

City of Oconto



Park and Recreation Plan
2009-2014

City of Oconto

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

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Contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1	Introduction and Purpose	3
1.2	Goals and Objectives	3-4
1.3	The Planning Process	4-5
2	Community Profile	5
2.1	Community Description	5-6
2.2	Climate	6-7
2.3	Land Use	7
3	Natural Resources.....	7
3.1	Natural Resources & Physical Characteristics.....	7-9
3.2	Park Facilities	9-15
3.3	Recreation Programs	15-16
4	Standards for Park Development	16
4.1	Acreage Analysis	16
4.2	Service Area Analysis	17
4.3	Land Classification	17-18
5	Needs Assessment	18
5.1	Park Survey	18
5.2	Future Park Needs	18
5.3	Facilities in demand	18
6	Action Plan	18
6.1	Recommendations	18-19
6.2	Capital Projects (Five Year Plan).....	19
7	Park Acquisition and Development Mechanisms	20
7.1	Developer Exactions for Park Acquisition and Development	20-21
8.1	Grant Information for Park Acquisition and Development	21-22

Tables

Table 2-A	Population Trends 1900-2000.....	6
Table 2-B	Population Projection 2005-2025	6
Table 2-C	Percent Change 1980-2025	6

1.1 Introduction and Purpose

Open space and outdoor recreation facilities are a positive attribute to the community and are an important public investment to provide leisure opportunities within the urban environment. Open space and park facilities are necessary to maintain the community's attractive atmosphere and enhance its growth and overall health. These facilities are also necessary for citizens to take pride in living, working and raising a family within a community. All people enjoy quality leisure time activities. Therefore, it is necessary to provide adequate areas and facilities to accommodate these activities. All levels of government meet some portion of these recreational demands. The local level of government is recognized as having the responsibility to provide nearby and accessible neighborhood and community type open space and park facilities. Planning is vital for identifying and meeting the needs of your community in an efficient and effective manner. The City of Oconto has developed this document as a guide for providing open space and outdoor recreation opportunities for its residents. This plan outlines recommendations for the continued development of existing city-owned park and parkway lands and the future acquisition of additional lands. The plan represents a combined effort of the City of Oconto Park Commission and Oconto staff.

Acceptance of this plan by the City Board and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) will maintain the City of Oconto's eligibility to participate in the Wisconsin Stewardship Fund Program for the next five years, as well as other state or federal recreation aid programs that may be instituted.

1.2 Goals and Objectives

Goals represent desired outcomes toward which planning efforts should be directed. They are broad and long-range. They represent an end to be sought and may never be fully attained. Objectives describe more specific tasks, which should be completed to advance towards achievement of the goals. They are targets along the path to satisfying the goals. The City objectives of the plan will be listed in the recommendation section (6.1).

The following goals are meant to guide city officials as they work to improve City's park and open space system. The goals indicate the type of outdoor recreation and open space system the City would like to provide for its residents. The goals address two aspects of a recreation system; one dealing with the provision of City's Park facilities, and the other dealing with the open space and unique, scarce, and valuable natural resources in the City comprising that open space. A third goal expresses a desire for continued planning.

Goal #1 – To preserve and maintain the quality and integrity of the Oconto Park System.

- Ensure the amount of open space and park lands keep up with the City's increasing population.
- Ensure all neighborhoods are serviced by a suitable park and facility according to national standards.
- Provide recreational facilities that are found in short supply or completely lacking.
- Protect parks, parkway, or future parks from encroachment of other uses.
- Provide adequate access to all City parks and facilities.

Goal # 2 – To promote the benefits of parks and recreation to City residents.

- Cooperate with local public, private, and not-for-profit organizations in promoting the Oconto park system.

Goals # 3 – To promote, preserve and protect unique open space property, or environmental resources for recreation and preservation.

- Promote the new multi- modal trail.
- Protect property along the Oconto River from development or other use that deteriorate the preservation of the parkway.
- Acquire property for conservancy and recreational use.
- Protect valuable and significant wetlands in the City.
- Conserve natural resources with potential for recreation.
- Preserve natural areas or wildlife habitat.

Goal #4 – To maintain a current and meaningful plan that meets the changing needs of the City residents.

- To promote citizen involvement in planning of parks and facilities.
- To create an action plan that is feasible, timely, and reflects the City's priorities and resources.
- Coordinate with other community plans and Oconto County.
- Provide periodic reviews of the plan.

1.3 The Planning Process

1.3.1 Development of CORP

Goal: Offer a wide range of park and recreational activities for all residents and visitors to the City of Oconto.

Objective: Promote safe parks and recreational sites that provide a variety of activities for residents.

Process: The City adopted its initial master plan for the Park System in 1991. The plan was revised in 1995, 2001 and 2008. In order to keep the plan current and maintain eligibility for grant funding, the City will be initiating a review process starting in April 2009. During the months of April through June, data will be compiled on the City of Oconto. A gathering of information will include inventory of existing parks, facilities and open space system, and its recreational opportunities. In July, the Park Commission will begin reviewing the plan and start to request revisions.

