

Dane County Parks Signage Manual for Friends Groups

Updated January 2026

1. Introduction

Dane County Parks Friends Groups play a vital role in enhancing the visitor experience through interpretive and informational signage. This manual provides guidance on the signage request process, design standards, installation, and funding opportunities.

The purpose of this Manual is to provide guidance to Dane County Parks Friends Groups in their process of designing, purchasing, and installing interpretive signs within the county park system.

2. Funding Opportunities

Dane County Parks offers grant opportunities that Friends Groups can be used to help cover signage. These can be found on our website at:

<https://www.danecountyparks.com/grants/friends-of-dane-county-parks-grant-program>

3. Signage Request Process

All signs initial concepts, content, and placement locations must be reviewed and approved by Dane County Parks staff. Please follow the steps below at the beginning of your signage project to ensure a smooth process:

1. **Concept Review:** Submit a draft concept of the proposed sign(s), content, and location(s) for review before beginning your project.
2. **Design Development:** Work with a professional designer to develop the sign or request a predesigned interpretive panel template (refer to Section 5 below).
3. **Draft Review:** Submit completed designs to staff for review.
4. **Final Review:** Submit completed designs to staff for final approval
5. **Installation:** Work with Dane County Parks staff to install signs or coordinate self-installation.

4. Content

Friends Groups may request to create an informational sign about their group or an interpretive sign to help educate visitors about the property's history or special features and to foster a

sense of place. Interpretive signs should focus on a single theme, point of interest, or historical feature. The goal is to educate visitors while keeping the message clear and engaging. A well-designed sign balances text, images, and graphic design, following the “3-30-3” rule:

- **3 seconds** to grab attention,
- **30 seconds** for an engaged reader,
- **3 minutes** for those highly interested.

Layout/Design Criteria: Signs should contain 1/3 graphics, 1/3 text, and 1/3 blank space, use high-contrast colors, and matte finish. A website shall be used to check colors and accessibility for those visually impaired. An example would be: <https://www.vischeck.com>

5. Types of Signs and Fabrication

I. Kiosk Panels

Some parks have 2 or 3-sided kiosks that provide park property information for visitors. Space within these kiosks is limited but Friends Groups may apply for one side of the kiosk. The panel developed must fill the whole area. Panels can have empty space on them for Friends Group posters and announcements (example below) but this space must be kept current by the Friends Group. Panels that are not maintained may be removed at any time by park staff.

The example panel below is available as an Adobe Illustrator file that friends can take to a designer to modify. It includes a space for posting two 8.5x11 sheets of papers for upcoming events.



A screenshot of the Lussier Family Heritage Center website. The homepage features a dark blue header with the center's name and a sub-header 'ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & OUTDOOR RECREATION CENTER'. Below the header, there are several sections: 'Overview' (with a brief description of the center's mission), 'Youth Programs & Summer Camp' (with a description of the center's youth programs), 'Field Trips' (with a description of the center's field trip opportunities), 'Upcoming Programs' (with a grid of images showing various programs), and 'Adult & Family Programs' (with a description of the center's adult and family programs). The website also includes a footer with links to the center's website, social media pages, and a QR code.

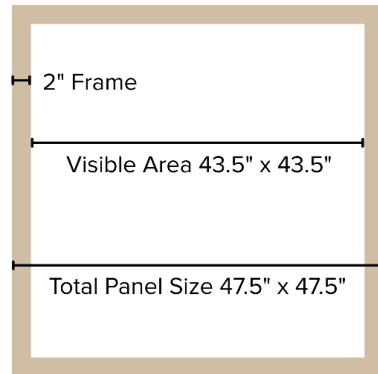
Panel Dimensions: 47.5" x 47.5" with a 2-inch outer margin that will be covered by the kiosk frame (see example to right).

Panel Fabrication: DiBond with UV protection laminate; include anti-graffiti if the panel will not be covered by a kiosk panel door.

