



# Town of Union

Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

## Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2021-2026

Town of Union Park Commission

Planning assistance provided by:



800-472-7372

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Adopted by the Town of Union Board **Month, Day Year**

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# Chapter 1

## Parks and Recreation

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### Introduction

Access to parks and recreational facilities is increasingly important to people when they choose where to live, work, vacation and retire. A variety of park and recreational opportunities is often associated with a better quality of life and can afford a number of benefits to a community.

Town of Union residents are fortunate to have inherited properties that are surrounded by numerous potential park areas maintained mostly in that state by previous generations. Today, with the addition of the Town of Union Park Commission, we wish to continue and enhance the Town's legacy of having an abundance of farmland, green space, diverse parklands, and safe environments while meeting the changing needs and demands of a diverse population for present and future generations to enjoy.

While communities surrounding the Town of Union continue to provide public sports complexes, ball fields, skating rinks and areas for the mixing and assimilation of residents, the Town of Union has maintained nature based park lands beyond its immediate needs as an alternative to active sports facilities.

The Town has had schools within its borders and along with them, playgrounds and ball fields, but the schools have all been consolidated out of existence or have been annexed by the City of Eau Claire and along with them, the playgrounds and ball fields have ceased to exist. The Town of Union has green space everywhere you turn but has only recently moved to expand and maintain its parks which do not have any up to date American Disability Act compliant facilities.



The Chippewa River: Southern boundary of the Town of Union

The void in playing field facilities has largely been filled by private clubs and organizations such as the Eau Claire Ski Club at Silver Mine Hill, Eau Claire Archery Club, Westgate Sportsman's Shooting Range, Bit 'N Spur Horse Club, the Elk Lake District, Moose Club and the various music festivals of Foster Farms have assumed much of the burden of recreation and outdoor activities in the Town. These groups may provide an opportunity for the Town to collaborate with them to promote outdoor activities in the community in the future.

The Town of Union does maintain its Town Hall for elections and resident gatherings and the Fire Hall for emergency situations. The Town has long held Sherman Creek Park and the Youth Forest as minimally maintained outdoor areas and this has slowly been changing in recent years with the addition of a parking area in the Youth Forest and the addition of the Kiwanis property.

Currently, the Town of Union owns and maintains the following parks and recreation areas.

- Sherman Creek Park
- Town of Union Conservancy
- Elk Creek Lake Properties.

Combined with the backdrop of the Chippewa River, the Town of Union offers a range of options for people of all ages to enjoy the outdoors.

The Town of Union Park Commission is creating its first 5-Year Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) to act as a guide for acquiring and developing local parks and recreation facilities. The CORP will allow the Town of Union to coordinate with the WDNR and other entities to improve park and recreation offerings to area residents and visitors.

The Town of Union Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan provides an inventory of existing parks and facilities, analyzes park and recreations needs, and recommends action steps that will help Union plan and prioritize the needs of the community and visitors.

As a Town, we are rich in open space and park area, but we are lacking in facilities, connecting pathways, planning and maintenance to make these open spaces and park areas attractive and useable for our residents.

This 5-Year Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan represents a new beginning to build a vision and execute a planning process by establishing goals and objectives, critically inventorying existing facilities, establishing standards for maintenance and development to eliminate deficiencies, protect resources, create connecting pathways, provide improvements on an ongoing basis and provide a more desirable and sustainable community environment. This is what the Park Commission can do for the Town of Union and we encourage everyone to support our efforts, to provide us with critical and well thought out input and direction, and to encourage our Town to be as great as we have been in the past and as forward thinking as we can be in the future.

## Benefits of Providing Parks and Amenities

Parks and recreation are key to providing a quality of life to Union residents and visitors. The specific benefits that parks and recreation programs bring to a community cover a wide spectrum and are important when promoting the Town as a great place to live or visit.

### Environmental Benefits

- Natural areas provide wildlife habitat, improve surface water quality, provide stormwater management, improve groundwater quality and improve air quality.
- Trees and other vegetation provide shade, which reduces the urban heat island effect.
- Children and adults can experience and connect with nature and understand the value of protecting the environment.

### Health Benefits

- Parks, trails, and recreation programs allow opportunities for people to engage in physical activity at a level that fits their needs and abilities.
- Children who are active at an early age tend to stay active as adults.
- Exposure to nature can reduce stress and increase happiness.

### Social Benefits

- Parks and recreation programs are inclusive with regards to income, race, and physical abilities.
- Parks provide spaces for social interaction with friends or meeting new people. These spaces provide places for concerts in the park, neighborhood picnics, and farmers markets that bring people outdoors.
- Parks can create a sense of pride and ownership in the community.

### Economic Benefits

- Quality parks can influence a person's or business' decision to stay in or move to your community.
- Property values tend to increase in relation to the proximity to parks.
- Parks and recreation programs can generate income for local businesses when park related events encourage people to stay overnight, go out to eat, rent bicycles or kayaks, or stop at a convenience store.

### Educational Benefits

- Parks can be used to teach residents about unique natural communities.
- Parks can enhance awareness of historical importance and use of the land.
- Interpretive signage can reveal the archeologic and geologic history of an area.

## Types of Recreational Activities

It is important to keep in mind that people have different parks and recreation needs based on their age, physical ability and activity they want to take part. Recreational activities are classified as active or passive.

### Active Recreation

Active recreation refers to activities for individuals or teams that require the use of special facilities such as:

- Basketball Courts
- Baseball Diamonds
- Soccer Fields
- Golf Courses
- Hockey Rinks
- Tennis Courts
- Skateboard Parks
- Playground Equipment
- Outdoor Fitness Park

### Passive Recreation

Passive recreation refers to activities that do not typically require developed facilities but place a priority on facilities or amenities that support the access to and enjoyment of nature. These facilities and amenities include:

- Walking, hiking and bicycling trails
- Boat ramps or canoe/kayak launch areas
- Observation decks
- Docks
- Beaches
- Benches
- Pavilions
- Picnic tables
- Restrooms
- Drinking fountains
- Bicycle racks

By providing a variety of recreational activities and amenities to the community, the Town of Union ensures that its parks are inclusive and accessible for users. At the same time, communities must identify what parks, recreational facilities or natural features are unique to them and can be used and promoted in a positive way.



## Parks and Recreation Goals and Objectives

The function of all plans, whether in our personal lives or in our community, is to identify goals and achieve measurable objectives.

Goals are statements of desired outcomes or achievements. They are general in nature. Objectives are more specific and identify measurable outcomes.

As a community's desires and needs change, so too must its goals and objectives. The following goals and objectives represent the ends to which the priorities and recommendations in this plan are directed. These goals and objectives will provide a sound basis for future planning decisions in the communities with regard to parks and recreation.

Plans and actions without goals can often be wasted effort since there is no framework for sustainable outcomes. Rather, we would have fits and starts without beginning or end. The goals must be clearly in mind and it is up to effective leadership to keep them in the forefront of actions and objectives so that we do achieve that for which we set out to accomplish. Thus, Goals are the ends we wish to attain while objectives are the means or steps by which we will get there.

### Goals

1. Enhance the quality of life and encourage healthy lifestyles while reconnecting people, especially children and the elderly, to the outdoors and activities through our parks, open spaces, natural areas, trails, facilities, and recreation programs.
2. Develop a stewardship ethic and to protect our natural environment for sustainable conservation for our community and generations to come.
3. Ensure all people access to a safe, affordable and healthy way to experience and appreciate nature while improving the social and economic value of our community.
4. Provide a mix of affordable, quality outdoor recreation facilities, programs, and assistance to private recreation facilities and programs which meet the needs of residents while taking advantage of tourism opportunities.
5. Develop an awareness and appreciation of the historical and cultural significance of the area as a transition from indigenous peoples to early European settlement.
6. Utilize grant programs or volunteer services to help reduce the Town's cost for park and recreation projects.
7. Work with surrounding municipalities and state agencies to plan for long-term park and recreation needs.



## Objectives

1. To provide a safe environment for play and physical activity and areas for active and passive recreation opportunities that meet the needs of all age groups, cultures, and ethnicity within the community.
2. To improve and revitalize our parks as gathering places for our youth, families and adults to play, exercise, relax, enjoy time with family and friends, and experience the natural environment.
3. To provide space for social interaction, health and wellness, and cultural diversity.
4. To obtain, when opportunities arise, sites for open green space, playgrounds, parks, trails, and areas and facilities of historic importance for the community.
5. To develop, when opportunities arise, park facilities which enhance and exhibit the historical, cultural and educational value of our parklands.
6. To remove impediments to recreation, gather places and spaces for social interaction.