1.3.1 Amending the Plan

The planning process, no matter how well thought out, is still subject to miscalculations and unforeseen circumstances. Amending a plan due to unforeseen developments and opportunities is common and should be considered part of an ongoing planning process. For the life of the 2009 CORP (2009 to 2014), the process of amendment will be as follows:

- Park Commission or staff identifies a critical opportunity not accounted for in the CORP.
- The Park Commission, staff or consultants develop an amendment to

- the plan that provides a discussion of the needs for the facility, an outline of the proposed uses and a capital improvement plan.
- The amendment is discussed at a public meeting of the Park Commission and changes are made to reflect the concerns and comments made at the meeting.
 - The Park Commission recommends adoption by the City Board of the amendment.
 - The City Board officials adopt the amendment.

2.1 Community History & Description

This area has a rich historical past, mainly because of its location along the west shore of the waters of Green Bay. About 5000 years ago an archaic people, later called the Copper Culture, hunted, fished, and buried their dead on the banks of the Oconto River near the bay. The French Canadians came here in the 1600's to trade for the fur of beaver, muskrat and fox, canoeing by way of Mackinac and down the bay. In 1669, Father Allouez established the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, the first outpost in all of northeastern Wisconsin. In 1682, it served as the camping grounds of Nicholas Perrot, a well-known trader. From 1820 to 1830, the Astor Fur Trading Company operated a post in Oconto. The lumbering industry began in 1842 with the construction of a mill and dam, followed by the first permanent white settlers in 1846. From 1850 to 1900, Oconto was a typical lumbering community with additional sawmills established. Logs were floated down the Oconto River where they were sawed into lumber at one of seven mills in Oconto and shipped out by boat to large growing cities on Lake Michigan. In 1855, the first state highway in Oconto County passed through Oconto stretching from Green Bay to Marinette. In 1871, the first train entered Oconto via the Northwestern Railroad tracks. Following the decline of the lumbering in the area, Oconto turned to other industries. The Holt Hardwood Company started in Oconto as the William Company and in the 1930s became the largest producer of maple flooring in the United States. Other notable businesses that operated in the City of Oconto included the Bond Pickle Company, the American Plywood and Veneer Company, the Great Lakes Shoe Company, the Oconto Brewing Company, the Elliott Glove Company, the Racine Fabricating Company, and, of course, Cruisers Inc. which began operation in 1953. Oconto was the home of the Honorable Edward Scofield, Governor of Wisconsin, whose house stands on Main Street. The First Christian Science Church erected in the United States is located on Main Street in Oconto. The Bayshore area also offers visible history lessons. The city of Oconto has thirty-three structures on the National Register of Historic Places. A visitor can take a self-guided tour of the city, walk the Historic West Main Street District, and in the summer tour the 1890's home of wealthy George Beyer located on Park Avenue. The rural areas contain many late nineteenth and early twentieth century farm buildings. Source: City of Oconto's 1986 Comprehensive Plan and the 1996 Community Assessment

The City of Oconto is located in southeastern Oconto County and encompasses an area of approximately seven square miles or 4,472 acres. The city planning area (extra territorial boundary) is approximately 22.25 square miles or 14,240 acres. U.S. Highway 41 running north/south and the Oconto River and State Highway 22 running east/west divides the planning area. Green Bay forms the city's eastern border. The Town of Little

River and the Town of Oconto on the northwest, west and south border the City of Oconto to the north.

Population Trends Table 2A

Historical Population Levels, 1900-2000, City of Oconto

Year City of Oconto

1900 4,646

1910 5,629

1920 4,920

1930 5,030

1940 5,362

1950 5,055

1960 4,805

1970 4,667

1980 4,505

1990 4,474

2000 4,708

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, General Population Characteristics 1840-1990, and U.S. Census 2000; and Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, 2006.

WDOA Population Projections Table2B

2005 4,713

2010 4,712

2015 4,689

2020 4,665

2025 4,614

Percent Change Table 2C

1980-1990 -0.7

1990-2000 5.2

2000-2025 -2.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population and Housing, 1980-2000; Wisconsin Department of Administration, for years cited; Wisconsin Department of Administration, Official Population Projections, 2003; and Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, 2006.

2.2 Climate

The climate of Oconto County and City of Oconto is classified as continental. This climate type is characterized by an extreme disparity between summer and winter temperatures that range from cold, snowy winters and warm summers with periods of hot, humid conditions. According to the Midwestern Regional Climate Center, the average annual temperature is 44.5 degrees with the coldest month being January (13.9 degrees) and the warmest month July at approximately 68 degrees. The nearby bay of Green Bay can have a modifying influence on the city's climate unlike more inland locations where the cool breezes off the bay have little or no affect. Over 60 percent of the annual precipitation of 32" falls from April through September with July traditionally being the wettest month. This time period also encompasses the growing season for most

crops. Overall, the varied climate is favorable for agricultural purposes and suitable for a number of outdoor activities ranging from biking and camping to snowmobiling and skiing.