Local Vendor Examples:

Signs by Tomorrow
Phone: (608) 246-9663
Email: sales@sbtmadison.com

Budget Signs
Phone: (608) 238-9080
Email: info@budgetsignsmadison.com



II. Trailside Interpretive or Point-of-interest Signs

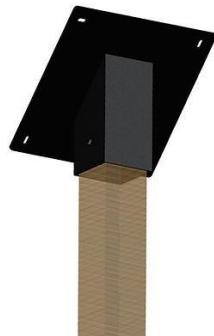
Panel Dimensions: typically sized at 36" wide by 24" high.

Installation: To the extent possible, interpretive signs should be placed at or along developed trails or facilities that are ADA accessible. Signs should also be placed in a way that they don't detract from the natural setting or create too much sign clutter. Location needs to be approved by Dane County Parks.

The bottom edge of the sign should be set at 32" and angled at 30 to 45 degrees. 27" of clear space from the ground should remain under a sign for wheelchair clearance.

In areas of cultural significance where ground disturbance may be a concern, discuss alternative sign installation options with park staff.

Sign Fabrication: frameless 1/2" Exterior CHPL (Custom High Pressure Laminate) with stainless steel threaded inserts w/ security bolts for attaching to a metal plate with a sleeve



that attaches to a 4" x 4" wood post. Signs should be printed through [Fossil Graphics](#). Signs are mounted to a [16x20 mount plate](#) that can be purchased through [BestEx Signs](#). The plate includes [product specifications](#) that can be sent to Fossil Graphics, along with your sign file, so they know exactly where to install the security bolts.

III. Wildlife Box Signs

IV. Dane County Parks offers a selection of **predesigned wildlife box signs** that could be used throughout the park system. Groups installing a wildlife box sign must use one of these templates vs designing their own. This creates consistency across the park system. A variety of options are available.



8.5 x 11" Metal Sign

These signs will have two mounting holes drilled into the sign for mounting (unless otherwise requested). A friends group logo can be added to the sign before printing. [Sign templates can be viewed here](#).

Dane County Parks would order the sign and the sponsoring organization would be responsible for installing the sign and reimbursing Dane County Parks for the printing costs.

The cost of the signs is \$100. Please indicate in your Concept Review request if you would like to use one of the existing templates.



4x6" Metal Mini Plaque

These signs will have two mounting holes drilled into the sign for mounting and are sized to fit on a 4x4 post. These cannot be customized before printing. [Sign templates can be viewed here](#).

Dane County Parks would order the sign and the sponsoring organization would be responsible for installing the sign and reimbursing Dane County Parks for the printing costs.

The cost of the signs is \$50. Please indicate in your Concept Review request if you would like to use one of the existing templates.

V. Predesigned Interpretive Panels

Dane County Parks offers a selection of **predesigned trailside, post-mounted interpretive panels** that could be used throughout the park system. These professionally designed templates ensure consistency across parks while allowing for minor customizations to fit specific needs. Staff can make small tweaks to these templates for the sponsoring organizations, contingent upon staff workload.

Dane County Parks would order it and install the sign and the sponsoring organization would be responsible for reimbursing Dane County Parks for the printing and installation costs.

The cost of the signs is \$1000. The panels are 24" x 36". Please indicate in your Concept Review request if you would like to use one of the existing templates.

The following templates can be modified and printed by Dane County Parks upon request:

Pollinator Garden – Highlights the importance of pollinators and native plants.

Small Garden, Big Impact

Packed with native plants, this small garden offers essential food and nesting habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. These plants also help stormwater soak into the ground, keeping our waters clean and healthy. Once established, well-designed native gardens are low-maintenance—thriving without fertilizers, watering, mulching, or chemicals—making them a win for you and the environment.



POLLINATORS are animals that visit flowering plants and transfer pollen from flower to flower, thus aiding plant reproduction. North American pollinators include bees, butterflies, moths, flower flies, beetles, hummingbirds, and in some parts of the southwestern U.S. and Mexico, nectar-feeding bats. Three-fourths of the world's flowering plants and about 35 percent of the world's food crops depend on pollinators to reproduce.

