



# TOWN OF GROTON

CONNECTICUT

## Parks and Recreation Master Plan

### Executive Summary

SUMMER 2009

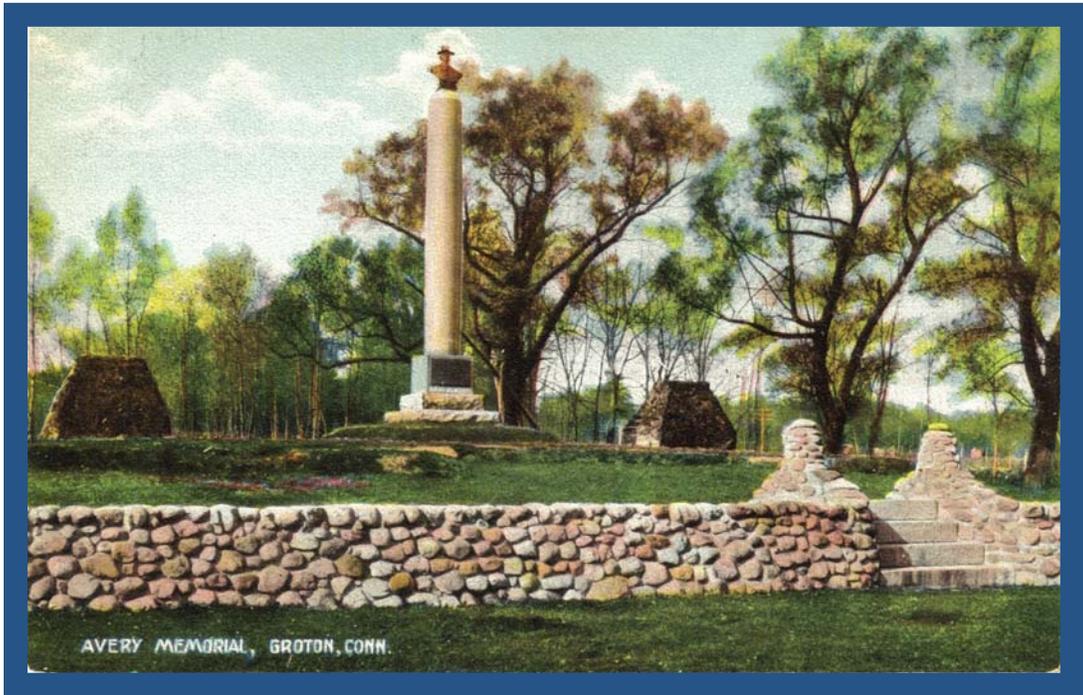
Prepared by







# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EVERY MEMORIAL, GROTON, CONN.

# GROTON PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## MASTER PLAN PURPOSE AND VISION

Parks, trails, recreation facilities, and open space are an integral part of Groton's community fabric, serving to strengthen its structure, culture, image and unique sense of place for residents and visitors. These resources also help define the quality of life. The purpose of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to create a strategy to maximize the quality of life through identifying the community's needs and desires, effective allocation of funding, and prioritized improvements to parks, trails, recreation facilities, and open space. This Master Plan establishes a clear direction, prioritized action plan, and implementation strategies to guide Town staff, advisory committees and elected officials in their efforts to enhance the community's parks and recreation facilities, programs and services.

## PROJECT SUCCESS INDICATORS

At project startup, the consultant team worked with the Department Management, key staff and elected officials to identify the most important outcomes and processes that needed to be accomplished in order to consider this strategic planning effort a success upon completion of the project. The following areas of focus were identified as project goals for the Town of Groton's Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- Address current facility challenges and impacts on services. The Department is highly dependent on athletic fields and indoor facilities that are not under Town ownership, which leaves the Department vulnerable to uncontrollable circumstances which can greatly impact the provision of a number of core services and the revenue associated with these programs.
- Identify the prioritized community needs for facility improvements and development. These needs should provide details on the Town's gaps in services, the types of facilities and amenities needed, as well as the resources needed to operate and maintain these facilities.
- Evaluate the resource needs of the Department. Identify the tools, funding and staffing levels necessary for employees to do their jobs better and provide a higher level of customer service to the community.
- Create a plan that is realistic, identifies priorities and provides an action plan to implement it.
- Engage the community, elected officials and partners in order to gain the buy-in and support necessary to implement the Master Plan upon completion.

