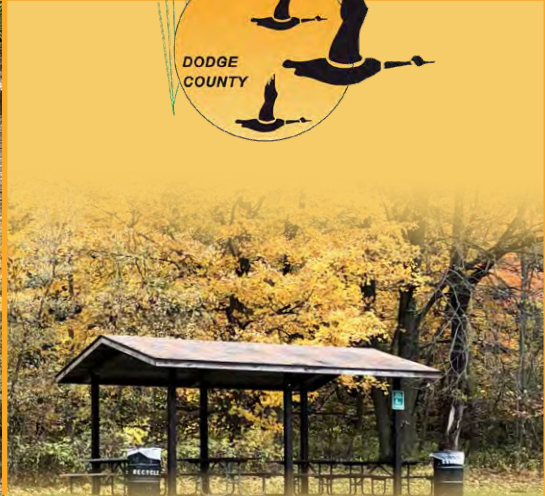
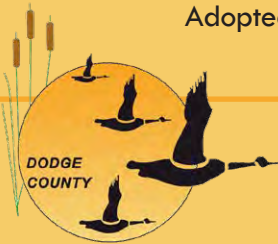




**DODGE COUNTY
PARKS, OUTDOOR
RECREATION AND
OPEN SPACE PLAN**

Adopted: 9.19.23



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023 Dodge County Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan was prepared in accordance with the guidelines that will make it certifiable by the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and qualify Dodge County for matching grant funds.

- The County has grown over the past two decades and in 2022 had a population of 88,822. By 2033, it is projected that Dodge County will have a population of 90,346 and by 2043 a population of 91,754. See Chapter 1 and Appendix.
- Dodge County owns and/or maintains 391 acres of developed parkland in five parks, approximately 25 miles of multi-use trail along three different trail corridors, and 86 acres of undeveloped conservation areas. Additionally, there are approximately 114 total miles of water trails in Dodge County. See Chapter 2 and Appendix.
- Multiple forms of public participation were utilized in this planning process including coordination with the County's Land Resources and Parks Committee to guide the process, stakeholder interviews, a community-wide online survey, and public open house review of the Final Draft Plan. See Chapter 3 and Appendix.
 - An online survey was utilized to gather over 215 people's opinions on current usage, prioritized park improvements, new facilities, and more.
 - Annual camper surveys conducted by the Land Resources and Parks Department were completed and used to develop the plan's recommendations. 740 responses were collected through the camper survey in 2022.
 - Focus group interview sessions were conducted with County staff, Land Resources and Parks Committee members, the Nitschke Mounds Friends Group, municipal and school district staff, trails and public health representatives, and Harnischfeger Park representatives and Dodge County park donors. Overall, over 30 people participated in the interviews.
 - A public open house was held at the conclusion of the process, providing members of the public with an opportunity to review, discuss, and ask questions on the draft plan prior to adoption.
 - The Land Resources and Parks Committee and County Board also participated in the review of the draft document and provided feedback on key components of the plan.
- In comparison to other neighboring counties, Dodge County falls behind in terms of residents per park as well as slightly behind in the amount of total park acres per 1,000 residents. See Chapter 5.
- A service area analysis was conducted to explore the geographic distribution of existing facilities in relationship to population. There are a few identified existing gaps within Dodge County as shown on Map 5.
- As of 2023, Dodge County provides approximately 4.4 Regional Park acres and 0.3 miles of multi-use trails per 1,000 residents. The new proposed standard for the County in 2023 is the provision of approximately 5.4 Regional Park acres and 0.5 miles of multi-use trails per 1,000 residents. See Chapter 5.
- To meet the future population demand for developed park acres and multi-use trail miles, it is projected that the County will need to acquire 151 new Regional Park acres and 20 miles of multi-use trails by 2033 and 205 new park acres and 21 miles of multi-use trails by 2043. See Chapter 5. Additionally, potential future park expansion opportunities have been mapped for all existing parks. See Appendix.
- A new parkland evaluation tool was developed to assist the County in assessing new parkland acquisition opportunities as they may arise over the planning period. Additionally, conceptual park development plans were created for Astico Park. New and improved recreational opportunities have been identified for the site. See Chapter 7.
- A complete list of recommended improvements to existing facilities was also established in Chapter 7 and 8. Cost estimates for these recommended park improvements were created in Chapter 9 to assist in future budgeting and capital improvement planning.
- A detailed set of action steps were identified to assist the County in advancing the goals and recommendations of this plan through implementation. See Chapter 10.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND EXISTING CONDITIONS



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

Communities throughout the world recognize that park land, recreation trails, and natural areas are key components of high-quality living environments. Open spaces and outdoor recreation provide a community with many benefits and serve a multitude of functions, including opportunities for recreation, promoting and accommodating a healthy lifestyle, enhancing community aesthetics, increasing property values, attracting visitors and tourists, shaping development patterns, and protecting the natural environment. The park and open space system of every community should be planned and designed to meet the diverse needs of its population. Proper recreation-based planning requires a focus on both the types of facilities needed to meet the needs of the community as well as the geographic distribution of those facilities relative to those who will use them.

Outdoor Recreation In Wisconsin

According to the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation, Wisconsin is home to over 15,000 inland lakes, 84,000 miles of rivers and streams, the 1,200-mile Ice Age National Scenic Trail, 7.5 million acres of public land, over 25,000 miles of groomed snowmobile trails, the third most ski resorts in the country, and 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations. In 2021, Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry contributed a record-setting \$8.7 billion to the state's gross domestic product and the outdoor economy grew by over 14%. Additionally, the industry supports nearly 90,000 jobs across various sectors in the state. Overall, outdoor recreation throughout Wisconsin provides a high quality of life for residents, economic opportunity, public health benefits, community identity by highlighting cultural and historic resources, and natural resource preservation and enhancement. (Source: Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation, 2022)

The Dodge County park, recreation, trail, and open space system is one of its many important amenities. The existing system plays a key role in the community's high quality of life, however, there are opportunities for expansion and improvement to serve the County's growing population, protect and maintain its high-quality natural resources, and embrace opportunities for open space preservation and recreation.

This 2023 Dodge County Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan (POROS) compiles, reviews, and updates information on the physical facilities and lands that make up the existing park and open space system, in addition to providing guidance for future improvement and expansion of the system. This Plan serves as an important element of Dodge County's overall comprehensive planning program. As such, the POROS Plan addresses the long-range park and open space needs of the community over the next 10-20 years, with a specific focus on park and recreation action items over the next 5-year period (2023-2028). Five years is generally considered a reasonable horizon in park planning because social, cultural, and political conditions tend to change enough over five years for the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations that derived from previous plans to be reevaluated.

This Plan has been prepared in accordance with guidelines that will make it certifiable by the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR) and qualify Dodge County for matching grant funds through the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the Federal Recreation Trails Act (RTA), and the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Grant Programs (State of Wisconsin). This Plan must be updated every five years to ensure that it reflects the current needs of the community and retains its WisDNR certification. The plan has also been prepared in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes 61.35, 236.29 and 66.0617. Furthermore, it will be incorporated as a detailed component of the County's Comprehensive Plan under Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001.



This Plan is intended to incorporate, refine, and update the previous analysis and recommendations presented in the 2015 Dodge County Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan. This Plan was prepared under the direction of Dodge County staff, the Land Resources and Parks Committee, and County Board. The purpose of the Plan is threefold:

1. To guide the decisions of the County and other providers of open space and recreational lands in the area in order to provide for the increasing demand for recreation facilities.
2. To recommend proposals for recreation and open space improvements within the County.
3. To maintain Dodge County’s eligibility for recreation grant funds with updates completed approximately every five years.

GENERAL REGIONAL CONTEXT

Dodge County is located in the middle of the triangle formed by the metropolitan communities of Madison, Milwaukee, and the Fox Cities in the southeastern part of Wisconsin. Counties that border Dodge include Dane, Columbia, Green Lake, Fond du Lac, Washington, Waukesha, and Jefferson Counties. The major north-south highway corridors linking these areas to Dodge County include Highway 41, Highway 151, and Highway 26. Highways 33, 49, and 60 provide the main east-west routes through the County. Dodge County’s centralized location in a growing region and its proximity to other population centers will likely lead to a demand for recreation and park resources in excess of what the local population itself would demand. Many of the County’s parks have evolved into regional recreational tourist destinations for both County residents and out-of-County users, who take advantage of the area’s ease of access to the interstate highway system, proximity to major metropolitan areas, and abundant natural resources located within its scenic, rural setting.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Dodge County currently includes just over 88,800 residents. The need for parks and recreational space is driven by the growing population of the County. Predicting how the County’s population might grow in the future provides important information about the amount of new parkland and recreational facilities that will be needed to serve the region. The County experienced steady population growth between 2000 and 2020, maintaining an approximate average of 2% population growth each decade. Dodge County has continued to experience steady growth since 2010, though not at the same level of intensity as in the first decade of the century.

Many of the counties adjacent to Dodge County, as well as the State as a whole, have experienced similar trends over the last two decades. Throughout Wisconsin, communities experienced significant construction and development in the 1990s and the years preceding the Great Recession (2000-2008), followed by slow economic recovery that has resulted in much smaller increases in housing development and population over the course of the following decade. However, it should be noted that amongst adjacent counties, Dodge has seen the smallest population increase between 2000-2020.

FIGURE 1.1: POPULATION TRENDS

	2000	2010	2020	2022*	2000-2022 Change
Dodge County	85,897	88,759	89,396	88,822	3%
Jefferson County	74,021	83,686	86,148	86,576	17%
Fond Du Lac County	97,296	101,633	104,154	104,162	7%
Washington County	117,493	131,887	136,761	138,229	18%
Columbia County	52,468	56,833	58,490	58,627	12%
Dane County	426,526	488,073	561,504	582,165	36%
Wisconsin	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,893,718	5,949,155	11%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2020 Census.

*WisDOA annual municipal population estimates, 2022.



Predicting future population growth is challenging and somewhat inexact. It should be noted that the County's actual future population will depend on social and economic trends, market conditions, attitudes toward growth, and development regulations. See the Appendix for the seven population projection methods analyzed. This set of projections was prepared specifically for this Plan and by the Wisconsin Department of Administration. All are projected through 2045. These forecasts provide the basis for determining future need for parks and open spaces.

For the purposes of this Plan, the County will utilize the Compounded Growth projection between 2000-2022 scenario as a reasonable, conservative estimate that would result in a total projected population of 90,346 residents by 2033 and 91,754 by 2043. The selected population projection forecast will be used to project future parkland additions required to accommodate population growth in the County.

In 2021, the County's median age was 42.4, higher than the statewide median age (40), but comparable to the median age in most adjacent counties. The percentage of the County's population aged 18 and under was 20 percent in 2021. That percentage was lower than both the statewide (22) and countywide totals for all adjacent counties besides Dane and Jefferson. 19% of the County's population was aged 65 and older – a higher percentage of the population than half of the surrounding counties and the state, all of which have at least 15 percent of their populations over the age of 65. Additionally, while the percentage of residents over 65 has increased since 2000, the median age in the County has also increased. It is important to keep in mind that

there may be a larger percentage of residents over the age of 65 in the next decade, and park and recreation facilities need to be provided for this age demographic as well as younger generations.

The population of Dodge County is predominantly white. This data depicts a relatively homogeneous population, however, there have been small increases in the number of people who identify as some other race, two or more races, or who identify as being of Hispanic or Latino origin. The percentage of residents that comprise these three categories makes up a total of just over 7% of the population and represents the portion of the population that identifies as part of a minority group. These findings indicate that care must be taken during the planning process to include and represent these minority groups in the planning for future park and recreation spaces within the region.

The County's average household size decreased between 2000-2020 from 2.56 to 2.39 persons per household. For comparison, the average household size throughout the State in 2020 was 2.38, indicating that Dodge County is mirroring statewide trends towards smaller household sizes. Additionally, the percentage of owner-occupied housing units has remained the same in the County since 2000, but this percentage is lower than homeownership levels in all neighboring counties except for when compared to the state and Dane County.

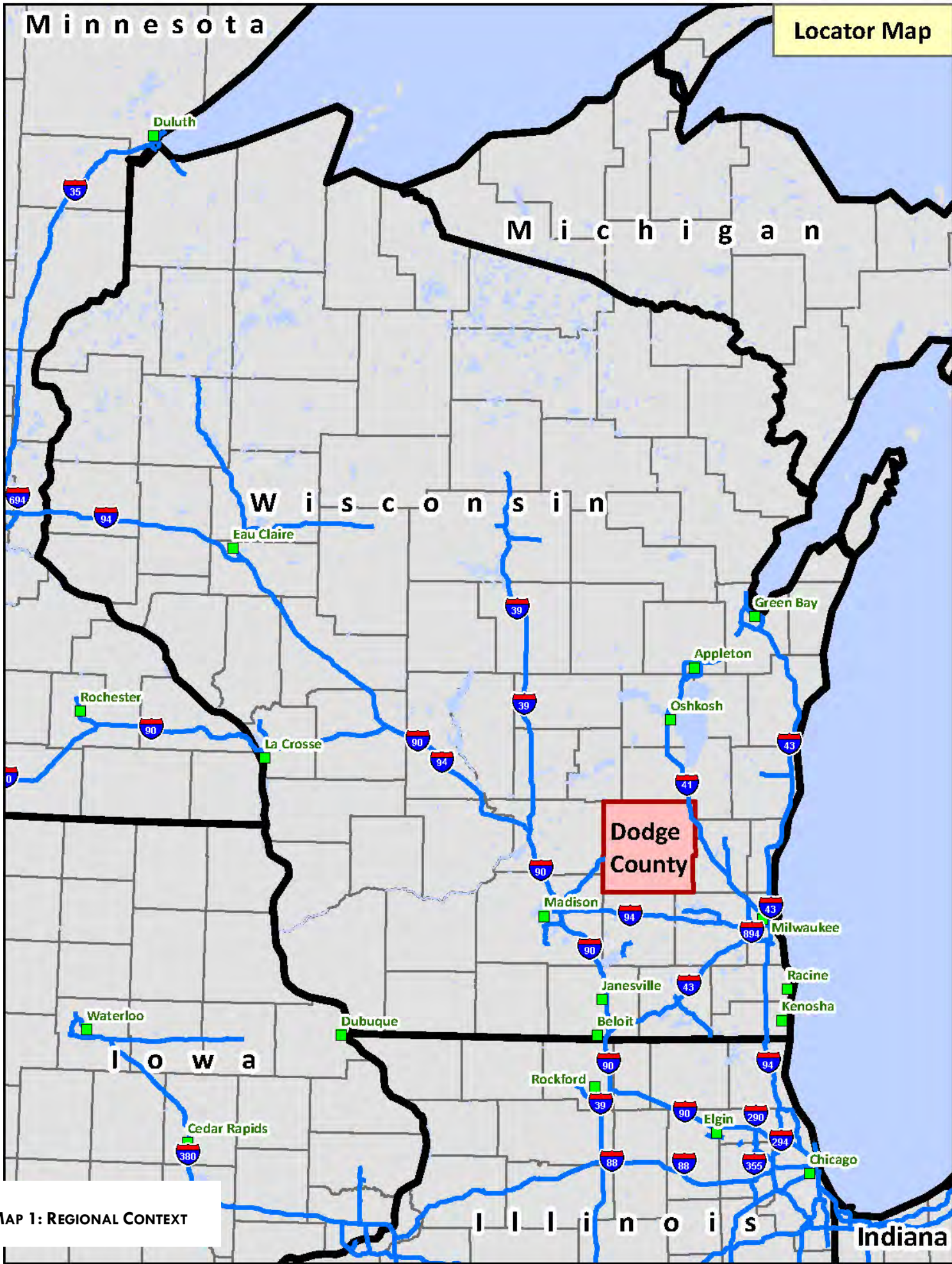
Parks and recreation are directly related to the community's overall public health because they provide opportunities for County residents to participate in physical activities, get outside, and improve health education. Overall, Dodge County ranks in the bottom 50% of Wisconsin counties in terms of overall health outcomes (43rd out of 72 counties, with the healthiest communities ranking the lowest numbers). Data from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services indicates that there are public health areas that can be improved throughout Dodge County including the percentage of adults with obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. This information is important for assessing how healthy Dodge County is today, while identifying areas of focus for improvement in the future.

Dodge County Public Health Rankings

Dodge County ranks in the bottom half of all Wisconsin counties (43 out of 72 counties) in overall health outcomes.

Source: 2022 County Health Rankings, University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

A complete inventory, analysis, and review of Dodge County's natural resource components, data trends, and existing plans can be found in the Appendix.



MAP 1: REGIONAL CONTEXT

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CHAPTER 2: EXISTING PARK AND OPEN SPACE FACILITIES



CHAPTER 2: EXISTING PARK AND OPEN SPACE FACILITIES

The following is a summary of the existing park and recreational facilities within the County. The locations are depicted on Map 3. Each facility is categorized by its size, use, and functionality. A complete list of the facilities within each park is provided within this chapter. Additionally, a summary of municipal, state, and federal parks and recreational facilities is provided to offer a broader perspective on the park and recreation facilities in Dodge County.

As of 2023, the Dodge County Parks and Trails system consists of approximately 391 total developed park acres in 5 parks, approximately 25 total miles of trails along 3 different multi-use trail corridors, and one undeveloped Conservation Areas area totaling 86 acres. Additionally, there are approximately 114 total miles of water trails along the Rock River, Crawfish River, and Beaver Dam River in Dodge County.

Dodge County Park Activity

Between 2013 and 2022, Dodge County Parks experienced an average of 7,436 campsite rentals per year, 136 shelter rentals per year, and 286 watercraft rentals per year.

Source: Dodge County, 2023

FACILITY CATEGORIZATION

A hierarchy of facility categorizations has been established as part of this planning process. Each County facility is categorized by its size, service area, function, and defining characteristics. Definitions used in this plan are modifications of definitions used by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). They are used to classify the existing recreation system and to guide plans for its future. Figure 2.1 summarizes the key aspects of each facility type. For more information on municipal, state, and federal recreational facility types, see Chapter 5.

Regional Parks

A Regional Park fills the gap between intensively developed urban facilities and resource protection-oriented municipal, county, state, or federal parks and resource areas. Regional parks should offer a variety of active and passive recreational experiences and be designed for day-long or overnight use. Proximity to significant population centers and scenic areas, accessibility from highways, location in relation to existing recreation areas and a maximum travel time of one-half hour must be weighed when considering locations for Regional Parks. In general, a location for a Regional Park should emphasize interesting topography and be characterized by scenic views, wooded areas, lakes, rivers, or other unique natural features. Generally, 100+ acres is a desirable size range.

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas may be created by a municipality, county, state, or federal agency for the protection and preservation of natural resources. These areas are located to take advantage of natural or unusual features of the landscape or to preserve areas of ecological or historic value and provide a variety of outdoor recreation activities. Conservation areas might be created to provide access to lakes and rivers or to protect ledges and areas with steep slopes. Sites of cultural, archaeological, or historical importance and certain recreation facilities such as golf courses, boat launching ramps, and marinas might be considered Conservation Areas. The size and location of special purpose parks are highly variable and depend upon natural features and the functions they are intended to serve.

Linear Parks (Multi-Use Trail Corridors)

Linear Parks or Multi-Use Trail Corridors are areas developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel such as hiking, biking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. Linear Parks provide links between communities, parks, and other regional destinations. These types of trails serve multiple functions as important transportation links for alternative modes of transportation, as well as providing significant recreational opportunities and social and political



linkages between communities and their residents. Linear Parks also tend to provide economic development opportunities through tourism and trail related business developments due to their popularity.

Rail Trails

Rail-Trails (trails built on abandoned railroad beds) and even Rails-With-Trails (trails built alongside active railroad beds) have been the traditional means of rural linear park trails. However, as railroad abandonments have decreased in recent years, developing separated paved bike paths within highway rights-of-way has also become another means of establishing this facility type. There are no defined size standards for these facility types, but they do need to have sufficient width to protect the resource or provide a buffer between adjacent uses.

Water Trails

The final facility type is Water Trails. Typically, defined as non-intermittent rivers, lakes, streams, and creeks, Water Trails provide connectivity throughout an area by non-motorized recreational boat travel (ex. paddling sports). Often, this facility type includes various access points along an established water corridor that provides water-based travel from one point to another. Strategically placed water access points provide opportunities to connect communities, parks, and other destinations together and serve as recreation-based options for residents and tourists. Like Conservation Areas Parks, there are no defined standard sizes for Water Trails as they are dependent on the location of natural resources and geography.

FIGURE 2.1 FACILITY CATEGORIZATION

Facility Type	Recommended Size Per Facility	Dodge County 2023 Totals	Primary Providers	Defining Characteristics
Regional Parks	100+ acres	391 Acres (78 Average Acres Per Site or 13-132 Acres)	County, State, and Federal	Provides opportunities for both active and passive uses
Conservation Areas	Variable	86 Acres	County, Municipalities, State, and Federal	Provides opportunities for passive uses
Linear Parks (Multi-Use Trail Corridors)	Variable	25 Miles	County, Municipalities, State	Interconnected portion of larger multi-use trail network
Water Trails	Variable	114 Miles	County and State	Interconnected portion of larger water trail network

DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING PUBLIC PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Regional Parks

Astico Park – 102 Acres

Park Description: Astico Park is a 102-acre park located in southwestern Dodge County east of the City of Columbus, in the Town of Elba, and along the Crawfish River and historic Danville Millpond. Approximately 40 acres of the park were acquired in the late 1990’s and are located to the east of the river and connected via the restored and relocated historic Ninabuck and Scofield Road Bridges. The park features 2 miles of river shoreline, is situated on a drumlin, and is predominantly wooded. It contains campsites, picnic shelters, playground areas, hiking trails, large open play fields, and fishing and canoeing access areas. The park features a restroom facility with showers and a sewage tank dump station, in addition to other scattered, vault toilet building facilities. Two continually flowing artesian wells in the park have become an attraction for many visitors. The “Point” area and the “Danville” sections of the park experience occasional river flooding every few years affecting usability of the campsites located there. The remainder of the park and facilities are more elevated and less impacted by river flooding. The park is open year-round for day-use activities and for camping from April through October. During the winter months only the main park road is plowed up to a small parking area. Winter use includes cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking. The remainder of the park roads are closed to vehicle traffic in winter.

Accessibility: Most facilities are connected by paved paths; however the varying topography of the park does provide some extra difficulties for those in wheelchairs or with walking issues, especially access to the river crossing on the west side of the park.

Derge Park – 14 Acres

Park Description: Derge Park is a 14-acre park located on the west central shore of Beaver Dam Lake, providing access to the 6,600-acre lake with good fishing and water sports opportunities. The park is very small for County Park standards but is well developed and attracts a high number of campers. The once heavily wooded park experienced a massive loss of trees during a winter storm in the late 1990's, which led to significant redevelopment at the park. The park mostly provides camping (24 sites feature electric hookups), a playground and picnicking areas, fishing access, accessible kayak launch, and a boat launch. The site contains flush toilets, showers, a sewage tank dump station, and a waterless vault toilet. Derge Park is open year-round for day use activities and is open for camping from April through October. Park roads are not plowed during the winter months.

Accessibility: A system of paved paths connecting the primary facilities in the park combined with a mostly level topography makes the park fully accessible for those in wheelchairs or with walking difficulties. A fully accessible kayak launch dock was donated and installed in 2017.

Harnischfeger Park – 133 Acres

Park Description: Harnischfeger Park, located in the southeast portion of the Town of Lebanon, was acquired by the County in 2004 from Harnischfeger Employees Benefits Association. The 133-acre park borders the Rock River with nearly 1 mile of shoreline. This park offers a wide variety of facilities and recreational opportunities including two shelters, miniature golf, volleyball court, disc golf, hiking and horse trails, play equipment, kayak rentals, camping, antique farm equipment interpretive trail and museum, and a boardwalk trail system. Trails are groomed in the winter for cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking. The park is a scouting group favorite, and several features of the park were done as Eagle Scout projects. The key facility in the park, the clubhouse, is reserved most Saturday and Sundays throughout the summer months and provides a nice venue for small weddings, company picnics, family reunions, graduations, and other group gatherings. The park hosts the annual FallFest event held by the Friends of Dodge County Parks to promote the parks and raise funds for park improvements.

Accessibility: Paved roads and paths to most facilities provide fairly good accessibility. Some steeper grades and graveled areas do provide some accessibility limitations that need to be addressed. Continued upgrades to the clubhouse bathrooms and building access will improve accessibility, however the men's and women's bathrooms are on separate levels. The park is mostly level in topography providing good access to all parts of the park.

Ledge Park – 87 Acres

Park Description: Ledge Park comprises 87 acres of land situated along the Niagara escarpment, a natural rock ledge, that divides the park into upper and lower areas and provides a breathtaking scenic overlook of the Horicon Marsh. Located southwest of Mayville, the park is split into two parts offering a variety of amenities. The upper portion of the park is mostly wooded with campsites, hiking trails, scenic overlooks with boardwalk, playgrounds, and a picnic shelter with a limited open field area. The lower portion of the park offers a smaller picnic shelter, picnic areas, unique hiking trails through rock and cave-like formations, a playground, and a wildlife pond with an observation deck. The park is open year-round for day use activities. The park is open for camping from April through October. During the winter months only the main park road past the office/residence is plowed up to the Rocks Trail parking area. Trails are groomed during the winter months for cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking. The remainder of the park roads are closed to vehicle traffic in winter.

Accessibility: There is minimal development of paved pathways within this park. The shower/restroom is fully accessible, however, there are no paved paths or improved parking areas near the upper picnic shelter and playground area. A fully accessible boardwalk and scenic overlook platform was installed in 2020.

Nitschke Mounds Park – 55 Acres

Park Description: Acquired by the County in 2003, Nitschke Mounds Park is a 55-acre property located in the Town of Burnett. The park is home to one of the most famous and best surviving Native American effigy mound groups in the world. Approximately 40 linear and conical effigy mounds believed to have been constructed between 800 AD – 1,100 AD remain on the site. The mounds represent one of the best surviving examples of the Mound Builders culture that once occupied the Dodge County area and southern Wisconsin. The property borders the Wild Goose State Trail. An agreement between Dodge County, the Ho-Chunk Nation, National Parks Service, State of Wisconsin, and UW-Milwaukee designates much of the property as an Archaeological Preserve, which sets restrictions on activities. Outside of the designated Archeological Preserve Area, there are less restrictions on developments and activities, though any future development at this site must be carefully considered to ensure that it is respectful, exists in harmony, and does not detract from or disrupt the burial mound area. The park is open year-round for day-use activities and includes a one-mile trail that runs through the park. Recent efforts to provide plowing to the entrance road and parking area have been made to encourage winter trail use. Grooming is done in the winter months for non-motorized trail activities.

Accessibility: The historically and culturally important nature of the site limits the ability to have fully accessible facilities in the park. However, there are no major barriers to access on the property.

Conservation Areas (Undeveloped)

Monroe Road Wetland – 86 Acres

Park Description: The Monroe Road Wetland is located in the east central portion of the Town of Lebanon and was donated to the County in 2003. The property is approximately 86 acres located on a bend of the Rock River with about 4,000 feet of shoreline frontage. The property is mostly low ground in the seasonal floodplain of the river and consists primarily of open marsh and scrub timber. Public access is only available via the river. The property has value as a public resting stop for river paddlers and may have potential for canoe-in camping and as a hunting area. While currently undeveloped, boardwalk trails to picnic and camping platforms may be possible at the site in the future.

Linear Parks (Multi-Use Trail Corridors)

Wild Goose State Trail – 20 Miles

Trail Description: The Wild Goose State Trail is a total of 34-miles, which runs north from STH 60 to the City of Fond du Lac on an abandoned railroad bed along the western edge of the Horicon Marsh. Approximately 20 miles of the trail are within Dodge County, passing through the towns of Clyman, Oak Grove, Burnett, and Chester. The trail is state-owned but maintained and operated by Dodge and Fond du Lac Counties, traversing woodlands, wetlands, streams, cropland, pasture, and historic railroad communities. The crushed limestone surfaced trail is primarily used for hiking and biking. The trail is relatively flat, as it follows an abandoned railroad grade. Snowmobiles and ATVs are permitted during the winter months. Cross country skiing and snow shoeing are permitted; however, these activities can be limited due to conflicts with snowmobiles and ATVs, when the trails are declared open for snowmobiles and/or ATVs. A 14-mile natural surface tread for horseback riding is adjacent to the limestone trail from STH 60 to Pautsch Road.

