

Village of Shorewood Hills Parks and Open Space Plan

Executive Summary

The Village of Shorewood Hills parklands, including wooded and open spaces, shoreline, trails, and public recreation areas, constitute one of the community's greatest assets. These resources provide for Village residents' interaction with nature, relaxation, and recreation in ways that enhance a sense of community and promote the stewardship of natural resources.

The Parks Committee has jurisdiction of the Village parks, "all of the lands and water owned or used by the Village for park or recreational purposes except those lands leased to others" (Village of Shorewood Hills Ordinance 12.01). The Village Board assigned the Parks Committee to draft a long term plan guiding the maintenance, development, and restoration of the parks. As a first step, the Committee developed a mission for the Committee, a vision for the Village parks, and a set of purposes for the plan:

Mission of the Village of Shorewood Hills Parks Committee:

In addition to accepting the mandates presented in the Village ordinances, the Committee is

1. To provide and regularly update an overall parkland restoration plan that maintains appropriate biodiversity and protects native trees, plants, and compatible animal life.
2. To actively educate residents about ways to safeguard the natural resources of Village parklands.
3. To cooperate with the Recreation Committee and other Village committees to ensure that the development and maintenance of recreational facilities occur and are compatible with the parks' natural environment.
4. To create opportunities for residents to participate communally in activities that improve parklands and enrich neighborhood ties.

Vision for Village of Shorewood Hills Parks:

Village parks will

1. Enable Village residents to explore and enjoy public natural areas and recreational facilities.
2. Serve as an example of healthy urban natural areas that contain appropriate biodiversity and protect native trees, plants, and compatible animal life.
3. Obtain sufficient funding for proper maintenance and replanting.
4. Be available for the enjoyment of residents as appropriate for each park category.

Purposes of the Parks Plan:

The four purposes of the Parks Plan are:

1. To implement the park vision.
2. To identify parks and open space goals for the Village of Shorewood Hills and to identify processes to meet those goals.
3. To provide Village administrators and residents with a basic knowledge of parks, parks facilities, and parks histories that will supply a foundation for future parks planning.
4. To satisfy requirements of the State of Wisconsin and granting agencies for a parks plan in order to obtain grant money.

The Village of Shorewood Hills has 21 acres of parklands in nine parks. Three of these parks, containing 10.8 acres, are recreational parks: Post Farm Park, Four Corners Park and the Marina. Recreational Parks provide a place for community activities and gatherings. Two of the Village parks, containing 2.69 acres, are mixed use parks: Bradley and McKenna Parks. Mixed use parks have both recreational and natural areas. Four of the Village parks, containing 6.1 acres, are natural area parks: Dudley Davis Quarry Park, Koval Woods, Oak Way Lots, and Bigfoot Park. Natural areas are designed to protect native plants and animals, to preserve green space, to control erosion in steeply sloped land, and to be enjoyed by passive recreation like walking and nature observation. In addition, the Village has limited recreational usage of two private properties. Although the 99.5 acre Blackhawk Country Club is owned by the Village, it is leased by Blackhawk Country Club Corporation until 2025 and Shorewood Hills residents have unlimited access only in the winter months. The Village also uses portions of the Shorewood Hills Elementary School grounds for recreation.

The Village Parks Committee identified five overall goals for the parks:

1. Promote biodiversity
2. Maintain the health of Shorewood Hills trees
3. Protect Lake Mendota water quality
4. Provide recreational opportunities
5. Permanently protect and preserve parklands

This Parks Plan identifies methods for achieving these goals. The Parks Plan also describes the current condition of each park and makes specific recommendations to carry out these goals in each park.

The Parks Committee identified the following overall priorities:

1. **Maintain the position of Forester/Horticulturist with an appropriate salary and an adequate budget.**
2. **Remove from the parks all serious threats to park and human health as soon as they are identified.**

Details:

Oak wilt and hazard trees, for example, require immediate attention because falling trees can injure residents and their property while a tree disease can kill many of the trees in our parks.

3. **Recruit and organize volunteers to help the Forester/Horticulturist.**

Details:

Cultivate a group of core volunteers who not only support the Forester in his/her efforts in park maintenance, but also invest themselves in community commitment to the Village. With the help of the Parks Committee, the Forester can educate volunteers to rid parks as well as their own property of noxious and exotic plants. Because invasive species are ever present, this needs to be an ongoing program.

A committed corps of volunteers can educate their neighbors about the perils of dumping on park land, the rigors of the tree ordinance, and the seasons for pulling garlic mustard. These volunteers can also work with the Forester and the Garden Club to develop "adopt-a-park" projects and with the schools to teach young people about stewardship.

4. **Continue to eliminate invasive non-native species from Shorewood Hills.**

Details:

Educate Village residents about invasive non-native plants and continue to remove them from parklands.

5. **Replant and maintain appropriate native plants where non-native species have been removed.**
6. **Establish lines of communication among all Village committees whose actions and decisions affect parklands and shorelines.**

Details:

Chairs of all these groups should meet twice each year to discuss their priorities and review the effects of recent actions on the parks system as a whole.

7. **Establish a method of assessing park progress.**

Details:

Have the Village Forester establish a system of record keeping for each park. This record should include the annual goals for each park, the efforts made to achieve the goals, and the results of those efforts. These assessments will allow Foresters and Village residents to learn which methods work. In addition, records of successful restoration are necessary to justify new major efforts. The records will also create a useful history for all future Foresters, Parks Committees, and Village Boards and justify funding for parks restoration and maintenance.

8. **Safeguard lands currently designated for park use and increase total parklands whenever possible.**

Details:

Protect all lands that are currently functioning as parkland. Accept gifts of free parklands and purchase parklands when available.