

I INTRODUCTION

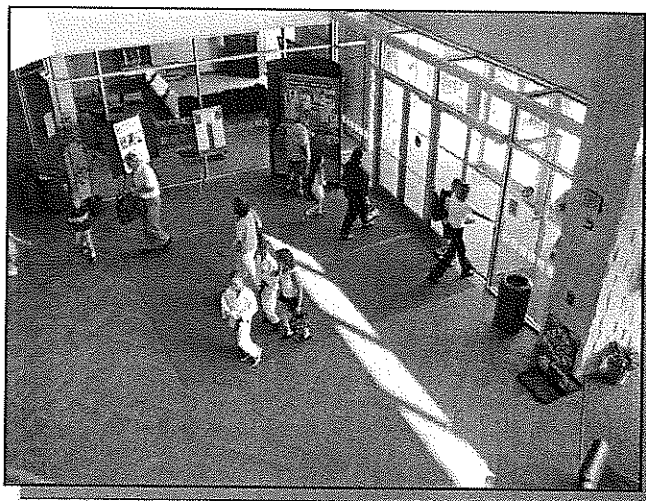
Communities throughout the country are recognizing that park land, recreation trails and natural areas are key components of high quality living environments. Such open spaces provide a community with many benefits. These include helping to meet human needs for outdoor recreation, promoting and accommodating a healthy lifestyle for residents, enhancing the aesthetic quality of a community, increasing property values, attracting visitors and tourists, shaping development patterns, and protecting the natural environment.

Over the years, the Village of Pleasant Prairie has planned for and developed a park and recreation system that is designed to meet the needs of the people who live in the community. Along the way, the Village has not only accounted for its own park and open space needs, but has also maintained a regional perspective, taking measures to preserve critical ecosystems and watersheds, and providing parks and recreational facilities that serve the surrounding communities in Wisconsin and Illinois. This *2006 Park and Open Space Plan* was prepared to further this tradition of park and recreation planning in Pleasant Prairie.

The primary purpose of this *Plan* is to proactively plan for the Village's future park and recreation needs. Furthermore, the recommendations presented in the *Plan* will guide the acquisition, preservation, and development of land for parks, recreation trails, and other open spaces in the Village to meet the needs of a growing and changing population. Such recommendations will also serve to protect and enhance the community's natural resource base into the future. Although, this *Plan* addresses the long-range park and open space needs of the community (through the year 2030), it also focuses on recommendations for development over the next five-year period.

This *Plan* is also intended to incorporate and refine the previous findings and recommendations presented in the *Park and Open Space Plan for Kenosha County*, written in 1987 and amended in 1999, and the 1995 *Comprehensive Plan for the Kenosha Urban Planning District*.

This *Plan* was prepared in accordance with guidelines that will make it certifiable by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and qualify the Village for matching grant funds through the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) and the State of Wisconsin Stewardship Fund. The *Plan* must be updated every five years to ensure that it reflects the current needs of the community and retains its DNR certification. This *Plan* was also prepared as a component of the Village's master plan, under Wisconsin Statutes 62.23 and 61.35. It will also be incorporated as a detailed component of the Village's "Smart Growth" Comprehensive Plan under Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001.



