



COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN CITY OF VIROQUA

2026-2031

DRAFT REPORT
Submitted August 28, 2025

studio **gwa**
TEAM DESIGN DEVELOP

Table of Contents

I: Introduction	1
Plan Overview.....	1
Parkland Benefits.....	2
Planning Purpose, Vision Statement.....	3
Community Engagement.....	3
How to Navigate the Plan	5
II: Community Profile	7
Local and Regional Context.....	7
Transportation Network	8
City History and Settlement	8
Parks and Recreation History.....	9
Demographic Profile	9
Geographic Setting and Natural Resources.....	16
Land Use and Zoning	17
III: Parkland Inventory and Recreation Programs.....	21
NRPA Acknowledgement	21
Parks and Open Space Classifications	21
Existing Park Facilities	24
Undedicated City-Owned Facilities.....	44
Undedicated Privately-Owned Facilities	45
Recreation Programs.....	46
Park and Open Space Amenities	46
Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities and Trails.....	47
IV: Community Engagement	47
Community Survey	48
Focus Groups	52

Pop-Up and other On-Site Engagement	57
Open House.....	59
V: Park and Recreation Analysis	59
Viroqua Acreage Standards Comparison	59
VI: Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Actions.....	66
Vision Statement.....	66
Planning Themes	66
Goals, Objectives, Actions.....	67
VII: Recommendations.....	73
Acquisition of Park Land	73
Dedication of New Park Facilities	73
Recommendations for Existing Parks	73
VIII: Implementation Strategies	75
IX: Appendices.....	76
Appendix 1: Community Engagement Responses	76
Appendix 2: Park and Open Space Classifications	77
Appendix 3: Park Property Information.....	77
Appendix 4: Maps	77
Appendix 5: Glossary of Terms.....	77
Appendix 6: Bibliography.....	79

**City of Viroqua
Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
2026-2031**

Acknowledgements

City of Viroqua Mayor and Council Members

Justin Running, Mayor
Seth McClurg, Ward 1
Andrew Bergum, Ward 2
Todd Kirking, Ward 3
Emma Hood, Ward 4
Todd Spaeth, Ward 5
Cyndy Hubbard, Ward 6
John Thompson, Ward 7
Kristal Welter, Ward 8
Steve Willis, Ward 9

City of Viroqua Planning Commission

Justin Running, Chair
Jan Rasikas
Stephanie Gauthier-Phillips
Richard Running
Sonya Newenhouse
David Levin
Kristal Welter

City of Viroqua Parks and Recreation Committee

Steve Willis, Chair
Andrew Bergum
Seth McClurg
Emma Hood
Cyndy Hubbard

City of Viroqua Staff

Nate Torres, City Administrator
Kale Proksch, Director of Parks and Recreation
Sarah Grainger, Director of Public Works/City Engineer
Angie Eitland-Anderson, Administrative Assistant

Stakeholders and Community Members

Duane Koons, Viroqua Area Pickleball Association
Dave Krier, Valley Stewardship Network
Joanna Lottig, Viroqua Club Basketball
Sonya Newenhouse, PrairieWind Park
Alycann Taylor, Vernon Trails, Blue Dog Cycles
Kay Wienke, Vernon County Over 50
Cecil Wright, Driftless United Soccer Club

Consultant Team

Studio GWA

Ashley Sarver, AICP, Partner

Michael Smith, Associate Planner

200 Prairie Street, Suite 201

Rockford, IL 61107

(815)-963-1900

www.studiogwa.com

Disclaimer: The information presented in this document is for planning purposes only and should not be used for the final design of any project. All content including but not limited to existing conditions, analysis, findings, recommendations, and strategies is based on limited information collected during the planning process and is subject to change. Further analysis is necessary prior to implementing any of the recommendations contained herein.

[placeholder: resolution to be inserted upon plan adoption]

I: Introduction

Plan Overview

The 2026–2031 City of Viroqua Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) compiles and updates information on the physical facilities and amenities that comprise the City's park system and provides guidance for its future improvement and expansion. This document is a key component of Viroqua's overall comprehensive planning program. It addresses the community's long-range park and open space needs for the next five years (2026–2031). Five years is widely viewed as an appropriate planning horizon because social, cultural, and political conditions shift enough to warrant a fresh look at goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations.

Viroqua offers residents and visitors a broad range of park and recreation opportunities that deliver environmental, health, economic, and social benefits. Parks, trails, and open space not only provide safe and healthy recreation options but also beautify the community, protect the environment, and influence development patterns. In addition, they raise property values, attract tourism, improve aesthetics, and advance sustainability.

To maintain these benefits, the CORP:

- Reviews and updates the City's recreation inventory to guide continual improvement of the park and open space system;
- Preserves the City's eligibility for state and federal park and recreation grants;
- Supports the City's long-term comprehensive planning goals by focusing on specific park and recreation priorities for the next five years; and
- Satisfies grant program requirements that mandate an approved outdoor recreation plan.

The 2026–2031 CORP has been prepared under the latest guidance from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR), making it eligible for WisDNR certification. Certification qualifies the City for matching funds under the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the Federal Recreation Trails Act (RTA), and the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Grant Program. It also complies with Wisconsin Statutes 61.35, 236.29, and 66.0617, and will be incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan under Wisconsin Statutes 66.1001.

The CORP was commissioned by the City of Viroqua in 2024. The plan was produced by Studio GWA, an architecture and planning firm based in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin. The CORP was produced concurrently with the 2026-2031 Historic Preservation Plan (HPP) and the 2026-2036 Comprehensive Plan, the latter of which was created in tandem with the consultant firm Redevelopment Resources.

Parkland Benefits

The City of Viroqua's parks, trails, and natural areas are important civic infrastructure. They perform essential environmental services, promote public health, foster inclusive social interaction, and enhance overall quality of life for our community members. The following benefits illustrate the numerous benefits afforded us by our park system and illustrate why continued care and stewardship of our parks is essential for a thriving community.

Environmental Benefits

- Parks and natural areas can provide critical wildlife habitat, improve surface water and groundwater quality, provide stormwater management, and improve air quality.
- Trees and other vegetation provide shade, which reduces the urban heat island effect.
- Parks give children and adults direct, recurring contact with nature, nurturing lifelong environmental stewardship.

Health Benefits

- Parks, trails, and recreation programs make it easy for people of all ages and abilities to stay physically active
- Early, routine physical activity in childhood is strongly linked to lifelong active habits.
- Time in natural settings measurably lowers stress and elevates mood.

Social Benefits

- Viroqua's parks and recreation programs are inclusive, welcoming people of every income, race, and ability.
- Parks foster community interaction, from sporting events to pick-up games to chance encounters.
- Parks can create a sense of pride and ownership in the community.

Economic Benefits

- High-quality parks influence both residents' and businesses' decisions to locate or remain in a community.
- Property values tend to increase in relation to the proximity to parks.
- Parks and recreation programs can generate income for local businesses when park related events encourage people to stay overnight, go out to eat, rent bicycles or kayaks, or stop at a convenience store.

Historical Benefits

- Parks named after prominent or historic residents or events create connection and educate future residents by generating interest in local history.

Infrastructure Support

- Vegetated surfaces absorb and filter stormwater and agricultural runoff
- Trees, shrubs, and other greenery improve air quality, reduce urban heat island effects, and enhance biodiversity.

Planning Purpose, Vision Statement

Viroqua's public parks and open spaces are operated and maintained by the Parks & Recreation Department. This CORP was prepared under the direction of City staff and the Planning Commission. The purpose of the plan is threefold:

1. To guide the decisions of the City and other providers of open space and recreational lands in order to provide for the increasing demand for recreation facilities.
2. To recommend opportunities for recreation and open space improvements within the community.
3. To maintain Viroqua's eligibility for recreation grant funds with updates completed approximately every five years.

The CORP also serves to identify potential conceptual location and recommendations for different parks, trails, open spaces, and other recreational facility types. Additional planning, engineering, planning, study, community engagement, budgeting, and discussion are required prior to the development of these lands and recreational facilities. The plan aids in providing recommendations in accordance with parkland acreage medians provided by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

Building on the community's deep appreciation for its park assets, the CORP casts the following vision for a vibrant park system that will serve community members for years to come:

"Our community envisions a thriving outdoor recreation landscape that fosters health, wellness, and connection among residents and visitors alike. We aim to create accessible and diverse recreational opportunities that celebrate our natural resources, promote environmental stewardship, and enhance the quality of life for all community members. Through collaborative planning and community engagement, we will develop safe, sustainable, and inclusive outdoor spaces that inspire active lifestyles, nurture a sense of belonging, and celebrate our unique natural and cultural heritage."

Community Engagement

Community meetings, engagement activities, and meetings with city staff and commission members were held throughout the planning process. The engagement activities conducted for the CORP were designed to elevate the role of recreation, particularly in how its parkland and facilities are important to the city's identity.

The engagement activities for the CORP were held from January to September 2025 and consisted of a community survey, focus groups, pop-up engagement, and a community open house. A summary is below. For comprehensive detailing of community engagement responses, refer to Appendix 1: Community Engagement Responses.

Community Survey

In January 2025, the project team developed a web-based community survey to gather important information on community needs and priorities. The survey was promoted on the City's website and social media page and via email to stakeholders. A print copy of the survey was made available at City Hall and McIntosh Memorial Library. The survey was administered from Friday, February 28 to Tuesday, April 15.

Focus Groups

In March 2025, the project team facilitated two focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather input from stakeholders on recreation-related issues and opportunities throughout the city. Seven recreation-specific stakeholders participated in the focus groups. The stakeholders represented a number of recreation-related organizations including the Driftless United Soccer Club, Vernon County Over 50, PrairieWind Park, Viroqua Club Basketball, and Valley Stewardship Network.

On-Site Engagement

In May 2025, the project team conducted a series of on-site community engagement activities. Activities for the intercept survey and pop-up booth included one question associated with the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The question had slight variations based on the engagement method used. The engagement activities consisted of the following:

- **Intercept Surveys:** Tuesday, May 27, conducted at Nelson Ag Center and the Park Bowl during a baseball game.
- **Pop-Up Engagement Booth:** Saturday, May 31st, at Viroqua Farmer's Market.
- **Community Forum:** Saturday, May 31st at Viroqua Commons.

Each activity was designed to gather community input on concurrent planning efforts, including the Historic Preservation Plan, the Comprehensive Plan, and the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Open House

[Pending September data as of 8/14/25]

How to Navigate the Plan

Section II: Community Profile

This section offers a comprehensive overview of Viroqua's local and regional contexts, demographic profile, physical and environmental features, land use and zoning, and transportation elements.

Section III: Parkland Inventory and Recreation Programs

This section includes a detailed inventory of Viroqua outdoor recreational facilities. Also defined within the section are park classification types in accordance with National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) guidelines, municipal park and open space amenities, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and trails, and relevant county and state facilities.

Section IV: Community Engagement

Public input is vital to the success of any park and recreation-oriented planning efforts. As such, this section quantifies community responses. From January to September 2025, the project team employed a variety of engagement activities to ensure that the recommendations of the CORP reflect a broadly supported vision and address the community's desires and requirements.

Section V: Park and Recreation Analysis

Viroqua parkland facilities are analyzed to quantitatively determine current and future local demand, expectations, and needs in this section. Further, classification of municipal parkland is determined using recommendations outlined in NRPA and Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) documents.

Section VI: Goals, Objectives, and Actions

To offer a comprehensive and inclusive planning process, this section establishes encompassing vision and goals, objectives, and actions offers guidance for the development of the CORP. Using these items, recommendations for outdoor recreational facilities can be generated.

Section VII: Recommendations

This section includes both general and park-specific recommendations for outdoor recreation facilities in the City of Viroqua. The section also provides maintenance recommendations and offers suggestions for the establishment of park types to classify City parkland.

Section VIII: Implementation Strategies

This section summaries capital improvement and funding opportunities that the City can utilize to fund implementation of the park and open space recommendations.

Section IX: Appendices

The final section consists of supplementary documentation which was used during the CORP planning process. This includes community engagement responses, park property information, and key terms used throughout the CORP. Sources used throughout the document are included as endnotes in Appendix 6: Bibliography.

Past Planning and Accomplishments

The following documents have been reviewed, summarized, and grouped by jurisdiction in order of year completed:

City of Viroqua Redevelopment Opportunities (May 2021)

In May 2021, City redevelopment opportunities were analyzed. Overall themes are as follows:

- Enhancing traffic safety and pedestrian/bike infrastructure.
- Increasing parking efficiency and wayfinding.
- Encouraging mixed-use development to boost downtown vibrancy.
- Improving community spaces and public infrastructure including side streets, sidewalks, and trees as lighting.

City of Viroqua Downtown Main Street Circulation & Safety Recommendations (2022)

Recommendations were made in 2022 regarding Viroqua main street circulation and safety. They are as follows:

- Traffic and Safety Improvements
- Parking and Infrastructure Enhancements
- Community and Wayfinding Enhancements
- Summary of Vernon County Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (2019-2023)

The plan is required under federal transit law (FAST ACT) to secure funding for transportation services supporting elderly and disabled populations. Developed by the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) with input from local agencies and the public, it is part of a regional coordination effort covering Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Trempealeau, and Vernon Counties.

Vernon County Existing Conditions Report (2024-2044)

This report examines the existing conditions of Vernon County as it relates to the nine comprehensive planning elements. These elements are Issues and Opportunities; Housing; Transportation; Utilities and Community Facilities; Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources; Economic Development; Intergovernmental Cooperation; Land-Use; and Implementation.

Vernon County Economic Development Strategy Summary (2024-2029)

In March of 2023, the Vernon County Economic Development Committee decided to focus on updating the Economic Development Strategy for 2024-2029. Through stakeholder engagement activities, the project team identified the following general values:

- Family farms and small businesses are highly valued cornerstones in the economy
- Development should respect the county's geography and natural resources
- Vernon County is a welcoming community that supports entrepreneurship and innovation
- Tourism development should enhance local quality -of-life and provide meaningful opportunities for entrepreneurship and employment.

Viroqua Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2025)

In 2023, City officials recognized a need to develop a practical vision for a future bicycle and pedestrian network that will allow Viroqua to meet multimodal objectives set by previous planning efforts. The project team identified several areas of opportunity:

- Trail system interconnections from the Viroqua area to regional tourist attractions such as parks, schools, entertainment, and commercial areas
- Sidewalk continuity from existing sidewalks into new urban land development, particularly in commercial areas and neighborhoods.
- Seek to expand the bicycle and pedestrian modes of travel where feasible to diversify and supplement motorized travel.
- Safe, connected, and accessible bicycling and walking for people of all ages and abilities throughout the community.

II: Community Profile

Local and Regional Context

Viroqua is a vibrant community known for its agricultural roots, civic pride, and creative economy. The city is situated in the Driftless Region of southwestern Wisconsin, an unglaciated landscape with wooded hills, spring-fed coulees, and rolling farmland that distinguishes the region from the flat terrain and glacier-formed lakes that are found elsewhere in the state. As the county seat, Viroqua supports a range of regional destinations—healthcare, government, commercial, and cultural—while maintaining the compact, walkable scale common in smaller communities. This concentration of amenities makes Viroqua a hub for city and county residents as well as a staging area for visitors, many of whom are drawn to the region's vast amount of outdoor recreation opportunities.

[Figure XX -Image]

Transportation Network

The city's transportation network is shaped by its role as a regional hub in Vernon County, U.S. Highway 14/61 and State Trunk Highway 27 is a four-lane north-south principal arterial that bisects the city, while State Trunk Highways 56, and 82 run east-west and provide access to surrounding small towns and farmlands. These arterials accommodate passenger and freight demand, primarily at the local and regional level. Within this network, Viroqua is located approximately 32 miles from La Crosse, 94 miles from Madison, and 45 miles from the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien.

[Figure XX – regional context map]

City History and Settlement

Note: Most of the content in this section is excerpted from the 2026-2031 Historic Preservation Plan. Readers are encouraged to review the plan for additional information.

First Peoples and Early Settlement

For at least 12,000 years, Wisconsin has been shaped by continuous human innovation. From the highly mobile Paleo hunters of 12,000 B.C. through the territorially defined Archaic gatherers, the mound-building Woodland villagers, and the maize-farming Mississippian and Oneota societies, each era expanded settlement complexity and left enduring marks that together form the rich archaeological heritage of our state ¹.

Native American tribes includes as the Dakota, Sac and Fox, and Ho-Chunk successively hunted, traded, and farmed the same lands. Pressured by European powers—first the French fur traders, then British and American settlers—these nations were pushed into treaties and displaced. The brief Black Hawk War of 1832 ended in massacre and exile for most Sac and Fox, yet Native peoples never vanished. Today the Ho-Chunk Nation owns and inhabits land across the Kickapoo Valley Reserve and around De Soto, while other tribal citizens live, work, and steward cultural sites throughout the region. Their enduring presence ensures that Native heritage is not a relic of the past but a living, integral part of Wisconsin's ongoing story.

City Settlement

Euro-American settlement in the region began in 1844 ². In 1846 additional families took up residence near the site of Viroqua. This includes Moses Decker, who is recognized as the first settler and pioneer of Viroqua and constructed the first building—a log home—on an old Native American trail which is roughly identical to that of present-day US Highway 14 (North and South Main Street) ³. Decker is one of the key settlers whose name is memorialized in the city's street names. Others include Thomas DeFrees (Defreese Street), Rufus Dunlap (Dunlap Street), and William and Margaret Terhune (Terhune Street) ^{5 6}.

Vernon County was originally founded as Bad Ax County, which was formalized as a separate county from Crawford County by the Wisconsin legislature in March 1851^{7 8}. The county was renamed to Vernon County in 1862, a change which was largely attributed to the efforts of settlers who advocated for a more favorable name⁹. Likewise, Viroqua underwent name changes in its early years, initially established as 'Deckerville', then 'Bad Ax', then 'Farwell'^{10 11 12}. The settlement was renamed to Viroqua in 1854. The origin of the name is largely undecided, with some sources stating reference to the name of a Native American figure, while others state the possibility of manufactured origins through use of the Native American syllable -qua, which is commonly attached to Algonquian names¹³. Viroqua was incorporated in the spring of 1866¹⁴. By 1884, the village was incorporated as a city¹⁵.

Parks and Recreation History

Viroqua's urban fabric was shaped by a variety of ambitious civic buildings and public works projects in the early 20th Century. This includes Eckhart Park, which was established in 1911 and is the first official park within the city¹⁶. In 1930 Eckhart Park would receive its prominent stone entrance facing West Decker Street. Six years later, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) constructed a bathhouse at 220 South Rock Street which, at the time of this report, is the future home of the Viroqua Welcome Center. Both places demonstrate the city's history of providing quality outdoor recreational facilities, long before an official Parks and Recreation Department was established.

