LaSalle County Parks and Recreation Plan

March 2021

Acknowledgements

LaSalle County Parks and Recreation Plan

Approved on March 8th, 2021

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Executive Summary

The first LaSalle County Parks and Recreation Plan is the result of an intensive multi-year planning process undertaken by the LaSalle County Property Committee with the assistance of the North Central Illinois Council of Governments. It is based on a review of the entire county, an analysis of the parks system, and the needs and concerns of the residents. The first meeting was held in April 2014. A public meeting was held in November at the County Governmental Complex. Residents and invited guests were asked to offer their opinions on numerous subjects dealing with the county parks. Many good ideas resulted from the meeting and helped serve as a guide for the important principles of the plan. Once recommended by the Public Property Board, it went to the County Board for final adoption in March 2021.

LaSalle County residents have a strong parks system available for their use. This plan aims to strengthen the existing parks and develop a proactive thought process for future facilities. One of the overarching goals of the plan is to use it to obtain state and federal parks and recreation grants. A parks plan serves as a necessary component in order to qualify for the competitive grants. It functions as a guide to enhance the parks system over the next 20 years.

The county is located on a particularly opportunistic land area. The Illinois River is a vital asset and must be taken care of properly. It is a great source for aquatic recreation and wildlife. The surrounding floodplain zones should be further utilized for outdoor enthusiasts. Development should be restricted whenever possible in flood prone areas. LaSalle County enjoys many elevation changes that smaller jurisdictions have in the primarily flat region. The elevation

changes more than 200' with the lowest point in the river valley and the highest point near Mendota.

Little population change has occurred since 1970, though the city did grow by 2.2% over the last decade. There is little need for new parks at the current growth rate, as the existing parks are generally maintained well and are sufficient for the relative size of the city. Statistics indicate a slightly decreasing population for LaSalle County through 2040. As the population continues to increase in age and it loses a portion of its inhabitants younger than 25, LaSalle County must analyze the programs and facilities to serve the changing demands of its residents. There has been little change regarding the ethnic makeup of the residents. The education and income levels continue to increase concurrent with national trends.

Two (2) parks make up the LaSalle County parks system, not including park space found at state parks and several rural schools. Both county parks, district parks, and state parks offer amenities for visitors and residents of the entire county. Most of the park components are severely aged and are in need of replacement. The majority of the equipment at both parks is from decades passed and replacement should be addressed. These amenities need to be removed and updated. Also, the primitive facilities at Catlin Park are in need of replacement. As stated above, the existing parks should serve as the primary priority while keeping an eye on changes with the demographics and development trends.

The seven (7) long-range goal categories, along with the corresponding strategies, are the backbone of the plan that acts as the main guide. The categories include: administrative development, community outreach, conservation, facilities development, funding, maintenance, and programming. While each policy is important, a handful can be identified as particularly imperative for future implementation:

- Review and formulate updates to the plan as needed, at least every five years.
- Stimulate and proliferate volunteerism. Recognizing that county resources are limited, volunteers should be sought to assist with the maintenance and program development.
- Continue to utilize the county website and existing media outlets to make information available to residents.

Executive Summary

- Protect historical sites (Shabbona Monument) with the continued inclusion in the parks maintenance schedule.
- Complete an inventory of both Catlin and Shabbona Parks.
- Maintain an annual budget, as much as possible, that meets the most important needs of the residents.
- Develop an annual maintenance plan for all public and private parks in LaSalle County with safety issues taking top priority

The priority items are broken into time ranges of 0-5 and 6-10 years. Certain items can be instituted with little financing and political acceptability while others will take additional planning and funding. The implementation section is the most important component of the plan. It identifies a schedule during which these can take place. Many greenways grants are also revealed. These sources can make achieving the policies much easier and quicker. LaSalle County can then be more creative in its management of the parks system.

This plan takes a concerted effort on behalf of the County Property Committee, County Board, and residents to put it into action throughout its lifespan. This vision must receive the backing of each elected and appointed county official. Solutions for problems do not result in the short term but rather over a long period of forethought. This is only a plan; the real work begins following its adoption. It is a working document. That is, the plan and its components should be followed as much as possible and updated when required, but it should not act as a limitation if alternatives evolve over time. The implementation of the plan ultimately decides the degree of success of the plan. The plan is not intended to sit on a shelf but to be used by public officials and private residents to retain a high standard of quality of life. The LaSalle County Parks and Recreation Plan serves as a benchmark for future parks efforts.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The 2015 LaSalle County Parks and Open Space Plan set out to identify significant natural, historical, and cultural resources. Through the planning process these resources were identified and methods of preservation and protection of the resources were outlined. The plan seeks to identify the recreational needs of the residents and visitors of LaSalle County. Public input was taken throughout the process. This plan will serve as the first step in maintaining the LaSalle County Parks System.

What is a Park?

Parks serve many functions in the course of a day. A great park is much more than a predetermined square footage of grass where people congregate. However, there is no set definition on how to build a park that will be successful. They are the places of central interest for many people. They come in different sizes and shapes. Neighborhood parks are as necessary as large community parks. They each serve different audiences and functions. Streets and parks can dictate the health of a city. If there is a wealth of vitality, there will typically be an abundance of exciting possibilities for residents and visitors. Each park does have one common denominator: they have the ability to attract people for a variety of reasons. From the person

looking to read a book underneath a shade tree to a jogger hoping to train for a marathon, parks offer the necessary relaxation and recreational opportunities in today's fast-paced society.

Though there is no set definition or design that will automatically be a community's centerpiece, many basic parts must be considered for every park. These are ideas that are not necessarily inherently known to the park's visitors but serve as the vital ingredients in most swaths of open space. These parts include the location relative to the natural environment, the location relative to the built environment, the identity, shape, audience, mixture of nearby land uses, the ability to aid diverse functions and activities, and the environmental enhancements.

Many parks take advantage of the sun's angle to provide natural lighting. Trees of all sizes make this more distinctive. They create what could be referred to as "lines of demarcation." This contrast attracts distinct options for use and the type of person likely to be attracted. Weather is a very real concern of park users. The need for sun may be more advantageous during cool fall days when the rays provide needed heat. It may also be sought after by those hoping for increased warmth beside the town swimming pool. The shade provided by trees or shelters is often a prime site for picnics and can be more desirable to the elderly. It is a needed relief on hot summer days.

Besides providing places for changes in body temperature, the need for a mix of sun and shade breaks up the continuity of a park. A section of land that is consistently in sun or conversely is always shaded holds little visual forthcomings. If the park can be viewed in one glance and holds little stimulation, a person is likely to not return as often. The use of sun and shade provides a distinctive feeling for the visitor. A park in full sun looks dull and uninteresting. It is only a park from the perspective that there is no profitable development located on the land. Shade presents the illusion of constant dreariness. Parks that are dark do not offer the sense of security needed that appeal to children. In addition, shade provided from trees or buildings can establish a permanent sense of enclosure and separation from the outside surroundings. While this enclosure is often a vital component to successful parks, people should not feel removed from the neighboring properties.

The location relative to the built environment is integral. A park located within an industrial park is not likely to be successful when analyzed by itself, but it may be a necessary greenway within an abundance of heavy machinery and industries and may be home to many workers. Having parks where people have to go out of their way to pass them is similar to a store locating in a poor market. People are generally more likely to use a park if they are able to view it more often and do not have to go out of their way to pass it. Most parks are typically located near residential developments. This is often because there is a greater collection of people at more

hours of the day. Many types of people utilize parks. Families use them after work hours, children use them during the summer, office workers use them during lunch hours, and peddlers use them to sell crafts. Therefore, there is no area where a park cannot properly function if it is located within the right marketplace.

Parks near areas of residences are preferred sites because of the inherent need for recreational opportunities. These types of parks often contain playgrounds and ballfields that appeal to all ages. Areas near commercial or office uses typically draw a limited in type, but substantial number of people. The use of these parks usually peaks between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. when people are on lunch breaks and get an opportunity for fresh air. These are often not parks in the perceived sense; many times, there is little chance for recreation. Areas surrounding fountains with benches, landscaping, sculpture gardens, or public art are popular congregation points. In fact, there does not need to be grass for there to be a park.

The most successful parks support a mixture of land uses. As with the most exuberant shopping or historic districts, the longer an area is open to as many people as possible, the healthier it will be. It should have a diversity of economic and social uses. Any successful place must offer a clear remembrance for four periods of time. The first is the initial time that one views a locale. This is the most important and is the lasting perception that someone has of the place. This perception will determine whether a person will return to the site. Second, the area must be open for as many of a day's 24 hours as possible. An area that is only open from 9 to 5 is virtually two distinct districts. Third, it should be open as long as possible for each of a week's seven days. If the location is closed on weekends, it will lose some of its appeal. Finally, it should be open year-round. The seasons must not dictate when or how the area is used. This is particularly true of parks, which can be utilized differently depending on the month of the year. The combination of uses generally includes residential uses. This use maintains a set number of people are in the district at the hours when people are not working or shopping.

Parks do not have a definitive shape. However, they do have a definitive space. Parks can be square, rectangular, circular, or any other odd shape. The space gives a park its characterization. As with prime real estate, it must be used efficiently. It must have a general layout that does not have conflicting uses. For example, joggers cannot deviate into the space of the playground users. The space is also given definition from the surrounding land uses.

A park is preferably suited to the audience that it is attempting to entice. For example, a recreational area comprising mainly of playground equipment would not be well-situated near a retirement community. The size of the park usually resembles the type of user that is attracted. A small neighborhood level park is unlikely to serve many different functions. It may be aimed

at one portion of the neighboring population but cannot please every recreational habit. A community level park should serve many different functions, including those that appeal to a wide range of age groups.

Nearly anything can be classified as a park. The only thing it must do is act as a diversion for residents and visitors. Parks are necessary to improve an area's quality of life. Besides beautifying the visual landscape, they are needed to enhance the overall health of the community. The sections following in this plan will review local and national standards for parks and recreational programs, evaluate the town's current resources, and develop policies for future parks enhancements and development.

Review of Existing Plans

Some of the material is derived from the *LaSalle County Comprehensive Plan 2014.* Parks are referenced in goals relating to both *Natural Resources and Open Space Protection and Recreation and Tourism.* The population of the county has remained at the same level. Currently there are 361 acres (Catlin Park 333 acres and Shabbona 20 acres) of parks and recreational facilities. This number has changed little over the last few decades. Most of the land was devoted to active recreational pursuits. While some of the problems noted in the plan have been addressed, many of the solutions then could be implemented today for each individual park. These will be expanded upon through the course of this plan.

The county population has changed little since 1970. This stagnant population growth has allowed existing infrastructure to be sufficient but the park acreage falls far under the 52.69 acres / 1000 residents. It should be noted, the State of Illinois manages several thousand acres of park space that are not included in the aforementioned average. Few parks goals were identified in the comprehensive plan update. Two (2) goals were created to address open space managed by the county. Following are the goals and strategies from the comprehensive plan:

Natural Resources and Open Space Protection

Goal 1: Protect green space, particularly state and county parks, nature preserves and Illinois Natural Area Inventory sites as well as the Illinois River and its tributaries, including the Fox and Vermilion rivers, and their riverine corridors.

