Chapter 4: Parkland Inventory

4.1 City of Madison Park Classifications

The City of Madison provides its residents with a wide variety of recreational opportunities, with most public parks including play areas and equipment, landscaping, signage, and seating. As shown in Table 4.1, each park is classified according to property characteristics such as size, service area, amenities offered, programming, or special purpose. [Map X:] Existing City Parks by Type illustrates the geographic distribution of City of Madison parks by their park classification.

Table 4.1: City of Madison Park Type Classification Descriptions

Classification	General Description
Mini Park	Fewer than 5 acres and used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.
Neighborhood Park	Greater than 5 acres, neighborhood parks remain the basic unit of the park system. These parks serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood.
Community Park	Typically greater than 20 acres, these parks serve a broader purpose than a neighborhood park. They focus on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.
Conservation Parks	Lands set aside for preservation of sensitive and/or high-quality natural resources.
Sports Complex	Heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities whose primary purpose is programmed active recreation.
Trafficway	Public right-of-way used as parkland. Development of this land is limited. Trafficway acreage is counted as parkland for the purposes of inventorying the quantity of acreage and number of parks.
Special Use	The City of Madison considers special use to include parkland whose primary function serves unique recreation opportunities (i.e. golf courses, Forest Hill Cemetery, and Breese Stevens Field).
Open Space	Typically land that is not of a quality to develop as a conservation or active use park with facilities.
Greenways	Public land owned or administered by City Engineering for stormwater purposes. Greenway acreage within parks is counted as parkland for purposes of inventory.
Other	Non park facilities. In the City of Madison this category includes the MMSD Pump Station 8 which is located on land owned by the parks division.

Table 4.2: Typical Park Facilities by Park Classification		
Mini	**Neighborhood**	**Community**
● Open play area ● Benches ● Landscaping ● Park sign ● Park kiosk/info board ● One small recreational amenity (i.e., 1/2 basketball court, playground, small soccer field, volleyball, etc.) ● Picnic areas	● Two medium-sized recreational facilities (i.e., softball diamond, soccer field) ● One small recreational amenity (i.e., small basketball court, gaga ball pit, yard games, small soccer field, bocce ball, etc.) ● Playground ● Accessible path system ● Open play area with space for soccer ● Recreational biking ● Benches ● Landscaping ● Park sign ● Park kiosk/info board ● Open air shelter ● Small parking area if programmed ● Community gardens (based on guidance from our partner Rooted)	● Two to three medium-sized recreational amenities (i.e., softball diamond, soccer field, full-size basketball court) ● One small recreational amenity (i.e., small basketball court, gaga ball pit, yard games, small soccer field, bocce ball, etc.) ● Accessible path system ● Playground for both two to five and five to twelve year olds ● Open play area with space for adult soccer ● Benches ● Landscaping ● Park sign ● Park kiosk/info board ● Reservable shelter with restrooms ● Drinking fountain ● Picnic area ● Large parking area ● Community gardens (based on guidance from our partner Rooted)

Mini, Neighborhood and Community Parks

Mini, neighborhood, and community parks form the core park facilities of most communities throughout the United States. The facilities in these parks usually provide some type of play equipment, athletic field and open green space (see Table 4.2). Amenities within each park are developed based on the park development planning process, specific physical land constraints, and budget. In the City of Madison, depending on the size and classification of the park, these parks can also include facilities such as community gardens, off-leash dog parks, and ski and hiking trails.

Conservation Parks

The City of Madison has 21 conservation parks. Conservation parks are managed to preserve native plant communities, wildlife, and significant natural resources. To preserve native plant and animal habitat, access is limited to foot traffic only (along with motorized wheelchair and mobility assistance devices) and dogs are not permitted. The City of Madison currently has approximately 1,752 acres of conservancy land. These facilities are acquired based on high quality environmental characteristics of the land. The City of Madison places high priority on the preservation of these areas and will continue to acquire conservation land to preserve and protect sensitive and high-quality natural areas in the future.

Sports Complex
This category primarily includes Duane F. Bowman Park, which functions as a venue for athletic games and practice but has also been used for events such as concerts.

