



## **PARKS AND OPEN SPACES: HOW WE PLAY**

### **Why This Matters For Sartell: Be Fun and Active**

The Sartell area is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty and environmentally sensitive areas. The Mississippi and Watab Rivers flow through the middle of the city and serve as primary sources of natural beauty. The area also provides a home to a variety of plant and animal life and is a source of recreation and enjoyment for residents and visitors alike. As a result, Sartell is committed to preserving, enhancing and providing good stewardship of our parks. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a guiding plan for parks, open space, and natural resources management. Sartell's parks and open space play an important role in making the City a desirable place to live, work and play. Parks improve our physical and psychological health, enhance community life, provide outdoor experience and serve as an anchor for strong neighborhoods.

Sartell has over 27 parks of diverse sizes, amenities, and opportunities for recreation and a number of additional properties that add to the greenspace of Sartell. Residents relied heavily on non-City facilities for their recreation needs, such as the school district's facilities. Sartell has been focused on building additional trails and park systems. The results from this last decade of acquisition and building have been dramatic:

- Increase in open space and park acreage from 150 acres in 2003 to a current total 289 acres
- Construction of new parks: Pinecone Central
- Acquisition of land for future park sites and amenities, such as Pinecone Central Park and Sauk River Regional Park

Not only do residents love the existing parks, but they also have numerous ideas for what to do with them and how to make them better. Now that the City has succeeded in developing its extensive parks system, the City's focus is to keep the parks in excellent condition, make connections between them and the trail network, and enhance the parks with additional amenities (or rebuild aging structures).

#### **Emerging Recreational Trends:**

- Increased interest in trail-related activities (walking, biking, in-line skating) and demand for improved safety and security.
- Growing public interest in Environmental Stewardship and environmental sensitive lifestyles.
- More year-round facilities and a need for adequate fields for "non-traditional" sports such as lacrosse, rugby,

kickball, etc.

- Increasing attention to healthy lifestyles.
- Greater demand for adult recreational activities, especially as the baby boom generation continues to age.
- The growth of youth athletic associations.

## PARK AND OPEN SPACE CLASSIFICATIONS

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) have developed park and trail system standards-based guidelines to serve as spatial and functional guidelines for communities to use as they develop their park systems. The following is a list of proposed park classifications including Level of Service (LOS) most relevant to Sartell's needs. It is important to note that these standards are general guidelines.



### Neighborhood Park

**Description:** Basic unit of the park system that serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Typically developed to provide both active and passive recreation opportunities for residents of all age groups living in the surrounding neighborhoods.

**Location Criteria:** ¼ mile to ½ mile service area radius

**Size Criteria:** 2-10 acres (Sizes may be determined as needed to accommodate desired uses)

**Site Selection Guidelines:** Site should be easily accessible from surrounding neighborhood and should link to a community greenway or trail system. Site development should provide for both active and passive recreation opportunities. The landscape of the site should possess pre-development aesthetic value and not be a “left-over” outlot or located within a 100-year flood-plain or be greater than 25% wetland.

**Development Guidelines:** Park development should be a balance of 50% active space and 50% passive space for recreational uses on the site and typically not be programmed. Appropriate park elements would include: play equipment, court games, open “non-programmed” play field or open space, tennis courts, volleyball courts, shuffleboard courts, horseshoe pits, ice skating areas, wading pool, or splash pad. Other park facilities should include picnic areas, internal

trail system, and general open space for enjoying the “park scenery”. Neighborhood parks should provide at least 7 to 10 parking spaces, and limited lighting should be provided for facility illumination, security, and safety.

Example Park fitting this category: Wilds Park North

### Community Park

**Description:** Larger in size and serves a broader purpose than the neighborhood park with the purpose of providing recreational opportunities for several neighborhoods or larger sections of the community. Typically developed to provide both active and passive recreation opportunities for larger groups while preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.

**Location Criteria:** Should serve two or more neighborhoods with a ½ mile to 3.0-mile service area radius

**Size Criteria:** 5-30 acres (Size may be determined as needed to accommodate desired uses)

**Site Selection Guidelines:** Site should be easily accessible from the entire service area, should be centrally located, and should have strong connection to other park areas. Site development should provide for both active and passive recreation opportunities. The landscape of the site should possess pre-development aesthetic value and not be a “left-over” outlot or located within a 100-year flood-plain. The site, when possible, should be located adjacent to natural resource areas and greenways. These areas tend to provide landscapes with greater biodiversity thus enhancing the passive recreational experience.

**Development Guidelines:** While the community park should be designed to accommodate both active and passive recreational opportunities, programming should remain, for the most part, limited. Appropriate active park elements would include: larger play areas with creative play equipment for a range of ages, court games, informal ball fields for youth play, tennis, volleyball and shuffleboard courts, horseshoe pits, ice skating, swimming pools and beaches, archery ranges, and disc golf. Parking lots should be provided to accommodate the use, and limited lighting should be provided for facility illumination, security, and safety development programs.

