

**The Royal Oak Nature Society Master Plans for
Cunnington Park, Tenhave Woods
and The Arboretum at Worden Park East
Version 3
*December 2, 2009***

*Questions or comments may be submitted
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Preface

Tenhave Woods and Cummington Park are the jewels of the Royal Oak park system. The development that started almost 200 years ago with the first settlers, has taken this land from a wilderness to an urban environment. The amount of tree, shrub and wild flower species found in the two parks is amazing. I have been a Scout leader for over 40 years and have taught natural history in literally hundreds of forest campsites. Yet in the middle of Royal Oak, our two nature parks put all those forest campsites to shame. Our parks currently allow just a short walk to teach about Oak-Hickory, Beech-Maple and Southern Swamp communities. Aside from their value for teaching natural history both parks have a link to human history as they are remnant wood lots from the first farms within our city.

With this said, both parks have suffered due to the urban development that has occurred over half a century, however, it is not too late. With the commitment of the City and its residents, the Royal Oak Nature Society has made considerable effort to protect and restore the biospheres of the parks. We have at the same time made the parks much more available to the public and started development to turn them into world class educational facilities. It is important to make sure that the quality of these fragile parks is maintained for future generations. The parks are not only natural history classrooms, but windows through which to view what Royal Oak was like before its development.

*Robert Muller
Royal Oak Nature Society Naturalist*

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Introduction

In 2002, the Royal Oak Nature Society's completed its' first Master Plan. Because goals over the years are completed, changed or new ones added, the Nature Society in 2008 began revising the 2002 plan. Please review the new Master Plan (version 3.0) to find out what our goals are for these three Royal Oak natural areas: Cummingston Park, Tenhave Woods and the Arboretum in Worden Park East. Please feel free to make comments. Your input is important and will be taken into consideration as we continue to plan the future of these areas.

Continue Support of the "1999 Royal Oak Parks & Recreation Master Plan"

The Royal Oak Nature Society Master Plan for the Cummingston Park and Tenhave Woods directly supports goals and objectives listed in the 1999 Royal Oak Parks and Recreation Master Plan as excerpted below:

-Page 57: Analysis of Existing Facilities of Special Use/Conservancy Parks

"Interpretive signage and kiosks, accessible parking and pathways, and annual programs should be provided at each of these facilities. Nature and conservancy groups should be brought together to develop a program and master plan for proper development and enhancement of these facilities".

- Page 60: Recreation Deficiencies

"Safety and the perception of safety are important to increasing the use of existing parks." The Royal Oak Nature Society will utilize the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) concepts outlined to help address safety issues.

- Page 61 and 62: Program Goals and Objectives for Programming

"Seek alternative funding for services in order to increase revenue, and decrease general fund contribution through requests to service clubs, private sector and professional organizations for sponsorships of various programs".

- Page 63: Program Goals and Objectives for Facilities

"Improve and enhance the educational opportunities at Quickstad and Cummingston Park".

- Page 66: Summary of Action Items for Nature/Ecological Facilities and Programs

The need most requested in the survey was the development of a Nature Center both as an indoor facility and a new program. Recommendations were to add educational signage in parks, coordinate with school district to expand existing programs, create advisory/feasibility committee based on high amount of interest."

Increase Community Use of Tenhave Woods, Cummingston Park & Worden Park East Arboretum

Many Royal Oak residents still do not realize these nature preserves exist. It is the goal of the Nature Society to improve the natural management of these park lands so they continue to be vibrant spaces in the community and continue to be utilized for both nature education and recreation.

Educational programs are managed by the Program and Education Committees.

The **Program Committee** focuses on environmental education for the general public. It has been providing services, free of charge, since the spring of 2001. Their current services are listed below.

