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PORTSMOUTH

RECREATION DEPARTMENT

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Recreational Needs Study

Final Report

FEBRUARY 2023



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Acknowledgements

The Recreational Needs Study is the culmination of a collaborative process, facilitated by frequent opportunities for engagement with a diverse set of stakeholders. Thanks to the support and assistance of these individuals, the Recreational Needs Study presents an informed view of the unique assets and aspirations of the Portsmouth community.

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Foreword

In late 2021, the City of Portsmouth started the process of an updated Recreational Needs Study. Along with consultants Placework Architecture and Planning and Horsley-Witten Group, a year-long process to evaluate the City's recreational facilities and programs began. An essential component of the process was to collect input from residents and community partners.

After taking leadership of the Recreation Department in early 2021, I was thrilled to have a study like this conducted, as the last time it was completed was 2010, and I was ready to make some changes to our programming and planning. A lot can change in 13 years – especially the changing trends of recreation and the needs of the residents of Portsmouth, and I welcome that guidance.

We started 2022 with a skatepark in the works, new pickleball courts, and a newly opened turf field. We were already trending in a positive direction and then in March 2022, the City purchased the Community Campus and the Recreation Department took over the facility as its managing department. This was a huge opportunity for our department to grow and start to achieve the goals of what I saw for the future.

The outlook is bright for the City of Portsmouth and the recreational opportunities ahead. This report will help inform our decision making for the next 10 years and beyond. As the Recreation Department continues to grow and continues to provide high-quality programming and facilities, I look forward to better serving the needs of the Greater Portsmouth community.

Todd Henley
Director of Recreation

Project + Purpose

Recreational spaces are a reflection of the values and aspirations of the community. The way that we plan for their evolution over time is an expression of the value placed on active, engaged residents, our neighborhoods, and our environment. Recreation spaces are important points of connection and interaction; they are the fields where our families come together, the trails where we connect with our natural environment, and the important places for all generations, cultures, and economic backgrounds to enjoy. These connections create bonds between us and to our city: fostering stewardship of land and community, strengthening our city and retaining residents, and supporting families to grow and remain in Portsmouth.

Defining Recreation for Portsmouth

What does it mean to prioritize community health and wellbeing? How can our spaces of recreation reflect that priority? This study seeks to determine the unique definition of recreation in Portsmouth, asking the important questions of residents: why, where, how and with whom do you recreate? The most successful and integrative spaces of recreation are not single-use facilities dedicated to playing and watching sports, but places where overlapping uses occur serving a diversity of visitors. Growing interest in passive recreation further emphasizes the need for recreational space to be multipurpose and contain strong connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods and nearby trails, parks and open space. Recommendations at the conclusion of this study are the product of analysis/comparative study, community input, and goals of City leadership, and are a response to the evolving definition of recreation for Portsmouth.

Building On the 2010 Recreational Needs Study

The Recreational Needs Study represents continued investment in long-range comprehensive planning for a diversity of activities and places benefiting the greater Portsmouth community. This update begins by building upon and updating the 2010 Recreational Needs Study, acknowledging the progress that has been accomplished as a result of that plan while recognizing that the community has changed in the intervening years, and its recreational needs and aspirations have changed along with it.

Two significant recommendations of the 2010 Recreational Needs Study have been accomplished: the construction of additional multi-use outdoor playing field and the establishment of a multigenerational public recreation center. Both are located at the recently-acquired Community Campus, positioning it to be the hub of recreation for Portsmouth in the future. Although the 2010 plan aspired to construct a multi-function complex including a replacement aquatics facility, the Indoor Pool has been stabilized sufficiently to maintain its operation, and the Community Campus presents many opportunities for recreational use. The 2010 plan suggested potential partnerships with local organizations and private partners to create a recreation center; the eventual build-out of the Community Campus buildings and land will consider such potential relationships, and partnership discussions continue to meet various recreational needs expressed by the community, to be detailed later in this document.

A Vision for Portsmouth Recreation

As Portsmouth's recreational needs evolve, this plan envisions a future for Portsmouth recreation that is:

- Community-building and supporting
- Accessible, Equitable, and Connected
- Multi-generational
- Diverse
- Focused on health and wellbeing of all Portsmouth residents

Guiding Principles

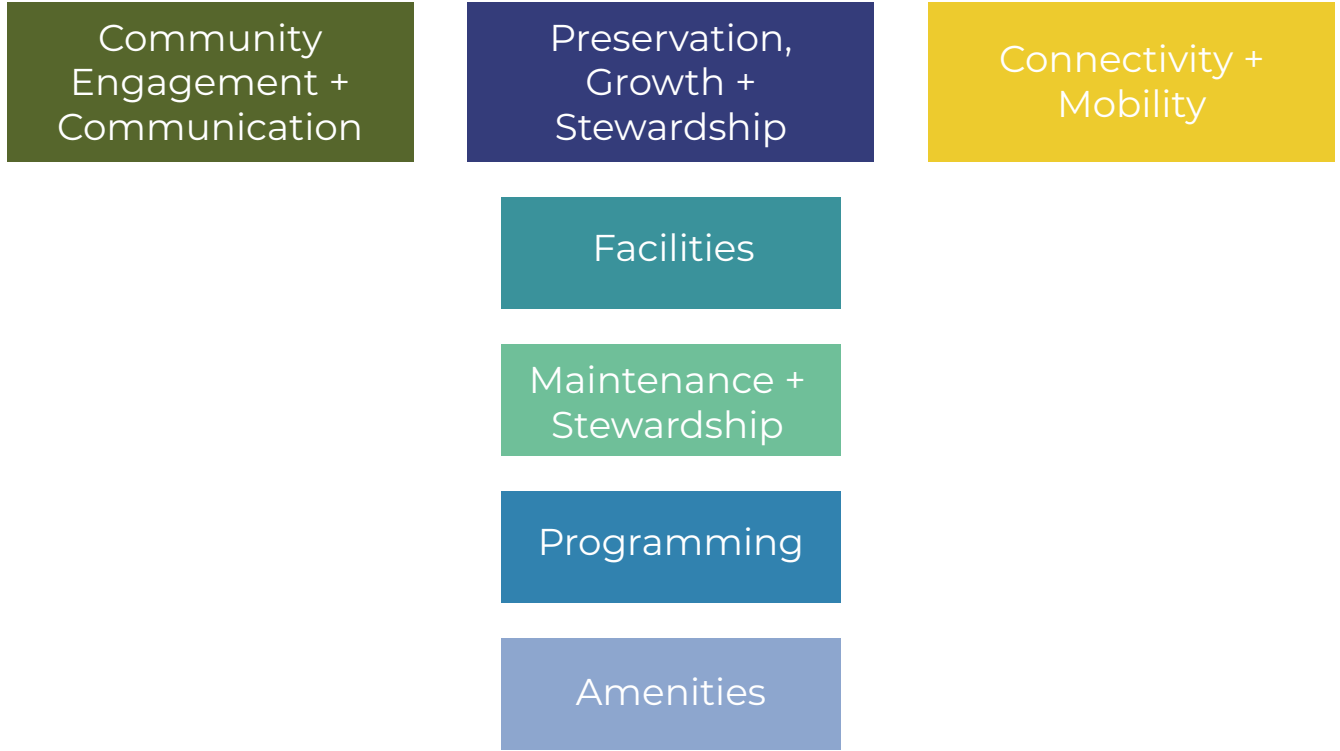
The Guiding Principles create a framework for examining current needs and prioritizing potential recreational projects and initiatives. The Study establishes this framework based on the stated goals of the City's Recreation Board, the Recreational Study Project Team and a diverse range of community input.

The following guiding principles describe a vision for the future of Recreation in Portsmouth and support a range of paths to success. Specific actions are outlined in the Goals, Strategies, and Actions section of the Recreational Needs Study.

- Prioritize Equitable Access to Recreation for the Health and Wellbeing of All Portsmouth Residents**
Examine scheduling, programming, funding structures, geography, and social/environmental factors
- Increase Connectivity of Recreational Opportunities**
- Maximize Capacity of Existing Sites for Recreational Needs**
Maintain, enhance, and develop existing sites before expanding to new locations
- Increase Interdepartmental Collaboration and Other Partnerships to Benefit Recreation in Portsmouth**
Consider collaborations related to use of facilities, funding, and operations amongst City Departments, local nonprofits, other communities, and public-private partnerships
- Advance and Expand Passive Recreation**
- Promote Climate Action, Resilience, and a Healthy Environment**
- Position Community Campus as the Recreational Hub of Portsmouth**
Reinforce and Expand recreational uses at Community Campus; future projects and programs should be considered for location at Community Campus before considering other sites

Areas of Focus

The following Areas of Focus emerged from community input and have become the organizing structure for future action. The Goals, Strategies and Actions that will guide the Recreation Departments's future planning align with these areas

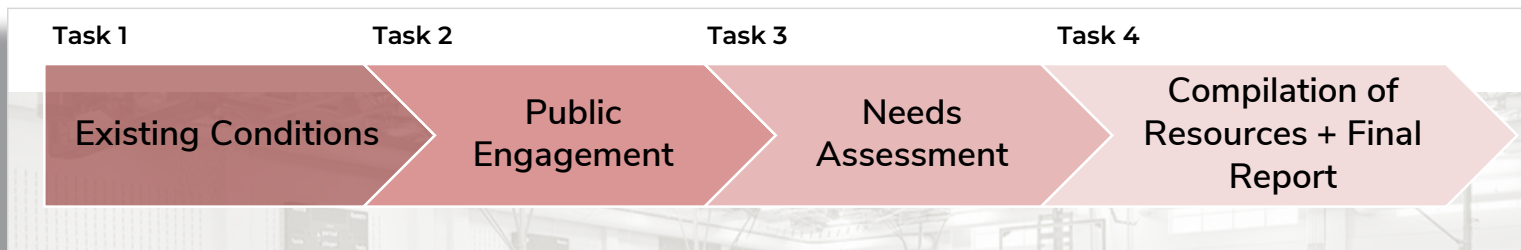


Process + Timeline

The City engaged the consulting team to document existing conditions and demographics, and to facilitate a multifaceted community engagement process. Through research, outreach, and close collaboration with the City's Project Team, the team created an assessment of need reflective of the unique character and vision of Portsmouth.

The consulting team conducted Recreational Needs Study according to best practices in recreational planning, within the resources available to the project. To economize time and budget, some limitations were placed on research and analysis portions of the process, with priority placed on community input and engagement. Comprehensive site assessments were not performed as a part of this study. Recommendations for future documentation of existing conditions have been made in the Goals, Strategies, and Actions section of this report, and tools have been developed for the City to further assess its current and future facilities and amenities. Similarly, a streamlined community engagement process made every effort to reach the widest possible audience using the available resources.

Process and Task Highlights



1A: DATA COLLECTION

- Compile relevant documents
- LIMITED Site Inventory
 - Interview with DPW/Rec Departments
 - Update list of properties/sites
- Local Comparisons – 2 communities

1B: DEMOGRAPHICS/TRENDS

- GIS-based analysis
- Compare with national trends

1C: LEVEL OF SERVICE

- Categorization system for facilities (NRPA)
- Review equity and regional efficiency

(2) ONLINE SURVEYS

- Parks, Recreation, Recreational Open Space
- Athletic Facility Use

(2) PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

- **Workshop 1:** Visioning
- **Workshop 2:** Master Planning Input

STAFF/PROJECT TEAM INTERVIEWS

- Limited site visits
- Interview summaries + recommendations for further study

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Compiled from prior phases

DRAFT + FINAL REPORT

- Documentation of findings
- Limited mapping/visuals

Sites Included in This Study

This Recreational Needs Study includes **City-owned and/or operated indoor and outdoor facilities in Portsmouth**, including parks, playgrounds, playing fields, passive recreation areas, and school facilities. Although private facilities and programs impact recreation in Portsmouth, these facilities were not included in the Study.