II BACKGROUND INFORMATION

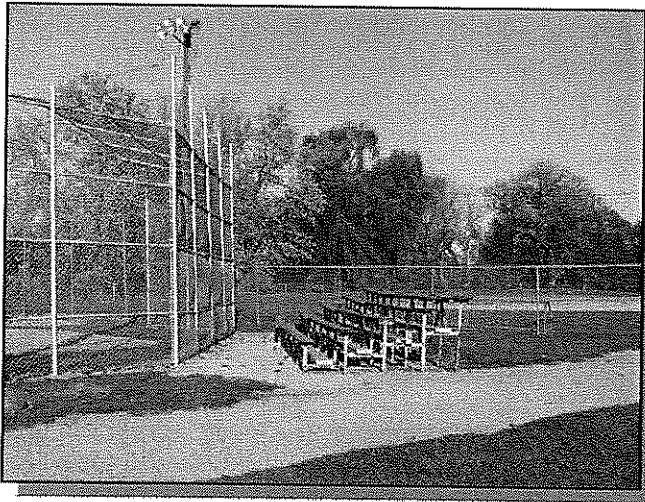
A. GENERAL REGIONAL CONTEXT AND VILLAGE HISTORY

Pleasant Prairie is a rapidly growing community located in Southeastern Wisconsin's Kenosha County. Situated on the southwest coast of Lake Michigan, the Village is bordered by the City of Kenosha on the north and Lake County, Illinois on the south. Interstate Highway 94 is in proximity to the western jurisdictional boundary of the Village. The Village is approximately 40 miles south of Milwaukee and 70 miles north of downtown Chicago. Positioned between two Midwestern metropolises and located directly off of a major interstate, Pleasant Prairie has an opportunity to provide a unique park and recreation system that may draw visitors from all over the region.

The Village was incorporated in 1989 from the former Town of Pleasant Prairie. Prior to the Village's incorporation, development originated from nine separate settlement areas, many of which still exist today. Therefore, unlike more traditional urban development patterns that radiate outward from a central location, Pleasant Prairie does not have a distinguishable core, and development is dispersed throughout the Village. This characteristic has important implications for park and trail systems planning, a detail that will be addressed further in Chapter VIII.

As of January 1, 2005, the Village encompassed approximately 34 square miles of land area and had a Village-estimated population of 18,993 residents. For comparison, the City of Kenosha is less than three quarters the size of Pleasant Prairie and has over five times the population.

Following the Village's incorporation and the creation of the Tax Increment Finance District #1, WisPark Corporation began development of the 2,391-acre LakeView Corporate Park that is now situated in the central western portion of the Village. The site currently includes a 1,496-acre business park and a 170-acre office and commercial park known as LakeView Corporate Park.

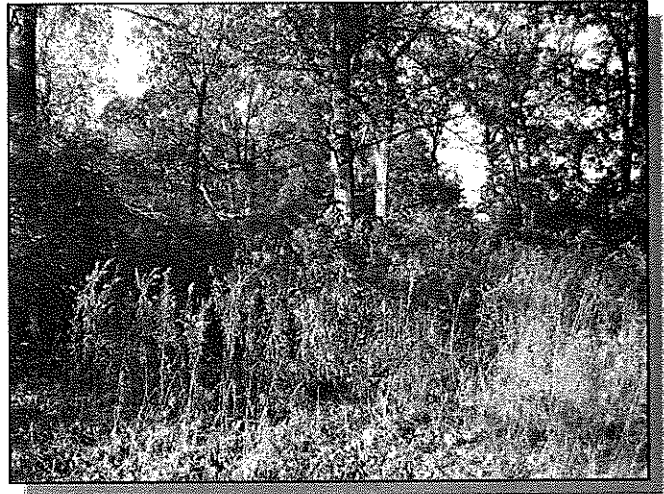


Due in large part to the over 8,000 jobs created within the LakeView development, the Village's daytime population is estimated to be between 40 and 50 percent higher than its Census population. The Village is currently the fifth largest manufacturing municipality in Wisconsin, drawing employees from northern Illinois and throughout the southeastern Wisconsin region. Moreover, industrial and residential land uses are separated from one another, suggesting a need for additional connections between job centers, residential neighborhoods, and Village park and recreational facilities.

B. NATURAL RESOURCES

A survey of Pleasant Prairie’s natural environment provides an important framework for guiding the park planning process. There are several unique characteristics of the Village’s natural landscape that will direct the development of future park and recreational facilities. These include:

- 4-season recreational opportunities;
- Significant water resources, such as the Des Plaines River and Lake Michigan; and
- Concentrations of high quality wildlife and vegetative habitat in the Chiwaukee Prairie – Carol Beach area and Des Plaines River watershed.



