



# *All For One, Fun For All!*

Bethlehem's Parks and Recreation  
Comprehensive Master Plan

November 2015



# Acknowledgements

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# I. Executive Summary

## Purpose of this Plan

The Town of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan is intended to help meet the needs of current and future residents by positioning Bethlehem to build on the community's unique parks and recreation assets and identify new opportunities. The citizen-driven plan establishes a clear direction to guide town staff, advisory committees, and elected officials in their efforts to enhance the community's parks and recreation services and facilities.

To create a greater awareness for the planning process and encourage citizen participation, the Project Team developed a project tag line and logo – *"All for one, fun for all!"*



## Planning Process Summary

A project team, which included Town staff and representatives of the Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation, has guided this project. This team provided input to the consultant team throughout the planning process. This collaborative effort creates a plan that fully utilizes the consultants' expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only community members can provide. The project consisted of the following tasks:

### Community Engagement

- Review of previous planning efforts and Town historical information.
- Extensive community involvement effort including focus groups, meetings with key stakeholders, and a community-wide public meeting.
- Review of community survey conducted by the Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation.
- Online community engagement website – MindMixer/mySidewalk.

### Facility Inventory

- Inventory of parks and facilities using existing mapping, staff interviews, and on-site visits to verify amenities and assess the condition of the facilities and surrounding areas.

### Level of Service Analysis

- Interviews with staff to provide information about park and recreation facilities and services, along with insight regarding the current practices and experiences of the Town in serving its residents and visitors.
- Identification of alternative providers of recreation services to provide insight regarding the market opportunities in the area for potential new facilities and services.
- Analysis addressing recreation, parks, natural resources, and related services.



## **Assessment and Analysis**

- Review and assessment of relevant plans.
- Measurement of the current delivery of service for park and recreation facilities using the Level of Service Analysis and allowing for a target level of service to be determined that is both feasible and aligned with the desires of citizens as expressed through public input.
- Exploration of finance and funding mechanisms to support development and sustainability within the system.

## **Needs Assessment**

- Consideration of the profile of the community and demographics, including population growth.
- Research of trends related to Bethlehem, the Capital Region, and American lifestyles to help guide the efforts of Parks and Recreation over the next several years.

## **Operational and Marketing Analysis**

- Analysis of departmental programming and service delivery.
- Facilitation of an organizational Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis.
- Development of a broad assessment of the overall parks and recreation operations.

## **Recommendations: Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan**

- Identification and categorization of recommendations into themes with goals, objectives, and an action plan for implementation.
- Development of an action plan for capital improvements including cost, funding source potentials, and timeframe to support the implementation of the plan.

## **Key Issues Summary**

During the initial stages of the project, the following Key Issues were identified for focus:

### **Organizational:**

- Provide better marketing and communication of activities and facilities.
- Increase staffing for programming and future facilities operations.
- Increase maintenance staffing to keep up with quality of service and demand.
- Review current athletic field allocation policy and update.

### **Programs and Service Delivery:**

- Increase programming for families, seniors, and teens.
- Increase programs in wellness/fitness, cultural, and special needs.
- Increase the number of art and music events in parks.
- Develop outdoor/adventure-based/environmental program offerings.
- Increase aquatic opportunities (pool and river front).
- Explore opportunities to develop non-traditional sports programs.



### Facilities and Amenities:

- Maintain and improve existing facilities.
- Renovate and update Elm Avenue Park Pool Complex.
- Develop connectivity of neighborhoods and parks.
- Meet future population demands through additional recreation facilities.
- Make needed repairs and updates to the Henry Hudson Park.
- Explore opportunities to develop mountain biking trails.
- Explore an outdoor amphitheater/special events venue.
- Explore opportunities for on leash dog access to select parks.
- Update ADA Transition Plan.
- Explore the establishment of a network of community gardens.
- Make repairs to the Fit Trail and replace outdated fitness equipment.
- Replace the playground at Elm Avenue Park.
- Consider redesign of Elm Avenue Park.
- Explore shade options in parks and at athletic fields.



### Level of Service (LOS):

- Identify gaps that are in need of service-based LOS.
- Verify other service providers are not filling gaps in service.
- Develop LOS criteria for catchment areas and acreage by population.

### Finance:

- Employ equitable user fees.
- Explore funding options that provide dedicated revenue for parks and recreation.
- Pursue grant opportunities.

### Key Level of Service (LOS) Analysis Findings:

- There is a wide variety of well-distributed recreational opportunities, with the noted exception of the north-south corridor between Magee Park, Colonial Acres Golf Course, and Maple Ridge Park. Additional islands without nearby park resources are created due to major roadways and varying topographic and environmental resource areas, including the neighborhoods south of North Bethlehem Park.
- The park system is well supplemented by distribution of Bethlehem Central School District properties, which provide playground equipment and recreation fields/courts for basketball, tennis, baseball, etc. Recreational fields are available to Town residents outside of school hours and scheduled events.
- The majority of park properties are small (3 to 22 acres), compared to Elm Avenue Park (160 acres), Henry Hudson Park (56 acres), and Moh-He-Con-Nuck Nature Preserve (55 acres).
- Overall connectivity within and between parks is limited, and the Town should focus on investment in the bicycle and pedestrian network that provides access to the Town parks. This would greatly improve park-to-park and neighborhood-to-park connections.
- Residential areas with lower level of service tend to be on the edges of the Town limits, tend to be adjacent to industrial property or farmland, and/or have a relatively low population density.



- Environmental, cultural, and historic resources exist throughout the community; however, beyond Moh-He-Con-Nuck Nature Preserve, few Town Park areas are dedicated to passive recreational interests of the community. However, the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, with several nature preserves in Town, along with the Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail, provide passive recreational opportunities.
- The Town has nearly ten miles of riverfront; however, public access is limited to a single access point at Henry Hudson Park.

## Inventory Assessment Summary

- Most parks are in excellent condition; maintenance is generally great, but a few locations have aged significantly.
- Elm Avenue Park pools, playground, office building, and maintenance structures need major repairs, upgrades, or replacement.
- Turf throughout the park system is of high quality, with some attention needed to help with drainage and erosion in playing field areas and non-playing field areas.
- There is a good variety of neighborhood and regional parks throughout the Town, as well as number of alternative service providers.
- Most parks do not incorporate cultural or historical aspects of the community, beyond specialty parks.
- The dog park is heavily used and exhibits wear and tear.

## Recommendations

The following Goals, Objectives, and Action Items are drawn from the public input, inventory, level of service analysis, findings feedback, and all of the information gathered during the master planning process, with a primary focus on maintaining, sustaining, and improving Town of Bethlehem parks, recreation, and greenways/trails. A complete table of Goals, Objectives, and Action Items with estimated costs and prioritization are included in the Master Plan.

### Goal 1: Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies

#### Objective 1.1 – Maintain and increase a level of service quality to citizens.

The Town of Bethlehem currently does not have an established Level of Service (LOS) Standard of acres of park land per 1,000 persons. Based on the 2015 data, the Town has 326 acres of park land and a population of 34,110 that results in a 9.55 acres per 1,000 persons LOS. At a minimum, the Town should establish a LOS at 10 acres per 1,000 persons and seek to maintain that standard as the population grows. A review of the NRPA's 2015 Field Report shows that the Town of Bethlehem would rank in the top percentage for like sized communities for acres per 1,000 population. Establishing a LOS Standard should be directed through the Town's Comprehensive Plan and with community input. Additionally, the Town should adopt an LOS Standard that establishes a walkable level of service of 0.5 mile from parks, greenways, and trails. Since school districts and non-profits provide various recreational opportunities, their facilities should be included as resources to achieve the LOS Standard. As new development occurs, the Parks and Recreation Department, working in coordination with the Planning Department and Planning Board, should look for opportunities for additional land acquisitions and reservations for open space and parks.



There is a gap in service located along the north-south corridor between Magee Park, Colonial Acres Golf Course, and Maple Ridge Park. Use of the parkland reservation requirements pursuant to the Town Subdivision Regulations §103-29 and Town Zoning Law §128-57 should be considered in this location and other locations as residential development is proposed and under review by the Town Board and/or Planning Board.

**Objective 1.2 – Enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding Department activities and services.**

The Parks and Recreation Department should develop a Marketing Plan (including improved use of social media) that will guide its efforts in communicating and promoting its activities and facilities. This should include all the recommendations in the Master Plan for programs, services, and facility upgrades which will serve to improve awareness. The Marketing Plan should be updated every five years and include marketing strategies that incorporate the efforts of partner departments and projects.

The marketing and communication of Parks and Recreation Department activities should be enhanced with a focused effort opening lines of communication and meeting with partners and potential partners within the community.

**Objective 1.3 – Provide improved signage Town-wide to make it easier for patrons to find and use parks, facilities, and trails.**

The Parks and Recreation Department should evaluate directional and wayfinding signage to facilities on roadways, trails, and within parks. The Department should enhance and update existing park signs as parks are renovated. Improved wayfinding signage will contribute to a greater connectivity of parks and facilities.

**Objective 1.4 – Maintain existing facilities and amenities.**

There was an overwhelming public response to make sure that Parks and Recreation maintains and improves existing facilities. The Department should continue to improve and upgrade existing facilities and amenities as well as address low-scoring components through the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). The Department should develop a Cyclical Maintenance Program to ensure consistent application of maintenance standards and cost efficiencies.

**Objective 1.5 – Improve access to athletic fields.**

The Department should review the current field allocation policy and update it based on demand, residency, and equitable scheduling. As part of the review, the Department should consider user groups' needs.

**Objective 1.6 – Increase appropriate partnerships and collaborations within the community.**

The Town of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department currently partners with a number of agencies to provide programs and activities to the community. The Department should continue to explore additional opportunities as well as build on its existing partnerships. Where not already in place, the Department should ensure that all existing and future partnerships are accurately portrayed in a signed partnership agreement (Sample Partnership Policy can be found in **Appendix D**).

The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to work collaboratively with other Town departments to achieve goals and objectives and, as opportunities arise, expand to include other departments as appropriate. To ensure that efficiencies are benefiting each department, continuous communications and an annual review are essential.



**Objective 1.7 – Staff appropriately to meet current demand and maintain established levels of service.**

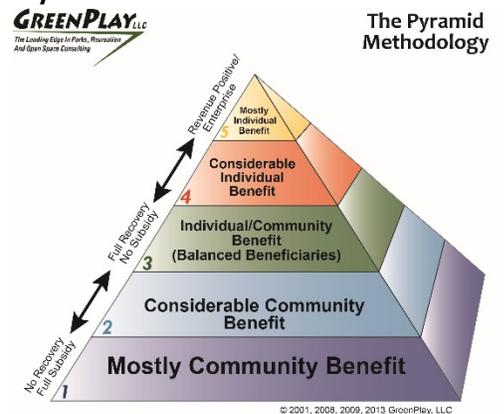
As recommendations in the Master Plan for programs, services, and facility upgrades are implemented, it is important to maintain staffing levels to uphold current performance standards. This will require the addition of new positions both in parks and recreation.

Parks and grounds maintenance was transferred to the Highway Department in 2012. To ensure that this structure is achieving the efficiencies and meeting citizen expectation of parks maintenance levels, it is very important to monitor and track work orders and general maintenance to make certain that a drop in service does not occur. This structure should be evaluated annually with the budget process to ensure that maximum efficiencies and outstanding customer service are being achieved.

**Goal 2: Increase Financial Opportunities**

**Objective 2.1 – Consider implementing a cost recovery and pricing policy.**

There is a consensus among focus group participants and survey respondents to implement and employ equitable user fees for Parks and Recreation activities based on a value received by the participant for the services with a personal benefit. Parks and Recreation should consider implementing a Cost Recovery Policy such as the Pyramid Pricing Methodology (**Appendix B**) to determine a consistent method of pricing parks and recreation activities throughout the Department. As part of the policy, the Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department should continue to support the existing Scholarship Program.



**Objective 2.2 – Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities.**

The Department currently takes advantage of grant opportunities available for programming and facility improvements. The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to pursue any and all grant opportunities at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. To accomplish this, the Department may consider contracting with a dedicated grant writer to research, submit, and track such grants.

**Objective 2.3 – Pursue opportunities for a dedicated revenue source for parks and recreation.**

The community appears willing to explore the feasibility of a dedicated revenue source to pay for the improvements that come out of this Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan. A campaign for an increased community investment may be a successful way of implementing the long-term recommendations in the Master Plan. These funding opportunities may include a bond referendum. It may also include an increase to the “in-lieu-of” parkland fees associated with new residential development (see Subdivision Regulations §103-29 and Town Zoning Law §128-57). The current in-lieu-of parkland fee was established in 2001. The current rate of \$1,550 for a single-family dwelling, and rates for other types of residential units, should be reviewed and adjusted, if necessary.



### **Goal 3: Continue to Improve Programs and Service Delivery**

#### **Objective 3.1 – Explore opportunities to increase recreational activities based on demand and trends.**

The community would like to see additional programs for families, teens, and seniors. As new programs are developed and delivered, fitness/wellness, cultural, and special needs programs are in high demand. In order to ensure that service delivery reflects the diversity of the community, the Department should engage the community in program development. To effectively achieve this objective, the Department should look to partner with other service providers in the community.

#### **Objective 3.2 – Explore opportunities to increase the number of events based on demand and trends.**

The Department should continue to look for opportunities to expand the number of music and art events offered annually.

#### **Objective 3.3 – Explore offering more non-athletic and non-traditional programs.**

Based on demand and current trends in the industry, the Department should explore opportunities to develop and expand programs that are outdoor/nature-based/environmentally focused. There are also opportunities to develop or expand on non-traditional sports programs such as disc golf, Pickleball, or Ultimate Frisbee.

#### **Objective 3.4 – Explore increasing aquatic opportunities.**

As part of the program review process, the Department should continue to monitor participation and demand for aquatic programs and adjust to meet the needs. It should also review the current schedule to maximize usage and meet demand at the Elm Avenue Park Pool Complex.

### **Goal 4: Continue to Improve Facilities and Amenities**

#### **Objective 4.1 – Maintain and improve existing facilities and amenities.**

There was an overwhelming public response to make sure that Parks and Recreation maintains and improves existing facilities. The Department should continue to improve and upgrade existing facilities and amenities through the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), Master Plan, and the Cyclical Maintenance Programs as recommended in the Master Plan.

#### **Objective 4.2 – Expand greenways and trails connectivity.**

Working with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, the Department should continue to develop shared-use paths and/or sidewalks/greenways to connect neighborhoods to parks. As new and existing greenways and shared-use paths are designed and renovated, the Department should consider adding fitness stations and family fun stations in appropriate locations. As Elm Avenue Park is redesigned or upgraded, consider opportunities to install a perimeter shared-use path and return the existing Fit Trail to a predominantly natural surface trail. As popularity grows and demand increases, the Department should explore opportunities to develop and add mountain biking trails in existing or future parks or public lands.



**Objective 4.3 – Meet current and future population demands through new land acquisition and redesign of current facilities.**

The Department is in need of programming space as well as administrative space. The opportunity is available to build a new community center at Elm Avenue Park to replace the current office building and provide much-needed space. Based on recommendations from the Master Plan and increased demand, the Department should explore opportunities for appropriate future facility expansion and redesign that include an outdoor amphitheater/special event venue and additional picnic shelters, as well acquisition of additional land for parks. Evaluation of the community center should consider collaborative uses by other Town departments and affiliates that would maximize the use of and funding opportunities for a center such as the Bethlehem Seniors and Bethlehem Historic Association. A top priority along the Hudson River waterfront should be to make repairs to the Henry Hudson Park that were identified in the Shoreline Stabilization Study.

**Objective 4.4 – Develop additional aquatic opportunities.**

The Parks and Recreation Department should make the needed renovations and updates to the Elm Avenue Park Pool Complex to address low-scoring components. Priority should be given to the locker rooms and building, incorporating family changing rooms and making repairs to the marcite. In addition to the pool complex, the Department should explore opportunities to create additional river access and programming at Henry Hudson Park.

**Objective 4.5 – Develop new amenities at existing parks based on level of service analysis.**

Demand for usage of Bethlehem parks, shelters, and athletic facilities continues to grow, and the Department should look for opportunities to add new amenities to enhance the experience for users. A top priority must be the replacement of the outdated wooden playground at Elm Avenue Park with an industry standard playground. Some enhancements identified through the public process are establishing a network of community gardens, providing shade to parks and facilities either with tree planting or shade structures, and developing a shared-use path network at Elm Avenue Park. Also, as the popularity of the dog park grows, the Department should explore both the opportunity to provide separate spaces for large and small dogs, as well as opportunities for on-leash access in identified parks.

**Objective 4.6 – Develop individual park master plans.**

Based on the Facilities Inventory and Level of Service recommendations in the Master Plan, develop individual park master plans to address low scoring components and repurpose spaces for better usage.

**Objective 4.7 – Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities.**

*According to the ADA.gov website, “Access to civic life by people with disabilities is a fundamental goal of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To ensure that this goal is met, Title II of the ADA requires State and local governments to make their programs and services accessible to persons with disabilities... One important way to ensure that Title II's requirements are being met in cities of all sizes is through self-evaluation, which is required by the ADA regulations. Self-evaluation enables local governments to pinpoint the facilities, programs, and services that must be modified or relocated to ensure that local governments are complying with the ADA.”*

Parks and Recreation currently does not have an ADA Transition Plan that identifies needed changes during a self-evaluation process. The Department needs to conduct a self-evaluation and develop a comprehensive transition plan. Once the ADA Transition Plan is developed and adopted, it should be updated at least every five years.



## II. Introduction of the Master Planning Context

### A. Purpose of this Plan

The Town of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan is intended to help meet the needs of current and future residents by positioning Bethlehem to build on the community's unique parks and recreation assets and identify new opportunities. The citizen-driven plan establishes a clear direction to guide Town staff, advisory committees, and elected officials in their efforts to enhance the community's parks and recreation services and facilities.

To create a greater awareness for the planning process and encourage citizen participation, the Project Team developed a project tag line and logo—"All for one, fun for all."



### B. History of the Town of Bethlehem and its Recreational Heritage

Bethlehem is located in an area of scenic beauty and historical significance. The parks of the Town of Bethlehem play a significant role in the history of the Town. The seeds of the Town's founding, commerce, and growth are currently evident in its parks, when Henry Hudson sailed up the river that would eventually bear his name, and is thought to have landed at what is now the Town of Bethlehem. The spot where he is presumed to have landed is commemorated at the Town's Henry Hudson Park.

In the mid-19th century the Delaware and Hudson Company initiated rail service into the hamlet then called Adamsville, renaming the hamlet Delmar. Delmar has become the most populous of numerous hamlets in town and its Delaware Avenue is the site of the present day Town Hall, police station, justice court, and public library, as well as numerous businesses. The D&H discontinued passenger service in the 1960s, and its successor started removing its tracks in 2000, with the last of the track removed in 2005. The railroad right of way has been acquired by Albany County and named the Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail. It is being converted into a pedestrian/bicycle trail with access at the Town's Veterans Memorial Park and various other locations in the most populous parts of Town. The Town has continued to grow, and is today considered to be a model suburb of the City of Albany consisting of 54 square miles of rural and suburban land uses, a population of approximately 34,000, and about 10 miles of Hudson River shoreline.



## C. Parks and Recreation Department Overview

The Town's Parks and Recreation Department is a source of community pride and is responsible for the parks, recreation facilities, and programs that are important factors in the quality of life in the community.

Under the direction of an Administrator, the Department is one of 12 Town departments and strives to provide and enhance recreational opportunities for Town residents. The Department provides a variety of programs from aquatics to summer camps, athletics, and specialty programs. Many of these activities take place at the Elm Avenue Park, with its pools, playing fields, and a headquarters office building, which also contains space for indoor programming. Maintenance of the Town's parks and facilities is managed by the Highway Department.

In addition to the Administrator, there are three full-time professionals and five dedicated maintenance staff. The Department is also the employer of approximately 200 seasonal staff with most hired as part-time help in the summer recreation period. Seasonal hires also provide important opportunities for teen and college-age residents.

The Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation, a 501(c)(3) charitable volunteer organization, was formed in 2013. Its mission is to be a collaborative partner with the department working to protect, enhance, and expand its recreation activities and parks to improve the quality of life for all residents.



## D. Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department Vision Statement

### Vision

*“The Town of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department enriches the lives of our residents through quality parks and activities for present and future generations.*

*“These parks and activities will be designed and developed so that people of all ages, abilities, interests, and economic status have the chance to participate in excellent recreational opportunities.*

*“The Department is a local leader in promoting parks, open spaces, and recreation opportunities as key elements in creating a healthy, dynamic, sustainable, vibrant town.”*

### Goals

- To continue to maintain and improve parks, facilities, and equipment that provide our residents with safe, clean, and beautiful recreational areas.
- To meet the ever-changing needs, trends, and abilities of all residents by providing quality, diverse recreational activities and special events.
- To continue to foster the strong public support our Department enjoys by encouraging feedback and meeting public needs and expectations as we plan for the future.

## E. Related Planning Efforts and Integration

The Town of Bethlehem has undertaken several planning efforts in recent years that helped direct the planning process for this plan. These documents include:

- Comprehensive Plan of 2005
- Report of the Comprehensive Plan Assessment Committee, 2013
- Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Survey Report, 2014
- Moh-He-Con-Nuck Nature Preserve Master Plan
- Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, Draft
- Henry Hudson Park Master Plan
- Henry Hudson Park Shoreline Stabilization Study
- Open Space Needs and Opportunities Report

These documents were reviewed by the consultant team and have been endorsed and integrated into the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan, where applicable, with no conflicts within any of these existing planning efforts.



## F. Methodology of This Planning Process

The project team, including Town staff and representatives of the Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation, guided this project providing input to the consultant team throughout the planning process. This collaborative effort creates a plan that fully utilizes the consultants' expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only Department staff and community members can provide. The project consisted of the following tasks:



### Community Engagement

- Review of previous planning efforts and Town historical information.
- Extensive community involvement effort including focus groups, meetings with key stakeholders, and community-wide public meetings.
- Review of a community survey conducted by the Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation.

### Facility Inventory

- Inventory of parks and facilities using existing mapping, staff interviews, and on-site visits to verify amenities and assess the condition of the facilities and surrounding areas.



### **Level of Service Analysis**

- Interviews with staff to provide information about parks and recreation facilities and services, along with insight regarding the current practices and experiences of the Town in serving its residents and visitors.
- Identification of alternative providers of recreation services to provide insight regarding the market opportunities in the area for potential new facilities and services.
- Analysis addressing recreation, parks, cultural affairs, and related services.

### **Assessment and Analysis**

- Review and assessment of relevant plans.
- Measurement of the current delivery of service for park and recreation facilities using the a level of service analysis and allowing for a target level of service to be determined that is both feasible and aligned with the desires of citizens as expressed through public input.
- Exploration of finance and funding mechanisms to support development and sustainability within the system.

### **Needs Assessment**

- Consideration of the profile of the community and demographics, including population growth.
- Research of trends related to Bethlehem, the Capital Region, and American lifestyles to help guide the efforts of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation over the next several years.

### **Operational and Marketing Analysis**

- Analysis of departmental programming and service delivery.
- Facilitation of an organizational Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis.
- Development of a broad assessment of the overall parks and recreation operations.

### **Recommendations: Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan**

- Identification and categorization of recommendations into themes with goals and objectives.
- Development of an action plan.
- Identification of potential funding sources.

## **G. Master Plan Timeline**

Start-up Meeting	November 2014
Community Engagement	January 2015
Inventory and Assessment of Existing Facilities	Jan – Feb 2015
Level of Service Analysis	March 2015
Operational and Program Analysis	Jan – Feb 2015
Findings Compilation Report	March 2015
Recommendations and Action Plans	April – June 2015
Draft Plan	June 2015
Final Plan, Presentation, and Deliverables	October 2015



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# III. Who We Are — Bethlehem Demographic Profile

Understanding community demographics is an important component of preparing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The population data, estimates, and projections used in this demographic profile of the Town of Bethlehem, New York come from ESRI Business Information Solutions, based on 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census data, except where otherwise indicated. **Table 1** provides a snapshot of demographic information discussed in this profile.

**Table 1: Bethlehem Summary Demographics, 2014**

Summary Demographics	
Population	34,110
Number of Households	13,750
Avg. Household Size	2.44
Median Age	44.8
Median Household Income	\$88,754

Source: Esri Business Information Solutions 2014 estimate based on the 2010 U.S. Census.

## A. Population Projections

Although population growth cannot be predicted with certainty, it is helpful to make projections for planning purposes. **Table 2** contains population and projections for the Town of Bethlehem as provided by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission. According to the U.S. Census, the annual growth rate for the Town from 2000 through 2010 was .72 percent. ESRI’s projected annual growth rate for the Town for 2014 to 2019 is .35%, compared to a projected 2014 to 2019 annual growth rate for the State of New York of .41 percent and for the United States as a whole of 0.73 percent. The projected population growth trend for Bethlehem is graphically represented in **Figure 1**.

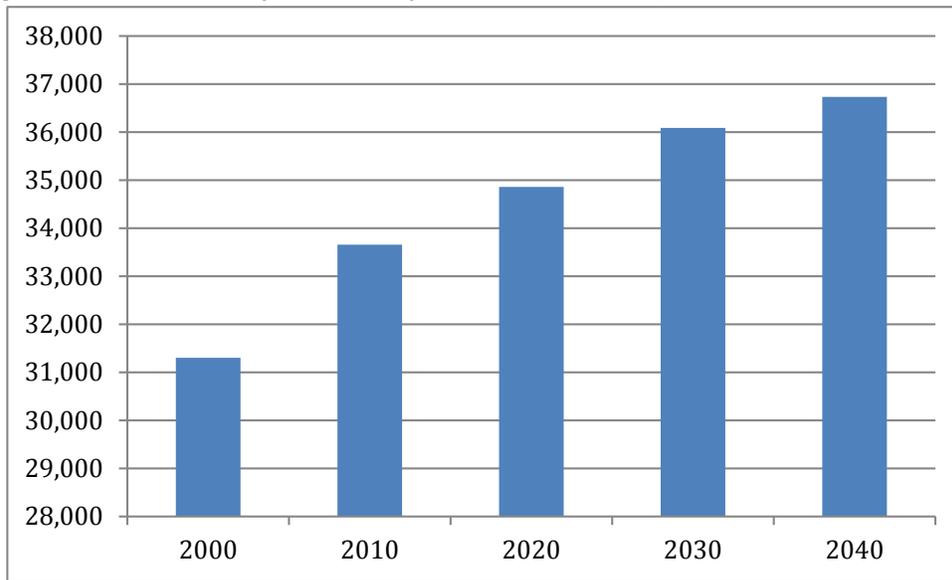
**Table 2: Bethlehem Population, 2000–2024**

Actual, Estimated and Projected Population	
2000 Population	31,304
2010 Population	33,565
2020 Projected	34,861
2030 Projected	36,088
2040 Projected	36,735

Source: Capital District Regional Planning Commission.



**Figure 1: Bethlehem Population Projected Growth Trend, 2000–2040**



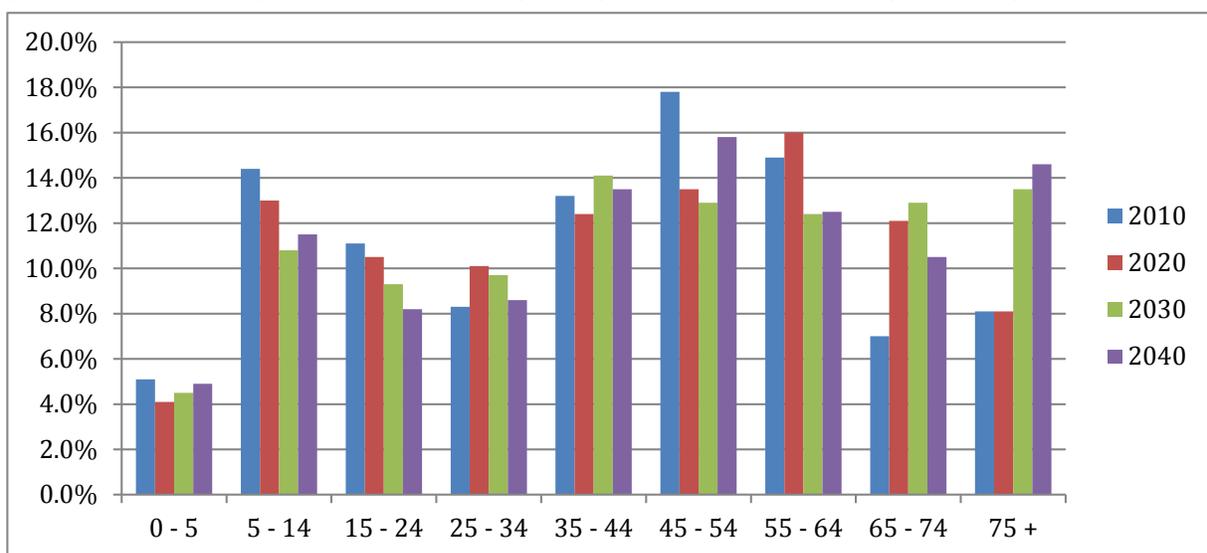
Source: Capital District Regional Planning Commission.

## B. Gender and Age Distribution

Gender distribution in the Town of Bethlehem in 2014 was 48 percent male to 52 percent female.

A comparison of the projected population breakdown by age for the Town of Bethlehem from 2010 to 2040 is shown in **Figure 2**. According to ESRI, the median age in 2014 was 44.8. The U.S. Census indicates that in 2010 the median age for the Caucasian population of Bethlehem was 44.7, while other racial/ethnic populations in the Town had a significantly lower median age (Asian 36.6, African American 25.2, and Hispanic origin [irrespective of race] 22.6).

**Figure 2: Bethlehem Age Distribution, 2010 (actual), and 2020, 2030, 2040 (projected)**



Source: Capital District Regional Planning Commission



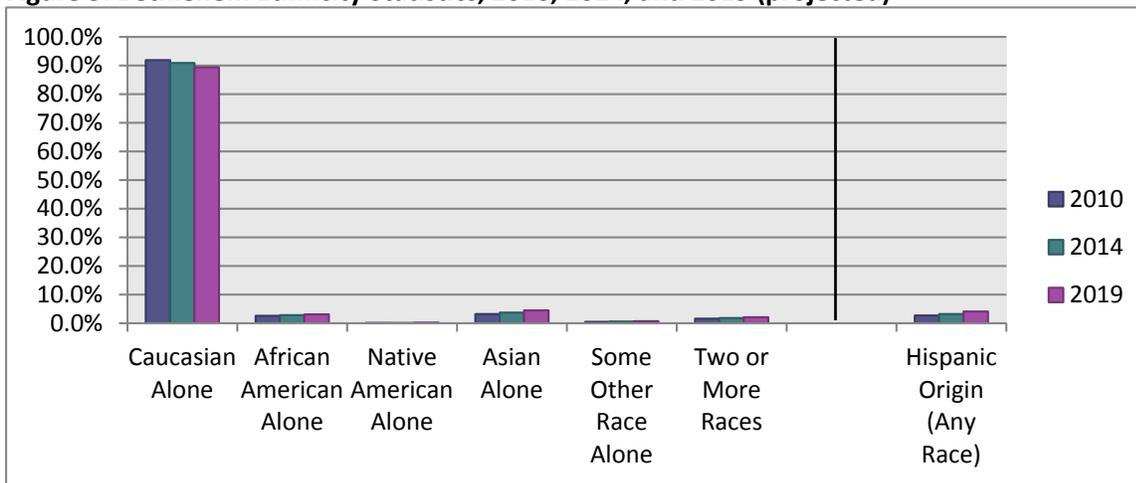
The age demographics are projected to undergo a number of changes in Bethlehem from 2010 to 2040. The population percentage in the 5 – 24 age range is predicted to drop about six percent from 2010 to 2040, while the percentage in the 65+ age range is predicted to grow about ten percent during the same time period.

