

CHAPTER 2

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Purpose

The municipal ordinance establishing the City of Waukesha Parks, Recreation and Forestry Board specifies that this Board shall have control and management of public parks, recreational property and recreation activities.

Therefore, the major portion of this report consists of an analysis of public recreation areas and public recreational facilities, which are under the jurisdiction of the City of Waukesha Parks, Recreation and Forestry Board. The report does, however, take into consideration those recreational areas and facilities which are readily available to the Board or compliment the City's facilities even though they may not be under the Board's jurisdiction.

As an initial step in this portion of the study it was necessary to spell out the specific purposes and the scope. These are as follows:

- To determine the suitability of developed park areas as to size, location, use and type of development.
- To determine the suitability of publicly owned but as yet undeveloped park areas as to size, location and proposed developments.
- To determine potential park areas for acquisition and development in the future.
- To determine possible partnerships with Waukesha County, the School District of Waukesha, and private groups and organizations, to best meet the collective recreational and environmental needs of Waukesha residents.

Because recreational areas and facilities require a considerable expenditure of money, this long range park and open space plan is being prepared to assist the City in its capital improvements programming and to assist the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Board in making its recommendations to the Common Council.



Minooka County Park Pond

The plan indicates recommendations primarily to the year 2012, however the approach used in the study, and the types of recommendations made, have implications for a much longer period of time. As guidelines they can serve as the basis for critical future planning.

The implementation of this study in stages will permit the most economical and effective use of public funds. This is the reason priorities have been established in the report. Even though this plan is very specific in parts, a plan of this type must be flexible in order to meet the changing characteristics of a growing community.

BENEFITS OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Outdoor recreation provides personal, social, environmental, community, educational and economic benefits to the citizens of Waukesha. While the benefits have long been known, recent research and understanding of these benefits clarifies the many positive effects of outdoor recreation.

On a personal level, outdoor recreation provides a wide array of opportunities for physical fitness, stress reduction, learning new skills and raising self-esteem. Encouraging youth involvement in outdoor recreation is a basic step in promoting an active, healthy population. Socially, people come together around outdoor recreation which helps build family and community unity.

The Waukesha community benefits from our outdoor recreation services. Preserving, protecting and providing parks, urban forest and open space in our community enhances the desirability of an area, as well as contributing to the safety and enjoyment of our citizens. In addition, while enjoying these outdoor opportunities, people learn about natural resources and our environment, which promotes good environmental stewardship skills.

Land set aside for outdoor recreation also provides important environmental benefits to the City of Waukesha. Community parks preserve portions of the natural environment for people to explore and enjoy in close proximity to home. Trails, community forests (including street trees), and open spaces not only provide recreation; they conserve energy, protect and enhance air quality by encouraging non-motorized transportation. In addition, the natural areas and green infrastructure helps to provide oxygen and sequester carbon dioxide, therefore improving the air quality. The urban forest also reduces the temperature of urban heat islands, thereby reducing the consumption of energy to cool the surrounding buildings. Additionally, green infrastructure assists in filtering water and reducing storm water run off, improving the quality of the watershed, resulting in the recharging of the ground water aquifer. Protecting the bio-diversity and ecological integrity of Waukesha's ecosystems is essential.

Local comprehensive planning that includes the provision of outdoor recreation resources does increase neighboring property values and attract and retain businesses and industries in an area. The Waukesha economy benefits from a strong park and open space plan. The health benefits of outdoor recreation can lower medical care costs. By giving children and teens a positive outlet for their energy through outdoor activities, the community saves dollars in social spending in many ways.

All of the above benefits are noted in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2000 SCORP). These benefits mirror the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Benefits Plan adopted in 1996. The NRPA Benefits Plan is based on their Benefits of Recreation Research and highlights the following areas.

