

Volume

1

# **ONALASKA CENTRAL GREENWAY PLAN**

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City of Onalaska

CITY OF ONALASKA

# Central Greenway Plan

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## Introduction

The Onalaska Central Greenway Plan is a result of Comprehensive Planning with emphasis in the area of citizen participation. The citizen-driven 1994 Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the City of Onalaska is the foundation for this plan. Page 79 of the plan indicates a short range implementation recommendation to “Work with the La Crosse County Parks Department to Study the Feasibility of Creating a Bluffland Trail System.” In addition, the plan identifies key opportunities for conservancy areas noting the steep terrain common to the bluffs and the difficulty in developing these areas. The 1999 Onalaska Comprehensive Park and Open Space Plan also supports this plan by calling out specific locations for park and open space lands within rapidly growing areas of the City and identifies a goal to provide, improve, and enhance public access, use and enjoyment of the community’s natural and recreational resources and to provide an efficient and well planned system of pathways that will encourage greater pedestrian and bicycle use for recreation and transportation purposes. In addition, the plan calls out greenways as an integral component of the park system, providing recreational opportunities which emphasize the natural environment.

In 1999, the Onalaska Planning Department conducted a city-wide citizen survey and held a community planning forum to gather citizen input on planning issues to be included in the 5 year update to the City’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The results of the survey further supported community interest in preservation of natural resources and the expansion of the parks and open space system through the integration of trails, natural corridors, conservancy areas and parks. The City also adopted an official city map in 1999 which identified key opportunities for trail corridors in the community which are articulated in the Central Greenway Plan.

## Private Involvement

In 1999, a group of concerned citizens formed the Clearwater Farm Foundation. The mission of this organization is to demonstrate and teach the stewardship of natural, architectural, historical and agricultural resources in a way that is environmentally, economically and culturally sustainable; and to have these resources utilized for hands-on experimental education. The Clearwater Foundation originally sought out to acquire roughly 60 acres of land in the greenway corridor indicated as area F and H on the Central Greenway Plan. This land was to be used to carry out the mission of the organization. After an exhaustive fundraising campaign, the foundation scaled back their efforts and approached the City of Onalaska on a possible partnership in the area which would preserve a key component to the system and allow for a smaller portion

of the land to be acquired by the foundation. The land owner, Elmwood Partners, further expressed an interest in a partnership which would allow for the development of a subdivision which would integrate a conservancy area and offer some of the amenities and uses that the City and Clearwater Foundation were pursuing. As a result of this dialogue, the City has formed a preliminary partnership with Elmwood Partners and the Clearwater Farm Foundation to enter into a land acquisition and management agreement for the creation of a conservation subdivision, greenway plan and educational facility. This plan is a result of previous planning efforts, community support and the creative partnership between these entities and other units of local government, the Onalaska School District, the Mississippi Valley Conservancy and La Crosse County.



Land Acquisition

The land that the City is interested in acquiring comprises 66 acres containing a variety of environments including wetlands, fencerows and edges, and intermittent stream, hardwood uplands and a bluff-top peak which is centrally located within Onalaska’s urban growth area and offers views of the Mississippi River, Lake Onalaska, the Minnesota Bluffs and the cities of Onalaska and La Crosse. The 66 acres is adjacent to a 5 acre public park, 7.5 acres of public land owned by the Township of Medary and will be accessible by a newly constructed off-street multi-modal trail which will be completed by Fall of 2001. The land also borders 5 acres of land being pursued by the Clearwater Farm Foundation which contains the historic farmstead of George Humfeldt. The historic barn on the site will be a key feature in the re-use of the site and a focal point in the greenway. The Clearwater Foundation plans to rehabilitate the barn using volunteer

## A Blueprint for Improved Development Practices.

In addition to serving as an important plan for recreation resources in the community, this plan will also serve to set a precedent for unique subdivision planning in Onalaska’s urban growth area. Many of the areas included in the greenway plan are encountering rapid development including Sand Lake Coulee, Greens Coulee and Marcou Coulee. A 2000 article in the Milwaukee Journal included Onalaska as the fourth fastest growing community in the State of Wisconsin with a change of 32.1% since 1990. Population estimates and recent GIS studies indicate that the City may reach a population between 25,000 and 30,000 people.

## Community Profile

Onalaska is a rapidly growing community with a population of roughly 15,000 people, located just north of the City of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Founded in 1851, Onalaska became the home of the lumber industry with its key waterfront resources on the Black River. Currently Onalaska is a prosperous community supported by economic development along Interstate 90 and US 53. Housing ranges from some of the most exclusive areas in La Crosse County to moderately priced post war and new construction housing. Onalaska's rapid growth has made planning a critical component for growth management and resource preservation.

### Onalaska's Natural Resources

Onalaska's terrain is both rugged and gentle, one of the desirable features that historically enticed settlers to the area. The sandy flats overlooking the Black River and Lake Onalaska are surrounded by scenic bluffs and ridgelines, which form coulees to the north and east of the City. Development pressure is high in these coulees with subdivision proposals containing nearly 500 new homes in the last 3 years. Wetlands, floodplain areas, creeks and drainage-ways are another component of the landscapes contained in the greenway plan. These areas are considered key opportunities for a diverse nature-based recreation mix in the greenway as well as providing key opportunities for environmental education and eco-tourism. Lastly, the relationship between preservation of these resources and Onalaska's economic future is considered to be of paramount importance. The life experiences offered by public access to these resources promotes interest in investing in Onalaska area both in business and living, further promoting the City's economic development objectives.

### Regional Access

*One key feature of the greenway plan is its regional accessibility to the greater metropolitan area. Since 1990, shortly after US 53 was constructed by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, communities north of La Crosse have seen enormous growth. Onalaska's central location to this growth makes the greenway readily*

*accessible by several neighboring communities including Holmen, La Crosse and the townships of Medary and Onalaska.*

## System Analysis

### Introduction

Onalaska is very fortunate to have an extensive Geographic Information System which was the basis for the analysis of the greenway system. Included in the analysis is transportation systems, trails, park and open spaces, public and semi-public lands, land use patterns, projected growth areas, scenic view-sheds, natural systems including steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains, drainage-ways, wildlife areas and urban forestry.

Geographic Information Systems allows for improved analysis through the layering of digital information in any combination. Use of this technology was instrumental in the analysis of the central greenway.

## Transportation Systems

### Trail Systems

The Great River State Trail is located along Onalaska's western corporate limits. Trail access is available at Riders Club Road near Van Riper Community Park. This location also has a County-owned parking area. Planned improvements to the STH 35 and Riders Club Road intersection in the year 2008 by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation will allow for a controlled intersection and improved pedestrian crossing from the trail access to the Riders Club Road corridor. Access to the trail can also be found at the Center for Commerce and Tourism on Oak Avenue and at Main Street in Onalaska.