### C. Race/Ethnicity

**Figure 3** reflects the racial/ethnic population distribution for the Town of Bethlehem. In 2014, 90.9 percent of the population was Caucasian, with the Asian population at 3.7 percent, African American at 2.8 percent, and Native American at .1 percent of the population. Additionally, the population of Hispanic origin\* (a separate look at the population, irrespective of race) was at 3.2 percent in 2014.

- The percentage of the population that is Caucasian is trending slightly downward from 91.9 percent in 2010 to a predicted 89.4 percent in 2019.
- Bethlehem’s Asian population is trending upward slightly from 3.2 percent in 2010 to a predicted 4.5 percent of the total population in 2019.
- The percentage of the population of Hispanic origin (irrespective of race), at 2.7 percent in 2010, is expected to grow to 4.1 percent of the population by 2019.

**Figure 3: Bethlehem Ethnicity Statistics, 2010, 2014, and 2019 (projected)**



Source: 2010 U.S. Census; 2014 estimates and 2019 forecast provided by Esri Business Information Solutions.

\*Hispanic origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before arriving in the United States. In the U.S. Census, people who identify as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be any race and are included in all of the race categories. **Figure 3** represents Hispanic Origin as recorded in the U.S. Census.



## D. Educational Attainment

As shown in **Table 3**, the highest ranking educational cohorts in Bethlehem are those residents with a graduate or professional degree (32.4%) and those with a bachelor's degree (22.9%). High school graduates follow, comprising 14.2 percent of the population, followed by those with some college, no degree (13.2%), and those with an associate's degree (12.1%). According to a U.S. Census study, education levels had more effect on earnings over a 40-year span in the workforce than any other demographic factor, such as gender, race, and ethnic origin.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 3: Bethlehem Educational Attainment, 2014**

Education Attainment	Service Area Percentage
Less than 9th grade	1.3%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	2.3%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	14.2%
GED/alternative credential	1.7%
Some college, no degree	13.2%
Associate's degree	12.1%
Bachelor's degree	22.9%
Graduate or professional degree	32.4%

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions 2014 estimate based on the 2010 U.S. Census.

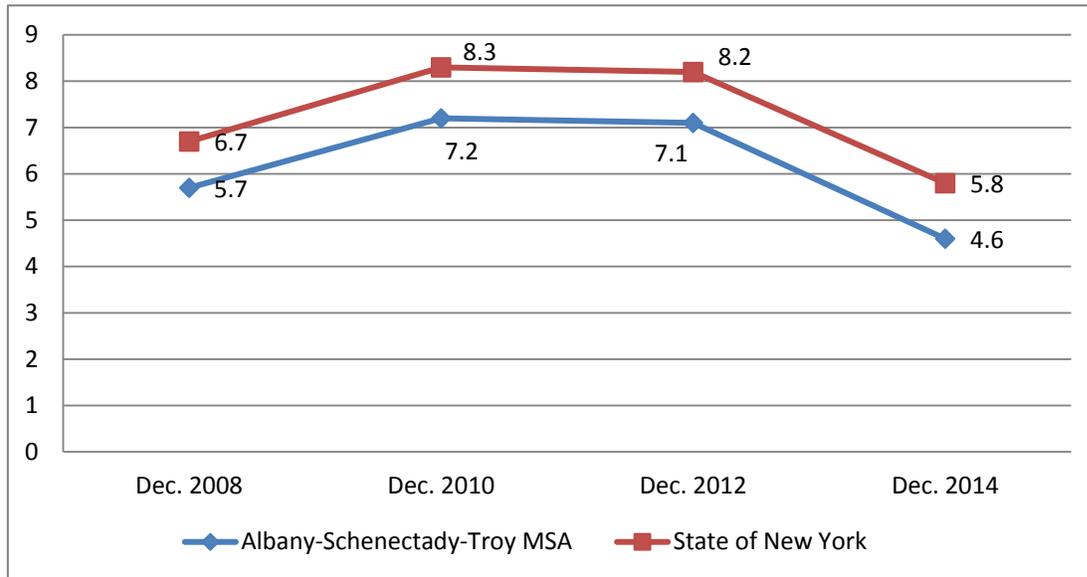
## E. Employment

The Town of Bethlehem is located within the Albany-Schenectady-Troy Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). **Figure 4** provides a snapshot of the unemployment rates from December 2008 through December 2014 for the MSA and the State of New York as a whole. The preliminary unemployment rate for both the MSA and New York in December 2014 was under six percent (4.6 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively).

<sup>1</sup> Tiffany Julian and Robert Kominski, "Education and Synthetic Work-Life Earnings Estimates", *American Community Survey Reports*, U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acs-14.pdf>, September 2011.



**Figure 4: Snapshot of Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA and New York State Unemployment Rates, 2008–2014**



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

## F. Household Information

As reflected in **Table 4**, in 2014, the Town of Bethlehem had 14,195 housing units with a 71.9 percent owner-occupied housing rate, compared to a 25 percent renter-occupied rate. The owner-occupied housing rate has stayed remarkably steady, dropping less than two percent since 2000, when 73.2 percent of the housing in Bethlehem was owner-occupied. The average household size in 2014 was 2.44.

**Table 4: Bethlehem Housing Statistics, 2000, 2010, 2014, and 2019 (projected)**

	2000	2010	2014	2019
Total housing units	12,456	14,015	14,195	14,473
Percent owner occupied	73.2%	72.0%	71.9%	71.5%
Percent renter occupied	24.0%	24.0%	25.0%	25.5%
Percent vacant	2.8%	4.1%	3.1%	2.9%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census; 2014 estimates and 2019 forecasts provided by Esri Business Information Solutions.

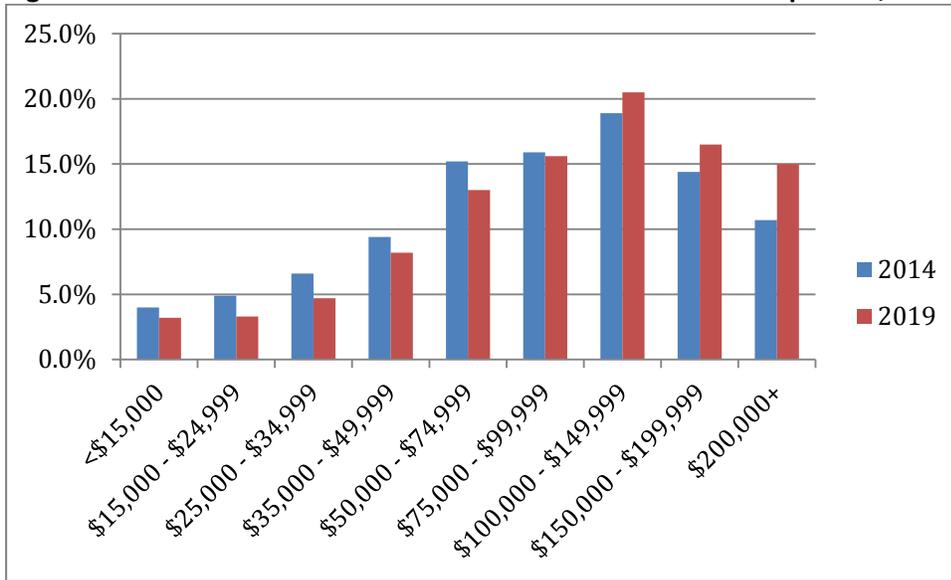
### Household Income

The estimated 2014 median household income for residents of Bethlehem was \$88,754 and is expected to grow to \$103,317 by 2019. **Figure 5** illustrates the full income distribution estimated for Bethlehem in 2014 and projected for 2019.

- In 2014, the largest share of residents had an income in the \$100,000 – \$149,000 range (18.9%) followed by the \$75,000 – \$99,999 range (15.9%) and \$50,000 – \$74,999 range (15.2%).
- From 2014 to 2019, income is expected to rise in each of the top distribution ranges: \$100,000 – \$149,000 (1.6%); \$150,000 – \$199,999 (2.1%); and \$200,000+ (4.3%).



**Figure 5: Bethlehem Annual Household Income Distribution Comparison, 2014 to 2019 (projected)**



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2014.



## IV. Park and Recreation Trends

Identification of current park and recreation trends, as well as community demographics, needs, and resources helps to better understand future recreational opportunities. The historic values of the community and standards that the Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department represents, along with park and recreation trends, work together to create a unique opportunity for the Town to plan and provide for the future. The following information highlights relevant regional and national recreation trends from various sources that may influence the Town of Bethlehem’s recreation planning for the next several years. The full Trends Report can be found in **Appendix A**.

### A. Demographic Trends in Recreation

#### Adults — The Baby Boomers

The highest ranking age cohorts in the Town of Bethlehem in 2014 were 45–54 and 55–64 (16.3% and 16.2% of the population, respectively) followed by the 35–44 cohort at 11.4 percent of the population. With 32.5 percent of the population in the 45–64 age range, planning for the next ten years suggests a growing demand for programs and services for Baby Boomers and seniors.

Baby Boomers are defined as individuals born between 1946 and 1964,<sup>2</sup> currently ages 51 to 69. As Baby Boomers enter retirement, they will be looking for opportunities in fitness, sports, outdoors, arts and cultural events, and other activities that suit their lifestyles. With their varied life experiences, values, and expectations, baby boomers are predicted to redefine the meaning of recreation and leisure programming for mature adults.

Jeffrey Ziegler, past president of the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association, identified “Boomer Basics” in his article, “Recreating Retirement: How Will Baby Boomers Reshape Leisure in Their 60s?” as follows:<sup>3</sup>

- Boomers are known to work hard, play hard, and spend hard.
- They have always been fixated with all things youthful.
- Swimming pools have become less of a social setting and much more of an extension of Boomers’ health and wellness program.
- Because Boomers in general have a high education level, they will likely continue to pursue education as adults and into retirement.
- When programming for this age group, a customized experience to cater to the need for self-fulfillment, healthy pleasure, nostalgic youthfulness, and individual escapes will be important.

<sup>2</sup> Linda Cochran, Anne Roshchadl, and Jodi Rudick, “Leisure Programming For Baby Boomers”, *Human Kinetics*, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Ziegler, “Recreating Retirement: How Will Baby Boomers Reshape Leisure in Their 60s?”, *Parks and Recreation*, October 2002.



Boomers will reinvent what being a 65-year-old means. Parks and recreation agencies that do not plan for Boomers carrying on in retirement with the same hectic pace at which they have lived during their years in employment will be left behind. Things to consider when planning for the demographic shift:

- Boomer characteristics
- What drives Boomers
- Marketing to Boomers
- Arts and entertainment
- Passive and active fitness trends
- Outdoor recreation/adventure programs
- Travel programs

In Bethlehem, although the 0-24 age cohort declined from approximately 30 percent in 2014 to 25 percent in 2040, it should be an essential component of Bethlehem recreation planning.

### **Youth — Planning for the Demographic Shift**

In her NPRA July 2012 *Recreation Management Magazine* article, Emily Sheffield identified five trends shaping tomorrow, one of which states, “The proportion of youth is smaller than in the past, but still essential to our future.” As of the 2010 Census, the age group under age 18 forms about a quarter of the U.S. population, and this percentage is at an all-time low.

### **Multiculturalism**

Our country is becoming increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. Cultural and ethnic diversity adds a unique flavor to communities expressed through distinct neighborhoods, multicultural learning environments, restaurants, places of worship, museums, and nightlife.<sup>4</sup>

The Town of Bethlehem has an overwhelmingly Caucasian population (90.9 percent in 2014). The Bethlehem demographic profile also indicates that in 2014, 3.7 percent of the population was Asian and 2.8 percent, African American. Additionally, 3.2 percent of the population was of Hispanic origin (irrespective of race).

### **Recreational Preferences among Ethnic/Racial Groups (Self-Identifying):**

Nationwide participation in outdoor sports in 2013 was highest among Caucasians in all age groups and lowest among African Americans, according to the “2014 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report.”<sup>5</sup> The biggest difference in participation rates was between Caucasian and African American adolescents, with 65 percent of Caucasians ages 13–17 participating and only 42 percent of African Americans in this age range participating. When asked why they did not participate in outdoor activities more often, the number one reason given by people of all ethnicities and races was because they were not interested.

<sup>4</sup> Baldwin Ellis, “The Effects of Culture & Diversity on America”, [http://www.ehow.com/facts\\_5512569\\_effects-culture-diversity-america.html](http://www.ehow.com/facts_5512569_effects-culture-diversity-america.html), accessed September 20, 2012.

<sup>5</sup>Outdoor Foundation, “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2014”, 2014.



According to the 2014 “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report,” the most popular outdoor activities among Caucasians are: running/jogging and trail running (19%); fishing (freshwater, saltwater, and fly) (18%); road, mountain, and BMX biking (17%); camping (car, backyard, backpacking, and RV) (16%); and hiking (14%). Whereas biking, running, fishing, and camping were the most popular outdoor activities for all Americans, with each ethnic/racial group participating in each in varying degrees.



## B. Facility Trends

The current national trend is toward “one-stop” indoor recreation facilities, which attract young families, teens, and adults of all ages. Large, multi-purpose regional centers help increase revenue and cost recovery, promote retention, and encourage cross-use. The trend toward multi-use facilities versus specialized space offers programming flexibility as well as free-play opportunities.

### Aquatics/Water Recreation Trends

According to the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA), swimming ranked third nation-wide in terms of participation in 2012.<sup>6</sup> Nationally, there is an increasing trend towards indoor leisure and therapeutic pools. Additional indoor and outdoor amenities such as “spray pads” are becoming increasingly popular as well. In some cities and counties, spray pools are popular in the summer months and are converted into ice rinks in the winter.

### Dog Parks

Dog parks continue to see high popularity and have remained among the top planned addition to parks and recreational facilities over the past three years. In 2014, a new association dedicated to providing informational resources for starting and maintaining dog parks, the National Dog Park Association, was formed. *Recreation Management Magazine*<sup>7</sup> suggests that dog parks can represent a relatively low-cost way to provide an oft-visited popular community amenity. Dog parks can be as simple as a gated area, or more elaborate with “designed-for-dogs” amenities such as water fountains, agility equipment, and pet wash stations, to name a few. According to the American Kennel Club<sup>8</sup>, an ideal dog park should include the following:

- One acre or more of land surrounded by a four- to six-foot high chain-link fence. Preferably, the fence should be equipped with a double-gated entry to keep dogs from escaping and to facilitate wheelchair access.
- Cleaning supplies, including covered garbage cans, waste bags, and pooper-scooper stations.
- Shade and water for both dogs and owners, along with benches and tables.
- A safe, accessible location with adequate drainage and a grassy area that is mowed routinely.
- If space allows, it is preferable to provide separate areas for small and large dogs. This will enable large dog owners to allow their pets to run more freely, while protecting smaller dogs who may not be suited to the enthusiastic play of larger breeds.
- Signs that specify park hours and rules.
- Parking close to the site.

<sup>6</sup> National Sporting Goods Association, “2012 Participation – Ranked by Total Participation”, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Emily Tipping, “2014 State of the Industry Report, Trends in Parks and Recreation”, *Recreation Management*, June 2014.

<sup>8</sup> American Kennel Club, “Establishing a Dog Park in Your Community”, [www.akc.org/pdfs/GLEG01.pdf](http://www.akc.org/pdfs/GLEG01.pdf), accessed July 29, 2015.



## C. Programming Trends

### General Programming

One of the most common concerns in the recreation industry is creating innovative programming to draw participants into facilities and services. Once in, participants recognize that the benefits are endless. According to *Recreation Management* magazine's "2014 State of the Industry Report,"<sup>9</sup> the most common programs offered by survey respondents include holiday events and other special events (78.1%), youth sports teams (69.1%), day camps and summer camps (64.7%), adult sports teams (61.3%), arts and crafts (60.9%), educational programs (60.5%), sports tournaments and races (56.8%), programs for active older adults (55.2%), fitness programs (61.4%), and festivals and concerts (53.2%).

The report also suggested more than three in 10 (35.7%) respondents indicated that they are planning to *add* programs at their facilities over the next three years. The most common types of programming they are planning to add include:

1. Programming for active older adults (up from No. 5 on the 2013 survey)
2. Fitness programs (up from No. 3)
3. Teen programming (down from No. 2)
4. Adult sports teams (did not appear in 2013)
5. Holiday events and other special events (up from No. 6)
6. Mind-body/balance programs – yoga, tai chi, Pilates, or martial arts (up from No. 7)
7. Environmental education (down from No. 1)
8. Educational programs (down from No. 4)
9. Festivals and concerts (up from No. 10)
10. Sports tournaments or races (down from No. 8)

### Fitness Programming

Body weight training appeared as a developing trend in 2014 and is projected to stay strong in 2015, as is high-intensity interval training. Yoga is regaining popularity after falling out of the top 20 in 2009 and staying out of the top 10 until 2014. Fitness programs for older adults will remain strong in 2015.

### Older Adults and Senior Programming

The American Academy of Sports Medicine issues a yearly survey of the top 20 fitness trends.<sup>10</sup> It ranks senior fitness programs eighth among most popular fitness trends for 2015. Whether it's Silver Sneakers, a freestyle low-impact cardio class, or water aerobics, more and more people are realizing the many benefits of staying active throughout life.

### Festivals and Events

In the context of urban development, from the early 1980s, there has been a process that can be characterized as "festivalization." This has been linked to the economic restructuring of towns and cities and the drive to develop communities as large-scale platforms for the creation and consumption of "cultural experience."

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<sup>9</sup> Emily Tipping, "2014 State of the Industry Report, Trends in Parks and Recreation", *Recreation Management*, June 2014.

<sup>10</sup> American College of Sports Medicine, "Survey Predicts Top 20 Fitness Trends for 2015", American College of Sports Medicine, " <http://www.acsm.org/about-acsm/media-room/news-releases/2014/10/24/survey-predicts-top-20-fitness-trends-for-2015>, accessed January 2015.



There are a growing number of smaller, more local, community-based festivals and events in communities, most often supported by local councils that have been spawned partly as a reaction to larger festivals, which have become prime economic-drivers. These community-based festivals often will reclaim cultural ground based on their social, educational, and participative value.

## D. Healthy Lifestyle and Active Living Trends

### Active Transportation – Bicycling and Walking

Bicycle-friendly cities and towns have been emerging over the last ten years. Cycling has become a popular mode of transportation as people consider the rising cost of fuel, desire for better health, and concern for the environment. Some people also use cycling as a mode of transportation just for the fun of it.

The Alliance for Biking and Walking published “Bicycling and Walking in the United States: 2014 Benchmarking Report,”<sup>11</sup> updating its 2012 report, which shows that increasing bicycling and walking as goals is clearly in the public interest. Where bicycling and walking levels are higher, obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes levels are lower.

Design of a community’s infrastructure is directly linked to physical activity — where environments are built with bicyclists and pedestrians in mind, more people bike and walk. Higher levels of bicycling and walking also coincide with increased bicycle and pedestrian safety and higher levels of physical activity. Increasing bicycling and walking make a big impact on improving public health and life expectancy.

### National Healthy Lifestyle Trends

The population of the United States is becoming more diverse. As demographics are experiencing an age and ethnic shift, so too are landscapes, daily lifestyles, and habits changing. While the number of adults over the age of 65 has increased, lifestyle changes have encouraged less physical activity.

### Shade Structures

Communities around the country are considering adding shade structures as well as shade trees to their parks, playgrounds, and pools, as “a weapon against cancer and against childhood obesity,”<sup>12</sup> both to reduce future cancer risk and promote exercise among children. Without adequate shade, many play areas are simply too hot to be inviting to children. On sunny days, the playground equipment is hot enough to scald the hands of would-be users.

Trees are helpful, as tree leaves absorb about 95 percent of ultraviolet radiation, but they take a decade or more to grow large enough to make a difference. Therefore, many communities are building shade structures instead. The non-profit Shade Foundation of American is a good resource for information about shade and shade structures.

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<sup>11</sup> 2014 Benchmarking Report, Alliance for Biking and Walking “2014 Benchmarking Report”, <http://www.bikewalkalliance.org/download-the-2014-benchmarking-report>, accessed January 23, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Liz Szabo, “Shade: A weapon against skin cancer, childhood obesity”, *USA Today*, June 30, 2011, <http://usatoday.30.usatoday.com/news/health/wellness/story/2011/06/Shade-serves-as-a-weapon-against-skin-cancer-childhood-obesity/48965070/1>, accessed May 23, 2013.



## Trails and Health

That a connected system of trails increases the level of physical activity in a community has been scientifically demonstrated through the Trails for Health initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).<sup>13</sup> Trails can provide a wide variety of opportunities for being physically active, such as walking/running/hiking, rollerblading, wheelchair recreation, bicycling, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, and horseback riding.

The health benefits are equally as high for trails in urban neighborhoods as for those in state or national parks. A trail in the neighborhood, creating a “linear park,” makes it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily routines, whether for recreation or non-motorized transportation. Urban trails need to connect people to places they want to go, such as schools, transit centers, businesses, and neighborhoods.<sup>14</sup>

## E. Natural Environments and Open Space Trends

### Conservation

The top ten recommendations of the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Conservation Task Force were published in the November 2011 issue of *Parks and Recreation* magazine.<sup>15</sup> These recommendations are a compilation of best practices used by trend-setting agencies.

- 1) Take a leadership role in the community to promote conservation.
- 2) Lead by example in employing best management conservation practices in parks.
- 3) Engage volunteers in conservation and stewardship.
- 4) Establish a strategic land acquisition strategy based on knowledge and awareness of significant natural and cultural resources.
- 5) Engage youth in conservation.
- 6) Conserve energy in all ways.
- 7) Protect natural resources in parks and in the community.
- 8) Create sustainable landscapes that demonstrate principles of conservation.
- 9) Forge partnerships that foster the mission of conservation.
- 10) Utilize technology to promote conservation.

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<sup>13</sup> “Guide to Community Preventive Services”, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/index.html>.

<sup>14</sup> “Health Community: What You Should Know About Trail Building”, <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/health/healthcombuild.html>, accessed May 24, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), “Conservation Leaders in our Community”, *Parks and Recreation* Magazine, November 2011, pgs. 85–101.



## Economic and Health Benefits of Parks

A report published by the Trust for Public Land titled, “The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space,” makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental, and social benefits of parks and open space<sup>16</sup>:

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health.
- Residential and commercial property values increase.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners.
- Trees assist with storm water control and erosion.
- Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.
- Stable neighborhoods and strong communities are created.

Researchers have long touted the benefits of outdoor exercise. A new trend started in China as they prepared to host the 2008 Summer Olympics. Their aim was to promote a society that promotes physical fitness and reaps the benefits of outdoor exercise by working out on outdoor fitness equipment.

The United States is now catching up on this trend, as park and recreation departments have begun installing “outdoor gyms.” Equipment that can be found in these outdoor gyms is comparable to what would be found in an indoor workout facility, such as leg and chest presses, elliptical trainers, pull-down trainers, etc. With no additional equipment such as weights and resistance bands, the equipment is fairly easy to install. Outdoor fitness equipment provides a new opportunity for parks and recreation departments to increase the health of their communities, while offering them the opportunity to exercise outdoors. Such equipment can increase the usage of parks, trails, and other outdoor amenities while helping to fight the obesity epidemic and increase the community’s interaction with nature.

## F. Sports and Recreation Trends

### General Sports and Recreation Trends

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) Sports Participation in the US in 2012<sup>17</sup> report found the top five athletic activities ranked by total participation included exercise walking, exercising with equipment, swimming, camping, and aerobic exercising. Additionally, the following active, organized, or skill development activities remain popular: hiking, running/jogging, bicycle riding, basketball, golf, and soccer.

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<sup>16</sup> Paul M. Sherer, “The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space”, The Trust for Public Land, San Francisco, CA, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> National Sporting Goods Association, “2012 Sport/Recreation Activity Participation”, 2013,..<http://www.nsga.org>.



## Youth Sports

The 2013 Sport Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) sports participation report indicates that in 2012, youth (ages 6-12) participation was highest for outdoor (63.1%), team (53.1%), and individual sports (49.8%). Children in this age group have increased interest in camping, while young adults ages 18–24 are becoming more interested in running/jogging.

The NSGA “Youth Sports Participation Report” from 2001–2011 indicates that specific offerings for children’s fitness are slowly increasing in health and fitness facilities. Facilities are offering more youth-specific exercise equipment. Individualized youth sports training opportunities are becoming more popular as well.

## Outdoor Recreation

The Outdoor Foundation releases an annual “Participation in Outdoor Recreation” report. According to the 2014 report,<sup>18</sup> while the actual number of outdoor recreation outings increased since 2012, the participation rate fell slightly, due to population growth. The foundation reports that the top outdoor activities in 2013 were running, fishing, bicycling, camping, and hiking. Birdwatching is also among the favorite outdoor activities by frequency of participation.



## Trail Recreation and Cycling

For trail-related recreation activities, such as hiking, bicycling, and running, the “2014 Outdoor Recreation Topline Report” indicates a positive three-year trend for running/jogging, hiking, road biking, and BMX biking. Additionally, participation in trail running and mountain biking was up significantly over the two to three years prior to the report.

## Therapeutic Recreation (TR)

The fundamental goal of TR services is to enable participants to return successfully to their communities. This not only means they need to have the functional skill, but also that they have physical and social environments in the community that are receptive to the individual.

Nationally, therapeutic recreation as a service is experiencing many struggles and challenges. The changing face of health care is having a dramatic effect on therapeutic recreation services in many rehabilitation settings and specifically in physical rehabilitation settings, thus affecting community recreation programs. In the past, clinical facilities provided programs such as wheelchair basketball, but due to the reduction of expenditures, facilities no longer provide such services and expect communities to address these needs.

The fundamental goal of TR services is to enable participants to return successfully to their communities. This not only means they need to have the functional skill but also that they have physical and social environments in the community that are receptive to the individual.

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<sup>18</sup> Outdoor Foundation, “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2014”.



## G. Administration Trends for Recreation and Parks

Municipal parks and recreation structures and delivery systems are changing, and more alternative methods of delivering services are emerging. Certain services are being contracted out, and cooperative agreements with non-profit groups and other public institutions are being developed. Newer partners include the health system, social services, the justice system, education, the corporate sector, and community service agencies. These partnerships reflect both a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation agencies and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues. The relationship with health agencies is vital in promoting wellness.

The traditional relationship with education and the sharing of facilities through joint-use agreements is evolving into cooperative planning and programming aimed at addressing youth inactivity levels and community needs.

Listed below are additional administrative national trends:

- The level of subsidy for programs is lessening, and more “enterprise” activities are being developed, thereby allowing subsidy to be used where deemed appropriate.
- Information technology allows for better tracking and reporting.
- Pricing is often determined by peak, off-peak, and off-season rates.
- More agencies are partnering with private, public, and non-profit groups.

### Role and Response of Local Government

Collectively, the trends noted above create profound implications for the way local governments conduct business. Some local governments are now accepting the role of providing preventative health care through parks and recreation services. The following concepts are from the International City/County Management Association.<sup>19</sup>

- Parks and recreation departments should take the lead in developing communities conducive to active living.
- There is growing support for recreation programs that encourage active living within their community.
- One of the highest priorities is a cohesive system of parks and trails and accessible neighborhood parks.

The role of public parks and recreation as a health promotion and prevention agency has come of age. What matters is refocusing and balancing its efforts to insure the health, well-being, and economic prosperity of communities and citizens in all demographic sectors.

### Funding

*Recreation Management* magazine’s “2014 State of the Industry Report” provides parks and recreation departments’/districts’ self-reported revenues from 2011 through 2013. The report reveals the beginning of a recovery from the impact of the recession of 2008. From 2011 to 2012, 82.6 percent of respondents reported that their revenues had either stabilized or had increased. This number grew to 84.8 percent of respondents when reporting on the 2012 to 2013 time frame, and 95 percent of parks and recreation department respondents are expecting that by 2015 revenues will either increase (49.7%) or remain stable (45.4%).

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<sup>19</sup> International City/County Management Association, [www.ICMA.org](http://www.ICMA.org), accessed in 2012.



### **Marketing by Parks and Recreation Providers**

Mobile marketing is a growing trend. Young adults engage in mobile data applications at much higher rates than adults in age brackets 30 and older. Usage rates of mobile applications demonstrate that chronologically across four major age cohorts, Millennials tend to get information more frequently using mobile devices such as smartphones.



# V. What We Want — Public Engagement Summary

This Public Engagement Summary is a synopsis of issues that were identified during 11 citizen focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and a public forum held January 14–16, 2015. More than 140 community members, Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department staff, other Town of Bethlehem staff, and elected officials participated and provided their input. Other specific groups participating included the Chamber of Commerce, the YMCA, Bethlehem School District personnel and students, senior citizens, and Bethlehem Police (Animal Control Officer).



Questions were developed by GreenPlay with assistance from the Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department. The input listed below is a summary of comments made in the citizen focus group meetings. The lists represent the responses from the participants and are not in order of importance. Participants in the focus groups, stakeholder meetings, and public forum expressed general agreement with this input.

The Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Master Plan addresses the top priorities as identified by focus group participants, as well as the citizen survey recently conducted by the Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation. (See the Key Issues Matrix on page 60.)

## A. Summary of Input



## Strengths

*What are the strengths of the department currently?*

- Programming options
- Maintenance of facilities
- Dog park
- Response to requests
- Good website
- Distribution of parks north to south
- Friendly
- Good Director
- Marketing and promotions
- Aquatics
- Picnic areas
- Range of summer programming
- Walking/fitness trails
- Conservation of green space
- Summer park programs
- Variety of amenities
- Creative, open to new ideas
- Summer employment opportunities
- All age activities available

## Areas for Improvement

*What areas of improvement exist currently for the department?*

- Lack of arts and cultural resources
- Lack of connectivity with trails
- Too much emphasis on youth sports
- Teen spots: skate park, etc.
- Schools/parks coordination programming and services
- Lack of shade trees
- Facilities not keeping up with growth
- Pool bath house condition
- Lack of indoor activities (pool, tennis, theater)
- Outdoor volleyball courts
- Natural history interpretation
- Access to dogs-on-leash areas
- Funding
- Aging, dated facilities
- Can't accommodate everyone: limited infrastructure
- Picnic shelters lacking
- Lack alternative/non-traditional sports activities

## Overall Quality of Current Programs Offered

Excellent	14.7%
Very Good	51.5%
Good	30.9%
Fair	2.9%
Poor	0%



## Additional Programs or Activities Suggested

Participants were asked what additional programs or activities they would like to see the department add to its current offerings.

