



2024 MASTER PARKS PLAN

CITY OF WILMINGTON, ILLINOIS

DRAFT REVIEW PURPOSES ONLY

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As a small town along the Kankakee River and defined by a series of nature preserves and open spaces, the park system serving Wilmington is relatively small but offers a slate of facilities, programs, and services that works for the community. As the City evaluates the potential for future growth and development, there are opportunities to improve and expand the park system to better serve residents and visitors. There is also an opportunity to streamline the management of the park system, particularly as the City of Wilmington and the Wilmington Island Park District continue to work in partnership with each other.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Wilmington Master Parks Plan is to:

- Assess existing parks and facilities
- Evaluate community perspectives about services and facilities
- Identify park, facility, and program needs
- Define strategic and measurable needs and strategies
- Provide an action plan to implement strategies over the next several years
- Clarify and define a streamlined partnership between the City of Wilmington and the Wilmington Island Park District

COORDINATION WITH 2024 COMPREHENSIVE CITY PLAN

The Wilmington Master Parks Plan was prepared in coordination with the 2024 Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan. While the Comprehensive City Plan accounts for parks as part of the community facilities and assets

strategies, preparation of the Master Parks Plan and Comprehensive City Plan as separate documents enables them to be consulted and updated independent of each other, even as some of their respective strategies are implemented at the same time.

The coordination of both plans accentuates the importance of the park system to Wilmington, including the quality of life in neighborhoods, vitality of the riverfront, and attraction of visitors from across the region. In particular, one of the objectives from the Comprehensive City Plan states:

Ensure the local park system offers safe facilities that are accessible to all ages and abilities and meet the recreational needs and interests of the community.

The Comprehensive City Plan strategies that advance this objective should be taken in tandem with the strategies defined in the Master Parks Plan to ensure the intent of this objective is achieved.



Community Partnership CITY & PARK DISTRICT



Prior to 2015, the City of Wilmington maintained an intergovernmental agreement with the Wilmington Island Park District that primarily oversaw the maintenance of the five city-owned parks. While the City owns the park properties, the Park District was in charge of maintaining the parks and recreational facilities through this agreement. The Park District manages the programming in these spaces.

The intergovernmental agreement ended in the spring of 2015. Prior to the expiration of this agreement, the Park District spent about \$131,000 each year on park maintenance and received a \$35,000 reimbursement from the City.

Along with the Park District's 2020 Strategic Plan, the 2024 Wilmington Master Parks Plan outlines goals and strategies that will guide both the City and Park District in their efforts to reach a renewed and equitable partnership for park maintenance, park land ownership, and future parks planning.

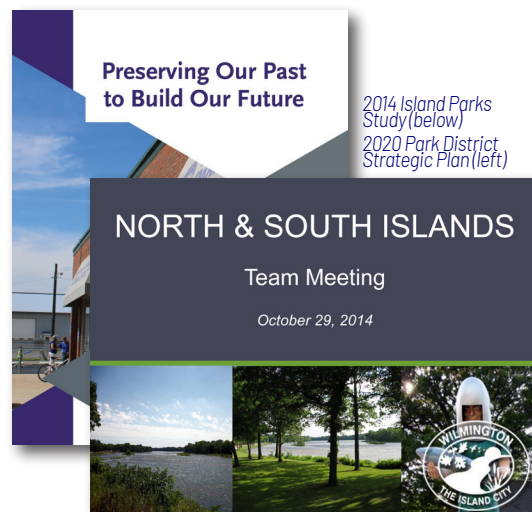


PAST PARKS PLANNING

Parks planning in Wilmington has been an ongoing endeavor for the past few decades. At the time of the City's previous Comprehensive City Plan in 2008, the local park system had only four parks: North Crest Park, Brookside Park, North Island Park, and South Island Park. Since then, Veterans' Memorial Park and Claire's Corner Park were added to the park system to raise the total number of parks to six.

As described in the sidebar on the left, the City and Park District had an intergovernmental agreement that delineated responsibility for parks maintenance; however, that agreement expired in 2015. Parks planning has continued before and after this expiration, including the 2014 Island Parks Study and 2020 Park District Strategic Plan.

The intent of the 2024 Wilmington Master Parks Plan is to provide renewed guidance to parks planning in Wilmington, including rejuvenation of the partnership between the City and Park District to best serve the Wilmington community.



HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The 2024 Wilmington Master Parks Plan should be used by both the City of Wilmington and the Wilmington Island Park District as a guide to implement action items, develop partnerships, and pursue funding sources outlined in last chapter of this document. While this plan generally covers a ten year timeframe, it can be updated at any time as community needs, resources, and expectations change. In particular, the Implementation Action Plan in Chapter 7 should be viewed as a dynamic working list that should be updated as needed.

PLAN COMPONENTS

The components of the 2024 Wilmington Master Parks Plan are outlined below.

Chapter 2: Policy Framework -

This chapter outlines the vision and goals that will guide parks planning in Wilmington.

Chapter 3: Importance of Parks -

This chapter describes the important role that parks play in our community. The types of parks are also explained to gain a better understanding of how different parks fit into the fabric of the community providing access to recreation and nature.

Chapter 4: Park System Profile -

This chapter provides a profile of the Wilmington park system. This profile includes city demographics, community perspectives, an inventory of parks and recreation facilities, park user groups, programs and operations, and coordination with other jurisdictions or organizations offering recreation facilities and programs in Wilmington.

Chapter 5: Park Demand -

This chapter summarizes the analysis of the current park system and demand for future parks and open spaces.

Chapter 6: Park Strategies -

This chapter serves as the foundation of the plan. This chapter provides Park Strategies and a Master Parks Plan Map. These elements are based on a park land and facilities analysis, park demand analysis, and recommended park standards. This chapter also includes an Implementation Plan that serves to activate the Master Parks Plan as a dynamic document that the City and its partners can consult on a regular basis. A summary of potential partners and funding sources is also provided to further support plan implementation.

CHAPTER 2

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The following vision statement and goals comprise the policy framework that will guide parks planning in Wilmington. In particular, the goals will manifest their intentions through the park strategies outlined in Chapter 6. Upholding this policy framework to attain the vision and meet the goals will take a collaborative effort between the City of Wilmington, Wilmington Island Park District, and other partners across the community, including those that offer facilities and programs that supplement the local park system.

VISION STATEMENT

The Wilmington park system offers a range of spaces, facilities, and programs that sustains the recreational, educational, and social needs of the community, particularly serving all ages, accommodating all abilities, and meeting varying socioeconomic means.

GOALS

1

GOAL:

Sustain a renewed collaborative partnership between the City and Park District.

2

GOAL:

Provide park spaces, facilities, and programs that accommodate all ages, abilities, and financial means.

3

GOAL:

Ensure local parks are equitably distributed across the community and meet national park standards.

4

GOAL:

Offer year-round activities in indoor and outdoor park spaces and facilities.

5

GOAL:

Center environmental stewardship in park planning efforts to protect the natural environment.

6

GOAL:

Take a proactive approach to acquiring land and coordinating with developers to build new parks.

7

GOAL:

Connect all park spaces and facilities to a well-connected trail system.

8

GOAL:

Utilize stormwater management best practices in all parks, particularly along the Kankakee River.

9

GOAL:

Build up the local open space system to maintain a natural green belt around the City.

10

GOAL:

Engage the community through events, social media, outreach, and public education.

11

GOAL:

Identify opportunities for collaboration with community partners to support the park system.

12

GOAL:

Maintain a flexible park planning process that can adapt to future trends and changing needs.

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CHAPTER 3

IMPORTANCE OF PARKS

According to the Trust for Public Land's study *Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space* study (Paul M. Sherer, 2003, "parks and open space improve our physical and psychological health, strengthen our communities, and make our cities and neighborhoods more attractive places to live and work." Other studies corroborate this perspective offering strong evidence that the availability of parks and open spaces have a positive impact on the overall quality of life in communities.

BENEFITS OF PARKS

The Trust for Public Land study highlights the following benefits of parks.



Health Benefits from Physical Activity:

Research finds that people who engage in regular physical activity benefit from reduced risk of certain diseases and ailments. Health benefits are typically proportional to the amount of activity.



Elevated Frequency of Exercise:

When people have access to parks, they tend to exercise more. A CDC study indicated that access to places for physical activity led to over 25% increase in the amount of people exercising three or more days per week.



Exposure to Nature and Greenery:

A growing body of research finds that access to nature improves physical and psychological health. People in a greener environment tend to report being in better physical and mental health.



Increased Property Values:

Real estate market trends show that people are willing to pay more for a property located close to parks and open space. This often translates to higher property values and tax revenues that can help support parks.



Enhanced Economic Development:

Businesses often view access to parks and recreation opportunities for their workers as part of a community's quality of life. In addition to health benefits, this can impact the vitality of commercial areas and employment centers.



Boost in Tourism:

Parks and recreation opportunities often become a community's signature attractions, which can be a vital marketing tool to boost tourism. Parks offer spaces for events like festivals and events revolving around sports, food, and the arts.



Pollution Abatement and Cooling:

The U.S. Forest Service found that the 50-year average lifetime of a tree can significantly reduce air and water pollution and soil erosion. Trees also act as natural air conditioners and reduce the urban heat island effect.



Natural Stormwater Management:

By intercepting and absorbing rainfall, trees, native plantings, and green spaces more effectively and less expensively manage the flow of stormwater runoff compared to concrete sewers and drainage ditches.



Spaces for Playing and Learning:

For children, playing is learning. Play helps kids develop muscle strength, coordination, language, cognitive thinking, and reasoning abilities. Play also teaches children how to interact and cooperate with others.



Reduced Crime and Juvenile Delinquency:

Access to public parks and recreation facilities is strongly linked to reduced crime and juvenile delinquency. This provides safe spaces for at-risk youth to interact with peers and engage in activities.

TYPES OF PARKS

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, the types of parks in Wilmington follow the hierarchy of parks described in the 2020 Wilmington Island Park District Strategic Plan. This ensures consistency between the way parks are categorized by both the City and Park District. In addition, common terminology and park site metrics will help support the renewed collaborative partnership between the City and Park District, which is the first overall goal identified in the policy framework in Chapter 2.

The classification system for the types of parks in Wilmington in this chapter lays the groundwork for summarizing the park system profile, preparing the park system analysis, and developing park strategies in the next three chapters.

FIGURE 3.1
CLASSIFICATION OF PARKS

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

A neighborhood park generally functions as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. In some cases like North Crest Park, a neighborhood park is near the center of the neighborhood to maximize equitable access to residents. In other cases like Claire's Corner Park and Brookside Park, a neighborhood park provides a small area for informal active and passive recreation. Unique cases like Veterans' Memorial Park offer special open space.

