



# Tanglefoot Park Redevelopment

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## FAQs

***What is the annual net revenue from Tanglefoot Park? If Tanglefoot is no longer a campground, how is the Village going to make up that lost revenue?***

The Village netted (revenue less expenses) approximately \$35,000 each budget year from campers at Tanglefoot Park. This figure does not include dock rental, which the Village continues to collect, nor does it take into consideration that Tanglefoot, if left as a campground, was in need of additional investment going forward. That \$35,000 represents 2.25% of the Village's annual General Fund operating budget.

In 2019, Ms. Kim VanKampen donated to the Village the commercial property located at 109 S. Jackson Street. After a lengthy RFP process, the Village sold that building to ARM, a local business, for \$110,000. That local business intends to invest nearly \$1,000,000.00 to redevelop 109 S. Jackson. Contrary to Facebook posts, 109 S. Jackson is **not** slated for demolition, but will be redeveloped in include a retail storefront on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and offices on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

The Village "earmarked" 109 S. Jackson's \$110,000 purchase price to offset lost revenue at Tanglefoot Park for the next 3 years. At the end of that 3 years, Tanglefoot redevelopment should be complete and generating revenue once again (albeit, not as a campground).

***Why weren't campers notified of the change to Tanglefoot Park?***

On October 5, 2018 at 3:00 p.m., a meeting was held at Village Hall in the EOC room to discuss the park closure (in 2019). The closure had to occur because the regional sewer force main construction had to go forward.

The Village posted the notice for the meeting in the Tanglefoot clubhouse shared by Tanglefoot campers. Inquisitive campers came to that meeting in the Village EOC room. The Village manager conducted a 90 minute "question and answer" session about the future of the park. Village staff shared diagrams compiled by the Village's civil engineers.

Over the course of 2018 and 2019, meetings by the Village's Parks & Recreation Board, the Downtown Development Authority, and Village Council gathered information regarding Tanglefoot and discussed options. The Village held community engagement meetings, including one on May 4, 2019 at Central Park in conjunction with Pedal, Picnic & Play and again on May 29, 2019 at Seven Steps Up. The Village sent every Village address a postcard inviting people to a community engagement meeting at Seven Steps Up. The Village recorded the resident comments. The Village archived that feedback, and it is public information readily available for all to evaluate. The Village also hired an independent consultant to distribute a survey and collect data to determine the financial sustainability of proposed changes to the park. A total of 541 survey responses were received. The economist's analysis presented to Village Council recommended the proposed new use.

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After over 12 months of data collection and contemplation, the Village Council decided to move ahead with the redevelopment, at which time a letter was sent to all 2018 seasonal campers, letting them know Tanglefoot Park would not reopen in 2020.

### ***Is one person dictating what happens at Tanglefoot Park?***

One person is not dictating changes to Tanglefoot Park. Ms. VanKampen gifted 109 S. Jackson Street to the Village to offset lost revenue from the park, if Tanglefoot Park was closed as a campground. Ms. VanKampen did not participate in any focus groups or any community engagement sessions. Ms. VanKampen did not attend any DDA meetings or Village Council meetings to influence any decisions from those boards.

### ***Why is the deed restriction regarding the use of Tanglefoot Park just now being brought up?***

The issue of non-compliance with the Thum Family gift restrictions (dated July 17, 1916) has been broached repeatedly over the decades. Here is an excerpt of the language from the deed restriction:

upon the following expressed conditions, to-wit:

First: That said property shall not be conveyed or title thereto transferred or encumbered by said Village of Spring Lake;

Second: That no lease of said property, or any part thereof, or other transfer of possession thereof shall be made by said Village of Spring Lake;

Third: That said property shall be used only for park, pier, wharf and other public municipal purposes under the control and direction of said Village of Spring Lake, and such other municipal corporations as may succeed to public authority over the territory now included within its boundaries.



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This is the legal opinion by recently-deceased local attorney James P. Piper, Scholten Fant, dated November 27, 1974:

### CONCLUSION

It is our opinion that even though the Village may be found to have violated the intent of the grantor (granting of leases) through a strict interpretation of the grant deed (donation of land to be used as a park), that a proper party having standing to assert the claim of reversion would be barred from maintaining that claim because any alleged violation first occurred in excess of 15 years ago and that the appropriate statute bars any action at this time.

In sum, Mr. Piper felt that, the use of Tanglefoot Part as a trailer park violated the Village's promise to the Thum family, but the Thum family had little recourse.

