



**Waukesha County
Parks and Land Use**



**Waukesha County Parks & Land Use
Partnership &
Engagement Plan**

A photograph of a field of purple flowers, likely Monarda, in bloom. The flowers are in the foreground, with a blurred background of more flowers and green foliage. A white text box is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

**The Waukesha County Parks and Land Use
Partnership Engagement Plan
is the overarching vision to guide how we
will work together to accomplish more!**

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Introduction





Executive Summary



The Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use strives to provide the highest quality services to our community. To enhance economic development and sound land use, we recognize the importance of collaborating with businesses and residents to meet these goals. We are committed to protecting and maintaining the quality of our 8,500+ acre natural resources-based park system for the enjoyment and health of all our citizens.

Our mission is to expand the environmental, educational, social, and economic benefits of the department to make Waukesha County a great place to live, work, and grow communities.

This plan provides a roadmap to achieve this mission by defining the key principles and actions that are necessary to help build impactful relationships with partners to help move this mission forward.

To ensure mutually successful relationships, we developed this plan to clarify the department's guiding principles and our Strategic Planning goals. These goals include increasing both financial and volunteer contributions towards the department's mission through effective partnerships. Further collaboration between businesses, organizations and communities will build upon the current achievements of the department.

Most importantly, we established that our engagement should be a collaborative dialogue. The flow of information is most effective when it works both ways and is fostered at each step. We place a high value on the sincere involvement of our partners and aim to have mutual benefit in our relationships at all levels.

Dale R. Shaver

Director, Waukesha County
Department of Parks and Land Use



Foundations



Mission

The mission of Waukesha County government is to promote the health, safety, and quality of life of citizens while fostering an economically vibrant community. We are committed to delivering effective, high quality programs and services in a courteous and fiscally prudent manner.

Five Pillars of Success

Waukesha County's framework for identifying core priorities and establishing program goals.





Foundations



**Waukesha County
Parks and Land Use**

Statement of Purpose

Waukesha County’s Department of Parks and Land Use, working through a combination of collaboration, education, and regulation is dedicated to fostering economic development, sound land use, and the protection, enhancement, and enjoyment of the County’s natural resources and health of its citizens.

Standards of Service Excellence

In Waukesha County we commit to the highest levels of customer service. Our team is dedicated to serving all customers by living our core values, standards of service, and behaviors of excellence.

- Teamwork & Collaboration
- Communication
- Innovation
- Ethics & Diversity
- Efficiency & Cost Savings
- Wellbeing