SUPPORTING POLLINATORS AT HOME

- Choose Native Plants**
Select plants that are native to the area and aim to have something blooming spring through fall.
- Leave Nesting Habitat**
Most native bees and insects are solitary, they do not nest in holes or colonies. Provide habitat in your yard by leaving dead trees, potted plants, mulch-free soil, logs and dead wood, and leaves.
- Provide a Water Source**
Provide a water source, like a shallow dish with pebbles, for pollinators to drink from even in winter.
- Eliminate Pesticides**
Reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides, including mosquito sprays, in your yard. Purchase plants from nurseries that don't treat their seeds or plants with Neonicotinoids.
- Lights Out**
Artificial lighting can reduce nighttime pollinator rates. Turn off outdoor lights when you go to bed, use lights with a motion sensor, or point lights toward the ground to reduce their impact.

Stroll quietly for a few minutes and observe the garden. What species are visiting the garden and what are they doing?

THIS GARDEN IS MAINTAINED BY: GIRL SCOUT TROOP 7720

www.dane.com/twparks.com
www.dpdparks.org
(608) 224-2730 TTY: Call WI Relay 771

Registered as a Monarch Watch waystation. Learn more about the plants in this garden on the waystation feedback page. [Go to website](#) | Learn more about waystations

Prairie Ecosystem – Explains prairie habitats, key species, and their ecological role.

Woodland Ecosystem

The wooded areas within the park are classified as oak opening, oak woodland, mesic forest, and southern dry-mesic forest and are largely comprised of Bur and Black Oak, Shagbark Hickory, and Sugar Maple. Other interspersed trees include Black Cherry, Hackberry, and White pine. The Arthur Shultz Memorial Woods is a planted forest stand from 1957 providing excellent habitat, especially winter cover.

1. Bur Oak
2. Black Oak
3. Blue Jay
4. Screech Owl
5. White Pine
6. Red Headed Woodpecker
7. Tree Swallow
8. Jack-In-the-Pulpit
9. Wild Geranium
10. Red Trillium
11. Yellow Trout Lily
12. Sensitive Fern
13. Sugar Maple
14. Honeyuckle*
15. Buckthorn*
16. Garlic Mustard*
17. Dame's Rocket*

*Invasive plant

Can you hear woodpeckers drumming on trees? Each species has their own beat. Woodpeckers drum to find insect meals, claim territory, or distract mates. Try to spot holes left by woodpeckers as you travel through the woods!

Dane County Parks
www.danecountyparks.com
danecounty@countyparks.com
608-224-3730 TTY: Call WI Relay 771
 **Translations Available**
www.danecountyparks.com/QR03

Anderson Park
FOND DU LAC, WI

Woodland Ecosystem – Describes forested areas, native flora, and fauna.

Prairie Ecosystem

Prairies are temperate grasslands made up of mostly native grasses, sedges, and flowering plants. Tallgrass prairies are among the most decimated and threatened natural communities in the Midwest and the world. Most native prairies found today in Wisconsin are small remnants that are less than 10 acres in size.

1. Soil Biology
2. Bumblebee
3. Wood Mint
4. White Wild Indigo
5. Lead Plant
6. Stiff Gentian
7. Common Milkweed
8. Little Bluestem
9. Goldfinch
10. Bobolink
11. Grasshopper Sparrow
12. Cup Plant
13. Wild Poinsettia*
14. Burdock*
15. Dicots