1. Climate

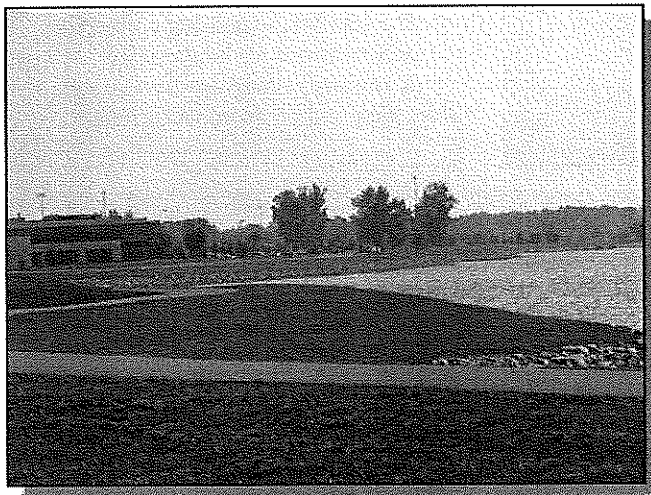
Southeastern Wisconsin’s climate is characterized by four distinct seasons. Warm summers generally span the months of June through August. The winter months of December, January, and February are cold, with average temperatures below freezing. The region is characterized by temperate conditions in spring and autumn. Because of its proximity to Lake Michigan, the climate in Pleasant Prairie is slightly modified by winds coming off of the Lake. These lake effects are most pronounced in the spring and early summer when the prevailing winds are easterly.

2. Soils

The Village is within the glacial drift region of Wisconsin. Blanketed with over 100 feet of silts, sand, and clay, a large proportion of Village land (42%) is classified as National Prime Farmland. That is, the soil is well suited for the production of food and has the capacity to sustain high yields of crops when properly managed. Furthermore, 9% of land in the Village has been identified as Farmland of Statewide Importance. Currently, 24% of Village land is being farmed.

3. Water Bodies and Watersheds

Situated on the coast of Lake Michigan, Pleasant Prairie is located within the Des Plaines River watershed and the Lake Michigan direct drainage watershed. Bisecting the Village from north to south is the subcontinental divide, which separates the region into two major drainage areas. The Des Plaines watershed, encompassing the western two-thirds of the Village, drains to the south and southwest and is part of the Mississippi River drainage system. The Lake Michigan direct drainage watershed encompasses the eastern one-third of the Village.



The Des Plaines River flows from the northwestern portion of the Village south into Illinois, eventually contributing to the Illinois River. There are several small streams in the eastern portion of the Village that flow perpendicular to Lake Michigan. Barnes Creek and Tobin Creek are short perennial streams that have their origins in the Village and empty into Lake Michigan. There are three lakes in Pleasant Prairie. Lake Andrea is a 110-acre springfed lake that was created from an old sand and gravel pit operation. The lake is located within Prairie Springs Park and is used primarily for recreation. Lake Russo is a privately-owned 21-acre lake located in the northwest corner of the Village in the River Oaks subdivision, and Paradise Lake is an approximately 39-acre lake located in the southeastern portion of the Village.

4. Vegetation

At the time of European settlement, much of southeastern Wisconsin was covered with prairie and oak savannah, oak woods, and lowlands. Since that time, most of the land has been converted to agricultural and urban uses. Currently, woodland areas mostly exist in isolated patches less than 40 acres in size. Most of the remaining prairie lands in the region are located in the Chiwaukee Prairie – Carol Beach area along the eastern-most portion of the Village and along Lake Michigan. Some native prairie habitat also still exists along the Des Plaines River.

