

Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan summary

To ensure that the Fort Wayne Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan meets the leisure needs of the Fort Wayne community, the planning procedure included extensive public input. The process was grounded in a citywide citizen survey and included a user group survey, focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and public workshops. Information from each source of public input was thoroughly reviewed to identify the park system's strengths and weaknesses. These findings, in turn, served as a foundation for many of the recommendations provided in this comprehensive master plan.

The draft plan recommendations were published on the Parks and Recreation website and copies placed in libraries and Department facilities. After a two week review, a two-day public open house allowed citizens to discuss the plan individually with staff and consultants. The plan was finalized based on the review of these public discussions.

Planning Themes

Seven planning themes were developed from public involvement meetings and interviews conducted by the strategic action planning team, to ensure equitable and sustainable management and development policies. The themes are:

- Rich tradition of stewardship
- Equitable distribution of parks and services
- Physical connectivity
- Essential services
- Social connectivity
- Economic development
- Sufficient funding

These themes are the basis of the vision strategies for the planning, budgeting, and operations of the Department. Also the themes ensure that future development of the park system will be easily accessible and open to all citizens of the Fort Wayne region. These over-arching themes remain consistent and are evaluated every five years to be certain we are responding effectively to the needs of the community.

Strategy One: Celebrate the parks system's rich tradition of stewardship.

The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department will celebrate the rich 100+ year tradition of stewardship, quality parks, open space, and greenways by prioritizing resources to maintain existing parks and facilities to meet the high expectations of the community, and by developing standards for design and maintenance to continue sustainable growth of the system in the future.

Goal: Recognize the qualities that distinguish the Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation System and establish an operational and funding structure to maintain those qualities and perpetuate them in future development.

2020 major initiatives that were accomplished include:

- Manage the Park assessment model for capital, maintenance and recreation improvement needs
- Continue to implement objectives outlined in the city's riparian management plan

Strategy Two: Provide an equitable distribution of parks and services.

The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department will provide an equitable balance of neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks, special recreation areas, and greenway trails throughout the city.

Goal: Balance the park system by adopting standards for park classifications and the amount of park land and facilities appropriate for the city and each of its planning districts.

2020 Major initiatives that were accomplished include:

- Work with engaged community members/neighborhood groups to define and plan for improvements in parks
- Identify and implement capital improvement projects in each of the City's quadrants

Strategy Three: Connect the parks through greenways and trails.

The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department will connect neighborhood parks, schools, and other destinations through greenways and trails to increase recreational opportunities throughout the city.

Goal: Develop greenways and facilities that interconnect parks and key point of interest in the community.

2020 Major initiatives that were accomplished include:

- Evaluate Rivergreenway connections to all parks and access need for internal park trails

Strategy Four: Establish and define the park system's essential services.

The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department will establish and define its essential services and commit sufficient resources to meet the needs of residents on an equitable, citywide basis.

Goal: Establish a clear vision for each essential service, create appropriate service standards, and provide adequate funding to meet the needs and expectations of Fort Wayne residents.

2020 Major initiatives that were accomplished include:

- Continue to update the ADA Transition Plan yearly and implement ADA improvements
- Continue monument restoration to preserve our history and heritage in historic Memorial Park

Strategy Five: Connect the community socially through parks, facilities and events.

The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department will socially connect the community to encourage broader participation in programs and events that unite neighborhoods as well as the entire community.

Goal: Enhance existing parks and community heritage features and develop destination parks and events that interconnect citizens and visitors and contribute to the overall quality of life in Fort Wayne.

2020 Major initiatives that were accomplished include:

- Maintain and improve relationships with neighborhood associations to encourage ownership of parks
- Complete the Needs Assessment survey of our community

Strategy Six: Enhance the park system's role in economic development.

The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department will enhance its role as a catalyst for economic growth in the city.

Goal: Take an active role in supporting economic development through the provision of quality parks and facilities, development of downtown gardens and landscapes, and sponsorship of special events to improve the livability of the community and promote increased tourism.

2020 Major initiatives that were accomplished include:

- Continue to lead in planning and design for phases 2 & 3 of Riverfront Development public spaces
- Coordinate improvements at McCulloch Park and Riverfront Phase 2 with developers of adjacent properties

Strategy Seven: Secure sufficient funding to maintain and enhance the park system.

The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department will secure sufficient funding to maintain and enhance the parks and recreation system through revenue strategies consistent with the community's values.

Goal: Establish new funding sources and an appropriate balance of revenue strategies to help cover the operational and capital costs of the Department.

2020 Major initiatives that were accomplished include:

- Applied for Department of Natural Resources Lakes And Rivers grant and Sustain Our Great Lakes grant for phase 2 riparian restoration at Spy Run Creek in regional park (Franke Park).
- Developed a sustainable practices program department-wide

In conclusion, the department bases yearly goals and strategies around the seven planning themes. The themes are evaluated to make sure the needs of the community continue to be met. As we look toward the future we plan to update our Comprehensive Plan and make tweaks as needed to be relevant in the years ahead.