Example Park fitting this category: Val Smith Park



### Regional and Special Use Park

**Description:** Covers a broad range of parks and recreational facilities oriented toward a single purpose use such as historical, cultural, or social sites. These sites may offer local historical, educational, or cultural, recreational opportunities. Examples of this type of park include historic downtowns, performing arts parks and facilities, arboretums, public gardens, indoor theaters, churches and public buildings. Other examples include community and senior centers, community theaters, hockey arenas, golf courses, aquatic parks, tennis centers, softball complexes, and sports stadiums. Community centers, however, are typically located in neighborhood or community parks.



**Location Criteria:** Location is primarily based on recreation need, community interest, facility type and availability of land. These type of parks should service the entire community rather than a defined neighborhood or area within a community.

The site should be easily accessible from major transportation routes and locations where possible.

**Size Criteria:** Facility space requirements should determine the size of the park.

**Site Selection Guidelines:** No specific site selection standard is recommended due to the diversity of use potential.

**Development Guidelines:** Due to the unique quality of this type of recreational facility, community input and focus groups should be used to determine the site development program.

Example Park fitting this category: Sauk River Regional Park

## Greenways



**Description:** Link the park system components to create a “cohesive park, recreation, and open space system,” that emphasizes the natural environment. Greenways allow for safe, continuous pedestrian movement between parks throughout a community and can enhance property values.

**Location Criteria:** Location is primarily based on the availability of land. Typically greenways are linear in nature and follow natural corridors such as waterways. Greenways can also be of the built environment including abandoned railroad

beds, areas within residential subdivisions, revitalized riverfronts, reclaimed industrial sites, safe powerline rights-of-way, pipeline easements, transportation rights-of-ways, etc. Boulevards and parkways can also be considered candidates as greenways if they provide a “park-like quality and provide off-street trail opportunities.”

**Corridor Width Criteria:** 25 feet within a subdivision, 50 feet minimum and 200 feet optimal

**Site Selection Guidelines:** Site selection is generally based on availability and the trail system plan. Natural corridors should be considered whenever possible, but appropriate “built” corridors are also acceptable with proper design.

**Development Guidelines:** Greenways provide the opportunity for some recreational travel opportunities such as hiking, walking, jogging, bicycling, and in-line skating. Parkway corridors also provide attractive travel experiences for the motorist and canoeing can occur in “green” waterway corridors.

### Park Classification

Table 1 shows park classifications assigned to each of Sartell's parks generally based on use, location, and size. While some of the parks may be smaller in size than a typical standard suggests, their location and current amenities have taken precedence in the classification process.

<b>Park</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Size</b>
Celebration	Community Park	1.75
Creekview Preserve	Neighborhood Park	1.87
Cypress Park	Mini Park	.72
Eastside Kiddie	Neighborhood Park	.55
Fox Run of Avalon Village	Mini Park	.71
Geoffrey	Neighborhood Park	.81
Huntington	Community Park	27.03
Lions	Community Park	7.33
Madison Crossing	Mini Park	.85
Meadowlake	Mini Park	.56
Morningstar	Neighborhood Park	.55
Natures Edge	Mini Park	.25
Northside	Community Park	36.32
Pine Tree Pond	Mini Park	.47
Pinecone Central	Regional Park	113
Pinecone Regional (Bernicks)	Regional Park	73
Rolling Meadows East	Neighborhood Park	1.32
Rolling Meadows West	Neighborhood Park	3.66
Rotary Riverside	Community Park	1.99
Sabre Oaks	Mini Park	.27
Sandstone	Neighborhood	3.33
Sartell Vetrans	Community Park	1.84
Sauk River Regional	Regional Park	62.02
Val Smith	Community Park	13.30
Watab Creek	Community Park	11.88
Wilds Park North	Neighborhood Park	7.32
Wilds Park South	Neighborhood Park	2.40

Table 1

### Future Park Needs

Based on the National Park standard of providing 10 acres of park and open space land per 1,000 people and on having a population of 17,000, Sartell exceeds the \_\_\_\_ guideline by \_\_\_\_ acres. It is important to note this is only a rule-of-thumb guideline. While Sartell's parkland acres within the system exceed national guidelines, the ratio alone does not imply that the community is being provided with an adequate range of park types or classifications and recreation facilities.

Table 2 shows park classification acreage ratio guidelines adapted from the National Standards that are most relevant to serving Sartell's needs. These ratios plan for providing an adequate distribution of park types within the system. These standards typically apply to those parks that offer active recreation opportunities. Standards do not apply for park and open space areas that are more specialized or that provide more passive recreational opportunities. These areas are typically more dependent on the location and size of the feature itself. The sizes shown in Table 2 are guidelines. The locations and amenities offered often take precedence in how parks are classified.

