

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Village of Ridgeway

December 14, 2021



PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY



Resolution Adopting the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

WHEREAS, the Village of Ridgeway has recognized the need for a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan based upon an inventory of outdoor recreation facilities and natural resources within the Village, Iowa County, and Southwest Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, the development of the plan will serve as a guide for making future decisions related to outdoor recreation in the Village of Ridgeway and through its adoption will make the Village eligible to participate in state and federal recreation aid programs; and

WHEREAS this comprehensive outdoor recreation plan has been prepared for the Ridgeway Village Board by Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission; and

WHEREAS, this recreation plan is based on sound planning principles and long-range goals and objectives for the Village's recreational development;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Village Board for the Village of Ridgeway hereby goes on record to adopt the Village of Ridgeway Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan as the Village's guide for future outdoor recreation improvements and development;

AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Village board requests the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to provide eligibility to the Village of Ridgeway for participation in the state and federal cost-sharing programs for an additional five-year period.

Dated this 14th day of December, 2021

VILLAGE OF RIDGEWAY

Michele B. Casper

Michele Casper, President

Hailey E. Roessler

Hailey Roessler, Clerk

ATTEST:

I hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of the resolution passed by the Village Board of the Village of Ridgeway at the regular meeting thereof held on this 14th day of December, 2021.

Hailey E. Roessler

Hailey Roessler, Clerk

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the 2022 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) is to act as a guide for the Village Council, Village Parks and Recreation Commission, Village Staff, interested residents, and volunteers in decision-making related to park programs and improvements over the next five years.

This plan is the result of an extensive public outreach process. In view of public health concerns arising from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the public input stage of the process was adjusted to reduce in-person meetings. The survey period was extended to provide ample time for more community members to respond to the survey. Also, open-ended questions were included in the survey to solicit for detailed responses regarding needed improvements to the parks, recreational facilities, and amenities. In total, the Southwestern Wisconsin Planning Commission (SWWRPC) collected 118 completed surveys representing an estimated 19% sample size of the total population.

The Village of Ridgeway has ample park space provided for its residents. This plan’s recommendations features two distinct focuses: 1) to strengthen existing park assets through ongoing maintenance improvements and by providing additional park amenities and 2) to develop park sites and facilities based on unmet community needs. This document includes specific park-by-park recommendations as well as proposals to enhance paths and trails. Improving recreational walking and biking opportunities is not only a local priority, but is a top priority indicated by the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). More detailed information on recommendations for outdoor recreation within the Village of Ridgeway can be found in the section “Recommendations for Outdoor Recreation” (Page 37).

Image 1: Village Park Playground Area



Introduction

This Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) for the Village of Ridgeway is an expression of the community's current goals and future objectives for recreational facilities. The intent of this document is to plan for the maintenance and improvement of Ridgeway's recreational and open space resources. This will be accomplished by outlining a strategy to manage existing resources and to develop new resources to meet future needs and demands.

Parks can serve a limited neighborhood area, the entire community, and the region as a whole. This provides outdoor recreation for both residents and visitors. Open spaces are not limited to parks but also include greenbelts, wetlands, and floodplains. Open space can also serve many functions for a community other than recreation, such as the following:

- Preservation of scenic and natural resources
- Flood management
- Protecting the area's water resources
- Preserving prime agricultural land
- Limiting development that may occur
- Buffering incompatible land uses
- Structuring the community environment

A parks and facilities plan incorporates private as well as public open space areas in the community. The development and continual updating of the CORP becomes a valuable asset to a community contributing to its ongoing stability and attractiveness.

Image 2: Village Park Ballfield Area



Plan Purpose

This plan is an update of the Ridgeway Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan prepared in 1999. The specific purpose of this plan is to guide the development and improvement of the Village's outdoor recreation facilities over the next five years to meet the recreational needs and demands of residents.

Policy decisions made by the Ridgeway Parks and Recreation Commission for park programs and improvements should be guided by the goals, objectives, findings, and recommendations of this adopted plan. Actual public policy decisions are contingent on funding sources, new opportunities, changing growth patterns, budget priorities, and shifting community goals. For this reason, the plan should be reviewed annually and a detailed update should be completed every five years. Updating the plan every five years is a requirement of the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to remain eligible for matching government funds for parkland acquisition and facility improvements. But just as importantly, the Village of Ridgeway needs to set a course of action for continued improvement of its parks and outdoor recreational system.

Goals and Objectives

The Village of Ridgeway takes pride in its excellent park system. This portion of the updated Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan provides Village officials with general policies to guide future growth and development of Ridgeway's park system and outdoor recreation facilities. The goals and objectives below are vital to the efforts in providing this important service.

GOAL: Continue to provide excellent maintenance to Ridgeway's parks and recreational facilities.

- Provide additional park amenities and facilities in existing parks including playground equipment, picnic tables, benches and other elements.
- Continue to provide excellent equipment maintenance, repairing and replacing items like trash cans, water fountains, and recycling bins.
- Continue to make Ridgeway parks handicap accessible, by incorporating updates into the formal maintenance schedule.

GOAL: Establish and maintain a community-wide system of parks and open space to meet the needs of community residents.

- Enhance walking, biking, and hiking opportunities in and around the Village.
- Acquire and develop park sites and facilities based on recommended standards, community needs, and the existing distribution of parks and other recreation facilities.
- Provide park and recreation facilities to accommodate all user groups, including the unique needs of the elderly and disabled.

GOAL: Continue to efficiently utilize existing funding streams and find new funding solutions for Ridgeway's park systems.

- Continue to cooperate and coordinate work with the school district, county, and state agencies to provide efficient outdoor recreation programs and opportunities.
- Leverage local support to develop more external grant funding for additional parks, recreation amenities, equipment, and maintenance.

Image 3: Village Park Playground Zip Line



Definitions and Classifications

Open Space Need Standards

Standards are a good starting point or reference when determining a community's outdoor recreation land and facility needs. However, each community's needs are different based on such factors as a community's demographic profile and what types of facilities and outdoor recreation priorities the citizenry deem important. Resident input in the form of surveys and/or public hearings are also important when recreation and park planners look at future development and/or preservation of public lands.

The Village of Ridgeway has a total of 27.8 acres of park and recreational space intensively developed for recreational purposes. Based on recommendations from the WIDNR and SWWRPC, the standard of 12 acres of developed park lands/open space per 1,000 population is used throughout this plan. This figure is viewed as a target number when recreation and park planners analyze a community's park, recreation land, and open space composition. Based on that standard, Ridgeway has more than enough developed park space for its residents because it only requires approximately 7.5 acres of developed park land for its population of 624 people. This analysis does not take into consideration the impact of park users residing outside the Village.

All parks, recreation lands, and open space under the jurisdiction of the Village of Ridgeway have been assigned one primary classification or code using the following titles and abbreviations:

- M-P: Mini Park (or Tot Lot)
 - Desirable/Typical Size: 1 acre or less.
 - Service Area: 1/8 – 1/4 mile.
 - Acres/1,000 Population: 0.5 – 1.0 acre.
 - Use: Specialized facilities to serve a concentration of limited population or groups such as senior citizens or young children.

- Site Characteristics: Within neighborhoods and in close proximity to concentrations of family or senior housing.
- NP/P: Neighborhood Park/Playground
 - Desirable/Typical Size: 1 to 10 acres.
 - Service Area: 1/4 – 1/2 mile radius.
 - Acres/1,000 Population: 2 – 3 acres.
 - Use: Area for intense recreational activities such as field games, court games, crafts, playground apparatus area, ice skating, picnicking, volleyball, etc.
 - Site Characteristics: Suited for intense development; easily accessible to neighborhood population; geographically centered with safe walking and biking access. May be developed as a joint school/park facility.
- C/CP: Community Park
 - Desirable/Typical Size: 10 to 25 acres.
 - Service Area: 1 – 2 miles.
 - Acres/1,000 Population: 6 - 9 acres.
 - Use: Area of diverse environmental quality. May include areas suited for intense recreational facilities such as athletic complexes or large swimming pools. May be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation such as walking, viewing, sitting, and picnicking. May be any combination of the above depending on site suitability and community need.
 - Site Characteristics: May include natural features such as water bodies and areas suited for intense development. Easy access by all modes of transportation.
- SU: Special Use Area
 - Desirable/Typical Size: Variable depending on type of facility.
 - Service Area: Entire Community.
 - Acres/1,000 Population: Variable.
 - Use: Areas for specialized or single purpose recreational activities such as golf courses, nature centers, marinas, zoos, conservancies, arboreta, display gardens, arenas, outdoor theaters, gun ranges, and downhill ski areas. Also includes plazas or squares in or near commercial centers, boulevards, or parkways.
 - Site Characteristics: Located within the community.
- LP: Linear Park
 - Desirable/Typical Size: Sufficient width to protect resources and to provide maximum use.
 - Service Area: No applicable standard.
 - Acres/1,000 Population: Variable.
 - Use: Area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel or activity such as hiking, biking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, fitness trails/cross-country skiing and canoeing. May include active play areas.
 - Site Characteristics: Built on natural corridors such as utility or railroad right-of-way, bluff lines, vegetation patterns, and roads that link other components of the recreation system or community facilities such as school, libraries, commercial areas, and other park areas.

Development of Recreational Facilities Need Standards

Standards for the development of recreation facilities, similar to open space standards are expressed in facility units per population ratio. The purpose of evaluating a recreation system is to determine the amount of needed facilities in each recreation area.

Problems related to using facility development standards is the assumption of desired opportunities by the resident population. For example, an examination of the facilities standards may show that a horseshoe area is needed based on the municipality's population. In reality, it is possible that very few people in the community enjoy playing horseshoes, which eliminates the need for this type of facility. Another problem with using standards is they are developed primarily for urban communities and have limited application to rural areas.

Despite these problems, community leaders can use them to approximate the adequacy of their park systems. A listing of recreational facility development standards, prepared by the American Planning Association and the United States Access Board can be found on their respective websites:

American Planning Association Outdoor Recreation Facility Standards:

<https://www.planning.org/pas/reports/report194.htm>

United States Access Board:

<http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/recreation-facilities/outdoor-developed-areas>

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

“Our effectiveness in meeting future recreation needs will be shaped by many factors including the shifting demographics of our population, the quality of habitats and the impacts from invasive species and changing climate conditions, our ability to improve the compatibility between and among recreation participants, and sustainable financial resources. Parks and nature preserves, wildlife areas and refuges, and forests and trails connect people to the natural environment. These places, from small neighborhood parks to the large national, state and county forests, are the stages on which we enjoy the outdoors, improve our health, protect our air and water, and provide a large economic boost, particularly to our rural areas. – Wisconsin Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan

The 2019-2023 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), provides recommendations to guide public outdoor recreation policy, planning decisions, the use of Land and Water Conservation Fund money, and other WIDNR administered grant programs.