Glacial River Trail – 3.5 Miles

Trail Description: The Glacial River Trail is a developing multi-county, non-motorized trail system extending from Rock County through Jefferson County and into Dodge County. The first section of the trail was started in Jefferson County in 1995. The Dodge County section (approximately 3.5 miles) opened in 2015 through the Towns of Clyman and Emmet. The entire trail length is about 52 miles. The trail is a mix of off-road trails, road routes, and separated paths within road rights-of-way mostly along Hwy 26 and paralleling the Rock River. As part of the Hwy 26 reconstruction project in Dodge County, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation has completed a 3.5-mile separated asphalt path within the right-of-way between Second Street and Hwy CJ. Designated road routes connect the path to the City of Watertown and to the Wild Goose Trail at STH 60. The paved trail within the Highway 26 right-of-way permits biking, hiking, jogging, dog walking, rollerblading, cross country skiing, and snow shoeing. No motorized recreation or horse riding is permitted. No winter maintenance is done in order to allow snow shoeing and cross-country skiing opportunities.

Gold Star Trail – 2.1 Miles

Trail Description: Currently being developed, the Gold Star Trail aims to connect the City of Mayville to the Horicon Marsh, City of Horicon, and eventually the City of Beaver Dam and beyond. It serves as the only east-west multi-use trail corridor in Dodge County. Phase 1 and 4 of five planned phases were opened in 2019. As of 2023, 2.1 miles of the paved trail have been completed from Mayville to the Horicon Marsh, running along the STH 28 right-of-way. In 2022, Dodge County received a Wisconsin Department of Transportation grant to design and construct the next phase (Phase 2) of the trail from the west side of Horicon to the Wild Goose State Trail near the intersection of STH 33 and STH 26. Following completion, the paved multi-use trail will connect to on-street bicycle routes and lanes within the City of Horicon to the Horicon Marsh. The next phases of the trail are planned to follow STH 33 west from the Wild Goose State Trail to the City of Beaver Dam and potentially beyond. Once completed, the paved trail is planned to be a total of 17 miles in length. The final phase (Phase 5) will connect Palmatory Street in Horicon through the Horicon Marsh to the Horicon Marsh Visitors Center and Phase 1 with bicycle access. Currently, hiking is only permitted on this segment.

Water Trails

Rock River Water Trail – 64.2 Miles

Trail Description: The Rock River begins north and east of the Horicon Marsh in Fond du Lac County and the Theresa Marsh Wildlife Area. It runs south through Dodge County, eventually flowing all the way to the Mississippi River. Several existing boat launches are located along the Rock River in the Horicon Marsh, City of Horicon, Village of Hustisford, and Harnischfeger Park before entering the City of Watertown. However, several existing dams limit motorized boat travel in some areas of the river, but portage locations adjacent to these dams provide non-motorized boat travel the full length of the river within Dodge County. The Rock River in Dodge County is part of a designated National Water Trail that runs 320 miles from Fond du Lac County to the Mississippi River.

Crawfish River Water Trail – 34.2 Miles

Trail Description: The Crawfish River flows through the southwest corner of Dodge County. It comes from Columbia County (near the City of Columbus), past Astico Park, and meets the Beaver Dam River near Mud Lake and extends to the City of Jefferson, where it meets the Rock River. Intermittent boat launches are found along the river. Due to the size of the river, non-motorized boat is the predominant travel mode. The Crawfish River Water Trail in Dodge County is a part of the Glacial Heritage Area Water Trail network that extends further south into Jefferson County. A dam at the southern edge of Astico Park in the unincorporated community of Danville requires portage.

Beaver Dam River Water Trail – 16.1 Miles

Trail Description: The Beaver Dam River runs north-south from Beaver Dam Lake in the City of Beaver Dam to Mud Lake, where it meets the Crawfish River. Part of the river includes the designated Glacial Heritage Area Water Trail network in southern Dodge County. Due its size and water speed/volume, non-motorized boats are the predominant travel mode.

Special Use Trails

Snowmobile Trails – 425.1 Miles

Trail Description: Dodge County Snowmobile Trails encompass approximately 380.3 miles, with another 44.8 miles of privately funded “club-owned” trails available for use within the County. The majority of trails cross private lands, where the seasonal trail use of the land is donated, or yearly easement payments are made. The funded trails are under the jurisdiction of Dodge County with actual maintenance, development, and grooming contracted out to member clubs of the Dodge County Association of Snowmobile Clubs. Twenty separate snowmobile clubs work on maintaining and grooming the county trail system each winter. The “club-owned” trails tend to serve more of the local users often connecting the county trails and population areas with food, service, and overnight facilities. The county trails should and typically do provide higher capacity trails linking other Counties in a regional network of predominately north-south and east-west trails.

ATV/UTV Trails – 20 Miles

Trail Description: The Dodge County ATV/UTV trail season runs from December through March each year on the Wild Goose State Trail when the trail is frozen and officially decaled open. There are designated trail routes through the communities of Burnett and East Waupun. Funded by the State of Wisconsin through ATV registrations and the gas tax, the Dodge County ATV Trail Program provides funding for maintenance of all 20 miles of ATV/UTV trails. To note, ATVs and UTVs have received authorization to use many County and Town roads throughout Dodge County. These road routes are not part of the Parks and Trails Department’s jurisdictional operations.

Dodge County Trail-Based Facilities

Trail Type	Present Supply
Multi-Use Pedestrian Trails (Biking and Hiking)	25 miles
Equestrian Trails	14 miles
Water Trails	114 miles
Snowmobile Trails (Funded & Unfunded)	425.1 miles (380.3 miles funded under State program)
ATV/UTV Trails	20 miles (winter only)

Source: Dodge County Land Resources & Parks

State of Wisconsin Parks and Trails

Park/Trail Name	State-Owned Land
Horicon State Wildlife Area and Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center	11,009 acres
Med Lake Wildlife Area	3,957 acres
Shaw Marsh Wildlife Area	906 acres
Theresa Marsh Wildlife Area	5,000 acres
Waterloo Wildlife Area	1,505 acres
Westford Wildlife Area	682 acres
Beaver Dam Lake Fishery Area	83 acres (additional privately-owned land)
Fox Lake Fishery Area	464 acres (additional privately-owned land)
Glacial Habitat Restoration Areas	Mix of private and publicly-owned land
Sinissippi Public Hunting Area	344 acres
Others (Scattered Small Sites)	2,200 acres

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Federal Parks and Trails

Park/Trail Name	Federal-Owned Land
Horicon National Wildlife Refuge	21,417 acres (20,482 acres in Dodge County)
Trenton Waterfowl Production Area	374 acres
Pieper Waterfowl Production Area	81 acres

Source: U.S. Department of the Interior

Incorporated Municipalities (Cities and Villages) Parks and Trails

Park/Trail Name	Locally-Owned Land
City of Beaver Dam	300 acres
City of Fox Lake	156 acres
City of Horicon	88 acres
City of Juneau	20 acres
City of Mayville	165.5 acres
Village of Brownsville	36 acres
Village of Clyman	6.5 acres
Village of Hustisford	28 acres
Village of Iron Ridge	10 acres
Village of Kekoskee	23 acres
Village of Lomira	52 acres
Village of Lowell	9 acres
Village of Neosho	7 acres
Village of Randolph	20 acres
Village of Reeseville	8 acres
Village of Theresa	17 acres

Source: Incorporated municipal websites listed above.

Incorporated Municipalities (Towns) Parks and Trails

Park/Trail Name	Locally-Owned Land
Town of Ashippun	5 acres
Town of Burnett	18 acres
Town of Calamus	1.5 acres
Town of Elba	6.5 acres
Town of Fox Lake	18 acres
Town of Herman	0 acres
Town of Hustisford	25 acres
Town of Lebanon	18 acres
Town of Leroy	1 acre
Town of Rubicon	9 acres
Town of Theresa	18 acres
Town of Trenton	0 acres

Source: Unincorporate municipal websites listed above and Dodge County.

Figure 2.3 below summarizes the County’s developed park facilities and the amenities offered at each.

FIGURE 2.3: PARK FACILITY MATRIX

	Harnischfeger Park	Astico Park	Ledge Park	Nitschke Mounds Park	Derge Park	Wild Goose State Trail	Glacial River Trail	Gold Star Memorial Trail
Acres/Miles	133	102	87	55	14	20	3.5	2.1
Soccer Field								
Softball Field								
Baseball Field								
Tennis Court								
Basketball Goal								
Volleyball Court	1 sand	1 grass	1 grass					
Football Field								
Open Playfield	X	X	X					
Disc Golf Course	9 hole							
Mini Golf Course	9 hole							
Horseshoe Pits	3							
Open Picnic Areas	4	7	6		1			
Picnic Tables in Picnic Area	5	9	8		2			
Cooking Grills	2	4	11		6			
Open Shelter Buildings	2	1	2	1	0			
Enclosed Shelter Buildings	Clubhouse							
Fishing/ Docking Piers	1	2			2			
Benches	15	13	15	8	5	15	5	5
Boat/Canoe Launch	Canoe	Canoe			Boat Ramp	Canoe/ Kayak*		
Play System	2	1	2		1			
Swings - Senior/Tots	4 / 2	8 / 2	4 / 2		4			
Teeter Totter	0	0			2			
Slide	4	5	6		1			
Sandbox	1	2	1		1			
Climbing Equipment	14	6	8		2			
Spring Rider	2		1					
Paved Parking Spaces	52	37	35		38	7		
Handicap Parking Spaces	4	6	4	1	4	1		
Gravel Parking Spaces	48	6	2	16		52		
Restroom Buildings (Flush)	1	1	1		1			
Drinking Fountains	1	3	1					
Bike Racks	2		3					
Trash Cans	12	10	11	1	5	2		
Recycle Cans	12	10	11	1	5	2		
Vault/Portable Toilets	1 (p)	4 (v)	3 (v)	1 (p)	1 (v)	1 (p)		







(p) = portable

(v) = vault

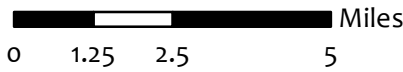
*unimproved

Dodge County Park, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan

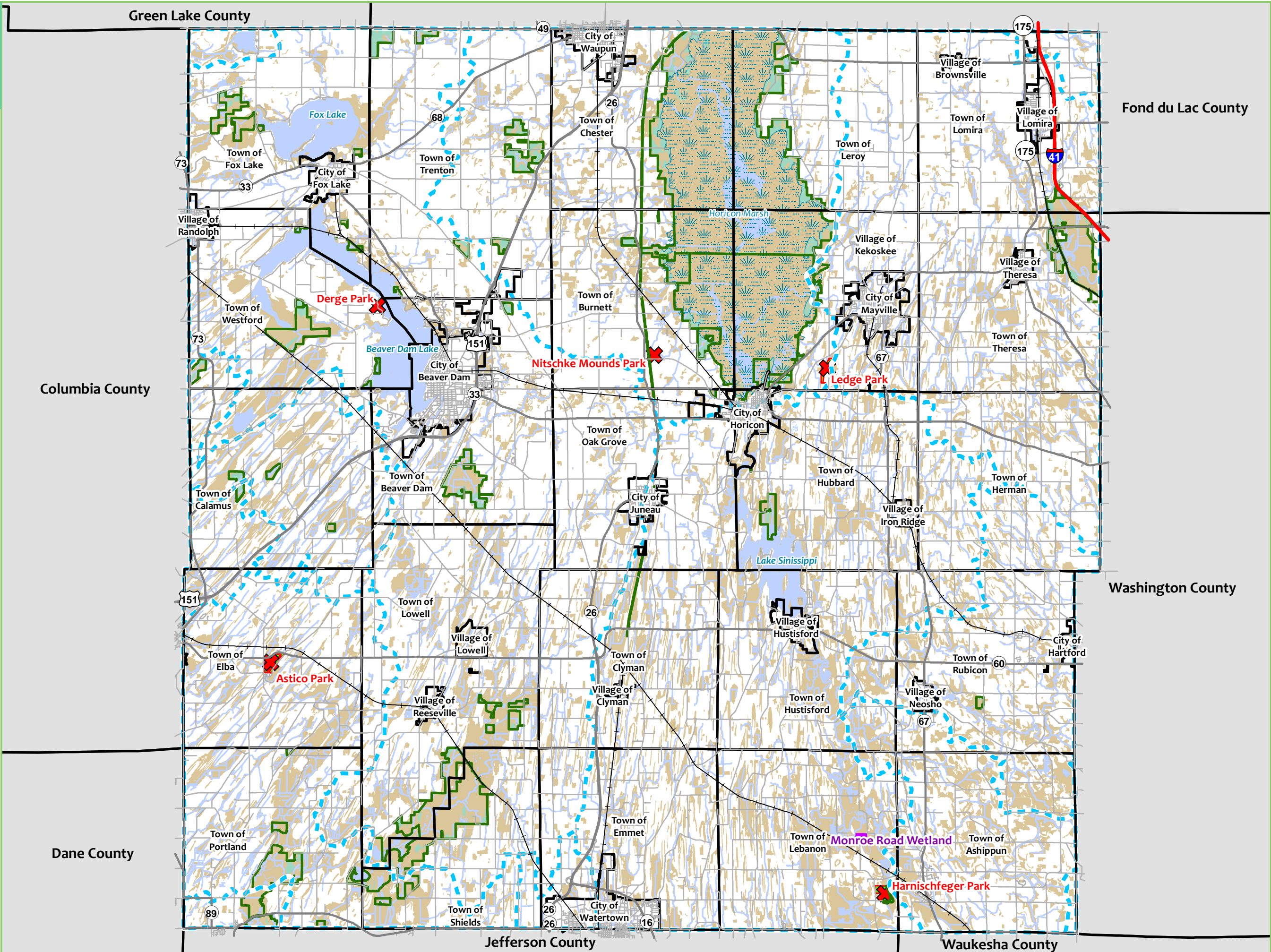
Map 2: Environmentally Sensitive Areas

-  Rail
-  Interstate
-  US or State Highway
-  Other Road
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Watersheds
-  County Park
-  County Park Footprint
-  County Special Use Area
-  Horicon Marsh
-  Surface Water
-  Environmentally Sensitive Areas*
-  State or Federal Recreation Area

*Includes DNR Wetlands, Hydric Soils, Steep Slopes over 12%, Wooded Areas, 100 and 500 Year FEMA Floodplains



Date: 9/19/2023
Sources: WI DNR, Dodge County, FEMA, USDA



Columbia County

Dane County

Jefferson County














Waukesha County

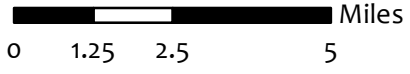
Fond du Lac County

Washington County

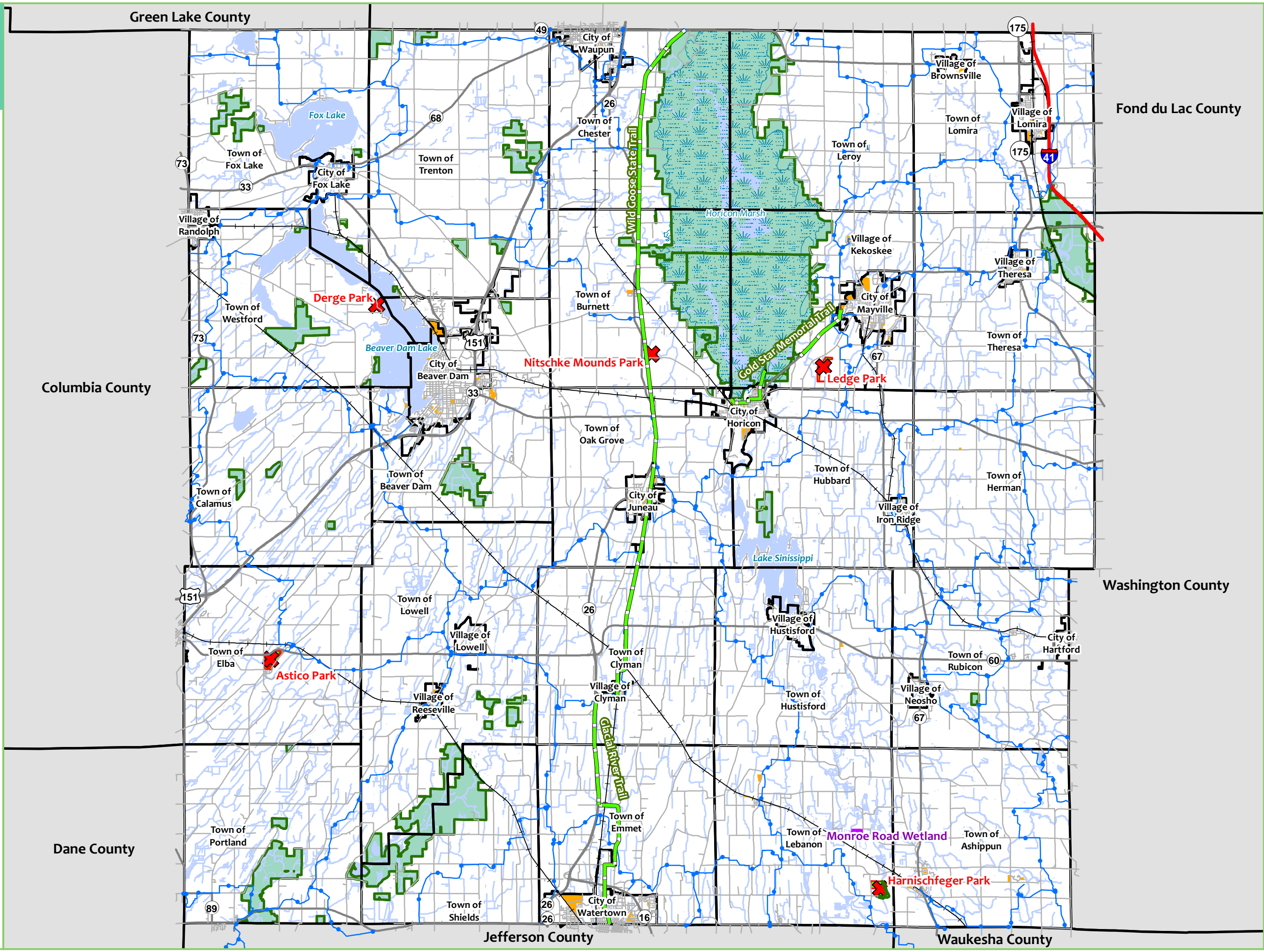
Dodge County Park, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan

Map 3: Existing Facilities

-  Existing Bike/Pedestrian Trails
-  Existing Snow-Mobile Trails
-  Rail
-  Interstate
-  US or State Highway
-  Other Road
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  County Park
-  County Park Footprint
-  County Special Use Area
-  Municipal Parks
-  Horicon Marsh
-  Surface Water
-  State or Federal Recreation Area



Date: 9/19/2023
Sources: WI DNR, Dodge County, FEMA, USDA



Columbia County

Dane County

Jefferson County
















Waukesha County

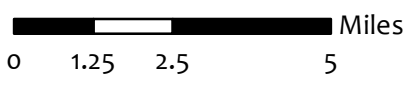
Fond du Lac County

Washington County

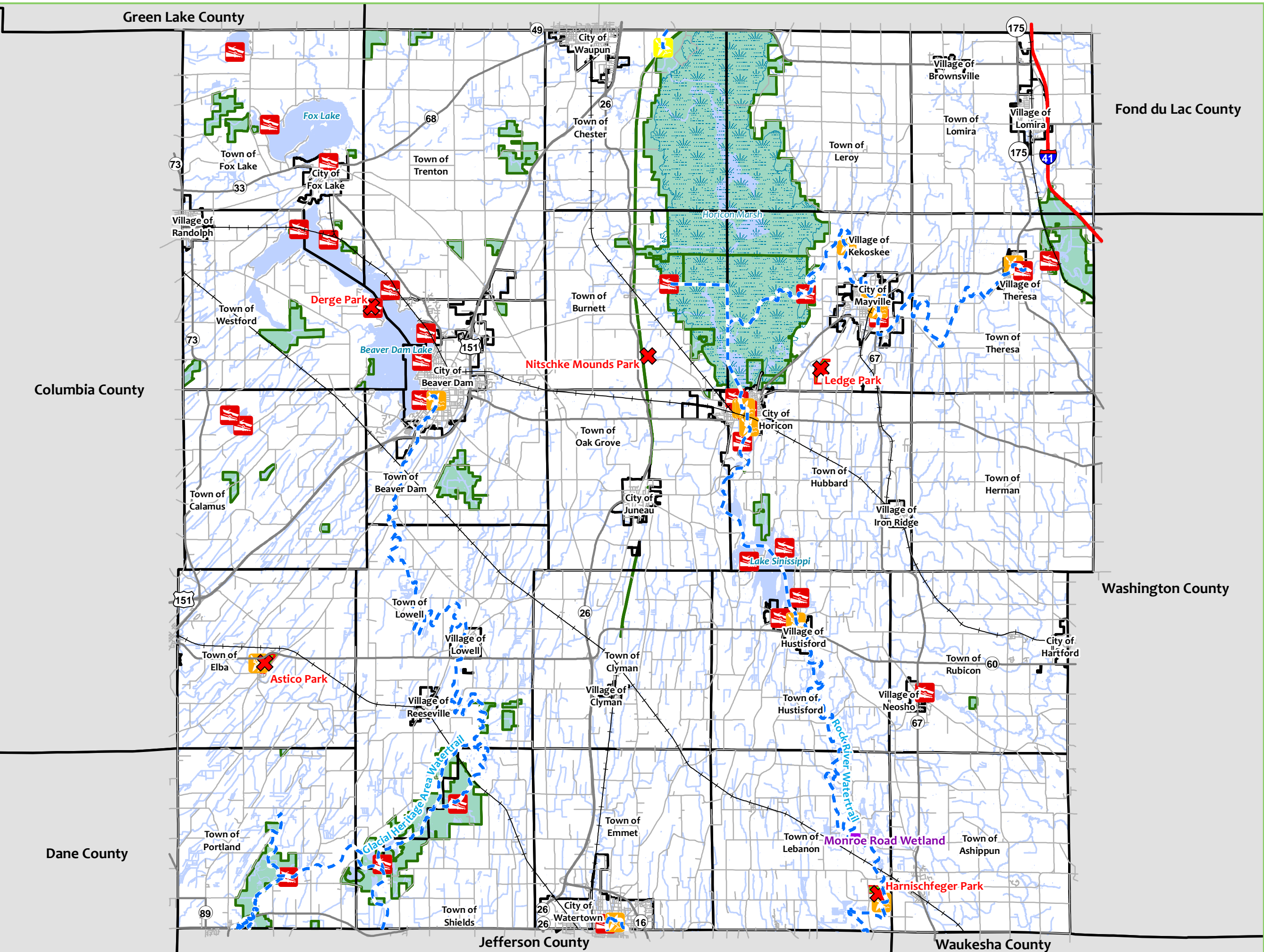
Dodge County Park, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan

Map 4: Surface Water Recreational Facilities

-  Water Trails
-  Rail
-  Interstate
-  US or State Highway
-  Other Road
-  Public Boat Launch (can also serve as Canoe/Kayak Launch)
-  Canoe/Kayak Carry-in
-  Canoe/Kayak Limited Carry-in
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  County Park
-  County Park Footprint
-  County Special Use Area
-  Horicon Marsh
-  Surface Water
-  State or Federal Recreation Area



Date: 9/19/2023
Sources: WI DNR, Dodge County, FEMA, USDA





CHAPTER 3: PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



CHAPTER 3: PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The 2023 Dodge County Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan Update was written by Vandewalle & Associates in collaboration with County staff. Dodge County completed previous versions of the plan in-house using planning and park staff prior to staff reductions, and this led to efficiencies in developing a succinct planning process with strategic updates to the plan's structure, background information, goals, objectives, and strategies, recommendations, and implementation action plan.

Public input was gathered throughout the planning process to provide insight into the needs of the community today and in the future. There were multiple public input opportunities during the process that included: Land Resource and Parks Committee meetings, a community-wide survey, annual camper surveys conducted by in-house staff, focus group interview sessions, a public review meeting of the final draft Plan, and a County Board Adoption meeting. Together, these events provided the key insight needed to produce a plan that truly reflected how the existing park system is utilized today, in addition to establishing priorities and projects to provide the services needed in the future.

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process started in October of 2022 and concluded with adoption of the plan in August 2023. Over that time, a total of approximately 1,000 responses contributed to the update of the plan. The key steps of the process are summarized below:

- County Staff Kickoff Meeting and Park Tour
- Land Resources and Parks Committee and Dodge County Parks Friends Board Kickoff Meeting
- Project-Base Webpage on the Dodge County Website
- Online Community Survey and 2022 Annual Camper Survey
- Focus Group Interviews
- Land Resources and Parks Committee Draft Review Meetings
- Public Open House Draft Review
- Land Resources and Parks Committee Recommendation Meeting
- County Board Adoption Meeting

A summary of each of the public participation events is provided below. All public input from each event can be found in the Appendix.

PLAN SURVEY

The County conducted an online questionnaire via Survey Monkey from November 14, 2022, to December 16, 2022. In total, 219 people provided feedback. Overall, the survey focused on obtaining public opinion and feedback on the current levels of park use, current conditions, and future needs of the Dodge County park and recreation system. All survey results can be found in the Appendix.

Of the 219 responses, 56% were County residents and the rest were mainly from outside of the County. Of those that lived in Dodge County, most respondents were longtime residents. Additionally, over 40% of respondents were above the age of 60, and individuals older than 50 years of age comprised 59% of all respondents. Only 2.3% of the survey respondents were 29 years of age or younger, indicating that very few young people were engaged in the survey.

Survey respondents were asked how familiar they were with Dodge County's park facilities and what methods could be utilized to increase awareness of the County's offerings. Most respondents indicated they were familiar or very familiar with the Dodge County parks and trails system, but desired to see an improved website and online maps for better



navigation to regional facilities (52% of respondents). Just over 45% of respondents indicated that they have a desire to see the County increase its social media presence with updates related to County Park facilities (45% of respondents).

The survey also asked participants how frequently they visit County park facilities and gauged the perceived level of safety and maintenance that individuals experience in County parks. Nearly all respondents indicated that they have visited a park or trail within the last year and over 30% visit a park or trail more than 6 times per year. Additionally, an overwhelming percentage of respondents (95%) indicate feeling safe or very safe while visiting County park locations. Finally, most respondents expressed that the County is doing well in maintaining park cleanliness and appearance, with 88% of responses indicating they were satisfied or very satisfied. Overall, those who participated in the survey clearly utilize the County's park and recreational facilities frequently, feel safe doing so, and were happy with the maintenance and appearance of the facilities.

Several facilities stood out amongst survey respondents as the County's most frequented parks. The most popular County park as indicated by respondents was Ledge Park (65% of respondents). Three other park and trail facilities were visited by over 40% of all survey participants, including Astico Park (48%), Wild Goose State Trail (47%), and Derge Park (43%). The County's other regional parks were visited by roughly 28-34% of respondents, with the Glacial River Trail receiving the smallest percentage of visits, with only 6% of respondents having indicated visiting this facility.

While activities participated in vary significantly, the most overwhelmingly popular activity reported was "Walking/Hiking/Jogging," with 80% of respondents indicating that their main use of County parks was utilizing internal walking paths and trails to enjoy nature and get exercise. Camping was the second most popular County park activity (51%), while picnicking (33%), bird/nature watching (32%), walking pets (29%), and using playground equipment (29%) round out top County park activities. Uses such as biking, fishing, canoeing and kayaking, and snowmobiling represent other popular uses across the County's park system.

A series of survey questions asked participants what the top priorities were for each County park over the planning period. For each facility, results indicate that the majority of respondents are satisfied with the current maintenance and appearance of the facilities. The top three priorities for each of the park facilities are listed below (respondents were asked to select up to three options, "Not Applicable" responses are not included within this summary):

Park and Trail Users

80% of survey respondents noted that their main use of Dodge County Parks and Trails was for walking, hiking, or jogging.

Astico Park:

- Improve or Expand Campsites (26%)
- Improve or Expand Bathrooms/Showers (23%)
- Improve or Expand Water Access (18%)

Derge Park:

- Improve or Expand Campsites (16%)
- Expand the Size of the Park (14%)
- Improve or Expand Bathrooms/Showers (14%)

Harnischfeger Park:

- Improve or Expand Campsites (20%)
- Improve or Expand Interior Trails/Boardwalks (13%)
- Improve or Expand Water Access (10%)
- Improve or Expand Bathrooms/Showers (10%)

Ledge Park:

- Improve or Expand Camp Sites (24%)
- Improve or Expand Interior Trails/Boardwalks (24%)
- Improve or Expand Bathrooms/Showers (22%)

Nitschke Mounds Park:

- Improve or Expand Archaeological Preservation Areas (16%)
- Improve or Expand Interior Trails (12%)
- Improve or Expand Bathrooms (12%)

County Trail System:

- Expand the Length of Trails and Connections within the County (28%)
- Improve the Quality of Existing Trails (10%)
- New Facility (9%)

Respondents were also asked what types of overarching recreational initiatives they would like to see the County pursue. Responses for overarching initiatives were consistent with respondent priorities for individual County park facilities, with many expressing the desire to see the development of more hiking trails, acquisition of land for passive recreational uses (camping, picnicking, trails), the expansion of conservation and preservation areas, and the improvement of connections between County and municipal park facilities and active areas.