**Table 2**  
**Park Classification Guidelines**

Community Park	5-30 Acres
Neighborhood Park	2-10 Acres
Mini-Park	<2 Acres
Regional and Special Use Park	No Standard
Greenways	No Standard
Natural Resource and Open Space Areas	No Standard

## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE GOALS

### GOAL 1: VALUE PASSIVE RECREATION

Passive recreation generally enhances the open-space aspect of a park by providing a minimal intensity of development for "unstructured" recreation opportunities, such as walking, picnics, and exercise. Active recreation, on the other hand, involves more intensive development for ball fields or aquatic centers, and typically includes programmed activities. Active recreation is a service provided by others. The Sartell/St. Stephen Community Education provides extensive sports programming, leagues, and recreation facilities at the various parks and other public spaces. By focusing on passive open

spaces, Sartell provides a unique opportunity to connect with nature, and its trail network provides connections to major amenities like a future downtown.

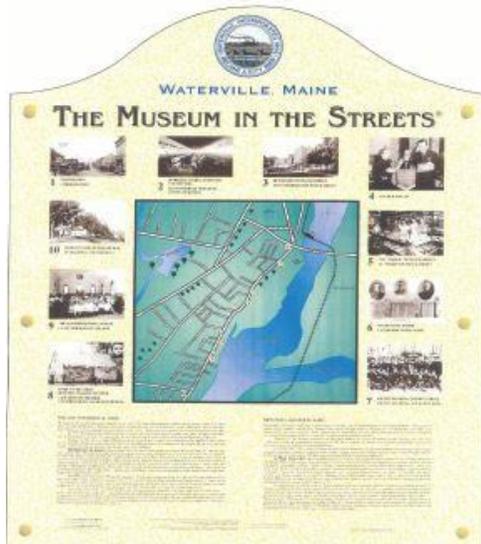
## Potential Strategies May Include These And Other Future Cool Ideas:

### 1.1 Target Funding For Passive Open Spaces

When considering budget allocations for parks, prioritize improvements and development of passive recreation. Ensure all residents of Sartell are within a short walking distance of passive recreation opportunities.

### 1.2 Encourage Residents To Explore Passive Open Spaces With New Events

Organize trail events like a scavenger hunt, geocaching, history and public art walks to encourage more residents to discover the valuable open space resources available to them.



## GOAL 2: PRIORITIZE EXISTING PARKS

Sartell has spent much of the last decade creating new parks to respond to the citizen-approved ½-cent sales tax. While more park spaces are planned, ensure that existing parks are maintained so that they remain attractive assets. New parks

increase the City's operating costs and responsibilities. As such, focus dollars toward enhancing existing parks before creating new ones.



## **Potential Strategies May Include These And Other Future Cool Ideas:**

### **2.1 Add Amenities And Enhancements To The Parks**

Residents noted that some of the trails and existing parks could use more amenities such as benches and other seating, trees and bike racks. Develop a priority list of cost-effective improvements to existing parks. Seek private sponsorship of amenities, such as an Adopt-a-Bench program that engages residents in the upkeep and improvement of these parks. Incorporate artistic, whimsical elements. Install Free Little Libraries in our parks, especially near playground equipment, pools and other areas which may appeal to families or individuals in an effort to bring books and magazines to the people.

### **2.2 Improve The Parks And Trails For Runners And Avid Walkers**

Runners prefer softer surfaces that protect their knees and joints. Allocate space for an unpaved trail for runners separate from a bike trail. Connect and expand existing trail markings that indicate mileage and location. Include points of interest such as sidewalk art or information kiosks.

### **2.4 Expand Community Gardening**

Community gardens are of keen interest to Sartell residents. Seek opportunities to create a range of community gardens, including fruit orchards, U-pick fields like strawberry and pumpkin patches, etc. With resident volunteers, these can be inexpensive, yet impressive, improvements to the parks.

### **2.5 Construction Of A Skate Park**

## **GOAL 3: ENSURE THE PARKS & TRAILS ARE SAFE**

To promote expanded use of the parks and at all times of the day, maintaining park safety is a critical goal for Sartell.

## **Potential Strategies May Include These And Other Future Cool Ideas:**

### **3.1 Add Video Surveillance To Local Parks**

Begin a program to cover major trails and entrances and promote these investments to residents.



### **3.2 Improve The Maintenance Of Parks And Trails**

Ensure that park and trail maintenance concerns are addressed quickly. Create a Google map on the City's website and/or a smartphone app that allows residents to tag areas of the parks that require some level of maintenance or improvement.