Trafficways
City of Madison trafficways are road rights-of-way that function as a public park. These include areas such as the Edgewood Pleasure Drive, certain street ends, and the State Street/Mall Concourse. The City of Madison has nearly 27 acres of parks classified as trafficways, but there are also areas that are road rights-of-way within larger classified parks (i.e., the non-vacated Esther Beach Road right-of-way within Esther Beach Park). The largest trafficway is the area known as State Street/Mall Concourse. The State Street/Mall Concourse includes State Street and Lisa Link Peace Park and encircles the State Capitol grounds. It has five performing areas, walkways, fountains, biking routes, and numerous passive recreation facilities built into its design. With the shops and restaurants that line State Street, it is a primary destination for students, visitors, downtown employees, residents, and major community events.

Open Space
The classification of open space denotes land that does not have active recreation facilities but provides vital space for the community. This category includes lands that function as a park such as former landfill Mineral Point Park, land adjacent to waterways such as the Mud Lake Fishing Access, and heavily wooded slopes such as Highlands East Open Space.

Other
This classification is used for Pumping Station 8, which is used solely by the Water Utility.

Special Use Parks
Specialized facilities intended to serve a unique function are classified as Special Use Parks. These include golf courses, maintenance facilities, Forest Hill Cemetery, the Olbrich Botanical Gardens, and the Henry Vilas Zoo (operated by Dane County).

The largest percentage of land in the special use category is golf courses. Madison has developed regulations for United States Golf Association (USGA) approved courses. This open space is used by golfers, walkers, joggers, and cross-country skiers. The four courses managed by the Madison Parks Division include Yahara Hills, Odana Hills, Monona, and The Glen.

Madison's golf program continues to be financially independent of the levy through the Golf Enterprise Fund.

The next largest special use facility is Olbrich Botanical Gardens, which operates as a public-private partnership between the Parks Division and the non-profit Olbrich Botanical Society (OBS) and attracts more than 325,000 visitors each year. The facility features the 10,000 sq. ft. Bolz Conservatory with a collection of tropical plants from around the world, as well as 16 acres of outdoor gardens that feature sustainable horticulture and landscapes suitable to the region. Specialty gardens include the Sunken Garden, the Herb Garden, the Meadow Garden, the Rose Garden, the Rock Garden, the Wildflower Garden, the Starkweather Creek and Atrium Shade Gardens, and the Thai Garden (a gift to the University of Wisconsin-Madison from the Wisconsin Alumni Association-Thailand). Additionally, Olbrich Botanical Gardens displays raingardens, gravel gardens, and a variety of meadows as examples of sustainable horticulture.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens offers the community a broad range of programs and activities, including the Schumacher Library, an education program for adults and families, and a volunteer program that contributes more than 25,000 hours annually to the Gardens. Olbrich Botanical Gardens also offers a number of special events, including Rhapsody in Bloom; GLEAM: Art in a New Light; Blooming Butterflies; three concert series; Crackle: Fire and Froth; and three flower shows.

Greenways

Greenways are public land managed and administered by the City of Madison Engineering Division. They include lands such as detention ponds and drainage corridors. Greenways are sometimes considered part of the park (e.g., the drainage ponds at Owen Park), but can also be completely separate from Madison Parks (e.g., the retention pond on Mineral Point Drive). The Parks Division occasionally shares mowing and plowing responsibilities with the Engineering division for greenway properties.

4.2 Parks Facilities

The City of Madison Parks system has over 270 public parks, providing typical park features such as basketball courts and playgrounds, as well as beaches, community gardens, ice skating rinks, pickleball and tennis courts, golf courses, and the nationally renowned botanical gardens.

Within the Madison park system there are over 8,000 amenities; some examples include athletic fields, buildings, and drinking fountains. For a breakdown of the park system's different facilities, please see [Table X]: Madison Park Facilities in [Appendix X].

[TO BE ADDED LATER: Trust for Public Land 2024 park facts national ranking data]

4.3 Other Park and Open Space Facilities

A variety of university, school, county, and state facilities adds to the availability of park and open space systems within the City of Madison. These facilities are shown in [Map X:] Other Park and Recreation Land.

University of Wisconsin
The University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW) contributes both athletic facilities and natural areas to the available open space in the City of Madison. The primary UW public facilities consist of the UW Arboretum and the UW Lakeshore Nature Preserve. These two areas provide over 1,500 acres of publicly accessible land for use.