To achieve the acquisition of more parkland or development of new amenities as part of the County parks and trails system, respondent opinions were generally favorable to a small tax increase from the County. It should be noted that 46% of respondents indicated that they do not live in Dodge County, but even considering this fact, there is significant support for increasing tax funding for park improvement. 30% of respondents indicated that they would be okay with a tax increase between \$11 - \$50 per year and another 25% would be comfortable with an increase between \$1-\$10 per year. Ultimately, 29% of respondents indicated they were unsure about a tax increase, and only 5% explicitly indicated that they would not favor any increase in taxes.

ANNUAL CAMPER SURVEY

Dodge County annually conducts a satisfaction survey of campers at Astico, Derge, Harnischfeger, and Ledge Parks. In 2022, a total of 740 people provided feedback. Overall, the survey focused on obtaining public opinion and feedback on camping user experiences, facility use trends, and future needs of the Dodge County Park recreation system's campsites. All survey results can be found in the Appendix.

Survey results indicate continued demand and an increasingly strong interest in camping-related improvements. Amongst survey respondents at each park, over 50% of campers camped more at Dodge County parks in 2022 than they did in 2021. At both Astico and Ledge Parks, over 10% of respondents indicated that they camped less at these locations because campsites were not available or hard to reserve. In the majority of parks, campers stayed an average of three nights per trip, an increase in use over the past three years. Across each County Park, an average of 30% of respondents consistently reported spending between \$11-\$50 in the area on food, gas, supplies, and entertainment (not including park fees) when camping. Approximately 28% of respondents spent between \$51-\$100 on expenses, and an average of 14% of respondents indicated spending over \$100 on such expenses during camping trips to the County. This information suggests that the increased use and demand of County Park camping facilities results in additional economic benefits for area businesses and service providers.

Respondents were asked to describe their level of satisfaction with both the quality of service and quality of facilities within each campground. In 2022, respondents indicated very high satisfaction with most park services, especially the quality and usefulness of the website, the ease of making camping reservations, and the ease of registering and checking in at facilities. Ratings for facilities at each park varied more significantly. Respondents generally indicated that the campsites were in great condition and that user value, and the quality of stays was well worth the amount of fees paid. However, many indicated that the adequacy of picnic areas, shelters, and playgrounds was lacking compared to in previous years, especially within Astico Park and Derge Park.

Additional feedback from respondents followed several consistent themes. Many indicated their satisfaction with campsites at each park, but described the need for additional campsites to meet demand or the integration of electric and water hookups at individual sites. Many comments indicated the need for improvements to restroom and shower facilities, better access to water throughout camping facilities, more amenities, and expanded/improved trail networks. The survey also polled respondents on their interest in winter camping opportunities. The vast majority of respondents at each park indicated that they were not interested in winter camping at County Park facilities in the future. When asked what facilities would need to be available in order for people to consider winter camping, significant percentages indicated that electric hookups would make them more interested in the activity, underscoring the potential value of adding electric access to more campsites throughout the park system.

Camper Spending

Based on 2022 camper survey responses, the average person spent \$67.78 each visit. Based on the total number of campsite rentals in 2022 (9,265), that equates to approximately \$627,954 spent by campers in 2022.

Source: Dodge County and V&A

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

In November and December of 2022, a series of Focus Group Interviews were held with key stakeholders that represented various user groups, including the Nitschke Mounds Friends Group, Municipal and School District staff, Trails and Public Health representatives, and Harnischfeger Park and Dodge County Park Donors. Overall, approximately 30 people participated in the interviews. Attendees were asked a variety of questions related to existing conditions and future priorities, projects, and goals. Along with the survey results, the information gathered during the Focus Groups guided many other facets of this Plan.

Key Focus Group Feedback:

- The Dodge County Park and Trail system's identity and role is to provide a balance between outdoor recreational opportunities centered around hiking and camping across the County, while preserving and protecting natural resource areas and native habitat.
- There are a wide variety of future projects that could help improve the overall park and multi-use trail system and more specific projects that could improve individual parks and trails. Overarching improvements included expanding campsites, trails, and trail connections throughout the County (for many different users), including the completion of the Gold Star Trail and Pelican Path. To note, many of the projects mentioned in the Focus Groups are incorporated into Chapter 7, 8, and 9.
- A large number of participants showed interest in expanding community connections with bicycle facilitates between Fox Lake, Waupun, Watertown, Hustisford, and other local municipalities.
- There is significant interest in improving access to the County's lakes and rivers by improving put-in/take-outs locations and encouraging kayak and canoe rental options at various locations throughout the region and coordination with School Districts to leverage the parks as educational resources and to partner on civic park improvement projects.
- A Park Master Plan should be developed for Nitschke Mounds Park, including various amenities centered around an educational community gathering space that honors Native American history and culture.
- A key strategy for the County to pursue should be leveraging local municipal and community partnerships to increase parks-related tourism through cohesive branding, the use of public art, recreational park tour programs and increased County park events programming, establishing widespread accessible trail networks, and utilizing placemaking to create compelling destinations.
- A major priority of focus group participants was increasing coordination, communication, and distribution of information about Dodge County parks and trails across the region and throughout its local communities. This branding and promotion could include social media, county and municipal websites, maps, events, and other means of communication.
- It was also highlighted that developing partnerships with private sector and local interest groups to assist in funding improvements could be a method for making several of the recommended improvements to existing and/or future facilities.
- Finally, many focus group participants were strongly in favor of establishing Dodge County as a premier destination for rural outdoor recreation and wildlife viewing for both residents and visitors alike.

Expanded Community Trail Connections

A large number of focus group participants indicated the desire for expanded bicycle facilitates between Fox Lake, Waupun, Watertown, Hustisford, and other local municipalities.

DRAFT PLAN REVIEW MEETINGS

On May 22, 2023, the Land Resources and Parks Committee met to review, discuss, and provide comments on the draft plan. The meeting features the committee, several County staff, and two members of the public. An overview presentation of the plan was provided to all those in attendance and the meeting centered around a discussion of identified key topics within the plan. The committee, staff, and members of the public weighed in on the plan's proposed park standards, ways to create unique recreational facilities in the county, a future park donation approach, and the Astico Park concept plans.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

Toward the end of the process, a public open house event was held to provide the public with an opportunity to review draft materials, provide comments, and ask questions. The event was held on June 29, 2023, with approximately 10 people in attendance. The meeting featured a summary presentation, all draft maps and graphics, and other summarizing materials for the public to comment on. Public comments were generally in agreement with the plan as drafted and supported many of its key aspects and recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION AND ADOPTION

The Land Resources and Parks Committee met on July 24, 2023 to review the final draft plan and comments from the public open house event. No requested changes were made.

The Land Resources and Parks Committee met on August 14, 2023 to consider a recommendation of the plan for adoption by the County Board. No requested changes were made.

On September 19, 2023, the County Board met to review the recommended plan and consider adoption.

CHAPTER 4: GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES



CHAPTER 4: GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

In order to conduct a thorough and accurate planning process, it is important to establish a vision statement and set of goals, objectives, and policies that will serve as the basis for the recommendations in this Plan.

A Vision Statement is a high-level and overarching declaration on where the community would like to be at the end of the planning period. Vision statements set the framework for all goals, objectives, and policies in advancing the community toward a common destination.

Goals are broad statements that express general public priorities. Goals are formulated based on the identification of key issues, opportunities, and problems that affect the park system.

Objectives are more specific than goals and are usually attainable through strategic planning and implementation activities. Implementation of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.

Policies are rules and courses of action used to ensure plan implementation. Policies often accomplish a number of objectives, sometimes simultaneously.

It is important that many factors are taken into consideration when determining the community's future vision, goals, objectives, and policies. The following were developed using the information presented throughout this Plan, including public input, staff recommendations, and Land Resources and Parks Committee feedback. Each goal and objective have been categorized by topic to improve usability. All policies are listed separately to reflect the specific projects and action steps that cover multiple goals and objectives.

VISION STATEMENT

Dodge County is a well-maintained and growing system of parks, trails, and open spaces that continues to increase local and regional connectivity, awareness, and attendance of its facilities, provide high quality recreational, educational, and public health opportunities for all residents and visitors, maintain long-term fiscal sustainability, and preserve and protect lands of significant natural beauty, ecological importance, and historic value.

In combination and coordination with the greater region, Dodge County will provide exceptional outdoor recreational destinations that immerse visitors in the area's unique natural habitat and cultural history through a wide variety of active and passive recreational opportunities.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Goal 1:** Provide a County-wide system of parks, recreation, and open space with safe, accessible, sufficient, and diverse recreational opportunities to promote public health and meet the needs and demands of all community members and visitors.
- Objective 1.1:** Strategically evaluate and acquire park and recreation sites and develop facilities to meet or exceed recommended standards and community needs.
- Objective 1.2:** Continue to invest in and prioritize existing park and trail maintenance, improvement, and development with an emphasis on accessibility for all.
- Objective 1.3:** Acquire open space recreation corridors, where possible, to link communities or developed areas with other recreation facilities or communities.
- Objective 1.4:** Provide recreational lands and facilities for all County residents within a readily accessible location and distance.
- Objective 1.5:** Encourage land donations from private landowners to the County for future parks, recreation, and open spaces.

Goal 2: Provide a County-wide system of recreation and open space areas that helps preserve and enhance significant natural, cultural, or historical resources of Dodge County.

- Objective 2.1:** Acquire or encourage other governmental acquisition of environmentally sensitive and unique lands for open space recreation to preserve them from damaging development.
- Objective 2.2:** Design park and recreational facilities with the natural environment in mind by considering project impacts to the environment.
- Objective 2.3** Utilize Dodge County parks to highlight, promote, and educate residents and visitors on the natural, cultural, or historical assets of the area.

Goal 3: Collaborate with the public, partner organizations, and other agencies in the planning, development, and operations of the Dodge County parks and trails system.

- Objective 3.1:** Coordinate park activities/facilities with municipal, private, state, and federal agencies and organizations to compliment offerings without unnecessary duplication.
- Objective 3.2:** Update the County Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan every five years and solicit input from residents and visitors during each update.
- Objective 3.3:** Foster and maintain collaborative relationships with municipal park and recreation departments, school districts, "Friends" and community groups, private businesses, and other local and state user groups, governmental entities, and organizations to improve the regional park and trail system and programming.
- Objective 3.4:** Increase communication and information sharing with the public, local user groups, and communities via the Dodge County website, social media platforms, mapping, and events.

Goal 4: Operate the Dodge County park and trail system in a fiscally sustainable manner.

- Objective 4.1:** Utilize this Plan to guide future capital improvement planning and land acquisition.
- Objective 4.2:** Leverage state and federal resources and grant programs to offset local expenditures to develop and maintain needed and quality facilities.
- Objective 4.3:** Employ a multi-jurisdictional approach to acquiring and developing parks, trails, and open space areas.
- Objective 4.4:** Collaborate with local private resources such as friends groups, organizations and individuals willing to donate time, labor, money, land, and other resources to develop and maintain needed and quality facilities.
- Objective 4.5:** Coordinate and utilize the resources and expertise of different County departments, staff, and officials, particularly where projects meet mutual goals and objectives.
- Objective 4.6:** Establish and maintain long-term funding programs for the park system.
- Objective 4.7:** Promote the growth of the Friends of Dodge County Parks Endowment Fund for long-term park funding potential.

Goal 5: Establish Dodge County as a boardwalk trails destination.

- Objective 5.1:** Improve and increase boardwalk trail amenities within Dodge County parks and trails.
- Objective 5.2:** Encourage a collaborative approach to partner with other governmental entities to increase boardwalk trails within other natural areas and connections between them.
- Objective 5.3:** Establish goals for the amount of new boardwalk trails to be implemented over planning period.
- Objective 5.4:** Seek alternative funding to implement new boardwalk trails in Dodge County through grants, partnerships, donations, and local volunteer groups.

POLICIES

The policies provided below consist of strategies and recommendations that further the County's goals and objectives over the next five years. These policy recommendations collectively aim to provide a balanced, accessible, and quality park and recreation system throughout Dodge County.

1. Acquire additional lands for active and passive recreational use to meet future population demands and to protect environmentally sensitive areas. Prioritize strategic acquisitions that are suitable for multiple uses and that prevent the loss of high-quality sites to other development. Priority should be given to developed recreational park properties that may be available.
2. Where appropriate, expand existing parks to offer new recreational opportunities, retain existing natural resource areas, and to maintain important buffers between potential conflicting land uses.
3. Where and when possible, park facilities should be linked to other facilities by open space environmental corridors, trails, or other means which provide non-vehicular access.
4. Land adjacent to recreation or open space areas should be used in ways which will not interfere with the purposes for which the recreation or open space land was intended. Recreation and open space land should be protected in perpetuity against encroachment by other uses that will inhibit the recreation or open space nature of the land.
5. Park facilities should be centrally located within the area they are intended to serve and must have safe and adequate access for maximum convenience to persons being served.
6. Use the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan to focus limited capital development funds on projects that provide maximum benefits to the parks and trails system.
7. The design of individual park and recreation sites should be as flexible as possible to reflect changing recreation needs and trends.
8. Prioritize the expansion of off-road multi-use trail networks throughout Dodge County to further connect park facilities with areas of activity, key regional destinations, and local municipalities. Network enhancements should follow State and ASSHTO standards. This includes the completion of the Gold Star Trail and potential development of the Pelican Path.
9. Encourage on-road bicycle and active transportation network connections across Dodge County on underutilized roads.
10. Design future park improvements and new park facilities with ADA accessible pathways and playground facilities.
11. Establish policies for integrating sustainability, energy efficiency, and conservation within all new park improvements.
12. Coordinate with local school districts, community stakeholder groups, and the Friends of Dodge County Parks to develop recreational, cultural, educational, and arts programming, events, and festivals to activate more community park facilities. These partnerships should also be utilized to advance park improvement projects.
13. Facility development must be done with safety in mind, adhering to accepted installation and maintenance standards.
14. Integrate passive and interactive public art features into existing and new parks in key entrances or locations that celebrate and explore Dodge County's culture, character, history, and native ecology. This could include interesting architectural elements, art installations, multi-functional stormwater management features, or design elements in playground equipment expansion or upgrades.
15. Utilize best management practices that protect and enhance natural features. This includes efforts to establish and maintain buffers for sensitive environmental areas, minimize fertilizer and pesticide use, and implement ecological restoration projects, to the extent possible.
16. Increase cooperation and coordination with local jurisdictions, nonprofits, and interest groups to establish a cohesive County Parks brand by increasing funding, programming, events, and tourism opportunities.
17. Establish a policy for utilization of the Park Development Fund to best support long-term fiscal sustainability of the parks system.



CHAPTER 5: PARK AND OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

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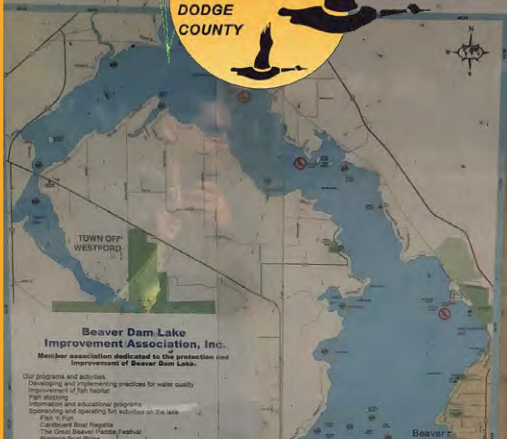
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The lake in winter is dangerous to swim due to hidden ice beneath the surface and underground springs, which can create ice spots or weak ice.



Launch collection box
Launch fees are enforced



Restrooms

Located in Campground Area

Please, Recycle
Place your used monofilament fishing line in the container attached to the Cleaning Station message board.

Thank You!
Containers are a project of the Lake County Beaver Dam

Size and bag limit regulations pursuant to Wisconsin Administrative Code, Section NR 20.03 (1), are in effect on these waters.

SPR	SIZE	LIMIT	WAG	LIMIT
SPR	20	15	SPR	15
SPR	20	25	SPR	25

CHAPTER 5: PARK AND OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

In order to guide the park planning process, it is important to establish a set of minimum standards for park and recreational facilities. Such standards enable a community to quantitatively measure how well its existing facilities are meeting the needs of residents and to plan for future facilities based on projected population growth. As such, park and recreation standards are commonly developed using a ratio of the number of minimum acres recommended per 1,000 residents.

The following section details the local standards for park and recreational facilities. These standards are a combination of National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidelines and best practice standards for park and open space planning. A calculation of County-specific standards is more likely to identify those park system deficiencies that would not otherwise be captured by universal or national standards. Furthermore, a locally derived standard does a better job of considering the quality of the park system as well as the quantity of park and recreational facilities provided.

For a full description of each facility type in Dodge County see Chapter 2.

NATIONAL STANDARDS AND COMPARABLE COMMUNITY'S STANDARDS

To understand the role that the Dodge County's park and trail system plays in providing park and recreation services, it is useful to understand the role of a county park system in the context of national, state, and local services provided.

- **National Parks** are scattered throughout the United States with massive tracts of land that serve as vacation destinations or preservation and wilderness areas. They are run by the Department of Interior of the United States government. There are no national parks in Dodge County, however the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge is a federally-owned nature preserve located within the county.
- **State Parks and Natural Area** exist as conservation areas, scenic drives, or as weekend getaways, typically away from population centers. State Parks are often designed to encourage tourism, but another primary purpose is to serve residents of their respective states. There are no state parks in Dodge County, but there are several state natural areas.
- **County Parks** function to fill in the gaps that municipal and state governments do not serve. The gaps can include serving a municipal function in portions of a county with municipalities too small to have enough resources to provide parks, conserving large areas of open space that municipalities cannot, or as a tourist venue for people from outside the county.
- **Municipal parks** exist to serve residents of municipalities, sometimes on an hourly basis, as hosts for active athletic or recreation programs. The two most common types of municipal parks are Neighborhood and Community parks. There are over 900 acres within incorporated municipal parks across Dodge County.



On an annual basis, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) compiles data from around the U.S. on park and recreational departments and services provided. In 2022, the NRPA released its latest version of the Park and Recreation Agency Performance Benchmarks. It is important to compare the services that Dodge County provides to the national averages as a benchmark for analysis. A few of the most applicable metrics include:

- On average, 10.4 acres of park land is provided per 1,000 residents in a jurisdiction.
- On a per park basis, there are an average of 2,323 residents per park.
- On average, an equivalent of 8.9 full-time employees, per 10,000 residents, are employed in each park and recreation department.

FIGURE 5.1: DODGE COUNTY COMPARISON TO NATIONAL AVERAGES

Municipality	2022 Population	Acres Per 1,000 Residents	Residents Per Park	Equivalent Full-Time Employees per 10,000 Residents
Dodge County	88,822	5.4	14,803	0.8
National Average (All Jurisdictions)*	Variable	10.4	2,323	8.9
National Average (Comparable Counties)**	50,000-100,000	10.5	9,400	3.2

As of 2023, Dodge County employed 3 full time and 9 seasonal paid employees. For purposes of this calculation, it was assumed that Dodge County employed an equivalent of 7.4 full time positions.

*National Average of all communities providing data to NRPA in 2022 (municipalities and counties).

**National Average of all counties providing data to NRPA in 2021 with a population between 50,000-100,000 and a population per square mile of 100-200 (Surry County, NC, Dodge County, WI, Grand Traverse County, MI, Fauquier County, VA, Crawford County, AR, Glynn County, GA, and Chatham County, NC).

Another method in evaluating the existing Dodge County Parks System is comparing it to other similar sized counties in Wisconsin. In Figure 5.2, four other counties were selected that ranged in size between approximately 81,000 – 104,000 in total population. Based upon this review, Dodge County has less total park acreage, fewer total number of park locations, and more residents per park in comparison to other similar sized counties in Wisconsin. In terms of the number of park acres and residents per 1,000 residents, Dodge County is also slightly behind the other comparable counties.

To note, some counties have significant amounts of their existing total park acres that are constrained by environmental factors such as rivers, streams, steep slopes, natural areas, floodplain, and wetlands. Many do not account for that factor in their park planning, thus total acres shown below include both constrained and unconstrained land totals.

FIGURE 5.2. COMPARABLE COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

Municipality	2022 Population	Total County Area (Square Miles)	Number of Parks	Residents Per Park	Total Acres*	Acres Per 1,000 People	Residents Per Acre
Dodge County	88,822	907	6	14,803	477	5.4	186
Fond Du Lac County	104,162	766	14	7,440	928	8.9	112
Ozaukee County	92,623	233	12	7,719	1,227	13.2	75
Jefferson County	86,576	583	22	3,935	1,180	13.6	73
Manitowoc County	81,442	589	8	10,180	543	6.7	150
Average of Comparable Communities	91,201	543	14	7,319	970	10.6	103

*Some counties listed in this analysis have a significant number of constrained acres that make up the total parkland acres documented in their respective plans. Not all counties listed distinguish constrained from unconstrained acres, so both were considered in this analysis to provide a consistent data point for all communities.

Source: V&A and Dodge County, Fond du Lac County, Ozaukee County, Jefferson County, and Manitowoc County.

While it is important to evaluate Dodge County based on both national averages and similar-sized Wisconsin counties, it is difficult to do a one-to-one comparison between county parks departments. This is because of the variability in department structure, amenities, distribution of county and state parks, and the number of natural resources in the area. Since there are so many variables, this plan will use customized local standards to determine its existing service gaps and future needs.

DODGE COUNTY PARK STANDARDS

Overall, Dodge County currently maintains a standard of approximately 4.4 Regional Park acres per 1,000 residents. Because of the projected future increase in the population over the next 10-20 years, the acres per resident standard is expected to decrease over the planning period. If the County wishes to maintain or increase the standard, additional park land will need to be acquired. Below, in Figure 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5, is the breakdown of each facility type acres per 1,000 resident's standards using Dodge County's 2022 and projected 2033 and 2043 total population. The newly established Dodge County standard for acres of total Regional Park lands per 1,000 residents (5.4) is an increase from the existing provision. The existing facilities in Dodge County in 2023 do not meet the established standards as developed through this plan. The new standards indicate a shortage in all categories, but reaching the County's park service area standards

should be manageable and obtainable as the County’s park system continues to develop over the planning period. In 2022, the Dodge County Land Resources and Parks Department received a portion of Dodge County’s federally-allocated American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to acquire additional parkland.

The new Regional Park standard of 6.0 acres per 1,000 residents in 2033 and 6.5 acres per 1,000 residents in 2043 was chosen as an ambitious goal for Dodge County to continue to increase and enhance its open space recreational offerings. Several existing parks do not have further capacity to support new recreational opportunities. As such, new lands will be needed to facilitate desired improvements and expansions of offerings provided by Dodge County. To note, any future land acquisition should be viewed differently between expansions of existing facilities versus new park locations. A new park location could be greater than the proposed additional acreage, but should be based on its consistency with the evaluation tool further described in Chapter 7. Any combination of new park expansion is best suited to help Dodge County meet the proposed additional acreage needs listed below, if consistent with the potential future park expansion area maps shown in the Appendix. Ultimately, this plan is a guiding document in relationship to any potential park or trail land acquisition. The Land, Resources, and Park Committee and County Board should view each opportunity on a case-by-case basis in relation to the recommendations of this plan, funding availability for land development and long-term maintenance, and recreational goals of the community.

FIGURE 5.3 FUTURE DODGE COUNTY PARK STANDARDS FOR 2023

Facility Type	2023 Total Acres/Miles	2023 Total Acres/Miles Per 1,000 Residents	Dodge County Standards For Acres/Miles Per 1,000 Residents	Total Acres/Miles Needed to Meet Dodge County Standards	Additional Acres/Miles Needed to Meet Dodge County Standards
Regional	391	4.4	5.4	533	89
Conservation	86	0.9	1.0	87	1
Trails	25	0.3	0.5	44	19

Source: V&A and Dodge County
Dodge County 2022 population was 88,822

FIGURE 5.4 FUTURE DODGE COUNTY PARK STANDARDS FOR 2033

Facility Type	2023 Total Acres/Miles	2023 Total Acres/Miles Per 1,000 Residents	Dodge County Standards For Acres/Miles Per 1,000 Residents	Total Acres/Miles Needed to Meet Dodge County Standards	Additional Acres/Miles Needed to Meet Dodge County Standards
Regional	391	4.4	6.0	542	151
Conservation	86	0.9	1.0	90	4
Trails	25	0.3	0.5	45	20

Source: V&A and Dodge County
Dodge County 2033 population projection: 90,346

FIGURE 5.5 FUTURE DODGE COUNTY PARK STANDARDS FOR 2043

Facility Type	2023 Total Acres/Miles	2023 Total Acres/Miles Per 1,000 Residents	Dodge County Standards For Acres/Miles Per 1,000 Residents	Total Acres/Miles Needed to Meet Dodge County Standards	Additional Acres/Miles Needed to Meet Dodge County Standards
Regional	391	4.4	6.5	596	205
Conservation	86	0.9	1.0	92	6
Trails	25	0.3	0.5	46	21

Source: V&A and Dodge County
Dodge County 2043 population projection: 91,754

SERVICE AREAS

Maps 4 and 7 depict the existing service areas of Regional Parks and Multi-Use Trails based on their location within Dodge County. This analysis is utilized to determine the existing service coverage of the developed park system, in addition to forming the basis of the recommended new park locations as discussed in Chapter 7.

Service Areas include:

- Regional Park Bicycle Service Area: 4-Miles
- Regional Park Vehicle Service Area: 8-Miles
- Multi-Use Trail Service Area: 4-Miles

In most urbanized areas, municipalities use a range of between $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ mile service areas surrounding neighborhood parks to account for walkability. Community parks typically double that range (1-2 miles) because they offer community-wide amenities. This same hierarchy was utilized to establish the Dodge County service areas. The 4-mile service area was selected to reflect approximately double the service area for a typical municipality's community-size park and potential for reasonable bicycle accessibility. The 8-mile service area was selected as approximately double the 4-mile service area to reflect the hierarchy of park service areas within many municipalities (community parks have double the service area of neighborhood parks). This distance also reflects average commute times of around 15 minutes, which is an approximate estimation of typical distances people are willing to travel for day use recreation. Both the 4-mile and 8-mile service areas reflect an assumed reasonable distance someone is likely to travel via each mode to regularly visit a park or trail.

As described in Chapter 2, each existing park and trail in Dodge County has varying levels of amenities. It is likely that residents and visitors may travel further to larger and more highly-developed sites like Ledge or Harnischfeger Park and that they may not travel as far for smaller and less-developed sites like Derge or Nitschke Mounds Park. For the purposes of this analysis, a uniform service area distance was applied to all Regional Parks and Multi-Use Trails to explore potential gaps. To note, the previous plan utilized a 12-mile service area, which was further customized to reflect the approach noted above.

PROGRAMMING AND STAFFING

As of 2023, Dodge County's Land Resources and Parks Department runs all daily park operations and administers camp site and shelter rental reservations within the County's parks. The County does not formally offer any recreational programming; however, County staff do assist in coordinating with the Friends of Dodge County Parks group to provide recreational activities in various parks throughout the year.

The Land Resources and Parks Department is staffed by 3 full-time employees, 9 seasonal employees, and typically 4 volunteer camp hosts per year. The County recently added a marketing and communications staff person to assist in amplifying the County park system's amenities and recreational tourism opportunities, as part of an increased community development effort. In order to provide the high level of service that the County desires, it is recommended that at a minimum the existing ratio of full-time to seasonal staff remains the same over the next five years. However, if new or expanded programming, facilities, or land acquisition takes place, additional staff should be considered, and is recommended to maintain the existing level of service.

The completion of the Gold Star Memorial Trail is one of Dodge County's major ongoing new facility projects and the development of the Pelican Path is an additional major facility project that is a prioritized recommendation of this plan. If/when completed, it is estimated that an additional 150 hours of maintenance per year is needed to maintain existing service levels. The current trail caretaker position is part time seasonal and could have the capacity to add the extra hours to the position or an additional part-time or summer only position could be needed.

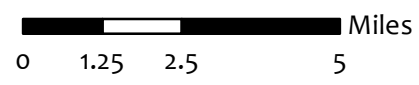
According to the National Recreation and Park Association's 2022 Park and Recreation Agency Performance Benchmarks Field Report, the national average of full-time park employees per 10,000 people in a jurisdiction is 8.9. Currently, Dodge County is well below the national average for full-time park employees (see Figure 5.1).



