



RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

CITY OF KAUKAUNA, WISCONSIN

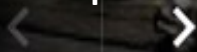


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Table of Contents

Chapter 1.	Introduction and Statement of Need	5
Chapter 2.	Goals, Strategies and a Community Vision	6
Chapter 3.	Parks and Recreation Standards	7
Chapter 4.	Planning Process	8
	A. Description of Process	
	B. Amending the Plan	
Chapter 5.	Summary of Past Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans	10
Chapter 6.	Description of the Social Characteristics of the Planning Region	11
	A. Size	
	B. Population trends and projections	
	C. Ethnic background	
	D. Employment/unemployment	
	E. Age	
	F. Economy	
Chapter 7.	Description of the Physical Characteristics of the Planning Region	16
	A. Waterways	
	B. History and Use of Waterways	
	C. Topography	
	D. Woodlands	
	E. Land Use	
Chapter 8.	Outdoor Recreation Supply Inventory	20
	A. Outdoor Recreation Facility Inventory	
	a. Number of Sites	
	b. Types of Park/Recreation Areas	
	c. Facilities Available at Sites	
	d. Current condition of Park/Recreation Areas and Facilities on Site	
	B. Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities	
Chapter 9.	Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment	43
	A. Public Input Assessment	
	a. Informal	
	b. Citizen Committees	
	c. Public Meetings and Workshops	
	d. Needs Assessment Surveys	

Chapter 10.	Recommendations for Outdoor Recreation Provision	58
A.	Priorities for Park and Space Improvements	
a.	Goals and Strategies for Implementation	
B.	Further Protecting Undeveloped Land	
a.	Regulatory Techniques	
b.	Acquisition Techniques	
c.	Funding Programs	
Chapter 11.	Appendix – Supporting data, tabular data, graphics, maps, tables	67

Chapter 10. Recommendations for Outdoor Recreation Provision

Plan proposals are designed to provide adequate recreational facilities to meet current needs and to accommodate projected growth, while at the same time preserving and enhancing Kaukauna's unique natural resources and features. The following plan proposals are designed to attain Kaukauna's goals or its City park and open space network. Some of the proposals are longer in range and may be beyond the City's short term capabilities. Others, however, may be implemented within the next several years and are the foundation of a five-year action plan. The plan proposals should be reviewed annually by the City's Health and Recreation Committee and the general public to accommodate the changing needs of the community.

Priorities for Park and Open Space Improvements

In assessing the public input feedback and after staff discussion, seven key goals and strategies have emerged for park and open space improvements. The goals are numbered below with specific strategies listed under each goal.

1. GOAL: Ensure Connectivity by Trail and Sidewalks for all Residents – the City of Kaukauna should continue to work with Outagamie County to ensure that the areas of the City most rapidly developing with single-family residential development are connected to the City's sidewalk and greater trail network. The most affected areas at the time of writing are the southernly most residential subdivisions which are not yet connected by the CE Trail.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Continue to work with Outagamie County for extension of CE Trail and/or safe sidewalk infrastructure to connect southernly residential subdivisions to trail network and provide safe walking/biking access to schools.
 - As residential development continues to the southeastern portion of the City, have discussions on feasibility of trail extension at the time of platting.
2. GOAL: Implement a Master Planning Process for the Municipal Pool – while the City of Kaukauna's pool was very contemporary at the time of its most recent design in the early 1990s, trends in water recreation have changed substantially since this time. One of the most high demand amenities requested in the public input process for this plan was a splash pad water feature in the community. Municipal pools in neighboring communities have upgraded in recent years and are now competing locations for water recreation for families. A professional assessment of the amenities within the Municipal Pool complex as well as projected revenue generation may open the door to potential redesign to include family and age-inclusive features like a splash pad or a miniature golf course, for example.

