

# Recreation Plan 2026-2030



*The Village of Fowler*

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## Community Description

The Village of Fowler is in Dallas Township, Clinton County, Michigan. The county is in the central portion of the lower peninsula of Michigan and is comprised of 16 townships, 3 charter townships, two cities and six villages.



Figure 1 - Clinton County Location Map

The Village of Fowler contains approximately 1.3 square miles with population of 1226 according to the 2020 U.S. Census. The Village of Fowler is a rural community located on M-21 and is near the cities of St. Johns and Lansing. The Village was incorporated in 1885 and has its own school system and village form of government.

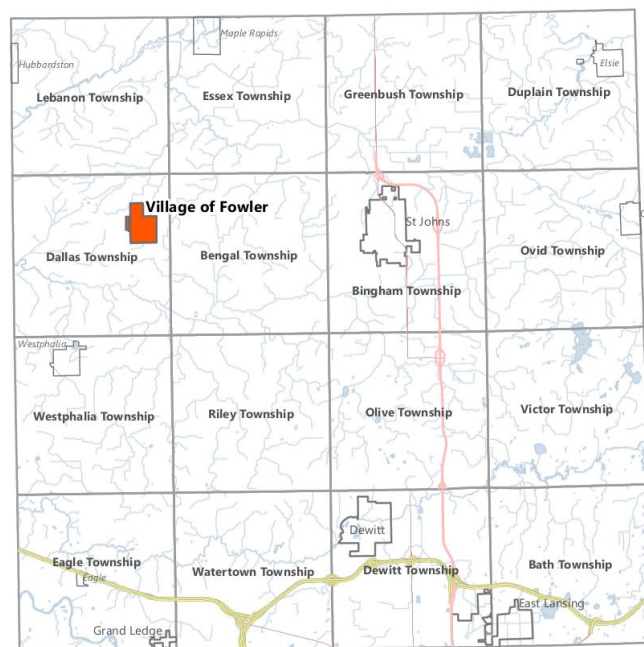


Figure 2 - Location of Village of Fowler

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## **Administrative Structure: Roles of Commission(s) or Advisory Board(s)**

The Village of Fowler [Village] is governed by the Fowler Village Council [Council] who is responsible for funding and maintaining recreation areas in the Village. The Village Department of Public Works [DPW] is solely responsible for recreation area maintenance. The Village has authority to commit funds for parks and recreation, accept grants and purchase land on behalf of the community.

In October 2025, the Council resolved to appoint a Recreation Advisory Committee [RAC]. The charge to the RAC is to develop a 5-year recreation plan for the purpose of pursuing assistance to enhance village recreation areas. The Committee is made up of volunteers with representatives from the Council as well as a representative from the Fowler Public Schools Board of Education. A past Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars also serves on the RAC.

The charge to the RAC is to develop a 5-year recreation plan for the purpose of pursuing assistance with enhancing village recreation areas with the following actions:

- Complete an assessment of current recreational areas (both owned and/or maintained by the village).
- Perform public outreach as to recreational amenities desired by the community.

## **Annual and Projected Budgets for Operations, Maintenance, Capital Improvements and Recreation Programming**

The current-year and projected annual budgets for parks operation and maintenance, recreation programming and capital improvements for the Village are \$30,000.00 and \$45,000.00 respectively. Current funding sources are limited to tax revenue. The Village has a Capital Improvement Program [CIP] as part of its Comprehensive Plan. The CIP includes short-term and long-term investment planning and is reviewed and updated every year and projected again for the next 5-6 year period.

