

Building A Brand: Outdoor Sport And Recreation In Wildwood



Hidden Valley Ski Resort

With four major parks, more than 50 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails, and the region's only ski resort, the city of Wildwood is quickly becoming the elite destination for active recreational opportunities. At 68 square miles and nearly 36,000 residents, Wildwood is the third largest city in the state of Missouri and covers much of west St. Louis County. Known for its parks and trails, the City is on the verge of becoming a premiere location for locally-owned businesses in a forward-thinking, walkable environment with a healthy, active vibe.

Early Development

Prior to 1995, the city of Wildwood was comprised of a large portion of unincorporated St. Louis County, including 11 smaller historic communities from the 1800s and early 1900s. As suburban growth occurred in St. Louis in the 1960s and 1970s, interest grew for new residential subdivisions in the area now known as Wildwood. At the time, county regulations allowed for large sites of residential development without any conservation or recognition of the natural environment and impact to neighboring residents. Plans had been identified for a new north/south "Outer-Belt" that would split the region in half, and bring high-speed traffic through the heart of the community. In September 1995, residents in the area approved the incorporation of the city of Wildwood in order to preserve a voice, and take control

of Wildwood's future growth and decisions. This allowed the residents to preserve the natural environment; establish its own identity; and essentially plan its own community.

Within the first year, the city of Wildwood adopted a master plan identifying distinct portions of the City designated for certain uses, and established regulations for development and environmental protections, including a more detailed analysis of the impact on the natural environment. Standards adopted by the City have resulted in high-quality, new residential developments that have more than doubled the number of residents in the area. More recently, the master plan has placed more emphasis on economic development and trying to increase employment opportunities for the City's residents, many of whom still commute to St. Louis

for work. The City has begun taking a proactive approach to promote more retail and office development to complement the residents and bring more employers to Wildwood.

With nearly 36,000 people across 68 square miles, the City prefers to be recognized as a “small town,” featuring local amenities, small businesses, and a close-knit community feel. It is with that mindset that the City maintains a small team of 20 full-time employees at City Hall. Focusing largely on planning, parks, public works, and administration, an economic development program and a proactive role in the business community was a top priority. In order to properly do so, the City hired Julian M.D. Jacquin as its first economic development manager. Establishing a position dedicated to economic development allows the City to commit the resources necessary to retain and expand local business; identify new employment opportunities; and recruit new retail and office users to the community. Jacquin’s top priorities consist of establishing the City’s economic development program; marketing the City as a destination for the business community; and creating a fresh identity to guide the City’s future.

By incorporating as a municipality, the City is able to preserve its natural environment and ensure that future development is completed carefully and properly. To do so, the City confines all commercial development activity to its “Town Center,” a master-planned convenience vision focused around the intersection of Routes 100 and 109 in the heart of the community. Most of the City’s economic development efforts are directed towards the Town Center. Targeting economic development efforts allows the City to attract all retail users to its downtown area, while preserving the remainder of the community for its large regional parks, trails, schools and residential areas.



Wildwood Town Center

equestrian trails are provided jointly by the city of Wildwood, St. Louis County and Great Rivers Greenway. Great Rivers Greenway is a regional parks and trails district in the St. Louis metropolitan area that creates an interconnected network of trails and green spaces throughout St. Louis. The Western Greenway and Meramec Greenway connect each of the City’s major parks, and represent more than 50 miles of hiking and biking trails. The trails connect most of the City’s residential areas to public institutions and shopping opportunities in the Town Center.

Tucked away in the rolling hills off of Highway 109 (abutting Greensfelder County Park) is the region’s only ski resort, known as Hidden Valley Ski Resort. Hidden Valley Ski Resort offers 15 ski and snowboard trails with four chair lifts (including two fixed quad); three surface lifts on two

Outdoor Recreation

Unique to Wildwood is its dominating presence of opportunities for outdoor recreation. The City’s four regional parks create an expansive “Green Belt” through the central corridor of the City, each individually connected by a set of paths and trails. The City’s four regional parks include Babler State Park, Greensfelder County Park, Rockwoods Reservation and Rockwoods Range. There are also a number of municipal parks, including Bluff View Park, Anniversary Park, Glencoe City Park and the Wildwood Community Park. The Community Park represents a 66-acre, six-phase investment of approximately \$12 million, including open play space, playgrounds, water features, a city dog park, six pavilions and reserved meadows. It is truly one-of-a-kind and unique to the entire St. Louis region. Hiking, biking and

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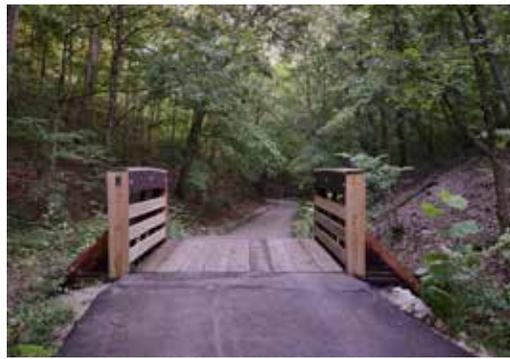
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**Far Left: Wildwood City Hall
Left: Wildwood Parks and Trails**

skiable peaks; and one additional trail for snow tubing. Since opening in 1982, Hidden Valley Ski Resort is the only ski resort within five hours of St. Louis and brings in visitors from all over the region.

As an added service to the community, the City offers or participates in a number of active recreational events throughout each calendar year. These events include the Frozen Feet Half-Marathon Trail Run (rated the second best trail run in the region); Ozark Foothills 50K/25K; Historic Route 66 5K; Green Rock Trail Challenge; Arbor Day/Tree Hugger 5K Run; Tour De Wildwood; and Rockin' Rockwoods 53K/20K. The City also hosts annual festivals and celebrations in the Town Center, including Celebrate Wildwood, Farmers' Markets, Founders Day/Art Festival, and the Wildwood BBQ Bash.

This expansive network of parks and trails, the region's only ski resort and the City's added events all set the stage

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for attracting a multitude of outdoor sport and recreational businesses. These include active recreational retailers, physical fitness gyms, sports medicine clinics and outdoor sport complexes.

The combination of parks, trails, ski resort and special events create a mountain-style feel to the community, and much of the new development in the City reflects this. New homes are built with the look and feel of lodges and cabins you would find in Colorado, and new commercial development is pedestrian-friendly and aesthetically-pleasing. In total, there are more than eight new residential subdivisions and 500 new single-family homes under construction in the Town Center over the next five years. The characteristics of the community make the City a unique residential destination and development opportunity. The City's identified goals and objectives have allowed Wildwood to pursue a wide variety of new outdoor sport and recreational businesses.

Wildwood is actively exploring new options and working to attract a regional cycling complex to the City, as well as expanding its outdoor offerings to include more high-level opportunities such as mountain biking, rock climbing and zip-lining. The combination of these assets make the city of Wildwood a unique and enriching community in St. Louis – a true destination throughout the Midwest. 🌿

Julian M.D. Jacquin is the economic development manager for the city of Wildwood, Missouri. Follow the City of Wildwood at www.cityofwildwood.com. Contact Julian at (636) 458-0440 or julian@cityofwildwood.com for more information regarding development opportunities.

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