

PARKS BOARD

HISTORY

The Parks and Recreation Board, serving as the duly constituted agency, operates under the 1965 Indiana Park and Recreation Law (36-10-3). The board provides policy and fiscal oversight and direction for the department. The following purposes and objectives serve as a general philosophy for park operations:

- Recreation is an integral part of society; therefore, it is necessary to develop and maintain a system of regional parks. The St. Joseph County Parks contribute to the quality of life in our region and help bridge the gap between municipal parks and larger scale state and national parks. The St. Joseph County Parks Board shall work in cooperation with other parks and recreation agencies and public and private organizations in the area to strive for a balance of recreational programs and facilities with a minimum of duplication.
- Parks and recreation facilities and programs are engines of economic activity. The St. Joseph County Parks shall continue to contribute to regional economic growth by generating tourism and supporting a livable community that attracts and retains businesses and talent.
- Recreation within the St. Joseph County Parks is defined as leisure programs and environmental education/interpretive opportunities. Through the development and offering of recreation programs, the Parks promote attitudes, interests, knowledge, and skills that encourage life-long learning, connections to the outdoors, and wise use and understanding of our natural and cultural resources.
- Each park should be uniquely designed and developed so it exhibits its own character distinct from other parks in the system. Programs and facilities shall be developed in harmony with the natural beauty and physiography of the land, while incorporating best practices for landscaping, control of invasive species, and wildlife management to support healthy ecosystems and habitats.
- Establishing or maintaining important natural areas and areas of historical significance is an important focus for the Board. Where at all possible, only 20% of the land under Board ownership will be developed, with 80% left in a natural state. Additional land acquisition shall focus on property contiguous to existing parks or tracts of land of 100 acres or more.
- Park facilities and programs shall be designed to promote public health and general well-being through outdoor activity and connections to nature. The Board shall establish rules and regulations designed to protect park users, as well as promote appropriate use and care of facilities.
- To meet the ever-changing interests and priorities of the community, the park and recreation needs of the County will be assessed, interpreted, and expressed by a Master Plan to ensure directed growth, development, and consistency with these guidelines.

The Parks Board typically meets the third Tuesday of every month. During these meetings, the Board receives updates on department activity, reviews the budget including claims and donations, approves policies and actions of the department, and assesses the position of the department for strategic planning.

Excerpted from Page 22 of St. Joseph County Parks Master Plan 2019-2023