# Chapter 2

## Community Profile

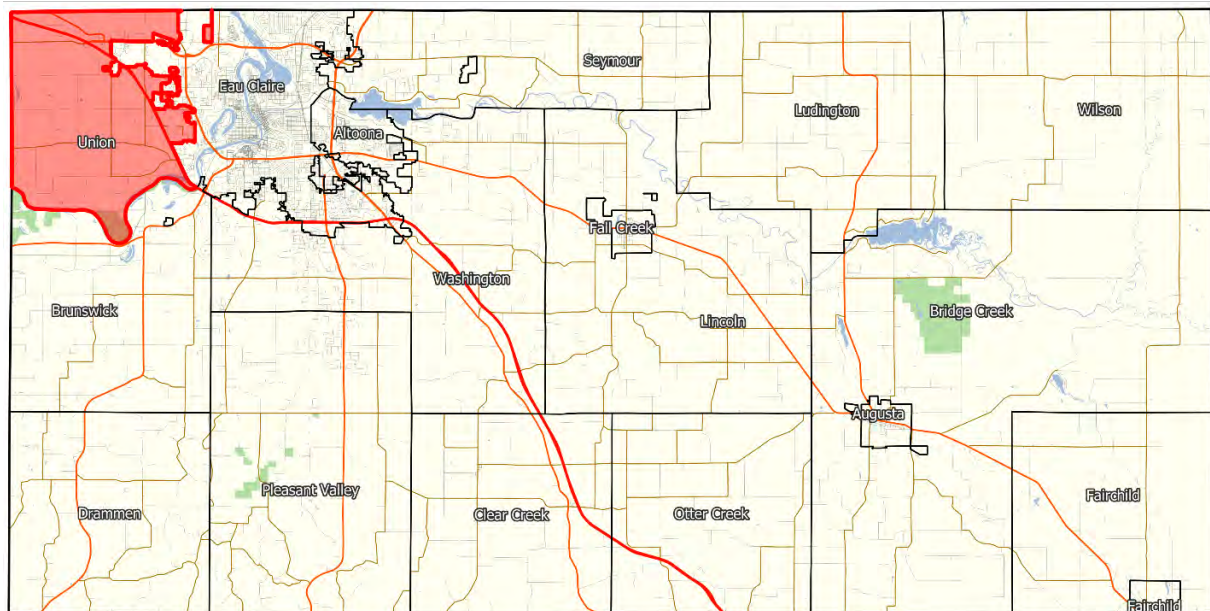
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### Introduction

The Town of Union originally consisted of a six-mile by six-mile square area in the Northwest corner of Eau Claire County. Union is bordered by Dunn County on the west, Chippewa County on the north, the Chippewa River on the south and the City of Eau Claire on the East. With encroachment of Interstate 94 and annexation by the City of Eau Claire, that area is now approximately 30 square miles (see Figure 1).

We are a Town of rolling hills, wide and fast moving rivers, windswept hilly farmland, ample forested land and widespread home building sites. Our northern sections are dominated by industrial development while our southern sections are wild and spacious woodlands bounded by high hills and the Chippewa River. In the middle sits our rolling farmland and creeks making their way to the Chippewa and Mississippi rivers. We are ideally suited horse country with pristine and serene parklands on our south and western edges and a quiet forest park amidst the center of our Town encircled by the City of Eau Claire. It is with this background that the Town of Union Park Commission has its mission to maintain and develop these parklands as quiet and peaceful areas, with ample outdoor exercise opportunities, which complement our agricultural life style and keep us active, social and healthy.

**Figure 1: Town of Union – Eau Claire County, Wisconsin**



Source: Cedar Corporation using multiple data sources.

## Population Demographics

The State of Wisconsin Demographics Center and U.S. Census provide statistical data for the population of all municipalities in the State of Wisconsin. The statistical data, or demographics, for the Town of Union may indicate trends related to population growth, income, and age distribution that will be analyzed and considered when looking at future park needs.

## Population

Population growth results in more potential users of park facilities and recreation programs but, depending on the type of park and its amenities, people living outside the Town of Union may use them as well. The U.S. Census shows that in 2010, the Town of Union's population was 2,663. Table 1 shows that between 1950 and 2010, the Town's population has fluctuated. Between 1950 and 1960, the Town's population grew by almost 22% but decreased by almost 18% the following decade. Overall, the Town's population grew by 309 residents (12.9%) between 1950 and 2010.

**Table 1: Historical Population: Town of Union**

Year	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1950-2010
Population	2,357	2,865	2,355	2,689	2,456	2,402	2,663	306
% Change		21.6%	-17.8%	14.2%	-8.7%	-2.2%	10.9%	12.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2 shows that the Town's population is projected to see steady growth up to 2040 growing to 3,375 residents. During this same time, the number of households is projected to increase from 983 in 2010 to 1,303 by 2040 (see Table 3).

**Table 2 Population Projections: Town of Union**

Year	2010*	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	% Change 2010-2040
Population	2,663	2,780	2,920	3,060	3,180	3,280	3,375	712
% Change	-	4.4%	5.0%	4.8%	3.9%	3.1%	2.9%	26.7%

Source: \*U.S. Census Bureau, Wisconsin Demographic Services Center 2013/12/10

**Table 3 Household Forecasts: Town of Union**

Year	2010*	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	% Change 2010-2040
Population	983	1,041	1,104	1,166	1,218	1,265	1,303	320
% Change	-	5.9%	6.1%	5.6%	4.5%	3.9%	3.0%	32.6%

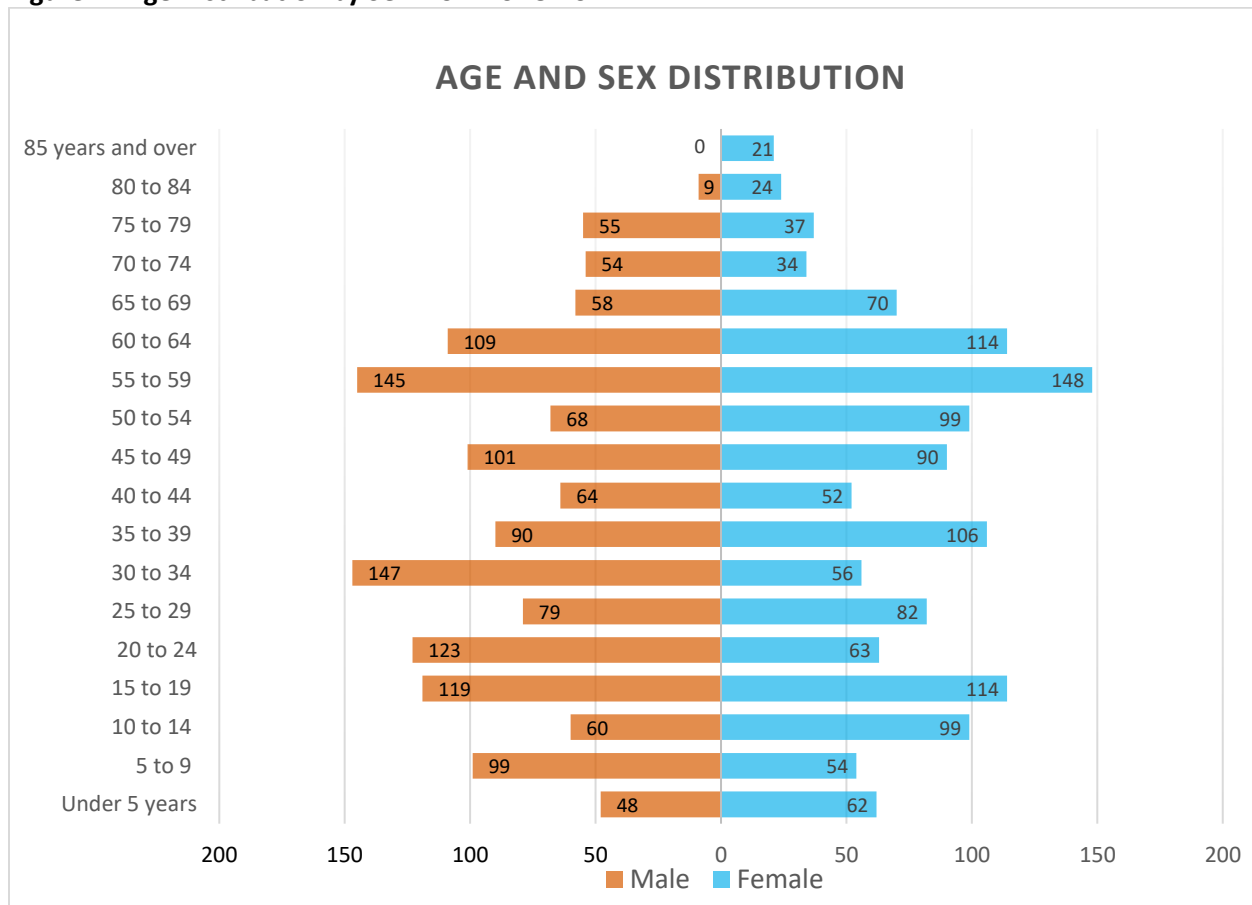
Source: \*U.S. Census Bureau, Wisconsin Demographic Services Center 2013/12/10

## Age Distribution

Recreation needs can vary depending on a person's age. Identifying age groups and the number of residents in those groups can help the Town anticipate the types of facilities needed in the future. Figure 2 shows the distribution of Union's population by age and sex in the form of a population pyramid.