The UW Arboretum and Lakeshore Nature Preserve provide the City with an additional recreational resource. The UW's Arboretum totals 1,262 acres of conservation land. Its footprint includes gardens, prairies, savannas, deciduous forests, conifer forests, wetlands, and horticultural gardens. The UW Arboretum provides opportunities for hiking, biking, picnicking, jogging, skiing, snowshoeing, and nature viewing.

The Lakeshore Nature Preserve contains 300 acres of preserved land along four miles of the southern shore of Lake Mendota. The Lakeshore Nature Preserve provides opportunities for nature viewing, swimming, picnicking, hiking, jogging, and biking, and has opportunities for launching kayaks, canoes, and small boats. Many people also use points along the Lakeshore Nature Preserve to access the frozen Lake Mendota for ice fishing or cross-country skiing.

The UW's private recreational facilities (e.g the Nicholas Recreation Center, Camp Randall Sports Center, and Bakke Recreation and Wellbeing Center) include indoor/outdoor tennis courts, an indoor racquetball court, swimming pool facilities, tracks, softball diamonds, soccer fields and basketball courts. These facilities are reserved for the over 60,000 students, faculty, and staff affiliated with the University. Additionally, the UW Library Mall and Memorial Union Terrace are popular outdoor spaces within the UW Madison campus complex enjoyed by students and the general public alike.

Public School Grounds
Public schools are excluded from the City's inventory of existing park facilities but often serve the same functions as mini and neighborhood parks. The Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) serves as the City's primary recreation programming service, providing a wide variety of activities that use both Madison parks and MMSD facilities.

Existing school facilities such as playgrounds and athletic fields are reviewed when evaluating overall City facilities. Using service area analysis, the City can identify whether school parks are able to fill demand in communities which may otherwise lack parkland. *[Appendix C, Table 4: Schools with Recreation Facilities identifies MMSD school grounds with recreation facilities that are open to the public when not reserved or being occupied by students].*

Dane County Parks
Dane County owns and manages over 12,000 acres of park and open space areas throughout the County. These areas are designed to offer recreational opportunities on a regional scale. Some of these parks lie within or partially within the City of Madison limits. These parks are typically conservation-oriented and have specific recreational facilities related to preservation

or education regarding cultural and natural resources. Nearby County parks and facilities that serve Madison residents are described below:

- Badger Prairie County Park: This park is located just east of the City of Verona at the intersection of County Highway PB and US Highway 18 and 151. It serves as the center of the Ice Age Trail Junction Area. The park has a shelter facility, play fields, mountain bike trails, a playground, a dog exercise area, and an aero-modeling field. The park also provides access to Military Ridge State Trail and a segment of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.
- Blooming Grove Drumlins Natural Resource Area: This 1,646-acre area preserves glacial drumlin features that remain from the last glaciation. The site provides opportunities for hiking, fishing, cross-country skiing, wildlife observation, foraging, nature study, as well as hunting and trapping through limited-issued permits only.
- Capital City State Trail: Dane County Parks maintains the 9-mile segment of Capital Trail that traverses through the Capital Springs Recreation Area from Verona Road to Industrial Drive. It provides multiple links around and through Madison between the Military Ridge State Trail and the Glacial Drumlin State Trail. In the City of Madison, the trail follows seven miles of bikeways, from Industrial Drive near Nob Hill, under the Beltline Highway, along John Nolen Drive, past the Monona Terrace Convention Center downtown, and through the east side of Madison. The Capital City Trail is used for bicycling, walking, jogging, and in-line skating. From 2018 to 2021, a major pavement restoration project was completed, and a connection to the Glacial Drumlin Trail beginning at the I-90 bridge in Madison east to the Glacial Drumlin Trailhead in Cottage Grove is scheduled to be completed in 2026.
- Jenni and Kyle Preserve: A unique park, encompassing 163 acres, intended to provide children and persons with disabilities a place to enjoy outdoor activities. Visitors can learn about natural environments through accessible fishing, wildlife observation, wheelchair swings, and a picnic shelter building. Trails lead around two spring-fed ponds containing trout and panfish.
- William G. Lunney Lake Farm County Park: This 328-acre park is a unit of the Capital Springs Centennial State Park & Recreation Area, which also includes the Lewis Nine Springs E-Way, Capital City State Bike Trail, and Lower Yahara River Trail. The park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and offers three shelter facilities, play equipment, a barrier-free boat launch with fish cleaning facility, two accessible fishing piers, group camping area, wildlife pond, overlook tower, and hiking and cross-country ski trails. The park also includes the Lussier Family Heritage Center, a reservable event venue, and a campground with 54 reservable sites, including 39 electrical hook ups for RV's, restrooms, and shower facilities. In 2020, solar array panels were installed on the Lussier Family Heritage Center, which now provides about 90% of all electricity across the site.
- Lake View Hill Park: This 40-acre park is the highest point on the north side of the City of Madison. The site served as a County tuberculosis sanatorium from 1930-1966. It is classified as a Cultural/Historical Site and is listed on the National Register of Historic