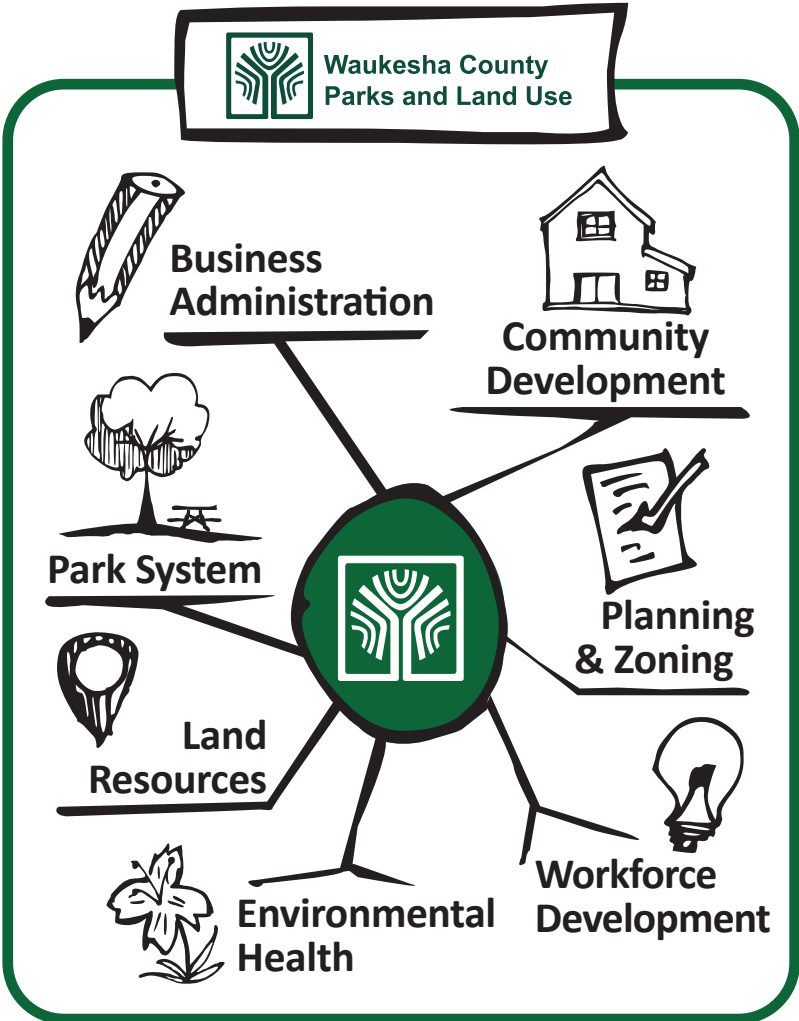


Organizational Overview

Organizational Overview

Waukesha County’s Department of Parks and Land Use consists of seven divisions:

- Business Administration
- Community Development
- Environmental Health
- Land Resources
- Planning and Zoning
- Park System
- Workforce Development



WAUKESHA COUNTY PARK SYSTEM



9 Fee-Based Parks

5 Lake Access Locations

1 Nature Center

2 Golf Courses

2 Indoor Ice Arenas

1 Expo Center

OVER 8,500 Acres
of Parkland & Greenways

Natural Resources Based Park System

A robust system of diverse landscapes, high-quality natural areas, a variety of trails, and beautiful lakes, ponds and waterways.



2021

Customer Service Rating



★★★★★
4.64/5 STARS

What our patrons say about us!



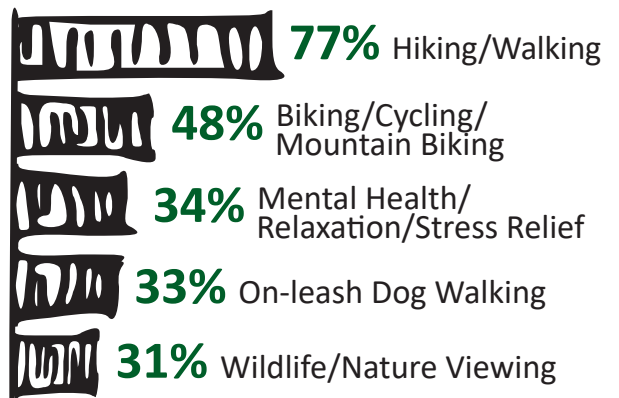
"Thank you for your enthusiasm and dedication to sharing the wonder and beauty of our parks!"



OVER 12.8K
Vehicles
Counted Per Week

\$1 MILLION
in Annual Park Stickers SOLD

Top Activities



*BASED ON 665 PATRON RESPONSES



13,588
Volunteer Hours
in 2021

That's about 6 more full time park staff!



Partnership Philosophy

Our Guiding Principles

The Department uses these guiding principles when engaging with partners to ensure an effective relationship.

Mission Driven

By working together, we can accomplish more. High-quality partner experiences will help each organization and person meet their missions more effectively and efficiently.

Responsive & Reciprocal

Strong partnerships benefit both parties and the process involves mutual learning.

Inclusive

The Department will work to facilitate the involvement of all individuals potentially interested or affected, including those that are harder to reach for reasons such as language, culture, age, or mobility.

Transparent & Trusting

The Department will ensure that information is accessible and objective and provide information so that partners can participate in a meaningful way and will foster a culture of sharing ideas.

Respectful & Responsive

The Department values partners and uses their input to improve outcomes, actively listens to understand partner needs, seeks to understand how they want to engage.

Importance of Engagement

The Department believes that partner engagement provides us a wide variety of benefits and that is why we prioritize this engagement.

Creates Shared Ownership

When partners and the Department collaborate, all parties can be focused on a single goal.

Access To Critical Information

Engagement helps improve communication and strengthens relationships that brings beneficial information to the project.

A Holistic View

An engaged group of partners ensures that all voices are heard in projects and allows these voices to be heard earlier in the process to increase the quality of the final product.

