizable population of a certain ethnic community in Vernon, there may be a sizable population of this group in North Vernon, and thus increase the likelihood of members of this ethnic community using Vernon parks and programming. The interconnectedness of the two locations requires attention to how the social and economic data of each affect one another.

Town of Vernon, Indiana

Overview...

Population: 224 People

Median Age: 46.2 Years

Income and Employment...

Median Household Income: \$67188

Unemployment Rate: 1.6%

Employment Rate: 66.7%

Housing and Families...

Households: 105

Housing Units: 127

Children Under 18: 17.4%

Average Family Size: 2.5 2People

Percentage Of Residents...

Age 5 or Younger: 2.5%

Age 65 or Older: 24.6% With a Disability: 27.7%

Percentage of Each Ethnic Group...

White: 98.7%

Black or African American: 0.0%

American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.0%

Asian: 0%

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0%

Two or More Races: 1.3%

Hispanic or Latino of Any Race: 1.3%

Biggest Employers...

Jennings County Government

Jennings County

Poverty Rate:13.1% (stats.indiana.edu)

Poverty rate under the age of 18: 16.8%

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

City of North Vernon, IN

Overview...

Population: 7214 People Median Age: 37.1 Years

Income and Employment...

Median Household Income: \$48235

Unemployment Rate: 5.3%

Employment Rate: 51.1%

Housing and Families...

Households: 2982

Housing Units: 3103

Children Under 18: 25.4%

Average Family Size: 2.86 People

Percentage Of Residents...

Age 5 or Younger: 5.7%

Age 65 or Older: 15.1%

With a Disability: 21.0%

Percentage of Each Ethnic Group...

White: 90.0%

Black or African American: 1.6%

American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.0%

Asian: 1.3%

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.0%

Two or More Races: 5.3%

Hispanic or Latino of Any Race: 8.1%

Biggest Employers...

Lowe's Distribution North Vernon Ind. Corp. Hilex Poly Co. Llc

The Effect on Parks and Recreation

Perceptions Yoga, Mindfulness & Art offers free programming and services for the community, operating as a nonprofit organization in the Town of Vernon. The Town partners with this nonprofit frequently, primarily to account for the population of low income residents that may still want to engage with their local community, but do not have the financial means to do so otherwise. Certain events or showcases may require paid entry or a fee to participate, but are done in the interest of raising money for the organization and enhancing the operations of the group in the future. Within the next five years, both Vernon and Perceptions hope to increase collaboration, which may be facilitated through the improvement of the local parks and Recreation facilities, which could be used by the studio to host events and classes.

Overall, the parks and programming are all free to use, though The Vernon Gym may require payments in case of renting for a short period of time. Additionally, there are limits as to the time of day that users can access the parks, as Vernon does not allow the use of parks at a certain time of night. However, when they are open, they do not require any entrance fee or payment to visit.

The median household incomes of Vernon and North Vernon both fall below the Indiana median household income, which is \$70051, further emphasizing the need of Vernon to have affordable recreational options. If residents are unable to afford the programming, then they will not participate, which is an issue the Board must target moving forward. Any fees paid to participate in local events would be used as a fundraising source, though should not be priced unreasonably high, or above what the median household income implies. Local programming may also allow residents to take advantage of resources they may not usually have access to, due to income level or financial circumstance. Additionally, with a sizable portion of the community living in poverty, they may enjoy recreation that provides them activities they may otherwise not have the money to participate in.

The Town of Vernon has a higher median age than that of the state of Indiana as a whole, which means that in creating new parks or programs, older residents should be a target for planning. This could mean catering certain activities to older age groups, or creating more community involvement opportunities for those in or close to retirement age.

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

However, the town should also still take the younger residents into consideration when developing local parks and programming, since while there are many residents over the age of 65, too much emphasis on this group will exclude the younger residents. Additionally, the median age in North Vernon is slightly younger than that of Indiana, so to attract residents of North Vernon, it may be beneficial to focus on this younger demographic as well. Regardless, it is necessary to orient more attention to residents close to or at retirement age while creating the master plan, as Vernon is an older community. However, there is a dramatic difference in median age between Vernon and North Vernon, so the youth of Jennings County may still be pulled into the community through our parks and recreation.

The majority of the residents in both Vernon and North Vernon identify as white and English speaking, so as a result, the Town of Vernon has largely lacked programming and recreation for those of different cultures and languages. As North Vernon has a larger variety of non-white and non-English speaking residents than Vernon, those curious about the parks and programming of Vernon may not visit Vernon due to feeling excluded or unaccounted for. So while the large majority of Vernon residents are from one specific demographic, this does not mean there is not still a need for more inclusive programming, as well as park features that celebrate the cultural differences of Jennings County. Vernon's location ensures that many people will find themselves passing through the town for travel, work, or legal responsibilities, so when there are inevitably visitors from out of town, it is important that they feel welcomed by the community, or else they may be unlikely to return.

Finally, physical accessibility and compliance with ADA standards is necessary for the Town of Vernon in developing a strong parks and recreation agenda. The community has already been working on inclusivity for disabled visitors and residents, as this is required regardless of the amount of disabled residents. However, 27.7% of the community reported having a disability, along with 21.0% in North Vernon, which are both higher figures than that of Indiana (14.0%). These percentages urge for there to be even more clarity on what accessibility should look like for residents in terms of the local parks and recreation. For example, many of the facilities were constructed before many ADA laws and regulations existed, and while some have been since updated to be up to code, they may still require further maintenance and renovations to be fully accessible for all users. Though in the past discussions about accessibility may not have been had while creating parks and programs, the town now has more resources to ensure that all residents can take advantage of the parks in Vernon, and given official census data, may need to be prioritized to a higher degree than originally anticipated.

ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Accessibility and Universal Design

The Vernon Gym (The Vawter Recreational Complex) has recently made strides in improving accessibility for visitors. This year, the facility has installed a vertical platform lift for wheelchair users to access the upper floor of the gym, making the inside of the gym accessible for all users. This facility has also increased the amount of handicap parking for residents, both in the lot in front of the old entrance of the gym and behind the gym. There is no need for stairs or steps, as this facility is located at ground level. This facility is also accessible using The Trail, so visitors may be able to use this to get onto the property as well.

While the Vernon Gym is working to improve its accessibility, there are still ways in which visitors may struggle to take advantage of this facility. First, the parking lot designated for parking behind the facility is covered with gravel, which is difficult for handicap visitors to use. Additionally, one of the alleys leading to the side entrance of the Vernon Gym is also covered with gravel, inaccessible for handicap users that chose to park by the front entrance. There is no obvious signage for visitors to use the side entrance, which makes it harder to enter, as the front entrance is not available for access. The restrooms are also in need of updates and renovations for full accessibility and compliance with ADA standards.

As The Commons was the first public playground to be established in the state of Indiana, this park's renovation efforts have often been concerned with updating historic fixtures. The park is located at ground level, without the need for stairs or any kind of steps. There is also designated parking for handicap visitors. From the parking lot, a person is able to access the shelter house and the new restroom facility using the sidewalk. The Trail is also connected to this park, so from the sidewalk, a person can then walk along the trail to other parks and facilities. The newly constructed restroom facility at this park was also constructed to be ADA compliant.

Despite the connection between the parking lot, the shelter house, the Trail, and the restrooms, the sidewalk ultimately does not connect to the playground itself. In turn, a handicapped or disabled visitor would not be able to access the playground using this sidewalk, along with the labyrinth, basketball court, or river access point. The playground's ground surface is covered in pea gravel, which impedes some visitors' ability to walk or use their wheelchair. Though the parking has designated handicap spots, the parking is limited, and lacks proper signage of alternative parking spots.

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

As the Art and History Park is still in its early development phase, especially in terms of accessibility, the park has limited information on its accessible and inaccessible features. Currently, this park is accessible via sidewalk, so a visitor walking around Vernon would be able to access the park using this.

While this park can be accessed using sidewalks, the park has no designated parking spots, so visitors must either parallel park, or park somewhere nearby, and then walk to this park, which makes it inaccessible to visitors. There are no handicap parking spots, which impedes the ability of disabled visitors to take advantage of this facility. Once at the park, the walking path is paved using gravel, which also makes it inaccessible for wheelchair users. This park also lacks the proper signage for visitors, which includes signage about the gravel path and the designated main entrance to the park.