General Specifications

- Serves one neighborhood
- Serves an area 1/4 to 1/2 mile distance
- Typical size range is 1 to 15 acres
- Optimal size depends on neighborhood

COMMUNITY PARKS

Given its relatively larger size, a community park typically serves a broader purpose than neighborhood park. In addition, a community park may have a unique or limited recreational function. For example, North and South Island Parks are distinctly located on the island within the Kankakee River and have baseball/softball fields, among other amenities. The intent of a community park is to meet an array of recreation needs and preserve unique landscapes and open spaces.

General Specifications

- Serves two or more neighborhoods
- Serves an area 1/2 to 3 mile distance
- Typical size range is 15 to 75 acres
- Optimal size is 25 acres

FIGURE 3.1
TYPES OF PARKS IN WILMINGTON



CHAPTER 4

PARK SYSTEM PROFILE

The park system profile provided in this chapter is comprised of a range of park information, community demographics, and community perspectives that forms the basis around which the park demand analysis (Chapter 5) and park strategies (Chapter 6) are established. Park information focuses on an inventory of parks and recreation facilities in Wilmington. In addition to the park system, jurisdictions and organizations offering recreation facilities and programs are identified to assess points of coordination to build out the complete slate of recreational facilities and open spaces across Wilmington.

FIGURE 4.1
COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Source: U.S. Census, 2018-2022 American Community Survey (via PolicyMap)

	Wilmington	10-Mile Radius ^A	Will County
Population	5,525	46,618	696,774
Population by Age			
- Less than age 18	16.8%	23.9%	24.1%
- Age 18-64	62.4%	59.2%	62.2%
- Age 65+	20.8%	16.9%	13.7%
Median Age	44	42	39
Households			
- Family Households w/ Children	36.8%	44.0%	45.2%
- Family Households w/ No Children	63.2%	56.0%	54.8%
Median Household Income	\$66,538	\$85,625	\$103,678
Per Capita Income	\$36,538	\$41,169	\$44,356
Poverty Level ^B	10.3%	7.4%	6.7%
Owner Occupied Housing	63.3%	81.2%	82.2%
Renter Occupied Housing	36.6%	18.8%	17.8%

^A 10-mile radius includes zip codes 60407, 60408, 60410, 60416, 60421, 60481, 60935
^B Percent of population living below the poverty level



Survey Says THOUGHTS ON PARKS



As described in Chapter 1, the planning process for the 2024 Wilmington Parks Master Plan ran concurrently with the 2024 Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan. A community survey was conducted during these concurrent planning processes, including a set of questions focusing on parks and open space in Wilmington.

The Park District administered a separate survey around the same timeframe to help inform their own Park District Master Plan. In addition, the Park District conducted a survey as part of their 2020 Strategic Plan process.

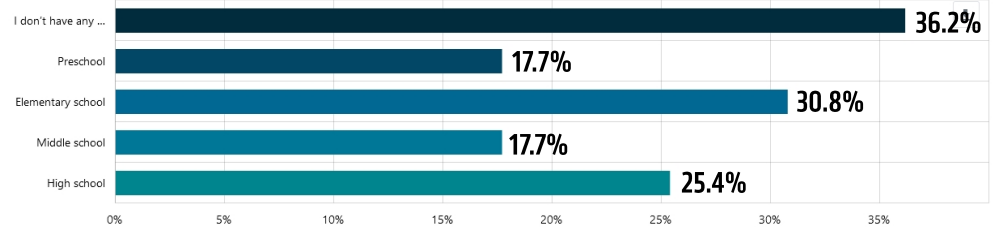
Since the Park District's Master Plan and Strategic Plan processes were independent of the 2024 Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan, this chapter primarily focuses on the community survey findings from the Comprehensive City Plan. While the Park District's surveys are separate and have their own findings, they generally reinforce the Comprehensive City Plan survey findings.



COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

As described in the sidebar on the left, the Wilmington community has had multiple opportunities over the past several years to share their feedback on the local park system. The intent of this section is to provide a broad overview of the key takeaways from the community survey findings from the Comprehensive City Plan process. These findings highlight community perspectives that helped to inform the park strategies established in Chapter 6.

25 If you have children under age 18, please indicate their school age(s). Select all that apply.
Multi Choice | Skipped: 3 | Answered: 130 (97.74%)



KEY TAKEAWAYS

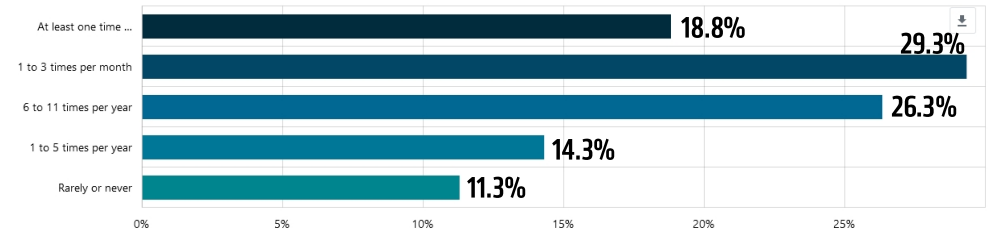
63.9%

Survey respondents indicating they have children under age 18

48.5%

Survey respondents indicating they have children who are in preschool or elementary school

26 How many times have you or members of your household visited a park in Wilmington over the past 12 months?
Multi Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 133 (100%)



KEY TAKEAWAYS

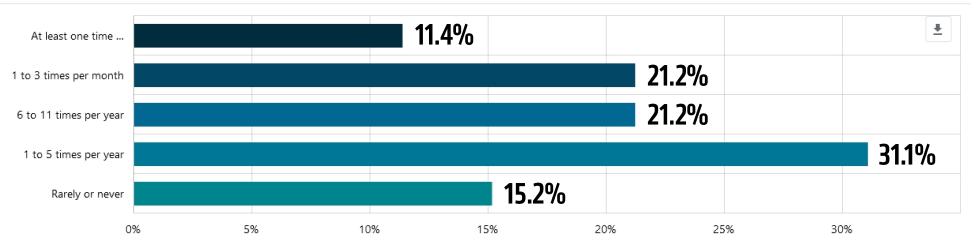
48.1%

Survey respondents visit a park in Wilmington a few times per month

25.6%

Survey respondents visit a park in Wilmington less frequently, roughly less than once every two months

27 How many times have you or members of your household visited a park, forest preserve, or other open space (e.g., Midewin) outside the city but near Wilmington over the past 12 months?
Multi Choice | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 132 (99.25%)

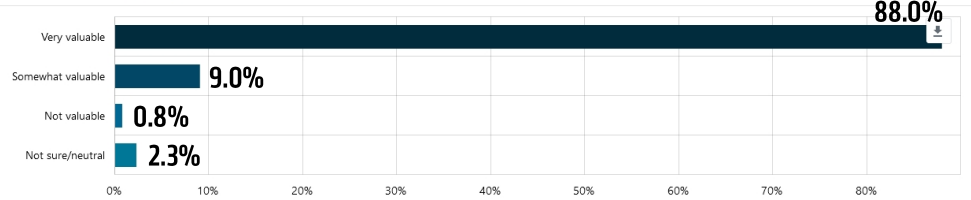


KEY TAKEAWAYS

32.6%
Survey respondents visit a park, forest preserve, or open space outside Wilmington a few times per month

46.3%
Survey respondents visit a park, forest preserve, or open space outside Wilmington less frequently, roughly less than once every two months

28 How valuable is a local parks system and dedicated park district (Wilmington Island Park District) to the overall quality of life in Wilmington?
Multi Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 133 (100%)



KEY TAKEAWAYS

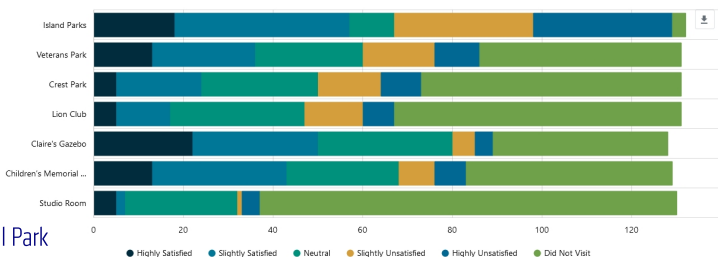
97.0%
Survey respondents view a local parks system and dedicated park district as being valuable to Wilmington's quality of life

29 Of the Wilmington parks and facilities that you have visited in the past 12 months, how satisfied are you with each one?
Matrix | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 132 (99.25%)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Survey respondents who are satisfied with existing parks and facilities in Wilmington

- 43.2%** Island Parks
- 39.1%** Claire's Gazebo
- 33.3%** Children's Memorial Park
- 27.5%** Veterans Park
- 18.3%** Crest Park
- 13.0%** Lions Club
- 5.4%** Studio Room



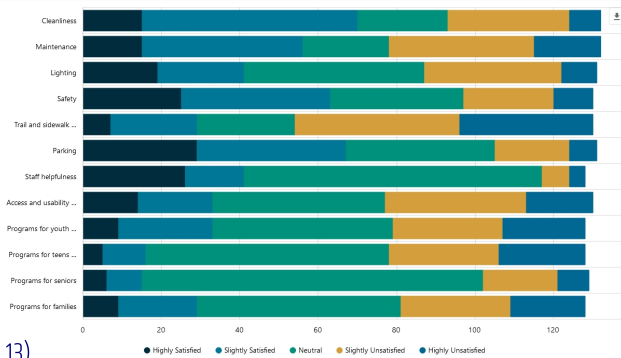
30 How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Wilmington parks and facilities?

