

**FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT  
FOR  
SOUTH HAVEN AREA  
RECREATION PARK  
SHARP**

DECEMBER 2004

Prepared by:



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## I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before initiating any action to gain philanthropic support for a new facility, a Feasibility Study is needed to provide a clear direction for the organizations leaders and the volunteers. This Pre-Campaign Feasibility Study will assist the SHARP committee members and city staff with the information and direction needed to determine if sufficient financial support exists for the proposed project. This study was developed and conducted for the exclusive benefit of SHARP.

This study focused on factors that will impact the potential for major financial support in and around the South Haven area. It was conducted with an emphasis in these four activities: research, observation, interviews and analysis.

### Research

- Review of all background information.
- Familiarization with the elements of the proposed project and scope of the overall effort.
- Informal discussion with SHARP leadership.
- Determination of potential interview candidates representative of the community.
- Preparation of a strong and compelling Case for Support.

### Observation

- Knowledge of the history and vision of the organization.
- Familiarity with facilities and their locations in relation to neighboring and regional communities.
- Informal discussions with residents of the greater South Haven region.

### Interviews

Personal and confidential interviews were conducted with a representative group of twenty six community members to provide critical input into the proposed project. Study participants were asked to respond to the proposed \$1,600,000 park project as described in the Case for Support. Interviewees were asked open-ended questions and had the opportunity to offer other pertinent information. While a specific pattern of questions was used, each interviewee was also given ample opportunity to expand upon his/her own thoughts and feelings. Specific information sought in the interview process included:

- Level of knowledge of the SHARP proposal, and information relating to the status of recreational facilities' in the greater South Haven area.
- Opinions about the plan to develop a new recreational facility.
- The appropriateness of a community-wide Capital Campaign.
- The likelihood of support and approximate level of commitment from those interviewed.
- An estimate of total fundraising potential toward the project as outlined in the Case for Support.
- Identification of potential campaign volunteers.

**Analysis**

Information, perceptions, questions and concerns generated through the interviews conducted by Development Strategies, Inc. have been analyzed and evaluated. This report documents our best judgment regarding the project's viability and the potential for major financial support based on the Case for Support developed for this Feasibility Study.

Interviewees covered a cross-section of the community and included individuals with an interest in all aspects of the proposed project and others who are knowledgeable of needs and issues in the greater South Haven area. The number of interviews conducted was sufficient to uncover relevant issues and to establish responsible recommendations regarding future steps in the project. Therefore, we believe the information represented in this report and the accompanying conclusions and recommendations are well founded and reliable.

## II. FAVORABLE FACTORS

### A. LEADERSHIP

Of those interviewed that knew of the SHARP goals and actions to date, they were complimentary of the leadership of the committee. The accomplishments and activities to date are recognized as valuable and beneficial towards improving recreational opportunities in the greater South Haven area. Approximately 57% of those interviewed were aware of SHARP. The remaining 43% either had little or no knowledge of SHARP.

#### Representative Comments

- The SHARP committees are very dedicated to their plan.
- Quality grass roots effort.
- Consistent with their message and goals.

### B. KNOWLEDGE OF THE PARK PLAN

Approximately 57% of those interviewed indicated they were knowledgeable, 23% were moderately knowledgeable and 20% had no knowledge of SHARP' plan and mission.

#### Representative Comments:

- SHARP has good relationships with community leaders in the area and they have done a fair job of spreading their message.
- SHARP is addressing a need in the greater South Haven area. They articulated this message fairly well to elected officials and to some of the community leaders.

### C. CASE FOR IMPROVED RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The majority of those interviewed agreed that recreational facilities in the South Haven area need to be improved. 88% of those interviewed support improving recreational opportunities.

#### Representative Comments:

- Many of the current fields and facilities are tired.
- Fields and courts are over-crowded and they are in rough condition.
- The SHARP Case for Support has captured the current status of our facilities and recreational challenges.

### D. CASE FOR SHARP PROJECT

Approximately 92% of those interviewed were in favor of a plan to improve recreational facilities, but many needed additional clarification. The remaining 8% indicated no support for the project as it was presented in the Case for Support.

#### Representative Comments:

- Other locations/properties in town could be used. There are potential existing industrial sites that could be converted or razed and/or reused.
- This will help give current facilities a rest.
- It will be good to consolidate facilities.
- Could be good opportunity for Cross-Country Skiing.
- Great support for quality recreation services and facilities.

- SHARP has identified the critical needs for improved recreation facilities.

#### **E. COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

All of the interviewees were very supportive of a strong and vibrant recreation programming and understood the need for quality facilities.