High-quality outdoor recreation experiences available in Wisconsin contribute to our exceptional quality of life; reflected in sustained economic growth and in outdoor recreation traditions passed down through generations. From community river walks to expansive public forests, public recreation lands and facilities enhance our lives, draw millions of visitors, and support businesses large and small. The economic, social, and health benefits of outdoor recreation in Wisconsin far outweighs the investment.

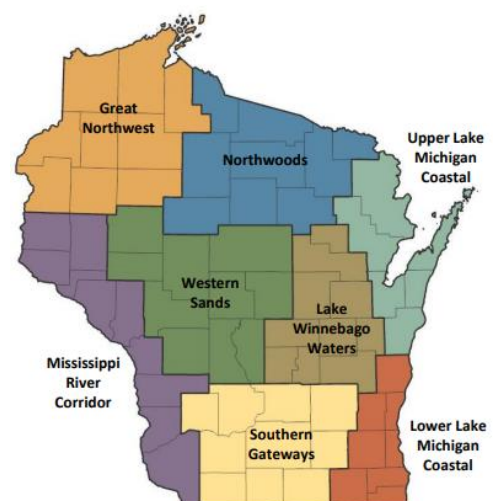
To support the development of SCORP, a statewide survey of Wisconsin residents was conducted regarding outdoor recreation participation and frequency, as well as opinions about future needs. In addition, WIDNR undertook an assessment of recreation opportunities and needs in each region of the state. Together, these supporting documents show that an estimated 95% of Wisconsin adults participate in some type of outdoor recreation in the past year. Activities in which residents most frequently engaged tend to be those that require little preparation or travel time and can provide a high-quality experience in a limited amount of time. Examples include hiking and walking on trails, fishing, bicycling, dog walking, and bird/wildlife watching.

SCORP goals include:

- Boost participation in outdoor recreation.
- Grow partnerships.
- Provide high-quality experiences.
- Improve data to enhance visitor experiences and benefits.
- Enhance funding and financial stability.

Additionally, the SCORP highlights regional recreational demands that supports Ridgeway’s priorities for its location in the Southern Gateways Region. The Southern Gateways Region contains a variety of environments - rolling hills in the south, the centrally located Wisconsin River, and large marshes in the east - the combination of which provides a wide array of recreational opportunities. The region also has a number of important geologic features, including Devil’s Lake, a craggy glacial lake surrounded by high cliffs and scenic overlooks that is one of Wisconsin’s most popular recreation destinations. The rapid development around Madison and nearby areas has also increased demand for urban-based recreation opportunities such as dog parks, bicycle and walking trails and developed sports facilities.

Image 4: SCORP Regions



Plan Process

The planning process for the 2022-2026 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) involved four stages:

1. Creating an inventory of existing community recreational assets and facilities
2. Development of relevant data and trends.
3. Coordinating outreach to the population that uses Ridgeway’s outdoor recreation facilities
4. Plan Development, Review and Approval

To develop Ridgeway’s Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, SWWRPC tackled these four baseline functions, while receiving guidance from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR).

Figure 1: Plan Process



Each baseline function provided the planning process with essential insight into the community’s assets, needs, and priorities; and were essential for the development of the final plan. To create an inventory of existing community recreational assets, SWWRPC staff conducted an on-site inventory of existing parks, facilities, and equipment by using state-provided metrics for ranking recreation assets.

Data compilation and mapping was done throughout the planning process. SWWRPC compiled data related to the Village’s age, demographics, and economic makeup and mapped it in relation to the existing parks. Finally, outreach is the most important plan activity. SWWRPC developed a survey and distributed it widely within the community. Copies were available in print and online. Over 118 responses were compiled by the end of the planning process. This information and a summary from all plan activities were presented in a public forum to the Ridgeway Parks and Recreation Commission on November 2nd, 2021. Plan goals and objectives were also developed for the final planning document during the public forum. Park Committee feedback from the November 2nd, 2021 meeting were compiled and added to the plan, incorporating implementation strategies for formal adoption and approval.

Table 1: Plan Activities

Activity	Date Conducted
Park Inventory	October 2021
Data and Mapping	October 2021 – November 2021
Outreach	October 2021 – November 2021
Plan Development	October 2021 – December 2021
Approval	December 2021

Amending the Plan

Plan amendments are common, represent good implementation or plan usage, and should be acceptable for consideration by local decision makers. Amendments must follow the same process as when the original plan was prepared. Amendments generally prolong the effectiveness of the original plan.

The following steps will ensure the new amendment is approved with respect to state statutes and to the citizens of Ridgeway.

1. Initial meetings/framing the amendment: Depending on the size and scope of the amendment, the Parks and Recreation Commission will meet several times to discuss the proposed amendment.
2. Opportunity for Public Input: A public forum should be provided with ample time for the community to know about the proposed changes to the plan. Then a public meeting should be held so the community can understand the need for amendment and have an opportunity to provide direct feedback on the proposed changes.
3. Draft Amendment: The Parks and Recreation Commission develops a draft amendment that captures the need for the amendment and feedback from the public.
4. Amendment Adoption: At an official public meeting, with 30 days of notice, the Village Council will vote to approve the plan amendment with the recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Commission.
5. WIDNR Approval: The council action on the plan amendment should be sent in writing to the Department of Natural Resources for re-certification of the Village's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan with the new changes. The plan amendment will not be effective until a letter is received from DNR indicating their approval.

Summary of Previous Outdoor Recreation Plans

Image 5: Ridgeway Welcome Home East Park Sign



The Village of Ridgeway had its first Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) prepared in the mid 1970's. Many improvements have been made to the Village parks since that initial plan was prepared. The plan was updated on a periodic basis to maintain the Village's eligibility for park and recreation cost-sharing funds available through the WIDNR. Ridgeway's previous CORP update completed in 1999 determined that while the Village did not need to increase the amount of park space, however improvements to facilities and equipment were required. Recommendations of the 1999 CORP largely focused on meeting and/or exceeding requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and expanding recreational opportunities for elderly citizens. The 1999 CORP also noted that the Village may want to consider the development of some additional neighborhood park facilities or lots to serve the younger children in some of the newer subdivisions being planned in the community.

Description of the Planning Region

Social characteristics of Ridgeway

According to the 2020 Census, the population of the Village of Ridgeway is 624, which is down 29 persons from the 2010 US Census count. Ridgeway’s racial composition is largely homogenous; 91.3% of the Village’s population being white. The remaining 8.7% is split between the “Black”, “Some Other Race”, and “Asian” categories. Ridgeway’s lack of racial diversity is standard for the southwestern Wisconsin region, and lags behind the state average, with 80.4% white and a 19.6% split of other races, black being the highest at 6%.

The Village of Ridgeway maintains a median age of 41.4, similar to many communities in southwestern Wisconsin. Table 2 illustrates that roughly 62.8% of the community is between 20 and 64 years old. This wide working-age base helps ground the community economically and provides stability. However, the relatively small youth population means that the Village will likely not have sustainable long-term growth.

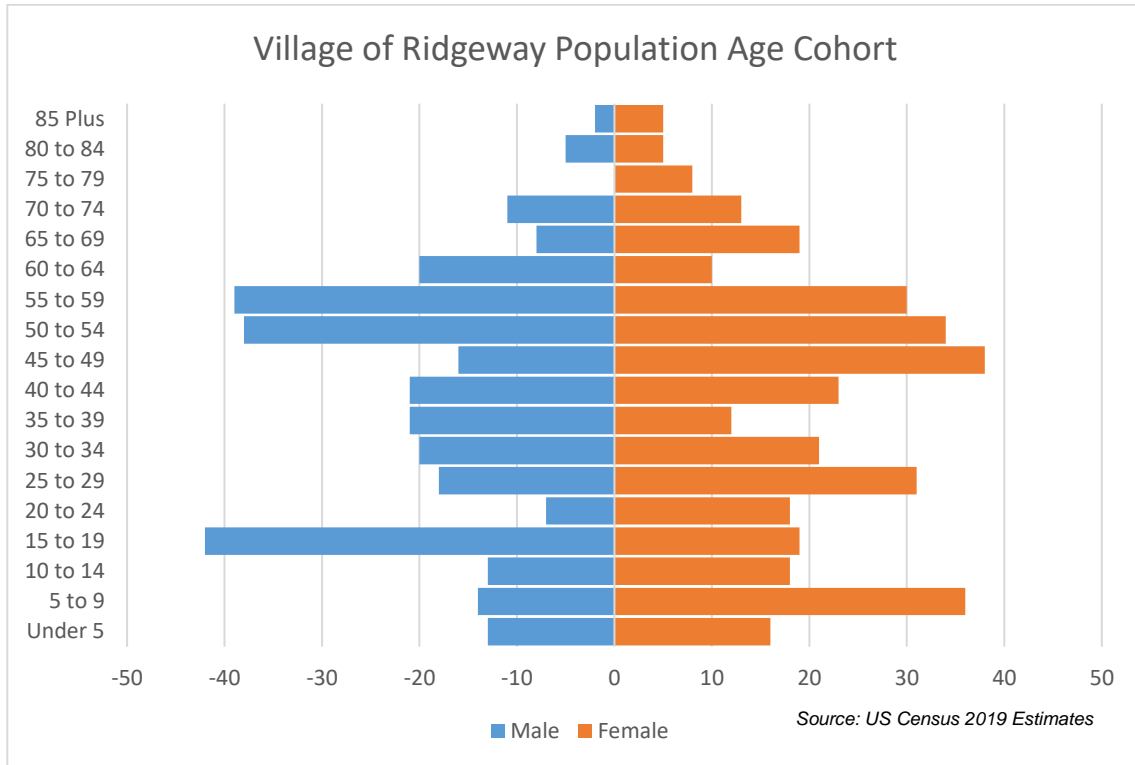
Table 2: Ridgeway Age Cohorts

	Total Population		Total Male		Total Female			
Total Population	664	100%	308	46%	356	54%		
Under 5 years	29	4.4%	13	4.2%	16	4.5%	Total "youth" population 171	25.8% of total population
5 to 9 years	50	7.5%	14	4.5%	36	10.1%		
10 to 14 years	31	4.7%	13	4.2%	18	5.1%		
15 to 19 years	61	9.2%	42	13.6%	19	5.3%		
20 to 24 years	25	3.8%	7	2.3%	18	5.1%	Total working-age population 417	62.8% of total population
25 to 29 years	49	7.4%	18	5.8%	31	8.7%		
30 to 34 years	41	6.2%	20	6.5%	21	5.9%		
35 to 39 years	33	5.0%	21	6.8%	12	3.4%		
40 to 44 years	44	6.6%	21	6.8%	23	6.5%		
45 to 49 years	54	8.1%	16	5.2%	38	10.7%		
50 to 54 years	72	10.8%	38	12.3%	34	9.6%		
55 to 59 years	69	10.4%	39	12.7%	30	8.4%		
60 to 64 years	30	4.5%	20	6.5%	10	2.8%		
65 to 69 years	27	4.1%	8	2.6%	19	5.3%	Total retired-age population 76	11.4% of total population
70 to 74 years	24	3.6%	11	3.6%	13	3.7%		
75 to 79 years	8	1.2%	0	0.0%	8	2.2%		
80 to 84 years	10	1.5%	5	1.6%	5	1.4%		
85 years and over	7	1.1%	2	0.6%	5	1.4%		