## **Relationships with Organization, School Districts and Other Public Agencies Involved in Recreation**

The Village partners with several organizations and agencies for recreational areas. The Village partners with the Fowler School District on FACE [Fowler Association for Community Enrichment] Park which is located on property owned by the Fowler

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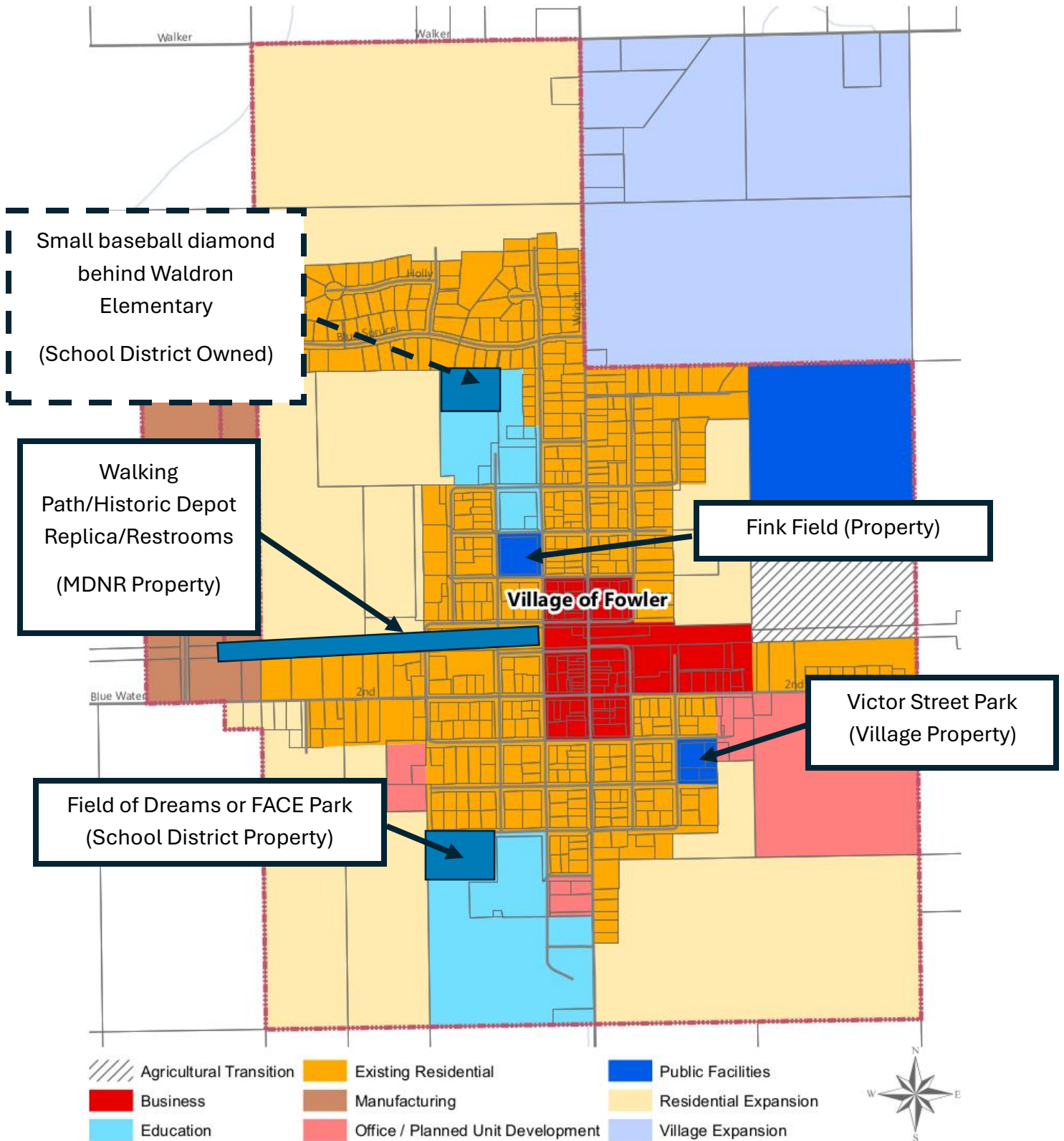
School District, but structures are managed by the Village. The Village partners with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) who owns land containing a walking trail/historic depot replica/restrooms. The Village worked with the now defunct Fowler Association for Community Enrichment [FACE] on FACE Park with the Fowler School District.

