



Wauwatosa, WI

Board of Parks and Forestry

Commissioners

Meeting Agenda

7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Tuesday, November 18, 2025

8:00 AM

Committee Room #1

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of 9/16/25 & 10/24/25 Meeting Minutes [25-2175](#)

MONTHLY REPORTS AND PARK UPDATES

This section includes monthly reports and updates on user groups, policies, and projects.

1. Monthly Report Oct 2025 [25-2176](#)
2. Update from Senior Center [25-2203](#)

NEW BUSINESS

1. Approval of Parks and Open Space Plan 2025-2030 [25-2188](#)
2. Discussion Regarding Future of Softball Diamond Area [25-2198](#)
3. Discussion Regarding Heat Haven Contract [25-2205](#)
4. Pickleball Signage Recommendation [25-2206](#)
5. Discussion Regarding Changing Meeting Start Time [25-2200](#)

ADJOURNMENT

NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

Persons with a disability who need assistance to participate in this meeting should call the Department of Public Works office at (414) 471-8422 or send an email to tparks@wauwatosa.net, with as much advance notice as possible.



Wauwatosa, WI

7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Staff Report

File #: 25-2175

Agenda Date: 11/18/2025

Agenda #: 1.

Approval of 9/16/25 & 10/24/25 Meeting Minutes



Wauwatosa, WI

Board of Parks and Forestry

Commissioners

Meeting Minutes

7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Tuesday, September 16, 2025

8:00 AM

Committee Room #1

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 8:02 AM

ROLL CALL

Present 5 Commissioner, Chair Tom Ertel
 Commissioner Kiara Caldwell
 Commissioner Steven Mares
 Commissioner Jurian Misawa Yee
 Commissioner Allysha Willman

Absent 3 Commissioner Steve Berg
 Commissioner Juan Farmer
 Alderperson Liaison Robin Brannin

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of May 20 2025 Meeting Minutes

[25-1541](#)

Attachments: [Minutes 5-20-25.pdf](#)

RESULT: APPROVED

MOVER: Allysha Willman

SECONDER: Jurian Misawa Yee

Aye: 5 Ertel, Caldwell, Mares, Misawa Yee, and Willman

Absent: 2 Berg, Farmer, and Brannin

MONTHLY REPORTS AND PARK UPDATES

This section includes monthly reports and updates on user groups, policies, and projects.

1. Monthly Report August 2025

[25-1542](#)

The Parks and Forestry Superintendent presented the Monthly Report to the Board.

RESULT: INFORMATIONAL ONLY

2. Update on Veterans Memorial after flood

[25-1524](#)

City staff answered the boards general questions about this subject, no action taken.

RESULT: INFORMATIONAL ONLY

3. Update on Stadium after flood [25-1525](#)

City staff answered the boards general questions about this subject, no action taken.

RESULT: INFORMATIONAL ONLY

4. Update on softball diamond after flood [25-1527](#)

City staff answered the boards general questions about this subject, no action taken.

RESULT: INFORMATIONAL ONLY

5. Update on the Park and Open Space Plan [25-1532](#)

City staff answered the boards general questions about this subject, no action taken.

RESULT: INFORMATIONAL ONLY

NEW BUSINESS

1. Construction of Restroom Building at Hart Park [25-1533](#)

Attachments: [Hart Park Comfort Station Materials Board \(2\)](#)
[Hart Park Comfort Station Materials Board](#)
[Hart Park Comfort Station V2-Plan](#)

The Parks and Forestry Superintendent presented his memo to the board and fielded their questions.

RESULT: INFORMATIONAL ONLY

2. Discussion with board about signage for added revenue [25-1523](#)

City staff answered the boards general questions about this subject, no action taken.

RESULT: INFORMATIONAL ONLY

3. Five year plan for repairs to parks [25-1528](#)

The Parks and Forestry Superintendent and the Public Works Director familiarized the board on how to access the Capital Improvements Program and fielded their questions.

RESULT: INFORMATIONAL ONLY

4. Review of article in *Hospitality* about Firefly Grove Park [25-1531](#)

Comm. Thomas Ertel presented the content of the magazine article to the board.

RESULT: INFORMATIONAL ONLY

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 AM.

NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

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Wauwatosa, WI

Board of Parks and Forestry

Commissioners

Meeting Minutes

7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Friday, October 24, 2025

12:00 PM

Zoom Only:
<https://servetosa.zoom.us/j/89630023532>,
Meeting ID: 896 3002 3532

Special Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 12:06 PM

ROLL CALL

Absent 4 Commissioner Juan Farmer
Commissioner Steven Mares
Commissioner Jurian Misawa Yee
Aldersperson Liaison Robin Brannin

Remote 4 Commissioner, Chair Tom Ertel
Commissioner Steve Berg
Commissioner Kiara Caldwell
Commissioner Allysha Willman

NEW BUSINESS

1. Approval of a Usage Agreement for the operation of Heat Haven Sauna Park at Hart Park

[25-1881](#)

Attachments: [Heat Haven Sauna Park - Hart Park Proposal](#)

Staff answered the boards questions regarding the Heat Haven Sauna Park.

RESULT: APPROVED

MOVER: Kiara Caldwell

SECONDER: Allysha Willman

Aye: 4 Ertel, Berg, Caldwell, and Willman

Absent: 3 Farmer, Mares, Misawa Yee, and Brannin

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:32 PM

NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

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Wauwatosa, WI

7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Staff Report

File #: 25-2176

Agenda Date: 11/18/2025

Agenda #: 1.

Monthly Report Oct 2025

Submitted by:

Justin Ramsey

Department:

Parks and Forestry

Monthly Activities
October 2025

Forestry

	YTD 25	YTD 24	End of Year 24
Tree Removals	499	358	377
Stump Removals	455	353	353
Maintenance Requests	735	1601	1657
Sectional Pruning	1650	1208	1479
Training Pruning	1,207	1721	2335
Planting	337	475	475

Other Activities:

Parks

	YTD 25	YTD 24	End of Year 24
Muellner Building			
No. of rentals	35	36	45
Revenue	\$ 8,701.82	\$ 6,240.00	\$ 6,240.00

	YTD 25	YTD 24	End of Year 24
Stadium			
No. of rentals	313	707	732
Revenue	\$ 46,851.04	\$ 165,223.95	\$ 172,683.95

Budgeted stadium revenue 2025	\$ 72,000.00
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Other Activities:



Wauwatosa, WI

7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Staff Report

File #: 25-2203

Agenda Date: 11/18/2025

Agenda #: 2.

Update from Senior Center

Submitted by:

Kosta Zervas

Update on the senior centers and discussion about the coexistence of the senior centers and the curling club.



Wauwatosa, WI

7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Staff Report

File #: 25-2188

Agenda Date: 11/18/2025

Agenda #: 1.

Approval of Parks and Open Space Plan 2025-2030

Submitted by:

Sarah Grimalkin

Department:

Public Works

The Park and Open Space Plan (POSP) is a supplemental document to the Active Tosa Plan and provided opportunities for Wauwatosa Parks staff to gather feedback from partners, park users, the public, and other stakeholders. Acting as a common vision for park, recreation, and resource-protection initiatives, the POSP will help to guide park development, in alignment with the community's needs, for the next 5 to 10 years.

With this Plan, Wauwatosa is well positioned to continue pursuing our park's values: enhancing our beloved park system, addressing changing recreational needs, and continuing to build a healthier, a more connected, and a more resilient community. Accordingly, staff recommend approval of the Park and Open Space Plan 2025-2030.



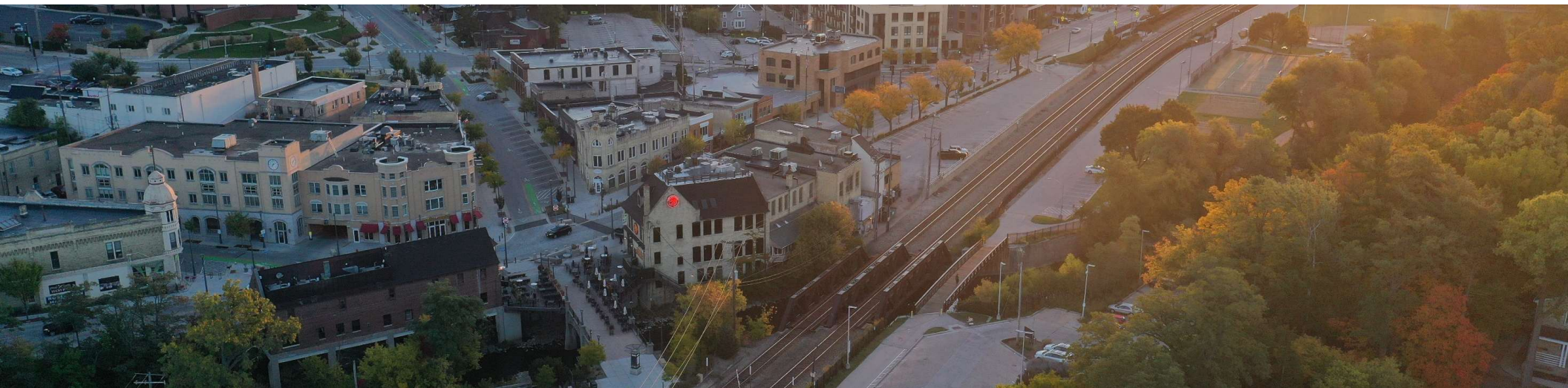
Park and Open Space Plan

2025-2030

Alex Krutsch – Parks and Forestry Superintendent
Sarah Grimalkin – Parks and Landscape Manager



PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN | What is it?



A common vision for park, recreation, and resource-protection initiatives

The Park and Open Space Plan (POSP) is a supplemental document to the Active Tosa Plan and provides opportunities for Wauwatosa Parks staff to gather feedback from partners, park users, the public, and other stakeholders. The POSP will help guide park development, in alignment with the community's needs, for the next 5 to 10 years. It must be updated every 5 years to maintain DNR Stewardship grant eligibility.

PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN | Elements of the Planning Process



Inventory/Analysis of Existing Lands & Facilities



Public Feedback

Pop-up Events
Open Houses
Public Survey/Fund It Tool
Stakeholder Meetings



Active Tosa Plan

Recommendations
Goals



Recreation Needs Analysis

Current demand
Upcoming trends



Recreation Trends

Passive vs. Active
Changing popularity
Local, state, national



Park Use Metrics

Demographic trends
Current patrons- who, when, how many, how often?



Acquisition Needs Analysis

Does existing parkland sufficiently and equitably serve all our residents?



State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

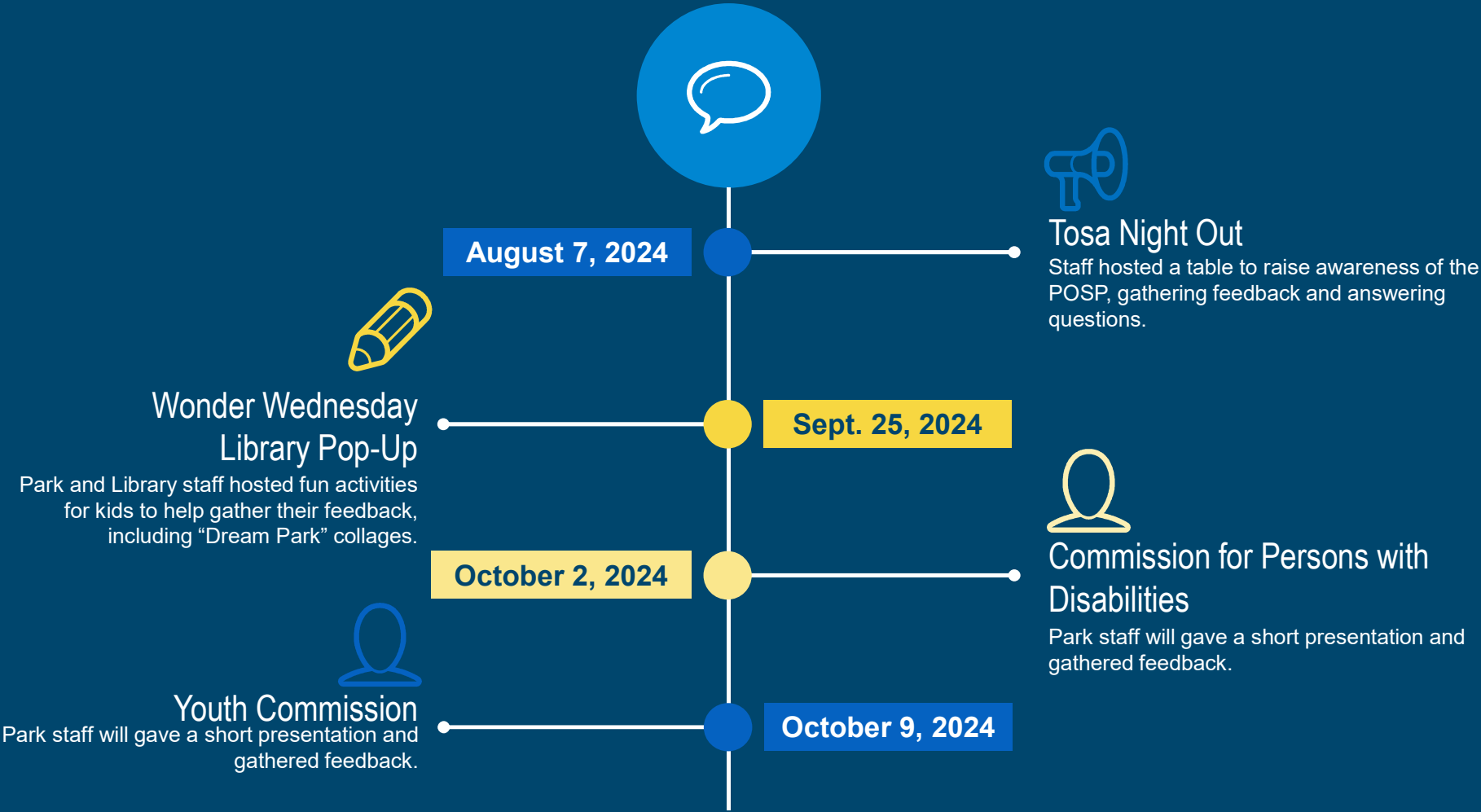


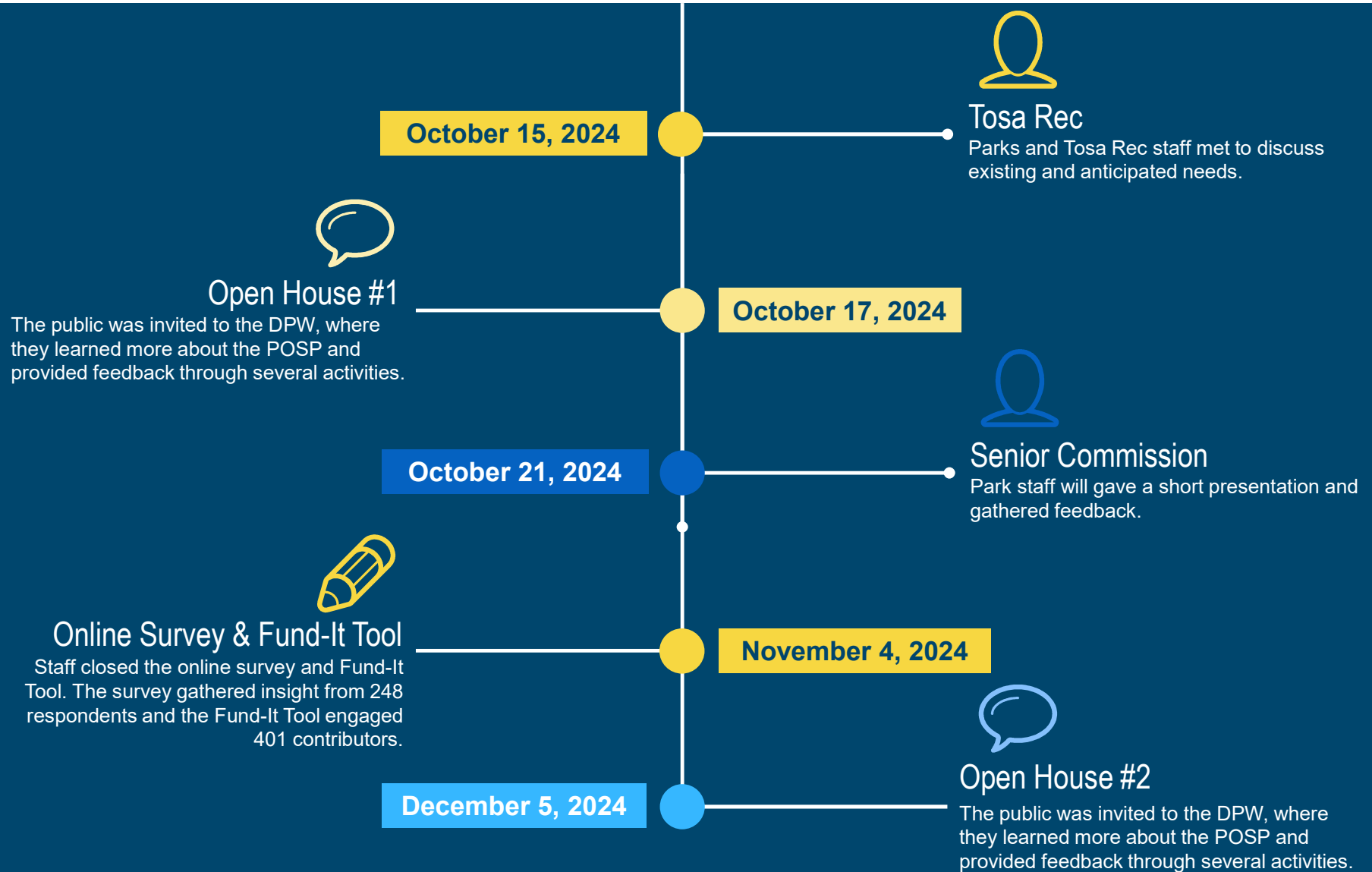
Staff Recommendations

PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN | Planning Timeline



PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN | Public Outreach Schedule





PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN | Key Survey Results

Survey

Why do people visit our parks?

Physical Activity* – 41.6%
Connecting with Nature – 23.1%
Spending time with Family and Friends - 23.1%

*Walking/Hiking/Running – 97.4%

Which activities have too few facilities?

River-based Activities – 60.5%
Winter Sports – 55.2%
Gardening/Ecological Restoration – 53.5%

How do people access our parks?

Visit Weekly or Daily – 69.7%
Walk to their Closest Park - 51.5%
Feel Parks are Very or Extremely Accessible – 66%

Who is being served our parks?

Parks were rated as meeting the needs of children (5-12) and adults (19-64).
Respondents indicated services for adolescents (13-18) and seniors (65+) could be improved.

Fund-It Tool

Top Priorities for Funding:

Walking & Biking Opportunities – 17%
Community Gathering Spaces – 17%
Nature Appreciation – 17%

Moderate Funding Interest:

Water Recreation – 12%
Court-based Sports – 9%
Children’s Play Opportunities – 7%
Public Art – 6%
Physical Fitness – 6%

Low-Priority Investments:

Open/Unprogrammed Green Spaces – 6%
Stadium Field Sports- 3%



Plan Implementation

Moving forward, the insights gained from the POSP will help inform future planning processes, capital funding requests, and project timelines.

Examples: Pursuing additional winter recreation opportunities (Heat Haven Sauna partnership), community gathering spaces (patio addition as part of Pocket Park redesign), community events/programming (partnership with Pour, Inc.)

2025 - 2030

CITY OF WAUWATOSA

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PLAN



AYRES

10/9/2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025–2030 Parks and Open Space Plan (POSP) for the City of Wauwatosa serves as a guiding document to assess current conditions, address evolving recreational needs, and strategically position the city for future growth. It emphasizes the critical role of parks in promoting public health, environmental stewardship, and community cohesion, aligning with funding criteria from agencies such as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP.) Developed through extensive community engagement, industry standards, and local data analysis, this plan is tailored to Wauwatosa’s unique needs and priorities. This plan

builds on and is an extension of the Active Tosa plan.

Wauwatosa has approximately 90 acres of parks, but the overall park system, including several parks owned and managed by Milwaukee County, is over 1,100 acres, and includes 756 miles of trails, serving nearly 48,000 residents. In addition to serving Wauwatosa’s residents, the park system plays a key role in promoting a positive image of the city. The parks enhance the quality of life of those who choose to make Wauwatosa their home, while also serving as a resource for people who work in and visit the city. This plan builds on the city’s commitment to maintaining and enhancing a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient parks network by guiding strategic improvements over and beyond the next five years.

To achieve this vision, the plan outlines six core goals:

- Protect and enhance existing parks and open spaces;
- Promote environmental sustainability;
- Support health and wellness through active living;
- Foster inclusivity and accessibility;
- Celebrate community identity; and
- Secure funding and partnerships for growth and maintenance.



Hartung Park

An extensive community engagement process—including public surveys, stakeholder meetings, youth input, and creative activities—ensured that diverse voices shaped the plan. Top community priorities included walking and biking infrastructure, nature access, gathering spaces, and winter recreation. Input from youth, seniors, and commissions further emphasized the need for intergenerational activities, equitable access, improved trail safety, and enhanced social and wellness opportunities.

The POSP also introduces a refined park classification system, tailored to Wauwatosa's local context. This framework supports the development of diverse park types—from pocket parks and natural areas to community hubs and waterfronts—ensuring a balanced and connected system citywide.

With this plan, Wauwatosa is well-positioned to enhance its beloved park system, address changing recreational needs, and continue building a healthier, more connected, and more resilient community.

As Wauwatosa continues to evolve, this plan provides a strategic roadmap to meet current needs while anticipating the future. Though the city faces challenges such as limited land availability, staffing capacity, and funding constraints, it also holds significant opportunities through creative placemaking, public-private partnerships, and a strong foundation of community support.

The plan calls for targeted investments in inclusive design, environmental resilience, and neighborhood-based amenities that reflect the values of today and the vision for tomorrow. By prioritizing access, equity, and sustainability, and aligning with state goals and national recreation data, Wauwatosa is positioned to lead by example.

With clear goals, community-driven strategies, and a commitment to continuous improvement, the 2025–2030 POSP will serve as a catalyst for a thriving, welcoming, and connected park system—one that enhances the daily lives of residents and ensures all community members have access to high-quality, inclusive, and resilient public spaces.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction and Statement of Need



Introduction

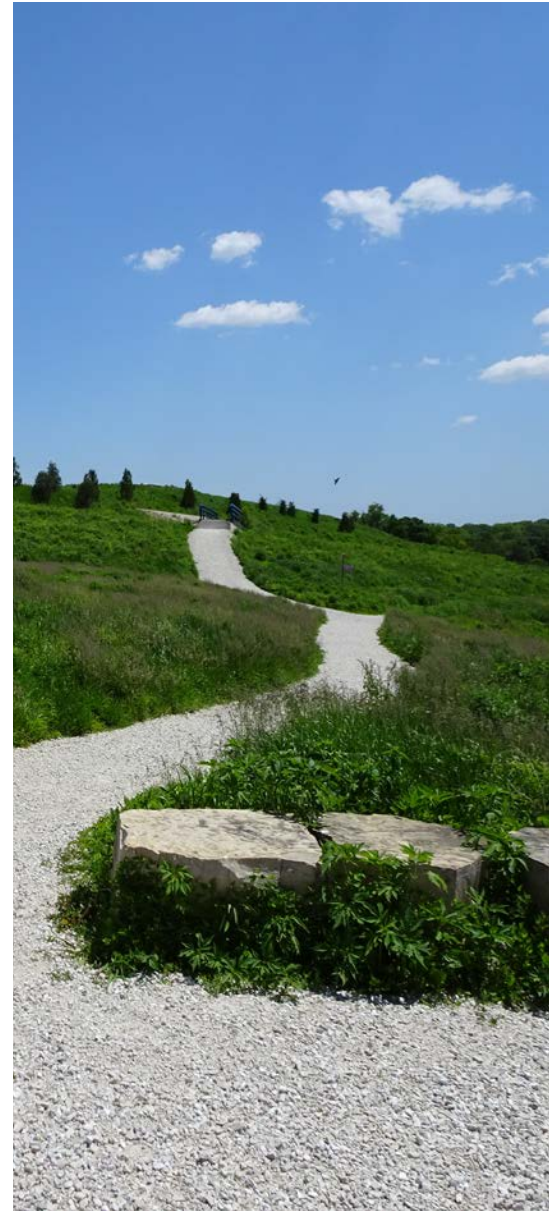
The City of Wauwatosa developed the 2025-2030 Parks and Open Space Plan (POSP) to assess current and future park system needs and to highlight the value these public spaces bring to the community. This initiative supports ongoing efforts to elevate Wauwatosa's recreational spaces while aligning with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) funding requirements.

This POSP will guide the City of Wauwatosa in developing and maintaining public parks and open spaces that are sustainable, resilient, welcoming, visible, and inclusive by providing exceptional facilities while protecting natural resources. This plan spans over the next five years, with some goals stretching to ten years. It also serves as a tool to aid participation in grant programs through the DNR and other agencies.

Statement of Need

This project aims to develop a Park and Open Space Plan for the City of Wauwatosa; assessing the vitality and needs of the City's current system and providing direction for maintenance, growth, and programming for the next five to ten years.

As a working tool, the plan will provide officials with a clear understanding of existing parkland inventory and future recreational facilities and open space needs. It also creates an orderly and prioritized strategy for making incremental improvements, as well as qualifying the City to request DNR and other public funding to implement proposed park improvements.



Hartung Park

National Standards and Best Practices

Parks are gateways to healthy, prosperous, and connected communities. Parks also play a vital role in fostering connected and thriving communities. A key national leader in the parks and recreation field is the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), which provides data, standards, and best practices to guide communities towards developing high-quality park systems. This document references NRPA resources as a baseline for national parks and recreation standards.

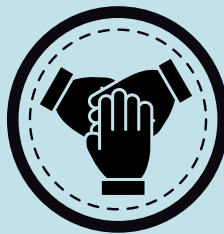
NRPA names “Three Pillars” by which a healthy park system can benefit a community:

The City of Wauwatosa's Parks and Recreation Department strives to promote a healthy, inclusive, and vibrant community by protecting parks and open spaces.



Health and Well-Being

Advancing community health and well-being through parks and recreation. Parks are essential in combating important health issues such as nutrition, hunger, loneliness, obesity, and physical inactivity.



Equity

Providing equal access to a healthy park system throughout the community is central to equity. Universal access to public parks and recreation should be considered a right, not a privilege.

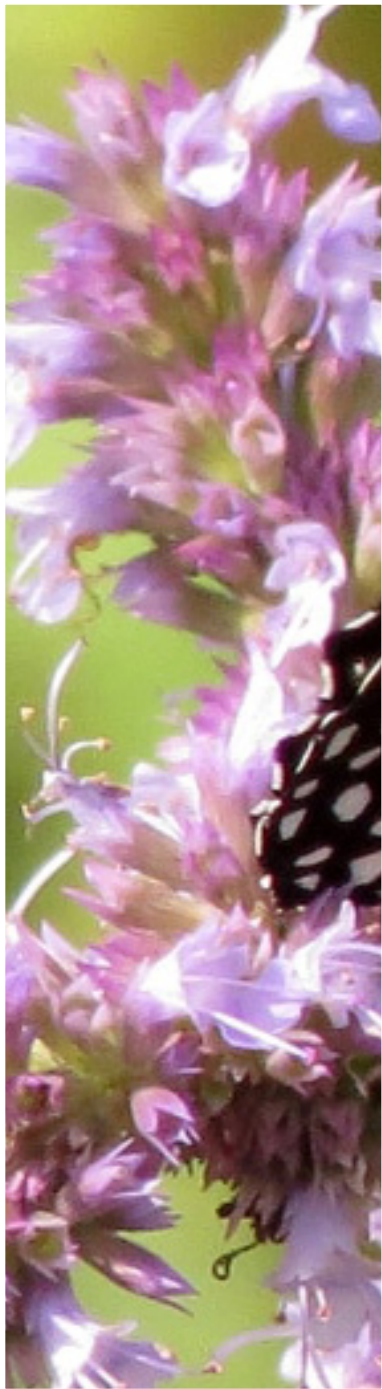


Environmental Resilience

Creating a nation of resilient and climate-ready communities through parks and recreation.

