

Community Description

Location

The City of Charlevoix is the County seat of Charlevoix County, and is located on the northwestern coast of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The City is bordered both to the north and south by Charlevoix Township, to the west by the waters of Lake Michigan, and to the east by Lake Charlevoix. Round Lake and the Pine River Channel, which flow between Lake Michigan and Lake Charlevoix through Round Lake, bisect the City. The location of the City can be found on Map 1, below

The City of Charlevoix is not directly accessible from the interstate highway system; however, U.S. I-75 is approximately 40 miles east of the City, and provides access to the urbanized areas of southeast Michigan. U.S. 131 is easily accessible from Charlevoix and is a major link to Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and other urbanized areas of western Michigan. U.S. 31, state highway M-66, and M-32 together provide access to Charlevoix; these state highways also offer easy access to northwest and north central Michigan.

Map 1 - Location



City Character and Land Use

The Central Business District in downtown Charlevoix is considered the economic and social focal point of the area. This district includes several parks, highlighted by East Park, which is considered by many to be the most important park facility in the City. This is due to the marina and numerous events held there. Commercial and office space, outside of the Central Business District, is primarily located adjacent to US 31, which bisects the City to the north and south. The Ance Industrial Park, on the north side of the City, is identified as a prime location for future manufacturing, technology and light industrial businesses.

The majority of the City's lands are used for residential purposes, including a mix of single family, resort single family, and multiple family dwellings in the form of condominiums and apartment buildings. Residential neighborhoods are dominant and largely built out. In the coming years, the City's development trends will most likely be concentrated in redevelopment of existing properties

The City of Charlevoix is typical of many Northern Michigan communities where there is a large resort population and significant numbers of transient tourists. Consequently, the real user population for the City's recreational lands and facilities is far greater than the City's permanent population. In addition to the seasonal users, the surrounding townships also use City lands and facilities. This fact also gives a dual purpose to the City's recreational lands and facilities. While providing for the demand for recreation spaces, they also bolster the City economically. This is particularly true of Lake Michigan and Lake Charlevoix public beaches, along with the municipal marina facilities.

Transportation

The City of Charlevoix includes transportation options not typically available for a City of its size. The City owns and operates a regional municipal airport, a marina, busses operated by the Charlevoix County Transit Authority. Additionally, Amtrak connects Charlevoix to large metropolitan cities. The City's proximity to numerous navigable waterways provides opportunity for vessels of varying sizes to access Charlevoix and the surrounding area. Transportation within the City also includes exclusive services to and from Beaver Island. Charlevoix's municipal airport serves as a base for two, year round commercial flight services to the island. Downtown Charlevoix is also home to a commercial ferry service which provides seasonal daily trips to Beaver Island.



Demographics

Population

According to the Census Bureau's 2010 estimate, the City of Charlevoix had a population of 2,513, a 16.1% decrease since 2000, which could be attributed to the economic downturn and closing of several local companies. However, in 2014, the Census Bureau estimates the population in the City to be 2,540. In contrast, nearby townships experienced growth rather than decline in the same time period. This trend is potentially due to the draw of rural living and lower annual property taxes. The decrease in the City's population indicates Charlevoix has the capacity to handle a population much greater than that which exists today. While this is not an area Recreation Plan, many residents in Charlevoix Township use the City parks. Therefore, the combined population of both the City and Township is 4,158. These populations, combined with the seasonal users, create a dramatic difference in park usage.

Table 1 below, provides other significant 2014 ACS and 2010 Census data for the City, Charlevoix Township, Charlevoix County, and the State. Of these four jurisdictions, the City's percentage of population 65 and older is the largest at 23.6%. Conversely, the City has the smallest population of residents younger than 19. It is important to remember that these numbers only pertain to City residents, not the seasonal population, therefore these percentages are not representative of the population throughout the year, just of the year-long residents. It will be important to cater to both full-time residents and seasonal visitors as well, when looking to the future of recreation planning. According to estimates, the City's population experiences nearly a three-fold increase in the summer months. The ever-changing population can have a significant impact on the demand for recreational services and infrastructure.