The La Crosse River State Trail is located along Onalaska's Southern corporate limits. There is currently no direct access to the La Crosse River State Trail in Onalaska. The nearest trailhead exists at CTH B on the northern edge of the City of La Crosse just south of the Holiday Heights Park, shown as key feature Q on the greenway plan. The City has preserved public access easements to the La Crosse River adjacent to the trail at the Valley View Addition, noted as feature R on the greenway plan. A bridge over the La Crosse River would be needed to have access to the trail at these locations in the future.

Van Riper Park contains a paved trail system approximately 1/2 mile in length. This trail is accessible from Riders Club Road and is noted on the greenway plan as feature B. Smaller trail systems can be accessed in several area parks including Sandalwood Park (Feature K) and Robinson Park (Feature O). These trails are bituminous pathways and are short loop-type systems which access local park facilities.

Onalaska also has an extensive system of sidewalks and on-street bicycle lanes. Riders Club Road, CIH OS (East Main Street), Theater Road and STH 16 all contain either on-street bicycle lanes or paved shoulders. In addition, the City will be constructing an off-street bituminous multi-modal trail along Greens Coulee Road (section 7 on the greenway plan) this summer (2001). South Kinney Coulee Road (near section 11 on the greenway plan) will also be constructed with on street bicycle lanes during the summer of 2002. These facilities and the extensive sidewalk system form some of the linkages noted in the greenway plan.

Parking facilities are currently available for access to the system at Van Riper Park (feature B), and at the county-owned parking area (feature A). Future parking facilities are planned for the Greens Coulee Community Park (feature E). Bicycle parking is also available at several area parks and is planned for the Greens Coulee Community Park (Feature E).

Transit services are available through the City's public transit system which provides destination-based service city-wide. The La Crosse Metropolitan Transit Utility also operates in the areas of East Main Street and South Kinney Coulee Road. This is a fixed route bus service with regular stops near these corridors (sections 8 and 11 on the greenway plan).

## Park and Open Space Inventory

Onalaska's 1999 Comprehensive Park and Open Space Plan inventories existing park and open space facilities throughout the City. Future needs are also identified in the plan with projected growth areas and anticipated needs. Several existing and anticipated park sites are noted as part of the greenway system, offering a greater variety of opportunities in the greenway system. The following is a brief summary of parks within the system:

1. Van Riper Park. A 40 acre site featuring nature trails, wildlife viewing, natural areas, ice skating and warming shelter, ball fields, sledding hill, picnic areas and off street parking facilities. (Feature B)
2. Meier Farm Park. A future neighborhood park roughly 5 acres in size featuring trails, natural areas, pic-nic areas, multi-purpose open space and play equipment. (Feature C)
3. Greens Coulee Community Park. A future community park containing over 72 acres. This park is the foundation of the greenway system with natural areas, pic-nic areas, scenic views, bluff access, wildlife viewing and photography opportunities, nature trails, bird watching areas, biking

facilities and access to the Greens Coulee multi-modal trail, connections to 7.5 acres of public township lands (feature I) and 26.67 acres of school district lands( Feature D), access to the Clearwater Farm, a cooperative gardening and learning center (Feature F) natural ponds, wetland restoration areas, multi-purpose open space, play equipment and off-street restroom and parking facilities. (Feature E and H)

4. Greens Coulee Neighborhood Park. A future 5 acre neighborhood park located in the northern section of Greens Coulee. This park is planned as part of Onalaska's rapid growth with a projected 200 more homes in the area. This park will have access to the Greens Coulee multi-modal trail and will feature open play areas, play equipment, trails and scenic viewing areas. (Feature G)
5. Sandalwood Park. Located just south of Main Street, Sandlawood Park features 12 acres of open play area, trails, future restroom and play equipment facilities (planned for 2002) and wetland areas. (Feature K)
6. Valley Vue Park. An existing 4 acre site adjacent to 10 acres of public park land in the City of La Crosse. This site features access to the La Crosse River Conservancy Area, La Crosse River Bottoms, wildlife viewing, nature trails and scenic views. This site is currently unimproved but is noted as a key access point in the La Crosse River Conservancy Project Master Plan. (Feature N)
7. Robinson Park. 12 acres containing trails, natural areas, open play areas and pic-nic areas. This site is programmed for improvements in 2002 for play equipment, restrooms, hard-court areas, multi-modal trail facilities and landscape improvements. The site is also noted as a key access point to the La Crosse River Conservancy Area. (Feature O)
8. Holiday Heights Park. 21.56 acres adjacent to the La Crosse River featuring pic-nic areas, open play areas, play equipment, and future restrooms, shelter and accessible fishing areas. This park is a key access point to the La Crosse River Conservancy Project and is immediately north of the La Crosse River State Trail-Head on CTH B. (Feature Q)

## Public and Semi Public Lands

1. Onalaska School District Athletic Fields. Located east of Van Riper Park, this 40 acre school district site offers numerous athletic fields for soccer and baseball and contains off-street parking for 100 cars. (Feature a.)
2. Onalaska School District Bluff-Land. Located in Greens Coulee, this 26 acre site features a key connection from the Sand Lake Road Corridor to the Greens Coulee park system. The land is currently used for nature-based education for school children. The site is currently accessible by a public access easement from the Greens Coulee Community Park. The site also contains the lower ridgeline of the Richard's Peak Bluff, a prominent bluff along the Mississippi River basin in Onalaska. (Feature D)
3. Clearwater Farm. A proposed 5 acre community gardening and educational facility operated through volunteer efforts at the direction of the Clearwater Farm Foundation. This site includes the preservation of the historic Humfeldt Farm barn which will serve both utility purposes for the Clearwater Farm and as an icon in the Central Greenway, reminding users of the areas agricultural heritage. A partnership between the City and the Clearwater Foundation may include shared facilities, access and opportunities for greenway users. (Feature F)
4. Town of Medary Lands. This 7.5 acre parcel offers access from the Meadowwood and Elmwood Hills Subdivisions containing 200 homes. The site currently is a natural area with Oak and Hickory forests and a prominent ridgeline. (Feature I)
5. Onalaska School District Property –French Road. This 10 acre site offers access to the eastern bluffs of Onalaska. The site is currently not in use but offers a key opportunity along the eastern portion of the greenway system. (Feature L)
6. Coulee Golf Bowl. A 18 hole public golf course located in the southern section of Greens Coulee. This course is very scenic, surrounded by bluffs, within visual range of the Greens Coulee Community Park. (Feature b.)
7. La Crosse Country Club. A 18 hole private golf course surrounded by scenic bluffs. A prairie-style course which has been integrated with exclusive housing areas in the eastern portion of the City. (feature c.)