The Alley is a relatively new facility for the Vernon Parks and Recreation, and takes up the smallest amount of acreage within the inventory. This facility is accessible using the sidewalk, with parking spots, including handicap parking, located by both entrances. This is also accessible when visiting other Vernon businesses, such as the Los Alamos Mexican Restaurant. This facility does not require any steps or stairs to access once on the sidewalk, giving handicap visitors better access.

While The Alley is making strides in accessibility, it still lacks certain features to ensure ADA compliance. The sign above the alley may be too high up for certain visitors to see and does not have any version of the signage closer to eye level. Additionally, this fixture was not constructed in the interest of being compliant with ADA standards.

As The Trails in Vernon has been recently developed and constructed, community leaders have followed ADA standards closely to ensure full compliance. As of this moment, this facility is accessible via sidewalk, and may connect visitors to other parts of the Town where there are no sidewalks yet constructed. Signage is posted throughout different locations, so visitors can read about this trail and understand where it is and is not available for use. The restroom facility and overlook were both constructed to be fully accessible and compliant with ADA standards. There is still no braille signage available for visitors. Additionally, The Trail connects to Muscatatuck Park (the county park) via hiking trail, which is a section of this facility that is not ADA compliant. This section follows along the river's edge, and was established for hiking and black diamond mountain biking.

Accessibility and Universal Design

The current mayor of Vernon will serve as the designated ADA information contact for the public, as there is currently no designated ADA coordinator for the Town.

To correct the inaccessible features of the Vernon Parks and Recreation inventory, major sources of funding are anticipated to be from grants. As funds are increased, so will improvements to ADA compliance and universal design, with there being an anticipated, but not yet realized, timeline for improvement in the next five years. Like with the budget for the Vernon Parks and Recreation, the amount of money dedicated to ADA compliance may have to first grow within itself to later make any significant changes.

Vernon is currently in the process of developing an ADA Transition Plan, as well as a Title VI Compliance Plan for the Town and Parks, which will fit the standards required for local ADA compliance. There will be increased efforts to regularly place notifications concerning compliance at community kiosks and message boards. Visitors and residents will be fully notified on how the town continuously works to increase the amount of accessible features within the community, as well as who to contact in the case of a complaint or grievance related to these matters.

Currently, the town is addressing several ADA access standards with a Safe Streets for All grant from Federal Highway. This study and plan will help locate and design better access to parks, facilities and streets for ADA compliance.

With the recent moving of the Town Hall to the Gym, new posters will be installed in a common location, including other information about ADA accessible amenities, programs, and services. This same information will also be posted on the Town website.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

Public Participation

In order to accurately assess the needs of the community, three public input methods were used. First, the Town of Vernon issued an online survey, with a physical copy also available and handed out. Second, the Town of Vernon Parks and Recreation Board held a public input session about the master plan on June 30th, 2025, hosted at The Vernon Gym from 6pm to 8pm. Third, four brief interviews were taken with local community leaders, or those with stake in Vernon's development.

The Survey

The survey was first made using Google Forms, and then publicized using the Town of Vernon Facebook page, which has a follower count of 3.4 thousand, and is liked by 2.9 thousand. Copies were also added to the Town of Vernon website, under the section titled "Events." A paper form of this survey was also created (which has been included in the appendix), and was handed out door to door in Vernon by interns. There were approximately 80 paper copies printed out to be distributed throughout the community. Summer interns also handed out another approximate 40 paper QR codes of the survey, in case a resident found it easier to complete online. The paper copy was able to be returned at the public input meeting, or could be dropped off at the Town Hall building, either in person or inside the drop box (in case someone did not feel comfortable leaving it in person, or could not make it to the office hours of the building). The survey stopped accepting responses July 25th, 2025. We were able to conclude with a total number of 26 online responses, and five paper responses.

During the response window, there were 26 online responses and 5 physical/paper responses. No respondent identified as younger than 21 years old. The largest age groups identified belonged to 60 or older (8) and 40-49 (8). Only 17 people reported actually living in Vernon, and just one person reported to not live in Jennings County at all. 25 of the respondents did not identify themselves or a member of their household to have a disability, while 3 did report either themselves or a household member having a disability.

Overall, no residents felt that The Vernon Gym had any physical barriers preventing them from using the property, which was also the only facility to have no one report never visiting. This facility also had the highest number of people reporting the conditions to be either fair or perfectly maintained. However, the Art and History Park had the highest number of people to report the conditions as either average or poor. This park also had the highest number of people say they never visit.

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

The responses ultimately showed that a majority of people are either satisfied or very satisfied with Vernon parks. A majority reported that they are neither satisfied or dissatisfied with the local programming/activities in Vernon. Many residents wrote in answers about wanting to see an increase in maintenance efforts, the addition of a stage or gazebo for community events, and an increased focus on local art and history.

The Public Input Meeting

The public input meeting was first publicized on the Town of Vernon Facebook page, alongside the survey. The flyer (included on the appendix) included information about free food and drinks being provided, in order to attract more attendees. The public input session was attended by 9 non government employees and non parks board members, as well as 8 government employees and parks board members. In total, there were 9 members of the public in attendance at the meeting. The notes taken from the meeting, as well as the sign in sheet, are included in the appendix. During the public input meeting, both government employees and non government employees expressed interest in the beautification of the Vernon parks. While participants also demonstrated a desire to see more maintenance to Parks properties, many residents also wanted to see new fixtures constructed at those already existing. An example brought up was for there to be a gazebo built at The Commons or The Art and History Park. Additionally, community members expressed wanting to see an increase in the amount of social events and gatherings, or simply ways to better connect residents with one another in organized spaces.

The Parks and Recreation Board organized the discussion by first introducing the Board, the purpose of the Board, the five year master plan, the purpose of the five year master plan, and then opened discussions pertaining to each individual Park property. Both the intern and the Parks Board president took notes during this meeting, which can be found in the appendix section of the plan. The discussion was facilitated by the Board president and council members. People were allowed to speak freely on a topic whenever they felt the urge, though were encouraged to do so without interrupting or dismissing another's comments . Papers were provided for the public to follow along with the discussion, along with paper forms of the survey, QR codes of the survey, a sign in sheet, and an optional sheet of paper to write down additional comments.

The Interviews

The interviews were held with five different community leaders, totaling 4 different interviews. Each interview consisted of the same five questions, intended to be brief, as to account for busy schedules and the limited availability of the interviewees. The first interview was held with Chris Asher at the Jennings County Historical Society, who is the curator. The second interview was held at Perceptions Yoga, Mindfulness, and Art studio, with directors Charlinda Evans and Karen Chilman. The third interview was held via email with Seth Jones, who is the director of the Jennings County Parks and Recreation department. The fourth and final interview was held with Bobby Willis, the director of the North Vernon Parks and Recreation department. These people were selected for interviews due to either their regularly occurring activity in Vernon, or relation to parks and recreation duties. The Town could potentially collaborate with these leaders in the future, since their entities are from neighboring communities. Every interview, except the one with Seth Jones, was held in person, in order to get more detailed responses.

The interview questions were:

- How would you describe your relationship with the Town of Vernon?
- How do you typically use the parks in Vernon?
- What would improve your experience with the parks in Vernon?
- How accessible do you consider the parks in Vernon to be?
- In the next five years, how do you see your relationship with the Vernon parks and programming developing or changing?

The interviews were held briefly, but did provide insight as to what would better attract stakeholders and local officials to Vernon parks. In each interview, they all reported having some sort of collaborative element to their relationship with Vernon, and look forward to more collaboration in the future. However, the relationships that Seth Jones and Bobby Willis have with Vernon are much less mature than those with Karen Chilman, Charlinda Evans, and Chris Asher. With this, the interviews Bobby Willis and Seth Jones concluded with much sparser responses. While Seth Jones and Bobby Willis had less to report on the conditions of Vernon parks and programming, the other interviews revealed a desperate need for better parking and physical accessibility to the parks.

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

Should these community leaders and their organizations host or cohost events in Vernon, they may feel discouraged by the lack of accessibility at each property. Though each interviewee proved open to future collaboration with the Vernon Parks and Recreation, there is a demonstrated need to improve how that collaboration is actually executed, and how they can trust residents will be able to easily and safely access the facilities being used.