[Figure XX: Eckhart Park]

Demographic Profile

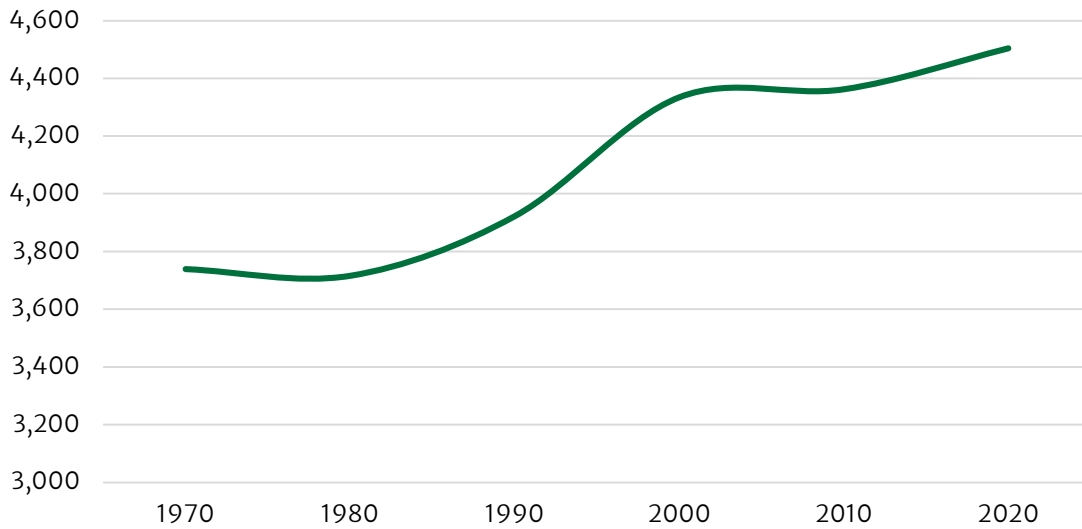
Note: Most of the content in this section is excerpted from the 2026-2036 Comprehensive Plan. Readers are encouraged to review the Comprehensive Plan for additional information.

Population

According to the US Census Bureau and the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA), the City of Viroqua grew from approximately 3,700 in 1980 to 4,360 in 2000, or by 660 people over 20 years. Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, were in their childbearing years during this time. Over the next twenty years, the City grew about 140 people. It is outside the scope of this plan to identify exactly why population growth decreased, but likely suspects are aging Baby Boomers, fewer births, and migration out of the community.

The DOA provides projections in five-year increments to the year 2050. Their projections for minor civil divisions are based on two annualized growth calculations. However, these projections do not account for development capability, competitive advantages, changes in housing preferences, and transportation improvements that characterize the City of Viroqua.

[Figure XX: DOA Population for Viroqua]



Data Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographic Services.

Age, Race and Ethnicity, and Gender

Figure XX illustrates Viroqua's population for 2024 as well as a projected population for 2029. According to ESRI, individuals aged 14 or younger comprised nearly 21 percent of the population in 2024. This is projected to decrease to 14 percent in 2029. The largest share of the city's population is in the 65-74 age range. This cohort is projected to remain the largest share of the population in 2029, and other older age cohorts are projected to increase as well. The median age in Viroqua in 2024 is 47.1, an increase from 46.2 in 2020 and 45.9 in 2010.

Viroqua's population is getting older, which is not unlike the State of Wisconsin as a whole. According to the Wisconsin State Plan on Aging (2026-2028, in draft form at the time of this report), Wisconsin's population aged 60 and older is projected to increase between 2020 and 2030 to a total of 1.69 million for a growth rate of 14.5 percent, whereas total population is expected to remain virtually unchanged¹⁷. Further, individuals aged 85 and older will increase to 141,000 by 2030 due to the postwar Baby Boom cohort falling into this age range. By 2050, Wisconsin's population aged 85 and over is expected to reach 261,000 persons, more than double current estimates¹⁸.

Figure XX illustrates 2024 population figures for Vernon County and Viroqua. The county's share of individuals aged 24 and younger are higher than the city's share by nearly seven percent, while the city's share of individuals aged 25-44 and 65 and up are higher than the county's share.

[Figure XX: Viroqua Population by Age (2024, 2029)]

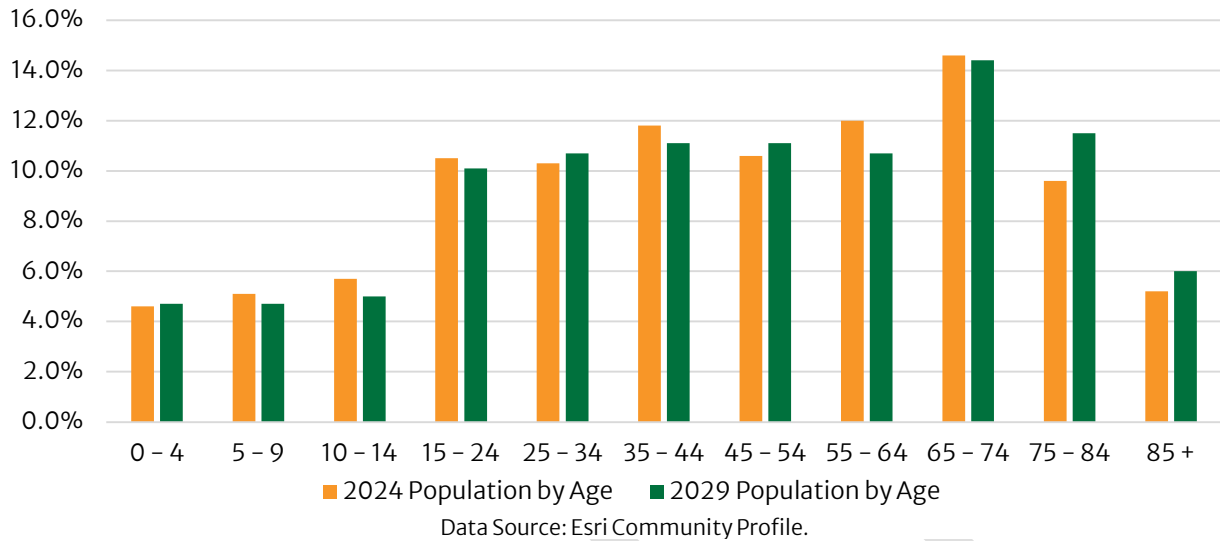


Figure XX: Vernon County and Viroqua Population by Age (2024)

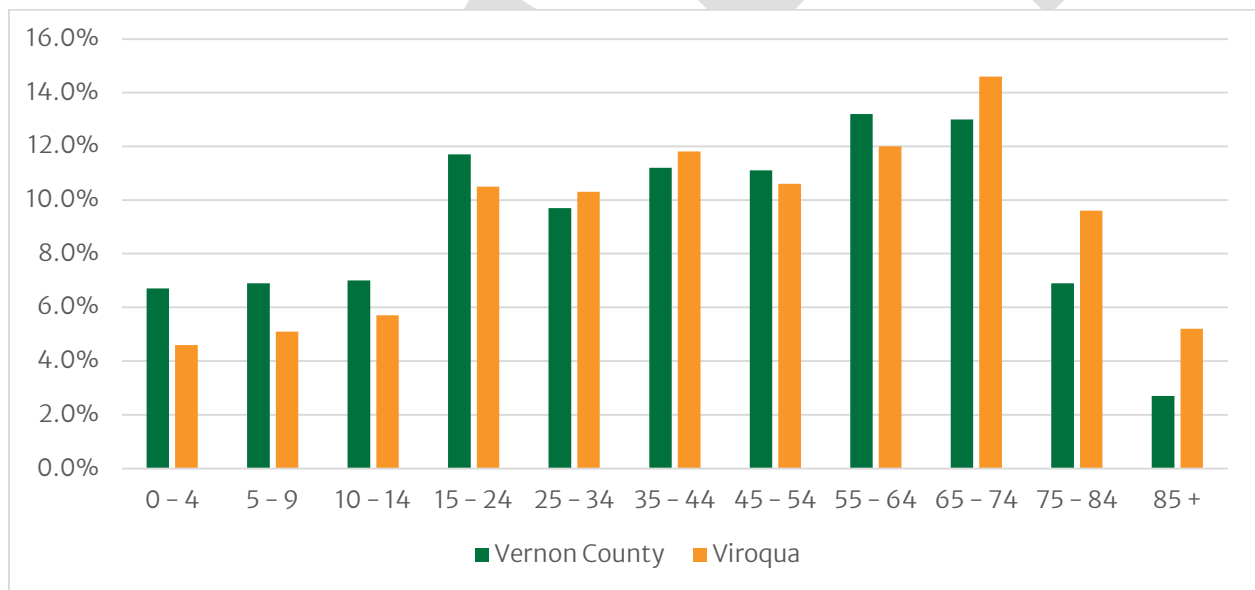
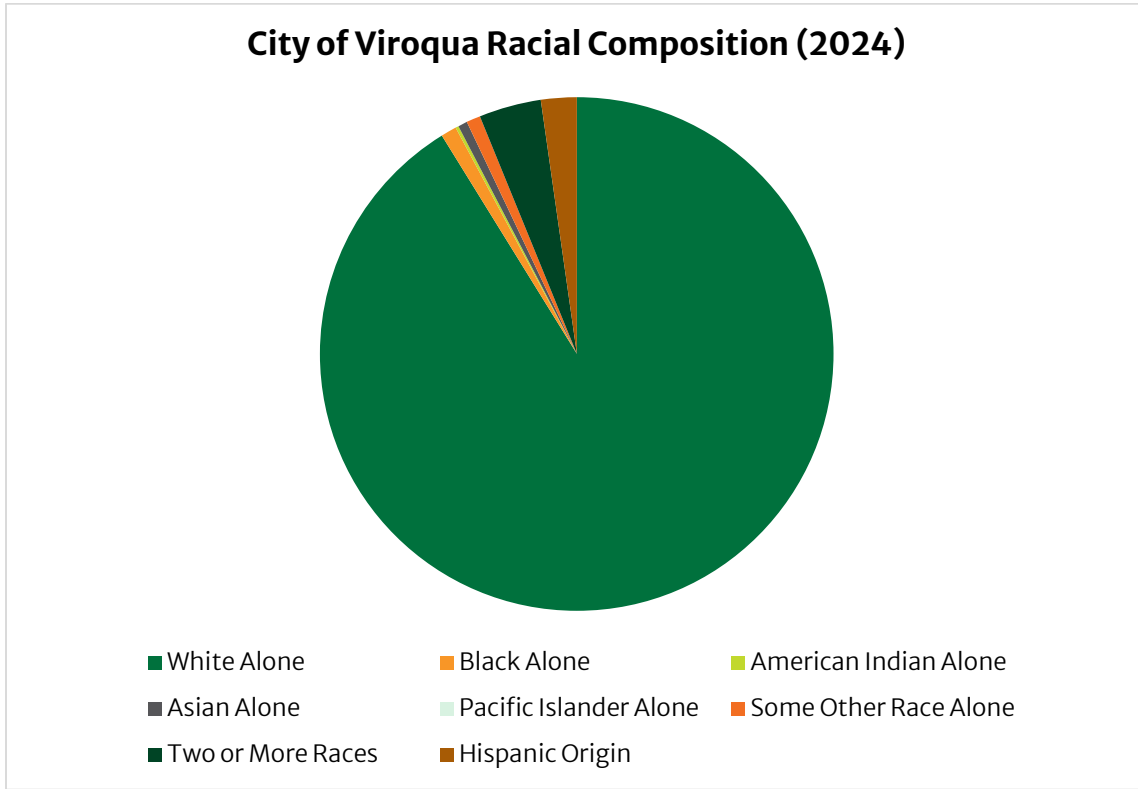
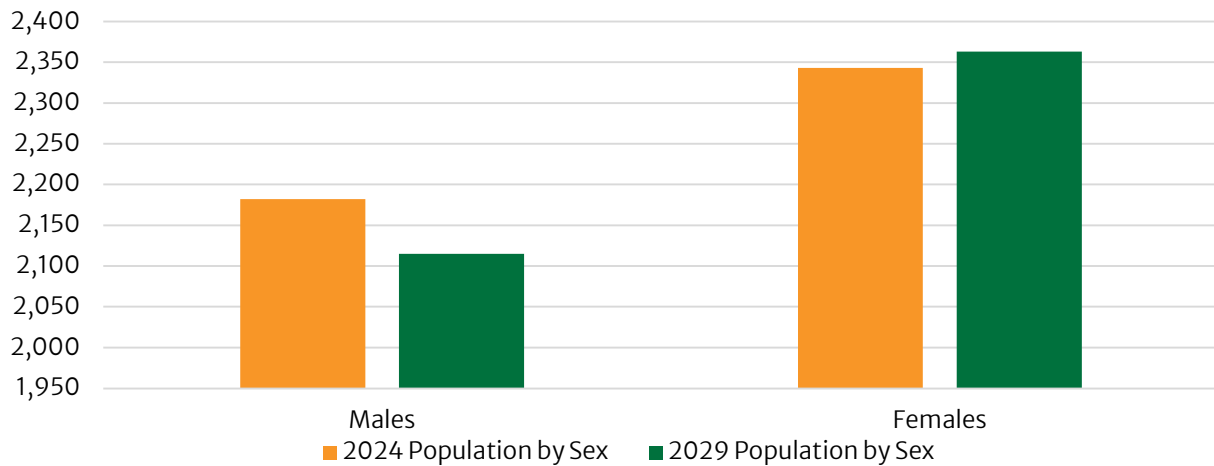


Figure xxxx illustrates Viroqua’s population by race and ethnicity. The percentage of white individuals comprise 93 percent of the city’s population, followed by ‘Two or More Races’, a category used to classify individuals who identify with more than one racial group. Individuals of Hispanic origin comprise 2.3 percent of the population.

City of Viroqua Racial Composition (2024)



According to ESRI, women comprise the majority of Viroqua’s population in 2024 (2,343 persons, or 51.8 percent of the population) and that majority is expected to continue in 2029.



Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

Households

The number of households in Viroqua has remained steady, however, likely due to new household formations from children creating their own households, household migration, the dissolution of marriages, etc.

Figure XX: Household Trends and Projections (2010-2029)

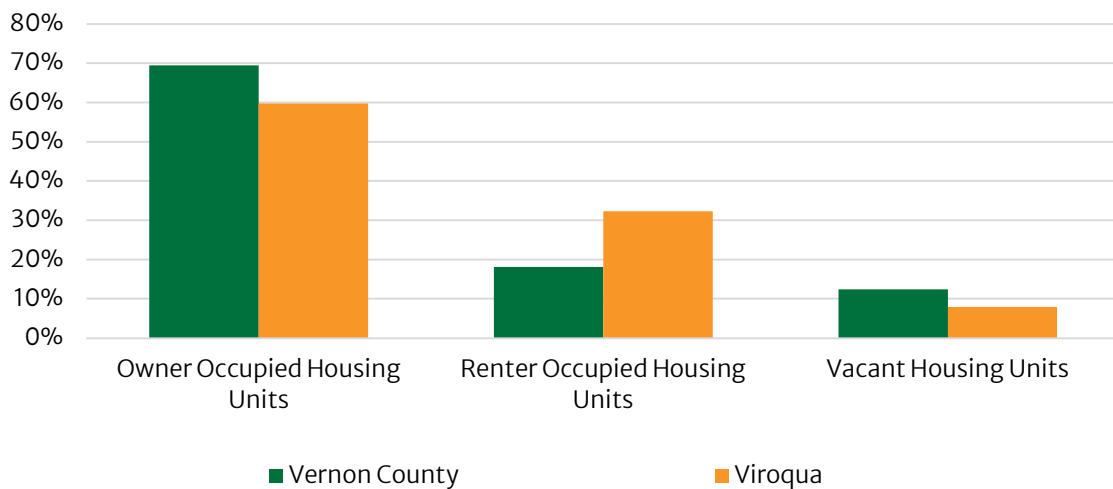


Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

Housing

In 2023 there were approximately 2,200 housing units in the City of Viroqua. According to ESRI, nearly 60 percent of housing units in 2024 were owner-occupied and 32 percent were renter-occupied. Nearly 8 percent of housing units were vacant; however, this is likely to include short-term rentals which inflate the vacancy rate.

Figure XX: Housing Unit Tenure Comparison



Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

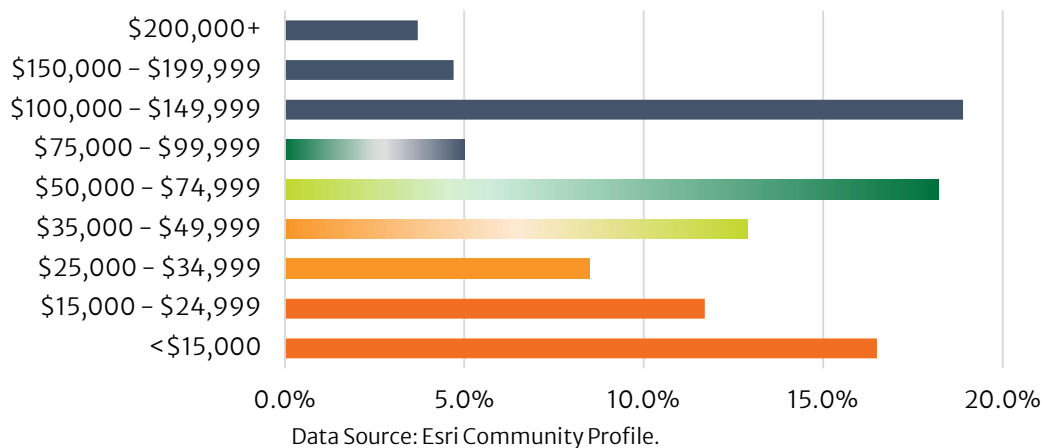
The Housing element of the 2026-2036 Comprehensive Plan includes a section on housing unit projections. Redevelopment Resources, the prime consultant for the plan, estimates that an additional 230-352 housing units are needed by 2033. This estimate is based on the following factors:

1. A portion of the employees commuting to the city may choose to move if housing is available.
2. New job creation may capture new residents.
3. Natural household growth trends.
4. Pent-up demand since the Great Recession.
5. Demand for new housing didn't go away during the Great Recession, but economic forces such as financing, layoffs, etc. constrained the ability to produce the supply needed to keep up with demand.
6. Redevelopment Resources, consultant for the concurrent Comprehensive Plan, recommends a total vacancy rate of 3-5%.

Income

Figure XX illustrates Viroqua households by income in 2024. According to ESRI, households earning between \$100,000-\$149,999 comprise nearly 19 percent of Viroqua households, followed by households earning between \$50,000-\$74,999. Nearly 50 percent of Viroqua households earn less than \$50,000. The median household income in 2024 was \$50,397.