- Outdoor/nature-based education/programming
- Music in parks
- Arts in parks
- Family festivals celebrating heritage
- Programs for teens/tweens
- Off-road/mountain biking
- Disc golf
- Allow dogs in parks
- Unstructured open space; breathing space
- Pickleball
- Adult learn-to-swim
- Bike share
- Tennis league
- Kayaking
- Off-hours programming
- Balance between conservation and use

## Overall Quality of Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

Excellent	3.8%
Very Good	55.6%
Good	32.9%
Fair	7.9%
Poor	0%

## Overall Quality of Maintenance of Parks & Recreation Facilities

Excellent	32.4%
Very Good	52.1%
Good	15.5%
Fair	0%
Poor	0%

## Suggested Improvements to Existing Facilities

Participants were asked what improvements should be made to existing facilities.

- Playground at Elm Ave Park, replaced and maintained
- Parking
- Pool building/locker room
- Family restrooms at pool
- Accessibility to parks — ADA
- Longer, better-maintained fitness trails
- Pool up to standards for meets
- Teens need a place to go
- Henry Hudson headwall repair
- Need for a canoe and kayak ramp
- Drainage issues on lacrosse fields
- Need shade/shelter
- Seating areas at the parks
- Lighting at fields, courts, parking at dog park
- Lack of restrooms
- Improved trails maintenance
- Lighting on sports fields
- Water fountains near pavilions



## Portions of the Community Identified as Underserved

Participants were asked to identify underserved populations, geographically, participations, economically, or otherwise.

- Seniors — difficult to access parks due to distance
- Connected paths for walking and bikes
- Teen/middle school programming
- Special populations — better ADA accommodations
- Non-vehicle operators
- Low-income citizens — costs prohibitive
- Exercise or fitness opportunities
- Glenmont feels isolated
- Inactive adults — more passive activities needed
- Mountain bikers
- Disc golfers
- Bicycling
- Adult team sports

## Desire for New Facilities/Amenities

Participants were asked what new facilities or amenities they would like to see added in Bethlehem.

- Performance venue, preference for ability to enclose
- Amphitheater
- Dog parks
- Indoor-activity facilities
- Community center
- Walking/biking trails, connectivity
- Disc golf
- Greenspace acquisition
- Mountain biking trails
- Community gardens
- Paved running/biking trails
- Pickleball courts
- Utility corridors for trails
- Adaptive/special needs playground
- Restrooms at parks
- Field and court lights
- Golf cart paths to connect parks and retail spaces
- Road biking
- Multi-use paths
- Synthetic turf field
- Model farm
- Archery range
- Story grove
- Arboretum

## Overall Quality of Customer Service

Excellent	63.2%
Very Good	32.4%
Good	4.4%
Fair	0%
Poor	0%

## Seeking Community Feedback

Excellent	6.3%
Very Good	32.8%
Good	35.9%
Fair	25.0%
Poor	0%



## Suggested Alternative Funding Ideas

*Participants were asked about ways to help fund the department and/or help pay for recommendations.*

- Sponsorships, grants, naming rights, advertising on website
- Explore efficiency and alternate sources of energy
- Community fundraising
- Don't do naming rights, sponsorships
- Fee in lieu
- Consider a "free day" occasionally
- Discuss a bond for recreation and parks
- Sweat equity and fund raising
- Opposed to allowing access in return for accepting federal/state grants

## Partnerships/Collaborations

*Other agencies, organizations, or individuals the Department should consider creating or maintaining a relationship with to move the goals of this plan forward.*

- Schools
- Youth sports associations
- Youth scouts
- Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy
- Arboretum/local nurseries/Garden Club
- YMCA
- Transportation district
- Historical Association
- Arts walk
- Service organizations
- Friends group
- Other open space entities (land trusts, foundations, etc.)
- Economic development — market parks as assets to live, work, and play
- Community theater
- Retailers
- Water line — City of Albany
- Sewer line property — utility
- Ethnic groups
- Surrounding jurisdictions

## Key Issues/Community Values

*Community values and key issues which may exist in the Town that should be considered in the development of this plan.*

- Sustainability
- History/culture
- Divided neighborhoods: parks can unify
- Need teen programming
- Community engagement
- Healthy kids
- Clean water
- Clean air
- Exercise
- Intergenerational programs
- Accessibility all ages
- Diversity of activities
- Native landscaping
- Renewable energy
- Willingness to invest in the community
- Don't like to spend money
- Identity of community



## Top Priorities

*Priorities of importance for the Department over the next 5 to 10 years.*

- Connectivity: non-motorized transportation
- Dog parks
- Arts in the park
- Rail trail improvements
- Financial assessment — finding the money
- Unifying the community
- Collaboration
- Pool locker rooms
- Community center design
- Plantings and landscaping
- Create a coalition serving teens/tweens
- Being creative re: Master Plan
- Update facilities
- Passive areas
- Energy self-sufficiency
- Be open to creativity
- Fiscally sustainable
- Sidewalks — walkability



# VI. What We Provide — Recreation Program Analysis

The Town of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department offers an array of recreation programs that seek to meet the needs of its diverse community. This analysis examined information pertaining to program inventory, participation rates, and revenues provided by the Department. Other sources included the survey of Town residents conducted by the Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation in 2014 and the citizen focus groups and forum held by GreenPlay in January 2015, as well as demographic information related to the Town of Bethlehem.

Parks and Recreation offers a wide variety of programs that can be found on the Town’s website: <http://www.townofbethlehem.org/140/Parks-Recreation>. For the purposes of this Master Plan, Department programs are grouped in the following categories: Sports, Senior Programs, Aquatics, Programmed Classes, Nature/Outdoor Programs, Drop-in and Other Programs, and Events.

## A. Program Categories

### Sports

Sports programming for adults is provided in basketball, volleyball, indoor soccer, and badminton. Softball is provided for adults 50 and over. Youth sports opportunities are available through Department programs as well as youth sports organizations that utilize the parks and schools in town for their league activities.

### Senior Programs

The Parks and Recreation Department and the Senior Services Department offer a variety of programs to enhance the quality of life for Bethlehem’s senior population. Programs and activities in healthy lifestyles, wellness, and self-improvement are presented to meet that objective, as well as to provide a socialization avenue for the senior community to engage with their peers.

### Aquatics

The aquatics division strives to provide safe, clean supervised areas for the citizens of the Town of Bethlehem to swim and enjoy aquatic environments and programs. Programs for adults and children, as well as open swim times, are provided at Elm Avenue Park.

### Programmed Classes

A variety of programs for all ages are provided in classes that include fitness, swimming, sports, and enrichment. The classes are offered in Town buildings, schools, and parks throughout the Town.

### Nature/Outdoor Activities

A ski club, history hikes, day camps, Traveling Tots, and a multisport camp are among the offerings with an emphasis on the out-of-doors.



## Drop-In and Other Programs

These categories include programming for informal activities such as arts and crafts, walking clubs, an after-school middle school program (the Pit), middle school events program (SCREAMS), Play Factory, and senior exercise classes.

## Events

Both Town-produced and co-sponsored festivals and events offer diverse cultural and recreational experiences to citizens and visitors while providing the opportunity for positive economic impact on the region.

## B. Program Participation and Financial Information

The following table is based upon information provided by the Parks and Recreation Department for the most recent fiscal year, 2014. The expenses shown represent *direct* costs of putting on the program. A truer picture of actual costs to provide the programming would also include *indirect* costs associated with the administration of the programs within the operations of the Department.

Direct costs are those for activities or services that benefit a specific program, for example the cost of the instructional staff and materials required for a particular program. Because these activities are easily traced to program, their costs are usually identified with the program.

Indirect costs are not directly attributable to a program. Sometimes considered as overhead, these may be costs for marketing, program registration, or administrative oversight. Indirect costs are those for activities or services that benefit more than one program. Their precise benefits to a specific project are often difficult to trace.

**Table 5: FY 2014 Program Participation with Expenses and Revenues**

	Participati on Units	Annual Expenses	Annual Revenues	Expenses vs. Revenues
EVENTS	2,090	\$5,350	\$2,000	(\$3,350)
SPORTS	314	\$9,917	\$22,799	\$12,882
SENIOR PROGRAMS	303	\$2,422	\$10,629	\$8,207
AQUATICS	1,792	\$43,311	\$52,828	\$9,517
PROGRAMMED CLASSES	1,175	\$67,663	\$101,545	\$33,882
NATURE/OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES	123	\$25,160	\$29,520	\$3,360
DROP-IN/OTHER PROGRAMS	1,261	\$30,523	\$8,200	(\$22,323)
TOTALS	6,778	\$184,346	\$227,521	\$43,175

**Table 5** shows that most programming is able to recover all of its associated direct cost and contribute to offsetting some of the indirect costs necessary to providing the program. In other areas such as events and some of the drop-in/other programs, it is intended that a tax investment support those offerings because of their broad appeal.



## C. Recreation Program and Space Analysis

The Town of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation staff produces diverse, affordable recreation programs to the community in a positive and safe environment. The quality of the programs was highly ranked by the public, with 97 percent of the focus group participants rating the programs as Good, Very Good, or Excellent. Survey respondents concurred with an average rating in excess of 3 on a scale from 1 to 5. Participation has grown in most program areas to a point where additional or improved venues are needed to meet current and future demands.

During interviews with Department staff and in public focus groups, several desired new programming areas were identified. The public expressed a desire for non-sport activities including cultural and enrichment programs, nature appreciation, and conservation-based activities. There were also requests to provide active pursuits such as mountain biking, Pickleball, and USTA tennis. These same categories were generally reflected in the 2014 survey.

Many respondents identified the need to provide programming at non-traditional hours. Parents expressed a desire for closer coordination with the school calendar, and some working adults would like more opportunities during evening hours and weekends.

Feedback from the focus groups indicated a need for greater access for seniors, some finding it difficult to travel to current program offerings. There was also concern expressed for those citizens without the means to afford program fees.

An underserved population identified by several in the public sessions was the special needs community. In fact, the program offerings of the Department were found to be lacking in adaptive or therapeutic programming and inclusion.

Teen and tween programming was cited by many as a need. A review of the program offerings, however, shows numerous tween and teen programming opportunities — some very well attended, and some with little or no registration. Connecting with this age group is traditionally a very difficult programming challenge. Consideration of an outreach to include teens and tweens in the programming decisions could result in programs attractive to these unique age groups.

Town-produced events such as summer concerts, children's shows, and celebrations around holidays — such as Family Day on July 4, Eggstravaganza, and Halloween Hay Day — work to support the local community. Expansion and enhancement can be sought through direct involvement along the lines of providing opportunity for local artists/exhibitors and non-profit organizations; considering new or expanded partnerships with local businesses; and reaching out to the small but growing ethnic communities resulting in ethnic festivals and multicultural events.

### **The Facilities**

Outdoor programming takes place at the parks and outdoor spaces of the Department. Summer swimming programs at Elm Avenue Park, camps, nature and outdoor experiences, and water access to the Hudson River all utilize the existing park amenities.

The Elm Avenue Park pool complex is in need of significant renovation and lacks updated restrooms and dressing rooms. Currently the pool does not meet competition standards for depth regulations set forth by USA Swimming.



Indoor programming is provided at existing Department and Town facilities such as Town Hall and the Elm Avenue Park offices. Other programming takes place in school buildings and occasionally on third-party sites.

Many of the indoor spaces have some programming limitations. While 90.4% of the public input rated the quality of existing parks and facilities as Good, Very Good, or Excellent, the amount of space available for programming is limited. The staff utilizes every available space to offer the programs, sometimes in makeshift areas.

### **Partners**

Many partners support current programming. Special event programming enjoys partnerships with the Bethlehem Police Department, the YMCA and in particular, the Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation. The Retired Seniors Volunteer Program, the Town Historian, and the public library support various other programming. Partnerships with area youth sports organizations provide programming in the area of youth athletics.

Opportunities exist to partner with health care providers and hospitals to address health and wellness programming, public safety agencies, outdoor/environmental/conservation entities for nature based programming, community gardens, and the schools for increased out-of-school time and enrichment programming.

### **Alternative Providers**

In addition to partnering with the Department, the YMCA is also an alternative provider of leisure services for Town residents, including aquatics, fitness, childcare, ice-skating, gym programs, and sports leagues. Other providers include a variety of organizations and churches providing adult athletic programs; Bethlehem Central School District, which offers adult fitness and other activities through its continuing education program; and commercial and non-profit entities. Environmental and outdoor education programming is available through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (at Five Rivers) as well as private entities such as Pine Hollow Arboretum and the Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy.

After-school programs, day camps, and sports camp programming are available from churches and religious organizations, School's Out, Inc., and a variety of for-profit and non-profit sports organizations. Cultural and enrichment offerings are also available from a mix of non-profit and private entities.

Consideration of the role of the Department as a provider of services, a facilitator assisting citizens in selecting from the offerings of others, or both, is a determination worthy of discussion by Town and Department leadership.

### **Program Development**

Understanding core services in the delivery of parks and recreation services will allow the Town to improve upon those areas while developing strategies to assist in the delivery of other services. To that end, the Department has established a Vision and three Goals to guide decision-making. (See Section IIC. on page 10)



With these guiding statements in mind, the Department seeks to provide the best in recreational opportunities for current residents as well as look to the future to meet emerging needs.

The basis of determining core services should come from the vision and goals developed by the Town and what brings the greatest community benefit, in balance with the competencies of the Department and the competitive market position (other providers).

Staff program area experts are assigned to develop and oversee specific program areas in order to ensure consistent program characteristics, instructor qualifications, training and evaluation, instructor pay scales, and fees. Programs areas, at a minimum, should include: fitness and wellness, aquatics, cultural arts, sports, outdoor recreation, and therapeutic recreation.

The Department should pursue program development around the priorities identified by customer feedback, program evaluation process, and research. This plan, as well as an ongoing effort to assess the changing needs of the community, provides the basis for examining program offerings. The following criteria should be examined when developing new programs:

- **Need:** outgrowth of a current popular program, or enough demonstrated demand to successfully support a minimal start (e.g., one class)
- **Budget:** accounting for all costs and anticipated (conservative) revenues should meet cost recovery target established by the Department
- **Location:** appropriate, available, and within budget
- **Instructor:** qualified, available, and within budget
- **Materials and supplies:** available and within budget
- **Marketing effort:** adequate and timely opportunity to reach intended market, within budget (either existing marketing budget or as part of new program budget)

New facilities and improvements should focus around stated community needs as well as defined core services of the Town and what would provide the greatest benefit to the community. Examples include a community center, gymnasiums, class and arts and crafts spaces, a performing arts venue, youth and senior spaces, and either dedicated or shared athletic fields. Once priorities are determined, a funding plan should be developed. All new facility development and improvements should be examined to be sure they are sustainable under current and/or future conditions of the General Fund and also maximize collaboration with other related Town Departments.

Additionally, it is important that all supporting divisions such as maintenance, administration, and recreation staff be involved as necessary in new program and facility development. Engaging all who are associated with a new program, both directly and indirectly, in the decision-making process will help ensure a quality experience for the customer.

The citizen focus groups touched on program areas that the community would like to see created or expanded. Further research into what types of programming would be successful needs to be done. Successful programs come from continuous creative assessment, research, and planning. The Department should create a process that evaluates the success of current program offerings and criteria to determine if new program ideas should be instituted or if changes should be made to current programs.



The demographics of the Town need to be considered when developing program offerings. The age cohorts of the Town of Bethlehem indicate that adult programming will play an increasing role in the offerings of the Department. Nearly 33 percent of the current population is between the ages of 45 and 64, and the fastest growing segment of the population is the cohort ages 65-74. Health, wellness, cultural, and other programming with appeal to this increasingly active adult cohort will be an important programming consideration. While the youth and teen sectors decline slightly over the evaluation period (2014–2020) from 30 percent to 25 percent, it remains a critical recreation segment that is unique not only for its needs, but because it typically requires adult support (for transportation) and increased staff attention.

Moreover, new leisure and recreation trends may drive different needs. It is very easy to focus on programs that have worked for a number of years, especially if they are still drawing enough interested participants to justify the program's continuation. Starting new programs, based on community demand and/or trends, can be risky due to the inability to predict their success. If the program interest seems great, as with those identified in public input, then the programs should be expanded. Appropriate available space may hinder new or expanded opportunities in some cases.

Using historical participation levels to determine program popularity and participant feedback can be helpful in deciding if programs should be continued. In addition, utilizing citizen surveys and participant feedback, and researching trends in parks and recreation programming are useful tools in determining future program needs and desires. Sources for trend information include:

- State parks and recreation associations and conferences
- National Recreation and Parks Association
- International Health, Racquet & Sports Club Association
- Parks and recreation trade publications

### **Program Evaluation**

All current programs are evaluated annually to determine if they should be continued, changed (market segment focus, time/day offered, etc.), or discontinued. A few simple questions should be asked about each program which include:

- Is participation increasing or decreasing? If participation is increasing, then it could clearly mean that the program should be continued. If participation is decreasing, are there any steps to take to increase interest through marketing efforts, change to the time/day the program is offered, or change to the format or instructor? If not, it may be time to discontinue the program.
- Is there information contained in the participant feedback that can be used to improve the program?
- Are cost recovery goals being met? If not, can fees be realistically increased?
- Is there another provider of the program that is more suitable to offer it? If yes, the Department could provide referrals for its customers for the program it does not or is not willing or able to offer.
- Is this program taking up facility space that could be used for expansion of more popular programs or new programs in demand by the community?



## Financial Sustainability

It is important for the Department to develop a resource allocation and pricing philosophy that reflects the values of the community and the responsibility it has to the community. This philosophy will be especially important as the Parks and Recreation Department moves forward in the development of new programs and additional and/or expanded facilities, strives for effective use of available resources and sustainability, and determines how much it is willing to subsidize operations with tax dollars.

One means of accomplishing this goal is applying a process using an industry tool called the “pyramid methodology.” This methodology develops and implements a refined cost recovery philosophy and pricing policy based on current “best practices” as determined by the vision of the agency and the program’s benefit to the community and/or individual.

Critical to this philosophical undertaking is the support and understanding of elected officials and ultimately citizens. Whether or not significant changes are called for, the Department wants to be certain that it is philosophically aligned with its residents. The development of the core services and cost recovery philosophy and policy is built on a very logical foundation, using the understanding of who is benefiting from recreation services to determine how the costs for that service should be offset.

Recreation programs and services are sorted along a continuum of what delivers the greatest community benefit to what delivers the greatest individual benefit. The amount of subsidy for each level (not necessarily each individual program) is then determined to create an overall cost recovery philosophy.

Developing effective ongoing systems that help measure success in reaching cost recovery goals and anticipate potential pitfalls are dependent on the following:

- Understanding of current revenue streams and their sustainability.
- Tracking all expenses and revenues for programs, facilities, and services to understand their contribution to overall Department cost recovery.
- Analyzing who is benefiting from programs, facilities, and services, and to what degree they should be subsidized.
- Acknowledging the full cost of each program (those direct and indirect costs associated with program delivery) and where the program fits on the continuum of who benefits from the program or service to determine appropriate cost recovery targets.
- Defining direct costs as those that typically exist purely because of the program and change with the program.
- Defining indirect costs as those that typically would exist anyway (like full-time staff, utilities, administration, debt service, etc.).
- Setting program fees not based on ability to pay, but on an objective approach that allows for easy access for lower income participants, through availability of scholarships and/or discounts. In many instances qualification for scholarships and /or discounts can mirror requirements for free or reduced cost for lunch in schools.

A detailed overview of the Pyramid Methodology can be found in **Appendix B**.



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## VII. Who Does It? – Organizational Analysis

GreenPlay broadly assessed the organizational and management structure and staffing of the Town of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department to determine effectiveness and efficiency in meeting current and future responsibilities as related to the community's needs.

The needs assessment of this planning process included input from staff interviews (both group and individual), community and key stakeholder engagement, and a level of service analysis, along with the consultant's expertise. In addition, data from the recent survey of the community conducted by the Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation was utilized. From this information-gathering process a few areas of concern and opportunities for operational enhancement have been identified.

Key organizational issues identified and observed as areas for improvement include:

- Internal and external communication can be improved to promote interdepartmental as well as intradepartmental coordination and cooperation.
- Online Registration can be difficult to navigate.
- Better marketing of programs is needed with more diverse and targeted promotions.
- A key and consistent element brought forward by the staff was the notion that improvements could be made through the nurturing of existing partnerships and cooperative arrangements with entities such as the school districts and in seeking new beneficial partnerships with other public, private, and non-profit organizations.
- While the relationship between Parks and Recreation and Highway appears strong, the assignment of the responsibility of maintenance of parks to another agency results in conflicts in priority setting and resource allocation.

Review of this information also revealed that the Department displays several strengths. Seventy-five percent of the focus group attendees rated Customer Service as either Excellent or Very Good. The results of the Friends survey also indicated high levels of customer satisfaction. The Department portion of the Town website received many favorable comments, as did the Department's response to the public.

### A. Staffing Analysis

Many observations were taken into account to determine if the Department had the right mix of staffing in the right places.

The staffing analysis process included the observations and assessments of:

- Community input
- Community satisfaction rates
- Staff group interviews
- Individual staff interviews
- Facility tours
- Observations of quality of maintenance
- Hours of operation
- Participation in professional parks and recreation organizations
- Organizational chart
- Departmental budgets



## B. Staffing Considerations

After considering the organizational observations and staffing assessment, the opinion of the consultant team is that Department staff have done a remarkable job of delivering quality service in the operation of its current system. However, in their quest for continual improvement, the following items are areas of concern requiring attention:

1. Strong communication must be maintained and enhanced within and between the operations of the Department, and especially with the Highway Department, to promptly and effectively maintain departmental facilities.
2. The Department is lacking in meeting the requirements for inclusion service mandated by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as programming specific for individuals with special needs.
3. While the website is good and received many positive comments from the public, overall marketing, especially the utilization of modern methods of communication and social media, require improvement.
4. There are several employees within five years of retirement. With their departure, the Department will also lose significant knowledge in operations. If not properly prepared for, training of replacements can be expensive and operations can suffer while new personnel get up to speed.
5. Existing staff is challenged to maintain current operations. Staff finds it difficult to be creative when an inordinate amount of time is required to deal with urgent matters. There is little to no time to plan. Any expansion of facilities or programs will require additional human resources to continue the high level of service delivery.

To operate more effectively in the future and to implement this plan, the Department should consider assigning the following duties to existing or new staff.

- Therapeutic Recreation--coordination of inclusion and adaptive recreation programming.
- Marketing and social media function.
- A staff liaison effort to enhance existing partnerships and to seek new partnership opportunities.
- Maintenance of existing and new facilities at or above acceptable standards.



# VIII. What We Have Now — Inventory and Level of Service Analysis

## A. Creating the Inventory

The level of service analysis process involved assembly of a detailed inventory of public physical assets available for use by the Bethlehem community. This asset inventory was created to serve the Town in a number of ways, as it can be used for a wide variety of planning and operations tasks such as asset management, as well as future strategic master plans. The assets inventory currently includes public parks, recreation, and trail facilities managed by the Parks and Recreation Department.

The Town of Bethlehem has 12 park facilities described within this section, and has over 12 other park and recreational facilities operated by other agencies within the Town limits. The park system consists of nearly 326 acres and serves a Town population of approximately 34,000 residents. Overall, the park system is highly regarded within the community and regionally, offering a wide variety of recreational opportunities with quality maintenance and operations of these facilities.

The park system consists of two regional parks (larger park areas with multiple park facilities: Elm Avenue Park and Henry Hudson Park), five neighborhood parks (smaller park areas predominately located within neighborhoods: South Bethlehem Park, North Bethlehem Park, Selkirk Park, Maple Ridge Park, and the Town Hall Playground and Ballfield), and five specialty park areas (predominately consisting of areas with a particular use: Firefighters Memorial Park, Veterans Memorial Park, Moh-He-Con-Nuck Nature Preserve, the Elm Avenue Park Pool Complex, and the Dog Park).

Like many upstate New York communities, Bethlehem strives to keep up with the demand for sports fields and facilities within its park system. It has a longstanding relationship with the Bethlehem Soccer Club, Tomboys Girls Softball, Bethlehem Babe Ruth Baseball, Tri-Village Little League, Bethlehem Lacrosse Club, and several others. The Bethlehem Central School District facilities as well as some private indoor and outdoor facilities are utilized as well.

Bethlehem is fortunate to have a five-mile portion of the Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail, a quickly growing east-west nine-mile multi-use trail, routed along the northern limits of the Town, providing a trail connection to the City of Albany, Town of New Scotland, and Village of Voorheesville.

Following is a brief description of each park facility and general suggestions for future improvements based on the level of service inventory analysis scoring and comments. (Parks are listed alphabetically.)



## Elm Avenue Park

The Town's largest park, built in 1973, is located on Elm Avenue, a quarter-mile south of the Delmar bypass (Route 32). The park includes a pool complex, tennis and basketball courts, pavilions, fitness trail, playing fields, volleyball and shuffleboard courts, a dog park, and a playground. Winter facilities include a large ice skating rink, sledding hill, cross-country skiing, and an area for snowmobiling.



Athletic Fields – The park includes several athletic fields, including the following: softball (6), baseball (5), soccer (6), and lacrosse (3). Fields are located throughout the park and on Line Drive.

Basketball Courts – Two basketball courts are available and are lit in the evenings beginning at the end of May.

Fitness Trail – The 1.3-mile fitness trail winds through a wooded area at the rear of the park and includes 20 exercise stations with 32 different exercises. The trail also serves as a walking/nature trail. Bicycles and all motorized vehicles are prohibited.



Horseshoe Pits – Two horseshoe pits are located near the large pavilion.

Ice Skating Rink – During the winter months, the grass area adjacent to the warming hut is flooded to create an ice skating rink, which is open daily for general skating when the ice is 4 inches thick with a good surface.



Pavilion Structures – Three pavilion structures are located throughout the park, providing spaces for groups to cookout and picnic. The two small pavilions can accommodate approximately 35 people each, while the larger pavilion can seat approximately 400 people. Bathrooms are located at the larger pavilion. The pavilions can be reserved by residents and Town of Bethlehem-based organizations.



Shuffleboard – A regulation size shuffleboard court is located near small pavilion B.



Tennis Courts – Eight tennis courts are available at the Elm Avenue Park. Four courts are lit in the evenings beginning at the end of May.

Volleyball Courts – Three volleyball courts are located within the park, two of which are sand courts located next to small pavilion A. The third court is located near the large pavilion.

Warming Hut – Throughout the year, the warming hut provides a covered area for patrons to picnic, restrooms, and a concession stand. Within the winter months, the warming hut supports the ice rink activities.

Additional Park Resources – Throughout the year, the park area provides a cross-country running course for the Bethlehem Central School District and various runs/walks. During the winter months, sledding is available on the large hill behind the small pavilion A. Cross-country skiing and snow shoeing are allowed throughout the park, while snowmobiling is permitted in the field areas along Rt. 32 only.

*General Recommendations: Elm Avenue Park is often considered the “hub” of Bethlehem’s park system and provides the greatest number of athletic and recreation facilities in a single location. As a result, some of the facilities at Elm Avenue Park are in need of upgrades/replacement. Several other facilities are in need of specific improvements including replacement of the playground and fitness circuit, upgrades to the volleyball and shuffleboard courts, drainage improvements at the lacrosse fields, re-grading/subsurface improvements to a few baseball fields, as well as upgrades to the warming hut facility. An expansion of the trail/pathway network within the park area and connecting with adjacent neighborhoods and bicycle/pedestrian facilities is recommended as well. Additional recommendations include implementing no-mow zones and additional natural areas to reduce regular mowing/maintenance, as well as installing additional shade structures.*

### **Elm Avenue Pool Complex**

The Elm Avenue Park Pool Complex is open daily from June to September and consists of a 50-meter pool, an intermediate pool, a diving pool, two children’s spray pads, a children’s play area, locker rooms, and a concession stand.



*General Recommendations: The Elm Avenue Pool Complex is in need of regular maintenance and repair. As a result, it is recommended that the marcite be replaced/rehabilitated to reduce ongoing maintenance of the pools. Ventilation within the pool mechanical room should be improved. The warming hut, first-aid station, locker rooms, and pool building are in need of renovation and should be retrofitted to serve the needs of all patrons, including individuals with disabilities and families. Additional shade structures within the pool area are recommended.*



### **Elm Avenue Park Buildings**

The entire park administration system is supported by the Parks and Recreation Office Building, which houses Department staff and includes a program/meeting room. The park maintenance area includes three garages, the pool filtration equipment, a greenhouse, work spaces, and a gas/diesel station, among many other equipment areas.



*General Recommendations: The Elm Avenue Park Office and Maintenance facilities are almost all in need of rehabilitation or replacement. Interior lighting finishes and storage areas need to be renovated/rehabilitated to provide newer and efficient use of space. Improved signage for these facilities as a part of the overall park signage strategy is recommended as well.*

### **Dog Park**

The dog park is a fenced-in area providing space for dogs to run and play. The park is located within the northernmost area of Elm Avenue Park along the Delmar bypass.

*General Recommendations: The dog park should provide a separate large and small dog run, and the shade shelter should be replaced. Additional signage, trees, and shade should be provided within the dog run area. Lighting from the parking lot to the dog run is recommended.*

### **Firefighters Memorial Park**

Firefighters Memorial Park is a small pocket park located next to the Slingerlands Fire House on New Scotland Road and adjacent to the Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail. This pocket park includes the memorial area, landscape areas, and on-street parking.



*General Recommendations: The park is in relatively good condition. The existing memorial area pavers are difficult to maintain and when it becomes necessary to replace the surface, alternative paving materials or method of construction should be considered.*



## Henry Hudson Park

Henry Hudson Park is sometimes seen as the “hidden gem” among Bethlehem’s parks. Located off Route 144 in Cedar Hill along the banks of the Hudson River, the park offers a variety of unique recreational amenities. The park facilities include a boat launch, picnic area with grills, picnic pavilion, softball field, playground, volleyball court, horseshoes, restroom facility, gazebo, and an accessible fishing area.



*General Recommendations: Henry Hudson Park is in fairly good condition, with the exception of the shoreline, which is in severe need of repair and/or replacement. In 2010, a study was completed to repair/restore the shoreline, which continues to degrade. Additional improvements within the park include improving accessibility for all park patrons, improving parking areas, repairing/removing unused fencing within the park, and creating a canoe/kayak launch.*

## Maple Ridge Park

Maple Ridge Park is a neighborhood park with large grass areas, a playground (with areas for ages 2–5 and 5–12), a basketball court, walking path, picnic areas, pavilion, several parking lots, and a sledding hill.



*General Recommendations: Maple Ridge Park is one of Bethlehem’s newer park facilities and is in fairly good condition. Recommended improvements include improving accessibility of the playground, providing additional park signage at side street entrances, and repairing/replacing the pavilion roof.*

## Moh-He-Con-Nuck Nature Preserve

Moh-He-Con-Nuck Nature Preserve, on the Hudson River off of Route 144 in Selkirk, is a 53-acre parcel with 1.2 miles of walking trails. The park area includes a parking lot with landscaping, a kiosk, and trail signage.

