

# A PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN FOR MILWAUKEE COUNTY



## SUMMARY REPORT

MAY 1991



MILWAUKEE COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,  
RECREATION AND CULTURE

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Special acknowledgement is due Gerald H. Emmerich, Jr., SEWRPC  
Principal Planner, for his contribution to this report.

## Summary Report

### A PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN FOR MILWAUKEE COUNTY

#### PROPOSED NEW PLAN COMPLETED

In 1977, the Regional Planning Commission prepared a regional park and open space plan for Southeastern Wisconsin. That plan was adopted by the Milwaukee County Board in 1978 as a guide to the acquisition and development of needed park and open space sites and facilities in the County. At the request of Milwaukee County, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission has prepared a new County park plan.

Adoption and implementation of the plan will, over time, result in the completion of an integrated park and related open space system within the County—a system which can continue to preserve and enhance the natural resource base, while at the same time providing, in an efficient and effective manner, opportunities for a wide range of high-quality outdoor recreational experiences. The importance of the implementation of this plan to the overall quality of life within the County cannot be overemphasized. Milwaukee County is blessed with an abundance of high-quality resource amenities, including Lake Michigan shoreline, numerous rivers and streams, attractive and environmentally important woodlands and wetlands, and scenic landscapes. Unfortunately, these resource amenities are all too often taken for granted, or worse, abused and destroyed. These natural resource amenities are as irreplaceable as they are invaluable, and once lost, are lost forever. Action taken now to complete the County park and parkway system will not only preserve these natural resources and therefore the unique natural beauty, cultural heritage, and overall environmental quality of Milwaukee County for all time, but will also assure the provision of recreational resources that can continue to provide residents of the County with outstanding opportunities to participate in a wide variety of wholesome outdoor recreational activities close to home.

The proposed new County park plan is set forth in SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 132, A Park and Open Space Plan for Milwau-

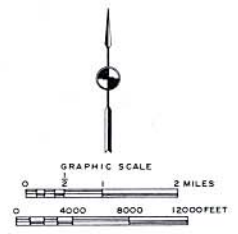
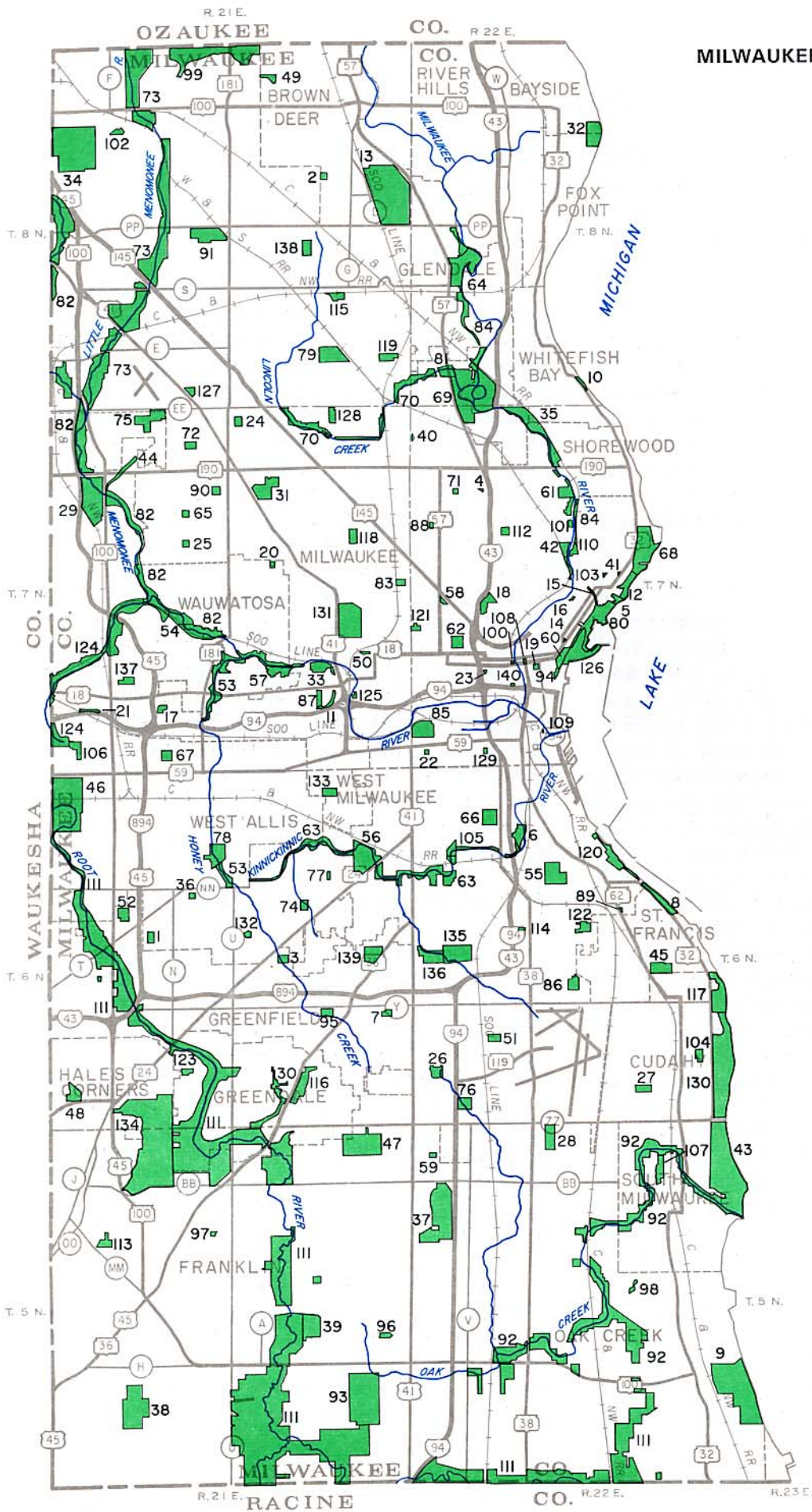
kee County. The report provides information on recent park and open space acquisition and development within the County; incorporates new land use and natural resource inventory and planning data; and, as necessary, sets forth revised recommendations on park and open space site acquisition and development within Milwaukee County. The report also contains a set of park and open space preservation, acquisition, and development objectives and supporting standards relevant to the needs and values of the citizens of the County, and identifies the roles which the State and local agencies of government, as well as the County, should play in meeting park and related open space needs within the County in a fully coordinated, cooperative manner. Adoption of the plan by the County Board and by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will make the County eligible for up to 50 percent assistance in the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation and open space sites and related facilities. This pamphlet presents a summary of the new Milwaukee County park and open space plan.