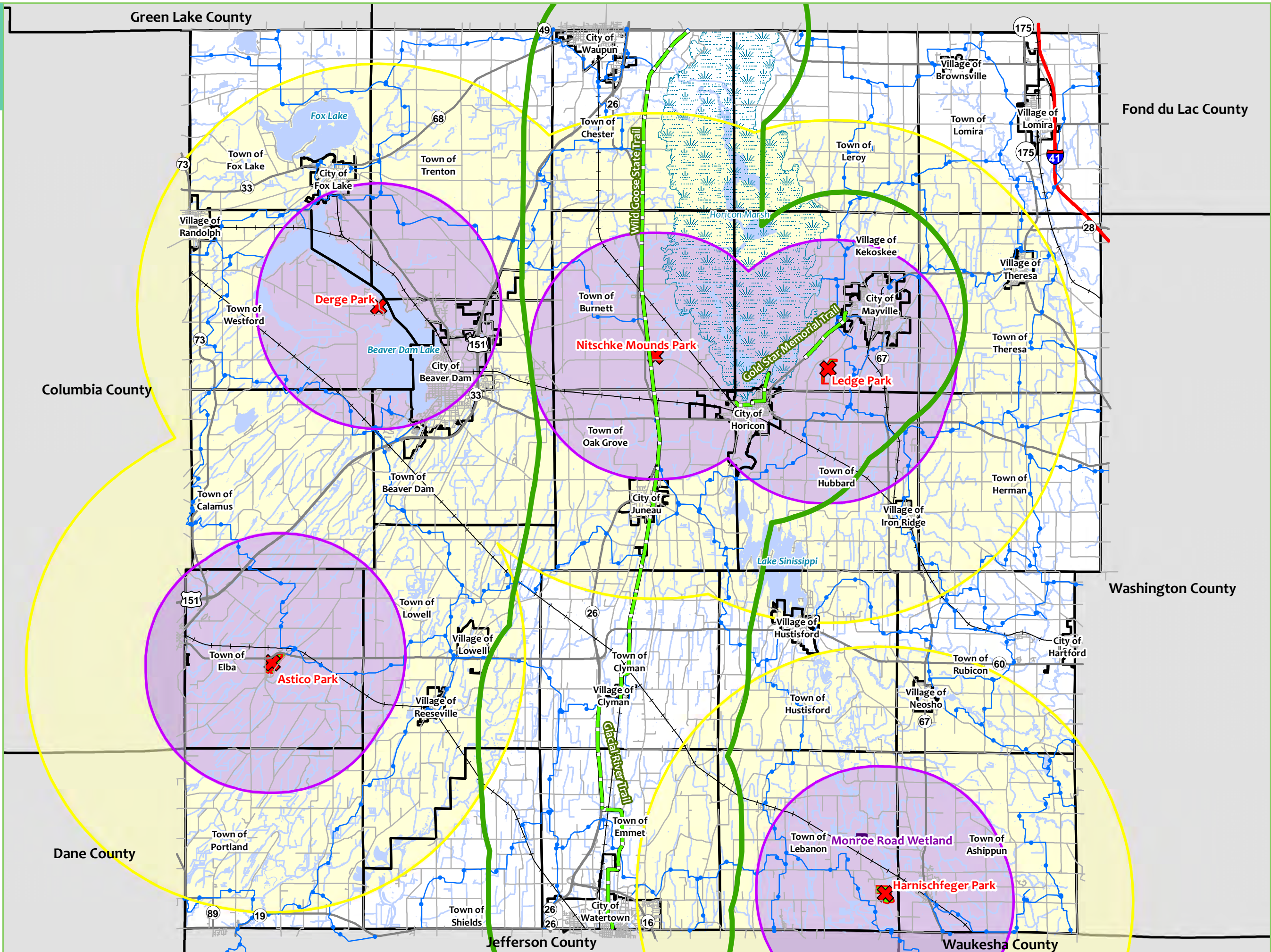
Dodge County Park, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan

Map 5: Existing Facility Service Areas

-  Existing Bike/Pedestrian Trails
 -  Existing Snow-Mobile Trails
 -  Rail
 -  Interstate
 -  US or State Highway
 -  Other Road
 -  Municipal Boundaries
 -  County Park
 -  County Park Footprint
 -  County Special Use Area
 -  Horicon Marsh
 -  Surface Water
- County Park Service Areas**
-  4-Mile Service Area
 -  8-Mile Service Area
 -  4-Mile Existing Trail Service Area











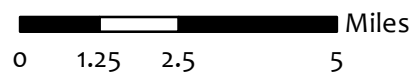
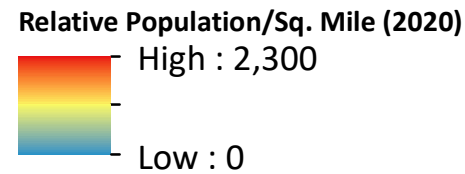
Date: 9/19/2023
Sources: WI DNR, Dodge County, FEMA, USDA



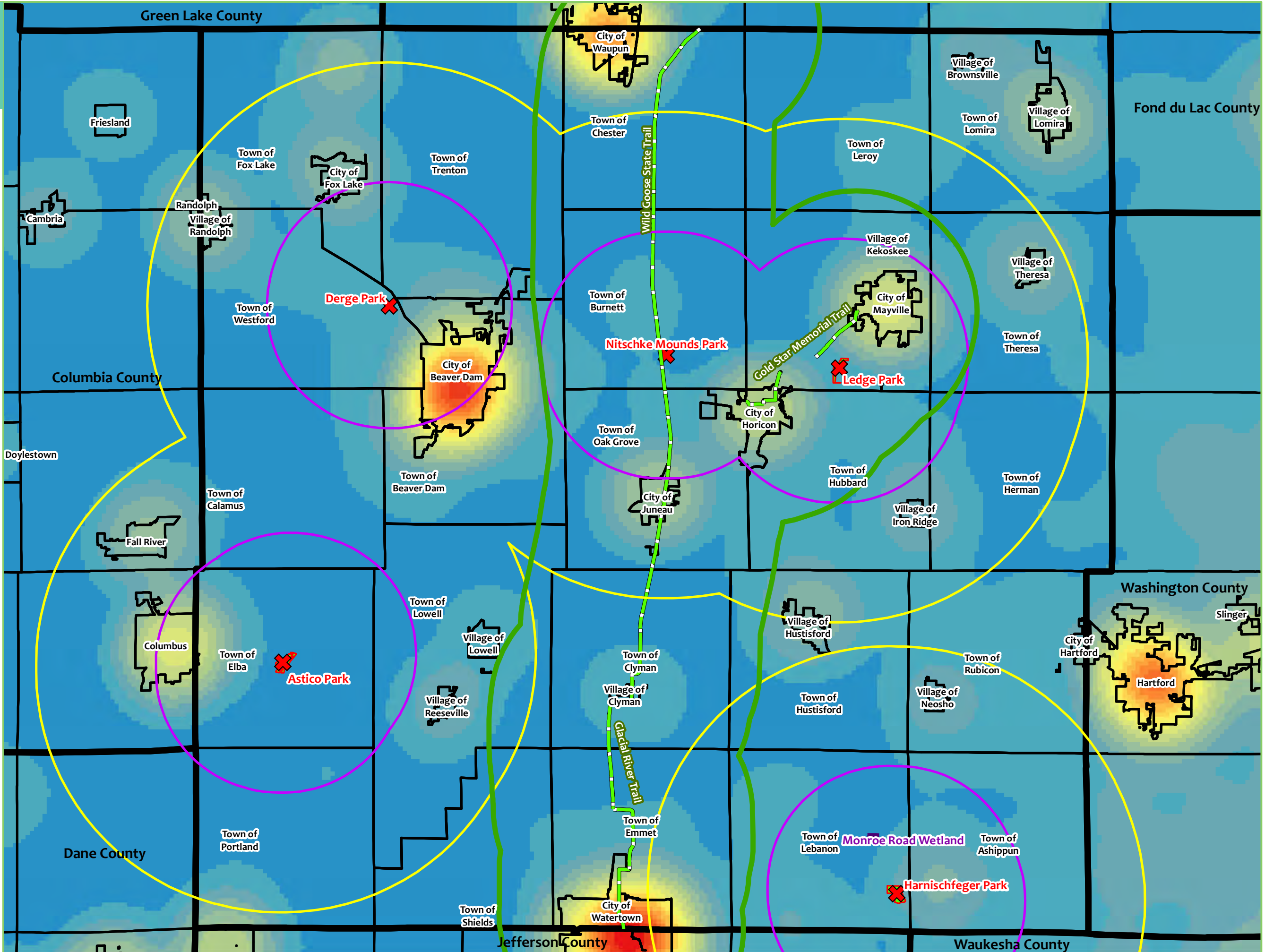
Dodge County
Park, Outdoor Recreation,
and Open Space Plan

**Map 6: Service Area
Population Density**

-  4-Mile Existing Trail Service Area
- County Park Service Areas**
-  4-Mile Service Area
-  8-Mile Service Area
-  Existing Bike/Pedestrian Trails
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  County Park
-  County Park Footprint
-  County Special Use Area



Date: 9/19/2023
Sources: WI DNR, Dodge County, FEMA,
USDA, US Census Bureau



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CHAPTER 6:
ANALYSIS OF THE
EXISTING PARK AND
OPEN SPACE SYSTEM



CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING PARK AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

This Chapter presents an analysis of how well Dodge County’s existing park and recreational facilities meet community needs, evaluating the following components:

- A site observation tour conducted in the fall of 2022.
- An application of established local and national park and recreational facility service standards to reliable population projections for the County (Chapter 5).
- A qualitative analysis of the County’s park system based on both an understanding of the County’s goals and objectives and an evaluation of the local demand for parkland and recreational facilities.
- An analysis of the geographic distribution and accessibility of each park location.
- A consideration of public input regarding the future of the County’s park and open space system.
- A review of the Wisconsin’s State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and other regional plans that influence the County’s Park and Recreation system planning. A complete list of relevant plans can be found in the Appendix.

The results of this analysis will serve as the basis for the recommendations presented in Chapter 7.

SITE ANALYSIS

In the fall of 2022, individual site visits were conducted to document the existing condition of each park and trail, gather general information on each site, and document observations. County Staff’s observations and site knowledge were also combined into the site analysis. Together, this helped guide the development of the recommendations for each park and trail in Chapter 7. The following is a summary of the information and observations for each site.



FIGURE 6.1 SITE OBSERVATIONS

Site	Observations
Astico Park <u>102 acres</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of effective entrance, traffic, and wayfinding signage – especially for park trail routes • Need consistent and expanded ADA accessibility to park facilities, especially bathrooms • Security issues, improved parking area, and trail improvements needed on the east side • Existing dam on Crawfish River creates an obstacle for paddlers • Playground equipment improvements needed • Lack of picnicking areas • Some existing campsite sizes are too small and need opportunities for additional campsites • Need for designated non-motorized multi-use winter trails on east side • West entryway needs significant improvement (congestion issues), but there are existing building reuse opportunity • Trail is too steep on the west side leading to the historic bridge on the Crawfish River • Some facilities and amenities could be reconfigured for better site use and access – especially the pavilion and parking area at the top of the hill (central location) on the east side of the park

Site	Observations
Derge Park <u>13 acres</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for future park expansion to the north or west • Tree plantings and buffering needed on all sides • Potential future boat camping sites along Beaver Dam Lake • Need vehicle access barriers on pathways to bathrooms from CTH CP • Beaver Dam Lake frontage could feature additional amenities such as fishing areas or piers • Stormwater infrastructure needed on east side • Steep slopes along repaved pathway to shower building • The park could use an additional shelter structure • Both playgrounds need improvements, especially the lake side playground • Kayak launch on Beaver Dam Lake needs ADA accessibility pathway improvements • Existing Quonset hut leaks and needs to be replaced with a new building to include an office and equipment storage • Existing entrance and parking area facilities need increased security, signage, and lighting • West side entrance could use speed bumps to calm entering traffic

Site	Observations
Harnischfeger Park <u>133 acres</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of effective entrance, traffic, and wayfinding signage – especially for park trail routes (identify the agricultural education trail and provide more clear direction) • The new barn structure and historic barn are utilized for FallFest, but could be further activated with additional programming and events • The old homestead foundation site could be upgraded to include a fire pit, event space, or pergola structure to further activate the area around the historic barn • Park entrances could use improvements to make each more welcoming, including improved signage • The boardwalk trails could be expanded further north to traverse wetlands for more frequent use and access • The former baseball field/open space area could be developed into a new facility • Disc golf course fairways could use additional vegetative buffering to further define their locations • The area around the boardwalk entrance and playground could feature a bandshell or performance space with a gazebo • Park clubhouse structure needs improved ADA access and new stairs • Concession/BBQ shelter needs ADA accessible paved pathways • The old barn adjacent to the mini golf course could be upgraded to serve as a new event space • The existing tree nursery needs to be relocated and expanded to serve the entire park system with new trees • South entrance road could potentially host more campsites • The existing dock and landing on the river need improvement – river level issues

Site	Observations
Ledge Park <u>87 acres</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sections of internal road need to be repaved The hiking trails along the ledge running north are too close to the ledge and should be redone to be set back further and include small lookout areas Interior trail signage needs to be improved for more clear and effective wayfinding Portions of the western terminus of the Red Trail need to be redone to address the steep grade change (potential for stairs from the lower park area to the upper park area) Area south of the Green Trail Loop could be suitable additional open space Campsites within the Electric Campsite Loop need to be paved Electric Campsite Loop road and parking area needs to be paved The shelter structure east of the Electric Campsite Loop needs to be replaced and could potentially be moved farther north to the picnic area or edge of the forest The scenic lookout boardwalk development could benefit from a unique art feature and paved parking area Potential for park expansion to take place in wooded areas surrounding the park and east of the upper playground Park needs a drive-thru lane for camp registration, an expansion to a two-lane road leading to the lower area parking lot, improved directional signage, and better access to dump station and fill towers The Contemplation Tree could benefit from more interpretive signage The lower area of the park could use updated playground equipment Opportunities to further utilize the lower area pond with boardwalk or bridge

Site	Observations
Nitschke Mounds Park <u>54 acres</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any development, improvement, or changes near the existing Archeological Preserve Area and effigy mounds should be undertaken in coordination with the Ho-Chunk Nation and Wisconsin Historical Society. The layout of sections of trail in and around the existing mounds groups need to be reconfigured to improve setbacks from mounds A Park Master Plan is needed Interpretive mound trail signage throughout the park needs to be replaced and should be developed in conjunction with the Ho-Chunk Nation. The east side of the pond could feature the addition of a boardwalk to complete a loop trail The existing shelter should be outfitted with electricity and could be a prominent location for educational events for school groups and public presentations Signage and trail improvements are needed to improve access to the Wild Goose State Trail. A new parking lot adjacent to the trail is also needed. Boardwalks throughout the park could be used to cross wet sections of trail loops Existing parking area and portable bathrooms could be improved

Site	Observations
Wild Goose State Trail <u>20 miles</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Minnesota Junction parking lot needs to be paved, improvements could be made to the trailhead here, and improved wayfinding signage to the trailhead should be developed with the extension of the Gold Star Trail Redevelop and upgrade the STH 33/26 parking lot and trailhead as the crossroads of the Wild Goose State Trail and future Gold Star Memorial Trail Develop parking area adjacent to Nitschke Mounds Park to address existing parking issues Install signage or bollards at CTH E crossing to discourage parking along the trail

Site	Observations
<u>Gold Star Memorial Trail</u> <u>2.1 miles</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The future trail connection to the Wild Goose State Trail (STH 33/26) should feature an improved trailhead with an art feature, paved parking area, and attractive signage. The art feature could include a National Gold Star memorial or monument. If the property at the corner of CTH TW and STH 28 is developed into a residential neighborhood, the County should ensure that a trail connection to this subdivision is established

Site	Observations
<u>Glacial River Trail</u> <u>3.5 miles</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need additional signage for on-road segments Improved connections to Watertown and improvements to a full off-road trail within Dodge County would benefit the trail A new off-road trail connection to the Wild Goose State Trail at STH 60 would improve inter-connectedness of trail system

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Existing Facilities

As documented in Chapter 5, the County’s existing Regional Park acres do not meet this plan’s local standard for a total of 5.4 acres of Regional Park lands per 1,000 residents (Figure 5.3). Constrained areas are defined as a combination of WisDNR wetlands and floodplains, steep slopes (greater than 12%), drainageways (75’ buffer around perennial streams or 50’ buffer around intermittent channels), and woodlands (combined 80% cover area). Dodge County’s Conservation Areas are considered constrained areas.

Dodge County also actively tracks the number of visitors at several locations within the existing park and trail system. While traffic count data is somewhat inexact (see Figure 6.2 notes) and does not account for park users entering facilities via a mode of transportation other than via car, the information still confirms several trends. The data shows that the parks are well attended, with Astico Park and Ledge Park being the most visited locations in 2022 (see Figure 6.2). Traffic counts indicate that County parks generally experience peak use during early and mid-summer, with use generally picking up significantly around April and remaining high through October before dropping off sharply with the onset of winter. In general, during peak warm weather months, average monthly traffic at County parks tends to be twice as high as overall annual average traffic counts. Traffic counts for 2022 also indicate that park use is continuing to increase compared to previous years. Additionally, Dodge County also conducts an annual camper survey. Camping is currently provided as a recreational activity in four of its five developed parks. Annual camper survey results can be found in the Appendix.

FIGURE 6.2: PARK TRAFFIC COUNTS (JANUARY – DECEMBER)

Park or Trail Facility	Average Monthly Traffic Count	Peak Monthly Traffic County
Astico Park	1,310 vehicles per month*	June – 5,236 vehicles*
Derge Park	710 vehicles per month**	July – 1,333 vehicles**
Harnischferger Park	1,178 vehicles per month	May – 2,279 vehicles
Ledge Park	1,900 vehicles per month***	October – 4,701 vehicles***
Wild Goose State Trail	1,012 vehicles per month	July – 1,798 vehicles

Source: Dodge County, 2022

*Astico Park Traffic Counter was not working between July – September, 2022. The average monthly traffic count and peak monthly traffic count would likely be significantly higher if data for these months was recorded.

**A traffic counter was not installed at Derge Park until May 2022. Values represent data recorded between June – December 2022.

***County data indicates that the traffic counter at Ledge Park was not working for the months of March and April in 2022.

Future Park System Needs

The future recreation needs of Dodge County are determined by applying the recommended minimum acreage standards to a reasonable population projection in future years. This type of needs assessment is a critical component of this plan and helps assist the County with planning and budgeting for the development of future parks.

Overall, the existing Regional Parkland provision for Dodge County is 4.4 acres per 1,000 County residents. This is approximately the same as it was in 2015. As also previously discussed in Chapter 5, the existing park and trail system does not currently meet this plan’s future standards (5.4 acres per 1,000 residents in 2023).

Figures 5.4 and 5.5 show the projected acreage and miles needed in 2033 and 2043, based on this plan's new standards per 1,000 residents and projected population in Dodge County over the next twenty years (6.0 acres per 1,000 residents in 2033 and 6.5 acres per 1,000 residents in 2043). To accommodate the future population and desired level of service in 2033, Dodge County would need to add approximately 151 new acres of Regional Park space, 4 new acres of Conservation Areas, and 20 miles of multi-use trails. In 2043, a total of 205 new acres of Regional Park space, 6 new acres of Conservation Areas, and 20 miles of multi-use trails would be needed.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Although quantitative standards provide a good basis for formulating the recommendations, a thorough assessment of the County's existing facilities must include an analysis that takes into consideration those characteristics that make Dodge County unique from other communities, this includes:

- Identify those park system deficiencies and strengths that are not captured by universal standards.
- Ensure that future parks and recreational facilities are tailored to meet the needs of County residents.
- Allow for the establishment of a more reasonable and specialized level-of-service standard by which the County can plan its future park system.

Important factors to consider include the following:

- While they are not considered in the calculations and analysis for specifically Dodge County's park and trail system, nearby recreation amenities offered by local municipalities, the state, and federal government also contribute to the region's overall parks, recreation, and open space system. In total, these facilities help serve Dodge County residents and visitors with a wide variety of recreational opportunities.
- County residents have access to many recreational facilities, however, the public input results (see Appendix) indicated there is a need for some additional facilities and amenities such as:
 - Development of a new Regional Park
 - Improve/expand passive recreational space and trails throughout Dodge County
 - Improve/expand existing park campsites
 - Expand boardwalk trail segments in existing parks
 - Develop additional multi-use trail corridors and bicycle connections throughout Dodge County
- Site visit observations indicate many potential improvements that could be made to the existing park and trail system. While it is not feasible to address all existing issues over the planning period, many have been included within the recommendations (Chapter 7) of this plan for future consideration during the capital improvements planning process each year. Additionally, Dodge County residents participating in the public input events indicated that the existing parks and trails are well maintained and well attended, however, incremental improvements overtime will continue to expand recreational opportunities and offerings to assist in maintaining that high level of service over the planning period.
- Annual camper surveys are conducted by Dodge County staff each year to monitor services provided and user satisfaction. The 2022 survey indicated that there is increased use and demand for camping at County park locations, and that while the majority of users expressed satisfaction with the quality of County park services and facilities, many people desire to see expanded and improved campsites, the inclusion of upgraded electrical and water hookups, modernized showers and restrooms, expanded trail systems, and general improvements to facilities and amenities at campgrounds. It is recommended that Dodge County continue to conduct annual surveys to monitor service provision overtime.



GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The location and distribution of the park and open space facilities in relation to a community's residents is also an important indicator of how well existing facilities meet the needs of the community. Maps 4 and 7 illustrate how effectively Dodge County's parks serve the various developed areas of the County. These service areas are based on the local standards identified in Chapter 5.

The area served by a park is influenced by several factors. These include the size of the park, location, transportation accessibility, and natural or manmade barriers. Displaying park service areas based on these factors suggests locations where additional park facilities might be necessary to serve residents. Map 7 analyzes the park service areas in relationship to the population concentration and distribution within Dodge County. Using these service areas, Map 5 and 7 identifies a few existing service area gaps:

- **Northwest and Northeast Corners**

Outside of the Wild Goose State Trail service area, the County's Regional Park service areas do not extend all the way to the northern boundary of Dodge County. Additionally, Derge Park is Dodge County's smallest with limited recreational opportunities. While there are other recreational opportunities in this area including the Horicon Marsh and several existing municipal parks, a new Dodge County park or trail in northeast or northwest corner of the county could help fill existing service area gaps.

- **Southcentral Area**

Most of southcentral Dodge County is underserved in terms of County Regional Parks. However, like the far northeast and northwest corners of the county, there are other recreational opportunities provided in several of the local municipalities and via the Glacial River Trail. This area of the county has great potential for increased connectivity between destinations via multi-use trails that could be further linked through a new Dodge County park.

- **Eastern Boundary**

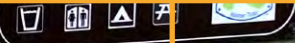
Near the Dodge County and Washington County boundary is another small existing service area gap. However, there are several recreational amenities to the east in Washington County, including the Theresa Marsh Wildlife Area, Washington County Family Park, and municipal parks in the City of Hartford. A new Dodge County park or trail in this area may make sense, depending on recreational opportunities available, but this area is considered to be a lower priority than the other two service area gaps listed above.

Overall, it may be necessary to acquire additional parklands so future residents have equitable access to all types of parklands, open space, and recreational opportunities.



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CHAPTER 7: PARK FACILITY & TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS



CHAPTER 7: PARK FACILITY AND TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides detailed recommendations to expand and improve Dodge County's existing park and open space system based on current deficiencies and opportunities identified in the preceding chapters of this Plan. These recommendations are also guided by the vision, goals, objectives, and policies outlined earlier in this Plan.

Based on the County's projected population in 2033 (90,346 residents) and 2043 (91,754 residents), and its local standard of 6.0 and 6.5 acres per 1,000 residents, Dodge County will need to provide approximately 151 additional acres of Regional Parkland by 2033, and 205 new acres by 2043. This recommendation assumes that Dodge County will continue to grow at a moderate rate, and that park and open space planning will be oriented toward serving a steadily growing population. It is also recommended that various improvements to existing parks also be made.

Additionally, an evaluation tool was created to help score and compare proposed parkland when it is presented to Dodge County in the future. See Figure 7.4 and 7.5 for the evaluation tool, criteria, and scorecard. It is recommended that the evaluation criteria be used in all future discussions regarding potential parkland acquisition.

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING PARKS

Recommended park improvements were developed through feedback from the Land Resources and Parks Committee, County staff, and the public, a review of the goals, objectives, and policies of existing plans, and the inventory and analysis of existing park and recreation system conditions within Dodge County. This comprehensive analysis led to the following list of existing park recommendations. Particular emphasis should be placed on acquiring important lands adjacent to existing parks to protect them from incompatible or potentially conflicting developments. The goal for each County Park should be to acquire enough land, where feasible, for each respective park's acreage to exceed 100 acres. For each park listed below, potential park expansion opportunities have been identified.

Over the next 5 years, it is unrealistic to think that all projects for each park and trail will be implemented. To account for this, the recommendations provide a broad range of projects that can be implemented incrementally in the short, medium, and long term as deemed feasible by the County. Chapter 9 further refines and prioritizes the projects that fall within average County budgetary constraints. The Capital Improvements Plan should be used as the foundation of the annual budgetary requests from the Parks Division. The list below should be used to develop longer-term projects (beyond 5 years), offer guidance to the Dodge County Friends Groups and other local groups, and provide an opportunity to leverage unique funding situations that may present themselves over the next 5 years.



FIGURE 7.1 RECOMMENDED GENERAL OVERARCHING COUNTY PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Existing County Parks and Trails

Recommended Improvements

- Complete an update of the Dodge County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in partnership with local jurisdictions.
- Update individual Park Master Plans at least every 10 years. These plans should indicate the future use of the facilities, equipment, and park grounds. Master Plans should be prioritized for existing parks and trails where no plan exists today.
- Pursue becoming a designated Wisconsin Healthy Community (see Chapter 8 for more information).
- Improve park entrance, circulation, and wayfinding signage – especially for interior park trail routes and facilities. Interpretive and educational signage should be developed and installed along all significant trails and areas of special interest within County parks. Update and replace all entrance signage with permanent materials.
- Expand and improve existing campsites in all parks to provide greater privacy between sites, easier access, and better facilities.
- Improve and expand bicycle connections and connectivity throughout Dodge County through on-street facilities and off-street multi-use trails. Add bicycle racks and promote bicycle rental at all existing parks and trailheads.
- Add additional trees and native plantings throughout all parks. Trees, native vegetation, and wildflower planting should be incorporated to help reduce mowing areas and costs, improve aesthetics, and create buffer areas, especially along property lines, use areas, and between campsites to provide better separation. Consider the addition of edible fruit and nut plantings, where appropriate. Expand the size and use of the existing tree nursery and establish a formal memorial tree planting program to assist in these efforts.
- Conduct a detailed ADA Assessment and Improvement Plan of all existing facilities and pursue recommended improvements. Additionally, incorporate and improve ADA accessibility with any new facility or improvement to an existing facility.
- Continue to evaluate existing facilities and perform systematic routine maintenance in each park.
- Expand enforcement of on-leash dog requirements and consider the development of a dedicated off-leash dog run or dog park facility.
- Improve and increase the marketing and communication of Dodge County parks and trails to better inform residents and visitors of their offerings and share information with other local governments, groups, and similar entities.
- Expand access opportunities along all lakes, rivers, streams, and other natural waterways within Dodge County.
- Develop boardwalk trail segments in existing and future County parks to provide recreational access to wetland areas and other unique natural features.
- Protect and preserve sensitive environmental features through property acquisition and conservation easements.
- Develop all recreational trails to accommodate multiple user groups, as feasible to reduce user conflicts.
- An extensive plan modeled after the Rock River Water Trail Plan should be established for the Crawfish River and Beaver Dam River to provide mapping and information on non-motorized boat routes, access points, and maintenance. Where appropriate, Dodge County staff should take the lead in identifying and making improvements to water access points.
- Shoreline stabilization should be implemented with landscaping and native vegetation for improved and safer access to the waterfronts, better aesthetics, goose control, and shoreline erosion protection.
- Improve park security through cameras or the establishment of a night security patrol position to oversee late night activity in the parks and prevent middle-of-the-night problems and unauthorized park entry.
- Expand opportunities for non-motorized winter trail users by providing groomed trails within all parks, where appropriate.
- Continue to support and assist the Friends of Dodge County Parks, Inc. in their efforts to organize and run park events and fundraisers.
- Conduct a Playground Management Plan to identify the condition and deficiencies in all existing playground equipment and surfacing. Following completion, pursue the recommended improvements needed.
- Install and upgrade drinking fountains in prominently used locations such as bathrooms, showers, trailheads, and shelters, where able.