[Figure XX: Viroqua Households by Income (2024)]

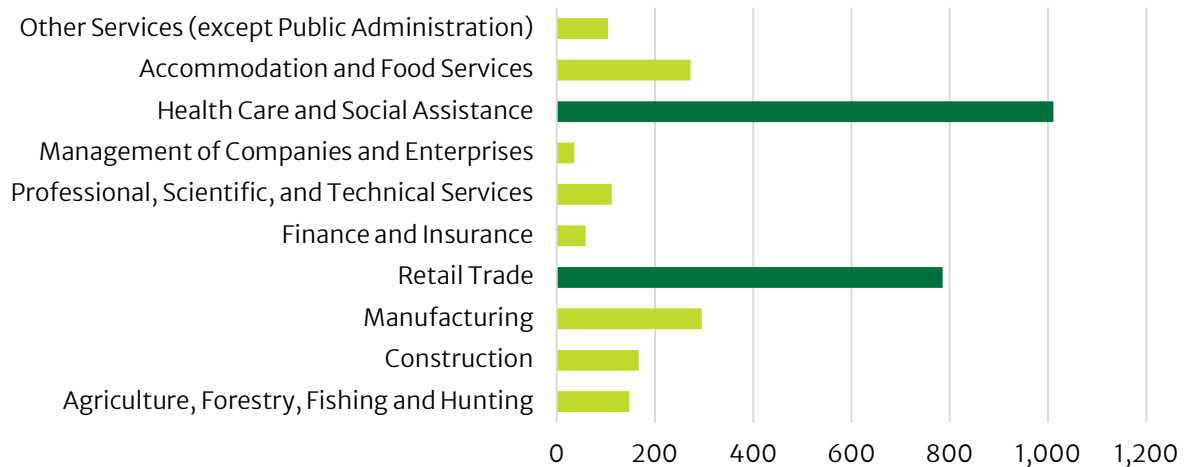


Employment

The Economic Development element of the 2026-2036 Comprehensive Plan includes detailed information on employment and unemployment trends in Viroqua. In 2023, the top two private sector industries in Viroqua by job count were Healthcare and Social Assistance and Retail Trade (Figure XX).

Since the Great Recession, Vernon County's unemployment rate has been consistently lower than the unemployment rate of the State of Wisconsin. The unemployment rate reached 7.7% in 2009, the highest it had been since 1990. It reached 5.3% in 2020 and by 2021 reached pre-pandemic levels. In 2024, it was 3.0% (Figure XX).

Figure XX: Jobs in Viroqua by Industry (2023)



Data Source: Lightcast retrieved by the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission. Data Note: The following had insufficient data for the geographical size such as Transportation and Warehousing; Information; Real Estate Rental and Leasing; Administrative and Waste and Support Services; Educational Services; and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation.

Figure XX: Vernon County Unemployment Rate Trends (1990-2024)

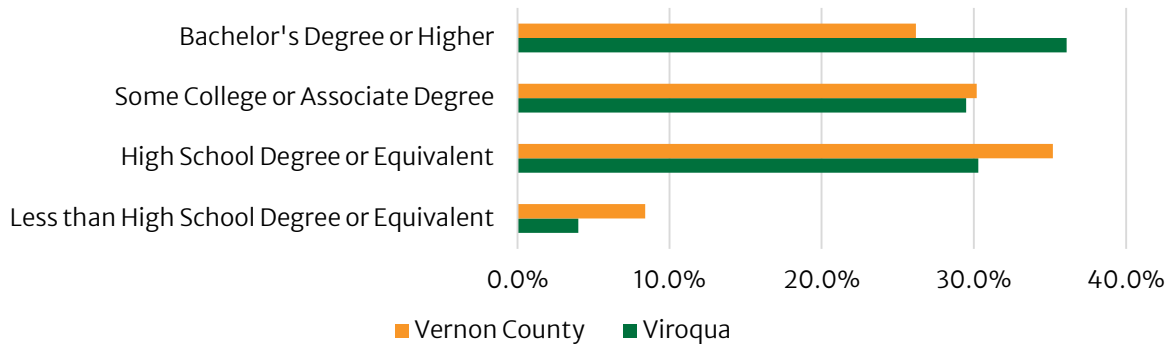
Education

The city is part of the Viroqua Area School District, which provides K-12 education at its school campus on the west side of Viroqua. Enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year totaled 1,030 students¹⁹. Other educational institutions include:

- The Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School, which offers K-8 education; and
- Youth Initiative High School, an independent Waldorf-inspired school located east of Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School.

A community's educational attainment impacts its future growth and development, which has implications for parks and recreation planning. Figure xxxx shows that, according to Esri, residents of Viroqua tend to have achieved higher levels of education than Vernon County. Educational attainment is correlated with higher wages, lower poverty rates, and improved health outcomes. Businesses consider local education levels when deciding where to locate or expand, knowing it affects the quality of the labor pool. In turn, businesses that require higher levels of education offer higher wages which attract higher income households.

[Figure XX: Viroqua Population by Educational Attainment (2024)]



Data Source: Esri Community Profile. Data Note: Education levels are for residents 25 years of age or older.

Geographic Setting and Natural Resources

The City of Viroqua is uniquely situated within Wisconsin’s Driftless Area, a landscape characterized by its rugged terrain, steep valleys, and rolling ridges that escaped glaciation. This geography is central to the community’s agricultural productivity, natural resources, and cultural identity. It also is the backdrop for many outdoor recreation activities.

Although the city proper contains limited farmland, wooded area, and surface water, the surrounding area supports highly productive agricultural lands, limestone quarries, sensitive wetlands, wildlife habitats, and historic landscapes.

Surface Water Resources

The planning area consists of minimal surface water environments. Surface water resources around Viroqua include the Springville Branch of the Bad Axe River, the South Fork of the Bad Axe River, and Sidie Hollow Creek, which are part of the Bad Axe River Watershed in the Mississippi River Basin, and Maple Dale Creek and Coon Creek, which are part of the West Fork of the Kickapoo River Watershed in the Lower Wisconsin River Basin. The split between the Bad Axe River Watershed and the West Fork of the Kickapoo River Watershed runs north-south through the City of Viroqua east of Highway 14²⁰.

Wetlands

According to the Surface Water Data Viewer of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the City of Viroqua has a few minimal areas that have been visualized as ‘Wetland Indicators’, including:

- East of USH-14 and north of Fairgrounds Road
- East of Chicago Avenue and north of Chase Street
- East of Railroad Avenue and south of Asbury Road²¹

Properties shaded purple on the map as wetland indicators have a landscape position and soils commonly found in wetlands²². Notably, the area east of Chicago Avenue and north of Chase Street

is the site of the Hanson Farm development and the proposed Hanson Farm park. This area is partially shaded as a wetland indicator.

[Figure XX – Hanson Farm site, or WisDNR viewer map]

Tree Canopy

Trees are an integral part of Viroqua's character, history, and infrastructure. The City maintains over 3,000 publicly owned trees and continues to plant more annually. These trees are managed by two foresters who oversee tree preservation, routine maintenance, and new plantings²³. This natural resource not only enhances the city's aesthetics but also provides critical environmental benefits including air purification, stormwater management, and urban heat reduction.

[Figure XX – city website photos of forestry department, or trees, possibly Gilman Champion]

Other Environmental Information

Air Quality: Air quality across Wisconsin has steadily improved over the past two decades, with statewide sulfur dioxide down 88 percent, fine-particle pollution down 26 percent, and ozone falling 15 percent since the early 2000s²⁴. While this long-term progress has kept the region in the 'Good' to 'Moderate' Air Quality Index (AQI) range for most days, short-term spikes due to Canadian wildfire smoke have temporarily raised particulate matter 2.5 levels, which can result in air quality advisories in Vernon County and surrounding areas.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) produces an annual Air Quality Trends Report with additional online tools, including a real time air quality map. Vernon County is not monitored and is therefore not included in the Air Quality Trends Report.

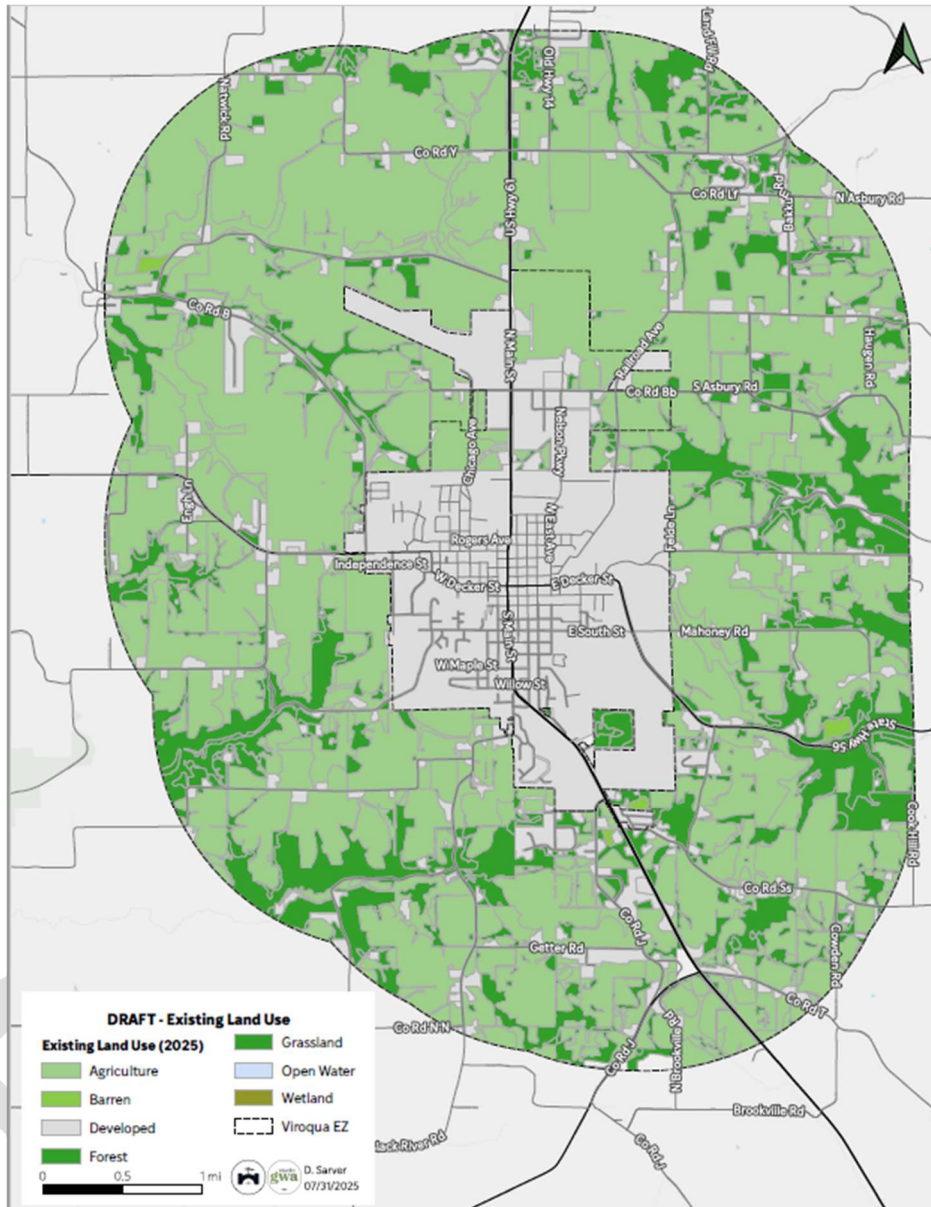
Light Pollution: Viroqua is in an area known for its dark skies, particularly within the Kickapoo Valley Reserve and surrounding areas. The local group, Kickapoo Valley Dark Sky Initiative (KVDSI) is actively working to mitigate light pollution by focusing on education and advocacy to preserve dark skies in the region.

Land Use and Zoning

Note: Most of the content in this section is excerpted from the 2026-2036 Comprehensive Plan. Readers are encouraged to review the Comprehensive Plan for additional information.

The existing land use in the City of Viroqua is illustrated in Figure xxxx and tabulated in Figure xxxx. Viroqua's zoning consists of ten zoning districts including one agricultural, five business, one commercial, and three residential. Residential zoning districts comprise nearly 40 percent of the city's existing land use.

[Figure XX: Existing Land Use Map, City of Viroqua]



[Figure XX: Acres per Zoning District, City of Viroqua]

Zoning Districts	Acres	Percent
A-1	493	19%
B-1	27	1%
B-2	296	11%
B-3	389	15%
B-4	183	7%
B-5	46	2%
C-1	172	7%

R-1*	557	21%
R-2	434	16%
R-3	47	2%
<hr/>		
Total	2,644	100%

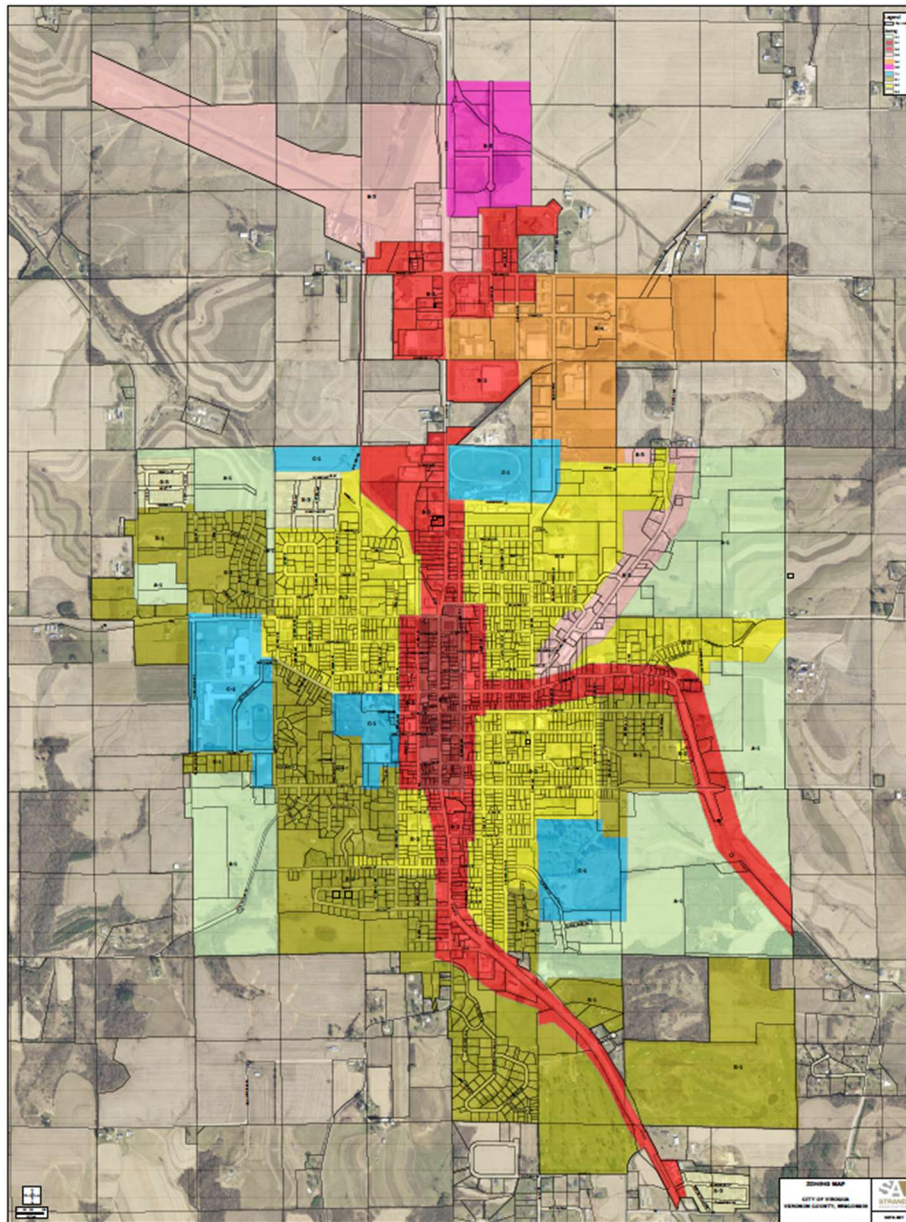
Source: Wisconsin State Cartographers Office V10 parcel data for Vernon County. Viroqua parcels were exported and assigned zoning classifications based on the 2007 Zoning map.

** Includes 145.1 acres occupied by the Viroqua Country Club and Municipal Golf Course.*

Figure xxxx illustrates the existing zoning map for the City of Viroqua. It is important to note that some parcels on the existing zoning map are overlapped by multiple zoning districts. The analysis of land area by zoning district in Table xxxx is based on the majority district represented.

[Figure XX: Existing Zoning Map, City of Viroqua]

DRAFT



The Future Land Use Map is a policy tool that is used to inform zoning decisions. As such, the map illustrates general land use types. Specific distinctions are in the city's Zoning Ordinance. The Future Land Use Map and the Zoning Ordinance work in tandem and must be aligned accordingly. City officials seeking to make any changes to either the Future Land Use Map or the Zoning Ordinance must be done in a way that ensures ultimate alignment between both documents.

[Figure XX: Future Land Use Map, City of Viroqua. To be included in final layout document.]

[Figure XX: Future Land Use. To be included in final layout document.]

Additional information on existing land use, land supply and demand, development patterns, zoning, and future land use is included in Section 8 of the 2026-2036 Comprehensive Plan.

III: Parkland Inventory and Recreation Programs

The City of Viroqua has jurisdiction over 14 parks in the region totaling 110 acres. These parks are home to multiple passive and active recreation opportunities, and together they provide an assortment of amenities for residents and visitors. City-owned parks vary in size, scale, and classification, ranging from small mini-parks (Viroqua Skate Park, .3 acres) to larger community parks (Park Bowl, 12 acres) to special use parks (Viroqua Hills Golf Course, of which 81 acres are city-owned). These variables, among others, provide the necessary baseline for conducting a thorough inventory of each facility in the City of Viroqua. This section also includes select county and state parkland facilities due to their proximity to Viroqua and usage by Viroqua community members.

[Figure xx: Park map]

[Table xx: Parks by classification]

NRPA Acknowledgement

The City of Viroqua Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) has been developed in alignment with the park classification and service standard guidelines established by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The NRPA's framework provides a nationally recognized foundation for evaluating and planning park and recreation systems, ensuring equitable access, functional diversity, and long-term sustainability.

The NRPA's classification system and its relevant park types, encompassing Mini Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, Regional Parks, and Special Use Areas, has been instrumental in guiding municipal inventory, analysis, and recommendations. These classifications have enabled a consistent and strategic approach to assessing existing assets, identifying service gaps, and forecasting future recreational needs based on population growth, demographic trends, and community input.

The NRPA continues to provide leadership in advancing best practices nationally for recreation management and planning efforts, such as NRPA Park Metrics. Relevant standards serve as a critical reference point in efforts to promote a high-quality, accessible, and resilient park system that meets the evolving needs of all residents.

Parks and Open Space Classifications

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provides guidelines for classifying parks, open spaces, and pathways.²⁵ The guidelines provide a description of each classification, size of the park

or open space, and the area it serves. By mapping the location, classification, and service areas of the City's parks, gaps in service and amenities can be identified and addressed in the CORP.

Although the NRPA provides guidelines for parks and open space, the unique landscape, culture, socioeconomic, and development patterns of the City will influence the types of parks and facilities that are offered.²⁶

Parks, open spaces, and pathways are divided into twelve classifications, though the following four are within the scope of the Viroqua CORP within the planning area.