Mobilizes Resources

Identifies synergies between the partner and Department work and encourages comprehensive solutions to complex projects and issues. It helps direct resources to projects that have the highest priority and will achieve the greatest impact.



Our Goals

Strategic Plan

As part of Waukesha County’s strategic planning efforts, the department identified numerous objectives to aim for over the course of the next three years. These objectives are considered milestones to be reached, so each one is designed to be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timebound (SMART). Two of these objective goals are a part of the Partnership Engagement Plan.



Goal

To increase financial partnerships.

Objective

Obtain contributions for 3-year maintenance projects totaling \$20,000 per year through the utilization of the Department’s Partnership Engagement Plan by December 31, 2022.

Measurement

Dollars donated and in-kind items will be tracked through the Department’s financial software.

Review

To be reviewed semi-annually during the budgeting process and again during the plan update process.



Goal

To increase volunteer partnerships.

Objective

Increase volunteer hours by 20% over the previous 3-year average through the utilization of the Department’s Partnership Engagement Plan by December 31, 2022.

Measurement

Hours volunteered will be tracked through the Department’s Volunteer database.

Review

To be reviewed annually during the plan update process.

A large, mature tree with a thick trunk and dense green foliage, standing in a field of yellow wildflowers under a clear blue sky. The tree is the central focus, with its branches spreading out across the upper half of the frame. The foreground is filled with vibrant yellow wildflowers, and the background shows a line of trees and a clear sky.

