



*John S. Harris Park*

# CHAPTER 2

TRENDS

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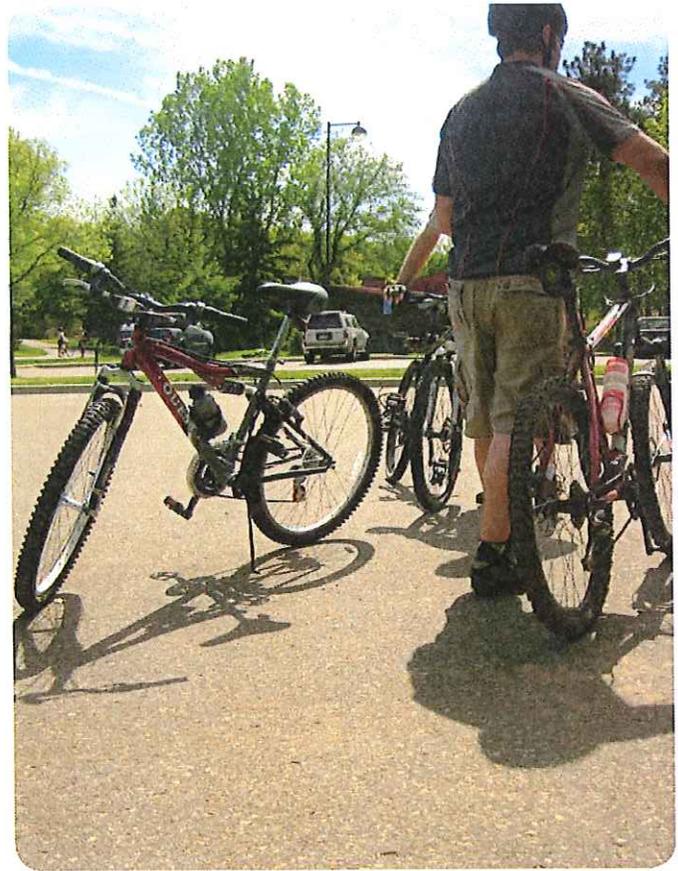


## Outdoor Recreation Activities of Minnesota Adults

(population 20 years and older, participating annually)

Activity	Percent of population
Walking	54%
Boating of all types	43%
Swimming or wading all places	41%
Driving for pleasure on scenic roads	37%
Picnicking	36%
Fishing of all types	30%
Biking outdoors of all types	29%
Visiting outdoor zoos	27%
Camping of all types	26%
Visiting nature center	25%

Source: 2004 Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey



Over the next decade, La Crescent's park system will be less influenced by the growth in the number of people and more by changes in the population (aging, growth in ethnic populations, etc.), changes in technology, changes in attitudes, and cultural changes. Recreation is driven by people. There will always be demand for traditional park activities such as baseball, soccer, softball and tennis. Technology, available leisure time, and levels of disposable income also drive park and open space needs. The La Crescent park and open space system needs to keep pace with these changing needs. The plan and the park system must remain flexible to adapt to new changes that occur in order to maximize investments.

The following are key trends that are expected to influence the La Crescent park system.

### RECREATION TRENDS

Demographic, social, cultural, economic and environmental changes influence recreational trends over time. Changes in recreation interests and habits affect park and recreation facility needs and desires. Significant recreation trends that may affect La Crescent include:

### INCREASED MOBILITY

In community surveys, trails are frequently mentioned as the number one desired recreation amenity. According to the Minnesota State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), 54% of Minnesota's residents participate in walking and 29% are involved in biking. Many people are also interested in passive and natural resource based recreation. In Minnesota, 36% of the population takes part in picnicking, 30% participate in fishing, 26% are involved in camping and 25% visit nature centers. In La Crescent, all of the top recreation activities noted in the SCORP are available to residents within either a short drive, walk or bike ride.