Source: US Census 2019 Estimates

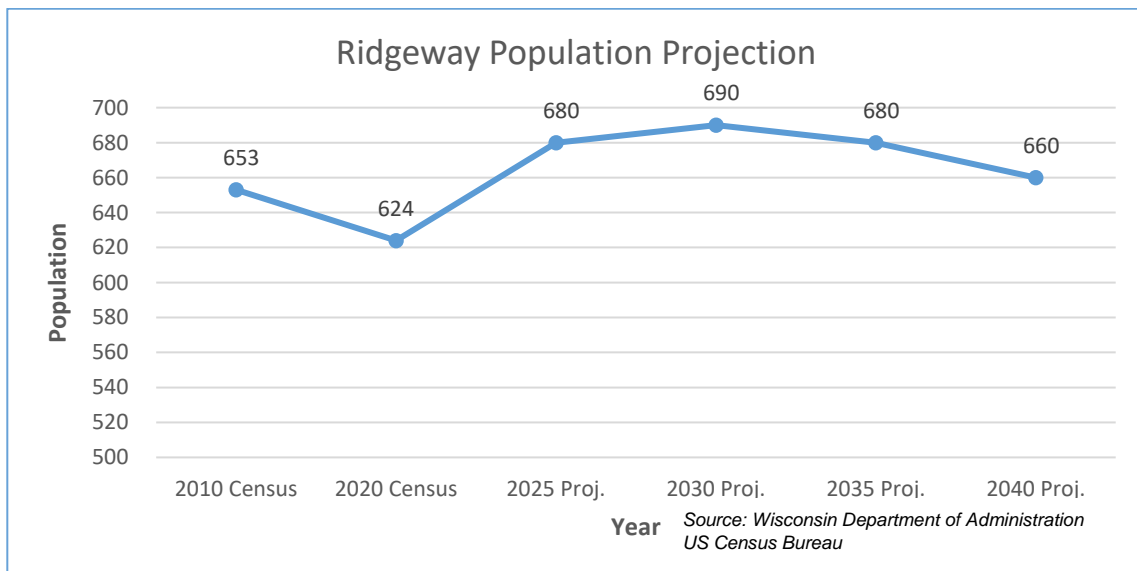
Figure 2 is a population pyramid that shows a snapshot of Ridgeway’s population taken from the 2019 US Census Estimates. As mentioned previously, the largest portion of the pyramid is the “working-age” population between 20 and 64 years. The middle of the pyramid is bloated and the top and bottom are narrow. This means that while the Village’s population is currently stable, in the future it will decline, unless more residents move into the Village.

Figure 2: Ridgeway Population Pyramid



These findings are consistent with information from the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA), which is believed to provide a more accurate reflection of population growth estimates. The Wisconsin DOA estimates are based on the 2010 Census and analysis of contemporary data including housing units, dormitory and institutional populations, automobile registrations, and other indicators of population change. According to the DOA, Ridgeway’s population will increase slightly from 2020 to 2025, but as the large “working-age” population advances in age, there will not be enough of a youth population to support their loss and the community will lose residents from 2030 to 2040. Figure 3 illustrates the potential rise and decline thereafter in population.

Figure 3: Ridgeway Population Projection



Economy

Within Ridgeway, the local economy is driven by businesses within the “Retail trade”, “Educational services, and health care and social assistance”, and “Manufacturing” Industries. The Village of Ridgeway has an estimated 2% unemployment rate according to the 2019 US Census estimates and approximately 9.2% of people at or below the poverty level. The median household income for people living within the Village is \$59,861 according to the 2019 US Census estimates.

Physical Characteristics of the Region

Location

The Village of Ridgeway which is part of the Madison Metropolitan Statistical Area is approximately 1.26 square miles of territory located on the eastern side of Iowa County. The main highway serving the community is Highway 18/151 that runs east-west through southwest Wisconsin. This highway connects the Village to the county seat at Dodgeville. Ridgeway’s proximity to unique natural features actively contributes to the visual identity that shapes the Village.

Figure 4 is a map depicting Ridgeway’s distance to other recreation areas. Ridgeway is well-positioned to provide residents with nearby recreation activities. Within 25 miles, residents can visit Love Creek, Ridgeway Pine Relict State Natural Area, Deer Valley Lodge and Golf Course, Governor Dodge State Park, Blackhawk Lake Recreational Area, Blue Mounds State Park, Cheese Country Recreational Trail, and others.

Figure 5 is a map that illustrates the local recreational assets within the Village of Ridgeway. Even though Ridgeway is a relatively small community, residents can enjoy recreation at the two major local parks and other Village-owned open spaces.

Figure 4: Ridgeway's Distance to other Recreation Areas

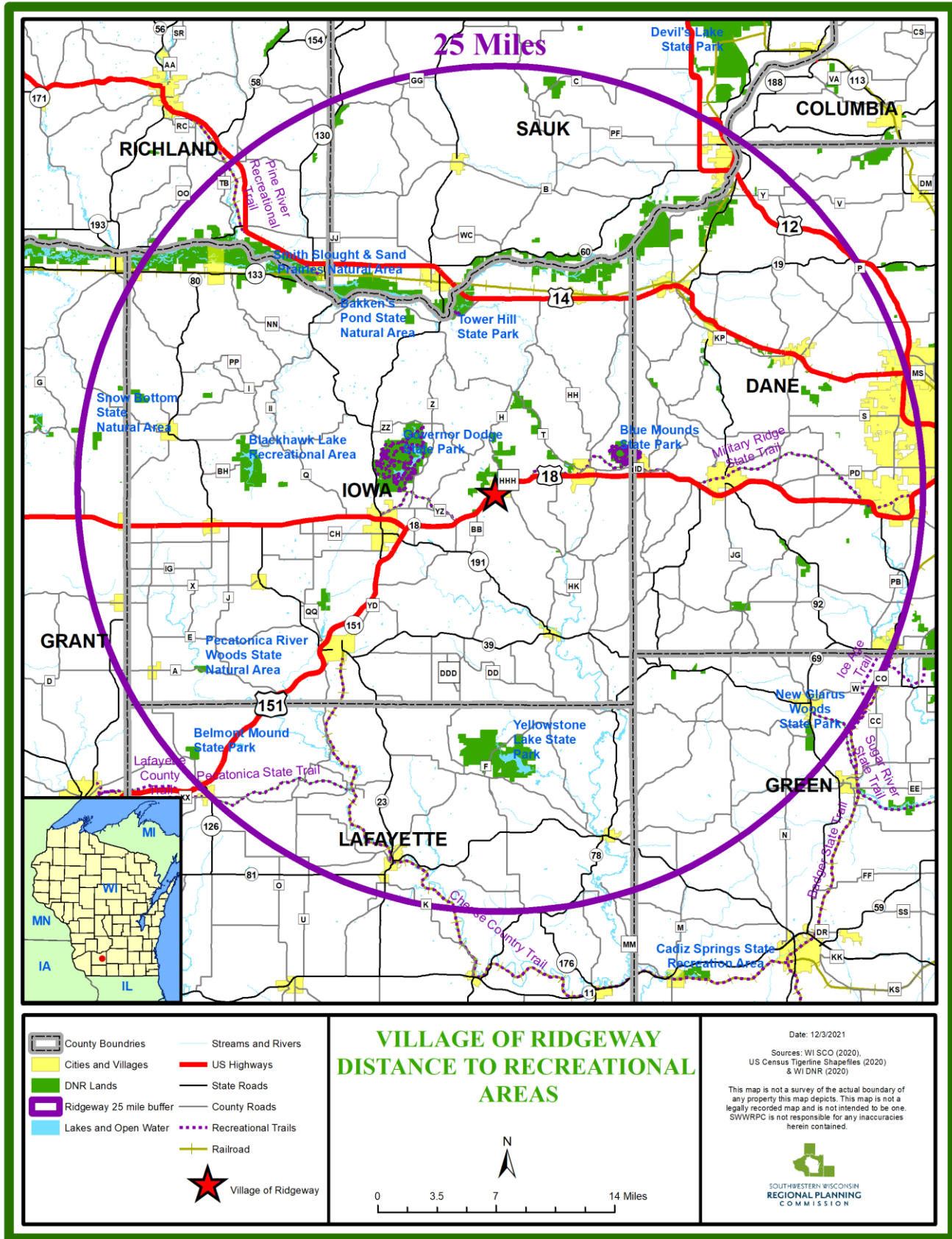
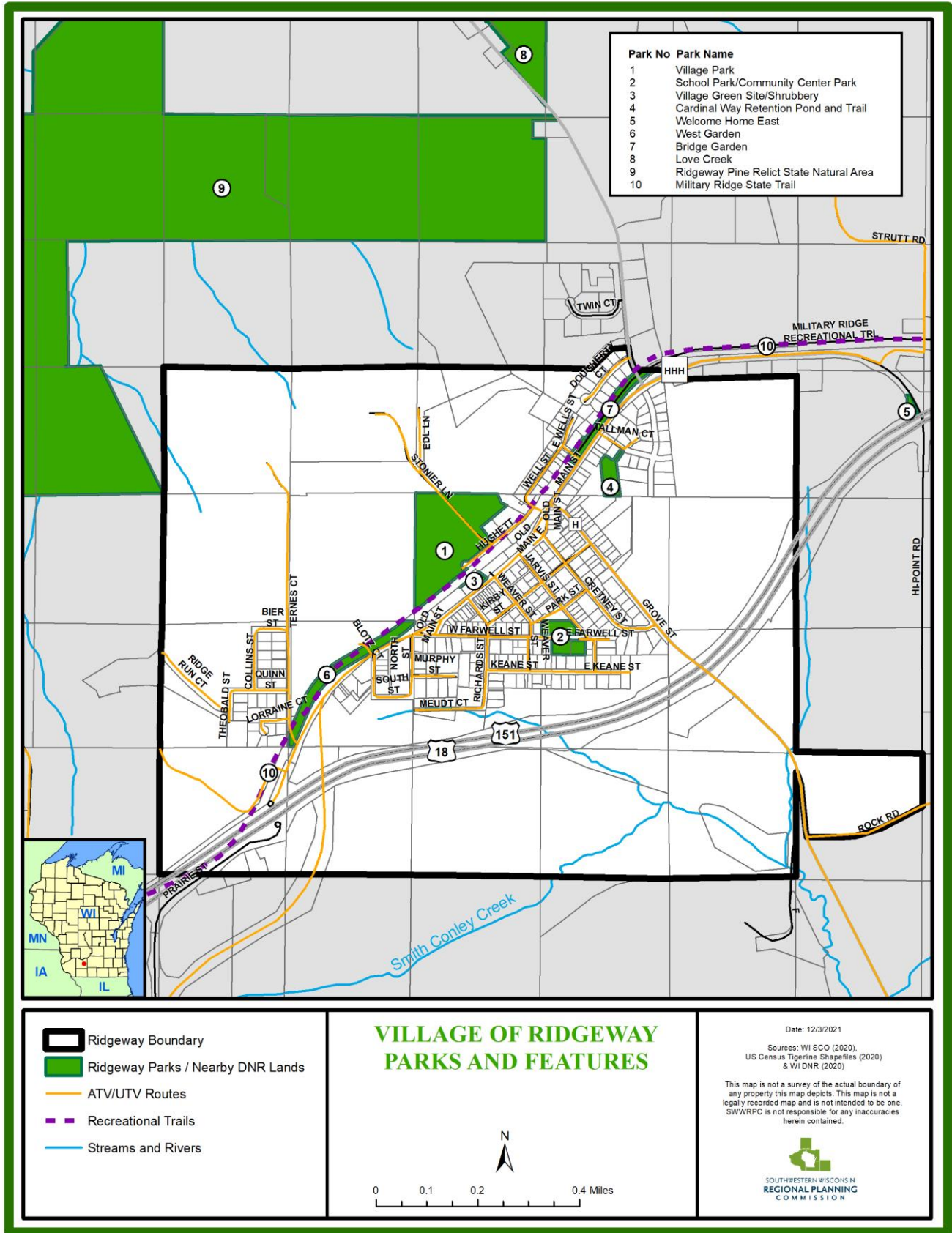