Summary

Putting together the information gathered from all three methods, it may be said that the community has demonstrated a strong desire for increased interconnectedness within Vernon, which may be facilitated by Vernon Parks and Recreation. Other consistent themes include increased beautification and maintenance efforts, more social events, as well as more spaces and features to hold these events. While the properties have historical value, they need to be regularly updated to be kept in use, or they may end up as only historical markers.

There was also shown to be a great need for improved access to each property. Recreational opportunities and activities may be hosted at The Vernon Gym or The Commons, but some residents feel they may not be able to easily park or walk to the property, and thus feel discouraged from going. Some even report the equipment at the properties to be outdated, and in need of maintenance. This would not only enhance the experience of the visitors, but also community leaders who want to host events at these locations, as this way they will feel more comfortable about inviting people. Ultimately, the community has expressed a desire to see the historical significance of Vernon continue to be highlighted, while still being functional for visitors and residents. Should an organization host an event at The Commons, they will want to see that the park is actually safe enough to handle the traffic of people. If a group of high schoolers want to play basketball inside of The Vernon Gym, they may want adequate flooring to run and dribble the ball on. Additionally, if a person is just driving through the town, the residents may want to have the artistic spirit of the community on display, possibly attracting this traveler to return. Vernon thrives on showcasing its historic significance, but the community still needs events and facilities that will allow for enjoyable recreation.

Needs Analysis

Currently, the population of the Town of Vernon is 236 people. The Parks and Recreation inventory takes up approximately 8.5 acres, with the town itself occupying an estimated total of 134 acres. Being a small, rural community, the Town has often lacked the staff necessary to complete and carry out projects. With this, there is a plethora of developments to be made to local parks and recreation.

The main method used to complete this section is called “Issue Analysis,” in which the intern took the information gathered from other sections of the plan, as well as the input taken from the public and Parks Board, to determine the needs of the public, Parks and Recreation board, and Town. The intern was then able to create a coherent list of priorities for the plan. This process included taking into account social and economic factors, impactful natural features, and the implication of the community’s history and culture on parks development. The specific challenges that Vernon has faced as a small, rural community are important to consider in coming up with a list of needs for the Parks and Recreation department.

This method was used because of how small Vernon is, both in terms of land mass and population. Although the City of North Vernon does affect local business to some degree, the community is in a unique enough position that many typical standards of analysis are harder to apply, especially having a smaller capacity to do so. There are few individuals available to assist in the planning process, as well as a smaller range of resources that could be used to gauge the needs of the community in a more quantitative manner. Knowing this, several lists of needs have been created based on public input, board discussions, and general information about the community.

Through analyzing the response given by the community, five main priorities were taken away, which have been listed and described below, in no particular order.

Through analyzing the response given by the public, five main priorities were taken away, which have been listed and described below, in no particular order.

Increased Amount of Community Events:

The community demonstrated that while upgrading the actual parks and facilities is important, the use made out of these parks is also important to consider, and should be prioritized in future planning. In the survey, many chose wanting to see more social and community events, or simply designated times for people to gather with one another. These events may be hosted at the parks in Vernon, but ultimately, should just occur within the community and at a more frequent rate. This is seen as how though parks do exist within the community, they have largely not been used at a high rate, which leaves room for other types of recreational opportunities to be brainstormed.

Renovations and Updates at Older Parks:

As Vernon is a historic community, many of the buildings and facilities were constructed before modern regulations were created. The public has taken notice of this, and shown a desire to see many of the older facilities be either renovated or updated to be safer and more accessible. Some examples of this are how the playground equipment at the Commons is in need of repairs, and how The Vernon Gym needs updated bathroom stalls. Vernon prides itself on its historical significance, but should still strive to make each property updated for full functionality.

Development of the Art and History Park:

The Art and History Park has not long been known as a park property, and is still not known as one to parts of the community. The public wants to see development from this park, specifically that will provide better opportunities for recreation and community use. While there is currently a gravel path and painted benches, this property needs a stronger and more clear identity to properly fit the needs of the community. As well, understanding the median income of Vernon to be lower than that of the state, this park should stay affordable and accessible to all residents.

Better use of The Vernon Gym:

For decades, The Vernon Gym has been a location dedicated to hosting community events, and while the public wishes to see this continue, they also want to see better recreation and programming come out of this property. This could mean facilitating even more community events at this location, adding new features and fixtures, and adding space for organizations and groups to regularly use. These changes would aid the goal of increasing the amount of community events, as well as justify the increase of renovations to Vernon parks.

Increased Safety and Signage at Existing Facilities:

In discussing the renovation of park facilities, the public has shown interest in enhancing the safety and accessibility of these properties. A common suggestion is to work on the physical signage posted throughout the Town about the parks and recreation, as many reported being unable to find the entrances or addresses for several properties. Prioritizing this would also be helpful in improving the accessibility of the parks, as Vernon noted in previous parts of the plan to often lack in this aspect.

On August 28th, 2025, The Vernon Parks and Recreation Board hosted a meeting at 5 pm in The Vernon Gym, in which they discussed the input gathered from the public, and then determined their main priorities for each Park property. While their priorities slightly differ from that of the community, they do share many of the same sentiments. Emerging in themes throughout the discussion, their five main priorities have been listed and described below:

Increased Safety and Signage at Existing Facilities:

Just as the public has shown interest in increasing the safety and accessibility of the existing parks, the board has also found this to be a priority. The existing signage has proved inadequate, and some properties lack signage entirely. Just as mentioned previously, prioritizing this may also improve Vernon's overall park accessibility, and even help justify renovation efforts to existing facilities.

Utilities and Lighting:

The Board found that while new features have recently been constructed at existing parks, some of these do not yet have all the necessary utilities and lighting fixtures installed. Should utilities and lighting be installed, people will be more likely to use the facilities. While the Town does have a small population of residents, the low usage at properties like the Alley may also stem from the lack of lighting fixtures put in place.

Redefining Existing Spaces:

There are spaces that are currently designated as part of the Parks and Recreation inventory, but are not popular enough to justify maintenance. This does not mean that these spaces should be demolished or left vacant, but rather, the Board finds that these spaces should be redefined, and would like to take more suggestions from the community about how to repurpose these facilities. The challenge of preserving the historical element of the properties, while still keeping it updated to fit community needs and desires, will likely affect the implementation of this. However, listening to the community and those with stake parks development will ease this, and assist in better reflecting the needs of the community as a whole through this master plan.

Improved River Access:

As the Muscatatuck River has long defined the culture and identity of Vernon, the Board wants to increase the focus placed on river access and usage. Visitors often come to The Commons for its river bank, which allows for kayaking, and is free for the community to use. Within the next five years, this is a direction that the board would like to take in improving the community's recreational opportunities.

Creating Opportunities for Programming:

In order to enhance the interconnectedness of the community, as well as the frequency of social gatherings, the Board would like to prioritize the creation of actual opportunities for programming. This may be done through the improvement and increased maintenance of park properties, as well as developing more partnerships with local organizations/entities. With these elements strengthened, they may open up more opportunities for new programming in Vernon.

Town Needs

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

By analyzing the needs of both the public and the Parks Board, as well as taking into account all of the other factors involved in creating a five year plan parks master plan, there are five main objectives found for the Town of Vernon, which have been listed and described below:

Funding and Budget:

Though both the Board and the public want to improve the parks, the issue of funding will likely be the biggest obstacle in accomplishing this. No substantial amount of revenue comes directly from residents, and with the Town being so small geographically, there is also not a large amount allocated from business or tourism. In the past, funding was typically gained through grants. The budget designated towards the Vernon Parks and Recreation falls short of what a majority of past projects often required. Moving forward, the creation of a stronger budget and new sources of funding should be prioritized. Without adequate funding, these many goals may not be fully realized.

Increased Safety and Signage at Existing Facilities/Properties:

The existing parks in Vernon have not experienced significant usage, so before attempting to construct new parks and facilities, updates targeting safety and signage need to be made within the town. The public has shown great interest in improving upon the existing facilities, so long as they eventually become easily accessible and easy to locate. The Board would also like to see a higher amount of usage in current parks, as the improvement of these existing properties may assist with the goal of redefining current spaces in the community.

Increased Interconnectedness:

The improvement of the parks and facilities are ultimately done in the interest of better connecting the community, and while this has always been an underlying theme in the construction of new projects, this should be specifically listed as a priority moving forward. In a variety of ways, the public and the Board has shown an interest in increasing the interconnectedness of Vernon. Clarifying this as a priority will help guide planning discussions.

