

CHAPTER FIVE: NATURAL RESOURCES AND RECREATION

The community's greenways are one of the three major components of the City's overall community development and preservation approach (neighborhoods and Targeted Investment Areas are the other two)—and for good reason. Brookfield enjoys two active community parks—Mitchell and Wirth—and Foxbrook County Park, a growing and extremely popular greenway trail network, natural assets like the Fox River, and a community attitude that supports green space preservation. The City of Brookfield also practices progressive open space and wetland preservation for the multiple benefits they provide, including flood control, natural resource and habitat protection, and tangible relief from the impacts of development.

This chapter is intended to lay out where and how the City will preserve, provide, and restore sensitive natural areas, parks, greenways, and recreation areas. Its relatively short length should not be interpreted as a reflection of the importance of natural resources and recreation in the community. Instead, it is a reflection of the fact that the City has a tradition of complete and regularly updated set of park and greenway plans, upon which most of the recommendations in this chapter are based.

Natural Resources and Recreation Principle (Goal)

Brookfield enjoys vibrant parks, trails, and restorative natural landscapes; is a careful steward of water and other resources; and is a center for culture, recreation, hospitality, and entertainment.

Natural Resources and Recreation Objectives

1. Ensure the provision and distribution of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities to provide all residents access to such facilities.
2. Provide safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access between residential neighborhoods and schools, parks, other recreational facilities, and major shopping and job destinations.
3. Work to permanently preserve the City's greenways.
4. Balance the interest in acquiring and developing new park and recreational facilities with the need to maintain and upgrade existing park sites and facilities.

Natural Resources and Recreation Policies

1. Refer to the City's Park and Open Space Plan for objectives and policies related to the greenway trail network.
2. Update the City's Park and Open Space Plan every five years to retain City eligibility for a wide array of state and federal funding sources.
3. Refer to the City's Greenway Trail Plan for objectives and policies related to the greenway trail network.
4. Integrate trail/path planning with road reconstruction projects to enhance transportation options in Brookfield, considering the combined recreational and transportation purposes that trails and paths can provide.
5. Permanently preserve the City's greenway network and other environmentally sensitive areas to provide passive recreation opportunities, protect natural resources, and provide for flood control and stormwater management.

6. Protect wetlands, river and stream corridors, groundwater and surface water resources as central to environmental and human health, and evaluate City decisions and private land developments to the degree that they protect or even enhance these resources.
7. In the consideration of land acquisition and the review of private development proposals, consider the impact on rare, threatened and endangered species and wildlife habitat in general.
8. While the City has scattered woodlots that it has taken measures to protect and in some cases purchase, it no longer has forests, productive agricultural areas, or opportunities for future active metallic and non-metallic mineral resource excavation, and therefore this Plan has no policies related to those types of resources.
9. Utilize the trail and parks system to host events that bring visitors to Brookfield, such as softball, running, bicycling, fitness training, and other team and club events and tournaments.
10. Recognize the City's greenways as opportunities to create engaging community gathering places and contributors to the City's overall identity.
11. Coordinate City park, trail, open space, and natural resource planning and improvements with Waukesha County, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR). Where feasible, provide continuous public ownership and trail access between City and regional recreational facilities.
12. Encourage volunteer participation and resident stewardship in maintaining existing and future parks.
13. Support existing and future hospitality and entertainment land uses, particularly in the Moorland Road corridor, to draw and serve visitors and enhance the City's tax base. In addition, enhanced hospitality venues serve to widen the appeal to Brookfield residents to dine, shop and access entertainment locally. See Chapter Eight: Special Places for additional recommendations.

Natural Resources and Recreation Programs and Initiatives

The City intends to pursue the following initiatives in support of its vision for natural resources and recreation:

Prioritize Implementation of the City's Current Park and Trail Plans

Brookfield's park, recreation, and open space system is one of the key assets of the City and its completion was consistently ranked as a high priority for participants in the planning process. There are currently approximately 1,800 acres of protected open space in the City including lands used for public and private recreation, and floodplains and wetlands that are publicly owned. As suggested in the Community Vision Report, it is anticipated that with full development of the City and full implementation of existing park and greenway plans, there will be a total of 3,400 acres of permanently protected open space, either because it will be publicly owned or protected through regulation of private land.

The City's current park, greenway acquisition, and greenway trail plans are depicted on Map 2. The City intends to complete this system for the multiple recreational, stormwater management, flood control, and neighborhood and community enhancement purposes they serve. Trail linkages within the greenways will be completed for both recreation and transportation purposes, leading to a more healthy and sustainable community.