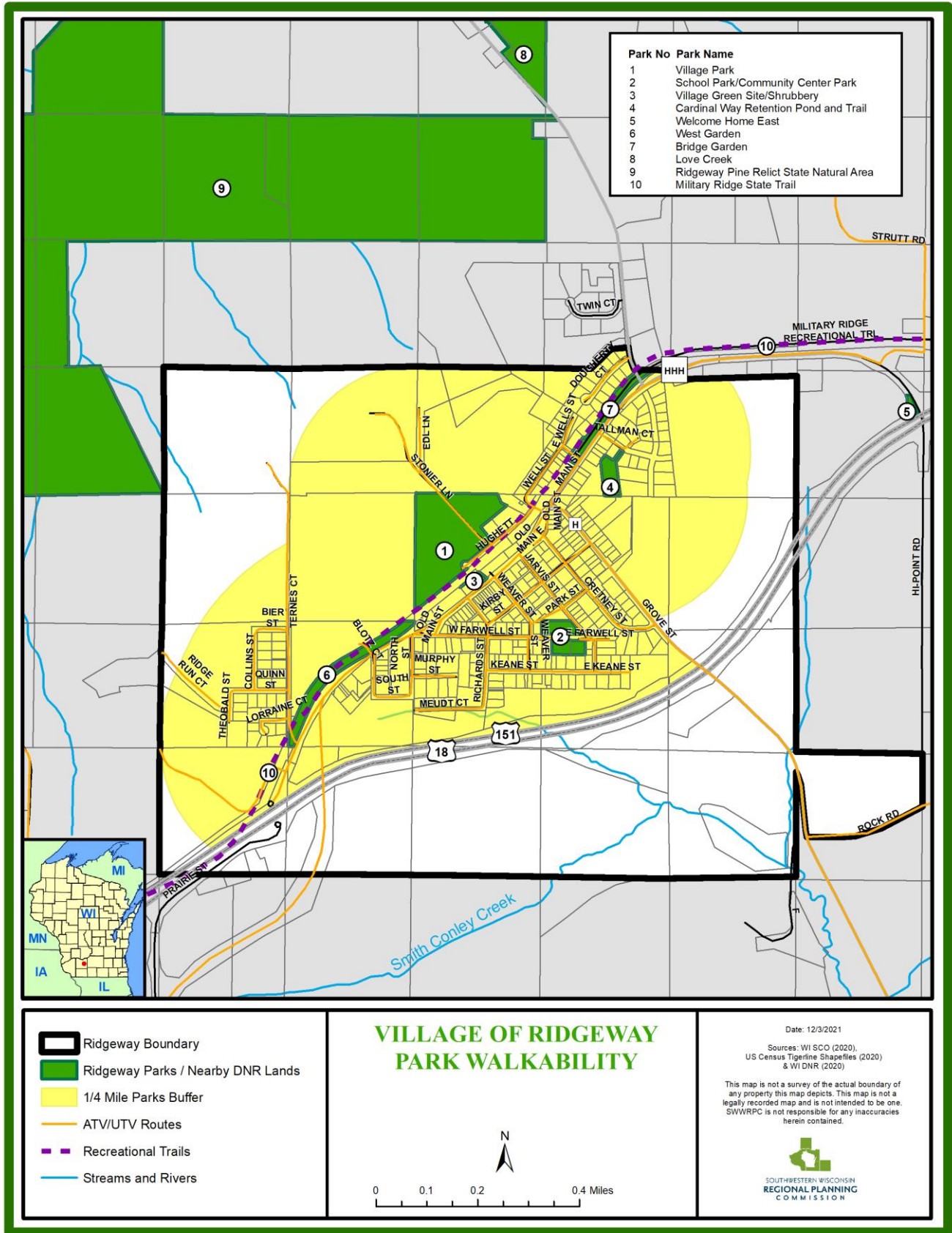
Figure 5: Ridgeway Parks and Features



Walkability

In terms of access, all residential portions of the Village are within one-quarter mile walking distance of a park or recreational asset. Figure 6 is a map depicting pedestrian access to each of Ridgeway’s recreation areas. A yellow buffer was drawn around every park area in the Village. This highlighted section represent the quarter-mile distance to a park. A quarter-mile is conventionally considered to be “walkable” in most communities. This map indicates that all residential portions of the Village are within walking distance of a park.

Figure 6: Park Walkability



Topography

Ridgeway and the surrounding areas in Iowa County are located within the Western Upland. The Western Upland is a geographical region covering much of the western half of Wisconsin. It stretches from southern Polk County in the north to the state border with Illinois in the south, and from Rock County in the east to the Mississippi River in the west. Wisconsin's Western Upland is a rugged, hilly region deeply dissected by rivers and streams. The area is characterized by rocky outcroppings and numerous small caves, as well as sharp and frequent changes in altitude. The average elevation in the region is between 900 to 1,200 feet above sea level, where the area immediately adjacent to the highland averages 600 to 900 feet in elevation. Aside from the Upland itself, the strongest topographic features of the region are the trenches of the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers and their numerous branches. One of the most dominant topographic features of the region is the Military Ridge. The Ridge is the divide between the north flowing tributaries of the Wisconsin River and the south flowing streams of streams tributary to the Rock and Mississippi Rivers.

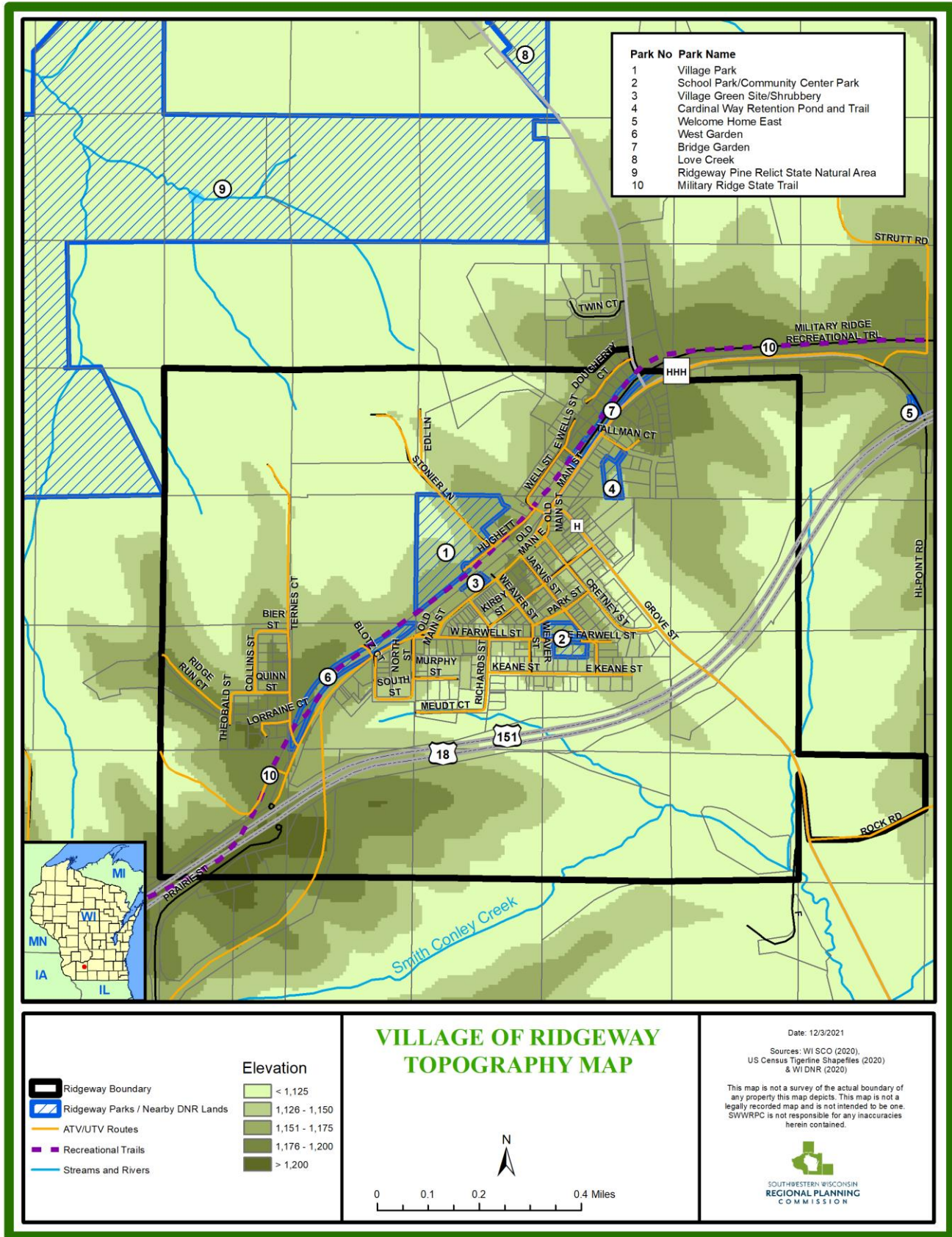
The entire region, with the exception of the eastern half of Green County and a small portion of southeast Lafayette County, is characterized by rugged, steep-walled valleys and high relief. The region is generally referred to as the Driftless Area which preserves a large sample of what the rest of Wisconsin, as well as the northern and eastern United States were like before the Glacial Period.