Athletic Fields/Recreation Areas

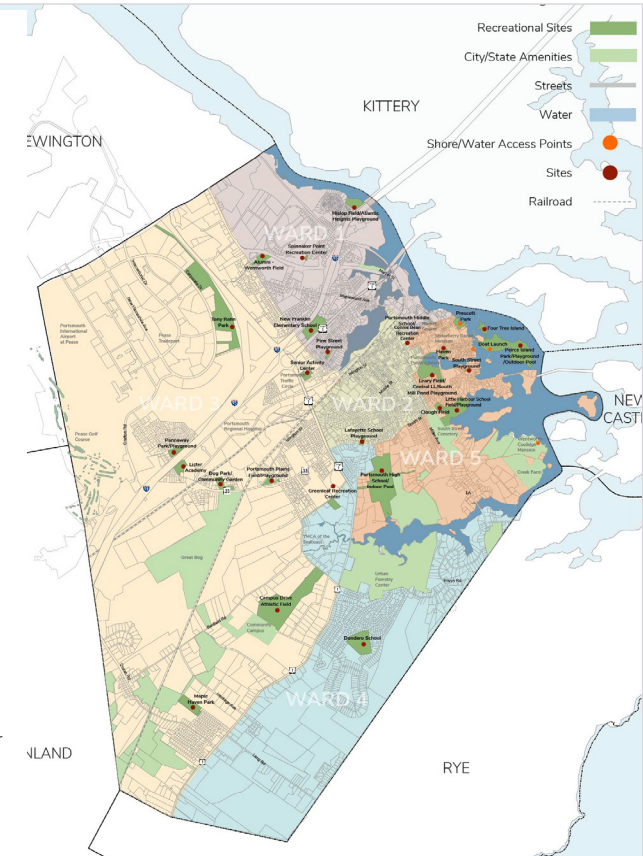
- Portsmouth High School:
 - Practice and Competition Fields
 - Track & Field Areas
 - Tennis Courts
 - Ropes Course
 - Cross-Country Trail Access
- Lister Academy School Field
- Dondero School Field + Playground
- Little Harbour School Field + Playground
- New Franklin Elementary:
 - Fields
 - Tennis Courts
 - Playgrounds
- Lafayette School Field + Playground
- Pannaway Field + Playground
- Alumni Ball Field
- Plains Ball Field + Playground
- Maple Haven Field
- Clough Field
- Pease Ball Field
- Hislop Park Ball Field

- New Athletic Field
- Peirce Island:
 - Playgrounds
 - Boat Launch
 - Four Tree Island
 - Pool + Bathhouse
- South Mill Pond Area:
 - South Mill Pond Playground
 - Tennis Courts/ Pickleball
 - Central Little League Ball Field
 - Leary Ball Field
 - Dog Park
- Rail Trail
- Greenleaf Skate Park
- Atlantic Heights Playground
- South Street Playground
- Pine Street Playground

Buildings/Indoor Facilities

- Portsmouth High School Gym
- Portsmouth High School Field House
- Lister Academy School Gym
- Dondero School Gym
- Little Harbour School Gym
- New Franklin Elementary Gym

- Connie Bean Recreation Center
- Spinnaker Point Recreation Center
- Portsmouth Middle School Gym
- Portsmouth Indoor Pool
- Greenleaf Recreation Center



Near-Term Projects

During the course of this Study, the City was in the process of finalizing two important developments in Portsmouth recreation: the purchase of the Community Campus property and building and the design of a new skate park. The Recreation Department relocated to the Community Campus in mid 2022, beginning a transition to make that site a central location for recreation in Portsmouth, as reflected in the Guiding Principles. Design phases for a skate park on the "Stump Dump" site on Route 33 was underway and funds allocated for construction.

Due to the early stages of development of these two projects, they were not considered to be part of the existing conditions. Every new endeavor for the Recreation Department is an opportunity to assess alignment with the Guiding Principles - these projects present that opportunity. A separate programming and outreach effort is recommended to determine specific planning for the Community Campus building and property. Additionally, the vision and principles of this Study can be incorporated into the design of the skate park site, particularly related to connectivity.

How To Read This Document

The following chapters summarize activities and research completed over the course of the Recreational Needs Study, concluding in the Needs Assessment section with a set of Goals, Strategies, and Actions for future projects, programming, and initiatives to be undertaken by the Recreation Department. The Appendix contains full detail of research, meetings and presentations, and community engagement survey responses and findings, to provide complete and unabridged documentation of the work done by the Recreation Department, Recreation Board, City of Portsmouth, and the consulting team.

Data Collection

Existing Conditions Analysis: Types + Methods

Documentation and analysis of existing conditions was streamlined to focus on providing the City with effective planning tools to evaluate and project recreational need. This phase prioritized the creation/update of the recreational site inventory, and documented and categorized that inventory using national standards for benchmarking purposes.

Site assessments during this phase were limited; visits and detailed conditions assessments were not performed but interviews with City staff facilitated the completion of the site inventory database with information related to condition, maintenance needs, and other factors. The consulting team has provided a Site Assessment Template to the City for future detailed assessment of each recreational site, to be completed by City staff. Additionally, the City has been provided with the site inventory database initiated by the consulting team. As recommended in the Goals, Strategies and Actions section, continual updates to the inventory and site assessments will allow the Recreation Department to better understand, prioritize, and budget for improvements and maintenance to recreational amenities over time.

This section contains a summary of:

- Site Inventory and Parkland Classification
- Portsmouth Demographics and National Trends Analysis
- Comparative Analysis of Comparable Seacoast Communities

Site Inventory

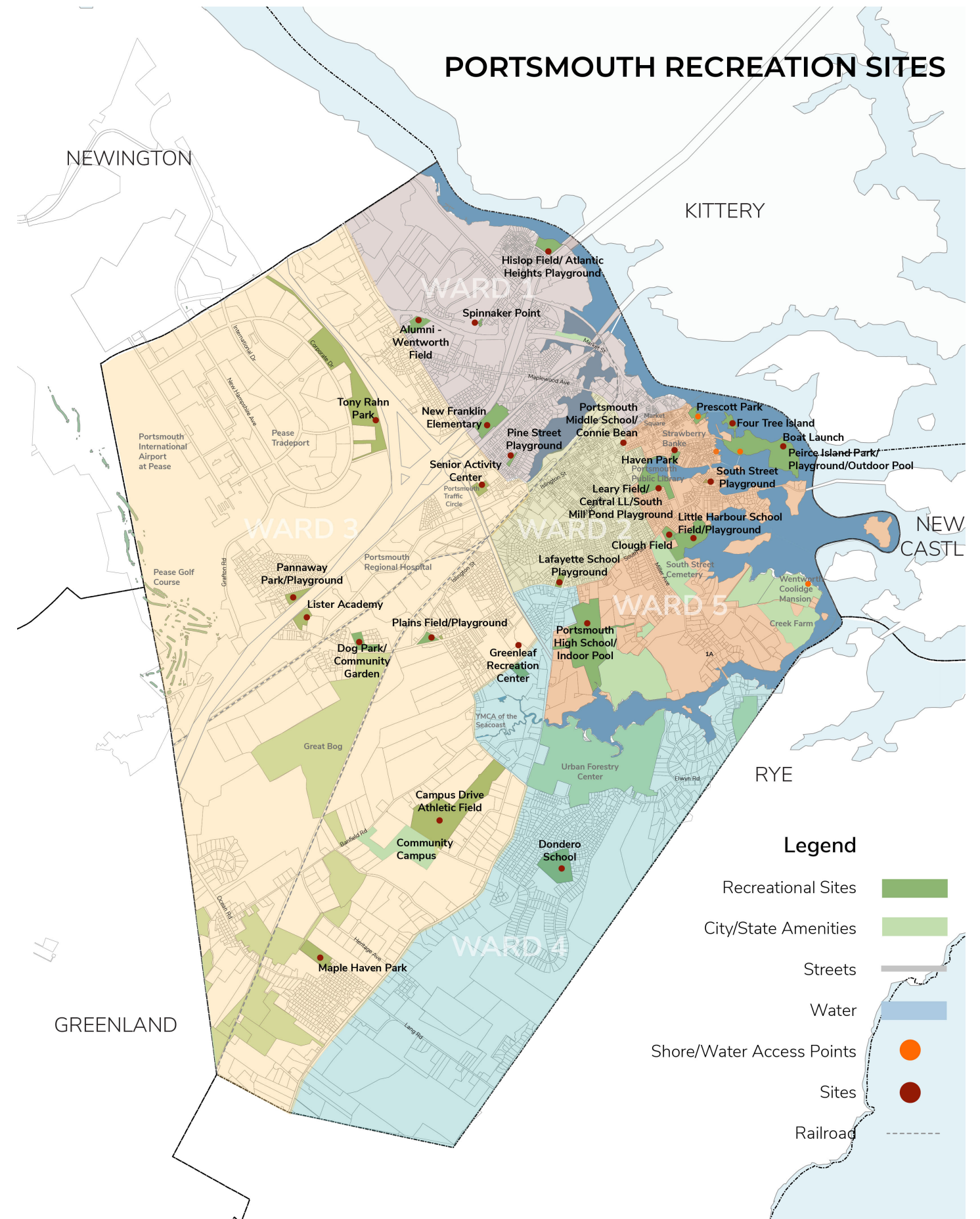
As noted above, a current inventory of recreational sites has been created and provided to the City for future use and continual updating. The City provided information regarding size, activities at each site, amenities, and pertinent notes regarding condition, maintenance, etc. An important aspect of the inventory is classification of sites according to nationally-recognized standards; the following sections contain a description of this process and product.

Parkland Classification

It is important to note that different types of parks have varying roles and purposes. Some parks attract visitors from throughout a region while others offer neighborhood users such as a toddler the experience of navigating a slide for the first time. Typically, parkland is classified to assist in planning for a community's recreational needs. At the beginning of this update to the Recreational Needs Study, a classification system of Portsmouth's park spaces did not exist. This Recreational Needs Study proposes a hierarchy of various park types in accordance with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) guidance, with each offering recreational opportunities. Individually, each park type may serve only one function, but collectively the system is intended to serve the full range of the community's needs. Classifying park space by function allows the City to evaluate its needs and to plan for an efficient, cost effective and usable park system that minimizes conflicts between park users and adjacent uses. Classifications also help to define locations of amenities, type and level of maintenance. The classification characteristics are meant as general guidelines to address the intended size and use of each park type. The following six classifications were used to define parks as part of this Recreational Needs Study and are defined as follows:

COMMUNITY PARKS
NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS
MINI PARKS

PLAYGROUNDS
HISTORIC PARKS
SPECIAL USE AREAS



COMMUNITY PARKS

Community parks are the largest park classification at the local level of planning between 12 and 50 acres in size. Community parks are typically developed for organized play and include a diverse range of facilities and amenities catering to a larger and more diverse group of users. Community parks are planned to provide both active and passive recreation opportunities as well as multi-generational activities. Community parks generally serve residents within a two-mile drive, walk, or bike ride from the site. Because of their size, community parks are designed and organized to support larger more intense recreation uses such as organized sports. Passive recreation and natural area components are also encouraged in community parks to complement and support active uses. They may also provide amenities such as playgrounds, splash pads, community gardens or indoor uses to support a wider range of recreational interests. Because community parks offer recreation and programming to a broad range of users, they should also include certain comfort amenities such as parking and restrooms.

COMMUNITY PARKS IN PORTSMOUTH

- Portsmouth High School
- South Mill Pond Area
- Peirce Island
- Campus Drive Athletic Field
- Prescott Park

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood parks are the backbone of most park systems designed for unstructured, non-organized play and limited active and passive recreation. They typically range in size from 2-5 acres in size depending on spatial constraints and the needs of the neighborhood. Neighborhood parks are intended to serve residential areas within close-proximity (up to ½-mile walking or biking distance) of the park and are typically geographically distributed throughout the community. Access to neighborhood parks is mostly pedestrian, and park sites should be located such that people living within the service area can get to the park safely and conveniently. Neighborhood parks typically include amenities such as pedestrian paths, picnic tables, benches, play equipment, an open field area for informal play, sport courts or multi-purpose paved areas and landscaping. When neighborhood parks are designed in conjunction with school sites, these sites typically include multi-use athletic fields.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS IN PORTSMOUTH

- Maple Haven Park/Playground
- New Franklin Elementary School
- Hislop Field/Atlantic Heights Playground
- Little Harbour School
- Portsmouth Middle School
- Lafayette School Field/Playground
- Pannaway Playground
- Spinnaker Point Recreation Center
- Dondero School

MINI PARKS

Mini parks are typically specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens and typically range in size from one acre or less. Mini parks are typically located within neighborhoods and in close proximity to apartment complexes, townhouse developments or housing for the elderly (less than ¼ mile walking or biking distance).

MINI PARKS IN PORTSMOUTH

- Lister Academy
- Cater Park
- Rock Street Park
- Portsmouth Plains Field/Playground
- Pease Baseball Fields/Tony Rahn Park

PLAYGROUNDS

Playgrounds are primarily for children aged 5 – 12 and include apparatus for older children and a field area for games and informal play. They also include a passive area for older children and an area for court games. Playgrounds are typically easily accessible from residential neighborhoods and are geographically located with safe walking and biking access (¼ mile to ½ mile walking or biking distance). They are smaller than a neighborhood park but contain similar facilities and may be developed as a school park facility.

PLAYGROUNDS IN PORTSMOUTH

- South Street Playground
- Pine Street Playground

HISTORIC PARKS

Historic parks are typically an officially designated location that includes pieces of political, military, cultural, or social history of local, regional, or national significance. They often include maintained gardens (as memorials) and passive areas for personal contemplation. Historic parks are typically found in a downtown location and other densely populated areas.

HISTORIC PARKS IN PORTSMOUTH

- Goodwin Park
- Haven Park*

SPECIAL USE AREAS

Special use areas are park spaces that generally serve a single recreation purpose. Special use areas are sites designed to support a specific, specialized use. These park settings may include sports complexes, aquatic facilities, dog parks, skate parks or any other facility intended for single use or specific demographic.