*General Recommendations: The park area is in relatively good condition, but is in need of additional trail signage and seating areas.*



### **North Bethlehem Park**

North Bethlehem Park, near the North Bethlehem Fire House off of Russell Road, features a playground, basketball court, parking lot, trails, and a picnic area.

*General Recommendations: North Bethlehem Park is in fairly good condition; however, the basketball court backboards, bicycle racks, and playground are all recommended for replacement or repair. In addition, there are consistent issues with dirt bikes in the wooded portion of the park. As a result, it is recommended that the trails be formalized to provide increased recreational use within this portion of the park and consequently additional eyes on the trails to deter inappropriate use.*

### **Selkirk Park**

Selkirk Park is located on Houk Drive off Thatcher Street and features a playground, youth-sized softball field, tennis courts, and a basketball court.

*General Recommendations: The tennis courts at Selkirk Park are in need of resurfacing. In addition, several of the benches and bicycle racks should be replaced; the bleachers and flagpole are to be repaired/replaced.*



### **South Bethlehem Park**

South Bethlehem Park is located on the shores of the Onesquethaw Creek off South Albany Road at Wylie Lane and features a playground, softball field, basketball court, picnic area, several parking lots, and fishing access.

*General Recommendations: Water service is recommended within the park for the addition of water fountains. The softball field infield areas around bases need improvement and additional player benches are needed as well. Several of the picnic tables, bicycle racks, and soccer goals should be replaced. Available properties adjacent to parklands should be considered for park expansion and additional field space.*



### **Veterans Memorial Park**

Veterans Memorial Park, located on Delaware Avenue adjacent to the Albany County Rail Trail, includes a memorial area with landscaping, signage, benches, and bicycle racks. Parking is available at the Stewart's Shop adjacent to the site.

*General Recommendations: The park is in relatively good condition. The existing memorial area pavers are difficult to maintain. If and when it becomes necessary to replace the pavers, alternative paving materials or method of construction should be considered.*



## **Town Hall Playground & Ballfield**

The playground and ballfield adjacent to Town Hall include benches, tables, trash receptacles, bike racks, landscaping, and a drinking fountain.

*General Recommendations: It is recommended that the playground and ballfield areas be rehabilitated/improved to provide access for patrons of all abilities. It is recommended that additional park identification signage be provided within the park as is the replacement of existing play equipment, sandbox, and bicycle racks.*

## **B. Facility Inventory Summary**

As part of the Master Plan process, the consultants have provided a complete Facility Inventory Summary Matrix as a staff document. This matrix represents the inventory and detailed assessment of each park component, completed by visiting every park in the fall of 2014.

The inventory for this Master Plan was conducted using a Composite Values Methodology (CVM). For the analysis, each component in the inventory was given a score based on apparent fit for its intended purpose:

- Score of 1 = the component does not meet expectations for its intended purpose at this particular location.
- Score of 2 = the component meets expectations for its intended purpose at this location.
- Score of 3 = the component exceeds normal expectations for its intended purpose at this location.

### **Key Facility Inventory Findings**

- Most parks are in excellent condition; maintenance is generally great but a few locations have aged significantly.
- Elm Avenue Park pools, playground, office building, and maintenance structures need major repairs, upgrades, or replacement.
- Turf throughout the park system is of high quality, with some attention needed to help with drainage and erosion in playing field areas and non-playing field areas.
- There is a good variety of neighborhood and regional parks throughout the Town, as well as number of alternative service providers.
- Most parks do not incorporate cultural or historical aspects of the community, beyond specialty parks.
- The dog park is heavily used and exhibits wear and tear.

## **C. Level of Service Methodology**

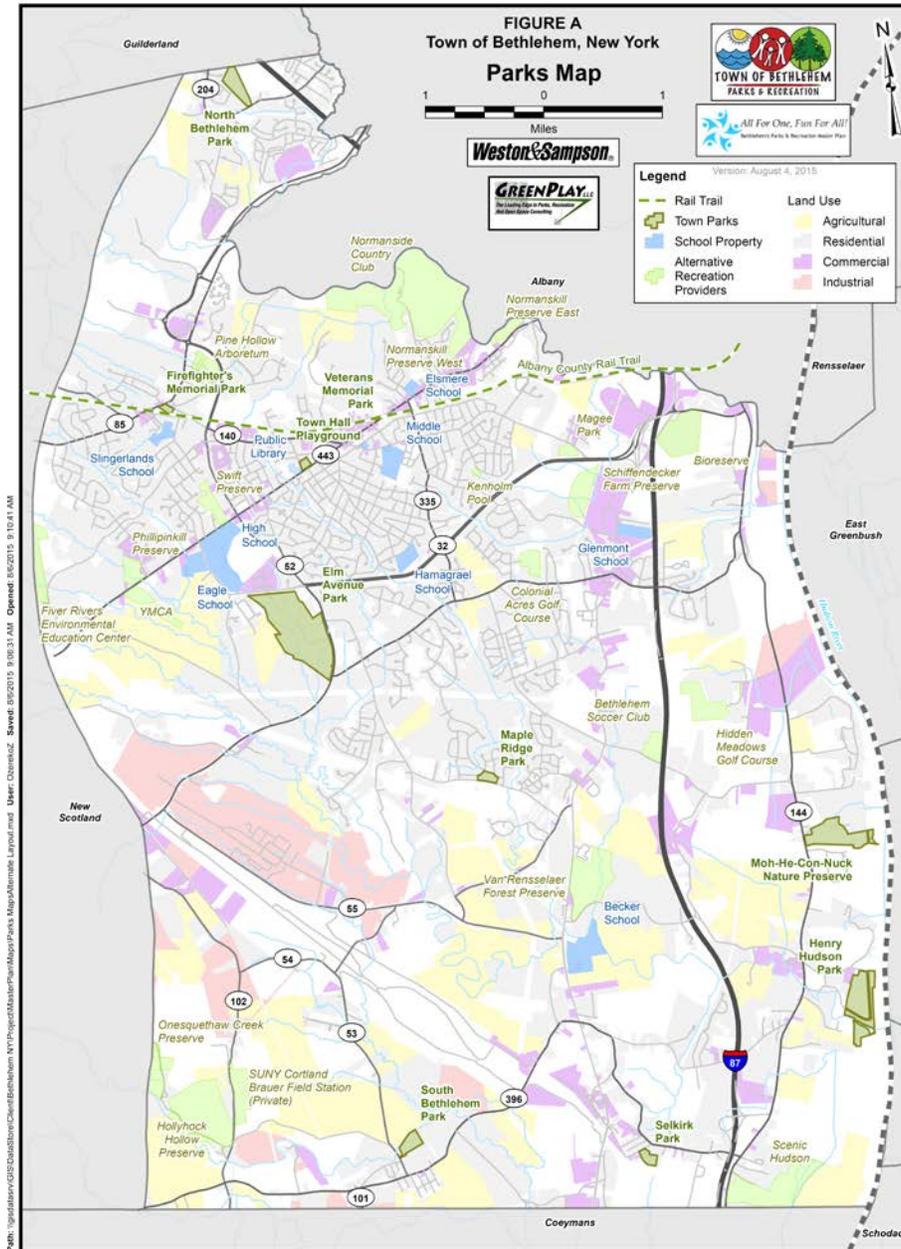
### **Overall Parks System**

The overall parks system level of service was developed through the analysis of existing park resources and variety of offerings. It also considers the locations of alternative service providers, including school district facilities. For purposes of this study, the Town limit boundary was used as the extent of the study area; however, it should be noted that park facilities just over the Town border provide services for Town residents or connect to nearby municipalities, e.g., Five Rivers Environmental Education Center and the Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail.



Figure 6 shows the study area and key locations of park facilities and schools within the Town of Bethlehem. Larger scale maps may be found in Appendix C.

Figure 6: Bethlehem Parks Map



**Park Catchment Areas**

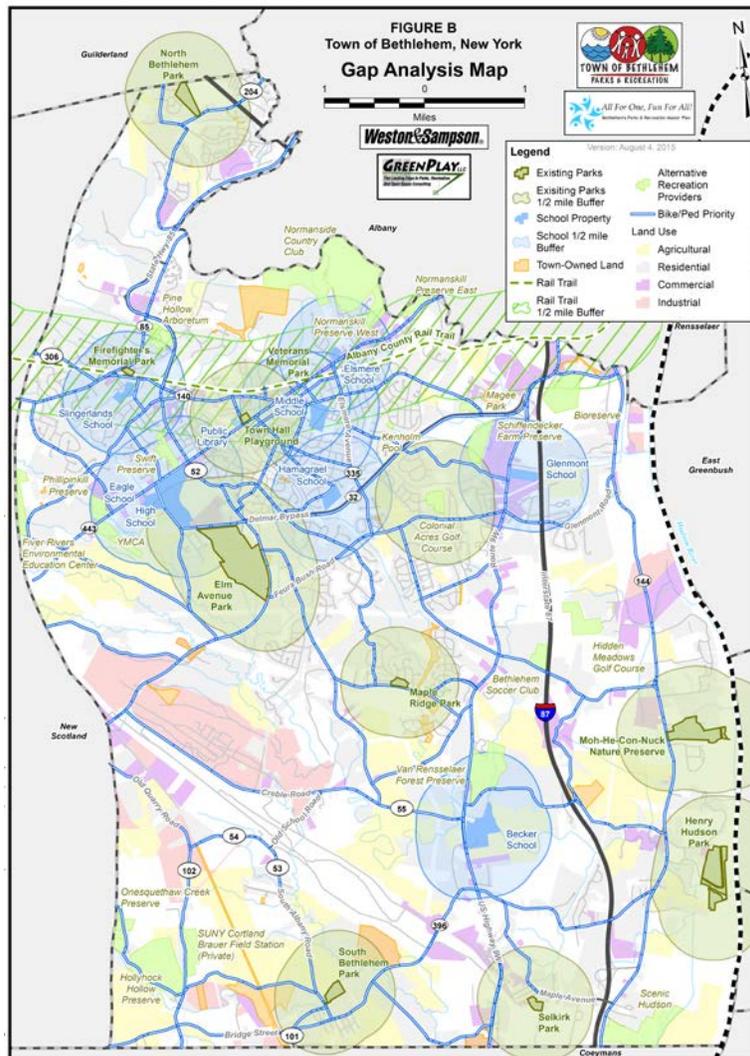
Park catchment areas, also called buffers, are used to display level of service areas in the community for each park. A radius of a specific distance is drawn around each park or trail. People use a variety of transit modes to reach a recreation destination: on foot, on a bike, in a car, via public transportation, or utilizing any combination of these or other alternatives.



Currently, most regional park visitors access the park areas via automobile, while some of the neighborhood parks (Maple Ridge, Selkirk Park, South Bethlehem Park, and Town Hall Playground and Ballfield) experience greater numbers of visitors through walking and biking. As a result, a primary catchment distance of 0.5 mile was utilized for each park, school property, and the Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail. This distance represents a travel time of 15 minutes based on an average walking speed of three miles per hour, accounting for longer actual walking distances due to indirect routes, as are commonly found in a disconnected street network.

**Figure 7** models the 0.5 mile catchment radii around each park, school property, and the Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail overlaid on the land uses as shown in **Figure 6**.

**Figure 7: Bethlehem Parks Gaps Analysis Map with .05 Mile Level of Service Buffer**



In general, the map indicates that Bethlehem has great distribution of facilities and good motor vehicle access to parks and outdoor recreation facilities. Areas of high concentration of school facilities are notable, particularly in the Delaware Avenue corridor. This map demonstrates that a majority of Bethlehem residents (current and future) are within 0.5 mile of a park or a bicycle/pedestrian priority network link. Implementation of the Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Network (created by the town's Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee) would greatly improve access to parks, trails, bike routes, and sidewalk connections within residential areas.

## D. Level of Service Analysis Findings

Through the level of service analysis, the park system was reviewed through several perspectives, including geographical distribution of park resources, proximity to neighborhoods, existing environmental/cultural resources, variety of park resources, and opportunities for park/recreation system expansion.

### Key Level of Service Analysis Findings

- There is a wide variety of well-distributed recreational opportunities, with the noted exception of the north-south corridor between Magee Park, Colonial Acres Golf Course, and Maple Ridge Park. Additional islands without nearby park resources are created due to major roadways and varying topographic and environmental resource areas, including the neighborhoods south of North Bethlehem Park.
- The park system is well supplemented by distribution of Bethlehem Central School District properties, which provide playground equipment and recreation fields/courts for basketball, tennis, baseball, etc. Recreational fields are available to Town residents outside of school hours and scheduled events.
- The majority of park properties are small (3 to 22 acres), compared to Elm Avenue Park (160 acres), Henry Hudson Park (56 acres), and Moh-He-Con-Nuck Nature Preserve (55 acres).
- Overall connectivity within and between parks is limited and the Town should focus investment of the bicycle and pedestrian network that provides access to the Town parks, which would greatly improve park-to-park and neighborhood-to-park connections.
- Residential areas with lower level of service tend to be on the edges of the Town limits and tend to be adjacent to industrial property or farmland, and/or have a relatively low population density.
- Environmental, cultural, and historic resources exist throughout the community; however, beyond Moh-He-Con-Nuck Nature Preserve, few Town Park areas are dedicated to passive recreational interests of the community. Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy has several nature preserves in Town that provide passive recreational opportunities.
- The Town has nearly ten miles of riverfront, however public access is limited to a single access point at Henry Hudson Park.



## IX. Key Issues Matrix

The Key Issues Matrix (**Figure 8**) captures, summarizes, and prioritizes all of the key issues that surfaced during the Master Plan process. The key issues appear in four categories on the matrix:

- a) Priority
- b) Opportunity to Improve
- c) Minor or Future Issue
- Left blank; means the issue did not come up or wasn't addressed in that venue

The qualitative data planning tools used to determine the priority of the key issues include:

1. Existing planning documents
2. Consultant team's expertise
3. Bethlehem Parks and Recreation staff input
4. Public forum input

The quantitative data planning tools used to determine the priority of the key issues include:

1. Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Survey
2. Town data
3. Facility Inventory and Level of Service Analysis

The key issues are organized into five areas:

1. Organizational
2. Programs and Service Delivery
3. Facility and Amenities
4. Level of Service
5. Finance

Preliminary recommendations are listed for each key issue and were presented to the Bethlehem Parks and Recreation project team to gather input on the prioritization of the final recommendations and action plans. The Key Issues Matrix summarizes the areas that need immediate attention and determines the direction of the implementation of recommendations in the Master Plan.

As the Key Issues Matrix demonstrates, these are the recurring themes that were common throughout the community input process, regardless of the method of communication.



Figure 8: Key Issues Matrix

2014 Data Source	Qualitative Data				Quantitative Data			Consultant's Analysis and Professional Expertise
	Consultant Team	Staff Input	Public Input	Existing Documents	FRIENDS Survey	Town Data	Facility Assessment/LOS	
 <p><b>Key Issue - Rating Scale</b></p> <p>a - priority b - opportunity to improve c - minor or future issue</p> <p>blank means the issue didn't come up or wasn't addressed</p>	 							
<b>Organizational</b>								<b>Preliminary Recommendations</b>
Need better marketing and communication of activities and facilities	a	b	a			a		Develop Marketing Plan to improve awareness and communication
Increase staffing for maintenance	a	a	a				a	Hire and train staff for current and future parks maintenance demand
Increase staffing for programming and future facilities operations	a	a	a					Hire and train staff for current and future programming and facility usage demand
Review current field allocation policy and update	a	a		a			a	Review existing field allocation policy and industry best practices to update current policy
<b>Programs and Service Delivery</b>								
Need more programming for families, teens, seniors	a	b	a			b		Expand program opportunities for teens, families, seniors
Increase programs in wellness/fitness, cultural, special needs	a	a				b		Expand programs in wellness/fitness, cultural, special needs
Increase number of Music and Arts events in parks	a	b	b			a		Expand neighborhood & community special event opportunities
Increase aquatic opportunities (pool, river front)	a	a	a					Review current schedule to maximize usage and meet demand
Develop outdoor/nature-based/environmental program offerings	a	b	a			a		Look for opportunities to offer additional non-sports programming
Explore opportunities to develop non-traditional sports programs	a	b	a			a		Based on demand and trends consider developing pickle ball, disc golf and archery
<b>Facilities and Amenities</b>								
Maintain and improve existing facilities	a	a	a			a	a	Continue to implement existing plans & Master Plan
Renovate and update Elm Avenue Park Pool Complex	a	a	a			a	a	Make renovations and update to accommodate families with individuals with Special Needs and the general public
Work with the Bike and Ped Committee to identify connections using the current priority network	a	a	a			a	a	Continue to develop greenways and expand to connect neighborhoods to parks with the Bike and Ped Plan
Meet future population demands through additional recreation facilities	a	a	a			a	a	Future facility expansion should include multipurpose use facility
Explore outdoor amphitheater / special event venue	a	b	a			a	b	Future facility expansion should consider additional entertainment venues
Explore opportunity to develop Mountain Biking Trails	a	b	a			b	a	Working with the community look for opportunities on current public lands
Explore opportunities for on leash dogs in select town parks	a	b	a			a	b	Working with the community and Animal Control to develop guidelines
Make needed repairs and updates to the Henry Hudson Park	a	a	a	a		a	a	Find funding options to make repairs identified in the Shoreline Stabilization Study and explore construction of a kayak launch
Update ADA Transition Plan	a						a	Using the Town's current Transition Plan and develop a P&R specific plan
Explore the establishment of network of Community Gardens	b	b					b	Working with community develop community gardens
Explore adding a separate area for small dogs	b	b				b	b	Based on demand look for opportunities to provide separate spaces for large and small dogs
Explore the addition of another picnic shelter to meet demand	a	a	a				a	New park development and renovations should include additional picnic shelters
Make repairs to the Fit Trail and replace outdated fitness equipment	a	a	a			a	a	Explore options to make repairs to the Fit Trail and to replace the current fitness equipment with fitness stations at points along the trail
Explore adding a Trail System at Elm Avenue Park	b	b	b			a	b	As Elm Avenue Parks is redesigned and renovated, explore options to add a circular trail around the perimeter of the park
Replace the playground at Elm Avenue Park	a	a	a	a		a	a	Replace the wooden playground at Elm Avenue Park with an industry standard playground. Engage the community in it's design and installation.
As opportunities arise look at adding additional park land	b	b	b	b		b	b	
Explore Shade options	a	b	a			a	a	Explore options to add shade to parks and facilities either through tree plantings or shade structures
<b>Level of Service</b>								
Identify gaps that are in need of service based LOS	a		a				a	Consider geographic barriers when looking at future facilities and services
Verify other Service Providers are not filling gaps	a	b					a	Continue to map HOA and other service provider amenities that fill service gaps
Develop LOS criteria for catchment areas and acreage by population	a						a	Using the NRPA 2015 Field Report as a benchmark, adopt LOS criteria for the Town
<b>Finance</b>								
Utilize equitable user fees	b	b	a	b		a		Develop Cost Recovery Policy
Pursue grant opportunities	a	a	a	a				Explore alternative funding opportunities
Explore funding options that provide dedication revenue for parks and recreation	a	a	a					Impact fees, tax levy, in lieu funds.....



# X. Great Things to Come – Recommendations

This section describes recommendations to enhance the level of service and the quality of life through improvement of existing sites, future development of new facilities, organizational enhancements, financial improvements, increased programming, improved safety, and potential partnerships.

*Note: Any reference to level of service scoring throughout this recommendation discussion relies on walkable level of service analysis. Overall level of service scoring from a driving standpoint was high and thus identified minimal need for improvement. Despite the fact that walkable coverage provided is generally good, an examination of walkable level of service does reveal areas on which to focus improvement efforts.*

## A. Overall Recommendations

Although the Town of Bethlehem Park system has great facilities and is well maintained, there are multiple recommendations to further improve the system. Three themes of recommendations were developed as described below.

### 1. Connecting people to parks (connectivity to and within)

- Develop/expand more neighborhood parks in growing areas.
- Disperse athletic field use beyond Elm Avenue Park.
- Improve trail connectivity within park areas.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections to parks.
- Embrace Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail with parking areas, and increased trail access to/from neighborhoods.
- Improve utilization of existing park spaces, specifically North Bethlehem Park and South Bethlehem Park.
- As land adjacent to existing parks becomes available for sale, the Town should consider the benefits of expanding the Town park system (examples include South Bethlehem Park and Elm Avenue Park).

### 2. Connecting people to people (cultural/historical/meeting spaces)

- Increase number of shade structures.
- Explore design and construction of a new Community Center at Elm Avenue Park.
- Develop an outdoor cultural arts venue/area.
- Develop cultural/ historical spaces and information within parks.



### 3. Connecting people to the environment (river/ adventure sports/nature)

- Embrace the waterfront — expand nature area and water-based/adventure recreational opportunities.
- Take advantage of the terrain, climate, and water opportunities to become an outdoor adventure sports destination with cross-country skiing, hiking, trail running, mountain biking, stand-up paddling, canoe/kayaking, etc.
- Construct separate canoe/kayak launch area at Henry Hudson Park.
- Implement strategies to incorporate native landscape/non-turf areas.
- Partner with community group to develop/organize a mountain bike “park.”
- Partner with community group to develop/organize a community garden.

#### General Recommendations

- Implement and update the ADA Transition Plan to address park and recreation areas that are not compliant.
- Provide universal access to all parks/facilities.
- Develop and implement design/maintenance standards.
- Develop and implement a system of park master planning for aging existing parks and expand recreational types.
- Maintain and improve/upgrade existing facilities outdated amenities that do not function well.
- Implement identification signage at all parks.

## B. Park-Specific Recommendations

Below is a summary of recommendations for each park area.

### Elm Avenue Park

1. Recreation/cultural center: Plan/design facility for recreation, historic, and cultural arts
2. Trails and paths: Renovate and expand trail/shared use path system within park areas (refer to **Appendix E** for conceptual plan at Elm Avenue Park).
3. Playground: Renovate/ replace/ develop.
4. Fitness Circuit: Renovate/ replace.
5. Signage: Replace/ improve existing park identification and wayfinding signage within park
6. Parking lot: Rehabilitate existing parking lot areas (behind tennis courts and Line Drive).
7. Turf fields: Improve drainage at lacrosse fields and select baseball fields.
8. Goals: Replace damaged soccer goals
9. Basketball court: Repair/rehabilitate basketball courts.
10. Shuffleboard court: Remove/rehabilitate.
11. Volleyball court: Rehabilitate court/netting/lighting.
12. Warming hut: Rehabilitate/upgrade existing structure.
13. Shade structures: Increase number of (non-reserve) shade structures in open spaces.
14. Natural areas: Enhance environmental areas and implement no-mow zones
15. Lighting: Improve security lighting at key areas of park (pavilion, playground, pool, etc.).



### **Elm Avenue Pool Complex**

1. Structural: Develop and implement a plan to renovate the Elm Avenue Park pools (marcite surface) and structures.
2. Access: Explore potential of implementing zero-entry access to L-shaped pool for additional access.
3. Safety: Improve diving board ladder rails.
4. Safety: Improve/replace small spray fixture to minimize injuries.
5. Access: Renovate locker room/gazebo to accommodate patrons with disabilities.
6. Systems: Renovate pool mechanical room to upgrade HVAC system, relocate chemical storage, and provide additional chemical storage on upper level.

### **Elm Avenue Park Buildings**

1. Park Office building: Rehabilitate.
2. Park Office building: Improve lighting/ interior finishes.
3. Small maintenance building: Renovate/expand office space, storage, and bathrooms.
4. Medium maintenance building: Replace roof.
5. Medium maintenance building: Expand storage area.
6. Medium maintenance building: Improve lighting.
7. Medium maintenance building: Provide cover over gas/diesel station pump area.
8. Large maintenance building: Replace roof/repair siding.
9. Large maintenance building: Expand storage area.
10. Signage: Improve building area identification signage.

### **Dog Park**

1. Access: Provide separate large/small dog runs.
2. Site Furnishings: Replace shade shelter.

### **Firefighters Memorial Park**

1. Connectivity: Formalize connection to the Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail.
2. Site Furnishings: Provide benches/tables as a resting spot for users of the Rail Trail.
3. Playground: Develop.

### **Henry Hudson Park**

1. Headwall: Repair.
2. Signage: Improve park identification signage (boat launch, kiosk).
3. Access: Improve access for all park patrons (softball field, benches, and trash receptacles).
4. Parking: Improve parking areas (peninsula, north end parking).
5. Fencing: Repair/remove unused fencing within the park.
6. Flagpole: Repair and provide lighting.
7. Site Furnishings: Repair/replace benches at softball field.

### **Maple Ridge Park**

1. Playground: Improve access
2. Signage: Provide additional park signage at side street entrances
3. Pavilion: Repair/replace roof
4. Basketball court: Add new pads for poles or remove



### **Moh-He-Con-Nuck Nature Preserve**

1. Signage: Provide additional signage within preserve.
2. Seating: Provide additional seating within preserve

### **North Bethlehem Park**

1. Playground: Repair/replace.
2. Basketball court: Repair/replace backboards.
3. Bicycle racks: Replace old-style rack.
4. Trails: Establish trail network within wooded area of park.
5. Trash receptacles: Repair flaps on receptacles.
6. Flagpole: Repair and add lighting.

### **Selkirk Park**

1. Tennis Courts: Repair/resurface.
2. Site Furnishings: Repair/replace benches, bicycle racks, and bleachers.
3. Flagpole: Needs repair and lighting.
4. Signage: Upgrade/provide additional signage within park.

### **South Bethlehem Park**

1. Water fountain: Provide fountain within park.
2. Softball field: Improve infield areas around bases.
3. Site furnishings: Provide additional player benches within the park; replace several picnic tables and bicycle racks.
4. Fields: Dedicate or assign some fields for practice/team use.
5. Flagpole: Repair and light.
6. Size: Explore expansion of the park as opportunities arise.

### **Town Hall Playground & Ballfield**

1. Playground: Rehabilitate/replace playground and sand box.
2. Access: Improve access to play areas for patrons of all abilities.
3. Signage: Upgrade/provide additional identification signage.
4. Site furnishings: Replace bicycle racks and benches.

### **Veterans Memorial Park**

1. Access: Improve access to memorial area from parking stalls.
2. Connectivity: Create a formal connection to the Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail.



# XI. What's Next — Goals and Action Plan

## Goal 1: Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies

### **Objective 1.1 – Maintain and increase a level of service quality to citizens.**

The Town of Bethlehem currently does not have an established Level of Service (LOS) Standard of acres of park land per 1,000 persons. Based on the 2015 data, the Town has 326 acres of park land and a population of 34,110 that results in a 9.55 acres per 1,000 persons LOS. At a minimum, the Town should establish a LOS at 10 acres per 1,000 persons and seek to maintain that standard as the population grows. A review of the NRPA's 2015 Field Report shows that the Town of Bethlehem would rank in the top percentage for like sized communities for acres per 1,000 population. Establishing a LOS Standard should be directed through the Town's Comprehensive Plan and with community input. Additionally, the Town should adopt an LOS Standard that establishes a walkable level of service of 0.5 mile from parks, greenways, and trails. Since school districts and non-profits provide various recreational opportunities, their facilities should be included as resources to achieve the LOS Standard. As new development occurs, the Parks and Recreation Department, working in coordination with the Planning Department and Planning Board, should look for opportunities for additional land acquisitions and reservations for open space and parks. There is a gap in service located along the north-south corridor between Magee Park, Colonial Acres Golf Course, and Maple Ridge Park. Use of the parkland reservation requirements pursuant to the Town Subdivision Regulations §103-29 and Town Zoning Law §128-57 should be considered in this location and other locations as residential development is proposed and under review by the Town Board and/or Planning Board.

### **Objective 1.2 – Enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding Department activities and services.**

The Parks and Recreation Department should develop a Marketing Plan (including improved use of social media) that will guide its efforts in communicating and promoting its activities and facilities. This should include all the recommendations in the Master Plan for programs, services, and facility upgrades which will serve to improve awareness. The Marketing Plan should be updated every five years and include marketing strategies that incorporate the efforts of partner departments and projects.

The marketing and communication of Parks and Recreation Department activities should be enhanced with a focused effort opening lines of communication and meeting with partners and potential partners within the community.

### **Objective 1.3 – Provide improved signage Town-wide to make it easier for patrons to find and use parks, facilities, and trails.**

The Parks and Recreation Department should evaluate directional and wayfinding signage to facilities on roadways, trails, and within parks. The Department should enhance and update existing park signs as parks are renovated. Improved wayfinding signage will contribute to a greater connectivity of parks and facilities.

### **Objective 1.4 – Maintain existing facilities and amenities.**

There was an overwhelming public response to make sure that Parks and Recreation maintains and improves existing facilities. The Department should continue to improve and upgrade existing facilities and amenities as well as address low-scoring components through the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).



The Department should develop a Cyclical Maintenance Program to ensure consistent application of maintenance standards and cost efficiencies.

**Objective 1.5 – Improve access to athletic fields.**

The Department should review the current field allocation policy and update it based on demand, residency, and equitable scheduling. As part of the review, the Department should consider user groups’ needs.

**Objective 1.6 – Increase appropriate partnerships and collaborations within the community.**

The Town of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department currently partners with a number of agencies to provide programs and activities to the community. The Department should continue to explore additional opportunities as well as build on its existing partnerships. Where not already in place, the Department should ensure that all existing and future partnerships are accurately portrayed in a signed partnership agreement (Sample Partnership Policy can be found in **Appendix D**).

The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to work collaboratively with other Town departments to achieve goals and objectives and, as opportunities arise, expand to include other departments as appropriate. To assure efficiencies are benefiting each department, continuous communications and an annual review are essential.

**Objective 1.7 – Staff appropriately to meet current demand and maintain established levels of service.**

As recommendations in the Master Plan for programs, services, and facility upgrades are implemented, it is important to maintain staffing levels to maintain current performance standards. This will require the addition of new positions both in parks and recreation.

Parks and grounds maintenance was transferred to the Highway Department in 2012. To assure that this structure is achieving the efficiencies and meeting citizen expectation of parks maintenance levels, it is very important to monitor and track work orders and general maintenance to assure that a drop in service does not occur. This structure should be evaluated annually with the budget process to assure maximum efficiencies and outstanding customer service are being achieved.

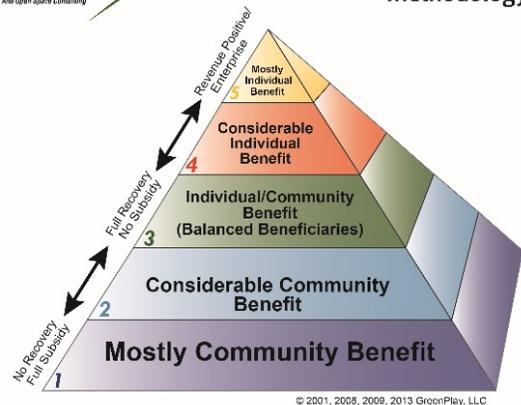
**Goal 2: Increase Financial Opportunities**

**Objective 2.1 – Consider implementing a cost recovery and pricing policy.**

There is a consensus among focus group participants and survey respondents to implement and employ equitable user fees for Parks and Recreation activities based on a value received by the participant for the services with a personal benefit. Parks and Recreation should consider implementing a Cost Recovery Policy such as the Pyramid Pricing Methodology (**Appendix B**) to determine a consistent method of pricing parks and recreation activities throughout the Department. As part of the policy, the Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department should continue to support the existing Scholarship Program.