Figure 7 is a Topography map for the Village of Ridgeway. Ridgeway is a prime example of the topography of the Driftless Region with elevations ranging between 1,100 to 1,200 feet above sea level.

Image 6: Topographic Regions in Wisconsin



Figure 7: Ridgeway Topographic Features



Climate

The climate of Ridgeway and the surrounding area in Iowa County is continental and typical of the central areas of a continent in the middle latitudes. Winters are relatively cold and snowy with extended periods of rain during the spring and autumn and intermittent periods of hot, humid summer weather. Air temperatures within the region are subject to large seasonal changes and yearly variations. Precipitation in the region for the six-month period from April through September falls largely as rainfall and may range in intensity and duration from light showers to destructive thunderstorms. The snowfall average for the region is about 40 inches annually. Prevailing winds are westerly in winter and southerly in summer.

Soils

Throughout the Driftless Area the work of weathering has continued since long before the Glacial Period and has produced a deep mantle of residual soil. This forms a notable contrast with the remainder of the state, where the continental glacier scraped away nearly all the residual soil and left a sheet of transported soil. Generally, the soils of the region have been classified as the Grayish-Brown Unglaciated Silt Loam, hilly or steep. The soils were formed from parent materials reflecting native vegetation such as prairie, oak-hickory forestry, and oak savannas. Their basic materials include clay residue from weathered limestone, weathered sandstone, loess, and stream-laid sand and gravel. The latter occurs in valleys of large streams, while the first three are wide spread. The entire southwest Wisconsin region is covered with a thick blanket of loess (windblown silt and sand). Over most of the region the loess is largely silt and is two to three feet thick. In addition, some sandy areas along the Wisconsin River have active dunes.

Flora and Fauna

Ridgeway is located within the Southwest Savanna ecological landscape in Wisconsin. The Southwest Savanna was once dominated by fire-dependent natural communities of Prairie, Oak Savanna, Oak Woodland and Oak Forest. It is now predominately dominated by agriculture, however, remnants of the former natural communities do exist but typically in low-quality. Less than one-percent of the land in this eco-region are in public ownership so care for the public lands are important. The WIDNR believes this landscape offers the best opportunity in the state for large scale grassland management and restoration. Small and scattered remnants of prairie and oak savanna exist and harbor many rare plant species. High quality streams also exist in this eco-region making buffer zones adjacent to them important.

Threats from invasive plant species have been increasing and control of them should be considered. Invasive plants reduce opportunities for recreation, increase chances for erosion, decrease habitat, and lessen the aesthetics of areas. Some of these invasive plants include: *Alliaria petiolata* (Garlic mustard), *Centaurea stoebe* (Spotted knapweed), *Cirsium arvense* (Canada thistle), *Coronilla varia* (Crown vetch), *Dipsacus sylvestris* (Common teasel), *Elaeagnus umbellata* (Autumn olive), *Euonymus alatus* (Burning bush), *Hesperis matronalis* (Dame's rocket), *Lonicera tatarica* (Tartarian honeysuckle), *Lythrum salicaria* (Purple loosestrife), *Morus alba* (White mulberry), *Pastinaca sativa* (Wild parsnip), *Phalaris arundinacea* (reed canary grass), *Robinia pseudoacacia* (Black locust), *Rosa multiflora* (Multiflora rose). Any plant that is dominating an area could be considered as invasive.

Common trees of the area historically would include fire tolerant Oaks, Shagbark Hickory and Hazelnut undergrowth. Ravines and near waterways would have been Maple, Basswood dominated. However, due to mesophication, woodlands are becoming dominated by other low-quality tree species and stocking rates are much higher today than historical standards.

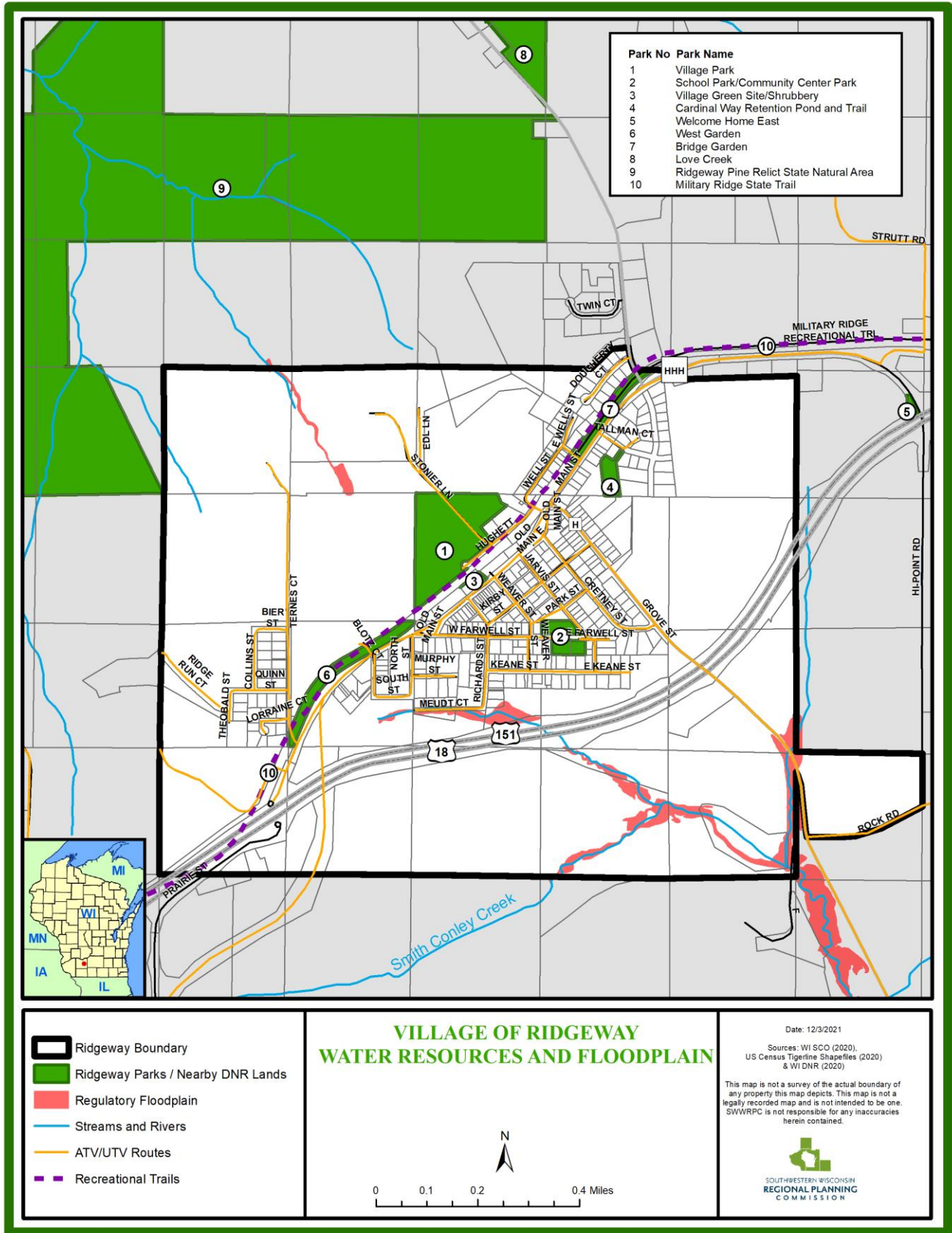
Most of the landscape (70%) is covered in agricultural crop production. Grassland, forest and residential areas comprise the remainder. The grasslands are primarily pasture, with some containing scattered open-grown oaks. These pastures mimic the historical oak savanna structure. Prairie remnants persist in areas poorly suited to agriculture. The area provides much potential for grassland and savanna restoration.

The Southwest Savanna contains public lands which provide abundant recreation opportunities with some of the most popular being surface trail bicycling, paddlesports, fishing and hiking, and walking or running on trails. The Southwest Savanna also contains nine Class I waters, 78 Class II waters, and four Class III waters. The protection of these waterways is imperative to any land use plan.

Water Resources and Floodplain

Two major rivers form boundaries of counties within the region. The Wisconsin River forms the northern boundary of Iowa and Grant counties, and the southern boundary of Richland County; and the Mississippi River forms the western boundary of Grant County. In addition, the area is traversed by a number of smaller rivers and streams that flow to either the Wisconsin or Mississippi Rivers. As mentioned above, there are no natural lakes in Southwestern Wisconsin due to the fact that the area was never covered by glaciers. However, there are a few man-made lakes in the region, most of which are located in state parks or other public recreation areas. Figure 8 illustrates the availability of water within the Village of Ridgeway.

Figure 8: Ridgeway Water Resources and Floodplain



Outdoor Recreation Supply Inventory

To determine what course of action Village officials must take to provide a comprehensive recreation program, it is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of existing areas and facilities in meeting demands for recreation. This section of the report provides an inventory of Ridgeway’s recreational facilities. The location of all park and recreation areas is recorded on Figure 5 (Page 18).

The following is a short description and inventory of existing Village-owned parks and recreational assets.

Image 7: Cardinal Way Retention Pond



Village Park

Village Park is the focal point for outdoor recreation activity in Ridgeway. The park is a popular spot in the summer time with the ballfields, basketball court, playground, shelters, and open space area. A memorial monument, located at the edge of the basketball court, was installed to provide special recognition to citizens providing outstanding community service.