##### **Representative Comments**

- South Haven has a history of being a very giving community.
- Many wonderful families that are currently involved and many people who have had quality experiences with sports and recreation throughout the years.
- Many people supported Ratcliffe Field project.
- Strong support for quality recreation facilities and programming.
- This could be very good for tourism, especially if we can make this a four season park.
- Good climate to promote messages of health and wellness.
- Casco Township is a very hands on community and would probably pitch in.

#### **F. PROPOSED CAMPAIGN**

Of those interviewed 89% indicated a \$1 million campaign would receive support from the community. 35% indicated strong support and 11% indicated little or no support.

##### **Representative Comments**

- Retail Business Community is supportive and willing to help with fund-raising events and activities.
- This will be a good opportunity to increase tourism.
- Several major fund-raising activities are almost complete.
- City of South Haven's support to date is very encouraging.
- Commitments from several key leaders in the community.

### III. UNFAVORABLE FACTORS

#### A. LEADERSHIP

There was a concern among some interviewed that only a select few really knew of SHARP and its goals and objectives. It was expressed as a general concern that the SHARP project will need a broader awareness prior to soliciting funds from South Haven and surrounding communities.

##### Representative Comments

- SHARP leadership is well respected but isn't known to the broader community.
- Need to have a broader community representation.
- Not sure who the leadership will be after the project is completed.

#### B. KNOWLEDGE OF THE PARK PLAN

Of those interviewed approximately 57% knew of the SHARP project. The remaining 43% had little or no knowledge of the project or the SHARP committee.

##### Representative Comments

- SHARP's vision is not well known in the area.
- There doesn't seem to be broad community enthusiasm for this project.
- I read a little bit about this in the paper, but otherwise haven't heard much about the project.
- I have attended a few fund-raising events, but otherwise hadn't heard much about the scope of the project.
- Who will run the services when the park is completed?

#### C. CASE FOR THE SHARP PROJECT

Of those interviewed 62% of the respondents were non-committal or somewhat ambivalent to the plan as presented in the Case for Support. Only 30% of the respondents indicated strong support for the project as proposed. This group indicated the site was good, the planned facilities are adequate to accommodate current and future recreational needs. The other 8% were not at all supportive.

##### Representative Comments

- Over 50% of the respondents expressed concerns that the site is too far away from the population base and that transportation would be an issue.
- Neighbors feel like they are being invaded by this project.
- Does Casco Township really want the growth or this project?
- Because Casco Township does not have a Parks & Recreation Plan it may be hard for them to participate in the campaign.
- Will there be security at the site especially after hours?
- Who will maintain the facilities long-term?
- Roads and infrastructure leading to property are inadequate.
- There are better sites within the City.
- Several industrial sites could be considered instead.

#### D. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Only 31% of the interviewees felt there would be good overall support from the community for the SHARP project. The remaining interviewees suggested that there would be fair support from the community.

##### Representative Comments

- Community is not growing very rapidly. We may be over building for our growth.
- Need better public relations so that there is broader community understanding.
- Need to communicate with neighbors of the proposed site. They feel like they are being invaded by this project.
- Could Casco Township incur any risk of liability if there is a city park located in their township?
- It isn't in the forefront of the minds of the community.
- Purchase price for the property is not a bargain.
- Will need some support for the campaign from the part-time residents.

#### E. PROPOSED CAMPAIGN

The majority, 54% of those interviewed believed a \$1 million campaign would receive moderate support at this time. 35% indicated strong support and that the community overall would support this size campaign. 11% indicated low or no support.

##### Representative Comments

- The campaign will require larger-scale community awareness and involvement.
- This might not be a good time to ask for support from Casco Township.
- Because 40% to 50% of the homes in the community are second homes or vacation rentals it may be difficult to raise the money.
- The residents, businesses and property owners feel like they are already over-taxed. Whether this is perception or reality, it is certainly in the forefront of the people in the greater South Haven area.
- Will there be additional assessments or millages for long-term maintenance and operation?
- Forefront of peoples' minds is the water/sewer/road taxes and the recent school millage/auditorium project.

#### F. COMPETITION FOR FUNDS

- St Basil's Catholic Church
- Friends Goodwill-Maritime Museum
- South Haven High School Auditorium
- Lake Michigan College
- South Haven Hospital
- Ratcliffe Field
- Art Museum
- Humane Society
- Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum
- Booster Clubs

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

After careful consideration of the favorable and unfavorable factors impacting potential fundraising for the project outlined in the Case for Support, it is the best judgment of Development Strategies, Inc., that SHARP *does not have sufficient financial support to move immediately forward* with the \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 project as proposed in the Case for Support used in this study. The following limitations should be addressed:

- A clear communications strategy.
- Clarification of short and long-term financial projections for the park.
- Uncertainty regarding the transportation to the site. Especially from people who live in the central part of South Haven.
- Develop a broad recognition of acceptance to improve recreational opportunities.
- Communication to the 40 – 50% of the property owners that are not full-time residents.

