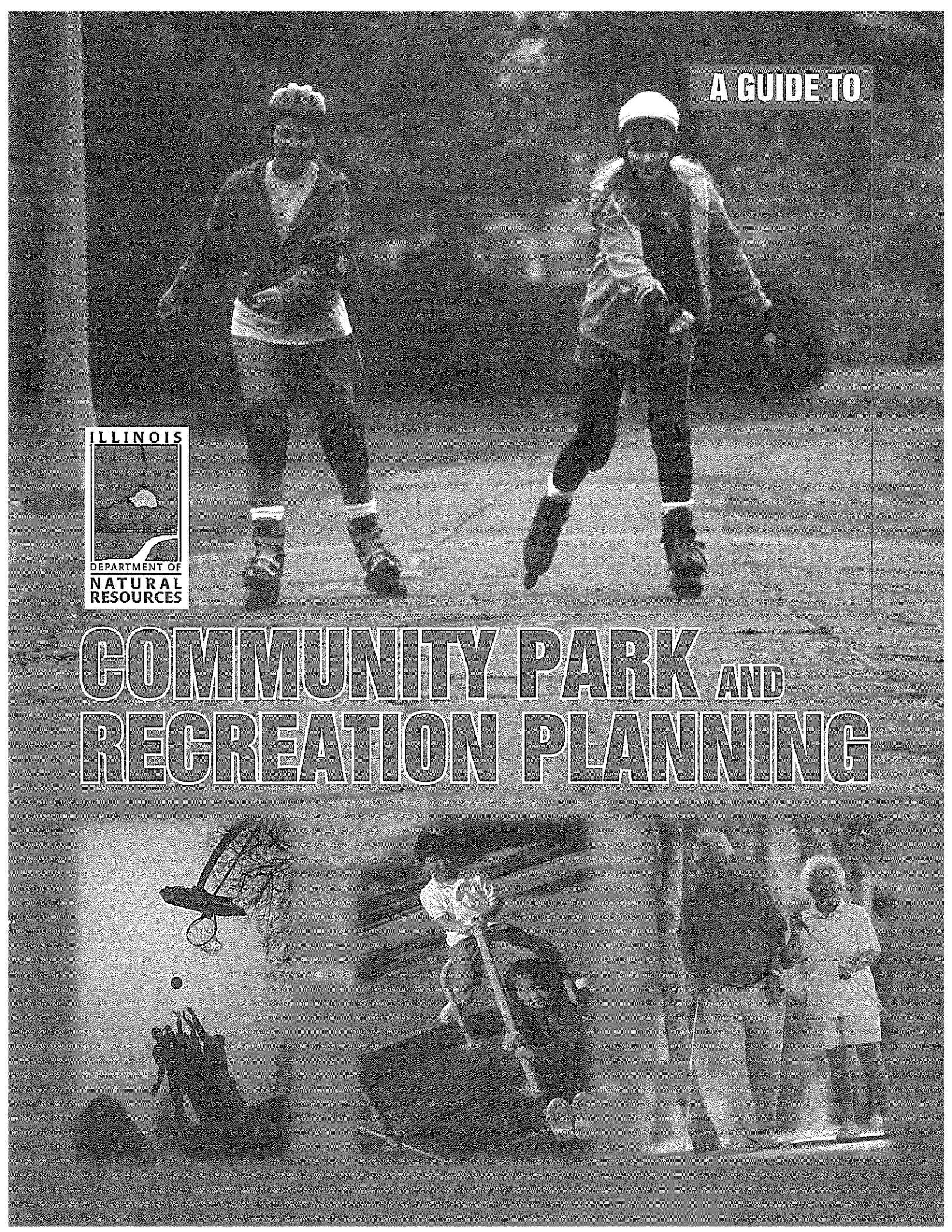


A GUIDE TO

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

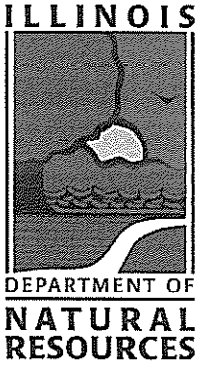
COMMUNITY PARK AND RECREATION PLANNING

A GUIDE TO

COMMUNITY PARK AND RECREATION PLANNING

FOR ILLINOIS COMMUNITIES

Second Edition



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March 2001

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The Planning Process

Why should you plan? First, understand that everyone plans. In our personal life, we plan our day's activities, the itinerary for a trip, and how to complete work assignments on time. Some of our plans are longer range such as those for sending our children to college and ensuring financial security for our retirement. **Having a plan does not ensure success, but neglecting to plan often leads to failure.** It has been said that, "Failing to plan is planning to fail."

In organizations and agencies of government the need for planning is even more important because:

- Success usually depends on the efforts of a number of individuals, working together to meet the needs of many other people, including those within the organization.
- Defining success is often complex.
- Plans usually must be longer range.
- Public bodies, answerable to voters, have special responsibilities, for example, for the wise use of public funds and to fulfill legal mandates.
- The public must be provided opportunities to provide input in the planning process and express their opinions.

For these reasons, **it is critical that all members of an agency: (1) are working toward the same outcomes and (2) agree on how to pursue these outcomes.** If an agency has not agreed on where it is going, its members are likely to find themselves working toward different goals. Even if all agree on what the agency's goals are, without agreement on how to achieve these goals, staff will again find themselves working at cross-purposes.

Developing a park and recreation plan does not have to be complicated and costly. The planning process presented is basically a common sense approach for identifying and deciding how to meet the recreation and open space needs of your community.

Planning involves:

- **looking at where a community stands today,**
- **envisioning where it wants to be tomorrow, and**
- **determining how to best move from today's situation to the desired future.**

There Are Plans, and Then There Are Plans

There are many types of plans: comprehensive, strategic, master, site, etc. Unfortunately these labels are sometimes used inconsistently, and plans are sometimes mislabeled. In many cases, plans combine aspects of more than one type of planning.

Using the planning process in this guide will result in what is usually called a community **master** plan for parks and recreation that combines aspects of both **strategic** and **comprehensive** planning methods.

A **park and recreation master plan** provides an overall framework to guide the provision of park and recreation services in a community. It should be consistent with the general plan of the community. The **general plan** is a multi-purpose community plan containing interrelated policies and actions for all major community governmental functions and responsibilities such as transportation, land use and education.

Comprehensive planning usually describes an approach to planning that is inclusive and considers, quantitatively if possible, all known factors, as well as the interrelationships among these factors, that might influence the function(s) for which the plan is developed. The resulting plans are usually long-range and general.

Strategic planning emphasizes developing a vision of a future condition the planning jurisdiction wants to achieve and determining specifically what strategies will be used to achieve this envisioned future. Strategic plans tend to be less quantitative, more focused and action-oriented and have shorter time horizons.

Fortunately, these distinctions are not critical to developing your plan. This guide refers simply to "a park and recreation plan" to avoid confusion.

When the decision has been made to develop a park and recreation plan, the following initial tasks need to be accomplished:

1. **The local village council or park board should adopt a formal resolution calling for and supporting the planning process** (See Form 1.). The resolution will demonstrate to the community that the governing body is committed to the park and recreation planning effort and that it accepts its role in future plan implementation.

2. **A park and recreation planning team, including at least one member from the governing body, should be officially appointed to develop the plan.** The planning team will collect and analyze information, involve the public in the planning process, develop the major elements of the plan itself and present the plan to the public for review and the governing body for consideration and official adoption.