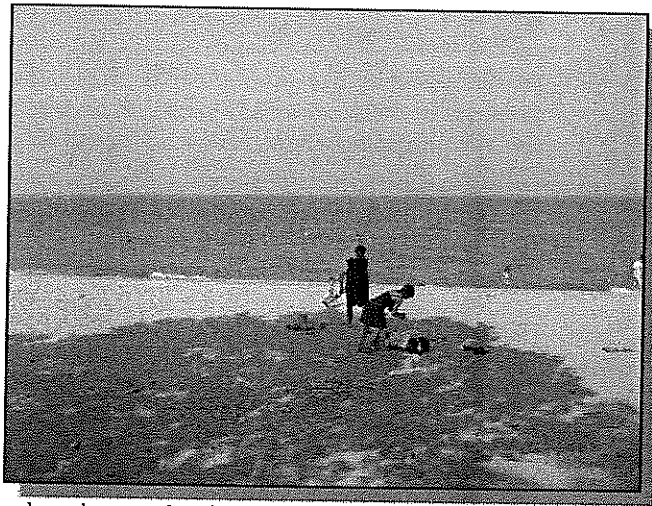
5. Wildlife Habitat

Species of wildlife that are common to the southeastern Wisconsin region are rabbits, squirrels, woodchucks, raccoons, muskrats, and beavers. Larger mammals such as white-tailed deer, coyotes, and foxes also inhabit the region. Common bird species include: pheasants, cardinals, robins, woodthrushes, great blue herons, and killdeer. The most significant concentrations of high quality wildlife habitat are located in the Chiwaukee Prairie – Carol Beach area and surrounding the Des Plaines River.

6. Chiwaukee Prairie-Carol Beach

Drawing visitors from all over the Midwest, the Chiwaukee Prairie-Carol Beach area represents one of the Village's significant natural resource areas. The Chiwaukee Prairie-Carol Beach area is located along the Lake Michigan coast and east of Sheridan Road in the Village (See Map 1b). The land area is approximately 1,825 acres, or roughly 8% of the Village's total acreage.

The Chiwaukee Prairie—Carol Beach lands are worth special mention because they comprise one of the outstanding natural resource areas in southeastern Wisconsin and in the upper Midwest. The land is characterized by a beach dune ridge and swale complex, high-quality wetlands and prairies, and two natural areas of statewide significance. Furthermore, Chiwaukee Prairie is classified as a National Natural Landmark and is recognized as one of the best remaining examples of Lake Michigan prairie land in the upper Midwest. Because of wet soils and other environmental limitations, development in the area is scattered, leaving much of this ecosystem preserved. The Village, County, State, and non-profit organizations such as The Nature Conservancy of Wisconsin and the Chiwaukee Prairie Preservation Fund have continued to extend their efforts to purchase and protect remaining private parcels of land on a willing seller-willing buyer basis. Currently, 482 acres are under the protective ownership. The southern portion of the Chiwaukee Prairie area is characterized by a 242-acre contiguous prairie, managed by The Nature Conservancy. The DNR managed lands north of this area are fragmented by roads and homes.



C. POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic characteristics help to determine the types of park and recreational facilities that the Village will use now and in the future. Important demographic trends for Pleasant Prairie are as follows:

- Park and recreational facilities will need to accommodate approximately 46% population growth over the next 10 years;
- The Village has a large population under the age of 25 (34%), compared to many other places; and
- Over the next 10-15 years 24% of local residents will be moving into the 65-and-older age bracket.

1. Population

The Village has experienced a significant increase in population in recent years. From 1990 to 2000, the Village's population grew approximately 34% (See figure 1). This compares with a 19% increase in Kenosha County and a 9% increase for the State of Wisconsin over this same time period. Pleasant Prairie's 2005 population is estimated to be 18,993. The Village's daytime population is estimated to be between 40 and 50 percent higher due to the large number of people that commute into the Village for jobs, shopping, recreational events, and schools.

Figure 1: Population Trends

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005
Village of Pleasant Prairie	12,019	12,703	12,037	16,136	18,993*
Kenosha County	117,917	123,137	128,181	149,577	157,935
State of Wisconsin	4,417,821	4,705,642	4,891,769	5,363,675	5,563,896

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2004.
 * Village of Pleasant Prairie population estimate, 2005.

The Village is projected to grow at the higher end of the intermediate growth scenario through the year 2030. Figure 2 shows population projections for both the Village and the County that were prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) in 2004. Over the next ten years, the Village is expected to grow an additional 46%.

Figure 2: Population Projections

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Village of Pleasant Prairie	16,136	18,993	23,851	27,740	31,630	35,519	39,409
Kenosha County	149,577	157,935	165,678	173,624	181,693	190,145	--

Source: The Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2004
 Village of Pleasant Prairie population estimates for 2005-2030.

