



Parks & Open Space Plan Update 2024-2029 Walking Iron Trail Update

January 17, 2023 – Wisconsin Heights High School



Dane County Parks Welcome



Joleen Stinson
Parks Director



Dane County Parks Planning and Development Team



Chris James
Park Planning Manager



Lindsay Koehnke
Landscape Architect



Dan Schmitt
Landscape Architect



Alex DeSmidt
Senior Landscape Architect



Jeff Prey
LTE Park Planner

Meeting Information

- Press Release Sent Out January 8th
- Stakeholder E-vite January 8th
- Posted to Dane County Parks Events Page
- Public Information Meeting, Not a Public Hearing
- Not a Park Commission Meeting, No Action Items or Official Business
- Hybrid Meeting-Virtual and In-Person Options
- **Two Presentations**, Each Followed With Opportunity for Virtual Attendees to Provide Chat Comments/Questions
- Welcome Comments by Mail, Phone, Voice
- Email Preferred if Possible.

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Parks and Open Space Plan Update Agenda

- Dane County Parks Overview
- Parks and Open Space Overview
- Planning Process and Schedule
- Current POSP Topics
- Demographics/Recreation Trends Overview
- Current Western Dane County Projects
- How to Provide Plan Input



Dane County Parks Overview

Dane County Parks Welcomes over 4 million visitors annually and manage over 18,000 acres of land!

- 25 Recreation Parks (including 8 Dog Parks)
- 20 Wildlife Areas
- 14 Natural Resource Areas
- 4 Historical or Cultural Sites
- 2 Forests
- Over 100 miles of trails (bike, equestrian, & cross-country ski)
- Over 3,000 acres of conservation & streambank easements
- 5 campgrounds & multiple adult & youth group camp sites
- Lussier Family Heritage Center



Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan 2018 - 2023

Dane County Parks System

- Recreation Park
- Natural Resource Area
- Wildlife Area
- Historical or Cultural Site
- Forest
- Trails
- Land & Water Legacy Wetland Sites
- Streambank Easements
- Conservation Easements
- Conservation Fund Grant Properties*

Dane County Natural Resource Area Project Areas

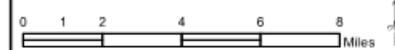
- Natural Resource Area Boundary (NRAB)
- Ice Age National Scenic Trail Corridor

Reference Layers

- Existing Regional Shared-Use Trails
- Railroad
- Lake/Pond
- River/Stream
- US Fish and Wildlife Lands
- National Park Service Lands
- DNR Public Lands
- Municipalities

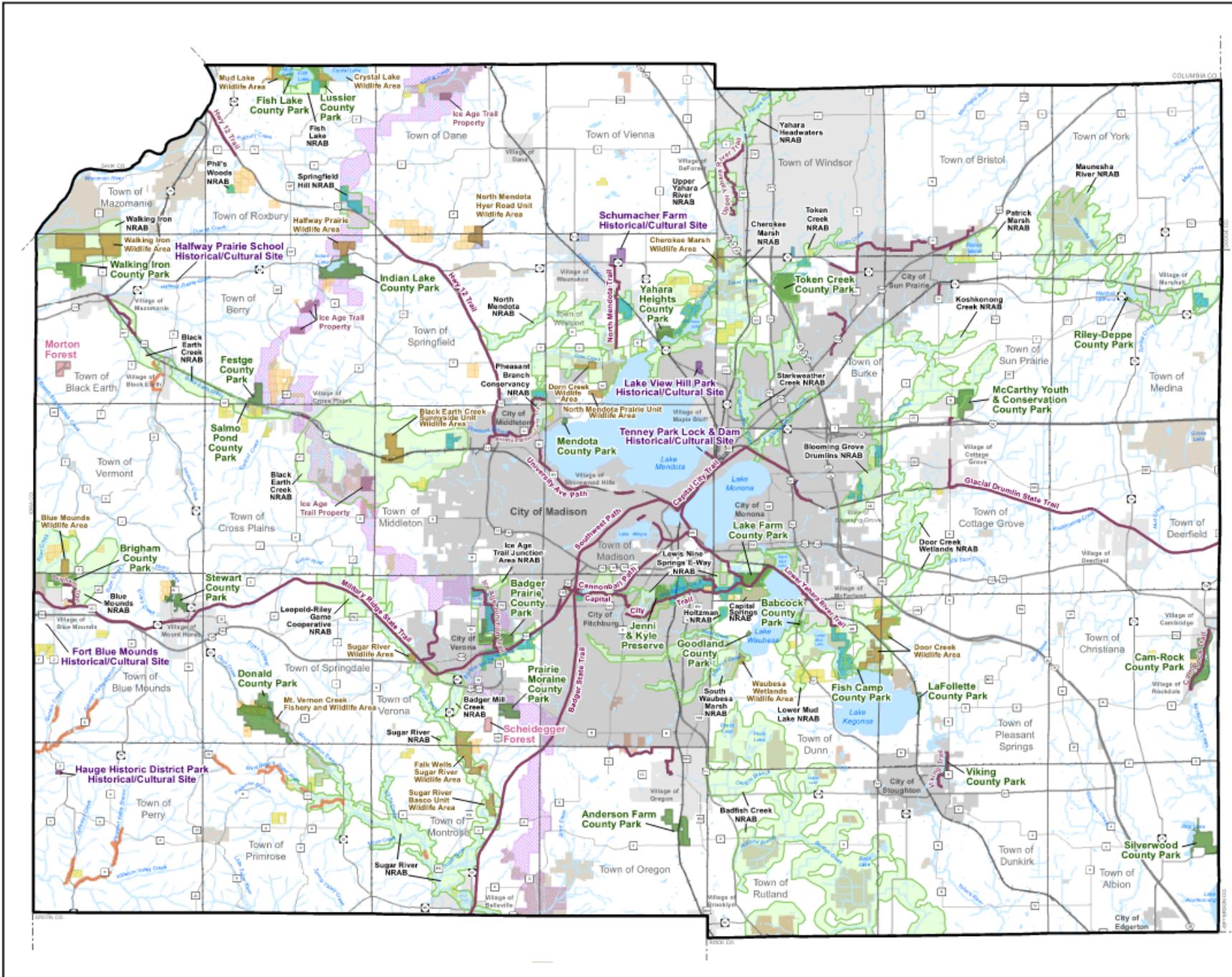
*Conservation Fund Grant Properties are lands or easements acquired by local units of government or non-profit entities with assistance from the Dane County Conservation Fund Grant Program.

