

Public City Parks

SPR manages a 258-acre park system of over 11 parks and extensive natural areas throughout the City of Sparta. Also providing athletic fields, play areas, specialty gardens, and more than 20 miles of trails, the Sparta Parks System offers outdoor recreation for all. Most parks within the Sparta Parks System have shelters for rent, grills and restrooms. For a complete list of the Sparta Parks and Shelters, see below. SPR also manages many facilities, including the Barney Family Community Center, River Run Golf Course, Sparta Family Aquatic Center, Senior Center, Fitness Center, ten outdoor shelters, and much more.

All Sparta parks are open to the public, resident and non-resident alike, but some properties, because of their smaller size and more limited facilities, are more likely to attract visitors from the immediate surrounding neighborhood.

Golf Course

Golf Course – This 150-acre, 18-hole, 6,187-yard, par-72 course is built on part of the grounds of the former Wisconsin Children's Center, owned by the City for many years, and called Memorial Park. The course nearly surrounds Perch Lake. The course is owned and operated by the City and the philosophy is to keep the greens fees as low as practical to encourage use and play by the general public. There are electric carts available for rent, or personal carts may be kept and used at the course. A private contractor operates a club house with restaurant, bar, and a small pro shop in a city-owned building. There is also a driving range. For more information on the golf course, you may visit the golf course's website.



Memorial Park

60 acres – This extensive recreation area is part of the grounds of the former Wisconsin Children’s Center. In the late 1970’s, the State ceased operation of the Center and it was acquired by the City. Some of the buildings on the campus like grounds have been sold to non-profit organizations for use as schools or daycare centers, but the majority of the buildings and most of the acreage remain intact for direct public use. There are a wide of facilities and activities available on the 60 acre property. The



Sparta/Barney Community Center, already discussed, lies within Memorial Park.

Outdoor recreation facilities at Memorial Park include:

- Aquatic Center
- Baseball and Softball fields
- Concession Stand
- Basketball Hoops
- Outdoor Sand Volleyball Courts
- Indoor Hockey Rink and Skating Rink
- Playground Apparatus
- 6 Picnic Shelters
- 100 Picnic Tables
- 10 Fire Grills
- Parking
- Perch Lake Boat Launch
- Memorial Park Fest Grounds

In the winter, the entire park, including the golf course, is open for cross-country skiing. Memorial Park is the site of the annual Butterfest celebration.

The lake frontage and general wide expanses of this park, with many mature trees and established landscaping from its previous use as a children’s home make it an ideal place for leisurely walking or sitting. There are many of the buildings remaining from the facility’s earlier use.

Evans-Bosshard Park

6 acres -The Park has exercise stations along the trail, two picnic shelters, picnic tables, grills, fixed benches, playground apparatus, bandshell and a canoe launch site on the south side of the La Crosse River near East Avenue. This park is home to "Concerts in the Park" every Wednesday night during the summer and the "Holiday in the Park" during the winter months. Vehicle entrance to the Park is from East Avenue.



Amundson Park

This largely undeveloped park totals over 100 acres of land. The primary entrance to the park is at the intersection of River Rd. and Apsen Blvd. The park features an improved parking lot and entrance road, picnic shelter and playground that was installed in 2007. There has been extensive trout habitat improvement done in the parks along that La Crosse River that is accessible through a trail system. Future plans for the park are to continue river work and expand the walking trails system. This park will also be home to a dog park that will hopefully be completed during the summer of 2011.



Perch Lake

Although Perch Lake is one of the principal features of the golf course, Memorial Park, and Fisherman's Park, it also is a unique feature in its own right. It has 32 surface



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acres with a maximum depth of ten feet and a mean depth of five feet. It was created by damming the La Crosse River. Most of the land around the lake is City owned except for one private home and a VFW clubhouse. The lake has a native fishery of warm water pan fish, largemouth bass, northern pike, and some brown and rainbow trout, all of which is supplemented by stocking as recommended by fishery management professionals. The Lake was last dredged in 2000.

