

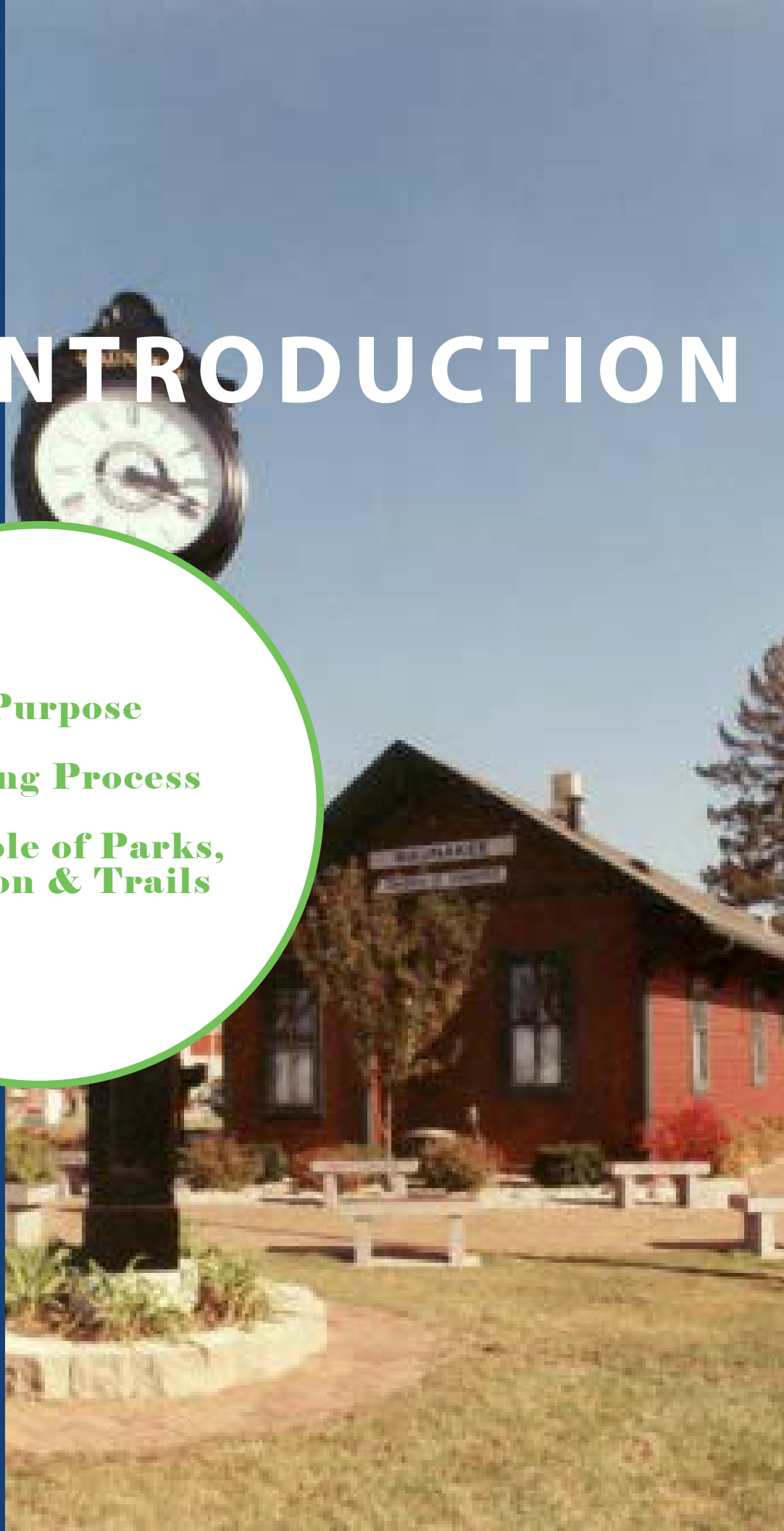
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Plan Purpose

1.2 Planning Process

**1.3 The Role of Parks,
Recreation & Trails**



CORP & GRANT FUNDING

The Wisconsin Legislature created the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program (Stewardship) in 1989. Named for two of Wisconsin's most revered conservation leaders, Warren Knowles (Governor 1965-1971) and Gaylord Nelson (Governor 1959-1963, U.S. Senator 1964-1981), the purpose of the program is to preserve valuable natural areas and wildlife habitat, protect water quality and fisheries, and expand opportunities for outdoor recreation. The conservation and recreation goals of the Stewardship Program are achieved through the acquisition of land and easements, development of recreational facilities, and restoration of wildlife habitat.

The Stewardship grant program is the most widely used recreational grant program in the state. Eligibility for the program requires that a community maintain a local comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (CORP), updated every five years, and that the project for which grant funding is sought is described in the CORP. Many other similar state and federal recreational grant programs have similar requirements or have shown a tendency to favor those grant applications which are supported through previous community planning efforts.

1.1 PLANNING PURPOSE

Parks, recreation, trails and open space are important elements in the quality of life for all communities. Not only do parks, open space and trails provide a safe and healthy place to recreate, they also serve to beautify, protect the natural environment and influence the patterns of development in and around the community.

The Village of Waunakee and Town of Westport realize the importance and benefits its parks, open space and trail systems have on the communities' character and quality of life and are committed to providing for the recreational needs of current and future residents. This plan intends to guide the continual improvement of the Village's and Town's park, open space and trail systems to maintain both communities' eligibility for State and Federal park and recreation grants. This plan envisions a connected system of parks, open spaces, and trails throughout Waunakee-Westport, related to the communities' natural resources, geography and neighborhoods.