2. Age

In 2000, the residents of Pleasant Prairie had a median age of 37 years, which is older than Kenosha County (34.8 years) and the State of Wisconsin (36.0 years). According to the 2000 Census, the Village had 5,457 residents under the age of 25, comprising 34% of the total population. This proportion of younger residents has risen since the 1990 census, when approximately 29% of the Village's total population was younger than 25 years. The number of school age residents (0-17 years) in 2000 was 27%, compared with 26% in 1990. In 2000, there were 1,715 residents age 65 or older, or 11% of the population. In 1990, this proportion of older residents was only slightly less at 10% of the population. These data depict that the Village has maintained a relatively stable proportion of younger and older residents over the last decade. While there are significantly more young residents than older residents in the Village, 24% of the population will be moving into the 65-and-older age bracket within the next 10-15 years.

Figure 3: Age Distribution

	Village of Pleasant Prairie	Kenosha County	State of Wisconsin
Median Age	37.0	34.8	36.0
% Under Age 5	6.2	6.9	6.4
% age 5-14	16.4	15.7	14.6
% age 15-24	11.3	13.8	14.3
% age 25-44	31.4	31.3	29.5
% age 45-64	24.2	20.7	22.2
% over age 65	10.6	11.6	13.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

3. Racial Distribution

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, in 2000, Pleasant Prairie was characterized by a predominately "White" population (94.1%), as compared with 88.4% for Kenosha County and 88.9% for the State of Wisconsin (Figure 4). Furthermore, the proportion of "Black or African American" residents in Pleasant Prairie was considerably lower (1.5%) than the County (5.1%) and the State (5.7%). The proportion of "Asian" residents was comparable to the rest of the State; however, there was a higher percentage of "Asian" residents in Pleasant Prairie as compared with the County, and a smaller percentage of "Hispanic or Latino" residents as compared with the County. These data depict a relatively homogeneous population.

Figure 4: Racial Distribution

	Village of Pleasant Prairie	Kenosha County	State of Wisconsin
White	94.1%	88.4%	88.9%
Black or African American	1.5%	5.1%	5.7%
Asian	1.4%	0.9%	1.7%
Hispanic or Latino	3.4%	7.2%	3.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.4%	0.4%	0.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	<0.1%	<0.1%	<0.1%
Some Other Race	1.0%	3.3%	1.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

4. Employment

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2000, 70.4% of Pleasant Prairie's population age 16 and older was in the labor force. Of these, 69.8% were employed in the civilian labor force and 0.6% were employed in the armed forces. Figure 5 shows the occupational distribution for the Village.

Figure 5: Occupational Distribution

Occupational Group	Percentage of Employed Labor Force
Management or Professional	33.6%
Service Occupations	12.9%
Sales and Office	26.2%
Farming, Fishing, Forestry	0% *
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance	10.4%
Production, Transportation	16.9%

* Although there are active farmers currently living in the Village, the number is too small to represent as a percentage of population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

D. HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

In 2000, the average household size in Pleasant Prairie was 2.73 persons per household, a decrease since the 1990 Census count of 2.83 persons. As shown in Figure 6, the average household size in the Village was slightly higher than that of the County and State. A total of 82.6% of the households were owner-occupied, and the Village had a lower proportion of renters (17.4%) than the County and State.

Figure 6: Household Characteristics

	Village of Pleasant Prairie	Kenosha County	State of Wisconsin
Total Housing Units	6,050	59,989	2,321,144
Household Size	2.73	2.60	2.50
% Occupied	96.2%	93.4%	89.8%
% Owner Occupied	82.6%	69.1%	68.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

E. REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS

Another critical step in the park planning process is an examination of relevant planning efforts in the Village. A comprehensive understanding of how the Village has evolved over time and how it has been planning for the future establishes guidelines for the recommendations presented in this *Plan*. Moreover, a review of existing plans helps identify ways that this *Plan* should be adapted so that it is consistent with the Village’s ongoing goals, objectives, and policies, and coordinated with regional planning efforts.