Improved River Access:

Vernon has often been defined by its proximity to the Muscatatuck River, and as both the public and Board have shown interest in showcasing this natural feature, better access to the river will be a bigger priority for the Vernon Parks and Recreation moving forward.

Creating Opportunities for Programming:

Just as it was described under “Increased Interconnectedness,” the Vernon Parks and Recreation will have to ensure that the local parks and properties are improved and upgraded in the interests of increasing programming and recreation.

The community wants to be more connected with one another, and this will only be possible if the Parks and Recreation Board prioritizes projects that allow these opportunities for programming and connectivity.

PRIORITIES AND ACTION SCHEDULE



Priorities and Action Schedule

While the public input and Board discussion proved helpful to creating a coherent plan of action, funding will likely be a large concern moving forward with the plan. The Town currently earns most of its funding through grants, which has been a consistent source for recent growth in Vernon. However, grants and donations cannot be the sole source of funding going forward, especially for smaller scale projects, which may be able to be supported through tax revenue and capital expenditures.

The current priority list, which will in turn guide the direction and content of the action plan schedule, was based on a combination of factors, and finalized to meet the needs of the community, the Board, and the Town as a whole.

Additionally, as Vernon is only beginning to develop their Parks and Recreation department, the current priority list reflects this immaturity, and attempts to set realistic goals that set up potential for significant growth within the next five years.

While the Town does have certain needs that should be met, smaller goals that the Board or public demonstrated may be more realistic to have completed within the next five years. These smaller, more specific goals could one day facilitate the completion of the broader goals listed for the Town. Additionally, while one goal may better fit the needs of the Town as a whole, it may not be listed due to a stronger need demonstrated by the public, or a current inability of the Parks and Recreation department to execute this.

Current Priorities:

- Finding new sources of funding for the Parks and Recreation department.
- Increasing the safety and signage at existing facilities/properties
- Creating opportunities for programming through renovation projects
- Redefining existing spaces; Repurposing spaces that are under utilized
- Improving accessibility of the river
- Increasing the amount of amenities involved with kayaking
- Organizing more community events; Creating the amenities necessary to host more community events
- Development of The Art and History Park
- Fully installing the necessary utilities and lighting at all parks and facilities
- Ensuring ADA compliance and full accessibility of all Parks properties

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

Action Schedule

	Year	Site	Action	Cost Estimate	Source of Funds
1	2026	Establish Consistent/Matching Signage at each Park and Facility			
		Vawter Rec Center	Facility Signage	\$ 5,000.00	
		Art and History Park	Park Signage	\$ 5,000.00	
		Commons	Park Signage	Complete	
		Commons	River route and trip length signage	Complete	
2	2027	Install Utilities at each Park			
		Art and History Park	Access to utilities – Electricity/Water	\$ 10,000.00	
		Commons	Utilities	\$ 10,000.00	
		Commons	Lighting	\$ 20,000.00	
		Alleyway	Lighting	\$ 5,000.00	
		Art and History Park	Lighting	\$ 15,000.00	
3	2027	Replace Playground Equipment			
		Commons	Playground Equipment	\$ 200,000.00	
4	2028	Spacial Improvement and Landscaping of Parks			
		Art and History Park	Define boundaries	\$ 1,000.00	
		Art and History Park	Establish paths	\$ 5,000.00	
		Art and History Park	Improved landscaping	\$ 5,000.00	
		Commons	Define roadways and parking w/Timber bollards	\$ 10,000.00	
		Commons	Redefining space – remove sign and labyrinth	\$ 1,000.00	
5	2028	Refurbish Facility Bathrooms			
		Vawter Rec Center	Bathrooms	\$ 100,000.00	
6	2028	Improve Facility Air Quality			
		Vawter Rec Center	Ventilation In Gymnasium	\$ 50,000.00	
7	2029	Improve Facility Spaces			

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

		Vawter Rec Center	Refurbishing Rooms for use/rent public	\$ 30,000.00	
		Vawter Rec Center	Kitchen – Commercial Refrigerator, Prep space.	\$ 50,000.00	
		Vawter Rec Center	Concession Area	\$ 10,000.00	
		Vawter Rec Center	Acoustic Paneling	\$ 25,000.00	
8	2030	Develop Park Venue			
		Art and History Park	Gazebo/stage	\$ 25,000.00	
9	2030	Increase Commons Amenities			
		Commons	Court Space Tennis/Pickle Ball	\$ 15,000.00	
		Commons	Steel BBQ Grills	\$ 2,500.00	
		Commons	Proper Boat Ramp w/Canoe Tree to Lock up canoe	\$ 25,000.00	
		Commons	Riverwalk	\$ 50,000.00	

These future improvements have been itemized in accordance to surveys, public meetings and interviews of current users.

Potential Sources of Funding (Expanded)

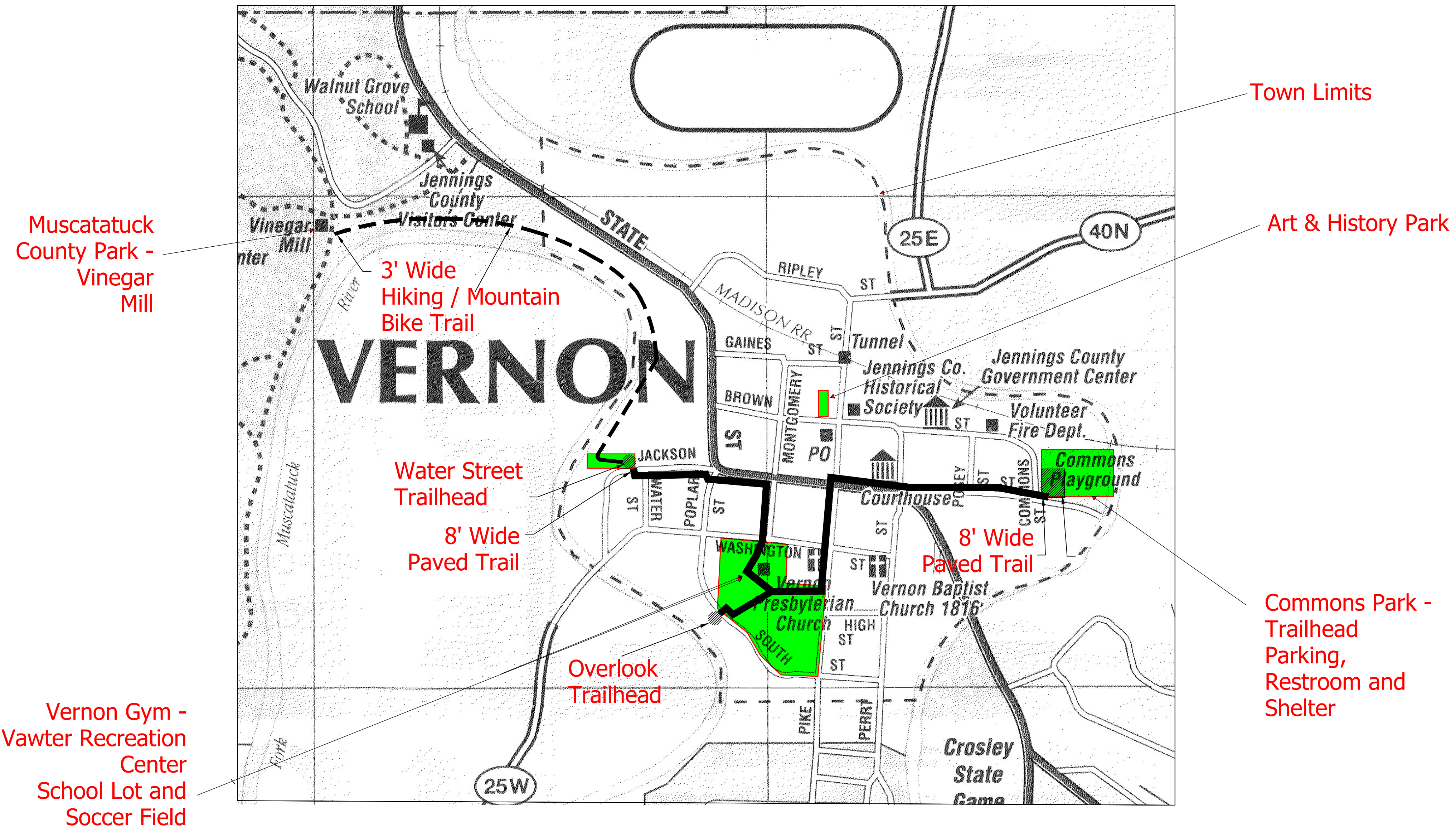
- **Creating Places** – A crowdfunding campaign collaborated between Patronicity and the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority.
- **Local Businesses** – Many local businesses see their success in response to the growth and success of their community.
- **Residential Donations** – Local donations are often received to support the development and improvement of local parks and public spaces.
- **Local Nonprofit Organizations** – Local Nonprofits are often a good source of funds that create partnerships and funds for park improvements.
- **Programming and Events** – Fees generated from the use of facilities and participation in events can contribute to the goals of the master plan.
- **Other Grant Opportunities** – The Vernon Department of Parks and Recreation will explore opportunities for state and federal grants to fund improvements to the town's parks and facilities.