Matrix | Skipped: 1 | Answered: 132 (99.25%)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Survey respondents who are satisfied with certain aspects of Wilmington parks and facilities

- 53.0%** Cleanliness
- 51.2%** Parking
- 48.5%** Safety
- 42.4%** Maintenance
- 32.0%** Staff helpfulness
- 31.3%** Lighting
- 25.8%** Programs for youth (under age 13)
- 25.4%** Access and usability for different ages and abilities
- 22.7%** Programs for families
- 22.3%** Trails and sidewalks
- 12.5%** Programs for teens (age 13-19)
- 11.6%** Programs for seniors

**31 How would you prioritize the following programs or opportunities for Wilmington's park system?**

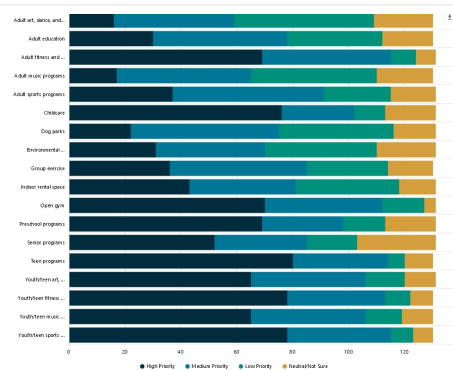
Matrix | Skipped: 2 | Answered: 131 (98.5%)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Survey respondents who place a high priority on programs or opportunities in the Wilmington park system

Adult & Senior Programs

- 52.7%** Senior programs
- 39.7%** Adult fitness and wellness programs
- 28.2%** Adult sports programs
- 23.1%** Adult education
- 13.1%** Adult music programs
- 12.3%** Adult art, dance, and performing arts

**31 How would you prioritize the following programs or opportunities for Wilmington's park system?**

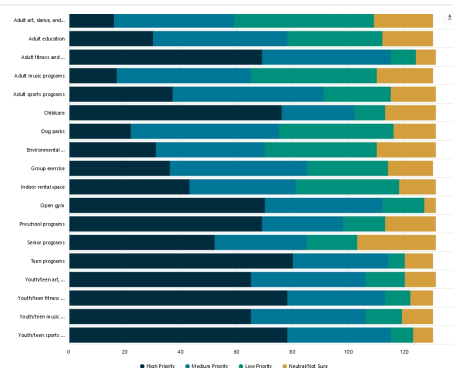
Matrix | Skipped: 2 | Answered: 131 (98.5%)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Survey respondents who place a high priority on programs or opportunities in the Wilmington park system

Youth & Teen Programs

- 61.5%** Teen programs
- 60.0%** Youth/teen fitness and wellness programs
- 60.0%** Youth/teen sports programs
- 58.0%** Childcare
- 52.7%** Preschool programs
- 50.0%** Youth/teen music programs
- 49.6%** Youth/teen art, dance, and performing arts



31 How would you prioritize the following programs or opportunities for Wilmington's park system?

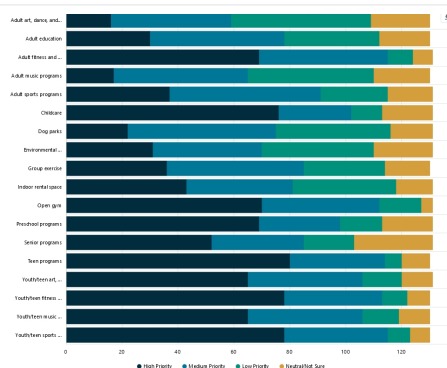
Matrix | Skipped: 2 | Answered: 131 (98.5%)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Survey respondents who place a high priority on programs or opportunities in the Wilmington park system

Other Programs

- 53.4%** Open gym
- 32.8%** Indoor rental space
- 27.7%** Group exercise
- 23.7%** Environmental education
- 16.8%** Dog parks

**32 How would you rate the availability of the following sports and recreational activities or facilities in or near Wilmington?**

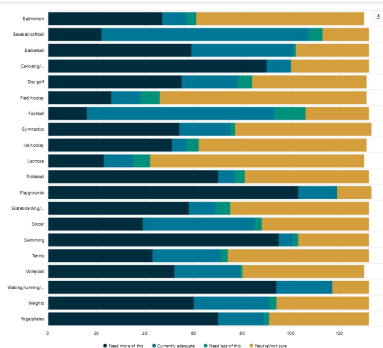
Matrix | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 133 (100%)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Survey respondents rated the availability of certain sports and recreational facilities in or near Wilmington

% Stating a need for more of this facility

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 77.4% Playgrounds | 40.6% Gymnastics |
| 72.0% Swimming | 40.0% Volleyball |
| 71.2% Walking/running/jogging | 38.9% Ice hockey |
| 68.2% Canoeing/paddleboarding | 36.2% Badminton |
| 53.0% Pickleball | 32.6% Tennis |
| 53.0% Yoga/pilates | 29.6% Soccer |
| 45.5% Weights | 19.9% Field hockey |
| 44.7% Basketball | 17.7% Lacrosse |
| 43.9% Skateboarding/rollerblading | 16.7% Baseball/softball |
| 42.0% Disc golf | 12.1% Football |



PARKS INVENTORY

The park system in Wilmington is presently comprised of the six parks shown on the map in Figure 4.1 and described below and on the following page. Each park includes a general service range – 1/4 to 1/2 mile distance for neighborhood parks and 1/2 to 3 mile distance for community parks – which are illustrated on the map in Figure 4.2.



NORTH CREST PARK

Park Type: Neighborhood Park

Location: 1112 N. Joliet Street

Size: 3.00 acres

Service Range: 1/4 to 1/2 mile

Characteristics:

- Also known as Children's Memorial Park
- Elements: Volleyball court (1); basketball court (1); softball field (1); playground (1); pavilion (1); skate park (1)
- Home to Riley Garden maintained by the local garden club
- Has internal sidewalks with limited sidewalk or trail access from the neighborhood
- 51.6% of survey respondents indicated they are satisfied with this park



CLAIRE'S CORNER PARK

Park Type: Neighborhood Park

Location: 101 N. Water Street

Size: 0.18 acres

Service Range: 1/4 to 1/2 mile

Characteristics:

- Also known as Claire's Gazebo
- Elements: Gazebo (1); fountain with benches (1); drinking fountain (1)
- Located in the heart of downtown
- Has an internal sidewalk connecting to the downtown sidewalk system
- 39.1% of survey respondents indicated they are satisfied with this park



BROOKSIDE PARK

Park Type: Neighborhood Park

Location: 805 River Street

Size: 0.40 acres

Service Range: 1/4 to 1/2 mile

Characteristics:

- Also referred to as the Lions Club park
- Elements: Swing set (1); community center building (1)
- Community center is maintained and operated by the Wilmington Lions Club
- Has sidewalks access along River Street, even though rest of neighborhood has sporadic sidewalk coverage
- 13.0% of survey respondents indicated they are satisfied with this park



FIGURE 4.1

CURRENT PARKS IN WILMINGTON



VETERANS' MEMORIAL PARK

Park Type: Neighborhood Park

Location: Southeast corner of Vine Street and Williams Street

Size: 1.63 acres

Service Range: 1/4 to 1/2 mile

Characteristics:

- Elements: Gazebo with memorial (1)
- Has internal sidewalks with limited sidewalk or trail access from the neighborhood
- 27.5% of survey respondents indicated they are satisfied with this park



NORTH ISLAND PARK

Park Type: Community Park

Location: 250 Bridge Street

Size: 11.00 acres

Service Range: 1/2 to 3 miles

Characteristics:

- Located within the Kankakee River
- Facilities: Baseball/softball field (1), including press box and concessions; pavilion (1)
- Has limited internal sidewalks or walking areas dedicated to pedestrians only, including sidewalk access to IL Route 53
- 43.2% of survey respondents indicated they are satisfied with this park



SOUTH ISLAND PARK

Park Type: Community Park

Location: 1112 N. Joliet Street

Size: 30.00 acres

Service Range: 1/2 to 3 miles

Characteristics:

- Located within the Kankakee River
- Facilities: Baseball fields (2), including press box and concessions; playgrounds (2); pavilion (1); fishing/skating pond (1)
- Has limited internal sidewalks or walking areas dedicated to pedestrians only, including sidewalk access to IL Route 53
- 43.2% of survey respondents indicated they are satisfied with this park

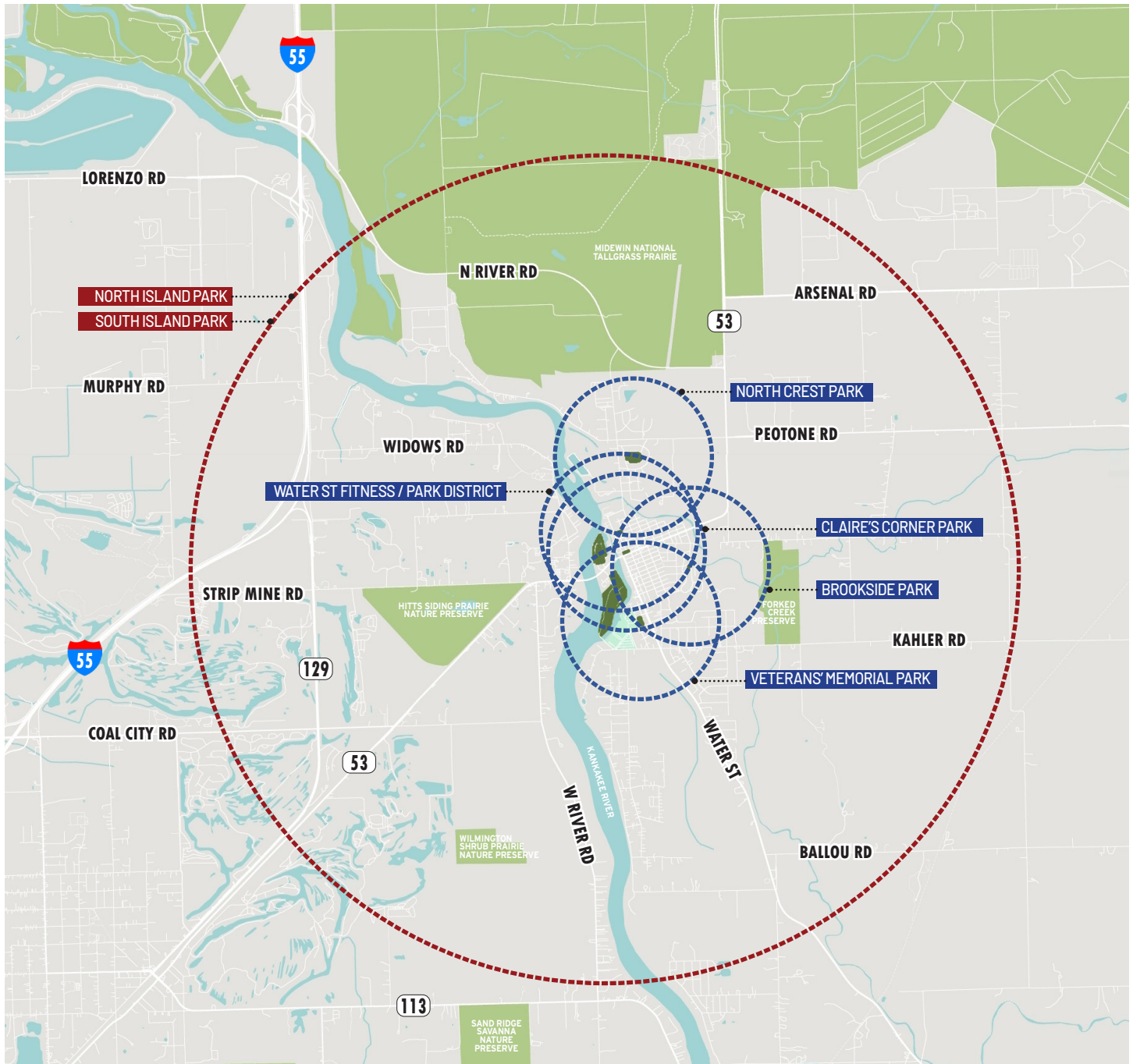
North Island and South Island Parks are the two largest parks in Wilmington. With their location within the Kankakee River, both parks are also situated within the river's floodplain, which makes the park and environs prone to flooding. Major flood events like the one that occurred in Winter 2023 have a significant impact on these parks causing closures, inflicting major property damage, and making park maintenance more difficult.