- Mini Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Special Use Park

Definitions for the classification of parks, open space, and facilities are based upon NRPA guidelines, but are unique to the specific needs of Viroqua and its residents.²⁷ The criteria used to define park and open space categories are described below.

Mini Park

Mini Parks are small, minimally developed facilities that serve a specific, unique function in the community. Mini Parks are often located on a single lot or remnant parcel near a residential district, and their size ranges from 2,500 square to 1 acre.²⁸ Low-volume local streets as well as sidewalks are paths are the typical means of access.

Mini Parks typically serve residents within a quarter-mile radius. However, a Mini Park could have a unique amenity that attracts regional visitors, such as a historical marker. Examples of amenities found in mini parks often include benches, gazebos, picnic tables, trees, gardens, historical markers, small playground or tot lot equipment, and small water features. Location, lot size, and context are important variables to consider when selecting amenities for Mini Parks.

The following facilities are classified as Mini Parks:

- Broadway-Bekkedal Park (201 W. Broadway)
- Viroqua Skate Park
- Viroqua Welcome Center Grounds
- Bigley Park (320 Tom Henry Ct)

Neighborhood Park

The Neighborhood Park is the quintessential unit of the park system and is often designed to be the primary recreation and community gathering space for a wide range of users. Neighborhood Parks provide active and passive recreation opportunities, with amenities that can be upgraded or replaced over time as community needs evolve. Examples of amenities found in Neighborhood

Parks include shelters, picnic areas, drinking fountains, pathways, and playground facilities. Some parks also contain athletic fields or courts that are used by local community organizations.

Neighborhood Parks often serve community members within a quarter-mile or half-mile radius. Given their proximity to residences, they are often accessed by way of low-volume local streets, sidewalks, paths, or bikeways. Neighborhood Parks can range anywhere from 1 acre to 10 acres. In the City of Viroqua, most Neighborhood Parks are closer to one acre.

The following facilities are classified as Neighborhood Parks:

- Court Street Park (740 E. Court St)
- Cedar Meadows Park (1102 Joseph Martin Ave)
- Hanson Park (1025 Western Ave)
- Washington Park (707 Lewison Ln)

Community Park

Community Parks are typically diverse in nature and serve a broader purpose than previous parks. Community parks may include neighborhood park amenities and may act as neighborhood parks as well. However, the focus of the community park is typically based on the needs of the community. Recreation, athletics, and open space are the most common needs. These parks, such as Viroqua Park Bowl, may include significant athletic complexes, aquatic amenities, pedestrian or bicyclist facilities, picnic areas, and various other active or passive amenities. The community park may also be the venue of an activity or amenity that has a broad community range appeal but does not fit the Special Use designation.

Community Parks typically serve multiple demographics, neighborhoods, or the great city. These parks are often a part of the Park District. 25 acres or more are preferred, though special amenities, facilities, or athletic sites that create broader community reach may occur in smaller areas. Five to eight acres are standard for every 1000 residents served.

The following facilities are classified as Community Parks:

- Viroqua Park Bowl (202 N. Main St)
- Eckhart Park (435 W. Decker St)

Special Use Park

Special Use Parks are a non-specific range of specialized parks and recreation facilities. These parks typically offer a single major use. Golf courses, historic sites, community centers, theme parks, water parks, and other special use facility park elements, but with amenities that often offer regional appeal to visitors from outside the City or park district boundaries.

Special Use Parks are inconsistent in scale, as they vary based on the needs of the amenity or facility. These parks often serve the entire park district to provide amenities that draw visitors from beyond the City.

The following facilities are classified as Special Use Parks:

- Viroqua Bark Park (700 Power Dr)
- Veteran’s Memorial Park (231 S Main)
- Viroqua Hills Golf Course (1110 U.S. HWY 14)

Existing Park Facilities

City-Owned Facilities

City parks are facilities that offer recreation value under City jurisdiction. Open to the public and all demographics, these facilities are subject to NRPA park classification standards for the purpose of the planning document. The City of Viroqua owns and maintains over 13 parks, composing nearly 110 acres within municipal boundaries. These parks are central to the community and tend to be generally distributed throughout the developed community.

The following facilities are classified as a City-Owned park:

- Broadway Bekkedal Park (201 W. Broadway St.)
- Bigley Park (320 Tom Henry Ct.)
- Court Street Park (740 E. Court St.)
- Cedar Meadows Park (1102 Joseph Martin Ave.)
- Hanson Park (1025 Western Ave.)
- Washington Park (707 Lewison Ln.)
- Viroqua Park Bowl (202 N. Main St.)
- Eckhart Park (435 W. Decker St.)
- Viroqua Bark Park (700 Power Dr.)
- Veterans Memorial Park (231 S. Main St.)
- Viroqua Hill Golf Course – Publicly-Owned Parcel (1131 US Highway 31)
- Viroqua Skate Park (446 W South St.)
- Viroqua Welcome Center Grounds (220 S. Rock Ave.)

Broadway Bekkedal Park

Located off West Broadway between North Rock Avenue and Bekkedal Court, this mini park includes an experimental community garden and open space for neighborhood use.

Location:	N. Rock Ave and Bekkedal Ct.	
Size:	0.50 acre	

Jurisdiction:	City
Classification:	Mini Park
Address:	201 W. Broadway
Amenities:	Green space



Bigley Park

Located on the corner of West South Street and Tom Henry Court. This ADA accessible park includes a picnic shelter that can be rented, quick park trail access, and within walking distance to Park Bowl baseball and softball fields.


Location:	Corner of S. Rock Ave. and W. South St.
Size:	1.10
Jurisdiction:	City
Classification:	Mini Park
Address:	320 Tom Henry Ct.
Amenities:	Trails, picnic shelter, open space



Court Street Park

Located on East Court Street between Lincoln and Greenhill Drive, this park offers picnic tables and a playground. Blacktop courts are also featured for basketball and pickleball recreation.

Location:	Between Lincoln Ave. and Greenhill Dr.
Size:	0.65 acre
Jurisdiction:	City
Classification:	Neighborhood Park

Address:	740 E. Court Street	
Amenities:	Playground, picnic tables, active recreation	

Cedar Meadows Park


Located on the corner of Joseph Martin Avenue and Beyer Street, Cedar Meadows Park sits in the northwest corner of the community off County Road B. It features picnic tables, a playground, and open green space.

Location:	Corner of Beyer St. and Joseph Martin Ave.	
Size:	1.33 acres	
Jurisdiction:	City	
Classification:	Neighborhood Park	
Address:	1102 Joseph Martin Ave.	
Amenities:	Green space, picnic tables, playground	

Hanson Park

Located on the corner of Chicago Avenue and Noggle Lane, Hanson Park features a variety of amenities including a picnic shelter, playground, horseshoe pit, basketball court, and a playground.

Location:	Corner of Chicago Ave. and Noggle Ln.	
Size:	1.06 acres	
Jurisdiction:	City	
Classification:	Neighborhood Park	
Address:	1025 Western Ave.	

Amenities:	Picnic shelter, playground, active recreation	
------------	---	--

Washington Park


Located off Lewison Lane, Washington Park features picnic tables, a playground, and a large open area for active play. Soccer and volleyball facilities are also present.

Location:	Corner of Lewison Ln. and S. Washington St.	
Size:	1.72 acres	
Jurisdiction:	City	
Classification:	Neighborhood Park	
Address:	707 Lewison Ln.	
Amenities:	Playground, picnic tables Active recreation	

Viroqua Park Bowl


Viroqua Park Bowl is the City's largest community park and is located on the Tom Henry Court off West South St. The park includes two diamonds for baseball and softball, a playground, park trail access, and parking. The baseball fields are used for Viroqua High School baseball, Junior Legion, Legion, and U14 Independent Baseball. The Park Bowl also includes an office facility for the City of Viroqua Parks and Recreation Department. Weather permitting, an outdoor skating rink is also offered during the winter.

Location:	W. South St and Tom Henry Ct.	
Size:	11.96 acres	

Jurisdiction:	City	
Classification:	Community Park	
Address:	202 N. Main St.	
Amenities:	Active recreation, trails, parking, playground, skating	

Eckhart Park

Located on the Corner of West Decker Street and Western Avenue, this large community park is home to a variety of amenities and large special events throughout the year. It is ADA accessible, and includes picnic areas, two shelters, restrooms, and trail access. Eckhardt Enchantment Playground, a wooden play structure also known as Dragon Park, is also at the location. The City is conducting public input sessions regarding proposed upgrades to playground equipment at the time of this report.

Location:	Corner of Decker St. and Western Ave.	
Size:	6.95 acres	
Jurisdiction:	City	
Classification:	Community Park	
Address:	435 W. Decker St.	
Amenities:	Restrooms, trails, shelters, picnic tables, playground	

Viroqua Bark Park

Located off Railroad Avenue on the road leading to the Vernon County Salt Sheds, the Viroqua Bark Park offers large fenced-in areas for residents and visitors to give their dogs some off-leash exercise. The park includes two separate areas to cater to both small and large dog breeds.

Location:	Corner of Power Dr. and Railroad Ave.	
Size:	2.03 acres	

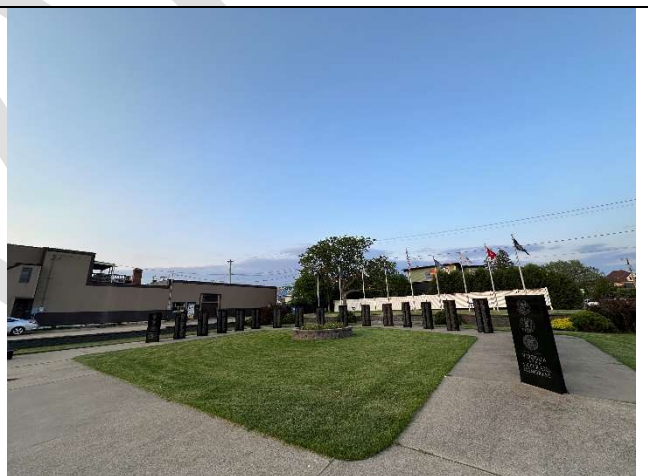
Jurisdiction:	City
Classification:	Special Use Park
Address:	700 Power Dr.
Amenities:	Recreation



Veterans Memorial Park

Located in the heart of Viroqua’s historic downtown, the Viroqua Veteran’s Memorial honors past community members who proudly served their country. The memorial is located at the corner of Main Street and East Terhune Street. Memorial plaques, flag corps, and seating are featured.

Location:	Corner of S. Main St. and E. Terhune St.
Size:	0.31 acre
Jurisdiction:	City
Classification:	Special Use Park
Address:	231 S. Main St.
Amenities:	Benches




Viroqua Hills Golf Course – Publicly-Owned Parcel

Located off US-14 between Circle Drive and County Road J, the east parcel of Viroqua Hills Golf Course is publicly owned by the City of Viroqua. This is an 18-hole course of which 9 holes (1-3 and 13-18) are located to the east of US-14. The property includes a maintenance building and associated parking.

Location:	US-14 between Circle Dr and County Rd J
Size:	81.27 acres
Jurisdiction:	City

Classification:	Special Use Park	
Address:	1131 US Highway 31	
Amenities:	Green space, active recreation	


Viroqua Skate Park

Location:	W. South St. between Tom Henry Ct. Elm Ave.	
Size:	0.3 acres	
Jurisdiction:	City	
Classification:	VIF	
Address:	446 W South St, Viroqua, WI 54665	
Amenities:	Skateboarding, recreation, picnic shelter	

Viroqua Welcome Center Grounds

Located to the west of the former WPA Bathhouse along South Rock Street, this location currently includes community gardens, open space, and hitching posts, which are used by Amish community members during the Viroqua Farmer's Market. The former WPA Bathhouse is being redeveloped into the Viroqua Welcome Center at the time of this report.

Location:	West of the former WPA Bathhouse	
Size:	0.3 acres, VIF	
Jurisdiction:	City	
Classification:	Mini Parks	
Address:	220 S. Rock Ave.	

Amenities:	Community gardens, open space, hitching posts	
------------	---	--

School-Owned Facilities

School Parks are facilities that serve a community, though are geared towards youth recreation. Depending on circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other park types, such as neighborhood, community, sports complex, and special use parks. Offered facilities and amenities typically include, but are not limited to, athletic fields, playgrounds, and blacktops. Joint-use agreements between involved agencies regarding acquisition, development, maintenance, liability, use, and programming can allow for a larger demographic to access these spaces.

School Parks vary in scale, as they are determined by the location of the school district property and the facilities offered. School District and City coordination often determines school parks should be bordered by neighborhood streets.

The following facilities are classified as a School Park:

- Viroqua Area School District Campus (100 Blackhawk Dr)
- Polo and Ebbetts Fields (911 Johnson St)
- Blackhawk Field (119 Parkwood Trail)

Viroqua Area School District Campus

Located on the western edge of the community, the Viroqua Area School District occupies a large parcel on which Viroqua Elementary School, Viroqua Middle School, Viroqua Area Montessori School, Better Futures High School, and Laurel High School are located. The campus offers a wide range of indoor and outdoor facilities that accommodate public recreation activities when available, such as pickleball on the tennis courts, exercise classes in Bigley Pool, and basketball in the gym.

Location:	Corner of N. Education Ave. and W. Broadway St.	
-----------	---	--

Size:	52.66 acres
Jurisdiction:	School
Address:	100 Blackhawk Dr.
Amenities:	Fields for soccer, tennis, practice football, playground, gymnasium, indoor pool



Rou and Mason Fields

Located on the grounds of Viroqua High School to the west of Bigley Pool, Rou and Mason fields consist of two baseball diamonds which are used for High School baseball, Ridge and Valley baseball, and Independent baseball.

Location:	Southeast corner of West Broadway Street (Highway 56 and Education Avenue	[update image] Not available online
Size:	xxxx acres	
Jurisdiction:	School	
Address:	302 Education Ave.	
Amenities:	Baseball diamonds	

Blackhawk Field

Located on the grounds of Viroqua High School, Blackhawk Field includes a football field which is bounded by a track. The field is used by both middle school and high school students for tackle football and track and field. The field is open to the public at certain times of the year.

Location:	Corner of Johnson St. and Parkwood Tr.	
Size:	1.73 acres	
Jurisdiction:	County	
Address:	119 Parkwood Tr.	

Amenities:	Field for football, track	
------------	---------------------------	--

Polo and Ebbetts Fields

Located on the corner of Johnson Street and Parkwood Trail, this field provides active recreation for youth baseball leagues and the attached school. It is connected to Viroqua High School.

Location:	Corner of Johnson St. and Parkwood Tr.	
Size:	3.00 acres	
Jurisdiction:	School	
Address:	911 Johnson St.	
Amenities:	Active recreation	

Privately-Owned Facilities

Within the City of Viroqua, there are several other privately-owned facilities that provide outdoor recreation opportunities for the community. Further, the facilities serve as buffers to urban development and open space for wildlife. These parks offer various amenities, from hosting active recreation to outdoor youth performances. Coordination between the City and those holding jurisdiction of private facilities will help to maintain quality of life currently enjoyed by residents.

The following facilities are classified as Privately-Owned parks:

- PrairieWind Park (422 Hickory St.)

- Viroqua Hills Golf Course – Privately-Owned Parcel (1110 US-14)
- Veteran Hill Disc Golf Course (751 S. Washington Ave)
- Viroqua Community Arena (858 Nelson Pkwy.)
- Hubbard Hills (561 W Maple St, Viroqua, WI 54665)
- Pleasant Ridge Playground (431 E. Court St.)
- The Wooded Acre (East of Lincoln Ave.)


PrairieWind Park

The park was purchased in 2020 for active recreation, agriculture, and art. It is operated with both public and private use agreements for specifically identified activity areas, such as Driftless United Athletics. The park portion of the property is open to the public and offers open space, events, soccer fields, trails, picnic tables, dog accommodations, and skiing.

Location:	Intersection of Lewison Ln. and Prairie Wind Wy.	
Size:	34.19 acres	
Jurisdiction:	Other	
Address:	422 Hickory St.	
Amenities:	Active recreation, trails, picnic tables, open space	


Viroqua Hills Golf Course – Privately-Owned Parcel

Located off US-14 between Circle Drive and County Road J, the west parcel of Viroqua Hills Golf Course is privately owned by the Viroqua Country Club but remains open to the public. This is an 18-hole course of which 9 holes (4-12) are located to the west of US-14. Amenities such as parking, restrooms, benches, active recreation, shelter, and green spaces are available.

Location:	US-14 between Circle Dr. and County Rd. J	
Size:	138.52 acres	
Jurisdiction:	Other	
Address:	1110 US-14	
Amenities:	Green space, active recreation	


Veteran Hills Disc Golf Course

Located off Washington Avenue between South Rusk Avenue and Circle Drive, Veteran Hills Disc Golf Course provides active recreation to the region through open green space for disc golf.

Location:	Washington Ave between S Rusk Ave and Circle Dr	
Size:	44.26 acres	
Jurisdiction:	Other	
Address:	751 S. Washington Ave.	
Amenities:	Green space, active recreation	


Viroqua Community Arena

The Viroqua Community Arena is located on the edge of Industrial Park and houses an ice rink. Hockey team events, free skating, and skating lessons are offered during parts of the winter. Auctions, shows, musical events, receptions, and other events are available at the space the rest of the year.

Location:	Nelson Pkwy. and Arena Dr.	
Size:	0.78 acre	
Jurisdiction:	Other	
Address:	858 Nelson Pkwy.	
Amenities:	Active recreation, events	


Hubbard Hills

Hubbard Hills includes approximately two miles of singletrack trails that are accessible to the public. The trails are home to a number of recreational activities, including hiking, trail running, Nordic skiing, mountain biking, and snowshoeing.

Location:	Between E. Sidie Hollow Rd. and W. Maple St.	
Size:	4.11 acres (22? VIF)	
Jurisdiction:	Other	
Address:	561 W Maple St, Viroqua, WI 54665	
Amenities:	Active recreation, trails, benches	


Pleasant Ridge Playground

Located at the Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School, the Pleasant Ridge Playground offers recreation opportunities to the public from dawn to dusk, when school is not in session. Some amenities include a playground, small hills, benches, and basketball hoops.

Location:	Corner of S. Washington Ave. and E. Jefferson St.	
Size:	0.8 acre	
Jurisdiction:	Other	
Address:	431 E. Court St.	
Amenities:	Playground, active recreation, benches	

The Wooded Acre

Located east of Pleasant Ridge Playground, The Wooded Acre offers woodland recreation and learning opportunities to the community. The facility is approximately two acres in size, largely unmodified. The location offers programming such as youth recreation, summer camp, and performances.