Evaluations and Updates to the Plan

A major goal of the master plan, the Vernon Parks and Recreation Board, and the Vernon Parks and Recreation department, is to consistently reflect and serve the needs of the community. With this, the plan will need to be regularly revised and updated. Doing so will help Vernon account for changes that will need to be made in the future, as well as describe how these changes will be justified. The natural features and historical/cultural significance of Vernon are not likely to change, but the economic and social factors may experience new trends, and these trends could bring about new challenges that the current version of the plan does not account for. The community may also feel a need to voice their opinions about the Vernon Parks and Recreation to the Board, and a consistently updated parks plan would give them the opportunities to do so.

To properly reevaluate the plan, the Parks and Recreation board will regularly schedule public input meetings, conduct new interviews, and send out surveys as time approaches for the plan to be updated for the next five year period. This will ensure that the Board continues to address the community's concerns about local parks and programming, and understand what changes will need to be made to the plan. The board may even take the initiative to include new forms of public input to the plan, and workshop what methods would best benefit the document. Additionally, the Board will reread each section to monitor any potential changes in information, especially the information about social and economic factors. Every piece of this plan needs to stay up to date and accurate, so the Board will have to reread the plan and agree on the necessary edits to be made before officially submitting the plan to IDNR. This may be done by hosting additional board meetings, and consulting local community leaders for their input.

Town of Vernon, Indiana Parks and Recreation Map



Town of Vernon Indiana
Park Department

Asset Inventory

Table 1

Board Name:	Park Department
Current Plan Year:	2025



- Directions:**
- A. List assets
 - B. Enter asset information
 - C. To add more assets use insert function and add rows then copy first asset row to new rows
 - D. Enter information in yellow cells
 - E. Remaining cells will calculate automatically.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Property	Capacity / Size	Material	Manufacturer	Tag Number (Optional)	Original Cost If Known	Replacement Cost	Year Installed	Expected Useful Life in Years	Remaining Useful Life in Years	Condition	Probability of Failure	Consequence of Failure	Criticality
Commons Park	2.5 ac					\$250,000	1815	500	290	1	1	1	1
Arts Park	0.2 ac					\$40,000	1990	500	465	1	1	1	1
Alley	0.05 ac					\$10,000	2024	500	499	1	1	1	1
Trail	0.73 ac					\$150,000	2024	500	499	1	1	1	1
Gym and School Lot and Field	5.23 ac					\$500,000	1890	500	365	1	1	1	1
													0
													0
Property Assets Subtotal						\$950,000							

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Improvements	Capacity / Size	Material	Manufacturer	Tag Number (Optional)	Original Cost If Known	Replacement Cost	Year Installed	Expected Useful Life in Years	Remaining Useful Life in Years	Condition	Probability of Failure	Consequence of Failure	Criticality
Commons													
Playground						\$200,000	2013	30	18	2	2	2	4
Shelter		wood / concrete	volunteer			\$150,000	1989	40	4	3	3	3	9
Basketball Court		concrete				\$100,000	2015	50	40	1	2	3	6
Labrynth						\$10,000	2020	25	20	2	3	2	6
Picnic Benches		wood				\$5,000	2000	40	15	2	2	2	4
River Access						\$5,000	1950	100	25	3	3	2	6
Arts Park													
Walking Trail			volunteer			\$10,000	2016	20	11	3	2	2	4
Stone Benches			volunteer			\$30,000	2006	150	131	2	1	1	1
Art Installation			grant funded			\$10,000	2025	50	50	1	3	2	6
Alley													
Iron Entry Signs						\$5,000	2024	40	39	1	1	1	1
Mural						\$2,500	2024	5	4	1	1	1	1
Trail													
Restroom			NLT Grant		\$189,646	\$200,000	2024	50	49	1	3	4	12
Overlook			NLT Grant		\$47,360	\$50,000	2024	50	49	1	2	2	4
Paving and Signage			NLT Grant		\$866,040	\$900,000	2024	50	49	1	2	2	4
Other													
Soccer Practice Building with Attached Restroo	5000 sq ft	Concrete				\$800,000	1890	200	65	2	2	3	6
Gym Building with Community Rooms	16000 sq ft	Brick				\$12,000,000	1930	200	105	3	3	4	12
Gym Parking & Site improvements		Stone				\$250,000	2010	200	185	2	2	2	4
Soccer field		Grass	volunteer			\$350,000	2020	200	195	2	2	2	4
School Field Playground		wood	volunteer		\$40,000	\$150,000	2015	30	20	3	3	3	9
School Field Shelter		stone	WPA			\$150,000	1930	150	55	2	2	2	4
Assets Subtotal						\$15,377,500							
Total of All Property and Improvement Assets						\$16,327,500							

Legend

Column K	
Condition Assessment	
Condition Rating	Description
5	Unserviceable/End of useful life - Over 50% of asset requires replacement
4	Significant Deterioration - 20-40% requires renewal/upgrade
3	Moderate Deterioration - 10-20% requires significant maintenance
2	Minor Deterioration - Requires minor maintenance
1	New or Excellent Condition - Only normal maintenance required

Column L	
Probability of Failure	
Performance Rating	Description
5	Imminent - Likely to occur in the near future
4	Probable - Likely to occur several times in the life of an item
3	Occasional - Likely to occur sometime in the life of an item
2	Remote - Unlikely but possible to occur in the life of an item
1	Improbable - So unlikely, it can be assumed occurrence may not be experienced

Column M	
Consequence of Failure	
Performance Rating	Description
5	Catastrophic disruption
4	Major disruption
3	Moderate disruption
2	Minor disruption
1	Insignificant disruption

Column N	
Criticality	
Criticality is determined by taking the score in Column L times the score of Column M	

APPENDIX



TOWN OF VERNON, IN

Parks and Rec.
**VERNON PUBLIC
INPUT MEETING**

LOCATED AT THE VERNON GYM

The Town of Vernon, IN would like you to provide your feedback on the local parks and activities! The responses from this meeting will be used to create a 5 year master plan for the Town of Vernon's parks and recreation. Please attend to help better your community!

FREE FOOD PROVIDED AT EVENT

JUNE 30TH, 6PM-8PM

TOWN OF VERNON, IN

**FILL OUT
OUR
SURVEY!**

DUE JULY 25TH

Vernon Parks and Recreation Survey

Turn in at Vernon Town Hall either in person or through the drop box outside the door (290 E. Brown St., North Vernon, IN). Also please come join us for our [parks and recreation public input meeting](#) at the Vernon Gym on June 30th from 6-8pm. Free food will be provided. Feel free to turn this in at the meeting.

General:

1. How satisfied are you with the parks in Vernon?

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Neither satisfied or dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

2. How satisfied are you with the community programs/activities in Vernon?

Very satisfied

- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

3. What would you like to see the Vernon parks and recreation add to or improve within the community?

- Social events/community gatherings
- Renovated facilities
- New walking paths
- Environment conservation projects
- Other: _____

4. What kinds of programs or activities would you like to see at our local parks and facilities?

- Athletic tournaments
- Arts/Crafts workshops
- Community garden
- Educational workshops
- Other: _____

The Commons:

This park is sat on the bank of the Muscatatuck River, and has additional space to play basketball and run around with friends. Since its creation, The Commons has come to also include a shelter house and public restroom facility.