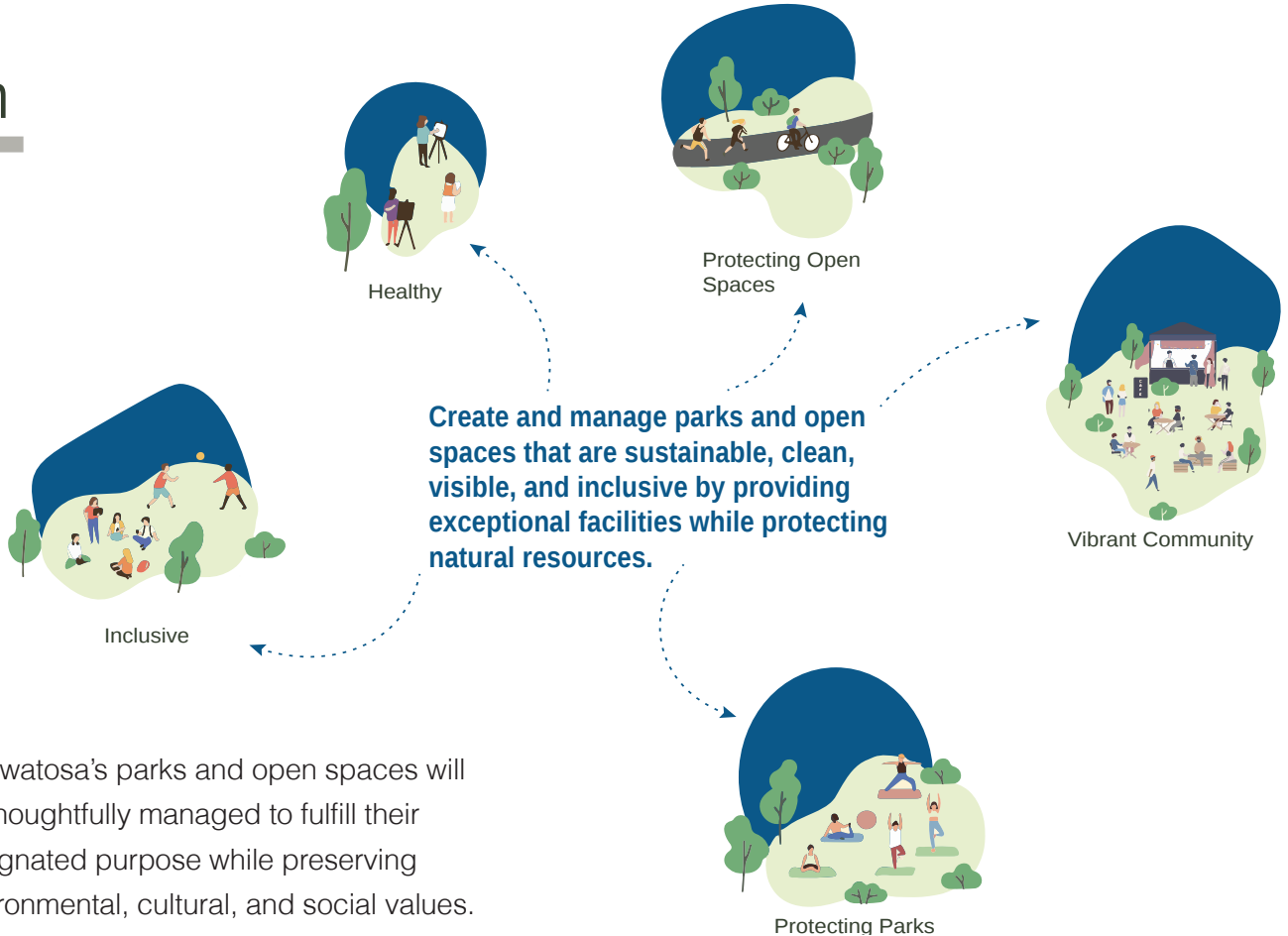
Chapter 2:

Vision, Goals and Objectives



The following section identifies the goals and objectives of Wauwatosa's parks and open spaces, which were identified through precedents, community input, and best practices. These goals are intended to guide the future development or expansion of parks and recreational facilities in Wauwatosa while preserving and promoting environmental, cultural, and social values.

Vision



1 Wauwatosa's parks and open spaces will be thoughtfully managed to fulfill their designated purpose while preserving environmental, cultural, and social values.

2 Through inclusive strategies, best practices, and proactive responses to climate change and evolving recreation needs, these spaces will remain welcoming and accessible to all.

3 Management decisions will be informed by science, risk assessments, and community input, utilizing adaptive approaches to ensure long-term sustainability.

4 Conservation efforts will safeguard ecological and cultural integrity, while strong partnerships will enhance stewardship and public engagement.

5 All decisions will be transparent, evidence-based, and guided by structured processes, ensuring Wauwatosa's parks remain a reflection of the community they serve, for current and future generations.

Goals and Objectives

GOAL NO.1 *Protect and Enhance Parks and Open Spaces*

Objectives:

- Uphold, maintain, and improve parks and their infrastructure while prioritizing the benefits to our local community.
- Implement designs and practices that emphasize long-term resilience, sustainability, and accessibility.
- Seek opportunities for expansion and connectivity between parks, green spaces, and surrounding neighborhoods to create a cohesive and accessible park system.

GOAL NO.2 *Promote Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship*

Objectives:

- Incorporate environmentally sustainable park planning, design, and maintenance practices to reduce ecological impact.
- Foster eco-stewardship initiatives, including restoration, conservation, and clean-up programs.
- Integrate native landscaping, stormwater management, and energy-efficient systems into park spaces where feasible

GOAL NO.3 *Promote Health and Wellness*

Objectives:

- Create spaces that encourage active and healthy lifestyles through walking paths, bike-friendly routes, and other recreational facilities.
- Ensure parks are safe, inclusive, and family-friendly environments that promote physical and mental well-being.
- Champion parks and open spaces as places for all community members to socialize, exercise, and play.

GOAL NO.4 *Foster Inclusivity and Accessibility*

Objectives:

- Strive to ensure parks meet universal accessibility standards and provide amenities for diverse populations, including individuals with disabilities.
- Incorporate features and programming that support equitable access to recreational opportunities.
- Conscientiously and proactively seek input from the community and apply the findings to ensure equitable access to amenities that the community desires, as a whole.

GOAL NO. 5 *Celebrate Community Identity and Connection*

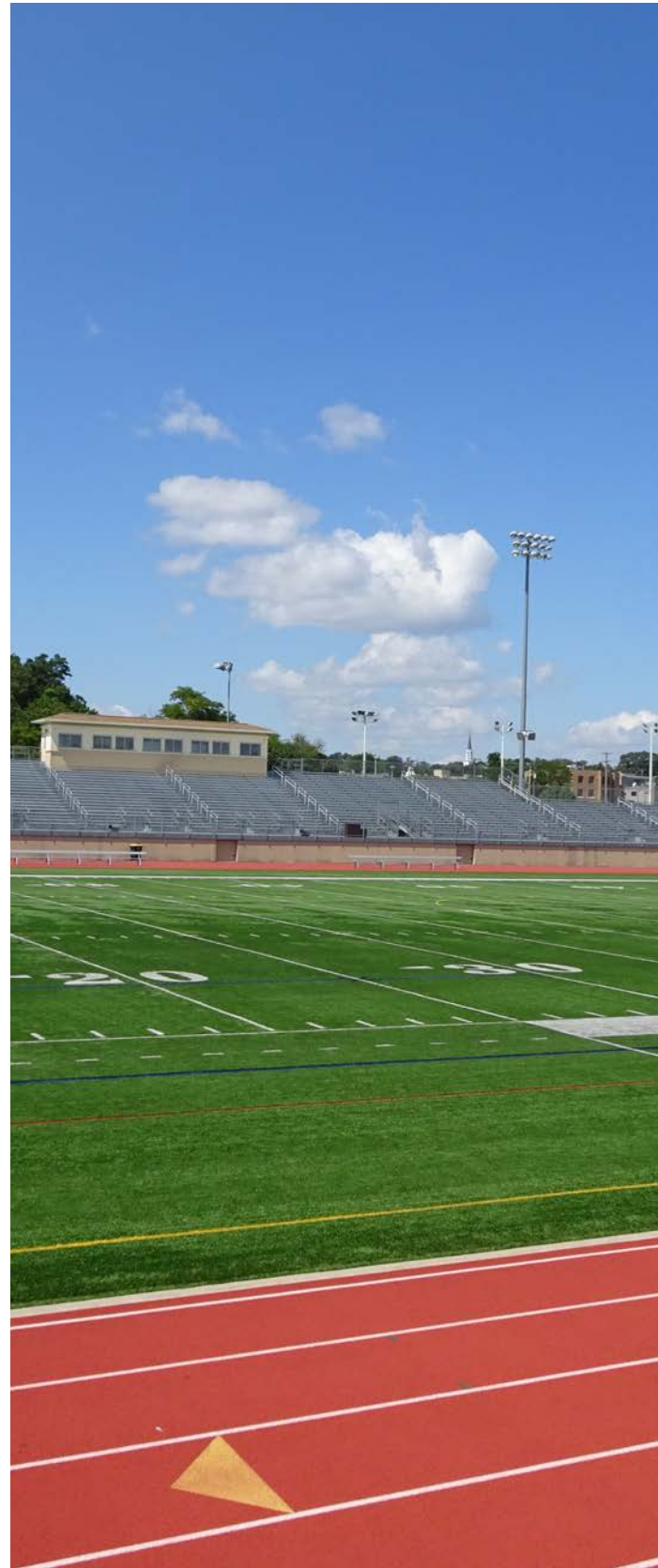
Objectives:

- Enhance a sense of place by reflecting Wauwatosa's unique culture, history, and identity through the intentional design of parks and open spaces
- Enrich, expand, and create spaces which offer shared experiences and foster opportunities for socialization, collaboration, and engagement in public spaces.

GOAL NO. 6 *Secure Resources for Future Growth and Maintenance*

Objectives:

- Broaden partnerships with Milwaukee County, regional stakeholders, and community organizations to leverage funding opportunities and volunteer workforces.
- Develop long-term plans that ensure fiscal responsibility and sustainable growth of park resources.
- Position the city for eligibility in grant programs through forward-thinking and strategic planning.



Hart Park Stadium

Chapter 3:

Park Classification



Classification Analysis

The demand for parks and recreation facilities in any community depends on the needs and preferences of residents. By identifying these priorities, Wauwatosa can strategically plan for investments in new parkland and facilities, while maintaining and improving the existing level of service.

Historically, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provided classification guidelines. However, the organization no longer promotes a single classification model due to the unique nature of individual cities. The Wisconsin DNR Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) Guidance document also references these older standards. Because the NRPA no longer endorses a single classification model, Wauwatosa developed the following unique system, partially based on these previous guidelines, to better address current local conditions.



Parkland Classification

A parkland classification system helps determine whether the existing park network meets the diverse needs of residents. However, total acreage alone does not guarantee that all recreational demands are fulfilled. Some communities meet acreage “standards” with a single large park but fail to offer the variety of experiences residents seek.

To ensure inclusivity, different types of parks should be provided for various uses, service areas, and age groups. The information below outlines how each classification fits into Wauwatosa’s Park system, clarifying intended use, service radius, and ideal size. By offering multiple types of parks, Wauwatosa can better meet the recreational needs of all community members.

1. Mini-Park / Pocket Park
2. Neighborhood Park
3. Community Park
4. Special-Use Park / Facility
5. Conservancy / Greenways / Natural Resource Areas
6. Waterfront Corridors

Mini-Park / Pocket Park

The smallest type of park, typically under one acre in size, primarily serves residents within a quarter-mile walking distance. These parks may include playground equipment, which is often geared toward preschool-aged children (2–5 years old). Commonly located in high-density neighborhoods or areas with limited private yards, they usually provide seating, landscaping, and other basic amenities, effectively functioning as a “backyard” for nearby residents.

- **Size:** Usually under 1 acre, often less than 0.5 acre.
- **Service Area:** A few blocks; roughly 1/4-mile radius (5–10-minute walk).
- **Primary Use:** Small children, quick play, seating areas for neighbors.
- **Characteristics:** Playground equipment, benches, shade trees. It is in high-density areas or places where yard space is limited.

Neighborhood Park

Typically encompassing 5–10 acres (though sizes can vary), a neighborhood park serves residents within approximately a half-mile radius. Common amenities include playgrounds, open lawns, walking paths, benches, and picnic spots. These parks are intended to be safely accessible on foot or by bike, away from major roads, and can be designed to meet the specific recreational needs of local families and children (often ages 6–11).

- **Size:** Typically, 5–10 acres (but can vary from 2 acres to 15, depending on urban context).
- **Service Area:** Approximately 1/2-mile radius (10–15-minute walk).
- **Primary Use:** Serves all ages in the immediate neighborhood.
- **Characteristics:** Playground, open lawn, paths, picnic tables, possibly half-courts, small shelters, etc. Walkable in residential areas, away from major arterial streets.

Community Park

Spanning 20 or more acres, community parks provide recreational opportunities for a broader population—often within a 1–2-mile radius or city-wide. Amenities can include multiple ballfields, large playgrounds, trails, picnic shelters, restrooms, and dedicated parking. Due to their larger size and scope, they may support organized sports, community events, and passive recreation and are typically located along collector or arterial streets, with buffer zones to protect adjacent residential areas.

- **Size:** Typically, 20+ acres

- **Service Area:** 1–2 miles or city-wide, depending on the municipality's size and layout.
- **Primary Use:** Larger-scale recreational facilities (e.g., multiple ballfields, large playgrounds), special event space, and passive recreation (walking paths, natural areas).
- **Characteristics:** Athletic fields, picnic pavilions, restrooms, parking, possibly a community center or pool. Ideally, it should be along collector or arterial roads for vehicle/bike access, with buffering for nearby residences.

Special-Use Park / Facility

These unique sites vary widely in size and layout and serve city-wide or regional user groups with specialized interests—such as dog parks, skate parks, golf courses, cultural or historic sites, or nature centers. Each facility is designed around a primary activity or feature, with secondary elements offered as space allows. Although specialized, these parks are vital to the park system, offering experiences not typically found in standard neighborhood or community parks.

- **Size:** Varies widely.
- **Service Area:** City-wide or even regional.
- **Primary Use:** Focused or specialized (e.g., dog parks, skate parks, golf courses, historic sites, plazas, nature centers, etc.).
- **Characteristics:** It depends on the special use, whether a single large facility or a cluster of smaller unique features.

Ideal location can be based on site-specific conditions (waterfront, scenic areas, unique natural features).

Conservancy/ Greenways/ Natural Resource Areas

These areas are designated primarily for protecting, restoring, and managing natural features such as wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitats, and other ecologically sensitive or unique resources. Recreational uses focus on low-impact activities—like walking, hiking, wildlife viewing, and nature study—and development is minimal to maintain ecological integrity. Often serving as corridors that connect neighborhoods and parks, they help preserve biodiversity and provide opportunities for environmental education and scenic enjoyment.

- **Size:** Varies (can include narrow corridors for trails or extensive natural preserves).
- **Service Area:** Can serve multiple neighborhoods, entire cities, or regions.
- **Primary Use:** Conservation of natural features, habitat protection, riparian corridors, and/or trail connections.
- **Characteristics:** Trails, interpretive signage, viewpoints, minimal development to protect resources. Ideally follows rivers, wetlands, woodlands, or other environmental corridors.

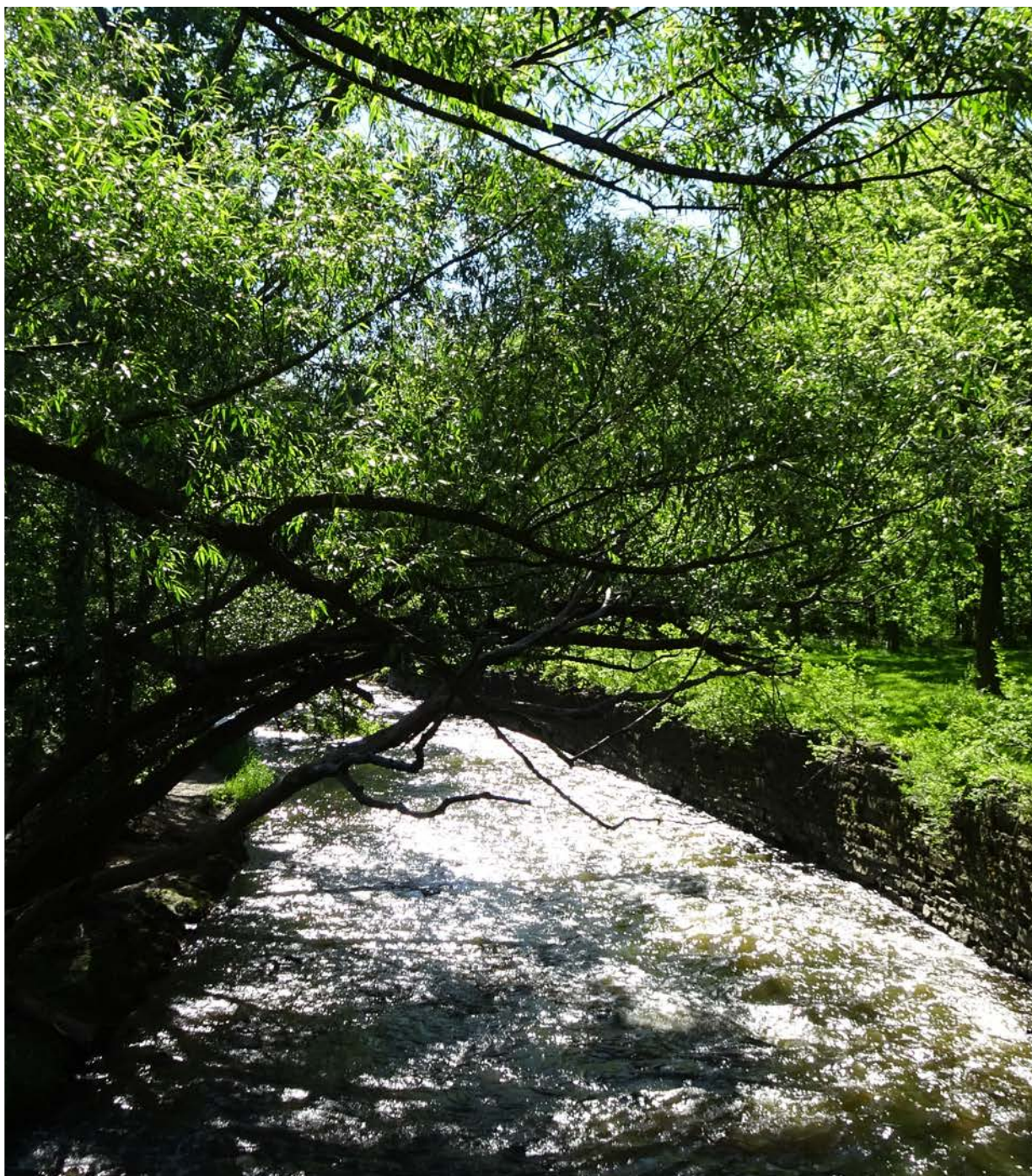
Waterfront Corridors

Encompassing strips of land along lakes, rivers, or other bodies of water, waterfront corridors offer public access to scenic views, fishing spots, walking trails, piers, and other waterfront activities. Their widths vary, ranging from narrow shorelines to wider open spaces, and they may connect neighborhoods to larger park systems or other community destinations. These corridors balance recreation with environmental stewardship, preserving natural habitats while encouraging responsible public enjoyment of water resources.

- **Size:** Varies (narrow shoreline or extensive riverfront).
- **Service Area:** Typically, city-wide or regional if it's a major waterbody.
- **Primary Use:** Public access to waterways, scenic viewing, fishing, and boat launches.
- **Characteristics:** Trails, piers, overlooks, benches, habitat restoration. Located along rivers, lakes, or streams to maintain public access to water.

Chapter 4:

Planning Process



In 2024, the City of Wauwatosa embarked on an extensive planning process to shape the future of its open space and recreation opportunities. This initiative aimed to build upon the city's existing assets while addressing the evolving needs and priorities of its community. The process brought together a diverse range of stakeholders, residents, and community partners through design charrettes, open forums, community surveys, and focused stakeholder meetings to ensure broad public input and collaboration.

The primary objective was to evaluate and develop strategies for improving Wauwatosa's parks, natural areas, and recreational facilities while ensuring sustainable growth and equitable access for all residents. Community input played a crucial role in identifying key priorities, guiding the recommendations for the city's open space and recreation framework:

- **Park Usage & Community Value:** Wauwatosa's parks are well-loved and widely used, emphasizing the need for continuous investment in maintenance, accessibility, and amenities to sustain high usage.
- **Seasonal & Recreational Gaps:** Expand and diversify seasonal and recreational opportunities to meet community needs. Investigate potential winter and water recreation options.
- **Accessibility & Age-Friendly Design:** Parks should be designed for all ages and abilities, ensuring ADA compliance, and providing opportunities for intergenerational recreation. City departments should prioritize improved transportation connectivity between parklands.
- **Safety & Park Maintenance:** Enhance safety through natural surveillance by activating parks with diverse programming and partnerships, ensuring all residents feel welcome and secure in public spaces.
- **Conservation:** Expand and celebrate conservation efforts, for example, by promoting native landscaping and improving access to natural areas, such as the Menomonee River.
- **Events & Social Spaces:** Parks should serve as vibrant community hubs by supporting events and cultural programming and providing gathering spaces for social interaction.



Community Engagement and Public Input

Community Survey

The Wauwatosa Parks & Open Space Community Survey gathered insights from **248 respondents** to assess park usage, preferences, and unmet needs. The findings highlight key priorities, gaps, and areas for improvement in the city's parks and recreational spaces.

Key Takeaways:

1. Primary Park Uses:

- The most common reasons for visiting Wauwatosa parks include physical activity (41.6%), connecting with nature (23.1%), and spending time with family and friends (23.1%).
- Walking, hiking, and running are the most popular activities, with 97.4% of respondents participating.

2. Facility & Amenity Gaps:

- Winter sports (55.2%), river-based activities (60.5%), and gardening/ecological restoration (53.5%) were identified as having too few facilities.
- Court-based sports (33.8%) and water recreation (31.5%) were areas where respondents felt more facilities were needed.

- While most respondents (66.7%) felt there were enough walking and hiking opportunities, 30.3% expressed a need for more.

3. Park Accessibility & Usage:

- 69.7% visit parks weekly or daily, showing strong engagement with public spaces.
- 51.5% primarily walk to their closest park, while 31.7% drive, highlighting the importance of pedestrian-friendly access.
- 66% of respondents felt Wauwatosa parks were “very” or “extremely” accessible, but barriers to access still exist, with some concerns about safety and comfort.

4. Demographic Engagement & Inclusivity:

- While 83.8% of respondents strongly agree that parks add value to the community, some reported avoiding parks due to safety concerns (19%), lack of comfort (15%), or not feeling welcome (6%).
- Parks were rated as meeting the needs of children (5-12 years old) and adults (19-64 years old) well, but services for adolescents (13-18) and seniors (65+) could be improved.

Fund It Results

The Wauwatosa Parks & Open Space Community Survey (Fund It Results) engaged **401 contributors** who provided **454 commentaries** helping to identify community priorities for park and open space investments. Participants were allocated a budget of 3 points per person, distributing their votes among proposed projects.

Key Takeaways:

1. Top Community Priorities for Funding

The most supported projects reflect strong community interest in **active transportation, gathering spaces, and nature appreciation**:

- Walking & Biking Opportunities (Skills Track, Walking Paths) – 225 votes (17.14%)
- Community Gathering Spaces (Picnic Areas, Hammock Grove, Beer Garden) – 224 votes (17.06%)
- Nature Appreciation (Hiking, Birdwatching, Children's Nature Play) – 224 votes (17.06%)

2. Moderate Funding Interest

Some projects received **moderate support**, suggesting they are still valued but not as high a priority:

- Water Recreation (Kayaking, Canoeing, Shore Fishing) – 164 votes (12.49%)

- Court-Based Sports (Tennis, Pickleball, Volleyball, Futsal) – 114 votes (8.68%)
- Children's Play Opportunities (Playground, Gaga Ball, Bike Playground) – 96 votes (7.31%)
- Public Art (Murals, Benches, etc.) – 79 votes (6.02%)
- Physical Fitness (Running Track, Exercise Equipment, Challenge Course) – 78 votes (5.94%)

3. Lower-Priority Investments

Projects that received fewer votes indicate a **lower immediate demand** for these features:

- Open/Unprogrammed Green Spaces (Kite-Flying, Frisbee, Sunbathing) – 74 votes (5.64%)
- Sports Played on a Stadium Field (Football, Soccer) – 35 votes (2.67%)

4. Widespread Community Participation

- 92.29% of participants funded at least one suggested project.
- 54.63% of contributions included at least half of the suggested projects

Dream Park Collages

City staff engaged the younger population at the Wonder Wednesday event hosted at the Tosa Library. This after-school program, designed to provide a safe and engaging space on early release days, encouraged children to express their vision through “Dream Park” collages. This hands-on, creative activity sparked excitement, imagination, and thoughtful discussions about the parks they want to see in their community.

Through their artwork and conversations, several key themes emerged, highlighting what matters most to them:

- **Imaginative Play:** Kids strongly desire interactive and creative spaces that inspire storytelling, adventure, and open-ended fun.
- **Equitable Access & Inclusivity:** Many emphasized the need for parks that welcome all abilities and backgrounds, ensuring every child has a place to play.
- **Thoughtful Play Equipment Design:** There was a focus on well-designed movement flows between structures, allowing children to run, climb, and explore seamlessly.
- **Water Access:** Whether through splash pads, nature-inspired streams, or interactive water features, water play was a recurring theme in their dream park designs.



Dream Park Collages

Stakeholder Meetings

- **Wauwatosa Commission for Persons with Disabilities**

A key concern for the Commission for Person with Disabilities was the safety of multi-modal trails, as shared paths with cyclists and runners can create barriers for individuals with disabilities. The commission advocated for pedestrian-focused paths, ensuring safe, predictable travel routes with accessible surfacing, seating, and sensory-friendly elements.

- **Wauwatosa Youth Commission**

The Wauwatosa Youth Commission shared a vision for making parks more engaging and accessible for teens by incorporating event spaces, free programming, interactive learning, and inclusive amenities. They advocated for a designated event space on the west side of Wauwatosa with two stages, providing a venue for performances, concerts, and community events. To encourage youth engagement, they proposed free activities such as a food truck night, movie nights, and a snow sculpting contest, ensuring accessible entertainment for teens.

Educational opportunities were also a priority, with suggestions for interactive signage, featuring a scavenger hunt component, to teach visitors about Wauwatosa's natural resources. Expanding equipment rental options, such as sleds, was highlighted to make recreation more affordable and equitable, allowing more teens to participate in seasonal activities without the burden of purchasing equipment.

The commission also expressed a need for more social gathering spaces, similar to Root Common and 69th Street Plaza, providing safe and welcoming places for teens to hang out. Additional activity-based features, such as geocaching, a labyrinth or meditation area, and a designated swing grove, were recommended to promote adventure and relaxation. They opposed a hammock grove unless hammocks were provided on-site, citing that bringing personal hammocks can be inconvenient and prohibitive.

- **Tosa Rec Department**



The Tosa Recreation Department emphasized the growing demand for tennis and pickleball programming and the importance of offering diverse recreational opportunities for all ages. While programming and facilities for these activities fall under the department's purview, not the City's, the department continues to explore ways to meet community needs through its own resources, which can accommodate activities like pickleball more effectively and at a lower cost than the City could provide.

They also highlighted the value of the senior center, noting that older adults feel well-represented in the city's recreational offerings.

A key discussion point was the desire to reinvest in adult softball facilities at Hart Park, particularly by upgrading lighting and restrooms. The potential closure of middle schools was also raised, with concerns about how it might impact access to softball fields and league play.

Environmental and ecological enhancements were discussed, particularly the increasing fish diversity in the Menomonee River and the need for more public access points to the water. The group acknowledged that trends in recreation evolve, but green space remains essential, stressing the need to balance public demand with park preservation, as Wauwatosa's parks experience heavy use.

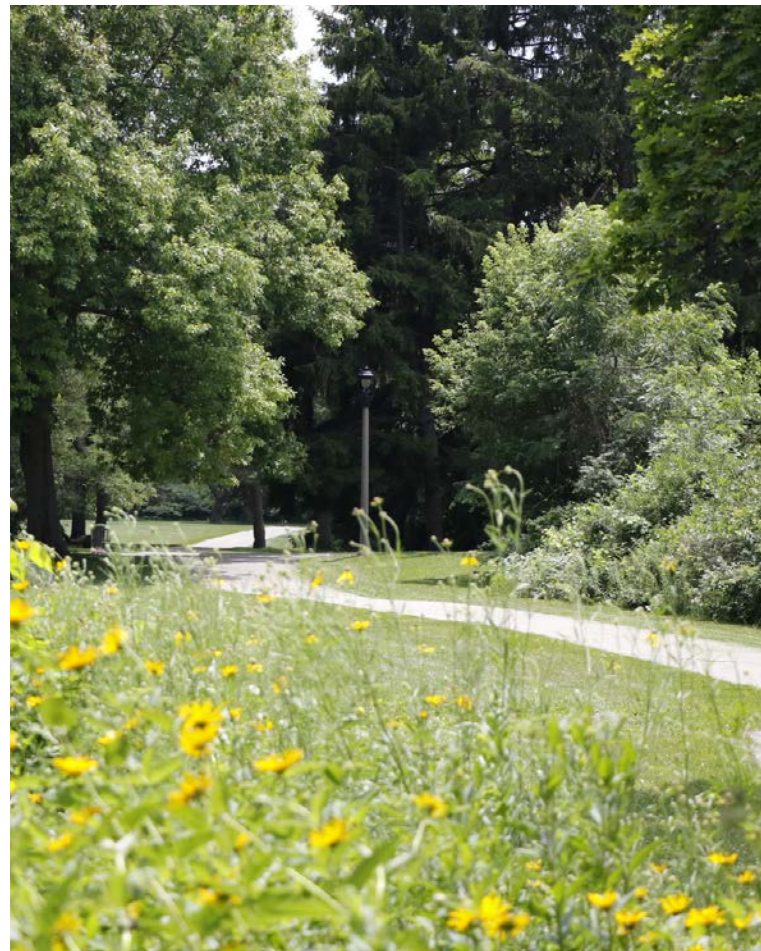
- **Senior Commission**



The Wauwatosa Senior Commission emphasized the need for expanded recreational and social opportunities that promote active lifestyles and community connections for older adults. A key request was adding pickleball facilities on the west side of Wauwatosa, recognizing the sport's growing popularity among seniors as a low-impact, social, and accessible activity. Improved

walking connections throughout the community were also a priority, ensuring that parks, trails, and key destinations are easily accessible for pedestrians of all abilities.