8. La Crosse River Conservancy Project. In 1999., the Mississippi Valley Conservancy began work on a comprehensive effort to conserve a large portion of the La Crosse River marsh area along Onalaska's southern limits. The plan which is included in this report contains nature based recreation activities, interpretive areas, wildlife viewing, bird watching, wetland restoration, trail access and scenic viewing areas. To date nearly 350 acres of land have been secured by acquisition or conservancy easements. The project is a joint partnership between Gundersen Clinic, The Mississippi Valley Conservancy, the City of Onalaska and the City of La Crosse. (Feature P)

## Land Use Patterns and Projected Growth

A land use plan is included in this report as well as a GIS analysis of the City's projected residential growth. Onalaska's coulees comprise the vast majority of future residential growth and have become highly desirable for residential land uses due to the scenic beauty of these areas. Greens Coulee, Marcou Coulee and Sand Lake Coulee are the three primary growth areas for low density residential land use in the City. These areas could easily support an increase in population in Onalaska of 10,000 people at current residential densities. Most of the residential growth in these areas occurs at the lower elevations with gentle terrain. The side slopes and ridgelines of the coulees are typically undevelopable due to local development restrictions on 30% slopes, minimum standards for public street grades and maximum front yard zoning setbacks. These restrictions combined with the demand for housing offers a unique opportunity for conservation subdivision practices which the City has been actively pursuing with developers since 1997. The Clearwater Addition which contains 51 single family parcels on nearly 150 acres of land is the first example of a public/private partnership in applying conservation subdivision principles in the City of Onalaska. The City's purchase of 57 acres and the donation and dedication of 10 acres by the developer will make the project possible. Areas containing steep slopes, wetlands, ridgelines and floodplains are noted as conservancy areas on the City's Land Use Plan.

Also included in the greenway plan are commercial land uses such as the Elmwood Business Center and Marketplace Development. These major employment areas offer a unique opportunity to provide access to the greenway system to the area labor force for recreational walking, hiking, wildlife viewing and other activities. The City has noticed a growing trend in these areas of employees walking during their lunch break and before or after work. Commercial areas within proximity to the greenway are noted in the land use plan exhibit.

Several studies have been completed which project growth in Onalaska. These studies vary slightly in their projections but all note an increase in the City's future population of 10,000 people. One study projects an increase of 15,000 people which would raise Onalaska's population to 30,000 people. A recent GIS study indicates that Onalaska's urban growth area could accommodate these projections given the available land and land use projections.

Economic development is also expected to continue in Onalaska with over 400 acres of vacant economic development and commercial lands indicated on the City's Land Use Plan. Most of these areas are adjacent to Interstate 90 or US Highway 53 and will accommodate light industrial, office and retail uses.

## Natural Systems

Geographic Information System technology was used to identify natural systems. These data layers include wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, surface water, drainage-ways, wildlife areas and bluff-top peaks. Onalaska has an abundance of these areas which will play a significant role in the greenway system offering access to multiple nature-based recreation opportunities including trails for walking and hiking, wildlife viewing and photography, nature photography, nature study and environmental education, bicycling, skiing, and picnicking.

A detailed analysis of these areas is included in the exhibits of this report.

Major components of the natural systems accessible by the Central Greenway system include:

1. The La Crosse River Conservancy Project. 300 acres of wetlands, floodplains and forested areas within the La Crosse River Floodplain.
2. Onalaska Bluffs. 700 acres of undevelopable bluff-lands containing Oak and Hickory forests, edge habitat, fencerows and rock outcroppings. These areas also provide for many scenic view opportunities in the system.
3. Drainageways. Development patterns in the coulee areas have made it necessary to develop drainage-ways through the center of these coulees. Although these drainage-ways serve as a utility, most conserve open space through the developments that are occurring and offer opportunities for trails along their perimeter. Some drainage-ways are converted intermittent streams which have been re-engineered to allow for flood control. In general, Onalaska's approach to these systems has been to naturalize them as much as possible by tying them into sediment basins and limiting structural improvements. Examples of these systems occur in Greens Coulee, Marcou Coulee and Sand Lake Coulee.

4. Wetlands. Primary wetlands in the greenway are within the La Crosse River Conservancy Area, however, the Greens Coulee Community Park contains three acres of isolated wetlands which will be conserved as part of the overall park and greenway design. These wetlands will serve as an opportunity for wetland restoration efforts and environmental education in the area. These wetlands are noted in feature E of the greenway plan.

## Photographs and Images



*Clearwater Farm-Central Greens Coulee*

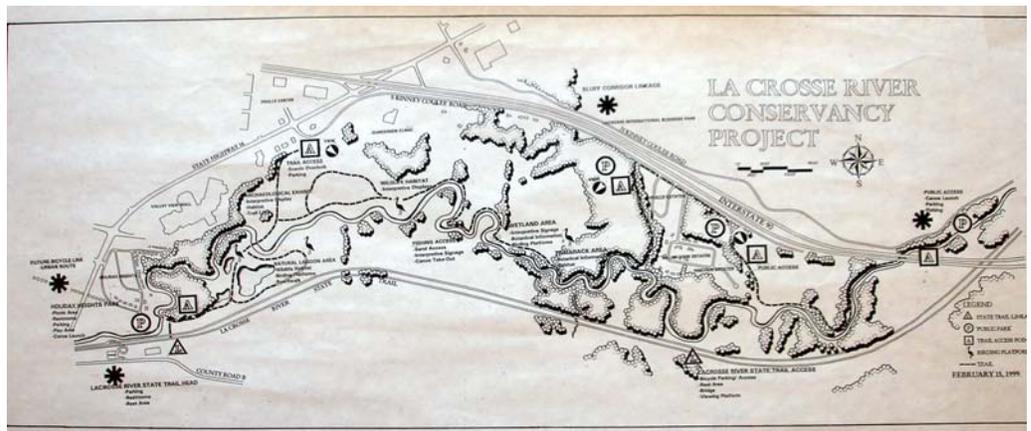


*Acquisitions Near Savannah Oaks Development-Greens Coulee*

ONALASKA CENTRAL GREENWAY PLAN



*The Onalaska Central Greenway Plan*



*The La Crosse River Conservancy Plan-Mississippi Valley Conservancy Lands*



*The Onalaska Waterfront-Black River and Lake Onalaska*



*The Onalaska Waterfront-Northern View towards Lake Onalaska*



*The Holiday Heights Park Canoe Launch Area-Part of the La Crosse River Conservancy Project*



*The La Crosse River Conservancy Project-Mississippi Valley Conservancy Lands*



*Pierce Neighborhood Park in Aspen Valley, Greens Coulee*



*Clearwater Farm-Greens Coulee*



*Sand Lake Coulee-Northern Portion of Greenway Plan*



*Greens Coulee Community Park Master Plan*



Onalaska's Bluffs

## Needs Assessment

The Needs Assessment for the Onalaska Central Greenway Plan is derived primarily from three principal sources:

1. **The 1999 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan**
2. **The 1999 Citizen Planning Survey and Forum**
3. **The City of Onalaska Comprehensive Land Use Plan**

### The City of Onalaska Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The 1999 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan serves as the City's guide for the type of park and recreation system the community desires. The Central Greenway System promotes and implements the goals and objectives of the plan. The goals and objectives articulated on page 12 of the plan highlight several key issues associated with the creation of the Central Greenway Plan including:

1. **GOAL. To Establish, administer and maintain a community-wide park and recreation system that will provide high quality facilities to fulfill the expanding needs and expressed desires of the community.**
2. **OBJECTIVE. To ensure that park and recreational facilities be planned on a neighborhood, community and city-wide basis as related parts of a unified, well-balanced system, to provide maximum opportunities for all community residents.**
3. **GOAL. To provide, improve and enhance public access, use and enjoyment of the community's natural and recreational resources.**
4. **OBJECTIVE. To establish and promote a variety of conservation measures to acquire and enhance the natural, cultural and recreational resources of the community.**

5. **GOAL.** To establish and efficient system of trails, pedestrian pathways, bicycle routes and greenways to provide access and linkages to natural and recreational resources.
6. **OBJECTIVE.** To promote the cooperation and coordination of acquisition and development efforts among state and local agencies, individuals, businesses and foundations.
7. **GOAL.** To identify, conserve and protect the community's natural resources and historic sites.
8. **OBJECTIVE.** To encourage the protection of the bluffland landscape by prohibiting development of steeply sloped areas greater than 30 percent slopes.
9. **GOAL.** To provide an efficient and well-planned system of pathways that will encourage greater pedestrian and bicycle use for recreational and transportation purposes
10. **OBJECTIVE.** To ensure that the park trails become fully integrated as a component of the City's Comprehensive Trail Plan.
11. **OBJECTIVE.** To work in cooperation with the school district, public agencies, private groups or civic organizations to form partnerships that will assist in the offering of recreational opportunities for the community.

The plan further identifies greenways as an integral component of the park system, serving to connect various levels of parks and providing the user with recreational opportunities, which emphasize the natural environment.

The plan notes that the availability of lands that may be part of a planned trail system should be a primary consideration when selecting land for the greenway.

The partnerships with Elmwood Partners, the Clearwater Foundation, the Onalaska School District and the Town of Medary in Greens Coulee as part of the Greens Coulee Community Park and the backbone of this greenway plan has presented the City with this type of a key opportunity. The plan also identifies the key Greens Coulee site (feature E) as a future 25 to 50 acre community park which will provide services to the surrounding area.

### **The 1999 Citizen Planning Survey and Community Planning Forum**

In 1999, the City of Onalaska conducted a city-wide household mailing to survey residents about planning issues. The City also conducted a citizen planning forum to solicit citizen participation in the planning effort. The survey and forum were conducted in preparation for the 5 year update to the 1994 Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Several key issues emerged as a result of the survey and planning forum which have furthered the objectives to plan a greenway system in the community.

Nearly 400 responses were received from the mailing. Survey questions included:

1. If you were to move away from Onalaska and return in 20 years, what would you like to see different about the City?
2. How can the City better serve you either with facilities of programs and services?
3. What transportation issues concern you the most?

The second highest response to question one was ‘more open space and parks.’ Question two’s top answer was ‘improved/increased recreational areas and parks.’ The top answer to question three was ‘need for facilities to support alternative modes of travel, hiking, biking, walking.’

Responses from these surveys indicate that citizens value Onalaska’s natural environment their desire for access to these resources.

Shortly after the survey was completed, a planning forum was held where similar questions were posed to participants. Results from the forum were as follows:

1. What would you like to see different about Onalaska’s housing growth?
2. What is your greatest concern for Onalaska’s environmental resources?
3. What types of recreational opportunities do you feel we need to offer that relate to our environmental resources?
4. If you were a visitor to our community for the first time, what would you see that you liked?

The top answer to question number one was ‘more green space, conservation of existing trees and open space in development.’ The top response to question two was ‘loss of natural areas to development.’ Question number three’s top answer was ‘better trail systems for biking, hiking, etc..’ and the top answer for question number four was, ‘natural features such as the bluffs.’

### **The City of Onalaska Comprehensive Land Use Plan**

The 1994 Comprehensive Land Use Plan’s objective of working with La Crosse County to develop a bluffland trail system is part if the impetus for the Central Greenway Plan.

Several other key points in the plan support the need for the development of the greenway system.

The environmental overview indicates that the City’s steep terrain contributes to the attractiveness of the area and should be protected. Additionally the flora and fauna of the bluffs is very fragile and deserves special attention. Also noted in the environmental overview is the City’s rivers, streams and associated wetlands which comprise part of the greenway system. The plan notes that these areas provide valuable habitat and contribute greatly to the aesthetic appeal of the region.

Goals and objectives of the land use plan which support the Central Greenway project include:

1. Encourage land use patterns and practices which are environmentally sensitive and do not disrupt the natural hydrologic system, including the balance between ground and surface waters.
2. Preserve wetlands as essential components of the hydraulic system and as valuable wildlife habitat.
3. Protect the bluffs by prohibiting development of steeply sloped areas greater than 30 percent slopes.
4. Encourage the preservation of the maximum amount of native vegetation on each site.
5. identify, conserve and enhance the community’s natural resources and historic areas and sites.

6. Establish safe pedestrian and bicycle circulation routes that consist of a combination of sidewalks, off-street trails and paved shoulders especially between neighborhoods, schools and parks.

Recommendations for planning Area 4 identified in the plan as Greens Coulee and Planning Area 5 for Marcou Coulee also support the central greenway plan. Land Use Recommendations for these areas include::

1. Steep bluffs and wetlands should not be developed.
2. Where development occurs in existing woodlands, as much natural vegetation as feasible should be preserved, including buffer strips of natural vegetation along the roadsides.
3. As Greens Coulee develops, two neighborhood parks will be needed, one at the southeast end and one at the northeast end. A community park will also be needed as population increases.

# Greenway System Plan

## KEY FEATURES

The Onalaska Central Greenway Plan contains numerous nodes or points of interest. Nodes and points of interest are noted on the plan as key features A through L, each representing unique opportunities for the greenway users experience.

Nodes and points of interest include, neighborhood parks, community parks and city-wide parks, school district lands, other public lands, conservancy areas, roadways and parkways, historic sites and natural systems. Each opportunity offers unique opportunities for nature based recreation, education and activities. Several features offer services beyond nature based recreation including, commercial services, athletic facilities, active recreation areas, refreshments, restrooms, transit connections and parking facilities.

## KEY LINKAGES

A principal objective of the Onalaska Central Greenway is to link the La Crosse River Trail with the Great River Trail via the features noted above. Linkage of these two trails would offer trail users an alternative route to experience Onalaska's bluff environment, adding to the nature-based recreation available on the current trail systems. Although both trails offer spectacular nature-based recreation along major waterways surrounding Onalaska, neither offers a perspective from the Mississippi River Bluffs which flank the river basin along Onalaska's eastern limits.

In addition, these linkages connect the system to surrounding communities and beyond such as Holmen and Trempleau to the north and La Crosse to the south.

Linkages within the system are equally important in improving the accessibility and opportunities within the regional existing park and open space systems.

## FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### SECTION 1-THE GREAT RIVER TRAIL LINKAGE

Paramount in the list of nodes and linkages within the system is the Great River Trail connection at Riders Club Road and State Highway 35 (The Great River Road).