The Village desires vibrant, safe, and highly used recreation areas for the benefit of current and future residents. Fowler has a rich history of providing welcoming recreational spaces to residents of the Fowler area (i.e. parks, public gathering areas, playgrounds). The Village's originally platted "town square" serves as its largest public recreation area today (Fink Field area). While the Village has added recreational amenities such as a train depot replica that serves as a historic center and restroom site near a walking trail, the community wants to ensure that all public recreation areas are safe and meeting the needs of our growing community.

### Recreation Inventory

The Village has 4 primary recreation locations: the Fink Field area, Victor Street Park, FACE or Field of Dreams Park, and the walking path/historical depot/restroom area. To perform the inventory assessment, the RAC split into 4 teams who completed onsite reviews of each park area. In addition to these 4 areas, 1 other area will be mentioned that represents potential additional recreational opportunities; a baseball field area behind Waldron Elementary (see map below). Only volunteer RAC committee members were used to complete the inventory. This is the first recreational area inventory performed by the Village.

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## Fink Field

The Fink Field recreation area was originally platted as the “town square”. The 2.35-acre area is the Village’s largest public recreation area today with a baseball diamond named after a local youth who had been killed in an accident. A gathering place for summer little league baseball and softball, the park includes a significant play area, basketball court and restroom/pavilion that was constructed in 1973 with upgrades over the years. DNR Accessibility Grade: 3.

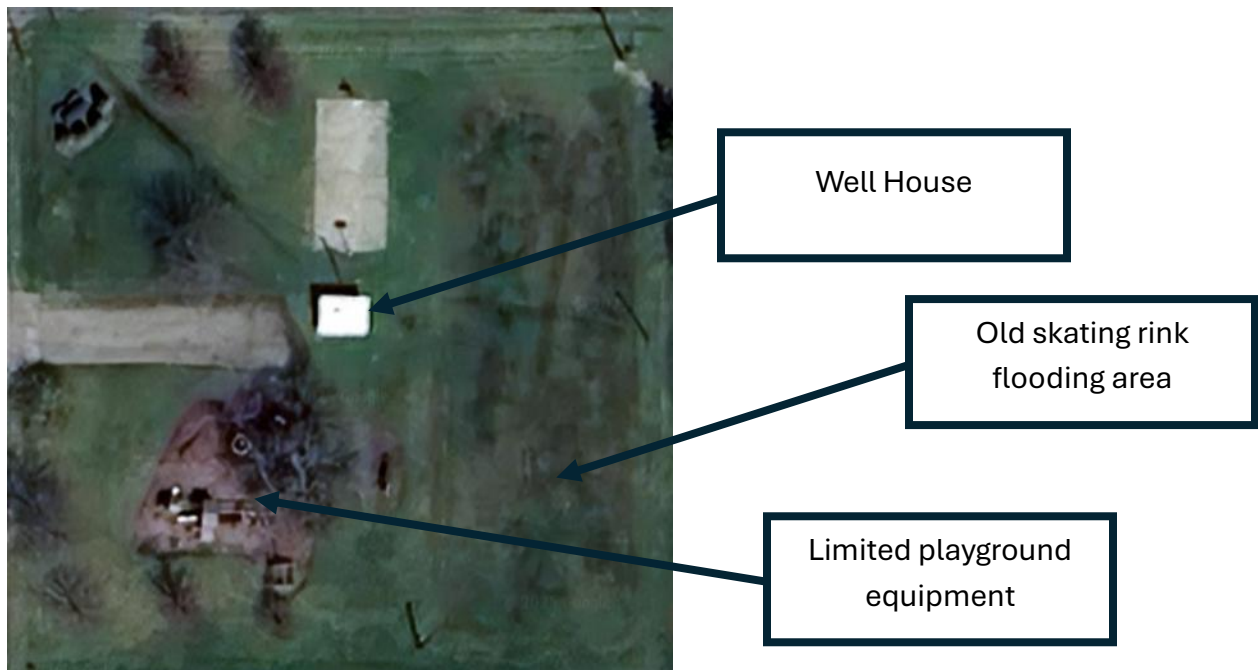
Park Amenity	Quantity	Condition	Other Comments
Baseball diamond	1	Good	(2) dugouts are tired
LED Light Poles	8	Good	Lights are 1 year old
Picnic tables	7	Good	Like new
Portable bleachers	3	Good	
Pavilion/bathrooms	1	Avg/Poor	
Horseshoe pits	2	Good	
Drinking fountains	2	Average	
Swings	2	Good	
Play structures	7	Avg/Poor	Log cabin, slides, monkey bars. Metal play structures are 50+ years old
Trash cans	3	Good	
Park bench	1	Good	
Grill (charcoal)	1	Average	