Recreation and Tourism

Goal 2: Encourage and assist the promotion and development of the County's historical, natural, and scenic points of interest as tourist attractions.

> Strategy 1: Identify opportunities to create a biking, hiking, or auto trail system linking key historic, scenic, and natural points of interest throughout the County.

Goal 3: Recognize the importance of a healthy environment as vital to recreation and tourism and protect the integrity of open spaces including parks, nature preserves, Illinois Natural Area Inventory sites, waterways, and greenways.

Definitions

Prior to going into more depth on the current and future role of the LaSalle County parks system, it is important to define a number of the terms that will be used throughout the plan.

Parks – Though parks can be described and illustrated in a variety of ways, the term will be used in a rather simplistic manner. A park is any part of land that is utilized for the purpose of relaxation or recreation. There is no limitation on the size or shape of the parcel. Parks include open space, greenways, trails, natural resource areas, or indoor athletic facilities. This plan will primarily analyze publicly available lands that are not located on school properties.

Active Recreation - Active recreation involves spaces that are suitable for and often used for intensive recreation. Active recreational spaces are usually large and relatively treeless, allowing for sports fields or used as festival settings. Specific uses include tennis courts, soccer fields, playgrounds, skateboard parks, and aquatic facilities. Active recreational areas are necessary to provide for physical fitness opportunities.

Passive Recreation – Passive recreational activities require a small amount of physical effort or low intensity recreation. The term passive implies inactivity, which is not entirely accurate when applied to passive recreation. The purpose of passive areas is to give users a unique place that allows for informal recreation, encourages socializing, and to enjoy the park's beauty. Passive recreational areas can range from open meadows to spaces providing benches, trees, and pathways. Passive uses include walking, reading, pet exercise areas, or bicycling on trails.

Sub-Neighborhood Park – Sub-neighborhood parks or mini-parks are usually found within densely populated neighborhoods to meet unique recreational needs. They are often no more than an acre in size and contain amenities such as a playground or picnic tables. The park is aimed towards the nearby residents who live within a convenient walking distance of 0.25 miles.

Neighborhood Park – Neighborhood parks pertain to a more broad usage. A strong neighborhood park serves about 2,500 people within a service radius of 0.5 miles. The minimum size is about three acres. Facilities can include playground equipment, tennis courts, ball fields, or a picnic shelter. The area can contain active or passive recreational features. The park generally complements the neighborhood by blending in using landscaping or similar raw materials. The location should not be on a major thoroughfare, increasing the safety of the pedestrians.

School Park – School parks complement the nearby school site. Most school parks are located near elementary schools, whose parks usually contain playground equipment and are heavily

used only during normal school hours. The participation is directed toward young children. High school parks, which can contain many different athletic fields, are generally not available to the public due to the extensive use by physical education classes and sports teams. The school park size is similar to the sub-neighborhood park. It serves a smaller residential population within walking distance of the school.

Community Park – Community parks are places where larger events are held. They contain a mix of active and passive recreational uses. The community park is usually the largest park found in a town. The town's recreational needs should be met through this park. The minimum size is 10 acres. It serves a population greater than 5,000. It services a radius of at least one (1) mile. At least 2.5 acres of space should be set aside per 1,000 people. It usually serves as the focal point for meeting the recreational needs of all age groups at one (1) facility.

District Park – District parks are the largest classification of parks within a city and emphasize passive recreational needs. They may contain amenities that are not found in any other parks in the town. Such aspects can include a baseball/softball field complex, a community pool, nature areas, or boating facilities. District parks are either found in larger cities that can support such facilities or are shared on a regional basis.

Greenways – Greenways are also known as parkways, stream and waterway corridors, park connectors, and trails. They do not always connect parks as formal trails. However, they do provide a sense of connectivity between streets, schools, or neighborhoods. They often benefit the ecosystem and wildlife when the natural state of the land is maintained. The most common greenways are linear pathways that transport pedestrians by means of walking, bicycling, or some small motorized terrain vehicles. The number and length of a town's greenways varies due to the built and natural environments. Many greenways require the coordination and cooperation from multiple jurisdictions, municipalities, or counties in order to be successful.

It is important to note for the scope of this plan we will only be addressing District Parks and Greenways.

Chapter 2 – Demographic Profile

Population Characteristics

Table 1 – LaSalle County - Population

	LaSalle County	± % change	Illinois	± % change
1940	97,801	--	7,897,241	--
1950	100,610	2.9%	8,712,176	10.3%
1960	110,800	10.1%	10,081,158	15.7%
1970	111,409	0.5%	11,110,285	10.2%
1980	112,003	0.5%	11,427,409	2.9%
1990	106,913	-4.5%	11,430,602	0.0%
2000	111,509	4.3%	12,419,293	8.6%
2010	113,924	2.2%	12,830,632	3.3%

LaSalle County is the 17th most populous county in Illinois (2010 Census Population 113,924), as well as, the second largest in land area (1,135 sq. mi.) The population of LaSalle County has remained relatively stagnant of the last four (4) decades and the geography has not changed in over 170 years. This, however, does not mean the recreational needs of the residents of LaSalle County have not changed. Changes in park systems run by municipalities and the state have a direct effect on the recreational needs of LaSalle County.

An effective park system, which includes recreational opportunities for people of all ages, is critical to a high quality of life. It can become a determining factor for families who are looking to move into the area.

The state's median age for 2000 and 2010 was 35.3 and 36.6 years of age, which were 2.8 and 4.4 years younger than the residents of LaSalle County respectively. This has followed a trend that is based on a number of factors. First, family sizes have become smaller due to lower fertility rates. Second, more couples have waited before having children. Third, the Baby Boomers are moving closer to retirement ages. Finally, the number of teenagers and young adults has decreased because of the perceived and real lack of opportunities in the region. The increase in the median age has a great effect on the types of services the County must offer.

There are a few ways communities can keep a steady or increasing population base. Services and activities should be offered that are directed toward youths. Families with children need reasons to live in LaSalle County. Good schools and a strong parks and recreation program are essential. The older population will demand more senior-oriented activities. Senior housing will be increasingly

desired as the median age of the town rises. A solid healthcare system should be a goal for the entire population but particularly people nearing retirement age.

Table 2 – LaSalle County Population by Age Group

Age Range	2000		2010	
	Total Persons	Percent	Total Persons	Percent
Under 5	7,033	6.3	6,618	5.8
5 – 9	7,681	6.9	7,345	6.4
10 – 14	8,280	7.4	7,594	6.7
15 – 19	8,013	7.2	7,611	6.7
20 – 24	6,066	5.4	6,454	5.7
25 – 34	13,319	11.9	13,341	11.7
35 – 44	17,945	16.1	13,896	12.2
45 – 54	14,607	13.1	17,963	15.7
55 – 64	10,273	9.2	14,424	12.7
65 – 74	8,811	7.9	9,202	7.9
75 – 84	6,857	6.1	6,324	5.5
Above 84	2,624	2.4	3,152	2.8
Total Population	111,509		113,924	
Median Age	38.1		41	

LaSalle County has experience a decrease in population under the age of 19. These age groups make up the largest number of park users. Conversely, the county has experienced a large increase in residents age 45-74. This is very representative to baby boomers growing older. This directly affects the recreational needs of the County. A traditional age make up would require sufficient park space for children. However, the changing population will lead the County to identify more passive recreational areas for the older population.

Different age groups require different recreational requirements. The 15-19 group typically are more involved in team sports; 20-34 year-olds require adult-sized sports fields but have equal uses between team and individual activities; people 35-54 partake in more passive interests and require space for their young children. The ratio of males to females can help determine what types of programs are offered. There are only slightly more females than males in LaSalle County, not a true indicator that more activities aimed toward females should be recommended.

Households Characteristics

The average number of persons per household for LaSalle County remained virtually identical between 2000 and 2010, 2.44 versus 2.45. Families with children are typically the most frequent users of parks and recreation facilities. Out of 30,116 families in LaSalle County, 12,457 families (27.5 percent) had children aged 18 or younger. This number is not indicative of a real need for supplying programs aimed at families with young kids.

Table 4 – Household Characteristics Summary

	LaSalle County	
	Number	Percent of Total
Total Households	**49,978**	**100.0%**
Total Housing Units	**45,347**	**90.7%**
Owner Occupied	**33,773**	**67.6%**
Renter Occupied	**11,574**	**23.2%**
Average Household Size	**2.45**	**X**
Average Family Size	**3.00**	**X**

Ethnic Composition

LaSalle County is predominately made up of White residents with Hispanics being the next largest population group. The percentage of Hispanic residents is consistent with the rate neighboring counties. Changes in racial composition in LaSalle County have also been relatively minor. The percentage of Caucasians has decreased slightly over the past decade, from 95 to 93.2%.

Table 5 – Race and Hispanic Origin

	White	%	Black	%	Hispanic*	%	Amer. Indian/ Alaskan Native	%	Asian/ Pacific Islander	%
2000	105,896	95.0	1,723	1.5	5,791	5.2	191	0.2	624	0.5
2010	106,187	93.2	2,186	1.9	9,135	8.0	289	0.3	778	0.7

* Note: Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race

Chapter 3 – Existing Facilities

Evaluation of Existing Parks


East 1251st Road

This section lists and evaluates what people can find at each park in LaSalle County. Two (2) parks make up the LaSalle County parks system. The maps on Page 3-4 – 3-6 show the locations of the parks in LaSalle County. Each of them serves the entire county.

Catlin Park

Catlin Park is a 333-acre multi-use district park located south of Illinois Route 71 near Ottawa. Catlin Park was obtained by LaSalle County in 1970. The park currently boasts areas for picnicking, a baseball field, several open fields, several play areas, numerous trails, ample parking in five (5) separate lots, and primitive amenities for the equine community. The site also serves as a base of operation for the park management team including several buildings. One of the buildings in particular is an underutilized space formerly used by local boy scouts.

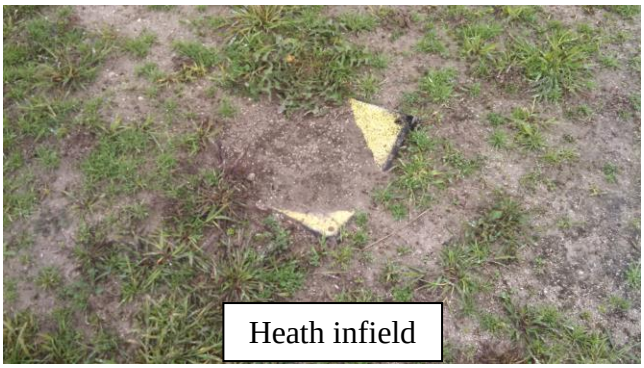
The following equipment can be found at Catlin Park:

- One (1) baseball field
- Two (2) playgrounds
- Four (4) picnic shelters with 24 picnic tables
- Four (4) primitive toilets
- 14 multi-use trails

It is apparent that Catlin Park receives regular maintenance on the trails and park roads. Other areas, however, need particular attention. The park is very picturesque, with large, aging oak trees suspended over much of the passive area. The following points would help further improve Catlin Park.