The park strategies in Chapter 6 outline potential actions the City and its partners can take to implement stormwater management practices that are most appropriate for park areas that are prone to flooding. Some of these flood-related park strategies build from overall community strategies identified in the 2024 Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan.

Stormwater Management FLOOD PRONE AREAS

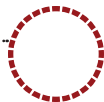


FIGURE 4.2
SERVICE RANGES FOR CURRENT WILMINGTON PARKS



COMMUNITY PARKS

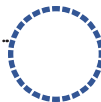
North Island Park,
South Island Park



Community parks have a service range of 1/2 to 3 miles. North and South Island Parks cover a majority of Wilmington. Two community parks is adequate for the size of a community like Wilmington.

COMMUNITY PARKS

North Crest Park, Claire's
Corner Park, Brookside Park,
Veterans' Memorial Park



Neighborhood parks have a service range of 1/4 to 1/2 miles. All four existing neighborhood parks are located east of the river. While their combined service ranges serve Wilmington well, new parks should be distributed more evenly as new housing is developed.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES INVENTORY

In addition to the six parks that presently comprise the park system in Wilmington, the Water Street Fitness Center located in the Wilmington Island Park District building is a key component of the community's recreation system. As listed on the right, the Water Street Fitness Center offers different recreational opportunities in an indoor facility that complement the outdoor sports, recreation, and spaces at the six parks.



WATER ST FITNESS / PARK DISTRICT

Facility Type: Fitness Center

Location: 315 N. Water Street

Size: 8,000 sq ft

Service Range: Community-wide

Characteristics:

- Opened in 2014
- Home to the Park District administrative office
- Park District utilized \$110,000 bond to outfit the building and \$40,000 loan for remodeling
- Facilities: Multi-purpose rooms (2) that host Park District programming and available for rent by community members for special events and club meetings; fitness area (1) including cardio stations and a mix of machine and free weights
- Has limited internal sidewalks with partial sidewalk network around the perimeter of the property
- Within walking distance to riverfront, including the millrace foot bridge to North Island Park

COORDINATION WITH OTHER PROVIDERS

In addition to the six parks and Water Street Fitness Center, community members have access to a wide array of recreational facilities managed by other agencies or groups. This is true of any community, not just Wilmington, where the overall parks and recreation system is built upon the spaces, facilities, and programs offered by a range of providers.

This collective approach to building up a community's parks and recreation system is of particular importance when the main provider(s) – the City and Park District in Wilmington's case – have a finite amount of resources that can be devoted to management, operations, and maintenance of park spaces and recreation facilities. While a collective approach enables different providers to fill in gaps when others can't, that places greater emphasis on avoiding duplicative offerings unless the demand can support such duplication.

The City and Park District should continue to work in partnership with these other providers, as this adds to the collective approach to ensure the Wilmington community has access to a parks and recreation system that meets local needs as best as possible.

Descriptions of the overall system of parks and recreation providers serving Wilmington are provided below. The table in Figure 4.3 summarizes the facilities and programs offered by these various providers.



Wilmington Island Park District

The City of Wilmington's most prominent partner regarding the community's parks and recreation system is the Wilmington Island Park District. While the City owns the six parks that currently comprise the park system, the Park District maintains these parks. This arrangement was previously governed by an intergovernmental agreement that expired in 2015. As described in the next chapter, a renewed approach to this partnership between the City and Park District is recommended to best provide for park maintenance and a sustained coordination as new parks are added in the future.



Wilmington School District 209-U

The Wilmington Community School District 209-U is comprised of four schools: Bruning Elementary School, L.J. Stevens Intermediate School, Wilmington Middle School, and Wilmington High School. The School District provides indoor spaces for sports and recreation activities, including basketball, volleyball, wrestling, cheerleading, spiritline, etc.). Outdoor facilities are also provided for baseball, softball, track and field, football, and soccer. As part of an intergovernmental agreement, the School District allows use of the schools' multipurpose rooms and gymnasiums in exchange for the Park District providing lawn mowing service and maintenance assistance for special events or projects.



Lions Club

The Wilmington Lions Club is a highly active civic organization and often supports the

Park District with financial donations and volunteers to assist with special events. The Lions Club manages a community center building and a swing set in Brookside Park. In addition, the Lions Club hosts various community events and offers its own programs for seniors such as yoga, tai chi, and quilting clubs



Wilmington Baseball and Softball Association

The Wilmington Baseball and Softball Association is a non-

profit organization that manages the organized youth baseball and softball leagues in the community. Teams play their home games on baseball/softball diamonds across Wilmington, including South Island Park, North Crest Park, and Wilmington Middle and High Schools.



Forest Preserve District of Will County

Among the Forest Preserve District's extensive collection of forest preserves

across Will County, Forked Creek Preserve is the most prominent facility immediately adjacent to the City of Wilmington. Covering over 951 acres, Forked Creek Preserve provides a range of outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities as summarized in Figure 4.3. This includes about 23 miles of trails and connectivity to the Wauponsee Glacial Trail, which is a 23-mile regional trail that starts at the Kankakee River and traverses north to I-80 in Joliet. Other forest preserves in the vicinity of Wilmington's planning area: McKinley Woods, Sand Ridge Savanna Preserve, Evans Judge Preserve.

Other Facilities

Wilmington is also served by a range of non-profit entities and private businesses or organizations that provide recreational opportunities to the community:

- Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie
- Des Plaines Dolomite Prairies Land and Water Reserve
- Hitts Siding Prairie Nature Preserve
- Riverfront Lanes (bowling)
- Wilmington Bobcats Football Field
- Cinder Ridge Golf Course
- Will County Sportsman's Club
- Wilmington Recreation Club

These private facilities expand options for recreation across the community, which is important to meet various needs and interests as part of a holistic parks and recreation system built up by the City, Park District, and various community partners.

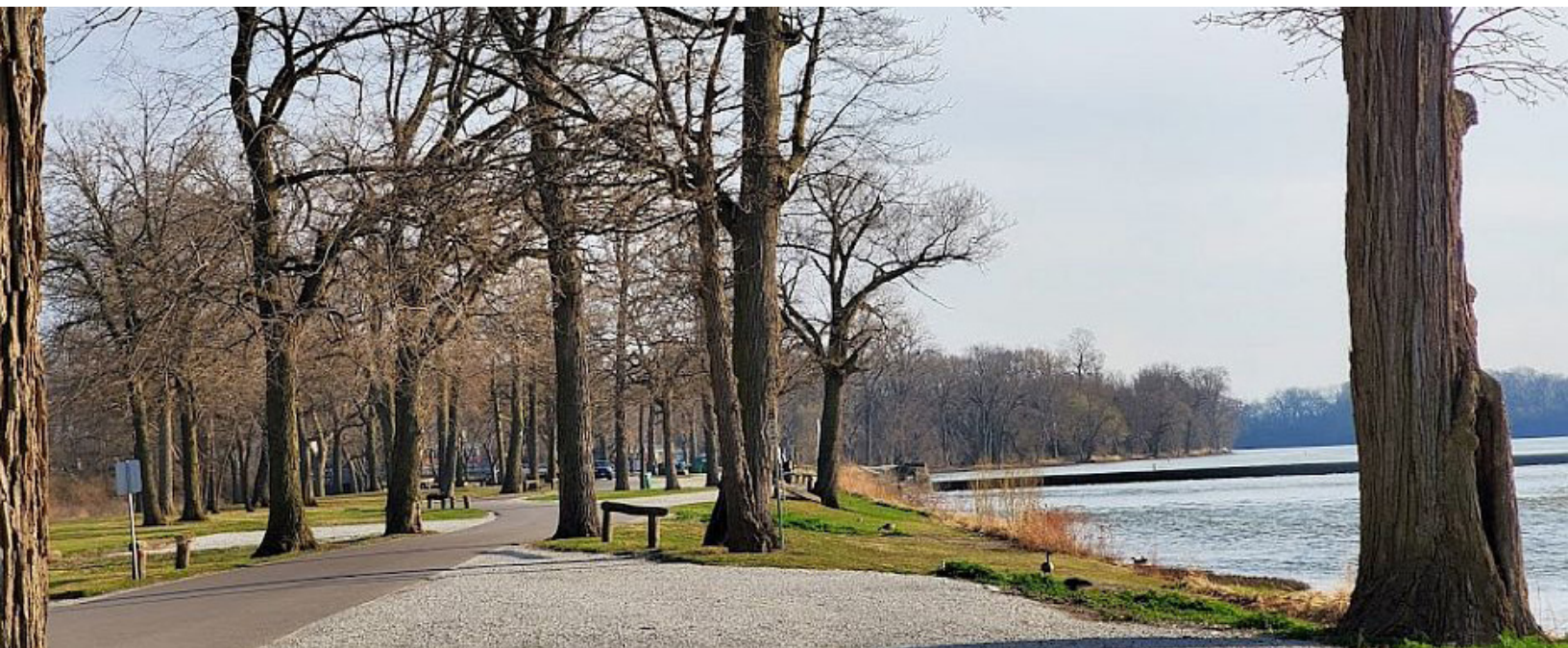
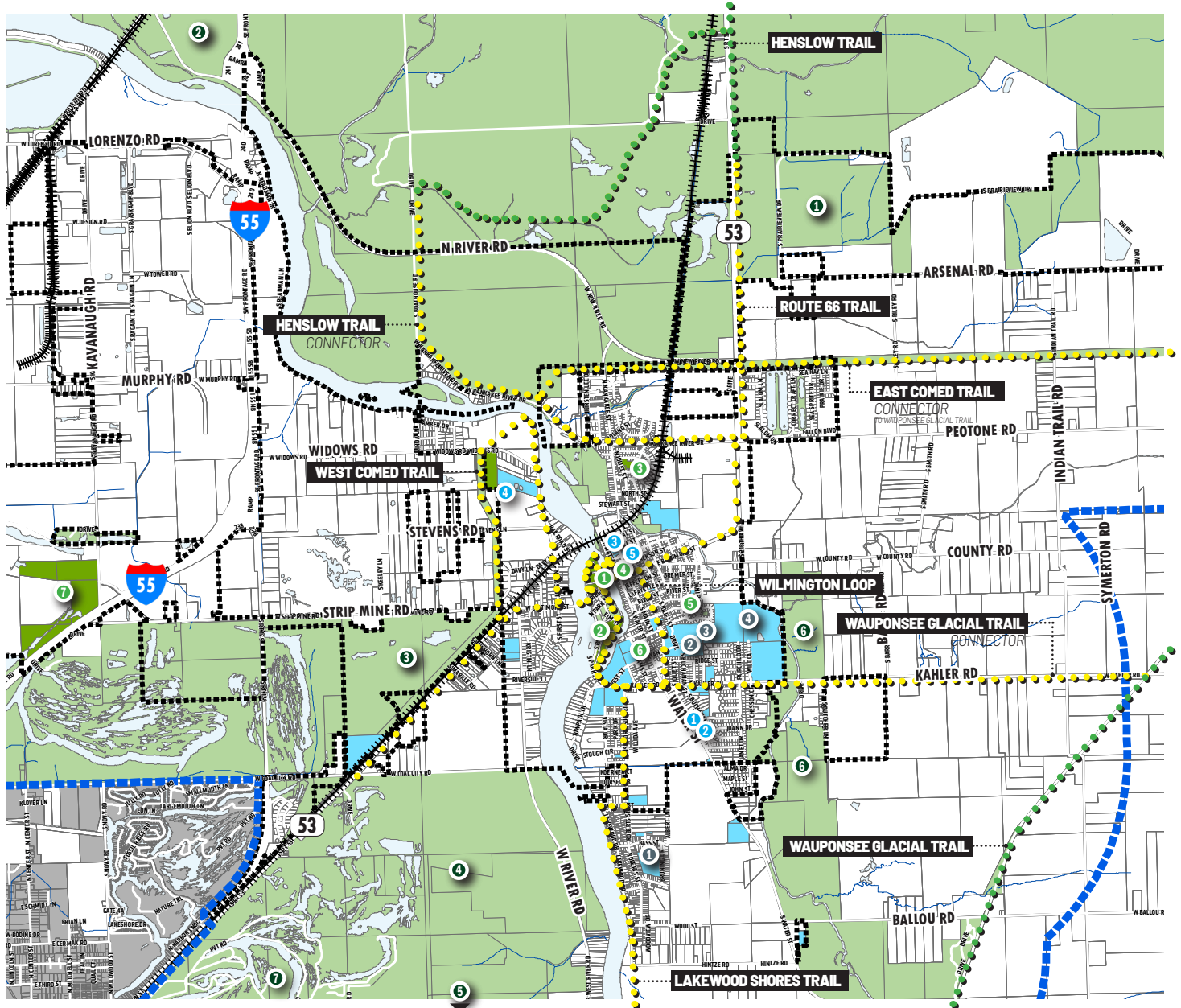