2.3 Land Use

For the entire planning area, approximately 14,240 acres, or 80 percent of the area is undeveloped. The vast majority of the undeveloped acreage consists of woodlands or croplands/pastures. For the city only, there are a total of 4,456 acres of which 1,864 acres (42 percent) is already developed. Single family residential covers nearly 821 acres of the developed land or 44 percent. Other natural areas (1,114 acres) comprise the largest undeveloped area within the city. In comparison, 388 acres or 15 percent is croplands and pastures.

3.1 Natural Resources & Physical Characteristics

INTRODUCTION

This section provides an inventory of the existing natural, agricultural and cultural resources/features within the City of Oconto and the surrounding one and one-half mile extraterritorial boundary. The inventory provides an understanding of the physical characteristics of the city. Because they are major determinants of future development options, it is important to understand where these resources are located and how they relate to one another. Inventorying and defining them will help limit unnecessary public expenditures and to minimize the negative impacts to these valued environmental/cultural resources as development does occur.

Geology

The Geology beneath the City of Oconto has important implications for land use. The dolomite bedrock provides a pathway for groundwater recharge. The glacial deposits that lie between the soil and bedrock provide a natural filter for surface water to drain through before reaching the bedrock. In the city and planning area, these layers can range from less than five feet to over two hundred feet thick.

Topography

The topography of the city and planning area varies from relatively flat to gently rolling, following the patterns of the glacial geology.

- The City of Oconto 20-year Comprehensive Plan illustrates the elevation ranges found within the planning area.

The lowest range of approximately 176 feet above sea level occurs along the Lake Michigan (Green Bay) shoreline while the highest point of 217 feet above sea level are located within the northwestern portion of the planning area.

The soil types for the City of Oconto and planning area can be divided into two broad categories as described by the county's soil survey: 1. Onaway-Solona 2. Wainola-Cormant

Watersheds

The City of Oconto and planning area are within Little River and Lower Oconto watersheds as delineated by the WDNR. These watersheds are part of the larger Upper

Green Bay Watershed. The City of Oconto 20-year Comprehensive Plan, displays these watersheds within the planning area.

Groundwater

The City of Oconto's groundwater source is part of a large aquifer system called the Cambrian-Ordovician aquifer system. It is the second largest source of groundwater for public, agricultural, and industrial use in the northern segment, which consists of Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and Iowa. This aquifer is a complex multi-aquifer system with several aquifers separated by leaky confining units. The Maquoketa confining unit caps the whole system where it is overlain by younger bedrock. More specifically, the groundwater comes from the Mount Simon aquifer, which is the lowermost aquifer of the Cambrian-Ordovician aquifer system. It consists of the coarse to fine grained Mount Simon Sandstone and the Bayfield Group in Wisconsin. The Mount Simon aquifer underlies the southern two-thirds of the state and has the broadest distribution of any of the aquifers in the Cambrian-Ordovician aquifer system.

Surface Water

The City of Oconto planning area contains or is bounded by the Bay of Green Bay to the east with the Oconto River running through it. The City of Oconto 20-year Comprehensive Plan shows the surface waters that lie within the planning area. The creeks and various unnamed tributaries that drain into the bay of Green Bay help provide quality habitat for waterfowl and wildlife and the surface waters offer recreational activities such as fishing, boating, and swimming.

Wetlands

Within the planning area, there are approximately 5,792 acres of wetlands. Of that figure, 1,493 acres are within the City of Oconto. The City of Oconto 20-year Comprehensive Plan illustrates the WDNR inventoried wetlands greater than two acres.

Shorelands

There are a total of 6.2 miles of shore land located within the City of Oconto and 10.94 miles within the total planning area. Shorelands located within the city and planning area are shown in the City of Oconto 20-year Comprehensive Plan.

Woodlands

There are approximately 861 acres of woodlands within the city and a total of 9,028 acres located in the planning area. Upland woodlands and lowland woodlands (woodlands within wetlands) are illustrated the City of Oconto 20-year Comprehensive Plan. Woodlands present aesthetic views, provide wildlife habitat, and offer multiple recreational choices. Woodlands also maintain watershed cover, provide shade, serve as a windbreak, help reduce soil erosion, act as a noise barrier, and screen unsightly developments.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Many rare, threatened, and endangered species are found within Oconto County. City of Oconto's 20-year Comprehensive Plan lists these animals, plants and natural communities in both the aquatic and terrestrial occurrences in Oconto County as identified in the WDNR Natural Heritage Inventory.

- According to the WDNR, the entire city has experienced threatened and endangered species occurrences with most of these occurrences being aquatic in nature and near Lake Michigan. Any potential environmental impacts should be discussed before any development occurs in order not to disturb or disrupt habitat for any plant or animal species especially those noted on the threatened or endangered list.