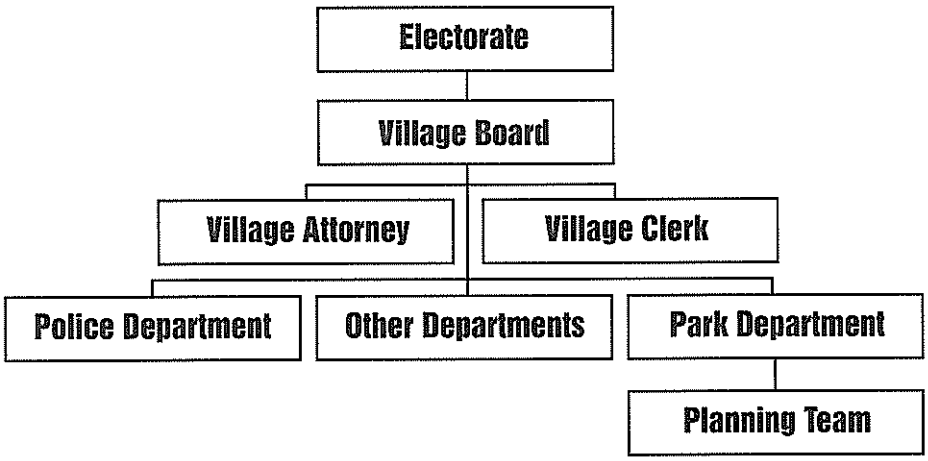
   The planning team should include members from those community organizations and interests that will be most affected by the plan's recommendations and whose support will be necessary to implement the plan. Team members must have the time, commitment and ability to stay with the planning process from start to finish. They should be familiar with the community and its parks and recreation system and represent a cross-section of the community: business, civic and educational leaders as well as members of the general public. Residents that have a personal interest in local park and recreation opportunities, such as those with young children or children active in sports, members of the disabled community and seniors are often well suited for this responsibility.

   In order to maintain the planning team at a workable size of about 15 members, it will be necessary to distinguish between those community interests who will be represented on the team and those whose input can be gained through the public participation process. Community members who have special expertise in planning, natural resources management or other areas relevant to plan development can be asked to participate as non-voting advisors to the team.

3. **A brief description of the role and responsibilities of the planning team, i.e., a "job description" for planning team members should be prepared.** For example, clarify that the team will recommend a plan to the governing body, not adopt the plan themselves. Specify the level of commitment expected of team members so that those invited will be able to determine if they are able and willing to participate fully. (How the team members will interact with each other to carry out their business usually can be left for the team themselves to determine at their first meeting. See Step 1.)

4. **Background material, which will be useful to planning team members in developing a common base of community knowledge relevant to the plan, should be assembled.** For example, this material might include:

   - Descriptions of the community's present park and recreation areas, facilities and staff, as well as the current park and recreation budget.
   - Information on the community, its residents and population trends
   - Organizational chart that displays the governmental structure of your community and clarifies where the responsibility for parks and recreation lies in relationship to other government functions.



   - Existing community park and recreation plans and statements of community park and recreation mission and goals.
   - Park and recreation plans from communities like yours.
   - This planning guide.

Be selective and present information as concisely as possible, perhaps annotating it and supplementing it with briefings at initial team meetings and as needed.

With the planning team formed, legitimized by ordinance and briefed, the team is now ready to begin meeting and preparing the park and recreation plan. The following material provides a step-by-step process that can be used as presented or adapted to develop the plan.

STEPS IN PREPARING A COMMUNITY PARK AND RECREATION PLAN

Step 1: Organize the Planning Team.

The planning team's first task is to organize itself. The team needs to:

1. **Select a Chairperson** (unless the governing body wishes to assign this responsibility) to conduct team meetings and direct team activities. This election may be left for a later meeting if team members do not yet know each other with someone designated to serve as interim chairperson.

   It may also be desirable to obtain the help of a person with experience in conducting group problem-solving meetings to serve as a non-voting team facilitator. A facilitator can neutrally guide discussion, allowing the chairperson to participate more in the substance of team discussions.

2. **Select someone to take notes, keep a record of group decisions, and prepare and disseminate team products.** If the team has a facilitator, this is often part of their responsibilities. Otherwise a team member may be willing to do this, or the convening body or a team member may be able to supply a member of their staff for this purpose.

   However the team decides to divide, distribute and carry out their responsibilities, the team must recognize that certain needs for effective and efficient team functioning exist and must be met.

3. **Agree on "ground rules"** to enable the team to interact in a productive, non-confrontational manner. Some ground rules are obvious, e. g., no side conversations, only one person talks at a time and only when recognized by the facilitator or chair. Other rules may be more difficult to decide on, such as whether a member can send a substitute when they can not attend a meeting and whether the team will make decisions by consensus or majority vote.

   One rule that most well-functioning working teams adopt is that **members may vigorously criticize ideas, but not other team members personally.** It is just as easy, and definitely more conducive to team functioning, to say, "I disagree with that suggestion," than to state, "That's the dumbest idea I've heard today." Getting personal is unnecessary and can quickly disrupt a team.

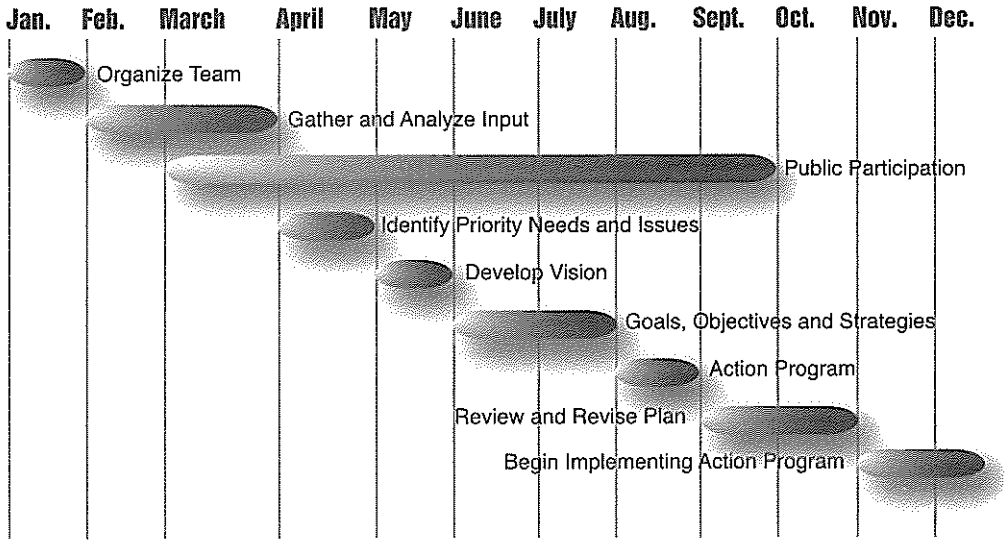
   Letting the team set its own rules encourages members to follow them.

Step 2: Agree on a Planning Process and Schedule.

1. **Agree on a planning process,** either the one described in this guide, some adaptation of it, or some other process the team is confident will effectively produce the type of plan they need. As part of the planning process, consider where in the process public input will occur and what type of input is needed at these points. (See Step 3.)

2. **Agree on a time schedule for the plan** based on the planning process. Identify any external dates, e.g., grant application deadlines, that may affect the schedule. Consideration of the schedule may prompt revisions in the planning process until some balance is reached between the type of planning process used and the time and effort required from team members for plan completion.

A chart such as the one below helps display the schedule.