SPECIAL USE AREAS IN PORTSMOUTH

- Greenleaf Recreation Center
- Senior Activity Center

The development of the parkland classification for Portsmouth also contributed to the creation of a recreation inventory which catalogues information specific to each site evaluated through this Recreation Needs Analysis. This inventory begins with each site's acreage, then follows with the identification of recreational/sports offerings under various categories, including water-related recreation (boating, fishing, and swimming), sports activities (fields, courts, and playgrounds), and associated amenities (restrooms, parking, and ADA accessibility). Sites were also coded by parkland classifications in a Geographic Information System (GIS) platform to digitally display the physical locations of each site to advance the City's documentation, but also as part of the public education and engagement campaign. Subsequent GIS analyses were then completed to better understand the equitable distribution of parks by type (Level of Service Analysis) and potential future vulnerabilities (FEMA Flood Zone and Climate Change Analyses), and to inform future decision-making and investments by city officials. This recreation inventory can also be integrated into the GIS platform as the beginning of a comprehensive GIS database that can be further expanded and built-out and serve as a valuable tool for the City moving forward.

*Parks not included in Study analysis, but meet the definition of their listed classification.

Note: classifications are made according to NRPA definitions; sites are listed in only one classification. For example, school sites have playgrounds, but due to other features (size, amenities, etc.), they are more accurately classified as Neighborhood Parks.

Facility Use Data

Field Use Analysis

The consulting team evaluated annual field use through the Athletic Facility Users Survey. Sports league coaches/administrators were asked to provide their seasonal/annual use of City-owned facilities including number of teams, practices, games per week, as well as the hours for each and the number of weeks in the season. The consulting team then calculated the total hours in use per team/season to identify the total overall annual use. These numbers were then compared against 'expected field condition standards based on hours of use' developed by North Carolina State University – North Carolina Cooperative Extension:

- Sustained Good Field Conditions (0 – 200 hrs/year)
- Good Field Conditions with some thinning/localized wear areas (400 – 600 hrs/year)
- Fair Field Conditions: Significant thinning/wear (800 – 1,000/year)
- Poor Field Conditions with significant turf loss, surface damage, and increased potential for athlete injury (1,000+ hrs/year)

Generally, good quality turf can be achieved/sustained with appropriate maintenance between an average use of 200 – 600 hrs/year. The Field Use Analysis (although incomplete) shows a number of athletic fields that are currently overutilized, including:

- Portsmouth High School Fields
- Alumni/Wentworth
- Clough
- Central
- Hislop
- Tony Rahn Fields
- Sherburne

Athletic Users Survey – Draft Response Highlights

TEAMS SURVEYED

Seacoast Pirates Baseball
 Portsmouth City Soccer Club
 Portsmouth Little League
 PHS Boys Tennis Program
 PHS Girls Tennis Program
 PHS Football Program
 PHS Varsity Softball Program
 Coastal New England Baseball League
 Seacoast Ultimate
 Portsmouth Youth Football
 PHS Cheerleading
 PHS Girls Varsity Lacrosse
 Seacoast Lacrosse
 American Legion/Babe Ruth
 Portsmouth Youth Softball
 Flag Football
 Woman's Softball
 Fusion Soccer
 Co-ed Softball

RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

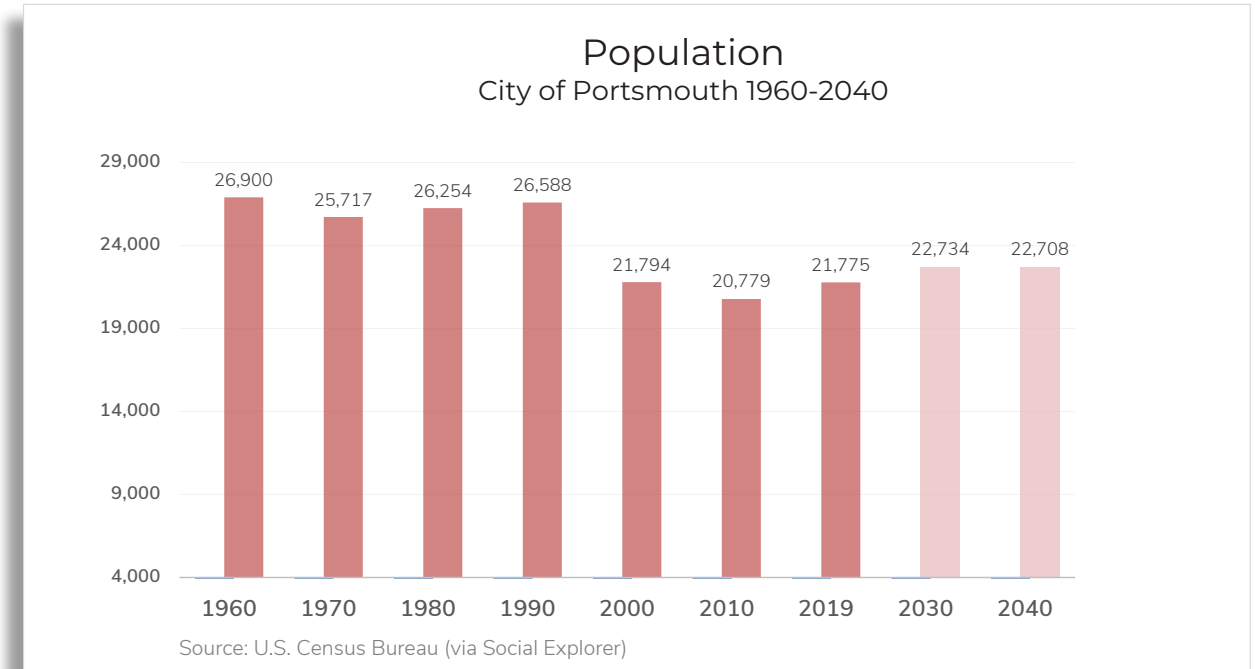
- Conflicts/Coordination with Schools, other sports, City Rec Programs
- Need for Warm Up Space and Practice Fields
- Field Condition: Drainage, Turf Wear
- Add Lighting for Increased Access
- Storage + Support: Space and Staff, especially in Mill Pond Area
- Need for Fields Built and Striped Appropriately for Sport (Softball, Football)
- Issues with Access to Leary Field (Baseball)

Gray text indicates respondents with incomplete/no response. Full survey responses can be found in the Appendix.

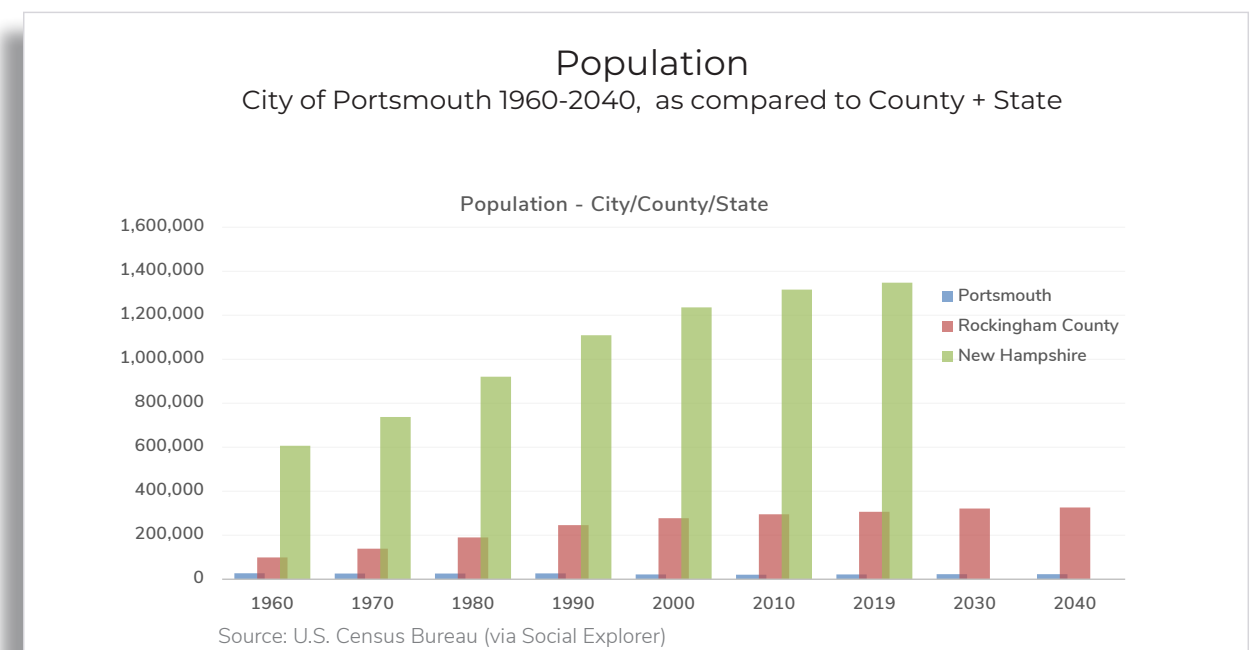
Demographics + Trends

Portsmouth Demographics

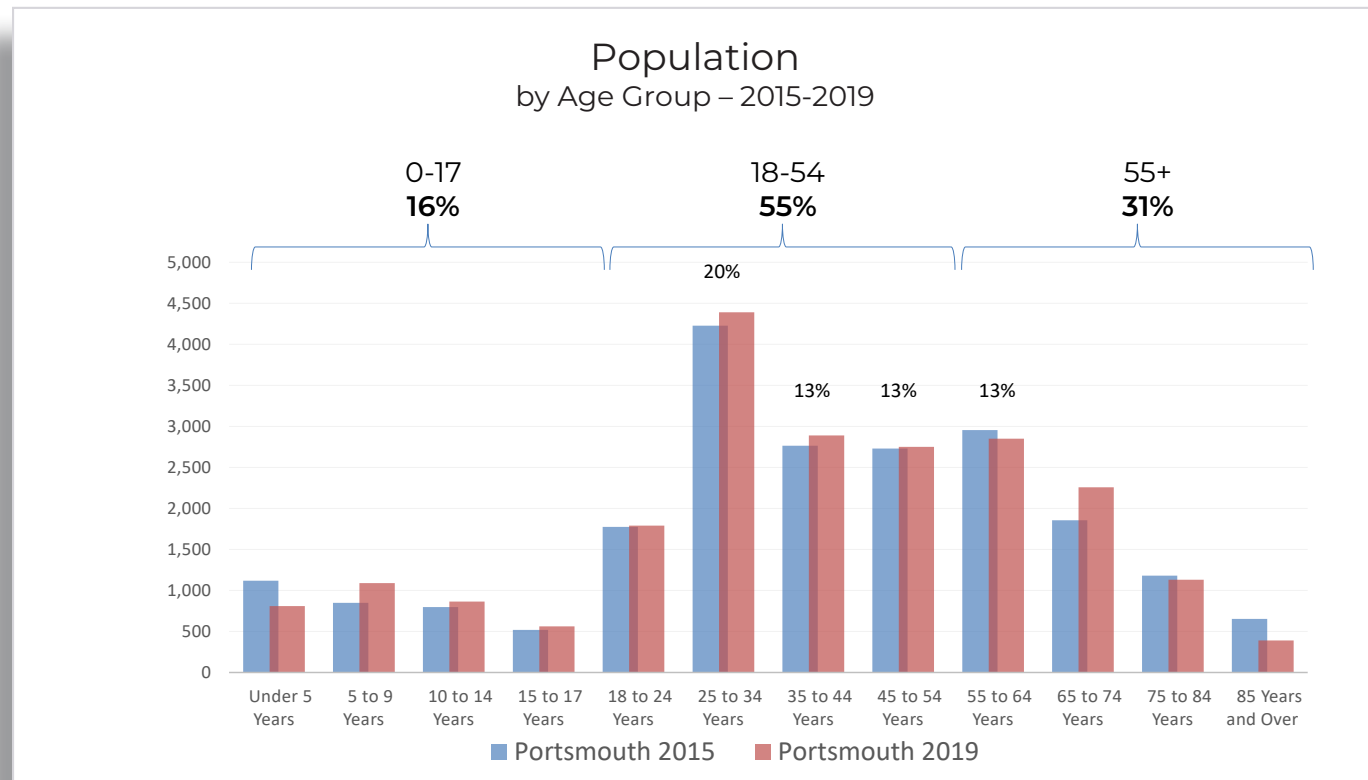
Tracking population and demographics is an important element of projecting future needs for Portsmouth. The following charts utilize United States Census Data to study trends and understand the makeup of the Portsmouth community.



After a marked decline in the 1990's, Portsmouth's total population has remained relatively stable, a trend that is projected to continue for the next 20+ years.



In contrast to the relatively flat population growth in Portsmouth, the state of New Hampshire has seen a more pronounced rate of growth.



This chart shows distribution of age groups in Portsmouth over a recent 5-year period. The age group with the highest population is 25-34 years. More than half of Portsmouth’s population is aged 18-54, an interesting note when considering recreational offerings for this group compared to those targeting seniors and young children.

