

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

PLAN CONTEXT

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) is charged by law with the duty of preparing and adopting a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the seven-county Southeastern Wisconsin Region, which includes Washington County. The regional plan, which is periodically updated, consists of a number of major elements, including land use, transportation, park and open space, and water quality management.

The regional land use plan sets forth the fundamental concepts which are intended to guide the development of the Region. The regional land use plan, the most recent version of which was adopted by the Commission in 1997, is documented in SEWRPC Planning Report No. 45, *A Regional Land Use Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2020*. The three most important recommendations contained in the regional land use plan are:

1. The preservation of primary environmental corridors in essentially natural, open uses
2. The maintenance of the best remaining farmland in long-term agricultural uses
3. Encouragement of a more compact pattern of urban development, one that can be efficiently served by such essential public facilities and services as centralized sanitary sewerage, water supply, and mass transit.

These three recommendations provide the basic framework within which other regional plan components, including park and open space plans, are developed.

A park and open space plan for Washington County was included as part of the first regional park and open space plan,¹ which was adopted by the Regional Planning Commission on December 1, 1977. That plan identified existing and probable future park and open space needs within the Region and recommended a park system consisting of large resource-oriented parks and smaller nonresource-oriented urban parks, together with attendant recreational facilities. The regional park and open space plan also recommended the development of an approximately 440-mile network of hiking and bicycling trails within natural resource corridors of regional

¹Documented in SEWRPC Planning Report No. 27, *A Regional Park and Open Space Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2000, November 1977*.

significance, including corridors along the Lake Michigan shoreline, through the Kettle Moraine, and along the riverine areas of the major streams and watercourses of the Region. The regional park and open space plan incorporated the regional land use plan recommendations concerning primary environmental corridors and farmland preservation.

In 1984, the Washington County Park and Planning Commission requested that the Regional Planning Commission assist the County in refining and updating the regional park and open space plan as it applied to Washington County. The resulting plan is documented in the first edition of this report, SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 136, *A Park and Open Space Plan for Washington County*, March 1989. The plan, which has a design year of 2000, was adopted by the Washington County Board of Supervisors on December 12, 1989, and by the Regional Planning Commission on March 7, 1990.

In 1994, Washington County requested that the Regional Planning Commission prepare a new park and open space plan to refine and update information from the first edition of the Washington County park and open space plan. The resulting plan is documented in the second edition of this report, SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 136, *A Park and Open Space Plan for Washington County*, August 1997. The plan, which has a design year of 2010, was adopted by the Washington County Board of Supervisors on August 12, 1997, and by the Regional Planning Commission on March 4, 1998.

The 1997 County park and open space plan called for the provision of four new major parks, for a total of 12 major parks within the County. Washington County was to be responsible for acquiring and developing new major parks in the areas of Newburg, Jackson, Addison, and Erin. Recommended facilities for the new major park sites included development of picnicking and trail facilities at each of the new parks, development of a swimming beach or pool at the Jackson-area park site, and development of group camping facilities at the new parks in the Addison and Erin areas.

The plan also called for additional acquisition and development of facilities at existing major County parks including Glacier Hills Park, Heritage Trails Park, Ridge Run Park, Sandy Knoll Park; the acquisition of lands at the Washington County Golf Course and Family Park; and the development of additional facilities at Homestead Hollow Park. Recommendations for other parks owned by Washington County included acquisition of lands at Lizard Mound Park and development of facilities at Goeden Park. The plan also called for the development of boat access sites at nine major lakes in Washington County.

Since 1997, Washington County has taken steps to implement the currently adopted park and open space plan. This includes the acquisition and development of Ackerman's Grove Park in the Town of Polk; the acquisition of Henschke Hillside Lake Access; and development of new restrooms at Homestead Hollow Park, Ridge Run Park, and Sandy Knoll Park. Facilities developed at Ackerman's Grove Park include a fishing pier, beach, picnic area, playground, shelter, restrooms, a boat access facility; and a soccer complex which is currently under construction. The acquisition and development of Ackerman's Grove Park meets the need for a new major park site in the Jackson area, as well as the need for a boat access site on Little Cedar Lake. Henschke Hillside Lake Access, when developed, will meet the need for a boat access site on Silver Lake.