Location:	Between E. Court St. and J St., East of Lincoln Ave.	
Size:	1.95 acres	
Jurisdiction:	Other	
Address:	East of Lincoln Ave.	
Amenities:	Trails, green space	

County-Owned Facilities

Vernon County owns and operates a plurality of facilities relevant to the planning boundary. These parks vary in scale and offer comprehensive coverage of amenities to the region and are therefore important to the residents of the City of Viroqua. The following list includes facilities deemed more impactful, within reasonable proximity. As such, the list is non-exhaustive though provides a variety of outdoor recreational activities.

The following facilities are classified as County-Owned parks:

- Vernon County Fairgrounds (210 Fairgrounds Rd.)
- Sidie Hollow Park (E6051 Country Rd X)
- Duck Egg Park (Irish Ridge Rd.)
- Older Settler's Overlook (East of WI-35)
- Wayside Park (S3361 US-14)
- Kooyumjian-Lost Creek Park (Pine Rd, Yuba, WI)
- Jersey Valley County Park (E9095 County Road X)
- Runge Hollow Recreation Area (County Rd Y)
- Esofea Park (Park Rd.)
- Blackhawk Park on Battle Island (E590 Cty Rd Bi, De Soto, WI 54624)

Vernon County Fairgrounds

Vernon County Fairgrounds are located at the corner of US-14 and Fairgrounds Road. The fair, which runs in the Fall, is the main use of the space and provides passive recreation. The fairgrounds are also used for other events throughout the year, and many of the buildings are rented out for storage from October through March.

Location:	Corner of US-14 and Fairgrounds Rd.
Size:	35.10 acres
Jurisdiction:	County
Address:	210 Fairgrounds Rd.
Amenities:	Recreation, open space



Sidie Hollow Park

Picnic shelters, fishing, hiking, biking, camping, and playgrounds are offered at Sidie Hollow Park. The park was created to prevent downstream flooding through the creation of a dam. The park is located on County Road X, west of Boat Landing Road.


Location:	West of Boat Landing Rd
Size:	542.49
Jurisdiction:	County
Address:	E6051 Country Rd X
Amenities:	Picnic shelters, recreation, playgrounds



Duck Egg Park

This park includes amenities such as hiking, biking, and fishing, though its primary use is as a woodland conservancy. It is located south off Irish Ridge Road. A dam was completed in 1990 to control flooding and protect property.

Location:	S. off Irish Ridge Rd.	
Size:	699.60 acres	
Jurisdiction:	County	
Address:	Irish Ridge Rd.	

Amenities:	Recreation, trails, green space	
------------	---------------------------------	--

Old Settler's Overlook

Located north of Spring Coulee Road off WI-35, this park is popular for its hiking and scenic viewpoint atop a bluff. It overlooks the Mississippi River.

Location:	N. of Spring Coulee Rd. off WI-35	
Size:	45.67 acres	
Jurisdiction:	County	
Address:	East of WI-35	
Amenities:	Trails	

Wayside Park


Located off US-14 south of Three Chimney Road, Wayside Park provides the community with open, accessible space. Many amenities are offered, including restrooms, a picnic shelter, and a small playground.

Location:	US-14 south of Old Hwy 14	
Size:	3.71 acres	
Jurisdiction:	County	
Address:	S3361 US-14	

Amenities:	Restroom, picnic shelter, Playground, open space	
------------	--	--

Kooyumjian-Lost Creek Park

The Kooyumjian-Lost Creek Forest is a park located on Pine Avenue between the towns of La Farge and Ontario, off State Highway 82. Trails and hunting are offered at the location.

Location:	South of Pine Ln. and Pine Ave.	
Size:	118.71	
Jurisdiction:	County	
Address:	Pine Rd, Yuba, WI	
Amenities:	Recreation, trails, fishing,	

Jersey Valley County Park


Located off County Rd X east of Tostrud Drive, Jersey Valley County Park formed by a flood control dam and man-made lake. Hiking and fishing make the location a popular recreation space.

Location:	County Rd X E. of Tostrud Dr.	
Size:	368.94 acres	
Jurisdiction:	County	
Address:	E9095 County Road X	

Amenities:	Trails, fishing, recreation	
------------	-----------------------------	--

Runge Hollow Recreation Area

Formed by Runge Hollow dam and located northeast of Turtle Hollow Road off County Road Y, the park is known for its scenic views. Fishing is also popular at the location.

Location:	Northeast of Turtle Hollow Farms	
Size:	4.40 acres	
Jurisdiction:	County	
Address:	County Rd Y	
Amenities:	Recreation, fishing	

Esofea Park

Located west of Highway B along Park Road, Esofea/Rentz Memorial Park is the oldest park in Vernon County. Miles of trails are offered, in addition to a picnic shelter, playground, open areas, fishing, and sports.

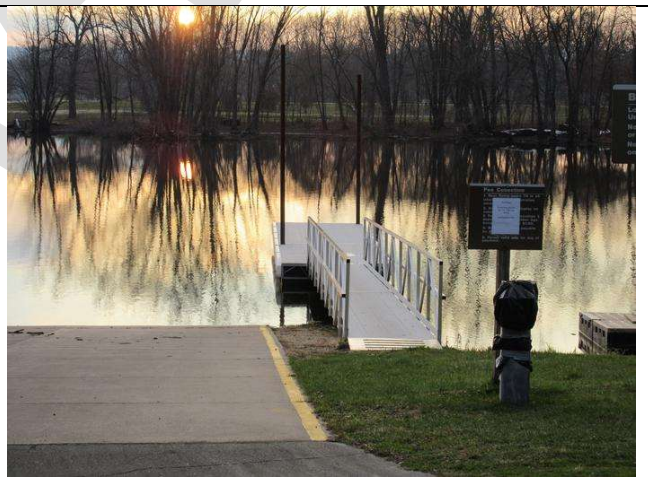
Location:	West of Highway B
Size:	186.52 acres
Jurisdiction:	County
Address:	Park Rd.
Amenities:	Trails, recreation, playground, picnic areas



Blackhawk Park on Battle Island

Located west of U.S. highway 35, Blackhawk Park is a county-owned park on the west bank of the Mississippi River and the Wisconsin border. The location offers boat access, camping, and observation.

Location:	Blacktop Rd off U.S. 35
Size:	1.73 acres
Jurisdiction:	County
Address:	E590 Cty Rd Bi, De Soto, WI 54624
Amenities:	Public boating, fishing, recreation



State-Owned Facilities


The City of Viroqua is situated near a plurality of state-owned parks that provide recreational value to the City and its residents. The following list includes facilities deemed more impactful, within reasonable proximity. As such, the list is non-exhaustive, but provides a variety of outdoor recreational activities.

The following facilities are classified as State-Owned parks:

- Wildcat State Park (E13660 WI-33, Ontario, WI 54651)
- Kickapoo Valley Reserve (WI-131, La Farge, WI 54639)

Wildcat State Park


Located above the Kickapoo River, Wildcat Mountain State Park includes 21 miles of trails and offers camping. Picnic areas, observation points, and paddling are also offered in and around the Kickapoo River.

Location:	East of WI-131, South of County Road Zz	
Size:	4,074.21 acres	
Jurisdiction:	State	
Address:	E13660 WI-33, Ontario, WI 54651	
Amenities:	Paddling, camping, trails, picnicking	

Kickapoo Valley Reserve

Located between La Forge and Ontario in Wisconsin, Kickapoo Valley Reserve is a highly diverse State Natural Area-designated landscape that offers multiple amenities for public use.

Location:	North of Rockton off WI-131	
Size:	8569.00	
Jurisdiction:	State	

Address:	WI-131, La Farge, WI 54639	
Amenities:	Public trails, fishing, recreation	

Undedicated City-Owned Facilities

Various recreational facilities or open spaces under city jurisdiction are either under development or have previously been discussed as potential park spaces within planning bounds at the time of the planning document's creation.

Hanson Farm Park

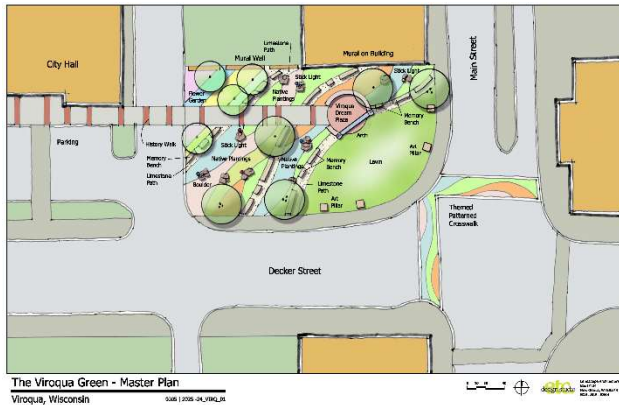
Hanson Farm Park is to be a neighborhood park that will open 2026-2027. It consists of a 0.78-acre lot, located between Chicago Avenue and US-14. At the time of this plan, plans are engineered and will go out to bid in 2025.



[Image XX – Hanson Farm Park]

The Viroqua Green

The Viroqua Green is to be a downtown park. Envisioned as a 'gateway' to the City's downtown district. It consists of a 0.34-acre lot located at 202 North Main Street, at the northwest corner of North Main and West Decker Avenue. The space is currently in the planning stages at the time of this report. Potential amenities include a plaza, signage, gardens, and seating.



[Image XX – The Viroqua Green Concept Plan (25_0305-Viroqua Green – Master Plan)]

Undedicated Privately-Owned Facilities

Dregne Lot

Dregne Lot is to be a neighborhood park along Sherwood Drive, in the northwest corner of the City. It consists of a 0.67-acre lot and currently exists as an open space at the time of this report. The space is currently in the planning stages at the time of this report. Potential amenities include active recreation, benches, and gardens.



[Figure XX – Dregne Lot]

Recreation Programs

The City of Viroqua's Park District offers a variety of programs and far-reaching services to residents of all ages year-round. The variety of recreation opportunities includes fitness and active living offerings, sports and clubs, outdoor recreation, special events, and more.

The Park District also hosts several special events during spring and summer, including the Wiffle Home Run Derby, Kickin It Kickball, and various volunteering efforts. Recreational youth opportunities during summer and spring months include sports camps, lessons, and clinics, sports leagues for the ages of four through twelve years old, traveling sports leagues, and skating. Some adult-focused outdoor recreation opportunities include pickleball, tennis, frisbee, and fitness in Eckhart Park.

During the fall and winter months, Viroqua Park District offers several youth recreation programs, including flag football, tackle football, and swimming. Some adult opportunities such as pickleball and swimming are also available.

Private recreation programs are undoubtedly vital to outdoor recreation in the City of Viroqua. These opportunities often are offered through partnerships and agreements with both municipal and private facilities. An example of a joint-use agreement in the City is Viroqua Driftless Soccer and PrairieWind, which provides the largest youth soccer program in the City. Development, maintenance, liability, use, and programming agreements can allow for a larger demographic to access these spaces. Other recreation programming includes Viroqua Wrestling Club, Viroqua Youth Volleyball, Viroqua Club Basketball, and Viroqua Thunder Hockey. Joint-use agreements also allow private facilities to experience enhanced traffic and community engagement.

Private outdoor recreation programs for senior citizens are also offered, such as Vernon County Over 50. This organization offers exercise opportunities including tai chi, yoga, and park tours.

Park and Open Space Amenities

As part of the planning process, an amenity assessment matrix was used to evaluate Level of Service of facilities in the City of Viroqua and ensure community needs are met. The inventory and assessment process involved gathering information about facilities to develop a matrix of what is available to City residents. This information can be used to formulate recommendations and plans for future improvements.

[Figure XX: Amenity Matrix.]

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities and Trails

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Bicycle and Pedestrian facilities are an important aspect of any park system. In the City of Viroqua, they are vital recreational facilities that foster visitation from beyond the region. Comprehensive active transportation options are available through present facilities, as noted in the following map.

Existing bike facilities consist of painted on-street bike lanes and shared-use paths. Facility selection depends on multiple variables including roadway jurisdiction, right-of-way width, funding opportunities, and pending capital improvements in a given area. Locally owned streets may lack dedicated bike facilities due to low traffic volumes.

The city's sidewalk network is largely connected, especially in the city center and adjacent neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods on the periphery are lacking sidewalks. This includes the neighborhood north of the high school and along Court Street, near Court Street Park.

Trails

Recreation trails accommodate various outdoor activities at varying times of year. They offer variety for both bicycle and pedestrian activities, including nature study, walking, jogging, running, skating, biking, skiing, and equestrian uses. A well-designed park system provides connections to parks, open space, and connecting trails whilst integrating into urban and suburban areas.

Existing trails in the study area are shown in the map below. Paved multi-use trails are present along South Rock Avenue as well as in the Park Bowl. Unpaved trails are present in both Hubbard Hills, PrairieWind, and Veteran Hills Disc Golf Course. These trails are located on privately-owned land to which the public is invited, and to that end offer a valuable amenity for residents and visitors alike.

[Figure XX: Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trail Facilities in the Planning Area]

IV: Community Engagement

Public input is vital to the success of any park and recreation-oriented planning efforts. From January to September 2025, the project team employed a variety of engagement activities including:

- A web-based community survey;
- Focus groups (In-person and virtual);
- Intercept Surveys;
- On-site engagement activities (including intercept surveys and a booth at the Viroqua Farmer's Market); and
- A community open house.

To ensure a broad cross-section of individuals were included in the CORP planning process, the project team invited a variety of stakeholders and community members to participate. A detailed summary of each engagement activity is provided below. Additional information can be found in Appendix 1.

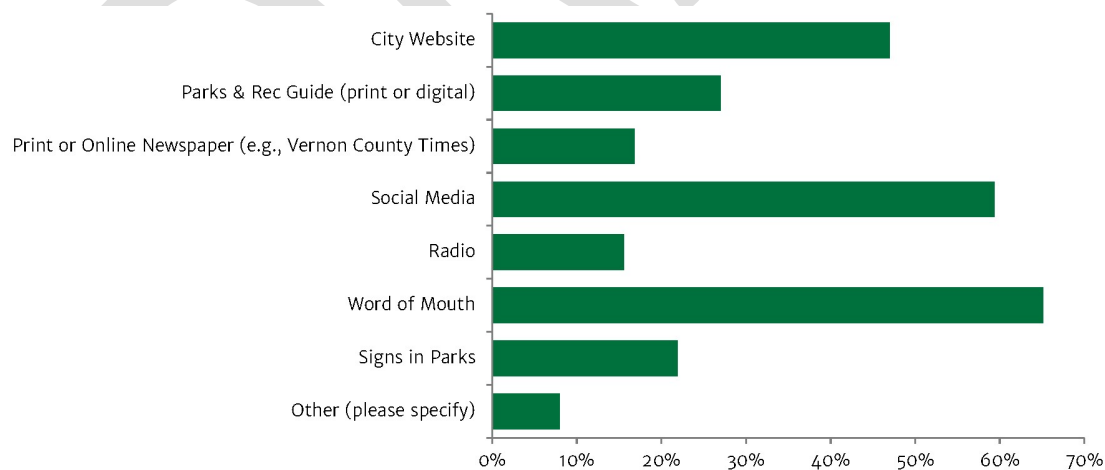
Community Survey

In January 2025, the project team developed a web-based community survey to gather important information on community needs and priorities. The survey was published on February 28, 2025. The original closing date for the survey was March 28; however, the date was extended to April 15 to allow additional input. The survey was promoted on the city's website and social media page and via email to stakeholders. A print copy of the survey was made available at City Hall and McIntosh Memorial Library.

The survey included 33 questions, of which eight (questions 20-27) were related to historic preservation. In total, there were 316 completed responses and 465 partial responses to the survey. A summary of responses from questions 20-27 are below.

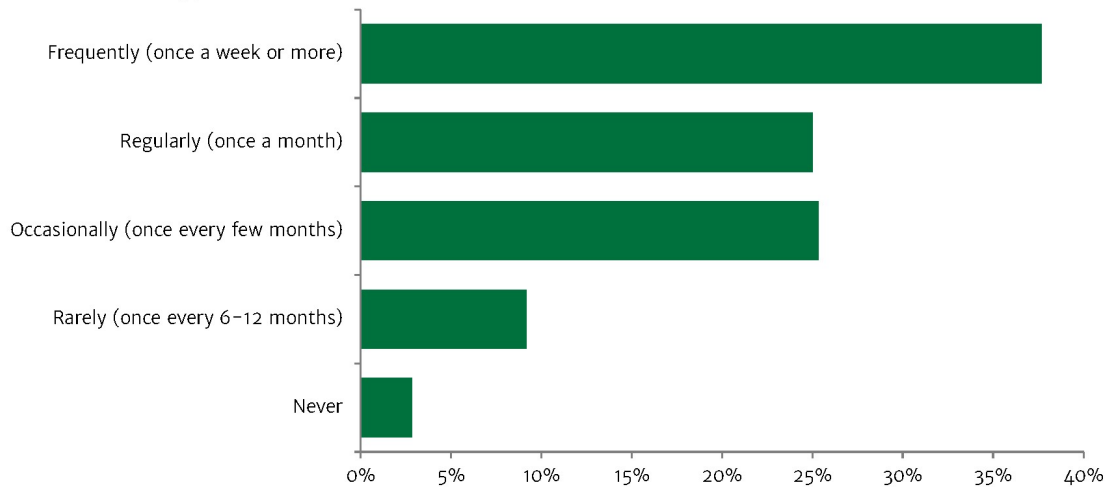
Q20: How do you obtain information about Viroqua parks, facilities, and programs?

Respondents were given eight answers, including a write-in option, and asked to select all that apply. Of the 316 respondents, 65 percent selected 'word of mouth', followed by 'social media' (59 percent). Among the top responses, Figure xx also shows that the city's website and the parks & recreation guidebook are an important means of information for respondents. Of the 25 comments submitted in the write-in section, most were specific examples of the answers listed above. Some respondents stated that they get their information by email as well as through bulletin boards at various places.



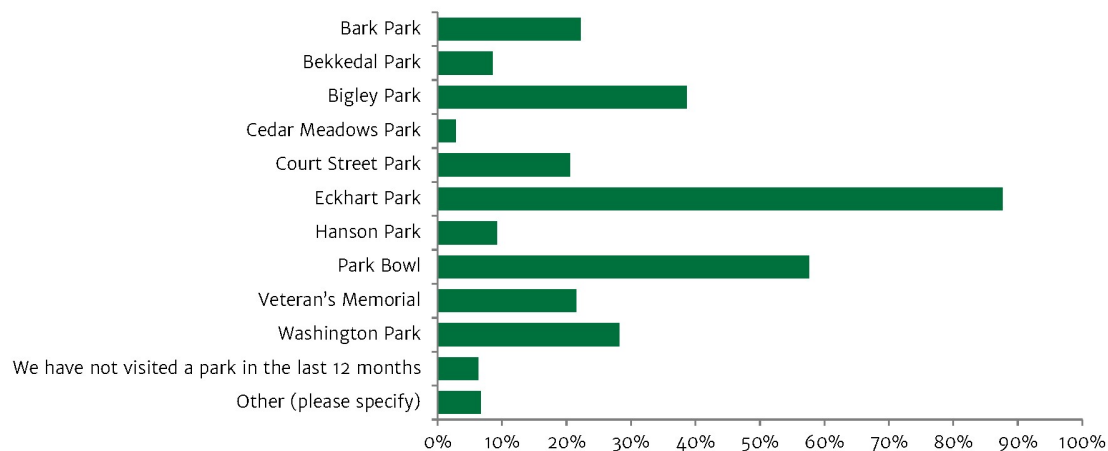
Q21: How often do you or other members of your household visit Viroqua Parks?