The following breakdown is used to separate the population into age-sensitive user groups.

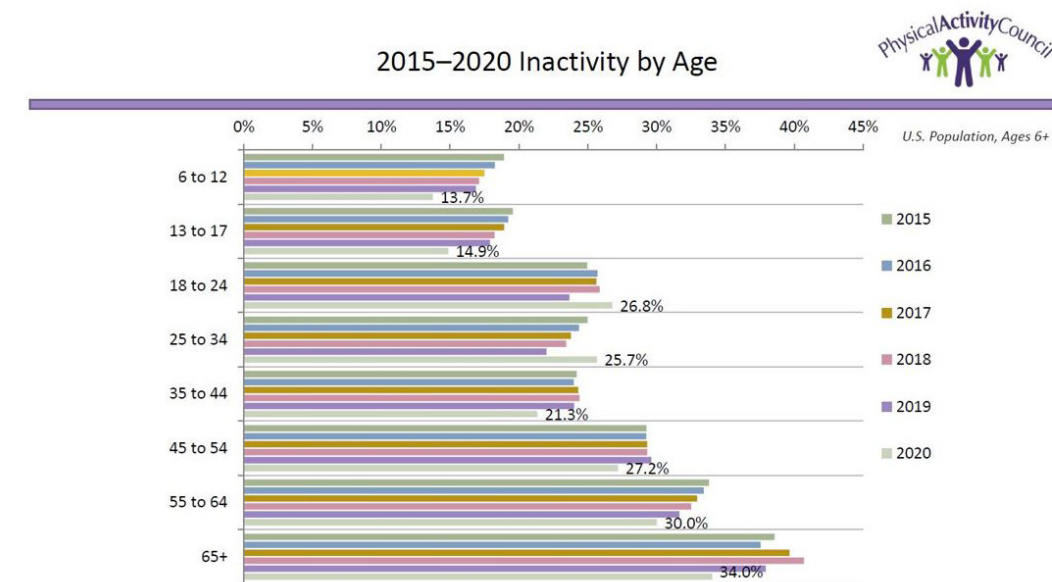
- Under 5 years: This group represents users of preschool and tot programs and playgrounds. These individuals often use walking paths with their parents and are the future participants in youth activities.
- 5 to 14 years: This group represents current youth program participants.
- 15 to 24 years: This group represents teen/young adult program participants that are transitioning from youth programs and into adult programs. Members of this age group are often seasonal employment seekers.
- 25 to 34 years: This group represents users of adult programs. Members are often beginning long-term relationships and establishing families.
- 35 to 54 years: This group represents users of a wide range of adult programs and park facilities. Member characteristics range from having children that use preschool and youth programs to empty nesters.
- 55 years and older: This group represents users of older adult programs. Member characteristics range from approaching retirement or already retired, and members typically have grandchildren. This group generally ranges from very healthy, active seniors to more physically inactive seniors.

National Trends

INACTIVITY TRENDS

Current national trends regarding active and inactivity lifestyles varies considerably dependent upon age in the United States according to the Physical Activity Council’s 2021 Participation Report: The Physical Activity Council’s annual study tracking sports, fitness, and recreation participation in the US. Children/youth (under 18) and adults (35 – 65+) have seen a steady decrease in inactivity with the largest decline between 2019 and 2020. Adults 18 – 34 have seen moderate increases in inactivity over the same time period (Figure 1).

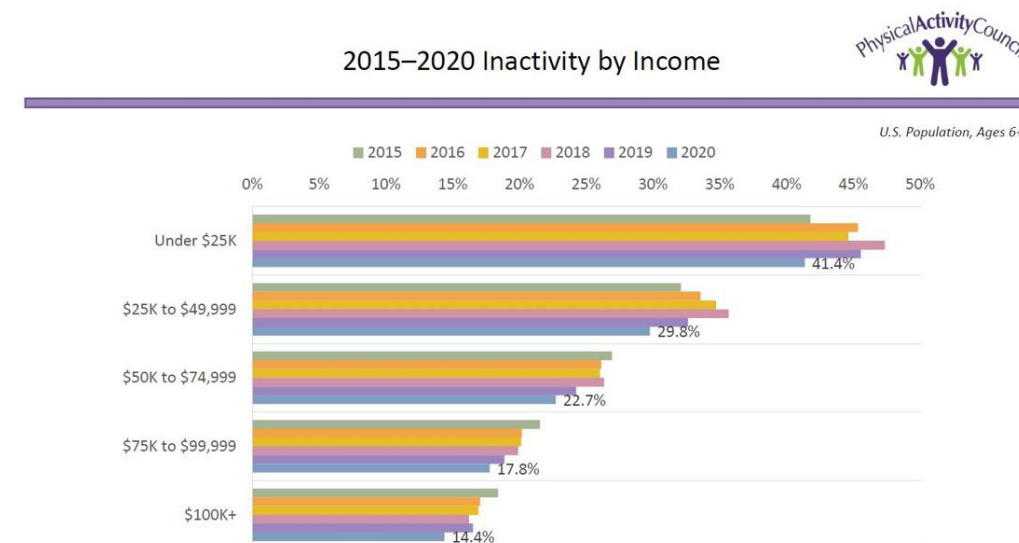
Figure 1. Inactivity Trends by Age



Source: Physical Activity Council

When inactivity was compared to income, inactivity remained higher in lower-income households although all income brackets saw a decline in inactivity in 2020. Those households earning \$75,000 to \$99,900 and \$100,000+ remained the most active and have been relatively steady over the last five years (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of Inactivity (Nationally) by Household Income



Source: Physical Activity Council

PARTICIPATION TRENDS

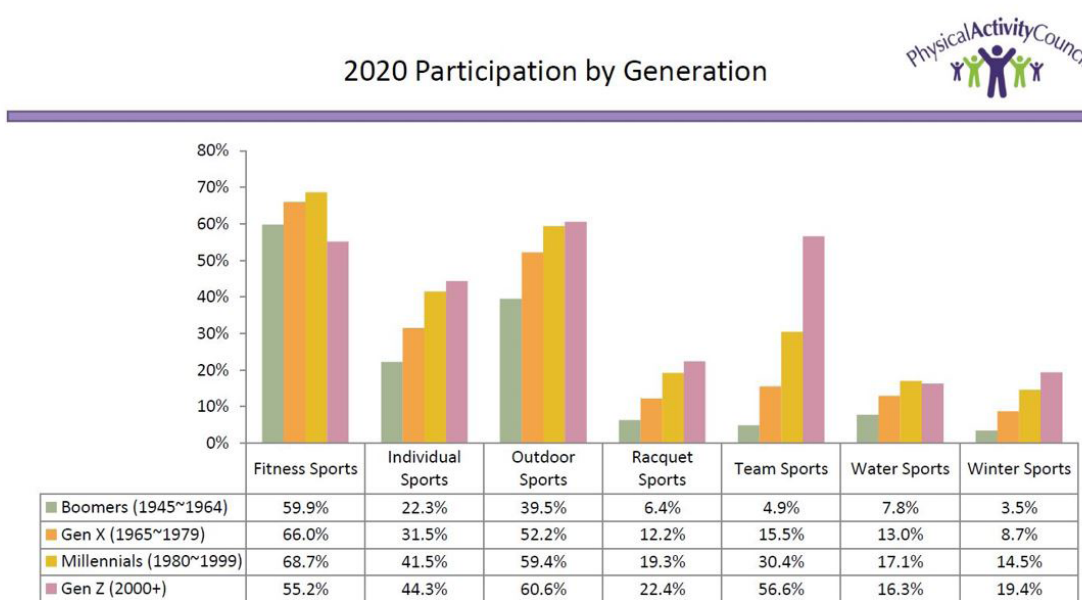
The largest increases in participation in organized sports were in outdoor and racquet sports categories while fitness, individual, and team sports declined slightly and water and winter sports were flat (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Participation Rates for Individuals 6+ Years of Age



That same report indicates that active participation in recreation is also influenced by generation. Boomers (1945 - 1964) preferred fitness sports, while Gen X (1965 - 1979) and Millennials (1980 - 1999) preferred fitness and outdoor sports, and Gen Z (2000+) preferred fitness sports, outdoor sports, and team sports (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Recreation Preference by Generation



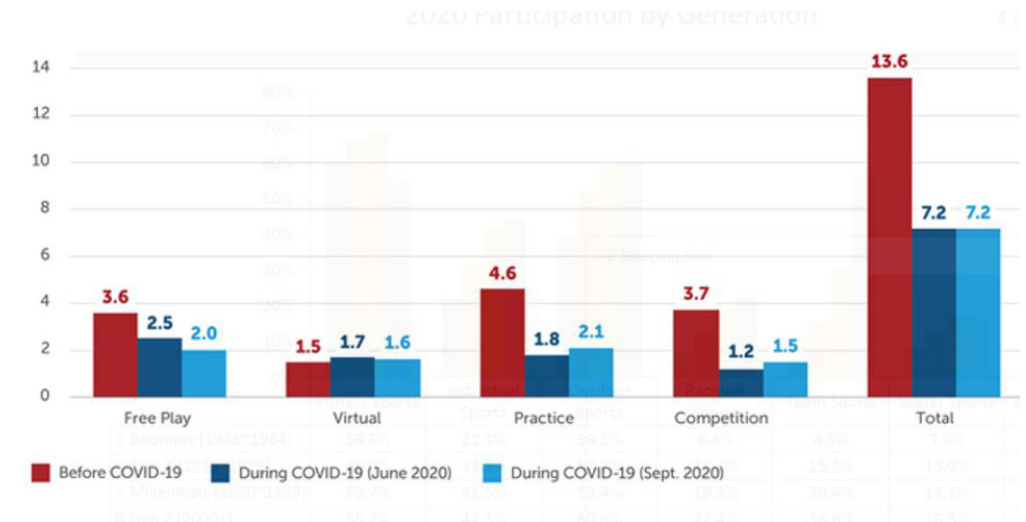
Source: Physical Activity Council

PANDEMIC IMPACTS

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, overall growth in sports participation in team and individual sports were experiencing considerable progress (2019). According to the Aspen Institute, this increase represents the highest growth in sports participation since 2012 for several sports including softball (12%), lacrosse (8%), field hockey (8%), and volleyball (8%).

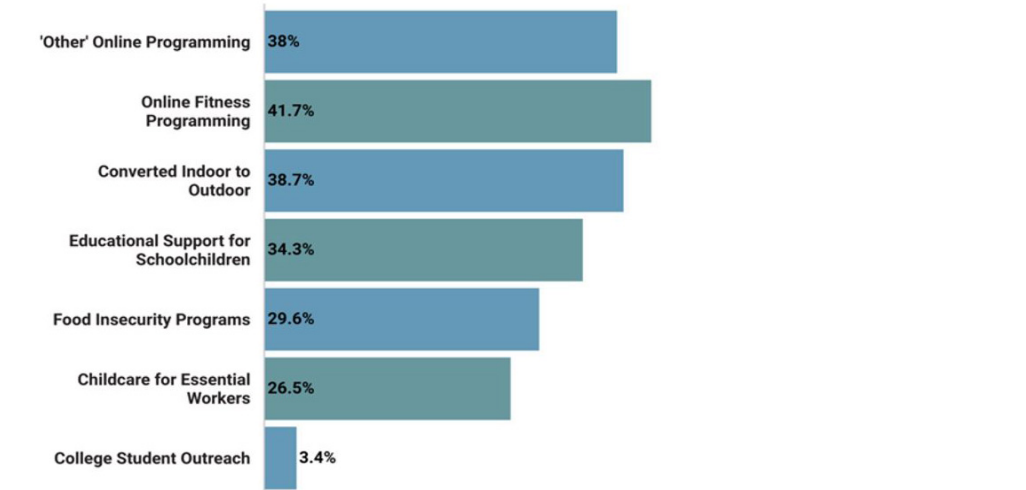
During the pandemic, on average, children ages 6 – 18 spent approximately 6.5 hours less time playing sports, with significant declines in free play, practices and games observed (Figure 5). A range of circumstances played a part in this sharp decline in participation including transportation difficulties and scheduling conflicts (associated with federal shut-downs and commercial/business closures) and the potential of getting infected (children and parents).

Figure 5. Hours Spent Playing Sport Per Week by Youth Ages 6 - 18 (pre- and post-COVID)
Source: Aspen Institute



Of note is the critical role that parks and recreation organizations assumed during the pandemic, and what it means for the future. At first, most were forced to close their doors during the mandatory shut-down. Then, as health officials learned more about the virus and the need for centralized 'COVID-19 resource centers', more and more communities began to convert some of their existing facility space for health care use. As time passed and social distancing mandates were implemented, many organizations began to transition some of their indoor programming to take place outdoors or online. Along with the advancement of testing and vaccines, many organizations shifted their activities and programming further to meet the social needs of the community by providing essential services, such as childcare for essential workers, food insecurity programs/distribution, educational support, and testing/vaccination locations (Figure 6). The COVID-19 pandemic will clearly have lasting implications for our future. Parks and recreation organizations should take note of this experience and proactively plan not solely for programs, fields and courts, but also for their capacity to serve as a vital community resource.