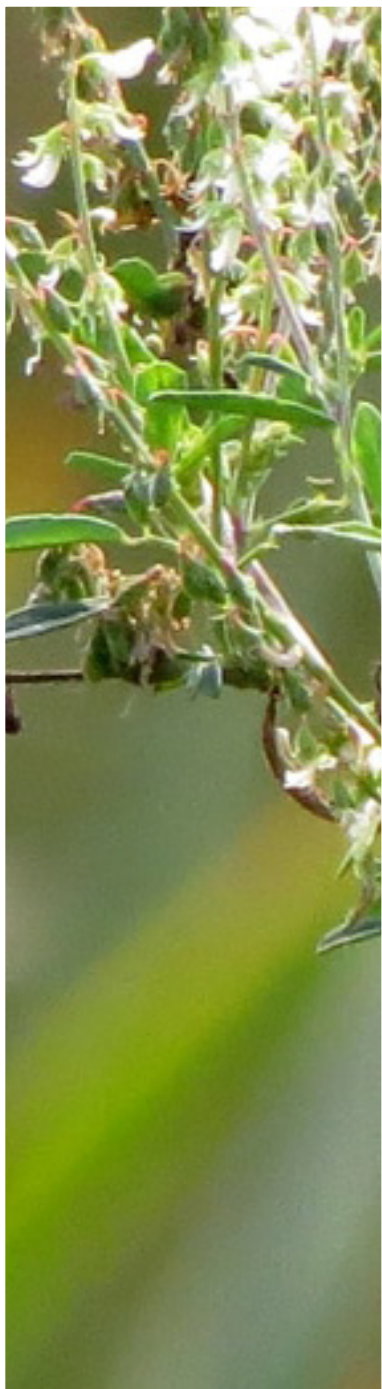
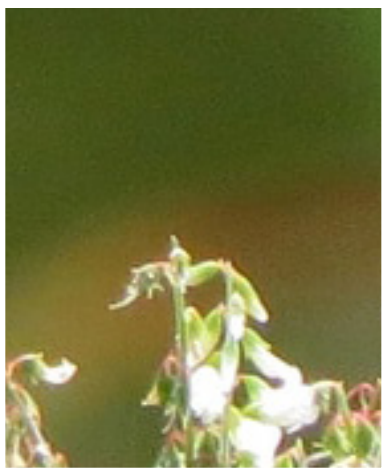
The commission also expressed enthusiasm for community gardening, specifically vegetable gardens that provide opportunities for healthy living, social engagement, and food sustainability. They advocated for intergenerational programming within these spaces, bringing together seniors, families, and youth for hands-on learning experiences. This initiative would support wellness and strengthen cross-generational connections in Wauwatosa.



Menomonee River Parkway

Chapter 5:

Summary of Past Parks and Open Space Plans



Evolution of the Comprehensive Plan

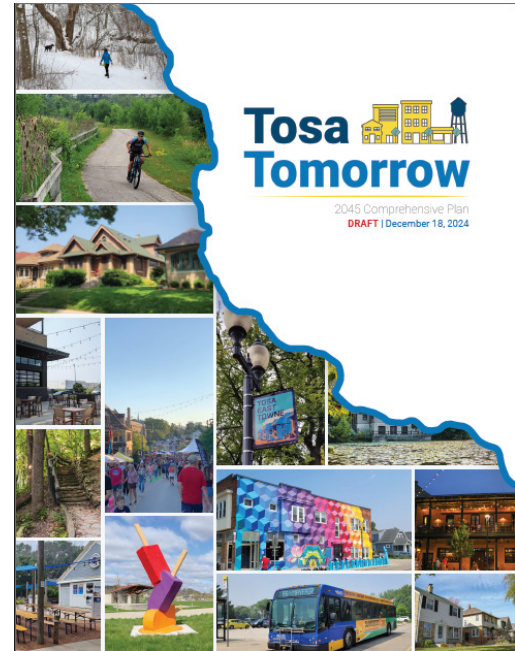
Below is a comparative analysis of the 2008 and 2024 Wauwatosa Comprehensive Plans outlining key differences, highlighting shifts toward sustainability, accessibility, community engagement, and expanded recreation opportunities.

	Wauwatosa Comprehensive Plan (2008)	Tosa Tomorrow Plan (2024)
Planning Vision	Focus on preserving green spaces and maintaining existing park facilities.	Expanded vision incorporating sustainability, climate resilience, and community-driven design.
Community Engagement	Limited direct community engagement in park planning.	Extensive public participation, workshops, and youth engagement to inform park improvements.
Park Connectivity	Emphasized trail and pathway development but with a limited focus on accessibility.	Prioritizes pedestrian and bike-friendly park connections with universal accessibility standards.
Recreational Opportunities	Traditional recreational facilities such as playgrounds and sports fields.	Expanded offerings include nature play, interactive learning elements, and intergenerational spaces.
Equity & Inclusivity	General considerations for accessibility but lacked a strong focus on inclusivity.	Stronger emphasis on equity, ensuring park access for all abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds.
Environmental Sustainability	Conservation-focused but with fewer proactive climate adaptation strategies.	Integrated climate resilience measures, native landscaping, and sustainable stormwater management.
Programming & Activation	Limited city-sponsored events and passive recreation.	Increased community-driven programming, including festivals, educational signage, and seasonal activities.
Water Access & Blue-Green Infrastructure	Minimal focus on enhancing water-based recreation.	Emphasizes expanded river access, water-based recreation, and ecological restoration.
Funding & Implementation	Broad recommendations with fewer specific funding strategies.	Includes actionable steps, partnerships, and funding mechanisms for implementation.

Tosa Tomorrow 2045 Comprehensive Plan (2024)

The plan's vision statement envisions Wauwatosa as a welcoming and prosperous city with vibrant neighborhoods, thriving commercial districts, and accessible green spaces. Goals focus on promoting diverse housing options, fostering economic growth, enhancing transportation networks, and ensuring sustainable development. Given the city's limited opportunities for outward expansion, the land use and development strategy emphasizes strategic infill, redevelopment, and maintaining neighborhood character through mixed-use developments, zoning updates, and public-private partnerships. A key focus of the plan is enhancing connectivity and accessibility through an expanded network of trails, greenways, and pedestrian-friendly corridors. This includes linking parks with residential neighborhoods, schools, and commercial districts to promote active transportation and reduce car dependence. Investments in multimodal infrastructure, such as bike lanes and safe pedestrian crossings, are recommended to create a more walkable and bike-friendly community. Additionally, the plan calls for improved wayfinding signage and accessibility upgrades to ensure that parks and recreational facilities accommodate all users, including individuals with disabilities.

The Tosa Tomorrow Plan identifies the need to modernize existing parks and expand recreational offerings to meet evolving community needs. This includes renovating aging playgrounds, athletic fields, and community centers and providing facilities which can host more diverse programming such as fitness classes, arts and cultural events, and nature-based recreation. The



plan also supports the development of flexible-use spaces that can adapt to different activities and seasonal programming.

The environmental sustainability component of the plan integrates green infrastructure and ecological preservation into park management. Strategies include incorporating stormwater management systems, increasing tree canopy coverage, and restoring native landscapes to improve biodiversity and climate resilience. The plan also emphasizes the protection of natural assets, such as river corridors and wetlands, to enhance ecological functions while providing passive recreation opportunities like hiking and wildlife observation.

Equity and inclusion are central to the plan's approach to parks and recreation, with a commitment to ensuring that underserved neighborhoods receive targeted investments. The City seeks to address gaps in park access by acquiring new green space where feasible and improving transit connections to existing

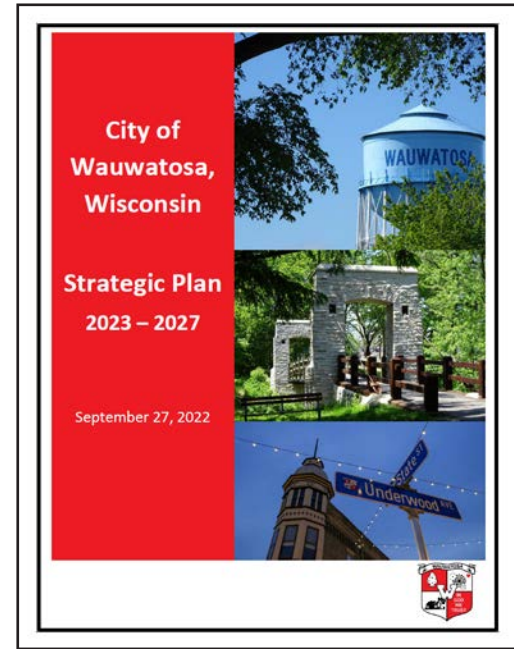
facilities. Additionally, inclusive design principles will be incorporated to make parks welcoming for residents of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Funding and implementation strategies outlined in the plan include leveraging state and federal grants, forming public-private partnerships, and exploring innovative funding mechanisms such as impact fees and dedicated revenue streams. The plan establishes performance benchmarks and accountability measures to track progress and ensure investments align with community priorities. Recommendations, including policy updates, funding mechanisms, and partnerships with regional stakeholders to achieve long-term objectives.

City of Wauwatosa Strategic Plan (2022)

The City of Wauwatosa Strategic Plan 2023–2027 establishes a comprehensive framework to guide the city's growth and development over the next five years. The plan, developed with extensive input from residents, business owners, and city staff, outlines five key priorities: economic development and financial resilience, public safety, infrastructure, housing, and quality of life. These priorities were determined through a structured planning process that included interviews, surveys, and community focus groups, culminating in a strategic workshop where city leaders developed goals and strategies to achieve them.

The strategic plan articulates a vision for Wauwatosa as a safe, welcoming, and inclusive community that delivers excellent city services and maintains a high quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors. The city's mission focuses on providing accessible and essential



services in an inclusive, efficient, and cost-effective manner.

The plan identifies the need for ongoing maintenance and modernization of existing parks to address aging infrastructure and improve functionality. This includes updating playgrounds, athletic fields, and recreational facilities to better align with current usage trends and community expectations. The city aims to expand its network of trails and greenways to enhance connectivity between neighborhoods, parks, and commercial areas, promoting walkability and cycling as sustainable transportation options. Additionally, the integration of stormwater management and native landscaping into park designs reflects a commitment to environmental stewardship and climate resilience.

Community engagement played a pivotal role in shaping the vision for parks and recreation, with residents emphasizing the importance of accessible green spaces, programming for all age groups, and preserving natural areas. To

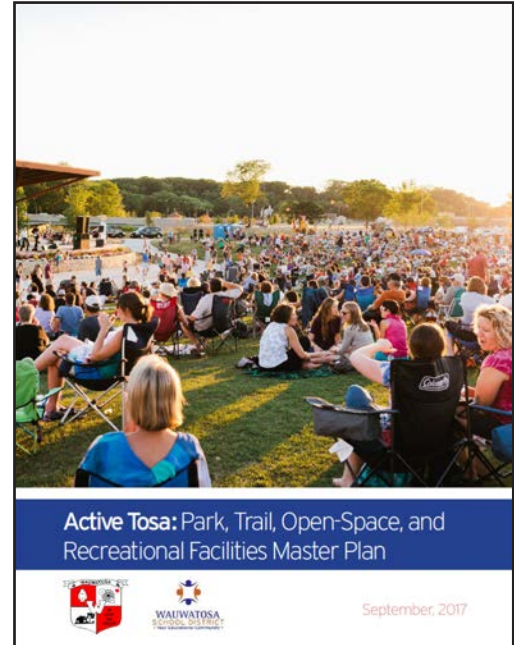
address these priorities, the plan proposes the development of new amenities and activities that cater to a wide range of interests, from youth sports to senior wellness programs. It also highlights the need for partnerships with schools, local organizations, and regional stakeholders to maximize resources and broaden the reach of recreational opportunities.

The strategic plan underscores the significance of equitable access to parks and recreation, targeting underserved areas and prioritizing investments in neighborhoods with limited amenities. Funding strategies include leveraging state and federal grants, public-private partnerships, and dedicated local revenue streams to support capital improvements and programming expansion. An implementation framework outlines specific projects, timelines, and performance metrics to ensure accountability and progress.

Active Tosa: Park, Trail, Open-Space, and Recreational Facilities Master Plan (2017)

The Active Tosa: Park, Trail, Open-Space, and Recreational Facilities Master Plan, adopted in September 2017, is a comprehensive guide for the City of Wauwatosa's park and recreation system. Developed through a collaborative process involving city officials, the Wauwatosa School District, and community stakeholders, the plan provides a strategic framework for enhancing parks, trails, and recreational facilities to meet the community's evolving needs. It evaluates existing conditions, identifies service gaps, and establishes priorities for improvements to ensure equitable access and long-term sustainability.

The plan is structured into four key phases:



Engage, Analyze, Envision, and Implement. The Engage phase involved extensive community outreach, including stakeholder interviews, focus groups, open houses, and an online survey with 797 respondents. Key themes emerging from public input included the need for improved coordination among city, county, and school district park facilities, enhanced connectivity through trail expansions, increased indoor recreational opportunities, and programming tailored to an aging population.

The Analyze phase assessed the existing park network, recreational facilities, and demographic trends to understand current and future needs. The plan identifies 1,099.65 acres of parkland in Wauwatosa, provided through city, county, and school district properties, offering a level of service (LOS) of 23.62 acres per 1,000 residents. Despite this, gaps in access were identified in some neighborhoods, and an unmet demand for trails, reservable shelters, and indoor facilities was noted. The plan proposes increasing the city's trail network by 6.8 miles to address connectivity issues.

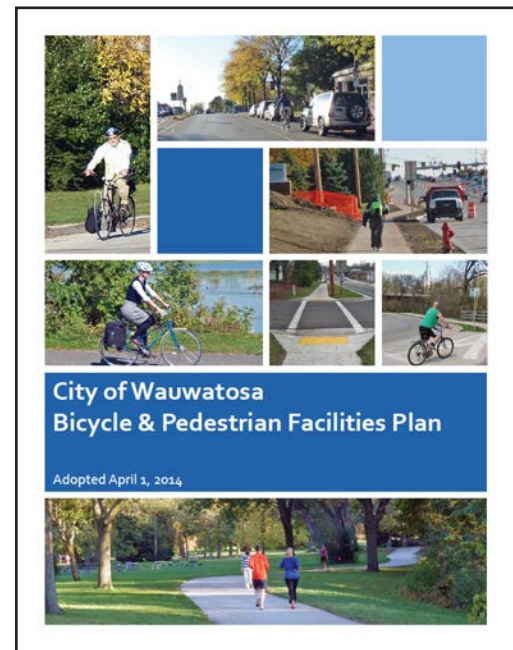
The Envision phase outlines strategic recommendations for park system enhancements, prioritizing accessibility, sustainability, and community engagement. Key recommendations include expanding walking and biking trails, modernizing facilities, increasing programming for seniors and youth, and fostering partnerships with community organizations to optimize resources. The plan also emphasizes balancing active recreational spaces and passive green areas to support ecological health.

The implementation phase provides an actionable roadmap with a phased timeline, funding strategies, and performance measures to track progress. Suggested funding sources include grants, public-private partnerships, and impact fees. A detailed implementation matrix outlines short- and long-term priorities, focusing on infrastructure upgrades, maintenance improvements, and program expansion.

City of Wauwatosa Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities Plan (2014)

The City of Wauwatosa Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities Plan, adopted on April 1, 2014, is a comprehensive guide to enhancing the city's walking and biking infrastructure. The plan builds upon Wauwatosa's compact size, grid street layout, and existing trail systems, such as the Hank Aaron State Trail and the Oak Leaf Trail, which provide strong foundations for active transportation. However, the plan acknowledges challenges posed by major highways, streets, and natural barriers like the Menomonee River, which divide the city and create obstacles for non-motorized transportation.

The plan aims to establish Wauwatosa as a healthy, safe, and livable community by



integrating bicycling and walking into daily life, fostering economic development, and enhancing accessibility. The goals include creating a well-labeled and interconnected network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, increasing the bicycle commute mode share to 4% and the walking mode share to 7% by 2020, improving safety through education and enforcement, and gaining national recognition as a bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly community.

Key recommendations focus on expanding the bikeway network from approximately 25 miles to over 120 miles, incorporating bike lanes, cycle tracks, shared lane markings, and neighborhood greenways. The plan also proposes adding 22 miles of pedestrian facilities, prioritizing areas near schools and along major corridors to enhance connectivity and safety.

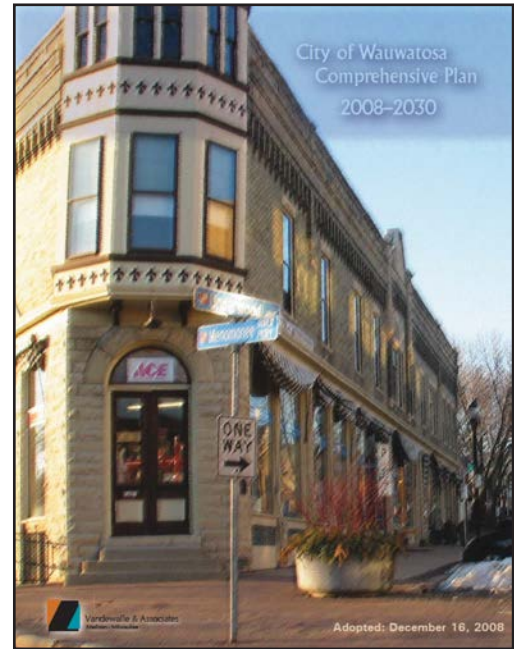
The plan's bicycle recommendations prioritize projects such as developing the Menomonee River Parkway Path, implementing neighborhood greenways with low-cost signage and markings, and introducing wayfinding systems. For

pedestrian improvements, the plan emphasizes key areas around schools, major roads such as Mayfair Road and 124th Street, and connections across barriers like highways and rivers. Public involvement played a crucial role in shaping the plan, with input gathered through a steering committee, public open houses, and an interactive online map that received significant community feedback. Residents highlighted concerns about connectivity, safety, and accessibility, particularly around schools and high-traffic areas. In addition to infrastructure, the plan outlines non-infrastructure recommendations, including encouragement programs, educational initiatives, enforcement strategies, and performance evaluations to monitor progress. Funding opportunities are identified through federal, state, and local sources, emphasizing inter-agency coordination for successful implementation.

The City of Wauwatosa Comprehensive Plan (2008)

The Wauwatosa Comprehensive Plan 2008–2030 prioritizes parks, recreation, and open space as essential to community well-being, environmental sustainability, and economic vitality. Given the city's built-out nature, the plan focuses on optimizing existing green spaces rather than creating new large-scale parks while maintaining an up-to-date Park and Open Space Plan to secure state and federal funding.

Intergovernmental collaboration, particularly with Milwaukee County, is highlighted as a key strategy for resource sharing, park maintenance, and trail network expansion, alongside fostering public-private partnerships to enhance recreational facilities. The plan also explores opportunities for new parks and public gathering



spaces, integrating smaller green spaces, plazas, and rooftop gardens into redevelopment projects to enhance community engagement. Connectivity improvements through expanded pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure aim to link parks with neighborhoods, schools, and business districts, supporting sustainability efforts and promoting active lifestyles.

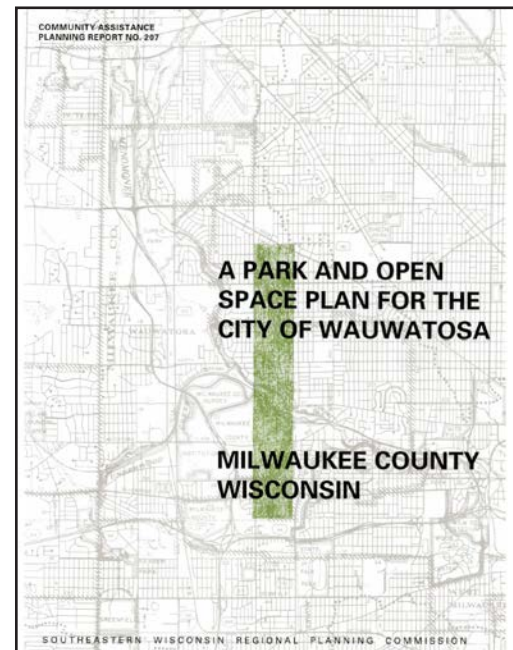
Environmental stewardship is emphasized through policies protecting tree canopies, native vegetation, and waterways, along with green infrastructure strategies such as bioswales and permeable surfaces to manage stormwater. The city considers alternative revenue sources like impact fees on new developments and partnerships with civic groups. Additionally, the plan recommends pursuing the Playful City USA designation to enhance recreational programming and prioritize play opportunities for children.

Wauwatosa Park and Open Space Plan (1998)

The Wauwatosa Park and Open Space Plan provides a comprehensive framework for developing, managing, and enhancing the city's parks, recreational facilities, and natural resources. The plan balances conservation, recreational opportunities, and community needs while supporting sustainable growth and environmental stewardship. It builds upon existing assets and proposes strategic improvements to ensure equitable access, enhance environmental quality, and foster community well-being.

The plan outlines several key objectives, including improving park accessibility, expanding recreational programming, and integrating ecological enhancements to protect natural habitats. It assesses the current park system, identifying strengths such as well-maintained facilities and connectivity to regional trail networks while addressing challenges like underutilized spaces, gaps in service areas, and the need for modernization. A detailed inventory of parks and open spaces highlights the diversity of facilities, ranging from neighborhood parks and playgrounds to larger natural preserves and multi-use trails.

Community engagement played an important role in shaping the plan, with input gathered through surveys, public meetings, and stakeholder consultations. Residents expressed a desire for improved park amenities, increased programming for all age groups, and enhanced maintenance to ensure long-term usability. The plan emphasizes the importance of fostering partnerships with local organizations, schools, and private entities to

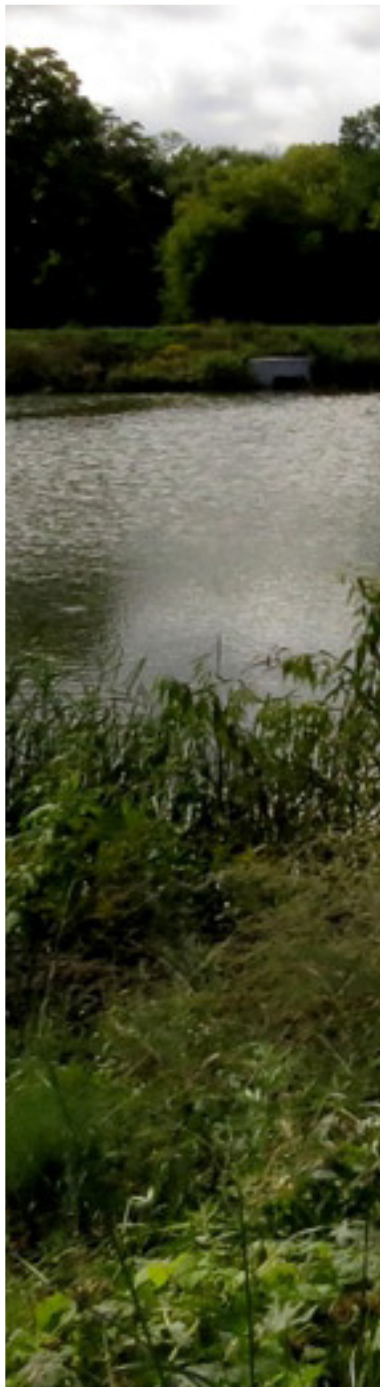


expand recreational opportunities and maximize funding potential.

A significant focus of the plan is on enhancing connectivity within the park system through greenway expansions, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly pathways, and better linkages between parks and neighborhoods. Additionally, sustainability initiatives, such as stormwater management features, native landscaping, and energy-efficient facility upgrades, are prioritized to align with the city's broader environmental goals. The plan also includes a phased implementation strategy detailing funding source, partnership opportunities, and prioritized projects based on community needs and available resources. Capital improvement recommendations address short-term enhancements and long-term investments to ensure the park system remains resilient and adaptive to changing demographics and recreational trends.

Chapter 6:

Community Profile and Regional Context



Area History

Originally incorporated as a village from the central part of the Town of Wauwatosa in 1892, the Village was rechartered as the City of Wauwatosa in 1970. Wauwatosa is located in Milwaukee County, in the southeastern region of Wisconsin. Milwaukee County is the most populous and densely populated county in Wisconsin, ranking as the 45th most populous county in the United States. It is the largest county within the Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI, metropolitan area and the broader Milwaukee-Racine-Waukesha, WI combined area.

The county has nineteen municipalities, including ten incorporated cities and nine incorporated villages, the largest of which, excluding the City of Milwaukee, are West Allis (58,874 residents), Wauwatosa (47,718), Greenfield (36,916), Oak Creek (37,156), and Franklin (35,485) (2023 estimates). Located just 15 minutes west of downtown Milwaukee, Wauwatosa offers convenient access to major entertainment and cultural attractions such as the Milwaukee County Zoo, American Family Field, and the Milwaukee Art Museum and is surrounded by the lush and fertile river basin of the Menominee River.

Wauwatosa has seven parks, with Hart Park serving as the city's major community park. Established in 1921, Hart Park was created near Charles Hart's first mill. It was initially called City Park when the Common Council purchased the 19.5-acre tract of land, the name was changed in 1960 to recognize the original settler of the area. The park expanded from 20 to 50 acres in 1997/1998 following the completion of a \$48 million flood management project by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD). This project included the construction of flood levels and storage areas designed to mitigate potential flood damage to homes and businesses and to reduce the risk of sewer backups and overflows.

Designations

A Tree City USA designation, awarded by the Arbor Day Foundation, recognizes communities demonstrating a strong commitment to urban forestry management. Cities must meet specific standards that promote their urban forests' health and sustainability, enhance air quality, reduce urban heat, and provide green spaces that improve residents' quality of life.

Wauwatosa is recognized as a Tree City USA, reflecting its dedication to maintaining and expanding its urban canopy. With over 25,000 publicly owned trees, the city meets the program's rigorous criteria, including establishing a tree board, implementing a tree care ordinance, maintaining a community forestry program with dedicated funding, and the annual observance of Arbor Day. This designation highlights Wauwatosa's commitment to preserving its natural beauty and ensuring a greener, healthier environment for future generations.

In addition, in early 2025 Wauwatosa was given an Urban Forestry Innovation award by the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council, which advises the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on managing urban and community forest resources. Wauwatosa won for its Tosa Tree Dashboard which allows users to take a virtual tree tour and learn about any publicly maintained tree.

Demographics Summary

Social Characteristics

This section presents social factors that are important to understanding the community and its recreation needs. Particularly important to planning for the adequate provision of parks and open spaces are population trends/projections over the planning period (5-10 years) and the age characteristics of potential park users.

Population Trends and Projections

There is a direct relationship between population and the need for parks and recreational space. Predicting how the 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 new populations.

The City of Wauwatosa had a declining population between the years of 1970 and 2010. The City dropped from a population of 58,676 in 1970 to a 46,396 population in 2010. However, since 2010, the City has been experiencing a steady increase in population. Population has grown from 2010 to a population of 49,363 in 2024, a growth rate of approximately 6%.



Designations

A Bird City designation recognizes communities dedicated to bird conservation and habitat preservation. The Bird City Wisconsin program honors municipalities that take meaningful steps to create healthier environments for both birds and people.

Wauwatosa is recognized as a Bird City, demonstrating a strong commitment to protecting bird populations and their habitats. The city has earned the "High Flyer" status, a distinction given to communities that exceed standard conservation requirements.

Key initiatives that contribute to Wauwatosa's Bird City designation include:

- Organized efforts at the Forest Exploration Center, where over 158 bird species have been documented
- Zoning modifications to Sanctuary Woods, designating it as a Special Purpose Conservancy to safeguard critical bird habitats
- Established educational programs such as the Tosa Green Summit and World Migratory Bird Day celebrations, which raise awareness about bird conservation
- By preserving bird habitats and fostering environmental stewardship, Wauwatosa supports biodiversity and enhances the community's natural beauty and ecological health.

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) projects that the City will experience a slight growth in population over the next 25 years with a predicted population gain of approximately 1%.

Population projection information for Wauwatosa and comparable communities is provided in **Table 1.1**. Current National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) standards recommend a minimum of 10.5 acres of dedicated parkland per 1000 residents. Population projections are useful in planning for adequate park land based on future population estimates.