Other important demographic characteristics to consider include residents with disabilities, median age, renter occupied housing, and seasonal housing. Of the four jurisdictions, the City has the largest population of civilian non-institutionalized individuals with a disability at 22.4%. The median age in the City is 48.1 years. Of the four jurisdictions, the City has the oldest median age, which corresponds to the large population of individuals over 65 mentioned above. Finally, housing is an important factor to consider. Of the occupied housing units in the City, 46.5% are renter occupied. Of the four jurisdictions, the City has the largest amount of renters, almost two times as many renters than the second highest rental market, the State. Another measurement to consider is the seasonal housing stock. The Census measures occupied and vacant units, and of the vacant units 82.5% are seasonal homes. Of the four jurisdictions, the City also has the largest percentage of seasonal homes, with the County having 81%. More demographic information can be found in Appendix A.

Table 1 – Select Demographics

Select Census Data for Charlevoix, Charlevoix Township, Charlevoix County, and Michigan				
	Charlevoix	Charlevoix Township	Charlevoix County	Michigan
Population- 2010 Census	2,513	1,645	25,949	9,883,640
Population- 2014 estimate	2,540	-	26,238	9,922,576
% of Population 65 & older	23.6%	22.9%	18.6%	13.8%
% of Population under 19	19.7%	23.6%	24.0%	26.8%
% of Civilian non-institutionalized population with a disability	22.4%	13.3%	15.2%	13.9%
Median Age	48.1	47.5	45.5	38.9
% with a Bachelor's Degree or higher	37.9%	34.9%	21.0%	25.7%
Median Household Income	\$32,868	\$49,000	\$46,709	\$47,175
Per Capita Income	\$29,427	\$27,328	\$27,231	\$24,997
Average Household Size	1.94	2.34	2.36	2.49
Median Housing Value	\$165,900	\$166,100	\$149,700	\$119,200
Renter-occupied housing as % of total Occupied Units	46.5%	8.1%	18.6%	27.3%
Seasonal Housing as % of total vacant housing units	82.5%	74.9%	81.0%	39.9%
Data from the 2014 ACS and the 2010 Decennial Census				

Based upon the analysis of demographic and social characteristics above, there are 5 specific population groups who have distinct needs for recreational facilities and programs. However, before each specific population is explained, it is important to consider the median household income in Charlevoix. Of the four jurisdictions, the City has the smallest median income. Individuals and families with smaller incomes have less discretionary and disposable spending money, meaning they have an even smaller percent of money to spend on recreation. Therefore, it is important that the residents have good quality public recreation options close to home, because there is a smaller chance that these individuals will be able to seek out more expensive options further from home.

The five populations to consider are as follows:

Youth – The younger population makes up just under 20% of the population in the City of Charlevoix. However, this number is not representative of the youth population in the summer. Many of the seasonal residents are families who bring their children. This would create a much more intense need of youth recreation activities in the high season. It is also important to note that these two populations have somewhat different recreation needs. While the seasonal residents need recreation amenities in the summertime, permanent youths will need year-round activities, amenities, and programs. Youth populations benefit from recreational options and organized or unorganized athletic activities, providing them with opportunities for exercise, community engagement, and education.

Senior Citizens – The senior citizen population in Charlevoix represents almost a quarter of the population. This is only representative of the permanent residents; this group of individuals is another that will exponentially increase in the high season. Seniors have different needs in recreation facilities than other age groups, (for example, pathways vs playgrounds), and those on fixed incomes may need low-cost recreational opportunities.

Population with a disability – The population with a disability makes up 22% of the population in the City. Disabled populations are often the most unheard voice, and are also most reliant upon government to advocate for their needs. These individuals need park facilities that are accessible to their needs and the City will need to work to provide equal access recreation opportunities.

Residents in multi-family housing, apartments, and renters in general - Residents in high-density housing or multi-family housing have a greater need for open space and recreational facilities compared to those in single-family households because they often do not have large yards or open areas of their own. Almost half of the population in the City of Charlevoix rents property, therefore they will need access to high quality recreation.

Seasonal population – Of all of the vacant housing units in the City, 82.5% are categorized as seasonal housing. This means that over 80% of vacant housing in the City, are second homes. Often seasonal visitors are families and bring in 3 or more individuals to the City. Additionally, the majority of individuals have second homes in Charlevoix because of the beauty of the area and the existing recreation options. Because these people are such a strong economic driver for both the City and the region, it is important that the recreation facilities remain up to the standards they have come to expect.