Oconto Marsh

This 3,700-acre area contains 2,340 acres of wetlands making it one of the largest wetlands located along the western shore of Green Bay. Most of the land in this area is owned by the state as part of the Green Bay Shores State Wildlife Area. The marsh area is an important breeding area for birds and is used significantly by various migrating waterfowl and shore birds. The marsh includes the Oconto River meaning that water quality within the wetlands is highly impacted by point pollution and non-point discharges into the river.

Oconto River

The Oconto River runs through the City of Oconto where it eventually empties into the bay of Green Bay. The river provides a number of recreational opportunities including canoeing, boating, kayaking, and fishing.

Oconto River Marsh

This area is widely used for recreational purposes and provides habitat for a number of wildlife and plant species.

West Shore Green Bay Wetlands

This area encompasses a number of wetlands located along the west shore of Green Bay. They provide a number of recreational opportunities including fishing and bird observation.

Oconto County Forest

This forest is an extensive second growth lacustrine forest characteristic of the Lake Michigan lowland area. It has an irregular in pattern with uplands and lowlands occurring together. There are predominately aspen-white, birch-white pine-oak with red maple, elm and ash trees thriving in this type of environment. The county's forest is listed primarily because of its size.

3.2 Park Facilities

Parks and Open Space

The public utilizes various natural settings in the city as recreational sites.

City of Oconto

1. Breakwater Park
2. City Docks
3. City Park
4. Copper Culture State Park
5. Freedom Park
6. Holtwood Park
7. Sharp Park

Breakwater Park

Breakwater Park is a one-acre park located at the mouth of the Oconto River. Offering a pavilion, great fishing areas, boat launching and boat slip rentals, this is a park you don't want to miss! Take a drive out to the end of the jetty and take in the view of the beautiful bay you'll be sure to come back.

General Use – fisherman, boaters, picnickers, pavilion rental, seasonal fishing, seasonal dockage.

Facility Conditions & Deficiencies - boat ramps in poor condition.

Additional Structures Recommended –

Recommended Improvements - replace & upgrade boat ramps, repair roof on pavilion, new picnic tables and benches throughout the park.

Short Range 1-2 years:

- Replace the boat ramps (in process)
- Replace the sea wall
- Add more boating slips around jetty
- Update the security Cameras, Budget for security system
- Reroof the Harbor Master building
- Add benches, tables, and trash receptacles
- Selective planting and landscaping
- Update fence around Harbor Master building or replace with Boulder Landscaping rock

Medium Range 3-4 years:

- Add a fishing pier

Long Range 5 or more years:

City Docks

Located midway between the mouth of the Oconto River and Oconto's central business district, this six-acre park offers a pavilion, fine fishing areas, plenty of open space and a boat-launching ramp. Stop by during Copperfest for exciting activities and catch the truck & tractor pulls on its constructed dirt track.

General Use - Mostly fisherman, boaters, and picnickers, pavilion rental and a truck pull track.

Facility Conditions and Deficiencies - The Park lacks bathroom facilities. The boat-launching ramps are in poor shape and the old dock is sinking and sliding into the river.

Additional Structures Recommended - Install permanent bathrooms. Replace docks and add restrooms. Walking trail along the river and park sign.

Recommended Improvements - Replace the boat ramps. Take out old dock and replace it with a wood structure/pier. Add horseshoes and plant more trees. New picnic tables for the shelter and add benches throughout the park. Add Playground equipment. Close off the grass so cars can't park on it and add a walking/ biking trail that connects to the trail on county Y.

Short Range 1-2 years:

- Replace the boat ramps (in process)
- Selective planting and landscaping
- Replace old dock with a new pier
- Signage for entrances
- Add benches, tables, and trash receptacles
- Replace 4x4 post with boulder landscaping rock

Medium Range 3-4 years:

- Build a restroom facility
- Installation of play equipment

Long Range 5 or more years:

City Park

A hidden gem, City Park is a 24-acre park located on the shore of Green Bay with 700 feet of water frontage. This park is great for taking in Oconto's beauty. It offers two large pavilions great for picnics, special events, parties or reunions. You'll also find playground equipment, horseshoe pits, two sand volleyball courts, fire pits, and nine newly constructed campsites for first come first serve campers. Enjoy a peaceful day on the sandy beach or take a splash in the bay.

General Use - The most common uses of City Park are pavilion rentals, swimming, fishing, ice fishing, picnicking and camping.

Facility Conditions & Deficiencies - Swimming is difficult because of the type of sand and the weed problem along the beach.

Additional Structures Recommended – Updating the old bathhouse, bathrooms in the campground and walking trail and park sign.

Recommended Improvements - Improve the swimming area address weed problem and update bathhouse and old play equipment. New picnic tables for the shelter, benches throughout the park. New road and parking lot or a walking trail.