Respondents were asked to choose one of the five answers provided. Of the 316 responses, a plurality of respondents indicated that they visit at least once a week or more (119 responses, or 38 percent of the total).



Q22: Which of the following Viroqua parks have you or other members of your household visited in the past 12 months?

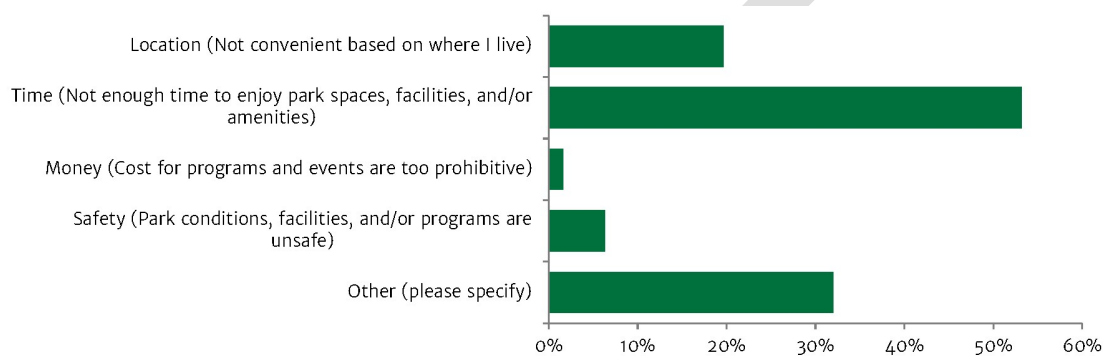
Respondents were given twelve answers, including a write-in option, and asked to select all that apply. Of the 316 respondents, 88 percent selected Eckhart Park, followed by Park Bowl (58 percent) and Bigley Park (39 percent). The comments submitted in the write-in option (21 comments total) primarily include parks that are not owned by the city, such as PrairieWind, VFW Trails, and Hubbard Hills.



Q23: What factors keep you from utilizing Viroqua parks and trails more often?

Respondents were given five answers, including a write-in option. Of the 316 respondents, 53 percent indicated that they do not have enough time to enjoy park spaces, facilities, and/or amenities more often. The comments submitted in the write-in option (101 comments total) suggested a number of ideas that would encourage people to utilize the parks more often, including:

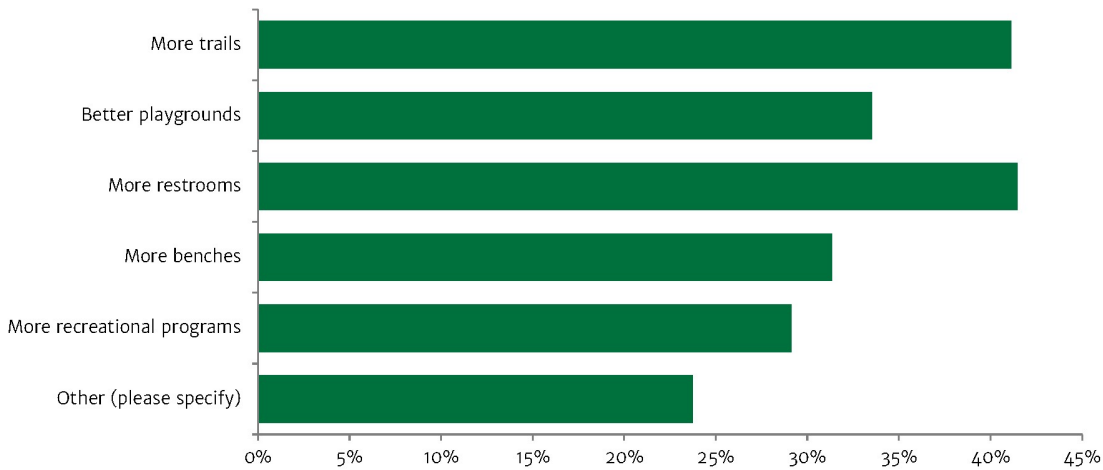
- More amenities, such as restrooms and play equipment;
- More community-oriented events and park programming, with some comments suggesting child-friendly programming; and
- Better access for people walking, biking, and rolling (e.g. skateboarding, scootering) to parks.



Q24: What improvements would you like to see in Viroqua parks?

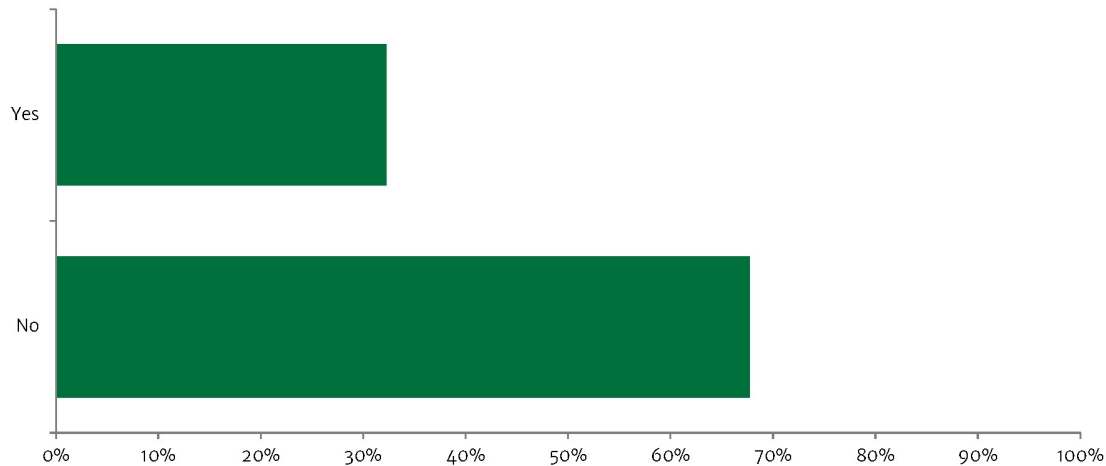
Respondents were asked to choose up to three of the six answers provided, one of which was a write-in option. Of the 316 respondents, 42 percent selected both 'more restrooms' and 41 percent selected 'more trails'. The most commonly requested improvements submitted in the write-in section (75 comments total) center around expanded amenities, better maintenance, and accessibility enhancements:

- Expanded amenities, such as restrooms, trash cans, and drinking fountains;
- Upgraded playgrounds, which includes upgrading existing equipment (e.g. Dragon Park) and adding new features (e.g. splash pad);
- Better maintenance in general, with some specifically mentioning the bark park and the skate park; and
- Improved accessibility, particularly for people with disabilities.



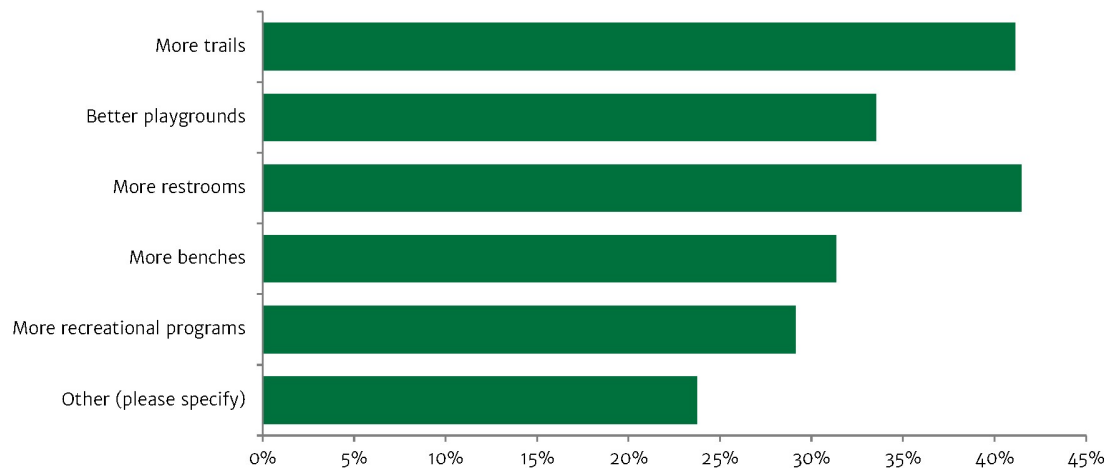
Q25: Have you or any member of your household participated in park or recreational programs or facilities in OTHER communities in the past 12 months?

This question is the first of three designed to help city staff better understand the amenities and facilities that Viroqua residents are visiting in other communities. 32 percent of respondents selected 'yes' to the question, while 68 percent of respondents selected 'no'.



Q26: Which community was the program/facility located?

This was a write-in question that was shown to respondents who selected 'yes' to the previous question. The most frequently mentioned communities were La Crosse and Westby, followed by La Farge, Richland Center, and Sparta. Several responses also mention nearby parks, sports fields, and outdoor recreational areas, such as Kickapoo Valley Reserve and Esofea Park.



Q27: What programs/facilities did you or members of your household visit?

This was a write-in question that was shown to respondents who were also shown the previous question. Of the 79 responses, frequently mentioned locations include parks in La Crosse (e.g. Trane all-abilities park, Myrick Park, Riverside Park), Davidson Park in Westby, Sidie Hollow, and Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Many respondents participate in youth sports such as baseball, hockey, and pickleball, while some folks swim at Sparta’s outdoor pool.

Category	Examples
Parks & Nature Areas	KVR (Kickapoo Valley Reserve), Sidie Hollow, Wildcat Mountain, Myrick Park, Riverside Park, Phoenix Park, Trane Park, Davidson Park, Camden Playground, Eckhart Park, Boerner, City Park (Lansing), Coon Valley Park, Bigley Park, Westby Pool, La Crosse parks, Black River Beach, Veterans Park, Duck Egg, Spring Green, Madison parks, The Reserve
Trails & Hiking	Vernon Trails, Hiking at bluffs, Duck Egg, Kickapoo Reserve, PWP Trails, Viroqua Cemetery, Theodore Wirth Trailhead, Bigley Park trails
Swimming Pools	Beakley Pool, Outdoor pools (Sparta, Richland Center, Black River Falls), Milwaukee pool, Westby Pool, YMCA swim programs, community pools
Youth & Summer Programs	Day camps, KVR children’s programs, Summer youth programs, Park Bowl games, YMCA youth programs, Summer baseball/little league, School activities, Legion baseball
Sports Facilities	Soccer fields, ballfields, hockey rink, bike pump track, lacrosse field, sports complexes
Dog Parks	Multiple dog parks including Davidson Park area
Music & Events	Music in the Parks, Burgers in the Park, Art fairs, concerts, Kriskindlmarkt, musical events
Recreational Activities	Pickleball (indoor/outdoor), Curling, Ice Skating, Skiing, Horseshoes, Exercise classes
Libraries & Education	Bekkum Library, Sparta Free Library, Educational programs, Book fairs, Theater/film events, South Side Center classes
Miscellaneous Facilities	Museum, YMCA, Community Center, Splash pad, Community arena

Focus Groups

In March 2025, the project team conducted two focus groups with recreation-oriented stakeholders in the community. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather input on recreation-related issues and opportunities within Viroqua.

Stakeholders were selected from a list generated by the consultant team and refined by City staff. The list was then segmented by an individual's subject matter expertise and relevance to the Comprehensive Plan, Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, or Historic Preservation Plan. 90 individuals were included in the stakeholder list; of those, 25 were identified as recreation-specific stakeholders. This list included business owners, property owners, business owners, volunteers of local recreation leagues, and other recreation-minded individuals. The organizations that were represented cater to a wide range of ages and interests, including Driftless United Soccer Club, Vernon Trails, and Vernon County Over 50 among others.

The 25 recreation-specific stakeholders were invited to participate in one of two focus groups, which occurred on two dates:

- **Focus Group 1:** Tuesday, March 18, 2025, from 5:00-6:00pm. (Virtual, via Zoom)
- **Focus Group 2:** Tuesday, March 25, 2025, from 12:00-1:00pm. (in-Person, City Hall)

Four people attended the virtual focus group on March 18th, with an additional individual who was unable to attend submitting their responses via email. Six individuals attended the in-person focus group on March 25th.

These stakeholders were asked questions relating to five themes:

- Recreation Programming and Activities
- Understanding Visitors and Participants
- Communications and Outreach
- Parks and Recreation Facilities and Amenities
- Future Planning

A summary of input from each theme is provided below. Each focus group discussion was fluid, and overlap between themes are present. The complete list of questions within each theme as well as all participant responses can be found in Appendix 1.

Recreation Programming and Activities

- **Successful Programs:** Stakeholders mentioned a wide variety of program offerings, many of which attract a large number of participants given the size of the community. This includes Driftless United Soccer Club (200 children, with a couple hundred more participants playing in pick-up games), Viroqua Club Basketball (over 160 participants), and the flag football league (over 60 participants). Stakeholders also mentioned that dance and cycling are quite popular, with cycling in particular being popular not only for residents but also for visitors.

[possible callout: "To create a cycling community that didn't exist 20 years ago is a big deal. It includes bike safety, how to ride on the trails...this all creates a big tourism destination in tandem with things like foodie tourism and the farmer's market."]

- **Meeting Demand:** Stakeholders highlighted the need for additional facilities and improved organization to meet the continued demand for youth sports and recreation leagues. There are multiple entities competing for limited space (e.g. gym space at the high school). A stakeholder associated with Driftless United Soccer Club mentioned that there is a demand not only for club soccer but for soccer to be an official high school sport. The Recreation Director shared that It is difficult finding volunteers to officiate and coach sporting events.
- **Facility Additions and Improvements:** Related to the above topic, participants discussed the prospect of building new facilities to address not only demand constraints of facilities within the community (e.g. gym space) but also demand that is being met outside of the community (e.g. community pool). Of equal concern was the need to maintain and upgrade existing outdoor facilities, and stakeholders proposed several ideas toward this end, including building out neighborhood parks, installing paths and sidewalks to improve connectivity, and lighting outdoor facilities to expand programming and 'pick up' games.



[Figure XX: Hanson Park 1_2024_CoV-DSP_Hanson Park-101]

- **Partnerships:** Stakeholders listed multiple examples of recreational spaces and programs that have benefited from successful partnerships. This includes public-sector partnerships (e.g. City of Viroqua and Viroqua School District involved with the Park Bowl) and public-private partnerships as well (e.g. PrairieWind, Hubbard Hills).



[Figure xx: Hubbard Hills. Image (6)]

- **Nature in Viroqua:** Viroqua’s unique topography in Wisconsin is enjoyed by community members and visitors alike. Stakeholders mentioned that visitors from across the world will come to the Driftless region to enjoy trout fishing. Continued support of public parks and the connection of sporting events to nature in the area would tie two of Viroqua’s most vital aspects.

Understanding Visitors and Participants

- **Marketing:** Participants cited marketing and promotion of outdoor facilities and programs as their “weakest link”. While stakeholders employ a variety of digital and print marketing methods, they expressed a concern that efforts are ‘siloes’ which limits outreach and creates communication gaps. Some expressed interest in a centralized information source for all programs. One person suggested a Parks & Recreation fair or open house where community members could get more information on the many programs available.
- **Barriers to Utilization:** One stakeholder stated that busy schedules limit youth participation, and another stakeholder stated a “news to me” mentality amongst older individuals regarding marketing attempts. Further, stakeholders detailed the nuances of limited facilities, citing aging infrastructure as a contributing factor to residents visiting other cities for amenities such as outdoor swimming and gymnastics. A stakeholder noted the use of Richland Center for events and community spaces through their community center.

Communications and Outreach

- **Communication Challenges:** Existing recreation outreach methods include social media, email blasts, community guides, posters, and radio. Marketing and promotion have been quoted to be a weak link for outdoor recreation as finding methods of communication that

span all demographics are limiting outreach concentration efforts. Additionally, a stakeholder noted the use of multiple messaging and blast apps, such as Riser and Band, which creates multiple communication streams. Siloed communication methods and recreation programs, such as existing youth soccer initiatives, have been found to limit community participation. Participants listed partnerships between local schools and these recreation initiatives have benefactors to ensure a cohesive program.

- **Potential Remedies:** Three years ago, a stakeholder conducted a survey at a local senior center to determine a preferred outreach method. 60 percent of seniors wanted U.S. Mail as a primary means of communication. The creation of a holistic community guide detailing parks and outdoor recreation around the City would offer a comprehensive program, according to a study group participant who is associated with Viroqua Parks and Recreation. Also detailed was the potential for a sports recreation council that gathers community members. As other demographics likely prefer social media and email as mediums for outreach, offering multiple streams of communication would benefit the promotion of recreation in Viroqua.

Parks and Recreation Facilities and Amenities

- **Valued Facilities:** The Park Bowl is a valuable community resource for outdoor activities. It serves as an example of a successful collaboration within Viroqua that could guide future initiatives. Other valued public amenities include PrairieWind, Hanson Park, Hubbard Hills, Eckhart Park, Washington Park, and the indoor pool.



[Figure XX: Eckhart Park Picnic Shelter. IMG_0058]

- **Requested Amenities:** Stakeholders called for the improvement of existing restrooms, playgrounds, and benches around the City. The enhancement of parks through the addition of new trails and benches were also mentioned by stakeholders. Viroqua lacks a sports complex that provides outdoor tracks, pools, and added recreation space. Though it is a big-ticket item, its addition would create a hub for recreation in the area. Also, providing night

lighting in parks would enhance accessibility, utilization, and safety, stated a stakeholder associated with local soccer associations. In regards to currently private facilities such as the track complex and PrairieWind, a discussion amongst focus group participants was held to relay a request for a partnership to allow public usage.



[Figure xx: PrairieWind Park open space. IMG_0012]

Future Planning

- **Needs in the next 5-10 Years:** Many participants re-emphasized previous points of discussion while stating that the potential for population growth in the coming years underscores the need for improved planning and coordination. Stakeholders proposed both indoor and outdoor options for pickleball and basketball, and one stakeholder encouraged the creation of a senior center with programs to support fitness programs and socialization.

Pop-Up and other On-Site Engagement

In May 2025, the project team conducted a series of on-site community engagement activities:

- **Intercept Surveys:** Tuesday, May 27, conducted at Nelson Ag Center and the Park Bowl during a baseball game.
- **Pop-Up Engagement Booth:** Saturday, May 31st, at Viroqua Farmer's Market.
- **Community Forum:** Saturday, May 31st at Viroqua Commons.



[Figure XX: Farmers Market]

Each activity was designed to gather community input on each of the plan efforts within the purview of the project team. Engagement activities for the intercept survey and pop-up booth were based on four question prompts—two associated with the Comprehensive Plan, one with the Historic Preservation Plan, and one with the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan—and were adjusted to fit the method of engagement for that given day. A summary of recreation-related questions are provided below. The complete list of participant responses can be found in Appendix 1.

