

**Shawnee Yacht Club**  
**Shawnee County Parks and Recreation**  
**Five-Year Master Plan**  
**2024**

[\(See addendum for referenced photos\)](#)

**Introduction**

Follow the “Yacht Club” signs along West Edge Road, turn east toward the lake on “Yacht Court” and pause for a moment in the parking lot. It’s a beautiful setting for a sailing venue, flanked by the Ted Ensley Gardens, just off a protective cove, overlooking the main body of the lake ([photos 1-2](#)). It’s the spot Shawnee Yacht Club members selected long ago, in Lake Shawnee’s early years, as an ideal base for sailing.

And it was ideal for fifty years, developing into a well-known Midwest sailing venue, hosting weekly club races, local and regional regattas, and occasionally national and even North-American championship regattas ([photos 3-15](#)). It put Lake Shawnee on the map. Those were the heydays for sailing on Lake Shawnee.

But in the 1990s SYC membership declined and interest in rental facilities for private events increased. The clubhouse constructed by club members was converted into a public rental facility, most of the sailing related amenities club members had developed over the years were removed, and the original SYC grounds were opened for general public use. The club could reserve the former clubhouse for special events on a limited basis, when available, but was left to operate mostly out of the boatyard. The thought at the time was that SYC should be able to continue to operate effectively with this new arrangement.

Club members have made every effort to make this arrangement work. Initially, still with many veteran club members, the weekly races continued for a time. The club hosted the Sunflower State Games sailing regatta for thirteen years, sponsored sailing academies for the Shawnee Heights Navy Junior ROTC and other area NJROTC units ([see newspaper article](#)), held many free-sailboat-ride days for the public, conducted many free and low-cost sailing lessons, and acquired a number of club-owned boats for members to use to make it easier to get started sailing, etc. But with the drastically reduced and declining facilities ([photo 16](#)), eventually, club membership decreased to the point where the regattas and even the weekly club racing ended.

In recent years, with boatyard improvements ([photo 17](#)) and ongoing effort by a small core group of members volunteering many hours conducting sailing lessons, repairing boats and equipment, mowing and weeding in the boatyard, etc., the club has been able to maintain a membership level of about thirty-five families. But that is not sustainable long term.

For those who hold fond memories of the sailing heydays on Lake Shawnee, it’s particularly sad, and such a shame, to see the original historic SYC site, once a safe, inviting and thriving community sailing venue become just one more of the many lake fishing areas and, more tragically, such a routine haven for threatening, illicit activity, hoodlums, drug dealing, pot

**Shawnee Yacht Club**  
**Shawnee County Parks and Recreation**  
**Five-Year Master Plan**  
**2024**

smoking, wild gatherings and all the disgusting trash those folks leave behind ([photos 18-28](#)). It reflects poorly on both P+R and SYC and makes it doubly difficult to attract new club members.

It's a competitive environment. If recreation/sports facilities are not kept up, the participants and events will go elsewhere. And that's what has happened here. Some have suggested that sailing's popularity has just declined. But the evidence doesn't support that conclusion. Lake Perry has two marinas with large sailing contingents along with Perry Yacht Club that is very popular with regular racing and regattas. Clinton Lake has two sailing venues. Lake Jacomo, east of Kansas City, has two active sailing venues, Jacomo Yacht Club, and Jacomo Sailing Club. The latter hosts many club and national regattas, some of which used to be held at Lake Shawnee. And there are many other examples of thriving sailing communities in the area. But these other venues' facilities are all far better than Lake Shawnee's.

The venerable Ted Ensley was Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Director from 1961 to 1992, Kansas Secretary of Wildlife and Parks from 1992 to 1995 and Shawnee County Commissioner from 1998 to 2014. In the years before his death in 2023, Ted repeatedly expressed his concern for the Yacht Club. It's not a coincidence that the Lake Shawnee sailing heydays were during Ted's tenure as Park Director. For those thirty-one years, he and his family lived next door to the Yacht Club, in what is now the Garden House. He could see for himself the recreational and social value the Yacht Club provided to the community and was always a big supporter.