Short Range 1-2 years:

- Clean up and approve bench area (in process)
- Extend beach to the north and south
- Approve old changing/concession building (in process)
- Update Signage for entrances (in process)
- Pave road

- Designate parking areas
- Update play equipment
- Add benches, tables, and trash receptacles (completed)
- Update electrical to pavilions (completed)

Medium Range 3-4 years:

- Add more camping sites

Long Range 5 or more years:

- Construct restroom for camp sites
- Add water/electrical to campsites

Copper Culture State Park

Copper Culture State Park is a 45-acre park located on the north bank of the Oconto River filled with a great amount of history. A monument erected by the State Historical Society and the Oconto County Historical Society in 1952, this park contains a 7,500-year-old burial site. At one time this was considered to be the earliest evidence of human settlement in North America east of the Mississippi River. You'll also find a pavilion, picnic areas, fishing areas and walking/hiking/biking trails. Enjoy the day hiking or biking followed by a rest along the banks of the Oconto River.

Copper Culture Historical Association has spent money and time developing a museum in the existing house on the Park. This facility has restrooms and a drinking fountain. Picnic facilities at the Park include a shelter, tables and grills. Additionally, a display of the excavation of the site and other interpretative aspects of the site has been created.

General Use - Historians are drawn by the museum and presence of artifacts on the site. Private parties, group functions and reunions make use of the pavilion. There is plenty of open space for picnicking. There is also a few hiking trails within the park and there will be an adjoining multi-modal trail system close by.

Facility Conditions & Deficiencies - The facilities are fairly new.

Additional Structures Recommended – None

Recommended Improvements – The creation of new and more hiking/biking trails within the park. New picnic tables for the shelter and benches throughout the park. Planting of a few more trees would also add to the park.

Short Range 1-2 years:

- Selective planting and landscaping
- Add benches, tables, and trash receptacles
- Development of a trail system throughout the park
- Develop viewing and picnic area by river (in process)
- Develop tree replacement plan

Medium Range 3-4 years:

- Trail map information center (in process)

-
Long Range 5 or more years:

Freedom Park

Freedom Park is a small but charming park located in the downtown area of Oconto. Oconto's newest park, it was constructed with the support of volunteers, funds from both private contributors and T.I.F. money. It is used primarily as a resting area for people of all ages. The Park has a historical marker, a fountain that was once a baptismal font, concrete benches plus site amenities. Stop for a rest while shopping in historic downtown and while you're there why not wish for something special in the water fountain.

General Use – Rest and relaxation spot for many people of all ages

Facility Conditions & Deficiencies – All pretty new

Additional Structures Recommended – Park sign

Recommended Improvements – Add music and a sign

Short Range 1-2 years:

- Selective planting and landscaping
- Update Signage for park
- Update electrical for park
- Replace Flag (completed)

Medium Range 3-4 years:

- Add music/sound system
-

Long Range 5 or more years:

Holtwood Sporting Complex & Park

Holtwood Park has 68 acres along 4,000 feet of frontage on the Oconto River. A sports haven, this park contains two pavilions, a fishing area, a boat launch, six ball diamonds, playground equipment, two sand volleyball courts, wide-open space, picnic areas and a football/rugby/soccer field. Try something new on any given day of the week at this grand sporting complex. You can always catch something going on.

General Use – This sports and recreation facility serving all ages is equipped with six baseball/softball diamonds, two of them lighted, two lighted sand volleyball courts. It is also where Aageson pool is located. Other uses include ramp access for boat launching, rugby/soccer field, playground and two pavilion rentals, which include picnic tables and grills.

Facility Conditions & Deficiencies – Lower three Ball diamonds could use new fencing for backstops and outfield. The boat-launching ramp is in less than adequate condition. The access road needs to be repaved.

Additional Structures Recommended – Basketball court, disc golf course, walking trail, another play feature and a park sign.

Recommended Improvements - Upgrade the launching ramp to make it safer and more efficient. Add new picnic tables and benches throughout the park. Repave the access road; Lower three baseball/softball diamonds should have new fencing and firmer sand. Field three diamonds should be equipped with sprinkler systems on the infield.

Short Range 1-2 years:

- Replace the boat ramps
- Selective planting and landscaping
- Update Signage for park entrances (in process)
- Approve river bank for viewing and fishing by boat ramp (completed)
- Pave road
- Install basketball court
- Install ice rink for winter use
- Construct warning track on top 3 diamonds
- Add benches, tables, and trash receptacles
- Develop disc golf course
- Develop trail through Holtwood Park and Campground and connect with multi-modal trail
- Budget for security systems

Medium Range 3-4 years:

- Install irrigation system to field 3 and lower diamonds
- Add and replace fencing for lower diamonds
- Installations of play equipment
- Develop Lighting for football, soccer, rugby field

Long Range 5 or more years:

- Develop new shelter/pavilion closer to campground
- Develop concession stand on lower diamonds

Sharp Park

Sharp Park is a 22-acre park that was donated to the City of Oconto. Park development was financed in part by federal funds through the Community Development Block Grant Program. There is a substantial amount of wooded acreage with walking and biking trails in the summer and cross-country skiing trails in the winter. The cleared area has a picnic area, playground equipment and lots of open space, great for a game of frisbee. It also hosts Oconto's ice rink in the winter and roller rink in the summer. Take in the beauty of nature year round.

