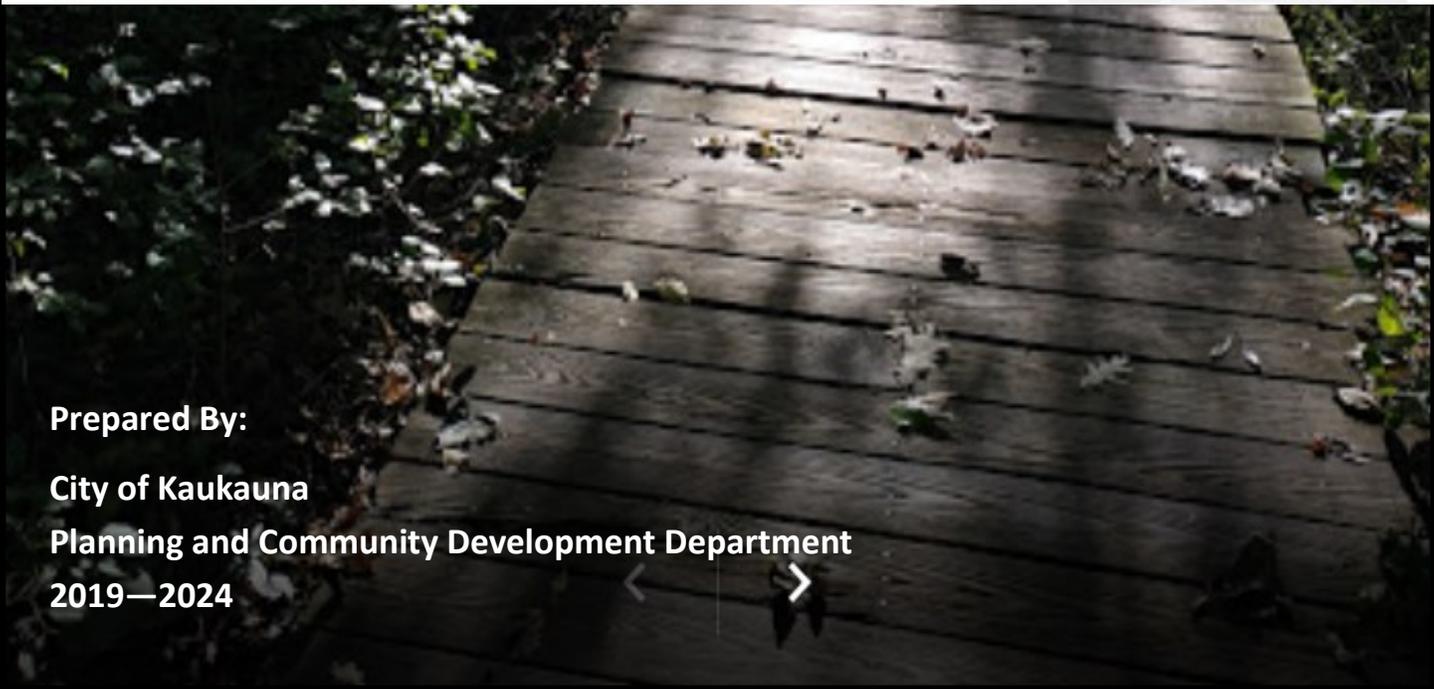




RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

CITY OF KAUKAUNA, WISCONSIN



Prepared By:

City of Kaukauna

Planning and Community Development Department

2019—2024



Acknowledgements

COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KAUKAUNA

Mayor Anthony J. Penterman

Marty DeCoster (District I)

Diana Driessen (District I)

Tim Roehrig (District II)

Philip Kohne (District II)

Brian Schell (District III)

Susan Duda (District III)

Pennie Thiele (District IV)

Michael Coenen (District IV)

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF

Robert Jakel, Director, Planning and Community Development

Allyson Watson-Brunette, Principal Planner

Julianne Schroeder, Planning and Community Development Coordinator

Jason Holmes, Planning and Engineering Technician

Gidget Perenboom, Community Enrichment Coordinator

RECREATION DEPARTMENT STAFF

Jeff Malloy, Director of Recreation

Michelle Mielke, Office Assistant for Recreation Department

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

John Sundelius, Director of Public Works Department

Patrick VandenHeuvel, Street Superintendent

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Chapter 9. Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment

A. Public Input Assessment

The 2018 Parks and Outdoor Recreation Plan for the City of Kaukauna engaged members of the public through a written survey and an open house event. The written survey was available for six weeks in the summer of 2018 in both a paper format and a digital (online) format. More than 350 respondents participated in the survey, the vast majority doing so online.