#### EXISTING PARK AND OPEN SPACE SITES

As indicated on Map 1 and in Table 1, the Milwaukee County park and parkway system in 1990 consisted of 140 sites encompassing 14,725 acres, or about 9 percent of the total area of the County. The 128 County parks ranged in size from Whitnall Park, a 640-acre regional park located in the southwestern portion of the County to five small parks less than one acre in size. These County parks provided such facilities as ball diamonds and other playfields, tennis courts, children's play areas, swimming pools and beaches, golf courses, and picnic areas.

The 12 County parkways ranged in size from the 3,929-acre Root River Parkway to the 11-acre Grantosa Parkway. County-owned parkways encompass and protect the natural resources associated with the rivers and streams of the County.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY PARKS AND PARKWAYS



Source: SEWRPC.

Table 1

## MILWAUKEE COUNTY PARKS AND PARKWAYS: 1990

Number on Map 1	Site Name	Acres	Number on Map 1	Site Name	Acres
1	Alcott	16.6	72	Lindsay	10.4
2	Algonquin	10.1	73	Little Menomonee River Parkway	883.2
3	Armour	16.1	74	Lyons	12.9
4	Atkinson	1.3	75	Madison	59.5
5	Back Bay	6.3	76	Maitland	27.3
6	Baran	31.8	77	Manitoba	5.0
7	Barnard	10.6	78	McCarty	60.6
8	Bay View	35.9	79	McGovern	70.5
9	Bender	308.4	80	McKinley	119.2
10	Big Bay	7.5	81	Meaux	25.0
11	Bluff	6.7	82	Menomonee River Parkway	640.0
12	Bradford Beach	19.3	83	Metcalfe	8.1
13	Brown Deer	367.3	84	Milwaukee River Parkway (includes Cambridge Woods)	116.9
14	Burns Triangle	0.6	85	Mitchell	60.8
15	Chicago & North Western Railroad Right-of-Way	15.2	86	Mitchell Airport	18.7
16	Caesar's	1.8	87	Mitchell Boulevard	15.6
17	Cannon	8.5	88	Moody	4.1
18	Carver	20.0	89	Morgan Triangle	1.0
19	Cathedral Square	2.3	90	Nash	7.2
20	Center	5.0	91	Noyes	80.8
21	Chippewa	10.4	92	Oak Creek Parkway	1,022.0
22	Clark Square	2.1	93	Oakwood	278.3
23	Clas	0.8	94	O'Donnell	9.0
24	Columbus	8.1	95	Parksite 56	16.6
25	Cooper	8.4	96	Parksite 59	8.9
26	Copernicus	22.1	97	Parksite 64	4.5
27	Cudahy	17.6	98	Parksite 65	12.0
28	Cudahy Nature Preserve	42.3	99	Parksite 71	200.5
29	Currie	209.3	100	Pere Marquette	1.9
30	Dale Creek Parkway	45.3	101	Pleasant Valley	7.0
31	Dineen	59.2	102	Popuch	11.1
32	Doctors	49.5	103	Prospect Triangle	0.6
33	Doyne	35.1	104	Pulaski (Cudahy)	16.7
34	Dretzka	326.6	105	Pulaski (Milwaukee)	17.7
35	Estabrook	115.1	106	Rainbow	25.9
36	Euclid	9.2	107	Rawson	28.1
37	Falk	217.3	108	Red Arrow	0.6
38	Franklin	164.6	109	Riverfront Launch Site	1.0
39	Froemming	72.6	110	Riverside	21.8
40	Garden Homes Square	1.9	111	Root River Parkway	3,929.0
41	Gilman Triangle	0.4	112	Rose	9.1
42	Gordon	13.7	113	St. Martin's	19.2
43	Grant	381.4	114	Saveland	3.9
44	Grantosa Parkway	11.0	115	Schoenecker	17.6
45	Greene	37.8	116	Scout Lake	72.3
46	Greenfield	295.2	117	Sheridan	84.1
47	Grobschmidt	154.8	118	Sherman	20.8
48	Hales Corners	33.3	119	Smith	20.2
49	Hanson	13.6	120	South Shore	48.0
50	Highland	3.4	121	Tiefenthaler	10.7
51	Holler	16.4	122	Tippecanoe	14.9
52	Holt	24.1	123	Trimborn Farm	7.5
53	Honey Creek Parkway (North and South)	117.8	124	Underwood Creek Parkway	386.3
54	Hoyt	35.1	125	Valley	1.7
55	Humboldt	70.6	126	Veterans	92.8
56	Jackson	117.4	127	Vogel	11.5
57	Jacobus	31.2	128	Wahl	13.7
58	Johnsons	13.3	129	Walker Square	2.1
59	Johnstone	12.7	130	Warnimont	291.6
60	Juneau	15.0	131	Washington	134.8
61	Kern	28.3	132	Wedgewood	6.2
62	King	21.3	133	West Milwaukee	20.1
63	Kinnickinnic River Parkway	227.1	134	Whitnall	640.1
64	Kletzsch	118.9	135	Wilson	78.5
65	Kops	8.3	136	Wilson Recreational Center	58.2
66	Kosciusko	34.7	137	Wisconsin Avenue	17.6
67	La Follette	18.4	138	Wyrick	19.9
68	Lake	140.3	139	Zablocki	47.4
69	Lincoln	312.1	140	Zeidler	1.2
70	Lincoln Creek Parkway	114.1			
71	Lindbergh	2.5			
				Total Site Area	14,725.0

Source: Milwaukee County Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture; and SEWRPC.



The County park and parkway system also offers a variety of special recreational facilities, including such facilities as the Boerner Botanical Gardens at Whitnall Park; the ice arena at the Wilson Recreational Center; and the Horticultural Conservatory at Mitchell Park. In addition, the County provides about 89 miles of trails and bicycle routes in County parks and parkways and along public streets in the County.