FIGURE 4.3

FACILITIES & PROGRAMS ACROSS THE WILMINGTON PARKS & RECREATION SYSTEM**LEGEND**

- Public/Institutional
- Parks and Recreation
- Open Space
- Municipal Boundary
- 1/2-Mile Planning Boundary
- Existing Trails
- Potential Trails

PARKS & RECREATION

- 1 North Island Park
- 2 South Island Park
- 3 North Crest Park
- 4 Claire's Corner Park
- 5 Brookside Park
- 6 Veterans' Memorial Park
- 7 Cinder Ridge Golf Course

OPEN SPACE

- 1 Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie
- 2 Des Plaines Prairies Land and Water Preserve
- 3 Hitts Siding Prairie Nature Preserve
- 4 Wilmington Shrub Prairie Nature Preserve
- 5 Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve
- 6 Forked Creek Nature Preserve
- 7 Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve

SCHOOLS

- 1 Bruning Elementary School
- 2 Stevens Intermediate School
- 3 Wilmington Middle School
- 4 Wilmington High School

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CHAPTER 5

PARK DEMAND

This chapter provides an evaluation of the amount and distribution of parks and open space within Wilmington’s 1½-mile planning area. This evaluation is compared to benchmarks based on Wilmington’s current and future population as projected in the 2024 Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan. The result is a summary of park and open space demand, which will help the City, Park District, and other partners plan for additional parks and open space amenities as Wilmington continues to grow and develop.

PARK DEMAND

The table in Figure 5.1 calculates park demand in Wilmington based on the City’s current population (5,726) and projected population (44,724, assuming full buildout of the Future Land Use Plan from the 2024 Comprehensive City Plan). Based on this park demand analysis, Wilmington’s current population has an overall surplus of 14.7 acres of parks with 46.2 acres total in the community’s current park system.

Park distribution is currently skewed with all parks located within or east of the Kankakee River. Park distribution will need to be more even to better serve all parts of the community, particularly residential growth areas west of the river and in the northeast and south sections of Wilmington’s planning area. In particular, full buildout of the residential components of the Future Land Use Plan generates the need for 199.8 acres of additional park space distributed in these areas of need across Wilmington.

OPEN SPACE DEMAND

In addition to park demand, the table in Figure 5.1 indicates open space demand in Wilmington. Even though not all open spaces are classified as parks, open spaces offer a range of active and passive recreational opportunities in the community. Wilmington in particular is rich with open spaces surrounding the City’s periphery, including Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Forked Creek Nature Preserve, and other nature preserves.

The Trust for Public Land tabulates total park/open space as a percentage of city area for a variety of major U.S. cities. This percentage is 8.0% for Chicago. For analysis purposes, this same 8.0% figure was used to calculate open space demand in Wilmington, which yields future open space need of 4,136.5 acres. With 31,364.0 acres of existing open space in Wilmington’s planning area, the City has a major surplus of 27,227.5 acres of open space, accentuating the vast amount of existing open space.

FIGURE 5.1
PARK & OPEN SPACE DEMAND

Current Population: ^A	5,726 residents
Future Population: ^B	44,724 residents

COMMUNITY PARKS

National Standard:	4.00 ac / 1,000 pop
Current Amount:	41.0 acres
Current Demand:	22.9 acres
Current Need/Surplus:	18.1 acres [SURPLUS]
Future Demand:	178.9 acres
Future Need/Surplus:	137.9 acres [NEED]

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

National Standard:	1.50 ac / 1,000 pop
Current Amount:	5.2 acres
Current Demand:	8.6 acres
Current Need/Surplus:	3.4 acres [NEED]
Future Demand:	67.1 acres
Future Need/Surplus:	61.9 acres [NEED]

OPEN SPACE

National Standard:	8.0% of city area
Current Amount: ^C	31,364.0 acres
Future Demand: ^C	4,136.5 acres
Future Need/Surplus:	27,227.5 acres [SURPLUS]

^A Based on 2023 estimate from U.S. Census ACS
^B Based on full buildout of the Future Land Use Plan from the 2024 Comprehensive City Plan
^C Located within Wilmington’s 1½-mile planning area

Sources: National Park Service; Trust for Public Land; 2024 Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan

PARK STANDARDS

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) establishes general park standards to provide targets for general park space and specific park amenities like sports fields, trails, and other recreational facilities. NRPA has a national standard of 10 acres of park land per 1,000 residents.

For comparison, Wilmington’s current park system has 46.2 acres of parks serving a present estimated population of 5,726 residents, which yields a ratio of 8.1 acres per 1,000 residents specifically for Wilmington. While this local park ratio is 1.9 acres less than the national standard, it is important to highlight the extensive amount of open space located around Wilmington, including Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and multiple nature preserves that offer active and passive recreational opportunities. Local schools and other organizations offer recreational spaces as well, which further enhances Wilmington’s overall access to recreation beyond the current 46.2 acres of parks.

As Wilmington continues to grow, the local park system will need to expand to adequately serve new residents, including the siting of new park spaces in an equitable manner so that residents across the community have close access to parks. With the six current parks located within or east of the river, new parks should locate in residential growth areas, particularly west of the river and in the northeast and south sections of Wilmington’s planning area.

In addition to the parks and open space demand assessment in Figure 5.1, the table in Figure 5.2 provides a general overview of park facility needs based on national standards for specific park facilities. Each standard is multiplied by the same population numbers (5,726 current population and 44,724 projected population) to calculate future facility needs. Some of these recreational facilities were listed as needs in the community survey conducted for the 2024 Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan, which had a concurrent planning process with the 2024 Wilmington Master Parks Plan.

FIGURE 5.2
PARK FACILITY NEEDS

Park Facilities	National Standard						
		Current Facility Demand ^A		Future Facility Demand ^B		Existing Facilities ^C	
Acquatic Center	1 center / community	1	1	0	1	1	
Baseball/Softball Field	1 field / 3,000 pop	2	15	4	2	11	
Basketball Court	1 court / 3,000 pop	2	15	1	1	14	
Community Center	1 center / community	1	1	1	-	-	
Dog Park	1 facility / community	1	1	0	1	1	
Football Field	1 field / community	1	1	0	1	1	
Handball Court	1 court / 4,000 pop	1	11	0	1	11	
Hockey Rink	1 rink / community	1	1	0	1	1	
Multi-Use Space	1 facility / 3,000 pop	2	15	1	1	14	
Outdoor Amphitheater	1 facility / 10,000 pop	1	4	0	1	4	
Pickleball Court	1 court / 4,000 pop	1	11	1	-	10	
Picnic Pavilion	1 facility / 2,000 pop	3	22	3	-	19	
Playground	1 facility / 1,000 pop	6	44	4	2	40	
Skateboard Park	1 facility / community	1	1	1	-	-	
Soccer Field	1 field / 4,000 pop	1	11	0	1	11	
Swimming Pool (indoor)	1 facility / community	1	1	0	1	1	
Tennis Court	1 court / 2,000 pop	3	22	0	3	22	
Volleyball Court	1 court / 3,000 pop	2	15	1	1	14	

^A Based on 2023 population estimate (5,726) from U.S. Census ACS
^B Based on projected population (44,724) from full buildout of the 2024 Future Land Use Plan
^C Located within Wilmington’s 1½-mile planning area; excludes facilities located at local schools

Source: National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)



CHAPTER 6

PARK STRATEGIES

The purpose of the park strategies is to develop actionable items for the City, Park District, and other partners to accomplish over the next five to ten years, particularly addressing the issues and opportunities described in this plan. Strategies are designed to achieve the three primary intentions outlined on the right. In addition, this chapter summarizes an implementation approach that the City can follow to put the strategies into action.