This connection has been considered for several years to be important in linking the current trail facility with Van Riper Park, a 40 acre complex to the east of STH 35 offering services and recreation opportunities. STH 35 is currently a two lane roadway with speeds of 45 to 50 miles per hour near Riders Club Road. West of STH 35, La Crosse County owns a parking lot overlooking

Lake Onalaska and adjacent to the Great River Trail. Also in this vicinity is a local restaurant, offering trail users a place to get refreshments. The County-owned parking lot is currently unimproved with a gravel surface. Access to the trail from the parking lot can be found by way of a wooden staircase which transcends the slopes at the south end of the parking lot or by a switch-back type trail connection at the north end of the lot. Both access points are used frequently by trail users and fisherman accessing Lake Onalaska.

### KEY FEATURE A-RIDERS CLUB ROAD CONNECTION

Crossing STH 35 at Riders Club Road is a challenge with the current high speed limit and the four lane width. Although the current intersection is uncontrolled, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation plans to improve the intersection with traffic controls as part of a major reconstruction project tentatively scheduled for 2008. This represents a key opportunity for pedestrian and bicycle access across STH 35 to the east to Van Riper Park.

### KEY FEATURE B-VAN RIPER PARK

Just east of State Highway 35 and the Great River State Trail is Van Riper Park. Constructed in 1990, the park offers 40 acres of mixed recreational opportunities including a ½ mile trail, nature trails, natural areas including a native prairie planting, a sledding hill, ice skating rink, shelters, restrooms, ballfields and the Onalaska Omni Center, a 50,000 square foot multi-purpose facility which offers events and local festivals throughout the year.

Van Riper Park has hosted several base camps for regional biking events. Due it's size and range of services, it is a key point on the system for programmed activities.

The park also offers greenway users with a unique perspective of Onalaska's landscape with rolling Oak covered hills and sandy flats above the Mississippi River and Lake Onalaska. The Park is adjacent and contiguous to a 40 acre site owned and operated by the Onalaska School District. This site has been master planned for school athletic facilities, offering soccer, baseball and open play fields. Photos of Van Riper Park are included in the exhibits.

### SECTION 2-RIDERS CLUB ROAD CORRIDOR

Riders Club Road offers a direct east-west connection from the Great River State Trail to the Mississippi River Bluffs flanking the eastern edge of the river basin. This roadway is included in the La Crosse Area Transportation Plan Bicycle Element as a facility offering on street bicycle lanes. The roadway also has sidewalk for pedestrians. Views from Riders Club Road to the surrounding bluffs are spectacular with a terminating vista of the Richard's Peak ridgeline at the roadways eastern limits. Riders Club Road also features services a medium sized commercial area of office and retail uses.

The roadway width is 42 feet from curb to curb and offers terrace areas for street tree plantings. Transportation plans indicate future signalization of Riders Club Road intersections at State Highway 35 and at Sand Lake Road.

### SECTION 3- SAND LAKE ROAD CORRIDOR

Sand Lake Road is one of Onalaska's primary north south arterials extending south to CTH SS where the roadway turns into 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and north into the Village of Holmen. The roadway is also indicated in the La Crosse Area Transportation Plan to have paved shoulders for bicycle traffic although only portions of these facilities exist today. Future plans for expansion will

include bicycle facilities as well as pedestrian sidewalks. Sand Lake Road is one of the most scenic roadways in Onalaska, bordering the Mississippi River Basin Bluffs and winding through agricultural areas north of Onalaska.

To the north, Sand Lake Road is considered a primary linkage to Sand Lake Coulee, one of Onalaska's growth areas including the newest subdivision, Wellington Greens, a 111 parcel single family residential subdivision. Sand Lake Coulee features prehistoric archaeology sites which are on the National Register of Historic Places and scenic views of the surrounding bluffs. The predecessor of this greenway plan may be a greenway extension into this coulee, promoting conservation subdivision design and environmental considerations.

The Sand Lake Road Corridor south of Riders Club Road offers linkages to the Richards Peak Bluffs as well as Onalaska's central area, the Main Street corridor which was recently renovated with streetscaping as part of a comprehensive downtown redevelopment plan. The central portion of Onalaska also contains Onalaska's densest residential areas.

### KEY FEATURE C-MEIER FARM PARK

At the north end of Sand Lake Road in Onalaska, lies approximately 160 acres of land, formerly part of the Meier Farm. Although the land is currently leased for agriculture, the current owner, Elmwood Partners, has master planned a 200+ parcel single family subdivision.

The land is unique in that it contains remnants of Onalaska's historic rolling sand flats with scattered Oak and Hickory ridges. With its unique topography and vegetation, future housing may be planned in a manner to preserve the landscape and integrate a greenway link to the planned neighborhood park which will comprise one of the Oak covered ridges on the property. This short linkage off of Sand Lake Road will offer greenway users a chance to find future restrooms, water facilities as well as a 5 acre natural park setting. A photograph is included in the exhibits.

### SECTION 5-RICHARDS PEAK BLUFF RIDGELINE

Prominent views of this ridgeline exist from practically every perspective in the City of Onalaska. Once used as a high point to launch hang gliders, the ridgeline is a narrow geologic formation with visible rock outcroppings. Currently owned by Menards Corp., this ridgeline is undeveloped. Housing that has occurred in Greens Coulee, east of the ridgeline, has been developed at lower elevations, leaving the ridgeline unchanged as a scenic feature in the community. Vegetation along its steep slopes consist of a mix of Oak and Hickory hardwoods and edge-type vegetation including Birch, Poplar and Elm. The steep side hills are currently only accessible by abandoned logging trails which ascend the slopes at several locations. The bluff line also contains one of the City's municipal water reservoirs near the Riders Club Road area.

Prehistoric archaeological sites are numerous in the vicinity of this bluff line. Another historic site exists near key feature D which includes a cave once used to age beer in the late 1800's. The cave site is located on private property adjoining the land owned by the Onalaska school district. Wildlife is abundant along the bluffs with concentrations of Whitetail Deer and Wild Turkey that frequent the adjacent agricultural fields at dawn and dusk. Bald Eagles, Redtail Hawk, and Pileated Woodpeckers can be seen along the bluffs as well.

The bluffs pinnacle is at elevation 1,123 and offers views of the Mississippi River and surrounding communities.

The southern end of the bluff line offers access to lands owned by the Onalaska School District, Key Feature D. This area has more gentle topography than the northern end and provides possible trail connection points into the Greens Coulee area to the east.

Photographs of the bluff are included in the exhibits.

## SECTION 6-GREENS COULEE PARK SYSTEM

Greens Coulee represents a significant percentage of Onalaska's future residential growth and future population. Approximately 800 acres in size, the coulee has seen several developments in the past three years including the 158 parcel subdivision, Aspen Valley, on the coulees west side and more recently, the Clearwater Addition, a 51 parcel subdivision on the coulees west side. Most of the growth is occurring at lower elevations due to the steeply sloping side hills of the coulee. The area is dominated by scenic vistas due to the surrounding bluffs.