1. A Park and Open Space Plan for the Kenosha Planning District (1980)

In 1980, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) prepared the first *Park and Open Space Plan* for the City of Kenosha, the Town of Pleasant Prairie, and the Town of Somers. This *Plan*, which was subsequently updated in 1987, presented recommendations regarding the preservation, acquisition, and development of lands for parks and outdoor recreation. Based on community needs and projected population growth, SEWRPC recommended that the former Town of Pleasant Prairie:

- acquire and develop one regional park and seven community or neighborhood parks;
- provide additional facilities, such as baseball fields and playgrounds in three existing parks; and
- take additional measures to preserve important open space lands in the Town.

A 425-acre site along the Des Plaines River was identified as a potential location for the regional park. This site has since been acquired by Pleasant Prairie and is currently known as Prairie Springs Park. The sand and gravel pit operation that was formerly located on the site was transformed into the 110-acre spring-fed Lake Andrea and surrounding park land.

2. A Land Use Management Plan for the Chiwaukee Prairie-Carol Beach Area of the Town of Pleasant Prairie (1985)

The Chiwaukee Prairie-Carol Beach area is located along the coast of Lake Michigan within the Village (formerly Town) of Pleasant Prairie. Home to a variety of ecosystems, including wetlands, beach dunes, and upland prairies, these lands have been characterized as one of the outstanding resource areas in southeastern Wisconsin. However, despite their ecological importance to the region, the future of these habitats has not always been clear. The land has faced substantial development pressures over the last several decades. Therefore, in the hopes of establishing a land use plan that would address the ongoing conflicts between development and preservation, SEWRPC completed a multi-year land use management plan under the direction of the Town of Pleasant Prairie and Kenosha County for the Chiwaukee Prairie- Carol Beach area.

This Plan proposed the following:

- The maintenance of a preservation corridor that connects the Kenosha Sand Dunes on the north end of the study area with Chiwaukee Prairie on the south end;
- The housing stock in the area should increase from 512 housing units in 1980 to about 1,460 units upon full development;
- The Town of Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and The Nature Conservancy should acquire platted, unimproved lots east of Sheridan Road for preservation under a willing seller-willing buyer basis;
- Appropriate land use and zoning controls should be implemented to preserve and protect lands that have been acquired in the public's interest.

3. A Park and Open Space Plan for the Kenosha Planning District (1987)

In 1987, SEWRPC updated the 1980 Kenosha County *Park and Open Space Plan*. This effort was initiated primarily to ensure that the County would maintain its eligibility for federal and state grant monies. Updated recommendations for this *Plan* included:

- Continue to acquire land along Lake Michigan as it becomes available, and provide improved access to the Lake for boating and other water-based activities;
- DNR and The Nature Conservancy should continue to acquire lands within identified environmental corridors and designated natural resource areas;
- Local units of government should plan for and provide park and open space sites located within their area of jurisdiction;
- The County should acquire about 1,273 acres of land along the Des Plaines River. This corridor should serve as the location for a variety of resource-oriented outdoor recreational facilities, including trails, picnic areas, river access points, and support facilities such as parking lots and restrooms.

4. A Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities System Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2010 (1994)

The *Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan* was completed in 1994 by SEWRPC. The intent of the *Plan* was to encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation by planning for the provision of facilities that accommodate bicycle and pedestrian travel. In cooperation with a Technical and Citizen Advisory Committee, SEWRPC proposed a total of approximately 113 miles of bicycle ways within Kenosha County. Roughly 27% of the proposed trails are located in off-street natural resource corridors. In addition, the bicycle ways are designed to link up major activity centers, including Pleasant Prairie parks.

5. **A Comprehensive Plan for the Kenosha Urban Planning District (1995)**

In 1996, the Village adopted the *Comprehensive Plan for the Kenosha Urban Planning District*, prepared by SEWRPC and the represented communities. The *Plan* includes a park and open space chapter, which served as an update to the 1987 *Park and Open Space Plan for the Kenosha Planning District*. The chapter is divided into two components: one for the area-wide planning of regional and multi-community parks, and a second for the local planning of community and neighborhood parks. As such, the *Plan* presents the following recommendations:

- Acquire and develop two new community parks and three new neighborhood parks;
- Add 126 new acres of parks in the Village by the year 2010;
- Acquire and develop one 20-acre site for use as a “Village Green”;
- Develop two sites along the Lake Michigan shore-line to provide access to the lake;
- Provide additional recreational facilities at three existing parks;
- Develop a local recreation trail system; and
- Preserve all environmental corridor lands as natural open spaces, or incorporate these lands into development areas as local parks.