It is important to understand that the planning process may be lengthy, taking six months to a year with the time needed varying among communities. A realistic time schedule should be established early in the process. How fast you can proceed will depend upon the level of commitment of those participating in the planning and how well they are able to balance the demands of the planning process with their other responsibilities. **Important challenges that need to be considered and met include (1) stimulating and maintaining participant interest and (2) making participation as easy and efficient as possible.**

Step 3: Develop a Public Participation Strategy.

To improve the quality of the plan and to ensure its widest acceptance, it is important that local citizens have the opportunity to participate in the planning process and that citizen input is responded to and incorporated into the plan.

Some **key points to consider** regarding public participation in the planning process include:

- The members of the planning team may write an excellent community park and recreation plan. However, **in order for the plan to be implemented, it must be supported by the community and especially the community's leaders and elected officials.** Consider arranging special meetings to obtain input from key civic groups and individuals, either collectively or in individual interviews. Forms 2 and 3 provide examples of questionnaires that can be used for interviews with community leaders and park district commissioners or other elected officials responsible for park and recreation services.

- The support necessary for implementation will not occur unless citizens believe that they have had a real opportunity to make their needs and desires known and that **the planning team took the public input seriously in developing the plan.** Form 4 is an example of a questionnaire that can be used in conjunction with a public meeting.

- The public participation strategy provides an opportunity to inform and involve residents in their community's parks and recreation services now and as they could be in the future. **An aggressive and effective public participation strategy can mobilize active community support for the plan and its implementation.** This can be the most beneficial part of the entire planning process.

- Use media coverage (newspaper, radio, and television) to broaden interest in the plan.

- Involve the park and recreation agency's own employees.

- Different methods of obtaining public input may be more useful for some purposes than others at certain points in the planning process. Different methods may reach different segments of the community.

  For example, consider:
  - Surveys conducted by mail, telephone or newspaper to collect broad citizen input.
  - Workshops to generate ideas.
  - Personal interviews with key community members and/or elected officials.
  - Structured small groups to resolve conflict.
  - Public meetings to obtain community input and accept comments on drafts of the plan.

- Everyone must be given the opportunity to say whatever he or she wants. However, **asking the public to respond to specific questions can often result in more useful input.**

- Be open to criticism as well as praise.

The strategy used to obtain public review and input should be fully described in the plan, usually in an appendix. The following information should be included:

1. A description of the strategy and the specific methods used to obtain public input, e.g., public meeting, questionnaire, phone survey, with samples of the forms or questionnaires used.
2. The number of persons that provided input, e.g., the number surveyed and the number who responded, the number invited to and the number in attendance and speaking at meetings.
3. The dates and locations of meetings and/or surveys.
4. A summary of the input received.
5 The planning team's analysis and evaluation of the content of the input and how the input was responded to, e.g., how the plan was changed to reflect input, suggestions not taken with the reason given.

Step 4: Collect and Display Basic Information.

Local, county or state agencies or planning departments and commissions for your jurisdiction may have already collected some of the basic information you need.

1. Inventory Existing Recreation Sites and Facilities.

A logical starting point for planning is to determine what recreation sites and facilities are now available to community residents. Using a separate Form 5, or a similar form, **for each park and recreation site within the community, inventory the types and amount of facilities and activities provided at the site.** The inventory should also include schools, church properties, and civic and

private recreation areas available to the public, as well as those parks that may be outside the community but are commonly used by your residents.

Take the park and recreation facility information gathered on the individual Form 5's for each **public** sites and compile it using Form 6. Then do the same thing for all the **private** sites inventoried using another copy of Form 6. Then total the public and private inventory for a **total community inventory** of available recreation sites and parks. (Place the totals for the public and private sites in the first two columns of a new Form 6 and use the Total column for the total recreation facilities in the community.) These tables provide convenient overall summaries of existing park and recreation resources in your community.

An evaluation of the accessibility of existing parks and recreation facilities to the disabled is an important and necessary part of the site and community inventories. **All communities are required by federal and state law to address accessibility considerations for sites and facilities within their jurisdiction** and to include individuals with disabilities in their self-evaluation assessment (See Appendix A.). At a minimum, sites should be evaluated using the basic accessibility concepts outlined on Form 7, Accessibility Checklist.

2. **Collect Resource Information.**

Important natural and cultural resources in your community should be identified. These include streams and their corridors, prairie remnants, forests, wildlife habitat, wetlands and historic and archeological sites. (Information on the location of these resources may be available from the IDNR's Division of Resource Review and Coordination.)[1]

Knowledge of these resources helps identify natural and historic settings that may be potential sites for community parks. It is also important information needed to prevent the unnecessary and perhaps illegal damage of important resources protected by law when developing recreation facilities.

Some of these identified resources may be unique to the community, region or even the state. If so, consider protecting these resources as a public park with public access provided in a manner compatible with protecting and enhancing the resources. Examples include a wetland with walking paths and a viewing stand for wildlife observation and a historic home restored to provide offices for park staff and to house a museum of community history. **By incorporating protection of a community's special resources and places in its mission, a local park and recreation agency can gain broader community support for its overall mission, while helping preserve those assets that make the community unique.**

3. **Display Important Information on Maps.**

To assist in planning, a good map of your community (jurisdiction) showing the location of existing and planned parks and other important features, including natural and cultural resources should be developed (See Appendix B.). A legible street/road map can be used for the base. (Communities that do not have a good quality street map, may obtain such maps from the district or Springfield offices of the Illinois Department of Transportation.)[2]

[1]Contact the IDNR's Division of Ecosystems and Environment, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, 217-785-5500
[2]Contact IDOT at 2300 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, Illinois 62764. Telephone: 217-782-6953.

4. **Collect Population Information.**

   Use Form 8 to collect basic socio-economic and population information for your community. Evaluation of census information from 1970 through 2000, as well as any additional information on recent developments that may affect population trends, will enable the planning team to forecast possible future population trends and estimate future recreation needs. Some of this information may be available from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' Website, www.commerce.state.il.us.

5. **Consider Any Existing Community Plans.**

   The planning process should include a review of all existing park and recreation plans, as well as other adopted community plans, for example, community general plans and plans for other government functions such as transportation, which might affect the provision of park and recreation services.

Step 5: Identify Needs and Issues.

1. **Needs**

   One of the more challenging aspects of park and recreation planning is determining how much open space or parkland and the types and quantities of recreation facilities a community needs. Unfortunately no valid method exists for making such determinations in a precise, quantitative manner. Information does exist however that can help your community draw reasonable conclusions about your needs.

   The IDNR has collected information on the average number of recreation facilities that exist in Illinois for each thousand residents (See Appendix C.). The Department has also collected information on how often Illinois residents participate in various types of outdoor recreation activities (See Appendix D.).

   The supply information that was collected in Step 4 can be used to **calculate the current number of community recreation facilities for each thousand residents in your community.** Using projected population in ten years rather than existing population may provide more useful averages for planning purposes, especially for growing communities.

   The per capita supply calculated for your community can then be compared to the statewide figures in Appendix C. Deficits, especially when they occur for facilities that provide opportunities for popular activities with high participation rates (as indicated in Appendix D) may indicate community needs.

   For example, this analysis may disclose that a community, call it Pleasant Town, which expects to grow from 3,000 to 3,500 residents in the next ten years, has:
   - No outdoor swimming pool.
   - One softball and baseball field (about half of the statewide average for communities of Pleasant Town's size).
   - Two playgrounds (below the statewide average).