The Pyramid Methodology



**Objective 2.2 – Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities.**

The Department currently takes advantage of grant opportunities available for programming and facility improvements. The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to pursue any and all grant opportunities at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. To accomplish this, the Department may consider contracting with a dedicated grant writer to research, submit, and track such grants.

**Objective 2.3 – Pursue opportunities for a dedicated revenue source for parks and recreation.**

The community appears willing to explore the feasibility of a dedicated revenue source to pay for the improvements that come out of this Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan. A campaign for an increased community investment may be a successful way of implementing the long-term recommendations in the Master Plan. These funding opportunities may include a bond referendum. It may also include an increase to the “in-lieu-of” parkland fees associated with new residential development (see Subdivision Regulations §103-29 and Town Zoning Law §128-57). The current in-lieu-of parkland fee was established in 2001. The current rate of \$1,550 for a single-family dwelling, and rates for other types of residential units, should be reviewed and adjusted, if necessary.

**Goal 3: Continue to Improve Programs and Service Delivery**

**Objective 3.1 – Explore opportunities to increase recreational activities based on demand and trends.**

The community would like to see additional programs for families, teens, and seniors. As new programs are developed and delivered, fitness/wellness, cultural, and special needs programs are in high demand. In order to ensure service delivery reflects the diversity of the community, the Department should engage the community in program development. To effectively achieve this objective, the Department should look to partner with other service providers in the community.

**Objective 3.2 – Explore opportunities to increase the number of events based on demand and trends.**

The Department should continue to look for opportunities to expand the number of music and art events offered annually.

**Objective 3.3 – Explore offering more non-athletic and non-traditional programs.**

Based on demand and current trends in the industry, the Department should explore opportunities to develop and expand programs that are outdoor/nature-based/environmentally focused. There are also opportunities to develop or expand on non-traditional sports programs such as disc golf, Pickleball, or Ultimate Frisbee.

**Objective 3.4 – Explore increasing aquatic opportunities.**

As part of the program review process, the Department should continue to monitor participation and demand for aquatic programs and adjust to meet the needs. It should also review the current schedule to maximize usage and meet demand at the Elm Avenue Park Pool Complex.



## Goal 4: Continue to Improve Facilities and Amenities

### **Objective 4.1 – Maintain and improve existing facilities and amenities.**

There was an overwhelming public response to make sure that Parks and Recreation maintains and improves existing facilities. The Department should continue to improve and upgrade existing facilities and amenities through the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), Master Plan and the Cyclical Maintenance Programs as recommended in the Master Plan.

### **Objective 4.2 – Expand greenways and trails connectivity.**

Working with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, the Department should continue to develop shared-use paths and/or sidewalks/greenways to connect neighborhoods to parks. As new and existing greenways and shared-use paths are designed and renovated, the Department should consider adding fitness stations and family fun stations in appropriate locations. As Elm Avenue Park is redesigned or upgraded, consider opportunities to install a perimeter shared-use path and return the existing Fit Trail to a predominantly natural surface trail. As popularity grows and demand increases, the Department should explore opportunities to develop and add mountain biking trails in existing or future parks or public lands.

### **Objective 4.3 – Meet current and future population demands through new land acquisition and redesign of current facilities.**

The Department is in need of programming space as well as administrative space. The opportunity is available to build a new community center at Elm Avenue Park to replace the current office building and provide much-needed space. Based on recommendations from the Master Plan and increased demand, the Department should explore opportunities for appropriate future facility expansion and redesign that include an outdoor amphitheater/special event venue and additional picnic shelters, as well acquisition of additional land for parks. Evaluation of the community center should consider collaborative uses by other Town departments and affiliates that would maximize the use of and funding opportunities for a center such as the Bethlehem Seniors and Bethlehem Historic Association. A top priority along the Hudson River waterfront should be to make repairs to the Henry Hudson Park that were identified in the Shoreline Stabilization Study.

### **Objective 4.4 – Develop additional aquatic opportunities.**

The Parks and Recreation Department should make the needed renovations and updates to the Elm Avenue Park Pool Complex to address low-scoring components. Priorities should be the locker rooms and building, incorporating family changing rooms and making repairs to the marcite. In addition to the pool complex, the Department should explore opportunities to create additional river access and programming at Henry Hudson Park.

### **Objective 4.5 – Develop new amenities at existing parks based on level of service analysis.**

Demand for usage of Bethlehem parks, shelters, and athletic facilities continues to grow, and the Department should look for opportunities to add new amenities to enhance the experience for users. A top priority must be the replacement of the outdated wooden playground at Elm Avenue Park with an industry standard playground. Some enhancements identified through the public process are establishing a network of community gardens, providing shade to parks and facilities either with tree planting or shade structures, and developing a shared-use path network at Elm Avenue Park. Also, as the



popularity of the dog park grows, the Department should explore both the opportunity to provide separate spaces for large and small dogs, as well as opportunities for on-leash access in identified parks.

**Objective 4.6 – Develop individual park master plans.**

Based on the Facilities Inventory and Level of Service recommendations in the Master Plan, develop individual park master plans to address low scoring components and repurpose spaces for better usage.

**Objective 4.7 – Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities.**

According to the ADA.gov website, “Access to civic life by people with disabilities is a fundamental goal of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To ensure that this goal is met, Title II of the ADA requires State and local governments to make their programs and services accessible to persons with disabilities... One important way to ensure that Title II's requirements are being met in cities of all sizes is through self-evaluation, which is required by the ADA regulations. Self-evaluation enables local governments to pinpoint the facilities, programs, and services that must be modified or relocated to ensure that local governments are complying with the ADA.”

Parks and Recreation currently does not have an ADA Transition Plan that identifies needed changes during a self-evaluation process. The Department needs to conduct a self-evaluation and develop a comprehensive transition plan. Once the ADA Transition Plan is developed and adopted, it should be updated at least every five years.

**Recommendations with Actionable Planning, Cost Estimates and Prioritization**

The following goals, objectives, and action items for the Master Plan recommendations are drawn from the public input, inventory, level of service analysis, findings feedback, and all the information gathered during the master planning process, with a primary focus on maintaining, sustaining, and improving the Town of Bethlehem parks, recreation, and greenways/trails. All cost estimates are in 2015 figures. Most costs are dependent on the extent of the enhancements and improvements determined. Capital project costs (including maintenance and enhancement projects) are typically greater than \$10,000 with a minimum life expectancy of 15 years.

Timeframe to complete is designated as:

- Short Term (up to 3 years)
- Mid-Term (4–6 years)
- Long Term (7–10 years)

**Goal 1: Continue to Improve Organizational Efficiencies**

<b>Objective 1.1:</b> <i>Maintain and increase the existing level of service quality to citizens</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.1.a</b> Adopt a Level of Service Standard of 10 acres per 1,000 persons and seek to maintain that standard as the population grows	\$0	TBD	Short-Term
<b>1.1.b</b> Adopt a Level of Service Standard that establishes a catchment area radius of 0.5 mile from parks, greenways, and trails.	\$0	Additional Staff Time	Short-Term



<b>Objective 1.2:</b> <i>Enhance and improve internal and external communication regarding Department activities and services</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.2.a</b> Develop a Marketing Plan.	\$0	Additional Staff Time	Short-Term
<b>1.2.b</b> Update the Marketing Plan every five years.	\$0	Additional Staff Time	Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>Objective 1.3:</b> <i>Provide improved signage town-wide to make it easier for patrons to find and use parks, facilities, greenways and trails</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.3.a</b> Enhance and update existing park signs as parks are renovated.	\$10,000-\$15,000	Additional Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>1.3.b</b> Improve connectivity by use of wayfinding	\$15,000-\$25,000	Additional Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>Objective 1.4:</b> <i>Maintain existing facilities and amenities</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.4.a</b> Continue to improve and upgrade existing facilities and amenities as well as address low-scoring components through the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).	Use CIP	Additional Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>1.4.b</b> Develop a Cyclical Maintenance Program to insure consistent application of maintenance standards and cost efficiencies to address low-scoring components.	\$0	Additional Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>Objective 1.5:</b> <i>Improve access to athletic fields</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.5.a</b> Review current field allocation policy and update based on demand, residency, and equitable scheduling.	\$0	Additional Staff Time	Short-Term



<b>Objective 1.6:</b> <i>Increase appropriate partnerships and collaborations within the community</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.6.a</b> Explore additional partnership opportunities as well as build on existing partnerships.	\$0	Additional Staff Time TBD Potential Increased Revenue or Decreased Expenses	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>1.6.b</b> Ensure all existing and future partnerships are accurately portrayed in a signed partnership agreement (Sample Partnership Policy can be found in <b>Appendix D</b> ).	\$0	Additional Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>1.6.c</b> Collaborate with other Town departments to achieve goals and objectives, and increase efficiencies.	\$0	Additional Staff Time TBD Potential Decreased Expenses	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>Objective 1.7:</b> <i>Staff appropriately to meet current demand and maintain established level of service</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>1.7.a</b> Hire and train staff for current and future park, facilities, greenways and trails maintenance demands.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>1.7.b</b> Hire and train staff for current and future recreation programming and facility usage demands.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term



## Goal 2: Increase Financial Opportunities

<b>Objective 2.1</b> <i>Consider implementing a cost recovery and pricing policy</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>2.1.a</b> Continue periodic evaluation of fees for programs and facilities.	\$0	Additional Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>2.1.b</b> Develop a standardized philosophy for pricing programs and services that reflects our community. An example developing a pricing philosophy is provided (Pyramid Pricing Methodology and Cost Recovery Policy, <b>Appendix B</b> ).	\$40,000	Additional Staff and Consultant Time	Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>Objective 2.2:</b> <i>Pursue grant and philanthropic opportunities</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>2.2.a</b> Continue to pursue grant opportunities and philanthropic donations working with the non-profit Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation.	\$0	Additional Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>2.2.b</b> Consider contracting with a dedicated grant writer to research, submit, and track federal, regional, state, and local grants.	Potential Matching Funds TBD	% of Successful Grants TBD	Short-Term
<b>Objective 2.3:</b> <i>Pursue opportunities for a dedicated revenue source for parks and recreation</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>2.3.a</b> Explore funding opportunities that provide dedicated revenue for parks and recreation that may include a tax levy. Review current in-lieu-of parkland fees to determine if adjustments are needed.	\$0	TBD	Mid-Term Long-Term

## Goal 3: Continue to Improve Programs and Service Delivery

<b>Objective 3.1:</b> <i>Explore opportunities to increase recreational programs based on demand and trends</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>3.1.a</b> Expand program opportunities for teens, families, and seniors.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>3.1.b</b> Expand wellness/fitness, cultural, and special needs programming opportunities.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term



<b>Objective 3.2:</b> <i>Explore opportunities to increase the number of events based on demand and trends</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>3.2.a</b> Continue to look for opportunities to expand and increase the number of music and art events.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>Objective 3.3:</b> <i>Explore offering more non-athletic and non-traditional programs</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>3.3.a</b> Look for opportunities to develop and expand programs that are outdoor/nature-based/ environmental focused.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>3.3.b</b> Look for opportunities to develop and expand non-traditional sports programs that meet current trends.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>Objective 3.4:</b> <i>Explore increasing aquatic opportunities</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>3.4.a</b> Review current schedule to maximize usage and meet demand.	\$0	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term



## Goal 4: Continue to Improve Facilities and Amenities

<b>Objective 4.1</b> <i>Maintain and improve existing facilities</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>4.1.a</b> Continue to implement existing plans, Capital Improvements Plan, Master Plan, and Cyclic Maintenance Program to address low-scoring components.	Varies depending on size/complexity	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>Objective 4.2:</b> <i>Expand greenways and trail connectivity</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>4.2.a</b> Working with the Bike and Ped Committee, continue to develop shared-use paths, sidewalks, and bicycle facilities to connect neighborhoods and parks.	TBD	\$0	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>4.2.b</b> Return the Fit Trail in Elm Avenue Park to a predominantly natural surface trail only. Consider adding fitness stations in appropriate locations in parks.	\$50,000-\$55,000	\$0	Short-Term
<b>4.2.c</b> Add a perimeter shared-use path around Elm Avenue Park as part of any redesign.	\$36/linear foot	TBD	Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>4.2.d</b> Explore opportunity to develop and add mountain bike trails at existing or future parks and public land.	\$0 (collaboration with partner)	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>Objective 4.3:</b> <i>Meet current and future population demands through new land acquisition and redesign of current facilities</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>4.3.a</b> Build a new Community Center at Elm Avenue Park to provide much-needed program space such as: gym, fitness, class rooms, meeting rooms, Senior Services, kitchen (20,000 to 40,000 sq. ft.)	\$5 million – \$8 million	TBD	Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>4.3.b</b> Build a new outdoor amphitheater/special event venue.	Varies depending on size/complexity (\$100,000 to 300,000)	TBD	Long-Term
<b>4.3.c</b> Build additional picnic shelters to meet demand and as space is available.	Varies depending on size/shape (\$10,000 – 40,000)	TBD	Mid-Term Long-Term
<b>4.3.d</b> As opportunities arise look at options to acquire additional land for parks.	TBD	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term



<b>4.3.e</b> Make needed repairs to Henry Hudson Park as identified in the Shoreline Stabilization Study.	\$2.5 Million	TBD	Short-Term
<b>Objective 4.4:</b> <i>Develop additional aquatic opportunities</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>4.4.a</b> Make renovations and update Elm Avenue Park Pool Complex to address low-scoring components.	\$250,000 – 300,000	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>4.4.b</b> Develop additional river access for non-motorized craft and explore programs at Henry Hudson Park.	\$45,000 – \$50,000	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>Objective 4.5:</b> <i>Develop new amenities at existing parks based on level of service analysis</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>4.5.a</b> Replace the wooden playground at Elm Avenue Park with an industry standard playground. Engage the community in its design and installation.	\$150,000 – \$170,000	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>4.5.b</b> Explore opportunities to establish a network of community gardens.	Varies depending on complexity of arrangement/ location	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>4.5.c</b> Add shade to parks and facilities either through tree plantings or shade structures.	Varies; Trees: \$250 – \$500 ea. Structures: \$5,000 – \$15,000	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>4.5.d</b> Based on demand look for opportunities to provide separate spaces for large and small dogs and/or on leash access in identified parks.	Varies depending on size/scale (\$10,000 – \$40,000)	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>Objective 4.6:</b> <i>Develop individual park master plans</i>			
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>4.6.a</b> Based on the Facilities Inventory and LOS recommendations, develop individual park master plans to address low scoring components and repurpose spaces for better usage.	Varies depending on complexity (\$10,000 to 30,000)	TBD	Short-Term Mid-Term Long-Term



**Objective 4.7:***Continue to improve ADA accessibility at all facilities*

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Capital Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Operational Budget Impact</b>	<b>Timeframe to Complete</b>
<b>4.8.a</b> Based on the Town's current ADA Transition Plan develop a parks and recreation specific plan.	TBD based on outcome of plan	Additional Staff Time	Short-Term Mid-Term
<b>4.8.b</b> Update the ADA Transition Plan every five years.	\$0	Additional Staff Time	Long-Term



# Appendix A – Bethlehem Trends Report

The following information highlights relevant regional and national outdoor recreation trends from various sources that may influence the Town of Bethlehem’s recreation planning for the next several years.

## A. Demographic Trends in Recreation

The highest-ranking age cohorts in the Town of Bethlehem in 2014 were 45–54 and 55–64 (16.3% and 16.2% of the population, respectively), followed by the 35–44 cohort at 11.4% of the population. Planning for the next 10 years suggests a growing demand for programs and services for baby boomers and seniors.

### Adults – Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers are defined as individuals born between 1946 and 1964, as stated in “Leisure Programming for Baby Boomers.”<sup>20</sup> They are a generation that consists of nearly 76 million Americans. In 2011, this influential population began their transition out of the workforce. As baby boomers enter retirement, they will be looking for opportunities in fitness, sports, outdoors, arts and cultural events, and other activities that suit their lifestyles. With their varied life experiences, values, and expectations, baby boomers are predicted to redefine the meaning of recreation and leisure programming for mature adults. In the July 2012 issue of *Parks and Recreation* magazine, published by NRPA, Emilyn Sheffield, Professor of Recreation and Parks Management at the California State University, published an article titled, “Five Trends Shaping Tomorrow Today.” In it, she indicated that Baby Boomers are driving the aging of America, with boomers and seniors over 65 composing about 39 percent of the nation’s population.<sup>21</sup>

In the leisure profession, this generation’s devotion to exercise and fitness is an example of its influence on society. When boomers entered elementary school, President John Kennedy initiated the President’s Council on Physical Fitness; physical education and recreation became a key component of public education. As Boomers matured and moved into the workplace, they took their desire for exercise and fitness with them. Now as the oldest boomers are nearing 65, park and recreation professionals are faced with new approaches to provide both passive and active programming for older adults. Boomers are second only to Gen Y/Millennials (born between 1980 and 1999) in participation in fitness and outdoor sports.<sup>22</sup>

Jeffrey Ziegler, a past president of the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association identified “Boomer Basics” in his article “Recreating Retirement: How Will Baby Boomers Reshape Leisure in their 60s?”<sup>23</sup> Highlights are summarized below.

<sup>20</sup> Linda Cochran, Anne Roshchadl, and Jodi Rudick, “Leisure Programming For Baby Boomers,” *Human Kinetics*, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Emilyn Sheffield, “Five Trends Shaping Tomorrow Today,” *Parks and Recreation*, July 2012, p. 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> 2012 Participation Report, Physical Activity Council, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Ziegler, “Recreating Retirement: How Will Baby Boomers Reshape Leisure in Their 60s?,” *Parks and Recreation*, October 2002.



*Boomers are known to work hard, play hard, and spend hard.* They have always been fixated with all things youthful. Boomers typically respond that they feel 10 years younger than their chronological age. Their nostalgic mindset keeps Boomers returning to the sights and sounds of their 1960s youth culture. Swimming pools have become less of a social setting and much more of an extension of Boomers' health and wellness program. Because Boomers in general have a high education level, they will likely continue to pursue education as adults and into retirement.

Bethlehem's demographic profile indicates that 32.5% of the current population falls within the Baby Boomer age range (those approximately 45–64 years of age).

*Boomers will look to park and recreation professionals to give them opportunities to enjoy many life-long hobbies and sports.* When programming for this age group, a customized experience to cater to the need for self-fulfillment, healthy pleasure, nostalgic youthfulness, and individual escapes will be important. Recreation trends will shift from games and activities that Boomers associate with senior citizens, as Ziegler suggests that activities such as bingo, bridge, and shuffleboard will likely be avoided because Boomers relate these activities to being old.

*Boomers will reinvent what being a 65-year-old means.* Parks and recreation agencies that do not plan for Boomers carrying on in retirement with the same hectic pace at which they have lived during their years in employment will be left behind. Things to consider when planning for the demographic shift:

- Boomer characteristics
- What drives Boomers
- Marketing to Boomers
- Arts and entertainment
- Passive and active fitness trends
- Outdoor recreation/adventure programs
- Travel programs

## **Youth – Planning for the Demographic Shift**

In her article, Emilyn Sheffield also that the proportion of youth is smaller than in the past, but still essential to our future. As of the 2010 Census, the age group under age 18 forms about a quarter of the U.S. population, and this percentage is at an all-time low. Nearly half of this population group is ethnically diverse and 25 percent is Hispanic.

## **Multiculturalism**

Our country is becoming increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. In May 2012, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that non-white babies now account for the majority of births in the United States. "This is an important tipping point," said William H. Frey,<sup>24</sup> the senior demographer at the Brookings Institution, describing the shift as a "...transformation from a mostly white Baby Boomer culture to the more globalized multi-ethnic country that we are becoming." Cultural and ethnic diversity adds a unique flavor to communities expressed through distinct neighborhoods, multicultural learning environments, restaurants, places of worship, museums, and nightlife.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Adam Serwer, "The End of White America," *Mother Jones*, <http://www.motherjones.com/kevin-drum/2012/05/end-white-america>, May 17, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Baldwin Ellis, "The Effects of Culture & Diversity on America", [http://www.ehow.com/facts\\_5512569\\_effects-culture-diversity-america.html](http://www.ehow.com/facts_5512569_effects-culture-diversity-america.html), accessed on Sept. 20, 2012.



As the recreation field continues to function within a more diverse society, race and ethnicity will become increasingly important in every aspect of the profession. More than ever, recreation professionals will be expected to work with, and have significant knowledge and understanding of, individuals from many cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

The Town of Bethlehem 2014 demographic profile indicates that 90.9% of the population is Caucasian, 3.7% is Asian, and 2.8% is African American. Additionally, 3.2% of the population is of Hispanic origin (irrespective of race).

- **Outdoor participation varies by ethnicity:** Participation in outdoor activities is higher among Caucasians than any other ethnicity and lowest among African Americans in nearly all age groups.
- **Lack of interest reason for not participating:** When asked why they did not participate in outdoor activities more often, the number one reason given by people of all ethnicities and races was because they were not interested.
- **Most popular outdoor activities:** Biking, running, fishing, and camping were the most popular outdoor activities for all Americans, with each ethnic/racial group participating in each in varying degrees.

### **Recreational Preferences among Ethnic/Racial Groups (Self-Identifying):**

Nationwide, participation in outdoor sports in 2013 was highest among Caucasians in all age groups and lowest among African Americans, according to the 2014 “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report.”<sup>26</sup> The biggest difference in participation rates was between Caucasian and African American adolescents, with 65 percent of Caucasians ages 13–17 participating and only 42 percent of African Americans in this age range participating.

#### **African Americans**

African American youth ages 6–12 (52% participation), are the only age group in this demographic to participate in outdoor recreation at a rate of more than 50 percent. By comparison, Caucasians in four of the five age groupings participated in outdoor sports at rates of 60 percent or more, with only those ages 45+ (40% participation) participating at under 50 percent. According to the 2014 “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report,” the most popular outdoor activities among African Americans are running/jogging and trail running (18%); fishing (freshwater, saltwater, and fly) (11%); road, mountain, and BMX biking (11%); birdwatching/wildlife viewing (4%); and camping (car, backyard, backpacking, and RV) (4%).

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<sup>26</sup>“Outdoor Recreation Participation Report” 2014, Outdoor Foundation, 2014.



## Asian Americans

Research about outdoor recreation among Asian Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Filipino)<sup>27</sup> found significant differences among the four groups concerning the degree of linguistic acculturation (preferred language spoken in various communication media). The research suggests that communications related to recreation and natural resource management should appear in ethnic media, but the results also suggest that Asian Americans should not be viewed as homogeneous with regard to recreation-related issues. Another study<sup>28</sup> found that technology use for finding outdoor recreation opportunities is highest among Asian/Pacific Islander populations. Over 60 percent of these populations use stationary or mobile technology in making decisions regarding outdoor recreation.

According to the 2014 “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report,” the most popular outdoor activities among Asian/Pacific Islanders are running/jogging and trail running (24%); hiking (15%); road, mountain, and BMX biking (14%); camping (car, backyard, backpacking, and RV) (11%); and fishing (freshwater, saltwater, and fly) (10%).

## Caucasians

According to the 2014 “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report,” the most popular outdoor activities among Caucasians are running/jogging and trail running (19%); fishing (freshwater, saltwater, and fly) (18%); road, mountain, and BMX biking (17%); camping (car, backyard, backpacking, and RV) (16%); and hiking (14%).

## Hispanics

In the United States, the Hispanic population increased by 43 percent over the last decade, compared to five percent for the non-Hispanic population, and accounted for more than half of all the population growth. According to Emilyn Sheffield, the growing racial and ethnic diversity is particularly important to recreation and leisure service providers, as family and individual recreation patterns and preferences are strongly shaped by cultural influences.<sup>29</sup>

Participation in outdoor sports among those who identify as Hispanic is at seven percent nationwide, according to the “2013 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report.”<sup>30</sup> Those who do get outdoors, however, participate more frequently than other outdoor participants, with an average of 43 outings per year. Hispanic youth (ages 6–17) are the most likely age group to participate in outdoor recreation, in the Hispanic demographic, followed closely by those in the 25–44 age range. The most popular outdoor activities among Hispanics are running and jogging (22%); road, mountain, and BMX biking (17%); fishing (freshwater, saltwater, and fly) (14%); camping (car, backyard, and RV) (11%); and hiking (9%).

## Multiculturalism and Marketing

Today the marketplace for consumers has dramatically evolved in the United States from a largely Anglo demographic, to the reality that the United States has shifted to a large minority consumer base known as the “new majority.”

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<sup>27</sup> P.L. Winter, W.C. Jeong, G.C. Godbey, “Outdoor Recreation among Asian Americans: A Case Study of San Francisco Bay Area Residents,” *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 2004.

<sup>28</sup> Harry Zinne and Alan Graefe, “Emerging Adults and the Future of Wild Nature,” *International Journal of Wildness*, December 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Emilyn Sheffield, “Five Trends Shaping Tomorrow Today,” *Parks and Recreation*, July 2012, p. 16-17.

<sup>30</sup> Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2013, Outdoor Foundation, 2013.



The San Jose Group, a consortium of marketing communications companies specializing in reaching Hispanic and non-Hispanic markets of the United States, suggests that today's multicultural population of the United States, or the "new majority," is 107.6 million, which translates to about 35.1 percent of the country's total population. The United States' multicultural population alone could essentially be the 12<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world.<sup>31</sup> Parks and recreation trends in marketing leisure services continue to emerge and should be taken into consideration in all planning efforts, as different cultures respond differently to marketing techniques.

## B. Facility Trends

According to Recreation Management magazine's 2014 "State of the Industry Report,"<sup>32</sup> national trends show an increased user-base of recreation facilities (private and public). Additionally, parks and recreation providers responding to the survey indicated an average age of 23.8 years for their community recreation facilities. To meet that growing need, a majority of the parks and recreation survey respondents (69%) reported that they have plans to build new facilities or make additions or renovations to their existing facilities over the next three years. Nearly one-third (32.5%) of parks respondents said that they have plans to build new facilities, and 28.9 percent said that they plan to add to their existing facilities. More than half (52.2%) are planning renovations to existing facilities.

The current national trend is toward "one-stop" indoor recreation facilities to serve all ages. Large, multipurpose regional centers help increase cost recovery, promote retention, and encourage cross-use. Agencies across the United States are increasing revenue production and cost recovery. Providing multiuse facilities versus specialized space is a trend, offering programming opportunities as well as free-play opportunities. "One-stop" facilities attract young families, teens, and adults of all ages.

Also according to the 2014 "State of the Industry Report" (p. 56), "...parks and recreation departments continue to see a slow recovery from the lowest points of the recent recession." While 69 percent plan for construction for parks, the average amount planned for construction in the 2014 budgets saw a slight decrease of 4.5 percent, from an average of \$3,973,000 in the previous year's survey to an average of \$3,795,000 for 2014. There was very little change in the features and amenities included in the facilities of the survey respondents from 2013 to 2014. The most commonly found features include splash play areas, trails, dog parks, park structures (shelters, restroom buildings, etc.), playgrounds, disc golf courses, open spaces (gardens, natural areas), synthetic turf sports fields, and concession areas.

### **Aquatics/Water Recreation Trends**

According to the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA), swimming ranked third nationwide in terms of participation in 2012.<sup>33</sup> Outdoor swimming pools are not typically heated and open year round. Swimming for fitness is the top aspirational activity for "inactives" in six of eight age categories in the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) 2013 "Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report," representing a significant opportunity to engage inactive populations. Nationally, there is an increasing trend toward indoor leisure and therapeutic pools. Additional indoor and outdoor amenities like "spray pads" are becoming increasingly popular as well. In some cities and counties spray pools are popular in the summer and are converted into ice rinks in the winter.

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<sup>31</sup> "SJG Multicultural Facts & Trends," San Jose Group, <http://blog.thesanjosegroup.com/?p=275>, posted October 25, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Emily Tipping, "2014 State of the Industry Report, State of the Managed Recreation Industry," *Recreation Management*, June 2014.

<sup>33</sup> "2012 Participation – Ranked by Total," National Sporting Goods Association, 2013.



The Outdoor Foundation’s 2014 “Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report” provided nationwide trends for various outdoor activities, including the following water recreation activities: board sailing/windsurfing, canoeing, fishing, kayaking, rafting, sailing, stand-up paddling, and wakeboarding (**Table 9**). Among water recreation activities, stand-up paddling had the largest increase in participation from 2010 to 2013 (23.9% increase) followed by several varieties of the kayaking experience: kayak fishing (20% increase), recreational kayaking (11.1% increase), and whitewater kayaking (6.6% increase). Fly fishing participation went up while other fishing activities went down in the same time period. Sailing participation increased somewhat, while rafting participation went down.<sup>34</sup>

**Table 6: Water Recreation Participation by Activity (in thousands - 6 years of age or older)**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	3-Year Average Change
Boardsailing/windsurfing	1,128	1,607	1,151	1,593	1,324	-2.4%
Canoeing	10,058	10,553	9,787	9,839	10,153	-1.2%
Fishing (fly)	5,568	5,478	5,360	6,012	5,878	2.4%
Fishing (freshwater/other)	40,961	38,860	39,071	39,135	37,796	-0.9%
Kayak fishing	no data	1,044	1,201	1,409	1,798	20%
Kayaking (recreational)	6,212	6,465	8,229	8,144	8,716	11.1%
Kayaking (white water)	1,369	1,842	1,546	1,878	2,146	6.6%
Rafting	4,318	4,460	3,821	3,690	3,836	-4.6%
Sailing	4,342	3,869	3,725	3,958	3,915	-.5%
Stand-up paddling	no data	1,050	1,242	1,542	1,993	23.9%
Wakeboarding	3,577	3,645	3,389	3,348	3,316	-3.1%

Source: Outdoor Foundation 2014

### Dog Parks

Dog parks continue to see high popularity and have remained among the top planned addition to parks and recreational facilities over the past three years. In 2014, a new association was founded, dedicated to providing informational resources for starting and maintaining dog parks – the National Dog Park Association. Recreation Management magazine<sup>35</sup> suggests that dog parks can represent a relatively low-cost way to provide an oft-visited a popular community amenity. Dog parks can be as simple as a gated area, or more elaborate with “designed-for-dogs” amenities like water fountains, agility equipment, and pet wash stations, to name a few. According to Dog Fancy magazine, an ideal dog park should include the following:

- One acre or more surrounded by a 4- to 6-foot fence
- Shade and water
- Adequate drainage
- Parking near the site
- A double gated entry
- Benches
- Pet-waste disposal stations with pickup bags and covered waste receptacles

<sup>34</sup> Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report 2014, Outdoor Foundation, 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Emily Tipping, “2014 State of the Industry Report, Trends in Parks and Recreation,” *Recreation Management*, June 2014.



## C. Programming Trends

### General Programming

One of the most common concerns in the recreation industry is creating innovative programming to draw participants into facilities and services. Once in, participants recognize that the benefits are endless. According to Recreation Management magazine's 2014 "State of the Industry Report,"<sup>36</sup> the most common programs, offered by survey respondents, include holiday events and other special events (78.1%), youth sports teams (69.1%), day camps and summer camps (64.7%), adult sports teams (61.3%), arts and crafts (60.9%), educational programs (60.5%), sports tournaments and races (56.8%), programs for active older adults (55.2%), fitness programs (61.4%), and festivals and concerts (53.2).

