Recommended Strategies

The 2025-2030 City of Madison Parks and Open Space Plan (POSP) is supplemental to the City of Madison Comprehensive Plan. The most recent Comprehensive Plan was initially adopted in 2018, with interim updates in 2023 and 2024. The Comprehensive Plan translates community input and ideas into policies and actions. The Plan is organized by seven elements which are major topic areas that influence the quality of life in the city:

- Land Use and Transportation: Compact Land Use | Efficient Transportation
- Neighborhoods and Housing: Complete Neighborhoods | Housing Access
- Economy and Opportunity: Growing Economy | Equitable Education and Advancement
- Culture and Character: Cultural Vibrancy | Unique Character
- Green and Resilient: Natural Resources | Parks and Recreation
- Effective Government: Efficient Services | Community Facilities |Regional Transportation
- Health and Safety: Equitable Health Outcomes | Safe Community

The Madison Parks system is integral in the quality of life for residents within the city, as such the recommended strategies in the 2025-2030 POSP are organized within these seven elements. The POSP incorporates information from the engagement process, recreation needs assessment, relevant planning documents and various recognized park metrics into actionable data-informed strategies. As the city and park system continue to grow, develop and evolve, these strategies will provide a roadmap towards achieving an ideal park system for everyone.

Land Use and Transportation
Strategy: Increase connectivity between parks to enhance access. • *Create a comprehensive system of greenspace connections by means of pedestrian, biking, and water trails through parks.* • *Increase connectivity with and through parks to key neighborhood facilities and public transportation methods.*
Neighborhoods and Housing
Strategy: Reduce parkland deficiencies and respond to increasing residential density. • *Make data-informed park planning decisions through evaluation of changing city residential population needs, market trends, and walkability standards.* • *Preserve, protect and advocate for sufficient undeveloped land for open space.* • *Acquire new parkland on existing developed properties where feasible in areas of high residential density.* • *Identify demand for additional parkland and sufficient improvement resources for Area Plans to address future residential density.* • *Pursue joint use agreements with owners of other public recreation spaces, such as school properties, to improve access in areas where there is no walkable access to mini, neighborhood, conservation, or community City-owned parkland.*

Economy and Opportunity

Strategy: Create welcoming and inclusive park spaces and programming.

- *Develop parkland and amenities that are reflective of the diverse recreational needs of the community.*
- *Lower barriers to use of park spaces, participate in programming and support local business.*
- *Pursue alternative funding sources that support programmatic needs of the division and provide opportunities to small business owners.*
- *Incorporate public engagement methods and partnerships during the park planning process to ensure projects are representative of the diverse community.*
- *Develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan to educate and inform the public about options and services available within the park system.*
- *Create and promote awareness around relationship between good parks and a strong economy.*

Strategy: Foster meaningful connections with groups and organizations that advance the vision of the Parks Division.

- *Nurture and create opportunities to strengthen the intrinsic value of parks within the community.*
- *Improve existing partnerships to establish equitable distribution of services and programming across geographic regions of the city.*
- *Develop a programming plan to grow and sustain relationships with existing partners and identify opportunities to address gaps and create frameworks to engage with future partners.*
- *Encourage connection with parks and nature through Friends Groups and other volunteer groups while aligning efforts with identified land management strategies and master plans.*
- *Support volunteers and recognize their contributions in planning, developing, programming and maintaining park spaces and facilities.*
- *Cultivate relationships and partnerships that boost the overall economy within the region by supporting placemaking and tourism.*

Culture and Character

Strategy: Improve public access to lakes and waterways.

- *Engage the community in the design process to increase water access on public lands.*
- *Provide opportunities for year-round water recreation.*
- *Support efforts of partners and stakeholders to improve water quality and clarity in Madison's lakes and waterways.*
- *Encourage creative placemaking opportunities to connect the community to water.*

Strategy: Protect and celebrate the community's cultural richness.

- *Respect and protect tribal sacred sites.*
- *Continue to recognize, preserve, and enhance historic parks.*
- *Actively pursue opportunities for cultural enrichment through community events and promotion of community building activities.*
- *Evaluate operational resources for park and street use events to promote balance between park uses and support the needs of the system.*

Green & Resilient

Strategy: Protect and enhance natural resources.

- *Identify and promote areas of native plant habitats and ecosystems, which complement recreational uses of parks.*
- *Improve biodiversity by managing invasive species in natural areas.*
- *Acquire conservation parkland to preserve unique habitats.*
- *Preserve iconic and special landscape views from publicly accessible areas.*
- *Preserve, promote and expand the urban tree canopy within park spaces.*

Strategy: Improve the park system's capacity to adapt to environmental challenges.

- *Use and promote plant species that thrive and adapt to environmental changes with fewer resource inputs.*
- *Integrate facilities, equipment and materials that reduce the carbon footprint of park operations.*
- *Use best management practices for stormwater runoff and infiltration to address increased storm severity.*
- *Create solutions that provide outdoor recreation and extended season use in all conditions.*
- *Support winter recreation through activities that are not impacted by climate change.*
- *Adapt to the unpredictable nature of climate change by developing an opportunistic approach to maintenance and programming.*
- *Create spaces and adapt programming to keep the community safe, healthy, and emotionally resilient in the face of stress and uncertainty.*

Effective Government

Strategy: Develop new parks and amenities in a fiscally sustainable manner.

- *Evaluate trends in funding sources to inform strategic planning and investment.*
- *Secure adequate funding for infrastructure improvements within existing and future parks.*
- *Revise parkland dedication and park impact fees every ten years to maintain adequate levels of parkland and funding.*
- *Require parkland dedication of parks five-acres or more for new residential developments where feasible.*
- *Expand existing park land where appropriate and feasible in accordance with adopted plans*
- *Seek out and utilize innovative sources to expand and develop existing parkland and amenities.*
- Fund and construct necessary infrastructure improvements in parks acquired through annexations and cooperative plans.

Strategy: Secure sufficient resources to sustain service levels across the growing and changing system.

- *Seek funding t*o maintain current levels of service in *the Parks Division's Operating and Capital budgets.*
- *Allocate funding equitably to maintain and upgrade existing infrastructure and develop of new facilities.*
- *Pursue opportunities to diversify revenue streams that support services.*
- *Evaluate staffing and location of operational facilities to optimize resources for new city facilities.*

- *Provide technical and administrative support to volunteers whose work supplements park maintenance , programming and improvement.*
- *Implement Results Madison and develop an asset management system to aid in data-informed decisions related to resource allocation.*
- *Encourage public interaction and participation with the Parks Division's governing bodies.*
- Develop appropriate professional development and recruitment programs to attract and retain employees committed to advancing the vision of the Parks Division.

Strategy: Pursue regional solutions to regional issues.

- *Where possible, enhance or develop regional recreation facilities identified by the Wisconsin SCORP for the Southern Gateways Region to address supply shortages.*
- *Continue joint planning efforts with Dane County Parks to implement recommendations of the Dane County Park and Open Space Plan within the City of Madison.*
- *Collaborate with park advocacy organizations and surrounding municipalities to meet park and recreation demands.*
- *Pursue strategic partnerships to provide tournament-scale venues.*

Health and Safety

Strategy: Promote the physical and social health of the diverse community.

- *Incorporate amenities that promote active recreation and social interaction for all skills and abilities, especially youth and seniors.*
- *Provide flexible multipurpose spaces that can respond to changing recreational trends.*
- *Provide sufficient fields, courts, and other facilities to accommodate larger competitions.*