1. How would you rate the condition of this park?

- Perfectly maintained
- Fair
- Average
- Poor
- Not at all maintained

2. How often do you visit this park?

- Regularly
- Every so often

- Rarely
- Never

3. What improvements would you MOST like to see made to this park?

- Renovated playground
- Renovated basketball court
- Better parking
- Improved grass/yard maintenance
- Other: _____

4. What physical barriers keep you from using this park?

There are no physical barriers keeping me from using this park

Other: _____

The Art and History Park:

Also known as “rat row,” the Vernon Art and History Park is located right off East Brown street. This park is home to a number of large art projects, and uses those to educate the community about history.

1. How would you rate the condition of this park?

- Perfectly maintained
- Fair
- Average
- Poor
- Not at all maintained

2. How often do you visit this park?

- Regularly
- Every so often
- Rarely
- Never

Vernon Parks and Recreation Survey

Turn in at Vernon Town Hall either in person or through the drop box outside the door (290 E. Brown St., North Vernon, IN). Also please come join us for our [parks and recreation public input meeting](#) at the Vernon Gym on June 30th from 6-8pm. Free food will be provided. Feel free to turn this in at the meeting.

Other: _____

The Vernon Gym:

The Vernon Gym (located at the Vawter Recreational Complex) and surrounding property hosts community events, sports practices, and even important town meetings. The Vawter Recreational Complex has recently added a new bathroom facility, as well as a public library room.

3. What improvements would you MOST like to see made to this park?

- Improved walking path
- New play area
- More events/programs/activities
- Improved grass/yard maintenance
- Other: _____

4. What physical barriers keep you from using this park?

There are no physical barriers keeping me from using this park.

1. How would you rate the condition of this facility?

- Perfectly maintained
- Fair
- Average

Poor
Not at all maintained

2. How often do you visit this location?

Regularly
Every so often
Rarely
Never

3. What improvements would you MOST like to see made?

Renovated basketball court
Renovated playground
Better parking
More frequent events/programs/activities
Other: _____

4. What physical barriers keep you from using this facility?

There are no physical barriers keeping me from using this facility.

Other: _____

Demographics:

1. What age group do you fall under?

17 or younger
18-20
21-29
30-39
40-49
50-59
60 or older

2. Do you live in Vernon?

Yes
I live in North Vernon.
I live in Jennings county, but not Vernon or North Vernon
I do not live in Jennings County

3. Do any members of your household have a disability?

Yes
No

**Town of Vernon Public Input Meeting Outline: Town of Vernon,
IN | Parks board five year master plan draft | 06-30-2025 | 6:00 PM |
Vawter Recreational Complex**

1. Introduce new Vernon parks board
2. Describe purpose of today's public input meeting
3. Describe purpose of a parks and recreation five year master plan
4. Discussion of overall parks and recreation in Vernon
 - a. Expectations of parks and programs
 - b. Expectations of parks board
 - c. Suggestions or ideas for improvement
 - d. Overall comments/concerns
5. Discussion of each individual park/facility in Vernon
 - a. The Commons
 - b. Art and History Park
 - c. Vawter Recreational Complex
 - d. Alley
 - e. Trail
6. Final opportunity to provide comments/concerns

**Town of Vernon Public Input Meeting Outline: Town of Vernon,
IN | Parks board five year master plan draft | 06-30-2025 | 6:00 PM |
Vawter Recreational Complex**

1. Introduce new Vernon parks board
2. Describe purpose of today's public input meeting
3. Describe purpose of a parks and recreation five year master plan

4. Discussion of overall parks and recreation in Vernon
 - a. Expectations of parks and programs
 - b. Expectations of parks board
 - c. Suggestions or ideas for improvement
 - d. Overall comments/concerns
5. Discussion of each individual park/facility in Vernon
 - a. The Commons
 - b. Art and History Park
 - c. Vawter Recreational Complex
 - d. Alley
 - e. Trail
6. Final opportunity to provide comments/concerns

General Summary:

- The parks survey was open between June 23rd and July 25th. During this window, there were 26 online responses, and 5 physical/paper responses.
- The Vernon Gym did not have any physical barriers be reported, and is also the only facility to have no one respond that they never visit. Additionally, this facility had the largest number of people report the conditions as either fair or perfectly maintained. The Art and History Park, however, had the highest number of people report the conditions as either average or poor. This park also had the highest number of people say they never visit.
- Overall, the responses showed that a majority of people are either satisfied or very satisfied with the parks in Vernon. A majority report that they are neither satisfied or dissatisfied with the local programming/activities in Vernon.

Demographics

- The largest age groups to respond were in the age groups 60 or older (8) and 40-49 (8). There were 6 responses from those in age groups 30-39 and 50-59, and one response from age group 21-29, though no responses from anyone younger than 21. - A total of 17 people responded that they live in Vernon, while 4 people responded they live in North Vernon. 7 people responded that they live in Jennings County (but neither Vernon or North Vernon). Only one person responded that they do not live in Jennings County at all.
- A majority responded that neither them or a member of their household has a disability (25), but 3 responded that either themselves or a household member has a disability.

General Opinion:

- A majority felt either satisfied (13) or very satisfied (5) by the parks in Vernon. 6 felt neither satisfied or unsatisfied, and a combined total of 5 felt either unsatisfied (3) or very unsatisfied (2).
- In terms of programs or activities in Vernon, the majority felt neither satisfied or unsatisfied (14), while a combined total of 12 felt either satisfied (10) or very satisfied (2). Only 2 felt unsatisfied, and just one felt very unsatisfied. ● When asked what they would like to see the Vernon parks and recreation add to the community, 12 responses included wanting to see more social events, and 7 wanted to see more facilities be renovated.
 - Environmental projects: 2
 - Better parking: 2
 - New walking paths
 - New/Improved bathrooms
 - Gazebo
 - Heritage Walk
 - Dog Park
 - Labor Day Event
- When asked what kinds of programs or activities they'd like to see at the local parks and facilities, 8 responded with a community garden, 8 responded with arts/crafts workshops, and 7 responded with athletic tournaments. ○ Educational workshops: 2

- Social Events (Euchre, Square Dancing, Field Day)
- Concerts/Performances
- Youth/Children centered activities
- History related activities
- More parking and space for events

The Commons:

- A majority feel that the conditions of The Commons are either fair (14) or perfectly maintained (4). 7 feel that the condition is average, and a combined total of 3 feel that it is either poor (2) or not at all maintained (1).
- When asked how often they visit this park, 17 responded they visit every so often, and 5 responded they visit regularly. 5 visit rarely, and 2 never visit.
- The improvement people would MOST like to see made is a renovated playground (10). 6 responded with better parking, 5 want better grass/yard maintenance, and 4 want better river/kayaking access.
 - Renovated basketball court: 2
 - Nature play space
 - Big slide
 - More attention to the area's history
- 26 respond that they do not experience any physical barriers keeping them from using the park, though 2 respond being unable to use the park due to broken equipment

The Art and History Park

- A majority feel that the conditions of The Art and History Park are either fair (13) or perfectly maintained (2). 8 feel that the condition is average, and 5 feel it is poor.
- When asked how often they visit this park, 12 responded they visit every so often, and 5 visit regularly. 8 visit rarely, and 4 never visit.
- The improvement people would MOST like to see made is more events/programs/activities (10). 6 answered they would like an improved walking path, 3 want a renovated playground, 2 want improved grass/yard maintenance, and 2 want better signage.
 - Gazebo
 - Benches
 - StoryWalk
 - More art
- 26 respond that they do not experience any physical barriers, though one person responds that they need more information about the park posted, and another needs a new/fixed play area.

The Vernon Gym:

- A majority feel that the conditions of The Vernon Gym are either fair (16) or perfectly maintained (6). 6 people feel that the condition is average, and only one person feels it is poor.
- When asked how often they visit this park, 17 people responded they visit this facility every so often, and 4 visit regularly. 8 visit rarely.
- The improvement people would MOST like to see made is more frequent events/programs/activities (13). Behind this, 6 want better parking, 3 want a renovated playground, 2 want renovated/new bathrooms, and 2 want a renovated basketball court.
 - Indoor playground
 - Kitchen
 - Noise suppression paneling
 - Ventilation system
- Of the 28 total responses, none reported having a physical barrier keeping them from using this facility.