However, it is our further judgment that support *does exist* for a Capital Campaign to support a project noting that *specific items must be addressed as denoted in this study*. We believe the negative factors identified in this report will not prohibit a recommendation to move forward to a campaign as long as the limitations can be mitigated through a well planned and executed Pre-Campaign planning process. This recommended planning activity will be completed in a four month period of time to lay the groundwork from which an area-wide Capital Campaign could be launched in late spring of 2005. Properly executed and supported, this critical next step will take advantage of the work completed to date, strengthening those elements of the project that have support, and reviewing and clarifying those elements in question. With the successful completion of this Pre-Campaign planning activity, ***we believe a goal of \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 would be reasonable and achievable through a well planned and executed area-wide Capital Campaign.***

We envision such a campaign will take roughly twelve months to implement beginning with lead and major gifts to be pledged over a three year period. We also see this Capital Campaign as an important opportunity for SHARP and other recreational organizations to build strong memberships, enhance programming and develop sound community relationships for long-term support.

It should be noted that judging the likelihood of success can be challenging due to the uncertainty of economic conditions in South Haven and surrounding communities. We believe, however, that sufficient knowledge of and support for the initiative does exist to reach the stated goal. If SHARP can reach a broader audience, i.e., Lakeshore property owners, and with sufficient leadership gift cultivation, the actual amount raised could exceed the stated goal.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were formulated with input solicited from interview participants. While specific and relevant to SHARP and its Case for Support, the questions asked were also open-ended to allow participants an opportunity to volunteer opinions and insights beyond the information requested. As a result, many common thoughts and suggestions surfaced regarding both the project's positive elements and potential obstacles.

Additionally, we believe the interviewees were well chosen and thoughtful in their responses, and therefore we are confident of the recommendations that follow. Consequently, we believe adherence to the following recommendations will provide SHARP a significant opportunity to engage existing and potential supporters in an area-wide Capital Campaign to help garner the additional resources required to develop and implement a park plan.

**Establish a Pre-Campaign planning committee.** The committee should include ten to fourteen members recruited from SHARP, City staff, schools, recreational organizations and community leaders at large. This committee would meet over four months during the time period of January 2005, to April 2005, to accomplish the following objectives:

1. **Develop and approve a Campaign Plan** that will include adequate budget support, clear lines of accountability, a realistic timeline, and a distinct delineation of roles for Steering Committee members and all other campaign volunteers.
  2. **Establish a communications strategy** to inform the communities of the project, addressing the following areas of concern:
    - Clear and convincing rationale for choosing the Casco Township site.
    - Develop strategy to communicate with lakeshore property owners.
    - Access to the site for people with limited transportation.
    - Long-term plans for infrastructure leading to and surrounding the site.
- 2 a. Modify the Case for Support to:
- List the financial details (costs) of the entire project.
  - Define the financial details regarding long term maintenance plans for the facility.
  - List and explain operational costs for short and long term.
  - Define levels of participation for each of the Capital Campaign divisions including Family, Foundation, Leadership, Major and Community.
  - Indicate all in-kind pledges that have been made to date.
  - Consider of a multi-phase project for future development and illustrate costs per phase and park features resulting from each phase.

3. Identify, cultivate and recruit the key community leadership including the part-time residents whose support for a promotion of an area-wide campaign will be needed.
4. Review and prepare the organization's database for the campaign.
5. Establish administrative capabilities to support the campaign.

Upon completion of the Pre-Campaign work outlined above, the Pre-Campaign planning committee will, if appropriate, recommend that the SHARP organization implement an area-wide Capital Campaign to seek funding from current and former supporters, area businesses, local and regional governments, foundations, community residents and non-resident property owners. This plan should also include memorial and commemorative gift opportunities and a "gifts-in-kind" strategy.

## VI. PURPOSE OF THE CAMPAIGN PLAN

The Campaign Plan is developed to serve the SHARP leadership, board members and volunteers with a consistent basis from which to execute the various campaign activities. It is designed to assure continuing input and assessment from campaign leadership, to provide the flexibility necessary to implement change and to assure smooth and effective transitions as the campaign unfolds.

The Campaign Plan will:

- Define a specific dollar goal for the project.
- Define a specific budget for all expenses related to the campaign.
- Define the roles to be carried out by campaign leadership and volunteers.
- Define a campaign structure.
- Provide a marketing/communications plan and timeline to lay the groundwork for a successful fundraising initiative.
- Define a gifts acceptance policy.
- Define a gift acknowledgement procedure.
- Assist with the preliminary development of prospect identification.
- Outline the steps to assure campaign coordination.

## VII. CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

### A. Campaign Steering Committee

The Campaign Steering Committee, consisting of 8 to 12 individuals, will oversee all aspects of the campaign. This committee will be composed of a volunteer Chair or Co-Chairs, Division Chairs, Communications Chair, SHARP committee members and key community volunteers. If SHARP decides to have an Honorary Chair, that person would also serve on the committee.