6. **Prospectus for the Preparation of a Multi-Use Trail System Plan for the Village of Pleasant Prairie (1995)**

Shortly after the completion of the Prairie Springs Park along the Des Plaines River, Pleasant Prairie citizens and officials recognized the need to begin to interconnect their Village park system by developing a long-range, multi-use trail system. In order to provide a framework for a future *Multi-Use Trail Plan* and a basis for park and recreational budgetary decision making, the Village established an advisory committee comprised of members of the Village Board, the Plan Commission, Park Commission, SEWRPC, and other technical and professional individuals. The prospectus that resulted from the advisory committee’s research addressed the need for, as well as the scope, content, organization, budget, and timeline of the work that would be necessary to prepare the *Multi-Use Trail Plan*.

The Village has since completed a preliminary bike trail system map for the purposes of conducting an impact fee assessment. Additional trail planning has been conducted as part of this *2006 Park and Open Space Plan*.

7. **A Regional Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Protection and Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin (1997)**

Beginning in 1991, SEWRPC staff conducted a natural areas and critical species habitat protection and management study to guide the preservation of the most crucial remaining natural areas and critical species habitats in Southeastern Wisconsin. The 1997 *Plan* that resulted from the study presented the locations of 12 natural area sites and 4 critical species habitat sites in the Village. None of the identified sites were under protective ownership at the time of the report. However, because these sites make significant contributions to the biodiversity, scenic beauty, and overall integrity of the region, it was recommended by SEWRPC that they be preserved, protected, and managed into the future (See Maps 1a and 1b).

8. **Kenosha County Park and Open Space Plan (1999)**

This 1999 amendment added one full paragraph to the 1987 *Park and Open Space Plan*, which recommended the development of an additional county park in the western portion of Kenosha County (outside Pleasant Prairie). The amendment also included an updated outdoor recreation map for the year 2020. The map depicts the location of a proposed trail within Pleasant Prairie running from the Wisconsin/Illinois border northward to Prairie Springs Park, around the eastern perimeter of the Park, and continuing north to meet up with the CTH C on-street bike route.

9. A Comprehensive Plan for the Des Plaines River Watershed (2003)

The purpose of the Des Plaines Watershed planning program and the resulting report was to help mitigate water resource-related problems by developing a plan that would guide water resource conservation and management into the future. Ultimately the *Plan* included four elements: a land use and park and open space element, a floodland and stormwater management plan element, a water quality management plan element, and a fisheries management plan element. The land use and park and open space element reflected the recommendations included in both the *Comprehensive Plan for the Kenosha Urban Planning District* and the *Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities System Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2010*.

The *Plan* positions the Village within the context of its larger bioregion (an area characterized by a particular ecological community and bounded by natural rather than artificial borders) and defines the connection between park and open space areas and the overall health of the Des Plaines watershed.

10. A Land and Water Resource Management Plan for Kenosha County: 2000-2004

Directed by the Kenosha County Land and Water Conservation Committee, the *Land and Water Resource Management Plan for Kenosha County* was intended to guide future natural resource-related programs in the County, particularly with respect to nonpoint source water pollution. The *Plan* seeks to identify and prioritize land and water-resource related problems, establish goals and objectives to address the problems, develop an implementation plan to meet the goals and objectives, and design public informational and educational programs to incorporate County residents. The *Plan* presents recommendations and priority actions by watershed. Some of the recommendations and priority actions that may relate to this *Park and Open Space Plan* are as follows:

- Support implementation of the *Land Use Management Plan for the Chivaukee Prairie—Carol Beach Area and the Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Plan*;
- Establish conservation buffers around riparian corridors, shorelands, and wetlands; and
- Track the level of protection for environmentally significant lands, such as those identified in the regional *Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Plan*.