In 1990, there were also 584 other public park and open space sites, school outdoor recreation sites, and private outdoor recreation sites in Milwaukee County, having a combined area of 5,650 acres, or about 4 percent of the total area of the County. Of this total, 422 sites, or 72 percent of the sites, and 2,865 acres, or 51 percent of the area, were publicly owned. The remaining 160 sites, and 2,331 acres, were nonpublicly owned.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDORS

The most important features of the natural resource base in Milwaukee County, including the best remaining woodlands, wetlands, wildlife habitat areas, major bodies of surface water and related undeveloped floodlands and shorelands, and sites having historic, scenic, scientific, and recreational value, occur in linear areas in the land- and city-scapes termed environmental corridors. Primary environmental corridors encompass a variety of the above mentioned important natural resource features and are, by definition, at least 400 acres in size, two miles in length, and 200 feet

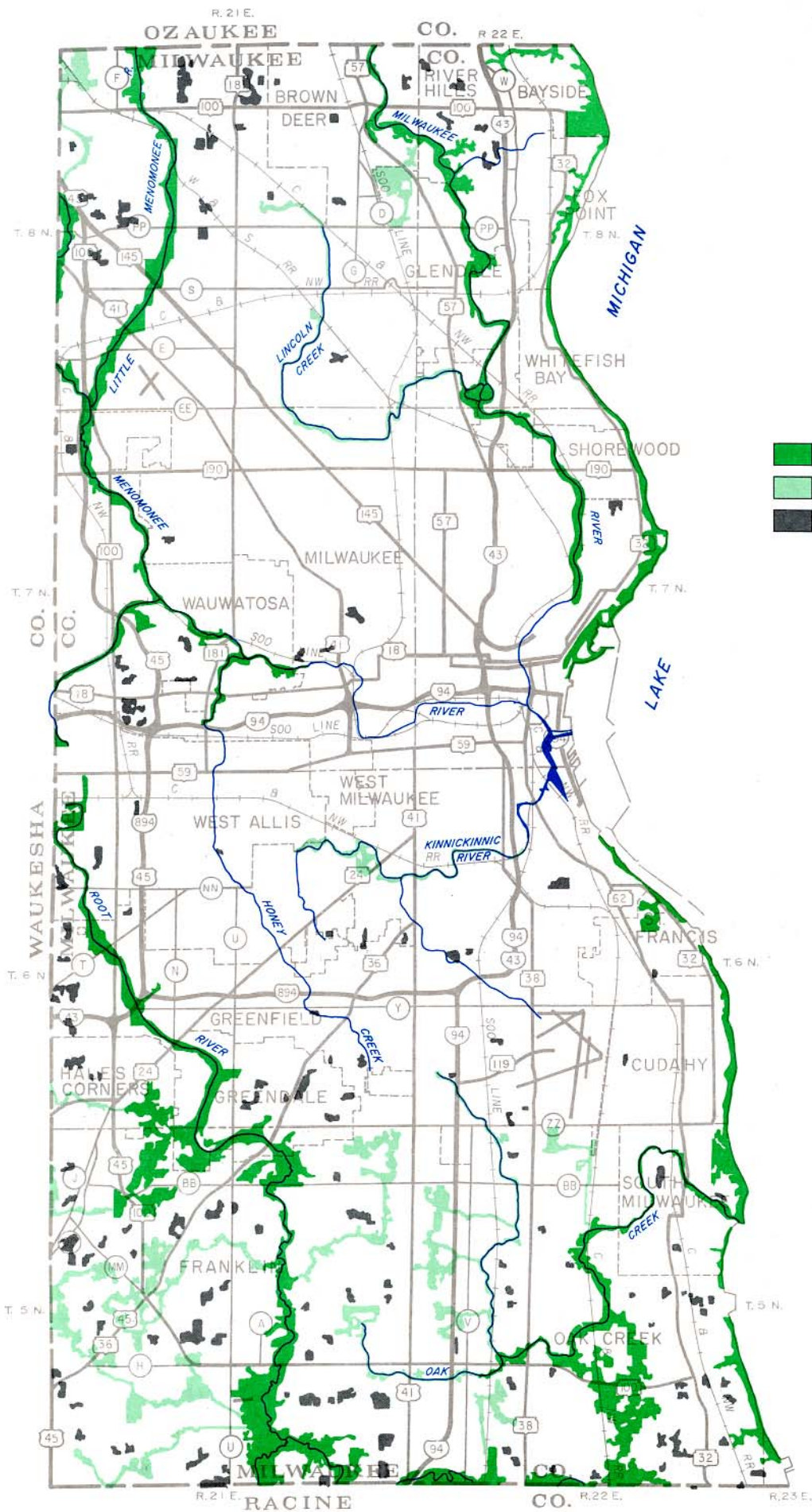
in width. As shown on Map 2, in 1990, primary environmental corridors encompassed 10,277 acres, or about 7 percent of the total area of the County. Of this total, about 6,787 acres, or about 66 percent, were located within the Milwaukee County park and parkway system, primarily within the Little Menomonee River, the Menomonee River, the Oak Creek, and the Root River Parkways.

Secondary environmental corridors connect with primary environmental corridors and provide areas for the movement of wildlife, maintain "pockets" of natural resource features, and facilitate surface water drainage. Secondary environmental corridors are, by definition, at least 100 acres in size and one mile in length. As shown on Map 2, secondary environmental corridors encompassed 3,100 acres, or about 2 percent of the County. Of this total, about 815 acres, or about 26 percent, were located within the Milwaukee County park and parkway system.




In addition to the primary and secondary environmental corridors, other, smaller pockets or concentrations of natural resource base elements existed within Milwaukee County. These isolated natural features included a variety of important isolated wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife habitat areas and provide good locations for local parks and nature study areas. As shown on Map 2, about 2,280 acres, or about 1 percent of the County, were encompassed within such isolated natural areas. Of this total, about 350 acres, or about 15 percent, were located within the Milwaukee County park and parkway system.

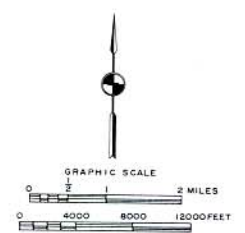
Map 2

### ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDORS AND ISOLATED NATURAL AREAS IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY

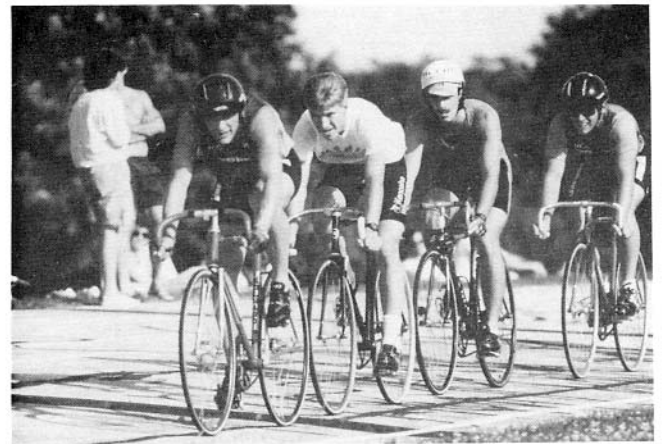


LEGEND

-  PRIMARY ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDOR
-  SECONDARY ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDOR
-  ISOLATED NATURAL AREA



Source: SEWRPC.