#### **Role of the Campaign Steering Committee is to:**

- Attend Campaign Steering Committee meetings as able.
- Make financial/corporate commitments to the campaign commensurate with ability.
- Oversee the implementation of the Campaign Plan, including divisional strategies focusing on leadership gifts, "family," foundations and the general community.
- Promote the campaign in the community through personal endorsement and participation in events and activities focusing on building public awareness and support of the project.
- Affirm the Case for Support, campaign theme, policies and procedures.
- Monitor the campaign budget.
- Provide leadership and direction to the solicitation process.
- Assist in identifying and evaluating donor prospects.
- Participate in the cultivation and solicitation of donor prospects.
- Perform other duties as needed.

### B. Campaign Leadership

#### **Role of the Campaign Chair/Co-Chairs is to:**

- Make a generous and early financial commitment.
- Be the public persona for the campaign in person, print and other media.
- Help enlist volunteers to serve in key campaign positions.
- Solicit other campaign volunteers and major donor prospects.
- Attend and chair regular steering committee meetings throughout the campaign.
- Attend campaign kickoff, cultivation and celebration events.

#### **Campaign leaders might also:**

- Participate in frequent strategy sessions to guide the campaign and solicitation process.
- Attend solicitor training meetings to help encourage and motivate volunteers.
- Help rate prospects.
- Review and edit proposals, letters and other campaign material.
- Make behind-the-scenes contacts to help motivate donors.
- Speak about the organization and campaign in various public forums.

**Role of the Honorary Chair is to:**

- Make a generous financial commitment.
- Help enlist volunteers to serve in key campaign positions.
- Attend campaign events.
- Help rate prospects.
- Help motivate donors.

**Role of the Division Chairs:**

Division chairs will be recruited to lead their respective division. The role of the Division chair will include:

- Attend and chair the meetings of the Division.
- Identify and recruit volunteers to develop the strategy to be implemented by the Division.
- Identify and evaluate Division prospects.
- Solicit Division volunteers for a gift to the campaign.
- Serve on the Steering Committee and attend Steering Committee meetings, as able.
- Make a financial commitment to the campaign commensurate with ability.
- Follow-up with volunteers to ensure timely completion of their Division activities.
- Perform other Division activities as required.

**Role of the Communications Chair:**

The Communications Chair works with campaign counsel and SHARP members and City and Township Staff to oversee the development of all campaign strategies related to the effective and appropriate communications, public relations and events related to the campaign. Responsibilities include:

- Assist in the identification and recruitment of additional communications committee volunteers.
- Assist in the development of the campaign theme.
- Assist in the refinement of the Case for Support.
- Determine printed materials and quantities necessary to support the campaign including letterhead, envelopes, pledge cards, Q and A piece, thank you notes, etc.
- Work in tandem with campaign activities and provide support to individual divisions as they unfold.
- Work with the media to develop adequate coverage and promotion of the campaign.
- Serve on the Steering Committee and attend Steering Committee meetings, as able.
- Plan and conduct all events as needed for the campaign.
- Follow-up with volunteers to ensure timely completion of their activities.
- Make a financial commitment to the campaign commensurate with ability.
- Perform other communications related activities as required.

## C. Campaign Divisions

### Family Gifts Division

The Family Gifts Division will be responsible for solicitation of current and former committee members, City and Township staff, volunteers and campaign leadership. Typically, a Family Gifts Division will challenge the “family” with 100 percent participation, while donations would be encouraged based on ability.

Key members of the Family Gifts Division should include representatives from all local sports organizations. This would be for campaign leadership and for potential contribution solicitation.

### Foundation Division

The Foundation Division will be responsible for the investigation and solicitation of local, regional and national foundations if appropriate. Requirements for proposal submission vary from one foundation to another; however, all foundation proposals submitted for this project will contain a format of information that will include:

- An executive summary describing the request and the case for supporting the project.
- Information about the organization’s history, background, vision, mission and proposed project.
- The reason for the request.
- The project’s impact on the community.
- A project budget and timeline.
- A listing of key personnel who are involved in the project.
- A copy of the IRS letter granting the SHARP or an umbrella fiduciary, its 501(c)(3) status.

### Leadership Gifts Division

The Leadership Gifts Division will be responsible for identifying and soliciting philanthropic community leaders and businesses to financially support the efforts of the campaign at the range of \$25,000 and up.