Table 1.1: Population Projections for Wauwatosa and Comparables (2050)

Municipality	Estimate 2024	Projection 2030	Projection 2040	Projection 2050	Percentage Change 2024-2050
Wauwatosa	49,363	49,438	49,826	49,986	1%
Sheboygan	49,886	48,404	46,450	43,541	-13%
West Bend	32,288	31,280	30,381	28,269	-12%
West Allis	59,934	58,092	55,221	52,280	-13%
Oak Creek	38,860	40,416	43,669	46,558	20%
New Berlin	40,055	38,221	35,737	32,707	-18%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration Estimates and Projections

Age Distribution

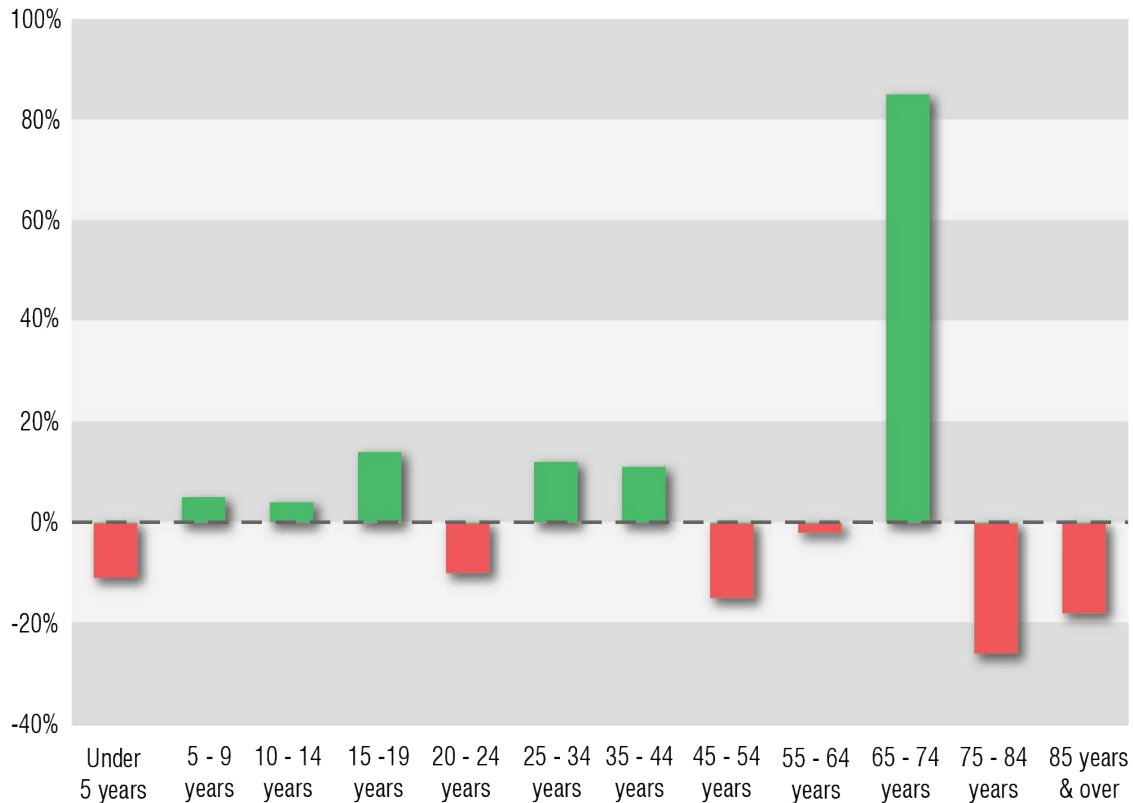
Age distribution in Wauwatosa is shown in **Table 1.2**. Age cohorts are an important consideration in park and recreation planning because different age groups have unique recreational preferences and desires. For example, in 2010 there were an estimated 2,551 residents between the ages of 65 and 74. That number had grown to 4,416 by 2023, an 85% increase in the population of that age group. The capacity of park facilities in the City designed for this age group should be reassessed, as there may be far higher demand than in 2010. Facilities such as hiking trails, boat launches, community gardens and pickleball courts are more frequently utilized by this age group and may be needed in higher quantities now than they had in the past.

Table 1.2: Age Distribution, 2010-2023 City of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

	2010		2023		Percent Change 2010- 2023
	Number	%	Number	%	
Under 5 years	3,134	6.8	2,795	5.9	-11%
5 to 9 years	2,512	5.4	2,637	5.5	5%
10 to 14 years	2,511	5.4	2,605	5.5	4%
15 to 19 years	2,570	5.6	2,936	6.2	14%
20 to 24 years	2,245	4.9	2,028	4.2	-10%
25 to 34 years	7,261	15.7	8,130	17.0	12%
35 to 44 years	6,269	13.6	6,961	14.6	11%
45 to 54 years	6,647	14.4	5,660	11.9	-15%
55 to 64 years	5,597	12.1	5,478	11.5	-2%
65 to 74 years	2,551	5.5	4,716	9.9	85%
75 to 84 years	2,791	6.0	2,067	4.3	-26%
85 years and over	2,091	4.5	1,705	3.6	-18%
Total Population	46,179		47,718		3%

Source: US Census Bureau

Population Change (2010-2022)

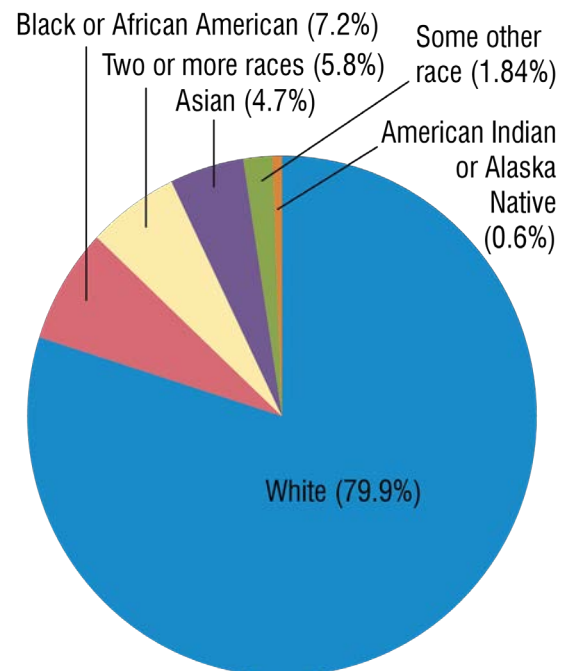


Ethnic Background

The 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates indicated the largest percentage of City residents (79.9%) were “White”. The second largest group was “Black or African American” (7.2%) followed by “Two or more races” (5.8%), “Asian” (4.7%), “Some other race” (1.8%) and “American Indian or Alaska Native” (0.6%).

Unemployment

The November 2024 Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (LAUS) estimate of the unemployment rate in the City of Wauwatosa was 2.4%. The statewide unemployment rate during the same time period was 2.6%.

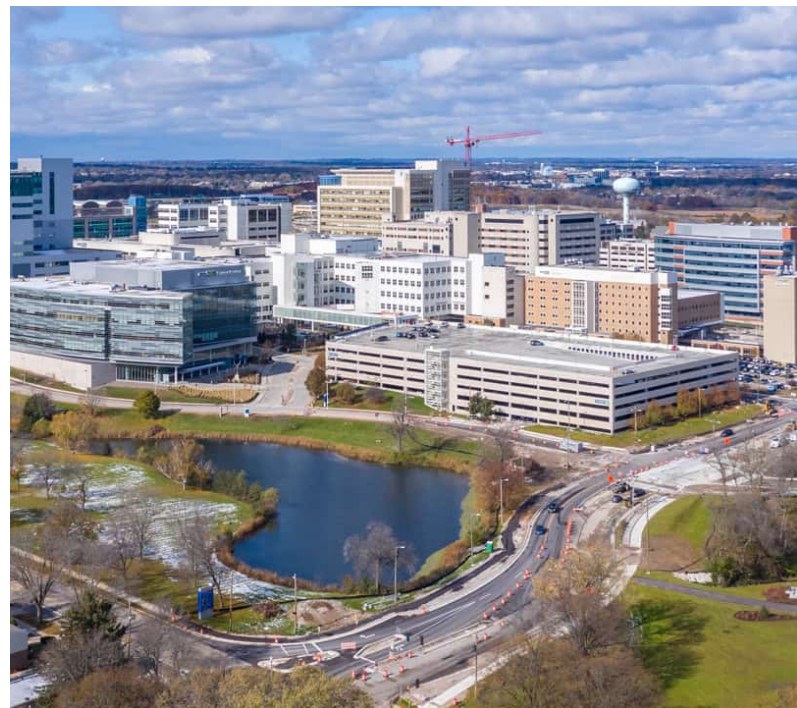
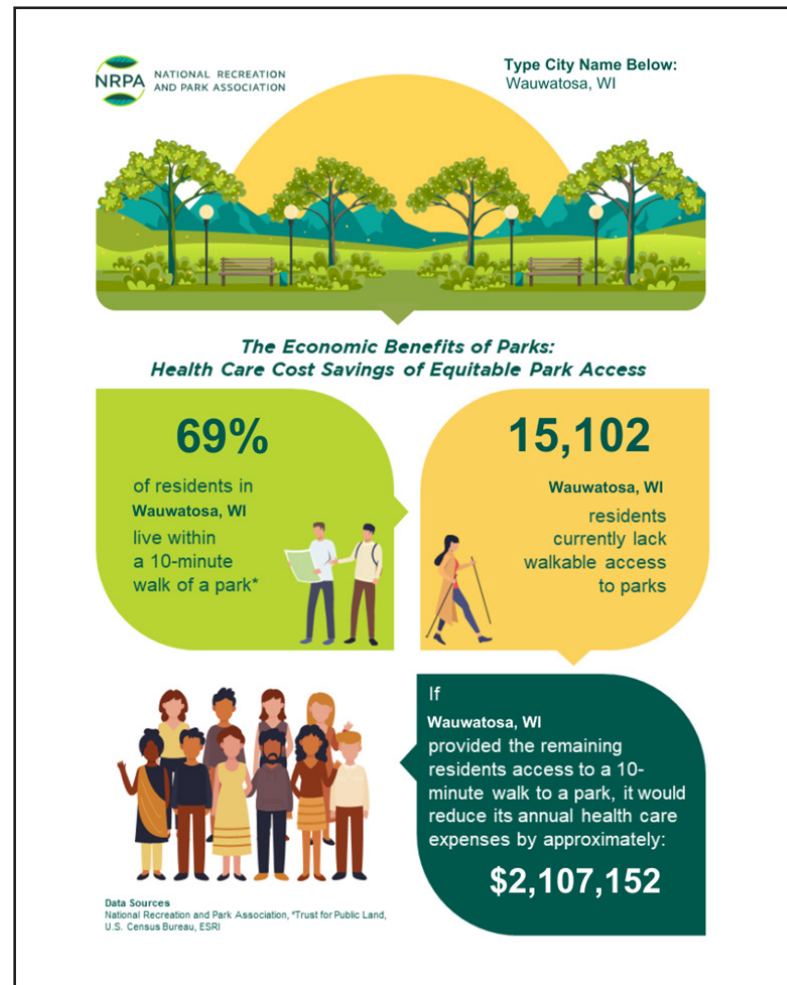


Economic Indicators

Wauwatosa is a major hub for business and employment centers. The City is home to the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center and research facilities, the headquarters for multiple large national and international corporations, regional shopping destinations, and mixed-use neighborhoods with uniquely local shops, restaurants, and entertainment. The city's strategic location within Milwaukee County provides opportunities for future economic growth, development in entrepreneurship, and collaboration with stakeholders.

Employment growth in Wauwatosa is projected to outpace population growth over the next 15 years. The Milwaukee County employment projections, developed by Moody's Analytics and adjusted by SB Friedman, forecast over 9,300 net new jobs through 2030. The highest growth is projected in professional services and healthcare, adding approximately 7,700 total jobs between 2013 and 2030. The retail sector is also expected to add approximately 370 jobs based on existing trends in the marketplace and does not reflect any large-scale development that could occur down the line.

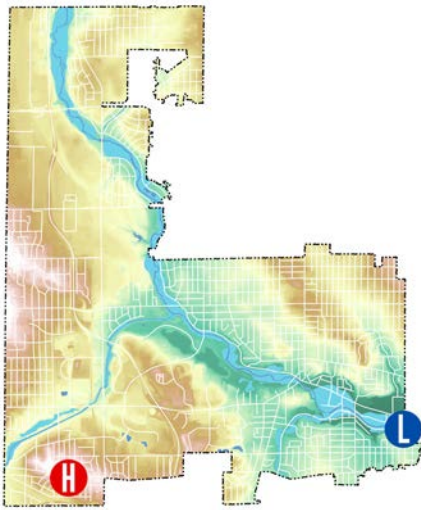
Wauwatosa's strong economic foundation and strategic location position the city for continued growth and opportunity. With employment projected to increase, the city is poised to build on its role as a regional employment center. Targeted redevelopment and revitalization efforts in aging commercial areas, coupled with support for retail and entrepreneurship, will help Wauwatosa remain a dynamic, mixed-use community that supports both residents and the regional economy.



Milwaukee Regional Medical Center and Research Facilities

Physical Characteristics

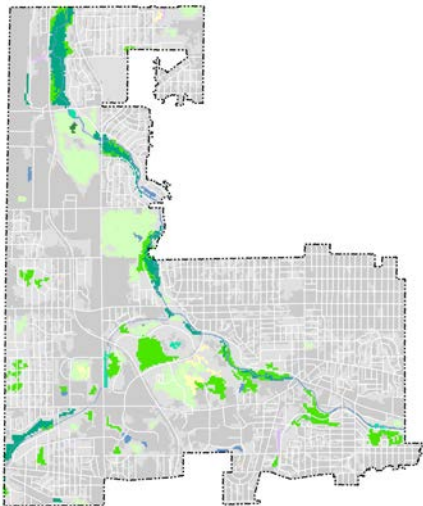
The following section gives background information on some of the physical characteristics of Wauwatosa. This section can be useful in giving an overall impression of the area, determining suitability for certain improvements and identifying areas that should be conserved due to their unique natural features.



Topography

This map shows a color-coded elevation model of Wauwatosa ranging from lower elevations in blue to the highest elevations in white.

The lowest elevation in the City is 619 feet above sea level on the City's east side along the Menomonee River. The high elevation of 824 feet above sea level is found on the southwest side of the City near the intersection of North 113th Street and West Blue Mound Road.



Land Cover

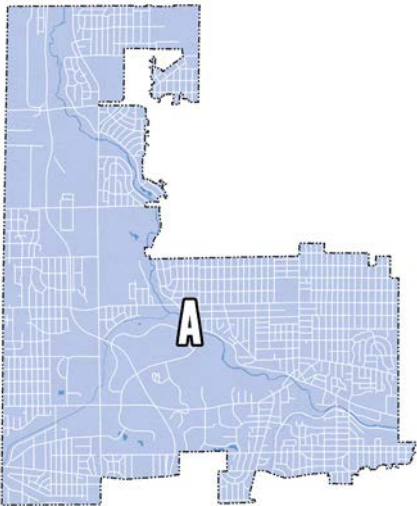
Approximately 89% of Wauwatosa is classified as an "Urban/Developed" (represented by the gray hues on the adjacent map), making it the most common land cover type in the City. "Foraged Grass" is the next most common land cover type at 5% coverage, followed by "Broad-Leaved Deciduous" at 3%.



Floodplain

There are 8,467 acres within the City designated by FEMA as high risk flood zones as shown on the adjacent map. These are primarily areas surrounding the Menomonee River, Underwood Creek and Honey Creek.

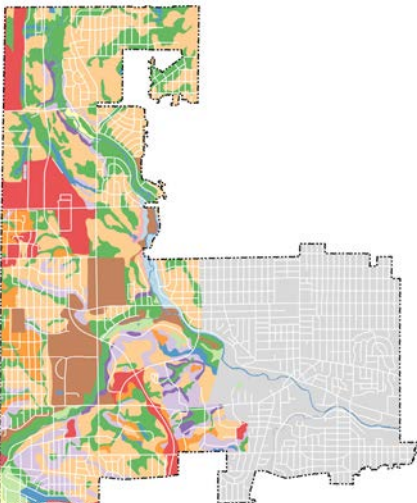
The areas shown as blue on the map are “AE” flood zones which represent the base floodplain.



Watersheds

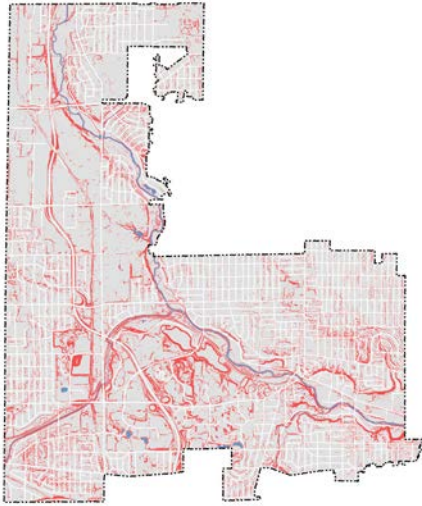
The City of Wauwatosa is completely within the Menomonee River Watershed.

The City occupies 13.2 square miles or 10% of the watershed’s 136.2 square miles.



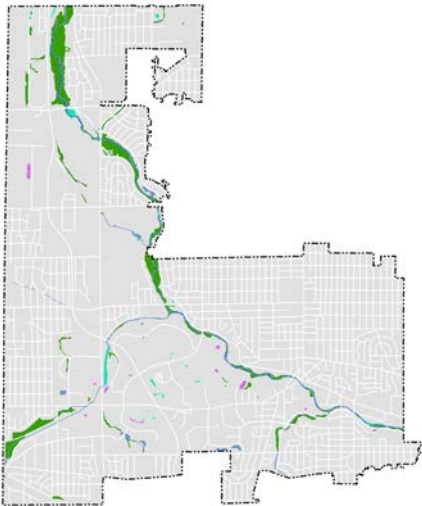
Soils

The most common soil type found in Wauwatosa is Mequon silt loam, 1 to 3% slopes. This soil type is found on over 2,490 acres in the City, followed by Ozaukee silt loam, high carbonate substratum, 2 to 6% slopes on 2,030 acres and Ozaukee silt loam, high carbonate substratum, 6 to 12% slopes, eroded found on 537 acres.



Steep Slopes

Red areas on the adjacent map represent areas with slopes greater than or equal to 12%. These areas represent approximately 1,050 acres or 12% of the City of Wauwatosa.



Wetlands

Wetlands as designated by the National Wetland Inventory are shown on the adjacent map. Wetland types are as shown below:

	Freshwater Emergent Wetland		Freshwater Pond
	Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland		Riverine

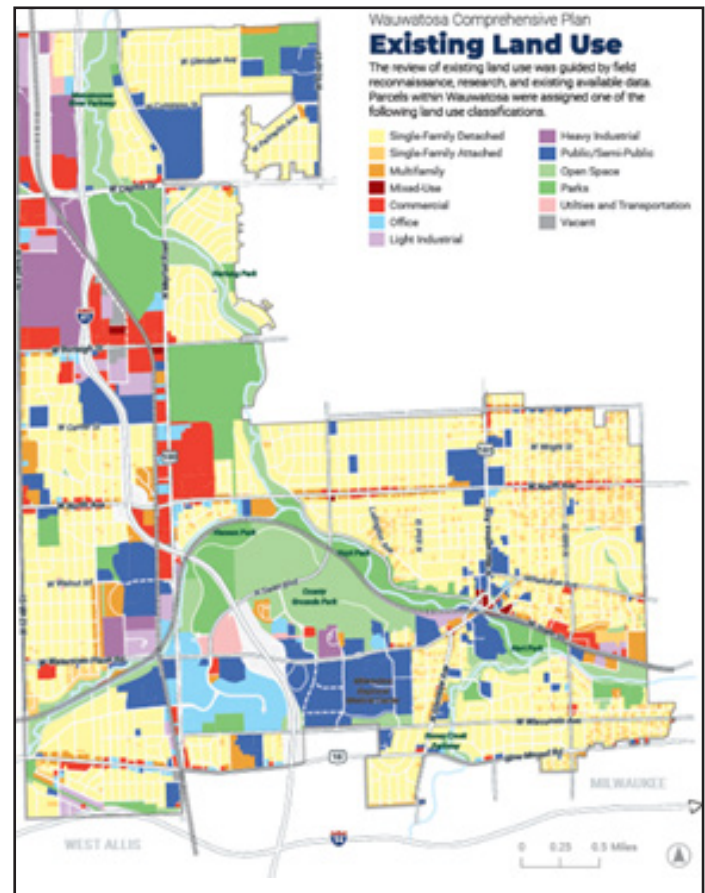
Physical Characteristics Maps Data Sources:

Topography: United States Geological Survey (USGS), Land Cover: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Floodplain: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Watersheds: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Soils: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Steep, Slopes: United States Geological Survey (USGS), Wetlands: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

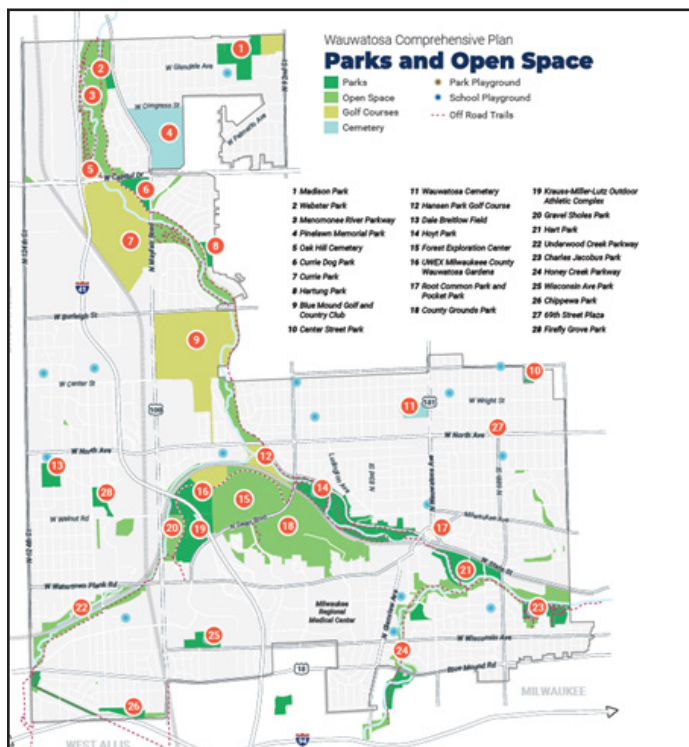
Regional and Local Context

Located along the Menomonee River and its ecologically rich riparian forest and floodplains, Wauwatosa residents also have access to much of the river corridor and its major tributaries within Wauwatosa, as they are held in public trust as a part of the Milwaukee County Park system. These areas include the Menomonee River Parkway, Underwood Creek Parkway, and Honey Creek Parkway. The distribution of county and city parks and open space lands allows Wauwatosa residents to have easy, walkable access to these facilities.

Wauwatosa has a rich history, developed mainly before World War II, and most of the historic structures are largely preserved. Wauwatosa has higher home ownership and median housing values than Milwaukee County. The City was also one of the first in Wisconsin to adopt a local zoning code. Its gridded street patterns, high density, and compact development patterns are entrenched in its appeal as an economically strong City of neighborhoods



The City of Wauwatosa measures roughly 13.2 square miles. Most of the City consists of residential neighborhoods at varying densities.



- Pre-war neighborhoods are located in the northeast and southeast portions of the City and represent the densest areas of the City. These neighborhoods also have a higher concentration of wealth than the post-war neighborhoods, predominantly located on the west side of the City.
- Multi-family housing exists along major corridors such as North Avenue, State Street, and the Village.
- All parks fall within or are immediately adjacent to residential neighborhoods.
- Commercial uses are generally located along major roadways in the City and within

the Village, including North Avenue, Mayfair Road, Burleigh Street, and Bluemound Road.

- Manufacturing uses are primarily located on the City's north side, adjacent to Highway 45. Some manufacturing facilities exist along State Street near the Village.
- Institutional land uses are distributed throughout the City; however, large contingents of institutional land are found in the Milwaukee County Grounds 1,000-acre property which hosts the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center and the University of Milwaukee Innovation Campus.

Although the City has very little vacant land, several existing underused properties present opportunities for future development and open space preservation. (See map in Appendix B)

Wauwatosa's unique position within the Milwaukee metropolitan area offers residents access to a broad network of regional amenities while maintaining a distinct identity rooted in historic neighborhoods, walkability, and compact development. The city's proximity to major institutions, parks, and recreational assets—both within and beyond its borders—enhances its livability and economic strength. Despite limited vacant land, opportunities exist for strategic redevelopment and open space preservation. As Wauwatosa continues to evolve, its integration with regional assets and commitment to neighborhood character will be key to supporting a vibrant and inclusive community.

Several of Milwaukee County's most popular parks and open spaces are located within or directly adjacent to Wauwatosa's boundaries.

- The Milwaukee County Zoo is located adjacent to the southern border of

Wauwatosa, within the City of Milwaukee. The Zoo houses over 2,000 animals within a 200-acre complex.

- Washington Park is located three miles east of Wauwatosa. This nearly 130-acre park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, was built in the late 1800s. Before 1958, the park was home to the Milwaukee City Zoo. The site is currently home to a branch of the Urban Ecology Center.
- American Family Field is located four miles southeast of Wauwatosa. The park is home to the Milwaukee Brewers and repeatedly attracts more than 2,000,000 visitors annually. Additionally, the park hosts numerous concerts and other events.
- Greenfield Park is located six miles southwest in the City of West Allis. The nearly 300-acre park contains an extensive golf course and provides access to the Root River Parkway.

Other, smaller, Milwaukee County owned parks located within Wauwatosa include Currie, Jacobus, Hoyt, Hansen, Underwood Creek Pkwy, County Grounds, WI Ave, Chippewa, and Madison. The City of Milwaukee owns the parcels which Webster and Hartung Parks are located upon, jointly operating with the City of Wauwatosa, which helps to provide additional recreation and open space resources to residents.

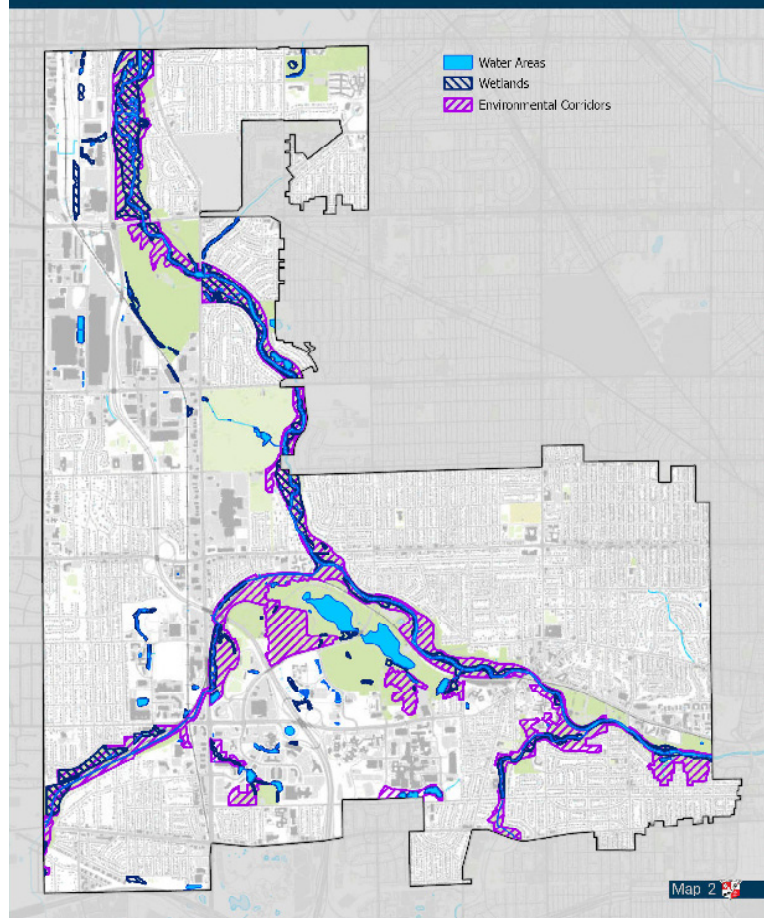
Water Resources and Environmental Considerations

The City of Wauwatosa has a vibrant network of parks and open spaces. The Department of Public Works operates and maintains approximately 88 acres of parkland under Wauwatosa's jurisdiction while other administrators, including the Wauwatosa School District and Milwaukee County Parks, manage the remaining parks, community facilities, and open spaces. The system encompasses a multitude of different recreation areas, including neighborhood parks, pocket parks, urban plazas, and multi-use trails with diverse amenities aimed at promoting active outdoor activities and passive recreation for the community.