The report also suggested more than three in 10 (35.7%) respondents indicated that they are planning to *add* additional programs at their facilities over the next three years. The most common types of programming they are planning to add include:

1. Programming for active older adults (up from No. 5 on the 2013 survey)
2. Fitness programs (up from No. 3)
3. Teen programming (down from No. 2)
4. Adult sports teams (did not appear in 2013)
5. Holiday events and other special events (up from No. 6)
6. Mind-body/balance programs – yoga, tai chi, Pilates or martial arts (up from No. 7)
7. Environmental education (down from No. 1)
8. Educational programs (up from No. 4)
9. Festivals and concerts (up from No. 10)
10. Sports tournaments or races (down from No. 8)

### Fitness Programming

There have been many changes in fitness programs in the last 15 years. What clients wanted in 2000 is not necessarily what they want today. The American College of Sports Medicine's (ACSM) "Health and Fitness Journal"<sup>37</sup> has conducted a survey annually since 2007 to determine trends that would help create a standard for health and fitness programming. **Table 7** shows survey results that focus on trends in the commercial, corporate, clinical, and community health and fitness industry. Some trends first identified in 2007 have stayed near the top of the list year after year, while others came and went in popularity. Zumba made a brief appearance on the top 10 in 2012 but had fallen off the list of top 20 by 2014. Body weight training appeared as a developing trend in 2014 and is projected to stay strong in 2015, as is high-intensity interval training. Yoga is regaining popularity after falling out of the top 20 in 2009 and staying out of the top 10 until 2014. Fitness programs for older adults will remain strong in 2014 and 2015.

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<sup>36</sup> Emily Tipping, "2014 State of the Industry Report, Trends in Parks and Recreation," *Recreation Management*, June 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Walter R. Thompson, "Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends for 2012," *Health & Fitness Journal*, American College of Sports Medicine, 2011.



**Table 7: Top 10 Worldwide Fitness Trends for 2007 and Predicted Trends for 2015**

2007	Trends for 2015
1.Children and obesity	1. Body weight training
2.Special fitness programs for older adults	2. High-intensity interval training
3.Educated and experienced fitness professionals	3. Educated and experienced fitness professionals
4. Functional fitness	4. Strength training
5. Core training	5 Personal training
6. Strength training	6. Exercise and weight loss
7. Personal training	7. Yoga
8. Mind/body exercise	8. Fitness programs for older adults
9. Exercise and weight loss	9. Functional fitness
10. Outcome measurements	10. Group personal training

Source: American College of Sports Medicine

### **Older Adults and Senior Programming**

The American Academy of Sports Medicine issues a yearly survey of the top 20 fitness trends.<sup>38</sup> It ranks senior fitness programs eighth among most popular fitness trends for 2015. Whether it's SilverSneakers, a freestyle low-impact cardio class, or water aerobics, more and more people are realizing the many benefits of staying active throughout life.

According to the National Sporting Goods Association, popular senior programming trends include hiking, birding, and swimming.

### **Festivals and Events**

In the context of urban development, from the early 1980s, there has been a process that can be characterized as “festivalization,” which has been linked to the economic restructuring of towns and cities, and the drive to develop communities as large-scale platforms for the creation and consumption of “cultural experience.”

The success rate for festivals should not be evaluated simplistically solely on the basis of profit (sales), prestige (media profile), or size (numbers of events). Research by the European Festival Research Project (EFRP)<sup>39</sup> indicates there is evidence of local and city government supporting and even instigating and managing particular festivals themselves to achieve local or regional economic objectives, often defined very narrowly (sales, jobs, tourists, etc.). There is also a growing number of smaller, more local, community-based festivals and events in communities, most often supported by local councils that have been spawned partly as a reaction to larger festivals that have become prime economic-drivers.

<sup>38</sup> “Survey Predicts Top 20 Fitness Trends for 2015”, American College of Sports Medicine, <http://www.acsm.org/about-acsm/media-room/news-releases/2014/10/24/survey-predicts-top-20-fitness-trends-for-2015>, accessed January 2015.

<sup>39</sup> EFRP is an international consortium seeking to understand the current explosion of festivals and its implications and perspective. <http://www.efa-aef.eu/en/activities/efrp/>, accessed October 2012.



These community-based festivals often will re-claim cultural ground based on their social, educational, and participative value. For more information on the values of festivals and events, see the CRC Sustainable Tourism research guide<sup>40</sup> on this topic.

In 2014, festivals grew in popularity as economic drivers and urban brand builders. Chad Kaydo describes the phenomenon in the January 2014 issue of *Governing* magazine: “Municipal officials and entrepreneurs see the power of cultural festivals, innovation-focused business conferences and the like as a way to spur short-term tourism while shaping an image of the host city as a cool, dynamic location where companies and citizens in modern, creative industries can thrive.”<sup>41</sup> Examples of successful festivals include:

- South by Southwest (SXSW) – This annual music, film, and digital conference and festival in Austin, Texas, is a leading example. Launched in 1987, the festival’s economic impact has grown steadily over recent years. In 2007, it netted \$95 million for Austin’s economy. In 2013, the event topped \$218 million.
- Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in California – This two-week cultural event draws big-name bands, music fans, and marketers, attracting 80,000 people per day.
- First City Festival in Monterey, California – Private producer, Goldenvoice, launched this smaller music event in August 2013 with marketing support from the Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau, drawing on the city’s history as host of the Monterey Jazz Festival. Adding carnival rides and local art, furniture and clothing vendors to the live music performances, the event drew 11,000 attendees each of its two days.

## D. Healthy Lifestyle and Active Living Trends

### Active Transportation – Bicycling and Walking

Bicycle-friendly cities have been emerging over the last 10 years. Cycling has become a popular mode of transportation as people consider the rising cost of fuel, desire for better health, and concern for the environment. Some people also use cycling as a mode of transportation just for the fun of it.

The Alliance for Biking and Walking published its “Bicycling and Walking in the United States: 2014 Benchmarking Report,”<sup>42</sup> updating its 2012 Benchmarking Report. The report shows that increasing bicycling and walking are goals that are clearly in the public interest. Where bicycling and walking levels are higher, obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes levels are lower.

Design of a community’s infrastructure is directly linked to physical activity – where environments are built with bicyclists and pedestrians in mind, more people bike and walk. Higher levels of bicycling and walking also coincide with increased bicycle and pedestrian safety and higher levels of physical activity. Increasing bicycling and walking make a big impact on improving public health and life expectancy. The following trends as well as health and economic indicators are pulled from the 2012 and 2014 Benchmarking Reports.

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<sup>40</sup> Ben Janeczko, Trevor Mules, Brent Ritchie, “Estimating the Economic Impacts of Festivals and Events: A Research Guide,” Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism, 2002  
<http://www.sustainabletourisonline.com/1005/events/estimating-the-economic-impacts-of-festivals-and-events-a-research-guide>, accessed October 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Chad Kaydo, “Cities Create Music, Cultural Festivals to Make Money,” *Governing*, January 2014,  
<http://www.governing.com/topics/finance/gov-cities-create-mucis-festivals.html>.

<sup>42</sup> 2014 Benchmarking Report, Alliance for Biking and Walking, <http://www.bikewalkalliance.org/download-the-2014-benchmarking-report>, accessed January 23, 2015.



**Public health trends related to bicycling and walking include:**

- Quantified health benefits of active transportation can outweigh any risks associated with the activities by as much as 77 to 1, and add more years to our lives than are lost from inhaled air pollution and traffic injuries.
- Between 1966 and 2009, the number of children who bicycled or walked to school fell 75 percent, while the percentage of obese children rose 276 percent.
- Bicycling to work significantly reduces absenteeism due to illness. Regular bicyclists took 7.4 sick days per year, while non-bicyclists took 8.7 sick days per year.

**The economic benefits of bicycling and walking include:**

- Bicycling and walking projects create 8–2 jobs per \$1 million spent, compared to just 7 jobs created per \$1 million spent on highway projects.
- Cost benefit analyses show that up to \$11.80 in benefits can be gained for every \$1 invested in bicycling and walking.

**National bicycling trends:**

- There has been a gradual trend of increasing bicycling and walking to work since 2005.
- Infrastructure to support biking communities is becoming more commonly funded in communities.
- Bike share systems, making bicycles available to the public for low-cost, short-term use, have been sweeping the nation since 2010. Twenty of the most populous U.S. cities have a functional bike share system.

In November 2013, the Institute for Transportation & Development Policy published a “Standard for Transportation Oriented Design,” with accessible performance objectives and metrics, to help municipalities, developers, and local residents design land use and built environment, “...to support, facilitate, and prioritize not only the use of public transport, but the most basic modes of transport, walking and cycling.” The TOD Standard, along with its performance objectives and scoring metrics, can be found at [www.itdp.org/documents/TOD\\_v2\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.itdp.org/documents/TOD_v2_FINAL.pdf).<sup>43</sup>

**National Healthy Lifestyle Trends**

The population of the United States is becoming more diverse. As demographics are experiencing an age and ethnic shift, so too are landscapes, daily lifestyles and habits changing. The number of adults over the age of 65 has increased, and lifestyle changes have encouraged less physical activity; collectively these trends have created profound implications for the way local governments conduct business.

Below are examples of trends and government responses.

- According to the article “Outdoor Exercise ‘Healthier than Gym Workouts,’” published in February 2011,<sup>44</sup> researchers found that going for a run outdoors is better than exercising in the gym because it has a positive impact on mental as well as physical health. Levels of tension, confusion, anger, and depression were found to be lowered. This aligns with the trend of adult fitness playgrounds that are popping up all over the world.

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<sup>43</sup>“TOD Standard, Version 2.0,” Institute for Transportation & Development Policy, November 2013, [http://www.itdp.org/documents/TOD\\_v2\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.itdp.org/documents/TOD_v2_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> “Outdoor Exercise Healthier than Gym Workouts”, *Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/outdoors/outdoor-activities/8306979/Outdoor-exercise-healthier-than-gym-workouts.html>, accessed March 2011.



- While Americans have been notoriously unhealthy, a recent survey found that 58 percent of Americans adults are paying more attention to their personal health than in the past; 57 percent seek to eat a healthier diet, 54 percent seek to achieve a healthy weight; and 45 percent want to reduce stress in their lives.<sup>45</sup>
- The link between health and the built environment continues to grow as a trend for local governments. Residents are increasingly incorporating active living and physical activity into daily routines.

More and more, local governments are accepting the role of providing preventative health care through park and recreation services. The following facts are from an International City/County Management local government survey<sup>46</sup>:

- Eighty-nine percent (89%) of respondents indicated that parks and recreation departments should take the lead in developing communities conducive to active living.
- Eighty-four percent (84%) had already implemented recreation programs that encourage active living in their community.
- The highest priority selected for the greatest impact on community health and physical inactivity was a cohesive system of parks and trails and accessible neighborhood parks.

### Health and Obesity

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), obesity continues to be a serious issue in America, growing at an epidemic rate – almost tripling since 1990. Overall, more than one-third (35.7%) of adults and 17 percent of children in the United States are obese.<sup>47</sup> These statistics illustrate the importance of intercepting the epidemic in youth.

As obesity in the United States continues to be a topic of interest for legislators and our government, there continues to be research suggesting that activity levels are stagnant among all age groups. The following are statistics that support this concern.

- Only 25 percent of adults and 27% percent of youth (grades 9–12) engage in recommended levels of physical activity.
- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of American adults are sedentary.
- Children nationally spend 4.5–8 hours daily (30–56 hours per week) in front of a screen (television and/or computer).

<sup>45</sup> Sy Mukherjee, “Are Americans Inching Their Way to Healthier Lifestyles?,” *Think Progress*, <http://thinkprogress.org/health/2013/08/02/2403921/americans-maybe-getting-heathier/>, Aug. 2, 2013.

<sup>46</sup> “Active Living Approached by Local Government: Survey”, International City/County Management Association, <http://bookstore.icma.org/freedocs/Active%20Living%20and%20Social%20Equity.pdf>, 2004.

<sup>47</sup> “Obesity and Overweight - Facts,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/facts.html>, accessed October 3, 2012.



## Shade Structures and Health

Communities around the country are considering adding shade structures as well as shade trees to their parks, playgrounds, and pools as, “a weapon against cancer and against childhood obesity,”<sup>48</sup> both to reduce future cancer risk and promote exercise among children. A 2005 study found that melanoma rates in people under age 20 rose three percent per year between 1973 and 2001, possibly due to a thinning of the ozone layer in the atmosphere. It is recommended that children seek shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., but with so little shade available, kids have nowhere to go. Additionally, without adequate shade, many play areas are simply too hot to be inviting to children. On sunny days, the playground equipment is hot enough to scald the hands of would-be users.

Trees would help, as tree leaves absorb about 95 percent of ultraviolet radiation, but they take a decade or more to grow large enough to make a difference. So, many communities are building shade structures instead. The non-profit Shade Foundation of America is a good resource for information about shade and shade structures ([www.shadefoundation.org](http://www.shadefoundation.org)).

## Trails and Health

That a connected system of trails increases the level of physical activity in a community has been scientifically demonstrated through the CDC’s Trails for Health Initiative.<sup>49</sup> Trails can provide a wide variety of opportunities for being physically active, such as walking, running, and hiking; rollerblading; wheelchair recreation; bicycling; cross-country skiing and snowshoeing; fishing and hunting; and horseback riding. Recognizing that active use of trails for positive health outcomes is an excellent way to encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyle changes, American Trails has launched a “Health and Trails” resource section in its website: [www.americantrails.org/resources/benefits/](http://www.americantrails.org/resources/benefits/).

The health benefits are equally as high for trails in urban neighborhoods as for those in state or national parks. A trail in the neighborhood, creating a “linear park,” makes it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily routines, whether for recreation or non-motorized transportation. Urban trails need to connect people to places they want to go, such as schools, transit centers, businesses, and neighborhoods.<sup>50</sup>

## E. Natural Environments and Open Space Conservation Trends

### Conservation

The top ten recommendations of the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Conservation Task Force were published in the November 2011 issue of *Parks and Recreation Magazine*.<sup>51</sup> These recommendations are a compilation of best practices used by trendsetting agencies.

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<sup>48</sup> Liz Szabo, “Shade: A Weapon against Skin Cancer, Childhood Obesity,” *USA Today*, June 30, 2011, [usatoday.30.usatoday.com/news/health/wellness/story/2011/06/Shade-serves-as-a-weapon-against-skin-cancer-childhood-obesity/48965070/1](http://usatoday.30.usatoday.com/news/health/wellness/story/2011/06/Shade-serves-as-a-weapon-against-skin-cancer-childhood-obesity/48965070/1), accessed May 23, 2013.

<sup>49</sup> “Guide to Community Preventive Services,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/index.html>

<sup>50</sup> “Health Community: What You Should Know about Trail Building,” National Trails Training Partnership: Health and Fitness, <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/health/healthcombuild.html>, accessed May 24, 2013.

<sup>51</sup> “Conservation Leaders in our Communities,” National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), *Parks & Recreation Magazine*, November 2011, p. 85-101, <http://ezine.parksandrecreation.org/HTML5/NRPA-Parks-Recreation-Magazine-November-2011>



- 1) Take a leadership role in the community to promote conservation. Park and recreation agencies have a unique opportunity to bring governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, community leaders, and the public together for the cause of working together on community wide conservation objectives – clean water, wildlife habitat preservation, reducing energy use and improving environmental quality. Park and recreation agencies must lead the way in promoting conservation to diverse and underserved audiences.
- 2) Lead by example in employing best management conservation practices in parks. Park and recreation agencies should become the catalyst in the community for conservation by showing how best practices can be adopted – not mowing what you do not need to mow; stopping wasteful energy consumption; and reducing pesticide use for example. Show the public how conservation practices can benefit everyone.
- 3) Engage volunteers in conservation and stewardship. Create a sense of belonging and stewardship for parks by creating a personal sense of ownership and value. Enable people to identify with their parks and natural resources and to care about their future. Sustain stewardship by creating meaningful public participation in implementation of conservation principles and practices.
- 4) Establish a strategic land acquisition strategy based on knowledge and awareness of significant natural and cultural resources (watershed protection, unique ecological characteristics, and sensitive natural areas deserving protection). As the largest owners of public land within most communities, park and recreation agencies should lead the way in developing a strategic vision for preserving open space and conserving important landscapes and natural features.
- 5) Engage youth in conservation. Get kids and teens outdoors and enjoying their parks. The experience of nature is inherently rewarding for youth. Set as a goal to connect kids in the community to nature and the outdoors. Children and youth will be fascinated by nature and will develop a lifelong affinity as well as a conservation ethic if they have early opportunities to enjoy nature and recreate outdoors in a safe, rewarding way.
- 6) Conserve energy in all ways. Park and recreation agencies must lead by example, showing the public how and why they should adopt practices that they can see demonstrated in parks and recreation facilities. Park and recreation agencies should adopt energy conservation measures that make sense and save public taxpayer funds.
- 7) Protect natural resources in parks and in the community. A core mission of public parks is to protect land and water resources and to be stewards of natural resources. This means committing personnel and resources to protect natural and cultural resources and creating sustainable long-term methods of funding this conservation mission. Parks and recreation agencies are entrusted with some of the most important public assets of a community and the conservation and long-term protection of this public trust is and should be a core component of every parks and recreation agency's mission.



- 8) Create sustainable landscapes that demonstrate principles of conservation. Utilize sustainable landscape practices to save taxpayer funds, to measurably improve conservation benefits, and to educate the public about conservation. For example, agencies can reduce turf grass and mowing frequency; replace turf with native plants; manage floodplains for multiple uses including conservation and public recreation; enhance wetlands for water filtration and groundwater recharge; plant model landscapes of drought tolerant native plants adapted to climate and culture; and promote parks as food sources through edible landscapes and community gardens.
- 9) Forge partnerships that foster the mission of conservation. The greatest and most beneficial conservation successes most often occur as a result of collaboration. Park and recreation agencies should partner with non-profit and community service organizations, universities and colleges, school systems, other governmental agencies, and non-traditional partners for conservation outcomes. Promote health, education, and other goals while working toward a common mission of conservation.
- 10) Utilize technology to promote conservation. Park and recreation agencies need to embrace technology to promote conservation. This is not only in applications such as GIS (geographic information systems), but in utilizing social media to engage the public, especially youth. Technology is not to be feared as something that detracts from the conservation mission of parks agencies, but rather it is to be accepted as a means of sharing knowledge and connecting people to conservation and stewardship.

### **Economic and Health Benefits of Parks**

There are numerous economic and health benefits of parks, including the following:

- Trails, parks, and playgrounds are among the five most important community amenities considered when selecting a home.
- Research from the University of Illinois shows that trees, parks, and green spaces have a profound impact on people's health and mental outlook.<sup>52</sup>
- U.S. Forest Service research indicates that when the economic benefits produced by trees are assessed, the total value can be two to six times the cost for tree planting and care.<sup>53</sup>
- Fifty percent of Americans regard outdoor activities as their main source of exercise.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> F.E. Kuo, "Environment and Crime in the Inner City: Does Vegetation Reduce Crime?," *Environment and Behavior*, Volume 33, p. 343-367.

<sup>53</sup> Nowak, David J., "Benefits of Community Trees," (Brooklyn Trees, USDA Forest Service General Technical Report, in review).

<sup>54</sup> Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2010, Outdoor Foundation, 2010.



The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space, a report from the Trust for Public Land, makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental, and social benefits of parks and open space<sup>55</sup>:

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and physiological health.
- Residential and commercial property values increase.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners.
- Trees assist with storm water control and erosion.
- Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.
- Stable neighborhoods and strong communities are created.

Researchers have long touted the benefits of outdoor exercise. According to a study published in the “Journal of Environmental Science and Technology” by the University of Essex in the United Kingdom, “...as little as five minutes of green exercise improves both mood and self-esteem.”<sup>56</sup> A new trend started in China as they prepared to host the 2008 Summer Olympics. Their aim was to promote a society that promotes physical fitness and reaps the benefits of outdoor exercise by working out on outdoor fitness equipment.

The United States is now catching up on this trend, as parks and recreation departments have begun installing “outdoor gyms.” Equipment that can be found in these outdoor gyms is comparable to what would be found in an indoor workout facility, such as leg and chest presses, elliptical trainers, pull down trainers, etc. With no additional equipment such as weights and resistance bands, the equipment is fairly easy to install. Outdoor fitness equipment provides a new opportunity for parks and recreation departments to increase the health of their communities, while offering them the opportunity to exercise outdoors. Such equipment can increase the usage of parks, trails, and other outdoor amenities while helping to fight the obesity epidemic and increase the community’s interaction with nature.

### **Nature Programming**

Noted as early as 2003 in Recreation Management magazine, parks agencies have been seeing an increase in interest in environmental-oriented “back to nature” programs. In 2007, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) sent out a survey to member agencies in order to learn more about the programs and facilities that public parks and recreation agencies provide to connect children and their families with nature.<sup>57</sup> A summary of the results follow.

- Sixty-eight percent (68%) of public parks and recreation agencies offer nature-based programming and 61% have nature-based facilities.

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<sup>55</sup> Paul M. Sherer, “The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space,” The Trust for Public Land, San Francisco, CA, 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Cited in: Sally Russell, “Nature Break: Five Minutes of Green Nurture,” Green Nurture Blog, <http://blog.greennurture.com/tag/journal-of-environmental-science-and-technology>, accessed November 14, 2012.

<sup>57</sup> National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), “NRPA Completes Agency Survey Regarding Children and Nature,” [http://www.narpp.org/assets/Library/Children\\_in\\_Nature/nrpa\\_survey\\_regarding\\_children\\_and\\_nature\\_2007.pdf](http://www.narpp.org/assets/Library/Children_in_Nature/nrpa_survey_regarding_children_and_nature_2007.pdf), April 2007.



- The most common programs include nature hikes, nature-oriented arts and crafts, fishing-related events, and nature-based education in cooperation with local schools.
- When asked to describe the elements that directly contribute to their most successful programs, agencies listed staff training as most important followed by program content and number of staff/staff training.
- When asked what resources would be needed most to expand programming, additional staff was most important followed by funding.
- Of the agencies that do not currently offer nature-based programming, 90 percent indicated that they want to in the future. Additional staff and funding were again the most important resources these agencies would need going forward.
- The most common facilities include: nature parks/preserves, self-guided nature trails, outdoor classrooms, and nature centers.
- When asked to describe the elements that directly contribute to their most successful facilities, agencies listed funding as most important followed by presence of wildlife and community support.

Figures from the Association for Interpretative Naturalists, a national group of nature professionals, demonstrate that nature-based programs are on the rise. According to Tim Merriman, the association's Executive Director, the group was founded in 1954 with 40 members. It now boasts 4,800 members, with research indicating that about 20,000 paid interpreters are working nationally, along with an army of more than 500,000 unpaid volunteers staffing nature programs at parks, zoos, and museums. The growth of these programs is thought to come from replacing grandparents as the teacher about the "great outdoors." It is also speculated that a return to natural roots and renewed interest in life's basic elements was spurred as a response to the events of September 11, 2001.<sup>58</sup>

*"There's a direct link between a lack of exposure to nature and higher rates of attention-deficit disorder, obesity, and depression. In essence, parks and recreation agencies can and are becoming the 'preferred provider' for offering this preventative healthcare."*

– **Fran P. Mainella**, former director of the National Park Service and Instructor at Clemson University

In his book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*,<sup>59</sup> Richard Louv introduced the concept of the restorative qualities of being out in nature, for both children and adults. This concept, and research in support of it, has led to a growing movement promoting connections with nature in daily life. One manifestation of this is the development of Nature Explore Classrooms in parks. Nature Explore<sup>60</sup> is a collaborative program of the Arbor Day Foundation and the non-profit organization Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, with a mission of helping children and families develop a profound engagement with the natural world, where nature is an integral, joyful part of children's daily learning. Nature Explore works to support efforts to connect children with nature.

<sup>58</sup> Margaret Ahrweiler, "Call of the Wild – From Beautiful Blossoms to Bugs and Guts, Nature Programs Are Growing as People Return to Their Roots," *Recreation Management Magazine*, <http://recmanagement.com/200310fe04.php>, October 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2005.

<sup>60</sup> "What is the Nature Explore Program," [http://www.arborday.org/explore/documents/NE\\_FAQ\\_002.pdf](http://www.arborday.org/explore/documents/NE_FAQ_002.pdf), accessed August 12, 2012.



## F. Sports and Recreation Trends

### General Sports and Recreation Trends

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) survey on sports participation in 2012<sup>61</sup> found the top five athletic activities ranked by total participation included exercise walking, exercising with equipment, swimming, camping, and aerobic exercising. Additionally, the following active, organized, or skill development activities remain popular: hiking, running/jogging, bicycle riding, basketball, golf, and soccer. **Table 8** outlines the top 20 sports ranked by total participation in 2012.

**Table 8: Top 20 Sports Ranked by Total Participation (in millions) in 2012**

Sport	Total
1. Exercise walking	102.1
2. Exercising with equipment	57.7
3. Swimming	48.6
4. Camping (vacation/overnight)	45.2
5. Aerobic exercising	44.8
6. Hiking	42.2
7. Running/jogging	40.0
8. Bicycle riding	39.3
9. Bowling	35.5
10. Workout at club	35.2
11. Weightlifting	31.1
12. Fishing (freshwater)	30.8
13. Wrestling	28.4
14. Basketball	25.6
15. Yoga	22.9
16. Billiards/pool	21.8
17. Target shooting	21.7
18. Golf	21.1
19. Hunting with firearms	19.4
20. Boating, motor/power	17.0

Source: NSGA 2012

The Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) produces a yearly report on sports, fitness, and leisure activities in the United States. The following findings were highlighted in the 2013 report<sup>62</sup>:

- Overall participation in sports, fitness, and related physical activities remained relatively steady from 2011 to 2012.
- Fitness sports had the largest increase in participation (2% increase to 61.1%).
- Racquet sports participation also increased (1% increase to 12.8%) but the peak rate of 14 percent remains from 2008.
- Both team (21.6%) and water sports (12.5%) participation increased slightly while individual (36%) and winter sports (6.6%) participation decreased slightly.
- Outdoor sports participation remained stable at around 49 percent.

<sup>61</sup> 2012 Sport/Recreation Activity Participation, National Sporting Goods Association, 2013, <http://www.nsga.org>.

<sup>62</sup> 2012 Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report, Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (now Sports and Fitness Industry Association), <http://www.sfia.org/reports/all/>.



- Spending on team sports at school and lessons/instruction/sports camp was projected to increase in 2013 as it did in 2011 and 2012.
- Twenty-eight percent (28%) of all Americans are inactive, while 33 percent are active to a healthy level (engaged in high-calorie-level sport/fitness activities in a frequent basis).

The “Ten-Year History of Sports Participation Report,”<sup>63</sup> published by NSGA, shows national trends in team sports and individual sports. Overall participation trends indicate a general increase in 2011 for most team sports. However, softball and volleyball show a decrease in participation through 2011. Over the decade individual sports show a dramatic increase in aerobic exercising, exercise walking, exercising with equipment, hiking, kayaking, running/jogging, target shooting and target shooting with an air gun, tennis, weightlifting and working out at a club. **Table 9** illustrates a ten-year change in participation for selected activities including both team sports and individual sports.

**Table 9: Ten-Year History of Sports Participation (in millions) 2001-2011**

	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011
Aerobic exercising	24.3	28.0	33.7	34.8	33.2	42.0
Archery (target)	4.7	3.9	6.8	6.6	7.1	6.3
Backpacking/wilderness camping	14.5	13.7	13.3	13.0	12.3	11.6
Baseball	14.9	14.6	14.6	14.0	11.5	12.3
Basketball	28.1	27.9	29.9	24.1	24.4	26.1
Bicycle riding	39.0	36.3	43.1	37.4	38.1	39.1
Camping	45.5	51.4	46.0	47.5	50.9	42.8
Exercise walking	71.2	79.5	86.0	89.8	93.4	97.1
Exercising with equipment	43.0	48.6	54.2	52.9	57.2	55.5
Fishing (freshwater)	39.1	33.2	37.5	30.8	29.0	28.0
Football (tackle)	8.6	8.7	9.9	9.2	8.9	9.0
Golf	26.6	25.7	24.7	22.7	22.3	20.9
Hiking	26.1	25.0	29.8	28.6	34.0	39.1
Hockey (ice)	.2	1.8	2.4	2.1	3.1	3.0
Kayaking	3.5	4.7	7.6	5.9	4.9	7.1
Mountain biking (off-road)	6.3	8.2	9.2	9.3	8.4	6.0
Running/jogging	24.5	22.9	29.2	30.4	32.2	38.7
Skateboarding	9.6	9.0	12.0	10.1	8.4	6.6
Skiing (cross-country)	2.3	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.7	2.3
Soccer	13.9	11.1	14.1	13.8	13.6	13.9
Softball	13.2	11.8	14.1	12.4	11.8	10.4
Swimming	54.8	47.0	58.0	52.3	50.2	46.0
Tennis	10.9	9.6	11.1	12.3	10.8	13.1
Volleyball	12.0	10.4	13.2	12.0	10.7	10.1
Weight Lifting	21.2	25.9	35.5	33.2	34.5	29.1
Wrestling	3.5	n/a	n/a	2.1	3.0	3.2

Note: Participated more than once (in millions), 7 years of age and older.

Source: NSGA 2012

<sup>63</sup> Ten-Year History of Sports Participation (2001-2011), National Sporting Goods Association, 2012, <http://www.nsga.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3346>.



## Youth Sports

The 2013 SFIA Sports Participation Report indicates that in 2012 youth (ages 6–12) participation was highest for outdoor (63.1%), team (53.1%), and individual sports (49.8%). Children in this age group have increased interest in camping, while young adults ages 18–24 are becoming more interested in running/jogging.

The NSGA “Youth Sports Participation Report” from 2001–2011 indicates that specific offerings for children’s fitness are slowly increasing in health and fitness facilities. Facilities are offering more youth-specific exercise equipment. Individualized youth sports training opportunities are becoming more popular as well. In 2011, in-line roller skating experienced the largest percentage decrease in participation. For youth ages 6–17, exercise walking, exercising with equipment, and swimming, followed by overnight/vacation camping had the highest number of participants in 2011.<sup>64</sup>

In 2009, an article in *The Wall Street Journal* observed that in recent years lacrosse has become one of the country’s fastest growing team sports. Participation in high-school lacrosse has almost doubled in the first decade of the century. An estimated 1.2 million Americans over age seven played lacrosse in 2009.<sup>65</sup> A 2011 report, “U.S. Trends in Team Sports,” finds that lacrosse and other niche team sports and volleyball are continuing to experience strong growth for youth and adults.<sup>66</sup>

## Outdoor Recreation

The Outdoor Foundation releases an annual “Participation in Outdoor Recreation Report.” According to the 2014 report,<sup>67</sup> while the actual number of outdoor recreation outings increased since 2012, the participation rate fell slightly, due to population growth. The foundation reports that the top outdoor activities in 2013 were running, fishing, bicycling, camping, and hiking. Birdwatching is also among the favorite outdoor activities by frequency of participation.