Another potential consideration for the Municipal Pool would include assessing if major improvements and site maximization is optimal at the present location. If land use at the Doty Bayorgeon Recreation Area were ever to change in the future, this might present an opportunity for a new pool location that could provide more parking and increased access to 1000 Islands Environmental Center.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Rely heavily on expertise of City Recreation staff in terms of space needs, functionality and present revenue generation and future revenue forecasting.
 - Identify areas for modernization in municipal pool complex and improvement of underutilized areas (hillside, playground).
 - Ensure that changing rooms, restrooms, and space for employees (locker/changing areas) are designed to be non-binary and inclusive.
3. GOAL: Allow Dogs in More Municipal Parks and Open Spaces – The Kaukauna Dog Park has been and continues to be a large destination for the Fox Valley and southern Brown County residents. Knowing this, continued improvements to the Dog Park such as additional shaded areas, running water, restrooms and a resurfaced parking lot would make this a greater regional destination. At this time, staff does not feel that opening access in municipal parks to dogs (on-leash) is a direction that they are comfortable going in. That being said, there is the opportunity to explore whether the new classification of Natural Open Spaces might be an appropriate fit for dogs. Natural Open Spaces include trails and parks that are not programmed (ie, no playground equipment) and are used more for non-permanent equipment activities such as fishing, wildlife viewing, or enjoying a quiet space in nature.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Continue to invest in improvements for the Kaukauna Dog Park, such as running water, restrooms, resurfaced parking lot.
 - Consider increased access for dogs in the newly classified City “natural open spaces” – parks that invite more passive recreation and do not feature playground equipment.
 - Clarify signage in all City parks to be specific as to whether or not dogs are permitted. Presently signage in Thelen Park, the Municipal Pool, Central Park, Van Eperen Park and Pond, Kelso Park and Pond, Nature View Park and Grignon Park do not explicitly state whether dogs are permitted or not. An allowance for dogs in ‘natural open spaces’ would promote parks such as Central Park, Van Eperen Park and Pond, Kelso Park and Pond, Quarry Point Park and Nature View Park as dog-friendly destinations.
4. GOAL: Maintain and Expand Quality Neighborhood Parks and Natural Open Spaces – The City of Kaukauna has a large number of parks and open spaces for its population, and as such, it can be a serious undertaking to replace aging equipment in the 15 parks that feature playground equipment. That being said, it should be a priority for the City to phase out traditional playground equipment that can be unsafe and is less accessible for users of all abilities. Parks that still feature this equipment should be a priority for funding in the next capital improvement plan. New park land should be set aside in developing subdivisions and should feature a mix of natural open spaces and neighborhood classified parks. While some open spaces in the City limits are not municipally-owned, the land use goal for the City of Kaukauna should emphasize maintaining open space acreage (where possible) in the community.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Continue to set aside or acquire acreage for future neighborhood parks and natural open spaces in new subdivisions. Neighborhood parks are to provide a similar type of amenity that they do in existing subdivisions (playground equipment, sitting area, possibly a small pavilion – not available for rent).
 - Natural open spaces provide dog-friendly spots for walking, running, wildlife viewing and can also be used, if needed, for wetland remediation in development plans.
5. GOAL: Invest in Destination-Worthy Improvements in Regional/Local Parks – In assessing the public input feedback generated in the writing of this plan, park users desire parks with high quality, modern playground equipment and a wide range of amenities and travel up to half an hour to use parks that feature these amenities. Some of the model park destinations are assessed more thoroughly in Chapter 9 of this plan. Furthermore, participants in the public input process overwhelmingly indicated that while it is important to still have neighborhood parks within walking distance from where they live, they will travel to a park with enhanced amenities (ie, a regional park).