Lake Shawnee has great potential to bring back those sailing heydays. Despite the major decline of the facilities since 1996 and the resulting drop in local sailing activity since then, sailing is still widely associated with the lake ([photos 29-31](#)). The lake is still perfect for small boat sailing with a layout matching the prevailing winds, the extensive no-wake area, consistent water level, convenient access, and there's still a dedicated core group of SYC members willing to help. That ideal base for sailing is still there at 3724 SE Yacht Court. It just needs to be restored back into a safe and inviting sailing venue and that is the goal of this five-year master plan.

**Shawnee Yacht Club  
Shawnee County Parks and Recreation  
Five-Year Master Plan  
2024**

**Improvements**

**1. Keep the vehicle gate at the top of the area access road closed, as it was in the past.**

This will stop the current common use of the area for illicit and threatening activity, and reduce thefts, vandalism, and the excessive litter ([photos 18-28](#)). It will also help to once again designate the original SYC area as primarily for sailing and help restore it as a welcoming, safe, inviting venue for sailing enthusiasts, families, and friends.

Timeframe: Immediately      Responsibility: P+R & SYC      P+R Cost: \$0      SYC Cost: \$0

**2. Install a new SYC sign just north of the area access road gate, perhaps patterned after the new P+R facility signs.**

This will help to once again designate the original SYC area as a sailing venue, will help promote sailing and will help create a welcoming environment for sailing enthusiasts, families, and friends. The sign could perhaps be patterned after the new P+R facility signs.

Timeframe: 2024      Responsibility: SYC      P+R Cost: \$0      SYC Cost: TBD

**3. Restore landscaping around the clubhouse.**

Landscaping around the clubhouse was completely removed several years ago, significantly degrading the appearance. Especially on the west side, where visitors get their first impression, there were previously some big wide graceful junipers. Now there's just a steep slope full of weeds, juniper stumps, and the bare weathered wall of the clubhouse to greet visitors. Some new basic landscaping would make it much more attractive and inviting. See [before](#) and [after](#) photos.

Timeframe: 2024      Responsibility: P+R      P+R Cost: TBD      SYC Cost: \$0

**4. Stabilize the small boat ramp.**

The small boat ramp is vital for restoring sailing activity. It is especially needed during high use, such as regattas. But over the last 20+ years the shoreline protecting it and much of the ground under and supporting the ramp pavement has washed away. If not corrected soon, it will lead to more damage, making it completely unusable.

Timeframe: 2024      Responsibility: P+R      P+R Cost: TBD      SYC Cost: \$0

**Shawnee Yacht Club  
Shawnee County Parks and Recreation  
Five-Year Master Plan  
2024**

**5. Replace the two boatyard exclusive docks provided by P+R with docks provided and maintained by SYC.**

With the current launch ramp dock, the water depth at the dock is too shallow for some boats and the dock is too far from boat trailers at the boat ramp to effectively assist with boat launching and retrieval. The dock is also very short, making it crowded for handling more than one or two boats at a time.

The SYC provided docks will be longer and better positioned to address these issues. They will be comprised of galvanized frames with wooden planking and will be kept in a presentable and safe working order. SYC would like to re-use the current dock ramps. The current plastic dock sections can then be reused to extend the dock behind the clubhouse and to replace the wood dock that was previously located north of the clubhouse.

This change will help reduce the perception that P+R is providing docks for SYC's exclusive use and, with appropriate signage, should reduce the temptation for fishermen to get around or over the boatyard fence to fish on the docks. It will also go a long way toward restoring the dock space available behind the clubhouse and north of the clubhouse.

Timeframe: 2024-2025      Responsibility: SYC      P+R Cost: \$0      SYC Cost: TBD

**6. Restore lighting, electric power, and a freshwater hydrant in the original SYC area.**

Lighting and electric power were removed from the area a number of years ago when garden electrical service was run underground. Both lighting and electric power were formerly located on a power pole at the base of the area access road. They need to be restored to improve security for property and safety for users, to make the area more usable at night and to allow electric equipment and tools to be used for maintaining equipment, facilities, and boats.