Classification: Village/Community Park

- 16.2 Acres
- Parking lot
- Flush toilets (ADA handicapped accessible)
- 1 drinking fountain
- 22 Picnic tables
- 8 benches
- 2 Large shelter, available to rent, with stage for music
- Large Barbeque pit
- 1 Concession stand
- Large baseball diamond with lights, a grandstand, scoreboard, announcer's stand, chain link fencing and bleachers (on cement pads)
- Smaller baseball diamond with fencing and bleachers
- Playground area
- Playground apparatus including slides, 2 merry go rounds, crawl tube, Zip Crooz, Swing set, and rockers
- 1 Basketball Court
- 2 Sand Volleyball courts
- Archery Range (Ghost Ridge Sportsman's Club)
- 5 Trash cans / 5 Recyclables

Image 8: Village Park Playground Area



Village Green Site/Shrubbery

This site is located between the Military Ridge State Trail and Main Street in the central part of the Village. Facilities in this park include a picnic table, waste receptacle, flagpole, and several trees. Shrubbery has also been planted around the water tower.

Classification: Mini Park

- 0.32 Acres
- 1 picnic table
- 1 Trash can / 1 Recyclable
- flagpole
- several trees

Image 9: Village Green Site/Shrubbery



School Park/Community Center Park

Located in the southeastern part of the Village, the park serves an expanding residential area. Most of the park is fenced in but not to an extent that limits public access.

Classification: Neighborhood Park/Playground

- 2.4 Acres.
- Large open space area used for field games and general play
- Playground area with playground apparatus including swing sets, playsets, zip line, and sandbox
- 1 basketball court with two standards
- 1 Trash can
- 2 benches

Image 10: School Park Playground area



Welcome Home East & West Gardens, and the Bridge Gardens

The highway intersection area dedicated as the Welcome Home East Gardens is located outside of the Village limits at the intersection of Highway 18 and High Point Road and includes a Ridgeway Welcome Home Sign and other signs showing important Village announcements.

The Welcome Home West Gardens and Bridge Gardens are also both located along Main Street on the western and eastern portions of the Village respectively. Both parks are filled with blossoming flowers during the summer. The Welcome Home West Gardens also includes a Ridgeway Welcome Home Sign and two picnic tables.

Classification: Mini Parks

- Welcome Home East Park 0.4 Acres.
- West Gardens 4.2 Acres.
- Bridge Gardens 2.7 Acres.

Image 11: Welcome Home West Gardens



Cardinal Way Retention Pond and Trail

The Cardinal Way Retention Pond and Trail area was a parcel of land which was designated as an 'outlot' on the Cardinal Way Subdivision recorded plat, and was not intended to be used as a residential lot when the plat was being developed. The area which has since been developed into a large landscaped open space area includes a pond, trail, and three benches.

Classification: Neighborhood Park/Playground

- 1.6 Acres.

Image 12: Cardinal Way Retention Pond



Military Ridge State Trail

The Military Ridge State Trail was created in the early 1980's when the WIDNR purchased the abandoned railroad line running from Verona in Dane County to Dodgeville. The trail offers recreational opportunities for hikers, cyclists, and snowmobilers over a distance of 39.6 miles. It is one of the busiest trails in the state. The trail has considerable tourism appeal and brings many bicyclists to Ridgeway where they often stop to rest or have a picnic at the Village Green Site or the Village Ball Park.

Classification: Linear Park

Image 13: View of the Military Ridge State Trail in Ridgeway



Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment

To compose the Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment, SWWRPC developed a comprehensive outreach strategy for the Village of Ridgeway. The survey was created electronically and open from September 28th to October 29th, 2021. Survey access information was posted on the Village’s website, Village utility bills, and Facebook pages. Paper copies were available upon request and in the clerk’s office. In total, SWWRPC collected 118 completed surveys with an estimated 19% sample size of the total population. However, some questions within the survey were not answered by all respondents.

These survey results were compiled, distributed, and presented in a meeting with the Ridgeway Parks and Recreation Commission on November 2nd, 2021. The results of the survey, public forum, and on-site evaluation for SWWRPC’s inventory process were instrumental in framing the Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment.

Survey

The two primary purposes of the survey effort were to (1) identify the quality of existing parks, facilities, and recreation spaces, and (2) identify the need for future parks, facilities, and recreational spaces. Overall, park satisfaction in Ridgeway is moderate (Figure 9). The Village Park, Village Green Site/Shrubbery, School Park/Community Center Park, and Military Ridge State Trail are all rated as high in frequency of use and of good quality, as shown in Figures 10 and 11 respectively. Of all the recreational facilities, the School Park/Community Center Park had the highest indication of “needing improvement”.