Wauwatosa also contains a variety of natural areas. A prime example is the Menomonee River Parkway, which offers vital riparian ecosystems and spaces for recreation and enjoyment, such as Charles C. Jacobus Park, Hart Park, Hoyt Park, Hansen Park, Hartung Park, Currie Park, and Webster Park. Having long played an important role in the development of the region, the Menomonee River is one of the three primary rivers that converge in the area and flow into Lake Michigan. Portions of the river have been heavily channelized and industrialized throughout history, but the section of the river which passes through Wauwatosa gives a glimpse of a more natural setting. Trees and grasses line the riverbanks, with pockets of wetland dotting the course of the water channel. In addition to providing a home for fish, amphibians, birds, and other fauna, the river and its riparian

zone offer a range of recreational activities. Trails and paths allow for walks, and runners and bikers can follow the river as it winds through the city. Additionally, adjacent public open spaces offer spaces for picnickers, sunbathers, and other park users. However, stream and wetland modification, urban and rural runoff, construction site erosion, and industrial point sources of pollution are major contributors to the degraded water and habitat quality within the watershed. Due to historic sources of pollution, Wauwatosa's section of the Menomonee River falls within the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern. Since 1991, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has worked with local

Floodplain Map



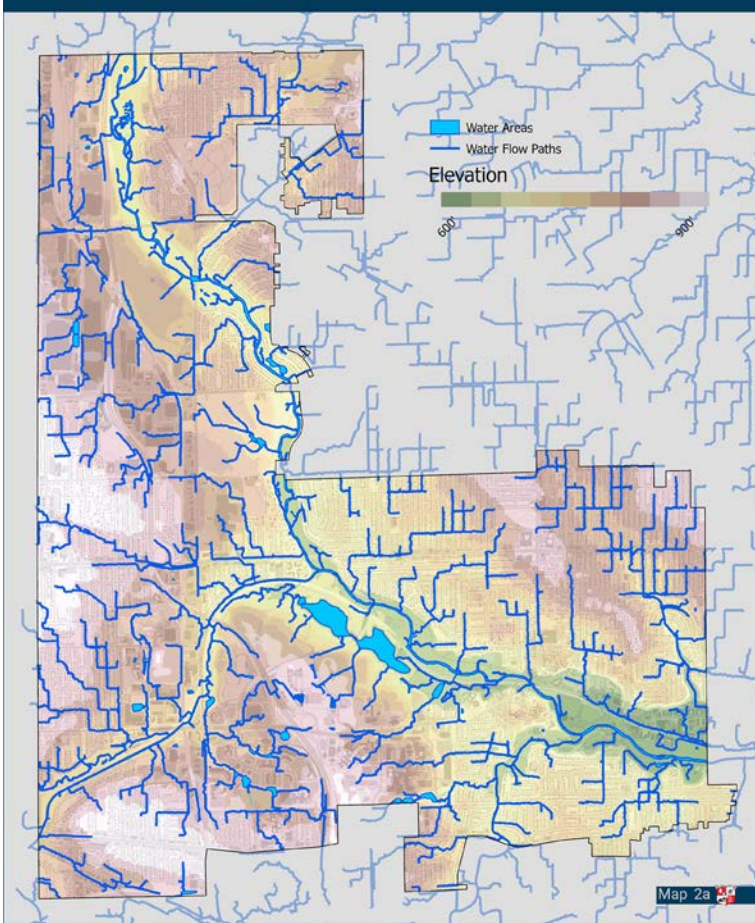
communities and partners to remediate polluted sections of the river and manage pollutants. Flooding is also a major concern in the watershed and the City is subject to numerous floodplain regulations. The corridor along the Menomonee River has a 1% annual chance of flooding, resulting in elevated fast-moving flood waters that pose significant risks to the community. Conversely other areas of Wauwatosa experience standing water during floods that naturally recede over time. To assist in mitigating these hazards, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) completed a \$48 million flood management project at Hart Park in 1997 and 1998. The park increased from 20 to 50 acres allowing for the installation of flood levees to temporarily store floodwater that could otherwise damage homes and businesses or flow into the

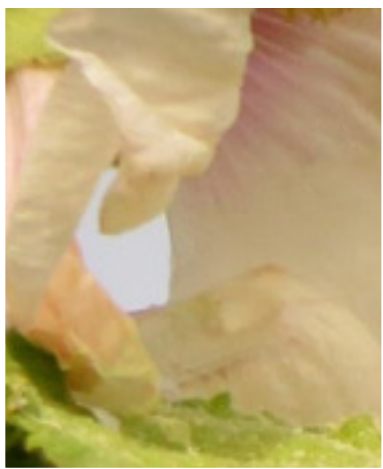
wastewater system, increasing the threat of basement backups and sewage overflows.

Another concern related to local water resources is the average depth of the water table. According to the DNR, Wauwatosa's water table depth varies from zero feet to more than 50 feet. Groundwater contamination is much more likely to occur in areas with a shallow water table depth, which lie primarily along the Menomonee River corridor. Thus, planning for low impact, natural areas in this location could be beneficial.

Wauwatosa's natural resources, particularly the Menomonee River and its surrounding parklands, play a vital role in supporting ecological health, recreation, and flood resilience. While the city faces ongoing challenges related to pollution, urban runoff, and flooding, continued collaboration with agencies such as the DNR and MMSD has led to significant improvements in water quality and flood mitigation. Ongoing restoration efforts and environmentally responsible park planning will be essential to preserving the health of the watershed, protecting public safety, and enhancing the community's connection to its natural surroundings.

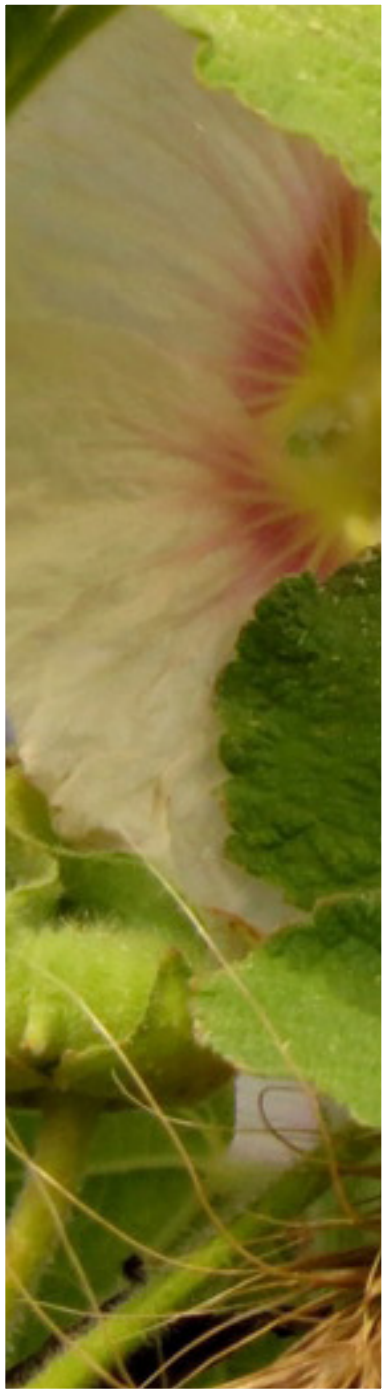
Waterflow Elevation Map





Chapter 7:

Inventory of Outdoor Recreation Resources



Park Summaries



Park Information

Address:

7300 Chestnut Street
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Park Classification:

Community Park

Area:

Approx. 42 Acres

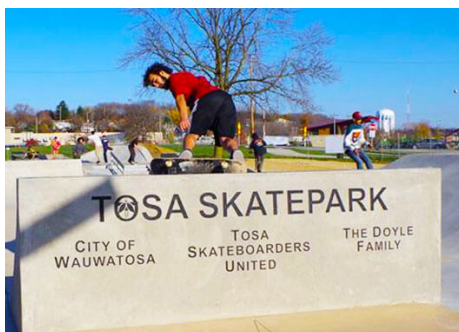
Park Hours:

7am-10pm



Existing Features

- Football/Soccer turf field
- Curling club
- Playgrounds
- Track
- Trails
- Natural Area
- Tennis courts
- Splash pad
- Skate park
- Softball field
- Rotary Performance
- Pavilion
- Park shelter
- Restroom building
- Parking lots
- Open space
- Bocce ball court
- Community Center/
Muellner Building
- Volleyball courts
- Pickleball courts





Park Information

Address:

Along the Menomonee River Parkway and W Keefe Ave
Wauwatosa, WI 53222

Area:

Approx. 6.2 Acres

Park Classification:

Neighborhood Park

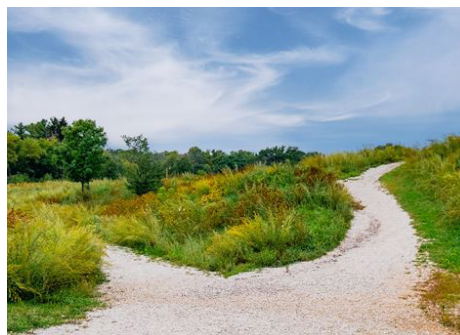
Park Hours:

7am-10pm



Existing Features

- Trails
- Playground
- Pond
- Outdoor fitness equipment
- Ping Pong table
- Stone labyrinth
- Natural areas
- Farmer's Market
- Wednesdays,
4-7pm, June through
September





Park Information

Address:

Corner of Harwood Avenue
and Wauwatosa Avenue

Park Classification:

Mini-Park

Area:

Approx. 0.37 Acres

Park Hours:

7am-10pm

Existing Features

- Green space/landscaping
- Benches
- Concrete path





Park Information

Address:

Corner of Harwood Avenue
and Wauwatosa Avenue

Park Classification:

Pocket Park

Area:

Approx. 0.51 Acres

Park Hours:

7am-10pm



Existing Features

- Green space
- Benches
- Performance stage
- Chimes and drums
- WWI Memorial





Park Information

Address:

69th Street & North Avenue

Park Classification:

Special-Use Park

Area:

Approx. 1.6 Acres

Park Hours:

7am-10pm

Existing Features

- Lounge chairs
- Picnic tables
- Shade structure
- "TOSA" bike rack/bicycle station
- Drinking fountain
- Pet fountain
- Parking lot





Park Information

Address:

4521 North Mayfair Road
Wauwatosa, WI 53225

Park Classification:

Neighborhood Park

Area:

Approx 4.1 Acres

Park Hours:

7am-10pm



Existing Features

- Playground with artificial turf surfacing
- Open space
- Parking lot
- Trail connection to Oak Leaf Trail
- Natural Area
- Benches
- Bike rack
- Picnic tables





Park Information

Address:

1900 N. 116th St.
Wauwatosa, WI 53226

Park Classification:

Community Park

Area:

Approx. 12.4 Acres

Park Hours:

7am-10pm



Existing Features

- Accessible play areas
- Nature play spaces
- Pump track
- Living willow hut
- Thomas Dambo troll sculpture & custom benches (public art)
- Sledding hill
- Picnic pavilion
- Walking paths



Image of Recent Park
Completion



Park Information

Address:

1261 N 64th St.

Park Classification:

Special Use

Area:

Approx. 22.1 Acres

Park Hours:

7am-10pm



Existing Features

- Historical
- Educational signage



Facilities and Amenities Overview

City of Wauwatosa Outdoor Recreation Inventory Chart

	Baseball/Softball Fields	Basketball Court	Bocce Court	Community Center	Disc Golf	Exercise Station	Football Field	Natural Area/Open Space	Parking	Picnic Tables	Playground	Performance Stage	Pickleball	Restrooms	Shelter	Skateboarding	Soccer Field	Splashpad	Swimming Pool	Tennis Court	Track	Volleyball	Walking Trails	Sledding Hill	Pump Track
Hart Park																									
Hartung Park																									
Pocket Park																									
Root Common Park																									
69th Street Park																									
Webster Park																									
Firefly Grove Park																									
Schoonmaker Reef																									



Milwaukee County Parks in Wauwatosa

Wauwatosa is home to several Milwaukee County parks that offer diverse recreational opportunities:

- **Jacobus Park:** 26 acre park that offers wooded areas, picnic sites, and trails, providing a natural retreat within the City.
- **Hoyt Park:** 19.9 acre park that features the TOSA Pool, playground, sand volleyball courts, soccer fields, access to the Oak Leaf Trail
- **County Grounds Parkland:** 55.5 acres park that features natural habitats, trails, and Sanctuary Woods.
- **Hansen Park:** 51.4 acres park that features open space and recreational facilities.
- **Currie Park:** 195.3 acres park which is a large riverside park that contains the Currie Park Golf Course.
- **Chippewa Park:** 10.5 acre park which is a smaller park along Park Hill Avenue that contains a basketball court, soccer field, and play area.
- **Madison Park:** 60 acre park that contains a 9-hole golf course and a variety of gathering spaces.

These parks, managed by Milwaukee County, complement Wauwatosa's city-operated parks, enhancing the community's access to green spaces and recreational facilities. County and City of Milwaukee parks, open spaces, and greenways in Wauwatosa, total 1,152 acres. Parkland is 483 acres of that total.

Accessibility and Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities

The City of Wauwatosa is committed to creating parks and open spaces that are welcoming, inclusive, and accessible to all residents, regardless of ability. Ensuring that people with disabilities can fully enjoy and participate in recreational opportunities is a central component of equitable park planning and design.

The City incorporates principles of universal design, aiming to go beyond minimum ADA compliance to create environments that serve people of all ages and abilities. Accessible routes, inclusive play equipment, sensory-friendly features, and adaptable seating and rest areas are considered essential elements in future park improvements. Feedback from local stakeholders, including the Wauwatosa Commission for Persons with Disabilities, has highlighted the need for mobility-friendly trails, pedestrian-only pathways, and better connectivity across the park system.

As Wauwatosa continues to invest in its parks, it will prioritize accessibility in both new projects and existing site upgrades, ensuring every resident can access nature, recreation, and community events with dignity, independence, and ease.



Hart Park

Chapter 8:

Needs Assessment and Public Input



Summary of Public Engagement Results

The survey underscores Wauwatosa's strong community engagement with parks, with most residents visiting frequently and valuing these spaces.

When analyzing public feedback, expanding recreational opportunities, particularly for winter sports, water activities, and natural spaces, were identified as the most desired improvements to the park system. Additionally, prioritizing accessibility, safety, and age-inclusive programming were identified as critical to ensuring the city's parks meet the evolving needs of all residents.

Suggested Needs:

- **Lack of Water-Based Recreation:**

60.5% cited a lack of river-related activities like fishing, kayaking, or swimming, and 31.5% wanted more water recreation facilities, including splash parks.

- **Limited Winter Recreation Options:**

55.2% of respondents felt there were not enough winter sports facilities, such as sledding hills, ice rinks, or cross-country skiing trails.

- **Need for More Ecological & Community Spaces:**

53.5% identified a need for more gardening and ecological restoration areas, signaling demand for community gardens or native habitat restoration initiatives.

Gathering spaces for picnicking, social events, and community programming were also a priority.

- **Barriers to Access & Inclusivity Concerns:**

Safety and comfort concerns were noted, with some residents avoiding parks for these reasons.

Parks are generally accessible, but improvements in senior-friendly amenities and adolescent-focused recreation are needed.

- **Limited Investment in Open Green Spaces**

While walking/biking and nature appreciation were prioritized, general green spaces for passive recreation (kite-flying, sunbathing, frisbee, etc.) received lower support. This suggests that while open space is valued, residents may prefer more defined recreational uses within those spaces.

- **Low Support for Stadium Sports Fields**

Football and soccer fields ranked last in funding support, suggesting that existing facilities may already meet demand, or residents prioritize other recreation types.

- **Moderate Support for Playgrounds & Children's Recreation**

Playgrounds and children's play spaces were not among the top-funded projects, possibly indicating that existing facilities meet many needs. However, niche amenities like bike playgrounds and gaga ball courts still attracted interest.

- **Fitness & Court Sports in Mid-Tier Demand**

Public fitness areas (exercise equipment, running tracks, challenge courses) and court-based sports (tennis, volleyball, futsal) were supported but not prioritized, indicating that while important, they may not be the city's most pressing recreational needs.

- **Priority Enhancements:**

Respondents highlighted the following top priorities for park improvements:

- Walking & biking paths (82.4%)
- Open spaces & natural areas (65.5%)
- Play opportunities for children (62.6%)
- Access to the Menomonee River (57.3%)
- Community events and gathering spaces (56%)

Assessment of Current and Future Outdoor Recreation Needs

A key component of any parks and recreation comprehensive plan is assessing how well existing parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities meet community needs. This is especially important in a community like Wauwatosa which sees heavy usage and high investment by the community. The following analysis examines the distribution of parks and open spaces across the community to determine whether all areas are adequately served.

Park Distribution & Geographic Coverage

Northwest Coverage: Webster Park and Hartung Park serve the northwestern neighborhoods.

Southern Area: Hart Park, Pocket Park, and Root Common Park offer coverage near major corridors and residential areas.

Western Area: Firefly Grove Park serves this area.

Central Wauwatosa: 69th St Pedestrian Plaza provides coverage in the downtown/core area.

Key Takeaway: While there is a reasonable spread of parks across the city, gaps exist on the edges of the city, particularly for residents without easy access to a car. In more industrial areas traffic and road impediments limit walking access.

Acreage & Park Size Considerations

Hart Park is the largest among the listed parks, offering significant recreational amenities and regional appeal.

Hartung Park & Webster Park provide moderate-sized green spaces, likely serving neighborhood-scale needs.

Pocket Park, Root Common Park, and 69th St.

Pedestrian Plaza are smaller spaces designed for passive use, social gathering, or pedestrian amenities rather than active recreation.

Schoonmaker Reef is a unique area that could be considered a “special use park”. While it’s currently fenced off, it is an ancient and unique geological formation that includes many fossils.

Smaller pocket parks are valuable but do not replace larger parkland for active recreation needs. Expanding or adding new parks in underserved areas may be beneficial if additional open space is needed.

Key Takeaway: Smaller pocket parks are valuable but do not replace larger parkland for active recreation needs. Expanding or adding new parks in underserved areas may be beneficial if additional open space is needed. Lack of available land for development may limit the City to smaller parks. Through deliberate and careful design, the benefits of these pocket parks will be maximized to the extent possible.

Access & Walkability

Walkability is a strength in central Wauwatosa, where parks like Root Common Park, Pocket Park, and 69th St. Pedestrian Plaza are integrated into pedestrian-friendly areas.

Webster Park and Hartung Park serve residential areas, though accessibility may vary depending on sidewalks, crossings, and traffic barriers.

Hart Park is a key regional amenity that may not be easily walkable for all northern or eastern Wauwatosa residents.

Key Takeaway: Gaps in walkable access exist in the eastern portion of Wauwatosa, particularly near major roadways.

Recreation & Amenity Provision

Hart Park provides the most comprehensive range of recreational facilities, including sports fields and courts, a skate park, a splash pad, play equipment, curling (seasonal), trails, and event spaces.

Hartung Park and Webster Park serve as natural areas and neighborhood parks, offering passive recreation but likely limited active sports amenities. There are often pick-up games in the field at Webster, like soccer. Both have play equipment. Hartung has exercise equipment.

Firefly Grove Park provides inclusive play, public art, intergenerational activities, and a pump track.

Smaller parks (69th St. Plaza, Root Common Park, Pocket Park) offer more passive and social uses rather than traditional recreation.

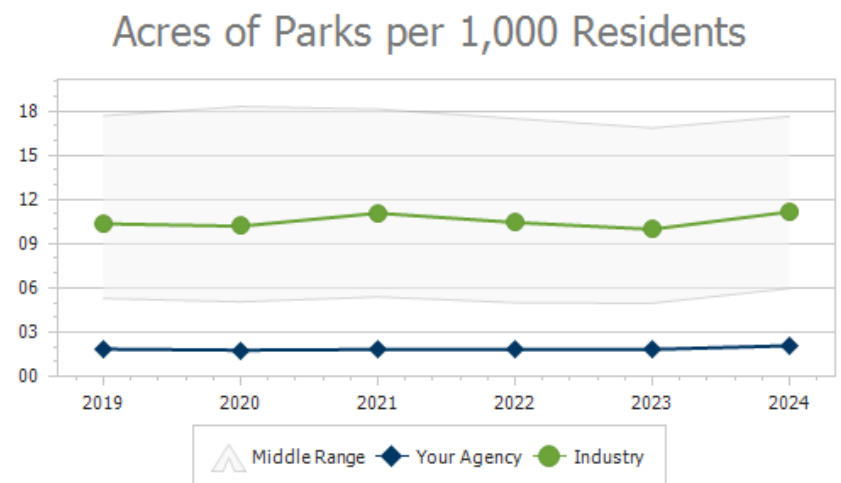
Key Takeaway: Potential Service Gap: If additional sports fields, playgrounds, or active recreation amenities are needed, the city may need to expand park offerings or enhance existing ones.

Open Space and Facilities Standards

NRPA Park Metrics

To support effective planning and management, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Park Metrics serves as the most comprehensive source of benchmarks and insights for park and recreation agencies. Since its launch in 2009, these performance resources have helped parks and recreation professionals optimize operations, allocate resources, and plan for future capital investments.

Park and recreation agencies vary widely, reflecting the unique needs of the communities they serve. What works for one agency may not be the best fit for another. The data below compares Wauwatosa to industry standards, highlighting key challenges and identifying potential solutions based on best practices.



Park Facilities

To meet the diverse needs, interests, and lifestyles of residents, park and recreation agencies must offer a variety of outdoor and indoor facilities. These facilities are vital for supporting programming, encouraging physical activity, and serving as hubs for community health, wellness, and connection. Outdoor parks and recreation spaces provide opportunities for people to gather, socialize, and engage in active living within safe and inclusive environments.

According to national benchmarks, a typical park and recreation agency provides one park for every 2,386 residents and maintains between 9 and 12 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. In comparison, the City of Wauwatosa, with a population of approximately 47,038, currently provides about 3 acres of City-owned parkland per 1,000 residents—well below recommended standards. This figure does not include Milwaukee County parks and open spaces, which also serve Wauwatosa residents. However, these areas are managed independently, and the City does not control their acreage, amenities, or maintenance.

Aside from the basic calculation of number of acres of park per resident, Ease of access and use has to be considered. Safety concerns were identified as a barrier preventing some residents from fully utilizing available parks and open spaces. While survey responses did not always distinguish between City and County-owned facilities, it is important to acknowledge that perceptions of safety—and corresponding improvements—may apply to both systems. The City of Wauwatosa takes safety and accessibility concerns seriously and considers them a top priority when planning for park improvements and public space design. Enhancing visibility, increasing programming, and maintaining high-quality amenities are essential strategies to ensure that all parks, regardless of ownership, are welcoming, inclusive, and well-used by the community.



Firefly Grove Park



Webster Park



Webster Park

Programming

Recreational programming in Wauwatosa is currently offered through the Wauwatosa School District Recreation Department, rather than the City. This structure represents a unique and collaborative model in which recreational programs are primarily hosted at elementary, middle, and high school facilities throughout the city.

The Wauwatosa Recreation Department offers a wide variety of programs designed to serve residents of all ages and interests. These programs are intended to meet the community's core recreational, educational, and social needs, and include the following focus areas:

- **Youth Sports:** Programs that offer various sports activities for children and teenagers, promoting physical fitness and teamwork.
- **Fitness and Wellness:** Activities and classes aimed at improving physical health and well-being for all age groups.
- **Arts and Cultural Programming:** Events and classes encouraging creativity and cultural engagement, such as art classes, music lessons, and cultural festivals.
- **Environmental Education:** Programs that educate the community about nature, conservation, and sustainability.
- **Community Events:** Special events that bring the community together, such as festivals, holiday celebrations, and community service projects

The Recreation Department publishes a seasonal program guides and manages a variety of special events throughout the year. This programming plays a vital role in community building, youth

development, and lifelong learning, complementing the city's physical parks and open spaces.

The City should pursue partnering with other organizations in addition to the school system's recreation department to increase programming options. Pursuing partnerships with more specialized providers can help engage a wider variety of people of different ages and abilities and bring even more people to the parks.

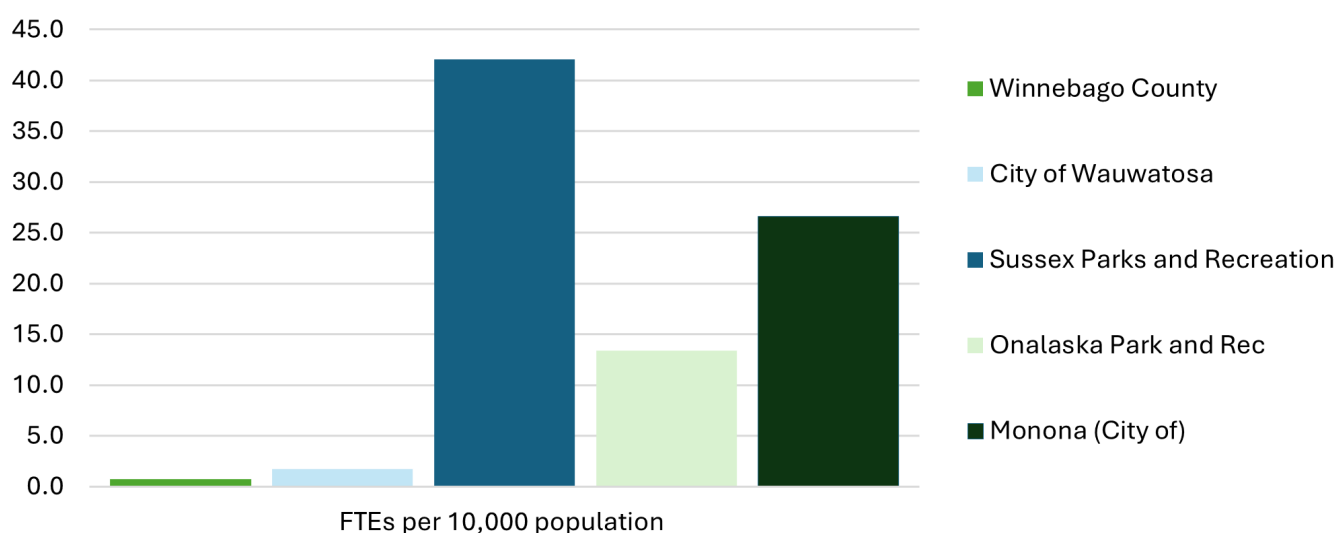


Staffing

Appropriate staffing supports park and recreation agencies' programs, facilities, and services. Park and recreation staff play a critical role in ensuring the success of their agency while creating safe, inclusive spaces for all community members.

Full-time employees are vital for agency operations, management, and long-term success. Understaffing can lead to fewer programs and activities, inadequate facility maintenance, and decreased community engagement. On average, park and recreation agencies employ 57.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members, according to the NRPA. However, staffing needs vary depending on the size and scope of each agency's jurisdiction.

FTEs per 10,000 population

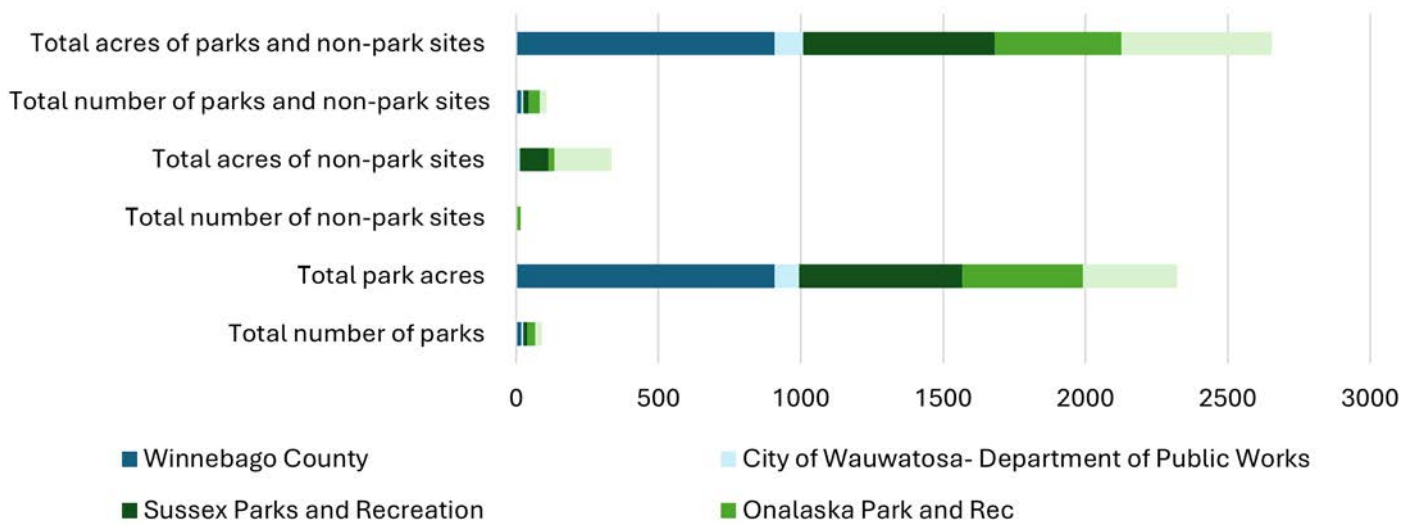


The graph above shows the number of Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) per 10,000 residents for various municipal and county park and recreation departments, including Wauwatosa, WI, in 2023.

Wauwatosa's has a relatively low number of FTEs per 10,000 residents with 1.7 FTEs compared to other municipalities. In contrast, Onalaska Park and Recreation (13.4), Sussex Parks and Recreation (42), and Monona (26.6) have significantly higher staffing levels. Winnebago County (0.7) has the lowest staffing levels, similar to Wauwatosa.

The lower FTE ratio might indicate a reliance on other departments, outsourcing, or volunteer efforts to support park operations. To align with regional or industry benchmarks, Wauwatosa should consider evaluating staffing needs and resource allocation to enhance the quality and accessibility of park services for residents.

Number of Parks and Non-Park Sites Managed by Jurisdiction



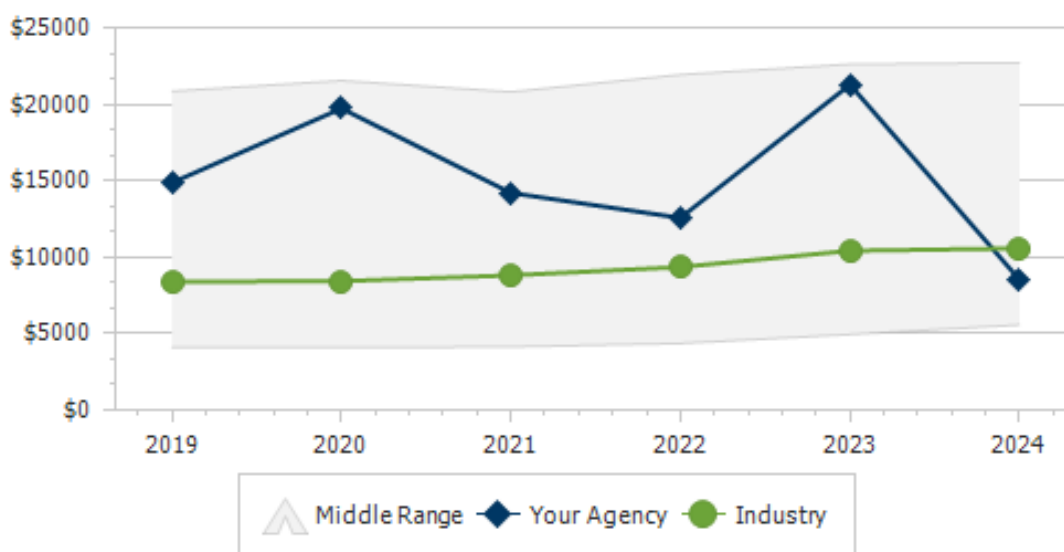
The graph above reveals that the City of Wauwatosa's Department of Public Works has significantly fewer park resources than its other municipalities. Wauwatosa manages eight parks, the lowest among the municipalities listed, compared to 27 in Onalaska and 24 in Monona. Additionally, the city's 88 acres of parkland are the smallest among the municipalities, far below Winnebago County's 907 acres, Sussex's 574 acres, and Onalaska's 425 acres. Beyond traditional park spaces, Wauwatosa manages one non-park site beyond traditional park spaces, with 14 acres; Monona manages 200 acres of non-park sites, and Sussex manages 100 acres. This results in seven managed sites (parks + non-park sites) covering 100 acres, the lowest among the municipalities compared.