Likewise, a freshwater hydrant at the top of the access road was disconnected a number of years ago. Convenient access to a freshwater hydrant is needed for cleaning boats and equipment, refilling water bottles, washing off after toxic algae exposure, etc.

Perhaps the most economical solution would be to run electric and water lines from the clubhouse to a point near the base of the access road, as electric was in the past.

Timeframe: 2024-2025      Responsibility: P+R & SYC      P+R Cost: TBD      SYC Cost: TBD

**Shawnee Yacht Club  
Shawnee County Parks and Recreation  
Five-Year Master Plan  
2024**

**7. Return clubhouse control to SYC**

This will allow the club to once again fully utilize the clubhouse as it did during the sailing heydays. The club will have access to the clubhouse as needed for any events and impromptu use without the need go through a time-consuming, uncertain scheduling process, without having to work around dates previously scheduled by others, and without being restricted by contractual limits.

It will allow club members to store equipment, tableware, cookware, drinks, food, etc. between uses. It will allow SYC to furnish the clubhouse with audio/video equipment to assist with meetings, presentations, and training. It will allow the clubhouse to be locked and unlocked as needed to secure contents if no one is there for a period of time, such as if everyone is out in the boats for a while. And it will allow sailing events that are cancelled due to weather to be rescheduled and still have the clubhouse for the new date.

Perhaps most importantly, it will allow SYC to convert the clubhouse from a sterile, general purpose, public rental facility, back into a recognizable sailing facility, with sailing pictures, posters, murals, memorabilia, trophies, etc., making it more inviting to the sailing community and more commensurate with what one would expect for an eighty plus year old local sailing institution.

Note that the clubhouse is already reserved extensively by SYC for socials, bi-weekly Sea Scout use and weekly sailing lessons. And we are also requesting it every Sunday to support our sailing activities. Therefore, this is not as much of a change as it may initially appear.

Timeframe: 1/1/25      Responsibility: P+R & SYC

P+R Cost: Lost rental income, minus upkeep and improvement costs –could be a net positive.

SYC Cost: Upkeep and improvement costs. But considering how this should drive an increase in membership and donations, as with other improvements in this master plan, it may be a financial net positive for SYC.

**8. Provide boat storage in the original SYC area, as in the past.**

This will require fencing in the area from the north side of the access road to the current boatyard. It will also require some leveling of boat parking spaces. The current boatyard is nearing capacity. This will allow boats to once again be stored in this area, making the site more recognizable as an active sailing venue and allow much more convenient access between boating activity and clubhouse activity. It will make it possible for the dock near the double boat ramp to be extended to the shore near the small boat ramp, as in the past, allowing for much

**Shawnee Yacht Club  
Shawnee County Parks and Recreation  
Five-Year Master Plan  
2024**

more convenient use. This currently can't be done because it would allow easy public access to the boatyard.

Timeframe: 2025                      Responsibility: P+R & SYC                      P+R Cost: TBD                      SYC Cost: TBD

**9. Replace the SYC storage shed with a larger two stall garage sized structure.**

This could be located on the level ground just outside the boatyard fence at the south end with doors opening into the boatyard. It would allow SYC to replace the pontoon boats with one or two motorboats that would be stored on trailers in this structure, eliminating the need to moor a pontoon boat in the cove. Storing these boats indoors would protect them from the wear and tear of the weather and would make them more secure, and easier to access and maintain. This larger structure would more easily accommodate larger items like long sail bags and masts and would generally provide for more storage. The new structure would have lights and electric power, making it much more useful.

