

III. PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

The Town of Somers has a strong interest in upgrading the current level of park and open space planning happening in the Town. Development of a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan will be the first effort of its kind in the Town, and the formation of a Park Commission in 2008 was a commendable first step towards ongoing planning for the Somers park system.

The Kenosha County Park and Open Space Plan, and the 2005-2010 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan are the park-related plans currently in effect for the County and State respectively. In addition, the Town of Somers recently completed 18 individual neighborhood plans that, together, comprise the land use plan for the Town of Somers.

Kenosha County Park and Open Space Plan

The County Plan, which was adopted in October of 1998 and amended in October of 1999, generally recommends in Chapter III that local units of government within the County should provide certain local park and open space sites and facilities as needed within their area of jurisdiction, and that these sites and facilities be maintained for outdoor recreation use and resource preservation purposes. The outdoor recreation element of the Plan recommends that cities, towns, and villages provide community and neighborhood parks in urban portions of the County to provide facilities for more intensive recreational activities, such as baseball, tennis, and playground activities, and that recommendations for the location of local parks and recreational facilities should be identified through the preparation and adoption of local park and open space plans. The Plan goes on to recommend that in rural areas of the County, one town-owned park and associated outdoor recreation facilities be provided in each town to serve the needs of town residents for local civic events and for organized recreation activities, such as softball and picnicking. It further recommends that this town park should be located in conjunction with another community facility that serves as a focal point for town residents such as a town hall, school, or fire station. The Plan additionally recommends that all environmental corridors and isolated natural areas within local park service areas be considered for acquisition by local units of government as necessary as development occurs. This would protect these areas for limited outdoor recreation uses, resource preservation, and drainage and flood control purposes. The Plan also provides the following recommendations applicable to the Town of Somers:

- Develop Countywide recreational trails along the Lake Michigan, Pike River, and Fox River recreation corridors
- Provide new and maintain existing boat access sites to Lake Michigan, the Fox River, and inland lakes in the County

2005-2010 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The statewide plan provides a more general analysis of recreational interests and related issues across a very diverse demographic area. Although the focus of the Plan is the provision of outdoor recreation, it also heavily promotes the importance of environmental preservation. The Plan offers a number of goals and actions to “make strides towards developing an improved supply of

recreation within the state, while also protecting Wisconsin's beautiful natural environment for the enjoyment of residents and visitors for generations to come."

Town of Somers Neighborhood Plans

Each of the Town's 17 adopted neighborhood plans provides general recommendations for the preservation of environmentally significant land and the provision of sufficient parkland in conjunction with future development. Some of the recommendations identified in the Plans include the following:

- Provide recreational trails that follow utility easements and natural areas associated with the Pike River and Pike Creek
- Include open space or parkland with future development to provide recreational opportunities for future residents
- Provide Conservancy zoning to preserve significant wetlands
- Protect environmental corridors and isolated natural resource areas, wetlands, wetland buffers, and floodplains from development to preserve their environmental benefits

It is recommended that a priority be placed on developing access to parkland, especially neighborhood parks, in the most densely populated neighborhoods that currently do not have access to recreational opportunities. This priority would include the following neighborhoods: North Lakeshore, Parkside East, Parkside North, Somers West, Fairfield, and Pike River West.

The 18th and final neighborhood plan has yet to be adopted by the Town. This plan addresses land use in the North Lakeshore neighborhood. It is critically important that the provision of future parkland be a component of the final adopted version of this plan, because the North Lakeshore neighborhood is the only neighborhood in Somers with shoreline property along Lake Michigan. The Town currently does not provide any public access to this exceptional water resource, and future land use patterns should be designed in such a manner so as to provide this access.