Engagement

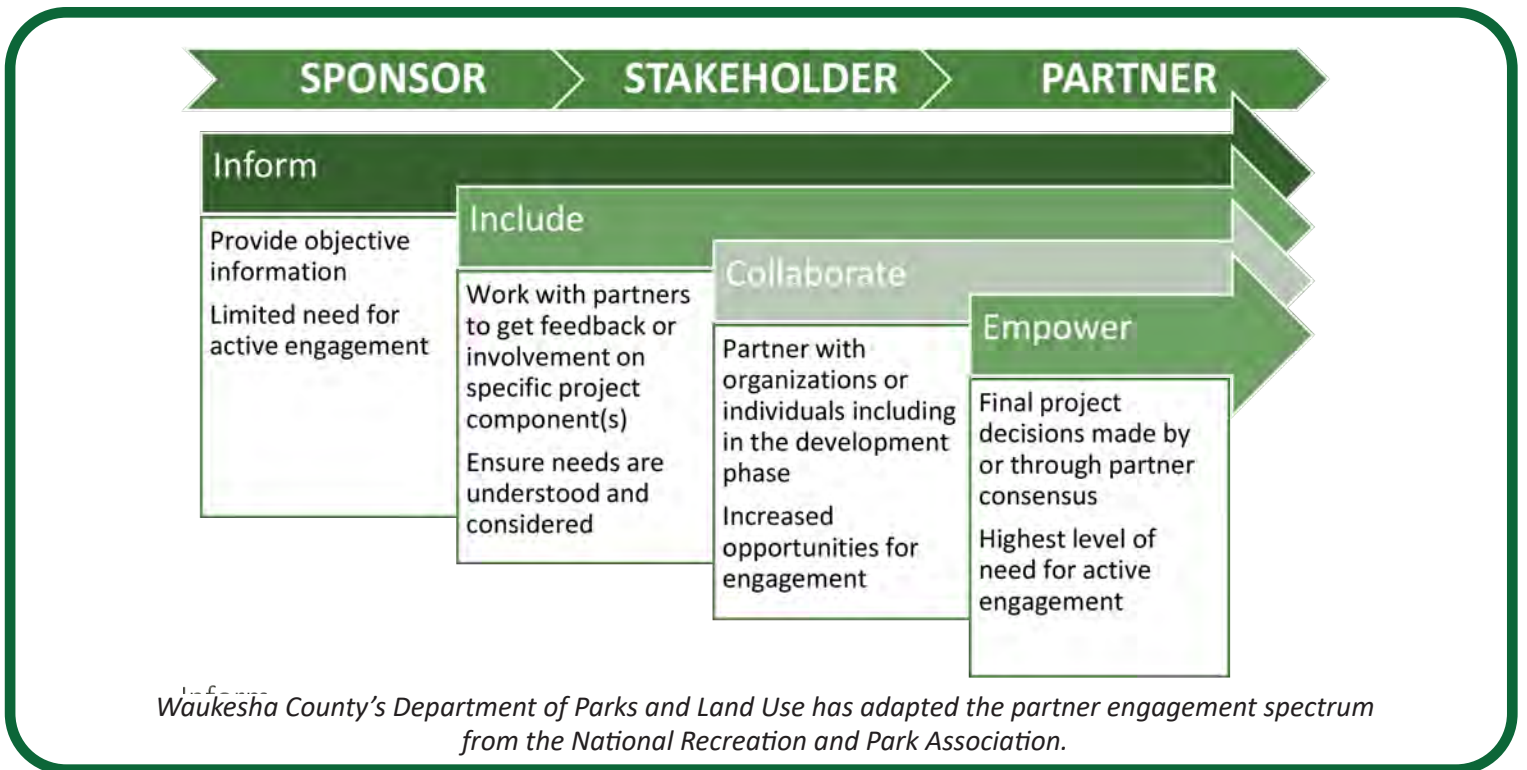


Engagement Spectrum

Our Partner Engagement Spectrum

It is the goal of the Department of Parks and Land Use to have a quality partner experience for both the Department, the partner organization, and the individual contributor partners. A key component to having a high-quality partner experience is to have a clear understanding about the type of engagement opportunity that a specific experience provides. This way all parties' needs are met. The spectrum heavily depends on both the partner interest and the project's need.

It is important to consider that partner experiences may have many partners that are engaged at different levels throughout an opportunity. For example, a project to expand a trail may need to inform the general public, include corporate volunteers on a workday, and collaborate with other departments and municipalities.





Inform

When partners, including the general public, are aware of a project but there is not an opportunity for active engagement, an opportunity to stay informed is key. The Department uses a variety of communication tools to keep partners engaged through providing accurate and timely information so partners can share information. Informing partners is also key where there is little to no avenue for alternative projects or actions due to legal or budget constraints. Informing partners at the beginning of a project is also helpful if there will be opportunities for more active engagement later in the process.

Most opportunities have some component of 'inform'. Opportunities that may only lie on the 'inform' portion of the engagement spectrum could be a trail being repaired or repaved. Site signage of projects that may impact public use of a facility or projects that are on the Parks Alert website are examples of projects that are on this end of the spectrum.

There are a variety of tools to utilize to inform partners about an issue or project. Determining the tools and frequency of informational communication should be developed as a part of the opportunity planning process. Tools can include, but are not limited to fact sheets, websites, an open house, newsletter, site signage, social media, and press releases.

Success can be measured in many ways depending on the type of tool that would be used and could include quantitative data such as analytic information from online sources or qualitative data such as positive feedback to staff.



Include

Some opportunities have limited engagement options that are mutually beneficial. Partners may be involved in one or many phases, such as providing feedback on project alternatives, project final designs, or by volunteering on a work component of the project.

This level of engagement is key when the goal is to:

- improve an existing service, process, or product,
- meet partner's strong desire to participate, and
- there may only be a limited range of outcomes but there are opportunities to modify the project based on partner feedback.

Opportunities that may lie on the 'include' portion of the engagement spectrum could be a prairie restoration, monitoring a stream for water quality, or providing outreach on an environmental topic.

There are a variety of tools to include partners on different aspects of a project. These may include surveys, focus groups, public comments, Web 2.0 tools, forums, workshops, or volunteer workdays.

Success should be measured with qualitative and quantitative measures. Quantitative measures should include dollars donated and number of partners engaged. Qualitative measures could include surveys, feedback, and general engagement.



Engagement Spectrum

Collaborate

Opportunities that benefit from joint ownership in either the development or delivery are best to use the 'collaborate' level of the engagement spectrum. However, the ultimate decision would be that of the Department.

This level of engagement is key if:

- joint project ownership would lead to all parties benefiting,
- all parties have the time and interest in participating fully,
- the timeline allows for full collaboration, and
- all parties have different resources and viewpoints, and the final project will benefit from sharing resources.

Projects that may be in the 'collaborate' portion of the engagement spectrum could be on a building or exhibit space renovation.