It should be noted that the Community Forum focused almost exclusively on the Comprehensive Plan; participants did not ask questions related to the CORP.

May 27 Intercept Survey, Q4: What improvements would you like to see in Viroqua Parks?

Respondents were given six options, including a write-in option, and asked to select all that apply. Of the 35 responses, a plurality of respondents selected ‘more trails’ at 31 percent. ‘More restrooms’ followed at 26 percent. Two additional comments noted a desire for more bicycle infrastructure and more cross-country ski trails.

May 31 Pop-Up Engagement Booth, Q4: What parks in Viroqua do you regularly visit? What additional amenities would you recommend for the parks in Viroqua?

For this activity, participants were shown a map of parks in Viroqua and placed stickers on the map to indicate which parks they visit regularly. Of the 67 responses, 19 percent placed a sticker at the Park Bowl, followed by PrairieWind at 13 percent.

Respondents were also asked to place an ‘amenity sticker’ to indicate an amenity that is currently missing in the park(s) they visit regularly. Of the 41 amenity stickers placed, 34 percent of

participants highlighted the need for additional restrooms. The request for restrooms is a common theme across stakeholders and survey participants alike.



[Figure XX - IMG_8032]

Participants also shared feedback with the project team that was not directly related to the question prompts but nonetheless relevant to active planning efforts. This includes park enhancements and upgrades (e.g. Dragon Park), additional amenities not included as amenity stickers (e.g. trash receptacles, trees), all-ability playground equipment, and increased mobility and access for people walking and biking.

Open House

[pending as of 8/14/25]

V: Park and Recreation Analysis

Viroqua Acreage Standards Comparison

The City of Viroqua owns and maintains fourteen park facilities totaling 109.8 acres. Additional undedicated parkland, such as Hanson Farm and The Viroqua Green, contribute to a plurality of acreage not currently included in the parkland inventory sum. City parkland tends to be distributed

throughout the developed community, in urban areas. For the purpose of this planning analysis, school, county, state, or private-owned facilities are not included in the analysis.

To ensure community parkland and facility space requirements are satisfactory requires a number of variables and equations. As such, the project team utilized multiple viewpoints to examine parkland existing in Viroqua and create a cohesive, comprehensive, and holistic perspective.

Viewpoints analyzed include:

- Acreage Standards Comparison
- National Average Comparison
- Comparable Community Analysis
- NRPA Recreation Facility Development Standards
- Population Projection and Parkland Projection Analysis

Recreation Facility Development Standards and Guidelines

The NRPA previously published facility development standards. However, these standards were retired in 2019 and replaced with NRPA Park Metrics, a benchmarking system that lets agencies compare their facilities against peer data rather than rely on a single prescriptive ratio. Under this model, communities can assess need with local demographics, participation trends, and financial capacity. No fixed per-capita standard is published. Further, each community is encouraged to determine its own respective standards and Level-of-Service (LOS) metrics to prioritize community needs, values, and issues using available resources.

Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Acknowledgement

This CORP has been prepared under the latest guidance from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, including the most recent Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Every five years, states are required to develop a SCORP for eligibility to participate in the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State Assistance Program.²⁹ The 2025-2030 SCORP is a reference document describing recreation needs, trends, and opportunities to address gaps in outdoor recreation systems across the state. It includes three primary goals for outdoor recreation:

- Ensure that all Wisconsinites have opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation.
- Maintain and expand sustainable outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Grow the collaborative approach across non-profit organizations, businesses, and federal, state, regional, and local agencies.

Though Wisconsin is notable for high performance of outdoor recreation performance when compared to other states, the State typically spends less per capita on state park operations than

the majority of states, largely due to the erosion in the funding from state taxes. Wisconsin State Parks are also experiencing extended cases of deferred maintenance due to debt payments instead of ongoing operations.³⁰ These issues, exacerbated by increased demand of state recreational facilities and growing population, further the importance of municipal outdoor recreation facilities such as those in the City of Viroqua.

The SCORP provides ten strategies with actions that local regional and state agencies can utilize for their respective parkland. Examples of actions include the selection of climate relevant and resilient plant species, the improvement of accessibility to park facilities for individuals with disabilities, ensuring facilities are clean, and improved park communication through signage and notice of recreation opportunities.

Level of Service

Level of service is a standard of measurement that recreation providers use to monitor the amount of services provided in their respective communities. Used in conjunction the quantitative and qualitative data gathered for the CORP, decision-makers can identify both strengths and gaps in their park systems and in how services are distributed. It also helps account for unique local features that shape recreational offerings.

The Level of Service metric is included in the following analyses.

Acreage Recommendations Comparison

The Acreage Standards Comparison measures the City of Viroqua's parkland against its population, expressing the result as acres per 1,000 residents. This metric is utilized in the table below, which lists all city-owned parks by NRPA classification and compares it to NRPA recommendations. Based on the ESRI 2024 population estimate of 4,525 persons, the City of Viroqua currently provides a total of 24.27 acres of municipal parkland per 1,000 residents, which exceeds the NRPA recommended area of 6.25-11 acres per 1,000 residents. This is segmented further according to the NRPA classification of each respective park. It is worth noting that the acreage associated with Special Use Parks is largely attributed to the publicly-owned portion of Viroqua Hills Golf Course (83 acres). Excluding the golf course would result in a total of 5.8 acres per 1,000 residents.

Viroqua Comparison to NRPA Acreage Recommendations

Park Type	Recommended Acres per 1,000 Residents	Viroqua Acres per 1,000 Residents
Mini Park	0.25 to 1 acre	0.52
Neighborhood Park	1 to 2 acres	1.2
Community Park	5 to 8 acres	4.1
Special Use Parks	N/A	18.5
Total NRPA LOS Classified Parkland	6.25 to 11	24.27

Source: ESRI, National Recreation and Parks Association

The 2025-2030 SCORP recommends that park classifications and standards “usually correspond to the National Parks and Recreation Association’s (NRPA) recreation, park, and open space standards guidelines.” Additionally, according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Community Assistance, it is recommended that local communities provide at least 6.25 to 10.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. This aligns with the historic guideline of the NRPA, which has recommended 7-10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Today, however, the NRPA emphasizes a flexible approach: rather than adhering to a fixed number, cities should evaluate their own Level of Service in partnership with residents and develop standards tailored to local needs.

National Average Comparison

The National Average Comparison is a benchmarking system provided by the National Recreation and Park Association that allows agencies to evaluate their performance against national norms and peer agencies. Using tools such as NRPA Park Metrics—an online database where agencies input their operational data—and the annual Agency Performance Review, local departments can compare key metrics like parkland per 1,000 residents, facility counts, staffing levels, and salary structures.

The following table compares Viroqua’s residents per park and total acres per 1,000 residents against other NRPA agencies. Of note:

- Viroqua enjoys a low number of residents per park (323), much lower than agencies that fall in the lowest quartile.
- As stated in the previous analysis, Viroqua enjoys a high number of parkland acres per 1,000 residents (24.27), which is higher than the median, lower quartile, and upper quartile.

This indicates that Viroqua offers more open space and less crowding per park than most U.S. agencies, especially among those serving communities under 20,000 residents. Further, this does not include proximal county, state, and privately-owned recreational facilities popular amongst City residents.

National Average Comparison				
	Residents Per Park		Total Parkland Acres Per 1,000 Residents	
	All Agencies	Agencies Less than 20k Residents	All Agencies	Agencies Less than 20k Residents
Median	2,411	1,001	10.2	12.9
Lower Quartile	1,317	640	4.9	5.9
Upper Quartile	4,984	1,778	17.5	22
City of Viroqua	323.21		24.27	

Source: ESRI, National Recreation and Parks Association

[Pending call-out box – This indicates the Viroqua offers more open space and less crowding per park than most U.S. agencies, especially among those services communities under 20,000 residents.]

As mentioned above, the NRPAs Agency Performance Review also allows readers to compare staffing levels. The typical agency has 8.3 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff members for every 10,000 residents, which can translate to 0.83 FTEs per 1,000 population. Using this as a benchmark results in a staffing need for 3.8 FTEs for Viroqua, given its current population size. Currently, the City of Viroqua employs three Parks and Recreation staff members, nearing staffing recommendations. As such, an additional full-time or part-time staff member warrants consideration.

Comparable Community Analysis

Another method in evaluating the existing Viroqua Parkland Inventory is comparing it to other similar size municipalities. In the following table, seven other communities were selected that ranged from 2000 to 10,000 in population. The City of Viroqua is notable for its favorability in total municipal parks, residents per park, and park acreage per one thousand (1,000) residents when compared to similar municipalities and their respective level of service.

Benchmarking data revealed Viroqua as a favorable location when compared to other regional parkland agencies in terms of residents per park and acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. In addition to offering 24.27 acres per 1,000 residents, the city accommodates 323.2 residents per park, beat solely by one other community. Further, the city tallies the greatest number of municipal parks with 14.

The City of Viroqua is also notable for its prominence as a hub for parkland and trail visitation. While increased total usage of parkland and trail via tourism is not quantified for the purpose of this

planning project, Viroqua offers facilities and parkland capacities not negatively impacted through increased usage numbers by non-residents.

Comparable Community Analysis				
Municipality	# of Municipal Parks Owned	Residents per Park	Total Acres	Acres Per 1,000 People
City of Viroqua	14	323.21	110	24.27
Tomah	6	1625.00	120	12.31
West Salem	9	586.33	47	8.91
Dodgeville	5	996.80	60	12.04
Westby	3	777.33	27	11.58
Prairie du Chien 1	12	458.83	560	101.71
Richland Center	5	1022.80	41	8.02
Lancaster 2	5	781.40	69	17.66
<i>Data Source: ESRI; U.S. Census, 2020 Decennial Census, NRPA</i>				

Recreation Facility Development Recommendations

The NRPA sets widely-used benchmarks for outdoor recreation facilities, including standards that informed the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources guidelines. These benchmarks translate desired levels of service into measurable targets—such as baseball diamonds per 5,000 residents—against which a community can gauge its supply.

For Viroqua, the City's publicly-owned facilities were evaluated against NRPA's benchmarks for communities under 20,000 residents. Each amenity was converted to "units" (e.g., one baseball diamond = one unit) and compared to the recommended units-per-capita ratios. The result is a gap analysis that highlights surpluses or shortfalls in the municipal system.

Within the planning region, the majority of facility types are accommodated by municipal facilities or other area providers, aligning with NRPA park metrics. While the matrix compares outdoor recreation facilities owned by the City, it must be mentioned that it does not include mention of privately-owned units and service providers within the area. Though not within City jurisdiction, these facilities fill gaps in level of service currently offered in Viroqua within the planning region.

NRPA Recreation Facility Development Recommendations						
Facility/Activity	No. of Units Per Population	Viroqua Population (2024)	No. Units Needed	Units in Park System	Enough Units Per Population?	Other Area Providers
Baseball Diamonds	1 per 5,000	4,525	0.91	2	Yes	School District (Rouo & Mason, Polo & Ebbets)
Basketball Court	1 per 5,000		0.91	3	Yes	Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School Playground
Football	1 per 20,000		0.23	0	No, but accommodated	School District (Blackhawk Field) and green space for informal games
Ice Hockey	Climate Dependent		1.00	0	No, but accommodated	Viroqua Community Arena
Outdoor Pool	1 per 20,000		0.23	0	No, but accommodated	School District (Bigley Pool)
Soccer Fields	1 per 10,000		0.45	1	Yes	High School; PrairieWind
Softball/Little League	1 per 5,000		0.91	2	Yes	School District (Ebbets)
Tennis/Pickleball	1 court per 2,000		2.26	0	No, but accommodated	outdoor)
Trail System	1 system per region		1.00	0	No, but accommodated	Hubbard Hills, PrairieWind
Volleyball	1 court per 5,000		0.91	1	Yes	School District (High School, Middle School)

Data Source: NRPA

It should be noted that these recommendations, provided by the NRPA and adopted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, have been primarily developed for urban communities, assuming the needs of all communities and areas are similar. These recommendations also do not factor local demographics, municipalities of smaller scale, preferences, and physical barriers into the matrix. As such, rather than adhering to a fixed number, Viroqua should evaluate their own level of service in partnership with residents and develop standards tailored to local needs.

Population Projection and Parkland Projection Analysis

This analysis provides an estimated amount of park acres needed to accommodate population projections for years 2029 and 2033. Two key variables were used during this analysis:

- A 2% population increase was applied to years 2029 and 2033 based on the 2024 population of Viroqua. It should be noted that such an increase is higher than the household projections and DOA estimates shared earlier in this report as well as the 2026-2036 Comprehensive plan.
- The 'Park Acreage Metric per 1,000 Residents' column assumes 17 acres for the analysis. This is lower than what residents currently enjoy--24.27 acres per 1,000 residents--but higher than what other municipalities typically include (10-12 acres).

Based on these variables, the analysis indicates a negative number of acres needed. This suggests that, even with a modest population projection, Viroqua residents can continue to enjoy a high level of service with the current quantity and acreage afforded to them by their existing park system. Or, put another way, the population projections do not result in a clear demand for acquiring additional land for park use. This analysis does not include school-owned or privately-owned facilities to which

the public is invited which, if included, would result in a higher level of service.

Study Area Park Acreage Needs by 2029					
2029 population projection	2024 Total Active Acres	2024 Acres Per 1,000 Residents	Park Acreage Metric Per 1,000 Residents	2029 Total Acres Needed to Meet Projected Population	2029 Additional Acres Needed to Meet Metric
4,616	109.83	24.27	17	78.46	-31.37
Study Area Park Acreage Needs by 2033					
2033 population projection	2024 Total Active Acres	2024 Acres Per 1,000 Residents	Park Acreage Standard Per 1,000 Residents	2033 Total Acres Needed to Meet Projected Population	2033 Additional Acres Needed to Meet Metric
4,708	109.83	24.27	17	80.03	-29.80

VI: Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Actions

To offer a comprehensive and inclusive planning process, the establishment of an encompassing vision and goals, objectives, and actions will offer guidance for the development of the CORP.

Vision Statement

“The City of Viroqua envisions a vibrant and inclusive outdoor recreation environment that enhances the quality of life for all community members. We strive to provide diverse and accessible parks, recreational facilities, and programs that promote health, wellness, and environmental stewardship.

Through collaborative efforts and responsible resource management, we aim to create safe, sustainable spaces that foster community connections, encourage active lifestyles, and celebrate our unique natural and cultural heritage. Our commitment is to ensure that every resident and visitor can enjoy enriching outdoor experiences that contribute to their overall well-being and the vitality of our community.”

Planning Themes

To ensure the vision is far-reaching, the project team developed a series of planning themes that are all within the purview of a municipal Parks & Recreation Department.

1. **Access and Connectivity**
2. **Natural and Cultural Resources**
3. **Maintenance, Sustainability, and Operations**
4. **Community Health and Wellness**
5. **Education and Awareness**
6. **Funding and Resource Allocation**
7. **Park Planning and Development**
8. **Recreation Programming**

9. Facilities and Amenities

These themes are represented in each of the 11 goals listed in the following section.

Goals, Objectives, Actions

Goals are statements of desired elements and are typically general in nature. Objectives are more specific than goals and are measurable. Actions are specific tasks or steps that are necessary to achieve defined goals or objectives.

The following goals, objectives, and actions were developed by Viroqua Parks and Recreation and the project team using community input.

* Objectives and actions with an asterisk (*) are sourced from the 2025 Viroqua Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

Goal 1: Provide Safe and Well-maintained Park and Recreation Facilities.

Objectives

- Ensure park facilities and varied recreational opportunities are accessible and meet the needs of all park users.
- Ensure the Capital Improvement Plan prioritizes the replacement of damaged or outdated recreational facilities and equipment.
- Ensure park grounds are well groomed and maintained on an established regimen, including tree and vegetation trimming, litter removal, lawn mowing, and facility cleaning.

Actions

- Conduct an ADA Accessibility Audit of park facilities and amenities.
- Conduct quarterly safety audits at each park. Correct all hazards within 30 days.
- Seek assistance from NRPA on standards (or guidance) on facility development standards, such as the Park Facility Condition Index (PFCI).
- Contact the National Recreation and Parks Administration (NRPA). Seek their advice on how to adopt a suitable assessment and maintenance regimen for park-owned facilities.

Goal 2: Provide a Safe and Well-maintained Transportation Network, Especially for People Walking and Biking.

Objectives

- Enhance and expand the network of sidewalks, bikeways, and shared-use paths to improve connectivity between parks and neighborhoods, schools, downtown, and other key destinations.
- Ensure the walking and bicycling network remains accessible year-round, in all seasons

- Increase ADA accessibility to sidewalks, trails, and support facilities.
- Review site plans to ensure sidewalk and trail connectivity.
- Maintain a 10-minute walkshed for all residents to access city-owned parks.

Actions

- Explore trail easements to facilitate access to PrairieWind Park, specifically to enhance connectivity between neighborhoods and their parks (Washington Park, Court Street Park).
- Deploy speed countermeasures on local streets near neighborhood parks, particularly those lacking sidewalks and/or crossing facilities. This includes

Washington Park, Court Street Park, and Hanson Park.

- Update policies and procedures for education and enforcement regarding removal of snow on sidewalks.*
- Prioritize enforcement of winter maintenance of walking routes connecting schools and parks.*
- Create a policy for winter maintenance of trails.*

Goal 3: Promote Community Health and Wellness Through Outdoor Recreational Opportunities.

Objectives

- Promote the health benefits of walking and biking.
- Work with the local business community and recreational groups to promote outdoor activities and wellness programs.

Actions

- Partner with Vernon Memorial Healthcare to pilot "Park Prescription" referrals.

Goal 4: Foster a Robust Network of Local Partners to Help Beautify Park Facilities and Enhance Recreational Opportunities.

Objectives

- Involve community members in the planning process to align recreational offerings with their needs.
- Equip commissioners and community members to be 'cheerleaders' on various park initiatives.

Actions

- Establish a 'Friends of the Parks' Group or a Park Foundation with 501c(3) status. Or consider using the Viroqua Area Foundation as a pass-through.
- Host a minimum of two public workshops and one online survey for every major park project.
- Explore a "Sponsor a Garden" program - offering de-lawning opportunities while gaining funding and maintenance from volunteer organizations.
- Create a 'Adopt a ___' Program to encourage routine maintenance and clean-up of park facilities, sign beds, etc. This could be done in tandem with existing groups or via the creation of a 'Friends of the Parks' organization.

Goal 5: Expand and Diversify Recreational Programs to Cater to Various Age Groups, Needs, and Interests.

Objectives

- Optimize year-round use of all recreational facilities available in the community.
- Introduce adaptive, inclusive programming.
- Ensure there is at least one program for each age bracket, from toddlers to seniors.
- Coordinate with the school district, volunteer sports organizations, library, and private entities to ensure programming is not duplicative.