The open house was hosted on September 25, 2018 at the City of Kaukauna. One community member attended the open house, negative weather conditions likely contributed to low attendance. The open house sought to gather information above and beyond what was captured in the online survey, but plan authors were still able to use the information that was captured in the generation of this plan.

Other Notes on the Public Input Process

In addition gauging park trends, needs and observations, the survey included a number of questions related to walkability and bikeability in the City of Kaukauna. These questions relate specifically to linkages, neighborhood connectivity and perceptions of safety.

B. Survey Findings

Respondent Demographics

- 357 respondents participated in the survey online, 2 respondents returned paper surveys.
- 274 respondents (76.3%) indicated that they lived in the City of Kaukauna. Residency was not required to participate in the survey, as input from park users (regardless of where they live) was considered valid and important to the integrity of this research.
- 43 respondents (11.9%) indicated that they live in a municipality that shares a border with the City of Kaukauna (Village of Combined Locks, Village of Little Chute, Village of Harrison, Town of Kaukauna, Town of Buchanan, or Town of Vandenbroek).
- The majority of other respondents live in other Outagamie County, Calumet County or Brown County municipalities. A small number of outliers (8 respondents) include non-residents or former residents who indicated that they are fully or partially retired out of state.
- The largest age demographic represented in the responses was 25-39 years old with 40.9% (146) respondents self-identifying as belonging to that age cohort. This was followed by the 40-54 year old age cohort (26.9%, or 96 respondents).

Tenure of Residency

Respondents represented both a mix of residents newer to the Fox Cities as well as long-established community members, but the majority were long-established Fox Cities area residents. 295 participants, or 82.6% of the survey sample, indicated that they had lived in the Fox Cities area for more than 15 years.

Frequency of Park Users

Over 75% (276) of survey respondents indicated that they utilize parks and open spaces more than once a month – and 42.9% (153) of survey respondents (represented in the 75%+ figure) utilize parks and

open spaces more than once weekly. This high level of use translated to very specific feedback on what amenities are desired and improvements are needed, as well as the ability to specifically reference parks and public spaces that they would like to see Kaukauna replicate from other communities.

How Park Users Access Parks

The top means by which park users access parks are by car (222 or 62.2% of respondents) or by foot (107 or 30% of respondents). Less used means of accessing parks are by bicycle/skates (27 or 7.6%) or by public transportation (1 or 0.3%).

Knowing that the majority of park users access parks by foot or by car may tell us several things:

- Individuals may be more likely to access parks by foot when they feel safe walking to that location (perceived safety, safety from walking on a protected trail or sidewalk versus on a street).
- Individuals may be influenced by availability or ease of parking at a location if they tend to visit by car.
- Individuals who do not have access to a vehicle and rely on public transportation may not have easy access to a number of City parks¹. A map of City parks and Valley Transit stops is included in the addendum of this plan.

Perceptions of Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety in the City

64% (224) of survey participants indicated they utilize pedestrian or bicycle amenities more than once per month. 38.9% (or 136) participants, represented in the 64% figure, reported using pedestrian or bicycle amenities more than once per week. Users who reported using pedestrian or bicycle amenities at least once per month (269 participants) were identified as high users² and were invited to answer additional questions about biking and walking in Kaukauna.

Of the High User participant group, 35% (90) of participants reported feeling “Very Safe” walking and biking in the City, and 37% (95) of participants reported feeling “safe” walking and biking in the City.

Gaps in Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks

Participants were asked to share areas of the City where they felt there were clear gaps in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure connectivity in an open-ended format. 86 responses were provided, with the top answers as follows:

- CE Trail connection to subdivisions in the southeastern area of the City, particularly east of Haas Road. This was a recurring theme in open-ended questions. (37 responses)
- State Highway 55 and Lawe Street were reported as areas where even with bicycle infrastructure individuals felt unsafe due to high speeds and truck traffic. (9 responses)

¹ A map is included in the Appendix to this plan which notes Valley Transit bus stop locations and all City parks locations.

² Logic analysis such as this in survey generation is sometimes used to identify participants who might offer greater insights on a specific topic. Survey development is a fine balance of asking enough questions to gather good data, while not asking so many questions as to tire or burnout participants. By identifying high users of pedestrian and bicycle amenities, we were able to ask follow-up questions specific to that group without adding to the full survey experience for all users.