## Victor Street Park

The Victor Street Park is a smaller park (1.1 acres) in the opposite village quadrant from Fink Field. In addition to some limited play structures, the park was home to a skating rink made possible by an independent village well. The rink is no longer operated as Michigan's climate has warmed to limit function of the rink. DNR Accessibility Grade: 4.

Park Amenity	Quantity	Condition	Other Comments
Swings	2	Good	
Play structures	2	Good	
Seating	0		Definite need
Restroom	0		Definite need
Shaded area	1	Good	Need for more
Lighting	1	Poor	Needs improvement
Trash can	1	Good	
Drinking fountain	0		Needed





## Field of Dreams/FACE Park

The Field of Dreams/FACE Park was a collaboration of Fowler Public Schools, the Village, and a non-profit community group. The 1.5-acre property is owned by Fowler Public Schools with structures and maintenance being the responsibility of the Village. The park boasts a pavilion and play structures. It is conveniently located near the Fowler High School athletic fields and newly refurbished pickleball courts. DNR Accessibility Grade: 3.

Park Amenity	Quantity	Condition	Other Comments
Ship play structure	1	Fair	
Castle play structure	1	Fair	
Climbing spider	1	Good	
Tire swing	1	Good	
Swingset	1	Good	Missing strap on chair swing
Bouncing teeter totter	1	Good	
benches	2	Good	
picnic table	10	Good	
trash recepticle	4	Good	
Sign with landscaping	1	Good	
Trees	5		
Little Library	1	Good	
Port-a-john	1	Good	Would benefit from bathrooms
Lighting	0	Poor	No lighting on site
Water fountain	0	Poor	No drinking fountains
Sidewalk	0	Poor	No sidewalk
Pavilion	1	Good	
Pickle ball courts	1	Good	Random cracks



Playground equipment

Pickle Ball Courts

Pavilion

### Walking path/Historic Depot Replica/Restrooms

Built to support the transition of a railroad to a walking trail, this 5.2-acre recreation area is the newest in the Village. The replica train depot with integrated restrooms was constructed in 2017. The site has historic train signage, a historic center located in the structure, and a remembrance of a past local celebrity. MDNR owns the property as well as adjacent properties used for events and parking. The structures and amenities were made possible in part to a DNR grant. DNR Accessibility Grade: 4.

Park Amenity	Quantity	Condition	Other Comments
Bike repair station	1	Good	
Restrooms	2	Good	
Bike racks	2	Good	
Little Library	1	Good	
Depot historic room	1	Good	
Depot patio	1	Good	
Benches	3	Good	
Picnic tables	2	Good	
Trash cans	2	Good	
Seasonal drinking fountain	1	Good	
Signage	1	Good	
Parking area	1	Good	
Clem Sohn memorial	1	Good	
Light poles	8	Average	Could use LED and base electrical outlets



### Old baseball diamond area behind Waldron Elementary

The RAC will explore potential partnerships and opportunities to use/enhance these areas as part of this plan.

The old baseball diamond area behind Waldron Elementary is approximately 1.5-acres and only has a worn backstop on site. It is adjacent to a new sidewalk that leads to the newest sub-division in the Village. This is on Fowler Public School property.



### Planning Method/Public Input Process

This plan was developed with the system method, asking the community for current recreation preferences, existing use of recreation areas, and application of community knowledge of past efforts and their acceptance by the community.

A survey was developed by researching other like communities that created like recreation plans. The RAC reviewed several surveys, selected questions relevant to the community, and released the survey using social media in early November 2025. The survey also included a list of projects/ideas that had been used in other communities in addition to opportunities for organic feedback. The survey was available for 2 weeks with 241 community members responding (20% response rate).