- First and foremost, the road accessing the park from the north (East 1251st Road) is in dilapidated condition and needs immediate attention. This road is managed by South Ottawa Township and the county should consider entering into an intergovernmental agreement to address the issues.

Joe Heath Field



Heath infield

- Consistent wayfinding signage should be installed to ensure users are aware of the vast expanses of the park.
- The existing primitive bathroom facilities should be replaced with new ADA compliant facilities.
- Playground equipment should be inspected and updated as needed to ensure user safety.
- Introduce interpretive signage to teach visitors of the natural environs.
- The County Property Committee should investigate the inclusion of new amenities at the site including primitive camping.
- The County Property Committee should investigate utilizing the park year round to include winter sports.

Chapter 3 – Existing Facilities

Shabbona Park

Shabbona Park, located north of Harding, sits on nearly 20 acres and offers primarily shelters for picnic activities. During the warm months the park sees many visitors and is often booked for parties. The park hosts a monument to the Indian Creek Massacre during the Black Hawk War. The park also boasts a sizable pond, playground equipment, an indoor shelter, and two (2) separate restroom facilities. Many of the amenities in the park are outdated and in need of restoration or replacement. The monument, erected by the State of Illinois, is in need of restoration. The former visitor's center is no longer used and should be assessed.

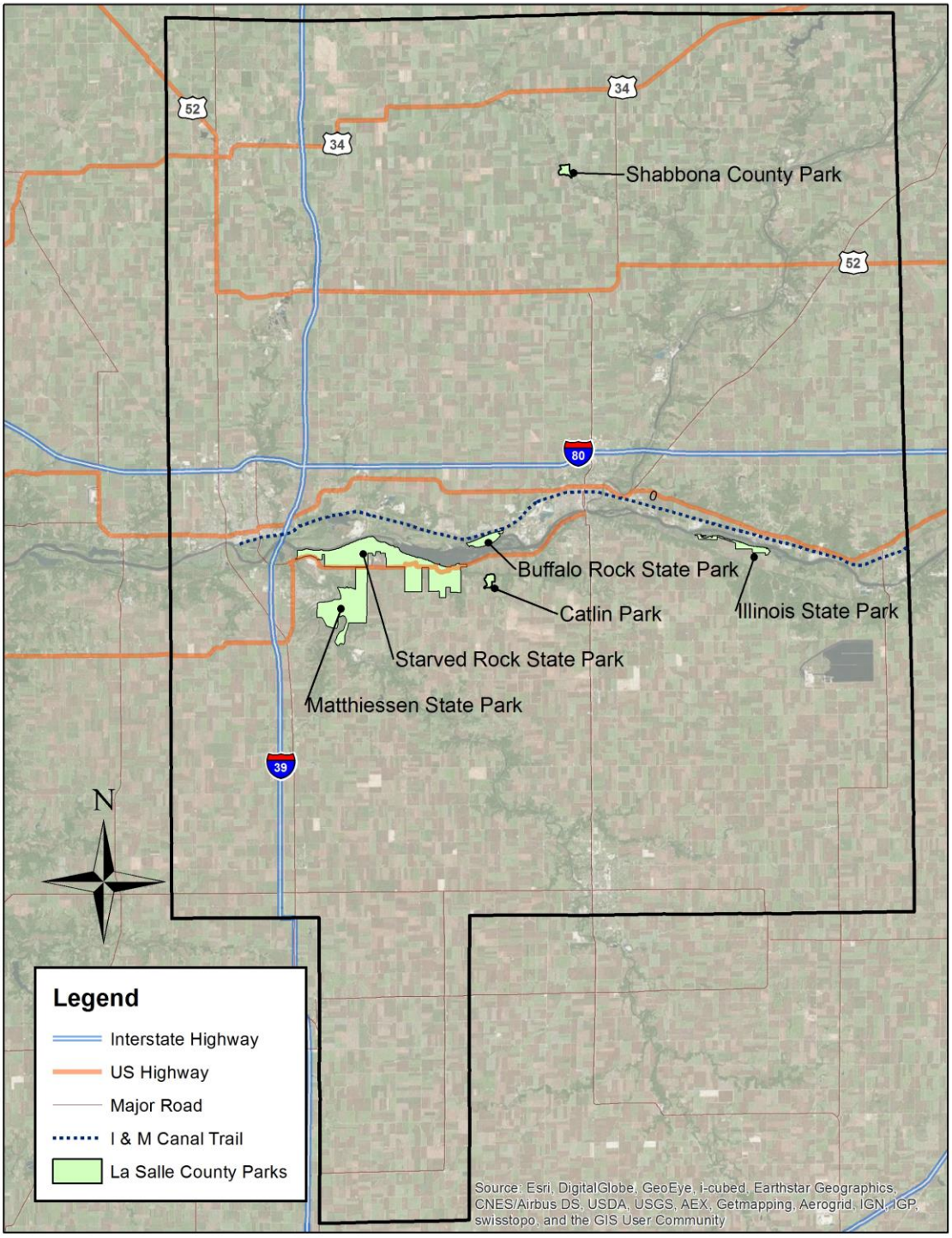
The following equipment can be found at Shabbona Park:

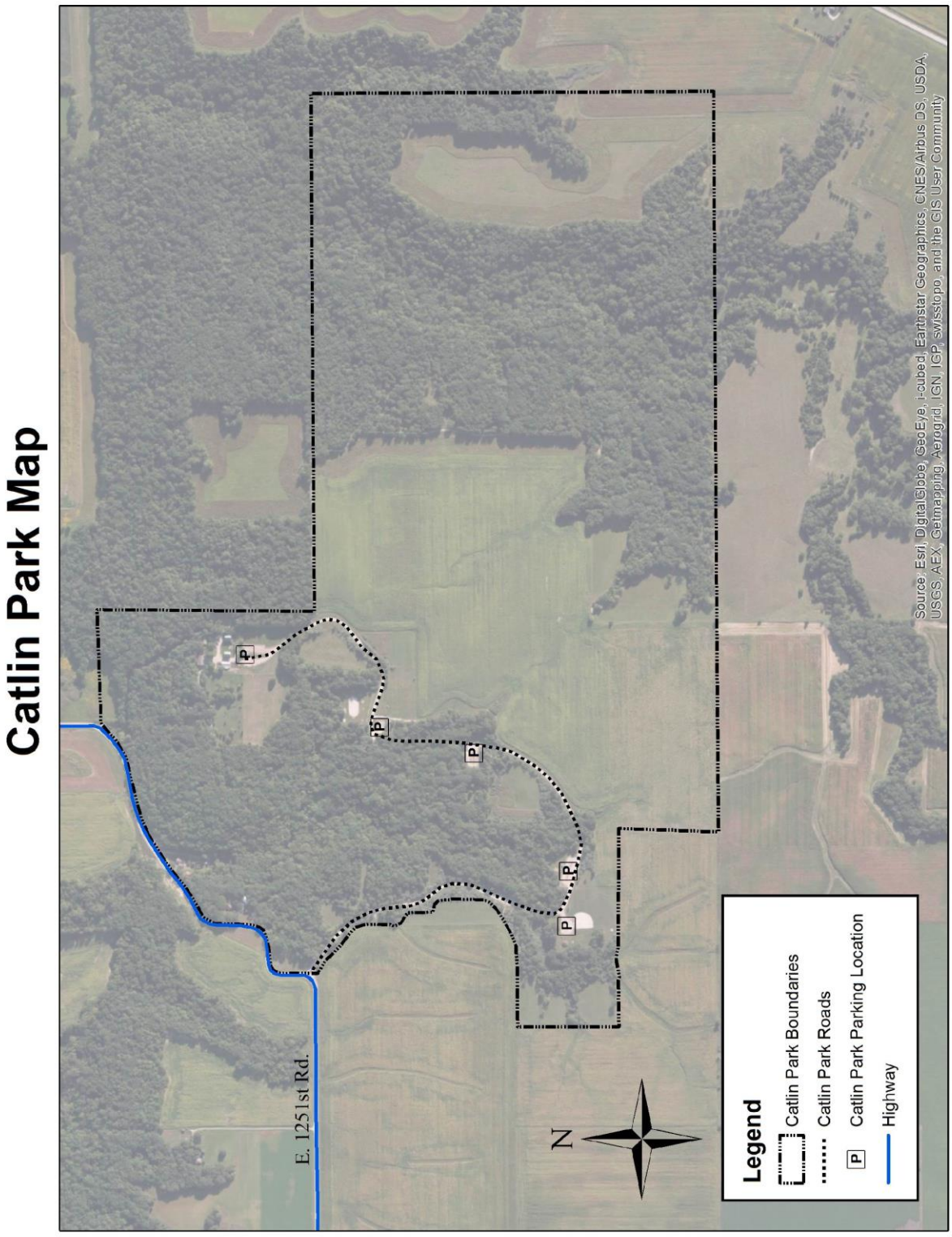
- Playground equipment
- A large open field
- Four (4) picnic shelters with 25 picnic tables
- Two (2) bathroom facilities

Overall, the park grounds are in good shape. The prized piece of the park, the monument, is surrounded by a fence in dilapidated condition. Also, the surface of the stone could be restored. The condition of the shelters is fair to good. Some electrical upgrades are needed but the structural condition seems sound. The existing bathroom facilities are aging and should be assessed by the County Property Committee. The playground equipment is antiquated and should be assessed by the county. A few items could be improved, including:

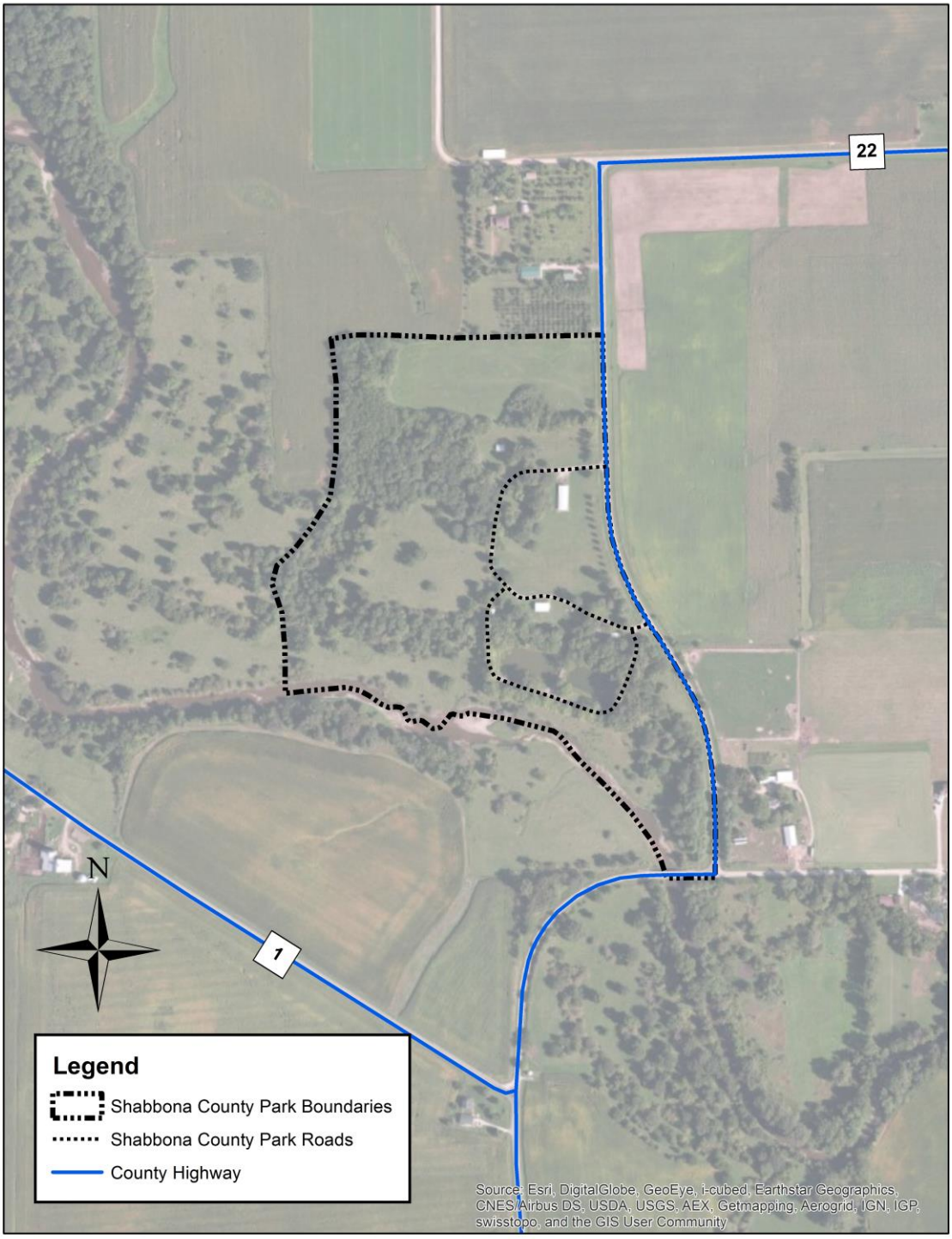
- An assessment of the current electrical infrastructure.
- An assessment of the parking situation. During peak usage the parking areas are undersized.
- An assessment of the bathrooms should be undertaken. The County Property Committee should utilize the services of a vendor to ensure the safety of structure or consider replacement.
- Interpretive signage should be constructed to commemorate the Indian Creek Massacre.
- With the assistance of a vendor, the existing visitor's center should be assessed by the County Property Committee to identify its usefulness.

La Salle County Parks Map




Catlin Park Map
E. 1251st Rd.
N
Legend
Catlin Park Boundaries
Catlin Park Roads
Catlin Park Parking Location
Highway
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

Shabbona County Park Map



Land Assessment

The matrix below shows the size and amenities found in the LaSalle County parks system. This plan evaluates only the non-school parks outside city limits, or parks that the County has no authority to maintain (ie State Parks). The general condition of the LaSalle County parks is poor. Over the course of several decades the parks have deteriorated. Both Catlin and Shabbona Parks have areas in need of significant repair. There is a total of 361 acres within the corporate limits. Presently, 210 acres of land (all at Catlin) are devoted to hunting pursuits during the fall. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources recommends 52.69 acres of usable regional park space per each 1,000 residents. According to IDNR, LaSalle County should have 1694 acres. It should be noted, the State of Illinois manages four (4) state parks in LaSalle County. These parks, Buffalo Rock State Park, Illini State Park, Matthiessen State Park and Starved Rock State Park represent nearly 5500 acres of regional park space. These parks offer adequate space for LaSalle County residents.

LaSalle County Park Matrix

Location / Park Type	Size (Acres)	Pool	Group Picnic Area	Play Area	Baseball Field	Football Field	Soccer Field	Tennis Court	Basketball Court	Skating Area	Garden	Passive Area	Trail	Golf Course	Fishing Area	Fitness Station
Regional Parks																
Catlin Park	333		4	4	1								14			
Shabbona Park	28		4	2	1							5	1		2	
Linear / Special Use Areas																
I&M Canal Towpath			5									5				
Other public open space																
Non-recreation areas																
Maintanance Center																

Much of the land and facilities emphasize active types of recreation. This is typical with most parks. The bulk of the passive recreation is at the Catlin Park. Each park should contain a balance between active and passive types of recreation. Active types will still contain the bulk of the devoted land due to the space needed for most of the activities. The proposed enhancements to the Catlin Park would greatly add to the passive possibilities and encourage trail usage.

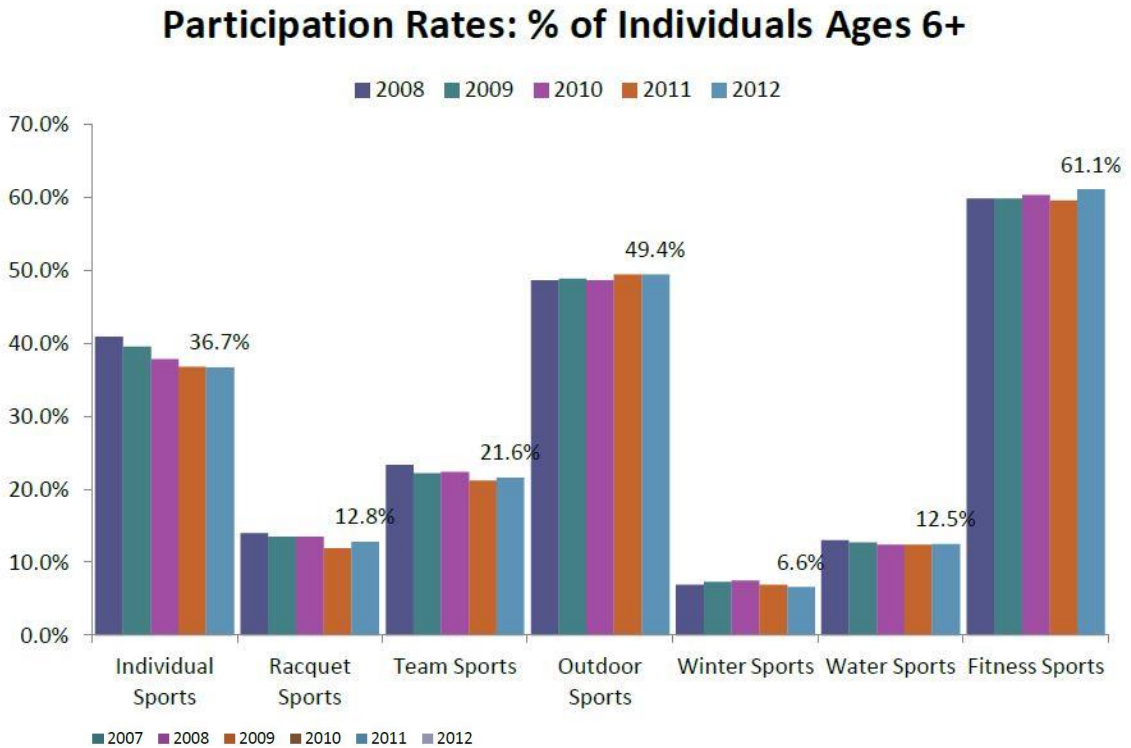
Spatial Assessment

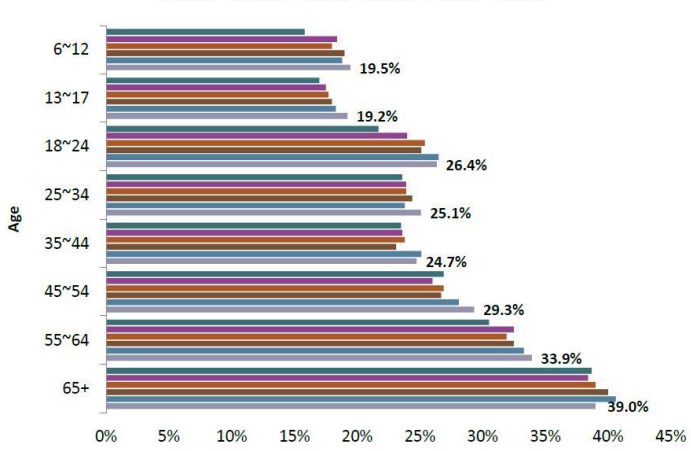
The parks in LaSalle County are spread out so that very few are within walking distance of physical recreation. The map on Page 3-3 shows an analysis of the spatial distribution of the parks. Both parks are accessible with automobile traffic.

Both parks are located on rural roads several miles from the closet town. Shabbona Park is located in north central LaSalle County and Catlin Park is located in central LaSalle County. The distance between the parks offers easier access to residents. However, the addition of a park located in southern LaSalle County would be a helpful asset to all residents.

Recreation Trends

The Physical Activity Council (PAC) compiled a report in a 2013 addressing use of recreational facilities. In early 2013 over 40,000 surveys were collected and compiled by the PAC. The results of the report have been included in this document of illustration. Sports surveys can be used to detect changes in usage and program areas that may be lacking. They help lead to where athletic fields may be necessary. National surveys have found that more recent sports involvement has moved towards individual sports and away from team sports, with the exception of basketball and soccer. The following graph shows the participation rates in six (6) sports categories. The highest participation rate is in fitness activities.





The converse of participation is inactivity. The survey conducted by the PAC also addressed inactivity. The chart to the left shows the inactivity rates of over the past six (6) years. The rates are broken into age groups. As would be expected the highest inactivity rates go to seniors. A

frightening national trend shows the increase of inactivity among nearly all age groups. In 2012 more than 80.4MM Americans were inactive.

According to the Illinois State Wide Outdoor Recreation Plan Illinois pleasure walking was the most participated in activity. The chart below shows participation rates, further broken down, by activity. The responses are classed into urban and rural.

Illinois Outdoor Recreation Participation, 2008

Activity	Percentage of **Statewide** respondents participating (n=1,566)	Percentage of **Urban** respondents participating (n=1,211)	Percentage of **Rural** respondents participating (n=275)
Pleasure Walking	86.9	88	84.4
Picnicking	67.9	68	66.7
Observing wildlife/Bird watching	58.2	56.3	67.6*
Swimming - outdoor pool	55.5	56.8	49.6
Use a playground	55	56.2	50.6
Hiking	47.4	48.3	46.6
Bicycling - roads	46.4	46.9	41.7
Fishing	45.4	42.8	58.4*
Swimming - outdoor other	40.6	41.8	35.8
Bicycling - trails	38.9	42.4	23.1*
Golfing	36.9	38.6	30.8*
Running/Jogging	32.9	35	22.1*
Softball/Baseball	32.4	32.9	29.3
Motor boating	30.7	29	38.3*
Tent camping	25.2	24.5	27.8
Canoeing/kayaking	22.8	24.6	14.8
Outdoor basketball	22.4	22.1	22.5
Tennis	19.1	21.6	8.5*
Hunting	18.8	14.5	37.5*
Soccer	16.7	18.1	8.9*
Equestrian (Horseback riding)	16.4	15.8	17.6
Vehicle camping	16.1	14	25.3*
Off-road vehicle use	15.5	12.4	28.8*
Ice skating	14.8	16.7	5.6*
Water skiing	12.7	12.9	12
In-line skating	9.9	11.4	3.4*
Sailing	9.4	10.8	2.2*
Cross-country skiing	7.6	7.9	4.7
Snowmobiling	7.3	7.1	8.2
Trapping	2.5	1.8	4.3*

* Indicates statistically significant differences between urban and rural activities

The following table identifies the importance of activities to Illinois residents.