In addition, other development at Washington County Parks, generally consistent with the 1997 plan, include a shelter and playground development at Family Park, and a soccer complex and a disc golf course currently under construction at Heritage Trails County Park. Other acquisition at Washington County parks includes Leonard J. Yahr Park in the Town of Farmington, and Joseph P. Marx Woods Nature Preserve in the Town of Hartford.

Since the 1997 plan, Washington County has developed a new special outdoor recreation site. The Washington County Fair Park has been developed in the northeastern portion of the Town of Polk to replace the original site in the northwest portion of the Town.

The 1997 plan also called for a combined total of 52 linear miles of trails in the Ice Age Trail and the Milwaukee River recreation corridors in the County. To date, there are approximately 27 miles of existing trails associated with natural resource related outdoor recreation corridors.

THE BENEFITS FROM PARK AND OPEN SPACE SITES

Park and open space sites provide the opportunity for participation in, and enjoyment of, a wide range of outdoor recreational experiences. Park and open space sites afford the opportunity for participation in resource-oriented activities such as camping, golfing, picnicking, skiing, and beach swimming and nonresource-oriented activities such as baseball, basketball, softball, soccer, tennis, and pool swimming. Such sites also afford the opportunity for more passive pursuits, such as nature study or walking. In addition, park and open space sites have a number of important social, environmental, and economic benefits. Among these benefits are the following:

- Social Benefits—Individuals personally benefit from outdoor recreational experiences through:
 - The improvement of physical health
 - Learning and teaching
 - Rest, relaxation, and revitalization, which contribute to mental well-being
 - The opportunity to interact with other individuals in the community
 - An increase in the awareness of the natural environment
- Environmental Benefits—Acquiring land for parks and open space helps assure the long-term preservation of environmentally significant land, which in turn:
 - Protects wildlife and plant communities
 - Reduces congestion
 - Enhances air quality
 - Reduces the sediment load, toxins, and excess nutrients that enters the waterway
 - Reduces the rate and amount of stormwater runoff that causes flooding and erosion
- Economic Benefits—The development of park and open space sites benefits the economy by:
 - Contributing to a healthy and productive working environment
 - Providing an attraction for tourism
 - Making a community more desirable for businesses and residential development
 - Increasing values of nearby properties

COUNTY REQUEST

On June 19, 2001, Washington County requested that the Regional Planning Commission assist the County in the preparation of a new park and open space plan. The new plan is to be based upon updated information related to land use, population levels and distribution, anticipated growth and development, natural resources, and park and open space acquisition and development activities within the County. The new plan is further intended to maintain County eligibility to apply for and receive Federal and State aids in partial support of the acquisition and development of park and open space sites and facilities. The new plan is documented in this report. The plan, which is based upon the recommended development pattern set forth in the year 2020 regional land use plan, is designed to extend the recommendations of the existing Washington County park and open space plan to that design year.

WASHINGTON COUNTY PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The new County park and open space plan was prepared under the guidance of the Washington County Park and Open Space Plan Technical Advisory Committee. A complete membership list of the Committee is provided on the inside front cover of this report. The Committee's recommendations were forwarded to the Washington County Planning, Conservation and Parks Committee and the County Board of Supervisors for their consideration.

REPORT FORMAT

The findings and recommendations of the requested park and open space planning effort are set forth in this report. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II of this report presents information about the County pertinent to park and open space planning, including information on the existing resident population, land use pattern, and natural resource base of the County. Chapter III provides information on existing park sites and facilities and open space lands within the County. Chapter IV describes results of the public opinion survey conducted as part of the planning effort. Chapter V presents the park and open space preservation, acquisition, and development objectives, principles, and supporting standards which served as the basis for the development of the park and open space plan for the County, and also presents an analysis of park and open space needs in the County. Chapter VI sets forth the recommended park and open space plan and identifies the actions required to carry out the recommended plan. A summary of the plan is presented in Chapter VII.