FIGURE 7.2 RECOMMENDED REGIONAL COUNTY PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Existing Regional Parks

Astico Park Recommended Site Improvements

- Improve park entrance, traffic, and wayfinding signage – especially for park trail routes and to key park facilities and features*
- Increase tree planting throughout park
- Increase ADA accessibility to park facilities, especially bathrooms with paved parking and pathways to all facilities
- Install fencing, security cameras, and lighting on the east side of the park
- Redevelop and improve the east side parking lot and access drive
- Improve the east side of the park with vault toilet facilities and consider the development of primitive canoe-in campsites and/or disc golf
- Develop and install entrance sign for east side of the park highlighting the historic bridge and trails access. Install a kiosk or new signage near the historic bridge for interpretive and park information
- Establish new park entryway and additional parking area with trail connections off of County Road T for winter access
- Develop a portage area for paddlers around the existing dam on Danville Mill Pond
- Update and expand playground equipment at key locations within the park, ensure that updates include ADA accessible facilities and equipment ground cover
- Increase the number of picnic tables within picnic areas throughout the park
- Develop a natural amphitheater area for naturalist programs and group activities and gatherings
- Where able, expand existing campsite sizes and electric hookup accessibility*
- Improve internal trail connections and quality, interpretive trail signage, and wayfinding signage*
- Add an ADA accessible kayak platform to the canoe/kayak launch pier*
- Improve landscape buffering between campsites, shelters, and other use areas
- Finalize the trail system identified in the Master Plan by completing any remaining trail gaps*
- Reconfigure the area adjacent to Shelter 1 as a shelter, bathroom, shower, paved parking area, and/or trailhead for the entire park’s internal trail network
- Redevelop the trail segment leading from the Shelter 1 area down to the historic bridge on the Crawfish River to include switchbacks to increase accessibility and reduce maintenance associated with erosion and washouts of steep sections
- Reconfigure both park entryways per the Astico Park Concept Plan
- Build a concessions kiosk or store to provide camping equipment such as bug spray, charcoal, ice, and firewood
- Construct a covered firewood storage structure
- Increase (as able) the number of ADA accessible campsites throughout the camping area
- Develop another dump station to lesson congestion at the current dump station site
- Complete prairie area restoration, increase native plantings, and expand invasive species management
- Establish signage along Bassett Street to prohibit vehicular parking
- Complete campsite electrical upgrades to 50 amp service pedestals, where able
- Reconfigure campsite loop 41-53 and pave the camp road
- Repave the upper road from shelter area 1 to the river point and widen the road where needed to develop pull-off areas for picnic sites

Astico Park Potential Park Expansion Opportunities (See Appendix for Map)

- Acquire the 10-acre property west of the cemetery and complete an Astico Park Master Plan update to determine future use, programming, and development
- Acquire approximately 1.5 acres on the east side of the dam to facilitate portaging around the dam from the river

Recommendations demarked with an asterisk () represent recommendations from the existing Astico Park Master Plan (1997).

ASTICO PARK – CONCEPTUAL PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Special attention was given to Astico Park as part of this planning process with the intention of analyzing key areas of the park in greater detail and developing conceptual park redevelopment plans for each area. The following concepts are intended to reflect the site observations and recommendations above with greater detail provided on ways the park could evolve and change over time to better utilize resources, capacity, and amenities. The concepts include:

- Existing Conditions
- Overall Park Concept Plan
- Entrance Area (Option A and B)
- East Side Area (Option A and B)
- Point Destination Area
- Hilltop Gathering Area
- Central Camping Area
- Potential Long-Term Expansion Area

It is infeasible for Dodge County to pursue all of these recommendations over the planning period, but instead, these concepts are aimed to provide a long-range plan for the park - similar to a Park Master Plan. Additionally, some recommendations can be made by staff as part of their annual budget or CIP processes and others will require more detailed engineering to take place prior to the implementation of the new or reoriented facility. Finally, this plan recommends the concepts be implemented in the following order of priority:






























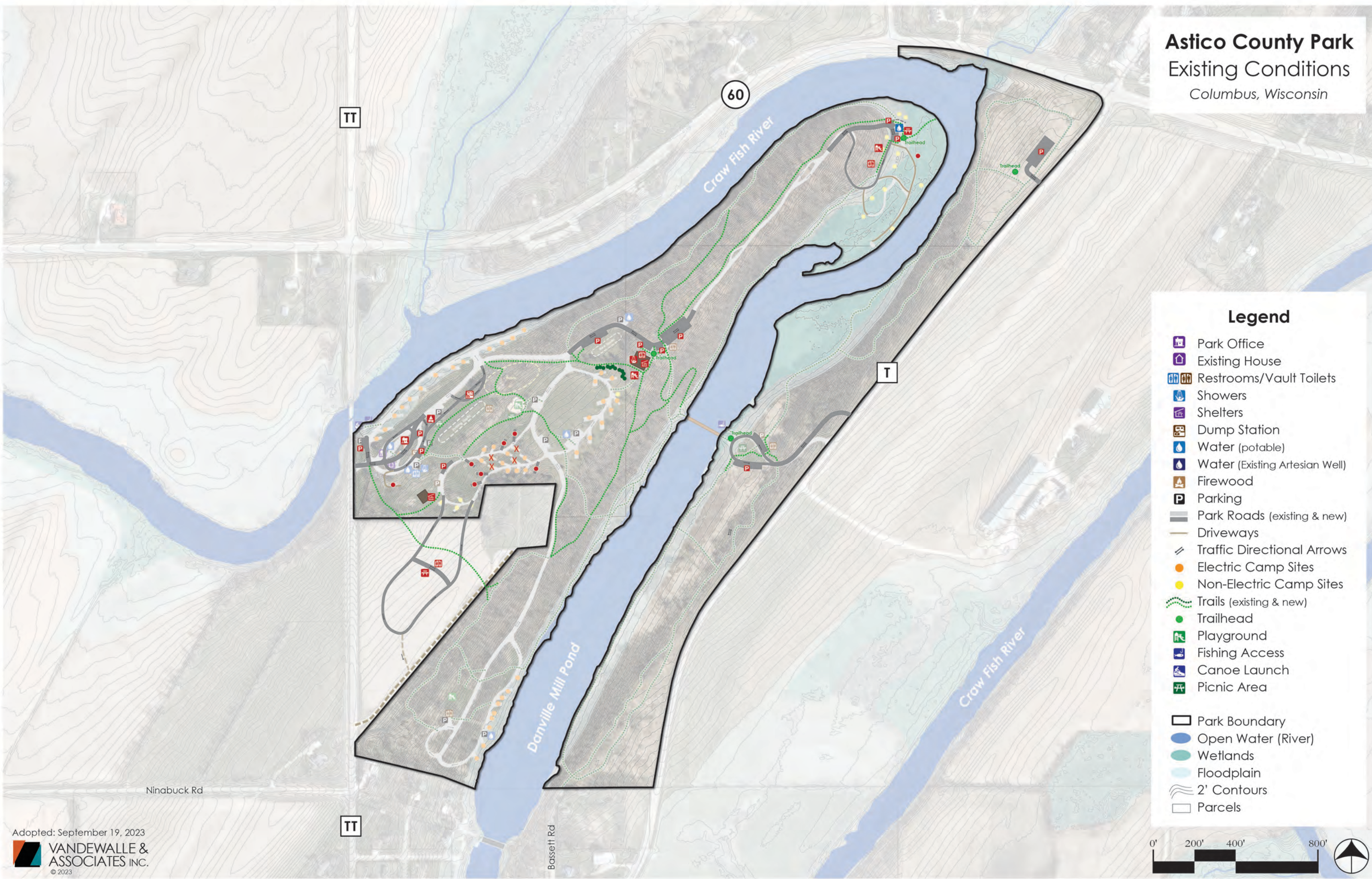
Priority Number	Concept Plan
1	Entrance Area
2	Hilltop Gathering Area
3	Central Camping Area
4	East Side Area
5	Point Destination Area
To Be Determined Based on Land Acquisition	Potential Long-Term Expansion Area

Astico County Park Existing Conditions

Columbus, Wisconsin

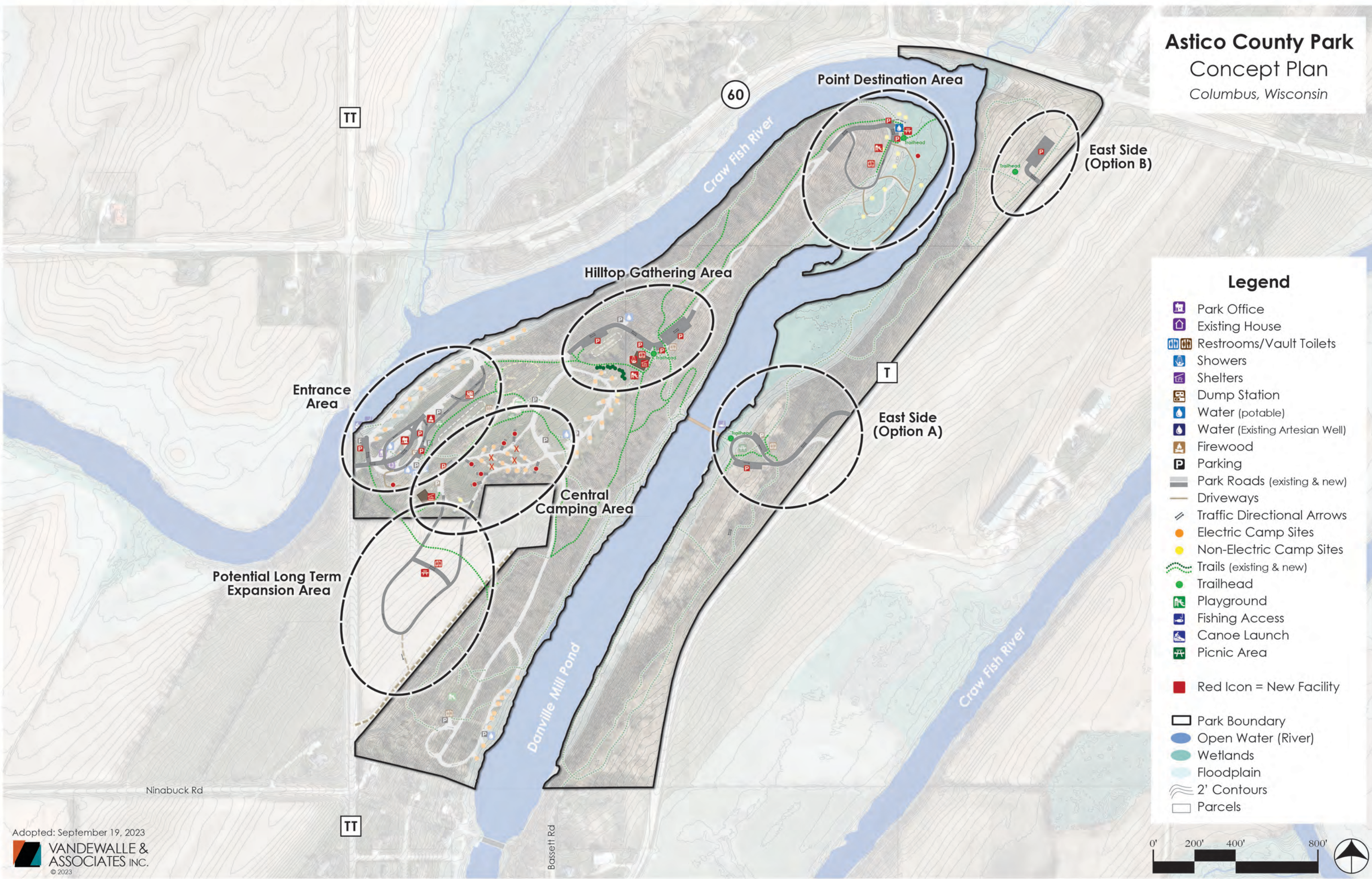
Legend

-  Park Office
-  Existing House
-  Restrooms/Vault Toilets
-  Showers
-  Shelters
-  Dump Station
-  Water (potable)
-  Water (Existing Artesian Well)
-  Firewood
-  Parking
-  Park Roads (existing & new)
-  Driveways
-  Traffic Directional Arrows
-  Electric Camp Sites
-  Non-Electric Camp Sites
-  Trails (existing & new)
-  Trailhead
-  Playground
-  Fishing Access
-  Canoe Launch
-  Picnic Area
-  Park Boundary
-  Open Water (River)
-  Wetlands
-  Floodplain
-  2' Contours
-  Parcels



Astico County Park Concept Plan

Columbus, Wisconsin



Legend

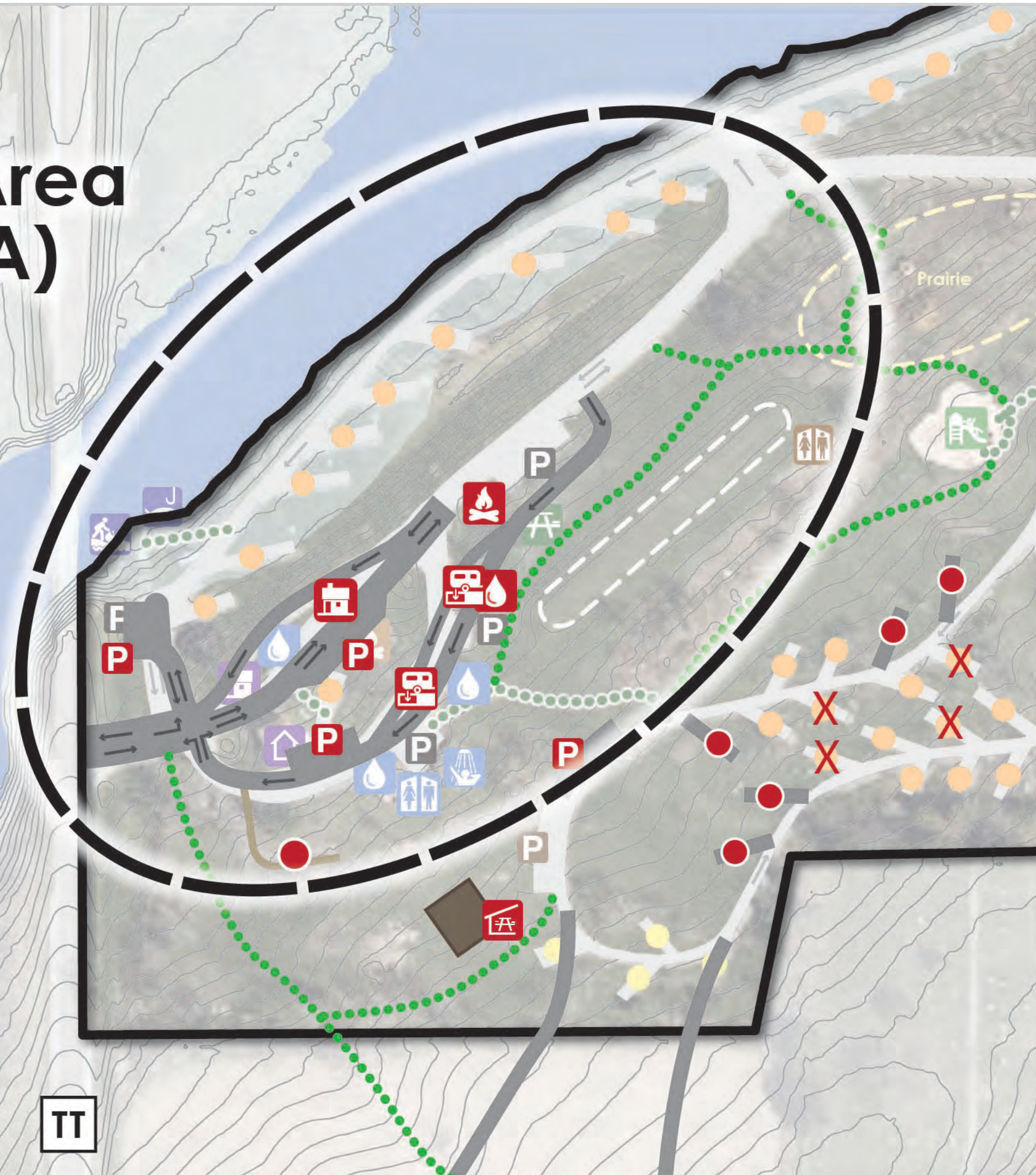
- Park Office
- Existing House
- Restrooms/Vault Toilets
- Showers
- Shelters
- Dump Station
- Water (potable)
- Water (Existing Artesian Well)
- Firewood
- Parking
- Park Roads (existing & new)
- Driveways
- Traffic Directional Arrows
- Electric Camp Sites
- Non-Electric Camp Sites
- Trails (existing & new)
- Trailhead
- Playground
- Fishing Access
- Canoe Launch
- Picnic Area

- Red Icon = New Facility

- Park Boundary
- Open Water (River)
- Wetlands
- Floodplain
- 2' Contours
- Parcels

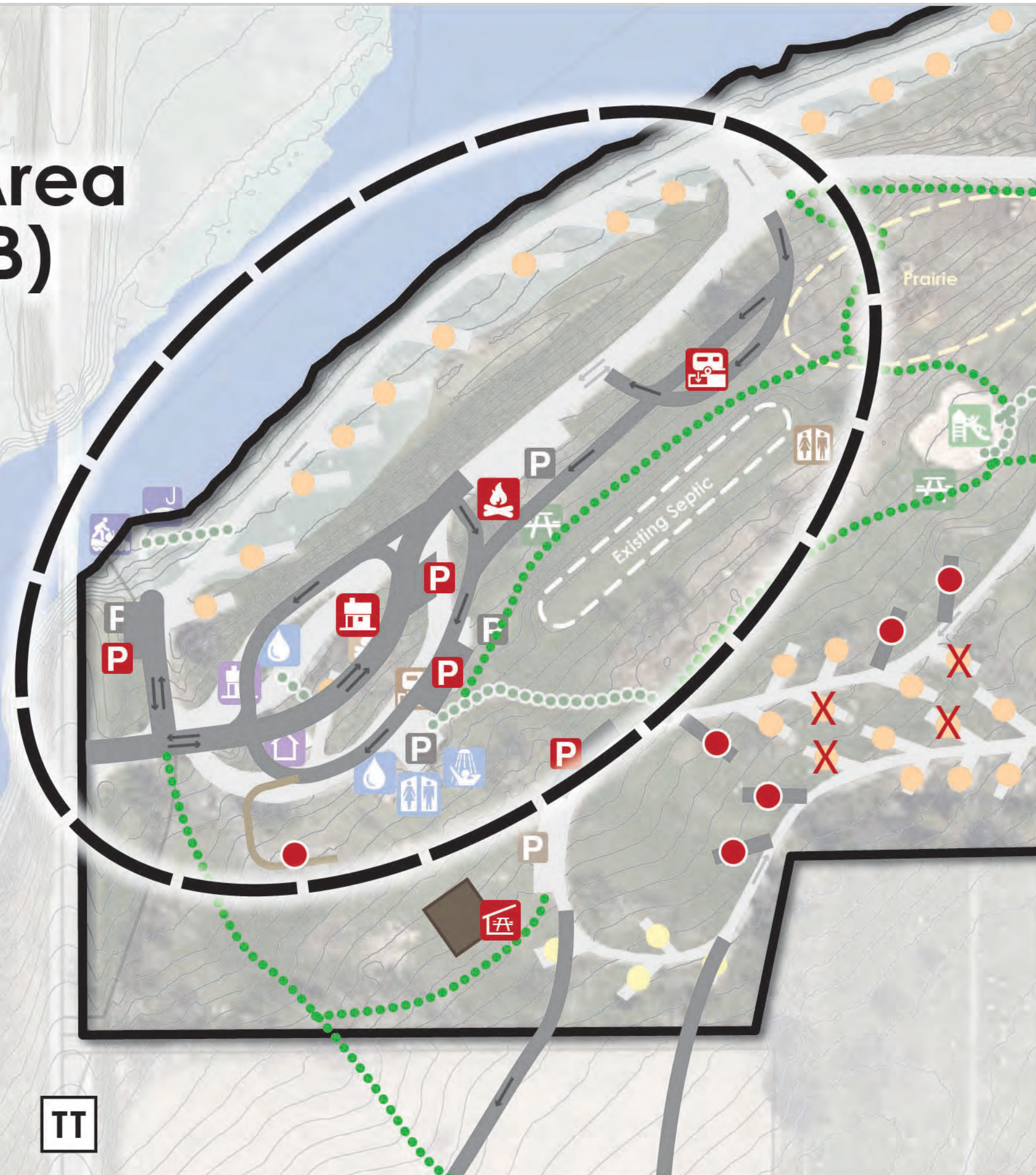
Entrance Area (Option A)

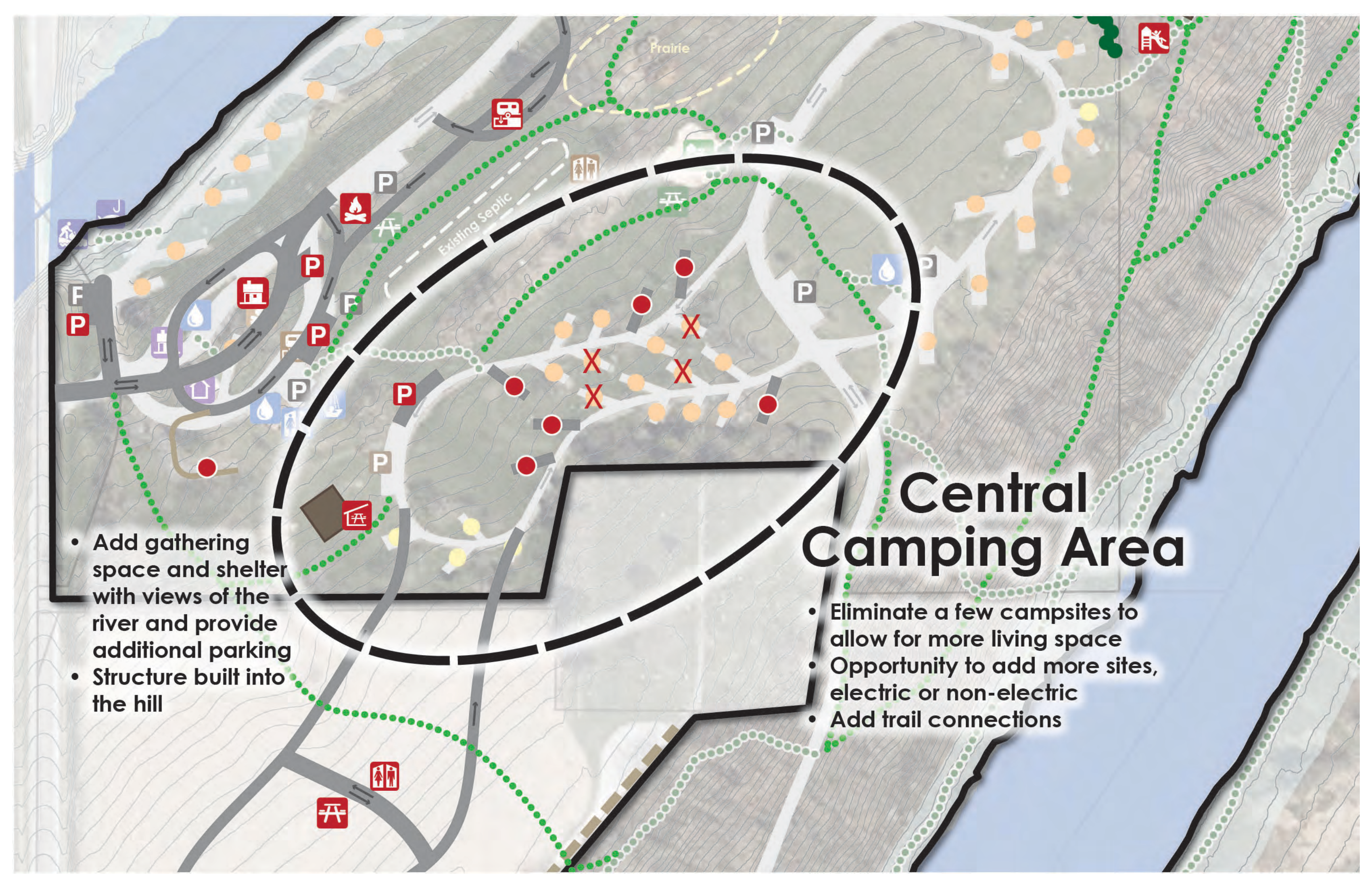
- Demo existing house, move mechanicals into existing shower building
- Move gatehouse further into park to allow for more camper stacking
- Provide multiple lanes past gatehouse and add parallel parking/pull over spots for cars or RVs
- Dump station stays in same location and second one is added
- Relocate firewood
- Restrooms and showers remain with one-way access (existing showers are in addition to new facilities proposed on hill top)
- Add parking west of restrooms to minimize conflict with dump station traffic, keep a couple near restrooms for handicap access
- Staff camp site off restroom/shower drive
- Improve entrance and wayfinding signage
- Add trees
- Add trail connections into the park



Entrance Area (Option B)

- Demo existing house, move mechanicals into existing shower building
- Move gatehouse further into park to allow for more camper stacking
- Provide multiple lanes past gatehouse and add parking
- Dump station relocated away from park exit
- Relocate firewood
- Restrooms and showers remain with one-way access (existing showers are in addition to new facilities proposed on hill top)
- Add parking east of restrooms and keep a couple near restrooms for handicap access
- Staff camp site off restroom/shower drive
- Improve entrance and wayfinding signage
- Add trees
- Add trail connections into the park
- Explore new dump station location in close proximity to existing septic mound system (but is downhill)
- Align with existing intersection





Prairie

Existing Septic

Central Camping Area

- Add gathering space and shelter with views of the river and provide additional parking
- Structure built into the hill

- Eliminate a few campsites to allow for more living space
- Opportunity to add more sites, electric or non-electric
- Add trail connections

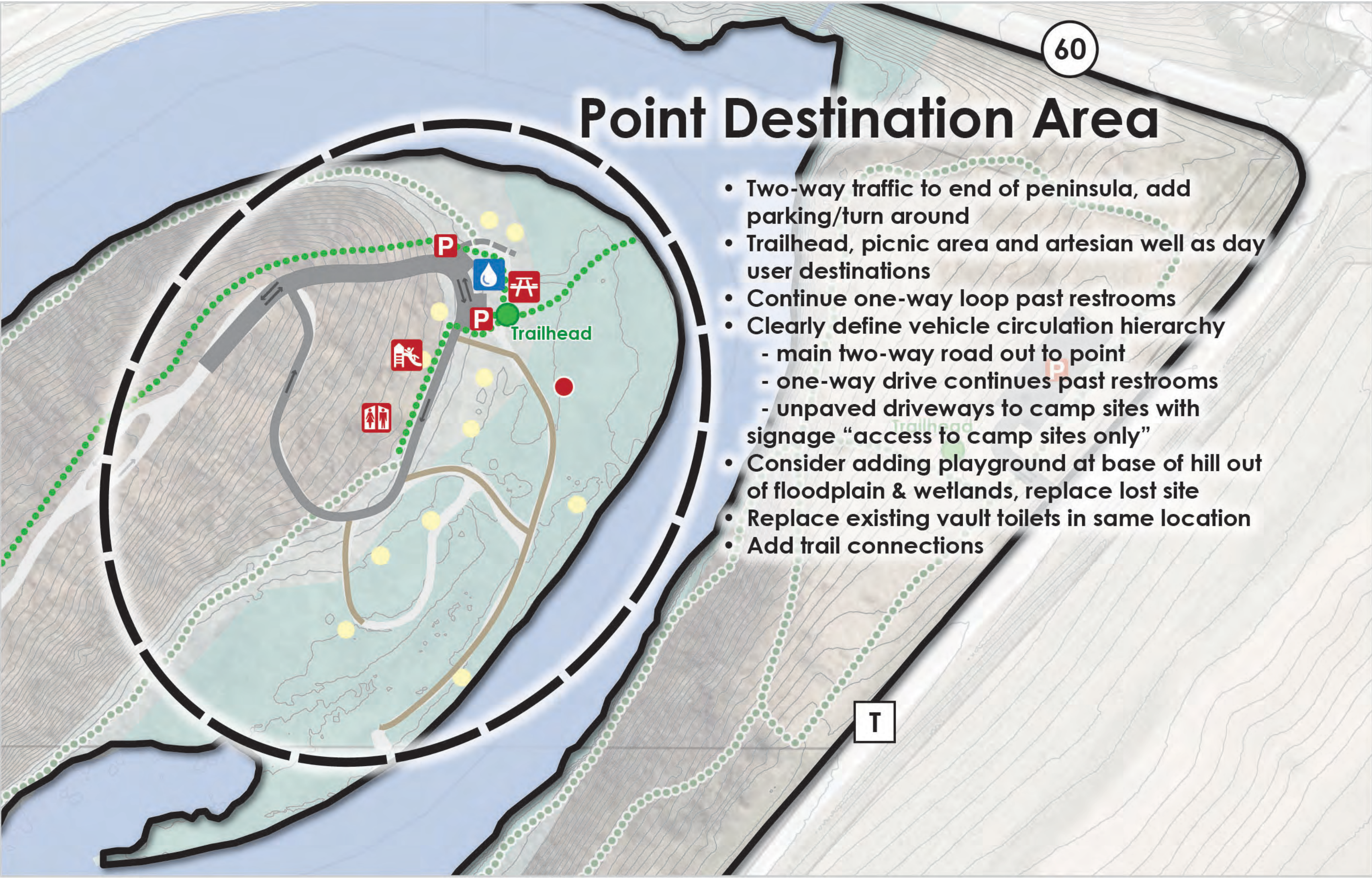
Hilltop Gathering Area

- Widen drive for better two-way traffic
- Add overflow parking at bottom of the hill (~15)
- Add trail connections
- Potential location for new septic for shower & restrooms building, location is flat and downhill