Obviously it is unsustainable to incorporate highly expensive playground in every single neighborhood park in Kaukauna, but there are two parks in particular that were frequently mentioned as ‘hidden gems’, underutilized and beautiful parks that could stand to see some upgrades. The two parks that staff highlighted as potential parks to shift from Local to Regional Parks were specifically La Follette Park and Riverside Park. Both of these parks are centrally located in the City, feature ample parking and ancillary amenities such as indoor restrooms, rentable pavilions and picnic areas. These long-established parks are still draws for residents, but do not presently offer significant amenities that might draw a visitor to the community. These parks also serve long-established residential neighborhoods. A downside of subdivision growth and urban sprawl is that near downtown neighborhoods and public spaces can sometimes see neglect or disinvestment. Making these two parks priorities for high quality playground equipment and destination style amenities makes sense from a location standpoint, a financial standpoint and from a volume and capacity standpoint.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Identify trends in playground equipment that are inclusive and present in destination parks in the greater Fox Cities area. Some of these parks are highlighted in Chapter 9.
 - Phase in new equipment over capital projects budgets in coming years to improve the recreational offerings at these large and centrally-located parks.
 - Maximize the expertise of the City’s new public relations coordinator and of the City Recreation director to effectively promote the amenities at all City of Kaukauna parks, especially destination/regional parks.
6. GOAL: Implement a Wayfinding Signage Effort – The City of Kaukauna needs to address the fact that a large number of parks within the City are undersigned for vehicular traffic and are not signed at all for bike and pedestrian traffic. With the City’s investment in major park

improvements and trail extensions, it can be presumed that more visitors will be coming to the City and efforts should be in place to ensure that visitors easily find their destination. This is particularly important as the City moves forward with the Fox River Boardwalk and connecting Power Canal Trail – serving as a direct pedestrian and bicycle connection between the Village of Little Chute’s park system and the City of Kaukauna’s park system.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Partner with East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to conduct a wayfinding signage inventory and gap analysis study (Completed in 2019)
- Make decisions as a staff on the hierarchy of recreational amenities and the distances at which they should be signed
- Work to design signage that is highly visible, functional for vehicles and pedestrians and fits a future brand for the City of Kaukauna in color and design.

7. GOAL: Strive for Inclusivity in Design – The City of Kaukauna has a limited number of accessible playground items and this is not in keeping with park and recreation trends nationally and in neighboring municipalities. An engagement process, perhaps in tandem with the Kaukauna Area School District, should seek to identify neighborhoods where youth with disabilities are present and invest thereby in neighborhood park level improvements to be more inclusive. Furthermore, local and regional parks in the community should all have some accessible playground equipment, with regional parks being held to the expectation of the greatest inclusivity. Inclusion design should not only take place in neighborhoods where individuals with disabilities live, but should be a priority across the City of Kaukauna parks and open space network and should seek to create a space for play and recreation that is inviting to all.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Inventory existing inclusive playground equipment in City parks and engage with local school district to discuss functionality and popularity of inclusive equipment in more modernized school playground equipment.
- Strive to include inclusive playground equipment and features, even minimally, in every Local and Neighborhood Park.
- Invest heavily in inclusive designed playground equipment at Regional/Destination parks with playground equipment.

8. GOAL: Utilize Community Events to Connect and Cross-Promote Parks and Open Spaces – The Kaukauna Farmer’s Market is administered by the City’s Community Enrichment Coordinator and is currently held during the summer months within a downtown municipal parking lot. The market has the opportunity to cross-promote the City’s parks and open space network by creating a vibrant public-gathering place for social interaction and integrating health-focused activities as a part of the Farmer’s Market. There is also the future opportunity to relocate the Farmer’s Market into a public park location (versus in a parking lot), such as Central Park or Hydro Park.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Maintain location with access to the recreational trail system and continue to provide bicycle parking.
- Incorporate active youth recreation into the Farmer's Market.
- Connect other downtown public spaces concurrently such as plazas and Central Park during the Farmer's Market.
- Cross-promote Recreation Department programs with the Farmer's Market such as the Yoga in the Park series.

Further Protecting Undeveloped Lands

There are a number of methods currently available for protecting remaining undeveloped lands that possess open space and recreation potential. Methods available to local governments fall into three categories: regulation, acquisition and funding programs. Effective implementation requires a combination of these tools.