In addition to the tools utilized for previous stages, this portion of the spectrum also may benefit from using facilitated forums, reference groups, and shared understanding of project goals. Agreements and approvals to proceed should be agreed to in writing from all parties.

Success should be measured with qualitative and quantitative measures. Quantitative measures should include dollars donated and number of partners engaged. Qualitative measures could include surveys, feedback, and general engagement.



Empower

Collaborative opportunities that ultimately need buy in from partner groups to be accomplished or may proceed without direct Department approval fall on the 'empower' portion of the engagement spectrum. Clear guidelines and definitions of success and frequent communication is key to making projects and opportunities be successful.

This level of engagement is key if a partner is needed for final approval prior to proceeding. A project that may be in the 'empower' portion of the engagement spectrum could be pursuing trail designations or crowd-funded park amenities.

The tools and measures of success are the same for 'collaborate' and 'empower' and any agreements and approvals to proceed should be agreed to in writing from all parties. It is best to decide what these project gateways are as soon as possible in the joint-project planning process as well as who from each organization can provide the authority to proceed.



Quality of Engagement

It is key that partners and the Department have a positive engagement experience.

Looking to Waukesha County's Pillars of Customer Service and Quality, this means that all parties are accessible and timely, information is accurate and communicated well, and everyone approaches the project with a positive attitude.





Internal Needs Assessment



Needs Assessment

Needs Framework

Waukesha County's Department of Parks and Land Use has a variety of needs that differ widely from project to project and from division to division. Generally all needs can fit into one of three categories.



Financial Needs

Funds may be needed for a variety of opportunities. Financial needs may be needed to complete a project or may offset other funding that would have been otherwise utilized for the project. When beginning a project and setting a budget, work with the project team and the Public Communications Coordinator to set a funding goal. This could be for 100% of the project cost, 100% of different project components, or general project support. Understanding what fund will accept and expend the donations will also be critical for the administration of the raised funds.



Volunteer Needs

Each opportunity will have the volunteer need identified along a continuum. Planners think of both traditional and non-traditional volunteer engagement opportunities as the ability to use volunteers also helps strengthen relationships with volunteers and volunteering agencies. Some volunteer opportunities need a high degree of knowledge or skill, whereas other opportunities are suitable for a diverse set of volunteers with differing abilities.

- High Need. Volunteers are needed to ensure the opportunity is successful and will not be able to move forward without volunteer assistance.
- Medium Need. The opportunity will occur faster or to a larger scope with the assistance of volunteer time.
- Low Need. The opportunity will proceed with or without volunteer efforts but volunteers may allow staff to focus on different tasks.
- No Need. The project is specialized and volunteer efforts cannot be utilized.

When developing a project that has an ability to utilize volunteers it is important to identify the tasks and the size of the volunteer groups that can be utilized. It is also important to understand if the volunteers need any specific skills or abilities to be successful. Some examples of different volunteers may be a technical consultant, a small group to assist a carpenter with building items, or a large group to assist with natural land management. Per the Volunteer Program Workflow, any project that engages the use of volunteers will coordinate with the Parks Program Specialist.



Community Champion Needs

Some opportunities need the visible support of members in different organizations. These are key, influencing partners whose support will impact the success of the project or effort. These individuals may be leaders from Waukesha County, partner municipalities, and public or private organizations. Ensuring that these individuals are clear on the impacts of the project, have the ability to speak about the project phases and current status, and are invited to participate with the promotion of the project will be key to a successful community champion relationship. During the initial project planning phase, work with the Public Communications Coordinator to identify the Community Champion Needs of the project and then create a communications plan to keep the Community Champion engaged throughout the project.



Needs Assessment

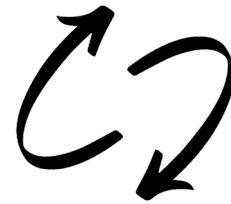
Our Needs

Waukesha County Parks and Land Use has a variety of opportunities that need support. These include both one-time need opportunities and ongoing needs opportunities.