Figure 6. Activity and Program Adjustments Due to COVID 19
Source: Recreation Management Magazine



NATIONAL TRENDS IN RECREATION: STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

According to a national survey conducted by Recreation Management magazine (2022), the most common features found among park respondents' facilities include: playgrounds, park shelters such as gazebos and picnic shelters, park restroom structures, walking and hiking trails, open spaces such as gardens and natural areas, outdoor sports courts for sports like basketball or tennis, bleachers and seating, natural turf sports fields, classrooms and meeting rooms, and concession areas.

The survey also listed the top planned additions for improvements to facilities based on frequency for those organizations planning to add/improve facilities over the next three years including (frequency shown in parentheses):

- Splash play areas (31.6 %)
- Synthetic turf sports fields (24.2 %)
- Dog parks (22.1 %)
- Playgrounds (20 %)
- Outdoor fitness areas and fitness trails (16.8%)
- Walking and hiking trails (21.7%)
- Bike trails (16.8 %)
- Park shelters (15.8%)
- Park restroom structures (15.8 %)
- Community or multi-purpose center (14.7 %)
- Open spaces and natural areas (14.7%)

The same survey showed the top program options most commonly planned for addition in 2022 included:

- Fitness programs (up from No. 3)
- Environmental education programs (up from No. 7)
- Mind-body balance programs such as yoga (up from No. 4)
- Group exercise programs (down from No. 1)
- Teen programming (down from No. 2)
- Performing arts programs (did not appear in top additions in 2021)
- Adult sports teams (up from No. 9)
- Educational programs (down from No. 6)
- Special needs programs (up from No. 10)
- Day camps and summer camps (did not appear in top additions in 2021)



Peer Communities

Survey of Comparable Communities

Valuable lessons can be learned from the experiences of peer communities in the delivery of recreational programs. Two Seacoast communities were selected for a brief case study: Rochester and Dover. The recreation directors of these two communities completed a questionnaire and interview, with questions related to programming, operations, facilities, and partnerships. They indicated many of the same challenges faced by Portsmouth (staffing, facilities maintenance, league coordination, etc.), and provided some insights into how their departments have addressed these challenges, in particular in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Questionnaire responses/interview notes from these conversations can be found in the Appendix.

Comparative notes regarding facilities:

DOVER:

- Has municipal ice rink, available to outside teams/leagues, currently used by Portsmouth and other communities from as far as one hour drive from facility.
- Under consideration: public/private partnership multi-use indoor facility including aquatics and artificial turf fields, to replace existing aging indoor pool and fill gaps in current facilities

HAMPTON:

- Has an outdoor municipally-owned skate park and inline skate rink
- Under consideration: partnership with Hampton Library for the creation of a Collaborative Community Center with both library and recreation uses

Comparative Analysis - Dover and Rochester

TRENDS

- Kids: more structured programming is the expectation (less open play)
- Adults: generally the opposite but still managed with sign ups

COORDINATION OF FACILITIES USE

- Generally managed similar to Portsmouth
- Idea: fee per roster to City for sports-specific maintenance fund

STAFF + FACILITIES

- Staff/Facility Balance is an issue
- Both open to sharing regionally

TAKE-AWAYS

LOOK BEYOND ISSUES OF THE DAY;
THOROUGHLY RESEARCH NEED
AND MEET IT

EVALUATE AND LEVERAGE
CURRENT ASSETS

GOOD DATA AND SOLID
RECOMMENDATIONS ARE
INSTRUMENTAL

Level of Service Analysis

Level-of-service (LOS) standards are measures of the minimum quantities of public facilities which must be provided to meet a community's basic needs and expectations, typically based on existing and projected population. For this Recreational Needs Analysis, the consulting team utilized 10-year population projections to align with the planning horizon of this study. LOS measures are usually expressed as ratios of facility capacity to the number of users. For example, a community may set a standard for how many park acres are needed per 1000 population, the median number of a specific facility type/use that can serve as a benchmark (with associated prevalence percentages for comparison), or as a ratio of distance to a particular facility – based on a parkland classification system and national standards for communities of similar population.

The Level of Service analysis for Portsmouth consists of two expressions of data - mapping and metrics. Maps are created to discern if geographical distribution of recreational facilities and amenities (fields, courts, etc.) is equitable. Metrics have been created to measure if quantities and types of recreational facilities are comparable to similarly-sized communities nationally.

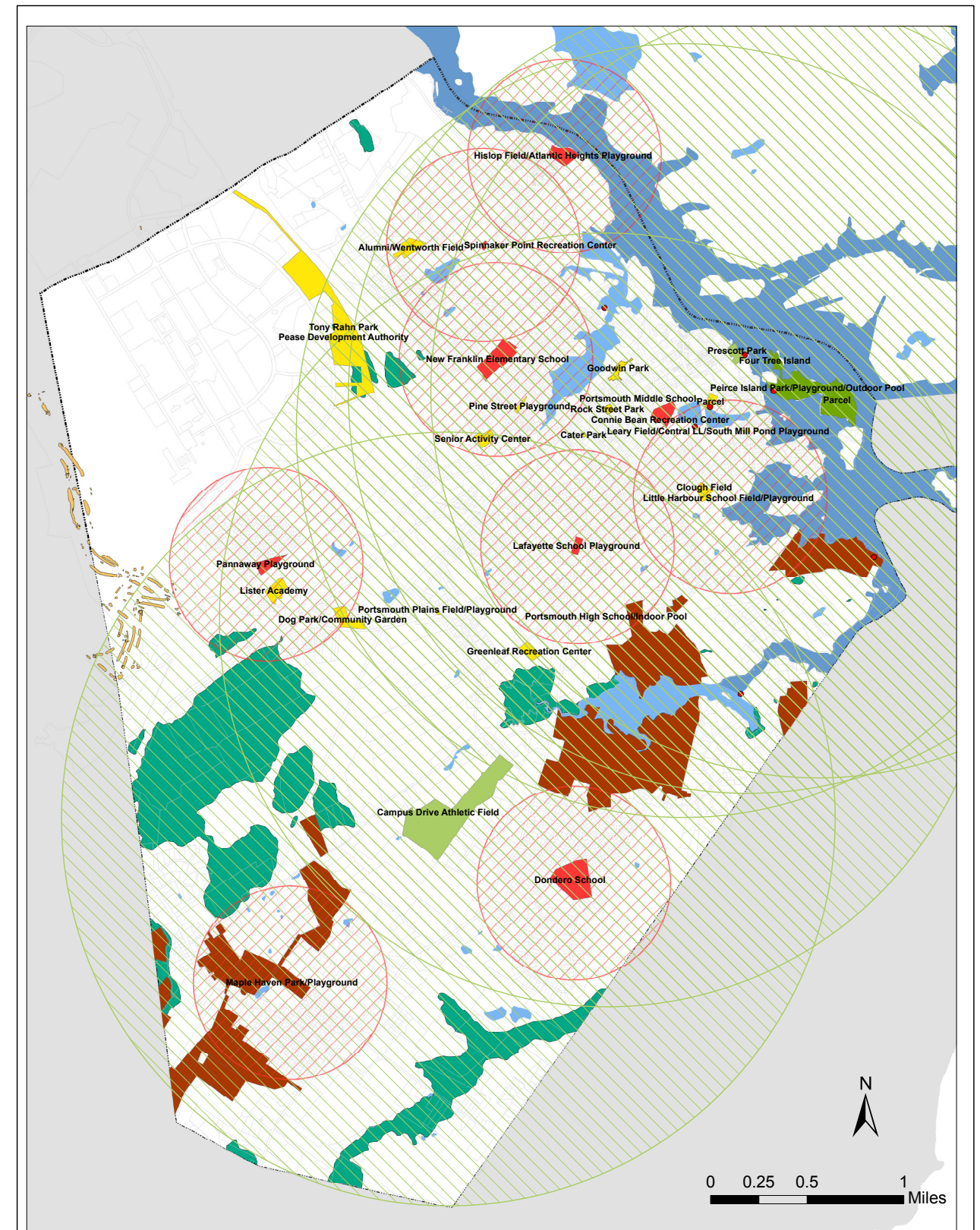
Level of Service analysis is a helpful tool to compare with national data and confirm needs expressed through community input; it is **not** intended to be used as the sole indicator of deficiency or need. Important factors including budget, community interest, site availability, etc. are key components to decision-making involving future projects; the Level of Service Analysis is one tool among many to create the full picture of how future resources should be deployed.

Level of Service - Findings Summary

- LOS analysis shows that overall, Portsmouth is adequately served by recreational amenities, although areas south of downtown are somewhat limited in diversity of uses.
- Portsmouth's diversity of facility types are in line with national trends; whether to add additional types of facilities will be largely determined by stakeholder input, rather than national benchmarks
- The quantity of outdoor facilities (fields, etc.) can be further evaluated using national benchmarks; in evaluating indoor facilities, it is more useful to look at whether communities of similar size have them nor not, rather than evaluating quantity

Comparing Portsmouth to National Trends

- How is Portsmouth doing compared to other communities? The following figures are for **benchmarking** purposes
- **This is only one part of the picture!** Final Recommendations for Portsmouth will come from a combination of sources including both benchmarking data and community input, City financial and planning vision, etc.
- **The Data**
 - NRPA: National Recreation And Park Association www.nrpa.org
 - 2022 NRPA Agency Performance Review
 - We compared with national data for communities under 20,000 residents
 - We looked at benchmarks for both **Indoor and Outdoor Facilities**



This document is for City of Portsmouth planning purposes only and is not suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes.

Data Sources: City of Portsmouth, NH GRANIT

Legend	
City Sites	Other Sites/Features
Red square: Neighborhood Park	Brown square: Local/State Conservation Areas
Green square: Community Park	Orange square: Golf Courses
Yellow square: All Other Sites	Blue square: Estuaries
Pedestrian/Bike Radius	Green square: Swamp/Marsh
Red circle with diagonal lines: 1/2 Mile (Neighborhood Park)	Blue square: Lakes/Ponds
Green circle with diagonal lines: 2 Miles (Community Park)	Red dot: Shoreline Access Points

Horsley Witten Group
Sustainable Environmental Solutions
55 Dorrance Street - Suite 200 - Providence, RI 02903
401-272-1111 • horsleywitten.com

Placework
ARCHITECTURE • PLANNING

**Level of Service Analysis
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

Date: 11/9/2022

Preliminary Findings/Recommendations

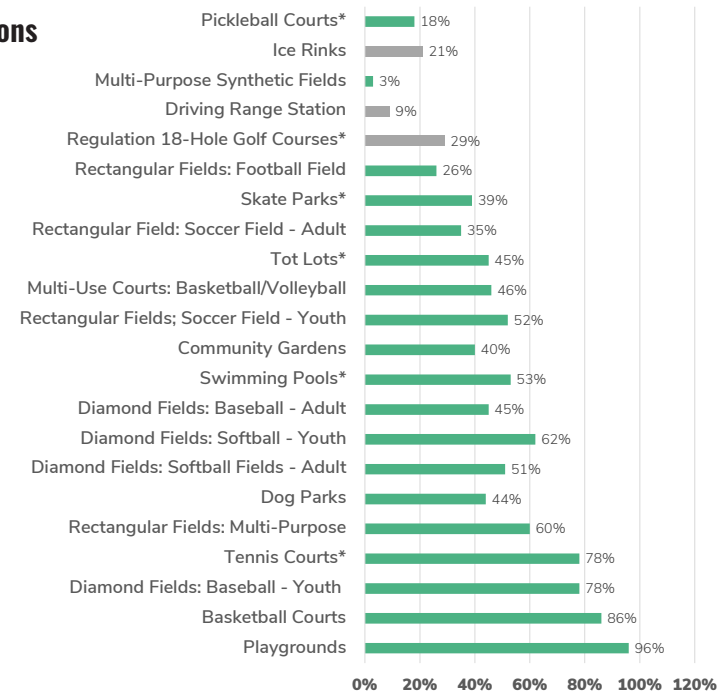
Facilities (Outdoor)

Outdoor Facilities by Type: National Prevalence

How many communities our size reported having these types of facilities?
 ■ = not offered in Portsmouth

Portsmouth Take-Aways:

- Portsmouth's diversity of outdoor facility types are in line with national trends
- The quantity of outdoor facilities (fields, etc.) can be further studied using national benchmarks



Source: 2022 NRPA Agency Performance Review
 * - Data for <20,000 unavailable; national data used

The above metrics show that Portsmouth has a good variety of facilities and amenities, including many that are not often found in communities of its size.