Figure 2 shows fewer residents in the *Under 5 years to 14 years of age* and *40 to 54 years of age* groups and more residents in the *15 to 24 years of age* group and *55 to 64 years of age* group showing an uneven distribution of age groups. In general, the Town has an aging population.

**Figure 2 Age Distribution by Sex: Town of Union**



Source: American Community Survey 2014-2018 5-Year Estimate

# Chapter 3

## Parks and Recreational Facility Standards

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### National Recreation and Parks Association Standards

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provides guidelines for classifying parks and open spaces. These are meant to act as a baseline to compare to help assess a community's offerings. The guidelines shown in Table 4 provide a description of each classification, size of the park or open space and the area it serves. By mapping the location, classification, and services areas of the Town's parks, gaps in service can be identified and addressed in the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Map 1 shows the locations of parks, open spaces, and pathways in the Town Union and their classifications.

Although the NRPA provides guidelines for parks and open space, the unique landscape and development patterns of the Town of Union will influence the types of parks and facilities that are offered. For Union, the Chippewa River and Town of Union Conservancy Area provide access to recreational opportunities that many communities don't have.

### Park Space Standards

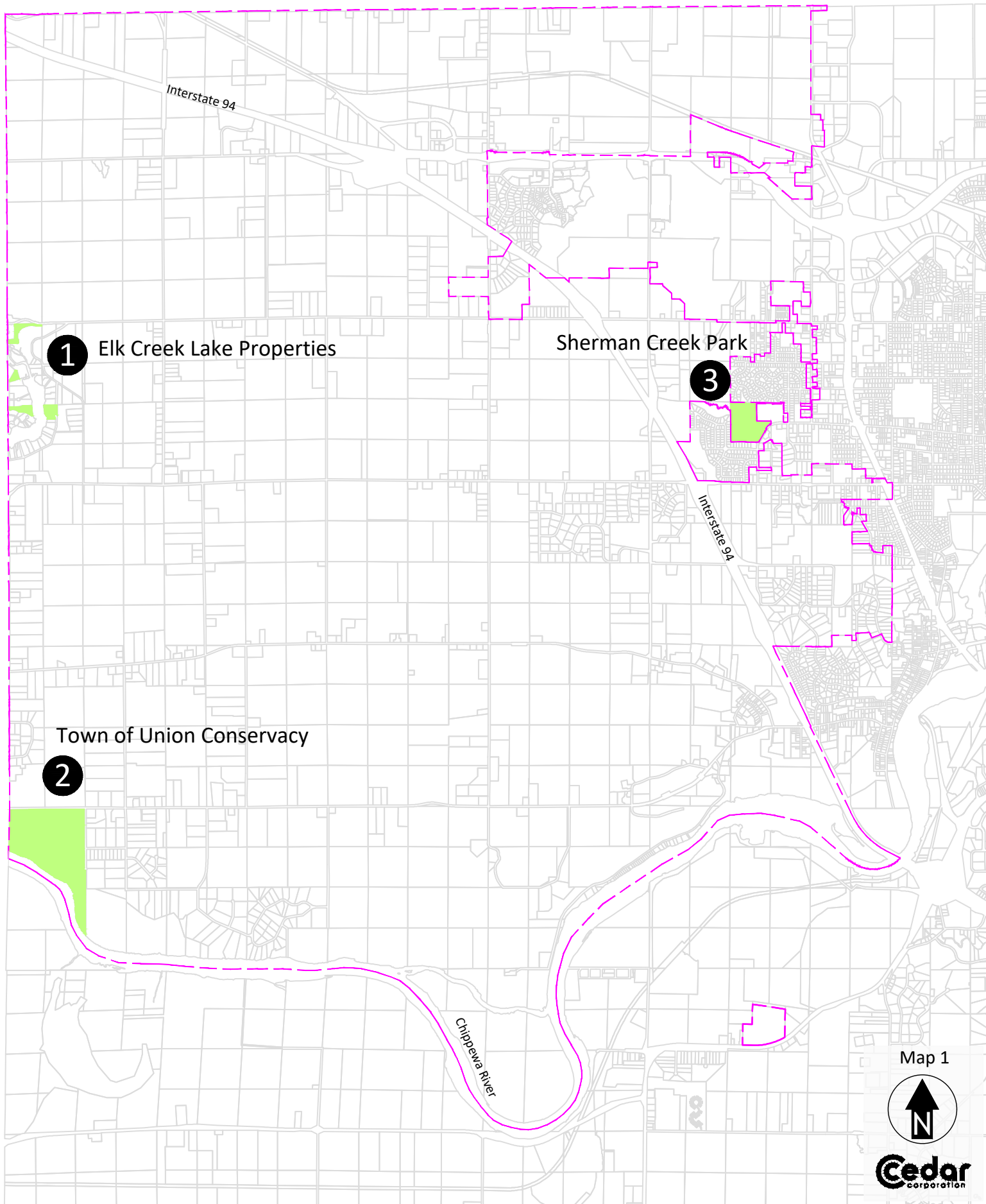
The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) provides recommendations for the types of parks and number of park acres per 1,000 residents that communities can use for a baseline when evaluating parks and open space. The three (3) types of parks and their recommended acreages include:

- Mini-Parks: 0.25 to 0.5 acres per 1,000 residents
- Neighborhood Parks: 1 to 2 acres per 1,000 residents
- Community Parks: 5 to 8 acres per 1,000 residents

The three park classifications provide a range of 6.25 to 10.5 total acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. These three park classifications are generally considered the main components of a park system. Other park classifications such as Large Urban Park, Natural Resource Area, and Special Use Area, are unique to each community, therefore, recommended space needs are not provided.

# Town of Union Parks

Town of Union, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin



**Table 4 National Recreation and Parks Association Park Classification System**

<b>Mini-Park</b>
<b>Description:</b> Mini-Parks serve a concentrated population or specific age group or function but can serve persons of all ages located in the immediate area. They typically contain children's playground equipment and passive amenities such as benches and shelters.
<b>Service Area:</b> Less than 1/4 mile radius
<b>Recommended Size:</b> 1 acre or less
<b>Acres/1,000 Residents:</b> 0.25 to 0.5 acres
<b>Neighborhood Park</b>
<b>Description:</b> Neighborhood Parks are the foundation of the park system and serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. These parks serve residents in a variety of age groups. The park should be easily accessible and access should be uninterrupted by major roads or other barriers. Parking may be necessary.
<b>Service Area:</b> 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile radius
<b>Recommended Size:</b> 5 to 10 acres
<b>Acres/1,000 Residents:</b> 1.0 to 2.0 acres
<b>Community Park</b>
<b>Description:</b> Community Parks are diverse in nature and serve a broader purpose than the neighborhood or mini parks. They are larger than neighborhood parks and are intended to serve a larger area. Community parks usually have both day and evening activities. Community parks include a mix of active and passive activities and attract users of all ages.
<b>Service Area:</b> 1/2 mile to 3.0 mile radius
<b>Recommended Size:</b> More than 10 acres
<b>Acres/1,000 Residents:</b> 5.0 to 8.0 acres
<b>Large Urban Park</b>
<b>Description:</b> Large Urban Parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. Focus is on meeting community based recreational needs, such as a soccer complex, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.
<b>Service Area:</b> Community-wide
<b>Recommended Size:</b> 50 acres or more
<b>Acres/1,000 Residents:</b> N/A
<b>Natural Resource Areas</b>
<b>Description:</b> Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space and visual aesthetics/buffering.
<b>Service Area:</b> Varies
<b>Recommended Size:</b> N/A
<b>Acres/1,000 Residents:</b> N/A
<b>Special Use Parks or Areas</b>
<b>Description:</b> Special Use Parks include specialized recreational activities that are often unique to a community. Activities can include boat ramps, campgrounds, golf courses or beaches. These parks usually provide amenities that serve the entire community as well as visitors from beyond the district and are typically a single use park.
<b>Service Area:</b> Varies
<b>Recommended Size:</b> N/A
<b>Acres/1,000 Residents:</b> N/A
<b>School Parks and Facilities</b>
<b>Description:</b> School Parks and Facilities can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks such as neighborhood, community, sports complex, and special use parks. Access to these facilities may be limited during school hours.
<b>Service Area:</b> Varies
<b>Recommended Size:</b> N/A
<b>Acres/1,000 Residents:</b> N/A

Source: National Recreation and Parks Association



Table 5 shows recommended acreages for mini-parks, neighborhood parks and community parks based on the Town of Union’s estimated 2010 population. These three classifications are considered the main building blocks of a community’s park system.