- County CE and roundabout located at Crooks Avenue was reported as an area where people felt unsafe navigating on foot or by bicycle. (8 responses)
- Lawe Street Bridge was specifically mentioned as an area without bicycle lanes, and that there is a need for a safer North-South connecting route between the two sides of the Fox River. (7 responses)
- Crooks Avenue was identified as an area where the speed and volume of traffic discourages on-street bicycle use. The lighted crosswalk was praised. (6 responses)
- The Hyland Avenue and Gertrude Street intersection and surrounding area was mentioned as a challenging disconnect between residential neighborhoods and Haen Elementary School. (3 responses)
- Highway 96 from Little Chute (on-street bicycle lanes cease at the City of Kaukauna municipal boundary) was referenced as a gap in the bicycle network. (3 responses)
- A desire to extend the CE Trail, possibly as far as Brown County was mentioned. This appeared to be more for a recreational use than for functional transportation. (3 responses)

Comments in open-ended areas of the survey such as the following were received on the subject of bike and pedestrian gaps:

“Walking along Highway 55 on Lawe Street is scary. Garbage day makes it even worse.”

“Highway 96 coming from Little Chute into Kaukauna. Make a bike lane and parking only on one side of 96 or Draper Street. Reroute semi trucks to Northland Avenue to make safe travels on a bike.”

“The bottom of the bridge on Lawe Street should have a crossing light similar to the crossing light by Family Video.”

“I HATE having my kids bike over the bridge. Once my daughter fell into traffic on the bridge and almost got ran over by a car.”

“The intersection of Crooks Avenue and Ann Street – trying to get to Piggly Wiggly and Walgreens is risky... maybe blinking lights?”

“We need to extend the CE Trail past the High School. I would use the CE Trail more frequently if I didn’t have to walk/bike with my kids on the side of the road of CE. It is extremely dangerous.”

“Need to focus on park connections to each other via trails. Green Bay has been doing very nice work connecting trails to one another which creates a nice network.”

Why Respondents Utilize Parks, Trails and Open Spaces

Participants were asked to sort in rank order five reasons why they personally utilize parks, trails and open spaces. Individuals top two responses were aggregated to identify the prevailing reasons for park use. The following findings were made (in rank order of most identified reason to least identified reason):

1. **To be with friends and family in a scenic outdoor setting.** 64.5% of respondents (162) indicated this use as their #1 or #2 reason to utilize parks.

2. **To enjoy a wide range of outdoor activities (both active and passive recreation).** 59% of respondents (148) indicated this use as their #1 or #2 reason to utilize parks.
3. **To escape the crowds and enjoy solitude.** 36% of respondents (91) indicated this use as their #1 or #2 reason to utilize parks.
4. **To meet my exercise or fitness goals.** 30% of respondents (75) indicated this use as their #1 or #2 reason to utilize parks.
5. **To learn about history, nature or culture.** 10% of respondents (26) indicated this use as their #1 or #2 reason to utilize parks.

Most Important Features of Parks, Trails and Open Spaces

Users were asked to place in rank order eight features of parks, trails and open spaces and their importance to them personally. Individuals top two responses were aggregated to identify the prevailing features of importance for park users. The following findings were made (in rank order of most important feature to least important feature).

1. **Accessibility for all visitors (inclusive of all abilities).** 39.9% of respondents (99) indicated this feature as their #1 or #2 feature of importance in parks, trails and open spaces.
2. **Bathroom availability and cleanliness.** 35.5% of respondents (88) indicated this feature as their #1 or #2 feature of importance in parks, trails and open spaces.
3. **Contemporary and interactive equipment.** 31.9% of respondents (79) indicated this feature as their #1 or #2 feature of importance in parks, trails and open spaces.
4. **Bicycle and pedestrian accessibility.** 30.6% of respondents (76) indicated this feature as their #1 or #2 feature of importance in parks, trails and open spaces.
5. **Distance from where I live.** 22.2% of respondents (55) indicated this feature as their #1 or #2 feature of importance in parks, trails and open spaces.
6. **Landscaping and appearance.** 16.5% of respondents (41) indicated this feature as their #1 or #2 feature of importance in parks, trails and open spaces.
7. **Amenities for dogs.** 14.9% of respondents (37) indicated this feature as their #1 or #2 feature of importance in parks, trails and open spaces.
8. **Availability of parking.** 8.5% of respondents (21) indicated this feature as their #1 or #2 feature of importance in parks, trails and open spaces.

Dogs in Kaukauna Parks, Trails and Open Spaces

Dogs are currently only permitted off-leash at the Kaukauna Dog Park. Dogs are permitted on-leash at Thelen Park, Central Park, Kelso Park and Pond, Van Eperen Park and Pond, Grignon Park and Nature View Park. The following parks are not clearly signed as to whether or not dogs are permitted: Anderson Park, Quarry Point Park, Konkapot Trail, Hydro Park, Sculpture Garden and Trail. Signage does not indicate at any park whether or not dogs must be on-leash, although this is likely presumed.