Chris Asher, Curator at Jennings County Historical Society. Date: 7/16/2025

1. How would you describe your relationship with the Town of Vernon?
 - She has served as the board member of the Jennings County Historical Society since 1985. By doing this, she has been able to develop relationships with different local politicians.
2. How do you typically use the parks in Vernon?

- She partners with the Town of Vernon and asks permission from the town council in order to host events or complete projects. Some of these events include the Sassafrass festival and camping at the art park. Additionally, The Commons is used in order to do Ghost Walk.
3. What would improve your experience with the parks in Vernon?
- For the Art and History Park, there is a desperate need for a gazebo or some sort of shelter house. This way there will be a place for bands to perform, people to host programs or events, or just general community gatherings. People should be able to just sit and listen somewhere. There could also be vendors selling different kinds of items here.
 - For the Commons, it is currently hard to keep it maintained and mowed. There could be a better place for overflow parking, or at least designated parking for events and vendors. The Commons has pitiful parking, and people deserve to be able to park on the street.
4. How accessible do you consider the parks in Vernon to be?
- The Art and History Park is much easier to access for handicap users than the Commons. However, it is harder for wheelchair users due to the uneven ground and grass.
5. In the next five years, how do you see your relationship with the Vernon parks and programs developing or changing?
- The relationship is not likely to change. She loves Vernon. People love the historic element. She would just want to see more retail and shopping opportunities, like a bookstore and a coffee shop. There is no need for more food establishments. It seems that the gym and library stay pretty busy. The Historical Society is also well maintained. Perceptions Studio has good clients. It would be nice to see new and diverse things for people to do. Specifically more things for visitors.

Karen Chilman and Charlina Evans, Perceptions. Date: 7/22/2025

1. How would you describe your relationship with the Town of Vernon?
- They are partners with the Town of Vernon, working together on events, as well as helping to support the different places and programming within the community.
2. How do you typically use the parks in Vernon?
- The Lollygag event used all the parks in Vernon. This event incorporated different kinds of recreational activities with the community.
 - They are trying to work on the new art and history park. They try to use the parks and recreational spaces for events (fundraising events). This includes Courthouse Yoga. - One of the first people they talked to discussed putting art into local spaces. Now, they want to see more art integrated within the community. It would be ideal to start beautifying the local space.
3. What would improve your experience with the parks in Vernon?
- The newest park needs infrastructure improvement and more art made by local artists and community members.
 - The Art and History Park is going through too many names. How do we signify and label it? The historical part seems to be taking a back seat, specifically concerning the marking of why everything is there.
 - The Commons is improving with all the recent additions. However, the gym needs its indoor restrooms improved. The public needs better restrooms at Vernon facilities. It is good though that the library is there in the gym now.
 - Since Perceptions is listed as a partner for programming, it'd be good to host more events.
4. How accessible do you consider the parks in Vernon to be?
- There is not great accessibility, as parking is difficult to navigate for many people. Ribbon cutting events proved difficult for people to reach in terms of walking and parking. - The Commons is not too accessible, but now people can reach the restrooms. This park is

also dramatically better in terms of accessibility. The Labyrinth is concerning in terms of its walking accessibility.

5. In the next five years, how do you see your relationship with the Vernon parks and programs developing or changing?
 - Within the next five years, there should be more programming. This would be good since the town has been very open to increased programming. However, it cannot cost them money to continue doing this. They would need more space and resources as well.
Extra: They love the recent work the town has done, especially the crosswalk. People are beginning to heed it and it looks really good. There is still the question of how well Vernon will be able to keep up the momentum. It is likely that manpower is necessary for continuing that. They want to see the actual plan for maintenance as well. Finally, they feel Vernon Day of Caring, as well as other small events, are either not sufficient or not well promoted.

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

Seth Jones, JCPR Director (over email)

1. How would you describe your relationship with the Town of Vernon?
 - I've only been the Director for JCPR for seven months now, so my relationship with the Town of Vernon is quite new. All of my interactions, thus far, have been good.
2. How do you typically use the parks in Vernon?
 - The only time I've really made use of the parks was to take my kayak out of the Muscatatuck river at the Commons.
3. What would improve your experience with the parks in Vernon?
 - I have no suggestions at this time.
4. How accessible do you consider the parks in Vernon to be?
 - Adequate.
5. In the next five years, how do you see your relationship with the Vernon parks and programs developing or changing?
 - Continuing to grow, hopefully.

Parks and Recreation Five Year Master Plan

Bobby Willis, NVPR Director

1. How would you describe your relationship with the Town of Vernon?
 - There has not been a ton of collaboration thus far, though there are a lot of people working hard to connect everything. He expects there to be more collaboration in the future.
2. How do you typically use the parks in Vernon?
 - From a professional standpoint, they don't really use them.
 - From a personal standpoint, he goes a few times each few months or so.
3. What would improve your experience with the parks in Vernon?
 - Generally, collaboration would be helpful, since this would offer the communities more connectivity. A way to do this would be through collaborative events.
4. How accessible do you consider the parks in Vernon to be?
 - He considers the Vernon parks to be very accessible.
 - The parks would only need increased connectivity with the community and North Vernon.
5. In the next five years, how do you see your relationship with the Vernon parks

and programs developing or changing?

- He is very confident that the relationship will grow, and the two may become more involved within the county as a whole.
- From his perspective, there needs to be an open line of communication in order to provide the best services possible.

Town of Vernon

Parks Board

2025-2029 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Public Input Meeting Minutes

06-30-2025

6:00 PM

Vawter Recreational Complex

Park Board Members in Attendance:

Matt Robinson, Davey Shaw, Kari Gosman, Wayne Zamora

Materials Presented:

- Paper sheet to write comments for discussion
- Sign in sheet
- Paper copy of survey
- QR Code for online version of survey
- Paper copy of discussion outline for meeting

Discussion and Comments:

- Session began with introduction of the parks board, the master plan, and the purpose of the public input meeting. The discussion would first go park by park, and then have a final comment period towards the end of the meeting.
- Beginning with The Commons, it was first suggested for there to be a boat ramp by the commons.
- Another suggests for the playground equipment by the commons to be updated, as well as the shelter house, as to match the renovated/new bathrooms. The pollinator garden may also be used instead for picnics or other recreational activities.
- Has largely been found important to improve the accessibility of The Commons playset. Gravel is not considered an accessible piece of equipment. Future additions to equipment should include steps, since no person could be wheeled up to the playset. The accessibility could be helped by replacing the gravel with a specific kind of mulch.
- A natural play space was suggested to be added at The Commons.
- The pollinator area at The Commons may be made smaller.
- May be necessary to better maintain the labyrinth at The Commons.
- Several attendees find it important to increase the signage for boat ramps and kayaking. This may help kayakers navigate the river.
- Mentioned for a community garden space/picnic space to be created at The Commons. - One attendee suggested hosting a 1-2 day long labor day festival in Vernon, which could include vendors down by The Commons, and then blocking off Brown Street for yard sales. - Moving on to The Art and History Park, it was suggested for the walking path to be improved. - For beautification, a flower bed could be made around the new sculpture at The Art and History Park (real flowers). This could help to ensure people know where the park starts and stops. - Another suggestion is to add a gazebo at Art and History Park. This could possibly act as a stage for events like the Sassafras Festival.
- In general, it may be helpful to increase the amount of flowers around the town. - Possibly have a flower drive to add to Art and History Park, or just general public spaces. - Improve the signage at The Art and History Park, which may mean creating signage for a clearer address/boundary, especially in the case of community events.