Parks have the ability to create a multigenerational link between individuals in these four groups, and across all demographic groups. They provide gathering places, make exercise opportunities available, promote civic participation, and improve the quality of life in an area.



Natural Features Inventory

Environment

The City of Charlevoix Recreation Master Plan incorporates the environment as a valued resource that should be protected and enhanced by recreational opportunities and programs.

Climate

On any given day, Charlevoix is highly susceptible to quick, sudden changes in the weather. The City's proximity to Lake Michigan sets it and other coastal cities apart from inland communities. The lake keeps the area warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer, with less rainfall than locations further in-land. Like many communities with an economy based on tourism and recreation, climate can be both a boon and bust. During the summer, weather can influence the number of tourists or seasonal property owners visiting Charlevoix, and in the winter the amount and duration of snow can impact the operation of local ski hills and resorts.

Water

Charlevoix has a unique connection with its surrounding water bodies. The lakes and the channel help make up much of Charlevoix's character, and influence the City far beyond aesthetic value. Great care must be taken to ensure the quality, availability, and beauty of this valued resource is enhanced by our parks, recreational opportunities, and programs. This philosophy has already influenced the design of community investments such as the Charlevoix City Marina, which is certified as a "Clean Marina," awarded by the Michigan Sea Grant with support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association. In addition, the redevelopment of East Park was designed to respect the qualities of Round Lake. Consequently, the impact on water quality by these two projects was carefully considered and greatly reduced.

Fishing is an important recreational activity providing an economic boost with the local fishing tournaments and launch fees from fishing boats. A parcel of land next to the US Coast Guard Station (Coast Guard Park), which has yet to be developed with a dock, was purchased by the City with the intent of creating fishing opportunities for youth. Recreational fishing opportunities are enhanced with good water quality and habitat, which is another reason to protect water resources.

Shores and Shorelines

Generally, area soils are sandy loam and present slight limitations to development. The potential instability of disturbed slopes reinforces the importance of employing soil erosion and slope stabilization techniques into the design of any waterfront recreation features. The trend of beach grooming has also played a part in altering native wildlife habitats and planting exotic vegetation has helped spread invasive plant species, including purple loosestrife and phragmites. This is less of an issue in the City with the well-established beaches on Lake Michigan and Lake Charlevoix.

Sand Dunes

The size and scale of the sand dunes on Lake Michigan adjacent to Mt. McSauba span over a mile of shoreline. Given their unique qualities and community value, recreational activities must not destroy or adversely affect them. These areas are highly valued by both private property owners and the general public for recreation and scenic beauty. Although these dunes are partially located in Charlevoix Township, the City should nevertheless be concerned with their long term protection and preservation.

Specifically, activities such as the new disc golf course and hiking at Mt. McSauba should not alter the balance of the sand dunes and associated native vegetation.

Trees and Woodlands

Most forests have disappeared from the City of Charlevoix during more than a century of development. The most heavily forested areas currently include Chicago Club's Old Island, the Michigan Beach Park on the north side of Park Street and the Belvedere Club's private recreation area. Mt. McSauba retains a number of areas of forest that significantly contributes to the natural quality of this park facility.

Map 2 further illustrates the wooded land located both, within the City of Charlevoix and the surrounding Township. While studying parks and recreation it is worthwhile to have an understanding of the natural areas in a community. This map highlights areas that may need to be protected or conserved, especially in a city like Charlevoix where space is at a premium because of the location. It will be important to consider these areas when guiding development in the future. There are three types of forests that are highlighted in this map:

1. Deciduous Forests are dominated by trees which shed foliage in response to seasonal change
2. Evergreen Forests are dominated by trees that maintain their leaves all year
3. Mixed Forest which are areas where neither deciduous nor evergreen green trees dominated one over the other in the landscape.

The majority of the natural areas on this map are already natural protected lands or are private clubs. But those that are not, will be important to keep in mind in the future.