Of 254 survey participants, it was a roughly even split on whether dogs should be allowed in more parks on-leash versus being allowed in all parks on-leash. Findings were:

- 37.8% (96) of respondents indicated that they would support dogs being allowed (on-leash) in all City parks.

- 36.2% (92) of respondents indicated that they would support dogs being allowed (on-leash) in more, but not all, City parks.
- 20.9% (50) of respondents indicated that they would not support dogs being allowed (on-leash) in any City parks.



Signage could stand to be significantly improved and could be presented in a tone that is more friendly and inclusive. All parks that prohibit dogs clearly state this, but parks that (apparently) permit dogs might say “Dogs welcome” on signage³. This is clearer for users and is inclusive. An excellent example of clear guidelines for dogs in parks is present in signage in the Village of Little Chute, as pictured to the left.

Additionally, it would make sense to open up the newly classified ‘Natural Open Spaces’ to leashed dogs. These natural open spaces are intended for passive recreation and do not feature playground equipment. Interactions between children and dogs are less likely in these natural open spaces than they are in Regional, Neighborhood or Local Parks. These open spaces are listed in the preceding chapter with “Leashed Dogs Welcome” as a proposed change of amenities.

Only positive comments in open-ended areas of the survey such as the following were received on this

subject, including the following:

“As a new resident, it was difficult to find much info on parks and trails in the area and what they offered. We were also disappointed in the fact that few public areas allowed dogs.”

“We just moved from a place where dogs were allowed in all parks. No dog policy in Kaukauna has been a hardship and not all dogs/owners like a dog park.”

“Other than not allowing dogs in parks, I think Kaukauna does a fine job. The Kaukauna Dog Park is amazing and I wish my new town of Dubuque, Iowa had a dog park like Kaukauna’s!”

³ The City of Kaukauna Municipal Code is sorely unclear on the subject of permitting leashed dogs in public places. Chapter 9.15, Section 6 states: “Prohibited Areas for Animals. Any person owning, keeping, or in charge of any animal shall not permit such animal to be in any public park in the City at any time, except as authorized by the park department, on any public school grounds, or on any playgrounds except for school-sponsored and authorized purposes. The provisions of this section shall not be applicable in cases in which a person is being assisted by a seeing-eye dog or in cases where a leashed animal is being walked upon a designated trail area through the park”. This would suggest that parks without trails, even if not signed to say “Dogs prohibited”, would not allow dogs. Some clarity would be beneficial for staff to better understand code and to better inform the public.

“Allow dogs on leashes at all parks. We have an emotional support service dog and we technically can only go to the dog park to enjoy.”⁴

Park Leakage and Regional Park Insights

An effort of the public outreach process was to determine what other parks were being utilized by Kaukauna and greater Fox Valley area residents. If it can be determined what specific assets and amenities parks that are a large regional draw in our area offer, we can look specifically at where improvements might benefit our park inventory.

Survey participants were not only asked which parks they utilize in Kaukauna’s parks system, but also to share what parks outside of Kaukauna they utilize. Participants were encouraged to share specific amenities that they enjoy utilizing and go out of their way to utilize. This data has been aggregated for consideration.

Kaukauna Parks and Open Spaces Specific Feedback

Some feedback received was specific to certain parks in Kaukauna. Those comments have been broken out by park for consideration. Comments related specifically to City of Kaukauna parks are incorporated here.⁵

Dog Park

- “The dog park needs some desperate attention.”
- “Dog wash available at dog park. Man-made lakes/ponds for dogs to swim.”
- “Fix the bridge at the dog park. It was on the 2017 Public Works project list and has not yet been fixed/replaced.”
- “I would love to see running water at the Dog Park, even if there was a fee assessed to use the park.”

Hydro Park

- “A splash pad would be great by Hydro Park. Middle of the City, accessible for each side of the river.”
- “Have a DJ at Hydro Park on Fridays or Saturday nights for teens to hang out.”
- “Nice landscaping at Hydro Park should be replicated at other City parks.”
- “Add a few water features/towers at Hydro Park.”
- “We would love to see more family activities held at Hydro Park. Kudos to the City for hosting the Live! Music series.”

⁴ Technically, this is not correct. Per City ordinance, service animals are allowed in City Parks. However, it matters little if this is how the public interprets the ordinance. This demonstrates a need to better explain to residents where dogs are and are not allowed and where service animals are welcome, as well.