Map of Counties Surrounding Dane County



Dane County Parks
Change is Success

Map Sources:
 Recreation Parks, Forests, Wetlands/Cultural Sites, Wildlife Areas, Natural Resource Area Project Areas, Natural Resource Area Boundaries, Trails, Conservation Easements, Streambank Easements, Land & Water Legacy Wetland Sites, US Fish and Wildlife Lands, National Park Service Lands, DNR Public Lands, Dane County Parks (2017), Municipalities, Deer Reserves, Dane County (2017), Redesigning Dane County (2014), Ne-Ago National Forest, Trail, Center and Properties, Ice Age Trail Alliance (2013), Land Use/Development, Trail-Decision Area Interposition Planning Organization (2013), State Natural Lands, Dane County (2017)



Parks and Open Space Plan Overview



What is the Parks and Open Space Plan?

- First plan was completed in 1970
 - 9th update in 45 years
- Provide common vision for park, recreation, and resource protection initiatives, county-wide
- Provide a 'check-in' opportunity for Dane County Parks to interact with Partners/Public/Stakeholders
- Stewardship grant eligibility
 - Must be updated every 5 years



A serene landscape featuring a calm body of water, likely a lake or river, surrounded by lush greenery. In the foreground, tall reeds and grasses grow along the water's edge. The middle ground shows a wooden dock extending into the water, with a small boat moored nearby. The background is filled with a dense line of trees, including several tall evergreens. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter, and a white text box is centered over the water and reeds.

**“The Journey is the
Destination...”**

What the Plan is NOT...

- A Land Use Plan or Zoning tool
 - Unless a local unit of government adopts it
- A trail development plan
- A park development plan



Planning Process Milestones



Planning Process



Current Plan Update Status

COMPLETED

- Demographics



IN PROCESS

- Public Input
- Land & Facility Inventory
- Accomplishments
- Recreation Needs Analysis
- Park Program Areas
- Current Topics





**Overall...The 2018-2023 Dane County
Parks and Open Space Plan is still
actively being implemented and the
majority of the plan recommendations
will continue to be valid**

Current Park Topics

- Climate change impacts on parks & recreation
- Cultural resource preservation policies
- Parks & LWRD land management coordination
- Regional trail project priorities
- Improving accessibility and inclusivity
- Stream restoration projects
- Land restoration projects
- Carbon sequestration and parks
- Renewable and green energy
- Pandemic impacts on Parks & Recreation

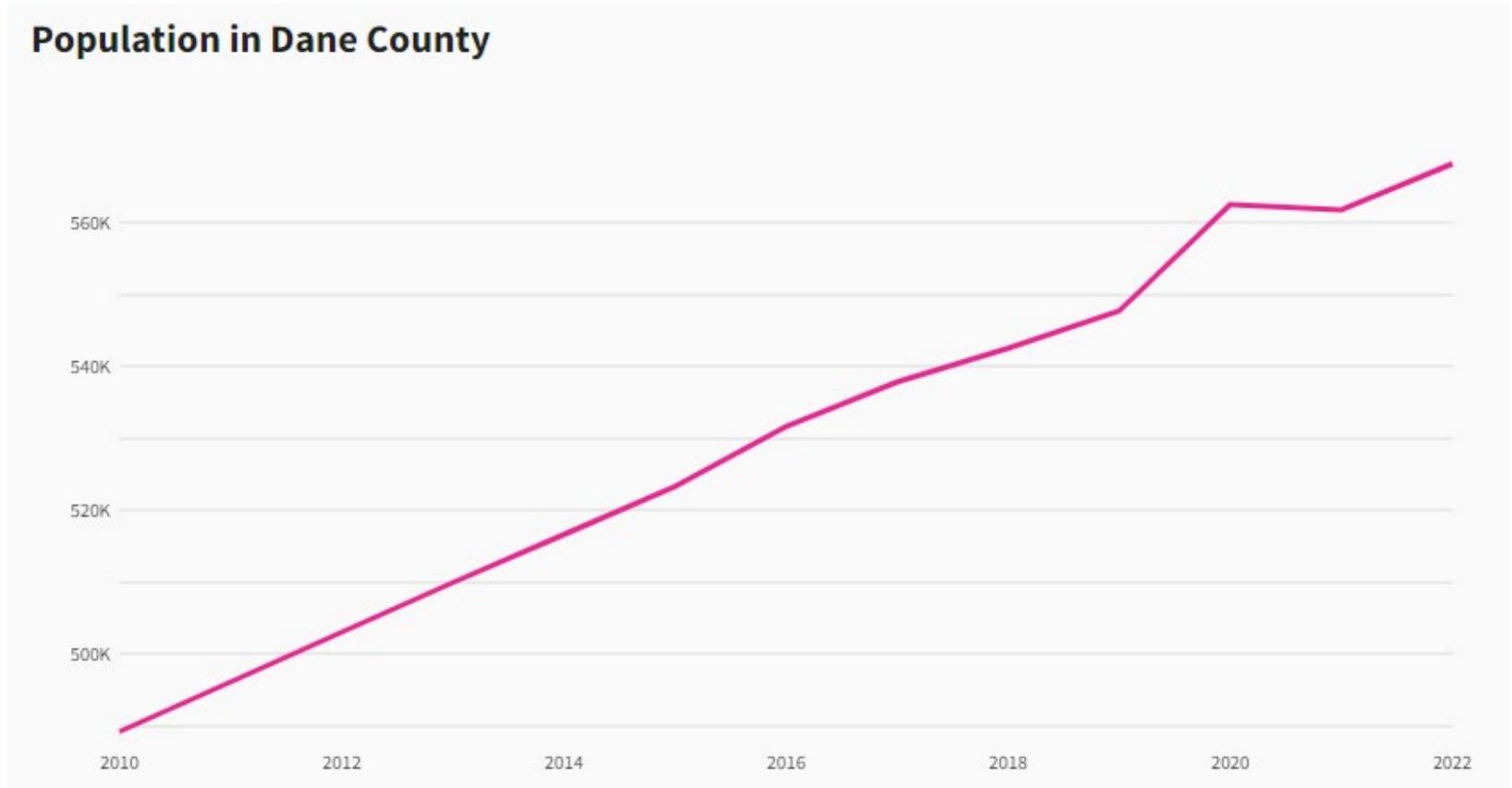


Demographics - Population

Dane County is the second fastest growing county in the state.