- Develop gathering place and park trailhead
- Wayfinding signage and trail map with “you are here”
- Construct new restroom/shower/open air shelter building with patio & picnic areas
- Shelter will be available for reservations
- Add playground
- Provide a buffer between gathering area and existing campsites
- Remove existing vault toilet building
- Add parking lot (~30 stalls)
- Provide drop-off/loading/handicap stalls
- Provide/maintain access to utility building
- Explore switchback trail to bridge

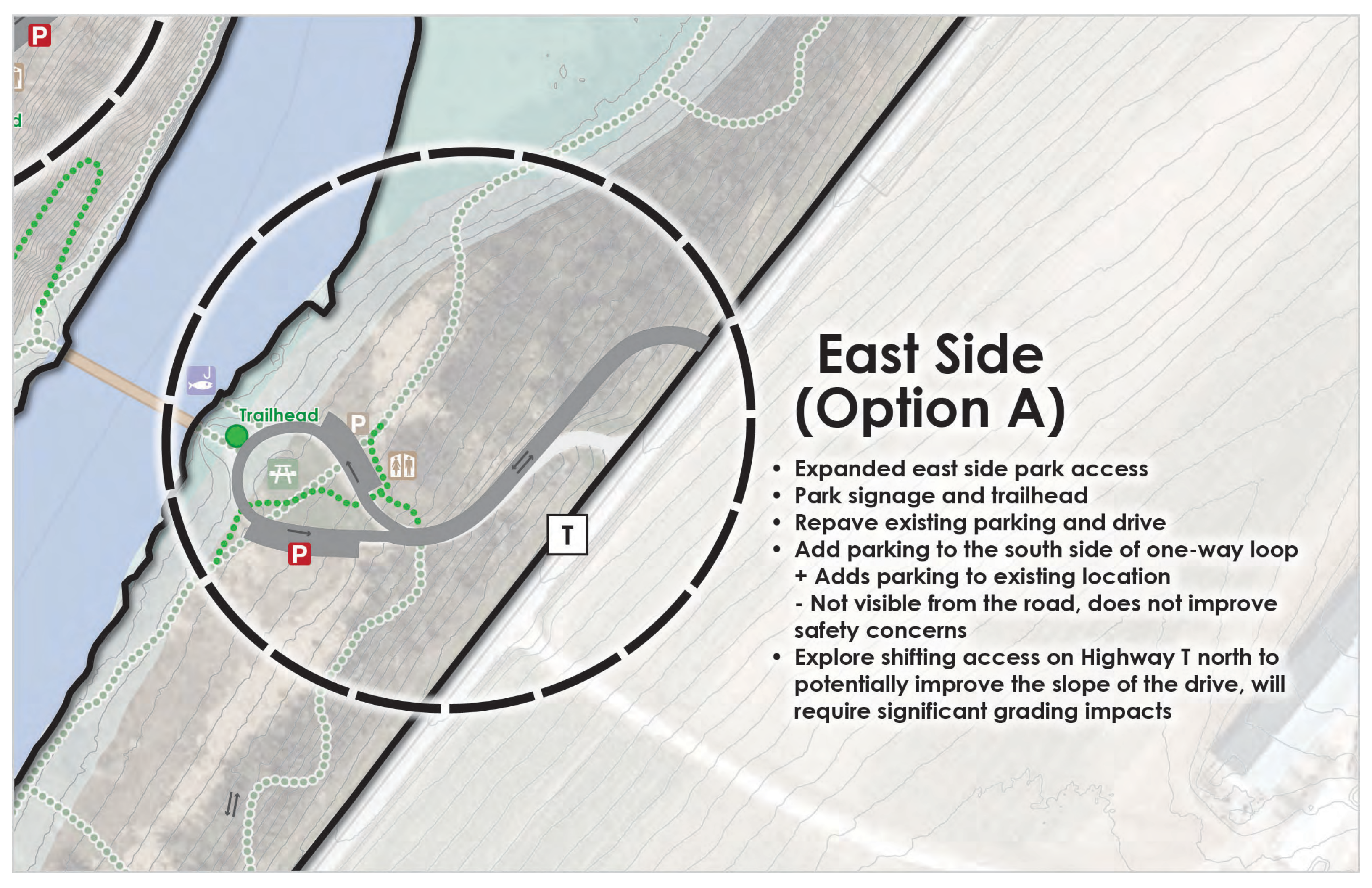


Point Destination Area



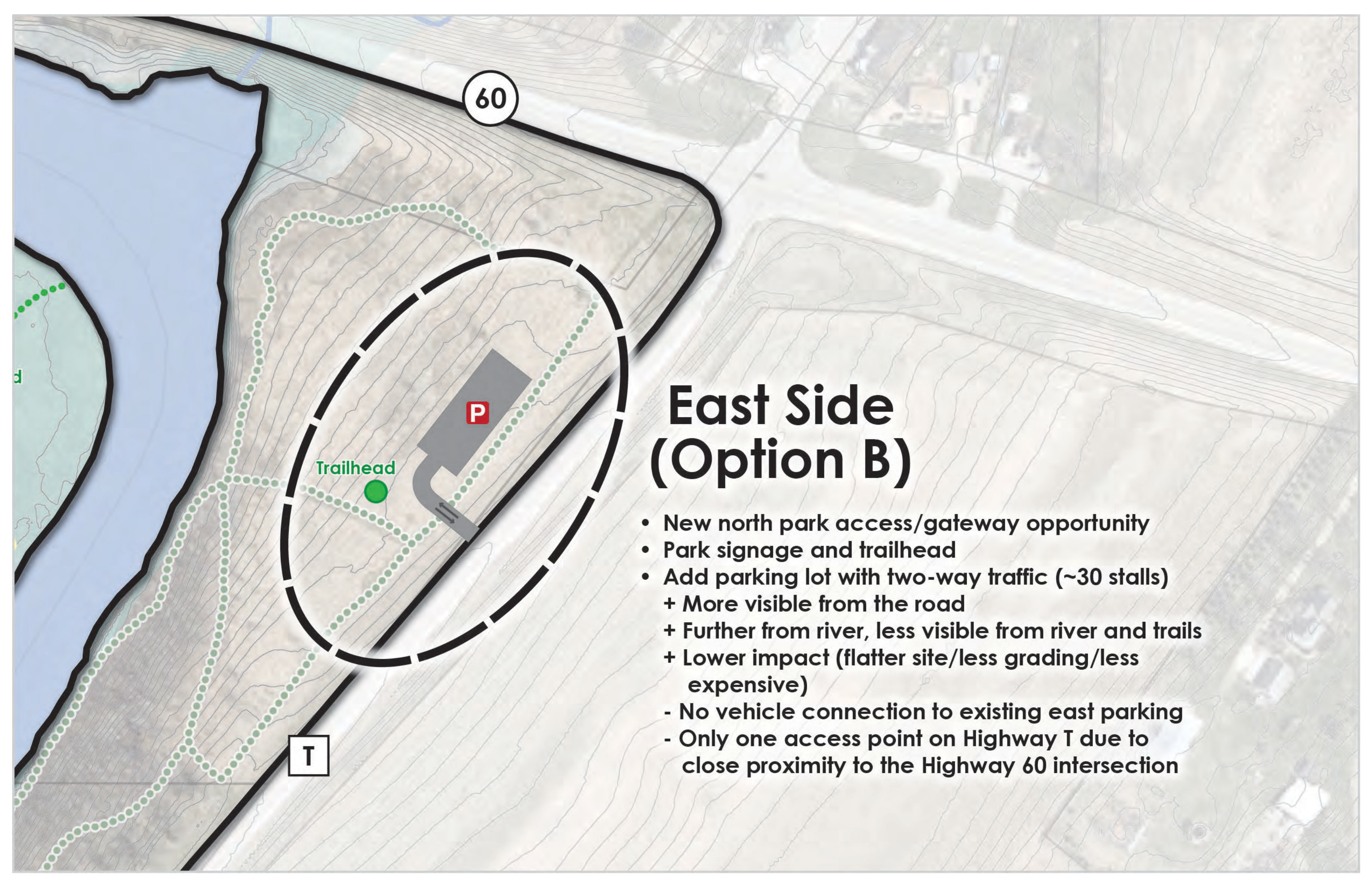
- Two-way traffic to end of peninsula, add parking/turn around
- Trailhead, picnic area and artesian well as day user destinations
- Continue one-way loop past restrooms
- Clearly define vehicle circulation hierarchy
 - main two-way road out to point
 - one-way drive continues past restrooms
 - unpaved driveways to camp sites with signage "access to camp sites only"
- Consider adding playground at base of hill out of floodplain & wetlands, replace lost site
- Replace existing vault toilets in same location
- Add trail connections

T



East Side (Option A)

- Expanded east side park access
- Park signage and trailhead
- Repave existing parking and drive
- Add parking to the south side of one-way loop
 - + Adds parking to existing location
 - Not visible from the road, does not improve safety concerns
- Explore shifting access on Highway T north to potentially improve the slope of the drive, will require significant grading impacts

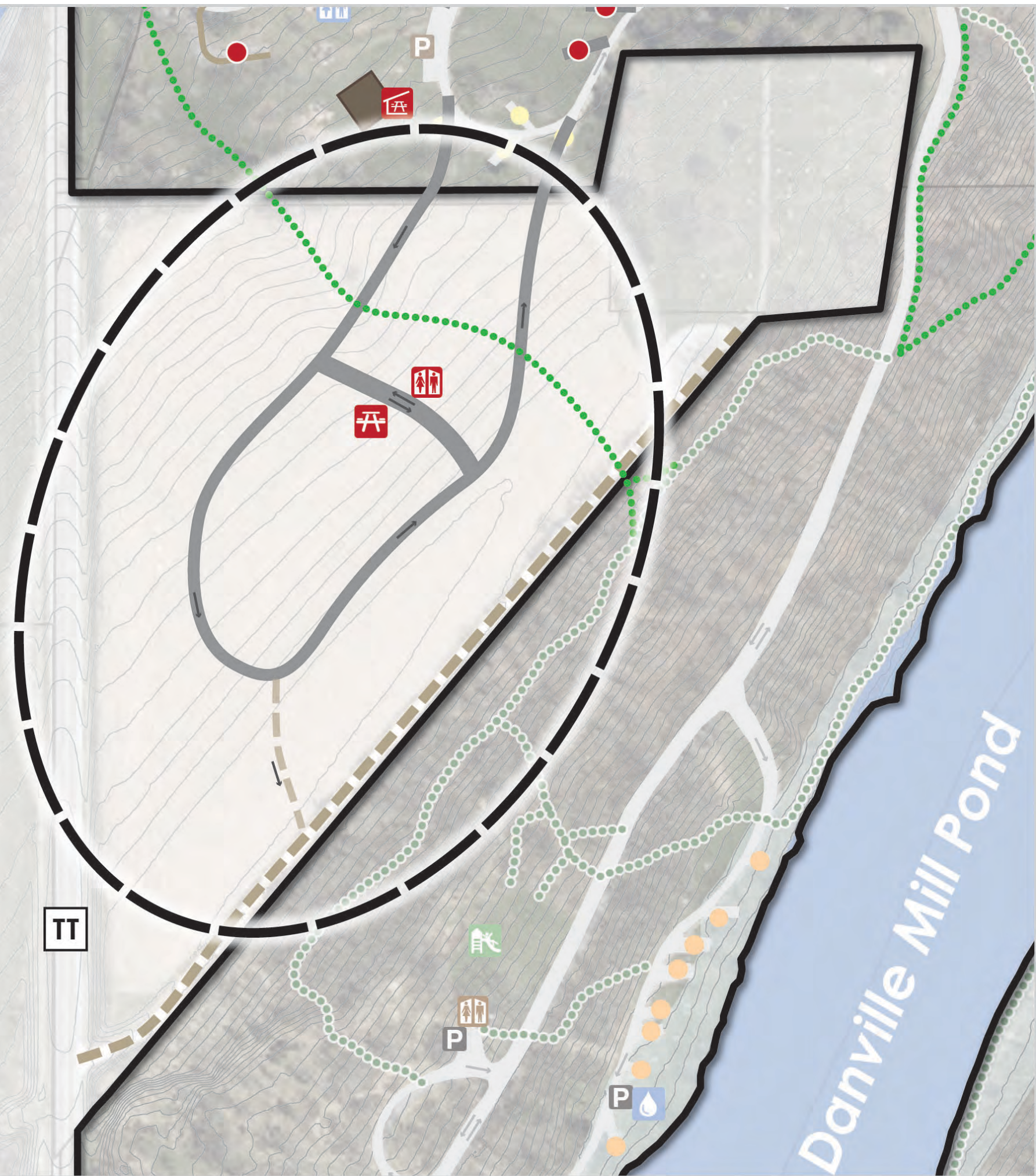


East Side (Option B)

- New north park access/gateway opportunity
- Park signage and trailhead
- Add parking lot with two-way traffic (~30 stalls)
 - + More visible from the road
 - + Further from river, less visible from river and trails
 - + Lower impact (flatter site/less grading/less expensive)
- No vehicle connection to existing east parking
- Only one access point on Highway T due to close proximity to the Highway 60 intersection

Potential Long Term Expansion Area

- Potential long-term expansion area
- Extend one way loop
- Additional sites could be electric or non-electric, potential for larger group site(s)
- Add common amenities at two-way mid connection point (restrooms, picnic, etc)
- Restrooms could be running water or vault toilets
- Maintain cemetery access and use as an emergency exit/access for the park
- Add trail connection from park entry
- Buffer highway
- Add trees for long term shade



Existing Regional Parks

Derge Park Recommended Site Improvements

- Develop a volleyball court on the lake side of the park
- Expand shoreline path to the north portion of the property and install a fishing platform
- Consider the development of boat-in camping sites along the shoreline of the Beaver Dam Lake
- Establish another pier and fishing area along the shoreline
- Develop a small loop trail through the northern part of the park connected to existing paths
- Remove and replace the Quonset building with rentable event space, new park office, and equipment building
- Complete campsite electrical upgrades to 50 amp service pedestals, where able
- Increase (as able) the number of ADA accessible camp sites throughout the camping area
- Install a drinking fountain or water bottle filling station
- Construct a stormwater detention area on the lake side to help slow and filter nutrient runoff, but also incorporates amenities such as a gazebo, trail, or picnic area
- Purchase and install an information and display board for west side park entry area
- Plant more trees along the west side of the County Road CP frontage between the road and the northern trail areas
- Replace the existing playground equipment in the lakeside picnic area, ensure that it is ADA accessible
- Install a bollard to block vehicular access to the pathway leading from County Road CP to the parking lot area
- Install a dumpster area or fish cleaning station on the lake side of the park or near the dump station
- Construct a foot bridge along the north/south pathway over the swale just north of showers and Quonset building
- Develop a paved pathway connection from the ADA kayak launch to the parking lot
- Improve security with cameras and lighting at key facilities and parking lots
- Install lighting on the park entrance sign
- Install speed bumps along the park entrance drive to increase traffic calming
- Upgrade the enclosed dumpster corral screening
- Pave campsites and repave sections of the main road and parking areas, where needed

Derge Park Potential Park Expansion Opportunities (See Appendix for Map)

- If camping and other recreational opportunities need to be expanded, as much as 75 acres of open space could be acquired to the north and east
- Acquire a 50' minimum buffer strip between campsites and adjacent farm field and acquire approximately 3 acres to square off the park in the northwest portion

Recommendations demarked with an asterisk () represent recommendations from the existing Derge Park Master Plan (1999).

Existing Regional Parks

Harnischfeger Park Recommended Site Improvements

North Side of Park

- Consider expansion of the northern parking area to better accommodate horse trailers
- Establish a community garden program in the north end of the park
- Rehab the old homestead site for potential reuse. Possible uses could include a fire pit, event space, or pergola structure to add amenities suitable for events and gatherings*
- Design and install interpretive signs for the antique equipment displays, agricultural education trail, and edible harvest food forest
- Finish the north barn rehabilitation and restoration project with accessible pathways, flooring, and stair improvements*
- Construct a bandshell or performance space with a gazebo adjacent to the boardwalk entrance and playground area
- Work with Friends of Dodge County Parks to establish an off-leash dog area in the north end of the park. Establishment of a dog owners' group to help fund and maintain such a facility is a critical component to the creation of an off-leash dog area*
- Evaluate the existing pond at the north end of the park for depth, fish stocking quality, and other potential recreational opportunities
- Develop permanent restroom facilities to serve the north trails and north barn area
- Pave the north parking lot, driveway, and paths

South Side of Park

- Create areas along the river for shoreline fishing and an additional permanent pier. Development of fishing areas may include the construction of fishing platforms, shoreline stabilization, and removal of brush*
- Expand the existing boardwalk trail north along the river and repair existing boardwalk and signage*
- Consider expansion of horse trail development on adjacent private lands via easements to increase horse trail length
- Improve both park entrances with upgraded signage, landscaping, and lighting
- Increase the campsite parking pads to 20' x 60', install 50 amp electric pedestals, and water hook-ups, as able
- Increase the mini golf course to 18 holes with at least 9 holes that are wheelchair accessible. Develop a sponsor signage program to help fund course expansion and improvements*
- Establish a paved ADA accessible path to the concession building from the shelter
- Increase (as able) the number of ADA accessible camp sites throughout the camping area
- Replace the existing drinking fountain near the canoe/kayak launch area
- Consider developing additional campsites adjacent to current camping areas along the main camp road
- Further formalize and define disc golf fairway locations with vegetative buffers, develop/update sponsors for hole signage, and expand disc golf into the north area open space the was the former baseball field*
- Develop an additional sand volleyball court adjacent to the existing north pavilion, consider dual use as an ice-skating rink*
- Construct a wetland pond in the old rifle range field with a boardwalk or adjacent path to connect with the trail system
- Improve and expand the clubhouse (interior and exterior) to increase ADA accessibility, replace stairs, better accommodate group rentals and events, expand paved parking area, and add an exterior water fountain*
- Relocate and expand the existing tree nursery to serve the entire County park system with new trees

Harnischfeger Park Potential Park Expansion Opportunities (See Appendix for Map)

- Acquire adjacent vacant land out to Highview Road
- Acquire land on the east side of the river for new horse trails, hiking trails, and non-motorized multi-use winter trails with a bridge connection over the river*
- Acquire land or easements on the east side of the river opposite of the park to preserve park views and provide remote facilities for river paddlers*
- Acquire land to the south around the pond and river inlet for expanded campsite areas

Recommendations demarked with an asterisk () represent recommendations from the existing Harnischfeger Park Master Plan (2008).

Existing Regional Parks

Ledge Park Recommended Site Improvements

- Continue to improve the park's trail system by closing off unwanted user-created trails, constructing new trail sections along the ledge, and installing interpretive signs about the significance of the Niagara Escarpment*
- Develop the northeast portion of the park for additional campsites if additional land can be acquired
- Upgrade and improve interior trail signage, including additional educational signage along trails and caution signage for the escarpment and cave trails*
- Increase (as able) the number of ADA accessible camp sites throughout the camping area
- Improve drinking water options in the park at shower facilities, the pumphouse, and near campsites
- Pave and repair campsites throughout the park and upgrade sites to 50 amp electric pedestals, where able
- Install additional on-road painted traffic directional signage throughout the internal roadway network to improve traffic flow, install speed bumps to slow vehicle speeds, and reconfigure camper registration area drive aisles
- Repave entire northeast loop
- Redevelop the Red Trail segments running north along the ledge to increase trail setback from the ledge; add small lookout platforms along it to allow for scenic viewing
- Extend the Red Trail further south to minimize slope and connect to the existing walking trail near the ranger station to provide ADA accessible loop
- Construct stairs from the lower park area to the upper park ledge at the beginning of the Red Trail segment
- Establish a unique art feature at the lookout and boardwalk, possibly in partnership with local school districts and classes
- Develop interpretive signage at the Contemplation Tree and other unique elements of the park
- Improve existing water drainage issues at the dump station, campsites 18, 19, 22, and P
- Develop a forest management plan to ensure variety of tree types and sizes and to provide revenue from periodic timber harvesting. Sparingly clear trees and brush to improve views of the Horicon Marsh. Perform selective cutting of potentially hazardous or diseased trees in the upper campsite areas to promote more under-story vegetation
- Develop paved pathways between the main facilities and features of the park where needed to improve ADA accessibility
- Upgrade existing vault toilets to accommodate ADA accessibility
- Reconstruct and pave the non-electric campsite road loop to improve access and safety for larger camping units and vehicles
- Redevelop and pave the parking area on the east side of the Electric Campsite Loop for better shelter and playground access
- Expand the roadway to the lower park area to two lanes
- Establish a drive-thru lane for camp registration at the split in the road north of the firewood station on the upper park area entrance roadway, near the ADA campsite
- Upgrade or replace the lower park area playground and ensure that it is ADA accessible
- Replace shelter structure east of the Electric Campsite Loop; consider moving it farther north to picnic area or the edge of the forest
- Upgrade dumpster location to include a screening corral
- Develop a water management plan to improve the quality and aesthetics of the spring and pond
- Expand areas for multi-purpose turf play areas if adjacent lands can be acquired
- Complete a boardwalk/dock over and across the lower pond; improve water containment structure on pond's west side

Ledge Park Potential Park Expansion Opportunities (See Appendix for Map)

- Seek to acquire the open area to the east of the playground and the adjoining wooded areas along the upper portion of the park
- Seek to acquire any lands along the top and base of the Niagara Escarpment
- Seek to acquire lands along the pond below the ledge at the north end of the park

Recommendations demarked with an asterisk () represent recommendations from the existing Ledge Park Master Plan (2000).

Existing Regional Parks

Nitschke Park Recommended Site Improvements

- Develop a Park Master Plan to guide future development of the park, focusing on development of the west side of the site and on accentuating the historical, cultural, and educational importance of the archaeological resources within the park (the National Parks Service, Ho-Chunk Nation, and Wisconsin Historical Society should be partners in this development process)
- Coordinate planning, decision-making, and any future development with UW-Milwaukee and the Ho-Chunk Nation
- Improve the path from the Wild Goose State Trail to the mound trails and shelter (possibly by utilizing the County Road E right-of-way) and develop wayfinding and directional signage to and from the trail and park
- Consider developing primitive bike-in campsites adjacent to the Wild Goose State Trail
- Replace and continue to develop and install interpretive signage related to the cultural and historical significance of the effigy mounds within the park in conjunction with the Ho-Chunk Nation
- Construct public art, informational signage, and other educational features or event spaces in conjunction with the Ho-Chunk Nation that feature the cultural and historical significance of the Archaeological Preserve Area and associated burial mounds
- Construct a boardwalk along the east side of the pond to complete the trail loop around it and install boardwalks where needed to complete trail loops through the wet areas
- Develop recreational facilities in the western portion of the park that are compatible, harmonious with, and that do not disturb the Archaeological Preserve Area and effigy mounds, such as off-leash dog exercise areas, disc golf courses, and trails
- Promote the development of a “Friends” group committee for funding and operational assistance of the park in conjunction with the Ho-Chunk Nation
- Ensure that the west side of the park is developed to include a permanent bathroom and parking area to accommodate Wild Goose State Trail visitors
- In conjunction with the Ho-Chunk Nation, consider the development of an elevated platform to enhance mound viewing
- Realign existing trails with a minimum 10’ buffer from mound borders
- Complete and implement a vegetation management plan
- Install electricity at the shelter structure and program it with educational events for school groups
- Replace the existing portable toilet unit with a permanent vault toilet
- Develop an interpretive plan to enhance educational use of the park for area schools
- Promote professional archaeological investigation of the area under the pond
- Continue to promote the professional archaeological investigations of the property

Nitschke Park Potential Park Expansion Opportunities (See Appendix for Map)

- Acquire land to the north of the property and along the Wild Goose State Trail as property may become available. Although surfaced damaged, dozens of mounds are suspected to exist in the field north of the mounds precinct. Remaining subsurface mounds should be protected from further destruction.

**There is no existing Nitschke Park Master Plan.*

Nitschke Mounds Park Master Plan

The process for park master planning is further outlined below, however, Nitschke Mounds is a unique park given its cultural resources. As such, any future park master planning effort undertaken for this facility should be expanded to include the National Parks Service (NPS). [The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program](#) through the NPS provides a unique and cost-effective way to leverage federal assistance in park master planning for this site. In particular, this resource could provide assistance in bringing interested parties together to implement shared goals through collaboration services provided by the NPS. While it is not a grant-funding program, NPS offers its services to help communities identify potential funding sources with the dedication of staff time during a master planning process. It is recommended that this approach be explored and leveraged during any future park master planning associated with Nitschke Mounds Park.

(Source: National Parks Service, 2023)

FIGURE 7.3 RECOMMENDED CONSERVATION AREAS PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Existing Community Parks
<p style="text-align: center;">Monroe Road Wetland Recommended Site Improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install signage to identify public property for canoe rest stops • Consider rustic opportunities to provide bench and seating areas at canoe rest stops • Consider opportunities for canoe-in campsites on higher area or on platforms
<p style="text-align: center;">Monroe Road Wetland Potential Park Expansion Opportunities (See Appendix for Map)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquire adjacent lands as may be available over the planning period to provide road access to the property

*There is no existing Monroe Road Wetlands Park Master Plan.

RECOMMENDED NEW PARKS

Additional park and recreation facilities should be considered for acquisition and development when the opportunity presents itself and where it is appropriate to serve the needs of Dodge County residents. Future new parkland acquisitions should generally be at least 100 acres in size unless the property contains a unique natural or recreational feature or has the likely potential for expansion to 100 acres. Sites that are State Land Legacy Places should receive the highest priority for acquisition as should sites that provide access to recreational surface water, especially along the Rock River. Emphasis in development should be placed on passive, nature-based recreation. Park facilities should include a system of paved roads as well as adequate parking areas, camping areas, hiking and cross-country skiing trails, picnic areas with shelters, restroom facilities, and additional facilities to address identified deficiencies or needs. For sites with water frontage, boat/canoe launch facilities and fishing opportunities should be accommodated. Large and expensive park developments should be completed in phases, when possible, in order to spread costs over a reasonable period of time. The most effective tool that can be utilized directly following any future park acquisition is the completion of a Park Master Plan. This plan will assist in identifying future programming and developing the phased implementation approach as mentioned above. See the call out box below for more details on Park Master Plans.

Park Master Planning

What are the benefits of park master plans?

- Park master plans build on the goals, recommendations, analysis, and action items of the County-level Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan.
- A park master plan uses its own dedicated planning process focused on a single site to provide details that would not otherwise be possible at a County-wide scale.
- Park master planning involves and gathers feedback from the public, stakeholders, and park users on the future development of the site.
- The results of the process yield a detailed site plan that is the basis for facility, trail, and site upgrades, maintenance, and development.

Throughout this Plan, it is recommended that the County develop new or update existing park master plans. This can be done in-house by County staff members, through the selection of outside consultants, or using interns or college-based classroom projects. Park master planning typically requires significant time, experience, technical proficiency, and planning process knowledge. Additionally, due to budget constraints, its often cost prohibitive to hire outside consultants for all park master planning needs. Where appropriate and feasible, college-level interns or capstone classroom projects could be leveraged to assist in park master planning. Dodge County is located near several major institutions which could provide these types of services including UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Oshkosh, UW-Whitewater, etc. This strategy may not work for all park master planning efforts, but could increase the pace of park master planning efforts in Dodge County.

The following recommend new parks for potential acquisition over the planning period include:

- Land acquisition for a new park in the northeast section of the County to address the services gaps in Map 5, highlight areas of unique topography, improve the parkland service provision as detailed in Chapter 6, and potentially be used to connect future portions of the County’s regional trail system.
- Land acquisition for a new park in the northwest section of the County to address the limited capacity and services available at Derge Park for this populated area within the County. Developing additional park facilities in this region

would better serve this part of the County, which is one of its most populated areas.

- Land acquisition for a new park in the central portion of the County south of Juneau between STH 26 and Hartford to address service area gaps as shown on Map 5. This could correspond or connect to the planned Pelican Path along STH 60.
- Land acquisition directly adjacent to existing parks as further described above in Figure 7.2. This could provide increased recreational opportunities in each park, further protect surrounding natural resources, and improve buffering between existing parks and neighboring properties.