⁵ The CE Trail is an Outagamie County park that has some local maintenance jurisdiction. It is worth noting that despite the fact that this is not a municipal park, that the extension of the CE Trail to southeastern subdivisions in the City of Kaukauna was one of the most highly noted topics in the survey data. The CE Trail was selected as one of the top three most visited parks by 133 respondents and was overall the #2 most utilized park. The desire for extension of the CE Trail to southeastern subdivisions and improve safety for residents in that areas was mentioned specifically 37 times in open-ended comments.

- “A band stage or amphitheatre would be nice.”
- “More art/music/markets at Hydro Park.”
- “There is an area next to Hydro Park and Kaukauna Utilities offices that looks like an island. It has a bridge connecting it to Hydro Park however the bridge appears to be over a sea of wild weeds. In general it looks really second rate. Was it intended to be a pond of some sort to highlight Hydro Park and our connection to water power? If so , why is there not a push to get this finished. The Hydro Park is gaining some exposure with the Wednesday night concerts and the Electric City Experience and it brings new people to our area but the view from the park is a field of weeds and bugs. It could be so much more!”

Konkapot Trail / Konkapot Prairie Preserve

- “ “Keep dogs on a leash” signs are ignored (and not visible) on the Konkapot Trail. Put dog waste bag dispensers on either end of Konkapot Trail with a garbage can, and possibly on the Oakridge Avenue entrance to Prairie Preserve.”
- “Pave the Konkapot Trail and Horseshoe Trail going to Horseshoe Park, or use a material that packs better. There is some very coarse gravel and loose gravel for biking and walking.”
- “The Prairie Preserve Trail has some areas of poor drainage resulting in puddles to cross. Please fill in or ditch better.”
- “Control the poison ivy along the Konkapot Trail.”
- “Control teasel (dipsacus) in many areas, such as Konkapot Trail, Prairie Preserve grassland.”
- “Place benches along Konkapot Trail.”
- “I would like to see more signs posted for people to put dogs on leashes and pick up after their dogs... It would also be nice to have a garbage can on trails so people don’t throw their garbage on the ground. There are many uneven surfaces on that trail making it difficult for strollers, bikes and older walkers. It would be nice to see it paved or at least seal coated.”
- “I am not a fan of walking or biking on gravel or wood chips.”
- “We need garbage facilities along the trails.”
- “I don’t feel safe taking my kids on the Konkapot Trail, I will only go if my husband is able to be with us.”
- “I would love to see the Konkapot Trail paved. I would also like to see more/better signage of bike trails.”
- “Paved trails would be much nicer, specifically, Konkapot.”
- “Pave the portion of the Konkapot Trail where it meets the CE Trail and there is a slight incline.”
- “More lighting on the Konkapot Trail for evening use.”
- “Add security cameras on Konkapot Trail.”

Friends and Family Sculpture Park

- “The downtown statutes area and small park between businesses should be refurbished. They are an eye sore and reflect poorly on downtown Kaukauna.”

Riverside Park

- “Please update equipment.”

La Follette Park

- “Please update equipment.”
- “Turn La Follette Park into into a really great dog park with lots of obstacles and separate areas for big vs. little dogs.”
- “La Follette needs attention... graffiti on trees and slides, both water fountains don’t work. A weedy area of sand that used to be a volleyball court (I’d rather see it removed than in disrepair).”
- “I live near La Follette and it’s not the nicest looking park, but it has a lot of potential.”

City Swimming Pool

- “The Kaukauna swimming pool needs to update their hours. Extend weekends into September and have open swim on weekend nights when not booked.”
- “Add a splash pad where sand volleyball court is now inside the pool.”
- “Please consider a wellness lot “Cross Fit” area above the swimming pool with basketball courts, sand volleyball courts.”
- “I was very disappointed to see the park equipment taken out of the sand area outside of the pool area near the parking lot. That was always a nice pit stop area for my son on our way home after we walk the Konkapot Trail.”

Central Park

- “Build an amphitheatre at Central Park for using during the Electric City Experience and other outdoor events.”
- “Find more use for Central Park. Live at Hydro could be there instead with the stage up the hill a little, on the concrete pad and much more room for people to spread out. More of a permanent stage area could be built instead of setting up and tearing down a stage ever week.”
- “Amphitheatre behind the Carnegie Library building.”
- “We would like to see a park with stationery outdoor workout machines. It would be great for Central Park.”