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The mission of Groton Parks and Recreation is to provide quality leisure opportunities in a safe and healthy atmosphere and to enhance the quality of life through the responsible management of fiscal and natural resources. To advance this mission, the Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Department is comprised of four Divisions: Recreation, Parks & Forestry (Parks Maintenance), the Senior Center and Shennecossett Golf Course. Administrative services and responsibilities are spread throughout each division. The four Divisions each have a unique role within the Department.

- Administration - is served by the Parks and Recreation Director and associated staff targeted towards the management and administration of the Department. An executive staff of Division Heads provides direct support to the Director and support operations throughout the agency. The Director manages all personnel activities, budgeting, and overall planning within the Department.
- Recreation - the responsibilities of the Division include providing cultural events, instructional programs, sports leagues, trips, fitness activities, inclusive programming, special events and safety programs for residents of all ages and capabilities. The Division also performs fundraising and utilizes many volunteers.
- Parks and Forestry Division - maintains over 68 locations, which includes parks, playgrounds, town grounds, athletic fields, memorials, waterfronts, docks and beaches, trails, cemeteries and open spaces. Some of the wide variety of tasks of this Division includes turf management, hardscape, landscape, tree and shrub care, installation of play struc-

tures, carpentry and construction, along with logistical work for special events.

- Senior Center – the Division’s responsibilities include providing nutrition, health and recreational classes, special events and trips, transportation, information and referral services for Groton residents 55 years and older. The current Senior Center is undergoing an expansion which is expected to be completed by approximately May of 2010.
- Shennecossett Golf Course - responsibilities include maintaining approximately 135 acres of highly manicured fairways, tees and greens and managing the clubhouse operations. The management of the course involves coordinating the grounds maintenance, golf professional staff and restaurant services. Fee structures for the course are reviewed annually, as the course is run as an enterprise fund.

## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

An important component of this Plan is to understand how current and future local demographics affect the parks and recreation program and facility needs, as well as understanding how these are either similar or different from state and national trends. The Town of Groton is located in southeastern Connecticut. The Town’s location on Long Island Sound has influenced the community makeup, being home to the U.S. Navy Submarine Base, Pfizer and shipping industry companies. The presence of the Naval Base has made Groton a younger community than most in the country. However, it is still growing older, which is in step with the nationwide trend of the aging “Baby Boomer” generation. The Town of Groton is rich in employment opportunities. However, in the past when primary employers such as the Naval Base and Electric Boat have cut back on staffing, those cutbacks have impacted local population numbers and the economy; such was the case between 1990 and 2000.

The projected population, however, is expected to grow. Per ESRI Business Solutions data, the population of the Town of Groton is a mature community that is projected to experience slight growth over the next five years, 0.24% for the period 2000-2013. This pace is slower than both the rate of growth for the State of Connecticut (0.41%) and the United States (1.23%). By 2013, Groton’s population is projected to be 41,197, approximately 4,000 less than the high of 1990. Of that 2013 population, the projected median age is 34.4 years, which is younger than the national (37.7years) and State (40.5 years) median ages. Relative to the state and the country, the Town of Groton’s median household income is \$71,506, compared to the state of Connecticut at \$82,941 and to the country at \$64,042.

## GROTON COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The focus groups and public meeting made it clear that the stakeholders, users and the general public are all extremely appreciative of the programs and facilities that are offered in the area, and recognize that the Parks and Recreation Department is doing a great job. The groups agreed upon several strengths, such as the broad diversity of programs offered and the equally broad range of users, as well as the dedication of staff necessary to program activities for such a wide variety of users. The majority of weaknesses identified were regarding facilities or other physical factors, such as the need for more swimming facilities and ballfields as demand exceeds current capacity; additional boating access is necessary as well as improvements to existing facilities at Spicer Park; a centralized, multi-use indoor/outdoor recreation facility is desired by many, however obtaining funding may be a challenge as it has been in the past. Lack of transportation options for those who cannot or chose not to drive was identified numerous times as a weakness; which includes a lack of public transportation and safe bicycle and pedestrian routes to facilities.

