



Catalpa Oaks County Park

27705 Greenfield Road
Southfield, MI 48076
248-464-8953



Park Information

Once owned by the City of Southfield and operated as a neighborhood park, Oakland County Parks and Recreation acquired Catalpa Oaks in 2007 as the 12th Oakland County Park. Improvements were made and the park was officially dedicated in 2012.

Catalpa Oaks preserves 24 acres of green space in Southfield, adjacent to the South Oakland Health Department. The park is home to the Annual Great Marshmallow Drop, a spring event drawing 5,000+ participants who watch 15,000 marshmallows drop from a helicopter and enjoy games and activities.

The park teems with activity, thanks to four soccer fields, two baseball fields and two playgrounds, including one universally-accessible playscape with swings for all abilities. A pavilion offers picnic table seating for 100 people, and modern restrooms are on site.

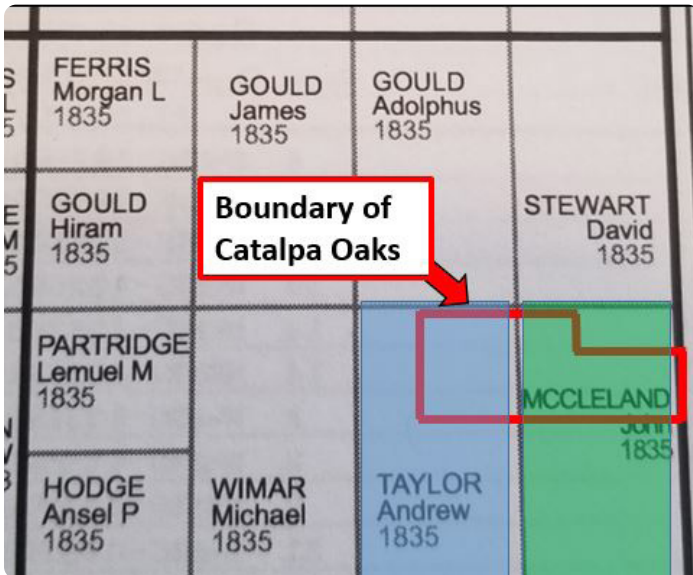
A new .8-mile crushed limestone trail completed in 2020 loops around the perimeter of the park and includes wheelchair-accessibility from Greenfield Road as well as neighborhood streets. Connector trails off the main loop lead to the fields and the playground /pavilion area.



Natural Resources

- Catalpa Oaks is part of the Clinton River Watershed and the Red Run subwatershed
- The park was likely a mixed hardwood swamp prior to the 1800s
- Development of Interstate 696 changed the soil and plant community composition of the park significantly. The trees and plants currently on the property were planted in the 20th and 21st centuries
- Native trees planted in the park by OCPD and the City of Southfield provide refuge for local bird and wildlife populations by providing green space, shelter and food sources

History



Map showing first landowners near Catalpa Oaks

- The first two people to own a patent for the land that later became Catalpa Oaks were John McClelland and Andrew Taylor. They each purchased 80 acres of land from the federal government in 1835, paying \$1.25/acre.
- John McClelland, who owned one of the first two farms on the land that became Catalpa Oaks, was a very active member of the nearby Reformed Presbyterian Church located just northwest of his farm. That church has been documented as a stop on the Underground Railroad.



Underground Railroad Monument in Detroit

- The Taylor and McClelland farms that later became Catalpa Oaks were mainly used to raise sheep and grow corn and oats.



- This aerial view shows that in 1940 the land that became Catalpa Oaks was still open land, but subdivisions were beginning to be platted around it.



1940 aerial



- In 1985 Catalpa Park, which was then managed as a city park by the City of Southfield, was a repository for surplus excavated material resulting from the construction of the nearby I-696 interchange.