Bayorgeon Fields

- “Revamp Bayorgeon Field for events. So much money was put into the high school fields that Bayorgeon Field could easily be turned into an event location.”
- “I think Bayorgeon Field needs to be turned into something more usable and attractive to outsiders. We have a \$10 million dollar sports complex at the high school, we don’t need two football fields. A splash pad or larger pool would be a huge draw.”
- “The softball fields by the pool cause injuries from rock filled dirt. You really need to scrape the infield and put down better dirt.”

Fassbender Park

- “Fassbender is more of a greenspace park, but it seems neglected and should have some money thrown at it to doll it up.”

Anderson Park

- “Add a soccer field area in Anderson Park.”

Strassburg Park

- “I live near Strassburg Park and it is very underutilized. Baseball is played maybe two times a year and the playground equipment could be updated. Maybe this park could use a remodel? Even a shelter would be a nice touch.”
- “Strassburg Park should be weeded and feeded.”

Horseshoe Park

- “A disc golf course at Horseshoe Park.”
- “Horseshoe Park equipment is awful and so out of date.”

Grignon Mansion/Grignon Park

- “It would be so nice if the Grignon Mansion was open more frequently.”

Thilwerth Park

- “Clean up the goose droppings along side of the river on the trail near the Library.”
- “Across from the Library on the trail there are always dead fish and animal waste on the trail.”

Glenview Park

- “I never see anybody at that park because of the lack of activities and places for parents to relax.”

General/All Parks

- “Some sort of guide about parks and park options in the City of Kaukauna. This could involve a listing of parks and park locations in the City along with a map of locations and trails, and a list of what amenities are in each park. This guide should be easily found at the City website and could also be in a pamphlet format available at some parks or throughout the City where visitors might be.”
- “When I looked for the parks on the City website, I couldn’t find them. I’d love to see a list and maybe some sort of scavenger hunt to visit all the parks?”
- “Have bathrooms unlocked for public use even in “off season” or evenings.”

General Park Feedback or Requests

General feedback that was provided in open-ended questions (but was not park-specific) is aggregated here. The number in parenthesis following each feedback line indicates how many times this specific feedback was shared.

- Modernize/update park equipment in Kaukauna parks (15)
- Add a splash pad in Kaukauna parks system (10)
- Parks are described as “outdated” (7)
- Southeastern subdivision areas (Meadowview/Haas Road) lack park spaces for families (5)

- Clean up landscaping and ensure grass clippings not rotting on sidewalks (4)
- Add outdoor exercise equipment, especially for adults (4)
- Allow dogs in more parks (3)
- Add obstacle course or agility equipment (3)
- Enhance dog amenities in parks (3)
- Market parks more effectively to promote the large number and wide amenities (3)
- Add bathrooms to parks that do not have them, ensure that quality and accessibility are high (2)
- Improve maintenance of volleyball courts (2)
- Add security cameras in parks/on trails (2)
- Invest in upkeep of existing park network before adding new parks (2)
- Add cooking facilities in park pavilions (2)
- Add rubber matting in parks to replace woodchips (1)
- Add more toddler-age amenities (1)
- Add more benches along trails (1)
- Add more garbage cans along trails (1)
- Increase police presence in parks (1)
- Increase canoe/kayak access points (1)
- Limit use of herbicides/pesticides in landscape management (1)
- Program more free, family-friendly activities (1)
- Bring back park leader program for summer, as well as activity sheds (1)
- Diversify tree varieties in parks to replace Ash tree population (1)
- Add double toddler swings to parks so parents can swing more than one child simultaneously (1)
- Maintain nostalgic park equipment to enhance youth gross motor skills (1)
- Add Gaga pit to parks (1)

Park Leakage to other Municipalities

Park respondents were asked to list (by name and location) all parks that they utilized in the past twelve months in Northeast Wisconsin that were located outside of the City of Kaukauna. Northeast Wisconsin is a generous geographic area in our summary here – stretching from Door County south to Sheboygan County and west to Winnebago County. More than 100 parks or park systems located outside of the City of Kaukauna municipal park inventory were shared. The goal in asking this question was to see if there were high volume destination parks in a proximate driving distance to Kaukauna that residents were opting to use in addition to or instead of City of Kaukauna parks. With that data in-hand, we could assess what amenities those destination parks have and if they have been more recently updated than City of Kaukauna parks.