Many opportunities are just the flip side of challenges. For example, the focus groups identified Copp property as a prime opportunity to fill some of the gaps in facility needs, with a suggestion of using this as the location for a multi-use recreation center, including programming for performing arts/theatre groups. Other opportunities identified include: the potential of an interconnected trail system to provide bicycle access and to link various facilities, as well as programming for youth that is less structured and less sports focused (such as nature based, theater, music, etc). Some items identified in the focus groups and public meeting that could be a threat include a perceived imbalance of where funding goes geographically. For example, there were concerns that the Mystic area receives more than their fair share of funding, to the detriment of other areas. Other threats were identified as a perceived lack of public initiative to support funding for programs or facilities, the need to increase physical activity and non-sports related programming among youth, and Department budget decreases due to the current economic condition and potentially because of the staff’s historical ability to do more with less.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

The Town of Groton is a stable and affluent community that puts a high value on the quality and availability of parks and recreation facilities and programs. The respondents to this survey are adamantly in support of the Parks and Recreation Department and are willing to offer constructive suggestions along with effusive praise for the Department staff and programs. The respondents support a large aquatics center that would offer recreational opportunities year-round, as well as a community center that would offer programming space for classes and fitness programs. They envision an expanded network of trails connecting the park facilities, which would provide an opportunity to increase pedestrian and bicycle access to the parks. Significant to the Town's capabilities of providing for these identified needs, the community is willing to support the Department financially.

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ANALYSIS

Groton Parks and Recreation provides a very high number and variety of recreation services and activities in comparison to other agencies of its size through the entire country. During the public input period of the project, existing and potential recreation partners, program participants and facility users expressed their high satisfaction with the current offering of programs and services. Yet, there were also requests for additional programming for specific demographic groups, such programs for youth. It was stated that there is a need for additional non-traditional programming to provide for the wide variety of interests of the Groton youth, such as extreme sports, fitness, environmental education, and cultural and arts programs. Stakeholders and residents felt that one-time day trips or "sample" activities might better serve to introduce youth to new activities, educational experiences and a healthy lifestyle.

The primary and strongest message heard throughout the public input process from staff, stakeholders and elected officials was concern that the Town's existing facilities are limited in providing for additional sports and athletic programs. The Department currently partners with community athletic leagues to provide a fairly high number of programs and leagues to the current community. Yet, the Department and partners could be offering even more if the Department had the funding to support the development of facilities in strategic or a centralized location(s) to provide aquatics, additional diamond (baseball and softball) and multi-use fields (soccer, lacrosse, and football). In recent years, the Town has also seen an increased demand and interest in growing activities, such as soccer and softball.

## PARK AND RECREATION TRENDS

In order to assist Americans in choosing healthy, active lifestyles, park and recreation agencies must provide a variety of active options and methods in which participants can become engaged, and they must stay on top of activity trends in order to prevent loss of interest or relevancy. It is a tall order, but given today's obesity epidemic, park and recreation agencies have the opportunity to combat this crisis. Connecticut is doing much better than the rest of the nation, as measured by its 3rd lowest obesity rate. However, given the state of the nation, improvement is still needed.

Getting youth engaged and keeping them engaged, especially more difficult with girls, is a critical component to recreation programming across the nation. Bringing in new "extreme" sport activities and activities that bridge the computer virtual world with an active real world experience as well as providing after school, team-based activities not only foster good physical activity habits, but good social habits as well. It is important to recognize that extra effort to reach out to girls to encourage participation in team sports will likely be necessary.

Combined pressure from both traditional forms of recreation use (i.e. - trails, swimming, fitness walking, picnicking, etc.) and new activities (i.e. - climbing, specialized bicycling niches, snowboarding, technological interactive, etc.) will likely create conflicts between user groups and competition for resources. Current generations have high expectations and desires for a comprehensive recreation experience, increasing the need for programs, facilities and infrastructure. The slow rate of growth in Connecticut offers some reprieve from the pressures that faster growing parts of the country are experiencing, but demographic changes, a fast-aging population in the Northeast and a shifting population due to migration will all play a role in shaping the parks and recreation programming and facility demands of the Town of Groton and the surrounding area.

Large, multi-purpose regional centers, with a wide variety of amenities to serve all ages, are a current national trend in park and

recreation facilities. Through the community input focus groups and interviews process, residents strongly expressed a desire for this type of facility, specifically with both indoor (i.e. – aquatics, meeting rooms, and theater) and outdoor components (i.e. – athletic fields, etc.). A multi-use recreation facility can often help an agency increase cost recovery, promote retention and encourage cross-use. Other facilities and park types that are becoming more common include BMX tracks, skate parks, climbing walls, dog parks, cultural arts facilities, nature centers and natural areas and indoor walking tracks.