Environmental Benefits of Parks & Recreation

- Clean water and clean air
- Preserves wildlife
- Reduces pollution
- Protects ecosystem
- Places to enjoy nature's beauty
- Preservation of open space
- Source of community pride



Fox River Sanctuary Butterfly Garden

Individual Benefits of Parks & Recreation

- Live longer
- Reduces risk of stress related disease
- Increases self esteem and self reliance
- Feeling of safety and security
- Sense of social belonging
- Eliminates boredom and loneliness
- Creates balance between work and play

Community Benefits of Parks & Recreation

- Reduces crime and delinquency
- Connects families
- Enhances ethnic and cultural understanding, harmony and tolerance
- Provides outlets for conflict resolution
- Supports youth
- Offers lifelines for elderly

Economic Benefits of Parks & Recreation

- Increase tourism
- Enhances land and property value
- Business retention
- Revenue generator
- Self supporting programs
- Reduces vandalism and crime

The benefits of Parks and Recreation are endless and an important component of the City of Waukesha POSP.



Oil Painting at Schuetze Recreation Center

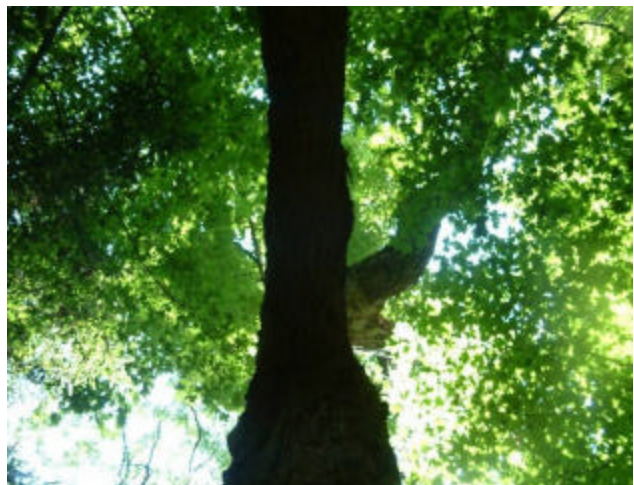


Schuetze Recreation Center

PARTICIPATION TRENDS IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor recreation activities in the Waukesha area are dynamic and constantly evolving. The most recent growth of in-line skating is an example of rapid change in recreational activities. Many factors affect the demand for outdoor recreation in Waukesha. Demographics play a key role in determining how a diverse population enjoys outdoor recreational activities. A significant change influencing outdoor recreation is the aging of the “baby boomers.” As people age their recreational patterns may change. People will be looking for easily accessible, reasonably priced and enjoyable forms of recreation provided by local community parks.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2000, reports three tiers of activities participation in the State of Wisconsin.



Moorewood Park 6

We may consider that these findings also reflect recreation participation trends in Waukesha.

“Tier I” activities, which report participation rates between 50 and 90 percent of the population, include traditional activities of walking for pleasure, picnicking, wildlife viewing, swimming and driving for pleasure.

“Tier II” activities have participation rates between 30 and 50 percent. These include bicycling, hiking, fishing, nature study or bird watching, motor boating and nature photography.

“Tier III” activities display participation rates of up to 30 percent. These include many specific sports or equipment based activities, from golf to ice skating to canoeing.

It should be recognized that a person’s choice of leisure activities varies greatly from person to person. A person’s definition of nature based activities will vary due to many factors, including age, social-economic background and ethnic heritage. A large park open space could be seen as the ideal spot for a picnic, the perfect place to toss a Frisbee, or the large area needed for a neighborhood pick-up football game. The varied use of all our park facilities should be considered when planning for the future.

It is difficult to forecast participation trends with a great level of confidence due to the many factors affecting people’s recreational choices. It does appear that in the Waukesha community, with the development of more parks, trails and open spaces, we have seen increased use of the facilities. Many community members currently walk, bike, in-line skate on our trails and picnic in our parks. It is anticipated that the demand for local outdoor recreation areas, which utilize the natural resource base, will continue to increase, thereby increasing the importance of planning for these future needs.

NOTES