

### Introduction

History. The City of Monticello maintains an extensive system of Parks and Pathways, with much of the system's development paralleling the growth of the community. The City's location on the Mississippi River resulted in the early development of riverfront park locations, including Ellison Park, East Bridge and West Bridge Park, and the County's development of Montissippi Park at the west end of the community.



As the City grew, focus on park facilities shifted away from the river, and a series of smaller neighborhood park facilities were added as new neighborhoods developed. Responding to a growing interest in pedestrian and bikeway development, the City undertook a major pathway project, establishing the pathway along the full length of Broadway/County 75 from the Meadow Oaks area on the east end of the community, to the west edge, past Otter Creek.

Through the core of the downtown area, the route follows the existing sidewalk for several blocks. This pathway has been enormously popular, even though it is primarily a single spine at the current time.

More pathway development followed as new transportation routes sprang up, with the goal of providing off-road pedestrian and bicycle options along those routes, especially in the areas of the schools.

Augmenting the downtown recreation options, the City partnered with the Army National Guard to establish the Monticello Community Center in 2000, introducing both indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities which were locally unavailable to the community members, including an indoor pool and water park, climbing wall, gymnasium, track, and fitness training facility, among other elements. The City and the School District later cooperated in the development of an indoor ice facility attached to the Monticello Middle School.



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In the middle 2000s, park development focus shifted again, as the YMCA organization announced an interest in selling its Camp Manitou facility to the west of Monticello. Operated as a private facility, the 1,200 acres includes a series of lakes, wetlands, and native woodlands that are unique to the region. The City, together with Wright County, embarked on an effort to acquire this acreage, a venture that is still in process. The addition of the Bertram Chain of Lakes Regional Park to the local park and open space inventory, and the costs involved in this project, have necessarily changed the way the City



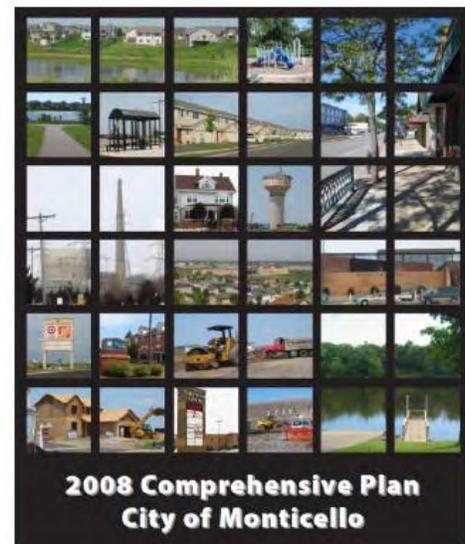
will need to plan for park development in the coming years.

Many of these projects were anticipated by a Parks System Plan that was adopted in the mid 1990s. However, significant growth and shifting priorities have made that Plan long since obsolete. Over the past few years, the City has experienced, along with the rest of the country, a significant slow-down in economic development activity. That downturn left a number of expected development projects idle or abandoned, and left several park locations undeveloped.

Recent Planning Efforts. During the period of slower growth, however, Monticello has adopted a new Comprehensive Plan, and is currently undertaking an extensive study of its downtown. These projects have positioned the City for the expected rebound in the general economy, and this Parks and Pathways System Plan is a part of the City's infrastructure planning necessary to ready Monticello for a new era of growth pressure.

The City's Comprehensive Plan cites the community's system of parks and open spaces as a major factor in the continuing effort to attract and retain new residents. The Comprehensive Plan identifies several components in this system, including the Monticello Community Center, the Mississippi River, and the efforts to acquire and develop the Bertram Chain of Lakes land from the YMCA as key to the quality of the parks system.

The Parks planning component of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan addresses the Parks System in a general way, building on the Plan's long-range growth projections and the existing parks and open space system. The bulk of the Comprehensive Plan discussion focuses on the existing parks, noting that additional park development will be addressed as the community grows. The new planning effort is designed to build on the Comprehensive Plan's general discussion, add specificity, and provide guidance on process,



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clarify park system objectives, and create a series of implementation tools that are tailored to parks and pathways system development.

Current Planning Process. This Parks Plan has been supported with funds from LiveWright, a program of Wright County's Public Health Department. LiveWright has allocated funds from



SHIP  
Statewide Health Improvement Program



the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), with the intention of pursuing and promoting healthier lifestyles. In this case, park and pathway

planning is being undertaken to improve residents' access to physical activity, and thus, overall community health.

The approach of the Parks and Pathways Plan is to utilize the City's long-term planning, coupled with the extensive existing inventory of parks and recreation facilities, to create a system that is accessible, efficient, and provides a full range of recreation opportunities, accounting for variations in age, interests, and activity levels. At the same time, a major component of this project is to build in flexibility to the City's Parks and Pathways infrastructure, allowing the community to adapt its facilities to changing needs over time. It is envisioned that this document will be incorporated as a separate chapter supplementing the existing Parks chapter of the official Monticello Comprehensive Plan.

The collection of baseline data for this plan has involved several parallel efforts. Fieldwork has included individual visits to each of the City's existing park and recreation facility locations, and direct use of much of the community's pathway and sidewalk inventory. City staff, from Administration and Engineering to Public Works and Community Center representatives, have all provided important direction, review, and guidance. Invaluable input and background has been provided especially by Community Development and Parks Department staff members.

Citizen input was received through a detailed survey of park use and assessment, as well as public meetings including workshops and open houses. A summary of the survey results is reported in Chapter 2 of this document, and the survey itself is included as an appendix. Significant contributions have also been made through more formal means, including members and representatives of the following groups, individuals, and organizations:

- Monticello Parks Commission
- Monticello Community Center Advisory Board
- Monticello Planning Commission
- Monticello School District
- Monticello Community Education
- Volunteer Athletic and Sports Associations

The Parks and Pathways Plan relies on the existing system as the starting point for park planning, then establishes a set of objectives and policies to guide future system growth. These objectives are intended to create a framework of the system that the City is planning and building. As a part of this exercise, analysis of the existing system is provided that guides the design of the future parks network.

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Out of the objectives and policies, the Parks and Pathways System Plan is built both to resolve issues identified in the existing system, and take advantage of the opportunities provided by the natural resources in the area. The System Plan is essentially a graphic representation of the Objectives, overlain on the existing parks and pathways infrastructure.

Finally, the plan sets out an Implementation chapter which provides a strategic set of steps for the City to use in realizing the plan objectives over the long term. As this Plan is a document with a planning horizon of 20 years or more, this chapter includes detailed, practical steps for city officials to use as development decisions are made, as well as alternative strategies that may be considered as options arise over time.

Like any plan, this document relies on a snapshot of the existing community as its starting point, following a presumed set of growth assumptions for future system development. Therefore, regular review and updating is important to ensure that the Parks and Pathways System Plan remains fresh and relevant to Monticello's growth and development decision-making.