PARK STRATEGIES

The park strategies, which are outlined on the next two pages, directly align with the twelve park goals identified in the Policy Framework in Chapter 2. This ensures that the park strategies support the policy framework that will guide parks planning in Wilmington. Active implementation of the park strategies will take a collaborative effort between the City, Park District, and other partners that offer facilities and programs that supplement the local park system.

FUTURE PARKS MAP

The Future Parks Map provided in Figure 6.1 on page 24 provides a visual depiction of the potential locations of future parks in Wilmington, which includes equitable distribution of existing and new parks. The six existing parks are shown along with conceptual locations for future park sites. The general service ranges for the existing and future parks are also shown to illustrate how they can more equitably serve a growing community.

INTENTIONS OF PARK STRATEGIES

- (1) Expand the park system as Wilmington grows.
- (2) Provide facilities and spaces that meet local needs and interests.
- (3) Create equity in the distribution and accessibility of park spaces, facilities, and programming for people of all ages and abilities.



PARK STRATEGIES

1

GOAL:

Sustain a renewed collaborative partnership between the City and Park District.

STRATEGIES:

1.1: Meet on a regular basis to maintain communication, pool resources, and coordinate efforts.

1.2: Renew an intergovernmental agreement to cultivate a sustainable long-term partnership.

1.3: Establish a clear system of roles and responsibilities for park management and operations between the City and Park District.

2

GOAL:

Provide park spaces, facilities, and programs that accommodate all ages, abilities, and financial means.

STRATEGIES:

2.1: Provide recreational and personal enrichment programming for all ages and abilities.

2.2: Bring all parks and recreational facilities up to ADA compliance.

2.3: Provide a range of costs for programming and facilities access to meet different financial means, including opportunities for locally funded scholarships and fee waivers.

3

GOAL:

Ensure local parks are equitably distributed across the community and meet national park standards.

STRATEGIES:

3.1: Coordinate with residential developers to provide new park spaces in their proposed developments, particularly in Wilmington's residential growth areas west of the river and in the northeast and south portions of the community.

3.2: Ensure new parks are accessible within the typical service range for community parks (1/2 to 3 mile radius) and neighborhood parks (1/4 to 1/2 mile radius).

3.3: Build up the park system to increase the community's current park ratio (8.1 acres per 1,000 residents) to meet or exceed the national standard (10 acres per 1,000 residents).

4

GOAL:

Offer year-round activities in indoor and outdoor park spaces and facilities.

STRATEGIES:

4.1: Continue to provide a mix of indoor and outdoor park spaces and facilities.

4.2: Continue to provide a mix of recreational and personal enrichment programming that can meet indoors and outdoors.

5

GOAL:

Center environmental stewardship in park planning efforts to protect the natural environment.

STRATEGIES:

5.1: Include environmentally friendly materials in the construction of park spaces.

5.2: Minimize concrete, pavement, and other impervious surfaces.

5.3: Integrate bioswales, rain gardens, and other stormwater management elements in parks.

5.4: Add native plantings in landscaped areas to serve as natural stormwater management.

5.5: Provide educational signage and placards in parks and along trails to encourage environmental stewardship.

6

GOAL:

Take a proactive approach to acquiring land and coordinating with developers to build new parks.

STRATEGIES:

6.1: Identify potential vacant or underutilized properties for potential park use.

6.2: Set aside money from the general fund for future site acquisitions.

6.3: Update the Zoning Code to provide provisions for developer cash contributions to a citywide parks and open space fund.

6.4: Coordinate with residential developers to ensure their proposed developments include new parks and trail connections.

PARK STRATEGIES

7

GOAL:

Connect all park spaces and facilities to a well-connected trail system.

STRATEGIES:

7.1: Expand the local trail system in accordance with the Transportation Plan from the 2024 Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan.

7.2: Coordinate with Will County, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, and other open space providers to make trail connections as part of a regional trail system.

7.3: Coordinate with residential developers to ensure their proposed developments include new parks and trail connections.

8

GOAL:

Utilize stormwater management best practices in all parks, particularly along the Kankakee River.

STRATEGIES:

8.1: Reduce the amount of impervious surfaces by using pervious materials.

8.2: Integrate bioswales, rain gardens, and other stormwater management elements in parks.

8.3: Add native plantings in landscaped areas to serve as natural stormwater management.

8.4: Coordinate with FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers to identify appropriate stormwater management practices for existing and new parks and recreational facilities along the Kankakee River and within the floodplain.

9

GOAL:

Build up the local open space system to maintain a natural green belt around the City.

STRATEGIES:

9.1: Coordinate with Will County, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, and other open space providers to identify potential plans for expansion.

9.2: Minimize development around the perimeter of Wilmington's planning area to protect the natural green belt created by existing open spaces and active farms.

10

GOAL:

Engage the community through events, social media, outreach, and public education.

STRATEGIES:

10.1: Create a public education campaign that clearly describes the collaborative nature of the park system, including the roles and responsibilities of the City and Park District.

10.2: Develop a joint City/Park District parks and recreation newsletter.

10.3: Continue to expand the use of social media to promote the park system.

10.4: Conduct periodic surveys with the community to learn about their changing interests, needs, and concerns, including quick informal survey questions via social media.

11

GOAL:

Identify opportunities for collaboration with community partners to support the park system.

STRATEGIES:

11.1: Continue to coordinate with the school district regarding their recreational spaces.

11.2: Continue to coordinate with neighboring municipalities regarding their parks and recreational spaces, particularly those that draw from the region.

11.3: Continue to coordinate with Will County, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, and other open space providers to identify ways to promote their spaces as an extension of the park system.

11.4: Continue to coordinate with third party providers of recreational programs, such as yoga and pilates studios, private gyms, youth and adult sports leagues, etc.

12

GOAL:

Maintain a flexible park planning process that can adapt to future trends and changing needs.

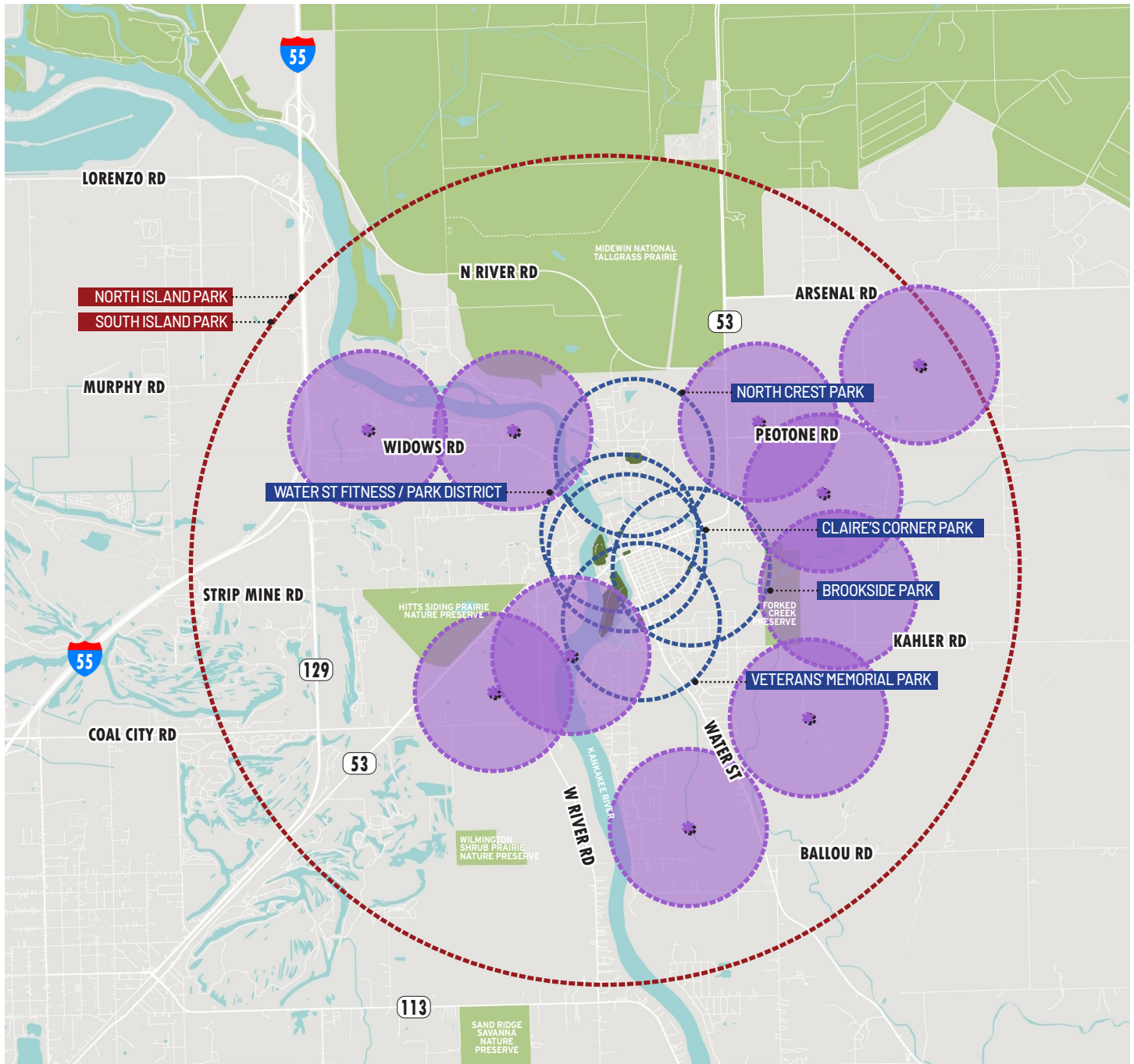
STRATEGIES:

12.1: Update the Master Parks Plan periodically (at least every 3-5 years) to ensure the strategies are achieved and kept up-to-date.

12.2: Coordinate updates of the Master Parks Plan with updates to the Comprehensive City Plan.

12.3: Utilize community survey findings to identify ways to make seasonal and incremental changes to the park system as people's needs and interests change.

FIGURE 6.1
FUTURE PARKS MAP



COMMUNITY PARKS

**North Island Park,
South Island Park**

Community parks have a service range of 1/2 to 3 miles. North and South Island Parks cover a majority of Wilmington. Two community parks is adequate for the size of a community like Wilmington.

COMMUNITY PARKS

**North Crest Park, Claire's
Corner Park, Brookside Park,
Veterans' Memorial Park**

Neighborhood parks have a service range of 1/4 to 1/2 miles. All four existing neighborhood parks are located east of the river. While their combined service ranges serve Wilmington well, new parks should be distributed more evenly as new housing is developed.