Fee simple acquisition is the most effective means of implementation. It provides complete control of recreational land and facilities. However, public or private agencies have limited funds for the acquisition of desired recreational lands. When acquisition is not possible, other alternatives are available for provision of recreational activities.

Regulatory Techniques

The importance of regulatory techniques in implementing open space objectives is underscored by the fact that most potential park lands and scenic areas are privately owned. There are, however, opportunities to incorporate open space objectives in land use and development regulations. Restrictions imposed on a land owner must relate closely to the interest of public health, safety, and welfare. Restrictions must be designed to reduce the adverse or negative impact of development.

- *Zoning*
Zoning's primary function is to separate incompatible land uses. This includes the protection of environmentally sensitive areas. For example, because flooding poses a threat to public health and safety, legal authority has been granted to restrict development in these areas. Thus, floodplain or shoreline zoning offers an opportunity to deter development and retain land adjacent to rivers, and streams as open space.

Zoning restrictions are also possible for other environmentally sensitive areas. Development on steep slopes can cause run-off resulting in erosion or mud slides. Therefore, restrictive regulations are designed to discourage or limit development. The possible destruction of wetlands through development also represents an opportunity for tighter restriction on development. In general, many of the environmentally unique and sensitive areas that are suited for open space and recreational use are not suited for development.

Zoning regulations through sign control, increased setbacks, landscaping requirements, and restrictions on outside storage can assist in preserving scenic areas. Cluster zoning

and planned unit developments also offer an opportunity to preserve open space for recreational use.

- *Subdivision Regulations*

Subdivision regulations ensure that subdivisions are properly designed including sidewalks and have adequate improvements, including open space. Residential land development in excess of actual or projected population growth represents a premature and unnecessary loss of open space areas. By requiring adequate improvements, the occurrence of speculative subdivision can be reduced. Subdivision regulations also require developers to dedicate or reserve a portion of the subdivision for recreational purposes or to pay an optional payment in lieu of dedication.

- *Official Mapping*

Although official mapping is commonly associated with future acquisition of road right-of-ways, it can also be used to identify future parklands. With this technique, future park areas are identified on a map, duly recorded, and approved by the governing body. The area will be referenced as a future park site in the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Kaukauna. These areas are then prohibited from being developed, offering the community time to purchase the site.

Acquisition Techniques

Several avenues are open to government in the acquisition of land for open space purposes and are described as follows:

- *Fee Simple Acquisition*

The landowner is given a sum of money for all rights to a specific piece of land or property. In Wisconsin, fee simple acquisition is the most common way of acquiring public lands for recreational uses. A land contract may also be used as a form of fee simple acquisition.

- *Purchase of Tax Delinquent Property*

This technique can only be used when back taxes on land have not been paid. Where such lands are needed for outdoor recreation and open space purposes, the purchaser pays the back taxes. The fair market value minus the cost of the back taxes is paid to the former owner. When property becomes delinquent due to soil contamination or similar fate, a program known as 'brownfield redevelopment' can assist in the development of this land.

- *Advance Purchase*

This method of implementation requires a purchase agreement to acquire outdoor recreation lands prior to the actual purchase. The agreement fixes the price of future acquisition and may relieve the landowner of up to 100 percent of the property tax burden.

- *Lease or Easement*

This technique provides for the recreational use of land for a designated period of time but without fee simple acquisition. An easement or lease can be written to allow or restrict public access and use of private land. Restricting access can encourage the preservation and creation of scenic views. Easements can also be used to provide limited trail access for recreation purposes. Because of their versatility, easements are a valuable implementation tool.

- *Purchase of Development Rights*

This technique allows an entity to acquire the rights to develop a tract of land or prevent the development of land for a contractual amount. The ownership of land the present use remains with the present owner. However, the land could not be developed without the consent of the entity that owns the developmental rights.

- *Eminent Domain*

Eminent domain is the power of a governmental body to condemn private land for public purposes upon payment of just compensation. The ability for government to use eminent domain for the creation of recreational trails or bike paths was curtailed by Assembly Bill 64 during the 2017-2018 Legislature. The recently proposed 2019-2021 biennial budget restores the ability of the Department of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources to again exercise eminent domain for the purposes of creating recreational trails and bike paths.