## **PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Major Parks**

Under the proposed new park and open space plan for Milwaukee County, nine regional parks—parks 250 acres or larger in size—and ten other major parks—parks 100 to 249 acres in size—would be provided by Milwaukee County. The location of these regional and other major parks is shown on Map 3. As shown on Map 3, it is recommended that Milwaukee County continue to maintain and improve, as necessary, seven regional parks—Brown Deer Park; Dretzka Park; Greenfield Park; Lake Michigan North, including Back Bay, Bradford Beach, Juneau Park, Lake Park, O'Donnell Park, the McKinley area, and Veterans Park; Lake Michigan South, including Bay View Park, Grant Park, Sheridan Park, South Shore Park, and Warnimont Park; Lincoln Park; and Whitnall Park. Milwaukee County would also expand and develop Bender Park, an undeveloped regional park; and expand and develop Oakwood Park, a partially developed regional park. In addition, under the plan, it is recommended that Milwaukee County continue to maintain and improve, as necessary, six other major parks—Currie Park, Estabrook Park, Jackson Park, Kletsch Park, Washington Park, and Wilson Park—and provide recreation facilities at the four undeveloped other major parks—Falk Park, Franklin Park, Grobschmidt Park, and an unnamed park site (identified as Park Site No. 71) in the northern portion of the City of Milwaukee.

The proposed new park and open space plan for Milwaukee County also recommends that six special regional recreation sites be maintained and improved as necessary—Havenwoods Forest Preserve and Nature Center (State of Wisconsin), Maier

Festival Park (City of Milwaukee), Milwaukee County Stadium, Milwaukee County Zoo, Milwaukee County Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory, and State Fair Park (State of Wisconsin).

### **Other County Park and Open Space Sites**

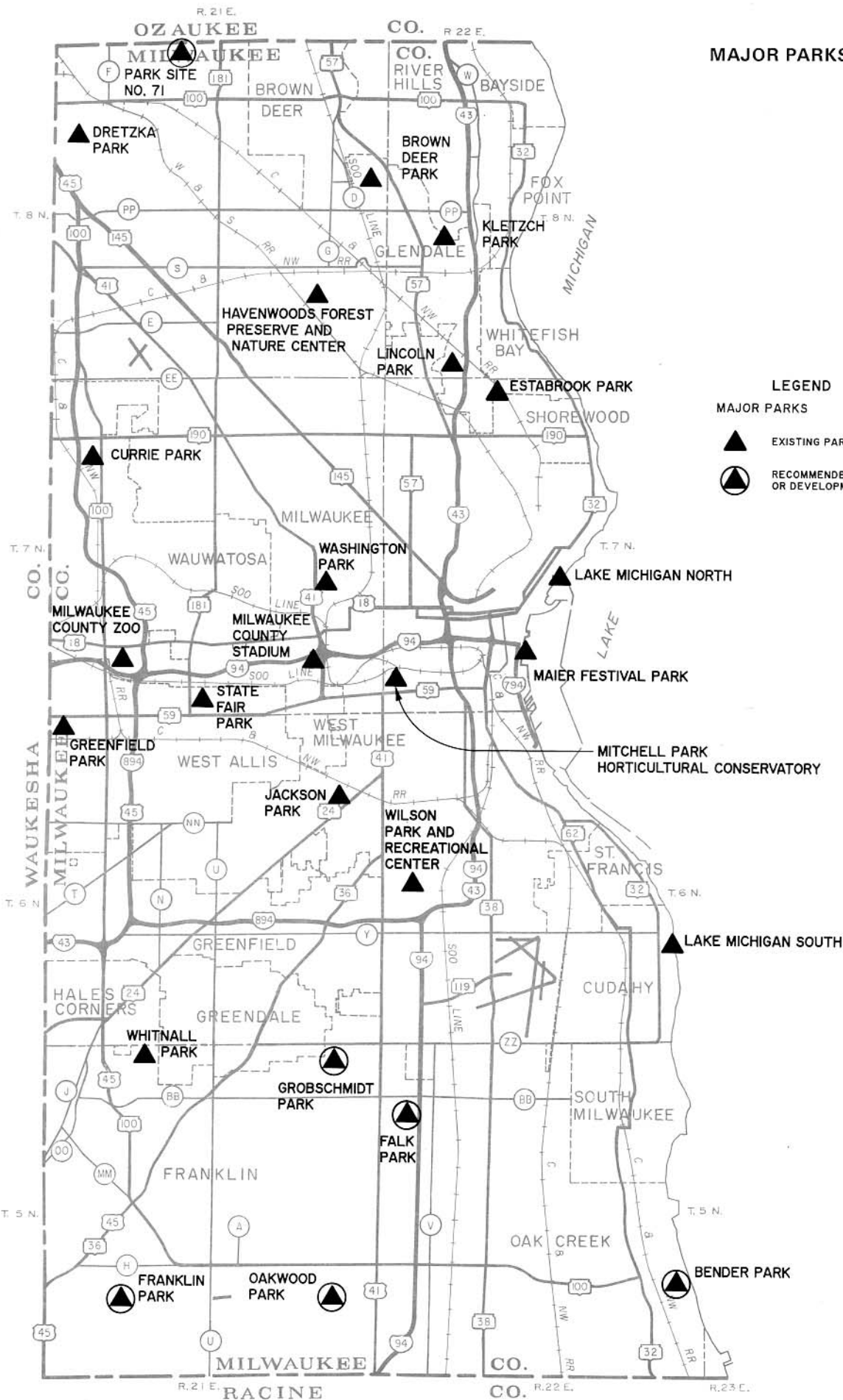
As shown on Map 4, 98 other parks were in County ownership in 1990. Under the proposed new park and open space plan, it is recommended that Milwaukee County continue to maintain and improve these sites. It is also recommended that Milwaukee County develop community or neighborhood park facilities at 18 sites which have been acquired but not yet developed. Finally, as shown on Map 4, it is recommended that Milwaukee County acquire and develop 10 new neighborhood parks.

