

Planning Mission and Objectives

Yahara River Parkway Planning Mission.

Soon after it was created in July 1995 by the Mayor and Common Council to address priority planning issues identified in adopted neighborhood plans, the Yahara River Parkway Steering Committee created the following mission statement to guide its planning efforts:

“Our goal is to improve and enhance a broad range of recreational, housing, employment, environmental, and aesthetic opportunities along the Yahara River corridor, encompassing the redevelopment of adjacent public and private properties. Our recommendations will suggest answers to two guiding questions: 1) How should the open space along the Yahara River be developed to serve the community’s needs? and 2) How do we create and/or expand an urban neighborhood along the under-utilized Yahara River Parkway?”



Planning Objectives.

Parks and Open Space.

Objective: To advocate for the planning, preservation, and development of the Yahara River Parkway as a continuous and accessible open space amenity for residents of adjacent neighborhoods and the City of Madison as a whole.

Objective: To promote the planning, preservation, and development of the Yahara River Parkway in the “prairie spirit” that the original designer intended, and to work with the Landmarks Commission in adhering to the Park’s Landmark status.

Objective: To encourage the City to acquire land to expand the Yahara River corridor, whenever possible.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Access and Safety.

Objective: To maintain safe bicycle and pedestrian access to the entire length of the Yahara River Parkway by enabling safe crossings at East Johnson Street and East Washington Avenue, and by establishing connections between the Parkway and the City of Madison’s existing network of bike/pedestrian routes.

Objective: To provide a bike/pedestrian friendly environment, it is important to address issues like accessibility and types of walking surfaces, the elimination of pedestrian/vehicle conflicts, and the lack of pedestrian/bike amenities.

Land Use.

Objective: To encourage an optimal arrangement of housing, open space, and mixed land uses in order to create an identifiable and livable urban neighborhood that is aesthetically and socially integrated with the Yahara River Parkway.

Objective: To encourage and strengthen neighborhood connectivity by using the Parkway as a catalyst to add to and tie the three neighborhoods together.

Yahara River Parkway Enhancement, Historic Preservation, and Stewardship.

Objective: To enhance the Yahara River Parkway as a recreational and aesthetic amenity for citizens while protecting its water quality, and the integrity of its banks, wildlife, and fish habitat, as well as the landscape material in the Parkway system.

Objective: To empower the adjacent neighborhood groups and citizens to be stewards of the Parkway.

Objective: To cultivate the Yahara River as an important historical site for the Midwest and City, and work within the Landmark guidelines to restore the “prairie spirit” landscape design by O.C. Simonds (see pages 14 and 15).

Objective: To imbue the Yahara River with environmental sculptures and/or appropriate public art.

Objective: Add devices and programs to enhance the growth and protection of special plants and wildlife.

Yahara Parkway System as an Educational Resource.

Objective: To cultivate the Yahara River and corridor as an educational resource for the elementary & middle school children, as well as citizens. The wildlife, fish habitat, and landscape material in the Parkway system can be used as a teaching tool.

Objective: To utilize the Yahara River and corridor as an educational resource to reveal the geological, Native American, and early Euro-American settlement history of the area.

Phased Plan Implementation.

Objective: To identify short-term and long-term recommendations in order to propose a development timeline in accordance with identified priorities.

The Public Participation Planning Process. In developing the Concept Plan, the YRP Committee has been guided by the extensive participation of citizens, particularly persons who live in the neighborhoods adjoining the Yahara River Parkway. The public participation forums leading up to the Concept Plan include the following:

1993-1994: Marquette-Schenk-Atwood (MSA) Neighborhood Planning Process. Citizen participants in the MSA planning process identified the Yahara River Parkway as a priority planning area, and presented a Parkway vision “to develop a pedestrian pathway that will provide a safe, accessible, and recreational passageway along the corridor, [including] improvement of pedestrian travel across (or under) bridges and busy intersections, a connection to Burr Jones Field and Tenney Park, and the enhancement of the shoreline to accommodate more green space and recreational lands” (*Marquette-Schenk-Atwood Neighborhood Plan*, April 1994, page 17; also see pages 2 and 18).

1994-1995: Tenney-Lapham/Old Market Place (TLOMP) Neighborhood Planning Process. Citizen participants in the TLOMP planning process echoed their MSA neighbors, identifying the Parkway as a priority planning area and emphasizing the need for a cross-isthmus pedestrian and bicycle pathway with safe intersection crossings, connections to Burr Jones Field and Tenney Park, and aesthetic and recreational enhancements of the Parkway and adjacent land parcels (*Tenney-Lapham/Old Market Place Neighborhood Plan*, June 1995, pages 4, 50-53).

November 1995: Yahara River Parkway Charette. After the Common Council created the Yahara River Parkway Committee in July 1995, the YRP Committee began its work by organizing a public planning charette held at the Fiore Shopping Center on November 18, 1995. The charette was an opportunity for citizens to help develop a planning framework for the Yahara River Parkway. Over 80 charette participants provided extensive ideas on how to maintain and improve the Yahara River Parkway as a valued City treasure. Their primary concerns included ensuring bike and pedestrian safety at the Parkway's intersections with East Johnson Street and East Washington Avenue; making Burr Jones Field a more user-friendly public park and enhancing its integration with the river and the Parkway; developing a bike/pedestrian route along the river while maximizing green space; and exploring mixed-use development alternatives at key sites adjacent to the Parkway.

June 1996: Isthmus 2020 Workshop. More than 250 citizens participated in the June 29, 1996, Isthmus 2020 Workshop held at the Madison Civic Center. The Yahara Parkway was one of several "stations" where citizens discussed isthmus planning issues. Yahara Station participants identified a bike/pedestrian route, enhanced recreational opportunities, and mixed-use redevelopment of adjacent sites as planning priorities for the Yahara River Parkway.

1995-1996: Yahara River Parkway Planning Process. Since its formation in July 1995, the YRP Committee has held over fifteen public meetings attended by citizens, guest speakers, alderpersons, and City staff. Discussions at these meetings – in addition to the MSA and TLOMP neighborhood plans, the Yahara Parkway Charette, and the Isthmus 2020 Workshop – provided the basis for the recommendations put forth in the Yahara River Parkway Concept Plan.

Spring 1996: Burr Jones Design Competition. During the Spring 1996 semester, University of Wisconsin landscape architecture students participated in a design competition for the Burr Jones Field area, identified as a location in need of comprehensive landscape design. Three design teams presented plans to the YRP Committee and Tenney-Lapham neighborhood residents in March 1996. All three plans support primary recommendations of the YRP Committee, notably an increase and more efficient use of open space as well as the development of a multi-use, water-based facility to connect Burr Jones Field to the Yahara River.

On April 4, 1998, the YRP Committee held an open meeting at O'Keeffe Middle School to discuss the master plan with the community. Approximately 150 people were in attendance. 113 neighborhood people officially signed in with 48 people filling out a written comment form to express their support or non-support (see appendices). The response was very favorable for the overall master plan with suggestions to improve specific areas of the plan.

On April 18, 1998, the Urban Open Space Foundation sponsored an all day workshop at Lapham Elementary School on the Yahara River entitled *Restoring a Treasured Landscape*. The purpose was to build action teams with specific interest in landscape stewardship/restoration and policy to aid the river corridor.

Committee Meetings. All meetings were posted and open to the public. Starting with the February 7, 1996, meeting, the committee reserved 15 minutes for public input on any of the agenda items.