- *Land Banking*

The land bank, which can be set up as a part of local government or a self governing entity, can purchase land and then sell it for development subject to the requirement that adequate and suitable areas are set aside for recreational purposes. Proceeds from the sale of land could be used for subsequent purchases. Initial financing could be provided through grants or by the issuance of bonds.

- *Conversion of Landfills, Quarries or Large Ugly Land Uses*

Former non-compatible land uses can often be used for recreational purposes. Activities such as fishing, ball fields, picnic areas, open space and play areas can be supported by the conversion of land uses donated by or acquired from companies who no longer have an economic use for the property. This is typically accomplished through brownfield rehabilitation.

- *Trust for Public Lands*

Private groups or organizations such as the Trust for Public Land or the Nature Conservancy can purchase outdoor recreation lands and hold them until a public agency can acquire them.

- *Donation*

This technique encourages and seeks the purchase of private lands for outdoor recreation and outdoor space in the least expensive means possible while still allowing

private owners to realize gains. Tax-deductible contributions can be in the form of a lease, easement, or outright title.

Funding Programs

State and federal funding programs are available to local communities to acquire, develop, or preserve open space areas. Due to limited funds and increasing competition for the available funds, local governments should prepare grant applications carefully, viewing these funds as supplements to local funding rather than as the mainstay of an outdoor recreation program.

- *Land and Water Conservation Fund / Aid for the Development of Local Parks*
LWCF and ADLP provide financial assistance for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. In Wisconsin, LWCF and ADLP are administered by the Department of Natural Resources. An approved Recreation and Open Space Plan is required for the receipt of LWCF or ADLP funds.
- *Community Foundation Funds*
The Fox Cities Community Foundation and its various family funds have been exceptional supporters of trail expansions in the City of Kaukauna and the greater Fox Cities region. They have also supported specific recreational improvements in the community like the Kaukauna Public Library Interactive Learning Garden.
- *Special Tax*
A special tax levy, usually included in the property tax, which allows local units of government to collect revenue to support outdoor recreation projects.
- *General Obligation Bond*
Funds are made available for recreational acquisition or development when a referendum or legislative act has authorized sale of such bonds. The recreational use debt is repaid by the levy of a property tax and secured by the local unit of government.
- *Revenue Bond*
Bonds are issued by a public agency and paid back by means of revenue derived from the operation of the resulting recreational projects, such as golf courses, swimming pools and community centers.
- *User Charge*
Money charged for use of certain recreational facilities helps offset the cost of acquisition, development, and maintenance of some outdoor recreation facilities.

Public Participation and Coordination

The most important part of any recreation plan is to get input from the people who will be using the recreation activity or what the people who ultimately fund the project would like to see. Recreation and park planning can involve the public through various methods. Public hearings are an effective way to hear (and have elected officials) hear directly the feedback from residents. However, public hearings can

often attract negative feedback and attendees are less likely to spend a portion of their time attending a meeting in support. The 2019 Recreation and Open Space Plan was the first to utilize an online survey component and the feedback, as highlighted in Chapter 9, was quite broad and constructive. The online survey, as a convenient, non-time restrictive means of sharing feedback increased participation overall, especially among younger park users.

The City of Kaukauna is not the only community working to improve its park and recreation system. At the State and County levels there are plans for park system improvements and expansions. East Central Regional Plan Commission also has heavy involvement in the park planning process. Neighboring communities (cities, villages and some urbanized towns) at the local level also do park and recreation planning. It is important to consider the plans of neighboring communities, one to not duplicate services, and two to make sure trails and other multi-jurisdictional features are compatible with each other when they meet at corporate limits. One tool which can be used to make plans compatible with neighboring communities are the comprehensive plans for each community. Comprehensive planning by its nature, involves not just the community it was prepared for, but the entire region a community is located within.