### **Trails and Bicycle Routes**

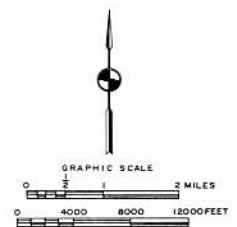
Under the park and open space plan for Milwaukee County, it is recommended that about 131 miles of trails and bicycle routes be provided in the County. As shown on Map 5, of the 131 miles of trails and bicycle routes proposed to be provided in Milwaukee County, about 89 miles, or about 68 percent, have been developed. It is recommended that these developed trails—which are located along the Lake Michigan shoreline; within the Kinnickinnic River, Lincoln Creek, Little Menomonee River, Menomonee River, Milwaukee River, Oak Creek, Root River, and Underwood Creek Parkways; and along Drexel Avenue, Good Hope Road, and Bradley Road—be maintained. As further shown on Map 5, the remaining 42 miles, or 32 percent, are recommended for development within the Little Menomonee River, Menomonee River, Oak Creek, and Root River Parkways; and along Bradley Road, along Cleveland Avenue, in the lower Menomonee River Valley, and on the Hoan Bridge.



MAJOR PARKS IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY



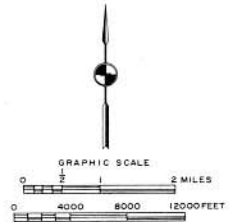
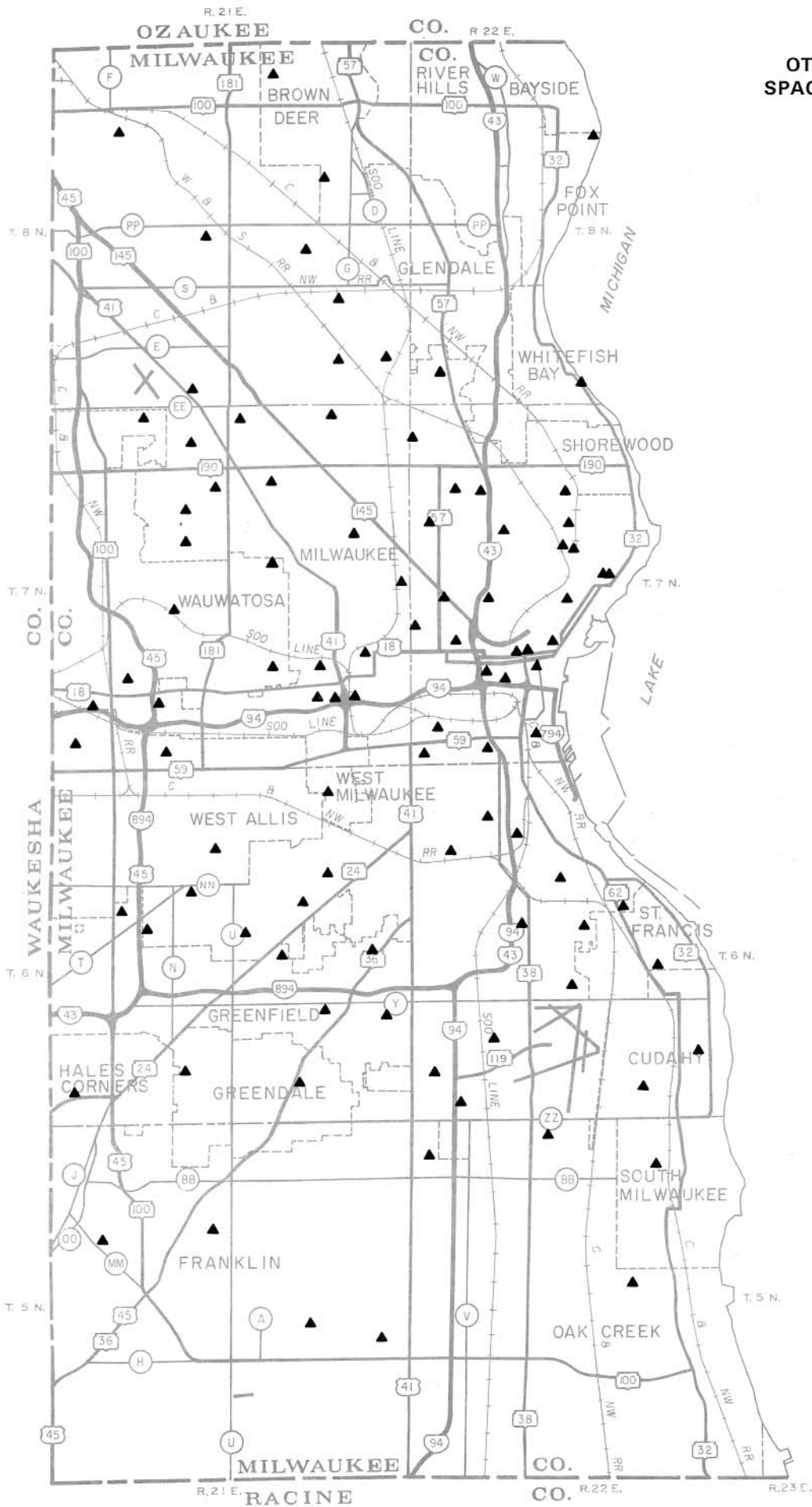
- LEGEND**
- MAJOR PARKS**
- ▲ EXISTING PARK TO BE MAINTAINED
  - ◐ RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL ACQUISITION OR DEVELOPMENT



Source: SEWRPC.