The Outdoor Foundation’s research brought the following key findings.

### Participation in Outdoor Recreation

- Return to nature: Nearly 50 percent of Americans ages six and older participated in outdoor recreation in 2013. That equates to a total of 143 million.
- Top five participation percentage increase in outdoor activities in the past three years (2014 “Topline Report”): Adventure racing, triathlon (off-road), stand-up paddling, kayak fishing, recreational kayaking.
- Recreation for exercise: More than 70 percent of outdoor participants were motivated to recreate outdoors as a way of getting exercise.

### Youth Participation in Outdoor Recreation

- Good news about outdoor participation rates of female youth: Participation rates among girls and young women increased by two percentage points – bringing young women’s participation to the highest since 2006.
- The influence of family: Most youth are introduced to outdoor activities by parents, friends, family, and relatives.

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<sup>64</sup>“2011 vs. 2001 Youth Sports Participation,” National Sporting Goods Association, 2012, <http://www.nsga.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3494>.

<sup>65</sup> Evans and Trachtenberg, “Lacrosse Muscles Its Way West,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May, 2009.

<sup>66</sup> “2011 Preview: U.S. Trends in Team Sports, Fall 2011,” SMGA, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2014, Outdoor Foundation, 2014.



- Physical education in schools: The importance cannot be understated. Among adults ages 18 and older who are current outdoor participants, 74 percent say that they had P.E. in school between the ages of 6 and 12.

Outdoor recreation trends are also a recurring topic of study by the United States Forest Service through the Internet Research Information Series (IRIS). An IRIS report dated January 2012<sup>68</sup> provides the following recent nature-based outdoor recreation trends: Participation in walking for pleasure and family gatherings outdoors were the two most popular activities for the U.S. population as a whole. These outdoor activities were followed closely in popularity by viewing/ photographing wildlife, boating, fishing, snow/ice activities, and swimming. There has been a growing momentum in participation in sightseeing, birding, and wildlife watching in recent years.

### Trail Recreation and Cycling Trends

For trail-related recreation activities such as hiking, bicycling, and running, the 2014 “Outdoor Recreation Topline Report” indicates a positive three-year trend for running/jogging, hiking, road biking, and BMX biking. Additionally, participation in trail running and mountain biking is up significantly over the recent three-year period.

**Table 10: Trail Recreation Participation by Activity (in thousands) (6 years of age or older)**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	3-Year Average Change
BMX bicycling	1,904	1,811	2,369	1,547	2,175	2,168	1.9%
Bicycling (mountain/ non-paved surface)	7,592	7,142	7,161	6,816	7,714	8,542	6.4%
Bicycling (road/paved surface)	38,114	40,140	39,320	40,349	39,232	40,888	1.4%
Hiking (day)	32,511	32,572	32,496	34,491	34,545	34,378	1.9%
Running/jogging	41,130	43,892	49,408	50,713	52,187	54,188	3.1%
Trail running	4,857	4,833	5,136	5,610	6,003	6,792	9.8%

Source: Outdoor Foundation 2014

<sup>68</sup> “Recent Outdoor Recreation Trends,” USDA Forest Service Internet Research Information Series (IRIS) Research Brief, January 2012, <http://warnell.forestry.uga.edu/nrrt/nsre/IRISRec/IRISRec23rpt.pdf>, accessed August, 2012.



## Other Cycling Trends

- Bicycle touring is becoming a fast-growing trend around the world, including the United States and Canada. “Travelers are seeking out bike tours to stay active, minimize environmental impact, and experience diverse landscapes and cityscapes at a closer level.”<sup>69</sup>
- Urban bike tours, popular in cycle-friendly cities in Europe, are taking hold in the United States as well. Bikes and Hikes LA, an eco-friendly bike and hike sightseeing company founded in September 2013, offers visitors the opportunity to “see the city’s great outdoors while getting a good workout.” In New York, a hotel and a bike store are partnering to offer guests cruisers to explore the city during the summer of 2014.<sup>70</sup>
- One of the newest trends in adventure cycling is “fat bike,” multiple speed bikes that are made to ride where other bikes can’t be ridden, with tires that are up to five inches wide run at low pressure for extra traction. Most fat bikes are used to ride on snow, but they are also very effective for riding on any loose surface like sand or mud. They also work well on most rough terrain or just riding through the woods. This bike offers unique opportunities to experience nature in ways that wouldn’t be possible otherwise.<sup>71</sup>

## Therapeutic Recreation

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) established that persons with disabilities have the right to the same access to parks and recreation facilities and programming as those without disabilities. In 2004, The National Council on Disability (NCD) issued a comprehensive report titled, “Livable Communities for Adults with Disabilities.”<sup>72</sup> This report identified six elements for improving the quality of life for all citizens, including children, youth, and adults with disabilities. The six elements are:

1. Provide affordable, appropriate, accessible housing
2. Ensure accessible, affordable, reliable, safe transportation
3. Adjust the physical environment for inclusiveness and accessibility
4. Provide work, volunteer, and education opportunities
5. Ensure access to key health and support services
6. Encourage participation in civic, cultural, social, and recreational activities

Therapeutic Services bring two forms of services for persons with disabilities into play, specific programming and inclusion services. Individuals with disabilities need not only functional skills but to have physical and social environments in the community that are receptive to them and accommodating individual needs. Inclusion allows individuals to determine their own interests and follow them.

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<sup>69</sup> Hope Nardini, “Bike Tourism a Rising Trend,” *Ethic Traveler*, <http://www.ethicaltraveler.org/2012/08/bike-tourism-a-rising-trend/>, accessed March 24, 2014.

<sup>70</sup> Michelle Baran, “New Trend: Urban Bike Tours in Los Angeles and New York,” *Budget Travel Blog*, <http://www.budgettravel.com/blog/new-trend-urban-bike-tours-in-los-angeles-and-new-york,11772/>, accessed March 24, 2014.

<sup>71</sup> Steven Pease, “Fat Bikes, How to Get the Most Out of Winter Cycling,” *Minnesota Cycling Examiner*, <http://www.examiner.com/article/fat-bikes-the-latest-trend-adventure-cycling>, February 1, 2014.

<sup>72</sup> National Council on Disability, *Livable Communities for Adults with Disabilities*, December 2004, <http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2004/12022004>.



Many park and recreation departments around the country are offering specific programming for people with disabilities, but not as many offer inclusion services. In “Play For All – Therapeutic Recreation Embraces All Abilities,” an article in *Recreation Management Magazine*,<sup>73</sup> Dana Carman described resources for communities looking to expand their therapeutic recreation services.

Therapeutic recreation includes a renewed focus on serving people with the social/emotional challenges associated with “invisible disabilities” such as ADHD, bipolar disorders, spectrum disorders, and sensory integration disorders. A growing number of park and recreation departments are making services for those with invisible disabilities a successful part of their programming as well. When well done, these same strategies improve the recreation experience for everyone.<sup>74</sup>

## G. Administration Trends for Recreation and Parks

Municipal parks and recreation structures and delivery systems have changed, and more alternative methods of delivering services are emerging. Certain services are being contracted out and cooperative agreements with non-profit groups and other public institutions are being developed. Newer partners include the health system, social services, justice system, education, the corporate sector, and community service agencies. These partnerships reflect both a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation agencies and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues. The relationship with health agencies is vital in promoting wellness.

The traditional relationship with education and the sharing of facilities through joint-use agreements is evolving into cooperative planning and programming aimed at addressing youth inactivity levels and community needs.

Listed below are additional administrative national trends:

- Level of subsidy for programs is lessening and more “enterprise” activities are being developed, thereby allowing subsidy to be used where deemed appropriate.
- Information technology allows for better tracking and reporting.
- Pricing is often determined by peak, off-peak, and off-season rates.
- More agencies are partnering with private, public, and non-profit groups.

### Role and Response of Local Government

Collectively, these trends have created profound implications for the way local governments conduct business. Some local governments are now accepting the role of providing preventative health care through parks and recreation services. The following concepts are from the International City/County Management Association.<sup>75</sup>

- Parks and recreation departments should take the lead in developing communities conducive to active living.
- There is growing support for recreation programs that encourage active living within their community.
- One of the highest priorities is a cohesive system of parks and trails and accessible neighborhood parks.

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<sup>73</sup> *Recreation Management*, February 2007, <http://recmanagement.com/200710fe03.php>, accessed on February 25, 2015.

<sup>74</sup> Kelli Anderson, “A Welcome Inclusion”, *Recreation Management*, October 2010, <http://recmanagement.com/201010fe03.php>, accessed on February 26, 2015.

<sup>75</sup> [www.ICMA.org](http://www.ICMA.org), accessed in 2012.



In summary, the United States, its states, and its communities share the enormous task of reducing the health and economic burden of obesity. While numerous programs, policies, and products have been designed to address the problem, there is no magic bullet to make it go away. The role of public parks and recreation as a health promotion and prevention agency has come of age. What matters is refocusing its efforts to insure the health, well-being, and economic prosperity of communities and citizens.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance**

On September 14, 2010 the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued an amended regulation implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 2010 Standards).<sup>76</sup> On March 15, 2011 the amended act became effective and, for the first time in history, includes recreation environment design requirements. Covered entities were to be compliant with design and construction requirements and the development of three-year transition plan by March 15, 2012. Implementation of the three-year transition plan was to be completed by March 15, 2015.

### **Funding**

According to Recreation Management magazine's 2014 "State of the Industry Report," survey respondents from parks and recreation departments/districts reporting about their revenues from 2011 through 2013 reveals the beginning of a recovery from the impact of the Recession of 2008. From 2011 to 2012, 82.6 percent of respondents reported that their revenues had either stabilized or had increased. This number grew to 84.8 percent of respondents when reporting on the 2012 to 2013 time frame and, by 2015, 95 percent of parks and recreation department respondents are expecting revenues to either increase (49.7%) or remain stable (45.4%).

### **Trends in Marketing by Parks and Recreation Providers**

Active Network offers expertise in activity and participation management. Its mission is to make the world a more active place. In its blog, the company offered the following marketing mix ideas which came out of a meeting with park and recreational professionals in the Chicago area.<sup>77</sup>

- Updated booths and community event presence—Bring a tablet or laptop to show programs you offer and provide event participants the opportunity to register on the spot.
- Facebook redirect app—This application redirects people automatically to the link you provide. Add it to your Facebook page.
- Instagram challenge—Think about how you can use mobile and social tools at your next event. It could be an Instagram contest during an event set up as a scavenger hunt with participants taking pictures of clues and posting them on Instagram.
- Social media coupons—Research indicates that the top reason people follow an organization on a social network is to receive discounts or coupons. Consider posting an event discount on your social networks redeemable by accessing on phone or printing out.

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<sup>76</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA Home Page, <http://www.ada.gov/>, accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.activenetwork.com/blog/17-marketing-campaigns-parks-and-recreation-marketing/>, May 2013, accessed February 26, 2015.



Mobile marketing is a growing trend. Social websites and apps are among the most used features on mobile phones. Popular social media marketing tools include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. Private messaging apps such as Snapchat and WhatsApp are being used more and more for live media coverage.<sup>78</sup>

Ninety one percent (91%) of Americans own a cell phone and most use the devices for much more than phone calls. Young adults engage in mobile data applications at much higher rates than adults in age brackets 30 and older. Usage rates of mobile applications demonstrate chronologically across four major age cohorts that millennials tend to get information more frequently using mobile devices such as smartphones. For example, 97% of cell phone owners ages 18–29 send and receive text messages, compared to 94% of ages 30–49, 75% of ages 50–64, and 35% of those 65 and older.

Minority Americans are significantly more likely to own a cell phone than are their white counterparts. (87% of African Americans and 87% of Hispanics own a cell phone, compared with 80% of whites). Minority Americans also lead the way when it comes to mobile Internet access. Two-thirds of African Americans (72%) and Hispanics (67%) access the Internet in their cell phones, compared to Non-Hispanic Whites (56%)<sup>79</sup>. By 2015, mobile Internet penetration is forecast to grow to 71.1% for Hispanics compared to 58.8 percent for whites.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Jacqueline Woerner, "The 7 Social Media Trends Dominating 2015," Emarsys Blog,

<http://www.emarsys.com/en/resources/blog/the-7-social-media-trends-dominating-2015/>, accessed February 26, 2015.

<sup>79</sup> Maeve Duggan, "Cell Phone Activities 2013," Pew Internet and American Life Project, Pew Research Center, September 16, 2013, [http://www.pewinternet.org/files/old-media//Files/Reports/2013/PIP\\_Cell%20Phone%20Activities%20May%202013.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/files/old-media//Files/Reports/2013/PIP_Cell%20Phone%20Activities%20May%202013.pdf), accessed November 15, 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Erik Sass, "Minority Groups Heaviest Users of Mobile Net," *Media Daily News*, Nov. 18, 2011,

<http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/162699/minority-groups-heaviest-users-of-mobile-net.html#axzz2CK9zYGFw>, accessed November 15, 2012.



# Appendix B – Pyramid Methodology

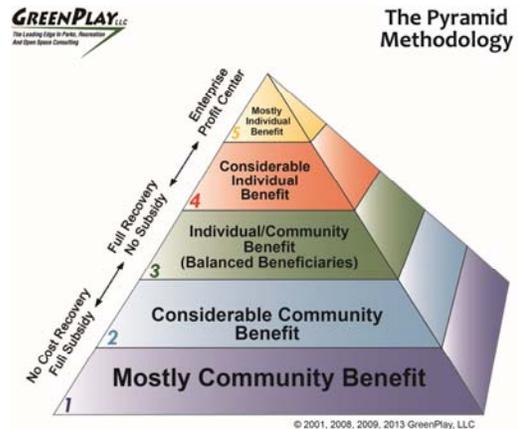


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**THE PYRAMID METHODOLOGY: COST RECOVERY AND SUBSIDY ALLOCATION PHILOSOPHY**

The creation of a cost recovery and subsidy allocation philosophy and policy is a key component to maintaining an agency’s financial control, equitably pricing offerings, and helping to identify core services including programs and facilities.

Critical to this philosophical undertaking is the support and buy-in of elected officials and advisory boards, staff, and ultimately, citizens. Whether or not significant changes are called for, the organization should be certain that it philosophically aligns with its constituents. The development of a financial resource allocation philosophy and policy is built upon a very logical foundation, based upon the theory that those who benefit from parks and recreation services ultimately pay for services.



The development of a financial resource allocation philosophy can be separated into the following steps:

**Step 1 – Building on Your Organization’s Values, Vision, and Mission**

The premise of this process is to align agency services with organizational values, vision, and mission. It is important that organizational values are reflected in the vision and mission. Oftentimes, mission statements are a starting point and further work needs to occur to create a more detailed common understanding of the interpretation of the mission and a vision for the future. This is accomplished by engaging staff and community members in a discussion about a variety of Filters.

**Step 2 – Understanding the Pyramid Methodology, the Benefits Filter, and Secondary Filters**

Filters are a series of continuums covering different ways of viewing service provision. **Filters** influence the final positioning of services as they relate to each other and are summarized below. The **Benefits Filter**, however; forms the **foundation** of the **Pyramid Model** and is used in this discussion to illustrate a cost recovery philosophy and policies for parks and recreation organizations.

Filter	Definition
<b>Benefit</b>	Who receives the benefit of the service? (Skill development, education, physical health, mental health, safety)
<b>Access/Type of Service</b>	Is the service available to everyone equally? Is participation or eligibility restricted by diversity factors (i.e., age, ability, skill, financial)?
<b>Organizational Responsibility</b>	Is it the organization’s responsibility or obligation to provide the service based upon mission, legal mandate, or other obligation or requirement?
<b>Historical Expectations</b>	What have we always done that we cannot change?
<b>Anticipated Impacts</b>	What is the anticipated impact of the service on existing resources? On other users? On the environment? What is the anticipated impact of not providing the service?
<b>Social Value</b>	What is the perceived social value of the service by constituents, city staff and leadership, and policy makers? Is it a community builder?

## THE BENEFITS FILTER

The principal foundation of the Pyramid is the **Benefits Filter**. Conceptually, the base level of the pyramid represents the mainstay of a public parks and recreation system. Services appropriate to higher levels of the pyramid should only be offered when the preceding levels below are comprehensive enough to provide a foundation for the next level. This foundation and upward progression is intended to represent public parks and recreation's core mission, while also reflecting the growth and maturity of an organization as it enhances its service offerings.

It is often easier to integrate the values of the organization with its mission if they can be visualized. An ideal philosophical model for this purpose is the pyramid. In addition to a physical structure, *pyramid* is defined by Webster's Dictionary as "an immaterial structure built on a broad supporting base and narrowing gradually to an apex." Parks and recreation programs are built with a broad supporting base of core services, enhanced with more specialized services as resources allow. Envision a pyramid sectioned horizontally into five levels.

### MOSTLY COMMUNITY Benefit

The foundational level of the Pyramid is the largest, and includes those services including programs and facilities which **MOSTLY** benefit the **COMMUNITY** as a whole. These services may increase property values, provide safety, address social needs, and enhance quality of life for residents. The community generally pays for these basic services via tax support. These services are generally offered to residents at a minimal charge or with no fee. A large percentage of the agency's tax support would fund this level of the Pyramid.

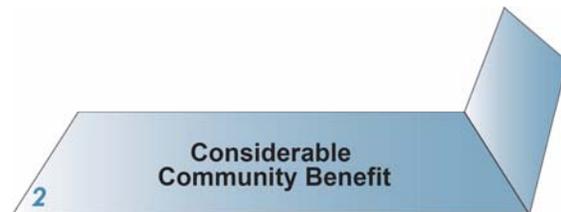


*Examples of these services could include: the existence of the community parks and recreation system, the ability for youngsters to visit facilities on an informal basis, low-income or scholarship programs, park and facility planning and design, park maintenance, or others.*

**NOTE: All examples above are generic – individual agencies vary in their determination of which services belong in the foundation level of the Pyramid based upon agency values, vision, mission, demographics, goals, etc.**

### CONSIDERABLE COMMUNITY Benefit

The second and smaller level of the Pyramid represents services which promote individual physical and mental well-being, and may begin to provide skill development. They are generally traditionally expected services and/or beginner instructional levels. These services are typically assigned fees based upon a specified percentage of direct (and may also include indirect) costs. These costs are partially offset by both a tax subsidy to account for **CONSIDERABLE COMMUNITY** benefit and participant fees to account for the **Individual** benefit received from the service.



*Examples of these services could include: the capacity for teens and adults to visit facilities on an informal basis, ranger led interpretive programs, beginning level instructional programs and classes, etc.*

### BALANCED INDIVIDUAL/COMMUNITY Benefit

The third and even smaller level of the Pyramid represents services that promote individual physical and mental well-being, and provide an intermediate level of skill development. This level provides balanced **INDIVIDUAL** and **COMMUNITY** benefit and should be priced accordingly. The individual fee is set to recover a higher percentage of cost than those services that fall within lower Pyramid levels.



*Examples of these services could include: summer recreational day camp, summer sports leagues, year-round swim team, etc.*

### CONSIDERABLE INDIVIDUAL Benefit

The fourth and still smaller Pyramid level represents specialized services generally for specific groups, and those which may have a competitive focus. Services in this level may be priced to recover full cost, including all direct and indirect expenses.



*Examples of these services could include: specialty classes, golf, and outdoor adventure programs.*

### MOSTLY INDIVIDUAL Benefit

At the top of the Pyramid, the fifth and smallest level represents services which have profit center potential, may be in an enterprise fund, may be in the same market space as the private sector, or may fall outside the core mission of the agency. In this level, services should be priced to recover full cost in addition to a designated profit percentage.



*Examples of these activities could include: elite diving teams, golf lessons, food concessions, company picnic rentals, and other facility rentals such as for weddings or other services.*

## Step 3 – Developing the Organization’s Categories of Service

In order to avoid trying to determine cost recovery or subsidy allocation levels for each individual agency service including every program, facility, or property, it is advantageous to categorize agency services into like categories. This step also includes the development of category definitions that detail and define each category and service inventory “checks and balances” to ensure that all agency services belong within a developed category. *Examples of Categories of Service could include: Beginner Instructional Classes, Special Events, and Concessions/Vending.*

## Step 4 – Sorting the Categories of Service onto the Pyramid

It is critical that this sorting step be done with staff, governing body, and citizen representatives involved. This is where ownership is created for the philosophy, while participants discover the current and possibly varied operating histories, cultures, and organizational values, vision, and mission. It is the time to develop consensus and get everyone on the same page – the page that is written together. Remember, this effort must reflect the community and must align with the thinking of policy makers.

**Sample Policy Development Language:**

XXX community brought together staff from across the department, agency leadership, and citizens to sort existing programs into each level of the Pyramid. The process was facilitated by an objective and impartial facilitator in order to hear all viewpoints. It generated discussion and debate as participants discovered what different people had to say about serving culturally and economically varied segments of the community, about historic versus active-use parks, about the importance of adult versus youth versus senior activities, and other philosophical and values-based discussions. This process gets at both the “what” and “why” with the intention of identifying common ground and consensus.

**Step 5 – Defining Direct and Indirect Costs**

The definition of direct and indirect costs can vary from agency to agency. What is important is that all costs associated with directly running a program or providing a service are identified and consistently applied across the system. Direct costs typically include all the specific, identifiable expenses (fixed and variable) associated with providing a service. These expenses would not exist without the service and may be variable costs. Defining direct costs, along with examples and relative formulas is necessary during this step.

Indirect costs typically encompass overhead (fixed and variable) including the administrative costs of the agency. These costs would exist without any specific service but may also be attributed to a specific agency operation (in which case they are direct expenses of that operation). If desired, all or a portion of indirect costs can be allocated, in which case they become a direct cost allocation.

**Step 6 – Determining (or Confirming) Current Subsidy/Cost Recovery Levels**

This step establishes the expectation that the agency will confirm or determine current cost recovery and subsidy allocation levels by service area based on the new or revised definition of direct and in-direct costs. This will include consideration of revenues sources and services costs or expenses. Typically, staff may not be cost accounting consistently, and these inconsistencies will become apparent. Results of this step will identify whether staff members know what it costs to provide services to the community, whether staff have the capacity or resources necessary to account for and track costs, whether accurate cost recovery levels can be identified, and whether cost centers or general ledger line items align with how the agency may want to track these costs in the future.

**Step 7 – Establishing Cost Recovery/Subsidy Goals**

Subsidy and cost recovery are complementary. If a program is subsidized at 75%, it has a 25% cost recovery, and vice-versa. It is more powerful to work through this exercise thinking about where the tax subsidy is used rather than what is the cost recovery. When it is complete, you can reverse thinking to articulate the cost recovery philosophy, as necessary.

The overall subsidy/cost recovery level is comprised of the average of everything in all of the levels together as a whole. This step identifies what the current subsidy level is for the programs sorted into each level. There may be quite a range within each level, and some programs could overlap with other levels of the pyramid. This will be rectified in the final steps.

This step must reflect your community and must align with the thinking of policy makers regarding the broad picture financial goals and objectives.

**Examples**

Categories in the bottom level of the Pyramid may be completely or mostly subsidized, with the agency having established limited cost recovery to convey the value of the experience to the user. An established 90-100% subsidy articulates the significant community benefit resulting from these categories.

The top level of the Pyramid may range from 0% subsidy to 50% excess revenues above all costs, or more. Or, the agency may not have any Categories of Service in the top level.

**Step 8 – Understanding and Preparing for Influential Factors and Considerations**

Inherent to sorting programs onto the Pyramid model using the Benefits and other filters is the realization that other factors come into play. This can result in decisions to place services in other levels than might first be thought. These factors also follow a continuum; however, do not necessarily follow the five levels like the Benefits Filter. In other words, a specific continuum may fall completely within the first two levels of the Pyramid. These factors can aid in determining core versus ancillary services. These factors represent a layering effect and should be used to make adjustments to an initial placement on the Pyramid.

**THE COMMITMENT FACTOR:** What is the intensity of the program; what is the commitment of the participant?



**THE TRENDS FACTOR:** Is the program or service tried and true, or is it a fad?



**THE POLITICAL FILTER:** What is out of our control?

This filter does not operate on a continuum, but is a reality, and will dictate from time to time where certain programs fit in the pyramid

**THE MARKETING FACTOR:** What is the effect of the program in attracting customers?



**THE RELATIVE COST TO PROVIDE FACTOR:** What is the cost per participant?



**THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS FACTOR:** What are the financial realities of the community?



**FINANCIAL GOALS FACTOR:** Are we targeting a financial goal such as increasing sustainability, decreasing subsidy reliance?



### Step 9 – Implementation

Across the country, ranges in overall cost recovery levels can vary from less than 10% to over 100%. The agency sets their goals based upon values, vision, mission, stakeholder input, funding, and/or other criteria. This process may have been completed to determine present cost recovery levels, or the agency may have needed to increase cost recovery levels in order to meet budget targets. Sometimes, simply implementing a policy to develop equity is enough without a concerted effort to increase revenues. Upon completion of steps 1-8, the agency is positioned to illustrate and articulate where it has been and where it is heading from a financial perspective.

### Step 10 – Evaluation

The results of this process may be used to:

- articulate and illustrate a comprehensive cost recovery and subsidy allocation philosophy
- train staff at all levels as to why and how things are priced the way they are
- shift subsidy to where it is most appropriately needed
- benchmark future financial performance
- enhance financial sustainability
- recommend service reductions to meet budget subsidy targets, or show how revenues can be increased as an alternative
- justifiably price new services

*This Cost Recovery/Subsidy Allocation Philosophy: The Pyramid Methodology Outline is provided by:*



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# Appendix C – Inventory and LOS Maps



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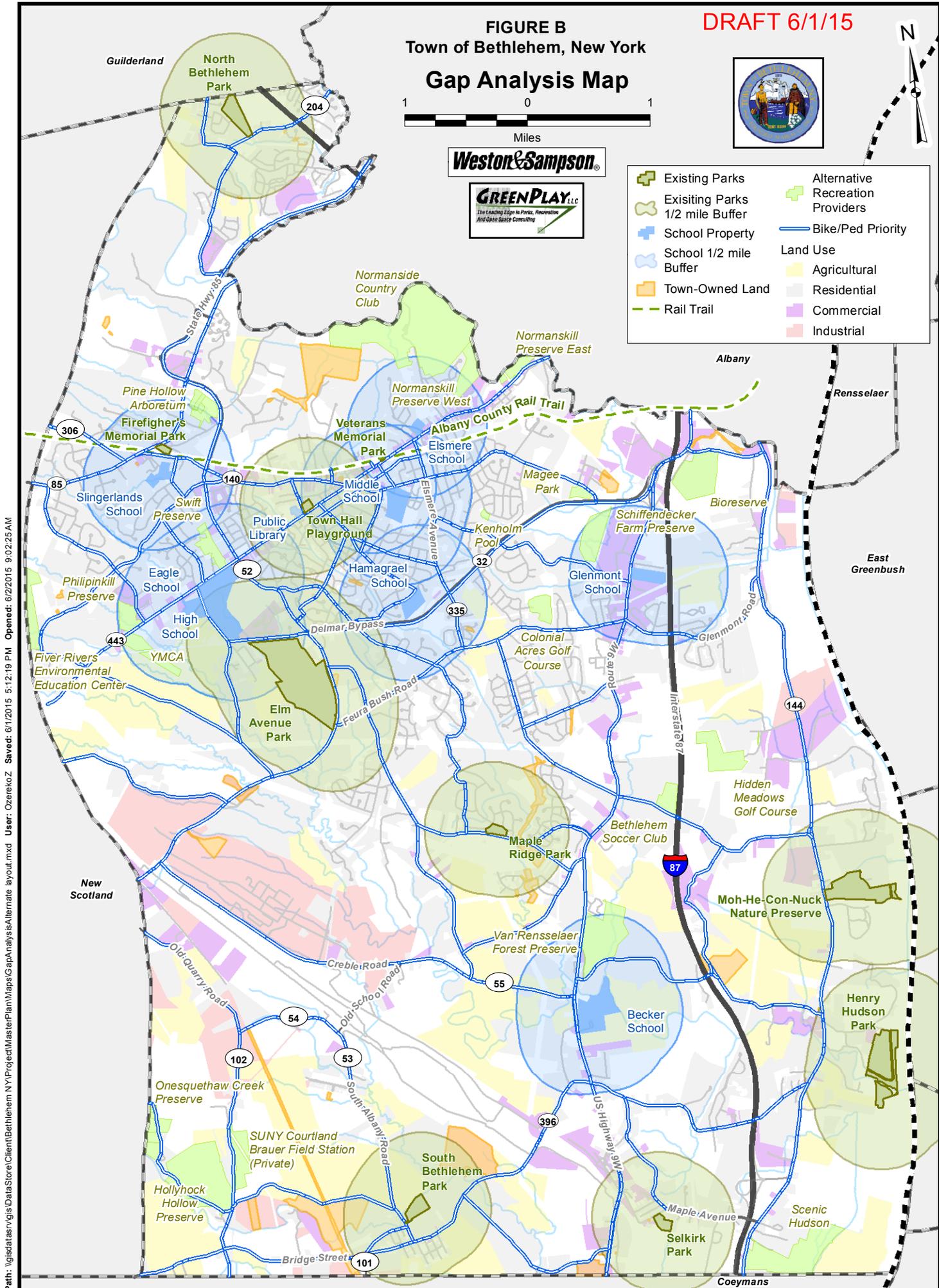
**FIGURE B**  
Town of Bethlehem, New York

**DRAFT 6/1/15**

**Gap Analysis Map**



- |                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Existing Parks                 | Alternative Recreation Providers |
| Existing Parks 1/2 mile Buffer | Bike/Ped Priority                |
| School Property                | <b>Land Use</b>                  |
| School 1/2 mile Buffer         | Agricultural                     |
| Town-Owned Land                | Residential                      |
| Rail Trail                     | Commercial                       |
|                                | Industrial                       |

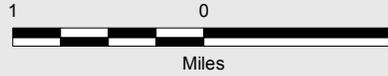


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**FIGURE A**  
**Town of Bethlehem, New York**  
**Town Parks Map**

**DRAFT 6/1/15**



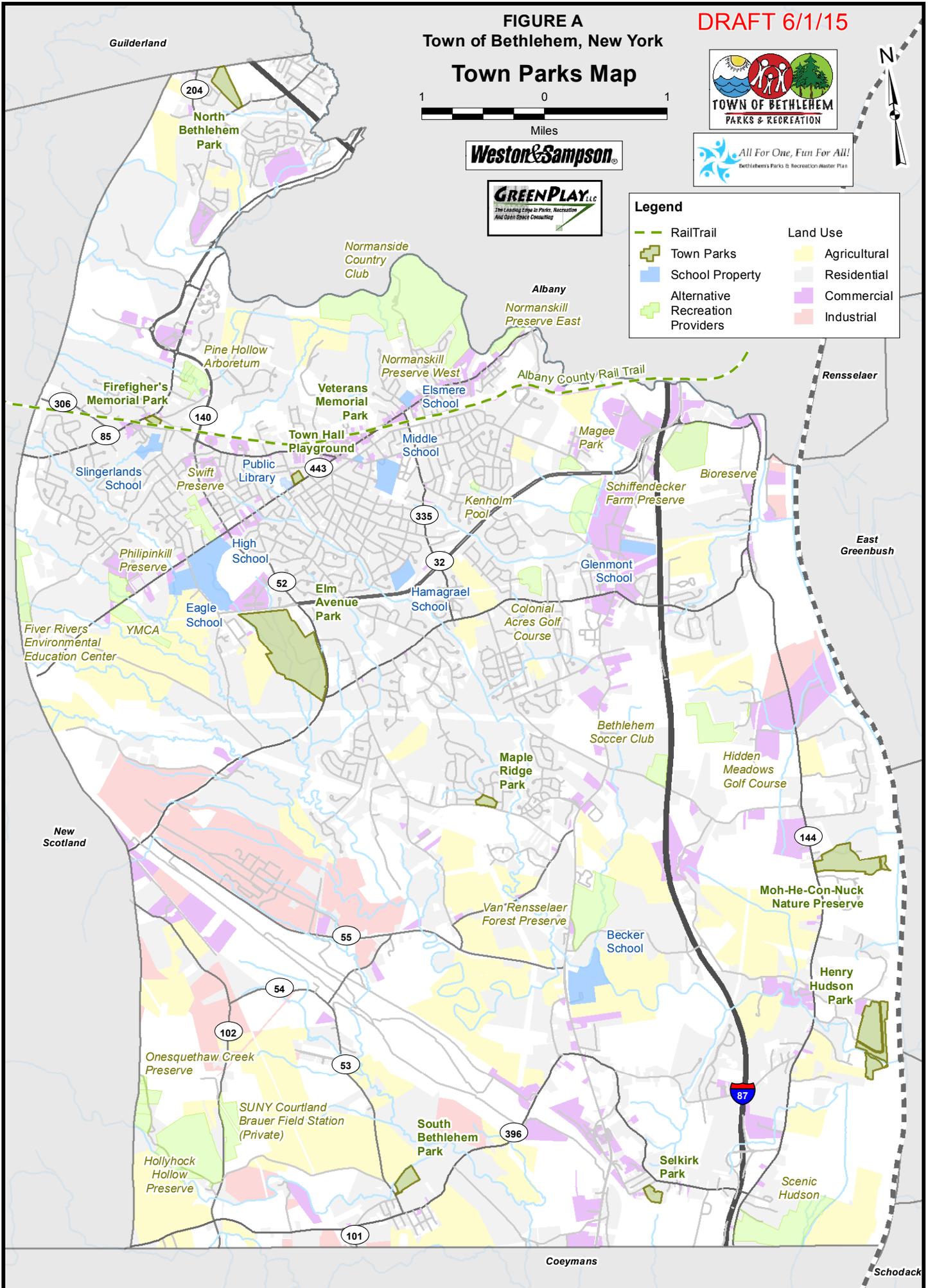
**Weston & Sampson**



**Legend**

RailTrail	<b>Land Use</b>
Town Parks	Agricultural
School Property	Residential
Alternative Recreation Providers	Commercial
	Industrial

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Guiderland

204  
 North Bethlehem Park

Normanside Country Club

Albany  
 Normanskill Preserve East

306  
 Firefighter's Memorial Park

140  
 Veterans Memorial Park

Normanskill Preserve West

Albany County Rail Trail

85  
 Slingerlands School

140  
 Swift Preserve

443  
 Town Hall Playground

Elsmere School

Magee Park

Bioreserve

Fiver Rivers Environmental Education Center

Philipkill Preserve

High School

52  
 Elm Avenue Park

335  
 Hamagrael School

32  
 Colonial Acres Golf Course

Glenmont School

Kenholm Pool

Schiffendecker Farm Preserve

Rensselaer

East Greenbush

New Scotland

Maple Ridge Park

Bethlehem Soccer Club

Hidden Meadows Golf Course

144  
 Moh-He-Con-Nuck Nature Preserve

Van Rensselaer Forest Preserve

Becker School

Henry Hudson Park

Onesquethaw Creek Preserve

102

SUNY Courtland Brauer Field Station (Private)

53

396  
 South Bethlehem Park

Selkirk Park

Scenic Hudson

Hollyhock Hollow Preserve

101

Coeymans

Schodack

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# Appendix D – Sample Partnership Policy



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# *Sample*

## Partnership Policy and Proposal Format

*Created By:*

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# Sample Parks and Recreation Department Partnership Policy And Proposal Format

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# I. Sample Parks and Recreation Department Partnership Policy

## A. Purpose

This policy is designed to guide the process for XX Parks and Recreation Department in their desire to partner with private, non-profit, or other governmental entities for the development, design, construction, and operation of possibly partnered recreational facilities and/or programs that may occur on City property.