The few parks, limited acreage, and lack of non-park sites indicate that Wauwatosa has a more constrained public space system, potentially affecting access to recreational opportunities and community engagement. The city's limited non-park sites suggest fewer additional public spaces, such as greenways, plazas, or specialized recreational facilities, that are more common in other municipalities. Combined with the previously analyzed low staffing levels (FTEs per 10,000 residents), these numbers suggest that staffing or funding constraints may impact Wauwatosa's park system. To better align with neighboring municipalities and industry standards, Wauwatosa could explore opportunities to expand park acreage, acquire new land, or enhance the quality and functionality of existing parks. Strategic improvements in resource allocation and partnerships, like the County, may also help increase recreational access for residents despite current limitations.

Budget

The primary goal of annual operating expenditures, including personnel services, contracts, supplies, and capital outlays, is to balance community needs with the fiscal capacity of the governing body, such as a city or county. Funding levels and sources vary by agency, but the most common source is general fund tax support. Earned revenue, generated from user fees, program registrations, and facility rentals, is commonly the second-largest source, while special taxes or levies, typically voter-approved, are sometimes used for special projects. Less common sources include public agency operating grants, sponsorships, in-kind donations, and private grants. A diverse funding strategy is essential to ensuring long-term financial sustainability while effectively meeting the recreational and operational needs of the community.

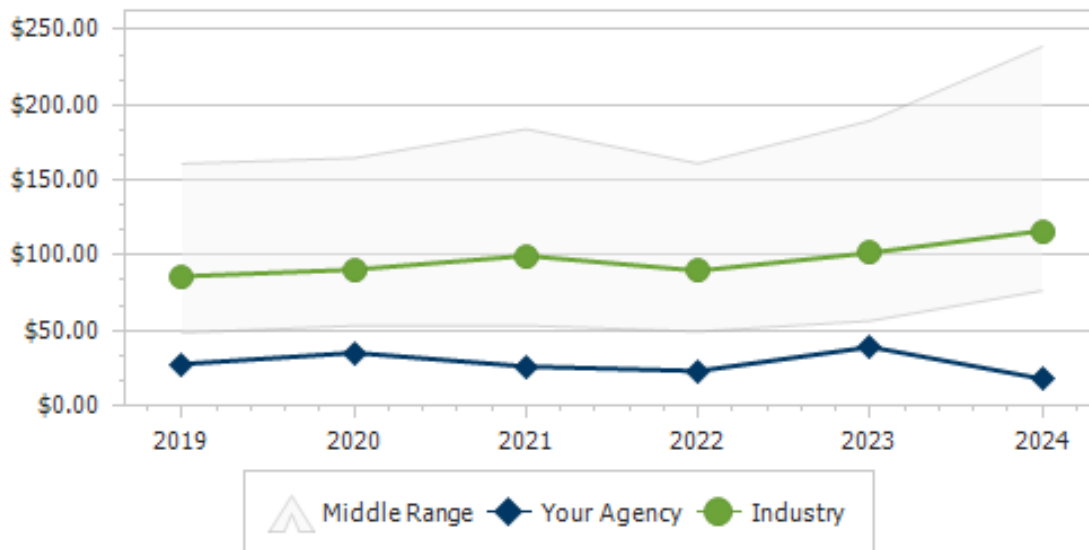
Operating expenditures per acre of parkland



The graph above shows Wauwatosa's expenditures were consistently above the industry average for most of the period, peaking in 2020 and 2023 at nearly \$20,000 per acre before experiencing a sharp decline in 2024, dropping below the industry benchmark for the first time. In contrast, the industry-standard remained stable, ranging from \$7,500 to \$10,000 per acre, with a slight upward trend.

This analysis should be reviewed periodically as it can be affected by various factors. For example, the sharp decline in 2024 was due to other funding sources, including American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds being utilized instead of general fund tax support or generated revenue.

Operating Expenditures per Capita

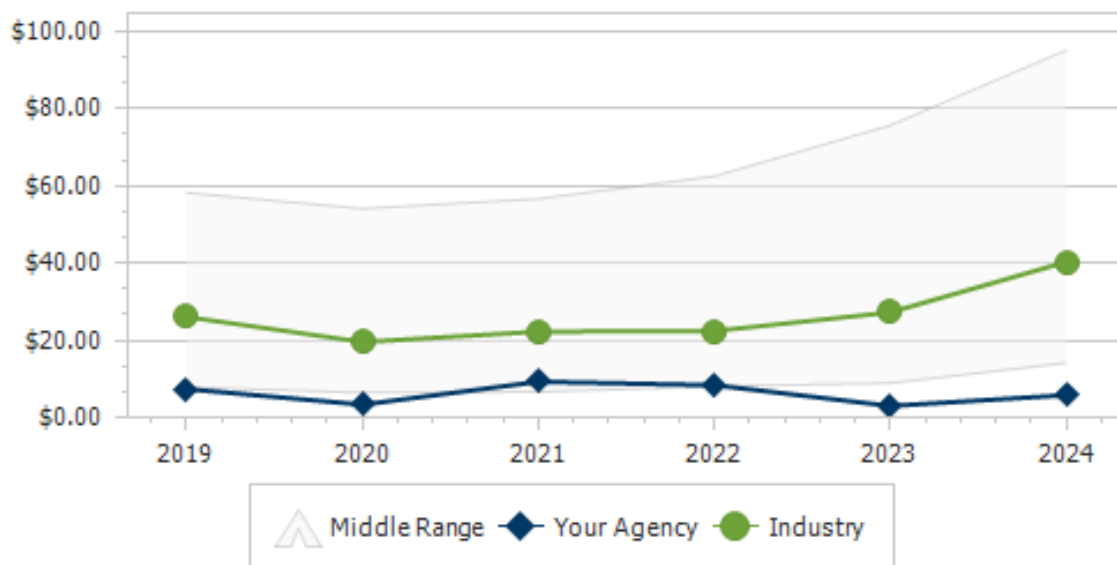


The graph above shows that the industry standard for park expenditures per capita has remained relatively stable, ranging from \$90 to \$110 per capita, with a slight increase in 2024. In contrast, Wauwatosa's expenditures have remained significantly lower, fluctuating between \$20 and \$50 per capita, peaking in 2023 before dropping again in 2024.

This low per capita spending suggests a constrained parks and recreation budget, which may limit the city's ability to maintain park infrastructure and provide high-quality services. The industry benchmark indicates that other municipalities invest significantly more in parks per resident, ensuring more robust maintenance and programming.

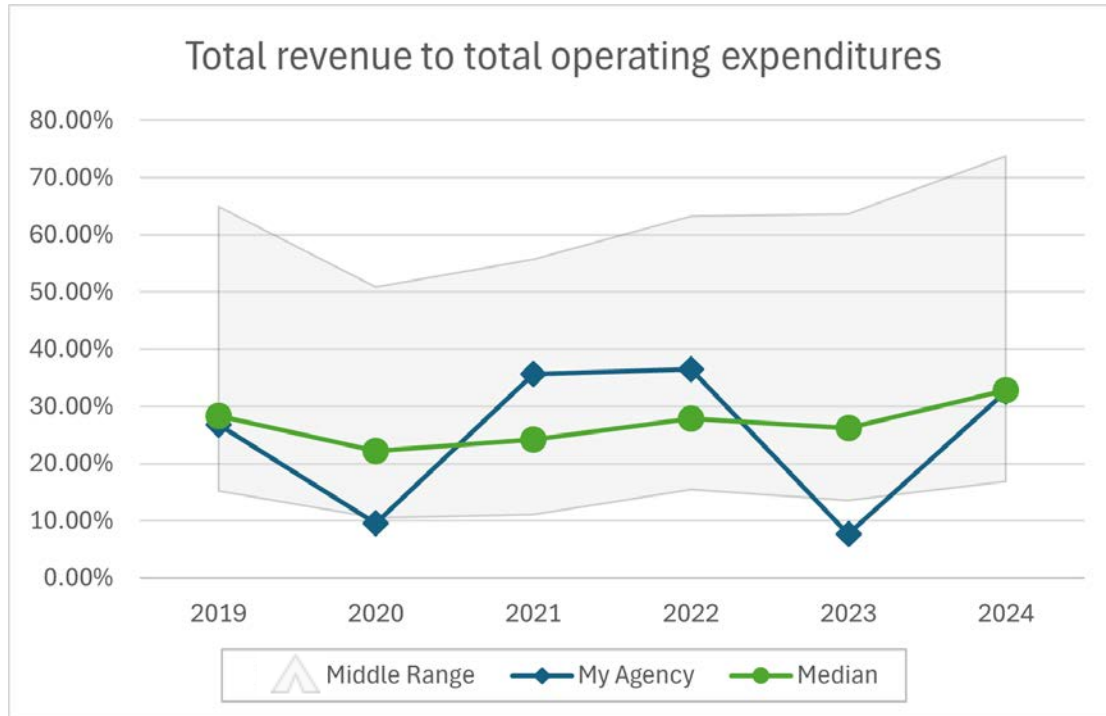
If this trend continues, Wauwatosa may struggle to meet community needs and expectations for park services, particularly in comparison to peer cities with higher per capita investments. To bridge this funding gap, the city may need to explore additional revenue sources such as grants, public-private partnerships, or cost-efficiency measures to enhance park services without drastically increasing expenditures.

Revenue per Capita



On the revenue side, the graph above shows the industry standard for revenue per capita has remained steady between \$20 and \$30 per capita, with a notable increase in 2024 to around \$40 per capita. In contrast, Wauwatosa's revenue per capita has remained consistently low, fluctuating below \$10 per capita, with only slight increases in certain years before experiencing a decline in 2023 and a recovery in 2024.

This persistent low revenue generation suggests that Wauwatosa may have limited revenue streams for its parks and recreation services, potentially relying heavily on general fund allocations rather than user fees, sponsorships, or other revenue-generating activities. To address this issue, Wauwatosa may need to explore strategies to diversify its revenue streams. Without increased revenue, the city may face challenges in sustaining or improving park and recreation services while keeping up with industry standards.



The graph above shows that the industry standard for total operating expenditures has remained relatively stable, hovering between 20% and 30%, with a gradual upward trend. In contrast, Wauwatosa's cost recovery rate has been highly variable, dropping sharply in 2020, most likely due to COVID-19, and peaking in 2021 and 2022 at approximately 35% before falling again.

The variability suggests that Wauwatosa has struggled to maintain a steady revenue-to-expenditure ratio, possibly due to fluctuating funding sources, or varying external funding and grant levels. Apart from COVID-19 in 2020, the 2023 decline indicates where revenue generation was particularly low relative to expenditures, potentially requiring greater reliance on general fund support or budget adjustments. However, the stronger performance in 2021 and 2022 suggests successful revenue-generating efforts or external funding sources in those years. As with the capital budgeting graph, revenue can be affected by unique circumstances year by year. Further analysis over time should be conducted. Depending on that outcome, Wauwatosa may need to develop a more sustainable revenue strategy, such as diversifying funding sources or implementing more consistent cost-recovery models.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and Maintenance Planning

A strategic approach to capital and maintenance planning is essential for sustaining a high-quality, resilient park system. One of the most effective ways to secure funding for necessary improvements is to proactively plan for these needs, through identifying projects which require regular maintenance or replacement and ensuring they are reflected in both the routine maintenance plan and/or the CIP.

CIP items typically require larger, one-time investments and are often eligible for external funding (e.g., grants), while routine maintenance involves smaller, recurring tasks necessary to keep facilities safe, functional, and clean.

Establishing a routine maintenance costs document can help guide annual budgeting, reduce unexpected expenses, and support long-term operations. At the same time, the CIP should allocate funding toward high-impact projects that expand and improve amenities, support accessibility, and enhance the overall park experience for all users.

To strengthen Wauwatosa's ability to secure grant funding and ensure long-term financial sustainability, it is recommended that recurring budget upgrades be prioritized and consistently reviewed and prioritized. By planning thoughtfully and investing strategically, the City can continue to improve its park system while maintaining smooth operations and delivering lasting value to the community.

Examples: Capital Improvement Plan vs. Routine Maintenance

Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)

- Playground equipment replacement
- Park shelter construction or major renovation
- Trail expansion or new trail development
- Parking lot resurfacing or expansion
- Restroom facility construction or upgrade
- New lighting installation
- Major landscaping (tree planting, grading)
- Signage and wayfinding system overhaul
- New sports court or field installation

Routine Maintenance

- Playground surfacing repairs
- Shelter cleaning and minor repairs
- Trail sweeping, patching, and vegetation trimming
- Snow removal and sweeping of existing lots
- Restroom cleaning and plumbing maintenance
- Bulb replacement and light fixture inspections
- Mowing, weeding, seasonal plantings
- Sign cleaning and touch-up painting
- Field lining, net replacements, and turf repair

Trends in Park and Recreation Usage

Staying ahead of emerging trends in parks and recreation is essential for agencies looking to engage the public and remain relevant. Several key developments are shaping the industry, strongly emphasizing inclusive programming, evolving recreational preferences, and increased outdoor participation. The following trends, identified by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Productive Parks, and the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), highlight the most significant shifts in community recreation.

According to the 2024 Outdoor Participation Trends Report (OIA) outdoor recreation participation grew by 4.1% in 2023, with 57.3% of Americans aged six and older and approximately 175.8 million people engaging in outdoor activities. Since 2019, 22.2 million more Americans have taken part in outdoor recreation. Notably, the participation base is becoming more diverse.

However, while overall participation is growing, frequency is declining. The average number of outings per participant has dropped from 87 per year in 2012 to 62.5 in 2023, suggesting a shift toward more casual engagement.

Implications for Parks and Recreation:

- **Catering to Casual Participants:** With more people engaging in outdoor recreation but less frequently, agencies should design accessible, low-commitment programs like drop-in fitness classes, social hikes, and pop-up outdoor events.
- **Enhancing Inclusivity:** As outdoor

participation becomes more diverse, agencies must prioritize equitable access, culturally relevant programming, and outreach efforts to engage underrepresented groups.

- **Encouraging Frequent Engagement:** To counter declining participation frequency, agencies could introduce community challenges, seasonal engagement programs, and family-friendly incentives to motivate regular park visits.

Top Park and Recreation Trends:

- **Expansion of Dog-Friendly Spaces.** Recognizing the growing number of pet owners, many communities are developing dog parks and pet-friendly areas. These spaces provide safe environments for pets to exercise and socialize, enhancing the quality of life for pet owners and their companions.
- **Growth of Community Gardens.** There's a rising interest in community gardens, driven by environmental awareness and a desire for local food sources. These gardens promote community engagement and healthier eating habits and can alleviate local food insecurities.
- **Diverse Programming Initiatives.** Agencies are introducing various programs to cater to different demographics: Family Engagement Nights, Seasonal Festivals, Fitness Programming, Holiday Karaoke, "Eldertainment", "Kidult" Activities, and Library Partnerships. These initiatives aim to foster inclusivity and address the diverse interests of the community

- **Evolution of Playgrounds.** Modern playgrounds are focusing on inclusivity, eco-consciousness, and nature-based play. Designs now often incorporate recycled materials, cater to all ability levels, and include natural elements to foster sensory experiences and a connection with nature. Reflecting local culture and history in playground design can also bolster community pride.
- **Pickleball's Continued Popularity.** Pickleball maintains its status as a rapidly growing sport, with approximately 36.5 million players in the United States. Its accessibility and minimal equipment requirements contribute to its widespread appeal. On average, 130 new pickleball locations are established monthly, indicating sustained demand for facilities. Agencies should consider expanding pickleball offerings to accommodate this interest.

Alignment with Statewide Recreation Goals (SCORP)

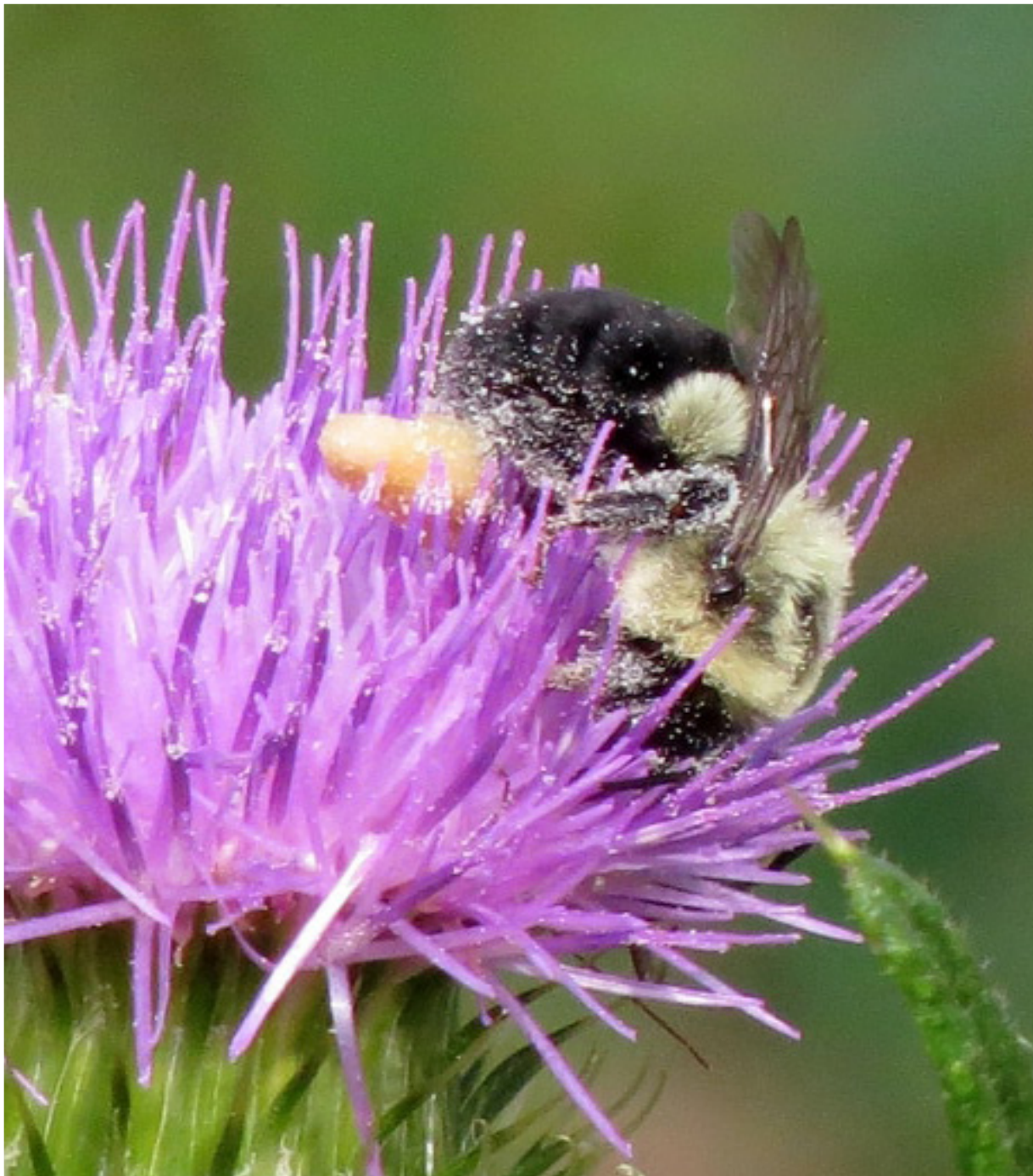
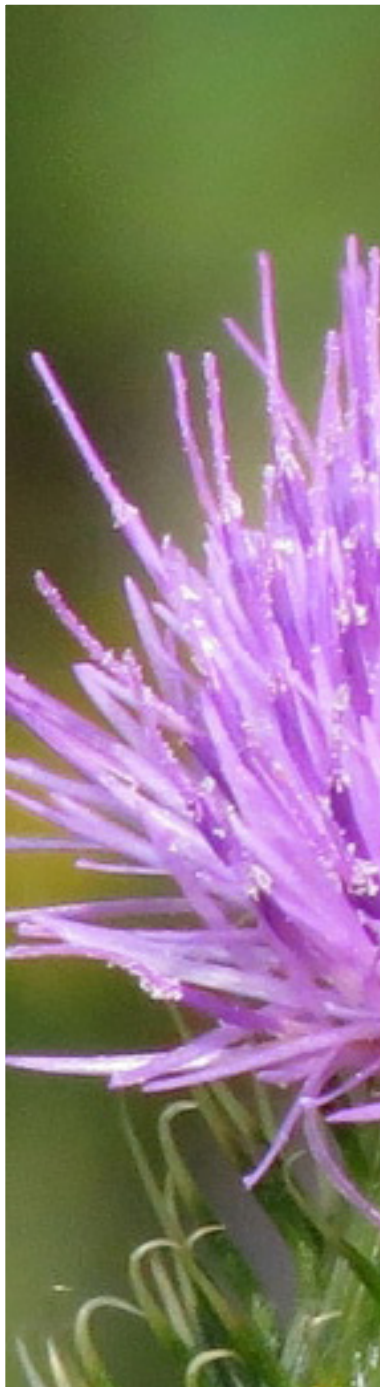
The 2025–2030 Wauwatosa Parks and Open Space Plan aligns with the goals and strategies outlined in the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), ensuring consistency with statewide priorities and enhancing the City's eligibility for funding.

Wisconsin's SCORP identifies three core goals: advancing equitable access to outdoor recreation, promoting sustainable growth and funding for existing opportunities, and fostering collaborative partnerships across agencies and organizations. Wauwatosa's plan reflects these values by focusing on multi-generational and inclusive park amenities, enhancing walkable and accessible park access, and identifying local and regional partners to support future development and programming.

Incorporating SCORP strategies, such as expanding close-to-home recreation, improving affordability and access, addressing climate resiliency, and creating more welcoming public spaces, Wauwatosa is positioned to proactively meet evolving community needs while supporting the broader vision for outdoor recreation across Wisconsin.

Chapter 9:

Recommendations and Action Plan



This section outlines park-specific recommendations and overall considerations based on community feedback and observations of Wauwatosa's existing parks. These recommendations and considerations provide guidance for the Wauwatosa Parks Department to implement targeted improvements that enhance park facilities, accessibility, and overall user experience. Many of the recommendations will involve partnerships across City departments to achieve the desired results.



Park-Specific Recommendations



Suggested Enhancements

1. Explore multi-generational fitness opportunities.
2. Pursue partnerships for intergenerational programming (e.g., grandparents and grandchildren nature walks).
3. Expand amphitheater events: Increase outdoor concerts, family movie nights, and cultural festivals.
4. Investigate increased access to the river.

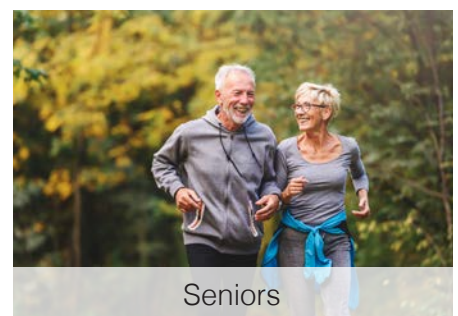
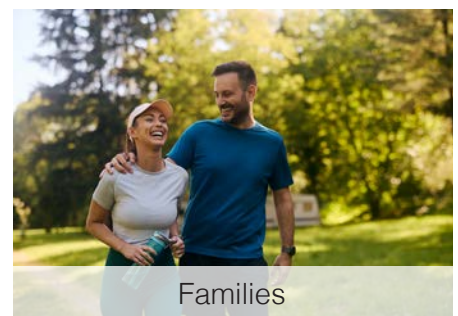
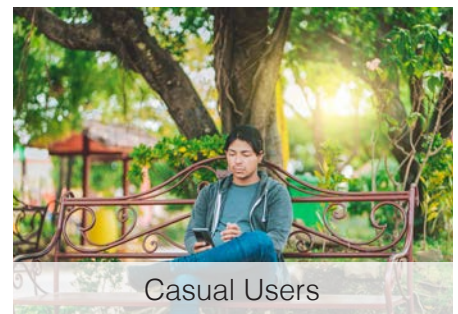
Connectivity & Accessibility Improvements:

1. Improve accessibility in parking lot by improving curb cuts and replacing lighting with more efficient, effective features.
2. Add enhanced pedestrian crossings leading into the park for safety.
3. Add wayfinding signage to increase ease of navigating.

Sustainability & Environmental Stewardship

1. Continue to expand native plant gardens to attract pollinators and enhance biodiversity.
2. Continue implementing stormwater management features to protect the river and groundwater resources.
3. Explore community gardens and native landscaping to address demand for more green space and sustainable gardening initiatives.
4. Assess and maintain irrigation systems to minimize water waste.

Targeted Groups





Suggested Enhancements

(To be pursued with the County because Hartung is City owned and Webster is County owned):

1. Pursue nature-based play areas for children when play areas are replaced or enhanced.
2. Provide senior-friendly walking paths with rest areas.
3. Explore partnerships for youth programming: STEM activities, junior naturalist programs.
4. Offer a variety of interesting seating options, which offer both functional and playful opportunities.

Connectivity & Accessibility Improvements:

1. Provide better sidewalk connections to integrate parks with residential neighborhoods.
2. Add safe crossings to increase ease of access.

Targeted Groups



Families with Children



Older Adults

Root Common & Pocket Park

Small Urban Parks



Suggested Enhancements

1. Wi-Fi-enabled workspaces and seating areas: Cater to remote workers with outdoor tables, shade structures, and power access.
2. Partnerships for small-scale community events (coffee socials, book clubs).
3. Partnerships for pop-up fitness classes (tai chi, yoga, meditation).
4. Public art installations: public art, integrate murals, sculptures, and interactive exhibits.

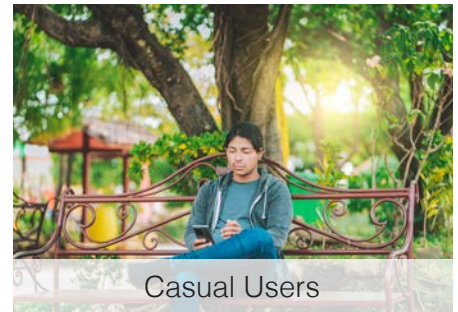
Connectivity & Accessibility Improvements:

1. Enhanced bike parking
2. Encourage increased natural surveillance to promote user safety and comfort.

Sustainability & Environmental Stewardship

1. Rain gardens and permeable pavement to absorb runoff.
2. Expanded shade or tree canopy to provide shade and cooling effects.

Targeted Groups



Casual Users



Seniors



Teens



Suggested Enhancements

1. Add interactive public art installations.
2. Outdoor gaming areas (chess tables, lawn games).
3. Community pop-up events (food trucks, craft fairs).

Connectivity & Accessibility Improvements:

1. Encourage safe pedestrian crossings
2. ADA-accessible seating.

Sustainability & Environmental Stewardship

1. Utilize recycled materials for furniture and seating.
2. Proactively maintain existing pervious pavement to ensure continuing functionality.

Targeted Groups





Suggested Enhancements

1. A dedicated alder is working with a group of neighbors to kick off event programming and volunteer workdays.
2. Partnering with organizations to restore the creek and wetlands that flow through the park. Collaborate with the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) and Ducks Unlimited to accomplish these goals.

Connectivity & Accessibility Improvements:

1. Add high-visibility crosswalks at N 114th Street and 116th Street/W Gilbert Ave entrances.
2. Install low-profile wayfinding signs at key junctions showing accessible routes, distances, and feature locations.
3. Develop themed signage using park motifs (e.g. troll, willow) to guide visitors and highlight accessible routes.
4. Add sensory play features (e.g. sound instruments) to enhance the accessible play area for children of all abilities.

Sustainability & Environmental Stewardship

1. Expand native plantings to link the rain garden, pond, and underused turf areas, creating continuous habitat corridors.
2. Install an educational kiosk displaying real-time solar energy generation, carbon offset, and stormwater treatment benefits.
3. Use environmentally sensitive de-icing materials on sledding hill approaches and main walking paths to protect water quality.

Targeted Groups



Image of Recent Park Completion



Suggested Enhancements

1. Investigate methods to allow public access and opportunities to appreciate & learn, while safely preserving history.

Connectivity & Accessibility Improvements:

1. Create a small accessible observation deck or platform outside the fenced area to allow safe viewing of the reef without disturbing it.
2. Install entry signage, and directional signage from nearby streets, trails, and parks to the reef, integrating it into Wauwatosa's pedestrian network.
3. Coordinate with WDOT and the Wauwatosa Historical Society to include the reef in walking tours and bike routes.

Sustainability & Environmental Stewardship

1. Provide interpretive panels explaining the reef's significance, its fossil history, and why physical access is restricted.
2. Use recycled or sustainably sourced materials for viewing platforms, fencing, and signage to align with environmental goals.