NEW PARKLAND EVALUATION TOOL

A method is needed to quantitatively evaluate potential parkland acquisition, when it is proposed. Staff and policy makers alike need a method of analyzing a site prior to making any formal determinations. Through the review of best practices, in addition to information provided by the County staff, Land Resources and Parks Committee, County Board, and the public, the following Parkland Evaluation Tool was created. It is recommended that this matrix be used in all future park or trail acquisition determinations at the Land Resources and Parks Committee level. It is also recommended that the table be reevaluated and adapted on an annual basis to most accurately reflect the needs of Dodge County as they change overtime. Figure 7.4 presents each Evaluation Criteria and the Site Score associated with each attribute of the park or trail being proposed.

FIGURE 7.4: PROPOSED PARKLAND EVALUATION TOOL

Evaluation Criteria		Scoring System
1	Area Identified in Chapter 7 and/or Meets a Service Area Gap (Map 5)	0 = Area is not directly stated or inferred in Chapter 7 or Map 5 10 = Area is not directly stated, but inferred in Chapter 7 or Map 5 20 = Area is directly stated in Chapter 7 or Map 5
2	Protects a Valuable Natural Resource (environmental corridor as shown on Map 2)	0 = Parkland includes no land within an environmental corridor 10 = Parkland is adjacent to an environmental corridor 20 = Parkland consists of some portion of an environmental corridor
3	Site Size and Expansion Opportunities	0 = Parkland is less than 100 acres with no directly adjoining future expansion opportunities 10 = Parkland is less than 100 acres, but has adjoining future expansion opportunities 20 = Parkland is at least 100 acres
4	Unique On-Site Natural, Historical, or Cultural Amenity and/or Surface Water Access	0 = Parkland does not include any unique amenity or water access 10 = Parkland includes at least one unique amenity and/or water access
5	Stormwater Retention	0 = Parkland is made up of over 50% lands that must be used for on-site stormwater retention 5 = Parkland is made up of between 0%-49% lands that must be used for on-site stormwater retention
6	Identified as a State Land Legacy Place	0 = Parkland is not identified as a State Land Legacy Place 5 = Parkland is identified as a State Land Legacy Place
7	Provides a Connection to an Existing State, County, or Municipal Park or Trail	0 = Parkland will not connect to any future or planned State, County, or Municipal park or trail 5 = Parkland is an opportunity for a future connection or is directly adjacent to an existing or planned State, County, or Municipal park or trail
8	Addresses a Goal, Objective, or Policy (Chapter 4)	0 = Parkland or future uses are not directly stated Chapter 4 5 = Parkland or future uses are directly stated in Chapter 4
9	Protects Prime Farmland	0 = Parkland consists of 50%-100% prime farmland 5 = Parkland consists of between 0%-49% prime farmland
10	Provides an Amenity or Recreational Programming Opportunity Not Offered by Dodge County	0 = No, the parkland or future use is already an existing Dodge County amenity or recreational program 5 = Yes, the parkland or future use is not an existing Dodge County amenity or recreational program

The maximum score for a given site, if all ten of the Evaluation Criteria were entirely satisfied would be 100. While it is highly unlikely any future potential parkland will score a perfect 100, it is recommended that a tier system to be utilized to categorize site scoring. Figure 7.5 displays the tiers in which a proposed parkland can fall within. It is recommended that the following approach be taken based on the park's evaluation score.

- Any site score of 49 or under should not be pursued at this time because it does not meet enough of the evaluation criteria and needs improvement.
- Any site score between 50-79 should be pursued, however additional evaluation and determination based on the details of the situation may be necessary before accepting the land.
- Any site score of 80 or above should be pursued and meets or exceeds nearly all evaluation criteria.

FIGURE 7.5: PARKLAND EVALUATION SUMMARY

Site Score	Land Acquisition Approach
0-49	Does Not Meet Needs
50-79	Recommend (With Further Evaluation)
80-100	Highly Recommend

It should be noted, each individual situation presents unique circumstances that may fall outside of this evaluation. Figures 7.4 and 7.5 are recommended to be used as supporting information in the determination of any future proposed parkland, not the sole source of determination. A case-by-case approach is the most effective method to factor in all aspects of a particular situation.

MULTI-USE TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2003, the County completed a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan that identified, analyzed, and prioritized future bicycle and pedestrian connections and improvements. Beyond the recommended trail connections to future planned parks on Map 7, this Plan recognizes and furthers the recommendations of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. However, due to the age of the existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, it is recommended that the plan be updated over the planning period to further explore and refine the recommendations of this Plan. Below are key recommended existing trail facility improvements, potential trail expansion opportunities, and new on-street and off-street facilities.



FIGURE 7.6 RECOMMENDED TRAIL FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Existing Trails

Wild Goose State Trail Recommended Site Improvements

- Develop paved parking area and trailhead along CTH E west of Nitschke Mound Park. Install signage at CTH E crossing to discourage users from parking along the trail
- Install bike route sign and provide Glacial River Trail information in the kiosk at STH 60 parking area to the paved portion of the Glacial River Trail
- Improve the Minnesota Junction parking lot, trailhead, and directional/wayfinding road signage to the trailhead
- Construct new trailhead signage at all parking lots
- Promote Gold Star Memorial Trail development from the Wild Goose State Trail to the Cities of Beaver Dam, Horicon, Mayville, and a trail connection to the City of Waupun
- Establish a written agreement with the City of Juneau regarding the rights and responsibilities of both the County and the City in regard to the portions of trail owned by the City of Juneau
- Develop permanent vault toilet buildings at STH 60, 33, and 26 trailhead parking areas
- Develop a horseback trail loop, if feasible
- Develop a covered bridge along the trail as a unique feature and tourist attraction
- Pave the trail segment within the City of Juneau
- Maintain an annual resurfacing schedule and rotation to reduce overall maintenance costs and keep trail surfaces safe and in good condition
- Install interpretive signage for historical and environmental information along the trail
- Continue efforts to develop and maintain effective drainage along the trail to reduce trail degradation over time
- Work to identify and control invasive vegetation along the trail
- Update the Trail Master Plan
- Install fitness stations along the trail in Juneau in cooperation with the County Employees Fitness Committee, Clearview, and City of Juneau organizations and groups
- Complete the final trail segment in Juneau from Oak Street to Center Street
- Encourage the Friends group or other organization to develop an interpretive guidebook for the history, natural resources, and unique features along the trail
- Install water stations for trail users at trailheads
- Improve identification of parking areas suitable for trailer access and parking
- Review existing signage and update as necessary
- Install picnic table and replace existing horse hitching post at Minnesota Junction parking and picnic area
- Install a horse hitching post at STH 60 and STH 33/26 parking areas
- Improve and pave the parking lot and trailhead in Waupun for year-round trail use
- Upgrade and develop a river access point at the bridge over the Rock River in Waupun within the excess trail right of way. The Horicon Marsh Federal Wildlife Refuge begins to the east of the Rock River bridge on the Wild Goose State Trail and prohibits canoe and kayak use.

Wild Goose State Trail Potential Trail Expansion Opportunities

- Work with WisDNR to acquire clear title to remaining reversionary property in the East Waupun area and complete development of that segment

Existing Trails

Glacial River Trail Recommended Site Improvements

- Install bike route signage along trail and road connections to Watertown and the Wild Goose State Trail
- Identify public parking access points for the trail, especially in the Village of Clyman
- Seek opportunities for off-road trail connections to replace the current road routes where feasible. The railroad corridor from Clyman Junction to Watertown may hold some opportunities in some sections
- Encourage the installation of 5' paved shoulders along HWY CJ to connect the path to the Village of Clyman
- Encourage the widening of Junction Road as feasible from the Village of Clyman to the Wild Goose State Trail at STH 60
- Encourage bike-friendly facilities (signage, pavement markings, etc.) along the road route connections

Glacial River Trail Potential Trail Expansion Opportunities

- Acquire lands that may become available and suitable for development of an off-road path to close the gap between the Wild Goose State Trail and the City of Watertown. The railroad corridor from Clyman Junction to Watertown could hold opportunities for trail development upon abandonment or upon consideration of a trail alongside the active line in some areas
- Coordinate efforts with Jefferson and Rock Counties on the promotion and improvement of the trail

Existing Trails

Gold Star Memorial Trail Recommended Site Improvements

- If the property at the corner of CTH TW and STH 28 is developed into a residential neighborhood, encourage the development of a trail connection into the new development
- Improve the trailhead at the planned trail connection to the Wild Goose State Trail to include a National Gold Star Monument, paved parking area, and effective wayfinding signage
- Complete Phase 2 design and construction from the City of Horicon to the Wild Goose State Trail
- Continue working with the WisDNR to provide bicycle access from the Horicon Marsh Visitors Center to the City of Horicon (considered to be Phase 5 of the Gold Star Memorial Trail Development Plan)

Gold Star Memorial Trail Potential Trail Expansion Opportunities

- Complete the Phase 3 trail design and construction from the Wild Goose State Trail to the City of Beaver Dam
- Explore opportunities to further expand trail north and east to the City of Fox Lake
- Work with the WisDNR to establish the Phase 5 section that will allow bicycling through the Horicon Marsh

Proposed Paths and Trails

Ensuring that interior park trails are connected, expanded, and improved throughout existing parks should be a main priority of the County. Public feedback indicated a very strong desire amongst park users to see incomplete trail segments connected and existing trail networks significantly expanded as a key priority within all existing County parks. In conjunction with efforts to improve the existing trail system, the County should also update internal wayfinding signage for each park's trail network to ensure effective traffic flow and ease of accessibility to and from each park's many features.

This Plan also recommends several off-street paths and trail segments within the County to connect local municipalities and townships to regional trail networks. These trails and paths are essential to linking the communities within Dodge County to on-street bicycle routes, parks and environmental corridors, and the regional multi-use trail corridors. Paved paths serve developed parks to connect on-site park facilities or connect multiple recreational locations together. This type of trail is recommended to connect new parks as they are developed to strategically link new residential developments with each other and create connections between existing and recommended new parks. Community connections to Fox Lake, Waupun, Watertown, Hustisford, and Lebanon were specifically identified during the public input portions of this planning process.

A key paved trail opportunity is a connection between the City of Beaver Dam to the City of Mayville via the planned and partially completed Gold Start Memorial Trail (GSMT). In 2018, Phase 1 of the project was completed and open for use. Recent efforts towards the completion of the trail included a 2019 feasibility study for Phases 2 and 3 and grant writing and submittal for funds to complete Phase 2. Dodge County was awarded a WisDOT Transportation Alternatives grant for Phase 2 engineering and construction from the west side of Horicon to the Wild Goose State Trail. Additional grant writing for Phase 3 development will be undertaken in 2023. Pending successful grant funding, Phase 3 development is slated for 2026-2027. The total estimated cost of Phase 2 and 3 is anticipated to be around \$6,500,000.

When complete, this proposed trail project will provide an important recreational trail facility by providing approximately 15 miles of new trailways for non-motorized uses (primarily biking and hiking). The trail will be designed to accommodate cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter. Establishing the GSMT will eventually create an important trail connection from the City of Mayville to the Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area, the City of Horicon, the Wild Goose State Trail, and the City of Beaver Dam.

COMMUNITY-WIDE BENEFITS OF TRAILS

Trails provide tangible benefits to communities across the county as they promote physical and mental health, offer inclusive and equitable outdoor recreation opportunities, stimulate economic development, and provide sustainable transportation infrastructure. Together, these benefits increase the local quality of life for all residents and visitors of the County.

Physical and Mental Health: A 2014 study by the American Journal of Public Health found that there is a direct and significant measurable correlation between how close people live to bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure and the amount of weekly exercise people get. Additionally, a 2011 study by the American Heart Association found that every \$1 invested in building trails is a direct correlation to \$3 of saved medical costs. Finally, a 2019 study by University of Exeter published in the Scientific Report found that 2 hours a week in the outdoors has a measurable impact on mental health. Proximity also matters, as most people studied lived within 2 miles of trail.

Equity: Trails promote social, racial, gender, and economic equity through strengthening the community, building sustainable interactions and outdoor recreation opportunities, and improving quality of life. Trails are potent tools in maintaining and improving viability and appealing to a broad range of demographic groups in choosing where they live, work, play, and visit.

Economic Development: The outdoor recreation economy generates over \$887 billion dollars in consumer spending each year across the United States, including over \$59 billion in state and local tax revenue. Beyond just tax revenue, other economic benefits include property value increases and creation of jobs. In fact, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects create 8-12 jobs per \$1 million of spending. (Garrett-Peltier, 2011)

Sustainable Transportation: Trails are truly infrastructure that enhances quality of life through connecting communities and destinations, spurring economic development locally and regionally, reducing our collective carbon footprint, and preserving the natural environment.

Source: *American Trails, 2022*

Most of the trail is planned to be 10' wide, asphalt paved, and located within highway rights-of-way separated from vehicle travel lanes. Grass roots efforts developed in 2013 to initiate this project, with residents, business leaders, and stakeholders gathering together to form a project committee and partnership with Dodge County and the Friends of Dodge County Parks laid the foundation for the project and currently carry out funding, planning, and development of the proposed trail. The project is broken into five development phases and the County stands to benefit significantly from this project's completion. Approximately 40-50% of Dodge County residents will have easy access to the trail. The trail will also improve access to healthy lifestyle activities and recreational pursuits, reduce automobile trips, improve bicyclist and hiking safety, and enhance economic development as a regional tourism resource.

Additionally, there is significant grass-roots support for the development of a trail called the Pelican Path to connect the Village of Hustisford to the Wild Goose State Trail along STH 60 right-of-way. The idea was developed and adopted as part of the recent Design Hustisford project that was a collaborative effort between the Village of Hustisford, Town of Hubbard, and the Town of Hustisford. This connection is viewed as a high priority project to increase multi-modal connections, boost tourism and economic development, and provide safe bicycling and walking facilities to this key regional asset. Further coordination and planning between the local trail group, area stakeholders, Dodge County, and WisDOT is currently underway. A feasibility study is underway as of the writing of this plan. The proposed route as of 2023 has been identified on Map 7.

Proposed On-Street Bicycle Routes

This Plan also recommends continuing to develop an on-street bike route system along existing and proposed streets. Building on existing routes, it is recommended that additional on-street sharrows, paved shoulders, bicycle lanes, and buffered bicycle lanes be added to roadways where applicable to provide local communities with bicycle network facilities that connect to the County's regional trail network. Map 7 builds upon the adopted Dodge County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to include greater on-street connectivity options to existing and planned parks, multi-use trail corridors, and destinations throughout Dodge County.

Overall, a consistent theme that emerged from the public feedback gathered throughout this process was the need for increased bicycle connections between communities. In particular, on-street bicycle routes that connect to off-street multi-use trails. This plan prioritizes an improved interconnected network of bicycle facilities as a critical component of Dodge County's future public health, tourism, and recreation goals.

NATURAL AND OPEN SPACE AREAS RECOMMENDATIONS

Dodge County residents prioritized more natural recreation areas in the 2022 public survey during the creation of this plan. The County should consider accepting any quality land donations for conservancy or natural and open space uses, where they may be most appropriate and can be developed in some capacity for recreational use.

SPECIAL USE FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the planning process, additional unique recreational opportunities were identified. In the future development and upgrades of existing and new parks, it is recommended that the County consider the following unique opportunities and partnerships as population and demand increase:

Boardwalk Trails

Dodge County's terrain and topography provide ample opportunities for boardwalk trails which are best suited to traverse wetlands, marshes, bogs, river and lake shores, or other similar situations. Two boardwalk trails exist within Dodge County Parks today, including Harnischfeger Park and Ledge Park. Additionally, a large boardwalk has been installed at the Horicon Marsh, which attracts visitors from all over the country. There are several opportunities to build on these existing trails, the county's unique natural resources, and further develop boardwalks across Dodge County, with the goal of becoming a boardwalk trail destination. It is recommended that, in conjunction with new boardwalk trail development, the county actively promotes and markets this recreational opportunity to further define itself as a recreational destination in Wisconsin for boardwalk enthusiasts.

Trail Network Benefits of Boardwalks

Dodge County's regional ecology contains many low-land prairie marshes and wetlands. As a result, many areas in existing park and conservation areas feature trail segments and natural features that are prone to saturation and flooding at various times throughout the year. The County must manage the dual goals of providing recreational access to sensitive environmental areas, while also ensuring their long-term protection and preservation, making it difficult to further establish traditional trail networks through many park areas.

The development of an expansive boardwalk trail system throughout Dodge County parks should be a priority over the planning period and will create a more sustainable trail system, offering several important advantages over traditional trail development.

- Boardwalk trails naturally control foot traffic and restrict movement to the pathway, protecting sensitive wetlands and reducing environmental damage from foot traffic. Since boardwalks are constructed above ground, they allow for exploration of these sensitive areas without continued damage or erosion of the environment by reducing impacts to vegetation and wildlife underneath and around the facility.
- Boardwalks are also effective in reducing ground erosion and compaction, two key issues that must be dealt with in the development of trails. On traditional trails, heavy foot traffic will often widen pathways and destroy vegetation, which is avoided by elevating trailways on boardwalk segments.
- Ground erosion and compaction from traditional trail development can be both detrimental to the environment and trail itself, causing it to wear down over time. Boardwalks are alternative infrastructural investment that allow for the natural environment below them to remain largely untouched and safe from disruption, better allowing for natural ground infiltration of water, the preservation of wetland hydrology, and less harm to the environment.

Source: *American Trails, 2022*

Disc Golf

Disc golf has become an increasingly popular hobby and recreational pastime over the course of the last decade. Many communities across the state have enjoyed the benefits of increased recreational tourism from disc golf courses, as enthusiasts often travel outside of their own communities to play on professionally designed courses of varying difficulty. The County currently has a growing population of residents interested in the sport. Community feedback indicates the desire for expanded or new facilities within Dodge County. Developing a full-length disc golf course takes up approximately 10 acres of land, which could be accommodated within a new or existing park. There may also be opportunities to expand and further improve the existing course at Harnischfeger Park or develop a new course on the east side of Astico Park or the west side of Nitschke Mounds Park.

Paddling Opportunities and Waterway Activation

Throughout Dodge County, community feedback indicated the desire for more opportunities to connect with key waterways throughout the region, such as Beaver Dam Lake and River, Crawfish River, Rock River, Horicon Marsh, and Sinissippi Lake. Providing more improved access points along the County's main rivers would expand recreational options, harnessing these waterways as additional key sources for both active and passive natural recreation. Expanding the number of locations with kayak and canoe rentals could also increase user accessibility to County water bodies and provides more drop-off points for rentals allowing paddlers to experience through-paddling opportunities.

Additionally, expanding paddle-in or boat-in campsites, scenic overlooks, fishing areas, and other recreational amenities accessible and complementary to water use will help increase water-related uses and further establish the County's lakes and rivers as vital components of the park system. Any future facilities at or connections to the Beaver Dam, Crawfish, and Rock rivers should be developed so that they are integrated into the County's continuously developing park and trail network to create regional connections via these important water resources. To ensure that paddling amenities are effectively integrated into the park system, the County must make sure that information about these new facilities can be easily accessed online and marketed to the public on County websites, social media, and via updated maps.

Expanded Placemaking and Events

To provide space for community programming and further activate the County's park and recreation system, the County should consider the creation of permanent outdoor events venues within its existing parks and future park developments. Popular around the country for creating space for active community use, dedicated events space could be designed to host summer concert series, outdoor educational events, plays, food truck events, festivals and celebrations, beer gardens, and facilitate community gathering. The survey conducted as part of this planning process confirmed that residents desire to have additional programming and more meaningful gathering opportunities. In considering the incorporation of such an amenity into the parks and recreation network, it is recommended that the County identify a central, widely accessible location for such a facility within appropriate parks. A permanent outdoor events venue could be used to activate a central or unique park feature or location or could be located to provide users with access to the County's water resources such as Beaver Dam Lake, the Crawfish River, or the Rock River, further cementing the natural feature as a key characteristic of the County's park system.

To further enhance the appeal, identity, and visitor experience at each County park, opportunities and partnerships to create public art pieces and unique facilities that complement key park features should be explored. Leveraging public art helps create a unique sense of place where installations are found, sparks curiosity, and draws people to particular locations, helping to further activate public spaces. By developing uniquely designed park structures or features and public art pieces that explore Dodge County's history, culture, and ecological features in conjunction with improvements to entertainment and recreational opportunities, the County can create even more compelling park amenities. The potential to leverage public art and entertainment uses, programming, or facilities along the County's multi-use trail corridors could greatly increase the user experience. Serving as regionwide active transportation facilities, the trails would greatly benefit from coordinated efforts to increase wayfinding signage, public art piece integration, and exposure to local historical, arts-related, entertainment, and recreational points of interest in communities along the trail corridor. Multi-community efforts to increase placemaking efforts or further identify interesting locations along the route will increase tourism and use of the facility.



ADA Accessibility

Although parks and recreation areas throughout the County exist in a natural environment with significant topography and vegetation, consideration should be given to making as many of these areas as accessible as possible to all persons. Hard surface paths, park shelters, restroom facilities, and camping areas should be maintained or developed to provide adequate access. Some camping facilities at each County park location should be maintained so as to be ADA accessible, and all upgrades to and new development of playground equipment should meet ADA accessibility standards and provide accessible ground cover. Consideration should be given to developing various portions of the trail systems in the County as handicapped accessible. Furthermore, all future buildings must be designed to meet or exceed minimum code requirements for accessibility.

Campsite Improvements and Expansion

The largest trend identified through public participation in the development of this plan was for improved, expanded, and increased camping opportunities and campsites across the County park system. Already one of the Dodge County park system's key use attractions, continued investment in existing and future park campsites, providing varied camping experiences, and accommodating various types of campers will be key to the system's future success. Exploring opportunities to provide a diverse range of camping experiences, from RV-style camping with utility hookups, to primitive hike-in campsites, paddle-in campsites, and ATV-in locations will appeal to a wide variety of recreationists. It is recommended that the County continue to improve its existing park campsites, expanding individual campsite sizes, paving and providing utility connections and electricity where applicable, and adding additional campsites to each park facility to increase camping capacity.

Food Forests

A food forest or forest garden is a diverse planting of edible plants that attempts to mimic the ecosystems and patterns found in nature. By imitating forest-like structures and establishing a forest ecosystem for edible plant life, food forests have numerous benefits over traditional gardens and farming techniques, including increase biodiversity, efficiency, and sustainability of food production.

While farms and gardens tend to grow along the ground in long, flat planes, food forests capitalize on natural processes and the structure of forests by growing three-dimensionally. Designed to grow vertically as well as horizontally, they create a complex layering of plant life from the tree canopy to the ground that allows for much more life (and much more produce) in a single area.

This abundance of life makes food forests healthy and resilient sources of food. In forests, pest management, fertilization, weed suppression, pollination, nitrogen fixation, and water retention all occur naturally as ecosystem functions created by the benefits of layered vegetation and plant species. When soil is regularly disrupted and exposed (as in common farming and gardening practice) it loses its ability to retain water, prevent erosion, cycle nutrients, build fertility, offer habitat, and to attract beneficial microbes that not only nourish plants, but hold carbon. So, a key feature of food forests is the ongoing presence of perennial plants such as fruit and nut trees, medicinal shrubs and flowers, and self-seeding annuals—plants that remain, year after year, building increasingly diverse ecosystems and producing food. Because of this, food forests do not have to be re-planted each year. Once established, they are generally very resilient and require much less management and care than common farming and gardening practices.

Establishing food forests in County parks can create another amenity for park users to enjoy. Developing a sustainable, low-maintenance source of food that can be picked fresh while on a trail hike or camping trip would offer a unique, convenient, and fun opportunity for Dodge County park users to connect with the natural environment and nutritious food sources. Establishing food forests in County parks would also be a major educational resource for local schools and environmental education groups.

The County should work in partnership with the Friends of Dodge County Parks in the expansion of food forests throughout the County's park and trail system. Friends of Dodge County Parks are already in the process of establishing an "edible harvest" food forest area in Harnischfeger Park.



Winter Trails Development

Developing or converting existing trail segments to accommodate winter activities will activate County Parks more consistently year-round. Converting existing trails and developing new network connections that allow for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and other winter activities could become a significant tourist attraction, drawing people from the surrounding metropolitan regions to the county to experience networks of trails that allow for active winter activities that cannot be found in other parts of the area. Careful planning and consideration should be given to developing cross-country skiing routes that do not create conflicts with other trail uses, such as hiking. Additionally, the development of facilities that provide easy access to active winter activities encourages healthier lifestyles during a significant part of the year when many do not frequent park facilities, supporting health initiatives within Dodge County.

UTV Trails

There is a critical need Statewide for more UTV riding areas, trails, and camping. Some additional trail miles for UTV use could be provided, however, the greater need seems to be for riding areas with varied terrain and large acreages. Many municipalities and towns throughout the County allow UTVs to operate on the roads. Because of this, the expansion of UTV trails should be focused less on developing network connections to get people to County park facilities and more on developing UTV-specific use opportunities within existing and future parks. The development of dedicated UTV trail segments and UTV-in campsites could benefit the County park system. Such facilities must be connected to and from park areas with roadway access to the greater transportation network. The expansion of UTV trails received some support in the public input survey, but trail expansion should be developed strategically, due to the high perception of noise conflicts and conflicts with other types of trail users.

Splash Pad

A splash pad has become a very popular alternative to waterbody access and swimming pools because they are far less expensive to build and maintain, and because they are safer and do not require constant lifeguard supervision. Splash pads also function as interesting features of park spaces.

When planning for a new splash pad, it is important to consider the intended size of the facility, its proposed location in relationship to water and stormwater infrastructure, and long-term operating expenses. The only splashpad type that may be feasible to develop within a Dodge County park is a flow-through facility. This type of splashpad brings new water each day through the features and then drains that water into stormwater sewers. This type of facility is less expensive to construct and operate (\$350,000-\$400,000), but is limited in size to 2,400-3,000 square feet because the maximum water capacity of a flow-through is 50,000 gallons per day. Due to the rural location of most Dodge County parks that are served by on-site well and septic systems, with no stormwater infrastructure present, it may be difficult to accommodate a new splashpad in an existing Dodge County park. However, the County should consider adding a splash park to a future County Park if there is existing or planned infrastructure to support it.



Off-Leash Dog Exercise Areas

The majority of Dodge County parks and trails allow on-leash dog opportunities. However, there are often instances in which visitors choose to use the park and trail facilities for off-leash dog exercise. To address this issue, a new fenced, off-leash dog exercise area should be developed. This could potentially occur within an existing park or be a part of a new facility developed. A new off-leash dog exercise facility should provide accessibility, signage, amenities, and limit impacts to existing surrounding uses.

What Makes a Great Off-Leash Dog Exercise Area?

Many communities all over the country have tackled the question of how to develop off-leash dog exercise areas that best fits the needs of the population. While it is unlikely that it will be feasible to include every one of the following amenities in any given facility, it is recommended that each of these attributes be considered:

- 20 acres in size
- Water source for both humans and dogs
- On-site parking
- Relatively flat land with some naturally shaded areas (or shade structure)
- Clearly posted guidelines and rules for the park users
- Designated walking path in addition to an open space area
- Separate small and large dog areas
- Benches, waste containers, and bag holders are dispersed throughout the park
- Perimeter fencing and double-gated entryway
- On-site restrooms
- Partnership with the Humane Society, nonprofit, private entity, or volunteer organization to help operate, maintain, and sustain the park long-term

Agri-Tourism

Tourism, parks, and recreation, especially centered around agriculture, is a unique opportunity for Dodge County. There are several existing agri-tourism businesses already located in the County, drawing people from all over the region. As Dodge County continues to explore land acquisition either surrounding an existing facility or as a new standalone park, the integration of agri-tourism components could help distinguish the county's recreational offerings from others around the state. This could be in the form of live animals, produce sales, or featuring other key farm elements within a park. Additionally, the County could explore a partnership opportunity with existing local agri-tourism businesses to avoid the additional maintenance, liability, and overall costs associated with these types of activities in a County Park. This approach has been successfully utilized in other Midwestern states to provide a new, unique recreational offering, drive tourism, and highlight the key agricultural resources of the area.

CHAPTER 8: OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS



CHAPTER 8: OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides detailed recommendations on other key components that play a role in the County's park and open space offerings including natural resources, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and programming. These recommendations are also guided by the goals, objectives, and policies outlined earlier in this Plan.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

The public input conducted as part of this planning process confirmed the desire of residents to have more meaningful gathering opportunities, increase awareness of the parks and recreational opportunities offered by Dodge County, and improve information sharing amongst other local governments and groups. It is recommended that Dodge County explore opportunities to expand awareness of the parks and recreational offerings and community events in conjunction with the Friends of Dodge County Parks and other local interest groups and partner organizations.

This can be accomplished through developing a county-wide interactive parks, trails, and tourism map, improving coordination with local governments in sharing links, information, and mapping, and further expanding event opportunities within the Dodge County parks, similar to Fall Fest. The County can utilize its new marketing position to lead this effort through coordination with various stakeholders and increasing the use of newsletters, local media, websites, social media, and email lists to distribute information about events and programming taking place throughout the region.