### NON-TRADITIONAL SPORTS

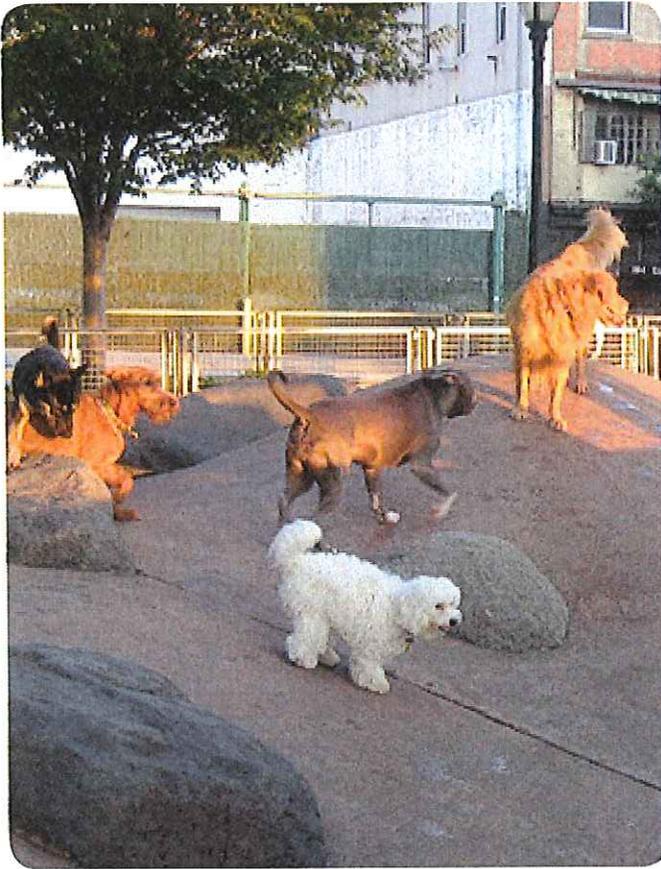
Non-traditional sports and recreation activities such as skateboarding, in-line skating, off-road biking, geocaching and disk golf continue to increase in popularity and are competing for space in existing parks. Creating facilities for these non-traditional recreation pursuits also challenges limited budgets which are frequently stretched thin just to support traditional endeavors. La Crescent recently received inquiries about establishing a Cricket pitch and disc golf in one of the City parks. This request is indicative new options for recreational facilities that are likely to occur due to changes in community demographics and interests.



### HEALTH CONSCIOUS POPULATION – FIGHTING OBESITY

Although Minnesotans are generally healthier than residents of other states, the obesity rate is increasing. From 1990 to 2006, obesity increased by 132%. Obesity is a factor in an array of health problems including diabetes. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 1964, 50% of kids rode their bikes to school and the obesity rate was 12%. Forty years later, 3% of kids rode their bikes to school and the obesity rate was 45%. Outdoor recreation is one way for people to stay active and prevent obesity.