FUTURE PARKS

The future parks shown in the map above are conceptual in nature and generally located in residential growth areas per the Future Land Use Plan. These future parks are presently shown as neighborhood parks each with a service range of up to 1/2 mile. Any of these parks could be developed as a larger community park with a 3-mile service radius. Future park sites are also shown to be more evenly distributed across the community. Actual size and location of future parks will depend on community needs and the final design of future development.

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

To active the strategies that define the Wilmington Master Parks Plan, the following implementation approach is intended to provide further guidance with timing, tools, and other tips to allocate resources over time.

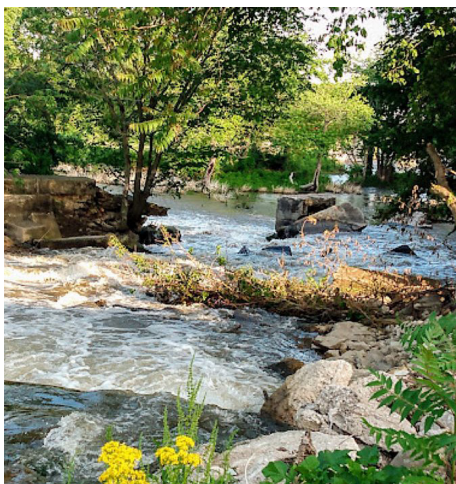
Implementation of the park strategies is a long-term process that requires constant monitoring and periodic updates as certain strategies are accomplished and others need amendments as community needs and demands change. The City should coordinate with the Park District and other partners on a regular basis to maintain progress towards carrying out the strategies and meeting the overall goals established in this plan.

The following section describes various implementation strategies including phasing, land acquisition, and land dedication. Identification of potential partners and funding sources are also provided to support strategy implementation.

Phasing

A prudent approach to strategy implementation is the completion of strategic tasks in phases, which can help allocate funding and resources in a timely and balanced manner. Phasing is generally categorized as follows:

- Ongoing
- Near-Term (1-3 years)
- Intermediate-Term (4-6 years)
- Long-Term (7+ years)



Focus of the near-term phases should be on actions and improvements that will have the most impact or highest priority among community members, particularly with regard to safeguarding the health, safety, and welfare of all park users. Essential park elements that serve park users are primarily viewed as near-term strategies.

Intermediate- and long-term strategies are generally viewed as important to the ongoing improvement of the park system but not immediately critical to park management or operations. This phased approach allows the City to demonstrate incremental results toward the ongoing improvement and expansion of the park system, which can create a favorable climate for spending funds and resources on future parks and recreational opportunities.

By phasing the various strategies outlined in this plan, the City will position itself to see recognizable improvements in the park system over time. A multi-year phased approach also enables the City to pursue grants and other funding sources, gather resources, acquire land, coordinate with partners and developers, and build future park sites in accordance with the strategies in this plan.

Land Acquisition

The park demand analysis conducted in the previous chapter indicates the need to provide additional park space over time to serve a growing population. In particular, there will be a need for approximately 199.8 acres of additional park space to support full buildout of the residential components of the Future Land Use Plan from the 2024 Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan. While full buildout may not play out exactly as depicted both in terms of location of new neighborhoods and the extent of future development, the main point is that the City should be ready to add new parks to the community as new residential uses are built.

Construction of new parks will primarily involve coordination with developers to include parks in their proposed

Plan Coordination

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Implementation of the strategies in the Master Parks Plan should be coordinated with strategy implementation from the 2024 Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan. Coordination is most pertinent for City Plan strategies regarding development, transportation, community facilities; however, park strategies may relate to other elements in the City Plan.

In particular, the conceptual future park sites (purple circles) shown on the map in Figure 6.1 directly relate to the residential growth areas illustrated on the Future Land Use Map in the City Plan.

The establishment of each of these future park sites will depend on how development plays out over time. Since the types of residential development and pace of development depend on the housing market, buildout of the land use plan may take several years and may not actually attain 100% buildout. As a result, the construction of new parks will partly depend on this buildout of future housing and the addition of new residents to the community.



developments. Another approach will entail the City acquiring properties where feasible to preserve land for future parks.

New parks will typically locate in future residential developments, particularly within Wilmington's growth areas west of the river and the northeast and south sections of the city. The City should focus on opportunities to fill park service gaps and spread parks across the community more equitably. Land acquisition is a significant tool enabling the City to acquire properties as they become available through purchase, grants, or donations.

Land Dedication & Fee Payments

Two common tool that municipalities use to create more parks and open space include:

- Dedication of parks or open space by private developers, typically dedicated to the municipality or local park district for the operation and management by a public entity
- Payment of fees by private developers into a general fund for the future development of parks or open space in other parts of the city that are more in need of such amenities

These two options can be negotiated in exchange for developmental considerations beyond those customarily permitted by a municipality's planning and zoning requirements.

Codification of these two tools is a critical step to ensure they are expressly written in a zoning code or other municipal ordinances. This ensures that the application of such tools are known upfront as part of the development review process and can be potential options for consideration during the negotiation stage between the municipality and private developer.

When codifying these tools into a zoning code or other municipal ordinance, the code language must specify that any land or funds will benefit users of the new development or community at large.

Fees in lieu of parks or open space are used when it is not practical for a developer to donate land. An important aspect of parkland dedication is land quality, particularly noting that not all pieces of land are suitable for recreation due to topography, flooding, and accessibility. To that end, a typical ordinance will require that most of the land be dry, reasonably flat, and accessible by a nearby road.

While any new park or open space should ideally be open to the general public, there are instances when such spaces are only available for private use. Some ordinances provide allowances for private recreation space that specify that private amenities will reduce residents' need to use local public parks. Restrictive covenants and maintenance agreements are typically

integrated into the conditions for allowing private recreation space to be given allowance.

PARTNERSHIPS

The operation and management of parks in Wilmington will primarily be handled by the City of Wilmington and Wilmington Island Park District. Such coordination between the City and Park District will require a renewed collaborative partnership. While the City will be involved in the implementation of all strategies, the City will need to work with other partners for certain strategies:

- Wilmington Island Park District
- Wilmington School District 209-U
- Lions Club
- Wilmington Baseball/Softball Assn
- Forest Preserve District
- Will County
- Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
- Wilmington Bobcats Football Field
- Cinder Ridge Golf Course
- Will County Sportsman's Club
- Wilmington Recreation Club
- ComEd
- Homeowners Associations

Corporate partnerships present additional opportunities for local businesses and other corporate entities to support local parks and recreation through sponsorships, donations, and provision of other financial or physical resources.



FUNDING

Strategies that require funding can be supported by a range of funding sources, as described below. While all of these funding sources are potential options, some may not be applicable due to limitations, conditions, or other parameter specific to Wilmington and its future park sites.

Foundations

Foundations support charitable and community-based activities that primarily focus on local needs. Tax exemptions and tax deductibility are two primary advantages of securing funding from a foundation. A few foundations in the region include the Community Foundation of Will County, the Nature Foundation of Will County, and the Conservation Foundation. A "Friends of the Park" foundation is common to support park activities and programs, particularly through endowments built up from donor contributions.

Cooperative Use Agreements

A cooperative use agreement is an agreement between two or more organizations that share and manage facilities, spaces, and/or programming. In the case of Wilmington's park system, a cooperative use agreement would be established between the City, Park District, School District, and/or any other organization that contributes facilities, spaces, and/or programming to supplement the overall park system. For example, a cooperative use agreement would enable residents to use school facilities for recreation when not in use by the school. This type of arrangement would allow the City to expand its available park offerings without taking on any additional maintenance responsibilities.

Sales Tax

A sales tax on retail sales within municipal limits is a common funding stream for municipalities. Income generated from a sales tax could be used to fund capital improvements and general operations of facilities, including the maintenance and management of a parks system.

User Fees

User fees are direct charges paid by users of parks and recreation facilities. These fees often help pay for the operation and maintenance of facilities and programming. Since user fees tend to focus on operations, maintenance, and programming, these funds may not be sufficient to pay for large capital improvement projects, which should be funded by more substantial funding streams. User fees typically come in the form of a daily or seasonal pass for individual users, including different costs for residents and non-residents/visitors. For large groups or sports leagues, user fees are more substantial, particularly to support more costly and labor-intensive indoor and outdoor recreation facilities such as ballfield complexes and aquatic facilities that require greater staffing and maintenance needs.

Bonds

The City could utilize its bonding capacity to place a bond referendum on the ballot. With successful passage of a bond referendum, the City can sell such bonds to raise capital to support major parks projects like capital improvement projects or the construction of new facilities. A tax increase is typically levied to retire the bond over the term of the bond. The following types of bonds may be considered to fund parks and recreation facilities:

- **General Obligation Bonds:** Bonded indebtedness issued via ballot measures to raise funds for capital improvements and general public improvements; an increase in property taxes is typically required to retire the bond over time.
- **Industrial Development Bonds:** Specialized revenue bonds issued on behalf of privately owned, self-supporting facilities.
- **Revenue Bonds:** Bond used for capital projects that will generate revenue for debt service where fees can support bond repayment.

Lease/Purchase Financing

Lease/purchase funding mechanisms can take different forms. One form is a certificate of participation in

which investors purchase tax free investments in the leased facility. Another form is a sales leaseback that enables a public entity to sell an existing facility to a separate entity (e.g., a non-profit organization or one or more investors) that makes improvements to the facility before leasing the facility back to the public entity at an agreed to interest rate for a specified period of time. In addition, facilities or public use like a park can be financed and built by an entity separate from the municipality (e.g., another public entity, a non-profit corporation set up for that purpose, a bank or leasing company, joint powers authority, etc.).

Public/Private Partnerships (PPP)

A public /private partnership (PPP) is a common approach to fund and develop expensive parks projects like sports complexes, community centers, ice rinks, etc. that have development costs beyond the means of the community. A PPP typically entails the public entity developing a partnership with a private enterprise to jointly fund, construct, and operate a park or recreational facility. In some cases, the public entity contributes the land and offers incentives like tax advantages.

Special Improvement District

A special improvement district is a taxing district that can be established to generate funds for certain types of improvements. Recreational and cultural enhancements are among the improvements covered by a special improvement district.

Park Donation Fees

The City may require park donation fees from new residential developments, particularly as a requirement for developers to dedicate land for public park use or make a cash payment in lieu of any land dedication. The latter option would enable the City to use the cash payments in lieu to fund the construction of parks in other parts of the community independent of the development site(s) from which the cash payments originated.

Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) Grant

Administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant program provides up to 50% of funding assistance for land acquisition and development projects relating to a variety of open space and recreation purposes. One of the dedicated funding sources of the OSLAD grant is a portion of the state's real estate transfer tax. OSLAD generally supports basic close-to-home recreational opportunities, including land for parks and facilities like ballfields and playgrounds. OSLAD also supports the renovation of existing recreational facilities, including aging infrastructure.