General Use - Common uses include sports activities, picnicking and recreational walking, ice hockey and skating.

Facility Conditions & Deficiencies - Playground equipment is aging and potentially hazardous. Some areas of the park lack adequate light, which can affect user safety.

Additional Structures Recommended - In the forestry area, an educational center should be established, as well as trail signs identifying species of trees, plants and wildlife. Basketball court.

Other Recommended Improvements - Upgrade and improve the playground equipment. Provide more lighting around the playground/recreation area. Replace hockey/roller rink with basketball court and invest in new, less maintenance ice rinks.

Short Range 1-2 years:

- Selective planting and landscaping
- Update Signage for park
- Add benches, tables, and trash/recycle receptacles
- Plant Spruce trees for shade around ice rink
- Replace Ice rink (in process)

Medium Range 3-4 years:

- Replace and Install play equipment and lighting
- Develop an forest educational center
- Trail map information center

Long Range 5 or more years:

Future Parks

Short Range 1-2 years:

- Develop a new park on the North-side of town
- Develop Skate park
- Develop dog only park
-

Medium Range 3-4 years:

-

Long Range 5 or more years:

Trails

Short Range 1-2 years:

- Develop trail through Holtwood Park and Campground and connect with multi-modal trail
- Develop trails through Copper Culture St. Park and connect with Multi-modal
- Develop a trail on the old railroad and connect parts of the City
-

Medium Range 3-4 years:

- Develop more multi-modal trail throughout the city
-

Long Range 5 or more years:

- Connect the City's Park system with trails

3.3 Recreation Programs

The Park, Recreation and Forestry offers (Summer/Winter Youth Programs, Ice Rinks, and Youth Softball/Baseball Programs). The City of Oconto is currently looking into better ways to serve the community and offering more programs like Senior Program, Trips and additional recreational programs. This is a full list of what the Park & Recreation Department has to offer as of this date.

Youth Baseball	Adult Kickball
Youth Softball	Adult Softball
Youth Football	Adult Flag Football
Youth Basketball	
Open Gym	
Youth Wrestling	
Learn to Skate	
Instructional Hockey	

Short Range 1-2 years:

- Add senior programs/trips ex.) Bingo league, Casino Trip, Ballroom Dancing
- Add youth trips ex.) Paintball, waterpark, sport trips
- Add more youth programs
- Budget for a color printer
- Budget for sound system and video projector (completed)
- Budget for online registration software

Medium Range 3-4 years:

- Budget for a part-time recreation coordinator
-

Long Range 5 or more years:

-

4.1 Acreage Analysis

The following guidelines are universally used to measure appropriate levels of park acreage and distribution of our parklands. These standards are relative, minimum requirements and should serve as general criteria to assist in the planning and decision making process. It is stated that these standards are to be used as a guide and should not be applied to all locations in the same manner. Various environmental, socioeconomic, physical, and other barriers or issues should be considered when determining appropriate parks and acreage.

4.1.1

A commonly used formula to determine appropriate acreage is for a community to provide 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space for every 1,000 of it's population. With the City's population of 4,700, this standard would suggest Oconto should have a total of 25 to 42 acres of developed open space. The City of Oconto opts to use this formula in analyzing park acreage throughout the plan.

4.1.2

Another commonly used analysis states that 10 percent of a community's area should be set aside for open space. The City of Oconto consists of approximately 4472 acres. By applying this standard to Oconto's acreage, approximately 447 acres of open space (all green space/land owned by the municipality or which may or may not be used for park land) should be dedicated to Open Space. The City of Oconto opts not use this formula in determining appropriate amount of green space and park acreage.

Present Park Acreage Analysis

Recommended acreage -	25-44 acres
Oconto Park Acreage- Developed -	143.83 acres
Special use/Wetlands/or Undeveloped -	2,592.2 acres
Applicable Oconto Park Acreage -	314.8 acres

4.2 Service Area analysis

A service area analysis is used to identify a park's target population by showing its service radius, and then eliminating areas from the service area based on manmade or natural barriers (i.e. busy roads, rivers, railroad tracks, etc...). A service area becomes clear by identifying a park, drawing its service area, and then eliminating areas within the service area based on manmade or natural barriers.

4.3 Land Classification

Municipal parks are designed primarily to serve residents within the boundaries of the municipality. There are five specific municipal park types.

Park Land Classifications, Component Use, Service Area, Desirable Size, Service population, Desirable Site Characteristics

Mini-Park - Provide open space for passive and some active recreation within a limited walking distance of primary users.

1/8-mile radius 1 acre or less 250 – 1,250 persons

Close to apartment complexes, town house developments, or senior housing.

Ex.) Breakwater Park and Freedom Park

Neighborhood Park - Designed to provide both active and passive recreation activities, organized league play, as well as informal "pick up" play.