Targeted Groups



Maintenance and Operations Considerations

Category	Area of Implementation	Recommendation
Landscape and Environment	Land Management	Continue actively researching and applying for funding, including state and federal grants, to support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of the City's park system to provide quality recreational spaces that meet the community's needs. To better align with neighboring municipalities and industry standards, Wauwatosa could explore opportunities to expand park acreage, acquire land, explore further opportunities in partnering with MKE County, or focus on enhancing the quality and functionality of existing parks. Strategic improvements in resource allocation and partnerships may also help increase recreational access for residents despite current limitations.
	Green Infrastructure	Low Impact Development (LID) is a comprehensive approach to stormwater and land use management, replicating natural hydrologic functions by promoting infiltration, filtration, storage, and evaporation of stormwater runoff. Emphasizing conservation and on-site natural features, LID integrates distributed stormwater management practices into a project's design, particularly landscaping and open space. The LID stormwater management process often includes a treatment train comprising various practices, such as minimizing soil disturbance, impervious area reduction, pervious pavement, shallow bioretention systems, vegetated or grassed swales, vegetated filter strips, minimizing directly connected impervious areas, cisterns, and stormwater harvesting.



Benefits of Green Infrastructure

- Alleviates localized flooding for continued use following an intense summer rain event.
- Reduces peak flow of runoff entering the municipal sewer system thus reducing stress on downstream infrastructure and waterways.
- Improves water quality by filtering runoff of sediments and pollutants.
- Recharges groundwater by infiltrating runoff back into soil.
- Creates habitat for pollinators and migratory birds.
- Reduces heat island effect by replacing paved surfaces with vegetation.
- Increases human access to nature within an otherwise urban environment.
- Improves overall aesthetic of an area.

Low Impact Development (LID)

Tourism	Placemaking	Continue to organize and/or support winter placemaking events that activate public spaces and encourage community engagement during the colder months, to provide seasonal recreational opportunities that promote wellness, social connection, and enjoyment of outdoor spaces all year.
Facilities/ Infrastructure Enhancements	Level of Service	Using the comparisons provided, monitor and enhance level of service provided for recreational and park facilities to provide adequate recreational facilities and space for residents.
	Accessibility	Where possible, with existing infrastructure, ensure that facilities are accessible to all users.
	Improved Equipment	To further enhance recreational spaces by exploring options to modernize equipment that can better cater to diverse age groups, interests, and activity levels by incorporating advanced technologies and interactive elements.
	Permeable Pavement	Given the need for versatile programming accommodating varying crowd sizes and special events, permeable pavement, including options like permeable asphalt, permeable concrete, and permeable pavers, incorporates pores or openings to enable water to pass through the surface and percolate into the existing subsoil. In areas with restricted soil drainage, permeable pavement can be synergistically employed with subsurface drainage systems, such as pipe underdrains or stormwater sewer system.
	Enhanced Lighting	Purposeful and intentionally designed lighting emerges as a transformative element, establishing an inviting atmosphere. Incorporating primary and enhanced lighting is crucial in improving the city's parks. Lighting, as a defining element, plays a pivotal role in shaping the perception of safety, catering to pedestrians and cyclists using the parks, especially during evening hours, whether for casual use or to participate in city-led events. Consider solar lighting elements where feasible.
	Multi-Modal Access	Improved bike network connectivity allows cyclists to transition from roads to shared paths, reducing disruptions seamlessly. Parks should serve as multi-modal connections to key city destinations, fostering an integrated and efficient urban transportation network.
	Safety	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a methodology aimed at mitigating criminal activity and the associated fear by diminishing opportunities for illegal behavior and promoting social engagement among people using a given area. The design of parks can significantly influence the public's impression of safety and their subsequent inclination to utilize the facilities. The implementation of CPTED can effectively inform recommendations for appropriate CPTED strategies. However, it is important to note that this approach should not function autonomously as the exclusive way of preventing crime. Rather, it should be implemented in tandem with other community-oriented strategies.
	Reef	Promote, protect, and provide access to Schoonmaker Reef

Conservation	Native Vegetation/ Enhanced natural biodiversity	Including native plants in upcoming improvements fosters a sustainable and ecologically-friendly environment characterized by increased resiliency, improved water quality, drought resistance, and an overall enhancement of landscaping and park aesthetics. Develop a tree Maintenance and tree planting plan (5 year) with a focus on biodiversity.
	Community Engagement through Volunteerism	Foster community involvement by partnering with organizations that can assist by providing volunteer opportunities aligned with local beautification initiatives, specifically focusing on park clean-ups.
Promotion	Branding and Wayfinding	Leveraging art can be a great way to brand Wauwatosa. Public art installations can create a unique city identity and make it more attractive to tourists and residents alike, creating a sense of community and place. By commissioning public art installations, Wauwatosa can create a unique identity that reflects its history, culture, and values. This can help attract new residents and businesses while creating a sense of pride and belonging among existing residents. Installations such as murals and sculptures can tell the story of the city's history and culture and be used for promotional branding of events and potential programming.
	Community Engagement	Implement self-guided activities like a scavenger hunt or geocaching in parks and open spaces featuring city-themed symbols and icons. This interactive experience can be facilitated through apps which can be accessed on cell phones. The Parks Department and the city can disseminate pertinent maps, historical highlights, and clues via the app, offering a family-friendly attraction that guides visitors through a self-guided tour. Expanding partnerships with local businesses can offer coupons distributed to participants through the app to incentivize visits to local businesses and eateries in the area. This can also be promoted online, the City's website and through social media outlets.
	Social Media Awareness	Facilitate special events or promotions encouraging visitors to capture photos with city/environmental-themed art installations and share them using specific hashtags on their social media accounts. This activation strategy not only boosts awareness among residents about park improvements but also establishes the parks and open spaces in Wauwatosa as a destination. The aggregated social media posts serve as free exposure for the city, enticing tourists. Example: Selfie Station.
	Sponsorships/ Partnerships	Consider sponsorships and partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and community groups to support park facilities, events, and programs. These collaborations can enhance recreational opportunities, promote community engagement, and provide significant financial support. Additionally, offering naming rights for sports fields, playgrounds, and other amenities can serve as a lucrative funding option.

Funding Opportunities and Strategies

To support the continued enhancement and sustainability of Wauwatosa's parks and recreational facilities, a diverse and proactive funding strategy is essential. In addition to traditional municipal budgeting and capital improvement planning, the City should continue pursuing non-traditional funding sources such as corporate sponsorships, private donations, naming rights, and public-private partnerships to fund specific facility improvements, programming, and special events.

Pursuing grant opportunities at the local, state, and federal levels can also provide significant financial support for priority projects—particularly those related to accessibility, conservation, and community health. Leveraging partnerships with non-profits, community organizations, and regional agencies can enhance eligibility and impact when applying for competitive grants.

A more comprehensive list of funding programs and grant mechanisms is included in Appendix D. This list can serve as a working resource for City staff and community partners to pursue targeted opportunities that align with Wauwatosa's park improvement goals.



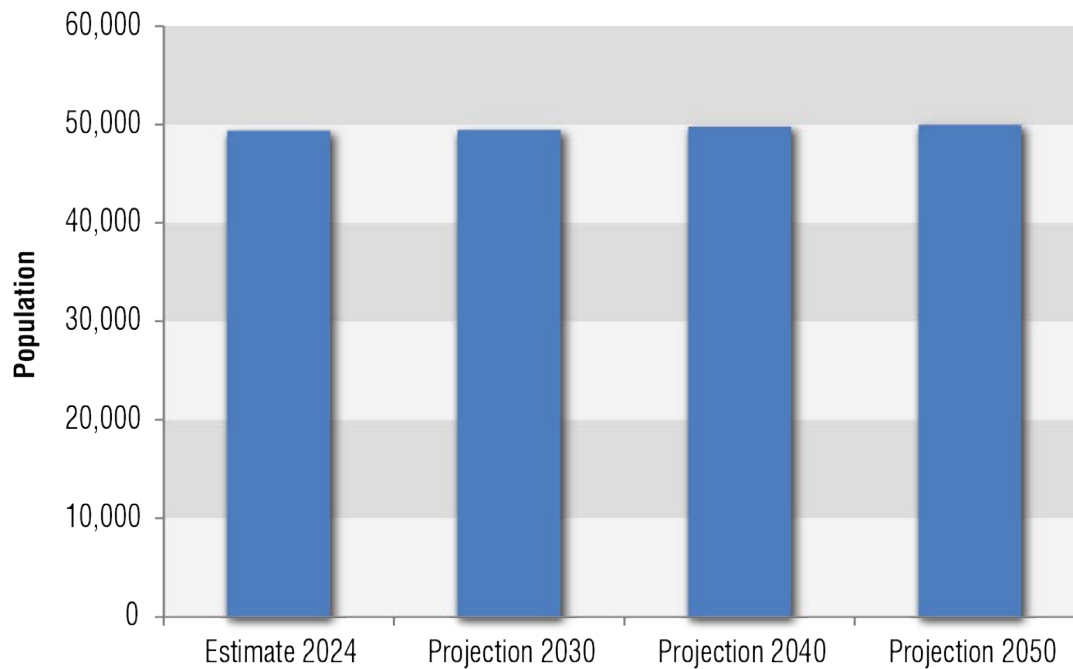
Hart Park

Appendices



Appendix A: Additional Supporting Data and Documentation

Wauwatosa Population Projection (2030-2050)



Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration Estimates and Projections

Table 1.1: Population Projections for Wauwatosa and Comparables (2050)

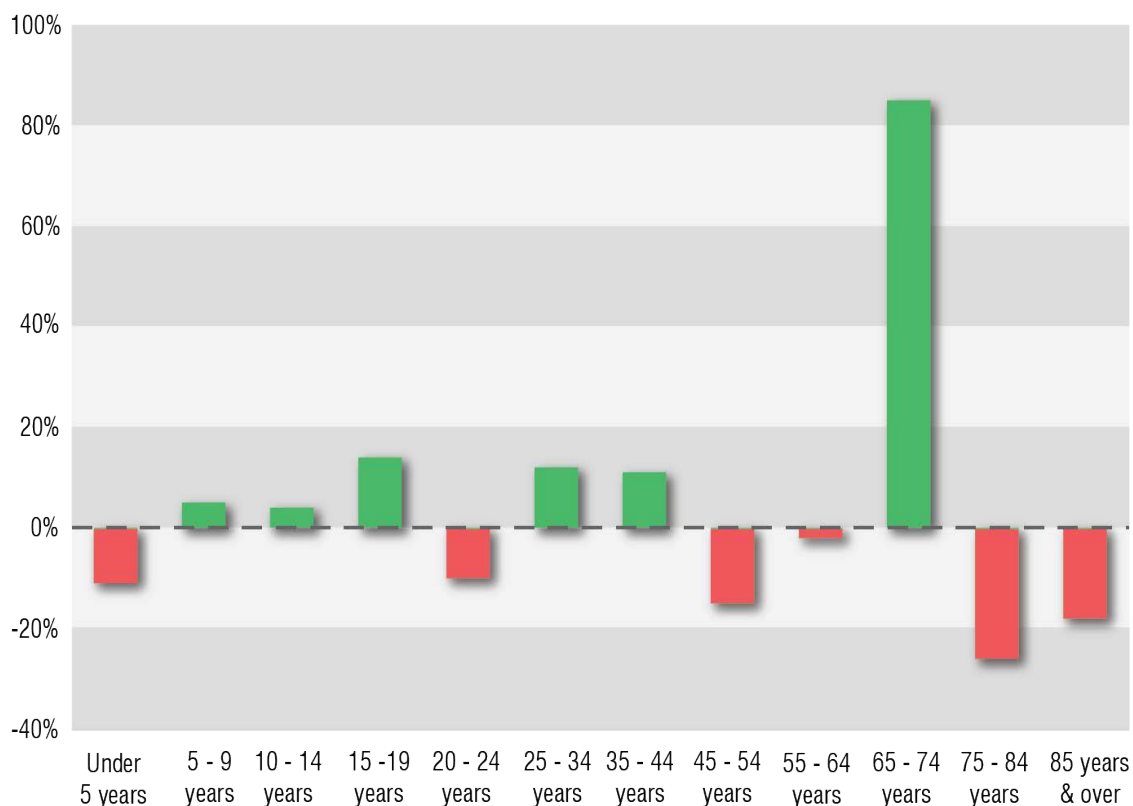
Municipality	Estimate 2024	Projection 2030	Projection 2040	Projection 2050	Percentage Change 2024-2050
Wauwatosa	49,363	49,438	49,826	49,986	1%
Sheboygan	49,886	48,404	46,450	43,541	-13%
West Bend	32,288	31,280	30,381	28,269	-12%
West Allis	59,934	58,092	55,221	52,280	-13%
Oak Creek	38,860	40,416	43,669	46,558	20%
New Berlin	40,055	38,221	35,737	32,707	-18%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration Estimates and Projections

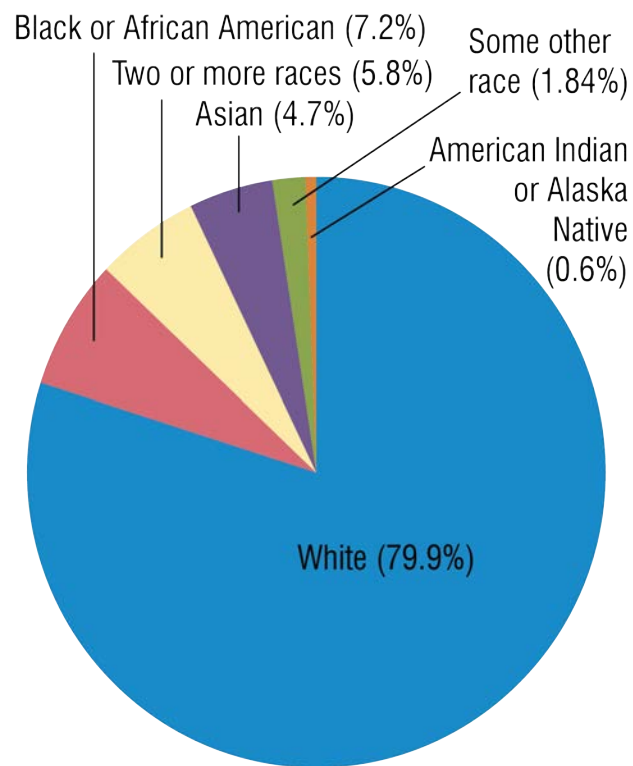
Table 1.2: Age Distribution, 2010-2023 City of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

	2010		2023		Percent Change 2010- 2023
	Number	%	Number	%	
Under 5 years	3,134	6.8	2,795	5.9	-11%
5 to 9 years	2,512	5.4	2,637	5.5	5%
10 to 14 years	2,511	5.4	2,605	5.5	4%
15 to 19 years	2,570	5.6	2,936	6.2	14%
20 to 24 years	2,245	4.9	2,028	4.2	-10%
25 to 34 years	7,261	15.7	8,130	17.0	12%
35 to 44 years	6,269	13.6	6,961	14.6	11%
45 to 54 years	6,647	14.4	5,660	11.9	-15%
55 to 64 years	5,597	12.1	5,478	11.5	-2%
65 to 74 years	2,551	5.5	4,716	9.9	85%
75 to 84 years	2,791	6.0	2,067	4.3	-26%
85 years and over	2,091	4.5	1,705	3.6	-18%
Total Population	46,179		47,718		3%

Source: US Census Bureau

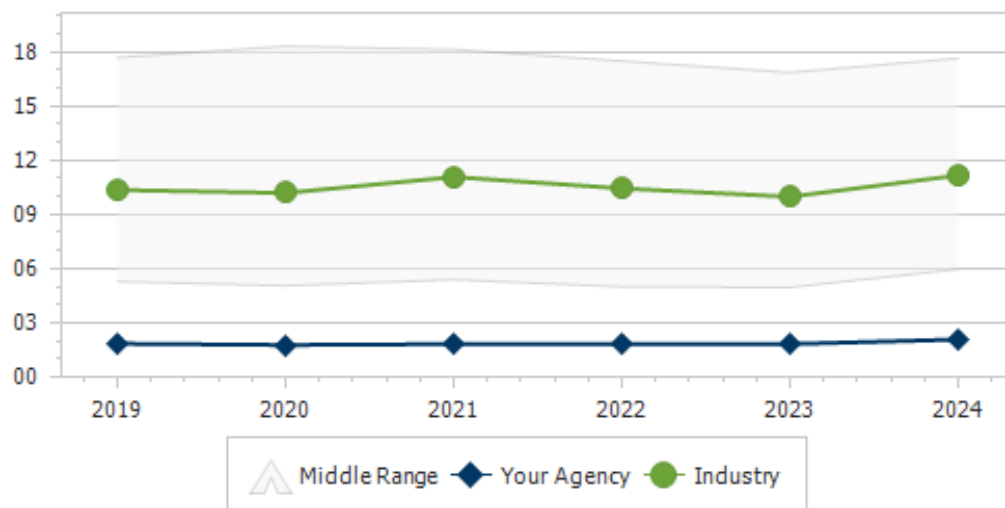
Population Change (2010-2022)

Ethnic Background

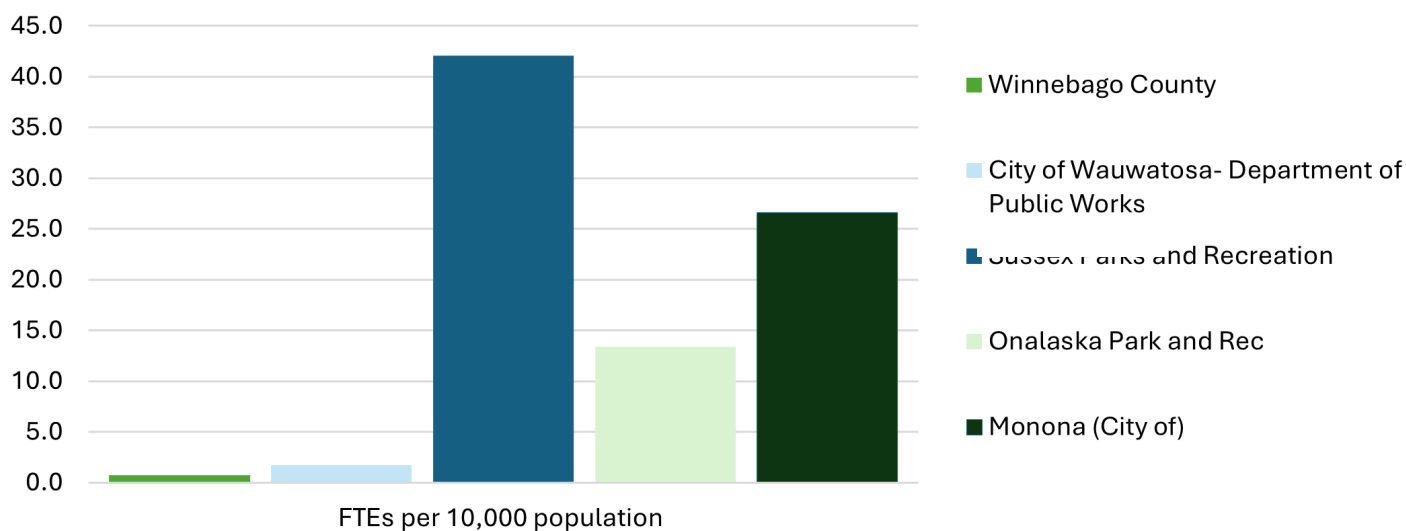


Source: Worldpopulationreview.com, 2025

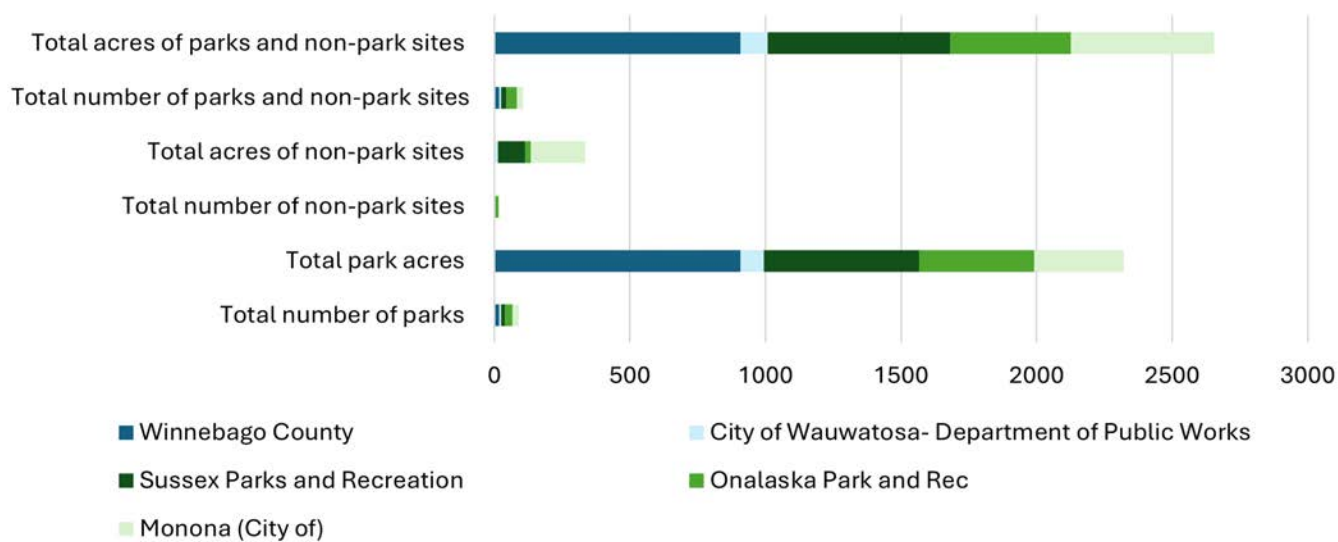
Acres of Parks per 1,000 Residents



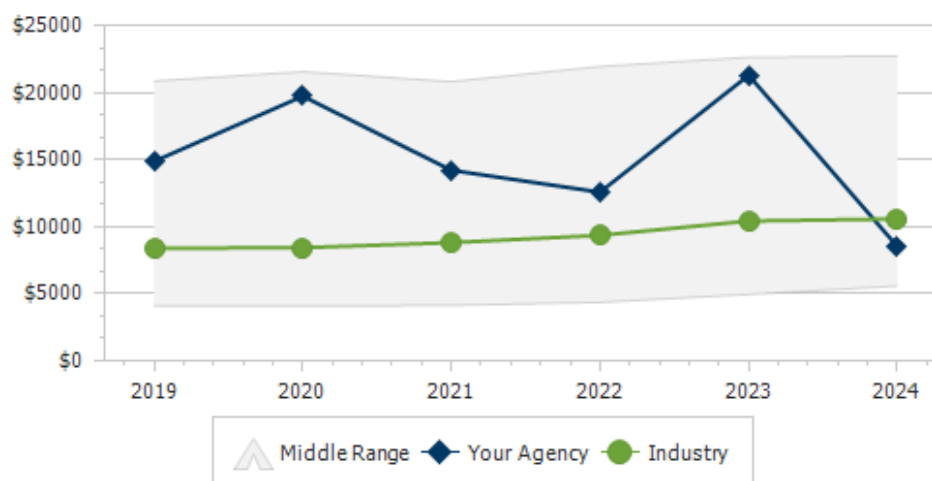
FTEs per 10,000 Population (2023)



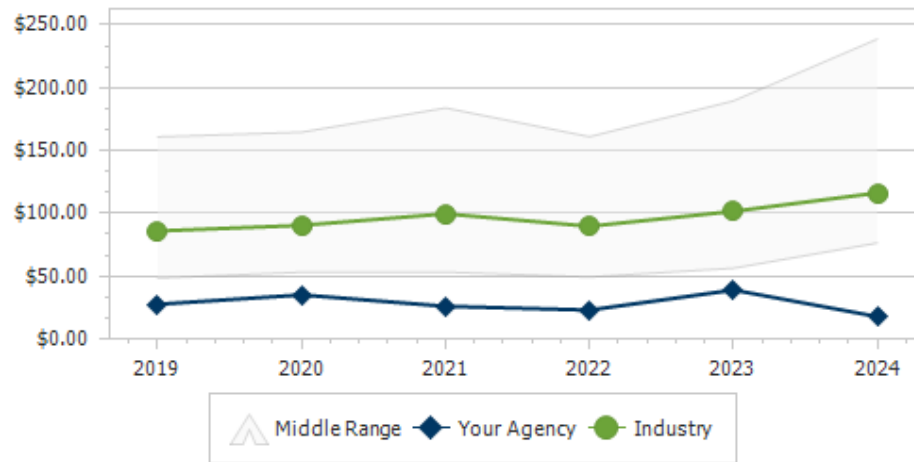
Number of Parks and Non-Parks Sites Managed by Jurisdiction



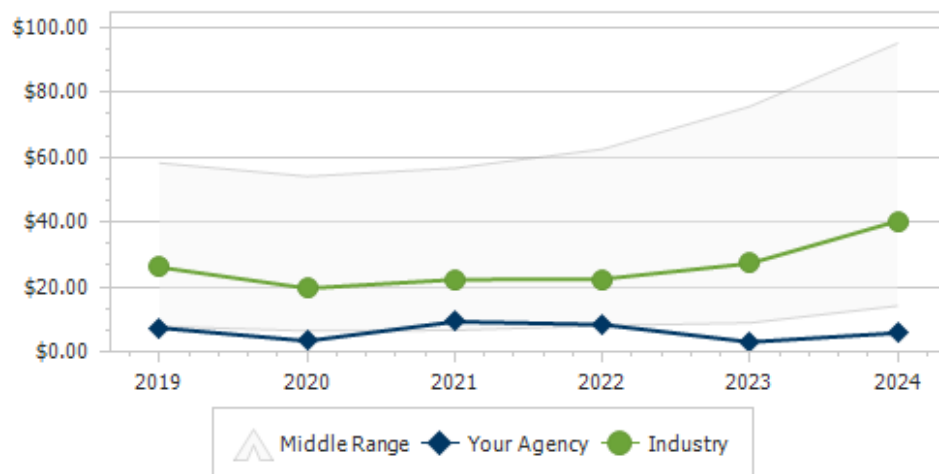
Operating Expenditures Per Acre of Parkland