Of the 100+ parks indicated:

- 183 mentions of parks located in the City of Appleton were noted
- 79 mentions of Wisconsin state parks were noted (predominantly High Cliff State Park)
- 54 mentions of parks located in Little Chute were noted
- 53 mentions of splash pads in other municipalities were noted

- 45 mentions of parks located in Menasha were noted
- 35 mentions of parks located in Neenah were noted

Of the 100+ parks indicated, the most cited (by name) parks included:

- High Cliff State Park, Sherwood (61)
- Memorial Park, Appleton (51)
- Heesakker Park and Trail, Little Chute (27)
- Wanick Choute Community Park and Splash Pad (21)
- Derks Park, Appleton (20)
- Plamann Park, Appleton (19)
- Telulah Park, Appleton (18)
- Doyle Park, Little Chute (17)
- Riverside Park, Neenah (16)
- Heckrodt Preserve, Menasha (15)

High Cliff State Park is a bit difficult to compare or extrapolate desires from in terms of what the Kaukauna municipal park system might add/modify as it is a state park. State parks more traditionally offer extensive rustic hiking trails, camping sites and open spaces which are not typically available at the same scale in municipal parks. High Cliff State Park is noted for its water access to Lake Winnebago.

Appleton’s Memorial Park is a park of a scale which the City of Kaukauna park system does not offer. This all-inclusive 143 acre park is home to the community ice rink, multiple ball diamonds and pavilions. The modernized playground equipment is distributed between three separate playground areas. The Universal Playground is inclusive and accessible to users of all abilities. The Universal Playground features a rubber mat surface that is wheelchair accessible and cushions falls. There are a variety of types of climbing activities, ranging from rock walls to jungle gyms, etc. that offer different motor skill development through play.



(Appleton Memorial Park photo courtesy of Go Valley Kids)

A Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article from March 2019⁶ featured Appleton Memorial Park’s Universal Playground and noted features in accessible playgrounds around the state, including:

- Bird nest swings (allow more than one child to swing at one time)
- Liberty swings (allow children in wheelchairs to swing)

⁶ Schwabe, Amy. 2019. ‘Inclusive parks are for everyone: Some accessible playgrounds to visit in Wisconsin.’ *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. March 15, 2019. Accessed online at: <https://www.jsonline.com/story/travel/wisconsin/weekend-getaway/2019/03/15/accessible-inclusive-playgrounds-wisconsin/3049874002/>

- Braille and sign language alphabets printed on equipment
- Metal slides (prevent electrostatic buildup, which can interfere with cochlear implants).
- Poured-in-place rubber surfaces that are navigable for wheelchairs.
- Ramps that allow wheelchair users to access the highest points in play structures.
- Wheelchair-accessible merry-go-rounds

The article points out that ADA requirements do not often go far enough to ensure that children of all abilities can enjoy playground equipment to the same extent as differently abled peers.

Heesakker Park in Little Chute offers a mix of trails (paved and non-paved), water access and playground equipment. Heesakker Park will be connected to the City of Kaukauna by the Fox River Boardwalk as soon as 2020, bridging the two park systems for non-vehicular access.



Wanick Choute Park in Sherwood features one of the closest splash pads for City of Kaukauna residents. Splash pads do not require lifeguards as they do not feature little to any standing water and pose a lesser risk of drowning. The park beyond the splash pad features a contemporary playground boasting a climbing web and rubber mulching.

(Wanick Choute Park photos courtesy of Go Valley Kids)

Derks Park in Appleton also features a rubber surfaced playground, as well as park pavilion and a walking trail / sidewalks around the perimeter of the park. Located off of Highway KK in the southeastern part of Appleton, this park is proximate for many residents in Kaukauna, particularly those living on the southern side of the community.



Plamann Park in Appleton is a part of the Outagamie County Parks system. This large (257 acre) park features a wide variety of family-friendly amenities including a sand swimming area, children’s farm area with animals, family-friendly walking trails, disc golf, court sports and ball diamonds. Plamann Park is currently fundraising toward a goal of adding a \$200,000 challenge obstacle course for adults and children feature similar to the one pictured below.



(Challenge obstacle course photo courtesy of Outagamie County Parks Department).

Telulah Park in Appleton features a rentable park pavilion, disc golf course, a skate park connection to the Newberry Trail, court sports, ball diamond, soccer field and an ADA accessible playground with a mulch surface. Future expansion plans include an ADA accessible kayak launch.

Doyle Park in Little Chute features the local pool and waterslide, contemporary playground equipment, court sports, ball diamonds and fishing access.

Riverside Park in Neenah is often called “Rocket Park” due to its large rocket ship-shaped playground equipment. The park has trails and a lovely waterfront location as well as a water feature reminiscent of the fountain in City Park in Appleton. A number of community events occur in Riverside Park including a popular live music series. The park may also be rented for private events like weddings.

Heckrodt Wetland Reserve in Menasha features several miles of nature trails, a nature education center and outdoor play learning areas and learning stations. Heckrodt hosts a number of community natural educational programs as well as youth-focused programs with Scouts groups, preschools, etc. Heckrodt is operated as its own non-profit organization independent of the City of Menasha.