The Town of Union does not have a mini-park. Mini-parks are typically found in urban areas with neighborhoods and are easy to walk to and are used by residents in the immediate area.

Sherman Creek Park is classified as a Neighborhood Park because of its proximity to residential areas. It provides a number of amenities that are intended for passive recreation.

The Town of Union Conservancy is classified as a Community Park because it serves a greater area. This park is also intended for passive recreation.

The Elk Creek Lake properties are classified as Natural Resource Areas.

Table 5 shows that the Town of Union has approximately 54.3 acres of park land per 1,000 residents in the three main park classifications. Parks under the Town’s jurisdiction exceed the recommended space needs identified by the National Recreation and Parks Association.

**Table 5 Existing Park Space: Town of Union**

Park Type	*Recommended Acreage	Actual Acreage
Mini-Park	0.7 to 1.4	0
Neighborhood Park	2.7 to 5.4	30.4
Community Park	13.5 to 21.6	116.1

Source: National Recreation and Park Association.

\*Recommended acreages are based on the 2010 U.S. Census estimated population of 2,663 residents.

## Park Service Boundaries

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) provides recommendations for the area served by community parks, neighborhood parks, and mini-parks. The three (3) types of parks and their recommended service areas include:

- Community Parks: 0.5 to 3 mile service radius
- Neighborhood Parks: 0.25 to 0.5 mile service radius
- Mini-Parks: up to 0.25 mile service radius

Maps 2 and 3 show the Park Service Boundaries of Sherman Creek Park and Town of Union Conservancy. Sherman Creek Park has a larger number of residents living within the service area and many people can walk or bike to the park. Town of Union Conservancy is located in a rural area and most visitors will drive to visit the park.



# Sherman Creek Park 1/2 Mile Service Boundary

Town of Union, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

Service Boundary

City of Eau Claire

Town of Union

Sherman  
Creek  
Park

Vine Street

Vine Street

Interstate 94

C.T.H. E

Map 2



**Cedar**  
corporation



# Town of Union Conservancy 3 Mile Service Boundary

Town of Union, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

Service Boundary

Town of Spring Brook  
Dunn County

Town of Union  
Eau Claire County

Town of  
Union  
Conservancy

Town of Union  
Eau Claire County

Town of Rock Creek  
Dunn County

Map 3



**Cedar**  
corporation



# Chapter 4

## Park and Recreation Inventory

### Existing Parks

The Town of Union is located in the northwest corner of Eau Claire County. Predominately rural, the eastern boundary of the Town abuts the City of Eau Claire. The southern boundary is formed by the Chippewa River.

The Town has jurisdiction over three park and recreation areas: Elk Lake Properties, Sherman Creek Park and Town of Union Conservancy. The three areas were visited and inventoried in the fall of 2019.

#### Elk Lake Properties

The Elk Lake Properties are located north of C.T.H. E near the western border with Dunn Counties. There are four properties associated with the Elk Lake Properties: Wildwood Park, Canyon Park, Primeval Park, and Ravina Park. Canyon Park is a popular location for geocaching. The combined properties provide approximately 15 acres of undeveloped space accessible to the public. These parks were platted in the 1920s when the area was marketed as lakeshore property.

#### Town of Union Conservancy (formerly the Youth Forest and Kiwanis Forest)

The entrance to the Town of Union Conservancy is located at the corner of White Pine Drive and Deer Park Road in the southwest corner of the Town. This property is bounded by Crescent Avenue on the north, White Pine Drive on the east, the Chippewa River on the south and Dunn County on the West.

The park is 116.1 acres and is made up of the Youth Forest (78.8 acres) and the Kiwanis Forest (37.3 acres). The Kiwanis Forest was acquired with the help of a WDNR Stewardship Program grant which provided 50% of the purchase costs. The Town also worked with the Landmark Conservancy to place the land in a conservation easement. The purpose of the easement is to “preserve the property in perpetuity in its predominantly natural and open space condition, and to prevent any use of the property that will adversely impact or interfere with its conservation values.”



There are several unique features in the Town of Union Conservancy. One is a sign on Crescent Avenue that marked the Union Town Forest. The sign was barely visible and the surrounding area is being cleaned up. Behind the sign one can see an arc of white pines. The first trees were originally planted to commemorate Town of Union residents who died in World War II. Later, school children planted more trees over time.



Union Youth Forest sign.



Pine trees planted in an arc behind the sign.

The park entrance leads you to large gravel parking area and there is a portable toilet on site. A new Town of Union Conservancy sign is located at the trailhead. The sign provide information about the ecological, cultural and geologic importance of the area. Newly developed primitive trails provide many options to hike through the woods. Some of the trails take you to a point 150' above the Chippewa River.

The Town of Union Conservancy is also open to horseback riding, hunting and trapping.





Trail above the Chippewa River.



Interpretive sign.

## Sherman Creek Park

Sherman Creek Park is accessed from West Vine Street near the Sherman Elementary School. A majority of the park is bordered by residential areas in the City of Eau Claire. The park is 30.4 acres.

Facilities include four picnic tables, an open air pavilion, a fire pit and walking trails. A few Leopold benches were added in 2020. Several pedestrian bridges cross the creek. A privy is available but is in disrepair. There is a very small paved pull-out area that provides minimal vehicle parking. Sherman Creek meanders through the middle of the property. Again, the Town worked with the Landmark Conservancy to place the park in a conservation easement.



Sherman Creek Park sign.



Bridge connecting the parking area to the main amenities.



## Town of Union Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2021 to 2026

Sherman Creek Park is dedicated to education and the protection of its natural resources. The Eau Claire Area School District utilizes this park for educational purposes and it is basically the backyard of Sherman Elementary School. The Ecology Club of North High School utilizes it for conservation projects. Boy Scouts have undertaken Eagle Scout projects to improve the conservation of the park as well. Local 4-H clubs have helped to maintain and utilize the park as service projects.



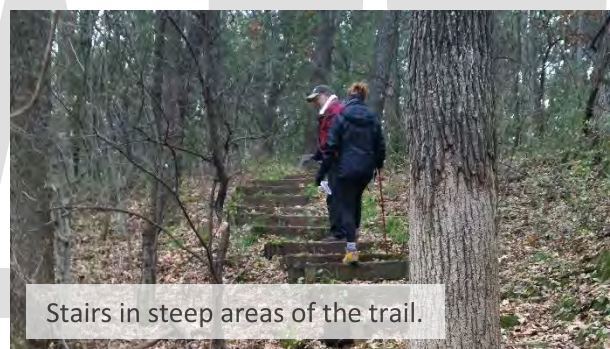
Pavilion with picnic table.



Fire pit and privy.



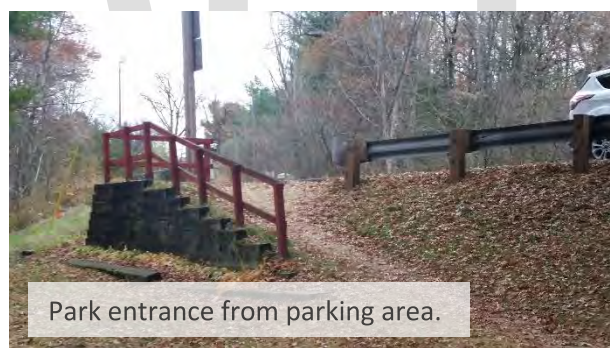
Heavy rains have eroded the creek bank.



Stairs in steep areas of the trail.



One of the bridges across Sherman Creek.



Park entrance from parking area.



# Chapter 5

## Park Improvement Recommendations

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The recommendations for park improvements were created after park visits and discussions. Generally, parks in the Town of Union are used for passive recreation and the enjoyment of the natural surroundings. Active parks and facilities can be found in the adjacent cities. The lists below represent the main ideas for park development.