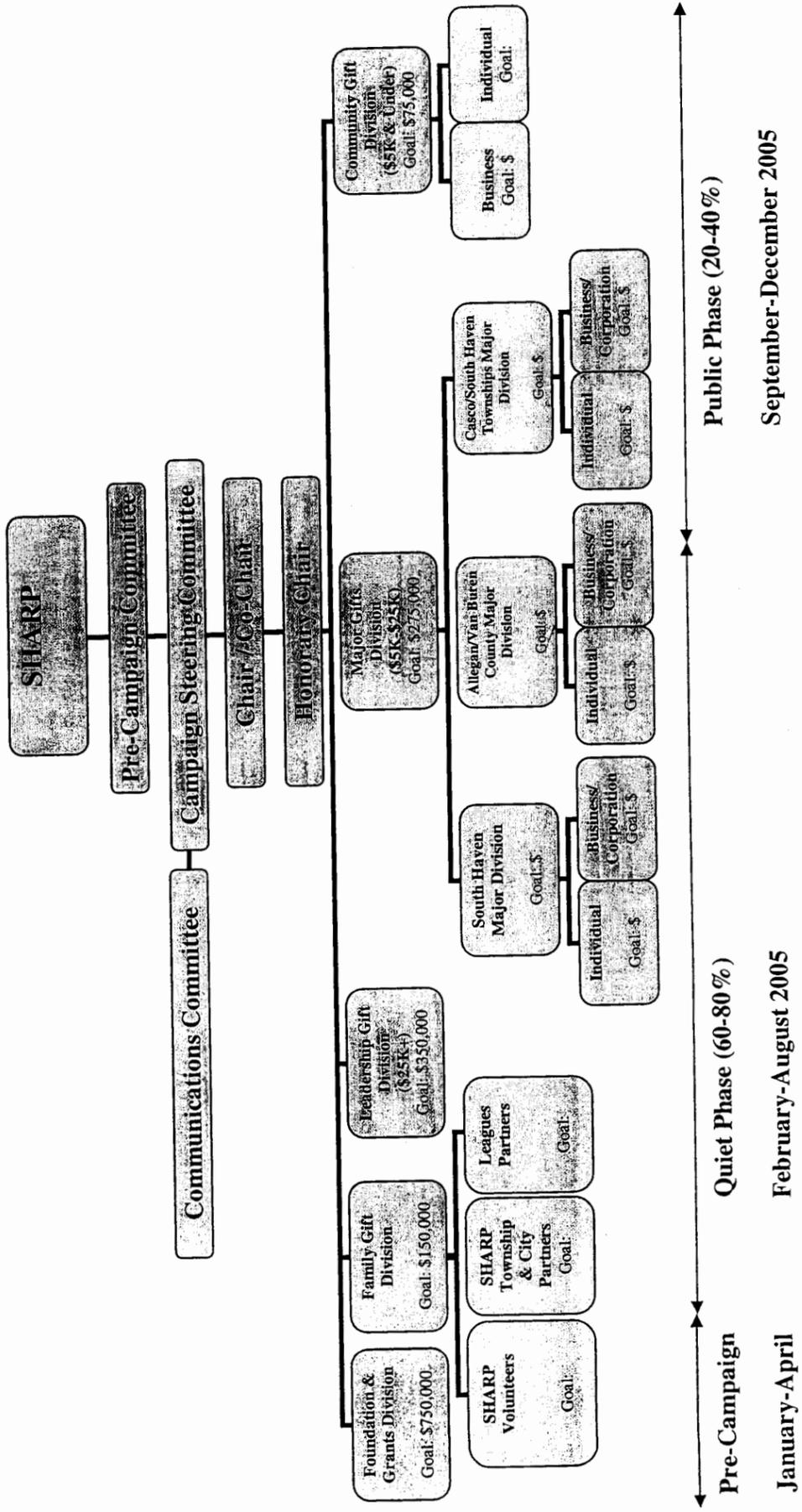
**Major Gifts Division**

The Major Gifts Division will be conducted through three subcommittees, South Haven Major Gifts Division, South Haven and Casco Townships Major Gifts Division, Northern Van Buren County and Southern Allegan County Major Gifts Division. The Major Gifts Divisions will be responsible for identifying and soliciting philanthropic community leaders and businesses to financially support the efforts of the campaign at the range of \$5,000 to \$25,000.

**Community Gifts Division**

The Community Gifts Division will be responsible for identifying and soliciting selected businesses and individuals in all of the communities and the two counties, at a range up to \$5,000.

**VIII. CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATIONAL CHART (\$1,600,000 CAPITAL CAMPAIGN)**



## IX. PRELIMINARY CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

### JANUARY TO APRIL 2005

- Review Feasibility Study report and recommendations.
- Edit Case for Support based on Feasibility Study findings.
- Form a Pre-Campaign committee whose responsibilities will be to establish a Campaign Plan that clearly defines responsibilities for leadership, staff and volunteers. This plan should:
  - Establish a communications subcommittee.
  - Identify and recruit leadership for the Capital Campaign.
  - Approve campaign timeline, campaign plan and budget.
  - Finalize project plan, operational budget, funding plan.
- Recruit campaign leadership.
- Identify appropriate foundations and begin preparation of grant proposals.
- Review records management and administrative support capabilities.
- Establish campaign office to:
  - Receive, record and acknowledge gifts.
  - Support the administrative demands of the campaign.
  - Manage campaign materials.
- Communications Committee:
  - Review campaign timeline.
  - Develop campaign theme.
  - Campaign materials approved.

