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Proposed trail system would provide enhanced access to parks, other destinations in community

Any visitor to the Village of Fredonia would say the community has a lot more green space than asphalt, and Village President Chuck Lapicola wants to see the community use that into a point of strength.

Shortly after taking office this spring, Lapicola took it upon himself to begin revising the village's Parks and Recreation Plan.

He is a retired civil engineer who worked extensively on projects with the U.S. Forestry Service.

Regular updating of the park plan is required to keep the community eligible for state and county grants for park development. The village's last park plan was completed in 1997.

The way Lapicola sees it, the proposed five-year plan can chart a course for the village that includes enhanced recreational features.

Those enhancements, he told the village's Parks Committee when presenting the draft plan during a recent meeting, may be enough to attract prospective residents.

"We have a pretty strong park system but there are some missing pieces. The more amenities we can offer, the more appealing the village will be to someone who is looking for a place to make their new home," Lapicola said.

A public hearing on the 46-page park plan is tentatively scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 6, prior to the Village Board meeting.

With the state budget putting a tight cap on how much local money will be available for recreational enhancements, proposed improvements will rely heavily on outside grants. Lapicola said it is critical to capitalize on that outside money to make the village an even more desirable destination.

In the plan, he concedes that some of the more ambitious elements — such as the construction of a community center with associated library room — are certain to extend well beyond the five-year time frame.

Central to the pending plan is expansion of a village trail system linking existing parks and other areas of community interest.

"The demand for outdoor recreation resources has been increasing and will most likely continue to grow based on lifestyles which allow for more leisure time and less (car) mobility due to gas prices," the draft plan says.

Lapicola envisions expanding the village's existing park trail to connect with a future Milwaukee River nature trail, and an extension to the Northern Ozaukee School District campus from the Emerald Hills subdivision.

"Trails and parks should be easily accessed by all types of people with an eye toward utilitarian purposes, such as getting to the grocery store, post office, restaurant and the park-and-ride (lot)," the plan says.

An existing trail starts at Wheeler Avenue and spurs at Firemen's Park, then crosses the railroad tracks and Fredonia Creek, linking with the privately owned Oak Park, the sprawling Marie Kraus Park and the county's Waubedonia Park.

"Many residents have expressed the concern that existing park locations are isolated from population areas and the only safe way to traverse between parks for children is in a car. A major recommendation for the village is to establish a bike/walk trail between the park locations and traffic generators," the plan's narrative states.

The extended path would stretch from roughly Highland Drive along Fredonia Avenue to Meadowbrook Avenue, via South Milwaukee Street and Wheeler Avenue. Sections of the trail that use existing streets would be marked on the pavement.

Decorative plantings and benches are proposed along the route, with portable rest rooms envisioned during the warmer months.

Some other long-term recreational goals set forth in the plan, although not necessarily proposed for the next five years:

A community center, possibly in conjunction with expansion of the fire station or in the area of the village water tower in the industrial park. The center would be able to accommodate up to 200 people, and could include an electronic resources center that would tie in with the Eastern Shores Library System.

Lapicola said the prospects for a community center are "well down the road," after community priorities like the reconstruction of Fredonia Avenue are addressed.

An ice rink, possibly in Marie Kraus Park, at the Lundman pond, on a regraded section of Firemen's Park or on the Milwaukee River near Waubedonia Park.

Development of the green space around Post Office site, limited to walking trails and benches because of recurring flooding problems.

Development of a wooded parcel on Partridge Lane on the west side of the village. A nature trail is envisioned, highlighting native flowers and bird habitat.

Complete copies of the plan are available for reading at the Fredonia Government Center, 242 Fredonia Ave.