¼ - ½ mile radius 5-10 acres 500-2,500 persons Tends to serve ages 5- 15 year olds, and covers one elementary school.

Ex.) City Docks

Community Park - Designed to serve several neighborhoods while minimizing travel distance. Intended to serve all age groups, while activities cater to junior/senior high school students and adults. 1 – 2 miles 25+ acres 2,500 – 20,000 persons although size is not always a sound criterion for classifying parks, it is generally recognized that community parks are more spacious than Neighborhood or Mini- Parks.

Ex.) Sharp Park, City Park and Holtwood Park

Special Use Parks - These areas tend to be specialized facilities that emphasize a chief or singular characteristic. (i.e. pools, zoos, fairgrounds, marinas, etc...) No applicable standard. Entire municipality.

Ex.) Ageson Pool

Conservancy Area - Serves to protect and preserve the natural and cultural environments, with recreational use as a second priority.

Ex.) Oconto's Marsh

5.1 Park Survey

The City of Oconto surveyed the residents and students in January 2005 regarding what they envisioned the city would look like in the year 2025. Over 2,200 surveys were distributed and **56** people responded -25 residents and 31 students. The responses by subject are listed below. This community input was used to create the city's vision statement that is to be the goal to be strived for during the implementation of the *City of Oconto 20-Year Comprehensive Plan*.

*Maintain City Park- Preserved- kept up.

*Sharp Park kept up.

*Save the Main St. Park as is!

*They should have a taxi or public bus service, so if something happens, or if you need a ride, you could get one. Oconto should have more parks for kids also to play in.

*The area golf courses need improvement. The game of golf brings commercial business in hotel housing, restaurants, and nightlife. But if the golf courses are not adequate to Green Bay courses, business potential will go elsewhere. The continual improvement of the Oconto River is necessary to maintain the life and blood of the city.

*Maintain current parks.

*Update play equipment.

*Clean up shoreline on City Park to expose a better view of the bay.

*Clean up City Park beach – more sand, fewer rocks.

*More money for parks department for up keeps.

*Clean City Parks.

*Kids need a park for skating, boarding, hanging out. It should be adult supervised.

*Roller Rink.

*Maintain parks.

*Is City Park being considered for some improvements?

*Develop that site for residential or make a park that goes to the river for picnic and fishing.

*Utilize Holtwood during winter; develop a skate area on river with warming shelters and lights.

*BMX Park and shop.

*Proper goal post on football field.

*More hunting grounds.

*Bike Park.

*New football field.

*Skate Park. (4 responses)

*Better parks.

*Keep city pool, very good for kids.

- *Kids sit around uptown because there is nothing to do. Need movie theatre or Skate Park. People can't afford the Bond Center.
- *Need improvements at City Park Beach.
- *Improvements to City Park and Copper Culture Park.
- *Cheaper place to workout, swim, and play basketball.
- *Water Park.
- *Add more to bond c. center – make cheaper.
- *Go-Karts.
- *Nature trails, Cross-country skiing opportunities, snowmobile trails.
- *Better swimming pool.
- *Better rugby field goal posts.

5.2 Future Park Needs

By using the standard of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of local park facilities to 1,000 people, the City of Oconto would need 25 to 42 acres of developed parkland to serve its population in 2025. Presently, the City has 114.3 acres of parkland (developed) and how more acreage in wetlands.

5.3 Facilities in demand or short supply

The following lists facilities considered in short supply or demand based on current trends, national standards, and citizen input. The list should be used in considering the development of new park areas.

- Basketball courts
- Tennis courts
- Skate Park
- Dog Park
- Sledding Hill
- Fishing facilities
- Frisbee Golf
- Splash Pad
- Soccer Fields
- Archery Range

6.1 Recommendations

Recommendations listed are based on the Park and Recreation Directors opinion and Recommendations, they are not listed in a matter of priority.

- A. Expand off the Multi-modal trail and develop more trails throughout the city.
- B. Acquire acreage for the purpose of a neighborhood park on the north side of Main St.
- C. Acquire vacant property within of the City for a neighborhood parks.
- D. Acquire property along the Oconto River that can serve as a neighborhood park. The park site could also act as a trailhead facility.
- E. Continue the development of Holtwood Park.
- F. Continued maintenance and improvements of current park facilities.

- G. Research the development of a dog park or the admittance of dogs on park trails.
- H. Determine a location of a splash pad in Oconto.
- I. Conduct an annual survey to residents regarding park and recreation related issues to obtain input.

6.1.1 Points of Consideration

The below points of interest are not necessarily recommendations to the City. They are topics or issues the City should consider if the right circumstances present themselves, or if a need is identified.

- Acquire additional property along the Oconto River for conservancy purposes and possible multi-use trail.
- Promote use of the Railroad right of way, and develop trails connecting park to and from each other.
- Acquisitions of wooded ravines to connect parks and facilities.
- When developing new parks and recreational facilities consider facilities in short supply.