## FUNDING, BUDGET & BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS

### FUNDING AND BUDGET ANALYSIS

Despite current economic challenges, the Town has enjoyed fairly steady economic circumstances, due the areas large regional employers (Pfizer, Electric Boat and the Naval Base) and a 2006 general real estate reevaluation. The Town's adopted budget for FY 2009 is \$118,024,114. The FY 2009 budget represents a 3.0% increase (\$3,486,160) over the FY 2008 Adopted/Adjusted budget. The Town Operations portion of the budget incorporates Town Departments, including the Community Services which acts as the umbrella over the Parks and Recreation Department and Groton Public Library. The allocation of funds to Community Services, which includes Parks and Recreation, falls well below that of Education Services (60.1%), Public Works (6.8%), and Public Safety (5.4%). Groton Parks and Recreation Department's FY 2009 budget is \$2,452,551, which is a 3.2% decrease (\$78,482) from FY 2008. Funding for Parks and Recreation has fluctuated significantly over the past four years.

Currently, the entire Department has an average cost recovery level of 25%, based on user fees, recreation programming and rental revenues (does not include donations and escrow funds). Dr. John Crompton from Texas A & M, a leading educator and researcher on the benefits and economic impact of leisure services, indicates that the national average is around 34% cost recovery. The Department has achieved a steady increase in revenue, which illustrates the success of the Department. However, cost recovery has not increased due to equally growing expenses associated with maintenance materials and utilities costs.

Considering the Town's large number of parks and facilities, increasing costs for utilities and maintenance, as well as the growing demand for programs and services, it would be expected that there would be a steadily growing budget to support these services and increasing costs. However, the Department has about the same amount of funding in 2009 as they did in 2005 (\$2,500,000). Furthermore, Capital Improvement funds have fluctuated significantly over the past five years from \$200,000 (FYE 2006), peaking at \$550,000 (FYE 2007), decreasing to \$170,000 (FYE 2008) and again declining to \$155,000 (FYE 2009). As the community continues to grow, diversify and age, it will be increasingly important to focus on and fund quality of life amenities that provide for the health, well-being and contribute to the economic development of the community. Despite the growth of the park and recreation amenities and facilities owned by the Town, the funding allocation to maintain and add amenities to those facilities has remained stagnant.

### BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS

The Town of Groton was compared to five other communities in Connecticut. Relative to parks and recreation acreage, Groton manages a significant amount of parks acreage (1,062 parks acres), calculating to 26.10 acres per thousand residents. This figure is well above NRPA guidelines that indicate a ratio of 6.25 (minimum) to 10.5 (optimal) acres per thousand. In regard to parks and facilities, Groton has the highest number of parks of polled agencies. However, when looking at active spaces (sports fields), the Town athletic field calculation (8) is well below all agencies benchmarked. Regarding indoor facilities, Groton and New Britain are the only agencies that do not have a dedicated community center. Groton has one indoor pool available for use, the Mystic Education Center, which results in a ratio of 1:40,686. This ratio ranks poorly when compared to the average of the five agencies benchmarked (1: 10,769).

Groton's full-time employee numbers equate to one employee per 1,376 residents. Groton's ratio is higher than the average of all benchmarked agencies (1,905). The maintenance budget for Groton (\$733,734 not including golf operations) is well below the three agencies that reported an annual maintenance budget (East Hartford, New Britain and Newington) when gauged against a per population ratio. Groton's average capital budget over the past five years was \$268,750, which by comparison is significantly lower than the average of \$475,000.

## DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Department is comprised of four divisions: Recreation Services, Parks & Forestry (parks maintenance), the Senior Center and Shennecossett Golf Course. In addition, Administration is a primary work area within the Department. The Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Department has a total of 30.75 full-time employees across five primary work areas. Department data also indicates that the agency employs part time/seasonal employees in different areas of operations, as well as contractual workers that perform various functions. The Town's largest user of part-time/seasonal and contractual employees is Recreation Services with over 150 part-time staff. Included in this number are lifeguards, summer camp staff, class instructors and others.