Importance of Outdoor Recreation Activities

	Statewide (n=1,566)		Urban (n=1,211)		Rural (n=275)	
Activity	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important
Pleasure Walking	79.8	17.1	81.8	15.1	73.2	24.9*
Picnicking	67.7	27.5	67.1	27.9	70	26.9
Observing wildlife/Bird watching	68.8	24.5	70.1	23.9	64.3	29.3
Swimming - outdoor pool	61.3	31.4	63.1	30.4	57.1	33.9
Use a playground	59.3	32.9	60.9	31.8	54.1	38.2
Hiking	63.1	28	65.5	27.3	52.8	32.1
Bicycling - roads	58.5	30.6	56.5	32.9	71.1	21.3
Fishing	51.8	36.7	51.7	37.3	57.1	32.8
Swimming - outdoor other	58.7	29.7	61.1	28.4	47.5	36.9
Bicycling - trails	53.3	34.8	54.3	34.7	47.5	39.3
Golfing	48.3	39.4	47.2	40.7	54.6	34.1
Running/Jogging	50.9	35.2	51.2	35.2	50.4	37.5
Softball/Baseball	46.3	38.3	47.7	37.8	41	42.2
Motor boating	45.7	38.1	46.5	38.2	42.4	39.5
Tent camping	50.1	33.5	51.3	32.4	45.9	37
Canoeing/kayaking	46.3	37	48.2	36.5	37.2	41.7*
Outdoor basketball	44	39.3	45.6	39	35.7	42.7
Tennis	45.8	35.5	47.1	34.3	43.1	43.2*
Hunting	39	41	37	42	50.4	40.6
Soccer	38.1	40.8	36.2	42	49.4	39.7*
Equestrian (Horseback riding)	35.6	43.2	37.4	43.7	27.9	42.2*
Vehicle camping	36.2	42.6	36	42.9	37.9	42.7
Off-road vehicle use	36.9	41.6	38.1	41.7	30.3	432.*
Ice skating	32.3	42.6	31.1	43.5	38.1	40.6
Water skiing	31.8	41.3	32.2	42	26	39.7*
In-line skating	30.3	42.2	31.4	42.6	24.6	42.4*
Sailing	34.4	30.3	29.3	31.6	57.9	23.1*
Cross-country skiing	19.8	40.2	19.1	39.9	22.7	41.3
Snowmobiling	20.1	33.2	18.6	31.8	27.2	38.6*
Trapping	10.7	29.9	9	17.9	17.9	40.3*

* Indicates statistically significant differences between urban and rural activities

Though many traditional activities are decreasing in participation, several areas have experienced growth. The largest increase is in pleasure walking, the most participated in activity in Illinois. It is important to distinguish between activities and sports when activities are identified. The previous charts identified by the PAC addressed sports.

Although participation is down in many team sports, more money has been spent each year on sporting equipment. This could be a sign that certain sports are becoming more costly for a portion of the population to have the necessary equipment.

Percentage Distribution of
Top 10 Potential Growth Activites

Activity	Percentage Statewide	Percentage Urban Counties	Percentage Rural Counties
Pleasure Walking	13.5	14	11.1
Bicycling	13	13.6	9.1
Fishing	11.1	9.7	19.4
Hiking	7.4	7.9	4.1
Camping	5.9	5.4	6.1
Golf	5.4	5.4	5.1
Canoeing/Kayaking	5	5.4	3.1
Hunting	4.4	3	11.2
Swimming	3.4	4.1	0
Equestrian (Horseback Riding)	3	2.6	3.1

While no data is available for the number of outdoor recreational activities participants in LaSalle County, 2009 Illinois Outdoor Recreation Activities data can lead to some conclusion which activities a typical person would be most likely to participate. Pleasure walking and pleasure driving/sightseeing are the only two (2) activities among those respondents age 18 and up that have at least a 50 percent participation rate. The previous table lists a number of outdoor activities and their corresponding participation rates.

The average number of park facilities per 1,000 population is used to determine assessments of current parks facilities and amenities. IDNR issues statewide surveys to local governments every five (5) years to determine a base for Illinois future facilities needs. The surveys are fairly accurate and can be applied to most communities, though larger cities have needs that generally do not apply to smaller towns. Certain facilities have averages that can be skewed, as shown in the next table. For example, one (1) golf course of 18 holes in LaSalle County gives an average of 3.34 per 1,000 population. Some of these categories have significant variances and therefore, larger standard deviations.

Recreation Facilities Inventory

Facility	Average Number in Illinois per 1,000 Population	Number in LaSalle County per 1,000 Population
Baseball & Softball Fields	.74	1 total for 30,000 + rural residents
Basketball Courts	.38	0
Fishing Piers & Docks	.17	0
Golf Course (holes)	1.30	0
Hiking Paths (miles)	.59	Several miles for 30,000 + rural residents
Picnic Shelters	.83	7 total for 30,000 + rural residents
Playgrounds	.78	4 total for 30,000 + rural residents
Soccer Fields	.21	0
Swimming Pools	.48	0
Tennis Courts	.87	0
Volleyball Courts	.19	0

LaSalle County does not meet the statewide averages in any recreational categories. It is important to distinguish this report addresses only parks managed by LaSalle County. There are several park districts, numerous city/village parks, and four (4) State Parks that are not being accounted for in this chart.

Chapter 4 – Recreation Standards

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) set state recreation guidelines for local governments to follow during park and recreation planning. Cities are urged to provide at least 11.35 acres of usable park space per 1,000 people for overall community parkland acreage and approximately 52.69 ac/1000 population for regional parkland acreage. Illinois recreation surveys taken from the 2014 Illinois SCORP showed a statewide average of 11.33 acres of park space per 1,000 people. Usable park space is defined as land that can be utilized for the purposes of active or passive recreation. The following standards are broken into four (4) categories: park site analysis, safety and accessibility, playground and sports facilities design, and trail design.

Park Site Analysis

The purpose of site analysis is to "find a place for a particular use or find a use for a particular place." Many resources should be used to properly determine the ability to develop parkland. These include topographic maps, aerial photos, and a land use and utility map showing existing boundaries, easements, roads, buildings, and other man-made objects. Besides trying to build around existing buildings, environmental conditions are the primary construction obstacle. Though possible flood-prone areas are often ideal candidates as park sites instead of brick and mortar construction, a few natural elements should be considered:

Soils and Geology – The proper drainage is reliant on the soil type. Playgrounds, ballfields, or courts should be constructed on well-drained soils. Installation on heavy clay, peat, or bedrock is discouraged. Soil surveys should be done to determine any compacted or eroded areas. These can be obtained from the local Agricultural Extension or Soil and Water Conservation District office.

Drainage – Water should always drain away from the playground. If it drains toward the playground, land grading or underground drainage lines may be necessary. Federal Emergency Management Agency floodplain maps will determine if a park is within a floodplain and possibly indicate any drainage hazards.

Topography – Depending on the type of park, topography is an influencing factor. Changes in slope can be more beneficial for parks that emphasize passive recreation or that do not have athletic fields. However, slight changes in slope between 1-4% (1 foot of fall for every 25 linear feet) are often necessary to properly drain any water. Slopes of less than 1% may result in drainage problems and slopes of greater than 4% may require site modifications. Changes in topography often add to the visual interest in the park than level land. Grading should be kept to a minimum depending on the drainage and erosion control.

Vegetation – Shade is a desired component of many parks. Trees should be located on the south and west sides to create shade during the afternoons of hot summer days. A minimum of 10 years is often necessary to generate enough differential shade. Trees should be located away from fields, where they could interfere with games, and away from playgrounds, where overhanging limbs can cause safety problems. Common trees found in the Midwest, such as oaks, elms, or evergreens, would offer the desired amount of shade.

Man-made elements must be categorized as well. A park should not be located over or under utility lines that could pose safety hazards during inclement weather. However, locating near some utility lines, such as water or electrical lines if drinking fountains or electricity are desired, may be beneficial and cost-effective. Utility easements grant the company the right to do any necessary repairs and could disrupt the operation of the park. Utility lines that are exposed to park users must be buried. If possible, utility lines should also be buried if they are near the park property.

A land use inventory should be taken of all nearby structures and a transportation analysis would determine transit patterns. The land use inventory would help indicate how many people may be expected to frequent the park. Certain land uses could have a detrimental effect on the park due to factors such as noise, odors, traffic, or aesthetics. A transportation analysis would include a study where parking would be located and access to the site.

Fencing or landscaped berms are necessary for sites near hazardous sites, including busy roads, railroads, ponds, or drainage ditches. If a park is aimed at both active and passive recreation users, there should be as little conflict as possible. Picnic tables should not interfere with players on a playing field. Ballfields or courts should be proportionally scaled according to the amount of space available. For example, a soccer field requiring a minimum of 50,000 ft² should not be built on a lot that has a total of 50,000 ft² of open space available.

Safety and Accessibility

Parks must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) requirements. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted in 1992, making access to recreation and play settings a guaranteed civil right for all Americans. Parks should be designed through a process known as universal design, or planning for the use by all people. LaSalle County's zoning regulations should currently comply with ADA in order to make the process as easy as possible. Many components must be considered to comply with ADA. These include:

- Parking must be accessible by all users. The Illinois Accessibility Code requires one handicap accessible stall for every 25 stalls and two more handicap spaces for every additional 50 spaces.
- Any paths to the parks must meet ADA requirements. They must be a minimum of 5' wide, cannot slope more than 5%, and cannot have a cross slope greater than 2%. The surfacing must be firm, stable, and slip resistant to allow for unimpeded travel during wet and dry travel.
- Conveniences and use areas must be accessible. These include water fountains, restrooms, and concession areas.
- Signing must be appropriate. This could include the use of Braille signs in areas with hearing impaired people.
- Use areas must be designed to ensure proper interaction by people with and without disabilities.
- If there is seating, there must be a minimum clear width of 3' for passing in order to prevent obstructing the path of handicapped people.

Other components are needed to have a safe park complex. These range from having plastic tubing on the top of chain link fences to installing the padding around lightposts. Regular maintenance also helps to ensure a safe park system. Fields and playground equipment can deteriorate without a commitment to an inspection process. Many manufacturers have a recommended inspection program for equipment they sell. A city can be liable for any potential injuries without frequent maintenance of the parks.