The Town of Union worked with the Landmark Conservancy to place conservation easements on the Town of Union Conservancy and Sherman Creek Park. The conservation easements limit the development of the park in some cases. The general parameters of the easements can be found in Appendix A. The recommendations appear to fall within the conservation easement guidelines, but any project should be reviewed with the Landmark Conservancy.

### Elk Lake Properties

The Elk Lake Properties consist of Wildwood Park, Canyon Park, Primeval Park, and Ravina Park. These are individual pieces of land in a residential subdivision around Elk Lake. The parcels would not be developed as some have steep slopes. Canyon Park is a popular location for geocaching.

#### Recommendations include:

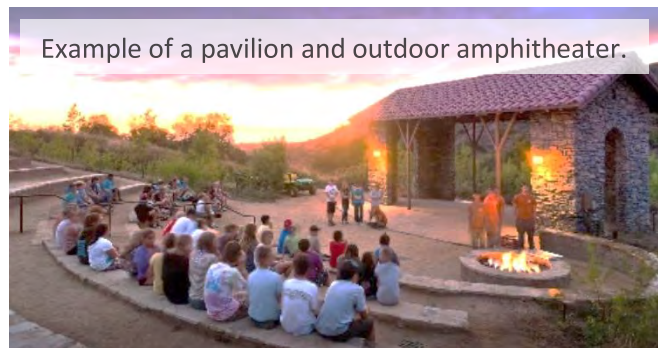
1. Remain as is.

### Town of Union Conservancy

The Town of Union Conservancy is a large area of undeveloped land along the Chippewa River. Primitive walking/hiking trails have been established and the park can be used for horseback riding, hunting and trapping as well. Town of Union Conservancy could be developed as a learning center to provide education about the area's ecological, cultural, and geologic history.

#### Recommendations include:

1. Construct a pavilion and an outdoor amphitheater/seating area for educational talks and programs.
2. Add handicapped accessible restrooms.
3. Continue to develop and implement trail signs.
4. Continue to improve existing trails and possible development of additional trails. Make some trails handicapped accessible near the trailhead.
5. Add a formal trailhead entrance.



Example of a pavilion and outdoor amphitheater.

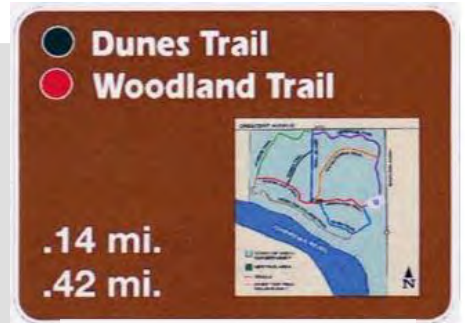
6. Improve bicycle accessibility by evaluating the incorporation of paved shoulders or striping when reconstructing main roads near the park.
7. Add small picnic tables areas at the trailhead.
8. Work with service organizations, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc. to construct and maintain Leopold benches to be installed along the trails (see Appendix B).
9. Add educational/interpretive signs to complement existing sign at the trailhead.
10. Develop a Site Master Plan for the layout and development of the trailhead area.
11. Explore grant and volunteer opportunities to offset park maintenance or improvement costs.
12. Work with the County Forester, Landmark Conservancy and WDNR to improve forest management and the removal of invasive species.
13. Work with Sherman Creek School to develop gated access and parking from the School parking lot.



Example of restrooms.



Leopold bench.



Signs developed for trails.



Example of trailhead entrance.



Example of interpretive signs.



Example of an accessible trail.

## Sherman Creek Park

Sherman Creek Park has existing amenities and most could be updated. Accessibility should be improved as well. The challenge of the site is the limited parking and access to the main park area where the amenities are located.

### Recommendations include:

1. Reconstruct the pavilion.
2. Add handicapped accessible restrooms. The location of the Sherman Creek floodplain and topography pose a challenge to construct new restrooms. The desired restrooms

would be connected to municipal water and sewer, but this may be cost prohibitive. Also, a more visible location is preferred to reduce vandalism.

3. Install security cameras.
4. Improve the aesthetics of the fire pit.
5. Continue to improve existing trails. Make some trails handicapped accessible near the main park area.
6. Make park access handicapped accessible from the parking area to the pavilion and restrooms.
7. Add permanent benches at locations along the trails where views of Sherman Creek are best. The challenge is getting the benches and a concrete slab to these locations.
8. Add educational/interpretive signs to replace past signs along the trails that have deteriorated.
9. Reconstruct stairs along the trail.
10. Work with the WDNR to address creek erosion.
11. Develop a Site Master Plan for the layout and development of the park and trailhead area.
12. Explore grant and volunteer opportunities to offset park maintenance or improvement costs.

## **Standardizing Park Amenities**

Having standards for park amenities creates a uniform look that is easy for people to recognize when they are in your community. Standards can be created for each park or for the park system as a whole. The following amenities are often standardized.

- Shelters
- Trash receptacles
- Signs
- Benches
- Picnic tables

## **Park Signs**

Park signs should be standardized in order to make them easily identifiable to residents and visitors. At a minimum, park signs shall contain the name of the park. Other items such as a park system logo or park hours can be incorporated.

## **Dedication of Trees and Benches**

Residents may want to dedicate trees, benches or other amenities on behalf of a family, organization, business, or in memory of a loved one. The Town can create a list of specific trees and a bench styles that can be donated to the park of the donor's choice.

# Chapter 6

## Park Development and Land Acquisition Funding

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### Funding Sources

Most communities search for outside funding sources to offset the cost of park maintenance, land acquisition, new amenities or trails. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources administers a wide variety of grants that are available to local governments, tribes, conservation groups, and landowners. The list below represents a starting point to explore funding related to the recommendations in the Town of Union Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2021-2026.

#### Acquisition & Development of Local Parks

**Eligibility & Purpose:** Helps to buy land or easements and develop or renovate local park and recreation area facilities for nature-based outdoor recreation purposes (e.g., trails, fishing access and park support facilities). Applicants compete for funds on a regional basis. This grant program is part of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

#### Habitat Area

**Eligibility & Purpose:** Protects and restores important wildlife habitat in Wisconsin in order to expand opportunities for wildlife-based recreation such as hunting, trapping, hiking, bird watching, fishing, nature appreciation and wildlife viewing. This grant program is part of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

#### Land & Water Conservation Fund - Nationally Competitive Program

**Eligibility & Purpose:** A nationally competitive federal program that will create or reinvigorate parks and other outdoor recreation spaces in areas delineated by the Census Bureau as comprising densely settled territory that contains 50,000 or more people. The State of Wisconsin will be able to submit two applications to compete for the available funding.

#### Land & Water Conservation Fund - State Program

**Eligibility & Purpose:** This Federal program encourages creation and interpretation of high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities. Funds received by the DNR for this program are split between DNR projects and grants to local governments for outdoor recreation activities. Grants cover 50 percent of eligible project costs.

#### Recreational Boating Facilities

**Eligibility & Purpose:** Counties, towns, cities, villages, WI tribes, sanitary districts, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts and qualified lake associations for recreational boating facility projects.

### Recreational Trail Program

**Eligibility & Purpose:** Counties, towns, cities, villages, WI Tribes, and incorporated organizations may apply for grant funding for development and maintenance of recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail uses. Funds from this program may be used in conjunction with the state snowmobile or ATV programs and Stewardship development projects. snowmobile trails for public use and enjoyment.

### State Trails

**Eligibility & purpose:** Applications for grants under this subprogram must be for properties identified as part of the State Trail system. It is possible for sponsors to nominate additional trails for state trail designation. The Streambank Protection Program protects water quality and fish habitat in Wisconsin by establishing buffers along high-priority waterways. This grant program is part of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

### Streambank Protection

**Eligibility & purpose:** The Streambank Protection Program protects water quality and fish habitat in Wisconsin by establishing buffers along high-priority waterways. This grant program is part of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

### Urban Rivers

**Eligibility & Purpose:** These grants helps buy land on rivers flowing through urban or urbanizing areas to preserve or restore the scenic and environmental values of riverways for nature-based outdoor recreation. This grant program is part of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.



# Chapter 7

## Plan Implementation

### 5-Year Capital Improvements Plan for Parks and Recreation

One of the purposes of the Town of Union Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan is that the community creates a vision for parks and recreation and then takes steps to see that vision realized.

Table 6 list park and recreation priorities for the next 5 years.