The plan is also intended to be a support document and component of the Waunakee-Westport Joint Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This plan along with the communities' other long-range plans and development-related ordinances, will be used to implement Waunakee's and Westport's parks and recreation program.

Specifically the plan provides:

- Information regarding demographic trends
- An inventory of existing park and recreational facilities,
- An analysis of parkland and recreational needs and demands,
- General policy direction regarding park and open space and bicycle and pedestrian facility planning and maintenance,
- Recommendations for improving existing park facilities and bicycle and pedestrian facilities,
- Recommendations for new park, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and
- Implementation strategies.

This plan identifies conceptual locations and recommendations for different types of parks, trails, natural areas, and recreational facilities. In nearly every case, more detailed planning, engineering, study, budgeting, and discussions will be necessary before decisions are made to actually acquire land or construct recreational facilities.

1.2 PLANNING PROCESS

Recreation and bicycle and pedestrian planning are essential components of long-range community planning in Waunakee-Westport. Currently Waunakee and Westport each have individual Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (CORPs) and a Joint Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. In 2016, the Village and Town contracted with MSA Professional Services, Inc. to assist with an update to the Waunakee-Westport Joint Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2005), Waunakee's CORP (2009) and Westport's CORP (2009). The end result being a combined, joint Comprehensive Bicycle, Pedestrian and Outdoor Recreation Plan. Preparation and adoption of this plan occurred simultaneously with the Waunakee-Westport Joint Comprehensive Plan over a twelve month period. Assistance with the development of this plan was provided by Village and Town Staff and Parks and Recreation Committees.

Early in the planning process Waunakee and Westport facilitated an online community survey to gather citizen feedback on desired public park, trail and recreational facilities (Refer to Appendix A). The process also involved two public involvement meetings, one at the beginning of the process and one after draft goals, objectives, policies and programs had been created. A public hearing was also held prior to plan adoption.

It's the Village's and Town's intention to update this plan every five years, in-part to remain eligible for park and recreation grants (see left side bar), and as best practice to ensure that the plan remains relevant to both communities' needs.

This plan was developed following the Guidelines for the Development of Local Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans of the 2011-2016 Wisconsin State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) created by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). The plan content and format have been tailored to fit the needs of Waunakee-Westport.

PROJECT MILESTONES

APRIL 2016

- Parks Committee - Survey Development
- Public Meeting

MAY 2016

- Parks Committee - Review Previous Plan Recommendations
- Parks Committee - Park Tours

JUNE 2016

- Parks Committee - Survey Review, Analysis of Needs

JULY 2016

- Parks Committee - Survey Review

AUGUST 2016

- Parks Committee - Goals, Objectives, Policies & Programs Review

SEPTEMBER 2016

- Parks Committee - Recommendations for Existing Parks

OCTOBER 2016

- Parks Committee - Review Draft Plan

NOVEMBER 2016

- Public Meeting
- Parks Committee - Review Draft Plan

DECEMBER 2016

- Parks Committee - Plan Recommendation

JANUARY 2017

- Public Hearing
- Plan Adoptions

1.3 THE ROLE OF PARKS, RECREATION & TRAILS

Proper planning is essential for the Village's and Town's parks, open space and trail systems to continue to meet the recreation needs of the communities, as well as to continue to preserve valuable natural areas. Whether the Village and Town are experiencing a bear or bull period of economic growth, it is important to remember the many benefits that park and recreational facilities provide the community.

COMMUNITY IMAGE

Local parks provide opportunities for formal and informal social gatherings. Community festivals, organized recreational events, or chance meetings between residents at local parks, all provide opportunities for residents to socialize with people they might not otherwise meet. In addition, having excellent park and recreation facilities can be a source of pride for a community. These factors contribute to the image of both communities as great places to live, work, stay and play.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

With the rising national trend in obesity, especially among children, the Village's and Town's park, recreational and trail facilities play a vital role in maintaining and improving the health of residents in the community and aiding in the physical development of children. Parks also provide sanctuaries and places for residents to mentally recharge.

ECOLOGICAL HEALTH

While parks, open spaces and trails provide opportunities to improve the health of residents, they also contribute to the greater ecological health of the Village and Town. Local parks are often tied together with environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, surface waters, or significant woodlands which can include trails. These areas provide food and shelter for local wildlife and natural stormwater retention. Individual parks can provide important "rooms" of natural resource activity; however, they become even more functional when they can be linked together by environmental corridors, or "hallways." Wildlife, plants, and water all depend on the ability to move freely within the environment from room to room.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Leisure time is an important component of everyone's lifestyle and increasingly people are choosing locations to live based on quality-of-life amenities such as the amount and type of recreational facilities a community can offer. The ability to retain or attract new residents has direct economic benefits to the Village and Town. Studies have also concluded that property values generally increase the closer residential lots are to a park facility. In addition, if a local parks system is designed with regional amenities, or connections to regional destinations, it can serve to bring additional visitors to the Village and Town. The additional tourism can be a significant benefit to local businesses.

CONNECTIONS

Connecting parks and recreational facilities, downtowns, libraries and schools to each other and the general population via trails is important to encourage safe, alternative modes of transportation. The Village and Town both desire to be pedestrian and bicycle friendly, especially in highly trafficked locations in each community. The Village and Town also desire to be connected to other communities and regional facilities. This allows for residents to travel safely to locations outside of Waunakee and Westport and it also invites nearby communities in. Dedicated bicycle and pedestrian trails improve the comfort of users, open-up new travel options, reduce automobile traffic, increase recreation and exercise and help create more livable communities overall.