Actions

- Increase annual park-based program participation by xx%.
- Explore a Joint Use Agreement between Viroqua and Westby to allow residents free pool access between communities.

Goal 6: Identify and Pursue Funding Opportunities to Ensure that Park Operations and Programs are Financially Sustainable.

Objectives

- Participate in federal and state financial aid programs to improve ADA accessibility.
- Utilize the variety of grant opportunities offered by the WDNR, Department of Administration, and Department of Transportation to fund improvements to park and recreational opportunities in the City.
- Utilize public and private foundations and donations to fund parkland acquisition, park amenities, or provide improved park and recreational opportunities in the City.
- Develop a city government commitment for continued annual funding to maintain all existing facilities in a manner conducive to the enjoyment and safety of all using the facilities.
- Establish an annual dollar amount to secure for in-kind donations.
- Apply for federal funds through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP).*

Actions

- Prepare and submit a minimum of xxxx grant applications per year, targeting \$xxx,xxx total.

Goal 7: Connect People to Information About Their Park and Recreation System to Increase Visitation.

Objectives

- Provide adequate signage for all parks and recreation areas.
- Develop a communication strategy that integrates multiple methods--web, social, email--into one ecosystem.

Actions

- Install QR-code-enabled signage at major park entrances to provide real-time updates.
- Utilize RecDesk's email marketing feature to conduct email marketing campaigns.

Goal 8: Design New Facilities and Retrofit Existing Facilities for Safety, Accessibility, and Inclusion.

Objectives

- Ensure new capital projects meet or exceed ADA and Universal Design standards.

- Achieve a minimum score of 90% on annual accessibility audits by 2029.

Actions

- Prioritize repair and retrofit of existing facilities.
- Conduct a park site analysis to determine placement of a splashpad

facility, resulting in 1-3 potential locations.

- Evaluate the feasibility of a community recreation center, which would include a siting analysis.

Goal 9: Provide a Safe and Well-maintained Transportation Network, Especially for People Walking and Biking.

Objectives

- Utilize and maintain environmental corridors and natural areas for passive recreation and for trails to improve connectivity between parks.
- Preserve and protect surface waters, wetlands, shorelands, and floodplains to maintain wildlife habitat.
- Ensure park facilities and amenities include materials, colors, and other design features that tell the story of the community's history and culture.
- Work with local partners to host cultural events and nature-education programming.
- Use native plant species and sustainable landscaping and maintenance practices within park and open space areas.
- Increase the quantity and diversity of trees in city-owned parks to promote sustainability and shaded recreation.

Actions

- Establish a rotating art program, with at least one new installation annually.
- Integrate interpretive signage or features highlighting the cultural, natural, or historic significance in relevant parks.
- Explore partnerships with local natural lands organizations and nurseries for

seed and/or planting and stewardship sharing.

- Engage volunteers to catalog the quantity and variety of trees in city-owned parks. Use their findings to plant trees, prioritizing parks that currently lack shade (e.g. Washington Park).

Goal 10: Design and Program Parks to Showcase Natural and Cultural Features While Prioritizing the Protection of Sensitive Ecosystems and Habitats.

Objectives

- Work with developers to ensure parks, trails, and/or sidewalks are included in development plans in a way that is consistent with proposed improvements in the 2026-2036 Comprehensive Plan.
- Annually review and update Section 16.12.140 (Public Use Dedications) for any changes that should be made to the Parkland Dedication and Fee-in-Lieu policy.
- Integrate proposed park facilities associated with new developments into the park service coverage map.
- Meet with city staff to assess areas that may not be covered in the park service coverage map with a 'Community Park' classification.

Actions

- Perform due diligence on acquisition of PrairieWind for a community park, including consideration of 'Right of First Refusal' agreement.
- Perform due diligence on acquisition of PrairieWind for a community park, including establishing a network of private partners for endowment to cover maintenance, etc.

Goal 11: Promote Administrative Excellence Through Efficient Operations, Talent Attraction and Retention, and Sustainable Funding.

Objectives

- Implement the CORP. Review actions and recommendations on an annual basis and adjust actions as appropriate.
- Update the Viroqua Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council annually on progress related to plan implementation.
- Determine implications to staffing, operations, equipment, and maintenance procedures based on CORP actions and recommendations.

Actions

- Consider allocating a portion of existing non-park maintenance responsibilities to the city's public works department. This may include maintaining police/fire and city hall buildings, watering flowers, or mowing.
- Conduct a parks and recreation survey in 2028, using the 2025 community survey questions as a baseline.

- Consider a referendum to increasing funding for park-related capital improvements, maintenance, and operations.
- Evaluate the feasibility of adding new full-time positions in the Parks and Recreation Department.
- Assess feasibility of converting current part-time or seasonal positions into permanent, full-time roles.

VII: Recommendations

[This section of the CORP is in progress and should not be construed to be a final list of recommended park-specific improvements. Additional content for this section will be created in September 2025]

Acquisition of Park Land

[pending]

Dedication of New Park Facilities

The following parks are in progress at the time of this plan:

- **Hanson Farm Park:** This park is associated with a 23-acre residential development, of which 0.78 acres will be set aside for a park. At the time of this plan, plans are engineered and will go out to bid in 2025, and the development will be completed in 2026-2027.
- **The Viroqua Green:** This park would occupy the site of the former City Hall building and serve as a gateway to the city's downtown district. The space is currently in the planning stages at the time of this report. Potential amenities include a plaza, signage, gardens, and seating.

It is understood that the city will own and maintain both of these parks upon dedication. The CORP recommends that Hanson Farm park be classified as a neighborhood park and Viroqua Green be classified as a mini-park.

Recommendations for Existing Parks

[The following is a draft list of proposed park-specific improvements. Further discussion with city officials, commission members, and community members will occur in September 2025.]

Viroqua Park Bowl

- Add lights to trail connect to Rock Avenue
- Replace outfield fencing
- Parking and Parking Lot improvements for circulation
- Consider new location for Ice rink

- Update and consider new press box
- Seating
- Accessible sidewalks
- Replace Baseball Lights

- Trail to skate park with lights
- Update Playground
- Update batting cages

Eckhart Park

- Replace Lighting (Dark Sky compliant)
- Plant Trees
- Replace sidewalks to be ADA compliant
- Repurpose the former concession buildings

- Consider repurposing playground elements from Dragon Park for artistic use
- IDEA: Overlook - Lookout Area

Bigley Park

- Update benches
- Add seating

- Staircase up hill
- Replace lighting

Broadway Bekkedal Park

- Make it a 'passive park'.
- Accessible sidewalks

- Add benches.

Viroqua Skate Park

- Repair and replace ramps

Viroqua Welcome Center Grounds

[pending]

Cedar Meadows Park

- Level open Field – soccer field – ultimate frisbee
- Playground with border – pump track
- Accessible sidewalks

- Planting of trees
- Trail access to Drengel lot for ease of maintenance

Court Street Park

- Playground upgrades
- Accessible sidewalks
- Park sign

- Shelter
- Seating
- Resurface basketball courts

Hanson Park

- New Playground
- Amphitheater
- Sprayground
- Resurface basketball courts
- Accessible sidewalks
- Parking

- Seating
- Hammocks area
- Bathrooms
- IDEA: Pickleball Courts/Multi-Purpose Courts (Hanson Park)

Washington Park

- Accessible sidewalks
- Move/upgrade playground
- Shelter/bathrooms
- Level the field
- Parking
- Natural Play, utilize the hillside
- Seating
- Trail to PrairieWind

Viroqua Bark Park

[pending]

Veterans Memorial Park

[pending]

Viroqua Hills Golf Course

[pending]

Other Recommendations

Other unlocated or non-specific recommendations include:

- Creation of City Rec Center
- Relocation of current ski and sledding hill
- Splashpad
- Additional soccer and square fields for active recreation

VIII: Implementation Strategies

[This section of the CORP will be developed in September 2025]

IX: Appendices

Appendix 1: Community Engagement Responses

CORP-Related Responses from Community Survey (Questions 20-27, 19 total)

CORP-Related Focus Groups, Meeting Agenda and Notes

The following document consists of a meeting agenda, questions, and participant responses from two focus groups with recreation-related participants on March 25 and March 26, 2025. It should be noted that the list of responses in the 'Notes' section is not exhaustive and may not fully reflect the entire comment provided by a given participant.

DRAFT

CORP-Related Responses from Pop-Up Engagement (Question 3)

Appendix 2: Park and Open Space Classifications

City of Viroqua Outdoor Recreation Facilities Terminology			
Classification	General Description	Preferred Size	Service Area
Mini Park	<p>Mini Parks are small, minimally developed facilities that serve a specific, unique function in the community. Mini Parks are often located on a single lot or remnant parcel near a residential district, and their size ranges from 2,500 square to 1 acre. Low-volume local streets as well as sidewalks are paths are the typical means of access.</p> <p>Mini Parks typically serve residents within a quarter-mile radius. However, a Mini Park could have a unique amenity that attracts regional visitors, such as a historical marker. Examples of amenities found in mini parks often include benches, gazebos, picnic tables, trees, gardens, historical markers, small playground or tot lot equipment, and small water features. Location, lot size, and context are important variables to consider when selecting amenities for Mini Parks.</p>	1 acre or less	1/4 to 1/2-mile radius
Neighborhood Park	<p>The Neighborhood Park is the quintessential unit of the park system and is often designed to be the primary recreation and community gathering space for a wide range of users. Neighborhood Parks provide active and passive recreation opportunities, with amenities that can be upgraded or replaced over time as community needs evolve. Examples of amenities found in Neighborhood Parks include shelters, picnic areas, drinking fountains, pathways, and playground facilities. Some parks also contain athletic fields or courts that are used by local community organizations.</p> <p>Neighborhood Parks often serve community members within a quarter-mile or half-mile radius. Given their proximity to residences, they are often accessed by way of low-volume local streets, sidewalks, paths, or bikeways. Neighborhood Parks can range anywhere from 1 acre to 10 acres. In the City of Viroqua, most Neighborhood Parks are closer to one acre.</p>	1 to 10 acres	1/2 to 1-mile radius
Community Park	<p>Community Parks are typically diverse in nature and serve a broader purpose than previous parks. Community parks may include neighborhood park amenities and may act as neighborhood parks as well. However, the focus of the community park is typically based on the needs of the community. Recreation, athletics, and open space are the most common needs. These parks, such as Viroqua Park Bowl, may include significant athletic complexes, aquatic amenities, pedestrian or bicyclist facilities, picnic areas, and various other active or passive amenities. The community park may also be the venue of an activity or amenity that has a broad community range appeal but does not fit the Special Use designation. Community Parks typically serve multiple demographics, neighborhoods, or the great city. These parks are often a part of the Park District. 25 acres or more are preferred, though special amenities, facilities, or athletic sites that create broader community reach may occur in smaller areas. Five to eight acres are standard for every 1000 residents served.</p>	25 acres or more	1 to 2 mile radius
Special Use Park	<p>Special Use Parks are a non-specific range of specialized parks and recreation facilities. These parks typically offer a single major use. Golf courses, historic sites, community centers, theme parks, water parks, and other special use facility park elements, but with amenities that often offer regional appeal to visitors from outside the City or park district boundaries.</p> <p>Special Use Parks are inconsistent in scale, as they vary based on the needs of the amenity or facility. These parks often serve the entire park district to provide amenities that draw visitors from beyond the City.</p>	Varies	Varies

Appendix 3: Park Property Information

Appendix 4: Maps

Appendix 5: Glossary of Terms

Accessibility: Refers to the design and implementation of outdoor recreation facilities, programs, and services that ensure equitable access for all individuals, regardless of their physical abilities, age, or socio-economic status. This includes:

- **Physical Access:** Ensuring that pathways, entrances, and facilities are navigable for individuals with mobility impairments, including the installation of ramps, accessible restrooms, and designated parking spaces.
- **Information Access:** Providing clear, understandable information about recreation opportunities, including signage in multiple languages and formats (e.g., braille, large print) to accommodate various needs.
- **Program Access:** Developing inclusive programs and activities that cater to diverse populations, including adaptive sports and guided experiences for individuals with disabilities.
- **Community Engagement:** Involving diverse community members in the planning process to identify barriers to access and to create solutions that reflect the needs of all users.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): A federal civil rights law enacted in 1990 that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in various areas of public life. Under the ADA, state and local governments that construct new facilities or make alterations to existing facilities must make them accessible.

Amenity: A feature or facility that enhances the usability, enjoyment, and overall experience of an outdoor recreation area. Examples include restrooms, picnic areas, parking, information centers, and trails.

Bikeway: A general term for any on- or off-street corridor that is intended for people biking.

Bike lane: The portion of a roadway surface that is designated by pavement markings and signing for the exclusive use of people biking.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP): A long-range planning document that outlines an organization's strategy for funding, scheduling, and managing capital projects over a specified period, typically five to ten years. Capital projects may consist of infrastructure (e.g. roads, bridges), facilities (e.g. parks, public buildings), and equipment (e.g. vehicles, technology upgrades)

Facility: Any physical structure or area designed to support and enhance outdoor recreational facilities. Can encompass both natural facilities, such as parks or trails, and built facilities, such as restrooms and shelters.

Greenway: A corridor of open space, typically linear, that is designed for recreational use, conservation, and transportation. Greenways may follow natural land, or water features such as rivers, shorelines or ridges, or human landscape features such as abandoned railroad corridors, trails or canals. Greenways often connect parks, natural areas, and communities, providing a multi-purpose route for various activities.

Interpretive facilities: Parts of a trail or recreational facility that offer the opportunity to educate the user on various aspects of the landscape, including native plants and animals, geologic history, local history, and local economy.

Level of Service (LOS): A ratio of land or facilities based on population, used to track the status of the system as it grows and establish the impact of population growth from development.

Recreation, Active: Activities focused on health, competition, skill development or play that center around a recreation facility such as a sports field, court, playground or building.

Recreation, Passive: Activities that focus on the enjoyment of the environment and center around the built or natural landscape such as open lawns, seating areas that take advantage of views or being surrounded by nature.

Shared use path: A trail that permits more than one type of user and that has a transportation and recreation function.

Trail: A path of travel for recreation and/or transportation within a park, natural environment, or designated corridor that is not classified as a highway, road, or street.

Universal Access: Refers to the ability of all people to have equal opportunity and access to a service or product from which they can benefit regardless of physical abilities or other characteristics. Refers to creating equal opportunity for all community members by reducing barriers.

Zoning: A regulatory tool adopted by the city to direct and shape land development patterns. Viroqua's zoning and development standards are contained within Chapter 17 of the Viroqua City Code and reflected on the city's Official Zoning Map.

Appendix 6: Bibliography

¹ Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center. *All Traditions*. Pg. 2-38. University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. 2004. <https://www.uwlax.edu/globalassets/centersprograms/mvac/alltraditions-2.pdf>.

² Union Publishing Company. *History of Vernon County, Wisconsin*. Pg. 116. Union Publishing Company. 1884. <https://archive.org/details/historyofvernonc00spri/page/n5/mode/2up>

³ Vernon County Historical Society. *Vernon County Heritage*. Excerpt of book, Pg. 3. 1994.

⁴ United States Department of Interior, National Park Service. *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Viroqua Downtown Historic District*. Pg. 25. June 5, 2003.

⁵ Vernon County Historical Society. *Hometown Heritage... A Celebration of Viroqua's 150th Birthday*. Pg. 9. 1996

⁶ Vernon County Historical Society. *Vernon County Heritage*. Excerpt of book, Pg. 3. 1994.

⁷ Nichols, M.C. *History of Viroqua, 1898*. Pg. 1. Wisconsin Historical Society archives. June 8, 1899.

-
- ⁸ Vernon County, Wisconsin. *History*.
https://www.vernoncountywi.gov/departments/sheriff_s_office/history.php
- ⁹ Munson, O.G. *Pickings All About Us*. Viroqua Censor, April 12, 1933. Accessed via Wisconsin Historical Society. <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Newspaper/BA13378>
- ¹⁰ Nichols, M.C. *History of Viroqua, 1898*. Pg. 1. Wisconsin Historical Society archives. June 8, 1899.
- ¹¹ WHS Library, Archives Staff. *Viroqua, Wisconsin – A Brief History*. Wisconsin Historical Society, 2009. <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2468>
- ¹² Wisconsin Historical Society. *Farwell, Leonard James 1819-1889*.
<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS7605>
- ¹³ Parrott, Kristen. *Museum Notes*. Week of November 10–16, 2019. Vernon County Historical Society.
- ¹⁴ Vernon County. *History of Viroqua*. Pg. 1. 1994.
- ¹⁵ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Viroqua Downtown Historic District*. Pg. 25. June 5, 2003
- ¹⁶ Vernon County Historical Society. *Main Street Meandering: Historic Walking Tour of Viroqua, Wisconsin*.
https://www.vernoncountyhistory.org/walking/images/msm_tour.pdf#:~:text=In%20the,building%20was
- ¹⁷ Pg. 7 <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/aging/2025-aging-narrative-draft.pdf>
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?County=VERNON&ID2=5515360
- ²⁰ City of Viroqua. *Environmental Information Document Outline, Sewer Rerouting and Extensions within the City of Viroqua*. Pg. 4. <https://cdxapps.epa.gov/cdx-enepa-ll/public/action/nepa/details?downloadAttachment=&attachmentId=458561#>:
- ²¹ Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. *Surface Data Water Viewr*.
<https://dnrmaps.wi.gov/H5/?Viewer=SWDV>
- ²² Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. *Wetland Indicators*. May 2021.
<https://widnr.widen.net/view/pdf/eg4qibazni/Wetland-Indicators.pdf>
- ²³ City of Viroqua. *Urban Forestry*. https://viroqua-wisconsin.com/services/public_works/urban_forestry.php
- ²⁴ Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. *Wisconsin's Air Quality Trends*.
<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/AirQuality/Trends.html>
- ²⁵ Mertes, James D., Hall, James R.. *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*. United States: National Recreation and Park Association, 1996.
- ²⁶ Dallas Park and Recreation Department. *Park Classifications*. City of Dallas. Accessed July 30, 2025. <https://www.dallasparcs.org/151/Park-Classifications>
- ²⁷ Munster Parks and Recreation Department. *Chapter 7: Park Classification & Levels of Service*. Munster, IN: Town of Munster, 2018. https://www.munster.org/egov/documents/1542401227_90454.pdf
- ²⁸ Village of Addison Park District. *Addison Park District Comprehensive Master Plan*. Pg. 99-114. February 5 2017. <https://addisonparcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/5.-Classification-of-Parks.pdf>
- ²⁹ Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. (2024). State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2025–2030). Retrieved from https://widnr.widen.net/s/jkhhvk6sh/fl_mp_scorp_2025_2030_documentonly

³⁰ Stein, J., & Byrnes, T. (2023). This Land is Our Land: The Past and Future of Conservation Funding in Wisconsin. Wisconsin Policy Forum. Retrieved from <https://wispolicyforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/ThisLandIsOur Land FullReport-1.pdf>

DRAFT