Of course, communities vary in their outdoor recreation interests and population trends. Experience with your community and how its residents differ from those of other communities in Illinois will help you make informed decisions about needs suggested by this type of analysis. However, be aware that **research indicates that community recreation interests may reflect to a large extent what facilities are currently available to residents. That is, if facilities exist for some types of recreation, but not for other types, residents may express wishes for even more facilities of the type already present simply because they have not had the opportunity to experience the other, unsupplied or under-supplied types of recreation.**

2. **Issues**

Because of the uncertainties in interpreting numerical supply and participation data to draw conclusions about recreation needs, **recreation planners have found it useful to supplement numerically based types of need information with information collected more directly from the community's residents.** This type of information can be obtained through the public input strategy discussed in Step 3. It may be based on the results of a survey of the public and/or community leaders and statements made at a public meeting about what residents want and think their community needs.

The results of such input usually do not lend themselves to numerical analysis beyond counting and averaging, but may provide important information. "Needs" identified this way are often referred to as issues. These issues include concerns and potential opportunities and challenges to which residents believe the community should respond.

Issues are usually simply recorded. For example, for Pleasant Town, some issues identified were:

- Save the historic Jones farmstead and grounds.
- We need an organized softball league.
- Clean up the riverbank downtown and use it for recreation.
- Develop a bicycle and jogging trail.
- More programs for teenagers are needed.

Other issues or concerns may derive from the planning team's analysis of community facilities and resources. For example, Pleasant Town's planning team discovered that:

- Facilities in City Park were run down and not useable by disabled residents.
- The Illinois Natural Areas Inventory identified a prairie remnant that is threatened by growth on the east side of town
- The abandoned railroad through town intersects a State Trail being constructed by IDNR three miles from town.
- There were complaints that teens were rollerblading in areas not constructed for this purpose.

Step 6: Focus on the Highest Priority Needs and Issues.

The planning team should use the information provided by: (1) comparing supply and participation information to identify needs and (2) issues identified through public participation and other means to identify the most important community park and recreation needs and issues.

The planning team should then focus the plan on addressing this limited number (often less than ten, rarely more than twenty) of the highest priority items. The planning team has to exercise its judgement in extracting what it believes are the most important community needs and issues form the information it has collected. Focusing the plan this way will also help efforts to implement the plan.

The needs and issues selected will probably not fully satisfy everyone in the community or even all members of the planning team. However, there should be enough scope and diversity in the items chosen that most residents will find something in the plan that is important to them and stimulates them to support the plan.

These needs/issues might include:

- More open space
- More opportunities for a particular type of recreation
- More accessible facilities better distributed throughout the community
- Protection of special community resources
- Rehabilitation of existing areas and facilities
- New and expanded recreation programs

A relatively simple policy change or administrative action may address some items. Other items, probably most, will be more difficult to address and may require funding not yet in place. The planning team might decide that some items are not immediately addressable for reasons such as lack of authority or funds. However, **if an issue is important to the public, the planning team should hesitate before excluding it.** It may be more advisable to include the issue in the planning process in the hope that some practical way of at least beginning to address it may be identified. Conditions change and it is always prudent to lay some groundwork for the future. New opportunities might arise later to more fully address important but difficult issues or needs.

A method the planning team can use to select the most important needs and issues for the plan is described in Appendix E.

Step 7: Develop a Vision.

By this step in the planning process, the planning team will have collected and evaluated much information about the community and its parks and recreation services. Citizens of the community will have been heard from. The team will have analyzed, thought about and discussed this input in identifying the most important planning issues.

Now is the time for the planning team to develop a vision of the kind of parks and recreation services their community should have in ten years (or whatever period is chosen for the plan). **The vision should excite and inspire the community's residents. However, the planning team should try to achieve a balance between a vision that is ambitious and exciting and one that is realistic and achievable.** Attaining the vision may require hard work and commitment from the community and its leaders, but it must not be seen as unreasonable and unattainable or the vision and the plan to achieve it will be rejected.

The statement of the vision should focus on the highest priority parks and recreation needs and concerns of the community. Where does the planning team envision the community will stand with respect to these concerns in ten years? What will be the effect on the community and its residents? What will your community look like to its residents and visitors? Describe a future that community members will be able to visualize. A sample vision statement is given in Appendix F.

The members of the planning team and the community must share the vision. Asking for public comment on the vision statement to determine whether it accurately reflects the aspirations of the community is recommended at this point.

Step 8: Formulate Goals and Objectives.

1. **Goals**

Goals embody the outcomes that will need to occur in order for the community to achieve its vision. Goals are written as broad statements of long-range aspirations that set overall direction for the community.

Goals may be stated in general, broad-brush terms that identify what the community should be or what the community should look like. However, goals should be measurable at least in principle. For example, "To make Pleasant Town a better place to live" is too general. "To provide Pleasant Town's residents with increased and improved opportunities for popular recreation opportunities" is more specific, measurable in principle and thus preferred. Most plans focus on ten or fewer broad goals.

Other goal statements for Pleasant Town might include:

- To provide more open space for recreation purposes.
- To rehabilitate existing recreation facilities and make them accessible to all residents.
- To provide close-to-home playgrounds for all children in the community.
- To provide recreation programs for all segments of the community.

The plan's goals should be linked to the community's highest priority needs and issues and the elements of your vision statement. Goals can be generated by asking what will have to be achieved in order to realize (the elements of) the vision statement and address the community's highest priority needs and issues?

2. **Objectives**

Objectives are statements of outcomes that must be accomplished to enable the community to fully achieve a goal. **Objectives are more specific than goals and must be actually measurable.** Usually each broad goal will have more than one objective. It may be necessary to limit the number of objectives for each goal. Identifying only the most important ones helps the plan retain its focus.

For example, in order for Pleasant Town to achieve the first goal above, "To provide more open space for recreation purposes", several objectives might need to be met, including:

- Acquire and develop a new community park.
- Develop two new playgrounds.

The planning team may decide to accelerate this phase of plan development by dividing the work yet to be done. Subteams of the planning team can be formed with each responsible for one or two goals. The subteams can formulate objectives (and later strategies and actions) for review by the entire planning team.

The process described in Appendix E can be used again, here to generate objectives for each goal.

Step 9: Identify Strategies.

When the objectives for each goal have been identified, the planning team will have identified what must occur for the vision to be realized. Now the team must focus on how each objective will be accomplished. That is, what strategy or strategies should be used to accomplish each objective?

The strategies may be both short and long-term. They may be relatively easy to accomplish or require much effort. For the objective, "Acquire and develop a new community park." some examples of strategies might include:

- Identify and assess potential sites for a new community park.
- Analyze potential funding sources for the new park.

The What and How of Planning

One of the challenges that face any planning team is distinguishing between the "building blocks" of a plan: goals, objectives, strategies and actions. Sometimes in practice the distinctions among these are fine, perhaps even insignificant in the larger scheme of the plan. The most important thing is that you first decide on ***WHAT*** **YOU ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE** (vision, goals and objectives) and then determine ***HOW*** **YOU PROPOSE TO ACHIEVE THESE THINGS** (strategies and actions).

The process described in this guide is designed to systematically step down from a more general vision statement to more specific statements of **what** needs to be accomplished (goals and objectives). Then identifying **how** these objectives will be achieved is done by similarly stepping down from more general strategies to very specific actions.

The essential elements of any plan are the two end points of the process: the **vision** of **what** you want to occur in the future and the specific **actions** that describe **how** the vision will be achieved. If the intermediate steps and terminology confuse the planning team, instead of making it easier to move from vision to actions, consider omitting one or more of the steps.