**Table 6: Town of Union Parks and Recreation Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan**

Park or Area	Improvement	Year
Conservancy	Continue to develop and implement trail signs.	Ongoing
Conservancy	Continue to improve existing trails and possible development of additional trails. Make some trails handicapped accessible near the trailhead.	Ongoing
Conservancy	Add a formal trailhead entrance.	2022
Conservancy	Add educational/interpretive signs to complement existing sign at the trailhead.	2023
Sherman Creek Park	Add handicapped accessible restrooms. The location of the Sherman Creek floodplain and topography pose a challenge to construct new restrooms. The desired option is restrooms connected to municipal water and sewer, but this may be cost prohibitive. Also, a more visible location is preferred to reduce vandalism.	2026
Sherman Creek Park	Improve aesthetics of the fire pit.	2022
Sherman Creek Park	Continue to improve existing trails. Make some trails handicapped accessible near the main park area.	2023
Sherman Creek Park	Add permanent benches at locations along the trails where views of Sherman Creek are best.	2024
Sherman Creek Park	Work with the WDNR to address creek bank erosion.	Ongoing
Sherman Creek Park	Work with Sherman Creek School to develop gated access and parking area from the school parking lot.	2022
All Parks	Explore grant and volunteer opportunities to offset park maintenance or improvement costs.	Ongoing

The Town of Union Parks and Recreation Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan does not limit the park and recreation projects that the Town can undertake. It should be used to provide direction to the Town Parks Committee for major park related projects but other opportunities may arise when grant programs change or new sources of funding are made available.

## Project Costs

The cost of maintenance and improvements can vary greatly depending on the quality of the materials, installation costs, and durability. Often, service organizations can organize members to donate labor, grants can be applied for to offset costs for land acquisition or amenities, and businesses may donate materials.

The following represent costs of similar projects as identified in this CORP. These general costs should be used as a starting point to help budget for future improvements. They do not represent the costs of projects identified in this Plan which will have to be investigated in more detail.

Recent park project costs.

- Gravel Trails: Clearing and grubbing, common excavation, up to 12" of crushed aggregate, up to 8' wide. Approximate cost - \$10-\$12/lineal foot.
- Benches and Concrete Slab: \$1,500-\$3,000.
- Leopold Benches: Under \$100.
- Precast Restrooms: \$40,000+. Costs will vary depending on the need for water, number of toilets and sinks.



# **Appendix A**



### **Town of Union Youth Forest CE Summary**

\*This is not a complete summary of the CE. Instead, it is highlighting terms that are applicable to potential infrastructure improvements.

Purpose: The purpose of this easement is to preserve the property in perpetuity in its predominantly natural and open space condition, and to prevent any use of the property that will adversely impact or interfere with its conservation values. The landowner intends that this easement will confine the use of the property to activities that are consistent with the purpose of the easement.

It is furthermore specifically the purpose of this conservation easement to protect the natural and forested Chippewa River bluffs and scenic viewshed from the river.

- Equestrian Use – Equestrian use of trails on the property is permitted, provided that there is no adverse impact to the conservation values. Equestrian use of the Shoreland Buffer Zone on the property is not permitted.
- Fences – Existing fences may be repaired, replaced, improved or removed. Additional fencing may be constructed.
- Signs – Small, unlighted signs may be placed on the property.
- Trails – May be established and maintained, provided they do not diminish the conservation values and are located and constructed to prevent erosion, avoid habitat fragmentation, and to protect sensitive areas and water quality. All trails shall have a pervious surface of natural materials.
- Roads – No new roads may be constructed or established. The road and associated public use area necessary for the operation of the Transfer Station may be maintained and improved.
- Buildings – The landowner may construct and maintain shelter building or structures in the Facilities Zone as follows:
  - Transfer Station – May maintain and operate the Town Transfer Station. Temporary storage structures, personnel facilities, impervious surface and equipment associated with this use are permitted, including the utilities necessary for the use and management of the area. The Transfer Station shall occupy an area no greater than 1 acre in size within the Facilities Zone.
  - Park Shelter – May construct and maintain a park shelter or pavilion for the benefit of public users of the property. The park shelter shall be located in the Facilities Zone and may contain an impervious surface.

- Restrooms – May construct and maintain temporary or permanent restrooms or latrines on the property for the purpose of accommodating public use. The restrooms shall be located in the Facilities Zone.
- Parking Area – May construct a parking area for the purpose of accommodating public use of the property. The parking area shall be located in the Facilities zone and shall not contain an impervious surface.
- Utilities – May install, maintain, repair and replace utility system and related facilities on the property, including without limitations, all systems and facilities necessary to provide power, lighting, fuel, water, waste disposal and communication to serve uses and activities specifically permitted by the easement. No underground storage tanks are permitted on the property, except for bathrooms.
- Recreational Amenities – Such as picnic tables and benches are permitted in the Facilities Zone for the benefit of public users of the property. Simple recreational amenities such as benches may be maintained throughout the property provided, they do not contribute noticeable ecological degradation impacts. Noticeable degradation to the property is cause for immediate removal and reclamation.
- Vegetation & Property Management – The landowner may undertake the following management activities on the property:
  - Cutting Timber & Vegetation – May cut or harvest timber for firewood, the maintenance of wood lots, fire control, and cutting and control of trees along the edges of permitted roads, trails and facilities, for the purpose of maintaining the integrity of those amenities and improvements. Commercial cutting of timber must be in accordance with a forest management plan that has been approved by Landmark Conservancy. Commercial timber harvest is not permitted in the Shoreland Buffer Zone.
  - Restoration – Restoration, enhancement and maintenance of the native ecological communities of the property is permitted with all applicable permits.
  - Spraying – No spraying with chemicals for any purpose within 100 feet of the ordinary high-water mark of the Chippewa River without the written approval of Landmark Conservancy.
- Soil Erosion – No use or activity that causes or is likely to cause soil degradation or erosion or pollution of any surface or sub-surface waters. Best management practices shall be employed to minimize soil erosion during and after construction of any permitted improvement or structures.
- Vehicles – Operation of motorized vehicles on the property is permitted only to carry out activities specifically permitted under the CE or for limited, non-commercial recreational use that does not adversely affect, to any substantial extent the conservation values of the property.
- Water – No alteration of any water body or its shoreline except as permitted under restoration.
- Recreational Use – May be used for hiking, cross-country skiing, temporary camping, nature observation, hunting, fishing and other similar low impact recreational activities.

### **Description of Zones**

Shoreland Buffer Zone: Is any portion of the property that begins at the Chippewa River and extends landward 100 feet beyond the crest of the Chippewa River bluff. The width of the Shoreland Buffer Zone varies with the slope of the bluff and includes the entire Chippewa River floodplain. Generally speaking, intensive use and development within this Zone is not permitted, beyond the maintenance of a primitive hiking trail.

Facilities Zone: Is an approximately 11-acre area of the property. The Facilities Zone is that part of the property where the Town Transfer Station is located, and developed facilities and amenities associated with the public use of the property are concentrated, in order to prevent widespread impacts to the remainder of the property and the Shoreland Buffer Zone.

Property Map





### **Sherman Creek Park CE Summary**

\*This is not a complete summary of the CE. Instead, it is highlighting terms that are applicable to potential infrastructure improvements.

Purpose: The purpose of this easement is to assure that the property will be preserved in perpetuity in its natural, scenic, forested, and open space condition and to prevent any use of the property that will significantly impair or interfere with its conservation values.

- Spraying – No spraying of chemicals on the property within 100 feet of the ordinary high-water mark of any water body without the prior written approval by Landmark Conservancy.
- Vehicles – Except for management activities, there shall be no operation of motorized vehicles on the property.
- Water – No alteration of creeks, shorelines or other waterbodies. Activities detrimental to water quality or disturbance of the soil within 100 feet of any shoreline is not permitted without written approval from Landmark Conservancy.
- Vegetation – No introduction of non-native, invasive plant species or disturbance of natural vegetation unless specifically permitted elsewhere in this summary.
- Structures & Improvements – Landowner may use and develop the property as follows:
  - Fences – Install, repair, replace, improve, or remove gates and fences.
  - Signs – Place small, unlighted signs on the property. No sign shall exceed 16 sq/ft unless approved upon by Landmark Conservancy.
  - Parking Area – The existing parking area may be maintained and improved in substantially the same location.
  - Unimproved Roads – Unimproved forest roads for management and maintenance of the property may be maintained and improved, but shall not be widened or constructed with a non-permeable surface.
  - Trails – May maintain and establish new trails for non-motorized recreational activities. Best management practices shall be employed to minimize soil erosion.
  - Utilities – Utility systems and facilities may be installed, maintained, repaired, extended and replaced only to serve uses and activities specifically permitted. This includes without limitation, all system and facilities necessary to provide power, lighting, fuel,

water waste disposal and communication. No underground storage tanks shall be allowed on the property, except for restroom facilities.