The RAC reviewed the survey results and developed an action plan as detailed in a later section. With a completed action plan, the draft 5-year recreation plan was released on December 28, 2025, for public comment via Village social media. Copies of the plan were made available in the Fowler Village Office as well as the municipal website.

A properly noticed public hearing is scheduled for January 28, 2026 in the Fowler Village Office as part of a special Village Council meeting and in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, PA 267 of 1976. After public comment, the Village Council is scheduled to approve/disapprove the plan at the meeting. If approved, the 5-year Recreation Plan for the Village would be submitted to the MDNR on February 1, 2026. The final resolution for adoption and a compilation of public input will be included in the appendix of this report as part of submission to MDNR. A copy of the

completed plan will be sent to the regional planning agency. A copy will also be sent to the county planning commission.

### Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan

These goals are formed from public input and serve as guiding principles. We feel the solid survey response of the community is representative of the recreation opportunities desired by demographics and locations served within the Village.

Goal: Safe, highly used recreation areas for residents.

Objective: **Replace aging, unsafe playground equipment at Fink Field and FACE Park.** Several community members commented about unsafe playground equipment, particularly the wooden structures at FACE Park and some of the playground equipment at Fink Field that is over 50 years old.

Objective: **Construct a sidewalk, with adjacent shaded benches, through each playground (Fink Field, Victor Street Park, and FACE Parks) to increase walkability and accessibility to play equipment/sporting events.** Residents expressed difficulties with accessing play equipment when the ground is saturated.

Objective: **Enhance lighting near walking areas.** Residents mentioned the need for better lighting for nighttime activities.

Goal: Enhance recreation opportunities that are integrated into the village lifestyle such as co-location of recreation areas with school facilities & athletics.

Objective: **Construct a new basketball court at Victor Street Park at the location of the old ice rink.** Residents expressed the need to better use the site and 70 respondents supported new basketball courts.

Objective: **Construct a restroom facility with water fountain near pickle ball courts at FACE Park.** Several residents made this suggestion, and restrooms were the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest requested amenity in the survey. The Village would work in collaboration with the school district.

Objective: **Refresh baseball diamonds at Fink Field & behind Waldron Elementary.** Comments from the community as well as the resource inventory mentioned this need. The Village would work in collaboration with the school district.

Goal: New, fun opportunities that support family use of recreation areas.

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Objective: **Construct a splashpad/restroom facility at Fink Field.** A splashpad was the highest scoring amenity on the survey with restrooms 2<sup>nd</sup>. While the restroom pavilion at Fink Field has been refreshed over the years, it was constructed in 1973. Splashpad area should have shaded seating/gathering areas with a focus on user accessibility and safety.

Objective: **Construct a sledding hill behind Waldron Elementary adjacent to the baseball diamond and sub-division.** A low-cost idea from the community survey in an underutilized area. The Village would work in collaboration with the school district.

## ACTION PLAN

### 2026 – Year 1

- LED lighting installed near walking areas. Estimated cost = \$1,000-5,000.

### 2027 – Year 2

- Replace aging, unsafe playground equipment at Fink Field and FACE Park. Estimated cost = \$150,000-\$200,000.
- Construct a restroom facility with water fountain near pickle ball courts at FACE Park. Estimated cost = \$100,000-\$125,000.

### 2028 – Year 3

- Construct a sidewalk, with adjacent shaded benches, through each playground (Fink Field, Victor Street Park, and FACE Parks) to increase walkability and accessibility to play equipment. Estimated cost = \$30,000-\$50,000.
- Refresh baseball diamonds at Fink Field & behind Waldron Elementary. Estimated cost = \$15,000-\$20,000.
- Construct a sledding hill behind Waldron Elementary adjacent to the baseball diamond and sub-division. Estimated cost = \$5,000-\$7,000.

### 2029-30 – Year 4 & 5

- Construct a splashpad/restroom facility at Fink Field. Estimated cost = \$650,000-\$900,000.

Estimated cost of Action Plan: \$951,000 - \$1,342,000

Plan will expire in 2031.