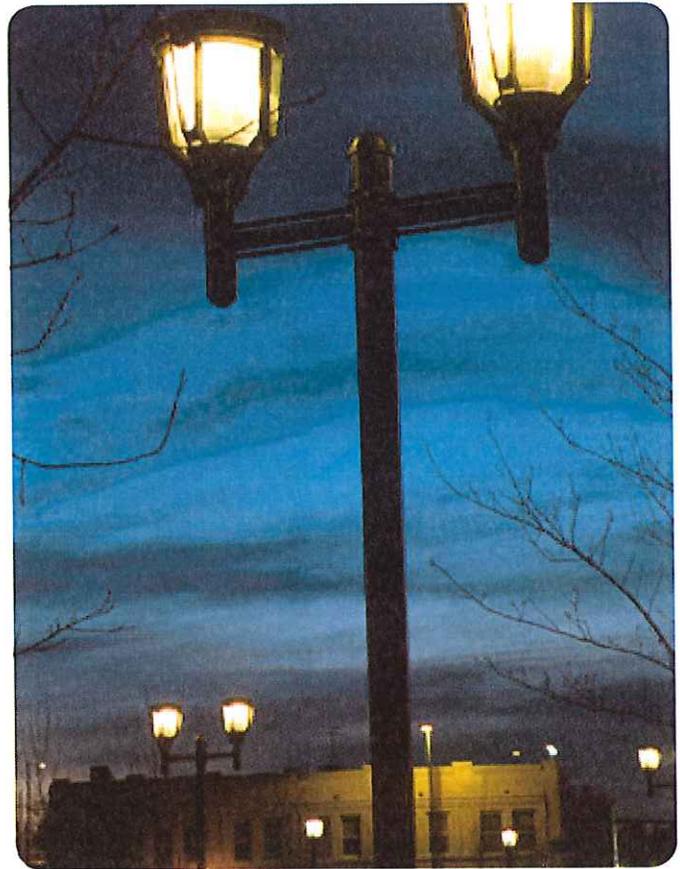
Studies also have found a link between urban living and health. Residents living in urban areas tend to weigh less than residents living in sprawling communities. Promoting walkability, active recreation, and healthy food choices benefits all segments of the population. Demand is expected to increase for more fitness and trail opportunities as well as increased active living opportunities. The trend for locally grown food is also expected to increase. The La Crescent Farmers' Market will remain a popular community activity.



### DOGS

The 2011-2012 National Pet Owners Survey found that 39% of the households in the United States own at least one dog. Since a significant number of households have more than one dog, on average, there are almost two dogs per household (1.69). A 2009 study done in the Twin Cities showed similar results. In the Twin Cities area, households with dogs (36%) exceeded the number of households with children (26%). A high level of dog ownership is likely in La Crescent as well.

As pet ownership has grown, off-leash dog parks and dog walking have become very popular. La Crescent has a local animal shelter but has no off-leash dog parks at the present time. The need for a dog park was referenced frequently in the early stages of the preparation of this plan.



### SAFETY CONCERNS

According to Minnesota's SCORP, many users of outdoor recreation facilities are concerned about safety and security. Parents may be cautious about letting their children use neighborhood parks without adult supervision. Whether the fears are realistic or based on inaccurate perceptions, they discourage use of park and open space facilities.

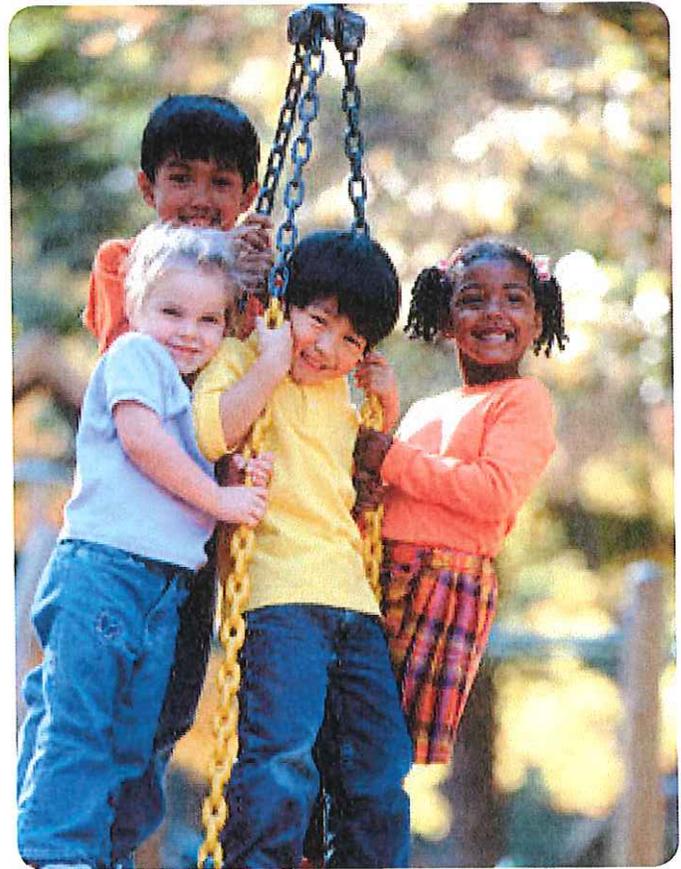
How we locate, design and manage outdoor recreation facilities can affect the real or perceived safety of those areas. Improved enforcement, responses to vandalism, security lighting, education, community support and funding all help address both the reality and perception of safety.



### DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Examining La Crescent's population is important in determining future park and recreation needs. In many communities throughout the United States, changes in population are having profound influences on park and recreation facilities. Most of these changes are being driven by a much older or more culturally diverse group of residents.

Although population changes are occurring in La Crescent, the City has not yet seen the magnitude of change that many communities have experienced nor is the City likely to see large scale changes in the next decade. Being aware of national trends, however, will help La Crescent prepare for the more gradual change in population that is likely to occur.



### INCREASINGLY DIVERSE

The United States is the only major industrial economy with an expanding population that is fueled primarily by immigrants. Along with increased racial and ethnic diversity, trends are showing an increased desire for multi-age interactions and exchanges.

In 1990, 99% of La Crescent's population was white. By 2010, the white population had shrunk to 96% of the total. Looking more closely at the numbers reveals that La Crescent echoes national trends, just at a lower growth rate. From 2000 to 2010, La Crescent's white population dropped by 1.64%. During this same time period, however, the non-white population changed in the following ways:

- The Black or African American population was up 66.7%
- The Asian population was up almost 14%
- Individuals listing themselves as Two or More Races was up 50%
- The Hispanic or Latino population was up 144%.

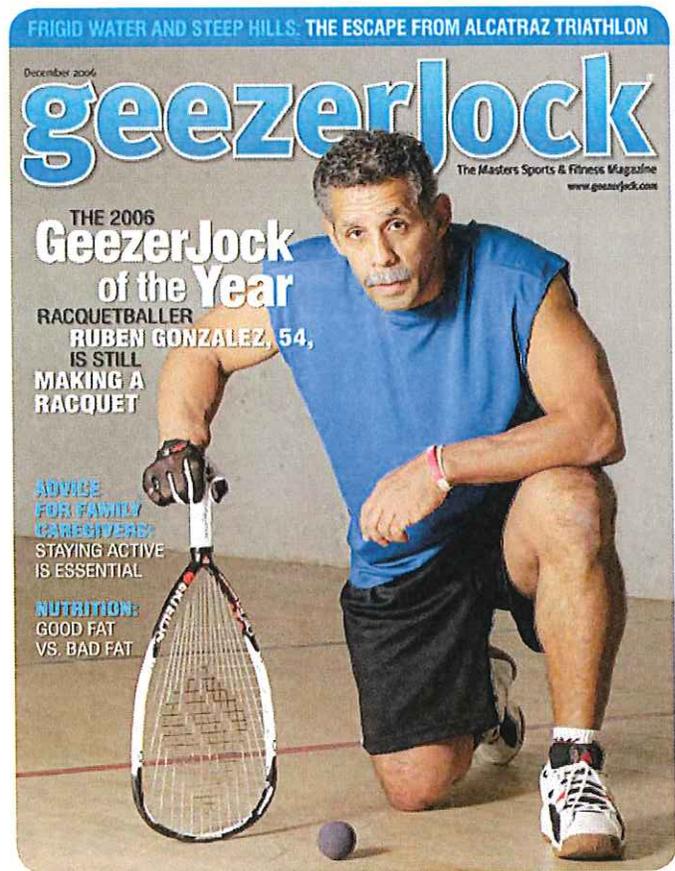


### REDEFINING FAMILY

In many communities, the traditional family with two parents with kids occupies a minority of households. Nationally, it is estimated that only 12% of new households over the next twenty years will have children.