Park and Recreational Facilities Construction (PARC) Program

The Park and Recreational Facilities Construction Program (PARC) is another IDNR program that provides grants to eligible local governments to fund land acquisition and construction of park and recreation facilities. Grant amounts range from \$25,000 to \$2,500,000 and cover 75% of capital project cost for most applicants. PARC grants must be used for bondable or brick-and-mortar projects. Eligible projects include demolition, site preparation and improvements, utility work, reconstruction or improvement

of existing buildings or facilities, expansion of buildings/facilities, and new construction of buildings/structures for indoor/outdoor recreation. Land acquisition projects include acquisition of land for the following: to construct new public recreation buildings, structures, and facilities; to expand existing public recreation buildings, structures, and facilities; general park purposes such as regional, community, and neighborhood parks and playfields; frontage on public surface waters for recreation use; open space/conservation purposes to protect floodplains, wetlands, natural areas, wildlife habitat, and unique geologic and biologic features, and additions to such areas.

Illinois Bicycle Path Grant

The Illinois Bicycle Path grant is another IDNR funding program that provides up to 50% of the costs for acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of public, non-motorized bicycle paths and directly related support facilities. Revenue for the grant program comes from a portion of the state's vehicle title fees.

Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)

Provided by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) utilizes federal funds to support

projects relating to pedestrian and bicycle facilities and the conversion of abandoned railroad corridors to trails.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federal program from the U.S. Department of the Interior supporting up to 50% of project funding for land acquisition and development of public parks and recreation areas.

Recreation Trails Program

Another federal program through the U.S. Department of Transportation is the Recreation Trails Program (RTP) that provides funding assistance for the acquisition, development, rehabilitation, and maintenance of both motorized and non-motorized recreation trails. This program can provide up to 80% of funding on approved projects, with the remaining 20% taking the form of a required local match. Examples of eligible project activities include:

- Trail construction and rehabilitation
- Restoration of areas adjacent to trails damaged by unauthorized trail uses
- Construction of trail-related support facilities and amenities
- Acquisition from willing sellers of trail corridors by easements or simple title



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOAL 1: Sustain a renewed collaborative partnership between the City and Park District.

1

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
1.1: Meet on a regular basis to maintain communication, pool resources, and coordinate efforts.	Ongoing	City	Park District	n/a (staff time)
1.2: Renew an intergovernmental agreement to cultivate a sustainable long-term partnership.	Near-Term	City	Park District	n/a (staff time)
1.3: Establish a clear system of roles and responsibilities for park management and operations between the City and Park District.	Near-Term	City	Park District	n/a (staff time)

GOAL 2: Provide park spaces, facilities, and programs that accommodate all ages, abilities, and financial means.

2

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
2.1: Provide recreational and personal enrichment programming for all ages and abilities.	Ongoing	Park District	School District; Public Library	General budget; corporate or private donations and sponsorships
2.2: Bring all parks and recreational facilities up to ADA compliance.	Intermediate-Term (existing parks) Ongoing (new parks)	City	Park District; School District; Forest Preserve District	CMAA ADA Transition Support (via Planning Technical Assistance Program); U.S. Dept of Labor Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grants
2.3: Provide a range of costs for programming and facilities access to meet different financial means, including opportunities for locally funded scholarships and fee waivers.	Ongoing	Park District	School District; Public Library	General budget; corporate or private donations and sponsorships

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOAL 3: Ensure local parks are equitably distributed across the community and meet national park standards.

3

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
3.1: Coordinate with residential developers to provide new park spaces in their proposed developments, particularly in Wilmington's residential growth areas west of the river and in the northeast and south portions of the community.	Long-Term	City	Park District; private developers	Funded by private development
3.2: Ensure new parks are accessible within the typical service range for community parks (1/2 to 3 mile radius) and neighborhood parks (1/4 to 1/2 mile radius).	Long-Term	City	Park District; private developers	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations; funded by private development
3.3: Build up the park system to increase the community's current park ratio (8.1 acres per 1,000 residents) to meet or exceed the national standard (10 acres per 1,000 residents).	Long-Term	City	Park District; private developers	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations; funded by private development

GOAL 4: Offer year-round activities in indoor and outdoor park spaces and facilities.

4

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
4.1: Continue to provide a mix of indoor and outdoor park spaces and facilities.	Ongoing	City	Park District; School District; private recreation facilities	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations
4.2: Continue to provide a mix of recreational and personal enrichment programming that can meet indoors and outdoors.	Ongoing	Park District	School District; Public Library	General budget; corporate or private donations and sponsorships

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOAL 5: Center environmental stewardship in park planning efforts to protect the natural environment.

5

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
5.1: Include environmentally friendly materials in the construction of park spaces.	Ongoing (new parks)	City	Park District; private developers	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations; funded by private development
5.2: Minimize concrete, pavement, and other impervious surfaces.	Intermediate-Term (existing parks) Ongoing (new parks)	City	Park District; private developers	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations; funded by private development
5.3: Integrate bioswales, rain gardens, and other stormwater management elements in parks.	Intermediate-Term (existing parks) Ongoing (new parks)	City	Park District; private developers; local landscaping companies	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations; funded by private development
5.4: Add native plantings in landscaped areas to serve as natural stormwater management.	Intermediate-Term (existing parks) Ongoing (new parks)	City	Park District; private developers; local landscaping companies	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations; funded by private development
5.5: Provide educational signage and placards in parks and along trails to encourage environmental stewardship.	Intermediate-Term (existing parks) Ongoing (new parks)	City	Park District; Library District; School District; private developers	General budget; corporate or private donations; funded by private development

GOAL 6: Take a proactive approach to acquiring land and coordinating with developers to build new parks.

6

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
6.1: Identify potential vacant or underutilized properties for potential park use.	Ongoing	City	Park District; Will County; private developers	n/a (staff time)
6.2: Set aside money from the general fund for future site acquisitions.	Ongoing	City	Park District; private developers	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations; funded by private development
6.3: Update the Zoning Code to provide provisions for developer cash contributions to a citywide parks and open space fund.	Near-Term	City	Planning consultant to assist with Zoning Code revisions	General budget
6.4: Coordinate with residential developers to ensure their proposed developments include new parks and trail connections.	Ongoing	City	Private developers	Funded by private development

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOAL 7: Connect all park spaces and facilities to a well-connected trail system.

7

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
7.1: Expand the local trail system in accordance with the Transportation Plan from the 2024 Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan.	Long-Term	City	Park District; Forest Preserve District; Will County DOT; Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie; IDOT	General budget; OSLAD grant; ITEP grant; funded by private development
7.2: Coordinate with Will County, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, and other open space providers to make trail connections as part of a regional trail system.	Long-Term	City	Park District; Forest Preserve District; Will County DOT; Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie; IDOT	General budget; OSLAD grant; ITEP grant; funded by private development
7.3: Coordinate with residential developers to ensure their proposed developments include new parks and trail connections.	Long-Term	City	Private developers	Funded by private development

GOAL 8: Utilize stormwater management best practices in all parks, particularly along the Kankakee River.

8

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
8.1: Reduce the amount of impervious surfaces by using pervious materials.	Intermediate-Term (existing parks) Ongoing (new parks)	City	Park District; private developers	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations; funded by private development
8.2: Integrate bioswales, rain gardens, and other stormwater management elements in parks.	Intermediate-Term (existing parks) Ongoing (new parks)	City	Park District; private developers; local landscaping companies	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations; funded by private development
8.3: Add native plantings in landscaped areas to serve as natural stormwater management.	Intermediate-Term (existing parks) Ongoing (new parks)	City	Park District; private developers; local landscaping companies	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations; funded by private development
8.4: Coordinate with FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers to identify appropriate stormwater management practices for existing and new parks and recreational facilities along the Kankakee River and within the floodplain.	Intermediate-Term (existing parks) Ongoing (new parks)	City	Park District; FEMA; Army Corps of Engineers	General budget

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOAL 9: Build up the local open space system to maintain a natural green belt around the City.

9

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
9.1: Coordinate with Will County, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, and other open space providers to identify potential plans for expansion.	Ongoing	City	Forest Preserve District; Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie	n/a (staff time)
9.2: Minimize development around the perimeter of Wilmington's planning area to protect the natural green belt created by existing open spaces and active farms.	Ongoing	City	Forest Preserve District; Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie; private property owners	n/a (staff time)

GOAL 10: Engage the community through events, social media, outreach, and public education.

10

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
10.1: Create a public education campaign that clearly describes the collaborative nature of the park system, including the roles and responsibilities of the City and Park District.	Near-Term	City	Park District	General budget
10.2: Develop a joint City/ Park District parks and recreation newsletter.	Near-Term	City	Park District	General budget
10.3: Continue to expand the use of social media to promote the park system.	Near-Term	City	Park District	General budget
10.4: Conduct periodic surveys with the community to learn about their changing interests, needs, and concerns, including quick informal survey questions via social media.	Ongoing	City	Park District	General budget

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOAL 11: Identify opportunities for collaboration with community partners to support the park system.

11

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
11.1: Continue to coordinate with the school district regarding their recreational spaces.	Ongoing	City	School District	n/a (staff time)
11.2: Continue to coordinate with neighboring municipalities regarding their parks and recreational spaces, particularly those that draw from the region.	Ongoing	City	Braidwood; Coal City; Diamond; Elwood; Joliet; Symerton	n/a (staff time)
11.3: Continue to coordinate with Will County, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, and other open space providers to identify ways to promote their spaces as an extension of the park system.	Ongoing	City	Forest Preserve District; Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie	n/a (staff time)
11.4: Continue to coordinate with third party providers of recreational programs, such as yoga and pilates studios, private gyms, youth and adult sports leagues, etc.	Ongoing	City	Third party providers of recreational programs	n/a (staff time)

GOAL 12: Maintain a flexible park planning process that can adapt to future trends and changing needs.

12

STRATEGY	PHASING	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	FUNDING
12.1: Update the Master Parks Plan periodically (at least every 3-5 years) to ensure the strategies are achieved and kept up-to-date.	Intermediate-Term	City	Planning consultant to assist with updating the Master Parks Plan	General budget
12.2: Coordinate updates of the Master Parks Plan with updates to the Comprehensive City Plan.	Intermediate-Term	City	Planning consultant to assist with updating the Master Parks Plan	General budget
12.3: Utilize community survey findings to identify ways to make seasonal and incremental changes to the park system as people's needs and interests change.	Ongoing	City	Park District	General budget; OSLAD grant; corporate or private donations