### **GOAL 4: EXPAND THE PARK CONNECTIONS & TRAIL NETWORK**

Improving existing parks and ensuring that they are safe is the current priority for Sartell. However, this does not mean we should not think ahead about ways to improve connectivity of the trail network. Sartell's trail system is extensive, but there are a few missing links. An effective trail network is one that is connected and fully integrated into the City's neighborhoods and regionally.

### **Potential Strategies May Include These And Other Future Cool Ideas:**

#### **4.1 Plan For New Trails**

New trails should seek specifically to address the missing links in the system. This includes the Lake Francis plans that include new trail connections and amenities that appeal to the use of outdoor spaces such as a fishing pier, water activities, and an outdoor amphitheater.

As warranted, review trails throughout the parks system and consider if connections to the regional trail system or other parks may be appropriate.

Identify high-use trails and consider appropriate trail surface materials to encourage safe, unrestricted use of the trail.

## 4.2 Organize Walking Groups

New trail connections are not always, what is needed to strengthen connections; sometimes-organized activities can offer residents comfort in using the parks. Encourage groups to offer walking groups and walking school busses to encourage greater use of the facilities.

Market programs and facilities using brochures, cable television, the internet and other available promotional avenues.



## 4.3 Develop And Redevelop Parks That Focus On Accessibility, Flexibility And Naturalization Where Appropriate.

Integrate practices that meet or exceed established standards for ecological design for landscapes and green building techniques that improve function and minimize long-term maintenance and operating costs. Engage and involve residents in identifying programs, services, and facility needs within the community.

Implement a long-term renewal plan based on a complete inventory of the system, lifecycle cost analysis, and condition assessment of all park facilities.

Build or renew facilities to meet or exceed standards for accessibility.

Build quality facilities that can be adapted to new uses as community needs change.

Accept parkland dedication only if it is consistent with the City's development plans and the City's parks plan.

Maintain zoning and subdivision regulations that provide for and encourage the continued development of parks, trails, recreational opportunities, and preservation of open space.

Apply official controls, such as Parkland Dedication Requirements, to ensure that appropriate and developable park land is provided with new development. Whenever possible, the land dedication should reflect the goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan.

Evaluate the quality and usability of land for parks, trails, and open space being proposed for parkland dedication by the developer.



Evaluate and plan for the future demand for available youth and adult park areas. Offer new ideas and facilities that will provide the opportunity to expand entertainment programming, athletic leagues, artistic opportunities, family schedule-friendly programs, healthy lifestyle/holistic classes, and community-wide special events.

Provide flexible spaces to accommodate changing trends in demand for park and open space programming.

Systematically upgrade existing park shelters, playground structures, trails and other park amenities to meet the changing needs of the community

Where appropriate consider alternative vegetation management within the City's park areas.

Continue the process of completing energy audits for all park buildings. Utilize audit results when planning for long-term capital improvements to the park buildings.

Using Best Management Practices (BMP's), buffer lakes, ponds, wetlands, and streams with native grasses and other ecologically appropriate plant species. Where possible, use buffers on public lands as demonstration projects to encourage residents, business owners, and developers to emulate best practices.

#### 4.4 Develop Relationships and Partners to Deliver Recreational and Passive Activities

Continue to support the park/school partnership and to coordinate park use with educational providers. If in the future any private or non-profit entity no longer wants to have the shared use park, the City should consider the opportunity to acquire the property for City park purposes.



Continue partnerships with youth organizations to collaborate on park improvements on a shared-use basis.

Continue program to promote volunteer efforts to assist with park amenities and aesthetic appeal.

Involve neighborhoods and the community to help shape park facilities and the use of open spaces within the City.

Enhance park and trail opportunities for the City with partnerships with other governmental agencies including the St. Cloud APO, Regional Active Living Advisory Group and surrounding cities and counties.

**GOAL 5: RECOGNIZE THE MISSISSIPPI, WATAB, SAUK AND OTHER RIVERS AND NATURAL AREAS AS A MAJOR RECREATIONAL, ECONOMIC AND OPEN SPACE ASSET TO THE COMMUNITY.**



**Potential Strategies May Include These and Other Future Cool Ideas:**

**5.1 Maintain Existing Public Accesses** to the rivers and increase public access in new development and redevelopment projects, specifically within the Mill Property area. Continue to develop access along the Rivers that are aesthetically compatible with the riverfront and sensitive to ecological function.

**5.2 Work To Connect** rivers to neighborhoods, parks and community facilities through trails and greenway corridors. Work with MnDOT to expand the Great River Bike Trail to include amenities within Sartell.

**5.3 Work With The MnDNR and Other Agencies** in creating and/or enhancing portages within all the navigable rivers.

The city will preserve and improve the natural, ecological and scenic resources within the park and open space system, including water quality, vegetation, wildlife and other environmentally sensitive resources.