Figure 9: Overall Ridgeway Park Satisfaction

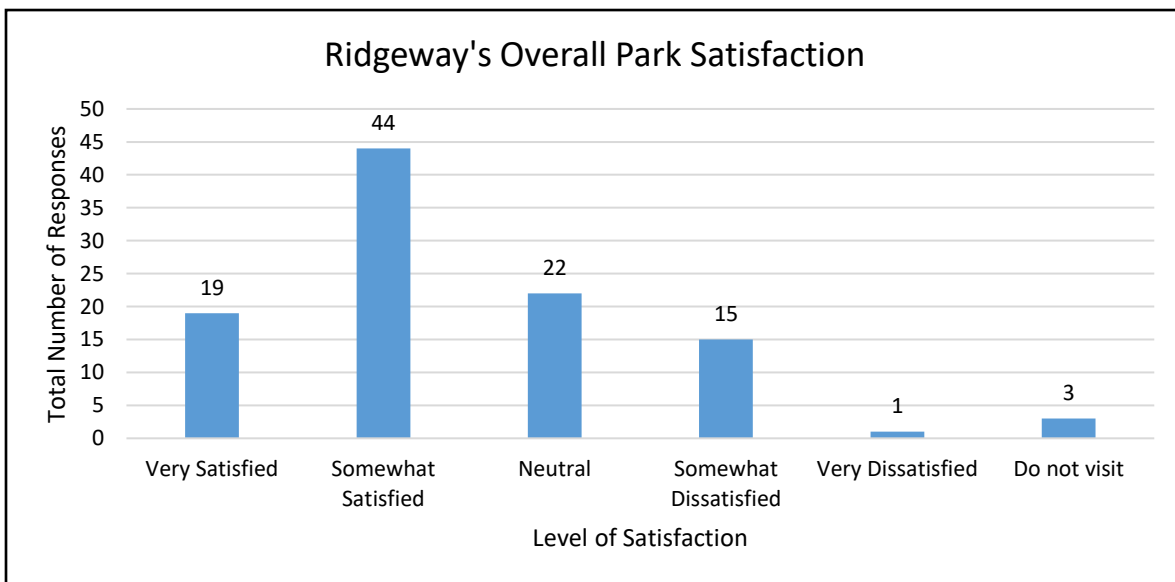


Figure 10: Ridgeway Park Visit Frequency

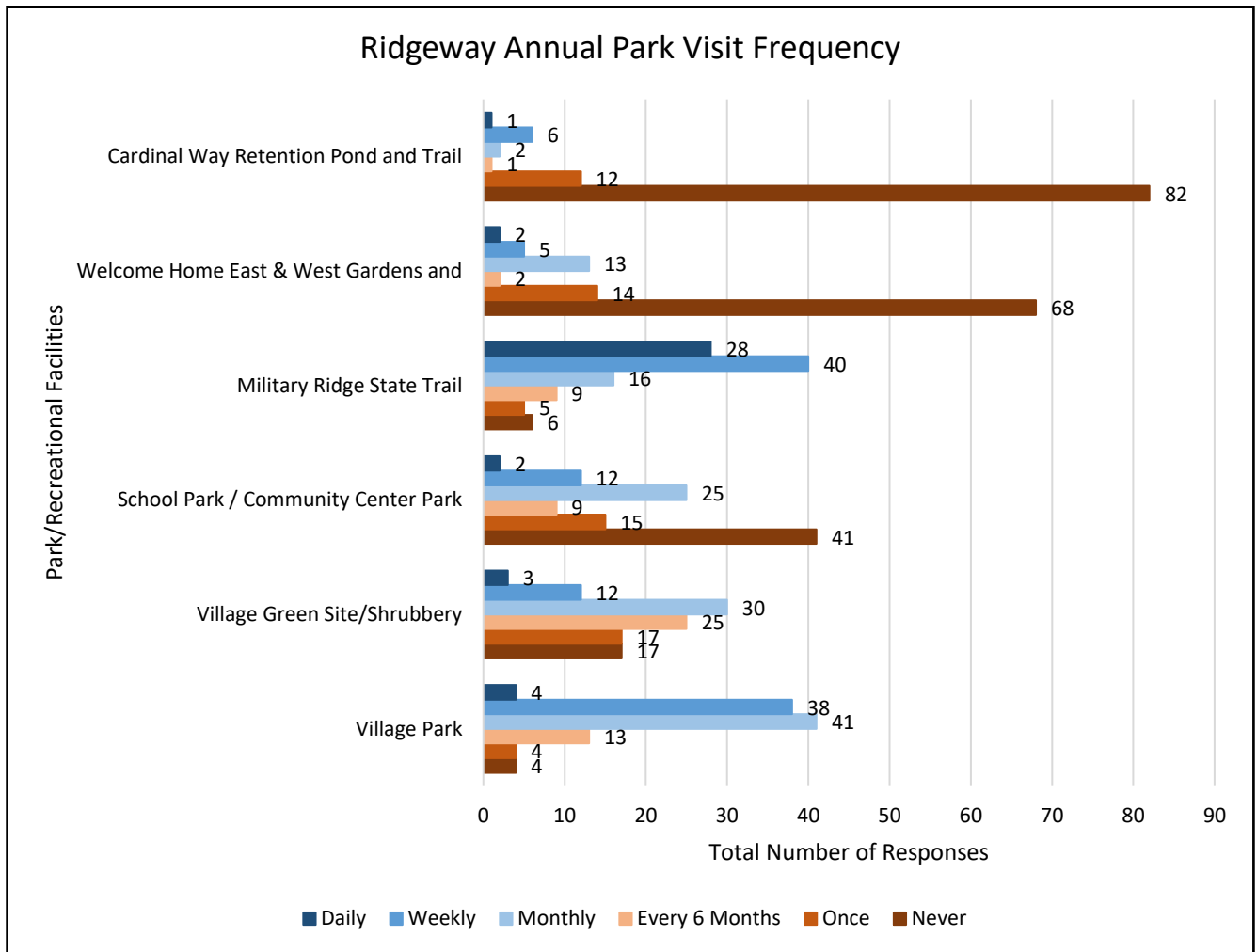
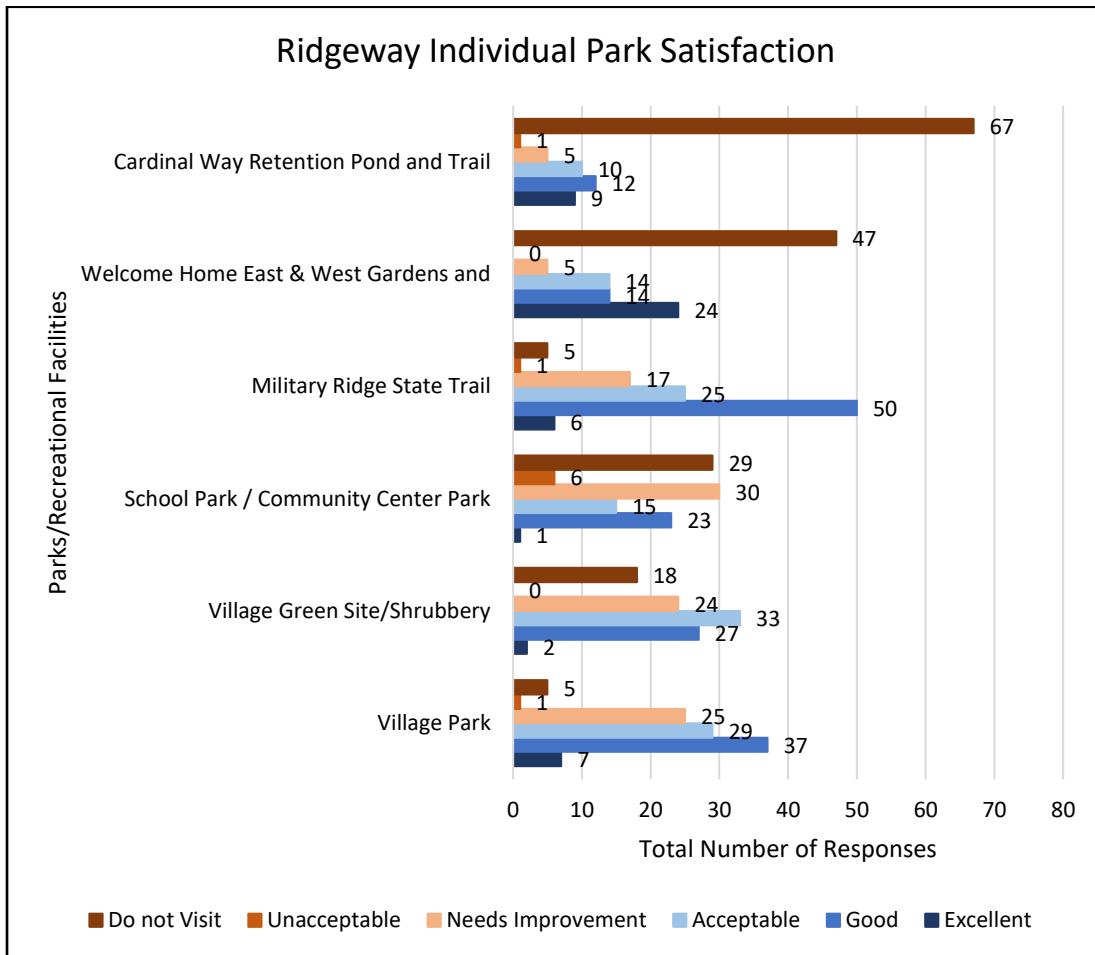


Figure 11: Ridgeway's Individual Park Satisfaction



In terms of addressing future needs, survey participants indicated their top-3 highest priorities for park maintenance, as shown in Figure 12. These priorities include maintaining facilities (including park shelters, restroom, etc.), amenities (including picnic tables, trash cans, water fountain, etc.), and equipment (including playgrounds, basketball court and hoops, etc.). Of these three top priorities each were indicated as being “needed now,” rather than sometime within the next five years. Survey participants had the following comments:

“I would like to see a veteran’s memorial in the Village”

“I would like to see a Dog park, tennis court, more concessions at the farmers market, and youth activities like soccer or dance. I would really like to see regular open gym available to children/ families even if it was like twice a month. Also increased trail repair/ maintenance on military ridge.”

“I think a dog park, even if small, would be helpful. I have a fenced in yard but know that many people use the current larger ball park as a dog park... for those who do not have a fence. I would LOVE to see an ice skating rink area but understandable there is not a lot of area for it. I also have a desire to get more involved in the community and meet more neighbors. If the community center was used for crafts and activities I would take advantage of that.”

“The farmers market has added greatly to the quality of life in Ridgeway. Also love the community center.”

“Improve the bathrooms, add splash pad, and add more activities for young kids and families”

"I would like to see a trail from east to west through the Pine Relict Co. H to Ridgeview Rd."

"Seems the Farmers Market is popular, improve facility to accommodate growth in this area. Improve food stand so it is useable during this event. Modify the shelter so vendors that setup in there feel they're a part of the market."

"The playground equipment at the community center is extremely outdated and verging on being unsafe for the kids. As it used to be the school, I know kids would love to be able to play there, but because of this choose not to."

"I would like to see a Recreation Department within the village. Recreation Departments provide the community with many opportunities and can be a main resource for activities for all ages and abilities for the village."

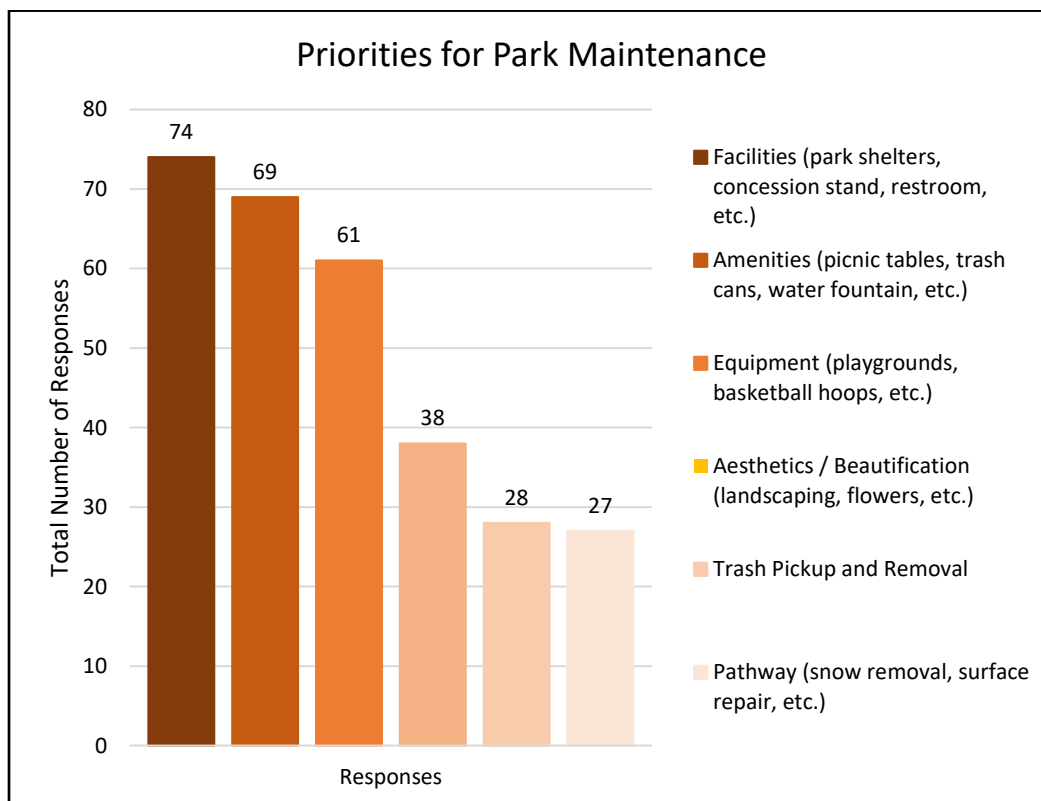
"More trash cans along paths/in parks."

"Trail improvement at the Cardinal Way Retention pond"

"Something for families with younger kids. We travel to Mount Horeb and Monona as Ridgeway and Dodgeville offer nothing for kids under age of 5."

"The lighting could be better for the volleyball courts. And being able to turn them on and off without getting into the stand would be nice. It would help out the volleyball league. And the polls could be replaced. That hold the nets"

Figure 12: Ridgeway's Priorities for Park Maintenance



Summary of Public Outreach

Public input sessions are often a statutory requirement or prerequisite to the adoption of certain ordinances and plans at the local government level. In light of public health concerns arising from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the public input stage of the process was altered to reduce in-person meetings. Due to this, the survey period was extended to provide ample time for more community members to respond to the survey. Also, open-ended questions were included in the survey to solicit for detailed responses regarding needed improvements to the parks, recreational facilities, and amenities. In total, SWWRPC collected 118 completed surveys with an estimated 19% sample size of the total population.

At a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting held on November 2nd, 2021, SWWRPC shared data gathered from the survey. The Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the material, identified Ridgeway's critical issues, provided additional feedback on the survey, reviewed recommendations, and developed plan goals and objectives. The Plan will be reviewed and adopted by the Village at their December 14th board meeting.

Needs identified through public participation include the following:

- Provide additional park amenities and facilities in existing parks including playground equipment, picnic tables, benches and others; new recreation facilities should accommodate all user groups, including the unique needs of the elderly and disabled.
- Parks need regular equipment and maintenance improvements. Priorities for park maintenance should be: improving amenities, restroom maintenance, equipment maintenance, facility maintenance, as well as increasing efforts like landscaping and beautification.
- Parks need to continue to be updated to become more handicap accessible.
- Park attendance needs to be improved. Better marketing and awareness of parks should be provided.
- Comments from the survey indicated that many residents are either (1) concerned that there is not any appropriate facility for dog-owners and their pets or (2) that dogs allowed within the parks create a nuisance for regular park visitors. It is recommended that the parks committee engage in conversation with Ridgeway residents to establish rules about access of dogs in parks and also to establish if a dog park is the best possible solution to the problem.
- 60% of survey respondents also expressed the desire for a Splash Pad facility during the survey; the Village of Ridgeway may need to start fundraising efforts as well as apply for WIDNR funding to support this project as has been done in neighboring communities. A Splash Pad facility would provide more activities for young kids and families as well as attract people to town.
- Continual funding is critical for the existing and future needs of the Ridgeway Parks system.