One-time Need Opportunities

- Identified annually as part of the budget process and are maintained as a portion of this plan in Addendum 4
- Includes new buildings, new amenities, new programs, additions, upgrades or restoration projects such as tree plantings
- Examples may include:
 - Retzer's Discovery Trail project
 - STEM laboratory
 - Solar well at Mukwonago Dog Exercise Area
 - Trail additions
 - New special events



Ongoing Needs Opportunities

- Identified as reoccurring, a repair, a replacement or a phased project and are maintained as a portion of this plan in Addendum 4
- Includes annual special event support, parkland maintenance, replacement of roofs, trail upgrades
- Examples may include:
 - Science Fest
 - Parkland Conservation Fund
 - Leave Your Mark Boardwalk
 - Drinking fountain upgrades to include bottle fillers

A group of people are gathered in a grassy field under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a young girl with long brown hair is looking towards the center. Behind her, another girl wearing a white baseball cap and a blue and green patterned top is holding a small, brown snake. To the right, a person wearing a blue polo shirt and a tan bucket hat is looking down. In the background, a woman with long dark hair and sunglasses is visible. The scene appears to be an outdoor educational activity.

Partners & Sponsors



Partner Map

Partners and partner organizations will be added to the Department’s Partner Map to ensure alignment and compatibility, as well as to record implementation and success. Partners and partner organizations will be viewed through a several lenses to identify potential “best fit” partners to engage on various opportunities.





Communications Plan

Communications With Our Partners

Communication is a key component of success for all partnerships. A unique communication plan will be developed for each project by the Public Communications Coordinator.

Discovery

- Project and/or volunteer opportunities explored for best fits

Agreements Completed

- All parties agree on commitments and complete necessary agreements

Onboarding

- Sponsors and/or partners onboarded to establish communication milestones

Ongoing Updates

- Identify primary relationship managers
- Milestones status updates throughout project

Completion Celebration

- Project completion and celebration
- Post project evaluation

Volunteers





Philosophy & Framework

Waukesha County's Department of Parks and Land Use's volunteer program provides many opportunities for individuals and organizations to enhance their knowledge and skills, gain rewarding experiences, and ultimately assist in supporting our vision to promote environmental stewardship. It is a needs-based program that aims to prioritize mutually beneficial experiences that match volunteer capacity with projects that build capacity within the park system.

It is the goal of the Department to recruit, train, and retain high level volunteers and volunteer groups so that the maximum benefit may be realized to both the Department and volunteer.

To ensure a mutually beneficial experience, the Department has a catalog of various opportunities that align with Department needs. This specific list aims to identify the size and scope of the opportunities to match with different interests and abilities.

Volunteer opportunity identification occurs through the Needs Identification process, previously outlined in coordination with other annual planning efforts. The Volunteer Coordinator will then utilize the list to match appropriate opportunities with groups that request volunteer opportunities.

Volunteer groups will share information that will help match the group with the most impactful opportunity. This information includes group size, age, skill level, preferred time commitment, recurrence of commitment, and preferred geographic location.