Playground Design

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM) issue guidelines for playground safety standards that must be followed with the construction of new parks. Proper playground design can provide a much safer environment for children. According to the CPSC, an estimated 148,000 children are injured from public playground equipment-related injuries. Most occur when kids fall off swings, monkey bars, climbers, or slides. In general, the playground use zone extends to a minimum of 6' from the outside of a piece of equipment.

Protective Surfacing – About 60% of all injuries are caused by falls to the ground. Many materials are acceptable, including double shredded bark mulch, wood chips, fine sand, and fine gravel. These provide the needed cushion for any fall. They vary in terms of function, cost, appearance, installation difficulty, containment, cleanliness, and needed maintenance. Some of the materials, such as wood chips, are cheaper but are easily displaced and require continuous maintenance. Others, such as chopped rubber, are well-cushioned and have lower maintenance costs but could be a potential fire hazard and have initial costs four times that of loose materials. The material should be between 6-12" in uncompressed depth for fall heights of between 5-12'. The fall height is the vertical distance between the top of the play object and the surfacing beneath. The equipment height should not exceed the maximum fall height depending on the surfacing. The topography of the site may have an effect on which surface are the most appropriate. Asphalt and concrete should be avoided. They do not protect against injury due to falls in the use zone. The fall zone should extend a minimum of a six-foot radius from the outer edge of the support structure on each side.

Swing Spacing – No more than two (2) swing seats should be suspended from the same section of a support structure. As a rule, the horizontal distance between adjacent swing seats or from a structural component should be at least 30 inches. Any swing should not be attached to other equipment. The fall zone should extend a minimum distance of twice the height of the pivot point and not interfere with other equipment. Tire swings can be safety hazards unless the swinging clearance is at least 36 inches from any other structure.

Playground Materials – Wood must be naturally rot and insect resistant. Splinters or decaying wood can cause the structure to deteriorate. Steel should be galvanized and contain a rust inhibitor. Steel also tends to be affected by the heat from the sun. "S" hooks should be closed as tightly as possible on playground equipment to eliminate any risk of entanglement. Potential pinch or shearing points from moving points should be inspected. Many playground materials have been used from recycled materials. Aluminum is rust resistant and rather

lightweight. Aluminum can be somewhat more costly, but takes less maintenance. Plastic is a general material that can be used for a wide variety of uses. Some communities have recycled plastics in order to provide for playground equipment. Plastics do have a tendency to sag or bend over time. UV inhibitors added to the plastic can extend the life expectancy and color.

Age Guidelines – It is important to note what type of park is built and which age group it is aimed. A park directed at preschool age kids would not be an ideal site for a football field. Also, certain playground equipment is more conducive for certain age groups. Older children would not be as likely to frequent a park if sand diggers or a 48" slide were available. The CPSC and ASTM recommend separate play areas for children age 2-5 and 6-12.

Potentially Unsafe Equipment – A number of pieces of equipment are not recommended due to safety hazards. The equipment includes:

- Spinning equipment without speed governors
- Seesaws that do not meet current safety standards
- Heavy swings (metal, wood, animal-type)
- Ropes/cables that are not attached at both ends
- Swinging exercise rings and trapeze bars
- Multiple occupancy swings
- Trampolines
- Homemade equipment
- Swinging gates

Each piece of equipment should be evaluated on a yearly basis to ensure that it complies with ASTM standards. Any purchased equipment should contain Product Liability Insurance. This insurance coverage is carried by the manufacturers against accidents due to the design of the equipment. However, a regular maintenance program must be fulfilled. The insurance is not covered if an accident is caused by a lack of maintenance or unauthorized modifications of equipment.

Sports Facilities Design

Baseball/Softball Fields – Baseball fields typically contain 2-2.5 acres for each field, while a softball field is about 1.7 acres for each field. Different age groups require different sized fields. Little League baseball fields for 9-12 year olds use a 46' pitching distance, 60' baselines, and a 200' outfield distance. League for kids 13 and up use a 60.6' pitching distance, 90' baselines, and 265-315' outfield distances. Most fields have temporary plastic fencing for safety and to increase the usefulness of the fields for other sports. Chain link fences around the field should be 6' high; the backstop fencing should be at least 20' high. Smaller gauge galvanized steel fencing is appropriate behind home plate for greater durability. All fields should be oriented with home plate facing north-northeast. Baseball fields have a grass outfield with dirt cutouts in the infield. Softball fields have grass outfields and dirt infields. Each field should have a warning track 8-10' in front of the outfield fence and all fences surrounding the

field. The material should differ from the infield dirt so as to provide a caution for oncoming fielders that the fence is approaching. Materials, such as crushed limestone, are appropriate.

The infield dirt is usually composed of a mixture of sand (30-40%) and clay (60-70%). The fields should have surface gradients between 1-2%. Many fields have a gentle slope directly behind the infield to allow for water runoff. Fields with tiling beneath the field help further facilitate water filtration, though a solid drainage system can be expensive. Vitrified and/or calcined clay particles can be added to enhance water absorption. Regular maintenance is necessary, including frequent watering, mowing, and raking. Some fields require lighting for higher classification leagues. Lights should be on 70' poles in order to properly light the entire field and avoid large shadow areas. Ten to fifteen parking spaces should be provided per acre. Seating should be provided for a minimum of 50-100 spectators

Soccer Fields – According to the United States Youth Soccer Association, soccer fields can range from 0.66 acres for girls fields to 1.9 acres for men's fields. Thirty feet of unobstructed space is necessary around the field perimeter. If additional space is allowed, the field can be moved around to reduce the wear patterns that result near the goal areas and at the center circle. Goal sizes range from 5' x 10' to 8' x 24' depending on the desired age group. Assuming the fields would be used during all seasons, the field should be oriented on a north-south axis. The grass field can be either Kentucky Bluegrass or Perennial Ryegrass.

Drainage is made easier with a slight crown down the center of the field. The slope on either side should be no more than 1-2%. Tiling can further increase drainage. Drainage is generally easier on soccer fields than baseball/softball fields due to the crown and an entirely grass field. Light posts should not be placed behind either of the goals because of the blindness they can cause to the goalkeeper. The posts do not need to be as high as with the baseball/softball fields (minimum 50') since the ball is bigger and on the ground most of the time. Ten to twenty parking spaces are sufficient per field.

Football Fields – Football fields can range from 120' x 300' to 150' x 360'. It is recommended that one (1) acre of unobstructed space be available. Football fields can be used in combination with soccer or baseball fields if there is little overlap in the seasons of use. Goal posts must have padding around the poles. The posts can be permanently fixed or be temporarily set to increase the field flexibility. If the fields are primarily used during the fall, the field should be oriented on a northwest-southeast axis. The grass field can be either Kentucky Bluegrass or Perennial Ryegrass.

As with soccer fields, drainage is made easier with a slight crown down the center of the field. Light posts should have an illumination of 30 horizontal footcandles (HFC) or higher and have at least four poles at least 50' in height. Less than standard lighting can lead to safety problems. At least 15 parking spaces should be provided per field.

The need for fewer fields can be accomplished through shared lighting, irrigation, parking, and washroom facilities. Schedules must be arranged on an annual basis to ensure enough time for

each sport. More maintenance is required with shared fields. Frequent turf replacement or slit seeding is often necessary.

Basketball Courts – Basketball court dimensions are typically 84' x 50'. A minimum of 5,000 ft² including a 3' radius of unobstructed space is required. Full courts require 7,280 ft² and a 10' radius of unobstructed space. The court should be built on a north-south axis in order to keep the baskets away from the sun as much as possible. Asphalt or concrete surfaces are appropriate. Asphalt is highly resilient and can be used for many purposes. It has a high cost compared with concrete and can soften in very hot weather. Concrete can be used year-round and is a good surface for most play areas when laid properly. It can be rough and abrasive and has a lack of resiliency. Many courts use a colored (green), resilient surface over the asphalt. The court should be cleared of any sand or debris that may cause slipping. There should be a minimal slope of .8-1.2% from end to end. The rim must be exactly 10' from the ground for all courts. The basket standard should be at least 2' behind the baseline. The backboard must be exactly 4' in front of the baseline. The backboards should be white or clear and can be either fiberglass or metal. Fiberglass produces less noise than metal.

If lights are desired, they only need to measure 20 HFC. Five (5) to ten parking spaces per court is sufficient. The court should be connected to the parking lot via a 36" wide firm path. Landscaped berms around the court provide a better visual impression and help keep balls inside the court area. It can also provide seating for any spectators. Fencing is generally not necessary. Little maintenance is required for basketball courts besides changing the nets occasionally and repaving the court when cracking occurs.

Volleyball Courts – At least 5,000 ft² of square footage is necessary for sand and hard volleyball courts. The court dimensions are 80' x 50' with a minimum of 10' of unobstructed area. Outdoor sand courts should be oriented on a north-south axis. The net height varies from 7'4" for women and high school players to 8' for men or recreational leagues. The nets should be constructed from a durable cable or rope. The net should be secured with metal eyebolts at the top and bottom of the net. Sand courts have a depth of 12"-20" of high quality, clean sand. Washed mason sand is generally the best sand, though others may be used depending on the topography. It should neither be too coarse or too fine. Hard courts may use asphalt or concrete surfacing.

The boundaries should be marked using a material that will not hurt the players. Rope, webbing, or thick tapes are appropriate markers. They can be tied to anchors in each corner and buried in the sand. Depending on the existing topography and soils, a drainage system may not need to be installed for sand courts. Plastic perforated tile encased in non-compacting aggregate stone can be used for further irrigation. Hard courts should have a minimum slope of 1% from side to side. Little maintenance is needed besides occasional raking of the sand and removal of small rocks and pebbles.

Tennis Courts – At least 7,200 ft² is required per court. The court dimensions are a standard 78' x 36'. It should be oriented on a north-south axis. Surfaces can be asphalt,

concrete, har-tru, clay, or grass. Har-tru, clay, and grass are used infrequently because of the high cost and maintenance required. An acrylic surface should be painted green or red to define the court boundaries. Additional surfacing can add cushioning to the surface. The netting should be a highly durable rope with cable at the top. It rises 3'6" from the top of the iron cap on both sides and 3' at the center line. There should be 12' between the side boundary lines if more than one court is constructed.

The court should ideally have a slope of about 1% side-to-side or end-to-end. Additional drainage systems are not needed. Lighting should be between 30-40 HFC and be 30' above the court. Fencing surrounding the court should be 12' in height. The fence behind the service lines can be reinforced to prevent distortion over time. Fences should be angled in the corners to reduce the number of balls that would collect. Wind screens to protect from wind and sun should at least be located behind both service lines and ideally on all four sides. They should be tied down to prevent wind movement and vandalism. Two parking spaces are sufficient per court. Some regular maintenance is needed. All courts eventually suffer some cracks in the pavement over time and need resurfacing. Paint may also be removed with frequent use or weatherizing of the court.