- Water & Restroom Facilities – Outhouses, water fountains or restroom facilities are permitted in the Park Facilities Zone.
  - Park Shelters – Recreational park shelters such as pavilions or picnic shelters may be constructed within the Park Facilities Zone. The Northeast corner of the property may also contain a picnic area, but improvements shall be minimal in size and scope.
  - Benches – Benches may be placed and maintained on the property, including trail-side benches, provided they are not placed in such a way as to contribute to erosion or heavy traffic within the Stream Bank Buffer Zone.
  - Grills & Fire Pits – Grills may be placed and maintained within the Park Facilities Zone. Rustic fire pits may be constructed and maintained on the property by the landowner.
  - Recreation Structures – Other low-impact recreational structures or facilities necessary for the use, enjoyment and management of Sherman Creek Park are permitted within the Park Facilities Zone.
  - Bridges & Boardwalks – Small bridges and boardwalks for crossing Sherman Creek and wetlands are permitted.
  - Notice – Prior to beginning expansion, replacement or construction of any existing or new structure, the Landowner will notify Landmark Conservancy.
  - Best Management Practices – Before any construction or land disturbance activity is undertaken, an approved construction site erosion control plan addressing onsite storm water drainage and erosion must be obtained.
- Land Management – The landowner may undertake the following vegetation and land management activities on the property:
    - Woodlot Management – May plan, manage, and harvest timber for the maintenance of healthy woodlots, to control of growth of trees along the edges of fields or developed areas, as an education tool for property forest management, and for the purpose of maintaining the integrity and diversity of the forest.
    - Commercial Timber Harvest – Permitted provided it is in accordance with a Forest Management Plan approved by Landmark Conservancy.
    - Restoration – Restore, enhance, and maintain the native plant and animal communities, including, but not limited to, removal of non-native or invasive vegetation.
    - Stream Restoration – Conduct stream restoration for the purpose of improving the water quality biological diversity, and/or controlling the erosive capability of the stream; provided a plan approved by Landmark Conservancy is in place.
    - Recreational Use – Vegetation may be planted or removed to enhance ecological resources, deter or enhance visitor use and traffic, maintain trails, remove park hazards.



### **Description of Zones**

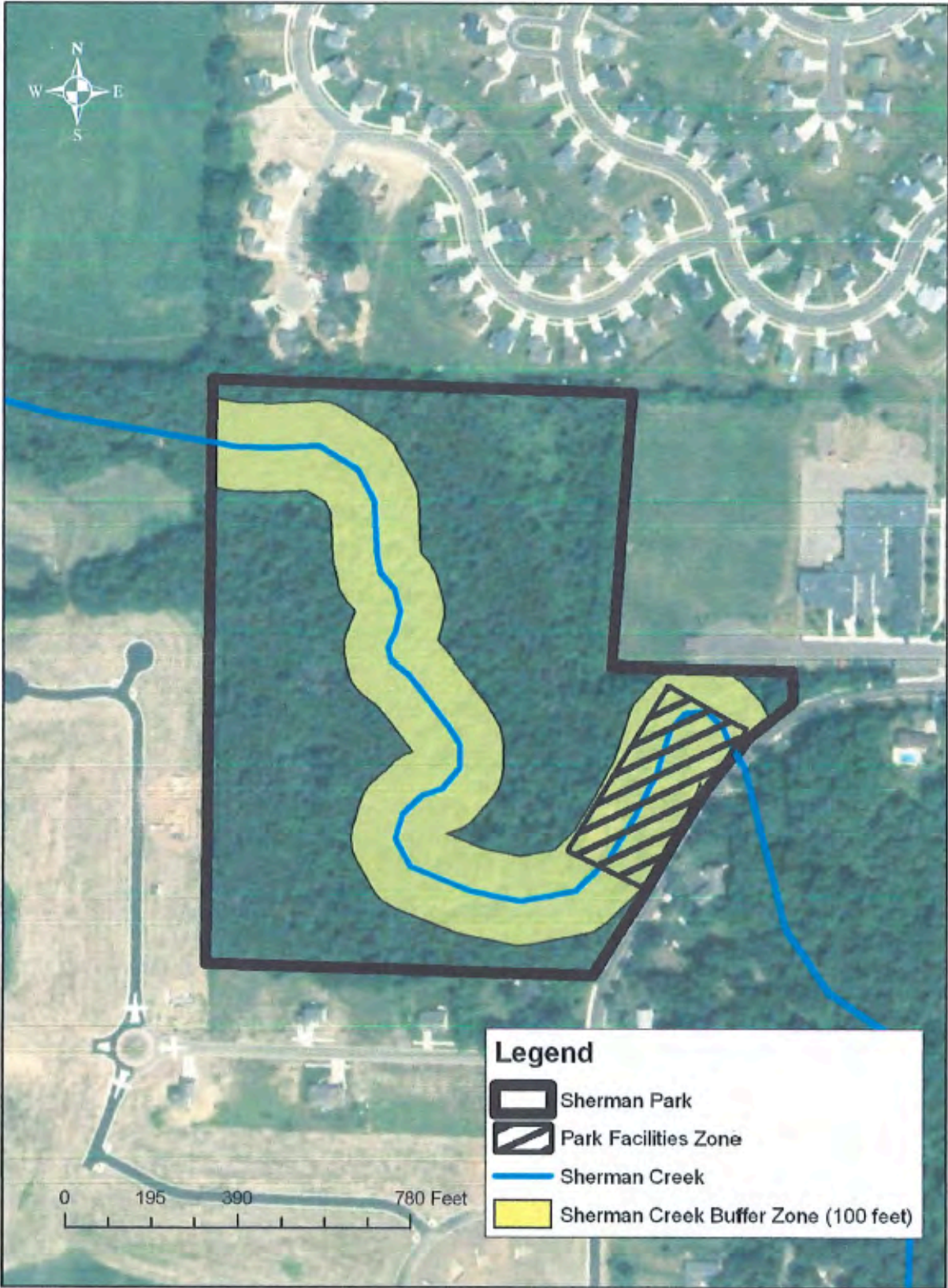
**Stream Bank Buffer Zone:** Is any portion of the property that extends 100 feet landward from the ordinary high-water mark of Sherman Creek. Within this zone, vegetation may be cut or mowed, but the soil shall not be cultivated, tilled, or otherwise disturbed.

Since maintenance of a natural and vegetative buffer strip is clearly identified as a purpose of the easement, it is understood and agreed that a natural and “Vegetative Buffer Strip” shall Be maintained along the shoreline of Sherman Creek on the property.

**Park Facilities Zone:** Is the area that is expected to be disturbed for such public uses as restrooms, pavilions, parking, and picnicking. Only this zone may permit large impervious surfaces or structures such as picnic shelter. The Park Facilities Zone shall be no greater than two (2) acres in size and shall be located directly off of the access road and is further depicted on the property map.

The purpose of the Park Facilities Zone is to permit and concentrate those structures and intensive recreational uses in a relatively small area of the property, while maintaining the majority of the property in a relatively natural setting.

Property Map



## **Appendix B**

This easy project will take only two hours of your time and cost about \$25.

# Winter building

ENJOY GETTING "LEOPOLD BENCHED."

Story and photos by Natasha Kassulke

They keep popping up — funny-looking gray benches with backrests that defy the vertical plane. First they were sprouting at the farm, then in our family's backyards and the community garden.

In fact, people all over the world are using and resting on their laurels on simple but sturdy Aldo Leopold benches.

I suppose it makes sense. Even the famed conservationist had to sit and rest once in a while. In fact, historians like to tell the tale that Leopold would sit outside

on his hand-built bench on his land near Baraboo and write about what he saw, heard and prognosticated for the future.

According to the Aldo

Leopold Foundation, there is no one correct bench design. Leopold never wrote down his plans for them.

My crafty brother-in-law has made many Leopold benches and when I went to take a picture of one recently at his house, his wife pulled me to the side to warn, "I'm not sure that's the photo you want. He doesn't really follow the directions."

But that's OK. The beauty of the bench is that you can make it your own. And just as — if not equally — important to the design is the place you choose to put

your bench.

My favorite spot is under the tree at the farm overlooking the garden. It's a shady spot that seems to attract the more senior "work supervisors" in the family. As I toil in the sun in the garden, they like to settle on the bench to point out the weeds I've missed — but also to savor the bird calls and butterflies just as Leopold did not too many miles away on his

own bench.

Thankfully, instructions for building an Aldo Leopold bench are easy to come by online. I found helpful instructions from the Environmental Protection Agency website ([archive.epa.gov/greenacres/web/html/wo27bench.html](http://archive.epa.gov/greenacres/web/html/wo27bench.html)). The project is easy — a fine winter workout for those like me with little carpentry experience. Supplies are inexpensive and can be purchased for about \$25. Time to build clocks in at two hours, on average.