In the extreme, if the elements of your vision are clearly laid out in specific terms in the vision statement, the planning team may be able to proceed directly from the vision to generating specific actions to achieve the vision. However, the reasoning behind actions that the full planning process makes more systematic and explicit may be lost, and the plan may become more difficult to develop and less understandable to its readers. This can be addressed to some extent by providing brief narrative paragraphs for each goal or element of the vision statement that explain the planning team's approach to the item and rationale for actions.

Remember this planning process is just one way to plan that can be adapted as necessary to better fit your situation.

Step 10: Prioritize Strategies and Develop an Action Program.

Since each goal can have more than one objective and each objective more than one strategy, strategies can multiply. For example, a plan with eight goals, each with four objectives, each of which has three strategies will have 8 X 4 X 3 = 96 total strategies. Even if the planning team places limits on the number of objectives per goal and the number of strategies per objective, a large number of strategies can result. The resulting plan may be discouraging in its long list of things that need to be done.

When the plan results in more things to do than can be realistically accomplished within a single, relatively short time frame, the planning team should prioritize. Choose a limited number of strategies, perhaps ten, and develop an action program that specifies exactly what actions are expected to occur in the first year or two of implementation, i.e., who is expected to do what by when.

The planning team should consider choosing strategies for the action program that:

- **Can begin to be implemented at once** and whose accomplishment will substantially help achieve important objectives.
- **Allow results to be seen by the public in the first year of plan implementation.**
- Allow progress to be made toward each of the plan's goals.
- Provide benefits to as many segments of the community as possible.
- Generate excitement, enthusiasm and involvement in the community's park and recreation future.
- Involve both acquisition and development of land for parks, as well as renovation of existing facilities.
- Contain actions that can both be carried out with existing funding and depend on generating new funds.
- Address high priority organizational needs, e.g., staff and funding, in a way that will not be seen as self-serving.

Make sure that each action is stated in specific enough terms that it will be clear when it is accomplished. Avoid actions that call for "more of" something. Specify "how much more" or "how many." Be specific about who is responsible for leading the activities to accomplish this action item. An action may require the contributions of several or even many, persons or organizations to complete. However, **in order to establish accountability, some specific person or entity should be held responsible for carrying out the action.**

Establish reasonable but specific deadlines. Questions relating to responsibility and time frames for actions are often negotiated with those primarily responsible for implementation during the final drafting of the plan. For example, actions related to Pleasant Town's new park might include:

- The Village will identify potential park sites in Pleasant Town by September 1, 200-.
- The Pleasant Town City Council will appoint a New Park Task Force by May 1, 200-. The task Force will first identify potential funding sources and develop alternative funding strategies for acquisition and development of the new park. The Task Force will consider grant programs, community fund-raising, facility sponsorship and imposing an open space impact fee for new development.

Some communities find it most useful to prepare an annual action program, coordinated with the community's budget cycle. Annual action program development can also be coordinated with assessing progress in plan implementation, as well as reexamining the plan in view of changing conditions.

How items will be funded will be an important consideration in implementing the plan and the action programs developed from it. In preparing an action program, the cost of actions should be estimated and potential funding sources recommended.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources urges you to familiarize yourself with the grant programs it administers described in Appendix G. Participation in these programs has significantly helped Illinois' communities implement their plans and realize their visions for the park and recreation future of their communities.

Length Is Not Necessarily A Strength

As the planning team writes the plan, it is important to keep in mind that the plan is intended to be a persuasive document. Prepare a plan that when read will interest, and hopefully excite, the reader to support it and work for the plan's implementation.

If the plan is long, unattractive or otherwise difficult to read, the plan's intentions for readership, let alone persuasion and implementation, will not be realized.

Therefore, keep your plan as brief and focused as possible. Place less important and the more detailed material in appendices, or if lengthy, in a companion publication. Always keep in mind who your primary audience is and write for them. Remember the most important readers to persuade may also be the busiest.

Make the plan look so interesting that people want to pick it up and read it. Make it as easy as possible for them to read the plan and focus on its most important aspects. Prepare a short executive summary of the plan if necessary. If help in preparing an attractive publication through utilizing a professional for layout and graphics is available, use it.

Follow-up

1. Resolution to Adopt the Plan

When the plan is completed, it should be presented to the governing council or board for formal approval. (See Form 9.) Upon approval, the plan becomes the official park and recreation plan of the community. Approval indicates to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and other potential funding agencies that the community's elected officials are committed to the plan and its implementation.

2. Plan Implementation

The momentum for plan implementation will be greatest immediately after the plan's completion and official approval. Therefore, it is important that the plan's initial action program be immediately prepared and vigorously pursued.

If the results of implementing the plan are visible to the public, especially where they constitute actual improvements in recreation opportunity for residents, momentum for implementation will increase. **If little appears to be occurring after the plan is completed, the plan soon will begin to lose credibility and support.**

An excellent way to begin implementation is to submit an application to IDNR for grant assistance from one or more of the programs described in Appendix G to help fund an action (or actions) in the plan's action program.

3. Plan Updating

Communities and their park and recreation needs and issues change. As a consequence, **park and recreation plans should be annually evaluated and updated at least every five years.** The initial plan can itself acknowledge the need for updating and even recommend a mechanism for the updating to occur. One possible mechanism, discussed in Step 10, is to coordinate reexamination and updating of the plan with annual action program development.

Many park and recreation agencies elicit feedback from their park users, as well as non-users, on a regular basis to identify service issues and emerging needs that should be addressed in plan updating.

Sources of Planning Information and Assistance

As indicated previously, much of the information needed to develop a community park and recreation plan may have already been collected by other local, county, regional and state agencies. Some of these agencies and organizations may also be willing to supply technical assistance in planning, data collection and analysis, meeting facilitation, plan publication and various aspects of the plan. In some cases, it may be helpful to make representatives of agencies who have needed capabilities members of or advisors to your planning team.

In addition to those sources already mentioned in the text, such as various divisions of IDNR and offices of IDOT, potential sources of planning information and assistance include:

- Regional Planning Commissions
- County and municipal planning departments
- Planning consultants
- United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Conservation Service
- Illinois Cooperative Extension Service
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- Illinois Association of Park Districts
- Park and recreation agencies of neighboring communities
- Office of Recreation and Tourism Development, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
- Colleges and universities
- U. S. Census Bureau

Information on most of these organizations can be obtained through the Internet.

Checklist for the Planning Process

- ❑ Board or Council Resolution Supporting Planning Effort Passed
- ❑ Planning Team Appointed
- ❑ Description of Roles and Responsibilities of Planning Team Prepared
- ❑ Background Material for Planning Team Assembled

- ❑ Planning Team Organized
- ❑ Chairperson Selected
- ❑ Facilitator or Secretary Selected
- ❑ Ground Rules Agreed-on

- ❑ Planning Process Approved
- ❑ Time Schedule Approved

- ❑ Public Participation Strategy Developed

- ❑ Basic Information Collected
  - ❑ Existing Recreation Sites Inventoried
  - ❑ Natural and Cultural Resources Identified

- ❑ Community Map Prepared
- ❑ Existing Plans Reviewed

- ❑ Needs and Issues Identified

- ❑ Needs and Issues Prioritized

- ❑ Vision Statement Prepared

- ❑ Goals Stated

- ❑ Objectives Formulated

- ❑ Strategies Identified

- ❑ Action Plan Developed

- ❑ Board or Council Resolution Approving Plan Passed

- ❑ Plan Implementation Underway

- ❑ Strategy for Updating Plan Identified

Resolution in Support of Planning

The following sample resolution can be used by the appropriate elective body to support the community park and recreation planning effort.