Hockey Rinks – In-line skating or in-line hockey rinks should have 28,000 ft^2 of play area, including 5,000 ft^2 for area including benches and penalty boxes. Dimensions range from 100' x 50' for junior hockey to 180' x 90' for full size rinks, with slightly larger surfaces for ice hockey rinks. A north-south axis is the ideal orientation. Asphalt or concrete can be played on but acrylic surfacing should also be added. Ice hockey rinks are often used on underutilized parkland during the winter months by flooding and freezing a pond. The dasher boards should have a recommended height of 42". The boards should not be much lower to prevent tripping into them. They can be portable or permanent.

Clear plexiglass is needed above the dasher boards, though steel fencing or other screening can be used as an alternative. A minimal slope of .8-1.2% is required to allow for drainage of the rink. A small cut-out is needed on the low-end to permit liquid to flow out for in-line rinks. Two cooling systems are used for permanent ice rinks: brine solution and ethylene glycol. Brine solution is highly corrosive and uses less horsepower than ethylene glycol, which has a higher solution cost. Many hockey rinks are used during night hours. Therefore, lighting may be essential. Illumination should measure 20-30 HFC. The number of required parking spaces varies from 15-30 spaces per rink. Considerable maintenance is mandatory for ice hockey rinks. Ice grooming equipment must be used at regular intervals to ensure a clean, level ice surface. A tarpaulin would help prevent melting by the sun.

Skate Parks – Skate parks are among the fastest growing park amenities. About 10,000 ft^2 is sufficient. The park may be built on a concrete base or built over a plywood structure. The cost can vary depending on the type of desired objects. Elements can include a rounded bowl, grinding rail, or a fun box. It is recommended that a minimum of 4-5 runs/routes be incorporated in the skate park design. Areas designated for beginners and experts should be kept separate.

Room must be given to allow for inevitable falls off the objects. Local skaters should be utilized during the design process.

Lighting is not required, though minimal illumination of 10-20 HFC may be desired. The skate park should be fenced from other park users. Five (5) to ten parking spaces is adequate, though it should be as a shared lot. Frequent maintenance is necessary. Regular inspection of the equipment may require eventual replacements. Signage must clearly state the rules of the skate park upon entrance. The signs should be placed at locations where the park users must view them. The requirement of safety equipment such as helmets and elbow and knee pads is strongly recommended. The town must analyze insurance options before opening any publicly available skate park.

Trail Design

Prior to the design and construction of a trail, the purpose and vision must first be understood. Trails are built to serve many ideals. They can promote an area's natural history, cultural resources, conservation features, wildlife, or provide general physical activity and access to other features. The purpose of the trail will have an impact on which type of surface is the best choice. In addition, the type of trail might mean the need to follow ADA guidelines and specifications. As with parkland used for active recreation, the site conditions and natural features demand if, how, and where the trail can meander. Aerial photos and topographic maps should be consulted to identify any natural openings, changes in elevation, vegetation types, and waterways. A new map should be designed using the different sources available, pointing out any objects that may be utilized or those that could be harmful.

Any possible trails should be walked prior to the commencement of any construction or movement of land to ensure the stability of the land. The actual trail corridor consists of three components: the actual walking surface; the right-of-way, which includes any land cleared for the walking surface; and the buffer zone, the area beyond the right-of-way that shields the trail from outside influences. In general, many areas favor trail placement. These include: well-drained soils; scenic vistas; vegetation conducive to easy travel; access to and view of waterways; natural drainage; natural contours; safe crossings of roads, railroads, and waterways; easy access from parking areas; and minimal conflict with bordering land uses. Greenways that are not straight and contain many visually attractive landscapes tend to be preferred and are more likely to be utilized. They should appear as natural as possible by blending in with the surroundings. A large percentage of people frequent trails to escape from the nearby built environment and its noise. A number of areas to avoid include: wet, flat, and frequently flooded depressions; unstable or fragile soils; steep slopes; areas with heavy vegetation requiring costly

clearing and maintenance; areas where endangered species might be affected; fragile cultural or archeological sites; road and rail crossings; and crossings over streams needing bridges.

Various materials are utilized depending on the trail location. Native materials are preferred for trails through natural areas to help it blend in with the surroundings as much as possible. Materials such as sawdust, shavings, wood chips, and mulch can be applied for trails whose main use is walking or hiking. These are only recommended for shorter trails, since the cost can be a prohibitive factor because of the need to spread them or do mulching on site. Trail width for natural trails should be a minimum of 2-4'. The greater the width, the greater the ability to accommodate multiple uses. Gravel and rock can be used in poorly drained or slippery areas. Larger rocks also can be used as steps where short elevation changes occur. Irregularly shaped rocks can also be used as ballast for trail subsurfaces. Trails primarily used for bicycling, in-line skating, or snowmobiling should have a harder surface. Suitable materials include asphalt, concrete, and crushed limestone. Bicycle trails must have a minimum width of 4-6'. Snowmobiling may only be allowed for trails that are not plowed during the winter months. It is important to note that trails that allow for bicyclists/pedestrians and other travel modes of greater speeds are incompatible on the same path. There should be separate corridors for each mode if conflicts of interest may result.

Most trails are short in the initial stages of construction. Land acquisition can often be difficult to create a long trail at one time. Therefore, unless the trail is an extension of another trail system the desirable length is between ½ and 2 miles. Looping allows users to return via untraveled right-of-ways and allows handicapped people the ability to utilize the trail.

A trail is much more than merely a linear path. It should contain places for resting and relaxation. While these could be in the form of benches or picnic tables, they could also be exercise areas or open areas away from the path. Signage is important for any trail. Informative signs are vital for self-guided nature and interpretive trails. Some trails develop decorative boxes containing brochures regarding nearby sites, vegetation, and wildlife. Mileage markers can be located on longer bicycle trails, such as the I&M Canal Trail. Maps are recommended to help people become acclimated with the routes available and point out any interesting facts that may be encountered. Wayfinding signs make visitors feel more welcome. Wayfinding is a method of directing people into and around the community through the use of readable and easily identifiable sign graphics. They offer a repetitive element by utilizing common graphics, shapes, and colors to communicate the message to be portrayed.

Additional Amenities

Following is a list of other amenities that can complement the parksite:

- An automatic irrigation system is useful for larger parks with multiple fields. While the system has a high upfront cost, it lessens the need for continual maintenance. Pop-up heads are built into the ground and can be timed to water the fields at certain times.
- Drinking fountains should be located in a central use area. The fountain can contain spigots to fill jugs.
- Washroom facilities are often necessary for community parks, or parks designated as destinations. One toilet stall shall be equipped for handicapped in both genders' washrooms.
- Benches should be placed near trees or buildings to provide shade. However, they should not be hidden where they do not allow for supervision. As with the water fountains, they should be on a handicapped accessible path.
- As stated earlier, vegetation helps beautify the park and make it a more primary destination. Unusual annual and perennial flowers can offer an arboretum feel, particularly to passive recreational spaces.
- Bicycle racks should be provided whenever possible. They should particularly be found at parks with playgrounds or ballfields.
- Trash and recycling cans should be found at all parks to discourage littering. Lids discourage animals and vandalism. Regular pickups should be done to keep garbage from piling up and creating pungent odors.
- Minimum lighting should be provided. Low-intensity lighting will provide for a safer nighttime environment while also discouraging evening users.
- Signs can add to the interaction with park participants. They are particularly desirable along trails and greenways or where important historical or cultural events have taken place. Each park should have simple signs at the most visible entrances. Safety warnings should be placed near the corresponding equipment.

Chapter 5 – Goals and Strategies

In a traditional sense goals would maintain the role as an overarching development ideology. In order to condense the process, the LaSalle County Parks Plan development goals have been approached as a list of actionable items to maintain and upgrade the park system for the use and enjoyment of residents.

In order to properly respond to residents' recreational needs, certain ongoing principles must be met. A challenge is to ensure that the recreational facilities are appropriate for a changing demographic system. This encourages a continual updating of the overall parks plan. An inclusive framework must be in place to guide future parks management and development.

Moving from the general to the specific, it must be noted that, over time, new areas of need or new situations become dominant and it is necessary to reappraise and amend goals periodically to reflect changing conditions. Because certain events cannot be properly planned for, goals should be reviewed and updated every five (5) years. Based upon the present point in time and the existing conditions in the county, the following goals are recommended. Goals are drafted in alphabetical order.

Goal 1 - Administrative Goal
Effectively and efficiently provide for the recreational needs of all LaSalle County residents by use of both public and private resources.

Strategy 1 - Deliver recreational opportunities to current and future residents. Leverage private organizations, county staff, and the committees of the County to satisfy the residents' current needs and future demands for recreational services.

Strategy 2 - Foster a working relationship with the community organizations, school districts, the County, and communities to capitalize upon similar recreational missions.

Strategy 3 - Stimulate and proliferate volunteerism. Recognizing that county resources are limited, volunteers should be sought to assist with the maintenance and program development.

Goal 2 - Community Outreach Goal
Ensure residents of LaSalle County are aware of the programs and facilities available to them. Encourage participation in recreational space and programming development.

Strategy 1 - Continue to utilize the county website and existing media outlets to make information available to residents.

Goal 3 - Conservation Goal
Preserve and protect areas of important environmental consideration.

Strategy 1 - Protect historical sites (Shabbona Monument) with the continued inclusion in the parks maintenance schedule.

Strategy 2 - Seek cooperation, advice, and assistance from other levels and agencies of government such as the County, State, and Federal Government in the acquisition and development of open space and recreational facilities.

Goal 4 - Facilities Goal
Provide facilities for both active and passive recreation to meet the needs of all county residents.

Strategy 1 - Complete an inventory of both Catlin and Shabbona Parks.

Strategy 2 - Ensure access to all residents.

Strategy 3 - Identify the public's needs for both active and passive recreation.

Strategy 4 - Open a dialogue with local, state, and federal agencies as it relates to the national significance of the Black Hawk War monument.

Strategy 5 - Recommend land donations for the development of park space by private organizations and developers building new housing.

Strategy 6 - Recommend a portion of each park to include benches and landscaping to offer a more visually-pleasing experience.

Goal 5 - Funding Goal
Utilized both public and private resources to finance the development of park facilities and programming.

Strategy 1 – Find funding sources from federal, state, and local levels both public and private.

Strategy 2 – Maintain an annual budget, as much as possible, that meets the most important needs of the residents.

Goal 6 - Maintenance Goal
Maintain the condition of park facilities to ensure a safe recreational space for residents.

Strategy 1 – Develop an annual maintenance plan for all public and private parks in LaSalle County with safety issues taking top priority

Strategy 2 – Conduct regular inspections and maintenance of all equipment and facilities.

Strategy 3 - Utilize current staff and volunteerism to provide a safe environment in and around Catlin and Shabbona Parks.

Goal 7 - Programmatic Goal
Draft and maintain a comprehensive program of recreational activities to meet the physical and psychological needs of all LaSalle County residents.

Strategy 1 - Maintain a dialogue with existing organizations to limit duplication of services.

Strategy 2 - Utilized surveying techniques to identify types of programs needed to ensure a variety of opportunities for people of all ages, abilities, and interests.