*Invasive plant

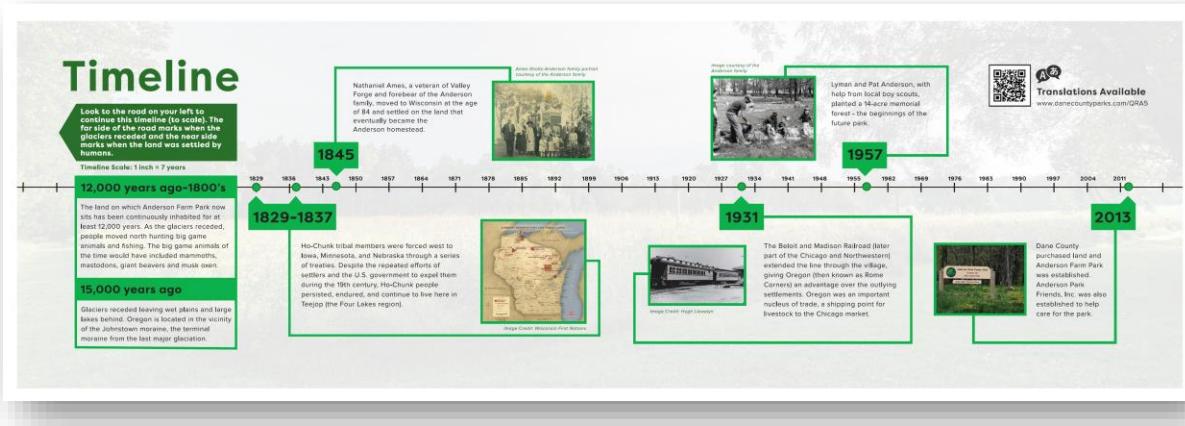
Can you spot a bird nesting box in the prairie? These support a number of species, including Kestrel, Blue Bird, Chipping Sparrow, House Wrens and Tree Swallows.

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Anderson Park
FOND DU LAC, WI

Additionally, staff worked with **Swink**, a local design company, to develop templates for interpretive panels that commonly appear in our park system. These templates are available in an Adobe Illustrator format and can be given to a professional designer at the start of your project to help reduce design costs and provide signage consistency throughout our park system. Sponsoring organizations are not required to these templates but they are a resource that is available.

Historical Timeline of the Property – Showcases the history of a park or site through key events and milestones.



Restoration and Stewardship – highlights restoration being done at the park with a spotlight on the Friends Group.



Property History – highlights previous occupants of the land and historical information.

Anderson Family History

Anderson Farm County Park is named after former Dane County Board Supervisor Lyman F. Anderson who was active in town, county and state government for over four decades. Lyman lived and farmed his entire life on this land and was legendary for championing family farming. Lyman's wife, Patricia Anderson, sold the family farm and land to Dane County in 2009. The public can enjoy this community park that honors Lyman's memory and preserves the land's beauty and agricultural heritage.

FARMING

After glaciers retreated from the area 15,000 years ago, prairies flourished and created deep, rich topsoil that was perfect for agriculture. Generations of Anderson family women helped run the farm, often in addition to outside jobs.

Patricia and Lyman Anderson

In the early 1960's Pat started a small business delivering eggs to local households in Oregon. This grew into what would become Lucky's Poultry Ranch. At its peak, the 9,000 laying hens produced eggs for many local restaurants, grocery stores and family households in the Madison area. Pat was involved with all aspects of farm life alongside her husband Lyman who was a champion of family farming. Pat also worked for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for 25 years and was involved with various community groups.

Mary Sholts Anderson and Frank Anderson - Lyman's Parents

Mary and Frank lived on the farm across from what is now the dog park. Mary had enormous vegetable and flower gardens and was still active in milking cows at the age of 70. She taught German, English and Mathematics at Oregon High School and also taught piano lessons to many local youth.

Alma Ames Sholts and Arthur H. Sholts Sr. - Lyman's Grandparents

Alma was a farm wife involved in all of the farming activities as well as teaching at the local one room schoolhouse. Arthur farmed and worked in education as well as being active in local and state politics as a member of the Town of Oregon Board and Wisconsin State Assembly.

ARTHUR SHOLTS MEMORIAL WOODS - THE BEGINNINGS OF A FUTURE PARK

In 1947, Arthur H. Sholts Jr., Mary's brother, passed away. Mary and Frank wanted to remember Arthur in a way that embodied the family values of conservation and community, so a memorial forest was planted. Lyman and Pat Anderson, with help from local boy scouts, planted more than 11,000 trees and shrubs on a 14-acre plot to establish the Arthur Sholts Memorial Woods. This forest was the beginning of the park you see today.

Family photos courtesy of the Anderson family.





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