- Dane County makes up 10% of Wisconsin's population
- The population has grown 16.1% from 2010 to 2022

Population in Dane County



Source: USA Facts



Demographics - Age

The 65+ resident age group is increasing

- The share of the population increased from 10.3% in 2010 to 15.3% in 2022
- Up 72.2% from 2010-2022 among the age range

The 0-4 resident age group is decreasing

- The share of the population decreased from 6.2% in 2010 to 5% in 2022
- Dropped 6.5% from 2010-2022 among the age range

Population by age in Dane County



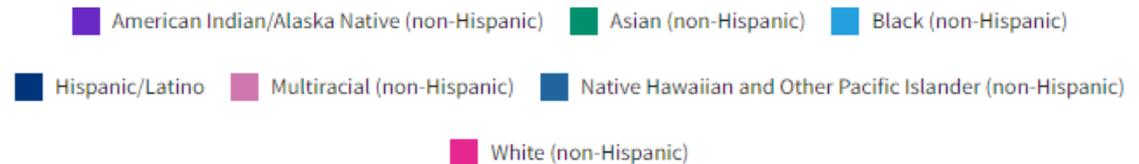
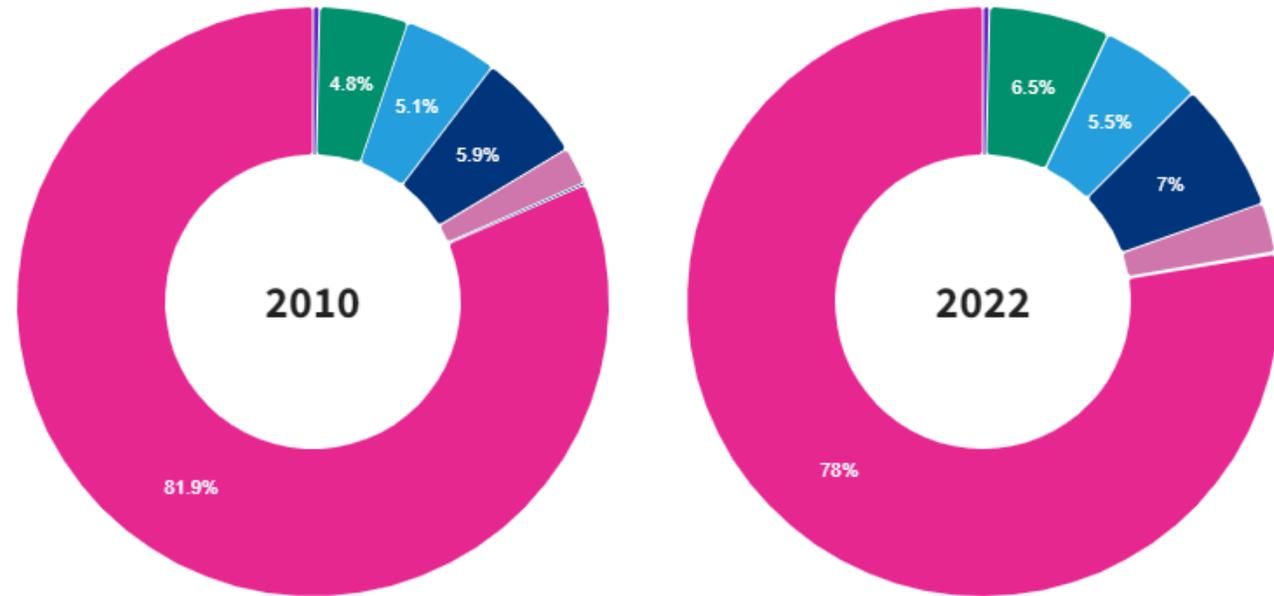
Demographics – Race/Ethnicity

It is important to understand the race and ethnicity demographics within Dane County to effectively plan parks that are equitable and inclusive to all residents.

- Diversity increased from 2010 to 2022
- Asian population grew the most with a 1.7% increase

Racial makeup of Dane County

Hide Hispanic ethnicity

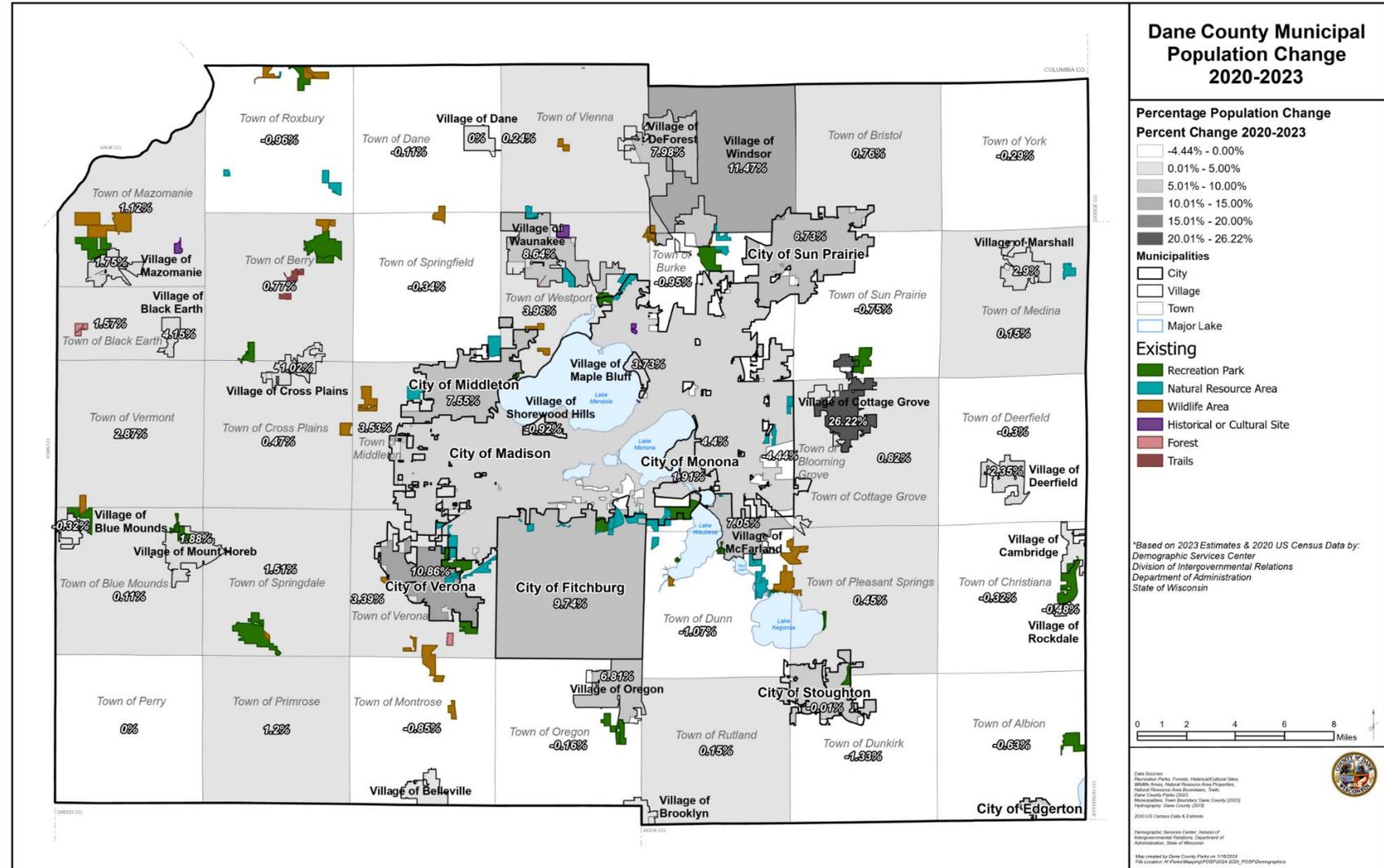


Source: USA Facts

Dane Co. 2020-2023 Percentage Population Growth

Top ten largest gains,
2020 (census) – 2023 (estimate)