Strategy 3 - Develop partnerships with private and non-profit firms to take advantage of possible underutilized programs that organizations have that aim to help with community functions.

Chapter 6 - Implementation

Equipment at Shabbona Park

The LaSalle County Parks and Recreation Plan is a comprehensive community policy statement comprised of a variety of both graphic and narrative policies intended to provide basic guidelines for making parks development decisions. The Plan is intended to be used by County officials, persons making private sector investments, and by all citizens interested in the future development of LaSalle County. The completion of the plan is only one (1) part of the community planning process. The implementation of the strategies of the plan can only be attained over a period of time and only through the collective efforts of public and private sectors. The implementation step is the most critical in the planning process, and determines the success of this plan. It is the hope of the County Property Committee that this document will be used to guide recreational development within the County over the next 20 years.

The development of a parks plan in itself is an important implementation tool. It can influence public and private decisions by providing a readily available source of information and ideas. The plan document is essentially a coordinated set of advisory proposals. The degree to which this influences decisions depends upon the soundness of the plan, its relevance to the actual situation, and its availability to developers and the public. A plan that is not available to the public and is not used can hardly be influential.

Chapter 6 - Implementation

The County Property Committee will present its official actions through goals and strategies in the plan. If the County Board neglects the parks plan, others will follow suit. Therefore, printing and disseminating the plan is an important step toward its implementation. This document must be made available to the public for purchase at the County Governmental Complex and/or other specific locations. The County should also consider making the plan available on its website.

County Board

The LaSalle County Board is the final authority on policy formulation for the community. It adopts the budget, passes local ordinances, and develops planning policy under direction of the Committees and Chairman. Board member support is essential for effective functioning of the planning process. The County Property Committee recommends any comprehensive parks plans. The County Board should examine creative ways to implement the Parks and Recreation Plan. Different funding sources should be looked at for all projects and traditional and nontraditional professional and labor resources should be analyzed.

Updating the Plan

The LaSalle County Parks and Recreation Plan, in whole or in part, may be amended from time to time as necessary and as planning and legislative bodies deem appropriate. Because of the timeliness of the information and goals presented in this plan, this document must be reviewed regularly to remain updated, ideally every five (5) years. New goals, along with added or amended maps and information, must be added. The strategies should be reviewed on a yearly basis.

Prioritized Timeline

Following is a list of priority items to be completed in the implementation of the LaSalle County Parks and Recreation Plan. These items are broken into two (2) periods: immediate, 0-5 years and long range, 6-10 years. The immediate priorities are further broken into the most vital physical planning and organizational planning matters. These items are listed in order of importance for that timeframe.

Rate of Priority (Listed in order of importance):

Immediate Physical and Organizational:	0-5 years (2020-2025)
Long Range:	6-10 years (2026-2030)

Immediate Physical *(0-5 years; 2020-2025)*:

1. Find funding sources from federal, state, and local levels both public and private.

The first priority is to use the available grants to develop the property at the Shabbona site. IDNR Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development grants have been considered in the past for this property. LaSalle County's applications to IDNR for grant funding will receive a higher priority ranking because they have a current Parks and Recreation Plan. Once the plan is adopted, the County Property Committee should begin compiling the preliminary information necessary for applying for one of the many grants. Brief summaries of the grants are found following this section. The sooner actual physical work begins on obtaining and developing park space, the more attention will be given to future projects the County Property Committee attempts to put into action. This will help generate momentum for the implementation of the plan's principles. The County should encourage residents to volunteer their time by helping with the project. While donated labor does not minimize the County's portion of any matching grant, it involves residents in community events.

2. Conduct regular inspections and maintenance of all equipment and facilities.

   The current condition of the facilities at both Catlin and Shabbona parks must be quantified. The aging facilities are in need of repair and, in some cases, replacement. It is paramount that the County Property Committee take annual stock of the existing park infrastructure.

3. Complete an inventory of both Catlin and Shabbona Parks.

   A complete inventory of the park and maintenance equipment should be completed by the County Property Committee. This inventory should also include all structures. The conditions of each should be recorded and updated annually.

Immediate Organizational *(0-5 years; 2020-2025)*:

1. Foster a working relationship with the community organizations, school districts, the County, and communities to capitalize upon similar recreational missions.

   A vision statement will establish what the County Property Committee hopes to accomplish through the implementation of each policy. The vision must be something that can be attainable and shows forethought for the future. It should be a broad paragraph that does not conflict with what LaSalle County envisions with regards to providing services to its residents.

2. Maintain and stick to an annual budget as much as possible that meets the most important needs of the residents.

The County Property Committee should identify a number of items it deems as important on a yearly basis that are needed to help sustain and improve the quality of life and are within the budget set by the County. Keeping to the budget will ensure that future projects can be properly financed. The County Board must provide adequate funding to guarantee a safe environment for all users.

3. Develop an annual maintenance plan for all public and private parks in LaSalle County with safety issues taking top priority.

   Prior to any new construction of parks or equipment, the existing facilities must be safe. The maintenance plan would prioritize the items that need to be repaired and identify the amount of financing needed. Particular attention should be paid to equipment at Shabbona Park that aged beyond its usable life. Any maintenance should be done to make the parks compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

4. Require a portion of each park to include benches and landscaping to offer a more visually-pleasing experience.

   Each LaSalle County park should stimulate the senses of the user. The use of sidewalks, benches, and trees enhances the appeal to a wider population by encouraging greater usage. These persuade people to utilize the park to relax and enjoy the surroundings. In addition, a uniform signage system should be in place that clearly identifies each park and any operating rules.

Long Range (6-10 years; 2025-2030):

1. Analyze the entire plan five (5) years after implementation.

   The primary changes could occur with the County's demographics and any developments that have changed the land area distribution. Any good plan depends on continual reexamination to fit the evolution of the County.

2. Develop partnerships with private and non-profit firms to take advantage of possible underutilized programs that organizations have that aim to help with community functions.

   Partnerships act as a win-win situation for both the County and the private or not-for-profit company that becomes involved with the project. The County is always looking for a way to extend their resources to generate innovative programs that may not otherwise be feasible. The LaSalle County-based companies can use the

partnership as a means to offer community service projects to their employees. The businesses also benefit from the public relations and marketing possibilities. Projects can range from annual landscaping to donating land or money for parks improvements. While this is categorized as a long range priority, contacts should be established as soon as possible to create a better working relationship amongst the many companies and organizations that would be suitable partners.

3. Require land donations for the development of park space by private organizations and developers building new housing.

   This helps ensure that the amount of parkspace available to residents keeps pace with the increase in population and land area in the County. The County Property Committee should work closely with the County Board to develop an ordinance that is enforced.

Funding Sources

Illinois Department of Natural Resources - Outdoor Recreation Grant-In-Aid Programs
http://www.dnr.state.il.us/

A. Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Program (OSLAD) & Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) - Applications due July 1 of each year.

The OSLAD and LWCF programs provide funding assistance to local government agencies for acquisition and /or development of land for public parks and open space.

Eligible Activities include:
Acquisition of land for new park sites or park expansion, water frontage, nature study, and natural resource preservation.

Development/Renovation of:

- picnic and playground facilities;
- outdoor nature interpretive facilities;
- sports courts and play fields;
- swimming pools, beaches and bathhouses;
- campgrounds and fishing piers;
- winter sports facilities;
- park roads and paths, parking, utilities and restrooms; and
- architectural/engineering (A/E) services necessary for proper design and construction of approved project components.

B. Boat Access Area Development Program

The Boat Access Area Development (BAAD) program is a state-financed program, administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), which provides funding assistance to local units of government for the acquisition and/or construction/renovation of approved public boat, including canoe, access areas in Illinois.

The BAAD program can provide up to 100% reimbursement funding assistance on approved project development costs and 90% reimbursement funding assistance on approved land acquisition costs. For development projects, higher priority is given in project evaluation for local agency financial contribution to the project, up to 30% of project cost for maximum credit. Maximum grant assistance for any one (1) project or project element in a given fiscal year (grant cycle) is limited to $200,000 for power boat access facilities and $80,000 for non-motorized, canoe, and other car top boat launch facilities.

Grants are generally due in early September each year.

C. Illinois Trails Grant Programs which include the following:

1. Illinois Bicycle Path Program -Applications due March 1 of each year.

This program was created in 1990 to financially assist eligible units of government acquire, construct, and rehabilitate public non-motorized bicycle paths and directly related support facilities.

2. Snowmobile Grant Program-Applications due May 1 of each year.

This program is financed from the registration fees of snowmobiles and provides up to 50% reimbursement of approved facility development/rehabilitation costs and 90% of approved corridor land acquisition costs for pubic snowmobile trails and areas in the state. Snowmobile grants are available to local governments, snowmobile clubs, and organizations under two (2) different IDNR trails grant programs (the Snowmobile Program and the Off-Highway Vehicle Program).

3. Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Grant Program - Applications due March 1 of each year.

Provides financial assistance to government agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and other eligible groups or individuals to develop, operate, maintain, and acquire land for OHV parks, trails and trailside facilities that are open and accessible to the public in Illinois and to restore areas damaged by OHV use. The OHV grant program can provide up to 100% funding on approved projects.

4. Recreational Trails Grant Program (RTP) - Applications due March 1 of each year.

This is a federal program created through the National Recreational Trails Fund Act (NRTFA). The program provides funding assistance for acquisition, development, rehabilitation, and maintenance of both motorized and non-motorized recreational trails. The RTP provides 80% federal funding assistance on approved projects. There is a $200,000 grant ceiling for non-motorized projects and no maximum grant for acquisition projects and for motorized projects.

D. Park and Recreational Facility Construction Act (PARC)

The Park and Recreational Facility Construction Act (PARC) was by Public Act 096-0820 effective November 18, 2009 created to provide grants to be disbursed by IDNR to eligible local governments for park and recreational construction projects.
It is important to recognize that the main intent of this program is to construct or rehabilitate/renovate existing recreational **buildings or structures.**

"Bondable" or "brick and mortar" projects for capital expenditures may include: demolition, site preparation and improvements, utility work, reconstruction or improvement of existing buildings or facilities, expansion of buildings/facilities, and new construction of buildings/structures.

Land acquisition projects for public park recreation and conservation purposes include, but are not limited to, acquisition of land for the following: to construct new public indoor/outdoor recreational buildings, structures and facilities; to expand existing public indoor/outdoor recreational buildings, structures and facilities; general park purposes such as

regional, community and neighborhood parks and playfields; frontage on public surface waters for recreational use; open space/conservation purposes to protect floodplains, wetlands, natural areas, wildlife habitat and unique geologic and biologic features, and additions to such areas.

The maximum grant amount is $2,500,000. The state will provide up to 75% of approved project costs, with the exception of those local governments defined as “disadvantaged”, which will be eligible for up to 90% funding. It is a reimbursable grant program. The community must be able to fund the entire project and be reimbursed upon project completion. IDNR has had two (2) funding rounds for this program. Dates for future funding rounds are not available at this time.