Places. Lake View Hill Park is heavily wooded and also contains restored savannas and prairie.

- Lewis Nine Springs E-Way: A 7-mile environmental corridor extending from Dunn's Marsh to Lake Farm County Park. The corridor includes cultural and natural features of wetlands, prairies, sedge meadows, native forests, large springs, and Native American mound sites. It offers opportunities for jogging, hiking, biking, nature study, photography, and cross-country skiing.
- Lower Yahara Trail: This nearly 2.5-mile trail opened in August of 2017 and provides an off-road trail connection between the City of Madison and the Village of McFarland. The bridge spans Lake Waubesa to connect the Capital City Trail at Lake Farm County Park with McDaniel Park in the Village of McFarland. The bridge runs alongside an active railroad corridor and includes an accessible fishing pier, rest stops, and multiple observation areas with picturesque views. Phase two of the Lower Yahara River Trail is currently underway, with an expected completion date of August 2024.
- Yahara Heights County Park and Cherokee Marsh Natural Resource Area: The 141-acre Yahara Heights County Park is located adjacent to the Cherokee Marsh Natural Resource Area. Cherokee Marsh is the largest remaining wetland in Dane County and in Lake Mendota's watershed. The recreational park offers a 20-acre dog exercise area, hiking trails, and a canoe and kayak launch, while the Natural Resource Area serves to preserve wildlife habitat and wetlands that are crucial to the water quality of Madison's chain of lakes. The Cherokee Marsh Natural Resource Area also contains some of the best examples of Native American mound sites in Dane County.
- Tenney Lock: The first dam at this site was constructed in 1847, to accompany a mill and brewery, and has been reconstructed several times throughout its history. The Tenney lock and dam has been operated and maintained by Dane County since 1981. Prior to this time, it was operated by the City of Madison. The lock structure allows boats to pass between Lake Mendota and Lake Monona and accommodates approximately 10,000 boats annually.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WIDNR) owns and manages a variety of natural resources. Of closest proximity to the City of Madison is Governor Nelson State Park, a 422-acre parcel located on the north shore of Lake Mendota. As shown in Exhibit 8, the park is a conveniently located recreational resource for Madison residents. Founded in 1975, this day use park offers amenities including a sand beach, boat launch, picnic areas, prairie restorations, and approximately 8 miles of hiking/cross-country ski trails.

Other Parks/Conservancy Areas

There are several other municipally owned parks and conservancy areas under the jurisdiction of Madison's neighboring communities that are used by City of Madison residents, including but not limited to the Cities of Fitchburg, Middleton, and Monona.

Private Recreational Facilities

Private recreational facilities provide recreational resources to City of Madison residents who can afford and desire to seek out specialized facilities such as private gyms, pools, and tennis facilities. Additionally, there are several privately owned spaces within the City that are used as public amenities. These areas often provide local neighborhood open space and are owned by private organizations. These facilities have not been included in this plan.

Additionally, Governor's Island located along the north shore of Lake Mendota is another unique outdoor recreation space. Wisconsin's first Governor, Leonard J. Farwell called the area home during his tenure, and the land was donated to the State of Wiscson by the state's second Governor to be used for the first State Hospital for the Insane, now the Mendota Mental Health Institute. The Institute now owns the property, but the public is welcome to traverse paved walking paths and take in scenic views near rocky bluffs.

Conclusion

Residents of Madison are fortunate to live in a place known for great natural resources and recreational amenities. As the largest landowner in the City, Madison Parks plays a large role in providing the community these assets. However, they are also supplemented by local and regional public land provided by the University of Wisconsin, Dane County, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.