### APRIL TO AUGUST 2005

- Steering Committee is recruited and begins to lead the campaign efforts.
- Family Gift Division leadership meets to identify and evaluate prospects, identify and evaluate prospects, appropriate strategies, determine volunteer requirements, train volunteers, and begin solicitation of Family Gift Division prospects.
- Continue to identify foundations and prepare grant proposals.
- Leadership Gifts Division meets to identify and evaluate prospects, determine appropriate strategies, volunteer requirements, recruit and train Leadership Gift Division volunteers and begin solicitation of Leadership Gift Division prospects.
- Continue communications support activities.
- Continue to identify appropriate foundations and prepare grant proposals.
- Finalize Family Gift Division solicitation.
- Major Gift Division leadership meets to:
  - Identify appropriate strategies.
  - Determine volunteer requirements.
  - Begin recruiting captains for South Haven, Casco/South Haven Townships, and Southern Allegan/Northern Van Buren Counties.

**SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER 2005**

- Complete Family and Leadership Gifts Division solicitation.
- Continue communications activities and announce the public phase of the campaign with appropriate media coverage.
- Major Gifts Division meets to identify and evaluate prospects, identify and evaluate prospects, recruit volunteers, train Leadership Gift Division volunteers and begin and complete solicitations of Major Gift Division prospects.
- Continue foundation proposals.
- Community Gifts Division meets to identify and evaluate prospects, identify and evaluate prospects, determine appropriate strategies, volunteer requirements, recruit, train Community Gift Division volunteers to begin solicitation.
- Plan for the campaign victory party.

**DECEMBER 2005**

- Complete Community Gifts Division solicitations.
- Complete Foundation Division solicitations (Solicitations may continue into 2006, depending on guidelines and timelines).
- Continue communications support activities.
- Implement donor reminder system.
- **CELEBRATE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE CAMPAIGN!**
- Conduct appropriate volunteer/donor recognition/appreciation ceremonies.

## X. PRELIMINARY CAMPAIGN BUDGET

Following is an estimated budget outlining the items and approximate expenses to adequately fund and implement the Pre-Campaign planning and Capital Campaign. Typically, costs associated with the implementation of a Capital Campaign such as this would not exceed fifteen percent of the project budget.

▪ Solicitation materials .....	\$12,150
Printing of all campaign materials: letterhead, envelopes, marketing materials, campaign brochures, Q & A materials, display boards.	
▪ Education/awareness activities and volunteer training .....	\$1,000
For meetings, special equipment, honorariums, volunteer training materials.	
▪ Campaign consultant's fee .....	\$72,000
▪ Office expenses .....	\$1,000
Copying, incidental printing, etc.	
▪ Postage .....	\$1,600
All campaign mailings, including donor acknowledgements	
▪ Donor/Volunteer recognition .....	\$1,700
Donor recognition and volunteer appreciation activities	
▪ Contingency .....	\$4,500
Up to five percent of the overall campaign budget to cover any unexpected campaign related expenses	
▪ Campaign administrative support .....	(\$550per month/11 months) \$6,050
<b>Estimated Total .....</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>

## XI. PRELIMINARY TABLE OF GIFTS

<u>Number</u>	<u>\$ Amt</u>	<u>\$ In Range</u>	<u>Cumulative</u>	<u>% of Goal</u>
1	300,000	300,000	300,000	19
2	100,000	200,000	500,000	31
4	75,000	300,000	800,000	50
4	50,000	200,000	1,000,000	62
8	25,000	200,000	1,200,000	75
15	10,000	150,000	1,350,000	84
20	5,000	100,000	1,450,000	91
25	2,500	75,000	1,525,000	95
30	1,000	30,000	1,555,000	97
Many	Up to 1,000	45,000	\$1,600,000	100%

**APPENDICES:**

**A. SHARP CASE FOR SUPPORT**

**B. PARK PROJECT BUDGET ESTIMATES**

**C. SHARP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**D. FEASIBILITY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**E. FEASIBILITY STUDY COMMITTEE**

## APPENDIX A CASE FOR SUPPORT

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### RECOGNITION OF COMMUNITY NEED

South Haven is a unique community that prides itself on providing its residents with many diverse recreational activities. Residents in the greater South Haven region understand that healthy communities result from quality cultural, recreational and educational services.