The 1999 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan identifies two principal parks in Greens Coulee to accommodate the projected growth in the area. The southern most park is a community park facility consisting of 25 to 50 acres of mixed active and passive recreation uses. The northern most park is a neighborhood park of approximately 5 acres, offering play areas, water and sanitary facilities and trails.

Both parks facilities represent significant nodes in the greenway system due to their central proximity to Onalaska's overall urban growth area and their potential for providing nature based recreation activities. In addition, these parks are contiguous with other semi-public lands which further their public benefit.

### KEY FEATURE D-ONALASKA SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPERTY

The Onalaska School district property in Greens Coulee consists of 26.62 acres of bluff land including part of the southern ridge line. The property is located just west of the current Pierce Park, a 5 acre parcel dedicated as part of the Aspen Valley development. The land is accessible from Pierce Park by a 20 foot public access easement and public right of way in the Aspen Valley subdivision.

Current use of the land is limited to nature study programmed through the school district. The land is dominated by Oak and Hickory hardwoods although some edge habitat is present on the property.

The school district property represent a significant linkage to the Richards Peak Ride line which runs primarily north of the site. The site also is contiguous to the private property containing the historic beer cave site.

Future use of the property will most likely consist of trails and interpretive areas for nature study.

### KEY FEATURE E-GREENS COULEE COMMUNITY PARK

The Greens Coulee Community park represents the most exciting current opportunity in the greenway system. A directive of the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the park was planned for a strategic location, taking advantage of the rapid residential growth in the area. Developed in 1998, the Aspen Valley Subdivision offered an opportunity to acquire 5 acres of

parkland through the City's subdivision requirements. In addition, the City Engineering Department required the developers to construct a pond adjacent to the site to manage storm water run off. Rather than create a utilitarian facility with security fences, the City decided to naturalize the pond and make it a feature in the park. The City further planned for the expansion of the 5 acre parcel to meet the objective of developing a 25 to 50 acre community park in the area.

Adjacent to the Aspen Valley park lies 10 acres of land owned by George Humfeldt. This 10 acre parcel is currently used for agricultural purposes although the site also contains the Humfeldt home and some accessory structures. One significant structure on the site is a 19<sup>th</sup> century ice house which was part of the historic farmstead of Hamlin Garland, a prominent individual in the La Crosse area.

Just across Greens Coulee Road to the east lies the recently platted Clearwater Addition. This subdivision proposes 51 single family home parcels on the former George Humfeldt farm. The proposed home lots only consume one quarter of the available 150 acres on the property. Although much of the developable land is steep slopes greater than 30%, the residential density could have been three times greater than what is planned by the current development. The proposed conservation of the majority of the land offered the City a key opportunity to purchase additional lands adjacent to the Aspen Valley park in order to meet objectives of the Outdoor Recreation Plan. In addition, the remaining 66 acres not consumed by housing, lies adjacent to 7.5 acres of land owned by the Town of Medary which was secured by the township for park purposes. The land also contains three acres of wetlands and the primary drainage way, an intermittent stream along Greens Coulee Road. The easternmost 40 acres of the site contains a bluff peak which offers views of the Mississippi River, Lake Onalaska and the surrounding communities. The peak is the site of a historic limestone quarry used by early settlers for building materials.

A master plan of this park facility is included in the exhibits. The park will ultimately contain 88 acres of public parkland and 26 acres of adjacent school district lands. Primary facilities will include parking, water and sanitary facilities, trails, open play areas and a multitude of nature based recreation opportunities including wetland and upland nature based education and interpretive areas, nature trails for walking hiking and biking, wildlife viewing areas offering facilities for photography, scenic viewing areas and picnic areas.

## KEY FEATURE F-CLEARWATER FARM

The remaining portion of the land contains the agricultural structures, consisting of approximately 5 acres. This land is being pursued by the Clearwater Foundation, a citizens group founded in 1999 to promote education and stewardship of natural, architectural, agricultural, and historical resources in the coulee. The purchase of this land by the foundation will present opportunities for partnership with the City of Onalaska for joint use and management of this portion of the greenway system. The historic barn located on the site represents one of the key opportunities in this area. The Clearwater Foundation's goals is to preserve the barn using volunteer labor and later program the structures use for neighborhood events. The preservation of this historic agricultural structure in the center of the greenway system is considered to be a key point of interest in Greens Coulee.

The Clearwater Farm will contain a cooperative gardening area accessible by the public. The site will also contain a multi-purpose educational area which will offer visitors opportunities to learn about area history, gardening methods and stewardship efforts.

## KEY FEATURE G-GREENS COULEE NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

The Greens Coulee Neighborhood Park is planned in anticipation of the future residential growth in Greens Coulee. It will most likely be located within the remaining agricultural lands currently in the northern half of Greens Coulee, in a central location to the future residential growth. The park will likely be 5 acres in size with trails, open play areas, restrooms and playground facilities. The site represents an important linkage to the greenway system for access by residents in the northern section of the coulee. The neighborhood park will be accessible by way of off street sidewalks or trails and a planned 8 foot multi-modal asphalt trail flanking Greens Coulee Road.

## KEY FEATURE H-GREENS COULEE BLUFF TRAIL

The bluff trail system proposed in Greens Coulee was conceived by the 1994 Comprehensive Plan objective to work with La Crosse County on the feasibility of creating a bluffland trail system. The location of the Greens Coulee Trail allows for a multitude of possible connections since the eastern ridgeline of Greens Coulee connects with several other ridgelines in the area and other growth areas such as Sand Lake Coulee.

The trail is also important in that it represents the only facility in Onalaska where citizens and visitors can experience the local bluff environment through the purchase of public park land.

The trail is located in a central location relative to Onalaska's urban growth area, making it easily accessible by the population. The trail will be designed to offer a variety of experiences, providing access to individuals with all abilities. Lower sections of the trail will likely be paved for use by bicyclists, roller bladers and walkers while higher elevations will be more natural logging trails. The lower section of the trail up to the first overlook will be designed for maximum accessibility while higher elevations may offer greater challenges for access due to steep slopes and rugged terrain. The trail will offer opportunities for rest with scenic overlooks, wildlife viewing areas and water and sanitary facilities. The trail will offer users a variety of environments to enjoy including the lower 3 acre wetland area, edge habitat areas, open meadows, upland hardwood areas and the rocky ridgelines and a bluff top peak.

## KEY FEATURE I-TOWN OF MEDARY PUBLIC LANDS

Located just south of the easternmost 40 acre parcel of the Clearwater Addition, the Town of Medary Land consist of 7.5 acres of bluff ridgelines and side slopes. Originally acquired as park land for the adjacent Meadowood Subdivision, the land is currently unimproved. The location of the parcel represents an opportunity for the greenway system to be accessible to two major subdivision areas to the south; the Elmwood Addition in the City of Onalaska and the Meadowood Addition in the Town of Medary. These subdivisions contain approximately 200 single family home sites.