WHEREAS, the _____(Corporate Name) recognizes the importance of parks and recreation to the quality of life of the residents of _____, Illinois

WHEREAS, the need to provide quality park and recreation services for residents is recognized, and

WHEREAS, the importance of sound planning in order to effectively meet the park and recreation needs of its citizens is understood,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT
THE_____supports the preparation of a Park and Recreation Plan, to be used upon adoption by this body as its official plan for the next ____ years, to guide the provision of park and recreational services in our community.

Passed and signed this ___ day of_____,20___.

ATTEST:

_____ _____

President / Mayor Clerk / Secretary

Form 2

Interview Questions for Community Leaders

1. Are you familiar with the programs and facilities offered by the park district?

2. Do you utilize park district programs and/or facilities?

3. Do existing programs and facilities meet the needs of all age groups?

4. Should existing programs be increased? If yes, identify.

5. Should new programs be added? If yes, can you explain?

6. How can the park district best serve the recreation needs of the residents within its boundaries?

7. Do you believe the park district wisely allocates your tax dollars?

8. Do you believe park district facilities are properly maintained?

9. Would district residents support an increase in taxes or fees for:

   - increased land acquisition
   - park improvements, e.g., new restrooms, boat ramp, floral display, bikeways, playground equipment, accessibility
   - swimming pool renovation or replacement
   - new community center

10. What is the public's image of the district?

11. What are some long-range goals you recommend that the park district board consider?

Note: Communities without park districts should adapt this form to reflect their community's method of providing park and recreation services.

Source: Illinois Association of Park Districts, 2000.

Interview Questions for Park District Commissioners

1. What are your long-range goals for the park district?

2. Should programs of the district be increased or expanded? If yes, identify.

3. Should new programs be developed? If yes, explain.

4. Is the district able to meet its current and projected financial obligations?

5. Do district residents believe their tax dollars are wisely utilized and allocated?

6. What are the highest priority capital improvements needed by the district? (pool, community center, sports complex, playground equipment, restrooms)

7. Should the district acquire more land? If yes, do you have suggested locations or areas for expansion?

8. Would district residents support increases in fees?

9. Would district residents support a tax increase for capital improvements?

10. Is the district maximizing its relationship with other governmental and private agencies, e. g., city, township, county, school district, college?

11. What is the public's image of the district?

12. What are the greatest challenges facing the district in the next 5 to 10 years?

Note: Communities without park districts should adapt this form to reflect their community's method of providing park and recreation services.

Source: Illinois Association of Park Districts, 2000.

Form 4

Public Meeting Questionnaire

PLEASANT TOWN PARK DISTRICT

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

Thursday, December 9,200-
7:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m.

Questionnaire

Your input is important to this long-range planning process and to the future of your park district. We would appreciate your answering the following questions:

1. Are you familiar with programs and facilities offered by the park district? Yes__ No__
2. Do you use district programs and/or facilities? Yes__ No__
3. Do existing programs and facilities meet the needs of all age groups? Yes__ No__
4. Should existing programs be increased? If yes, identify. Yes__ No__
5. Should new programs be added? If yes, please explain. Yes__ No__
6. Do you believe the district facilities are properly maintained? Yes__ No__
7. Should the district acquire more parkland? Yes__ No__
8. Should the district make park improvements? If yes, identify:
   - ❑ new restrooms
   - ❑ new shelters
   - ❑ boat ramp
   - ❑ bikeways
   - ❑ playground equipment
   - ❑ increase accessibility for disabled
   - ❑ renovate/replace pool
   - ❑ new community center
   - ❑ other
9. What are some long-range goals that you recommend the park district board consider for the next 3 to 5 years?

10. What are the greatest challenges facing the park district in the next 3 to 5 years?

Name_____

Address_____

Thank you for your input. We will summarize the information we receive from all returned questionnaires.

Note: Communities without park districts should adapt this form to reflect their community's method of providing park and recreation services.

Source: Illinois Association of Park Districts, 2000.

Site Inventory

Park / Site Name _____ Type _____

Acreage _____ Managing Agency _____

Recreation Facility	Amount	Condition / Accessibility	Comments
Basketball-outdoor courts			
Boat & canoe access			
Fishing access			
Golf course			
In-line skating			
Play Equipment			
Soccer fields			
Softball / Baseball fields			
Swimming beaches			
Swimming pools			
Tennis courts			
Trails			
Volleyball courts			
Wildlife observation			
Other:			
Amenities			
Benches			
Community center /			
Indoor facilities			
Grills			
Picnic tables			
Restrooms			
Shelters			
Water fountains			
Other:			
Special Features			
Archaeological sites			
Historical sites & structures			
Lakes or ponds			
Prairie remnants			
Rivers or streams			
Wetlands			
Woodlots / Forests			
Other:			

Note: For **Type** of Site or Park, use the following code:
N=Neighborhood park (serves part of community; usually within a 1/2 mile radius
C=Community park (serves entire community)
O=Other

For **Amount,** use an appropriate measure, e.g., number of, miles of, number of holes,

Form 6

Community Inventory

Site / Park	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Name						
Type						
Acreage						
Recreation Facilities						
Basketball-outdoor courts						
Boat & canoe access						
Fishing access						
Golf course						
In-line skating						
Play Equipment						
Soccer fields						
Softball / Baseball fields						
Swimming beaches						
Swimming pools						
Tennis courts						
Trails						
Volleyball courts						
Wildlife observation						
Other:						
Amenities						
Benches						
Community center / Indoor facilities						
Grills						
Picnic tables						
Restrooms						
Shelters						
Water fountains						
Other:						
Special Features						
Archaeological sites						
Historical sites & structures						
Lakes or ponds						
Prairie remnants						
Rivers or streams						
Wetlands						
Woodlots / Forests						
Other:						

Note: This table will need to be expanded to compile data for more than five sites.

Accessibility Checklist

1. Is parking in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

2. Does a path of travel from parking, street or sidewalk to the recreation area or facility exist and meet ADA requirements?

3. Are conveniences (e.g., water fountains) along the path of travel accessible?

4. Is the entrance signed appropriately? Does it meet ADA requirements?

5. Are use areas (e.g., ball fields, spectator areas, concessions, passive areas) able to be used by a person with a disability?

6. Are use areas designed to encourage and maximize interaction among people with and without disabilities?

7. Can existing facilities and experiences be modified for use by persons with a disability? Have such modifications been made?

8. Does the surfacing allow unassisted, unimpeded travel by a person in a wheelchair?

9. When an area and facility is not readily accessible to and usable by a person with a disability is another area or facility providing similar experiences nearby and accessible?

10. When an area is not readily accessible to and usable by a person with a disability, is this area scheduled to be made accessible and included in a transition plan?

Source: McGovern, 1992

Form 8

Socio-Economic Information

A. Census data:

	Population			
Jurisdiction	**1970**	**1980**	**1990**	**2000**
County_____				
Community: _____				

B. What population trends are evident?

C. Is this trend expected to continue? Why?

D. Population age breakdown:

Under 5 years _____
5-18 years _____
19-24 years _____
25-44 years _____
45-64 years _____
65-79 years _____
80 years and more _____

E. What minority groups are present in the community?

What percentage of the population does each comprise?

F. Does the community have disabled residents with special needs?

G. What are the major types of occupations in the community?

H. What is the average income and income distribution of the population?
What percentage of the community's population has an income below the poverty level?