The Department's general structure of established Division heads for Parks and Forestry, Recreation, Golf and the Senior Center is in-line with similar agencies throughout the country. An area of concern may be that there are currently two vacant managing positions in the Parks Division, as well as the fact that the Manager of Recreation Services organizes and provides inter-division coordination versus having an Assistant Director do so. Relative to community interaction, the Department makes great efforts to maintain and build effective partnerships with external affiliated leagues and groups. A challenge appears to be how the Town coordinates with the City of Groton and other sub-areas within the Town (Mystic, Noank, etc.). The public and stakeholders commented that the agency provides a great selection of youth and sports programming. While this may be the case, community input also revealed that there is a strong desire for additional facilities that can accommodate more indoor program space. The new Senior Center will be a welcome addition to the facility inventory, but it is important to recognize that it will only meet the needs of a niche portion of the community. Analysis of athletic fields, parks and Shennecossett Golf Course reveal that areas are well-maintained, although many turf areas are used quite heavily. However many of these facilities are aging and are in need of updating and renovations.

To meet future programming demand, the agency needs to be ready to meet new challenges and opportunities. Trends in both passive and active recreation and finding ways to engage and reach the public have changed in the recent past. Recommended actions regarding programs and activities can only be implemented if the Department is ready to meet public demand and finding new methods to provide services as the community continues to age and diversify.

## PARKS AND FORESTRY

Maintenance crews are set up to provide roving maintenance throughout the Town's parks and recreation system, which equates to 1,570 acres (1,851 including additional Town-owned lands). The Division also maintains the Town tree canopy; public grounds (Town Hall, Annex, etc.) open spaces, 13 cemeteries and 15 schools, which are maintained via contract with an outside company. The contract is managed by the Parks Foreman. Specific to the parks and recreation system, the crews maintain the following park amenities:

- Three (3) boat docks (1 true dock and 2 ramps)
- 17 playgrounds
- Esker Point Beach
- Two (2) pavilions
- Approximately 20 miles of trail on Town-owned lands

The Division maintains its park facilities to a very high level in comparison to other agencies throughout the country. However, the maintenance Division is stretched thin with the amount of grounds it must manage or maintain. The Division's acre to staff ratio (69:1) is very high when compared to industry norms (20:1) and best practice agencies (12:1). This is in part due to the Division's charge to maintain all Town-owned grounds. This takes the focus away from maintaining recreation and parklands that need attention and specialized care. Prioritizing maintenance areas is something the Division should consider. Utilizing the data provided in the Inventory and Mapping Analysis Section of the report, the Division should use the assigned maintenance scores to classify and "grade" the parks based upon the amount of resources necessary to maintain the facilities. The level does not reflect the importance of a property, merely the level of play, visitors and programs that occur.

Division budget numbers have decreased substantially in the areas of operations and maintenances. Department supplies and equipment budgets decreased by over \$100,000 in 2008; impacting the Division's capabilities to continue to provide the high level of maintenance the community has come to expect and possibly affecting long-term conditions in parks and recreation areas. Recreation

management indicates that the Department has written maintenance standards, including directives on how to mow specific types of turf, when to clean restrooms, and how to check and maintain playground areas, for example. The standards need to be widely distributed and updated as conditions and facilities are added to the inventory.

## INVENTORY AND CONDITIONAL ANALYSIS

The Groton parks and recreation system is composed of a wide variety of sites and facilities in four principal categories:

1. Protected and un-programmed open space parcels containing woodlands, old farm fields, ponds, and wetlands with unimproved trails (Natural Resource Areas),
2. Community parks that include athletic facilities, picnic areas, playgrounds, and unique amenities like a skate park and town beach,
3. Indoor facilities that provide specific programmed amenities such as courts, classrooms and indoor special use areas,
4. Neighborhood parks and school grounds.

The system provides a diverse selection of amenities through the variety in size and programming at each facility. The adjacent parks, Poquonnock Plains and Sutton Park provide the largest concentration of amenities, including athletic fields, a skatepark, picnic shelters, playgrounds and restroom facilities. The smaller parks also play an important role in the system by serving the neighborhoods which surround them. These smaller parks generally include open turf, wooded natural areas and amenities like picnic tables, benches and playgrounds. Some also include asphalt courts and backstops. Overall, the Groton park system provides a diverse range of active and passive green spaces available for public use.