A group of coaches, parents and community leaders introduced a concept for a consolidated regional recreational park that would accommodate the needs of a rapidly-growing region. These individuals understood the personal, social and economic benefits that a quality regional recreational park would provide.

Resulting from their passion to see that these issues were addressed, they created the South Haven Area Recreational Park Committee (SHARP):

The SHARP committee first convened in 2002, and determined there was a need to:

- Enhance recreational programming and facilities for the greater South Haven region.
- Fulfill unmet recreational services.
- Proactively plan for recreation expansion.

The SHARP committee is proposing a conveniently-located 96-acre site that will feature several baseball/softball diamonds and soccer fields, a football field, quality concessions, playground structures for young children, restrooms and appropriate parking. The park will also feature a well landscaped non-motorized pedestrian friendly path that will serve walkers, joggers, and in-line skating during warmer weather and cross-country skiers in the winter,

This site was chosen because of the convenient location, topography of the land (for easier constructability), and potential for further expansion. The committee also recognized that this land provides a unique opportunity to preserve open space for the greater South Haven community. Although the park will have an emphasis on sports recreation, plans also include natural landscaping, ponds, benches and other features for rest, relaxation and contemplation.

### IMMEDIATE NEEDS FOR LAND ACQUISITION

The SHARP committee submitted an application in May 2004, to the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF) for funds to assist in the purchase of the 96 acres for the recreational park. If the grant is approved, the MNRTF could provide as much as 75% of the funding for the project, with the remaining 25% to be matched by local sources. To qualify for this grant, the SHARP committee needs to demonstrate a commitment for the remaining 25% match by September 30, 2004.

## RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING SUCCESS AND GROWTH

The South Haven and neighboring communities participate extensively in youth and adult recreational programs. These programs include Rocket Football leagues, Junior Youth League baseball and softball, AYSO soccer, WMYSA soccer, as well as school-based athletics.

Community growth and participation in the many fine recreational programs has increased the demand for more efficient and suitable facilities. Currently, recreational activities take place at over five facilities dispersed throughout the City of South Haven, South Haven Township and Casco Township. One school administrator said "One of the reasons we could use more facilities is because there are never any feet off the grass. That translates into not having enough time to properly maintain the facilities." A parent also said "Once a season starts, practices stop. There just aren't enough facilities to accommodate practices and games."

National and state health organizations have documented the need for quality recreational facilities in a community. Their studies and reports provide ample evidence that physical exercise and recreational programming provide excellent team building and skills for youth and adults and is vital to the overall physical and mental health of individuals and their communities.

## SOUTH HAVEN COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

### Soccer

The American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) has operated soccer programs in the Greater South Haven area for over 10 years. Also the West Michigan Youth Soccer Association (WMYSA) provides a more selective competitive youth league. These programs have grown to include over 500 boys and girls from age 5 through 16. In addition to these two programs, there are informal yet very active adult soccer groups. These leagues and groups compete for time and space at three South Haven Public School facilities and two other community facilities:

- LC Mohr High School
- Armory Fields
- Baseline Middle School

This separation causes logistical and scheduling difficulties.

### Baseball/Softball

The South Haven Junior Youth Leagues (SHJYL), a program for youth age 4 through 15, typically has around 550 participants. These players share four playing fields, and also compete for the same space with the Boy's Varsity and JV and the Girl's Varsity and JV baseball and softball programs. Competition for the facilities has shortened or eliminated some practices, and produced inconvenient and erratic scheduling for the SHJYL.

Due to a lack of sufficient facilities local church programs and adult leagues are forced to play in surrounding communities as far away as Holland, Coloma and Bangor.

### Rocket Football

Approximately 120 youth participate in football and cheerleading programs in South Haven. The schedules for South Haven Rocket Football and Cheerleading programs conflict with schedules for AYSO, WMYSA, Freshman, JV and Varsity Ram Soccer and Football.

Having all of these programs operating simultaneously creates scheduling and logistical complexity.

### Tennis

Although there are tennis facilities at two local schools, the courts are not readily available for the general public. In addition to the limited availability, maintaining the courts at the High School is difficult because of outdated design standards.

#### **DEFICIENCIES IN RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND PROGRAMMING:**

- Severe space limitations for increasing broad community recreational activities.
- Insufficient operating budgets for Public School recreation facilities due to rapidly expanding school recreation programming and pressure for non-school related recreation.
- Over scheduling of the facilities causes poor conditions due to limited time for maintenance and recovery of facilities and fields.

