

City of Whitewater Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2026–2036

1. Purpose and Overview

The City of Whitewater Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2026–2036 builds directly upon the adopted Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan 2026–2031 and serves as its implementation framework. While the Open Space Plan establishes policy, priorities, and community vision, this Strategic Plan translates those goals into clear, actionable steps. It identifies specific projects, cost ranges, funding opportunities, and timelines that will guide City staff, the Parks and Recreation Board, and community partners in carrying out improvements across the next decade.

This plan provides the structure needed for consistent annual budgeting, grant applications, and performance reporting. Together with the City’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP), it ensures that the community’s vision for accessible, high-quality, and sustainable parks becomes a reality.

2. Plan Alignment and Guiding Principles

This Strategic Plan implements the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan 2026–2031, maintaining DNR certification and eligibility under the Stewardship and LWCF programs. It complements the City’s Comprehensive Plan and related efforts such as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, Effigy Mounds Preserve Maintenance Plan, and SEWRPC lake management studies.

Guiding Principles:

1. Maintain First, Expand Second – Reinvest in existing facilities before constructing new ones.
2. Advance Accessibility and Inclusion – Ensure all parks meet ADA standards and serve users of all abilities.
3. Promote Environmental Stewardship – Restore, protect, and enhance Whitewater’s lakes, trees, and natural areas.
4. Leverage Partnerships and Collaboration – Work with UW–Whitewater, WUSD, service clubs, and community groups to share resources and expertise.
5. Ensure Fiscal Responsibility and Funding Diversity – Pursue grants, donations, and sponsorships alongside local capital investment.
6. Foster Community Connection and Engagement – Promote parks as centers for community identity, recreation, and wellness.

3. Implementation Framework

Projects are organized by park and facility to ensure accountability and clarity within the City’s annual budget process. Each project in the Strategic Implementation Matrix includes the category, project description, phase, cost range, funding sources, responsible party, and

related notes. This structure provides transparency and flexibility while maintaining consistency with DNR and CIP reporting requirements.

4. Priority Projects Summary

Key early priorities include:

- Starin Park: splash pad, roof and restroom replacements, playground renewal, and ballfield improvements.
- Moraine View Park: construction of restroom and concession building.
- Cravath and Trippe Lakes: dam compliance, shoreline stabilization, and new fishing piers.
- Accessibility Upgrades: surfacing, pathways, and inclusive play at neighborhood parks.
- Veterans Park: new unified memorial park with monuments, flags, and interpretive signage.
- System-Wide Initiatives: trails, shade canopy, and expanded program communication.

5. Cost and Phasing Summary

Estimated investment levels based on 2025 benchmarks:

- Immediate (2026–2027): \$3.5M–\$6.5M — Accessibility, modernization, splash pad, and dam projects.
- Mid-Term (2028–2030): \$1.5M–\$3.0M — Trails, shade, playground replacements, and event amenities.
- Long-Term (2030–2035): \$0.5M–\$1.5M — Veterans Park completion and emerging needs.
- Ongoing: \$100K–\$200K annually — Maintenance, stewardship, and programming.

6. Funding Strategy

Implementation relies on a mix of state, federal, local, and partnership funding sources.

Primary Grants:

- WDNR Stewardship Program
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- Wisconsin DOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Partnerships:

- UW–Whitewater and WUSD for shared facilities and programs.
- Service clubs, nonprofits, and corporate sponsorships for community projects.
- Volunteer and “Friends of Parks” programs for ongoing maintenance and events.

Local Funding:

- City Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
- Donations and sponsorships for targeted amenities.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

Progress will be reviewed annually by the Parks and Recreation Board and reported to the Common Council. The Strategic Implementation Matrix will be updated regularly to track completion, costs, and funding. Key performance indicators include facilities upgraded,

miles of trail improved, natural acres restored, program participation, and grant dollars leveraged.

8. Conclusion and Call to Action

This Strategic Plan provides the roadmap for turning community vision into tangible results. By maintaining strong partnerships, pursuing diverse funding, and focusing on inclusive design and stewardship, Whitewater will continue to deliver safe, inspiring, and sustainable parks for all residents. Implementation of this plan reflects the City's long-standing values of health, inclusion, and environmental responsibility — ensuring that Whitewater's parks remain vital community spaces for generations to come.