

GOALS & STRATEGIES

3.1 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & POLICIES

The mission of the Fort Atkinson Parks & Recreation Department is “to enrich the quality of life for all participants by providing enjoyable, wholesome, recreational experiences.”

The following goals, objectives, and policies for the department come from the City’s 2022 Amended Comprehensive Plan.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal: Maintain and preserve existing facilities, effectively plan for future facilities that serve all residents, enhance opportunities for recreational tourism, and preserve the environmental integrity of the community.

Objectives:

1. Ensure the equitable distribution and maintenance of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities throughout the City to provide all residents access to such facilities.
2. Provide safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access between residential neighborhoods and schools, parks, and other recreational facilities.
3. Work to permanently preserve environmental corridors and other environmentally sensitive areas for passive recreation and to protect natural resources.

Policies:

1. Provide neighborhood park facilities that are safely accessible by children within all residential neighborhoods.
2. Site new parks in areas that promote neighborhood accessibility and interaction. All new neighborhoods should be within walking distance of public park space.
3. Provide sufficient community park facilities to serve community-wide park and outdoor recreation interests.
4. In areas of the City that are not currently served by neighborhood parks, work to identify land appropriate for parkland acquisition.

5. Integrate drainage-ways, greenways, and environmental corridors into the City’s permanent open space system. Such environmentally sensitive areas should not be used as substitutes for Neighborhood or Community Parks due to the fact that such areas cannot typically be used for active recreation.
6. Provide “special purpose” parks, plazas, and open spaces within commercial and industrial areas that provide aesthetic enhancements in otherwise developed environments.
7. Continue to enhance the City’s trail system by linking Neighborhood and Community Parks, schools, and residential neighborhoods. Where feasible, the trail system should follow or utilize environmental corridors.
8. Continue to improve and expand access to the Rock and Bark Rivers, without impairing water quality or ecosystems.
9. Coordinate City park, trail, and open space planning and improvements with the Towns of Koshkonong and Jefferson and Jefferson County. Where feasible, provide continuous trail and pedestrian access between City and regional recreational facilities.
10. Require that all proposed residential developments dedicate land for public parks or pay a fee-in-lieu of park land dedication and/or park impact fee.
11. Design park facilities to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

National Park, Recreation, and Open Space Standards

The following policies have been adapted from the *National Park, Recreation, and Open Space Standards*, a publication of the National Recreation and Park Association, for application by the City.

1. The park and recreation system should provide opportunities for all persons regardless of race, creed, age, sex, or economic status.
2. Advance land acquisition based upon a park and open space system should begin immediately in order to prevent the loss of high quality sites to other development interests.

3. Facilities should be centrally located within the area that they are intended to serve and must have safe and adequate access, and be distributed so that all persons in the community can be served.
4. Land acquired for use as parks or recreation areas should be suitable for the specific intended use, and when possible, for multiple uses.
5. Land adjacent to recreation and open space areas should be used in ways that will not interfere with the purposes for which the recreation or open space land was intended, and in addition, recreation and open space areas should be compatible with surrounding land uses.
6. The design of individual park and recreation sites should be as flexible as possible to reflect the changing patterns of recreation needs in a given service area.
7. Special efforts should be made to provide for easy access to and the use of all facilities by the elderly, ill and handicapped, very young, and the other less-mobile groups in the community.
8. Recreation and open space land should be protected in perpetuity against encroachment by other uses that will inhibit the recreation or open space nature of the land.
9. Park and recreation areas should be used to separate incompatible land uses and guide future urban development.
10. Neighborhood and community level recreation areas should adjoin schools whenever possible. This can enhance the school environment and prevent duplication of facilities.
11. Citizen involvement in the recreation and open space decision-making process should be encouraged and expanded.
12. Facility development must be reviewed with safety in mind, adhering to accepted standards prior to installation.

COMPLYING WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The ADA, enacted in 1990, clearly states the right of equal access for persons to local government services, including parks. On September 15, 2010 the Department of Justice published revised final regulations implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act. The 2010 Standards included new provisions for accessible design for recreational facilities such as playgrounds, swimming pools, fishing and golf facilities. Similar to when the original 1991 ADA Standards were adopted for public buildings, a community is required to complete a self-evaluation of their recreational facilities for ADA compliance by March 15, 2012. Those communities with 50 or more full or part-time employees are also required to develop a Transition Plan, which identifies what corrective work will be completed, when it will be completed, and the individual responsible for the corrective work. Any new recreational facilities designed, constructed, or shaped after March 15, 2012 are subject to the 2010 Standards. Any alteration (not simple maintenance, but something that changes the way the site is used) must make the element altered accessible and must create an accessible path of travel through the site or facility to that element.

There are some fundamental differences in how accessibility in the outdoors is accommodated compared to indoors or the built environment. While restrooms, shelters, interpretive centers, and parking lots, for example, need to follow detailed ADA guidelines, other improvements such as trails or swimming beach areas, for example, do not necessarily need to follow indoor or built environment ramp grades or surfacing requirements. A good rule of thumb for the City to follow is that anything constructed must not make the outdoor experience anymore difficult than what occurs naturally. Mother Nature does not have to comply with ADA, but the City does.

The New England ADA Center is a good resource to use and offers checklists to evaluate accessibility at existing park facilities. The fillable checklist forms can be found here: <http://www.adachecklist.org/checklist.html#rec>