Extrapolating the features of these popular destination parks in Northeast Wisconsin with what City of Kaukauna parks offer leaves us with a few key takeaways:

- Community members desire parks that offer a diverse range of activities and spaces – a park with more offerings – even if it is not within walking distance – makes for a travel-worthy destination.
- Community members desire contemporary playground equipment. Thematically respondents to the survey noted that the Kaukauna playground equipment was “out of date”, and noted parks with updated equipment as destinations. A number of respondents also noted that they enjoy using the Kaukauna Area School District playgrounds in summer or on weekends as the equipment is more contemporary.
- Community members desire inclusive playground equipment that welcomes and includes individuals of all abilities.

(Pictured below: an ADA Safe Swing that an individual in a wheelchair can safely use located at H.B. Tanner Elementary School and a braille play learning activity at Electa Quinney Elementary School)



Other Insights on Gaps and Opportunities

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) publishes annually a list of emerging trends and issues in parks and open spaces. The 2019 list⁷ included emerging issues such as the opioid epidemic, technology and data-gathering, animals and yoga among other trends viewed nationally. Some of the top takeaways from this report that might apply now or in the future to Kaukauna municipal parks:

- Responding to the opioid crisis through park design. Safety concerns in parks (some related to opioid abuse and the dangers of abandoned drug paraphernalia) offer an opportunity for community policing, health partnerships and opportunities to educate the public on safe sharps disposal. NRPA encourages installation of safety lighting, large volume sharps disposal containers and training for City / parks staff on Narcan (overdose reversal treatment) application.
- Technology can be used to gather useful data for municipal leadership. Parks in San Diego, California use beacon counters and geofencing to detect the number of times unique mobile devices 'ping' in a certain location. These effectively provide counters on the exact number of users of parks coming and going on a daily basis as well as timeframes for use. Data like this would be labor intensive to gather through headcounts or spot checks and the near ubiquitous use of internet-connected devices offers an opportunity for data gathering.
- Yoga for all ages and yoga with animals is a continuing trend, with a wide range of types of animals – ranging from goats to pigs to dogs and cats. A large number of municipal recreation programs, including Kaukauna, offer outdoor yoga classes at no or a nominal fee. Yoga studios

⁷ Dolesh, Richard. 2019. 'Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2019.' *National Recreation and Parks Association*. January 7, 2019. Accessed online at: <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/january/top-trends-in-parks-and-recreation-for-2019/>

and humane societies in the area have offered animal yoga classes for a fun and unique experience.

- Dog parks (and parks that allow dogs) are one of the largest growing types of parks across the United States. Culturally, dogs are viewed as an extension of the family and may be likely to accompany the family on recreational outings, if spaces are inclusive to both human guests and pets.
- Connectivity between government services and parks. By connecting government services through walkable corridors and providing outreach for government services outside of City Hall, parks can become a functional delivery location for government services. The Kaukauna Library's groundbreaking on the Interactive Learning Garden demonstrates a desire to combat nature deficit disorder by creating interactive, outdoor spaces for play learning – reinventing the traditional concept of library programming and merging it with what we traditionally think of as park amenities into a joint venture.
- Non-binary gender identification in park amenities. Inclusive policies that engage members of the LGBTQ+ community have led to infrastructure changes nationally to move away from binary gender identification on park restrooms, changing rooms, etc. to create gender neutral facilities or individual changing areas that are not gender-specific.

The continuing trend toward an aging population in this region of the country and in this part of Wisconsin opens up the need and programming opportunity for additional senior programming. As referenced in Chapter 3 of this plan, our demographics continue to shift toward older residents. Currently the City of Kaukauna offers numerous programs geared toward senior audiences in an indoor setting, but there is a greater opportunity to expand programming for seniors in municipal parks and open spaces.

Other gaps identified through the inventory and public input process include urban camping (improved) for recreational vehicles. Such an improvement would require significant infrastructure and additional staff support in a formal campground setting, but it would likely bring additional economic impact to the region. Water-accessible camping along the Fox River Navigational System has been discussed in the past and may offer a less cost-intensive way to meet a gap in the City's recreational offerings. Rustic, water-accessible campsites would need little more than a grassy area for a tent and a safe place to store a canoe or kayak for the night.

Another opportunity to maximize community usage of parks and open spaces would be to encourage the use of newly developed plazas for programming and events. Currently the Eagle Plaza is utilized for live music performances during the Saturday Farmer's Market, and future plazas like Gathering of the Pike Plaza may offer similar opportunities for similar programming.