#### **BENEFITS OF A NEW COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL FACILITY AND PROGRAMMING:**

- Improve recreational services for the Greater South Haven Community.
- Controlled environment providing safe facilities for children.
- Consolidate facilities to assist families that have multiple recreation participants.
- Protect and enhance open space.
- Increase opportunities to grow recreational programming.
- Healthier youth and adults.
- Excellent self esteem and team/skill building for youth and adults.
- Enhance multi-cultural community interaction.
- Centrally-located facility for easy access and visibility.
- Economic benefits for the region – (tournaments, regional meets, conferences and other related tourism).
- Reduce maintenance stress on current facilities.
- Opportunities for simultaneous recreational programming for all ages.
- Strong community support indicated through regional resident survey.
- Enthusiastic support by local Public Schools to relieve pressure on school facilities and to also provide additional community recreation opportunities.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

The SHARP committee has contracted with Development Strategies, Inc., a regional consulting firm, to conduct a feasibility study, to determine the level of interest from key community leaders such as you. If the Feasibility Study reflects potential support from the community, a Capital Campaign committee will be formed to develop an implementation plan.

We look forward to sharing our vision with the South Haven community and seeking your advice and input as we develop plans for this exciting regional resource.

# Appendix B Campaign

SHARP Project Estimates  
**IMMEDIATE NEEDS- (September 30, 2004)**

Description	Quantity	Unit Cost (Estimated)	Total (Estimated)
Land Acquisition	96 Acres	\$4,000/acre	\$384,000.00
Misc. Acquisition costs (Appraisal, closing, etc.)			\$10,000.00
<b>Land Acquisition Sub-Total</b>			<b>\$394,000.00</b>
<b>Anticipated Grant @ 75%</b>		\$	<b>295,500.00</b>
<b>Necessary Community Support For Land Acquisition</b>		\$	<b>98,500.00</b>
<b>DEVELOPMENT NEEDS (2005-2007)</b>			
Baseball/Softball fields			
Soccer Fields			
Football Field			
Concession			
Bleachers, Benches and other amenities			
<b>Total Fields and Concessions</b>			<b>\$1,000,000.00</b>
Walking Trail/Path	2 miles	\$100,000.00	\$200,000.00
<b>Development Needs Sub-Total</b>			<b>\$1,200,000.00</b>
<b>Anticipated Grant @ 25%</b>		\$	<b>300,000.00</b>
<b>Necessary Community Support For Park Development</b>		\$	<b>900,000.00</b>
<b>Estimated project total</b>			<b>\$1,594,000.00</b>
<b>Total Anticipated Grant Funding</b>		\$	<b>595,500.00</b>
<b>Total Community Support</b>			<b>\$998,500.00</b>

Maintenance-Annual \$91,000.00\*\*\*

\*\*\*50% to 60% of the maintenance costs will be off set by concession revenue and tournament fees  
 This project is planned to be a phased development.  
 The City is anticipating that approximately 25% of the park development costs will be covered through grants.

**APPENDIX C SHARP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Community Chairman and Grant Writer  
Dennis Fitzgibbon

Community Fund Raising  
Suzie Fitzgibbon-Chairperson  
Nancy Kneeland  
Brenda Schrader  
Carol Stricklin  
Mark and Sarah Barnes

Land Identification  
Ted Weber

Finance/Accounting  
Cheryl Hamlin

Public Support  
William D. Townes

Facility Design  
Kelly Ford

Facility Maintenance  
Steve Ohnsman

Facility Operation  
Matthew Larson

Construction  
Brian Brouillette  
Paul Sondegerath

## **APPENDIX D**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

#### **SHARP Interview Questions**

1. Did you receive the information on SHARP and were you able to review it?
2. How familiar are you with SHARP and its history?
3. What is your perception of SHARP and the proposed project?
4. Do you know of anyone in the community that has been involved with the SHARP project?
5. Are you aware of the issues that SHARP project addresses in the community and is this a subject of interest to you?
6. Are you involved in any of the recreational organizations/activities that are addressed in the SHARP Case for Support?
7. Did the Case for Support give you a good sense of the project being proposed?
8. What is your overall reaction to the Case?
9. Do you think members of the community will support the project?
10. Do you think a campaign of approximately \$1,600,000 ~~million~~ will be successful?
11. While I am not here to present a solicitation proposal today, some sense of your own participation in this project is important to our study. If properly approached, would you personally consider making a significant contribution for the project?
12. If so, can you give me some idea of the size of gift you would consider over a three-year period?
13. Because of the immediate needs for local matching funds for the State Grant, would you be interested in pledging an amount today?
14. Would you be willing to volunteer in the campaign?
15. Are there others in the community you feel should be interviewed?
16. Do you have any specific suggestions to offer regarding any aspect of the potential campaign that we have not already discussed which you feel would assist us in preparing a report for SHARP?

**APPENDIX E**  
**FEASIBILITY STUDY COMMITTEE**

- Dennis and Suzie Fitzgibbon
- Ron Hartgerink
- Kevin Anderson
- City Manager, South Haven
- Ed and Jeanne Harris
- Lee Utke
- Kelly and Sarah Ford
- Eugene Guraliak