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--------|
| 1. | Village of Cottage Grove | 26.22% |
| 2. | Village of Windsor | 11.47% |
| 3. | City of Verona | 10.86% |
| 4. | City of Fitchburg | 9.74% |
| 5. | Village of Waunakee | 8.64% |
| 6. | Village of DeForest | 7.98% |
| 7. | City of Middleton | 7.55% |
| 8. | Village of McFarland | 7.05% |
| 9. | Village of Oregon | 6.81% |
| 10. | City of Sun Prairie | 6.73% |

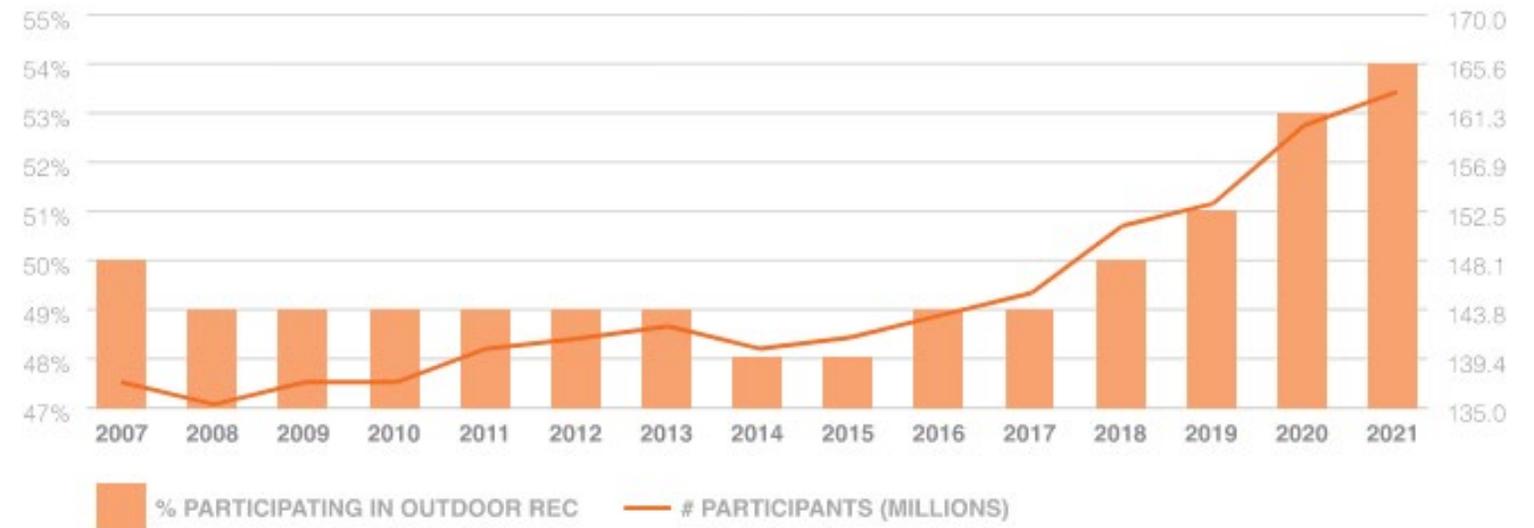


* Created by Dane County based on 2020 US Census and 2023 Estimate

Current Recreation Trends - Growth

- Pandemic increased new and returning outdoor participants by 26% - 2021 had the highest ever recorded.

OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION GROWTH TRENDS
2007 TO 2021



Source: NRPA – 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report

Current Recreation Trends - National

INTEREST LEVEL OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES BY RACE/ETHNICITY

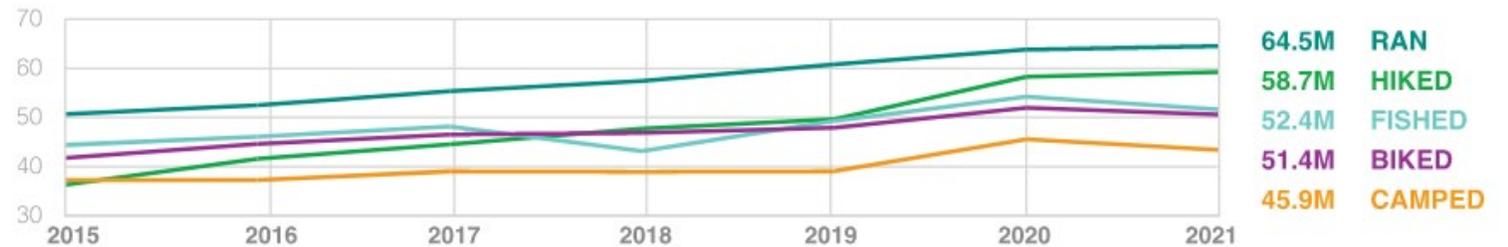
INTEREST LEVEL	ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER PERSONS	AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK PERSONS	HISPANIC/LATINX PERSONS	WHITE PERSONS
1	 23.8%	 15.4%	 20.8%	 22%
2	 22.3%	 11.8%	 17.9%	 18.7%
3	 16.7%	 10.8%	 17%	 17.7%
4	 17.7%	 7.2%	 15.7%	 16.9%
5	 9.8%	 6.3%	 13.8%	 15.4%

LEGEND

-  CAMPING
-  BIKING
-  FISHING
-  HIKING
-  RUNNING

TOP FIVE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES (MILLIONS OF PARTICIPANTS)

2015 TO 2021



Source: NRPA – 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report



Current Recreation Trends – Dane County

Walking	48.1%
Dog Orientated (Parks)	43.1%
Swimming	40.0%
Running	27.5%
Beach	25.6%
Backpack Hiking	22.6%
Hiking	21.9%
Bicycling	18.0%
Visit Zoo	17.4%
Basketball	16.6%
Fishing	16.5%