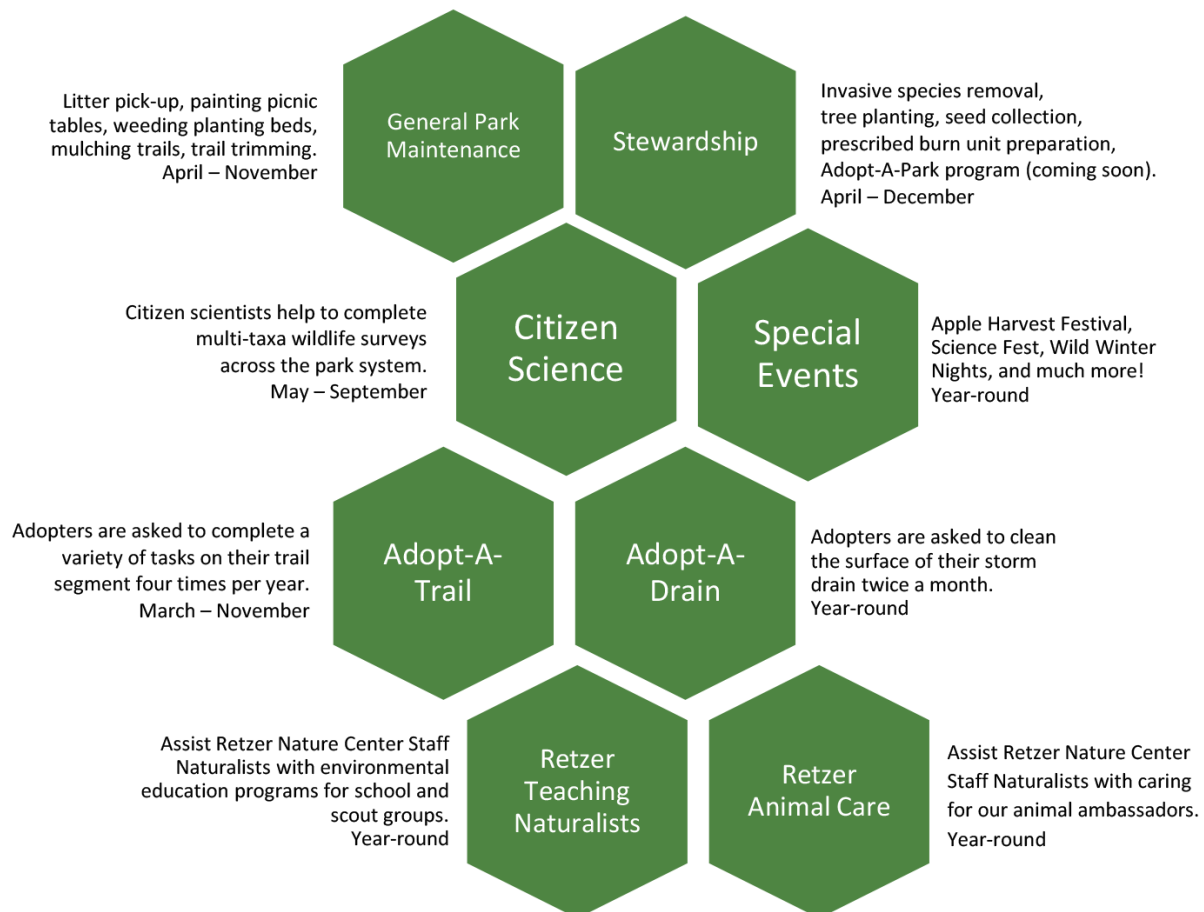


Assessing Opportunities

Current Opportunities

The Volunteer Coordinator will work with staff to maintain an ongoing list of volunteer needs. While the initial plan will be developed through the project planning process, ongoing park maintenance needs will become available throughout the year.

These opportunities will be identified at the park foreman meetings. The Volunteer Coordinator will then utilize the list to match appropriate opportunities with groups that request volunteer opportunities.





Legal Aspects

Waviers

Volunteer Participants need to sign a Participant waiver (Under 18 yrs. Need a Minor Liability Waiver). This is typically done online when registering for a volunteer event or program.

SAMPLE WAVIER:

I, and/or a member of my family, will be participating in an activity or program sponsored by Waukesha County. Activities and programs are listed in the Waukesha County Environmental Education Guides (Public and/or School). I understand that the Guides are available online or a copy may be obtained at the Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use.

I understand that there are certain dangers inherent in these activities and programs, which include but are not limited to, drowning, broken bones, sprains or other injury, animal/insect bites, skin irritation or rash, puncture wounds, sunburn and actions of other people. I understand the dangers and risks that are inherent in these activities and programs, acknowledge that participation is voluntary and I/we knowingly assume all risks.

In consideration of being allowed to participate, I, and/or my family member, individually and for all others who may make a claim, accept the risks and waive, release and forever discharge Waukesha County and all of its officials, officers, employees, departments and boards from all claims, demands, causes of action, and suits including any liability for any physical injury, death, damage or loss whatsoever that may occur.

I understand that the purpose and intent of this Waiver and Release is to prevent me and/or my family member from recovering any money from Waukesha County, its officials, officers, employees, departments and boards for any physical injury, death, damage or loss suffered while participating in the activities or programs. I understand that by agreeing to this, I am releasing all claims for myself and/or my family member, and giving up substantial rights.



Volunteer Survey

Engagement Survey

The Department Volunteer Engagement Survey is distributed annually to the ongoing, regular volunteer roster and directly to special event volunteer projects (e.g. corporate volunteer workday).

The survey aims to measure the volunteer's overall satisfaction with the onboarding and training process, coordination of project logistics, communication with Department staff, and whether or not the volunteer would recommend volunteering with Waukesha County to others.

