

Desiree Stanfield
Chief Marketing and Communications
248-705-4108 | stanfieldd@oakgov.com

Oakland County Parks offers to purchase North College Campus and adjacent nature preserve in Waterford Township

171-acre parcel is a popular recreation destination for residents and nature lovers from Commerce, West Bloomfield, White Lake and Waterford townships

WATERFORD, MI – Jan. 30, 2025 – Oakland County Parks (OCP) has released offers to the Oakland Community College (OCC) Board of Trustees and the Waterford School Board to purchase a total of 171 acres of land at risk of loss to development due to the impending closure of the Highland Lakes campus in 2026. The property includes the Luellen Woughter Nature Reserve, a 57-acre area targeted by a prominent conservation organization for preservation due to its high-quality natural features and biodiversity.

The combined offer of \$4.4 million is the largest ever made by Oakland County Parks to purchase land without federal or state grant funding assistance. The amount reflects the significant recreation and conservational value that this land and its natural features offer in close proximity to the more than 200,000 residents of the four surrounding communities. An offer of \$2,376,400 has been made to OCC for 91.4- acres owned by OCC that includes the Nature Reserve, Woodland Hall, additional structures and a large parking area. And, \$2,067,000 was offered to the Waterford School District for 79.5-acres of undeveloped natural area located on the northern boundary of the OCC property. If these offers are accepted, Oakland County Parks plans to create a new county park on the site.

“We’ve heard from countless residents and nature lovers worried about the future of this land due to the impact of the closure of the campus. Visit it on any given evening or weekend and you will find people walking the campus and the trailways located throughout the nature preserve, often with their dogs,” said Oakland County Parks Director Chris Ward. “The approval of our millage proposal last November opened the door for Oakland County Parks to act quickly to save lands that have significant recreational and conservation value at risk of loss to development. We are hopeful that our proposals are accepted and these incredible assets continue to serve the public for generations to come.”

The proposed county park would be located adjacent to the future Waterford Township Community Center being developed on the southern portion of the campus following voter approval of a bond proposal last November. Oakland County Parks have offered to partner and collaborate with the Township's Parks and Recreation Department at the site to provide enhanced public recreational services and programs while reducing overall operating costs for both parties.

On June 4, 2024, the OCC Board of Trustees voted to request that the Township rezone the area OCP is seeking to purchase from its current designation as Public Land to Single Family Residential to facilitate its sale to a developer. Information on OCC's plans is available on [OCC's website: https://bit.ly/3CpFG7y](https://bit.ly/3CpFG7y).

The Six Rivers Land Conservancy conducted an assessment of the natural features found at the Woughter Nature Reserve. They reported that the property "was found to contain multiple high quality natural areas with healthy, biodiverse native communities – Six Rivers Land Conservancy is putting its support behind OCP's purchase offers and vision for the properties."

"The Nature Preserve located on the Highland Lakes property in Waterford Township is one of Six Rivers Land Conservancy's top 10 priorities for conservation in Oakland County," said Executive Director Chris Bunch. "We are excited and grateful that our friends and partners at OCP are working to acquire it. The property has unique and high-quality natural features that need to be protected and is an iconic space in the area that is well-known and loved. Ensuring the property and its natural features are preserved and remain available for recreation and education is a huge benefit to the community and to water quality, sustainability and quality of life in the region!"

The Luellen Woughter Nature Reserve is named for a long-time biology professor at the OCC campus who frequently utilized the area as a hands-on classroom for her students. Ms. Woughter taught at the college from 1965-1990 and passed away in 2004.

For more information about this initiative, please visit [OaklandCountyParks.com \(https://bit.ly/40Dx4IE\)](https://bit.ly/40Dx4IE). Interested persons are also encouraged to take the [OCC Highland Lakes Campus Survey](#) to provide their feedback.

For more information about Oakland County Parks, visit [OaklandCountyParks.com](https://bit.ly/40Dx4IE). Join the conversation on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [X](#).