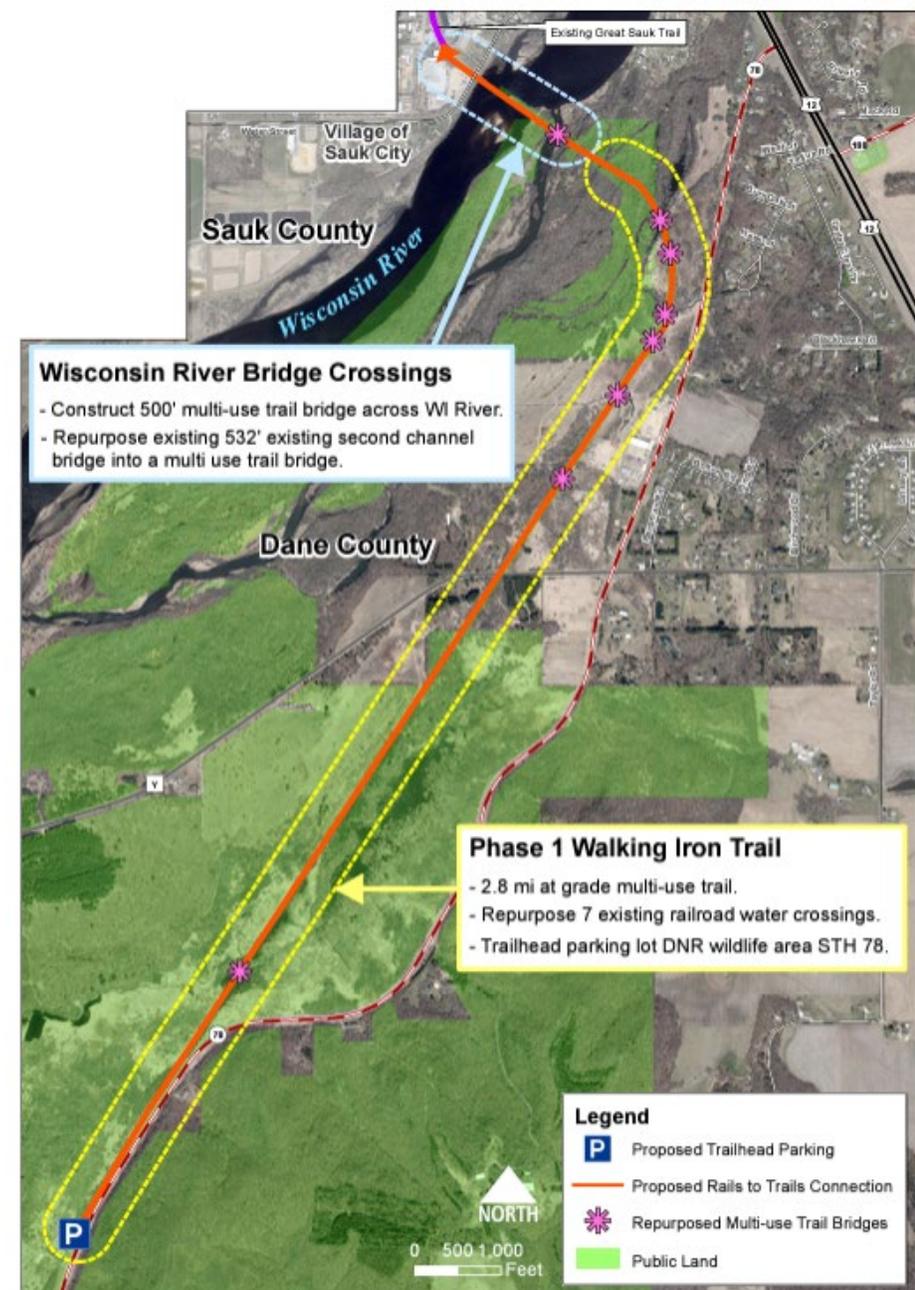


Source: MRI-Simmons Survey of the American Consumer

Current Projects

Great Sauk – Walking Iron Trail – Rails to Trails Conversion

- Dane County and Sauk County are working on design and engineering to construct an approximate 500' multi-use trail bridge over the Wisconsin River and conversion of nearly 3 miles of railroad track into a multi-use trail from the Wisconsin River to the existing WI DNR parking lot on STH 78
- <https://lwr.d.countyofdane.com/CurrentProjects/Detail/Great-Sauk-Walking-Iron-Rails-to-Trails-Conversion>



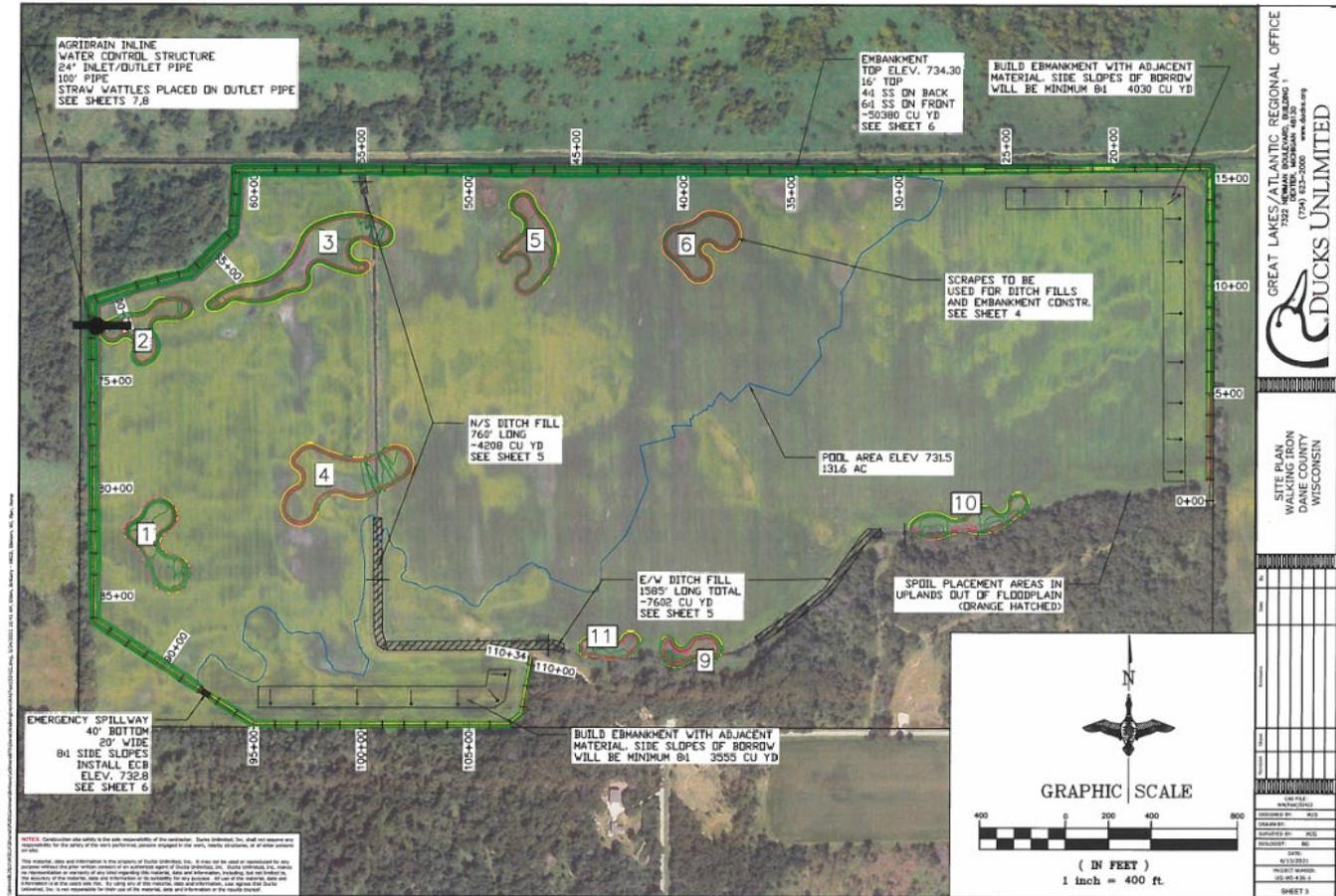
Great Sauk-Walking Iron State Trail Proposed Rail Trail Conversion