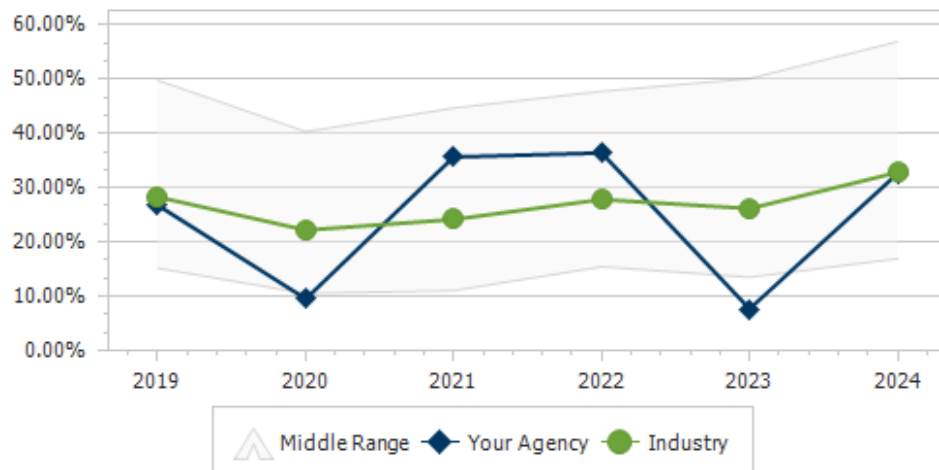
Operating Expenditures Per Capita



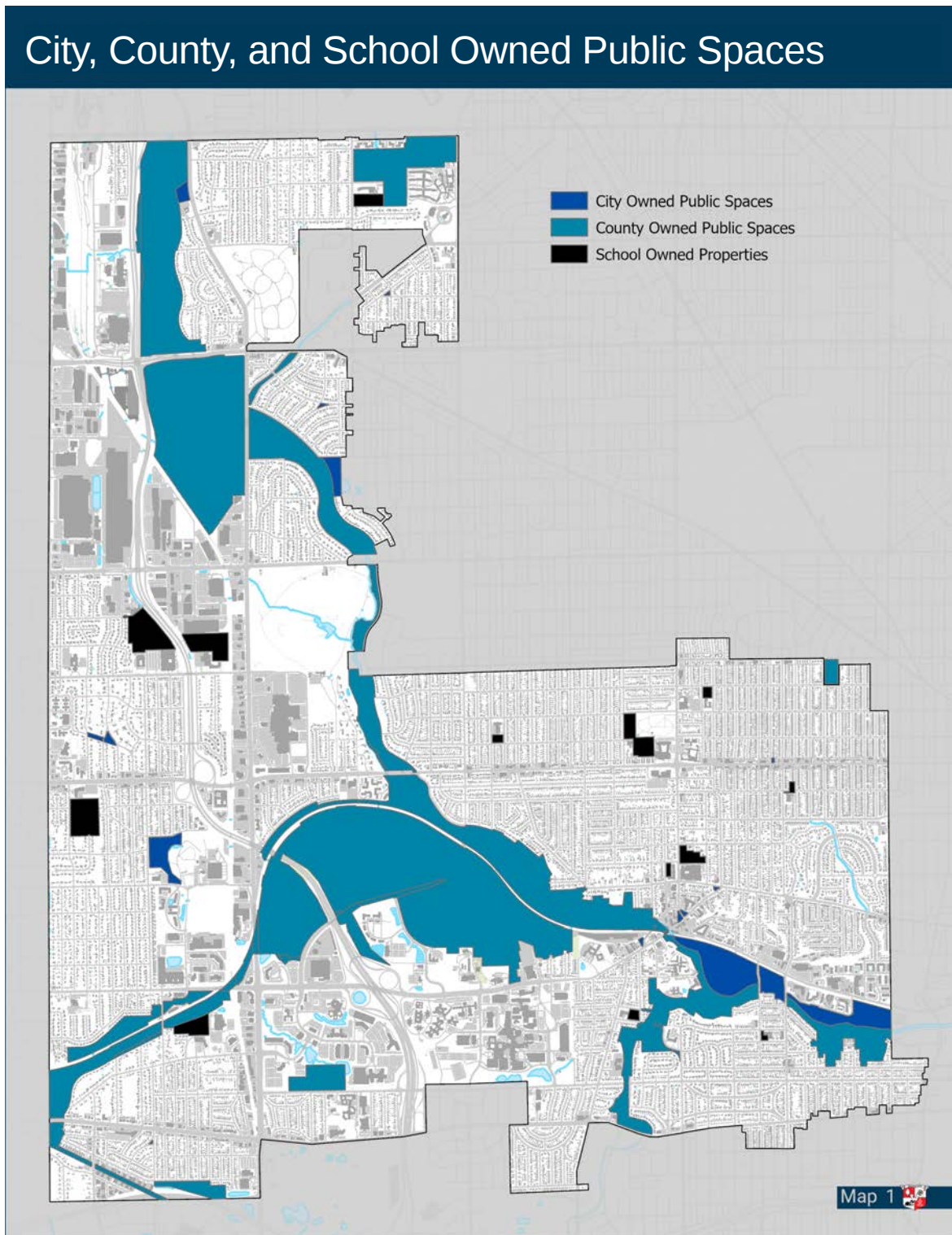
Revenue Per Capita



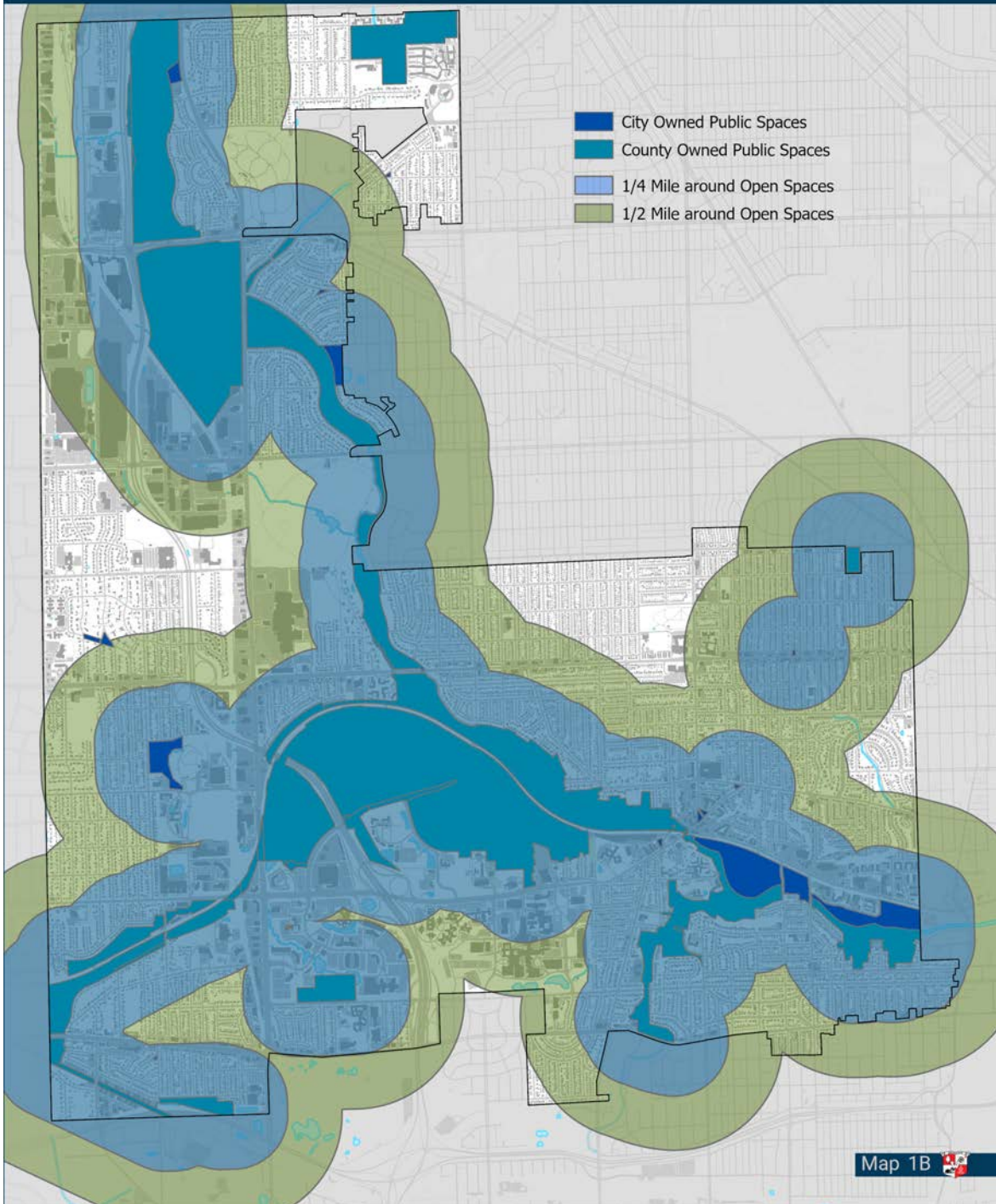
Total Revenue to Total Operating Expenditure



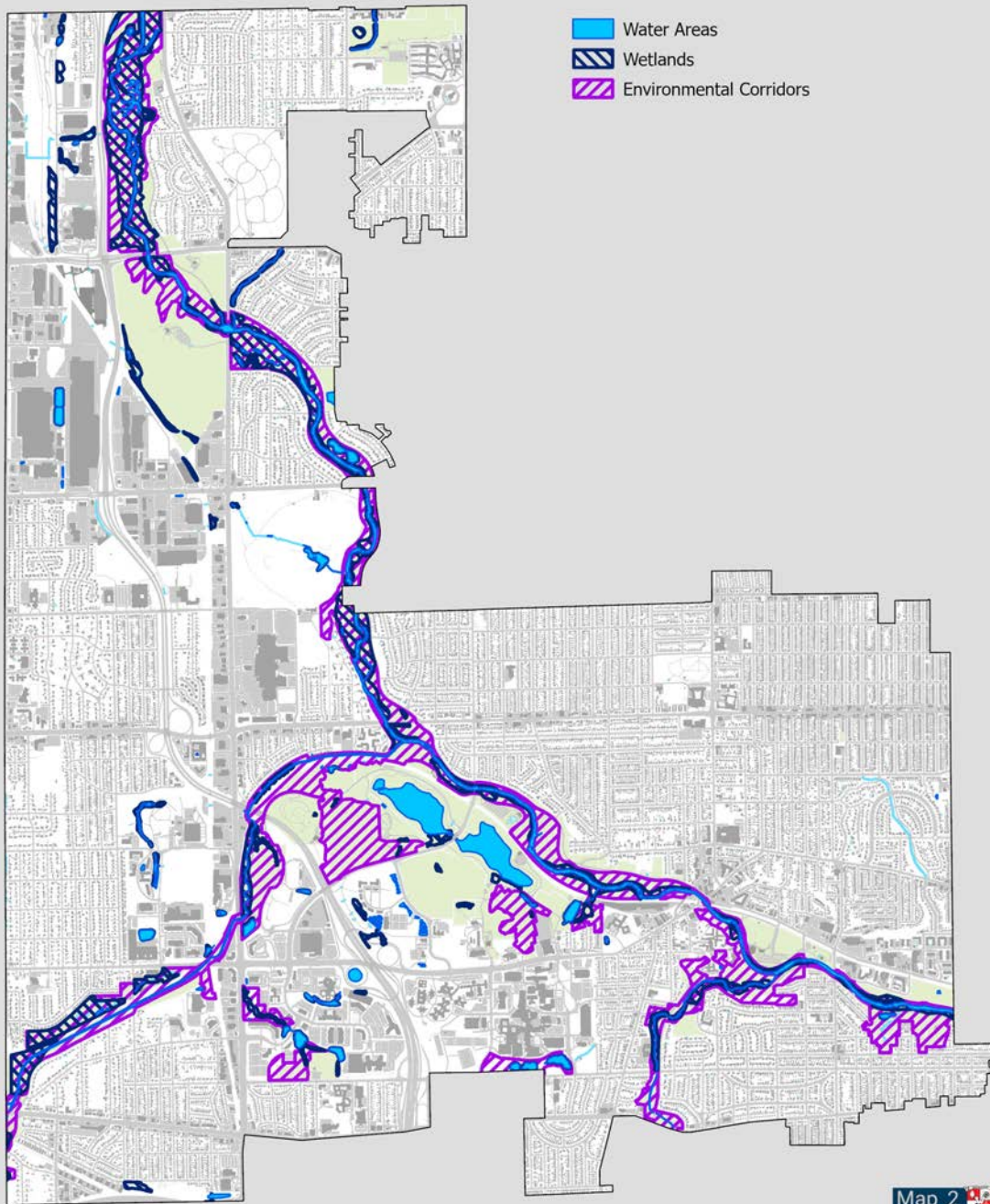
Appendix B: Maps of Parks and Open Spaces



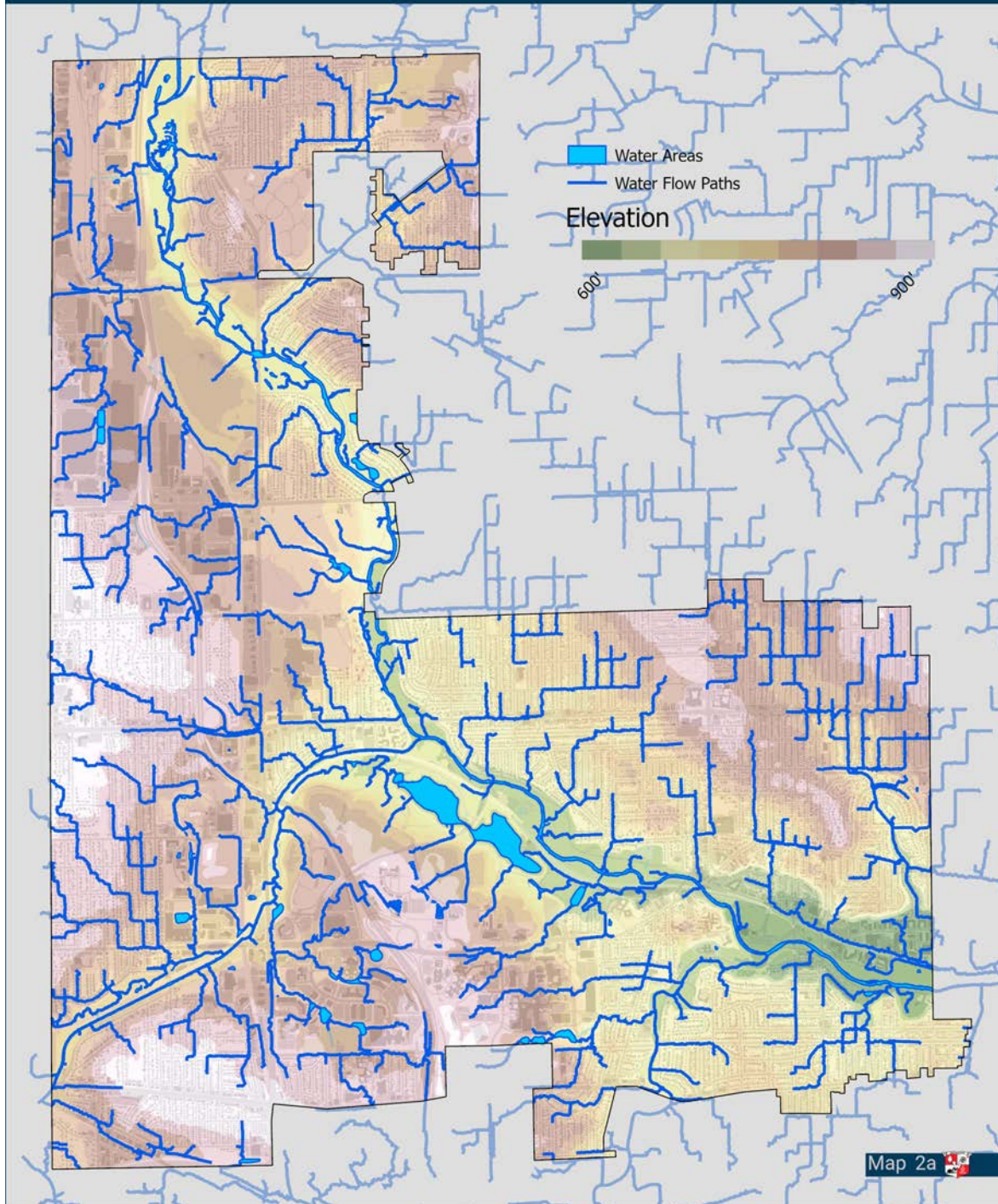
Distance to Public Open Spaces



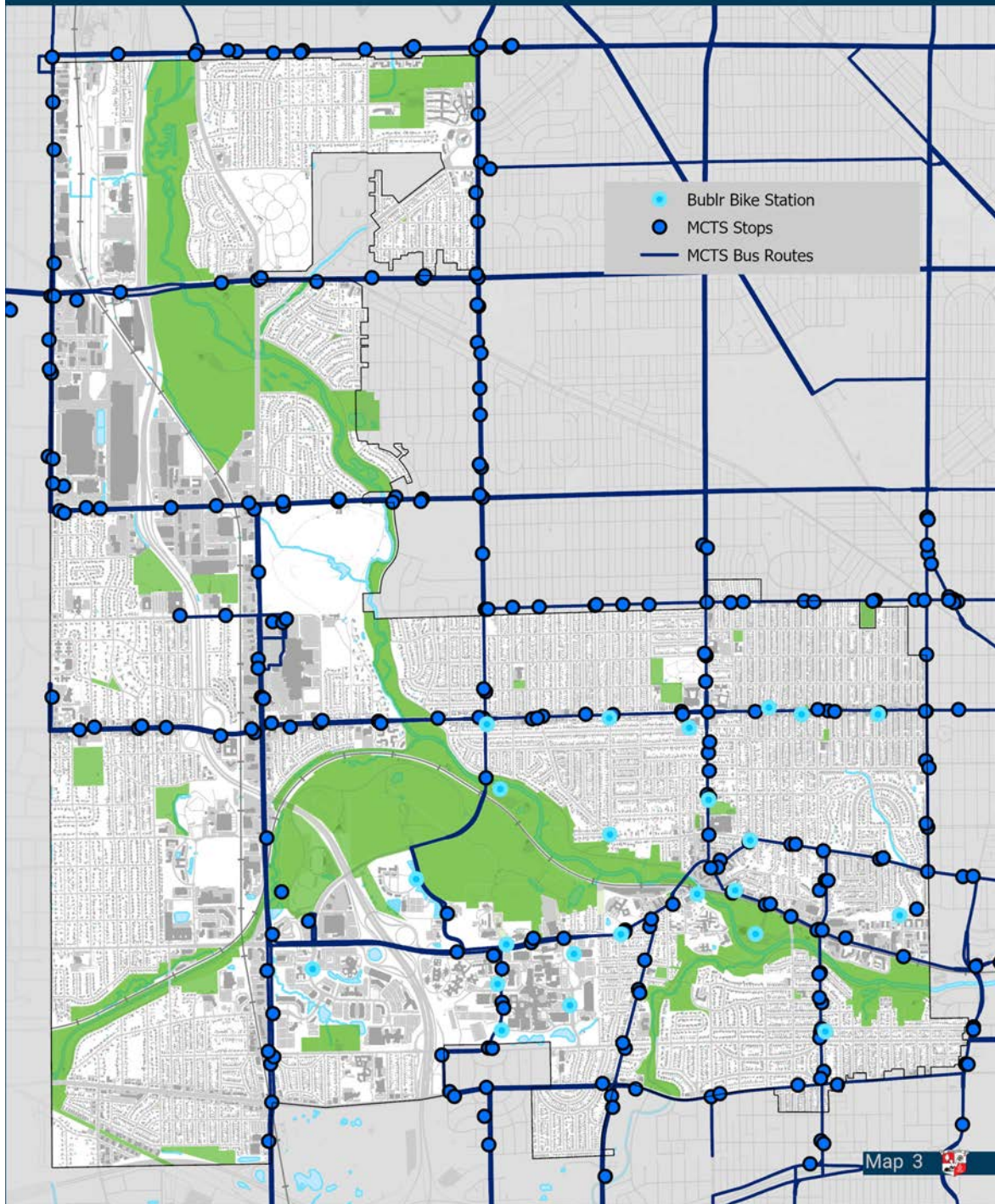
Water Resources

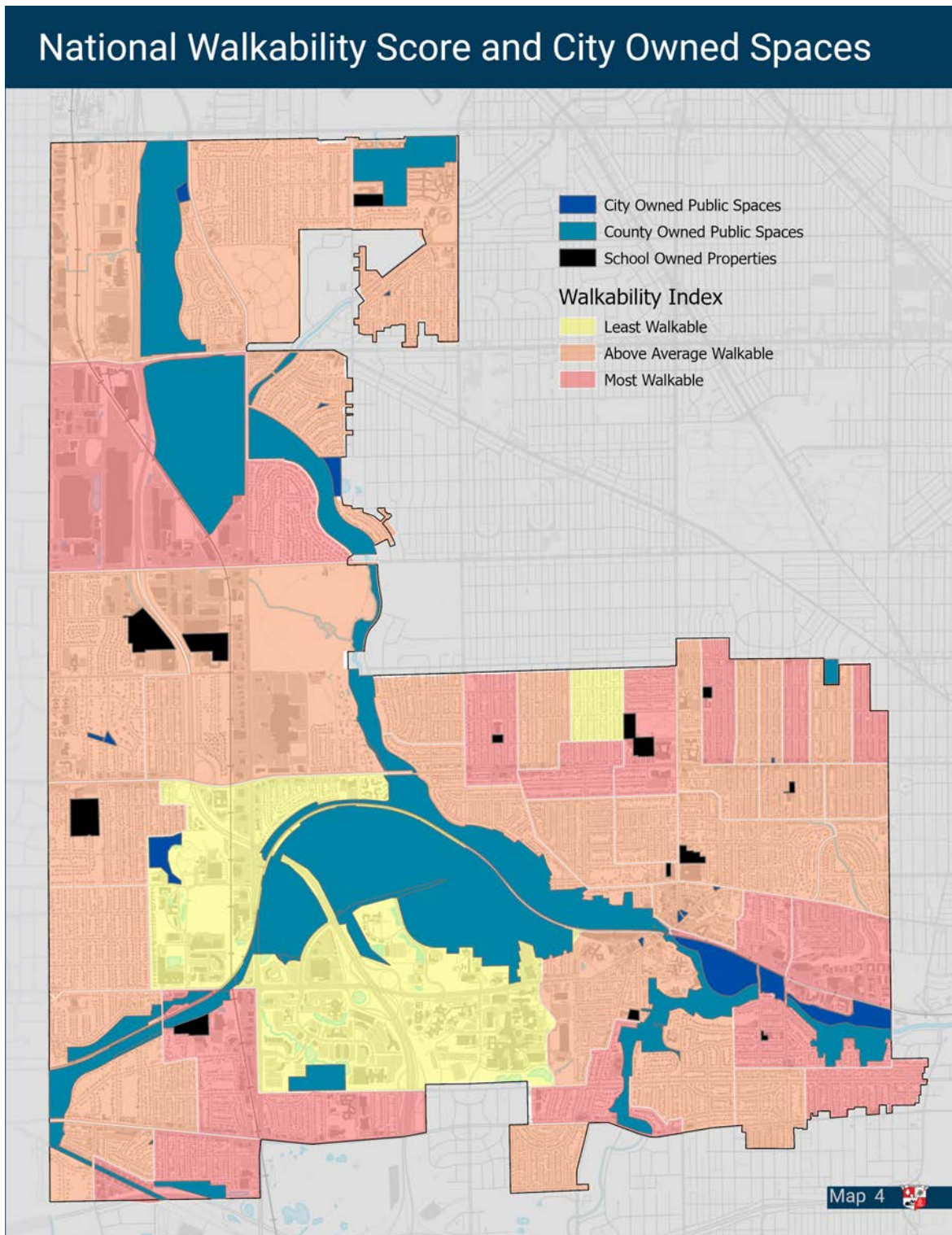


Water Flow and Elevation



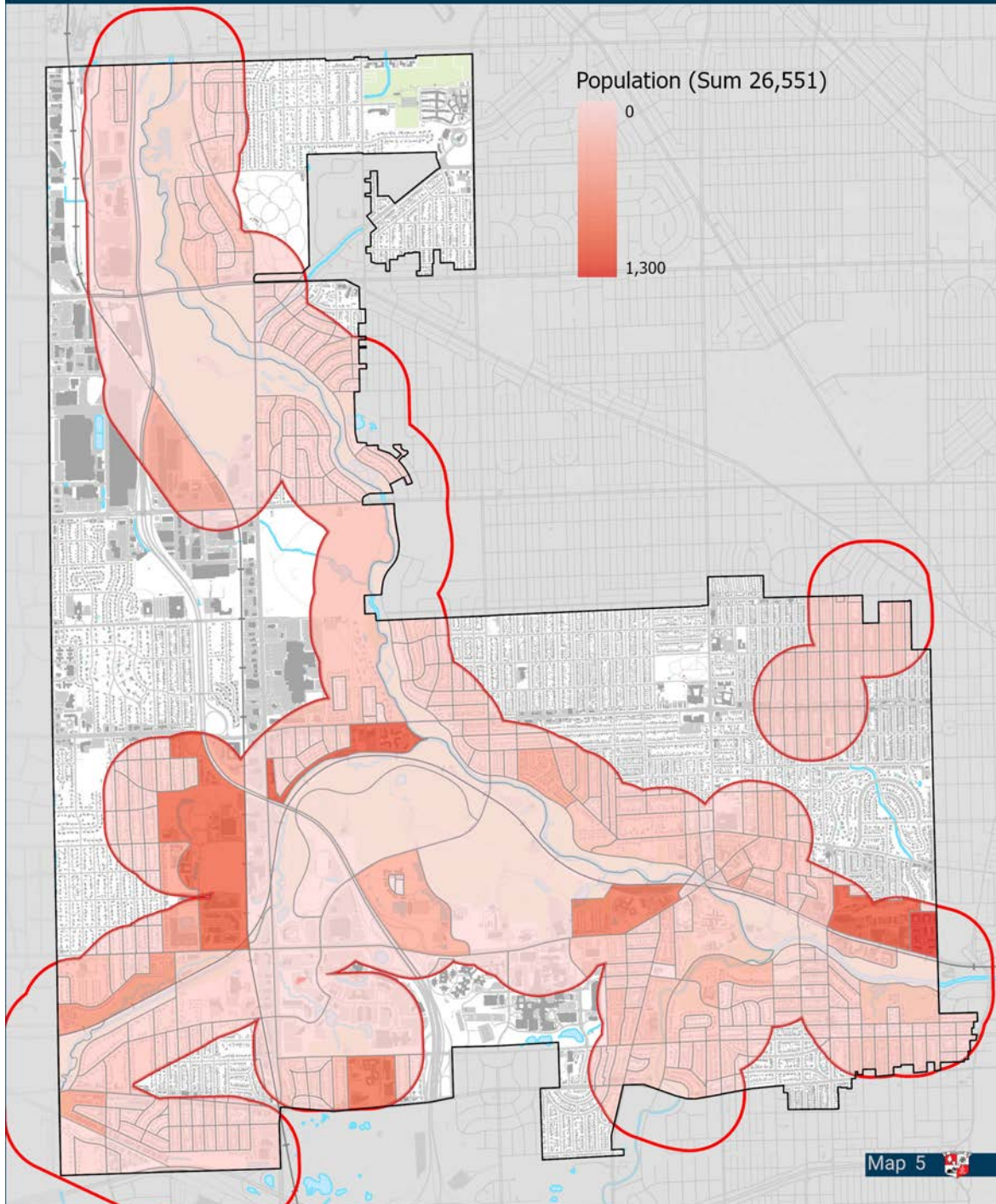
Public Transportation Network





Soure: EPA's National Walkability Index

Population Served Within 1/4 Mile of Open Areas



Appendix D: Grant Opportunities and Funding Resources

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Grants: NRPA offers various grants for park and recreation agencies. These grants support projects related to health and wellness, conservation, and social equity. Examples include the “Parks as Community Nutrition Hubs” and “Sustainability in Practice” programs

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): This federal program provides matching grants to states and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds: Wauwatosa has already utilized ARPA funds for park development, such as the Firefly Grove Park project and remodeling of the Muellner building and Senior Center. While no longer available, these funds were a huge boost for various park improvements, including stormwater management and recreational features. If a similar opportunity arises, Wauwatosa should pursue additional funding for parks.

Amercian Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Grant Program: AARP provides Community Challenge grants which are focused on benefiting older people. These grants focus on public places, transportation and mobility, housing, digital connections, and community resilience. Parks improvements can addresss these topics, and thus are good canditate projects for funding.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Grants: The DNR offers several grant programs for park and recreation projects. These grants support the acquisition, development, and renovation of park facilities.

- **Wisconsin DNR Grants**

Land and Water Conservation Fund: Funds acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program: Stewardship program protects water quality and fisheries and expanded outdoor recreation opportunities by preserving acres around lakes. Includes: Urban Green Space

Recreational Trails Program: Reimbursement for development and maintenance of recreational trails and related facilities for motorized and non-motorized uses.

Recreational Boating Facilities Grant: Funds capital improvements to provide safe recreational boating facilities, conduct feasibility studies, purchase aquatic weed harvesting equipment, purchase navigational aids, dredge waterways, and chemically treat Eurasian watermilfoil.

Sport Fish Restoration Program: Funds fishery projects, boating access, and aquatic education.

Dam Removal Grants: Reimbursement for 100 percent of eligible project costs up to a maximum of \$50,000 to remove a dam.

Municipal Flood Control Grant: Funds for acquisition of property, vacant land, structure removal,

flood proofing, administrative support.

Municipal Dam Grant Program; Funds maintenance, repair, modification, or abandonment and removal of municipally owned dams.

Urban Non-point Source Construction Grant: Funds detention ponds, infiltration areas, shoreline stabilization, and land acquisition and permanent easement costs.

Urban Non-point Source Stormwater Grant: Funds stormwater management planning, ordinance development, and public education.

Multimodal Local Supplement Program: Provides grants for up to 90% of total eligible costs for multimodal transportation projects on the local system.

Municipal Street Discretionary Improvement Program: Assists local governments by paying up to 50% of costs to improve deteriorated county highways, town roads, and municipal streets.

Wisconsin Economic Development Grant

Vibrant Spaces Grant: Design to assist with creating vibrant and engaging communities the promote improved sense of place and quality of life.

Other Programs:

Safe Routes to Parks (SRTS) Grant: Funds projects that enhance pedestrian and bike access to parks.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP): Provides funding for trail development, maintenance, and restoration.

Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program: Funds projects in underserved communities to improve urban park access.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Allocations: Secure dedicated city funding for major park infrastructure projects.

Park Impact Fees: Fees collected from new developments to support the expansion of parks and recreational spaces.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF): Leverage TIF districts to fund park improvements in redevelopment areas.

The Conservation Fund & Trust for Public Land: Supports land preservation and green space development.

Adopt-a-Park Programs: Engage local businesses and residents in sponsoring park maintenance efforts.

Explore opportunities through the **Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG)** to install solar-powered lighting and EV charging stations in parks.





Wauwatosa, WI

7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Staff Report

File #: 25-2198

Agenda Date: 11/18/2025

Agenda #: 2.

Discussion Regarding Future of Softball Diamond Area

Submitted by:

Tom Ertel

- 1) Survey recommendations
 - Current issues
 - Restrooms
 - Water
 - Netting left field fence
 - Drainage
 - Adjust lights
- 2) Increase revenue
 - Concessions
 - Other Softball leagues & tournaments
 - Local leagues
 - Outfield rentals on grass
- 3) Annual field repair
- 4) Other uses
- 5) Naming rights revenue for field



Wauwatosa, WI

7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Staff Report

File #: 25-2205

Agenda Date: 11/18/2025

Agenda #: 3.

Discussion Regarding Heat Haven Contract

Submitted by:
Tom Ertel

Review Sauna rental fees and where they are received (City or Parks) and food trucks revenue.



Wauwatosa, WI

7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Staff Report

File #: 25-2206

Agenda Date: 11/18/2025

Agenda #: 4.

Pickleball Signage Recommendation

Submitted by:
Tom Ertel

Comm. Ertel will make his recommendation for signage at the pickleball courts.



I will take the lead on Pickleball signage with the above examples.

Tom Ertel
Wauwatosa Parks and Forestry Commission



Wauwatosa, WI

7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Staff Report

File #: 25-2200

Agenda Date: 11/18/2025

Agenda #: 5.

Discussion Regarding Changing Meeting Start Time

Submitted by:
Tom Ertel

Open discussion about potentially changing the Board of Parks and Forestry Commissioners meeting starting time.