Ben Bikin' Park

2.5 acres - This park is one of the best known in Sparta, if not much of western Wisconsin, because it is the site of "Ben Bikin," a large rendition of a figure in late 19th century clothing mounted on an "ordinary," or high front wheel bike. The location at the southeast corner of STH 16 (Wisconsin Street) and Water Street insures that good use is made of the small unstaffed shelter which has numerous maps and other tourist information posted. The park has frontage on the La Crosse River and the shoreline on both sides has been rip-rapped from the STH 16 bridge to the Water Street Bridge. The City hiking/biking trail begins at this park and extends north along the La Crosse River/Beaver Creek shoreline into Evans-Bosshard Park. Bicyclists on either the Sparta-Elroy or La Crosse River State Trails can easily reach this park, and its intracity trail, by means of local, or minor collector, City streets. In the heavy tourist season months portable toilets are placed in the park.



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Fisherman's Park

2 acres – Fisherman’s Park provides a remarkably quiet park at the lower end of Perch Lake. The park has one shelter, playground apparatus, picnic tables and grills, and portable toilets during heavy-use season. There is a wheelchair accessible fishing pier extending into the Lake from the park shoreline. The part of the park lying east of East Avenue is the most heavily used with the mowed turf, playground, shelter, parking, and fishing pier. West of East Avenue provides some great fishing opportunities at Farmers Valley Creek and the La Crosse River. A cement canoe launch has been added just below the Perch Lake dam.



Blyton Park

4 acres – This park is basically a picnic park for passive recreation in an established neighborhood. Large shade trees are a dominant feature of this park, and the Civil War statue and many war monuments add a touch of hometown established values. There is a non-regulation size ball field with backstop located in the park, which is suitable for younger players. A playground area, swing bays, and some rocking animals complete this park.

West Side Park

2.9 acres – This park is located in the center of a residential block surrounded by houses, and is not readily visible from the surrounding streets. A vehicular drive provides access from the south, off Hill Street, and the small parking lot in the park is used seasonally as a skating rink. Permanent restroom facilities are available and the park includes an integrated play area and some wooden beam structures. There is also a ball diamond that has been improved and provides a great sheltered ball field. Because of this park’s location near two parochial schools, it serves as the recess play area for both of them.

Tom Gomez Park

1.8 acres – This park is a good example of the City’s subdivision requirements for park creation as new residential areas are developed. Mr. Charles Palmer, the developer of the Pfaff subdivision has set an example for other new development. The park has a baseball backstop and 18 crimson maple trees were planted for landscaping. There is a small open side picnic shelter, tables, and a playground apparatus.



Howard Huff Park

This small neighborhood park is just east of Water St. across from the Ben Bikin’ Information Center. The park features a playground apparatus, swing set, sandbox, and open grass area for picnics and ball games.



City Biking Hiking Trails Along Beaver Creek

Bicycling/Hiking/Roller skating facilities begin at Howard Huff Park with a bicycle lane beginning at Water Street, extending north to Main Street. At this point the bicycle way leaves the street and enters the Information Center on a paved trail. It crosses under the Wisconsin Street Bridge, remaining on the west side of the La Crosse River, and enters into Evans-Bosshard Park. It travels through this park to the west side of Beaver Creek, with a spur crossing the creek to the east, through the park, to East Avenue. Another spur from this spur extends south through the park and across the La Crosse River on a bicycle/pedestrian/snowmobile bridge to the Highway 16 Wayside portion of Evans-Bosshard Park. The main trail continues north through Evans-Bosshard Park, to the north boundary of the park at Main Street. The trail crosses Main Street and runs between the Rural Fire Department Building and Beaver Creek, through the parking lot behind the fire station to a ramp,



constructed in 1998, to gain access to Water Street. A crossing of Water Street is made at this point, in the heart of the central business district. The trail system is most developed within Evans-Bosshard Park, and includes bridges over both the La Crosse River and Beaver Creek.

Beaver Creek Parkway

Beaver Creek Parkway – This greenway has essentially been discussed as being an extension of Evans-Bosshard Park and is part of the trail system. It has traditionally been identified as a distinct feature in the City's park system.