Preliminary Findings/Recommendations

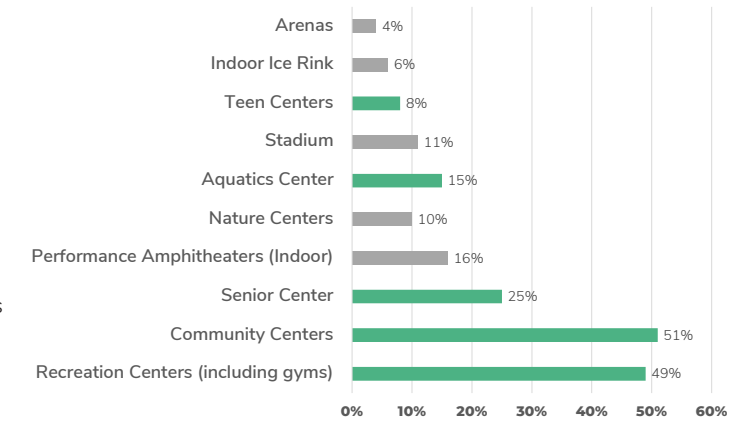
Facilities (Indoor)

Indoor Facilities by Type: National Prevalence

How many communities of our size reported having these types of facilities?
 ■ = not offered in Portsmouth

Portsmouth Take-Aways:

- Portsmouth has many facilities that most other communities of our size do not have
- Comparing quantities of indoor facilities is less important than whether they exist in Portsmouth or not



Source: 2022 NRPA Agency Performance Review
 * - Data for <20,000 unavailable; national data used

The above metrics show that Portsmouth's indoor amenities are in line with comparable communities nationally. A few clarifications: an Arena is a high-capacity enclosed area for sports, entertainment, and other events. Portsmouth's Connie Bean Center meets the NRPA criteria for a Teen Center.

Preliminary Findings/Recommendations

Facilities (Outdoor)

Potential Growth:

- Adult Softball Fields: 3
- Youth Softball Fields: 1
- Adult Baseball Fields: 2
- Youth Soccer Fields: 3
- Adult Soccer Fields: 1
- Football Fields: 1
- Skate Park
- Golf Course
- Driving Range
- Community Garden (add'l)
- Outdoor Ice Rink

Type of Facility - Outdoor	Median Number of Residents per Facility		Number of Facilities					Prevalence in Communities <20,000
	Population of Jurisdiction ¹		Baseline	2022 Inventory	Population 2032: 23,284			
	Less than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999			Portsmouth 2022 Existing	Portsmouth 2022 Additional Needs	Portsmouth 2032 Needs ²	
Playgrounds	1,986	3,111	11	14	0	12	0	96%
Basketball Courts	3,750	6,839	6	7	0	6	0	86%
Diamond Fields: Baseball - Youth	3,107	4,858	7	8	0	7	0	78%
Tennis Courts*	2,723	5,000	8	10	0	9	0	78%
Rectangular Fields: Multi-Purpose	4,362	7,674	5	5	0	5	0	60%
Dog Parks	11,100	28,000	2	3	0	2	0	44%
Diamond Fields: Softball - Adult	5,667	11,232	4	1	3	4	3	51%
Diamond Fields: Softball - Youth	5,339	8,509	4	3	1	4	1	62%
Diamond Fields: Baseball - Adult	7,954	19,000	3	1	2	3	2	45%
Swimming Pools*	8,637	26,281						53%
Community Gardens	8,773	24,500						40%
Rectangular Fields; Soccer Field - Youth	3,504	5,011	6	3	3	7	4	52%
Multi-Use Courts: Basketball/Volleyball	5,400	14,807	4	11	0	4	0	46%
Tot Lots*	6,642	10,756	3	0	0	4	0	45%
Rectangular Field: Soccer Field - Adult	8,017	10,547	3	2	1	3	1	35%
Skate Parks*	11,100	32,335						39%
Rectangular Fields: Football Field	8,004	19,351	3	2	1	3	1	26%
Regulation 18-Hole Golf Courses*	9,183	33,800						29%
Driving Range Station	5,055	23,238						9%
Multi-Purpose Synthetic Fields	12,962	24,665	2	2	0	2	0	3%
Ice Rinks	7,997	3,123						21%
Pickleball Courts*	3,446	8,143	6	9	0	7	0	18%

1: Showing both NRPA Population
 2: Utilized NRPA < 20,000 standard for median number of residents per facility (closest to Portsmouth) and applied Portsmouth total population.
 3: Additional indoor basketball/volleyball courts available at school sites (not fixed).

Portsmouth has fewer playing fields than many communities of its size; when extrapolating quantities of fields from population per field, the quantities above indicate the number of additional playing fields which would bring Portsmouth in line with comparable communities. Other indoor facility types listed at left have low prevalence in communities of Portsmouth's size, but could be considered based upon demand.

Preliminary Findings/Recommendations

Facilities (Indoor)

Portsmouth Take-Aways:

- When facility types of low prevalence in small communities are being considered for Portsmouth, municipalities larger than Portsmouth (20,000-49,999) are more useful benchmarks.
- Because the indoor facilities that Portsmouth lacks have low prevalence in comparably-sized communities, the decision to add them will be largely determined by Stakeholder Input rather than national benchmarks

Type of Facility	Prevalence in Communities <20,000	Median Number of Residents per Facility	
		Population of Jurisdiction ¹	
		Less than 20,000	20,000 to 49,999
Recreation Centers (including gyms)	49%	9,126	24,601
Community Centers	51%	8,504	26,668
Senior Center	25%	12,935	32,075
Performance Amphitheaters	16%	9,291	30,745
Nature Centers	10%	11,821	30,912
Aquatics Center	15%	11,375	31,230
Stadium	11%	9,126	27,891
Teen Centers	8%	14,426	29,406
Indoor Ice Rink	6%	8,002	24,904
Arenas	4%	6,137	24,413

■ = not offered in Portsmouth

Public input during this Study has indicated demand for some indoor facility types that are uncommon (low in prevalence) in communities of Portsmouth's size. In this case, national benchmarks are not as effective in demonstrating need as expression of need from the community.

How Will Level of Service Analysis be Used?

This Level of Service Analysis performed in this study can be used as a planning tool to inform future improvements/investments. As mentioned earlier in this section, LOS is one data-based element to be incorporated alongside community interest, budget, and other factors to facilitate informed decisionmaking in recreational planning for Portsmouth.

In addition to these findings being used to aid in decisionmaking, integration with the City's GIS data plays an important role in assessing current conditions and planning for the future. LOS Analysis will enable the City to expand on its current GIS data by adding additional existing (not part of this Needs Study) and new sites to better understand the equitable distribution of amenities/facilities for planning purposes. The consulting team has provided the City with its source data in the form of ArcGIS MXD files (and associated shapefiles), which can be further built out by the City to incorporate the developed inventory into the various sites.

What is GIS?

A geographic information system (GIS) is a system that creates, manages, analyzes, and maps all types of data. GIS connects data to a map, integrating location data (where things are) with all types of descriptive information (what things are like there). [USGS Definition of GIS](#)

Climate Change Analysis

Future investment in recreational sites -whether it be in the construction of new sites or renovations/improvements to existing ones - should take into account both existing and potential issues related to flooding, erosion, and other climate-related challenges. As a coastal city, many areas of Portsmouth already experience problematic flooding during high tides and major rain events, and these events are expected to increase in frequency and severity over time. Portsmouth's recreational sites are not immune from problems that arise during these circumstances; integrating climate response and resiliency as a part of recreational planning will maintain current sites and help to minimize unforeseen projects and expenses resulting from climate vulnerability.

The following map indicates 1' and 3' sea level rise, with existing recreational sites shown. According to this map, these sites are vulnerable to flooding due to sea level rise:

- Portsmouth High School
- Little Harbour School
- Peirce Island
- Prescott Park

It is important to note that many additional sites are vulnerable to flooding due to groundwater and surface water challenges, some of which will be exacerbated by rising sea levels and increased flood events as a result of climate change. While this study has not performed a comprehensive site assessment for recreational sites' flooding potential, the following additional sites are known to have frequent flooding severe enough to limit usability of fields:

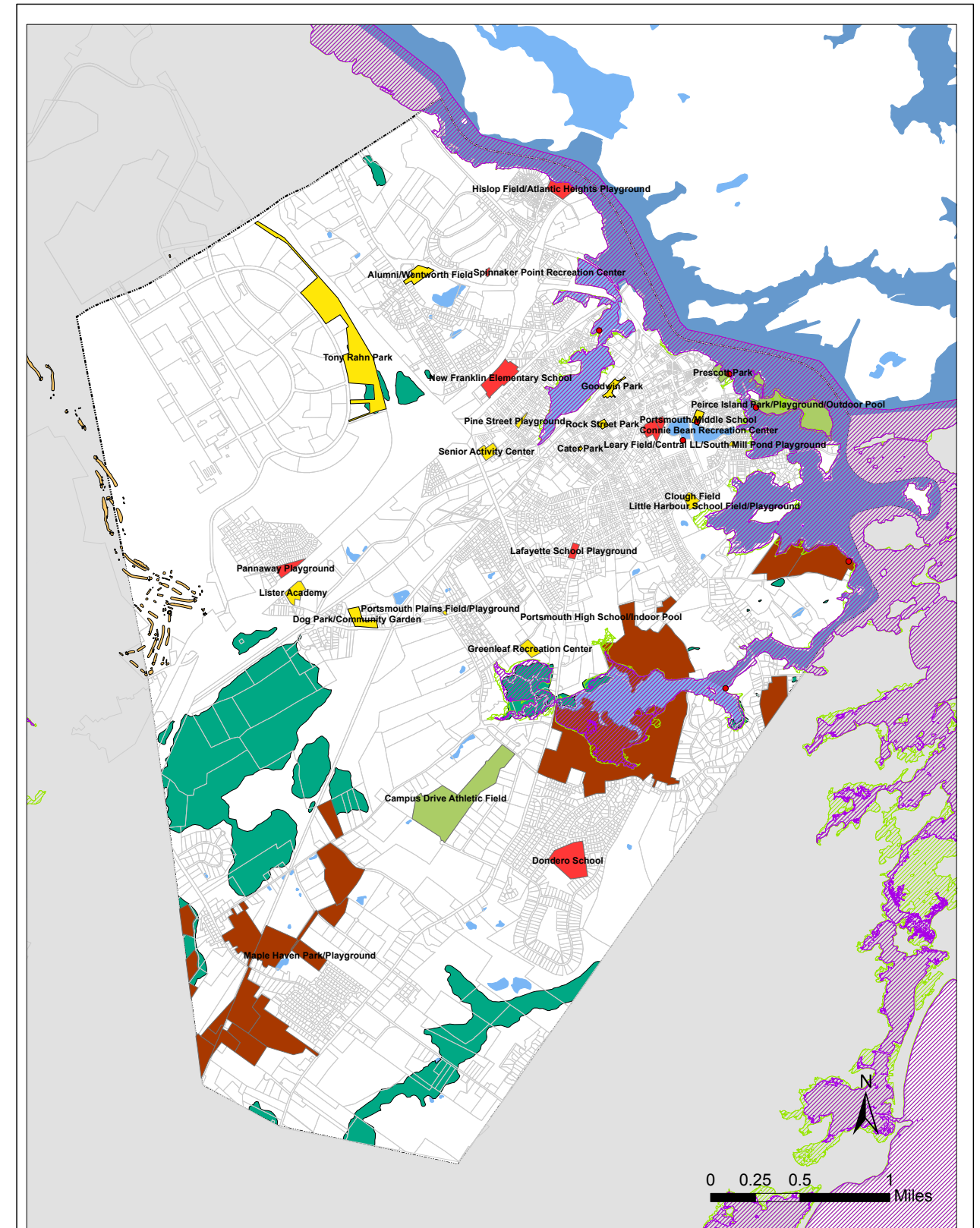
- Leary Field
- Elementary School fields
- Prescott Park
- Lafayette Field

This plan recommends close integration with City-wide resiliency and climate action planning, and a comprehensive site assessment of recreational sites that includes assessment of vulnerabilities due to flooding and climate change, with recommended actions to mitigate or control them.

Source data: NOAA
Projections: City of Portsmouth, NH Vulnerability Assessment of Projected SLR and Coastal Storm Surge Flooding

Lower Emissions Scenario:
2050: 1-foot rise
2100: 2.5-foot rise

Higher Emissions Scenario:
2050: 1.7-foot rise
2100: 6.3-foot rise



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Data Sources: City of Portsmouth, NH GRANT

<p>Legend</p> <p>City Sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighborhood Park Community Park All Other Sites <p>Projected Sea Level Rise Scenarios</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Foot Sea Level Rise 3-Foot Sea Level Rise 		<p>Other Sites/Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local/State Conservation Areas Golf Courses Estuaries Swamp/Marsh Lakes/Ponds Shoreline Access Points 	<p>Horsley Witten Group Sustainable Environmental Solutions 95 Dorchester Street • Suite 200 • Providence, RI 02903 401-423-1710 • hws@hws.com</p> <p>Placework ARCHITECTURE • PLANNING</p> <p>Climate Change Analysis Portsmouth, New Hampshire</p> <p>Date: 11/9/2022</p>
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Community Engagement

Perhaps the most important aspect of data gathering for this Study has come in the form of community input. The future of recreation in Portsmouth will be most successfully integrated if it has come from expressed needs and aspirations of its residents for an active and healthy community. Data gathering and analysis presents only one piece of the recreational need assessment; community input provides important confirmation of that assessment and reveals needs that are unique to the specific recreational profile of Portsmouth.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Early in the planning process, community members were asked to provide their feedback on current programming, facilities, and sites, and help in prioritizing a vision for the future. Following this initial call for feedback, a vision and initial recommendations for Portsmouth recreation was produced combining community input with analysis undertaken through existing conditions research. Again the community was asked to weigh in, to assist in prioritizing recommendations.