- **Nature Walks:** The Nature Society currently runs a series of free nature walks for the public year round in each park. There is no operating cost for this program. Walks are lead by Royal Oak Nature Society Naturalist volunteers. We plan to establish a naturalist training program.
- **Speaker Series:** Nature Society currently provides monthly speaker series (September to June) on nature based topics. These programs are held at the Royal Oak Middle School and are generally designed for people 10 years and older. The first several minutes before the beginning of the speaker program is considered the General Meeting for the Royal Oak Nature Society. Currently, there is no cost associated with these programs. Normally, 25 to 60 people attend each monthly program. The purpose of these programs is not only to educate the community about nature but to make them aware of Royal Oak's natural areas.
- **Programming for Outside Organizations:** The Nature Society provides help in creating programs utilizing the natural areas to meet the needs of outside organizations (Garden Clubs, Scout groups).

The **Education Committee** focuses on outreach to the local schools. The committee conducted a survey of grade school teachers in the Royal Oak School District. The purpose of the survey was to determine what type of environmental education outreach programs our organization could provide for teachers. The results determined three areas that the Education Committee will work with schools to provide:

- **Guest Speakers** (naturalists) to present programs to students in the classroom
- **Naturalist**-guided field trip in the parks
- **Nature Night** programs that teach environmental education to children and their families through the use of nature based displays and activities.

We also want to increase the positive usage of these three parks on a daily-basis. This will be done through creating a safe environment. New access points and trail systems at each park that encourage traffic through the parks, signage, and ongoing community events help achieve this goal.

What Will the Park Improvements Cost?

The overall costs for the improvements may be low because labor will be completed by volunteers, unless it is a technical or dangerous job. In addition, we will use natural materials to build the trail system. The following are estimates of the cost of action items:

Fund to Pay for Speakers	\$600/year
Fund to Cover Printing/Mail	\$300/year
Fund for Education Projects	\$250/year
Fund for Excavation Equipment	\$500/year

Cummingston Park - Master Plan

The following table breaks down the areas of work to be accomplished with specific action items: a timeframe for completing the task

- Immediate =Within One Year
- Short= 1 to 5 Years (before December 31, 2014)
- Long = Beyond 5 Years (2015 & beyond)

Area	Action Item	Time Frame	Comments
Drainage	The west side of the park still has flooding and needs drainage corrections.	Immediate	\$12,000 equip. rental
General Layout	Develop a prairie restoration replacing the grassy area at the southeast corner of the park.	Long	
General Layout	Hard dirt trails should be 4' to 8' wide with brush cleared 8' high overhead.	Ongoing	
General Layout	Continue to try to bring the nature trails into ADA compliance.	Ongoing	
General Layout	Research the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and try to meet them.	Ongoing	Also applies to Tenhave Woods
Enhancements	Add signs on 14 Mile near Leafdale and Torquay directing visitors to the park.	Short	City to add signs
Enhancements	Maintain bird feeder system in the park.	Short	\$300/yr
Enhancements	Map park with GPS (includes trails, trees & plants) & make available to the public at entrance, on our website, etc.)	Short	
Enhancements	Purchase Plexiglas enclosed display case with trail maps, tree & plant location maps, nature walk & speaker program schedule & list of service organizations etc. that are maintaining the trail system.	Long-	
Enhancements	Investigate augmenting and restoring the native plant community, and decide on a policy.	Short	Also applies to Tenhave Woods
Fencing	Repair fencing around the south, west and north side of the park. Install fence on east end of park.	Long	
Fencing	Remove the middle fence that runs north/south.	Long	
Fencing	Add a gate to the fence on Meijer Drive at the Crawfish Pond.	Short	
Maintenance	Continue to update the flora and fauna survey of the park.	Ongoing	
Maintenance	Identify and remove invasive plants. We need to ramp-up efforts on invasive plant control.	Ongoing	This is a serious problem & should be a top priority.
Maintenance	Maintain trail system.	Ongoing	

Tenhave Woods in Quickstad Park - Master Plan

- Immediate = Within One Year
- Short = 1 to 5 Years (before December 31, 2014)
- Long = Beyond 5 Years (2015 & beyond)