## SECTION 7-GREENS COULEE CORRIDOR

Greens Coulee Road is the central collector in Greens Coulee. The roadway is currently a rural in nature, with no curb and gutter and a narrow 24 foot width in most places. The roadway is approximately 8,000 ft. in length, beginning at Main Street to the south and running north to a dead end. The intersection at Main Street is not signalized and has become increasingly congested with growth in Greens Coulee and the surrounding area.

The 2000 Capital Improvement Plan identified Greens Coulee Road as a priority project for reconstruction. The improvements are largely needed due to residential growth in the coulee. The project also contains a 8 foot off street multi-modal trail which will run along the east side of Greens Coulee Road. This facility is likely to get heavy use due to the increasing numbers of pedestrians and bicyclists in Greens Coulee. The trail will offer safe access to the greenway system from the Main Street corridor. The roadway will also be developed with grass terrace areas for street tree planting and maximum width of 37 feet, consistent with recommendations of a recently adopted transportation study for the coulee.

## SECTION 8-MAIN STREET CORRIDOR

Onalaska's Main Street corridor is one of the principal transportation arterials in the city. On the far west end of Main Street lies Onalaska's historic downtown area and the Great River Road, State Highway 35, an area in positive transition due to the 1999 Comprehensive Downtown Redevelopment Plan. On the corridor's eastern limits lies State Highway 16 and one of Onalaska's premier economic development zones with nearly 130 acres of prime commercial real estate and a mix of light industrial, office and retail uses. The area is considered to have high potential due to the proximity of Gundersen Clinic and the establishment of several key businesses in the area including Winnebago Software, Midwest Security Insurance and Baird Financial Services. The western end of the Main Street Corridor at State Highway 35 has linkages to the Great River State Trail and has recently been updated with streetscaping in conjunction with a reconstruction project completed in 2000. The 60,000 square foot Onalaska municipal facilities is also located on Main Street just blocks away from the Great River Road and Trail. Current plans for the eastern limits of Main Street is a comprehensive landscape improvement and community entrance sign project which will be completed in 2001.

The Main Street corridor is important to the greenway system in that it is a major east-west linkage through the heart of Onalaska connecting these key areas of the City. The corridor is also listed in the La Crosse Area Transportation Plan as having bicycle facilities with paved bicycle lanes east of the State Highway 157 interchange. The Main Street Corridor also offers greenway users linkages to area commercial services such as restaurants and retail areas and connections to the system by the local labor force for recreation.

The Main Street corridor also links two major growth areas in the City, Greens Coulee and Marcou Coulee.

## KEY FEATURE J-EAGLE BLUFF SCHOOL

Eagle bluff school is Onalaska's newest elementary school. Purchased in 1997, the property surrounding Eagle Bluff School is made up of steep slopes and ridgelines just north of the Main Street corridor. When approval was granted for the school development, the City requested that the school district preserve a future public access easement to the north into Greens Coulee. This linkage could offer opportunities for connections to the Greens Coulee School District land as well as the larger greenway which will provide nature base education and recreation to school children. The linkage also provides access to the Theater Road corridor just south of the school which was constructed in 1998 with paved bicycle lanes. The Theater Road corridor links the commercial areas south of Interstate 90. Eagle Bluff School also has open play areas and natural areas including prairie plantings. The City of Onalaska has a cooperative relationship with the school district in joint programming of open play areas and recreational facilities throughout the City.

## KEY FEATURE K-SANDALWOOD PARK

Sandalwood Park is a 12 acre site located along State Highway 157 just south of Main Street. The park is programmed to have restrooms and water facilities in the future which will benefit trail users in the area. The land consists of open play areas, wooded areas and wetlands. The park will also contain a trail loop from Esther Drive just south of Main Street to the Pralle Road area east of the park. This portion of the trail will be paved.

## SECTION 9-MARCOU COULEE BLUFF LINKAGE

The Marcou Coulee bluff linkage is shown as an alternative greenway linkage to the eastern portion of the City, ultimately connecting the La Crosse/Onalaska economic development area and the La Crosse River Basin to the south. This major system of bluffs is largely undeveloped and offers peaks and ridgelines which run east-west connecting the Greens Coulee area with the Marcou Coulee area. The bluff line overlooks the La Crosse Country Club development, a 18 hole private golf course facility surrounded by some of Onalaska's most exclusive housing. To the north of the bluffs in Marcou Coulee, lies the Innsbruck Subdivision, a rural subdivision in the Township of Onalaska containing over 60 homes.

The bluffs in Marcou Coulee are dominated by Oak and Hickory forests on steep slopes. This linkage may be considered through direct purchase, conservation easements, transfer or purchase of development rights or public access easements or a combination of any of these mechanisms.

This linkage will largely depend on the willingness of private land owners in the area.

## KEY FEATURE L-ONALASKA SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPERTY

The Onalaska School District owns 10 acres on the eastern side of Marcou Coulee just north of French Road. Although the land is currently not programmed, it represents another opportunity in the greenway system for nature based recreation and education. The parcel is primarily wooded with a combination of rolling topography and steep side slopes along the bluffs. The French Road corridor as well as the Country Club area are both subject to residential development pressures. Plans are underway for an additional 200 homes in the Country Club Area. This area is also identified in Onalaska's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for a community park facility serving Onalaska's eastern residential areas.

## SECTION 10-LACROSSE/ONALASKA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AREA

The La Crosse/ Onalaska Economic Development area is the product of the 1997 La Crosse-Onalaska boundary agreement, a cooperative agreement between the City's to jointly develop the land in the area of State Highway 16 and Interstate 90. The land consists of approximately 230 acres of vacant economic development land flanked on the west by a creek corridor which serves the Marcou Coulee watershed and to the east by steep bluffs at Onalaska's corporate limits with the Township of Hamilton.

The principal greenway linkage in this area is formed by the creek corridor along the west edge of the economic development zone. The City of La Crosse master plan for the La Crosse

International Business Park identifies the creek corridor as an opportunity for off-street trails for use by the local workforce. This creek corridor winds its way through both City's between State Highway 16 and Interstate 90, presenting the opportunity for a collaborative project between the cities of Onalaska and La Crosse. A small pond (less than 1 acre in size) is located in the central portion of the creek, providing wildlife habitat and potential adjacent viewing areas. The creek is also bordered by wetlands and wooded side slopes.

*The creek corridor represents the key opportunity for a north south linkage from the bluffs to the north to the La Crosse River Conservancy Area south of Interstate 90.*

East of the economic development zone is the bluff line at the City's eastern limits. Although this area is not shown on the greenway plan, future potential for a trail loop exists as development occurs and future phased reclamation of the La Crosse County landfill is underway. The La Crosse County landfill has a current life expectancy of about 20 years.

## SECTION 11-LA CROSSE RIVER CONSERVANCY PROJECT

The La Crosse River Conservancy Project was conceived through a cooperative partnership between the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, the cities of Onalaska and La Crosse and Gundersen Clinic. Key objectives of the plan included the phased acquisition of portions of the La Crosse River floodplain either through direct purchase or through the establishment of permanent conservation easements.