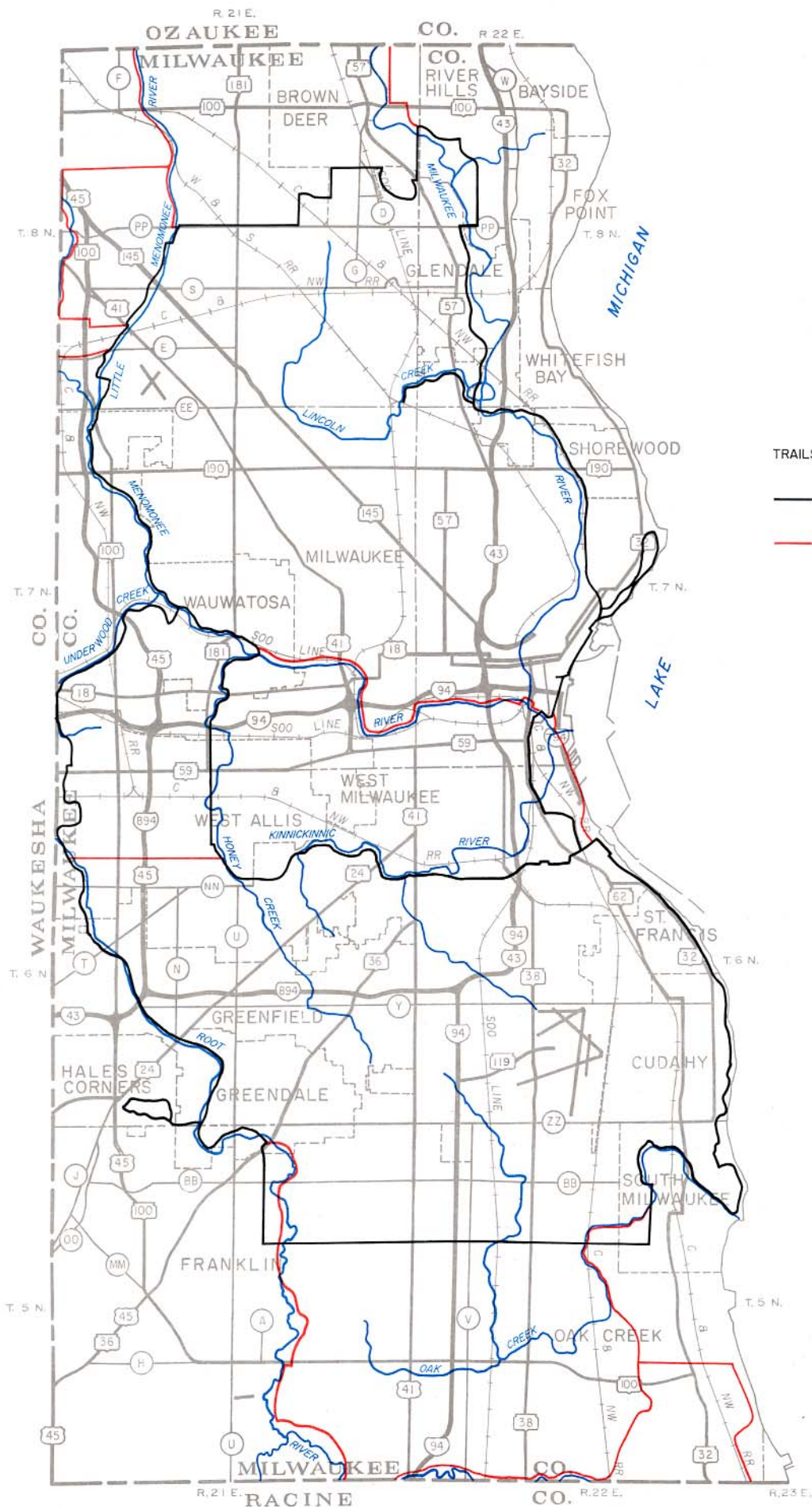
Map 4

OTHER COUNTY PARK AND OPEN SPACE SITES IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY



Source: SEWRPC.

TRAILS AND BICYCLE ROUTES  
IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY



LEGEND

TRAILS AND BICYCLE ROUTES

- EXISTING
- PROPOSED

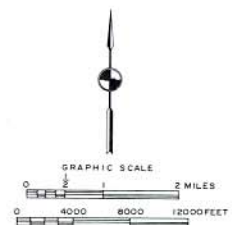


Table 2

**A SUMMARY OF PARK AND OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE UNDER THE RECOMMENDED PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN FOR MILWAUKEE COUNTY**

Parks and Parkway	Existing Ownership		Recommended Acquisition and Development					Total Existing and Proposed Parks and Parkway	
			Existing Parks and Parkway		Proposed Parks and Parkway				
	Sites	Acres	Additional Acquisition		Additional Development		Sites	Acres	
			Sites	Acres	Sites	Acres			
Major Parks . . . . .	30 <sup>a</sup>	5,340	2	149	6	--	--	30	5,489
Other Parks . . . . .	98	1,877	1	29	18	10	150	108	2,056
Parkway . . . . .	12	7,508	5	1,425	--	--	--	12	8,933
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>14,725</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1,603</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>16,478<sup>b</sup></b>

Trail or Bicycle Route	Existing Trail or Route (miles)	Recommended Trail or Route (miles)	Total (miles)
Trail <sup>c</sup> . . . . .	58	31	89
Bicycle Route <sup>d</sup> . . . . .	31	11	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>131</b>

<sup>a</sup>Includes Bender Park, Brown Deer Park, Currie Park, Dretzka Park, Estabrook Park, Falk Park, Franklin Park, Greenfield Park, Grobschmidt Park, Jackson Park, Kletzsch Park, Lake Michigan North (which consists of Back Bay, Bradford Beach, Juneau Park, Lake Park, O'Donnell Park, the McKinley area, and Veteran's Park), Lake Michigan South (which consists of Bay View Park, Grant Park, Sheridan Park, South Shore Park, and Warnimont Park), Lincoln Park, Oakwood Park, Park Site No. 71, Washington Park, Whitnall Park, and Wilson Park and Recreational Center.

<sup>b</sup>Under the plan, the Milwaukee County park and parkway system is recommended to encompass about 8,027 acres of primary environmental corridor lands, including 6,787 acres within existing parks and parkways and 1,240 acres in proposed parks and parkways; about 1,295 acres of secondary environmental corridor and isolated natural area lands, including 1,165 acres within existing parks and parkways and 130 acres in proposed parks and parkways; about 489 acres of scientific and natural area sites, including 271 acres in existing parks and parkways and 218 acres in proposed parks and parkways; and about 5,920 acres of floodlands, including 5,159 acres within existing parks and parkways and 761 acres within proposed parks and parkways.

<sup>c</sup>Includes trails, paths, and routes within parks and parkways and on parkway drives along Lake Michigan, Little Menomonee River, Menomonee River, Milwaukee River, Oak Creek, Root River, and Underwood Creek.

<sup>d</sup>Includes bicycle routes on public road rights-of-way and parkway drives, including Bradley Road, Cleveland Avenue, Drexel Avenue, Good Hope Road, Kinnickinnic Parkway (76 East-West Addition), Lincoln Creek Parkway, and roadway in the Menomonee Valley.

