

RECREATION BOND – 1988

In the 1980s, the population growth and housing development in the City of Rochester Hills was rapidly accelerating. The passage of the 1988 Recreation Bond issue provided \$9 million and a rare window of opportunity “to purchase lands for, to develop parks for, and to improve existing park or recreational facilities in the City of Rochester Hills” – an opportunity that would provide active and passive recreation for all the residents of our community. This funding source presented a means to purchase more than 460 acres of land on eight new sites at a cost of \$6.3 million. The new parklands included:

- 143 acres at the southeast corner of Hamlin and John R that is now Earl E. Borden Park.
- 70 acres along the Clinton River, north of Hamlin and between Crooks and Adams, that has been named Riverbend Park. This property is currently undeveloped.
- 5 acres at the southeast corner of Avon and Livernois that is now Veterans Memorial Pointe.
- 13 acres at the southwest corner of Avon and Livernois, expanding the Avon Nature Area along the Clinton River. The property included existing buildings, one of which now houses our Environmental Education Center.
- 10 acres on Tienken Road, west of Adams, currently undeveloped.
- 25 acres on the east side of Adams Road, south of Tienken, that has been named Eugene S. Nowicki Park, currently undeveloped.
- 1.2 acres adjacent to the property that was incorporated into what is now Avondale Park.
- 200 acres of Bloomer Park and Yates Park from the State of Michigan Park system that was earmarked for closure.

To stretch the bond dollars further, the Parks Division also sought out all available grants to be used in developing these park sites and improving current facilities. The bond issue provided matching funds to obtain some \$1.2 million in development grants from various state sources. The combined funds permitted:

- Full development of the Borden Park sports complex, including park design, infrastructure improvements of sewer lines and water taps, grading and seeding the fields, irrigation and lighting, installation and renovation of the donated batting cage, 5 soccer fields, 4 ballfields, 4 tennis courts, 3 basketball courts, a concession facility, and paved parking for over 700 cars. The quality of Borden Park’s fields was first recognized during the World Cup Legacy Tour in 1994 with the Romanian soccer team using the “world cup” field for practice. Borden Park also is the venue for the city’s annual Festival of the Hills and fireworks display.
- Avondale Park was completely developed and now features a multipurpose field, a ballfield, sand volleyball, tennis courts, basketball courts, a tot lot, play equipment, a picnic area, and a natural area.

- The exterior of the Dairy Barn at the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm was completely restored and preserved for many future generations. The Milk House and Pump House in the barn complex were also repaired and kept from deterioration.

Funding from the bond issue also:

- Converted a former residence into the Environmental Education Center, providing our community with programs, tours, informative displays, outdoor exploration and nature discovery day camps, and resources on local wildlife and our diverse ecosystems.
- Converted a former residence into the Administrative Office at Borden Park, where all soccer and ballfield reservations are handled; where seasonal employees can clock in, receive training, have lunch; where meetings can take place with sports leagues and coaches; where supplies can be ordered and received.
- Provided environmental and wetland assessments on the properties purchased; demolition of unusable structures; removal of an underground storage tank and asbestos.
- Allowed other numerous park improvements, i.e, park fencing, fire protection and security, play equipment, concession equipment, bleachers, and soccer goals.

Without the passage of the Recreation Bond in 1988, when large parcels of affordable vacant land still existed, our community would not now have the numerous active, passive, environmental, and cultural recreation options that are currently available.