



Community Workshop #1

May 26, 2022

Overview

The Portsmouth Recreation Department hosted a Community Workshop in May 2022 to fulfill a key goal of the Comprehensive Recreational Needs Study Update: the gathering of public input on existing recreational facilities and programs in the city.

Followed by an overview presentation of the project goals, vision, and work to date, the consultant team facilitated work group discussions around the following questions:

- WHAT IS WORKING WELL?
- WHAT'S WORKING, BUT COULD BE IMPROVED?
- WHAT'S MISSING?

Groups discussed their responses and prioritized them as a group. The following is a summary report of discussions and responses from those breakout group discussions.

What is working well?

What is the City of Portsmouth doing well by way of providing recreational opportunities (programming and/or facilities) for residents? (not prioritized)

Group #1 (Jeff)

- Indoor/Outdoor pools
- Senior Center
- Youth programs are a good feeder system for Portsmouth High School sports
- Young children summer activities
- Events for younger children are available (soccer, basketball, dances)
- Variety of programs
- Winter vision
- Many types of recreation options (organized sports, individual sports, outdoor activities, community events)
- Pickleball
- Many fields for sports
- General maintenance
- Availability/quality of leisure space
- Trails/Rails trails
- Tennis
- Support for Strawberry Banke
- Ice Skating

Group #2 (Alice/Craig)

- Early youth sports/recreation opportunities
- Multi-sports and summer camp programs (elementary school aged children)
- Organized youth sports at more advanced levels (PGSA softball, PCSC soccer)
- A lot is working – many good facilities and programs
- Mill Pond Area
- Rec. basketball
- Walking Trails
- New community garden
- Dull men's coffee group on Fridays
- Senior Center
- Indoor/Outdoor pools
- Spinnaker Point Recreation Center

What is working, but could be improved?

What existing recreation facilities/programs could benefit from improvements? How could they be improved?

Group #1 (Jeff)

- Need more indoor court/recreation space **(priority #1)**
- Need more turf fields **(priority #3)**
- Need picnic spaces
- More pickleball courts are needed
- Need connectivity with way-finding signage
- Need more access to winter sports, hockey/ice-skating (year-round) **(priority #2)**
- Activities for little guys
- Overall quality/upkeep of recreational facilities (Tony Rahn Park: no electricity, Sherburne Field: backstop needs help and infield is sand, not dirt, no indoor training facilities)

Group #2 (Alice/Craig)

- Youth sports to be integrated with Portsmouth Housing Authority youth **(priority #2 tie)**
- Senior Programs are good, but non-residents should be paying a fee
- Communication on programs/facilities **(priority #2 tie)**
- Outdoor pool is great, but the hours need to be adjusted **(priority #2 tie)**
- Senior should be 'Community Center' for all ages
- City needs more bike paths/trails **(priority #2 tie)**
- Boat ramp is great, but no boating programs (instructional) **(priority #2 tie)**
- Maintenance/Operations of fields could be better (lighting, electricity, maintenance) **(priority #1)**

What's Missing?

What is the City not doing? What are new recreational opportunities (programs/facilities) and community events that the City should consider?

Group #1 (Jeff)

- Turf field **(priority #3)**
- Make programs more affordable
- Indoor turf training facility **(priority #2)**
- Multi-sports complex to bring it all together **(priority #1)**
- More use of waterways
- More organized trips/travel opportunities
- Ice/Hockey rink **(priority #1)**
- Connectivity (bike share program)
- Adult programming/education (cooking, sailing, archery, languages)
- Regional cooperation
- Way-finding plan

Group #2 (Alice/Craig)

- Multi-sports complex/Ice rink (indoor training, turf, for hockey/soccer) **(priority #1)**
- Connectivity to sites **(priority #2 tie)**
- Funding for recreation programming/sports **(priority #2 tie)**
- Boating program

General Comments

- High School baseball field is not easily accessible for disabled residents. Need more handicap parking spaces closer to the field.
- Not enough restrooms in most of our parks, including the high school
- Smaller fields could use some help
- Indoor batting cages would be nice
- Not enough facilities for adult sports
- Need winter youth sports programming
- Portsmouth Recreation does a great job serving many different demographics and interests, organized sports offerings, individual sports
- Need an ice rink that supports all skating programs and not just hockey, that also converts to a professional performance space
- Youth programs are world class and facilities are maintained to a high standard
- City needs more turf fields/more usable hours for both passive and active recreation
- Need more winter sports/access to winter activities
- Need more pickleball courts
- There are an incredible range of recreational opportunities available to residents via the combined city owned/non-profit (YMCA) and private options (Planet Fitness/Atlantic Gymnastics/numerous exercise studios)...City doesn't have to provide everything
- We should get more use out of the outdoor pool during the brief season. Later hours for greater flexibility to capitalize of the good weather evenings, especially on weekends.
- City needs two ice rinks, as in Dover, Exeter. For more than 20 years we've lacked a private or public ice rink. High School hockey team has to travel 25-30 minutes each way and deal with low priority ice time for practices. Two rinks would be ideal for tournaments, which in turn would benefit the City economically: lodging, restaurants, shopping.

The following questions were presented on large city maps; attendees marked their responses using dots.

Where Do You Live?

- Participants represented a number of neighborhoods including:
 - Voting Wards 1, 2, 3, and 4
- The West End Neighborhood vicinity showed the most attendance
- Underrepresented areas were in the vicinity of the South End/Downtown, Atlantic Heights, and the southern half of the city.
- One participant was from Kittery, ME

Where Do You Recreate?

WHERE DO YOU ACCESS COMMUNITY SERVICES, PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES?

Participants identified with recreating at the following sites:

- Tony Rahn Park
- Lister Academy (2)
- Campus Drive Athletic Fields
- Dondero School (2)
- Urban Forestry Center
- Portsmouth High School/Indoor Pool (6)
- Greenleaf Recreation Center
- Lafayette School Playground
- Clough Field
- Leary Field/Central LL/South Mill Pond Playground (3)
- Senior Activity Center
- Peirce Island Park/Playground/Outdoor Pool (2)
- Boat Launch
- Prescott Park (4)
- Portsmouth Middle School