Overall, there is a strong desire to see the Dodge County park and trail system see increased use by local residents, but also function as an important element of the County's tourism strategy. Increased communication, coordination, information sharing, and local events play a key role in benefiting local residents and tourists alike.

Sport and Fitness Industry Association Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report, 2022

The Sport and Fitness Industry Association conducted a national survey in 2021 of a random sample of over 20,000 Americans. The findings help to provide large trends related to inactivity, demographics, and participation. A few data points that are important for Dodge County to consider over the next five years are:

- 22% of the US population is inactive, meaning that they do not participate in any level of calorie burning activities in an average week, which is a decrease since 2013.
- Class-based (yoga, karate, etc.), fitness (cardio, lifting, swimming, etc.), and outdoor activities (hiking, trail running, etc.) have all increased in overall participation since 2013.
- Pickleball has become the fastest-growing sport over the past two years, with participation seeing 39.3% growth.
- The most popular activities by age group:
 - Baby Boomers focus on low-impact activities
 - Gen Xers participate most in team sports
 - Millennials prefer to participate in the most diverse set of activities across many different types
 - Gen Zers focus on high calorie burning/more intensive activities

COLLABORATION RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to implement the recommendations of Chapter 7 and 8, it will take a collaborative effort between Dodge County and its local partners. This includes local school districts, local government entities, state and regional governments, nonprofits, volunteer groups, and the private sector.

The County has several opportunities to collaborate with other units of government in planning for park and outdoor recreation facilities over the planning period. These opportunities include the following:

- Working with the WisDNR and Department of the Interior on coordinating park, open space, and environmental corridor protection and use activities.
- Work with local municipalities and townships on any potential park expansion areas within proximity of their municipal boundaries that could benefit interconnectivity and access to park and recreational opportunities.
- Work with the Dodge County school districts to determine ways to work together to provide needed and innovative park and recreational facilities that encourage community use and environmental education.

Partnerships with Local School Districts

The opportunity to partner with schools throughout Dodge County can prove mutually beneficial for both Dodge County and young learners. By developing strategic partnerships with local high schools, students in art classes and various tech and shop classes could work with County staff to apply their learning and skill development to real-world projects throughout the County's parks.

Arts classes could develop projects that could be implemented in parks to add public art pieces at key park locations that explore the County's history, culture, and ecology. Such installations would enhance County parks, providing them further with their own unique character and enhancing placemaking in key locations. Students in tech and shop classes could apply their skills on concrete projects that would have an immediate benefit for park users, such as creating boardwalk sections, building fish cleaning stations, or canoe rental racks. In this way, students are exposed to the County park system and the outdoors, while gaining valuable learning experiences, and the County develops a valuable partnership that supports its ongoing park maintenance and improvement efforts.

When schools, community organizations, and public organizations work together to support learning and accomplish mutual goals, everyone benefits. Leveraging these kinds of partnerships creates real community connections and promotes collaboration between educators, residents, and governments.

Source: The Expanded Learning & Afterschool Project

- Continue to participate in regional park, open space, multi-use trail, and bike route planning efforts, particularly when local, state, or federal governments update their park and open space plans, bicycle and pedestrian plans, or comprehensive plans.
- Working with local Friends Groups, non-profits, charitable organizations, and private sector partners to improve existing and develop new parks and trails. There are many volunteer-based organizations in Dodge County that currently assist in park programming, improvements, and related activities. These groups are vital components to maintaining fiscal sustainability for the County and improving/activating parks and trails. Additionally, private sector businesses and groups can assist in land acquisition, large-scale projects, and fundraising. Leveraging these groups has been successful in the development of the Gold Start Memorial Trail and the acquisition of Harnischfeger Park. It is important to continue these collaborative efforts over the planning period.
- Working with local hospitals, clinics, and related public agencies to improve public health, engage residents in healthy activity opportunities, and increase attendance in the Dodge County parks and trails. The Blue Zone Project is key example of an existing effort to increase public health across the region. This can further be built upon over the planning period to collaboratively work to improve community-wide public health that aligns strongly with the goals and objectives of the Dodge County Land Resources and Parks Department. Other examples include maintaining or improving the designated Wisconsin Healthy Community status (see next page).

Wisconsin Healthy Communities

The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute has started recognizing communities throughout the state on their pursuit of improved public health through the designation of Wisconsin Healthy Communities. The purpose of the designation is to recognize and encourage local efforts that improve the overall community's health and well-being. It also aims to promote collaboration centered around health improvement. Communities are recognized as Gold, Silver, or Bronze depending on how well they are pursuing public health improvement efforts.

Because of several recent initiatives, including the expansion of biking and walking infrastructure through Complete Streets Policies and developing food insecurity screening and recovery meal programs, Dodge County has been recognized as a Wisconsin Healthy Community with a Silver Tier classification. Within Dodge County, the municipalities that have formally been recognized include:


















- City of Beaver Dam - Silver
- City of Horicon – Silver
- City of Juneau – Silver

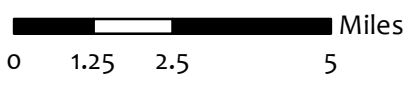
Recommendations in this plan can serve as the foundation for various initiatives that will support the continued creation of a healthier community in Dodge County, including the activation of critical street network connections with multimodal transportation options, increased green space and park connectivity, and community programming at public amenities to support physical and social activity.

The local and regional park and trail systems play significant role in the promotion and sustainability of improving public health. Many of the overarching goals of the Wisconsin Healthy Community Designation program are reflective of the overarching goals in this plan.

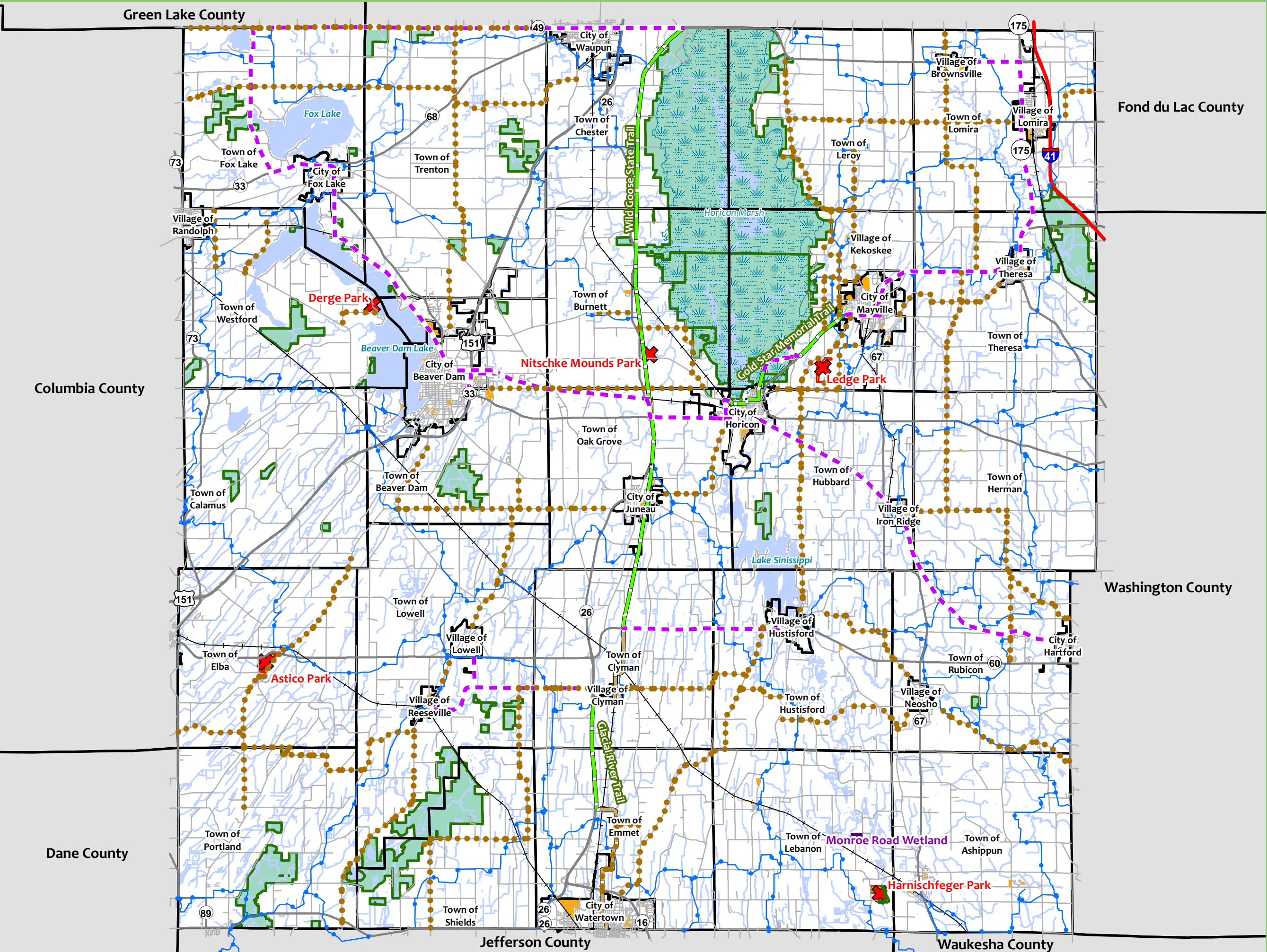
Dodge County Park, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan

Map 7: Recommended Trails

-  Existing Off-Road Bike/Pedestrian Trail
-  Existing On-Road Bike/Pedestrian Trail
-  Proposed Bike/Pedestrian Trails
-  Other Existing On-Road Bike Route
-  Existing Snow-Mobile Trails
-  Rail
-  Interstate
-  US or State Highway
-  Other Road
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  County Park
-  County Park Footprint
-  County Special Use Area
-  Municipal Parks
-  Horicon Marsh
-  Surface Water
-  State or Federal Recreation Area



Date: 9/19/2023
Sources: WI DNR, Dodge County, FEMA, USDA



Columbia County

Dane County

Jefferson County

Waukesha County

Fond du Lac County

Washington County

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CHAPTER 9: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLANNING



CHAPTER 9: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLANNING

This chapter contains detailed capital cost estimates for providing the new park and recreational facilities recommended in Chapter 7 and 8. It is intended to assist the County with the budgeting and planning for improvements over the planning period.

PROPOSED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS BUDGETING 2023-2028

The following projects and cost estimates correspond to those site-specific projects listed in Chapter 7 and 8. Each overarching project has a wide variety of variables associated with its implementation in each individual site where it is planned to be completed. To estimate budgeting for each project, it is recommended that more detailed analysis related to the individual park site be completed to determine a cost estimate for that specific project which is most accurate.

To note, the estimated cost ranges are based on project bids collected in 2022-2023 dollars. It is reasonable to expect that an inflation metric of at least 1%-2% or more be applied based on these figures and the year in which the project is being pursued. Building materials, labor, and overall construction costs have been highly variable over the past two years. As such, the inflation metric listed above could increase significantly over the planning period. Overall, these tables have been developed with the intent of providing benchmark estimated costs figures for planning purposes only.

For more specific recommendations related to individual park and trail improvement projects, see Chapter 7.

FIGURE 9.1 ESTIMATED COSTS OF KEY PROJECTS OF COMPONENTS OF PROJECTS

Key Projects and Components of Projects From Chapter 7	
Proposed Project Type/Component	Estimated Cost Range
Park Master Plan	\$10,000-\$20,000
Playground Equipment (new or replacement)	\$70,000-\$300,000
Playground Surface (replacement)	\$50,000-\$150,000 (\$5/sf EWF, \$22/sf PIP)
Open Air Shelter (new or replacement)	\$50,000-\$75,000
Paved Trail	\$25/lf (assumed 10' width)
Unpaved Trail	\$15/lf (assumed 10' width)
Boardwalk Trail (non-motorized, contractor installed)	\$200/lf (assumed 6' width)
Boardwalk Trail (non-motorized, volunteer/staff installed)	\$150/lf (assumed 6' width)
Accessible Kayak Launch/Pier	\$18,000-\$30,000
Stormwater or Environmental Restoration Plan	\$25,000-\$45,000
Paved Stage Platform	\$33/lf (assumed 14' width)
Disc Golf Course	\$5,000/hole equipment and tee box (does not include earthwork and hole clearing)
Paved Parking (replace or expand)	\$1,800/parking stall
Dog Park Fence	\$55/lf (assumed 6' tall)
Benches and Picnic Tables	\$1,200/each
Wayfinding Signage	\$800/each
Park Entry Signage	\$6,000-\$10,000/each
New Park Road (one-way)	\$200-\$400/lf (assumed 12' width) (does not include culverts)
New Park Road (two-way)	\$400-\$800/lf (assumed 20' width) (does not include culverts)
Park Road Repaving (one-way)	\$12-\$24/lf (assumed 12' width) (asphalt over existing base)
Park Road Repaving (two-way)	\$20-\$40/lf (assumed 20' width) (asphalt over existing base)
New Vault Toilet (prefab construction)	\$70,000-\$80,000

Source: Vandewalle & Associates, Dodge County, and Parkitecture + Planning, 2023

In order to develop a reasonable and obtainable future capital improvements plan, the recommendations in Chapter 7 were prioritized by County Staff, the Land Resources and Parks Committee, and the County Board based on average capital expenditure budgets over the past 5 years. Due to the unpredictability of future funding levels, the proposed

Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) does not require that every project be listed in the County Budget within the given year identified below. Instead, the CIP offers a starting point for the Land Resource and Parks Department’s budgetary request each year and is expected to be customized or changed to best fit future situations. To note, the Land Resources and Parks Department is only required to seek CIP funding for projects greater than \$50,000. All other projects below that figure can be funded using the department’s annual budget, donations, grants, or other funding mechanisms. Several of the recommendations in Chapter 7 may cost less than \$50,000 and thus are not listed below for that reason.

FIGURE 9.2 PROPOSED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Proposed Capital Improvements Plan		
Proposed Project	Proposed Implementation Year	Estimated Project Cost
Astico Park		
Restroom, Shower, and Pavilion (with mound system)	2024	\$400,000
Campsite Reconfiguration and Road Paving and Upgrades (campsite 41-53 loop)	2025	\$60,000
Road Paving and Upgrades (Shelter 1 to point)	2026	\$110,000
Redevelop/Pave East Side Parking Lot and Driveway	2026	\$55,000
Derge Park		
Road Paving and Upgrades (parking lot)	2026	\$60,000
Remove and Replace Quonset Shelter	2028	\$105,000
Harnischfeger Park		
Campsite Upgrades (electric and water)	2024	\$75,000
Vault Toilet (north parking lot)	2025	\$70,000
Pave North Parking Lot and Driveway	2027	\$50,000
River Trail and Boardwalk Expansion	2027	\$90,000
Gazebo and Storage Area	2028	\$70,000
Ledge Park		
Upper Campsite Road (rehab and paving)	2024	\$100,000
Road Paving and Upgrades (lower road)	2026	\$120,000
Nitche Mounds Park		
Boardwalk Trail (Red Wolf Trail and Pond Crossing)	2025	\$95,000
Road Paving and Upgrades (parking lot and driveway)	2029	\$50,000
New Parking Lot (near Wild Goose State Trail)	2029	\$50,000
Vault Toilet (shelter area and new parking lot)	2029	\$140,000
Wild Goose State Trail		
East Waupun/Rock River Bridge Rehab (covered bridge)	2024	\$275,000
Park Workshop and Equipment Upgrades	2025	\$102,000
Vault Toilet (STH 60 trailhead)	2025	\$70,000
Vault Toilet (STH 33/26 trailhead)	2029	\$70,000
Glacial River Trail		
None	-	-
Gold Star Memorial Trail		
Phase 2 (Horicon to the Wild Goose State Trail)	2024	\$1,250,000
Phase 3 (Wild Goose State Trail to Beaver Dam) Design and Land Acquisition	2025	\$150,000
Phase 3 (Wild Goose State Trail to Beaver Dam) Construction	2026	\$5,000,000
Phase 4 (Horicon Marsh) Design and Construction	2027	\$300,000

Source: Vandewalle & Associates and Dodge County, 2023

FISCAL OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS

The net 2022 Parks operation, development, and equipment budget was \$969,230. Of this total, \$190,000 is funded by the County's sales tax program, \$400,071 is funded by the tax levy, \$150,050 is funded by grants, \$221,430 is funded by user fee revenue, and \$7,679 is funded by donations and other miscellaneous revenues. This does not include the grant funding recently received for the Gold Star Memorial Trail Phase 2 and the Park Development Fund, which is funded by a \$5 reservation fee for camping and shelter reservation to cover credit card and banking fees. The net revenue from this source is approximately \$12,000 per year and totals approximately \$103,000 at the end of the fiscal year 2022.

As indicated in the survey, the respondents would support a minimum tax increase per year to acquire more parkland or add new park amenities. The parks continue to represent an excellent value to their taxpayers, however, obtaining necessary funds to improve the parks and add or update infrastructure through tax levy is an increasing challenge. New sources of funding for park improvements are needed as is more use of the ½% sales tax program. The parks play a major role in bringing tourism dollars to the area which helps to fuel the sales tax fund.

Funding assistance for acquiring and developing parks and recreation facilities can also be obtained through a variety of grants and programs. Additionally, many communities have good success with local fund-raising campaigns for large specific projects and local service organizations can be an excellent source of manpower and funding for smaller projects. Local business and corporate funding and support should also be encouraged.

With limited staffing resources, seeking grants for County facilities is typically limited to the higher dollar amount programs which are usually found through State and Federal sources. However, some local grant options need to be considered where the likelihood of receiving the funds is high based on the amount of time needed to develop the grant application. The public park grant programs are primarily administered by the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation administers funding for bike paths. Federal funds are typically passed to the State agencies to administer and pass on to the local governmental units.

For more details on alternative funding options and specific grant opportunities related to parks and recreation, please see the Appendix.

Friends of Dodge County Parks

The Friends of Dodge County Parks is a 501c3 non-profit organization working closely with the Dodge County Land Resources and Parks Department. The group's mission is to encourage and assist Dodge County in providing sufficient parkland and a variety of recreational and cultural facilities to meet the needs and demands of the County's residents and visitors into the future.

The Friends of Dodge County Parks, Inc. originally incorporated in 1987 as Friends of The Recreational Trail, Inc. (F.O.R.T.). The group was formed specifically to raise funds and support the development of the Wild Goose State Trail in Dodge County. The group was charged with raising 100% of the trail development costs through donations and grants. After successfully accomplishing this task, the group expanded its scope to encompass fundraising and support for all the Dodge County Parks. The name was officially changed to the Friends of Dodge County Parks, Inc. in 2001.

The group was instrumental in raising funds and support for the acquisition of Harnischfeger Park in 2004 and more recently with the Gold Star Memorial Trail project. They have raised over \$500,000 in donations for the trail and continue their commitment to assist in the completion of the trail. Also, federal and state grants are likely to be received when there is a partnership with a non-profit organization.

The most visible aspect of the Friends group is in fundraising to provide a source of funds to the County to supplement public funds for park projects. The primary sources of funds for the group come from the annual Fall Fest event at Harnischfeger Park, as well as memberships and general donations. The group has strong connections with the business community throughout Dodge County and has been very successful in encouraging and receiving their donations for the Dodge County Parks. The Friends group 2022-year end fund balance was \$103,747. These funds are designated for various Parks and projects.

In an effort to provide a means of perpetual park funding, a permanent Endowment Fund was created in 2010. Eventually the fund will provide a substantial annual income to the Friends group for future Dodge County parks and recreation needs. The 2022-year end account balance was \$35,738. Annually, up to 5% is available to be withdrawn for needed expenses or project funding.

CHAPTER 10: IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN



CHAPTER 10: IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

In striving to achieve the vision and goals of this Parks, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan, specific follow-up actions will be required. This final chapter is intended to provide a roadmap for these implementation actions by identifying priority programs and actions. This Chapter, in combination with Chapter 7, 8 and 9, should be utilized to help guide project implementation by Dodge County over the next 5 years.

PLAN UPDATES

The Plan was prepared in accordance with guidelines that will make it certifiable by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR) and will qualify the County for matching grant funds through the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) and State of Wisconsin Stewardship Funds. In order to remain eligible, the Plan must be updated every five years to ensure that it reflects the current needs of the community and retains its WisDNR certification. Based on this deadline, Dodge County will update this Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan in 2028 (i.e. five years after 2023), at the latest. The County should continue to monitor any changes to state or federal regulations related to grant eligibility over the next five years.

ACTION PLAN MATRIX

Figure 10.1 provides a detailed list and timeline of the major actions that the County intends to complete in implementing this Plan. Often, such actions will require substantial cooperation with other County Departments, state and local governments, non-profits and volunteer groups, and local organizations and entities throughout the region. The list of recommendations is divided into four different categories—based on different implementation tools or Plan elements. This list is not exhaustive. It includes the recommendations that are likely to be actions taken over the next five years. The County may choose to pursue additional actions or prioritize other actions as conditions change.

The table has three different columns of information, described as follows:

- **Action Item:** The first column lists the actual steps, strategies, and actions recommended to implement key aspects of the Plan.
- **Potential Partners:** The second column lists additional other groups who would be a great partner in the pursuit of accomplishing the Action Item. While County staff will play a role in all of these Action Items, if there are no other groups listed, it is assumed that County staff will be leading the effort.
- **Implementation Timeframe:** The third column is the suggested timeframe for the completion of each recommendation. It reflects the priority attached to the recommendation. Each timeframe is defined as follows:
 - **In Progress** means that the Action Item has already started to be addressed at some point and it is still a priority moving forward. These Action Items should be continuously reevaluated to make sure that progress is being made.
 - **Short** means that the Action Item should be pursued over the next 1-2 years, following the adoption date of this Plan.
 - **Medium** means that the Action Item should be pursued over the next 3-5 years, following the adoption date of this Plan.
 - **Long** means that the Action Item should be pursued over the next 10 years, following the adoption date of this Plan.

There are a number of potential funding sources available to help finance implementation, including state and federal grant programs. These funding sources are included in the Appendix. It should be noted that funds from many of these grant programs are subject to change due to fluctuations in federal, state, and local budgets.

Figure 10.1 Action Plan Matrix

Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeframe
Work with the state and federal government on any future plans for parks, recreation, and bicycle and pedestrian planning in and around the County.	WisDNR, WisDOT, U.S. Department of the Interior	Ongoing
Support future updates to local municipal park plans or Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans.	Local Municipalities	Ongoing
Support local School Districts on any future updates to Safe Routes to School Plans.	School Districts	Ongoing
Continue to coordinate and collaborate with local snowmobile groups on the maintenance, improvement, and expansion of snowmobile trails in Dodge County.	Local Snowmobile Groups	Ongoing
Utilize the County Capital Improvements Plan to implement the recommended improvements to each existing facility as detailed in Chapter 7, 8, and 9.	Land Resources and Parks Committee and County Board	Ongoing
Annually review this plan at a Land Resources and Parks Committee meeting to track progress and set priorities for the upcoming year.	Land Resources and Parks Committee	Ongoing
Maintain and update the County’s park and trail maps on the website.	County Staff	Ongoing
Evaluate any new parkland acquisition using the evaluation matrix in Chapter 7.	Land Resources and Parks Committee	Ongoing
Actively pursue grant opportunities as they arise that align with the recommendations of this Plan.	County Staff	Ongoing
Continue to expand and improve existing camp sites in all parks to address the demand.	County Staff	Ongoing
Expand winter recreational opportunities throughout Dodge County, in particular non-motorized winter trails in existing parks.	County Staff	Ongoing
Continue to track park visitors and conduct annual camp site surveys.	County Staff	Ongoing
Work with local UTV groups on ways to increase UTV recreational opportunities in Dodge County parks.	Local UTV Groups	Short
Establish a policy for utilization of the Park Development Fund to best support long-term fiscal sustainability of the parks system.	Land Resources and Parks Committee, County Board	Short
Complete a community branding process for parks, trails, and recreation in Dodge County to establish a cohesive message, graphics, and advertisement strategy.	Land Resources and Parks Committee, County Board, Local Municipalities, and Other Local Groups	Short
Complete a full update of the Dodge County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.	Local Municipalities, WisDNR	Short
Establish new access points along the Beaver Dam River, Crawfish River, and Rock River through property acquisition or during development of these areas. Work with other entities to improve water trails and distribute information about recreational opportunities along each.	County Parks “Friends” Groups, Local Municipalities, WisDNR	Short
Establish new educational opportunities that encourage field trips or curriculum use by local schools and their students in Dodge County parks.	School Districts	Short
Establish a student-based project program for the development of new public art, signage, and other small-scale park and trail improvement projects.	School Districts	Short

Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeframe
Create a new Dodge County Parks app that includes an interactive online map of all parks, trails, and destinations across Dodge County.	Local Municipalities, Tourism Groups, and Public Health Groups	Short
Establish a Parks Facebook and Instagram page to improve marketing, public awareness, and showcase amenities, events, and services.	County Staff	Short
Complete Phase 2 of the Gold Star Memorial Trail extension.	County Parks “Friends” Groups, and WisDNR	Short
Assist the Pelican Path volunteer group in their process to design and build the Pelican Path bike trail from Hustisford to the Wild Goose State Trail.	County Parks “Friends” Groups, WisDOT, WisDNR, Other Local Groups	Short
Establish additional park-specific Friends Groups or advisory committees in those parks currently without one.	County Parks “Friends” Groups, and Other Local Groups	Short
Develop relationships with visitor and tourism bureaus both inside and outside of Dodge County in order to create links between their websites and the Dodge County website and social media channels.	Economic Development/Tourism Agencies and Local Municipalities	Short
Increase the number of maintenance staff through the addition of a seasonal/part-time, intern, or full-time employees consistent with increased facility development.	County Board	Short
Increase and improve wayfinding signage on roads leading to and within the parks and multi-use trails. Work with American Trails to leverage opportunities for trail assessments and signage upgrades donated by private business sponsorships. See Chapter 7 and 8 for details.	Local Municipalities	Short
Develop volunteer handbooks and provide these handbooks to applicable groups and volunteers.	County Staff	Short
Engage local recreation-oriented groups, clubs, and businesses to start utilizing Dodge County parks and multi-use trails for festivals, events, and gatherings to improve awareness and utilization of the park system. Example: yoga classes, group hikes, trail races, live music, dog walks, kayaking class, equestrian group rides, etc.	County Parks “Friends” Groups, and Other Local Groups	Short
Develop a policy for the integration of sustainability, energy efficiency, and conservation best practices into any future park improvement.	County Parks “Friends” Groups	Short
Work with local municipalities to increase data collection, reporting, and summarizing to build into Dodge County’s data collection of park visitors.	Local Municipalities	Short
Develop and maintain a park and trail user-group database. Utilize the database to provide news, updates, events, and other news directly to interested parties. Provide an opportunity to sign-up directly on the website and through social media.	County Staff	Short
Develop a Park Master Plan for Nitschke Mounds Park to proactively plan for the future of the park and its important historical and cultural preserve areas.	Land Resources and Parks Committee, Ho-Chunk Nation, UW-Milwaukee, WHS, County Parks “Friends” Groups	Short

Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeframe
Explore opportunities for local business sponsorships to fund park improvements.	Local Organizations and Employers	Short
Establish a tree memorial donation program where residents can donate money to assist in growing and planting trees in each park.	Local Organizations and Employers	Short
Establish an off-leash dog facility in Dodge County.	Land Resources and Parks Committee	Medium
Explore the use of an internship to expand opportunities in scheduling, organizing, and running new events within the parks.	County Parks "Friends" Groups	Medium
Pursue becoming a gold tier designation Wisconsin Healthy Community. See the Appendix for more information.	Local Public Health Groups	Medium
Establish a Dodge County Parks and Recreation Planning Committee made up of representatives from governments throughout Dodge County and WisDNR to plan, coordinate, and improve intergovernmental communication and connectivity of the region's parks and multi-use trails.	County Staff, Local Municipalities, WisDNR	Medium
Develop a Playground Management Plan and ADA Assessment and Improvement Plan to monitor infrastructure and plan for maintenance and upgrades needed.	County Staff	Medium
Establish partnerships between nearby universities to provide a cost-effective method of conducting additional studies, research, and park planning.	UW-Oshkosh, UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, MPTC	Medium
Partner with local employers to connect people looking to volunteer with opportunities to assist in the maintenance of County parks and donation support in future park improvements.	Local Organizations and Employers	Medium
Update this plan prior to the end of 2028.	Land Resources and Parks Committee and County Board	Medium
Complete Phase 3 of the Gold Star Memorial Trail.	County Parks "Friends" Groups and WisDNR	Medium
Complete Phase 5 of the Gold Star Memorial Trail.	County Parks "Friends" Groups and WisDNR	Medium
When available, pursue land purchases for the expansion of existing parks per the recommendations in Chapter 7.	Land Resources and Parks Committee and County Board	Long
Update all existing Park Master Plans overtime.	Land Resources and Parks Committee and County Board	Long