I. Are there other features of your community that might affect resident's recreation needs (e.g., single-parent families)?

J. What are the sources of the information entered in this form (e.g., Regional or County Planning Commission, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, US Census Bureau)?

Resolution to Adopt the Plan

The following sample resolution can be used by the appropriate elective body to adopt the completed community park and recreation plan.

WHEREAS, the _____(Corporate Name) recognizes the importance of parks and recreation to the quality of life of the residents of _____, Illinois

WHEREAS, the need to provide quality park and recreation services for residents is recognized, and

WHEREAS, the importance of sound planning in order to effectively meet the park and recreation needs of its citizens is understood,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE _____ does adopt the Park and Recreation Plan, to be its official plan for the next ____ years, to guide the provision of park and recreational services in our community.

Passed and signed this ____ day of_____,20____.

ATTEST:

_____ President / Mayor

_____ Clerk / Secretary

Appendix A

Accessibility Mandates

Section 504

The 1973 federal Rehabilitation Act was amended in 1978 by adding Section 504. This section prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities (mobility, visual, hearing or mental) in all programs receiving federal financial assistance. Each federal agency subject to this act has developed and enforces regulations for federally assisted programs under their authority. Section 504 requires the self-evaluation of facilities and programs to assess the extent to which regulations are met.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

ADA is a comprehensive law that took effect in 1992, making **access to recreation and play settings a guaranteed civil right for all Americans.**

Design that approaches site and facility planning from the perspective of use for all, not just able-bodied users, is called universal design. The key to universal design is awareness and flexibility in the park environment to meet different accessibility needs.

If an organization's accessibility self-evaluations (See Form 7.) indicate that site and facility modifications are necessary, a transition plan to accomplish the adaptations must be prepared. Many local organizations have already complied with accessibility requirements. If your agency has done so, you should briefly describe your evaluation and findings in the community park and recreation plan. Any necessary structural changes to park and recreation facilities should be included in the plan's action program.

Facilities constructed with federal or state assistance or located on land acquired with federal or state assistance must be designed and constructed in conformance with ADA.

Acceptable design criteria have been published in "Illinois Accessibility Code," prepared by the State of Illinois, and available from:

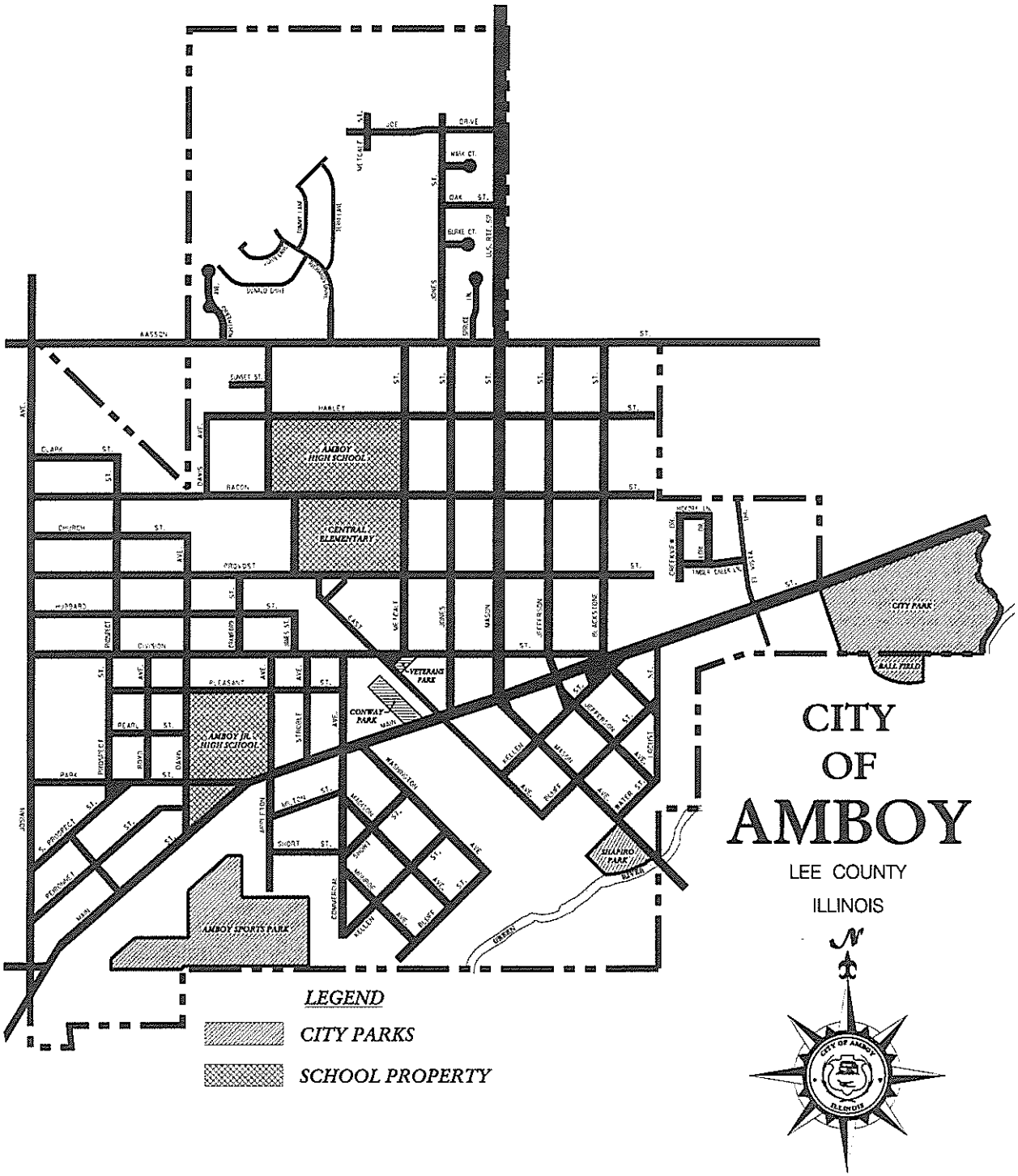
Capital Development Board
Third Floor, Stratton Building
401 South Spring Street
Springfield, Illinois 62706

For Americans with Disabilities Act information, contact:

Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board
Suite 1000, 1332 F. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004-1111

1-800- USA-ABLE (Voice) or
1-202-272-5434
1-800-USA-ABLE (TDD)

Community Map



Source: 1999 Grant Application submitted by the City of Amboy, Illinois.

Appendix C

Illinois Recreation Facilities Inventory [3]

Facility	Average Number in Illinois per 1,000 Population	Number in Your Community per 1,000 Population
Baseball & Softball Fields	.74	
Basketball Courts	.38	
Fishing Piers & Docks	.17	
Golf Course (holes)	1.30	
Hiking paths (miles)	.59	
Picnic Shelters	.83	
Playgrounds	.78	
Soccer Fields	.21	
Swimming Pools	.48	
Tennis Courts	.87	
Volleyball Courts	.19	

Source: Illinois Recreational Facilities Inventory, 1994

Note: This table can be used to compare the supply of these facilities in a community per 1,000 current residents and/or 1,000 estimated residents to the average statewide supply for these facilities.

[3] Data is given for recreation facilities typically supplied by local governments. For data on additional facilities, contact the IDNR's Division of Realty and Planning, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271. Telephone: 217-782-7940.