The results of the survey will be utilized to identify potential continuous improvement projects for the Department Volunteer Program and overall workflow process. The goal is to have an engagement rating of 4 out of 5.

**Overall
Volunteer
Experience
Rating of**

4.60/5 STARS



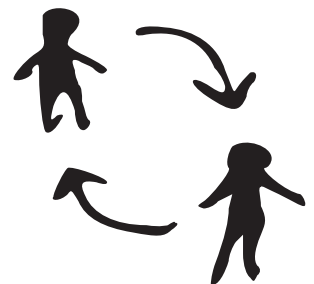
100%

would

**RECOMMEND
our volunteer
program to
a friend or
colleague!**

90%

**VOLUNTEERED
with Waukesha
County Parks
and Land Use
BEFORE!**



A monarch butterfly with vibrant orange wings and black borders with white spots is perched on a cluster of purple asters with yellow centers. The background is a lush green field of similar flowers and trees, slightly out of focus.

Celebration & Recognition



Recognition

Your Recognition

Celebrating and recognizing partners is key to a positive engagement experience. The Department appreciates partner relationships and seeks to recognize and celebrate all levels of support from partners and volunteers.

There are many opportunities for recognition and the Department will work to align these acknowledgments to be meaningful based on partner preferences and project needs. Recognition and celebration will be identified and customized as part of Partner Onboarding and the Communications Plan.



Definitions



Definitions

Definitions

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Partners | Individuals or organizations that engage in an opportunity with the Department along the Engagement Spectrum. The term includes both Sponsors and Stakeholders. |
| Sponsors | Partners that engage in an opportunity with the Department along the Engagement Spectrum typically in the inform or include stage. These partners typically have alignment on the Partnership Map with financial and/or volunteerism goals. |
| Stakeholders | Partners that engage in an opportunity with the Department along the Engagement Spectrum. In addition to alignment on the Partnership Map with financial and/or volunteerism goals, these partners also have alignment on prioritizing customer service, collaboration, and an alignment of mission. |
| Department | Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use. |
| Partnership Map | A series of areas of alignment the Department has with a Partner. |
| Partner Experience | Any opportunity to engage a partner along the Engagement Spectrum. It may be a project, a special event, or other opportunity. |
| Engagement Spectrum | Adapted from the National Recreation and Park Association, the Engagement Spectrum helps clarify the opportunity for partners to be involved in a Partner Experience. The stages include Inform, Include, Collaborate, and Empower. |
| Inform | The first stage along the Engagement Spectrum is when partners are aware of a Partner Experience but there is not an opportunity for active engagement. |
| Include | The second stage along the Engagement Spectrum is when the Department works to get feedback and involvement from partner(s) on a specific aspect of an engagement opportunity. |
| Collaborate | The third stage along the Engagement Spectrum is when there is an opportunity to engage partners in multiple phases of an engagement opportunity, including the planning phase. |
| Empower | The final stage along the Engagement Spectrum is when final decisions in the engagement opportunity are made by consensus between the Partner and the Department. |



Definitions

Definitions (Volunteer Opportunity Types)

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| General Park Maintenance | Litter pick-up, painting picnic tables, weeding planting beds, mulching trails, trail trimming, and other park needs. |
| Stewardship | Invasive species removal, tree planting, seed collection, prescribed burn unit preparation. |
| Citizen Science | Citizen scientists help to complete multi-taxa wildlife surveys across the park system. |
| Adopt-A-Trail Program | Adopters are asked to complete a variety of tasks on their trail segment four times per year including litter pick-up, painting signs and benches, weed control, and vegetation trimming. |
| Adopt-A-Drain Program | Adopters are asked to clean the surface of their storm drain twice a month and report the quantity and composition of debris removed. |
| Special Events | Apple Harvest Festival, Science Fest, Wild Winter Nights, and much more! |
| Retzer Teaching Naturalists | Assist Retzer Nature Center Staff Naturalists with environmental education programs for school and scout groups. |
| Retzer Animal Care | Assist Retzer Nature Center Staff Naturalists with caring for our animal ambassadors. |
| Administration | Assist with administrative duties such as making copies, filing, cleaning, greeting the public, answering phone calls, etc. |



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