Groton residents also benefit from facilities and open space owned and maintained by State, Federal and private entities. Two interconnected state parks provide more 1,000 acres of coastal open space, and approximately 30 coastal access points are state designated. The Naval Base operates recreation facilities and programs for Navy personnel who mostly reside in the Town and two local land trusts own properties with trails that are open to the public. Indoor programs are conducted at a vacated elementary school, the Groton Senior Center and the state-owned Mystic Education Center facility.

## LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) ANALYSIS

Overall, the Town of Groton is above the maximum recommended level of service within the NRPA guidelines on acres per 1,000 (at 10.68 acres/1000), when only counting Mini, Neighborhood and Community parks. However, with the inclusion of the Natural Resource Areas and Special Use Parks, the number is significantly above the maximum service level recommended by NRPA. Continued collaboration and coordination with the School District will also assist in keeping this number above the recommended level of service well into the future. See Tables 12.1 through 12.1B in the full report, for a detailed breakdown of the level of service levels in each category.

The NRPA strictly evaluates Mini, Neighborhood and Community level parks for level of service. Within these categories, the Town of Groton is currently below the recommended level of service in Mini parks, but above in Neighborhood parks and within the level of service recommendations for Community parks. Many of the Neighborhood Parks may however serve the purpose of the mini parks, balancing the discrepancy in service. Consideration for acquisition and/or development of smaller local parks in areas lacking neighborhood or mini park facilities should be considered in order to balance the level of service with smaller parks across the geographic area of Town. Additionally, development of existing community parks to include programmed spaces in conjunction to natural areas will increase the LOS to the community.

Based on the surplus of acreage within the Town of Groton system, additional land acquisitions are not necessary to meet the NRPA guidelines on acres per 1,000 residents. However, in order to provide the recommended level of service to Groton residents, the development of programmed assets such as athletic fields and courts, playgrounds and picnic pavilions are needed to fill the gap in service for these facilities and should occur on lands already owned by the Town of Groton. Careful consideration of these properties for environmental sensitive areas and preservation as well as opportunities for the provision of programmable asset development will be extremely important to increasing the Level of Service provided to the community..

## AREAS OF FOCUS

### Capital Improvement Priorities

Focus group participants, staff, and survey respondents all shared significant concerns about the need for additional programmed parks and active recreation facilities. The number one need for programs facilities and services identified through the community survey is an indoor pool and aquatic center, followed by community-wide trails and a multi-purpose recreation center. Capital improvements and facility development is critical to addressing the capacity and functional limitations of existing parks and indoor facilities. Furthermore, capital investments are necessary to address the community's concerns about safe and accessible bike and pedestrian routes to parks and facilities. It will be extremely important to prioritize these capital improvements and allocate funding to address these facility needs which most largely contribute to Groton's quality of life.

Based on the existing Level of Service and the Town's significant shortfalls in the provision of specific park and recreation amenities (i.e. – Tennis, Volleyball, Baseball/Softball, Football, Soccer, Swimming Pool, Running Track, Playgrounds and Picnic Pavilions) the Town needs to develop facilities. Groton has significant amount of undeveloped Town-owned lands. The use of these facilities for the provision of these lacking amenities would eliminate the cost associated with acquisition and greatly improve the Level of Service provided to the community.

### Traditional and Alternative Funding

The Town of Groton has many aging park and recreation facilities in need of renovations and repairs. With the recent decline in the economy and the Department's stagnant operations and maintenance dollars over the past four years, it is going to become increasingly important the Department identify and establish new and steady funding sources. The Department needs to focus on setting itself up to gain more traditional funding, such as through a dedicated percent property tax or the establishment of a benefit assessment district.

In addition to increasing traditional funding, it will be important for the Department to actively seek monies from alternative funding sources. The Department will need to continue its efforts to obtain grants, donations, and sponsorships in order to provide for the sustainability of the agency. Additionally, these actions need to be supported by the Town Council and RTM in order to provide the matching funds in order to obtain these funds. The Town's highest priority for implementing this Master Plan will have to be identifying and obtaining ways to invest in and fund desired and expected quality of life amenities.

### Increase Partnerships and Collaborations

The Groton Parks and Recreation Department has done a great job partnering with community organizations and nonprofits to provide services and minimize duplication of efforts. It will be extremely important that the Department continue its philosophy of strong communication and partnerships with other service providers and work to formalize these partnerships through contractual agreements.