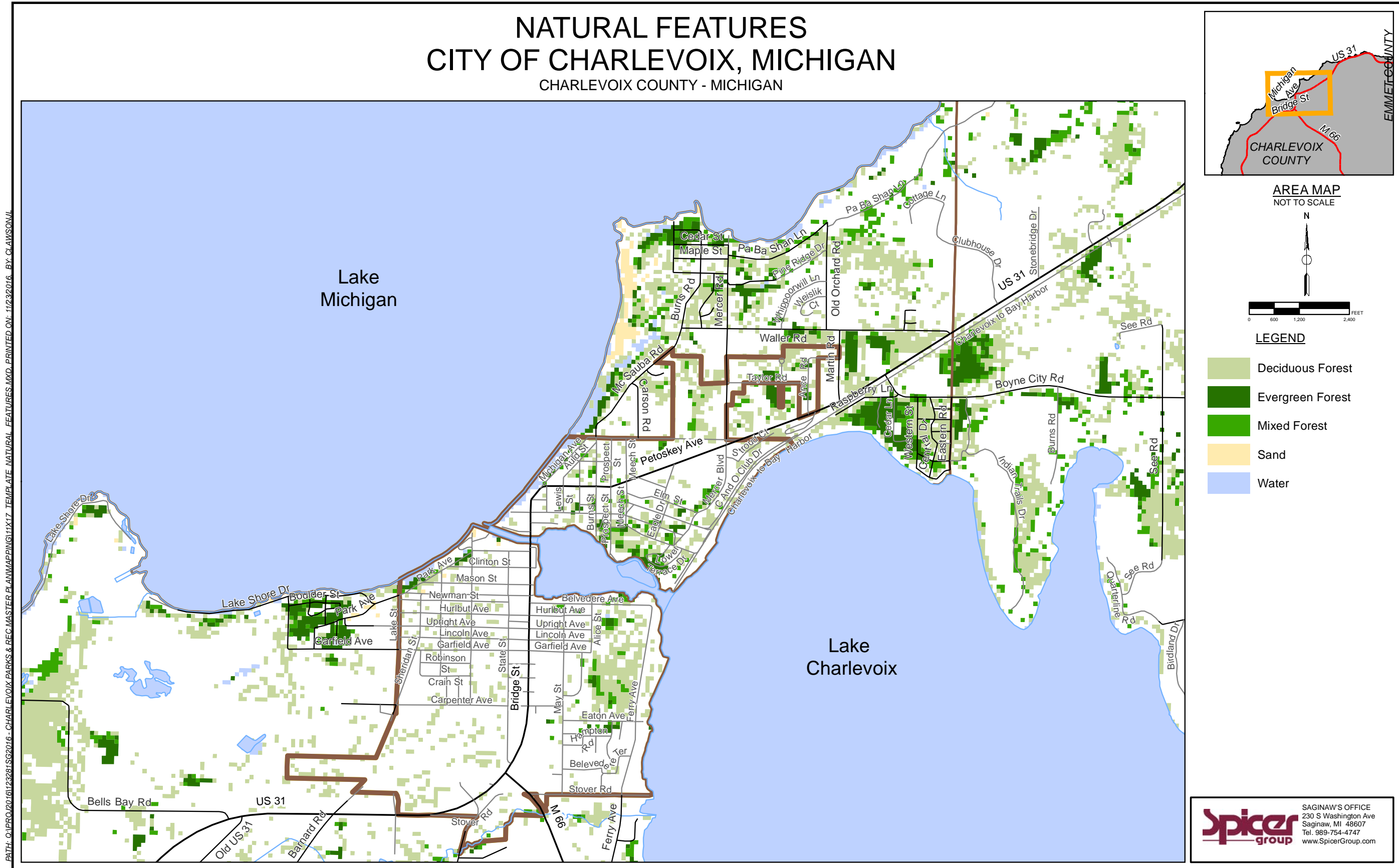
Due to the importance of urban forestry, Charlevoix has established a Shade Tree Commission, as well as an Adopt-a-Tree program, to protect and to help replace trees when they need to be taken down, or when they are lost to disease or storms. While trees are important community assets, it is also recognized that infrastructure maintenance and public safety requires trimming, pruning, and in some instances tree removal. The Shade Tree Commission has two volunteer Landscape Architects who provide professional advice on choice of species and maintenance following National Arborist Association Standards. In addition, the City has been a member of the Tree City USA program for the over 20 years. This national program provides local education, financial assistance, and many other benefits for our urban forestry program. The Shade Tree Commission should play an integral role in the proper pruning and removal of dead trees, specifically at Mt. McSauba and Michigan Beach Park.



NATURAL FEATURES

CITY OF CHARLEVOIX, MICHIGAN

CHARLEVOIX COUNTY - MICHIGAN



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