6.2 Five Year Capital Plan (2009 – 2014)

Capital improvements to a park are the addition of labor and materials that improve the overall value and usefulness of that park. Capital improvements are designated and funded individually through segregated municipal funds. Most projects can be easily identified and categorized, but some are difficult to determine. When a project falls on the borderline between improvement and maintenance, the overall cost will become the determining factor. Projects with a high cost, such as seal-coating roads or parking lots, should be categorized as capital improvements. Generally speaking, capital improvements are ranked in the following manner:

1. Improvements to existing facilities:
 - a. Correct health and safety hazards
 - b. Upgrade deficient facilities
 - c. Modernize adequate but outdated facilities
2. Install new facilities as deemed appropriate through community response (i.e., surveys, nominal group sessions, public hearings).
3. Install new facilities as deemed necessary through comparison to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) park and recreation standards.

Generally, improvements to existing facilities will rank the highest in the capital improvements program, while new facilities are usually ranked lower, according to their need. Improvements that correct health and/or safety hazards are always the highest priority. Improvements that are deemed necessary through comparison to park and recreation standards are usually ranked the lowest.

This section of the report includes a listing and brief discussion of various means of funding the acquisition of parkland and the funding of park development. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but should help Oconto think creatively about funding sources.

7.1 Developer Exactions for Park Acquisition and Development

Many communities across the United States have developer exactions for parkland acquisition and recreational facilities development. These exactions are designed to help a growing community develop new park facilities to keep pace with new residential development. As residents move into the new subdivision, they place additional stress on existing park facilities. The exactions provide land or cash or a combination of both to the City to be used in the provision of park facilities for the new neighborhood. There are two kinds of exactions, the Park Land Dedication Ordinance and Impact Fees.

7.1.1 Park Land Dedication Ordinance

The ordinance is usually written to give the community the option of accepting land or a fee in lieu of land from the developer. The fee is usually placed in a separate fund for park land acquisition or is used to develop or improve existing park land to serve the new residents. The "exaction" (how much land is to be donated or fee is to be paid) is calculated and agreed upon during the subdivision plat review process. Some municipalities use the projected population of the new subdivision in calculating the amount of land or cash owed. Others use the number of dwelling units expected to be developed or the total acres of the subdivision as a means of calculating the amount. Meeting the requirements of the park land dedication ordinance is one of many steps in the approval process that must be completed by the developer before plat approval can be received and construction can begin on a new subdivision.

7.1.2 Impact Fees

Many communities collect "impact fees" at the time the building permit is issued for a new home. These impact fees can cover a variety of things including sewer and water infrastructure, fire fighting equipment, library facilities and park development. Regardless of what particular facility or service, the fee must reasonably relate to or somehow serve the new residents. Park impact fees go into a separate account to be spent on capital development of parks (or improvements to existing parks) to serve the new residents. The City of Oconto has done an excellent job of making capital improvements in recent years to its park system. As residential development continues in the future, it will be necessary to acquire new parks to serve the new residents. An impact fee can provide another revenue source and it is reasonable to require the new population to contribute to the needed expansion of the park system.

The state and federal government provides money to local governments for the acquisition and development of parks. It is important to note that all of the programs require that a local government submit to the WDNR a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan or master plan which has been approved by resolution by the submitting local government. By adopting the City of Oconto 20 year Comprehensive Plan with an official resolution, the City of Oconto has met the eligibility requirement for these grant

programs. This section provides general information and contact names on grant programs that may be used to acquire and develop local park facilities.

8.1 Available grants

8.1.1 Stewardship Grant

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program was implemented in 1989 by the Wisconsin Legislature. The Stewardship Program typically funds about \$60 million per year into five different categories. The allocation of funds to each category can change on a yearly basis. The numbers listed were the most recent allocation numbers from the Wisconsin

Department of Natural Resources.

A. Land Acquisition Program - \$45 million

B. Local Assistance Program - \$8 million

- (ADLP) Acquisition and Development of Local Parks

- Urban Rivers

- Urban Green Space

- Acquisition of Development Rights

C. Property Development on State Lands - \$8 million

D. Baraboo Hills - \$1 million

E. Bluff Protection - \$1million

Contact Name: Christine Halbur

Phone: 920-662-5121

E-mail: Christine.Halbur@Wisconsin.gov.

8.1.2 Urban Forestry Grant

On a yearly basis the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources administers a grant for Urban Forestry Programs in Villages. Grants range from \$1,000 - \$25,000, and are a 50% cost sharing program.

Contact Name: Tracy Salisbury

Phone: 920-662-5450

E-mail: Tracy.Salisbury@Wisconsin.gov

8.1.3 Recreational Trails Program

Created in 1998 by the Transportation Equity Act (TEA -21), this program is funded through federal tax excise taxes. The program provides 50% matching funding for the development of motorized or non-motorized trails.

Contact Name: Christine Halbur

Phone: 920-662-5121

E-mail: Christine.Halbur@Wisconsin.gov.