Recommendations for Outdoor Recreation

Action Program

Under the existing park and open space classification system, Ridgeway has enough open space for its population of 624 people. In terms of access, all residential portions of the Village are within one-quarter mile walking distance of a park or recreational asset. The following section features two sets of recommendations 1) to strengthen existing park assets through ongoing maintenance improvements and by providing additional park amenities and 2) to develop park sites and facilities based on unmet community needs.

Recommendations by Park

Village Park

Several improvements are needed at the Village Park. Recommendations for individual projects or activities are listed below:

- Add more playground apparatus (some designed for handicapped persons). Replace worn playground equipment with new and innovative playground apparatus.
- Update ballfields while addressing the erosion and gutter safety issues there.
- Update the concession stand to make it a better community gathering space.
- Resurface the shelter building floors to make them more level. Modify the shelters so that vendors that setup there during Farmer's Market feel part of the market.
- Provide additional trash cans.
- Provide better restroom clean-up and maintenance.
- Replace the volleyball polls that hold the nets. Also enhance lighting at the volleyball courts while ensuring that lights can be turned on and off without getting into the stands.
- Provide a dog waste station within park.
- Provide an area within the Village Park for a Dog Park. Also provide signage to prevent people from walking their dogs in the ball field. Figure 13 shows the proposed location for the Dog Park within the Village Park.
- Install a Splash Pad. Figure 13 shows the proposed location for the splash pad within the Village Park.

School Park/Community Center Park

Several improvements are needed at the School Park. Recommendations for individual projects or activities are listed below:

- Add more playground apparatus (some designed for handicapped persons). Replace worn playground equipment with new and innovative playground apparatus.
- Provide additional benches and seating areas within the School Park.
- Provide additional trash cans.
- Provide a dog waste station within park.

Cardinal Way Retention Pond and Trail

Several improvements are needed at the Cardinal Way Retention Pond and Trail area. Recommendations for individual projects or activities are listed below:

- Develop pond area more to include beautiful areas with native plants where people can connect with nature.
- Provide a dog waste station within park.
- Provide additional trash cans.
- Develop and improve the existing grass Cardinal Way Trail into a gravel trail.
- Provide signage at the entrance of the park.
- Provide lighting at the park to help improve safety.

Military Ridge State Trail

Several improvements are needed on the Military Ridge State Trail. Recommendations for individual projects or activities are listed below:

- Increase trail repair/ maintenance on Military Ridge State Trail.
- Provide a dog waste station along trail.
- Provide bore benches along trail for walking people to sit.
- Provide more trash cans along trail.

Village Green Site/Shrubbery

Several improvements are needed on the Village Green Site/Shrubbery. Recommendations for individual projects or activities are listed below:

- Reseed areas within park that have grass damages. Provide additional landscaping around water tower.
- Provide additional picnic tables and benches within park.
- Improve lighting at the park.
- Provide a dog waste station within park.

Welcome Home East & West Gardens, and the Bridge Gardens

The three community gardens are all in excellent condition. One recommendations was identified during the public outreach process and has been listed below:

- Add informational signage about plants.

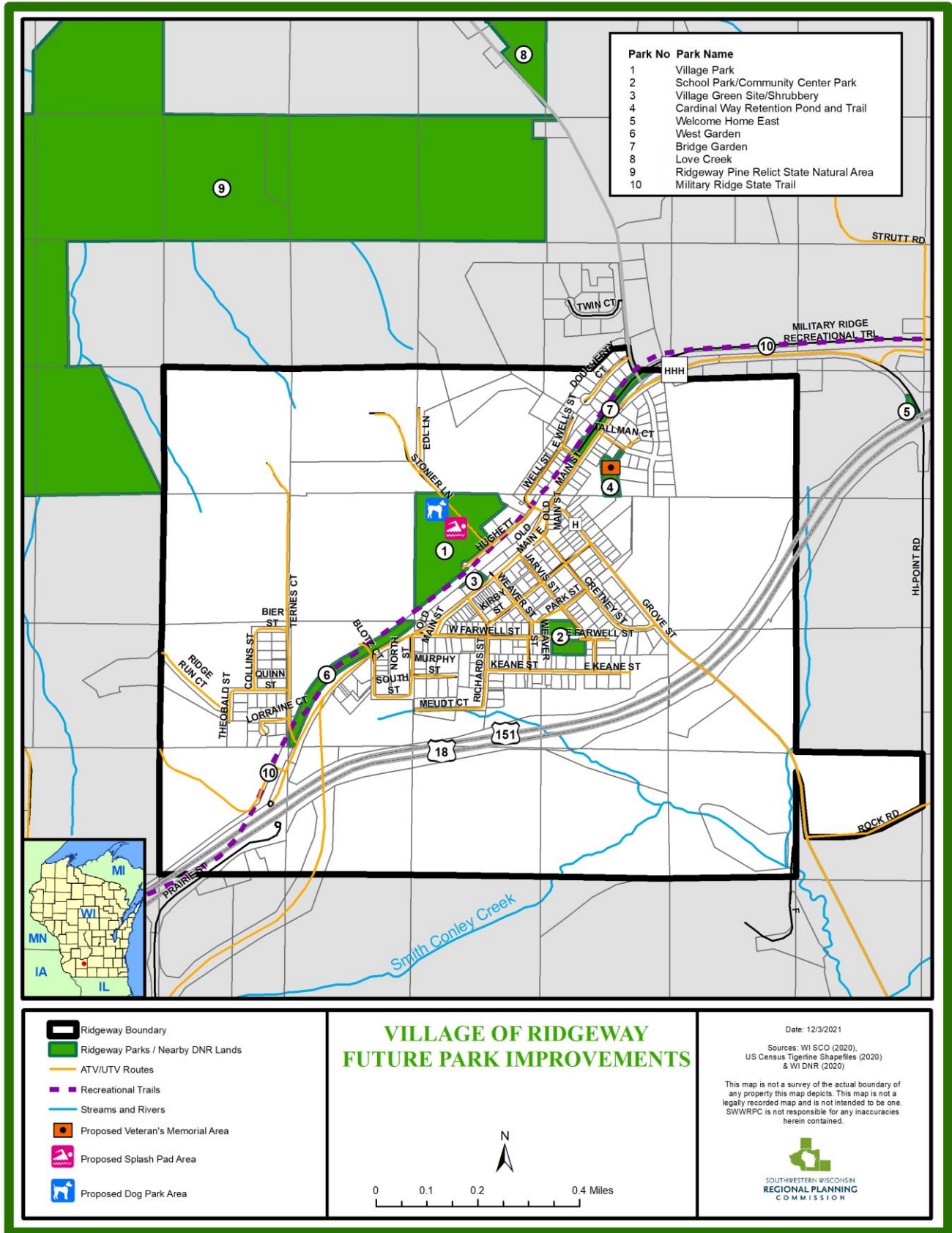
Additional Recreational Spaces

Other additional recreational needs include:

- Add a Veteran's Memorial area within one of the existing parks. Include a flagpole and benches in this area.
- Invest in wayfinding signage identifying key community assets such as parks and businesses with a focus on getting residents and travelers to visit these community assets.

Figure 14 shows the locations of future recreational improvements within the Village of Ridgeway.

Figure 14: Future Improvements Map



Appendix A: Capital Improvement Schedule

Over the next five years, the Village of Ridgeway will focus on the improvements outlined in the previous section. These recommendations are in addition to the standard operations and maintenance schedule under which the Village currently operates. Table 3 is the Capital Improvement Schedule which shows the park specific recommendations, priorities, and the number of years the plan recommendation will be completed by.

Table 3: Capital Improvements Schedule

Park/Recommendation	Priority	Timeline
	1 – 5 1 being highest priority	Within 1 year 2 years 3 years 4 years 5 years
Village Park		
Add more playground apparatus (some designed for handicapped persons). Replace worn playground equipment with new and innovative playground apparatus.	3	Within 3 year
Update ballfields whiles addressing the erosion and gutter safety issues there.	2	Within 2 years
Update the concession stand to make it a better community gathering space.	2	Within 3 years
Resurface the shelter building floors to make them more level. Modify the shelter so that vendors that setup there during Farmer’s Market feel a part of the market.	2	Within 2 years
Provide additional trash cans.	4	Within 4 years
Provide better restroom clean-up and maintenance.	1	ongoing
Replace the volleyball polls that hold the nets. Also enhance lighting at the volleyball courts while ensuring that lights can be turned on and off without getting into the stands.	3	Within 3 years
Provide an area within the Village Park for a Dog Park. Also provide signage to prevent people from walking their dogs in the ball field.	1	Within 2 years
Install a Splash Pad.	5	Within 5 years
Provide a dog waste station within park.	1	Within 2 years
School Park or Community Center Park		
Add more playground apparatus (some designed for handicapped persons). Replace worn playground equipment with new and innovative playground apparatus	2	Within 3 years
Provide additional benches and seating areas within the School Park.	3	Within 4 years
Provide additional trash cans.	3	Within 3 years
Provide a dog waste station within park.	1	Within 2 years
Cardinal Way Retention Pond and Trail		
Develop pond area more to include beautiful areas with native plants where people can connect with nature	4	Within 3 years
Provide signage at the entrance of the park.	2	Within 2 years

Provide a dog waste station within park.	1	Within 2 years
Provide additional trash cans.	3	Within 4 years
Develop and improve the existing grass Cardinal Way Trail into a gravel trail.	3	Within 3 years
Provide lighting at the park to help improve safety.	5	Within 5 years
Military Ridge State Trail		
Increase trail repair/ maintenance on Military Ridge State Trail	4	ongoing
Provide a dog waste station along trail.	1	Within 2 years
Provide bore benches along trail for walking people to sit.	3	Within 3 years
Provide more trash cans along trail.	3	Within 2 years
Village Green Site/Shrubbery		
Reseed areas within park that have grass damages. Provide additional landscaping around water tower.	2	Within 3 years
Provide additional picnic tables and benches within park.	4	Within 4 years
Improve lighting at the park.	3	Within 3 years
Provide a dog waste station within park.	1	Within 2 years
Welcome Home East & West Gardens, and the Bridge Gardens		
Add informational signage about plants.	2	Within 2 years
Additional Recreational Spaces		
Add a Veteran's Memorial area within one of the existing parks. Include a flagpole and benches in this area.	3	Within 3 years
Invest in wayfinding signage identifying key community assets such as parks and businesses with a focus on getting residents and travelers to visit these community assets.	2	Within 3 years