Participation in Outdoor Recreation Activities in Illinois

Activity	Percentage of Adult Respondents (age 18 or more) Participating
Bicycling	44.2
Fishing	27.1
Golfing	18.0
In-line Skating	12.1
Observing Wildlife / Birdwatching	40.4
Outdoor Basketball	23.9
Picnicking	49.2
Pleasure Driving / Sightseeing	66.0
Pleasure Walking	76.0
Running / Jogging	38.2
Soccer	5.1
Softball /Baseball	23.4
Swimming in an Outdoor Pool	44.3
Tennis	9.8

Note: Activities included are those typically pursued by residents of small communities in or near to their community.

Source: Illinois Outdoor Recreation Activities, 1997

Appendix E

Group Brainstorming Technique

This appendix describes a technique that enables a group to answer questions effectively and efficiently. The technique is designed to encourage both individual and group creativity and result in a group consensus. It limits and focuses interaction among team members in order to arrive at the needed team result in an efficient manner. The method has been adapted from "brainstorming" techniques originally developed to stimulate group creativity in developing advertising campaigns and techniques developed in the field of group dynamics to study how groups reach a consensus.

The technique is commonly used in a variety of related forms in situations where groups are working together to generate ideas, build on each other's ideas, combine these individual ideas and then decide as a group which ideas are the best. For example, in preparing a park and recreation plan, the technique can be used for deciding what are the community's highest priority needs and issues, formulating objectives for goals and identifying strategies to meet objectives.

First, the chairperson or facilitator, working with a flip chart and marker, **asks the team to suggest answers to a question** such as, " What are the most important park and recreation concerns in Pleasant Town?" Each team member in turn suggests one answer, which the facilitator lists on the chart. The team member is asked just to suggest one item, not to explain, justify or argue for it. Similarly, team members are asked not to discuss at this point items suggested by other team members.

The facilitator proceeds around the team **listing items until the suggestions are exhausted.** Team members can skip a turn and suggest additional items in later rounds as they occur to them. The facilitator encourages members to suggest items they are hesitant about. Often these turn out to be the more unusual and creative ideas. Initial suggestions can be built on and improved by other group members. Preventing comments on the suggestions during this phase encourages members to offer ideas they might otherwise be reluctant to suggest.

The listed ideas should be displayed so members can examine the entire list. **The facilitator now asks if there are any suggestions the group does not understand.** If so, the member who suggested the idea explains it, with the facilitator adding material to the list to clarify the item's meaning. **The facilitator then asks if there are any items that could be combined.** Then members are finally asked whether there are **any items that someone thinks should not be on the list.** These questions stimulate focused group discussion that results in a refined list of items understood by all members.

The team next prioritizes the list. This can occur in a variety of ways, but often is accomplished by giving each member a number of votes that they can use to select the items they believe are the most important. For example, each member of the group might be asked individually to choose the three items they believe are the highest priority or most important after being given a few minutes to reflect on the list. These votes are then announced member by member, noted by the facilitator on the list and then counted or combined to identify the team's priority order of items.

There should be some convergence among the members in their votes. If there is not, that is, if votes are evenly distributed among the items, further discuss the items and the disagreement about their importance and then revote.

Some members may be disappointed with the results, especially if items they consider important are not ranked highly by the group. It is useful to note that the results at this point are provisional in the sense that this is just one of many stages in the planning process. As the team proceeds through the process, there will be ample opportunity to revisit earlier decisions, especially as the public reviews the team's work and public input is used to modify the plan's components.

This technique can be even more productive and efficient if team members are provided with the questions to be brainstormed prior to the meeting and are urged to come to the meeting ready with ideas to share with the team.

Example of a Vision Statement

Over the next ten years, Pleasant Town is expected to grow and expand. With this expansion comes the challenge of meeting the increasing recreation needs of Pleasant Town's present and future residents. Pleasant Town is a community that understands that parks and recreation are a critical element of a community's quality of life. Recreation brings together all segments of our community and makes us more healthy and productive. The importance of recreation to Pleasant Town's present and future economic viability is also understood.

Pleasant Town is a community determined to preserve those aspects of its heritage that are unique and represent important moments in our community's cultural and natural history. This heritage can provide settings for individual, family and group recreation activity, community gatherings and remain an important part of what will continue to make Pleasant Town a special place in which to live, work and play.

In 2010, Pleasant Town will be proud to be a community that works together to provide quality parks and recreation services for its residents, including:

- A refurbished historic park with grounds, vegetation and facilities that have been rehabilitated and made accessible for the use of all Pleasant Town's residents including the disabled
- Increased open space including a new community park and new neighborhood playgrounds readily accessible to all our community's children.
- Increased and improved opportunities for popular recreation opportunities such as swimming and softball, especially for an organized league.
- New programs that better meet the recreation needs of all segments of our community.
- The permanently protected East Side Prairie providing education and enjoyment for residents and visitors.
- The Rippling River corridor restored through the business district with natural vegetation providing beautification, passive recreation and a walking path.
- The historic Jones farmstead protected and used for the Village's park and recreation office and a community heritage museum.
- A trail on the abandoned railroad corridor connecting downtown with the Long Ridge State Trail and its associated regional trail network.

Note: The Vision Statement is written with its specific elements identified in outline format. This assists in translating the elements of the vision statement to goals.

Appendix G

Potential Funding Sources

Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) and Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Programs are Illinois' primary source of funding to assist local units of government in the acquisition and development of land for public parks and open space. These programs provide funding assistance up to 50% of approved project costs. Maximum grant awards are currently limited to $750,000 for acquisition projects, while development/restoration projects are limited to $400,000.

Other funding programs available through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to assist in developing recreation areas or facilities in your community include:

Boat Access Area Development Program provides assistance to local government agencies for the acquisition, construction, expansion or rehabilitation of public boat and canoe access areas. The program provides up to 100% of approved project construction costs and 90% of approved land acquisition costs up to $200,000 per project annually.

Illinois Bicycle Path Grant Program assists units of local government acquire, construct and rehabilitate public, non-motorized bicycle paths and directly related support facilities. Financial assistance up to 50% of approved project costs is available. There is no limit for funding assistance for acquisition projects, but development project funding is limited to a maximum grant of $200,000 per annual request.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides up to 80% federal funding assistance for acquisition, development, rehabilitation and maintenance of both motorized and non-motorized recreation trails to federal, state and local government agencies and not-for-profit organizations.

Local Government Snowmobile Grant Program assists local units of government acquire, develop and rehabilitate locally maintained trails and areas for public snowmobiling.

Off-Highway Vehicle Program (OHV) provides up 100% reimbursement to government agencies, not-for-profit organizations and individuals to acquire, develop, operate and maintain land for off-highway vehicle parks and trails that are open and accessible to the public.

The IDNR publishes manuals that explain how local units of government may apply for grant assistance from these programs. Contact:

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Division of Grant Administration
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271

217-782-7481
Fax: 217-782-9599
E-mail: grants@illinois.gov

Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP), managed by the Illinois Department of Transportation, funds recreation facilities such as bicycle trails, hiking trails and greenways, signing and other related items that have a current or past transportation function. Contact:

Enhancement Program Coordinator
Illinois Department of Transportation
Office of Planning and Programming, Room 307
2300 South Dirksen Parkway
Springfield, Illinois 62764
217-782-6006

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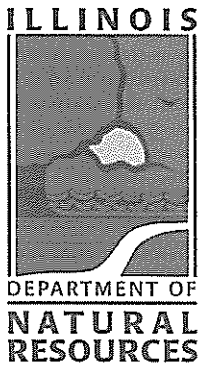
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