Source: SEWRPC.

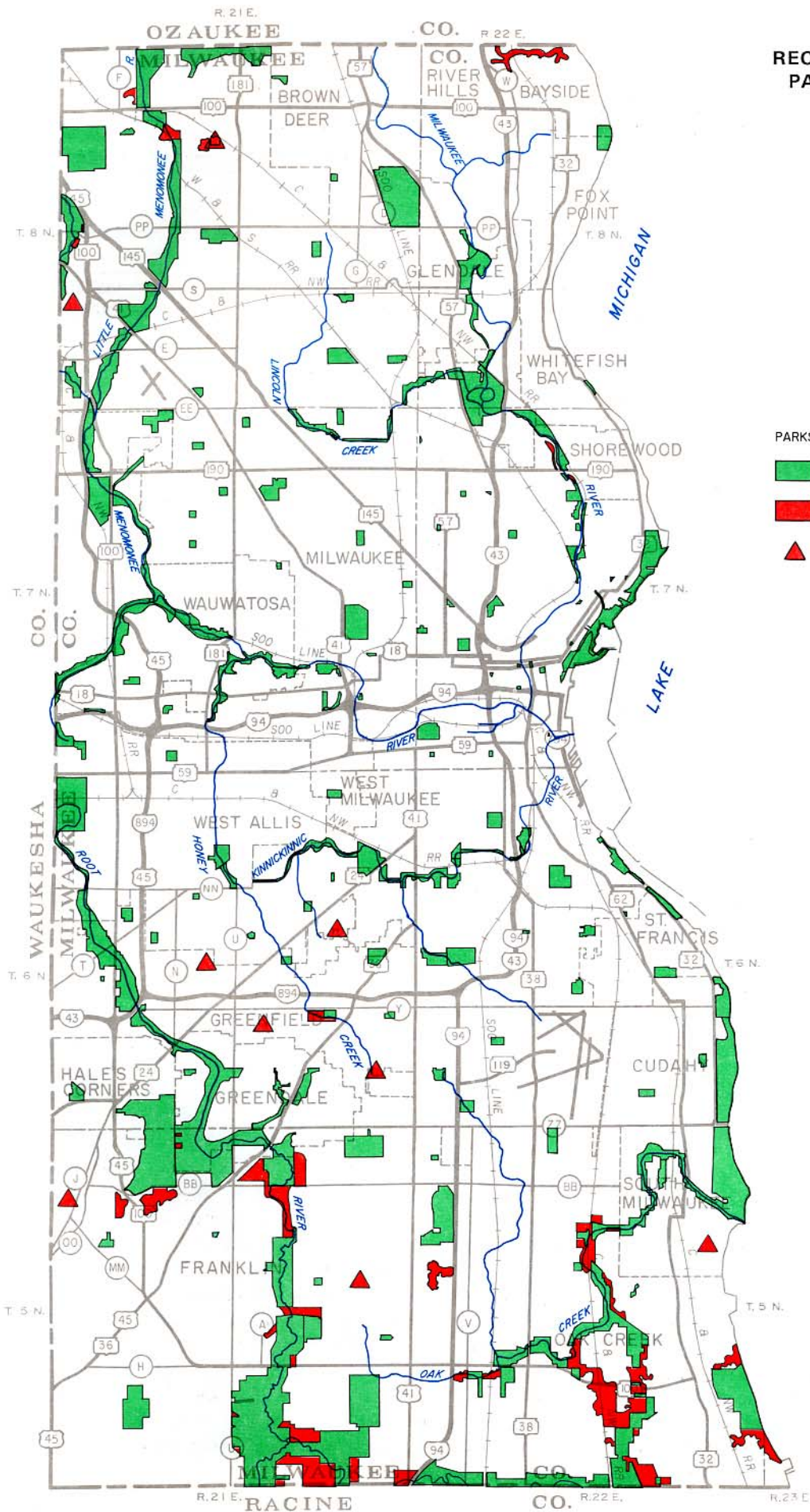
**Environmental Corridors and Isolated Natural Areas**

The park and open space plan identifies all primary environmental corridor lands located within Milwaukee County—about 10,277 acres, or about 7 percent of the total area of the County—and recommends that such lands be preserved in essentially natural open uses. As shown on Map 6, it is recommended that Milwaukee County maintain the 6,787 acres, or 67 percent, of such corridors located within County parks and parkways, mostly within the Little Menomonee River, Menomonee River, Oak Creek, and Root River Parkway. It is also recommended that the 1,159 acres, or 11 percent, of surface water and lands in other public or private park and conservancy agency ownership be maintained in natural, open use. As further shown on Map 6, it is recommended that Milwaukee County acquire an additional 1,240 acres, or 12 percent, of the corridors for flood control, resource preservation, and limited outdoor recreation use as part of the County park and

parkway system. Thus, under the plan, a total of 9,216 acres, or about 90 percent of the primary environmental corridor area within the County would be protected in public or private compatible park and open space ownership. It is recommended that the remaining 1,061 acres, or 10 percent of the primary environmental corridor area—located mainly in narrow bands of land in private ownership along the Lake Michigan shoreline and along rivers and streams in developed urban areas—be preserved through appropriate local public land use regulation.

The proposed plan also recommends that the secondary environmental corridors and isolated natural areas which are presently held in public park and open space use, or in compatible private park and related open space use, be maintained in such use. Those corridor lands which are not presently held in public or private park and related open space use should be considered for local public acquisition as more detailed drainage and neighborhood unit planning and engineering may indicate.

### RECOMMENDED MILWAUKEE COUNTY PARK AND PARKWAY ACQUISITION



#### LEGEND

##### PARKS AND PARKWAYS

- EXISTING COUNTY OWNERSHIP
- PROPOSED COUNTY ACQUISITION
- PROPOSED COUNTY PARK (GENERAL SITE LOCATION)

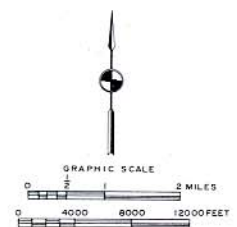


Table 3

**A SUMMARY OF ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT COSTS FOR MILWAUKEE COUNTY UNDER THE PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN**

Park and Open Space Site Type	Milwaukee County Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture		
	Acquisition	Development	Total
Major Parks . . . . .	\$ 379,000	\$13,640,000	\$14,019,000
Other County Parks . . . . .	4,404,000 <sup>a</sup>	24,440,000 <sup>a</sup>	28,844,000 <sup>a</sup>
Trails and Bicycle Routes . . . . .	--	4,214,000	4,214,000
Natural Resource Preservation . . . . .	4,593,000	--	4,593,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,376,000<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>\$42,294,000<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>\$51,670,000<sup>b</sup></b>

<sup>a</sup>Includes the development costs of four community and 14 neighborhood parks, and the acquisition and development costs of 10 new neighborhood parks. Does not include the estimated acquisition, development, and other costs of \$67.7 million for the provision of one additional needed community park and 33 additional needed neighborhood parks.