Timeframe: 2025                      Responsibility: SYC                      P+R Cost: \$0                      SYC Cost: TBD

**10. Upgrade the clubhouse.**

Some alternatives for improving or replacing the clubhouse include:

- a. Provide more shaded areas on the deck and/or patio to make it more comfortable when watching the sailing activity, for social activities, etc. This will make the area more inviting for family and friends, which will naturally bring out more sailors, as families want to do things together. This could involve constructing a roof over the deck or patio, or the use of shade sails. If over the deck, this would also help extend the deck's life by protecting it from the weather.
- b. Repair the current siding as needed, power wash, and apply a stain/sealer to improve the appearance and extend the life.
- c. Replace the old, weathered siding and rebuild portions of the deck as necessary. Applying a stain/sealer on the deck regularly would improve the appearance and extend its life.
- d. Replace the old, weathered siding, remove the deck (considering the high maintenance and replacement costs), and move the structure down the hill, just above and west of the patio. The entrance door could be moved back to its original location on the southeast corner.
- e. Replace the current clubhouse with a pre-built or onsite built structure just above and west of the patio. The new structure would include kitchen facilities but would probably be smaller than the current structure.

Timeframe: 2026-2028                      Responsibility: SYC                      P+R Cost: \$0                      SYC Cost: TBD

**Shawnee Yacht Club  
Shawnee County Parks and Recreation  
Five-Year Master Plan  
2024**

**11. Install security equipment.**

This involves installing cameras and alarms to help discourage and monitor unauthorized access and vandalism in the area.

Timeframe: 2027                      Responsibility: SYC                      P+R Cost: \$0                      SYC Cost: TBD

**12. Install a flagpole near the clubhouse, as SYC had in the past.**

Perhaps an old boat mast could be used for this. It will allow SYC to display flags and pennant strings, and will help identify the area as a sailing venue with a more nautical look

Timeframe: 2027                      Responsibility: SYC                      P+R Cost: \$0                      SYC Cost: TBD

**13. Install a mast stepping tower/pole.**

This will assist in maintaining boats, making the venue more attractive to boat owners.

Timeframe: 2027                      Responsibility: SYC                      P+R Cost: \$0                      SYC Cost: TBD

**14. Install a boat hoist.**

This will assist in maintaining boats, making the venue more attractive to boat owners.

Timeframe: 2028                      Responsibility: SYC                      P+R Cost: \$0                      SYC Cost: TBD

**15. Build a new firepit/grill on the clubhouse patio, as SYC had in the past.**

This will provide SYC with expanded and more convenient cooking facilities and help make social occasions in cooler weather more enjoyable.

Timeframe: 2028                      Responsibility: SYC                      P+R Cost: \$0                      SYC Cost: TBD

**Shawnee Yacht Club  
Shawnee County Parks and Recreation  
Five-Year Master Plan  
2024**

**Summary**

Improvement	Timeframe	Responsibility	P+R Cost	SYC Cost
1. Keep the vehicle gate at the top of the area access road closed.	Immediately	P+R & SYC	0	0
2. Install a new SYC sign just north of the area access road gate.	2024	SYC	0	TBD
3. Restore landscaping around the clubhouse.	2024	P+R	TBD	0
4. Stabilize the small boat ramp.	2024	P+R	TBD	0
5. Replace the two boatyard exclusive docks provided by P+R with docks provided and maintained by SYC.	2024-2025	SYC	0	TBD
6. Restore lighting, electric power, and a freshwater hydrant in the original SYC area.	2024-2025	P+R & SYC	TBD	TBD
7. Return clubhouse control to SYC.	1/1/25	P+R & SYC	See narrative	See narrative
8. Provide boat storage in the original SYC area.	2025	P+R & SYC	TBD	TBD
9. Replace the SYC storage shed with a larger two stall garage sized structure.	2025	SYC	0	TBD
10. Upgrade the clubhouse.	2026-2028	SYC	0	TBD
11. Install security equipment.	2027	SYC	0	TBD
12. Install a flagpole near the clubhouse.	2027	SYC	0	TBD
13. Install a mast stepping tower/pole.	2027	SYC	0	TBD
14. Install a boat hoist.	2028	SYC	0	TBD
15. Build a new firepit/grill on the clubhouse patio.	2028	SYC	0	TBD