

---

KENT COUNTY NEWS RELEASE  
PARKS DEPARTMENT



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
September 11, 2014

**Media Advisory:  
New Kent County Park Dedication Ceremony**

**GRAND RAPIDS** – Kent County Parks is excited to announce the dedication and opening of the new, 52 acre Lepard Nature Preserve in Caledonia Township. With pristine natural areas and educational opportunities, this park exemplifies a primary role of county parks in our community. It's also a great example of the collaborations our Parks Department has formed for decades. We invite you to celebrate the generosity of the Lepard Family, Caledonia Township and neighboring Spirit of Life Church.

The Lepard family generously donated the land for the park back in 2003. The Michigan DNR has a rating system for the diversity and quality of plant species for natural sites. While most natural sites have a score of around 20, the Lepard Nature Preserve scored of 59.87! Caledonia Township partnered with Kent County Parks (as it has several times) on this project. The township helped fund the trail system, signage and the boardwalk.

“The contributions of the Lepard Family and Caledonia Township were critical to keeping this greenspace open to the public,” said Dan Koorndyk, Chair of the Kent County Board of Commissioners. “This site will be a place to get away from the hectic pace of the city and close to nature for generations to come.

One more obstacle was overcome when Spirit of Life Church became such a generous partner in our park project: parking. The Spirit of Life Church agreed to allow use of their driveway and parking lot to access the county owned parking lot on the preserve site. “This is truly a public-private partnership, and proves the success of collaboration we have come to know in Kent County,” Chair Koorndyk added.

**Media and the Public are Invited to the Dedication and Park Opening  
Lepard Nature Preserve  
6392 76<sup>th</sup> SE, Caledonia, MI (east of M-37)  
September 12, 2014  
11:00am**

*For more information, contact the Kent County Parks Department at (616) 632-PARK (7275).*

###

## Lepard Nature Preserve

**Park Type:** Natural Resource Area

**Size:** 51.7 acres

**Description:** Heavily wooded hills and valleys with natural-surfaced trails, accessed from the parking lot at site of the future Spirit of Life Church.

**Facilities:** Parking, Hiking/walking trails

**Accessibility:** 2

**History:** This single parcel of land was donated to the county in 2003 by John S. Lepard, Joan Slater, Judith Maier and Mary Jean Buttrey, with the intent of providing a nature preserve with opportunities for outdoor education. Caledonia Township contributed funds to support development of interpretive trails and parking. To overcome limited visibility for entering and exiting cars on 76th St, the Parks Dept secured an easement from the Spirit of Life Church in 2013 to provide public access to a parking lot to be constructed at the north east corner of the preserve.

### Discussion:

This scenic natural area offers excellent opportunities for exploration and hiking and is easy to reach from M-37. Trails were marked and interpretive signs installed a few years after the property was donated, but a lack of suitable parking limited their use to mostly neighbors residing adjacent to the preserve. In late 2013, a parking lot and connecting bridge/boardwalk were built to greatly improve access for the general public. Due to the adjacent residential developments east of the park and the presence of M-37/Broadmoor Ave to the west, no significant opportunities for expansion of the park are anticipated.

### Long Term Vision:

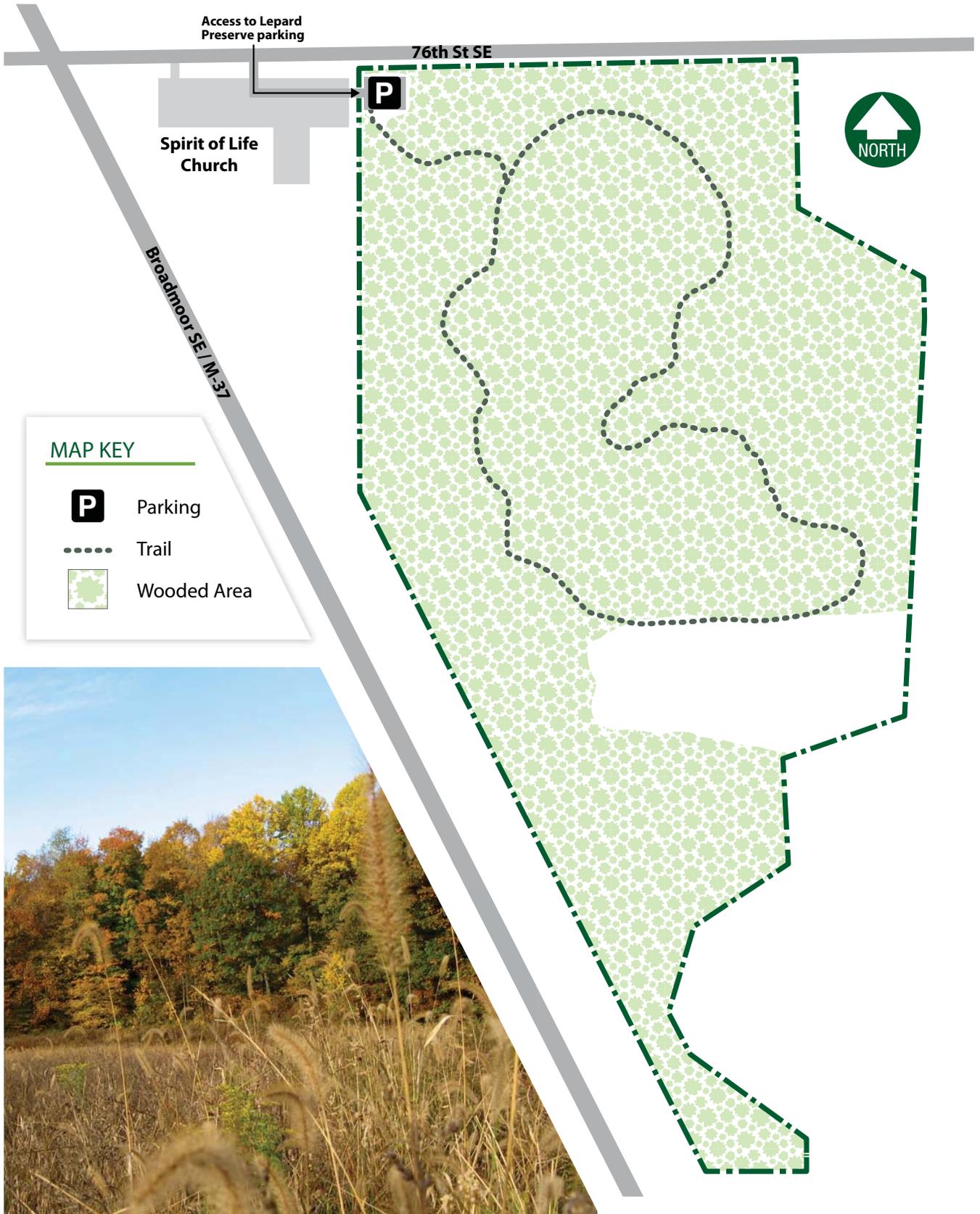
Maintain and manage the preserve for its current use of hiking and nature education.

### DNR recreation grants:

None



# Lepard Nature Preserve (continued)



### MAP KEY

-  Parking
-  Trail
-  Wooded Area