The City and the consulting team worked in collaboration to provide a diversity of opportunities for engagement, to reach the widest possible audience. Multiple formats and methods were employed to the extent possible, and the City website, eblasts, and social media were deployed to notify and provide information to community members.

Input was requested via:

SURVEYS

- Community Survey - May 2022
- Facility User Groups - limited distribution to league/team representatives (see Facility Use Data section in Existing Conditions)

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

- Community Workshop #1 - Vision May 26, 2022
- Community Workshop #2 - Recommendations November 16, 2022

Highlights from these engagement efforts are to follow; detailed summaries of survey and workshop findings can be found in the Appendix.



Community Survey

The Portsmouth, NH Recreational Needs Analysis Online Community Survey kicked off on May 11, 2022 following an eblast from the City of Portsmouth and the Portsmouth Recreation Department, and was closed on July 11, 2022. The survey was also promoted at the first Community Workshop on May 26, 2022. The survey used an online format for response collection, but a paper copy was made available and any responses received via hard copy were entered into the survey response database by the Recreation Department.

There were 303 responses from community members. A full accounting of survey responses can be found in the Appendix; below is a summary of themes and highlights of response data.

SURVEY PERIOD: MAY – JULY 2022

303 RESPONSES

- 92% Portsmouth residents; good geographic representation
- High response rate from families with young children
- 62% walk to local parks; 73% within 0.5 miles of parks

SUBJECTS COVERED

- Facilities and Programs
- Level of Satisfaction
- Suggestions/Recommendations

COMMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- General support for direction of Recreation Department
- Remember Seniors
- Remember Working Families
- Equity: make sure all voices are heard
- Environment: material choices, thoughtful development
- Leverage assets that we have
- Lots of interest in Rail Trail
- A few specific requests for ice rink not to be at Community Campus

Community Survey – Response Highlights

FACILITIES + PROGRAMS

- Most-commented items on Level of Satisfaction:
 - Pickleball
 - Walk/bike paths
 - Pool hours/facilities upgrades
 - Gender Equity
 - Field Facility Improvements
 - Playground Improvements

MOST POPULAR PROGRAMMING

- Major Events, Swimming, Youth Soccer

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

- In general, room for improvement in 'very satisfied/satisfied' responses across all demographics

WHAT RESPONDENTS WANT

Facilities:

- 50+ Responses: Ice Hockey Rink
- 20+ Responses: Splash Pad, Indoor Multi-Sport Facility, Pickleball, Skate Park
- Others: many passive recreation (greenways, water access, biking)

Top 3 Program Suggestions:

- Ice-Related: Hockey, Lessons, Skating
- Tennis
- Organized Pickleball

Community Workshop #1 - May 26, 2022

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 consulting team facilitated work group discussions around the following questions:

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)

WHAT'S WORKING, BUT COULD BE IMPROVED?

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

WHAT'S MISSING?

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

Groups discussed their responses and prioritized them as a group. A summary of responses with highlights and themes is below; a full summary of Workshop #2 can be found in the Appendix.

WHAT IS WORKING WELL?

Youth Programs + Sports
Senior Center
Variety of Programming
General Support of Direction

WHAT'S WORKING, BUT COULD BE IMPROVED?

Priority 1:

- Indoor Courts/Recreation Space
- Maintenance/Operation of Fields

Priority 2:

- Winter Sports Year-Round
- Communication
- Outdoor Pool Hours
- Bike Trails + Paths
- Boat Ramp Programming
- Youth Sports/PHA

Priority 3:

- More Turf Fields
- Senior Programs: access and equity

WHAT'S MISSING?

Priority 1:

- Multi-Sport Complex
- Ice Rink

Priority 2:

- Indoor Turf Training Facility
- Connectivity to Recreation Sites
- Funding for Recreation + Sports

Priority 3:

- Turf Fields



Community Workshop #2 - November 16, 2022

The second (and final) public workshop for the Portsmouth Recreational Needs Study was held on November 16, 2022 at the Community Campus. The focus of the community workshop centered on a presentation of findings from community engagement efforts, data collection and analyses, then offered residents the opportunity to weigh in on preliminary recommendations and prioritize actions the City should focus on first, according to category/topic area. Residents were also asked to contribute a word, phrase or full statement towards the creation of a vision statement.

In a format similar to Workshop #1, following a presentation of initial findings attendees were asked to vote on their top priorities by placing stickers on a collection of themed boards, according to the following Focus Areas:



Below and right: photos of interactive “dot voting” boards. Votes were gathered during Workshop #2. To maximize participation, boards were made available at the Community Campus extending voting by one week following the workshop.



Public Input – Workshop #2 Frequently Requested

INDOOR

- Indoor Ice Rink/Arena (44)
- Multi-Purpose Indoor Sports Complex (31)
- Teen Center (14)
- Indoor Courts: Basketball/Pickleball (11)
- Performance Theater/Amphitheater (8)
- Community Center (7)
- Senior Center (5)

AMENITIES

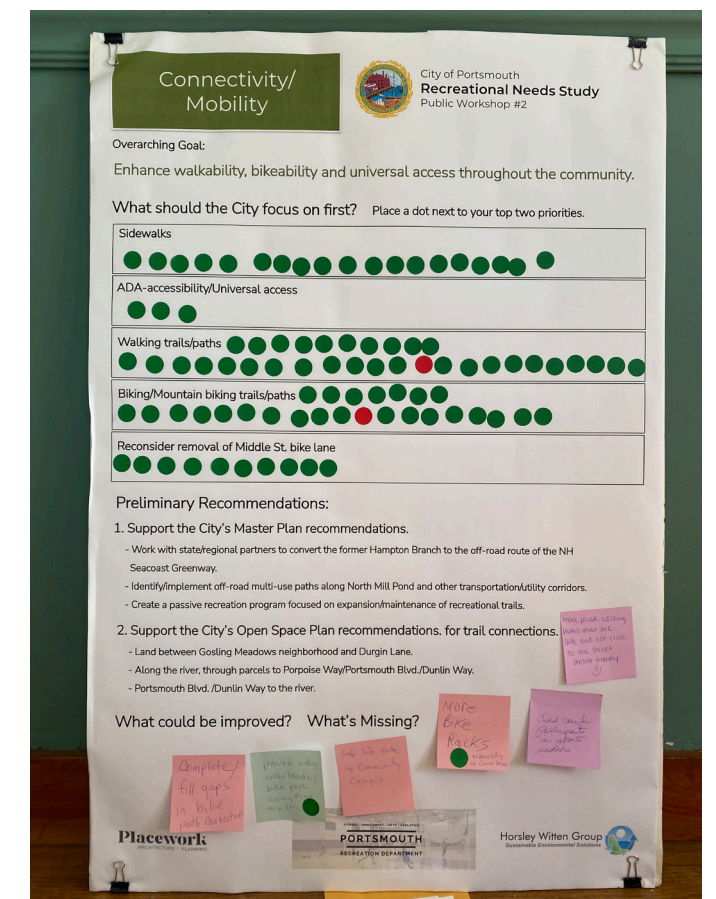
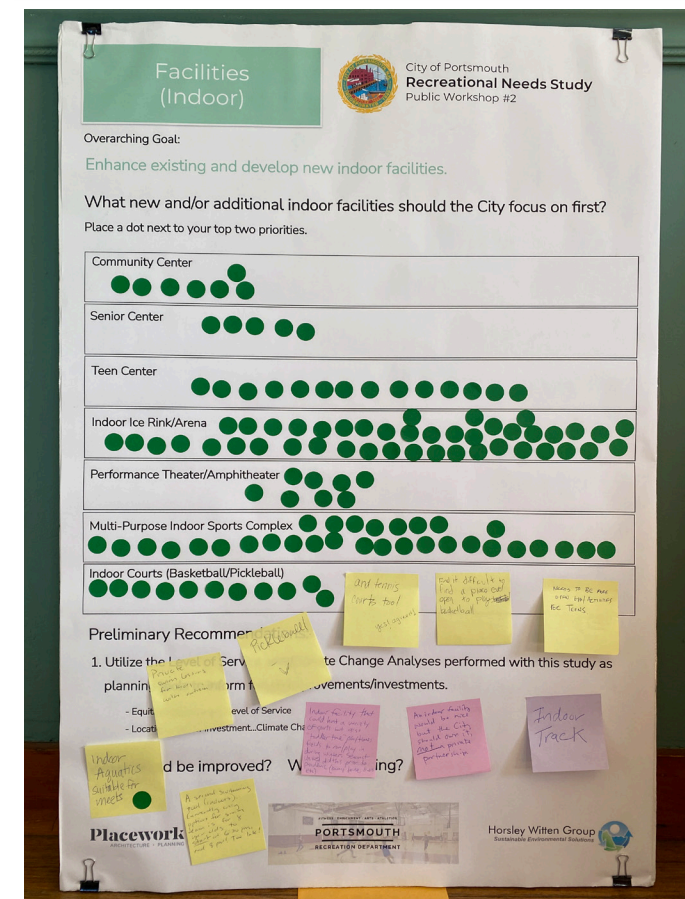
- Restrooms – add/improve
- Playground Equipment improve/replace
- Lighting

OUTDOOR

- Splash Pads (25)
- Synthetic Turf Fields (13)
- Outdoor Pools (12)
- Skate Parks (11)
- Multi-Purpose Fields: Soccer/Football (11)
- Baseball Fields: Adult/Youth (7)
- Basketball Courts (5)
- Tennis Courts (5)

OTHER

- Improve existing first, then add
- Improve connectivity
- Nature/Sustainability focus



Needs Assessment

Using the seven Guiding Principles as a foundation, along with the combination of analysis and community input, the following set of actionable recommendations has been created to serve as a roadmap to guide the future of recreation in Portsmouth. These recommendations are sorted according to the seven Areas of Focus presented and evaluated during the Public Engagement phase. Recommendations are further organized by overarching Strategies, the Goals to attain them, and specific actions to achieve each goal.

Guiding Principles

Prioritize Equitable Access to Recreation for the Health and Wellbeing of All Portsmouth Residents
Examine scheduling, programming, funding structures, geography, and social/environmental factors

Increase Connectivity of Recreational Opportunities

Maximize Capacity of Existing Sites for Recreational Needs
Maintain, enhance, and develop existing sites before expanding to new locations

Increase Interdepartmental Collaboration and Other Partnerships to Benefit Recreation in Portsmouth
Consider collaborations related to use of facilities, funding, and operations amongst City Departments, local nonprofits, other communities, and public-private partnerships

Advance and Expand Passive Recreation

Promote Climate Action, Resilience, and a Healthy Environment

Position Community Campus as the Recreational Hub of Portsmouth
Reinforce and Expand recreational uses at Community Campus; future projects and programs should be considered for location at Community Campus before considering other sites

AREAS OF FOCUS

Community
Engagement +
Communication

Preservation,
Growth +
Stewardship

Connectivity +
Mobility

Facilities

Maintenance +
Stewardship

Programming

Amenities

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

GOAL 1

INCREASE COMMUNICATIONS, FORMALIZE COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING AND PROMOTE THE CITY'S GOAL OF EQUITY AND INCLUSION

STRATEGIES

A Establish and Maintain an Effective Communications Plan

B Formalize communications planning with other City departments

C Promote the City's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion

ACTIONS

- 1 Produce accurate, timely transparent and easy to understand internal and external communications.
- 2 Continue to use and evaluate new technologies that enhance community access to information, including social media platforms (field access app/program signup for mobile phones).
- 3 Develop and distribute a map and resource guide with all parks and open spaces available to the public and list the amenities of each space.
- 4 Establish quarterly or annual 'Meet and Greet' sessions for sports league/organization administrators, coaches and support staff with the Recreation Department, School District Facilities Director and Public Works Division of Parks and Forestry.
- 5 Formalize protocols for field use with athletic user groups and organizations (Memoranda of Agreement) and update regularly (minimum annually):
 - Maintenance responsibilities based on best practices
 - Field closure/reopening policy
 - Equipment, appurtenances replacement or upgrades
- 6 Establish a regular meeting schedule (minimum quarterly) between the Recreation Department, Public Works Division of Parks and Forestry, and School Department Facilities Director to coordinate facility use, program offerings and to identify efficiencies for equipment and personnel crossover.
- 7 Minimize duplication of programs and identify personnel and facility efficiencies (particularly with Health/Library/Senior Services Departments) by continuing to Coordinate with all City departments regularly well in advance of seasonal program offerings to understand new initiatives.
- 8 Consider a management structure to oversee all of the parks and playgrounds in the City (also recommended in Open Space Plan).
- 9 Ensure that programs are conveniently located and geographically accessible utilizing the Level of Service Analysis.
- 10 Periodically assess programs to identify potential barriers to participation and possible solutions (internally and through public engagement).
- 11 Establish scholarship opportunities to families with demonstrated need.
- 12 Update this Needs Analysis every ten years in order to respond to changing trends and demographics.