Throughout the public input process, it was stressed that the most feasible strategy for expansion of services and development of facilities will be through collaborative efforts between the City of Groton, the Groton School District, the private sector and nonprofit organizations. There is an increasingly successful trend for park and recreation departments to sell the naming rights of facilities to private businesses as well as partner with schools on adjacent land so indoor and outdoor amenities can be shared for usage, capital expenditure, operational costs, scheduling, etc. and each partner increases their value and benefits more efficiently. Groton should continue to research and investigate these types of opportunities in order to increase the LOS within the community.

### Revenue Generation and Cost Recovery

In discussions with the staff and Parks and Recreation Commission it became evident that the existing policy may not provide the Department the full capability of utilizing excess revenue from one program to support other programs. It is in the Department's best interest to evaluate the existing pricing strategies and develop a cost recovery philosophy and goals for each division that truly reflects the values placed on parks and recreation services by the community, each program's benefits to community, as well as provide for the sustainability of the Department.

## INTRODUCTION

Another major challenge for the Department in generating significant revenue is the lack of a large regional facility that can support large special events and/or tournaments. These types of activities can attract visitors from throughout the state and region and often have significant impact on the local economy through lodging and retail spending, in addition to support the revenue of the Department.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Master Plan Goals

- Evaluate the resource needs of the Department. Identify the tools, funding, and staffing levels necessary for employees to do their jobs effectively and provide a high level of customer service to the community.
- Address current facility challenges and impacts on services. The Department is highly dependent on athletic fields and indoor facilities that are not under Town ownership, which leaves the Department vulnerable to uncontrollable circumstances which can greatly impact the provision of core services and the associated revenue.
- Identify the prioritized community needs for facility improvements and development. These needs should provide details on the Town's gaps in services, the types of facilities and amenities needed, as well as the resources needed to operate and maintain these facilities.
- Create a plan that is realistic, identifies priorities and provides an action plan to implement it.
- Engage the community, elected officials and partners in order to gain the buy-in and support necessary to implement the Master Plan upon completion.

### Agency Resources and Customer Service

Goal 1: Improve the management and procedures within the department to increase efficiency and promote implementation of the Master Plan.

Objective 1.1: Integrate the priority recommendations of this Master Plan into the Department's and Staff's annual Goals and Objectives.

Goal 2: Maintain and Improve the Department's service to the public

Objective 2.1: Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the department through education and the appropriate resources for every member of the staff.

Objective 2.2: Maintain and foster cooperative and collaborative efforts to maximize resources and funds so as to expand programs and services in order to meet growing demands.

Objective 2.3: Expand the marketing and distribution of Department information to the public in order to facilitate an increase of participation and interest in the facilities and programs.

### Recreation Programming

Goal 3: Providing programs and activities to serve the needs of the Groton community.

Objective 3.1: Maintain the quality of program offerings while adapting to changing trends and interests for a diverse and comprehensive selection of options for all ages and interests.

Objective 3.2: Coordinate with alternative providers and partners to minimize overlap in programming.

## Facilities

Goal 4: Meet Groton's growing community needs for facility improvements and development.

Objective 4.1: Improve the access to facilities through the development of pedestrian and bicycle pathways

Objective 4.2: Decrease department dependency on athletic fields and facilities that are not under the Town's ownership or control to meet programming needs.

Objective 4.3: Work to balance the preservation of open space with the development of facilities on Town-owned land in order to meet the recreation needs of the community.

Objective 4.4: Develop new facilities which are complementary to the Town's existing park and recreation system.

Objective 4.5: Increase the level of service for the entire system through improvements to existing facilities.

## Organization, Management and Staffing

Goal 5: Evaluate pricing policies and increase department cost recovery

Objective 5.1: Develop policies and procedures for documenting program and task-specific costs, revenue and cost recovery.

Goal 6: Maintain and improve the level of maintenance at all parks and facilities.

Objective 6.1: Provide staff with the tools to appropriately and effectively maintain all park and recreation facilities in the system.

## Funding

Goal 7: Identify potential funding sources

Objective 7.1: Investigate Potential Traditional Funding Sources

Objective 7.2: Pursue Alternative Funding Sources

Objective 7.3: Investigate and implement partnership opportunities to reduce costs or share expenses for the development of new facilities or programs, or in order to sustain existing facilities and programs.

Please also see the Recommendations and Action Plan Section of the full report for more information and details for the strategies, prioritization, strategy leaders and estimated costs.