Current Projects

Walking Iron Wildlife Area – Wetland Restoration

- Dane County Parks partnered with Ducks Unlimited and the US Fish & Wildlife Service on a ~ 300-acre wetland and prairie restoration
- The project includes the creation of several waterfowl habitat areas
- Water control structures will control water elevations within the project area
- Site is seeded with native prairie and wetland plants
- <https://lwr.dane.gov/CurrentProjects/Detail/Walking-Iron-Wildlife-Area-Wetland-Restoration>



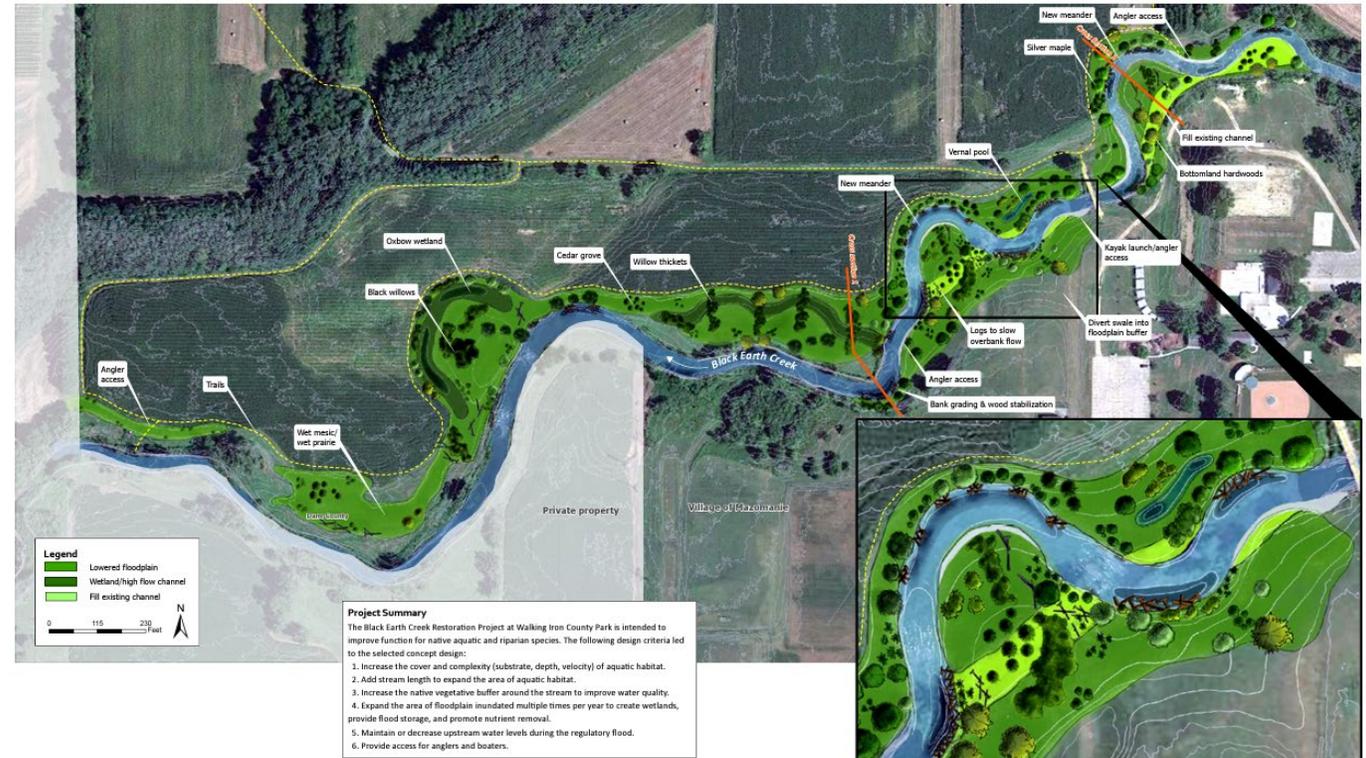
Current Projects

Black Earth Creek – Stream Restoration

- Improvements along 4,000 feet of Black Earth Creek to enhance public access and recreation, protect water quality, improve fish and wildlife habitat, and attenuate flooding
- Improvements include: canoe/kayak launch, angler access points, stormwater controls, hiking trails, streambank stabilization, fish habitat practices, and increased flood storage
- <https://lwr.dane.gov/CurrentProjects/Detail/Black-Earth-Creek-Stream-Restoration>