<sup>b</sup>Does not include the implementation costs of other planning programs for Milwaukee County. Such costs would total \$61.4 million, including \$43.9 million, or about 71 percent, associated with the provision of Lake Michigan shoreline protection and access facilities recommended in SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 163, A Lake Michigan Shoreline Erosion Management Plan for Milwaukee County, and \$17.5 million, or about 29 percent, associated with the acquisition of high and medium value sites of vacant or underutilized lands along the Kinnickinnic, Menomonee and Milwaukee Rivers, as identified in SEWRPC Memorandum Report No. 40, An Inventory of Vacant or Underutilized Lands in the Riverine Areas of Central Milwaukee County.

Source: SEWRPC.

**PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

Full implementation of the proposed new plan will require the cooperative efforts of the State, County, and local units and agencies of government concerned. Primary responsibility for implementation of the plan, however, will rest with Milwaukee County.

As shown on Map 6 and as indicated in Table 2, under the proposed new park and open space plan, Milwaukee County would be responsible for the acquisition of additional land at two existing major parks—Bender Park and Lake Michigan South; the development of additional facilities at six existing major parks, including Bender Park, Falk Park, Franklin Park, Grobschmidt Park, Oakwood Park, and Park Site No. 71; the development of community or neighborhood park facilities at 18 existing other County parks; the acquisition and development of 10 additional new neighborhood parks; the provision of an additional 42 miles of trails and bicycle routes in the County; and the provision of Lake Michigan access facilities. As further indicated in Table 2, Milwaukee County would be responsible for the acquisition of about 1,753 acres of lands within a variety of park, parkway, and other open space sites.

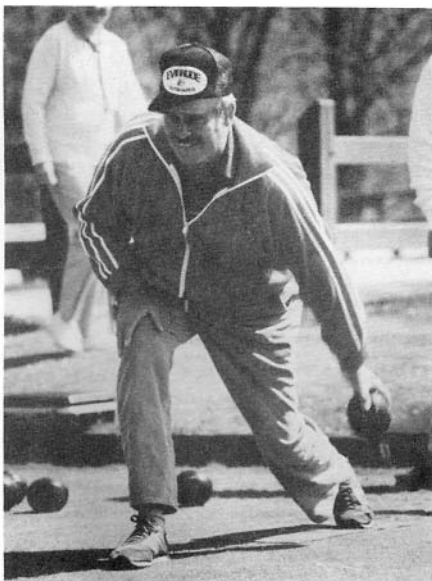
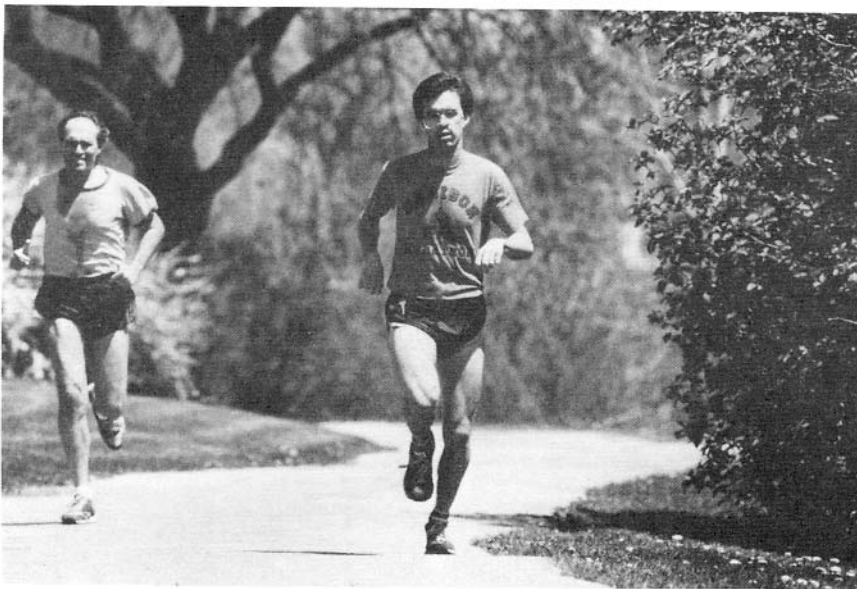
**PLAN COSTS**

Implementation of the proposed new park and open space plan for Milwaukee County would require a total capital investment of about \$51.7 million. As indicated in Table 3, about \$9.4 million, or 18 percent of the total plan costs, would be incurred for park and open space site acquisition, while the remaining \$42.3 million, or 82 percent, would be incurred for outdoor recreation facility development. Of the \$9.4 million acquisition cost, about \$0.4 million, or 4 percent, would be incurred for the acquisition of major parks; about \$4.4 million, or 47 percent, for the acquisition of other County parks; and the remaining \$4.6 million, or 49 percent, for the acquisition of important natural resource lands, including the acquisition of parkways, other primary environmental corridor lands, and lands within the 100-year recurrence interval floodplain. Of the total \$42.3 million development costs, about \$13.6 million, or 32 percent, would be incurred for the development of major parks; about \$24.5 million, or 58 percent, for the development of other County parks; and the remaining \$4.2 million, or 10 percent, for the development of trails and bicycle routes.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Adoption of the proposed new park and open space plan for Milwaukee County would provide the County with a sound and workable guide for the acquisition and development of the lands and facilities needed to satisfy existing and probable future outdoor recreation and open space needs within the County. Implementation of the recommended plan would also assure the protection and

preservation of the environmental corridors and isolated natural areas within the County; the maintenance of healthy populations of fish and wildlife; and the provision of an attractive setting for urban development and life. The proposed parks and parkways would constitute an important asset to the continued sound social and economic, as well as physical, development of the County and its constituent communities, and as such an important incentive to the location of new and conservation of existing urban development.



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