The materials listed on EPA's site include: one 2x6x33-inch board, one 2x10x30-inch board, one 2x8x10-foot board, six 3/8-inch x 3 1/2-inch carriage bolts with washer and nut, 12 3/8-inch x 3 1/2-inch #12 or #14 flathead wood screws. It's suggested to use Douglas fir for your Leopold bench. The materials listed will make a 33-inch bench, but you may choose to build out to 48 inches.

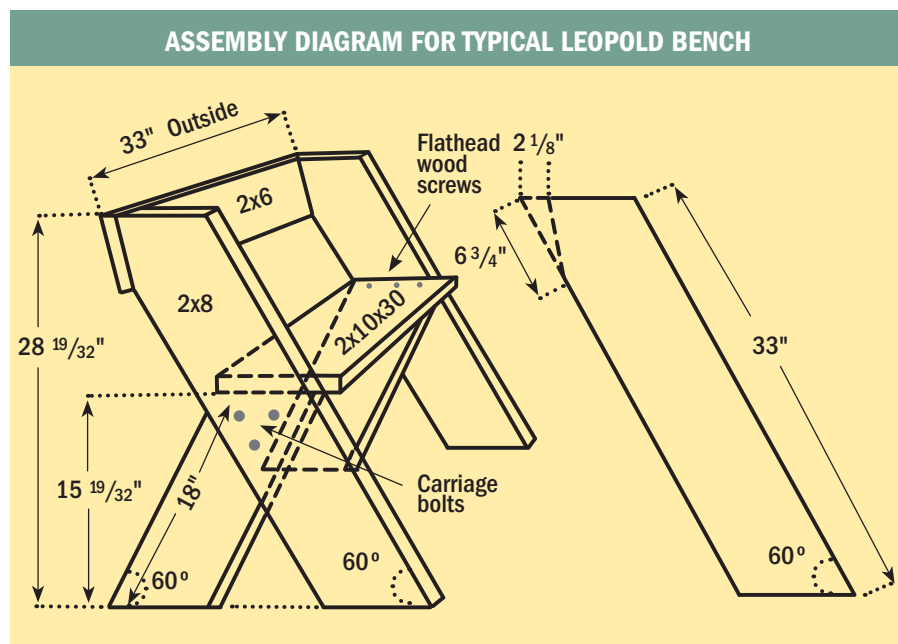
Another helpful site from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Agricultural Education Program includes a design and instructions by Julie Niemerg ([aged.illinois.edu/sites/aged.illinois.edu/files/resources/AGM%20Leopold%20Bench.pdf](http://aged.illinois.edu/sites/aged.illinois.edu/files/resources/AGM%20Leopold%20Bench.pdf)).

People modify the angle of the back rest. Some like the benches to be wider. But no matter the size, no matter the space, "To spy a Leopold bench in someone's yard is to know something about the family who there resides," the EPA website suggests.

Natasha Kassulke writes from Madison. She did earn an "A" in her elementary school shop class.



The bench is just the right size for Cory and Dylan Layton of Madison.



THOMAS SENATORI (ADAPTED FROM USEPA DRAWING)



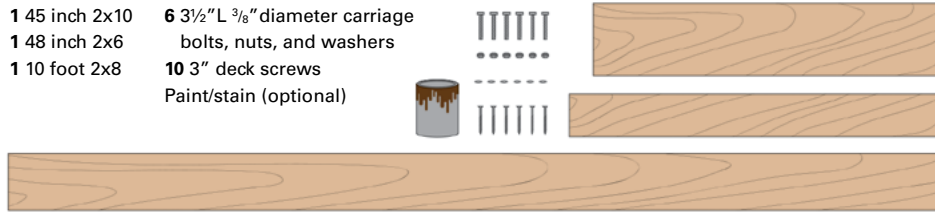
# ALDO LEOPOLD BENCH

woodworking  
FOR WILDLIFE

Aldo Leopold is an internationally recognized figure in wildlife conservation and pioneering author and philosopher on environmental ethics and land stewardship. Born and raised in southeastern Iowa on the bluffs of the Mississippi River in Burlington, Leopold's land ethic was born from hundreds of hours of careful observation outdoors in Iowa, Wisconsin, the American southwest, and other natural landscapes. Surely many of those hours, especially those outside his family's "shack" on the banks of the Wisconsin River, were spent on benches just like these, which similarly adorn the trails and fields of natural areas around the Midwest. This plan shows you how to create your own Aldo Leopold Bench where you can experience and enjoy nature. Situate your new bench in your favorite natural area or outdoor spot; visit it often with a book, binoculars, or camera; and enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells of nature.

## SUPPLIES

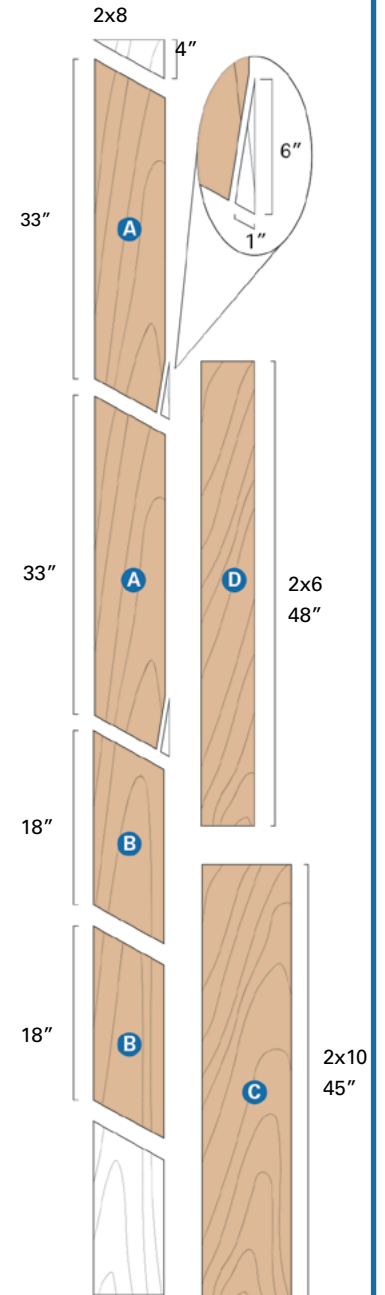
- 1 45 inch 2x10
- 1 48 inch 2x6
- 1 10 foot 2x8
- 6 3 1/2" L 3/8" diameter carriage bolts, nuts, and washers
- 10 3" deck screws
- Paint/stain (optional)



Circular saw  
Drill with 3/8" bit  
Tape measure  
Straight edge



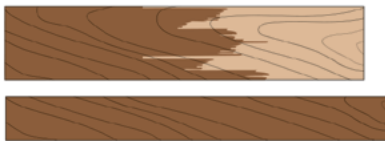
## CUT SHEET



## ASSEMBLY

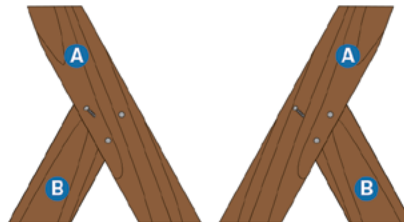
1

Stain or paint wood pieces.



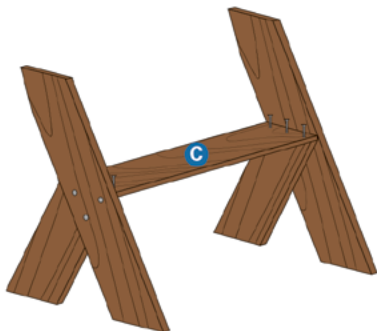
2

Assemble each leg by aligning the bottoms on a wall or other flat surface. Drill holes and connect **A** and **B** with three carriage bolts on each leg.



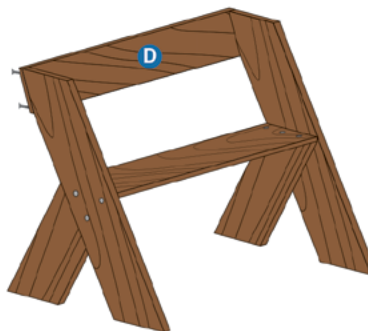
3

Mount the seat **C** connecting the legs with three deck screws on each side.



4

Mount the back **D** to the bench with two deck screws on each side.



WL 0011 January 2019

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Extension and Outreach

By Adam Janke, assistant professor and extension wildlife specialist at Iowa State. Adapted from plans distributed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

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