### KEY FEATURE M-INTERSTATE 90 CROSSING

Considered one of the top challenges of the greenway system is the Interstate 90 crossing near Pralle Estates, a recently platted area containing 30 lots. This crossing is important in completing the linkage between the Great River State Trail and the LaCrosse River State Trail. Crossings of this magnitude either require the use of overpass or underpass facilities. Several large underpass and overpass facilities are present in the La Crosse and Onalaska area, providing key access points for trails across major roadways. Perhaps a future opportunity may present itself for a crossing as a result of updated stormwater box culverts which exist in the area. An overpass is also possible although these facilities are known to be very expensive at this scale and an underpass may be a more practical solution, taking advantage of the changing grades along the Interstate corridor.

### KEY FEATURE N-LA CROSSE ONALASKA PARK LAND

The La Crosse Onalaska park land is also a product of the La Crosse Onalaska boundary agreement. When the area was annexed, a 15 acre site previously owned by the Town of Medary became park land jointly owned by the City of Onalaska and La Crosse. The land contains portions of the La Crosse River floodplain as well as a logging road that transcends the slopes to the bottom of the river valley from South Kinney Coulee Road.

### KEY FEATURE O-ROBINSON PARK

Robinson neighborhood park contains about 8 acres adjacent to the Pralle, Pineview and Valley Vue subdivisions. The park offers a trail loop, water and sanitary facilities, open play areas, scenic views of the La Crosse River floodplain, wooded areas and access points to the La Crosse River

Conservancy project. The park also contains prehistoric evidence of Native American activity in the area per a recent archaeological investigation done at the site.

## KEY FEATURE P-LACROSSE RIVER CONSERVANCY PROJECT

The La Crosse River Conservancy Project contains over 1000 acres of floodplain, wetland, wooded areas and the La Crosse River itself. The project proposes the future development of nature based recreation and education facilities through access by several local public park sites including Robinson Park (Feature O), Valley Vue Park (Feature N and Holiday Heights Park (Feature Q). Trails, bird watching platforms, river access points and interpretive areas are part of the master plan for the area. Plans for habitat restoration are also part of the plans for conservancy project.

The conservancy area is largely inaccessible currently although spectacular views of the area can be found at several locations north and south of the floodplain.

## KEY FEATURE Q-HOLIDAY HEIGHTS PARK

Holiday Heights park is a 21.56 acre site located between the cities of Onalaska and La Crosse adjacent to the Holiday Heights subdivision. The park is primarily located in the La Crosse River floodplain, offering key wildlife viewing, fishing, and hiking opportunities. The park also contains a potential linkage to the La Crosse River Conservancy Project to the east by way of a bridge over the La Crosse River. A bridge used by snowmobiles currently exists in the park, however, the bridge is beyond repair due to it's age and erosion of the main structure over time. The park also lies across the river from the La Crosse River State Trail trailhead at CTH B in La Crosse, presenting another opportunity for a potential linkage to the State trail system. The park currently contains open play areas and playground equipment. The master plan for the park indicates future nature trails along the river, an accessible fishing and canoe launch area, a shelter and restroom facilities.

## SECTION 12-LACROSSE RIVER STATE TRAIL CONNECTION-FEATURE R

A trail connection to the La Crosse River State Trail would require a bridge over the La Crosse River from the north. Both the La Crosse River Conservancy Project and the Onalaska Central Greenway Plan note the possibility of this type of connection.

South of the Valley Vue Estates subdivision is a bend in the La Crosse River which puts the river within close proximity to the state trail. Near this point, the City of Onalaska acquired public access easements from the Valley Vue Estates subdivision south to the rivers edge. Due to these features and the close proximity of the river to the trail, an access point is possible at key feature R. Another opportunity for a linkage to the state trail exists at the Holiday Heights Park (Key Feature Q).

ONALASKA CENTRAL GREENWAY PLAN

## Implementation Plan

The following implementation plan identifies objectives to be completed within a specified timeframe. The implementation plan is to serve as a guide for future planning and may be subject to change as opportunities and/or constraints arise. Four principal mechanisms will offer opportunities for land acquisition and access and capital costs associated with improvements to the system. These mechanisms include:

1. The Onalaska Capital Improvement Plan. Projects are prioritized annually against available funds for each fiscal year. Potential greenway projects may compete with public works projects as well as other city projects for funding.
2. Public/Private or Public/Public Partnerships. Many opportunities exist for the implementation of the greenway plan through partnerships. These partnerships can offer extended technical and financial resources and may accelerate the implementation of the objectives of the greenway plan.
3. Alternative Funding Sources. Grants from State, Federal and Private entities will be a principal source of revenue for the implementation of the greenway plan. Since local funding may be limited due to competition in the capital improvement planning process, these funds play an important role in the implementation of the greenway plan. Due to Onalaska's rapid growth and the increasing development pressures on many areas of the greenway, outside financial support may be critical to seizing opportunity when it arises.
4. Private Development. As development occurs, the City will employ mechanisms such as parkland dedication requirements to further the objectives of the greenway plan. Private development may also use mechanisms such as public access easements, conservancy easements or common ownership agreements to preserve portions of land as development occurs. Transfer or purchase of development rights may also be considered by the City as opportunities arise.

## Short Term Objectives 0 to 5 years

1. Work with La Crosse County on improvements to the parking lot west of Riders Club Road and State Highway 35 near the Great River Trail Access.
2. Continue to foster nature based recreation activities in the Van Riper Park facility (Feature B) through trail improvements, naturalized plantings and programming.
3. Include Riders Club Road in the City's Urban Forestry Plan in order to beautify the corridor with street trees and accent plantings.

4. Work with the developer of the Meier Farm Area (Feature C) in order to provide a linkage to the future neighborhood park. Develop the Meier Farm neighborhood park with nature based recreation activities, taking advantage of the rolling wooded landscape that the area offers.
5. Work with Menards Corp. on the trail linkage and possible conservancy areas along the Richards Peak Bluffline
6. Begin phased implementation of the Greens Coulee Community Park site including land acquisition and improvements.
7. Establish a partnership with the Clearwater Foundation on the rehabilitation of the George Humfeldt barn structure and common objectives for nature based recreation and education in the coulee.
8. Work with the Town of Medary on the linkage to the 7.5 acres owned by the township.
9. Work with Elmwood Partners and other private land owners on the linkages through the Marcou Coulee area as development occurs and opportunities arise.
10. Work with the City of La Crosse on the establishment of a trail system along the drainage way west of the L A Crosse International Business Park in the Onalaska/ La Crosse Economic Development Area.
11. Continue cooperative efforts with the Mississippi Valley Conservancy on the establishment of trail heads and facilities associated with the La Crosse River Conservancy Project.
12. Begin the phased implementation of improvements at the Robinson Park and Valley Vue Park sites, emphasizing opportunities for nature based recreation activities and linkages to the La Crosse River Conservancy Project.