PRESERVATION, GROWTH AND STEWARDSHIP

GOAL 2

MAINTAIN/ENHANCE EXISTING FACILITIES, EXPAND PROGRAM OFFERINGS AND DEVELOP NEW INDOOR AND OUTDOOR FACILITIES

STRATEGIES

A **FACILITIES (Indoor)**
Provide adequate indoor facilities to support active living programs, services and lifestyles.

B **FACILITIES (Outdoor)**
Provide adequate outdoor facilities to support active living programs, services and lifestyles.

ACTIONS

- 1 Seek creative solutions to meet the community's identified need for the following facilities:
 - Indoor ice rink/arena
 - Multi-purpose sports complex
 - Teen center
 - Indoor courts (basketball/pickleball)
 - Performance theater/Amphitheater
- 2 Conduct economic feasibility and marketing studies to explore the development of new specialty facilities including:
 - Indoor ice rink/arena
 - Multi-purpose sports complex
- 3 Utilize the Level of Service, Climate Change and FEMA Flood Zone Analyses as planning tools to inform future improvements/investments.
- 4 Establish a phased Athletic Fields Capital Improvements Plan. Seek creative solutions to meet the additional need for the following field types in order to address overutilization and the City's limited capacity to rest fields:
 - Multi-purpose/artificial turf field
 - Softball field (s)
 - Baseball field (s)
- 5 Conduct economic feasibility and marketing studies to explore the development of new specialty facilities including:
 - Spray/Splash pads
 - Outdoor ice rink
- 6 Complete a comprehensive site assessment of the City's parks and playgrounds to document existing conditions. Use this to inform and guide the scheduling, design and upgrade of facilities (also recommended by Open Space Plan).
- 7 Pursue opportunities for community gardens at the Senior Center and throughout the City (also recommended by Open Space Plan/Master Plan).
- 8 Develop a master plan for the South Mill Pond Area (also recommended by Open Space Plan).
- 9 Expand natural playground elements at all elementary schools (also recommended by Open Space Plan).
- 10 Support the city-owned properties such as Prescott Park, Peirce Island and Sagamore Creek (also recommended by Master Plan).
- 11 Utilize the Level of Service, Climate Change and FEMA Flood Zone Analyses as planning tools to inform future improvements/investments.

PRESERVATION, GROWTH AND STEWARDSHIP

GOAL 2

MAINTAIN/ENHANCE EXISTING FACILITIES, EXPAND PROGRAM OFFERINGS AND DEVELOP NEW INDOOR AND OUTDOOR FACILITIES

STRATEGIES

C MAINTENANCE + STEWARDSHIP
Develop and implement a Maintenance Management Plan to ensure that maintenance funds are invested in tasks that benefit recreation activities.

D PROGRAMMING
Utilize best practices for the enhancement and implementation of recreation programs.

ACTIONS

- 12 Identify average per-unit maintenance budget costs for parks and facilities, and use as guidance for maintenance budgeting and forecasting when new parks and facilities are brought online. Maintenance unit costs should be established and periodically reviewed for the following:
 - Infrastructure
 - Landscaping
 - Playgrounds
 - Open space
 - Recreation elements
- 13 Establish a life cycle maintenance and replacement program for all athletic fields to extend the life of fields and have the ability to replace or renovate fields once they have reached their useful lives.
- 14 Update maintenance standards on all fields based on agreement with the Recreation Department, Public Works Division of Parks and Forestry and School Department.
- 15 Partner with local schools and community organizations to create a stewardship program (also recommended by Master Plan).
- 16 Define standards and criteria to ensure that the Recreation Department's instructors, educators, and sports coaches are trained and certified. Offer high quality, ongoing training to program providers.
- 17 Establish scholarship opportunities to families with demonstrated need.
- 18 Further evaluate the enhancement of the Recreation Department's program offerings to include/expand:
 - Free play options throughout the City
 - Winter sports offerings
 - Affordable swim lessons
 - Programming for preschoolers, adults and people with disabilities
 - Pickleball lessons/league
 - Tennis lessons
 - Martial arts programming for adults
 - Disc golf
 - Teen programming
- 19 Evaluate the feasibility of extending hours of operation at indoor facilities to meet the needs of working families.

PRESERVATION, GROWTH AND STEWARDSHIP

GOAL 2

MAINTAIN/ENHANCE EXISTING FACILITIES, EXPAND PROGRAM OFFERINGS AND DEVELOP NEW INDOOR AND OUTDOOR FACILITIES

STRATEGIES

E PROGRAMMING
Establish an evaluative system for current programs and the addition of future programs.

F AMENITIES
Enhance, upgrade and/or develop new amenities at existing sites to improve user experience.

ACTIONS

- 20 Utilize a range of methods, such as surveys and questionnaires, to solicit public input for program evaluation and adjustment to align with the annual budget process.
- 21 Regularly evaluate trends in sports and recreation activities and compare to Portsmouth.
- 22 Implement a system to track partner and competitor service delivery to help set targets for the Recreation Department to work with partners. Explore long-term plans of private/non-profits for synergies (PMAC, YMCA, etc.).
- 23 Consider safety at sites as a top priority for improvements, including:
 - Fencing at playgrounds and ballfields
 - Lighting (also to expand length of use)
 - Update playground equipment
 - Noise abatement
- 24 Evaluate the feasibility of adding comfort-related amenities, including:
 - Restrooms
 - Seating/bleachers/benches
 - Picnic areas
 - Parking
- 25 Create an asset management plan to address the replacement of field equipment and appurtenances.
- 26 Evaluate existing field sites and configurations for the incorporation of warm-up areas.

CONNECTIVITY AND MOBILITY

GOAL 3

ENHANCE WALKABILITY, BIKEABILITY AND UNIVERSAL ACCESS THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY

STRATEGIES

A Provide universal access to parks and recreation facilities City-wide.

B Support efforts to expand multi-use trails throughout the City.

ACTIONS

- 1 Conduct site-level accessibility reviews and develop an implementation strategy to remove existing barriers at parks and recreation facilities for people with and without disabilities.
- 2 Provide internal pathways connecting park elements in all parks and recreation facilities.
- 3 Prioritize sidewalk improvements/development that connect residents from residential areas to parks and recreation facilities.
- 4 Work with state/regional partners to convert the former Hampton Branch to the off-road route of the NH Seacoast Greenway (also recommended by Master Plan) and utilize and expand upon it to connect to Community Campus and the future skate park, and other recreational sites.
- 5 Identify/implement off-road, multi-use paths along North Mill Pond and other transportation/utility corridors (Master Plan).
- 6 Create a passive recreation program focused on expansion/maintenance of recreational trails (Master Plan).
- 7 Support efforts to incorporate trail connections throughout the City in accordance with goals of the Open Space Plan.

Site Specific Recommendations

Community Parks

PORTSMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

- Resolve limited parking issues
- Address drainage issues on multi-purpose grass field
 - Artificial turf field anticipated for replacement 2023
- Reconstruct Tennis Courts

PORTSMOUTH INDOOR POOL

- Consider increasing annual City funding of \$150,000 to the special revenue fund for the Indoor Pool, to reflect inflation levels since 2010
- Consider expanding hours of operation to meet the needs of working families and expand opportunities for additional swimming lessons
- Resolve limited parking issues

SOUTH MILL POND AREA

South Mill Pond Playground

- Replace split-rail wood fence at playground
- Replace and update playground
- Add restroom facilities

Central Little League Field

- Formalize MOA with Portsmouth Little League and update seasonally/annually for maintenance responsibilities, field closure/reopening policies, and equipment/appurtenances replacements or upgrades
- Address limited parking issues
- Address the overutilization and limited capacity to rest fields (Athletic Fields Capital Improvements Plan)

LEARY BALL FIELD

- Address limited parking issues
- Upgrade batting cage areas
- Address the overutilization and limited capacity to rest fields (Athletic Fields Capital Improvements Plan)
- Grandstand/bleachers to be replaced 2025 to meet code compliance (concessions).
- Evaluate options and feasibility of flood control measures and drainage improvements

ALUMNI FIELD

- Address the overutilization and limited capacity to rest fields (Athletic Fields Capital Improvements Plan)

DOG PARK

- Add trees to provide additional shade
- Replace/reconfigure fencing for improved safety
- Evaluate feasibility of providing additional amenities for park users

PEIRCE ISLAND

Playground

- Replace playground (high priority) due to age and intensity of use

Boat Launch

- Construct permanent restrooms
- Update docks and launch area

Pool/Bath House

- Aquatics upgrade
- Schedule bath house improvements/upgrades

COMMUNITY CAMPUS

Community Campus – Building + Site

- Conduct feasibility study to prioritize improvements that meet current deficiencies identified in this Needs Analysis.

Campus Drive Athletic Fields

- Complete second field as planned
- Upgrades to grass field

PRESCOTT PARK

Prescott Park

- Continue to support implementation of Prescott Park Master Plan

Four Tree Island

- No recommendations

Neighborhood Parks

DONDERO SCHOOL

- Expand natural playground elements
- Evaluate options and feasibility of flood control measures and drainage improvements

HISLOP FIELD/ATLANTIC HEIGHTS PLAYGROUND

- Expand parking
- Evaluate feasibility of incorporating a dog park
- Address overutilization and limited capacity to rest fields (Athletic Fields Capital Improvements Plan)

LAFAYETTE SCHOOL FIELD/PLAYGROUND

- Address drainage issues on field to extend play
- Identify off-street parking solution
- Evaluate options and feasibility of flood control measures and drainage improvements

LITTLE HARBOUR SCHOOL

- Resolve limited parking issues
- Consider incorporating noise abatement
- Incorporate natural playground elements
- Upgrade multi-purpose field for recreational use
- Address field drainage issues

CLOUGH FIELD

- Add lighting to extend use
- Add irrigation
- Resolve limited parking issues
- Consider incorporating noise abatement
- Expand natural playground elements

MAPLE HAVEN PARK/PLAYGROUND

- No recommendations

NEW FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Schedule improvements to tennis courts
- Add lighting to extend use
- Expand natural playground elements

PANNAWAY PLAYGROUND

- Identify off-street parking solution
- Consider incorporating noise abatement

PORTSMOUTH MIDDLE SCHOOL/CONNIE BEAN CENTER

- Re-evaluate use of Connie Bean Recreation Center as a teen center clarify...what is this trying to say? community campus is (will be) a teen center. Is this recommending not using Connie Bean as a teen center? Or is it saying it needs to be more exclusively a teen center and not be shared with other uses?
- Identify other potential programmable space to be associated with Connie Bean Center for recreational use (either adding to or expanding existing facility in-place)

SPINNAKER POINT RECREATION CENTER

- Resolve limited parking issues (adjust program schedule of high-participation programs)
- Address maintenance deficiencies in advance of 10-yr. lease expiration
- Explore future plans for Spinnaker Point site, including City purchase of facility or relocating programming and facilities to other City recreation sites.

Mini Parks

CATER PARK

- No recommendations

LISTER ACADEMY/SHERBURNE FIELD

- Address the overutilization and limited capacity to rest fields (Athletic Fields Capital Improvements Plan)
- Schedule field improvements

TONY RAHN PARK

- Add lighting to extend use
- Address the over-utilization and limited capacity to rest fields (Athletic Fields Capital Improvements Plan)

PORTSMOUTH PLAINS FIELD/PLAYGROUND

Plains Field

- Formalize MOA with Portsmouth Little League and update seasonally/annually for maintenance responsibilities, field closure/reopening policies, and equipment/appurtenances replacement/upgrade
- Add lighting to extend use
- Address the over-utilization and limited capacity to rest fields (Athletic Fields Capital Improvements Plan)

Playground

- No recommendations

ROCK STREET PARK

- No recommendations

Linear Parks

RAIL TRAIL

- Find opportunities for connections to recreational sites, including Community Campus and future skate park

Playgrounds

SOUTH STREET PLAYGROUND

- No recommendations

PINE STREET PLAYGROUND

- Replace split-rail wooden fence at playground

Historic Parks

GOODWIN PARK

- No recommendations

Special Use Parks

GREENLEAF RECREATION CENTER

- Schedule replacement of fencing
- Evaluate future plans for skatepark and building for recreational use

SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER

- Evaluate feasibility of incorporating community garden space