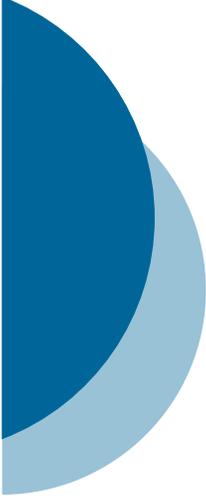
The current Village council feels that redeveloping Tanglefoot Park into a community gathering space preserves the original intent of the gift made by the Thum family 103 years ago. The proposed expansion is also consistent with the Village's Master Plan.

### ***Why is the Village redeveloping Tanglefoot Park, when Mill Point Park needs attention?***

The Parks & Recreation Board and Village Council all agree Mill Point Park needs major repairs. The issues at Mill Point Park are due to record high water levels. The Village has allocated a total of \$440,000 in the Village budget for 2 consecutive years to address the parking lot. But the Village cannot demand that Mother Nature roll back the water and allow us to do the necessary work. Once the water levels recede, Mill Point Park will receive the attention it needs and deserves. We may have to wait up to 2 more years, however, before the water recedes enough to perform the work.

### ***Why doesn't the Village address the goose problem at Mill Point Park?***

The Village's goose population varies from year-to-year, but geese are always present to some extent. The Village consulted with experts over the years on various means to keep geese out of Mill Point Park. Unfortunately, geese *can* (and do) fly and they also swim. There is no perfect solution to keeping them at bay. DPW crews can clean the docks, sidewalks, pathways and lawn area and those locations can then be completely re-covered in goose excrement within an hour. The most effective solution, according to the experts, is to employ a dog (we've tried various other means, to no avail).



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### ***Why hasn't the Village fixed the bike path between Mill Point and Tanglefoot Parks?***

The entire Great Lakes Basin is experiencing record-high water levels. The Village is part of that basin and is itself a peninsula on the much larger Michigan Peninsula. Our Village is literally surrounded by water. That water is causing damage to multiple locations around the Village (Mill Point Park, Jackson Street dock, Lakeside Beach, Alden Street end just to name a few). Our very preliminary guess is the Village faces approximately \$1,000,000.00 in repairs arising from the higher water levels; a number that may increase as lake levels remain high, or go even higher. Regarding the specific space between Mill Point and Tanglefoot Parks, the Village maintains an easement over private property that *allows* us to maintain the pathway, but does not *mandate* that we maintain the pathway. The Village intends to repair the easement walkway as part of the larger repair and reconstruction of multiple locations around the Village, but we need the water to recede first.

We do not believe it would be a wise expenditure of tax dollars to repair paths, beaches, and parking lots, when the United States Army Corp of Engineers predicts water levels are likely to be the same or higher in 2020. Several years ago, we lost the concrete sidewalk at Lakeside Beach to erosion. We replaced the sidewalk with a "long-term" solution...which we lost again in 2019. Today Lakeside Beach is almost non-existent.

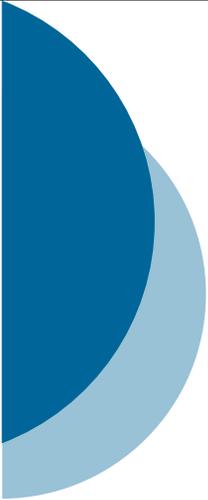
We are in regular communication with the Army Corp of Engineers, our own civil engineers, and the Ottawa County Emergency Management Director regarding 2020 water levels.

### ***How much are the Tanglefoot Park changes going to cost?***

The engineering estimate associated with the preliminary design was just over \$3,000,000.

### ***Who is paying for the changes?***

Two donors have committed \$500,000 each towards a new community pavilion at Tanglefoot Park. The Village will apply for grants from local and state grant-making authorities. Village Council does not intend on raising millage rates to pay for this redevelopment---Tanglefoot needs to generate revenue and be sustained by increased revenue from downtown development. This approach has been supported by the Parks & Recreation Committee as well as the Downtown Development Authority.



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## ***What are the next steps?***

The designs vetted at the community engagement meetings were *preliminary*. The Village is taking further suggestions, which may need to be incorporated. A focus group will then “tighten up” the design and then the budget. More community engagement meetings will follow, and a firm budget established before any investment is made.

***If you have questions about this topic or any other, please feel free to reach out to Village Manager Chris Burns at 616-842-1393 or [christine@springlakevillage.org](mailto:christine@springlakevillage.org).***

Additional information is available on our website [www.springlakevillage.org](http://www.springlakevillage.org) or on our Facebook page. Please consider signing up for our weekly e-newsletter.



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