Town of Vernon

Parks Board
2025-2029 Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Public Input Meeting Minutes
06-30-2025
6:00 PM

Vawter Recreational Complex

- Possibly add historical markers at The Art and History park, or something to tell the stories of the benches at the park.
- Create a “Rat Row” plaque to honor the local history, as well as art pieces/sculptures at this property. With this, the public wants to see more public art, mostly to better showcase local art and history. We potentially could create a system for this in which we all build on the work of the former, as a kind of community group project.
- Potentially create a picnic pad where a bench at The Art and History Park used to be located. - Possibly begin organizing a Christmas market/Halloween walkthrough event at the Art and History Park.
- The Art and History Park may have the Boyd Family partner to have pumpkins lined along the park in the fall.
- Increase infrastructure at Art and History Park.
- Moving onto The Vernon Gym, it was first suggested to pave the alley used to enter the property. - Possibly squeeze in a sidewalk alongside The Vernon Gym, as to protect pedestrians walking around the alley.
- Add new front doors and have them be usable, as right now they are currently only available as an emergency exit. For the aesthetics, front doors should be restored.
- Only keep one point of access into The Vernon Gym (current entrance).
- Possibly plant wildflowers along the front side of The Vernon Gym.
- Create better signage for the interior of The Vernon Gym, that way people will know how to get in, as well as navigate once they are actually inside.
- Increase signage to let people know how to actually enter the Vernon Gym facility
- Paint windows to make the inside of The Vernon Gym look more cheerful.
- Install a better ventilation system inside The Vernon Gym. Possible a better exhaust system if the installation of an AC system is not possible.
- Possibly create a patio area that has a seating wall (around where the dumpster is), which may then face the soccer field.
- In terms of programming, the town could host a square dance/line dance activity at The Vernon Gym. Also suggested for a community dance to be hosted here.
- Other possible events could include trivia night or euchre nights at The Vernon Gym.
- Possibly host a fundraiser concert at The Vernon Gym.
- To help with staffing issues, potentially collect volunteers from the community that may once a month help clean up the community. This could be turned into a kind of community project. - One attendee recommended a need for better publicization of town events.
- Possible benefit to be gained from increasing the partnership with the Boys Scouts. - A question was introduced of how to have open hours for The Vernon Gym (volunteers, interns, parks board members?).
- Add a projector to the main gym facility, so the town could host family movie nights. - Possibly add concessions tables/stands, which could help take care of general Vernon Gym operations.

Town of Vernon Parks Board 2025-2029
Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Public Input Meeting Minutes
06-30-2025 6:00 PM

Vawter Recreational Complex

- The attendees and board members were all given an opportunity to make any additional comments, even if not about a particular park.
- Moving the discussion back onto The Commons, one attendee suggested having this property be the main base for large community events, such as box car racing.
- The trails may be a good viewing spot for community events.
- Opportunities for boat racing may be enhanced around the trails. Possibly use the new trail project for boating or kayaking.
- Possibly block off the alley from cars, and use it for walking into The Vernon Gym instead.
- Increase parking at The Vernon Gym.
- Install solar lights at the Alley to enhance the lighting (not the alley by the Gym, but the actual park property).
- In general, it is necessary to have actual power at The Alley (better/improved infrastructure). - Suggested to add something at The Alley, as to better grab the attention of the community. - As we renovate The Vernon Gym, they may possibly add murals that look like the old windows of the school building.

**ASSURANCE OF ACCESSIBILITY COMPLIANCE WITH:
ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS ACT of 1968 (As Amended);
SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (As Amended);
AND TITLE II OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990
(As Amended)**

The Town of Vernon, Indiana (Applicant) has read the guidelines for compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (As Amended); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (As Amended); and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (As Amended) and will comply with the applicable requirements of these Acts.

SIGNATURE 

APPLICANT ~~PRESIDENT~~
Mayor
Bradley R. Bender

(President's printed name)

SIGNATURE _____

(Secretary's printed name)

DATE October 22, 2025

ORDINANCE NO. 186-2024

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION AND REPEAL OF ALL
ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT THEREWITH.

WHEREAS, the Town owns scenic and historic property and intends to see this property maintained and improved in a manner that benefits the public for the purposes of recreation. It is hereby ordained by the Common Council of the Town, that:

Section I

Under the provision of I.C. 36-10-3, with modifications due to Vernon's Town Charter and the judgement of the Indiana Supreme Court in 1948, there is hereby created a municipal Department of Parks and Recreation.

Section II

A park and recreation board shall be composed of:

1. Four members appointed by the executive and approved by a majority vote of the Common Council on the basis of their interest in and knowledge of parks and recreation. No more than two members shall be of the same political party.

Section III

Upon establishment of the board, the terms of its members shall be as follows:

1. One member for a term of one year.
2. One member for a term of two years.
3. One member for a term of three years.
4. One member for a term of four years.

As a term expires, each new appointment shall be made by the mayor for a four-year term contingent on the approval of the appointment by a majority vote of the Town Council. All terms expire on the first Monday in January, but a member shall continue in office until his or her successor is appointed. If an appointment for a new term is not made by the executive by the first Monday in April, the incumbent shall serve another term. If a vacancy occurs, the executive shall appoint a new member for the remainder of the un-expired term.

Section IV

At its first regular meeting in each year, the Board shall elect a president and vice-president and liaison. The vice president shall have authority to act as the president of the board during the absence or disability of the president. The liaison shall attend public meetings of the Common Council of the Town on a regular basis to maintain communication between the two bodies. The board may select a secretary from within or without its own membership.

Section V

The Board shall have the power to perform all acts necessary to acquire and develop sites and facilities and to conduct such programs as are generally understood to be park and recreation functions. In addition, the board shall have all the powers and duties listed I.C. 36-10-3.

Section VI

The Board shall prepare and submit an annual budget in the same manner as other departments in the city government as prescribed by the State Board of Accounts. The Board may accept gifts, donation, and subsidies for park and recreation purposes. A non-reverting fund for the Parks board shall be set up within the Town's fiscal structure. Any spending by the Board will be limited to less than \$750 in a single expense. Expenses larger than \$750 must be approved by a majority vote of the Common Council of the Town.

Section VII

All other ordinances, resolutions, or parts thereof in conflict with the provisions and intent of this ordinance are hereby repealed.

Section VIII

This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, and approval, according to the laws of the State of Indiana.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Council of the Town of Vernon, Indiana this 11th day of April, 2024.

COUNCIL MEMBERS, TOWN OF VERNON

John Post

John Post, 1st Ward

Jeff Walker

Jeff Walker, 2nd Ward

Amber Fields

Amber Fields, 3rd Ward

Wayne Zamora

Wayne Zamora, Mayor

APPROVED AND SIGNED BY ME THIS 11th DAY OF April, 2024.

Mary Jo Bender

Mary Jo Bender, Clerk Treasurer

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Park Board for the Town of Vernon, Indiana will conduct a public hearing on Monday, April 6, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. in the meeting room of the Vernon Gymnasium in Vernon, Indiana regarding adoption for five (5) year master plan. The regular meeting will take place at the conclusion of the public hearing.

DATED: March 20, 2026.

Bradley Kage,
Attorney for Town of Vernon, Indiana

Publish Once

Pursuant to the public hearing Notice copied above, the Public Hearing was called to order at 6:00pm.

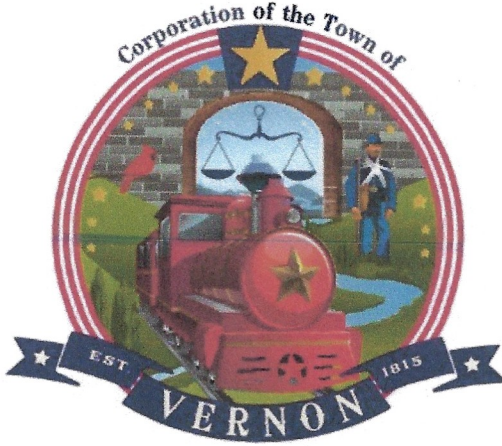
There were no members of the public present other than the Mayor as an elected official.

It was noted that the document had been posted on the Town website for review, and no written comments were submitted.

There being no further discussion, the public hearing was closed, and the regular meeting started.



Kari Gosman - Secretary



TOWN OF VERNON, INDIANA
PARK BOARD
RESOLUTION 2026- 1

A Resolution of the Town of Vernon Park Board to adopt the five(5) year Master Plan

WHEREAS, the Town of Vernon has prepared a plan for the future use, enjoyment, and improvements to the park system;

WHEREAS, a draft format of the plan was submitted in November 2025 to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR);

WHEREAS, revision were made according to the comments from IDNR;

WHEREAS, public input was solicited throughout the process, both prior to development, and at conclusion;

and WHEREAS, a public hearing was advertised and held on April 6, 2026 for the adoption of the final plan;

BE IT NOW RESOLVED that the Park Board of the Town of Vernon hereby adopts and accepts **THE TOWN OF VERNON PARKS AND RECREATION FIVE YEAR MASTER PLAN**

Dated: April 6, 2026

Mandell Gomers

Kari L Grossman

MR