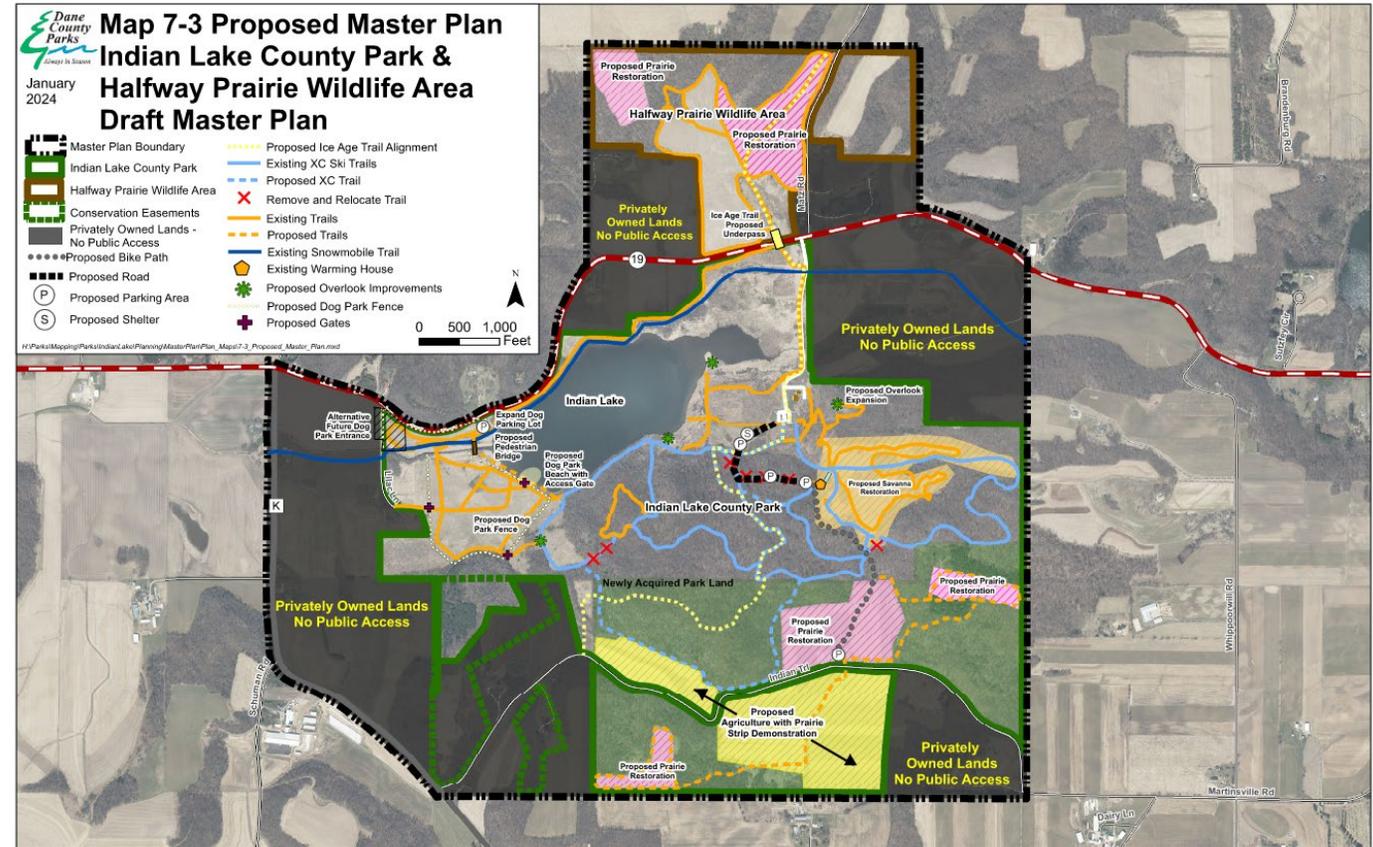
Black Earth Creek Restoration at Walking Iron County Park - Concept Design



Current Projects

Indian Lake County Park & Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area Master Plan

- Planning for the future land management and park development recommendations
- Master plan recommendations include accessibility improvements, trail expansion, shelter, parking, dog park fencing, and prairie restoration
- <https://www.danecountyparks.com/propertyplan/detail/Indian-Lake-Halfway-Prairie>



Current Projects

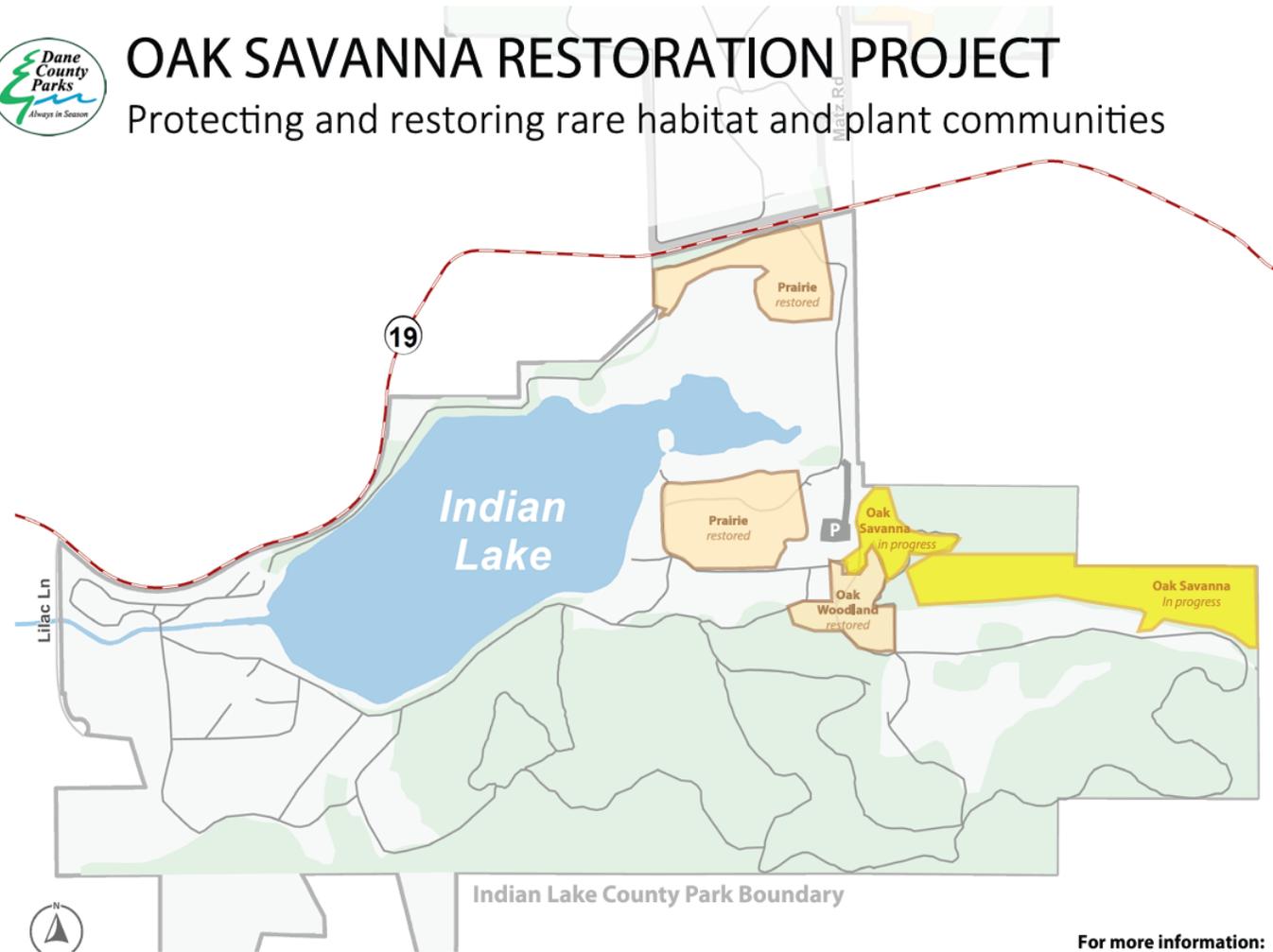
Indian Lake County Park – Oak Savanna Restoration