Area	Action Item	Time Frame	Comments
General Layout	Continue to try to bring the nature trails into ADA Compliance	Ongoing	
General Layout	Hard dirt trails should be 4' to 8' wide with brush cleared 8' high overhead.	Ongoing	
General Layout	Remove trees and shrubs along the along the west fence line to allow more sunlight on the pond.	Ongoing	
Enhancements	Signage: Add numbered identification posts, elevate identification & directional signs and maps for people using the nature trails to help them identify trees, shrubs and flowers.	Ongoing	\$1,000
Enhancements	Move bird feeder close to the pond.	Immediate	
Enhancements	Maintain bird feeder system in the park.	Ongoing	\$300/yr
Enhancements	Build a sidewalk from the main sidewalk up to the Normandy entrance turnstile	Short	\$\$\$\$
Enhancements	Make a wooden sign with park rules at Normandy entrance	Immediate	\$\$\$ (identical to the one at the Lexington entrance)
Enhancements	Map the park with GPS (include trails, trees & plants) and make the map available to the public at the park entrance and on our website.	Immediate	To research & purchase a GPS unit \$\$\$
Enhancements	Purchase a Plexiglas enclosed-display case with plant location maps, nature walks and speaker programs, schedule and list of service organizations that are maintaining the trail system.	Short	\$\$\$\$
Fencing	Make repairs to existing fences, especially at the bottom where domestic animals can enter the park.	Short	
Fencing	If necessary, increase height of fences adjacent to residences to 8 feet to keep deer out of park.	Long	
Maintenance	Update the flora and fauna survey of the park.	Ongoing	
Maintenance	Fill in unauthorized man-made holes.	Ongoing	
Maintenance	Maintain trail system.	Ongoing	
Maintenance	Identify and remove invasive plants. We need to ramp-up efforts on invasive plant control.	Ongoing	This is a serious problem & should be a top priority.

Arboretum at Worden Park East - Master Plan

- Immediate = Within One Year
- Short= 1 to 5 Years (before December 31, 2014)
- Long = Beyond 5 Years (2015 & beyond)

Area	Action Item	Time Frame	Comments
General Layout	Describe plans for completion of trail system. Develop a landscape plan.	Immediate	
General Layout	Work with other groups to achieve the goals of creating and maintaining the Arboretum.	Ongoing	
Enhancements	Map park with GPS (includes trails, trees & plants) and make maps available to the public at the park entrance, and on our website.	Immediate	
Enhancements	Purchase Plexiglas-enclosed-display case with information about the Arboretum.	Long	
Enhancements	Install a storage unit adjacent to the Senior Center to store supplies in.	Immediate	\$\$\$
Enhancements	Plant appropriate woody and herbaceous plants. Adopt an Arboretum Collections Policy.	Ongoing	Refer to website: http://www.aza.org/R/C/PlantCollPolicy/
Enhancements	Signage: Add numbered identification posts, elevated identification & directional signs and maps for people using the nature trails to help them identify trees, shrubs and flowers	Ongoing	
Irrigation	Install water spigot stations at a number of locations to enable easy watering of plants.	Immediate	City will do it
Maintenance	Continue to update the flora and fauna survey of the park.	Ongoing	
Maintenance	Identify and remove invasive and aggressive plants, including poison ivy.	Ongoing	
Maintenance	Remove hazardous dead trees and woody debris	Ongoing	
Maintenance	Partner with other organizations to provide ongoing maintenance (gardening).	Ongoing	

Nature Center Master Plan

Our long term goal is to build an Environmental Education Center. This Project needs discussion and planning, with identification of location, milestones, a time line and funding.

Revision Notes

Version	Date	Content Changes
1.0	December 4, 2001	
2.0	March 4, 2002	-Added <i>What Will Park Improvements Cost?</i> ; -Added specific costs to park description tables; -Updated the Organization of the Royal Oak Nature Society to reflect election of Board; -Grammar and format changes
3.0	December 2009	Complete revision of version 2.0