Specifically, unless a future park or trail plan update suggests otherwise, the City intends to prioritize the acquisition and development of the following new parkland and recreational facilities:

- Acquisition and development of new neighborhood parks in the northeastern and southeastern portions of the City.
- Additional lands added to Mary Knoll Park.
- Acquisition and development of pocket parks in certain Targeted Investment Areas (Brookfield Square-Executive Drive for example).
- Development of the Northeast District Park, Section 4 neighborhood park (Imperial Site leased from the School District of Elmbrook), Meadows or Brookfield Park, Mound Zion Park, and Mitchell Park.
- Development of additional trails, trailheads, and wayfinding signs that are part of the greenway trail network.



The pool in Wirth Park is a key recreational and gathering spot for Brookfield residents

Consider New Ideas in Planned Updates to City Park and Trail Plans

Both the City's Park and Open Space Plan and Greenway Trail Plan are scheduled for updates in 2010. As part of those updates, the City will consider the following new ideas that emerged during the comprehensive planning process:

- Possible additional trails, including a trail between the Village Area and Springdale Road to better connect nearby neighborhoods, the Gateway West Commerce Center, Mitchell Park, and the potential high-speed rail station in the Village Area.
- Potentially applying themes to trails/greenways in different parts of the City to mark differences and emphasize sustainability and "Garden City" opportunities. The initiative that follows provides additional details on this idea.
- Within Mitchell Park or elsewhere, consider the creation of a botanical garden, perhaps with a focus on native/prairie vegetation. The idea of a botanical garden or similar destination proved very popular in the community survey conducted as part of the comprehensive planning process.
- A continuing emphasis on maintenance and stewardship of existing and future parks and recreation facilities through effective management, enhancements, protection, and capital improvement projects.
- A continuing consideration of partnerships and alliances to increase community outreach and effectively enhance the provision of all aspects of parks and recreation services and facilities. This may include an expanded partnership with the School District of Elmbrook and Brookfield Academy (e.g., Safe Routes to School) and expanded volunteer programs. The City could potentially work more with the Eagle Scouts, Key Club, persons requiring court-ordered community service, members of the business community, and seniors.

- A continuing consideration of grant opportunities, and working to best position projects for grants. For example, positioning or doubling the greenway trail update to also meet “Safe Routes to School” criteria would significantly increase non-City funding options.

Consider Establishing Unique Identities for Different Greenway Segments

One component of the City’s vision is enhancing its identity based on its history and open space character. The greenway network and associated trail corridors provide opportunities to accomplish this aspect of the 2035 Vision. The following ideas (or others) for unique trail identities will be explored as part of the next park and trail plan update processes.

- Mitchell Park Greenway: This greenway could have an arts theme with art works, artist designed landscape, and informal performance spaces.
- Calhoun Road Greenway: This greenway could celebrate Brookfield's agrarian past by utilizing decorative crop and or edible plantings.
- 124th Street Corridor Greenway: This greenway could include "green nodes" at major intersections that tell the story of Brookfield’s natural resources and their role in creating industrial opportunities in the Milwaukee area.
- Village Area: This greenway could tie into the historical character of this area by showcasing Heirloom plantings and information about Brookfield’s history. Discussion of the City’s rail history would be particularly relevant because the Village Area was the first stop completed on the first railroad built in Wisconsin (from Milwaukee to La Crosse), a historic depot still exists, there remains significant freight rail traffic, and there is a real possibility of the reintroduction of passenger rail service.



The greenway trail in Wirth Park is one of several recent trails added to the City’s growing network

- Civic Center: This greenway could highlight local, state, and national civics, acknowledging that Brookfield is part of something larger. For example, displays could include information on the official state tree (sugar maple), the official state flower (wood violet), the official state grain (corn), the official state rock (red granite), the official U.S. tree (oak), and official US flower (rose). In fact, roses are already planted by the City as part of the Civic Center landscaping.
- Northwest Gateway: This greenway could focus on sustainability, with native plantings, pervious trail surfaces, and views of natural areas.

Update and Coordinate Park and Recreational Planning

The City intends to continue to update park and trail plans in an effort and format to integrate them where possible and to maximize non-City funding options. Currently, the City has a Park and Open Space Plan (last updated in 2001), a Greenway Corridor Recreational Trail Plan (last updated in 2002), and a comprehensive/strategic park plan that is more frequently updated. The proposed update to the Park and Open Space Plan would maintain the City eligibility for to State Stewardship and federal LAWCON grant funding. The proposed update to the Greenway Corridor Recreational Trail Plan could potentially be linked with a “Safe Routes to School” plan (a federal program designed to enhance safe access to and from schools), which would open up trail development to federal transportation funds for that purpose. The Trail Plan could also consider and provide

recommendations to cross major barriers, like wide roads and the railroad. Other new concepts to explore include trail identities discussed briefly in this chapter and a future botanical garden (see Chapter Eight: Special Places).

Map 2: Future Park, Recreational, and Open Space Lands