- Dane County Parks and Friends of Indian Lake are working to restore the oak savanna that once dominated the area
- Savannas are characterized by scattered oak trees covering 10-50% of the site and an understory of prairie mixed with shade tolerant plants
- To date, approximately 20 acres of prairie and 6 acres of oak woodland have been restored at the park
- <https://lwr.dane.gov/CurrentProjects/Detail/IndianLakeRestoration>



OAK SAVANNA RESTORATION PROJECT

Protecting and restoring rare habitat and plant communities



For more information:



Current Projects

Indian Lake County Park – Prairie Strips

- Dane County is partnering with Sand County Foundation to develop a plan for prairie strip implementation on existing agricultural fields south of Indian Trail as a demonstration site
- The strips use deep roots of native prairie plants in an agricultural setting to help reduce nutrient losses to water bodies, infiltrate water, and minimize soil runoff during rain events
- Provide habitat for pollinators and wildlife
- <https://lwr.dane.gov/CurrentProjects/Detail/Indian-Lake-County-Park-Prairie-Strips>



Current Projects

Mendota County Park Improvements

- In August 2022, the Foundation for Dane County Parks accepted a philanthropic gift of \$1.5 million dollars from the William L. Ragatz Trust, Thomas R. Ragatz, and Erik D. Ragatz (Ragatz Family) to implement the following recommendations:
 - Replacement of the existing park shelter and associated parking/paths
 - Parking lot lighting
 - Replacement of the playground with an inclusive playground
 - New paved walking trail with benches and fitness nodes
 - <https://lwr.dane.gov/CurrentProjects/Detail/Mendota-County-Park-Improvements>



Current Projects

Prairie Moraine County Park - Restoration

- Dane County Parks have been working to restore 3 primary natural resource communities – prairie, oak savanna, and oak woodland
- Invasive/aggressive species has diminished the use of the area where dogs can safely run, blocked views of geologic features, and crowded native vegetation
- Benefits include water infiltration, pollinator habitat, and diverse landscape
- <https://lwrp.countyofdane.com/CurrentProjects/Detail/Prairie-Moraine-Restoration>

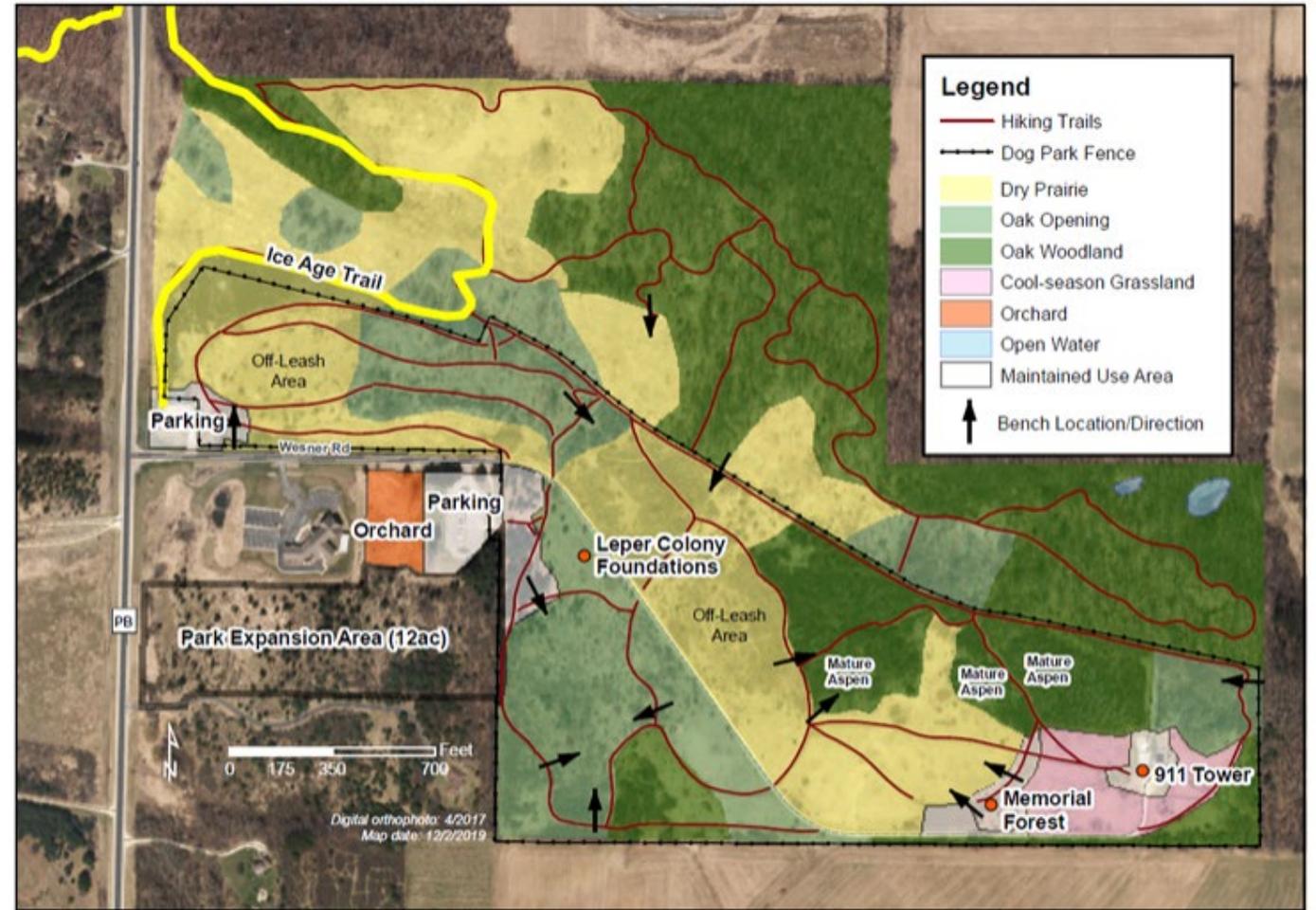


Figure 1. Target Vegetation Community Types at Prairie Moraine County Park

What You Need to Know

- Dane County is the Second Largest and Fastest Growing Counties
- Dane County Parks is the Largest Metro County Park System In WI
- Fastest Growth Areas Continue to Be Northeast Area of the County
- Overall Population Continues Trending Toward Older
- Walking, Running, Hiking, Biking, Fishing Continue to Be Some of Most Popular Outdoor Past Times Nationally and Locally



How You Can Provide Feedback on the 2024-2029 Dane County POSP

- Email written comments
- Take the survey (Available Feb. 1st)
 - <https://www.danecountyparks.com/openspaceplan>





THANK YOU

Courtesy Shan Bartus

Contact Information



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Join us!