The XX Parks and Recreation Department would like to identify for-profit, non-profit, and governmental entities that are interested in proposing to partner with the City to develop recreational facilities and/or programs. A major component in exploring any potential partnership will be to identify additional collaborating partners that may help provide a synergistic working relationship in terms of resources, community contributions, knowledge, and political sensitivity. These partnerships should be mutually beneficial for all proposing partners including the City, and particularly beneficial for the citizens of the community.

### **This policy document is designed to:**

- Provide essential background information.
- Provide parameters for gathering information regarding the needs and contributions of potential partners.
- Identify how the partnerships will benefit the Sample Parks and Recreation Department and the community.

**Part Two: The “Proposed Partnership Outline Format,”** provides a format that is intended to help guide Proposing Partners in creating a proposal for review by Sample Parks and Recreation Department staff.

## B. Background and Assumptions

Partnerships are being used across the nation by governmental agencies in order to utilize additional resources for their community's benefit. Examples of partnerships abound, and encompass a broad spectrum of agreements and implementation. The most commonly described partnership is between a public and a private entity, but partnerships also occur between public entities and non-profit organizations and/or other governmental agencies.

### **Note on Privatization:**

This application is specific for proposed partnering for new facilities or programs.

This information does not intend to address the issue of privatization, or transferring existing City functions to a non-City entity for improved efficiency and/or competitive cost concerns. An example of privatization would be a contract for a landscaping company to provide mowing services in a park. The City is always open to suggestions for improving services and cost savings through contractual arrangements. If you have an idea for privatization of current City functions, please call or outline your ideas in a letter for the City's consideration.

**In order for partnerships to be successful, research has shown that the following elements should be in place prior to partnership procurement:**

- There must be support for the concept and process of partnering from the very highest organizational level – i.e.: the Board or Trustees, a council, and/or department head.
- **The most successful agencies have high-ranking officials that believe that they owe it to their citizens to explore partnering opportunities whenever presented, those communities both solicit partners and consider partnering requests brought to them.**
- **It is very important to have a Partnership Policy in place before partner procurement begins. This allows the agency to be proactive rather than reactive when presented with a partnership opportunity. It also sets a “level playing field” for all potential partners, so that they can know and understand in advance the parameters and selection criteria for a proposed partnership.**
- A partnership policy and process should set development priorities and incorporate multiple points for go/no-go decisions.
- **The partnership creation process should be a public process, with both Partners and the Partnering Agency well aware in advance of the upcoming steps.**

## C. Partnership Definition

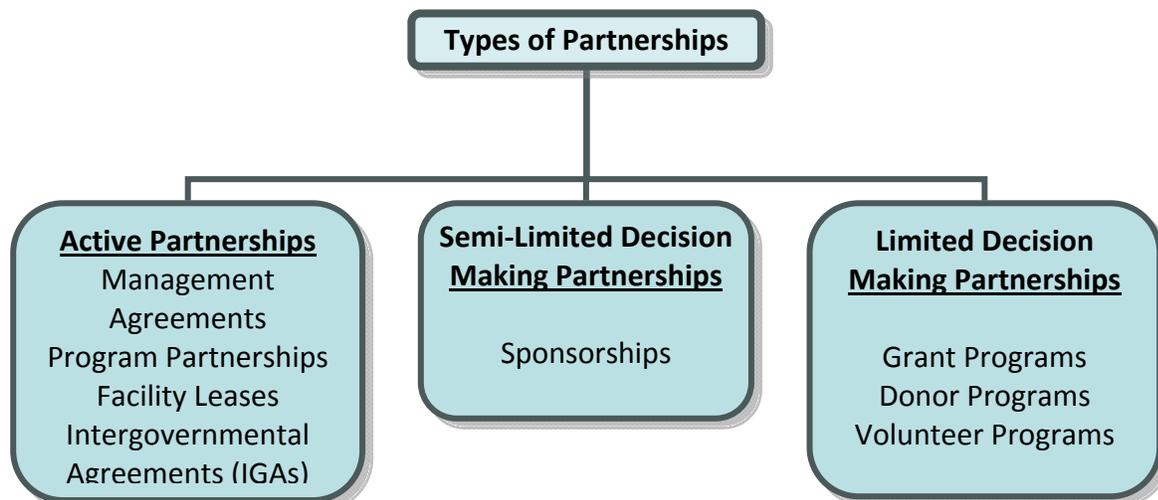
For purposes of this document and policy, a Proposed Partnership is defined as:

**"An identified idea or concept involving Sample Parks and Recreation Department and for-profit, non-profit, and/or governmental entities, outlining the application of combined resources to develop facilities, programs, and/or amenities for the City and its citizens."**

A partnership is a cooperative venture between two or more parties with a common goal, who combine complementary resources to establish a mutual direction or complete a mutually beneficial project. Partnerships can be facility-based or program-specific. The main goal for XX Parks and Recreation Department partnerships is enhancing public offerings to meet the mission and goals of the City. The XX Parks and Recreation Department is interested in promoting partnerships which involve cooperation among many partners, bringing resources together to accomplish goals in a synergistic manner. Proposals that incorporate such collaborative efforts will receive priority status.

Partnerships can accomplish tasks with limited resources, respond to compelling issues, encourage cooperative interaction and conflict resolution, involve outside interests, and serve as an education and outreach tool. Partnerships broaden ownership in various projects and increase public support for community recreation goals. Partners often have flexibility to obtain and invest resources/dollars on products or activities where municipal government may be limited.

Partnerships can take the form of (1) cash gifts and donor programs, (2) improved access to alternative funding, (3) property investments, (4) charitable trust funds, (5) labor, (6) materials, (7) equipment, (8) sponsorships, (9) technical skills and/or management skills, and other forms of value. The effective use of volunteers also can figure significantly into developing partnerships. Some partnerships involve active decision making, while in others, certain partners take a more passive role. The following schematic shows the types of possible partnerships discussed in this policy:



## **D. Possible Types of Active Partnerships**

The XX Parks and Recreation Department is interested in promoting collaborative partnerships among multiple community organizations. Types of agreements for Proposed “Active” Partnerships may include leases, contracts, sponsorship agreements, marketing agreements, management agreements, joint-use agreements, inter-governmental agreements, or a combination of these. An innovative and mutually beneficial partnership that does not fit into any of the following categories may also be considered.

Proposed partnerships will be considered for facility, service, operations, and/or program development including associated needs, such as parking, paving, fencing, drainage systems, signage, outdoor restrooms, lighting, utility infrastructure, etc.

The following examples are provided only to illustrate possible types of partnerships. They are not necessarily examples that would be approved and/or implemented.

### **Examples of Public/Private Partnerships**

- A private business seeing the need for more/different community fitness and wellness activities wants to build a facility on City land, negotiate a management contract, provide the needed programs, and make a profit.
- A private group interested in environmental conservation obtains a grant from a foundation to build an educational kiosk, providing all materials and labor, and is in need of a spot to place it.
- Several neighboring businesses see the need for a place for their employees to work out during the work day. They group together to fund initial facilities and an operating subsidy and give the facility to the City to operate for additional public users.
- A biking club wants to fund the building of a race course through a park. The races would be held one night per week, but otherwise the path would be open for public biking and in-line skating.
- A large corporate community relations office wants to provide a skatepark, but doesn't want to run it. They give a check to the City in exchange for publicizing their underwriting of the park's cost.
- A private restaurant operator sees the need for a concessions stand in a park and funds the building of one, operates it, and provides a share of revenue back to the City.
- A garden club wants land to build unique butterfly gardens. They will tend the gardens and just need a location and irrigation water.

### **Examples of Public/Non-Profit Partnerships**

- A group of participants for a particular sport or hobby sees a need for more playing space and forms a non-profit entity to raise funds for a facility for their priority use that is open to the public during other hours.
- A non-profit baseball association needs fields for community programs and wants to obtain grants for the building of the fields. They would get priority use of the fields, which would be open for the City to schedule use during other times.
- A museum funds and constructs a new building, dedicating some space and time for community meetings and paying a portion of revenues to the City to lease its land.

### **Examples of Public/Public Partnerships**

- Two governmental entities contribute financially to the development and construction of a recreational facility to serve residents of both entities. One entity, through an IGA, is responsible for the operation of the facility, while the other entity contributes operating subsidy through a formula based on population or some other appropriate factor.
- Two governmental public safety agencies see the need for more physical training space for their employees. They jointly build a gym adjacent to City facilities to share for their training during the day. The gyms would be open for the City to schedule for other users at night.
- A school district sees the need for a climbing wall for their athletes. The district funds the wall and subsidizes operating costs, and the City manages and maintains the wall to provide public use during non-school hours.
- A university needs meeting rooms. They fund a multi-use building on City land that can be used for City community programs at night.

## **E. Sponsorships**

The XX Parks and Recreation Department is interested in actively procuring sponsorships for facilities and programs as one type of beneficial partnership. Please see the ***Sample Parks and Recreation Department Sponsorship Policy*** for more information.

## **F. Limited-Decision Making Partnerships: Donor, Volunteer, and Granting Programs**

While this policy document focuses on the parameters for more active types of partnerships, the City is interested in, and will be happy to discuss, a proposal for any of these types of partnerships, and may create specific plans for such in the future.

## **G. Benefits of Partnerships with Sample Parks and Recreation Department**

The City expects that any Proposed Partnership will have benefits for all involved parties. Some general expected benefits are:

### **Benefits for the City and the Community:**

- Merging of resources to create a higher level of service and facility availability for community members.
- Making alternative funding sources available for public community amenities.
- Tapping into the dynamic and entrepreneurial traits of private industry.
- Delivering services and facilities more efficiently by allowing for collaborative business solutions to public organizational challenges.
- Meeting the needs of specific groups of users through the availability of land for development and community use.

### **Benefits for the Partners:**

- Land and/or facility availability at a subsidized level for specific facility and/or program needs.
- Sharing of the risk with an established stable governmental entity.
- Becoming part of a larger network of support for management and promotion of facilities and programs.
- Availability of professional City recreation and planning experts to maximize the facilities and programs that may result.
- Availability of City staff facilitation to help streamline the planning and operational efforts.

## II. The Partnering Process

The steps for creation of a partnership with the XX Parks and Recreation Department are as follows:

- A. XX Parks and Recreation Department will create a public notification process that will help inform any and all interested partners of the availability of partnerships with the City. This will be done through notification in area newspapers, listing in the brochure, or through any other notification method that is feasible.
- B. The proposing partner takes the first step to propose partnering with the City. To help in reviewing both the partnerships proposed, and the project to be developed in partnership, the City asks for a **Preliminary Proposal** according to a specific format as outlined in **Part Two - Proposed Partnership Outline Format**.
- C. If initial review of a Preliminary Proposal yields interest and appears to be mutually beneficial based on the City Mission and Goals, and the Selection Criteria, a City staff member or appointed representative will be assigned to work with potential partners.
- D. The City representative is available to answer questions related to the creation of an initial proposal, and after initial interest has been indicated, will work with the proposing partner to create a checklist of what actions need to take place next. Each project will have distinctive planning, design, review, and support issues. The City representative will facilitate the process of determining how the partnership will address these issues. This representative can also facilitate approvals and input from any involved City departments, providing guidance for the partners as to necessary steps.
- E. An additional focus at this point will be determining whether this project is appropriate for additional collaborative partnering, and whether this project should prompt the City to seek a **Request for Proposal (RFP)** from competing/collaborating organizations.

**Request for Proposal (RFP) Trigger:** In order to reduce concerns of unfair private competition, if a proposed project involves partnering with a private "for-profit" entity and a dollar amount greater than \$5,000, and the City has not already undergone a public process for solicitation of that particular type of partnership, the City will request Partnership Proposals from other interested private entities for identical and/or complementary facilities, programs, or services. A selection of appropriate partners will be part of the process.

- F. For most projects, a **Formal Proposal** from the partners for their desired development project will need to be presented for the City's official development review processes and approvals. The project may require approval by the Legal, Planning, Fire and Safety, Finance, and/or other City Departments, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Planning Board, The Board of Trustees, and/or the City Supervisor's Office, depending on project complexity and applicable City Charter provisions, ordinances or regulations. If these reviews are necessary, provision to reimburse the City for its costs incurred in having a representative facilitate the partnered project's passage through Development Review should be included in the partnership proposal.
- G. Depending on project complexity and anticipated benefits, responsibilities for all action points are negotiable, within the framework established by law, to ensure the most efficient and mutually beneficial outcome. Some projects may require that all technical and professional expertise and staff resources come from outside the City's staff, while some projects may proceed most efficiently if the City contributes staff resources to the partnership.
- H. The partnership must cover the costs the partnership incurs, regardless of how the partnered project is staffed, and reflect those costs in its project proposal and budget. The proposal for the partnered project should also discuss how staffing and expertise will be provided, and what documents will be produced. If City staff resources are to be used by the partnership, those costs should be allocated to the partnered project and charged to it.
- I. Specific **Partnership Agreements** appropriate to the project will be drafted jointly. There is no specifically prescribed format for **Partnership Agreements**, which may take any of several forms depending on what will accomplish the desired relationships among partners. The agreements may be in the form of:
- Lease Agreements
  - Management and/or Operating Agreements
  - Maintenance Agreements
  - Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs)
  - Or a combination of these and/or other appropriate agreements

Proposed partnership agreements might include oversight of the development of the partnership, concept plans and project master plans, environmental assessments, architectural designs, development and design review, project management, and construction documents, inspections, contracting, monitoring, etc. Provision to fund the costs and for reimbursing the City for its costs incurred in creating the partnership, facilitating the project's passage through the Development Review Processes, and completing the required documents should be considered.

- J. If all is approved, the Partnership begins. The City is committed to upholding its responsibilities to Partners from the initiation through the continuation of a partnership. Evaluation will be an integral component of all Partnerships. The agreements should outline who is responsible for evaluation and what types of measures will be used, and should detail what will occur should the evaluations reveal Partners are not meeting their Partnership obligations.

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### III. The Partnership Evaluation Process

#### A. Mission Statements and Goals

All partnerships with Sample Parks and Recreation Department should be in accord with the City's and the Parks and Recreation Department's Mission and Goals to indicate how a proposed partnership for that Department would be preliminarily evaluated.

##### **SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENT**

The XX Parks and Recreation Department will provide a variety of parks, recreation facilities, and program experiences equitably throughout the community. Programs will be developed and maintained to the highest quality, ensuring a safe environment with exceptional service while developing a lifetime customer. Services will demonstrate a positive economic investment through partnerships with other service providers, both public and private, ensuring a high quality of life for citizens of XX.

##### ***(Sample)* GOALS –**

- Promote physical and mental health and fitness
- Nourish the development of children and youth
- Help to build strong communities and neighborhoods
- Promote environmental stewardship
- Provide beautiful, safe, and functional parks and facilities that improve the lives of all citizens
- Preserve cultural and historic features within the City's parks and recreation systems
- Provide a work environment for the Parks & Recreation Department staff that encourages initiative, professional development, high morale, productivity, teamwork, innovation, and excellence in management

#### B. Other Considerations

##### **1. Costs for the Proposal Approval Process**

**For most proposed partnerships, there will be considerable staff time spent on the review and approval process once a project passes the initial review stage. This time includes discussions with Proposing Partners, exploration of synergistic partnering opportunities, possible RFP processes, facilitation of the approval process, assistance in writing and negotiating agreements, contracting, etc. There may also be costs for construction and planning documents, design work, and related needs and development review processes mandated by City ordinances.**

Successful Partnerships will take these costs into account and may plan for City recovery of some or all of these costs within the proposal framework. Some of these costs could be considered as construction expenses, reimbursed through a negotiated agreement once operations begin, or covered through some other creative means.

## **2. Land Use and/or Site Improvements**

**Some proposed partnerships may include facility and/or land use. Necessary site improvements cannot be automatically assumed. Costs and responsibility for these improvements should be considered in any Proposal. Some of the general and usual needs for public facilities that may not be included as City contributions and may need to be negotiated for a project include:**

- Any facilities or non-existent infrastructure construction
- Roads or street improvements
- Maintenance to specified standards
- Staffing
- Parking
- Snow removal
- Lighting
- Outdoor restrooms
- Water fountains
- Complementary uses of the site
- Utility improvements (phone, cable, storm drainage, electricity, water, gas, sewer, etc.)
- Custodial services
- Trash removal

## **3. Need**

The nature of provision of public services determines that certain activities will have a higher need than others. Some activities serve a relatively small number of users and have a high facility cost. Others serve a large number of users and are widely available from the private sector because they are profitable. The determination of need for facilities and programs is an ongoing discussion in public provision of programs and amenities. The project will be evaluated based on how the project fulfills a public need.

## **4. Funding**

Only when a Partnership Proposal demonstrates high unmet needs and high benefits for City citizens, will the City consider contributing resources to a project. The City recommends that Proposing Partners consider sources of potential funding. The more successful partnerships will have funding secured in advance. In most cases, Proposing Partners should consider funding and cash flow for initial capital development, staffing, and ongoing operation and maintenance.

**The details of approved and pending funding sources should be clearly identified in a proposal.**

For many partners, especially small private user groups, non-profit groups, and governmental agencies, cash resources may be a limiting factor in the proposal. It may be a necessity for partners to utilize alternative funding sources for resources to complete a proposed project. Obtaining alternative funding often demands creativity, ingenuity, and persistence, but many forms of funding are available.

Alternative funding can come from many sources, e.g. Sponsorships, Grants, and Donor Programs. A local librarian and/or internet searches can help with foundation and grant resources. Developing a solid leadership team for a partnering organization will help find funding sources. In-kind contributions can, in some cases, add additional funding.

All plans for using alternative funding should be clearly identified. The City has an established Sponsorship Policy, and partnered projects will be expected to adhere to the Policy. This includes the necessity of having an Approved Sponsorship Plan in place prior to procurement of sponsorships for a Partnered Project.

### **C. Selection Criteria**

In assessing a partnership opportunity to provide facilities and services, the City will consider (as appropriate) the following criteria. The Proposed Partnership Outline Format in Part Two provides a structure to use in creating a proposal. City staff and representatives will make an evaluation by attempting to answer each of the following Guiding Questions.

- How does the project align with the City and affected Department's Mission Statement and Goals?
- How does the proposed facility fit into the current City and the affected Department's Master Plan?
- How does the facility/program meet the needs of City residents?
- How will the project generate more revenue and/or less cost per participant than the City can provide with its own staff or facilities?
- What are the alternatives that currently exist, or have been considered, to serve the users identified in this project?
- How much of the existing need is now being met within the City borders and within adjacent cities?
- What is the number and demographic profile of participants who will be served?
- How can the proposing partner assure the City of the long-term stability of the proposed partnership, both for operations and for maintenance standards?
- How will the partnered project meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) requirements?
- How will the organization offer programs at reasonable and competitive costs for participants
- What are the overall benefits for both the City and the Proposing Partners?

## D. Additional Assistance

The XX Parks and Recreation Department is aware that the partnership process does entail a great deal of background work on the part of the Proposing Partner. The following list of resources may be helpful in preparing a proposal:

- **Courses are available through local colleges and universities to help organizations develop a business plan and/or operational pro-formas.**
- The Chamber of Commerce offers a variety of courses and assistance for business owners and for those contemplating starting new ventures.
- There are consultants who specialize in facilitating these types of partnerships. For one example, contact **GreenPlay LLC** at **303-439-8369** or **info@greenplayllc.com**.
- Reference Librarians at libraries and internet searches can be very helpful in identifying possible funding sources and partners, including grants, foundations, financing, etc.
- Relevant information including the **City of XX Comprehensive Plan**, the **Parks and Recreation Master Plan**, site maps, and other documents are available at the \_\_\_\_\_. These documents may be copied or reviewed, but may not be taken off-site.
- The XX Parks and Recreation Department Web Site (**www.XXXX.com**) has additional information.
- **If additional help or information is needed, please call 000-000-0000.**

## Part Two

# Sample Proposed Partnership Outline Format

Please provide as much information as possible in the following outline form.

### I. Description of Proposing Organization:

- Name of Organization
- Years in Business
- Contact Name, Mailing Address, Physical Address, Phone, Fax, Email
- Purpose of Organization
- Services Provided/Member/User/Customer Profiles
- Accomplishments
- Legal Status

### II. Decision Making Authority

Who is authorized to negotiate on behalf of the organization? Who or what group (i.e. Council/Commission/Board) is the final decision maker and can authorize the funding commitment? What is the timeframe for decision making?

#### Summary of Proposal (100 words or less)

What is being proposed in terms of capital development, and program needs?

### III. Benefits to the Partnering Organization

Why is your organization interested in partnering with the XX Parks and Recreation Department? Please individually list and discuss the benefits (monetary and non-monetary) for your organization.

### IV. Benefits to the Sample Parks and Recreation Department

Please individually list and discuss the benefits (monetary and non-monetary) for the XX Parks and Recreation Department and residents of the City.

### V. Details (as currently known)

The following page lists a series of *Guiding Questions* to help you address details that can help outline the benefits of a possible partnership. Please try to answer as many as possible with currently known information. Please include what your organization proposes to provide and what is requested of XX Parks and Recreation Department. Please include (as known) initial plans for your concept, operations, projected costs and revenues, staffing, and/or any scheduling or maintenance needs, etc.

## **Guiding Questions**

### ***Meeting the Needs of our Community:***

- In your experience, how does the project align with park and recreation goals?
- How does the proposed program or facility meet a need for City residents?
- Who will be the users? What is the projected number and profile of participants who will be served?
- What alternatives currently exist to serve the users identified in this project?
- How much of the existing need is now being met? What is the availability of similar programs elsewhere in the community?
- Do the programs provide opportunities for entry-level, intermediate, and/or expert skill levels?
- How does this project incorporate environmentally sustainable practices?

### ***The Financial Aspect:***

- Can the project generate more revenue and/or less cost per participant than the City can provide with its own staff or facilities? If not, why should the City partner on this project?
- Will your organization offer programs at reasonable and competitive costs for all participants? What are the anticipated prices for participants?
- What resources are expected to come from the Parks & Recreation Department?
- Will there be a monetary benefit for the City, and if so, how and how much?

### ***Logistics:***

- How much space do you need? What type of space?
- What is critical related to location?
- What is your proposed timeline?
- What are your projected hours of operations?
- What are your initial staffing projections?
- Are there any mutually-beneficial cooperative marketing benefits?
- What types of insurance will be needed and who will be responsible for acquiring and paying premiums on the policies?
- What is your organization's experience in providing this type of facility/program?
- How will your organization meet ADA and EEOC requirements?

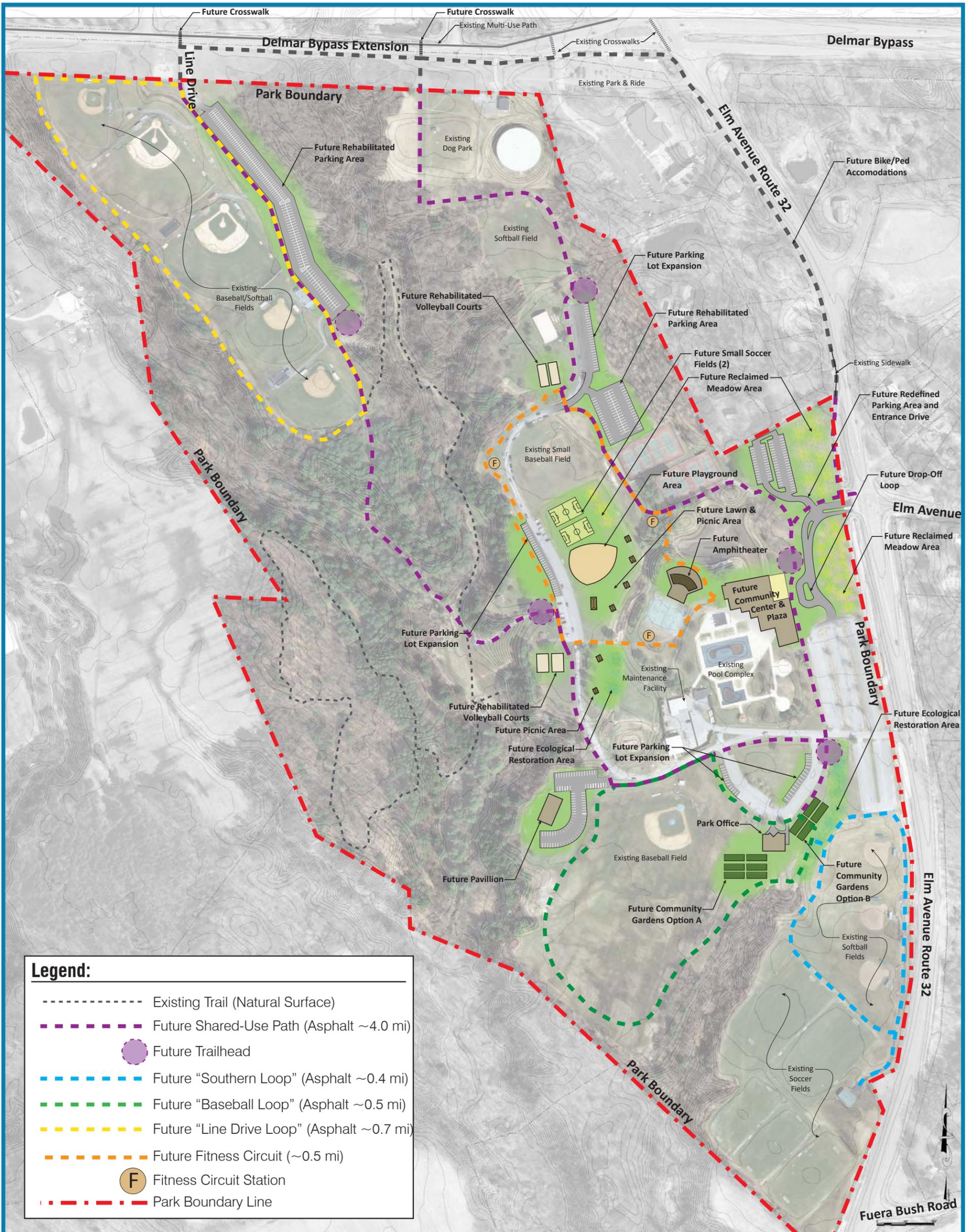
### ***Agreements and Evaluation:***

- How, by whom, and at what intervals should the project be evaluated?
- How can you assure the City of long-term stability of your organization?
- What types and length of agreements should be used for this project?
- What types of “exit strategies” should we include?
- What should be done if the project does not meet the conditions of the original agreements?

# Appendix E – Elm Park Concept



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September, 2015

# Elm Avenue Park - Conceptual Master Plan

Town of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation Department



Town of Bethlehem,  
New York