

Chapter VII

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

The recommended park and open space plan for Washington County consists of an outdoor recreation element, providing recommendations for parks and other outdoor recreational sites and facilities, and an open space preservation element, providing recommendations for the protection of important natural resources. The recommended plan described in the preceding chapter provides a design for the attainment of the park acquisition and development objectives and the open space preservation objectives presented in Appendix C of this report. In a practical sense, however, the recommended park and open space plan for the County is not complete until the steps required to implement the plan have been specified. This chapter is intended to serve as a guide to the implementation of the recommended plan, including a description of those actions required of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and of Washington County. Also included is a description of the acquisition and development costs and the priorities associated with the implementation of the recommended plan.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has the authority and the responsibility for the development of parks, the protection of natural resources, the control of water quality, and the regulation of water use. Because of this broad range of authority and responsibility, certain Department functions have particular importance for the implementation of the County park and open space plan. The Department has the obligation to prepare comprehensive, Statewide conservation and water-resource plans; the authority to protect, develop, and regulate the use of State parks, forests, fish and game, lakes and streams, certain plant life, and other resources; and the authority to acquire conservation and scenic easements. The Department also has the obligation to establish standards for floodplain and shoreland zoning and the authority to adopt, in the absence of satisfactory local actions, shoreland and floodplain zoning ordinances. The Department also has the authority to administer the Federal grant program known as the Land and Water Conservation (LAWCON) Fund program within the State and administers the State Stewardship Fund, which provides funding for County and local park and open space land acquisition and development.

It is important that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources act as follows: 1) to approve and certify the County park and open space plan in order to maintain the eligibility of

the County to receive available State and Federal outdoor recreation grants in support of plan implementation, 2) to use available regulatory authority to guide urban development in a way that protects important natural resources, 3) to be directly responsible for the maintenance of existing State-owned recreation and open space sites in the County, 4) to be responsible for the acquisition and development of lands within established State project boundaries in the County, 5) to be responsible for the acquisition of sites for resource preservation, including natural areas and critical species habitat sites, as recommended in Chapter VI, 6) to be responsible for the acquisition and development of boat-access sites, as recommended in Chapter VI, and 7) to be responsible for the acquisition and development, in cooperation with the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation, Inc., of the Ice Age Trail. A summary of the costs associated with recommendations directed to the Department is included in Table 28 in Chapter VI.

Washington County

The authority and responsibility for the provision of areawide resource oriented park and open space sites and facilities in the County rests primarily with the Washington County Park and Planning Commission. A summary of the park acquisition and development and open space preservation recommendations for the County is included in Table 28.

Under the recommended park and open space plan presented in Chapter VI, Washington County should do the following: 1) acquire additional land at five existing major park sites, 2) develop additional facilities at five existing major County park sites, 3) acquire and develop four proposed new major County parks, 4) develop additional facilities at one other County site, and 5) acquire additional land at one other County site. It is further recommended that Washington County pursue the acquisition and development of lands to provide the opportunity for public lake access for other recreational activities, such as beach swimming, shore fishing, and other passive uses, as opportunities become available.

Under the open space plan element recommendations, the County should acquire additional natural resource areas to assure the preservation of important natural resources in the County, including the acquisition of an additional 4,396 acres of primary environmental corridors, about 64 acres of secondary environmental corridors, and about 22 acres of isolated natural resource areas. In addition to woodlands, wetlands, and other natural resources, the corridors and areas recommended to be acquired by the County contain natural areas and critical species habitat sites, providing habitat for rare plant and animal species.

The plan also recommends the development by the County of a 10-mile trail along the Milwaukee River. The proposed trail would connect to the City of West Bend Riverwalk Trail and the planned Milwaukee River Trail in Ozaukee County. It is recommended that Washington County and City of West Bend work cooperatively to identify and establish appropriate on- and off-street routes to connect these trails and provide proper signage and such improvements as safe drainage grates and improved railroad crossings, where necessary.

Local Units of Government

While the provision of major parks, areawide trails, water-access facilities, and certain important natural resource features are proposed to be County or State responsibilities, local units of governments should consult with the State and County to identify specific lands required for areawide park and open space preservation purposes. Once such lands are identified, local units of government should utilize their powers of zoning and official mapping to reserve the needed lands in open space. Further, it may be appropriate for local units of government to accept in dedication certain lands identified for State or County acquisition as the land subdivision process proceeds and then transfer ownership of such lands to the County or State. Similarly, it would be appropriate for the County or State to assume the responsibility for the development of trail facilities in local parklands, as needed, to assure continuity and uniformity in the proposed continuous regionwide system of recreation trails.

Local units of government should also place lands identified as primary farmlands in an exclusive agricultural zoning district to preserve such lands in agricultural use. Primary farmlands are shown on Map 18 in Chapter VI.

ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FOR WASHINGTON COUNTY

Priorities for the park and open space acquisition and development projects proposed for implementation by Washington County are presented in this section. It is necessary to establish priorities for park and open space acquisition and development because public financial resources available for acquisition and development are limited and because implementation of the recommended plan will, as a practical matter, occur gradually over time.

It is recommended that the County continue actively to acquire land for park and recreational purposes and for open space preservation. Land acquisition is particularly important, given the rapid pace of urbanization occurring within the County. As urbanization occurs, development pressures inevitably cause an increase in property values, thus making land acquisitions more costly. Washington County should make efforts to acquire park and open space lands at a reasonable

cost before their development for urban uses. It is recommended that priority for land acquisition be given to lands needed for new major parks or for expanding existing County parks, followed by acquisition of lands within the Milwaukee River corridor, then by acquisition of other environmental corridor lands.

It is recommended that emphasis also be placed on to the construction of new rest rooms and the development of nature trails at existing major County parks. A summary of recommended acquisition and development activities for Washington County parks during the 14-year period from 1997 through 2010 are set forth in Table 27 in Chapter VI. These actions would allow the County to meet its long-term goals of providing sites and facilities for outdoor recreation and for preserving important natural resource areas in Washington County.