La Crescent's growth over the last ten years and its likely growth over the next decade runs counter to the national trends. Between 2000 and 2010, the City's population up to age 19 grew at a significant rate. In 2000, this segment of the City's population comprised 29% of the total. By 2010, this segment of the population comprised almost 34% of the total. The growth of the parent cohort, those people from 25 to 34 years of age, grew by 33% over the same time period. Interestingly, the growth in the younger segment of the population was balanced by declines in older population segments. In 2000, La Crescent residents aged 55 and over comprised 24% of the population. By 2010, this segment of the population shrunk to 16% of the total population.

Local population trends in La Crescent will continue to create a strong interest in traditional recreation activities. Local programs in soccer, softball, hockey, etc. will remain strong.



### AGING ACTIVELY

The aging of the population will continue to impact La Crescent even though the percentage of older individuals dropped over the past 10 years. Books like "70 is the New 40" illustrate an ongoing trend of seniors that are far more active than their predecessors. Many member of the aging population seek changes in lifestyle to reflect their lack of child-care responsibilities and often expanded recreation, education and cultural interests. As baby boomers reach retirement age, they are aging more actively. The word "active" refers to continued participation in social, cultural, spiritual and community affairs, not just the ability to be physically active. Accordingly, the full spectrum of La Crescent's park needs will need to consider an environment that fosters participation in civic affairs and social and cultural enrichment. Institutions like the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and Viterbo University provide educational and cultural events and activities that are conveniently accessible to La Crescent's population.

La Crescent's park system should continue to accommodate life-long sports and activities. Tennis, golf, cross county skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, biking are all activities that are enjoyed by a wide range of ages.



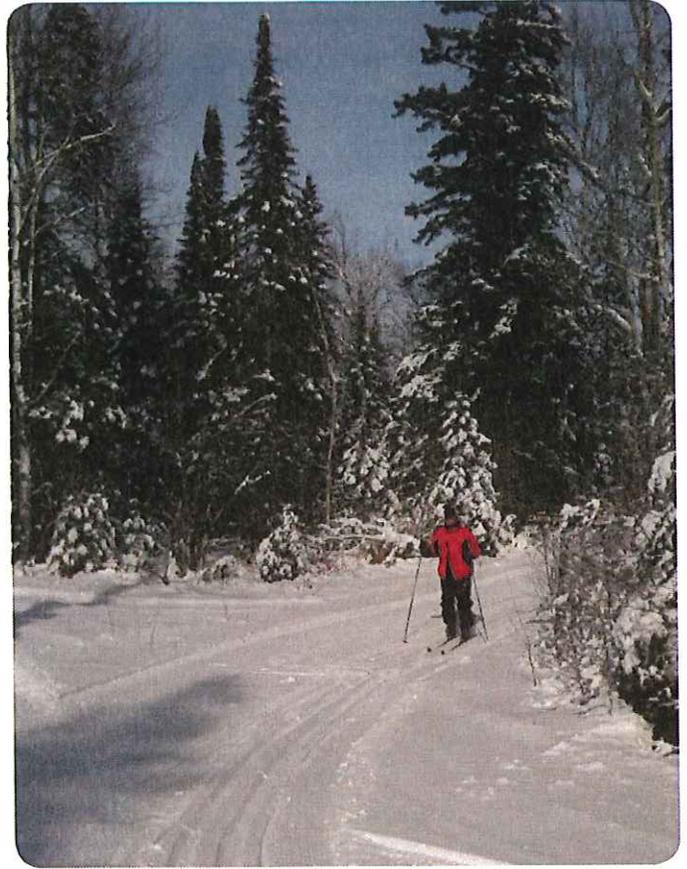
### ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS

Changes in our physical environment such as climate, wildlife, plant life, etc. affect our day-to-day and long-term recreation habits and opportunities. These habits are tied directly to our health and well being. Environmental trends that have and will likely continue to affect change include:

### CHANGING CLIMATE

While the causes of climate change remains somewhat controversial, there is a general understanding that global warming and other climate changes are occurring. Warmer winters and variable precipitation rates over the past decade have had a negative impact on outdoor winter sports like ice skating, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing. Climate is also changing people's interest in environmental sustainability and energy efficiency. Rising energy costs will put greater emphasis on local recreational options and will increase the demand for trail and bikeway connections. Wise use of water, energy, and natural resources are guiding decision making and supporting community sustainability.

2009 tied for the second warmest year worldwide, but over the southern hemisphere, it was the warmest year observed



since 1880. NASA reports that the decade from 2000 to 2009 was the warmest ever recorded for the planet. Their research suggests that CO2 emissions will need to be reduced dramatically. Society is becoming more environmentally conscious and is seeking urban areas that offer mass transit, denser living, green development, walkable neighborhoods where they can live more sustainably.

Although La Crescent can't necessarily be considered an urban city, green development and walkable neighborhoods certainly are interests of the community. Consistent with sustainable practices, residents want a bicycle and pedestrian network that is safe, easy to use and understandable for all types of users. Bike routes, trails, bike lanes, and complete streets will be important tools for building a sustainable network for walking and biking throughout La Crescent.



### INTEREST IN NATURE

Increased sensitivity to ecological issues and the benefits of a healthy ecosystem have people demanding more natural experiences from parks and recreation. There is increased interest and opportunities to engage local residents and groups in environmental stewardship activities such as removal of invasive species. In addition, people desire more educational and/or interpretive programs, are seeing a better balance of environment and recreation, are looking for more passive open space, and have a heightened interest in aesthetic and gardens.

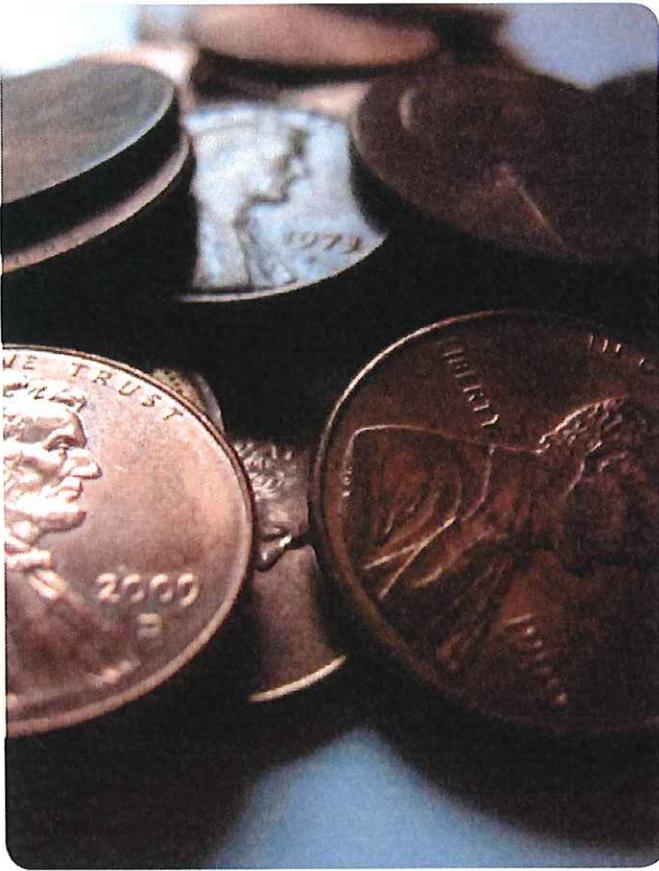
According to Minnesota's SCORP, outdoor recreation is "very important" in the lives of 57% of the state residents. Another 25% think that it is "moderately important". If 82% of the population thinks that outdoor recreation is important, what stands in the way of higher actual participation rates? In surveys conducted as part of the SCORP update, four factors were cited:

- Time – People simply don't have enough leisure time to take part in the outdoor activities as often as they want. Lack of time was the most often cited reason for respondents' limiting outdoor recreation.
- Outdoor Pests – Not wanting to fight off mosquitoes, black flies and other pests was the second most frequent reason cited for poor participation.
- Cost and Effort – Statewide, recreation activities for many residents involve expenses, travel and preparation. Most Minnesota residents can't just walk out the door and take part in recreational activities. La Crescent is fortunate that a wide array of outdoor recreational opportunities lies within close proximity to all community residents.
- Lack of a Companion – People take part in activities outdoors as a way to share experiences. For those living alone, lack of companions is a major constraint to participation in outdoor recreation activities.



#### *FOUR SEASON RECREATION*

Lying in the upper Midwest, La Crescent needs to offer recreation activities for the full range of seasons. Four-season recreation requires a broader range of facilities and experiences and presents additional challenges for maintenance and operations. Creating ice skating rinks, grooming trails for cross country skiing, plowing trails for winter use, holding events, providing indoor recreation space such as gyms and ice arenas are all part of a balanced winter recreation system.

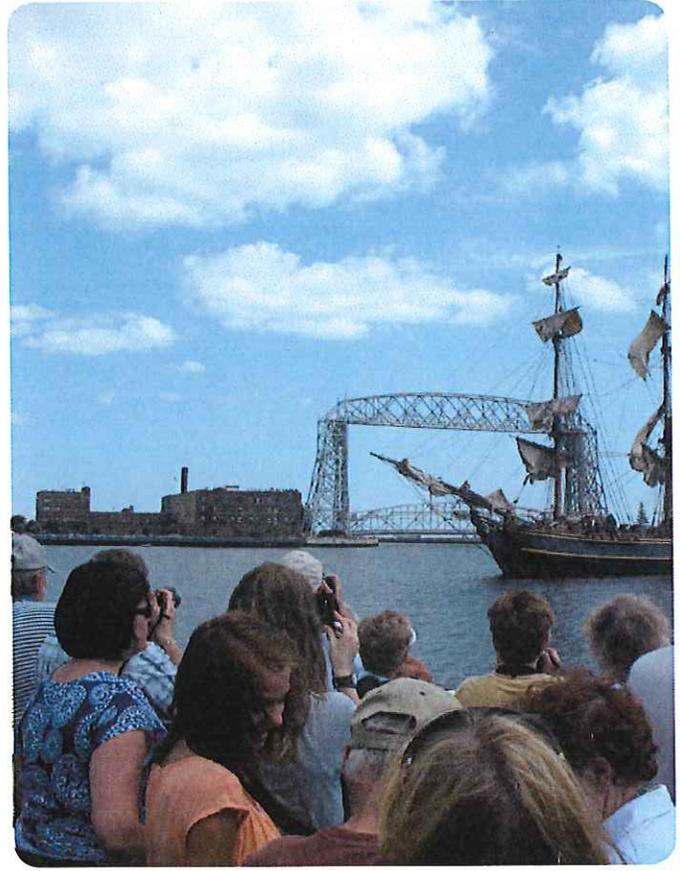


### ECONOMIC TRENDS

Economic conditions change over time and impact the City's ability to provide park and recreation facilities and services. The ability of the City to meet the park needs of local residents is influenced by local and regional economic trends. Some of these trends that may affect change in La Crescent include:

#### FISCALLY CHALLENGED

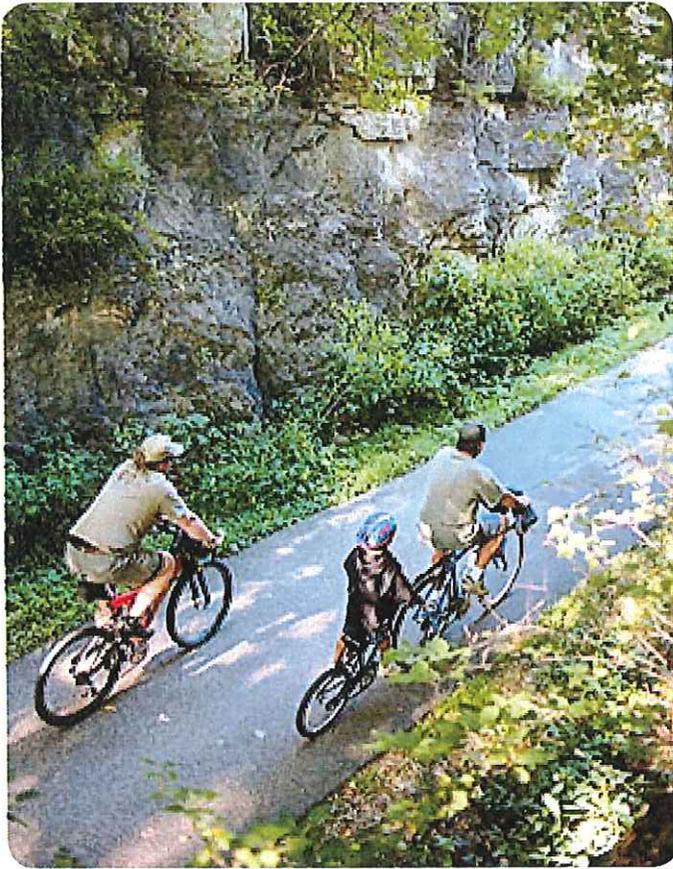
Reduced revenue from the State of Minnesota to local governments and schools, rising health care costs, anti-tax sentiments, increasing fuel and material costs, are reducing the resources available for park and recreation improvements and upkeep. There is an increased need for partnerships, volunteers, creative funding sources and a renewed focus on quality over quantity.



### EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

Studies show that people receive more enduring pleasure and satisfaction from investing in quality experiences than material possessions; and recent trends show, even during a recession, people still seek quality experiences while cutting back on other necessities. This will put a new focus on the importance of positive experiences in public spaces and parks as a driving force for the draw of tourists and for the satisfaction of residents alike. With its wealth of parks, trails and recreation places La Crescent is well positioned to take advantage of this emphasis on experience if the parks and places are safe, well maintained and attractive.

Parks can also serve as incentives to attract new residents. Along with quality schools, a diverse housing supply and employment opportunities, parks can help attract new residents and encourage new community growth.



#### *CRAVING CULTURE AND THE OUTDOORS*

Living in Minnesota where 57,000 jobs are related to the outdoor recreation economy, it is hard to overlook the important role played by our interactions with nature and the environment. Cultural tourism is the fastest growing form of tourism and visitors tend to spend more and stay longer than other tourists. Also, as the trend for outdoor recreation increases, La Crescent should be prepared to offer recreation and interpretation opportunities that balance sensitivity to the ecological world while capitalizing on adventure sporting opportunities. The bluff areas that surround La Crescent offer great potential as both ecological/geological attractions and as locations for adventure sports activities. The City's location on the Mississippi River opens up cultural tourism opportunities.



#### *HEALTH CARE COSTS AND SEDENTARY LIVES*

One of the biggest challenges facing our country and region is health care and rising health care costs. We can provide excellent care, but the lack of activity in most American's lives more than offsets our health care technology. The result is the most expensive health care in the world with only middle of the road results in term of personal health, longevity and infant mortality. It is time that we acknowledge that parks, recreation, trails and active lives are a key to our personal and community health. La Crescent strongly advocates active living and can further create a healthy community, through expanded bicycle and walking connections, use of complete streets, promotion of active lifestyles and physical activity and commitment to creating a design of walkable community.



*Frank J. Kistler Memorial Park*